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A NEW ROYAL LETTER FROM PESSINUS: SOME CORRECTIONS AND  
SUGGESTIONS

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## A NEW ROYAL LETTER FROM PESSINUS: SOME CORRECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A new letter of Attalos II found at Pessinus was published in 2014 by A. Avram and G. Tsetskhladze.<sup>1</sup> The find was first announced by the former excavator of Pessinus J. Devreker, who also promised the publication that never materialized. After more than a decade since its 2003 discovery in a private house in Ballıhisar, we finally have the first publication of the new royal letter before us. This important find will doubtless attract much attention from ancient historians and epigraphers. My aim is to correct and supplement some readings of the first editors and to offer a new general explanation of the text in accordance with those corrections and supplements.

White-marble stone, broken on top and sawn off on bottom. Dim. 43 cm x 35 cm x 19 cm; letters 1.8–2 (first line; *theta* 1.4), 0.9–1.1 (lines 2–3), 0.7–0.9 (lines 4–17).

Date: before 159/8 B.C.



- Ἄγαθῇ τύχῃ·  
Ἄτταλος Σωσθένει καὶ Ἡρώιδε[ι]  
χαίρειν· ἐντυχῶν ἡμῖν Ἀρίβαζος,  
ἡγεμῶν τῶν ἀπὸ Κλεονναείου Γαλατῶ[ν]  
5 καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ Ἀμορίου κατοίκων, ἔφησ[εν]  
ἀναφέρεσθαι ἐν τοῖς ἐν τῷ Κλεονναε[ίωι]  
[κ]αὶ διὰ τῶν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὄντων πρότερ[ον]

<sup>1</sup> A. Avram – G. Tsetskhladze, A New Attalid Letter from Pessinus, ZPE 191, 2014, 151–181. I am very grateful to G. Tsetskhladze for sending me photographs of the stone, one of which is published here.

- [μ]ισθοφόρων μηθὲν διατετάχθαι τοῖ[ς] <sup>vac?</sup>  
 ἡγεμόσιν φιλάνθρωπον, γεγραμέναι ἡμᾶ[ς]  
 10 [ἄ] δεῖν ἐκάστους ἔχ[ει]ν τῶν τὰς ὑποκάτω  
 [ἡ]γεμονίας ἐχόντων, περὶ δὲ ἑαυτοῦ μηθὲ[ν]  
 [γε]γονέναι, καὶ ἡξίου ἐπιγ[ραφ]ῆναι στρατηγίαι  
 [καὶ] τοὺς κλήρους ἐαθῆ[ναι] ἔχειν οὐς προκ[α]-  
 [τέ]χει, ὄντας ἡγεμονικούς, τὰ τε ἄλλα ὑπ[άρ]-  
 15 [χει]ν αὐτῶι ἄ καὶ τοῖς στρατηγοῖς συνεχω-  
 [ρητα]ί· ἐπεὶ οὖν ἔν τε τῇ ἀρχαίαι καὶ νῦν  
 [c. 9 letters ]ΙΙΟΝΑΣ [π]αρείσχηται καὶ ἐν ...<sup>2</sup>
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17 Since one can still discern an oblique right-hand stroke in front ΙΙΟΝΑΣ, the unknown object of the verb [π]αρείσχηται (perhaps *χρείας?*) could have been defined as *π*λήρονας, although one does rather expect the regular form *πλείονας*.

*With good fortune! Attalos to Sosthenes and Herodes, greetings! Having met with us, Aribazos, commander of the Galatians from Kleonnaeion, and of the katoikoi from Amorion, said that he is registered among those at Kleonnae[ion] and that on account of the mercenaries who were in that place earlier no privilege was granted to their officers, (and) that we had prescribed what each of those holding one of the commands (listed?) below should have, but that nothing had happened in his case, and he asked to be assigned a strategia and to be allowed to keep the allotments he already holds, these allotments being in the category of officers' allotments, and that he be granted the same privileges that are conceded to the strategoi; since, then, both in the old and present - - - he provides (many?) - - -, and in - - -.*<sup>3</sup>

Starting with the editors' description of the stone and the text inscribed on it, it is odd to see them qualify a perfectly regular inscription as *negligent* and criticize the quality of the marble (*far from being adequate*), the stone-cutter's abilities (or rather, in their eyes, inabilities, as demonstrated by his alleged failure to carve the letter *chi* correctly: (*it is constantly rendered by just an oblique stroke descending from left to right, the other one being omitted*),<sup>4</sup> and by his alleged mistakes in lines 10, 13, 16), and even the literary abilities of Attalos II and his mastery of the Greek language, since, in their opinion, he composed a most unsatisfactory text. *This is, all in all, too sloppy*, they indignantly conclude. Without meaning any insult to the esteemed

2 Readings of the first editors: 2 Ἡρωίδει[ι]; 9 after ἡγεμόσιν they put a comma: ἡγεμόσιν, φιλάνθρωπον γεγραμέναι ἡμᾶ[ς]; 10 [..]ΔΕΙΝ ἐκάστους {EXON} τῶν τὰς ὑποκάτω, suggesting to read the first word as [δ'] ἰδεῖν and assuming an error of the lapicide in {EXON} (in their words: *in fact, having ἐχόντων in the next line, the cutter wrongly engraved the same word instead of the article τῶν*); 13 [καὶ] τοὺς κλήρους ἔχον[τ]α[ς] ἔχειν οὐς προκ[α], assuming another error of the lapicide; 15–16 συνεχω[ρ]ή[ρη]κα[με]ν, ἐπ(ε)ί.

3 Translation of the first editors: *Good Fortune. Attalos to Sosthenes and Heroides greeting! Aribazos, commander of the Galatians from Kleonnaeion and of the katoikoi from Amorion, coming before us, said that he was registered at those at Kleonnaeion and that through those in the topos who formerly had been mercenaries nothing was ordered to the commanders, that all those having subordinate commands (knew?) that we have granted a benefaction put in writing, whereas nothing happened for him, and he requested to be ascribed to a Strategy and that those detaining kleroi should detain those that, being "hegemonic", he already occupies, while the other (privileges) we have granted to the strategoi being to him. Since therefore in older time and now he ...*

4 Simply not true, as abundantly demonstrated by the photographs of the stone.

editors, I would like to defend the lapicide (and in the same process, Attalos as well) and to warn once again all epigraphists against blaming the lapicides for their own inability to read and understand ancient inscriptions. I am afraid this unfortunate practice is the reason why the translation provided by the first editors is in part meaningless and at times even incomprehensible. Their statement on p. 159 shows they were well aware of this fact: *as a general impression, it is obvious that the phraseology of the letter is odd. In the next sections of our paper we will try to find appropriate solutions for understanding this obscure text. But the question persists, how could Attalos, otherwise credited with letters written not only in good Greek but also disclosing some rhetorical virtues or personal accents, draw up such an unsatisfactory text?* I hope it is already evident that the new text is not obscure and that Attalos' mastery of the Greek language<sup>5</sup> and his 'rhetorical virtues' are as alive and well as evidenced by the other letters he composed.

In addition to making it possible to understand fully the content of the new royal letter, it is very important to place this document in a wider context and to examine how well it fits into our previous notions on the Attalid kingdom and its administrative and economic structure, what are the questions it raises and the new information it provides. Nevertheless, it is not my intention to write a comprehensive commentary at this time, but rather to focus on a few issues that need to be elucidated.

2–4 Sosthenes, Herodes, *hegemon* Aribazos: both royal officials, addressees of the letter, and their respective positions within the Attalid state hierarchy are unknown, and it is not necessary or helpful to identify the new Herodes with the *hemiolios* introduced by the letter of Eumenes II to Tyriaion<sup>6</sup> or to indulge into far-reaching hypotheses on their positions and duties; the same applies to the identity of the military officer (*hegemon*) Aribazos, one of the numerous anonymous individuals that held this position in the Attalid army around 160 B.C. *Hegemones* are well attested in the Hellenistic inscriptions, including those from the Attalid kingdom.<sup>7</sup> R. E. Allen was of the opinion that the rank of a *hegemon* was the highest one in the Attalid army and that the term *strategos* is *never clearly attested in a military sense*,<sup>8</sup> but he has been proven wrong by at least two inscriptions, one from the area of Apollonia on the Rhyndakos<sup>9</sup> where οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν Δαφνοῦντι honour as their benefactors a *strategos* and a *doryphoros*, and another from Tralleis<sup>10</sup> featuring a στρατηγὸς τοῦ ὑπαίθρου, *general of the open country*; to those two, we can now add the new inscription from Pessinus, as will be shown in more detail later on.<sup>11</sup>

5 In the editors' opinion, this is an example of *rough Greek* (p. 160: *either he (sc. Attalos) wrote the letter himself, quickly and negligently, or he dictated his decision to a companion who was far from having the education needed for a secretary*). An even harsher verdict can be read on p. 171: *although the text of Attalos' letter is, as we already have seen, nebulous*.

6 L. Jonnes – M. Riel, A New Royal Inscription from Phrygia Paroreios: Eumenes II Grants Tyriaion the Status of a Polis, *EA* 29, 1997, 1–30 (= *SEG* 47, 1745).

7 Cf. R. E. Allen, *The Attalid Kingdom: A Constitutional History*, Oxford 1983, 107.

8 Allen, *op. cit.*

9 C. Tanriver – S. Kütük, The Katoikia of Daphnous and the Sanctuary of Apollon Daphnousios in the Territory of Apollonia ad Rhyndacum, *EA* 21, 1993, 100 no. 1 (= *SEG* 43, 879).

10 H. Malay, New Evidence Concerning the Administrative System of the Attalids, *Arkeoloji Dergisi* 4, 1996, 83–86 (= *SEG* 46, 1434).

11 A fourth attestation of an Attalid military *strategos* could be the one found in an inscription from NE Lydia (H. Malay, *Researches in Lydia, Mysia and Aiolis (ETAM 23)*, Wien 1999, 151 no. 179 = *SEG* 49, 1552),

4–8 Kleonnaeion, the Galatians, *the mercenaries who were in that place earlier*, Amorion: to quote the editors (p. 165), the phraseology of the inscription clearly indicates that the ‘Galatians from (ἀπό) Kleonnaeion’ (l. 4) are the same as ‘those in (ἐν) Kleonnaeion’ (l. 6), while ‘the *katoikoi* from (ἀπό) Amorion’ (l. 5) are the same as ‘those (settled) in (ἐν) the place (τόπος) who formerly had been mercenaries’ (l. 7 f.). Both groups were under the military authority of the ἡγεμών Aribazos. I can subscribe to the first and the last of these statements, namely, that the Galatians from Kleonnaeion are the same as ‘those at Kleonnaeion’, and that Aribazos was the commanding officer of both the Galatians from Kleonnaeion and the *katoikoi* at Amorion, but not with the middle one identifying οἱ ἀπὸ Ἀμορίου κάτοικοι with οἱ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὄντες πρότερ[ον μ]ισθοφόροι, since the *topos* in question (line 7) is certainly Kleonnaeion, mentioned in the immediately preceding sentence (line 6), and not Amorion.

The toponym Kleonnaeion<sup>12</sup> is previously unattested; most probably, it derives from the personal name (a hypocoristic) Kleonnas. The person in question was considered the *ktistes* of Kleonnaeion founded either under the Seleucids or the Attalids.

At some point in time, but already under the Attalid rule, Kleonnaeion was garrisoned by a unit composed of mercenaries, about whom it is stated (lines 7–8) [κ]αὶ διὰ τῶν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὄντων πρότερ[ον μ]ισθοφόρων μηθὲν διατετάχθαι τοῖ[ς] <sup>vac?</sup> ἡγεμόσιν φιλάνθρωπον. I am not quite sure how to understand the phrase [κ]αὶ διὰ τῶν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὄντων πρότερ[ον μ]ισθοφόρων, but perhaps the preposition διὰ should be translated ‘by reason of, on account of, because of’ (either in the positive or the negative sense), although the noun following διὰ should be in the accusative, not the genitive case, as here.<sup>13</sup> If we accept this explanation, namely, that the mercenaries previously stationed in Kleonnaeion were held responsible for their officers’ unenviable position of receiving no *philanthropa* from the kings, then the questions arise about the identity of these mercenaries and the reasons and circumstances of their departure from Kleonnaeion. At the moment, I can only suggest that the mercenaries stationed at Kleonnaeion were involved in some turbulent events possibly implicating (some of) their officers as well: consequently, the officers in question were denied all privileges and the mercenary garrison itself disbanded and evacuated from the place, to be replaced by the Galatians.<sup>14</sup> Actually, a mercenary revolt would not be a singular event for the Attalids, as evidenced by the settlement

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unless the document dates from the reign of Antiochos III (cf. H. Müller – M. Wörrle, Ein Verein im Hinterland Pergamons zur Zeit Eumenes’ II., *Chiron* 32, 2002, 225 note 151), and a fifth in an inscription from Smyrna (*ISmyrna* 609, 133/129 BC: Δημήτριον Μητροδώρου τοῦ Μητροφάνου τὸν καλούμενον Γερῶν τὸν στρατηγὸν οἱ συνστρατευσάμενοι καὶ ταγέντες ὑφ’ ἑαυτὸν ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ).

12 The suffix -a(e)ion is common in Phrygian place names (cf. L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen*, Heidelberg 1984, § 272, 594-3, 807-1, 837-1, 1387-2, etc.).

13 A very distant parallel could be a late-Roman funerary inscription (*SEG* 37, 1072) from Bithynian Nikomedeia, where a fine-clause ends with καὶ τοῦτο ἔγραψα διὰ τῶν τινῶν κακουργίας (ll. 13–14).

14 On Galatians as mercenaries in the Hellenistic world and Asia Minor in particular, see M. Launey, *Recherches sur les armées hellénistiques* I, Paris 1949, 490–534; K. Strobel, Die Galater im hellenistischen Kleinasien: Historische Aspekte einer keltischen Staatenbildung, in: J. Seibert (ed.), *Hellenistische Studien. Gedenkschrift für H. Bengtson*. München 1991, 101–134 (non vidi); eund., *Die Galater. Geschichte und Eigenart der keltischen Staatenbildung auf dem Boden des hellenistischen Kleinasien. I. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und historischen Geographie des hellenistischen und römischen Kleinasien*, Berlin 1996 (non vidi); S. Mitchell, The Galatians: Representation and Reality, in A. Erskine (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Oxford 2005, 288–290.

reached between Eumenes I and his rebellious mercenaries in Philetairaia and Attaleia,<sup>15</sup> and Attalos I's problems with his disgruntled Galatian mercenaries who had to be taken back to the Hellespont and promised a suitable place in which to settle (Polyb. V 78).<sup>16</sup>

9–16 Aribazos' grievances and demands: Aribazos approached Attalos in order to voice his complaints and requests, concerned as he obviously was with his own position within the army hierarchy and with the status of his landed property, and having as his primary motive for seeking an audience with Attalos the wish to advance the first and secure the second. In order to do that, he first referred to a royal decree on the privileges bestowed on οἱ τὰς ὑποκάτω [ἡ]γεμονίας ἔχοντες. This obscure (for us only!) phrase should perhaps be understood as if οἱ τὰς ὑποκάτω γεγραμμένας [ἡ]γεμονίας ἔχοντες stood on the stele: if that were the case, the stele would have exhibited a today missing appendix with a list of the *hegemoniai* in question. This royal decree seems to have been concerned (among other matters?) with the landed property allotted to the *hegemones* by virtue of their position in the military hierarchy. In any event, Aribazos complained to Attalos that his *hegemonia* in Kleonnaeion and Amorion was not included in the royal decision, leaving him in an insecure and therefore disagreeable position.

Aribazos's demands to Attalos regarding his status in the army hierarchy, property and privileges were threefold: 1. ἐπιγ[ραφ]ῆναι στρατηγία; 2. τοὺς κλήρους ἐαθῆναι ἔχειν<sup>17</sup> οὓς προκ[ατέ]χει, ὄντας ἡγεμονικούς; 3. τὰ τε ἄλλα ὑπ[άρχει]ν αὐτῶι ἃ καὶ τοῖς στρατηγοῖς συνκεχώ[ρητα]. The first request was *to be assigned/ascribed a strategia*, in other words, to be promoted to the position of a (military) *strategos*.<sup>18</sup> This clause and the one a couple of lines below, explicitly mentioning *stratego*i and their privileges, demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt that the term *strategos* was used in the Attalid kingdom not only for the territorial *stratego*i but also for the military ones, in other words, for army generals commanding a *strategia*, a military formation of infantry soldiers consisting of several *hegemoniai*.<sup>19</sup> As a 'simple' *hegemon*, even one whose services were appreciated and valued by the King and his brother, Aribazos was hardly in a position to aspire to the elevated position of a territorial *strategos*, reserved for the most influential individuals in the King's entourage,<sup>20</sup> but with his military experience and his faithful service to the Attalids he could nurture feasible hopes of appointment to a va-

15 *IvPergamon* 13 (OGIS 266); cf. H. Bengtson, *Die Strategie in der hellenistischen Zeit* II, München 1964, 198–207; B. Virgilio, Eumenes I e i mercenari di Fileterea e di Attaleia, *Studi Classici e Orientali* 32, 1982, 97–140; Allen, op. cit. 23–25, 40; I. Kertész, Söldner im hellenistischen Pergamon, in I. Weiler, *Soziale Randgruppen und Aussenseiter im Altertum*, Graz 1988, 129–135 (non vidi); A. Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, Malden, MA and Oxford, 2005, 66, 86–88.

16 Cf. Launey, op. cit. 508–510.

17 Cf. the phrase ἐὼν ἔχειν in the letter of Eumenes II to the inhabitants of *Kardakon kome* (M. Segre, *Iscrizioni di Licia* I. Tolomeo di Telmesso, *Clara Rhodos* 9, 1938, 181–208).

18 This is the editors' comment on these lines (p. 157): *Aribazos apparently wants 'to be registered', 'to be ascribed' (ἐπιγραφήναι) to a Strategy and that the owners of 'hegemonic' κλήροι (see below), i.e., as we are invited to understand, his subordinates, should have whole property on their plots. This is, of course, remarkable, insofar as we are thus informed, so it seems, about a new Strategy in the Attalid kingdom, whose borders were doubtless contiguous with the territory controlled by autonomous Galatians.*

19 The same conclusion about the meaning of the title *strategos* was already reached by H. Bengtson (*Die Strategie in der hellenistischen Zeit* II, München 1964, 201–202; 206), on the basis of the wording of *IvPergamon* 13.

20 Cf. Bengtson, op. cit. 209–232 (Attalid Kingdom). The new attestations are collected by I. Savalli-Lestrade in her article *Amici dei re, alti funzionari e gestione del potere principalmente nell'Asia Minore ellenistica*, *Simblot* 3, 2001, 270–271 and note 20.

cant post of a commander of a *strategia*, the next level up from his own of a *hegemon*. It is not impossible that he would perform this new duty in the same places he served as a *hegemon* – in Kleonnaeion and Amorion. His second demand aimed to confirm and secure his ownership of the *hegemonikoi kleroi* (officers' allotments) previously allotted to him in Kleonnaeion and Amorion. Finally, the third demand concerns the standard privileges and entitlements accorded to the generals that should now also fall to him after his anticipated promotion from a *hegemon* to a *strategos*.<sup>21</sup>

16–17 Attalos' decision: little sense can be made of the two fragmentary lines that remain of Attalos' decision concerning Aribazos' petition: he seems to be contrasting the past with the present<sup>22</sup> and praising Aribazos for the services rendered. It is safe to say that Aribazos achieved the goals he set for himself when setting out to meet the future King.

### Özet

Makale, Pessinus'da bulunup yakın zamanda A. Avram ile G. Tssetskhladze tarafından "A New Attalid Letter from Pessinus" başlığı ile *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (= *ZPE*), 191, 2014, s. 151–181'de yayınlanmış olan bir kral mektubuna ilişkin olup, okumalara ilişkin bazı düzeltmeler yapılmakta ve yeni yorumlar getirilmektedir. II. Attalos'un *Kral* ünvanını almadan önce kaleme aldığı bu mektup önemlidir; çünkü bu mektup, Attalosların ordusundaki hiyerarşi hakkında bugüne kadar kabul edilmiş olan bazı düşünceleri düzeltmemize olanak vermekte ve Hellenistik devirdeki Phrygia'nın tarihi coğrafyası, paralı askerlerin rolü ve arazi sahipliğinin mahiyeti hakkında yeni bilgiler sağlamaktadır.

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21 The editors differ widely in their understanding of the same lines (p. 171: Although the text of Attalos' letter is, as we already have seen, nebulous, we believe that the contents of Aribazos' petition may be understood in the following terms: although he was the commander of both the Galatians from Kleonnaeion and the *κάτοικοι* from Amorion, he was registered only at Kleonnaeion; therefore, his relation with the settlers from Amorion, who formerly had been mercenaries, was not yet clearly defined, and he could not enjoy, as all the other subordinate commanders did, the royal *φιλάνθρωπον*. We think that this benefaction can only be understood here as a tax-exemption – granted either by Eumenes II or, in his brother's name, by Attalos himself. Aribazos therefore requests to be ascribed to a Strategy and to obtain the same privileges as those just granted by the Attalids to the *στρατηγού*: thus, he hopes for a form of promotion. On the other hand, the *κλήροι* enjoyed by the other commanders, who were his subordinates, should belong to them, for they had just such a status before the recent events. Aribazos 'already occupied' the territory of Amorion, where mercenaries were settled, and his men had there 'hegemonic' *κλήροι* – meaning larger in size, perhaps also of higher quality. He not only wants to receive some privileges but also undertakes to maintain those of his subordinates. Aribazos, thus, notified the provisional character of the circumstances: from a military point of view, he continued to be the commander of both communities of soldiers; nevertheless, as seen by administrative side, being himself registered only for those at Kleonnaeion, he remained without any authority over the mercenaries newly settled at Amorion). To put it mildly, this is all odd and confusing, full of unnecessary assumptions and simple mistakes of reading and understanding a perfectly normal Greek inscription.

22 It seems to me that the adjective *ἀρχαία* here does not define a period, but has a more concrete meaning that presently eludes us.