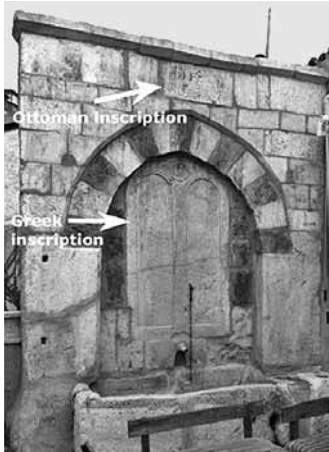


### A NEW FUNERARY INSCRIPTION FOR A PHYSICIAN FROM MERZİFON, NW OF AMASEIA<sup>1</sup>



During his work on the Bozacı Camii Çeşmesi, an Ottoman fountain in the city of Merzifon, M. Kemal Şahin discovered a Greek inscription carved on one of the stones which were reused during its construction. According to the Ottoman inscription on the block above the arched recess the fountain was built in 1452 A.D. by Bozacıoğlu Hoca Bedreddin, a benefactor who had also paid for the constructions of a mosque and a school in Merzifon. Above the tap is a marble panel with two arched recesses of 1.45 m high, each surrounded by projecting mouldings. At the top of the panel is a round motif in high relief which may originally have been a cross (?) medallion. The inscription is in the upper part of the left arch. It seems to be engraved on a rasura. Letter-height varying between 0.04 and 0.06 m.



ἐνθά-  
δε κα-  
τάκτε  
4 Θεόδω-  
ρος πρε-  
σβύτερο-  
ς, ἰατρός.

“Here lies Theodoros presbyter, a physician”.

Obviously, some marble architectural blocks built in the walls of the fountain, the marble sarcophagus used as trough and the inscribed panel were *spolia* collected from the

surroundings for constructing the fountain in the year 1452 A.D. The arched panel with a cross (?) medallion may point to a date in the early Byzantine period, e.g. fifth century A.D., as we are told by some experts. If this is right, regarding the fact that it is engraved on a rasura, our inscription would have replaced the original one from the fifth (?) century.<sup>2</sup> Theodoros the physician was obviously a Christian<sup>3</sup>, and the qualification as πρεσβύτερος designates his service as priest rather than his age.<sup>4</sup>

1 We wish to thank Dr. M. Kemal Şahin (Aydn) for giving permission to publish this inscription.

2 The shape of the letters lead the authors to think of the sixth century for the inscription for Theodoros.

3 For a contemporary and homonymous physician who served in a hospital (νοσοκομείον) at Euchaita, localized at Beyözü (formerly Avkat) S of Merzifon, see É. Samama, *Les médecins dans le monde grec: sources épigraphiques sur la naissance d'un corps médical* (2003), 428, no. 328, cf. also SEG 59, 1445 and 53, 2191.

4 For the omission of καί between ἰατρός and πρεσβύτερος see e.g. É. Samama, *op. cit.*, 530, no. 488 (Rome).

The find-spot Merzifon, a modern town located NW of Amaseia (Amasya), is not the site of an ancient settlement.<sup>5</sup> Because of the remarkable distance to each, it is hard to attribute the inscription to Amaseia or Euchaita (see our note 3). If Theodoros was not an itinerant physician, he may have lived and performed his profession in a smaller settlement in the plain of Suluova which is generally identified with Strabo's Chiliocomum "plain of the thousand villages".<sup>6</sup>

### Özet

Makalede, Merzifon'daki Bozacı Camii Çeşmesi'nde devşirme malzeme olarak kullanılmış olan mermer bir panelin üzerinde yer alan bir yazıt tanıtılmaktadır. Yazarlar, iki kemerli bölmeden oluşan ve en üstte haçlı (?) bir madalyon yer alan bu panelin erken Bizans dönemine, olasılıkla 5. yüzyıla ait olduğunu ve üzerindeki orijinal bir yazıtın sonraki bir dönemde (6. yüzyıl ?) silinerek, üzerine Theodoros adındaki hekimin mezar yazıtının kazındığını ileri sürmektedirler. Grekçe yazıtın çevirisi şöyledir:

"Burada, rahip ve hekim Theodoros yatıyor".

Theodoros olasılıkla bir Hristiyandı. Bu yüzden, yazıtta geçen *presbyteros* sözcüğü onun "yaşlı" biri olduğundan çok. aynı zamanda bir rahip (papaz) olarak da görev yaptığını belirtmek üzere kullanılmış olmalıdır.

Merzifon'da herhangi bir büyük antik yerleşim bulunmadığı gibi, aradaki uzun mesafelerden dolayı, yazıtımızı yöredeki en büyük yerleşim merkezi olan Amaseia (Amasya) ya da erken Bizans devrinde yine Theodoros adındaki bir başka hekimin de görev yaptığı bir hastanenin bulunduğu Euchaita (Çorum/Beyözü [Avkat] köyü) adındaki geç antik devir yerleşimi ile ilişkilendirmek zordur. Theodoros belki bir gezgin hekimdi; bu yüzden belki seyahatlarından biri sırasında Merzifon civarında ölmüş ve burada gömülmüştü; veya belki, Strabon tarafından sözü edilen ve günümüzün Suluova düzlüğü ile özdeşleştirilen Khilikomum'daki ("Bin Köy Ovası") küçük yerleşimlerden birinde hekim olarak hizmet etmişti.

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5 D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (1950), 1067, note 6.

6 Strabo XII, 561 (3.39): τὸ χιλιόκωμον καλούμενον πεδῖον, see also D. Magie, *op. cit.*, 178, 1067, 1078 and 1210; A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (1971<sup>2</sup>), 172 and 429 with earlier bibliography.