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CHRISTIANITY AT APOLLONIA OF PISIDIA?

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CHRISTIANITY AT APOLLONIA OF PISIDIA?

The sum of epigraphic evidence for Christianity in the third century is very small, and therefore any addition to the known testimonies is sure to arouse interest. Under the title, “Apollonia: An Early Testimony for Christianity in Anatolia”, P. R. McKechnie has recently proposed that an inscription from Apollonia in Phrygia or Pisidia, just east of Apamea Cibotos, should be added to the dossier.¹ In the pediment above the inscription is carved a cross with four arms of equal length within a circle. The text and a possible translation are as follows:

Αὐρ. Ἀσκληπιάδης Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ καὶ Ἀρτέμωνος δ' Ὀλυμπίχου καὶ Αὐρ. Κοσμία Ἀσκληπι<ά>δου β' Μεννέου τῷ ἰδίῳ ἀνδρὶ, καὶ Αὐρ. <Ἀρ>τεμωνίς πατρὶ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ μνήμης χάριν.

Aurelius Asclepiades, son of Alexander also known as Artemon, fourth of the name [i.e. son, grandson and great-grandson of Alexander, who was son] of Olympichos, and Aurelia Kosmia, daughter of Asclepiades, second of the name [i.e. son of Asclepiades, son] of Menneas, for her own husband, and Aurelia Artemonis for her father Alexander, in his memory.²

The earliest ancestor named is therefore Olympichos, father of Alexander. The MAMA editors, W. H. Buckler, W. M. Calder and W. K. C. Guthrie, adduced other inscriptions of Apollonia probably referring to the same family, and assembled a stemma to take account of all the persons who could possibly be included in it.³ They did not, however, insist on its correctness, and in constructing it they made some arbitrary decisions about identities and interrelationships. As well as Olympichos, father of Alexander, the earliest person mentioned in the present text, there are several other Olympichoi from the same city and probably from the same family: (1) O. father of Artemon, of the first century BCE (no. 141); (2) O. son of Artemon and father of Apollonios (?), a benefactor of the city probably in the first century CE (no. 142); (3) O. son of O., brother of Apollonios and father of Alexander (no. 160); (4) a Roman citizen using O. as his cognomen (no. 161);⁴ (5) C. Iulius O., father of M. Iulius Longus (no. 162); (6) O. son of Artemon and father of Apollonios (no. 172 II; 172 I is too heavily restored to be useful); (7) O. father of D[emetri]os, and his cousin, (8) O. surnamed Damas, again probably of the first century CE (IGR III 320).⁵

The MAMA editors identified the O. of the present inscription, father of an Alexander, with no. 3 and “probably” with C. Iulius O. (no. 5). But the first identification depends solely on the assumption that two men having the same name and patronymic, Alexander son of O., are identical. For Athens, where admittedly the population was both much larger and the epigraphical record is much richer, Christian Habicht has collected many cases where “the same combination

¹ P. R. McKechnie, *Epigr. Anat.* 41, 2008 (publ. 2009) 141–146, discussing MAMA IV 222. As always, I am grateful to Glen Bowersock for comments and criticism.

² For the meaning of numerals in nomenclature, whether written alphabetically or in full, e.g. L. Robert, *Et. epigr. et philol.*, 1938, 51 n. 4; L. and J. Robert, *La Carie II*, 1954, 211 n. 8; L. Robert, *Noms indigènes dans l'Asie-Mineure gréco-romaine*, 1963, 98. A good example from Apollonia is provided by MAMA IV 181, in which Aurelius Diophantos *dis Menelaou* commemorates his father, Aurelius Diophantos *Menelaou*.

³ MAMA IV p. 49, reproduced by McKechnie p. 142.

⁴ The text in MAMA supersedes that in IGR III 321.

⁵ The MAMA editors took Damas to be the father of this Olympichos, but “Damas” is more probably a surname: for surnames of this form, L. Robert, *Et. épigr. et philol.* 165; J. and L. Robert, *Hellenica VI* (1948) 11.

of two different names, those of father and son, occurs in more than one deme". He warns that the lesson to be drawn from such cases "also applies outside Attica, everywhere in the Greek world", and cites a well-known instance of such homonymy from Sparta that for a while appeared to upset the generally accepted date of Thucydides' death.⁶

McKechnie, while considering the stemma in MAMA to be essentially correct, argues that the editors' date for no. 222, "latter half of the third century", is too late, since a reasonable calculation of the intervening generations should rather produce a date soon after the Antonine Constitution of 212.⁷ Hence this would be one of the earliest Christian inscriptions of Anatolia, close in time to the inscription of Alexander of Phrygian Hierapolis dated to 215/16, which in its turn refers to the celebrated inscription of Abercius from the same city.⁸ But the family at Apollonia clearly had several branches and many homonyms, and extended over many generations. The only safe guide to the date of the present stone comes from the criteria that the MAMA editors presumably used when dating it to the latter part of the third century, the script and the cross inscribed on the pediment. They were also careful to infer from the cross only that Aurelius Asclepiades was "probably" Christian, since such markings are not an infallible sign of Christianity.⁹

Özet

İ.S. III. yüzyıldan kalan Hristiyan yazıtlarının hayli az olmasına dikkati çeken yazar, *MAMA* VI, 222'de yayınlanan ve McKechnie tarafından *EA* 41, 141-146'da tekrar incelenen bir mezar yazıtı üzerinde yorumlar yapmaktadır. Bilindiği gibi, Apollonia'da (Uluborlu) bulunmuş olan ve üzerinde bir haç motifi yer alan ve *MAMA* editörleri tarafından İ.S. III. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına yerleştirilen bu yazıt, McKechnie tarafından da 212 yılından hemen sonraya tarihlenmiş ve bunun Anadolu'daki ilk Hristiyan yazıtı olabileceği belirtilmiştir. Yazara göre McKechnie, Apollonia'da bulunan diğer bazı yazıtlardan hareketle, bu ailenin bir şeceresini pek iddialı bir biçimde ve doğru olup olmadığına dikkat etmeden çıkarmıştır. Oysa Apollonia'da, bu yazıtta adı geçen ve bu ailenin ilk atası olan Olynpikhos ile aynı adı taşıyan ve belki bu ailenin mensubu olan 7 kişi daha yaşamıştı. Ayrıca şecere çıkarımında aynı ad ve baba adı ile anılan herkesi özdeşleştirmenin de doğru olmadığını, bu durumun yazıtın tarihlenmesinde de yanlışlığa yol açabileceğini ileri süren yazar *MAMA* editörlerinin yazı karakterine ve haç motifine dayanarak yaptıkları tarihlenmenin daha doğru güvenilir olduğuna ve '+' şeklindeki motifin her zaman Hristiyanlık devrine işaret etmeyebileceğine dikkati çekmektedir.

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⁶ Chr. Habicht, Notes on Attic Prosopography: Coincidence in Father-son Pairs of Names, *Hesperia* 59, 1990, 459-462. In his subsequent study, Namensgleiche Athener in verschiedenen Demen, *ZPE* 103, 1994, 117-127, Habicht collects many more instances, but includes ones where the relationship is son-father as well as father-son.

⁷ McKechnie seems to ascribe this constitution to the year 214 (p. 145).

⁸ Alexander of Hierapolis: Merkelbach and Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten* 3, 2001, 186, 16/07/02. Abercius: *ibid.* 182-185, 16/07/01.

⁹ See the cautious remarks of C. W. M. Cox and A. Cameron, *MAMA* V p. xxxiii, and their commentary on *MAMA* V 11 (p. 7).