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NEW MILESTONES FROM NEOKLAUDIOPOLIS

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In the Roman period, Neapolis/Neoklaudiopolis (mod. Vezirköprü) was the centre of a large and fertile territory known as the Phazemonitis,¹ stretching from the river Halys (Kızılırmak) eastward almost to the banks of the Iris (Yeşilırmak) and bisected by the highway from Thermai (Havza) through Neoklaudiopolis towards Sinope. The existence of this route is attested, albeit in a garbled form, by the *Tabula Peutingeriana*.² Numerous milestones have also been recovered, no less than two dozen from the section between Thermai and the Halys alone.³

Since 2005, Oymaağac in the northern Phazemonitis has been at the focus of a campaign of excavation and survey directed by Rainer Czichon and Jörg Klinger of the Institute for Ancient Oriental Studies at the Free University of Berlin and funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.⁴ In April 2010, Dr Czichon and the author undertook a closer study of the ancient route between Neoklaudiopolis and the Halys together with Müge Küçük, representative of the Turkish government. The survey brought to light two unrecorded Roman milestone inscriptions as well as a possible third, uninscribed stone. All were found in or near the village of Incesu some ten kilometres to the west of Vezirköprü.

1. A Milestone of Alexander Severus (AD 222)

In the centre of Incesu village, a milestone was found standing by the roadside a short distance to the west of the mosque (fig. 1). The top and base had been broken off and the lower third of the shaft was buried in the soil. The material is grey limestone. The shaft is cylindrical, 30 cm in diameter, and its present height 1.5 m. The milestone has now been removed to the provincial museum in Samsun (inv. no. 2010/146 (A)).

The letters are of uniform size, 4.5–5 cm in height, classical in shape with clearly defined serifs (fig. 2). Apart from the erasure of the fourth line, all are clearly legible. The text is entirely in Latin save for the concluding numeral in the Milesian notation.

Imp(erator) Cae-
sar M(arcus) Aur(elius)
Severus
[[Alexander]]
5 Pius Felix
Aug(ustus), p(ontifex) max(imus),
tribunici-
ae potesta-
tis, co(n)s(ul), p(ater) p(atriciae),
10 restituit
per L(ucium) Aproni-

¹ Strabo, 12.3.38.

² Miller 670–71.

³ French 1988, 875–886; 888; 890; 892–900; Marek 62 n. 3 (unpublished).

⁴ For more information, see the homepage www.nerik.de.

um Pium leg(atum)
 Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore). Mi-
 li(a) pass(uum) ε

“The emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander Pius Felix Augustus, pontifex maximus, of tribunician authority, consul, father of the fatherland, restored (*sc.* this road) through the agency of Lucius Apronius Pius, the emperor’s propraetorian legate. Five miles.”

The Roman senate awarded Severus Alexander the titles *Augustus*, *pater patriae* and *pontifex maximus* in March of 222 while his first year of tribunician authority ended on December 9. In the same year L. Iulius Apronius Pius was legate of Galatia.⁵ At his death in 235, Severus Alexander suffered *memoria damnata* but was later rehabilitated. The milestone has been erected at some time between March and December 222 and the fourth line erased after the emperor’s death in March 235.

Two other milestones of Severus Alexander have been found along the road between Havza and the Halys. One was discovered in a cemetery at Tepeören, c. 9 kms from Vezirköprü. The first lines have been lost, but the remainder follows the same formula as the stone from Incesu. The mileage is given as ζ.⁶ A similar stone was found in Vezirköprü. Its mileage had been lost along with part of the text, but enough survived to show that once again, the names were those of Severus Alexander and his legate L. Apronius. All three milestones were evidently set up in the same year, presumably to commemorate a major renovation of the road both to the north and to the south of Neoklaudiopolis.

2. A Milestone of Decius (AD 250?)

In a farmyard close by the mosque of Incesu, a fragment of a milestone was found (fig. 3). It had been broken from the upper end of a milestone and tapers to a diameter of c. 20 cm at the top. The fragment is now in the study collection of the Samsun museum.

The material is a brownish grey limestone. The height of the letters varies from 3.5 cm to 4.8 cm. The Greek stonemason had some problems with the letter S, which has no counterpart in the Greek alphabet (fig. 4). The remainder of the letters are regularly shaped and the carving is neat, but shallow. Only two lines remain:

Imp(eratori) Cae(sari)
 C(aio) Messio Q(uinto)
 [...]

“To the emperor, Caesar Gaius Messius Quintus ...”

A milestone with a similar formula but in a better state of preservation has been found at Ortaklar between Köprübaşı and Havza.⁷ From the emperor’s titulature and the inclusion of Herennius Decius as Caesar, this stone can be dated to the summer or autumn of 250. The inscription also

⁵ *PIR*² I 161 = Rémy 98 no. 127; French 1981, 165–66; Christol–Loriot, 107–8.

⁶ French 1988, no. 893 = *CIL* III, 14184²⁷ = Munro no. 5 (p. 162) = *AE* 1900, 151.

⁷ French 1988, no. 890 = *CIL* III, 14184²⁵ = Munro no. 3 (p. 161) = *AE* 1900, 150; Chapot 104–6.

names the *praeses* M. Iunius Valerius Nepotianus.⁸ Given the brevity of Decius' reign, it is possible that the milestone from Incesu was erected on the same occasion as the stone found at Ortaklar.

3. An Uninscribed Milestone?

Near the main road to the north of the village there are two springs, one of which is surrounded by an enclosure combining modern concrete construction and re-used ancient materials. Among the *spolia* is a section of what may once have been a Roman milestone (fig. 5). The material is grey limestone and the present height of the fragment is 92 cm. It tapers to a diameter of 32 cm at the top, which shows distinct traces of breakage. There is no lettering on the visible surfaces. Anepigraphic milestones are rare, but not unknown in the Phazemonitis.⁹

Local informants told us that the *çeşme* had recently been renovated but could provide no information on the provenance of the conical fragment. It may have come from the nearby cemetery, where other milestones have been found.¹⁰

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⁸ *PIR*² I 844 = Rémy 98, no. 132.

⁹ French 1988, no. 878; 889, Olshausen–Biller 1984, 190; 226; also Grégoire 14 = French 1988, no. 879, but this may be a fragment of an inscribed stone.

¹⁰ French 1988, nos 884–86 = *CIL* III, 14184^{33–36} = Munro nos 11–13.

Özet

Makalede, 2010 yılının Nisan ayında antik Neoklaudiopolis (Samsun-Vezirköprü) kentinin batısında yapılan topografik araştırmalar sırasında bulunan, biri yazıtsız, diğer ikisi Latince yazıtlı olmak üzere üç adet yeni miltaşını yayımlanmaktadır. Şimdi Samsun müzesinde korunmakta olan yazıtlı miltaşlarından biri Roma imparatorlarından Alexander Severus, diğeri de Decius dönemine aittir.

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Fig. 1. Milestone of Alexander Severus (no. 1) as found



Fig. 2. Detail of stone no. 1 showing last five lines
(Photo: Rainer Czichon)



Fig. 3. Fragment of a milestone of Decius (no. 2)

IMP CAE
C MESJNQ

Fig. 4. Inscription on milestone no. 2



Fig. 5. Uninscribed stone, possibly a milestone, built into a fountain c. 1 km north of Incesu village