

Some News about Inscriptions from Northwestern Greece: Preliminary Remarks on Recent Epigraphical Work in the Museums of Thyrion and Agrinion

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Under the direction of the 6th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Dr. Lazaros Kolonas, an international team was formed a few years ago to study the epigraphical material from ancient Acarnania. The general objective is to collect and study all the epigraphical evidence from northwestern Greece. Members of the team include Prof. Dr. Claudia Antonetti from Venice, Prof. Dr. Peter Funke from Münster, Prof. Dr. Klaus Hallof from the “*Inscriptiones Graecae*” in Berlin and Prof. Dr. Hans-Joachim Gehrke from Freiburg. The work concentrated at first, of course, on the two most important museums in Acarnania, the archeological collections in Agrinion and Thyrion. Under the supervision of the researchers already mentioned my colleague Dr. Daniel Strauch and I began recording the Greek and Latin inscriptions in the museum of Agrinion in September of 1996. In September of 1997 I was able to study the epigraphical material in the museum of Thyrion with the help of some of my colleagues from Münster.^{1*}

In my paper I would like to examine three points.

1. First of all I would like to present a short overview of epigraphical research in northwestern Greece.
2. In the second part I will give a concise report on the work in the museums in Agrinion and Thyrion.
3. Finally I will briefly present and provisionally classify some new and not yet published inscriptions from Acarnania which are important with respect to

the history of northwestern Greece in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods.

I would like to stress explicitly that I can only give you what we call in German a “*Werkstattbericht*”, that is a “workshop report”, in the true sense of the word. The work in the two museums is now mostly finished. At present we are involved in processing and interpreting the individual epigraphical texts. We have also developed an epigraphical database which, in addition to the work on the squeezes and the photographs, will assist us further with the interpretation and documentation of the epigraphical material.

Please allow me to give you a brief review of the epigraphical research in Acarnania and Aitolia:

In 1897 the *Inscriptiones Graecae* IG IX, 1 was published. The editor, Wilhelm Dittenberger, collected and edited the already published inscriptions from Phocis, Locris, Aitolia, Acarnania and the Ionian Islands.² Since the beginning of the 20th century, the archeological and epigraphical investigations of Greek researchers in Thermos and other parts of Acarnania and Aitolia – Georgios Soteriadis and Konstantinos Romaios³ should be mentioned here in particular – helped considerably to increase the number of historically relevant inscriptions many times. In the years following, the epigraphical research of northwestern Greece has been inseparably connected to the name Günther Klaffenbach (1890–1972). After the reorganization of the *Inscriptiones Graecae* by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, the urgently needed second edition of the ninth volume of the *Inscriptiones Graecae* (IG IX, 1²)

should include 4 fascicles. G. Klaffenbach already began preparing the new inscription volumes in 1919. He traveled widely in northwestern Greece and contacted Greek archeologists and epigraphists. He was already able to publish the Aitolian volume in 1932.⁴ This fascicle contains 171 inscriptions in contrast to the 39 Aitolian inscriptions found in *Inscriptiones Graecae* IX 1 of 1897. On behalf of the Prussian Academy of Sciences Klaffenbach undertook further journeys in Phocis, Locris, Aitolia, Acarnania and the Ionian Islands in 1933 and 1934. Klaffenbach published the results of his research trips in the transactions (“Sitzungsberichte”) of the Academy.⁵

The IG-volume with the Acarnanian inscriptions (IG IX 1², 2) appeared in 1957.⁶ This volume contains a total of 398 inscriptions which were found in Acarnania; in contrast to the 99 inscriptions of the first edition which was edited by Dittenberger, the amount of epigraphical material has increased considerably. The volume with the inscriptions from West-Locris (IG IX 1², 1, 3) finally appeared in 1968. In spite of the difficult working conditions in the former German Democratic Republic and the political isolation, Günther Klaffenbach set a high standard in the three volumes of inscriptions from northwestern Greece. All the volumes contain informative fasti and extensive indices. So far the fascicle *Inscriptiones Graecae* IX 1², 1, 4 with the inscriptions from the Ionian Islands has yet not been published. One still has to depend on the 1897 *Inscriptiones Graecae* volume by Wilhelm Dittenberger which I have already mentioned.⁷ In the museums in Agrinion and Thyron we were able to find most of the inscriptions which Klaffenbach had included, and so we could study them once again. The inscriptions which could not be found there are either still on site, could not be examined by Klaffenbach himself, or have been lost in the course of time. Due to the careful and extremely productive activities of the appropriate Greek administration of antiquities and the responsible ephoroi, especially Eu-

thymios Mastrokostas⁸, Petros Themelis, I. A. Papapoustolou, Lazaros Kolonas, as well as many others, a large number of new inscriptions from the whole nomos have been discovered since 1957.

Allow me to comment a bit on our work in the museum of Agrinion. Agrinion, a town of about forty thousand inhabitants, is the capital of the eparchy of Trikhonidhos and the largest city in the nomos. It was almost completely rebuilt after an earthquake in 1887. The site of ancient Agrinion has been located above the village of Megali Khora, 4 km northwest of the modern town. There is an important archeological museum here. The museum contains finds from the district of Aetoloacarnania ranging from the prehistoric to the Roman periods. It was erected in 1969. Our interest was concentrated on the epigraphical material, but of course other very important archeological items are also on exhibition.

In the museum in Agrinion we were able to study 141 inscriptions (about half of the inscriptions came from Acarnania, the other half from Aitolia). In principle a large number of inscriptions from sites in the whole nomos were collected. In recent years the museum of Agrinion has mostly kept material from central and southern Acarnania and west Aitolia. For example, inscriptions from Stratos are now exhibited or kept in the museum. The material is so extensive that one can no longer exhibit all the blocks of inscriptions in the museum itself; the material must be left in the archives and in the forecourt of the museum. In particular the newer material and the smaller fragments with remains of inscriptions are kept in the archive.

All the inscriptions were critically examined. All the stones in the museum of Agrinion were described and measured in a precise manner. In the case of the important new inscriptions and the historically important inscriptions already published, a first reading was done on the stone. At least one squeeze was made of each inscription and photographs were also taken.

In the museum there are some significant, not yet published inscriptions whose publication and interpretation are of great historical importance.

In this context let me mention only two longer and almost completely preserved manumission inscriptions from Gavalou, the ancient Trichonion. Due to the naming of eponymous officials, these are of particular importance for our view of the history and chronology of Aitolia in the second century BC, among other things.

There are two milestones from the Roman period in the museum which come from a place called Rhonghia in the vicinity of modern Stamna. Stamna is located on the left side of Acheloos south of Angelokastron. The earlier of the two milestones was made under the emperor Trajan (114-115 AD) and indicates a distance of 25 Roman miles. The later milestone was put up under Carus, Carinus and Numerianus (283 AD) and Constantius I. and Maximilian (293-305 AD).

Another milestone in Greek comes from Drymos, more precisely from a place called Kefeli. By means of the reference to C. Julius Verus Maximinus Thrax and his son of the same name the stone can be dated as belonging to the period of about 235-238 AD. The milestone from Drymos is now in the museum of Thyrion. These inscriptions were published by Kornelia Axiote.⁹

Taken as a whole, these inscriptions show only too clearly that Roman roads already existed in Acarnania in the first century AD and that they were then repaired under Trajan. These milestones provide us with a surprising glimpse into the Roman infrastructure in northwestern Greece of the Roman period. There was an important public road here which connected Nikopolis with Kalydon and the Gulf of Corinth. This road went from Actium, the port of Nikopolis, to Drymos which was 2 kilometers from the southern coast of the Ambrakian gulf. As some still unpublished Latin and Greek inscriptions from the museum in Thyrion show, an Asklepios shrine and probably a larger

Roman settlement were located here as well.

The further course of the road from Drymos to Stamna is a point of controversy. Claudia Antonetti, for example, thinks these milestones marked a Roman road from Vonitsa to modern Amphilochia.¹⁰ According to Kornelia Axiote the road did not lead to Amphilochia; rather it turned south directly in the area of Drymos, then led across a ford of the river Acheloos to the ancient site near Stamna. From here one could travel along the road to Calydon and the Gulf of Corinth.

The town of Thyrion, formerly Hag. Vasilios, lies on the northern slope of Mt. Bergandi. The present village is in the area of the important Acarnanian polis Thyrrheion, an ancient city surrounded by 10-kilometer long walls near the Ambrakian gulf. The museum was built in 1962. The museum contains a lot of archeological material from the ancient polis Thyrrheion dating from the classical to Roman periods. The epigraphical material consists of many funerary stelae and other material which comes primarily from the cemeteries of ancient Thyrrheion, from the area of the ancient Anaktorion and from the region of modern Vonitsa.

The work in the museum of Thyrion, the ancient Thyrrheion, produced even more results in terms of epigraphy. If you leaf through the Acarnania volume of the *Inscriptiones Graecae* by G. Klaffenbach, you find that 139 of the altogether 368 Acarnanian inscriptions collected there come from Thyrrheion and the surrounding area. In the interim more than 100 additional inscriptions from Thyrrheion have been reported in *Deltion* and *Ergon*. In September 1997 we could record a total of 291 inscriptions. Thus the number of unpublished or only provisionally published inscriptions in the museum is considerable.

The variety of the epigraphical material is remarkable: The museum exhibits the well-known Roman-Aitolian treaty of al-

liance from 212 BC, which G. Klaffenbach published in 1954, as well as the famous treaty of alliance between Rome and Thyrrheion from 94 BC. I will treat this Foedus below in greater detail. A Proxenie decree of the Acarnanian federation which was recently published by P. Funke, H.-J. Gehrke and L. Kolonas was also found in Thyrrheion.¹¹ This honorary decree for a Roman named G. Baebius not only gives us an insight into the history of Acarnania in its conflict with Rome in the second century BC, but also provides us with important historical information about the political situation of the Acarnanian federation in the late Hellenistic period.

Some other largely fragmentary decrees from Thyrrheion, which are probably from the late Hellenistic period, are among the newly discovered inscriptions. They are particularly important because they name city officials who were unknown up until now. Thus we learn that Prytanēs and Grammateis acted as eponymous officials in Thyrrheion. Promnamones and Sympromnamones are mentioned as magistrates in the Acarnanian city of Thyrrheion for the first time.

There are also numerous lists of priests and cult officials from Thyrrheion which are interesting from a religious-historical point of view because cult officials are named, for example Hierophoros, Mageiros, etc. Several dedications, some of which are again unpublished inscriptions, give some indication of the entire spectrum of the divinities worshiped in Thyrrheion: Among others, the inscriptions mention Aphrodite with the exceptional epitheton Stratagis, Hermes, Pan, Priapos, Hermes, a cult of Herakles, as well as the cult of Zeus Melichios and of Zeus Xenios.

The epitaphs from the Hellenistic period are particularly numerous. Although it is a rather thankless task to record and publish these hundred epitaphs, we still think that this material will definitely be useful in view of future onomastical and prosopographical research¹², also in historical terms.

A new fragment of the alliance (*foedus*)

between Thyrrheion and Rome, which I have already mentioned, can be found in the museum of Thyrrheion. The naming of the consuls, the praetor urbanus and the praetor perigrinus makes it possible to date this inscription exactly – the year is 94 BC (*Inscriptiones Graecae* IX, 1², 2, 242). The upper part of the inscribed stele has been known for a long time. Günther Klaffenbach discovered this inscription in 1934 as a spoil built into a house in Thyrrheion. Klaffenbach published this inscription in the Acarnanian volume of the *Inscriptiones Graecae*.¹³ This fragment was brought to the museum of Thyrrheion after the archeological collection was set up. A second fragment belonging to the inscription was discovered later and was brought to the museum in Thyrrheion in 1963; its inventory number is 14. Unfortunately no further information can be found concerning the exact site of the discovery of this fragment in the environs of Thyrrheion. This fragment was reported by E. Mastrokostas in 1963 in the *Archaiologikon Del-tion*, but it has not yet been published.¹⁴

We are now in the process of preparing this fragment for publication. Now at least the treaty of alliance between Thyrrheion and Rome includes a total of 20 lines. The already published fragment contains the only completely preserved prescript of a treaty of alliance between Rome and a state in eastern Greece. The prescript closes with the naming of envoys from Thyrrheion who had traveled to Rome prior to the negotiations. The new fragment which is part of the inscription helps us get a further insight into the individual modalities of the agreement. In terms of the modalities of the agreements in the other treaties between Rome and smaller cities in eastern Greece, it is immediately striking that they are virtually identical. For this reason it is not difficult to reconstruct the new text.

We find here a declaration of permanent “friendship and alliance” (*filia kai summachia*) between Rome and the people of Thyrrheion which is to last forever on land and on sea; it adds that there should be no wars between the two parties. After

that there is a passage which states that neither party, neither the Romans nor the people of Thyrrheion, should allow enemies to pass through its land or through territory it controls.

In addition, the next provision prohibits assisting potential enemies by supplying grain, weapons, money and ships. The inscription breaks off here. Other standard provisions are missing: Each party must assist the other if an enemy starts a war against one of them. Another clause which is missing permits the amendment of the treaty by agreement of both parties. A treaty between Rome and a Greek state concludes by regulating the place where the text is exhibited (*pinax summaxias*) in Rome and the allied city.

In addition to the great historical significance of the inscription we would like to point out that with the help of the inscription it might be possible to reassess the epigraphical supplements and some other problems concerning the foedera between Rome and other Greek states which have long since been published and are preserved solely as fragments. With the help of the treaty from Thyrrheion together with the well-preserved treaty of alliance between Rome and the Thracian Maroneia¹⁵, it may be possible to reconsider the language and formulas in other treaties, for example the treaties with Astypalaia (Sherk 1969, No. 16) and Mytilene (IG XII 2, 35).

Another important and still unpublished inscription from Thyrrheion which was discovered only a few years ago records a Roman senatorial decree in Greek translation from Rouga. The inscription stone had been used as a threshold in a house and is now stored temporarily in Vonitsa. Rouga, the site of the discovery of the inscription, is the name of a small peninsula near Vonitsa, approximately 6 km from Thyrrion as the crow flies. From an archeological point of view it is interesting to note that the remains of an ancient paved road have been found near Rouga which obviously connected the coastal settlement and a small harbor with ancient Thyrrheion.

Lazaros Kolonas, who is the responsible ephoros for our region, reported this exceptional new find for the first time in 1995.¹⁶ Unfortunately this extensive inscription which is formulated in several columns is in bad condition so that we have considerable problems with the reconstruction of the text.

The dating of the inscription is also problematic. Since the prescript naming the Roman officials is preserved in only a very fragmentary condition, it is not possible to date the inscription by means of the named eponymous officials. We will only be able to make some headway by using formal dating criteria such as the character of the letters, the inscription form and by means of other content-oriented considerations. The shapes of the letters, the inscription form and also the terminology suggest a dating in the second half of the second century or the first decades of the first century BC. As far as the content is concerned, a long-term conflict between the people of Thyrrheion and the Nesiotai, the "island inhabitants", is the subject of the inscription. The parties to the conflict had sent legations to Rome and accused each other there of diverse offenses. Among other things the Nesiotai complain that, contrary to previous senatorial decrees, they were attacked by the people of Thyrrheion at night and subsequently had to accommodate an occupational force in their city.

In the brief time allotted to me here I cannot treat all the philological, prosopographical and historical problems connected with this inscription. Above all else, three questions are of special importance, and we hope that we will be able to find answers to these questions, at least in part, in the course of our epigraphical and historical work.

Who are the Nesiotai and where is the polis of the Nesiotai located?

On the basis of the inscription, how can the relationship between the Nesiotai, the people of Thyrrheion and an Acarnanian federation which is still possibly in existence be described? How is the new *senatus consultum* from Rouga temporally

and textually related to the treaty of alliance between Thyrrheion and Rome from 94 AD?

About 60 years after the conclusion of the treaty of alliance between Thyrrheion and Rome Octavian/Augustus founded the victory city Nikopolis in memory of his decisive naval victory over Antonius and Cleopatra. In an epigram of Antipatros of Thessaloniki, a contemporary of Augustus, Thyrrheion is named among the cities which were annexed to Nikopolis.¹⁷ The rest of the ancient authors do not even mention Thyrrheion. During the period of time we worked there in the museum we were struck by the relatively large number of epitaphs from the Roman period, some of which were of excellent quality. In addition there is a multitude of other archeological remains in the collection from all areas of life which must certainly be dated as belonging to the same period. As a result it seems to us that a critical reevaluation of the thesis that Thyrrheion was deserted after the founding of Nikopolis is imperative. In reality the reorganization of northwestern Greece after 30 BC in terms of settlement policy evolved in a far more complex manner than that suggested in the summarizing and disparate source material.

Let us summarize what has been presented: All in all, we were able to study 141 inscriptions in the museum of Agrinion and 291 inscriptions in the collection in Thyrrion. In 1996 and 1997 we were thus able to study and document a total of 432 Greek and Latin inscriptions from northwestern Greece. Most of the material has been at least provisionally published. The responsible ephori announce new epigraphical finds regularly in preliminary reports in *Archaiologikon Deltion*. About 10% of the inscriptions have not yet been published. This paper could not be anything more than a “workshop report” as I have already said. We do think, however, that a comprehensive revision of the epigraphical material in the museums of Agrinion and Thyrrion is quite a worthwhile undertaking. The epigraphical research can help expand our knowledge of the ancient history of northwestern Greece in many facets and in a decisive way, not only with regard to the Classical and Hellenistic periods, but also for the second and first century BC and the Roman period. In the end we may be able to place our historical hypothesis on more solid ground.

Notes

NOTE 1*

I would like to thank L. Kolonas very much, also in the name of my colleague D. Strauch, for generously giving us permission to study the inscriptions in the museums of Agrinion and Thyron. We would also like to express our special thanks to the local directors and staff of the museums. Without their energetic support and assistance the epigraphical work could never have been finished on site in such a relatively short amount of time.

NOTE 2

Dittenberger 1897.

NOTE 3

Romaïos 1918, 105-124

NOTE 4

Klaffenbach 1932

NOTE 5

Klaffenbach 1935. Klaffenbach 1936. Klaffenbach 1939, 189-209. Klaffenbach 1954. See Toulomakos 1995, 193-199.

NOTE 6

Klaffenbach 1957.

NOTE 7

Strauch 1997, 209-254. Mela & Preka & Strauch 1998, 281-303.

NOTE 8

Mastrokostas 1965, 152-159. McCamp, 1977, 277ff.

NOTE 9

Axiote 1986, 186-205.

NOTE 10

Antonetti 1986, 39-72.

NOTE 11

Funke & Gehrke & Kolonas 1993, 131-144.

NOTE 12

Antonetti 1996, 149-155.

NOTE 13

Bernhardt, 1971, 72ff. Baranowski 1982. Sherwin-White 1984, 66ff. Gruen 731-744. Ferrary 1990, 217-235. Derow 1991, 261-270. Kallet-Marx 1995. Avram 1996, 491-511.

NOTE 14

E. Mastrokostas, *AD* 18 B 1 (1963) [1965] 148, Strauch, 1996, 135 and 370.

NOTE 15

Triantaphyllos 1983, 419-449. Loukopoulou, 1987, 101-110. Stern 1987, 501-509.

NOTE 16

L. Kolonas, *AD* 45, 1990 (1995), 140.

NOTE 17

Anth. Pal. IX 553.

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