Attic Text Reflecting the Influence of Cleopatra

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A column with two inscriptions was discovered in the Attic deme of Teithras and published by J. J. Politt, who on the basis of the lettering dated the first inscription, the one in which we are here interested, to the second half of the first century B.C.¹ The second inscription, two or three generations later perhaps, records a dedication to Isis,² who is presumably "the goddess" mentioned in the last line of the first inscription. Taken together, the two inscriptions attest a hitherto unknown sanctuary of Isis.

The importance of our text, the first on the column, lies primarily in the evidence it provides for the acceptance of the cult of Isis. The cult is not simply tolerated but protected like one of the Athenian state itself. Violation of this protection becomes a basis for legal action as asebeia in the Council. The date would surely fall before the Battle of Actium and probably in or soon after 37 B.C., when Antony married Cleopatra, the New Isis, who fostered the image by appearing on state occasions in the garb of Isis.³ Many like Vergil were to see the coming struggle with Antony as one between the gods of Rome and the gods of Egypt. Political hopes and fears received a religious expression. The

¹ J. J. Politt, "The Egyptian Gods in Attica: Some Epigraphical Evidence," Hesperia 34 (1965) 125-130 with photographs. The letters, he says, are "very similar to those in an Attic ephebic inscription dating from the year 38/37 B.C."
² The unrelated second inscription on the column reads as follows:

Is the phrase in lines 5-6 a reference to the lifting of the head of the first ox, τὸν ἡγεμόνα (βοῦν), to be sacrificed? Compare SIG² 717, lines 10-11, ἦραντο δὲ καὶ τοῖς μουστρίοις τοῦς βοῶς ἐν Ἑλενώι τῆς θεοῖας.
Athenians who publicized their devotion to Isis were committed also to the New Isis and her consort.

Secondly, the inscription raises questions concerning the position of the Council of the Six Hundred. Politt did not dare restore βου]αην at the end of line 13, but the restoration is certain as comparison with SIG3 147, line 35, and 204, line 83, and with ATL 2, D 7, lines 35–39, shows (in all these the adjective κυρία refers to the Council). The Demos had left the entire regulation of the sanctuary to the discretion of the Council, and what we have is the dogma of the Council after the latter was empowered to make all arrangements. How often did the Council assume control of a sanctuary and have to be asked for permission to set up a dedication?⁴

Though he usually has found the meaning, Politt has made two errors which should be corrected. First, he has recognized the right procedure but restored the wrong word in line 9 for the initiation of legal action. The term was endeixis, not phasis, when an Athenian spoke of a denunciation before the basileus. Prosecution for asebeia on the basis of an endeixis to the basileus is actually attested in an Athenian inscription of the first century,⁵ as well as in Classical literature.

Secondly, Politt has restored the δυνας clause in lines 18–19 without a verb. Surely a verb is indispensable.

The following text corrects some flaws and includes new readings by D. J. Geagan (per epistulas) in lines 1, 2 and 12 and new restorations by the author:

⁴ For a survey of the evidence, see Daniel J. Geagan, The Athenian Constitution after Sulla (forthcoming as Hesperia Supplement).
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10 [τῷ βουλομένῳ νοὶ οἷς ἔξεστιν καλυτέρωσαι δὲ καὶ τῷ ταῦ
[τῷ παρε] ληθυθότων δόσεις ἀν ἐπιγνώσων ν εἰσ[εὐναί ἦσ]
[τῷ εἰσι] βῆ τῶν θεῶν ν ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἀνατιθέμενοις
[ἐνθέμενοι] χωρίς τοῦ αὐτήσαισθαι τὴν πάντων κυρί[ας βου]ν
λὴν ἀναγραφάσθαι δὲ οἱ εἰσενέκκαντες τὸ δὲ [τῷ δόῃ]
15 μὲν ἐν τῇ παραστάδι τῇ <τῇ> στοάς ἦν ὁ δὲ ἀν <αὐ>τοῖς φαίνεται
ἐπιτιθήσην εἶναι πρὸς τὸ μένειν εἰς τὸν πάντα[χ τὰ χρόνον]
τὰ δόξαστα τῇ βούλῃ τὸ δὲ αυτὸ καὶ ἐν σανίδι λε[νεκω]
μὲν καὶ παράδοσισ <σαν> τῷ ἵερι ὅπως εἴκομενον [ἐχεῖ]
τῆς ἡμέρας πρὸ τοῦ ναοῦ, ἵνα τοῦτον συντελεῖ [μέ]

20 νων φαίνεται ἡ βουλή πλῆθυν πρὸνοιαν ποιοῦμεν[η]
τῆς πρὸς τὴν θεῶν εὐσεβείας


Line 1: Geagan considers the restoration Σαρ[άπι]βι highly unlikely and reads MH.

Line 7: The ζακόρος at Athens is well known in the cult of Asclepius, where tenure may have been limited to one term. On Delos the ζακόρος is prominent in the cult of the Egyptian Gods, and the office could be held repeatedly.

Line 12: Geagan’s reading, ἐβη, eliminates Politt’s restoration [τῷ ἵερι νῦν] and concomitantly the identification of the sanctuary as legally that of the Egyptian Gods rather than of Isis alone. With the prohibition εἰσ[εὐναί ἦσ] τῷ εἰσε] βῆ τῶν θεῶν for those guilty of sacrilege, compare the Pergamene text, SIG 1219 = Sokolowski, 6 TAPA 71 (1940) 388; IG II 3 3798–99, 3804, 3962–64, 4466, 4477, 4481, 4486–87, 4514, 4521a, 4821, perhaps also 5158. For the less known Athenian ζάκορος τῶν φελον εἰκάσων see L. Robert, “Recherches épigraphiques,” REA 62 (1960) 316–324.

7 Inscriptions de Delos 2205, dated after 88/7 B.C.: ζακόρονς Εὐδών τὸ ὀκτὼ καὶ δέκατον.
Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure no. 16, lines 25-27: καὶ μὴ δαίων αὐταῖς εἶναι, ὡς ἀσβοῦσας, θείων μηθενὶ θεῶν ἐπὶ δέκα ἐτη.

Lines 18-19: The text on a whitened board⁹ is to be given to the priest¹⁰ "so that he may have it on view daily in front of the temple."

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⁹ For the use of a whitened board see the examples cited by Adolf Wilhelm, Beiträge zur griechischen Inschriftenkunde (= Sonderschriften des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien 7 [1909]) 249–257, and by editors of the Tabula Hebana (AJP 75 [1954] 225–249), which in line 20-21 reads: tabulas dealbatas in quib(us) nomina candidatorum scripta sint, quo loco commo[disimne legi] possint, ponendas curet. See also ATL 2, D 7, line 44, and D 8, line 14. My wife adds the material on Delos cited by J. H. Kent, Hesperia 17 (1948) 243f.

¹⁰ This priesthood may well be that of the ἱερός στολιστής Ἰσίδος καὶ Σεράπιδος known from IG II² 12318. On the other hand, the dedication to Isis, IG II² 4702, dated by priest and zakoros, may have come originally from Delos; in any case it was in modern times discovered at Athens and does not pertain to the sanctuary at Teithras.