"First of the Hellenes in the Province": A New Inscription from Mygdonia

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N RECENT YEARS our knowledge of the *Koinon* of the Macedonians in the imperial age has been expanded and enriched by a number of chance-found inscriptions, with the result that we have been able to penetrate certain aspects of its life that were hitherto unknown¹ One such find is presented in this paper.² It comes from the Palaiokastron hill archaeological site approximately one kilometre northwest of the village of Mavrouda in the Langada district of the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, and it came to light in May 2001.

1 For earlier research see D. Kanatsoulis, "Τὸ Κοινὸν τῶν Μακεδόνων," Μακεδονικά 3 (1953–55) 27–101; J. Deininger, Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit von Augustus bis zum Ende des dritten Jahrhunderts n. Chr. (Munich/ Berlin 1965) 91-96; D. Kanatsoulis, "Οι Μακεδονιάρχαι τοῦ Κοινοῦ τῶν Μακεδόνων καὶ ή κοινωνική θέσις αὐτῶν," Μακεδονικά 13 (1973) 1-37. For more recent finds and studies see P. M. Nigdelis, "Oberpriester und Gymnasiarchen im Provinziallandtag Makedoniens: eine neue Ehreninschrift aus Beroia," Klio 77 (1995) 170-183; "Geminii und Claudii: Die Geschichte zweier führender Familien von Thessaloniki in der späteren Kaiserzeit," in A. D. Rizakis (ed.), Roman Onomastics in the Greek East (Meletemata 21 [Athens 1996]) 129-141; "Μακεδονικά Σύμμεικτα," Τεκμήρια 1 (1995) 173-190; "Die Eordaier und das Koinon der Makedonen in einer neuen Ehreninschrift," Hermes 128 (2000) 152-163 (with E. Kefalidou); and Επιγραφικά Θεσσαλονίκεια. Συμβολή στην πολιτική και κοινωνική Ιστορία της Αρχαίας Θεσσαλονίκης (Thessaloniki 2006) 73 ff. Photographs are due to Asterios Lioutas, Archaeologist of the ΙΣτ΄ ΕΠΚΑ (Thessaloniki), who also contributed to the archaeological part of this paper. We thank Stephen Tracy and Glen Bowersock for their suggestions.

 2 The sculpture, now no. MO 20038 in the Archaeological Museum in Thessaloniki, was in two pieces when it was discovered: the head and neck, and the chest and base. Reassembled, it proved to be 82 cm high x 46 wide. The base is 22 cm wide x 17.5 high x 14 deep.

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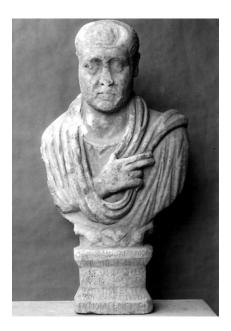


Figure 1: bust from Macedonia

The object in question is a bust of a male figure, worked in coarse-grained marble and standing on a small base with an inscription, which is discussed below, on the front face (fig. 1). The chest is fairly flat, and the back non-existent: rather, a considerable volume of material has been removed from the back of the sculpture, leaving a single vertical brace running down to the base, making the bust lighter and perhaps more intrinsically stable, although there must have been some form of support at the back, since it was probably intended to stand on its own in front of a wall.

The man in the portrait is dressed in a chiton and wrapped in a mantle, leaving only his right hand exposed. The arm is bent at the elbow and the palm lies against the chest; the fourth and little fingers are caught in the folds of the mantle in the manner familiar from reliefs of the imperial period.³ The broad nose and small, fleshy-lipped mouth are worn, but the expressiveness of the face can be read in the large, heavy-lidded eyes and broad forehead, marked with three parallel furrows. The short, careless hairstyle is sketchily rendered, and the beard is barely visible. Just above the base there is an acanthus leaf in low relief, bending at the tip towards the viewer, the veins traced with a sharp point. The leaf is framed between two flower buds borne on short stems.

The dating of the bust to the second quarter of the third century is based on comparisons with similar works from workshops in Thessaloniki,⁴ although this piece, as the product of a local workshop, is aesthetically inferior.

The Palaiokastron hill, where the bust was found, rises at the north end of a small depression between the mountains of Lake Volvi and Mount Vertiskos, seven kilometres east-southeast of Sohos, the basin (until it was drained in the 1950s) of Lake Mavrouda. The area around the lake was inhabited in the Late Neolithic age, and traces of settlements from the archaic and classical periods have been found in the nearby villages of Skepasto, Xeropotamos, Anixia, Askos, Sohos and, naturally, around Arethousa, which is the natural outlet towards the south and east, i.e. towards Lake Volvi and the Strymonikos Gulf. None of these settlements has been identified with any certainty.⁵

Surface exploration of the 1.2-hectare site at the summit of Palaiokastron hill revealed remains of an Iron Age settlement and the still-visible ruins of some Byzantine fortifications. The hill is steep, and thus entirely defensible, but seems not to have

³ See e.g. G. Despinis, T. Stefanidou-Tiveriou, E. Voutyras, *Catalogue of Sculptures in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki* (Thessaloniki 2003) no. 324 (Chr. Ioakimidou).

⁴ Cf. e.g. bust Inventory Catalogue no. MΘ 2492; see also A. Rusch, "Das kaiserliche Porträt in Makedonien," $\mathcal{J}dI$ 84 (1969) 59–196, at 141 with Abt. 64 and 65. Both sculptures are from the second quarter of the third century A D.

⁵ See in this regard F. Papazoglou, Les villes de Macédoine à l'époque romaine (BCH Suppl. 16 [Paris 1988]) 222–226.



Figure 2: bust from Macedonia, detail

been used in the Roman era. On the slope of the hill, however, about 500 metres away, are remains of a settlement from the imperial age, which may be connected with the new find. This was probably a *villa rustica*, one of many that have been discovered scattered across ancient Mygdonia. This hypothesis is borne out by the inscription (*fig.* 2) on the base of the sculpture:⁶

[Αἴ?]λιον Νικοπολιανὸν τὸν σύνεδοον καὶ ποῶ- τον Ἑλλήνων τῆς ἐπαρχείου νας Ζώσιμος δοῦ- λος πραγματευτῆς τὸν ἴδιον δεσπότην εὐνοίας ἕνεκεν.

Ligatures: $\Pi P(2, 5)$, $\Omega N(3)$, $TH\Sigma(3)$, OY(4).

 $^{^6}$ The inscription was first mentioned by P. Adam-Veleni, E. Poulaki, K. Tzanavari, Αρχαίες Αγροικίες σε σύγχρονους δρόμους. Κεντρική Μακεδονία (Athens 2003) 259 and fig. 432 α .

The shape of the letters, the ligatures, and the general impression of the writing suggest that the inscription must date in the first half of the third century.⁷ This, as we have already seen, is compatible with the stylistic features of the sculpture (especially the rendering of the hair), which point to the second quarter of that century.

According to this text the bust was erected in honour of one [Ae?] lius Nicopolianus by his slave Zosimus, who was a πραγματευτής. As is indicated by a substantial number of inscriptions from Macedonia and other territories in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, the word designates the steward or manager of a presumably large agricultural estate, and corresponds to the Latin term actor.8 Given that the lexical content of the related term οἰκονόμος/vilicus began to change around A.D. 100,9 Zosimus' duties must in all probability have been connected primarily with the financial side of estate management (e.g. collecting rents and loans from the tenant farmers and in general handling the cash and accounts) rather than overseeing the farm work, which was the job of the οἰκονόμος/vilicus.

In Macedonia, stewards (πραγματευταί) and overseers (οἰπονόμοι) are attested as a rule in inscriptions in lowland districts, such as Philippi, Langada, Thessaloniki, Pella, Pydna, Heraclea

- ⁷ Characteristic letters are the rhomboid omicron and the three-stroke sigma, the alpha and the delta with an upward slant of the right-hand serif, and the squared upsilon. Cf. the letters in *I.Leukopetra* 107 (A.D. 254).
- ⁸ For the word πραγματευτής/actor see e.g. N. Ehrhardt, "Eine neue Grabinschrift aus Iconium," *ZPE* 81 (1990) 185–188; T. R. S. Broughton, in T. Frank, *Econ. Survey* IV (1938) 663–676; and S. Mitchell, "Population and Land in Roman Galatia," *ANRW* II.7.2 (1980) 1053–1081, at 1070–1080.
- ⁹ See in this regard J. Carlesen, *Vilici and Roman Estate Managers* (Rome 1995) 121–142, with the (legal, literary, and inscriptional) sources. See also recently T. Corsten, "Estates in Roman Asia Minor: the Case of Kibyratis," in S. Mitchell and C. Katsari (eds.), *Patterns in the Economy of Roman Asia Minor* (Oakville 2005) 12, who concerning the administrative role of *pragmateutai* at the Ummidii estate (Kibyra) suggests that "they had basically the same duties as the ἐπίτροποι, but on a smaller scale, in that they were responsible for the accounting (and the like) of a single domain, whereas the ἐπίτροποι administered the entire estate for the absentee land owners."

Lyncestis, and Pelagonia, and were usually slaves or freedmen.¹⁰ That the case of Macedonia with regard to the legal status of these persons was not unusual is implied in a passage of Ps.-Plutarch *On the Education of Children (Mor.* 4AB), where the author, stigmatising the educational choices of his aristocratic contemporaries, observes

τών γὰο δούλων τών σπουδαίων τοὺς μὲν γεωργοὺς ἀποδεικνύουσι, τοὺς δὲ ναυκλήρους τοὺς δὲ ἐμπόρους τοὺς δ' οἰκονόμους τοὺς δὲ δανειστάς· ὅ τι δ' ἂν εὕρωσιν ἀνδράποδον οἰνόληπτον καὶ λίχνον, πρὸς πᾶσαν πραγματείαν ἄχρηστον, τούτῳ φέροντες ὑποβάλλουσι τοὺς υἰούς.

for if any of their servants be better than the rest, they dispose some of them to follow husbandry, some to navigation, some to merchandise, some to be stewards in their houses, and some, lastly, to put out their money to use for them. But if they find any slave that is a drunkard or a glutton, and unfit for any other business, to him they assign the government of their children.

The information supplied by this text concerning the legal status of stewards and overseers is confirmed and supplemented by numerous inscriptions from various parts of the Roman Empire, which show that many of them were eventually manumitted as a result of their close association with their masters, who were generally members of the local or imperial elite. The virtually unlimited freedom they enjoyed in the running of their masters' estates enabled them to enrich themselves to the point where they could even erect statues in their honour in public places. It is not, therefore, surprising that Zosimus should, presumably at his own expense, have been able to commission this bust in honour of his master Nicopolianus. Moreover, given the financial and social position assured them by this close relationship with their master within the enclosed community of these great landed estates, and indeed beyond

 $^{^{10}}$ The relevant inscriptions are collected by Nigdelis, Επιγραφικά Θεσσαλονίκεια 227 ff.

¹¹ See for example, for Macedonia, J. Coupry and M. Feyel, "Inscriptions de Philippes," *BCH* 60 (1936) 43 no. 2 = P. Pilhofer, *Philippi* II *Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi* (Tübingen 2000) 248: Πυθιανός, πραγματευτής Ίουνίου Ποντίου Πρόκλου νέου (late II or III).

them, they had no embarrassment in describing themselves, as Zosimus did, as slaves, which in other circumstances would have been an undesirable admission of inferiority.¹²

Zosimus' otherwise unknown master (δεσπότης), [Ae?]lius Nicopolianus, was probably a scion of a Greek family that had likely acquired Roman citizenship (civitas Romana) during the reign of Hadrian or the Antonines. This is indicated by the nomen [Ae?]lius, if that is the correct restoration, ¹³ in conjunction with the cognomen Nicopolianus, which is attested in other parts of Macedonia and elsewhere as well. ¹⁴ His place of birth is not known, since it is not stated in the inscription.

Out of his master's doubtless more extensive career, Zosimus chose, for reasons unknown, to mention the office of σύνεδρος (councillor) and the title πρῶτος Ἑλλήνων τῆς ἐπαρχείου ("first of the Hellenes in the province"). The word ἐπάρχειος, attested here for the first time in a Macedonian inscription, is used in place of the more common ἐπαρχεία; it occurs in several inscriptions of the imperial age in various Greek-speaking regions. The word σύνεδρος signifies that he represented his city in the *Koinon* of the Macedonians meeting in Beroea. To judge from the information we have, he must have been the leading delegate from the district, 16 assuming of course that he

- 12 For examples of inscriptions in which slave stewards or overseers (πραγματευταί/οίπονόμοι) declare their legal status, see Ehrhardt, ZPE 82 (1990) 186–187.
- 13 The missing portion of the name could also have been [IOY] ([Iov] λ (ov), assuming that the diphthong ov was written as a ligature as it is in $\dot{\epsilon}\pi\alpha\rho\chi\epsilon$ (ov in line 4.
- 14 The name occurs, for example, in the funerary inscriptions SEG II 409 from Mariana and IG X.2.1 343 from Thessaloniki. See also LGPN IV 255.
- ¹⁵ See e.g. the honorific inscriptions *IGBulg* II 642.6 from Nicopolis ad Istrum (A.D. 238–240), ὑπατεύοντος τῆς ἐπαρχείου; *I.Tomis* 83.10 (199–201), ὑπὲς τοῦ διέποντος [τ]ὴν ἐπάρχειον ὑπατικοῦ Ἰουνίου Τερτύλλου; Ε. Bosch, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Ankara* no. 349.1 (= *OGIS* 549) from Ankara, τὸν κράτ(ιστον) Καικίλ(ιον) Ἑρμιανόν, τὸν πρῶτον τῆς ἐπαρχείου; and *SEG* XXIX 1281.17 from Nicaea, ἐν τῆ παραπομπῆ καὶ παραχειμασία τῆ ἐν τῆ ἐπαρχείω τοῦ θειοτάτου Αὐτοκράτορος Ἀντωνίνου. See also H. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions* (Toronto 1974) 45 and 135.
- ¹⁶ To date we know the names of only five members of the *Koinon*, see Kanatsoulis, Μακεδονικά 3 (1953–55) 90–92.

did indeed come from there and was not simply a wealthy Macedonian who had acquired property in the area.

The most interesting feature of the inscription, however, is certainly the honorific title ascribed to the man: πρῶτος Έλλήνων της ἐπαρχείου. So far as we know, this is its first appearance in this precise form, in Macedonia or elsewhere. By contrast, the title πρώτος Έλλήνων is attested in a small number of inscriptions from Asia Minor. The oldest of these, from Thyatira in the province of Asia, is a funerary inscription placed on the grave of Gaius Julius Xenon, archiereus of the Koinon of Asia, by the association of Juliasts between 29 B.C. and A.D. 2.17 Towards the end of the first century A.D. the city of Nicopolis in Lesser Armenia honoured a prominent local citizen, Julius Patruinus, described as πρῶ[τ]ος τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ πρώ[τ]ος Άρμενιάρχης, "first of the Hellenes and first Armeniarch" (i.e. archiereus of the imperial cult in that Koinon). 18 C. Julius Severus, archiereus of the imperial cult in the Koinon of the Galatians and a scion of one of Ankara's most important families, who traced their ancestry back to King Deiotarus, is also called by the title ποῶτος Ἑλλήνων in two honorific inscriptions of A.D. 114 from that city. 19 The title is also found in a fragmentary inscription on a sarcophagus from Nicomedia in Bithynia, which, to judge by internal evidence (the amount of the penalty fixed for violating the sarcophagus), likely dates from the third century.²⁰ Finally, the expression

¹⁷ ΤΑΜ V.2 1098: ὁ δῆμος τὸ Ξενώνηον καὶ τὴν ἐντο[μ]ὴν [κα]θιέρωσεν Γαΐωι Ἰουλίωι Ἀπο[λλωνί]δου υἰῶι Ξένωνι ἥρωι εὐεργέτηι γεγονότι ἀρχιερεῖ τοῦ [Σ]ε[βαστοῦ Καίσαρος καὶ θεᾶς Ῥώμης καὶ εὖ πεποιηκότι πᾶσαν τὴν] Ασίαν τὰ μέγιστα καὶ κατὰ πά[ν]τα σωτῆρι καὶ εὐεργέτηι καὶ κτ[ίστη]ι καὶ πατρὶ γεγονότι τῆς πα[τρί]δος, πρώτω Ἑλλήνων, κατ[ε]σ[κεύα]σαν οἱ (Ἰ)ουλιασ[ταί].

¹⁸ F. Cumont, "L'annexion du Pont Polémoniaque et de la petite Arménie," in W. R. Buckler and W. M. Calder (eds.), *Anatolian Studies ... Ramsay* (London 1923) 109–111, at 116 (= *OGIS* 652 = *IGR* III 132).

 $^{^{19}}$ Bosch, *Quellen* nos. 105 and 106 (= *OGIS* 545, 544), where the honoree is referred to as πρῶτος Ἑλλήνων, ἀρχιερασάμενος etc. See also Bosch nos. 107 and 108.

²⁰ TAM IV.1 332.4, πρώτω Ἑλλήνω<ν>. The name of the deceased and other possible titles are not preserved.

πρῶτος ἐν Ἑλλησι, "first among the Greeks," in a funerary inscription for a Bithyniarch named Chrysogonus from Claudiopolis, should probably also be interpreted in the same way.²¹

Like the other honorary titles of the Koinon known to date, such as πρῶτος τῆς ἐπαρχίας, πρῶτος τοῦ ἔθνους, πατὴρ τοῦ συνεδρίου, υἰὸς Μακεδόνων, etc.,²² the new title must, since it contained the word ἐπάρχειος (province) and independently of its content,²³ have been awarded by decision of the councillors to distinguished local figures upon completion of their term of office.²⁴ Like the other titles, the new one would have given its bearer the right to a place of honour at the games organised by the Koinon and other public events.²⁵ What needs to be determined here is the content of the word Ἑλλην and the juncture at which the title was adopted by the Koinon of the Macedonians.

As to the content of the word, researchers addressing the inscriptions from Thyatira, Nicopolis, and Ankara formulated two different interpretations. Keil and von Premerstein, who

²¹ I. Klaudiu Polis 16, [π]ρῶτον ἐν πάτρι καὶ ἔθνει Βιθυνίδος ἀρχῆς / πρῶτον ἐν Ἑλλησιν, κυδάλιμον βιότφ / [Χρ]υσόγονον τόδε σῆμα κτλ.; see also L. Robert, "Notes et discussions," RevPhil III.17 (1943) 186. In I.Magnesia 158 honouring an archiereia of the Koinon of Asia, the editor's proposed completion [πρ]ώτη τῶ[ν Ἑλληνίδων] is not the only one possible: see e.g. S. J. Friesen, Twice Neokoros. Ephesus, Asia and the Flavian Imperial Cult (Leiden/New York/Cologne 1993) 85, who proposes the completion [πρ]ώτη τῶ[ν γυναικῶν].

²² See in this regard Deininger, *Provinziallandtage* 94–95.

²³ According to F. Papazoglou, "Le Koinon macédonien et la province de Macédoine," in *Thracia* 12 = *Studia* ... *Chr. M. Danov* (1998) 133–139, in some of the epigraphic evidence of the *Koinon* of the Macedonians the word should be understood as designating not the whole of the province of Macedonia but one part of it, that is, the "ethnic" assembly of the Macedonians, without southern Illyria, which could have had an assembly of its own, like that of the Macedonians. Deininger, *Provinziallandtage* 96, on the other hand, holds that *Koinon* corresponds to *eparchia*. New inscriptions may provide an answer to the question.

²⁴ Robert, *RevPhil* III.17 (1943) 186, thinks that the title πρῶτος ἐν Ἑλλησιν was awarded to the Bithyniarch Chrysogonus of Claudiopolis by this procedure.

²⁵ See e.g. for the *Koinon* of the Galatians Bosch, *Quellen* 128.

published the first of these inscriptions, believe that it probably refers simply to the Hellenes of the province in which the title was used, and thus interpret it as synonymous with the titles πρώτος της ἐπαρχίας, πρώτος τοῦ ἔθνους, etc.²⁶ Cumont, in reference to the inscription from Nicopolis, thinks that Έλλην in the title should be referred to the formulation Κοινὸν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀσίας (τῶν ἐν Βιθυνία) Ἑλλήνων, where, in his view, the term opposes the urban populations of those assemblies to their non-Hellenised rural populations.²⁷ Bosch, for his part, thinks that the word, as used in the titles from Thyatira, Bithynia, and Ankara, meant only the cultivated segment of the population of the Asian provinces, who spoke Greek and whose education was Greek, and concludes that "the 'Hellenes' therefore were the upper social stratum of the population of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, who lived in the Greek style in cities organised in the Greek manner, but who in many cases were not Hellenes by ancestry."28

Such an interpretation of the word "Hellene," which restricts it to only part of the population, is in our view extreme, and we are forced to disagree. Its meaning in the honorific title of the provincial assemblies of Asia Minor under consideration should properly be sought in the names of those of Asia and Bithynia, i.e. Κοινὸν τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἑλλήνων and Κοινὸν τῶν ἐν Βιθυνία Ἑλλήνων, and in the significance carried by the word Ἑλλην, since those names constitute its first official use by the people of Anatolia after the Roman conquest. As recent research has shown, these names were probably instituted by the local populations of the provinces of Asia and Bithynia. By calling themselves Hellenes, the inhabitants of those provinces

²⁶ J. Keil and A. von Premerstein, *DenkschrWien* 54 (1911) 42: "Der Ehrenvorrang eines πρῶτος Ἑλλήνων ist wohl jeweils auf die 'Hellenen' der betreffenden Provinz zu beschränken und tritt in der Regel in Verbindung mit dem Oberpriestertum auf."

²⁷ Cumont, in *Anatolian Studies* 117, who holds that the term also distinguishes the Greeks from the many Jews living in Asia Minor, since the latter did not take part in the Assemblies or the observances of the imperial cult performed by them.

²⁸ Bosch, Quellen 128.

sought to project their Hellenic or (in some cases) Hellenised identity—their cultural superiority, in other words—in the hope that the Roman authorities would respect their history and treat them more favourably.²⁹ The subsequent use of the title in the *Koinon* of the Galatians and the *Koinon* of the Armenians should therefore be ascribed to imitation of the usage of the *Koinon* of Asia and the *Koinon* of Bithynia.

The use of the title by the Koinon of the Macedonians could be justified in the same manner, all the more so since to date there is no evidence of the form Κοινὸν τῶν ἐν Μαμεδονία Έλλήνων. On the other hand, the late attestation of the title πρώτος Έλλήνων in connection with that body permits another possible interpretation, reflecting the time at which it appeared. We think it possible that the leaders of the Koinon may at some point have adopted the title in response to the philhellenism displayed by the Roman emperors beginning with Hadrian and continuing for the next two centuries. If this is the case, then we are justified in accepting that in using this title the elite of the province were expressing their faith in their own Greek identity and that of their compatriots, regardless of the precise content they attributed to it. That such perceptions of their Greek identity and descent existed among the Macedonians is confirmed characteristically by e.g. the fact that Thessaloniki, the province's capital, sent representatives to the Panhellenion in Athens and that one of its distinguished

²⁹ See J.-L. Ferrary, "Rome et la géographie de l'hellénisme: reflexions sur 'hellènes' et 'panhellènes' dans les inscriptions d'époque romain," in O. Salomies (ed.), *The Greek East in the Roman Context* (Helsinki 2001) 19–35, at 29. Ferrary believes that the adoption of the official names of these assemblies was in the end approved by the Romans. E. Frézouls, "L'Hellénisme dans l'épigraphie de l'Asie Mineure romaine," in S. Said (ed.), ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΣ. Quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grècque (Leiden/New York/Cologne 1991) 125–147, at 128, thinks that the appearance of the term Ἑλλην, both in honorific titles and in the official names of the Assemblies of Asia Minor, is related to the dominant role of the Greek language in the eastern part of the Empire, which obliged even non-Hellenes to use it, but does not analyse its conceptual content.

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citizens (whose descendants included Makedoniarchs) served as ἄρχων τῶν Πανελλήνων in A.D. 205–208.³⁰

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³⁰ See Nigdelis, in *Roman Onomastics* 129–141. It is worth noting in this context the Ephesian decree *I.Ephesos* 24.8–12 and 16–20 (of A.D. 162/3 or 163/4), which uses the expression παρὰ δὲ Μαμεδόσιν καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσι τοῖς Ἑλληνικοῖς.