

Τετραδισταί in a Funerary Inscription from Roman Thessaloniki

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AT THE END of 2015 I published a new funerary inscription from Roman Thessaloniki, the text of which ran as follows:¹

-----ΣΕ
τραδος · ἀρχισυναγωγ-
ώγου Εὐλάνδρου · το-
4 ὦ Ζωσίμου Θεσσαλ-
ονικέος · Τι. Καθήκο-
ντι τῷ συνήθι μνήμης
χάριν καὶ Εἰουλία
8 Πρόκλα τῷ συγγενῆ
αὐτῆς καὶ Ἐπιγόνῃ τῷ
ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.

That reading of the inscription was based not on the monument itself but on a copy of it made by an anonymous archaeologist and preserved in the archives of the Museum of Byzantine Culture (Thessaloniki) with inventory number ΠΑ 5 (*fig. 1*). This number refers to a collection of antiquities still lying in the courtyard of Holy Mother Acheiropoietos church in Thessaloniki, a fact that in turn explains well the abbreviation Π(αναγία) Ἀ(χειροροποίητος). In editing the text I used the copy of the inscription because I was unable to locate the stone, despite my searches in the courtyard of the church—hence I considered it lost.

¹ Π. Νίγδελης, *Επιγραφικά Θεσσαλονίκεια* II (Thessaloniki 2015) 108–110.



Figure 1

That conclusion is now proven erroneous, for the archisynagogos inscription is to be found today in the Epigraphic Collection of the Museum of Herakleion in Crete, together with two other inscriptions that are of Cretan origin,² all of them repatriated there from Perth, Western Australia. This information and the odyssey of the inscription became known to me thanks to Professor Greg Horsley, who while preparing a joint publication with Dr. Norman Ashton on the history of a Thessalonian family sent me a draft of their paper asking about the date of a sarcophagus. I was surprised to discover that the two colleagues included in their paper the archisynagogos inscription as unpublished (justified though this was as my book had been released just a few months before).

After my response, Professor Horsley by e-mail explained thoroughly the details of the discovery of the stone.³ Dr. Ash-

² These are *I.Cret.* I XVI 17 (treaty between Lato and Eleutherna) and III IV 5 (treaty between Itanos and Hierapytna).

³ A reference to the discovery of the three inscriptions has been made in a publication of June 2014, available on-line at *Academia*, entitled “The looted antiquities in Greece during World War II: case studies of return and restitutions,” by Eleni Pipelia. Her claim (p.6), that “Similar is the case of three marble inscriptions from the archaeological collection of the Museum of Heraklion in Crete. An Australian serviceman, Major James Wilson, returning at the end of World War, took them from Greece to his home in Australia. The Major died in 1974 and the inscriptions have been ‘floating around’ the home of his son Derek, who by chance spoke with Dr Ashton, professor of archaeology of the University of Western Australia. The latter recognized the antiquities which were finally return [*sic*] to Crete in 1944 [*sic*],” has to be discounted. I owe the reference to Prof. Horsley.

ton, who was at that time teaching in the Department of Classics at the University of Western Australia in Perth, was shown the three inscribed stones in October 1993 by Derek Wilson († 2001).⁴ Wilson had inherited them from his father James Wilson who served in the First World War in Greece but was medically discharged in 1916 and sent to England to recuperate, having been promoted to the rank of major in 1915. As to how James Wilson acquired the stones, Horsley was kind enough to inform me that according to Ashton and him: “it may be more likely that it was not during wartime; perhaps he [James] did not acquire them all at the same time. It may well be that he acquired them when back in Australia, by a means not known to us.” Finally, in 1994 at the instigation of Ashton, the archisynagogos inscription, together with the two Cretan stones, was handed over to the Greek consulate in Western Australia (Consul Th. Passas) and from there transported and registered in the Epigraphic Collection of the Museum of Herakleion,⁵ although its provenance remained unknown.⁶ Despite the efforts of Dr. Charalambos Kritzas, then curator of Herakleion Museum, to solve the riddle of the number ΠΑ 5 written on the top side of the stone,⁷ its provenance remained

⁴ The information is also given by Χαρ. Κριτζάς, “Αρχαίων Νόστοι,” *Ο Μέντωρ*, 32 December 1994, 213–214.

⁵ The slab is inventory number E 433 (registration date 13.10.1995). Its dimensions are: w. 0.305 m., h. 0.345, th. 0.065. The height of the letters varies, but is usually 0.02 m., and the line spacing is 0.008.

⁶ See Κριτζάς, *Ο Μέντωρ*, 32 December 1994, 214.

⁷ The information is given in the draft of Horsley and Ashton’s paper and was confirmed by Dr. Charalambos Kritzas. In a telephone conversation we had after Horsley’s first e-mail, he informed me that given Θεσσαλονικεύς in the inscription he had questioned colleagues in the 16th ΕΚΠΑ (Thessaloniki), but their researches were fruitless. The reason was evidently that the record of the collection of Acheiropoietos was kept not in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, where the 16th ΕΚΠΑ then resided, but in the archives of Byzantine Museum. The Acheiropoietos collection of antiquities had been created immediately after 1912 (the year of Thessaloniki’s liberation from Ottoman occupation), since it was meant to house the

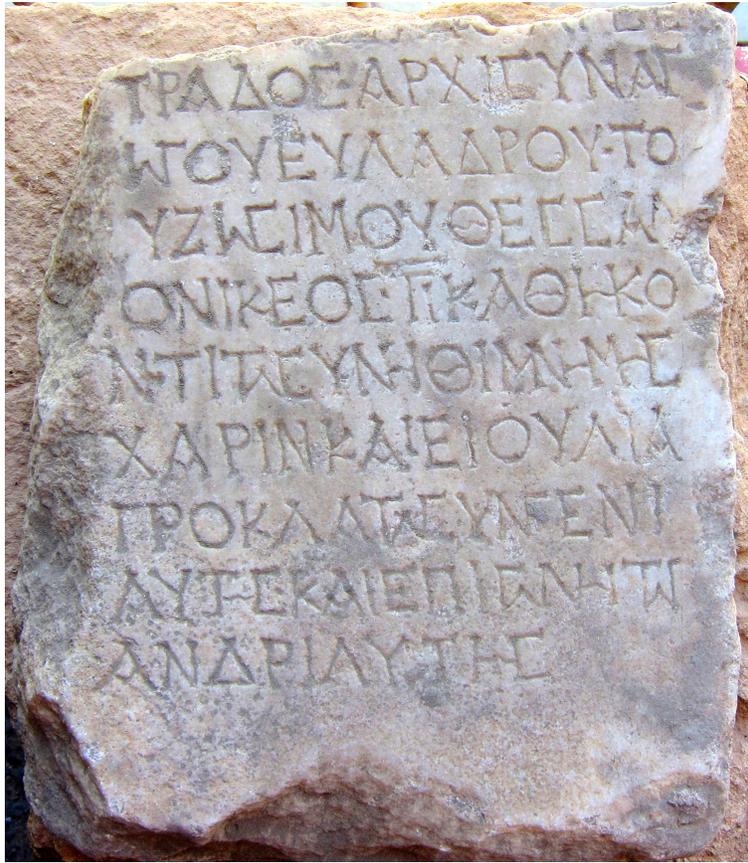


Figure 2

unknown until my correspondence with my Australian colleague. Thanks to the photograph sent to me by him, and then those sent by Dr. Kritzas (*figs.* 1 and 2), it is now beyond any doubt that the inscription in the Herakleion Museum is identical to the one I published and erroneously considered unknown.

Byzantine Museum of the city, but the project was later abandoned. See Chr. Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, “The Byzantine Antiquities,” in *Symposium “Thessaloniki after 1912”* (Thessaloniki 1986) 67–78, here 71.

However, the gain from (re)discovery of the archisynagogos inscription is not confined to the confirmation of its Thessalonian provenance, for we can date it, improve its text, and ultimately understand it better. As to its date, with no internal criteria we are completely dependent on the form of its characteristic letters: broken-barred alpha; eta and theta with wavy horizontal bar; epsilon with middle horizontal bar a little shorter than top and bottom bars; kappa with short oblique arms; three-stroke sigma, mu, and omega very square, the latter two with internal oblique arms half the height of outer hastas. Remarkable too are the clear and careful carving of the letters, punctuation between some words, numerous ligatures, and the overall impression of writing where square letters dominate. Comparing the letter forms and the overall impression of writing to other Thessalonian inscriptions which are dated exactly, we would date the archisynagogos inscription approximately between the mid-second and the mid-third centuries A.D.⁸

As to the text, the most significant improvement concerns the first surviving line, which is preserved in a very fragmentary state. From the traces discernable we can read safely only the last two letters, which at first resemble sigma and epsilon. But given the ending -τραδος with which line 2 begins, I suggest as the only possible reading τε/τράδος, the genitive of τετράς, fourth [day of a month],⁹ provided that epsilon was written in

⁸ Compare the letter forms and the overall impression of writing of the following dated inscriptions: Th. Stefanidou-Tiveriou and P. Nigdelis, *Die lokalen Sarkophage aus Thessaloniki* (Ruhpolding 2014) 220–222, nr. 109, Taf. 52 and 53.1–3 (A.D. 147/8), and Π. Νίγδελης, *Επιγραφικά Θεσσαλονίκεια* (Thessaloniki 2006) 360, nr. 2 and fig. 81 (A.D. 234/5).

⁹ In their draft Horsley and Ashton discuss reluctantly the possibility of restoring a personal name in -τρας (genitive -τραδος) and mention that their search in PHI yielded only two names, Εύλείτρας (Mysia) and Σωπάτρας (Knidos). But such a restoration should be excluded as it does not cohere well with the beginning of the text and the new reading I propose for the first line as a whole (see below).

ligature with tau whose horizontal bar has been lost. In fact such a ligature is widely used in city's inscriptions of all kinds, especially in the second and third centuries.¹⁰

Of the two fragmentary letters that have survived before τε one can easily recognize: (a) the lower part of a letter consisting of a horizontal bottom bar and a substantial part of a hasta, forming a right angle that certainly belongs to a three-stroke sigma, and (b) two hastas and a wavy horizontal bar at the middle height, which can be certainly identified as eta written in ligature with the following three-stroke sigma. The ligature could be more elaborate, if we assume that in the upper part of eta's right hasta there was a horizontal bar belonging to a tau. In fact such a reading, viz. a ligature of tau-eta-sigma, is supported by the rest of the text itself, particularly αὐτῆς in line 9. Therefore we conclude that before τε we should read either the ending -της of the genitive of a feminine noun or adjective, or the genitive of the article, τῆς.

Working always backwards one can further discern before ΤΗΣ: the lower part (a) of two oblique bars belonging certainly to an alpha, (b) of a narrow hasta, which could be either iota or gamma, and (c) of a rounded base of a letter, either omicron or theta. Since the deceased is referred in the text as συνήθης (6), we are certainly entitled to conclude that, as in many other cases in Thessaloniki, the voluntary association in which he participated was a συνήθ(ε)ια, and consequently to restore [συνή]θια¹¹ in the missing part of the first line.

¹⁰ From a cursory search only of the honorary and funerary altars of Thessaloniki I note the following cases of the ligature (examples could be multiplied): Π. Αδάμ-Βελένη, *Μακεδονικοί βωμοί* (Athens 2002) nr. 3.4–5, pl. 26 (Ἰστυειανόν); nr. 14.12, pl. 31 (τέκνων); nr. 34.2, 8, pl. 42 (Τερευτιανόν), 7 (ἔτει); nr. 47.17, pl. 49 (τετράκις); nr. 57.18, pl. 53 (ἔτει); nr. 65.7, pl. 56 (γραμματεύοντος); nr. 88.2, pl. 65 (Ἀτείμητος); nr. 105.2–3, pl. 73 (Ἀτείμητος); nr. 111.2, pl. 75 (θυγατέρα); nr. 117B.3, pl. 78 (κατεσκευάσεν), 7 (ἔτερος); nr. 159.3, pl. 95 (τέκνων).

¹¹ For similar spelling of the word see e.g. P. Nigdelis, "Voluntary Associations in Roman Thessalonikē," in L. Nasrallah et al. (eds.), *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2010) 42, nr. 40.

The new readings together with some minor improvements allowed by the photographs lead to this revised text of the inscription:

----- ? -----
 [ca. 2-3 ἡ συνή]θια τῆς τε-
 τράδος · ἀρχισυναγ-
 ῳγου Εὐλά<v>δρου · το-
 4 ὦ Ζωσίμου Θεσσαλ-
 ονικέος · Τι(βερῖω) Καθήκο-
 ντι τῷ συνήθι μνήμης
 χάριν καὶ Εἰουλία
 8 Πρόκλα τῷ συγγενῖ
 αὐτῆς καὶ Ἐπιγῶνι τῷ
 ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς. *vacat*

The new readings do not change the interpretation of the inscription I had given in my first publication: it was carved on a gravestone erected on the tomb of a certain Τι(berius) Καθηκον, member of a voluntary association; the expenses of his funeral, as in similar cases known at Thessaloniki,¹² had been paid by the association, by a Julia Prokla,¹³ one of his relatives, and by his wife Epigone. Nevertheless the restoration of the first line throws new light on the history of the association: we learn its title at least partially, since it is not clear whether there was another line before the first preserved, and this helps us to understand its nature. Although on current evidence it is the first association in Thessaloniki and Macedonia entitled συνήθια τῆς τετράδος, we can infer its nature by

¹² See Nigdelis, in *From Roman* 40–42, nrs. 20, 29, and 39.

¹³ In the prosopography of Thessaloniki there is another Julia Procla, a member of an illustrious family whose husband was a councilor. For her family tree see *IG X.2.1* p.86. Since we have no information about the life and family of Julia Procla who appears in the archisynagogos inscription, any attempt to associate the two homonymous women is to my mind risky. Also obscure is the exact family relationship between Julia Procla of our inscription and the deceased.

considering voluntary association in other Greek cities using the word τετράς in their title.

The term means that their members met and celebrated the fourth day of each month, because that was considered the holy day of the god/goddess they worshiped. Such is the case with the tetradistai known to us from passages of Alexis and Menander, Athenian authors of comedies in the fourth century B.C. Tetradistai appear in Alexis' *Choregis* participating in a symposium in which they are offered λέκιθον καὶ μεμβράδας καὶ στέμφυλα.¹⁴ Similar is the context of a passage in the *Kolax* of Menander: during the festival the Aphrodite Pandemos, tetradistai honored the goddess by offering a libation through a professional cook whom they hired, which implies that after the libation a symposium took place.¹⁵ That tetradistai constituted a voluntary association is made clear by the lexicographer Hesychius (τ 614): τετραδισταί· σύνοδος νέων συνήθων κατὰ τετράδα γινομένη, “tetradistai: gathering of young associates taking place on the fourth [of a month].”

The tetradistai of Athens and now of Thessaloniki were certainly not isolated examples of cult associations that took their names from a specific day of the month when their members met to commemorate a deity by offering a libation and organizing a symposium. In other Greek cities are various well-known examples of such associations with names like νομηνιασταί, ἐννατισταί, δεκαδ(τ)ισταί.¹⁶

¹⁴ Alexis fr. 260 (Ath. 287F).

¹⁵ Men. *Kolax* fr.1 Sandbach (= Ath. 659D): τὸν τοῖς τετραδισταῖς διακονούμενον μάγειρον ἐν τῇ τῆς Πανδήμου Ἀφροδίτης ἑορτῇ ποιεῖ (scil. Menander) ταυτὶ λέγοντα· σπονδὴ. δίδου σὺ σπλάγχν' ἀκολουθῶν. ποῖ βλέπεις; / σπονδὴ. φέρ', ὦ παῖ Σωσία. σπονδὴ. καλῶς. / ἔχει. θεοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις εὐχόμεθα / Ὀλυμπίασι, πᾶσι πάσαις—λάμβανε τὴν γλῶτταν ἐν τούτῳ —διδόναι σωτηρίαν, / ὑγίειαν, ἀγαθὰ πολλὰ, τῶν ὄντων τε νῦν / ἀγαθῶν ὄνησιν πᾶσι. ταυτ' εὐχόμεθα.

¹⁶ For tetradiastai see F. Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens* (Leipzig 1909) 64 and 253, and especially “Tetradistai,” *RE* 5A (1934) 1070–1071. Examples of other cult association named for days are *IG* XII.9 1151 (Euböia, III B.C., *Noumeniaistai*), XI.4 1228–1229 (Delos, II B.C., *to*

The last question raised by the new restoration of the first line concerns the god whose holy day was the fourth. According to what we know mainly from literary sources, the fourth day of each month was devoted to three deities: Heracles, Hermes, and Aphrodite.¹⁷ Eros, also, may have laid a claim to this day given his association with Aphrodite. Heracles is linked to the fourth day because, as mentioned in Philochoros' *Περὶ ἡμερῶν, ταύτη* (scil. *τῇ τετάρτῃ*) δὲ καὶ Ἡρακλῆ φησι γεννηθῆναι, "he says that Heracles was born on it."¹⁸ That the fourth was Heracles' holy day is confirmed by the sacrifice to the Heracleidai on Mounichion 4 mentioned in the calendar of the Attic deme Erkhia.¹⁹ As to Hermes, *Homeric Hymn* 4.19 (τετράδι τῇ προτέρῃ, τῇ μιν τέκε πότνια Μαίᾱ) informs us that the fourth was also the day on which he was born.²⁰ This is confirmed not only by various literary sources (authors, lexicographers, and scholiasts) but also by the Erkhia calendar, which provides a sacrifice in honor of Hermes on Thargelion 4.²¹ The same day, finally, was Aphrodite's birthday, according to the scholiast to Hesiod,²² consistent with what we have seen in Menander's *Kolax*.

Which of these deities was worshiped by the Thessalonians who participated in the [συνή]θια τῆς τετράδος is unknown.

κοῖνον τον ενατιστον), and XII.4 551 (Kos, II/I B.C., *enatistai kai dekatistai*).

¹⁷ The relevant testimonies are gathered by J. Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar of the Athenian Year* (Princeton 1975) 16–18.

¹⁸ *FGrHist* 328 F 85 (schol. Pl. *Ap.* 19C); cf. Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar* 17.

¹⁹ *SEG XXI* 541.B.40–44: Μουνιχιῶνο/ς τετράδι ἰσ/ταμένου, Ἡρα/κλείδαις, οἶ/ς, Ἐρχιᾶ(σι) Δ††.

²⁰ See Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar* 17, for other literary sources confirming this information.

²¹ *SEG XXI* 541.E.47–58: Θαργηλιῶνο/ς τετράδι ἰ/σταμένο, Ἐρ/μῆτι, ἐν ἀγορ/ᾱι Ἐρχιᾶσι, / κριός, τούτ/ωι ἱερεῶσθ/αι τὸν κήρυ/κα καὶ τὰ γέ/ρα λαμβάνε/ν καθά<π>ερ ὁ δήμαρχός, Δ.

²² Schol. Hes. *Op.* 800b: ἡ τετάρτη ἱερὰ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἑρμοῦ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς συνουσίαν ἐπιτηδεῖα.

Perhaps the popularity of the cult of Heracles, the ancestral and beloved god of the Macedonians²³ (shown among other things by the fact that voluntary associations in Thessaloniki were devoted to Heracles)²⁴ could justify the assumption that the members of [συνή]θια τῆς τετράδος also worshiped him. However, as there was an association in Thessaloniki dedicated to Aphrodite,²⁵ it cannot be excluded that the new association was devoted to her.²⁶

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²³ For the worship of Heracles in Thessaloniki see P. Iliadou, *Herakles in Makedonien* (Hamburg 1998) 66–74.

²⁴ See Nigdelis, in *From Roman* 39 ff., nrs. 15 (οἱ συνήθεις τοῦ Ἡρακλέους), 16 (οἱ συνήθεις τοῦ Ἡρακλέους), 29 (οἱ συνήθεις Περιτιαστῶν), and 35 (οἱ συνήθεις τοῦ Ἡρακλέους).

²⁵ See Nigdelis, in *From Roman* nr. 18 (θρησκευτὰ Παφίης Ἀφροδίτης).

²⁶ I am grateful to Prof. Greg Horsley and Dr. Norman Ashton for their kindness in intrusting me with a draft of their publication and providing a photograph of the inscription. I express also my sincere thanks to my colleague and friend Dr. Charalambos Kritzas, former Director of the Epigraphic Museum at Athens, for having confirmed my new readings and also providing me with two more photographs.