

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FOR THE PHILOSOPHER ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS

ANGELOS CHANIOTIS

Inscriptions often provide information about great figures of ancient literature. This applies to Arrian, Plutarch and Tacitus no less than to the poet Nikandros of Kolophon or Aristotle. A new find from the city of Aphrodisias in Asia Minor in 2001 now adds some important biographical information on the city's most known author and one of the greatest philosophers of the Imperial period. This new inscription will be published together with other recent epigraphic finds from Aphrodisias in a forthcoming issue of the *American Journal of Archaeology*; as the news about this text has already spread among scholars interested in the history of ancient philosophy, it seemed appropriate to present this text as soon as possible in a journal more likely to be read by scholars interested in classical literature.

The new inscription is written on the marble rectangular base of a statue dedicated by Alexander to his father. The stone was re-used as a trough, but luckily the side which has been destroyed is not the inscribed one. The base (height 1.14 m, width 48.5cm, depth 52.5cm) was found in the town of Karacasu in 2001, but it had originally stood in Aphrodisias. The text reads:

	Ψηφισαμένης		λόσοφος, τῶν Ἀθη-
	τῆς βουλῆς καὶ		νησιν διαδόχων,
	τοῦ δήμου	8	Τ. Αὐρήλιον Ἀλέ-
4	Τίτος Αὐρήλιος		ξανδρον, φιλόσο-
	Ἀλέξανδρος, φι-		φον, τὸν πατέρα

In accordance with a *psephisma* of the council and the people, Titus Aurelius Alexandros, philosopher, one of the heads of the philosophical schools in Athens, (erected the statue of) his father, the philosopher T. Aurelius Alexandros.

There can be no doubt that the philosopher Titus Aurelius Alexandros, who honours his homonymous father, also a philosopher, is the famous Alexander of Aphrodisias, the greatest Peripatetic philosopher of the Imperial period. He has the title of a *diadochos*, that is, the director of one of the philosophical schools in Athens.¹ Unfortunately, the new text does not provide any information on the date, and so it cannot answer the question of when exactly

¹ For this title see J. H. Oliver, 'The Solonian Constitution and a Consul of AD 149', *GRBS* 13, 1977, 99-107; J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen 1978), 344; J. Hahn, *Der Philosoph und die Gesellschaft. Selbstverständnis, öffentliches Auftreten und populäre Erwartungen in der hohen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 1989), 122-26.

Alexander became head of the Peripatetic school (c. AD 198-209).² The name Titus Aurelius, borne both by the father and the son (L. 4 and 8), implies that the family was awarded Roman citizenship by the later emperor Antoninus Pius (Titus Aurelius Fulvus Antoninus), probably when he was holding the office of the governor of Asia in AD 135/136 (as was pointed out to me by M. Frede), and this safely dates the inscription to the late 2nd or early 3rd century.

The most important biographical information provided by the new inscription is the fact that Alexander was the son of a philosopher. We already knew several of his teachers (Aristokles of Messene or Aristoteles of Mytilene, Herminos and Sosigenes), but his first educator in philosophy must have been his father; such family traditions in philosophy are not uncommon in the Imperial period.³ The inscription does not refer to Alexander's school, *i.e.* the Peripatetics, but describes his position in general as 'one of the *diadochoi* in Athens'.⁴

The new honorary inscription throws some new light on the vivid intellectual life at Aphrodisias in the Imperial period, the only surviving product of which are (apart from Alexander's works) the novel of Chariton of Aphrodisias and a few fragments of the historiographical works of Apollonios (*FrGrHist* 740 F 1-16). From an honorary inscription⁵ we know of a library in the city, and more texts inform us about Aphrodisian scholars, such as the tragic poet C. Julius Longianus who was honoured in Halikarnassos for the public lectures he gave in that city (AD 127),⁶ the sophists Chaireas, Marcus Flavius Antonius Lysimachos, Claudius Aurelius Zelos, his son Iulius Aurelius Charidemos Ioulianos, Marcus Antonius Popillius Agelaos, and Pereitianos Dometeinos, and the orator Tib. Claudius Aurelius Ktesias.⁷ Other philosophers, in addition to the two Alexandroi and the Peripatetic Adrastos,⁸ are the prominent citizen Marcus Aurelius Diodoros Kallimedes, who is called in a post-humous honorary inscription 'a true philosopher',⁹ and in Late Antiquity Asklepiodotos, leaders of the late pagans (late 5th century AD).¹⁰ From random references to benefactors who are called sophists or orators and sophists in their honorary inscriptions we may infer that philosophy and rhetoric played a very important part in the life of the elite.

2 R. W. Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias. Scholasticism and innovation', *ANRW* II.36.2, (Berlin 1987), 1177f.

3 See *e.g.*, A. W. Parsons, 'A Family of Philosophers at Athens and Alexandria', in *Commemorative Studies in Honor of T. L. Shear* (Baltimore 1949), 268-72.

4 For similar expression see *e.g.* *IG* II² 1099 L. 6: *diadochus Athenis*; Porph., *Vit. Plot.* 20: οἱ τ' Ἀθήνησι δῖαδοχοί. References to δῖαδοχοί of particular schools are limited to those of the Epicureans and the Stoics (Hahn, *op.cit.*, 125).

5 *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua*, VIII, 498.

6 C. Roueché, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* (London 1993), no. 88.

7 The evidence has been collected by L. Robert, 'Inscriptions d'Aphrodisias', *L'Antiquité Classique* 35 (1966), 395-98 and B. Puech, *Orateurs et sophistes grecs dans les inscriptions d'époque impériale* (Paris 2002), 165f. no. 59 (Chaireas), 166-69 nos. 61-63 (Charidemos), 187-89 nos. 76-77 (Ktesias), 338-41 nos. 167-68 (Lysimachos) and 471f. no. 260 (Zelos). Agelaos and Pereitianos Dometeinos are mentioned in unpublished texts.

8 H. B. Gottschalk, 'Aristotelian Philosophy in the Roman world from the time of Cicero to the end of the Second Century AD', *ANRW* II 36.2 (Berlin 1987), 1155f.

9 *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua*, VIII 499 b 15f.

10 For the activity of Asklepiodotos and his homonymous son-in-law, see P. Athanassiadi, *Damascius, the philosophical history. Text with translation and notes* (Athens 1999), 202-33, 248f., 284f., 348f.; A. Chaniotis, 'Zwischen Konfrontation und Interaktion: Christen, Juden und Heiden im spätantiken Aphrodisias', in *Patchwork: Dimensionen multikultureller Gesellschaften*, ed. C. Ackermann and K. E. Müller (Bielefeld 2002), 102f. For a house decorated with portraits of philosophers (the seat of the philosophical school of Asklepiodotos?) see R. R. R. Smith, 'Late Roman philosopher portraits from Aphrodisias', *Journal of Roman Studies* 80, 1990, 127-55.

It is beyond my area of expertise to comment on the significance of the new text for the history of philosophy in the Imperial period, but I hope that the publication of Alexander's inscription will attract as much interest as the rumours about its existence.

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