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THE RELUCTANT RHETOR – A RECENTLY PUBLISHED INSCRIPTION FROM  
LATE IMPERIAL EPHEOS

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- 10 ἔπαινον εἰς τοὺς ἔπειτα παραπέμποντες ὥσπερ ἐκτείνοντες τοῖς γράμμασιν  
τὴν  
11 μνήμην εἰς χρόνου μῆκος ἄπειρον, ἐλεγχομένου τοῦ παίζαντος διὰ τὴν  
ἑορτὴν τοῦ  
12 βήματος ὡς ἐν φίλοις ἀλλ' οὐκ εἰς συγγραφὴν τότε τολμήσαντος. ἀλλ', εἰ  
13 καὶ ταῦτα τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τρόπον καὶ τὸ λυσιτελεῖς ἑκατέρῳ φανερόν,  
14 νικάτω τὸ δόγμα τῆς πόλεως πάντως. ὁ νικηθεὶς οὐκ αἰσχυνθήσεται  
15 διὰ τὴν πόλιν, ἣν ἀπάντων κρατεῖν ἀεὶ νικῶσαν εὐχομαι τοὺς μὲν  
16 φίλους εὐ ποιοῦσαν ἐκόντας τοὺς δὲ ἐναντίους ἐξ ἀνάγκης  
17 ἄκοντας.
- 18 κύριε βοήθῃ πάσα ψυχῇ καὶ τῷ γράψαντι.

Translation:

(I hesitate to agree, because there might be somebody), who, once hidden envy arouses a tongue given to mockery, also criticises if someone receives from such a city any reward however small, and commenting on such an honour does not allow what has happened to remain free from reproach.

Secondly, because for me the burden is mounting up of debts from the benefits from your city, whilst my present resources are insufficient for repayment, just as those who have contracted multiple debts despair of repaying in one instalment, because, though they are moved by goodwill towards their creditors, they are not able to pay back their debts.

And thirdly, because you think it right that words playfully improvised under the necessity of honouring the custom, so that I should leave the safe privilege of silence, should be written down, to pass on to those after us the panegyric, extending by means of letters, so to speak, its memory to a measureless length of time; even though one who has improvised at the festival of the tribune is thus exposed as having then taken that risk on the understanding that he was among friends rather than expecting publication.

Nevertheless, even if this is the way things are and the advantage to each side it is clear, may the decision of the city prevail entirely. One prevailed upon will not feel shamed by the city, which, I pray, may master everyone and always prevail - over willing friends by the means of benefits, by compulsion over unwilling enemies.

Lord, help every soul and the scribe!

Commentary:

In general the text is in orthodox attic vocabulary. But phrases like διὰ τὴν ἀνάγκην τῆς τοῦ νόμου τιμῆς (II. 8/9) or εἰς συγγραφὴν τολμήσαντος (I. 12) and the use of ὑπὸ with an abstract noun in I. 7 (ὑπὸ ... εὐγνωμοσύνης) are characteristic of the stilted bombast of

late antique rhetorical prose. Every sentence is grammatically correct, but twisted into intricate, mannered periods. The thoughts expressed are logically structured, but adorned with very artificial comparisons and tropes.

One sees conscious rhetorical structuring and embellishment in the following features of the text: ἔπειτα (l. 4) and καὶ τρίτον (l. 8) show that the partly lost first paragraph contained a statement parallel to the two surviving ones, probably introduced by some such formula as πρῶτον, ὅτι ...

Each of the two remaining ὅτι - sentences governs a structurally parallel subordinate clause, which provides a comparison (καθάπερ ll. 6ff. and ὡςπερ ll. 10ff.), and is supplemented by a genitive absolute (οὐκ ἀρκούσης ... ll. 5ff. and ἐλεγχομένου ll. 11ff.). To avoid boring the reader the comparisons and the genitives are presented in chiasmic order.

The author varies νικάτω τὸ δόγμα τῆς πόλεως with the passive ὁ νικηθεὶς (οὐκ αἰχυνθήσεται) διὰ τὴν πόλιν (both l. 14) and opposes τὰ πολλὰ (l. 6) ἀθρόαν (l. 7) and ἐκόντας (l. 16) to ἄκοντας (l. 17). For the sake of variety, ἐκόντας is linked with the participle, εὐποιοῦσαν (l. 16), while ἄκοντας is qualified with a prepositional phrase, δι' ἀνάγκης (l. 16).

In line 9 the phrase τὸ τῆς κιοπῆς ἀκίνδυνον γέρασ is a very common quotation.<sup>3</sup> We find it in this form in Aelius Aristeides or. 46,143, who adds ὡς τις τῶν Κείων ἔφη ποιητῆς. A scholion on the passage<sup>4</sup> explains: τὸ δὲ κιοπῆς ἀκίνδυνον γέρασ ἐκ Κιομονίδουσ ἐστὶ τοῦ Κ(ε)ρίου. Other sources though,<sup>5</sup> who quote the line without naming the original author, have κιογᾶν or κιογῆς instead of κιοπῆς. This leads Page to suggest that Simonides may have written ἔστι καὶ κιογᾶσ ἀκίνδυνον γέρασ.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to see that both Libanios and our rhetor have the very same words as Aelius Aristeides, i.e. not the precise original words, when they quote the phrase.<sup>7</sup> We know from Libanios himself that he read with admiration speeches of his model Aristeides, sitting under the bust of the νεός Δημοσθένης which a friend had given him.<sup>8</sup> A general comparison of style between Aristeides, Libanios and the author of the stone allows the latter to be regarded as a fairly minor but typical exponent of the late atticising and archaizing manner. Eduard Norden's description of the manner of the archaizers of the second century AD as "ein wahrhaft

<sup>3</sup> See Dennis Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* 582, Simonides 77, (Oxford 1968). To the passages he gives one can add Eus. *Vita Constantini* 1,10,1: κιοπᾶν ἀσφαλὲς καὶ ἀκίνδυνον.

<sup>4</sup> Aelius Aristeides ed. Dindorf Vol. 3,501.

<sup>5</sup> Plut.Moral. 207c (an apophthegma of Augustus); Stob.Florig. 3,33,5 (referring to the anecdote in Plutarch), IG 14,2136 (from the city of Rome).

<sup>6</sup> He suggests this probably for metrical reasons: this is an acatalectic trochaic trimeter.

<sup>7</sup> Lib.decl. 15,4; also in Julian or. 1,3 B.

<sup>8</sup> Lib.ep. 1551. On the "Strenge Archaisten" see E.Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, Vol.1, 2nd ed. Leipzig/Berlin 1909,401-407, on Libanios 402ff.

mumienhafter Stil"<sup>9</sup> seems quite adequate for the Ephesos fragment too. It is not impossible that our rhetor has read Aristeides or Libanios and memorized the nice archaic phrase for future use.<sup>10</sup>

Another illustration of the writer's pleasure in using archaic or poetic words is found in l. 11: χρόνου μῆκος ἄπειρον. Ἄπειρον is certainly a rather poetical word and the expression χρόνου μῆκος, found for example in Aesch.Prom. 1020 and Soph.Trach. 69, is distinctly pompous in the present context.

The rhetorical training of the author is particularly apparent in the overall structure of the surviving text: he agrees to give a written version of a speech already given, but not without adorning his reply with three *recusationes*, showing off how well he knows the conventions of panegyric oratory.<sup>11</sup> Three reasons are given for his reluctance. First, the secret malice (of colleagues?) might lead them to ridicule him, when they hear that his speech has found acclaim in such an important city as Ephesos.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, a point he rather labours, that his favour in providing a text of the speech would be so embarrassingly small compared with the benefits he has received from the city in the past; he illustrates what he means by comparing himself with debtors, deeply grateful to their creditors, who would so much love to pay back their debts in one instalment, but cannot and therefore nearly despair. His third "reason" has more point: his work was an improvisation, since the rule of the "festival of the speakers' platform" called for an extempore, rather than a prepared, speech, and it seems inappropriate to subject his own to indefinite preservation.<sup>13</sup>

His final wish, that the city master its friends with benefits and its adversaries against their will, may remind one of the final passage of Xenophon's Hiero (11,14) where Simonides (-again-) says: ἐὰν γὰρ τοὺς φίλους κρατῆς εἰ ποιῶν οὐ μὴ σοὶ δύνωνται ἀντέχειν οἱ πολέμιοι, expressing thus the commonplace notion of imposing obligations of friendship by means of favours given, the *do ut des* principle.

It is obvious that the author of this text was certainly not an original mind nor a great stylist, but he provides a lively example of what thousands of mediocre rhetors could produce after being trained in the discipline.

In contrast to this carefully composed text stands the short prayer in line 18, which was inscribed later: κύριε βοήθι πάσα ψυχῆ καὶ τῷ γράψαντι. Someone wrote βοήθι for

<sup>9</sup> Norden l.c. 392.

<sup>10</sup> At any rate this is likelier than that he has read Simonides' works; the phrase was already a literary cliché, which must have made its way into florilegia for rhetors too, where the Ephesos rhetor might have found it.

<sup>11</sup> Many panegyrics start with assertions that the talent of the speaker will never suffice to do justice to the topic, the excellence of the honorand (Menander Rhetor 1 recommends this topos especially for the βασιλικός λόγος, on the emperor; cf. XII Panegyrici Latini, ed. R.A.B.Mynors (Oxford 1964) I,3,5; II(XI)1,1-5; III(XI),1,f etc.), the greatness of the city (e.g. Ael.Arist. 14, εἰς Ῥώμην 2: Ἴσως μὲν καὶ μείζονες δυναθῆναι τοιούτου ἄρα λόγον, ὅτις παρισώσεται τοσῶδε ὄγκῳ πόλεως).

<sup>12</sup> This paraphrase involves some guesswork based on the incomplete first sentence.

<sup>13</sup> He shows thus also that he knows that there are different rules for extempore and prepared speaking.

βοήθει, an iotacism, a "mistake" the author of the main text would not have made. The κύριε βοήθει formula is quite common in later antiquity.<sup>14</sup> It is first found in early Christian epitaphs,<sup>15</sup> then as an apotropaic inscription on lintels;<sup>16</sup> it is not inconceivable that the rhetor's stone was re-used in the latter way.

#### Discussion.

Since the text gives no dates, names or other specific data, other indications must be sought to interpret the document as a whole and to put it into a larger context.

The stylistic analysis combined with the observation that it contains a direct address (l. 9 ἄξιούτε) suggest that this is the end of a letter<sup>17</sup> by an orator to a city, almost certainly Ephesos. The author refers (ll. 9-12) to an ἔπαινον, a panegyric speech, which he had delivered extempore, as required by the rule of the "festival of the speakers' platform", the ἑορτὴ τοῦ βήματος. The city had formally (δόγμα l. 13) expressed the wish to receive a written version of this speech; the letter affirms in reply that this δόγμα is to "win", the rhetor thereby agreeing to provide a text.

Three points arise from the text which call for further comment and which by combination suggest a context.

First, the ἔπαινον. The strongest clue to its content is the fact that the city wishes to put it up in writing. A likely topic therefore would be a panegyric speech on the city itself. Less likely would be a narrower topic, such as praise of a founder-hero, or even a completely different theme which, for reasons unknown to us, pleased the audience enough to call for an inscription.

Secondly, the nature of the ἑορτὴ τοῦ βήματος.<sup>18</sup> As is well known, festive occasions among the Greeks were usually accompanied by literary compositions for the event: in very early times, these were mainly choruses; drama too has to be seen in this context. From the late fifth century onwards, the epideictic prose speech rapidly grew in importance on and for such occasions.<sup>19</sup> It is natural enough therefore to find epideictic display in connexion with a civic festival, but the question must remain open whether these speeches were the central feature of the event in Ephesos, as for example at the διάλογος in Plataiai, where every fourth year speakers from Athens and Sparta gave speeches in praise of their cities thus

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<sup>14</sup> In Byzantine contracts one finds quite often next to the ἐγράφη of the notary a κύριε βοήθει. J.M.Diethart, 'Κύριε βοήθει in byzantinischen Notarsunterschriften, ZPE 49,1982,79-82 and sometimes the formula is found in subscriptions at the end of manuscripts.

<sup>15</sup> C.M.Kaufmann, Handbuch der altchristlichen Epigraphik, Freiburg 1977,142.

<sup>16</sup> Kaufmann l.c. 163.

<sup>17</sup> Rather than of a speech, as the editors propose.

<sup>18</sup> Without further parallels I cannot follow the editors in JÖAI who write "(hier wohl eine der üblichen organisierten Volksversammlungen)".

<sup>19</sup> On its origins see Vinzenz Buchheit, Untersuchungen zur Theorie des Genos Epideiktikon von Gorgias bis Aristoteles, München 1960.

competing for the honour of leading the procession,<sup>20</sup> or a contribution to it, as e.g. the Olympiakoi Logoi adorned an essentially athletic and religious festival. The phrase ἑορτὴ τοῦ βήματος could either be the formal name of the event referred to, or a description the rhetor chose to emphasize his contribution - a speech. No festival formally named ἑορτὴ τοῦ βήματος is attested in Ephesos, nor, as far as I know, anywhere else.

Thirdly, it is worth considering whether the speech might have been delivered at a rhetorical contest. The νικάτω (l. 14) could be a highly artificial allusion to the victory of the author, who now magnanimously is prepared to be "prevailed upon" (νικηθεῖς l. 14). Rhetorical competitions have a long tradition in Greek culture, from the contest of Homer and Hesiod to the Agon as a central part of tragedy to the revival of professional tours of rivalling rhetors in the Greek cities in the second century AD, Radermacher's "Konzertredner".

The art of rhetoric experienced a considerable revival in the fourth century AD and continued to be taught widely. Its theoretical canon included detailed rules on how to praise a city, which might give us some ideas about the content of the ἔπαινον referred to in the inscription: according to Menander Rhetor<sup>21</sup> in the section πῶς χρῆ πόλεις ἐπαινεῖν of his treatise on epideictic speeches, such a speech is a mixture between praising a country and praising a person. One ought, he says, to talk about the site, the climate and the products of a polis, its position relative to the cities of the neighbourhood, its origins and its history. Further, one should describe special qualities of the place, such as a good constitution, learning, music, laws, religion, relationships with foreigners and among the inhabitants: in short how the virtues which philosophy seeks in individuals and judges them by are manifested in the city as a whole. Surviving examples of such encomia by for instance Aelius Aristeides<sup>22</sup> and Libanios, with whose style in general the Ephesos-inscription is comparable, show indeed these thematic elements. Libanios' 'Antiochikos' was composed for a major local civic festival, the Olympic Games of Antioch,<sup>23</sup> probably those held in AD 356.<sup>24</sup>

City encomia occur quite frequently at festivals. Menander writes: "A further observation to be made about encomia of cities is that some are common to all times, some to special occasions. They are special to occasions when the speeches are made at feasts or festivals or

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<sup>20</sup> N.Robertson, A point of precedence at Plataia: the dispute between Athens and Sparta over leading the procession, *Hesperia* 55,1986,88-102; fragment of such a speech IG II<sup>2</sup> 2788.

<sup>21</sup> Treatise I,2,346ff.; see D.A.Russell and N.G.Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, Text, Translation and Commentary, Oxford 1981.

<sup>22</sup> 14, Speech on Rome (on which see R.Klein, *Die Romrede des Aelius Aristeides*, (Darmstadt 1981 and 1983); J.A.Oliver, *The Civilizing Power*, *Transactions of the Amer.Philos.Soc.* N.S. 58,1 (1968)); *Panathenaikos* (13 D) and the occasional speech for Smyrna (19-21 K).

<sup>23</sup> Libanios or. 11. On the games see Glanville Downey, *The Olympic Games of Antioch in the Fourth Century AD*, *TAPA* 70,1939,428-438.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Petit, *Zur Datierung des "Antiochikos" (or. 11) des Libanios*, in G.Fatouros and T.Krischer, *Libanios WdF* 621 (Darmstadt 1983,129-49).



at a competition or a gladiatorial show. They are common when they have no such pretexts".<sup>25</sup>

To sum up the discussion so far: we have a panegyric speech, a festival and rhetors (a school of rhetors?) and finally the guess that there was a competition of some sort.

It is not possible to postulate a festival held at regular intervals in honour of the city with a speech on Ephesos each time it was held, because the inscription makes it clear that the speech was extempore; how could one "improvise" on a topic which everybody knew in advance?

It seems equally unlikely that the *ἑορτή* was an event which happened only once, otherwise the *νόμος* in l. 9 would be difficult to explain.

A possible reconstruction of a background to the newly found inscription could be as follows: there could have been a regularly held public festival, where speeches were held on topics set out *ad hoc* but from the canon of rhetorical teaching and that this particular one happened to be a praise of the city which pleased the citizens so much that they wished to have it in writing.

One or two points remain. As often with inscriptions it is not easy to explain why the text of the letter was inscribed on stone at all. An obvious possibility is that the present text was appended to the public inscription of the entire *ἔπαινον*, the request for which the letter answered in the first place. Even so, the additional trouble and expense of inscribing the letter is puzzling. One might speculate that the rhetor was a famous man<sup>26</sup> in his day, and that the Ephesians wanted to be able to boast that "the great such-an-such said this about us, and here is the letter to prove it ...". It is less likely that the letter came to be inscribed inadvertently by being affixed to the end of the script from which the mason works, since scribes and therefore very likely masons too were paid by lines.<sup>27</sup>

It might seem strange that a city like Ephesos<sup>28</sup> takes an interest in the work of so mediocre (at least in our eyes) a rhetor. But if indeed he had composed an encomium of the city, the speech and the letter would be easily explicable within the frame work of a well-attested feature of late antique city life. Especially in the second and third century AD we find major cities of Asia minor, among others Ephesos and Smyrna, in eager competition for official honorific titles such as *πρώτη τῆς Ἀσίας*, *μητρόπολις* or *νεώκορος τῶν Σεβαστῶν* etc.<sup>29</sup> A letter of Antoninus Pius to the Ephesians settles their complaints about the Pergamenes who had, it was claimed, appropriated titles the emperor had granted only to

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<sup>25</sup> I,2,365 25ff. (transl. Russell/Wilson).

<sup>26</sup> One should not rule out the possibility that the author was famous not as rhetor but e.g. as a member of the imperial court.

<sup>27</sup> According to Diocletian's price edict [paragraph] 39f. (ed. S.Lauffer, Berlin 1971).

<sup>28</sup> On Ephesos in the late fourth and fifth century AD see Clive Foss, *Ephesos after Antiquity* (Cambridge 1979).

<sup>29</sup> E.g. IK 12 (Ephesos) 304, 10-14; IGR IV (Smyrna) 1421; IvMilet 260; *Altertümer von Pergamon* VIII,3,24; IvSardes 63.

Ephesos.<sup>30</sup> Possibly an even closer parallel to our inscription is offered by a recently discovered third century inscription from Perge, a hymnus on the city itself.<sup>31</sup>

Evidence for the rivalry between Ephesos and Smyrna can be found as late as the mid fifth century AD.<sup>32</sup>

However one interprets details and speculates about the context, the new discovery from Ephesos is a very unusual literary inscription and throws an interesting light on the fact that the tradition of Greek panegyric speech was still alive - and how.

#### Appendix: Diogenes of Oenoanda - a parallel?

If the letter of the rhetor is indeed only the end of a much longer inscription, i.e. his encomium and the letter, one might hope to find parallels to support so bold an assumption. One would look for a major literary text inscribed for its own sake without any (immediate) political intention.

By good fortune we have a kind of parallel: in 1884 M.Holleaux and P.Paris published a group of fragments from the small Anatolian city of Oenoanda and a few years later, in 1897, the seminal article by R.Heberdey and E.Kalinka appeared in the BCH<sup>33</sup> on this major text: a local dignitary, in old age and ill, published a digest of the complete doctrine of Epicurus. Himself an Epicurean, Diogenes of Oenoanda wanted to make the wholesome ideas of his teacher accessible to his fellow citizens. The inscription can be dated to around AD 200. In the last twenty years have come to light many more fragments of this enormous inscription, which originally covered a wall of over 40m, 120 or more columns of text, with another parallel range of the same length above and even more text higher up.<sup>34</sup> Apart from its literary nature and length, a further parallel between this text and the Ephesos-inscription reconstructed in the way suggested here is that it contains various letters of Diogenes, one of them possibly referring to the publication of the main text.<sup>35</sup>

The survival of so many fragments from Oenoanda and, as yet, only one in Ephesos, does not tell against the assumption of such a very long literary inscription in Ephesos: one rather expects in a big provincial capital much more frequent re-use of building material than in the backward little Oenoanda.

I am aware of the problem of comparing a second with a fourth (or even later) century text, but the existence of the latter at least shows that a literary inscription of considerable dimensions would not be completely unparalleled.

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<sup>30</sup> IK 15 (Ephesos) 1489.

<sup>31</sup> Epigr.Anat. 4,1984,1ff.

<sup>32</sup> Foss l.c., quoting an inscription condemning some "wicked Smyrnaeans" for an unknown offence.

<sup>33</sup> Die philosophische Inschrift von Oenoanda, BCH 21,1897,346-443.

<sup>34</sup> C.W.Chilton, Diogenes of Oenoanda, The Fragments (Oxford 1971) XLIVf.

<sup>35</sup> Chilton frg. 51.