KRZYSZTOF NAWOTKA

INSCR. SCYTH. MIN. I 207 (ISTROS) RECONSIDERED


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ISM I 207 found in 1951 in Istros on the Black Sea and published in 1960 by Dionise M. Pippidi has attracted substantial interest among the scholarship. This is due to the fact that it names the first pontarch, i.e. the first president of the Western Pontic league. The stone containing the inscription is broken on all sides yet the meaning is not lost: it is a list of winners in a sacred agon (line 2, τόν ιε/ρόν ἄγωνα - lines 15/16). Top, bottom and the original left side of the stone disappeared; one has to agree with the editor that on the left 1 or 2 letters are missing in lines 5–18. On the right the original end of the line is preserved in ll. 7, 8, 13–17. Having studied the stone insitu I would like to offer a few observations on reading this inscription.

Pippidi’s readings are for the most part good, save for not paying attention to ancient punctuation marks. They take the shape of raised dots which accompany abbreviated Roman names in lines: 3 M:, 5 M: ΟΥΛΠ:, 6 M: ΟΥΑ:, 8 ΟΥΑ:, 10 ΑΙΑ:, 14 Π ΑΙΑ:. These punctuation marks were not employed by the cutter in a consistent manner since they do not occur with all abbreviated praenomina and nomina.

More substantial remarks have to be made on two of the onomastic restorations. Pippidi reads lines 3–4 προστατοῦντων δὲ Μ(άρκου) Ο[ι]λ(που) Ἀρτεμιδόρου, πρῶτου ποντάρχου κτλ. The nomen of the first pontarch is certain as several more Marci Ulpii are attested in this inscription and the bottom part of upsilon can be read on the stone. The first preserved letter of the cognomen is, however, lambda and not delta; this can be seen even on the photo in ISM. There are no doubts about identifying the letter which stands clear against the undamaged surface of the stone and is very similar in shape to the lambdas in ll. 5, 11, 18. Therefore Pippidi’s restoration does not hold; the cognomen of the first pontarch ends in -λωρος.

There are seven Greek names ending in -λωρος: Ἀλωρος, Πέλωρος, Τέλωρος, Πύλωρος, Φλωρος, Ὀπάλωρος, Χλωρος/Χλωρός. None of these is attested in Istros.

The line length in this inscription, as determined in the well-preserved lines 5–13, is 32–36 letters. Therefore it is not possible to establish precisely the size of the lacuna in lines 3–4 and to determine which cognomen of the first pontarch should be restored there. Most likely the lacuna is 7–9 letters long and, assuming the usual abbreviation of the pontarch’s nomen Ο[ι]λ(που) or Ο[ι]λ(που), one may expect quite a long cognomen, i.e. Ὀπάλωρος.

This was the conclusion of a paper I presented at a conference in 1994. Nevertheless this restoration is but tentative since the name Ὀπάλωρος is very rare. To my knowledge it is not attested epigraphically and, as a matter of fact, it occurs only once in a fifth-century letter of Neilos. It is perhaps more judicious to leave the name of the first pontarch unrestored as Μ(άρκου) Ο[ι]λ(που) -


3 I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Adrian V. Rădulescu, the Director of the Museums of Constanţa and Histria for his friendly hospitality during my research trip to Romania in September 1993 and to The Ohio State University for the financial assistance of my research.

4 According to F. Dornseif, Rückläufiges Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen, ausgearbeitet von Bernhard Hansen, Berlin 1957. A search which I have run on TLG and PHI disk #6 has not provided any more names with this termination.


6 Nili ep. I 151 (PG 79).
What is truly important here is the fact that the name of the first president of the Western Pontic koinon is not, as universally accepted, M. Ulpio Artemidoros. This renders obsolete much of the present discussion about the early years of this league.

The second remark on the reading of a proper name concerns the last line of the inscription. Pippidi reads the second part of it: Λ. . Λ. Καλλικλέου. Closer examination of the stone shows ΑΙΜ[ . Λ]ΙΣ and thus the last name in this inscription can be restored: ΑΙμ[ί]λικ[ο]ς Καλλικλέου.

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