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ΠΡΟΣΩΠΙΔΙΟΝ
A Musical Term in a Delian Inscription (IG XI 120.49)


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The word “προσώδιον” is well attested in the terminology of ancient poetry and religion in the sense of “processional song”. The form προσώδιον occurs a few times in late lexicographical sources. Suda 4.230.31 has an entry: προσωδια και προσώδιον’ ὑμνος (he also has two entries for προσόδια: 4.229.26 and 29, not acknowledging any relationship or difference between this and προσώδιον).1 Et. Mag. 690,33,42, 44 seems to use προσώδιον where we might expect προσόδιον, defining it as λιτανεία μετά ὑμνων.2 We also find an etymologically meaningless form προσώδιον (without the first iota) where we might expect προσόδιον in some MSS of the discussion of the προσόδιον in Photius, Bibl. p. 320a.3 The general feeling about προσώδιον is that it is an ad hoc formulation, and not a real word, perhaps a result of confusion with words like ἐπώδιον,4 or with the word προσωδία, which can mean “song”: see Critias, DKB 57: προσωδιαν τὰς πρὸς κυθάραν ὑδάς προσωδιαν’ ἀρκέσει καλεῖν).5

Not so. “προσώδιον” occurs in Delian temple inventories (IG XI 120.49), where two victorious ψάλται are said to have won “μετά τοῦ προσώδιον”.

ψάλται: Δημήτριος μετά προσώδιον, Κλεόστρατος μετά προσώδιον (The underlining was used by Dürrbach to indicate parts of the inscription that he read when he first looked at the inscription in 1885, but found it impossible to read when he tried to read it for the second time in 1907).6 The date is 236 BCE.7 The date is 236 BCE.8 The date is 236 BCE.6 The date is 236 BCE.7 The date is 236 BCE.8 This phrase must specify an additional circumstance of performance, rather like προσωδία in Critias’ sense. There remains a possibility that it might have some other unknown meaning in Hellenistic musicology, referring to a specialised form of song.

If προσώδιον is a real word, it would not be surprising if it was confused with προσόδιον as early as the Hellenistic period, just as it was in late lexicographical sources. Thus, according to the conventional reconstruction of Ps. Plutarch, De Musica 1132c, Heracleides of Pontus, says that Klonas was the first to construct τοὺς αὐλῳδικοὺς τόμους καὶ τὰ προσόδια, which is usually taken to mean “nomoi and prosodia sung to the aulos”; but if we read τὰ προσώδια it might mean instead “nomoi

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1 4.229.26: προσόδια ἀπὸ τῶν προσώδιων, οὐτὶ δὲ ἔλεγαν τὰς προσαγωγέσιν τῶν θεών ποιμάς, καὶ προσωδία τὰ εἰς πανηγύρεσι θεών ποιήματα παρὰ τῶν λυρικῶν λεγόμενα. 4.229.29: προσώδια ὑμνος. ἀρχή προσώδιον τι κάλλιον ἄρχομέναι ἡ καταπαυμέναι ἡ θεωρίης ἐλατήρα αἰδέων.

2 Sylburg restores προσόδιον according to Gaisford’s apparatus; see H. Färber, Die Lyrik in der Kunsttheorie der Antike (Munich, 1936), 1, 48–9. Cf. Σ in Dion. Thrac. pg. 305,30 Hilg.

3 320a17: προσόδιον Α, προσόδιος Μ (manuscripts cited according to A. Severyns, Recherches sur la Chrestomathie de Proclus, i. Le Codex 239 de Photius (Liège, 1938), 2, p. 42; A = Ven. Marc 450, M = Ven. Marc. 451); at 320a18 in heading to chapter 40, 320a18: τι ἔστι το προσόδιον Α, περὶ προσόδιον Μ; but not at 320a14; one manuscript (B = Paris Graec 451) has προσώδιον consistently.

4 See C. D. Buck and W. Peterson, A Reverse Index of Greek Nouns and Adjectives (Chicago, 1944).

5 See so R. Muth, RE s. v. Prosdion 857; LSJ s.v.; Buck and Peterson (above, n. 4), 63.

6 See F. Dürrbach, Inscriptiones Graecae XI.1 = Inscriptiones Deli 2 (Berlin, 1912), 8.

7 See P. Bruneau, Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l’époque hellénistique et à l’époque impériale (Paris, 1970) [Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, fasc. 217], 74

sung to the aulos and accompanying songs (sung to the kithara)”. The second interpretation has the advantage that both genres that Klonas is attributed with having invented are musical.

It might permissible to offer a speculation about the relationship between προσόδιον and προσώμβιδιον. Although προσόδιον usually means a processional song performed by a khoros, in Hellenistic agonistic inscriptions the προσόδιον seems to be regarded as a form of musical performance.9 Such agonistic προσόδια may have been monodic,10 and they might not even have been performed in procession, but by musicians standing in full regalia. Such “virtual προσόδια” would have belied their name. Perhaps a feeling arose that “προσώμβιδιον” was a more appropriate term for what had become essentially a quasi-musical genre.

To conclude: if we trust Dittenberger’s first reading of IG XI 120.49, and there is no reason not to, προσώμβιδιον is a real word, not a ghost, and it belongs in our lexica.

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9 See e.g. examples in Soteria inscriptions; Nachtergael 307; Nachtergael 4.16 (page 410) and Nachtergael 9.13–5 (p. 420).

10 E. Reisch, RE 3.2 (1899), 2438.