

An Istrian Dedication to Leto

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One of the fragments included in the corpus of Istrian inscriptions by D.M. Pippidi under the heading *Varia incerta* is a small piece of marble with beautiful engraved letters (*I. Histriae* 380). Nothing is known about the circumstances of this find. The editor noted that the fragment is broken on both the left and right sides and dated it to the 4th century BC. In his book-review of *I. Histriae*, L. Moretti suggested that this fragment could belong to a decree.¹ However, he failed to observe that, according to the description given by Pippidi, only the lateral sides of the stone were broken. This would mean that the text could not have had more than four lines; not enough for a decree!

The stone is, in fact, a base which could support a small bronze (?) statuette, so the attempt to restore the text must search for a dedication formula. Pippidi gave the following transcription:

--- ΟΘΕΜ -----
--- ΤΟΓΕΝ -----
--- ΝΗΚΟΣ -----
--- ΛΗΤΟ -----

A revised examination (August 2002) of the stone in the *lapidarium* of the Museum of Histria/Istros (inv. no. 238) revealed that the first letter (l. 1) is an *omega*, that in l. 2 before the *tau* there are the remains of the right foot of another *omega* and, particularly important, there is no trace of any letter before the *lambda* at the beginning of l. 4. The disposition of the letters indicates a good *stoichedon*. It is therefore certain that ΛΗΤΟ is the beginning of the last word, and insofar as the text seems to be a dedication, I assume that we have here the dative Λητο[ῆ].

Starting from this crucial point, the next step would be to identify the name of the dedicator. The combination of the letters revealed by l. 2 offers plenty of scope to develop it into a common Greek personal name, while the letters in l. 1 could permit other solutions. The key seems to be l. 3: it is hard to conceive of the group ΝΗΚΟΣ as being a part of one word (neither *ethnikon* nor anything else), and the sole remaining – but very attractive way of dividing it – is [- -]ΝΗ ΚΟΣ[- - -]. I suggest [γυ]γῆ κόσ[μημα] and consequently the genitive [Πρ]ωτογέν[ους] for the name in l. 2, which both make a perfect *stoichedon*. An alternative possibility is to presuppose a formula

such as [ῆ δεινα] | [Πρ]ωτογέν[ους], | [γυ]γῆ Κοσ[- -], i.e. “daughter of Protogenes and wife of Kos[- -]”, without any mention of the object of the dedication; however, although not obligatory, a δέ after [γυ]γῆ might be expected.²

The person who consecrated an ornament (κόσ[μημα])³ to Leto was therefore a woman, the wife of Protogenes. Her name needs to be identified in l. 1, and the only possible solution would be to find a *compositum* of -θεμις.⁴ Feminine names composed with -θεμις seem to be rather rare, and I have not found any name (masc. or fem.) ending in [- -]ωθεμις.⁵ However, [Σ]ωθεμ[ίς] seems to me acceptable as an onomastic composition.⁶ This would also contribute to the symmetry of the text.

I suggest therefore the following restoration:

[Σ] Ω Θ Ε Μ [Ι Σ]
 [Π Ρ] Ω Τ Ο Γ Ε Ν [Ο Υ Σ]
 [Γ Υ] Ν Η Κ Ο Σ [Μ Η Μ Α]
 Λ Η Τ Ο [Ι]
 [Σ]ωθεμ[ίς]
 [Πρ]ωτογέν[ους]
 [γυ]γῆ κόσ[μημα]
 Λητο[ί]

“Sothemis, wife of Protogenes, (dedicated) the ornament to Leto”.

Pippidi dated the inscription to the 4th century BC. However, a date towards the end of 5th century seems to me more attractive. In fact, the genitive in l. 2 is restored, and an Ionic [Πρ]ωτογέν[εος] (claimed by a higher dating) still remains possible.

This is the second document attesting the cult of Leto in Istros. The other inscription is that on a large base (now lost) for a statue of the goddess (end of the 5th century BC) edited by S. Lambrino⁷ and republished by M.L. Lazzarini,⁸ by Pippidi in *I. Histriae* 170 and finally by M. Alexandrescu Vianu⁹. All the editors restored:

[ὁ δεινα] Ἰ[ππο]λό[χο - -]εμιος Λητοῖ
 [ἀ]νέθηκ[εν] ἐπὶ Ἰπ[πολό]χο τῷ Θεοδ[ό]το
 ἰέ[ρε]ω.

Lambrino and Pippidi connected not only the priest Hippolochos, son of Theodotos, but also the presumed Hippolochos (l. 1) to a well-known family of priests of Apollon Ietros. However, l. 1 remains a bold restoration of the patronymic, while in this case the next visible letters, [- -]εμιος – a clear Ionic genitive ending – cannot be explained. The drawing shows l. 1 at the place of the supposed I the lower part of an inexpressive *hasta* and then, after a space allowing the insertion of 3 or 4 letters, an oblique *hasta* which could

belong to a triangular letter (Α, Δ, Λ) or to an M as well (see the form of the M in [- - -]ΕΜΙΟΣ) and a round letter, perhaps an O. The preserved genitive at the end of the line suggests [- - -θ]έμιος, i.e. another *compositum* of -θεμις as in our previous inscription. Initially, I thought of [Ἄπολλ]λο[θ]έμιος but the *lacuna* before [- - -θ]έμιος indicates at least 3, if not 4 missing letters. I would therefore suggest, with due caution, Μο[λποθ]έμιος,¹⁰ a good Apollonic name which occurs at Nymphaion.¹¹ The dedicator would be a son or (less convincingly) a daughter of this Molpothemis.

The coincidence that a woman possibly called Σωθεμίς and the son (or the daughter) of a man possibly called Μολπόθεμις – bearing anyway names which are *composita* of -θεμις – both gave dedications to Leto is less surprising if we remember a quite similar case in the family of the dedicators to Leto's son Apollon.¹² They bear in fact the same traditional names (Ἰππόλοχος, Θεόδοτος etc.). I suggest therefore, that the woman of *I. Histriae* 380 and the father of the dedicator of *I. Histriae* 170 belonged to the same family, and I suspect that they had close connections to the family of Apollon's priests.

“Letokult ist für Milet/Didyma also spätestens seit dem 6. Jh. v. Chr. anzunehmen, und es wäre zunächst durchaus denkbar, dass die Göttin schon früher gekommen ist. Leto gilt als kleinasiatische Göttin, die zusammen mit Apollon eingewandert ist“.¹³ A short time after these lines had been written, this assertion found confirmation through the Orphic tablets of bone found at Berezan' (last quarter of the 6th century BC), where Leto is mentioned in a “Didymaic” context: μέμνημαι Λητῶ(ς).¹⁴ It should be noted that with the exception of Berezan' and Istros, the cult of Leto is not yet attested in other Milesian colonies.¹⁵

Although obviously less spectacular, the two inscriptions from Istros (*I. Histriae* 170 and now also 380) can therefore provide good evidence for the diffusion of the cult of Leto from Didyma to the Pontic colonies of Miletos.

Notes

1. Moretti 1983, 53: “riterrei tuttavia lacinie di decreti i nrr. 380, 381, 386, 398”. More convincingly about the same inscription: Vinogradov & Karyškovskij 1984, 180-181.
2. For a dedication made by the wife of a citizen, see e.g. Lazzarini 1976, 185, no. 41 = *IG F*, 894 (Athens, c. 430-420 BC) : [..... Π]ορέπιδος γυνῆ | [Χουπετ]αιδὸς [τῆ] | [Ἄθ]εναί[αι ἀνέθ]εκεν].
3. This seems to me a plausible restoration, although the “ornament” (which could mean a number of things) is not listed among the objects dedicated to gods by Lazzarini 1976. I do not know of any special study devoted to the term κόσμημα but I think I have found a convincingly restored context for its use in the decree Şahin 1994, l. Π.35-36 (= *SEG XLIV*, 949), where the “ornaments” are juxtaposed with vases: ποτήρια ἢ κοσμη[ήματα ἀργυρῶ] ἢ χρυσῶ]. For the architectural cognates κόσμος (French “ordre, frise”), κόσμησις or ἐπικόσμησις (“ornamentation, embellissement”), see Hellmann 1992, 231-233.

4. "Ce type de noms en -θεμῖς est bien attesté par de nombreux composés variés": Robert 1967, 20, who refers to Bechtel 1917 and adds Λυσίθεμῖς (Βόμβος Λυσίθεμῖδος from Assos: Robert 1966, 16-17, l. 9-10 of the decree, now also in *I. Ilion* 10, 77 BC).
5. I used especially Bechtel 1917, 200-201, and the *LGPN*.
6. See, as a close parallel, Ἀνθεμῖς: *LGPN* I (Rhodos, Samos), II (Athens), III A (Lipara), III B (Larissa), with references.
7. Lambrino 1937, 352-362.
8. Lazzarini 1976, 202, no. 173.
9. Alexandrescu Vianu 2000, 87-88, no. 102 (and fig. 4, Lambrino's drawing). I prefer the earlier dating, mentioned above (Lambrino and Alexandrescu Vianu), to the 4th century admitted by Lazzarini and Pippidi.
10. Robert 1967, 20: "nom dont la première partie forme des noms surtout dans les pays ioniens ou influencés par l'Ionie, particulièrement à Milet où florissait l'institution des *molpoi*". Cf. Masson 1984, 52 = Masson 1992 II, 431: "les noms en Μολπο- sont également caractéristiques pour le domaine ionien, comme le montrent déjà les exemples de Bechtel 323-324".
11. Sokolova, Pavličenko & Kasparov 1999, 330: Μολποθέμιος τῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ. Cf. the references given by the authors to Μολπαγόρης and Μολπᾶς attested on the North coast of the Black Sea (to be found in *LGPN* IV, forthcoming).
12. The genealogy of this family suggested by Lambrino and Pippidi has been convincingly changed by Alexandrescu Vianu 1989, 1-5.
13. Ehrhardt 1988, 159 (with references to the cult of Leto in Didyma). See also Kahil 1992.
14. Rusjaeva 1986, 25-64 (= *SEG* XXXVI, 694) = Dubois 1996, 146-154 no. 93; cf. Ehrhardt 1987, 116-117; Rusjaeva 1992, 29-41.
15. Ehrhardt (1988, 160), prudently adds the theophoric name Λητόδορος from the Milesian Gorgippia (*CIRB* 1179.25-26: [Λη?]τοδώρου, 3rd cent. AD) and the Teian Phanagoria (*CIRB* 976.4, AD 151) but he accepts himself that "beide Belege stammen allerdings erst aus der Kaiserzeit". The restoration of the name in the Gorgippian inscription is not absolutely certain. Consequently the name will be not registered in *LGPN* IV.

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Abbreviations

- CIRB* V.V. Struve et al., *Corpus inscriptionum Regni Bosporani*. Moskva-Leningrad 1965.
- I. Histriae* D.M. Pippidi, *Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine 1. Histria și împrejurimile*. București 1983.
- I. Ilion* P. Frisch, *Die Inschriften von Ilion (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 3)*. Bonn 1975.
- LGPN* P.M. Fraser & E. Matthews (eds.), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*. Oxford. I (1987); II (1994); III A (1997); III B (2000); IV (forthcoming).