

‘To the Emperor Caesar, the son of the deified Trajan, Traianus Hadrianus Augustus, Zeus Olympios and Eleutherios and Sabina Augusta, the New Demeter (under the government of Publius... the praetorian legate of the emperor), Larcia Gepaiyris, daughter of Larcus Asiaticus, on the orders of and wholly at the expense of her father erected and consecrated (the sanctuary with the imperial cult image) and other statues that are erected in it.’

The inscription is dated to 128–136 based on the imperial appellation Ὀλύμπιος,³ and belonged to a lavishly decorated building, possibly with εἰκόνες and statues of the imperial family, which is interpreted as being the temple of Hadrian and Sabina in Perinthos.⁴ The construction of this building is connected with Hadrian’s visit in the city in AD 131, although no explicit data for this visit is available.⁵

Several questions arise when one is dealing with the inscription, concerning the nature of the building itself, the date of the inscription and the purpose of this initiative. It seems that these questions are closely intertwined with each other.

As mentioned, the inscription is dated to 128–136 after the Ὀλύμπιος appellation of the emperor. Although a consensus in the literature is established for this date,⁶ some comments may be made on both *termini*. I can take AD 136, for example, which may be called into question due to the fact that no actual denial of this appellation is attested so far on the epigraphic monuments in AD 136 or afterwards. Quite on the contrary, several imperial statue bases found for example in Lysimacheia, Peparethos, Skiathos, Aidepsos, Athenae, etc., are dated to AD 128–138 based exactly on this appellation of the emperor.⁷ Besides, Sabina who was also honoured in the inscription was consecrated in a ceremony that was pursued not earlier than March 138.⁸ Rumours according to which Hadrian poisoned her⁹ were spread at that time. This gives me a good reason to believe that the later date of the inscription may be expanded at least to 137, if not even to the very last year of the reign of Hadrian in AD 138 as in fact it is the case with the other similar inscriptions cited above.

The Ὀλύμπιος appellation of the emperor itself gives a certain *terminus post quem* in AD 129 AD.¹⁰ Thus, it is well known that in that year Hadrian begun the execution of his ambition plan to establish what A. Birley has called the ‘Hellenic Commonwealth’ of the Greeks from the old poleis as well as from others spread in the Eastern Mediterranean. For the purpose the great temple of Zeus, the Olympieion, was completed¹¹ and from this time

³ SAYAR 1998, 219.

⁴ SAYAR 1998, 220.

⁵ SAYAR 1998, 220.

⁶ RAYCHEVA 2015, 23.

⁷ See the analysis in HOJTE 2005, 427–432.

⁸ BIRLEY 1997, 294.

⁹ HA *Had.* 23.9; *Epit. de Caes.* 14.8.

¹⁰ In KIENAST 2011, 130 it is suggested 128/129 AD.

¹¹ BIRLEY 1997, 218–219.

on the emperor was regularly named in the Greek part of the empire as *Hadrianos Sebastos Olympios*, or *Hadrianos Sebastos Zeus Olympios* identified as the Olympian Zeus.¹² It took him, however, a couple of more years to advance to his next step with the organization of the Panhellenion league. It happened during the next imperial visit in Athens, which Hadrian reached coming from Thrace, possibly in early 132, if not in the very last days of 131.¹³ The newly established association was based in Athens, presided over by an archon who held the office for four years and is called ‘the high priest of the god Hadrian Panhellenios’¹⁴ and ‘*agonothete* of the Great Panhellenion’.¹⁵ The Panhellenic games seem to have been founded at the very end of life of the emperor, not before AD 137.¹⁶

The newly established Panhellenion league affected the titulature of the emperor who was now honoured also as Πανελλήνιος or Ὀλύμπιος Πανελλήνιος. This may be found in official as well as private dedications, both those set up in cities that were members of the Panhellenion league, and those that were not. In the first group one would consider for example Megara,¹⁷ while in the second — Chios,¹⁸ Karystos (Euboia),¹⁹ Miletos,²⁰ Teos,²¹ Ephesos²² etc.²³ The appellations Πανελλήνιος or Ὀλύμπιος Πανελλήνιος have no definite chronological value and therefore the lack of them is not decisive for the date of the inscription.²⁴ As suggested by M. Sayar, the construction of the building may have been related to the imperial visit in Perinthos in AD 131. If so, the fact that Larcia Gepaiipyris completed the work that had been started by her father Larcus Asiaticus may imply a date between AD 131 when the emperor visited Perinthos and his death, i.e. AD 131–138.

Another appellation by which the emperor is honoured in this inscription is Ἐλευθέριος. Indeed, the inscription itself implies that this title is connected with the cult to Zeus Eleutherios, but as the fact that this is the only case known so far from Thrace of Zeus honoured as Ἐλευθέριος as well as the close connection between the cult to Zeus and the imperial cult to Hadrian, as inscriptions from Mytilene reveal, may point out that in our case it was Hadrian that was cited as *eleutherios*. This imperial appellation is unique for Thrace,

¹² BIRLEY 1997, 220.

¹³ It is known after his edict that was issued and set up in Maroneia that he was in that city since December, 10, 131 when his 16 tribunicia potestate begun — I. Aeg. Thrace E 185. On the edict — see recently JONES 2011.

¹⁴ See most recently in CAMIA 2011, 44–46.

¹⁵ OGIS 507.1–3; BRENT 2006, 299–300.

¹⁶ ROMEO 2002, 21.

¹⁷ IG VII 3491; IG VII 72; 71; 70.

¹⁸ SEG 15, 530.

¹⁹ IG XII Suppl. 527; SEG 3:758.

²⁰ Miletos 225; Milet VI.3 1099.

²¹ One such is the inscription from Teos, dated between 132–138: ROBERT 1946, 86–89.

²² IEph 271F; IEph 1501.

²³ Syros: IG XII Suppl. 239.

²⁴ BENJAMIN 1963, 59.

and as a whole not common for Hadrian or any other emperor at all. This is why its meaning is still debatable, although ‘Liberator’ is in some cases linked with the awarding of the status of ‘free city’ to the city in question,²⁵ and the privileges that might go with this status, such as for example tax immunity, but this is not the exclusive use of the title.²⁶ One good example for Hadrian as Ἐλευθέριος comes from a series of inscribed altars, possibly set up in a sanctuary in Mytilene.²⁷ These inscriptions seem to support the idea advanced by A. Birley as in some of them Hadrian is also honoured as ‘Founder’,²⁸ which, however, is not connected with the foundation of the Panhellenic league as has been suggested in other cases,²⁹ but to that of the city of Mytilene; in some of inscriptions he is explicitly cited as οἰκίστα τᾶς πόλιος.³⁰ This goes in line with the ‘freedom’ which Mytilene has received also as the worship of the emperor as ‘ktistes’ may imply granting of certain privileges.³¹ It is noteworthy that this was the second ‘freedom’ that Mytilene received after that granted by Pompey,³² which was evidently confirmed by Augustus who is also epigraphically attested as Ἐλευθ[έρι]ος.³³

Unfortunately, no clue at all as to the architectural features or even the nature of the sanctuary is given in these inscriptions, but it seems that it is reminiscent of the Olympieion in Athens, where numerous statues of Hadrian were also set up by some Greek cities. I would not be surprised if the sanctuary in Mytilene was a mini-variant of the Olympieion, as regards the decoration of the interior space. The sanctuary seems to have been dedicated to the emperor, but also the Founder of the city, who in this case coincided with the emperor. Therefore, by worshipping the emperor the Founder was also worshiped and vice versa. In this way may be explained the numerous altars dedicated to Zeus, Roma, Dionysus and Maron in Maroneia, Thrace,³⁴ which possibly belonged to the sanctuary with similar interior of numerous identical statues. It should be reminded that in fact Hadrian spent some time at Maroneia at the end of AD 131 as already mentioned above.

Another example with Hadrian as Ὀλύμπιος and Ἐλευθέριος may be found geographically closer to Perinthos in a city located in NE Balkans, the metropolis of Moesia Inferior, Tomis. The case is discussed by A. Avram who published an inscription in which the ἔλευθερία is related with the construction of a building (*heroon*).³⁵ The latter seems to have

²⁵ BIRLEY 1997, 167–168.

²⁶ See the analysis in GUERBER 2009, 33–77.

²⁷ IG XII², 183, 185, 191, 193, 195, 196, 197, 198; Suppl. 53.

²⁸ IG XII², 184, 185, 186, 187,

²⁹ BENJAMIN 1963, 59.

³⁰ IG XII², 189, 190.

³¹ See on the emperor as ‘founder’ — PONT 2007, 526–552.

³² See Tac. *Ann.* 6.18; BOWERSOCK 1965, 4.

³³ IG XII², 156: Ἀὐτοκράτορι/ Καίσαρι Σε-/ βασιτῶ Ἐλε[v]-/ [θερίω].

³⁴ I. Aeg. Thrace, nos. 188–198.

³⁵ AVRAM 2014, 162–163.

been an imposing construction, probably a two-aisled stoa (porticus duplex) or two-faced stoa (porticus bifrons), with an altar.^{35F}³⁶ It is suggested that the *heroon* was built on the occasion of the ‘restoration of Liberty’ and was dedicated to the mythical eponymous hero Tomos,³⁷ by which a clear link between the invention of the foundation legend and the cult itself and the privileges awarded by Hadrian is established. Two more inscriptions support this date, or a date range expanded to early in Antoninus Pius’s time.³⁸ It is without doubt that all the inscriptions are linked with the restoration of the civic status of Tomis as *ciuitas libera et immunis*, on which occasion Hadrian gained the appellations Ἐλευθ[έρι]ος, Ὀλυμπ[ίω]ς and Σωτήρ.³⁹ A. Avram assumes that in fact Hadrian restored the status of *ciuitas libera et immunis* which was granted to Tomis by Vespasian.⁴⁰

The invention of the foundation myth is of interest, and it seems that it is defined in the time of the imperial visit to Thrace in AD 131, which was also a catalyst for similar processes in the cities visited.⁴¹ Studying the case with Tomos a link is assumed between the Hadrianic Ἐλευθ[έρι]ος and the Hadrianic Panhellenion,⁴² although Tomis was not a part of the Panhellenion league. By this, Tomis found its place among the numerous Asianic cities that at that time also manifested on various media the increasing worship, if not invention, of the cult of the mythical eponymous hero.⁴³

Of all these cases, the one that is the closest parallel to Perinthos is that of Mytilene, with inscription where Hadrian is honoured only as Ἐλευθέριος and Ὀλυμπ[ίω]ς.⁴⁴ Indeed, these inscriptions are numerous, but it is the only one in which the emperor is attested also as Διῖ.⁴⁵ In this, the Perinthian inscription differs not only from the remaining inscriptions of Mytilene, but also from that in Tomis.

If one follows the examples considered, one should assume that Perinthos has also received the civic status of ‘free city’ (*ciuitas libera et immunis*) for which, however, no evidence is attested at all in the inscriptions, local coinage or literary sources. No evidence also is attested for privileges such as for instance tax exemption or something else that the city was awarded by Hadrian. The appellation Ὀλυμπ[ίω]ς, however, implies granting of certain privileges as it is known that it was not a name assumed by the emperor on his own

³⁶ AVRAM 2014, 163–167.

³⁷ AVRAM 2014, 163.

³⁸ AVRAM 2018, 453–466.

³⁹ AVRAM 2018, 458–459; see the inscription in IScM II 47: Αὐτοκρά[το]-/ ρι Καίσαρι [Ἄδρι]-/ α(ι)νῶ Σεβα[σ]-/ τῶ Ἐλευθ[έρι]-/ ω, Ὀλυμπ[ίω],/ [σ]ωτήρι,/[χα]ριστήρι-/[ο]ν.

⁴⁰ AVRAM 2018, 458.

⁴¹ TOPALILOV 2020a; 2020b.

⁴² AVRAM 2018, 459, n. 30.

⁴³ AVRAM 2018, 456.

⁴⁴ IG XII² 183; 192; 193; 194; 195; 196; 197.

⁴⁵ IG XII² 183.

initiative, but conferred by grateful citizens.⁴⁶ It seems that in our case the answer is elsewhere.

Indeed, the case with Tomis is the closest geographically, but it is of great importance for our study because the emperor evidently did not visit the city and this initiative was made while touring in neighbour Thrace. If so, a very close relation may be established between the initiatives in both cities with their manifestation in the same way. Like the increased worship of the mythical eponymous hero in Tomis, Hadrian's visit was also a catalyst if not of the invention itself, at least of the increased worship of the mythical eponymous hero Perinthos which appeared in the local coinage in the time of Antoninus Pius.⁴⁷

Both cases have another close feature by which they differ from the other two, the Hadrianic Panhellenion. Indeed, the case of Mytilene may also be connected to this institution, but the lack of any close economic, religious, and political links with Perinthos make this connection doubtful. Unlike Tomis and Mytilene, Perinthos was among the founding members of the Panhellenion league which may attach a significant value to the inscription under consideration and the sanctuary itself as well in this aspect.

It is known that Perinthos was founded in 602 BC as a colony of Samos⁴⁸ and through the ages it preserved its close link with the metropolis. This is especially visible with the predominance of the cult to Hera and persistent devotion to her in Perinthos, but also the existence of a Heraion near by the city,⁴⁹ probably Heraion Teichos. The image of Hera of Samos was presented on the local coinage from the imperial era (Nero).⁵⁰ In fact, the Perinthian elite propagated its Ionian origin on the local coinage with legends as ΙΩΝΩΝ ΚΤΙCΤΗΝ , ΙΩΝΩΝ ΤΟΝ ΚΤΙCΤΗΝ and ΙΩΝΩΝ .⁵¹ but this may be seen as closely linked to the Perinthian participation in the Panhellenion league rather than something else; no such legend or idea of it is attested in the sources in 1–2 c. AD. Given all this it seems logical that the city found its place among the founders of the Panhellenion league.

Numerous examples, however, and especially those outside Old Hellas reveal that not all of the foundation members had a clear Greek past,⁵² which was officially admitted as most important criteria. Besides, some of most important cities in the Aegean region, such as for instance Miletos and Ephesus, did not enter the Panhellenion league, at least not at the very beginning.⁵³ It seems that the cities were attached to the league due to other reasons, mostly

⁴⁶ See JONES 2006, 153.

⁴⁷ The cult to Tomos is also attested on the local coinage of Tomis as early as the time of Antoninus Pius — see AVRAM 2018, 456, n. 15.

⁴⁸ Ps.-Skymnos 714–715; Strabo 7, frg. 56; Plut. *Mor.* 303E; Hieron. *Chron.* 98b, Helm.

⁴⁹ LOUKOPOULOU, ΛΑΙΤΑΡ 2004, 920.

⁵⁰ SCHÖNERT 1965, 24, 102–103, Nos. 76–84.

⁵¹ SCHÖNERT 1965, 53, 56 (with the image of Herakles).

⁵² SPAWFORTH, WALKER 1985, 79–82.

⁵³ A. Birley believes that eventually they joined the league.

concerned with the Roman interest, including strategic location. This is an argument that the creation of the league was imperial initiative, rather than of the Greek cities, and may reveal the imperial personal attitude to some of the cities. It is without any doubt that the emperor was also assisted in his judgment by the prominent citizens of local municipalities and provinces⁵⁴ which may explain the presence of some members that have no clear Greek past, but obviously had the persuasive politics and elite to include their city in the league.

It is possible that the main work on the list of the founding members of the Panhellenion league was done in the period between AD 129 when the imperial intention was officially declared by constructing the *Olympeion*, along with the launch of construction on the temple of Hera and Zeus Panhellenion as well as the Pantheon,⁵⁵ and the real establishment of the league council in late AD 131/132. During this period the emperor visited some of the future founding members such as for example Tralles, Thessalonika, Cilician cities etc., but many remained out of the scope of his tours. It seems that this was also a period of a huge correspondence that was pursued between the emperor and the other members of the league. Visiting Perinthos was also a part of the imperial itinerary on his way to Athens to establish the Panhellenion league. Given the above specifics of the manner in which the league was established I would not be surprised if the emperor was convinced to include Perinthos among the founding members of the league by a notable member of the local political and cultural elite while he was at the provincial capital of Thrace. The Perinthian inscription gives his name: Larcius Asiaticus. He initiated the construction of the sanctuary dedicated to the imperial family, and the appellation of Hadrian as Ἐλευθέριος and Ὀλυμπίως seems to have tied him with the Perinthos' status in the Panhellenion. Thus, the question arises of who Larcius Asiaticus was.

The name of Larcius Asiaticus is typical, but it reveals an Eastern provincial origin. The name of his daughter Larcia Gepaiyris shows his Thracian origin as the name Gepaiyris itself is considered a common one in the Thracian aristocracy.⁵⁶ The examples known from Thrace are rare,⁵⁷ but if Larcius Asiaticus known from the Perinthian inscription has a Thracian origin, it seems that in this case it may be dealing with someone from among the *homines novi*, i.e. these provincials that achieved a high career ranking in the imperial capital and the provinces.⁵⁸ His possible influence convincing the emperor to put Perinthos among the founding members of the Panhellenion league may be regarded in this context.

Certainly, this practice was not something new in Thrace and especially in Perinthos which as seems had lost its status of metropolis in the early Trajanic period through the

⁵⁴ ROMEO 2002, 22; BIRLEY 1997, 218–219.

⁵⁵ BIRLEY 1997, 219.

⁵⁶ SAYAR 1998, 220 and the bibliography cited there.

⁵⁷ See most recently DANA 2014, 187, but not only.

⁵⁸ On them — see HALFMANN 1979.

intervention of another *novus homo*, the *procurator Augusti* T. Claudius Sacerdos Iulianus.⁵⁹ Now, it was Perinthos' turn. Whether Larcus Asiaticus was acting as a provincial legate is unclear, but most probably he was one of most distinguished members of the provincial society in Thrace.

It remains unclear also what was the nature of the building. Indeed, it is restored as τὸ [ἱερὸν, but also τὸ[ν ναόν is possible.⁶⁰ As mentioned, M. Sayar suggested that in this case it is dealing with the temple of Hadrian and Sabina.⁶¹ Some reasonable scepticism, however, has been expressed recently with the reminder that no imperial temple is attested in Perinthos prior to the time of the Severans when the city received its neokorate.⁶² What is known about the building is that it is lavishly decorated with εἰκόνας and statues of the imperial family and it may be assumed that it was located on the *acropolis* which makes it one of the major sanctuaries for the provincial capital. A suggestion may be found in the local coinage with the manifestation of the cult to the Eponymous hero Perinthos on coins with Marcus Aurelius as Caesar.⁶³ As mentioned, the imperial presence was a catalyst for the manifestation of the cult to the Founder in the coastal cities in Thrace, which in fact finds close parallel with the nature of the sanctuary at Mytilene, dedicated to the emperor as a 'Founder' too. So, I would not be surprised if the sanctuary that was richly decorated with statues and icons of the imperial family in Perinthos and the sanctuary of Mytilene that was also richly decorated with statues of Hadrian given the numerous bases found were part of a practice that spread around in the Asianic provinces and Aegean isles of construction of temples and sanctuaries dedicated to Hadrian based on the idea of the *Olympeion* in Athens. The numerous bases found in Maroneia with the name of Maron, the eponymous hero, mentioned above, may also attribute this sanctuary to that group.⁶⁴ If so, this may raise the question of an existing closer link between the cult to the emperor and the cult to the Founder in the cities in the Greek part of the Roman empire in the time of Hadrian, especially after AD 129. Certainly, this is only an assumption that need more evidence.

As mentioned, the appellations to the emperor as Ἐλευθέριος and Ὀλυμπίως may imply granting of certain privileges. In this case, they may concern personal privileges that were given to the father of Larcia Gepaiyris — Larcus Asiaticus. What are they, if any, remain unclear, but it may be suggested on analogy some tax exemption for instance or what is more likely to me — a certain position in the newly founded Panhellenion league. The list of the holders of the various offices in the league is still incomplete, and some speculations could

⁵⁹ See on this — TOPALILOV 2018, 457–463.

⁶⁰ This opinion was expressed by Adrian Robu whom I express my sincere gratitude.

⁶¹ SAYAR 1998, 220.

⁶² RAYCHEVA 2015, 24.

⁶³ SCHÖNERT 1965, nos. 411–418.

⁶⁴ Whether Maroneia may be added to the founding members of the Panhellenion league is unclear.

be made moreover another Perinthian will later hold some offices. For instance, I am aware of a certain (Aurelius?) Rufus who held the *agonothesia* and the office of *archon* between 177 and 217.⁶⁵ The dedication to the emperor as Zeus and the permission to build the new sanctuary on the *acropolis* of the provincial capital is a good evidence for the Panhellenion league option, rather than some prosaic privileges bestowed on a certain family in the city.

Acknowledgement. This paper was written in the framework of the project LABedia: encyclopedia of Late Antique Balkans, 4th century, financed by the National Science Fund, Contract KH-06-H30/6, 13.12.2018.

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⁶⁵ See the lists in SPAWFORTH, WALKER 1985, 84–87.

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