

IAMBLICHOS AT ATHENS

(PLATE 9)

RECENT excavations and investigations in and around the Agora of Athens have added considerably to our knowledge of Athens during the second half of the fourth century of our era, the city's "last period of prosperity" as S. Dow rightly put it¹ in his review of John Day, *An Economic History of Athens under Roman Domination*, 1942. While W. Judeich² had very little to say about Athens during the fourth century, Day, whose recent death we all mourn, was able to devote a whole chapter (VII, pp. 262-270) of his fine book to the "Fourth and Fifth Centuries," and he referred there not only to the literary evidence, pertaining mainly to the University of Athens,³ but also to inscriptions⁴ and to the results which were then just beginning to become known (see especially pp. 265-266, note 11). A few years later, Kenneth M. Setton promised us a history of *Athens in the Middle Ages*, to supplement if not to replace the classic by F. Gregorovius; as a foretaste he gave us a delightful essay on *The Archaeology of Medieval Athens*⁵ which drew heavily on the new findings of the Agora Excavations. More recently, Homer A. Thompson presented an up-to-date account of the topographical history of Athens between A.D. 267 and 600 under the telling title "Athenian Twilight,"⁶ and John N. Travlos included a chapter on the topography and monuments of Athens between A.D. 267 and 408 in his monumental *Πολεοδομική 'Εξέλιξις τῶν 'Αθηνῶν*, 1960,⁷ soon to be available in a second (and English) edition. Finally, Alison Frantz has prepared an attractive Picture Book on *The Middle Ages in the Athenian Agora*, 1961.

These preliminary and general studies make it possible to find a proper place for an individual monument which for one reason or another seems to belong to post-Herulian and pre-Christian Athens. Such is the case with the shaft of a herm, which was brought in from the Stoa of Attalos in February, 1936. It is broken above and below but it still shows traces of a bearded head with a philosopher's cloak hanging

¹ *Cl. Weekly*, XXXVI, 1943, p. 128.

² *Topographie von Athen*², 1931, p. 105.

³ On this topic, see the comprehensive summary by F. Schemmel, *Neue Jahrbücher*, XI (XXII), 1908, pp. 494-513.

⁴ The first attempt to examine the earliest Christian inscriptions from Athens as a group was made by John S. Creaghan, S. J., who has also since died, and myself (*Hesperia*, XVI, 1947, pp. 1-54; separately published by "Theological Studies," Woodstock, Maryland), but the pagan inscriptions which belong to the period after the attack upon Athens by the Heruli have not yet been studied as a group.

⁵ *Essays in Medieval Life and Thought*, presented in honor of A. P. Evans, 1955, pp. 227-258.

⁶ *J.R.S.*, XLIX, 1959, pp. 61-72.

⁷ Pp. 125-134.

over the left shoulder; on the sides there are cuttings for the "arms." This herm, which may well have been made in the second century of our era, was re-used in the fourth century; its smooth front face, which probably carried an inscription, was roughly trimmed down, and on the new surface were engraved at least two epigrams. The first one, in three hexameters, is completely preserved; of the second one, in distichs, we have only one line and remains of a second. The two poems seem to be not only by different poets but also engraved by different hands, though probably at the same time.

Height, 0.51 m.; width, 0.29 m.; thickness, 0.24 m.

Height of letters, 0.017 m.

Inv. No. I 3542.

ca. 400 A.D.

Τούτου καὶ μετὰ πότμον ἄθωπευτοῖς γλυφίδεσσ[ι]
ὁ στεγανὸς τίσεν Πάγος Ἄρεος οὐνεκα πύργους
τείχεος ἔρκος ἔτευξεν Ἰάμβλιχος ὄλβον ὀπάσσας.

Καὶ σοφίῃ κόσμησεν Ἰάμβλιχος οὗτος Ἀθήνας
5 [καὶ δαπάν]ῃ κρατερὸν τε[ίχος ἐπ]ῆρε πόλει

The silent Hill of Ares honored this man after his death
With carvings which cannot flatter him, Iamblichos, for he built
The towers, the wall's defense, giving freely from his wealth.

Both through wisdom this Iamblichos adorned Athens
(And at his own expense) he (raised) a mighty (wall) for the city.

The language of the epigram, with its epic reminiscences, requires some comment. *Γλυφίς* in the meaning of "pen-knife, chisel" is attested in the Anthology (VI, 62 and 64), as Evelyn B. Harrison pointed out to me, and in an epigram from Koptos (*I.B.M.*, IV, 1074) which Werner Peek called to my attention; they have thus kept me from misunderstanding the expression *ἄθωπευτοῖς γλυφίδεσσ[ι]*. *Γλυφίς* thus corresponds to *γλύφανος*, "tool for carving, knife, chisel" and is used here metaphorically for *γλυφή*, "carving," sculpture, portrait. *Ἀθωπευτός*, "without flattery," suggests that the honored person is so handsome that no portrait can flatter him. The Areopagus, which is normally styled *σεμνότατος*, is called *στεγανός* also in Alciphro, I, 16 (13), 1: *γενοῦ μοι τὰ νῦν Ἀρεοπαγίτου στεγανώτερος*. It should be emphasized that the beginning of the fifth line is restored, and that part of it (containing the letters *ΗΚΡΑΤΕΡΟΝ*) has been chipped off and lost since the stone was first found.

We learn from the first epigram that Iamblichos was honored by the Areopagus because he had erected the towers of the wall at his expense. From the second epigram we learn that Iamblichos was a distinguished philosopher in Athens and

that he built or contributed to the building not only of the towers but of the wall itself.

The identity of the Iamblichos honored by the epigrams can be established with certainty since only one Iamblichos is known from Athens and what we know about this Iamblichos fulfills all the conditions demanded by the inscription: he lived in the second half of the fourth century of our era, he was rich and generous, he resided for an undetermined period of time after 362/3 in Athens, and he was a distinguished philosopher although he does not seem to have held one of the chairs at the University of Athens. This Iamblichos was the grandson of the famous Iamblichos after whom he was named, he was a friend and relative of Libanios, and he was the son of Himerios and the nephew of Sopatros; the details of his life have been satisfactorily assembled by Otto Seeck.⁸ The new evidence of the inscription makes it necessary, however, to re-examine some of the literary evidence, especially that dealing with his sojourn and activity in Athens.

Iamblichos went abroad for the first time as a young man in A.D. 357, and Libanios supplied him with a series of letters of recommendation (W 485-493 = F 569-577). We learn from these letters virtually all we know of Iamblichos' family relations and of his patrimony (W 487 = F 571, 3-4), but it does not seem that any of the letters was addressed to a friend of Libanios who happened to be living in Athens at the time.⁹ Iamblichos did, however, go to Athens on this occasion and Libanios comments on this fact in a way which shows his surprise—hence this visit may not have been planned (W 330 = F 327, 2): τὸ δὲ ἐλθεῖν Ἀθήναζε καὶ ταύτην κομφίσαι τὴν λύπην εἶτε αὐτὸς ἰδὼν εἶτε ἄλλω πεισθεὶς ἐποίησας, ἐπαινω μέγα γὰρ εἰς τὸν λοιπὸν βίον τὸ μὴ τὴν πόλιν ἀγνοεῖν. καίτοι δέδοικα μὴ τῶν αἰετῶν πείραν λαβὼν ὑπερίδης τῶν κολοῶν. His first visit may have been short, but he seems to have returned to Athens in the following year, A.D. 358 (W 363 = F 360, 2: πάλιν Ἀθήνηθεν γράφεις), but again only for a short time, since Libanios writes him in the same year to Egypt (W 388 = F 385).¹⁰

⁸ *Die Briefe des Libanios*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte d. altchristlichen Literatur, XV (XXX), 1906, p. 184, and *R.E.*, s.v. Iamblichos No. 4, col. 651.

⁹ Iamblichos' father Himerios is not the famous Himerios as H. Schenkl has shown, *Rh.Mus.*, LXXII, 1917-18, pp. 34-36; see, however, A. Colonna, *Himerii Declamationes* etc., 1951, p. L.

¹⁰ To this period belongs a curious letter from Julian to the Neoplatonic philosopher Priscus in which Iamblichos and his famous grandfather may be mentioned twice; see the first edition in *Rh.Mus.*, XLII, 1887, p. 25. The letter is now dated 358-359 and it is assumed that it was written while Julian was in Gaul. In this letter Julian refers to the work of the great Iamblichos and to his namesake: τὰ Ἰαμβλίχου πάντα μοι τὰ εἰς τὸν ὁμώνυμον ζήτει . . . ἔχει γὰρ ὁ τῆς σῆς ἀδελφῆς γαμβρὸς εὐδιόρθωτα. Does this mean that Iamblichos the younger edited the work of his grandfather or commented on it? This is J. Geffcken's opinion (*Kaiser Julianus*, 1914, p. 145) with whom W. C. Wright now agrees (*The Works of . . . Julian*, III, 1953, p. 5, note 1). In the same letter, Julian advises Priscus to study eagerly the philosophy of the older Iamblichos and the theosophy of his namesake: καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ περὶ μὲν Ἰαμβλίχου ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ περὶ δὲ τὸν ὁμώνυμον θεοσοφίᾳ μενοινᾷ(ς). The important question is whether Julian refers in both passages with ὁμώνυμος to another Iamblichos or to another Julian as W. Ensslin, following Bidez, suggested, *R.E.*, s.v. Priscus No. 28, col. 7, lines 40-47.

In 362/3, Iamblichos was again in Athens, and Libanios hesitates, evidently because of jealousy, to write to him but does it just the same (W 711 = F 801, 1): *ἐποίει δὲ τὸν μὲν ὄκνον, ὅτι σὺ τῶν Ἑρεχθιδῶν εἰλημμένος καὶ ἀκροπόλεως ἐκείνης καὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ τόπων καὶ θεῶν ἐδόκει μοι τῶν προτέρων παιδικῶν ὑπὸ τῶν δευτέρων καταφρονεῖν*. It seems that Iamblichos wrote full of enthusiasm about Athens and about his life there. Later on, in the same letter (3), Libanios resigns himself to the idea that Iamblichos may stay in Athens: *εἰ δὲ δεινὴ κατέχειν ἢ τῆς Παλλάδος γῆς, πάλιν δεόμεθά σου σπείραι παῖδας Ἀθήνησι καὶ τὸ γένος ἡμῖν ἐκτείνειν*. πάντως δὲ ἢ πόλις γέμει τῶν ἀπὸ Κόδρον, τὸ δὲ αὐτό σοι καὶ νιεῖς οἴσει καὶ βάσανον φίλων· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὄντως ἀγαπῶντες μενοῦσι φιλοῦντες, τοὺς δὲ ἀποπετομένους ὄψει.

We do not know for certain from the literary tradition how long Iamblichos actually remained in Athens and what he did there. Only one more letter of Libanios is addressed to him in A.D. 365, but we cannot be quite sure that it was written to Athens (W 1072 = F 1466). Libanios is cool to the point of being sarcastic when he writes that he has not received any letters from Iamblichos (1): *γράμματα δ' ἡμῶν ἦν μὴ πολλὰ λαμβάνης, μὴ θαυμάσης· τῶν γὰρ σῶν οὐδεὶς ἔτι μοι προσέρχεται*. One may suspect that Iamblichos had forgotten Libanios while he was settling down and getting used to the life in Athens. Libanios goes on comparing Iamblichos, who claims to be *φιλόμουσος*, with the Muses who live in the mountains and not in the city, and he concludes (4): *Νῦν δ' ἐν ὄρει μὲν ἦσαν, ἐν ἐρημίᾳ δὲ οὐδαμῶς, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ σύ. αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀλλήλας εἶχον, σὺ δὲ ὧν ἦσαντο ἐκείναι, τὸν Πυθαγόραν, τὸν Πλάτωνα, τὸν Ἀριστοτέλην, τὸν ὁμώνυμον, τὸν θείον*. Libanios evidently means that Iamblichos is not meditating in solitude but is enjoying the company of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, (the older) Iamblichos, and (the uncle) Sopatros. Inasmuch as Iamblichos is surely not in Antioch, he may be presumed to be in Athens, living in the company of the great philosophers of the past. This may mean that Iamblichos had in fact settled down in Athens.

Libanios mentions Iamblichos four more times in his letters of the years 390 and 391 (W 850, 901, 903, 926 = F 932, 982, 984, 1007); the tone of these references is distant and polite, almost respectful. One gets the impression that no direct and intimate contact existed at that time between the two men, and this could easily be explained by the fact that Iamblichos was staying on in Athens. In one of the letters (W 901 = F 982) Libanios speaks of Iamblichos as *περὶ δίκαιον δεσπότην τὸν σοφὸν Ἰάμβλιχον* and mentions later on *τοιούτος γὰρ ἀνὴρ ὡς κοινὰ τὰ κείνου πάντων Ἑλλήνων εἶναι*; this last phrase suggests that Iamblichos spent his money freely and generously in Greece.

The final piece of evidence, unfortunately undated but probably belonging to a period when the reputation of Iamblichos was well established, that is between A.D. 380 and 390, is a letter from the famous Symmachus to Iamblichos offering him his friendship (IX, 2). Considering the high reputation and exalted position of Sym-

machus, the praise bestowed upon Iamblichos indicates clearly that he, too, occupied a position of preeminence. Comparing Iamblichos with his fellow philosophers, Symmachus declares, repeating the judgment of Eudoxius, *illis desiderium doctrinae vitaeque tribuens, tibi perfectionem*. It may be presumed that Iamblichos was at that time in Athens, for we have no evidence to show that he returned to Antioch after 362/3.

To sum up, encouraged and enlightened by the new inscription, we were able to reconstruct Iamblichos' life after 362/3. He went this year to Athens and stayed there, abandoning gradually his connections with Antioch and especially with Libanios.¹¹ In Athens, he received a high position as a philosopher and as a benefactor of the Greeks.

It is now possible to discuss the donations of Iamblichos of which we learn from the epigrams on the herm. John N. Travlos¹² has already observed that about a hundred years after the Herulian destruction, during the second half of the fourth century, the old circuit wall of Athens was once more restored and put into use. He found additional evidence for this assumption in the story told by Zosimos (V, 5, 8) that Alaric thought Athens did not have enough soldiers to defend its long walls and fortifications; this could not refer to the small city fortified immediately after the Herulian attack. It is now possible to support this view with some epigraphical evidence. E. Groag¹³ already called our attention to the epigram in honor of Phosphorios (*I. G.*, VII, 96) who "protected the cities with towers" (*πυργώσας πόλιος*) probably after the earthquake of A.D. 375 when the danger of a Gothic invasion became imminent; Setton¹⁴ credits Julian with such building activities. At that time, Iamblichos, too, may have made his donations toward the building or rebuilding of the

¹¹ There remains unexplained the strange story told by Cedrenus (I,313 B—548 Bonn.) and repeated by Zonaras (*Ann.*, XIII,16) that Libanios the Sophist and Iamblichos the teacher of Proklos performed (presumably in 372/3) the so-called 'chicken-oracle' (*ἀλεκτορομαντεία*). They wrote the twenty-four letters of the alphabet on little pieces of plaster and put a kernel of grain on each piece. Then they let a rooster loose and observed the order of letters on those pieces of plaster from which he picked the kernels. In this particular case, the rooster first picked the kernel from a piece marked Θ, then Ε, then Ο, and then Δ, thus the beginning of a variety of names such as Theodosios, Theodotos, Theodoros, and others. The idea was to determine in this way the identity of the next emperor. When Emperor Valens heard about this, he took a dim view of the matter, and Iamblichos got frightened and took poison. The crux of this story lies in the fact that Iamblichos was evidently alive after 372/3 and that he could not have been the teacher of Proklos, if the famous Neoplatonic philosopher is meant, because Proklos was not yet born at that time. I am unable to suggest a solution of this problem; G. R. Sievers, *Das Leben des Libanius*, 1868, p. 146, note 66, accepted the story uncritically, while Seeck (*op. cit.*) considers it a fable without explaining its origin.

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

¹³ *Die Reichsbeamten von Achaia in spätrömischer Zeit (Dissertationes Pannonicae, Series I, no. 14)*, 1946, pp. 54-55; see, however, W. Ensslin, *R.E.*, s.v. Phosphorios no. 1.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 240.

towers and walls of Athens. It is therefore not surprising that Libanios (W 901 = F 982) should refer in A.D. 390 to Iamblichos' generosity.

A final question concerns the occasion and the place of the erection or dedication of the Herm of Iamblichos. Here, the excavators have again anticipated the answer by identifying a large building of *ca.* A.D. 400 as serving educational needs and providing space for honorary statues of Athens and of her University.¹⁵ Travlos¹⁶ very appropriately called attention in this connection to a passage in Eunapius (*Vitae Soph.*, p. 483) which tells of the Athenian town house of Julian in which there were statues of his famous friends. The Herm of Iamblichos may have stood in one of these buildings.

Once again, an inscription has thrown a sharp but narrow light upon an event and upon a man known to us already in general outlines from the literary tradition; we have here another historical Attic inscription, one of the latest.

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¹⁵ Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 130-132.



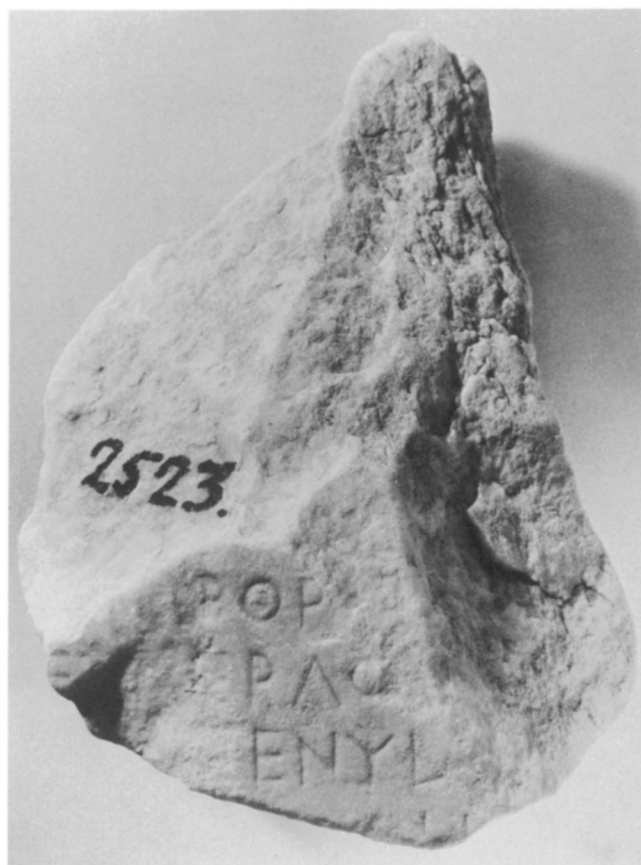
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No. 21



I.G., I², 853

DONALD W. BRADEEN:
ATHENIAN CASUALTY LISTS



A. E. RAUBITSCHK: IAMBlichOS AT ATHENS