

## THE ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟΝ IN LATE ATTIC INSCRIPTIONS

In the Asclepieum on the south slope of the Acropolis is a base with the following inscription (*I. G.* III<sup>1</sup>, 772 c):

Ἡ πόλις  
Τίτον Πομπήιον Διονύσιον  
Παιανιέα, τῶν ἀπὸ Μουσείου  
φιλόσοφον, βασιλεύσαντα, τῆς  
περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς εὐσεβείας καὶ  
τῆς εἰς τὴν πατρίδα εὐνοίας  
ἔνεκα

T. Pompeius Dionysius appears also in a prytany list, *I. G.* II<sup>2</sup>, 1056, of about 210 A.D. S. A. Koumanoudes, who first published the inscription on the base, explained the phrase τῶν ἀπὸ Μουσείου φιλόσοφον as indicating a philosopher with an appointment to the Museum at Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> The fact, of course, that Pompeius Dionysius had served both as prytanis and as royal archon, shows that for many years at least he actually resided in Attica, because he became so identified with the life of the country that he was given public offices, never awarded as an honor to foreigners. Yet he might have held an honorary appointment at Alexandria, and if this Attic inscription were the only one to mention the Μουσεῖον, we could call the occasion exceptional and rest content with the explanation. But the word [Μ]ουσεῖον occurs also on a small fragment found in the American excavations of the ancient Agora. The latter inscription, as yet unpublished, may probably be dated in the same period on the basis of the lettering. After the discovery of still a third case in Athens it behooves us to look for the Μουσεῖον in Attica itself.

The third example presented itself in the excavations of the Roman Agora. The Greek archaeologists recently discovered there a large base of Pentelic marble, adorned with a moulding above and below. It now stands a few yards east of the gateway to the marketplace of Caesar and Augustus. The lettering is suitable for the first half of the third century A.D.; it might, however, be somewhat earlier. In the top of the monument are two holes for the feet of the statue. The back is much worn because the base evidently had been used face down as a threshold block.

<sup>1</sup> *Ἀθήναιον*, V, 1877, pp. 528–529. His interpretation has been accepted in Dittenberger, *S. I. G.*<sup>3</sup> II, p. 619.

Height of base, 1.15 m.; width of inscribed face, 0.55 m.; thickness without moulding, 0.63 m.

Height of letters, 0.027–0.04 m.



*Ἀγαθῆι Τύχηι  
Κασιανὸν Ἀντίου  
τὸν καὶ Συνέσιον,  
τὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ Μουσίου[υ],  
Πανελλήνων ἄρχον[τα],  
[ὁ Ἄριος Πάγος ἢ β[ουλή]  
καὶ ὁ δῆμος &*

Base in the Roman Agora

I am here reproducing a photograph with the kind permission of Mr. Kourouniotes and Mr. Stavropoulos. The latter has already reported the base in his preliminary account of the excavations in the *Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον*, XIII, 1931, *Παράρτημα*, p. 7, but

in the limited space he attempted no commentary beyond suggesting as possible a connection between the Cassianus there honored and the eponymous archon Cassianus, who held office during the reign of Caracalla (211–218 A.D.). An identification, however, seems to me impossible, for the title reads *Πανελλήνων ἄρχων* not *ἄρχων ἐπώνυμος*. Since, moreover, the deme is not mentioned, Cassianus called Synesius (the *clever one*), son of Antias, can hardly have been an Athenian citizen.

The base adds to those already known the name of yet another archon of the Panhellenes.<sup>1</sup> Since he held this position, the person honored was a man of more than local importance. For us, however, the chief interest lies in the title *ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ Μουσείου*, recorded as his other great distinction. The *Μουσεῖον* over which he presided was obviously not the hill of the Muses, where the monument of Philopappus stood, but rather a school or academy such as the word commonly indicated elsewhere and at Athens too.<sup>2</sup> By no means, however, does the Museum of Alexandria constitute the only possible interpretation, nor, I think, even a probable one, the reference being what it is, for we must allow a difference in this respect between the literary and the epigraphical manner. In fact, if not in theory, the literary author usually addressed the whole *οἰκουμένη*, and if he made a reference to the Museum without the accompaniment of an identifying phrase, he meant, indeed, that of Alexandria, which through its brilliant history had become for all the world the Museum *κατ' ἐξοχήν*. An inscription, on the other hand, would generally have a local application. As we know, precisely at Athens the connection *school and shrine of the Muses* had a strong tradition quite independent of Alexandrian influence. Plato had established the school of philosophy as a *θίασος τῶν Μουσῶν* and had spoken of his activity as a service of the Muses. The other schools at Athens in turn did the same so that the conception of philosophical school and that of shrine of the Muses were always closely connected here. Far from being restricted to the great institution at Alexandria, the word *Μουσεῖον* by late Hellenistic and Roman times had become a common designation for almost any sort of school. Plutarch, for example, had the rhetoricians in mind when he wrote: *"Ἔθους δ' ὄντος ἐν τοῖς μουσείοις κλήρους περιφέρεισθαι καὶ τοὺς συλλαχόντας ἀλλήλοις προτείνειν φιλόλογα ζητήματα, φοβούμενος ὁ Ἀμμωνίος, κτλ.*<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the "universities"<sup>4</sup> of the third century after Christ had as

<sup>1</sup> The epigraphical and literary material concerning the Panhellenes has been gathered together by M. N. Tod, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, XLII, 1922, pp. 167–180. Hadrian "enhanced the dignity and brilliance of Athens by making it the capital of a new union of Greek states, termed the *Πανελλήμιον*, which, though devoid of political significance, served to unite the Greeks, both European and Asiatic, and to revive the memories of the great civilizing mission of Hellenism in the past. At its head stood a council (*συνέδριον*), composed of representatives of the states comprised in the union, and presided over by the *ἄρχων*. Each member of the council was entitled *Πανελλήν*, and the post was regarded as a high distinction."

<sup>2</sup> The reader will find an account of the history of the word in Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *Real-Encyclopädie*, XVI, pp. 797ff. For its application to the philosophical schools at Athens see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Antigonos von Karystos*, pp. 263–291.

<sup>3</sup> *Quaest. Con.*, IX, 2.

<sup>4</sup> J. W. H. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece*, has assembled the material in the most convenient form and supplied a good bibliography. Compare also Schmidt-Christ *passim*.

forerunner the Museum of Alexandria, and it is readily understandable that the convenient word *Μουσεῖον*, which at Alexandria had virtually been a name such as later the *Capitolium* at Constantinople, or the *Athenaeum* at Rome, might become almost a common noun to describe any similar institution.

A local Athenian inscription, therefore, should have concerned a local school. In the third century, instead of designating which school, a document could speak of *the* (one) *Μουσεῖον* because the philosophical, grammatical, and rhetorical education had been reorganized and the old schools united into one great institution.

In the third century at Athens the term would mean, therefore, the "university" as it appears even more plainly from the analogy of the schools at Ephesus and Antioch. At Ephesus a stone has survived, whereon the faculty, *οἱ περὶ τὸ Μουσεῖον παιδευταί*, honor P. Avidius Antoninus, benefactor of the city. In another inscription occurs the phrase *οἱ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ Μουσείου ἱατροί*. Accordingly a *Μουσεῖον*, which cannot be confused with that of Alexandria, existed at Ephesus.<sup>1</sup> Given its faculty and its connection with the medical profession, it was clearly an institution of the "higher learning." Furthermore, Libanius employs the same term in referring to the school at Antioch, which with its chairs of philosophy, rhetoric, and grammar resembled closely the one at Athens. In the first oration he speaks of the difficulty that he encountered at Antioch before he received his appointment: he managed, he says, to increase somewhat the number of his followers by establishing himself in a more public place near the Agora; but still the school was in the hands of his rivals, and that gave them an immense advantage: *τὸ Μουσεῖον δὲ τῶν ἄλλων ἦν, ὅπη τοῖς ἔχουσι μεγάλη*.<sup>2</sup>

Schools of rhetoric and of philosophy had continued to exist at Athens from classical times on into the Roman period. The "university," however, may be said to have begun in the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. Under the latter academic chairs (*θρόνοι*) were established with salaries attached. Marcus Aurelius completed the creation of an institution somewhat resembling our modern universities, when he endowed chairs in the four schools of philosophy,—the Academic, the Peripatetic, the Stoic, and the Epicurean, and added to the older chair in rhetoric still another with a larger salary paid out of the imperial treasury. The "university" of Athens soon eclipsed those of all other Greek cities even well before the displeasure of Caracalla descended so grievously upon Alexandria. Once in a while a professor resigned a post at Athens to accept one of the more remunerative chairs in the Athenaeum at Rome, but no other institution could lend the same prestige or attract as many students as the "university" at Athens. It was the chief centre of the New Sophistic which in the Imperial Age triumphed over Philosophy. And Athens, whither students flocked in the hope of

<sup>1</sup> J. Keil, *Jahresheft*, VIII, 1905, pp. 128–138 (particularly pp. 135–136); F. Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens*, p. 206†; *Forschungen in Ephesus*, II, no. 65; *ibid.*, III, no. 68; J. Keil, *Jahresheft*, XXIII, 1926, *Beiblatt*, p. 263. I should explain the phrase *περὶ τὸ Μουσεῖον* as indicating not only the professors ἀπὸ τοῦ Μουσείου but also those who without holding official appointments had the privilege of teaching there.

<sup>2</sup> I 71.

learning to speak the purest Attic, Athens, the quiet academic town, suited to study and clothed in a glorious tradition, had advantages which the world capital, Rome, did not possess.

The third inscription in still another way confirms our explanation. On the evidence of a passage in Flavius Philostratus,<sup>1</sup> for which the base found in the Roman Agora affords an eloquent commentary, we may identify the director with the Ionian sophist Cassianus, active in Athens in the early part of the third century and connected with the university as we gather from his contemporary's uncomplimentary observation: *οἷος θρασύνεσθαι μὲν ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀθήγησι θρόνον διὰ καιρούς, οἷς ἀπεχρήσατο, παιδεῦσαι δὲ μηδένα, πλὴν Περιλήγτος τοῦ Λυδοῦ*. Not only the name identifies them. The absence of a demotic in the honorary inscription establishes the foreign origin also of our Cassianus. The sophist, mentioned by Philostratus, despite his alleged incapacity secured an appointment to the chair of rhetoric. He had had some good opportunity which facilitated the appointment, and, as this unfriendly version implies, he may have secured the post through unfair exploitation of his opportunities. The nature of the great chance, the exploitation of which might well have annoyed another sophist, appears in full clarity from the other title recorded on the base in the Roman Agora. Cassianus held the archonship of the Panhellenes with residence in Athens, a superb opportunity for an ambitious sophist. Although the Athenians selected foreigners, they almost always selected them from among those who resided in the city. For this reason the sophists who entertained aspirations to the chair, waited in Athens sometimes many years, often enough in vain, and few were those who had the prestige of a great office to prepare the way for them.

The Cassianus of the inscription was director of the "university." Concerning the other, Philostratus indicates merely that he secured the appointment to the chair of rhetoric. However, the latter chair, *ὁ σοφιστικὸς θρόνος*, was regarded as more important than all the others, and surpassed in dignity not only the chair of political rhetoric (*ὁ πολιτικὸς θρόνος*) but also the philosophical chairs. In several passages Philostratus himself implies that the incumbent of the chair of rhetoric was *ex officio* director of the whole school. In the following words, for example, he records that the sophist Theodotus was the first to receive an appointment, at 10,000 drachmas, to the new, more highly paid chair of rhetoric which Marcus Aurelius created: *προὔστη δὲ καὶ τῆς Ἀθηναίων νεότητος πρῶτος ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκ βασιλέως μυρίαῖς,—he was placed in charge of the Athenian youth*.<sup>2</sup> Philostratus continues to say that Marcus Aurelius allowed Herodes Atticus to appoint the philosophers, but he, himself, the emperor, selected Theodotus to direct the youth (*ἐπέκρινε τοῖς νέοις*). Likewise the emperor, himself, when the chair was again vacant, appointed the sophist Adrianus. Philostratus again says that he *placed him in charge of the youth*, *ἐπέταξεν αὐτὸν τοῖς νέοις*.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, we know that after Libanius received

<sup>1</sup> *Vitae Soph.*, p. 627.

<sup>2</sup> *Vitae Soph.*, p. 566.

<sup>3</sup> *Vitae Soph.*, p. 588.

as sophist the appointment to the chair of Antioch, he was in charge not only of the other rhetors but of the whole school,<sup>1</sup>—he was, in the language of our inscription, *ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ Μουσείου*. We do not know who, apart from political officials, served as director in the other schools, but it is interesting that in the two places about which we are informed, the incumbent of the sophistical chair had a certain authority over the whole institution and served as an intermediary between the state and the “university.” At Athens this fact will account for the greater salary that he received.<sup>2</sup>

Since, therefore, we recognize in the word *Μουσεῖον* the ordinary designation for the “university,” a new meaning in which there is nothing surprising or unusual, emerges for the phrase *τῶν ἀπὸ Μουσείου φιλόσοφων* that misled the editor of the base in the Asclepieum as we related at the beginning. The philosophers *ἀπὸ (τοῦ) Μουσείου* are the incumbents of the philosophical chairs at Athens.

<sup>1</sup> J. W. H. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece*, deals with the school of Antioch on pp. 270–278. The account that Eunapius (pp. 79 ff.) gives of the struggle for the chair of sophistry in Athens on the death of Julian in the fourth century, contains many more indications that the sophist was the Head of the School. The account would lead one to believe that the battle for the succession vitally concerned the whole empire, which divided in its sympathies along geographical lines. Compare Walden’s note pp. 142–145.

<sup>2</sup> Philostratus (*Vitae Soph.*, p. 600) gives the salary attached to the *πολιτικός θρόνος* as 6,000 drachmas. The sophist received 10,000.

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