

## THE NEW HOMER

THE epigram on the plinth of the statue representing a personification of the Iliad (above, pp. 62-65) is of considerable archaeological and historical importance.<sup>1</sup>

Ἴλιὰς ἢ μεθ' Ὀμηρον ἐγὼ καὶ πρόσθεν Ὀμήρ[ου]  
Παρστάτις ἴδρυμαι τῶι με τεκόντι νέω[ι].

The pentameter indicates that the statue of the Iliad was set up next to a statue of her "new" father. The first line also speaks of two Homers, one older and one younger than the Iliad herself. The older Homer must be the famous poet of the Iliad, but it was the new Homer next to whose statue stood that of the Iliad.

This interpretation of the epigram permits at once the identification of the "New Homer" with C. Iulius Nikanor who was known as the *Neos Homeros*. Most of the evidence concerning this remarkable man (who was a friend and contemporary of the Emperor Augustus) was assembled more than ninety years ago.<sup>2</sup> Some new evidence has recently come to light, and, while a careful study of it will be necessary, a preliminary account of it may be submitted here in order to indicate the significance of the new discovery and to stimulate further study of this man.<sup>3</sup>

The Attic inscriptions in which Nikanor's name appears are the following:

1. *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 3785 (a = E. M. 3124, identified by Grimaldi): inscribed base of an honorary statue of C. Iulius Nikanor, the son of Are(i)os. This inscription suggests the identification of Nikanor with the son of the philosopher Areius Didymus who was a friend of the Emperor Augustus (Suetonius, *Divi Augusti Vita*, LXXXIX, 1), and of Maecenas (Aelianus, *Varia Hist.*, XII, 25).

<sup>1</sup> The statue of the Iliad has been discussed repeatedly; reference may be made to P. Graindor, *Athènes sous Hadrien*, pp. 262-266 (with bibliography). The artist's signature preserved on the statue representing the Odyssey is now published as *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 4313.

<sup>2</sup> See Karl Keil, *Rh. Mus.*, XVIII, 1863, pp. 56-70. For recent treatments of Nikanor, see P. Graindor, *Athènes sous Auguste*, pp. 8-10, 168, 176; A. Stein, W. Kroll, and C. Wendel, *R.E.*, s.v. Nikanor, Nos. 18 and 22; J. Day, *An Economic History of Athens under Roman Domination*, p. 149; S. Accame, *Il Dominio Romano in Grecia dalla guerra Acaica ad Augusto*, pp. 178-179; Th. Ch. Sarikakis, *The Hoplite General in Athens* (Diss. Princeton, 1951), Athens, 1954, pp. 73-74.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to H. A. Thompson for having discussed with me the archaeological implications of the association of the Iliad monument with Nikanor. In the original publication of the Iliad base (above, p. 64) its association with the Library of Pantainos was suggested. This appears to involve some chronological discrepancy inasmuch as Nikanor, the New Homer, was active in the time of Augustus whereas the Library was erected in the reign of Trajan. The difficulty can scarcely be resolved without additional evidence. One can conceive, however, that a statue of the New Homer, dating from his life time or soon after, was set up a good deal later in the Library of Pantainos, and that the statues of the Iliad and the Odyssey, whose style suggests a date in the second century, were then added so as to make up a group.

I am also grateful to Fr. W. M. A. Grimaldi, S. J., and to E. Vanderpool who examined most of the inscriptions mentioned in this report.

2. *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 3786-3789: a series of inscribed statue bases honoring Iulius Nikanor, the New Homer and the New Themistokles. Two of these monuments (3786 and 3787) were set up on and near the Akropolis, one (3788) in the Peiraieus, and one (3789) in Eleusis. These identical inscriptions assure the identification of Nikanor with Nikanor the New Homer, a native of Hierapolis, mentioned by Stephanus Byzantius, *s.v.* Ἱεράπολις. In one of these inscriptions (3788) the designation of Iulius Nikanor as the New Homer and the New Themistokles is completely preserved, while in the others it has been erased; this erasure itself supports the identification of Nikanor with the man of this name mentioned by Dio Chrysostom, XXXI, 116.
3. *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1723; S. Dow, *Hesperia*, III, 1934, pp. 162-167 (with fig. 11 on p. 163): archon list in which Iulius Nikanor, the New Homer (and the New Themistokles), is mentioned as Hoplite General. This inscription is dated by Dow (p. 166) "at the earliest late in the reign of Augustus." Notice that the laudatory epithet ("the New Homer") was added to Nikanor's name in this public document; notice also that the epithet was not erased.
4. *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1069 + (?) 1119 + E. M. 5245 (apparently unpublished) + I 175 + I 1059 + I 6132 + I 6387 (unpublished fragments from the Agora). A second copy of the same inscription was set up in Eleusis: *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1086 + A. N. Skias, Ἐφ. Ἀρχ., 1895, col. 121, no. 34 (already associated with *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1086 by Skias, but apparently excluded from publication in *I.G.*). In the Attic decree (*I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1069), Nikanor is mentioned with his epithets (not erased) and as Agonothetes of the Augustan Games and as Hoplite General; for the combination of these two offices, see J. H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Sacred and Ancestral Law*, p. 85. The association of *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1069 (which seems to be lost) with the other six Athenian fragments is suggested (a) by the occurrence of one significant word (κεχειροτονημένον in line 8) in the first line of the small fragment from Eleusis published by Skias ([κε]χειροτο[νημένον]), and (b) by the occurrence on the same fragment (line 5) of the name of Iulius Nikanor. Moreover, the larger fragment from Eleusis (*I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1086) has an erasure in line 14 in which the epithets of Nikanor can be restored since the corresponding line of the Athenian fragment (*I.G.*, III, 47, line 14; the letters of this line are omitted in *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1119) allows the reading and restoration: καὶ ὁ Ιού[λιος. . .]. This document, the text of which has still to be studied, evidently is concerned with real estate on the island of Salamis, and thus confirms once more the identification of this Nikanor with the Nikanor mentioned by Dio, ὃς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὴν Σαλαμίνα ἐωνήσατο.

Attention may be called to the literary problem connected with these inscriptions and with the statue of the Iliad. The official designation of a man as the New Homer and the erection of his statue with that of the Iliad are puzzling. It seems that Nikanor

was the author of a poem which could be identified or equated with the famous Iliad of Homer. The suggestion may be made that he was the author of the *Ilias Latina*.<sup>4</sup>

A final suggestion may be made to explain Nikanor's second epithet: the New Themistokles. Since the most noteworthy deed of the famous Themistokles was his victory at Salamis, one should expect that Nikanor, too, was the victor of a battle of Salamis. It so happens that Augustus staged in 2 B.C. a naumachia between the Persians and the Athenians (Ovid, *Ars Am.*, I, 171-2) in which the Athenians won (Cassius Dio, LV, 10, 7). Graindor rightly connected this event with the sham battles at Salamis which the Athenian epebes staged during the Empire (*Athènes sous Auguste*, pp. 128-9). It is now possible to confirm this connection and to see in Nikanor the man who 'won' the battle of Salamis in 2 B.C., and who established the commemorative celebrations of the epebes at Salamis. This explains satisfactorily his second title: the New Themistokles.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See C. Hosius, *Gesch. d. Röm. Lit.*, 4th ed., pp. 505-508.

<sup>5</sup> Attention may be called to the repeated references to monuments and to sanctuaries on Salamis in the much discussed inscription *I.G.*, II<sup>2</sup>, 1035 (especially lines 30-34); for the Augustan date of this document, see H. S. Robinson, *A.J.A.*, XLVII, 1943, pp. 298-9, and note 20 (with bibliography).