GNAES Octavius and the Echinaioi

(Plate 91)

In 1958 D. G. Gardikis called attention to an inscribed base in the village of Achinos (ancient Echinos) honoring one Γναῖος Ὀκτάιος Γναῖον στρατηγὸς Ρωμαῖον. The piece subsequently was noted with measurements (height 0.27, width 0.80, thickness 0.32 m.) in Δελτ., XXII, 1967, Χρον., p. 247 and then treated by J. and L. Robert (R.E.G., LXXXII, 1969, pp. 470-471) who identified the Octavius on the stone as the commander of the Roman fleet in Greece in 168-167 B.C. A text of the inscription has now appeared in S.E.G., XXV, 1971, p. 212, no. 642. Unfortunately the text still has not been accurately recorded and I should like to offer another text and a photograph of the stone (Pl. 91).²

a. 168-167 a.

ἀ] πόλις Ἐχιναίων Γναῖον Ὀκτάιον Γνα[ί-

-ον στρατηγὸν Ρωμαῖον ἀρε-

-τάς ἐνεκεν καὶ εὐνοίας τὰς ἐις αὐτάν

The lettering of the inscription is generally careful, though with occasional crowding. Letter forms are compatible with a date in the first half of the second century B.C. Incompatible with this date are the single dots painted below each line to indicate word division and the hyphens painted at the beginning and end of lines to indicate syllabic division. These were surely added in modern times when paint was applied to emphasize the ancient letters.³

With the exception of its first line, the inscription presents no problems. But at the end of line 1 iota must be restored. The right lateral face of the stone must have been trimmed, eliminating iota and the right-hand margin. The restoration of iota causes line 1 to extend slightly beyond lines 2 and 3 on the right. This was also the case on the left side of the line where the stone is chipped. Here the definite article ἄ must be restored before πόλις. The Echinos stone belongs to a highly

² I am grateful to Prof. W. Kendrick Pritchett for permission to publish his excellent photograph, and to my colleague Colin N. Edmonson for directing my attention to the inscription and some of its attendant problems. ³ Cf. W. Larfeld, Handbuch der Griechischen Epigraphik, Leipzig, 1902-7, p. 574.

Hesperia, XLIV, 4
formulaic class of honorific inscriptions. With slight variations and additions, these inscriptions regularly read “ή πόλις (ὁ δήμος, τὸ κοινὸν) τῶν δείνων τὸν δείνα ἀρετῆς ἐνεκεν καὶ εὐνοίας τῆς εἰς αὐτήν.” The absence of the article before πόλις would be very unusual. Finally, I note that the correct reading in line 3 is the usual εἰς αὐτάν and not πρὸς αὐτάν as printed in the Δελτίων, and followed by Robert and S.E.G.

The nomen Octavius was frequently written 'Ὀκτάιος in Greek inscriptions. In fact, 'Ὀκτάιος may have been the only spelling used originally. At the end of the second century B.C. 'Ὀκταίος is attested and 'Ὀκταὐοῦς, the spelling familiar in manuscripts, makes its appearance a century later. But until the end of the second century 'Ὀκτάιος is the only spelling so far attested. Consequently, I suggest that Olympia, V, Die inschriften, Amsterdam, 1966, no. 9343 (== S.I.G. 3, 650), also a statue base honoring this same Gnaeus Octavius, should be restored Γαῖαν 'Ὀκτα[ϊ]οῦν and not Παίαν 'Ὀκτα[ϊ]οῦν in line 1.

Robert is very likely correct in identifying the Octavius of the stone as the praetor in command of the Roman fleet in 168 B.C. who secured the surrender of Perseus at the end of the Third Macedonian War and celebrated a triumph, subsequently becoming consul in 165 B.C. However, we know something, in addition to their names, of three men under the Republic who were called Gnaeus Octavius Gn. f.: (1) the Gnaeus Octavius in question; (2) his son, consul in 128 B.C.; and (3) his grandson, son of (2), consul in 87 B.C. Except for an anecdote in Cicero, we know nothing certain of the career of (2) and associate (3) primarily with the civil dis-

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4 Some examples: W. Dittenberger, S.I.G. 3, 621 (186-172 B.C.) and 626 (ca. 182 B.C.), ή πόλις; 632 (ca. 182 B.C.) and 649 (169 B.C.), τὸ κοινὸν; 639 (ca. 177 B.C.), ὁ δήμος.

5 I known of only one such inscription within a two-hundred-year radius which omits the article. A stone from Veluchovo in Aetolia ca. 289 B.C. (S.I.G. 3, 369) reads: [βασιλέα Π]ύρρον βασιλέως Αλκ[ί]να πόλις [Καλλίπολι] τῶν ἀρετῶς ἐνεκεν, κ. τ. λ. But it is worthwhile noting that had the inscription been inscribed to read Αλκ[ί]να δ ἀ πόλις, two alphas would have occurred in a row. So we may have nothing more than an instance of haplography here.

6 I.G.R.R., IV, 262, ca. 110 B.C.; B.C.H., XXXVI, 1912, pp. 57-58, end of second century B.C.


8 In addition to the Εχινος stone cf. B.C.H., LXXXI, 1957, p. 183, ca. 168 B.C.; Inscr. Délos, III, 1429, A, 11-12, ca. 163 B.C.; I.G., VII, 4127, first half of second century B.C.; B.C.H., LIV, 1930, pp. 10 and 39, III, after 160 B.C.; perhaps B.C.H., XXXI, 1907, p. 446 (cf. note 12 below). An inscription found by Herzog on Cos also contains the name of Octavius, commander of the Roman fleet in 168 B.C. Unfortunately it has not yet been published and I have not been able to consult it.


orders at Rome in 87 B.C. during which he lost his life. 11 But in addition to (1), either (2) or (3) was also active in the Greek world as praetor, possibly in command of a fleet. A statue base discovered at Delos records honors accorded by the Posidoniasts of Beirut to a Γναῖος Ὅκταύ wellbeing Γναῖος στρατηγὸς Ῥωμαῖων and the letter forms of this stone allow it to be attributed to either (2) or (3). 12 If (2) is the recipient of the Delos base, there is a slim chance he is also the Octavius honored on the Echinos stone since its letter forms admit of a late as well as an early second-century date. But Octavius (1) is by far the most likely candidate. In contrast to (2) and (3) he is definitely known to have played an important role in Greece, both as a statesman and as a military commander. Moreover, Livy reports his activities in the area of Echinos at the nearby cities of Oreos (XLIV, 30, 1; 32, 5) and Demetrias (XLV, 28, 8) and in the territory of Magnesia (XLIV, 46, 3). While operating near Echinos in 168 B.C. Octavius was praetor in command of the fleet, “praetor, cui classis obtigisset (Livy, XLIV, 21, 3),” a direct link with the στρατηγὸς ναυτικὸς Ῥωμαῖων inscribed on the stone. Most likely Octavius was honored by the Echinaioi in this year or possibly in the following year when he was propraetor (ἀντιστράτηγος). As M. Holleaux has shown, the Greeks did not distinguish regularly between Roman magistracies and promagistracies before the end of the second century B.C. 13

The phrase στρατηγὸς ναυτικὸς is only descriptive of Octavius’ role and not a translation of an official Roman title. Octavius’ official title was simply praetor. Nowhere in the literary or epigraphical sources for the Republic is a praetor in command of a fleet called “praetor classis,” “praetor navium,” or the like. 14

Although we do not know the exact circumstances which prompted the Echinaioi, they were not alone in honoring Octavius. Stones survive attesting similar actions on the part of Elis and Argos. 15 Octavius was frequently in direct contact with the

11 For their careers see Münzer, R.E., XVII, 2, 1814-1818 (nos. 18 and 20); Broughton, op. cit., pp. 595-596.
14 Cf. S.I.G. 591 for “δ στρατηγὸς τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν ναυτικῶν,” a. 196 b.c. sqq. The title “praefectus classis” which appears on inscriptions in the last half of the first century B.C. (Dessau, i.L.S., 891, 30 b.c.; 2675, “litteris vetustioribus”; C.I.L., XI, 6058, 27 b.c.) is applied by Livy to three men during their tenure as praetor or propraetor in the second century B.C. (cf. W. Enslins’ remarks and references in R.E., XXII, 2, 1294-1295). But στρατηγὸς ναυτικὸς is not likely to be a translation of “praefectus classis” since the Greeks employed compounds of -αφιξ- (as) for this purpose; cf. D. Magie, De Romanorum Juris Publici Sacrique Vocabulis Solemnibus in Graecam Sermonem Conversis, Lipsiae, 1905, p. 20 (“ναύαφρος,” “προφραφρος”) and I.G.R.R., III, 1018 (“ἐφαρμος στόλον”).
Greek states owing to his activities as a commissioner in addition to his military role. It is significant that at Amphipolis in 167 B.C., upon conclusion of the war, he read in Greek the decisions of the senate and his commander, Aemilius Paulus, after Paulus himself had read them in Latin (Livy, XLV, 29, 3). We may conclude, therefore, that Octavius' importance and influence among the Greeks were considerable, and the new stone from Echinos further emphasizes his importance and prestige, if not his popularity.