

## THE MARQUIS DE NOINTEL IN NAXOS, A.D. 1673

**M**T. ZEUS in the southern part of the island of Naxos is the highest point in the Cyclades, rising to an altitude of 1003 meters above sea level. It takes its name from an ancient sanctuary of Zeus Melosios known from a rock-cut inscription on the upper slopes of the mountain (*IG XII*, 5, 48).

Another rock-cut inscription, this time in Latin and dated 24 November 1673, has recently been reported by Merle K. Langdon in an appendix to his monograph *A Sanctuary of Zeus on Mount Hymettos* (*Hesperia*, Supplement XVI, Princeton 1976, p. 111, note 36). It is carved on a slanting outcropping of bedrock 13 meters south of the modern survey marker at the peak. The letters are shallowly cut (letter height 0.03 m.) and many of them are hard to read. Langdon reads the first four lines and the date in the tenth and last line, leaving the remainder unresolved in capital letters. He remarks that his reading could probably be improved upon with more work. His text is as follows:

Ex hoc vertige  
montis Iovis  
Melosii maris  
Aegaei circum. .  
5 .ASINSVIAS. .N  
.ERABAT CAR. . . .  
O .ERMAR. . IO  
BENOINTEL. . . .  
CALLIS. . . . .  
XXIV Nov MDCLXXIII

The key to the interpretation of the inscription lies in line 8 where the name Nointel can be read. This is the Marquis de Nointel, French ambassador to the Sublime Porte in the reign of Louis XIV. He is best remembered by antiquarians for his visit to Athens in 1674 when an artist in his suite, Jacques Carrey, made a series of drawings of the sculptures of the Parthenon at a time when most of them were still in place on the temple, before the great explosion of 1687. Nointel arrived in Naxos on November 7, 1673 and stayed until December 15. Then he went to Paros and Antiparos for a fortnight, returning to Naxos December 31 and leaving for good on January 2, 1674. These dates are given by Anthoine des Barres, who accompanied the Marquis, in his book *L'estat present de l'Archipel*, Paris 1678, pp. 135-157. The date of Nointel's visit to Mt. Zeus as recorded in the inscription falls about the middle of his first stay.

The following account of the Marquis' visit to Mt. Zeus is given by Albert Vandal in his book *L'Odyssée d'un ambassadeur: les voyages du Marquis de Nointel, 1670-1680*, Paris 1900, p. 125: "Il monta jusqu'au sommet de l'île, gravit le pic aigu qui la domine et semble régner sur l'Archipel; là, il vit s'arrondir à ses pieds le groupe des Cyclades; il put compter soixante îles ou îlots, blocs de pierre variant à l'infini de dimensions et de formes, plongeant dans l'onde bleue." This will help us to restore lines 4-6 of our inscription.

Nointel's name and titles appear in lines 6-9 of our inscription. His full name is Charles Marie François Olier, Marquis de Nointel et d'Angervilliers. According to le Conte de Laborde, *Athènes aux XV<sup>e</sup> XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1854, p. 89, note 2, he signed state documents "Nous, Charles François Olier, marquis de Nointel, conseiller du roy en tous ses conseils, en sa cour de parlement de Paris et son ambassadeur en Levant." Two Latin inscriptions which are carved in the cave at Antiparos to commemorate Nointel's visit give the name as follows: first, Car. Fr. Olier, marq. de Nointel; and second, Car. Fr. Olier de Nointel, Imp. Galliarum legatus. These are reported in an article by H. Omont, "Relation de la visite du Marquis de Nointel à la grotte d'Antiparos (1673)" in *Bulletin de géographie historique et descriptive* 4, 1892, pp. 32-33.

We may now read our inscription as follows:

ex hoc vertige  
 montis Iovis  
 Melosii maris  
 Aegaei circumiac-  
 5 [t]as insulas LX nu-  
 [m]trabat Car. Franc.  
 Olier marquis  
 de Nointel imp.  
 Gall. legatus  
 10 XXIV Nov. MDCLXXIII

Once the nature of the inscription is understood, the readings follow easily and naturally. I have not visited Naxos to see the inscription but I have had access to Langdon's excellent color transparency and to a mediocre squeeze. The resources of the Gennadius Library in Athens have made research in this unfamiliar field both easy and pleasurable.

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ATHENS