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A New Epigram from Magnesia on the Maeander

ABSTRACT: The author publishes a new inscribed statue-base discovered in 2023 during ongoing excavations at Magnesia on the Maeander. The statue-base bears an epigram in honour of a certain Mandron son of Artemidoros, who died in the course of an embassy to “King Alexander”, presumably Alexander the Great. The statue-base dates to the mid-second century AD, and the author discusses the reasons why the Magnesians might have chosen to honour such a relatively minor figure from their distant past; he suggests a possible connection with the Magnesians’ admission to Hadrian’s Panhellenion, attested in an inscription from Athens dating to the reign of Antoninus Pius.

KEYWORDS: Magnesia; Alexander the Great; honorific statues; epigram; Panhellenion.

In September 2023, the Turkish team currently excavating the site of Magnesia on the Maeander under the direction of Görkem Kökdemir uncovered a large limestone statue-base bearing an inscribed epigram (*Fig. 1*). The base was discovered in secondary use, built into the post-Classical city wall which encircles the central part of the urban centre of Magnesia; the base was built into the west face of the wall, facing the eastern part of the agora of Magnesia, c. 45m east-south-east of the Temple of Zeus Sosipolis, where the post-Classical wall meets the west end of the south stoa of the sanctuary of Artemis. The stone is a plain rectangular shaft with upper and lower mouldings, which continue around all four faces of the shaft (the upper moulding badly chipped above the left and right faces). On the top of the base are a group of circular depressions, serving as fixings for a bronze statue (*Fig. 2*). The stone measures 1.20m in height, 0.74m in width, and 0.76m in depth; the shaft (without mouldings) measures 0.80m in height, 0.59–0.61m in width, and 0.65m in depth.

The inscription on the front face of the shaft is well preserved, with just two letters missing at the right-hand edge where the face of the shaft is chipped (*Fig. 3*). The letters are between 0.016m (line 10) and 0.020m (line 1) in height, with interlinear spaces of c.0.015m; the lettering gets noticeably smaller as the text proceeds. The text reads as follows:

ὁ δῆμος
Μάνδρωνα Ἀρτεμιδώρο[υ]
τῆσδέ ποτ’ ἀμφὶ πόλῃο[ς]
Ἀλεξάνδρω βασιλῆϊ ἔ
5 ἀγγελίην τελέσας
ἔφθιτο νόσφι πάτρης
Μάνδρων Ἀρτεμιδώρου,
ὄν ἀντ’ ἀρετῆς ὄδε δῆμος
στήσεν θηροφόνης
10 παρθένου ἐν τεμένει.
(leaf)

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“The people (honoured) Mandron son of Artemidoros. On behalf of this city, Mandron son of Artemidoros once performed an embassy to King Alexander, and died far from home; in return for his virtue, this people set (a statue of) him up in the sanctuary of the maiden, slayer of wild beasts.”

As the photograph shows (Fig. 3), the text is very carefully inscribed. ὁ δῆμος in line 1 is centred, with a space between the two words; the remainder of the text is left-aligned, with line-end corresponding in every case with word-end (creating, as a result, some substantial vacats at right). The letters have very pronounced serifs. The alphas have broken cross-bars; the central horizontals of the epsilons and etas (which themselves have marked serifs) do not connect to the vertical strokes, and likewise the central horizontals of the thetas do not connect to the outer circle. The vertical stroke of the phi projects slightly above and below the normal letter-height, and the central loop takes the form of a flattened oval, pinched inwards slightly at the vertical.¹ There is a decorative symbol ∞ at the end of line 4, and a hederia below the final line of the text.² The final letter of line 6 (the sigma of πάτρης) shows traces of a correction, with an intrusive vertical at left, and a descending diagonal across the entire width of the letter space; the mason appears to have started inscribing a nu, before realising his error and correcting it to a sigma. In general, the lettering would fit most comfortably in the mid-second century AD; the closest analogies are with a pair of Magnesian statue-bases for Antoninus Pius.³

The first two lines of the text are in prose; the remaining eight lines (3–10) are in verse, forming two elegiac distichs. In each of the four verses, the caesura corresponds with line-end:

τῆσδέ ποτ' ἀμφὶ πόλῃο[ς] | Ἀλεξάνδρω βασιλῆϊ ∞ |
 ἀγγελίην τελέσας | ἔφθιτο νόσφι πάτρης |
 Μάνδρων Ἀρτεμιδώρου, | ὃν ἀντ' ἀρετῆς ὄδε δῆμος |
 στήσεν θηροφόνης | παρθένου ἐν τεμένει. |

As the inscription makes clear, this base carried a portrait-statue of a certain Mandron son of Artemidoros (lines 2, 7), who has been honoured by the *dēmos* of Magnesia (lines 1, 8) with a statue in the sanctuary of Artemis Leukophryene, the chief deity of Magnesia (lines 9–10).⁴ Mandron is honoured for having performed an embassy to a certain “King Alexander” (line 4), in the course of which he met his death “far from home” (line 6). At the time of the statue’s erection, Mandron’s embassy clearly did not lie in the recent past (note the use of ποτ(ε), “once”, in line 3), and it is difficult to believe that an otherwise unspecified non-contemporary “King Alexander” could be anyone other than King Alexander III of Macedon. It therefore seems certain that this statue-base is, as it were, a “historical” or “retrospective” honorific monument, erected in the high Roman imperial period in honour of a man who had been dead for over four and a half centuries.

The honorand, Mandron son of Artemidoros, is not attested elsewhere. The name Ἀρτεμίδωρος is exceptionally common throughout the Greek world (albeit of course particularly apt at Magnesia, with its major cult of Artemis),⁵ but the name Μάνδρων is considerably more unusual. In 2006, in the course of a study of Greek personal names formed in Μανδρο- and -μανδρος, I collected seventeen instances of the name

¹ Compare the lettering of *IMagnesia* 184 (statue-base of Antoninus Pius) as described by Kern, *IMagnesia* p.XXXV).

² The decorative symbol ∞ also appears in *IMagnesia* 183 (statue-base of Antoninus Pius).

³ See Kern’s overview of the lettering of Magnesian inscriptions of the early imperial period in *IMagnesia* pp. XXXIV–XXXV.

⁴ For θηροφόνη, “slayer of wild beasts”, as a poetic epithet of Artemis, cf. Thgn. 11 (Ἄρτεμι θηροφόνη); Ar. *Thesm.* 320 (πολυώνυμε θηροφόνη, Λατοῦς χρυσώπιδος ἔρνος). For civic sanctuaries as a favoured location for inscribed honorific monuments, see Ma 2013, 79–85.

⁵ *LGPN VA* lists twenty-six bearers of the name at Magnesia (181–206).

Μάνδρων, to which we may now add four further examples (not counting the present inscription).⁶ Of these twenty-two instances, five derive from Magnesia, with a further nine from immediately neighbouring cities (Samos, Ephesos, Priene, Tralleis); this distribution matches that of names in Μανδρο- and -μανδρος more generally, which are densely clustered in the lower Maeander valley and immediate vicinity. It is worth noting that names in Μανδρο- and -μανδρος are also generally concentrated in the Archaic and Classical periods; the latest datable instances of the name Μάνδρων can be placed in the first century BC.⁷ Unfortunately, the Μάνδρων of this text cannot be identified with any of the other four bearers of the name at Magnesia.⁸

The inscription tells us nothing about the context and purpose of Mandron's embassy to Alexander. The only attested diplomatic relations between Alexander and the Magnesians came in the context of Alexander's conquest of western Asia Minor in 334 BC: while Alexander was at Ephesos, in high summer 334, the Magnesians (in concert with the people of Tralleis) sent an embassy surrendering their cities to Alexander, in response to which the King sent Parmenio with a substantial force to take over the two cities.⁹ However, the fact that Mandron is said to have died "far from home" (line 6) perhaps renders it unlikely that this was the embassy concerned—Ephesos is, after all, about as close to Magnesia as one can get (the two cities' territories were contiguous). No other Magnesian embassy to Alexander is recorded in any of our surviving sources for Alexander's reign. Perhaps the most credible context for Mandron's embassy is the deluge of embassies from the entire Greek world and beyond which arrived at Babylon in the spring of 323, the purposes of which, according to Diodorus Siculus, were hugely varied: "some congratulating him on his successes, others conferring crowns on him, others establishing treaties of friendship and alliance, many bringing magnificent gifts, a few defending themselves against accusations".¹⁰

The crucial question from our perspective is why the Magnesians should have chosen, at some point in the second century AD (probably under Hadrian or the Antonines), to erect a posthumous honorific statue of this (to us) deeply obscure ambassador from their remote past. The wording of the inscription may perhaps indicate that the Magnesians themselves knew relatively little about Mandron's embassy: it is striking that the epigram does not tell us the purpose of the embassy, nor whether it was successful, nor indeed in what Mandron's "virtue" (ἀρετῆς, line 8) actually consisted (his long journey? His success with Alexander?).

One possibility is that the posthumous commemoration of Mandron was initiated by a member of the high imperial civic elite of Magnesia who claimed—truthfully or not—to be his descendant. Claims to genealogical links with famous and heroic figures from the Classical Greek past were a standard feature of elite self-representation in Greek cities during the Roman imperial period: among many other examples, one might think of Herodes Atticus' claim to be descended from Miltiades and Kimon, or indeed of Plutarch's comment that at Magnesia certain privileges were reserved for the descendants of Themistokles down to

⁶ Thonemann 2006, 19–20, to which add (1) Cape Molyvoti, near Maroneia, IV BC (*I.Thrake Aeg.* E164); (2) Magnesia, c. 300 BC (*LGPN VA*, s.v. 3); (3) Magnesia, early III BC (*LGPN VA*, s.v. 5); (4) Iasos, c. 230–200 BC (*SEG* 57, 1082).

⁷ Thonemann 2006, 24–7.

⁸ Euboulos son of Mandron (*I.Magnesia* 105, line 9; Ager 1996, no. 158.II) was a member of a board of foreign judges in 112/1 BC; Mandron son of Apollophanes (*I.Magnesia* 9, line 4) was the *epistates* of the presiding tribe at an uncertain date in the early third century BC; Mandron son of Mikythos was a mint-magistrate in the early third century BC (*LGPN VA*, s.v. 5). A different mint-magistrate Mandron (*LGPN VA*, s.v. 3) was responsible for an issue of bronze dichalka, closely associated with the dichalka struck by Klearchos c.300 BC (Ashton – Kinns 2004, 77). I am grateful to Philip Kinns for advice (per litt.) on the chronology of these issues.

⁹ Arr. *Anab.* 1.18.1: ἐν τούτῳ δὲ ἐκ Μαγνησίας τε καὶ Τράλλεων παρ' αὐτὸν ἦκον ἐνδιδόντες τὰς πόλεις.

¹⁰ Diod. Sic. 17.113.1, further specifying (at 17.113.3) that some of the embassies concerned "disputes with neighbours" and "arguments against the return of exiles". See also Arr. *Anab.* 7.19.1, 7.23.2; Just. *Epit.* 12.13.1; Bosworth 1988, 83–93. For embassies associated with the Exiles' Decree, see also Heisserer 1980, 186–93.

his own day.¹¹ However, this idea runs up against two obvious objections. First, it is hard to see how the inscription can represent a genealogical claim, given that no individual contemporary Magnesians are named on the inscription (though it is, perhaps, just conceivable that the inscription originally formed part of a statue group including images of his supposed descendants). Second, and more important, the sheer obscurity of the ambassador Mandron surely makes it difficult to see why any member of the Magnesian civic elite would have bothered to claim descent from him. It is true that the pre-Roman history of Magnesia was not overburdened with figures of Panhellenic fame and significance, aside from Themistokles and his son Archeptolis and perhaps the Greco-Baktrian king Euthydemos;¹² but even allowing for that, Mandron is just too obscure a figure to make this argument credible.

I therefore think it more likely that the Magnesians' retrospective statue-honours for Mandron were prompted by a renewal of interest in some specific privileges which they believed their city to have had conferred on them by Alexander the Great. Throughout the Roman imperial period, Greek cities quite regularly appealed to decisions and grants by earlier rulers in order to preserve or obtain particular benefits at the hands of the Roman imperial state. The best-known episode is the large-scale review of the rights of inviolability (*ἀσολία*) possessed by Greek cities in AD 22/23, described at length by Tacitus (*Ann.* 3.60–63): Tacitus tells us that the city of Sardeis appealed to a “gift of the victorious Alexander” (*Alexandri victoris... donum*, 3.63.3) in claiming inviolability for their temple of Artemis, and that the Magnesians themselves “relied on decisions of L. Scipio and L. Sulla—of whom the former paid tribute to the loyalty and courage of the Magnesians after the expulsion of Antiochos, the latter after that of Mithridates—that the refuge of Artemis Leukophryene should be inviolable” (*Magnetes L. Scipionis et L. Sullae constitutes nitebantur, quorum ille Antiocho, hic Mithridate pulsus fidem atque uirtutum Magnetum decorauere, uti Dianae Leucophryenae inuolabile foret*, 3.62.1).¹³

Our inscription certainly cannot relate to this particular episode (the lettering is incompatible with a date as early as AD 22/23), but the Magnesians presumably had occasion to appeal to many such earlier grants over the course of the first and second centuries AD. On several occasions in the second century AD the Magnesians demonstrably “republished” documents of the Classical and Hellenistic periods on stone, no doubt on each occasion in order to support some particular contemporary claim. The best-known such document is the famous letter of Darius to Gadatas concerning the fiscal status of the “sacred gardeners of Apollo” near Magnesia, (re-)inscribed on stone at some point in the first half of the second century AD.¹⁴ Whether this document is a translation of a real edict of Darius I or an outright Roman-period fabrication remains hotly contested, but for our purposes the question is immaterial: in either case, the “republication” of this document in the early second century must have served some immediate contemporary purpose, most probably concerning the tax-status of the sanctuary of Apollo at Aulai.¹⁵ Likewise, a Magnesian oracular inquiry and response concerning Dionysiac thiasoi, originally dating to the third

¹¹ Philostr. *VS* 2.1.1 (546); Plut. *Them.* 32.5. See Jones 2010; Heller 2011.

¹² Themistokles: Nollé – Wenninger 1998/1999; Euthydemos: Polyb. 11.34. Themistokles is depicted on the provincial coinage of Magnesia under Antoninus Pius (*RPC* IV.2 1022 (temp.); Schultz 1975, 103) and Severus Alexander (*RPC* VI 5132 (temp.); Schultz 1975, 244). A new inscription from Magnesia, to be published by Mustafa Adak and Görkem Kökdemir, shows the Magnesians honouring Herodes Atticus (probably in AD 134/5) for, among other things, his delivery of a declamation about Themistokles, presumably at Magnesia.

¹³ See, among many other discussions, Herrmann 1989; Rigsby 1996, 580–5 and passim; Woodman – Martin 1996, 429–46; Traulsen 2004, 258–63. For the Magnesians' claim of loyalty during the Mithridatic War, see Keaveney 2019.

¹⁴ *IMagnesia* 115; Meiggs and Lewis 1988, no. 12. On authenticity, see Briant 2003; Lane Fox 2006; Tuplin 2009; Lombardi 2010.

¹⁵ Lane Fox 2006, 156–7; cf. Tuplin 2009, 166–9. For the identification of the Apollo of the Gadatas letter as the Apollo of Aulai, see Robert 1987, 35–46.

century BC, was reinscribed on stone at Magnesia at some point in the mid-second century AD, supposedly on the initiative of an individual Dionysiac initiate, for purposes unknown.¹⁶

It is, then, perfectly credible that the Magnesians could have “rediscovered” an old edict of Alexander the Great concerning Magnesia at some point in the second century AD, which served to underwrite a contemporary Magnesian claim to status or privileges of one kind or other. This would provide a plausible context for the Magnesians’ decision to honour the long-dead ambassador whom they believed (rightly or wrongly) to have been responsible for the original grant of these privileges.

We have no way of knowing for certain what this hypothetical “edict of Alexander” might have contained. However, if (as suggested above, on the basis of letter-forms) the statue-honours for Mandron do indeed date to the reign of Antoninus Pius, then one specific context might perhaps be floated. Thanks to a well-known Athenian inscription, we can infer that it was during Antoninus’ reign that the city of Magnesia was admitted to Hadrian’s Panhellenion:¹⁷

[- -] ἀγαθῆι τύχηι. Λεύκιππος. | [- - - ψήφισ]μα τὸ γεγόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν Πανελλήνων· | [ἐπειδὴ Μάγνητες οἱ] πρὸς τῷ Μαιάνδρῳ ποταμῷ ἄποικοι | [μὲν ὄντες Μαγνήτων] τῶν ἐν Θεσσαλίᾳ, πρῶτοι Ἑλλήνων | (5) [δὲ καὶ διαβάντες εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν καὶ κατοικήσαντες, συνα]γωνισάμενοι δὲ καὶ] πολλάκις Ἴωσι καὶ Δωριεῦσι καὶ τοῖς ἐ[πὶ τῆς Ἀσίας ταυτοῦ γ]ένους Αἰολεῦσι, τιμηθέντες καὶ ὑπὸ | [τῆς συγκλήτου τῆς Ῥω]μαίων δι’ ἃς ἐποιήσαντο συμμα[χίας πρὸς αὐτοὺς καὶ δ]ωρεῶν ἐξαιρέτων τυχόντες ὑ|(10)[- - - παρὰ θεοῦ Ἄδ]ριανοῦ, πατρὸς Τ. Αἰλίου Καίσαρος | [Σεβαστοῦ Αὐτοκράτο]ρος Ἄδριανοῦ Ἀντωνίνου τὰς | [- -]

“[- -] *With good fortune. Leukippos. [- -] passed by the Panhellenes. [Since the Magnesians] on the Maeander river, [who were] colonists [of the Magnesians] in Thessaly, and were the first of the Greeks [to have crossed t]o Asia and settled there, who also often fou[ght alongside] the Ionians and Dorians and the Aiolians [of the same] race as themselves [in Asia], and have been honoured by [the Ro]man [senate] through the allian[ces] they have made [with them, and] have received exceptional gifts [- -] from the god Had[rian], the father of T. Aelius Caesar [Augustus Impera]tor Hadrian Antoninus, the [- -].”*

This series of mythical and historical considerations evidently served as the justification for the Panhellenes’ decision to admit the Magnesians to the Panhellenion. The story presented in the Athenian inscription about the foundation of Magnesia by colonists from the (Aiolian) Magnes of Thessaly had been part of the mythological history of Magnesia since the third century BC;¹⁸ the more specific claim that the Magnesians were in fact the very first Greeks to settle in Asia does not seem to be found elsewhere.

As it happens, we have good evidence that Alexander was repeatedly called to deliver rulings on the “Greekness” (and mythological origins) of cities in western Asia Minor during his campaigns of 334 and 333 BC. In winter 334/3, the city of Side in Pamphylia attempted to persuade Alexander that they were in fact colonists from Aiolian Kyme (with what success, we do not know); likewise, in autumn 333 BC, the people of Mallos in Kilikia successfully persuaded Alexander that they were Greeks descended from the Argive hero Amphilochos.¹⁹ It seems to me quite possible that Alexander could have delivered (or later been plausibly represented as having delivered) some judgement of this kind on the Hellenicity of

¹⁶ *I.Magnesia* 215 (*Steinepigramme* I, 02/01/02), with Lombardi 2007/2008.

¹⁷ *OGIS* 503; *IG* II² 1091; Oliver 1970, 94–5 no.5; <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/OGIS/503> (C. de Lisle). The text reproduced here is that of Oliver (except in line 6, where I have replaced Oliver’s ἐκτενῶς with δὲ καὶ), but, like Hallmannsecker 2022, 81 n.108, I am unpersuaded by several of Oliver’s restorations; the text could usefully be looked at again.

¹⁸ See *I.Magnesia* 17, with Chaniotis 1988, 34–40; Prinz 1979, 112–21; Gehrke 2001, 292–3.

¹⁹ Side: Arr. *Anab.* 1.26.4 with *I.Side* I, pp. 43–7. Mallos: Arr. *Anab.* 2.5.9. See further Thonemann 2012, 26–9.

the city of Magnesia on the Maeander.

Be all that as it may, the statue-base for Mandron remains a striking and unusual piece of evidence for the intense and purposive attention paid by Greeks of the second century AD towards their past. I strongly suspect Mandron was quite as obscure a figure to most inhabitants of Magnesia as he is to us; we might imagine his death during an embassy to Alexander being mentioned in passing in some lost history of Alexander the Great, where it could easily have been uncovered by some eager Magnesian historical researcher of the mid-second century AD. (Note, once again, the striking lack of information about Mandron's career which the inscription offers: this really does look like someone about whom the Magnesians knew very little.) It is tantalising not to know exactly how the Magnesians instrumentalised this historic embassy to Alexander in the context of Hadrianic or Antonine civic politics; let us hope that the ongoing excavations at Magnesia shed more light on the episode in due course.

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²⁰ Epigraphic abbreviations are those of the GrEpiAbbr list of AIEGL (<https://aiegl.org/grepiabbr.html>).

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Menderes Magnesiası’ndan Bir Epigram

Öz: Burada Magnesia kentinde Agora’nın doğusunda 2023 yılı kazılarında keşfedilen yeni bir yazıtlı heykel kaidesi yayınlanmaktadır. Kaidenin üzerine “Kral İskender”e elçilik yaparken hayatını yitiren Artemidoros oğlu Mandron’un onurlandırma şiiri kazınmıştır. Metinde adı geçen kral, Büyük İskender ile özleştirilmektedir. Heykel kaidesi MS ikinci yüzyılın ortalarına tarihlenmektedir. Makalede, Magnesialıların uzak geçmişlerinden böylesine nispeten önemsiz bir figürü onurlandırmayı seçmiş olmalarının nedenleri tartışılmaktadır. Onurlandırmanın, Magnesialıların Hadrianus tarafından kurulan Panhellenion’a kabul edilmesi ile bağlantılı olduğu önerilmektedir. Kentin Panhellenion’a üye kabul edildiğini Antoninus Pius dönemine tarihlenen Atina’daki bir yazıt kanıtlamaktadır.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: Magnesia; Büyük İskender; onursal heykel, epigram, Panhellenion.

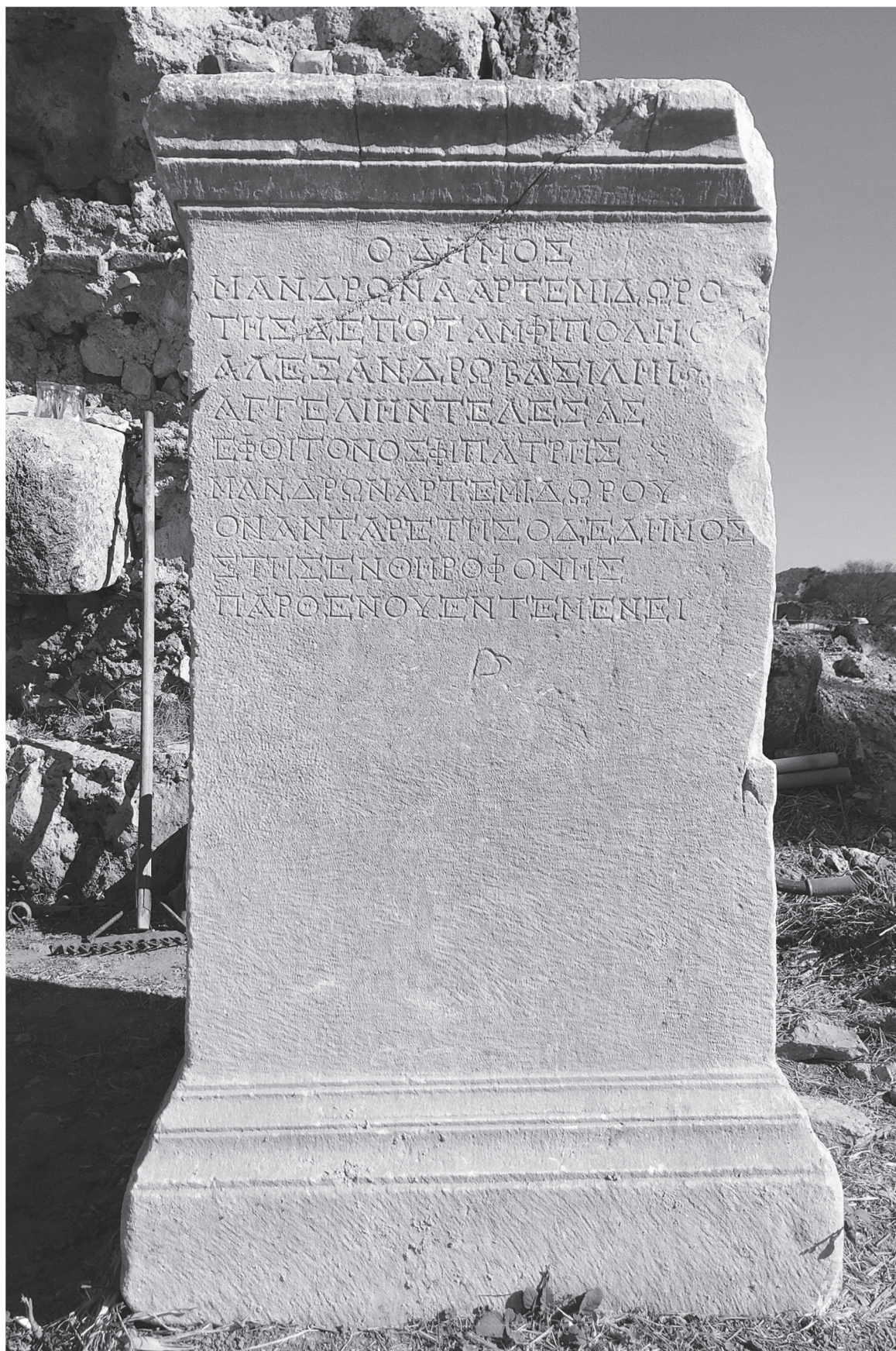


Fig. 1: Honorific statue base for Mandron son of Artemidoros. Photo: M. Adak.



Fig. 2: Upper surface (inscribed face at bottom). Photo: M. Adak.

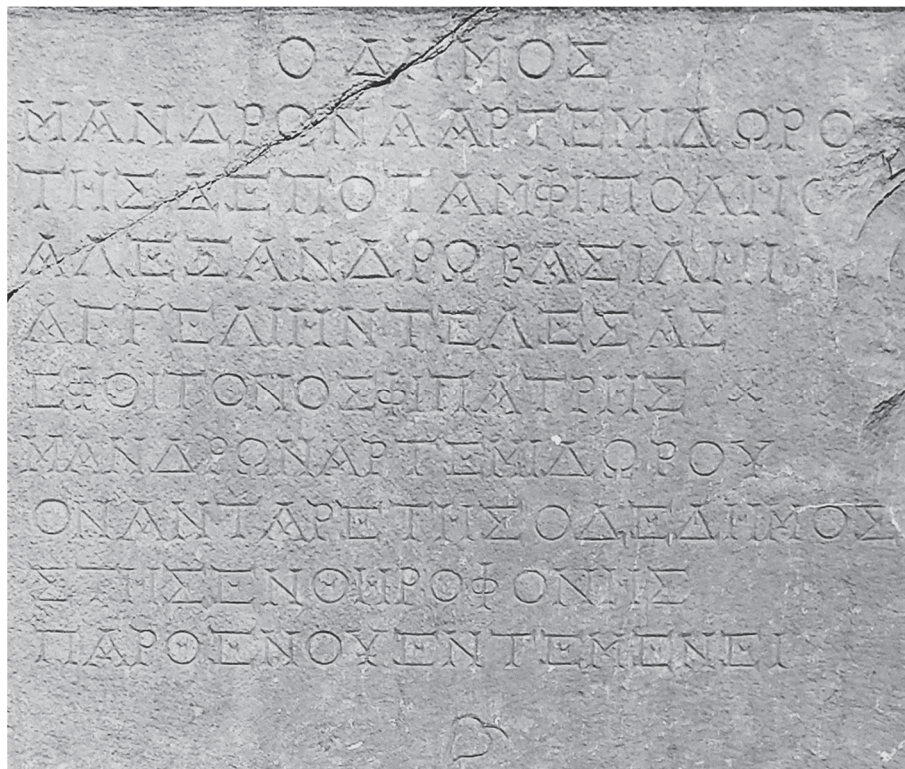


Fig. 3: Honorific epigram for Mandron, detail. Photo: M. Adak.