



Peter THONEMANN*

A New Epigram from the Region of Philadelpheia

ABSTRACT: The author publishes a new inscribed funerary epigram discovered in 2024 in the village of Badınca, near modern Alaşehir (ancient Philadelpheia). The epigram commemorates a woman by the name of Diodora, daughter of Menandros, who died in childbirth at the age of thirty. The epigram is closely modelled on a famous Hellenistic literary epigram by the poet Leonidas of Tarentum, whose dialogue-form was widely imitated in funerary epigrams of the Hellenistic and Roman imperial period.

KEYWORDS: Philadelpheia, Leonidas of Tarentum, Lydia, epigram.

The funerary epigram published here was seen by the lawyer Çetin Erdem, a distinguished collector of ancient coins,¹ in early 2024 in the village of Badınca, some 4km southeast of the modern town of Alaşehir (ancient Philadelpheia). With the agreement of the Manisa Archaeological Museum, Mr Erdem attempted to purchase the stone from the owner for the museum, without success. A photograph of the inscription was sent to Prof. Dr. Mustafa Adak (Fig. 1), who encouraged me to publish the text.

The stone is an undecorated white rectangular marble slab, broken in two pieces. It appears to be complete, and the inscription is perfectly preserved. The dimensions of the stone and the heights of the letters are not known. The text reads as follows:

τίς τίνος ἦδε κόρη; : Διοδώρα, παῖς δὲ
 Μενάνδρου, ἀστίη. : καὶ θνήσκεις ἐκ τίνος;
 ἐκ τοκετοῦ. : οὔσα πόσων ἐτέων; : ξέ-
 νε, τρίςδεκα. : τέκνα δὲ λείπεις; : παῖ-
 5 δας μὲν δοιούς, μουνογενῆ δὲ κόρην.
 τίς δέ σε καὶ κτερέϊξεν; : ἀνὴρ ἐμός,
 ὃς τόδε σῆμα θῆκε φιλοστόργου μνω-
 ὄμενος χάριτος. : χαῖρε κόρη, καὶ γαῖαν
 ἔχου ἐπὶ σώματι κούφην. : σοὶ δέ,
 10 ξεῖνε, πόροι πάντα θεὸς τὰ καλά.

“Who is this maiden, and whose daughter is she?” “Diodora, daughter of Menandros, a citizen.” “And what did you die of?” “In childbirth.” “How many years old were you?” “Stranger, I was thirty.” “Do you leave children?” “Two sons, and a sole-born daughter.” “And who honoured you with burial?” “My husband, who built this tomb, mindful of my loving grace.” “Farewell, maiden, and may you have the earth light upon your body.” “And as for you, stranger, may the god give you all blessings.”

The lettering is characteristic of the high Roman imperial period: the alphas have a broken cross-bar, the phi takes the form of a horizontal figure-of-eight bisected by a vertical, and the right-hand diagonal of the delta often projects somewhat above the apex of the letter (clear in lines 4, 6, and 7); there are no ligatures. The first line of the epitaph is indented slightly to the right; otherwise the text is left-aligned, with syllabic

* Prof. Dr. Peter Thonemann, University of Oxford, Faculty of Classics; Wadham College, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PN (peter.thonemann@wadham.ox.ac.uk | ORCID: 0000-0002-2239-9281).

¹ See O. Tekin – A. Yacı, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. Türkiye 11. The Çetin Erdem Collection: Lydia and Phrygia*, Istanbul-Antalya 2019.

division at line-end preserved throughout. The inscription is a dialogue in verse, with change of “speaker” consistently marked by an interpunct in the form “:”. The dialogue forms four metrically accurate elegiac distichs, as follows:²

“τίς τίνος ἦδε κόρη;” “Διοδώρα, παῖς δὲ | Μενάνδρου,
 ἄσθή.” “καὶ θνήσκεις ἐκ τίνος;” | “ἐκ τοκετοῦ.”
 “οὔσα πόσων ἐτέων;” “ξέινε, τρίςδεκα.” “τέκνα δὲ λείπεις;”
 “παῖ(5)δας μὲν δοιούς, μουνογενῆ δὲ κόρην.” |
 “τίς δέ σε καὶ κτερέϊξεν;” “ἄνηρ ἐμός, | ὃς τόδε σῆμα
 θῆκε φιλοστόργου μνω|όμενος χάριτος.”
 “χαῖρε κόρη, καὶ γαῖαν | ἔχοις ἐπὶ σώματι κούφην.”
 “σοὶ δέ, |(10) ξεῖνε, πόροι πάντα θεὸς τὰ καλά.”

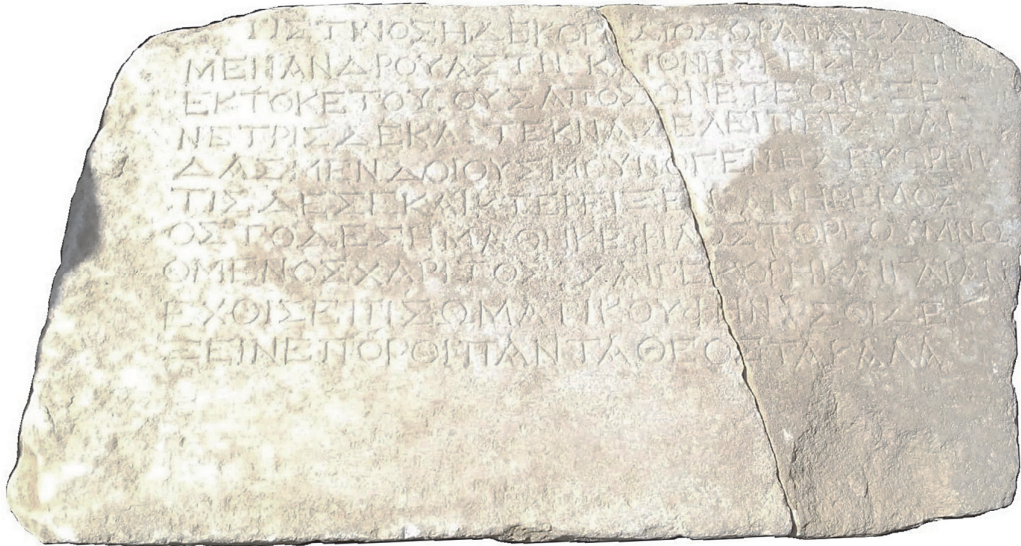


Fig. 1: Funerary epigram for Diodora, daughter of Menandros. Photo: Çetin Erdem.

Epitaphs in verse were reasonably common at Philadelphiea in the high Roman imperial period: Georg Petzl’s 2007 corpus of the inscriptions of Philadelphiea and its territory includes twenty-two funerary epigrams.³ A minor peculiarity of this mini-corpus is the frequency (and ingenuity) with which the poets inserted a reference to the age of the deceased, no doubt reflecting the wider tendency of epitaphs from Philadelphiea and neighbouring regions to specify the deceased’s age.⁴

This new Philadelphiean epitaph is closely modelled on a famous literary epigram by the third-century BC poet Leonidas of Tarentum; I have underlined the phrases quoted directly in the Philadelphiean text:⁵

“τίς τίνος εὔσα, γύναι, Παρίην ὑπὸ κίονα κεῖσαι;”
 “Πρηξῶ Καλλιτέλευς.” “καὶ ποδαπή;” “Σαμῆ.”
 “τίς δέ σε καὶ κτερέϊξε;” “Θεόκριτος, ᾧ με γονῆες
 ἐξέδοσαν.” “θνήσκεις δ’ ἐκ τίνος;” “ἐκ τοκετοῦ.”
 5 “εὔσα πόσων ἐτέων;” “δύο κείκοσιν.” “ἦ ρὰ γ’ ἄτεκνος;”
 “οὔκ, ἀλλὰ τριετῆ Καλλιτέλην ἔλιπον.”

² The poet once exploits orthographic variation for metrical purposes: ξέινε, lines 3–4; ξεῖνε, line 10.

³ TAM V 3, 1894–1915; add SEG 64, 1183.

⁴ TAM V 3, 1896 (τρεις... ἐπ’ εἰκοστοῦ... ἐνιαυτούς), 1900 ([ἐνδε]κέ[τ]η), 1901 (ὀκτωκαιδεκέτης), 1908 ([ὀ]κταέτης), 1909 (εἴκοσιν ἔξ ἐτέων), 1910 ([τρὶς] δεκάκις λυκάβαντες), 1912 ([τρ]ια[κο]νταέτη[ς]); TAM V 3, 1914 probably concluded with the deceased’s age. Specification of age at death in East Lydian epitaphs: Thonemann 2022, 86–91.

⁵ AP 7.163 (Gow and Page 1965, 2395–2402 no. lxx).

“ζῶοι σοι κείνός γε, καὶ ἐς βαθὺ γῆρας ἵκοιτο.”
 “καὶ σοί, ξεῖνε, πόροι πάντα Τύχη τὰ καλά.”

“Who are you, woman, and whose daughter are you, you who lie below this Parian column?” “Prexo, daughter of Kalliteles.” “And where are you from?” “I am Samian.” “And who honoured you with burial?” “Theokritos, to whom my parents gave me in marriage.” “And what did you die of?” “In childbirth.” “How many years old were you?” “Twenty-two.” “Were you childless, then?” “No, but I left Kalliteles behind me, three years old.” “May he at least live on for you, and may he reach deep old age.” “And as for you, stranger, may Fortune give you all blessings.”

This dialogue-epigram by Leonidas was very widely imitated in antiquity.⁶ We have three “literary” adaptations from the Hellenistic period, which in each case preserve Leonidas’ fictive personal names and scenario (Prexo of Samos, wife of Theokritos, dead in childbirth etc.), but vary the phraseology to a greater or lesser extent.⁷ We also have a whole host of inscribed epitaphs from the Aegean and Asia Minor which draw on the dialogue-structure and motifs of Leonidas’ epigram (albeit of course with the names and scenario modified to fit the real-life deceased), although we can seldom be certain that they are drawing directly on Leonidas’ text.⁸ The new Philadelphian inscription aside, direct knowledge of Leonidas’ epigram is clearest in the opening lines of an epitaph from Hadrianoi in Mysia, which runs as follows:⁹

“τίς τίνοσ;” ἦν εἶρη, Κλάδος οὖνο|μα· καὶ “τίς ὁ θρέψας;”
 Μηνόφιλος | “θνήσκω δ’ ἐκ τίνοσ;” ἐκ πυρε|τοῦ·
 “κάπο πόσων ἐτέων;” τρισι(5)καίδεκα· “ἄρά γ’ ἄμουσος;”
 οὐ τέλεον, Μούσαις δ’ οὐ μέγα φειλάμενος,
 ἔξοχα δ’ Ἑρμεία με|μελημένος· ἐν γὰρ ἀγῶσιν |
 πολλάκις αἰνητὸν στέμμα |(10) πάλας ἔλαχον. |
 Ἀφφία ἡ θάψασα δ’ ἐμῆ τροφός, | ἥ μοι ἔτευξεν
 εἰκόνα καὶ τύμ|βῳ σῆμ’ ἐπέθηκε τόδε.

If you ask “Who are you, and whose son are you?”, my name is Klados; and if you ask “Who reared you?”, Menophilos; “And what did I die of?”, from a fever; “And how many years old were you?”, thirteen; “So were you without culture?”, not entirely; I was not greatly dear to the Muses, but I was the particular favourite of Hermes, for often in competitions I won the glorious wreath for wrestling. It was Apphia my rearer who buried me, who crafted an image of me, and set this marker on my tomb.

As will be clear, the new text from Philadelphia follows the structure of Leonidas’ original epigram even more closely than the Hadrianoi epitaph, which veers off in a completely different direction after the first three verses.

The new Philadelphian epitaph is also an extremely competent piece of funerary poetry in its own right. The Philadelphian poet’s choice to begin the dialogue with a question about the deceased in the third person (τίς τίνοσ ἦδε κόρη, “Who is this maiden, and whose daughter is she?”), and only to switch to direct second-person address after the deceased woman unexpectedly answers the question herself, is if anything a rhetorical improvement from Leonidas’ original.¹⁰ The question in verse 3 of Leonidas’ epigram (τίς δέ σε καὶ κτερέϊξε; “And who honoured you with burial?”) included a fine piece of Homeric

⁶ See Bettenworth 2007, 86–9; Garulli 2012, 116–34; Hunter 2021, 222–4; Hunter 2022, 13–16.

⁷ Antipater of Sidon, *AP* 7.164 (Gow and Page 1965, 302–311, no. xxi); Archias, *AP* 7.165 (Gow and Page 1968, 3658–3665, no. xiii); Amyntes, *P.Oxy.* 4.662 (Page 1981, 6–8).

⁸ For catalogues of the relevant texts, see Garulli 2012, 116–34; Arft 2022, 298–306.

⁹ Vêrilhac 1978–1982, I no. 63 (*I.Kyzikos* 511; *I.Hadrianoi* 77; *Steinepigramme* II, 08/08/10). For another text which sticks sufficiently close to Leonidas that direct imitation is credible, see *IG* X 2, 2, 396 (Lychnidos), with L. and J. Robert, *BE* 1958, 301, pp. 265–6. An epitaph from Philomelion, *MAMA* VII 201 (*Steinepigramme* III, 16/55/03), clearly shows direct knowledge of Antipater’s adaptation of Leonidas (*AP* 7.164), whose phraseology it follows very closely.

¹⁰ Note that in contrast to the less accomplished Hadrianoi epitaph, answers are given to both elements of the question

vocabulary, the verb κτερεῖζειν (“to honour someone with funerary rites”: *Il.* 23.646, 24.657; *Od.* 1.291, 2.222); the Philadelpheia text adds a further item of Homeric vocabulary in the response, ἀνὴρ ἐμὸς... φιλοστόργου μνωόμενος χάριτος (“my husband... mindful of my loving grace”).¹¹ The prayer that the earth might lie lightly on the deceased (lines 8–9) is not found in Leonidas’ epigram, but is widespread in Greek poetry, beginning with Euripides (*Alcestis* 463–4, κούφα σοι χθὼν ἐπάνωθε πέσοι, cf. *Helen* 853).¹² The contrast between the stylistic elegance of the epigram and the relative crudeness of the lettering is noteworthy.

Bibliography

- Arft 2022 J. Arft, *Arete and the Odyssey’s Poetics of Interrogation: The Queen and Her Question*, Oxford 2022.
- Bettenworth 2007 A. Bettenworth, *The Mutual Influence of Inscribed and Literary Epigram*, in: P. Bing and J. S. Bruss (eds), *Brill’s Companion to Hellenistic Epigram*, Leiden and Boston 2007, 69–93.
- Garulli 2012 V. Garulli, *Byblos lainee: Epigrafia, letteratura, epitaflio*, Bologna 2012.
- Gow and Page 1965 A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams* (2 vols), Cambridge 1965.
- Gow and Page 1968 A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip* (2 vols), Cambridge 1968.
- Hunter 2021 R. L. Hunter, *The poetics of Greek inscriptions*, in: B. Kayachev (ed.), *Poems without Poets: Approaches to Anonymous Ancient Poetry*, Cambridge 2021, 203–226.
- Hunter 2022 R. L. Hunter, *Greek Epitaphic Poetry: A Selection*, Cambridge 2022.
- Lattimore 1942 R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, Urbana, Illinois 1942.
- Page 1981 D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams*, Cambridge 1981.
- Thonemann 2022 P. Thonemann, *The Lives of Ancient Villages: Rural Society in Roman Anatolia*, Cambridge 2022.
- Vérilhac 1978–1982 A.-M. Vérilhac, *Παίδες ἄωποτ: Poésie funéraire* (2 vols), Athens 1978–1982.
- Wulfram 2019 H. Wulfram, *Sit tibi terra levis. Eine Grabinschriftenformel in den Epigrammbüchern Martials*, in: C. Ritter-Schmalz and R. Schwitter (eds), *Antike Texte und ihre Materialität*, Berlin 2019, 45–65.

Philadelpheia Bölgesi’nden Yeni Bir Epigram

ÖZ: Yazar, 2024 yılında modern Alaşehir (antik Philadelpheia) yakınlarındaki Badınca köyünde keşfedilen yeni bir mezar epigramını yayımlamaktadır. Epigram, Menandros’un kızı olan ve otuz yaşında doğum sırasında vefat eden Diodora adlı bir kadını anmaktadır. Şiir, Tarentumlu şair Leonidas’ın ünlü Helenistik edebi epigramını yakından taklit etmektedir. Leonidas’ın diyalog biçimli epigramı, Helenistik ve Roma imparatorluk dönemindeki mezar epigramlarında yaygın olarak taklit edilmiştir.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: Philadelpheia, Tarentumlu Leonidas, Lydia, epigram.

Received: 03.09.2025 | Accepted: 10.09.2025

τίς τίνος.

¹¹ Homer uses the participial form at *Od.* 4.106 (μνωόμενος) and 15.400 (μνωόμενος); the participle appears in numerous other funerary epigrams (e.g. *IG VII* 118 (Megara); *SEG* 27, 436 (Pantikapaion); *I.Cret.* I viii 33 (Gortyn); *I.Aphrodisias* 2007 5.120; *I.Anazarbos* 514).

¹² In Greek funerary epigram, cf. e.g. *IG XII* 1, 151 and 153 (Rhodes); *IG XII* 4, 3, 1526 (Kos); *Steinepigramme* I, 03/06/06 (Teos), 04/02/11 (Sardeis), 05/01/52 and 05/01/54 (Smyrna); see Lattimore 1942, 65–74; Vérilhac 1978–1982, II 253–6; Wulfram 2019. The sentiment is familiar from the standard Latin formula *sit tibi terra levis*.