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New Reading of I.Mylasa I, 403

I.Mylasa I, 403 İçin Yeni Okuma

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Abstract: This article presents a new reading of a published inscription from Mylasa. The inscription is a dedication of an altar to an emperor and Zeus Olympios by the inhabitants of a street, for the sake of honoring Dionysides son of Demetrios, the olympic victor (*olympionikes*). It was engraved on a white marble round altar with profiles above and below. The inscription was published by Ph. Le Bas in 1870 and subsequently by G. Cousin in 1898, afterwards it was revised by L. Robert in 1937 and by W. Blümel in 1987. In December 2023, the altar was refound in Mylasa (modern Milas) in the garden of a private house and it was brought to Milas Museum. The new study has enabled a substantial reading of the lines 1-2 and 4-5 which were undecipherable in the earlier editions. The new reading of the lines 1-2 indicates that the altar was dedicated to Augustus and Zeus Olympios, therefore the inscription should be dated to the reign of Augustus. Besides, the lines 4-5 clarify that the dedicators of the altar were “the inhabitants of a *mesoplateia*” (*mesoplateitai*) from “the street of Labraunda” (*plateia Labraundike*). The street of Labraunda (*plateia Labraundike*) is attested for the first time in inscriptions of Mylasa. More importantly, *mesoplateites* (inhabitant of a *mesoplateia*) is a new word, which is not known from any literary or epigraphic document.

Keywords: Mylasa, Dedication, Altar, *Olympionikai*, Augustus, Street of Labraunda

Öz: Bu makalede, yayımlanmış bir Mylasa yazıtı için yeni bir okuma sunulmaktadır. Yazıt, bir imparatora ve Zeus Olympios’a, bir sokağın sakinleri tarafından, Olympia oyunlarında zafer kazanmış (*olympionikes*) Demetrios oğlu Dionysides onuruna adanmış bir adaktır. Beyaz mermerden, üst ve altta profilli yuvarlak altar üzerine yazılmıştır. Yazıt 1870 yılında Ph. le Bas tarafından, 1898 yılında ise G. Cousin tarafından yayımlanmış, ardından 1937 yılında L. Robert tarafından ve 1987 yılında W. Blümel tarafından revize edilmiştir. Altar, 2023 yılı Aralık ayında Mylasa’da (Milas) bir evin bahçesinde yeniden bulunmuş ve Milas Müzesi’ne getirilmiştir. Yeni çalışma, daha önceki edisyonlarda deşifre edilememiş olan 1-2. ve 4-5. satırların büyük oranda okunmasını mümkün kılmıştır. 1-2. satırların yeni okuması altarın Augustus’a ve Zeus Olympios’a adandığını, bu nedenle yazıtın Augustus Dönemi’ne tarihlenmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, 4-5. satırlar bu altarı adayanların Labraunda caddesinden (*plateia Labraundike*), “*mesoplateia*’nın sakinleri” (*mesoplateitai*) olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Labraunda caddesi (*plateia Labraundike*) Mylasa yazıtlarında ilk kez belgelenmiştir. Daha önemlisi, *mesoplateites* (*mesoplateia*’nın sakini), edebi ve epigrafik belgelerden bilinmeyen yeni bir sözcüktür.

Anahtar sözcükler: Mylasa, Adak, Altar, *Olympionikai*, Augustus, Labraunda Caddesi

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White marble round altar with profiles above and below. The profile below is partially preserved due to the second use of the altar. The altar was used as a large mortar, therefore during the second use the bottom was hollowed and a hole was made at the beginning of the lines 11 and 12 (Fig. 1d). The initial 12 lines of the inscription were engraved between two palm leaves, while the 13rd line was engraved below the leaves (Fig. 1a-c, 2).



a



b



c



d

Fig. 1

The altar was (re)found in Mylasa (modern Milas) in the garden of a private house in Hoca Bedrettin District, on Sakarya Street in December 2023. Now in the garden of the Milas Museum¹. Inv. No: 2023/150 (A).

Dimensions: Height: 81 cm; Diameter: 51 cm (shaft); 61 cm (with profile); Letter height: 1,7 – 2,5 cm (omikron 1,5 – 2 cm); lines 11 and 12: 1,5 – 2 cm; line 13: 3 – 3,5 cm (omikron 1,5 cm). There are distinct differences between the heights of the letters.

Ed.: *LBW* no. 363; Cousin 1898, 382–383 no. 24; Robert 1937, 537–538 (corrigendum for lines 3–5); *BE* 1938, no. 409; Moretti 1957, 176, no. 957; *I.Mylasa* I, 403; II, p. 4; Çokbankir 2010, 200–201, no. 150; Brunet 2010, 118, 121–122; *AGRW* ID# 10594.

Date: The reign of Augustus (27 BC–14 AD) according to line 1, see app. cr. 1–2 below.

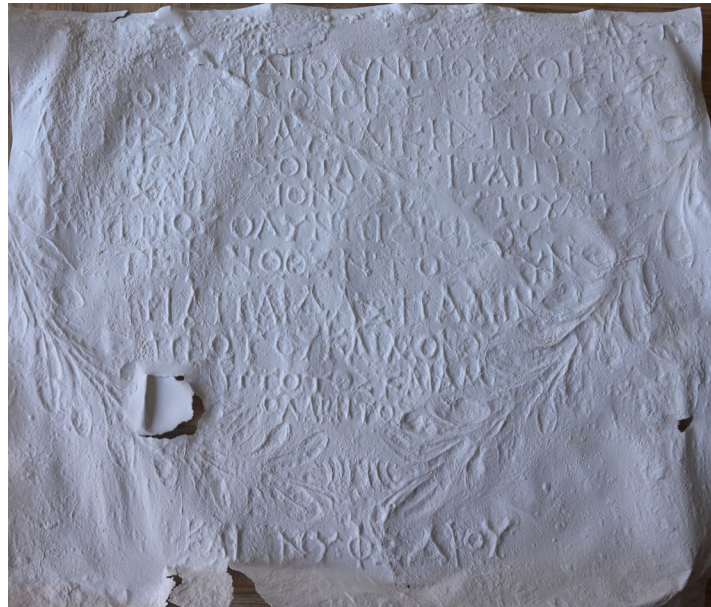


Fig. 2. Photograph of the squeeze

In 1870, Ph. le Bas had published the *editio princeps* of the inscription, stating that it was engraved on a round altar, between two palms;

[. Ἡ]φαίστῳ Σεβαστῶ[. καὶ Διὶ Ὀλυνπίῳ
καθιέρωσαν τὸν βωμὸν οἱ ἐκ τῆς π[αλαίστρ]ας τῆς Α[.] δόξης
(vel δίκης) πρὸς [.] σοπαλτεῖται (?), τει[μῆ]ς χάριν
Διονυσιδ[ώρο]υ τοῦ Δημητρίου Ὀλυνπιονίκου, στεφανωθέντος
Ὀλύνπια παῖδας πάλ[ην] πρώτου καὶ μόνου [πε]πτῶτος καὶ ἀμ[.
.]σ[.]λαβήτου καὶ ἀνυφένδρου.

In 1898, G. Cousin published a more accurate copy of the inscription in maiusculum as an unpublished inscription;

¹ The epigraphical study on the stele was performed with the permission of the Directorate of Milas Museum, dated 07.10.2024 and numbered E-51034835-155.01-5772289. I would like to thank Ali Yalçın, the director of Milas Museum for the permission to study the inscription. Additionally, I am indebted to archaeologist Selçuk Karabağ, for his assistance during my studies at the Museum.

ΚΑΙΣΑΡΙΣ ΕΒΑΣΤΩ
 ΙΔΙΟΛΥΜΠΙΩΚΑΘΙΕΡΩ
Σ Ν.....ΟΝΚΩΝΟΝΟΙΕΚΤΗΣ ΠΑΤΙ,
ΑΥΤΗΣΛΜΦΑ/ΗΔΙΚΗΣΠΡΟΣΤΩ
 5ΕΤΗΩΜΥΣΟΠΛΑΤΕΙΤΑΙΤΕΙ
ΛΟΣΧΑΡΙΝΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΔΟΥΤΟΥΔΗ
 ΜΗΤΡΙΟΥΟΛΥΝΠΙΟΝΙΚΟΥ
 ΣΤΕΦΑΝΩΘΕΝΤΟΣΟΛΥΝ
 ΠΙΑΠΑΙΔΑΣΠΑΛΗΝ
 10 ΠΡΩΤΟΥΚΑΙΜΟΝΟΥ
 [Α ΠΤΩΤΟΣΚΑΙΑΜΕ
 ΣΟΛΑΒΗΤΟΣ
 Au dessous du nœud des rameaux
 ΚΑΙΑΝΥΦΕΔΡΟΥ

In 1937, L. Robert accepted the reading of Cousin for the lines 1; 6-7 and 11-12, he also corrected the reading of the lines 3-5 in the light of the earlier copies;

οί ἐκ τῆς πλατεί-
 4 ας τῆς - - - - - ἰκῆς πρὸς τῷ
 - - - - - πλατεῖται, (κτλ.)

In 1987, W. Blümel republished the inscription in the corpus *I.Mylasa* (IK 34.1) as no. 403, with a restoration for line 1 and a suggestion for reading of the line 13;

New reading	<i>I.Mylasa</i> I, 403
[^{vac.} Αὐτοκράτ]ορι Καίσαρι Σεβαστῷ ^{vac.}	[Αὐτοκράτορι] Καίσαρι Σεβαστῷ
2 ^{vac.} [κ]αὶ Διὶ Ὀλυνπίῳ καθιέρω- σαν τὸν βωμὸν οἱ ἐκ τῆς πλατεί-	[κα]ὶ Διὶ Ὀλυνπίῳ καθιέρω- σαν τὸν βωμὸν οἱ ἐκ τῆς πλατεί-
4 ας τῆς Λαβραυνδικῆς πρὸς τῷ Ε[.]ΔΗΩ μεσοπλατεῖται τει-	ας τῆς Λ[]Α[]ΔΙΚΗΣ πρὸς τῷ Ε[]ΒΩΜ[]ΣΟ πλατεῖται τει-
6 μῆς χάριν Διονυσίδου τοῦ Δη- μητρίου Ὀλυνπιονίου,	[μῆ]ς χάριν Διονυσίδου τοῦ Δη- μητρίου Ὀλυνπιονίου,
8 στεφανωθέντος Ὀλύν- πια παῖδας πάλην,	στεφανωθέντος Ὀλύν- πια παῖδας πάλην,
10 πρώτου καὶ μόνου [ἀ]πτῶτος καὶ ἀμε-	πρώτου καὶ μόνου [ἀ]πτῶτος καὶ ἀμε-
12 σολαβήτου	σολαβήτου
<i>Leaf</i>	
καὶ ἀνυφένδρου.	καὶ ἀνυφένδρου.

Translation²:

“The inhabitants of the mesoplateia (mesoplateitai), from the street of Labraunda, near the [– –], dedicated the altar to the [Emperor] Caesar Augustus and to Zeus Olympios for the sake of honoring Dionysides son of Demetrios, the olympic victor, who was rewarded with the crown of victory for boys’ wrestling at the Olympic games (Olympia), the first and the only, without taking a fall, without getting caught in a waistlock and without sitting out any rounds”.

Apparatus criticus:

L.1: The leaf relief which borders the inscription on left begins from the 3rd line, while the one on right begins from the 2nd line. In the beginning of the 1st line, an uninscribed surface is visible. After the uninscribed surface there is a damaged surface enough for nine or ten letters, followed by the traces of two undecipherable letters and the traces of the letters OPI which are visible only under convenient light. Therefore, before the restored word [Αὐτοκράτ]ορι there was possibly an uninscribed surface for three or four letters’ space in the beginning of the damaged surface (Fig. 3a-b).

L. 2: In the beginning of the 2nd line, there is an uninscribed surface which was partially preserved. After this *vacat* there is a damaged surface enough for one letter which is followed by the trace of an A and a clearly visible I. Therefore the restoration [κ]αὶ fits the damaged surface (Fig. 3a-b); thus the emperor, for whom the altar was dedicated, should be Augustus.

L. 3-5: οἱ ἐκ τῆς πλατείας τῆς Λαβραυνδικῆς πρὸς τῷ Ε[.]ΛΗΩ μεσοπλατεῖται

ἐκ τῆς πλατείας τῆς Λαβραυνδικῆς “from the street of Labraunda”. Possibly an unknown adjective Λαβραυνδικός, ἡ, ὄν (of Labraunda; related with Labraunda). A well called *Parthenike* (the well of *Parthenoi*) is known from Panamara (Ist c. AD); *I.Stratonikeia*, no. 220a (11-13) [κατασκευάσας τὴν κ]ρήνην τὴν λεγομένην Παρθενικὴν (κτλ).

It is not surprising that in Mylasa there was a street that was identified with the name of Labraunda, the location of the most important sanctuary of Mylasa. The street of Labraunda possibly ran in a south-north direction, leading to Labraunda which was at *ca.* 15 km north of Mylasa. It seems possible that the “street of Labraunda” was connected to the “sacred way” from Mylasa to Labraunda mentioned by Strabon. According to Strabon, there was a paved road for a distance of about 60 *stadia* from the temple to the city; it was called the sacred way (ὁδὸς ἱερὰ), along which the sacred things were carried in procession: “ὁδὸς τε ἔστρωται σχεδὸν τι καὶ ἐξήκοντα σταδίων μέχρι τῆς πόλεως ἱερὰ καλουμένη, δι’ ἧς πομποστολεῖται τὰ ἱερὰ³”:

² For the English translation of the previous editions by Harland, see *AGRWID#* 10594 “Those from the street (*plateia*) of the . . . , street-inhabitants (*plateitai*), dedicated the altar to the emperor. . . Caesar Augustus and to Zeus Olympios for the sake of honoring Dionysides son of Demetrios, olympic-victor, who won the victory crown for boys’ wrestling (*palē*) at the Olympic contests — first, unique, never thrown down, never seized, and without being the reserve”.

³ Strab. 14.2.23 (C 659).



Fig. 3a-b. Detail of lines 1-7

A recently published inscription from Mylasa (late 1st c. BC – 1st c. AD) mentions the name of another street which was defined by the name of an individual; ἐν τῇ πλατῇ τῇ Σκόρπωνος πρὸς τῷ κυθρίνῳ (on the street of Skorpon near the hollow), see Ünver 2024, 332-333 (5-6).

L.4-5: πρὸς [- -] (le Bas); πρὸς τῷ ΕΤΗΩ (Cousin); πρὸς τῷ Ε[]ΒΩ (Blümel); πρὸς τῷ Ε[.]ΛΗΩ (new reading).

πρὸς τῷ Ε[.]ΛΗΩ, “near the [- -],” defining with πρὸς (dative) should be the way of describing the location of a street; another street of Mylasa, the street of Skorpon (late 1st c. BC – 1st c. AD) was defined as “πρὸς τῷ κυθρίνῳ” (near the hollow); ἐν τῇ πλατῇ τῇ Σκόρπωνος πρὸς τῷ κυθρίνῳ (on the street of Skorpon near the hollow), see Ünver 2024, 332-333 (5-6).

οἱ (. . .) μεσοπλατεῖται, although the cavity of the letter was filled with lime, the E of μεσο- is clearly visible (Fig. 3a). Blümel had proposed the reading E[-]ΒΩ μ[ε]σοπλατεῖται, pointing out that the word was unattested⁴. The word μεσοπλατεῖται, (plural nominative of μεσοπλατεΐτης) “the inhabitants of a μεσοπλατεῖα” is attested for the first time. The meaning of the word remains unclear; probably, μεσοπλατεῖται defines the inhabitants of a part of “the street of Labraunda” (ἐκ τῆς πλατεΐας τῆς Λαβραυνδικῆς), therefore it may be used to define “the inhabitants of the middle part of the street”, where it intersected with other main streets. The middle part of the street was possibly situated in close proximity to the city center and it may be an indication of prosperity and prestige to mention in which part of the street the dedicators inhabit.

Although the inscription doesn’t provide any evidence for the existence of an association, the inhabitants of the *mesoplateia* (μεσοπλατεῖται), the dedicators of the altar may have formed an association⁵. Besides μεσοπλατεῖται may have been just a neighborhood community.

L. 6: In the beginning of the line, the letters MH, which were restored in earlier editions, are clearly visible (Fig. 1a, 2).

L. 11-13: **πρώτου καὶ μόνου [ἄ]πτῶτος καὶ ἀμεσολαβήτου καὶ ἀνυφέδρου.** “the first and the only (Olympic victor) who won the victory (in his category, boys’ wrestling) without taking a fall, without being caught in a waistlock, and without sitting out a round. For the list of athletes who won at Olympia ἀπτῶς, ἀμεσολάβητος, and/or ἀνυφεδρος, see Brunet 2010, 117-118.

L. 11: ἀπτῶς, (gen.) ὤτος (derived from πίπτω) “without having been thrown down,” or as S. Brunet rightly suggested⁶ “without taking a fall”, see Brunet 2010, 115, cf. *I.Mylasa* I, p. 154 (no. 403 app. cr. 11) “einer der nicht fällt”. For the list of athletes defined as ἀπτῶς in Asia Minor, see Çokbankir 2010, 438.

L. 11-12: ἀμεσολάβητος, ον (derived from μέσος, η, ον and λαμβάνω) literally “never seized by the middle”, therefore “by the middle of his body (*i.e.* his waist)”. S. Brunet rightly suggested⁷ “without getting caught in a waistlock”, see Brunet 2010, 115. In the Turkish trans-

⁴ *I.Mylasa* I, p. 154 (app. cr. 5). For another possible reading of the word, W. Blümel also mentions the word ξυστοπλατεΐτης attested in an inscription from Smyrna, see *I.Mylasa* I, p. 154 (app. cr. 5); *I.Mylasa* II, p. 4 no. 403. For the inscription see *I.Smyrna*, no. 714.

⁵ *AGR WID#* 10594, “The street in question seems to be a neighborhood association”; cf. Harland 2014, 337-338 “The inhabitants of a street at Mylasa, which may or may not have formed an ongoing association, dedicated an altar to Caesar and to Zeus Olympios (not Labraundeus) on behalf of a victor in wrestling”.

⁶ “In brief, to add the title of ἀπτῶς (alternately ἀπτής or ἄπτωτος) to his record, a wrestler had to demonstrate his superiority by throwing each of his opponents three times without ever taking a fall himself”. Brunet 2010, 115.

⁷ “Another way a wrestler could demonstrate his skill was by keeping his opponent from grabbing him around the waist (ἀμεσολάβητος). The waistlock (μέσον λαμβάνειν/ἔχειν *vel sim.*) was considered the hardest hold to counter because it allowed a wrestler to lift his opponent off the ground and thereby gave him complete control over his adversary”. Brunet 2010, 115.

lation by N. Çokbankir, “ince belini kaptırmamış” (never had his slender waist seized), see Çokbankir 2010, 201, cf. *IMylasa* I, p. 154 (no. 403 app. cr. 11) “nicht um die Mitte gefaßt”. For the list of athletes defined as ἀμεσολάβητος in Asia Minor, see Çokbankir 2010, 439.

L. 13: καὶ ἀνυφέδρου *LBW*; καὶ ἀνυφέδρου, Cousin; καὶ ἀνυφέδρου Moretti. On account of the consideration that the word was unattested, W. Blümel suggested the reading “καὶ ἀνεφέδρου” changing the first Y with E, see *IMylasa* I, p. 154 (app. cr. 13).

ἀνύφεδρος, ον (derived from ὑπό and ἐδριάω, paronym with ὑφεδρία) literally “never sat behind”. Therefore the adjective is possibly related with “not drawing a bye in a lot”⁸. *Diccionario Griego-Español* accepts the reading “ἀνυφέδρου” and suggests the meaning of the adjective as “*que lucha sin estratagemas, que juega limpio*” (who fights without stratagems, who plays fair)⁹. The adjective ἀνύφεδρος is attested in a contemporary (Ist c. BC – Ist c. AD) inscription from Kos, καὶ γενόμενον ἀνύφεδρον ἀπτῶτα πρῶτον πάντων, see Höghammar 1993, 131 no. 21 (6–7); *ICos*, EV 247a; *SEG* 43 (1993) no. 555 (app. cr. 6); *BE* 1994, no. 451; *IG* XII,4.2, 942. The editors of *SEG* provide the meaning of the adjective (ἀνύφεδρος, ον) as “without having had a bye”, see *SEG* 43 (1993) no. 555 (app. cr. 6), similarly S. Brunet suggested “without sitting out a round” see Brunet 2010, 116, also see *AGRWD*# 10594, “without being the reserve”; Çokbankir 2010, 201 “boş kura çekmeden” (without drawing a bye).

Dionysides son of Demetrios

The altar was dedicated for the sake of honoring the Olympic victor (*olympionikes*) Dionysides son of Demetrios who was rewarded with the crown of victory for boys’ wrestling (*pale*) at the Olympic games (Olympia)¹⁰. His victory was extraordinary as described in the lines 10–13; he was the first and the only Olympic victor who won the victory (possibly in his category, *i.e.* boys’ wrestling) without taking a fall, without being caught in a waistlock and without sitting out a round.

The name of the wrestler was partially read and therefore restored incorrectly as Dionysid[oros] (Διονυσιδ[ώρο]ς τοῦ Δημητρίου) by Ph. le Bas. In the majuscule copy by G. Cousin, the name was written correctly as Dionysides (Διονυσίδου τοῦ Δημητρίου) which was also accepted by L. Robert and W. Blümel afterwards. Nevertheless, L. Moretti who followed the reading by Ph. le Bas, mentioned the name of the wrestler as “Dionysid[oros]”, see Moretti 1957, 176, no. 957.

This dedication is the only inscription currently known that mentions the *olympionikes*

⁸ “Not just wrestlers but also pankratiasts could add the distinction of winning ἀνέφεδρος (ἀνύφεδρος) to their records if they did not sit out any of the rounds that a match might involve. The opportunity to do so depended partially on chance since wrestlers, pankratiasts, and presumably boxers needed to draw lots to see who would get a bye only when an uneven number of competitors had registered”. Brunet 2010, 116.

⁹ *DGE*, s.v. ἀνύφεδρος, see also *IMylasa* II, p. 4 (addenda and corrigenda for no. 403).

¹⁰ According to W. Blümel, it is not clear whether he won at the Elean Olympics or at another agon Ὀλύμπια, see *IMylasa* I, p. 154 “*Ob er bei den eleischen Olympien gesiegt hat oder bei einem anderen Agon Ὀλύμπια, ist nicht klar*”.

(Olympic victor) Dionysides of Mylasa. L. Moretti suggested “non prima del I saecolo d. Cr.” (not before the Ist c. AD) for the date of the victory of Dionysides¹¹. Likewise, the editors of “*Connected Contests Ancient Athletes Online*” (person ID: 4147)¹² suggested the date 0-93 AD for the victory of Dionysides. The new reading of the inscription, particularly of the lines 1-2, indicates that the victory of Dionysides should be dated to the reign of Augustus.

It remains unclear why the μεσοπλατεῖται (inhabitants of the *mesoplateia*) dedicated the altar for the sake of honoring Dionysides. Dionysides son of Demetrios was possibly a young citizen of Mylasa; one can suggest that Dionysides was also a μεσοπλατεῖτης and a source of pride of the neighborhood.

¹¹ Moretti 1957, 176, no. 957.

¹² CC, 4147.

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* Abbreviations of epigraphical editions and reference works follow the “Liste des abréviations des éditions et ouvrages de référence pour l'épigraphie grecque alphabétique (GrEpiAbbr – Version 02, Janvier 2022)” developed by the *Association Internationale d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine*.