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The Physicians of Nikaia (Bithynia) in Light of the Inscriptions

Yazıtlar Işığında Nikaialı (Bithynia) Doktorlar

Ezgi DEMİRHAN ÖZTÜRK*

Abstract: In this article, a total of eight Nicaean doctors, six known from Nikaia and its territorium, one from Thessalia and one from Rome, are presented. These previously published inscriptions are reassembled and studied, with an emphasis upon the Nicaean doctors. In addition, the movement of doctors to different regions is examined and the fact that the profession of medicine is a tradition passed from father to son is highlighted from the inscriptions, with the inscription of Peisistratos and Apollodotos and their families providing a good example of this tradition. It was also considered remarkable that the inscription found in Thessalia does not carry the name of the grave owner, but refers to his profession and emphasizes it in poetic language. This indicates that these people through indicating their professions in all the grave inscriptions examined, may have emphasized the prestige of this profession.

Keywords: Bithynia, Nikaia, Physicians Inscription, Funerary Inscription, Roman Imperial Period

Öz: Bu makalede Nikaia ve egemenlik alanından bilinen altı, biri Teselya ve bir diğeri de Roma'dan olmak üzere toplam sekiz adet Nikaialı doktorların mezar yazıtı sunulmaktadır. Daha önce yayımlanmış olan bu yazıtlar Nikaialı doktorlar özelinde tekrar bir araya getirilmiş ve incelenmiştir. Tüm bunlara ek olarak, doktorların farklı bölgelere göçlerinin nedeni incelenmeye çalışılmış ve doktorluk mesleğinin babadan-oğula geçen bir gelenek olduğuna yazıtlar yolu ile dikkat çekilmeye çalışılmıştır ve bu geleneğin güzel bir örneği olarak da Peisistratos ve Apollodotos ile onların ailelerinin yazıtı gösterilmiştir. Teselya'da bulunan yazıtta da mezar sahibinin adının olmaması; fakat mesleğine atıfta bulunması ve bunu şiirsel bir dille vurgulaması da dikkate değer görülmüştür. Bu durum makalede incelenen tüm mezar yazıtlarında bu kişilerin mesleklerini belirtmiş olmalarının, bu mesleğin saygınlığına vurgu yapmış olabileceklerine dair bir görüşe de dikkat çekilmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bithynia, Nikaia, Doktor Yazıtları, Mezar Yazıtları, Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi

Introduction

In the pre-Hellenistic period we do not know for certain the medical methods employed. The general belief was that illness was a form of divine punishment believed to be given by the gods. In general, it is known that the people who treated the sick were priests who had relations with the gods¹. While this was the case in the medical field, we see the only example that we can call medical practice was in Egypt. However, it is known that this practice did not go beyond the trial-and-error method and that it was a kind of alternative medicine based on herbal resources².

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All translations belong to the author.

¹ For detailed information about this subject, see Cilliers and Retief 2013, 17.

² Jouanna 2012, 9.

If we take a general look at Greek medicine, the basis of Greek medicine (ca. VIth - IVth B.C.) was human nature (naturalistic thought), and the views on the origin of the healing of illness was based upon the ancient priests of Asklepios. According to the ancient physicians, one could not be healed without the help of a “divine God”. Due to the practice of Hippocrates, the supernatural became more independent from the contemporary and ethical. Many physicians were philosophers, confirmed by their views on life, such as Pythagoras of Samos (ca. 570 - ca. 495 B.C.), Alkmaion of Kroton (ca. 510 - ? B.C.), Empedokles (ca. 494-434 / ca. 444-443 B.C.), Hippocrates of Kos (460 - ca. 370 B.C.), Aristoteles (384-322 B.C.), Praxagoras (ca. 340 - ? B.C.), Erasistratos (ca. 304 - ca. 250 B.C.), Galenos (129-216 A.D.) and Asklepiades of Bithynia. Asklepiades was a famous physician (130-40 B.C.), a friend of Cicero, who studied medicine in Athens and in Egypt in Alexandria and applied his medical knowledge, which he learned in Greece and Anatolia in Bithynia before moving to Rome. It is known that he brought the Greek medicine to Rome from 91 B.C. onwards³.

In this paper, I bring together and interpret eight previously found inscriptions and two inscriptions among them recorded through our survey, the Sakarya and Bilecik Provinces Epigraphic History-Geographic Survey in the territory of Nikaia⁴ located in ancient Bithynia which was a capital for a long time, and these inscriptions date from the Roman imperial period. With the translation of the inscriptions, interpretations are made and evaluations are made of what these doctors mentioned about themselves and their profession in these funerary inscriptions.

Bithynia is a region located in northwest Anatolia, bordered by Paphlagonia (=West Black Sea region) in the East, the Pontos Euxenus (=the Black Sea) in the north, the Propontis (=the Marmara Sea) and the Rhyndakos (=Kocayağ, Atranos River) in the west, and the Sangarios (=Sakarya River) in the south⁵. Many physicians' inscriptions are known from this region, which contained thirteen cities⁶.

The Bithynian physicians known from the inscriptions and texts that date from the Hellenistic to the Late Roman periods come from the following cities: Apameia (1)⁷, Chalkhedon (2)⁸, Kios (3)⁹, Klaudiopolis (6)¹⁰, Herakleia ad Pontum (3)¹¹, Nikaia (8)¹², Nikomedeia (5)¹³, Prusa ad Olympum (2)¹⁴, Prusias ad Hypium (1)¹⁵, Tieion (2)¹⁶, and from an unknown settlement (3)¹⁷.

A Brief History of Nikaia

Known as Nikaia and located near Askania Limne Lake (=Iznik Lake) in ancient times, modern Iznik

³ Cic. *de or.* i 62. See also Rawson 1982, 360.

⁴ An epigraphic survey in the territory of Nikaia conducted by Assoc. Dr. Hüseyin Sami Öztürk of which I have been a team member since 2014.

⁵ Belke 2020, 98.

⁶ For detailed information about these inscriptions, see Nissen 2006, 14–63.

⁷ Nissen 2006, 14-16 no. 001 (1).

⁸ Nissen 2006, 17 no. 002 (1); 18-19 no. 003 = Samama 2003, 415–416 no. 312 (2).

⁹ Nissen 2006, 20 no. 004 (1); 21 no. 005 (2); 22, 006 = Samama 2003, 408 no. 304 (3).

¹⁰ Nissen 2006, 24-25 no. 007 = Samama 2003, 416-417 no. 313 (1); Nissen 2006, 26 no. 008 = Samama 2003, 416-417 no. 313 (2); Nissen 2006, 27 no. 009 = Samama 2003, 417-417 no. 314 (3); Nissen 2006, 28 no. 010 (4); Nissen 2006, 29 no. 011 (5); Adak *et al.* 2008, 93-94 no. 18 = SEG LVIII 1430 (6).

¹¹ Nissen 2006, 31-32 no. 013 = Samama 2003, 154-155 no. 54 (1); Nissen 2006, 33-34 no. 014 = Samama 2003, 419-420 no. 317 (2); Nissen 2006, 35-36 no. 015 = Samama 2003, 420 no. 318 (3).

¹² Nissen 2006, 44 no. 021 = Samama 2003, 411 no. 307 (1); Nissen 2006, 45-46 no. 022 = Samama 2003, 512-513 no. 464 (2); Nissen 2006, 47-48 no. 023 (3); Nissen 2006, 49-51 no. 24 = Samama 2003, 507-508 no. 458 (4); Nissen 2006, 29 no. 011 = Samama 2003, 412-413 no. 309 (5).

¹³ Nissen 2006, 54-55 no. 026 = Samama 2003, 408 no. 303 (1); Nissen 2006, 56-57 no. 027 (2).

¹⁴ Nissen 2006, 58 no. 028 (1).

¹⁵ Nissen 2006, 61-62 no. 029 = Samama 2003, 321 no. 196 (1); Nissen 2006, 63 (2).

¹⁶ Nissen 2006, 64-65 no. 030 (1); Nissen 2006, 66-67 no. 031 (2); Nissen 2006, 68-69 no. 032 (3).

¹⁷ Nissen 2006, 43 no. 020 = Samama 2003, 177 no. 075.

was an important city of Northwest Asia Minor and the oldest city and first metropolis of Roman Bithynia. Nikaia gradually developed and prospered during the Roman Imperial Period, especially during the *Pax Romana* (27 B.C. - 180 A.D.). The city's prosperity is reflected in the construction of a theatre, baths, waterways, gymnasiums, temples and roads¹⁸. In this period, great expansions were seen in the borders of the city with the borders of the city's territory substantially expanded. The sovereignty areas of the city were as follows: Yenişehir district of Bursa province in the west; Pamukova, Geyve and Taraklı districts of Sakarya province in the north; Göynük and Mudurnu districts of Bolu province in the east, Yenipazar district of Bilecik province in the south and south-east of Bilecik province, Osmaneli, Gölpazarı, Merkez district, Söğüt and İnhisar districts¹⁹.

The ancient city of Nikaia, located at the intersection of important roads was used as the capital for centuries due to this strategic location. In ancient times, there were two main routes from Asia Minor to the East: one was the *Via Sebaste*, which started from Ephesos-Pergamon; the other was the Roman / Pilgrimage Road, whose original name is still unknown, coming from the Balkans and going to Byzantion (Istanbul) and from there to Khalkhedon (= Kadıköy) and Nikomedeia (= İzmit) and then to Nikaia²⁰. Nikaia's location in these road networks brought the city an important place in the field of trade and culture; as can be seen, Nikaia was one of the important cities of the Bithynia region. For this reason, it should be considered that there were many professional groups and that the physicians were among these groups²¹.

In addition, our information on medical knowledge in the broader territory of Nikaia comes from votive inscriptions dedicated to Asklepios. Inscriptions dated to the Roman Imperial period were found on different places such as Orhangazi²² (Bursa province), Osmaneli²³, Gölpazarı²⁴, Söğüt²⁵ (Bilecik province) and Göynük²⁶ (Bolu province) in the territory of Nikaia. Except for both the physicians and votive inscriptions, there is a holy spring in the center of Nikaia called Böcek Ayazma that might be related to medicine. The following is written in an inscription dated to the VIth century A.D., which is currently kept in the İznik Archaeological Museum but was brought from the Böcek Ayazma: *The god gives good to everybody because his grace is eternal*²⁷.

The Inscriptions of Nikaian Physicians

To date eight physicians are known from inscriptions from the territory of Nikaia, its center, and other places in the Roman world until now. These inscriptions are translated with comments concerning the physicians' names, families, and professions as follows:

1. Epitaph of Peisistratos and Apollodotos and Their Families

Three marble plaque fragments.

Findspot: These three marble fragments were found in the south of the village of Elbeyli, located 6.5 km north of İznik (Bursa province), in 1934-35. The place where the inscriptions were placed was most probably in the necropolis area. Only plates b and c are at the İznik Archaeological Museum (Fig. 1).

¹⁸ Öztürk 2021, 2.

¹⁹ For detailed information about the borders, see *I.Nikaia*, 3-38.

²⁰ *RRMAM* I no. 13; *I.Nikaia* 50. See also Öztürk 2016, 61.

²¹ For detailed information, see Nissen 2006.

²² *I.Nikaia* 703.

²³ *I.Nikaia* 1041.

²⁴ *I.Nikaia* 1042-1043.

²⁵ *I.Nikaia* 1307.

²⁶ *I.Nikaia* 1044.

²⁷ *I.Nikaia* 615; Ameling, *J/O* II 322-324 no. 153.

Dimensions: (A) H.: 1.35 m; W.: 95 cm; L.h.: 4.3 cm; (B) H.: 25 cm; W.: 95 cm; L.h.: 4.3 cm; (C) H.: 1.80 m (bottom) – 1.70 m (top); W.: 95 cm; L.h.: 4.3 cm.

Ed.: Schneider 1943, 27 no. 19; *BE* 1946/47, 189; 1965, 393; d'Alessio 1964, 196; *I.Nikaia* 275, pl. XXIII; Samama 2003, 409-410 no. 305; Nissen 2006, 38-39 no. 17.

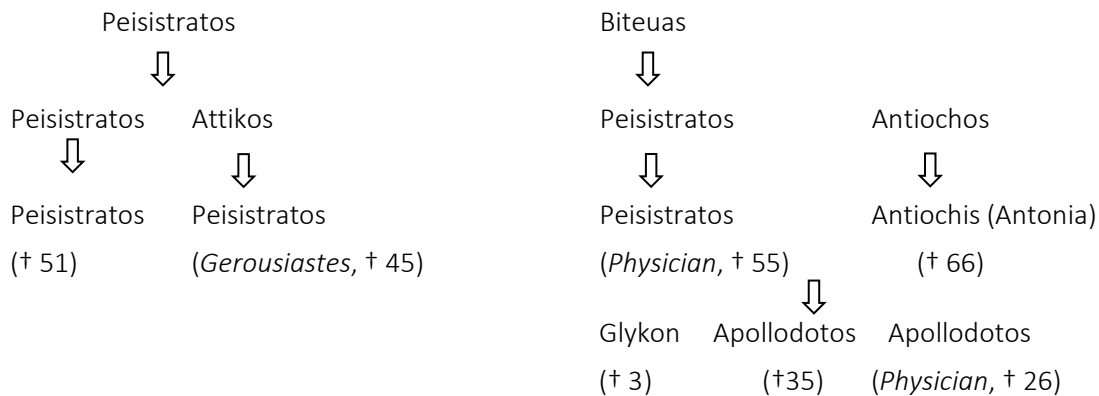
Date: 1st cent. A.D.



Fig. 1. Epitaph of Peisistratos and Apollodotos and Their Families (Photo: H. S. Öztürk)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>(A) Πεισίστρατος
Πεισιστράτου
τοῦ Πεισιστρά-
του ζήσας ἔτ-
η να'. χαῖρε.
Πεισίστρατος
Ἀττικοῦ γερουσιαστής
ζήσας ἔτη με'. χαῖρε.</p> | <p>(A) <i>Peisistratos, son of
Peisistratos, son of
Peisistratos, lived for 51
years. Farewell!
Peisistratos, son of
Attikos, a member of the
Gerosia, lived 45 years.
Farewell!</i></p> |
| <p>(B) Πεισίστρατος Πεισιστράτου
τοῦ Βιτείου εἰατρός
ζήσας ἔτη νε'. χαῖρε.
Ἄντιοχίς Ἄντιόχου ἡ καὶ
Ἄντωνία ζήσασα ἔτη ξς'. χαῖρε.
Γλύκων Πεισιστράτου ζήσας
ἔτη γ'. χαῖρε.</p> | <p>(B) <i>Peisistratos the physician,
son of Peisistatos, son of
Biteuas lived 55 years.
Farewell! Antiochis,
daughter of Antiochos, also
known as Antonia, lived 66
years. Farewell! Glykon,
son of Peisistratos, lived for
3 years. Farewell!</i></p> |
| <p>(C) Ἀπολλόδοτος
Πεισιστράτου
ζήσας ἔτη λε'.
χαῖρε.
Ἀπολλόδοτος
Πεισιστράτου
εἰατρός ζή-
σας ἔτη κς'
χαῖρε.</p> | <p>(C) <i>Apollodotos, son of
Peisistratos, lived 35
years. Farewell!
Apollodotos the physician,
son of Peisistratos lived 26
years. Farewell!</i></p> |

L. (B) 2; (C) 7: εἰατρός = ἰατρός. For the interchange of *ι* and *ει*, see Gignac 1976, 190, 249.

Family Tree²⁸

As can be understood from the inscription, a total of 7 family members were buried together. It is a typical Nicaean inscription including names, ages and - if there is - duty. In Nikaian inscriptions, the father's name, the name of the deceased and the age at death are usually given. Peisistratos held the office of *gerousia* and he must have been one of the prominent citizens of Nikaia²⁹.

The two other deceased persons were Peisistratos and Apollodotos, who were physicians. Peisistratos died at fifty-five, and Apollodotos at twenty-six. As seen above, S. Şahin, the author of the *editio princeps* of the inscription, proposed a genealogical tree³⁰, but Nissen thinks that, despite the mention of filiations, it is impossible to determine the exact family connection with the rest of the family members of the two physicians. Besides, he mentions the lack of evidence to confirm Şahin's interpretations³¹.

2. Epitaph of Hedys and His Wife Dikaiosyne

Column-shaped base.

Findspot: The inscription was recorded between 1670 and 1677 by John Covel, Levent Company Chaplain and for two years British ambassador to the Porte, in "Kava Kein Köyü". Kava Kein Köyü must be today's Karatekin village in İznik district. The inscription is lost.

Dimensions: H.: 90 cm; W.: 1.75 m; D.: 33 cm; L.h.: 4-7.5 cm.

Ed.: Robert 1940, 103; *GVI* 1749; *I.Nikaia* 175. XXIII; Horsley 1982, 19; Samama 2003, 410-411 no. 306; Nissen 2006, 41-42 no. 19; *SGO* II 09/05/12.

Date: Ist-IInd cent. A.D.

πῦρ μὲν σάρκας ἔκαυσε,	καὶ τὰ μὲν οὐ<τ>ω πάντα
τὰ δ' ὅστέα ἐνθάδ' ἔνεστιν, /	ταλαιπῶρως τετέλεσται, /
Ἡδύος ἱατροῦ πολλήν	τέκνα δὲ οὐκ ἐγένονθ'
4 γαῖαν κατιδόντος /	12 Ἡδύος [οὐδ]αμόθι. /
ὠκεανοῦ τε ῥοὰς	Ἡδύς πρεσ(βύτερος)
καὶ τέρματα ἠπίροιο /	ἐτ(ῶν) νε'.
Εὐρώπης Λιβύης τ'	Δικαιοσύνη
8 ἡδ' Ἀσίας μεγάλης' /	16 ἐτ(ῶν) ν'.

²⁸ *I.Nikaia* 275.

²⁹ For this office, see *I.Nikaia* 761, 1242, 1250, 1261, 1340, 1578; Akyürek Şahin 2005, 84-85 no. 4; Öztürk *et al.* 2018, 238-241.

³⁰ *I.Nikaia* 275.

³¹ Nissen 2006, 39.

*The fire has burned the flesh but here lie the bones of Hedys, a physician who got to know many lands, the currents of the Ocean, as well as the extremities of continents, of Europe and of Libya and of Greater Asia; while all his (life) was spent in hardship, Hedys did not beget children anywhere. Hedys the elder, 55 years of age. (His wife) Dikaiosyne, 50 years of age*³².

As has stated by Nissen, an English traveller found the epitaph of the physician Hedys at some point between 1670 and 1677 in a Turkish village called Kava Kein Village. J. Covell copied the inscription and the village is thought to be Karadin Village in the vicinity of Nikaia³³. The funerary epigram was carved on a small round column and is composed of dactylic hexameters. There is no mention of children in the graves of the physician and his wife, who died at the age of fifty-five and fifty, respectively. The text explicitly mentioned that the couple did not have children; Hedys and his wife expressed their sorrows about this situation. Based on the funerary inscription of Hedys, we can clearly emphasize that he was a travelling doctor. The inscription states that, "He visited a large part of the world, saw the waves of the ocean and the borders of the mainland, Europe, Libya and Greater Asia"³⁴. In addition to emphasizing that Hedys travelled to many parts of the world, it can also be understood that he carried out his profession wherever he went, not only in his native Asia Minor but also in European and Libya. Another piece of information in Herodotus is that the number of doctors in Egypt was high and their fields of specialization were separated. In other words, each doctor was interested in his own speciality³⁵. Based on this information, it is possible that they went to Egypt for treatment in order to have children. The name of the physician, Hedys, is deduced from the adjective ἡδύς, "pleasant, sweet", which was a frequent anthroponym³⁶.

3. The Epitaph of Agrippa and His Wife Apphe

White limestone stele. The upper part is profiled; the right and left sides of the stele were smoothed. There is a flower depiction on the upper front and a *patera* to the right and left. A lead drain hole was made at the top of the stone. The front surface of the stele is plain. The inscription consists of six lines.

Findspot: Bilecik Province, Gölpazarı District. This inscription was found during dam construction in the Demirhanlar village of the Gölpazarı district in 2018. The inscription is now in the waste treatment plant of the Gölpazarı Municipality. During the survey, at least three more un-inscribed stelae belonging to a grave were found in this same area (Fig. 2)

Dimensions: H.: 167.5 cm; W.: 66.5 cm; D.: 69 cm; LH : 3.3-5.8 cm

Ed.: Öztürk & Demirhan Öztürk 2018, 82-84 no. 2.

Date: Ist - IInd cent. A.D.



Fig. 2. Epitaph of Agrippa and His Wife Apphe (Photo: Öztürk & Demirhan Öztürk)

³² I would like to thank Dr. Haris Theodoretis-Rigas, Lecturer in Classical Greek and Latin at Koç University, Department of Archaeology and History of Art, for help with this translation.

³³ Nissen 2006, 41.

³⁴ Nissen 2006, 41.

³⁵ Hdt. II. 84.

³⁶ Samama 2003, 410.

<p>Ἀγρίππας Εὐπ[άτο-] ρος, ἰητρὸς, ζῶν τὸ μ[νημῆϊ-] [ον] κατεσκεύουασ[α ἑαυ-] 4 τῷ καὶ τῇ ἑαυτο[ῦ γυ-] ναικὶ Ἄπφη ζη[σάση] ἔτη μ'.</p>	<p><i>When physician Agrippa, son of Eupator, was alive, he had the commemorating monument (tomb) built for himself and his wife, Apphe, who lived for 40 years.</i></p>
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L. 2: ἰητρὸς = ἰατρὸς. For the interchange of α and η, see Gignac 1981, 4.

Unfortunately, it is not known anything about the physician who is mentioned in the text because of the lack of information concerning him. While Agrippa is a Latin name, his father's name is Greek, and his wife's name is epichoric.

4. The Epitaph of the Son or Sons of an Anonymous Physician

Large square base with four-corners.

Findspot: Bilecik Province, Gölpazarı District. The inscription is now lost.

Dimensions: Unknown.

Ed.: Mendel 1900, 403-404 no. 79; *I.Nikaia* 1425; Samama 2003, 418 no. 315; Nissen 2006, 30 no. 12.

Date: Roman Imperial Period (?).

According to Mendel 1900, 403-404 no. 79	According to <i>I.Nikaia</i> 1425	According to Nissen 2006, 30 no. 12
ΕΤΟΥΣΑ	---	[— — —] ἔτους α[.]
ΙΣΤΟΣΟΙΑΙ ΝΙΩ] ἔτους α[[—]ιστος ὁ Ἀπ[ολλώ]νιος
ΙΗΤΡΟΣ ☞	ICTOCOIAI.NIΩ	[— — —] ἰητρὸς ☞
ΕΤΟΥΣΕΙΙΛΛΛ	ΙΗΤΡΟΣ ☞	4 [—] ἔτους ε[— —]
ΤΟΥ	4] ἔτους ΕΙΙΛΛ..[[— — — —] τοῦ
ΔΑΙΟ]ΤΟΥ[[— — —]δαιο.
]ΔΑΙΟ[

... in the year. Apollonios... physician.

L. 3: ἰητρὸς = ἰατρὸς. For the interchange of α and η, see Gignac 1981, 4.

This inscription was first published by G. Mendel in majuscules in 1900. Unfortunately, currently all information about the stone is missing. During the survey in 1899-1900, the French researcher recorded the inscription in the “town of Gölpazarı” (now district), located about 50 km east of ancient Nikaia. He noticed that, the letters were much erased, which explains why his transcription has significant gaps. The inscription was republished by S. Şahin in *I.Nikaia* (nr. 1425). S. Şahin identified it as an epitaph and without adding more comment, except for the find spot. Samama presented this text as the epitaph for two children of a physician, who may have been one and five years old respectively when they died, based upon the still visible letters³⁷.

The remaining words suggest that this is an epitaph because the term ἔτος, which is mentioned twice³⁸, was generally used to indicate the age of the deceased in Nikaian funerary inscriptions³⁹. The word ἰητρὸς is clear in the third line. Nissen noted we do not know anything about

³⁷ Samama 2003, 418.

³⁸ For an example from Nikaia, see Öztürk & Demirhan Öztürk 2018, 88 no. 7.

³⁹ *I.Nikaia*, p. 85-91.

the physician who is mentioned in the text⁴⁰.

5. The Epitaph of Aurelius Khryseros and His Family

Limestone base with tenon and moulding above. The top is profiled; all faces are smoothed

Findspot: Bolu Province, Göynük District, Arızlar Village. The stele is currently located in front of Kazim Kök's house. According to Kazim Kök's statement, it is not known when and from where the inscription was brought (Fig. 3).

Dimensions: H.: 1.36 m; W.: 51.5 cm; D.: 50 cm; L.h.: 2.1-3.5 cm.

Ed.: Öztürk 2016, 290-291 no. 3; *SEG* LXVI 1420

Date: After 212 A.D.

Δομίτιος Κοσμί-
ων^{vv} Αύρ(ηλίω) Χρυσέ-
ρωτι^{vvv} είατρῳ

- 4 καὶ Αύρ(ηλίω) Κοσμίω-
νι γλυκυτάτοις
τέκνοις^v Αύρηλία
Πῶλλα γυνή Κοσ-
8 μίωνο[ς] τὸν βω-
μὸν ἀνέστησα
ἀνεξοδίαστὸν
διὰ βίου μνή-
12 μης χάριν.

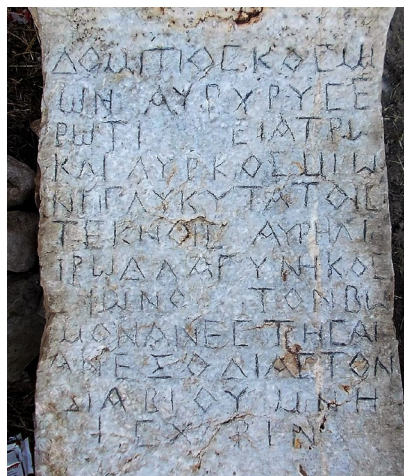


Fig. 3. Epitaph of Aurelius Khryseros and His Family (Photo: H. S. Öztürk)

Domitius Kosmion and Aurelia Polla, wife of Kosmion, erected this altar for their most sweet children, Aurelius Khryseros the physician and Aurelius Kosmion. (This altar) cannot be sold throughout the life. For their memory.

L. 3: είατρός = ἰατρός. For the interchange of ι and ει, see Gignac 1976, 190; 249.

Unfortunately it is not known anything about the physician who is mentioned in the text because no details are mentioned about them. Otherwise, the physician's name is Aurelius a typical Latin name.

6. Epigram of Asklepios

Grave stele made of limestone with a triangular pediment and relief image.

Findspot: Bilecik Province, Söğüt District (Fig. 4).

Dimensions: H.: 1.38 m; W.: 66 cm; D.: 32 cm; L.h.: 1.8 cm.

Ed.: *I. Nikaia* 1326, pl. XIII; Cremer 1992, 76-79; 154; Samama 2003, 418-419 no. 316; Nissen 2006, 59 no. 28; *SGO* II 09/05/25.

Date: 230-240 A.D.

⁴⁰ Nissen 2006, 30.

- πᾶσι βρότοις χαίρων Ἀσκλήπιος
 ἐνθάδε ἦρωσ ὕπε μεταλλά-
 ξας μναμοσύνης ἔνεκεν·
 4 μηδὶς λυπίσθω θανάτου τέ-
 λος ἀνταποτίσας ὕεισενὶ
 τοῦτ' ἐδόθημεν, ἐπὶ τόδε Μο<ῖ>-
 ρ' ἐπέκλωσεν ὕκῖμαι γὰρ καλο-
 8 εργὸς ἀνὴρ τὸν κόσμον ὀ-
 δεύσας ὕπεντήκοντα ἔτη, {ο}
 μοιρῶν μίτον ἐξαναλύσας
 σεμνοτάτην Κυῖνταν πρό-
 12 λιπον καὶ παῖδας ὁμοίους.

Here [lies] the hero Asklepios, who loved all mortals [...]. Leaving (this world), he said as a reminder: "let none who paid death's final toll grieve [...]. To this one thing we were assigned, this is what Fate has spun (for us); [...] for I, a benevolent man, lie here, having walked the earth [...] for fifty years, having spent the thread of the Fates, I left behind (my) most respected (wife) Quinta and children just like her.

The inscription of Asklepios, who died at the age of fifty, was uncovered during the construction of a house in the Turkish village of Söğüt, located in the Sangarios valley, about 60 km south-east of ancient Nikaia. It states that Asklepios left behind a wife and children after his death, the occupation of Asklepios is not specified in the inscription. However, there are several clues to suggest that he was a physician. The name Asklepios is borrowed from the Greek, god of healing (known to the Romans as Aesculapius), who was considered by doctors the god of medical science⁴¹. According to Nissen names formed from Asklepios, such as Asklepiades, Asklepiakos or Asklepiodorus, met with great success among physicians, especially in Asia Minor and the inscription also contains information that this person named Asklepios traveled the world during his lifetime⁴². Here, it can be assumed that he is a travelling physician as is recorded of other doctors in inscriptions (nos. 2 and 7). Another element that supports the discussion whether the tomb owner may have been a physician is the depiction carved on the tomb stele. Two arched niches are carved into the lower part of the pediment on the tomb stele and there is a male bust on the right and a female bust on the left in the niches. While the inscription is carved in the middle of the monument, various objects and ornaments are at the bottom. According to Nissen's definition on the lower left side of the stele, there are three drinking bowls and a table; an amphora in the center from which vine branches emerge with leaves and fruits, an amphora framed by a hook and an axe; on the right is a rectangular object with rounded edges, erected next to a small rectangular box closed with a spherical lid, on which several long and thin objects are placed in parallel⁴³.

According to M. L. Cremer, the box mentioned is similar to examples of medicine boxes known as *νάρθηξ*⁴⁴. These cylindrical boxes contained surgical instruments because the boxes depicted here are also cylindrical⁴⁵. Cremer thinks that the depiction of two objects emphasized the object



Fig. 4. Epigram of Asklepios
 (Photo: H. S. Öztürk)

⁴¹ See further Ley 1997, 96.

⁴² Nissen 2006, 59.⁴³ Nissen 2006, 59.

⁴³ Nissen 2006, 59.

⁴⁴ Cremer 1992, 78.

⁴⁵ Nissen 2006, 44.

used by the ancient physicians to carry their tools and medicines in the depiction on the right and under the stele thus confirming the medical effectiveness of Asclepius⁴⁶.

7. Epitaph of a Physician from Nikaia

Findspot: Duklista, Thessalia.

Dimensions: H.: 1.38 m; W.: 66 cm; D.: 32 cm; L.h.: 1.8 cm.

Ed.: Kaibel *EG* 509; *IG IX,2* 1276; Robert 1940, 104; Samama 2003, 177-178 no. 75; Nissen 2006, 43 no. 20.

Date: 230-240 A.D.

Θ(εοῖς) Κ(αταχθονίους).
 ἰατρόν μ' ἔσορᾶς,
 φίλε, Βιθυνόν
 4 πόλεως Νικαίας
 πολ<λ>ήν θάλασσα<ν>
 καὶ γαῖαν περι[νο]-
 στήσας τὸ πε[περω]-
 8 μένον ὧδ[ε ἀπέ]-
 τεισα, ἕξ[ηκοστὸν]
 καὶ πρῶ[τον ζήσας]
 λυκά[βαντα].

To the gods of the underworld!
You see me, friend,
a Bithynian physician
from the city of Nikaia;
having travelled
many seas
and lands,
I fulfilled
my destiny
after sixty-one
years of life.

The doctor mentioned in the inscription is an *iatros* from the city of Nikaia in the region of Bithynia. The inscription was found in Perrhaibia in northern Thessaly, north of the slope of Mount Olympus, in the church of Haghia Sotira of Dolichi, ancient Duklista, and was recorded in 1855⁴⁷. The inscription has survived complete, but it is interesting that it does not record the deceased's name. The deceased is described in the first person singular and does not talk about any wife or children. He notices that he is a travelling doctor, emphasizing that "he has travelled many seas and lands". We read in the first person that his travels took him to Thessaly. This is not mentioned in the text; it can be deduced from the find spot of the inscription, where he died at the age of sixty-one. (We think that) this tomb inscription may have been prepared beforehand as a kind of testament, and it is noteworthy that it emphasizes the profession of medicine.

8. Epitaph of the family of Sosicrates and Munatius

White marble plaque.

Findspot: Rome. Now at the Museo delle Terme in Rome (Fig. 5).

Dimensions: –

Ed.: Pedrazzoli 1970, 106-107 no. 5; Nutton 2004, 260, fig. 17.6; Nissen 2006, 37 no. 16; Alonso 2018b, 224 no. 61.

Date: 20 A.D.



Fig. 5. Epitaph of the family of Sosicrates and Munatius (Nutton 2004, 260 fig. 17.6)

⁴⁶ Cremer 1992, 78.

⁴⁷ Nissen 2006, 43.

L(ucius) Munatius Planci l(ibertus) <i>vac.</i> Castor, <i>vac.</i> Munatia Planci l(iberta) 4 <i>vac.</i> Dionysia, <i>vac.</i> Sosicrates Sosicratis f(ilius) Nicae(ensis), medicus.	<i>Lucius Munatius Castor, freedman of Plancius, Munatia Dionysia, freedwoman of Plancius, Sosicrates, son of Sosicrates, from Nikaia, physician (lie here).</i>
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There is the name of a Nikaian physician on this tombstone belonging to a freedman and a freedwoman of the Munatius family. The inscription, whose provenance is unknown, is kept in the Museo delle Terme in Rome⁴⁸. While the first four lines of the inscription are carved in larger characters, the lower part of the block presents in minor characters, the name of a Greek physician named Sosicrates, son of Sosicrates. The name Σωσικράτης is a typical Greek name⁴⁹ and this indicates his Greek origin or that he had a Greek-speaking background. In addition, this is the only known Latin text attesting a doctor from Nikaia.

Greek physicians immigrated to Rome and Italy and more widely to the Latin West in the first centuries of the Empire⁵⁰. During the reign of Augustus the Roman world changed socially and geographically. Sosikrates, who was most likely involved with the elite class, can have been a Greek immigrant physician to Rome, ca. 20 A.D., or he may have been sold as a slave⁵¹. One important question remains in Nutton's mind about the relationship between Sosikrates and the family of the freedman Manius: How did Sosikrates of Nikaia become friends with Munatius Plancus and his wife⁵². We cannot answer this question for now. In any case, certainly, the presence of Sosikrates in Rome at the beginning of the Imperial period offers a further indication of the significance of Greek physicians in Rome.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of the eight inscriptions, no detailed information about the profession of doctor could be reached. And also we do not know about the Nikaian physicians; this knowledge derives only from several inscriptions. In general, family names and the regions they traveled are emphasized in their funerary inscriptions. The inscriptions do not offer any clues about their specialties, which suggests they were not very famous or successful doctors. In comparison, there is the example of Herakleitos known from Rhodiapolis. He is Herakleitos of Rhodiapolis whose fame extended far beyond the borders of ancient Lycia. We have detailed information about him and his profession from TAM 2 910. He was honoured at Athens and Alexandria, and called "The Homer of Medical Poetry"⁵³.

These inscriptions from Nikaia support the image of travelling physicians that we know from other sources. Physicians received medical training in Athens, Alexandria, Pergamon and some physicians traveled after this training and worked at different places⁵⁴. In this case, it raises the question why physicians did not stay in the places where they lived. It is not possible to definitively answer this question; economic reasons may have come first. In the IIIrd century B.C., Greek physicians, not only Greek ones, brought scientific medicine to Rome. There is also the possibility of

⁴⁸ Pedrazzoli 1970, 106-107 no. 5.

⁴⁹ The name Σωσικράτης is attested 275 times in the *LPGN*. For this name, see <https://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/>.

⁵⁰ Nutton 2012, 534.

⁵¹ Nutton 2012, 538.

⁵² Nutton 2012, 540.

⁵³ TAM II,2 910.

⁵⁴ Alonso 2018a, 122.

traveling to conduct science, and we see these in Lucius Cassius Hemina, Cato, Plinius, and Cicero⁵⁵. The high number of doctor's inscriptions found within the territory of Nikaia suggests there may have been a place where medical education was provided in this region, albeit this is a small possibility.

Another interpretation is the information provided by “the epitaph of Peisistratos, Apollodoros and their family”. As we have interpreted above in this inscription, it is possible to document that the profession of medicine continued as a profession from father to son; this family tradition of medicine seems to be common among physicians⁵⁶.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the information found in the funerary inscriptions of the doctors of Nikaia and its territory. When we look at funerary inscriptions in general, it is known that doctors were buried with their families, and considering these inscriptions alone, the average age of death for doctors is forty five. These inscriptions are dated to the Roman imperial period and looking at the contents of these inscriptions, it is noteworthy that in one inscription, the profession of physician was a father-son tradition (inscription 1), and as we said, this is a common tradition in ancient times.

Further, we see that the grave owners especially stated their profession. It is noteworthy that most physicians travelled from country to country and wanted their titles to be included in their funerary inscriptions (inscriptions 4, 7). While writing about the countries they visited, they may have wanted to emphasize their competencies in this profession, apart from where they practised their profession. As in the example of Asklepiades mentioned above, it is known that physicians received medical education in Athens and Alexandria. The inscriptions are the clearest proof of this. It has been observed in the inscriptions, the physicians went to different regions and it is not known why they choose these particular regions.

Another striking point is that the physicians were from Nikaia and travelled from region to region rather than working permanently in their home cities. In the tomb inscription of Sosicrates, there is no written statement that he was a doctor. It can be assumed that he was modest in this regard compared to other inscriptions, or that the ornaments engraved on the tomb were sufficient for him. (Unfortunately, there is no very detailed information to be obtained from these inscriptions about Roman medicine in Nikaia since these are all simple funerary inscriptions).

⁵⁵ For detailed information about this subject, see Alonso 2018.

⁵⁶ Torrance 2014, 375.

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