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Theophanes of Mytilene:
A New Inscription Relating to his Early Career

Until recently, we knew of three honorific inscriptions relating to Pompey's historian, Theophanes of Mytilene.¹ Only one of them is in Mytilene now (IG XII 2, 150 = Syll³ 755), the others being in the British Museum (IG XII 2, 163 = Syll³ 753) and the Archaeological Museum of Constantinople (L. ROBERT, Théophane de Mytilène à Constantinople, CRAI 1969, 42 ff. = OMS V, 1989, 561 ff.). In 1980, excavation began of a building plot next to the foundations of an ancient structure at the junction of Satha and Vilara streets, Epano Skala, Mytilene. In the course of the excavation a round base was discovered, on the front of which was a new, seven-line honorific inscription relating to Theophanes, in excellent condition. The base was removed to the courtyard of Mytilene's Archaeological Museum, where it is now on exhibition. The text is as follows:

Mytilene Museum, No 15431. Inscribed round base of greyish-white limestone, broken at the bottom and with a damaged moulding at the top. There is a round aperture in the centre of the upper surface and seven smaller ones around the edge. Dimensions: height 74 cm, diam. 70 cm. Inscribed surface: height 41 cm, width 24 cm, height of letters 0.22 cm (O) – 0.3 cm (M), space 0.05 cm. Pers. exam. and photographs (pl. 1).

Ὁ δᾶμος
Θεοφάνην Ἱρροί-
τα τὸν λόγον
πρώτανιν ἀρέ-
5 τας ἔνεκα καὶ
εὐσεβήας τᾶς
πρὸς τὸ θῆον

Line 3: The horizontal stroke of the A is damaged. Line 5: The left half of the horizontal stroke of the T is missing.

¹ See D. SALZMANN's relatively recent article, Cn. Pompeius Theophanes. Ein Benennungsvorschlag zu einem Porträt in Mytilene, MDAI(R) 1985, 257–8 (Anhang I). For permission to publish the new inscription we are indebted to the Superintendent of Classical Antiquities in Mytilene, Ms A. ARCHONTIDOU-ARGYRI. We thank also A. and M. KONTOGIANNI for their comments on the text of the inscription.

In the Mytilene and Constantinople inscriptions, Theophanes' name appears in the form Γναῖος Πομπήτιος Θεοφάνης, while in the British Museum inscription it has the form Ζεὺς Ἐλευθέριος Θεοφάνης, obviously after divine honours had been bestowed upon him. However, the inclusion of his patronymic (Ἰ(ε)ροῖτα υἱός)² in the first two inscriptions leaves little room for doubt that the honorand in the new, fourth, inscription (as in the Constantinople inscription, the patronymic here is in the Aeolian form Ἰροῖτας instead of Ἰεροῖτας)³ is likewise the same Theophanes.

The full form of the name, Γναῖος Πομπήτιος, Ἰ(ε)ροῖτα υἱός, Θεοφάνης is, of course, connected with Theophanes' being awarded Roman citizenship by Pompey.⁴ It also gives a definite terminus a quo of 62 B. C.⁵ In the case of our inscription, however, the simple Greek form Θεοφάνης Ἰροῖτα is a strong indication of an earlier date.

Theophanes accompanied Pompey on his campaign against Mithridates and was therefore absent from Mytilene between 67/66 and 62 B. C. Moreover he followed him to Rome shortly thereafter.⁶ During the whole of this period, he could not have held any office in his city. So we have a terminus ad quem of 67/66 B. C. Hitherto the earliest inscriptional evidence relating to Theophanes was the Constantinople inscription (which L. ROBERT plausibly conjectured might have been Mytilene's first official recognition of him),⁷ and our knowledge of his earlier career was largely a matter for speculation. The new honorific inscription from Mytilene allows us to refute some of this speculation.

Theophanes is styled λόγιος πρύτανις (3–4), a title which is so far encountered in four published inscriptions from Mytilene from the first century A. D. onwards,⁸

² The name Ἰεροῖτας is encountered sporadically on other islands too, but it seems to be more common on Mytilene (see P. M. FRASER – E. MATTHEWS, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names I*, Oxford 1987, s. v.).

³ See R. SCHMITT, *Einführung in die griechischen Dialekte*, Darmstadt 1977, 81 (3); R. HODOT, *Le dialecte éolien d'Asie*, 1990, 235–6.

⁴ See M. GELZER, *Pompeius – Lebensbild eines Römers*, Stuttgart 1984 (reprint of 1973²), 96; B. RAWSON, *The Politics of Friendship: Pompey and Cicero*, Sydney 1978, 200; B. HOLTHEIDE, *Römische Bürgerrechtspolitik und römische Neubürger in der Provinz Asia*, Freiburg 1983, 24–5; cf. L. ROBERT, *REA* 62, 1960, 280.

⁵ It was in this year that Pompey visited Mytilene after his Asian campaign (see R. SEAGER, *Pompey. A Political Biography*, Oxford 1979, 52); he awarded Theophanes Roman citizenship in 61 B. C. at the latest, if not while the campaign was still going on. For a discussion of this point, see L. ROBERT, *Théopane . . .*, 47.

⁶ Theophanes was definitely in Rome in 59 B. C., and possibly even in 60 B. C. He visited Mytilene with Pompey in 48 B. C., after the battle of Pharsalos, and returned there for good after the latter's death in Egypt. See W. S. ANDERSON, *Pompey, His Friends and the Literature of the First Century B. C.*, Berkeley 1963, 36–40.

⁷ *Op. cit.* 63.

⁸ See E. ORTH, *Logios*, Leipzig 1926, 70–2 and *IG XII Suppl.* 63, 12. It is also encountered in Pergamum (*IGRR IV* 1243, 5–6; *TAM V* 2, 1179, 5–6), in a copy of *IG XII* 2, 243. Cf. L. ROBERT, *OMS IV*, 1974, 252; *idem*, *Deux poètes grecs à l'époque impériale*, *ΣΤΗΛΗ Ν.*

but not from the late Hellenistic period. The form *πρότανις*, however, is attested nowhere else; it must have been connected with the confusion between the vocalic quantity of *Ο* and *Ω*; we should read *πρότανις* (cf. IG XII Suppl. 63, 12).⁹ Also, the nature of the title is not absolutely clear. R. CAGNAT's hypothesis that it refers to the *πρότανις* cui mandata erat rationum cura¹⁰ gives the adjective *λόγιος* a technical aspect, which cannot be confirmed beyond its lexical correspondence to the office of *ἴδιος λόγιος* in Egypt. Besides, it is unlikely that there was a collegium of prytanis on Mytilene.¹¹ The adjective might simply mean 'eminent'.¹²

Be that as it may, the eponymous office of prytanis on Mytilene dated back to the archaic age and there is no question but that its holders were members of the local aristocracy.¹³ At this point, granted that the honorific inscription dates from before 67/66 B. C., it may be useful to estimate Theophanes' age when the *δῆμος* honoured him (at the end of his term of office?) as prytanis. Since Theophanes is believed to have died between 44 (t. a quo: Cicero, Att. 15, 19, 1) and 36 B. C. (t. ad quem according to R. LAQUEUR)¹⁴ – i. e. at least twenty-three years after Pompey's campaign began – then he must have been prytanis in middle age if not earlier.¹⁵

Κοντολέοντος, Athens 1980, 8, n. 55. It is worth noting that a priestess, a descendant of Potamon, is referred to as *λόγιος πρότανις* (IG XII 2, 255; cf. R. W. PARKER, Potamon of Mytilene and his Family, ZPE 85, 1991, 128); translated as gebildete Vorsteherin by E. ORTH, op. cit. 71. It was not unusual for women to assume high offices, but it could be argued that they did so in a purely technical or honorary capacity; for some remarks on this point, see R. MACMULLEN, Woman in Public in the Roman Empire, Historia 29, 1980, 215; idem, Women's Power in the Principate, Klio 68, 1986, 437.

⁹ See C. D. BUCK, The Greek Dialects, Chicago – London 1955 (1928¹), 213 ff. (nos. 25 and 26) and 369, s. v.; A. THUMB – A. SCHERER, Handbuch der griechischen Dialekte II, Heidelberg 1959, 90; F. BECHTEL, Die Griechischen Dialekte I, Berlin 1963², 62 (73); L. THREATTE, The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions I, Berlin – New York 1980, 217–8; R. HODOT, op. cit. (n. 3) 54–5. Concerning the confusion of *ο* and *ω* see L. THREATTE, op. cit. 223–4; inversely, confusion of *ω* and *ο*, see R. HODOT, Notes critiques sur le corpus épigraphique de Lesbos, EAC 5, 1976, 34–5 (143).

¹⁰ IGRR IV, 77.

¹¹ See F. GSCHNITZER, RE Suppl. 13, s. v. Prytanis, 733 and 746–7.

¹² See C. O. P. SPICQ, Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire I, Göttingen 1978, 502 (ἀνὴρ λόγιος: homme éminent ou très distingué).

¹³ R. SHERK, The Eponymous Officials of Greek Cities, ZPE 84, 1990, 274.

¹⁴ Theophanes, RE 5 A. 2, 1934, 2094 and 2100. Cf. H. VON GAERTRINGEN, Neue Forschungen zur Geschichte und Epigraphik von Lesbos, NAWG N. F. 1, 1934–36, 109; D. SALZMANN, op. cit. (n. 1) 251–2.

¹⁵ H. DE LA VILLE DE MIRMONT, Théophraste de Mytilène, REG 18, 1905, 189, considers that Theophanes was not very young in 66 B. C., although his marriage and the birth of his son, M. Pompeius Macer, are dated to after 49 B. C. (op. cit. 196 and 204), or even c. 43 B. C. (see R. SYME, History in Ovid, Oxford 1978, 73). Cf., however, J.-M. BERTRAND, A propos de deux disparus: Cn. Pompeius Theophanes, M. Pompeius Macer, ZPE 59, 1985, 175–6, who adds to the family's stemma an older brother of M. Pompeius Macer (b. c. 45 B. C.), Cn. Pom-

In an attempt to make up for the lack of biographical evidence about Theophanes, H. DE LA VILLE DE MIRMONT reached the erroneous conclusion that he was of humble origin. He described Theophanes as one of those young, wandering, mediocre poets¹⁶ whose search for a generous patron took them to Rome,¹⁷ a conjecture which F. JACOBY and L. ROBERT were among the first to challenge.¹⁸ The fact that Theophanes enjoyed sufficient social prestige and prominence to assume the eponymous office of prytanis even before he became a close friend of Pompey leaves no room for any doubt that he was a member of the upper echelons of local society.¹⁹ We cannot trace his career back any further,²⁰ but Strabo's information that οὗτος δὲ καὶ πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ ὑπῆρξε καὶ Πομπηίῳ τῷ Μόρνῳ κατέστη φίλος μάλιστα διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ταύτην (13, 2, 3) may be taken to refer to Theophanes' activity before he met Pompey – i. e. his involvement in the political life of Mytilene. This useful experience, as others have already argued,²¹ enabled him to help the Roman emperor to reorganise affairs of the East. Thus, the notion that Theophanes had no political ability and that his role was determined solely by the fact that Pompey was attracted to Greek culture or was vain enough to desire his acts to be recorded by a Greek historiographer²² is not convincing. Whether this earlier activity was charac-

peus Theophanes, supposedly born c. 60 B. C. (cf. H. VON GAERTRINGEN, *op. cit.* 109–10 and 120).

¹⁶ That he was a poet is an unfounded conjecture. See L. ROBERT, *Théophraste . . .*, 46, n. 5.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* 172–4. This conclusion is based on an erroneous interpretation of Cicero, *Att.* 7, 7, 6 (see F. JACOBY, *FGrHist* 188 T1, *Kommentar*; D. R. SHACKLETON BAILEY, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus III*, Cambridge 1968, 306).

¹⁸ *FGrHist*, *ibid.*; L. ROBERT, *op. cit.* 45, rejects F. TAEGER's description of Theophanes as an unbedeutender Mann (*Charisma – Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes I*, Stuttgart 1957, 369).

¹⁹ The later information in the *Historia Augusta* (MB 7, 3: *suae patriae nobilissimus*) cannot be evaluated, owing to the nature of the source itself and the unreliability of the passage in question, in which, anyway, Theophanes is confused with his adopted son, L. Cornelius Balbus.

²⁰ Even taking for granted the office of prytanis, there is equally no sound basis for such hypotheses as that Theophanes was already involved in the political life of his city in the 80s B. C.; contra, W. S. ANDERSON, *op. cit.* (n. 6) 34–5; B. K. GOLD, *Pompey and Theophanes of Mytilene*, *AJPh* 106, 1985, 319.

²¹ For the interpretation of Strabo's evidence see R. LAQUEUR, *op. cit.* (n. 14) 2091; J. GLUCKER, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Göttingen 1978, 22–4; A. N. SHERWIN-WHITE, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East*, London 1984, 254; B. K. GOLD, *op. cit.* 320; E. RAWSON, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, Baltimore 1985, 92; J.-L. FERRARY, *Philhellénisme et impérialisme*, Roma 1988, 612. Cf. also H. G. PFLAUM, *Les procurateurs équestres sous le haut-empire romain*, Paris 1950, 41; W. S. ANDERSON, *op. cit.* 34, and R. BERNHARDT, *Imperium und Eleutheria*, Hamburg 1971, 149.

²² According to M. H. CRAWFORD, *Greek Intellectuals and the Roman Aristocracy in the First Century B. C.*, in: P. D. A. GARNSEY – C. R. WHITTAKER eds., *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, Cambridge 1978, 203–4, Theophanes exemplifies the contemporary Greek intellectu-

terised by friendliness towards Rome, which would certainly (bearing in mind Mytilene's hostile attitude to Rome in the past and the oppressive regime imposed upon the island after it was conquered by M. Minucius Thermus in 80/79 B.C.)²³ have made it easier for him to forge a relationship with Pompey, is a pertinent question.

We cannot, as already stated, deduce anything further or more precise about Theophanes' political activity on Mytilene. Inscriptions such as this one tend towards concision, owing both to lack of space and to the use of set formulae, which shed little light on the case in hand. Thus the phrase ἀρέτας ἔνεκα καὶ εὐσεβείας τὰς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον (4–7),²⁴ which is encountered with only minor differences in the Constantinople inscription (6–7),²⁵ is a commonplace²⁶ denoting the esteem and gratitude of the δῆμος. No more profound interpretation of its meaning is possible.²⁷

This new inscription gives the earliest extant evidence about Theophanes the historian, with prosopographical data relating to the essentially undocumented period of his life prior to 67/66 B.C. The information that he was an eponymous official in Mytilene, and particularly that the city honoured him with the dedication of a statue for his evidently successful period in office, is very welcome. It provides a solid basis for Strabo's testimony about Theophanes' political experience and supports the opinion of those scholars who hold that he enjoyed a high social position in the city. This new, fuller, picture of his social background and political activity coincides, along general lines, with the image we have of the other Greeks who were the political mainstays of the first-century B.C. imperatores in the cities of the

als' general attitude towards the Romans, an attitude which was chiefly characterised by self-interest and flattery in the cultural sphere. Contra, J.-L. FERRARY, *op. cit.* 612, n. 89.

²³ Pompey's bestowal of freedom on Mytilene, which was Theophanes' main achievement on his city's behalf, is chiefly evaluated in terms of Mytilene's former hostile relations with the subsequent conquerors of Mithridates; see R. LAQUEUR, *ibid.*; M. GELZER, *op. cit.* (n. 4) 97; A. ŞTEFAN, *Le début de la domination romaine sur les cités de la côte ouest du Pont-Euxin: date et circonstances*, Actes de la XIIe conférence internationale d'études classiques Eirene, Cluj-Napoca 2–7 Octobre 1972, Bucuresti-Amsterdam 1975, 623–4; W. DAHLHEIM, *Gewalt und Herrschaft. Das provinzielle Herrschaftssystem der römischen Republik*, Berlin-New York 1977, 243–4; D. SALZMANN, *op. cit.* (n. 1) 250.

²⁴ Concerning *ei* instead of *η*, see L. THREATTE, *op. cit.* (n. 9) 170 ff.; W. BLÜMEL, *Die aiolischen Dialekte*, Göttingen 1982, 71.

²⁵ ἔνεκα instead of ἔνεκα (see L. ROBERT, *Théophraste . . .*, 54–6, n. 5), *ei* instead of *η* (θεῖον instead of θεός, see L. ROBERT, *op. cit.* 53, n. 2) and *eis* instead of *πρός*.

²⁶ Concerning the meaning of ἀρετῆς ἔνεκα and parallels, see E. NACHMANSOHN, *Zu den Motivformeln der griechischen Ehreninschriften*, *Eranos* 11, 1911, 185–6; M. J. PAYNE, *Ἀρετῆς ἔνεκα: Honors to Romans and Italians in Greece from 200 to 27 B.C.*, *Diss. Michigan* 1984 (Univ. Microfilms International), 34–6 and notes. In Mytilene in particular, see *IG XII Suppl.* 62, 2–3: ἀρέτας ἔνεκα καὶ εὐσεβείας πρὸς τοῖς θεοῖς. More generally, see G. GERLACH, *Griechische Ehreninschriften*, Halle a. S. 1908, 58–9.

²⁷ B. K. GOLD, *op. cit.* (n. 20) 324 and n. 57, implies some sort of correlation between the ἀρετῆς in the Constantinople inscription and the ἀρετῆς to which Strabo refers (*ibid.*), but they are clearly coincidental.

Greek East. Indeed, it reinforces this image, confirming that they were generally men of education and culture, men of noble origin with considerable political experience.²⁸

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²⁸ The topic is fully treated by G. BOWERSOCK, *Augustus and the Greek World*, Oxford 1965, ch. 1; cf. also A. N. SHERWIN-WHITE, *op. cit.* (n. 21) 253 ff.



Plate 1

