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LOST DEDICATIONS COMMEMORATING RHODIAN VICTORY OVER ANTIOCHUS III

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Marble plaque, 0.35 m high, 0.36 m wide, 0.10 m thick, found on Tenos in the sanctuary of Poseidon, “des abords de l’autel”. Now lost. Letters, 0.012 m high. Date: 190–177 BCE.

P. Graindor, Fouilles de Ténos, *Musée Belge* 10 (1906) 332–336; *IG XII(5)* 913.

Ῥόδιοι
οἱ στρατευσάμενοι μετὰ
ἄρχοντος τῶν ἀφράκτων
4 Ἀγαθαγήτου τοῦ Δαμόνακτος,
καθ’ ὑοθεσίαν δὲ Πausανία,
καὶ τριηράρχων
Ἀγήμονος τοῦ Δαμοστράτου,
8 Ἀ[γ]ασιδάμου τοῦ Καλλιστράτου
Διὶ Σωτήρι, Ἀθάναι Σ[ω]τείραι,
Ποσειδᾶνι Ἀσφαλείωι,
Ἄρτέμιτι Ὀρθωσίαι, Ἡρακλεῖ,
12 Ἄρει, Ἀθάναι Ἀρείαι, Ἐνυῶι,
Ἐνυ[α]λίω[ι], Νίκαι
κατὰ τὸν ἐκ Δελφῶν χρησμόν.

The Rhodians who campaigned with the *archon* of the un-decked vessels, Agathagetos, the son of Damonax – but by adoption son of Pausanias – and the trierarchs Hagemon the son of Damostratos, Agasidamos son of Kallistratos:

To Zeus Soter, Athena Soteira, Poseidon Asphaleios, Artemis Orthosia, Herakles, Ares, Athena Areia, Enyo, Enyalios, Nike, at the behest of the oracular response from Delphi.

This dedication by the leaders of a Rhodian naval detachment¹ probably commemorated a Rhodian military victory. The letter forms provide a date somewhere in the first half of the second century B.C., the high water mark of military and political strength for the island republic. The name of the archon of the un-decked ships may help place the dedication even more precisely. Graindor proposes to identify Agathagetos, son of Damonax, with the pro-Roman politician met in the pages of Polybios² and makes our dedication a thank-offering for Rhodian victory over the Lykians in 177 BC.³ Others argue that the dedication has nothing to do with specific military victories at all, but should be connected with a delegation of Rhodian *πρυτάνεις* who negotiated a settlement between Delphi and Amphissa ca. 180 and were consequently honored by the Delphians.⁴ But we may assume that the Rhodian *θεωρία* of 180 was not an isolated instance, for the Rhodians had been granted *προμυατεία* in 253,⁵ an honor that would not come

¹ The dedication was probably made by the men who served in a squadron of Rhodian vessels comprised of open (aphract) and covered (cataphract) warships. In Rhodian documents, the archon always commands the aphract detachments, while trierarchs could pilot either aphract or cataphract vessels. Both archons and trierarchs were under the command of one or more navarchs. See V. Gabrielsen, *The Naval Aristocracy of Hellenistic Rhodes* (Cambridge 1997) 94–100, with references.

² Polybios 27.7.4–12 and 28.2.1–8. Agathagetos, along with Rhodophon, Astymedes, Philophron, and Theadetos were the nucleus of this *στάσις*. They were opposed by the faction around Deinon and Polyaratos, who are portrayed by Polybios, perhaps unfairly, as adherents of Perseus. See F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybios*, vol. 3 (Oxford 1979) 303 and E. Gruen, *Rome and Rhodes in the Second Century BC: A Historiographical Inquiry*, *CQ* 25 (1975) 59–81, esp. 69–71.

³ Graindor, *op. cit.*, 335; Polybios 25.4–5, with Walbank, *Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 277–283.

⁴ R. Étienne, *Tenos II. BEFAR 263 bis*. (Athens 1990) 116 with note 60. Graindor, *op. cit.*, 335, suggests that the trierarch Hagemon, the son of Damostratos was the brother of the Rhodian Agetor and was granted proxeny by Delphi in 180/179 – *Syll.*² 268, lines 218–219 = *Syll.*³ 585, lines 222–223.

⁵ *FD III.1.93*.

without assiduous cultivation of the oracle's favor. As we should assume that official Rhodian-Delphian contacts were common as the island republic's prestige grew in the late third and early second century,⁶ in the absence of more certain chronological indications, and given the overtly martial character of the deities invoked – Ares, Athena Areia, Enyo, Enyalios,⁷ and Victory – associating the dedication with the *θεορία* of 180 seems somewhat gratuitous.

Another, military context readily presents itself. Thirteen years before their victory over the Lykians in 177, the Rhodians had scored a series of crucial naval victories over Antiochos III during the campaigns of 191–190.⁸ While the active military career of Agathagetos could easily have spanned the period 191–177, the narrative of Polybios (27.7.3 and 28.2.3) suggests that he was a senior statesman in the 170s, which would place him near his *ἀκμή* in 190, when service as a trierarch or *ἄρχων* in the fleet would be more expected. It seems at least possible that this plaque stood upon a Rhodian victory monument commemorating Rhodian naval victories over the Seleucid monarch in the series of sea battles at Korykos, Side, and Myonnesos during 191–190 BCE.⁹ Although the Rhodian fleet fought alongside a numerically superior Roman force, the Rhodians could readily claim most of the credit for the final campaign. The Rhodians, fighting alone at Side, had seriously damaged half of the Seleucid fleet and captured a *ἑπτήρης*, all without the loss of a single ship. Likewise, at the climactic battle of Myonnesos, the issue was decided by the tactical agility and enterprise of the Rhodian navarch Eudamos.¹⁰ The significance of the outcome at Myonnesos cannot be overstated. Seleucid losses, 29 vessels sunk and 13 captured, amounting to half of the royal fleet, ensured that Rome and her allies would retain naval supremacy in the Mediterranean.¹¹

Tenos, headquarters of the revived Nesiotic League headed by Rhodes after the end of the Second Macedonian War (197 BC),¹² would have been a particularly appropriate venue for Rhodian captains to erect dedications associated with this momentous victory. The prow of a ship from Antiochos' once proud fleet, commanded by Hannibal himself, would have provided eloquent testament to the might of the Rhodian navy, the piety of her commanders, and the *νέμεσις* visited upon Antiochos for the assault on Tenos that had likely precipitated Rhodes entering the war on the side of Rome and Pergamon.¹³

As fate would have it, we also possess notice of another lost dedication from Nisyros commemorating the career of another likely participant in the naval campaigns of 191–190.¹⁴ A thank offering to Ares and Argive Poseidon records the service of a grandfather, likely named Sosagoras,¹⁵ who served as *στρατηγός* for the Rhodians during one of the “Cretan Wars” and had also served in the Rhodian navy under the

⁶ Pace Etienne, *op. cit.*, 116.

⁷ The independent identities of Ares and Enyalios are unimpeachably clear in this inscription. The two were distinct deities, listed here with their appropriate female counterparts; Ares, as so often, is followed by Athena Areia, while Enyalios is paired with the enigmatic Enyo. See M. Gonzales, New Observations on the Lindian Cult-tax for Enyalios, *ZPE* 166 (2008) 131–134.

⁸ Livy 37.33–36; Polybios 21.13; Diodoros 29.7; Appian, *Syr.* 29; Justin 31.7.3–9. The magnificent Winged Victory of Samothrace is traditionally associated with this Rhodian victory; P. Green, *Alexander to Actium* (London 1990) 355.

⁹ On the battles, see Livy 37.29.5–30.10, 37.33–36; Green, *op. cit.*, 420; R. M. Berthold, *Rhodes in the Hellenistic Age* (New York 1984) 156–158; E. R. Bevan, *The House of Seleucus* (London 1902) 104–106; W. L. Rodgers, *Greek and Roman Naval Warfare* (Annapolis 1937) 414–417; J. H. Thiel, *Studies in the History of Roman Sea-Power in Republican Times* (Amsterdam 1946) 352–357. See also now D. Grainger, *The Roman War of Antiochos the Great* (Leiden 2002), esp. 247–306 on the final naval campaigns.

¹⁰ *robore navium et virtute militum Romani longe praestabant, Rhodiae naves agilitate et arte gubernatorum et scientia remigum; maximo tamen terrori hostibus fuere ...* (Livy 37.30).

¹¹ Grainger, *op. cit.*, p. 304 concludes, “This battle was decisive for the naval war, and, in fact, it was also decisive for control of the Mediterranean for the next six centuries.”

¹² See K. A. Sheedy, The Origins of the Second Nesiotic League and the Defense of Kynthos, *Historia* 45 (1996) 423–449.

¹³ G. Reger, Athens and Tenos in the Early Hellenistic Age, *CQ* 42 (1992) 379–381.

¹⁴ *IG XII* (3) 103 = *Syll.*³ 673; E. E. Rice, Prosopographika Rhodiaka, *ABSA* 81 (1986) 209–233, esp. 222–223 on the family monument in question, dates it on prosopographical grounds to the last years of the 150's, immediately after the Second Cretan War.

¹⁵ Rice, *op. cit.*, 223; W. Peek, Epigramme und andere Inschriften von Nisyros, *Wissenschaftl. Zeitschrift der Univ. Halle* 16 (1967) 367.

navarchs Kleonaios, Akesimbrotos, and Eudamos, whose known activities span the years 201–190.¹⁶ Earlier opinion posited a chronological listing of the grandfather's career, placing his service as στρατηγός in the First Cretan War (205–201 BCE).¹⁷ More recent treatments place his στρατηγία during the Second Cretan War (156–153).¹⁸ But in either case, his earlier service with Kleonaios and Akesimbrotos make it extremely likely that Sosagoras fought alongside the Rhodians under Eudamos in 190 at the decisive sea battle of Myonnesos.¹⁹

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¹⁶ The active dates of the navarchs Kleonaios, Akesimbrotos, and Eudamos are well established: Kleonaios is attested as navarch from 201–200 (Polyb. 16.9), Akesimbrotos from 199–197 (Livy 31.46.6 and 47.2, 32.16.6; Polyb. 18.1.4 and 2.3–4, 19.1.2), and Eudamos from 190 (Polyb. 21.10.5; Livy 37.22–24) to 168 (Livy 44.28).

¹⁷ M. Holleaux, Sur la 'guerre' cretoise, *REG* 30 (1917) 88–104, esp. 95–102 = M. Holleaux, *Études d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques*, tome IV (Paris 1952) 163–177, esp. 169–175, supported by Peek, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Rice, *op. cit.*, makes a prosopographical case for the monument being erected after the Second Cretan War, the dates of which accord well with the signature of the sculptor Epicharmos of Soli, active in the second half of the second century. The grandfather's service record would not, in this case, follow a chronological schema, but emphasizes the later service and honors of the elderly general in the later war, as first argued by P. M. Fraser and G. E. Bean, *The Rhodian Peraia and Islands* (Oxford 1954) 149–152.

¹⁹ Holleaux, *op. cit.*, 98–99 = *Études* IV 171–173.