The Tablet of Idalion (ICS 217)

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The "Inscription of Idalion", also known as the "Tablet of Idalion" [Fig. 1] bears the longest and best preserved Cypriot syllabic text known so far. Therefore, the inscription preserves valuable linguistic, as well as historical information. On the other hand, the lack of comparable epigraphic material leaves many questions open to future consideration.

The inscription's main subject is the contract between the king and the city of Idalion on the one hand, and the doctors (physicians) who were commissioned to treat the wounded soldiers of a battle on the other. Given the restrictions of this essay, we shall be limited to a brief presentation of the main aspects of the inscription.¹ Noticeably, ever since the inscription was discovered, a large number of researchers has published and commented on its content, hence contributing not only to its interpretation but also to the progress of our knowledge of the syllabic script of Cyprus and, subsequently, of the history of ancient Cyprus.²

The inscription was discovered by farmers right before the 1850s at present-day Dali. It was placed - in excellent condition - at the sanctuary of Athena, which is mentioned in the inscription itself (lines 27-28), on the west acropolis of the ancient city of Idalion, situated at the hill of Ampileri. Following the mediation of Péretié, chancellor of the French consulate at Beirut, the inscription was then sold to the French Honoré Théodoric Albert de Luynes, together with many other ancient objects. In 1862-1863, de Luynes donated his collections to the Cabinet des Médailles of the National Library of France, where the tablet of Idalion is still exhibited today (inv. Bronzes 2297). Since 2010, the local Museum of Ancient Idalion displays a copy of the tablet, the fruit of the collaboration between the Foundation of Local History "Kypros" and the Municipality of Idalion, with the National Library of France and the Polytechnic School Ecole Centrale Paris and the Centre Technique des Industries de la Fonderie.

The tablet is made of bronze with a handle on one side. It is inscribed on both sides, measuring 21.4 cm x 14 cm on the incised part, with a thickness of 4-6 mm. The Cypriote syllabic text is continuous and comprises of 16 lines on side A and of lines on side B. The words or groups of words are separated by vertical lines [Fig. 2].
The text

Syllabic transliteration of the text:

**Front side (A):**

1. o-te | ta-po-to-li-ne-e-ta-li-o-ne | ka-te-wo-ro-ko-ne-ma-to-i | ka-se-ke-ti-e-we-se | i-to-i | pi-lo-ku-po-ro-ne-we-te-i-to-o-na-sa-ko
2. ra-u | pa-si-le-u-se | sa-ta-si-ku-po-ro-se | ka-se-a-po-to-li-se | e-ta-li-e-we-se | a-no-ko-ne-o-na-si-lo-ne | to-no-na-si-ku-po
3. ro-ne-to-ni-ja-te-ra-ne | ka-se | to-se | ka-si-ke-ne-to-se | i-ja-sa-ta-i | to-se | a-to-ro-po-se | to-se | i-ta-i | ma-ka-i | i-ki
4. ma-me-no-se | a-ne-u | mi-si-to-ne | ka-sa-pa-i | e-u-we-re-ta-sa-tu | pa-si-le-u-se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | o-na-si
5. lo-i | ka-se | to-i-se | ka-si-ke-ne-to-i-se | a-ti-to-mi-si-to-ne | ka-a-ti | ta-u-ke-ro-ne | to-we-na-i | e-xe-to-i |
6. wo-i-ko-i | to-i-pa-si-le-wo-se | ka-se | e-xe-ta-i-po-to-li-wi | a-ra-ku-ro | ta | ta | e-tu-wa-no-i-nu | a-ti-to
7. a-ra-ku-ro-ne | to-te | to-ta-la-to-ne | pa-si-le-u-se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | o-na-si-ko-ne | ka-se | to-i-se | ka-si
8. ke-ne-to-i-se | a-pu-ta-i | ga ?-i | ta-i-pa-si-le-wo-se | ta-i-to-i-ro-ni | to-i | a-la-pi-ri-ja-ta-i | to-ko-ro-ne
9. to-ni-to-i | e-le-i | to-ka-ra-u-o-me-no-ne | o-ka-to-se | a-la-wo | ka-se | tae-re-ki-ni-ja | ta-e-pi-o-ta
10. pa-ta | e-ke-ne | pa-no-ni-o-ne | u-wa-i-se | ga ?-ne | a-te-le-ne | e-ke | si-se | o-na-si-lo-ne | e-to-se
11. ka-si-ke-ne-to-se | e-to-se | pa-i-ta-se | to-pa-i-to-ne | to-no-na-si-ku-po-ro-ne | e-xe-to-i | ko-ro-i | to-i-te
12. e-xe | o-ru-xe | i-te-pa-i | o-e-xe | o-ru-xe | pe-i-se-i-o-na-si-lo-i | ka-se | to-i-se | ka-si-ke-ne-to-i
13. se | e-to-i-se | pa-i-si | to-na-ra-ku-ro-ne | to-te | a-ra-ku-ro | ta | ta ( vacat)
14. ka-se | o-na-si-lo-i | o-i-wo-i | a-ne-u | to-ka-si-ke-ne-to-ne | to-na-i-lo-ne | e-we-re-ta-sa-tu | pa-si-le-u
15. se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | to-we-na-i | a-ti | ta-u-ke-ro-ne | to-mi-si-to-ne | a-ra-ku-ro | pe IIII pe
16. (vacat) Il ti-e | e-to-ko-i-nu | pa-si-le-u-se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | o-na-si

**Front side (B):**

17. o-ne-to | sa-ta-si-ku-po-ro-se | ka-se-a-po-to-li-se | e-ta-li-e-we-se | a-no-ko-ne-o-na-si-lo-ne | to-no-na-si-ku-po
18. ro-ne-to-ni-ja-te-ra-ne | ka-se | to-se | ka-si-ke-ne-to-se | i-ja-sa-ta-i | to-se | a-to-ro-po-se | to-se | i-ta-i | ma-ka-i | i-ki
19. ma-me-no-se | a-ne-u | mi-si-to-ne | ka-sa-pa-i | e-u-we-re-ta-sa-tu | pa-si-le-u-se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | o-na-si
20. lo-i | ka-se | to-i-se | ka-si-ke-ne-to-i-se | a-ti-to-mi-si-to-ne | ka-a-ti | ta-u-ke-ro-ne | to-we-na-i | e-xe-to-i |
21. wo-i-ko-i | to-i-pa-si-le-wo-se | ka-se | e-xe-ta-i-po-to-li-wi | a-ra-ku-ro | ta | ta | e-tu-wa-no-i-nu | a-ti-to
22. a-ra-ku-ro-ne | to-te | to-ta-la-to-ne | pa-si-le-u-se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | o-na-si-ko-ne | ka-se | to-i-se | ka-si
23. ke-ne-to-i-se | a-pu-ta-i | ga ?-i | ta-i-pa-si-le-wo-se | ta-i-to-i-ro-ni | to-i | a-la-pi-ri-ja-ta-i | to-ko-ro-ne
24. to-ni-to-i | e-le-i | to-ka-ra-u-o-me-no-ne | o-ka-to-se | a-la-wo | ka-se | tae-re-ki-ni-ja | ta-e-pi-o-ta
25. pa-ta | e-ke-ne | pa-no-ni-o-ne | u-wa-i-se | ga ?-ne | a-te-le-ne | e-ke | si-se | o-na-si-lo-ne | e-to-se
26. ka-si-ke-ne-to-se | e-to-se | pa-i-ta-se | to-pa-i-to-ne | to-no-na-si-ku-po-ro-ne | e-xe-to-i | ko-ro-i | to-i-te
27. e-xe | o-ru-xe | i-te-pa-i | o-e-xe | o-ru-xe | pe-i-se-i-o-na-si-lo-i | ka-se | to-i-se | ka-si-ke-ne-to-i
28. se | e-to-i-se | pa-i-si | to-na-ra-ku-ro-ne | to-te | a-ra-ku-ro | ta | ta ( vacat)
29. ka-se | o-na-si-lo-i | o-i-wo-i | a-ne-u | to-ka-si-ke-ne-to-ne | to-na-i-lo-ne | e-we-re-ta-sa-tu | pa-si-le-u
30. se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | to-we-na-i | a-ti | ta-u-ke-ro-ne | to-mi-si-to-ne | a-ra-ku-ro | pe IIII pe
31. (vacat) Il ti-e | e-to-ko-i-nu | pa-si-le-u-se | ka-se | a-po-to-li-se | o-na-si
Back side (B):

17. lo-i a-ti to-a-ra-ku-ro to-te a-pu-ta-i ga ?-i ta-i-pa-si-le-wo-se ta-i-ma-la-ni-ja
18. i ta-i pe-ti-ja-i to-ko-ro-ne to-ka-ra-u-zo-me-no-ne a-me-ni-ja a-la-wo ka-se ta-te-re
19. ki-ni-ja ta-e-pi-o-ta pa-ta to-po-e-ko-me-no-ne po-se to-ro-wo to-tu-ru-mi-o-ne ka-se po
20. se ta-ni-e-re-wi-ja-ne ta-se a-ta-na-se ka-se to-ka-po-ne to-ni-si-mi-to-se a-ro-u-ra
21. i-to-ti-we-i-te-mi-se o-a-ra-ma-ne-u-se-e-ke a-la-wo to-po-e-ko-me-no-ne po-se pa-sa-ko-ra
22. ne to-no-na-sa-ko-ra-u ka-se ta-te-re-ki-ni-ja ta-e-pi-o-ta pa-ta e-ke-ne pa-no-ni-o-se u
23. wa-i-se ga ?-ne a-te-li-ja i-o-ta e-ke si-se o-na-si-lo-ne e-to-se pa-i-ta-se to-se o
24. na-si-lo-ne e-xe-ta-i ga ?-i ta-i-te i-e-xe to-i ka-po-i to-i-te e-xe o-ru-xe i
25. te o-e-xe o-ru-xe pe-i-se-i-o-na-si-lo-i e-to-i-se pa-i-si to-na-ra-ku-ro-ne to-te a-ra-ku-ro
26. ne-pe III pe II ti-e i-te ta-ta-la-to-ne ta-te ta-wei-ja ta-te i-na-la-li-si-me-na
27. pa-si-le-u-se ka-se a-po-to-li-se ka-te-ti-ja-ne i-ta-ti-o-ne ta-na-ta-na-ne ta-ne-pe-re
28. ta-li-o-ne su-no-ro-ko-i-se me-lu-sa-i ta-se we-re-ta-se ta-sa-te u-va-i-se ga ?-ne
29. o-pi-si-ke ta-se we-re-ta-se-ta-sa-te lu-se a-no-si-ja-wo-i-ke-no-i-tu-ta-sa-ke
30. ga ?-se-ta-sa-te ka-se to-se ka-po-se to-so-te o-i o-na-si-ku-po-ro-ne pa-i-te-se ka-se to-pa-i-to-ne o-i-pa
31. i-te-se e-ke-so-si a-i-we-i o-i-to-i-ro-ni to-i e-ta-li-e-wi i-o-si

Alphabetic transliteration of the text:

Front side (Α):

1. Ὅτε τὰ(ν) πτόλεμος Ἐδάλιον κατέ ὥρρος Μᾶδοι κας Κετιῆς ἰ(ν) τῶι Φιλοκύπρων ἐτεί τῷ Ὀνασαγόρα
2. ραυ, βασίλευς Στασίκυπρος καζ Ὀνασίλον τὸν Ὀνασικύρων τὸν ἰατῆραν κας τὸ(ν)ς κασιγνήτο(ν)ς ἰασθαὶ τὸ(ν)ς ἀ(ν)θρώπο(ν)ς τὸ(ν)ς ἰ(ν) τᾶι μάχαι ἰχμάνο(ν)ς ἄνευ μισθῶν. Καζ περ εὐρητάς(ν)τυ βασίλευς κας τὸ πτόλεμος Ὀνασί-
5. λωὶ καὶ τοῖς κασιγνήτοις ἀ(ν)τὶ τῶ μισθῶν καὶ ἀ(ν)τὶ τὰ υχήρων δο. Φέναι ἔξ τῷ
6. Φοίκω τῷ βασιλῆς Φος καὶ ἐξ ταῖ πτόλει Φ άργυρω ΤΑ Ι TA. Ἑδοὶ Φαν οἶ(ν)ν α(ν)τὶ τῷ
7. ἀργύρων τῶ τῷ ταλά(ν)των βασιλεύς καὶ ἀπὸ τὰς Ὀνασιλίως καὶ τοῖς κασι-
8. γνήτοις ἀπὸ ταῖ γα(?!) ταῖ βασιλῆς Φος ταῖ(ι) ἀ(ν)τὶ τῷ Αλα(μ)πιρίται, τό(ν) χύρων
9. τὸν ἰ(ν) τῷ ἐλεῖ τὸ(ν) χραιύμενον Ό(γ)κο(ν)τος ἀλ Φω καὶ τὰ τέρξινα τὰ ἐπιο(ν)τα τα
10. πά(ν)τα τὰν χράμενον πανώνων Φαις γα(?)ν ἀτελῆν. Ἡ κέ σις Ὀνασίλων ἢ τὸ(ν)ς
11. κασιγνήτο(ν)ς ή τὸ(ν)ς παιδας τὸ(ν) παιδῶν τῶν Ὀνασικύπρων ἐξ τῷ χύρων τῷ δι
12. ἐξορύξη, ἵδε παι, ὁ ἐξορύξη πείσει Ὀνασιλίως καὶ τοῖς κασιγνήτοις-
13. τὸ τοῖς παισὶ τὸν ἀργυρον τὸ(ν)δὲ: ἀργυρῶ ΤΑ Ι TA. (vacat)
14. καὶ Ὀνασίλως ὁ παῖς άνευ τῶ(ν) κασιγνήτων τῶν αἰλῶν ἐκ Φρητάσιος στῇ βασιλεῦ-
15. καὶ Ὀνασίλον ἢ τὸ(ν)ς παίδων τῶν Ὀνασίλων ἢ τὸ(ν)ς ἐξορύξη τῷ κάπω ἐξ τῶι κα
16. τοῖς παισὶ τὸν ἀργυρον τὸ(ν)δὲ: ἀργυρῶ ΠΕ III ΠΕ,

Back side (Β):

17. λωὶ ἀ(ν)τὶ τῷ ἀργυρῷ τῷ ἢ τοῖς κασιγνήτων τῶ ἡκτὶ τῷ γα(?!) ταῖ βασιλῆς (ι) Φω(ν) Σαλανι-
18. τὲ τῷ πεδίῳ τὸ(ν) χύρων τῶν κραυζόμενον ἀμενία ἀλ Φω, καὶ τὰ τέρ-
19. χριά τὰ ἐπιο(ν)τα σα(ν)τα, τό(ν) ποικόμενον πόσ το(ν) ρό Φο(ν) τό(ν) Δρύμιον καὶ σῶ-
20. τὸ τὸν ἱερήθιμον τὰς Χάνας, καὶ τῶ(ν) κάπον τῶν ἰ(ν) Σι(μ)μόδος ἀροῦρα-
21. τῶ(ν) Δι(μ)θέμις ὁ Ἀρμανεὺς ἤκε ἀλ Φω(ν), τό(ν) ποικόμενον πόσ Πασαγόρα-
22. ν τῶν Ὀνασαγόραρα, καὶ τὰ τέρξινα τὰ ἐπιο(ν)τα σα(ν)τα ἠ(ν) πανωνιο(ν)ς ὑ-
23. παισίων ἐξ ταῖ γα(?!) τα ἢ ἐξ τῷ κάπῳ τῷ ἢ ἐξορύξη, ἵ-
24. δὲ ὁ ἐξορύξῃ πείσει Ὀνασιλίως καὶ τοῖς παισὶ τὸν ἀργυρον τὸ(ν)δὲ: ἀργυρῶ-
26. ν ΠΕ ΙΙΙ ΠΕ, ΙΙ Δ/Ε. Ἰδὲ τὰ(ν) δάλτον τά(ν)δε, τὰ Φἐνια τάδε ἰναλαλισμένα(ν),

27. βασιλεὺς καὶ πτόλις κατέθιαν ἰ(ν) τὰ(ν) θιὸν τὰν Ἀθάναν τὰν περ’ Ἐ-

28. δάλιον, σὺν ὁρκοῖς μὴ λύσαι τὰς Φρήτα(ν)ς τά(ν)σδε ὑαινεῖς γά(?)ν.

29. Ὅπι (?) σίς κε τὰ(ν)ρήτα(ν)ς τά(ν)σδε λύση, ἀνοσία/ἀνόσια θοὶ γένοιτο. Τά(ν)ς γε

30. γα(?)(ν)ς τά(ν)σδε καὶ τῶ(ν)ρήτα(ν)ς τά(ν)σδε οἱ Ονασικύπρων παῖδες καὶ τῶ(ν) παίδων οἱ πα-

31. ίδες ἔξο(ν)σι αἰ(ἳ)ς, ο(ἳ) τ' οἰρῶνι τ' Ἐδάλιῃ Α ἰω(ν)σι.

Translation and thematic entities

I. Introduction: The circumstances under which Onasilos and his brothers were invited (lines 1-4)

When the Medes (Persians) and Kitians had the city of Idalion under siege, in the year of Philokypros, son of Onasagoras, King Stasikypros and the city – the Idalians – called physician Onasilos, son of Onasikypros, and his brothers, to treat people who were wounded in battle, without payment.

II. Payment of Onasilos and his brothers (lines 4-13)

And so, the king and the city agreed to give Onasilos and his brothers, instead of payment and additional gratuity, a talent of silver from the House of the king and the city. But instead of that silver talent, the king and the city gave to Onasilos and his brothers land of the king which is located in Alampria: the piece of land that is in a swampy meadow – that which adjoins the orchard of Onkas –, and all the new plants there, to possess them with absolute right to sell, forever, without taxes. If ever someone evicts Onasilos or his brothers or Onasikypros’ children’s children from that piece of land, then, he who will expel them shall pay Onasilos and his brothers or their children the following amount: a talent of silver.

III. Separate payment for Onasilos without his brothers (lines 14-26)
And for Onasilos alone, without his brothers, the king and the city agreed to give, instead of additional gratuity, besides payment, four silver *pelekeis* and two double *mnas* of Idalion. But instead of that silver, the king and the city gave Onasilos land of the king which is in the valley of Malania: the piece of land that adjoins the garden of Amenia and all the new plants there, (land) that reaches the river Drymios until the sanctuary of Athena and the garden that is in the land of Simmis – the one that Diwethemis the Armaneus had as orchard, contiguous with that of Pasagoras, son of Onasagoras – and all the new plants there, to possess with absolute right to sell, forever, without taxes. If ever someone evicts Onasilos or Onasilos’ children from that land or that garden, then, he who will evict them shall pay Onasilos or his children the following amount: four silver *pelekeis* and two double *mnas* of Idalion.

IV. Conclusion: Additional guarantees (lines 26-31)

And this cartouche, which is inscribed with these words, the king and the city submitted it to goddess Athena, she (who protects) the area around Idalion, with vows not to violate these terms, ever. If someone violates these terms, may the curse fall upon him. These lands and these gardens, the children of Onasikypros and his children’s children will own them forever, those who shall stay in the area of Idalion.

Some basic philological comments

- The first lines of the text (lines 1-4) resemble the beginning of a narrative rather than that of a legal text. Instead of the usual epigraphic formula (preposition ἐπί followed by the name of the *eponymous archon* in genitive form) the time setting is given in a detailed manner. The word ὅτε is an introduction to the general outline of the agreement that is fully presented below. It comprises its chronology, its contributors and the reason of the agreement.

Moreover, the chronology is given by two elements: a) the siege of the city by the Persians and the Kitians and b) "the year of Philokypros, son of Onasagoras". The introduction also mentions the name of the king, however it is the name of the *archon* that functions as a chronological indication. The title and name of King Stasikypros are mentioned due to his role in the agreement. The reference of the two names *following* that of the incident (the siege of the city) that led to the agreement also needs to be illustrated. This element is the
first to be mentioned in the inscription, a fact that is indicative of its importance.

- The ethnonym "Ἐδαλιῆ Φες" (line 2) is not used to describe Stasikypros and the city, but only the city itself. Just like Philokypros, who was mentioned alongside the name of his father but without his ethnonym, Stasikypros is also followed by his title alone (king). The Idalian origin of them both becomes evident from their position, the content of the inscription and the word "Ἐδαλιῆ Φες" that follows as a characterization of the citizens. The citizens were essentially designated collectively by their ethnonym, since they also contributed to the agreement alongside the king. The ethnonym "Ἐδαλιῆ Φες" and the name of the king, "Stasikypros", are not used again each time the decision made by the king and the city is mentioned.

- The phrase ἔδυ Φάν οἰ(ν)υ (line 6) refers to the payment of Onasilos and his brothers, while the phrase ἔδωκ οἰ(ν)υ (line 16) refers to the payment received by Onasilos alone. Each of these phrases connects two paragraphs the first of which presents a money payment and the second one a payment in land plots. This is not an alternative selection of payment – in money or land – as it was first understood, but rather a payment that was decided to be given in the form of land rather than in ordinary currency. This selection, as is deduced by the linguistic analysis, also explains the detailed description of the land plots offered to the physicians. This change in the form of payment is probably related to the hostile attack against the city: the city’s treasury would be empty in such difficult circumstances, a fact that could not be mentioned explicitly in an official document of this sort.

- The phrase "πὸς τὰν ἱερῆταν Αθάνας" (to the sanctuary of Athens, lines 19-20) refers to a sanctuary of goddess Athena that, according to the description of the area, was located outside of the city walls. The phrase "ἰ(ν) τὰν Αθάναν τὰν περ’ Ἐδάλιον" to goddess Athens, she (who protects) around Idalion, lines 27-28) refers to another sanctuary of Athena that was inside the city. According to the same passage, it is in this sanctuary that the inscription was stored (lines 26-28) and it is in this sanctuary that the inscription was unearthed. Athena here is characterized by the phrase "τὰν περ’ Εδάλιον", meaning “around Idalion”. The use of preposition περ’ (περί) possibly echoes Athena’s role as the protector of Idalion, although the actual verb is omitted.

- The words πανώνιον/πανωνίοι(ν)ς (lines 10, 22) and ἀτελήν/ἀτελία (lines 10, 23), and the phrase ὑΦαις γα(?)ν (lines 10, 22-23, 28) provide all the necessary information about the donation of land, similar to what is attested in other legal texts. This information is about a) the right of exploiting the land, b) the duties and privileges related to taxation, c) the duration of land ownership.
The word πανώνιον/πανωνίο (ν), a case of ἄπαξ λεγόμενον, is used to describe the land plots («τὸν χῶρον» and «τὸν κἄπον»), giving to Onasilos and his brothers the right to sell the property. Following παν-, which is clear in its meaning, the second component of the word seems to be etymologically related to the word ὄνος (= acquisition price) and not with ὄνινημι (= to benefit, to enjoy). The word ἀτελήν/ἀτελία supports this interpretation, referring to the tax exemption for these plots.

The phrase ὑπαῖς γα (?)v, which is attested only once, is the most difficult part of the inscription in its interpretation. The second half of the phrase in particular, is the most intricate. It had initially been read as za-ne, ζᾶν (in accusative form) and was thus associated with the word βίος first, whereas it was subsequently read as γᾶν (= earth, land). The first one of the two syllabic signs traditionally corresponds to either za or ga, although in other parts of the inscription it is only used as ga. However, the reading γᾶν hampered the interpretation of the phrase. For these reasons, the syllabic sign ga⁹ has been considered the correct reading, whereas for the phrase as a whole, contextual evidence supports the interpretation “for ever”.¹⁰

- It is not entirely clear whether the name in the phrase “land of Simmis” (line 20) refers to man or a woman, or if it is a toponym. It would be awkward, however, if, while the city and the king were offering plots of the royal land to Onasilos and his brother, in this particular point they chose to donate him a private land plot. Hence it seems more reasonable that the word “Simmis” is a toponym.

- The term a-no-si-ja (ἀνοσία ή ἀνόσια, line 29) may refer to misfortune (mostly in the sense of lack of divine support) but also to harmful things or actions.¹¹ Here the word “curse” is conventionally used as the closest one between the two interpretations.

Historical remarks

The dating of the inscription

The two chronological elements mentioned in the text, that is the attack of the Persians and the Kitians, and the names of Philokypros and King Stasikypros, cannot be dated with accuracy, hence the exact dating of the inscription is uncertain. For its chronological investigation, the following elements are taken into consideration:

a) Historical data: it is obvious that the attack against Idalion was not successful and that the city continued to live as an autonomous city-kingdom. This attack may be related to the
Ionian Revolt and the uprisings of the Cypriotes against the Persians in 499/498 BC: If not during the uprising itself, then shortly before or after, when the Persians, assisted by the Phoenicians, were trying to reinforce their presence on the island. It seems more likely that the Idalion tablet should be associated with the Ionian Revolt in 499/498 BC, rather than with the first Greek intervention in Cyprus, in 478 BC, or with the end of the unsuccessful Athenian ventures on the island, in 450-440 BC.

b) Archaeological evidence: Most of this evidence was produced in the area of the sanctuary of Athena on the west acropolis of Idalion, where the inscription itself was found. It is the same sanctuary mentioned in the text (lines 27-28). The destruction of the sanctuary is important for dating the tablet since the sanctuary was never restored; therefore its destruction offers a terminus ante quem for the chronology of the inscription. However, the fact that there is no consensus between archaeologists over the chronology of the sanctuary’s destruction, and that the Idalion tablet was not found during excavations, does not allow any secure conclusions. Stratigraphy and pottery from the site suggest a dating around 470 BC for the destruction of the sanctuary, at a transitional stage between the Cypro-Archaic II and the Cypro-Classical I period.

c) Numismatic evidence: the latest coins known from Idalion (series e) date after 470 BC. Besides the sphinx and lotus flower, they bare the syllabic sign sa on the obverse. This has been interpreted by some scholars as an abbreviated version of the name Stasikypros that is attested in the inscription. This identification led to the conclusion that Stasikypros was the last king of Idalion before the city was conquered by Kition in the mid-5th century BC. However, the association of the sign sa with Stasikypros is dubious, since this can be the abbreviated form of another name starting with a Sta- or Sa-. The association of Stasikypros attested in the tablet with an older numismatic series from Idalion is also possible. This evidence does not lead to a specific dating but at least it places the writing of the inscription in the first quarter of the 5th century BC.

Idalion

There is only one mention of the history of the foundation of Idalion by Chalkanor in the ancient Greek literary sources (Stephanus of Byzantium, Ethnika, s.v. Ἰδάλιον). The tablet of Idalion yields valuable information about the organization of the city-kingdom, valid also for other city-kingdoms of the island, since it is the only direct written source hitherto known about this subject.
The tablet attests the first system of social security known so far: Shortly after the war, the city-kingdom of Idalion had a social organization that allowed – or forced – the city to take care of the injured citizens by public expense. Even more remarkable is people’s participation in the institutions of Idalion in support of the king, who is presented as having the total control over his citizens. In the text, the king and the city (citizens) always appear in association with each other as the two main components that make and execute decisions, having equal responsibilities in front of gods and people. This combination, “king and the city”, is mentioned six times in the inscription that is each time when the decision-making authority has to be documented.

Apart from this participation, the people of Idalion possess two more important rights: they appear as the owners of land (lines 8, 17) and they possess their own treasury (line 6). Therefore, except for the royal land and treasury, ancient Idalion also managed public lands and a treasury. This means that the city had two sorts of income – royal and public – each one managed separately. Public property could not be used without the consensus of the people. However, the tablet also suggests that the agreement of the people was also necessary for the disposal of the royal property: although the payment of the physicians is only based on royal land plots, the donation of these plots is made by the king and the city (lines 7-8, 16-17). This can only be explained on the premise that royal land plots were not part of the king’s personal property but they belonged to the whole community although the king was still responsible for managing this land. A similar arrangement can be seen in Macedonia. The roots of this sort of donation can probably be traced back in the Mycenaean times, where private property gets distinguished from the property of the public, the king and the highly-ranked officials.12 Noticeably, Theophrastus (Historia plantarum V.8.1.11-13) refers to the kings of Cyprus using the phrase «τηροῦντες και ταμιευόμενοι with regard to the royal land.

Furthermore, the tablet helps us to trace the presence of public offices that were not permanent, as in the case of Philokypros. This is also attested in other Greek societies (the ephor of Sparta, the eponymous archon in Athens). The same is true for the benefit of tax exemption granted to the physicians and their descendants (lines 10, 23): In other Greek cities too, mostly in Athens, this was an honorary benefit to citizens who had served the city.

These features had initially led to the conclusion that the political organisation of Idalion comprised of elements that were inspired by democratic Athens. However, this actually looks impossible, mainly for chronological reasons, since it would not allow enough time for the evolution of democratic institutions. Moreover, the tablet contains no indication of an
assembly or a boule at Idalion.

It becomes obvious that the official state at Idalion was expressed through the collaboration between the king and the citizens. This seems to be an evolutionary phase of political institutions, with a royal government that displays some liberal features. Idalians and their king have established an administrative system in which royal features coexisted with elements of a republic. This may be the result of a tendency to differentiate from eastern-type monarchies (e.g. the Persian monarchy) in order to denote the Greek character of the city. A similar situation can be seen at the east Greek city-states and it offers an explanation about why Idalion and other cities of Cyprus insisted on preserving kingship, a hereditary system of government that secured the continuation of this Greek character.

The land plots offered to the physicians are described in such detail supporting the hypothesis that the city of Idalion had its own land registry, hence the emblem of the Department of Lands and Surveys of the Republic of Cyprus [Fig. 3]. The word "οἱρῶνι" (line 8, 31), in dative form means the region; the word "χώρος" (lines 8, 18) means the land plot, whereas "γᾶ" means land in its broader sense, of which "χώρος" is a subdivision. It is clear therefore that Idalion consisted of the city itself and of a greater region scattered with small communities, in some of which were situated the land plots donated to the physicians. In these, we come across gardens, orchards, plains, one river and the sanctuary of Athena, with the names of two regions: Malania, that remains unidentified and Alampria, the latter corresponding to modern Alambra. These topographical references bring us to the conclusion that the donation of land plots was not uncommon at Idalion.

The agreement and the physicians

The tablet of Idalion is not only the earliest written source to explicitly mention a Cypriote physician (line 3) yet also the earliest epigraphic attestation of the recruitment of a physician by a Greek city.

The king and the city are the two instigators of the agreement with Onasilos and his brothers. The participation of the city makes the agreement trustworthy since kings change, yet the city itself remains stable.

Even though the payment of the physician was initially planned to be in money, it was actually made in land plots, probably due to the financial difficulties caused by the battle. The silver talent (line 6) that was initially selected as payment for the physicians was not a small sum, even though it would be divided between Onasilos and his brothers. The amount...
initially mentioned as the payment of Onasilos alone, that is four silver pelekeis and two double Idalian mnas (lines 15-16) is indicative of an era when the old weighing system for metals – such as silver pelekeis or tripodia – was also applied to the numismatic system.

Noticeably, the amount initially agreed to be paid to the physicians corresponds to the fine that would be paid by whoever tried to expel them from the land donated to them. It is possible that the land plots donated to the team of physicians had the same value. The important element is that the physicians obtain the right of possession, enjoyment and exploitation of the land plots while they keep the right to sell it and are subject to tax exemption (lines 10, 22-23). These rights are hereditary with no time restrictions, as long as the physicians and their heirs live at Idalion.

The agreement actually includes two parts: one with the team as a whole and one with Onasilos alone. His personal payment is considerably bigger than the payment shared between him and his brothers. The whole team was asked to offer its services without accepting any sort of payment from the patients (line 5). However, it seems that Onasilos, being the chief of the team, was entitled to receive fees from his patients (line 15) or rather from patients that were not amongst “those injured during the battle” (lines 3-4).

Noticeably, there are not strict restrictions or a clear designation for the duties of the medical team. The only explicit clauses are the complimentary treatment of those injured in the battle and the physicians’ stay at Idalion. On the contrary, special emphasis is placed on the physicians’ protection. This disparity of the agreement may be explained by the urgent need of Idalion to hire physicians for the treatment of those that were injured. These physicians may have come to Idalion from another city yet they were very much respected by the people of Idalion.

The case of Onasilos – the first head of a medical team that we know – and his brothers reflects the family-character of early medicine. It is this character that led the king and the city of Idalion to expand the land donation and the benefits to the descendants of the physicians, since they would also inherit their medical knowledge. Several years later, this hereditary character of medicine continued to exist as a sacred duty of the doctors, according to the Oath of Hippocrates (8-12).

Transliteration and translation of the Idalion tablet text: Georgiadou, Anna
List of illustrations

The images that follow are available in the digital version of the present article in the website Kyprios Character. You can view the images by following the link: kyprioscharacter.eie.gr/en/t/AO

Fig. 1: The Tablet of Idalion: face A (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, inv. Bronzes 2297).

Fig. 2: Face A (top) and B (bottom) of the text (Masson 1983a, pl. XXXVI.1, XXXVI.2).

Fig. 3: The emblem of the Department of Lands and Surveys, Ministry of Interior, the Republic of Cyprus.
Endnotes

1 For a more detailed analysis, Georgiadou 2010.
2 The publication of the inscription by Olivier Masson (1983, 235-244) that established the bibliographic reference to the inscription (ICS 217), holds a prominent position. See also Egetmeyer 2010, II, 629-635.
3 We adopt the ending –ίλος: Masson 1983a, 237, 239; Masson 1983b, 281; Panayotou 1985, 14-15.
4 This also occurs in other formal documents of ancient Greek kingdoms, however these documents are later, e.g. Hatzopoulos 1996, II, 60, no 41.
5 The phrase “ἁ πτόλις Ἐδαλήων”, with the ethnonym in a genitive possessive form, would be expected instead. This rough structure is not unique. Similar examples are known from Crete, as in the case of the later inscription IC IV 233, reading “ἁ πόλις οἱ Γορτύνιοι”.
6 For the interpretation of these phrases, Georgiadou 2010, 151-154.
8 Hatzopoulos 1996, II, 44-46.
11 For the two interpretations: Willi 2006, 194-198; Egetmeyer 2010; Georgiadou 2010, 157-159.
12 Hatzopoulos, Georgiadou 2013, 206-207.
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