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## EPMHNEIA.

### The Greek Translations of the *sacrae litterae* on Official Hospitality (AD 204)

*Abstract.* The decision of AD 204 which exempted Roman senators from the duty of providing hospitality to official guests is known from eight inscriptions found in cities of the Aegean region and western Asia Minor. New fragments of the bilingual version of this text in the collection of the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations, Ankara, show that the Greek translation came with the heading ἐρμηνεία θεῶν γραμμάτων. Hermeneia was the technical term used between the 3rd and 5th centuries AD to denote authorized Greek translations of official rulings in Latin. Since the three Greek versions of the decision all differ from one another, it is clear that these translations were produced locally with the advice of legal experts.

*Keywords:* ἐρμηνεία; *sacrae litterae*; official hospitality; Septimius Severus; Caracalla.

Sencer Şahin has a very strong claim to have been the most important Turkish scholar of antiquity, in any discipline, from the twentieth century. He played a seminal role in inaugurating a new era in the study of Greek inscriptions in Turkey. From the beginning of his active scholarly career around 1970 he published work at the highest scholarly level, especially on the rich epigraphic heritage of Bithynia and of south-west Turkey. His collaboration with his mentor Reinhold Merkelbach was decisive in establishing and extending the series *Inscripfen Griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien*. He worked tirelessly and with extraordinary productivity, and no scholar working in the field can afford to overlook his contributions. One of his most important achievements was to have blazed the trail for a new generation of Turkish epigraphic researchers, who are now doing so much both by their discoveries and by their historical investigations to broaden and deepen our understanding of their country's ancient past. This short discussion of a bilingual text, housed in the collection of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara, is offered as a modest and inadequate tribute to a remarkable scholar.<sup>1</sup>

In 1978 Louis Robert published three fragments of a bilingual inscription which he had copied and squeezed in the archaeological depot on Ankara Kale. He recognised the text as a bilingual version of the imperial ruling, probably a subscript rather than an imperial letter, issued by Septimius Severus and Caracalla in AD 204, which confirmed that Roman senators were immune from the duty of providing lodging or hospitality to official visitors. On the basis of the letter forms Robert suggested that the text was probably carved in the middle or later third century.<sup>2</sup> In 2014, I recorded the text again in Depot D of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. It is marked with the inventory number 211 and one of the fragments has the inked label 'Istanbul'. This confirms Robert's supposition that this inscription, like a number of others at Ankara, had been brought to the museum's collection from Istanbul. Its original find-spot is unrecorded and remains unknown.<sup>3</sup> Robert saw three fragments with the right

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<sup>1</sup> I recorded the text in September 2014 as part of my work on the Greek and Latin inscriptions of Ankara. I am very grateful to the General Directorate of Museums and Antiquities for permission to carry out this research (permit reference 64298988–155.02 [YA2014.54] 139397), and to the Museum staff, above all to Nilgün Sinan, for their assistance in the Museum depots.

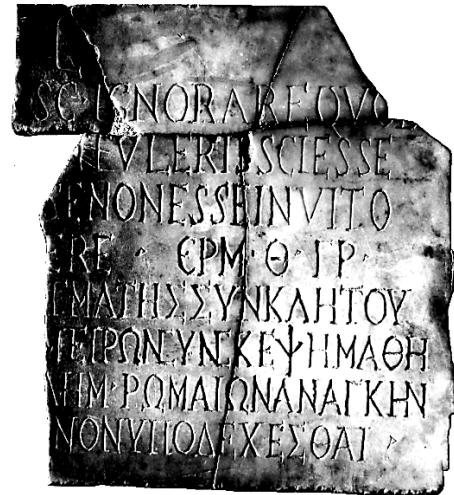
<sup>2</sup> Robert 1978, 432–437 (SEG 28 1567).

<sup>3</sup> Jones 1984, 99 showed that not all the known texts came from the province of Asia, and that an Ankara provenance was at least theoretically possible. This, however, is ruled out by the item's label.

hand edge of the text; the Museum staff have now identified two further pieces and reassembled the inscription. The new text contains two variations from the version proposed by Robert's *ed. pr.* which have significant consequences for our understanding of the production of the Greek translation of this original Latin document.

The inscription is made up from five fragments of a white marble wall plaque, now reconstructed, but broken on the left; height 0.46; width 0.43; thickness 0.02; letters 0.035–0.04; L in line 1 0.05. It was published without the two left-hand fragments by L. Robert (1978, 432–437 [Bull. ép. 1978, 468; SEG 28 1567]); in the text reproduced below the letters that were not seen by Robert are underlined.

Text [S.] L.  
 [Videris nobis] s. c. ignorare quod  
 [si cum peritis con]ntuleris scies se–  
 4 [natori p. R. neces]se non esse invito  
 [hospitem suscip]ere • έρμ. • Θ • Γ •  
 [δοκεις ήμίν τὸ δό]γμα τῆς συνκλήτου  
 [ἀγνοεῖν ὃ ἐάν μετ' ἐ]μπείρων συνσκέψη μαθη–  
 8 [ση μὴ συνκλητικῶ] δήμ. Ῥωμαίων ἀνάγκην  
 [εἶναι ἄκοντι ξέ]νον ὑποδέχεται •



line 1: [S(acrae)] L(itterae).

line 5: vac. Θ. Γ., Robert.

line 7: [ἐπι]σκέψη, Robert.

*Imperial Ruling.* You appear to us to be ignorant of the decision of the Senate, according to which, if you confer with experts, you should know that a senator of the Roman people is not obliged to receive anyone as a guest against his will.

The wording of the Latin version of this imperial ruling is rigorously comparable to the six other Latin versions that have been recorded, two at Ephesus,<sup>4</sup> one at Pisidian Antioch,<sup>5</sup> one at Satala in Lydia,<sup>6</sup> one in the Phrygian Pentapolis,<sup>7</sup> and one at Paros,<sup>8</sup> the only bilingual version apart from the Ankara example. The texts only vary in the extent of the abbreviation of the words *s(enatus) c(onsultum)* and *p(ropuli) R(omani)*. The Phrygian and Parian stones end by naming the ordinary consuls of AD 204, thus providing the original date of the ruling.

Apart from the Ankara text, two other Greek versions are known. One is from Paros, carved on a separate stone from the Latin version recorded there:

ἱερὰ γράμματα. | [δ]οκεις ήμείν τὸ [δó]γμα | [τ]ῆς συνκλήτου ἀγνο[εῖ]ν ὃς ἐάν μετ' ἐμπεί[ρ]ων συν-  
 αντιβόλης | [ε]ῖση μὴ εἶναι ἐπάναγκ[ε]ς συγκλητικῶ | |[δ]ήμου Ῥωμαίων ἄκον[τι] ξένον ὑποδέχει[σ]θαι •  
 ἐδόθη | [πρ(ὸ)] ἁ Καλ. Ἰουνί. Ῥώμη | [Φα]βίω Κεῖλωνι τὸ β' καὶ | [Ἀν]νίω Λίβωνι ὑπάτοις.

<sup>4</sup> Knibbe – Merkelbach 1978, 229–232; IEphesos II 208.

<sup>5</sup> Jones 1984, 97–98.

<sup>6</sup> Herrmann 1977, 364–365; TAM V.1 607, identifying the fragment published by Robert 1962, 281. The Claus-Slaby databank of Latin inscriptions erroneously classifies this text as coming from the legionary fortress Satala in Capadocia. The beginning of this text reads [videris no]vis sen[at]us consultum], but 'novis' simply represents the popular pronunciation of 'nobis'.

<sup>7</sup> Drew-Bear 1977, 356–358; (AE 1977, 807).

<sup>8</sup> Wilhelm 1900, 75–78; (IG XII.5 132).

Another Greek version was copied at a site in the Troad and recognised by C. P. Jones. It appears to have been carved on a marble stele originally c. 0.45 wide, with short lines between 11 and 14 letters long and letter heights of around 0.025.

|   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
|   | ἱερά γρ[άμματα]   | (12) |
|   | δοκείς • ή[μείν τὸ]   | (12) |
|   | δό[γμα τῆς συν]-  | (11) |
| 4 | κλήτο[υ ἀγνοεῖν ὀ]  | (14) |
|   | ἐάν <με>[τ'ἐμπεί]-  | (11) |
|   | ρων σ[υνσκέψη]  | (11) |
|   | εἴση σ[υνκλητι]-  | (12) |
| 8 | [κῶ δῆμ. Ῥωμαίων ἀνάγκην μὴ εἶναι ἄκοντι ξένον ὑποδέχεσθαι] |      |

line 5: EANOY, copy of Thiersch; perhaps read ἐάν συ [μετ'ἐμπεί]ρων. This would lengthen the line to 13 letters.

line 6: σ[υναντι βάλης], Jones, after the Paros version, but the restoration makes a line of 16 letters and is too long.

line 7: ΕΙΣ ΗΣ, Thiersch/Reinach. εἴση <μ>ή [εἶναι, κτλ], Jones.

C. P. Jones observed that the Troad inscription, according to his restoration, had the same Greek version as the Paros inscription and must have been an official translation, but he was perplexed by the divergences from the Ankara Greek version. However, there is insufficient space to restore σ[υναντι βάλης], in line 6 of the Troad text, and it is preferable to supply σ[υνσκέψη] on the basis of the new reading of the Ankara text. The next line of the Troad text reverts to the εἴση of the Paros version, instead of Ankara's μαθήση. Moreover, if the final *sigma* of line 7 was correctly copied, the translator in this case placed σ[υνκλητικῶ] at the start of the subordinate clause, reserving the negative μή for a later position, but following the word-order of the Latin original, *scies senatori p. R. necesse non esse invito hospitem suscipere*. It therefore appears that all three Greek translations were independent of one another. They were local renderings of a Latin original. The Latin text, by contrast, was reproduced with the same wording in all seven recorded copies.

The most important novelty revealed by the fuller version of the Ankara inscription is the reading ἐρμ. preceding the abbreviation Θ. Γ., which should now be resolved as ἐρμ(ηνεῖα) θεῖων γραμμάτων. Robert had previously assumed a *vacat* at this point. The text stated explicitly that the Greek version of the *senatus consultum* was a translation. The term ἐρμηνεῖα is epigraphically attested in two imperial inscriptions of late antiquity. The earlier of these is the tetrarchic rescript (or rescripts) published by the community of Elephantine in Syene (upper Egypt) in a Greek version, which is known only from a copy made by Richard Pococke in 1737/8 and has been discussed and interpreted by Peter Brennan<sup>9</sup> and Denis Feissel.<sup>10</sup> Pococke's copy contains many uncertain readings which make detailed interpretation of the text very difficult. Line 20 of his facsimile text appears to read τῶν γραμμάτων *vac* ἐρμηνεῖ (sic). The last word should undoubtedly be corrected to ἐρμηνεῖα. Brennan demonstrated that this part of the text ran over two blocks and that Pococke copied the right hand block before the left-hand one. This led Feissel to make the plausible suggestion that Pococke misaligned 'ἐρμηνεῖ' so that in the printed version it followed rather than preceded 'τῶν γραμμάτων'. Even so, ἐρμηνεῖα τῶν γραμμάτων is not a satisfactory reading, and it seems preferable to suppose that Pococke also misread an *iota* as a *tau*, and restore the Elephantine inscription exactly in the form suggested by the abbreviated Ankara text: ἐρμηνεῖα [θε]ίων γραμμάτων.

<sup>9</sup> Brennan 1989, 193–205; closely followed by Bernand 1989, 234–240 no. 252.

<sup>10</sup> Feissel 1985, 33–53; revised reprint in Feissel 2010, 125–137.

The later text, which coincidentally was also copied by Pococke and before him by Cyriac of Ancona, is the fragmentary bilingual Latin and Greek inscription containing the pragmatic sanction (imperial decision) of Theodosius II about the levying of *portoria* at Passala, the harbour attached to the Carian city of Mylasa, and the accompanying letter of his *comes sacrarum largitionum*, dating between 427 and 438.<sup>11</sup> Here there is no textual uncertainty. The Greek translation of the Latin version of the emperor's pragmatic sanction began with the heading ἡ ἔρμηνεία τοῦ θείου τύπου. The emperor's ruling, which was inscribed in both languages, was addressed to Flavius Eudoxius, his *comes sacrarum largitionum*, whose own decision was only reproduced in a Greek version under the heading ἡ ἔρμηνεία τοῦ δευτέρου τύπου τοῦ κωμ. τῶν λαργιτιόνων.<sup>12</sup>

The term ἔρμηνεία in exactly the same sense, referring to a Greek version of a Latin official document, first occurs on a number of third century papyri, including P. Oxy 7 of AD 256/7, which appended a copy of the translation, [ἔρμηνεί]ας ἀντίγραφον, of a legal decision which related to issues surrounding a Roman will, and P. Oxy 1201 of AD 258, which contained both the Latin and the Greek versions of a petition also concerning an inheritance dispute, addressed to Mussius Aemilianus, *v. a. Praef. Aeg.*, and whose Greek version is prefaced by the phrase ἔρμηνεία τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν. If Robert's dating of the Ankara inscription to the mid or later third century is accepted it appears to be roughly contemporary with these papyrus documents.

The most familiar usages of the term are found in the chapters of Eusebius' *Church History* which cited copies of imperial documents relating to the persecution of the Christians at the beginning of the fourth century. Among several examples perhaps the most explicit is the heading that Eusebius attached to the final statement of recantation by the emperor Maximinus, in which he rescinded his anti-Christian measures of AD 312, and which reads ἀντίγραφον ἔρμηνείας τῆς τοῦ τυράννου ὑπὲρ Χριστιανῶν διατάξεως ἐκ Ῥωμαϊκῆς γλώττης εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα μεταληφθείσης.<sup>13</sup>

The primary meaning of ἔρμηνεία given by LSJ, based on classical usage, was not 'translation', but 'interpretation'. It is clear that the use of the term in texts of the third to the fifth century related specifically to the Greek translations of Latin official documents. Further, the variations between the surviving Greek texts of the SC concerning hospitality of AD 204, show that there was no single official version of such documents. Each version, unlike the Latin original, appears to have been generated independently at a local level. However, a document with the heading ἔρμηνεία evidently carried authority, and so we should understand it as having the status of an authorized translation, produced by an accredited expert, and thus retaining the legal force of the Latin original. In identifying the appropriate authority we should probably look no further than the increasing number of lawyers who were involved in public and private legal decision-making in the later empire. It is no coincidence that the imperial ruling of AD 204 referred anyone seeking clarity about the regulations to legal experts: *si cum peritis contuleris, εἰ μὲν μετ' ἐμπείρων συνσκέψη / συναντιβῶλης*. Their authoritative interpretations of Latin legal decisions were embodied in the Greek translations which could be given the label ἔρμηνεία.

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<sup>11</sup> CIL III 448 = 7151; IMylasa nos. 611–612; Merola 2001, 277–292.

<sup>12</sup> IMylasa 612.

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### Özet

#### EPMHNEIA. Resmi Misafirlik ile ilgili *sacrae litterae*'nin Yunanca çevirileri

Septimius Severus ve oğlu Caracalla İ.S. 204 yılında bir kararname yayınlarak İmparator adına görev yapanları misafir etme yükümlüğünü Roma senatörleri için kaldırmıştır. Bu kararnameyi içeren sekiz adet yazıt Ege ve Batı Anadolu kentlerinden şimdiye kadar bilinmekteydi. Bu kararnameyi içeren yeni bir fragman ise Ankara'da Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi'nde bulunmaktadır. Çift dilli kaleme alınmış yeni yazıtın Yunanca başlığı ἐρμηνεία θείων γραμμάτων olarak verilmiştir. *Hermeneia* sözcüğü İ.S. 3.–5. yüzyıllarda Latince kaleme alınmış resmi metinlerin onaylanmış Yunanca çevirisi için kullanılan teknik bir terimdi. Yukarıda sözü edilen İ.S. 204 yılına ait kararnamenin üç Yunanca çevirisi yazıtlar aracılığıyla günümüze ulaşmıştır. Üç çeviri arasındaki farklılıklar, bunların eyaletlerde yerel bazda hukuk uzmanlarının desteğiyle hazırlandığını göstermektedir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* ἐρμηνεία; *sacrae litterae*; resmi misafirlik; Septimius Severus; Caracalla.