

PHILIP V AND THE ISLANDERS

WESLEY E. THOMPSON

University of California, Davis

For John V. A. Fine

The object of this paper is to bring together two inscriptions to illustrate the policy of Philip toward the cities of the Aegean at the close of the third century. It should be stated at the outset that in neither case can we be certain of the context and significance of the documents, but the similarity of the two does suggest that they are pieces of the same puzzle.

From Polybius we learn that once he got clear of his first war with the Romans Philip began to make life miserable for the inhabitants of Rhodes and the Cyclades. First he sent the Aetolian pirate Dicaearchus to ravage the Aegean islands.¹ Polybius says that this man set up altars to *Asebeia* and *Paranoia* wherever he went. Next the king secretly incited the cities of Crete to war on Rhodes² and then dispatched Heraclides of Tarentum to the Rhodians to act as a Sinon or a Zopyrus.³ Once he had insinuated himself into their good graces by disclosing secret documents, he took the opportunity to set fire to their naval yard. When Philip at last resorted to open warfare, he rapidly gained a temporary ascendancy at sea and then, campaigning on the mainland, marched through Caria and occupied the Rhodian peraea.⁴

Just before his arrival in the south Aegean he gave an indication of what his political strategy was going to be. Apparently it was at this time that he gained control of Perinthus and ended its relationship of

¹ Polybius 18.54.8–11 and Diodorus 28.1; cf. Maurice Holleaux, *Études d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques* 4 (Paris 1938–69) 124–45.

² Polybius 13.4.2; for the First Cretan War cf. Rudolf Herzog, *Klio* 2 (1902) 316–33, Holleaux (above, note 1) 163–76, and Mario Segre, *RFIC* 61 (1933) 365–92.

³ Polybius 13.4–5 and Polyaeus 5.17.

⁴ Polybius 16.1–15; cf. Holleaux (above, note 1) 211–335.

sympoliteia with Byzantium.⁵ At the same time he detached Lysimachia from the Aetolian League and signed a treaty of friendship and alliance with it.⁶ This, I suggest, was his policy toward the Aegean islanders. Wherever he found a union of island states, he broke it up and restored to the constituent members their independence (or at least the appearance of independence). This explanation, at any rate, makes good sense of two enigmatic epigraphical documents.

The first inscription for our consideration includes a letter of Philip to Nisyrus, which lies some forty miles off Rhodes, and the beginning of a decree passed by the *dêmos* of Nisyrus:⁷

I have sent Callias to you, who is an associate of ours and a citizen of yours. Knowing that he is well disposed to the city and has often spoken to me on your behalf, I have charged him to announce to you what I wish you to know.

Once Philip's agent, Callias of Nisyrus, had delivered the king's message, the *dêmos* voted a decree beginning, "Since Callias is present bearing letters from King Philip and the seal of the king and announcing that the king has granted us the right of employing the established ancestral institutions . . ." By "ancestral institutions" I translate the familiar Greek phrase *patrioi nomoi*.

We know that by the second century Nisyrus had become an integral part of the Rhodian state.⁸ If this was the case during the third century as well, it means that Philip detached Nisyrus from Rhodes, and the right to employ the *patrioi nomoi* signifies the restoration of independence.⁹ On the other hand, it may be that Rhodes had not yet absorbed the smaller island. Thus Philip's letter would mean simply that he had somehow obtained control of Nisyrus and was now relinquishing it as a goodwill gesture.¹⁰

There is fairly good evidence that Nisyrus was actually part of the Rhodian state as early as the First Cretan War, which probably began

⁵ Polybius 18.2.4. This action probably belongs to Philip's campaign around the Propontis in 202 mentioned by Polybius at 15.23.9.

⁶ Polybius 15.23.9; E. Bickerman, *RPh* 65 (1939) 348-49.

⁷ SIG³ 572.

⁸ Cf. P. M. Fraser and G. E. Bean, *The Rhodian Peraea and Islands* (London 1954) 147-52.

⁹ So Herzog (above, note 2) 328-29 and Holleaux (above, note 1) 175-77.

¹⁰ So Fraser and Bean (above, note 8) 147-52 and F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* 2 (Oxford 1957-date) 530.

in 204.¹¹ A group of people set up a dedication to honor their grandfather, on which they list his achievements:¹² general in the Cretan War, recipient of a vote of praise, a gold crown, and *proedria* from the *dêmos*, campaigns under the admirals Cleonaeus, Acesimbrotus, and Eudamus.¹³ These men are known to have served between 201 and 190.¹⁴ Thus the grandfather almost certainly served as general in the First Cretan War rather than the Second, which began in 155.¹⁵ It seems altogether unreasonable to me to suppose that his grandchildren could find no accomplishment between the years 190 and 155 to record. On any straightforward interpretation of their dedication, they are recording the culmination of their grandfather's career in the years 204-190. Since he was a Nisyrian and served as general of the Rhodians during the Cretan War, we can reasonably conclude that the islands were united at the time.

Even so, it is theoretically possible that Philip inherited Nisyrus from Antigonos Doson and set it free long before the Cretan War.¹⁶ But, of course, the most likely time by far for him to gain control of the island was after his victory over the Rhodian fleet at Lade had, according to Polybius,¹⁷ given him mastery of the Aegean. Consequently, it seems very likely that Philip adopted the policy which Sparta followed after the Peace of Antalcidas of granting autonomy to those who desired it and forcing autonomy on those who did not.¹⁸ First it was Perinthus, then Nisyrus. It is not hard to guess what justification Philip offered for his actions. Many years earlier he and his Hellenic Alliance swore to liberate those cities which had been forced to join the Aetolian League against their will.¹⁹ Without a doubt he

¹¹ On the date cf. Holleaux (above, note 1) 124-45.

¹² *SIG*³ 673.

¹³ Holleaux (above, note 1), 173-74, is probably correct in thinking that the grandfather held high office under these admirals.

¹⁴ Polybius 16.9 and 18.1-2; Livy 31.46.6, 32.16.6, 32.32.11, and *inter alia* 37.12.9.

¹⁵ Cf. Polybius 33.13.

¹⁶ For Doson's influence in the Cyclades cf. J. Delamarre, *RPh* 26 (1902) 301-25.

¹⁷ 16.10.

¹⁸ The Boeotian League (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.1.32-33), Corinth (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.1.34), Mantinea (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.2.1-7 and Diodorus Siculus 15.5 and 12), the Chalcidic League (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.2.11-3.9 and Diodorus Siculus 15.19-23).

¹⁹ Polybius 4.25.7.

was now able to find factions in the various cities which favored autonomy and alliance with Macedon, men like Callias of Nisyrus. At the same time there were men like the grandfather from Nisyrus who remained loyal to the established order.

Our second inscription is a third century decree from Cos, concerning its union with the island of Calymna.²⁰ It requires all citizens of both islands to swear the following oath:

I shall abide by the established democracy and the restoration of the union and the ancestral institutions established in Cos and the decrees of the assembly and the resolutions concerning the union. And further I shall abide by the treaty of friendship and alliance with King Ptolemy and the agreements with the allies ratified by the people. And I shall not establish an oligarchy nor tyrant nor another form of government except democracy by any means, nor shall I allow anyone else, but I shall prevent him to the best of my ability. Nor shall I seize any of the guardposts or citadel, by myself or assisting someone else by any means. Nor shall I permit Coan territory to be diminished, but I shall increase it to the best of my ability. And I shall be a fair juror and impartial citizen, voting without bias whatever in my opinion benefits the people.

Two points in this translation need explanation. First, the form of union is called *homopoliteia*, a word otherwise unattested. Whatever its exact nuance,²¹ the oath makes it clear that Calymna is part of the Coan state, for everyone alike must swear to abide by the *patrioi nomoi* established in Cos and to increase Coan territory. Secondly, it is evident from the word *apokatastasis* that this condition of *homopoliteia* is being reestablished, as Herzog and Segre saw.²² Klaffenbach has doubted this interpretation because other inscriptions show that Cos and Calymna were separate states until the last quarter of the third century.²³ That leaves little time for the two to join, to separate, and to reunite before the close of the century. But Polybius' use of

²⁰ The decree was first published by Rudolf Herzog, *RFIC* 70 (1942) 5-8 and re-edited and reinterpreted by Mario Segre, *Tituli Calymnii* (Bergamo 1952) 9-17. Cf. also Günther Klaffenbach, *Gnomon* 25 (1953) 455-57.

²¹ On this disputed point see the references cited above, note 20. *LSJ*⁹, s.v., cites only a passing reference to this inscription by Herzog, *Heilige Gesetze von Kos* (*AbhBerl*, 1928, 6) 45.

²² Above, note 20.

²³ Above, note 20.

apokatastasis is decisive. Once its meaning is uncertain,²⁴ but the other six times it clearly means a reversion to a previous condition: the restoration of hostages to their homeland (3.99.6 and 3.99.7), the restoration to Eumenes of honors which had been revoked (28.12.7), the reversion of territory to its former allegiance (5.86.8 and 24.1.6), the return of conditions at Sparta to normal after an outbreak of rioting (4.23.1). Polybius also uses the verb *ἀποκαθίστημι* in the same way.²⁵ Especially noteworthy are such expressions as "restore the ancestral constitution" (9.36.4; cf. also 23.4.5), "restore cities to their ancestral constitutions" (4.25.7), and "restore the Perinthians to their *sympoliteia* with the Byzantines" (18.2.4). Thus we can only conclude in spite of ourselves that during the last quarter of the third century Cos and Calymna joined to form a unified state, separated for a time, and then coalesced again.

The likely explanation of this chain of events is not far to seek. Since we learn from the Coan decree that Ptolemy favored the union of the two islands, we may reasonably suppose that one of his major opponents abetted separatism, Philip or Antiochus. And it appears that Philip's protégés from Hierapytna attacked Calymna during the Cretan War.²⁶ More than anything else, it is the similarity between this situation and Philip's treatment of Perinthus and Nisyrus that indicates the solution. I suggest that sometime after 225 Cos absorbed Calymna, but that Philip gained control of the smaller island after the battle of Lade, granted it independence, and installed a government favorable to himself and separation. When Attalus brought his fleet to assist the Rhodians, the Macedonian navy was forced to withdraw from the south Aegean, Rhodes quickly regained control of Nisyrus, and Cos and Calymna were reunited, as illustrated by the inscription which we have been discussing.²⁷ Roman intervention ended Philip's role in the Cyclades altogether, and his experiment with separatism was discontinued.

The two inscriptions, then, show the same phenomenon, viewed from

²⁴ 39.8.6. To Polybius the Roman settlement of the Achaean War probably seemed a return to normalcy after a temporary aberration on the part of the Greeks.

²⁵ Cf. Arno Mauersberger, *Polybios-Lexikon* (Berlin 1968–date) s.v.

²⁶ *SIG*³ 567. On the involvement of both Calymna and Cos in the First Cretan War cf. especially Herzog (above, note 2) 316–33.

²⁷ Cf. F. W. Walbank, *Philip V of Macedon* (Cambridge 1940) 126–37.

different sides. Both are concerned with the grant of autonomy to small states. Philip's faction on Nisyrus considered him the great liberator, but to the Coans, as their oath indicates, his coming meant oligarchy or tyranny and the overthrow of the democracy. Both his friends and his foes regard their own domination as equivalent to the *patrioi nomoi*, showing that, as in fifth and fourth century Athens, the ancestral constitution meant whatever you wanted it to mean.