

A letter of Hadrian to Naryka (Eastern Locris)

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Though more letters of Hadrian are preserved than those of any other emperor of the High Empire, a newly published example is exceptional in many ways. First mentioned in print in 1998, when it was still on the antiquities market, it was given to the Louvre in the following year by Jean-Luc Chalmin, and since 2000 versions and discussions of the text have multiplied. In the present article, I present a revised text, discuss various points of interest that it raises, and ask what, in the last analysis, the letter is about; for this purpose I reserve discussion of the very last lines to near the end.¹

The letter is dated between December 137 and July 138, the last months of Hadrian's life, when he was already seriously ill; it is the latest dated letter of his surviving correspondence. The recipients are the citizens of Naryx or Naryka, a small and rather obscure community of Eastern or Opuntian Locris in Greece. The reported dimensions are 0.90 m. height and 0.50 across, but the letter-sizes, which vary, are not available. It is perhaps unique among imperial letters in Greek in being written not on marble or other stone, but on bronze. Greek inscriptions written on bronze are (apart from coins) usually private ones, such as statues or votives. In Greece, public ones are mainly found in central and W Greece, notably at Olympia; two well-known 5th-c. inscriptions of the western or Ozolian Locrians are also on bronze.²

The text is inscribed on a pedimental stele, which has a bust of Hadrian in the pediment and was probably slotted at the base into a stone support, since there are no holes for attachment to a wall. The layout of the text differentiates between the salutation in ll. 2-7 (containing the emperor's name and titles) and the following text. In the first part, the cutter does not break any words, and sometimes leaves gaps between words and at the ends of lines, three times adding *hederae distinguentes* (in my text I have marked these as ♣). He also puts small raised dots to indicate numerals in lines 5 and 6. In the second part, he breaks words 6 times out of a visible 14, uses no *hederae*, and only rarely marks breaks in the sense by small spaces (l.17 before καί and l.19 before ὀνομάζουσι). The spelling ἀμφιζητήσῃν in l.8, if not an error, presumably developed from the form ἀμφιζήτηειν, which begins to appear in the 2nd c. B.C.

I propose the following text.

Ἄγαθῆ^{vvv} τύχη·
Αὐτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ θεοῦ Τραϊανοῦ ♣
Παρθικοῦ υἱός, θεοῦ Νέρουα υἱανός, Τραϊανός
4 Ἄδριανός Σεβαστός, ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος,

* I have used the following abbreviations:

Oliver, *Greek constitutions* J. H. Oliver, *Greek constitutions of Early Roman emperors* (Philadelphia 1989)

Robert, *OMS*

L. Robert, *Opera minora selecta* (Amsterdam 1989-90).

1 Partial or complete texts have appeared in F. Lefèvre, *L'Amphictyonie pyléo-delphique: histoire et institutions* (BÉFAR 298, 1998) 83 n.408 ("lettre d'Hadrien, inédite [marché des antiquités]"); L. Boffo in A. M. Biraschi and G. Salmeri (edd.), *Strabone e l'Asia Minore* (Naples 2000) 133 n.110; D. Jaillard, *ZPE* 132 (2000) 143-44; D. P. Adam, *Λοκρική Περιβοαγρία – Επικνημιδία* (Lamia 2001) 116-17; *SEG* 51 (2001 [2005]) no. 641. For other discussion, A. Pasquier, *RevLouvre* 50.2 (2000) 90 with photo and brief summary; D. Knoepfler, *Appports récents des inscriptions grecques à l'histoire de l'Antiquité* (Paris 2005) 66-73, discussion and photo. A photograph was also on line at http://www.photo.rmn.fr/cf/htm/Search_New.aspx, keyword "naryka" but has now been removed. For details of the gift, see *Direction des Musées de France, Rapport d'activité 1999, Annexes* p. 237, available on-line at http://www.dmf.culture.gouv.fr/rapports_act/pdf/annexes.pdf.

2 Bronze: L. Robert, *Noms indigènes dans l'Asie-Mineure gréco-romaine* (Paris 1963) 469 n.4. Inscriptions of Western Locris: *IG I²* 3, 609 and 718 (R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *A selection of Greek historical inscriptions to the end of the fifth century B.C.* [Oxford 1988] nos. 13 and 20).