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A NEW FRAGMENT OF AN INSCRIPTION FROM THE JULIAN BASILICA AT ROMAN CORINTH

ABSTRACT

Research conducted in Corinth has led to the identification of two additional fragments of West-13 (*Corinth* VIII.2, pp. 11–12, no. 13). These fragments enable a full restoration of line 1 of the text and roughly the first half of line 2. Although many questions regarding this inscription remain, most significant perhaps being its date, the inscription does document further evidence of a distinct imperial presence within the Julian Basilica.

In 1986, a box of epigraphical fragments marked “ΑΣΚΣ 1898” was returned to the Corinth Excavations from the National Museum in Athens.¹ Recent investigations in the Epigraphicon in Ancient Corinth have determined that at least one of these fragments appears to have been found in 1898 by Arthur Cooley, whose plan of Trench VII, housed in the archives at Ancient Corinth, documents cleaning of the trench in that year. Trench VII included, in part, a north–south wall that ran over the south aisle of the cryptoporticus of the Julian Basilica and into its east aisle. This fragment, I-2762, joins another unprovenanced fragment, I-164 (West-41),² from the early excavations.

1. I would like to thank Guy Sanders, Director of the Corinth Excavations; Nancy Bookidis, former Assistant Director; and Charles K. Williams II, Director Emeritus. Joyce Reynolds and the anonymous referees of *Hesperia* offered keen insight and helpful comments. Molly Richardson provided a careful and thorough editing. Any errors or omissions are, however, the responsibility of this author.

2. The newly published I-2762 is the lower right, I-164 the upper left of the two joining fragments (see Fig. 1). West-41 (I-164): *Corinth* VIII.2, p. 26, no. 41.

Corinth I-164 + 2762

Fig. 1

P.H. 0.298, p.W. 0.251, Th. 0.020 m

L.H. line 1: 0.081; line 2: 0.052 m

Interlinear spacing lines 1–2: 0.04; H. of *vacat* above line 1: 0.07 m

Two joining fragments of blue-veined white marble revetment; inscribed face, back, and top preserved. On the preserved top edge is a dowel hole, for mounting the stone. Provenance uncertain, but most likely the east aisle of the cryptoporticus of the Julian Basilica. Parts of two lines of text are preserved.

[- - -] CA . [- - -]

[- - -] T • CO . [- - -]

EPIGRAPHICAL COMMENTARY

Line 1: A vertical hasta is preserved after the A.

Line 2: A vertical hasta is preserved after the O.

The letter heights, line spacings, and letter forms of the text, and the thickness of the fragment, match those of an inscription previously published by Martin West, in *Corinth* VIII.2, as West-13.³ In addition, a matching dowel hole is preserved along the top of West-13, 0.196 m on center from the preserved right edge of the stone, to the right of the first S of *Augustis* (line 1; see the text, below). Although the new fragments do not join West-13, the restored text confirms the indications that they are part of that inscription.

All the previously identified fragments of West-13 with known provenance are from the Julian Basilica. Nine of the fragments, published together as West-13, were found in the north aisle of the cryptoporticus by Emerson Swift and Carl Blegen in 1915. A tenth fragment, found in 1914 by Swift in the east aisle of the cryptoporticus, near the statue of Lucius Caesar, was published separately as West-210.⁴ In 1935 or 1936, Oscar Broneer recognized that West-210 joined West-13,⁵ although John Kent, when he wrote on the inscriptions of the Julian Basilica,⁶ was unaware of the join. Regardless, the join had been made when the present author first saw the inscription in 1993 (Fig. 2). The text of West-13 + 210 is:

[- -]RIBVS AVGVSTIS
[- -]VD • IV[- -]

Given the short distance of the final S of *Augustis* from the preserved right edge of the stone, ca. 1.5 cm, and unaware that West-210 joined to provide part of the second line, West had assumed that there must have been an adjacent stone to the right, and restored line 1 of West-13 to read:

[LA]RIBVS AVGVSTIS [SACRVM]

Assuming a *lararium* of Augustus, or of any Augustus, made good sense in a building which had the highest concentration of imperial statuary in Corinth but for the theater. Kent, however, was more reserved about restoring the text, and cautioned that [LA]RIBVS was a far from certain restoration.⁷ In spite of the present author's previous enthusiasm for West's restoration,⁸ Kent's reserve has proven to be well founded.

With the joining of West-13 and 210, and their association with Corinth I-164 + 2762, line 2 can now be recognized to contain the abbreviated formulaic name of the Roman colony of Corinth in an oblique case. That is: *Col. Laud. Iul. C-* (nom., *Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis*). The restoration of this abbreviated name in line 2 restricts the space available in line 1 between the CA of I-164 + 2762 and the RIBVS of West-13 to that of three to four letters, and the presence of the word *Augustis* in the succeeding position recommends the restoration CAE[SA]RIBVS. If we also assume that the two preserved dowel holes were placed roughly symmetrically on the original top edge, then we can deduce that *Caesaribus* was the first word of line 1, that the initial C was ca. 5 cm from the original left edge,



Figure 1. Corinth I-164 + 2762.
Courtesy Corinth Excavations; photo
I. Ioannidou and L. Bartzioti. Scale 1:6

3. West-13: *Corinth* VIII.2, pp. 11–12, no. 13.

4. West-210: *Corinth* VIII.2, p. 127, no. 210. For the statue of Lucius Caesar, see n. 13, below.

5. In the back of one of his field notebooks for 1935–1936 (NB 151), Broneer jotted down observations and thoughts on a number of epigraphical fragments.

6. *Corinth* I.5, pp. 54–56.

7. *Corinth* I.5, p. 55.

8. Scotton 1997, p. 245.



Figure 2. West-13 + 210.

Courtesy Corinth Excavations; photo I. Ioannidou and L. Bartzioti. Scale 1:6

and that the original width of the inscription was ca. 1.23–1.26 m. Thus, the text can be restored as:

CAE[SA]RIBVS • AVGVSTIS
[E]T • COL[LA]VD • IV[L • C - - -]

This is a dedication to the Caesares Augusti and the colony of Corinth. Dedications to both an emperor and a people are known from elsewhere—Aphrodisias, for example.⁹ The Corinth inscription does not preserve the name of the benefactor, but it is reasonable to assume that it is a private and wealthy individual, as in the Aphrodisias inscription. As in the case of the Aphrodisias inscription, something has been dedicated to the Caesares Augusti that is also a gift to the colony of Corinth from the benefactor. In the preserved fragments, however, there is no indication as to who this benefactor was nor what this gift may have been.

The Corinth inscription provides puzzles other than the identity of the benefactor. The plural *Caesares* was in use at least as early as A.D. 4/5, when commemorative equestrian statues of Augustus's deceased heirs Gaius and Lucius were set up in Pisa.¹⁰ Augustus himself also used the plural in reference to Gaius and Lucius.¹¹ Not long afterward, Valerius Maximus mentions divine Caesars shining in the heavens.¹² In Corinthian coinage and statuary, recognition of Caesares came early. Gaius and Lucius, the adopted sons of Augustus, were commemorated on a coin dated 2/1 B.C. and in statues;¹³ Gaius and Tiberius Gemellus, the heirs of Tiberius, on a coin of A.D. 32/3; and Nero and Drusus, on a coin of A.D. 37/8. Even dedications to Caesares, although perhaps not common, were to be found

9. Reynolds 1980, pp. 76–77, no. 4 (*SEG XXX 1246*), the base of a statue of Hygeia dedicated to Caesar Augustus and the demos:

[τ]ὴν Ὑγίαν Καίσα[ροι Σεβ]-
[α]στῶι καὶ τῶι δήμ[ωι]
[Μ]όλοσσοσ Χρυσ[ορ]-
[ε]ῖοσ ὁ ἱερεὺσ τῆσ Ὑγί[ασ]

10. *CIL XI 1421*, lines 36–37:
... circaque eam duae | eq[uest]res
inauratae Gai et Luci Caesarum
statuae ponantur.

11. *Res Gestae* 3.14: [fil]ios meos,
quos iuv[enes mi]hi eripuit for[tuna],
Gaium et Lucium Caesares. . . .

12. Val. Max. 2.1.10: . . . inde, inquam,

caeli clarissima pars, divi fulserunt Caesares. (I would like to thank the anonymous *Hesperia* referee for this reference.)

13. Found in the Julian Basilica: S-1065, published as Lucius Caesar (*Corinth IX*, pp. 72–74, no. 135); S-1080, published as Gaius Caesar (*Corinth IX*, pp. 74–76, no. 136).

in the empire.¹⁴ Dedications to the Augusti can be found as well, perhaps especially so in the east, and at an early date. For example, as early as the Tiberian era, a *τέμενος τῶν Σεβαστῶν* and a dedication to the *Θεοὶ Σεβαστοί* existed at Apollonia Sozopolis.¹⁵ Examples of dedications to the Augusti and the Caesares together are also extant.¹⁶ The collocation of *Caesaribus Augustis* is another matter.

With its dedication to Caesares Augusti, the Corinth inscription stands nearly as a unicum. I have found only three other examples of the plural forms of Caesar and Augustus juxtaposed. The example closest in form comes from Rome, although the order of the names/titles has been inverted.¹⁷

AV[G(VSTIS) - - -]
[- - - CA]ESARIBVS

The second and third examples are abbreviated forms.¹⁸

[- - - C]AESA[R - - -]
[A]VGG[- - -]
[- - -]VCH[I - - -]
[. . . . 10]
CAES AVGG

Before the discovery of West-210 and Corinth I-164 + 2762 and their association with West-13, West's restoration of [LA]RIBVS AVGVSTIS in West-13 made good sense. Such dedications are common in *CIL*, which provides examples of verbatim transcriptions;¹⁹ *Augusti* in the genitive singular;²⁰ the terminal S of *Augustis* restored;²¹ *Augusti(s)* abbreviated;²² the genitive plural *Augustorum*;²³ the word order inverted;²⁴ and both words abbreviated.²⁵ Now of particular interest are examples in which the word *laribus* has been partly restored. None of these preserve the first letter of the word,²⁶ but in some instances the layout of the inscription allows space for only a single letter, and a restoration of *laribus* is certain.²⁷ In view of the evidence provided by the newly assembled fragments of the Corinth

14. E.g., *CIL* X 7191:
CAESARIB
SACRVM
L • CAELIVS • M • F
QVADRATVS

5 D • S • P
15. *MAMA* IV 142:
[ἡ βουλή και ὁ δῆμος]
ἐτείμησεν Ἀ[πολλωνί]-
ον Ὀλυμπίχ[ου τοῦ Ἄρ]-
τέμωνος φιλοσέβασ]-
τον και φιλό[πατριν. ἄ]-
5 ναστήσαντ[α εἰκόνας ἐρίπ]-
πους τρεῖς ἐ[ν τῷ τεμένει]
τῶν Σεβαστῶ[ν, και πρὸς τὴν]
πόλιν ἐκ προγ[όνων κατὰ βίον ὁ]-
λον εὐεργετικῶ[ς διακείμενον]
10 και πρεσβεύσαν[τα πρὸς Γερμα]-

νικὸν Καίσαρα κ[αὶ γυμνασιαρ]-
χήσαντα λαμπρ[ῶς και ἱερέα θε]-
ᾶς Ῥώμης γενόμενον και ἐπι]-
δόσεις δόντα [και ἐστιάσεις]
15 πολυτελεῖς παρασχόμενον]
και συμφερόντ[ως ἀναστρε]-
[φόμενον . . .].
MAMA IV 143A: [τοὺς κοινούς τε
και ἰδίους θεοὺς Σε]βαστοὺς και τοὺς
π[αῖδας αὐτῶν ὁ δῆμος Ἀπολλωνιατῶν
Λυκίων Θραικῶν κολώνων.]

16. E.g., *IGR* III 908:
Θεοῖς
Σεβαστ[οῖς] και
Καίσαρσιν
17. *CIL* VI 31511.
18. *AE* 1997, no. 1670; *CIL* VIII
16520b.

19. *CIL* VI 445, 448, 450, 451; XII
3075, 4319; XIII 5173.

20. *CIL* XIII 3014.
21. *CIL* VI 443, 444.
22. *CIL* VI 441, 442, 446, 447, 449,
452, 30954, 30957, 30959, 30960; VII
14552 = 10589; XII 3074.
23. *CIL* V 3259.
24. *CIL* V 4865.
25. *CIL* VI 446, 447, 30957, 30959,
30960; IX 3960; X 137, 205, 4634,
7514, 7953; XII 2807; XIII 2811, 3014;
XIV 2041.

26. E.g., *CIL* V 7689, 8234; VI 453,
455, 3701, 30956, 30961; XI 423; XIV
2041.

27. E.g., *CIL* IX 5180, XII 5077.

inscription, however, Kent's reservation about restorations such as West's has proved to be quite right. That is, not every [- - -]RIBVS AVGVSTIS is necessarily to be restored as [LA]RIBVS AVGVSTIS. One might well ask if restorations have masked other examples.

The next question concerning the Corinth inscription is whether the dedication is generic, i.e., to all emperors living and dead, or to specific individuals presumably living. The text itself, as now extant, provides no indication. If the date of the inscription were known, the answer might be clearer. There is, regrettably, insufficient information for dating the inscription. West offered no date in the first edition.²⁸ In Weinberg's publication of the Julian Basilica, Kent summarizes the key inscriptions found in the basilica, and, while arguing mostly that this inscription is not Augustan, he finds that it "do[es] not seem to be earlier than Tiberius' reign and in my opinion probably do[es] not date earlier than A.D. 40."²⁹ His argument appears to have been influenced (1) by the fact that he dates two of the inscriptions found in the Julian Basilica as Augustan,³⁰ which indicates the possibility of an Augustan date for the construction of the basilica, and (2) by the fact that Weinberg dated the construction of the basilica to the reign of Claudius.³¹ More recent studies have called into question both of these findings. Lotted pottery from packing around the foundations of the north and west exterior walls of the Julian Basilica is dated Augustan/Tiberian³² as is a well sealed during the construction of the building.³³ In addition, Kent's criteria for dating Corinthian inscriptions by letter forms have been challenged by Antony Spawforth.³⁴ It is these criteria that Kent used to dismiss an Augustan date and support a Claudian one.

It is beyond my expertise to settle the epigraphical dispute. The letter forms can be characterized, however, as follows. The letters are cut finely with wavy serifs. The upper and lower termini of the C are perpendicular as is the vertical hasta of the G. The O is circular and the A has a sloped crown. The left arm of the A is narrower than the right. The right arm of the V is narrower than the left. The tail of the R joins at the point where the lobe turns upward. The upper lobe of the B is shorter than the lower by a ratio of 7:10, and narrower by a ratio of 2:3. Such letter forms are most consistent in Corinth with inscriptions from the Julio-Claudian period.³⁵

If this inscription is indeed Julio-Claudian in date, then something can be said about the dedicatees. That is, reference to more than one Caesar Augustus would most likely mean the dedication is to the deceased Augustus, or Augusti, and to the one living as well, a situation such as that represented by the Tiberian inscription from Apollonia Sozopolis.³⁶

28. *Corinth* VIII.2, pp. 11–12, no. 13.

29. *Corinth* I.5, p. 55.

30. *Corinth* I.5, p. 55; the inscriptions are West-14 and 214.

31. *Corinth* I.5, p. 56.

32. Scotton 1997, p. 109, lots 1980-104-109. These findings were made by Williams during his direction

of the 1980 field season.

33. Williams and Russell 1981, p. 24, n. 37; and Kathleen Warner Slane (pers. comm.). In a future monograph, I will argue for a late Augustan date for the construction of the basilica.

34. Spawforth 1978, esp. p. 258.

35. J. Reynolds holds this view as well (pers. comm.). With such a date,

she is hesitant about the reading of *Caesaribus*. Dr. Reynolds did not, however, have the benefit of the photographs of the new fragments nor the additional evidence presented in this article.

36. For the text, *MAMA* IV 143A, see above, n. 15.

CONCLUSIONS

With the date uncertain and with extant fragments providing no specific information to identify specific dedicatees, it is safest to assume that this is a generic dedication to the Caesares Augusti, living and dead. Just exactly what was dedicated is unknown. Within the context of the Julian Basilica, however, statues and perhaps an aedicula are likely. Although there is some architectural evidence for the presence of aediculae in the basilica,³⁷ it would only be speculation to place this inscription within that context. There is also no indication as to which, if any, of the extant imperial portraiture from the Julian Basilica may be associated with this dedication. Nevertheless, even if this inscription could be tied to specific sculptures, its significance would not end there. The presence of yet another imperial dedication³⁸ in the basilica, amid the highest concentration of imperial sculpture in Corinth³⁹ but for the theater and amid the highest concentration of agonothetes dedications found in Corinth, is suggestive of the presence of some manifestation of the imperial cult in the Julian Basilica.

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37. I will present this evidence in a future monograph.

38. Others are: *Corinth* VIII.2, p. 6, no. 4; pp. 9–10, no. 10; pp. 12–13, no. 14; pp. 15–17, no. 17; *Corinth* VIII.3, pp. 41–42, no. 81. For *Corinth* VIII.2, pp. 12–13, no. 14, see also the revised text in *Corinth* VIII.3, p. 38, no. 69.

39. In addition to the statues of Lucius and Gaius Caesar (see n. 13, above) are statues of Augustus (S-1116), Caesar/Claudius (S-1089), Nero (S-1088), Antoninus Pius (S-1081), an unidentified heroic nude (S-1052), and an unidentified cuirassed figure (S-1125).

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