Gaining Forts and Ports: The Materiality of Sympolities

A sympolity allows two city-states to share a political system and provides various benefits to the two partners involved, including shared citizenship and shared religious festivals. Terms of sympolities varied by alliance, and the partner city-states might or might not have combined physically during the agreement. Sympolities particularly became more prominent during the Hellenistic period, with a concentrated amount from Hellenistic western Anatolia. In this paper, I argue that even if partner city-states might not have fully combined physically during the alliance, they used sympolities to gain access to infrastructure and to strengthen local resources during periods of instability caused by the wars of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Thus, the sympolities had real material consequences for those involved in addition to the political benefits. I present two examples from Hellenistic western Anatolia: the sympolity between Miletos and Pidasa, and the sympolity between Colophon and Notion.

The sympolity between Miletus and Pidasa is described in an inscription dated to the early 2nd century BCE (*SEG* 51.1608; Kawerau and Rehm 1914; Gauthier 2001). In the first half of my paper, I will focus on this epigraphic evidence to argue that the main concern for Miletus, the larger community, was the expansion of its territory and its physical access to Pidasa's forts around the time of the Roman-Seleucid war and the resulting Treaty of Apamea in 188 BCE which significantly altered the power balance within the region from the Seleucid kingdom to the Attalid kingdom. In turn, Pidasa, the smaller community, gained protection from a larger city-state, as well as new infrastructure, such as a road connecting the two, promised by Miletus.

The sympolity between inland Colophon and sea-side Notion is also described in an inscription from the late 4th century BCE (Merrit 1935, No. 3). Over time in the epigraphic

record, the sites are renamed Old Colophon and Colophon-by-the-Sea, respectively, and by the mid-2nd century BCE the record only mentions Colophon, suggesting that the sympolity has ended. Archaeological evidence shows that Colophon is abandoned and Notion undergoes a major urbanization by the early 3rd century BCE, so Notion became the more prominent partner in the region and was renamed Colophon (Gassner et al. 2017; Ratté et al. 2020). This shift corresponds to Lysimachus' attack on (Old) Colophon in 294 BCE. In the second half of my paper, I will focus on the archaeological evidence for Colophon and Notion to argue that the sympolity alliance initially allowed the two sites to integrate into larger trade networks via the port of Notion, but in response to Lysimachus' territorial ambitions, Notion was monumentalized and fortified due to its advantageous position on the sea.

With these two examples, I demonstrate that sympolities were strategies for the city-states involved to acquire tangible benefits in order to strengthen their communities and to maintain resilience in the wake of territorial changes instigated by the Hellenistic kingdoms.

Works Cited

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