

τρόφιμος in an Inscription of Erythrai

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An inscription from Erythrai (Inscriptionen von Erythrai no.63) refers to a son of the biographer Philostratus as *τρόφιμος* of the Boule. This word has been interpreted in the sense known from New Comedy, "young master." A better interpretation is "nursling", "foster-child", cf. Dessau, *ILS* 5076, *alumnus municipii sui*. Young men or women were not infrequently called in the Roman period by such titles as "son (daughter) of the Boule": since Philostratus was from Athens, his son living in Erythrai could appropriately be called "foster-son of the Boule".

A statue-base seen at Erythrai about 1880, and published several times since then, honors a certain L. Flavius Capitolinus, "son of the sophist Flavius Philostratus and the most excellent Aurelia Melitine".¹⁾ The text owes its chief interest to the fact, which was immediately noticed, that the sophist Flavius Philostratus is the biographer of the sophists and of Apollonius of Tyana, while Flavius Capitolinus has been recognized as the person of this name who appears on coins of Erythrai minted under Philip.²⁾

The present note is concerned less with questions of prosopography than with a phrase in lines 9 through 11 of the inscription, *ἡ κρατίστη βουλή τὸν ἑαυτῆς τρόφιμον καὶ εὐεργέτην*. Only the most recent editors have commented on the word *τρόφιμον*, which appears in a few private inscriptions but seems unexampled in a public one. Their explanation is that Capitolinus probably owned land in Erythrai, and had given banquets to the *boule*; the word *τρόφιμος* is used by slaves in New Comedy to designate the sons of their masters, and "presumably" Capitolinus is so considered in a figurative sense here; at the same time the word evokes the cognate *τροφεύς* ("nourisher"), which many cities bestowed on those who had given

¹⁾ Independently published by E. Pottier and A. Hauvette-Besnault, *BCH* 4 (1880) 153–55 no.1 and from a copy of the schoolteacher S. G. Sotiropoulos in *Μουσείον* 3 (1878/80) 147 no.308 (*Syll.*³ 879; *IGRR* IV 1544; H. Engelmann and R. Merkelbach, *Die Inschriften von Erythrai und Klazomenai* I [Bonn, 1972] pp.158–61 no.63). Merkelbach and Engelmann report that the stone was subsequently moved to Smyrna, but Pottier and Hauvette-Besnault say this only of a bronze statue that was found with it; whether statue or base, the object was presumably lost in the fire of 1922.

²⁾ Thus *PIR*² F 232, 332. To the coins cited in the first article add L. Forrer, *The Weber Collection* III,1 (London, 1926) no. 5983; *SNG* Copenhagen, Ionia no.751.

them food.³⁾ Yet it seems odd that a body incorporating the aristocracy of an ancient Ionian city should have regarded itself even metaphorically as the slave of Flavius Philostratus, and have regarded his son as its *τρόφιμος* in the sense in which that word is used in New Comedy. An alternative explanation can be offered which finds a close parallel in a Latin inscription from Africa.

Liddell and Scott recognize *τρόφιμος* as a noun in two senses, the first one being that just discussed, the other, called "passive", being that of "nursling, foster-child." It has rightly been suggested that the first sense actually derives from the "passive" one: a son or daughter of the house, "requiring to be nursed" by the servants, retains this appellation until early adulthood.⁴⁾ One of the inscriptions cited for this sense by Liddell and Scott leads directly back to Philostratus and the Second Sophistic, since it concerns the prince of that movement, Herodes Atticus. The relevant lines run:⁵⁾

Ἡρώδης Βιβούλλι-
 [ο]ν Πολυδευκίωνα ἱππ[έα]
 [Ρ]ωμαίων ὁ θρέψας καὶ φι-
 8 [λ]ήσας ὡς υἱὸν τῇ Νεμέ-
 [σει], ἧ̄ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἔθυσεν, εὐμ-
 [ε]νῆ καὶ ἀίμνηστον τὸν [τρό-]
 φιμον

According to Philostratus, Polydeucion was one of three young men whom Herodes "mourned like his bodily sons though in fact they were his foster-sons (*τροφιμούς*), since they were of the best class (*καλοὶ μάλιστα καὶ ἀγαθοί*), well-born, scholarly, and worthy of being raised by him." In Roman law they would have been his *alumni*, persons raised in another household in a position close but not identical to that of adoptive sons.⁶⁾

Now it is a familiar feature of public life in antiquity, and especially during the principate, that an eminent person may receive from a public entity such as a city or a province a title denoting some kind

³⁾ Merkelbach and Engelmann (n.1) ad loc. Liddell and Scott s.v. *τρόφιμος* II 1 had already cited this inscription, understanding the word in the same way.

⁴⁾ G. Sacco in *Settima Miscellanea greca e romana* (Rome, 1980), 277-78.

⁵⁾ *IG II² 3969*, lines 5-11 (W. Ameling, *Herodes Atticus* [Hildesheim, Zürich, New York, 1983] II 169 no. 173).

⁶⁾ Philostr. *VS* II 1.10, pp. 66-67 K. On the term *alumnus* see now B. Rawson in *The Family in Ancient Rome* (London and Sydney, 1986) 173-86, and H. S. Nielsen, *Classica et Mediaevalia* 38 (1987) 141-188, esp. 148-157.

of familial relationship to that entity. The most striking occurrence is when a man or woman is called "son" or "daughter" of a city or some body within it such as the *boule*: in most, perhaps all, of these cases, actual adoption seems to have occurred, however strange that may appear to modern eyes.⁷⁾ At other times the privilege seems to be merely that of "being officially called" (*χρηματίζειν*) by a title: thus at Tlos in Lycia the *demos* clamors for a benefactress "to be officially called 'mother of the city'", *ὥστε χρηματίζειν τὴν Λάλλαν μητέρα πόλεως*.⁸⁾ In the inscription of Erythrai, therefore, it may be suggested that Capitolinus was similarly an official "foster-son" as well as a benefactor of the council. Though the family originated from Lemnos, Flavius Philostratus the sophist passed his active life in Athens, apparently allowing his son to be raised in Erythrai. His motives can only be guessed, but while they may have been purely domestic Erythrai was not far from Smyrna, one of the capitals of the Second Sophistic, and may have had distinguished professors of its own.⁹⁾ *τροφεύς*, conferred on those who had contributed to the food-supply of a city, is altogether different, and can hardly be present even by implication in the inscription of Erythrai.¹⁰⁾

Thus interpreted, the inscription from Erythrai finds a curious parallel in an unnamed *municipium* of Africa Proconsularis, where the *populus* honors a benefactor as a "bonus vir, amator et alumnus municip(ii) sui." The first editor was surely right to suggest that the man had been born elsewhere, but had grown up in the *municipium*.¹¹⁾ When the emperor Gaius entered Rome for the first time

⁷⁾ For a comprehensive discussion and bibliography, L. Robert in J. des Gagniers, *Laodicée du Lycos: Le Nymphée* (Québec-Paris, 1969) 316-20. For a *νίδος τῆς βουλῆς*, Ch. Dunant and J. Pouilloux, *Recherches sur l'histoire et les cultes de Thasos* II (Paris, 1958) no. 238.

⁸⁾ C. Naour, *ZPE* 24 (1977) 265 no. 1 lines 16-17 (J. and L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.* 1977 no. 470; *SEG* XXVII no. 938). On this sense of *χρηματίζειν*, E. J. Bickerman, *Harvard Theological Review* 42 (1949) 109-16; Robert, *Hellenica* XI/XII (1960) 454-55.

⁹⁾ Note that Hermocrates of Phocaea, highly praised by Philostratus in the *Sophists*, receives a posthumous statue from Erythrai: Merkelbach and Engelmann (n. 1) p. 144 no. 43, with the commentary of J. and L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.* 1973 no. 375, pp. 141-42.

¹⁰⁾ On *τροφεύς* see especially L. Robert, *Hellenica* VII (1949) 74-81; cf. X (1955) 200, XI/XII (1960) 569-71; C. P. Jones, *JHS* CIX (1989).

¹¹⁾ J. Schmidt, *Eph. epigr.* VII (1892) p. 78 no. 250; *CIL* VIII 14372 (*ILS* 5076). Schmidt's explanation is quoted with approval by E. de Ruggiero, *Dizio-*

after the death of Tiberius, he was greeted with a number of affectionate names, "sidus et pullus et pupus et alumnus." The last may refer to the fact that Gaius was not born in the capital but elsewhere, though the exact place was disputed.¹²⁾

nario Epigrafico s.v. *alumnus* 440, bottom of col. ii; it is not repeated by Schmidt in *CIL* or noticed by Dessau in *ILS*.

¹²⁾ Suet. *Cal.* 13; cf. Nielsen (n.6) 148.