

A Victory List from Cos

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In a victory list from Cos of Augustan date, the festival *Ἐλευ[σίν]ια τὰ καὶ Καισάρηα* is local, and not the Eleusinia of Athens. But no cult of the Eleusinian pair is known at Cos. Restore instead *Ἐλευ[θέρ]ια*, commemorating the end of the tyranny of Nicias of Cos and the victory of Octavian at Actium.

A statue base on Cos, of Augustan date, honors an athlete, listing his several victories:¹

----- τοῦ Π[υθ]οδώρου

νικάσαντα

[Ἴσ]θμια ἄνδρας πένταθλον,

[Ἐλ]ευσίνια τὰ μεγάλα ἄνδρας πένταθλον,

5 [Ῥω]μαῖα τὰ τιθέμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ δάμου παῖδας

Ὀλυμπικοὺς στάδιον, Καισάρηα ἐν Μητροπόλει

[π]αῖδας στάδιον, Ῥωμαῖα τὰ τιθέμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ

δάμου παῖδας Ἴσθμικοὺς στάδιον, διάυλον,

πένταθλον τῶ αὐτῶ ἀμέρα, Ἐκατήσια ἐν

10 Στρατονικήα παῖδας Ἴσθμικοὺς πέν-

ταθλον, Θεογά[μ]ια ἐν Νύση παῖδας Ἴσθμι-

κοὺς πένταθλον, Κλάρια ἐν Κολοφῶνι

[παιδ]ας [Ἴ]σθμικοὺς πένταθλον, Ἀρχηγέ-

[σια] ἐν Ἀλικαρνασσῶι παῖδας Ἴσθμικοὺς

15 [πέ]νταθλον, Ἐκατήσια ἐν Στρατονικήα

[ἀ]γενεῖους πένταθλον, Ἀρχηγέσια ἐν Ἀλι-

[κα]ρνασσῶι ἀγενεῖους πένταθλον, Ἐλευ-

[σίν]ια τὰ καὶ Καισάρηα ἄνδρας πέντα-

[θλον], Καισάρηα τὰ τιθέμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ δάμου

20 ἄνδρας πένταθλον,

[Ἀπο]λλωνία ἐν Μύνδωι πένταθλον,

[Ἀρχηγέσια ἐ]ν Ἀλικαρνασσῶι πένταθλον, ἐπιστατεῦντος

-----ου τοῦ Πυθοδώρου.

The list exhibits a discernible order. Two panhellenic contests are placed out of chronological sequence at the beginning: the Isthmia, the lone victory in one of the four festivals of the classical *periodos*, inscribed first and in isolation, and the Great Eleusinia at Eleusis in

¹ First published in 1874, and many times since: e.g. *Syll.*³ 1066; MORETTI, *I. agon. gr.* 61 with commentary; SEGREG, *Iscr. Cos* EV 203 with photograph.

Athens. The remaining games are then registered chronologically, at least in terms of the victor's age levels; these were local in terms of both geography (Cos and the western coast of Anatolia but not the Greek mainland or elsewhere) and status (not panhellenic).² The last three lines are a later addition.

Moretti dated the monument late in Augustus' reign because he took the Kaisareia of line 19 to honor young Gaius Caesar, citing the Coan victory list *I. agon. gr.* 60. That is unnecessary; and in the latter inscription the unusual honorand is in fact clearly specified, *Καيسάρηα τὰ τιθέμενα Γαίῳ Καίσαρι*. The Rhomaia (line 7) are attested also in an undated inscription from Chios, *Ῥωμαῖα τὰ ἐγ Κῶ*.³

The puzzle is the two Eleusinia. The Great Eleusinia were the panhellenic and more extensive celebration that was held at Eleusis at four-year intervals, distinct from the Lesser Eleusinia or *trieteris* in the off year.⁴ But what is the "Eleusinia also called Kaisareia" (17)? The two panhellenic festivals were thought to need no geographical marker; the lesser festivals that follow in the list all have one – with this one exception: the Coans evidently felt that its locale was obvious.

The Coans are unlikely to mean in line 17 the Great Eleusinia again, thus naming the festival in two different ways in the same text. But it is also unlikely that the added name Kaisareia designated the Lesser Eleusinia as distinct from the Greater: for the Athenians to add Augustus' name to the minor celebration might well seem more an insult than an honor. In any case, the imperial epithet for the Eleusinia is not attested at Eleusis or elsewhere. These Augustan titles faded as subsequent emperors and benefactions intervened, but our evidence on the Eleusinia is such that, if the lesser games used the name Kaisareia even briefly, we would probably hear of it more than this once.

Moretti alone has seen that Eleusinia labeled in two different ways must have been distinct games, and concluded that the "Eleusinia also called Kaisareia" were a Coan festival of Demeter. But no cult, let alone games, of the Eleusinian pair is on record at Cos. Demeter had a temple, but the evidence for Kore/Persephone is thin indeed.⁵ There is

² By "Panhellenic" I mean games formally proclaimed to other cities and attended by their delegates. For the Eleusinia see *I. Gonnoi* 109.35 *τοὺς δὲ σπονδοφόρους τοὺς ἐπαγγέλοντας τὰ τε Ἐλευσῖνια* (ca. 200 B.C.); cf. M. THOMPSON, *Coins for the Eleusinia*, in: *Hesperia* 11, 1942, 213–229, at 217.

³ L. ROBERT, *Etudes épigraphiques et philologiques*, Paris 1938, 126–128.

⁴ K. CLINTON, *IG I² 5, the Eleusinia, and the Eleusinians*, in: *AJP* 100, 1979, 1–12, at 10–12; K. RIGSBY, *The Schedule of the Eleusinia*, in: *Mnemosyne* 63, 2010, 289–297.

⁵ S. SHERWIN-WHITE, *Ancient Cos*, Göttingen 1978, 305–312.

no mention of a joint cult in surviving texts, or of the epithet “Eleusinian”. The inscriptions of Cos are unusually rich in their allusions to religious usages. If there were an established cult and games named for the Eleusinian goddesses, it surely would have left some further trace in the documents.

We might then seek some other city that celebrated Eleusinian games that would attract foreign competitors. Classical Sparta had Eleusinian games, on slim testimony.⁶ In the Hellenistic period, Eleusinia were held once a year at the Alexandrian suburb Eleusis, attested once in the third century B. C.⁷ Both festivals seem too remote to be in our Coan’s circuit; both may well have lapsed by the Augustan age. And we would expect the city to be specified in the Coan list.

I would urge therefore that Moretti was right to place the festival on Cos. The expression *ὑπὸ τοῦ δάμου* has been omitted here merely because the compound name of the festival already makes the entry long, and above all because the Coans considered the name unambiguous – they knew no other festival with this double name. I propose instead a different restoration. The recent history of Cos is suggestive.

In the 30’s B. C. Cos was ruled by the tyrant Nicias, a partisan of Antony.⁸ Two dozen small private monuments imply an edict of his that every household maintain an altar in his behalf. An epigram of Augustan date recounts the Coans’ riotous desecration of his grave.⁹ No firm date is evident in this material. The likely guess has long been that his end came around the time of the defeat of Antony at Actium.¹⁰ He was properly buried, and on Cos rather than abroad with the campaign. Perhaps his death preceded the battle, while the destruction of his tomb followed it.

Augustus was attentive to the Coans’ recent sufferings. In 31 B. C., gathering resources for the war, a legate of Antony had cut down trees in the precinct of Asclepius; Augustus had him executed in the grove itself.¹¹

⁶ MORETTI, *I. agon. gr. no. 16.11*, *Ἐλευθύνια τετράκις*.

⁷ P. M. FRASER, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Oxford 1972, I 200–201. Only Satyrus mentions the festival, *κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν . . . [ἀ]γομέ[ν]η πανήγυρις ἔχουσα [....]κὸν καὶ μουσικὸν ἀγῶνα* (*P. Oxy. XXVII, 2465*).

⁸ R. HERZOG in: *HZ* 125, 1922, 189–216; SHERWIN-WHITE (see n. 5) 141–145; K. BURASELIS, *Kos between Hellenism and Rome*, Philadelphia 2000, 25–65.

⁹ *Anth. Gr.* 9.81 (GOW-PAGE, *Garland of Philip*, Crinagoras XXII).

¹⁰ HERZOG (see n. 8) 213–215; R. SYME in: *JRS* 51, 1961, 25–28 (*Roman Papers* II 213–215); G. W. BOWERSOCK, *Augustus and the Greek World*, Oxford 1965, 46 n. 1; SHERWIN-WHITE (see n. 5) 144–145.

¹¹ Cass. Dio 51.8.3 (the execution described under 30 B. C.), *Val. Max.* 1.1.19; cf. SHERWIN-WHITE (see n. 5) 141.

We have then a Coan festival with two names, attested briefly in the aftermath of the tyranny of Nicias. Attested only once, the games may have had a short life. I suggest that the festival was a part of the popular reaction against the tyrant. Restore:

Ἐλευ-

[θέρ]ια τὰ καὶ καλούμενα Καισάρεια ἀνδρας πέντα-
[θλον]

Larisa in Thessaly affords a parallel: two inscriptions of the second century B. C. reveal a festival there called the Eleutheria.¹² Historians have deduced that this commemorated the liberation of Larisa (and Thessaly) from Macedonian rule in 196 B. C.

For Coan readers of this list, no confusion with the Eleutheria at Plataea was possible, given the imperial alias; and that festival would have been placed at the top with the other two panhellenic games. The games at Larisa, if they survived to the Augustan period, were well out of the Coan athlete's orbit, and again would have required an indication of their city.

If this is so, then ca. 30 B. C. the Coans founded a new festival, the Eleutheria-Kaisareia, which commemorated their liberation from tyranny and honored the winner of Actium.

Addendum:

I saw too late L. ROBERT, *OMS* VII 762–763, who also argued for Eleutheria, but referred this to Plataea, with which I disagree.

¹² Ἐλευθέρια τὰ ἐν Λαρίσῃ: *IG* VII 48, IX.2 614; MORETTI, *I. agon. gr.* p. 118.