Fulvius Asticus on the Tetrarchic Price Edict

aizanoi_price_edict_macellum.jpg



[1]

The governor Fulvius Asticus comments on the Price Edict decreed by Diocletian and his colleagues in the Tetrarchy.

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Provincial Edict Original Location/Place: Macellum of Aizanoi in Phrygia

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): In-situ, Çavdarhisar (Turkey)

Date: 301 CE

Physical Characteristics: Inscribed on the last column of the 9th block of the Aezani's macellum. Letter forms are

rounded and slightly smaller than the Latin text that covers the other blocks.

Material: Stone

Measurements: The blocks in the *macellum* are between 30 and 75 centimetres wide.

Language: Greek

Category: Roman, Greek

Publications: *SEG* 26.1353 [*MAMA* IX List 179, P25]

Commentary:

This inscription was added to one of the most famous epigraphic monuments of the Roman imperial age, the so-called 'Price Edict' (see Lauffer, *Diokletians Preisedikt*). The latter corresponds to the written document by which the Tetrarchs – Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius and Galerius – decided to set a maximum fee for all venial products at the end of 301 CE (see Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs*, p. 205-233). The aim of our commentary is not to discuss this well-known and complex source, but rather to explore how the new imperial regime was presented to the provincial population at the beginning of Late Antiquity.

Fulvius Asticus, the very distinguished governor (??????/hêgemôn), is attested in numerous milestones discovered along the roads of Caria (*PLRE* I p. 119; cf. *SEG* 41.941 and Roueché, "A new governor," p. 239). This region formed together with Phrygia a new administrative division that had been separated from the rest of Asia in the mid-3rd century CE (Roueché, *Aphrodisias*, p. 2-4; cf. Dmitriev, "The End," p. 488). While Aphrodisias became the capital of the joint province, <u>Aizanoi</u> [2] remained one of the principal urban centres of Phrygia. In both locations, the extensive text of the Price Edict was inscribed. The appendix of the provincial governor has only survived in the copy of Aizanoi. This city was renowned in Antiquity for its temple of Zeus and achieved admission to the Panhellenion in the 2nd century CE. Greek was therefore the main language of the local population and, for this reason, our inscription needs to be interpreted as a brief explanation of the 37 chapters and hundreds of lines of content originally issued by the Tetrarchs in Latin. Like the emperors, Fulvius Asticus also introduces his statement with the verb "to say" (???? = *dico*) which was the traditional formula preceding edicts. At all times and particularly between lines 2 and 3, the provincial governor establishes a strong connection between his words and what the invincible and victorious lord kings (????????????????????/despotai basileis) and Caesars had previously announced.

Diocletian had acceded to the throne in 284 CE (see Rees, *Diocletian*). Instead of attaching members of his family to institute a ruling dynasty, he selected Maximian as *Augustus* in 286. Diocletian controlled the eastern provinces of the Empire, Maximian the West, and in 293 two imperial assistants with the inferior rank of

Caesar were proclaimed: Galerius and Constantius Chlorus. The four-tier system of government is known as Tetrarchy and was novel for Roman imperial rule. Fulvius Asticus, under this command, presented their collegiate decision as a sign of divine foresight (???????/promêtheia). The rulers wanted to provide abundance (??????/euchereia) by setting fair fees (?? ?????????/en teimais dikaias). Allegedly, the excessive greediness (????????/philargyria) of some had affected all men who could not get what was necessary (?????/chreia). The solution was to put an end to such wicked (????????/panourgos) acts and set a universal price for all products enumerated in the long list attached to the imperial decision. The Tetrarchic preoccupation was based on real and acute problems of inflation that this regime had to face after the economic difficulties of the 3rd century crisis (see Ermatinger, *The Economic Reforms*, p.67-85). Indeed, the Price Edict had been preceded by a monetary reform which would not have proven very successful (see Kuhoff, Diokletian und die Epoche, p. 543-564). Even if the governor wished for this solution based on the imperial divinity (??????/theiotês) to be eternal (????/aiôn), the Christian author Lactantius denounced that the new measure soon proved ineffective and had to be abandoned too (On the deaths of the Persecutors VII.6). And yet this inscribed copy (????????/antigraphon) of the imperial law (?????/nomos) sought to show the care (??????/epimeleia) of the rulers and the reverence (??????/sebasma) of the governor through his edict (??????/diatagma). Proponatur is correspondingly the Latin legal formula authorising the publication.

These last lines are fundamental for understanding the double purpose of the large epigraphic monument (see Blanco-Pérez, "Western Asia Minor and its Epigraphic Sources under the Tetrarchy"). On the one hand, the new imperial regime needed to publicise a measure that they considered beneficial for their subjects. On the other hand, we can see loyal Roman administrators committed to the Tetrarchic rule who wanted to demonstrate their allegiance. The messages of Fulvius Asticus therefore reinstate the ideals of justice (iustitia), quietness (tranquilitas), dignity (dignitas) and majesty (maiestas) that the Tetrarchs already conveyed in the preface of their Price Edict. Likewise, the provincial governor strove to distribute copies of the imperial regulation across the entire province he commanded. It is actually not a coincidence that a copy of the same text in Latin was carved in prominent locations such as the *macellum* of Aezani and the basilica of Aphrodisias (Crawford, "Discovery," p. 148-163), which were also central for commercial activities such as fairs. More fragments have appeared in the council-house of Stratonicea, another city in Caria (Corcoran, "The heading"). In fact, the Price Edict is the single inscription of the Roman world with the highest number of surviving copies. The geographical distribution of them is, nonetheless, not uniform (see Giacchero, Edictum Diocletiani). For example, on the entire peninsula of Anatolia only the joint province of Phrygia-Caria has provided us with testimonies. The other fragments come from Egypt, Achaea, Crete and Cyrenaica (see Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs*, p. 229-230). This would show that the epigraphic publication of the Price Edict, a universal law, greatly depended on the individual decisions of provincial governors such as the loyal Fulvius Asticus, following a model previously attested in Egypt (P.Cairo Isid. 1.16) and Syria (see Millar, The Roman Near East, p. 535-544). The fact that in Achaea not only a Greek appendix was added but also the entire imperial edict and lists translated supports such localised efforts. Both in this province and the other territories of the eastern Mediterranean, the Roman administrative personnel was aware of the symbolism of displaying epigraphic copies of official documents at conspicuous locations (see Feissel, "Les constitutions"). The main difference is that, while imperial decisions such as the Hadrian letter of Aizanoi or the 'Archive-Wall' in Aphrodisias had been set up by the local political institutions, the Latin reproductions of the Price Edict were commanded by a new ruling regime particularly keen to spread its propaganda, not only on large monuments, but also through smaller epigraphic media such as milestones (see Witschel, Meilensteine and Sauer, "Milestones"). Consequently, the appendix of Fulvius Asticus in Phrygia and Caria allows us to observe the message of protection, care and diligence that the Tetrarchy was trying to implement with an innovative system of government which, with successes and failures, signified the final transition from the high imperial period to the Christian kingdom of Constantine's successors and the genesis of Late Antiquity.

Literary reference:

Lactantius, On the deaths of the Persecutors VII.6.

Keywords in the original language:



- <u>??????</u> [3]
- <u>????</u> [4]
- <u>?????</u> [5]
- <u>????????</u> [6]
- ???????? [7]
- ????? [8]
- ???????? [9]
- ??????? [10]
- ???????? [11]
- <u>?????????</u> [12]
- <u>????</u> [13]
- <u>???????</u> [14]
- ???????? [15]
- <u>???????</u> [16]
- <u>?????</u> [17]
- <u>?????</u> [18]
- ???????? [19]
- <u>???????</u> [20]
- <u>Propono</u> [21]

Thematic keywords:

- <u>Aizanoi</u> [22]
- Phrygia [23]
- Caria [24]
- tetrarchy [25]
- Diocletian [26]
- <u>price</u> [27]
- trade [28]
- imperial propaganda [29]
- <u>publication</u> [30]
- propaganda [31]
- care [32]
- Roman governor [33]
- greediness [34]
- imperial cult [35]
- reverence [36]
- <u>edict</u> [37]
- imperial administration [38]
- imperial law [39]
- Late Antiquity [40]

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Read more about Preamble to Diocletian's 'Edict on Maximum Prices' (AE 1890, 66) [58]

Inscription

Maximinus Daia and the Christians in Lycia-Pamphylia [59]

The public institutions of Lycia and Pamphylia petitioned Maximinus Daia, one of the Tetrarchs, to prohibit Christianity on charges of atheism, insanity and defiance.

• Read more about Maximinus Daia and the Christians in Lycia-Pamphylia [59]

Inscription

Hadrian and Zeus in Aizanoi [60]

Hadrian restores the ancient lands of Zeus in Aizanoi using Hellenistic precedents and members of his administration

• Read more about Hadrian and Zeus in Aizanoi [60]

Inscription

Iulius Eugenius, a Soldier in Pisidia and Bishop of Laodicea [61]

The bishop of Laodicea and former soldier, Eugenius, commemorates the construction of a church after having suffered persecution and tortures under Maximinus Daia.

• Read more about Iulius Eugenius, a Soldier in Pisidia and Bishop of Laodicea [61]

Inscription

Perge, metropolis by the emperor-god Tacitus [62]

The city of Perge in southern Anatolia celebrates its new title of *metropolis* after the exceptional grant of the emperor Tacitus, worshipped as a god.

• Read more about Perge, metropolis by the emperor-god Tacitus [62]

Inscription

Cyrene Edicts of Augustus: I and III [63]

Augustus sets new rules on the way Greek and Roman citizens shall chose their tribunals and juries (I). Roman citizens without immunity in the Cyrenaica shall contribute to the local liturgies (III)

Read more about Cyrene Edicts of Augustus: I and III [63]

Inscription

Edict of the governor of Galatia on the requisitioning of transport and accommodation [64]

The governor Sextus Sotidius Strabo Libuscidianus sets the rules for requisitioning official transport and accommodation in the territory of Sagalassos

• Read more about Edict of the governor of Galatia on the requisitioning of transport and accommodation [64]

Inscription

Edict of Tiberius Julius Alexander on Egypt and Galba [65]

The provincial governor of Egypt introduces Galba as a saviour of humankind in his response to many petitions sent by the local population

• Read more about Edict of Tiberius Julius Alexander on Egypt and Galba [65]

Inscription

Provincial Edict and the Market Days of Mandragoreis (Asia) [66]

Edict responding to a village in the Maeander valley that petitioned for market days. The legal procedure concerning the reproduction of this official document is also detailed.

• Read more about Provincial Edict and the Market Days of Mandragoreis (Asia) [66]

Inscription

Baetocaece / Baitokaike: Valerian and the Ancestral Privileges of a Temple in Syria [67]

Epigraphic dossier confirming the privileges of the sanctuary of Zeus in Baetocaece (Syria) in 258-260 CE. Seleucid and Augustan precedents are used to back the worshippers' petition.

• Read more about Baetocaece / Baitokaike: Valerian and the Ancestral Privileges of a Temple in Syria [67]

Inscription

Mylasa, its local coins and the long life of the Severan emperors [68]

A typical city in Asia Minor drafts a resolution concerning illegal banking activities and local legal procedures. The fragmentary decree includes an acclamation and several messages extolling the Roman emperors and the eternity of their rule.

• Read more about Mylasa, its local coins and the long life of the Severan emperors [68]

Inscription

An Anatolian Guardian of Peace in the Mid-3rd Century CE [69]

A decree honours a local officer for having acted as a "guardian of peace" in a remote location of southern Anatolia between 270's and 280's CE.

Read more about An Anatolian Guardian of Peace in the Mid-3rd Century CE [69]

Text

Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History VIII.13.9-14 [70]

The transition of the Roman government from prosperity to unrest, and the piety of Constantius and Constantine

• Read more about Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History VIII.13.9-14 [70]

Text

Lactantius, Divine Institutes VII.15.13, 17-19 [71]

The downfall of the Roman empire

• Read more about Lactantius, Divine Institutes VII.15.13, 17-19 [71]

Inscription

Dedication to the "providence" and "divine spirit" of Diocletian (CIL III, 5810) [72]

• Read more about Dedication to the "providence" and "divine spirit" of Diocletian (CIL III, 5810) [72]

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