

DATED INSCRIPTIONS AT AMASIA

Amasia was one of the few ancient cities consistently and extensively to employ a system of year dates based on a eral calendar. Coins of the city were dated in this manner. Epigraphic documents at Amasia also carry a year-date. Among these texts the number of civic and dedicatory inscriptions is relatively low. On the other hand, one class of inscription -gravestones- frequently bears a year-date, often a month name, sometimes a day.

An investigation into the relative frequency of year-dates has been published for Roman Lydia*. In the present article I present the results of a parallel examination of year-dates found on gravestones at Amasia and on its territory.

Definition of Amasian territory: On the basis of Strabo's description (12.3.39, C 561) and on the evidence of milestones I have attempted in earlier publications to delineate the territorial boundary of Amasia in the Roman period. In this process, the use of eral dates, principally on gravestones, is helpful although ambiguous. Eral dates were employed extensively in the area of Neoclaudiopolis (modern Vezirköprü), less so in the regions of Tavium (modern Büyük Nefes), Gangra (modern Çankırı), Amisus (modern Samsun), Neocaesaria (modern Niksar) and Zela (modern Zile) [Fig.3].

A distribution of dated gravestones on the territory of Amasia is given below (map, Fig. 1).

Sample size: The sample size for the Amasian territory is not large by comparison with the total available for Roman Lydia as quoted by MacMullen (405). This figure, of course, includes the subtotals provided by each individual city in Lydia. For a single city, the Amasia total is somewhat larger than the subtotal of any one Lydian city.

The total of all inscriptions at Amasia and on its territory is 375 and comprises:

Hellenistic		3
miscellaneous	3	
Roman		304
gravestones	254	
votive dedications etc.	48	
votive dedication (dated)	1	
temenos-markers	2	
Byzantine		67
miscellaneous	66	
civic dedication (dated)	1	
		375

* MacMullen, R., *ZPE* 65(1986), 237-8 and fig.1.

Relative use of year dates: MacMullen comments on the use of year-dates for texts other than funerary.

In the case of Amasia all but two of the 68 known occurrences are found on epitaphs. The first exception (from the temenos at Yassıçal: *St.Pont.* 3.1.141) is a dedication to Zeus Stratios. It is dated to the year 101 (AD 98/99) and is almost the earliest known epigraphic occurrence of a year-date at Amasia. The second exception is a late dedication (year 379, AD 376/377: *St.Pont.* 3.1.99).

Of the total number (66) of dated epitaphs 24 (i.e. 36 %) are found on gravestones erected for women.

The known occurrences on epitaphs are listed below (Fig.2 B) and a frequency-curve is also given (Fig.2 A).

The year-date can occur at the very top of the text, i.e. "in the very first line" (as in Lydia), or at the foot or indeed (but unusually) in the body of the text.

Coins: In general the year-distribution of dated coins reflects the frequency-curve of dated-inscriptions. The year-dates on coins, as can be seen below (Fig.4) commence in the first year of Vespasianus, AD 68/69, and cease abruptly in AD 231/232, shortly before the death of Severus Alexander. By contrast the earliest dated inscription is an epitaph of the year AD 97/98 and the latest an epitaph of AD 258/259. It is known, however, that the use of eral-dates at Amasia continued into the fourth-century (a civic dedication of the year 379, AD 376/377: *St. Pont.* 3.1.99).

Comment: The frequency-curve (Fig.2 A) which results from the Amasian sample emphasises the preponderance of mid-second century dates. Whatever bias may be given by incomplete texts on broken stones, it is unlikely, as Mac Mullen comments, that the sample is skewed. It remains to be seen how Amasia may compare with other Pontic cities. Preliminary results of similar study at Sinope, for example, indicates a quite different curve of frequency.

If directed to the similarities and dissimilarities in epigraphic collections, city-by-city, such statistical researches will certainly define the idiosyncrasies, i.e. the characteristic individuality or "fingerprint" of each city-corpus, and throw light on a city's "epigraphic habit".

FIGURES :

- Fig.1 Map of Amasian territory and location of dated gravestones
- Fig.2 A Frequency of dated gravestones on the territory of Amasia
- Fig.2 B Occurrences of dated gravestones on the territory of Amasia
- Fig.3 Map of Amasian territory
- Fig.4 Table of year-dates on Amasian coins

FIG. 1

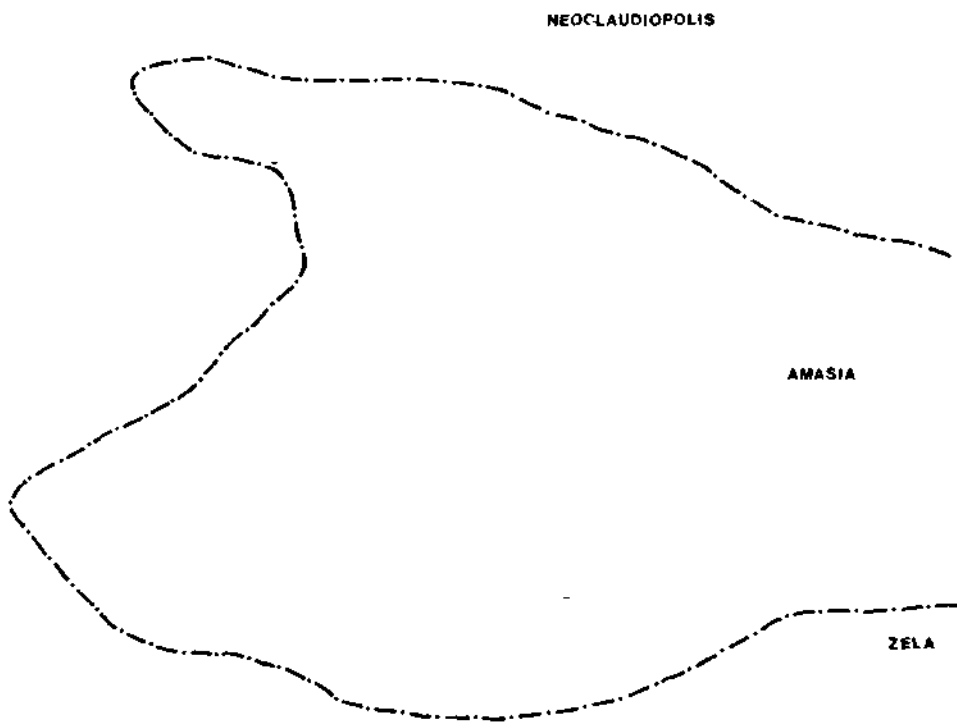


FIG. 2 A

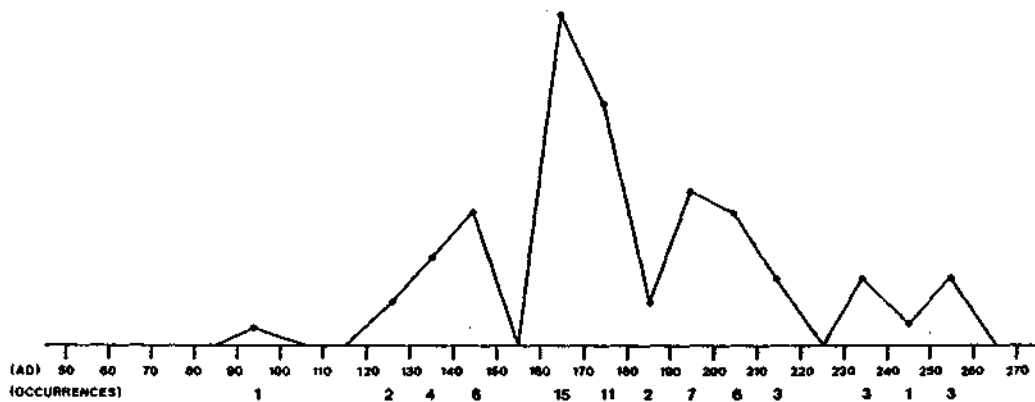


FIG. 2 B
OCCURRENCES OF DATED GRAVESTONES ON THE TERRITORY OF
AMASIA

(Domitianus)		(Commodus)	
year 100	(AD 97/98)	year 186	(AD 183/184)
		190	(AD 187/188)
(Hadrianus)		(Sept. Severus)	
year 123	(AD 120/121)	year 186	(AD 193/194)
126	(AD 123/124)	187	(AD 194/195)
134	(AD 131/132)	199	(AD 196/197)
136	(AD 133/134)	200	(AD 197/198)
140	(AD 137/138)	202	(AD 199/200)
		204	(AD 201/202)
(Ant. Pius)		206	(AD 203/204)
year 142	(AD 139/140)	207	(AD 204/205)
145	(AD 142/143)	208	(AD 205/206)
147	(AD 144/145)	210	(AD 207/208)
148	(AD 145/146)	211	(AD 208/209)
150	(AD 147/148)		
160+		(Caracalla)	
163	(AD 160, 161)	year 215	(AD 212/213)
		218	(AD 215/216)
(M. Aurelius)		219	(AD 216/217)
year 165	(AD 162/163)		
166	(AD 163/164)	(Sev. Alexander)	
167	(AD 164/165)	year 233	(AD 230/231)
168	(AD 165/166)	237	(AD 234/235)
169	(AD 166/167)		
170	(AD 167/168)	(Gordianus)	
172	(AD 169/170)	year 242	(AD 239/240)
173	(AD 170/171)	245	(AD 242/243)
174	(AD 171/172)		
175	(AD 172/173)	(Treb. Gallus)	
177	(AD 174/175)	year 254	(AD 251/252)
178	(AD 175/176)		
181	(AD 178/179)	(Gallienus)	
		year 260	(AD 257/258)
		261	(AD 258/259)

FIG. 4

TABLE OF YEAR-DATES ON AMASIAN COINS

(Vespasianus)	
year 71	(AD 68/69)
81	(AD 78/79)
(Domitianus)	
year 95	(AD 92/93)
(Traianus)	
year 115	(AD 112/113)
(Hadrianus)	
year 138	(AD 135/136)
(Ant.Pius)	
year 155	(AD 152/153)
156	(AD 153/154)
157	(AD 154/155)
158	(AD 155/156)
(M.Aurelius)	
year 164	(AD 161/162)
165	(AD 162/163)
169	(AD 166/167)
(Commodus)	
year 188	(AD 185/186)
189	(AD 186/187)
190	(AD 187/188)
191	(AD 188/189)
(Sept.Severus)	
year 206	(AD 203/204)
208	(AD 205/206)
209	(AD 206/207)
(Sev.Alexander)	
year 228	(AD 225/226)
229	(AD 226/227)
230	(AD 227/228)
234	(AD 231/232)