

## ZEUS BENNIOS: A FEW MORE NOTES

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Dedications to Zeus Bennios, considered as a Phrygian deity, have been published and discussed since the 1st century (Ramsay 1884, 258–259, No 11; Ramsay 1887, 511–512, No 97). His cult was spread along the Upper Tembris valley in Western Phrygia, and some recent finds testify to his presence in Bithynia as well (Şahin 1978, 771–790; Şahin 1986, 135, note 37).

Twelve inscriptions read: *Αὐτὸν Βέννιον*, (Ramsay 1884, No 11; Ramsay 1887, No 95; Buckler et al. 1928, No 241; Drew-Bear 1976, No 11; Şahin 1978, 774–778; Şahin 1986, 135, note 37; Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, Nos 13–19; Levick et al. 1988, No 49), while the rest of the texts (the total number of the inscriptions in point being around 20) contain other forms, similar to the epithet, which provoked a long-lived discussion. The inscriptions are dated in Roman Imperial time, e.g. from the 1st to the 3rd century AD. *Βέννος* and *βέννει* have been most often reviewed: the latter was interpreted as the Phrygian form of the epithet of Zeus in dative. A recent work on the divinities of Roman Phrygia (Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1952–1992) has re-examined the whole record and has systemized the data, offering further arguments in favour that *βέννει* is the dative form of *βέννος* (Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1989–1990). *Βέννος* is used in relation to a toponym/deme or to another deity (Buckler et al. 1928, No 241: *βέννει Σοννῶν*; Ramsay 1884, No 10: *βέννει Σερεανῶ*; Şahin 1978, 780: *βέννος Δεὶ Καλαγαθίῳ*; Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, No 20: *τὸ βέννος Διὸς Βροντῶτος*). Besides, *βέννεται* and *βεννάρχης* are also mentioned in some inscriptions, generally considered as priests or members of a cult association (Cook 1925, 883; Şahin 1978, 777; discussion in: Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1988). The context suggests that the meaning of the word can be similar to that of *δοῦμος*.

One Greek epitaph from the “Midas City” (Yazıkaya) provided a form which was finally interpreted as a verb due to a new word division: *βέννευε κή*, instead of *βεννευεκη* – a toponym

that is otherwise not attested (Haspels 1971, No 18; Şahin 1978, 781; Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1960–1961), hence: *βέννευειν*. Some authors find a similar verb in a New-Phrygian text: *βέννεν*, explaining it as an imperative (Haas 1966, Nos 83, 125, 150).

*Βέννιος/Βένιος* is a personal name, found in three epitaphs in Greek, considered as secondary, derived from the divine epithet (Calder 1956, Nos 214, 273a – from Eastern Phrygia; Mitchell 1982, No 293; Zgusta 1964, § 161). It has recently been listed among the few certain native Phrygian names (Innocente 1997, 37).

Earlier parallels from the Old-Phrygian material can be suggested to the above record. Zeus' epithet has already been compared phonetically with the first part of the Old-Phrygian *Benagonos*, thought of as a compound personal name (Brixhe/Lejeune 1984, G-116; Lejeune 1969, 294; Brixhe 1994, 175; Baion/Open 1988, 197–198).

As it was seen, the meaning of *βέννος* was compared to that of *δοῦμος*, assumed to be of Asianic/Phrygian origin due to a fragment by Hipponax (Hipponax frg. 30 (67D3); Masson 1962, 124; Chantraine 1968, 295, and most recently Lubotsky 1997, 124–125, who thinks that no satisfactory etymology or origin can be suggested for the word). The latter occurred in inscriptions from Serdicae and Novae as well (Mihailov 1966, 41, No 1925; Gerov 1989, No 295; Vassileva 1995, 29–31). The word designates a religious association of female followers of the Great Goddess. The same meaning, “religious assembly”, was proposed for the Old-Phrygian *duma-* (*duman* in Acc.) preserved in an inscription from Bithynia (Brixhe/Lejeune 1984, B-01; Baion/Open 1988, 187). Some Gordion graffiti offer derivatives of *duma-*: *dumastaeia* and *dumast-v-* (– an adjectival derivative?), understood as personal names (Brixhe/Lejeune 1984, G-131, G-245; Brixhe 1994, 175). *Dumeyay* in dative might be compared to other epithets of the Mother-Goddess found in the Old-Phrygian inscriptions. *Δουμο-* in a New-



Phrygian inscription is being much discussed. Although some scholars insist on interpreting the New-Phrygian word as a designation of a tomb or of a part of a grave monumet (Brixhe 1990, 93–94), the context of the whole usage record is a stronger argument. If the meaning “religious assembly/association” for *duma-/δοῦμος* is further confirmed, then the occurrence of a divine epithet, related to an association, in the Roman times would be a survival of a much earlier practice.

The independent use of *βέννος*, as well as its mentioning together with other divinities and with toponyms, pursued the authors of the above hypothesis to suggest that the verb would designate the activities of the association (Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1991). At the present state of the evidence, however, the toponyms would probably point to cult centres. Unlike other scholars who previously thought of *βεννεῖται* and *βεννάρχης* as members of a cult association of Zeus Bennios (Şahin 1978, 777), the above view derives both the activities and the epithet from the word for association. This means that there would have been cult associations of other deities as well, as could be perceived by the *βέννος* of *Διὸς Βροντῶντος* and of *Διὸς Καλακαγαθίου*.

A recently republished and reinterpreted inscription renders the form *ERMABENNEI* (Levick et al. 1993, No 222, 69–71), that provoked a vivid discussion as well. The editors of *MAMA X* consider it as an argument against the meaning of *βέννος* as a cult association, and suggest a cult image in the shape of a herm. The Phrygian cult and religious practice is consistent with such a hypothesis, as the stone/pillar/rock cult setting is well attested. The reading of the inscription, however, poses some difficulties as there is a small space between *EPMA* and *BENNEI* and a word division could be assumed here as well. It is also very unlikely to offer a dedication both to Zeus and a herm. Accepting it as *Ἑρμᾶ βέννει*, Cl. Brixhe proposes the founder of the association or of the cult to be seen in *Ἑρμᾶ* (Brixhe 1995, No 479, 513). Whatever the discussion, the evocation of the name of Hermes might be suggestive.

It is worth noting that the name *Βοσπόριχος* from the above inscription is common in the region of Byzantium, whence in the metropolis and in Mesambria Pontica, as well as in the commercially related cities (Levick et al. 1993, 71; Masson 1994, 139; Mihailov 1970, Nos 324, 330ter, 284–285; 290–291). This could be another reference for the Constantinople chora, whose ethnocultural context has already been discussed (Φολ 1994, 70, 101, 105, 179, 208, 222).

As it has already been shown, the evidence on Zeus Bennios and the other inscriptions in point are confined to the territory of Phrygia and to the areas where Phrygian cultural presence was attested. The cult of Zeus Bronton/Brontaios was attested practically in the same area – predominantly in Northwestern Phrygia (Doryleion/Eskişehir), but in Bithynia and along the southern coast of the Propontis as well (Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1992–1995, notes 308–309, 316). Two dedications were discovered at the site identified as Modra, mentioned by Strabo in Hellespontine Phrygia (Strabo 12.3.7). The toponym might be discerned in the compound title *modrovanak* found in an Old-Phrygian inscription hewn on a rock-cut throne at the top of the plateau of the “Midas City” – “Vanak of Modra/Modroi” (Brixhe/Lejeune 1984, M-04; Neumann 1986, 52, against this toponym in the compound title: Brixhe 1997, 47, note 19). Thracian-Phrygian cultural belonging has long being ascribed to this cult (Cook 1925, 838). A.B. Cook’s view about the Orphic nature of the divinity, which he related to Zagreus, is usually neglected by modern scholars. Whatever the discussion, a survival of an uranian deity, of the Weather/Storm God-type (popular in Anatolian land) could have appeared under this Greek epithet. It is instructive to note that two recently published dedications, again from Western Phrygia, attested *Διὶ Βροντῶντι καὶ Σαουαδίω* and *Διὶ Σαουαδίω* – a variant of Sabazios (Frei 1988, Nos 9N, 10N, 19–20, 22–24). *Σαυαζίος*, *Σαουαζίος*, *Σαοαζος* seem to be forms reserved for the inscriptions from Phrygia, though badly documented data for Thrace exist as well (Eisele 1909, 233, 236; Johnson 1984, 1585). It



should also be reminded that Silenoi were called *Σανάδαι* by the Macedonians (Hesychius s.v., and Hdt. 7. 138 about the "Gardens of Midas" in Macedonia, where Silenus was caught, comments by Φολ 1994, 68).

Though the conclusions on the re-examined epigraphic data cast doubt on the similar nature of Zeus Bennios and Zeus Bronton (Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1999, note 338), whom some authors are inclined to see both as "Fruchtbarkeitgott" (Şahin 1978, 786–790), the spread of their cults coincides and marks the area of the Balkan-Anatolian interactions. Similarity in cult might be supposed as a *bennos* of Zeus Bronton existed.

Although the cult of Dionysos in Roman Phrygia is generally assigned to the Greek influence, *μύσται* of Dionysos have already been compared to the terms *Βεννεῖται* and *Βρονταῖσται* (Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1946, 1948, note 135). The spread of his cult coincides with the territory, where dedications to local Mothers are found, while Zeus Bennios seems to share a common cult with the Mother Steunene (a guild of *Στευνηνοί* offered a dedication to Zeus Bennios: Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, No 18, 1983–1986). The above notes could suggest the cult and religious context, in which the meaning and the significance of *βέννος* and *Βεννιος* could possibly be better interpreted. It can point to a Dionysiac/Sabasian rituality that had an earlier indigenous background in Phrygia.

As the word *βέννος* is of non-Greek origin, it probably denoted native realia for the Hellenic-speaking population (Brixhe 1993, 342), especially in cult practice. The only evidence on the rites performed to Zeus Bennios is to be found in the inscription from Ahmetler, Bithynia, 210 AD.: an altar with *ἄγαλμα* was dedicated to the god, an ox was sacrificed and other fragrant substances and wine were offered, as well as a copper vessel (Şahin 1978 775–778). The interpretation of the word as an association is quite convincing from historical and cultural point of view. However, there must have been something special about this association to produce a verb. As it was demonstrated, though *δοῦμος* can be assigned to

other deities, its original meaning was related to the followers of the Great Mother-Goddess. Bearing in mind the ethnic and cultural belonging of the area, the local cult background mentioned above, as well as the religious conservatism, a parallel with other "Barbarian" words for particular rites, mentioned by the ancient authors, could be discussed.

A Greek literary tradition of Hellenistic origin provides "Barbarian" words related to the worship of Bacchos. The evidence is again confined to the Thracian-Phrygian cultural zone. The commentator of Aristophanes states that Dionysos and Sabazios was one and the same deity, and explains the name of Sabazios as coming from *σαβάζειν*, "celebrating, worshipping the God", as the Barbarians used to say, while his Greek followers used *εὐάζειν* for the same activity (Schol. Aristoph. Birds 874–875 Dübner; the context created by this evidence and the considerations below do not quite agree with C. Brixhe's view: Brixhe 1987, 113–138). The commentary contains a quotation from the Hellenistic author from Herakleia Pontica Amphiheos, the variants in the manuscripts of whose fragment read: *σαβάζειν* G *καβάζειν* V (*Amphiheos* (?) On Herakleia II (= F 1a, b Jacoby), the same tradition in Suid.s.v. *Σαβάζιος* and Etym. Magnum, s.v. *Σαβάζιος*). The texts have been examined and discussed in detail to propose that the rituality of a mystery cult in the Balkan-Anatolian area had given birth to the "Barbarian" correspondences of the Hellenic *βακχεύω* (Hellenized itself probably on Anatolian/Phrygian land), respectively *εὐάζειν*: *σαβάζαν* and *καβάζειν* (Φολ 1994, 59–70, 97–101, 177–180). As a working hypothesis *βέννος/βεννεύειν* could be situated in a similar context. If further evidence confirms the above hypothesis about *βεννεύειν*, should it be considered that the ritual activity and the local verb designating it gave the name of the association and the epithet of Zeus Bennios?

Recent studies usually do not mention the parallels with the town *Βέν(ν)α* in Thrace, with the Thracian tribe of *Βενναῖοι*, *Βεννάσιοι* and the strategy *Βεννική* (Plin. NH 4.40; Steph. Byz. 162.17; Ptol. 3.11.6, there is a phyle



*Béva* in Ephesos as well: Steph. Byz. 163.3), while others assign these just to a phonetical coincidence (Drew-Bear/Naour 1990, 1960, note 190). The names were listed by Detschew (Detschew 1976, 51). They also evidence the variants -vv-/-v-. The data on a common Palaeo-Balkan and Anatolian onomastic layer have already been discussed (most recently: Янакиева 1994, 53–54). The location of the above toponyms and ethnonyms could have marked the zone of interactions between Western Asia Minor and Southeastern Thrace. The revealing of common cultural realia connected with these names could contribute to a further research of the Balkan-Anatolian interrelations in Antiquity.

Greek epigraphic data of Roman Imperial time from Phrygia, Bithynia, Mysia and Paphlagonia could demonstrate survivals of earlier cultural phenomena concerning cult and religion. The example of Zeus Bennis, still scarcely documented, displays a non-Greek epithet and *realia* that probably had an earlier indigenous background.

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#### ЗЕВС БЕНИОС: ОЩЕ НЯКОЛКО БЕЛЕЖКИ

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(резюме)

Посвещения на Зевс Бениос, традиционно приеман за фригийско божество, се публикуват и коментират от края на миналия век. Култът му е разпространен по долината на Горен Тембрис в Западна Фригия, но някои нови находки свидетелствуват за присъствието му и във Витиния. Надписите са от римската императорска епоха, т.е. от I–III в. Освен посвещенията на Зевс Бениос, в общо около 20-те досега известни надписа присъествува и думата *βέννος*, от която се извежда божеският епитет. Тази негръцка дума е многократно коментирана в опит да се изведе нейното значение. Наскоро излязлата работа на Th. Drew-Bear и Chr. Naour систематизира целия епиграфски материал и предлага интерпретация на *βέννος* като „асоциация от почитатели на бога“. Думата се сравнява с друг термин – *δοῖμος*, означаващ религиозна колегия (първоначално на Великата богиня), смятан също за малоазийска/фригийска дума. И за двата термина тук се предлагат паралели от старофригийските надписи – с първата част на съставното име *Benagonos* и с *duma*.

*Βέννος* се среща заедно с топоними и с други божества. *Βέννος* е лично име в няколко епитафии, една от които предлага и глагол – *βεννέειν*. Предполага

се, че глаголната форма означава дейността на религиозната асоциация. За да се появи тази дума обаче, навярно действията на религиозното общество са белязани с определена специфика.

Настоящата статия насочва вниманието към контекста, в който е засвидетелствуван култът на Зевс Бениос и който би могъл да ни доближи до характеристиките на обществото от негови почитатели. Разпространението на култа съвпада с това на Зевс Бронтон/Бронтийос, чиято орфическа, трако-фригийска същност отдавна е предположена в литературата. Няколко новопубликувани надписа, отново от Западна Фригия, предоставят епитети на Зевс и на Зевс Бениос, които са вариант на името на Сабазий. Запазените названия на членове на колегията се сравняват с мистите на Дионис. От своя страна, култът на Дионис в римска Фригия съвпада териториално с култовете на множество местни Богини-майки, които пазят една по-стара фригийска традиция на анонимност и назоваване с епитети. Прегледът на епиграфския материал дава основания да се предположи сабазиева/дионисова обредност за областите, в които са засвидетелствувани и Зевс Бениос, и Зевс Бронтон.

В по-новите изследвания обикновено не се споменават паралелите с града Бена в Тракия, с тракийското племе бенан и стратегията Бенике, поставени от Дечев сред тракийските езикови остатъци. Наистина, само прецизен лингвистичен анализ би могъл да изясни връзката им с думите от кръга на *βέννος*, но с оглед на сходния Балкано-анатолийски контекст, тези сведения не бива да се изпускат.

Всичко това налага един паралел с данните от античните извори за „варварски“ думи, означаващи „чествувам, почитам бога“, отнасяни към Дионис и Сабазий. Елинистическата традиция за варварските съответствия на елинските *βακχεῖο* и *εὐδάζειν* – съответно *σαβάζειν* и *καβάζειν*, коментирана вече по отношение на обредните реалности в Тракия, може да внуши подобен смисъл и за *βεννέειν*. В настоящата статия се предлага хипотезата, че една особена ритуалност, сабазиево-дионисово обогрена, навярно с по-стари корени във Фригия, е довела до „изковаването“ на нова дума, означаваща обредните практики. Навярно от глагола, от специфичните действия на религиозното общество, са произлезли названията на самата асоциация и епитетът на Зевс Бениос. Култът на Зевс Бениос от римско време във Фригия разкрива преживелици на по-древни местни характеристики, които допринасят за по-нататъшното изследване на трако-фригийската зона на културни взаимодействия.

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