

BENJAMIN ISAAC

DEDICATIONS TO ZEUS OLYBRIS

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## DEDICATIONS TO ZEUS OLYBRIS

## I

Bronze plaque, l. 11 cm., maximum width 4 cm. The inscription is scratched and punched and picked out in white. The object was purchased and the find-spot is unknown.<sup>1</sup> Lettering 4–5 mm. Pl. XVII,1.

ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΣ ΟΥΑΛΗΣ  
ΟΥΕΤΡΑΝΟΣ ΛΕΓΙΩΝΟΣ ΔΕΚΑΤΟ[.]  
ΦΡΕΤΗΣΙΑΣ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ ΚΟΝΤΟΝ  
ΑΡΓΥΡΟΥΝ ΘΕΩ ΟΛΥΒΡΕΙ

Μάρκος Ἀντώνιος Οὐάλης  
οὐετρανός λεγιῶνος δεκάτο[υ]  
Φρετησίας ἀνέθηκε κοντόν  
ἀργυροῦν θεῶ Ὀλυβρεῖ

Translation: ‘Marcus Antonius Valens. Veteran of the Legion X Fretensis dedicated this silver spear to the god Olybris.’

Although the find-spot is unknown there can be little doubt that it derives from a site in Israel or its immediate vicinity. The dedicant was a veteran of the legion X *Fretensis* which had its permanent base at Jerusalem from AD 70 till the mid-third century.<sup>2</sup>

## The dedication of a silver κοντός (pike)

The κοντός is mentioned by Josephus and Arrian as the pike carried by Roman cavalry. Josephus writes: ‘The cavalry carry a large sword on their right side, a long pike in the hand . . .’<sup>3</sup> and Arrian: ‘Of the latter [sc. the unarmoured cavalry] some are spear-carriers, some pike-carriers, some lance-carriers . . .’<sup>4</sup> It may be significant that Hesychius equates κοντός with γαισός<sup>5</sup>, a term employed by Polybius to designate both the Latin *pilum*, the legionaries’ javelin, and the *hasta pura*, the spear given as a formal military award (normally restricted to those of the rank of senior centurion and above).<sup>6</sup> In a well known passage Josephus describes Titus awarding rewards after the capture of Jerusalem (*BJ* vii 1,3 (13–15)). He called up by name those who had excelled and ‘placed crowns of gold upon their heads, presented

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Mr Geoffrey Cope for his permission to publish these two inscriptions and to Mr Ilan Shahar for showing me the objects.

<sup>2</sup> His personal names occur frequently among soldiers in the Orient. A centurion Magonius Valens of the *Cohors Milliarum Thracum* is mentioned in P. Yadin 11 as serving in En Gedi (AD 123). M. Antonius is found very often. Note for instance: *IGR* ii 141: L. Antonius Valens, brother of M. Antonius Aelianus; *IGR* i 1334: M. Antonius Valens, eques of the *Coh. I Thebaeorum Equitata*. *IGR* 1337: G. Antonius Valens; M. Iulius Valens. *AE* 1983.800: Ant. Valens, ex eq(uite) from Alba Regia (Apulum), Dacia; 1989.875: L. Antonius Valens Antio(chia); M. Antonius Valens Antio(chia), from Africa (Hadrianic); *AE* 1972.671: southern Negev: . . . (centuria) Ant(onii) Valetis; *AE* 1969–70.633 I: inscription from Egypt: C. Antonius Valens Antio(c)hia, a legionary.

<sup>3</sup> Jos. *BJ* 3.96.1 τοῖς δὲ ἵππεῦσιν μάχαιρα μὲν ἐκ δεξιῶν μακρὰ καὶ κοντός ἐπιμήκης ἐν χειρὶ; cf. iii 7,24 (254).

<sup>4</sup> Arrian, *Tactica* 4.2.1 ἄφρακτος δὲ ἢ ἐναντία. τούτων δὲ οἱ μὲν δορατοφόροι εἰσὶν ἢ κοντοφόροι ἢ λογχοφόροι; cf. 4.7.2. In the *Acies contra Alanos* 16,17,27 both mounted men and legionaries carry κοντούς, pikes.

<sup>5</sup> Hesychius, *Lexicon*, gamma 64: γαισός· μακροκέντης ἢ κοντός. Elsewhere Hesychius equates the κοντός with the δόρυ, the regular Greek term for the spear: *Lexicon*, kappa 3541: κοντός· δόρυ.

<sup>6</sup> V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army*, London, 1981, 85f.

them with golden neck-chains, little (or: long) golden spears (δόρατα μικρὰ [or: μακρὰ] χρυσᾶ) and standards made of silver, and promoted each man to a higher rank. He further assigned to them out of the spoils silver and gold . . . M. Antonius Valens was a regular soldier, not an officer, and he would therefore not have been a normal candidate for the award of a *hasta pura*. However, he must have obtained his silver spear somehow. It is hardly to be assumed that a veteran would himself have ordered a silver spear to be made for a dedication. There are parallels for the dedication of arms to a deity, but these are regular weapons, not made of precious metal.<sup>7</sup> It is tempting to suggest that the veteran obtained his silver pike as a reward for service in war, possibly the siege of Jerusalem, and then dedicated it to Zeus Olybris.

### The God Olybris

A Latin dedication to ‘Jupiter Olybraeus’ has been found in the region of Syria and Palestine once before, on a little altar in the excavations of the sanctuary at Baniyas / Caesarea Philippi. Zeus Olybrios occurs in an inscription from Rome as a Cilician god.<sup>8</sup> An inscription from Ankara is dedicated to Zeus Olybris.<sup>9</sup> Olymbros is mentioned by Stephanus Byzantius as the brother of the founder of the Cilician city Adana.<sup>10</sup> It is quite possible that the dedicants of the two inscriptions honouring Olybris were of Cilician origin.<sup>11</sup> The veteran who dedicated his silver spear apparently remained in Judaea after the end of his service there.

## II

The object was purchased, and the find-spot is unknown, but certainly originates from the same site as no. I. It is a bronze plaque, 7 cm. broad, 6.5 cm. high and shows two ears in relief. Greek inscription in tabula ansata underneath, lettering 0.5 cm., scratched. Pl. XVII,2.

<sup>7</sup> E. Schwertheim, *Die Inschriften von Hadrianoi und Hadrianeia (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, 32)*, Bonn 1987, no. 1, the dedication to Zeus Kersullos of a τόγα, δακτύλεον χρύσεον, ἀσπίς, δόρυ. The dedicant later also donated a golden τύπωμα(?) of a hundred denarii (*SEG* 1987.1012); *CIL* xiii 3592, from Tongeren, ‘Q. Cattus Libo Nepos centurio leg. III Cyrenaicae scutum et lanceam d.d.’; cf. J. Bogaers, *Civitates und Civitas-Hauptorte in der nördlichen Germania Inferior*, *BJ* 172, 1972, 310–333, esp. 331f.

<sup>8</sup> L. Moretti, *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae* i, Rome, 1968, no. 131; *IGR* iii 72: Διὶ Ὀλυβρι τοῦ Κιλίκων ἔθνους τῆς λαμπροτάτης μητροπόλεως Ἀναρζαβέων Αὐρ. Μάρκος στάτωρ εὐχῆς χάριν. The dedicant was a stator, cf. M. Durry, *Les cohortes prétoriennes*, Paris, 1938, repr. 1968, 20f. The inscription from Baniyas will be published in the forthcoming report on the excavations at the Pan Sanctuary, edited by Z. Maoz.

<sup>9</sup> L. Robert, *Hellenica* 9, 67–69: Διὶ Ὀλυβρι Κυρίῳ | Χίλιω ἱερέυς. R. P. Harper, *Anatolian Studies* 19, 1969, 27: Διὶ Ὀλυβρε[ι] κὲ Ἐπηκό[φ] from Comana in Cappadocia. Robert observes that in the two inscriptions known to him the name occurs as ΟΛΥΒΡΙ which represents a dative form Ὀλυβρι, corresponding to nominative Ὀλύβρις or Ὀλυβρεύς (from Ὀλυβρι, Ὀλυβρεῖ). In the Latin inscription from Caesarea Philippi ‘Olybraeo’ definitely implies a nominative ‘Olybraeus’. The two new inscriptions give the two dative forms Ὀλυβρι and Ὀλυβρει. For the name, cf. L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen*, Heidelberg, 1984, 437.

<sup>10</sup> Stephanus Byzantius, *Eth.* 24.19 s.v. Ἀδανα. Κίλισσα πόλις, οὐδετέρως. ταύτην ᾤκισεν Ἄδανος καὶ Σάρος, Ταρσεῦσι πολεμήσαντες καὶ ἠττηθέντες. ἀφ’ ὧν ἡ πόλις ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος Ἄδανος. τὸν δὲ ποταμὸν Κοίρανον καλοῦμενον Σάρον καλέσαντες. ἔστι δὲ ὁ Ἄδανος Γῆς καὶ Οὐρανοῦ παῖς, καὶ Ὅστασος καὶ Σάνδης καὶ Κρόνος καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Ἰαπετὸς καὶ Ὀλυμβρος.

<sup>11</sup> For recruitment to Syria and Palaestina from this area: S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor*, Vol. I, Oxford 1993, 139f.

Prof. Werner Eck suggested that there might be an alternative explanation. There exist dedications requesting the aid of deities in healing illnesses and these occasionally show representations of the parts of the body concerned. In the present case this would be a dedication requesting the help of the god in healing the dedicant’s ears.

ΑΣΚΛΗΠΙΑΔΟΥ  
ΔΙΟΛΥΒΡΙΕΥΧΗΝ

Ἄσκληπιάδου  
Διὶ Ὀλυβρι εὐχὴν

Translation: 'From Asclepiades, to Zeus Olybris, a vow.'

The ears represent the god in his quality of one who listens. Most dedications to the 'theoi epekooi' are found in the east or were made to oriental deities. Ears are depicted frequently on dedications and altars. They are also found on bronze plaques similar to the present dedication.<sup>12</sup> Zeus Olybris/Olybreus has this epithet on the inscription from Comana, mentioned in note 7, above.

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<sup>12</sup> O. Weinreich, *Theoi Epekooi*, *Mitteilungen des kaiserlich deutschen archäologischen Instituts* 37, 1912, 1–68; pp. 23–25 for dedications to Zeus. For figures representing ears: pp. 48–68; bronze plaques: pp. 50; 68. For a Jewish coin of the Persian period with an ear: Y. Meshorer, *Eretz Israel* 25, 1996, 434–437 (Heb.).



1)



2)

1) Bronze Plaque with Dedication to Zeus Olybris; 2) Bronze Plaque with Dedication to Zeus Olybris