



TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Herausgegeben von

Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer
Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

Band 5, 1990

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Tafel 1 – 21

BJÖRN FORSÉN

A Rediscovered Dedication to Zeus Hypsistos*

EM 3221

(Tafel 3)

So far 24 anatomical *ex votos* have been reported as found or as supposedly originated from the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos on the Pnyx in Athens¹.

As early as 1803, George, Earl of Aberdeen, cleared away earth from around the bema on the Pnyx and in front of the great scarp to the east of the bema. He found ten marble plaques representing parts of the human body and bearing dedications to Zeus Hypsistos². These ten marble plaques were taken to England, where they were incorporated into the Elgin collection in the British Museum³. In 1844, four similar votive offerings, which had been found on the north slope of the Acropolis, were taken to Berlin⁴.

In 1839, while clearing a shallow pit cut in the rock at the northwest corner of the bema on the Pnyx, K. S. Pittakes found fragments of two votive offerings of stone⁵, which probably had belonged to the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos. When E. Curtius investigated the site in 1862, he discovered two more fragments of marble reliefs representing parts of the human body, one of them with a fragmentary inscription of three lines which he read as:

σμο
[Διτ̣ Ὑψ̣]ιστ[φ
εὐ]χή⁶

* I owe many thanks for the help I received from the staff of the Epigraphical Museum, especially from Dir. Dr. Πέππα-Δελμούζου and Dr. Κάρπα-Μολιζάνι. I am also indebted to the Nordenskiöld-samfundet and the O. Öflundin Säätiö for giving me the support which made my stay in Athens possible.

¹ In his catalogue over all published anatomical *ex votos* from Greece, F. T. van Straten, *Gifts for the Gods*, in: *Faith, Hope and Worship. Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World*, ed. by H. S. Versnel, Leiden 1981, 117–119, enumerates only 20 anatomical *ex votos* from the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos. He does not include the four, which are only shortly mentioned by Pittakes and Curtius (see note 5 and 6), in the catalogue.

² E. Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece I*, London 1819, 401–405. Altogether there were 12 marble pieces found, but only 10 represented parts of the human body.

³ A. Smith, *A Catalogue of Sculpture in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities. British Museum I*, London 1892, Nos. 799–808. See IG II² 4799–4807 for the inscribed ones.

⁴ *Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Beschreibung der antiken Skulpturen mit Ausschluß der Pergamenischen Fundstücke*, Berlin 1891, Nr. 718–721. The inscriptions are published as IG II² 4808–4810; cf. E. Holländer, *Plastik und Medizin*, Stuttgart 1912, 217; Fig. 126–128. These four Berlin plaques unfortunately got lost during World War II.

⁵ K. Σ. Πιττάκης, Ἐφ. Ἀρχ. 1853, 774. No further description is given of these votive offerings.

⁶ E. Curtius, *Attische Studien I. Pnyx und Stadtmauer*, Göttingen 1862, 27.

Unfortunately, the later fate of the four fragmentary votive offerings found by Pittakes and Curtius is unknown. They seem to have been forgotten: the inscription mentioned by Curtius is not even included in IG II².

Excavations in Athens during this century have brought to light another five anatomical *ex votos* to Zeus Hypsistos⁷, but no answer has been offered to the question where the fragmentary votive offerings found by Pittakes and Curtius are nowadays.

In 1976, a votive plaque to Zeus Hypsistos, showing female pudenda in relief and having the inscription [Δι]ἰ Ὑψίστω Δαφονίς | [εὐ]χὴν ἀνέθηκε(ν) was published in the catalogue of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston⁸. The plaque is recorded as having been bought in Athens in the year 1900. As the inscription is not the same as the one mentioned by Curtius, the plaque cannot be from his excavation. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that Pittakes would have left a nearly complete inscription unmentioned. Thus the Boston fragment must be considered as having come either from some other excavation of the nineteenth century or as having been found by an antique dealer⁹.

Furthermore, there are at least 8 published anatomical *ex votos* in the museums of Athens, the origin of which is unclear¹⁰. One of these is EM 3221. On the photo of EM 3221 published by Svoronos¹¹, one can discern traces of an inscription which was not reported by Svoronos. Upon studying the stone, it becomes apparent that the inscription is the same as the one read by Curtius. Consequently, EM 3221 can be ascertained as being one of the votive offerings Curtius found in 1862.

EM 3221 is a marble relief, not a freestanding sculpture on a base as one could be led to believe by the photo published by Svoronos¹². The relief is of Pentelic marble, measuring 0.25 m.

⁷ K. Kourouniotes, H. A. Thompson, *The Pnyx in Athens*, Hesperia 1 (1932) 196, Fig. 59 and 198, Fig. 60. The inscriptions are IG II² 4783–4784. H. A. Thompson, *Pnyx and Thesmophorion*, Hesperia 5 (1936) 154–155, Fig. 4a–b. B. D. Meritt, *Greek Inscriptions*, Hesperia 29 (1960) 63, No. 107. Many altars and votive plaques not representing parts of the human body have also been found. For further references see A. Łajtar, *An Athenian Vow to Zeus Hypsistos*, ZPE 70 (1987) 166, note 7.

⁸ M. B. Comstock, C. C. Vermeule, *Sculpture in Stone. The Greek, Roman and Etruscan Collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston 1976, 146, No. 235. A correction of the inscription is offered by Łajtar (note 7) 165–166.

⁹ In 1882–1883, the American J. M. Crow worked on the same site, however without finding any anatomical *ex votos*. On the other hand, there is nothing to ensure us that the Boston plaque must have been found on the Pnyx. Marble from the Pnyx was apparently reused, at least in the Agora where the Berlin reliefs and some of those mentioned by Thompson and Meritt have been found.

¹⁰ EM 2524, 2528 and 3221 published by I. N. Σβορώνος, *Τὸ ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἐθνικὸν Μουσεῖον*, Ἀθῆναι 1903, 672, πιν. 232, 1 and 673, πιν. 232, 11 and πιν. 233, 4. Akr. Mus. 3687–3690 and 4748, see H. Walter, *Beschreibung der Reliefs im kleinen Akropolismuseum in Athen*, Wien 1923, 109–110, Nr. 239–243. F. T. van Straten, *Gifts for the Gods* (above note 1) enumerates four other pieces: Van Straten's No. 9.2. (NM 2277) is however according to Π. Καστριώτης, *Γλυπτὰ τοῦ Ἐθνικοῦ Μουσείου*, Ἀθῆναι 1908, found in the Athenian Asklepieion, and No. 9.6. (EM 2527) is identical with IG II² 4765, which originates from the same place. Van Straten's No. 9.8. (NM 2680) is found at Kalamata and No. 9.7. (NM 2701) is probably not an anatomical *ex voto* at all. For further comments on the last three, see B. Forsén, E. Sironen, *Zur Symbolik von dargestellten Händen*, *Arctos* 23 (1989) 56 f., 59 f. und 62 ff.

¹¹ Σβορώνος (note 10) πιν. 233, 4. Another photo is published here with the courtesy of the Epigraphical Museum, plate 3.

¹² Van Straten (note 10) 119, No. 9.4. incorrectly describes EM 3221 as: Dorsal view of a male body, waist to mid-thigh, on a base.

in height, 0.12–0.13 m. in width, and has a total thickness of 0.11 m., the relief being 0.06 m. high. The stone is broken on its right side and in the lower left corner. The original width seems to have been ca. 0.16–0.18 m.

The relief depicts the dorsal part of a male body, from just below the waist to mid-thigh. We know of three other similar dedications, two from the Athenian Asklepieion¹³ and one of unknown origin¹⁴. The high relief with its narrow background margin in EM 3221 is rather unusual for anatomical *ex votis* in relief. The nearest parallels I know of are Akr. Mus. 3687¹⁵ and EM 8414¹⁶.

The height of the letters in the first line varies between 0.013 and 0.016 m., in the second line between 0.01 and 0.011 m., and in the third line the letter η has a height of 0.013 m. The width of the letters varies between 0.013 and 0.018 m. in the first line, 0.009 and 0.014 m. in the second, and is 0.012 m. in the third. The letters are shallow, but neatly inscribed. The character of writing indicates a date at the end of the first century or in the second century A. D.

Regarding the reading, I do not quite agree with Curtius's restoration. Δτί in the second line is possible, but in no way necessary. Many of the other anatomical *ex votis* to Zeus Hypsistos are, in fact, only dedicated to Ὑψίστω¹⁷. If we read Δτί in the second line, this would necessitate the contraction of the text at the beginning of this line, something that seems rather unlikely as the preserved part of the inscription is so neat and regular.

As the dorsal part depicted in the relief is without doubt male, the dedicator must be regarded as a man¹⁸. If one expects the text in line one to begin and end at about the same place as the second and the third lines do, there would have been two letters before the σμο and one after. In this case the last letter must have been a σ and the whole name could have been Κόσμος, ῥισμός or Πεσμός¹⁹. Of these, Κόσμος is the most common and therefore perhaps the one to be preferred. Thus the text on the stone would be as follows:

[Κό]σμο[ς]
[ῥ]ιστω
[εὐ]χή[ν]²⁰

¹³ EM 8260 (IG II² 4518); Σβορώνος (note 10) 672, πιν. 232 III, 132p; IG II² 4503, originally published by Σ. Α. Κουμανούδης, Ἐπιγραφαὶ ἐκ τῶν περὶ τὸ Ἀσκληπιεῖον τόπων, Ἀθήναιον 6 (1877) 375, No. 11, now probably lost.

¹⁴ EM 2528 = Σβορώνος (note 10) 672, πιν. 232, I.

¹⁵ Walter (note 10) 109, Nr. 239.

¹⁶ IG II² 4517 = Σβορώνος (note 10) πιν. 233 III, 132g.

¹⁷ See for example IG II² 4783, 4799–4801, 4803, 4804, 4806 and 4809. See also Thompson (note 7) 1936, 154–155, Fig. 4a and Meritt (note 7) 63, No 107.

¹⁸ This is interesting for a sanctuary where the votaries predominantly seems to have been women, cf. T. Derda, A. Łajtar, *An Athenian Inscription to Zeus Hypsistos Reconsidered*, ZPE 70 (1987) 164. Until now we know of only one anatomical *ex voto*, IG II² 4799, which has been dedicated by a man. On the other hand, the votive plaque IG II² 4798, the bust IG II² 4737 and possibly also the small cylindrical altar published by B. D. Meritt, *Greek Inscriptions*, Hesperia 23 (1954) 256, No. 40 = SEG XIV 139 (a Hebrew name!) have been dedicated by men.

¹⁹ These are the possibilities given by B. Hansen, F. Dornseiff, *Rückläufiges Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, Berlin 1957, 264.

²⁰ Accusative is probably to be preferred here because of greater frequency. Nominative is very seldom used and does not for instance appear among the other known Athenian dedications to Zeus Hypsistos. For further references, see H. S. Versnel, *Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer*, in: *Faith, Hope* (note 1) 45, note 186.

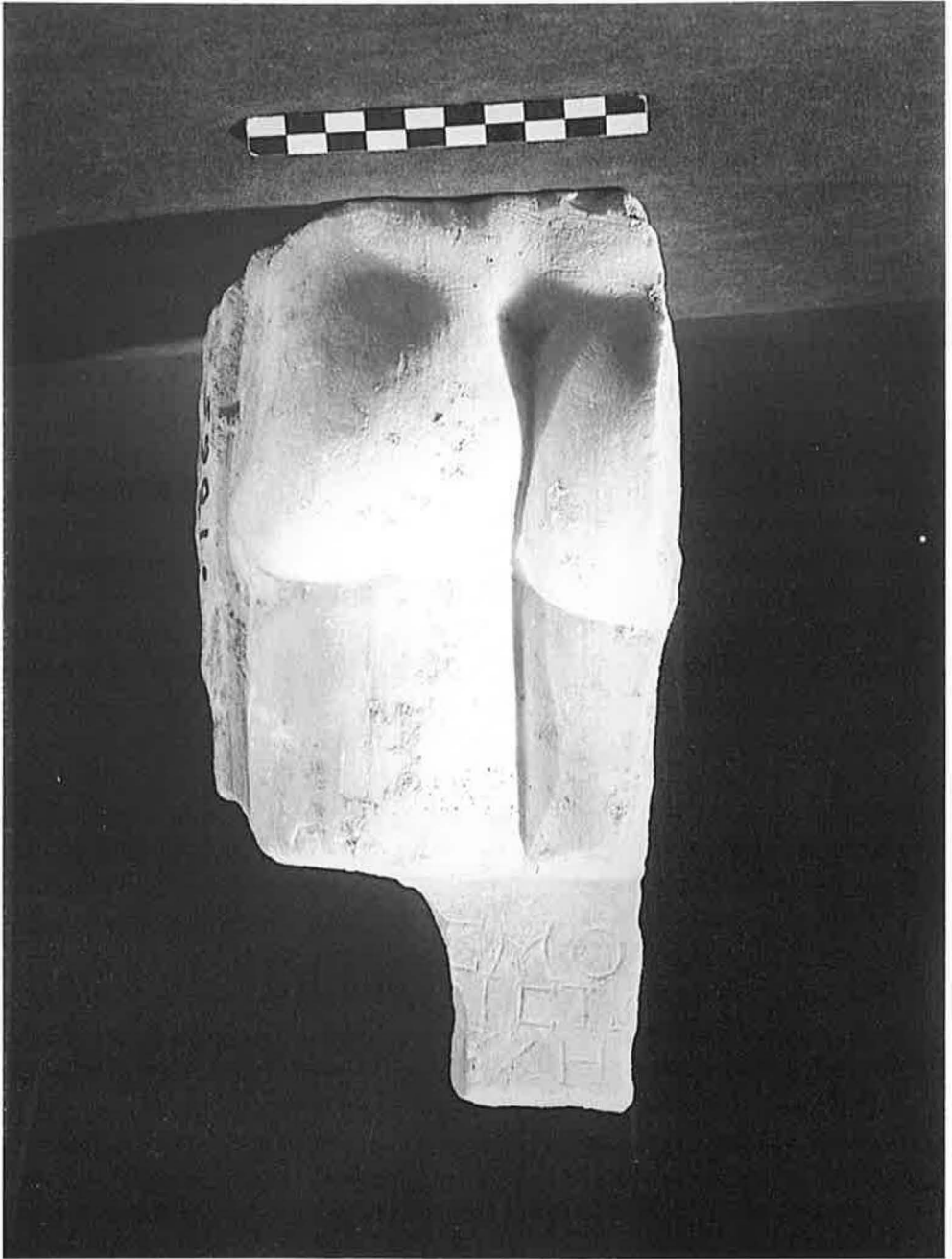
What about the other three anatomical *ex votos* found by Pittakes and Curtius? According to Heydemann's catalogue over the marble sculptures and reliefs in Athens in the year 1874²¹, two votive reliefs depicting ears, later republished by Weinreich 1912²², would have been found in the sanctuary of Zeus Hysistos on the Pnyx. Unfortunately the present where-about of these reliefs, that most probably are identical with two of the three other anatomical *ex votos* mentioned by Pittakes and Curtius, is unknown.

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²¹ H. Heydemann, *Die antiken Marmor-Bildwerke in der sog. Stoa des Hadrian, dem Windturm des Andronikos, dem Wärterhäuschen auf der Akropolis und der Ephorie im Cultusministerium zu Athen*, Berlin 1874, Nr. 584 und 585.

²² O. Weinreich, *Θεοὶ ἐπήκοοι*, AM 37 (1912) 61, Anm. 3, Nr. 1, Abb. 8, und 61, Anm. 3, Nr. 3.



Zu Forsén, S. 9 ff.