

## Two Newly Discovered Votive Inscriptions to Zeus Bronton from Eskişehir / Dorylaion

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## Two Newly Discovered Votive Inscriptions to Zeus Bronton from Eskişehir / Dorylaion

### *Eskişehir / Dorylaion'dan Zeus Bronton İçin İki Yeni Adak Yazıtı*

Necmettin ERAYDIN\*

**Abstract:** Introduced in this article are ancient Greek votive inscriptions dedicated to Zeus Bronton, one of which was from the Sarıungur village of Odunpazarı district and the other from the Ahılar village of Tepebaşı district of Eskişehir. The discovery of these artifacts took place over the course of the surface survey of the provinces of Eskişehir, Kütahya and Afyonkarahisar, which was conducted under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Taciser Tüfekçi Sivas. They were found on-site in 2021 during the Eskişehir Province Epigraphic Survey, which was conducted under the chairmanship of Assoc. Prof. Emre Erten and prepared for publication by myself.

**Keywords:** Votive Inscriptions, Zeus, Bronton, Cult, Phrygia, Dorylaion, Sarıungur - Ahılar

**Öz:** Bu makalede Eskişehir ili, Odunpazarı İlçesi Sarıungur ve Tepebaşı İlçesi Ahılar köyünden birer adet olmak üzere Zeus Bronton'a sunulmuş Hellence iki adak yazıtı tanıtılmaktadır. Söz konusu eserler Prof. Dr. Taciser Tüfekçi Sivas başkanlığında yürütülen Eskişehir, Kütahya, Afyonkarahisar il'leri Yüzey Araştırması kapsamında bulunmuş ve Doç. Dr. Emre Erten başkanlığında yürütülmekte olan Eskişehir İli Epigrafik Yüzey Araştırması'nda 2021 yılında yerinde tespit edilmiş ve tarafımdan yayına hazırlanmıştır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Adak Yazıtları, Zeus, Bronton, Kült, Phrygia, Dorylaion, Sarıungur – Ahılar

As is known, the Bronton (Βροντῶν) *epitheton*, which is the most frequently encountered among the *epithetons* of the god Zeus, whose existence is determined by inscriptions in the Phrygia region, clearly reveals the attributes of the god who governs the sky and weather events. This adjective verb (*participium*), articulated to Zeus, is derived from the ancient Greek verb “Βροντάω” “to roar”. Therefore, the expression of Zeus Bronton (Ζεὺς Βροντῶν) means “thundering Zeus”, as the celestial nature of the god coincides with the identity of the chief god of the ancient Greek *pantheon*. However, research to date clearly shows<sup>1</sup> the worship of the god with such attributes was not something new in the Phrygia region, as he was also worshipped in the ancient civilizations of Anatolia under different names and epithets, as well as in the civilizations of the Near East.

In Phrygia, where the god Zeus was widely worshipped, the god was not only responsible for weather events, shown through<sup>2</sup> votive and tomb inscriptions dedicated for him. Since Zeus is a

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<sup>1</sup> For information on the origin, the functions, and other *epithetons* of the god Zeus, which reveal his attribute as a sky god, see Şahin 2001; Eraydın 2002, 16-18; For information on the belief in the sky god and the evolution of the cult, see Akyürek Şahin 2002, 18-21.

<sup>2</sup> For an example, see Drew-Bear 1978, 48, no. 25. For a general overview of the inscriptions on Zeus Bronton

god who makes it rain, he was perceived as the source of fertility for the local people, initially for themselves and their family members<sup>3</sup>, followed by their products<sup>4</sup> and animals<sup>5</sup>. In their prayers, they always put emphasis on fertility<sup>6</sup> and for protection<sup>7</sup> from Zeus, befitting this “heavenly father” image. And when Zeus responded positively to their desires<sup>8</sup>, they honored<sup>9</sup> the god and tried<sup>10</sup> to gain his support by revealing his good aspects<sup>11</sup>, while protecting themselves from his wrath with various *epithetons*<sup>12</sup>.

The geographical borders, where Zeus Bronton cult spread in quantity, are on the line of the villages of Bilecik center in the south-southwest part of Bithynia, which are within the borders of Nikaia *territorium*, the villages<sup>13</sup> of Söğüt and Pazaryeri districts, Dorylaion/Eskişehir center<sup>14</sup> and Nakoleia/Seyitgazi<sup>15</sup> in northwest Phrygia. The iconographic similarities among the votive steles with Bronton *epithetons* unearthed in this region, confirm the existence of a cultural interaction and transition. The stelae uncovered also affirmed<sup>16</sup> that the cult was not confined to the Dorylaion - Nakoleia area, but expanded its influence in the south-southwest direction of Phrygia,

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and his cult, see Akyürek Şahin 2001, 166 -170; Eraydın 2002, 55; For the Zeus Bronton inscriptions, see also Haspels 1971, no. 103,127, 128,129,132, 134, 135,136,137,138,142,143,147,148, 149,150, 151, 154.

<sup>3</sup> MAMA V. 182, R 23.

<sup>4</sup> Frei 1988, 11, no. 1, 13, no. 3, 15, no. 5, 16, no. 6, 18, no. 8, 19, no. 9.

<sup>5</sup> MAMA V. 218; Akyürek Şahin 2002, 347-348, no. 105; 2006a, 77, no. 108; 2006b, 113, no. 39, res. 39; SEG LVI 1613; LXII 1264; Altınbıçak 2020, 116, no. 185, 150, no. 264.

<sup>6</sup> Ζεὺς Εὐτύχης / Zeus Eutykhes (prosperous) SEG VII. 1175.

<sup>7</sup> MAMA V. 175: Ζεὺς Κτήσιος / Zeus Ktesios (Protector of home and property), no. R 19 Ζεὺς Σωτήρ / Zeus Soter (Saviour); Frei 1981, 80-81, no. 7; Drew-Bear & Naour 1990, 2018, dn. 425; Adak & Akyürek Şahin 2005, 135, no. 1, 136, no. 2.

<sup>8</sup> SEG XXVIII. 10: Ζεὺς Εὐχοδότης / Zeus Eukhedotes (donor of wishes, grantor of wishes); XIV 778: Ζεὺς Εὐφράνωρ / Zeus Euphranor (exhilarating, pleasing).

<sup>9</sup> Körte 1900, 417, 55; Rédaction 1921, 558, 2 (Alpanos/Sarayönü, Ζεὺς Βροντῶν Μέγας / Zeus Bronton Megas-Almighty); SEG L. 1222 (Iuliopolis/Nallıhan – Hıdırlar, Ἀρίστος / Aristos - Best; Μέγιστος / Megistos - Supreme); (İnönü, Ἐπήκοος / Epekoos - Listening); SEG LVI. 1434 (Aizanoi/Çavdarhisar, Μέγας / Megas - Best); Rcl 2017, 139-140.

<sup>10</sup> Agathios / Ἀγάθιος, Agathos / Ἀγαθός Making this attribute of Zeus clear; for another *epitheton* “Καλοκαγάθιος / Kalokagathios”, the compositum (compound) version of kalos kai agathos adjectives, see a votive inscription from Pisidian Antiochea (SEG VI. 550). For the *epitheton* of Ζεὺς Ἀγάθιος Βροντῶν, see MAMA IX. 52 (Sopu köy); Rcl 2017, 134, fn. 15. Zeus Agathios is the most widespread cult after Zeus Bronton, especially in the Bithynia region. For the votive inscriptions of the cult, see Şahin 1981, 1061-1067; On Agathios see Akyürek Şahin 2005, 85-90.

<sup>11</sup> For example, an important clue showing that Zeus was a god feared by the local people due to his connection with the harsh weather conditions in the Cilicia region is that Zeus was referred to as Halazios / Ζεὺς Χαλάζιος (Hail-rainer). In addition, Zeus’ *epitheton keraunios* shows the god’s relationship with lightning and therefore bad weather conditions. For examples and comments on this subject, see Ehling *et al.* 2004, 176-179, 229, no. 13, 230, no. 14; Erten 2011, 190ff.; For an example from Pamphylia, see Özdl 2020, 490.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Zeus and his *epithetons*, see Akyürek Şahin 2001; Eraydın 2002, 29-90; Rcl 2017, 133-141.

<sup>13</sup> For the inscription in Başköy of central of Bilecik, see Şahin 1981, 1084, for the inscriptions in central Kurtköy see 1086, 1097-1098; for the inscriptions in central Nanedere village see Akyürek Şahin 2012, 3-7; For the votive inscriptions from Yakacık village of Söğüt district, see Şahin 1981, 1081, 1087, 1104; for the inscription from Ahmetler of Pazaryeri district, see Şahin 1982, 1504; also, for the cult inscriptions from other districts and villages of Bilecik, see Akyürek Şahin 2012, 353-366, no. 1-19; 2014, 131-133 no. 1-3 and for other inscriptions in the same article but in different locations, see 165, no. 32, 166-167, no. 34.

<sup>14</sup> MAMA V. 13-16, 18-19, 78-79, 84-85, 111, 125-131, 134-138, 147, 151-154, 156-157, 170-172, 176-181, 218-232, R 3, R5, R 9-11, R14-15, R 21-23, KB13.

<sup>15</sup> For a study in which the Nakoleia inscriptions are evaluated collectively, see Altınbıçak 2020.

<sup>16</sup> For an example in Kütahya, see Drew-Bear & Naour 1990, 2001, no. 21, 2002, no. 22, 2003, no. 23; see also MAMA X. 290, 294, 324 (the eagle relief on lightning in this inscription is the visual equivalent of a tombstone dedication to Zeus Bronton), 426; Akyürek Şahin 2001, 171, dn. 68.

called Phrygia Epiktetos<sup>17</sup>, especially in the Upper Tembris (Porsuk) Stream and Rhyndakos (Kocasu) Stream valleys, where they found new living spaces. Although it's not as numerous as in Phrygia, the votive inscriptions belonging to the cult of Zeus Bronton are found not only in this region, but also in Maionia (Northeast Lydia), Galatia, Isauria, Lykaonia and Pamphylia as well as outside Anatolia such as in Rome, where the worship of Zeus Bronton was known as Iuppiter Tonans. It has been documented that votive offerings were also made in Latin and ancient Greek, honoring the god and paying homage to his name. Additionally, the votive steles from the island of Thera (Santorini) and the city of Kytaion in the Crimea have much importance in terms of showing the extent of the cult's spread<sup>18</sup>.

All epigraphic material respecting the worship of Zeus Bronton in the Phrygia region was gathered by Akyürek Şahin in 2002<sup>19</sup>. Subsequently, new finds regarding the cult of Zeus Bronton continued to be uncovered. Within this context, a Zeus Bronton votive stele brought to the Kütahya Museum from Yaylababa village, and another Bronton votive stele placed under protection of the Afyon Museum, although its origin is not known. A Zeus Bronton votive stele, which is currently in the Uşak Museum, is said to have been brought from Göynükören village between Gediz and Uşak, according to the museum inventory record. It is especially emphasized<sup>20</sup> by Akyürek Şahin because of its unique characteristics of the cult of this region. All these votive stones are no different from other Bronton offerings and include those of who make a wish to Zeus Bronton, the farmer god, for the well-being of their place of residence or family members. Apart from these three examples, the subject of 57 cult stones brought to the Eskişehir and Seyitgazi Museums from the villages of Dorylaion (Eskişehir) and Nakoleia (Seyitgazi) or recorded *in situ* outside the museum, are similarly composed of expressions of the well-being of the products, animals and themselves as the local people. An important part of these finds belong to the Zeus sanctuary in Yazıdere (Beygir Tokadı/Köle Deresi Locality) northeast of Seyitgazi and provide valuable information about the Zeus Bronton cult in the region<sup>21</sup>.

In another study on the finds that took place after 2002, 22 votive inscriptions, two of which are tomb inscriptions, belonging to Zeus Bronton were collected from Bilecik villages. They are currently kept in the Bilecik and Söğüt Museums or recorded *in situ*, and introduced to the scientific world. One of these votive inscriptions was found in Bolu province, Mudurnu district, Çepni<sup>22</sup> village and the other in Bursa İnegöl Hamzabey<sup>23</sup> village. Another Zeus Bronton votive stele<sup>24</sup>, which was found in the village of Bağcagiz in Geyve district of Sakarya province, a part of the Nikaia *territorium* in Bithynia, ends with an expression of gratitude. It is claimed that the temple of the Roman Imperial Period under the sovereignty of Paphlagonia Hadrianapolis, dated to the II<sup>nd</sup> - III<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. in Asartepe / Kimistene, probably belongs to Zeus Kimistene, who is mentioned in a rock inscription. There is also an inscription<sup>25</sup> at this location that is dedicated to Zeus Bronton. These finds, which prove that the cult spread towards such regions as Bithynia and Paphlagonia, also show us that the god Zeus fulfilled his function in a way befitting his *epitheton*, ensuring these regions that have particular geographic conditions (especially those covered with

<sup>17</sup> The cities that make up the Phrygia Epiktetos region are Dorylaion, Nakoleia, Midaion, Kotiaieion and Aizanoi.

<sup>18</sup> Akyürek Şahin 2002, 514, no. 297-298, 518, no. 299-300, 521, no. 301, 522, no. 302, 523, no. 303, 524-536, no. 304-313, 539, no. 315, 537, no. 314.

<sup>19</sup> Akyürek Şahin 2002.

<sup>20</sup> For these examples, see Akyürek Şahin 2006b, 118, no. 58, 120, no. 59, 120-121, no. 60.

<sup>21</sup> For the finds from the Yazıdere sanctuary, see Akyürek Şahin 2006a; 2006b, no. 34-57.

<sup>22</sup> Akyürek Şahin 2012, 367, no. 21.

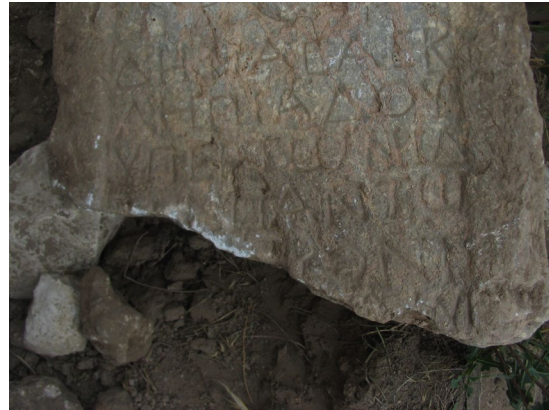
<sup>23</sup> Akyürek Şahin 2012, 368, no. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Öztürk 2013, 290, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Laflı & Christof 2011, 233-286.







Δημᾶς Ἀσκ-  
 2 ληπιάδου  
 ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδ-  
 4 [ι]ων πάντω-  
 [ν Διὶ] Βροντ-  
 6 [ῶντι][ --- ]Υ  
 [ ----- ]

*Demas son of Asclepiades (offered) (this offering) to Zeus Bronton for (the well-being) of all his family members.*

L. 1: Demas is a Greek personal name known in Phrygia<sup>27</sup>. The name<sup>28</sup>, an example of which we have encountered in the city of Miletos beyond Phrygia, is especially common in the cities of Ionia, while fewer examples are also encountered<sup>29</sup> in Mysia. This name is also mentioned in one of the votive inscriptions with the bust of Zeus and Bronton *epitheton* in the Bithynia region, where the Bronton *epitheton* is widely recorded.<sup>30</sup>

LL. 1-2: Asklepiades / Ἀσκληπιάδης, which is frequently encountered<sup>31</sup> in almost every region of Anatolia, is a Greek theophor name, meaning the son or descendant of the physician god Asklepios. Therefore it is a name synonymous with the word doctor<sup>32</sup>. This name, which is closely related to the god of health and his cult, is also documented in inscriptions from Dorylaion<sup>33</sup> and Nakoleia<sup>34</sup> in Phrygia. This name, which is closely related to the god of health and his cult, is also documented in inscriptions from Dorylaion and Nakoleia in Phrygia.

L. 6: Since the phrase (εὐχὴν), which is expected to come after the Bronton *epitheton* that we completed in the last line, does not match the broken part up to the upsilon letter at the end of the line in terms of the estimated number of letters, the end of the line remains incomplete. Consequently, several possibilities can be considered: The rest of the stone may have been left blank by the stonemason, or it may simply be ornamented with a motif. Or there might have been

<sup>27</sup> MAMA V. 207 (Seyitgazi/ Nakoleia); 231, KB 9; MAMA VII. 265 (Piribeyli/ Yunak/ Konya); Haspels 1971, no. 141 (Seyitgazi/Nakoleia/ Aşağı Ilıca); Waelkens 1986, 200, no. 564 (Amorion/ Hisarköy/ Pissia?).

<sup>28</sup> LGPN VB. 99 (Miletos).

<sup>29</sup> LGPN VA. 120.

<sup>30</sup> Akyürek Şahin 2014, 132, no. 2.

<sup>31</sup> For some examples, see LGPN VA. 80-83; LGPN VB. 72-73; MAMA VI. 77, 150.

<sup>32</sup> Χυτήρογλου 2011, 124.

<sup>33</sup> MAMA V. 16, 29, 31, 64, 66, 67, 81, 110, 138, 139, 181, R3.

<sup>34</sup> MAMA V. 181, R 3, R 11, R 26.

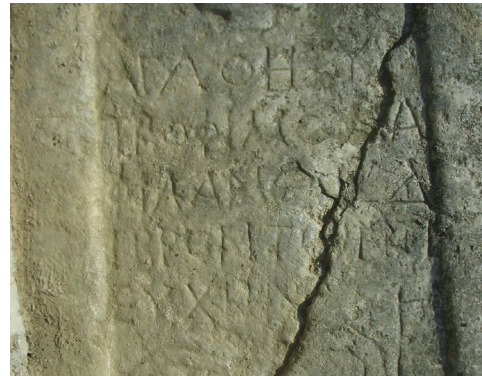
expressions such as “for himself”, “for his wife”<sup>35</sup>, “for his children” or “for his salvation” in respect to Demas. Another possibility is that an *epitheton* of Zeus came after the god’s name<sup>36</sup>.

## 2. The Vow of Trophimos and Philanthos

Findspot: Ahılar village. Dimensions: H.: 1.515 m; W.: 0.49 Top - 0.47 Middle - 0.50 m Bottom; D.: 0.16 - 0.11 - 0.14 m; LH.: 0.028 - 0.035 m.

Marble votive stele with a triangular pediment with two acroteres. In the pediment, there is a relief *bukranion*<sup>37</sup>, which is frequently encountered as a tribute to the god Zeus. The gap is moulded in between the pediment and the inscription. There is a basket (κάλαθος) at the top of the inscription. Below the inscription, there is a depiction of a sheep drawn in an incised technique, as an incised trace visible in its upper right corner. There is a 5-line ancient Greek inscription above the sheep depiction. The inscribed obverse has a crack extending from the upper right corner to the lower left corner, hence the damage to some letters.

Date: Before 212 A.D.



ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ·  
2 Τρόφιμος καὶ  
Φίλανθος Δ-  
4 ἰ Βροντῶντ  
εὐχὴν.

*For Good Fortune. Trophimos and Philanthos (presented) (this) offering to Zeus Bronton.*

L. 2: The name Trophimos, which is quite common in the region of Phrygia, is mentioned in four tomb inscriptions<sup>38</sup> in Eskisehir/ Dorylaion; as well as in a votive inscription<sup>39</sup> presented to Zeus Bronton in Seyitgazi/ Nakoleia/ Kuyucak. Through our inscription in Ahılar village in the Dorylaion *territorium*, this name is again documented. The name Trophimos is derived from an ancient Greek verb τρέφω meaning “to feed”, “to grow”, “to bring up”, and it means “nourishing”, “nu-

<sup>35</sup> MAMA V. 85.

<sup>36</sup> For another *epitheton* of Zeus, see MAMA V. 157. For comments and bibliography on this subject, see Eraydin 2002, 42-44.

<sup>37</sup> For the use of *Bukranion* in the Zeus Bronton offerings, see Radet & Ouvre 1896, no. 2; Ramsay 1915, 2, fig. 5; MAMA V. 220; 152-153, 178, 182; For Zeus Tyrannos MAMA V. 12; For Men Touitenos no. 208; Lane 1964, no.10; For Hosios kai Dikaios MAMA V. 10; Akyürek Şahin 2002, 368-369, no. 135, fig. 24-25, lev. 30, 135 a-ç; Altınbıçak 2020, 38-39, no. 27.

<sup>38</sup> MAMA V. 181, 3-4; 183, 155; 187, 1 [1/4].

<sup>39</sup> MAMA V. 151, R 10.

tritious". And as a name, it means "young master of a slave"<sup>40</sup>.

L. 3: The name Philanthos is mentioned once in Karia - Aphrodisias<sup>41</sup>, and once in Ionia - Phokaia and Mysia - Kyzikos<sup>42</sup>. On the other hand, it is mentioned twice in a tomb inscription from Konya/Yunak/Beşışıklı (Ούέτεστον / Vetistos / Vetistus) village, in the borders of Galatia province<sup>43</sup>.

And as far as we can determine today, the name is mentioned for the first time in the Phrygia region, in this inscription from Ahılar village, and documented in the Dorylaion *territorium*. The name Philanthos (Φιλανθος) means "flower lover", "fond of flowers"<sup>44</sup>.

LL. 3-4: Examples of Zeus' name with a single *iota* in the form of Δι are well known<sup>45</sup>.

The depiction of an ox head, a basket and a stylized sheep on the work provides an important clue as to what was expected from the god Zeus Bronton, through these votive offerings. The depiction of *bucranium* and the sheep are items that clearly point to agriculture and animal husbandry, as the basket is a device for carrying/storing the crops obtained or the products taken from animals, such as wool, etc. Having taken on the identity of omnipotence, the god Zeus had such divinity that protected and blessed the animals and agricultural products of those who presented him with offerings. Additionally, the work is a new find in terms of the geographical spread of those votive inscriptions, bearing the Zeus Bronton *epitheton*. And as far as we have found, this is the first documentation from this village.

Both votive inscriptions introduced in this article, provide new clues to the geographical spread of the cult of Zeus Bronton in the Phrygia region, and reveal that this cult was important for the ancient people, whose main livelihood was from agriculture and animal husbandry, in the regions that today correspond to the villages of Sarıungur and Ahılar. Further studies to be carried out in this region will help us add further information to our existing knowledge about this cult and perhaps capture different perspectives on it.

<sup>40</sup> LSJ 1996, 1828.

<sup>41</sup> LGPN VB. 425.

<sup>42</sup> LGPN VA. 446.

<sup>43</sup> Waelkens 1986, 232, no. 593.

<sup>44</sup> When examined etymologically, it is a composite adjective derived from the verb φιλέω "to love" and the name τὸ ἄνθος "flower" and is used as a noun. As in the noun example Φίλιππος (Philippos), "horse lover, fond of horses", which is derived from the combination of the verb Φιλέω "to love" and ὁ ἵππος "horse".

<sup>45</sup> For some examples, see MAMA V. 14, 84, 232; X. 294.



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