

The Religion and Cults of the Pontic Kingdom: Political Aspects

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In the religious life of the Kingdom of Pontos, we can see two main currents – the cults of Hellenic and local deities and the ideological propaganda closely connected with royal dynastic policy. With the exception of a few articles¹ and sections in monographs on the history of the Kingdom of Pontos, there is little literature on the subject and we lack monographic studies on Pontic religion (by “Pontic” I mean the Kingdom of Pontos). Scholars instead usually stress the political aspects of the royal propaganda of Mithridates Eupator connecting it with his anti-Roman activity before and during the Mithridatic Wars.² Some aspects of religious life and cults in Pontos have been touched upon in studies on terracottas, coins, reliefs, and inscriptions, but these studies have mostly referred only to the Greek cities of the Pontic kingdom.³ A complete study of cults and religion in the Pontic Kingdom as well as the basic points of royal Mithridatic propaganda connected with the popular cults throughout the whole state remains a task for classical scholarship.

The same is true for other regions included in the kingdom of the Mithridatids: in Bosporos we come across clear traces of Mithridatic, i.e. Pontic, religious policy even after the fall of Mithridates Eupator; clearly this policy survived throughout the course of the late 1st century BC and indeed endured until at least the mid 3rd century AD. Yet we still do not know what was the reason for the spreading of the Pontic cults there, the more so in that local Greeks and barbarians had their own cults and religious traditions since the time of the Greek colonization. One thing however is clear – in Olbia, Chersonesos, and the West Pontic cities the original Mithridatic, i.e. Anatolian, cults were very rare, unlike in Bosporos and the ancestral Pontic domain, including Kolchis, where the Pontic religious impact was much greater. At Bosporos this influence is confirmed by the spread of the cult of Ma – a female deity with a variety of functions of partly Hellenic, Iranian, and Anatolian origin – which had a temple in Pantikapaion (*CIRB*, 74: θεῶ τῆς Μᾶς? καὶ Πλαρ(θ)έβου), by the worship of Mithras-Attis in the first century BC to the first century AD⁴ and Mên, who appeared on the coins of Pantikapaion, Phanagoreia, and Gorgippia struck in the first quarter of the 1st century BC, showing the features of king Mithridates Eupator wearing a diademed Phrygian helmet.⁵ Anatolian and Iranian cults spread over the territory where Hellenic cults had been dominant since the Greek colonisation, and it is quite interesting to

study how they interacted with each other. Dionysos, a Hellenic god of fertility and wine-making, had a shrine in Pantikapaion, and was revered probably from the beginning of the 80's BC.⁶ A temple, where the god Dionysos was worshipped, appeared at the turn of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC in Vani.⁷ The establishment of these sanctuaries in Kolchis and Bosporos coincides with the surge of Mithridatic propaganda, based on the political and ideological exploitation of Mithridates Eupator as Dionysos just after the triumph of the king in Pergamon in 88 BC or slightly earlier.⁸ When Bosporos joined the Kingdom of Pontos, its monetary officials began in 100 BC to place the image and attributes of Dionysos on the coins of the main Bosporan cities, because the Pontic king was associated with this god.⁹ That is why some of the coins have the image of a young Dionysos with features of Mithridates Eupator. Dionysos appeared on coins parallel to the traditional Greek deities Apollon and Artemis, who were popular among the Bosporans.

The political aspects of Mithridatic religion in the Black Sea territories were deeply connected with the Pontic Kingdom, where the cult of Dionysos was used in the policy of the king, as is reflected on coins and terracottas. Dionysos and his attributes were stamped on royal and bronze coins: in 96 BC royal coins of Mithridates Eupator were decorated with an ivy wreath which testifies to the existence of a royal cult of Dionysos in Pontos and the identification of the king with this god.¹⁰ Early undated tetradrachms of the king depict him without an ivy wreath, and this fact allowed G. Kleiner to date the early royal series of coins to no later than 102/101 BC, when the cult of Dionysos officially became a royal one and the king began calling himself Mithridates Eupator Dionysos.¹¹ A head of the young Dionysos bearing an ivy garland together with his attributes *cista mystica*, *thyrsos*, and panther was shown on the coins of Pontic cities – Sinope, Amisos, Komana, Laodikeia, Kabeira, Dia, which F. Imhoof-Blümer dated to 105-90 BC (type "Dionysos/thyrsos") and 90-80 BC (type "Dionysos/cista mystica" and "panther/cista mystica"), while F. de Callataj dates the whole Dionysos series to 100-85 BC.¹² This seems to be correct, if it is taken into account that the adoption of the epithet "Dionysos" occurred not earlier than 102 BC. The appearance of the god on coins of the Greek cities of Pontos was due to the Philhellenic policy of Mithridates, who gave some political and autonomous rights to his Hellenic subjects just after beginning the expansion in Asia Minor. At exactly the same time the terracotta workshop at Amisos began to produce a great number of masks and terracotta figurines of Dionysos, Satyros and Silenos, which were widely spread throughout the whole territory of the Pontic state, including the North Pontic region and Kolchis.¹³ This was definitely political and ideological propaganda, which introduced the king as the New Dionysos, eager to free the Greeks from the barbarians and, to some extent, from the Romans. Thus since the last decade of the 2nd century BC the Pontic royal elite and the followers of the king tried to use religion and cults as a mean of propaganda to strengthen the power of Mithridates Eupator.

This tendency became evident soon after the Crimean campaign of Diophantos in 110-107 BC. In the decree for Diophantos from Chersonesos (110-107 BC) we hear nothing about Mithridates' epithet "Dionysos" probably because it had not yet been taken by the king (*IOSPE I*², 352). Yet already by 102-101 BC Mithridates took the epithet "Dionysos", as is shown by the inscription of the priest Helianax in the Mithridatic heroon on Delos.¹⁴ This epithet could have been adopted by Mithridates as part of his title after 106 BC when he began his expansion in Asia Minor as a first step in preparation for the future struggle with Rome. The political aspect of the cult of Dionysos in the Pontic Kingdom was strengthened when Mithridates attempted to annex Paphlagonia in 106 BC and both needed to control affairs in Kappadokia at the turn of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC and captured Lesser Armenia and Kolchis.

Territorial expansion meant that the royal propaganda machine had to portray the king of Pontos as protector and liberator of the Greeks and the resident population by identifying him with the god who had mainly apothropaic functions and was widely worshipped as Saviour – *Soter*. Although this feature was applicable to the cults of numerous gods, popular in the Kingdom of Pontos, it was Dionysos who was chosen for official use. That is why our task here is to trace the influence of the main Pontic cults on Mithridatic propaganda as well as on the creation of the king's new image as Dionysos. I shall try to answer the question why Dionysos in particular was chosen as a chief official god of Pontos to express the ideological background of Mithridatic policy – to create a large kingdom on the basis of territorial expansion in Asia Minor and on the Black Sea.

Let us begin with the male cults in the Kingdom of Pontos. The most popular, and the chief, official god was Zeus, who was already a royal deity in the reign of Mithridates III. His image was shown on royal coins as Zeus Etaphore, sitting on a throne and holding a sceptre and an eagle as symbols of spiritual and universal power.¹⁵ The standing figures of Zeus and Hera, leaning on sceptres, are found on the tetradrachms of Mithridates IV and his wife and sister-queen Laodike.¹⁶ A single figure of Hera, in the same pose with a sceptre, appears on the coins of Laodike after she became a widow and for some time ruled alone until Mithridates V came to power.¹⁷ This means that Zeus and Hera, the supreme Olympic gods, symbols of power in the Greek world, were worshipped in the Pontic Kingdom already in the 3rd century BC, and became particularly popular in the 2nd century BC as the patrons of the ruling dynasty (Fig. 1). It proves that the cult of Zeus became official in Pontos under the early Mithridatids and that the god was viewed as a protector of the royal family, which suggests some degree of deification of the rulers on the base of this worshipping of Zeus and Hera. The latter is confirmed by a unique stater of Mithridates IV with the portrait of the king in a laurel wreath – a standing Hera with sceptre, star, crescent, and the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΙΘΡΙΔΑΤΟΥ, which G. Kleiner supposed to be a post-humous issue of this king by Laodike, who on her own coins had the same type of Hera, but without star and cres-



Fig. 1. Pontic royal issues with Zeus and Hera.

cent.¹⁸ If so, then Hera (and Zeus as well) was regarded as protector of the members of the dynasty. Zeus' cult continued to be official during the reign of Mithridates Eupator, as is evident from numismatics (Fig. 2). The majority of the copper coins from the so-called "quasi-autonomous" mints of Pontic cities bear the image and attributes of Zeus, inspired, of course, by the royal propaganda. The same follows from the sacrifices to this god as *Stratios*, i.e. Warrior and "god of armies", performed by the king in connection with his struggle with the Romans (App. *Mith.* 66, 70). Modern scholarship offers different explanations of this matter: some scholars suggest an Iranian origin of Zeus in Pontos akin to the Persian royal god Ahura-Mazda, others assume Seleukid influence on the cult, as the first kings of Pontos had dynastic links with the Seleukids.¹⁹



Fig. 2. Coin of Amisos with the type "Zeus/eagle on thunderbolt".

In tracing the origin of the cult of Zeus in Pontos and Paphlagonia, it should be kept in mind that the god was considered to be a protector and a saviour in different spheres of life for the local population in many areas of northern and eastern Anatolia. Zeus' epithets show the chthonic features of the god and demonstrates that he was considered as patron of certain regions in Paphlagonia: Zeus Karzenos in Karzena, Zeus Kimistenos in Kimistena, Zeus Bonitenos (*IGR* III, 90) in Bonita – in the last case he was considered a horseman and a sun-god with protective, soteric, and apothropaic functions, whose role was to guard and preserve the region, people, and villagers, just as Zeus Pappos in Bithynia. He was also worshipped as Koropidzos (in Kastamonu) – an epithet also taken from a place-name.²⁰ We also hear about some other local epithets of Zeus – Baleos, Sdaleites, Monios, Sarsos, Xibenos, Disabeites – all thought to be derived from local toponyms, showing Zeus as patron of villages, small towns, and ethnic communities (the suffix –ειτης is a witness of the ethnic character of the epithet).²¹ The soteric aspect of the god in northern Anatolia (and in some other parts of Asia Minor) as saviour and guard compares to the Hellenic cult of Zeus where the epithets Pater, Soter, Patroios, Ktesios, Erkesios, and Oikophylaks are used and the god worshipped as keeper and defender of the house, court-yard, plot, property, individual ownership, etc.²² Soteric features of Zeus were concentrated in the cult of Zeus Pyleios, popular in forts and fortified cities of the Pontic Kingdom, because the god Pylon in Pontos, as in Greece, was a keeper of gates and walls and a defender of forts, castles, and towns (*IGR* III, 110).²³ In Paphlagonia and Pontos, Zeus was thought to be a protector of regions and cities, because the local villagers were grouped into native or ethnic communities as the primary form of social organisation of peasants in Anatolia.

As the worshippers of Zeus were mostly peasants, *katoikoi*, villagers, and temple-servants, who worked on temple-lands, one of the chief functions of the god was his role as patron of crops and natural forces. Consequently Zeus was worshipped in Paphlagonia with the epithet Poarinos, as we see in an inscription from the city of Abonouteichos and on the city's rare coins of the Mithridatic period.²⁴ The epithet Ποαρινός comes from the word ποία, ποάριον (or Πόια) – “a grass” and can be compared with the hero Ποίας, son of Taumachos, father of Philoktetes, which makes him a patron of meadows and pastures.²⁵ As god of plants and nature he can be compared with Attis, a Phrygian companion of the Great Mother of Gods – Kybele, who had the epithet Ποιμήν or *Phrygius pastor*, worshipped as a patron of pastures, meadows and herds, i.e. a god of nature and vegetation. Poimen was popular among the Phrygian and Thracian population of northern Anatolia particularly in Maryandinia (*Schol. Apoll. Rhod.* 2.354), while the Greeks associated him with Zeus, as in Abonouteichos. In Çorum (Euchaita) in Pontos, Zeus was worshipped as a god of fertility under the epithet Epikarpios, connected with the Hellenic cults of the Eleusinian goddesses Demeter and Kore and with the Phrygian and Karian cults of the Mother of the Gods and Attis.²⁶ In Çerek he

was viewed as the patron of landowners, the protector, saviour and guardian of their fields and the conqueror of dark and evil; in Paphlagonian Zorah he appeared as protector, soter and guardian of families and privacy.²⁷ Zeus had an altar in Zela, and on local coins of the Roman period he was depicted as Zeus Nikephore (like Zeus Etaphore on royal coins of Mithridates III) with the epithet ΖΕΥΣ ΕΠΙΚΑΡΠΙΟΣ ΖΗΛΕΙΤΩΝ, which shows him as protector and patron of the city's community.²⁸ On other coins of the Imperial period the god holds a *grebe d'epis barbelé* as a deity of nature and crops.²⁹ Such attributes allows us to connect Zeus Epikarpios with the completely Greek cult of Zeus Karpophoros or Karpodotes – a fruit-bearing god.

Zeus' functions as patron of the country, villages, and crops along with his main feature of controlling natural forces lead to his chthonic and apothropaic character as soter and saviour. This is definitely linked with his epithets Ἐθέρι ἀλεξιχαλάζω,³⁰ which linkage also indicates a god of fertility linked with land-productivity, water, and the Eleusinian cults of Demeter, Eubouleios, and Ploutos. The epithet Ἐθέρι = Δίος Αἰθήρ > Αἰθέριος is usually met in Greece and in the Greek cities of Asia Minor along with the Hellenic gods Athena Pallas and Poseidon (particularly in Miletos, Mytilene, Kyzikos, Arkadia). This makes Zeus Αἰθήρ > Ἐθέρι ἀλεξιχαλάζω an originally Greek god, who was closely associated with Zeus Epikarpios (=Karpophoros or Karpodotes) and Zeus Soter. Zeus as god of recovery and protector from evil can be found in the cult of Zeus Bobeomenos in the region of Amaseia (derived from the verbs βέομαι – “I shall live”, βιώω – “to live”, “to survive”, “to recover”)³¹. Thus the god was a patron of human life and recovery, a role which corresponds to the fundamental religious nature of Zeus in Pontos, Paphlagonia, and Kappadokia as Soter and Epikarpios – a patron of fertility, vegetation, and crops, without which life was impossible. As Soter he was responsible for the life of the people. Returning to the above mentioned inscription from Çorum, it should be noted that the dedication was made by a priest of the Eleusinian, i.e. Hellenic, triad Demeter-Kore-Zeus. This was not only a gift to the fertile forces of nature, it was to a greater extent a reminder of the central point of the Eleusinian ceremony – to revive life after death, and this aspect is confirmed by the fact that, according to the inscription, the festival of the Eleusinian gods was celebrated before the day of the Phrygian Mother – Kybele, a goddess of fertility and recovery, popular among the Greeks and the local population of Anatolia.³² It shows the chthonic aspect of the cult and a kind of religious syncretism, where Hellenic deities retain a central role.

The cults of Zeus, the highest Olympian god of the Greeks, popular in the Pontic Kingdom as the protector of different regions, were united into one common cult of Zeus Soter – the Saviour. In Trapezous since the 5th century BC he was worshipped together with Herakles – the immortal hero, conqueror of death and mortality (Diod. 14.30.3; Xen. *An.* 4.8.25); in Havza a dedication to Zeus Soter was made for the recovery of a person³³ and here the god was associated with the popular Greek god Asklepios Soter – a patron of health in

charge of restoring life after serious illness. In the Kappadokian Kingdom, in the city of Anisa, we hear about the Soteriai – a festival in honour of Zeus³⁴, and the same holiday existed in Sinope already from the 3rd century BC.³⁵ It would hardly be a mistake to suggest a Hellenic origin for the Soteriai as well as to stress the Greek nature of the cult of Zeus Soter in Pontos, especially in the Greek cities of the kingdom.

These cults, however, were mostly private, while the official royal cult, as mentioned above, seems to have been the cult of Zeus Stratios. Appianos' description of sacrificial rituals for this god helps to establish the deities' real identity. Mithridates Eupator made sacrifices to him: "on a lofty pile of wood on a high hill, according to the fashion of his country, which is as follows. First, the kings themselves carry wood to the heap. Then they make a smaller pile encircling the other one. On the higher pile they pour milk, honey, wine, oil, and various kinds of incense. On the lower they spread a banquet of bread and meat for those present (as at the sacrifices of the Persian kings at Pasargadae) and then they set fire to the wood. The height of the flame is such that it can be seen at a distance of 1000 stades from the sea, and they say that nobody can come near it for several days on account of the heat. Mithridates performed a sacrifice of this kind according to the custom of his country" (App. *Mithr.* 66). In 73 BC before setting out for Paphlagonia the king made a similar sacrifice together with sacrifices to Poseidon to whom he offered a pair of white horses by throwing them into the sea (App. *Mithr.* 70). On the coins of the Imperial period struck in Amaseia, where a temple of Zeus Stratios had been erected,³⁶ one can see Zeus Nikephoros, Nike and Athena Polias closely linked with Zeus as patron of warriors and armies. The coins show a bonfire,³⁷ an eagle with open wings,³⁸ sometimes sitting on a fire, a tree, and a quadriga.³⁹ Some coins bear a two-storey bonfire,⁴⁰ a sacrificial animal – a bull, lying on the fire with legs up,⁴¹ while a life-tree, a symbol of royal power and good fortune, is visible near it. Clearly these are the attributes of Zeus Stratios, patron of the ruling Pontic dynasty, and the Amaseian coins undoubtedly reproduce a sacrifice to this god. It has long ago been suggested that in the Kingdom of Pontos Zeus Stratios was identified with Ahura-Mazda, a protector of the Achaemenids in ancient Iran, whom the Mithridatids regularly tried to imitate. In Persia this cult was also combined with the worship of Poseidon, as some scholars believe, basing their thinking on the abovementioned note of Appianos about the simultaneous sacrifices for Zeus Stratios and Poseidon.⁴² The quadriga with eight white horses, was also devoted to Ahura-Mazda (Ormuzd), while horses were sacrificed to Zeus-Helios, whose quadriga, as ancient people thought, dwelt in the clouds over a bonfire with an eagle sitting on it (Xen. *Cyr.* 8.3.12; Herod. 7.40).

The sacrifices to Zeus Stratios were usually offered on hilltops or on the tops of mountains where sanctuaries were constructed. A temple of Zeus Stratios was located on a hill above Yassıçal, where the remains of a perimeter wall, pottery fragments, and three inscriptions mentioning Zeus

Stratios have been found. One of these inscriptions reads: Δὶ Στρατίῳ | Βασιλεὺς | εὐχῆ.⁴³ The second does not contain the name of the god but mentions a lifelong priest, who made the dedication from income from the god's (some scholars suppose Zeus Stratios')⁴⁴ temple (ἐκ τῶν τ[οῦ] θεοῦ). The third inscription was erected by the college of *archontes* on behalf of the *demos* of Amaseia.⁴⁵ From Phazemonitis (Çatalkaya) comes a dedication to Zeus Stratios made by Kyros (a Persian) and Philetairos (a Greek) from Klaros, where a well-known temple and oracle of Zeus was situated.⁴⁶ Thus Zeus Stratios was worshipped equally by the Iranian, Anatolian, and Greek populations, as well as by the Romans. The latter is confirmed by a dedication inscribed on an altar from Çalıca, dated to 239/240 AD⁴⁷ and by a dedication to Zeus Stratios in Athens, offered by a group of citizens from Amaseia, two of whom were Greeks, one evidently a Roman and one probably of Anatolian origin. According to F. Cumont, Zeus Stratios was a protector of Amaseia, the early capital of Pontos, which explains the multiple sanctuaries of this god in the city and the surrounding area – near Yassıçal, in Çatalkaya on the plain of Chiliokomon, and to the north near Gökcebag (modern Zulu).⁴⁸

F. Cumont noted that the Greek settlers in Anatolia identified their greatest god Zeus with resident Anatolian deities, while the Mithridatids compared him with the Persian god Ahura-Mazda, which resulted in the syncretistic Greek-Iranian cult of Zeus Stratios with both local Anatolian and Iranian features. Local attributes, however, are largely lacking and we find mainly Greek features, particularly in the religious content of the cult. The Iranian element is only partially evident in the rituals: in particular there can be talk of the participation of kings in the sacrificial ritual, as in Persia under the Achaemenids, and the great role of fire during animal sacrifices. Yet this could simply be a coincidence, as fire was widely used in rituals in a variety of Hellenic cults. It could also be a kind of imitation of the Persian kings by the Mithridatids, who declared themselves descendants of the Achaemenids and Otanes, one of the Seven Magi. The affinity of rituals in the Persian cult of Ahura-Mazda and those belonging to the cult of the Greek Zeus made the two rather alike. But it is noteworthy that the kings of Pontos offered sacrifices not to Ahura-Mazda, but to Zeus, called Stratios in accordance with the Greek tradition, though the rituals on the whole remained Iranian. This suggests the Hellenic origin of the cult, which became official royal cult under the early Mithridatids. The city coinage of Pontos under Mithridates Eupator represents Zeus and his attributes (eagle on thunderbolt) as a Hellenic Olympian god (Fig. 2). Significantly, it is used in both the Hellenic *poleis* and in non-Greek communities such as Gazioura, Taulara, Pimolisa, and Chabakta.⁴⁹ Thus, it is apparent that the official propaganda of Mithridates VI used the Hellenic cult of Zeus in relation to all his subjects.

The Greek nature of Zeus Stratios is confirmed by the worship of the completely Hellenic god Zeus Strategos in the Greek *polis* of Amastris in

Fig. 3. A Relief with male deity from Zougo (chora of Amaseia).



Paphlagonia. Here Zeus Strategos and Hera were regarded as τοῖς πατρίοις θεοῖς, protectors and guardians of the city.⁵⁰ As F. Cumont confidently identified Zeus Strategos in Amastris with Zeus Stratios in Pontos,⁵¹ we should accept that both epithets belonged to the same god – saviour, guardian, and patron of armies and warriors. Both epithets are more expressive of Zeus as a Hellenic deity and less as an Iranian, which in Pontos and Paphlagonia is confirmed by the popularity of the Greek personal name Στρατός,⁵² by altars in the environs of Herakleia Pontike, by the cult statue in Nikomedeia in Bithynia, sculpted by Daedalos, as well as by the worship of the god by Eumenes from Kardia, a ruler in Paphlagonia and Kappadokia in the late 4th century BC.⁵³ The significance of the cult grew in the course of the wars conducted by the *diadochs*, when *polis* cults became secondary.

A late Hellenistic relief from the environs of Amaseia is noteworthy in this context. It shows an androgynous figure with a lightning bolt and a round shield, which has caused some scholars to consider it a local predecessor of Zeus Stratios.⁵⁴ Yet the image has no connection with Ahura-Mazda (Fig. 3). It was rather an attempt to reproduce a male deity as thunder-god and warrior, popular within the territory of Amaseia. The inscription on the base-relief can

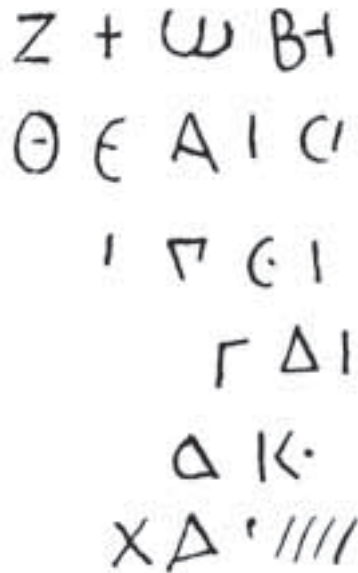


Fig. 4. Greek inscription on the Zougo-Relief.

the Earth who gives life and harvest, i.e. food for life, is also quite understandable. The myth about the birth of Attis was connected with Agdistis and Zeus, and that is why the warrior on the relief from Zougo can be identified with Zeus and Attis, an identification which corresponded to the religious notions of the indigenous population. The woman who offered the gift could have been a native of this region as the name suggests. The alteration of $\eta > \epsilon$, as in the goddess' name *Gē*, is characteristic for Greek inscriptions of the late Hellenistic period, but the question remains as to what the ending of *Agdistis* in the dative case in local spelling was. According to the rules of the Greek language it should be Ἀγδίστιδι which we can possibly find in line 5 of this inscription. But another possible reading can be as follows: Ζώβη θεαῖς Γέι [$\text{Ἀ} \gamma \delta \iota [\sigma] \delta \iota \varsigma \chi \Delta \text{III}$, i.e. "Zobe to the two goddesses Ge and Agdistis (a gift) 14 (chalkoi?)" with alternation $\tau > \delta$ and incorrect changing of dative into nominative in the name of Agdistis. In any case the relief and the inscription does not appear to be evidence for the interpretation of the warrior as a local androgynous idol but rather as Zeus Soter, comparable to Zeus Epikarpios, Aither and Alexichaladzos, linked with fertility, or Zeus Stratios, protector and guardian of the Amaseian territory.

In Pontos, Zeus was a multi-functional god, who to a certain extent could be associated with Iranian deities like Ahura-Mazda and Mithras, but the Greek and Anatolian population of Paphlagonia and Pontos worshipped him foremost as a Hellenic god, who could be syncretised with Perseus, Mên-Pharnakou, and Dionysos. This is evident from the coinage: the double axe

possibly be read as Ζώβη θεαῖς Γέι (καὶ) [$\text{--- Ἀ} \gamma \delta \iota [\sigma \tau \iota \varsigma] ? \chi \Delta \text{III}$, i.e. "Zobe to the goddess *Gē* and Agdistis (a gift) 14 chalkoi" (Fig. 4). Zobe is not the name of a local goddess, a patron of the village Zougo, as H. Grégoire and E. Olshausen supposed,⁵⁵ but most probably a personal female name (cf. *IOSPE* I², 105; 176: $\text{Ζώβεις Ζώβειτος, Ζώβεις Ζώβει}$ (Olbia); *CIRB* 320: Ζόβην (Pantikapaion)).⁵⁶ Unification of *Gē* and Agdistis in one cult along with a male deity – a thunder-god and a warrior, who could only be Zeus Stratios, is quite explicable: Agdistis is a name of a Phrygian deity of fertility and vegetation in Pessinos, linked with Zeus, Attis, Kybele and Rhea; sometimes it was even an epithet of Rhea and Kybele as goddesses of fertility, soil and of all beings.⁵⁷ An offering to her along with *Gē* – the goddess of

was attributed both to Perseus, as seen on the bronze figure from Satala,⁵⁸ and to Zeus Stratios, akin to Zeus in Labraunda in Karia. Hermes-Mithras or more probably Mên-Pharnakou can be seen on royal coins of king Pharnakes I as his patron,⁵⁹ and he was depicted with a thunderbolt – an attribute of Zeus Stratios – on later coins of Mithridates Eupator, and with a bunch of grapes, which associates him with Dionysos. Mên-Pharnakou and Perseus on the coins of Pharnakes I and Mithridates IV⁶⁰ were a change from the sitting figure of Zeus Etaphore on the royal Pontic coins of Mithridates III, although Mithridates IV still continued to portray Zeus on his joint coin-issues with Laodike. This suggests the possibility of associating the royal, official Greek and half-Iranian cults of Zeus and Perseus (the latter was traditionally worshipped as a Greek hero who killed Medusa and was considered as the ancestor of the Persians) with Iranian Mithras and the Phrygian moon-god Mên. Already during the reign of Pharnakes I, but chiefly during the time of Mithridates Eupator, when the coins show the symbols of Dionysos (ivy wreath), Perseus (Pegasos), Zeus⁶¹ and Ares on bronze civic coins, we can see a certain unification of such male deities of the Greeks with Anatolian Mên as patron of king Pharnakes I. This syncretism was based particularly on Hellenic cults, chief in the royal ideology.

Zeus replaced the local gods from the second half of the 3rd century BC, as his cult became official and as he became associated with other male deities of Persian and Anatolian origin. The dominant Hellenic character of Pontic religion is emphasised by the fact that we find practically no traces of the cult of Mithras in Pontos, although this Iranian god by all means should have been a patron of the Mithridatids judging from their preferred royal name (“given by Mithras” > *Mithra-data*). The syncretism of Zeus with Persian gods but with mostly Hellenic features is found in the cult of Omanes – Iranian *paredros* of Anaitis > Anahita. In Kappadokia, Anaitis and Omanes had sacred places, *temene*, and temples where the *magoi* and *πύραιθοι*, “keepers of fire”, arranged sacred rituals. Here sacrifices were made by a priest using a kind of club, and beating the victims to death. At the festival of the sacred fire, *πυραθεία*, the *magoi* wearing high turbans of felt wrapped around their heads so that they reached down over their cheeks far enough to cover their lips, kept an eternal fire burning on the altar. During the ceremony *magoi* made incantations for a period of time, holding their bundle of rods before the fire and people in processions carried a wooden statue, *xoanon* of Omanes (Strab. 15.3.15). Omanes and another Persian god – Anadatos shared a temple with Anaitis in Zela, a well-known temple-state of the goddess in Pontos (Strab. 11.8.4). In Pontos, Omanes was associated with Zeus, as witnessed by a dedicatory inscription from Amaseia to *Διὶ Ὀμανῆι*,⁶² where the name of the Persian god was turned into an epithet of Zeus.

As mentioned above, the cult of Mên-Pharnakou, introduced by Pharnakes I with a temple in Ameria not far from Kabeira, continued also in the time of Mithridates VI, as Strabon says that the Pontic kings used to give a traditional



Fig. 5. Mithridates VI Eupator as Mên-Pharnakou on coinage from Pantikapaion.

oath there – “I’m vowing by the king’s Tyche and by Mên Pharnakou” (Strab. 12.3.31). Initially it seems to have been an Iranian cult, because of the correlation of the king’s Iranian name “Pharnakes” with the Persian *farrukh* which means “happiness”. Thus the name Mên-Pharnakou was translated as “Mên who possess happiness”. The association with Zeus, visible in the use of his attribute, the thunderbolt, is completed by the depiction of this moon-god as a horse-rider (like Mithras, who was worshipped as a rider in Trapezous)⁶³ and with a double-axe like Perseus. His link with Zeus

and Dionysos is reflected in the use of a bull as his animal attribute, while his closeness to Phrygian Attis is confirmed by a pine-cone – a sacred plant of Kybele’s son. The god’s responsibility for fertility and vegetation, which bring abundance, is evident from the *cornucopia* which Mên-Pharnakou is holding in his left hand on the coin of Pharnakes I. This also links him with Attis and Dionysos along with Zeus – gods of fertility and rich crops. As a moon-god Mên could defeat darkness and evil. Besides the bull and the horse, a cock was the sacred animal of Mên; this was also a sacrificial bird in the Persian cults of Mithras and Ahura-Mazda thus proving the Indo-Persian origin of this cult⁶⁴ and the association of Mên with Mithras and Zeus. This profound syncretism of Anatolian, Iranian, and Hellenic cults, particularly in the cults of Mên and Dionysos as gods of recovery and birth, allowed the royal propaganda to personify Mithridates VI as Mên-Pharnakou and Dionysos, as we see on Bosphoran coins, minted in Pantikapaion (Fig. 5), Phanagoreia, and Gorgippia, where Mithridates Eupator as Mên-Pharnakou was shown together with the statue of a standing Dionysos holding grapes and a *thyrsos*.⁶⁵

Another deity, who had an official royal cult in Pontos, was Perseus, a mythical patron of the Mithridatids at least from the reign of Mithridates IV.



Fig. 6. Apollon-Perseus on royal coinage of Mithridates V.

The cult achieved its highest popularity in the time of Mithridates Eupator, when the royal tetradrachms and bronze city coins reproduce the hero's portrait and statue, his sacred attributes – Pegasos, winged *harpa*, *aigis* with Gorgon – and his female companion Athena.⁶⁶ Under Mithridates V when the Kingdom of Pontos turned its attention to the Greek cities and attempted to portray the king as protector of Hellenism in northern Anatolia and on the Black Sea, Perseus was associated with Apollon, the most popular Greek god in the Greek *poleis* on the Black Sea. On silver coins from Sinope dated to the 3rd



Fig. 7. Mithridates VI Eupator as Apollon-Perseus on Pontic anonymous obols.

century BC, we see a statue of a standing Apollon. The tetradrachms of Mithridates V Euergetes (Fig. 6), dated to 128 BC and 125/124 BC, show a statue of a naked deity, standing to the left, quite like the standing Apollon on the Sinopean coins (the only difference is that the Apollon on the coins of Sinope stands to the right). Unlike the statue of Apollon on the Sinopean coins, the god on the royal tetradrachms of Mithridates Euergetes holds a Scythian bow and a small figure of Nike (or another female deity, possibly Artemis or Athena). L. Robert assumed that Mithridates V had imitated the cult statue of Apollon of Dydima as it had looked in the 6th century BC. He believed that the king had reconstructed it as a gesture of respect for Athens, Delos and the temple of Apollon on Delos.⁶⁷ But nobody has paid attention to the fact that the head of the naked figure of the god on the royal coins of Mithridates V is covered by a leather cap, *kyrbasia*, much alike the headdress depicted on the so-called Pontic anonymous bronze coins. The bow in the hands of the naked god coincides with the bow on anonymous obols of the same series both in countermarks and as the main type (Fig. 7).⁶⁸ Pfeiler has convincingly proven that the portrait wearing a *kyrbasia* on the anonymous Pontic coins was that of the young king Mithridates Eupator. Contemporary coins of Amisos and Sinope with the head of a young man with a quiver wearing a Persian leather cap⁶⁹ probably also show a portrait of Mithridates Eupator (Fig. 8a). These important details mean that these coins were minted in the late 120's BC at the same time as the royal tetradrachms of Mithridates V, although they remained in use at a later date.⁷⁰

The types of anonymous Pontic obols are closely linked with Hellenic-Iranian-Anatolian deities of Pontos and the cult of Perseus in particular, revealing Perseus' relationship to such gods as Ma-Enyo-Bellona, Artemis, Athena, Anaitis, Kybele, Ares, Mên, Mithras, Helios, Attis, Zeus. The affinity in types between the anonymous bronze coins and silver tetradrachms of Mithridates V testifies to the royal character of the cult of Apollo-Helios-Mithras, which was not deprived of Perseus' influence, because the hero, according to royal propaganda, was the mythological patron of the Pontic kings, the direct suc-



Fig. 8a-b. a) Portrait of Mithridates VI Eupator on bronze coinage of Amisos b) Mithridates VI Eupator as Perseus on the civic bronze coinage of Amisos.

cessors of the Achaemenids, and was worshipped as the official ancestor of the Persians and their kings.⁷¹ So, for political reasons Mithridates V Euergetes could well have depicted the Sinopean cult statue of the Greek god Apollon on his coins, having altered it slightly in order to give it the features of Perseus, who in accordance with official Pontic ideology was worshipped as a Greek and Iranian hero. This sculpture stood in Sinope in the temple of Apollon of Didyma in the place which had earlier been occupied by the statue of Apollon that was reproduced on the city's coins in the 3rd-2nd century BC. When Sinope became the capital of the Kingdom of Pontos, the king eventually proclaimed the cult of Apollon official and royal, but insisted on associating Apollon with Perseus, patron of the Mithridatic dynasty. This was done to promote the worship of this syncretistic cult throughout the whole state, although it was mainly directed towards the Hellenic population. This initiated the spread of the cult of Perseus-Apollon in Paphlagonia and in Pontic Kappadokia, which is reflected by the coinage of Amisos, Kabeira, Taulara and Sinope⁷² along with the anonymous Pontic coins where the god Apollon-Perseus (with the features of the young Mithridates Eupator) was given a half-Hellenic, half-Iranian image (Fig. 8b). The population, either following the royal official ideology and propaganda, or for personal reasons might have freely identified him with local deities like Mithras, Mên, Attis, the more so since the kings of Pontos refrained from spreading the Persian cults of Mithras and Ahura-Mazda. The Greeks were able to identify Apollon-Perseus-Mithras with Helios, the Sun, which would have been a good reason for Pontic officials to promulgate the idea of the deification of their ruler as the Sun god who brought light and freedom from evil.

The introduction of an official cult of Apollon by the Mithridatids of Pontos coincided with the proclamation of Sinope as the capital of their kingdom and with their change of policy towards philhellenism after the defeat of Phar-

nakes I in the war from 183 to 179 BC. Already Mithridates IV and Laodike had close connections with Delos. During the reign of Mithridates his nearest associates among the Greeks offered dedications to Apollon, Artemis and Leto on Delos, while Mithridates VI Eupator erected a temple on the island. This is why some coins of Amisos and Sinope during the rule of Mithridates Eupator bear the type "Apollon/tripod",⁷³ while the city coins of Pantikapaion during the Mithridatic rule over Bosporos retained Apollon, and the same city even put Apollon's head along with a feeding Pegasos on coins,⁷⁴ thus confirming the official Pontic association of Apollon with Perseus.

The association of Perseus with Apollon (= Helios/Mithras) and Mên-Phar-nakou together with Dionysos was due to the syncretism of the popular cult of Zeus with Attis, since all of these gods were worshipped by the population of the Pontic state as gods of recovery and revival, conquerors of evil and enemies. This was the main point of the official Pontic ideology, which tried to portray the king as a man, called upon to liberate the Greeks and gather neighbouring territories in Asia Minor and on the Black Sea under his rule. This aspect of the political ideology of the kingdom was part of the philhellenic policy of the Mithridatids, which was begun already in the mid 2nd century BC and was actively pursued by Mithridates V and his son Mithridates VI. The latter, however, did not have the option of proclaiming himself a living Zeus, because this god was the highest of all the Olympian gods and goddesses and creator and patron of all spheres of life, and such a proclamation might have caused distrust among the population, particularly among those of local origin. To be proclaimed as Mithras or Ahura-Mazda was even more dangerous, as this might have raised the suspicions of the kings' Hellenic subjects, especially after the kings had started on a philhellenic policy directed against the Romans. So there was only one suitable solution – to declare the king a living Dionysos, the son of Zeus, who could be easily associated with many Anatolian, Hellenic and even Iranian gods and heroes, responsible for victory over evil, darkness and recovery. This god was equally important to the Anatolian population, who could unify him with Attis and Mên, to the Iranian and Kappadokian inhabitants who worshipped Iranian Mithras, Omanes, Anadatos, Perseus, and to the Greeks who worshipped Zeus, Ares, Herakles, Apollon, Helios, Perseus and Dionysos as well. The main idea of this political tendency was to deify the ruler who thus would seem to be a god or at the very least simply be associated with the god. This religious and ideological point was substantiated in the royal Mithridatic (i.e. Achaemenid) symbols – the star and crescent – which were linked with the cults of Mên, Mithras, Ahura-Mazda, and reflected their victory over darkness, i.e. evil, the main religious aspect of Persian Zoroastrianism. The general tendency of the religious policy of the Pontic kings was to make official only those cults of deities, both male and female, who were connected with military matters – battles, victories, the army and heroic deeds – together with rebirth and winning over death. These ideas are clearly observed in the cults of Zeus,

Herakles, Perseus, Apollon, Mithras, Dionysos, Ma-Bellona in Komana, Athena Polias and Nikephora, associated with Ma in Komana and Artemis, who also was closely associated with Ma. Even Anaitis, popular in Zela as a goddess of nature and love, like Aphrodite, had a common altar with the Persian war heroes Omanes and Anadates, and was a patron of the so-called Sakaiai – a festival, linked with the warriors, because it was organized by Persian generals and its participants wore the Scythian dress like the Saki – Scythian warriors (Strab. 12.8.4-5). Yet only the abovementioned male cults were the basis for the creation of the image of Mithridates Eupator as Dionysos – the son of Zeus. That is why the deification of the Pontic ruler has nothing to do with Seleukid influence – it was completely based on local tradition where the Greek cults were always primary in official royal propaganda. All these Greek cults, however, could easily have been unified with Anatolian and Iranian ones.

The popularity of gods in charge of regeneration and rebirth in northern Anatolia fuelled the legend that the statue of Serapis in Alexandria in Egypt was brought from Sinope under the early Ptolemies.⁷⁵ This myth is reflected by the spread of syncretistic cults of different male deities of regeneration in northern Anatolia: when the Egyptian cults of Isis and Osiris penetrated into Asia Minor in the late Hellenistic and early Imperial period, it was associated in Anatolia with local cults of Zeus Chthonios, Hades, Asklepios, Helios, Mithras, Attis, Dionysos and Mên.⁷⁶ At the same time the Pontic administration decided to use the popular idea of regeneration which was reflected in different Greek and Anatolian cults for political reasons, in order to create the idealised image of Mithridates Eupator Dionysos not only as a liberator, but also as protector of the state. That is to say that the king's deification was based on the close links between the worship of Dionysos, Zeus, Mên-Pharnakou, Helios, Apollon (=Mithras), Perseus, Ares, and Herakles. After the king's triumph in Pergamon in 88/87 BC his statues and busts, together with his portraits on coins, began to represent him with a new force as an idealised picture of the new god, just as the deified Alexander the Great, with features of Dionysos, as well as Mên, Helios, Ares, Perseus, and Herakles⁷⁷ – all deities and immortal heroes, connected with Zeus Stratios. Thus the ruler-cult was inspired by the idea of rebirth and protection.

The official cults and propaganda influenced the private cults within the whole Kingdom of Pontos including the region around the Black Sea. Among the terracotta figurines found on the north coast of the Black Sea we can find ones of Mên on a cock and Mên-Attis riding a galloping horse, dated mostly to the Mithridatic period and later, as well as several figurines of Mithras Taurochton in the costume of Attis killing a bull, together with clay masks of Dionysos and members of his retinue, produced in Amisos and in local workshops.⁷⁸ These cults were brought to Bosporos from Pontos, Armenia Minor, and Kolchis and followed the traditions and rituals common for their performance in Asia Minor (the costume of Attis!) rather than those of Kappadokia

and Iran. Among Bosphoran terracottas of the late 2nd century BC to early 1st century AD can be found a number of the so-called “warriors” – soldiers with shields of Galatian type, which they either hold or lean upon. Scholars have grouped these figures into two groups: warriors with a wreath and a cuirass, each leaning on a large shield of oval form with his left arm and warriors in Phrygian dress, wearing Persian or Phrygian leather caps, standing with their left arms on their hips, and leaning on their shields with their right arms, or holding their shields on their left arms with their right hands resting on the upper part of their shields (Figs. 9-12). Because the shield often looks Celtic, it has been supposed that these are genre terracottas, which show Galatian or Bosphoran mercenary warriors, or represent children or Erots with armament.⁷⁹ But many terracottas of this kind were discovered in graves and in domestic shrines, for example in the rural sanctuary General’skoe Vostočnoe in eastern Crimea,⁸⁰ where a variant of the type – Eros in Attis’ Phrygian costume has been found. This confirms the sacred character of such figures which had so-teric or apothropaic functions. Sometimes these figures were found together with herms and terracottas of a standing Aphrodite or a Kybele sitting on the throne, as at the site Rassvet near Gorgippia. Here they surely represent the male partner of a female goddess of fertility and nature.⁸¹ One form of the shield held by the warriors resembles the shield of Ma on the cult statue in her temple in Komana Pontike and the shield of Athena Nikephora in Pergamon (Ma-Enyo-Bellona was worshipped in the Kingdom of Pontos as Thea Nikephora and Athena).⁸² Figures of “warriors” are known not only from Bosphoros but also from Armenia, Parthia, and Babylonia where they were inspired by local cults. So we can conclude that the warriors appeared on the north coast of the Black Sea from the Pontic Kingdom and were inspired by Pontic religion with its Iranian, Kappadokian, and Armenian cults such as those of Omanes, Anadates, Zeus, and Mithras.

In a religious sense these terracottas were closely connected with the popular Pontic cults of Perseus and Ares, which, as we have seen above, were partially royal. Ares – the Greek god of war – was popular in the Thracian and Iranian world, including the Sarmatians (*CIRB* 120: Pantikapaion, 2nd-1st century BC). In ancient Persia the god was linked with Veretragna, the Zoroastrian analogy of Herakles, who was a god of victory. In Bactria Ares’ functions were equal to those of Sharewar. Ares was also worshipped in Kappadokia as a participant in the mysteries of Mithras. His iconography shows a young man in helmet and cuirass, with a shield placed on the ground and a spear in hand, wearing tunika and *chlamys*.⁸³ The Iranian world knew several images of Mithras and Sharewar=Ares was one of them. He stood close to Serapis who, on one hand, was close to Mithras, and on the other to Zeus and Osiris as gods of regeneration and nature. Some scholars have suggested that Serapis had more Iranian than Egyptian features. In Greece the same functions belonged to Apollon who was the Hellenic equal of Mithras, while the Iranians worshipped him as Kshatrapati or Satrap (in Palmyra known as



*Fig. 9. Winged Eros-Attis
with a shield. Terracotta.
Bosporos.*



*Fig. 10. Attis-Mên (or
Mithras-Mên) with a shield.
Terracotta. Bosporos.*



*Fig. 11.
Warrior
with shield.
Terracotta.
Bosporos.*



*Fig. 12.
Eros-Attis
with shield.
Terracotta.
Bosporos.*

Sadrapa – a warrior in armour with a shield and spear).⁸⁴ In Greece, in Elis, stood a bronze statue of a beardless man with crossed legs (the warriors on Bosporan terracottas stand in the same position) leaning on spear. Initially it was considered a statue of Poseidon, but later it was called Satrap (Paus. 6.25.6). Satrap > Serapis and Mithras had the same Phrygian or Persian leather cap, known also as the “hat of Perseus”, which was worn also by most of the “warriors” from Bosporos and Armenia. So the Bosporan “warriors” could be understood as Mithras, Serapis, Apollon, and Perseus who could defend, protect and guard a person and a family, as gods with real soteric functions. These gods could also help to achieve victory over darkness, evil and death – they were bearers of immortality. This is why the figures of “warriors” were put into graves and brought as gifts to the sanctuaries.

If Ares was linked with Mithras, who as god-protector was patron of warriors, then he can at the same time be linked with Attis, because in Bosporos, Mithras was shown in terracottas in the costume of Attis and sometimes holding a shield (Figs. 10 & 12). In the late Hellenistic period we often see a syncretistic cult of Eros and Attis, which is indicated by the wings on terracotta figurines of the latter god (Fig. 9).⁸⁵ As a male *paredros* of Aphrodite-Kybele, Attis-Eros was provided with soteric and apothropaic functions. This means that the figurines of warriors reflect a deep religious syncretism of different Pontic cults forming a group around Ares, Perseus, Mithras, and Attis – the latter connected with the Greek god Dionysos, who was also a deity of the official cult of Mithridates Eupator. All these male gods were associated with Zeus Stratios (or Strategos), who was given the features of a warrior defending the king, his house and his country. Association of these terracottas with Zeus Stratios or Strategos is confirmed by the abovementioned relief from Zougo near Amaseia, where we can observe a god much like Zeus-Attis with a shield and a battle axe (Fig. 3) and by coins from Kabeira, which reproduce a warrior in Phrygian or Persian cap holding a spear and an oval shield of the same shape as that of the terracotta warriors (Fig. 13).⁸⁶ A large shield and a pointed hat were the attributes of Perseus, connected with Apollon in Pontos, i.e. with Mithras-Helios, who in turn was closely connected to the Iranian war deity Omanes, worshipped in Pontos and Kappadokia as Zeus (see above).

Taking all this into account, we should say that the appearance of



Fig. 13. Zeus Stratios inside the temple in Kabeira. Coin of the Imperial period.

Bosporan terracottas representing Attis, Mithras, Mên and warriors with shields was due to religious syncretism and the spread of the official cults of Zeus Stratios and Dionysos under Mithridates VI. These figurines were popular among the soldiers and mercenaries who served in the Pontic army. They had different religious meanings, but their cults were mostly inspired by Zeus Stratios, protector and guardian of many spheres of life in the kingdom. The popularity of Zeus grew parallel to the spread of the cults of Dionysos, Perseus-Apollon, Mithras-Mên-Attis – official deities of the Mithridatids as basis for creating the image of a deified king.

There were three levels in Pontic religious ideology and royal propaganda. First the Hellenic, which played the most central role in the deification of the ruler, mostly in the eyes of the Greek subjects, for whom Mithridates Eupator was proclaimed Dionysos and was associated with Ares, Perseus, Apollon, Herakles, and Helios – all sons of Zeus, the main cult in Pontos since the early Mithridatids. Second the Phrygian-Anatolian, where Attis and Mên seemed to be the chief deities, and the latter was drawn into the royal cult, because Mithridates Eupator tried to associate himself with the local moon-god in order to rally the resident population around him. Third the Iranian which was perhaps the least important, as the kings of Pontos, though half-Persian by origin, were scared to declare themselves to be descendants of Mithras and Ahura-Mazda, having proclaimed instead that they were equal to the Hellenic and Phrygian gods and heroes, where Perseus was a compromise between Greek beliefs and the Iranian essence of the dynasty.

Notes

- 1 The most comprehensive is still Olshausen 1990, 1865-1906.
- 2 For example, Gaggero 1976, 89-123; McGing 1986, 89-95.
- 3 Kleiner 1955, 1-14; Price 1968, 1-3; Summerer 1999, 159-161; Erciyas 2006, 122-173. Very important are, of course, the commentaries of F. Cumont, E. Cumont, J.C.G. Anderson, and H. Grégoire on inscriptions and other archaeological finds, which they saw during their travels in Pontos (*Studia Pontica*, 1-3, 1902-1910).
- 4 Kobylina 1976, pl. XVIII.1, 27; XIX.1, 29.
- 5 Kobylina 1976, pl. XIV.1, 20a; Anochin 1986, nos. 201, 207, 210; Frolova & Ireland 2002, 19-20; *SNG Brit* IX.1, pl. XXXV, 936.
- 6 Zinko 2001, 311: the temple was built earlier, but functioned most actively during the rule of Mithridates Eupator.
- 7 Lordkipanidse 1995, 399.
- 8 Cic. *Flacc.* 60; Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 1.6.2; cf. Athen. 5.212d.
- 9 The types with Dionysos and attributes of his cult appeared on the coins of Pantikapaion, Phanagoreia, and Gorgippia no earlier than 100 BC, which proves that the depiction of the god was closely connected with the proclaiming of Mithridates Eupator as Dionysos in 102 BC (Zograf 1951, 187; Frolova & Ireland 2002, 14-16).
- 10 *RGAM* I.1², 13-20, nos. 9-16.

- 11 Kleiner 1955, 1-21.
- 12 Callataÿ 2007, 273-308.
- 13 Finogenova 1990, 189-203; Summerer 1999, 43-46.
- 14 Durrbach 1921, no. 133.
- 15 *RGAM I.1*², 10-11, nos. 2-3, pl. I, 2-6; pl. Suppl. A, 1-3.
- 16 *RGAM I.1*², 13, no. 7, pl. I, 13; pl. Suppl. A, 8; *SNG von Aulock I*, pl. I, 2.
- 17 *RGAM I.1*², 13, no. 8, pl. I, 14.
- 18 Kleiner 1955, 14.
- 19 Olshausen 1990, 1899; for the Iranian nature of the god, see Højte 2004, 79-82.
- 20 Hirschfeld 1888, no. 61; Doublet 1889, 311; Legrand 1897, 98, no. 12; Mendel 1901, 24, no. 161; Kaygusuz 1984a, 63-68; Kaygusuz 1984b, 69-71; Donceel 1983, 21-22; Marek 1993, 89, 124, 180, 192, 193, no. 16, 95; Marek 2003, 106, abb. 149-152. The Greek origin of Zeus Bonitenos is confirmed by the inscription of 215 AD with a dedication to Θεῶ [π]ατρῶν Διὶ Βονιτηνῶ (Marek 1993, no. 95).
- 21 Marek 1993, 98, 178, 185, 186, no. 87; see also French 1996, 90, no. 9; Robert 1964, 36.
- 22 Boltunova 1966, 30; Boltunova 1977, 179.
- 23 Mitford 1966, 475-490; French 1996b, 94-95, no. 21; Olshausen 1990, 1894.
- 24 *RGAM I.1*², 167*, no. 1, pl. XVII, 6. Leper 1902, 158-162; Reinach 1905, 116.
- 25 Leper 1902, 158-162; Reinach 1905, 116; Saprykin & Maslennikov 1998, 408-410.
- 26 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, no. 189.
- 27 French 1992, 67; French 1996b, 88, no. 4. See also Doublet 1889, 310; cf. Mendel 1901, 28, no. 168; Cumont 1902, 314; Marek 1993, 193, no. 20.
- 28 *RGAM I.1*², 159, no. 3.
- 29 *RGAM I.1*², 160, no. 7, pl. XVI, 16; *SNG von Aulock I*, no. 142.
- 30 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, no. 114a; Reinach 1895, 78, no. 24bis; French 1996b, 85-97; Schwabl 1972, 262; Olshausen 1990, 1900.
- 31 French 1996b, 89-90, no. 8.
- 32 See the commentary in Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 189-190, no. 189.
- 33 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 42, no. 28; cf. Cumont & Cumont 1906, 130-132.
- 34 Curtius 1880, 646-651; Robert 1963, 456.
- 35 Robinson 1905, 332-333, no. 96.
- 36 Cumont & Cumont 1906, 145, 170-172.
- 37 *RGAM I.1*², 35, nos. 12, 14.
- 38 *RGAM I.1*², 36, no. 17.
- 39 *RGAM I.1*², 38, no. 32.
- 40 *RGAM I.1*², 42, no. 54.
- 41 *RGAM I.1*², 46, no. 78.
- 42 Cumont 1896, 137-138; Cumont 1901, 47-57; Cumont & Cumont 1906, 139, 170-175; Kleiner 1955, 10; Gaggero 1976, 107; Donceel 1984, 1984, 21; McGing 1986, 96.
- 43 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 150, no. 140.
- 44 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 152, no. 142.
- 45 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 151, no. 141.
- 46 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 166, no. 152; Hirschfeld 1888, 891-892, no. 72-73; Cumont 1901, 51-53; Cumont 1902, 53; French 1996b, 85-97; French 1996a, 73; Olshausen 1990, 1901.
- 47 French 1996b, 91, no. 11.

- 48 See Cumont & Cumont 1906, 139, 145, 174-184; Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 161-162, no. 146.
- 49 *SNG Brit* IX.1, nos. 1249, 1266, 1288, 1289, 1350, 1351.
- 50 *IGR* III, 89; see also Hirschfeld 1888, 876, no. 27; Kalinka 1933, 70, no. 17; Marek 1993, 98, no. 3; coins: *RGAM* I.1², 173*, nos. 52-54.
- 51 Cumont 1901, 50.
- 52 Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, no. 278b from Gazioura / Turhal.
- 53 Plin. *HN* 16.239; Plut. *Eum.* 17.
- 54 Cumont & Cumont 1906, 139; Olshausen 1990, 1901-1902.
- 55 On the discussion of how to read the name – Ζωβη or Ζιωβη and who it was – a deity or a dedicator, see Gregoire 1909; Anderson, Cumont & Grégoire 1910, 161, no. 146; Olshausen 1990, 1903.
- 56 Zgusta 1955, 998-999: this name seems to be Iranian; but see Zgusta 1964, 684 and Robert 1963, 538: as a name from Asia Minor; Tohtasjev 1993, 182-183: takes the name Ζόβην from *CIRB* 320 (Pantikapaion) as Thracian or from Asia Minor, which is correct, because this conclusion corresponds to the dedication of Zobe from Amaseia to Agdistis – the Phrygian deity of Thracian origin.
- 57 Knaack 1894, 767-768; cf. a dedication from Bithynia by Publius Aelius Marcianus θε[αί] Ἀνγίστηι (*TAM* IV.1, 63. Mendel 1901, 58: θεοί; Ἀνγίσταις means Kybele and Attis); see also dedications from Eumeneia (Lane 1964, 24, no. 12: a priest's inscription mentioning Zeus Soter, Apollon, Mên Askaneios, The Mother of the Gods Ἀγδίστεως, Agathos Daimon, Isis) and from Pantikapaion (*CIRB* 27: a votive to Ἀγδίστις > Ἀνγίσσα, 2nd century BC).
- 58 Cumont 1905, 181-189; Saprykin & Maslennikov 1998, 432.
- 59 *RGAM* I.1², 11-12, no. 4, pl. I, 7-10.
- 60 *RGAM* I.1², 12, no. 6, pl. I, 11-12.
- 61 *SNG Brit* IX.1, nos. 1034-1043. Zeus appeared on the coins of the city of Pharnakeia already in the reign of king Pharnakes I, its founder, in the first half of the 2nd century BC (*RGAM* I.1², 138, no. 2, pl. XIV, 16; *SNG Brit* IX.1, 1274 with incorrect dating to the mid 4th century BC).
- 62 French 1986, 277-285; French 1996b, 92, no. 15.
- 63 See *RGAM* I.1², 150-151, nos. 16-20, pl. XV, 20-22.
- 64 Lane 1964, 94; Haeperen-Pourbaix 1983, 236-247.
- 65 *SNG Brit* IX.1, no. 936.
- 66 *SNG Brit* IX.1, nos. 1212-1217 (Amisos), no. 1248 (Kabeira), no. 1253 (Chabakta).
- 67 Robert 1978, 151-162; cf. also Karamesine-Oikonomidou 1980, 149-153, fig. 49.1a; 51.10.
- 68 On the Pontic anonymous bronze coins, see Baldwin 1913, 285-313; Golenko 1969, 130-154; *RGAM* I.1², pl. Suppl. M, 10-24; *SNG Brit* IX.1, nos. 972-984, pl. XXXVII.
- 69 *RGAM* I.1², 62-63, no. 13, pl. VII, 6; 206, no. 58, pl. XXVI, 14; *SNG von Aulock* I, nos. 57-58; *SNG Brit* IX.1, nos. 1135-1138, 1523.
- 70 Pfeiler 1968, 75-78; Kleiner 1955, 6; Bohm 1989, 156-158.
- 71 Saprykin 1990, 32-34; Saprykin 1996, 107-120; Saprykin & Maslennikov 1998, 432.
- 72 *SNG Brit* IX.1, nos. 1135-1138, 1240, 1287, 1523.
- 73 *RGAM* I.1², 208, no. 71, pl. XXVI, 20.
- 74 *SNG Brit* IX.1, nos. 955-956.

- 75 Tac. *Hist.* 4.83-84; Plut. *Mor.* 361F = *De Isis et Osir.* 361, 984A = Soll. *Anim.* 36. 2; Clem. Alex. *Protrep.* 4.43 P.
- 76 Hornbostel 1973, 21-24.
- 77 Højte (ed.) 2005, 51-55; Erciyas 2006, 129-166. On the sculptural portraits of Mithridates VI as Herakles, Dionysos, and Helios, see Smith 1988, 99-100.
- 78 Vermaseren 1966, 47, no. 11, 12; Blawatsky & Kochelenko 1966, figs. 8-10; Kobylina 1976, 9, pl. XVIII.1, 27; XIX.1, 29; Košelenko & Maslennikov 2003, 184-186. For terracottas of Attis and Mên-Attis from Bosporos and Chersonesos, see Kobylina 1976, 23-26, no. 10-26, pl. XII-XVII. For new figures of Mên-Attis riding and Mithras-Attis murdering a bull from the Bosporan site Poljanka, see Saprykin & Maslennikov 1998, figs. 1.3, 3, 4; Maslennikov 2006, 93, pl. 18; 99, pl. 21; 109, pl. 26.
- 79 Kobylina 1961, 118, 119, pl. XXI, 2-3; XXII, 1; Pruglo 1966, 205-213.
- 80 It was found lying near the terracotta altar from the 1st century BC in the center of the *naos* (Maslennikov 2002, 176; Maslennikov 2007, 201, figs. 92, 1-4; 93, 11).
- 81 Kobylina (ed.) 1974, 50, nos. 1-2, pl. 58, 1-2.
- 82 The shield is visible on coins of Komana Pontike: RGAM I.1², 109, no. 12, pl. XII, 3.
- 83 Cumont 1896, vol. I, 143, 144; vol. II, no. 592.
- 84 Dupont-Sommer 1976, 660; Bivar 1991, 53-55.
- 85 Kobylina 1976, pl. XIII.1, 18.
- 86 Price & Trell 1977, 97, fig. 174.

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Abbreviations

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