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An Imperial Freedman's Dedication in Phrygia

Abstract: Although members of the imperial *familia* lived within the Greek communities of Asia primarily to administer and enforce Roman law, the surviving epigraphic evidence for their presence mainly relates to their interaction with local society. The dedications made to Zeus Bennios by Flavius Helius and his wife preserve substantial information about their cultural and religious connections. The interpretation of Helius' official designation, *eirenophylax* τῆς ἐπαρχείας, is aided by consideration of the shape and decoration of the *stelai* on which the texts were engraved.

Keywords: Phrygia; Zeus Bennios; Flavius Helius; imperial freedman; *eirenophylax*.

The members of the imperial *familia* had a significant role in the application of Roman government and are attested in many parts of the province of Asia. Yet, although they lived within the Greek communities primarily for the administration and enforcement of Roman law, it is their impact on local society linguistically and culturally which is more frequently recorded. Few of the inscriptions portray imperial freedmen and slaves performing their official responsibilities. A small number record their activity in civic public life as benefactors, honorands or as the promoter of others but it is in epitaphs or dedications that they are most frequently attested.¹

A pair of inscriptions which record separate dedications to Phrygian Zeus Bennios by the imperial freedman, Flavius Helius, and his wife conform to this pattern.²

No: 1

ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Οὐεσπασιανοῦ Καίσα-
ρος τὸ θ' καὶ Τίτου Καίσαρος τὸ ζ', Τί-
τος Φλάβιος Ἥλιος Οὐεσπασια-
νοῦ Καίσαρος ἀπελεύθερος εἰρηνο-
5 φύλαξ τῆς ἐπαρχείας, υἱὸς δὲ Γλύ-
κωνος Τειμαίου Ἀγροστεα-
νοῦ, ὑπὲρ τῶν Σεβαστῶν καὶ ὑπὲρ
ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ὑπὲρ Σεξιπλίας Ποπλίου
θυγατρὸς Ἡδονῆς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικὸς
10 καὶ ὑπὲρ Τίτου Φλαβίου Σεξιπλιανοῦ
Ἥλιου υἱοῦ ἰδίου Διὶ Βεννίῳ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ πατρί-
δος Ἀγροστεων καὶ Ζβουρηας καὶ τοῖς πα-
τρίοις θεοῖς εὐξάμενος ἀνέθηκεν.

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It is with pleasure that I offer these thoughts for inclusion in a volume honouring Professor Sencer Şahin whose extensive publications have opened up rich areas of knowledge in the epigraphy of Asia Minor. Among his numerous publications are matters relevant to the inscriptions considered below.

¹ Kearsley 2001, 148, 155–156.

² The inscriptions were first published and discussed in Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1967–1981.

When the consuls were Vespasian Caesar for the ninth time and Titus Caesar for the seventh, Titus Flavius Heliuss, freedman of Vespasian Caesar, eirenophylax τῆς ἐπαρχείας, son of Glykon the son of Timaios of Agrostea, on behalf of the Sebastoi and on behalf of himself and on behalf of Sextilia Hedone, the daughter of Publius, his own wife, and on behalf of Titus Flavius Sextilianus Heliuss his own son, vowed and made a dedication to Zeus Bennios of his native land, Agrostea and Zbourea, and to the ancestral gods.

No: 2

ἐπὶ ὑπάτων Οὐεσπασιανοῦ Καί-
 σαρος τὸ ἕνατον καὶ Τίτου Καί-
 σαρρος τὸ ζ', Σεξιτία Ποπλί-
 ου θυγάτηρ Ἡδονὴ ὑπὲρ τῶν
 5 Σεβαστῶν καὶ ὑπὲρ Τίτου Φλα-
 βίου Ἡλίου εἰρηνοφύλακος τῆς
 ἐπαρχείας υἱοῦ Γλύκωνος Ἀ-
 γροστεανοῦ Τειμαίου τοῦ ἐ-
 αὐτῆς ἀνδρὸς καὶ ὑπὲρ Τίτου
 10 Φλαβίου Σεξιτιλιανοῦ υἱοῦ ἰδίου Δι-
 ἰ Βεννίῳ Ἀγροστεων καὶ Ζβου-
 ρηας καὶ θεοῖς πατρίοις τοῖς
 Ἡλίου τοῦ ἑαυτῆς ἀνδρὸς εὐ-
 ξαμένη ἀνέθηκεν.

When the consuls were Vespasian Caesar for the ninth time and Titus Caesar for the seventh, Sextilia Hedone, the daughter of Publius, on behalf of the Sebastoi and Titus Flavius Heliuss, eirenophylax τῆς ἐπαρχείας, son of Glykon of Agrostea, the son of Timaios, her own husband, and on behalf of Titus Flavius Sextilianus her own son, vowed and made a dedication to Zeus Bennios of Agrostea and Zbourea, and to the ancestral gods of Heliuss her own husband.

Flavius Heliuss was an imperial freedman official whose function was *eirenophylax* and whose sphere of his authority is described as τῆς ἐπαρχείας (no 1: ll. 4–5). His acknowledgement of Roman officialdom and its governmental relevance in the region is made clear by the use of consular dating for his dedication and also by the inclusion of the *Sebastoi* among those on whose behalf he makes his offering (no 1: l. 7). The specification of his imperial status (no 1: ll. 3–4) is typical of imperial freedmen in Roman Asia generally. A survey of epigraphic testimonies about them reveals that membership of the *familia* was a matter of pride and, far from being suppressed, it was regularly included in a prominent position.³ Here it indicates Heliuss' message was one of self-promotion. The inhabitants of the two villages mentioned in the text (no 1: l. 12), villages which controlled the sanctuary, were made aware not only of Heliuss' local origin but also of his relatively elevated official standing within the imperial *familia* by his essentially private dedication.⁴

The offering of Sextilia Hedone to Zeus Bennios was dedicated at the same time according to its date. The structure and wording of the inscriptions of husband and wife is also very similar and their coordinated action is indicated by the inclusion of each other's names and the name of their son in common within their own dedication. However, there are differences of detail which reveal somewhat

³ Kearsley 2001, 154.

⁴ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1968–1969, 1979–1980.

individual religious and cultural perspectives.⁵ Helius' imperial status designation is omitted in his wife's dedication and the presence of her patronymic indicates she was of free status as the daughter of a Roman citizen (no 2: *ll.* 3–4). Her Sextilian *nomen* suggests that her family stemmed from the Roman *negotiators* in the province.⁶ Nevertheless, a marriage between an imperial ex-slave and a free-born woman accords with epigraphic evidence within the province of Asia, more generally. An imperial freedman had a high standing in the provincial communities of Greeks and Romans.⁷

The dedications of Flavius Helius and his wife were made in one of the many rural sanctuaries in Phrygia which are usually characterized by stones of unprepossessing size and brief dedicatory texts.⁸ The two stones associated with Helius, by contrast, are both tall and well-shaped *stelai* with extensive inscriptions. The fact that the one married couple dedicated two such expensive stones rather than just one, despite the extensive overlapping in the texts, is also notable.⁹ It suggests that the monuments themselves have a role to play in the interpretation of Flavius Helius' action. The sophistication of the *stelai* and their inscriptions is in contrast to Helius' rural origin. Therefore, his ancestry does not necessarily indicate his official location at the time of the dedication. He can, surely, no longer have moved within the rural context of his forebears when he made his dedications according to the nature of the two *stelai*. The style of the stones speaks of production within a civic rather than a rural environment.¹⁰ Since the character of the *stelai* is not typical of the local area, it may be used to provide evidence for the location of Helius as imperial freedman with the function of *eirenophylax* τῆς ἐπαρχείας.

Given the physical and stylistic similarity between the two *stelai*, Helius' dedication alone may be taken as representative of the pair. It is a substantial free-standing *stele* of 2.85 m in height with a large tenon. The stone is embellished with an elaborate pedimental top which has palmettes carved at the corners, ornamental mouldings, and a rosette within the *tympanon*. A laurel wreath bearing a ribbon stands at the top of the shaft and below it are thirteen lines of text. Beneath the inscription a large section of the shaft remains bare.¹¹ The size, shape and decoration of this *stele* clearly link it with a very well-defined class of funerary and dedicatory *stelai* which were produced chiefly within the Hermos Valley.¹² They were also created in western Phrygia at the city of Aizanoi during late I AD.¹³

⁵ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1977–1979 pl. VIII no. 16 a-c.

⁶ Cf. Thonemann 2013, 29–31; Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1978 n. 257; Kearsley 2001, 85 no. 114; Herrmann – Malay 2007, 131–132 no. 100.

⁷ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1979 with n. 258; Kearsley 2001, 156.

⁸ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1979. See, for example, Drew-Bear et al. 1999, especially 26–31.

⁹ On the similarity of the two *stelai*, see Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1978. The top part of a third *stele* from the same sanctuary has been found: Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 2014–2017. It bears a very brief dedication to Zeus Soter along the base of the pediment. This inscription represents a secondary use of the stone according to its position and character. The *stele* is from the same workshop as those of Helius and his wife but the lettering on the pediment is not at all similar. Because most of the shaft is not preserved, the original inscription engraved below the wreath is lost. Conceivably, this stone was a third *stele* of the Helius family. A dedication in the name of Flavius Sextilianus Helius, the son of Helius and Sextilia, would have complemented Helius' extravagant display already demonstrated by the two separate, but repetitive, stones which are fully preserved.

¹⁰ Cf. the remarks of Yannakopoulos 2003, 830–831.

¹¹ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1967–1968 pl. VII no. 15 a-b.

¹² See, for example, Naour 1981, 11–44; Malay – Gül 1981, 81–90. Stones were sometimes transported from the region of their production in antiquity: see Welles 1934, 101–102 no. 19. For roads between Aizanoi and Appia, see MAMA X, xxiv–xxv.

¹³ Lehmler – Wörrle 2006, 62–63 no. 115 Abb. 37; cf. Abb. 35, 38. The upright lettering on both the *stelai* of Helius and his wife should be compared with some of the stones from Aizanoi, as also use of the ω *omega* (see, for example, *ibid.*, Abb. 3, 15). Although essentially very similar to Helius' *stele*, that dedicated by Sextilia Hedone differs in having an eagle in the *tympanon* rather than a rosette. On the significance of representations of eagles at Aizanoi, see Rheidt 2010, 171–172; cf. Lehmler – Wörrle 2006 Abb. 13–15, 17–18 for representations of eagles.

The nature of *eirenophylax* as a functionary title is not indicated in Helius' inscription nor is there evidence for it elsewhere in imperial Asia.¹⁴ The equation of *eirenophylax* with eirenarch is unlikely. Helius was an imperial freedman whereas the eirenarch was a civic magistracy of the Greek cities.¹⁵

The sphere of authority denoted by the phrase τῆς ἐπαρχείας is capable of several different interpretations. The phrase may be interpreted as referring to both the whole province and to a *dioecesis*. With respect to Helius, the title *eirenophylax* τῆς ἐπαρχείας denotes an imperial official of a *dioecesis* or assize district.¹⁶ This being so, Helius would have been stationed in one of the cities designated as a Roman *conventus* centre in late I AD. Synnada has been intimated as his official base already.¹⁷ However, given that the character of the *stelai* themselves points to the west rather than the east of Appia, in whose territory the sanctuary lies, the imperial bureau to which Helius was attached is more likely to lie in that direction also. The *conventus* district of Sardis included the Hermos Valley.¹⁸ If based within that *conventus* district, Helius would certainly have had access to a workshop in the territory of Saittai producing *stelai* such as those of his family's dedications.¹⁹ Aizanoi, too, was producing them and it was a city of importance although it is not certainly known to have been an assize centre as early as late I AD.²⁰

Helius' place in the Roman official structure is likely to have been subject to the imperial procurator as a member of his staff.²¹ A literal translation of *eirenophylax* as 'guardian of the peace' surely expresses his function in general terms.²² More specifically, Helius must have maintained order on behalf of the Roman government when issues arose that had the potential to create disorder.²³ His duties would also have involved maintaining law and order in the face of local inhabitants opposed to the imposition of an imperial resolution.²⁴

Four epigraphic documents engraved on the temple of Zeus at Aizanoi provide a relevant illustration of such a situation.²⁵ The first of these records a letter of Avidius Quietus, proconsul of Asia, to the magistrates, council and *demos* of Aizanoi. It reveals the existence of a dispute within the city's territory which had proved intractable over very many years despite earlier Roman intervention. Finally, in AD 125/126, the emperor gave definitive instructions to Quietus for solving the problem. The issue con-

¹⁴ Mitchell 1999, 29. Apart from these two inscriptions, there are isolated examples of the title only in southern Asia Minor: Yannakopoulos 2003, 840–844.

¹⁵ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1970; Brélaz 2005, 90–91; Burton 2001, 209–210. Imperial freedman are sometimes documented as city magistrates and as members of civic institutions but on those occasions the official title is recognizable from its occurrence within honorific inscriptions for members of the Greek elite also: cf. Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1970–1971; Kearsley 2001, 156.

¹⁶ Mitchell 1999, 28–29. For *dioecesis*/διοίκησις as synonyms for *conventus*, see Burton 1975, 97. Cf. Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1974; Yannakopoulos 2003, 829–831.

¹⁷ Drew-Bear – Naour 1990, 1969 with n. 217.

¹⁸ Cf. Burton 1975, 93; Mitchell 1999, 31.

¹⁹ Cf. Malay – Gül 1981, 81; Broux – Clarysse 2009, 28.

²⁰ There is no explicit evidence that Aizanoi was an assize centre before the time of Antoninus Pius: Kantor 2013, 154. Aizanoi was, nevertheless, a city of importance even before it was an assize centre: Thonemann 2013, 7, 24–26.

²¹ Cf. Burton 2002, 267–269; Mitchell 1993, 161; Kantor 2013, 158–61.

²² Cf. Brélaz 2005, 95, 228 n. 713.

²³ Interventions by proconsuls and procurators are not infrequently attested. For an instructive overview of the topic, see Burton 2000, 196–205.

²⁴ An *eirenophylax* might be expected to perform functions in a civilian context similar to those undertaken by a military *stationarius*, on whom, see Mitchell 1999, 38–39; cf. Yannakopoulos 2003, 827–828.

²⁵ MAMA IX, xxxvi–xliii; Dignas 2002, 177–187. For the physical context of inscriptions, see Rheidt 2010, 60 Abb. 55.

cerned land belonging to the temple of Zeus and the need to define its boundaries.²⁶ The matter was complicated by the fact that the land had been gifted to the temple in the time of the Hellenistic kings and the location of the boundaries between it and land used by neighbouring kleruchs had been lost. Hadrian's solution would benefit some but disadvantage others. It was the role of the procurator and his staff to establish it nevertheless.²⁷

One of the many important aspects of epigraphic study is the relationship of text and monument. Investigation of this relationship with respect to the two *stelai* dedicated to Zeus Bennisos has assisted in formulating hypotheses about the official context of the imperial freedman Flavius Helius. Without an appreciation of the provenance of the *stelai*, the region of Flavius Helius' peace-keeping function remains hidden from view.

Abbreviated Literature

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| Brélaz 2005 | C. Brélaz, <i>La sécurité publique en Asie Mineure sous le Principat (Ier-IIIème s. ap. J.-C.): Institutions municipales et institutions impériales dans l'Orient romain</i> , Basel 2005. |
| Broux – Clarysse 2009 | Y. Broux – W. Clarysse, Two Greek Funerary Stelae from Lydia and the Antonine Plague, <i>Tyche</i> 24, 2009, 27–33. |
| Burton 1975 | G. P. Burton, Proconsuls, Assizes and the Administration of Justice under the Empire, <i>JRS</i> 65, 1975, 92–106. |
| Burton 2000 | G. P. Burton, The Resolution of Territorial Disputes in the Provinces of the Roman Empire, <i>Chiron</i> 30, 2000, 195–215. |
| Burton 2001 | G. P. Burton, The imperial state and its impact on the role and status of local magistrates and councillors in the provinces of the empire, in: L. de Blois (ed.), <i>Administration, Prosopography and Appointment Policies in the Roman Empire</i> , Amsterdam 2001, 202–214. |
| Burton 2002 | G. P. Burton, The Roman Imperial State (A.D. 14–235): Evidence and Reality, <i>Chiron</i> 32, 2002, 249–280. |
| Dignas 2002 | B. Dignas, <i>Economy of the Sacred in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor</i> , Oxford 2002. |
| Drew-Bear – Naour 1990 | Th. Drew-Bear – Chr. Naour, <i>Divinités de Phrygie</i> , ANRW II 18.3, Berlin 1990, 1907–2044. |
| Drew-Bear et al. 1999 | Th. Drew-Bear – Chr. M. Thomas – M. Yildizturan, <i>Phrygian Votive Steles</i> , Ankara 1999 (Turkish Republic, Ministry of Culture, Museum of Anatolian Civilizations). |
| Herrmann – Malay 2007 | P. Herrmann – H. Malay, <i>New Documents from Lydia</i> , Vienna 2007. |
| Kantor 2013 | G. Kantor, Law in Roman Phrygia: rules and jurisdictions, in: P. Thonemann (ed.), <i>Roman Phrygia. Culture and Society</i> , Cambridge 2013, 143–167. |
| Kearsley 2001 | R. A. Kearsley, <i>Greeks and Romans in Imperial Asia. Mixed Language Inscriptions and Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Interaction until the end of AD III</i> , Bonn 2001 (<i>Inschriften aus Kleinasien der griechische Städte</i> , vol. 59). |
| Lehmler – Wörrle 2006 | C. Lehmler – M. Wörrle, <i>Neue Inschriftenfunde aus Aizanoi IV: Aizanitica Minora II</i> , <i>Chiron</i> 36, 2006, 45–111. |
| Malay – Gül 1981 | H. Malay – Y. Gül, <i>New Inscriptions from Saittai</i> , <i>ZPE</i> 44, 1981, 81–90. |
| MAMA IX | B. Levick – S. Mitchell – J. Potter – M. Waelkens, <i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua IX: Monuments from the Aezanitis</i> , London 1988. |
| MAMA X | B. Levick – S. Mitchell – J. Potter – M. Waelkens, <i>Monumenta Asiae</i> |

²⁶ See Dignas 2002, 180–183.

²⁷ For text and English translation, see Dignas 2002, 178–179.

- Minoris Antiqua X: Monuments from Appia and the Upper Tembris Valley, Cotiaem, Cadi, Synaus, Ancyra Sidera and Tiberiopolis, London 1993.
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Özet

Phrygia’da bir İmparator Azatlısı’nın Adak Yazıtı

Yazar makalesinde bir imparator azatlısı olan Flavius Helius ve eşi Sextilia Hedone tarafından Zeus Bennisos’a sunulan ve birbirlerine büyük oranda benzeyen iki adak yazıtı aracılığıyla Helius’un resmi unvanı olan *eirenophylaks* τῆς ἐπαρχείας’ı yorumlamaktadır. Görevleri genel olarak Roma hukukunu uygulamak ve düzeni sağlamak olan *eirenophylaks*’lar, bir eyalet *procurator*’unun altında görev yapmakta ve ofisleri *conventus* merkezi olan bir kentte yer almaktaydı. Yazıtların kazındığı stellerin 2.85 m yüksekliği ve özenli işçiliğiyle, Phrygia Bölgesi’ndeki pek çok kutsal alanda ele geçen gösterişsiz ve sade stellerden ayrıldığını, şekil ve büyüklük bakımından daha çok Hermos Vadisi’nde üretilen mezar ve adak stellerine benzediğini vurgulayan yazar, bu doğrultuda Helius’un çalışma ofisinin daha önceki görüşün aksine Synnada’da değil Hermos Vadisi içinde, Sardis ya da daha az olasılıkla Aizanoi *conventus* merkezinde olabileceğini önermektedir. Yazıtların çevirileri ise aşağıdaki gibidir:

1) *Vespasianus Caesar* 9. kez, *Titus Caesar* ise 7. kez konsülken, *Vespasianus Caesar*’ın azatlısı, eyaletin *eirenophylaks*’ı *Agrostea* (Köyü’nden) *Timaios* torunu *Glykon* oğlu *Titus Flavius Helius*, *Augustus*’lar, kendisi, eşi *Publius* kızı *Sextilia Hedone* ve oğlu *Titus Flavius Sextilianus Helius* için kendi vatanı *Agrostea* ve *Zboura*’nın *Zeus Bennisos*’una ve geleneksel tanrılara adağı sundu.

2) *Vespasianus Caesar* 9. kez, *Titus Caesar* ise 7. kez konsülken, *Publius* kızı *Sextilia Hedone*, *Augustus*’lar, kendisi, eyaletin *eirenophylaks*’ı, *Agrostea* (köyünden) *Timaios* torunu *Glykon* oğlu olan kocası *Titus Flavius Helius* ve oğlu *Titus Flavius Sextilianus Helius* için kendi vatanı *Agrostea* ve *Zboura*’nın *Zeus Bennisos*’una ve geleneksel tanrılara adağı sundu.

Anahtar kelimeler: Phrygia; Zeus Bennisos; Flavius Helius; İmparator azatlısı; *eirenophylaks*.