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The cult of Men Tiamou, preliminary remarks

This article explores, in a preliminary fashion, the evidence for the cult of Men Tiamou, which was confined to the region of Lydia Katakeumene (“Burnt Lydia”). The epithet seems to be derived from the personal name Tiamos, which is found in Anatolia, and which seems to be of Persian origin, being found at Persepolis.

Key words: Men Tiamou, Anatolia, Lydia, Achaemenid, cult, Persian

Man is a god given a large number of epithets. Among the others that he possessed, a particularly interesting one, which has not been previously resolved, to my knowledge, is that of Men Tiamou. The purpose of this article is to attempt to elucidate this epithet.

The cult of Men Tiamou is confined to a small area Lydia in western Anatolia, south of the middle reaches of the river Hermos, where it is recorded in a number of inscriptions of late Hellenistic or Imperial period date. It is usually, though not invariably, recorded alongside the cult of Artemis Anaitis. The inscriptions, which first began to be recorded in the late nineteenth century, were found clustered around the modern sites of Gölde (the ancient Kollyda) and Kula (ancient Koloe?)². A number of inscriptions had been transported to Smyrna. The location of the ancient sanctuary, therefore, was unknown until the discovery of an inscription still *in situ*, which was published in 1983 (Naour 1983: 107). This inscription was found almost in the middle of a small hill, separate from the other foothills of the mountains that culminate in the peak of Yeldegirmen Tepe. The hill lies approximately 100m south of the houses of the village of Asar, or Asarcık, situated two kilometres to the north-northeast of Görnevit³. The name of the village possibly preserves the ancient toponym Azita, which is given as the

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² See the convenient map by Ch. Naour (Naour 1981: pl. Ib).

³ The location was accepted by Richard J.A. Talbert (Talbert 2000: 844), s.v. Artemis Anaeitis, Men Tiamou (map 56 H4).

place of residence of the gods in a displaced inscription found in Smyrna (Petzl 1998: 86–90).

Epithets attached to a god's name might be explained in a variety of ways. Many of them are geographic. In the case of Men, the known geographical epithets of the god are derived exclusively from Anatolia⁴. The only possible Anatolian geographic explanation that comes to mind, would be a connection with the Anatolian town name of Teimiusa (Calder, Bean 1958), but Teimiusa lies in Lycia, far away from Lydia, and it would be grammatically difficult to explain how one would arrive at the object genitive form of Tiamou. Another series of epithets allude to a particular sphere of the god's power. In the case of Men Tiamou, however, no plausible explanation of this kind comes to mind.

Another set of epithets arises in cases of syncretisation of two existing deities, typically in cases where a new god usurps the location of an existing god. In the case of Men Tiamou no less an authority than the eminent Sir William M. Ramsay considered such a possibility, linking the epithet Tiamou with the old Mesopotamian goddess Tiāmat (Ramsay 1895: 341–342)⁵, concluding that “it seems highly probable that Men-Tiamou is a god of the oriental colonists of the Katakeumene” (see: Debord 1985: 346; Diakonoff 1979: 159)⁶. Any such explanation, however, seems highly unlikely. At the end of the nineteenth century knowledge of Mesopotamian religion was in its infancy. Any association between the moon-god Men and Tiāmat, who was a personification of the salt waters, would be hard to understand. In any case Marduk, the champion of the younger generation of gods, «destroyed Tiāmat by splitting her skull with his mace, while standing on “her lower parts”. He broke her in two, “like a dried fish”, using one half to roof the heavens and the other to surface the earth: her breast formed mountains, Tigris and Euphrates flowed from her eyes, her spittle formed clouds» (Black, Green 1992: 177). So, in cosmological terms, Tiāmat, a representative of a previous pantheon, was already dead.

We are left with the explanation of Magie, that the epithet Tiamou “as in the other cults of Men in Asia Minor where a personal name in the genitive is attached to that of the God, indicates the founder” (Magie 1950: 1073, n. 14). In this place Magie is specifically discussing the cult of Men Pharnakou (Μῆν Φαρνάκου) at Ameria in Pontus, mentioned by Strabo (12.3.31), where the founder was one Phanakes, King of Pontus, who is probably to be identified with Pharnakes I (c. 185–156 BC), who also credited with the founding of the city of Phanakeia⁷.

⁴ See Eugene N. Lane (Lane 1975: 233) commenting on the exceptional case of the cult of Men Italika, and quoting C.W.M. Cox and A. Cameron (Cox, Cameron 1937).

⁵ The suggestion is repeated in: (Stauffenberg 1936: 760–761).

⁶ I.e. Lydia Katakeumene, or “Burt” Lydia, as this region of east-central Lydia was termed in Antiquity.

⁷ See Hans Oppermann (Oppermann 1938: col. 1853–1855), but cf. Eugene N. Lane (Lane 1990: 2171) where the title is derived from “the reputed founder of the Pontic kingdom, Pharnaces, husband of Atossa, Cyrus’ maternal grandmother”, quoted with approval by Emine Sökmen (Sökmen 2009: 283).

Strabo goes on to record that the Pontic Kings revered this temple so exceedingly, that they proclaimed the royal oath as follows “By the Fortune of the King and by Men Pharnakou” (Τύχην βασιλέως καὶ Μῆνα Φαρνάκου)⁸.

As a general statement it would be close to the truth to state that Iranians took the Anatolian moon-god Ma to be to all intents and purposes identical with their Iranian moon-god Māh⁹. The latter deity is only attested in the Avesta, but the existence of the cult of Māh among the Iranian or Iranianised population living in Anatolia in Achaemenid or post Achaemenid times is attested to by the occurrence of a series of theophoric names beginning with the participle Mat- there (Benveniste 1966: 105)¹⁰. It can hardly be doubted that the highly Iranianised Pontic Royal house identified Men Pharnakou with the Iranian Māh when they established the special Royal cult in Ameria.

The personal name Τίαμος is not attested in Greek¹¹. In the volumes of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* published so far, the name is listed with a question mark, presumably as the personal name of the founder of this cult (Corsten, Fraser, Matthews 2010: 429). One should also note the personal name Τιαμος, of unknown derivation, which occurs at Miletus in a list of the *stephanēphoroi* of that city, as the patronymic of one Πολυδωνέος who held office in the year 443/2 BC (Kawerau, Rehm 1914: 257; Balzat, Catling, Chiricat, Marchand 2013: 407). This name is only superficially similar in form to Τίαμος, but the quality of the vowel in the second syllable is quite different. María Paz de Hoz has suggested that Tiamou was the genitive form of a Lydian nominative ending in *-u* (Paz de Hoz 1999: 41–42).

Given the Iranian associations of Men, however, perhaps we should seek a similar form of personal name for Tiamos among the Old Persian onomasticon. In the relevant inscriptions Men Tiamou is invariably attested, with a few exceptions, alongside Artemis Anaitis: a goddess without doubt to be identified with the Persian goddess Anahita (Brosius 1998: 227–238). This strengthens our suspicion that her partner Men Tiamos is a Persian (or at least an Iranian) god too, and that the personal name Tiamos should be Persian.

The personal name Ti-ya-ma occurs among the personal names recorded in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (Hallock 1969: n. 763a)¹². The interpretation

⁸ On the significance of the Fortune of the King in this oath see: (Shabazi 1980: 135). The suggestion of Agnès van Haepen-Porbaix (Haepen-Porbaix 1983: 238) that Pharnakou stands for *Hvareno* are ill-placed, it is the “Fortune (*Tychē*)” in the oath that stands for *Hvareno* in Greek. *Pharnakou* must be interpreted as the name of the founder of the cult of Men at Ameria, cf.: (Saprykin 2009: 259–260).

⁹ A point developed by E.N. Lane (Lane 1968: 94–97; Lane 1990: 2170–2171).

¹⁰ The use of theophoric names based on the name Māh (*m'y*, *m'x*) continues down to Sasanian and post-Sasanian times in Sogdian documents cf.: (Boyce 1982: 143).

¹¹ Though compare the personal name Τιαμῶ, which is attested in Aethiopia (SEG 1980).

¹² The individual is mentioned in PF 377, 526–530, 630ff., 1008, 1097, 1112, 1840; Fort 5231 in which documents he issues sealed documents, receives flour and wine and hands it on to others. He seems to be responsible for the receipt and further distribution of rations.

of the names appearing on the tablets recovered from Persepolis is not straightforward. Not only Persian names are recorded there: approximately a tenth are Elamite, accompanied by a mere smattering of names of other origin. Furthermore the names are recorded in Elamite syllabic script by (largely) Elamite scribes, who could only approximately, albeit as closely as possible, reproduce the Persian names that they heard.

Gershevitch clearly believed the name to be Persian and listed it under the form *Tiyama* (Gershevitch 1969: 239), but directs the reader's attention to his entry under *Šiyama* (Gershevitch 1969: 233), where he argues that the personal name *Šiyama*, also attested at Persepolis, is derived from an unattested Old Iranian form **syāva-* "black". There he draws attention to the existence of the form *Tiyama*, which, he argues, represents the Old Persian form **θyava-* "black". Both names, it seems, could be derived from different Old Iranian words for "black", but seemingly at a different stage of dialectical development. This point was followed up by Mayerhofer in a study of Median dialect that appeared subsequent to the publication of Gershevitch. If I understand Mayerhofer's argument correctly, he postulates that the transition of the *s* sound into *θ* happened at the very beginning of the Old Persian period, and therefore that the name *Ši-ya-ma* is Median, whereas the name *Ti-ya-ma* (derived from **θyava-*) is Persian (Mayrhofer 1968: 13)¹³. In his subsequent masterly work on the Persepolitan onomasticon, Mayrhofer lists both the names *Ti-ya-ma* (Mayrhofer 1973: 240, n. 8.1648), and *Ši-ya-ma* (Mayrhofer 1973: 234, n. 8.1559¹⁴), and he also discusses the dialectological problem involved in interpretation of the personal name *Ti-ya-ma* (Mayrhofer 1973: 300, n. 11.2.2.5.1). In his review of Mayerhofer's *Onomastica Persepolitana* Mackenzie singled out Mayerhofer's treatment of this group of personal names for criticism. He cast doubt on the postulated sound shift for lack of concrete evidence, and so brought the "Median" interpretation of the personal name *Ši-ya-ma* into doubt (Mackenzie 1974: 701). Nevertheless, Mackenzie thought that that *θyava-* was the correct Old Persian form for "black", in which he was supported by Hinz, who translated the personal name *Tiyama* as "der Schwarze" (Hinz 1975: 241).

In all this discussion, that the personal name *Tiyama* "Mr. Black" is Persian is never brought into doubt. I suggest that the Persian name *Tiyama* lies behind the Greek Τίαιοος and it was a historical personage who established the cult of Men south of the middle reaches of the Hermos valley in Lydia Katakeumene. Do we have any means of establishing when this action took place?

More than twenty years ago an Aramaic inscription was found at a place called Kenger to the north of Maionia, and thus within the ancient catchment area of the cult of Men Tiamou. The editor André Lemaire found the inscription extremely

¹³ "Kennenziechen von Nichtpersisch und Persisch (im Falle der Achämenideninschriften: Medisch und Persisch). Der Übergang von *s*, *z* zu *θ*, *d* habe erst am Anfang der altpersischen Periode begonnen".

¹⁴ Mayrhofer lists the cognate forms for black in Chwarasmian *Š'wš*, Armenian *Šavarš*, both forms etymologically connected, seemingly, to the modern German *schwarz* ("black").

difficult to read and interpret, but it seems to concern a god who is named as MYS in the inscription, which the editor interpreted as a nominative form of the name Men¹⁵. The inscription also mentions what the editor interpreted as the name of a priest Kumou. The inscription also contains the words BYTH and WGDRH and GNN, which the editor would respectively interpret as “house/temple”, “enclosure”, and “gardener”, as well as the word ŠBLYŠTŠ or ŠBLY ŠTŠ, which are interpreted by the editor as a toponym – the ancient name for the site of Kenger. The editor dated the inscription to the middle of the fourth century BC, in other words to the end of the Achaemenid period, on the grounds of the letter forms, and concluded that it concerned a temple. Lemaire noted that it was the oldest attestation of the god Men in the region (Lemaire 2002: 179–184). Indeed, my colleague Richard Catling, who was first responsible for bringing my attention to the publication of this inscription, has remarked “this will be its (i.e. the cult of Men (N.S.)) earliest attestation in Asia Minor” (Catling, Kanavou 2007: 110, no. 50).

It could be argued that the inscription discussed above is a foundation inscription, which established the cult of Men in the region, and made provision for a temple, enclosure, gardener and priest, and that the individual who was responsible for the inscription was called Tiamos. There are a number of objections that could be raised against any such interpretation: the inscription makes no mention of Artemis Anaitis: the inscription implies that the temple was located (or was to be located) at ŠBLYŠTŠ or ŠBLY ŠTŠ (Kenger) and are not at Azita, but none of these considerations are insuperable obstacles.

En Envoi

Any further work on this topic requires for all inscriptions mentioning Men Tiamou to be gathered, analysed, dated, and located on a distribution map. This task requires more time than I have currently at my disposal.

Although the name Tiamos seems almost certainly to be Persian, it does not necessarily follow either that the cult was founded in the Achaemenid period, nor that the founder of the cult was a Persian by race.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere (cf.: Sekunda 1988: 175–196; 1985: 7–30; 1991: 83–143; 2010: 219–227; 2011: 48–76.), Persian names were adopted by the local Anatolian nobility during the Achaemenid period of occupation of Anatolia, and survived throughout the Hellenistic period, down to Roman times. Furthermore, in the latter period especially, the adoption of noble-sounding Persian names by the emancipated was a common phenomenon. These two factors alone guaranteed the survival of Persian names throughout the Hellenistic and Imperial

¹⁵ The name of the god Men Tiamos is, in fact, rendered in the forms Μείς Τίαμου and Μίς Τίαμου in later inscriptions coming from the catchment area of the worship of the god in the middle reaches of the Hermos valley, for example in two inscriptions of the second century AD recorded in Smyrna, but most probably originally coming from the same locality. See: (Petzl 1998: 86–88, n. 68, 69).

periods. Therefore the presence of Persian names in the Anatolian onomastic record in post-Achaemenid times, does not necessarily imply the survival of Persian or Iranian communities. The cult of Men Tiamou could have been founded by an individual coming from a local noble family, that had adopted the name of a local Persian ruler, and handed that name down through succeeding generations.

In fact the personal name Tiamos is found in Anatolia, but further to the east in Isaurica, recorded in an inscription carved on a stele which was built into the wall of a mosque in the modern town of Dorla. The inscription, presumably dating to the fourth or fifth century AD most of the other inscriptions from that area, runs thus (Ramsay 1905: 173):

Φαν[α]λ[ι]ς ἐκόσμησεν τὸν
ἀδελφὸν Τ[ί]αμον

Phanalis has honoured her
brother Tiamos

Admittedly there is a problem in that the *iota* of Tiamos has been restored, but, if the restoration is to be believed, in my opinion probably here we have evidence for the survival of a Persian name through adoption by a local Anatolian family, and its transmission down through the generations, rather for the survival of an Iranian ethnic group in Isaurica. It is also to be borne in mind that personal names could travel far from the site of their original adoption by the mechanism of inter-marriage of powerful local families.

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