

# AGORA I 5983

## ZEUS EXOU- . . . AGAIN

Few Athenian horoi have elicited more curiosity and more controversy than an inscribed stele found in 1947 in the so-called Industrial District southwest of the Athenian Agora, where it had been used face down as a cover slab for a Late Roman water channel beneath the East Bath (Agora grid-square C:19).<sup>1</sup> I read this marker for a shrine of Zeus (Agora I 5983), in letter forms datable between the early 4th and the late 2nd century B.C.,<sup>2</sup> as follows:

ΟΡΟΣ  
ΙΕΡΟΥ  
ΔΙΟΣ  
ΕΞΟΥ

In his *editio princeps* of the inscription, B. D. Meritt read the last letter as *psi* (ἐξουψ) and conveyed the suggestion of A. B. Cook that the intended *epiklesis*, or byname, of Zeus may have been ἐξόψιος, a presumed *hapax legomenon* meaning “who watches over the fortunes of his realm.”<sup>3</sup> In the same year, R. E. Wycherley, alluding to an anonymous suggestion of ἐξου

1. I am indebted to Judith Binder, Dorothea Lalonde, and three anonymous readers, whose critiques have substantially improved this paper. I thank the Publications Committee and editorial staff of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens as well as the following directors of institutions and their staffs: James Muhly, Director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens; John McK. Camp II, Director of the Agora Excavations; and the Trustees of Grinnell College.

2. Meritt (1957, p. 90) gave the date “*saec. IV a.*,” as he commonly did with

post-Eukleidean horoi that have no distinctively later context or letter forms. But nothing in the simple large lettering of this inscription suggests a dating closer than noted here. Its developed Ionic script and orthography put the anterior limit in the early 4th century, and the first half of that century is less likely, since, before about 350 B.C., when ου replaced ο̄ as the standard spelling for the diphthong (see Threatte 1980, p. 238), the inscriber could have achieved more symmetry and economy in line 2 with ιερῶ than with ιεροῦ. For the other limit, the lettering seems short of the 1st century

B.C., by which time most inscribers had affected serifs, broken-bar *alphas*, and lunate *sigmas*.

For an illustration of this inscription, see Meritt 1957, pl. 22, no. 37.

3. Meritt (1957, p. 91), thinking this byname suitable for Zeus overlooking the city, tentatively associated the horos with a shrine already marked by the archaic rupestral inscription ἰόρος Διός (retrograde) (= I<sup>3</sup> 1055 A) on the east spur of the Hill of the Nymphs. In a short paper (Lalonde 1995) I have argued that the Zeus of this shrine was Meilichios, and I am preparing a detailed case for this identification.

for the last line, reasserted Meritt's ἐξοψ, but added that "the last line remains a puzzle."<sup>4</sup>

In 1966 Eugene Vanderpool, with the aid of photographic enlargement, argued that the mark in the upper angle of the last letter is detached, leans to the left, and does not conform to the width and depth of the letter strokes of the horos, but is similar to marks of damage in this area of the stone.<sup>5</sup> He read an *upsilon* and suggested that the intended name was "Ζεὺς Ἐξοῦ(σιος) or the like, Zeus of Power or Authority (ἐξουσία), an appropriate epithet for the 'Father of Men and Gods,' " but also one without parallel. Wycherley then conceded that only Υ was cut at the end of line 4, but still left open the possibility of ἐξοψ- by suggesting that Ψ, like the whole inscription, might have been intended but not completed.<sup>6</sup> He also rejected Vanderpool's ἐξοῦσιος as unsuitable for Zeus' power, noting Philo's use of the term to mean "deprived of property," and reasserted Exopsios "with a mark of interrogation."<sup>7</sup> When, some years later, Homer Thompson suggested that I edit the horos inscriptions for *Agora XIX*, he expressed a special interest in what I would write about Zeus Exops- or Exou-. For that volume, an autopsy of I 5983, which included close examination of the disputed mark in good light with a strong magnifying glass, persuaded me that line 4 ended with *upsilon*, but I had nothing to add about the mysterious *epiklesis*.<sup>8</sup>

Now I would like to offer an addendum to the minimal commentary of *Agora XIX*, including new consideration of the meaning of line 4. In preparing this paper I again examined the stele and noted further evidence for *upsilon* as its last letter. The mark between the upper diagonals of this letter is a blunt gouge, wider at the surface plane of the stone than most of the letter strokes and wide and concave at its trough, unlike the linear strokes of the letters, which are at their trough as thin as a pencil line. I can also emphasize Vanderpool's observation that the mark is leaning and detached from Υ by noting that this cutter shows no sign elsewhere of skewing vertical lines or of leaving normally intersecting or converging lines unconnected. Finally, I should respond to an unusual alternative hypothesis about this mark. While agreeing with Vanderpool that the cutter would normally have executed the full vertical line of a Ψ before its diagonals, Wycherley suggested that the flaw may have prevented completion of the *psi*, or that the cutter considered it as roughly incorporated in the letter.<sup>9</sup> One need only examine the very neat tooth-chisel dressing of the inscribed surface to doubt that this mark, or others like it in the area, preceded the cutting of the inscription.

More may be learned about this inscription by pursuing further the question of how we came to have this "puzzling last line," as Wycherley called it. We may start with a choice of two general hypotheses: the inscription is complete and line 4 is an abbreviation, or it is incomplete and the last line is either part of an intended word or phrase or an irremediable error.

Is line 4 an abbreviation? The notebook entry of the excavator, Rodney S. Young, observing that the horos is "apparently complete," and Meritt's statement that "the inscription is complete"<sup>10</sup> imply that line 4 is an abbreviation, and their printing of nothing beyond the extant letters of line 4 is

4. *Agora III*, p. 124; see also Wycherley 1964, pp. 177–178 and note 21, for this "very puzzling 'boundary stone of the shrine of Zeus Exops(ios??).'"

5. Vanderpool 1966, pp. 274–275, no. 1, and pl. 72 (enlarged photo of the last letter of line 4); a mark that is proximate and very similar to the one in question can be observed just below the right diagonal of the disputed letter.

6. Wycherley 1968; Wycherley also noted here that both he and Vanderpool had rejected ἐξ οὐ because there was not room on the stone for a relative clause. After exploring this possibility, I agree with them. Even if one allows a short verb (e.g., ἤλαθε) in a fifth line after ἐξ οὐ, there is no room for a subject. Lack of space for an intended relative clause is a possible reason why the inscription was not completed, but it seems unlikely that this problem would be noticed only after four lines had already been cut. For the only known relative clause on an Athenian horos of public domain, see *Agora XIX*, p. 29, H 34, pl. 3.

7. A decade later, Wycherley (1978, p. 188 and note 36) reopened the question of whether the mark in the upper vertex of the last letter is accidental and again called attention to Meritt's Zeus Exopsios.

8. *Agora XIX*, pp. 25–26, H 19.

9. Wycherley 1968, p. 121.

10. Meritt 1957, p. 90.

an editorial convention for abbreviation. Likewise, Vanderpool's rounded brackets in Ἐξού(σιος) indicate an abbreviation. But there are several reasons why abbreviation does not seem to be intended here. When abbreviation is used on horoi, it is generally used in all or most words of the text, although numerals or units of measurement are sometimes isolated examples. Abbreviations most often shorten words to an initial letter or two in order to create a large, easily legible text in a limited space.<sup>11</sup> A horos of Zeus Exou or Exops fits none of these patterns.

The other general explanation of line 4, which actually begs the question, is well summed up by Wycherley in the comment "The stone was left incomplete, for some unknown reason."<sup>12</sup> Wycherley inferred only from the puzzling fourth line that the inscription was unfinished, but the layout of the text in relation to the dressed area in which it is cut not only corroborates this inference but also suggests that a fifth line was intended. Despite the awkwardness and timidity of this cutter's execution of the letter forms, the text has the compensating neatness of letters of fairly uniform size arranged symmetrically on the dressed face of the stele. The use of one word per line in lines 1, 2, and 3,<sup>13</sup> and, despite the variation of four and five letters per line, the spacing of those letters to create justified vertical margins seem to reflect a careful plan that would be completed in a fifth line of four or five letters. Finished horoi sometimes have considerable space below their texts, but in this case the measurement of the available space (0.13 m) and the spatial symmetry of the first four lines suggest that the text was originally meant to be finished with an additional line. If this line had the average letter height of the extant lines (0.040 m) and between it and line 4 was the average interlinear space of the extant lines (0.030 m), all five lines would be vertically balanced within the dressed area, with the margin at the bottom (0.060 m) being slightly more than the one at the top (0.050 m). Thus, a further argument against the hypothesis of abbreviation, whether of Ἐξόψιος or Ἐξούσιος, is that it overlooks the availability of space in the lower dressed area of the stone for a fifth line of text with the same dimensions, spacing, and style as the four extant lines.

Because the inscription is unfinished, any restoration of the fifth line must be speculative. Nevertheless, an unfinished byname of Zeus in line 4 is a possibility worth further consideration. As an alternative to the deadlock of Exopsios/Exousios, I suggest -πανοῦ as a possible fifth line, and that Zeus had the *epiklesis* ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ, "from Heaven or the Sky." There are several reasons for considering this suggestion: it fits line 4, if, as I argue, ἐξου-, rather than ἐξοψ-, is the right reading; Athenian use of the phrase ἐξ οὐρανοῦ is attested, even if not precisely as an *epiklesis*, for the gods and for Zeus in particular; the five letters ΠΑΝΟΥ would fit symmetrically as the fifth line of a completed inscription. The absence of a definite article is no impediment, since it is commonly dispensed with on horoi to allow a conspicuous text with fewer but larger letters. The byname in the form of a prepositional phrase has a number of parallels in inscriptions and literature, as, for example, on an inscribed altar at Inönü in Phrygia belonging to Διὶ ἐξ Αὐλῆς.<sup>14</sup> Most such bynames refer to the earthly locations of cults, but the Greeks were familiar with the idea of οὐρανός as a

11. *Agora* XIX, p. 7 and notes 12, 13; p. 14 and the example of *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 2639.

12. Wycherley 1968, p. 121; cf. Wycherley 1978, p. 188; his perennial return to Meritt's Zeus Exopsios indicates that Wycherley thought line 4 was an incomplete byname of Zeus.

13. This arrangement of one word per line could not be continued with a complete *epiklesis* of Zeus, but this inconsistency is not a strong argument for abbreviation in line 4; see the parallel of *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 2606: ἡόρος / ἱεροῦ / Διός / Αὐαντῆ / ρος.

14. Körte (1900, pp. 419–421, no. 32) takes ἀλλή as referring to the hillside cave near which the altar was found; cf. Robert 1955, pp. 37–38, note 2 (ἀλλή as a courtyard or shelter); also of Zeus: *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1828.28 (ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ), 5064 (ἐκ Πείσης), 1096.3 (ἐμ Παλλαδίῳ); other gods: Aphrodite ἐν Κήποις (Paus. 1.19.2; 1.27.3); Μήτηρ ἐν Ἄγρας (*IG* I<sup>3</sup> 369.91).

real *topos*, especially as the domain of Zeus<sup>15</sup> and from which he descended as Astrapaios or Kataibates in the form of ominous lightning, or as Ombrios or Hyetios, life-giving rain.<sup>16</sup> In *Prometheus* 897 the chorus uses the phrase τινὶ τῶν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ of the gods immediately upon mentioning Zeus as a specific example. The term ἐξ οὐρανοῦ is a plausible variant of οὐράνιος, a popular epithet of Zeus the sky god.<sup>17</sup> That Ζεὺς ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ would be a unique occurrence does not argue strongly against it, for among the hundreds of Greek bynames and epithets of Zeus, including at least forty-nine known in Athens, many have only a single attestation.<sup>18</sup>

If the Athenians actually had a shrine of Ζεὺς ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ, we can only speculate about where it might have been. Mountains or hilltops, as proximate to the heavenly source of lightning and rain, were often the sites of shrines to Zeus.<sup>19</sup> Since the unfinished horos was probably created in or near the *asty* of Athens, perhaps even in the Street of the Marble Workers near which it was found, its intended site may have been one of the prominent hills nearby. Another possible site was one of the *enelysia*, or places struck by lightning, which were considered sacred to Zeus, usually as Kataibates, and were kept open to the sky and marked off as *abata*.<sup>20</sup>

Still, restoration of the phrase ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ, as of the other proposed bynames of Zeus, leaves unexplained the incomplete state of the horos.<sup>21</sup> This fact prompts us to consider the alternative possibility that what we have in line 4 is a total mistake. Even if the nature of such a misinscription is not apparent from what we see on the stone, this possibility may be more logical than would a partial *epiklesis* of Zeus for explaining the failure to complete the inscription, since a major error might have been considered irremediable and thus a reason for scrapping the horos.<sup>22</sup>

A close look at the provenience and condition of Agora I 5983 in fact shows evidence to suggest that the stone may never actually have been used as a horos. Young dated the first phase of the East Bath and the underlying water channel where the stele was found to a period between the mid 2nd century and the Herulian invasion of A.D. 267.<sup>23</sup> Yet the stone may well have had an earlier use as building material. As Young showed, the slab-covered channel was part of a system which in part replaced and used material from an earlier Roman drain that had blocked and replaced the southerly course of the Great Drain, probably after the siege of Sulla. Young also judged from the material and structure of sections of this replacement, from the fill of a cistern that underlay it, and from a tributary channel down the northwest slope of the Areiopagos that the “post-Sullan” drain had a history of construction and use as early as the 2nd century B.C.,<sup>24</sup> and, of course, the southerly section of the south branch of the Great Drain was in use as early as the turn of the 5th to the 4th century.<sup>25</sup>

Although these predecessors of the Late Roman channel were not covered, they or some other structure dismantled in the earlier evolution of this area may have supplied this stele for later use as a cover slab. The damage to the inscribed face, including, in my judgment, the mark above the final *upsilon*, consists of small gouges that are themselves not eroded and look like the result of short-term rough handling during reuse, but the preserved sharpness of the shallow and thin lines of the text and the tooth-chisel marks of the dressed face indicate a surface that has been protected

15. *Iliad* 15.192, *Odyssey* 1.67; the association of god and realm is most fundamental, since Ζεὺς / Διός is a *nomen agentis* derived from Indo-European terms for sky, day, or brightness (see Frisk 1960, s.v. Ζεὺς; Schwabl 1978, cols. 1013–1014).

16. Zeus Astrapaios (Strabo 9.2.11); Kataibates (*IG* II<sup>2</sup> 4964, 4965); Ombrios (Raubitschek 1943, pp. 72–73, nos. 19–21 [Agora I 1797 + 4825, 4804]; Langdon 1976, pp. 5–8); Hyetios (Aristeides 43.30; Paus. 2.19.8); cf. Alkaios, fr. 338 (L.-P.): ὕει μὲν ὁ Ζεὺς, ἐκ δ' ὀράνω μέγας / χεῖμων.

17. *IG* V i, 36 A.6–8: ἱερέυς γε[νό]μενος [Διὸς Οὐρ[αν]ίου]. A variation of the same kind is Athenaios' reference (11.465a) to Dionysos as Λιμναῖος as well as the usual ἐν Λίμναις.

18. E.g., in Attica alone, Zeus Epopetes, Geleon, Enchorios, Georgos; for others, see Cook 1914–1940, I, pp. 852–853, and II, ii, pp. 1335–1339 (indices, *passim*); Schwabl 1978, cols. 1064–1075; Wycherley 1964, pp. 175–179.

19. Langdon 1976, pp. 100–112.

20. *Etym. Magnum*, s.v. ἐνηλύσια; Pollux 9.41; *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 4965, 4998; Nilsson 1967, pp. 71–73.

21. I have been asked if the missing text could have been painted on the stone. Because ancient inscribed lettering was highlighted with color for easy legibility, erroneous letters or missing letter strokes were sometimes unobtrusively corrected with paint. It is possible, but not easy, to imagine circumstances in which the remainder of this horos would have been uncut but painted.

22. It might be argued that, with the narrow and shallow lettering of this inscription, even a complete line could have been corrected after the surface was slightly lowered. There are obviously factors in the treatment of this stone that remain unknown.

23. Young 1951, pp. 266, 282, and 281, fig. 26.

24. Young 1951, pp. 263–264 and p. 136, fig. 1.

25. Young 1951, p. 256.

26. Judith Binder reminds me (*viva voce*) of the horoi of the Kerameikos (IG II<sup>2</sup> 2617–2619; exemplary photo in Travlos 1971, fig. 415) that were buried under fill shortly after their erection about the mid 4th century B.C. Their letters are so fresh that guidebooks have called them replicas; see also the sharp lettering of a horos quickly buried during the urban crowding of the Peloponnesian War (Lalonde 1968, pp. 127–128, 132, and pl. 36: a, d).

and has not suffered the smoothing effects of lengthy exposure to the elements and human wear.<sup>26</sup>

In sum, this review of the horos argues that the inscription as we have it does not contain an abbreviation but is incomplete, that the fourth line may be a partial *epiklesis* of Zeus, possibly ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ, but that an irreparable error in that line may go even further in explaining the incompleteness of the horos text, the probable rejection of the stele as a marker, and its use as building material.

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