

SYNCRETISM—THE TERM AND PHENOMENON¹

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Summary

In this article the history of the use of the term syncretism is traced. It shows that apart from being used etymologically incorrectly it has acquired vague meanings. Thanks to its universal potential it became an expression for every kind of religious or even cultural contact. Being used to describe different religious phenomena it creates an illusion of correlation, each of them with the rise of a mixed religion. This pattern of thought was especially popular among scholars of the nineteenth century. It still affects the modern investigations of the Mediterranean religious situation of the Hellenistic and Roman periods as the epigraphic example demonstrates.

The problem of scholarly terminology does not belong to the sphere of purely theoretical speculation. Scientific language possesses an ability to shape our thoughts and to play games with us through words. This can sometimes create confusion. The term *syncretism* epitomises the problem.

If we try to define precisely the meaning of the word syncretism and to consult lexicographical references the picture is rather confusing. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines syncretism as 'attempted union or reconciliation of diverse and opposite tenets or practices, esp. in philosophy and religion'. It treats syncretism, firstly as a result and not as a process, and secondly as something man-made and not natural. The German *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* suggests a more complicated picture, which also leaves room for the natural course of events: 'er bezeichnet einerseits den bewußten Zusammenschuß verschiedener Religionen bzw., einzelnen Elemente in ihnen, anderseits das organische Zusammenwachsen von Religionen oder ihre Anschauungen und Praktiken zu einer Einheit'. If we turn to more specialised scholarly literature we find the picture even more uncertain. G.

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Van der Leeuw in his famous book *Phänomenologie der Religion* (published in English under the title *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*) understands syncretism as 'the process leading repeatedly from Polydemonism to Polytheism'.² Later in the same book, while trying to 'apprehend its essential nature somewhat more thoroughly', he describes it 'as one form of the dynamic of religions'.³ For J.H. Kamstra syncretism means amalgamation, something opposite to an encounter, i.e. the existential meeting of two religions.⁴ He sees syncretism as the 'result of alienation in an existing religion. . . The criterion for syncretism is therefore alienation, something which either comes in as alien from without or which is alienated from within—whatever it is'.⁵ Lastly M. Pye defines syncretism as 'the temporary ambiguous coexistence of elements from diverse religious and other contexts within a coherent religious pattern'.⁶

These conflicting definitions reflect a situation where the word, having the status of a term, nevertheless is used by scholars in different ways in the manner of Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty.⁷ This makes the process of reading some articles similar to the complexity of a crossword.

A survey of the history of this term's use reflects the same problem. The word συγκρητισμός is a *hapax legomenon*.⁸ It

² Chap. 19:1 cited here and elsewhere in the English translation by J.E. Turner (London 19642). German edition (Tübingen 1933).

³ Chap. 93:1.

⁴ J.H. Kamstra, *Encounter or Syncretism: The Initial Growth of Japanese Buddhism* (Leiden 1967) 5.

⁵ J.H. Kamstra, *Syncretism op de Grens tussen Theologie en Godsdienstfenomenologie* (Leiden 1970) cited in accordance with M. Pye, 'Syncretism and Ambiguity', *Numen* 18 (1971) 86.

⁶ M. Pye, *op. cit.*, 93.

⁷ Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, 'When I use a word', Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I use it to mean—neither more nor less'. 'The question is', said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things'. 'The question is', said Humpty Dumpty, 'Which is to be master—that's all', (chap. 5).

⁸ The history of the term has been discussed at length on several occasions, see esp. A. Pariente, 'ΣΥΓΚΡΗΤΙΣΜΟΣ', *Emerita* 37 (1969) 317; C. Colpe, 'Die Vereinbarkeit historischer und struktureller Bestimmungen des Synkretismus', in A. Dietrich (ed.), *Syncretismus im syrisch-persischen Kulturgebiet* (Göttingen 1975) (Abhandlungen d. Akademie d. Wiss. in Göttingen, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 3 Folge N 96) 15f.; K. Rudolph,

was used by Plutarch in his work *περὶ φιλαδελφίας* (*de fraterno amore* 19). Plutarch mentioned that Cretans, who constantly fought each other, stopped their war. They came to an agreement when threatened by a common enemy καὶ τοῦτ' ἦν ὁ καλούμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν συγκρητισμός. The etymology and meaning of the word, as it was understood by Plutarch is absolutely clear, i.e. to be united like Cretans at the time of danger from outside. The verb συγκρητίζειν was mentioned both by the *Suda* and *Etymologicum Magnum*. It was never again used in any Greek literature which has survived.

It was Erasmus who revived the word (in its verbal form) in his letter to Melanchthon in 1519: *aequum est nos quoque synkretizein. Ingens praedium est concordia*. Erasmus used the word in the traditional sense of Plutarch—to come to concord and fight mutual enemies together despite the differences of opinions which existed in the Humanist's camp. His definition was widely adopted and used in a positive sense. However, in the 17th century the situation changed completely. The word began to be used in a negative way and this pejorative meaning as 'Rudolph quite rightly stresses 'ihn bis heute nicht ganz verlassen hat'.⁹ This unexpected and abrupt change was connected with the name of George Calixtus whose attempt to harmonise the different views of Protestants, and subsequently all Christendom, met with universal disapproval.¹⁰ Though still used etymologically in a correct way, the word syncretism little by little had undergone a substantial change of meaning—the stress now was put not on unification against a mutual enemy, but on the incompatibility of different forces.¹¹

The next development took place in the nineteenth century and was marked by the rejection and complete loss of

'Synkretismus—vom theologischen Scheltwort zum religionswissenschaftlichen Begriff', *Humanitas Religiosa, Festschrift f. Haralds Biezais* (Stockholm 1979) 194ff.

⁹ K. Rudolph, *op. cit.*, 195.

¹⁰ Cf. the remark of R.J. Zwi Werblowski: 'Da werde als Synkretismus gescholten, was heute vielleicht von vielen lobend Ökumenismus genannt werden würde' ('Synkretismus in der Religionsgeschichte', W. Heissig, H. Klimkeit (eds.), *Syncretismus in der Religionen Zentralasiens* (1987) 2.

¹¹ Cf. a good example of such an attitude is in the *Eirenikon Catholicum* by Jesuit Voit Elber (cited by K. Rudolph, *op. cit.*, 95) who stated that the principles advocated by Calixtus meant the union not of people, who belonged to different religions, but of different religions.

the etymological meaning of the word. It was used as a term to define a mixture of heterogeneous elements in religions and cults in the Hellenistic period and gradually came to be understood as a derivative from συγκεράννυμι.¹²

¹² Pariente, op. cit., made an attempt to prove that Plutarch's συγκρητισμός was actually derived from σύγκρατος and in the long run from συγκεράννυμι (with the root -κρα in the Ionian form). Thus, from the very beginning, as Pariente supposes, it had the same meaning as it had obtained in the 19th century. The story about the Cretans' federation in the extreme situations, according to Pariente, was invented by Plutarch and represents a classical piece of popular etymology. Ionic form can be explained by the fact that it was borrowed from technical language where Ionic dialect had a tendency to be preserved as, for instance, military terms were preserved in their Doric form. The appearance of such a term, as Pariente states, was assisted by the existence of the group κρητισμός < κρητίζω, Κρής. Following I. Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax* (Basel 1920) 301, he insists that if the historic situation described by Plutarch had any chance of being probable, it must be dated in the Creto-Mycenxan period. Forms ending in -ισμός appeared in the Greek language much later. Pariente is convinced that the word συγκρητισμός came into being either in Plutarch's time or just a little earlier and belongs to the class of derivatives ending in -ισμός from the nouns, like ῥοπαλισμός < ῥόπαλον, κεφαλισμός < κεφαλή, σκαριφισμός < σκάριφος. All these arguments do not seem convincing to me. In the third century BC thirty Cretan cities were united in κοινὸν τῶν Κρηταίων. As M. Van der Mijnsbrugge supposes, the origin of this Cretan Koinon is to be sought in the ancient institution of *syncretismus* though the historical *koinon* was formed without foreign threat to the independence of the island (*The Cretan Koinon* (New York 1931) 57f.). R.F. Willetts sees the explanation of the tradition in 'a tribal confederacy of the Dorians formed during their migration into Greece and perpetuated, through necessity and precedent, during their migration over Crete' (*The Civilisation of Ancient Crete* (Berkeley 1977) 181). The legend, reported by Plutarch, could have originated in the period when Cretan Koinon came into being as confirmation of its traditional role at Crete. If we turn to the linguistic arguments of Pariente, our attention is drawn to the fact that all three words he adduced to prove his supposition that the words ending in -ισμός were not necessarily derived from the verbs, are very rare if not *hapaxes*. Therefore an absence of the appropriate meaning of the verb cannot guarantee that the verb actually had never had a suitable meaning. Besides, one of the examples of Pariente must be abandoned. Pariente's translation of the verb ῥοπαλίζω (which was explained by Hesychius as στρέφει, κίνει ὡς ῥόπαλον) as *herir con una maza* is unjustified. It seems evident that ῥοπαλισμός (*hapax legornenon*, mentioned in the plural form by Aristophanes, *Lys.* 553) is derived from ῥοπαλίζω—the explanation given by Hesychius does not exclude the use of the word in the erotic context. But even if sometimes the words ending

Etymological incorrectness of the term does not mean, of course, that it cannot be used. Much more important is the question of whether in religion there really exists an autonomous phenomenon to describe which we need a term syncretism and if it exists, what is it.

When it began its life in the field of the history of religions it was used in a narrow way to depict the religious situation which came into being in the Mediterranean world after Alexander. At that time the population of a vast territory interacted with Hellenism. Thus preconditions were formed which welcomed innovative processes on an unprecedented scale in different religions. But strictly speaking all religions are genetically heterogeneous and in this sense syncretistic. The difference between syncretistic and traditional religions as well as syncretistic and pure ones is meaningless. All we can do is to direct our attention to a balance between traditional (i.e. what has become traditional) and innovative features at particular stages. Innovations in religion can take place either as a result of internal development or under external influence. What we actually mean in applying the term syncretism to Hellenistic religions is that during the Hellenistic period the process of heterogeneous innovations was especially active. This observation did not escape the notice of some historians of religion of this period and made them feel unsure about the correctness of the use of the term. F.C. Grant in his book with the characteristic title *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism* admits that syncretism 'is no late development of the Hellenistic age'. It was to be found as far back as the history of Greek and other ancient religions could be traced. 'What distinguished the syncretism of the Hellenistic age was its vast extent, its thoroughness, and the remoter origins of some of the cults and deities involved'.¹³

The scale of the process cannot serve as a sufficient basis for introducing the new term, because in this case its meaning cannot be fixed precisely. It provides every oppor-

in -ισμός were denominative derivatives, the supposed συνκρητισμός < σύγκρατος does not follow this pattern, σύγκρατος being a verbal adjective. It is also worthwhile to remember that glossaries fix the existence of the noun συγκερασμός from συγκεράννυμι with the suffix -σμι-. To sum up, Plutarch's etymology of the word συνκρητισμός is very likely to be correct.

¹³ (New York 1953) XXIf.

tunity for changing from a useful tool into a source of misrepresentation of the material. Another option is that such a term, thanks to its vagueness and universal potential, can start its own independent life. *Syncretism* does not escape either fortune.

Heterogeneous innovations in Hellenistic religions were numerous and complex. As a result the meaning of the term *syncretism* was becoming more and more vague. It was applied to very different phenomena such as:

1. *Interpretatio graeca* (or *latina*) when someone else's deities were identified with the gods of the Greek (Roman) pantheon on the basis of similarity in rites, iconography or place in the pantheon.
2. Transmission of a certain cult to another ethnical milieu.
3. Assimilation of such transmitted deities.
4. Translation of a religious work into another language which introduces new shades of meaning in that language which never existed in the original as happened, for instance, with the LXX.
5. Philosophical speculations in which different deities are treated as simply different names for the same deity.
6. Creation of a new cult by means of the amalgamation of different features of different deities.

Using the term *syncretism* to describe all these phenomena creates an illusion of the **correlation** of each of them with the rise of a mixed religion. It suggests the combination of the features of different religious systems, i.e. any contact in the religious sphere becomes sufficient grounds for declaring the existence of religious syncretism. Taking into consideration the variety and wide spread use of religious contacts we cannot be surprised either by the fact that many scholars *a priori* were aware of the *syncretistic* character of the religious phenomena they were investigating or by the expansion of the term beyond the borders of the Hellenistic period.

The fact that the term syncretism was applied to such a variety of religious phenomena, and in its wider sense became an expression for any kind of religious or even cultural

contacts,¹⁴ made the need to clarify the issue very urgent. Some doubted the very wisdom in keeping the term:

'One might even ask if exact definitions are always useful in the study of religion. After all, terms are labels which we put on phenomena. They are necessary and useful as long as they serve the purpose of clarity and exactitude. But in a case like this. . . it is questionable that the phenomenon under discussion is so homogeneous if it is capable of exact definition'.¹⁵

Another group of scholars decided to harmonise the chaos and create a typology of syncretism. Such typology was proposed, for instance, by P. Leveque¹⁶ and it is only natural, that it turned out to be a short history of Mediterranean religions from the Creto-Mycenwan period up to Roman times.

C. Colpe suggests that a universal typology of syncretism should be worked out and he sketched a programme for investigating different types of contacts in the sphere of religion and language. He understands syncretism as a universal phenomenon which is manifested in symbiosis, acculturation and identification, so that any ethno-cultural contact can be treated in terms of syncretism.¹⁷

A heuristic model of syncretism was suggested by U. Berner.¹⁸ He defines syncretism as a process in the history of religion which manifests itself either at the system level, when two competing systems made contact or at the element level, when such a connection exists only between the elements. Syncretism for Berner expresses a tendency to overcome the competitive character of the systems and to abolish the borders

¹⁴ 'Religious syncretism in the wider sense of this term is an expression for cultural contact...' (Å. Hultkanz, 'Pagan and Christian Elements in the Religious Syncretism among the Shoshoni Indians of Wyoming', in S.S. Hartman (ed.), *Syncretism* (Stockholm 1969) 15.

¹⁵ H. Ringgren, 'The Problems of Syncretism', *Syncretism*, 7. It is worthwhile mentioning that Van der Leeuw used the term *syncretism* only five times in his famous 700 page book. The reason is, to my mind, obvious—he dealt with the classification of the real phenomena and needed precise terms and conceptions.

¹⁶ P. Leveque, 'Essai de typologie des syncretismes', *Les syncretismes dans les religions grecque et romain* (Strasbourg 1973) 179ff.

¹⁷ C. Colpe, *op. cit.*, 15f.

¹⁸ U. Berner, 'Heuristische Modell der Synkretismus Forschung', G. Wiesner (ed.), *Synkretismusforschung, Theorie und Praxis* (Wiesbaden 1978) 11.

between them. The heuristic model developed by Berner is a masterpiece of its own. Berner suggests a lot of detailed and sophisticated definitions of different types of syncretism (or as I would call it of religious contacts) such as *absorbierende Synkretismus*, *agglomerativer Synkretismus*, *Meta-Synkretismus* etc. What is interesting to mention is that some of the traditional concrete terms such as, for instance, identification, have now become subdivisions of the universal conception of syncretism, though at first it came into being (and still sometimes is being used) as a duplicate of them.

Thus, at the moment we have a rather peculiar situation where, on the one hand, the majority of scholars who work in the field of Mediterranean religions use the term in a vague and indeterminate sense (with one especially delicate point, which many try to avoid—whether Christianity can be called syncretistic), and on the other hand, *syncretism* has become just an expression for any kind of religious development (cf. Van der Leeuw's 'dynamic of religions') and as such constitutes an autonomous sphere of knowledge.

In conclusion, here is an example which demonstrates that the vagueness and wide usage of the term with its indefinite meaning is not inoffensive for scholarly work.

In his book *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, P. Trebilco criticises very strongly an old conception of 'syncretism between the Sabazios cult and Judaism', which was proposed by F. Cumont and widely accepted. One of the main arguments of Cumont in favour of his conception was his interpretation of the dedication to Θεὸς Ὑψίστος from Piro (Macedonia). Cumont thought that this dedication was made by the adherents of Sabazios and as Theos Hypsistos was considered by him always to represent Yahweh, he decided that this inscription gave the best example of the amalgamation of Yahweh and Sabazios. Trebilco quite rightly rejects Cumont's theory. But the arguments he uses against Cumont are based on the material which is interpreted in accordance with the same pattern of thought which underlies Cumont's theory. Trebilco argues that as 'a number of pagan deities were given the epithet 'Hypsistos', so it is highly likely that in this instance Sabazios is being called 'the Highest God' by some of his own worshippers'.¹⁹

¹⁹ (Cambridge 1991) 141.

But why is Trebilco so sure that a number of pagan deities could be addressed, as Hypsistos? In support of this assertion he refers to the works of A.B. Cook, Gressman, A.S. Hall and M. Tacheva-Hitova.²⁰ But in their works they provide no list of inscriptions mentioning the names of different gods with the title *Hypsistos*. The reason for this is that in the overwhelming majority of cases the assumption that a certain deity bears the title *Hypsistos* is simply an interpretation. The basis of such interpretations is the belief that in the Hellenistic and Roman periods all cults were syncretistic, i.e. mixed. If two inscriptions are found near each other—one dedication to a local god and another to the Most High God—then they assume that this must be interpreted that this local god was also called the Most High. Trebilco writes that 'in Syria "Theos Hypsistos" (and also "Zeus Hypsistos") was used to refer to the local Baal of the region'. He obtained this information from Cook, who wrote on one page of his book that the Syrian Zeus Hypsistos was *probably* Ba'al-samin, and three pages further on that in Syria it definitely means Ba'al-samin.²¹ The only reason for identification is that inscriptions were found in the same region.

Let us turn now to the inscription from Pirot and see whether it is possible to find an explanation from the actual wording of the last lines of the inscription other than those of Cumont and Trebilco.

The text which is inscribed on an altar of limestone was first published and restored by A. von Domaszewski.²² B. Gerov dates it to the 2nd - early 3rd century AD and on the basis of onomastic analysis before the Antonine Constitution.²³

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 239, n. 8.

²¹ A.B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, 2. II (Cambridge 1925) 886, 889.

²² A. von Domaszewski, 'Griechische Inschriften aus Moesien und Thrakien', AEM 10 (1886) 238f.

²³ *Godishnik na Sofijskiya universitet* (Sofia 1969) 224.

Ἄγαθῆ [τύ]χ[η]
 Θεῷ ἐπηκόω ὑψίστῳ
 εὐχὴν ἀνέστησαν
 τὸ κοινὸν ἐκ τῶν ἰ-
 δίων διὰ ἱερέως
 Ἑρμογένους καὶ προ-
 στάτου Αὐγουστιανοῦ
 Ἀχιλλεὺς, Αὐρηλῖς, Διο(ς), Ἀλέ-
 ξανδρος, Μοκας, Μο[κι]ανος,
 Δομητις, Σοπεινος, Παυ-
 λεῖνος, Πύρος, Ἀπολινά-
 ρις, Μοκιανός, [Σ?]ηλυς
 καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀσκ-
 ληπιάδου ΘΙΑ---ΣΕΒΑΖΙ
 ΑΝΟΣΘΗ---ΤΟΥΤΑΣ²⁴

For ΘΙΑ, Domaszewski suggested the restoration θίασος, and connecting it with Σεβαζιανός, he cautiously proposed that the association (τὸ κοινόν) which composed the dedication to the Most High God was the *thiasos* of the adherents of Sabazios. Domaszewski's proposition was approved by the majority of scholars.²⁵ Another interpretation of this inscription was given by D. Detschev, who saw in Σεβαζιανός a personal theophoric name, well-represented in this region.²⁶ His idea received very limited scholarly support.²⁷ Nevertheless it is worthwhile to consider this possibility more carefully.

There is nothing impossible in the fact that there was a religious association in one and the same inscription described as both τὸ κοινόν and ὁ θίασος. Τὸ κοινόν, which was a general term for any kind of association can be combined in the inscriptions with such words as θιασῖται (θιασῶται), ὀργεῶνες, ἐρανισταί.²⁸ But the word θίασος was connected usually with the genitive of the noun, which could be either the name of the head (or founder) of the association: ὁ θίασος ὁ Φαιν[ε]μάχου (B

²⁴ Domaszewski wrote, that the last three lines are given in accordance with the squeeze, 'da ein heftiges Gewitter mich hinderte die Copie von dem Steine zu Ende bringen' 239.

²⁵ Cf., for instance, one of the latest articles by Sh. E. Johnson, 'The Present state of Sabazios Research', in ANRW II 17,3, p. 1606.

²⁶ D. Detschev, *Godishnik na narodniya muzei v Sofia*, 5 (1926-31), 158f.

²⁷ It was approved by G. Gerov, *op. cit.*, 224 f. and M. Tacheva-Hitova, *Eastern Cults in Moesia Inferior and Thracia*, EPRO 95, (Leiden, 1983), 197.

²⁸ F. Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinwesens* (Leipzig, 1909) If., 550f.

146),²⁹ ὁ θίασος ὁ Ἀναξιπόλιδος (B338a), ὁ θίασος ὁ [Σ]ιμαλ[ίων]ος (B 340) or the name of the deity: θίασοι Βάκχοιο (B 320a), or the name of the members of the association, derived from the name of the deity with the suffixes -ισταί / -ασταί, in the gen. plur.: θίασος Ἀφροδισιαστῶν (B 231a, β), θίασος Ἑρμαιοστ[ῶν] (B 232), or some special names connected with a certain cult, mostly the cult of Dionysos in the gen. plur.: θίασος τῶν Πλατανιστηνῶν (B 320a). According to the restoration by Domaszewski, θίασος is combined with an adjective derived from the name Σεβάζιος.³⁰ Generally speaking, (θίασος; can be combined with adjectives, though such a combination is rather uncommon: τοῦ Βακχικοῦ θιάσου (SEG 27 (1980), 384). The adjective could also be used with other designations of associations: σύνοδος Εἰσιακῆ (B 470), though in this case also, combinations with the genitive or with prepositions are much more common: ἔρανος ὁ Βακχίου (B 46A), ἡ σύνοδος ἡ περὶ κτλ. (CIRB 1260, 1263, 1264 etc.). The members of Sabazios' associations were called Σεβαζιασταί (CCIS II N 28, 46, 51) (cf. Ἀσκληπιασταί, Ἀπολλωνιασταί, Σεραπιασταί, Διονυσιασταί).³¹ Thus the designation of the *thiasos* of the adherents of Sabazios, formed in accordance with the traditional pattern, must have been: ὁ θίασος (τὸ κοινόν, ἡ σύνοδος) τῶν Σεβαζιαστῶν.

In accepting Domaszewski's suggested restoration of the inscription Cumont noted that σεβαζιανός is a regular derivative from Σεβάζιος.³² He is right in so far that adjectives with the suffix -ανος, generally do exist in the Greek language. But as far as is known the adjective σεβαζιανός is not recorded. Besides, the meaning 'devoted or belong to some deity' is not characteristic for adjectives with such a suffix.³³ The suffix -ανος/-ηνος can be found in a limited number of ancient adjectives or in the north-western part of Asia Minor and near-by

²⁹ The numbers of the inscriptions are given in accordance with Poland.

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³⁰ One of the parallel forms of the more common Σεβάζιος.

³¹ F. Poland, *op. cit.*, 57-62.

³² F. Cumont, *Les mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme*, CRAIBL, (1906) 67.

³³ R. Vulpe supposed that the word Kaatavoi was the name of the members of the association of the adherents of Zeus Casios (Le sanctuaire de Zeus Casios de Seremet et le probleme d'un vicus cassianus, *Epigraphica* (Bucarest 1977) 113f.). His arguments were rejected by J. and L. Robert, (REG. 91, 447, N 337).

regions in the onomastic adjectives derived from toponyms.³⁴ In the Roman period under the influence of the Roman onomastics, personal names ending in -(ι)ανος (including theophoric) gradually gained popularity. The Greek language also borrowed some Latin expressions with reference to Roman names: *Antonianus fundus* (the former property of Antonia)— οὐσία Ἀντωνιανή (instead of πρότερον Ἀντωνίας).³⁵ There are also some astrological terms with the meaning 'to be under the influence' of a zodiacal sign (Σκορπιανοί) and a few derivatives from personal names, such as μαγιανόν bracelet, (from the name of the manufacturer).³⁶ In Christian circles under the influence of the Latin model the names ending in -ιανός with the meaning 'the followers or adherents of someone'³⁷ became especially widespread: Σαβελλιανοί, Σαββατιανοί, Μελιτιανοί, Μακεδον-ιανοί etc.

Theophoric personal names ending in -ιανος quite often form a pair with adjectives ending in -ιακος: Ἀπολλωνιανός-Ἀπολλωνιακός, Ἀμμωνιανός-Ἀμμωνιακός, Δημητριανός-Δημητριακός.

Thus, taking into consideration the rarity of usage of adjectives with θίασος, the absence in our sources of the adjective σεβαζιανός as well as the absence of adjectives with the suffix -taw; with the meaning 'the adherents of the deity', the productivity of the model ending in -ιανος, for personal names and the presence of the parallel adjectives ending in -ιακος the necessity to see in Σεβαζιανός of the inscription from Piroṭ a personal name seems to me the only possible interpretation.³⁸

³⁴ E.A. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* I (München 1953) 490; P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien* (Paris 1933) 206; M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formen- Lehre* (1977) 323.

³⁵ E. Bickerman, 'The Name of Christians', *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* 3 (1986) 146.

³⁷ Ναυατινανοί: αἰρεοῖται τὰ Ναυάτου φρονοῦντες (Suid. s.v. Ναυατινανοί), cf. also Μακεδονιανοί and οἱ τὰ Μακεδονίου φρονοῦντες in *Theophanes Chronographia*, (ed. De Boor, I, 68, 77, 156).

³⁸ The fact that καί in this case appears not to stand before the last name in the list cannot be used as an argument against this interpretation, because such an order of words is not exceptional, *IGBulg* I, 287. If we accept this interpretation, then ΘΙΑ, ΘΗ, ΤΟΥΤΑΣ are parts of the names such as Θῆρις Θήρων, Τουτας: F. Bechtel, *Die historischen, Personennamen des griechischen bis zur Kaiserzeit* (1917) 210; L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personennamen* (Prague 1964) 1596 - I.