

## Dionysophanes (856)

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# 856 Dionysophanes

## Ken Dowden (Birmingham)

BNJ	Dionysophanes	Dionysophanes
Historian Number:	856	

<b>856 F 1 - PORPHYR. Vit. Pythag. 14</b>	<b>meta[[ id="856" type="F" n="1" sourcework(level1="Porphyrius" level2="" level3="Vita Pythagorae" level4="" level5="" level6="14-15") ]]</b>
<b>Subject: genre: local history</b> <b>Historical Work: <i>Thraikika</i>?</b> <b>Source date: AD 270-300</b> <b>Historian's date: 1 c BC?</b> <b>Historical period: late 6 c BC</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<p><b>14</b> ἦν δ' αὐτῶι καὶ ἕτερον μαιράκιον, ὃ ἐκ Θραίκης ἐκτήσατο, ᾧ Ζάμολξις ἦν ὄνομα, ἐπεὶ γεννηθέντι αὐτῶι δορὰ ἄρκτου ἐπεβλήθη· τὴν γὰρ δορὰν οἱ Θραῖκες ζαλμὸν καλοῦσιν. ἀγαπῶν δ' αὐτὸν ὁ Πυθαγόρας τὴν μετέωρον θεωρίαν ἐπαίδευσε τά τε περὶ ἱερουργίας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας εἰς θεοῦς θρησκευίας. τινὲς δὲ καὶ Θαλῆν τοῦτόν φασιν ὀνομάζεσθαι. ὡς Ἡρακλέα δ' αὐτὸν προσκυνοῦσιν οἱ βάρβαροι. <b>15</b> Διονυσοφάνης δὲ λέγει δουλεῦσαι μὲν αὐτὸν τῶι Πυθαγόρῃ, ἐμπεσόντα δ' εἰς ληιστὰς καὶ στιχθέντα, ὅτε κατεστασιάσθη ὁ Πυθαγόρας καὶ ἔφευγεν, δῆσαι τὸ μέτωπον διὰ τὰ στίγματα. τινὲς δ' ἐρμηνεύεσθαι τὸ ὄνομα φασὶ Ζάλμοξιν 'ξένος ἀνὴρ'.</p>	<p><b>14</b> He (<i>Pythagoras</i>) had another young man, whom he had acquired in Thrace, called Zamolxis – because when he was born, a bear's skin was cast over him and Thracians call a skin a <i>zalmos</i>. Pythagoras, as he was fond of him, taught him the higher contemplation, namely about the performance of rites and other matters of religion directed to the gods. Some say that he was also called Thales. And the barbarians worship him as Herakles. <b>15</b> Dionysophanes says that he was a slave of Pythagoras's, but that he fell into the hands of brigands, was branded, at the time when Pythagoras was forced into exile by civil dissension, and wrapped up his forehead to hide the branding. Others again say the name Zalmoxis means 'foreigner'.</p>

## 856 F 1 Commentary

Zalmoxis, the Thracian god drawn into Pythagorean lore, has fascinated the imaginations of the modern age too, from Carolus Lundius, *Zamolxis: primus Getarum legislator* (Uppsala 1687), to M. Eliade, *Zalmoxis, the vanishing god: comparative studies in the religions and folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe* (Chicago 1972).

On Zalmoxis see also Herodotos 4.94-96; Poseidonios *BNJ* 87 F 70.39, F 104.8 (Strabo 7.3.4-5), Diodoros 1.94; Iamblichos, *De vita pythagorica* 173 and other passages cited on *BNJ* 87 F 104.8; and Dio *BNJ* 707 F 1.39.

Herodotos (4.95) attributes to ‘Greeks living around the Hellespont and the Black Sea’ the version that ‘Salmoxis’ was a slave of Pythagoras, the *point de départ* for Dionysophanes and other sources here. The problem posed by this passage is how to account for his name; though Porphyry could have been clearer, Dionysophanes seems to attribute the name to the material binding his forehead, namely, one supposes, a foxskin, conceivably a ‘Davy Crockett’ hat. This narrative displays ingenious economy, connecting the hat (if such it is) with the mark of slavery. Such ingenuity in solving a *zetema* (see K. Dowden on *BNJ* 56 F 1b and problem-based scholarship) suggests a 1st c. BC/AD date. The brigands too seem to herald the *imaginaire* of the Good Samaritan and the Greek novel; see K. Dowden, ‘“But there is a difference in the ends ...”: brigands and teleology in the ancient novel’, in M. Paschalis, S. Panayotakis (eds), *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel* (Groningen 2013), 41-60.

Porphyry’s *Life of Pythagoras*, from Bk 1 of his lost 4-book *History of Philosophy*, probably dates to his post-Plotinian years (R. Beutler, ‘Porphyrios (21)’, *RE* 22.1 (1953), 275-313, at 287), so after AD 270. Its sources were studied by H. Jäger, *Die Quellen des Porphyrios in seiner Pythagoras-Biographie* (diss. Zurich 1919) and, earlier, in connection with the closely related *Pythagorean Life* of Iamblichos, by E. Rohde: *RhM* 26 (1871), 554-6, *RhM* 27 (1872), 23-61, repr. *Kleine Schriften*, 2 (Tübingen, Leipzig 1901), 102-72, esp. 125-7, and reflected by E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*<sup>1</sup> (Leipzig 1876), 253-4 n. 2. According to Rohde, *Roman*<sup>1</sup>, 254 n. 2, F 1.14 derives from Antonius Diogenes, *Incredible Things beyond Thyle*, and Zamolxis certainly is ‘a not insignificant figure’ (Rohde) at 110a. At F 1.15, Rohde sees Porphyry’s source as turning to Dionysophanes, though, as Jäger (*Quellen*, 28) observes, this book *could* have been cited by Antonius Diogenes (Jäger cites 111a in support of that possibility, but prefers to see it as deriving from a different handbook). However, Porphyry’s overall source seems likely to have been Nikomachos of Gerasa (unless we follow J.A. Philip, ‘The Biographical Tradition – Pythagoras’, *TAPA* 90 (1959), 185-94, esp. 187-8), who dates to about AD 100 (unless we follow J.M. Rist, ‘A Date for the Death of Nicomachos of Gerasa?’, *CR* 19 (1969), 274-5, who proposes AD c. 120-196). It is Nikomachos, in all probability, that cites Dionysophanes, and provides a *terminus ante quem* for him, together with the Apollonios scholia (see on F 2). The effects for dating would not be very different if the source were Antonius Diogenes, whom E. Bowie dates to AD c. 98-108 (‘The Chronology of the Earlier Greek Novels since B.E. Perry: revisions and precisions’, *AN* 2 (2002), 47-63, at 59-60).

<p><b>856 F 2 - SCHOL. APOLL. RHOD. 1, 826b</b></p>	<p><b>meta</b>[[ id="856" type="F" n="2" sourcework(level1="Scholia" level2="ad Apollonium Rhodium" level3="Argonautica" level4="" level5="" level6="1, 826b")]]</p>
<p><b>Subject: genre: local history</b>  <b>Historical Work: Thraikika?</b>  <b>Source date: 1 c BC - AD 1 c?</b>  <b>Historian’s date: 1 c BC?</b>  <b>Historical period: 1 c BC?</b></p>	<p><b>Translation</b></p>
<p>Θρηκίης ἄροσιν χιονώδεα]  οἱ μὲν ὅτι λευκόγεως ἡ Θράκη, οἱ δὲ τὴν συνεχῶς χιονιζομένην παρὰ τὸ δυσχείμερον εἶναι, ὃ καὶ βέλτιον· ψυχρὰ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ χώρα, διὸ κάκειθεν τοὺς ἀνέμους πνεῖν ἐμυθεύσαντο.</p>	<p><b>‘the snowy ploughland of Thrace’:</b>  Some attribute this to the fact that Thrace has white earth; others to its being continuously snowed upon due to the harsh wintry weather – which is better, because the land is cold, which</p>

Διονυσοφάνης δὲ βόθρον φησὶν εἶναι ἐν τῇ  
Θράκῃ, ἐξ οὗ φυσήματα ἀνέμων γίνεσθαι, καὶ  
μυθευθῆναι οὕτω Θράκην ἀνέμων οἰκητήριον.

is why myths were created of the winds  
blowing from there. Dionysophanes says there  
is a pit (*bothros*) in Thrace which is the source  
of the blowing of the winds and that this is how  
in myth Thrace became the home of the winds.

## 856 F 2 Commentary

Such, for Greeks, is Thrace: Boreas the N wind comes from there and his daughter is Chione (her of the *chion*, ‘snow’, if not quite the snow-maiden, *snegurochka*, of 19 c Russia). The mythical imagination of Dionysophanes is not unlike that of Aristeas of Prokonnesos (*BNJ* 35), in whose system the N winds blew from the Blasty Mountains (*Rhipaioi*, e.g. *BNJ* 35 F 8), so literally that if you crossed them you reached the N wind-free Hyperboreans.

The explanation of Dionysophanes is of a very particular cultural character. Apparently it is a rationalising solution – there is no home of the winds, only a hole from which winds emerge; but we should not miss that it is marvellous (*thaumaston*), belongs in paradoxography, and is somewhat preposterous in that special way that delighted the educated classes of the 1st century BC and AD (cf., e.g., K. Dowden on Ktesippos *BNJ* 843).

Winds might normally be thought to issue from caves, as do the winds of Aeolus at Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.52, 60. A different picture, however, forms as one reads P. Fiorentino, *Sicily through Symbolism and Myth: Gates to Heaven and the Underworld* (2006), 101: ‘Those who visit the Aeolian Islands today will marvel at the grand Aeolian *bothros*. For centuries, this sacred well has preserved archaeological items which were offered to King Aeolus, Lord of the Winds’ (cf. A. D. Trendall, ‘Archaeology in South Italy and Sicily, 1964-66’, *Archaeological Reports* 13 (1966-7), 29-46, at 46). Possibly comparable is the use of *bothroi* where rites are performed to placate the winds, near the Altar of the Winds at Titane, not far from Sikyon (Pausanias 2.12.1). The latter is discussed by G. Ekroth, *The sacrificial rituals of Greek hero-cults in the Archaic to the early Hellenistic periods*, Kernos Suppl. 12 (Liège 2002), 66, though n.188 takes Dionysophanes too seriously, as though he represented a genuine tradition.

Dionysophanes does appear to have had some cult background to build on: rites were performed at *bothroi* for the winds at Titane, i.e. offerings made in some way; and objects were left in a sort of pit or well that archaeologists call a *bothros* on Lipari. The idea that winds issued from a *bothros*, however, is purely imaginary.

The date of the Apollonios scholia may effectively be very early: it is observed by Eleanor Dickey (*Ancient Greek Scholarship* (New York 2007), 63) that their ‘ancestors’ were available to, e.g., Valerius Flaccus (at the end of the 1st cent. AD). If this scholion too goes back to such early material, then there is an early *terminus ante quem* for Dionysophanes (see Biographical Essay).

## 856 Biographical Essay

Dionysophanes (= ‘Dionysos apparent’?) is not a particularly common name, with 29 entries currently (September 2013) in the *LGPN* database. The most famous is the master of his country estate on Lesbos that makes his epiphany in the last book of Longos’ novel, *Daphnis and Chloe*. The dates of the various people called Dionysophanes range between the 5 c BC and the 2 c AD (where, *pace LGPN*, Longos must belong). The geographical distribution is,

however, more interesting: despite significant presence elsewhere, it has a substantial proportion in N Greece, from Thessalonike to Amphipolis and ultimately Olbia. It may be only speculation, but it would not seem at all unlikely that Dionysophanes comes from Thrace or nearby and therefore writes about it; and Thrace had long been associated with Dionysos in the Greek imagination. This has been taken literally to indicate the Thracian origin of Dionysos in the wake of E. Rohde, *Psyche: the Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Ancient Greeks*, Eng. tr. (London 1925; *Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen*<sup>1</sup>, Tübingen 1894), ch. 8; others, however, have more wisely seen Thrace as a projection by Greeks of Dionysos' otherness, since W.F. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, Eng. tr. (Bloomington 1965; *Dionysos: Mythos und Kultus*<sup>1</sup>, Frankfurt 1933), ch. 2. Dionysophanes, then, is named appropriately, culturally speaking, for the only writer of *Thraikika* of whom anything survives and fittingly is the author to close *BNJ*, as the Greek world runs out.

The brigands of F 1.15 suggest the imagination of the 1 c AD and later. However, incorporation in the Apollonios scholia might suggest the date is not *very* late (see on F 2) and that and the probability that Nikomachos of Gerasa is the source of F 1 lead us to a *terminus ante quem* of AD 100. For those that have a nose to smell his mythographic method (see on F 1, F 2), it is strongly redolent of the 1st cent. BC/AD. And his name disappears from the record barely into the 3 c AD, if at all.

As both fragments concern Thrace and in quite different ways, the best guess is that we are dealing with a work on Thrace, a *Thraikika*. Other writers of *Thraikika* are even more shadowy. Kleitonymos *FGrH* 292 F 3 probably comes from a *Thraikika* if the reference is not bogus: he is cited by [Plutarch], *de fluviis* and the other two fragments come from [Plutarch], *Parallela minora*, both of which have come under, maybe excessive, suspicion, cf. my remarks on *BNJ* 56 F 1b. The case is the same for the *Thraikika* of Kallisthenes *FGrH* 124 F 58, and also of Sostratos *BNJ* 23 F 2. Thus Dionysophanes might be the only real writer of *Thraikika* of whom we know, but he belongs squarely with the possibly bogus, certainly revisionist, authors between around 100 BC and AD 100, with the Apollonios scholia nudging his date down towards the 1st cent. BC.

## 856 Bibliography

None.