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Divine Names on the Spot. Towards a Dynamic Approach of Divine Denominations in Greek and Semitic Contexts

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Thomas Galoppin / Corinne Bonnet (eds)

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**Towards a Dynamic Approach of Divine Denominations
in Greek and Semitic Contexts**

PEETERS

DIVINE NAMES ON THE SPOT

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PREFACE

This collective volume is the result of a one-year seminar held at the University of Toulouse in the framework of the ERC Advanced Grant “Mapping Ancient Polytheisms: Cult Epithets as an Interface between Religious Systems and Human Agency”, funded by the European Research Council from October 2017 to June 2023 (741182). With the title “The Names of the Gods. Texts, images and contexts of use”, between January and June 2019, we hosted in Toulouse colleagues coming from different horizons and covering the two main areas of the MAP project, the Greek and the Semitic worlds.

The observation that naming practices concerning the divine are sensitive to both space and time is at the heart of the MAP project, which aims at exploring this issue by means of a vast comparativism through time and cultures. The volume tackles many different contexts of communication and conditions of enunciation, examining the way in which they fit into dynamic and pragmatic social relations. In accordance with the objectives of the MAP project, the contributions pay great attention to the agents and their naming strategies. Considering the conditions and circumstances of enunciation also leads to increased awareness of an interaction between name and image in the fabrication of a divine figure or figuration—a quite complex equation that will need further exploration.

We thank the whole MAP team who helped on this truly collective work, as well as Sara Eco Conti and Nicolas Colombi who actively participated in proofreading and preparing the indexes. We are also grateful to the *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* collection that hosts the publications of the MAP Seminar proceedings. Our warmest greetings go to the contributors for their efforts in chasing and thinking divine names in a plurality of times and places.

DIVINE NAMES ON THE SPOT: TOWARDS A DYNAMIC APPROACH OF DIVINE DENOMINATIONS IN GREEK AND SEMITIC CONTEXTS

Corinne Bonnet and Thomas Galoppin

1. INTRODUCTION: ARE ALL GODS *AUGENBLICKSGÖTTER*?

In an article entitled “Éléments pour une anthropologie de l’homme en mouvement”,¹ published in 2013, Muriel van Vliet brings our attention to an epistolary exchange between Ernst Cassirer and Aby Warburg in 1924.² Warburg places special emphasis on the fact that both his approach to symbolic forms and that of Cassirer share a common aim: to create “eine allgemeine Kulturwissenschaft als Lehre vom bewegten Menschen”.³ One passage from this epistolary exchange, which contains a quotation from Goethe’s *Zur Morphologie* (1817), can prove to be a useful starting point for a reflection on the divine denominations conceived as practices subject to movement, thus sensitive to the contexts in which they operate:⁴

Der Deutsche hat für den Komplex des Daseins eines wirklichen Wesens das Wort Gestalt. Er abstrahiert bei diesem Ausdruck von dem Beweglichen, er nimmt an, daß ein Zusammengehöriges festgestellt, abgeschlossen und in seinem Charakter fixiert sei. Betrachten wir aber alle Gestalten, besonders die organischen, so finden wir, daß nirgends ein Bestehendes, nirgends ein Ruhendes, ein Abgeschlossenes vorkommt, sondern daß vielmehr alles in einer steten Bewegung schwanke. Daher unsere Sprache das Wort Bildung sowohl von dem Hervorgebrachten als von dem Hervorgebrachtwerdenden gehörig genug zu brauchen pflegt. Wollen wir aber eine Morphologie einleiten, so dürfen wir nicht von Gestalt sprechen, sondern, wenn wir das Wort brauchen, uns allenfalls dabei nur die Idee, den Begriff oder ein in der Erfahrung nur für den Augenblick Festgehaltenes denken.

However, from as early as 1896, Hermann Usener was attempting to understand names in movement in an acclaimed piece of work entitled *Götternamen. Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung*. In particular, he put forward a typology of divine names⁵ that fitted into a schema that could une-

¹ VAN VLIET (2013). Also see VAN VLIET (2018).

² KROIS *et al.* (2009), 66-67.

³ *Ibidem*, 67.

⁴ *Ibidem*, 66-67.

⁵ SCHEID, SVENBRO (2011). See also PERFIGLI (2004).

quivocally be described as evolutionist, although it would be unfair to restrict Usener's thought to this one category, subsequently underlining its obsolescence. In an early phase of the history of religions, Usener theorised that, by means of specific names, people identified the *Augenblicksgötter*, "gods of the moment". They were fleetingly associated with a given phenomenon, a precise moment, an action within a complex whole, an operational chain made up of a plurality of moments, gestures, actions. Subsequently, people began to identify the *Sondergötter*, that is, the "specific gods", linked to a function, a skill, like *Obarator*, the god of the last ploughing before the land was sown. Names, up to this point, seemed to be purely descriptive, therefore transparent: they simply stated what the gods were or did. But the evolution process of divine names was not yet complete; the third phase effectively saw the emergence of personal gods (*persönliche Götter*), derived from specific ancient gods who had, so to speak, unfolded and ended up grouping together several functions, notably by attracting and amalgamating a certain number of their congeners. Personal gods, given that they no longer identify with an action or a function, are referred to by means of an opaque name, which becomes incomprehensible. They subsequently have a "proper name", like a "person" and, just like a "person", they appear in narratives and are represented using images. The meaning and scope of a name like Kronos or Zeus are not straightforward; they are, in a way, conventional and call upon narratives and images to make full use of their potential. Although this typology seems largely outdated today, it remains nonetheless true that Usener, by apprehending the names as "fragments of description" (*Bruchstück einer Beschreibung*) of the gods, gave rise to an intuition that remains valid, namely that the cognitive scope of the divine onomastics is something that should certainly not be underestimated. The name, in fact, sheds light on various facets of the world of the gods, of the world of men and, above all, their relationships therein. By studying names in context, we have access both to representations and practices, to the various types of relationships that come about within the divine world and between gods and men. Because naming the gods is to say, to do and to believe, in resonance with the works of John L. Austin and John Scheid, and with the 2005 collective volume on *Nommer les dieux*,⁶ it is precisely this trinomial that leads the motivation for exploring how the gods were named in ancient, polytheistic and monotheistic religions, within the framework of the ERC Advanced Grant project, *Mapping Ancient Polytheisms. Cult epithets as an interface between religious systems and human agency* (MAP) which has been running for four years, since October 2017, at the University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès.⁷

⁶ AUSTIN (1962), SCHEID (2005), BELAYCHE *et al.* (2005).

⁷ <https://map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr/>

Naming the gods is also tangled up in temporalities. The time of origins, *in illo tempore*, when, according to one story or another, a divine name was “invented”; the lengthy tradition and usage, reproducing this name as a reassuring echo; the upsurge of an unexpected present leading to the introduction of a variant or even an innovation; the short-lived ritual allowing one or more actors to add leverage to the name in order to communicate with the gods, etc. Thus, to echo the project of Warburg and Cassirer, that of the study of cultures in movement, manifested through experience and in the moment, could we go so far as to affirm that all divine names refer, to some extent, to the *Augenblicksgötter*? For it is the *hic et nunc*, the space and the time of an interaction that has left a useful trace for the historian, allowing us to find out about the gods; it is the performance, in which one or more agents, themselves embedded in social relations, address the gods by choosing a particular name, which sheds light on religion in the making, as Jörg Rüpke and his team often write.⁸ This is why, in this collective volume, we wanted to focus on the contextual factors that dictate the choice of names used on the spot.

In this respect, we agree with Usener’s stance, relayed by Cassirer,⁹ according to whom, in order to grasp and analyse the processes of development, use, circulation and transformation of a symbolic system within a given culture, studying the facts of language must be of utmost importance. Divine names, seen as a linguistic process in context and in movement, constitute, in our eyes, a fundamental gateway to representations of the divine and to their eternal reconfiguration within time and space, be it the momentary nature of a sacrifice or a hymn, or the longstanding historical mutations which take place throughout Antiquity and come to reshape social codes. Examining divine names, namely, not as a fixed, stable and closed system, in the words of Warburg, but as a vast repository of aspiring information, falls well within the scope of the *Begriffsbildung*, the formation of concepts, ideas and representations: “both *what* is produced *and that* which produces”.

Although Usener’s way of thinking, like that of many scholars of his time (but undoubtedly less than many others), appears to be weighed down by an obsession with origins and filiation, it nonetheless has the merit of highlighting the fact that divine names do indeed constitute historically situated and culturally determined data. This is why only a dynamic, moving approach allows us to grasp them as historical material, as an endlessly renegotiated symbolic system. Moreover, the *Wucherung*, the “proliferation” of gods and names, which Usener describes as a “mysterious desire for reproduction”, is there to confirm that onomastic practices are constantly transforming. The proliferation

⁸ ALBRECHT *et al.* (2018).

⁹ CASSIRER (1925).

of languages, the creativity that endlessly enriches the cautious approach to gods using names is, in truth, driven by men's experiences of the world: travel, war, birth, death, drought, danger, victory, disease, poverty, etc. In all of these circumstances and in many others still, the empirical, perceptual and constantly fragmentary knowledge of the gods not only involves sorting or inventions, choices or adjustments, but is also accompanied by a notional abundance aiming to express, in a multitude of registers, what the gods do to men, that is, the multiplication of points of view on the gods and the divine. The plurality of names, which echoes these processes, enriches the diversity of representations of the divine, as does the variety of social experiences. John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro illustrate this process with this example:¹⁰

Lorsque le 25 mars 101 apr. J.-C., au cours d'une formulation officielle de vœux un prêtre romain veut circonscrire l'action de Jupiter, il invoque deux divinités, Jupiter Optimus Maximus, qui exprime le mode d'action du dieu souverain, et Iovis Victor, qui traduit le résultat de son intervention ; au cours du même rite – qui concerne le départ en guerre de l'empereur Trajan –, il invoque, dans l'ordre, Mars, le dieu de la violence guerrière, Mars uictor, le résultat de son action, et Victoria, la divinité représentant cet état. Les autres divinités qui se joignent à celles que j'ai mentionnées précisent toutes un aspect du vœu qui portait sur l'aller, la victoire et le retour heureux du prince et de son armée. L'action du dieu était explorée d'un côté par l'association d'autres divinités au vœu, de l'autre par une génération de divinités à partir d'un dieu père, que ce soit Jupiter ou Mars. Et chaque année, quand les consuls au début de l'année formulaient les vœux pour le salut de l'État, c'est-à-dire du peuple romain, ils invoquaient la triade capitoline, patronne de l'État, et le résultat attendu de leur action, la Salus du peuple romain.

We can see how, within the framework of a banal ritual of vows, the place, the moment, the intentions, the actors, the hierarchies forge the discourse and lead to the mobilisation of certain gods, using certain names, within duly thought-out configurations, adjusted and modulated to match the circumstances. The choice of these names, in other words, can only be understood in alignment with a complex context, rich in interactions, within which humans and non-humans contribute to the production of meaning and to the power of words. The case of Pan *Sunstrateuomenos*, which we will consider later, provides a particularly convincing illustration of this.

¹⁰ SCHEID (1998), 177 *sq.*, n° 62, a, l. 23-73.

2. FROM SEMANTIC TO SITUATIONS AND BACK

Divine names are not “off-ground”; quite the contrary, as linguistic and symbolic resources used to communicate between men and gods, they attest the inscription of religious practices in specific environments; they bear the trace of a space of life and thought (*Lebensraum* and *Denksraum* in Cassirer) which characterises a society, an era, a group or even an individual, and which encompasses the ability to project oneself beyond the present, singling out the onomastic trace of a ritual. Fundamentally, it is the making of divine names, their circulation and their use, that we have placed at the heart of this volume, choosing to consider them as a dynamic construction. Such an approach is nourished by the conceptual and methodological foundations of the project *Mapping Ancient Polytheisms. Cult epithets as an interface between religious systems and human agency* managed by Corinne Bonnet and a team of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. This project embraces the Antiquity of the *longue durée* (from 1000 BCE to 400 CE) and the entire Mediterranean space, focusing on two major cultural spaces: the Greek worlds and the West-Semitic worlds – Aramaic, Hebrew, Phoenician and Punic. This approach to divine names therefore incorporates a comparative dimension and the consideration of multicultural contexts, within which divine names adapt to exceptionally fluid and flexible communication contexts.

In the MAP project, our approach, nourished by this conceptual and methodological background, consists in locating, recording in a database and analysing the innumerable names of the gods attested in the epigraphic sources of the Greek and Semitic worlds. Far from immobilising onomastic uses, the database makes it possible to connect them through many different factors;¹¹ indeed, the thousands of testimonies are associated with a wide range of metadata relating to the context in which the names are used: mediums, places, actors, occasions, related material, etc. A Geographic Information System (GIS) makes geolocation possible and therefore one can map names, gods and men. These tools were all devised within the MAP project and developed in order to meet the need for a dynamic and relational approach. Each name is thus recorded in a spatio-temporal and social fabric. Finally, the use of methods specific to network analysis makes it possible to understand divine names as shared or exclusive elements, within specific contextual ensembles. Far from reifying the divine names as if it were simply a matter of a label, some raw data, or touching the surface of the ritual action, the MAP project sees divine names as traces of an exchange between men and gods, an experience, which is both perception and knowledge, an *Augenblick* that subtly combines

¹¹ LEBRETON, BONNET (2019). For the database: <https://base-map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr>.

the ephemeral and the recurrent, tradition and creation, pragmatism and inspiration.

In order to trace the contours of this complex and paradoxical purpose, and to astutely adhere to flexible and moving contexts, our aim, since 2017, has been to rethink certain categories and concepts that have thus far been customary in the field of divine onomastics.¹² We have in fact fallen into the habit of distinguishing, in an excessively rigid and hellenocentric way, the theonym on the one hand and on the other, the epithets and cult epithets – the former being literary, the latter related with worship. While this conceptual framework has proven fruitful for several decades, it difficultly stands up against the extreme variety of onomastic practices and the specificities of Semitic languages. In addition to this, it is based around a presupposition, namely that the theonym is the determining element, the “real name”, while the (cult) epithet is a simple ornament, a secondary option. However, it is not. In a name like Aphrodite *Ourania*, the epithet is by no means a decoration; it serves, in a fundamental way, to anchor the goddess in a space, the sky, which conveys a cosmic dimension, but also a pragmatic one for navigation; it expresses her kinship with Ouranos and therefore engages her in a theogonic process. The epithet thus translates several correlated facets of the “power”¹³ of the goddess we call Aphrodite. Moreover, how can we distinguish, in a Phoenician onomastic formula like “Baal Šr”, “Baal/Master of Tyre/of the Rock”, a theonym and a cult epithet, given that we are dealing with two intimately linked and inseparable nouns that designate the tutelary god, the “Master” of the City conceived, from its very foundation, as a roving rock? The way we see it, in these names, each word counts, each term constructs the meaning of what we now call an *onomastic sequence* or *formula* resulting from the arrangement of several *onomastic elements*. This fluid vision, this constructivist bias, adapts perfectly to the logic of creativity where divine names constitute the speaking testimony. Likewise, from this point of view, we disregard the distinction between literary and ritual epithets insofar as many contexts blur the boundaries between these two extremes, such as epigrams or hymns carved on stone in sanctuaries, or even a qualification like *Glaukōpis*, widely used in the Homeric epic, but also attested in epigraphic documents on the Acropolis of Athens. Ultimately, the boundary between literary and cult epithets is porous; far from opposing each other, these two categories often engage in dialogue, from one context to another, they echo each other, overlap, sometimes even diverge. Adopting a new conceptual framework makes it possible to approach onomastic sequences as

¹² BONNET (2018).

¹³ On the notion of “divine powers”, see BONNET *et al.* (2017).

many contextual variants in all their richness and complexity, without a priori restriction.

Naming the gods is therefore not a trivial action: it has to do, one might say, with *speech acts* that make use of both text and image, be it mental or concrete. In the ten contributions of this book, the discursive acts are contemplated as communicational means and transactional objects that are part of a dynamic or pragmatic of social relationships involving multiple agents, both human and non-human. In keeping with the notion of agency, divine names set in motion a whole range of components: religious landscapes, material devices, poetic or rhetoric mechanisms, performative utterance, knowledge, etc. We could gather all of these coordinates under the apparently simple term “situation”: a situation constructed to produce meaning, to generate cognitive and material effects.

3. A DEPARTURE VOW

Let us move to a brief case study: a vow to Pan *Sunstrateuomenos* (“who joins/takes part in a military expedition”). How are we to consider Pan a warrior? Why is the Greek goat god invoked in an unusual – while not exceptional – function of soldier? He helped the Athenians against the Persians in 490 BCE.¹⁴ Being a wanderer of the mountains and the wild, encountered more by rural, pastoral and hunting people, Pan also plays his part on the battleground, where his trick, the *panic*, can seize entire armies.¹⁵ Is that what is meant by this attribute, *Sunstrateuomenos*?

Pan is *Sunstrateuomenos* in a dedication carved on the rock, during the Hellenistic period, somewhere at the start of the Wadi Bir el-Ain, at one entrance of the Eastern desert in the Egyptian Kingdom.¹⁶ Leaving the green valley of the Nile for the warm, dry and rocky lands of the desert, Paniskos, whose name is built on the god’s designation,¹⁷ made a vow of departure (*euchēn exodias*) to no less than four divine powers. Each of the four denominations is carved on a separate line, while all gods share a “same honour” (*homou timē*):¹⁸

¹⁴ Hdt 6.105.

¹⁵ BORGEAUD (1979), 137-155.

¹⁶ SIDEBOTHAM, HENSE, NOUWENS (2008).

¹⁷ According to Trismegistos’ statistics, the anthroponym is most frequent in the Pathyrite and Panopolitan nomes, and chronologically attested mostly in the first century BCE (<https://www-trismegistos-org/name/4844> – last view in December, 2020).

¹⁸ *SB* I, 293; *I.Pan du désert* 3. SAYCE (1891), 55 (no 9).

ὁμοῦ τιμῆ <Μη>τρὶ θεῶν Στρατεΐαι
 Ἄρηι Συμμάχῳ
 Διὶ Ὀλυμπίῳ
 Πανὶ Συνστρατευομένῳ
 εὐχὴν ἐξοδίας,

Same honour to the Mother of gods Of the military expedition,
 To Ares Who fights alongside,
 To Zeus Olympian,
 To Pan Who joins the expedition,
 As a vow for departure.

In accordance with the approach developed by the MAP project, let us analyse these denominations as a unique sequence made up of nine elements: *[[Mētēr # theōn] # Strateia] / [Arēs # Summachos] / [Zeus # Olumpios] / [Pan # Su(n)strateuomenos]*.¹⁹ The juxtaposition of each god’s syntagm, symbolised here by the slash mark, follows the layout of the inscription. Inside each syntagm, an adjectival form qualifies a name – with the syntagm *Mētēr theōn* working as a usual proper name: the qualification is marked by a hash symbol. The formatting of this testimony is not uncommon but shows a clear organisation of a list of gods, where every divine power is designated by a similar compound “name # qualification”. The list builds on a configuration of gods who are interconnected semantically through their qualifications:²⁰ *Strateia* (“of the military expedition, of the army”), *Summachos* (“who fights with, ally”), *Sunstrateuomenos* (“who takes part in the military expedition”); only *Zeus Olumpios* seems to stand out of this semantic network. But Zeus is Zeus, and as the Olympian god *par excellence*, he is the great conductor of peace and war, like in the *Iliad*. Another framing tool is the order of the gods: the Mother of gods leads the expedition, followed by Ares aiding in combat and Zeus ruling from Mount Olympus, and only then does Pan join the mission. This disposition does not seem hierarchical since the gods possess a *homou timē*; it may however be a response to the situation faced by the dedicant.

So, what is this expedition? The human interlocutor of the gods is Πανίσκος Θέωνος Κυρηναῖος κυνηγὸς (τριακοντάρουρος), *Paniskos son of Theōn, Cyrenaean, hunter (tenant of thirty arourai)*. Showing off his Cyrenaean origins, that is, his status in Egyptian society, Paniskos is a landowner in Egypt, probably thanks to his family position in the Ptolemean army.²¹ He also chose to

¹⁹ See the MAP-database, Testimony no. 1687 (<https://base-map-polytheisms.humanum.fr/attestation/1687>). For an explanation of the formulae, see LEBRETON, BONNET (2019).

²⁰ On the list as a resource to organise the plurality of gods involved in a ritual or a narrative, see PIRONTI, BONNET, LORIOL (forthcoming).

²¹ VEISSE (2014), MAIRS (2019).

display his hunting activities. The desert is not a desolate space: many animals like ostriches and gazelles can be chased through the wadis and the heights and have been exploited since prehistoric times.²² Desert animals are well known from the Egyptian temple literature as a symbolic manifestation of the dangers and chaos that Seth, lord of the “red land”, can bring on the fragile equilibrium of the Nile kingdom, and therefore hunted and ritually killed in some ceremonies.²³

The context is Greco-Egyptian and calls for a cross-cultural hypothesis. Another well-known god of the desert is the ithyphallic Min, master of Coptos and Akhmim – the Greek “city of Pan”, Panopolis.²⁴ Through the mechanism of the *interpretatio graeca*, Min undertakes the name of Pan and rules over the desert,²⁵ considered a liminal and transitory space, with roads for commercial caravans travelling to the Red Sea, “mountains” rich with precious stones and gemstones as well as animals. Here, greetings directed at Pan cannot be all that different to those used by the local cult of Pan/Min. While Pan is a hunting god in the Greek lands, chasing rabbits as well as sexual prey,²⁶ the Egyptian Min of Coptos has also been credited with the title of “Explorer of Punt” (*sr bīz n Pwnt*), that is, of the eastern lands where militarised expeditions were sent to furnish the crown with minerals, perfumes and exotic animals.²⁷ In the Ptolemaic period, Min is the *Medja* of the Eastern desert, the explorer and officer of the desert. In his temple of El-Kanais (*Hydreuma tōi epi tou Paneiou*) in the Eastern desert, Pan is both “Of the good road” (*Euodos*) and “Of the good hunt” (*Euagros*) during the Ptolemaic period.²⁸

Addressing Pan this way makes perfect sense when we consider this local and Greco-Egyptian background. But the god is, in this inscription, connected with a network of Greek deities working together in a specific ritual and, somehow, a specific narrative. In the same region, Pan is also called Ὀρηοβάτην (“ranger of the mountains”),²⁹ as well as ὀρεσσινόμοιο (“feeding on the mountains”) in a versified inscription of Panopolis.³⁰ Both the Mother of gods and Zeus Olympian are connected with mountains. The Mother of gods, whether she is called Rhea, Cybele, Idaean or otherwise, is frequently located in the wilderness of the Greek and Anatolian mountains where her

²² SIDEBOTHAM, HENSE, NOUWENS (2008).

²³ DERCHAIN (1962), BOUANICH (2005).

²⁴ TRAUNECKER (2002), CLAUDE (2017).

²⁵ BERNAND (1977), CUVIGNY (1997), VOLOKHINE (2011).

²⁶ BORGEAUD (1979).

²⁷ MEEKS (2002), 312, YOYOTTE (1952).

²⁸ *Euodos*: *I.Kanais* 2 (*I.Égypte métriques* 158), 10, 13, 21, 22, 27, 28, 36, 37, 38, 43, 44, 47, 50, 54, 61, 62, 72, 78, 88; *Euagros*: *I.Kanais* 8 (*I.Égypte métriques* 164), 26, 29, 66.

²⁹ *I.Pan du désert*, 1 and 4 (Wadi Bir el-Ain).

³⁰ *I.Égypte métriques*, 114, IV, 2 (Akhmim).

court of Kouretes roams.³¹ Zeus, as *Olumpios*, the sovereign of the gods, watches over the mountain expedition from his highest residence, the Olympian peak – way north of Panopolis but still meaningful in Paniskos’ pious vow. Therefore, at least three deities in the inscription display connections with a certain landscape, with a perspective broad enough to associate Mount Olympus with the wadis of the Egyptian desert. But here again, the list of divine names tells a tale: the hunt in the wilderness of desert mountains is just as if Paniskos were chasing boars or deers in the mountains of Northern Greece or Anatolia.

There is no way of knowing why Paniskos did not ask for Artemis’ help, however. We can only underline the lexical militarisation of the expedition through the choice of the divine denominations. This is how Paniskos conceived of his own action: a military expedition – this is the cognitive and concrete aspect of the vow. A dedication of Wadi Bir el-Ain is made to the sole Pan *Oreibatēs* by “those who went on the hunt with Dexios, chief of the guards and guardian of the wild beasts (*thērophulax*) in the Panopolitan nome, under the command of Asklepiades, Seuthes and Heliodoros, horsemen”.³² A second inscription dedicated to the same Pan Mountain-ranging or Ranger of the desert is left by inhabitants of Panopolis and hunters from the nome led by Perigenes, commander and *thērophulax*.³³ The Wadi Bir el-Ain is the point of departure for hunts led by officials and supervised by mounted soldiers: a whole logistic and military-like detachment is involved in these Panopolitan hunts.³⁴ Therefore, Paniskos was probably leading a whole crew of hunters as well and decided to call for the protection of militarised deities. The first difference between his inscription and the two others addressed to Pan *Oreibatēs* is that he stands alone as a dedicant while the others involve the crew collectively. The second difference is the plurality of gods involved in Paniskos’ departure vow. On the one hand, a human expeditionary force is protected by one god, while on the other hand, a divine battalion of four gods is honoured by a one-man army. The dissimilarity does not necessarily reveal a radically different context; it rather points to specific strategies of social communication among the local hunters who paid attention to Pan’s shielding.

The Mother of gods was chosen to open the list because she is supposed to supervise a militarised expedition into a certain kind of landscape she is familiar with. Ares comes to give warlike support to the crew while Zeus watches from his own usual place of surveillance. The narrative of the ritual vow tells a

³¹ BORGEAUD (1996).

³² *I.Pan du désert*, 4.

³³ *I.Pan du désert*, 1.

³⁴ This logistic is especially known for the chase of elephants in regions joined through the Red Sea: CASSON (1993).

broad story of war and mountains: under the watch of the Mother of gods of the expedition, Ares who fights alongside, and Zeus *Olumpios*, the adventure of Paniskos could have been epic material.³⁵ At the end of the dedication, *last but not least*, Pan is the local master of the desert: qualified as the one “who joins the expedition”, he also stands as the master of the exact time and place of the *euchē exodias*, the departure vow. Somehow, naming Pan *Sunstrateuomenos* is naming the context: here and then, in the land of Pan, the hunter faced the wilderness with a troop of mountain and warrior gods. Leaving no shadow of doubt as to the confidence Paniskos placed in these four gods, this is also a tale that he chose to display on the stone at the time of his departure.

As we observed with Paniskos’ departure vow, the names result from processes that are framed by different, contextual parameters. The contributions to this volume raise several of such parameters.

4. COGNITION AND MATERIALITY, RITUALS AND POETICS, TRANSMISSION AND CROSS-CULTURALISM

Each contribution has been perceived as a case study, aiming to identify one or more circumstances of enunciation and communication in which the divine names play a leading role. It aims to appreciate the reasons and the impact of the choices made regarding the way the gods were talked about and talked to. Using one or several case studies as a point of departure, each author has endeavoured, within their field of speciality, to cover, in parallel, the ground of theoretical proposals, that is, a way to reconsider the variety of divine names as constituent elements of dynamic relational systems, in movement. Taking into account the discursive contexts and strategies also makes it possible to reflect on the relationship between the naming modes and the “mediums”, texts and images, where the imprint is left, the memory of an interaction. In which circumstances, when and why does a divine name come to result in the fabrication of a material depiction of the divine, and vice versa? Is the use of a certain name or another conditioned by the divine images present in that context? How does the relationship between texts and images work in divine onomastics? This very topic turned out to be so promising that it was the subject of Seminar 4 of the project, devoted to narratives and images of divine names, which will be the subject of a future publication in this series.

³⁵ On the topic of war, we could add that, in the Archaic and Classical periods, in the Greek world, the cults of Zeus *Olumpios* were strongly connected to the aristocratic values of war (see DE ANGELO LAKY [2013], 293-306).

Several elements can be questioned in order to grasp the agency of the names in specific contexts: cognition and materiality, ritual and poetics, transmission, and cross-cultural dynamics. In the first part of this volume, Saskia Peels-Matthey offers some hints to a cognitive linguistic approach of the ancient Greek polytheism. The cognitive linguistic study of divine denominations attempts to bypass the irrelevant search for semantic unity, since the gods are better understood through a network of names, relations, and functions. Names frame the divine in a mental space, a mental lexicon where an agent can choose the name(s) that best fit a situation that he has encountered. The cognitive linguistic theory invites us to consider each onomastic pattern as a “construction”, making it possible to grasp the possibilities for innovations in naming the divine. More than semantics, we need to examine situations in order to understand both the making of a common religious knowledge as well as the punctual strategies in a fluid polytheistic system.

Cognition aside, a material space is at the core of Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme’s approach. Studying the Aramaic dedicatory inscriptions of the Hellenistic Period sanctuary of Mount Gerizim, she underlines the material agency of the inscribed denomination of “the god” (*’lh*), “the god in this place” (*’lh’ b’tr’ dnh*), or “the lord” (*’dny*). The very inscription of these dedications creates a divine presence in the sanctuary through the remembrance of the worshipper’s action, possibly reactivated by visitors to the sacred precinct and accomplished by the very interdependence of words and architecture. Denomination is not everything: written address to the divine forms part of a combination of speech act and material agency, even with few divine names, but all the more so when the god is “in this place”.

A same agency is involved in the interconnected Phoenician images and texts – or “imagetexts” – analysed by Ida Oggiano. Objects with a function of divine representation are actors in a complex context or theatre play where many agencies are interconnected: the agency of the object itself, that of its commissioner, the maker, the users, even the agency of the modern scholar who studies it. Questioning the relation between divine names and divine images in the Levant and western Phoenician world between the second millennium and the Hellenistic period, I. Oggiano explains how difficult and even misleading it can be to try to construct identifications between iconography and specific deities. The complexity of the contexts is precisely what prevents us from making such equations. On the contrary, the multiplicity of agencies invites us to admit a dynamic fluidity in the wide range of possible associations between iconographic types and onomastic attributes.

In the second part of our volume, the distinction between literary and cultic epithets is overcome by a close observation of ritual and poetic paradigms. Claude Calame questions the use of *Argurotoxos* as a *name* for Apollo in the

hymns uttered by heroes of the Homeric cycle or in the *Homeric hymns*. As a continuation of his extensive research on Greek hymns, C. Calame focuses on the conditions of the enunciation, where the *ritual* performance gives way to denominating a god its very agency. The pragmatics of the *poetic* performance plays an essential role in bringing a divine power to action: the qualification of the god may not be semantically connected to the ritual context but still creates a narrative that honours the god and gives value to the offering of the musical recitation. In the epigraphic *paean* by Aristonoos that C. Calame studies at the end, the narrative matches a Delphic religious landscape. The denominations and qualifications given in the poetics shape the portrait of the divinity and therefore enforce her presence.

Rebecca Van Hove scrutinises the use of oaths in the Attic orators' judicial and political declamations. Here, she finds both formal and informal oaths, since orators sometimes explicitly invoke gods as witnesses of an oath, and at other times swear in the name of a deity without the weight of ritual forms.³⁶ In the act of oath-swearing, invoking a divinity is crucial: it emphasises the speech of the orator, as well as the agency of the superhuman power who is invoked as guarantor and witness. The divine name uttered during the rhetoric action empowers the discourse. Contrary to a common opinion that sees in informal oaths a lack of semantic and religious value, R. Van Hove asserts that even these "informal" oaths continue to act as true invocations of divine powers.

The ritual performativity of the utterance of a name is also analysed by Thomas Galoppin through the written records of maledictions in Attica during the Classical and early Hellenistic ages. Carved on lead lamellae and mostly deposited in funerary places, these curses (*katadesmoi*) sometimes appeal to the justice exerted by Hermes, Persephone, the Earth and other deities connected to the soil of the grave. The choice of onomastic attributes such as *Katochos*, *Chthonios*, or the more poetical *Eriounios*, relies on the location of Hermes in the necropolis, where he and the other invoked powers can bring an end to the action intended by the curse. The network of gods and qualifications belongs less to a separate class of rituals – so called "magical" – but rather to a part of the religious landscape of the city and the powers that the gods of the place exert there.

The ritual context, with its possible stock of poetic qualifications, is not the only situation of performativity. The practice of writing and uttering hymns as a philosophical discourse is studied here by Nicoletta Di Vita who, with a special emphasis on Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, stresses the importance of correctly naming the gods in order to honour and display knowledge of truth about the

³⁶ See the Nottingham Oath Project (<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~brzoaths/index.php>).

divine. The philosopher must be someone who correctly names the gods, in accordance with a certain sensitivity to the agency of words: therefore, the anthropomorphic and mythological representation of the god can be addressed alongside the theoretical consideration of the god as a universal principle. Traditional names are remobilised by philosophical discourse not because they carry a meaning, but because names are the linguistic acts by which gods come to the knowledge of mortals.

As N. Di Vita tells us, according to Cleanthes, gods are “secret forms and sacred callings” (*mustika schemata kai kleseis hieras*).³⁷ One could say that, rather than images or names, gods are in the act of tracing or uttering. The semantics of the names can help to recognise a god or goddess’ specificities, but the embodiment of such powers is ensured by the pragmatics of poetical performance and the agency of ritual speech acts.

The making of gods through names, addressing the deities directly or indirectly speaking of the divine, may be a crucial point in a cross-cultural context. One of the first cross-cultural dynamics is the process of translation. James Aitken draws on an analysis of the translation of the Psalms in the Septuagint and, especially, the translation of divine names and epithets, to show the importance of the context. While, in theory, divine names are supposed to be untranslatable, two strategies were chosen: to create neologisms and to take on terms used to address gods and sovereign in court and cultic life of Ptolemaic Egypt. The translation of divine names is innovative and enlarges the repertoire: the Jews in Egypt could recall divine denominations used by their neighbours, even from minor cults.

The Sumerian Ereshkigal re-emerges in the Roman period as an additional name for Persephone and Hecate, a long time after it disappeared from cuneiform literature. Christopher Faraone analyses this use in the specific context of Greek magic – that is, curses on lead lamellae, ritual prescriptions on papyri and magical gems. The new name may be considered a case of *interpretatio*: Persephone shares a common sovereignty with Ereshkigal over the dead, and it is in this perspective that she takes on the name of the Sumerian Queen of the underworld. In the case of Hecate, C. Faraone argues that her ritual function as a frightening gatekeeper of Persephone’s realm justifies this association with Ereshkigal. The transmission of ritual knowledge channels the re-activation of a foreign name in the Greek ritual lexicon because, it seems, the power of the Sumerian name reinforces the terrible power of the two goddesses who, also as moon deities, are involved in disquieting rituals.

A final context examined here is a polemic against idolatry. In some passages of the Quran, Muhammad addresses the question of the names of poly-

³⁷ *SVF*, I, 538 = Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, III, 2, 9.

theistic deities. Michel Tardieu interrogates the assertion that, in the Quran, gods are nothing but names, and names without power. Three times, the argument is made with a different background, but in one case, the context places the names in a specific topography. The goddesses al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt are named as possible intercessors in a “satanic” verse where they are actually keeping track of the local, Meccan cults: it is this contextualization of the names that aids the exegesis of this passage of the Quran. It is through this contextualization that the Quranic point on the weakness of polytheistic cultic names is preserved.

Cross-cultural contexts are very informative: whether the names are involved in translations, cultural transfers, or polemic discourses, it seems that the lexicon is not a hermetic box but rather a dynamic interface. Where the context involves cross-cultural or interreligious dialogues, we must question the strategies that motivate the meaning and value of the names in response to specific, cultural, theological, and ritual situations.

Like Paniskos the hunter on the margins of the desert, it is time to depart for our expedition among gods and goddesses. Now, from the mountain to the desert, let the name-hunting begin!

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POLYTHEISM AS LANGUAGE:
A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO GREEK POLYTHEISM*

Saskia Peels-Matthey

Cette contribution a pour objectif de participer à une meilleure compréhension du polythéisme grec ancien en explorant la nature du savoir que les dévots ont de leurs divinités. Je propose de relier le problème que pose la gestion d'une pluralité religieuse par les Grecs anciens au domaine de la linguistique cognitive. Plus précisément, je propose de voir que les dévots comprennent les dieux grecs comme un réseau lexical. Je soutiens que le concept de réseau peut nous aider à comprendre à la fois les variations synchroniques et les changements diachroniques, sans avoir à recourir à un noyau de définition pour chaque divinité, ni être contraint de postuler un savoir théologique avancé de la part des dévots. Au fil de cette contribution, la déesse Artémis servira d'exemple au propos.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ancient Greeks recognized and honoured many gods. Polytheism was, in the words of Albert Henrichs, “one of the most defining features of Greek religion”,¹ but it is also among the most difficult characteristic to comprehend. In fact, the topic continues to perplex modern scholars. “Greek polytheism is indescribable” was the starting point of a discussion by Robert Parker in 2005, and he repeated this sentiment in 2011: “The attempt to confer logical coherence on polytheism is a hopeless enterprise.”² The complications associated with understanding polytheism may be illustrated by means of a simple example. Artemis was the goddess of hunting, fond of the wilderness, but she was also a protectress of cities. Though she was not a typical deity of war (as Ares

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¹ HENRICHS (2010), 22.

² PARKER (2005a), 387, (2011), 98.

or Athena were), she is occasionally connected with battle. She was sometimes portrayed as a young girl, the eternal virgin, playing a key role in the lives of girls and young women. She also assisted girls at the moment of their marriage, and she was the patron goddess of married women when they hoped for a pregnancy and a successful labour.³ For assistance in childbirth, a woman could also approach other goddesses, such as Eileithyia, the Moirai or Leto.⁴ In fact, a worshipper would often turn to “Artemis” in a particular manifestation, as shown by the epithet.⁵ For example, concerning childbirth, one could address Artemis Lochia or Eulochia “Artemis of (a Good) Childbirth”.⁶ One could even turn to Artemis Eileithyia, whatever the juxtaposition of the two theonyms may have signified.⁷

The example illustrates some of the key problems in understanding the involvement of ancient Greek gods in the lives of their worshippers. All major gods had several different roles or functions, and sometimes they occurred in combinations that are not obvious to us (e.g. virginity and assisting in childbirth; fondness of the wilderness and of cities; all this together with assistance in war). At the same time, various gods were involved in each important domain of life. One result of this complexity is that the gods typically had a variety of divine appellations (epithets). Understanding polytheism means: getting a grasp on how a multiplicity of gods, each with their own range of appellations and roles, affected the lives of the Ancient Greeks. In other words, what kinds of mental representations did the Greeks have of their gods and their identities? And why did they sometimes turn to one god, and sometimes to another (or to the same deity with a different epithet)?⁸

Did the Ancient Greeks themselves have questions about the identities of their gods? The contemporary evidence suggests that they did, as was recently discussed in some detail by Henk Versnel. What about choosing the most suitable god for their request? The plurality of gods seems to have been a source of anxiety to Ancient Greek worshippers (or perhaps, a concern about efficiency),

³ Some studies of Artemis, discussing her various roles: VERNANT (1991), 195-257, BRULÉ (1998), COLE (2004), 178-230, PETROVIC (2007, 2010), FISHER-HANSEN, POULSEN (2009), ELLINGER (2009), BUDIN (2016), LÉGER (2017).

⁴ On goddesses of childbirth and protection of the newborn child, PARKER (2005a), 426-443, PIRONTI, PIRENNE DELFORGE (2013).

⁵ Cf. PARKER (2011), 67, PARKER (2017), 9.

⁶ Artemis Lochia and Eulochia: e.g. E. *IT* 1097-1098, *IG* II³, 4 1784 = *IG* II² 4547 (Attica, ca. 400 BCE), PEEK (1969), 44 no. 92 (Astypalaia, 4th cent. BCE.), *IG* IX 2, 141 (Thebes, 2nd cent. BCE), *I. Gonnoi* II.173 (Gonnoi, ca. 300-250 BCE).

⁷ On cases such as Artemis Eileithyia, cf. PARKER (2005b); PIRONTI, PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2013), 74, and recently MACEDO (2017), esp. 578.

⁸ Cf. BONNET *et al.* (2018), 569: “Dans l’interaction rituelle ... cibler précisément les interlocuteurs divins à qui l’on s’adresse constitue un enjeu stratégique.”

as evidenced by frequent questions posed to oracles.⁹ In Dodona, for example, worshippers asked “to which god” they should address themselves to obtain better health, have offspring or be prosperous.¹⁰ It must be acknowledged that this choice was often influenced by the factors of time and place.¹¹ Nevertheless, the oracular evidence testifies that worshippers often did reflect on the question of which god or gods would be the *most* suitable. One could, of course, play it safe and sacrifice to multiple gods. We do have answers from Delphi to the type of oracular questions mentioned above, and what is striking is that these answers usually mention a list of deities, instead of singling out one god.¹² Although this may sometimes have been a solution,¹³ it cannot always have been possible (time-wise and budget-wise) to address a collection of gods. We must then imagine that choosing the one god most relevant for one’s request was a real concern.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP¹⁴

This concern leads us back to our main questions: who – or what – was a Greek god, and how did the gods differ from one another? Such topics have occupied students of Greek religion since the second half of the 20th century.

⁹ On identities of gods, cf. VERSNEL (2011), 37-42 and 49-60; on these oracular questions (and answers), cf. VERSNEL (2011), 43-49 and PARKER (2016).

¹⁰ Health: e.g. LHÔTE (2006), no. 73; offspring: e.g. LHÔTE (2006), no. 48; prosperity: DAKARIS *et al.* (2013), no. 2367.

¹¹ The tutelary god or goddess of one’s *polis* may have been a safe bet in all circumstances; it may have been convenient to turn to a god who was honored in one of the frequent, local, periodical festivals and recurring sacrificial rituals; the accidental vicinity of sanctuaries of some gods, but not of others, may have played a role. Thus, the city’s protecting deity, the sanctuary “around the corner” or the upcoming deity in the sacrificial calendar may have been more obvious choices than other deities.

¹² For example, in answer to an apparent question concerning health and fortune, the Pythia responded: “For good health you must sacrifice and pray to Zeus Hypatos, Herakles, Apollo Prostatarios. For good fortune to Apollo Agyieus, Leto, Artemis ...” Cf. VERSNEL (2011), 49: “What catches the eye ... is that the questions are always phrased in the singular: ‘to which of the gods’ (τίνι ἄν θεῶν), while *all* available answers mention extended and, at first sight, functionally untransparent and theologically incoherent lists of gods and heroes... The search for a—hopefully specific, expert or appropriate—god ends up with a list of gods.” It is, of course, possible that these lists were functionally transparent and coherent to ancient observers.

¹³ Aristoteles (*Pol.* 7.1335b) suggested that pregnant ladies should make a daily round and visit all the goddesses involved in childbirth, which would keep them fit.

¹⁴ In this section, the scholarship on Greek religion most relevant to this article is discussed concisely, as a fuller overview lies outside of the scope of this article. See e.g. PARKER (2005a), 387-395 and VERSNEL (2011), 26-36 for a more extensive introduction to the structuralist approach and the challenges it offers, and Versnel for an account of the work of Walter Burkert, the other main scholar of Greek religion in the 20th century, whose work is not discussed in detail here; cf. BREMMER (2019), 3-20 for a concise, more general historiography of the study of Greek religion in the 20th century, with many further references.

Earlier studies of Greek religion (19th century) mainly focused on religious rituals, while the gods remained on the margins of scholarly efforts, or were studied from a literary perspective.¹⁵ The interest in the gods themselves returned in the 1960s and 1970s, when a new approach, generally referred to as the (French) structuralist approach was elaborated by Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne, among others.¹⁶ Vernant and Detienne proposed that individual divinities should not be studied in isolation, rather we should try to understand how individual gods in a pantheon relate to one another and to a system as a whole. It is clear that all major gods operated in various spheres of life, and it is generally accepted that a one-dimensional image of gods as “persons” who may be juxtaposed to one another (Artemis as “goddess of the hunt”, Eileithyia as “goddess of childbirth”) does not work. The structuralists’ proposal was that gods were powers (“puissances”) with various aspects,¹⁷ but that each god had nevertheless a distinctive manner of operating. This mode of activity may be seen as the god’s defining core, which manifests itself in the various domains in which the god intervenes.¹⁸ An illuminating example, well summarized by Robert Parker, concerns the divinities Aphrodite and Poseidon. Aphrodite is not only the goddess of sexuality, but also protects sailors.¹⁹ Thus, both Poseidon and Aphrodite are concerned with the sea and sea voyages. But Aphrodite has her own distinctive mode of intervention because she “applies to storms [on sea] ... the same conciliatory charm that unites lovers”. Using her charm, Aphrodite calms the sea, while Poseidon is responsible for turbulence.²⁰

The structuralist approach to the Greek gods was an important paradigm turn. Though most current scholars would probably not call themselves “structuralists”, recent studies on Greek polytheism still take this approach as their main starting point for thinking about the topic, and it has become an essential frame of reference.²¹ Theoretical problems with it have been widely acknowl-

¹⁵ Cf. GRAF (2009), 3, HENRICHs (2010), 24-27, BREMMER (2019), 3.

¹⁶ Cf., among other studies: DUMÉZIL (1966), VERNANT (1963), VERNANT (1966), VERNANT (1974), DETIENNE, VERNANT (1974) and later DETIENNE (1997).

¹⁷ VERNANT (1974), 109.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. VERNANT (1974), 111 on the example of Hermes in comparison to other gods: “[le dieu] se distingue de chacun [des autres dieux] par certains modes d’action *qui lui sont propres*” (italics mine).

¹⁹ Cult places of Aphrodite are often found at harbours and the seashore, and various of her epithets refer to this role, such as Aphrodite Pontia “of the sea”, or Euploia “of a good seavoyage” (cf. PIRENNE-DELFORGE [1994], 434-437).

²⁰ PARKER (2005a), 390, PARKER (2011), 89-90.

²¹ E.g. PARKER (2005a), 387: “If one attempts today to describe the indescribable [i.e. polytheism], the best starting-point is the application of structuralist ideas to the study of Greek polytheism that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s ... the structuralists offered for the first time ... a systematic position which one could either accept or react against”, cp. PARKER (2011), 88. PIRENNE-DELFORGE, PIRONTI (2015), 39-40: “[concerning] the ‘French structuralist approach’ ... scholars working on Greek polytheism today must still take this work into account”.

edged; they are at the same time key challenges for studying Greek polytheism today. I will summarize the relevant issues, distinguishing three main types of such challenges.

The first problem is that a distinctive mode of activity or a contrast between the modes of activity of two gods cannot always be convincingly posed. Moreover, a deity's actual domains cannot always be derived straightforwardly or predicted from the abstract mode of activity.²² I will give one concrete example of these issues here. Artemis has been characterized as “a goddess of transitions”, concerned with various types of passage from one condition to another.²³ In many cases, this mode of activity makes sense. Indeed, the interventions of Artemis occur at key transitions in the lives of girls (who worship Artemis right before they get married) and married women (who demand the assistance of Artemis for a successful labour). But other domains of Artemis are more difficult to characterize as concerning “transition”. Hunting and the preoccupation with wildlife may be such a domain. Although it has been argued that here an “intersection” and a process of “infiltration” between the wild and the civilized was concerned,²⁴ literary passages do not necessarily concentrate on mutual interaction between one condition and the other, but emphasize Artemis' joy in playing with and hunting animals.²⁵ A “transition” is not necessarily involved. The eternal maidenhood of Artemis clearly lacks the notion of transition; and in the worship of Artemis by young girls, there may be a *potentiality* of their typical later transitions (entering puberty – getting married – becoming a mother), but no actual change need be envisaged in a chorus of young girls dancing for Artemis. Moreover, there are transitions in which Artemis does not play a role of importance, such as illness and healing²⁶ (while other gods do, who are not characterized as deities of transition).

A second problem is defining the extent to which searching for modes of action, particular to each god, can be considered an emic perspective. The vocabulary used by the ancient Greeks themselves sometimes prompts our understanding of the gods' distinctive modes of intervention.²⁷ However, we cannot

²² PARKER (2005a), 387-395 has provided an excellent and concise discussion, with illuminating examples.

²³ Cf. p. 23.

²⁴ E.g. VERNANT, VIDAL-NAQUET (1988), 197, Artemis is said to occupy “border zones ... where the wild and the civilized live side by side, coming into opposition certainly, but thereby mutually infiltrating one another ... [she is] positioned ... at the intersection of the wild and the tame” (the discussion on Artemis runs from 195-201).

²⁵ E.g. H. *Od.* 6.102-106, *h.Hom.* 27.

²⁶ Though there are *some* cases in which the illness of a woman is attributed to Artemis, e.g. E. *Hipp.* 145-150, Call. *Aet. Fr.* 75.

²⁷ The μήτις of Athena, her cunning intelligence, is proposed by the goddess herself in the *Odyssey*, when she addresses Odysseus: “I am known among all the gods for my wisdom and cunning arts” (ἐγὼ δ' ἐν πᾶσι θεοῖσι μήτι τε κλέομαι καὶ κέρδεσιν, H. *Od.* 13.297-99). Aphrodite

always find a direct mapping between the way of operating proposed by modern scholars and the corresponding Greek vocabulary, for example in the case of Artemis as a goddess of transitions. We cannot trace this description back to the Ancient Greek sources – and especially not the more complicated version of it proposed by Vernant: “Artemis always operates as a divinity of the margins with the twofold power of managing the necessary passages between savagery and civilization and of strictly maintaining the boundaries at the very moment they have been crossed.”²⁸

Even in those cases where distinctive modes of actions for different gods do seem to have been expressed in the language of writers, poets, and philosophers, we may still wonder whether ordinary worshippers could always be expected to make similar abstractions. The structuralist approach implicitly assumes advanced insight into the polytheistic system on the part of the worshippers. This point has been raised by scholars such as Parker and Versnel.²⁹ The latter sceptically wonders:

For the first time, but not for the last, we see ourselves confronted with the question of whose viewpoint we are representing: our own, that of the Greeks? Of which Greeks? ... that of a majority of the Athenian – or worse, the Greek – population, who probably would have no inkling of what we are talking about?³⁰

A related question is to what extent the proposed modes of action of gods would help Greek worshippers understand how to act in their everyday lives. The observations concerning the divine patrons of sailors do not seem to tell us which god (Poseidon, Aphrodite or yet another deity, such as the Dioscuri)³¹ it was best to turn to for a safe sea-voyage. Parker has suggested that in actual

is said to watch over the sea so that the voyage of sailors is pleasant (ὄφρα φίλον ναύτησι τελεῖ πλόον, *AP*, 9.144). Here, the Ancient Greek authors themselves seemingly focused on her capacity to bring harmony (here in the case of a sea journey); cf. DEMETRIOU (2010) for this and other examples of Aphrodite bringing harmony to travel at sea. That Poseidon’s distinctive way of operating should have something to do with causing turbulence shows from his role as Earth-Shaker (Ἐνοσίχθων, e.g. *H. Od.* 7.271), his involvement with horses, whom he frightened so that they started prancing (e.g. *D. Chr.* 32.76), and by his capacity to “stir up” the sea (verb ὀρίνω, e.g. *H. Od.* 7.267-284).

²⁸ VERNANT (1991), 204. Compare the summary by BUDIN (2016), 2-3, with a less complicated formulation: Artemis is “goddess of transitions ... the goddess who presides over changes of states of being”.

²⁹ PARKER (2011), 94: “structuralism postulates a large database of theological knowledge in the mind of every Greek”, cf. also p. 93: “These answers ... are, inevitably, our answers, not theirs [i.e. the answers given by the Ancient Greeks themselves] ...”.

³⁰ VERSNEL (2011), 71-72 with further discussion.

³¹ For an overview of gods involved in the domain of the sea: cf. PARKER (2005a), 409-411.

cult practice, such abstract distinctions between two gods who operate in the same sphere of activity may not have played an important role.³²

A third problem with Vernant and Detienne's approach concerns the emphasis on finding one distinctive mode of action. To associate each god with a particular mode of intervention may be seen as another attempt to reduce gods to one particular aspect – as Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge and Gabriella Pironti recently put it, “it gives back to the gods an ‘essentializing’ unity that was the original point of contention”.³³

In the course of the discussion, some recent attitudes to studying Greek gods have already been mentioned. We have seen Parker's conclusion that it is impossible to impose logic on ancient Greek polytheism; nevertheless, we may and should still try to “describe the indescribable”. A similar point of view is apparent in studies by, for example, Fritz Graf and Jan Bremmer.³⁴ Versnel's response to all these difficulties, in his rich analysis in *Coping with the Gods* (2011), was to postulate fundamental “inconsistencies” in ancient Greek perceptions of divinities. In his view, the ancient Greeks were capable of having “contradictory representations” (on gods) without perceiving them in terms of a paradox that could not be overcome.³⁵ Such inconsistencies were, as Versnel argues, at the heart of the Greek religion; one should therefore reject the quest for unifying explanations of how polytheism works, though we may still go on to describe polytheism in all its aspects.³⁶ What types of knowledge the ancient Greeks had of their gods and what their “strategies” were for choosing the proper god is an area of attention in current scholarship, not only in the work of the above-mentioned authors, but also in the ERC project of Corinne Bonnet and her colleagues, as they argue:

Le projet MAP vise à... appréhender les stratégies déployées par les sociétés et les individus pour communiquer efficacement avec les dieux en les nommant ... si la connaissance qu'un acteur peut avoir de tel ou tel interlocuteur divin est approximative, on doit supposer – telle est du moins notre

³² PARKER (2005a), 389.

³³ PIRENNE-DELFORGE, PIRONTI (2015), 40. Cf. also PARKER (2005a), 390, with further references.

³⁴ GRAF (2009), 5 (introduction to a monograph on the god Apollo): “In mapping the provinces of Apollo's activities, I will not even try to find a unity that would underlie the different roles”; BREMMER (2019), 18: “In the end, the polyvalent nature of the Greek gods and their historical developments will always oppose an all too strictly ‘systemic’ analysis”. In both cases, an extensive study of aspects of Greek polytheism follows, despite these qualifications.

³⁵ Contradictory representations: VERSNEL (2011), 10; worshippers “coped with the inherent paradoxes and inconsistencies”, e.g. p. 85 (this is argued throughout the monograph).

³⁶ The notion of inconsistencies was already introduced by VERSNEL (1990, 1993).

hypothèse de départ – qu’il est dépositaire d’un certain savoir et/ou savoir-faire.³⁷

In the following, I aim to explain more clearly what precisely this “approximate” knowledge may have consisted of.

3. INTRODUCTION OF A NEW, COGNITIVE APPROACH TO GREEK POLYTHEISM

Without disagreeing with what scholars before me have observed – inconsistencies, sometimes chaos, an almost indescribable plurality (which may have embarrassed the Ancient Greeks less than it bewilders us) – I would like to suggest an alternative method for understanding Greek polytheism. This is a cognitive approach, which aims at giving an explanation for and overcoming at least some of our problems of understanding, by focusing primarily on the semantic nature of worshippers’ knowledge about their gods. I propose to connect the problem of gods to the domain of cognitive linguistics, more precisely, the study of the meaning of words.³⁸

The field of lexical semantics models the way in which knowledge of the meaning of words is represented in the mental lexicon (that is, in the “dictionary” in the minds of language users). Lexical semanticists in the field of cognitive linguistics assume that an entry in the mental lexicon is *not* an abstract description of the meaning of a word.³⁹ It has been observed that, in daily life, language users usually do not have any ready definitions. Empirical research shows that the vast majority of language users finds it very difficult to give a definition even of seemingly straightforward words.⁴⁰ Cognitive linguists assume that an entry in the mental lexicon is more like an inventory of situations in which a particular word can appear.⁴¹ This perspective on lexical meaning can be described as usage-based. Language learners, as well as proficient language users, hear lexemes being used in various ways, in various contexts, and remember this information, storing up multiple concrete options for the interpretation in their mental lexicon, accumulating them.⁴² These stored usages form the basis of a person’s idea of what a word means. In other words, seman-

³⁷ BONNET *et al.* (2018), 569; cp. 588.

³⁸ I will provide a brief overview of cognitive linguistics views on lexical semantics here; for a more detailed description, cf. PEELS (2016), 14-23.

³⁹ For theories of semantics which do assume abstract descriptions, cf. PEELS (2016), 15 with further references.

⁴⁰ TAYLOR (2003 [1989]), 162.

⁴¹ E.g. ENGELBERG (2000); LANGACKER (1987, 1988, 1990, 1991); TAYLOR (2000).

⁴² The “usage-based thesis”: cf. CROFT, CRUSE (2004), 3; EVANS, GREEN (2006), 108; TOMASELLO (2003).

tic knowledge about a lexeme is knowledge of its distribution. Interpretation of a word is not a process of connecting an abstract, underspecified description or definition in one's mental lexicon to a concrete situation at hand, but rather a matter of accessing stored meanings in the inventory. Users *may* also build up what Ronald Langacker calls a "schema", a kind of definition or more abstract idea of what various encountered usages of a lexeme have in common. But this is optional: many language users will not have a schema for some or most words.⁴³

What links usages of a lexeme together? Cognitive linguists see the mental representation of a category as a network of related usages.⁴⁴ Employing a notion originally introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein, we may see the connections between parts of a network as "family resemblances". Wittgenstein used the analogy of a family group, in which various members may share various features and traits (such as eye color, curly hair or artistic talent). In all likelihood, there will *not* be a set of characteristics that all the family members share, but various instances of single characteristics shared by two or more members finally link the family together.⁴⁵ In an analogous way, members of a lexical category will share family resemblances, though not all members will share all of them.

Lexical networks are internally structured, in the sense that users know which usages of the lexeme they consider more central or prototypical (what they label the "best examples of a category") and which ones they consider more peripheral. For example, Northern Europeans may find apples "better" examples of fruit than pomegranates, and broccoli a "better" example of a vegetable than a potato. Judgments of prototypicality or non-prototypicality will differ between places, cultures, social groups, etc. People can even debate whether some entity belongs to the category in question or not. We therefore

⁴³ LANGACKER (1987), 371.

⁴⁴ LANGACKER (1991), 2.

⁴⁵ Wittgenstein used the famous example of a "game" to provide what may have been the first critique of the classical theory of meaning, and introduced the term family resemblances in the context of that discussion (WITTGENSTEIN [1953], sections 66-67). In the classical theory of meaning, category membership was defined by a set of necessary and sufficient features (for further explanation of the classical theory of meaning, which goes back to Aristotle, cf. PEELS (2016), 15 n. 77). Wittgenstein pointed out that if we were to investigate what all the things that we call "games" have in common, we would soon run into difficulties. Not all games involve a "competition", we also call peekaboo played by mother and child a "game". Games are typically played together, but some are played alone (e.g. a child throwing a ball against a wall). One may propose an activity should be amusing to be called a "game", but we also speak about "political games" which are not necessarily fun. Neither are the elements of skill, luck and physical exercise relevant to all games to the same extent. In short, one cannot find a set of characteristics that is relevant to each and every example.

say that categories have fuzzy boundaries.⁴⁶ Because of these characteristics of networks, categories may also be extended to include new members, provided that language users are convinced that a new usage does indeed belong to the category in question.

Finally, a network of related uses would crucially include an awareness (on the part of the language user) of the *contexts* in which each of these particular usages belong, since cognitive linguists propose that lexical knowledge cannot be disconnected from other experiences, ideas and frames associated with a lexeme.⁴⁷ In this sense, the mental storage of lexical meaning resembles the organization of an encyclopaedia more than that of a dictionary. When a speaker recognizes a word, not only his semantic but also the other knowledge surrounding the word in question is activated.⁴⁸

4. ADVANTAGES OF THE COGNITIVE APPROACH

How does the proposed cognitive linguistic theory of word meaning apply to the study of Ancient Greek polytheism, and how may it help us to understand the Ancient Greeks' mental representations of gods? My assumption is that a worshipper's understanding of a god is lexical knowledge. In other words, the name of the god is what helps worshippers organize their experiences of a god. A Greek person would have stored what they know concerning the Greek goddess Artemis in a lexical entry "Artemis".⁴⁹ Assuming that worshippers' experiences of individual gods are stored and organized in lexical entries is in line with the dominant view in studies of Greek gods. The idea that names of gods

⁴⁶ A consequence of the classical theory of meaning (previous note) was that categories had clear boundaries. Individual cases either belonged to a category or not, and all had equal status. Therefore, categories lack internal structure. But experimental research has shown that this is not how language users actually conceive of categories. People consider some entities to be "better" examples of categories than others. In other words, categories *do* have internal structure. A prototypical usage of a lexeme is what language users understand as the "best" example of a category: the examples one would think of without context or contextual preparation. More peripheral examples are perceived as less obvious examples, but still sharing some semantic characteristics with the rest of the semantic network. At the very edge of the network are marginal examples. Their category membership may be debated and is questionable: this is why we say that categories have fuzzy boundaries. Cf. LABOV (1973), ROSCH (1973, 1975a, 1975b).

⁴⁷ E.g. recently MARMARIDOU (2013), 84: "the process of communication involves the activation within speakers and across speakers of ... [such associations]; the implication of this position is that in lexical analysis a word cannot be separated from its context if an adequate account of its meaning is to be given".

⁴⁸ LANGACKER (1987), 161-164, TAYLOR (2003 [1989]), 83-87, 281-89, EVANS & GREEN (2006), 160, 207-209, 216.

⁴⁹ For further precisions concerning cases in which the naming formula of a god is more complex, cf. p. 35-36 below.

are the core of knowledge of divinities may be traced back at least to Jean Rudhardt's work, and is at the heart of current scholarly studies of Greek religion.⁵⁰ When these established views are followed, the question becomes how knowledge of a god in the mind of a worshipper is organized around the god's name.

This approach may help us overcome some of the challenges outlined above. As we saw, it has been argued in the scholarship that looking for a distinctive mode of intervention for each god, as opposed to that of (an)other god(s), brings back the problematic tendency to reduce a god to one essence. Moreover, it has proven impossible to adequately capture gods in a system of binary oppositions. Exceptions to any neat classification abound, and as Parker concisely summarized it, "stubborn difficulties remain".⁵¹ I suggest that modelling knowledge of gods as structured networks – as inventories of usages which are linked together through family resemblances between instances – may help us to understand how the various and potentially disparate aspects of a god are connected in the minds of worshippers, without having to resort to the problematic enterprise of finding their distinctive modes of actions. Crucially, though it seems logical to look for a defining core of a god, we have seen that knowledge of words in the mental lexicon is not centred on a definition. It follows that it may not make sense, from a language users' point of view, to search for the defining core of a god, nor is it necessary.

To understand how the various roles of, for example, Artemis may contribute to her network, we can focus on finding the family resemblances that connected her various roles in the minds of worshippers. I will illustrate this point by enumerating some of them.⁵² An associative connection or family resemblance between Artemis, concerned with wild animals (as a huntress), and Artemis, protectress of young girls, may be the quality of being untamed (ἄδμηξ).⁵³ As has been pointed out by others, in the Ancient Greek conceptualization, small children were seen as "wild", like animals; an unmarried girl was "untamed" (this includes Artemis herself)⁵⁴ as girls became tamed by marriage

⁵⁰ RUDHARDT (1958), 97, BREMMER (1994), 13, BELAYCHE *et al.* (2005), VERSNEL (2011), e.g. 148, PIRENNE-DELFORGE, PIRONTI (2015), 40-41, BONNET *et al.* (2018).

⁵¹ PARKER (2005a), 390.

⁵² This brief enumeration is intended as an illustration of the principle, not as a full study. The most obvious family resemblance, Artemis' bow and arrows, is discussed immediately below in the paragraph on diachronic change.

⁵³ ἄδμηξ refers to being "untamed"; "unwedded" for maidens and "unbroken" for animals (LSJ, s.v. ἄδμηξ).

⁵⁴ Artemis herself is referred to ἄδμηξ in *A. Supp.* 149 (Danaus' daughters, themselves untamed, wish to be rescued by the untamed goddess: ἄδμητος ἄδμητα | ῥύσιος γενέσθω, 149-150); also *S. El.* 1239.

and having children.⁵⁵ Another link, or family resemblance, between Artemis, goddess of marriage, and Artemis, patron of childbirth, may have been the girdle or ζώνη. This belt, worn by women “just above the hips”, was unloosened when a woman got married (on the wedding night), but also when a woman gave birth.⁵⁶ The epithet Lysizonos, “Loosener of the Girdle”, for Artemis, connected with marriage and childbirth, is attested late, but it may have been a cult name of this goddess in earlier times.⁵⁷ A connection between Artemis, goddess of marriage, and Artemis who assists in battle may have been the attribute of the torch. Such torches formed an essential part of wedding ceremonies and are attested in the context of worship of Artemis;⁵⁸ but Artemis with her burning torches is also invoked to inflict harm on an enemy.⁵⁹ We have now established some possible family resemblances (very briefly); the network of Artemis will be connected through a series of them.

The linguistic model may help us grasp better not only any synchronic situation at hand, but may also elucidate diachronic change. The evolution of roles of gods is not a random process, but may be seen as cases of successfully anchored innovations.⁶⁰ What factors may decide the accepted addition of a “new

⁵⁵ KING (1993), 111 and previously e.g. CALAME (1977), 411-420, VERNANT, VIDAL-NAQUET (1988), 195-201, VERNANT (1991), 197-201. We may find a divine figure connected to the worship of girls and to wilderness in very early iconography, e.g. frescoes found at Thera, ca. 1700 B.C. If the interpretation of the imagery on these frescoes is correct, the conceptual link between a goddess of wilderness and young girls seems to be rather old (cf. BUDIN [2016], 11-14 for a discussion).

⁵⁶ LSJ, s.v. Marriage: cf. n. 57 below; loosening of the ζώνη is used in a more general sense for the onset of sexual activity e.g. in *h. Ven.* 164, where Anchises loosens Aphrodite’s girdle when he has sex with her. Childbirth: e.g. Hyp. Fr. 67. On the significance of the ζώνη of various stages in a woman’s life, cf. SCHMITT-PANTEL (1977), esp. 1063-1064.

⁵⁷ Hsch., s.v. λυσιζώνος, holds that this adjective describes a woman who just got married, and that it is also an epithet of Artemis; Schol. A.R. 288 mentions that women who have given birth loosen their girdles and dedicate the belt to Artemis, which is why there is a sanctuary of Artemis Lysizonos in Athens. Previous to these sources, Call. *Diana* 111 mentions that she herself had a golden ζώνη. Eileithyia has the epithet Lysizonos in Theoc. 17.61. An Attic red-figure *lekythos* by the Achilles Painter of the mid-fifth century (OAKLEY & SINOS [1993], 14-15 with fig. 9) seems to show a bride loosening her belt before Artemis (represented with bow, arrows and a torch).

⁵⁸ From the 6th century onwards the iconographical evidence includes vase-paintings, found in sanctuaries of Artemis, with images of young women in pre-nuptial rituals carrying torches; in the classical period the goddess Artemis herself carries torches in images of wedding rituals (cf. PARISINOÛ [2000] 28-34).

⁵⁹ In S. *OT* 205-207, the chorus deems the god Ares responsible for the plague in Thebes. They call for Zeus with his thunder and lightning, for Apollo with his arrows, and for “the fire-bearing gleam of Artemis’ torches” (τάς τε πυρφόρους | Ἀρτέμιδος αἴγλας) to fight Ares.

⁶⁰ On Anchoring Innovation, cf. SLUITER (2017) and <https://www.ru.nl/oikos/anchoring-innovation/>, with a definition of this concept: “Anchoring is a label for the many different ways in which people connect the new to the old, the traditional, the already known. What is called or considered ‘old’ or ‘new’ is not always a matter of objective diagnosis: it is a judgment established through discourse and societal negotiation. ... Anchoring innovation is about the way in

member” to a category from a linguistic point of view? To extend a network of current usages of a lexeme, there should be perceived *similarities* between the established usages and the new example. In other words, when a new role is added to the semantic network of a god (an innovation), one or more family resemblances between the new roles and the existing parts of the network (the anchors) should be considered as shared for such a process of extension to be successful. Thus, to understand diachronic change in the character traits, domains or attributes of a god, we must establish links between the existing and the new, which consist of family resemblances.

In pre-classical evidence (Homer and the older Homeric hymns), Artemis is not honoured as a birth goddess, while from the classical period onwards this seems to be a key domain of hers. How did this role become integrated into the network of Artemis?⁶¹ A family resemblance that may have helped forge the link between Artemis the huntress and Artemis, goddess of birth, is the conceptualization of Artemis (in Homer and subsequently Aeschylus and Euripides) as using bow and arrows to harm animals and humans alike. From Homer onwards, Artemis, huntress and arrow-shooter, is also portrayed as a woman-killer.⁶² And in the *Iliad*, painful wounds in battles are compared to the pangs of childbirth resulting from an arrow (βέλος) sent by the Eileithyiai (here in plural).⁶³ Thus, in Homer, pains connected to childbirth are imagined as being caused by arrows sent by gods (the Eileithyiai); and Artemis sends arrows which are dangerous to women. It may have been a small step to conceptualizing Artemis as a goddess who “sends arrows” to women in childbirth, and the tragic poets may have played a role in showing this connection.⁶⁴

We may see the first (implicit) connection between Artemis’ arrows and her role in childbirth in Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*. Danaus’ daughters, grateful for the protection they have been granted in Argos, pray that war or illness may not befall the city; they also pray that new rulers will always be born and that Ἄρτεμις ἐκάταν will watch over the labour of women.⁶⁵ There is a textual am-

which people regard and cope with ‘newness’, and about the question under what conditions new things become ‘anchored’, and thus successfully implemented – or not!”

⁶¹ Cf. e.g. BUDIN (2016), 97-106, for a discussion of various cultural, religious and literary factors that may have contributed to Artemis becoming goddess of childbirth, including the increasing syncretism of Eileithyia and Artemis and the roles of tragic poets as innovators.

⁶² The depiction of Artemis as “shooter of arrows” (ιοχέαιρα, lit. “arrow-pourer”) or with comparable descriptions is very frequent from the Homeric epics onwards (e.g. *H. II.* 20.39, *Od.* 6.102). Artemis responsible for the death of women: e.g. *H. II.* 24.606, *Od.* 11.324.

⁶³ *H. II.* 11.267-272.

⁶⁴ The idea that the arrows of Artemis and the Homeric arrows of the Eileithyiai provide a connection that makes Artemis’ role as goddess of childbirth understandable was also proposed by PIRONTI, PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2013), 73, 76 (their brief discussion does not mention tragic passages).

⁶⁵ *A. Supp.* 676-678.

biguity in these lines, for the form ἐκάταν may refer to Hecate,⁶⁶ but it may also be interpreted as a feminine form of the epithet ἑκατος, attested for Apollo from Homer onwards.⁶⁷ The epithet ἑκατος itself has an uncertain meaning and origin,⁶⁸ but seems to have been connected by the Greeks to the epithet ἐκηβόλος. The latter may have an original meaning of “shooting at will” and relate to the unpredictable quality of a god who may inflict harm with his or her arrows as he or she likes.⁶⁹ In short, for the Greeks, the qualifier ἐκάταν in Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* may have pointed to the potential danger which an irascible Artemis, who shoots her arrows at will, poses to women in childbirth.⁷⁰ In Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, we find another connection between Artemis’ arrows and labour. In the parodos, the chorus (married women of Troezen) is trying to guess what is causing Phaedra’s illness, as she has been wasting away in bed for the past three days, refusing to eat.⁷¹ One of their suggestions is that Phaedra is suffering because a “bad and wretched sense of feeling helpless, caused by birth pains and losing one’s mind (ὠδίνων τε καὶ ἀφοροσύνας), is used to accompanying the troublesome temperament of women” (161-164). Since it is unlikely that Phaedra is actually currently in labour (this would have been noticeable...), the passage has convincingly been interpreted by Barrett as referring to a state of melancholy caused by pregnancy and fear of *impending* birth

⁶⁶ I.e. in which case Hecate is an epithet of Artemis, similar to the case Artemis Eileithyia. The goddess Hecate was often identified with Artemis, being a goddess with much overlap in spheres of activity (e.g. marriage) and attributes (e.g. torches).

⁶⁷ Cf. e.g. JOHANSEN, WHITTLE (1980), *ad loc.* For a discussion of the uncertain meaning of ἑκατος / ἐκάτη, cf. ZOGRAFOU (2010), esp. 145-151; Zografou argues that this is the first example of identification of Artemis and Hecate in literary texts ([2010], 100 n. 43, 204 n. 4).

⁶⁸ BEEKES, (2010), s.v. thinks that the form ἑκατος may have been Pre-Greek.

⁶⁹ As BEEKES (2010), s.v. explains, the epithet ἐκηβόλος has been interpreted since antiquity as “shooting from far away” (related to ἑκατος). The metrically lengthened form ἐκατηβόλος has also been interpreted as such, or as containing the element ἐκατόν, so “shooting from afar” or “with a hundred arrows”. But Beekes argues that the compound ἐκηβόλος was probably formed with the root *uek- (from which ἔκων).

⁷⁰ Aeschylus forged another type of connection between Artemis the huntress who enjoys being among animals, and her role as protector of childbearing women in the *Agamemnon*, by presenting an innovative version of the events leading up to Artemis stopping the winds at Aulis. In Aeschylus’ story, an omen of two eagles devouring a pregnant hare, before it can give birth, is interpreted by the seer Calchas as angering Artemis. Calchas emphasizes that she is exceedingly fond of *young* animals, therefore, we may infer she is upset about an especially young – because unborn – animal being killed. The link which Aeschylus seems to create between the two domains (the hunt and wilderness on the one hand, and childbirth on the other) is an affection for the young. A full discussion of this scene and its rich scholarship, including the textual difficulties and ambiguities of the passage and questions of interpretation is beyond the scope of this article. Some discussions are provided (besides commentaries on the *Agamemnon*) by PERADOTTO (1969) and HEATH (2001). The passage has often been interpreted as Artemis somehow being proleptically angry about the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and young people at Troy (and even unborn fetuses) being killed.

⁷¹ E. *Hipp.* 131-140.

pains.⁷² The chorus sings that they themselves have been in the same situation in the past,⁷³ and turned to Artemis for help:

.... τὰν δ'εὐλοχον οὐρανίαν
 τόξων μεδέουσιν ἄστευ
 Ἄρτεμιν ...
 I called to the heavenly (goddess) of a good childbirth,
 ruler of arrows,
 Artemis.⁷⁴

As we see, the arrows of Artemis and protection of women in labour are juxtaposed and not explicitly causally connected. Yet it seems significant that both elements are mentioned together.⁷⁵ Through this juxtaposition, the passage hints at the cause of pregnant women's fear of labour, implying that the arrows of Artemis bring pain and, possibly, death. But it also focuses on the benevolent side of Artemis, who oversees a good outcome of the process (εὖ - λοχος).

Various factors must have played a role in the successful innovation of Artemis' network to include the role of birth goddess. In this brief analysis, I have tried to trace one factor in the anchoring of this new role, which is the family resemblance of the bow and arrows, connecting the domain of the hunt and pains and dangers of childbirth.⁷⁶

The cognitive linguistic perspective on lexical meaning may also be of help in ongoing scholarly discussions concerning the connection between gods of myth and gods in cult. A well-known debate on this topic was conducted between Jon Mikalson and Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, who had opposing views on whether the gods of tragedy had anything to do with the gods that were revered in cult in the mind of a Greek worshipper, or were completely separate divine conceptions.⁷⁷ Another manifestation of this scholarly discussion occurs in a debate on the connection between the poetic epithet (French: *épithète*) and the cult epithet (French: *épiclèse*). How did each of these types of epithet contribute to worshippers' knowledge about a god, in what way does it

⁷² BARRETT (2001 [1964]), *ad loc.*

⁷³ "Once, this breeze rushed through my womb", 164-165. Cf. HALLERAN (1995), *ad loc.*, for the interpretation of this "breeze" (ἀύρα) as an impulse, the reason for emotions, with further refs. Cf. GOFF (1990), 6 with n. 8 on the womb as causing women's unstable temperament.

⁷⁴ E. *Hipp.* 166-68.

⁷⁵ Various commentators (BARRETT [1964], *ad loc.*, HALLERAN [1995], *ad loc.*) have pointed out that the mentioning of the arrows may be significant, for these have been related to the death of women from Homer onward and may be connected to death in childbirth here.

⁷⁶ Later tragic connections between Artemis and childbirth occur in Euripides' *Suppliants*, line 958 (production: 423 BCE) and Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, line 1097 (production: 414-412 BCE). Both texts figure Artemis Lochia, but an explicit connection with arrows is not made.

⁷⁷ MIKALSON (1991) and SOURVINOU-INWOOD (1997); that this old discussion is not outdated is shown by a recent elaborate review of this debate, provided by VERSNEL (2011), 517-525.

make sense to distinguish between the two types (which sometimes overlap), and should the distinction perhaps be denounced?⁷⁸ Since lexical knowledge includes an awareness of the contexts of particular usages, it would be reasonable to assume that a worshipper distinguishes between formulas heard and experienced in different situations – such as in cult practice or the performance of a tragedy.⁷⁹ However, since they form part of one mental network, centred around the name of the god, these sources of knowledge are not disjointed. Linguistic research shows that even if a word is always used in a particular sense and in a particular context, the whole semantic network of that word is temporarily activated.⁸⁰ Thus, I argue that the proper level of understanding is the representation of a god *in the mind of* individual language users, and the cognitive linguistic paradigm may help us to advance scholarly debates of how connections and exchanges between literary knowledge and ritual knowledge occur.

A final advantage of the cognitive linguistic approach to Greek polytheism is that we do not need to assume advanced “theological knowledge” on the part of worshippers anymore, since conceptual or lexical knowledge is largely subconscious. Knowledge of gods, not only in word recognition, but also in word production, is accessed largely involuntarily. Since linguistic competence is seen as a structured inventory of encountered usages, the knowledge that is ascribed to worshippers is also much less daunting than the abstract descriptions proposed in earlier research.⁸¹

⁷⁸ On this topic, cf. most recently BONNET *et al.* (2018), 575-576.

⁷⁹ Where applicable, the worshipper would store the information that a particular epithet is encountered in poetic *and* cultic contexts.

⁸⁰ Cf. PEELS (2016), 18-19, with further references: “Information on the various usages of a lexeme is not only stored, but this combined knowledge also influences the interpretation of individual encounters with the lexeme. Experimental research has shown that when a listener recognizes a word, he or she accesses the whole multiplicity of stored interpretative options. Although a listener always hears and understands a word in a specific context in a specific usage ... all stored senses of a word are temporarily co-activated during word recognition. Thus, the understanding of a lexeme in a specific utterance is influenced by the other impressions a speaker has of the general usages of this lexeme.”

⁸¹ For example Vernant’s description of Artemis as “a divinity of the margins with the two-fold power of managing the necessary passages between savagery and civilization and of strictly maintaining the boundaries at the very moment they have been crossed” (1991), 204; cf. p. 23 above. For a similar point made with respect to child language acquisition (the cognitive linguistic approach makes the endpoint of the language acquisition process seem much closer than other, generative linguistic, theoretical models do; this is how we may better understand how babies ever successfully learn their mother tongue), cf. TOMASELLO (2003), 3-7.

5. THE PROPOSED APPROACH AND ITS POSITION WITH RESPECT TO CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP

The idea of studying knowledge of gods as a cognitive lexical network of related usages builds onto a series of earlier insights by other students of Greek religion, first of all on previous proposals to think of gods in terms of “deity networks”. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti use this notion to describe how Greeks could experience potentially disparate encounters with a deity, without dissolving the “unity” implied in the theonym:

To use once again the metaphor of the network, a sum would be static, while a network is dynamic, fluid, flexible. A god can be conceptualized like such a network: different activities or contexts, such as the telling of myths or practice of particular cults, let some segments and portions of the network appear.⁸²

However, these scholars’ notion of the “network” remains a metaphor (as they themselves mention). The field of cognitive semantics uses the same idea of “networks”, but offers a more integrated and powerful tool of analysis.

In the cognitive linguistic paradigm, knowledge of a lexeme includes an understanding of the various *contexts* in which a word is used. Still, any individual usage of a word activates the complete inventory of usages of a term (including an awareness of various other contexts in which the word is used), and this colours the interpretation of individual examples.⁸³ In effect, my proposition seems a continuation of Louis Gernet’s view that a (major) god is “un système de notions”;⁸⁴ it may also be considered a restatement in linguistic terms of what Sourvinou-Inwood proposed already in 1997 (without further theoretical considerations), that “there was a semantic field ‘Athena’ and ... its individual manifestations were perceived through the filters of the main traits of that semantic field”.⁸⁵ Similarly, Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti mention that

⁸² PIRENNE-DELFORGE, PIRONTI (2015), 41, cf. also PIRONTI (2007), 285 and LEBRETON (2019).

⁸³ Cf. p. 27 above.

⁸⁴ Gernet in GERNET, BOULANGER (1932), 222. Gernet’s views on ancient Greek gods built on linguistic ideas expressed in his first major work, *Le développement de la pensée juridique et morale en Grèce* (1917). I would like to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me. On Gernet’s body of thought and its influence on Vernant’s ideas on Greek polytheism, cf. PIRENNE-DELFORGE, SCHEID (2017), esp. p. 39-43.

⁸⁵ SOURVINOU-INWOOD (1997), 166 cf. also p. 171: “For when the ancient audience made sense of (say) Artemis in a given tragedy, they did not do so through neutral filters, they did not construct the goddess *ex novo* on the basis of the material presented in the play alone, as we would do an alien deity in a science fiction film; they made sense of the Artemis presented in the

“myths and rituals are not unrelated bodies of evidence, but specific languages, which resonate inside the mental frame of poets who narrated tales, of painters who decorated Attic vases, and of worshippers who performed rituals”.⁸⁶ In other words, these scholars intuitively captured what the cognitive linguistic paradigm makes explicit.

The model also elaborates Parker’s recent brief proposal that the proper level of analysis may be that of subconscious awareness:

As for the objection that ordinary Greeks did not think in terms of [modes of intervention], the answer might be that they nonetheless perceived them at a level below that of explicit consciousness.⁸⁷

Finally, the proposal to study worshippers’ mental representations of the divine continues the focus on religious experience in recent studies on polytheism,⁸⁸ in the sense that it focuses on the cognitive level and perspective of worshippers.

6. CHALLENGES FOR THIS NEW APPROACH (AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS)

Some aspects of the proposed approach need further elaboration. A first question concerns the precise representation of the names of gods in the mental lexicon, considering the large variability in the way they are named. Gods have poetic and cult epithets, sometimes a second theonym functioning as a kind of specification, and sometimes even entire descriptive phrases attached to the theonym.⁸⁹ In short, a god may be known by various “*séquences onomastiques*” or “*formules onomastiques*”; the precise ways in which such formulae functioned is currently an object of scholarly attention.⁹⁰ This complexity raises the question of what the lexical representation of the naming formula of a god looks like. I propose that the notion of “constructions” is relevant here. Cognitive linguists have proposed that, besides individual lexemes, language

tragedy through their assumptions about Artemis, about gods and religion, and so on; it was an interactive process.”

⁸⁶ PIRENNE-DELFORGE, PIRONTI (2015), 41-42. Cf. also the quote on p. 34 above.

⁸⁷ PARKER (2011), 91.

⁸⁸ E.g. PARKER (2005a), 392 (“a pantheon that was recreated and reordered day by day, if within certain constraints, through the decisions made by individual worshippers”); PARKER (2011), 91-94; The Erfurt-based Lived Ancient Religion Project of J. Rüpke and collaborators, cf. for an overview article ALBRECHT *et al.* (2018); VERSNEL (2011), 72-73.

⁸⁹ Second theonym: cf. p. 19 with n. 7 above; descriptive phrase: e.g. “Artemis, Mistress of the Salt Lake, Mistress of gymnasia” (E. Hipp. 228-229).

⁹⁰ BONNET *et al.* (2018), 568; 584-589, also for the terminology “*séquences onomastiques*” or “*formules onomastiques*”.

users store chunks of words or patterns of usages, which they call “constructions”.⁹¹ All attested combinations of *séquences onomastiques* may be seen as “constructions”. It has been argued that constructions have multiple “parents” in the network: for every construction-specific word, for subpatterns, sometimes for the whole pattern.⁹² My starting point is that the theonym (for example, the word Artemis) would be a main “parent”, besides other less important “parents” such as *ιοχέαρα* (Shooter of Arrows).⁹³ When the construction consists of two theonyms (such as Artemis Eileithyia, cf. note 7 above for this type of case), there may be two “parents”: Artemis and Eileithyia.

A second concern is whether the cognitive theory of lexical semantics applies to the names of Greek gods. As proper names, their semantic properties might be held to differ crucially from those of common nouns. This is not a trivial consideration. As Willy Van Langendonck stated recently, “For a century, a question of hot debate has been ... whether proper names can be attributed any meaning or sense and if so, what kind of meaning would be involved”.⁹⁴ A relevant first point of response is the key structuralist notion that gods are not ordinary “persons” with proper names, but should be seen as “powers” with diverse roles evoked by the theonym and epithets, which are constructed in the mental lexicon of individual language users and in the collective cultural knowledge of communities of worshippers. Since gods are not persons, their names perhaps should not be understood as proper names. Still, gods are often addressed, interacted with and treated as persons. However valuable the “gods as powers” approach is, gods are perceived anthropomorphically at least in some of their manifestations,⁹⁵ and as persons, they may be considered to

⁹¹ E.g. GOLDBERG (1995, 2003, 2006), LANGACKER (2005, 2008, 2009), VERHAGEN (2005). E.g. GOLDBERG (2003), 219: “All levels of description are understood to involve *pairings of form* with semantic or discourse function, including morphemes, words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully abstract phrasal patterns.”

⁹² VERHAGEN (2005), 210.

⁹³ It is also possible that, independent of constructions related to specific gods, at least some language users stored a series of more abstract constructions, for example representing the fact that, in cult, the combination “theonym + epithet” most often takes one of the two following shapes: 1. “name of the god + epithet defining the place where he or she is honored” (e.g. Artemis Ephesia) and 2. “name of the god + epithet defining his/her function or domain” (e.g. Artemis Lochia “of Childbirth”). For the distinction between the first type of epithet and the second, cf. PARKER (2017), 13-17.

⁹⁴ VAN LANGENDONCK (1999), 106.

⁹⁵ Cf. e.g. BREMMER (1994), 23: “Poetry, art, and cult all incessantly impressed upon the Greeks the personal aspects of their gods ... ‘Power’ and ‘person’ are two sides of the Greek gods which could come to the fore at different times and in different contexts”; VERSNEL (2011), 317: “it is my unfashionable impression that in everyday religious practice individual Greek gods were practically never conceived of as power, let alone as cultural products, but were in the first place envisaged as *persons* with individual characters and personalities” (cp. also p. 314 n. 16). On anthropomorphism of Greek gods and the limits of the concept, cf. recently GAGNÉ, HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2019) (on Homer).

have proper names. Thus, our question concerning the applicability of theoretical ideas concerning common nouns to the name of a Greek god still stands.

Are proper names meaningless labels? Some linguists and philosophers think that we cannot see proper names as normal lexical entries. For example, Eduardo García-Ramírez and Marilyn Shatz recently argued that “proper names have very minimal lexical content”.⁹⁶ Yet it has been pointed out by others that theoretical models of proper-name processing should not generalize across all classes of proper names. Rather, we should distinguish between different kinds of names, for some classes of proper names may be more than purely referencing expressions. Various associations and semantic frames may be connected to proper names in the mind of one individual or a group of people. Van Langendonck pointed out that “proper names often display associative meanings (connotations)”, and Jarrod Hollis and Tim Valentine made a similar argument for names of countries, entries of which in the mental lexicon may include cultural information.⁹⁷ Thus, proper names sometimes have semantic properties in common with common nouns, and are therefore perhaps more equivalent to common names. My assumption is that gods’ names also have such cultural and associative meanings.

A third challenge concerns modelling the networks of gods. Lexical networks will differ between places and cultures; it stands to reason that lexical networks or inventories of related usages vary even between individual users. Investigating the lexical representation of a theonym in theory should concern the network of an individual person. This network would have included idiosyncratic aspects, such as previous personal experiences in the worship of a god, rumours one happens to have heard, personal beliefs, one’s location with respect to a particular cult place, and so on. But the nature of the evidence precludes reconstruction of the experiences or semantic networks of specific individuals (ancient authors to some extent excepted). The best we can do is reconstruct hypothesized “networks” for particular groups of worshippers, one at the time. Information gathered from the ancient sources would allow us, I hypothesize, to reconstruct the networks of Artemis of married women in

⁹⁶ GARCÍA-RAMÍREZ (2010), 164; cf. also p. 10-46; republished in: GARCÍA-RAMÍREZ, SHATZ (2011), 53-77. Their argument is based on experimental studies focusing on how adults use proper names, on the development of names in the young child’s lexicon and on patients who suffer from neurological conditions that impact linguistic performance.

⁹⁷ VAN LANGENDONCK (1999), 112. HOLLIS, VALENTINE (2001), 99. Cp. GEERAERTS (2006), 252-271 and MARMARIDOU (2013), 67-98. The name “Napoleon” does not simply refer to the general and dictator, but may be linked in the mind with various other words, such as “Waterloo”, with historical information, and perhaps other associations; the name “Santa Claus” may activate the frame of Christmas, with all the pleasant or perhaps unpleasant associations connected to the month of December in the mind of an individual, etc.

Attica in the 5th century, taking as evidence cases in which real or fictive wives address Artemis. The role of Artemis in various domains may then be studied in comparison to the roles that other gods and goddesses played in those women's lives; each case study should be confined to a precise time and place as much as possible.⁹⁸

My working hypotheses, then, are that we may see various onomastic sequences as constructions, organized around one or more “parent” theonyms;⁹⁹ that cognitive linguistic insights concerning lexical meaning may apply to gods' names; and that we may reconstruct networks of social groups, limited to a particular time and space.

7. CONCLUSION

Ancient Greek polytheism poses many problems of understanding. This article proposes a new approach to help overcome some of these challenges. It is suggested that we may use insights from the field of modern linguistics, in particular, the cognitive linguistic study of lexical semantics, to model the knowledge that Ancient Greek worshippers had of their gods.

In this method, potentially disparate aspects of a god are resolved by the associative connections (family resemblances) that link a semantic network together. I argue that understanding a worshipper's knowledge of a god on the level of the mental lexicon and as a structured network of concrete usages has various advantages. For example, this new approach bypasses the problematic enterprise of trying to find the “defining core” of gods; it can help us to better understand how various and potentially dissimilar aspects of a god may each contribute to a coherent divine identity; and it provides insight into how the roles and domains of deities may evolve over time.

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⁹⁸ This is of course not a new insight, cf. for example PARKER (2005a), 394, BREMMER (2019), 18.

⁹⁹ For further precisions, cf. p. 35-36 above.

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PERMANENT AND PASSING WORDS:
ADDRESSING THE DIVINE IN THE SANCTUARY ON MOUNT GERIZIM

Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme

Le matériau empirique de la présente étude est constitué par les inscriptions dédicatoires du mont Gerizim. Je m'y penche ici sur les aspects matériels des inscriptions dédicatoires et sur la manière dont leur matérialité enrichit leur rôle de moyen de communication entre les êtres humains et leurs dieux. La première partie de l'étude propose une brève présentation des inscriptions du Gerizim, suivie d'une description des inscriptions dans leur contexte géographique et culturel plus large, ainsi qu'une réflexion sur leur relation avec la Bible hébraïque ; enfin, quelques considérations pratiques sont avancées sur les processus qui transforment un don en une inscription dédicatoire. Dans la seconde partie, j'esquisse trois types d'agentivité matérielle interdépendants : le souvenir, la réactivation et la réalisation. J'en conclus que, lorsque les inscriptions étaient exposées dans le sanctuaire du mont Gerizim, elles activaient une adresse sans mots, dont le but était de fixer les mots éphémères des prières et invocations qui étaient prononcées. L'agentivité matérielle de ces inscriptions, cependant, va bien au-delà d'assurer la permanence de mots passagers. Leur présence dans le sanctuaire crée la présence divine à laquelle elles sont censées s'adresser.

1. INTRODUCTION

The empirical material for this study on addressing the divine is primarily composed of the dedicatory inscriptions from Mount Gerizim, which I have worked on, on and off, for the past decade.¹ In the following, I suggest various ways in which we can bring the Gerizim inscriptions into conversation with the focus of this volume, namely the contexts and conditions of enunciation of divine names.

I am particularly interested in the material aspects of dedicatory inscriptions, and how their materiality and tangibility add to the role they play as communication between human beings and their gods. Therefore, in the following, I shall concentrate on different kinds of material agency – or perhaps

¹ Cf. GUDME (2012), (2013), (2015), (2017), (2018) and (2020).

we could even call them material addresses to the divine – and how the Gerizim inscriptions embody this kind of agency.

I shall begin with a brief presentation of the Gerizim inscriptions, followed by a description of the inscriptions in their wider geographical and cultural context as well as a reflection on their relationship to the Hebrew Bible. Finally, I shall offer some practical considerations of the processes that transform a donation into a dedicatory inscription. In the second part of this study, I shall build on this material to sketch out three interrelated kinds of material agency. These are remembrance, reactivation and realization. The first two are self-explanatory, whereas the third, realization, is perhaps somewhat enigmatic. Here, I think of realization as making something into *res*, into a thing, into being. To realize, in a way, is to create. To anticipate my conclusion, my suggestion is that when the Gerizim inscriptions were on display in the Yahweh sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, they enacted a wordless address, an enduring material communication with the divine. The purpose of which was to solidify and fix the ephemeral words of spoken prayers and invocations. The material agency of these inscriptions, however, far exceeds lending permanence to otherwise passing words. Their presence in the sanctuary *creates* the divine presence that they are intended to address. In order to reach this conclusion, I shall begin with a presentation of the Gerizim inscriptions.

2. GERIZIM

2.1. *The dedicatory inscriptions from Mount Gerizim*

Mount Gerizim is situated south of the modern city of Nablus on the West Bank. During excavations between 1982 and 2006 on the mountain's main summit, *Jebel et-Tur*, a sacred precinct and a surrounding city were excavated. These excavations were directed by Yitzhak Magen and the results have been published in two volumes in 2004 and 2008 as well as in a number of articles, published in English and Hebrew since the late 1990s.² The earliest parts of the sacred precinct date to the latter half of the 5th century BCE. The city, which was founded in the late 4th century BCE, grew up around the sacred precinct. Both the precinct and the city were destroyed by John Hyrcanus I in about 110 BCE and the area remained uninhabited after that until the Byzantine period.³ Mount Gerizim is usually identified with Samaritanism, perhaps most famously in the Gospel of John chapter 4 in the conversation between Jesus and the

² MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004); MAGEN (2008); PUMMER (2016a), 74-118.

³ MAGEN (2008), 167-179.

Samaritan woman at the well. There is nothing distinctly ‘Samaritan’, however, about the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and therefore the sanctuary and the dedicatory inscriptions are best seen as remnants of what we could call ‘Samaritan’ or Northern Yahwism in the late Persian and Hellenistic periods, regardless of later developments in Samaritan religion.⁴

The sacred precinct displays signs of two distinct building phases: the earliest, dating to the Persian period, is a rather small structure, whereas the second building phase, which dates to the Hellenistic period, c. 200 BCE, sees the precinct develop into a large compound with watchtowers, storerooms and auxiliary rooms.⁵ There undoubtedly was a sanctuary dedicated to the deity Yahweh on Mount Gerizim in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, but it remains a moot point whether this sanctuary complex actually contained a temple *building*.⁶ So far, no structure that can decisively be identified as a temple has been discovered at the site.⁷ The structures excavated in the sacred precinct are mainly surrounding walls and ancillary rooms. In the excavation reports, Magen suggested that there was a temple building and an altar in an inner courtyard inside the sacred precinct, but material remains at the site do not support this hypothesis.⁸ However, the vast amount of bones and ashes discovered at the site combined with the dedicatory inscriptions confirm that there was a sanctuary dedicated to Yahweh on Mount Gerizim and that a large-scale sacrificial cult took place there.⁹

The assemblage of Aramaic dedicatory inscriptions from Mount Gerizim consists of roughly 380 more or less fragmented inscriptions. Unfortunately, none of the inscriptions were found *in situ*. Most of the stones with inscriptions were found scattered around the site or thrown down the slope. Some were discovered in secondary uses.¹⁰ This of course makes it difficult to reconstruct the inscriptions’ original setting and context. However, it is possible that the inscribed stones may have all been part of the same structure built of dressed unplastered stones. This structure *may* have been an inner wall in the sacred precinct separating the innermost part of the sanctuary from the outer courtyard, but it should be stressed that this explanation remains hypothetical and that it is partly dependent upon Magen’s suggestion that there was a temple building in the inner sanctuary, which was surrounded by this wall. What we

⁴ GUDME (2013), 56-64; PUMMER (2016a), 9-73, 128-169.

⁵ MAGEN (2008), 97-103, 167.

⁶ Cf. the discussion in PUMMER (2016a).

⁷ One possible exception is the structure known today as “The Twelve Stones”, which Magen interprets as the only preserved remains of the Persian period temple building’s adyton or Holy of Holies, see MAGEN (2008), 113-114, 151-152.

⁸ MAGEN (2008), 97-103; GUDME (2015) and (2020).

⁹ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004); MAGEN (2008), 160-162; GUDME (2013), 52-90.

¹⁰ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 13-16.

can say with some certainty, however, is that the inscriptions are inscribed on ashlar that may have been part of the same structure – possibly a wall – and that this now-dismantled structure would have been placed somewhere in the sacred precinct. The Aramaic dedicatory inscriptions most likely date to the first half of the 2nd century BCE.¹¹

Most of the Gerizim inscriptions are very fragmented and quite a few of them only contain a couple of broken letters. However, some of the Gerizim inscriptions do still contain entire sentences. The longest unbroken inscription is no 147, which reads: “That which Delayah son of Shimon offered for himself and for his sons [this] stone [for] good remembrance before the god in this place” (*zy hqrb Dlyh br Šm ‘wn ‘lwhy w’l bnwhy ‘bn’ [dh]dkrn Ꞥb qdm ‘lh’ b’tr’ dnh*).¹² Some of the Gerizim inscriptions seem to contain a version of this relatively long dedicatory formula, whereas others would appear to have a similar but shorter version, where the ending “for good remembrance before the god in this place” is left out. The majority of the inscriptions, however, are so damaged that it is practically impossible to reconstruct entire words let alone dedicatory formulae.¹³

If we pay particular attention to divine *names* in the Gerizim inscriptions, it is noteworthy that the name of the deity Yahweh (*yhw*) does appear in one of the Gerizim inscriptions. This is inscription no. 383, which may belong to the handful of inscriptions from Gerizim that is written in Hebrew and not in Aramaic. Sadly, inscription no. 383 contains little else than the divine name.¹⁴ A few other inscriptions do not use a divine name, but refer simply to “the god” (*‘lh’*) or to “the god in this place” (*‘lh’ b’tr’ dnh*).¹⁵ Finally, two inscriptions refer to the deity as “the lord” (*‘dny*).¹⁶ Magen and his colleagues speculate that the very limited use of the divine name Yahweh, the so-called tetra-

¹¹ In the *editio princeps*, the excavators proposed a fairly broad dating of the Aramaic inscriptions on the basis of epigraphy. They suggested a date in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BCE but they also considered a date for some of the inscriptions as early as the 5th century BCE, MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 14, 41. Jan Dušek has subsequently conducted an extended analysis of the inscriptions and he arrives at a date in the first half of the 2nd century BCE, DUŠEK (2012), 59-60.

¹² MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 137-138.

¹³ In the *editio princeps*, the Gerizim inscriptions are ordered as either a or b, depending on whether they carry a long or a short version of the abovementioned dedicatory formula, see MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 16. This categorization has been criticized recently by Magnar Kartveit, who points out that the fragmented nature of the majority of the Gerizim inscriptions does not warrant such a systematic categorization, see KARTVEIT (2014), 457. In my previous work on the Gerizim inscriptions, I have adopted the categorization coined by Magen and his associates (see e.g. GUDME [2013], 71-72), but I must admit that I am becoming more and more persuaded by Kartveit’s critique.

¹⁴ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 254-255.

¹⁵ Inscription nos. 147, 149, 152, 155 and 190 (and possibly also nos. 153, 154, 160, 162, 180, 182, 188 and 192), MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 22-23, 147-168.

¹⁶ Nos. 150 and 151, MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 22-23, 141-143.

grammaton, in the Gerizim inscriptions may be an early example of a practice that is attested in later Jewish and Samaritan sources and which is also widespread in contemporary Judaism. According to this custom, the divine name is considered too holy to pronounce and therefore its use is restricted or entirely avoided.¹⁷ This may be a correct interpretation of the material, but it also runs the risk of anachronistically importing a somewhat later notion and practice into Hellenistic Samaritan Yahwism. I find it more prudent and more likely to assume that the prevalence of the reference to “the god” in the Gerizim inscriptions can be explained by common Aramaic language usage in this period and that it is not derived from any kind of religious taboo.

2.2. *The Gerizim inscriptions in their cultural and geographical context*

A number of the Gerizim inscriptions mention Yahweh’s ‘good remembrance’ (*dkrn ṭb*), which is requested in return for the gifts dedicated to the deity. In this respect the inscriptions from Mount Gerizim pick up a version of a dedicatory formula which is well-known in Aramaic inscriptions and graffiti in the Eastern Mediterranean where the phrase “for good remembrance” (*ldkrn ṭb*) and the more common “may he/she be remembered for good” (*dkyr ṭb*) is widespread. Particularly from around 200 BCE to 300 CE several hundred remembrance-inscriptions have been found in various locations and contexts. The most common contexts are funerary contexts and cultic contexts. For the purposes of a comparison with the Gerizim inscriptions, in my earlier research, I selected five assemblages of remembrance inscriptions from a cultic context. These were from the Assur-Seru temple in Assur, the so-called Hellenistic temple or Building E in Hatra, the Nabataean sanctuary at Jebel Ramm and the cult place dedicated to Sin in Sumatar Harabesi. Finally, I included an assemblage of inscribed dedicatory altars from Palmyra.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that several of these inscriptions, including the Gerizim inscriptions, contain the preposition ‘before’ or ‘in front of’ the deity. It is the preposition *qdm* in Aramaic. This specific reference to location seems to stress that it is important to the function of the inscription that it is placed exactly in a sanctuary setting in front of the place where the deity is thought to be in accordance with a classic Ancient Near Eastern theology of presence.¹⁹ I shall not

¹⁷ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 23.

¹⁸ HEALEY (1996); GUDME (2013), 91-134.

¹⁹ In the Ancient Near East and in the ancient Mediterranean, temple buildings were conceptualized as the dwellings of the gods (cf. e.g. Exodus 25:8-9; 40:34-38). The temple’s innermost room, the *adyton*, was reserved for the deity, represented by a statue or a symbol, and sometimes the deity’s presence caused access restrictions in the sanctuary (cf. e.g. Leviticus 16 and JENSON (1992). Contrary to what one may think, a theology of presence is not a simplistic idea of gods

go into much detail with these other remembrance inscriptions in the present study, but I do wish to point out that these inscriptions show us that the Gerizim inscriptions are not an isolated case, nor are they a phenomenon that exclusively belongs to ancient Yahwism. When we compare the Gerizim inscriptions to other assemblages of remembrance inscriptions, it becomes clear that these inscriptions all seem to reflect a roughly similar set of practices, which can be detected in Aramaic-speaking areas, including Palmyrene, Nabataean and Hatrene dialects, over a period of three to four centuries. What these practices have in common is of course first of all a ‘dedicatory habit’. That is a custom of setting up private dedicatory inscriptions inside the sanctuary. By private I mean dedications given by private individuals as opposed to ‘official’ dedications donated by public officers or rulers.²⁰ The inscriptions themselves do not appear to be private in the sense of being ‘secret’. In fact, rather the opposite. It seems that part of the rationale behind this dedicatory practice is that the inscriptions must be visible both to other visitors to the sanctuary and to the deity that resides there. Finally, these inscriptions seem to share an opinion of divine remembrance as something that is desirable as a counter-gift. In some of these inscriptions, but not in the Gerizim inscriptions, divine remembrance is used interchangeably with blessing, and it would appear that these two concepts cover much the same things; a wish to stand in a positive relationship with the deity and to receive this deity’s gifts and protection. It should be noted of course, that this dedicatory habit shares several common features across otherwise distinct religious systems. And that the deities referred to in these inscriptions are a diverse group that includes deities such as the Nabatean goddess Allat, the divine couple Assur and Seru, the head of the so-called Hatrene triad, Maren, and of course Yahweh on Gerizim.

2.3. *The Gerizim inscriptions in relation to the Hebrew Bible*

There is only an indirect link between the Hebrew Bible and the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and that link is the deity Yahweh. Yahweh was worshipped by the people who visited the sanctuary on Gerizim and by the authors of the Hebrew Bible, but there is no firm indication that the people on Gerizim were familiar with the Hebrew Bible.²¹ This is an important detail to keep in mind, because the material remains on Mount Gerizim are frequently interpreted in

living in “houses”, but rather a complex and dynamic system of how divinity manifests itself on earth. For good examples of how ancient temple structures communicate divine presence, see HUNDLEY (2013).

²⁰ MCLEAN (2002), 181-182, 208; cf. GUDME (2013), 100-101.

²¹ KRATZ (2015), 165-181, especially 175.

light of the Hebrew Bible. Magen and his associates have looked for similarities between the Gerizim temple and textual sources about the Jerusalem temple.²² Along a similar line of reasoning, they interpret the traces of ritual practices on Mount Gerizim in light of the ritual texts in the Pentateuch.²³ The fact remains, however, that no direct quote from or copy of parts of the Hebrew Bible has been discovered on Mount Gerizim in relation to the Persian and Hellenistic period sanctuary, and therefore we have to be open to the possibility that the people on Mount Gerizim belonged to a group that Reinhard Kratz has termed ‘non-biblical Judaism’. That is a group of Yahweh-worshippers, or early Jews depending on your preferred terminology, who did worship the deity Yahweh, but who were unfamiliar with, or just did not use, the texts that we now call the Hebrew Bible.²⁴

That being said, it does make sense to compare one material expression of ancient Yahweh worship, the Hebrew Bible, with another, the Yahweh temple on Mount Gerizim. The sanctuary on Mount Gerizim is one of relatively few surviving Yahweh sanctuaries and the Hebrew Bible is by far the most extensive and theologically informative ‘yahwistic’ text that we have. In this sense, it is worthwhile to consider – with all the necessary caveats – how the text and the sanctuary may be able to cast light on one another. At the same time, it is crucial that we do not assume a degree of dissemination of the texts of the Hebrew Bible that we simply have no evidence for whatsoever. Therefore, if we come across ideas or practices that appear to be shared both by the Hebrew Bible and by the people on Gerizim, this may be because these ideas and practices circulated in the wider cultural milieu of Samaria and Yehud at the time, and not necessarily, because the worshippers on Gerizim read the Hebrew Bible.

2.4. *Practical considerations: from donation to inscription*

Before I move on to the more theoretical part of this study, I would like to offer my reflections on the events that may have gone before setting up one of the dedicatory inscriptions in the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim. As a starting point, I shall return to the wording of one of the dedications, no. 147, which I mentioned above: “That which (zy) Delayah son of Shimon offered for himself and for his sons [this] stone (’bn’ [dh]) [for] good remembrance before the god in this place.”²⁵ This inscription is one of only two of the Gerizim inscriptions

²² MAGEN (2008), 141-162; GUDME (2020).

²³ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 9-10.

²⁴ KRATZ (2015), 143, 165.

²⁵ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 137-138.

that explicitly mention what the dedicated object is, namely “this stone”, and it presumably refers to the stone on which the inscription is written.²⁶ The vast majority of the Gerizim inscriptions, however, also begin with a relative sentence, ‘that which someone gave’, but they do not make explicit *what* the relative particle, *zy*, refers to, and therefore, in most cases, we do not know exactly what donation the inscription is intended to commemorate.²⁷ On the basis of the two inscriptions that do mention “this stone” as the object of dedication, we could conclude that we should understand the inscribed stone or section of the wall as the offering in *every case* at Mount Gerizim. This interpretation was suggested by Joseph Naveh, who published the first of the Gerizim inscriptions.²⁸ Naveh referred to Mark Lidzbarski’s classic description of dedicatory inscriptions in his authoritative 1898 handbook of North Semitic epigraphy, where it says:

In den meisten Fällen wird der geweihte Gegenstand in der Inschrift nicht erwähnt; das ist ja auch nicht nötig, da er es in der Regel selbst ist, der die Inschrift trägt und also vor den Augen des Lesers steht.²⁹

To paraphrase Lidzbarski: No explicit mention of the dedicated object is necessary, because whoever reads the inscription is looking right at it. It should be noted, however, that Lidzbarski’s dedicatory inscriptions are all inscribed on *portable* objects, such as small altars, statues and vessels, and *not* on building material such as seems to be the case on Mount Gerizim.

Naveh also drew a parallel between the construction of the inner wall of the Gerizim sanctuary and the construction of the city wall in the Hebrew Bible’s Book of Nehemiah chapter 3, where the people of Jerusalem all work together on the reconstruction of the city wall. Naveh suggested that the dedicatory inscriptions each commemorated a contribution made by an individual person or a family towards constructing a part of Yahweh’s sanctuary on Mount Gerizim.³⁰ In this way, Naveh tied the making of the inscription to the time of construction of the wall or structure that the inscribed stones are a part of but this seems to be somewhat contradicted by the material itself. In some cases, the surface of the inscribed stones are prepared with a fine comb dressing on top of the original rough dressing of the stone. This indicates that the stone was not inscribed prior to its being part of the wall and therefore at least some of the inscriptions must be secondary to the actual construction of the wall. There are also a number of in-

²⁶ The other inscription is no. 148, see MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 138-140.

²⁷ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 16-18; GUDME (2013), 85-88.

²⁸ NAVEH, MAGEN (1997).

²⁹ LIDZBARSKI (1898), 151.

³⁰ NAVEH, MAGEN (1997), 13*-14*.

scriptions where the stone surface shows no trace of preparation prior to the engraving of the inscription itself, which is another indication that not all the inscribed ashlar were originally intended for an inscription.³¹

Furthermore, Jan Dušek has studied the ruling practices in the Gerizim inscriptions and his analysis shows that the inscriptions with ruling lines were most likely created in two stages; first the stone was prepared in a stonemason's workshop and ruling lines were added even though the exact text of a future inscription was not yet known. In the second stage, the stone, which had by then been chosen by or assigned to a donor, was engraved. The two stages are indicated by the fact that some of the inscriptions do not follow the ruling on the stone. There is no indication that the second stage of the process took place before the stone was made part of the wall, so it is at least possible that the actual text of the inscriptions with ruling lines was added after the construction of the wall itself.³² Therefore, the dedication of the stone should not be interpreted too literally as the donation of the *actual* stone. Rather than the building stones themselves, the dedicatory formula most likely refers to a gift of sacrifices or money, dedicated to the deity and eternalized with an inscription. In this way, an offering, although not of the stone itself, could be understood to equal the value of a stone, and the donor could obtain the "right of dedication" to a certain stone and the right to have an inscription made on this stone. This was also the conclusion that Magen and his co-authors reached, when they published the inscriptions in 2004.³³

To commission an inscription and have it set up in the sanctuary was probably not an everyday occurrence for ordinary worshippers. It would have been relatively costly to pay for the gift referenced in the inscriptions. Further, there may even have been an additional cost to pay for the work of a stonemason unless this expense was part of the sanctuary's price for an inscription. Yet the sight and experience of these inscriptions were probably part of every regular visit to the sanctuary, whether a person came to give a less expensive offering, stopped by to conduct some other business, or simply went to the temple of Yahweh to linger there and soak up the atmosphere.³⁴

³¹ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 14.

³² DUŠEK (2007), (2012), 43-62.

³³ MAGEN, MISGAV, TSFANIA (2004), 17-18.

³⁴ Cf. GUDME (2015), 100, (2018), 14.

3. MATERIAL AGENCY

3.1. *Remembrance*

I shall turn now to my three reflections on material agency.³⁵ Before I do that, however, I would like to address the question of analytical perspective. In this study, I combine an *emic* perspective, the cultural phenomenon seen from within its culture, with an *etic* perspective, the cultural phenomenon viewed from outside, from the cultural other's perspective.³⁶ I combine these two perspectives, because I am asking two kinds of questions about ancient dedicatory practices. I am asking *how* these practices were perceived to work by the people who performed them on Mount Gerizim more than 2000 years ago, and in a way why they made sense to them. This is an attempt to approach an emic perspective. I am also asking *why* these practices work in this way if we look at them from a religious studies perspective, which in this case is an etic perspective.

The first of my three examples of material agency has to do with remembrance, and we can start with a consideration of why anyone would commission an inscription in the first place. Why not simply give an offering or a sacrifice and leave it at that? The answer is quite straightforward, I think. An offering or a sacrifice are temporary fleeting gifts. They disappear. An inscription on the other hand monumentalizes the gift and turns it into something permanent and lasting. This desire for permanence corresponds well with the wish for divine remembrance, which is expressed in several of the inscriptions that I have mentioned so far. Interestingly, this is also quite similar to ideas about Yahweh's remembrance that can be found in the Hebrew Bible.³⁷ To be remembered by Yahweh is thought to have a palpable and positive effect for the person remembered. For instance, Yahweh remembers Noah in the ark in Genesis 8, and makes the waters withdraw. And Yahweh remembers the childless Rachel in Genesis 30, and opens her womb. Yahweh is sometimes described as using physical reminders of things that he wants to remember. Perhaps the best example of this is in Genesis 9, where Yahweh places his bow in the sky as a sign to remind him of his covenant with Noah. Along a similar line of thought, in the ritual texts in the Pentateuch, Yahweh's remembrance can be evoked by means of ritual, where physical reminders are brought inside the sanctuary, where Yahweh resides, or placed in front of it. For instance, the gemstones on

³⁵ For a good introduction to the material turn in the study of the religion of ancient Palestine, see MANDELL, SMOAK (2019).

³⁶ For emic and etic, see PIKE (1967) and LETT (1990).

³⁷ CHILDS (1962); SCHOTTROFF (1967); GUDME (2013), 135-138, 145-147.

the High Priest Aaron's breastplate that are engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are to be "a continual remembrance before Yahweh" (Exodus 28:29). This concept of divine remembrance as something that can be evoked through ritual by placing a material reminder in front of the deity is very close to what seems to be the rationale behind the remembrance inscriptions, where a physical reminder – the inscription – is placed in front of the deity in the sanctuary to bring about divine remembrance.³⁸

This leads me to a consideration of the relationship between materiality and remembrance. Within the field of Material Religion, there is a growing awareness of the interrelationship between people and objects. When we interact with objects, when we use them, see them, preserve them, a dialogue between us and the object is initiated and in this dialogue material objects become agents that are able to trigger and influence our behavior.³⁹ This is exactly what happens in the interplay between materiality and remembrance; material objects or places can somehow trigger the memory of a person, but how does materiality's influence on memory actually work? In theories of cultural evolution, the transition from so-called mythic culture to theoretic culture is often stressed as the decisive moment, when the human mind developed the ability to transform human consciousness into external symbols. This development eventually led to the invention of writing and the highly literate society we have today, but not until a much later stage. The revolution at the time of transition was the move from internal, biological memory storage to external symbolic memory storage. This development meant that the physical world could serve a mnemonic function for the human consciousness and that external objects could work as "external symbolic storage" for memory.⁴⁰ A string around the finger that reminds us of something is a very basic example of external symbolic storage. The archaeologist Andrew Jones has clarified the relationship between materiality and memory by comparing the material object with an indexical sign. The index is a sign which is really affected by the object that it signifies.⁴¹ A popular example is a weathervane which is an index of the wind's direction or smoke which is an index of fire. The index does not equal what it signifies, but it *points* to it. In relation to remembrance, the material object serves as an index of the past and therefore it helps to invoke memory. In this way, remembrance happens in a dialogue between person and artifact, when an external symbol is 'read' by the human mind and a memory is evoked through the dynamic and creative interaction between the two.

³⁸ Cf. GUDME (2013), 141-147.

³⁹ Cf. LAW (2009); ENGELKE (2012); MARAN, STOCKHAMMER (2012).

⁴⁰ DONALD (2001), 303-310.

⁴¹ JONES (2007), 22-26.

If we apply this insight to dedicatory inscriptions, it becomes clear that the materiality of the inscription itself and its location in the sanctuary in front of the deity is crucial in order to bring about the positive divine remembrance mentioned in some of these texts. The inscriptions are not just physical manifestations of more or less abstract prayers and invocations. They are each indexical signs that point to acts of worship carried out by the people mentioned in the inscriptions and as such they are placed in the sanctuary in order to remind the deity who resides there of the gifts that these people gave. The wording of some of these inscriptions explicitly ask for divine remembrance, but the remembrance of the deity is not obtained by words alone. It is secured by the continued physical presence of the inscription in front of the deity, where it functions as external symbolic storage, an index that points to the person who wishes to be remembered. In this way, aspects of materiality become of prime importance, because it allows the memory of the worshipper to linger in the sanctuary and to outlast the smell of the sacrificial smoke and the echo of the prayers.

3.2. *Reactivation*

My second point about material agency is a direct continuation of my first point about remembrance. As mentioned, the dedicatory inscription monumentalizes the gift and makes it permanent. It becomes an index of the gift of the worshipper and as such it evokes memory. The primary purpose of this monumentalization appear to be to evoke *divine* memory, but of course the dedicatory inscriptions that were put on display in the sanctuary would also have had an effect on human visitors, who came to the sanctuary.⁴² The sight and experience of these inscriptions were probably part of every regular visit to the sanctuary, and therefore it is interesting to consider what kind of interaction general visitors to the sanctuary may have had with these inscriptions as they formed a part of their built environment.

In this regard, the larger group of remembrance inscriptions provides us with information on how visitors to the sanctuary may have acted around and interacted with the dedicatory inscriptions on Mt. Gerizim. One dedicatory inscription from Palmyra, inscription no. 0319, is particularly interesting in this respect, because it explicates the function of the remembrance formula. Written on a rather large altar, the 11-line inscription is 14 inches tall. The inscription reads:

⁴² Cf. GUDME (2013), 34.

[T]hese two altars made Obaidu son of Animu [son of] Shadilat, a Nabataean of the Rawwah[a], who has been a cavalry soldier [at] Hirta and in the camp of Ana, to Shaialqaum the good and generous god, who does not drink wine, for the life of himself and the life of Meaiti and Abdu his brothers and Shadilat his son, in the month Elul of the year 443, and remembered be Zebaida son of Shimeon son of Belaqab, his host and friend before Shaialqaum the good god, and remembered be whoever frequents these altars and says remembered be all these for good.⁴³

This inscription clearly encourages everyone who passes by the altars to pray for the persons mentioned in the inscription. In this way, the positive remembrance requested in the inscription is reactivated by the participation of visitors to the sanctuary, and through their participation, they themselves receive a share in the deity's good remembrance. This type of remembrance inscription that explicitly encourages interaction is quite rare, but there are a couple of similar inscriptions from Hatra, where the rationale appears to be the same – although it is expressed as a threat rather than a promise. One example is this two-line inscription, which reads:

Remembered be Nšry son of 'bdmlyk and 'by his son before Maren for good Hnj son []hj and the curse of Maren on anyone who reads this inscription and does not say remembered be.⁴⁴

The question, of course, is whether the performative practice of saying 'remembered be', is to be understood in every occurrence of the remembrance formula. Considering the limited number of inscriptions that explicitly encourage action, it may be inadvisable to apply this explanation to the entire body of material.⁴⁵ However, these interactive inscriptions do seem to offer us a glimpse of what a visit to a sanctuary could have entailed. We cannot assume that all visitors to these sanctuaries were literate, so an actual recitation of the text of the inscription seems unlikely. However, it is possible that some literate visitors could have read aloud to others. William Harris calls this "second-hand literacy".⁴⁶ It may even be possible that literate temple personnel could have assisted visitors in reading inscriptions. Even if visitors were unable to read themselves and had no opportunity to have the inscriptions read for them, these inscriptions may have been culturally recognizable as objects that required an interactive response. In this way, the inscriptions would have been readable

⁴³ HILLERS, CUSSINI (1996), 75.

⁴⁴ VATTIONI (1981), 55; for a few more examples, see GUDME (2015), 99-100 with references.

⁴⁵ HEALEY (1996), 183-186; GUDME (2013), 123-125, (2015), 99-100.

⁴⁶ HARRIS (1989), 35.

through a kind of multimodal literacy, which extends beyond simply decoding letters.⁴⁷ If that is the case, then the inscriptions may have triggered visitors to the sanctuary to touch one or several of the inscriptions that they passed on their way and to mumble, “Remembered be”, as they did so.⁴⁸

If this assumption is correct, an extra dimension is added to the significance of these types of inscriptions in the sanctuary. The inscription not only reminds the deity of the donor and represents him or her in front of the deity, but when a visitor comes to the sanctuary this representation is also reactivated and reenacted, so that it includes both the people mentioned in the inscriptions and the person who says, ‘remembered be’. In this way, a visitor to the sanctuary would enact the prayer for blessing that these inscriptions were commonly known to contain and, thereby, reactivate the plea for the deity’s good remembrance.

3.3. *Realization*

My third and final point about material agency does not only pertain to the dedicatory inscriptions from Mount Gerizim. In a way, it applies to the majority of religious ritual actions. I call it ‘realization’, because one way of describing what a ritual action is, is that it turns words, ideas and symbols into being, it *realizes* them and materializes them into actions, gestures and things.⁴⁹ This has been formulated pertinently by Webb Keane, who writes that ritual practices “render available to experience the *very absence* they invoke”.⁵⁰ Many religious ritual actions are directed against spirits, the dead or gods, and one thing that these entities have in common is that they are immaterial and invisible. Seen from a strictly etic standpoint, they probably are not there. But in order to interact with these immaterial and invisible agents, human beings interact with what *is* there, the built environment and the natural landscape and a wide range of ritual objects. If we focus on the gods here, human beings seek them out in the places where they are perceived to be accessible, in sacred groves, in their temples or in a domestic shrine. In order to interact with these agents that are imperceptible to the human senses, worshippers interact with their gods through the material world, through religious architecture and through objects.

If we apply this to the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, the sacred precinct itself already creates an experience of a divinely inhabited place. This experi-

⁴⁷ MANDELL, SMOAK (2018).

⁴⁸ Cf. GUDME (2015), 100.

⁴⁹ Cf. RAPPAPORT (1999), 37.

⁵⁰ KEANE (2010), 198.

ence is strengthened by the ritual practices that are carried out in this place, such as the sacrificial cult and the smoke rising from the altar, which undoubtedly establishes the sensorial experience of a deity in residence. Along the same lines, the dedicatory inscriptions that are a part of the visible built environment of the sanctuary evoke the presence of a deity, who remembers his worshippers. As more and more inscriptions were added to the rest and put on display in the sanctuary, these inscriptions would act as material agents that would index not only the act of dedication, but also the presence of the deity that these inscriptions were dedicated to. As the number of dedicatory inscriptions grew, they would act as a continually growing testament to – and recommendation of – the god in that place, namely Yahweh.

4. CONCLUSION

With my example from Mount Gerizim, I have tried to shift our focus away from the kind of address that is communicated solely through words, whether they be spoken words or written down. Instead, I have focused on various kinds of material communication or material agency. I have argued that the dedicatory inscriptions function as indexical signs that point to the donor of the inscription and to his act of worship, and in this way the inscriptions trigger remembrance. I have also argued that this remembrance can be reactivated by visitors to the sanctuary through interaction with the inscriptions and the built environment. Finally, I have argued that the Gerizim inscriptions as examples of religious architecture and ritual objects in fact create and make available to experience the very absence that they invoke. The dedicatory inscriptions from Mount Gerizim add to the creation and *realization* of Yahweh, the deity who is the god in that place. In this way, I hope I have shown the relevance of considering alternative ways of addressing the divine, not through words alone, but through objects and interactions with objects.

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PHOENICIAN GODS:
TELL ME YOUR NAME, SHOW ME YOUR IMAGE!

Ida Oggiano

Selon Julien (Lettres, 89b, 291 b), les dénominations des dieux (ἑπωνυμίας) sont liées à leurs images visuelles (ὡσπερ εἰκόνας γραπτὰς). Cette approche, qui met en corrélation les systèmes de communication verbal et visuel, fonde notre étude qui vise à mettre un peu d'ordre dans la jungle des connexions réelles, détaillées, hypothétiques (sans parler de celles qui relèvent de l'imagination) entre les images et les noms des dieux phéniciens. Afin d'étudier cette question de manière pertinente, on se concentre exclusivement sur les objets où le nom inscrit d'un dieu phénicien est clairement associé à l'image représentée et on se penche sur la comparaison des mécanismes de construction qui sont à l'œuvre dans les langues sémitiques et dans l'iconographie des dieux phéniciens. Si l'on considère que les dieux sémitiques étaient somme toute limités et que les attributs iconographiques étaient également limités et non exclusifs d'un seul dieu, on peut identifier quelques types fondamentaux : un dieu frappant, marchant, trônant. L'absence d'une iconographie fixe, à l'exception d'une représentation plus ou moins canonique de Melqart avec des attributs "orthodoxes" (qui peuvent néanmoins être partagés avec d'autres divinités), laisse aux acteurs du culte un rôle très important dans la manière de mettre en avant l'aspect principal d'une divinité et ses attributs. Or, l'iconographie et les noms des dieux phéniciens sont géographiquement et chronologiquement très répandus. Par conséquent, l'utilisation des images et des noms comme indices pour identifier certains aspects de la perception du divin n'est possible qu'à condition de les relier au contexte culturel dans lequel ces indices ont été exprimés.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

In a famous passage from the Letters (89b, 291 b), Julian states that denominations (ἑπωνυμίας) of the gods are linked to their visual images (ὡσπερ εἰκόνας

¹ This study is the work and result of a fruitful continuous dialogue with the MAP research group and in particular with Fabio Porzia with which we have tried to undertake a common path of understanding the ancient way of considering images and names of Phoenician gods.

γραπτὰς).² This approach, which correlates the verbal and visual systems of communication, has ancient roots and corroborates this study which aims to put some order to the jungle of real, detailed, hypothetical (not to mention imaginative) connections between the images and names of Phoenician gods. In order to properly investigate the matter, this study focuses solely on “imagetexts”,³ that is, compositions that bring together both textual and visual dimensions. In other words, we will only consider an object where the inscribed name of a Phoenician god is clearly related to the image represented on it. This calls for a strict selection process with two main exclusions. The first is votive “imagetexts” with an uncertain identification between the image and the borne name, like the statue, likely from Sarepta, that mentions “the holy god”⁴ but most probably represents the dedicator. The second exclusion has to do with “standard” cult objects inscribed only afterwards with the name of the gods to which they were dedicated, such as the *situla* of Mizpeh Yammim with the dedication to Astarte.⁵ Another possible example of this second case is the stele of the western *tophet* where it is difficult to directly connect all of the symbols to the gods Baal Hammon or Tanit.⁶ The need to consider the object as a whole makes things even more complicated.

If we imagine the history of an object as a theatre play, several actors can be identified. The protagonist is the object as a whole (support, image and inscription), whose story builds up through the actions of co-actors: the customer (historical-cultural context analysis); the artisan (analysis of dimension, colours, style and production mechanisms);⁷ the customer/user (they could be more than one for large objects of a public nature and individual for a smaller personal object, like glyptic and coroplastic). The last actor, in the final scene, is the modern scholar who narrates “his/her” story of “imagetext” from distant time and space, as an off-screen voice, and who stars in a *pièce* performed in a meaningful space, the stage.⁸ In synthesis, the meanings and emotions⁹ evoked by the various actors on the stage can be expressed by two words: complexity and context or, better still, the complexity of the context.

² Julian, *Letters* 291c (*Letter to a priest*), translated by W.C. Wright.

³ I adopt the term “imagetext”, following MITCHELL (1994, 89, n.9) and CRAWFORD (2013), 242.

⁴ XELLA, ZAMORA, OGGIANO (2018).

⁵ For the *situla* from Mizpeh Yammim, see BERLIN, FRANKEL (2012), 46, Fig. 30.

⁶ For the correlation text and images on the stele of the *tophet* OGGIANO, XELLA (2009).

⁷ FELDMANN (2014).

⁸ On the role of space FELDMANN (2010), 151.

⁹ For the role of emotion in archaeology see TARLOW (2000).

2. NAMES AND IMAGES OF PHOENICIAN GODS

Name and images of Phoenician gods: all of these definitions would require clarification regarding the use made of them in this work, but it would simply take up too much space. It will be clear, from reading this study, what is meant by theonym and divine image.¹⁰ On the other hand, it is necessary to specify the criteria applied to the selection of the case studies analyzed herein. Three factors have been considered: the cultural/geographic area from the Levant to the western Phoenician “colonial” world between the 2nd millennium BCE to the Hellenistic period; the language of the inscription (Phoenician); and the name of the gods traditionally identified as Phoenicians, the names Astarte and Melqart, for example, in some cases, appear in hieroglyphic or Aramaic inscriptions.¹¹

2.1. *Melqart Breġ stela and the history of an iconographic type between East and West*

The basalt stela of Breġ (Fig. 1), about seven kilometres north of Aleppo, was found in a Roman wall where it had been reemployed.¹² Three quarters of the height of the stela are occupied by the bas-relief image of a striding bearded male figure wearing a short skirt, open on the thighs, and a conical headdress (a *tiara*). In his right hand, he holds an unidentified object (an ankh?) while his left hand clasps a fenestrated axe which rests on his shoulder.

The epigraph, composed in Aramaic, reads: “(This is) the stela which Barhadad, son of ‘Attar-Šumki (?), king of Aram, set up for his lord, for Melqart, to whom he made a vow and who heard his voice.”¹³ The identification of Barhadad, who describes himself, according to some readings, as “son of Attarsumki, king of Aram”,¹⁴ is still under debate. It is possible to identify the

¹⁰ On the concept of image in Phoenician context, see DOAK (2015), 22-27. For the Symbol System as applied to the Levantine iconographic, KEEL, UHELINGER (1998), 7-9; MITCHELL (1986), 89, n.9; CROWFORD (2013), *passim*.

¹¹ For the term “Phoenician” see ERCOLANI (2015). For the recent debate about the Phoenicians see XELLA (2014), QUINN (2018), OGGIANO (2019).

¹² MATTHEWS *et al.* (1978), 416. The original location could be ‘Ayn at-Tell, a site not far from the area (LIPÍŃSKI [2000], 211), or Aleppo (see for instance, NIEHR [2014], 279; BONNET [1988], 132-136).

¹³ KAI 201; translated from the Italian version of FALES, GRASSI (2016), 90. For more bibliography concerning the inscriptions, see the MAP’s Database available here: <https://map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr> (accessed on 28.5.2021).

¹⁴ YOUNGER (2016), 533-536.



Fig. 1. The Bar-Hadad stele (Bonnet, s.v. Melqart, *Iconography of Deities and Demons: Electronic Pre-Publication /4 Last Revision: 26 April 2007*, <http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd>).

character with a regent of Arpad, in the kingdom of Bit Agushi, who came into power in the first half of the 8th century BCE.¹⁵

A combination of elements make the Breğ stele particularly important: it is Melqart's most ancient quote; it is the first representation of an iconography that can unquestionably be linked to this god; it is the erection of a stele dedicated to the tutelary god of Tyre, in the Aramean kingdom of Bith-Agushi by an Aramean king. For these reasons, following the first publication by M. Dunand,¹⁶ there have been many studies dedicated to the stele aimed, from time to time, at examining the iconographic, stylistic, epigraphical, historical aspect of the monument.¹⁷ Due to lack of space, only the iconographic and

¹⁵ See a recent summary of the subject, with reflections that can be widely shared, in YOUNGER (2016), 533-536. See also LEHMANN (2008), 153 (with previous bibliography) and, more recently, NIEHR (2018).

¹⁶ DUNAND (1941), 65-66.

¹⁷ See CECCHINI (2013) with previous bibliography.

stylistic aspects will be scrutinized here, simply to underline that graphic signs¹⁸ and the style¹⁹ suggest a southern setting of the monument.

The image of Melqart is well defined by specific iconographic attributes: long hair, beard, ovoid tiara, fenestrated axe on the shoulder, and long dress. Fenestrated axes were used as a war and ceremonial weapon in Middle Bronze Syria, for instance at Ebla, where they were closely connected to deceased sovereigns²⁰ and Lebanon at Byblos.²¹ Just like the axe, the conical hat is also of royal character derived, most probably, from the Middle and Late Bronze Syrian tiara as shown on a stone plaque from Byblos.²² In his right hand, the god has an object that is difficult to interpret. It could be an ankh, similar to the one held by two figures beside the sacred trees in a 1st first millennium BCE bowl from Cyprus.²³ The image of the stele is proof of the transformation of an originally royal iconography into a divine one, which is perfectly coherent with the function of Melqart as true king of the city, “à la fois un roi déifié et un dieu souverain”.²⁴

According to some scholars, the image of the god represented on the Breğ stele was inspired by the same model (a cult statue of the god in Tyre?)²⁵ that was brought about a series of figures reproduced on object like bowls, seals and razors both in Cyprus and in the Phoenician-Punic West, at least until the 3rd century BCE.

The earliest example is the silver bowl from the *Tomba Bernardini at Praeneste*²⁶ from the first half of the 7th century BCE (Fig. 2, a-b). The scene depicted on the external register is a description of a lost tale commonly entitled “Hunter’s day” or “Ape Hunt”:²⁷ a “prince” leaves his city in a horse-drawn cart, hits a deer on a mountain and subsequently tracks the wounded deer. While the attendant takes care of the horses, the prince skins the deer and makes offerings to a winged deity. While he’s doing this, a gorilla steals a bone from the sacrifice and goes on to attack the “prince”, but a winged goddess lifts both him with the whole cart up, saving him. Once safely on the ground again, the “prince”, in turn, attacks the gorilla and kills it. They then return to the city.

¹⁸ AMADASI GUZZO (2018), 131-132.

¹⁹ The stele is attributed by S.M. Cecchini to a southern Syrian model, probably Tyrian (CECCHINI [2013], 281-282).

²⁰ PINNOCK (2002).

²¹ MIRON (1992), 62; YASUR-LANDAU (2015).

²² DUNAND (1937), tav. CVII, 1148.

²³ MARKOE (1985), Cy2.

²⁴ BONNET (1988), 112.

²⁵ CULICAN (1960-1961), 41; CECCHINI (2013), 275.

²⁶ MARKOE (1985), 191, n. E2.

²⁷ KARAGEORGHIS (2002), 174.

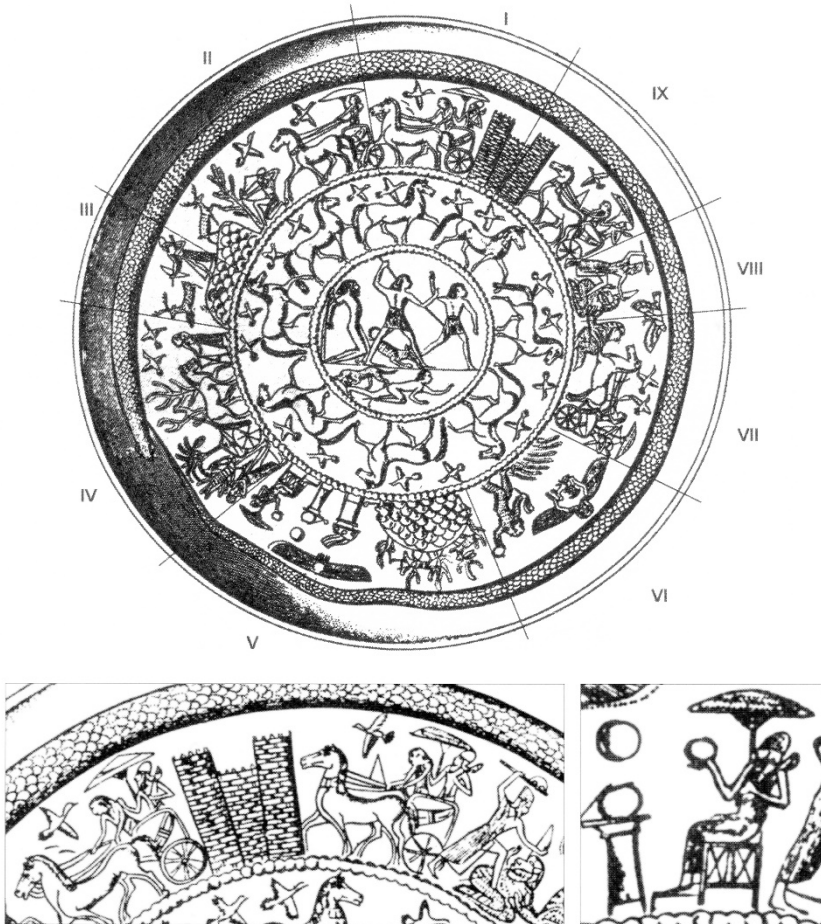


Fig. 2. Cecchini 2010, Fig. 1; Cecchini 2005, 7a-b.

S.M. Cecchini claims that the episode is constructed in the framework of the fable literary genre:²⁸ the departure, the journey, the necessity and the ability to face and master a new and hostile world, the magical elements that help to overcome proof. It is clear that the reference background of the artist was a story belonging to a narrative repertoire, which was well known in a particular context, like banquets, where silver bowls were used.²⁹ Who is the protagonist

²⁸ CECCHINI (2013) with reference to LIVERANI (1972).

²⁹ KAIZER (2006), 31: “we know close to nothing with regard to the mythological realms of the various local religious worlds, most of which were delineated orally”.

of this story? Iconography and attributes are completely analogous to the character of Melqart of the Breĝ stele. He was, certainly, a character with regal connotations who, after a fantastic initiatory journey, assumed divine connotations.³⁰ The “king of the city” and “deified king” were celebrated on a metal bowl, a type of object often used to celebrate the ruling power.³¹

The presence of the axe is the *fil rouge* connecting the Breĝ stele and the Praeneste bowl with a group of seals of which only one has a definite provenance and, therefore, is well dated:

1) a scarab portraying a male figure with Egyptian wig (?) from the sacred area of Kition dated, according to the archaeological context, to the end of the 6th early 5th century BCE³² (Fig. 3.1);

2) a scarab from Cyprus of uncertain chronology³³ (Fig. 3.2);

3) a seal possibly from Sardinia with a seated male figure in front of an incense burner dated to around the 6th century BCE³⁴ (Fig. 3.3);

4) a green jasper seal with an axe-bearing female goddess³⁵ from Tharros dated, in this case, to the 5th century BCE³⁶ or from Phoenicia predating green jasper local Sardinian production dated to the 7th century BCE³⁷ (Fig. 3.4);

5) the “Melqart type” is also featured in a votive razor from the necropolis of Douïmes in Carthage,³⁸ in a context of the 3rd century BCE (Fig. 3.5).

The image, copied from the original model (a seal?) was clearly not well understood by the seal engraver. In fact, the meaning and importance of the attributes were underestimated when, reproducing the image, the sceptre was cut off together with the left hand. But it is precisely the error of the craftsmanship that makes it interesting to evaluate the meaning of the choice of this iconography. Punic razors were, in fact, used in a funerary context by important citizens at the head of the Carthaginian community and it is obvious that this antiquarian “royal” iconography, which is very unusual, was selected for the political meaning expressed by Melqart in Carthage of the 3rd century BCE.³⁹

³⁰ CECCHINI (2010), also for other interpretation of the iconography.

³¹ ONNIS (2009); on the iconological approach in the study of Phoenician art, see the works of CIAFALONI (1995).

³² CLERC *et al.* (1976-1977), n. 505, 53-54.

³³ FURTWÄGLER (1900), pl. LXI, 11.

³⁴ GUBEL (1980), 8 and note 68; 11 where the scholar proposes the identification of this figure with Baal Shamin.

³⁵ GUBEL (1980); hieroglyphic signs are meaningless.

³⁶ ACQUARO (1977), 100.

³⁷ GUBEL (1980), 12.

³⁸ ACQUARO (1971), Ca 83, 71-72, 107, Fig. 75,1); ACQUARO (2015).

³⁹ ACQUARO (2015), 234-235.



Fig. 3. Figures with axe 1-4. Seals from 1: Kition (Gubel 1980, Tav. II, 4); 2: Cyprus (Acquaro 1971, fig. 75,1); 3: Sardinia (Gubel 1980, tav. II,2); 4: Tharros or Phoenicia (Gubel 1980, tav. I,2); 5: Razor from Carthage (Acquaro 2015, fig. 3); 6: Glass seal from Jerusalem (Brandl 2000, fig. 1); 7: Seal from Ibiza (Culican 1960-61, fig. 1,a).

6) Finally, the axe is also present in the Smiting type on a glass from Persian Jerusalem and a seal from Ibiza of uncertain chronology (Figs. 3.6-7).⁴⁰

2.2. *Shadrapa and the Nahr el-Abrash stele*

The stele, found near the Nahr el-Abrash but probably originally placed in a mountain temple,⁴¹ was first published by Clermont Ganneau in 1884.⁴² Elongated in shape, it is closed at the top by a winged solar disk that frames the scene below: a divine figure with a short skirt and a belt is represented in profile with the left foot resting on the head of a lion standing, in turn, on top of two mountains. The god wears an Egyptian *atef* crown with a uraeus on the forehead. The face is beardless to highlight the youth of the god who brandishes an Egyptian *khépes* with their right hand and holds a lion cub by the tail in their left hand. The inscription narrates that the stele was dedicated by

⁴⁰ Glass seal from Jerusalem (BRANDL [2000], Fig. 1); seal from Ibiza: CULICAN (1960-1961), Fig. 1,a).

⁴¹ DE CLERCQ (1901).

⁴² CLERMONT-GANNEAU (1882), 128-129. A very good synthesis about the history of the research and the study of the stele CECCHINI (1997) where there is a vast bibliography. See also GUBEL (2002).

“Pilles, son of Abday to his lord, to Shadrafa, because he heard the voice of his words”.⁴³ Using some iconographic details and paleographic elements as a guide, the monument can be dated to the Neo-Babylonian period.⁴⁴ The stele is an expression of a figurative culture in which Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Anatolian traditions appear stratified.⁴⁵ The attributes of the god are, in fact, derived from Egypt or even from an Egyptianized Phoenician tradition, such as the *atef* crown, the *khépeš*; Mesopotamia and Syria with the iconographic type of the Master of Animal together with the menacing god, the symbol of the mountains; and North-Syria South-Anatolia with the little animal held with the outstretched hand.

Very close to this representation of the god Shadrafa is the type of an almost contemporary group of Cypriot sculptures, some of which were imported to be dedicated in the cult place of Amrit (Fig. 4.2).⁴⁶ The near life-size statues represent a striding male figure, brandishing a club in his right arm and, in his left hand, clutching an animal, often a lion, but sometimes a goat. He is wearing a tight-fitting belted tunic, and a lion skin is draped over his shoulders. The head of the lion skin forms a helmet, and the teeth of the lion are visible instead of hair. The general schema is very similar to the Shadrafa stele: the type of the god immediately after the fight against the animal (this is not precisely the Smiting god type but a variation of it), with a little lion in the left hand wearing a similar kilt. The headdress and the weapon are different: the Egyptian crown of Shadrafa is substituted by a *leonté* and the Egyptian *khépeš* by a club. Both *leonté* and club were attributed, in the Greek context, to Heracles.

After M. Dunand’s publication, several studies have addressed the topic. C. Bonnet and Jourdain-Annequin hypothesized that the iconography is that of “Heracles-Melqart” created in Cyprus, combining Greek Heracleian characteristics, namely the club and the lion skin, the latter occurring in Greek vase painting of the 6th century, and Oriental divine attributes, like the non-bearded, striding “Smiting god” type – with an origin in both Mesopotamian and Egyptian media going back to the 2nd millennium BCE – associated with the pose of

⁴³ Translated from the French version of PUECH (1986), 337.

⁴⁴ For both the stele and the inscription, we follow the chronology of S.M. Cecchini, CECCHINI (1997); for the chronology of the inscription see also PUECH (1986), 336, n. 35, who dates it to the 6th century BCE; TEIXIDOR (1983), 222-223, n. 255, who dates it to the 5th century BCE; LIPÍŃSKI (1992), 407-408; (1995), 197, who dates it first to the 7th-6th, and after to the 8th-7th centuries BCE. E. Gubel dates the stele between 850-750 BCE and the inscription to the 6th-5th century BCE, GUBEL (2002), 51-53, n° 38.

⁴⁵ MOSCATI (1989), 148; CECCHINI (1997), 85.

⁴⁶ On the statues FAEGERSTEN (2003). On the temple of Amrit, see DUNAND, SALIBY (1985); OGGIANO (2012) with bibliography.



Fig. 4. 1: Nahr el-Abrash stele (AA.VV. 2007, 52). 2: Kition Bamboula, statua di Eracle/Melqart (Yon 2006, fig. 65).

the “Master of Animals”.⁴⁷ With particular reference to the documentation from Amrit, K. Lembke gives to this type the generic name of “Herr der Tiere”, supposing that it could be used for the representation of Eshmun at

⁴⁷ JOURDAIN-ANNEQUIN, BONNET (2001).

Sidon in his role as a fighting god.⁴⁸ J. Nitschke asserts that the god of the Temple of Amrit was likely Eshmun, Shadrapha or some combination of the two or another god entirely.⁴⁹ Finally, G. Garbati, writes that iconographic attributes of these sculpture can recall some roles of Eshmun as a fighting god in addition to that of a therapeutic one.⁵⁰

2.3. *The Baalat Gubal at Byblos*

At Byblos, three artefacts represent the powerful goddess of the city: the Baalat Gubal. The name ‘Lady of Byblos’⁵¹ – because this was probably not a title but a proper designation of the local goddess – had already been attested in the Egyptian documents, some of which were found in Phoenicia since the 3rd millennium BCE. The very close relationship between the goddesses of Dendera and Byblos finds in the Gublite image of the goddess as Hathor a clear confirmation. From the earliest testimony, the so-called “Montet cylinder” (Fig. 5.1)⁵² dated to the 2350 BCE and the so-called “relief de la maisonnette” (Old Kingdom?) (Fig. 5.2)⁵³ to the Persian period “Yehawmilk stele” (450 BCE, KAI 10), the *b’lt gbl* was represented as an enthroned goddess with bovine horns and a solar disk, holding a sceptre (Fig. 5.3).⁵⁴ The Yehawmilk stele (H.: 1.12 m.; L.: 0.56 m.; Dp.: 0.24 m.), found in the Persian-period layers of the temple of the Balat Gebal, features a 14-line inscription (KAI 10.6.12) that celebrates the restoration of the temple and the construction of a porch. Celebrating these actions, the king, in Persian attire, stands in front of the image (a statue?) of the goddess of the city to whom he brings an offering in a bowl, with his right hand raised as a sign of worship.

The strong link with the regality of the city is expressed by the images of the god or goddess on the throne. The throne is the attribute through which a male or female figure without other attributes was characterized as divine, regal or divine/regale (divinized king) on different media. In the images of Phoenician gods, the throne could be simple, deriving from the Egyptian tradition, or featuring animals as armrests originating from both Egyptian and Mesopotami-

⁴⁸ LEMBKE (2004).

⁴⁹ NITSCHKE (2007), 62.

⁵⁰ GARBATI (2010).

⁵¹ ZERNECKE (2013), 235. “Baalaat Gubal”, “Lady of Byblos”, might have functioned as proper name, and the search for her “true name” would become futile.

⁵² MONTET (1928-1929), ESPINEL (2002), 106-108.

⁵³ MONTET (1928-1929), Fig. 6.

⁵⁴ BORDREUIL, GUBEL, (1985), (2002).

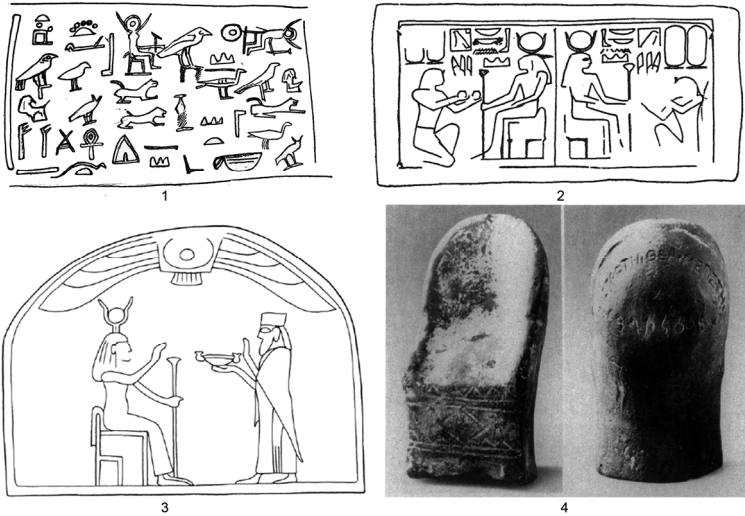


Fig. 5.1: Cylinder Montet (Montet 1928-1929, fig. 20); 2: Relief de la maisonnette (Montet 1928-1929, fig. 6); 3: drawing of the upper part of the Yehawmilk stele (Cornelius 2004, fig. 13); 4: Bordreuil Gubel 1985, fig. 8).

an tradition.⁵⁵ The throne link with the Baalat Gubal is confirmed in the 4th century BCE by a clay model of a throne where the name of the goddess is attested in a bilingual inscription in Greek and Phoenician (1 ΑΣΤΑΡΤΗ ΘΕΑ ΜΕΓΙΣΤΗ 2 *lb'lt gbl*) (Fig. 5.4).⁵⁶ Although this object deserves further study, especially concerning the relationship between the production of the object and the realization of the two inscriptions, it is a fundamental hint of a link between the main Phoenician female goddesses (Astarte and/or Baalat Gebal) and the throne as an “aniconic” attribute.

2.4. Astarte in Phoenicia

Astarte, the “Lady”, the “Great Lady”, the “Queen”, the “Queen of heavens”, the “Lady of the evening”, the “Lady of the morning”, is not identifiable by a precise iconography. Even in Egypt, for example, it is difficult to distinguish

⁵⁵ The most famous is the throne of king Ahiiram in his sarcophagus. For different types of throne, see the very accurate study of GUBEL (1987), 37-84.

⁵⁶ BORDREUIL, GUBEL (1985); ZERNECKE (2013), 231-233.

between representations of Astarte and Anat.⁵⁷ This is not by chance: Astarte, in fact, was “une identité divine une et plurielle”.⁵⁸

The only testimony of an Astarte “imagetext” from Phoenicia is the votive throne from Khirbet et-Taybèh (47 x 37 x 29 cm) which dates back to the 3rd century BCE where the throne with the sphinxes houses two stelae, each carved with the mirror image of a character with one hand raised as a sign of devotion or blessing and a papyrus scepter in the other (Fig. 6).⁵⁹ The inscription “to my lady Astarte” (KAI 17) indicates that the throne was devoted by a man, Abdoubasti, son of Bodbaal. This object represents the “missing link” between the image of the throne and the name of Astarte and was the origin of the denomination “thrones of Astarte” for a group of artefacts, approximately a dozen, from the region of Sidon and Tyre that are characterized by their armrests in the form of female winged sphinxes. Dated generally to Hellenistic and Roman periods, they are usually empty or have a cut area for the placement of a cult object (e.g. a betyl) or have cultic scenes or symbols on the front or the backrest. The dimension of the throne varies and a monumental one served as a focal point of the so-called “Astarte pool” at the Bostan esh-Sheikh sanctuary.

2.5. *Astarte in Egypt*

In Egypt, Astarte’s images, usually connected with war and horses, are completely embedded into the context of the local iconographic tradition. Astarte, in Egypt, has the same main function: warrior, blessing goddess, non-aggressive goddess.⁶⁰ She is often shown with the pharaohs, especially during the New Kingdom, but she was also very popular among common people since she is often represented in ostraca and seals-amulets.

Only one cylinder seal is known from the Palestinian area (Bethel). It is inscribed with the name of Astarte and the goddess is depicted as a warrior, together with Baal (Fig. 7.1).⁶¹ On the small limestone private stele of Tell el Borg (Sinai), that must date from before ca 1320-1300, Astarte sits in front of a cult statue of Resheph (Fig. 7.2).⁶² She is enthroned on a leonine-legged chair which, in turn, rests on the back of a horse. A spear clutched in her left hand is

⁵⁷ CORNELIUS (2008).

⁵⁸ BONNET (2010).

⁵⁹ BONNET (2015), 302-303 also for the previous bibliography.

⁶⁰ CORNELIUS (2008).

⁶¹ WEIPPERT (1988), 308; KEEL, UEHLINGER (1998), 87f, n. 28 Fig. 109; CORNELIUS (2008), 107-108.

⁶² HOFFMEIER, KITCHEN (2007).



Fig. 6. Throne from Khirbet et-Taybèh (AA.VV. 2007, 117).

raised over her head as her right hand grasps a shield. She wears a tightly fitted dress and on her head is the *atef* crown. In a relief from the tomb of Hetepka at Saqqara dated to the reign of Ramses II (1279-1213), the inscribed name of the figure is reconstructed as reading Astarte who wears an *atef* crown and holds a curved shield (Fig. 7.3);⁶³ relief of Ramses II (Sudan) hieroglyphic inscriptions identify the figure as Astarte (Fig. 7.4). The type of the equestrian divinity is also present in some seals which, due to the close resemblances with the

⁶³ CORNELIUS (2008), 104.

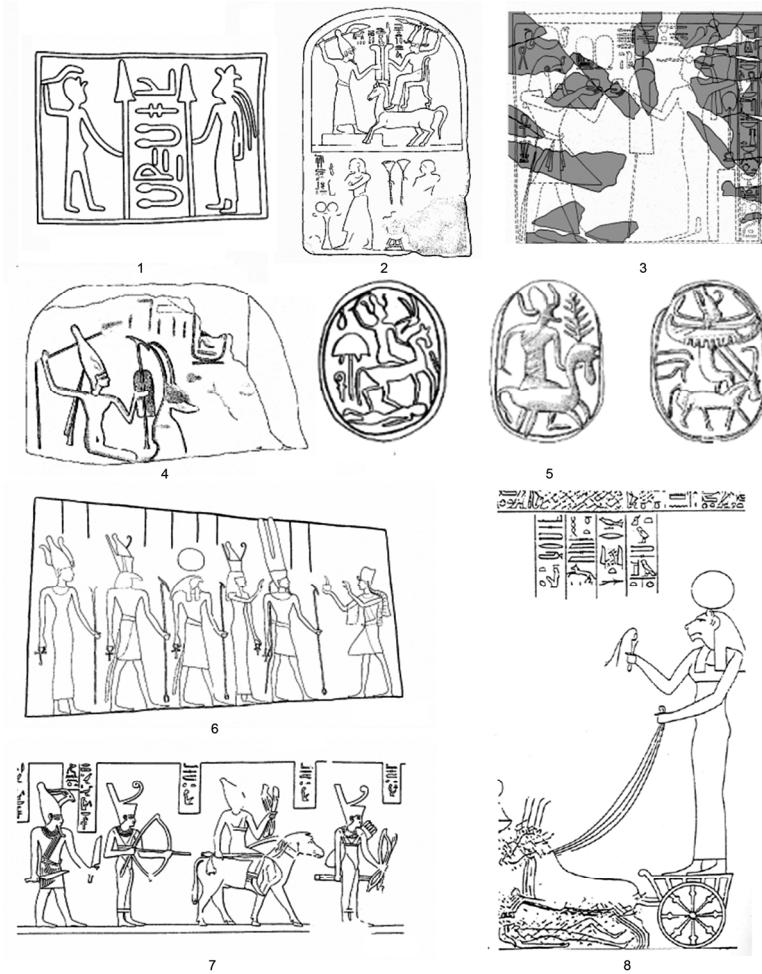


Fig. 7. 1: Cylinder seal from Bethel (Cornelius 2008, fig. 1); 2: Stele of Tell el Borg Cornelius 2008, fig. 15); 3: Relief of Hetepka – Saqqara (Cornelius 2008, fig. 4); 4: Relief of Ramses II – Sudan (Cornelius 2008, fig. 14); 5: Seals (Cornelius 2008, fig. 19-22); 6: Stele from Abu Simbel (Cornelius 2008, fig. 6); 7: Temple of Hibis (Cornelius 2004, fig. 10); 8: Temple of Edfu (Cornelius 2004, fig. 32).

Egyptian iconographies, have been interpreted as representations of Astarte (Fig. 7.5). In a stele from Abu Simbel of the Pharaoh Siptah (1192-1193) Astarte appears on the left-hand sceptre of pluriform type and in her right hand is the Egyptian symbol of life. She is with Seth, Horo, Nut, Amun-Re (Fig. 7.6). From the Persian temple of Hibis, three figures are identified with Astarte

thanks to the inscription. The central one is shown on horseback wearing the white crown and holding weapons in both hands, the other two figures with bow and arrow wearing the red crown and identified by text as “Astarte” (Fig. 7.7).⁶⁴ In the Ptolemaic Horus temple of Edfu, Astarte is depicted in a small chariot and the inscription reads “Astarte mistress of horses and lady of the chariot” (Fig. 7.8).⁶⁵

2.6. *Astarte overseas*

The small statue of Astarte, only 16.6 cm, on show at the Museum in Seville is an extraordinary example of a travelling goddess (Fig. 8).⁶⁶ The sculpture, in fact, was imported from the Levant and dedicated as a votive object at a sanctuary that was built near the ancient Spal, modern Seville, probably the spectacular cult place of El Carambolo.⁶⁷

The goddess is represented naked and wearing an Egyptian-style wig. Her left arm – possibly articulated or movable – is missing, her feet rest upon a footstool that bears a Phoenician inscription. The position and the presence of a tang beneath the buttocks lead us to assume that there was a throne attached to the figure.

The Phoenician inscription, paleographically dated to the 8th century BCE, reads that the sculpture is presented by two individuals as votive offering to the goddess Astarte for granting their requests. The term “*hr*” which accompanies Astarte’s name, has given rise to numerous theories. One is that it stands for “Hurrian” which would further confirm the figure as a Syro-Phoenician divinity.⁶⁸ From a stylistic point of view, the Egyptian aspects of the figure’s appearance have been compared to representations on the Near Eastern ivory pieces.

Two main attributes characterize the goddess: the throne and the nudity.⁶⁹ Although the throne is usually connected with regal and divine aspects, as already seen, images of naked females in the ancient Near East are widely abundant. They are widespread in an area from Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine,

⁶⁴ CORNELIUS (2008), 29; 43.

⁶⁵ HERMANN (1999), 59; the head is damaged but has been reconstructed as the lion-headed Sekhmet.

⁶⁶ CORNELIUS (2014); BONNET, BRICAULT (2016).

⁶⁷ DE LA BANDERA ROMERO, FERRER ALBELDA (2010) and NAVARRO ORTEGA (2016) with update bibliography.

⁶⁸ For the text of the inscription see, AMADASI GUZZO (1967), Spagna 16. For a discussion on the term *hr*, see BONNET (1996), 127-131.

⁶⁹ For nudity, see the proceedings of the congress DONNAT, HUNZIKER-RODEWALD, WEYGAND (2019) with the updated bibliography. With reference to Phoenician milieu OGGIANO (2020).



Fig. 8. Carambolo Astarte (Aruz, Graff, Rakic 2014, 219).

Anatolia, Elam, Egypt etc. from the Neolithic onward. The subject of female nude images in the ancient Near East has been widely studied and the meaning of female nudity variously interpreted. Nudity, without other specific attributes, has been read in various ways. As an abstract concept the principle/quality of human dignity expressed by the Akkadian term *baštu*;⁷⁰ as a positive general message of pure pleasure, power and fecundity; as a deity identified as a mother goddess or, more specifically, ‘Inanna, Ištar, Astarte; and

⁷⁰ BAHRANI (1996); BONNET, PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2004); ASSANTE (2006), 181.

more “concretely” as the representation of a priestess, temple attendant, worshipper, and seductress. In the case of the Astarte of Carambolo, the context (a sacred place), the material (bronze) and, especially, the inscription certainly leads us to interpret the nudity as a divine attribute. A nudity that Astarte wore as a dress⁷¹ to underline her seductive aspect while expressing the function of regal divinity sitting on a (missing) throne.

3. CONSTRUCTION MECHANISMS OF NAMES AND IMAGES IN PHOENICIAN CONTEXTS

“Une analyse qui reposerait sur une définition stricte de la notion d’épithète – fondamentalement issue d’un contexte linguistique indo-européen, grec en particulier –, court donc le risque de négliger la dynamique propre aux langues sémitiques qui, plus souvent que la langue grecque, recourent à la construction verbale ou à des phrases nominales pour désigner ou qualifier le divin”.⁷² Starting from this consideration, this study moves from the analysis of the dynamic of language to the examination of the dynamic of images, swinging between the language of images and the images of language. The interaction between the two systems, linguistic and iconographic, according to Goodman’s theory, is vividly described by Mitchel “a paragraph may be turned on its side and ‘read’ as a city skyline; a picture may be riddled with alphabetic characters and may be constructed to be read from left to right in a descending series of sequences. ... What determines the mode of reading is the symbol system that happens to be in effect, and this is regularly a matter of habit, convention, and authorial stipulation”.⁷³

Here, the construction mechanism of the basic structure of Semitic language is compared with that subtending the creation of images of Phoenician gods. In doing so, the images and their attributes have been organized into a semantic network in order to recreate the way of thinking behind the work of the artisans with “nodes” (concepts) related to each other (through “arcs”) and organized into a taxonomic hierarchy.⁷⁴ Thanks to this approach and considering only the object and images selected for this study, some basic types are identified: smiting, striding, enthroned (Figs. 9-10).

⁷¹ BONFANTE (1989), 544.

⁷² BONNET *et al.* (2018), 582.

⁷³ MITCHELL (1986), 70. For reference to the Goodman theory (GOODMAN [1976]) see CRAWFORD (2013), 247-248.

⁷⁴ BONNET *et al.* (2018), 588; not unlike are “théonymes, épithètes ... locutions et autres types de dénominations divines seront donc appréhendés comme autant de « noyaux »”.

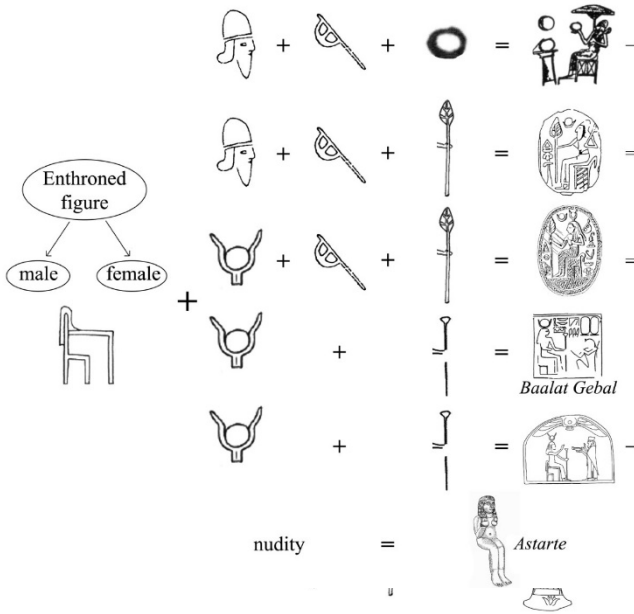


Fig. 9. Schema of enthroned figures.

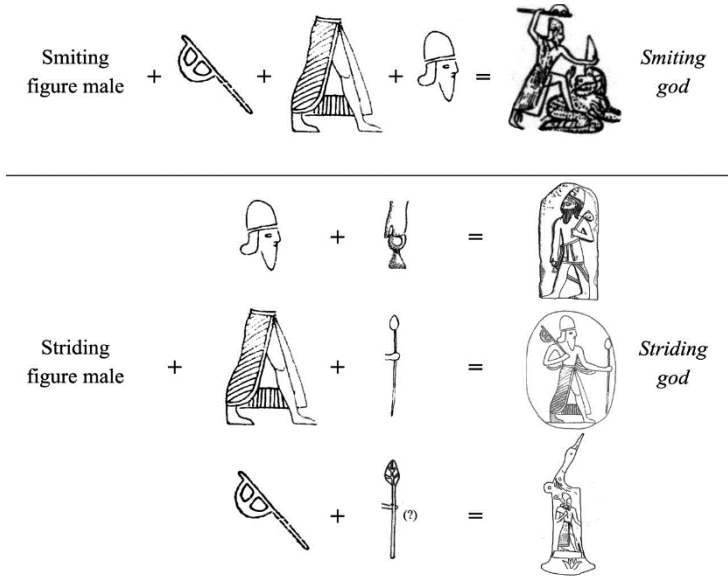


Fig. 10. Schema of smiting and string male figure/gods.

It seems that, as in the Semitic language, a central role had the nominal root in this case the basic type, for example, the enthroned figure that can be “inflected with suffix” (attributes, for example, sceptre, axes, headdress, etc.) that change the meaning of the word and image, depending on the chronological, functional, and geographical context. As the names of Semitic gods were, all things considered, limited, the number of iconographic attributes were equally limited and not exclusive to one single god. Subsequently, the Phoenician gods had a limited number of names and images and this is probably because each of them was, using an inspired definition by J.L. Durand for the Greek divine world, a “minipanthéon”,⁷⁵ with interchangeable attributes depending on the circumstances. Because the “notion of exclusivity does not seem to have been present at a popular level in the polytheistic world of the Near East”.⁷⁶ The onomastic attribute, like the iconographic attribute, can be considered a “nuclear” element of a sequence, i.e. a phrase of the verbal language. Only the sum of all attributes gave life to the onomastic sequence that, together with the iconographic sequence – a phrase of non-verbal language – constituted the system of notion called “god” (Fig. 11).⁷⁷

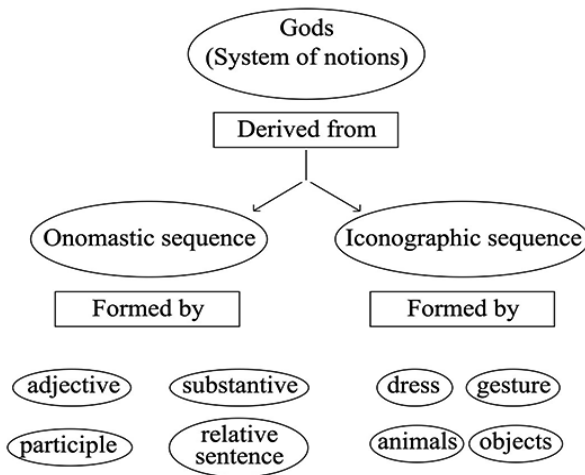


Fig. 11. Representation of linguistic and iconographic construction mechanism.

Contrary to the Egyptian and Greek world, even if it is reductive to speak of these cultural complexes as monolithic entities without chronological and geo-

⁷⁵ DURAND (1991).

⁷⁶ KAIZER (2006), 43. The statement is valid although Kaizer refers it to the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

⁷⁷ GERNET, BOULANGER (1932), 265-276.

graphical differentiation, Phoenician and Punic symbolic/non-narrative representations of single gods appeared substantively repetitive and “minimalist”. The use of single images in long decorative sequences does not change the language’s sense of succinctness, a characteristic that is often connoted in a negative sense, basing the evaluation only on a strongly Greek-oriented aesthetic taste. Therefore, it is fundamental to move from an aesthetic judgement (even if the minimalistic style is very fashionable in our society!) to a wider and more complex vision of this “minimalistic” rendering of images of gods. The apparent generality of some images can be read, in fact, on the basis of the semantic structure proposed, as a synthesis of attributes visually unexpressed but very well known to the ancient viewer.

The degree of transparency of the images depends on the time and place where they were used: the same image, using the same attribute can be very clear in one place and semi-transparent and opaque in another.⁷⁸ The image of Astarte riding a horse was certainly very clear in the Egyptian context and opaque in others, such as in the 1st millennium BCE Phoenician colonial context, where a completely different image, naked and seated on a throne, of the same goddess was imported from Phoenicia in a Tartessian context. When a proper name exists, like in the cases analyzed herein, it is evident that the simple divine name Astarte is, at least formally, a stable element through time, from the New Kingdom period to 8th century BCE, and space, from Egypt to Phoenicia, and beyond until the Iberian Peninsula. What is not different is the function and it is this variability that makes the link between the image and the name unstable.

4. USE OF IMAGES IN A NARRATIVE CONTEXT

How were images used in Phoenician art and, in particular, in a narrative context like that of the precious bronze and silver bowls? If we consider the “type of Melqart” of the Breġ stele, the silver bowl from Praeneste shows how it was used in a narrative sequence where a “myth” about the Phoenician god was depicted.⁷⁹ This object is even more significant because of the rarity of this kind of representation in Phoenician art and craftsmanship that, as already seen, tends to prefer the symbolic form of communication.

⁷⁸ For the use of this terminology (transparent, opaque) for the analysis of the use of names and theonyms see ZERNECKE (2013).

⁷⁹ Where to narrate means to communicate events by images arranged according to a certain order of time (characters appear and the narrative facts are placed in a specific time and space).

In the story illustrated on the bowl from Praeneste, whatever was represented, the protagonist is featured in three different ways: seated, striding, and smiting that correspond to three different icons or constellations.⁸⁰ The three icons are represented singularly in different media as seals and razors and this could suggest a more general consideration: what prevents us from thinking that individual images of Phoenician gods found on small objects were originally part of a more complex narrative schema from which they were extrapolated and stigmatized?

An example of the use of the construction mechanisms of images and, in particular, of the movement of the icons from a narrative to a symbolic system (and likely vice versa), to reconstruct the cultural/historical context of an image is the razor from Carthage. The iconography of Melqart with an axe, already well known in the Levantine world, arrived at the Carthaginian craftsmen through preparatory sketches/drawings or, more likely, thanks to the circulation of small objects like seals with a single image or metal bowls with more than one iconography to be selected. On the razor, the lack of confidence with this type of image is clearly demonstrated by the error of the craftsman. This mistake in the construction of images is a substantial clue in order to reconstruct the 3rd century BCE political milieu of Carthage where Melqart was, most probably, represented with a different appearance and a different attribute.

5. MOVEMENT OF IMAGES AND GODS

The names and images of gods share a common destiny: they are not static.⁸¹ Some images and names travelled physically through the Mediterranean, like the Astarte of the Carambolo. With objects meanings conveyed by attributes of gods (names and images) moved as “mobile products of the ongoing conversations and activities that constitute social life”.⁸² And in these movements, objects and manual activities, like those of artisans, had an active role in addressing the way people perceived functions of deities and influenced their way of considering the gods.

The stele of Shadrappa is good example of the role that the circulation of objects played in creating new ways of perceiving deities. In the Persian period, in the regions of Amrit, Levantine, Anatolian and Eastern Mesopotamia,

⁸⁰ According to J. Assman, that is the way a complex of ideas takes shape. ASSMANN (1982), 13-61; (1983), 54-95; see also KEEL, UHELINGER (1998), 12-13.

⁸¹ LESURE (2002), 588 (“Imagery is not a static phenomenon”); BONNET, BRICAULT (2016).

⁸² LESURE (2002), 588 and Fig. 1. “Meanings are not fixed relations between objects and ideas but mobile products of the ongoing conversations and activities that constitute social life. They are negotiated, contested, and unstable.”

cultural traditions converged and began, simultaneously, to be influenced by Greek art. The impact of the way the Greek divine world was represented could be the source of this new and original image, rich in attributes and well characterized. In fact, the construction mechanisms of images based on the aggregation and replacement of a limited number of attributes was affected by increasingly close confrontation with Greek iconography which stimulated new experimental language in the field of iconography of the gods.

This phenomenon can be placed before the world of Greek images burst into the Near East, in the Hellenistic period, an intrusion well foreshadowed in the coins of Tyre (425-394) where the (likely) main god of the city is represented as a bearded man riding a hippocampus: a version of Melqart governing the sea?⁸³

6. TELL ME YOUR NAME!

Given that archaeology alone is unable to document absolutely everything about Phoenician and, in general, ancient cults and deities, texts do not always offer information about ancient divine figures and, of course, about their personal and common names. “Suffering from textual fixation we ignore some deities owing to their absence in written sources”⁸⁴ but their existence is very well testified by the material culture.

A jungle of images from ancient times and different media (terracotta figurines, sculptures, reliefs, seals, metal bowls, etc.) drive scholars into a sort of oneiric scene. Although the study of iconography is solidly based on well-tested investigation methods, this scene perfectly describes the sense of bewilderment that a scholar feels when confronted with some well-characterized Phoenician iconographies. The Persian period is again a key moment for the study of this topic. In the terracotta figurines of the Persian period, two types of new iconographies are very widespread: the seated man with an *atef* crown and a hand touching his beard, and a pregnant woman⁸⁵ in two variants, standing and seated, with a hand on her belly (Figs. 12, 1-2).⁸⁶ Both iconographies are present in every context of the Levantine coastal regions and Cyprus.⁸⁷ Who is

⁸³ ELAYI, ELAYI (2009), 205; 265-271.

⁸⁴ LEWIS (2005), 75.

⁸⁵ SCIORTINO (2017) with updated bibliography.

⁸⁶ The figurine of the pregnant woman is already sporadically attested in the 8th century and was widespread between 6th and 5th BCE.

⁸⁷ On the male god, see STERN 2010; on the pregnant female figurine SCIORTINO (2017) with updated bibliography.



Fig. 12.1: Male god touching his beard from Akhziv (*Méditerranée* 2007, cat 230);
 2: Pregnant figure from Tartous (*Méditerranée* 2007, cat 206).

this male god? And who is this pregnant woman that almost always appears in the same context of the bearded god? Is she a woman or a goddess? Could they be interpreted as a divine couple?

“Tell me your name” is what, instinctively, we would like to ask these images that, through specific attributes, are trying to speak to modern people (not only scholars but also anyone who sees them exhibited in the windows of a museum), using a sign language that is often incomprehensible. They could be called, “mute figurative epiclesis”, images which are very well characterized from an iconographic point of view, but which are not linked to an inscription and are subsequently “mute” even though they were undoubtedly associated with a “divine” name that was well understood to the ancient onlookers. In fact, if it is true that the most important element of the ancient god was their

function, it also true that the gods are defined, in line with this analysis and the MAP project, by their combination of names and images. As a result, when faced with only one of these attributes (a name or an image), modern scholars only possess partial information about the ancient nature of the god named or represented. Of course, the development of the so-called “Name Theology” in the Hebrew Bible is a different case, where the divine name takes the place of the divine image. A name which is no longer the real, proper name of god, as the *tetragrammaton* YHWH is presented in Ex 3, but consists of generic titles such as “the Lord” (*’adonay*) or simply “the Name” (*hashem*).⁸⁸

Therefore, although the type of the pregnant woman’s function can be associated with some specific traits of the life of ancient women, and can be considered a very good example of *Typisierung von Rollen*.⁸⁹ The ignorance regarding her name, which could be different in the singular context – from Phoenicia to Cyprus to the western Mediterranean – causes a vacuum to form around in our perception of the ancient god (we can assume that the figure represented a god due to the presence of the “throne”). This same vacuum remains around the perception of a god like Eshmun, who was never conclusively associated with a specific image.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The absence of fixed iconography, except for a more or less canonical representation of Melqart with “orthodox” attributes that can, however, be shared by other deities, let to the actors (costumer, artisans, users) a very important role in emphasizing the main aspect of a deity and his attributes.

This is why the study of iconography in relation to names is a very complex topic and why it is tempting but dangerous to create an identification chain between ancient Phoenician deities based on iconographic attributes.⁹⁰ Both iconography and names of Phoenician gods are geographically and chronologically widespread and, therefore, using them as precious hints to identify certain aspects of the ancient perception of the divine⁹¹ is possible only by connecting them to the cultural context in which they were expressed. The commissioner of the object (statues, stele, seals) was evidently the one to decide who represented a specific god and how this was done. The person who decided to assign a bronze figure to Astarte, buying it in a Levantine workshop and dedicating it in the Tartessian far west, was surely the one who wanted her to be represented

⁸⁸ For a discussion on the “Name Theology”, see RICHTER (2002) and PORZIA (forthcoming).

⁸⁹ UEHLINGER (1991), where he claims that the function of the divine type in the image (e.g. “weather god”) is primary and the “name” only functions on a second level.

⁹⁰ KAIZER (2006), 41, 43.

⁹¹ BONNET *et al.* (2018), 576.

naked and seated on a throne, subsequently emphasizing her regal and erotic aspect. However, it emerged that the Phoenician workshops' repertoire in terms of type and gesture were limited and this is not without significance in a non-scriptural tradition where iconography constituted a crucial component of the theology.⁹² Basing themselves on a few types (enthroned, striding, smiting, master of animal) and thanks to a process involving the addition and subtraction of a limited number of attributes (attire, headgear, weapons, animals, sceptre, etc.) the artisans created images of female and male gods that were flexible and unorthodox.⁹³

A bird's eye view of the images of the Phoenician gods makes it possible to surf as if using hypertext with codified attributes (posture, attire and headdress, object and animals, etc.). For example, the god Shadrappa is a Master of Animals; the posture and the little lion dates back to the Mesopotamian reliefs and forward to the statues in Cyprus where the Egyptian crown and axe are replaced by the *leonté* and the fenestrated axe. The *leonté* was the attribute of Heracles with which Melqart was identified. Was Shadrappa therefore linked to Melqart because of the similarity of the iconographic schema used in the stele and for the statues? The constant references between one iconography and another are like a game of mirrors in which we admittedly get lost as we are unable to think as the Phoenicians thought. Therefore, we are pushed to produce a logic where, inevitably, a logic like ours, modern and "western", did not exist. Nevertheless, identifying the construction mechanisms that subtend the creation of divine images and comparing them with the basic structures of Semitic language represents an attempt to get closer to the way the Phoenicians "imagine" their gods and, surely, the discovery of new "imagetexts" will help to define it even better.

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⁹² BRICAUL, PRESCENDI (2009).

⁹³ Even in Egypt and Mesopotamia, where there is a one-to-one relationship between the image and the god or goddess thereby represented, occasionally a single deity might have more than one such symbol or a particular symbol might in exceptional circumstances stand for more than one deity or as general attribute of any deity. GREEN (1995), 183; CORNELIUS (2008), 6.

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NOMMER, QUALIFIER, INVOQUER LES DIVINITÉS :
PROCÉDURES ÉNONCIATIVES ET PRAGMATIQUE POÉTIQUE
DES FORMES HYMNIQUES

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Under the title « Cult Epithets as an Interface between Religious Systems and Human Agency », the program Mapping Ancient Polytheisms invites us not only to question the function of the “cult epithets” in relation to human agency in ritual practices within a polytheistic system, but also the “conditions of enunciation” of the denomination of the gods. These “conditions of enunciation” imply a ritual context of performance as well as an internal, poetic context, with enunciative strategies aiming at establishing a ritual relationship with the divinity, in order to provoke his or her intervention, hic et nunc. Here we pay attention, in particular, to the discursive procedures which, in different hymnic forms, cause the divine presence at the very moment of the ritual performance of the cultic prayer. The ritual nomination as well as qualification of the gods ensure the efficiency of the hymnic prayer, in a pragmatic movement in which the poetic form in musical performance plays an essential role.

Écoute-moi, dieu à l'arc d'argent, qui as pris sous ta protection Chrysé
et la divine Cylla, toi qui règnes souverainement sur Ténédos,
Smintheus, s'il est vrai que j'ai élevé pour toi un temple qui te plaît,
S'il est vrai que j'ai brûlé pour toi de gras cuisseaux
De taureaux et de chèvres, pour moi accomplis ce vœu :
Que mes pleurs soient vengés par tes flèches.

Telle est la prière qu'au tout début de l'*Iliade* (1, 37-42) le devin et prêtre Chrysès, sur la grève, hors de tout contexte rituel, adresse au « seigneur Apollon qu'enfanta Létô aux beaux cheveux » (vers 36). La prière est introduite par le même vers que celui initiant la prière rituelle qu'après de l'autel dressé pour l'offrande sacrificielle, il adressera au dieu pour que cesse l'épidémie frappant l'armée achéenne (1, 451-456) : κλυθί μεν, Ἀργυρότοξ', ὃς Χρῦσῃν ἀμφιβέβηκας (« Écoute-moi, dieu à l'arc d'argent, qui as pris sous ta protection Chrysé », vers 37). On y reviendra. Notons pour l'instant que l'appel à la divinité à écouter l'orant s'accompagne d'une invocation : « dieu à l'arc d'argent ». Cette forme au vocatif est suivie du pronom relatif « hymnique » attendu : dans des énoncés descriptifs qui peuvent assumer une tournure narrative, sont introduites des précisions sur les qualités du dieu dont on appelle le

soutien, en l'occurrence son règne sur des localités de la Troade, parmi lesquelles Chrysé et Sminthé. L'évocation de cette dernière cité s'opère par une nouvelle qualification du dieu au vocatif Σμινθεῦ (vers 39), également par allusion, par jeu étymologisant interposé, au fléau des rats qu'Apollon tue de ses flèches. De plus, selon une tournure commune à la prière rituelle, le vieux Chrysès évoque le temple élevé et les sacrifices de taureaux et de chèvres offerts « autrefois » (εἰ δὴ ποτε, vers 40) pour appuyer son vœu actuel et conclusif : que le dieu frappe de ses flèches les Achéens conduits par Agamemnon qui refuse de lui restituer sa fille Chryséis. Le récit reprend : Ὡς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων (vers 43) ; le prêtre a dit en sa prière et le dieu l'a entendu. Phoibos Apollon descend immédiatement de l'Olympe pour diriger ses traits mortels sur les animaux, puis sur les hommes.

La forme discursive assurant l'efficacité de la prière adressée à Apollon suit le schéma rituel de l'hymne ; la critique moderne en a fixé la structure dans les trois moments d'*invocatio*, *narratio* et *preces* :¹ 1. invocation de la divinité sous ce qu'on dénommera pour l'instant une « qualification traditionnelle », en l'occurrence ἀργυρότοξος ; 2. introduit par un « relatif hymnique », rappel des qualités du dieu et d'éventuelles interventions passées ; 3. formulation de la demande présente (ici marquée par le déictique de la présence τόδε, vers 41), et cela par référence à la qualification de la divinité.

Mais pourquoi invoquer le dieu en tant qu'ἀργυρότοξος et non pas sous son nom, Apollon ? Pourquoi user de ce que les modernes dénomment une « épithète » et non pas du « théonyme » ? Quels enjeux donc à la nomination des dieux et aux modes de l'appellation des dieux en régime polythéiste hellène ?

1. DÉNOMINATIONS ET QUALIFICATIONS DIVINES EN PERFORMANCE RITUELLE

Sous l'intitulé « *Cult Epithets as an Interface between Religious Systems and Human Agency* », le programme *Mapping Ancient Polytheisms* nous invite non seulement à nous interroger sur la fonction des « épithètes de culte » en relation avec l'agentivité humaine dans les pratiques rituelles en système polythéiste, mais elle nous interpelle aussi quant aux contextes et aux « conditions d'énonciation » de la dénomination des dieux. Et qui dit « contexte d'énonciation » dit non seulement contexte rituel de performance et détermina-

¹ Pour les différentes variantes proposées par les critiques modernes quant à cette structure tripartite de la prière hymnique je me permets de renvoyer à CALAME (1995/2005), consacré aux *Hymnes homériques* (avec de nombreuses références bibliographiques) ; on pourra y ajouter les considérations formulées à ce propos par FURLEY & BREMER (2001), 50-64.

tions d'ordre institutionnel, religieux et culturel, mais tout d'abord contexte énonciatif interne d'ordre discursif : postures actoriales, certes, mais aussi stratégies énonciatives visant à établir, en l'occurrence, la relation avec la divinité et en définitive son intervention *hic et nunc* : question de pragmatique. Les nominations des dieux et leurs qualifications initiales sont souvent développées en « séquences discursives », à considérer comme des actes énonciatifs et comme des actes discursifs efficaces.

De ce point de vue, les adresses aux déesses et aux dieux en leurs différentes formes discursives ont une portée d'ordre rituel. On sera sensible en particulier aux procédures énonciatives qui, dans différentes formes hymniques, suscitent à la fois la présence et l'intervention de la divinité, *hic et nunc*, au moment de la performance de la prière rituelle. Autant la nomination rituelle des dieux que leur qualification polymorphe sont destinées à assurer l'efficacité de la prière hymnique, dans une pragmatique où la forme poétique en performance musicale joue un rôle essentiel.

En partant de la prière iliadique telle celle commentée en guise de prélude et en passant par les *Hymnes homériques* pour aboutir à un hymne de culte, en passant donc de prières hymniques et rituelles insérées dans un récit à des formes hymniques relevant de l'ordre du discours, à l'exemple de l'invocation d'Apollon, on sera conduit à une redéfinition des catégories modernes de « théonyme » pour la dénomination des divinités, et d'« épithète », sinon d'« épiclèse », pour leurs nombreuses qualifications ; cela dans la confrontation critique avec les notions « indigènes » correspondantes. Par ce biais d'ordre anthropologique, il s'agira de montrer que non seulement la forme énonciative de l'appel aux dieux, non seulement la fabrication poétique de l'adresse, mais aussi sa valeur et son épaisseur sémantiques concourent à l'efficacité cultuelle de toute prière assumant une forme hymnique et rituelle.

2. DÉNOMMER ET QUALIFIER LES DIVINITÉS : CONCEPTIONS INDIGÈNES

Mais avant de poursuivre avec l'étude énonciative, sémantique et pragmatique de la nomination et de la qualification des dieux en situation d'invocation poétique et rituelle, il convient d'aborder un point de méthode.

À l'écart de nos propres catégories opératoires, à l'écart de notions modernes que nous avons tendance à considérer comme universelles, sinon comme fondées en essences (telles la prière, l'hymne, le sacrifice, le mythe), comment les Grecs (et les Grecques) percevaient-ils les noms et les qualificatifs qu'en bon régime polythéiste ils attribuaient à leurs figures divines ? Et comment les concevaient-ils dans des constellations et des configurations

changeant d'une cité à l'autre, se modifiant dans le temps, intégrant de cas en cas des groupes de figures divines, telles les Charites ou les Muses, ou des figures héroïques, tels Héraclès, les Dioscures ou Hélène ?

Ici, du point de vue des notions « indigènes » et du lexique correspondant, il convient de mentionner deux textes essentiels. Souvent allégués, ils ont fait l'objet pour ma part de trois études récentes, consacrées à différents aspects de la (dé-)nomination des déesses et des dieux en Grèce ancienne.

2.1. Hérodote : noms et « surnoms » en substances

Tout d'abord, on se rappelle l'origine égyptienne que, dans le livre II de son *Enquête*, Hérodote attribue aux dieux grecs. On se souvient en particulier du rôle qu'il assigne aux Pélasges, la population grecque aborigène, dans la transmission des « noms » (ὀνόματα) de ces dieux. Et l'enquêteur de préciser : « Comme je le sais pour l'avoir entendu à Dodone, les Pélasges accomplissaient tous les sacrifices (ἔθουον) en adressant des prières aux dieux (θεοῖσιν ἐπευχόμενοι). Ce faisant, ils n'attribuaient à aucun d'entre eux ni "surnom" (ἑπωνυμίαν), ni nom (ὄνομα) ; en effet ils n'en avaient pas encore connaissance » (2, 52, 1) ; c'est-à-dire ni qualifications, ni dénominations.

Donc, dans cette phase pré-grecque, une seule dénomination collective : θεοί, « les dieux ». De ce terme, Hérodote ne manque pas de donner l'origine dans une procédure d'étiologie étymologisante que poètes et sages grecs affectionnaient tout particulièrement. Il poursuit donc : « Ils (les Pélasges) les appelèrent θεοί du fait que (ὄτι) les dieux après avoir disposé (θέντες) toutes choses en bon ordre (κόσμωι) et en bon partage (νομάς) en maintenaient l'organisation » (2, 53, 1).

Ce « bon ordre » et cette juste répartition impliquent que les dieux sont organisés selon l'ordre du monde, dans l'ordre distributif que dessinent la *Théogonie* d'Hésiode et de nombreux *Hymnes homériques*. L'un et l'autre rendent compte de la « part » qui, comme on va le voir, est attribuée à chaque divinité dans chaque organisation polythéiste grecque. Puis c'est l'oracle de Dodone qui aurait recommandé aux Pélasges d'user pour leurs dieux des noms (ὀνόματα) repris aux « barbares » (2, 52, 3), c'est-à-dire aux Égyptiens !

L'entière et évidente hétérogénéité entre les noms des dieux grecs et les noms des divinités égyptiennes pose une question de traduction transculturelle qui ne semble pas préoccuper Hérodote. Dans un autre passage du livre II, l'enquêteur affirme simplement que les Grecs dénomment (ὀνομάζουσι) « Apollon » l'Égyptien Horus et qu'Horus est le fils d'Osiris qui, selon la langue grecque (κατὰ Ἑλλάδα γλῶσσαν), est « Dionysos » (2,144, 2) ! Cela

signifierait-il qu'Hérodote anticipe sur le *Cratyle* de Platon ? Le nom désignant la chose serait-il la chose même, notamment par jeu étymologisant interposé ?²

En fait, Hérodote ajoute une étape au transfert des Égyptiens aux Grecs de son temps des « noms » des dieux. Dans une double intervention énonciative marquée, où par deux fois il présente ses affirmations comme son opinion, l'enquêteur attribue un rôle central à la « théogonie » qu'il place non seulement sous le nom d'Hésiode, mais aussi sous celui d'Homère. Par ces procédures théogoniques, les dieux devenus grecs auraient reçu leurs qualifications (ἐπωνύμια), leurs charges et fonctions (τιμαί), leurs savoirs pratiques (τέχνη), et leurs formes et figures (εἶδεα) respectives (2, 53, 1-2).

De là la double conclusion tirée dans deux études successives sur la dénomination, l'identification et la profération rituelle du nom des dieux en régime polythéiste grec. Tout d'abord, dénommer un dieu, c'est définir son identité avec ses qualifications, ses fonctions et compétences, ses modes et techniques d'intervention et ses figures, une identité qui s'inscrit dans une organisation polythéiste ordonnée. De plus, dénommer une divinité en pays grec c'est prononcer son nom éventuellement assorti de qualifications, dans une identification entre signifiant et signifié à la manière du *Cratyle* ; c'est appeler sa présence grâce à la force pratique que les Grecs attribuent à l'énonciation orale et ritualisée des mots, surtout quand elle advient sous forme poétique.³ La nomination d'une divinité se fonde donc sur le pouvoir à la fois sémantique et pragmatique de toute dénomination, surtout quand elle intervient dans une forme de discours ritualisée, en particulier dans une forme de discours poétique telle la prière hymnique ou l'hymne présenté comme une offrande rituelle.

2.2. Pausanias : qualifications poétiques et « épiclèses » culturelles

Par ailleurs, du point de vue des catégories « indigènes », on se rappelle qu'à l'occasion de sa description du sanctuaire de Poséidon à Patras, Pausanias (7, 21, 7-9) est amené à tracer une distinction entre trois types de qualifications pour une divinité : les noms (ὀνόματα) fabriqués par les poètes pour embellir leurs vers (ἔπη) ; les noms particuliers (ἴδια), de caractère local (ἐπιχώρια) ; les « épiclèses » (ἐπικλήσεις), communes à tous. En particulier pour Poséidon, les épithètes communes seraient Pélagaios, Asphaltios et Hippios, le Maritime, le Salutaire, l'Équestre. Et pour rendre compte de l'attribution à Poséidon de l'« épiclèse » Hippios, Pausanias propose une explication d'ordre étymologique, qu'il assume d'ailleurs en *je* en contraste avec d'autres explications qu'il

² Quant à ces perspectives étymologisantes, voir l'étude de BURKERT (1985) ; à ce propos j'ai adopté dans CALAME (2011), 267-270, une position critique.

³ Cf. CALAME (2011) et (2014).

ne donne pas : Poséidon serait l'inventeur de la cavalerie. De manière paradoxale, le Périégète appuie son affirmation étimologique sur une citation de deux vers de l'*Illiade* (23, 584-585). Ces deux vers sont placés dans la bouche de Ménélas s'adressant à son adversaire Antiloque ; le roi demande au héros de prendre à témoin le dieu la main sur son attelage.

Dans ce vers dont l'énoncé est de l'ordre du récit même s'il est inséré dans une intervention de l'ordre du discours, Poséidon n'est pas nommé en tant que tel ; le dieu y est désigné par deux qualifications traditionnelles réunies en *asyndète* et dans la forme métrique de l'*enhoplion* : γαῖήχορον ἐννοσίγαιον, « qui embrasse la terre », « qui ébranle la terre ». Ce sont deux désignations fréquentes du dieu en particulier dans la poésie épique ; elles relèvent donc de la catégorie des qualifications poétiques même si, comme on le verra, l'*asyndète* est caractéristique de l'appellation rituelle d'une divinité. Puis Pausanias cite un vers hymnique emprunté au poète légendaire Pamphôs qui aurait composé pour les Athéniens « les plus anciens des hymnes ». Le dieu y est qualifié de « dispensateur de chevaux et de navires aux voiles déployées ».

Pausanias en effet ne manque pas de rendre compte, occasionnellement, des « épiclèses » des divinités dont il visite et décrit les sanctuaires. C'est dire que les trois catégories qu'il semble distinguer sont d'ordre explicatif, elles n'ont qu'une valeur opératoire. Or une étude systématique des emplois du terme ἐπίκλησις dans la *Périégèse* révèle que, si le terme est bien utilisé par Pausanias pour des qualifications de figures divines et parfois de figures héroïques (147 emplois sur un total de 183 occurrences du terme), il peut aussi désigner des surnoms d'hommes mortels, voire la manière de qualifier un lieu : de plus, dans onze cas, le terme ἐπωνυμία, utilisé par Hérodote dans le passage commenté, s'avère être, sous le calame de Pausanias, pratiquement un synonyme d'ἐπίκλησις. Par ailleurs, les explications données par le Périégète visent en général à référer une appellation locale à une désignation panhellénique.⁴

⁴ Pour une analyse lexicale des termes employés par Pausanias, voir PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2008), 262-271 (avec les données statistiques consignées dans la note 104). De manière incidente l'auteure distingue parmi les « épiclèses » qui retiennent l'attention de Pausanias des qualifications toponymiques, mythologiques (relatives à un récit épichorique) et liturgiques (relatives à une pratique rituelle) (p. 270) ; voir encore PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2005).

On remarquera que dans son étude sur les « épiclèses divines » en Arcadie, JOST (2005) est amenée à tracer une distinction empirique entre « épiclèses toponymiques » (telle Artémis Lousiatis à Lousoi), « épiclèses résultant de l'association entre deux divinités » (par exemple Aléa et Athéna), « épiclèses liées à la vie des dieux et à leurs "fonctions" » (Zeus Téléios ou Athéna Polias). En complément on lira les considérations de PARKER (2005) sur ce qu'il dénomme « le double nom cultuel grec », association de deux divinités distinctes telles Zeus Héraios ou Athéna Aréia.

2.3. Concepts opératoires : dénominations, appellations et qualifications

Face aux trois classes proposées de manière empirique et occasionnelle par Pausanias sans qu'il y recoure de manière systématique, face au large champ sémantique délimité par les usages du terme *ἐπίκλησις* en dehors de la qualification des dieux dans le domaine des lieux de culte, des pratiques rituelles et des récits qui leur sont attachés, les modernes ont eu tendance à tracer une simple distinction binaire sur la base du critère grammatical déterminé/déterminant : d'une part les noms des dieux considérés comme des « entités divines recevant un culte », des noms rebaptisés dans cette mesure « théonymes » ; d'autre part les compléments du nom, en l'occurrence les qualités particulières de la divinité concernée : quand elles assument la forme simple non pas d'un énoncé introduit par une relative mais d'épithètes, elles sont dénommées « épiclèses », par le biais d'un autre mot grec. Dans cette mesure les épithètes considérées comme poétiques sont par exemple écartées de la *Banque de Données des Épiclèses Grecques (BDEG, ex BDDE)*, centrée qu'elle est sur les « épiclèses divines ». ⁵ *Épiclèse* devient ainsi un terme technique qu'il n'est pas en grec.

Il s'agit donc d'éviter tous les malentendus entretenus par les concepts opératoires modernes que l'on dénomme d'un terme grec renvoyant pourtant à un signifié différent ; la référence lexicale hellène a un effet d'universalisation et d'essentialisation contraire à toute démarche anthropologique. À cet égard, rappelons-le, le cas le plus flagrant est offert par le recours trompeur au terme *muthos* pour désigner la notion moderne de « mythe ».

C'est pourquoi, dans la suite de cette étude, on préférera substituer au terme et concept de « théonyme » la notion opératoire floue de « dénomination » (relative à une figure divine, héroïque, voire conceptuelle), et à « épiclèse » celle d'« appellation », voire de « qualification » ; ces qualifications peuvent être réparties grossièrement entre des appellations d'ordre rituel et cultuel (en somme des « épiclèses » au sens étymologique du terme en grec) et des qualifications d'ordre poétique.

Et on terminera ces considérations de méthode par deux rappels. D'une part les différentes formes hymniques que nous connaissons, qu'elles soient de tradition « littéraire » ou de tradition épigraphique, sont régulièrement rédigées

⁵ Voir à ce propos BRULE (1998/2007), 313-319, ainsi que BRULE & LEBRETON (2007), 218-221 (sur la « philosophie » de la *BDEG, ex BDDE*). Par ailleurs, PARKER (2003) affirme avec raison que les noms des dieux sont en Grèce volontiers accompagnés d'une (ou plusieurs) « *cult epithet* », les épithètes qualifiées de poétiques peuvent assumer cette fonction rituelle en particulier dans des hymnes destinés à une « *cult performance* » ; voir encore l'étude de BELAYCHE (2005) et surtout les indispensables précisions comparatives et critiques apportées par BONNET et al. (2018) qui soulignent en particulier la polysémie des « dénominations » des divinités en régime polythéiste.

en une diction poétique qui implique un rythme métrique et une performance chantée. D'autre part l'acte de nomination de la divinité dans une forme poétique et musicale contribue à provoquer sa présence au moment de la performance rituelle chantée. La suggestion était déjà celle du Socrate mis en scène par Platon dans le *Cratyle* à propos de la règle (ὀρθότης) pour l'établissement des noms : faire « comme dans les prières où la coutume veut que nous les interpellions par des noms (ὀνομαζόμενοι), quels qu'ils soient, et avec l'origine qui leur plaisent (χαίρουσι) ». ⁶ Le rappel est ici explicite de la demande sur laquelle se concluent la plupart des *Hymnes homériques* : χαῖρε, que la divinité se réjouisse de l'offrande musicale qui lui est faite en échange de l'intervention requise.

Entre dénominations, appellations culturelles et qualifications poétiques, on entend donc poursuivre l'interrogation sur l'impact pragmatique de la nomination rituelle des déesses et des dieux grecs dans les formes hymniques.

3. AUTOUR D'Ἀργυρότοξος : PRIÈRES HYMNiques DANS L'ILIADe

Revenons au début de l'*Iliade* et à la prière à forme hymnique adressée par le prêtre Chrysès au dieu Apollon pour venger l'enlèvement de sa fille. On se souvient que, devant le fléau qui, par les flèches d'Apollon, décime l'armée achéenne, Agamemnon est contraint de restituer Chryséis à son père. La jeune fille est ramenée par Ulysse à Chrysè où les Achéens offrent au dieu une importante hécatombe pour apaiser sa colère. Après les habituels gestes rituels de purification, Chrysès adresse à Apollon une nouvelle prière, dès lors entièrement intégrée à la séquence rituelle (1, 451-456) :

Écoute-moi, dieu à l'arc d'argent, qui as pris sous ta protection Chrysé
 Et la divine Cylla, toi qui règnes souverainement sur Ténédos,
 Déjà naguère tu as été à l'écoute de mes prières,
 Tu m'as honoré en frappant avec force l'armée des Achéens.
 Maintenant encore accomplis ce vœu qui est le mien.
 Maintenant des Danaens écarte le fléau qui les accable.

Comme on l'a relevé dans une étude toute récente,⁷ la qualification initiale du dieu en tant qu'Ἀργυρότοξος devient ici dénomination, de même que dans la prière adressée par le même Chrysès au début de la narration de l'*Iliade*. Et, de

⁶ Platon, *Cratyle* 400e ; voir aussi *Philèbe* 12c (à propos des noms d'Aphrodite) ; voir à propos de la nomination des dieux l'étude d'AUBRIOT (2005) ainsi que, pour leur invocation sous forme poétique, CALAME (2014). Voir dans ce volume, DI VITA, p. 162-183.

⁷ CALAME (2021).

même que dans cette prière dont les deux premiers vers sont ici repris, l'invocation au dieu est encadrée par un appel à l'écoute (κλῦθί μευ, vers 451), invitation à la divinité récurrente en particulier dans les hymnes de culte, et par un relatif hymnique qui introduit la partie descriptivo-narrative. Et l'évocation d'interventions passées de la part du dieu nous reconduit à la situation présente : ἔτι καὶ νῦν « et maintenant encore » (vers 457).

Avec sa forme rituelle reprenant la structure tripartite de toute forme hymnique,⁸ avec son énonciation invocatoire à la deuxième personne, avec sa performance rythmée et poétique, l'adresse au dieu introduisant l'offrande sacrificielle a un effet immédiat. À l'issue de la découpe des chairs des animaux sacrifiés selon le rite, à l'issue de leur consommation en un partage convivial, à l'issue de la consommation du vin ponctuée de libations aux dieux, les jeunes Achéens ne cessent de chanter « le beau péan » et le dieu préservateur (Ἐκάεργος, vers 474), qu'ils tentent d'apaiser. À l'écoute de la prière hymnique de Chrysès, puis des chants à son adresse, Apollon se laisse charmer et le fléau cesse. Accompagnant l'acte sacrificiel, la prière hymnique initiée par l'appellation du dieu s'avère efficace, *hic et nunc*.

Ἀργυρότοξος est-il dès lors à considérer comme une appellation culturelle, comme une « épiclèse » au sens étymologique du terme, voire comme un substitut du nom du dieu Apollon dans un appel rituel, individuel ou collectif ?

Dans l'étude préalable que l'on vient de mentionner, on a indiqué que dans l'*Iliade* l'adjectif ἀργυρότοξος pouvait être employé par le narrateur, dans le cours de la diégèse, comme nom désignant Apollon. C'est par exemple le cas quand le dieu apparaît aux côtés d'Arès et d'Éris, à propos du combat que ces divinités ont suscité (5, 517-518). Mais au terme de l'*Iliade*, c'est aussi sous cette forme (24, 56) que la déesse Héra s'adresse à Apollon pour reprocher aux dieux d'avoir soutenu Achille dans le traitement infamant que le héros a réservé au cadavre d'Hector. À vrai dire, pour en rester à l'*Iliade*, l'emploi d'ἀργυρότοξος est plus fréquent comme qualification d'Apollon, au cours du récit. Dans le chant V par exemple, Héra relève, en s'adressant à Zeus, que Cypris et « Apollon à l'arc d'argent » (5, 760) se réjouissent du spectacle d'Hector qui, à leur instigation, se déchaîne contre les Achéens. Dans ces différents emplois l'expression ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων assume la forme et le rôle poétiques d'une expression formulaire.⁹ Du point de vue métrique, elle est en général précédée d'une forme monosyllabe d'un verbe d'action sinon d'un

⁸ Quant à l'identification de cette structure en termes d'*invocatio/evocatio, pars epica* et *preces*, voir les références données dans CALAME (2012), ainsi que, pour les *Hymnes homériques*, VAMVOURI-RUFFY (2004), 27-36.

⁹ La portée sémantique plus ou moins motivée des épithètes intégrées dans les expressions formulaires de la poésie homérique est interrogée en particulier dans l'étude de BAKKER (2005), 1-37.

connecteur ; elle correspond ainsi au second cōlon de l'hexamètre dactylique après la césure pentémimère et, par conséquent à un parémiaque (≡ --- --- --). Ainsi, la qualification est détachée de tout contexte rituel pour être intégrée à la conduite du « récit ». De plus, la relation sémantique forte entre le sens de l'épithète « à l'arc d'argent » et le contexte rituel où le dieu est appelé à intervenir n'est pas actualisée ; dans son emploi formulaire, la qualification n'est pas motivée par une sollicitation d'Apollon comme archer, lanceur de traits portant maladie et mort.

4. LES HYMNES HOMÉRIQUES :

APPELLATIONS DIVINES ENTRE « RÉCIT » ET « DISCOURS »

En passant de l'ordre du récit à celui du discours, en passant d'une séquence d'énoncés narratifs à la troisième personne et au passé dans laquelle est éventuellement inséré le texte d'une prière hymnique à des énoncés formulés à la première et à la deuxième personne comme adresses directes à une divinité ici et maintenant,¹⁰ en passant donc de prières à forme hymnique dont le contexte est narratif (et intra-discursif) à des formes d'hymne dont le contexte est d'ordre cultuel (et extra-discursif), on se demandera ce qu'il en est du contexte énonciatif et de la pragmatique des appellations ritualisées des divinités grecques d'abord dans les *Hymnes homériques*.

4.1. Appellations formulaires : quelle motivation sémantique ?

À commencer par le second *Hymne homérique* adressé à Dionysos (7). Au centre de cette composition de cinquante-neuf vers, le développement descriptivo-narratif qui raconte l'enlèvement du dieu par les pirates tyrrhéniens. Face à la difficulté à maîtriser et à enchaîner l'inconnu, le capitaine se demande s'il ne s'agit pas d'un dieu : « mais ce dieu devant nous n'est-il pas Zeus ou Apollon l'archer, ou encore Poséidon ? » (ἦ γὰρ Ζεὺς ὄδε γ'έστιν, ἢ ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων, ἢ Ποσειδών, vers 19-20). À n'en point douter, l'emploi de l'expression ἀργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων est ici, à nouveau, formulaire. Elle apparaît dans la position métrique habituelle du parémiaque, et cela dans une énumération où ni le nom de Zeus, ni celui de Poséidon ne sont quant à eux accompagnés d'une qualification. En l'occurrence l'épithète « à l'arc d'argent » corres-

¹⁰ Je reprends donc ici, de manière purement opératoire, la distinction tracée par BENVENISTE (1966), 237-250 et 258-266 ; sur l'« appareil formel de l'énonciation », on verra encore (1974), 79-88 ; voir les compléments proposés, en particulier pour les formes poétiques grecques, dans CALAME (2005), 13-26.

pond à une qualification poétique non motivée du point de vue du contexte sémantique de l'hymne.

En revanche, dans le bref hymne homérique 9 adressé à Artémis, l'expression formulaire ἀργυρότοξος Απόλλων (vers 5) entre en écho sémantique avec la qualification initiale de la déesse, sœur d'Apollon. Artémis la jeune fille sagittaire est d'emblée présentée comme la sœur de l'« Archer » (vers 1). De plus, au vers 6, la déesse reçoit les qualifications successives de ἐκατηβόλος, « qui frappe au loin », « qui lance ses traits au loin », et de ἰοχαίρα « qui lance des flèches ». Le premier de ces deux composés à rection verbale est aussi employé pour qualifier Apollon lui-même par exemple dans un passage de l'*Iliade* (5, 443-454) où le dieu reçoit encore la qualification d'ἀργυρότοξος ! Ainsi se dessine, dans ce bref hymne homérique de moins de dix vers, une véritable « isotopie » sémantique, relative au moyen d'intervention commun à Artémis et à Apollon : l'arc et les flèches. Mais dans le tracé de ce registre sémantique unissant en leur mode d'action la sœur au frère, la double mention du dieu Apollon reste de l'ordre du récit !

Il en va de même dans le long *Hymne homérique à Hermès*. Dans le récit développé du vol des vaches d'Apollon et plus particulièrement dans la scène de comparution devant Zeus, face à Hermès le Cyllénien, Apollon est simplement désigné comme Ἀργυρότοξος (vers 318). Cette désignation adjectivale correspond à une dénomination, elle correspond à un substantif. Puis tenant le petit Hermès en station devant les genoux de Zeus, face à la balance de la justice, le dieu devient ἀργυρότοξος Απόλλων (vers 327). C'est ensuite en tant que Phoibos que le maître de l'Olympe s'adresse au dieu pour s'enquérir de l'origine du petit Hermès. La réponse d'Apollon est introduite par un vers doublement formulaire, soit τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπεν ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Απόλλων, « alors Apollon qui frappe au loin, le seigneur, lui répliqua » (vers 333). L'asyndète marquant la double qualification d'Apollon intervient donc dans l'ordre du récit. Et si, au début de cette scène, le petit Hermès s'adresse à Apollon qu'il interpelle au vocatif en tant que Ἐκάεργε (vers 307) dans une qualification qui devient « théonyme », c'est dans un discours inséré, qui est narrativement subordonné au récit principal...

4.2. L'Hymne homérique à Apollon : appellations rituelles

Mais en suivant le fil conducteur offert par l'épithète ἀργυρότοξος, les énoncés en diction homérique mentionnés jusqu'ici s'insèrent tous dans l'ordre du « récit », dans l'ordre de la narration hymnique, comme c'est le cas dans l'*Iliade*. Le long *Hymne homérique à Apollon* semble en revanche offrir un exemple de

l'emploi d'ἀργυρότοξος dans une adresse directe à Apollon, au moment de la performance chantée de l'hymne.

Rappelons brièvement que cet hymne homérique de plus de cinq cents vers est composé de deux volets racontant l'un l'arrivée du dieu à Délos, l'autre son installation à Delphes. Sans entrer dans le détail d'une question largement controversée,¹¹ on remarquera que la partie délienne offre la structure tripartite caractéristique de toute forme hymnique. Comme c'est le cas, à une exception près, des trente-trois hymnes homériques à nous être parvenus, ce poème en diction homérique est introduit par un vers non pas d'évocation, mais d'invocation, et cela sur le mode performatif : « Je vais rappeler, et ma mémoire ne faillira pas, Apollon l'archer » (μνήσομαι... Ἀπόλλωνος ἐκάτοιο, vers 1).

Puis, dès le deuxième vers, la partie narrative et descriptive est introduite par le relatif hymnique attendu ; on assiste successivement à l'arrivée du dieu sur l'Olympe dans la demeure de son père Zeus, à la quête de sa future mère Létô pour un lieu où accoucher, à la naissance du petit Apollon à Délos où le dieu adulte revient pour assister aux chants choraux des Ioniens. Enfin, sans offrir de prière explicite, le poème délien s'achève, comme de nombreux autres hymnes homériques, par l'intention performative de la part du *je* poétique de poursuivre sa célébration chantée d'Apollon « qu'a engendré Létô aux belles boucles » (vers 178).¹²

Or, la scène narrative située à Délos, le lieu de culte du dieu, est introduite par une invocation directe à Apollon ; et cela sous la forme rituelle, sinon culturelle d'une accumulation de qualifications en asyndète : αὐτὸς δ' ἀργυρότοξε, ἄναξ Ἐκατηβόλ' Ἀπόλλων, « toi à l'arc d'argent, seigneur qui lance ses traits au loin, Apollon » (vers 140), dans l'esquisse d'une « séquence onomastique ». Énoncé au vocatif, sur le mode du discours, cet hexamètre à tournure rituelle semble confirmer l'hypothèse de la valeur invocatoire et par conséquent de la force pragmatique de la dénomination et de la qualification hymniques d'une divinité. Dès lors, les épithètes choisies pour qualifier le dieu pourraient apparaître comme motivées du point de vue sémantique. De plus, du point de vue énonciatif, la narration de cette scène du retour du dieu à Délos (vers 140-178) est initiée au passé pour se dérouler ensuite au présent. Par ailleurs, grammaticalement, Apollon en est l'acteur à la deuxième personne ;¹³ c'est ainsi que le dieu est l'objet d'une seconde adresse en tant que Phoibos (vers 146). La posi-

¹¹ La question de l'unité de l'*Hymne homérique à Apollon* a été reprise récemment par CHAPPELL (2011) qui, sans aucun doute à raison, plaide pour l'autonomie respective des deux parties conduisant à Délos d'une part, à Delphes de l'autre.

¹² Exemples et signification de ce passage à un autre chant dans CALAME (1995/2005), 60-63.

¹³ Ces différences entre « *subsequent singulative narrative* » (au passé) et « *simultaneous iterative narration* » (au présent, ici en *tu*) sont relevées par NÜNLIST (2007), mais sans qu'il en tire les conclusions qui s'imposent du point de vue énonciatif et pragmatique.

tion énonciative de l'interlocuteur ou du narrataire dans laquelle le dieu est placé implique sa présence, *hic et nunc*.¹⁴

Or à l'occasion de sa mention de la purification de Délos pour conjurer la peste qui a dévasté Athènes en 426/5, Thucydide (3, 104) cite précisément deux séries de vers tirés de cette scène essentielle du long *Hymne homérique à Apollon*.¹⁵ Tout en les attribuant à « Homère », l'historien indique qu'ils sont extraits d'un « proème d'Apollon ». C'est en effet par ce terme de προοίμιον que l'on désigne volontiers dans l'Antiquité les hymnes que la tradition considère comme homériques. Ces compositions en diction homérique sont destinées à introduire la récitation de chants rhapsodiques à l'occasion de concours musicaux tel celui qui marquait la célébration culturelle des Grandes Panathénées pour Athéna Pallas à Athènes à l'époque classique.¹⁶ Comme l'y invite la tournure énonciative de la narration hymnique avec ses adresses directes à Apollon, acteur en *tu* de l'action narrative, l'historiographe athénien ne manque pas d'établir une relation forte entre ce rassemblement d'autrefois (ποτε, παλαιί) au temps d'Homère, et la célébration musicale actuelle (νῦν) ; cela à l'exemple d'Éphèse puisque les circonstances avaient contraint les Athéniens à suspendre momentanément la célébration des Délia. Et Thucydide d'ajouter que cette célébration culturelle s'inscrivait dans la tradition respectée à Athènes et dans les îles de la mer Égée d'envoyer à Délos des groupes cho-raux et des offrandes sacrificielles.¹⁷

Mais si la narration de la partie délienne prend du point de vue énonciatif la tournure du discours notamment par l'usage de la deuxième personne, elle se déroule toujours sur le mode du récit. Cette narration est engagée au tout début du proème et poème hymnique par le relatif hymnique faisant suite au vers d'évocation (et non pas d'invocation) attendu au début de tout hymne homérique : « Je vais rappeler et je n'oublierai pas Apollon frappant au loin, qui fait trembler les dieux quand il se rend dans la demeure de Zeus » (vers 1-2). De plus, au terme de la partie délienne de l'hymne, après la « sphragis » qui attribue le poème hymnique à « l'aveugle de Chio »,¹⁸ le rhapsode narrateur dé-

¹⁴ Quant aux tournures énonciatives permettant d'activer la présence de l'interlocuteur en particulier dans l'*Hymne homérique à Apollon*, voir l'étude de HUNZINGER (2012), 52-58 (avec de nombreuses références bibliographiques).

¹⁵ Vers 146-150 et 165-172, avec quelques variations par rapport au texte de la tradition manuscrite des *Hymnes homériques*.

¹⁶ Sur les hymnes homériques comme proèmes, cf. CALAME (1995/2005), 44-47. Pour la récitation des poèmes homériques au concours de rhapsodes des Grandes Panathénées, voir en particulier NAGY (1996), 69-71 et 110-112.

¹⁷ Dans un chapitre où elle analyse les différentes mentions poétiques des danses chorales des Déliades, KOWALZIG (2007), 56-128, identifie bien les enjeux politiques et économiques de la célébration par Ioniens et Athéniens de la grande fête des Délia en l'honneur d'Apollon.

¹⁸ Pour le sens très discuté de cette « signature » poétique, voir en particulier NAGY (2009), 205-210.

clare de manière performative son désir de ne pas cesser de chanter (οὐ λήξω ὕμνέων, vers 177-178) Apollon : mis en scène à nouveau à la troisième personne, le dieu est qualifié (en asyndète) de ἐκηβόλος et de ἀργυρότοξος, « qui lance des traits au loin » et « à l'arc d'argent ».

L'*Hymne homérique à Apollon*, du moins dans sa partie délienne, nous situe ainsi encore entre récit et discours, sans référence explicite par la qualification de la divinité au contexte d'énonciation du chant, *hic et nunc*. Pour évaluer la portée pragmatique des qualifications des dieux, il faut encore se tourner vers quelques compositions où le rhapsode homérique insère ces qualifications dans l'adresse directe au dieu, en particulier au terme du poème.

4.3. Pragmatique des appellations divines dans les Hymnes homériques

De fait à répondre explicitement à la définition pragmatique de l'hymne homérique en tant que proème à la performance rituelle de chants rhapsodiques, notre corpus des *Hymnes homériques* n'offre qu'une seule composition.

Il s'agit du second hymne homérique adressé à Aphrodite (le sixième dans notre corpus). Certes, la déesse au début du poème n'est évoquée que par des qualifications qui nous apparaissent comme poétiques. L'aède dit son intention de chanter (αἴσομαι, forme du futur performatif au vers 2) « la respectable, la belle Aphrodite à la couronne d'or » (χρυσοστέφανον, vers 1). Suit une partie descriptive et narrative qui, introduite très régulièrement par un relatif hymnique, décrit l'habillement érotique d'Aphrodite avant que la déesse ne quitte l'île qui l'a accueillie pour l'Olympe. Enfin on assiste à la prière conclusive qui qualifie à nouveau la déesse de manière poétique ; en effet ni ἐλικοβλέφαρος, « aux yeux mobiles », ni γλυκυμείλιχος, « douce comme le miel » (vers 19) ne sont des qualificatifs réservés à la seule Aphrodite. Néanmoins, tout en énonçant ces deux épithètes en asyndète sur le mode rituel comme c'est le cas au premier vers, ces vers sont introduits par la traditionnelle invitation à la divinité à se réjouir (χαῖρε) ; et dans l'habituel contrat rituel de *do ut des*, en échange du chant qui lui est offert, la déesse est priée d'intervenir « dans ce concours-ci » (ἐν ἀγῶνι τῷιδε, vers 19-20). Avec ce geste de deixis verbale décidé, le *je* poétique demande à Aphrodite de lui accorder la victoire en entonnant son propre chant (ἔμην δ' ἔντυνον ἀοιδήν, vers 21) !

Malheureusement, comme c'est souvent le cas dans les procédures poétiques de deixis verbale, aucune figuration n'est donnée aux paramètres de l'*hic et nunc*, aux circonstances spatiales et temporelles de l'exécution chantée de l'hymne homérique. Certes, du point de vue géographique, on peut relever que la partie descriptivo-narrative de l'hymne est centrée sur l'accueil à Chypre de la très jeune déesse, à peine née de l'écume de la mer, par les Heures qui la

parent des atours suscitant le désir érotique pour l'introduire choralement auprès des immortels ; ceux-ci ne vont pas manquer de désirer avoir pour épouse celle qui devient la Cythérée (vers 19). Mais dans le retour à l'*hic et nunc* assumé par le *je* poétique par une forme du futur performatif (μνήσομαι, vers 21) qui est en écho annulaire avec la forme ἄισομαι du vers 2, aucune allusion à Chypre comme lieu éventuel de la joute musicale et par conséquent de la performance chantée et dansée de l'hymne homérique lui-même.

Tournons-nous vers le très bref *Hymne homérique à Athéna* (11). Le poème hymnique débute avec une forme d'évocation qui pourrait offrir une indication d'ordre spatial : Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην ἐρυσίπολιν ἄρχομ' αἰεῖδεν, soit « je commence à chanter Pallas Athéna, la protectrice de la cité ». Pallas fait en effet référence à la cité d'Athènes. En effet Athéna apparaît comme Pallas dans quelques inscriptions athéniennes,¹⁹ et il semble possible d'identifier Pallas avec Polias.²⁰ De plus, la qualification de la déesse comme « protectrice de la cité » (sinon de l'acropole) ainsi que son association à Arès et à l'exercice de la guerre dans la partie descriptive semblent désigner l'Athéna d'Athènes. L'hymne pourrait donc, en tant que proème, correspondre à l'un des chants hymniques introduisant un chant homérique à l'occasion du célèbre concours de rhapsodes marquant, on l'a mentionné, la célébration des Grandes Panathénées.²¹ Néanmoins non seulement l'emploi de l'épithète ἐρυσίπολις pour qualifier Athéna n'est pas propre au seul contexte athénien – dans l'*Iliade* par exemple (6, 305), Athéna est invoquée en tant que telle par Théanô, la prêtresse du temple de la déesse sur l'acropole de Troie. Mais de plus, introduit par la traditionnelle demande à la déesse de se réjouir (χαῖρε), le vers conclusif de la prière se limite à une demande générale d'accorder « bonheur et prospérité » à qui chante (vers 5).

Parmi les trente-trois chants constituant notre corpus des hymnes homériques, il est un autre poème épique (28) qui s'adresse à Pallas Athéna. La déesse est évoquée dans un vers initial analogue à celui qui initie le bref hymne que l'on vient d'alléguer : Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην, κυδρὴν θεὸν, ἄρχομ' αἰεῖδεν, « je commence à chanter Pallas Athéna, la glorieuse déesse » (vers 1). À la suite d'une partie descriptive introduite par un relatif hymnique pour raconter la naissance de la déesse de la tête de son père Zeus sur l'Olympe, l'appel formulaire à la déesse à se réjouir (χαῖρε, vers 17) désigne Athéna comme « fille de Zeus qui porte l'égide ». L'invocation débouche sur le vers, également formulaire, qui indique, sous forme performative, l'intention du poète de célébrer la déesse dans un autre chant : « et moi de toi je ferai mémoire (μνήσομαι)

¹⁹ Par exemple IG II² 3474 ; mais l'inscription date de 130 av. J.-C.

²⁰ Mais pas avec le Palladion ; voir à ce propos notamment SOURVINOU-INWOOD (2011), 160-167.

²¹ Cf. *supra* note 16.

dans un autre chant encore » (vers 18). Avec sa tournure performative au sens linguistique du terme, ce vers conclut d'autres préludes hymniques en diction homérique, confirmant leur fonction de proèmes.

Mais la spécificité culturelle de la divinité évoquée dans le premier vers en tant que Pallas Athéna se dissipe rapidement. En effet, par l'accumulation en asyndète de six qualifications, les deux vers suivant s'emploient à définir la figure physique, morale et intellectuelle de la déesse. Avec ses yeux brillants (γλαυκῶπιν), la respectable jeune fille (παρθένον αἰδοίην) « au cœur inflexible » est astucieuse (πολύμητιν) comme elle est aussi protectrice des cités (ἔρυσίπτολιν) et intrépide. Quant à la partie narrative de ce bref hymne homérique, consacrée à la naissance de la déesse, elle est présentée comme l'explication étimologique de la désignation courante d'Athéna, dès les poèmes homériques, en tant que Tritogénès ou Tritogénéia. Cette dénomination est reprise au début du vers final du récit par l'évocation de Pallas Athéna (vers 16) ; elle se trouve en écho annulaire avec la désignation qui, dans les mêmes termes, inaugure la composition hymnique. Il est donc malaisé de localiser le culte de la déesse ainsi définie et, partant, la célébration rituelle dans laquelle s'insérerait le chant de ce proème !

Sur la base du même vers final de passage à un autre chant célébrant la divinité évoquée, puis invoquée dans l'hymne, on se trouve confronté à la même interrogation successivement pour le très bref hymne homérique adressé aux Muses et à Apollon (25), pour l'hymne adressé à Gaia en tant que mère de toute chose (30) ou pour le poème évoquant Hestia, la fille de Cronos, en même temps qu'Hermès (29). Il n'en reste pas moins que, du point de vue pragmatique, reste significatif en particulier l'organisation en structure annulaire du chant hymnique 28 ; son développement nous conduit de l'évocation initiale de Pallas Athéna à la même mention de la déesse en conclusion de la partie descriptive et narrative. Cette double nomination confirme l'appel à la présence de la déesse aussi bien dans le poème que dans le rituel correspondant à sa performance chantée.

5. UN HYMNE DE CULTE : INVOCATION ET PRÉSENCE DE LA DIVINITÉ

Mais de l'évocation de la divinité qui initie les hymnes homériques passons enfin à la forme hymnique invocatoire. Parmi les quelques hymnes de culte à nous être parvenus par l'intermédiaire épigraphique, l'exemple de plus illustratif du présent propos est sans doute fourni par l'*Hymne à Apollon* d'Aristonoos ; assumant la forme d'un péan (42 Käppel), cette composition permettra de parvenir à quelques conclusions partielles et provisoires quant à la

pragmatique de la nomination et de la qualification hymniques et rituelles des divinités en régime polythéiste grec.

Dans la partie initiale non plus d'évocation, mais d'invocation à proprement parler, Apollon n'est appelé par son nom qu'au vers 5. En effet, composé de six paires de quatrains rythmiquement formés d'un enchaînement non plus d'hexamètres dactyliques mais de trois glyconiens suivis d'un phérécratéen, le chant est ponctué par la répétition, au terme de chaque strophe de quatre vers, du célèbre appel rituel ὦ/ἦ ἰὲ Παιάν, « *ô/iê ie Paian* ». ²² Ainsi à l'issue du premier quatrain tout se passe comme si c'était le refrain d'appel à Péan qui induisait l'adresse à Apollon en tant qu'Apollon. Quant à cette première strophe, elle est consacrée à situer d'emblée le dieu auprès de la roche de Delphes, auprès du site oraculaire de Pythô fondée par les dieux. Cette mention initiale revient non seulement à localiser le dieu, mais surtout à lui attribuer la qualification et la fonction qu'il assume en effet sur le site de la Pythie : ²³

Πυθίαν ἱερόκτιτον ναίων
 Δελφίδ' ἀμφὶ πέτραν αἰεὶ
 θεσπιόμαντιν ἔδραν,
 ἦ ἰὲ Παιάν,
 Ἄπολλον, Κοίου τε κόρας
 Λατοῦς σεμνὸν ἄγαλμα καὶ
 Ζητὸς ὑψίστου μακάρων βουλαῖς,
 ὦ ἰὲ Παιάν.

Occupant en permanence le siège pythique,
 au fondement sacré, de la parole oraculaire
 auprès du rocher de Delphes,
iê ie Paian,
 Apollon, vénérable orgueil pour Létô,
 la fille de Coios, et par la volonté de Zeus,
 le plus haut placé parmi les bienheureux,
ô ie Paian.

Ainsi, après l'allusion généalogique aux parents du dieu offerte dans le deuxième quatrain, c'est précisément la fonction oraculaire qui est précisée au début de la partie descriptivo-narrative de l'hymne. De manière significative, ce développement central est introduit au début de la seconde paire de strophes non pas par le relatif hymnique attendu, mais par un pronom démonstratif de lieu : ἔνθα, « là » (vers 9). Remarquons que toute cette partie est énoncée non pas à la troisième, mais à la deuxième personne ; faisant du dieu invoqué ici et maintenant le protagoniste de ces énoncés descriptifs et narratifs, ces formes de la deuxième personne entrent en écho invocatoire avec le double refrain qui ponctue chaque double quatrain. Du point de vue de la qualification du dieu ces vers permettent d'ajouter à l'évocation des pieux décrets de l'oracle la voix

²² Pour la structure métrique de ce péan et la bibliographie qu'il a suscitée, on pourra se référer au commentaire de FURLEY & BREMER (2001), II, 45-52. Les formes assumées par le refrain qui ponctue le péan sont analysées par KÄPPEL (1992), 65-70. Quant au péan comme forme poétique, voir l'excellente étude de FORD (2006).

²³ Dans son étude de 2003, PARKER propose de distinguer entre « *functional cult epithet* » et « *topographic cult epithet* »; cf. *supra* note 5.

de la lyre au son retentissant (vers 13-16).²⁴ Ils prolongent donc la description du caractère oraculaire du lieu dans lequel le dieu est d'emblée invoqué.

Suit une évocation des divinités qui ont contribué à l'installation d'Apollon à Delphes : Zeus, Athéna, Gaia, Thémis. C'est ensuite au tour de Poséidon, des Nymphes, de Dionysos (Bromios) et finalement d'Artémis, « la vénérable » (σεμνά, vers 38). On relèvera que, par l'insertion d'un second pronom adverbial (ὄθεν, « de là », au vers 25), le poète introduit de manière étimologique la présence d'Athéna ; dénommée Τριτογενής, la déesse est installée par Apollon lui-même en tant que Pronaia au seuil de son sanctuaire oraculaire.²⁵

Quant à la partie de *preces* qui correspond au dernier couple de strophes du poème hymnique (vers 41-48), elle est à nouveau centrée, du point de vue spatial, sur le site de Delphes :

Ἄλλ' ὃ Παρνασσοῦ γυάλων
εὐδρόσοισι Κασταλίας
να[σ]μοῖς σὸν δέμας ἐξαβρύνων,
ἰῆ ἰὲ Παιάν,
χαρεῖς ὕμνοις ἡμετέροις,
ὄλβον ἐξ ὀσίων διδοῦς
ἄει καὶ σώϊζων ἐφέποις ἡμᾶς,
ὦ ἰὲ Παιάν.

Allons, ô toi qui baignes ton corps plein
de grâce dans les eaux fraîches de Castalie
jaillissant des vallons du Parnasse,
iê ie Paian,
toi qui te laisses charmer par nos hymnes,
en accordant la pieuse prospérité et le salut
pour toujours, puisses-tu nous accompagner,
ô ie Paian.

Si les allusions au Parnasse et à la source Castalie dessinent une structure annuelle avec le thème géographique qui est celui de la première strophe du chant, l'évocation du bain d'Apollon dans les eaux jaillissant à Delphes débouche sur le pacte rituel concluant pratiquement chaque forme hymnique : au constat du plaisir que le dieu prend aux hymnes qui lui sont adressés répond le souhait des chanteurs de se voir accorder prospérité et sécurité, pour toujours.

Essentiel est ici l'usage d'une forme du verbe « se réjouir » (χαρεῖς, vers 45) qui, de même que le χαῖρε conclusif des *Hymnes homériques*, engage la transaction rituelle du *do ut des*. Cette invite à la réjouissance fait du poème en performance une offrande musicale. En tant qu'hymne, cette offrande est assumée par un *je* poétique qui apparaît ici au pluriel : ὕμνοις ἡμετέροις, « par nos chants » (vers 45), tant il est vrai que la forme hymnique du péan implique une exécution chorale.²⁶ Sans doute s'agit-il ici, au terme du poème, d'un *nous* poétique, qui inclut sur le mode énonciatif du discours le poète, le groupe cho-

²⁴ En ce qui concerne l'arc et la lyre d'Apollon, les affinités entre voix oraculaire et voix instrumentale sont explorées en particulier par MONBRUN (2007), 273-292.

²⁵ Sur Athéna Pronaia à Delphes, voir FURLEY & BREMER (2001), II, 50.

²⁶ Quant à l'exécution chorale et musicale des différentes formes de péan, voir les pages précises de KÄPPEL (1992), 75-82.

ral et la communauté civique, dans une polyphonie chorale qu'on a pu repérer dans d'autres formes de poésie chantée.²⁷

La destination, la performance et la consécration du péan hymnique à Delphes sont pleinement confirmées tant par l'énoncé de la dédicace que par le texte introductif à la dédicace épigraphique. Sous la forme d'une *sphragis*, c'est-à-dire d'un « sceau » en guise de signature, le premier déclare que le chant explicitement désigné comme ὕμνος est dédié à Apollon Pythien (voir le premier terme de l'hymne !) par le Corinthien Aristonoos fils de Nicosthène qui s'en déclare implicitement l'auteur. Le second précise qu'en reconnaissance pour les hymnes qu'Aristonoos a composés (ἐποίησεν) pour les dieux, les gens de Delphes lui ont accordé ainsi qu'à ses descendants une série de privilèges, parmi lesquels la proxénie, la promantie, la proédrrie, cela probablement durant le troisième tiers du IV^e siècle. De plus, du point de vue pragmatique, l'importance donnée dans le poème hymnique à la figure d'Athéna est à reconduire aux grands travaux entrepris dans le sanctuaire d'Athéna Pronaia au moment de la consécration du péan.²⁸

Ni la dédicace ni le chant hymnique lui-même n'offrent néanmoins d'indication sur la fête culturelle à laquelle ce péan était destiné. Tout porte à croire qu'il s'agit des Théoxénies, célébration rituelle de l'hospitalité offerte à Delphes à Apollon et à Dionysos.²⁹ Mais surtout, s'il contribue dans son développement à qualifier le dieu dans son espace cultuel et dans sa situation parmi les dieux de l'Olympe, cet hymne cultuel n'offre d'Apollon aucune qualification à proprement parler, ni épithète poétique, ni appellation culturelle, sinon dans le cri rituel du refrain douze fois répété ὦ/ῆ ἱὲ Παιάν, « *ô/iê ie Paian* ». Péan : « épiclèse » ou appellation culturelle s'il en est, sinon dénomination alternative et rituelle du dieu Apollon ! Tout se passe comme si, du point de vue de la pragmatique de l'appel hymnique à une divinité, la réitération du refrain avec les jeux rythmiques qu'il implique se substituait en quelque sorte aux qualifications adjectivales, qu'elles soient poétiques ou culturelles.

6. PROPOSITIONS CONCLUSIVES

Quoi qu'il en soit, dans et par des formes poétiques qui combinent subtilement énoncés narratifs ou descriptifs et énoncés relevant de l'ordre du discours, il s'agit d'appeler la présence et l'intervention de la divinité à laquelle la performance musicale et rituelle de l'hymne est dédiée ; le poème hymnique, dans sa

²⁷ Par exemple dans les épiniques de Pindare telle la 6^e *Olympique* : CALAME (2009).

²⁸ Ces circonstances historiques sont explicitées par VAMVOURI-RUFFY (2004), 206-216.

²⁹ Sur cette hypothèse, voir FURLEY & BREMER (2001), I, 120-121.

réalisation vocale, est présenté en offrande musicale, dans la pratique rituelle du *do ut des*. La voix poétique qui la porte renvoie autant, du point de vue de l'agentivité rituelle, au rhapsode ou au groupe choral qui chante l'hymne qu'au poète qui l'a composé. Qu'il s'agisse des prières rituelles insérées dans la narration épique, des hymnes homériques en tant que proèmes à des récitations rhapsodiques ou des hymnes de culte, la combinaison des appellations culturelles et des qualifications poétiques avec la nomination de la divinité concernée contribue à la portée pragmatique de la prière proférée pour susciter sa présence et son intervention, *hic et nunc*.

Quant aux « propositions théoriques » à l'origine du présent volume collectif, on pourra esquisser les réponses, très partielles, suivantes. Le passage d'« épithètes littéraires » à des « épithètes rituelles » semble facilité par l'efficacité pratique des formes de chant poétique en performance que sont les hymnes. De là la nécessité de renoncer à la bipartition entre « épithètes » et « épiclèses », pour lui préférer la désignation globale comme « qualifications » et « appellations » ; des appellations qui peuvent se développer en « séquences onomastiques » se prolongeant quant à elles dans la figuration et la qualification de la divinité invoquée à travers la partie descriptivo-narrative de toute forme hymnique grecque. Quant aux agents de la performance musicale et rituelle de ces formes poétiques hymniques, ce sont aussi bien les poètes et compositeurs du poème que les exécutants du chant et en définitive la communauté des participants et participantes à la célébration religieuse dont le chant de l'hymne est un des actes rituels constitutifs ; les uns et les autres agissent dans et par le poème même grâce aux différentes stratégies énonciatives parmi lesquelles l'appel et la qualification de la divinité concernée.

C'est sans doute la raison pour laquelle les (dé)nominations et les appellations hymniques des dieux sont focalisées sur la localisation de la divinité invoquée et sur la qualité et la fonction divines dont on attend les bénéfiques. En donnant une figuration de la puissance divine appelée à intervenir, dénominations et appellations concourent à provoquer la présence de la divinité et, par conséquent, à susciter son action. Dans cette figuration l'esquisse d'un « paysage religieux » est essentielle dans la mesure où le dessin de cet espace est en relation autant avec la fonction et les qualités requises du dieu invoqué qu'avec l'espace dans lequel il est appelé à intervenir, *hic et nunc*.³⁰ Quant au « niveau de langage » concerné, on espère avoir montré que la diction poétique de formes hymniques qui renvoient à une forme de chant rythmé et dansé est constitutive de leur ritualité musicale et garante de leur efficacité religieuse.

³⁰ Voir dans ce volume la contribution de GALOPPIN, p. 138-161.

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BY X?
SWEARING OATHS AND NAMING DEITIES IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

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Cette contribution explore la pratique du serment (formel et informel) en tant qu'acte de communication et d'invocation dans les tribunaux de l'Athènes classique. Ce faisant, elle corrige le rejet systématique des serments informels comme interjections purement rhétoriques qui auraient perdu toute la valeur sémantique que possèdent les serments. En prêtant attention à la diversité des divinités invoquées dans ces serments, ce chapitre recherche pourquoi et comment un orateur choisit de jurer au nom de telle ou telle divinité. Par une analyse complète des divinités les moins fréquemment invoquées par serment, cette contribution démontre que le choix de ces divinités peut être délibéré, propre au contenu du serment et significatif. Dans un deuxième temps, le chapitre examine l'usage rare d'épithètes dans ces serments informels, qui éclaire l'importance de nommer des divinités précises dans un contexte judiciaire. Cette contribution soutient que les serments informels sont des témoins d'une pratique consciente de dénomination et devraient donc être compris comme des actes de parole qui, s'ils diffèrent des serments formels par leur degré d'intensité, n'ont pas entièrement perdu de leur signification originelle.

In the Assembly and law courts of Classical Athens, the gods are shadowy figures. Litigants in trials or orators in the Assembly present in their speeches a civic religious discourse which, as Robert Parker puts it, is “opaque”: it is a never-endingly optimistic discourse free from criticisms of the gods and full of praise for them, yet – crucially – lacking in specificities or speculation about these very gods.¹ Orators rarely discuss singular, individual deities, instead talking of the gods as a collective: it is the plural *theoi*, or the general, unspecific *theos* or *daimon*, who are said to always be just and benevolent, unflinching on Athens' side (e.g. Dem. 18.192-194, 290; Aeschin. 3.88; Isoc. 1.12).² The gods are present, if in the background, dimly lit. They seldom appear in their cultic forms: apart from references to specific festivals or sanctuaries, orators rarely draw attention to individual deities.³ However, there is one important

¹ PARKER (1997), 154.

² With the general concept of τύχη ('fortune') responsible for negative outcomes: e.g. Din. 1.32; Antiph. 6.15.

³ MIKALSON (1983), 64-69; RUDHARDT (1958), 103-105.

exception to this: in their judicial and political declamations, orators frequently swear oaths. The surviving corpus of the Attic orators counts 252 oaths, of which 4 are elaborate, formal oaths which include an explicit oath statement and a verb of swearing (Dem. 23.5; 32.31; 54.41; 19.172).⁴ The remaining 248 are short “informal oaths”, so-called because they lack the formality and explicitness of the more regular, formal oaths.⁵ These elements simply comprise an affirmative or negative particle (e.g., *ναὶ μά, νή, οὐ μά, or μά*) and one or more divine names: expressions such as *νῆ τὸν Δία καὶ τὸν Απόλλω*, “by Zeus and Apollo”, (Dem. 9.65) or *μὰ Δί’* (Dem. 19.285), “by Zeus”, pepper the speeches of litigants and speakers. The vast majority of these invoke either Zeus (176 occurrences) or all the gods (*οἱ θεοί*: 37), followed in third place by combinations of Zeus with other gods (22).⁶ However, in a handful of cases other deities are invoked: we find Athena thus sworn to three times, Demeter twice, Dionysos once, Herakles three times, Poseidon once, and the heroic war dead once.⁷ Similarly exceptionally, there are a few informal oaths in which the speaker invokes a deity not only through use of a theonym but by adding an epithet to the divine name. To borrow from linguistics, we may consider these expressions “marked”. They stand out as deviating from the “unmarked” norm – namely the informal oaths sworn by Zeus and by “all the gods”.⁸ How should we understand these instances where a speaker calls not to Zeus, the king of deities, nor to the collective gods, but to a different divine being? Do all invoked deities function the same, or is there a difference between, say, Demosthenes invoking Zeus, or Demeter, or *x* deity, at a crucial point in his argumentation? Is there a significance and meaning in the choice of oath deity, or the addition of an epithet to a divine name, or are these “informal oaths” easily interchangeable?

⁴ These oaths all invoke only *τοὺς θεοὺς* and (in the case of Dem. 54) *τὰς θεὰς*, meaning they will not be relevant for this discussion of unusual oath-gods.

⁵ See “The Oath in Archaic and Classical Greece” database: by Sommerstein, A.H., Bayliss, A.J., Torrance, I.C., <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~brzoaths/database.php> [date accessed: 10/11/2019]. They count 251 oaths in total, omitting Dem. 23.5. I am grateful to the Nottingham Oath Project for open access to their database, which has greatly facilitated the collection of data for this investigation. On the distinction between “formal” and “informal” oaths, see SOMMERSTEIN, (2014a), 315.

⁶ The data per deity is collected in SOMMERSTEIN (2014a), 315-320.

⁷ This list excludes two oaths found in spurious speeches: a fourth invocation of Herakles, found in Dem. 25.51, is discounted here, as well as a fourth oath to Athena, in Dem. 26.19. Both these speeches, *Against Aristogeiton I* and *II*, should be considered non-Demosthenic but rather Hellenistic creations, and therefore not relevant to this study of fourth-century oratorical practice: cf. HARRIS (2018), 195-197.

⁸ A third marked category of informal oaths found in oratory are those in which multiple gods are invoked together: given spatial constraints, this essay will focus only on the first two categories.

This article attempts to answer these questions by offering an analysis of the unusual informal oaths in Attic oratory. Recognising the central role of naming in this practice of swearing informal oaths, this paper asks why and how a swearer chooses which divinity to swear by in the law courts and Assembly meetings. It examines the constraints and possibilities which conditioned the selections of divinities made by speakers, and analyses these oaths as evidence for a conscious naming practice. By swearing oaths, speakers explicitly name and invoke particular deities, a practice which deserves attention as the most direct way in which the gods are brought into the political and judicial decision-making processes which the speeches of the orators attest to.

To commence its investigation, this paper first considers the nature and status of “informal oaths”: how should these proclamations be approached, and what is their exact relationship to “formal” oaths? This will then allow for an investigation of all the uncommon oath-gods invoked in oratory, showcasing the remarkable variety in the selection of deities and the real significance in some of these uncommon choices. The final part of the paper will inspect a further category of marked oaths, examining the epithets added to the names of certain deities in these oaths. In doing so, this article aims to challenge the common interpretation of informal oaths as semantically empty and religiously meaningless interjections. Aside from one example in an Assembly speech, all these unusual oaths are found in forensic orations, meaning this investigation will focus primarily on the Athenian law courts.

1. INFORMAL OATHS

It is crucial to commence this investigation by considering how we might categorise the short expressions of particle and divine name, found so frequently in oratory but also in comedy, tragedy, and poetry. Although referred to by some scholars as invocations, by others as oaths, I have so far used the label “informal oaths”, borrowed from the Nottingham Oath Project, a recent large-scale study of the oath in Archaic and Classical Greece.⁹ The project applies the term “informal oath” only to the occurrences of this phenomenon in oratory and “less elevated” genres of poetry, such as comedy, as it argues that in the genres of tragedy and epic the construction $\mu\acute{\alpha}$ or $\nu\eta$ + god(s) makes up more weighty and meaningful utterances.¹⁰ It is generic context, not (only) form, which is therefore taken to determine what an oath utterance such as $\nu\eta$ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν

⁹ Invocations: e.g. EDWARDS (2009); MARTIN (2009), 277, n.1. Oaths: DILLON (1995).

¹⁰ SOMMERSTEIN (2014d), 81.

might mean.¹¹ This separation of the informal oaths found in certain genres of text from those same expressions found in other genres of text based on an interpretation of function is, I would argue, problematic: it suggests, after all, that such expressions can be interpreted only in one of two ways while, as we shall see, there is a more nuanced spectrum of meanings which can be assigned to these oaths, dependent not only on the genre in which it occurs, but also the specific context and situation of the proclamation. Nonetheless, the term “informal oath” is useful for the fact that it distinguishes this phenomenon from other types of invocations, on the one hand, as well as from “formal” oaths, on the other hand.¹² The question relevant to this study is precisely in what ways the informal oath differs from both.

Generally, an oath can be defined as a declaration whereby a speaker specifies a superhuman power as witness and guarantor, and calls down a conditional curse upon him- or herself, in case of violation of the oath.¹³ Swearing an oath is a speech act, as the act of speaking itself constitutes an intended action: by pronouncing the oath, one swears. An oath is also further characterised by two elements: an invocation and an implication of immutability.¹⁴ The invocation is usually understood as a request to the divine to perform the dual actions of witnessing and guaranteeing.¹⁵ It is therefore an ascription of agency to the divine: the gods are given an active role. Immutability is guaranteed by the self-curse which accompanies the oath, even if not always explicitly.

Informal oaths, such as found in oratory and comedy, evidently differ from the elaborate, formal oaths found throughout the Greek world, the pervasiveness and significance of which is illustrated by the speeches of the orators

¹¹ On such oaths in tragedy, see FLETCHER (2012) and SOMMERSTEIN (2014d), 80-83.

¹² In oratory, informal oaths differ from other types of divine invocations in their use: addresses in the vocative, e.g. ὦ πάντες θεοί (Dem. 6.37, 9.76), are largely used when the speaker proclaims a wish – the audience of jurors is not directly involved in the pronouncement. The “pros + genitive” formula is used when the audience of jurors is addressed: the speaker asks the audience a question or makes a request or order. The invocation of deities is in this case a tool for urging the audience to accede to the request or answer the question truthfully (e.g. πρὸς θεῶν: Aeschin. 3.61; πρὸς Διὸς: Dem. 8.34). Informal oaths, by contrast, remain linked to a statement of which the speaker wishes to assert its truthfulness – the role of the deity is to guarantee, and give more weight to, this assertion or promise of truth.

¹³ SOMMERSTEIN (2014b), 1-2.

¹⁴ AUSTIN (1975), esp. 1-11. On a speech utterance as not necessarily the sole element constituting the performance of the act, but accompanied by other actions and dependent on context, see already AUSTIN (1975), 8-9.

¹⁵ BURKERT (1985), 250; PLESCIA (1970), 2; POLINSKAYA (2012), 23. The role of witness could be understood as implying an all-seeing, all-knowing god, who knows whether the swearer speaks the truth about an action or statement made; or it could be someone who simply bears testimony to the act of swearing. As guarantor, a god can be seen as standing guarantee for the truth of the statement made (SOMMERSTEIN [2014b], 1) or as guarantor of the statement being binding, thus emphasising the role of the god as deliverer and executor of justice: POLINSKAYA (2012), 27; BURKERT (1985), 250.

themselves: in the Assembly and the law courts, speakers refer to all kinds of oaths of office, interstate oaths, personal oaths, and judicial oaths.¹⁶ This last type is evidently especially important in the forensic context of the law courts, where special rules governed the use of oaths. The participants in trials – judges, litigants, and officials – were obliged to swear oaths, while formal oaths could only be accepted as evidence in litigation if both sides agreed to accept the oath.¹⁷ It is important to recognise that the informal oaths which this article examines differ considerably from such judicial oaths: despite being proclaimed during these same trials, their usage is not regulated by any legal rules. Furthermore, informal oaths are also distinct from the “formal” oaths sworn in all kinds of contexts, including occasionally by litigants in law courts (Dem. 23.5; 32.31; 54.41; 19.172). These formal oaths include a conditional self-curse: whether one curses oneself or one’s family, it is evident that perjury is thought to carry serious consequences with it. The short, frequent informal oaths discussed here do not explicitly include such significant sanctions. They are evidently also less consequential in a legal sense than evidentiary oath-challenges or compulsory judicial oaths, though the latter nonetheless create a context of serious oath-swearing which frames all action in the court.

Informal oaths are not the weighty ritual forms of divine communication that formal oaths present, but the question remains to what degree exactly they differ. Most scholars approach informal oaths not only as weakened-down variants of oaths, but rather as interjections which have completely lost their semantic meaning and any value *as* oaths. Such approaches are guided by a recognition of the rhetorical functions which informal oaths carry out. For oratory, two functions in particular have guided scholars as they interpret informal oaths. First, the informal oath functions as a literary device and tool of persuasion within the speaker’s argument, carrying out an emphasising and heightening function.¹⁸ For instance, Theopompus, the speaker of Isaeus’ oration *On the Estate of Hagnias*, claims that if he were mismanaging the accuser’s property, his opponent “would be justified in bringing this criminal charge

¹⁶ For general studies of the oath, see e.g. BENVENISTE (1948); PLESCIA (1970); AUBRIOT (1991); SOMMERSTEIN, FLETCHER (2007); SOMMERSTEIN, BAYLISS (2013); SOMMERSTEIN, TORRANCE (2014). On curses in particular: FARAONE (2015). On oaths and citizenship, see COLE (1996); for oaths and the law, GAGARIN (2007); on oaths in literature, ALLAN (2007); KITTS (2005). MARTIN (2009), esp. 171-174 and 225-226, discusses accusations of perjury in oratory.

¹⁷ On the reconstruction of the dikastic oath, sworn at the beginning of each year by all the citizens selected to serve as judges, see HARRIS (2013), 101-137, who discusses the long history of scholarship on the matter. On witnesses’ *exomosis* oath, see SOMMERSTEIN (2013), 93. On litigants’ *antomosia* and *dimosia* oaths, see GAGARIN (2007); HARRIS (2013), 101-137. For oath-challenges as evidence, cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1.15.27-32, with GAGARIN (1997).

¹⁸ See SOMMERSTEIN (2014c), 232; KRAUS (2009), 437-439. Commentaries on speeches focus often exclusively on these two rhetorical functions: e.g. FISHER (2001), 185; KREMMYDAS (2012), 225, 228, 317; MACDOWELL (2000), 236, 269, 274.

against me, but not, by Zeus (μὰ Δί'), when it is a question of my own property" (Isae. 11.35). The oath to Zeus emphasises the incredulity of the speaker, presenting the charge against him as preposterous. Second, scholars have recognised that informal oaths function as signpost for a hypothetical objection by a speaker's opponent, which the speaker then refutes. Thus, in *On the False Embassy* Demosthenes asserts:

For, by Zeus, (νῆ Δί'), [Aeschines said that] the trial of Timarchus will improve the character of our young men. Well then, this trial will improve the integrity of our statesmen, on whom depend the gravest political hazards; and they also have a claim on your consideration (Dem. 19.285).

This interjection of Zeus heralds an argument which Demosthenes attributes to his opponent, Aeschines: although often translated as indirect speech, with a verb of saying (such as "By Zeus, he said that ..."), the objection is presented as direct speech, signposted *only* by the oath: νῆ Δί', οἱ νέοι γὰρ ἡμῖν δι' ἐκεῖνον ἔσονται τὸν ἀγῶνα βελτίους.¹⁹ As Victor Bers has shown, a tenth of Demosthenes' νῆ Δία oaths involve direct speech in this way.²⁰ Many of the exclamations invoking Zeus or "all the gods" can be understood in this light, as either a signpost for a change in subject or a tool for adding intensity and emphasis.

These rhetorical and syntactical functions have led the majority of scholars to consider informal oaths as purely rhetorical interjections detached from the original semantic meaning of an oath.²¹ By swearing an oath, a speaker brings in a higher authority and thus elevates certain statements above others. The emphatic function of the informal oath is considered a derivation of this elevation but one so watered down that the original function is displaced. Thus, Isabelle Torrance considers the frequent νῆ Δία – when emphatic in function – as practically synonymous with the particle μέν, "on the one hand".²² Alan Sommerstein likewise understands "by Zeus" as "little more than a sentence-adverbial" when used as indicator for hypothetical speech.²³ Significantly,

¹⁹ On the use of oaths as signifiers for direct and indirect speech, see BERS (1997), 139-141. As quotation marks are evidently modern additions, in cases where there are no other framing devices, the informal oath sometimes signals the only indication of a switch in speaker: see e.g. Dem. 8.15-16 or Dem. 4.10, as discussed by BERS (1997), 195-196. However, it is important to keep in mind the oral nature of these speeches, and therefore the role of intonation and inflection in differentiating different personae too. On the development of the oath in this "anticipated objection" argument, which appears from Isaeus onwards, see also SOMMERSTEIN (2014c), 233-235.

²⁰ BERS (1997), 139.

²¹ EDWARDS (2009), 420; KRAUS (2009), 437.

²² TORRANCE (2014), 348-349.

²³ SOMMERSTEIN (2014c), 237.

similar assertions are made not only for oaths to Zeus but also for informal oaths in general. Writing on Aristophanic informal oaths, Matthew Dillon judges that “so common are these ‘oaths’ they hardly seem worthy of the name; at most, they might seem to offer no more than insight into colloquial language at the profane level”.²⁴ The informal oath thus sees comparison with the contemporary offhand use of swearwords and taboo words, such as “for God’s sake” and “goddamnit”. Michael Edwards suggests informal oaths in the orators may be no more meaningful than contemporary expressions like “Mon Dieu” or “my god”.²⁵ These kinds of utterances, found in many modern languages, have become detached from their original meaning: “semantically bleached” interjections which function primarily as expressions of a mental attitude or state.²⁶ In their emphaticness, exclamations of “by Zeus” or “by the gods” in Attic oratory are considered similar by many scholars.²⁷

It is evident that the most commonly sworn informal oath, “by Zeus”, develops new uses as a rhetorical and syntactical tool, but this implies a differentiation between swearing an oath to Zeus and swearing to other deities. Furthermore, should these rhetorical functions necessarily be considered incompatible with the original function of an oath, that is, of bringing in a deity as witness and guarantor of a statement? A different approach to informal oaths is found in Alan Sommerstein’s work on informal oaths in comedy.²⁸ Focusing principally on Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, he has analysed the informal oaths sworn by characters of the play, dissecting the consequences, expressions and context to question their validity, that is, “the degrees to which, if at all, these informal oaths were felt as solemn and binding”.²⁹ He sees in *Clouds*, at least, “a significant degree of reluctance to attach an oath-formula to a false or insincere statement, and an even stronger degree of reluctance to show such an action as being successful to the detriment of others”.³⁰

Sommerstein’s study warns against a simple dismissal of all informal oaths as wholly stripped of their nature as oath. In taking informal oaths seriously, this article builds on Sommerstein’s work, putting oratory’s informal oaths under similar scrutiny. The nature of oratory of course means it is not possible, unlike in comedy, to independently verify the veracity of oath-formulas, nor to discover the consequences for a particular character of swearing a specific

²⁴ DILLON (1995), 135.

²⁵ EDWARDS (2009), 420. For comparison with modern swearwords, see also DILLON (1995), 135; SOMMERSTEIN (2013), 86; AUBRIOT-SÉVIN (1991), 95.

²⁶ See NORDGREN (2015), 78-79 on oaths as secondary interjections.

²⁷ KONSTANTINIDOU (2014), 37: an oath fulfils “its function as a verbal element that forms, through its manipulation, one of the rhetorical strategies open to litigants in a trial”.

²⁸ SOMMERSTEIN (2014a), 331-347.

²⁹ SOMMERSTEIN (2014a), 333.

³⁰ SOMMERSTEIN (2014a), 347.

oath. Instead, what we can do is investigate the form of the oath itself, and its relation to the context in which it is sworn. This article does so by shining light on the unusual oaths where deities other than simply Zeus or “all the gods” are invoked. Examining these exceptions to the norm allows us to form a more complete picture of the genre of informal oaths. Furthermore, it also tells us something about the place of the gods in the public discourse of the law courts: we find here invocations of specific, diverse divinities, remarkable in a context in which the divine generally forms a constant if homogeneous and vague presence in the background.

2. CHOOSING A DEITY

The oaths marked by unusual oath-gods call out to Athena (3), Herakles (3), Demeter (2), Dionysos (1), Poseidon (1), and the heroic war dead (1). We find that in many instances these document a correlation between selection of the god and the context, speaker, addressee, occasion or subject-matter of the oath. Starting with Athena, we find instances where the goddess is invoked in contexts concerning the city of Athens and its citizens. For example, Lykourgos, arguing that Leokrates’ desertion of the city directly contravenes the city’s traditional attitudes to cowardice and bravery, declares, “for by Athena (νή τήν Ἀθηνᾶν), in the ancient laws and in the principles of those who drew them up in the beginning we have indeed a panegyric on the city” (Lyc. 1.75). As patron goddess of the city, the reasons for the selection of Athena are evident. This invocation not only reminds the audience of Lykourgos’ earlier claim that Leokrates had betrayed “the temple of Zeus Soter and Athena Soteira” (Lyc. 1.17) but also recalls his earlier evocation that “your forefathers called their country Athens after the goddess Athena” (Lyc. 1.26). Furthermore, it links to another appearance of Athena as oath-god, in the ephebic oath which Lykourgos quotes soon after his informal oath (Lyc. 1.77).³¹ The other invocations of Athena similarly appear in contexts which concern a threat to Athens or its citizens as a whole. Demosthenes invokes Athena in his speech *Against Timokrates* as he accuses his opponent of introducing a law “which contravenes all of the city’s laws, and to top it all even his own earlier law, by Athena (μὴ τήν Ἀθηνᾶν), I do not think this has escaped your notice!” (Dem. 24.199). At the beginning of the speech, Demosthenes even claims that Timokrates, through his proposed law, “robs the gods of sacred funds and the city of public funds, invalidates the resolutions of the Council, the Assembly, and the courts,

³¹ Cf. RYDBERG-COX (2000), 423. On the unusual line up of oath gods in the ephebic oath, see BAYLISS (2013), 16-17.

and has given immunity to anybody who wishes to plunder the public treasury” (Dem. 24.9). The oath to Athena at the speech’s end, at its climax of argumentation, would have stood out to the audience and reminded them of the claim that Timocrates’ law was an assault on the wealth of the goddess. The third instance of an informal oath to Athena occurs in one of the *Prooemia* attributed to Demosthenes, which purport to be a collection of opening paragraphs of speeches the orator delivered in the Assembly.³² In this one, the speaker swears by Athena as he tells the Athenians no other people would listen so complacently to a reminder of their own faults (Dem. *Pr.* 46.3). While the latter example does not demonstrate as strong of a link between the invocation of Athena and the context as Lykourgos’ oath does, nonetheless these three oaths do suggest the decision to invoke Athena appears to have been deliberate. Speakers decided to invoke Athens’ patron goddess as they contemplated potential (real or imagined) threats to the city.

Other uncommon oath-gods likewise show a connection to the speaker, swearer or context of the oath-swearing. In his indictment of Timarchos, Aeschines invokes the only oath to Dionysos attested in the orators. He begins by denouncing Timarchos for being a kept lover before accusing him of prostitution. Aeschines pretends to be reluctant to discuss such matters openly in the court but eventually declares, “it will be clear that he has not only been a kept lover (ἡταιρηκός) but – by Dionysos! (μὰ τὸν Διόνυσον) I don’t think I can evade the issue all day – has actually prostituted himself (πεπορνευμένος)” (Aeschin. 1.52). According to Nick Fisher, Dionysos may be invoked here because “Aeschines is claiming a licence to utter a rude or explicit word as if at a comedy or Dionysiac festival where *parrhesia* is allowed”.³³ Another interpretation, I would suggest, is that the oath hints at the revelation that follows: while Dionysos’ connection to sex in cult and myth is complicated and diverse, he is seen as a god of “liberation, if only temporary, of both women and men from social controls, including sexual controls”.³⁴ The world of Dionysos, as documented in iconography especially, features sexuality at its centre: “not as an expression of fertility or reproductive inclination but of *joie de vivre*, that is

³² On the *Prooemia*, see MACDOWELL (2009), 6-7. The fourth Athena oath, in the spurious *Against Aristogeiton II*, does actually also appear in a context in which the speaker discusses Athens: he laments that what takes place on the Assembly’s *bema* these days is a disgrace to the city (Dem. 26.19). Whether this connection between oath-god and context in a speech written to resemble a real Demosthenic speech is in any way significant is impossible to tell with such a small quantity of data.

³³ FISHER (2001), 184.

³⁴ JAMESON (2014 [1993]), 62. Some references connect Dionysos specifically to homosexual sex, such as a poem of Anacreon (PMG 357), though considering the god’s variegated portrayal in cult and myth, this is not necessarily indicative of a particular connection.

to say, a sexuality which in essence is ‘useless’ and playful”.³⁵ Aeschines’ accusation of Timarchos portrays the defendant as “a slave to the most shameful pleasures” (Aeschin. 1.42), as a man indecent and out of control (1.57).

Aeschines’ speech *Against Timarchos* also contains the only oath in oratory sworn to Poseidon (Aeschin. 1.73). In an attempt to face head-on the substantial flaw of his case – the lack of any solid proof or testimony evidencing the exact nature of Timarchos’ relationships, which Aeschines claims amounted to Timarchos prostituting himself – Aeschines argues that the audience cannot expect men to give evidence which would amount to confessions:

But he is on trial precisely for this, because after such conduct he addressed the assembly, in defiance of the laws. Shall we, then, drop the whole affair, and enquire no further? By Poseidon (νή τὸν Ποσειδῶ), what a fine city we would live in, if when we ourselves know that an act has taken place, we are to ignore it unless some man come forward here and testifies to the act explicitly and shamelessly (Aeschin. 1.73).

The oath to Poseidon introduces an ironic comment, as Aeschines imagines the catastrophe of Athenians only acting against crimes on confessions. The oath emphasizes the incredulity with which Aeschines makes this remark. Jeffrey Rydberg-Cox has read this oath to Poseidon as a subtle invocation of the founding myths of the Areopagos and thereby a reminder of its divine origins, aligning with the orator’s later claims (1.92-93) that the jury should use the standards of the Areopagos Council to judge Timarchos’ actions.³⁶ However, the selection of Poseidon could also be explained simply as an appropriate choice for an appeal to the basic principles of the democratic city. As a god who has a prominent cult on the Acropolis and who fought Athena for the title of Athens’ principal deity, Poseidon being invoked emphasizes the severity and catastrophic nature of the situation which Aeschines imagines.³⁷

Aeschines appears to swear unusual oaths with particular frequency. Alongside the oaths to Dionysos and Poseidon, two of the three oaths sworn to Herakles in genuine fourth-century orations are Aeschinean too. In the *Against Ktesiphon*, the orator attacks Demosthenes, saying, “it is clear, by Herakles; one thing at least none of you will fear is that Demosthenes, a man high-spirited and distinguished in war, will, if he fails to win the prize for valour, go home and kill himself” (Aeschin. 3.212). The invocation of Herakles appears when Aeschines calls Demosthenes a coward by implicitly comparing him to the mythical hero Ajax, who killed himself after failing to win recognition as

³⁵ ISLER-KERÉNYI (2007), 1.

³⁶ RYDBERG-COX (2000).

³⁷ FISHER (2001), 210.

the most valorous warrior of the Greeks, as Carey also recognises.³⁸ Selecting another hero as the oath-god accentuates Aeschines' point of disparagement. The next Herakles oath occurs in Dinarchus' *Against Aristogeiton* (Din. 2.3). The orator accuses Aristogeiton of having accepted a bribe from Harpalus and he portrays this act as the apogee of a lifetime of shameful and wicked deeds. Dinarchus then urges the jurors:

For you must assume, by Herakles (μὰ τὸν Ἡρακλέα), that there will be no improvement in him if he is pardoned by you now, and that in future he will not abstain from taking bribes against you if you now acquit him. For when wickedness (πονηρίαν) is in its infancy perhaps it can be checked by punishment, but when it has grown old and has sampled the usual penalties, it is said to be incurable. (Din. 2.3)

It is perhaps possible that Herakles is here chosen in his role as one who wards off evil: Dinarchus presents Aristogeiton as wicked throughout the speech (πονηρός; Din. 2.3, 14, 15), and warns just after swearing the oath that πονηρία, wickedness, must be staved off early. However, this is a speculative connection – Herakles, like all heroes and deities, had numerous guises, and while the evidence for his cult in Athens in the classical period does seem to emphasise his role as averter of evil, this is of course not the only way in which he would be worshiped, nor conclusive proof of any conscious selection of Herakles as oath-god in the *Against Aristogeiton*.³⁹ In any case, striking here is too that the oath to Herakles immediately follows an appeal to divine action, relatively rare in oratory: “if god is willing (ἄν θεὸς θέλῃ) and you are wise”, Dinarchus says, Aristogeiton will suffer today (Din 2.3). The marked oath is accompanied by a marked statement, a wish for divine intervention.

The final occurrence of a Herakles oath is another illustration that not all choices of uncommon oath-gods can be as easily explained through a definite connection to context or swearer. Aeschines' second oath to Herakles occurs in the *Against Timarchos*. Aeschines discusses the fate of some other wrongdoers: “Were the accused acquitted? No, by Herakles! They were punished with death, though the crime they committed was much less, by Zeus and Apollo, than that of this defendant; those poor wretches suffered such a fate because they were unable to protect themselves against old age and poverty together, the greatest of human misfortunes; the defendant should suffer it because he is

³⁸ CAREY (2000), 237.

³⁹ On Herakles as warder off of evil: see e.g. the Athenian votive relief to Herakles Alexikakos (“Averter of Evil”), along with Hermes, from ca. 370 BCE (Boston 96.696), or the reference in an Aristophanic scholion to a statue of Herakles Alexikakos in a sanctuary in the deme Melite, supposedly made by the Argive sculptor Hageladas in the 430s BCE: see WOODFORD (1976) and STAFFORD (2012), 176-177.

unwilling to restrain his own vileness” (Aeschin. 1.88). The oath to Herakles is closely followed by an oath to Zeus and Apollo: the hero-god does not seem to be chosen for a particular reason, other than the emphasis created by invoking different deities one after another and together.⁴⁰

The only two informal oaths sworn to Demeter in oratory occur in speeches by Demosthenes. In *On the False Embassy*, delivered in 343 BCE, Demosthenes attempts to indict Aeschines for misconduct on an embassy to Philip of Macedonia. In his speech the orator paints a vivid picture of the growing expansion of Philip’s influence and power. Demosthenes describes the “terrible and fierce disease (νόσημα)” which “has fallen upon Greece” (Dem. 19.259) and has made the leaders of Greek states haplessly hanker after Philip’s approval. This disease, Demosthenes declares, has already infected the Thessalians, the Arcadians and the Argives. He then warns his audience that: “By Demeter (νῆ τὴν Δήμητρα), if I am to speak plainly, we really must pay serious attention, as this disease, spreading around, has now reached our own city” (Dem. 19.262).⁴¹ As he emphasises the need to take the threat Philip poses seriously, Demosthenes here invokes the goddess Demeter. One explanation for the choice of Demeter could perhaps be found in her role as goddess of the earth and agriculture: Demosthenes’ description of the “disease” spreading through and infecting the different Greek states, first the Thessalians, then Peloponnesians and Arcadians, before moving to Athens, makes Philip appear as a natural disaster, an infectious plague, as if spreading through crops, which the reference to Demeter intensifies. As an oath goddess, Demeter rarely appears alone: she is one of the few female goddesses to whom only men – never women – swear in comedy (alongside Athena and Ge), but even then not often.⁴² In oratory, however, she regularly appears together with Zeus and Apollo, for example in the dikastic oath. Despite her central position in the Athenian pantheon thanks to her role as deity of the Mysteries and her cult at Eleusis, she does not feature much as a character in tragedy, though at times “as a metonym for grain”.⁴³ Of course, the deity’s role specifically as goddess of agriculture may not have guided her selection here in Demosthenes’ speech – it is also possible that the

⁴⁰ Earlier in the speech Herakles’ name does appear again, but as an exclamation, not an oath: it is an address to the god in the vocative: ὦ Ἡράκλεις (Aeschin. 1.49) and therefore a type of invocation, like prayers and calls to witness, which carries merely a suggestive, not a binding, force. Such exclamations of Herakles are used in comedy to express shock or surprise (e.g. Ar. *Birds* 93, *Clouds* 184), and appear to be used similarly in oratory: see also Aeschin. 3.21; Dem. 21.66, 19.308; Din. 1.7, cf. FISHER (2001), 182.

⁴¹ ταῦτα νῆ τὴν Δήμητρα, εἰ δεῖ μὴ ληρεῖν, εὐλαβείας οὐ μικρᾶς δεῖται, ὡς βαδίζον γε κύκλω καὶ δεῦρ’ ἐλήλυθεν, ὃ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τὸ νόσημα τοῦτο.

⁴² SOMMERSTEIN (2014a), 322. For an exception with the formula νῆ (μὰ) τὴν φίλην Δήμητρα see SOMMERSTEIN (2014a), 321.

⁴³ MIKALSON (1991), 56.

unusual choice of her as oath-god cannot be so easily explained here. Demosthenes' other invocation to Demeter, in his *Third Olynthiac* (Dem. 3.32), is perhaps even less easily linked to speaker, context or swearer. The only connection discernible here is a highly suggestive one, connecting the oath to the notion of manliness, which Demosthenes discusses in this section of the speech. After criticising the masculinity of the present-day Athenians, sarcastically saying it reaches its height (τὸ πάντων ἀνδρειότατον) when the people proffer thanks "for what is their own" (Dem. 3.31), Demosthenes continues: "You cannot, I suppose, have a proud and chivalrous spirit, if your conduct is mean and paltry; for whatever a man's actions are, such must be his spirit. By Demeter (μὰ τὴν Δήμητρ'), I should not wonder if I got rougher treatment from you for pointing out these faults than the men who are responsible for them" (Dem. 3.32). Choosing to swear here to a goddess who was only invoked by men, never by women, perhaps stresses Demosthenes' point of criticism.

One final informal oath proves noteworthy for its unusual choice, for here the oath-god is, strictly speaking, no god at all. In *On the Crown*, Demosthenes swears by the Athenian ancestors:

But no; you cannot, men of Athens, you cannot have done wrongly when you took on danger for the sake of the freedom and safety of all, by our forefathers who bore the brunt of battle at Marathon (μὰ τοὺς Μαραθῶνι προκινδυνεύσαντας τῶν προγόνων), by those who stood in ranks at Plataea, by those who fought in the sea-battles of Salamis and Artemisium, and by the many other brave men who lie in the public tombs, who were all considered equally worthy of honour by the city who buried them, Aeschines, not only the successful and the victorious. Rightly so, for they all performed the duty of good men, and they each met with the fortune which a god (δαίμων) allotted them (Dem. 18.208).

The invocation of ancestors in an oath – even an informal one – is distinctive. Of all ancestors, the war dead held a special status in classical Greek society, as the funeral orations evidence, yet they are never referred to as heroes in the classical period. As Parker observes, however, "there is no form of cultic honour customarily granted to heroes that the war dead do not receive".⁴⁴ The oath's invocation of the audience's ancestors does not come from nowhere: it is part of an argument by Demosthenes about the inherent value of bravery, even when it does not lead to success. He argues that Athens and its ancestors have always chosen to fight for honour and glory rather than succumb to servitude – even if that led to failure. By analogy, he asserts the crown proposed for

⁴⁴ PARKER (1996), 136. Cf. "The Oath in Archaic and Classical Greece" Database, Oath ID 3360: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~brzoaths/database.php>. [Date accessed: 28 November 2019].

him – the topic of the court case – amounts to recognition of Athens’ achievements, despite the situation not having turned out as planned or hoped (Dem. 18.199-208). Stressing the importance of the deeds and character of the city’s ancestors, he aptly chooses to swear an oath by those ancestors most revered of all. The idiosyncrasy of the oath emphasizes the sincerity and solemnity of his argument, elevated further by two other more regular oaths which he swears in this section too (Dem. 18.199: πρὸς Διὸς καὶ θεῶν; 201: πρὸς Διὸς).

3. EPITHETED OATH-GODS

Before further interrogating what conclusions we can draw from speakers’ selections of oath-gods, it will be useful to briefly examine another category of marked oaths: those that include epithets alongside theonym to invoke a deity. Epithets are an absolutely ubiquitous element in divine naming practices in the Greek world, crucial to cultic practice. In Greek oath-swearing in general, epithets can act as another way of accenting an oath and therefore marking the heightened importance or significance for the speaker.⁴⁵ Yet in the 252 oaths sworn in Assembly and law court speeches, the orators invoke only a handful of epitheted oath-gods: thrice does someone invoke “the Olympian gods” (Aeschin. 3.182, 228; Isae. 8.29) and four times “Olympian Zeus” (Dem. 24.121; Aeschin. 1.55, 76; 3.255). Another three oaths, which invoke “lord Zeus and all the gods” (Dem. 35.40), Zeus Megistos (Dem. 48.2) and Zeus Soter (Din. 3.15), complete the list.

This subcategory of marked oaths aligns in some ways with the category already discussed so far: here too, there are cases where the choice of oath-god appears conscious – with the deity’s identity, further conditioned by the inclusion of an epithet, linked to content or context. An example is Dinarchus’ *Against Philocles*, where the orator swears by Zeus Soter (νῆ τὸν Δία τὸν Σωτήρα) as he attributes to divine action the very presence of the defendant standing trial: it was the gods, he says, who “exposed them [the defendants] and surrendered them to you for punishment” (Din. 3.14). This picture of the gods protecting the city by exposing traitors and lawbreakers is strengthened by the chosen invocation of Zeus Soter – a protecting deity.⁴⁶ Dinarchus adds a reminder that the people did not entrust the defendant to look after their ephebes, considering it unsafe (Din. 3.15) – thereby continuing the theme of salvation and protection. In other cases, however, the choice of epithet is not as

⁴⁵ Cf. TORRANCE (2014), 132-133. Despite this recognition, the Nottingham Oath Database does not include epithets as a parameter.

⁴⁶ On such “saviour gods”, see JIM (2015).

easily explained: “Lord Zeus and all the gods”, sworn in Dem. 35.40 (μὰ τὸν Δία τὸν ἄνακτα καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ἅπαντας) or the “Olympian gods” (eg. Isae. 8.29; Aeschin. 3.182, 228) do not display any obvious connection to the oath-swearing’s context or content.

However, we also find among the epitheted oath-gods a third category of cases, where the choice of deity is not content-specific, but context-specific: more than the identity of the particular deity, it is the intensity of the oath which matches its context. An example can be found in Demosthenes’ speech written for Kallistratos (Dem. 48). Here, an epitheted oath-god is invoked as Kallistratos commences his address with a statement on his motivation for prosecuting his opponent:

If I were entering upon this course, judges, without having been wronged, or were trumping up a false charge against Olympiodorus, or if I were unwilling to refer the matter to men who are friends both of Olympiodorus and myself, or if I were refusing to adopt any other fair course of action, be assured that I should be thoroughly ashamed, and should think myself a worthless sort of fellow: but as it is, the loss I have suffered at the hands of Olympiodorus is no small one; I have not refused to accept any referee, and by Zeus Megistos (μὰ τὸν Δία τὸν μέγιστον) it is not willingly, but with the utmost possible reluctance, that I have been forced by the defendant to bring this suit (Dem. 48.2).

Avoiding the label of sycophant by having a well-grounded reason for taking someone to court was vital when prosecuting someone in Classical Athens, as is shown by the frequency and urgency with which prosecutors attempted to defend themselves against such accusations.⁴⁷ The oath to Zeus Megistos is the only informal oath in Kallistratos’ speech, and here it bolsters his crucial claim that he was wholly unwilling to go to court but was eventually forced into it by the “magnitude of the wrongs done to me” (Dem. 48.1).

Another example of this type, where epitheted oaths indicate episodes of significance, occurs at a moment where the divine is explicitly present in the argumentation of the speech. In *Against Timokrates*, Diodorus proclaims:

By Olympian Zeus (νῆ τὸν Δία τὸν Ὀλύμπιον), I think, men of the court, that insolence and arrogance did not come upon Androtion by accident, but were sent by the goddess (ὕπὸ τῆς θεοῦ ἐπιπεμφθεῖσαν) so that just like those who hacked the wings from the statue of Victory and brought destruction on themselves, these men too will in the same way bring about their own destruction by accusing each other and paying a tenfold penalty according to the law or be put in prison. (Dem. 24.121)

⁴⁷ On sycophancy see e.g. OSBORNE (1990), 83-102.

The goddess here is Athena: Diodorus has argued that Timokrates' new law protects those who steal property from the city and from the gods, such as the tithes due to Athena (Dem. 24.120). Remarkably, this oath addresses not merely Zeus but Olympian Zeus. The oath statement itself is an assertion of divine action: Demosthenes swears that Androtion's insolence and arrogance were sent by the goddess to bring destruction on himself. The oath thus functions as proof for a statement of divine intervention in the process of enforcing justice. Given that such claims about the will or actions of the gods occur rarely in oratory (Lyc.1, Andoc.1, Lys. 6, Dem. 32.8, Antiph. 5.82), the choice to swear such a statement about the unknowable gods, and their unknowable ways by invoking not Zeus but Olympian Zeus appears to be a way of adding particular force to a particularly remarkable assertion.

Like the invocations to oath-gods rarely sworn in oratory, these epitheted deities show the same complexity of clear as well as opaque selections. Important to consider too, however, is the kind of epithets employed here, and the theonyms to which they are attached, which allow us to offer a couple of interpretive suggestions.

First, the only oath-gods awarded epithets in the speeches are Zeus and the collective *theoi*: deities who normally constitute the most common and unmarked oaths. The use of epithets as a way of differentiating these specific invocations from the norm perhaps tells us something about the way these normal informal oaths were conceived. It suggests that invoking all the gods or the ruler of the gods may have operated in essentially the same way: the common oath "by Zeus" perhaps invoked Zeus not as a *particular individual* deity, but in his role as ruler of all deities, as most powerful, as paradigmatic of divine power – thereby carrying a similar meaning to swearing "by the gods". This explanation may account for Zeus being the only singular deity to have an epithet here: it is Zeus himself being invoked, be it to emphasize a statement concerning divine action (Dem. 24.121), to stress a speaker's motivation for going to court (Dem. 48.2), or to accent Zeus' role in saving the city by exposing and delivering law-breakers to the people (Din. 3.15).

Secondly, all the epithets employed prove rather un-specific. Epithets, whether in oaths, prayers or hymns, serve both to identify the deity being addressed, and to honour and please this deity. Megistos ("greatest"), Olympian and Anax ("lord") do not refer to specific *timai* or functions of Zeus, but rather serve as praise epithets. Although Soter is more specific as it does indicate a particular aspect of the god – which also appears in cultic contexts – it, like two of the three other epithets here, nonetheless is a trans-divine epithet: a name not peculiar to Zeus, but assigned to multiple deities.⁴⁸ For example,

⁴⁸ On trans-divine epithets see BRULÉ (1998), 13-34. Cf. also JIM (2015). Megistos only becomes transdivine after the classical period: on this epithet's origin, see PARKER (2017), 107.

Zeus, Apollo and Asclepius, among many others, can all be referred to as Soter. Rather than suggesting a particular cult or aspect of Zeus, the epithets attached to Zeus as oath-god remain rather vague, which may indicate that adding an epithet to his name in an informal oath functions as a way of distinguishing this oath from the “regular” common oath to Zeus. If we approach these epithets in such a way, then the evidence from informal oaths in oratory shows that theonym and epithet should be taken together: we do not see a simple division of labour, with theonym identifying the deity and epithet offering a further qualification. Rather, taken together they form an “onomastic sequence” which both specifies and identifies the deity invoked in the oath.⁴⁹

4. CONCLUSION

This analysis of the range of deities named and invoked by litigants in Athenian trials shows that, at times, there appears to be a connection between the choice of divine oath-god and the context or content of a litigant’s communication. In Aeschines’ *Against Timarchos*, the Poseidon oath recalls the divine origin of the Areopagos court and thereby underscores its importance. Diodorus invokes Zeus Soter as he rails against the Athenians for growing weary of punishing law-breakers, while the gods protect the city by delivering criminals to the people (Din. 3.15). The elaborate oath to the war dead sworn by Demosthenes in *On the Crown* bolsters his argument about the ancestors’ valour such that it even suggests hero-status for the bravest of these ancestors. In a few cases, however, most notably the oaths to Herakles at Aeschin. 1.88 and to Demeter at Dem. 3.32, it is less easy to discern with certainty an explanation for the choice of deity.

There are three possible ways in which this mixed evidence can be interpreted. The first would be to argue that every oath can be explained as a deliberate invocation of a particular deity – but this is evidently not supported by the evidence. A second way of interpreting the data would be to consider all the selections of deities as simply meaningless, as coincidental or random. If one searches hard enough for a reason behind the choice of a particular god, one might say, an explanation will always be found. However, the quantity of unusual informal oaths for which a connection *can* be found, as detailed above, argues against mere coincidence. Furthermore, and more importantly, this data fits in well with the general picture we see in ancient Greece, where plenty of evidence demonstrates that people swear oaths to gods who are relevant to the

⁴⁹ Cf. BONNET *et al.* (2018).

particular oath-swearing situation.⁵⁰ The informal oaths in oratory have generally been left out of this picture, due to the predominance of the common oaths “by Zeus” and “by the gods”, but this analysis of the less common oath deities has hopefully shown that such distinction is unjustified. Even in oratory, speakers *can* consciously select particular, apt deities. The third way of interpreting the evidence then, which I propose to do, is to recognise the deliberateness behind the majority of these choices of unusual oath-gods, but to accept that we are not able to systematically understand the reasoning behind every choice: there might be a connection to context, swearer, or swearer which we are unaware of, or perhaps there is no clear reasoning in these cases. That we cannot explain the reasoning behind every case does not matter, however: what matters is that the evidence shows that the choice of deity sometimes does connect to the argument which the speaker makes, indicating that these informal oaths *can* be used as real invocations of a particular deity, selected after consideration.

This leads us to the question of why a litigant might decide to choose a particular deity to invoke, or to embellish the name of a god with an epithet. As mentioned at the start of this essay, the gods do not take centre stage in oratory. Unlike comedy, for example, which features an abundance of informal oaths but alongside copious references to individual deities, who even appear as characters on stage, the informal oaths of oratory stand out from the normal register of religious discourse for their context: the judicial and political arenas of the law courts and the Assembly. That informal oaths can be employed to make reference to particular deities is thus striking. Precisely because these marked oaths were rare, the audience would almost certainly have registered the exceptionality of the statement and perhaps considered it more carefully. This first of all means that such oaths were used emphatically, investing the statement with greater emotion, whether the speaker indignantly disputes a counter-argument or adds solemnity to a promise. The use of these marked oaths at crucial moments in argumentation underlines this contention (e.g. Dem. 48.2; Dem. 18.208; Aeschin. 3.228).

⁵⁰ For example, the *diomosiai* oaths made by litigants in trials before the Council of the Areopagos were sworn by the *σεμναὶ θεαί*, amongst other gods (Din. 1.47). These Revered Goddesses, the Erinyes, were natural choices as they were, through the mythical trial of Orestes, connected to the founding of the Areopagos court (Aesch. *Eumen.* 443ff). A decree from the deme Ikaria from ca. 440-415 BCE regulating the local Dionysia details that the men chosen as *choregoi* had to swear an oath upon their investiture by placing a hand on the cult statue of Dionysos – an obviously appropriate god to invoke considering the context of the oath-swearing (*IG I³ 254*): cf. WILSON (2015), 121-122. In Aristophanes, choice of oath god is linked to swearer’s gender and identity, as well as to the context: e.g. Aristoph. *Clouds* 82-83, on which see SOMMERSTEIN (2014a), 337. In inter-state oaths, we often find the “local” gods of both parties invoked: see BRULE (2005).

More than this, however, examples also reveal the relationship between marked oaths and the speaker's argument itself. Often such a relationship may be subtle. To help explain the process of naming a deity, perhaps useful is the idea of "onomastic traits" suggested by the *Mapping Ancient Polytheisms* project.⁵¹ Parallel to iconographic traits, a particular name can function as a "sign" which expresses a particular part of a deity's nature, function, and identity. For example, Aeschines invokes Dionysos as he claims to be reluctant to discuss the unspeakable sexual acts of his opponent – Dionysos' name here functions as a prompt, the sexual liberation with which the god is associated linking in the mind of the audience to the unspeakable things which Aeschines' opponent is accused of. Invoking particular deities therefore works not only emphatically, but also allows a litigant to prevail on the polytheistic background of their audience of judges, leaning on the associations connected to a divine being's name.

It is also exactly the specificity of the name which is important here. If informal oaths are pronouncements consciously linked to the deities invoked, they change our understanding of these oaths *as* names. In the act of oath-swearing, naming a divinity is crucial: it is, after all, an act of communication which summons a superhuman power and assigns agency to it – through the function of acting as witness (to the statement made) and guarantor (to its fulfillment). In the condensed informal oaths, the name not only indicates the deity addressed, but also, along with a particle, remains the only extant evidence of the oath: the name, here, *is* the speech act. In a rhetorical reading which considers them pure interjections, as utterings shorn of meaning, the *specificity* of the deity no longer matters. It becomes a mere reference to a divine or sacred matter: whether one exclaims "oh Jesus" or "by god", to take examples from modern swearwords, makes no difference if one understands these statements as solely expressing a speaker's heightened mental state of mind. In this view, a name is not really a name anymore but only a reference, as it is not a *specific* deity which is addressed. However, as this article has demonstrated, the deities invoked in informal oaths – even if uttered liberally throughout a speech – *can* be consciously chosen for their appropriateness to the context of the swearing, or to the agent involved. They are not one-size-fits-all invocations – unlike the *passe-partout* nature of oaths to Zeus and the collective gods. This practice in oratory of invoking a god relevant to the context therefore demonstrates a naming practice which corresponds to other types of communication, such as prayers and hymns, for example. In the ancient Greek world religious language was obviously considered more effective and efficient if it referred to the appropri-

⁵¹ On "onomastic traits", see LEBRETON, BONNET (2019).

ate divinity: deities had personal interests and obligations.⁵² Oaths, unlike hymns and prayers, may address divinities only indirectly, but informal oaths nonetheless carry within them the function of a name, that is, of identifying a *particular* deity.

Unlike formal oaths, these invocations carry little *ritual* force. But that does not mean that they do not carry *religious* significance. It might be more useful to see the difference between informal and formal oaths as one of degree, rather than a difference in kind or value. Andreas Willi, in his analysis of religious language in Aristophanes, examines prayers as well as secondary interjections such as “Oh Zeus” and “Lord Herakles”. These he sees as different from prayers, of the utterance of which they are a shortened form, but in degree rather than kind: “they only imply a passing request for assistance” compared to the more explicit requests to the gods which prayers constitute. The relationship between informal oaths and other oaths can be described in similar terms, as a difference of degree of intensity, rather than seeing in informal oaths a complete elimination of their original semantic meaning. Informal oaths are more than simply the equivalent of underlining or bold type: they still act as invocations. Both types of oath therefore occupy places on a sliding scale, which also includes elaborate formal oaths (such as the oath of office of the Basileus, or interstate oaths, such as the League of Corinth oath), embellished by sacralising place and ritual acts such as sacrifice. Informal oaths are shorthand for something. They can imply a promise to a god or goddess, an assertion of the truth, a strengthening of the statement made.⁵³

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⁵² On the significance of naming specific gods in ancient Greek religion in general see the essays in BELAYCHE *et al.* (2015). On epithets in particular see also PARKER (2003) and now BONNET *et al.* (2018).

⁵³ I would like to express my thanks to Corinne Bonnet and the “Mapping Ancient Polytheisms” team for the kind invitation to present this work in Toulouse, and for their thoughtful and valuable feedback. I also thank the anonymous reviewer for constructive feedback. Thanks are also due to audiences at the British School at Athens and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where I presented earlier versions of this research. Finally, this article has also benefited from discussions with Edward Harris and Paul Michael Kurtz, to whom I am most grateful. This research was funded by a Leverhulme Trust Study Abroad Fellowship held at the Collège de France and University of Liège.

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LA JUSTICE DU SOL :
LES NOMS DIVINS DANS LES MALÉDICTIONS ATTIQUES
AU IV^e-III^e SIÈCLE AVANT NOTRE ÈRE*

Thomas Galoppin

Curses carved in Greek on lead lamellae (katadesmoi) and mostly deposited in funerary spots appeal to the action exerted by divinities that we frequently label as infernal or from the underworld. In fact, in the records from Attica in the Classical and early Hellenistic ages, the network of powers that are invoked involves chiefly Hermes, Persephone, the Earth, and different configurations of deities connected to the soil of the grave and a superhuman form of justice. More specifically, the choice of onomastic attributes such as Katochos, Chthonios, or the more poetical Eriounios, for Hermes, ties up a link between the constraints exerted by the god and the location of his power in the necropolis. These divine names, if they rely on a specific field of knowledge, also depend on concrete conditions of rituals, anchored in well-defined places, within the landscape of the city.

Plus de 1600 tablettes de plomb gravées de malédictions en grec ou en latin, souvent roulées, pliées, clouées et déposées dans des espaces particuliers (tombe, fosses, puits, sanctuaires), témoignent d'un mode d'imprécation qui a eu cours, avec de nombreuses variations, dans le monde gréco-romain depuis le début du V^e siècle avant notre ère. Platon emploie le terme de « ligatures » – *katadesmoi* ou *katadeseis* – pour désigner ces malédictions et on retrouve le verbe correspondant sur les plombs eux-mêmes : *katadeô*, « je lie ». ¹ Avec quelques figurines en argile ou en plomb, parfois enfermées dans des boîtes en plomb – objets qui peuvent eux-mêmes avoir été gravés –, ces documents sont les restes de rites qui pouvaient comprendre d'autres actions, ne serait-ce qu'une performance orale. La mise par écrit sur des supports spécifiques constitue en soi un dispositif matériel, dont Cléo Carastro a montré qu'il contribuait

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¹ Platon, *République* II, 364c, *Lois* 11, 933d.

à fabriquer le corps dévoué aux divinités.² La malédiction consiste en effet à dévouer un ou plusieurs adversaires à une divinité pour que celle-ci exerce un pouvoir punitif à son ou à leur encontre. Les textes portent principalement le nom de l'adversaire, *onoma* qui participe de sa personne, et les formules de ligature permettent d'agir sur lui tout en le mettant en présence des divinités sollicitées, « instances de l'enchaînement ».

Le groupe des malédictions sur plomb de l'Attique datées des IV^e et III^e siècles avant notre ère est l'un des premiers ensembles documentaires de ce type – après les tablettes de plomb siciliennes qui ne comportent aucun nom divin.³ Le catalogue des *katadesmoi* attiques a été publié une première fois par Richard Wünsch, puis repris dans le volume d'Auguste Audollent, avant d'être réexaminé et complété par David Jordan.⁴ L'élément fondamental, souvent unique, de l'écriture dans un rituel de malédiction est le(s) nom(s) de la (des) cible(s). Pour cette étude, je me concentre sur les textes comportant un ou plusieurs nom(s) divin(s). À cette époque, les *katadesmoi* ne comportent pas encore, dans cette région, de noms « barbares »⁵ ou d'origine non-grecque.⁶ On a affaire à un réseau relativement restreint de divinités que l'historiographie catégorise comme « chthoniennes » ou « infernales ». Hermès, qualifié par une série très restreinte d'épithètes, domine un réseau qui s'étend à des divinités associées à l'au-delà comme Perséphone ou Hécate, mais aussi ponctuellement la Terre (Gê), la Justice (Dikê), ou encore la Mère des dieux.

Il s'agit ici, à partir des noms de ces divinités dans leur usage rituel et dans un contexte historique relativement précis, d'observer la manière dont elles forment à la fois une configuration propre au rite et un savoir partagé relatif à un paysage religieux plus large. Ce petit répertoire de divinités témoigne en effet d'un savoir-faire qui se réinvente d'un texte à l'autre, tout en s'adossant à une tradition. Premièrement, la construction des noms divins dans le dispositif graphique des plombs imprécatoires met en acte une justice exercée par ce réseau étroit de puissances. Le répertoire d'attributs onomastiques d'Hermès est le plus varié et son analyse permet d'orienter non seulement vers sa relation aux morts, mais à l'espace funéraire où est exécuté le rite : la dénomination divine devient alors une manière de construire le paysage religieux. Certaines de ces appellations témoignent enfin d'un savoir rituel en partie adossé à d'autres types de savoirs, comme la représentation théâtrale, voire l'image.

² CARASTRO (2009).

³ Les datations données ici sont avant notre ère, sauf exception. Pour la Sicile, voir BETTARINI (2005).

⁴ Il s'agit des publications abrégées respectivement *DTA*, *DT*, *SGD* et *NGCT*. Voir aussi CURBERA (2012).

⁵ TARDIEU *et al.* (2013).

⁶ Voir ici FARAONE, p. 206-231.

1. *Katadô pros...* ÉCRITURE RITUELLE ET JUSTICE DIVINE

1.1. *Séquences onomastiques et modes d'écriture*

Dans le corpus qui retient notre attention, le nom d'Hermès est enrichi d'un répertoire restreint d'attributs onomastiques :⁷ les qualificatifs *Katochos*, *Chthonios*, *Dolios* et *Eriounios*, auxquels s'ajoute le titre de *Despotês*. Les quatre premiers forment une série dans un *katadesmos* du IV^e siècle :

Dieux. À la Bonne Fortune (*Theoi. Agathêi Tuchêi*).

Je lie et je ne libérerai pas (*katadô kai ouk analusô*) Antikleia fille d'Anti-phane, Philoklea fille de Patrocle, Kleocharê, Philoklea, Smikrônidê, Timanthê et Timanthê.

Je lie toutes celles-là devant Hermès *Chthonios*, *Dolios*, *Katochos* et *Eriounios* (*pros ton Hermên ton Chthonion kai ton Dolion kai ton Katochon kai ton Eriounion*), et je ne les libérerai pas.⁸

La malédiction s'ouvre par une formule en usage dans la documentation civique : « Dieux. À la Bonne Fortune ». La suite consiste en la formulation d'une ligature avec une séquence d'anthroponymes ; puis la formule est répétée et son efficacité renforcée par l'insertion d'une séquence de théonymes, « *pros* (« en présence de ») + noms divins à l'accusatif », proche de l'énoncé des témoins dans les documents juridiques contemporains.⁹ Ligatures et serments impliquent les pouvoirs divins de façon similaire.¹⁰ La ligature est activée par le verbe *katadô*, « je lie en bas », performatif dans la mesure où son énonciation détermine l'action, comme l'enclouage de la tablette sur le mode gestuel.¹¹ Le véritable agent demeure anonyme : c'est le sujet du verbe au présent ainsi que, dans ce cas particulier, du futur performatif qui prolonge l'action (« je ne libérerai pas »).¹² Le témoin divin est convoqué pour renforcer les conditions de réussite de l'énoncé performatif.

Cette séquence onomastique est un choix – unique – de l'auteur de la malédiction. Elle structure un portrait d'Hermès en coordonnant quatre qualifications.¹³ Chaque appellation isolée et reliée par la coordination garde son autonomie tout en formant le réseau d'une « configuration d'Hermès » particu-

⁷ Sur la notion d'attribut onomastique, BONNET *et al.* (2018).

⁸ *SGD* 18, Athènes, IV^e siècle.

⁹ FARAONE (1991), 5.

¹⁰ CARASTRO (2012). Sur les serments, voir dans ce volume VAN HOVE, p. 115-137.

¹¹ AUSTIN (1962).

¹² FARAONE (1995).

¹³ Pour une explication de ce vocabulaire et des « formules onomastiques » encodées dans la base de données MAP, voir BONNET – LEBRETON (2019).

lière.¹⁴ Cette pluralité hermaïque peut parfaitement faire l'objet d'une adresse au singulier, comme dans le texte figurant sur une tablette de plomb d'époque classique ou hellénistique :

Hermès <i>Chthonios</i>	prends l'âme
Hermès <i>Dolios</i>	de la femme de Pyrrhos
Hermès <i>Katochos</i>	Mammia Hierêôs ?
Ses mains son cœur ses pieds	
... Mammia Hierêôs ?...	
... ti ? saisissant...	
.... ¹⁵	

Selon des choix ponctuels, Hermès peut avoir quatre, trois, ou deux appellations. Le choix tire profit éventuellement des possibilités graphiques qu'offre le recours à l'écrit, innovation fondamentale des *katadesmoi* sur plomb.¹⁶ En témoigne la séquence en miroir d'un Hermès double sur cette tablette :

Je lie	verbe performatif
Ôpheliôn et Ka-	{ anthroponymes
ntharis en présence d'Hermès	[Hermès # épithète +
<i>Chthonios</i> et <i>Katochos</i>	épithète # Hermès]
Hermès. Ôph-	anthroponyme }
eliôn, je le lie. ¹⁷	verbe performatif

Le choix des attributs onomastiques s'effectue dans un répertoire assez précis et tient compte à la fois des énoncés formulaires et des dispositifs graphiques, deux éléments techniques du rituel.

1.2. Les destinataires d'un recours divin

Hermès *Katochos*, « Qui saisit, retient », est le principal agent des ligatures athéniennes à l'époque classique et il est sans doute le *Theos Katochos* choisi par l'auteur d'une tablette.¹⁸ C'est également le seul qualificatif associé au titre *Despotês*, « Maître », sur une autre tablette dont le dispositif graphique est éclairant :

¹⁴ Pour reprendre l'expression de JAILLARD (2007).

¹⁵ DTA 93, Patissia, époque classique ou hellénistique.

¹⁶ CARASTRO (2009).

¹⁷ DTA 91, Attique, non daté.

¹⁸ DTA 95, IV^e-III^e siècle.

(A) Maître Hermès (*Despota Hermê*)

Katochos saisis (*kateche*) Phrynichos et ses extrémités
 les pieds la tête
 les mains le ventre
psuchê la paume
phusis Maître Hermès (*Despota Hermê*)
 le pénis *Katochos* saisis (*kateche*)
 Kittos et ses extrémités
 la *psuchê*
 les sourcils
 et la langue
chpsên (*psuchê* ?)

(B) Maître Hermès (*Despote Hermê*)

Saisis (*kateche*) Chairyllê
 Je la lie, elle et ses extrémités
 Je lie ces choses qui sont à Chairyllê
 Je lie les mains
 l'esprit, *psuchê*, la tête,
 l'activité, le cœur,
 leur bien-être.¹⁹

L'adresse au *Despotês Hermês* est mise en tête comme le destinataire d'une lettre. Le qualificatif *Katochos* ouvre le corps du texte en lien avec l'impératif *kateche*, « saisis », « retiens », qui n'est pas à proprement parler un verbe de ligature, mais exprime une demande. La ligature est quant à elle associée à une liste d'éléments corporels convoqués devant la divinité à la manière d'une liste d'accusés au tribunal.²⁰ Au revers, *Despotês Hermês* apparaît seul, ce qui tend à montrer la prépondérance du titre.²¹ Le nom même d'Hermès peut disparaître au profit de la seule séquence *Despotês Katochos*, au vocatif, encore en exergue comme le destinataire d'une lettre.²² D'autres *katadesmoi* adoptent clairement la forme épistolaire :

À Hermès et Perséphone j'envoie cette lettre (*Herm[êi] kai Pherseph[o]n[êi] tênde episto[l]ên apopem[pô]*). Dès lors que je porte cela

¹⁹ DTA 89, Patissia, IV^e siècle. CURBERA (2015), 145-146.

²⁰ GORDON (1999).

²¹ PARKER (2017), 1 : « direct address brings respect and the desire to conciliate into play, often in very high degree; it may lead to avoidance of proper names in favour of respectful titles or at least the addition of such titles ».

²² DTA 94, Patissia, III^e siècle. Richard Wünsch localise cette inscription au même endroit que DTA 89, au siècle suivant.

contre de mauvais hommes, que ceux-là, ô Dikê, reçoivent une juste fin (*tuchein telo(u)s dikês*). [...].²³

Or, le développement des *katadesmoi* sur plomb est contemporain de celui de lettres personnelles sur plomb utilisées pour la transmission de messages, d'instructions, voire d'esclaves, qui ont également été écrites dans des situations problématiques ou pour garantir le secret et la sécurité des instructions envoyées.²⁴ Perséphone est, après Hermès, la divinité la plus fréquente dans ces malédictions. Elle est dénommée sans titre ni qualification, mais son nom peut prendre plusieurs formes : *Phe(r)rephatta*, *Perephatta*, *Persephonê*, *Phressephônê* – jamais Korê.²⁵ C'est déjà elle, avec Hadès, qui reçoit les imprécations d'Althaïa dans l'*Iliade*.²⁶ À en croire Platon, ce nom de la déesse était propre à susciter la peur²⁷. Intervenant comme souveraine des défunts, elle s'associe à Hermès ici, ailleurs à Hermès *Katochos*,²⁸ auquel on ajoute Hadès²⁹ ou Gê,³⁰ Hermès *Chthonios* et Gê *Katochos*,³¹ Hermès *Eriounios* et le Léthé,³² des défunts³³ ou des *daimones* :

En envoyant une lettre aux *daimones* et à Phressephônê, je transmets Tibitida, fille de Choirinê, qui m'a fait du mal, fille, époux et les trois enfants de celle-là, deux femelles et un mâle : Pancratê Mantia Diophantês Metagenê.³⁴

La lettre précédente semblait porter un recours juridique,³⁵ adressé à Hermès et Perséphone, mais aussi à Dikê, « Justice », qui peut être une déesse vengeresse.³⁶ La deuxième lettre transmet une personne. On retrouve une forme épistolaire dans un *katadesmos* du II^e siècle à Lilybée, en Sicile, où *Katochos* devient *Katôchos*, valorisant le mouvement *katô* (« en-bas ») du dieu qui doit

²³ DTA 103.A, Pirée, IV^e-III^e siècle. La face B comporte une liste d'anthroponymes.

²⁴ EIDINOW, TAYLOR (2010).

²⁵ Le nom *Pherrhêphatta*, proprement athénien, apparaît quelques fois dans des inscriptions en lien avec le culte éleusinien, et toujours en compagnie de Déméter ; c'est toutefois *Korê* qui est généralement utilisé dans ce contexte : DIMOU (2016), 97-98.

²⁶ Homère, *Iliade*, 9, 566-572.

²⁷ Platon, *Cratyle*, 404 c-d.

²⁸ DT 50, IV^e siècle.

²⁹ SGD 44, Céramique, milieu du IV^e siècle.

³⁰ SGD 42, Décélie, première moitié du IV^e siècle ; SGD 75, provenance exacte inconnue.

³¹ DTA 101, près d'Athènes, vers 380.

³² NGCT 9, Céramique ?, premier quart du IV^e siècle.

³³ DT 68, IV^e siècle.

³⁴ DTA 102, Kotana, IV^e siècle.

³⁵ Pour le vocabulaire judiciaire, voir EIDINOW (2007), 165-190.

³⁶ RUDHARDT (1999), 131-145 ; DTA 158, très fragmentaire, contient <κ>αὶ δίκ<η>, fr. 1, l. 10. Sophocle, *Trachiniennes*, 808-812 : la « Justice vengeresse ». Noter la présence de *Chthôn* dans le passage.

livrer à Perséphone une femme, Prima Allia, dont la beauté est détaillée et vantée comme un objet de don.³⁷ À Carystos, en Eubée, Hermès *Katochos* est invoqué sur un *katadesmos* anthropomorphe, saisissant visuellement la personne qui lui est dévouée.³⁸ À Athènes, déjà, le *Katochos* exerce une action carcérale en saisissant un adversaire à travers le nom inscrit :

(A) ... *euthunai*... Satyros de Sounion et Demetrios, et si quelqu'un d'autre est mon ennemi, et tous ceux-là, je les lie, moi Onesimê. Tous ceux-là mêmes et leurs actions contre moi je les livre à ta charge, ô Hermès *Katochos Katochos*, saisis (*isthi*) ces noms et tous ceux-là. Hermès et Gê, je vous supplie (*hiketeuô*) de prendre ces choses en charge et de punir ces gens, sauvez (*sôizete*) celle qui a frappé ce plomb (*molubdokopos*) !³⁹

Onesimê ajoute une supplication, rite qui la place sous la protection d'Hermès et de la Terre : nous n'avons pas affaire à des envoûtements ciblant des victimes, mais au recours à une forme de justice divine contre des adversaires humains. Si victime il y a, il s'agit du rôle qu'endossent les commanditaires de ces malédictions.

Hermès *Katochos* peut en outre être associé aux *Praxidikai*, déesses terrifiantes dont la puissance relève de l'accomplissement de la vengeance,⁴⁰ dans une tablette qui leur promet un sacrifice d'*euaggelia* (« bon message » ?).⁴¹ Les *Praxidikai* sont invoquées comme *philai*, « chères », selon une stratégie rhétorique qui amplifie l'appel au secours divin.⁴² Cette pluralité divine est attestée hors de l'Attique aussi au singulier.⁴³ Hermès et les *Praxidikai* sont associés à Érétrie au III^e siècle.⁴⁴ À Dion, en Thessalie, un culte est attesté à Praxidikê et Hermès *Tuchôn* à la fin du V^e ou au IV^e siècle.⁴⁵ Praxidika est également invoquée comme « fille (*kôra*) d'Aglaokarpos » dans une malédiction en hexamètres de la fin du III^e siècle à Cyrène.⁴⁶ Il est possible qu'il s'agisse d'un hétéronyme poétique pour Perséphone.⁴⁷ Quoiqu'il en soit, c'est un choix logique mais circonstanciel qui les associe à Hermès *Katochos*, comme l'est la

³⁷ *SGD* 109.

³⁸ *SGD* 64 ; ROBERT (1936), 17-18, pl. VIII ; CARASTRO (2009).

³⁹ *DTA* 100, une tombe près d'Athènes, 360-330. La face B est une liste de noms. La répétition de l'élément *Katochos* est bien dans l'inscription.

⁴⁰ VERNANT (1985), 65-68.

⁴¹ *DTA* 109, Attique, III^e siècle.

⁴² À nouveau, PARKER (2017), 1.

⁴³ Pour une *Praxidika Chthonia* parmi toute une série de divinités *chthoniai* au nord de la mer Noire, voir *SGD* 170 (*katadesmos* non daté).

⁴⁴ *IG* XII Suppl. 574.

⁴⁵ *SEG* 61, 490 : [- - -]των Πραξιδικαι : και | [Ερ]μῆι : Τύχωνι. PINGIATOGLOU (2011) ; PARKER (2018).

⁴⁶ *SGD* 150

⁴⁷ Voir FARAONE (1995), 6-8, n. 25 et 28.

séquence suivante : *pros ton Hermên Katouchion kai pros tē[n He]katên kai pros tēn Gē[n k]ai pros Theous Hapantas kai M[ê]tera Theôn*.⁴⁸ Cette série montre une progression des divinités propres au rituel vers « l'Ensemble des Dieux et la Mère des Dieux ». Le recours à la Mère des dieux s'explique bien dans le contexte athénien : son sanctuaire, à côté du Bouleutérion, est le lieu où la cité archive les textes de lois et les actes des procès.⁴⁹ Le rôle de son sanctuaire comme lieu d'appel rituel à la justice étant attesté, la Mère des dieux supervise ici un rituel qui relève des puissances de la terre et de la justice.⁵⁰ Les malédictions sur plomb de l'Attique sont une forme de riposte face à une injustice et participent en cela de la sphère de la *dikê*, l'équilibre social assuré par le respect des droits de chacun.⁵¹ Dans cette mesure, il semble vain d'opposer aux *katadesmoi* des « prières pour justice » qui auraient un caractère moins « magique ». ⁵² Les tablettes de plomb recourent à un répertoire de noms divins lié à autre chose qu'une échelle de valeur des comportements rituels. Il semble que ces configurations circonstancielles dépendent moins de l'opposition entre une justice céleste et une vengeance infernale que du fonctionnement particulier de certains espaces rituels.

2. *Em mnêmasi*. LES DIEUX D'UN SOL QUI RETIENT

2.1. Katochos : la tombe qui retient

Il faut revenir au sens du qualificatif *Katochos*. Proche du « possédé », l'individu *katochos* est aussi celui qui est placé sous le contrôle d'une puissance – par exemple, le sommeil : « Ne réveille pas celui qui est détenu par le sommeil ». ⁵³ Gê peut aussi être *Katochos*,⁵⁴ dans la mesure où la terre de la tombe retient le défunt :⁵⁵ « la terre retiendra » (*gaia kathexei*), dit-on dans l'*Iliade* pour évoquer l'ensevelissement.⁵⁶ Dans l'épopée, c'est *gaia* qui re-

⁴⁸ DT 72.

⁴⁹ BORGEAUD (1996), 31-55.

⁵⁰ BORGEAUD (1996), 51 : la Mère des dieux athénienne, revalorisée dans les dernières décennies du V^e siècle, est « une figure maternelle et divine représentant à la fois la Justice et la Terre ».

⁵¹ RUDHARDT (1999), 104-131 ; SCHEID-TISSINIER (2008). PARKER (1983), 191-206.

⁵² VERSNEL (1991, 2010 et 2012 *contra* DREHER [2012]).

⁵³ Sophocle, *Les Trachiniennes* 978 : Οὐ μὴ ξεγερῆϊς τὸν ὕπνω κάτοχον.

⁵⁴ SGD 75, époque classique, non localisé.

⁵⁵ WILLI (2007), 175.

⁵⁶ Homère, *Iliade* 16, 629 ; 18, 332 ; *Odyssée* 13, 427 ; 15, 31 ; voir *Odyssée* 11, 549 : *gaia kateske*.

couvrir les morts et les immobilise en un lieu fixe.⁵⁷ C'est également Hadès qui, selon Platon, *katechei* les morts dans sa demeure.⁵⁸ Puisqu'il retient, immobilise, Hermès, comme la terre ou le sommeil, est *katochos*. Une tablette de plomb le situe explicitement « dans les tombes » (*em mnêmasi*).⁵⁹ Ce *katadesmos* vise un petit réseau local de commerçants et propriétaires liés par le voisinage ou des relations familiales.⁶⁰ Hermès *Katochos* semble être plus spécifiquement une divinité des tombes, où s'ancrent justement des relations interpersonnelles.⁶¹ Ornées de bandelettes, destinées à recevoir des offrandes, les tombes sont habitées par les défunts, puissances relativement peu malveillantes, mais irritables, dont le pouvoir, qui s'exerce dans l'espace funéraire, assure une protection.⁶² Or, la période de production des *katadesmoi* étudiés ici fait suite à un changement des structures funéraires en Attique. Après 430 et pendant le IV^e siècle, les tumuli et complexes funéraires ancestraux sont entourés de périboles en pierres, monumentalisés, couverts de stèles ou de colonnes.⁶³

Selon Hésychius, les *katochoi* sont « des pierres, celles qui sont disposées sur les tombes, et les prêtres d'Hermès, et ceux qui sont pris de maladie, ou possédés, ou habités par le divin ». ⁶⁴ Hermès est par excellence lié aux dépôts de cailloux (*psêphoi*) qui ponctuent l'espace, les lieux de passage ou de démarcation, tas de pierres qui ont pu être appelés *hermaia*.⁶⁵ Hésychius associe les monticules de pierres (*lophoi*) à Hermès en sa qualité d'*enodios*, « en chemin ». ⁶⁶ Dans le registre mythique, Hermès fait passer du vivant au minéral et inversement.⁶⁷ Les *katochoi* viennent ainsi s'ajouter à ces différents modes de dépôt de pierres, en marquant cette fois les espaces funéraires, mais ils renvoient aussi aux pierres tombales qui bloquent les morts dans le sol.⁶⁸

Une loi athénienne, attribuée à Solon et maintes fois réactualisée, limitait en théorie la monumentalisation de l'espace funéraire, interdisant notamment qu'on y dresse des *hermai*.⁶⁹ Or, les hermès quadrangulaires sont des images divines récurrentes dans le paysage religieux de la cité, des marqueurs

⁵⁷ Voir *Illiade* 2, 699 ; 6, 464-465 ; 14, 114 ; *Odyssée* 3, 258 ; Hésiode, *Les travaux et les jours* 121, 140, 156.

⁵⁸ Platon, *Cratyle* 403b-d.

⁵⁹ *DTA* 87, IV^e siècle.

⁶⁰ Voir aussi LAMONT (2015).

⁶¹ HUMPHREY (1980).

⁶² GARLAND (1985), 5-6.

⁶³ HUMPHREY (1980) ; PARKER (2005), 23-27.

⁶⁴ Hésychius, s.v. « κάτοχοι » : λίθοι, οἱ ἐπὶ μνήμασιν τιθέμενοι. καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς Ἑρμοῦ. καὶ οἱ ὑπὸ νόσων κατελιημμένοι. ἢ ἐνθουσιῶντες, ἢ ἔνθεοι.

⁶⁵ Hésychius, s.v. « Ἑρμοῦ ψήφος ». *Anthologie Palatine*, VI, 253 (Crinagoras).

⁶⁶ Hésychius, s.v. « Ἑρμαιοὺς λόφος ».

⁶⁷ SCHEID, SVENBRO (2014), 93-124.

⁶⁸ Voir aussi SVENBRO (1992).

⁶⁹ Cicéron, *Lois*, 2, 26.

d'espace.⁷⁰ D'après Pausanias, au II^e siècle de notre ère, un Hermès quadrangulaire, barbu et coiffé d'un bonnet, porte l'*epiklêsis* de *Dolios*, « Fourbe » : cet *agalma* se tient sur la route de Pellène et accomplit des vœux.⁷¹ Le « Fourbe » de la route de Pellène peut être utile aux voyageurs, comme l'envoyé spécial, jeune et rusé, de Zeus qui, dans l'épopée, endort les gardes et assure un passage à Priam.⁷² Peut-être aussi l'Hermès des *katadesmoi* attiques est-il invoqué pour tromper l'ennemi : « Et quoiqu'elle fasse devant le *Dolios* Hermès, que cela devienne pitoyable et honteux ». ⁷³ Quoiqu'il en soit, c'est dans l'espace des tombes que cet Hermès agit, car c'est là qu'il est présent, ce que le qualificatif *Chthonios* exprime d'autant plus.

2.2. Chthonios : le sol funéraire

Contrairement à *Katochos*, *Chthonios* est un qualificatif d'Hermès et d'autres divinités qui restera en usage jusqu'à l'Antiquité tardive et est présent dans différents registres rituels.⁷⁴ Dans le dossier athénien d'époque classique, il n'est attribué qu'à Hermès et, occasionnellement, à Hécate ou, dans un cas, Artémis. Hécate semble *Chthonia* tout particulièrement lorsqu'elle lui est associée :

Ô Hermès *Chthonios*, que soit lié (*katadedesthō*) Puthotelês devant (*pros*) Hermès *Chthonios* et Hécate *Chthonia*, ainsi que sa langue, ses paroles et ses actes... Ô Hermès *Chthonios*, que soit lié Puthotelês devant Hermès *Chthonios* et Hécate *Chthonia*, ainsi que sa langue, ses paroles et ses actes. Ô Hécate *Chthonia*⁷⁵ et Hermès *Chthonios*, que soit lié Trou[-...] devant Hermès *Chthonios* et Hécate *Chthonia*, ainsi que sa langue, ses paroles et ses actes. ... que Sôsignênês soit lié devant Hermès *Chthonios* et Hécate *Chthonia*, ainsi que sa langue, ses paroles et ses actes...⁷⁶

Le schéma formulaire est presque identique dans un autre *katadesmos* qui ignore l'invocation à Hermès au vocatif.⁷⁷ Hermès *Chthonios* et Hécate *Chtho-*

⁷⁰ JAILLARD (2001).

⁷¹ Pausanias, 7, 27.1.

⁷² KAHN (1979) et (1978).

⁷³ DTA 90, Attique, III^e siècle. CURBERA (2015), 144-145.

⁷⁴ Au moment de cette rédaction, un mémoire de master très prometteur est en cours de réalisation par Emmy Martins, étudiante de l'université Toulouse 2 Jean Jaurès sur (*Kata*)*chthonios*. *Sens et usages d'une épithète divine*, sous la direction de Corinne Bonnet, Sylvain Lebreton et moi-même.

⁷⁵ Si on admet ici une restitution, alors qu'auparavant c'est Hermès *Chthonios* seul qui fait l'objet de l'invocation.

⁷⁶ DTA 105, III^e siècle. La face B déploie une analogie performative qui n'implique pas les divinités.

⁷⁷ DTA 106, III^e siècle.

nia sont encore ceux devant qui est effectuée une série de ligatures (*katadedesthō*, *katadeō*) dans une tablette de plomb qui a reçu, au revers, comme sur un courrier, les deux noms de divinités au nominatif : Ἑρμῆς χθόνιος | καὶ Ἑκάτη χθονία.⁷⁸ Hermès *Chthonios* et Hécate *Chthonia* forment donc une paire reconnue, même si Hermès *Chthonios* peut être seul objet de l'adresse directe. Dans un groupe de *katadesmoi* trouvé récemment dans une tombe d'époque classique sur la route du Pirée, la paire s'élargit à une triade : « Hécate *Chthonia*, Artémis *Chthonia*, Hermès *Chthonie* | mets le *phthonos* sur... ». L'impératif au singulier *epiphthoneson* demande l'envie, le mauvais œil, à un triple destinataire. Les noms divins occupent une ligne complète et nette, comme un entête ou le destinataire d'une lettre. L'épithète distingue trois divinités là où une inscription attique de 429-428 avant notre ère atteste un culte à « Hermès et Artémis Hécate ».⁷⁹ Artémis Hécate, honorée à Erchia dans le sanctuaire de Kourotrophos, semble aussi protéger les femmes en couches.⁸⁰ Mais ici, l'épithète impose une autre configuration et introduit, dans cette tombe, Artémis parmi les divinités de l'espace funéraire.⁸¹

De son côté, Hécate *Chthonia* est attestée sans Hermès dans deux *katadesmoi* du III^e siècle, encore que l'un des deux soit trop fragmentaire pour être affirmatif.⁸² Le second, en revanche, l'associe aux Érinyes *élthiōnai* (« qui troublent, distraient », *hapax*) dans une malédiction en hexamètres du III^e, voire II^e siècle.⁸³

Dans un *katadesmos* visant ses relations amoureuses ou érotiques, une femme nommée Théodora est liée devant des défunts *atelestoi* (« inaccomplis ») qui sont peut-être morts avant le mariage.⁸⁴ L'un de ces défunts gît dans la tombe où est déposé le texte et par une analogie explicite, Théodora doit être inaccomplie dans sa relation avec d'autres hommes que le commanditaire du rituel.⁸⁵ Les défunts *atelestoi* sont associés d'une part avec « celle qui est auprès de » Perséphone (Hécate ou l'Érinye ?), d'autre part avec Hermès *Chthonios* et Téthys. Cette dernière peut surprendre, mais cette divinité des origines liquides, épouse d'Océan, est à la fois une puissance des confins et la mère des

⁷⁸ DTA 107, premier quart du IV^e siècle.

⁷⁹ IG I³ 383, 124-129.

⁸⁰ Calendrier d'Erchia (375-350) : CGRN 52. Eschyle, *Les suppliantes*, 676-677 ; Euripide, *Hippolyte*, 166-169.

⁸¹ Théocrite, *Idylles* 2, 33-34 : « Toi aussi Artémis, tu feras bouger l'acier dans l'Hadès et tout ce qu'il peut y avoir d'autres d'inébranlable » (traduction personnelle).

⁸² DTA 104, III^e siècle.

⁸³ DTA 108, III^e siècle. FARAONE (1995), 5-6. La thèse d'Anaïs Marchiando, *Érinyes, Euménides, Semnai : dynamiques des configurations et montages rituels, menée à Genève sous la direction de Dominique Jaillard*, doit apporter un éclairage utile sur les différents registres où interviennent les Érinyes.

⁸⁴ DT 68, IV^e siècle.

⁸⁵ EIDINOW (2007), 149-150. La mention du mort dans la tombe est un élément d'innovation que l'on ne rencontre sinon qu'à partir de l'époque hellénistique, BRAVO (1987).

fleuves, notamment ceux des Enfers.⁸⁶ Elle est donc aussi la mère de cours d'eau qui, comme l'Éridan à Athènes, coulent dans les zones funéraires qui bordent l'espace habité.⁸⁷ Le répertoire onomastique et formulaire d'une telle inscription est quoiqu'il en soit assez original.

Le corpus athénien des IV^e et III^e siècles ne connaît pas de dieu *Katachthonios* (« Souterrain »), mais bien le *Chthonios* que l'on peut comprendre au premier abord comme « de (la) Terre », « Terrestre » ou « Terrien ». *Chthôn* renvoie à la terre dans son épaisseur ou sa matérialité. Elle couvre le même champ sémantique que *gaia* ou *gê*, à la fois sol et surface, matière fertile, territoire civique, champ sémantique qui peut s'étendre au sol qui recouvre les morts.⁸⁸ On peut lire *chthonios* comme « du sol », en associant à cette idée un partage fonctionnel de la terre qui, parce qu'elle est terre d'Hermès et d'Hécate, est funéraire. Dans d'autres configurations, dans d'autres contextes, Déméter *Chthonia* renvoie à un sol cultivé.⁸⁹ Dans le cas d'Hermès *Chthonios* ou Hécate *Chthonia*, l'épithète définit l'espace funéraire où on les rencontre comme un « sol » particulier. À cet égard, le choix de l'attribut onomastique s'inscrit aussi dans une façon de faire du paysage religieux, en singularisant le sol qui relève de ces deux divinités du passage.⁹⁰

3. *Chthonion proseipe*. LE NOM MIS EN SITUATION : RÉCITS, IMAGES, EXÉGÈSE

Les malédictions gravées sur plomb à Athènes font appel à un répertoire restreint d'attributs onomastiques autour d'une puissance divine principale : Hermès. Leur choix relève d'énoncés stratégiques dans le cadre de la performance rituelle qui dépendent de trois facteurs principaux : la technique de l'écrit, le rôle punitif de la divinité, le lieu de son pouvoir. Le qualificatif *Chthonios*, lié au sol des tombes, renvoie à un portrait plus précis du dieu activé dans le théâtre et, probablement, la production iconographique.

3.1. *Chthonios* : en récit et en image

Hermès n'est appelé *Psuchopompos*, « celui qui conduit les âmes », ni dans les malédictions, ni dans les textes tragiques contemporains.⁹¹ Son appellation

⁸⁶ Ailleurs apparaissent les eaux du Léthé (*NGCT* 9).

⁸⁷ CHATZIVASILIOU (2019).

⁸⁸ WILLI (2007), 174 ; GEORGOU DI (2002) ; DIMAKOPOULOU (2019), 66, n. 36.

⁸⁹ Pausanias, II, 35.4-5 ; III, 14.5. PALERMITI (2019), 198-199.

⁹⁰ Sur la notion de paysage religieux : POLIGNAC, SCHEID (2010). Voir ici CALAME, p. 93-114.

⁹¹ SIEBERT 2005, 265.

« *Pompaios* » est toutefois connue d'Eschyle.⁹² Hermès *Chthonios* est aussi *Pompaios*, guide des défunts.⁹³ Eschyle qui, par ailleurs, semble connaître des chants capables de lier,⁹⁴ met en scène Hermès *Chthonios* dans l'*Orestie* représentée à Athènes en 458 :

Hermès de la Terre, qui surveille le pouvoir paternel/ancestral, deviens mon sauveur, l'allié que j'implore. [...] Sur le tertre de cette tombe, je somme mon père de prêter l'oreille.⁹⁵

Oreste invoque Hermès *Chthonios* à la tombe de son père Agamemnon pour solliciter son aide dans la vengeance qu'il se doit d'exercer, à travers une invocation qui ouvre la tragédie des *Choéphores*. Chez Eschyle, *Chthôn* est un autre nom de Gaia/Gê qui a « une seule forme sous de nombreux noms ». ⁹⁶ Dans l'*Hélène* d'Euripide, ce sont les Sirènes qui sont « filles de la Terre » (*Chthonos korai*), invitées à jouer une musique funèbre.⁹⁷ L'Hermès de la terre funéraire est aussi *epopteus*, celui qui veille sur la puissance paternelle matérialisée par la tombe, garant d'une légitimité généalogique, qu'Oreste mobilise en tant que sauveur (*sôtêr*) et allié (*summachos*), qualifications d'un dieu combattant.⁹⁸ Hermès *Chthonios* devient ainsi agent de la vengeance à venir qui est aussi justice.⁹⁹ L'invocation d'Électre dans la même pièce consolide cette configuration sur le lieu de la tombe : « Très grand héraut de ceux d'en haut et d'en bas, Hermès *Chthonios*, fais-toi mon héraut ». ¹⁰⁰ Électre évoque ensuite la Terre, *gê* ou *gaia*, dans laquelle se déroule le cycle de vie et de mort ; la *chthôn*

⁹² Eschyle, *Euménides*, 89-92 (Apollon) : « Et toi, frère, en qui coule le sang de notre père, Hermès, veille (*phulasse*) sur lui. Justifie ton appellation (*epónumos*), sois le Guide (*pompaios*) qui conduira mon suppliant » (tr. Mazon modifiée).

⁹³ En relation avec un Zeus *Chthonios* dans un fragment des *Psychagogues* d'Eschyle, 273a 8 [Radt]. Voir Sophocle, *Ajax*, 831-834.

⁹⁴ C'est l'hymne *desmios* des Érinyes (*Euménides*, 306), FARAONE (1985).

⁹⁵ Eschyle, *Choéphores* 1-5 (Oreste) : Ἑρμῆ γθόνιε, πατρῶι ἐποπτεύων κράτη, | σωτήρ γενοῦ μοι σύμμαχος τ' αἰτουμένωι | [...] | τύμβου δ' ἐπ' ὄχθωι τῶιδε κηρύσσω πατρὶ κλύειν, ἀκοῦσαι (tr. Mazon modifiée).

⁹⁶ Eschyle, *Prométhée*, 205 (Τιτᾶνας, Οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ Χθονὸς τέκνα) et 210 (καὶ Γαῖα, πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφή μία).

⁹⁷ Euripide, *Hélène*, 167-172 : « Jouvencelles ailées, ô demoiselles filles de la Terre (παρθένοι Χθονὸς κόραι), Sirènes, puissiez-vous venir à mes plaintes faire écho sur le lotos de Libye ou la syrinx, apportant à mes cris funèbres des larmes bien à l'unisson... » (tr. H. Grégoire modifiée ; je choisis de mettre une majuscule à *Chthonos*).

⁹⁸ Dans les *Perses*, il est souverain parmi les puissances *chthonioi*. Voir SIEBERT (2005), 266-268.

⁹⁹ Eschyle, *Choéphores* 935-936 et 946-952, où ré-intervient Dikè. La justice rétributive est en arrière-plan (*dikê*) : Eschyle, *Choéphores*, 144.

¹⁰⁰ Eschyle, *Choéphores* 124-130 : κῆρυξ μέγιστε τῶν ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω | <ἄκουσον,> Ἑρμῆ γθόνιε, κηρύξας ἐμοὶ | τοὺς γῆς ἐνερθε δαίμονας κλύειν ἐμὰς | εὐχάς, πατρώϊων δωμάτων ἐπισκόπους, | καὶ γαῖαν αὐτήν, ἥ τὰ πάντα τίκτεται | θρέγασά τ' αὐθις τῶνδε κύμα λαμβάνει. | κάγω χέουσα τάσδε χέρνιβας νεκροῖς | λέγω καλοῦσα πατέρ' (tr. Mazon modifiée).

est aussi, à Athènes, la terre dont est issu le corps civique autochtone et à laquelle il retourne.¹⁰¹ Hermès *Chthonios* est le héraut de l'entre-deux qui ouvre un chant à l'adresse des puissances enterrées. Il transforme le sol en interface. Le chant du Coryphée, quant à lui, réinvestit Hermès *Chthonios* de toute la configuration de vengeance que dessineront les *katadesmoi*, en invoquant le sol et la tombe « car maintenant, l'heure est venue pour la Persuasion Fourbe de descendre avec eux dans la lice, et pour l'Hermès *Chthonios* et le *Nuchios* de diriger la joute des épées meurtrières ».¹⁰² Ce moment du drame est crucial puisqu'Oreste s'apprête à assassiner sa mère et le chant du Coryphée rassemble les forces surhumaines capables de l'appuyer. Le sol funéraire du père légitime son action, *Peithô Dolia*, la « Persuasion Fourbe », assure l'efficacité du stratagème qu'emploie Oreste. Hermès *Chthonios*, cette fois, est aussi *Nuchios*, « de la Nuit », l'heure du crime qui confère une connotation plus poignante encore à la dramaturgie effroyable.¹⁰³ De fait, en étant à la fois de *Chthôn* et de *Nux*, Hermès conjoint les forces de deux déesses primordiales, la Terre et la Nuit.¹⁰⁴ Hermès fils de Maïa est enfin celui qui pourra endormir les gardes.¹⁰⁵

En 458, Eschyle a mis en scène Hermès, à la fois fils de Maïa,¹⁰⁶ *Chthonios* et *Nuchios*, comme puissance centrale d'un drame de justice vengeresse dans une configuration qui mêle la terre, la tombe, la nuit, la ruse, l'emprise du sommeil et les armes du meurtre. Or, dans un fragment de tragédie dont l'auteur, le titre et la date exacte nous restent inconnus, Hécate *Chthonia* dirige un cortège de cauchemars : « Mais si tu as peur d'une apparition en rêve | et si d'Hécate *Chthonia* tu as reçu le cortège... ».¹⁰⁷ Pareillement, dans un fragment d'Aristophane, la chevelure d'Hécate *Chthonia* est entremêlée de serpents et la comédie l'identifie à Empousa, apparition métamorphe issue de l'Hadès.¹⁰⁸ Hécate *Chthonia* envoie les fantômes, les apparitions qui provoquent l'effroi et patronne les manifestations des défunts.¹⁰⁹ Elle donne à voir les morts et, dans

¹⁰¹ DARTHOUS (2005).

¹⁰² Eschyle, *Choéphores* 722-729 (Choryphée) : ὃ πότνια χθὼν καὶ πότνι' ἀκτὴ | χόματος, ἦ νῦν ἐπὶ ναυάρχοι | σώματι κείσαι τῷ βασιλείῳ, | νῦν ἐπάκουσον, νῦν ἐπάρηξον· | νῦν γὰρ ἀκμάζει Πειθὼ δολίαν | ξυγκαταβῆναι, χθόνιον δ' Ἑρμῆν | καὶ τὸν νύχιον τοῖσδ' ἐφοδεῦσαι | ξιφοδηλήτοισιν ἀγῶσιν (tr. Mazon modifiée).

¹⁰³ RAMNOUX (1959), 150-159.

¹⁰⁴ PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2018), 149.

¹⁰⁵ Eschyle, *Choéphores* 812-818 (chœur) : ξυλλάβοιτο δ' ἐνδίκως | παῖς ὁ Μαίας ἐπιφορώτατος | πρᾶξιν οὐρίαν τελεῖν· | πολλὰ δ' ἀλά' ἔφανε χρήζων, | ἄσκοπον δέ πως βλέπων | νυκτὸς προὔμμάτων σκότον φέρει, | καθ' ἡμέραν δ' οὐδὲν ἐμφανέστερος.

¹⁰⁶ Eschyle, *Choéphores* 45 : ἰὼ γαῖα μαῖα.

¹⁰⁷ Plutarque, *De la superstition*, 166a : Ἄλλ' εἴτ' ἔνυπνον φάντασμα φοβεῖ | Χθονίας θ' Ἐκάτης κῶμον ἐδέξω (tr. modifiée) = *Adesp.* Fr. 375 Kannicht-Snell.

¹⁰⁸ Aristophane, *Tagenistai*, fr. 515 K.-A. SERAFINI (2015), 167-169, PATERA (2015), 271-274, EIDINOW (2019) montre l'ancrage de cette figure démonique dans un espace liminaire et funéraire.

¹⁰⁹ JOHNSTON (1999), 64.

le registre théâtral du moins, elle est celle dont on détourne les attaques par des purifications – alors même que les *katadesmoi* n'impliquent pas explicitement ce mode d'action de la déesse.¹¹⁰

Dans les récits, *Chthonios-a* entre en réseau avec des éléments sensibles comme les tombeaux, des manifestations de défunts sur terre et signale Hécate comme une « Puissance de Terreur ».¹¹¹ Déjà, la trilogie de l'*Orestie* est faite pour impulser une angoisse devant la puissance rétributive du divin, peur et justice qui sont toutes deux manifestées par les Érinyes, les cauchemars ou les tombeaux.¹¹² En faisant appel, au IV^e siècle, à Hermès *Chthonios* dans des malédictions et des prières prononcées et écrites sur le sol des tombes, les *katadesmoi* activent une configuration familière aux Athéniens depuis au moins un demi-siècle. En outre, un fragment de l'historien Théopompe de Chios, actif au IV^e siècle avant notre ère, atteste qu'à son époque un sacrifice était offert à Hermès *Chthonios* lors du troisième jour (*Chutroi*) de la fête printanière des Anthestéries, fête à laquelle les défunts sont associés.¹¹³ Le sacrifice consiste en l'offrande d'une bouillie de céréales et légumineuses (*panspermia*) réservée au dieu et aux défunts, que ni les vivants ni les Olympiens ne peuvent partager. C'est donc bien Hermès *Chthonios* que les Athéniens associent aux défunts.

Il est plus difficile d'associer l'attribut onomastique *Chthonios* à un mode de représentation figurée, mais on a voulu le reconnaître sur un lécythe à figures blanches attribué au Peintre de Tymbos et daté des environs de 460.¹¹⁴ Le dieu est représenté debout, tourné vers la droite et brandissant une baguette au-dessus du col d'un large *pithos* d'où s'envolent de petites figures humaines ailées – *eidola* ou manifestations des défunts. L'image donne à voir un mode d'action proche du *Pompaios*, bien que celui-ci apparaisse surtout, à partir du V^e siècle, pour guider le passage des défunts vers l'Hadès.¹¹⁵ D'autres images représentent le dieu immobile, voire assis, auprès des tombes :¹¹⁶ on pourrait y reconnaître l'Hermès *Chthonios* maître des espaces funéraires, mais il ne reçoit pas de nom explicite ; toutefois, au Nord de la Grèce, l'iconographie funéraire sera plus claire, comme à l'époque hellénistique, sur une stèle funéraire de Veria en Macédoine (Fig. 1).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ PARKER (1983), 222-225 et 251. ZOGRAFOU (2010), 231-232.

¹¹¹ VERNANT (1985), 60-62.

¹¹² DE ROMILLY (1958) ; PARKER (2008).

¹¹³ Théopompe de Chios, *Hist.*, *FGrH* 115 F, 347a et b = Schol. Ar. *Ach.* 1076.

¹¹⁴ Jena, University inv. V 225. OAKLEY (2004), 137-141.

¹¹⁵ SOURVINOU-INWOOD (1995), 303-356. Voir Homère, *Odyssée*, XXIV, 1-2, où c'est Hermès du Cyllène qui guide les âmes de sa baguette.

¹¹⁶ *LIMC*, VI, 586-645.

¹¹⁷ DAUX (1965), 792-793.



Fig. 1 : Stèle funéraire de Cassandra, fille d'Hadéa, Veria, époque hellénistique. Musée de Véria, photo personnelle.

Sur le relief, à gauche, deux femmes, une adulte et une jeune fille, se font face : elles sont sans doute la défunte et sa mère, nommées dans l'inscription. À droite, une base rectangulaire inscrite « à Hermès *Chthonios* », supporte deux représentations du dieu (Fig. 2) : Hermès anthropomorphe, vêtu de la chlamyde et portant le caducée, avec à sa droite une petite figure anthropomorphe enveloppée dans un manteau long ; à sa gauche se dresse un Hermès quadrangulaire. Cette inscription figure sur d'autres exemples en Thessalie.¹¹⁸ Le nom du dieu qui semble

¹¹⁸ PERRIOLLO, PIVOTEAU-DESCHODT, ZACHARI (2013), n. 27.



Fig. 2 : Représentation d'Hermès avec base inscrite sur la stèle de Véria. Musée de Véria, photo personnelle.

dédier une construction funéraire « à Hermès *Chthonios* » entre en dialogue avec deux formes ou apparences du dieu, du fait que la base inscrite les soutient toutes deux : ils me semblent complémentaires, comme pour former une séquence à la fois iconographique et onomastique où Hermès est *Chthonios*, psychopompe et quadrangulaire. Chaque élément est distinct, mais l'ensemble forme un dieu pluriel, à l'instar d'une séquence onomastique comme Hermès *Katochos kai Dolios kai Chthonios kai Eriounios*. Hermès *Chthonios* n'apparaît pas tant dans un environnement « infernal » que dans un paysage religieux, funéraire.

3.2. Eriounios : la grammaire et la terre

Les noms d'Hermès dans les malédictions ne sont donc pas « hors-sol », mais s'enracinent dans le paysage religieux au-delà même de ce seul rituel. Il me

reste à dire quelques mots d'*Eriounios* qui témoigne en outre des liens entre ce répertoire rituel et d'éventuelles réflexions sur les noms divins dans l'Antiquité. Dans les *Grenouilles*, Aristophane déploie une joute littéraire au cours de laquelle Euripide critique l'usage de l'épithète *Chthonios* par Eschyle, et ce dernier rétorque qu'elle n'est qu'une autre façon de dire *Eriounios* :

Eschyle – En quoi dis-tu que j'ai fait une faute ?

Euripide – Répète depuis le commencement.

Eschyle – « Hermès *Chthonios*, surveillant le pouvoir paternel ».

Euripide – Oreste ne dit-il pas cela sur le tombeau du père défunt ?

Eschyle – Je ne dis pas le contraire.

Euripide – Que veut-il donc dire d'Hermès ? Est-ce, quand son père périt sous les coups d'une femme dans un obscur guet-apens, est-ce là ce que tu prétends qu'Hermès *surveillait* ?

Eschyle – Ce n'est pas celui-là, mais *Eriounios* qu'il appelle Hermès *Chthonios* (ἀλλὰ τὸν Ἐριούνιον | Ἑρμῆν Χθόνιον προσεῖπε), et il le montre en disant qu'il tient ce titre (γέρας) de son père.

Euripide – La faute est encore plus grave que je ne prétendais. Car s'il tient de son père ce titre de *Chthonios* (εἰ γὰρ πατρῶον τὸ Χθόνιον ἔχει γέρας) ...

Dionysos – Dans ce cas il serait du fait de son père violateur de tombeaux (τυμβωρύχος) !

Eschyle – Dionysos, le vin que tu bois n'a pas de bouquet.¹¹⁹

Eschyle et Euripide, dans l'Hadès, discutent d'une scène qui a lieu sur une tombe, dans un débat rhétorique qui oppose « ancienne » et « nouvelle » tragédie – la première aura la préférence finale de Dionysos et d'Aristophane. L'argument premier d'Euripide porte sur le participe *epopteuôn* qu'il juge ambigu : que surveille ce « surveillant » ?¹²⁰ Euripide accuse Eschyle d'avoir forgé le nom d'une divinité patronne des meurtres en famille. Pour s'en défendre, Eschyle explique que Zeus a donné à Hermès *Eriounios* le nom de *Chthonios* comme *geras*, « part d'honneur ».¹²¹ C'est cette équivalence que mettent encore en avant deux commentaires littéraires plus tardifs. Le grammairien Apollodore le sophiste mentionne le fait que certains commentateurs, récents par rapport à lui, faisaient équivaloir *eriounios* et *chthonios* en rapprochant *eriounios* du terme *era*, « terre ».¹²² Une scholie à Homère précise que les tragiques ont donné à l'épithète le sens de *katachthonios*.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Aristophane, *Les Grenouilles*, 1135-1150, tr. H. Van Daele modifiée.

¹²⁰ JOHNSTON (1999), 45, associe l'*epopteuôn* des *Choéphores* au héros Epops et à Zeus Epoptès, conjointement honorés à Erchia lors du festival des *Genesia*, en l'honneur des ancêtres.

¹²¹ H. Van Daele traduit par « fonction » ; je préfère l'idée d'une part d'honneur et donc, puisqu'il s'agit d'un nom, un « titre ».

¹²² Apollodore le Sophiste s.v. ἐριούνιος (76, 16-17 Bekker) : ἐπίθετον Ἑρμοῦ, ὁ μέγας ὄνισκων, τουτέστιν ὠφελῶν. οἱ δὲ νεώτεροι τοῦ χθόνιου, παρὰ τὴν ἔραν, « *Eriounios* : épithète

De fait, Hermès *Eriounios* est attesté aussi dans des contextes similaires à ceux de *Chthonios*. Dans les *katadesmoi*, il apparaît avec Perséphone et le Léthé¹²⁴ au tout début du IV^e siècle, ou encore Hécate.¹²⁵ *Eriounios* est toutefois une appellation plus ancienne et plus connue : épithète homérique, elle fait partie, comme *Argeiphontès*, des épithètes exclusives d'Hermès. Compris souvent comme « le bienfaisant, celui qui est utile, serviable », il s'agit d'un nom si ancien que les Grecs de l'époque classique n'en connaissaient plus eux-mêmes le sens et l'étymologie.¹²⁶ Nombre d'usages littéraires témoignent d'une association d'idées entre l'*Eriounios* et la fonction de messenger, orientant vers un dérivé de l'arcado-chypriote signifiant « celui qui court vite ». Elena Langella a proposé de considérer la re-sémantisation de « celui qui accourt à l'aide » en synonyme de *Chthonios*.¹²⁷ Quoi qu'il en soit, le théâtre et les inscriptions le re-sémantisent en le connectant à la terre, notamment funéraire : l'épithète apparaît en épigraphie au milieu du V^e siècle avant notre ère, à Pharsale.¹²⁸

Le savoir rituel des *katadesmoi* se saisit d'un répertoire que partagent le théâtre et l'épigraphie funéraire. Il le reconfigure en associant à cet Hermès aux différents noms d'autres puissances de l'espace funéraire et de la justice. À lire Platon, cette reconfiguration pourrait être le fait de *manteis* ou *agurtai*, devins et entrepreneurs rituels indépendants. Également désignés comme *goêtai*, spécialistes des chants adressés aux morts – l'*epiklêsis* ou « invocation » des morts, dit plus tard la *Souda*¹²⁹ –, ces agents humains devraient être reconsidérés à l'interface entre les registres de savoir et, on le voit par les noms divins qu'ils mettent en acte, leur place dans un paysage religieux.

En resserrant la focale sur un micro-réseau ou une configuration de divinités déployée dans un cadre rituel précis, on observe avec quels composés réagissent les dénominations divines mises en acte. Le réseau divin des *katadesmoi* attiques de l'époque classique et du début de l'époque hellénistique s'ancrent dans un contexte local et un savoir rituel donné.¹³⁰ Ces divinités ne

d'Hermès, Celui qui secourt grandement, c'est-à-dire qui aide ; selon certains, plus récemment, le *Chthonios*, à partir de *era* ».

¹²³ *Sch. in Hom. Y 34c Erbse* (ex.): <ἐριοῦνης> ὁ ἐρευνητικός· λόγος γὰρ ἐστιν. ἢ ὁ μέγιστα ὠφέλιον, πλεονάζοντος τοῦ Y. οἱ δὲ τραγικοὶ τὸν καταχθόνιον (fr. ad. 588 N2).

¹²⁴ Que l'on voit peut-être avec le *Chthonios*, p. 143.

¹²⁵ *SEG* 40.266, v. 338.

¹²⁶ Il fera toujours objet d'un traitement polysémique : *Etymologicum magnum*, 374, 20-26.

¹²⁷ LANGELLA (2013 et 2017).

¹²⁸ AVAGIANOU (1997).

¹²⁹ *Souda*, s.v. Γοητεία [Adler 365].

¹³⁰ Le terrain athénien est bien sûr un secteur d'étude privilégié et il faudrait pouvoir questionner l'étendue géographique du savoir rituel en question. Richard Wünsch mentionne une tablette de *defixio* de Tanagra, dont la formule est Έ[ρμ]ῆν [κ]ι[κ]λήσω χθόνιον | καταδίδημι Δ[ι]ονυσίαν | καὶ Φερσεφόνηαν, « J'invoque Hermès *Chthonios* et Phersophonê, je leur remets

représentent pas à proprement parler un « panthéon infernal » car elles ne sont en rien l'ensemble complet et fermé des puissances de l'Hadès. Le répertoire de ces divinités relève d'un paysage religieux, celui des espaces funéraires en particulier, espaces liminaux mais à forte valeur sociale. Ici domine un Hermès du sol qui détient et immobilise, un pouvoir qui s'applique dans une forme de justice rituelle au côté de puissances rétributives connues et dépassant le seul cadre funéraire. Le répertoire est peu étendu : on ne rencontre pas Némésis, puissance rétributive pourtant bien présente en Attique, ni les juges des Enfers. L'ancrage funéraire de la pratique rituelle est prépondérant mais pas unique. En témoigne une ligature de la fin du IV^e siècle, portant une prière adressée sur du plomb à Palaimôn, dans le sanctuaire de Pancratès.¹³¹ Palaimôn serait le nom de Mélicerte, fils d'Ino-Leukothea héroïsé. Honoré dans le sanctuaire, il est à la fois un défunt puissant et une puissance marine.¹³² L'espace funéraire et ses divinités ne sont qu'un des domaines possibles de la pratique des malédictions, plus largement attesté sur les tablettes de plomb.

La prépondérance d'Hermès dans le registre imprécatoire va de pair avec une sorte de médiatisation plus large de ce dieu spécialisé qu'est l'Hermès des tombes, à travers les fêtes, le théâtre, l'iconographie. Cela implique que les choix de dénomination du divin faits dans des rites même supposés marginaux ou indépendants des cultes officiels, comme ces pratiques que l'on a tendance à trop vite enfermer dans la catégorie de « magie », doivent être considérés comme l'activation de savoirs rituels partagés plus largement et adossés aux structures matérielles du rituel. Cela vaut bien évidemment pour le dossier étudié ici, et d'autres contextes témoigneront d'autres configurations.

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LES NOMS DIVINS DANS LA PHILOSOPHIE GRECQUE : UN CAS D'« USURE SÉMANTIQUE »

Nicoletta Di Vita

This study aims at exploring the use of hymnic invocations as a model for calling upon gods in Greek philosophical discourses. It is possible to identify a philosophical corpus of divine onomastic sequences; this corpus, almost entirely neglected by modern commentators, opens a field of investigation for the study of divine denomination in the context of a significant appropriation of cult practices. Through a systematic study of an exemplary case – the onomastic attributes mobilized in the Hymn to Zeus of the stoic philosopher Cleanthes (3rd c. BCE), compared to the invocations of Zeus in literary and ritual documentation, as well as the onomastic sequences in prose philosophical discourses –, my aim is to show the continuity and change in the representation of the gods, and to elaborate an hypothesis on the function of naming formulas in the ancient Greek philosophical context. Because of the specificity of the case study, I will take into consideration the representation of the divine in emic terms, as well as the explicit theorization on the naming of the gods by the philosophers – which is particularly rich and unexpected on a conceptual point of view.

1. L'HYMNE COMME MODÈLE D'APPELLATION DES DIEUX POUR LA PHILOSOPHIE

1.1. *Le langage apte à parler des dieux*

Dans un passage de son traité sur l'épidictique ancienne, au sein de la section consacrée à la classification des hymnes, le rhéteur Ménandre de Laodicée (III^e-IV^e siècle) signale l'existence d'une sous-classe de compositions hymniques, les ὕμνοι φυσικοί ou φυσιολογικοί, hymnes « naturels » ou, d'après la traduction convaincante du philologue allemand Günther Zuntz, les « hymnes philosophiques ».¹ Il s'agit d'hymnes aux dieux composés dans un contexte philosophique ou ayant des visées spéculatives, c'est-à-dire portant sur la « na-

¹ Mén. II, 333, 12 ; 336, 24 ; cf. RUSSELL, WILSON (1981), *ad loc.* Zuntz commente : « nicht „physiologisch“, sondern „wesensdeutend“, d. h. philosophisch », ZUNTZ (2005), 11. On retrouve des indications analogues sur une hymnographie philosophique chez Quint. *Inst. orat.*, III, 7, 7-9 ; Alex. Num. *Rhet. Aph.* III, 4-6 ; Ael. Arist., *Orat.*, 46.5, 363.29 Keil.

ture » de l'être divin (τίς ἢ Απόλλωνος φύσις, τίς ἢ τοῦ Διός [II, 333, 13 ; 438]), ou, plus en général, d'hymnes écrits par des philosophes.

Cette catégorie d'hymnes était si remarquable que Ménandre y reconnaît l'un des exemples majeurs de l'hymnographie ancienne (et pas seulement philosophique) dans l'œuvre de Platon : ce dernier est, à ses yeux, « le plus illustre et excellent (ἄκρον καὶ ἄριστον) auteur d'hymnes de l'Antiquité », source de πολλά παραδείγματα (« nombreux exemples ») et même ἐξηγούμενος, « pionnier », du genre hymnique ancien tout entier (Mén. I, 334, 7-8 ; 335, 10).

En effet, malgré l'opposition critique traditionnelle de la philosophie grecque à l'égard de la poésie et de la religion, plusieurs indices témoignent de son intérêt large et continu pour les hymnes aux dieux ; surtout, plusieurs indices témoignent de la permanence, au sein même du discours philosophique grec, du registre cultuel et littéraire qui caractérise les pratiques d'invocation des dieux dans les hymnes traditionnels.

Dans le livre III de la *République*, les hymnes sont considérés par Platon comme une exception parmi les genres poétiques : ils sont les seuls, avec les éloges, à être admis dans la *polis* (*Resp.* X, 604a 4).² Dans le *Phèdre*, l'adresse aux dieux par le biais du langage hymnique est exprimée comme un « manque » que la philosophie, avec son ambition de vérité, doit assumer : « or, ce lieu supracéleste, nul poète encore, de ceux d'ici-bas, n'a chanté d'hymne en son honneur, et nul n'en chantera jamais de façon digne. Et cette façon est la suivante : il faut avoir le courage de dire la vérité, surtout lorsqu'on parle de la vérité » (*Phaedr.* 247c 3-6, tr. Robin).

Le lien qui rattache les modalités hymniques d'énonciation à la vérité philosophique au sujet des êtres supérieurs – le « courage de dire la vérité », où le vrai concerne aussi bien l'objet du dit (περὶ ἀληθείας λέγοντα) que le dire lui-même (τὸ γε ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν) – apparaît ailleurs dans la réflexion platonicienne. Dans les *Lois*, nous lisons que « les poètes, quand ils chantent des hymnes (ὑμνοδοῦν), sont de race divine et comprennent les événements conformément à la vérité (κατ'ἀλήθειαν) » (III, 682a 1-5). Dans le célèbre passage du *Théétète* où le philosophe est opposé à l'orateur, on relèvera l'image des philosophes qui « chantent des hymnes véridiques », alors que l'orateur n'en est pas capable (*Theaet.* 175d8-176a 2) et, dans le *Clitophon*, Socrate semble « parler de la plus belle manière » quand, « en parlant, il chante des hymnes » (ὑμνεῖς λέγων, *Clit.* 407a 5-e 2).

On pourrait prolonger cet inventaire, d'autant plus qu'il ne se borne pas à la seule philosophie platonicienne, mais qu'il touche, de façon peut-être plus insistante, les écoles suivantes. Dans le stoïcisme hellénistique, par exemple,

² Παραδέχομαι εἰς τὴν πόλιν, « admettre dans la *polis* », est une expression fréquente dans la *République* et l'un des soucis majeurs du dialogue, cf. *Resp.* 399d ; 605b.

Cléanthe, deuxième scholarque de l'école d'Athènes (III^e siècle av. n. è.), désigne son hymne à Zeus comme un véritable devoir pour tous les hommes dotés de langage : « c'est devoir (θέμις) pour tous les mortels de s'adresser à toi par la parole ».³ Il associe donc la parole de l'hymne au plus élevé des savoirs, celui du sage : la condition nécessaire pour chanter étant d'« éloigner l'ignorance », de « rencontrer la γνώμη » (v. 34-39). Quelques siècles plus tard, Épictète (I^{er} siècle de n. è.), en se demandant comment le philosophe peut nommer correctement le divin (« τις λόγος ; », « quel langage » pourrait suffire ?), en conclut que l'hymne est la forme la plus noble de la parole humaine, celle que le philosophe ne peut que viser : « Si j'étais rossignol, j'accomplirais l'œuvre du rossignol ; si j'étais un cygne, celle du cygne. Mais je suis un être doué de langage, je dois entonner des hymnes au dieu (ὕμνεῖν με δεῖ τὸν θεόν). Telle est mon œuvre » (*Diss.* I, 16, 15-21).

Pour Proclus, enfin, et pour la plupart des néoplatoniciens,⁴ expression de la vérité et expression du divin, c'est-à-dire philosophie et hymnologie, coïncident parfaitement : « la philosophie est en soi une très haute forme de musique » – écrit-il dans son commentaire à la *République* –, en vertu de laquelle « l'âme est en mesure de chanter à la perfection des hymnes aux dieux (τὰ θεῖα τελέως ὑμνωδεῖν) » (Procl., *In Remp.* I 57, 9-16).⁵

1.2. Nommer les dieux comme dans les prières

Mais que signifie au juste l'affirmation selon laquelle l'hymne aux dieux – une composition qui s'inscrit dans les contextes cultuels et littéraires, et dont le registre linguistique est déterminé essentiellement par ces contextes – serait la forme la plus haute du langage humain et, *a fortiori*, du langage philosophique dans son effort aléthurgique ?

Pour essayer de comprendre la portée de ce lien, plutôt inattendu si l'on pense à l'auto-positionnement de la philosophie ancienne vis-à-vis de la religion et de la littérature traditionnelles,⁶ on peut d'emblée attirer l'attention sur le fait que la pratique hymnique était impliquée dans la pratique linguistique des philosophes grecs non seulement comme reprise de la forme poétique ordi-

³ VON ARNIM (1964) [= *SVF*], I. 537. Sur *themis* comme « devoir », cf. NEUSTADT (1931), 389 ; DIRKZWANGER (1980), 359 ; VOS (1956) ; LATTE (1973), 1626 ; SCHMIDT (1995), 990-994.

⁴ VAN DEN BERG (2001), 18 ; LACOMBRADÉ (1978).

⁵ L'affinité entre hymne et philosophie a été également soulignée du côté de l'hymne : ce dernier serait comparable à la « pensée spéculative » (UNTERSTEINER [1980], 55) et son poète à un philosophe « avant la lettre », un « métaphysicien » (RENOU [1956]), car dans l'hymne réside une sorte de « pré-philosophie du langage » (OGUIBENINE [2007], 16).

⁶ Cf. FESTUGIÈRE (1949-54) ; GOLDSCHMIDT (1950) ; CHANTRAINE et al. (1954) ; BABUT (1974) ; COLLI (1975) ; HADOT (1995).

naire de l'hymne (caractérisée par trois parties : invocation, *pars epica*, prière ou salut),⁷ mais surtout comme recours à une forme déterminée d'énonciation du divin : les appellations multiples des dieux, c'est-à-dire les séquences onomastiques à plusieurs éléments se rapportant aux dieux.

Les philosophes eux-mêmes le signalent ; dans le *Cratyle*, Platon indique que le lieu par excellence de l'appellation des dieux – l'un des enjeux les plus problématiques du dialogue –, est à retrouver précisément dans les hymnes : en se demandant comment nommer correctement (ὀρθῶς) les êtres divins, Socrate affirme qu'il faut agir comme on le fait « dans les prières aux dieux » (*Crat.* 400e 1-2).⁸ Dans son commentaire au dialogue, Proclus définit le *Cratyle* lui-même comme un « hymne », dans la mesure où ce dialogue est consacré à la « justesse des noms » (ὀρθότης τῶν ὀνομάτων) (*in Crat.* I, 1, 1-4). L'objectif du dialogue serait double : montrer l'activité génératrice des âmes et entonner des hymnes (ἄνυμνεῖν) aux dieux par le biais de leurs noms (*in Crat.* CLXVI, 90, 24-27).⁹

De même, Aristote qui, selon l'hypothèse de L. Pernot, a « pour la première fois défini le concept de "lieu du nom" dans la rhétorique religieuse »,¹⁰ voit dans les « éloges aux dieux » la norme de l'appellation : « un autre lieu vient du nom (ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος), comme par exemple chez Sophocle [...] et comme il est coutume dans les éloges aux dieux (ἐν τοῖς τῶν θεῶν ἐπαίνοις) » (*Rhet.* II, 1400b 18-24).¹¹

Les témoignages anciens portant sur ce point sont nombreux¹² et nous retrouvons une conviction analogue chez les commentateurs modernes : dans le discours philosophique, encore plus que dans la forme littéraire, les « épicleses fonctionnent comme des raccourcis [...] ; ce sont des micro-hymnes, de même

⁷ Variablement modulées dans les différents contextes. La première classification remonte à AUSFELD (1903), 502-547. Voir la contribution de Claude Calame dans ce volume, p. 93-114.

⁸ Platon définit souvent les hymnes comme des « prières », cf. par exemple *Lois* III, 700 b1-2 ; VII, 801 e1-4. Sur cette confusion très présente dans l'Antiquité, cf. HEILER (1919) ; MEYER (1933), 7-8 ; WÜLFING (1981), 21-22 ; RUDHARDT (1992), 199 ; PULLEYN (1997), 43. « Prier » signifie pour Platon déjà « demander quelque chose aux dieux » (τὸ δ'εὔχασθαι αἰτεῖν τοὺς θεοὺς, *PL. Euthyphr.* 14 c6), et la prière constitue normalement la dernière partie d'un hymne ; par contre, « chanter un hymne » a affaire, comme l'on essaie de montrer ici, spécifiquement avec l'acte de nommer les dieux (et une partie « hymnique » ouvre souvent les prières). Le passage du *Cratyle* se référant aux noms divins, on considère la valeur « hymnique » de ces εὐχαί.

⁹ Cf. aussi ROMANO (1987), 119.

¹⁰ PERNOT (2005), 32.

¹¹ Cf. PERNOT (2005), 29-39.

¹² Cf. par ex. le *De divinis nominibus* de Denys l'Aréopagite (XIII, 4, 981 C) au VI^e siècle de n.è. Ménandre le Rhéteur, dans son modèle idéal d'hymne, insiste presque exclusivement sur le moment appellatif du dieu (*Mén.* II, 445, 26-446, 8). Je me permets aussi de renvoyer à ma thèse de doctorat *Hymnes et philosophie dans l'Antiquité grecque*, Université Padoue/ENS Paris (2018).

que l'anthroponyme est un "micro-récit" », ¹³ elles « résument l'hymne tout entier ». ¹⁴

Ces éléments apportent, peut-être, un éclaircissement sur le fait étonnant que, malgré l'ambition emphatique des philosophes à reparcourir l'ancien « chemin des hymnes », ¹⁵ on ne connaît, à vrai dire, que peu de cas d'hymnes écrits par des philosophes : l'*Hymne à Zeus* du stoïcien Cléanthe, composé en hexamètres selon l'ancien modèle homérique ; un hymne perdu à Apollon et un *Hymne à Areté* d'Aristote ; ¹⁶ l'hymne à Vénus de Lucrèce ; ¹⁷ les sept hymnes de Proclus et les neuf hymnes de Synésios de Cyrène. ¹⁸

« Hymnique » est la philosophie grecque dans la mesure où elle emploie les séquences onomastiques se rapportant aux dieux qui constituent traditionnellement les invocations des hymnes. En appelant les dieux comme il est d'usage dans les hymnes (ὡσπερ ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς νόμος ἐστίν, Plat. *Crat.* 401a), en re-fonctionnalisant dans son propre discours – en prose, dans le dialogue, dans le traité ¹⁹ – la *polyonymie* des dénominations cultuelles et littéraires des dieux, la philosophie peut, dans son ambition de « vérité » et sans nécessairement renoncer à sa forme propre, parler correctement des dieux.

Mais comment interpréter cette réappropriation du matériel hymnique au sein de la production philosophique ? Quels sont la fonction et l'enjeu de l'appellation multiple du dieu pour la philosophie ?

1.3. Les enjeux théoriques du paradigme onomastico-hymnique

Il n'y a pas aujourd'hui d'étude consacrée à la permanence du paradigme onomastico-hymnique dans la philosophie et à ses enjeux. Les travaux très peu nombreux consacrés au rapport entre hymne et philosophie se limitent à des recueils anthologiques, dépourvus de toute ambition exégétique ou théorique,

¹³ PERNOT (2005), 37.

¹⁴ PERNOT (1993), 236. Cf. aussi MEYER (1933), 5. Les séquences onomastiques constituent « primarily a hymnic feature », PULLEYN (1997), 53.

¹⁵ L'expression est d'Empédocle (Simpl. *Cael.* 528, 30 = B 35 D.-K.).

¹⁶ Athénée, XV, 696 a-d éd. DIEHL (1954). Un fragment de l'hymne à Apollon dans Diogène Laërce, V, 27 (= fr. 671 Rose). Sur les hymnes dans les *symposia* platoniciens et aristotéliens, KRANZ (1967), 320-29.

¹⁷ Cf. SCHRIJVERS (1970).

¹⁸ Pour Proclus cf. VAN DEN BERG (2001). Pour Synésios cf. LACOMBRADÉ (1978). Parmi d'autres hymnes écrits par les philosophes, mais perdus : Empédocle (Diogène Laërce, VIII, 57 ; Ammon. *In de int.* 249 = B 134 D.-K.). Un cas particulier est représenté par les hymnes dont la divinité n'appartient pas au panthéon de la religion traditionnelle, mais est la personnification d'une entité abstraite, par ex. Bacchylide (à la vertu, *Ep.* 13, 175-189) ; un hymne à *Kairos* d'Ion de Chios (Pausanias V, 14, 9) ; un hymne à *Hygieia* ; deux hymnes à *Tychè* (III^e av. n. è) (Stob. *Ecl.* I, 6, 16 ; *Pap. Berol.* 9734) ; un hymne plus tard à *Nemesis* et au Soleil.

¹⁹ UNTERSTEINER (1980).

et presque sans aucune attention pour la reprise de la fonction appellative traditionnelle.²⁰

Pourtant, une analyse de la fonction de la nomination hymnique en contexte philosophique apparaît prometteuse à bien des égards : elle prend au sérieux, pour la première fois, la présence d'une classe d'hymnes qui s'ajoute à la classification canonique (hymnes cultuels et littéraires)²¹ qui exige d'être finalement dévoilée.

En second lieu, la présence de la nomination hymnique dans les mailles du discours philosophique apparaît décisive sur le plan, plus spécifiquement métaphysique, de la puissance du langage face à son objet majeur – la « divinité », remodulée par les philosophes comme une entité supérieure ne pouvant être réduite aux traits anthropomorphes traditionnels.

En troisième lieu, et peut-être surtout, une telle analyse a le mérite d'ajouter à l'énonciation un moment d'auto-compréhension. La philosophie ne se contente pas d'appeler mais, comme nous le verrons, elle *réfléchit explicitement* sur les raisons et les finalités du fait même d'appeler. La littérature philosophique est riche en passages qui s'interrogent sur l'emploi et la potentialité (laudative, sémantique, strictement spéculative) des noms et des attributs divins. Or – ce qui est plus étonnant – cela arrive autant au sein de l'argumentation et des discours que, par le biais de certains éléments d'ordre stylistique et rhétorique, dans la nomination même au sein de la parole des philosophes.

2. OUVRIR UN ESPACE DE DICIBILITÉ : LES SÉQUENCES ONOMASTIQUES DANS L'HYMNE À ZEUS DE CLÉANTHE ET DANS LA PROSE PHILOSOPHIQUE

2.1. *Les attributs de Zeus dans l'Hymne à Zeus de Cléanthe*

Il peut s'avérer utile d'examiner plus en détail un cas exemplaire, c'est-à-dire les séquences onomastiques réservées à Zeus dans l'*Hymne à Zeus* du philosophe stoïcien Cléanthe, à laquelle il faudra ajouter par la suite quelques exemples de séquences onomastiques au sein du discours en prose. Mon but est de montrer comment, au sein du discours philosophique grec, les épithètes divines sont utilisées non pas simplement en raison de la sémantique qu'impliquent les différents éléments composant la séquence onomastique, mais aussi en raison de l'acte même d'appeler, de façon multiple, la divinité. En s'adressant au dieu dans les invocations, prononcées à la première ou à la

²⁰ ZUNTZ (2005) ; MEUNIER (1935) ; GIORDANO (1957).

²¹ FURLEY, BREMER (2001), 8-20.

deuxième personne (*Du-* ou *Ich-Stil*, selon la célèbre classification de Norden, c'est-à-dire avec des noms au vocatif ou au nominatif/accusatif),²² la philosophie a accentué le moment purement appellatif du dieu en fonction d'une représentation déterminée du divin et de la façon de le saisir dans le langage.

L'*Hymne à Zeus* (Ἕμνος εἰς Δία) du philosophe Cléanthe est le seul texte de la tradition stoïcienne ancienne qui nous soit parvenu dans son intégralité. Écrit au milieu de l'âge hellénistique (probablement entre 270 et 280 av. n.è.),²³ il ne nous est parvenu que dans une seule version, transmise par un manuscrit des *Eclogae* de Stobée.²⁴ Il s'agit d'un véritable abrégé de la philosophie stoïcienne, contenant tous les aspects thématiques de la pensée du philosophe, deuxième scholarque de l'école d'Athènes.²⁵ Pour cette raison, l'hymne a été considéré comme l'un des exemples majeurs d'hymnographie grecque, sans doute le cas le plus intéressant d'hymne philosophique.²⁶

Les circonstances de sa rédaction et de son éventuelle récitation ne sont pas claires. Selon l'hypothèse la plus répandue, il ne fut ni un hommage au culte rendu à Zeus par la cité, à l'occasion de cérémonies ou de rituels – à cause de son étendue –,²⁷ ni non plus un essai poétique – à cause de son contenu, presque entièrement spéculatif (la nature du cosmos et ses principes, v. 7-16 ; la question éthique de l'agir conformément à la raison, v. 17-31).²⁸ Nous pouvons donc supposer que contexte et finalité étaient purement philosophiques.

Voici l'invocation de l'hymne contenant les attributs de Zeus (v. 1-3 ; 9-10), auxquels s'ajoutent quelques attributs disséminés dans le reste du poème et une courte séquence dans le salut conclusif (v. 32-39) :

Κύδιςτ' ἀθανάτων, πολυώνυμε, παγκρατὲς αἰεὶ, | Ζεῦ, φύσεως ἀρχηγέ,
νόμου μέτα πάντα κυβερνῶν, | χαῖρε· [...] | πάντων λόγον αἰὲν ἔοντα [...] |
τοῖον ἔχεις ὑποεργὸν ἀνικῆτοῖς ὑπὸ χερσὶν | ἀμφίκη, πυρόεντα, ἀειζάοντα
κεραυνόν· [...] || ἀλλὰ Ζεῦ πάνδωρε, κελαινεφές, ἀργικέραυνε, | ἀνθρώπους

²² NORDEN (1957), 149. L'usage alternatif du vocatif ou du nominatif/accusatif pour les noms divins n'est pas sans signification. Dans l'horizon philosophique grec, à partir des stoïciens (ILDEFONSE [1997], 156), le vocatif a suscité un intérêt particulier en tant qu'outil du langage qui permet que la sémantique soit suspendue au profit de la fonction appellative.

²³ Pour les spéculations à ce propos, THOM (2005), 6-7.

²⁴ Le texte, composé de 39 vers, est contenu dans Stob., *Anth.* I,1.12 (= *SVF* I. 537). Le seul manuscrit que nous possédions, le *Neap. Farnesinus* III-D15 (3r-v.), est d'un auteur inconnu et daté du XIV^e siècle. Cf. THOM (2005), 27-29 ; COLACLIDES (1968), 58.

²⁵ Sur le rôle de Cléanthe dans l'école stoïcienne, cf. *SVF* I. 477.

²⁶ FESTUGIERE (1949), ZUNTZ (2005).

²⁷ Sur la difficile détermination de l'occasion de l'hymne, cf. FESTA (1935), 172 ; THOM (2005), 11-12. D'autres hymnes philosophiques furent certainement récités lors d'occasions rituelles, par ex. l'hymne à Areté d'Aristote, prononcé à la mort de son ami Hermias.

²⁸ VON ARNIM (1921), 560 a proposé l'hypothèse de l'hymne comme "prélude" d'une œuvre philosophique, de façon analogue aux hymnes homériques ou à l'hymne d'Hésiode dans *Les Travaux et les Jours* ou encore au prélude d'Aratus. Cf. aussi THOM (2005), 12-13.

<μὲν> ῥύου ἀπειροσύνης ἀπὸ λυγρῆς, | ἦν σύ, πάτερ, σκέδασον ψυχῆς ἄπο
[...]| [...] κοινὸν αἰεὶ νόμον [...]. (SVF I. 537)

Le plus glorieux des immortels, aux noms multiples, toujours tout-puissant,
| Zeus, principe de la nature, gouvernant tout selon la loi, | Je te salue [...] |
Logos de toutes choses toujours existant [...] | Tant est grandiose
l'instrument que tu tiens en tes mains invincibles, | le foudre à double tran-
chant, flamboyant, toujours vivant [...] || Mais Toi, Zeus, dispensateur de
tout bien, seigneur des sombres nuées, foudroyant, | délivre les humains de
la triste ignorance, | dissipe-la, ô Père, loin de notre âme [...] | *nomos* tou-
jours commun [...]

Les premiers vers suivent la composition canonique de l'hymne, en invoquant Zeus à travers une série d'attributs, en mode paratactique, qui a été jugée particulièrement étendue.²⁹ Parmi ces attributs, nous trouvons la qualification particulière de πολυώνυμος, employée dans divers contextes et pour qualifier différents dieux, mais plutôt rare pour Zeus.³⁰ Son intérêt est lié au fait qu'il opère une sorte d'auto-description des appellations multiples de l'invocation (« aux noms multiples »).

La première remarque intéressante concerne la coexistence d'un registre onomastique double. Considérons, par exemple, l'invocation qui ouvre l'hymne à Zeus dans le recueil pseudo-homérique de l'époque archaïque (*Hymne Homérique XIII*), que Cléanthe connaissait probablement :

Ζῆνα θεῶν τὸν ἄριστον αἰέσομαι, ἠδὲ μέγιστον, | εὐρύοπα, κρείοντα,
τελεσφόρον [...] | ἴληθ' εὐρύοπα Κρονίδη, κύδιστε, μέγιστε

C'est Zeus, le meilleur des dieux que je chanterai, le plus grand, au vaste regard, puissant, maître en accomplissement [...] | Sois propice, Kronide, au vaste regard, très auguste, très grand !

Dans l'hymne de Cléanthe, Zeus est dit κύδιστος et παγκρατής, selon les attributs de puissance et de grandeur qu'on retrouve aussi dans d'autres contextes mais qui ici sont plus nombreux : dans l'hymne homérique, par exemple, cet aspect de puissance est exprimé au moyen de κρείοντα et τελεσφόρον ; ailleurs, dans la poésie épique, la qualification traditionnelle de Zeus est généralement κύδιστος μέγιστος.³¹ À côté des attributs habituels de puissance, chez

²⁹ THOM (2005), 13.

³⁰ C'est presque un topos du genre (« comme dans les litanies de la foi populaire », GERNET, BOULANGER [1970], 405). La première occurrence hymnique se trouve dans l'*Hymne Homérique* 18,32. Cf. aussi KEYBNER (1932), 47. Il est aussi attribué à Zeus dans le Περὶ κόσμου du Pseudo-Aristote (VII, 401a12-14).

³¹ *Il.* II 412 ; III 276, 279 ; VII 202 ; etc. Cf. SCHWABL (1972). Παγκρατής est un attribut très fréquent pour Zeus, dans la littérature et dans le culte. Cf. THOM (2005), 47-48.

Cléanthe, Zeus est aussi *πάτηρ*, « père » ; *κελαινεφής*, « seigneur des sombres nuées » et *ἀργικέραυτος*, « foudroyant » (v. 32). Comme dans les représentations les plus typiques du père des Olympiens, il tient dans « ses mains » le foudre, « à double tranchant, flamboyant, toujours vivant ».³²

Néanmoins, le Zeus de Cléanthe est, en même temps, *πάντων λόγος* (v. 12), c'est-à-dire *κοινὸς νόμος* (v. 24 et 39), la raison commune et la loi qui règnent sur tout, où *νόμος* et *λόγος* sont employées techniquement par les Stoïciens pour indiquer philosophiquement la loi qui gouverne tout, c'est-à-dire l'ordre intelligent qui traverse le monde.³³ Il est en outre *φύσεως ἀρχηγός* (v. 2), principe de la nature – mais aussi, dans la terminologie stoïcienne, « première cause », c'est-à-dire cause génératrice et rationnelle de la nature –,³⁴ et capable, conformément aux fondements de l'éthique stoïcienne, de « délivrer les humains de la triste ignorance » (v. 37). Zeus est enfin *πάνδωρος*, « dispensateur de tout bien », adjectif qu'on dirait traditionnel, mais qui, à vrai dire, « n'est pas habituel comme qualificatif de Zeus [...]. Ici, cet adjectif renvoie plutôt à la théorie stoïcienne qui identifie Zeus au destin ».³⁵

Comme on le voit, à un registre *mythologique* se juxtapose naturellement, presque sans le heurter, un registre *philosophique*, c'est-à-dire métaphysique et éthique, qui convoque des attributs nouveaux, généralement absents dans la tradition et dans les autres contextes.³⁶

La présence d'attributs métaphysiques apparaît en effet parfaitement cohérente avec le contexte spéculatif dans lequel l'hymne a été vraisemblablement écrit – elle est même prévisible : dans la doctrine stoïcienne, le principe premier est « divin » ; il est immanent, vivifiant, providentiel, rationnel et actif ; en ce sens, il est *πάνδωρος* et *φύσεως ἀρχηγός*, ainsi qu'explicitement *λόγος* et *νόμος*.³⁷

Moins évident est, en revanche, le fait que la séquence ne renonce pas à un registre traditionnel, tout comme la doctrine : le principe – la divinité du monde d'après le stoïcisme qui, à ce propos, « plus que tout autre, paraît

³² Zeus est le dieu du ciel et de ses phénomènes atmosphériques, nuages, pluie, tonnerre. Son nom signifie « ciel » (de la même racine **div-* vient le latin *dies*, « jour ») et il est fréquemment accompagné par des épithètes culturelles comme *ὄμβριος* et *ὕετιος* (« pluvieux »). Cf. DIELS (1923), 1-15 ; CHANTRAINE (1953), 65-78 ; CASSOLA (1975), 390.

³³ Cf. *S/F* I. 41 ; I. 481 ; III. 315.

³⁴ Comme Thom l'a montré, le mot *ἀρχηγός* est présent aussi dans d'autres contextes dans le sens de « guide » : chez Bacchylide, Zeus est *ἀρχαγόν θεῶν* (5, 179) ; dans les fragments orphiques, on trouve *Ζεὺς βασιλεύς*, *Ζεὺς ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων*, etc. Pour une histoire de l'épithète *ἀρχηγέτης* et de son usage surtout en contexte athénien, cf. BIAGETTI (2019). Dans le stoïcisme, il assume la valeur de principe génératif et causal de la nature et de son ordre. THOM (2005), 49.

³⁵ BROWN (1990), 2-5.

³⁶ La question a été plutôt sous-estimée. Cf. POHLENZ (1948), I, 108 ; LONG-SEADLEY (1987), I, 332.

³⁷ Cf. par ex. *S/F* I. 303 ; 530 ; 599 ; 1108 ; 937 ; etc.

s'éloigner de la religion traditionnelle »³⁸ et qui, en tout rigueur, ne pourrait en aucun cas réduire le divin à une image anthropomorphique³⁹ – est désigné sans cesse par le nom d'un dieu du culte : il est, en même temps, "Zeus".

Cléanthe n'a pas choisi de chanter son hymne à une entité abstraite ou métaphysique, au principe rationnel et vivifiant, tel que cela arrive souvent dans l'Antiquité,⁴⁰ mais à un dieu personnel de la tradition, aux traits anthropomorphiques, dont il reprend sans hésiter noms et épithètes. Dans les mots de Chrysippe, troisième scholarque de l'école : ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός, ὅσπερ ἐστὶν ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος, διὰ πάντων ἐρχόμενος, ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν τῷ Δί, « la loi universelle, qui est la droite raison pénétrant toutes choses, identique à Zeus » (Diogène Laërce, VII, 88).

S'il y a une « notion synthétique »⁴¹ de Zeus opérant dans le contexte philosophique stoïcien, elle a le sens de cette cohabitation, de ce double, qui est inhérent et fécond : « Chrysippe – écrit Philodème – dans le premier livre sur *Les dieux* dit que Zeus est la raison qui régit toute réalité, l'âme du tout, et que chaque chose, même les minéraux, vit en tant que partie de lui » (*SVF* II. 1076).⁴²

Comme les cités de l'âge classique peuvent donner des traits spécifiques ou locaux à "Zeus", les attributs signalant et justifiant cette spécificité qu'il était impossible de réduire à une idée cosmique ou abstraite du dieu,⁴³ de même la philosophie stoïcienne appelle son propre Zeus, tout en agissant comme un culte lié à un « lieu » de la pensée et à une idée spécifique de la nature.

2.2. Le registre double : deux observations et une hypothèse

La *coexistence* de deux registres – véritable enjeu de l'invocation de Cléanthe⁴⁴ – ouvre une question déterminante pour la pensée de l'Antiquité : de quelle conception du « divin » avait hérité la philosophie et comment l'avait-elle réélaborée ? Comment a-t-il été possible, pour le stoïcisme, d'avoir recours au

³⁸ GERNET, BOULANGER (1970), 406.

³⁹ Diogène Laërce, VII, 147 (= *SVF* II. 1021) : μή εἶναι μέντοι ἀνθρωπόμορφοι. Cf. aussi *SVF* I. 264, 265.

⁴⁰ Cf. *infra*, note 18.

⁴¹ GERNET, BOULANGER (1970), 223.

⁴² D'après les stoïciens, Zeus est le seul dieu éternel et incorruptible, qui ne périra pas à la fin périodique du monde (*SVF* I. 535). En vertu de sa primauté parmi les dieux olympiens, on comprend bien le choix de Zeus comme principe premier.

⁴³ GERNET, BOULANGER (1970), 230.

⁴⁴ Mais il est présent aussi ailleurs, par ex. chez Platon, dans des passages hymniques sans hymne (*Phaedr.* 246 d8-e1 ; 247 c3-e6). On a observé que « les prédicats essentiels des dieux sont identiques à ceux des archétypes intelligibles : les dieux sont καλοί, σοφοί et ἀγαθοί tout comme les substances divines qui peuplent l'hyperuranium », LAVECCHIA (2006), 215-16 ; sur le registre double de Platon cf. aussi LEROUX (2006), 49.

nom de « Zeus » et à ses attributs traditionnels pour désigner le principe immanent et tout-vivifiant, impersonnel et impossible à individualiser ?

Il n'y a pas lieu de retracer l'histoire de la question si complexe des rapports entre religion, représentation du divin et philosophie dans l'Antiquité. Il convient davantage d'insister, pour ce qui nous intéresse, sur deux aspects significatifs.

Premièrement, si tout est divin pour les stoïciens, puisque dieu est le principe actif qui pénètre et anime la matière inerte, la religion ne peut qu'être extensivement une religion de la nature. Le culte entretient lui aussi une relation avec les dieux, mais aussi avec la réalité dans son ensemble. On peut parler, en ce sens, non seulement d'une « théologie » philosophique,⁴⁵ mais également d'un véritable culte philosophique. Ce culte a affaire précisément avec la façon de connaître le divin et de le dire dans le langage : autrement dit, le recours paradoxal aux attributs mythologiques vise à intégrer – en lui donnant une forme nouvelle – le culte et ses actes énonciatifs dans le contexte philosophique.

Platon soutenait déjà, dans un contexte spéculatif bien différent (surtout quant à la conception de l'entité divine suprême), que le philosophe « doit nécessairement, s'il atteint la vérité, penser aux choses immortelles et divines [...]. Car il offre sans cesse un culte au divin (θεραπεύοντα τὸν θεῖον) » (*Tim.* 90 c). Cet aspect deviendra emblématique pour l'école stoïcienne : Épictète écrivait que le véritable culte est d'« avoir des jugements droits au sujet des dieux » (*Ench.* 31, 1), c'est-à-dire de les connaître et de les comprendre conformément à la vérité (c'est-à-dire philosophiquement). Avec les mots de Pierre et Ilsetraut Hadot, « rendre un culte à Dieu c'est tout simplement le connaître : *deum colit qui nouit* ». ⁴⁶

Deuxièmement, et surtout, il convient de souligner que la question d'une coexistence entre les conceptions mythologique et philosophique fut posée par les stoïciens dans des termes onomastiques. C'est à travers les noms, et en vertu de ces noms, que le dieu peut avoir accès à la parole des philosophes. Dans un passage de Diogène Laërce sur la « théologie » stoïcienne, on peut lire :

Le dieu est un animal immortel, raisonnable, parfait, c'est-à-dire infiniment intelligent et souverainement heureux [...]. Il est le père des choses, soit qu'on l'envisage dans sa totalité, soit qu'on le considère dans ses parties [...]. On l'appelle *Dia*, parce que c'est par lui que tout existe (δι'ὃν τὰ πάντα) ; *Zéna* parce qu'il est la cause de la vie (ζῆν) [...]; *Athéna* parce que la partie hégémonique de son être est répandue dans l'éther (αιθέρα) ; Héra,

⁴⁵ FREDE (2005).

⁴⁶ HADOT, HADOT (2004), 170.

parce qu'il remplit l'air (εἰς ἀέρα) ; etc. (Diogène Laërce, VII, 147, trad. Zevort)

Ce passage est lui aussi en quelque sorte invocatoire et renferme un double registre : « immortel, raisonnable, parfait », mais aussi « père ». Comme on le voit, les noms des dieux, tels qu'ils sont transmis par la tradition, ne sont pas ici simplement conservés, mais refunctionalisés,⁴⁷ envisagés pour leur compatibilité et intégrabilité dans le contexte philosophique. Autrement dit, le dieu de la tradition n'est pas une entité qui demeure extérieure, mais il est plutôt potentiellement interne à la philosophie, et cela en gardant son ancien nom, dépourvu de sa sémantique originare. Mais pourquoi retenir le nom traditionnel – plutôt que s'en débarrasser –, au prix du dépouillement de sa sémantique propre ?

À propos de ce passage de Diogène Laërce, on a parlé d'une étymologie « dont l'arbitraire et la puérité nous paraissent difficilement tolérables » (Gernet, Boulanger 1970, 409) : tout semble indiquer qu'une raison sémantique compatible avec la philosophie serait possible pour n'importe quel nom de dieu (comme c'est notamment le cas dans le *Cratyle* de Platon) – c'est-à-dire qu'on pourrait trouver n'importe quelle justification pour tout signifiant hérité. Non seulement les stoïciens retiennent les noms des dieux (seulement les noms, sans leur contexte et leur contenu originare), mais ils les chargent avec des nouveaux contenus qui, pour qu'on ne renonce pas à ces signifiants, sont le produit d'un procédé « arbitraire » et « puéril ».

Cela suggère, alors, que le dieu de tradition (Zeus, Athéna, Héra) entre dans le langage philosophique – devient compatible avec lui – aussi, et peut-être avant tout, en vertu de son nom, de son être encore (ainsi) nommable au sein du discours de la philosophie ; admissible, avec son nom propre et ancien – *quelle que soit effectivement sa sémantique originare* – dans l'horizon du discours philosophique.

D'après un témoignage d'Épiphané, Cléanthe parlait des dieux comme de « figures mystiques et appellations sacrées (μυστικὰ σχήματα καὶ κλήσεις ἱεράς) » (*SVF* I. 538), comme des images et des noms. Comme le montre le caractère évidemment, et peut-être intentionnellement, arbitraire des dérivations étymologiques dans le passage de Diogène Laërce, les noms et les attributs traditionnels des dieux ne sont pas discutables : ils demeurent identiques et, comme tels, sont répétés et invoqués, même ramenés à ce qu'il y a de plus étranger à leur contexte d'origine. Comme le soulignent Gernet et Boulanger, « si les Grecs se sont parfois exercés à l'interprétation étymologique des noms divins, ce jeu d'esprit ne pouvait avoir qu'un lointain rapport avec la pensée

⁴⁷ À travers un procédé devenu célèbre, l'allégorie. Cf. PÉPIN (1958).

religieuse » :⁴⁸ ces noms restent obscurs, d'une « obscurité » qui est la « condition des vrais noms propres » et qu'une étymologie esquissée ne peut, évidemment, que confirmer. Mais, alors, c'est précisément dans cette *volonté de sauver les noms – quels qu'ils soient* – que le dieu, pour la philosophie, entre tout d'abord dans le langage.

Dans une étude célèbre consacrée aux noms divins, Hermann Usener a souligné comment, pour l'Antiquité, « la condition de la naissance des dieux personnels est un processus historico-linguistique ».⁴⁹ Il fait valoir l'hypothèse selon laquelle, dans le processus de perception du divin (en trois phases : *Augenblicks-*, *Sonder-* et *Namensgötter*), l'émergence « naturelle » de la figure du dieu, sa perception comme « événement extraordinaire », ne se distinguerait pas de l'acte de sa dénomination. Le dieu, écrit Usener, est une perception fugace, provisoire dans son apparition et dans sa dissolution, dépourvue de toute persistance. Son existence coïncide, en premier lieu, parfaitement avec « l'énonciation de son nom » au moment même de son apparition. De sorte que le nom, à son tour, semble renoncer à sa persistance : il coïncide avec l'instant même de l'apparition de la chose, aperçue dans sa divinité.⁵⁰

De même, Gernet a soutenu que le dieu était représenté comme celui qui « peut recevoir d'autres attributs que l'attribut considéré » :⁵¹ il est l'objet, en ce sens, de l'attribution possible. Et de façon analogue, malgré son « silence intrigant » sur les noms propres dans son *Cours de linguistique générale*, Ferdinand de Saussure semble avoir interprété dans cette perspective le lien entre la représentation du divin et son statut linguistique. Le nom – comme nous pouvons le lire dans des notices publiées à titre posthume – est « la mesure fondamentale du degré de divinification d'une chose », de son « venir peupler l'Olympe ».⁵² Un être, écrivait-il, devient « purement mythologique » en vertu du fait qu'il a un « nom ». Ainsi, le nom est le « principe décisif » dans la mesure où il est « dépourvu de sens » ou, selon une expression corrective de Lévi-Strauss, intéressé par une « usure sémantique ».⁵³ Saussure écrit à ce sujet : « Il reste définitivement vrai, non que les *nūmina* sont *nōmina*, selon la formule célèbre, mais que du sort du *nōmen* dépend [absolument] très décisivement [et à chaque minute] et pour ainsi dire de seconde en seconde celui du *nūmen* ». Les dieux – dans ce qu'Usener aurait considéré vraisemblablement comme la troisième phase, celle des dieux personnels – ne viennent pas d'une

⁴⁸ GERNET, BOULANGER (1970), 224.

⁴⁹ USENER (1948), 316.

⁵⁰ USENER (1948), 292. Cf. CASSIRER (1956), 103-104 ; BADER (1989), 317-328.

⁵¹ GERNET, BOULANGER (1970), 226.

⁵² SAUSSURE (1986), 503-504.

⁵³ LEVI-STRAUSS (1972), 325-344.

impression faite par un objet réel, mais du « jeu infini des épithètes roulant sur chaque nom » (*ibid.*).

Notre hypothèse est alors que la philosophie, dans son exigence de conjurer une vision réélaboree du divin avec sa figure et ses noms traditionnels (σχήματα καὶ κλήσεις), a exacerbé et exprimé au plus haut degré cet aspect latent de l'appellation ancienne des dieux.

Si un registre double habite, tout en le caractérisant, l'hymne à Zeus de Cléanthe – si le dieu y est nommé en même temps λόγος et νόμος commun, et « père » et « seigneur des sombres nuées », « foudroyant » –, c'est, peut-être, en raison de la nature du nom propre et de l'emploi des attributs-épithètes comme des théonymes – noms propres eux aussi, liés à l'émergence du dieu – ; c'est-à-dire, en raison de leur nécessaire « usure sémantique », chaque fois librement modulable selon les exigences du contexte.

2.3. Quocumque nomine. *La polyonymie et la parataxe*

Je vais essayer, pour conclure, de retracer quelques aspects exemplaires qui nous aident à vérifier et préciser cette hypothèse. Nous allons nous éloigner provisoirement des sources stoïciennes pour retrouver des éléments également intéressants au sujet de la nomination des dieux dans d'autres expériences philosophiques de l'Antiquité (et qui, dans leur différence, montrent certains points de convergence).

Deux éléments méritent encore d'être soulignés : le positionnement de certains philosophes vis-à-vis du sens de leur appellation des dieux – le moment auto-compréhensif susmentionné ; et quelques considérations d'ordre stylistique sur l'appellation des dieux dans la prose philosophique.

Dans le passage du *Cratyle* où Platon voit « dans les prières » le modèle d'appellation « correcte » des dieux, Socrate affirme :

Une seconde manière de justesse serait de faire comme dans les prières, où nous avons pour coutume de les invoquer sous les noms, n'importe lesquels, de quelque origine que ce soit, qui leur plaisent [...] Et c'est en effet une coutume sage. (*Crat.* 400d-e)⁵⁴

Selon ce passage, c'est dans les hymnes (« prières ») – ramenés à leur activité propre, la nomination divine – que l'on peut retrouver une forme d'ὀρθότης. Cette justesse ne résiderait pas dans l'individuation du nom correct ou « vrai »

⁵⁴ δεύτερος δ' αὖ τρόπος ὀρθότητος, ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς νόμος ἐστὶν ἡμῖν εὐχεσθαι, οἵτινές τε καὶ ὀπόθεν χαίρουσιν ὀνομαζόμενοι, ταῦτα καὶ ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν, ὡς ἄλλο μηδὲν.

du dieu – qui est la « première manière » et est l’apanage des dieux –,⁵⁵ mais dans une « seconde manière de justesse », qui est un acte plutôt singulier : « invoquer sous les noms, n’importe lesquels et de quelque origine que ce soit ».

Ce qui compte, ici, ce n’est pas *le* nom ou l’épithète du dieu, mais « n’importe quel nom » – pour autant qu’il soit un nom, pour autant qu’il y ait des noms (et qu’ils « plaisent » aux dieux).⁵⁶ Ce qui importe, c’est la nomination elle-même, éventuellement multiple (la *polyonymie*), constituée par des noms dont l’origine – selon cette déclaration qui est évidemment provocatrice, mais d’autant plus significative – « n’importe pas ».

Comme dans la sémantique « arbitraire et puérile » proposée par les stoïciens dans le passage de Diogène Laërce, ici, le nom du dieu est séparé de sa sémantique « vraie » : pour Platon, les noms divins dans les hymnes s’émancipent de toute contrainte essentialiste et descriptive définitive, et la philosophie doit saisir et exprimer précisément cet aspect. Il faut sauver les noms – mais n’importe lesquels, car seule leur « usure sémantique », leur capacité à être des purs noms, permet à la philosophie de les réintégrer dans ses enjeux.

L’expression platonicienne n’est pas étrangère aux hymnes eux-mêmes. Norden a souligné cet aspect à travers la formule latine *quoquo nomine* ou *quocumque nomine*, fréquemment accompagnée par l’expression « comme il plaît aux dieux », et les exemples poétiques à cet égard sont nombreux.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Car les hommes « ne connaissent rien ni des dieux ni des noms » par lesquels ils s’appellent eux-mêmes, et qui sont les « vrais noms ».

⁵⁶ La condition que ces noms « plaisent aux dieux » est explicitée dans plusieurs passages de Platon (par exemple *Philèbe* 12c, où Aphrodite doit être appelée « ὅη ἐκεῖνη φίλον ») et elle constitue sans doute un aspect décisif de la polyonymie ancienne (cf. NORDEN [1956] ; sur la jouissance des dieux en contexte de polyonymie, voir en dernier lieu BONNET (à paraître), qui définit les appellations plurielles des véritables « offrandes onomastiques »). On peut cependant observer que, dans ce passage spécifique du *Cratyle*, cette dimension paraît, à la rigueur, inaccessible aux mortels (« nous ne savons rien des dieux »). Cette profession d’ignorance typiquement socratique suggère que, pour le philosophe, le critère du choix des noms divins ne peut pas, en premier lieu, se fonder sur ce qui plaît aux dieux, car l’objet de ce « plaire » demeure inconnu pour tous mortels. On peut en outre attirer l’attention sur le fait que cette exigence de plaire aux dieux est plutôt habituelle dans les dialogues platoniciens : le philosophe doit toujours (et non seulement dans le contexte d’interaction hymnique avec les dieux) « dire des choses qui plaisent aux dieux (θεοῖς κεχαρισμένα λέγειν) » (*Phaedr.* 273 e7) ; il doit sans cesse « être en mesure de parler (λέγειν) et d’agir d’après ce qui plaît aux dieux » (*Euthypr.* 14 b2-4). Je vais donc considérer la condition de « plaire aux dieux » comme un élément essentiel dans la définition même de la philosophie platonicienne, mais secondaire par rapport aux critères effectifs de sélection des noms divins dans ce spécifique contexte philosophique.

⁵⁷ NORDEN (1956), 145. L’expression vient de Hor. *Carm.* III 21, 2-5. Parmi les exemples grecs, Eur. *Bacch.* 273 (ὄνομα δ’ ὀπότερον βούλει κάλει) ; fr. 912, 2-3 ; ou le célèbre ὅστις ποτ’ εἶ σύ d’Eschyle. Cf. aussi USENER (1948), 336.

Dans la pratique hymnique de la philosophie grecque – le lieu où, comme on l’a vu au début, le philosophe peut parler des dieux « conformément à la vérité » ou, avec le *Cratyle*, selon « une seconde manière de justesse » –, le souci d’identifier le dieu concerné (en employant la *polyonymie* comme une « *Ungewissheitsformel* » ou « *Salvierungsformel* », selon les expressions de Wilamowitz, Norden et Burkert,⁵⁸ ou comme une « solution embarrassée, adoptée pour se tirer d’affaire en cas d’ignorance »),⁵⁹ ou encore le souci d’en amplifier la grandeur (selon l’interprétation « rhétorique » de la polyonymie),⁶⁰ semblent jouer un rôle secondaire. L’hymne semble représenter cette matière spéciale du langage qui insiste sur le nom sans pourtant coïncider avec lui. En ce sens, le *quocumque nomine* est le lieu où seule importe la nomination elle-même : l’entrée de la divinité dans le langage.

La tension hymnique est, ainsi, d’après cette formulation platonicienne (« les invoquer sous les noms, n’importe lesquels, de quelque origine que ce soit, qui leur plaisent »), le paradigme de la philosophie qui est dans le langage – dans l’acte d’appeler – sans pourtant posséder déjà *le nom*, le nom sémantiquement et définitivement déterminé – ce qu’on appellerait son essentielle tension *érotique*. De sorte que l’hymne est, aussi pour cette philosophie, la marque de la possibilité de nommer, d’appeler le dieu dans la langue avec n’importe quel nom : il est le lieu de la dicibilité du divin.

C’est peut-être pourquoi on a pu retrouver le trait spécifique du style onomastique philosophique dans l’emploi copieux de la parataxe et de la polyonymie – signes intentionnellement accentués dans la prose d’un aspect qui est naturel pour la poésie.⁶¹

Dans son étude des formes expressives religieuses, Norden a rapporté explicitement cet élément au « *theologischer Sprachstil* » autant « de Platon que des stoïciens ». ⁶² Un passage d’Épictète semble confirmer cette impression : en se demandant « *tis logos ?* », il fait allusion – dans un passage évidemment énumératif lui aussi – à l’acte d’énumération comme étant déterminant pour l’énonciation hymnique du divin (« ὁμνεῖν καὶ εὐφημεῖν καὶ ἐπεξεργασθαι », I, 16). Chez Platon, on retrouve plusieurs passages d’appellation des dieux qu’on dirait énumératifs et un exemple célèbre en est le *Timée*, défini dans l’Antiquité déjà comme un « hymne à l’univers » (Mén. I, 337, 23). ⁶³ Il présente, dans sa

⁵⁸ NORDEN (1956), 146 ; BURKERT/STOLZ (1994), 14. Cf. aussi RUDHARDT (1991), 264.

⁵⁹ AUBRIOT (2005), 482.

⁶⁰ SQUILLANTE (2005), 21-28 ; PARKER (2017), 132-153.

⁶¹ DEICHGRÄBER (1933).

⁶² NORDEN (1956), 126. Cf. MEYER (1933). Aubriot a parlé de l’insistance sur le εἶτε...εἶτε, καὶ...καὶ, comme de la véritable « marque de la tradition hymnique », AUBRIOT (2005), 484.

⁶³ Pierre Hadot a défini le *Timée* « une offrande poétique au Poète de l’Univers », cf. HADOT (1983), 113.

conclusion, une cascade en parataxe d'attributs divins – une véritable séquence onomastique :

il est né notre monde, vivant visible, comprenant les vivants visibles, dieu sensible, image de dieu intelligible, très grand, très bon, très beau, très parfait, ciel unique, le seul de sa race. (*Tim.* 92 c)

Aujourd'hui, la parataxe est considérée comme un élément particulier du langage : le lieu où ce dernier « renonce à l'assertion prédicative », « interrompt » toute structure syntaxique et strictement sémantique du discours,⁶⁴ et qui non par hasard a été hérité et copieusement employé par la tradition de la théologie négative.⁶⁵

C'est exactement dans les mêmes termes que Karl Deichgräber a défini les parties hymniques de la prose philosophique grecque : le « *καὶ-Stil* de la prédication à travers l'accumulation illimitée des prédicats » caractériserait non seulement « la forme originelle de tout discours religieux », mais surtout l'énonciation philosophique des attributs pour l'entité suprême. C'est le cas, par exemple, d'Anaxagore et de Diogène d'Apollonie – respectivement pour le « divin νοῦς » et l'ἄήρ ou la ψυχή constituant le Tout –, mais aussi de Platon, Cléanthe, Xénophon, Marc Aurèle, et beaucoup d'autres.⁶⁶ Au milieu d'un discours argumentatif typiquement philosophique, Diogène écrit :

Mais cela me semble évident, qu'il est grand et puissant et éternel et immortel et la cognition de beaucoup de choses. (Diogène Laërce, IX, 57)⁶⁷

Le « *καὶ-Stil* », forme explicitée de toute tension paratactique de la nomination hymnique, atteindrait son moment le plus élevé dans la philosophie en prose et, dans ce contexte, il montrerait son être essentiellement « en tension avec le γάρ » et le « ὥστε », particules de l'argumentation philosophique et de la « *Be-gründung* », solidaires au plus haut point d'un emploi exclusivement ou premièrement sémantique du langage.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ ADORNO (1964), 15-46 ; AGAMBEN (2009), 261.

⁶⁵ F. Ildefonse a observé qu'« il y a une pratique de la prière qui vise à se détacher du sens. [...] Dans les listes de la théologie négative, on vise à suspendre le sens, [...] à sortir du langage [...] pourvu de signification (ILDEFONSE [2012], 155-56).

⁶⁶ DEICHGRÄBER (1933), 352, 357.

⁶⁷ τοῦτό μοι δήλον δοκεῖ εἶναι ὅτι καὶ μέγα καὶ ισχυρὸν καὶ αἰδίων καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ πολλὰ εἰδός ἐστι.

⁶⁸ DEICHGRÄBER (1933), 351.

3. CONCLUSION

Dans leur étude sur *Le génie grec dans la religion*, Gernet et Boulanger écrivent : « on pense volontiers que la représentation d'une personne divine suppose l'idée d'une certaine essence ; on n'admet pas facilement qu'il puisse y avoir beaucoup de contingence dans l'histoire des dieux et dans le groupement de leurs attributs ». ⁶⁹

Dans plusieurs expériences de la philosophie grecque cet aspect semble avéré et s'intensifier : comme ces pages ont, trop succinctement, essayé de le montrer, l'idée de saisir une « certaine essence » définitive et exacte est parfois philosophiquement redimensionnée, et l'idée même d'une contingence essentielle de la prédication, d'un ensemble d'attributs nécessairement pluriels et changeants – jusqu'au cas extrême (et somme toute contrefactuel) du recours platonicien à *n'importe quel nom* –, prend la place de toute sémantique transparente et reconnue, c'est-à-dire d'une sémantique définitive, et cela à cause d'une représentation spécifique du divin, du monde et du langage.

On pourrait dire qu'en prononçant, au sein de sa parole nouvelle, les noms et les attributs des dieux, de « n'importe quelle origine », ou en les insérant dans une séquence polyonymique, la philosophie (de Platon, des stoïciens, mais aussi d'Anaxagore et de Diogène d'Apollonie et de tous les autres cas étudiés par Deichgräber et qui mériteraient à leur tour une analyse systématique) a suspendu pour un instant la forme argumentative et sémantiquement fondée de son discours véridatif, pour avoir accès à un moment de simple nomination – une sorte de remémoration de la première entrée du dieu dans le langage sous la forme d'un nom. Le registre double des épiclèses (exemplifié dans l'hymne de Cléanthe), ainsi que les énumérations inlassables de noms et d'attributs divins (qui peuplent le discours en prose des philosophes) semblent montrer que, dans cette ligne qui, non sans des interruptions, arrive à perdurer et à se représenter au-delà des différences d'école les plus marquées, il n'est pas simplement question du « nom correct » du dieu, mais, comme le dit avec un paradoxe évident Platon lui-même, de « n'importe quel nom », pour autant qu'il soit un nom (et, dans son cas, pour autant qu'il soit toujours érotiquement orienté « πρὸς θεῖον » [Pl. *Soph.* 254 b 1]).

L'hymne apparaît, en ce sens, comme le paradigme originaire de la vocation de la philosophie à interroger non seulement ses objets, mais, en même temps, la nature et la puissance de son langage.

Comme cela deviendra d'autant plus évident dans les écoles néoplatoniciennes, l'appellation divine s'installe, dans l'environnement philosophique, dans la théorie générale de la connaissance et de la méconnaissance du divin –

⁶⁹ GERNET, BOULANGER (1970), 221.

qui est la forme spécifique de ce « culte » (*deum colit qui nouit*) –, aussi bien que dans la supposition de sa dicibilité ou indicibilité.

Nommer, c'est ouvrir un espace de dicibilité ; nommer de façon plurielle, c'est éviter toute prétention d'exhaustivité. C'est à partir de cela – qui est un seuil décisif – que la pensée philosophique de l'Antiquité s'est définie par rapport et par opposition aux savoirs précédents ou alternatifs – qu'il s'agisse de la sophistique ou de la religion traditionnelle.

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DIVINE EPITHETS IN THE GREEK PSALMS:
CULTURAL ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSLATABILITY

James K. Aitken

Un traducteur, rendant en grec les Psaumes hébraïques au II^e siècle avant notre ère, était confronté à de nombreux termes appliqués à dieu qui nécessitaient des équivalents grecs. La solution consistait à trouver des équivalents qui n'étaient pas simplement fait pour éviter les notions hébraïques, mais transformaient avec succès les termes en épithètes conformes aux pratiques épithétiques de la tradition grecque. Tantôt, le traducteur a inventé des termes qui avaient une résonance en grec, en recourant à des adjectifs utilisés pour désigner dieu dans la tradition juive. Tantôt, il a choisi des termes provenant de contextes de pétition en Égypte, et notamment des termes adoptés par d'autres cultes égyptiens. Il en résulte que les Psaumes sont marqués par des appels pétitionnaires à dieu, tandis que l'accumulation d'épithètes reflète à la fois les pétitions et la tendance nouvelle, dans la pratique hellénistique, à recourir à des épithètes fonctionnelles multiples. Les Juifs d'Égypte partageaient donc davantage de traits avec les cultes voisins dans leurs pratiques de dénomination du divin qu'on ne l'a parfois pensé.

In the Hebrew Psalms, there are to be found multiple terms for the Jewish god.¹ When translated into Greek (c. 100 BCE or later),² these would have posed some problems for finding a suitable equivalent but also afforded the opportunity for creative adaption. Ps 5:3 can be used as illustration, where god is designated by ὁ θεός as well as being addressed as βασιλεύς and κύριος, titles known as Greek terms for gods too:

πρόσχες τῇ φωνῇ τῆς δεήσεώς μου,
ὁ βασιλεύς μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου.
ὅτι πρὸς σὲ προσεύξομαι, κύριε· (Ps 5:3)

¹ My thanks to the members of the “Mapping Ancient Polytheisms” research team for their feedback on my paper, and for the comments of the anonymous readers. They have saved me from some errors and improved the paper significantly.

² AITKEN (2015), 321-323.

Be attentive to the expression of my petition,
 my king and my god,
 for it is to you that I will pray, O Lord.³

The traditional Greek titles are employed since they match well the Hebrew equivalents (*melek* “king”, *ʾelohim* “god”, *ʾadonai* “lord”) while also providing cultural resonance with Graeco-Roman cults. The very plurality of titles in the Hebrew tradition presented complex opportunities for cultural engagement by the translators of the Septuagint, and especially for the Psalms translator.⁴ At the same time, the translator’s method resulted in a version that does not always conform to modern tastes in translation. Oddities were sometimes produced when the Hebrew was followed closely, matching word order and employing consistency in choice of lexemes, such that cultural concepts or idioms are rendered without modification. For example, the reader is meant to gain comfort from the fact that “God is the one who tests hearts and kidneys” (ἐτάζων καρδίας καὶ νεφροῦς ὁ θεός, Ps 7:10). The representation of feelings or seats of emotion in Hebrew by anatomical terms does not translate so well into Greek, despite the acceptability of a metaphorical sense for *καρδία* in Greek. The verse strikes the Greek reader instead as an allusion to the god practicing necromancy.

It is therefore difficult to judge the careful balancing act that a translator must perform. He might at times be aiming for cultural sensitivity or cultural translation in his choices, while at other times he may be imposing a stock equivalent for the Hebrew without concerns for cultural intelligibility. If there is an element of cultural negotiation underway, the question still remains as to how far he is participating in the language of the time or subverting that language for expressing a strict monotheism. This is further complicated by the fact that the function and meaning of Greek titles can change over time. When dealing with translation the terms in Greek may not function in the same way as their Hebrew equivalents, and attention should be given to the Greek.

1. THE TRANSLATABILITY OF GODS

The translatability of the gods is a feature common across much of the Mediterranean and the Near East. Jan Assmann has promoted the idea more than any other,⁵ and for a later period Robert Parker’s recent book *Greek Gods*

³ All translations of the Greek are my own, unless indicated. The Hebrew translation is from the NRSV.

⁴ For an overview of Hebrew divine titles, see METTINGER (1988).

⁵ ASSMANN (1997).

Abroad traces the development of notions and terms.⁶ It is standard to see gods on the move, but the one exception in scholarship appears to be the Israelite tradition. Within the religion of ancient Israel there was an early adoption of titles and images of gods similar to those found in the Near East, and such titles are latent still within the Hebrew biblical text. But this translatability was, according to Assmann, brought to a close by the rise of monotheism, often with violent consequences.⁷ Mark Smith seeks to correct Assmann's picture, by recognizing an initial translatability from other cultures and thereby questioning Assmann's view of a lack of translatability in the Bible. Smith outlines the consequences of the rise in Assyrian and Babylonian power for the biblical view of god, which led to a defensive attitude in response from Israel and Judah. The dominance of the god of Israel was a defensive move to deny other gods power and led instead to "a vertical translatability", in Smith's terms.⁸

One of the notable aspects of Smith's book is his attention to the Jewish religion in the Graeco-Roman period, and therefore of relevance for the discussion here. His argument continues the theme of emphasizing the role of the imperial contexts for the understanding of god. He sees the new Hellenistic empires – reflected in the mobility of peoples and the establishment of libraries – as an opportunity for greater integration that in turn led to a genuine change in religious experience. Nevertheless, while this encouraged translatability in other ethnic groups, Jews in the Hellenistic period, in line with their predecessors of the Persian period, practiced local resistance to such translatability.⁹ One of his prime examples is the Maccabean revolt and its response in the literature as constitutive of Jewish belief. As a result, despite some hints in Jewish Greek authors, the Jews remained monotheistic and resisted the translatability of their god. Among possible exceptions, and they are seen very much as literary exceptions, is the case of the Septuagint translation of Exod 22:27(28), which is frequently cited in scholarly literature.¹⁰

θεοὺς οὐ κακολογήσεις καὶ ἄρχοντας τοῦ λαοῦ σου οὐ κακῶς ἐρεῖς.
You shall not revile gods and speak ill of the leaders of the people.

The term for god (*ʾelohim*) is morphologically plural in Hebrew and has been read as a plural in the Greek translation. It implies the translator wished to express respect for foreign "gods". The *Letter of Aristeas* (2nd century BCE) is

⁶ PARKER (2017).

⁷ ASSMANN (1997).

⁸ SMITH (2008), 243-273.

⁹ SMITH (2008), 228-242.

¹⁰ SMITH (2008), 303. Josephus in the first century CE takes this passage as an injunction not to disrespect the gods of other cities (*Ant.* IV, 207; cf. Philo, *Mos.* 2.205).

another case where reverence for Zeus is implied in recognising the same god by different names (*Ar.* 15), and thereby expressing horizontal and vertical translatability. Even these do not reflect full equation of one god with another, but can be seen more as recognition of the existence of other gods, and thus a milder form of translatability.

Lacking in most of the scholarship is attention to the ancient translation of the Septuagint, where the very idea of translation is inherent. It has the potential to demonstrate something of popular belief and certainly shows how Hebrew terms were understood by Greek-speaking Jews, and how they conformed to their wider environment. There have been a number of obstacles to the proper appreciation of such data. First is the technicality of the field, which has prevented its being appreciated by those in cognate disciplines. Thus, biblical scholars or even scholars of Hellenistic Judaism have tended to neglect the Septuagint – the example of Exod 22:27 is the only one cited by various scholars on this topic.¹¹ Second, it is a field little known to scholars of Graeco-Roman religion who often do not have the linguistic competency to express confidently on issues within it. Robert Parker's engagement with the Septuagint in his new book is impressive.¹² Third, the study of the Septuagint is itself a discipline that is divorced from developments in other fields. Scholars are trained in biblical studies and textual criticism, and engage little with issues of religious history or the Graeco-Roman world. Finally, there is, as we shall see in a moment, an idea of translators struggling with their Hebrew text (see, e.g., Ps 7:10 above) and producing unsatisfactory results, failing to represent fairly the Hebrew meaning. As a result, the scholarship tends to begin with a negative attitude. A problem in the field is asking the right questions.

2. THE GREEK PSALMS AS A TRANSLATION

The biblical book with the greatest number of appearances of divine titles and attributes is the book of Psalms. The Old Greek translation of the Psalter, however, presents problems of its own for dating and location. While one might speculate that it was one of the first translations to be produced for liturgical purposes,¹³ there is little evidence for liturgical activity in the diaspora before 70 CE to draw any conclusions upon this. Indeed, it is possible that conservatism in the liturgy encouraged the ongoing use of Hebrew rather than necessi-

¹¹ E.g., BARCLAY (1996), 431.

¹² There are only five references in the index, but this is more than in many works, and in itself shows some recognition that the Septuagint fits into the evidence of Greek religion.

¹³ See PIETERSMA (2001), 99. On the question of the liturgical origins of the first translation of the Pentateuch, see DORIVAL, HARL, MUNNICH (1988), 68-69.

tating a translation. A date in the second century BCE has been the preference of most scholars,¹⁴ and recent research has tended to confirm this but does not rule out a first-century BCE date. Important for the discussion of the translation has been its high degree of lexical consistency and quantitative equivalence. Scholars have identified different translation approaches in books of the Septuagint, and in the case of the Psalms translation its consistent method has been associated with what is known as the *kaige* tradition. This was a method of translation that appears in some books, and in revisions of other books, that sought to bring the translation into closer conformity with the Hebrew word order and ensure consistent translation equivalents.¹⁵ Although the Psalms are not entirely consistent and therefore may be earlier than some *kaige* translations, the earliest evidence for *kaige* is in the first half of the first century BCE. This does suggest the Psalms were completed by the first century BCE.¹⁶ Its location has been a matter of debate but the majority opinion is that it was composed in Egypt, and some of the vocabulary evidence that we shall look at will confirm this.¹⁷

While the translation does largely aim for word for word equivalence it is sophisticated and careful in its choices. Part of the evaluation so far has been somewhat negative of the translator's attitudes to their Hebrew text, and this reflects a much wider negativity in the field towards the translators. Certainly, at times it can produce oddities (as in the case of Ps 7:10) but other times there is careful structuring, as for example in Ps 51(50):12:

καρδίαν καθαρὰν κτίσον ἐν ἐμοί, ὁ θεός, καὶ πνεῦμα εὐθὲς ἐγκαίνισον ἐν τοῖς ἐγκάτοις μου. (Ps 50:12)
A pure heart create in me, O God, and an honest spirit renew within my being (Heb: *qereb*).

Here the triple alliteration of the letter kappa (καρδίαν καθαρὰν κτίσον) may well be unintentional. The Hebrew Masoretic Text most likely represents in this case the *Vorlage* of the translation, since the Greek equivalents for each of the Hebrew words are standard elsewhere in Psalms and indeed more generally in the Septuagint. Therefore, the translation arises from giving the standard equivalents of the Hebrew. However, this alliteration may not have gone unnoticed by the translator and could have been the motivation for drawing out another one in the second half of the verse (ἐγκαίνισον ἐν τοῖς ἐγκάτοις μου) where the verb ἐγκαίνιζω is standard but the choice of ἔγκατον “entrails” is

¹⁴ E.g., SWETE (1914), 25; DORIVAL *et al.* (1988), 97.

¹⁵ MUNNICH (1983); OLOFFSON (2009).

¹⁶ See GENTRY (2001).

¹⁷ See AITKEN (2015a), 68-69.

unique to this occurrence in the Septuagint (contrary to LSJ). The phrase continues the *kappa* alliteration and coordinates the two words with the ἐν- prefix.

More generally we should recognize how all our Greek translators of Hebrew play with words and forms. It is important to note that, however odd the translation may sound owing to its close conformity to the Hebrew, the Septuagint translators show awareness of the wider literary context and are creative in their translation approach, playing with the problems of representing the Hebrew in Greek.¹⁸

3. DIVINE TITLES IN THE SEPTUAGINT

One particular challenge for interpretation is the translation of terms used of god. A number of these are terms for physical objects such as rock (Hebrew *sela'* or *šur*), shield (*magen*), fortress or stronghold (*ma'oz* or *'oz*), and place of refuge (*maḥseh*, *mišgab*) or place of shelter (*mešudah*). It is unclear whether we should call them metaphors, attributes or titles but they function to portray the nature of god and his activity. When rendered into Greek we see how these terms reflect a variety of translation methods but often ones not giving precise equivalents to the Hebrew. The result is a colourful description of the god of Israel, as for example:

Hebrew: The Lord is my rock (*sela'*) and my fortress (*mešudah*) and my deliverer. (*pl̄* Piel participle)

My god is my stone (*šur*) and I shall seek refuge in him.

My shield (*magen*) and horn of my salvation and my stronghold (*mišgab*).

κύριος στερέωμά μου καὶ καταφυγή μου καὶ ῥύστης μου,

ὁ θεός μου βοηθός μου, καὶ ἐλπῶ ἐπ' αὐτόν,

ὑπερασπιστής μου καὶ κέρας σωτηρίας μου, ἀντιλήμπτωρ μου.

(Ps 18[17]:3)

The Lord is my firmness and my place of refuge and my rescuer;

my God is my helper, and I will trust in him,

my shield-bearer and horn of my deliverance, my protector.

Scholars have been quick to note how the Greek uses less visual depictions of God; hence rather than objects we have active persons.¹⁹ God is no longer a rock, place of refuge or shield, but a helper (βοηθός), a protector (ἀντιλήμπτωρ), and a shield-bearer (ὑπερασπιστής). Careful studies of these terms have shown how much they interchange such that some Hebrew terms are

¹⁸ As an example, see AITKEN (2015c).

¹⁹ FLASHAR (1912), 243-244.

rendered by various Greek words and Greek words in turn are used for multiple Hebrew terms. It appears almost as if the concatenation of terms is more important than precise and consistent rendering of individual terms. This is an important point to which we will return.

However, the somewhat negative approach of earlier scholarship, which recognised the problem for the translators of presenting god as a rock, has persisted. For example, some earlier scholars saw the renderings of these terms as theologically motivated. An extreme case of this is Erwin's view that the translator "altered these expressions that violated his conception of the spiritual nature of God".²⁰ Less problematic but still limiting is the idea of the suppression of these Hebrew titles, as expressed by Passoni dell'Acqua, which fits with her conception of Alexandrian Jews portraying the superiority of their god.²¹ In response, Olofsson focusses on translation method,²² but also sees a theological intention in the rendering of inanimate objects behind the terms in two respects. First, the similarity of the terms in Hebrew to other terms in the ancient Near East, whether archaic or contemporary, Olofsson proposes, could have created doubt over the exclusivity of the god of Israel. This is a weak argument when considering a translation into Greek in which the cultural associations with the ancient Near East would not have been strong. Second, Olofsson sees a tendency in the translation to emphasize divine transcendence, freeing the God from associations with material objects. This reflects the earlier view of Erwin (on the spiritual nature of God) that the translation was intentionally avoiding something and intentionally adding a new spiritual direction. There are problems with such a concept, both in its latent anti-Jewish sentiments or Christian *praeparatio evangelica*, and in its supposed evolutionary model of divine understanding.

The tendency then in Septuagint scholarship is to focus on the transfer or not from the Hebrew into the Greek. There are alternative choices that the translator could have taken. Since the descriptive terms in Hebrew refer to the physicality of the protection from god, largely representative of his residence in the Temple on a high mountain, geographic adjectives could have been chosen by the translators. If they had wished to avoid the supposedly problematic "rock" or "fortress", they might have chosen a cultic term that specifies god of Zion or Jerusalem. Such a toponymic epithet would have been in conformity with one of the Greek conventions for epithets (such as Artemis Ephesia). The toponym might have been avoided, though, as it could imply polytheism or at least a denial of universalism, indicating that the god of Israel is the god of the

²⁰ ERWIN (1962), 7, cited in OLOFSSON (1990), 7.

²¹ PASSONI DELL'ACQUA (1977); PASSONI DELL'ACQUA (1998), 106-107.

²² OLOFSSON (1990), 21-22.

local cult and not other centres or cities. Instead, the alternative convention of choosing a divine function for an epithet is preferred. This still does not avoid the perception that other gods might offer other functions, but here the concatenation of the multiple epithets serves to emphasise the one god is sufficient. See how similar terms from the previous examples build towards the all-protective power given by god:

ἔλεός μου καὶ καταφυγή μου,
 ἀντιλήμπτωρ μου καὶ ῥύστης μου,
 ὑπερασπιστής μου, καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἤλπισα,
 ὁ ὑποτάσσων τὸν λαόν μου ὑπ' ἐμέ. (Ps 144[143]:2)
 my mercy (Heb: *hesed* “kindness”²³) and my place of refuge (“shelter”
mesudah),
 my protector (“stronghold” *misgab*) and my rescuer (“deliverance” *pelet*),
 my shield-bearer (“shield” *magen*) and in him I trusted,
 the one who places my people under my protection.

What is most interesting in these examples is the function of the terms in Greek. While some of the terms are not found elsewhere in Greek religion, they do conform to epithet practices in Greek. Although the Hebrew may indicate metaphors or poetic descriptions of god, in Greek they become titles of divine functions. We may therefore legitimately call them epithets conforming as they do in form and meaning to functional epithets of deities. They should properly be called poetic epithets as part of the literary creation of the translators rather than actual terms used by everyday users,²⁴ but such a distinction cannot be fully drawn, especially when we have little epigraphic evidence of Jewish cultic practice in this time. One type of Greek epithet employs substantives as epithets, such as Apollo Iatros, “the Doctor”,²⁵ and this we see in the use in the Psalms of ὑπερασπιστής “shield bearer”. The titles βασιλεύς “king” or κύριος “lord” perhaps serve similar duty to ἄναξ of Zeus. Many epithets are functional, and while some of those in the Septuagint or their meanings are not attested elsewhere, their form is not unexpected. God as ἀντιλήμπτωρ or ῥύστης is not a far cry from the common epithet σωτήρ or σώτεια. Indeed, masculine σωτήρ is of course also used as a divine title in the Psalms (Ps 24[23]:5). At times a term may be a substantivized participle, as we find in Ps 17(16):7: ὁ σώζων τοὺς ἐλπίζοντας ἐπὶ σέ “the one who saves those that

²³ Some English translations (e.g., NRSV) have emended the opening word to “my rock” in the light of parallel passages elsewhere and the pairing with “shelter”. Since the Greek obviously had before him a Hebrew text similar to ours, there is no need to emend for our purposes.

²⁴ See PARKER (2003) on the distinction but also on the problems of drawing a rigid separation between them.

²⁵ HORNBLLOWER (2014), 9.

trust in you”. This is again similar to the participial formation of βροντῶν “one who thunders” for Zeus. One distinctive element in the Psalms epithets is the use of the possessive (“my protector”; “my rescuer”). This designation of a “personal god” is untypical of Greek epithets, but common in Semitic languages. As Parker notes, in a case where a Phrygian appeals to “Artimis, my great god”, he marks himself out as a barbarian by this use of the possessive, along with the spelling of the name.²⁶

It is of course natural for the translators to make use of the possibilities of word formation in the Greek language in this way. It is nonetheless also a reminder that when choosing their translation options, they were thinking about the opportunities in Greek and not only the limitations in rendering the Hebrew. The phenomenon of translating epithets in the Septuagint needs to be seen in a wider context, beyond just the translation technique, to include the linguistic context, the semantic field as a whole, the social context of the Greek words, and the reception of the vocabulary.

4. INTERPRETING THE EPITHETS IN THE PSALMS

It can easily be demonstrated that the Greek words chosen are not only aimed at avoiding concrete Hebrew terms such as “rock”. Otherwise, an example such as Ps 40(39):18 would not make sense. Here we find the two terms βοηθός and ὑπερασπιστής:

Hebrew: As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.
 You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God. (NRSV)
 ἐγὼ δὲ πτωχός εἰμι καὶ πέννης· κύριος φροντιεῖ μου.
 βοηθός μου καὶ ὑπερασπιστής μου σὺ εἶ· ὁ θεός μου, μὴ χρονίσης.
 I am poor and needy. The Lord takes thought for me.
 You are my helper and shield-bearer; my God, do not delay.

The Greek terms translate Hebrew terms that are active agents and not static objects. Thus, βοηθός, which we saw being used of a rock (*sur*) in Ps 18 above, is here used of God as a source of help (*ezrah*). It may be from this equivalent that βοηθός comes to be used frequently in the Psalms (26x), especially since it had been established as early as Genesis 2 (for Hebrew *ʿzr*, Gen 2:18, 20) and used specifically of god in Deuteronomy (Deut 33:7, 26, 29). Second, in the verse from Psalm 40(39) we have the nominal participle *mplṭ*, denoting one who delivers or saves, but instead of choosing something like ὁ σώζων or ὁ ἀντιλήμπτωρ the translator opts for ὑπερασπιστής, the one who holds the

²⁶ PARKER (2017), 119. I am grateful to Fabio Porzia for drawing my attention to this.

shield (17x Pss). Outside of the Psalms the noun *ὑπερασπιστής* does appear in 2 Sam (2 Kgdms) 22:3, 31 but that section is also a Hebraising revision similar to the *kaige* tradition (see above), and may be later or at least no earlier than the Psalms. Thus, we can say these terms have a positive force for the translator and are not only used as substitutes for inanimate objects.

It is also to be noted here that we have the same Greek equivalents as in the earlier examples, but for different Hebrew terms. Despite a largely consistent translation style, the translator prefers these terms and their associations with each other than a fixed translation method. Their appearance in a series in these Psalms fits the Hellenistic preference for multiple titles. Hornblower observes, for example, the “striking and unavoidable feature” of the Hellenistic poet Lykophron’s *Alexandra*: his habit of avoiding the usual names of gods but designating them by lists of epithets piled up in *asyndeton*.²⁷ At the same time the compilation of lists of epithets can be observed in epigraphy, including titles previously used in the classical period for specific gods and their roles.²⁸ There is as it were a democratisation of titles, where any one title may be shared by many deities, and no longer serves as a designation of any one god. With such considerations in mind, we can examine in greater detail some of the epithets used in the Psalms to determine their origins and their place within the Greek system of epithets. We begin with two examples of rare words before moving to titles used more widely.

4.1. στερέωμα

One odd equivalent has already been seen above in Ps 18(17):3 where the Hebrew “my rock” is rendered κύριος στερέωμά μου. The noun *στερέωμα* appears five times in the Psalms (LXX Pss 17:3; 18:2; 70:3; 72:4; 150:1), but only twice used of God. The other case is Ps 71(70):3 (also translating Hebrew *sela*’).

γενοῦ μοι εἰς θεὸν ὑπερασπιστὴν
καὶ εἰς τόπον ὄχυρόν τοῦ σώσαί με,
ὅτι στερέωμά μου καὶ καταφυγή μου εἶ σύ. (Ps 71[70]:3)
Be to me a protector-god,
and a strong place, to save me,
because you are my firmness and my refuge.

The noun *στερέωμα* in two of the other occurrences in the Psalms and elsewhere in the Septuagint denotes the firmament (e.g., Gen 1:6), or upper layer of the universe, a physical entity. This example would seem to go against the

²⁷ HORNBLOWER (2014), 91-92.

²⁸ PARKER (2017), 132-133.

suggestion that the translator is avoiding inanimate objects, even if it is an object that has certain magisterial qualities through being associated with the created universe. Indeed the cognate adjective στερεός is frequently used of rock (πέτρα) in the Septuagint:²⁹

ἐθήλασαν μέλι ἐκ πέτρας
καὶ ἔλαιον ἐκ στερεᾶς πέτρας (Deut 32:13)
they sucked honey from a rock
and oil from solid rock.

This sense is obvious for anyone reading Greek but the association within the literary context of the Septuagint is important for understanding the translator's awareness too. In this sense the translator is conveying a direct allusion to rock in his translation through using the nominal derivative.

The general sense of firmness for the noun is seen in another Psalm, the one other occurrence in the Psalter:

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνάνευσις τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτῶν
καὶ στερέωμα ἐν τῇ μάστιγι αὐτῶν· (Ps 73[72]:4)
because there is nothing negative to their death
and no firmness (Heb *bari*? "fatness") in their whip.

This would seem to be the meaning when it conveys the divine rock, although an association at least cognitively with the firmament may also be significant. Compare Deuteronomy 33 where the divine magnificence is reflected in the firmament:

Οὐκ ἔστιν ὡσπερ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ ἠγαπημένου·
ὁ ἐπιβαίνων ἐπὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν βοηθός σου
καὶ ὁ μεγαλοπρεπῆς τοῦ στερεώματος. (Deut 33:26)
There is none like the God of the beloved;
he who rides upon the sky is your helper
and the magnificent one of the firmament.

This term or its adjectival equivalent στερεός is not used, as far as I know, of gods elsewhere in Greek; nor is the adjective used of the God of Israel. There is one curious exception, and that is in 1 Samuel 4:

οὐαὶ ἡμῖν· τίς ἐξελεῖται ἡμᾶς ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν θεῶν τῶν στερεῶν τούτων;
(1 Sam 4:8)
Woe to us! Who will deliver us out of the hand of these sturdy gods?

²⁹ See too Isa 2:21; 5:28; 50:7, as well as Isa 17:5 (φάραγγι στερεῇ).

The Hebrew term *ʿadîr* appears in the Bible as an epithet of the God of Israel (e.g., Ps 76:5, θαυμαστῶς for *ʿadîr*), but can also be used of mighty warriors and as here of foreign gods.³⁰

It is possible that the association of strength was thereby directly connected with a divine epithet. What all this shows is that a particular avoidance of association with inanimate objects is not the full picture, and that to understand a term we must explore the wider context. In this case, στερέωμα does not appear to have been adopted as a divine epithet in Judaism or Christianity, apart from in obvious biblical quotations. It is not to be found in Christian inscriptions, and this evidence underlines its slight oddity. This is not the case with the next term, which is a semantic equivalent of στερέωμα.

4.2. κραταίωμα

While στερέωμα is a word already existing in Greek, we have no attestation of the term κραταίωμα before the Septuagint. It appears four times in Psalms, each time in reference to a divine attribute:

Hebrew: You are indeed my rock (*selaʿ*) and my shelter (*mesudah*).
 ὅτι κραταίωμά μου καὶ καταφυγή μου εἶ σὺ (Ps 31[30]:4)
 because you are my empowerment and my refuge.

In this first example we again see it as an equivalent for rock, as we did for στερέωμα. However, in the three other appearances it stands as an equivalent for “mystery(?)” (*sod*, 25[24]:14 LXX), “stronghold” (*ʿoz*, 28[27]:8 || *maʿoz*), and “refuge” (*maʿoz*, 43[42]:2). Once more we see variety and lack of consistency of choosing the terms in relation to the Hebrew equivalents. This also confirms an interest in expressing the nature of solid objects in reference to God, and while it moves away from the specific objects, it still conveys an aspect of them.

Some sense of its use of stone is found when we turn to the adjective κραταίος, which is twice used in the Septuagint as an attribute of stone, in Ezra (2 Esdras) 6:4 and Ezek 3:9:

καὶ δόμοι λίθινοι κραταιοὶ τρεῖς, καὶ δόμος ξύλινος εἷς· καὶ ἡ δαπάνη ἐξ οἴκου τοῦ βασιλέως δοθήσεται· (Ezra 6:4)
 and there were three courses of hard stones and one course of timber, and the cost will be paid from the house of the king.

³⁰ This is a feature of North-West Semitic languages, appearing in Ugaritic, Phoenician and Punic (see GESENIUS [2013], 14). Thus, the cognates *ʿdr* or *ʿdrt* in Phoenician and Punic inscriptions are applied to gods, both masculine and feminine.

καὶ ἔσται διὰ παντὸς κραταιότερον πέτρας· (Ezek 3:9)
and it shall be continually stronger than rock.

However, here the association with God is much stronger than in the case of στερέωμα. The adjective κραταιός is most frequently used of the powerful hand or arm of either Pharaoh or God:

ἐν γὰρ χειρὶ κραταιᾷ ἐξήγαγεν ὑμᾶς κύριος ἐντεῦθεν (Exod 13:3; cf. 13:9)
For by a mighty hand the Lord brought you out from there.

In this sense the adjective could be said to be a divine attribute, but it is not ordinarily used of God directly. It does become in the Psalms a popular title for God, first appearing in Deut 7:21:

οὐ τρωθήσῃ ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν, ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου ἐν σοί, θεὸς μέγας καὶ κραταιός (Hebrew *nora*’ “fearful”)
you will not be harmed before them because the Lord your god is in you, a god great and strong

It reappears in Neh 9:32 (LXX 2 Esdras 19:32) for the Hebrew “warrior” and it is possible that the section is under the influence of Deuteronomy. In the Psalms it translates Hebrew *ʿizuz* and *maʿoz*, both terms associated with strength or stronghold:

κύριος κραταιὸς καὶ δυνατός,
κύριος δυνατὸς ἐν πολέμῳ. (Ps 24[23]:8)
a Lord strong and powerful
a Lord powerful in war

ὥσει τέρας ἐγενήθην τοῖς πολλοῖς,
καὶ σὺ βοηθὸς κραταιός. (Ps 71[70]:7)
I was like a sign to the many
and you are a strong helper

There is an internal Septuagint association then between the strength words and the root of κραταιός. The translator has invented a word to convey this notion of divine strength and reinterpreted the Hebrew in this light.

This strategy could be said to be successful since it is making an association with divine terms. This is all the more significant when it is recognised that, as a divine epithet, κραταιός was known in the Egyptian context. For, according to Parker, Egyptian epithets are only occasionally translated into Greek and some are transliterated, with the exception of the ubiquitous μέγας “great”.³¹

³¹ PARKER (2017), 105.

The adjective κραταιός is an example of an epithet that is not standard anywhere else in Greece but does appear in Egypt.³² Such examples are most likely translations of Egyptian epithets but the lack of precise parallels between Egyptian and Greek texts does not make it easy to be sure. One case is in the first-century BCE hymn to Isis, one of four hymns said to be inscribed by a certain Isidorus. In the second hymn one reads:

ὡς ἐτύμως ὁ ἀγαθὸς δαίμων, Σοκονῶπις κραταιός,
 σύνναος ναίει, πλουτοδότης ἀγαθός,
 How truly the Agathosdaimon, mighty Sokonopis,
 dwells as your temple-mate, that goodly Bestower of wealth. (Hymn II, 9-10)

Here the adjective is paired with others, including the attribute πλουτοδότης known elsewhere but most common in Egypt (Isidorus I.1; IGR I,5 1131.2-4; 1/2 c. CE).³³ The adjective κραταιός appears in later Egyptian texts too (SEG 8:574, 3rd cent CE).

This shows that there was some use for it as a divine epithet even if rare and localized. How do we evaluate this data? On a simple level we could speak of polygenesis, that occasionally the Egyptians chose a term that is a rather general term for strong. At the same time the Jewish translators also chose the same term to match the Hebrew *ʿoz* and cognates. One difficulty with this notion is that *ισχύς* and cognates are far more common equivalents for the Hebrew than κραταιός. Instead the particular use represents a term that was acceptable in some circles to use of god. Language operates as part of a wider shared cultural tradition and there were constraints on the choice of terms according to acceptability in the language culture. In this case the Septuagint represents early attestation of the use of this term for God that we find appearing in (dated later) Egyptian sources.

The similarity in language to that of the Isis hymns is no surprise. A number of terms that are distinctive in the Septuagint are also found applied to Isis in the hymns of Isidorus (1st century BCE). These terms include ἐλεήμων, εὐείλατος, and παντοκράτωρ, although naturally in the feminine there (παντοκράτειρα).³⁴ We even learn from Stobaeus (1.41.44; 978) that Isis and Osiris were the “helpers” βοηθοί, the term used of god in the Psalms. It can be seen that Jews adopted practices and institutions from Egyptians, and this includes some of the language of praise found in Jewish Greek texts from Egypt, and especially in the Septuagint. Similar language in non-Jewish texts, including the Greek hymns to Isis, indicates a shared linguistic tradition.

³² PARKER (2017), 105.

³³ PARKER (2017), 109.

³⁴ See AITKEN (2015a).

4.3. ἔρεισμα

One other word in this conceptual frame does not appear in the Psalms but it is a further example of an abstraction of inanimate qualities applied to God. The noun ἔρεισμα “prop, support” appears once in the Septuagint (Prov 14:26).

ἐν φόβῳ κυρίου ἐλπὶς ἰσχύος,
τοῖς δὲ τέκνοις αὐτοῦ καταλείπει ἔρεισμα. (Hebrew *mahseh* “refuge”)
In the fear of the Lord is hope of strength,
and to his children he bequeaths support.

In Greek ἔρεισμα is applied to architectural structures, boats and even to the legs of the human body. It can also be used metaphorically of persons: Θήρων’ ἔρεισμα Ἀκράγαντος “pillar of Agrigentum” (Pindar *Olymp.* 2.6). It is not knowingly used of gods anywhere else. Intriguingly here it translates the Hebrew “refuge”, one of the many Hebrew terms in the Psalms. The translator has taken the physical object and rendered it by a characteristic. It is once more conveyed as something solid and strong, but hardly any more transcendent or spiritual than the Hebrew. Unsurprisingly this rendering did not catch on.

4.4. ὑπερασπιστής

As already noted above, the term ὑπερασπιστής appears seventeen times in the Psalms, and we have already encountered it above in Ps 17:3; Ps 39:18; and Ps 70:3. Apart from later appearances in 2 Samuel, it is unique to the Psalms as a divine title. It renders both the word for shield in Hebrew (*magen*) and the word for fortification (*maʿoz*; LXX Ps 26:1; 27:8; 30:3, 5; 36:39) as well as some other words. It derives from the verb ὑπερασπίζω that appears in Hellenistic literature onwards and obviously denotes the person bearing the shield. Thus in the translation the object has become the person manipulating the object. The noun itself is not used more widely in extant Greek but we do have one possible example in a fragmentary papyrus (P.Strasb. 8 761, l. 9, ὑπε]ρασπιστής). As noted above, it follows the pattern of the formation of Greek divine epithets and was therefore a natural choice for the translator.

The portrayal of God as a protector is also seen in the book of Samuel where the Hebrew word for rock (*sur*) is rendered by φύλαξ “guard”:

ὁ θεός μου φύλαξ ἔσται μου, πεποιθὼς ἔσομαι ἐπ’ αὐτῷ (2 Sam 22:3)
My god is my guard. I shall trust in him

This appears to be distinctive of the one translator (also in 2 Sam 22:47*bis*; 23:3) but leads to further consideration of some terms, as we move from static qualities to active agents.

5. EPITHETS AS ACTIVE AGENTS

Among the epithets in the Psalms we see a number of terms that have been discussed often in the literature. They may therefore be dealt with more briefly, while the significance and manner of their adoption can be explored further. Terms such as ἀντιλήμπτωρ, βοηθός, σωτήρ and καταφυγή were chosen since they were functioning as standard petitionary terms of the time. Montevecchi notes how they appear more frequently in Ptolemaic-era papyri than Roman, thereby pinpointing the likely chronological context more precisely.³⁵ As she puts it, the translator chose the Greek terms to make the passages intelligible to Greek ears, capturing the force and feeling, poetic colour and divine inspiration of the Hebrew poetry more powerfully than by word or letter.³⁶ For her the terms all derive from the Ptolemaic court, and while καταφυγή “refuge” could also be a designation for a temple, in general the terms are that of court language. The one term not used of god in the Psalms is the noun εὐεργέτης “benefactor”, which would have been appropriate in some contexts but presumably avoided owing to its use as an epithet of two Ptolemies. Let us illustrate each title in turn briefly.

5.1. καταφυγή

Both the noun καταφυγή and its cognate verb can be illustrated from petitions:

καλῶς] οὖν ποιήσεις γράψας πρὸς [Ἑρμ]άν ἐπ[ιστολήν] | ὅπως ἂν τὸ σῶμα
ἀπ[οκα]ταστή[σῃ] πρὸς σέ, | ἵνα ἐπὶ σέ [κα]ταφυγὼν τοῦ δικαίου[υ] τύχω.]
Please write a letter to Hermais so that he may send this person to you, so
that I, who have fled to you, may receive justice. (P.Cair. Zen. 2 59224
(III BCE), ll. 6-9)

ἠνάγκασμαι τὴν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς καταφυγὴν ποιήσασθαι ἵνα τύχω βοηθείας.
I am forced to make my recourse to you so that I can obtain some help.
(P.Dion. 9 [139 BCE], l. 6)

³⁵ MONTEVECCHI (1999), 106.

³⁶ MONTEVECCHI (1999), 104.

The second example here is striking since the petitioner is seeking to obtain βοθηεία, throwing into relief examples such as Ps 18(17):3 where god is addressed as both καταφυγή and βοηθός. The language of the Psalms continues to influence later Christian use where both καταφυγή and καταφύγιον appear in epigraphic quotations of them (e.g., IK Anazarbos 60).

5.2. ἀντιλήμπτωρ

The significance of the noun ἀντιλήμπτωρ “helper, protector” (LSJ 158), a derivative of the verb ἀντιλαμβάνω, has been recognized since the time of Deissmann.³⁷ As a title it appears twenty times in the Septuagint (sixteen times in the Psalms) and once in 1 Enoch before becoming a popular term in Christian sources:

ἀντιλήμπτωρ μου εἶ καὶ καταφυγή μου, ὁ θεός μου (Ps 90[91].2)
You are my protector and my refuge, O my God.

What is striking about this word, and not made explicit by Montevecchi, is that the word, although documented in papyri, never appears in literary sources apart from Jewish and Christian. Equally striking is the fact that it does not appear in inscriptions, apart from Christian ones. In this case, therefore, the inscriptions provide important counter-evidence to the papyri from which we may conclude that, since the word is only attested in papyri from Egypt and not in documentary sources from elsewhere, it might indeed be a specifically Egyptian word.

While its use is to be found in Ptolemaic petitions, in the earliest occurrence in 157 BCE (UPZ 1 14), however, the rulers are addressed as gods, both in the very opening of the petition (line 5: βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίωι καὶ βασιλίσηι Κλεοπάτραι τῇ ἀδελφῇ θεοῖς Φιλομήτορσι χαίρειν) and as part of the request:

καθότι οὐθαμόθεν ἔχω τὰ ἐπιτή/δῃαι | πλὴν τοῦ τὴν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς καταφυγὴν
τοὺς θεοὺς μεγίστους | καὶ ἀντιλήμπτωρας (UPZ 1 14 r2.16–18)
inasmuch as I have no means of gaining the necessities of life except by
seeking refuge with you, the most great gods and protectors.³⁸

It remains true that this is a term of the petitions to the monarchs, but the ambiguous status of the monarchs as deities means it functions too as an appeal for divine assistance. It is also striking how the Psalms translator not only incorporates this word in petitions alongside other words, but is inconsistent in

³⁷ DEISSMANN (1901), 91.

³⁸ Translation from BAGNALL and DEROW (2004), 281.

his use of it for Hebrew words. In its sixteen appearances in the Psalms, it renders no fewer than seven different Hebrew words, as preserved in the MT: *magen* “shield”, *maḥseh* “refuge”, *mišgab* “refuge”, *šur* “rock” *selā* “stone”, and two verbal forms, one who upholds one’s life and those who extends loving kindness (Pss 41[42]:10; 53[54]:6).³⁹ This suggests that the function and significance of the term in Greek is more important than the wish to render what is in the Hebrew.

5.3. βοηθός

An excellent example of the use of βοηθός is found in a letter where it appears alongside other terms also found in our Psalms.⁴⁰ In a case regarding the mutilation of pigs, the writer appeals to King Ptolemy:

τούτου γὰρ γενομένου, βασιλεῦ, ἐπὶ σὲ κ[ατα]φυγών, | τ[ὸν] κοινὸν
εὐεργέτην καὶ βοηθόν, [τεύ]ξομαι τῆς παρὰ σου βοηθείας. (P.Enteux. 70
[221 BCE], ll. 13-14)

Since this has happened, king, I am seeking refuge in you, who are both benefactor and helper so that I might obtain help from you.

Likewise, in 114-115 CE, a petition addressed to the governor states:

ἐπὶ σὲ τὸν πάντων βοηθὸν καὶ | σωτήρα [προσ]εφύγαμεν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν
(P.Fam.Tebt. 15.70-71)

to you the helper and saviour of all we have made recourse and appeal.

As in the case of ἀντιλήμπτωρ, βοηθός is the equivalent for multiple terms in Hebrew. In its 26 occurrences in the Psalms, it renders 8 different Hebrew words: *maḥseh* “refuge”, *mišgab* “refuge”, *ma’oz* “stronghold”, *šur* “rock”, *‘ezer* “help”, *‘ezrah* “help”, *‘zr* participle “helper”, and *‘oz* “stronghold”.⁴¹ From these examples it can be seen that, in the language of petition to the monarch, a person could draw upon more than one term (βοηθός, εὐεργέτης, and σωτήρ) just as we saw in the case of ἀντιλήμπτωρ and καταφυγή. The pleonasm of terms ensures the success of the petition. This is very similar to the phenomenon that Parker describes of the Hellenistic practice of excessive accumulation of epithets in address to gods. The Greek Psalms are perhaps a link in this chain of developing practice in the Hellenistic period. They adopt the form of petitionary appeal from documentary papyri, a form that utilizes

³⁹ BONS (2020a), 835.

⁴⁰ An exhaustive study of this term has been undertaken by BONS (2014) but the limitation of studying an individual term is the inability to place it in the context of the other terms.

⁴¹ BONS (2020b), 1659.

multiple terms to guarantee success, and apply it to the translation of the Psalms where there are yet more terms requiring translation than even needed in the petitions.⁴²

6. CONCLUSION

The Greek translation of the Psalms can be placed within the wider context of the development of divine epithets in the Hellenistic period. Whether inventing words or choosing known terms from their context, the translator and the community of Jewish translators chose terms that conformed to the practice of Greek divine epithets. Irrespective of the function of the Hebrew terms, the Greek equivalents were formed according to the principles of Greek poetic epithets and can be viewed as such. That some terms were rare or unique does not lessen this point, since the same can be said of some Greek cult epithets, and in every case they are intelligible within the linguistic culture of the translators. As was common in the Hellenistic period the terms do not identify the god, but describe his attributes.

Drawing from his cultural context the translator seems to have developed two strategies. One was to create neologisms that reflected associations with adjectives that could be used of divine qualities and thereby to form nouns that within a Jewish cultural context could be interpreted as divine epithets. The other was to draw upon terms already being put to use for appeal to a god, and especially those used in petitions to the Ptolemies, who were considered divine, and to Isis. It is possible that they were not drawing upon petitionary terms from secular contexts alone, but were aware of their use in Greek cultic contexts. Drawing upon a suggestion of Pleket, the translators may have been avoiding terms used in the main Greek cults but willing to take on those used by minor cults.⁴³ They may even have seen a similarity between their life of worship in Egypt and their neighbours. In that sense distinguishing these poetic epithets from real cult titles is difficult, since there may be a real context from which the translators are drawing if only from their neighbours and not from their own prayer houses.

Two final observations may be made. The question of Jewish non-translatability of god is modified by this very analysis of a translation. It is certainly not full translatability or equation of one god with another, but the terms and functions of the neighbouring gods are adopted. The translator of the

⁴² HORNBLLOWER (2014), 99, observes how in literary contexts, accumulation of divine epithets can have a particular force, especially in prayers.

⁴³ PLEKET (1981); AITKEN (2015a).

Psalms, as other Septuagint translators, may have seen close affinity between their expressions of divine qualities and those of others, and had no unease in adopting many of the terms used by others. There were limitations on what they adopted, but it is not a rigid segregation or avoidance of translatability. Second, they were not so much faced by the problem of rendering from Hebrew something that was unacceptable to render literally into Greek. They were rather making the most of the opportunity to convey in intelligible ways titles that could be parsed as Greek epithets.

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HECATE ERESHKIGAL ON THE AMULETS, MAGICAL POPYRI AND CURSE TABLETS OF LATE-ANTIQUÉ EGYPT

Christopher Faraone

Dans l'Antiquité tardive, il apparaît qu'une déesse invoquée sous le nom d'Ereshkigal était utile à la fois dans des protections magiques et dans des malédictions. Elle est entrée d'abord dans le monde hellénophone par les tablettes de malédictions, où elle semble traduire ou bien assimiler le pouvoir royal de Perséphone dans l'Hadès, en tant que reine et juge des défunts, ou bien traduire ou assimiler le pouvoir d'Hécate en tant que « gardienne des portes » dans l'Hadès. Hécate – et non Perséphone – a été invoquée avec le nom d'Ereshkigal sur quelques amulettes, où elle apparaît sous sa triple forme en tant qu'entité protectrice. De récentes études ont montré clairement que, si l'usage grec du nom Ereshkigal révèle une connaissance élémentaire de son pouvoir, il est clair également que les experts qui ont composé, transmis et utilisé ces textes magiques en grec n'avaient en revanche qu'une petite connaissance des traditions mésopotamiennes d'origine, telles qu'on les trouve dans les textes magiques ou d'autres textes cunéiformes. Ereshkigal n'était pas, en somme, adoptée par les Grecs parce qu'elle était un agent courant des malédictions mésopotamiennes, mais plutôt parce qu'elle était connue d'après des textes littéraires la présentant comme une puissante déesse du monde souterrain.

In Late Antiquity we can see that a goddess invoked as Hecate Ereshkigal was useful in both protective magic and in curses. We see her, for example, on a gem amulet that depicts on the obverse the goddess in her famous triple form (Fig. 1a) and that has on its back the name Ereshkigal carved above and below four stars (Fig. 1b).¹ But she also appears on a number of curse tablets, and most enigmatically in the rubric of a magical recipe, where (some argue) she is represented, like Hermes Trismegistos, as a helpful source for magical knowledge (*PGM* LXX 4): “[The Charms of] Hecate Ereschigal against fear of punishment”. In this paper I will address the question of when and why Hecate was assimilated to or identified with Ereshkigal, a much older Sumerian goddess, who was the “queen of the underworld” and thus closely involved in the punishment or at least in the fate of the individual dead in the underworld. We begin by noting that there are, in fact, two Greek goddesses identified with

¹ *BM* 66.

Ereshkigal in the Roman period, Hecate and Persephone, and in the case of Persephone, at least, this correlation makes good sense, because she, like Ereshkigal, is also a “queen of the underworld”, who has great influence over the dead and their experience in her realm. The assimilation of Hecate and Ereshkigal is, on the other hand, more complicated to assess, but it seems to arise from some important role that Hecate plays as a servant of Persephone, as an agent of curses, and as a gate-keeper in the underworld, who passes initial judgement on the recent dead. Scholars sometimes claim that this less pleasant side of Hecate was a later development in the evolution of the goddess, but this approach fails to appreciate an important chthonic aspect of her early worship and a duality in her role as a gate-keeper, in which she protects those on the inside and threatens those on the outside. There are, moreover, two other Olympian deities who have a chthonic “double”, for example Zeus Chthonios (or Meilichios) and Hermes Chthonios.

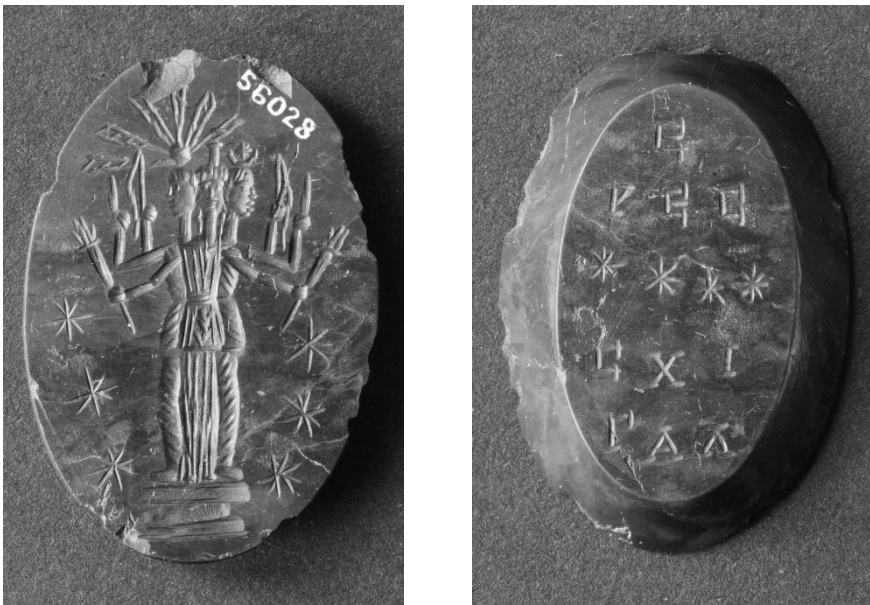


Fig. 1a-b: Heliotrope gemstone engraved with triple Hecate on Obverse and the name “Ereshkigal” on the Reverse (BM 66); author’s photograph © Trustees of the British Museum.

But Hecate has the most diverse portfolio. If we focus on the earliest Greek poets, we find that she is completely absent from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but she does play an important role in the Hesiodic *Theogony* in the so-called “Hymn

to Hecate” (411-452), where she is portrayed as a goddess who is involved in many areas of human activity and who is generally well disposed towards mankind. Her “goodness” is, for example, underscored by the repetition of the adjective ἐσθλή: “She is good (ἐσθλή), whenever men compete in athletics” (435), ... “She is good (ἐσθλή) to stand by the side of horsemen” (429), ... “She is good (ἐσθλή) to increase the livestock” (444). And her effectiveness seems closely tied to her proximity to human life:

- 429: “she stands by (παραγίνεται) and helps whomever she wishes (ᾧ δ’ ἐθέλη)”
 430: “she makes conspicuous (μεταπρέπει) whomever she wishes (ὄν κ’ ἐθέλησιν)”
 432: “she stands by (παραγίνεται) whomever she wishes (οἷς κ’ ἐθέλησιν)”
 434: “in judgement she sits beside kings (παρὰ ... καθίζει)”
 436: “she stands by (παραγίνεται) and helps them”
 439: “... to stand by (παρέσταμεν) whomever she wishes (οἷς κ’ ἐθέλησιν)”

The poet also suggests, however, a certain amount of fickleness in the reiterated clauses “whomever she wishes”, an idea that is repeated twice more in the descriptions of her role (in partnership with Poseidon and Hermes) in fishing and herding: for fishermen (440-444) she gives and takes a large catch of fish, “if she wishes at least in her heart (ἐθέλουσα γε θύμῳ)” and for herdsmen (445-447) she both increases and decreases the size of the herd, “if she wishes in her heart, at least (θύμῳ γ’ ἐθέλουσα)”. The hymn ends, finally with the claim that the goddess is/was “a nourisher (κουρότροφος) from the beginning” (452), a claim that has been connected with her role as the protector of the house.²

The Hesiodic “Hymn” twice suggests, moreover, that her power might be described as “triple”: “he (Zeus) gave her splendid gifts – to have a share of the earth and of the barren sea, and from the starry sky ...” (*Theogony* 412-414) and “nor does the goddess ... have a lesser share of honor or privileges on earth, in the sky and the sea” (427-428).³ It is notable that, here at least, Hecate

² A comic oracle quoted in Aristophanic comedy refers in passing to “*hekateia* everywhere in front of doorways” (*Wasps* 804); a scholiast explains that “Athenians everywhere set her up as an overseer (*ephoros*) of all things and as one who nourishes children (*kourotrophos*)”. See the discussions by JOHNSTON (1999), 212 (who rightly stresses the importance of the epithet “she who nourishes of children”) and ZOGRAFOU (2010), 98.

³ We find a similar expression in an Orphic *Hymn to Hecate* where it seems to be connected with her triple form: (*Orphic Hymn* 1.1-2): “I celebrate (you), lovely Hecate at the roadside, at the triple crossroads, in the sky, in the earth and in the sea...”. (Εἰνοδίην Ἐκάτην κλήϊζω, τριοδίτην, ἐραννήν, οὐρανίην, χθονίαν τε, καὶ εἰναλίην). The hymn, aiming as it does at describing her universal powers goes on in the very next line to describe Hecate’s chthonic powers, but the correlation between τριοδίτην and οὐρανίην, χθονίαν τε, καὶ εἰναλίην is striking.

does *not* have a share in the fourth part of the universe, the underworld. But we get a different view of her in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, where she appears near the beginning of the poem as the only other god to take up torches in both hands and accompany Demeter on her desperate nocturnal search for her lost daughter (52-59):

ἦντετό οἱ Ἑκάτη, σέλας ἐν χεῖρεσσιν ἔχουσα,
καί ῥά οἱ ἀγγελέουσα ἔπος φάτο φώνησέν τε·
“πότνια Δημήτηρ ὠρηφόρε ἀγλαόδωρε,
τίς θεῶν οὐρανίων ἤε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
ἦρπασε Περσεφόνην καὶ σὸν φίλον ἦκαχε θυμόν;
φωνῆς γάρ ἤκουσ’, ἀτὰρ οὐκ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν
ὅς τις ἦν·

Hecate met her with light in her hands, and spoke to give her news:
“Lady Demeter, bringer of resplendent gifts in season,
who of the heavenly gods or of mortal men
has seized Persephone and grieved your dear heart?
I heard her voice, but I did not see with my eyes, who it was”

She did not see the kidnapper, because during the daytime rape, she was in a dark cave, a position that some suggest points to her early identification with the moon.⁴ Hecate then reappears at the end of the poem, after mother and daughter are reunited (439-441):

τῆσιν δ’ ἐγγύθεν ἦλθ’ Ἑκάτη λιπαροκρήδεμνος,
πολλὰ δ’ ἄρ’ ἀμφαγάπησε κόρην Δημήτερος ἀνῆς·
ἐκ τοῦ οἱ πρόπολος καὶ ὀπάων ἔπλετ’ ἀνασσα.

And Hecate of the glossy veil drew near to them,
and gave the daughter of holy Demeter many an embrace,
from which time the goddess became her attendant and servant.

The final line here suggests that Hecate is a powerful goddess – she is called *anassa* at the end of the verse –, but she also has a subsidiary role with respect to Persephone, as both a *propolos*, literally “one who goes before” Persephone, as an attendant, and also – somewhat paradoxically – as an *opáōn*, literally “one who follows after” Persephone, a word that can also mean “comrade” or “companion”, but also “servant”. Because she appears on vase paintings of Eleusinian scenes with both Demeter and her daughter, we tend to assume, I think, that Hecate plays this role only on Olympus for the portion of the year

⁴ FOLEY (1994), 39; RICHARDSON (1974), 156 sees a connection with Hecate’s chthonic cults.

when Persephone lives with her mother, but this ignores, I think, the vital role that Hecate also plays in Persephone's court in Hades.

There is some consensus that Hecate originated in the archaic period in Caria, a region of southwestern Anatolia, where she protected cities and served as a guardian of entrances (but with no chthonic connections at all) and that her worship spread in this role as gatekeeper, first through the Aegean and eventually as far as Sicily.⁵ She was also eventually identified with the Thessalian goddess Enodia, another goddess, who averted danger from the doorway.⁶ It is not completely clear, however, when or how Hecate assumed her role as an underworld deity, like Hermes.⁷ Indeed, we shall see that, like Hermes, she is given the epithet "Chthonian" on curse tablets and that in her widespread role as a doorkeeper she is often paired with Hermes. We shall see, too, that she, in the role of Empousa, or the "Impedress", seems to have played a role as a gatekeeper in Hades, who confronted newly arrived shades and tested them, a role, I suggest, that eventually lead to her syncretism with Ereshkigal.

This essay is divided into two parts, the first discusses how the name Ereshkigal first enters Greek-speaking world in the late antique period on curse tablets, where it seems to operate in two ways: (i) to translate or assimilate the royal power of Persephone in Hades as queen and judge over the dead; and (ii) to translate or assimilate the power of Hecate as a kind of "gatekeeper" in Hades. In the second half of the paper I then turn to Hecate and the magical spell with the rubric I cited at the very start of this essay, to see why she was also – in this recipe at least – a good match for the Mesopotamian goddess. I shall not, however, address the question of how, precisely, the Greeks in Roman Egypt first learned about Ereshkigal. Recent studies make it clear, in fact, that by the Bronze Age this Sumerian goddess was only known in the Near East as a character in two popular literary texts about underworld journeys and that, although the Greek use of the name Ereshkigal reveals a basic knowledge of her power, it seems clear that the experts who composed, transmitted and used these Greek magical texts "had either little interest in or little knowledge of (or both) the Mesopotamian traditions associated with Ereshkigal in magical or other cuneiform texts".⁸ Ereshkigal was not, in short, adopted by the Greeks because she was a common agent in Mesopotamian curses, but rather because she was known from literary texts to be a powerful goddess of the underworld.

⁵ JOHNSTON (1999), 205-207.

⁶ JOHNSTON (1999), 208-210.

⁷ JOHNSTON (1999), 203-249 suggests that Hecate's association with female transition rites eventually led to a connection with the chthonic cults of "dying maidens" and to her role as mistress of ghosts, whom she could lead up from the underworld.

⁸ NEMETH (2010) and SCHWEMER (2019), 67-68; the quotation is from the latter, p. 68.

1. PERSEPHONE ERESHKIGAL: THE QUEEN OF THE UNDERWORLD

In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, after the extension of Greek culture to the East by Alexander and then the Romans, we find a growing tendency among the Greeks to equate or assimilate the local deities they encountered with their own gods. This kind of assimilation is a well known phenomenon and it continues to accelerate in Late Antiquity, as we can see, for example, in a popular binding spell that is preserved with variations in a late-antique handbook recipe (*PGM* IV 335-406) and on six lead curse-tablets, all of which were found in Egypt and are dated to the 2nd-3rd century AD:⁹

I deposit (*παρακατατίθεμαι*) this binding charm (*κατάδεσμος*) with you, chthonic gods, Plouton *uesemigadôn* and Kore Persephone *Ereshkigal* and Adonis also called *barbaritha*, and Hermes Katachthonios Thoth *phôkensepseu arektathou misonktaik* and mighty Anubis *psêriphtha*, who holds the keys of the gates to Hades, and chthonic demons, gods, men and women who suffered untimely death, youths and maidens.

As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁰ this formula shows clear signs of its Greek origins, in the use of the verb *παρακατατίθεμαι* (“I deposit”) and in the designation of the text as a *κατάδεσμος* or “binding charm”, terms which had been used in Greece since the time of Plato to designate a traditional curse that asks the gods of the underworld to inhibit their rivals or enemies in some kind of upcoming competition.¹¹ And since lead is not easily available to Egypt, even the medium upon which these curses are inscribed in Egypt, points to the Greek origins of the practice.¹²

We can see, moreover, that in its original form this formula probably invoked only four individuals by name – Pluto, Kore-Persephone, Adonis and Hermes, each name separated by the word “and” – and that the non-Greek names were added:

⁹ For this composite text, see MARTINEZ (1991), 116-117 and 131-132.

¹⁰ For the evolution of these invocations, see FARAONE (2002).

¹¹ FARAONE (1991).

¹² CURBERA (2014), 98, who also points out that isotopes analysis of the lead in curse tablets from Megara, Melos and Tanagra, show that the lead came from Laurion. There are, moreover, five additional lead tablets in Berlin that are said to come from Egypt, one that dates to the third-fourth century CE and four others that date to the fourth-century BCE and consist mainly of names. A recent isotopic test of the four early tablets revealed that the lead came from the area of Laurium in Attica; see VOGL *et al.* (2016), 2-3. Lead does occur in Egypt in deposits of galena and antimony, but there is no evidence that it was ever mined and therefore had to be imported from somewhere.

. . Pluto *uesemigadôn*,
 and Kore Persephone *Ereschigal*,
 and Adonis also called *barbaritha*,
 and Hermes Katachthonios Thoth *phôkensepseu arektathou misonktaik*,
 and mighty Anubis *psêriphtha*, who holds the keys of the gates to
 Hades.

In the first three cases, a Semitic name (*Ereshkigal*) or a Semitic-sounding *vox magica* has been added *after* the Greek name as a kind of equivalent or epithet.¹³ The word *uesemigadôn*, for example, is generally understood as a Semitic title that ends with the phrase “his name is great”, in which the final four letters (*adôn*) seem to be cognate with the Semitic word “’dn” or “Lord”. This word is also cognate with the third deity on our list “Adonis”, who according to the Greek tradition also goes back and forth to Hades on a yearly basis, like Persephone. The epithet *barbaritha* given to Adonis here is uncertain, but some kind of Semitic word or phrase has been suspected.¹⁴ In the fourth and fifth cases, however, Egyptian, rather than Semitic, deities become the focus of the assimilation: the name Thoth, for example, and three Egyptian-sounding words (*phôkensepseu arektathou misonktaik*)¹⁵ have been placed after the name of the Greek god Hermes. This assimilation of Hermes with Thoth is, of course, common in Egypt and elsewhere in the Roman world. In the fifth position, the name Anubis has been added to the bottom of the list, without any Greek equivalent, and his name is followed by another Egyptian sounding *vox magica* and mention of his possession of the keys of the underworld, a traditional Egyptian motif.¹⁶ Anubis’ name is not, therefore, placed here (like the other non-Greek names), as the equivalent of a Greek god, but rather as a completely new addition at the end of the Greek sequence, a common enough strategy of acculturation that is observable in other cases where traditional Greek texts are brought into Roman Egypt and then extended to make them more relevant to their new cultural setting, for example, the case of fourth-century BCE paean to Asclepius, that shows up centuries later on a Roman-period inscription from Ptolemais Egypt with an additional, and entirely novel stanza that invokes the Nile River.¹⁷

¹³ According to the very helpful “Glossary” in BRASHEAR (1995), 3576-3603, the word *uesemigadôn* is Hebrew for “That is: his name is great”.

¹⁴ *Barbaritha* is possibly Aramaic for “Arba has come”; or Hebrew for “Art thou Arba”. See MARTINEZ (1991), 76-77 and BRASHEAR (1995), 3582.

¹⁵ The same three words appear, for example, at *PGM* LXVII 11-12 (as an epithet of Hermes Thoth); see KOENEN (1971), 205. A variation of the first word (*phôkenseps*) has been explained as Egyptian for “der mit dem Schwert Geschmückte”. See MARTINEZ (1991), 43.

¹⁶ According to BRASHEAR (1995), *ad loc.*, *psêriphtha* may be Egyptian for “son of Re-Ptah”. See MARTINEZ (1991), 41-45, for all of the Egyptian motifs here.

¹⁷ FARAONE (2011).

Here, then, we see one way in which the gods of the Greek underworld are explained or translated by or for people living in Late-Antique Egypt. Such equations tend to cluster around what we can roughly call the solar and lunar gods. This all-powerful solar god is invoked as Zeus, Helios, Apollo, Horus, Ptah, Re, Yahweh or Mithras suggesting that in the late Roman period, at least, such male gods were interchangeable or that all nations worship the same sun-god under different names.¹⁸ The practitioners who composed or used the magical papyri were, of course, well aware of the process. There is, for example, a magical recipe for a jasper amulet inscribed with the names Abrasax, Iaô and Sabaôth and then consecrated with the following prayer: “I call upon you as ‘Phno-eai-iabok’ according to the Egyptians, as ‘Adônai Sabaôth’ according to the Jews, as ‘King of all, ruling alone’ according to the Greeks, and as ‘Ouerto’ according to the Parthians!”¹⁹ These kinds of equations are not, however, only a feature of the often strange world of “magic”, but in some sense typical of the Roman period, as we can see, for example, in a prose hymn to Apollo Smintheus composed by the third-century CE writer Menander Rhetor as a model to be imitated by others: “Every city, land and nation do you control... as “Mithras” the Persians address you, as “Horus” the Egyptians.... the Chaldeans address you as “Ruler of the Stars”.²⁰ We see similar strategies of assimilation in the case of the lunar goddesses, who are variously invoked on amulets and erotic curses as Artemis, Selene, Isis, Hecate, Persephone and even Ereshkigal.²¹ And, indeed, we saw earlier the suspicion that already in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* Hecate has been assimilated to the moon goddess. That this list also includes underworld deities, like the Greek Persephone and Mesopotamian Ereshkigal, might surprise some, but in fact, because in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian systems both solar and lunar deities spend part of each day under the earth, they are also treated as powerful entities of the underworld, in such a way that the usual Greek distinction between the heavenly and chthonian realms is ignored and we have the odd situation (for the Greeks, at least), in which solar gods can be invoked at sunset to send up a ghost from the underworld for necromancy.²²

¹⁸ DIELEMAN (2005), 165-170.

¹⁹ *PGM* XII 201-69.

²⁰ Menander Rhetor 2.446.3-6. See also a papyrus fragment (*P.Oxy* 412. 14) of Julius Africanus, a near contemporary of Menander, who quotes a startling version of the famous scene in *Odyssey* 11, in which Odysseus summons up the soul of Tiresias, by invoking Helios, Yahweh, Re and others.

²¹ See, for example, the description of a single goddess in Lucian, *Syrian Goddess* 32: “Hera, without a doubt, but she also has something of Athena, Aphrodite, Selene, Rhea, Artemis, Nemesis and the Fates.” For similar addressees in the hymns of magical papyri, see BORTOLANI (2016), 51-54.

²² FARAONE (2004).

2. HECATE ERESHKIGAL ON CURSE TABLETS

But now let us turn to Hecate. Another curse tablet from Egypt, this one from Alexandria (*DT* 38 = *SM* 54: 3rd cent.), asks a single female goddess to oversee the spell and bring it to fruition (10-15 and 26-32):

I call upon you, mistress ruler of all men, all-devouring(?), bursting out of the earth, you who also gather up the limbs of Meliouchos and Meliouchos himself, Ereschigal Neboutosoualêth, gloomy, she of the nets(?), she of the dead(?), Hecate, true Hecate, come and perfect this procedure for me (τελειώσατέ μοι τὴν πραγματοεῖαν ταύτην)!

We should notice right away that the order of the assimilation has been reversed: first, we hear of “the mistress, ruler of all men” who gathers the limbs of Meliouchos, a goddess who indeed sounds like Isis gathering up the *disiecta membra* of Osiris; second comes Ereshkigal; and at the very last comes Hecate, who is asked to “bring to fruition this very act”, a reference to the erotic curse in which it appears. Hecate is also assimilated to Ereshkigal in a third-century CE curse tablet from Carthage, which is one of the few of magical texts found outside of Egypt that mention Ereshkigal (*DT* 242.39-42); it contains an adjuration of a ghost:²³

By the Earth I adjure you (i.e. the ghost), by the names of the triply-shaped goddess, the whip-holder, the torch-bearer, the lamp-bearer, of the golden sandal, blood-drinking, Chthonian, Ak[tiophis], Ereshkigal, Neboutosouant.

Here Hecate is not named, but reference to her triple shape makes the identification clear, as do at least two of the epithets that follow on the curse tablet: the “whip-holder” and the “torch-bearer”. The additional names Ak[tiophis] and Neboutosouant sometimes appear with Hecate, but their origins are debated.²⁴

²³ Others include a curse tablet from Bithynia – a curse that binds the speech of more than forty individuals: see BECKER-BERTAU (1986), 31-35 no. 9 – and two magical texts in other languages that nonetheless have borrowed from the Greek: (i) in a third-century CE papyrus handbook (*PDM* xiv 212), where, as J.F. Quack *apud* SCHWEMER (2019), 67 notes, the Demotic writing reflects an adaptation of the Greek form of Ereshkigal’s name; and (ii) BOHAK (2008), 260-261 discusses a Jewish metal amulet of the sixth century CE inscribed in Hebrew with the name ‘RSKY’L, i.e. the angel name “Ereschiel” (which is an adaptation of the original “Ereshkigal”); here, too, Bohak makes clear that the name was borrowed from the Egyptian-Greek practice.

²⁴ *Neboutosouant* is a misspelling or variant *Neboutosoualêth*, which has been assigned both Egyptian and Mesopotamian origins; see BRASHEAR (1995), 3593. *Aktiophis* is an epithet or alternate name for Selene or Hecate, and is in the papyri often combined with Ereshkigal and *Neboutosoualêth* in the *Aktiophis*-logos: *PGM* II 33; IV 1416, 2749-50, 2913-14; V 340, 426; VII

The whip and the torch are, of course, well known attributes of the popular statuettes of the triple Hecate that were placed in Greek entrances, as you can see in Fig. 2: these images are usually knee high or smaller and represent three maidens, who stand in the round facing outwards on a triangular base, while resting their backs collectively on a central column and sometimes holding in their hands implements associated with the goddess, especially torches and libation bowls. A reference in Aristophanes to *hekateia* “everywhere in front of doorways” suggests the ubiquity of such domestic images and by the end of the Hellenistic period we find them, like the herm, throughout the eastern Mediterranean.²⁵ This same image of Hecate, moreover, was also regularly used on amulets to protect individual bodies, as we can see in a lapidary recipe discussing the use of red coral.²⁶

This stone [*i.e.* red coral] is even called “gorgonios” by some and on account of this they carve a Gorgon into it and set it in gold or silver. And if it is consecrated, it is the greatest phylactery for those on a journey against every fear, against the abuse of wicked persons, and most of all against the attacks of wicked people and all creeping things.... and for slaves against the anger of masters, if they are engraved with a drawing of Hecate.

There are to my knowledge only three very worn versions of a triple Hecate on red coral, but there are many more in red jasper, which seems to have been a more durable substitute, as you can see in Fig. 3.²⁷ We should note that the triple Hecate on amulets usually differs from those of the late Classical and Hellenistic period shown in Fig. 2: the earlier images hold torches or libation vessels, while the later images on the gemstones of the Roman period continue to hold torches, but they are additionally armed with two kinds of weapons – the whip and the knife. This later evolution of Hekate into an armed guardian of entrances is not so difficult to understand, of course, since the Greeks used a number of threatening apotropaic images to protect their homes and bodies, including the ithyphallic herm, which as we saw above is a regular companion of the triple Hecate.

317, 896, 984-5; XIII 925; *PGM* XIXa 7; for the *Aktiophis*-logos on magical gems, see MICHEL (2004), 482 and 502.

²⁵ This word can also describe a small shrine to Hecate, but this is probably the same as the statuette, see, e.g. JOHNSTON (1999), 212-215 and ZOGRAFOU (2016), 46-50, esp. 48: “Sa triple image fonctionne à la fois comme un lieu de culte privé et comme une figure apotropaïque similaire au visage du *gorgoneion*.”

²⁶ *Kerygma* 20.12-16. HALLEUX, SCHAMP (2003), *ad loc.* translate *zôdion* as “animal” and then (327 n. 8) suggest this animal is “le surmelot (*triglos*)”, but this ignores the evidence of the gems, which repeatedly show the tri-morph Hecate.

²⁷ FARAONE (2019), 90-91.



Fig. 2: Statuettes of the triple Hecate (*hekateion*), drawing after REINACH (1897-1898).



Fig. 3: Red-jasper gemstone engraved with triple Hecate on the Obverse and on the Revers the acclamation “Orara conquers, Hecate subdues!” (BM 69); author’s photograph © Trustees of the British Museum.

Let us return, however, to the curse tablet from Carthage, which described Hecate as “the triple-shaped goddess”, the “blood-drinking, Chthonian” and as “Ereshkigal”. How could it be that this protective image of the triple-faced Hecate is used on a curse tablet and also called “blood-drinking”? One might dismiss this text as an outlier, but we find this same triple Hecate in a hexametrical hymn used in an erotic curse in *PGM IV 2747*, where she is again equated with Ereshkigal and Neboutosoualêth: “Come, o triple-headed goddess, who walks on fire, cow-eyed ... Ereschigal, Neboutosoualeth, ... Hecate!” Such a negative casting of the triple Hecate is not, however, simply a late-antique Egyptian phenomenon, as we can see in a rather passionate curse tablet against thieves, that was found in a well in the Athenian Agora (SGD 21). This tablet has been dated by stratigraphy to the first-century CE(?) and it ends as follows: “And you, mistress Hecate of the heavens (*Ourania*), Hecate of the underworld (*Katachthonia*), Hecate of the crossroads (*Trioditi*), Hecate the triple-faced, Hecate the single-faced, cut the hearts of the thieves or thief.”²⁸ It is worth noting that here Hecate seems to have a share in three parts of the universe, much as she did in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, although here the three areas of her habitation are the heavens, the underworld and the crossroads (i.e. on the earth). The crossroads were, in fact, an apt place to set up a triple-faced statue of Hecate, because unlike the typical modern intersection, they were usually places where three roads met, as their name, *triodos*, makes clear.²⁹ This same curse tablet was, moreover, engraved with a crude image of this goddess (Fig. 4), that

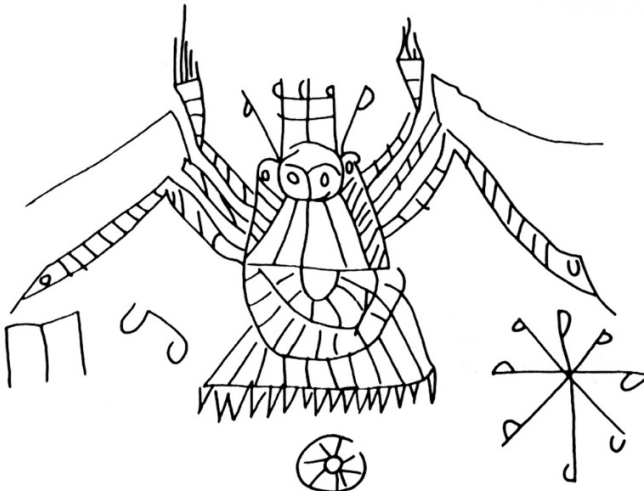


Fig. 4: Drawing of triple Hecate on an Athenian Curse Tablet (SGD 21).

²⁸ Translation by JORDAN (1980).

²⁹ JOHNSTON (1991).

depicts her with three pairs of arms, the topmost holding torches, the next whips, and the third snakes.

Here, once again, we see the ease with which the triple-faced guardian can also serve as a fearful agent of curses.

3. HECATE ERESHKIGAL ON THE MICHIGAN MAGICAL PAPYRUS³⁰

This duality lies, I think, at the heart of a complicated late-antique Greek magical recipe in Michigan (*PGM LXX 4-19*), whose rubric I quoted at the start of this essay:³¹ Ἐκάτης Ἐρεσχιγάλ πρὸς φόβον κολάσιος is usually translated as the “[Charms of] Hecate Ereschigal against fear of punishment” on the assumption that this goddess is a helpful deity and that the author of this recipe put her name in the genitive case to indicate that the charm “came from” or “was invented by” the deity. But, in fact, nearly all the authors named in the rubrics of magical recipes are mortal, rather than divine.³² In the few cases where a title is coupled with a divine name, such rubrics usually refer to a deity who is invoked during a procedure, but not its author, for example: “The Oracle of Kronos” or the “Dream-Sender of Bes”, which aim respectively at acquiring oracular knowledge from Kronos or a beneficial dream from Bes.³³ The only real exceptions seem to be Hermes, who appears a few times as an author – e.g. *PGM V 213* (Hermes’ Ring) or *VII 919* (Hermes’ Wondrous Victory Charm). In these cases, he is usually assumed to be Hermes Trismegistos, who was indeed thought to have authored many arcane books.³⁴ Hecate, whose name appears in the rubric to the Michigan recipe, is never, in fact, invoked by name in the Michigan recipe itself; Ereshkigal alone is mentioned twice by name and (as I will argue below) in both instances she is invoked as a dangerous goddess, who must be kept away. The rubric, in short, should be translated: “Against the fear of punishment from Hecate Ereschigal.” The Michigan papy-

³⁰ For full discussion, see FARAONE (2019).

³¹ The *editio princeps* is BONNER (1936), but see also *PGM ad loc.*, BETZ (1980), 287-295 and JORDAN (2001) 186-193.

³² See, e.g. *PGM IV 243-256 850* (The Collapse Spell of Solomon); *3007* (The Tested Procedure of Pibecheis for Those Possessed by Demons); *V 96* (The *Stelê* of Jeu); *VII 162* (The Paignia of Democritus); *862* (The Lunar Spell of Claudianos); *VIII* (The Philtrokatadesmos of Astramp-soukos); *X 107* (The Dream-Sender of Agathokles); *121* (The Dream-Sender of Zminis of Dendera); or *351* (The Sphere of Democritus).

³³ *PGM IV 3086* (Oracle of Kronos); *3210* (*Phialomanteion* of Aphrodite); *V 1-53* (Oracle of Sarapis); *215-218* (*Stelê* of Aphrodite); or *222-249* (Dream-Sender of Bes).

³⁴ DIELEMAN (2005), 263-269. The only other outlier is “The Subjection-Charms of Apollo” (*PGM X 36*), which was probably a scribal mistake for “of Apollonius” *i.e.*, of Tyana, who is named as the author of another recipe (*PGM XIa1*): “The Old Serving Woman of Apollonius of Tyana”.

rus provides, I think, our best evidence for this puzzling relationship between Hecate and Ereshkigal, because it allows us to see Hecate in her two roles in Hades as both gatekeeper – a role that her statues play at the doors of Greek houses – but also as punisher.

The recipe recommends aversive procedures in four threatening scenarios that I have marked with Roman numerals:³⁵

Against fear of punishment from Hecate Ereschigal:

- (i) If she comes out (*e.g.* against you), let him say: “I myself am Ereschigal, the one holding her thumbs, and not even one evil can befall her!”
- (ii) If she comes close to you, take hold of your right heel and <continue> saying: “O virgin Ereschigal, bitch, serpent, wreath, key, herald’s wand, golden sandal of Lady Tartaros” and you will (*i.e.*, successfully) entreat (her).
- (iii) *Aski kataski erôn oreôn iôr mega semnyêr baui* – [say it] three times. “Oh Holy Fearsome-One, I have been initiated, I went down into the chamber of the Dactyls and I saw the other things down below: virgin, bitch and all the rest.” Say it at the crossroads and turn around and flee, because it is at those places that she appears as a phantom. {Saying it late at night, about what you wish, and she will reveal it to you in your dreams.}³⁶
- (iv) And if you are led off to death, say these (*i.e.*, same) words, while scattering sesame seeds, and they will save you.

In the first three cases, we are told how to protect ourselves when a fearful figure suddenly appears or otherwise confronts us – a figure, whose name or even whose gender is not, however, clearly specified at the start of the recipe. Nearly all modern commentaries and translations assume that this attacker is a generic male,³⁷ who stands in for any attacker, but, in fact, this figure can be identified by both gender and name, because the setting of the third encounter is a place closely associated with Hecate: “Say it at the crossroads ... because it is at those places that X appears as a phantom.”³⁸

I summarize below the four dangerous scenarios and in each case the protective gesture and/or speech-act that is used to avert the danger:

³⁵ For the Greek text used here, translation and detailed discussion, see FARAONE (2019). I am guided by the notion of BETZ (1980) that lines 4-19 comprise a single spell, bounded by the *paragraphoi* before line 4 and after line 19. There is also a *paragraphos* at the end of section (ii) at line 11, suggesting that sections (i) and (ii) are closely related to one another and that sections (iii) and (iv) may have been later additions.

³⁶ Like all commentators, I ignore this unnumbered fifth scenario (in brackets) as an outlier, which seems to be a later addition concerned with dream divination and thus with no connection to the rubric about “fear”.

³⁷ See, *e.g.*, BETZ (1980) and JORDAN (2001). BONNER (1936), 125-126 alone rightly saw (*ad loc.*) that the subject of ἐξέρχηται is Hecate.

³⁸ JOHNSTON (1991) and ZOGRAFOU (2016), 45-68.

Threat	Gesture	Speech-Act	Prediction/Command
(i) “if she comes out”	hold thumbs	boast “I myself am Ereschigal ...”	no evil will happen
(ii) “if she comes near”	hold right heel	Invoke Ereschigal as “virgin, bitch, serpent”; recite list of symbols: wreath, key, wand, sandals	“you will entreat (her)” (<i>i.e.</i> , with success)
(iii) if she appears ... at the crossroads	none	<i>aski kataski-logos</i> ; boast “I myself have been initiated, I saw the other things below”, “virgin, bitch and all the rest.”	“turn around, escape” (imperatives)
(iv) “if you are led off to death	scatter seeds	say “these (same) words”	“they (words + seeds) will save you”

As we can see in the last column, the results or goals of these speech-acts and gestures are entirely protective: the prevention of “evil”, a successful entreaty, escape or salvation. My colleague Hans Dieter Betz was the first to stress, moreover, that the verbal responses to encounters (ii) and (iii) contain formulae used by the Greeks in a ritual of descent known as a *katabasis*. He also noted that the first three scenarios could all have been plausibly experienced in the underworld or in a nocturnal initiation-rite, during which the initiates encountered similar experiences.³⁹ The third encounter at the crossroads, for example, might well be imagined taking place at the parting of the ways in Hades, where the souls of the dead were sent to different destinations, depending on whether they were initiated or how they were judged.⁴⁰ The fourth scenario, however – “if you are lead off to death” –, can only take place in the land of the living.

Hecate herself does not appear, however, in the first two sequences. In the first we are advised to protect ourselves, by claiming that we *are*, in fact, Ereshkigal, because as long as we impersonate her “no evil will befall us”. Such a boast makes sense, of course, if we follow Betz in thinking that this advice was originally designed to protect the dead after they had gone down

³⁹ BETZ (1980), 287.

⁴⁰ BETZ (1980), 293-294 suggests that the spell could be used in both places, noting that Plato is a number of passages makes the *triodos* the place where the blessed are separated from the others. *Gorgias* 524a: “These, when their life is ended, shall give judgement in the meadow at the crossroads (ἐν τῇ τριόδῳ), whence are the two ways leading, one to the Isles of the Blest, and the other to Tartarus.” See also *Republic* 614e, and *Phaedrus* 249a.

into Hades: what better way to protect oneself in *that* realm, than by impersonating its queen?⁴¹ Modern commentators rightly assume, moreover, that, since we are pretending to be the goddess “who holds her thumbs”, at this point we, too, are supposed to be holding our own two thumbs, presumably with the fingers of the same hand.⁴² This is, in short, a strange ritual by which we transform ourselves – however briefly – into an effigy of the attacker: in short, by claiming to be Ereshkigal and by disabling our opposable thumbs, we can – according to the logic of like-banning-like – prevent her from grabbing hold of us with her hands. And this is not, in fact, a unique example, because we see a similar gesture in two other recipes in the magical papyri, for instance, in a prayer for strength (*PGM* LXIX 3), in which thumb-holding is also combined with a claim of impersonation: “... ‘Abranax, give me your strength, for I am Abranax.’ Say it seven times while holding your two thumbs.” In both recipes, therefore, we claim to be the powerful divinity whom we are addressing (Ereshkigal or Abranax), and therefore we must hold our thumbs in order to control this god, a pattern that we can also discern in yet another recipe, *PGM* IV 2325-2327, where in the midst of a long iambic poem aimed at Selene-Persephone, we find the command: “Do what I say, o Maid, ruler of Tartaros, because ... with awesome compulsion I hold fast your thumb.”⁴³ Here, as in the Michigan papyrus, we are not explicitly told to hold down our own thumb, but the performative language – “I hold fast your thumb” – makes this most likely.

But let us move on to the second scenario in the Michigan papyrus. In response to the second condition (“if she comes near...”), we are not told to impersonate the goddess, but rather to address her directly as “O virgin Ereschigal!” Then, while holding our right heel in our hand, we must recite a simple list in the nominative case, that begins with a pair of female animals (a dog and a serpent) and then continues with a series of personal objects – wreath, key, *kerykion* and golden sandal. It is not entirely clear why we must grasp our heel during this second encounter, but, here, too, we should probably follow Betz in understanding that, like the holding of the thumbs, this gesture will in some manner be projected onto Ereshkigal, who with her hand and foot so encumbered, would be unable to pursue or harm us. In describing the third scenario, the scribe inverts the order that we saw in the first two encounters: in this case, the speech-act appears first – without any gesture – and the place of the encounter – the crossroads – is described last and in more detail as the place where the attacker “appears as a phantom (*phantazetai*)”. Here we find the key

⁴¹ BETZ (1980), 289: “Parallels in Greek catabasis literature ... point to a situation in the underworld, where visitors must expect attacks by underworld demons in charge of the punishments.”

⁴² BONNER (1930), 181.

⁴³ BONNER (1930), 180 suggest that the practitioner desires to intimidate the goddess.

evidence that the attacker is female, because, as was mentioned earlier, in the Greek world Hecate is the only deity closely associated with the crossroads,⁴⁴ and because at this point in the recipe she is to be addressed as Phobantia Semnê, “Holy Fearsome-One”, an apt *female* epithet for an entity to be averted in a recipe that is introduced by the rubric: *Against fear* (phobos) *of punishment*.⁴⁵

4. HECATE EMPOUSA: A GATEKEEPER IN HADES

We can understand, of course, why Ereshkigal would be connected in this way with the underworld, but why Hecate? We saw earlier, of course, hints in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* that Hecate may have played some kind of role in Persephone’s court in Hades, and in the curse tablets discussed above, she is certainly invoked as Chthonian Hecate for the purpose of cursing. There is also some neglected literary evidence that Hecate, again in some Eleusinian connection, played an active role in Hades as a gatekeeper. Near the start of Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, in a section of the play filled with references to the Eleusinian initiates and mysteries,⁴⁶ the slave Xanthias describes to his master Dionysus the horrible sight he sees just after they arrive at Hades (*Frogs* 289-292):⁴⁷

Ξ: καὶ μὴν ὀρῶ νῆ τὸν Δία θηρίον μέγα·
 Δ: ποῖόν τι;
 Ξ: δεινόν. παντοδαπὸν γοῦν γίγνεται·
 τοτὲ μὲν γε βοῦς, νυνὶ δ’ ὀρέυς,
 τοτὲ δ’ αὖ γυνὴ ὠραισιότατη τις.
 Δ: ποῦ ’στι; φέρ’ ἐπ’ αὐτὴν ἴω.
 Ξ: ἀλλ’ οὐκέτ’ αὖ γυνὴ ’στιν, ἀλλ’ ἤδη κύων
 Δ: Ἔμπουσα τοίνυν ἐστί.
 Ξ: πυρὶ γοῦν λάμπεται ἅπαν τὸ πρόσωπον.
 Δ: καὶ σκέλος χαλκοῦν ἔχει;
 Ξ: νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ, καὶ βολίτινον θάτερον, σάφ’ ἴσθι

Xanthias: And look, by Zeus, I see a huge beast.

Dionysus: What kind?

Xanthias: Frightful! Anyway, it’s a shape-shifter:
 now a cow; now a mule;
 and now a woman, very nice looking.

⁴⁴ JOHNSTON (1991).

⁴⁵ BONNER (1936) and BETZ (1980) simply transliterate the word as *phobantia*, while JORDAN (2001) emends the text to φο(ι)βάντ(ρ)ια, “purifier?” or “brightener?”, presumably on the assumption that this refers to a kinder and gentler Hecate Ereshkigal.

⁴⁶ BROWN (1991), 42-43, following GRAF (1974), 40-43.

⁴⁷ Text and translation of HENDERSON (2002).

- Dionysus: Where? Come on, let me at her!
 Xanthias Wait, she's not a woman any more, she's a female dog.
 Dionysus: Then it must be Empousa!
 Xanthias: Yes, her whole face is ablaze with fire.
 Dionysus: And does she have a brazen leg?
 Xanthias: Yes indeed, and the other one's made of dung, I swear.

Dionysus, therefore, identifies the monstrous shape-shifter as “Empousa” (293). Next, he begs his own priest sitting in the front row of the theater – “O priest, Protect me!” (297: *ἱερεῦ, διαφύλαξόν μ’*)” – and then Xanthias follows suit with two traditional apotropaic expressions, “O Lord Herakles!” (299, a reference – according to the scholia – to Herakles Alexikakos) and “Go back the way you came!” (301: *ἴθι ἥπερ ἔρχει*), after which Empousa seems to vanish.⁴⁸

Christopher Brown, building on the long established connections between these scenes in the *Frogs* and the Eleusinian mysteries, has argued quite convincingly that in this comic vision of the shape-shifting Empousa, Aristophanes alludes carefully⁴⁹ to yet another part of the mysteries: an initial confrontation with a shape-shifting demoness named Empousa.⁵⁰ He begins with the report of the late fourth-century BCE historian, Idomeneus of Lampsacus, who tells us that “the mother of Aeschines was called “Empousa”, ... *because she appeared from shadowy places* to those being initiated (*τοῖς μνουμένοις*)”.⁵¹ We actually know a lot about Aeschines’ mother, thanks to the scorn that Demosthenes pours on his rival’s lowly beginnings: how he assisted his mother in performing private initiations of a Dionysiac sort, by reading texts aloud, by clothing the initiates in animal-skins and finally by commanding them to recite the ritual boast at the end of the ceremony: “I escaped evil, I found a better way!”⁵² Idomeneus, on the other hand, seems to suggest that Aeschines’ mother was called by the nickname Empousa, because in the course of these private

⁴⁸ See BORTHWICK (1968), 201, who calls it “apotropaic”, and DOVER (1993), 230-231.

⁴⁹ Carefully, because his presumed fear of prosecution for revealing details of the mysteries, as illustrated by the story of Aeschylus’ prosecution, for which see BROWN (1991), 43, n. 9.

⁵⁰ *Frogs* 316-459; see GRAF (1974), 40 ff. and BROWN (1991), 43.

⁵¹ *FGrHist* 338 F 2 is cited in a rhetorical lexicon to help explain why Demosthenes (18.130) refers to Aeschines’ mother as an “Empousa”. Throughout this paragraph I summarize BROWN (1991), 42-46.

⁵² Demosthenes 18.259: “On arriving at manhood *you assisted your mother in her initiations, reading the books and helping generally with the other things. At night it was your duty to mix the libations, to clothe the initiates in fawn-skins, to wash their bodies, to scour them with the loam and the bran, and, when their lustration was duly performed, to stand them up and command them to say: ‘I escaped evil; I found a better way!’*” The debate concerning which deity was the focus of these rituals is greatly complicated by Demosthenes’ desire to broadly paint his rival’s mother as a priestess in some kind of unsavory foreign cult; see the full discussion by BROWN (1991), 44-45.

rituals, she was accustomed to jump out of a dark corner and frighten her initiands, just like Empousa did to Eleusinian initiates.⁵³

The name of “Empousa”, which Aristophanes gives to his shape-shifting demoness, looks, in fact, like a female participle, “She-who Impedes”, generated by false analogy from the Greek adverb *empodôn*,⁵⁴ which means “underfoot” or “presenting a hindrance or impediment”,⁵⁵ and a more recent study suggests a derivation from *ἔμποντία, “she who is in the path”.⁵⁶ These need not be mutually exclusive, of course, and they both suggest a function similar to the triple-faced statues placed at entrances and to another aspect of Hecate in the form of Hecate Enodia, which means “Hecate in the road” (or according to some “Hecate blocking the road”). But how, then, might we connect this Empousa with Hecate? Fairly easily, it turns out, because Hesychius tells us that “Aristophanes says that Empousa is Hecate”, which seems to mean that Empousa was an epithet or an alternate name of Hecate.⁵⁷ He was presumably alluding to a fragment of a lost Aristophanic play called the *Tagenistai*, which is quoted in a scholion to the *Frogs*: “... and Chthonian Hecate entwined with spirals of snakes. Why do you call her the Empousa?”⁵⁸ The same scholion later offers an alternate explanation: Empousa was “a demonic apparition sent by Hecate, which changes its shape”.⁵⁹ Empousa’s role in the underworld, in short, is to “impede” some of the dead, presumably the uninitiated from finding a joyful haven in Hades.⁶⁰ Given the fact that Aeschines’ mother is also said to have appeared suddenly as Empousa in private initiations, it is probably the case that some non-Eleusinian ceremonies could also be suddenly halted, at least momentarily, by the appearance of the demoness, who was to be evaded

⁵³ BROWN (1991), 46 stressing that Idomeneus uses the key term τοῖς μυσουμένοις, and JOHNSTON (1999), 133-134, who stresses that Aeschines mother “took part in dramatic enactment of some kind during initiations, pretending to be ghostly threat to the initiands”. She also points out (p. 132) that Proclus describes a similar scene (*In Alc.* 340.1): “In the holiest of the mysteries, before the gods arrive, the emanations of the chthonic demons become manifest and visions frightens the initiates distracting them from the good things the gods have to offer.” Johnston notes *ad loc* that the phrase “the holiest of the mysteries” in Proclus always refers to the Eleusinian mysteries.

⁵⁴ JOHNSTON (1999), 134.

⁵⁵ In his *Anabasis*, Xenophon reveals how another chthonic deity, Zeus Meilichios, could do harm by acting as acting “Empodios” (7.8.3-4): “Then Euclides said, ‘Yes, because in your case Zeus Meilichios is (*i.e.* Zeus) Empodios (‘the impeder’)’ and he asked Xenophon whether he had yet sacrificed to him, ‘just as at home’, he continued, ‘where I was wont to offer the sacrifices for you, and with whole victims.’ Xenophon replied that not since he left home had he sacrificed to that god. Euclides, accordingly, advised him to sacrifice just as he used to do, and said that it would be to his advantage.” Thanks to Sylvain Lebreton for alerting me to this passage.

⁵⁶ ALVAREZ-PERDROSA NÚÑEZ (2011).

⁵⁷ Hesychius s.v. “Empousa”.

⁵⁸ Frag. 515 PCG also = Scholia Apollonius 3.861; see BROWN (1991), 47-48.

⁵⁹ BROWN (1991), 47-48 with some other references as well.

⁶⁰ JOHNSTON (1999), 134.

by means of prayer, acclamation or apotropaic incantation, just as Dionysus and Xanthias do.⁶¹ In later narratives of the descent of Heracles or Aeneas into the underworld, the hero is similarly confronted immediately by a Gorgon, Fury, or other apparitions, scenes which suggest a general idea that upon entry to Hades, the souls of the dead or still-living interlopers are impeded or challenged by female demons or monsters who suddenly emerge from the darkness to prevent them from getting to the Isles of the Blest or the Elysium Fields.⁶² A famous fragment of Plutarch's *On the Soul* (fr. 178 Sandbach) confirms that this kind of katabatic narrative was in some way enacted at the Eleusinian mysteries:⁶³ he tells us that during the nocturnal ritual in the Telesterion, the initiands are first plunged into darkness and into a state of fear created by a sudden shock (*ekpleksis*), but that in the end they encounter light and a feeling of bliss.⁶⁴

But most importantly for this essay, there seems to have been a fear among the Greeks that a snaky Hecate Empousa could even emerge from the underworld and attack the living, just as we seem to see in the Michigan recipe. In Lucian's *Lover of Lies*, a character named Eucrates asserts that many people encounter *daimones*, both day and night, but that he was no longer disturbed by them, because an Arab gave him "a ring of iron made from crosses and taught him an incantation (*epôdê*) of many names".⁶⁵ A little later in the dialogue, Eucrates describes how once, while travelling alone through the woods at mid-day, he used this ring to protect himself. After hearing the barking of dogs and the thunder of an earthquake, this is what he sees (22):

γυναικα ... προσιοῦσαν φοβεράν, ἡμισταδιαίαν σχεδὸν τὸ ὕψος. εἶχεν δὲ καὶ δᾶδα ἐν τῇ ἀριστερᾷ καὶ ξίφος ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ ὅσον εικοσάπηχῦ, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἔνερθεν ὀφιοίπους ἦν, τὰ δὲ ἄνω Γοργόνι ἐμφορῆς, τὸ βλέμμα φημί καὶ τὸ φρικᾶδες τῆς προσόψεως, καὶ ἀντὶ τῆς κόμης τοὺς δράκοντας βοστρυχηδὸν καθεῖτο εἰλουμένους περὶ τὸν ἀρχέαν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων ἐνίους ἐσπειραμένους.

A horrible woman was coming toward me about a half a stade in height. She was holding a torch in her left hand and sword in her right, ten cubits long; below she was snake-footed and above she was similar to the Gorgon,

⁶¹ JOHNSTON (1999), 134.

⁶² BROWN (1991), 49 and CLARK (2009).

⁶³ For the most recent discussion, see HERRERO DE JÁUREGUI (2016), 34-37.

⁶⁴ BROWN (1991), 50 and JOHNSTON (1999), 131, who stresses rightly that the use of the word *ekpleksis*, from the verb *ekplêssein*, "to strike someone out of their wits", implies an agent who appears suddenly, as Empousa does in the *Frogs*.

⁶⁵ Lucian, *Lover of Lies* 17: τὸν δακτύλιον ὃ Ἄραψ ἔδωκε σιδήρου τοῦ ἐκ τῶν σταυρῶν πεποιημένον καὶ τὴν ἐποδὴν ἐδίδαξεν τὴν πολυώνυμον. The reference to iron "from crosses" probably refers to the iron nails used in crucifixions.

in her stare, I mean, and in the frightfulness of her appearance and instead of hair she had snakes lying around her neck in ringlets.

Eucrates, however, uses his ring to protect himself from this horrible female, who he identifies as none other than Hecate (24):

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ἰδὼν ἔστην ἀναστρέψας ἅμα τὴν σφραγίδα ἣν μοι ὁ Ἄραβ
ἔδωκεν εἰς τὸ εἶσω τοῦ δακτύλου· ἡ Ἑκάτη δὲ πατάξασα τῷ δρακοντείῳ
ποδὶ τοῦδαφος ἐποίησεν χάσμα παμμέγεθες, ἠλίκον Ταρτάρειον τὸ βάθος·
εἶτα ὄχχετο μετ' ὀλίγον ἀλλομένη εἰς αὐτό. ἐγὼ δὲ θαρρήσας ἐπέκυσα....
εἶτα ἐώρων τὰ ἐν Ἅιδου ἅπαντα, τὸν Πυριφλεγέθοντα, τὴν λίμνην, τὸν
Κέρβερον, τοὺς νεκρούς, ὥστε γνωρίζειν ἐπίους αὐτῶν·

Well I, for my part, stopped when I saw her, at the same time turning the gem (i.e. of the ring) that the Arab gave me to the inside of my finger. Hecate, for her part, by stamping on the ground with her serpent foot, created a huge chasm, as deep as Tartarus; then in an instant she leaped into it and was gone. I plucked up courage and looked over.... Then I saw everything in Hades, the River of Blazing Fire, and the Lake, and Cerberus, and the dead, well enough to recognize some of them.

This description – especially the gigantic size of the goddess and her snaky hair and serpent feet – is, of course, completely overblown for comic effect and clearly designed to mock the superstitious narrator Eucrates. But nonetheless, Lucian seems to reflect real knowledge of the gestures and the apparatus of such protective rituals, in this case the manipulation of a special ring, presumably while saying aloud the magical names that the Arab had given him. Indeed, his account of Hecate coming out of Hades and approaching in a threatening manner easily recalls the first two of the frightful scenarios described in the Michigan papyrus, in which Ereshkigal “comes out” and then “comes near”; and in his protective response, it is also important that Eucrates uses a simple apotropaic gesture with his ring, very similar to those described in the Michigan recipe, which tells us to hold down our thumbs or grasp our right heel.

The invocations on the curse tablets discussed earlier or in the Michigan recipe usually do not help us distinguish between the single and the triple-bodied Hecate, but Lucian’s description of Hecate suggests the existence of a frightening, single-headed monster holding a torch in her right hand and a sword in her left, a description that seems reflected on the reverse of a serpentine gem in the British Museum (*BM* 296; Fig. 5), where we see Hecate (her face obliterated presumably on purpose by a later drill hole) holding a flail in her right hand and a sword in the left, while she stands on the back of a prone man; the scene is surrounded and then crossed by the following plea: “Restrain

the angry outbursts (κάτεχες τοὺς θύμους) of Euphratas and every person.”⁶⁶ The name of the victim is placed, perhaps not accidentally upside down beneath



Fig. 5: Serpentine gemstone in the British Museum engraved with Hecate on the Reverse and the plea “Restrain the angry outbursts (κάτεχες τοὺς θύμους) of Euphratas and every person!” (BM 296); author’s photograph © Trustees of the British Museum.

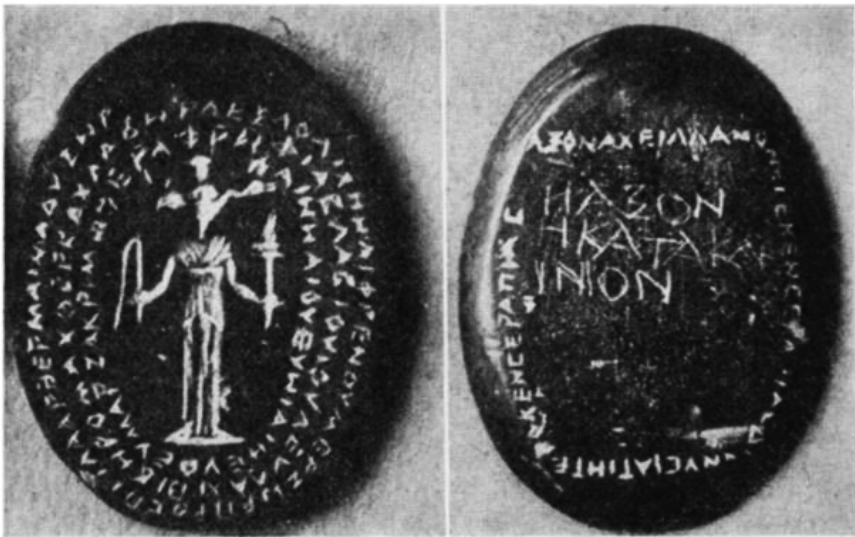


Fig. 6: Brown ironstone gemstone in the British Museum engraved with triple Hecate on the Obverse and on the Reverse two pleas: “Lead (ἄξον) Achilleus, whom Serapia bore, to Dionysias, whom Serapia bore” and “Either lead him or lay him low (ἢ ἄξον ἢ κατὰ κλεινον)!”; after BONNER (1946).

⁶⁶ For this revised text, see FARAONE (2021), 141-143.

the sprawled body. Another gem, this one rather large (4.4 x 3.2 cm) and of brown ironstone (probably limonite), was also used in a hostile fashion. It shows a similar image of Hecate (Fig. 6) with two changes: she holds a torch, not a sword, in her left hand and she has three heads: in addition to the frontal head of a maiden topped by a *kalathos*, we see a profile bird's head on her right and goose on her left. A triple swirl of magical names surround her and on the back in a square along the edges: "Lead (ἄξον) Achilles, whom Serapia bore, to Dionysias, whom Serapia bore." But it seems that at some later point in time someone, the owner perhaps, lightly scratched in the middle of the reverse a revised plea in much larger and irregular letters: "Either lead him or lay him low (ἢ ἄξον ἢ κατάκλεινον)!" These objects reflect the rather rare use of gems as media for curses, the first for anger restraint and the other for erotic subjugation, and they (and the Attic curse tablet in Fig. 4) show that as early as the second or third century CE an image of the triple-headed Hecate could be used to curse. The second gem described above (Fig. 6) suggests, moreover, how such an imaginative leap might be accomplished, because the triple Hecate there has the heads of a maiden, a bird and goose. Might this be a later manner of understanding the shapeshifting of Hecate Empousa, who in fifth-century Athens was imagined in quick succession to be a cow, a mule and a woman?

5. SOME CONCLUSIONS

We saw above how Ereshkigal is assimilated – unsurprisingly – to Persephone, because both are queens of the underworld and have royal authority over the fates of the dead who enter their realm. In the case of Hecate, however, it seems that the Greeks assimilated her to Ereshkigal, because Hecate, in her role as "Empousa", was thought to be an important gatekeeper for Persephone's kingdom in Hades, a shapeshifter who confronts new arrivals and at times even emerges from the underworld to attack the living, as we saw in the passage from Lucian – a possibility that is also implicit in the role of Chthonian Hecate on curses, in which the expectation is that she will emerge from Hades and attack the victim(s) of the curse, just as she attacks Eucrates in Lucian's dialogue. Perhaps more importantly, this late-antique equation of Hecate with Ereshkigal has given us some new insights into Hecate's early role in the underworld, especially in Athens and in Attica. Indeed, we saw hints of this underworld Hecate already in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, where she is clearly attached to Persephone in some formal way as a minister or a follower and in her role as Empousa, who in the Eleusinian mysteries appeared and frightened initiates, as a dress rehearsal for when they themselves would finally enter the underworld.

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« CE NE SONT QUE DES NOMS » (CORAN LIII/23)

Michel Tardieu

This contribution highlights the conditions and aspects of the Quranic enunciation of the divine specific to Surah 53. A unique case in this type of anti-idolatrous religious literature, Surah 53 points out some contextual elements useful for the analysis: mention of the polytheistic adversaries targeted, denominations of female deities peculiar to the Arab pantheon (the Great Goddesses), topography of the Mecca sanctuary, hours of the day favourable to the descent of the entity conveying the revelation, and last but not least, material traces, i.e. textual variants, of compromises to accommodate with polytheistic adversaries (so-called satanic verses). This context led the German philosopher Schelling to compare the Great Gods of Samothrace and the Quranic enunciation of the divine debated in Surah 53. By qualifying the situation prevailing in the Aegean sanctuary as mahommedanisch, Schelling points to a fundamentally monotheistic, archaic and pre-biblical mode of argumentation.

Les recherches collectives et comparatives que dirige Corinne Bonnet dans le cadre du projet MAP (Mapping Ancient Polytheisms) sur les systèmes de dénomination du divin élaborés dans l'espace méditerranéen et sur le temps long amènent à s'interroger sur un cas d'énonciation propre au Coran, intervenant dans le contexte de la polémique contre l'idolâtrie. L'argument utilisé, consistant à dire que les divinités du polythéisme « ne sont que des noms » (*in hiya illā asmā'un*), est inhabituel dans les controverses internes aux religions sémitiques. D'autre part, le cas n'est pas isolé, puisqu'il revient à trois reprises dans le Coran, à chaque fois par une formulation identique alors que le contexte prophétique est différent. L'un de ces contextes est intéressant à analyser à cause des détails qui sont donnés sur les circonstances et la topographie de l'énonciation des noms de divinités, et en raison surtout des hésitations qui affleurent dans le texte coranique lui-même sur le marquage de la frontière séparant polythéisme et monothéisme.

1. LES NOMS DIVINS SANS POUVOIR

Le premier énoncé coranique relatif à l'argument des dénominations à l'encontre des pratiques culturelles polythéistes intervient dans la sourate VII

(*al-A'raf*), verset 71. Les *A'raf* désignent dans les hauteurs célestes, comme l'écrit Blachère, « un lieu intermédiaire entre le Paradis et l'Enfer où quelques défunts se tiennent, incertains de leur sort final ».¹ Lieu d'attente, donc. L'argument sur les noms y est mis dans la bouche du prophète Hūd à l'adresse de ses compatriotes idolâtres, fils de 'Ād, tribu mythique localisée au pays des « dunes » (*al-Aḥqāf*).² Les commentateurs l'assimilent au désert sud-arabique. Premier des prophètes arabes mais figure non biblique, Hūd est un envoyé de Dieu aux « nations disparues » (*al-umam al-khāliya*). L'historiographie place ce prophète et son peuple dans la génération qui suit le déluge de Noé. Il est chargé d'annoncer aux Arabes des temps archaïques le pur monothéisme. Les 'Ād refuseront de se convertir. Dieu les châtiara par un « vent mugissant » (*bi-rīḥin ṣarṣarin*) qui se déchaîne sept nuits et huit jours :³ il tue les gens, mais ne détruit pas les monuments. Le motif de l'orgueil polythéiste, Iram aux colonnes, capitale de la démesure des 'Ād, reste intacte mais, frappée à la mémoire, la cité est recouverte du voile de l'oubli. Du moins jusqu'au jour où, racontent les poètes, un berger yéménite, Abū Qilāba, à la recherche d'une chamelle égarée, découvre par hasard le site d'Iram et en détaille les splendeurs.⁴

De Hūd à son peuple :

Coran VII/71. *atuḡādilūnanī fī asmā'in sammaytumūhā antum wa ābā'ukum mā nazzala Allāhu bi-hā min sulṭānin.*

(Traduction R. Blachère). Disputerez-vous avec moi sur des noms dont vous et vos pères avez nommé [vos Faux Dieux] ? Allah n'a fait descendre nulle probation avec [ces Faux Dieux].

(Traduction D. Masson). Hūd dit : Allez-vous discuter avec moi sur les noms que vous et vos pères avez donnés à ceux auxquels Dieu n'a accordé aucun pouvoir ?

Le second énoncé coranique de l'argument sur les noms appartient aux légendes bibliques (*isrā'iliyyāt*), en l'occurrence l'histoire de Joseph fils de Jacob, reprise et augmentée dans la sourate XII. L'énoncé prophétique y est mis cette fois dans la bouche de Joseph à l'adresse de ses compagnons de prison, des adolescents égyptiens :

Coran XII/40. *mā ta'budūna min dūnihi illā asmā'an sammaytumūhā antum wa ābā'ukum mā anzala Allāhu bi-hā min sulṭānin.*

¹ BLACHÈRE (1957), 181, n. 44.

² Coran XLVI/21.

³ Coran LXIX/6-7 ; le nom de la cité des 'Ād, Iram aux colonnes, est mentionné en LXXXIX/7.

⁴ Fine analyse du mythe : BENCHEIKH (1990).

(Traduction R. Blachère). Ceux que vous adorez en dehors de Lui ne sont que des noms dont vous les avez nommés, vous et vos ancêtres. Allah ne fit descendre avec eux aucune probation.

(Traduction D. Masson). Ceux que vous adorez en dehors de Lui ne sont que des noms que vous et vos pères, vous leur attribuez. Dieu ne leur a concédé aucun pouvoir.

Le troisième énoncé coranique sur les noms de divinités (sourate LIII/23) appartient à une prédication de Muḥammad à l'adresse de ses compatriotes Mekkois restés attachés au polythéisme :

Coran LIII/23. *in hiya illā asmā'un sammaytumūhā antum wa ābā'ukum mā anzala Allāhu bi-hā min sulṭānin*

(Traduction R. Blachère). Ce ne sont que des noms dont vous les avez nommées, vous et vos pères. Allah ne fit descendre, avec elles, aucune probation.

(Traduction D. Masson). Ce ne sont vraiment que des noms que vous et vos pères leur avez attribués. Dieu ne leur a accordé aucun pouvoir.

Les parties de la transcription arabe, mises en gras, sont identiques d'une sourate à l'autre. Les énoncés coraniques font apparaître par là une formulation qui a été utilisée comme leitmotiv dès les débuts de la prédication du Prophète.⁵ Elle est à traduire littéralement : « ... (des) noms dont vous (= les polythéistes) les (= les divinités) avez nommées, vous et vos pères ; ce qu'a fait descendre Allāh avec elles [est] sans pouvoir ». La pluralité des prophètes (Hūd, Joseph, Muḥammad) et des contextes (Yémen, Égypte, Arabie) renforce ce qui est à dénoncer, l'inanité des noms d'idoles, et du coup installe Muḥammad dans une continuité prophétique sur le temps long, c'est-à-dire périodisé par les venues successives d'envoyés divins.⁶

Le thème des noms divins dépourvus de pouvoir, en soi peu original, n'est cependant guère fréquent dans l'histoire de la polémique contre le polythéisme. Les controverses précoraniques, juives et chrétiennes, insistent, il est vrai, presque exclusivement sur une inanité des dieux païens fondée sur leurs représentations matérielles d'objets fabriqués. La *Lettre de Jérémie* (II^e/I^{er} s. av. n. è., conservée dans la Septante et la Vulgate), écrit juif en grec qui vise l'idolâtrie hellénique à travers une satire du culte babylonien, décrit complaisamment les tourments subis par les statues divines entre les mains des artisans. Les apologistes chrétiens exploiteront le filon.⁷ Le motif se trouve aussi

⁵ Selon la tradition exégétique musulmane, en effet, les trois extraits coraniques cités ci-dessus proviennent de sourates dites « mekkoises ».

⁶ Conceptions du passé et périodisations prophétologiques : TARDIEU (1996).

⁷ Tertullien, *Apologeticum*, XII 2-5 ; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, XXIV 6-10 ; mais surtout, pour sa verve et son outrance, Arnobe, *Adversus nationes*, VI 14-16.

dans le Coran : « *Ces divinités* qu'ils (les polythéistes) prient en dehors d'Allah n'ont rien créé, mais *ont été créées* : mortes et non pas vivantes, elles ne savent quand elles seront ressuscitées ». ⁸ Toutefois, l'argument de poids retenu par le texte coranique est celui de noms divins dépourvus de tout pouvoir, comme réduits à du souffle matériel. Il est la forme inverse, négative, de l'apologétique en faveur de la dénomination qui agit, celle du nom comme description de l'être divin unique, Nom que l'on conçoit imprononçable, silencieux, caché, invisible, alors que les noms des divinités plurielles sont préférables, signifiants, localisables, visibles. C'est par là d'une certaine façon, comme le dit Schelling, « tenir dans le concept de monothéisme un moyen de démontrer l'impossibilité du polythéisme ». ⁹

Par quel canal l'argument des dénominations divines est-il arrivé au Coran ? Je penserais volontiers aux ariens radicaux en raison de leur proximité théologique avec les protomusulmans sur la question de l'unicité divine. ¹⁰ Dénommés également « anoméens » à cause de leur thèse sur le caractère dissemblable (ἀνόμοιον) des essences du Père et du Fils, ces chrétiens ariens du parti d'Aèce et d'Eunome s'activent aux IV^e et V^e siècles en Asie mineure et Arabie du Nord. Mais aussi en Arabie du Sud. L'écrivain chrétien Philostorge, anoméen notoire, raconte que l'empereur Constance II (reg. 337-361), soutien du parti arien, envoya une ambassade à la cour himyarite (Yémen), dotée de deux-cents chevaux pur-sang de Cappadoce et d'un missionnaire de choc, lui aussi arien, Théophile l'Indien : ce dernier y fonda trois églises. ¹¹ Les propositions théologiques d'Aèce, tête de file du parti, dénoncent comme pures dénominations (ψιλαὶ προσηγορίαι) dépourvues de réalité (οὐσία) les noms de *fils*, *rejeton*, *engendré*, *monogène*, *premier-né*, introduits dans les débats trinitaires par les partisans de l'orthodoxie nicéenne ou de courants proches de celle-ci. ¹²

2. LES VISIONS PRÉALABLES

La sourate LIII, *al-Najm*, l'Étoile, a la particularité de présenter, parmi les énoncés coraniques relatifs aux noms divins dépourvus de pouvoir, une contextualisation assez précise en faisant état de visions préalables à la mention du

⁸ Coran XVI/20-22.

⁹ Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1857, 103 ; PERNET (1992), 104.

¹⁰ Aperçu des controverses doctrinales liées à la crise arienne : TARDIEU (1987).

¹¹ Philostorge, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III 4, 7-8, éd. J. Bidez, Berlin, 1972 (zweite Auflage besorgt von F. Winkelmann), 34, 10-23.

¹² Aèce, *Syntagmation*, Proposition 8, transmis par Épiphane de Salamine, *Panarion*, LXXVI 12, 8, éd. K. Holl, Leipzig, 1933, 353-354 ; voir également Propositions 16, 17, 26. L'ensemble des textes d'Eunome sur la critique des dénominations ont été rassemblés par VAGGIONE (1987).

Nom et d'un incident particulier résultant de la dénomination des idoles, incident dit des versets sataniques. Selon Blachère, « l'examen du texte décèle trois révélations juxtaposées qui sont, dans leur plus grande partie, de la première période mekkoise ». ¹³ Nous sommes donc approximativement dans les années 610-612. La singularité de la sourate vient de ce que le Prophète y précise les circonstances de ses visions : moment de la journée où elles interviennent, aspect extérieur du révélateur, distance où se tient le révélateur par rapport au récipiendaire, topographie des visions dans leur environnement végétal (arbre nommé, le jujubier, et un jardin localisé), et enfin noms des divinités féminines particulières au sanctuaire à proximité. Je cite ce passage dans la traduction de Denise Masson.

/1/ Par l'étoile lorsqu'elle disparaît ! /2/ Votre compagnon n'est pas égaré ; il n'est pas dans l'erreur ; /3/ il ne parle pas sous l'empire de la passion. /4/ C'est seulement une Révélation qui lui a été inspirée. /5/ Le Puissant, le Fort la lui a fait connaître. /6/ Celui qui possède la force s'est tenu en majesté, /7/ alors qu'il se trouvait à l'horizon suprême ; /8/ puis il s'approcha et il demeura suspendu. /9/ Il était à une distance de deux portées d'arc — ou moins encore — /10/ et il révéla à son serviteur ce qu'il lui révéla. /11/ Le cœur n'a pas inventé ce qu'il a vu. /12/ Allez-vous donc élever des doutes sur ce qu'il voit ? /13/ Il l'a vu, en vérité, une autre fois /14/ à côté du jujubier de la limite [al-Montahā] /15/ auprès duquel se trouve le Jardin de la Demeure [al-Mawā], /16/ quand couvrait le jujubier ce qui couvrait. /17/ Son regard ne dévia pas et ne fut pas abusé. /18/ Il a vu les plus grands Signes de son Seigneur.

Les versets 6-7 et suivants décrivent un révélateur divin au corps gigantesque, qui apparaît à Muḥammad « lorsque l'étoile disparaît » (verset 1), c'est-à-dire « sur l'horizon de l'aube, dans le jour commençant ». ¹⁴ L'ensemble du texte juxtapose par la suite deux visions. Ce qui (ou : celui qui) est vu par le Prophète n'est pas nommé, il n'a ni nom propre, ni appellatif, il n'est ni dieu (*allāh*) ni ange (*malak*). Le prophète visionnaire reste toujours immobile. Le parcours céleste décrit dans la sourate XVII ou dans les traditions relatives à Hénoclivre des visions différentes : ¹⁵ du haut vers le bas et avec mobilité de celui qui regarde. Le visionnaire de l'Étoile, lui, regarde du bas vers le haut. Seul, ce qui (ou : celui qui) est vu est mobile : « il s'approche » (verset 8). L'être décrit est localisé dans le temps (verset 1), mais aussi dans l'espace, environnement mekkois idéalisé en paradis (versets 14-15). Les dimensions de ce qui (ou : de celui qui) est vu sont analogues à celles de Métatron dans

¹³ BLACHÈRE (1957), 560.

¹⁴ CHABBI (1997), 218.

¹⁵ Le voyage céleste et la vision sont étudiés dans l'ouvrage collectif d'AMIR-MOEZZI (1996).

l'angéologie juive de l'époque talmudique : majesté de celui qui se tient à l'horizon suprême puis qui s'approche et demeure suspendu entre haut et bas (1^{ère} vision, cosmique), il est comparé ensuite à un arbre, le jujubier (2^e vision, paradisiaque).

La description des deux visions est suivie de la mention de trois divinités arabes féminines (19) : *a-fa-ra'aytum al-lāta wa-l-'uzzā /20/ wa-manawāta l-thālitha l-ukhrā*, « avez-vous considéré al-Lât et al-'Ozzā /20/ et Manât, la troisième, l'autre ? ». Par conséquent, l'entité divine décrite dans les visions préalables est masculine et unique, en contraste avec les entités féminines plurielles qui suivent.

Un autre cas ouest-sémitique de divinités masculines/féminines, dépourvues de biographies individuelles et aux dimensions énormes, est attesté chez les Ébionites.¹⁶ Ce sont des judéo-chrétiens au sens strict, c'est-à-dire des juifs qui ont adopté certains aspects du christianisme tout en conservant les observances juives. Leurs communautés résident principalement en Arabie du Nord et en Syrie-Palestine (I^{er}-X^e s.). Épiphanie, l'hérésiographe chrétien qui les a fréquentés dans sa jeunesse, résume ainsi une de leurs apocalypses : « ils croient que Christ est une figure (ἐκτύπωμα) à forme masculine, invisible aux humains, de quatre-vingt-seize milles de haut, soit vingt-quatre schœnes, et de six schœnes de large, soit vingt-quatre milles, et en profondeur avec une autre dimension. En face de lui, se tient aussi l'Esprit saint, à forme féminine, de façon invisible, et aux mêmes dimensions ». Puis l'hérésiographe, pensant amuser ses lecteurs et ridiculiser par de l'absurde ce qu'il cite, transmet la littéralité du traité ébionite : « Elxai (leur Prophète) déclare ceci : Comment ai-je trouvé ces mesures ? — C'est, dit-il, que j'ai observé par comparaison avec les montagnes et que j'ai vu que leurs têtes les dépassaient : en examinant la dimension de la montagne, j'ai su les dimensions du Christ et de l'Esprit saint ». Les équivalences métrologiques fournies par la citation excluent que le mille de référence corresponde au mille romain. Les nombres signifiants, exprimés en schœnes, 24 et 6, sont ceux des deux noms de Métatron à partir du compte des lettres de l'alphabet.¹⁷ Dans ce type de représentations, les corps divins sont des noms, autrement dit des assemblages de lettres que l'on peut compter.

Autre témoin des mêmes spéculations chez les Elchasaïtes antiochiens et romains (III^e s.), branche occidentale d'un groupe de judéo-chrétiens babyloniens – leur lien avec les Ébionites palestiniens reste débattu – : « (Le révélateur apparu à Elchasaï¹⁸) était haut de vingt-quatre schœnes, ce qui fait quatre-vingt-seize milles, large de quatre schœnes, et, d'une épaule à l'autre, de six

¹⁶ Épiphanie de Salamine, *Panarion*, XXX 17, 6-7, éd. K. Holl, Leipzig, 1915, 356, 18-357,7.

¹⁷ Sur ces nombres qui proviennent du *Shi'ur Qomah* : STROUMSA (1992), 59.

¹⁸ Transcription simplifiée. Graphies flottantes du même nom : grec patristique Ἠλχασαί, Ἠλξαί, Ἐλκεσαί ; grec manichéen Ἀλχασαῖος ; syriaque *Elqasai* ; arabe *Alḥasyh, Alkhasayh*.

schoenes ; ses pieds laissaient une empreinte d'une longueur de trois schoenes et demi, ce qui fait quatorze milles, d'une largeur d'un schoene et demi, et leur hauteur était d'un demi-schoene. Il était accompagné d'un être féminin dont les dimensions étaient celles que nous venons de dire. L'être masculin était le Fils de Dieu, l'être féminin s'appelait Esprit saint ».¹⁹

Les deux extraits de l'apocalyptique judéo-chrétienne décrivent un révélateur céleste dont on évite de mentionner le nom et qui n'est dit explicitement ni dieu ni ange. Il forme couple : son élément masculin a pour fonction de faire descendre la révélation, et à ce titre il est assimilé au Christ ou Fils de Dieu, l'élément féminin est l'Esprit saint. La vision cosmique du révélateur dans la sourate de l'Étoile (versets 6-10) conserve des spéculations ébionites-elchasaïtes le gigantisme et la puissance prêtés à Métatron, puisque sa hauteur est marquée par l'horizon le plus élevé (*al-ufuq al-a'lā*) et sa suspension dans les airs (versets 7-8). La dénomination du révélateur, retenue dans ce contexte, est celle littéralement de « Puissant-en-force », *šadīd al-quwā* (verset 6) ; au verset 16, ce « Puissant » est appelé « ce qui couvrait ». L'énigmatique verset 10 (« et il révéla à son serviteur ce qu'il lui révéla ») donnerait à penser que le « serviteur » (*'abdu*) est le révélateur lui-même, et non Muḥammad, comme intermédiaire entre Dieu et le Prophète.²⁰ La seconde vision renvoie à un paysage végétal où se tient le Prophète et qui évoque le Paradis (versets 13-16). L'arbre nommé à deux reprises (versets 14 et 16), le jujubier (*sidr*), est mentionné par ailleurs dans le Coran comme végétation typiquement paradisiaque : à son ombre immense — selon la légende, un cheval au galop mettrait cent ans à en sortir —, courent les ruisseaux et gambadent les houris.²¹ Dans son traité de pharmacopée, al-Bīrūnī (mort vers 442 H./1050) explique que le meilleur *nabq* d'Arabie (fruit du jujubier) est à Hajar (dans l'Arabie du Nord-Est, la Gerrha des auteurs gréco-latins) et uniquement dans cet endroit : « C'est là le jardin du roi. Le *nabq* y est si doux que, pour qui en prend, du parfum s'exhale de sa bouche et de ses vêtements ».²²

Les deux visions préalables ne mentionnent pas l'être unique qui a la prééminence du Nom, c'est-à-dire la toute-puissance. Leur rôle est de préparer à la révélation du Nom qui intervient seulement avec les versets suivants, en contraste avec les dénominations divines, privées de puissance, que vénèrent les polythéistes.

¹⁹ Hippolyte de Rome (?), *Elenchos*, IX 13, 2-3, éd. P. Wendland, Leipzig, 1916, 251, 14-20.

²⁰ Le titre de « serviteur » est attaché à la fonction de Métatron : STROUMSA (1992), 58.

²¹ Coran LVI/28.

²² Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-šaydana fī l-ṭibb*, éd. H. M. Said, Karachi, 1973, 218 (arabe), 180 (traduction).

3. LES VERSETS SATANIQUES

L'historiographie et l'exégèse musulmanes désignent ainsi deux brefs versets coraniques situés entre l'énonciation des noms de divinités arabes féminines et la déclaration de l'inanité des mêmes noms (LIII/21-23).²³ Ces versets ne sont mentionnés aujourd'hui que dans les corans orientalistes non confessionnels, tel en français celui de Régis Blachère.²⁴ Ils suivent immédiatement la dénomination des divinités (LIII/19-20 : « Avez-vous considéré al-Lât et al-'Ozzâ / et Manât, cette troisième autre ? ») et disent ceci : « /20bis/ Ce sont les Sublimes Déesses, /20ter/ et leur intercession est certes souhaitée », *innahā l-gharānīq al-'ulā / wa-inna šafā'atahunna la-turtaḏā*. Conservons pour le moment l'interprétation d'*al-gharānīq al-'ulā* par « Sublimes Déesses ».

Embarrassée par ce qui paraissait être une concession de Muḥammad aux polythéistes, l'exégèse musulmane a imaginé un épisode biographique destiné à exclure pour inauthentiques les deux versets en question. Le qualificatif de « sataniques » vient de ce que ces versets, qui ne vilipendent nullement les noms des déesses arabes, auraient été placés sournoisement par Satan sur la langue de Muḥammad pour le mettre en contradiction avec ce qu'il prêchait, l'unicité de Dieu (*tawḥīd*). Ces versets ne figurent pas dans la Vulgate coranique dite du roi Fu'ād (Le Caire, Boulaq, 1342 H./1923), d'usage universel aujourd'hui.²⁵ Tel n'était pas le cas dans les premiers temps de l'islam. L'exemplaire du Coran en possession d'Ibn al-Kalbī (mort en 204 H./819) comportait les versets.²⁶ Il en est de même pour le Coran qu'utilisait Muqātil ibn Suleymān (mort en 159 H./767).²⁷ Chez Ṭabarī, les deux versets sont précédés, dans le texte arabe, d'une chaîne de garants qui inscrit l'épisode biographique dans un processus historicisant,²⁸ à lire de bas en haut, en remontant du plus récent au plus ancien :

Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraḏī (ob. 108 H./726)

(fils d'un captif juif de la tribu des Quraḏā)

↑

Yazīd b. Ziyād al-Madanī (ob. ca. 135 H./752)

↑

²³ Sur ces versets, une étude indispensable : AHMED (2017).

²⁴ BLACHÈRE (1957), 561.

²⁵ Texte reçu non critique : BERGSTRÄSSER (1932) ; BLACHERE (1959), 134-135 ; AZAIEZ (2015), 13-15.

²⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-aṣnām*, 15e, éd. W. Atallah (1969), 14.

²⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, t. IV, éd. du Caire, 1988, p. 162, passage traduit et commenté par GILLIOT (1991), 77-78.

²⁸ Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, éd. M. Abū l-Faḏl Ibrāhīm, Le Caire, 1966, t. II, p. 337, 20-22.

Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq al-Madanī (ob. 151 H./768)
 ↑
 Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī (ob. 191 H./806)
 ↑
 Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī (ob. 248 H./862)

L'incident est raconté de la façon suivante par l'historien arabo-persan Ṭabarī. Je résume. Le Messager de Dieu constate que sa tribu (Qurayš polythéistes) se détourne de lui. Il en est très affecté. Il désire ardemment que survienne quelque chose qui le réconcilierait avec les siens et que le dur traitement qu'ils lui font subir soit adouci. Dieu fait alors descendre la sourate de l'Étoile : « Par l'étoile quand elle disparaît ! Votre compagnon n'est pas égaré ; il n'est pas dans l'erreur ; il ne parle pas sous l'empire de la passion » (LIII/1-3). Quand le Prophète arrive au verset : « Avez-vous considéré al-Lāt et al-'Uzzā et Manāt, la troisième, l'autre ? » (LIII/19-20), Satan, sachant le désir du Prophète de faire quelque chose qui plaise à son peuple, met sur sa langue ces paroles relatives aux trois divinités : *tilka l-gharānīq al-'ulā wa-inna šafā'atahunna la-turtaḍā*, « ce sont les Sublimes Déesses, et leur intercession est certes souhaitée » (LIII/20bis-20ter). Entendant cela, les Qurayš sont ravis. Appeler leurs divinités par leurs noms leur plaît beaucoup, et ils prêtent attention à la prédication, car les croyants étaient convaincus que les paroles de leur Prophète venaient de leur Seigneur et qu'il ne pouvait y avoir en elles ni erreur ni illusion ni défaillance. Quand (le Prophète) eut terminé la sourate, il fit la prostration. Les musulmans la font en même temps que lui, car ils avaient foi en la vérité de ses paroles et qu'ils obéissaient à son commandement. Quant aux polythéistes d'entre les Qurayš, ils se prosternent également, croyant que le Prophète a loué leurs idoles. La fin du récit sur l'incident marque le retour à l'orthodoxie. Le lendemain, Muḥammad récite la sourate à l'ange Gabriel avec les versets sataniques. Puis, sermonné par l'ange, il recommence mais en les omettant, revirement qui consacre la rupture entre le Prophète et les polythéistes.

D'après le chroniqueur des tribus arabes préislamiques, Ibn al-Kalbī, les trois divinités nommées dans la sourate de l'Étoile étaient appelées par les Arabes préislamiques : « filles de Dieu » (*banāt Allāh*). L'expression est d'origine sudarabique.²⁹ Les Qurayš, écrit Ibn al-Kalbī, faisaient leurs rondes rituelles autour de la Ka'ba en criant :

wa-l-Lāti wa-l-'Uzzā
wa-Manawāta l-thālithi l-ukhrā
fā-inna-hunna l-gharānīq al-'ulā
wa-inna šafā'atahunna la-turtaḍā

²⁹ ROBIN (2001), en particulier 139-156.

Et par al-Lāt et par al-Uzzā
 et par Manāt, la troisième, l'autre :
 elles sont les beautés premières,
 et leur intervention est à souhaiter.

Il est clair par là que le processus de dénomination divine est intervenu au départ dans le cadre d'un *ihlāl*, cri rituel d'une acclamation de procession. Or, c'est cet *ihlāl* qui se trouve cité à la lettre dans le Coran LIII/19-20. S'agit-il réellement, comme le considère l'exégèse musulmane, d'une concession « satanique » au polythéisme pour créer un syncrétisme ? On penserait plutôt, dans le jeu de rapports oraux contradictoires internes à la sourate LIII, à la reprise ironique d'une acclamation bien connue de l'auditoire du Prophète. Manāt est dite « la troisième, l'autre », par opposition aux deux divinités féminines qui forment couple et sont vénérées ensemble, al-Lāt et al-'Uzzā.³⁰ Manāt était la divinité la plus ancienne, elle avait un sanctuaire sur la côte entre Médine et la Mecque.³¹ Les pèlerins se rasaient la tête pour y entrer. D'après Ibn al-Kalbī, al-Lāt aurait succédé à Manāt dans la dévotion arabe avec un sanctuaire principal à Tā'if, à une soixantaine de kilomètres de la Mecque. Al-'Uzzā, divinité la plus récente, très vénérée des Qurayš, habitait un bois d'acacias près de la Mecque. Son idole fut démolie à coups de sabre par Khālid Ibn al-Walīd en l'an 8 H./ 629. D'après Lammens, les puissances divines auxquelles s'oppose, en contexte mekkois, la prédication du Prophète constitueraient « une triade fermée ».³² Il semble bizarre d'élaborer une triade avec des divinités sexuées toutes féminines, sans rapport hiérarchique entre elles. Ébionites et elchasaïtes offrent, de façon régulière, comme nous l'avons signalé, une ébauche de triade divine où l'élément féminin unique permet d'organiser des relations de dépendance. Le reproche coranique, répété à six reprises,³³ selon lequel les polythéistes mekkois attribuent à Dieu des filles, alors qu'eux-mêmes dans la vie courante préfèrent avoir des garçons, est un autre trait ironique relevant de la controverse.

L'interprétation d'*al-gharānīq al-'ulā* par « Sublimes Déeses » est-elle à conserver ? Il semblerait, en effet, que l'expression arabe ait été choisie précisément (*ṣahāda* oblige !) pour ne pas employer le mot courant désignant la divinité au féminin. En ce cas, ne réintroduisons pas ce qu'on a cherché à éviter. Les *gharānīq* ne sont pas des « déesses ». Il s'agit au sens propre de grues,

³⁰ LAMMENS (1917), 51-56.

³¹ Les sources principales concernant ces divinités avec quelques éléments de l'histoire de la recherche sont fournies dans les notices de l'*Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, deuxième édition : pour Manāt, t. VI (1991), 358 ; al-Lāt, t. V (1986), 697-698 ; al-'Uzzā, t. X (2002), 1045-1046.

³² LAMMENS (1917), 54.

³³ Coran LIII/21-22, mais aussi XVI/57-58 ; XVII/40 ; XXXVII/149-153 ; XLIII/16-19 ; LII/39.

d'une espèce particulière décrite dans les traités arabes de volerie et que François Viré identifie à la Demoiselle de Numidie (sg. *ghurnūq*), *Anthropoides virgo*.³⁴ Au sens figuré, ces splendides volatiles désignent en arabe des personnes des deux sexes, élégantes et gracieuses. L'élatif *'ulā* qui accompagne *al-gharānīq* caractérise la capacité de ces oiseaux à voler très haut dans le ciel et d'observer tout de là-haut, à l'instar du regard divin.³⁵ Par conséquent, l'interprétation de l'expression *al-gharānīq al-'ulā* dans la traduction de Blanche par « Sublimes Déesses » conviendrait assez bien, même si elle extrapole quelque peu. Il eût été plus exact certainement de traduire par « Sublimes Demoiselles » et d'expliquer cette mention ornithologique coranique par allusion au conte de tradition orale, dénommé dans la classification internationale « The Cranes of Ibycus », conte commun à nombre de cultures sémitiques et indo-européennes.³⁶ Volant haut dans le ciel d'où rien ne leur échappe, les grues altières et vengeresses sont par excellence les oiseaux dont « l'intercession est souhaitée » (LIII/20^{ter}) : grâce à elles, en effet, est-il raconté, ont pu être identifiés, retrouvés et châtiés les meurtriers du poète musicien qui se rendait aux jeux. Dans la ballade de Schiller, Ibycus supplie les grues qui volent si haut (*von euch, ihr Kraniche dort oben !*) d'intercéder en sa faveur.³⁷ La littérature orale et les poètes aident à comprendre le Coran ;³⁸ les exégètes ne devraient pas délaissé, non plus, ainsi que me le signale Thomas Galoppin, les récits d'ornithomancie dont font état généreusement les littératures orientales et gréco-latine.

4. L'APPORT DE SCHELLING

L'objectif de la présente étude consiste à explorer la dénomination coranique du divin à partir des conditions de l'énonciation propres à la sourate LIII et aux versets similaires, c'est-à-dire situées dans l'espace et le temps mekkois. Reste à rendre compte de l'objectif connexe fixé par le projet MAP : « débroussailler le sujet des dénominations du divin au moyen notamment d'un vaste compara-

³⁴ VIRÉ (1984), 154 et 275, n. 283. On trouvera une jolie description de la grue demoiselle dans le traité de l'empereur romain germanique Frédéric II de Hohenstaufen (reg. 1220-1250), *De arte venandi cum avibus*, IV 12, éd. A. Paulus et B. Van den Abeele, Nogent-le-Roi, J. Laget, 2000, 357.

³⁵ Coran LXXXIX/14 : « Ton Seigneur est celui qui observe tout ».

³⁶ AT 960A : SCHMITT (1996), 333 ; UThER (2004), I 601. Conte connu des Arabes : ROSENTHAL (1975), 258-259.

³⁷ Schiller, *Die Kraniche des Ibycus*, 1797, vers 45-47.

³⁸ On en a un exemple avec la sourate XVIII (légende des Sept Dormants) : TARDIEU (2011).

tisme à travers le temps et les cultures ». ³⁹ Cela vaut de façon essentielle pour le Coran, accumulation de versets insaisissables, majoritairement polémiques mais sans contextes ni désignations vérifiables des adversaires visés. Il ne s'agit pas, cependant, d'une nouveauté dans l'histoire religieuse orientale : les textes gnostiques perdus en grec et en syriaque mais retrouvés en copte présentent le même cas d'une littérature déroutante, dépourvue de tout contexte. ⁴⁰

Le premier penseur soucieux de contextualiser en comparant, c'est-à-dire en introduisant de la relativité et du changement entre les noms divins de cultures différentes et d'un texte sacré à l'autre, a été Schelling (1775-1854). Je laisse de côté sa monumentale et très complexe *Philosophie de la mythologie*, élaborée dans la décennie 1830-1840, construction spéculative vouée au triomphalisme comparatiste d'une puissance naturelle christique qui serait à la fois Melqart en Syrie, Vishnou en Inde et Dionysos en Grèce. Je rappellerai seulement, pour conclure la présente étude, deux écrits de Schelling antérieurs à la *Philosophie* et dans lesquels la question des noms divins est abordée dans le cadre de l'histoire des religions. Il inaugure à vingt ans (1795) ses recherches comparées par une thèse de théologie sur Marcion dans laquelle il pose le problème de la falsification des épîtres pauliniennes et remet en question, « les frontières reçues entre orthodoxie chrétienne et hérésies ». ⁴¹ Quarante ans plus tard (1815), alors qu'il travaille à son ouvrage (inachevé) sur les âges du monde (*Weltalter*), il rédige un mémoire sur les divinités de Samothrace (*Ueber die Gottheiten von Samothrake*). ⁴² L'objet de ce traité consiste à appliquer au système du divin en vigueur dans le grand sanctuaire de l'île égéenne à l'époque classique une double qualification, apparemment étrange. D'après lui, on serait en présence, non d'un système polythéiste, mais d'une sorte de monothéisme non-biblique de facture *mahommedanisch*, dit-il. Schelling n'a pas commis là d'anachronisme. Les rapprochements et exégèses qu'il multiplie pour montrer la capacité du « paganisme » à se transformer se fondent sur une connaissance de première main des sources de l'histoire des religions disponibles de son temps. Le vif intérêt qu'il manifeste à l'égard des noms divins d'origine sémitique ou grecque vient de sa fascination pour l'écriture de l'hébreu ou de l'arabe. Les mots écrits de ces langues, en effet, dès lors qu'ils

³⁹ Équipe MAP, « Noms de dieux ! Texte et contextes », Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès, janvier-juin 2019, 1.

⁴⁰ Méthodologie mise en œuvre pour contextualiser l'*Apocalypse de Zostrien* (Nag Hammadi Codices VIII/1) : TARDIEU (1996).

⁴¹ LAURET (2003), 291.

⁴² Le mémoire est prononcé comme discours académique le 12 octobre 1815 à l'Académie des sciences de Bavière. Il est publié en « appendice aux *Weltalter* » par le fils du philosophe, Fritz Schelling, dans les *Sämmtliche Werke*, VIII. L'unique traduction française existante, due à Jankélévitch 1949 (Samuel, le père de Vladimir J.), laisse de côté toutes les notes ainsi que le Post-scriptum.

sont dépourvus de signes vocaliques, sont totalement imprononçables, sauf pour qui en reconnaît le sens par le graphisme, dans la phraséologie schellingienne des *Âges du monde* : sauf si « la création [leur] insuffle la vie ». ⁴³ La très longue note de Schelling sur la dénomination cabirique du divin à Samothrace ⁴⁴ emprunte de multiples chemins, y compris celui de la Kabbale juive. ⁴⁵ Je m'en tiendrai à la voie islamique, parce qu'elle permet d'établir une comparaison par rapport à la contextualisation des noms divins que l'on a vu intervenir lors de l'incident dit des versets sataniques. Dans son Post-scriptum au mémoire, Schelling écrit que la doctrine des Cabires (*Kabirenlehre*), du fait de sa haute antiquité autant qu'en raison de la clarté et de la simplicité de ses contours est en quelque sorte « la clé de toutes les autres doctrines ». ⁴⁶

La phrase, par laquelle Schelling résume son analyse des dénominations divines à Samothrace, s'énonce ainsi :

Vollends aber jener, nicht alt-, nicht neutestamentlich, nur etwa mahomedanisch zu nennende Monotheismus, dessen Begriff doch eigentlich immer jenen Behauptungen zu Grund gelegt wird, widerstrebt dem ganzen Alterthum und der schöneren Menschlichkeit, die sich ganz in dem Ausspruche des Heraklit spiegelt, dem auch Plato Beifall gegeben : Das Eine weise Wesen will nicht das alleinige genannt seyn, den Namen Zeus will es. ⁴⁷

Enfin ce monothéisme qui n'est ni celui de l'Ancien ni celui du Nouveau Testament et qu'on peut seulement, à la rigueur, qualifier de mahométan, ce monothéisme, disons-nous, dont le concept est à vrai dire toujours mis à la base de ces assertions, est en opposition avec toute l'Antiquité, avec cette splendide société humaine qui s'exprime dans ces paroles d'Héraclite auxquelles Platon a donné son adhésion : l'unique être sage ne veut pas être appelé l'Un, il veut porter le nom de Zeus. ⁴⁸

Héraclite dit en réalité ceci : ἔν τὸ σοφὸν μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζητὸς ὄνομα, « Un, l'(être) Sage, Seul, ne veut pas et veut être appelé du nom de Zeus ». ⁴⁹ Ainsi que le précise la note 88 de Schelling, ⁵⁰ le fragment provient de Clément d'Alexandrie, lequel s'intéresse à l'aphorisme héraclitéen

⁴³ Schelling, *Les Âges du monde*, éd. P. David, 1992, 292.

⁴⁴ Schelling, *Ueber die Gottheiten von Samothrake*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, VIII 415-420, n. 113.

⁴⁵ KILCHER (2003), 138-139, a bien montré tout ce que Franz Joseph Molitor (1779-1860) devait à la note 113 dans la mise en œuvre de son grand projet de philosophie du judaïsme.

⁴⁶ Schelling, *Nachschrift*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, VIII 423.

⁴⁷ Schelling, *Samothrake*, in *Sämmtliche Werke*, VIII 362.

⁴⁸ Traduction JANKELEVITCH (1949), 212 (complétée et corrigée).

⁴⁹ Héraclite, fragment 32, in Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Dublin, Weidmann, 1972, I, 159.

⁵⁰ Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, VIII 401, n. 88.

à cause de sa première partie exploitable dans le cadre de la polémique contre le polythéisme.⁵¹ L'(être) Sage ne veut pas porter le nom de Zeus. Pour le commentateur récent de l'œuvre de Clément, Alain Le Boulluec, « l'appel à l'autorité de Platon en faveur d'Héraclite n'est pas parfaitement clair » ; selon lui, Clément « se réfère plutôt au *Phèdre* 278d, où il est dit que l'appellation de "sage" convient seulement à la divinité ».⁵² Le point de vue de Schelling n'a rien à voir avec celui de Clément, pas plus qu'avec celui d'Héraclite, dès lors que le philosophe allemand évacue de l'aphorisme la dualité. L'interprétation donnée à la première partie du fragment (l'unique être sage *ne veut pas* être appelé l'unique, *das alleinige*) vise le monothéisme islamique. La note 88 est très claire là-dessus : *mahommedanisch darf der Monotheismus wohl heissen, der nur Einer Persönlichkeit oder einer ganz einfachen Kraft den Namen Gott zugesteht*, « peut bien s'appeler mahométan le monothéisme qui ne concède le nom de Dieu qu'à une personne unique ou à une puissance toute simple ». La seconde partie du fragment (l'être sage *veut* porter le nom de Zeus) est l'énoncé positif de l'interprétation précédente et désigne le paganisme que la *Philosophie de la mythologie* situe en tant qu'étape intermédiaire entre judaïsme et christianisme.

Par conséquent, Samothrace et le Coran se rejoignent dans une même forme de monothéisme, archaïque et prébiblique. Ses caractéristiques consistent à n'accorder à la divinité suprême aucun nom particulier sauf celui d'Unique (théologie du *tawhīd*) ou bien, dans le cas du sanctuaire égéen, à ne réserver les dénominations qu'à des êtres seconds mais possédant la puissance de la divinité première.⁵³ D'après les sources antiques réunies par Naphtali Lewis, les Cabires de Samothrace ne constituent pas le sommet du divin, ils sont des êtres semi-divins, intermédiaires entre les dieux et les hommes, « *daimones* ou des-servants des dieux », *δαίμονες ἢ πρόπολοι θεῶν*, selon la formule qui les définit, transmise par Strabon.⁵⁴

Ce statut démonique des Cabires est, avant Strabon, noté chez Apollonius de Rhodes (III^e s. av. n.è.) lors de l'arrêt d'Orphée et de ses compagnons à Samothrace. Par reconnaissance pour les bienfaits reçus au cours des initiations aux rites du sanctuaire, « mystères qu'il ne nous est pas permis de chanter », les Argonautes expriment le vœu, par la bouche du poète, que « soient comblés de faveurs l'île et ceux à qui sont échus de tels mystères, ces êtres démoniques qui y ont pris domicile (*δαίμονες ἐνναέται*) ».⁵⁵ Le rôle du *δαίμων* est d'intercéder et de protéger. La réussite de la navigation des Argonautes résulte

⁵¹ Clément d'Alexandrie, *Stromates*, V 115, 1, éd. Le Boulluec (1981), I 213.

⁵² LE BOULLUEC (1981), II 339.

⁵³ Aspect bien mis en évidence par SCARPI (2005).

⁵⁴ Strabon, *Géographie*, X 3, 7 ; *πρόπολοι* : CHIAI 2017, 207-208, et n. 678.

⁵⁵ Apollonius de Rhodes, *Argonautica*, I 915-921 ; LEWIS (1958), n° 229.

des initiations pratiquées : σωότεροι κρυόεσαν ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα ναυτίλλοιντο « avec plus de sécurité ils naviguèrent sur la mer glaciale ». ⁵⁶ Les scholies parisiennes à Apollonius de Rhodes commentent ce vers, en précisant qu'au cours de la cérémonie les initiés sont ceints de bandelettes pourpres et que cela les protège des dangers de la mer. ⁵⁷ Pareillement, autre dévot des Cabires, ⁵⁸ Alexandre le Grand marque le succès de son expédition orientale en faisant élever, à une trentaine de stades de l'Hyphase à l'intérieur du territoire indien, un autel à ses *démons* protecteurs, portant l'inscription : Σαμόθραιζι Καβείροις, « Aux Cabires de Samothrace ». ⁵⁹ Chez les commentateurs antiques d'Apollonius de Rhodes, le passage de la dénomination des Cabires δαίμονες à celle de μεγάλοι θεοί, est assuré par la réussite des rites et la satisfaction des initiés *post eventum* : une fois que, *pleni deorum*, ⁶⁰ ils ont franchi sains et saufs les épreuves et les dangers. ⁶¹

En qualifiant de *mahommedanisch* la dénomination divine à Samothrace, Schelling a créé une nouvelle classification en histoire des religions, que l'islamologie, brouillée avec la discipline comparatiste, persiste à ignorer. En mettant le grand sanctuaire égéen à l'écart du polythéisme et l'islam en préalable aux religions abrahamiques, il a posé le fondement du processus théogonique historique qu'il s'apprête à construire pour l'*Introduction à la philosophie de la mythologie*. La comparaison qui apparaît avec le mémoire sur les noms divins à Samothrace est appelée à s'enrichir d'une nouvelle recrue, l'énigmatique Melchisédech, roi de Salem, tel un musulman tout entier voué à l'Unique... ⁶²

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⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I 918.

⁵⁷ Scholia Parisina à Apollonius, *Arg.*, I 918 ; LEWIS (1958), n° 229h.

⁵⁸ C'est, raconte Himérius, au cours de la cérémonie d'initiation à ces mystères que la future mère d'Alexandre, Olympias, s'est éprise de Philippe de Macédoine : LEWIS (1958), n° 194.

⁵⁹ Philostrate, *Vie d'Apollonius de Tyane*, II 43, LEWIS (1958), n° 209 ; commentaire : LAMOTTE (1951), 148-149.

⁶⁰ L'expression est de Valerius Flaccus, *Argonauticon*, II 441 ; LEWIS (1958), n° 229e.

⁶¹ Diodore de Sicile chez LEWIS (1958), n° 229d. L'acclamation en triple *kadosh* (« dieux grands, dieux forts, dieux bons ») est en grec chez Servius, *In Aeneidem*, I 378 ; LEWIS (1958), n° 183.

⁶² Gn 14, 18-20 ; Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, XI 167 ; COURTINE-MARQUET (1998), 170-172.

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