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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)

Divine Names on the Spot

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

PEETERS

DIVINE NAMES ON THE SPOT

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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 Iouis 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 κυνηγός (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” (*ʾlh*), “the god in this place” (*ʾlh bʾtr dnh*), or “the lord” (*ʾdny*). 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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