



HAL
open science

Zeus hupatos kreionton: A Comparative Study on Divine Sovereignty, Between Attica and Syria

Sylvain Lebreton, Giuseppina Marano

► **To cite this version:**

Sylvain Lebreton, Giuseppina Marano. Zeus hupatos kreionton: A Comparative Study on Divine Sovereignty, Between Attica and Syria. Alaya Palamidis; Corinne Bonnet. What's in a Divine Name? Religious Systems and Human Agency in the Ancient Mediterranean, De Gruyter, pp.391-412, 2024, 978-3-11-132651-1. 10.1515/9783111326511-020 . hal-04490553

HAL Id: hal-04490553

<https://hal.science/hal-04490553>

Submitted on 5 Mar 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Sylvain Lebreton and Giuseppina Marano

Zeus *hupatos kreionton*: A Comparative Study On Divine Sovereignty, Between Attica and Syria

Abstract: In Attica, as is common, Zeus is the richest in onomastic attributes. Among them, some indicate a sovereign function (*Hupatos*, *Basileus* . . .), but the corresponding cult seems reasonably modest or scarcely attested. On the other hand, some major city-protecting Zeuses, such as the *Polieus*, the *Olumpios* and the *Soter*, also played their part, but not at the same time and only in specific contexts and configurations. Ultimately, considering that onomastic attributes build networks among gods, Zeus' pre-eminence, if any, may lie in the fact that he is the most connected of the gods. A mirror situation is traceable in terms of the use of Zeus' name in Graeco-Roman Syria starting from the Hellenistic Age, when the idea of "sovereignty" itself was translated by iconographical and onomastic issues. Usually, when Zeus appears in the pantheons of big cities, as well as those of small villages, he is the main deity, able to represent the local god in all his power. However, from a small to a large scale, Zeus penetrates the religious plot of the Ancient Near East, meaning both proximity to Semitic features and distance from them, even though judging their cultural continuity or rupture on time is still a delicate exercise.

When dealing with divine sovereignty in the ancient Greek-speaking world, the figure of Zeus surely comes to mind. Straight away, in Homer, he is *hupatos kreionton*, the "highest of the most powerful (gods)": his "bright-eyed (*glaukopis*)" daughter Athena addresses him with this double superlative denomination twice in the first Book of the *Odyssey*, and once again at the end of the poem.¹ But, for those looking for tutelary deities of Greek *poleis*, Zeus has not been granted this role as often as Athena, Artemis, Apollo or Hera. Yet, if we move from this civic scale to wider as well as narrower ones, the picture might look quite different: regional federations often share a cult of Zeus (especially on mountain-tops, such as Zeus *Lukaios* in Arcadia,² or Zeus *Ataburios* in Rhodes); and this god is perhaps the most frequent protector of sub-civic

¹ Hom. *Od.* 1.45; 1.81; 24, 473.

² Jost 1985, 249–269, esp. 267–268; Nielsen 2015, esp. 250–252.

Note: This publication has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 741182, Project "Mapping Ancient Polytheisms"). We warmly thank Maurice Sartre for having given us access to the numbering and concordances of the inscriptions in the *IGLS* 16 issues not yet published.

groups, from phratries or the like (as Phratrios, Patroios, Hikesios, Alastoros)³ down to *oikoi* (as Ktesios and Herkeios).⁴ But maybe this takes us too far from the actual significance of divine sovereignty itself. Taking a step aside, leaving the Aegean area can provide a better view.

Thus, this paper will follow a comparatist approach which will try to mirror Zeus' onomastic attributes in Attica and Syria. Actually, despite the importance of the god's cults in both areas, comparison is not that easy a feat. The documentation and contexts are quite different. The richness and variety of sources in Athens give us insights into Zeus' onomastic landscapes as well as their political, social, spatial and historical contexts, that cannot be attained in Syria. But this discrepancy can be fruitful in helping us grasp what divine – Zeus' – sovereignty is exactly. Here probably lies at least a part of the problem. Is a sovereign god the most powerful? The most popular? The most frequently associated with political institutions – the latter being quite different in Syria and in Attica, and within each of these regions in a given historical period? Whatever the criterion chosen, divine onomastics is helpful in exploring each of these tracks: most epithets or other onomastic attributes – including “Zeus” itself⁵ – directly refer to or bear a connotation of these semantic fields. In itself, onomastic richness can give a hint of the importance of a given deity. Following a common approach since Plutarch's *Lives*, this paper will cover each paralleled region after the other, before suggesting a comparison between them.

1 Who is the Greatest Zeus of Athens?

1.1 Zeus' Richness in Epithets

Is Zeus the greatest god in Athens? Surely not. Athena most certainly is, bearing the heavy historiographical burden of the archetype of tutelary goddess – the confusion between “tutelary” and “poliad” being a casualty of an excessive generalisation of this Athenian model.⁶ But she would perhaps not be so powerful without her father: their partnership is heavily emphasised by their common epithets, a well-known configuration in Attica and elsewhere.⁷ Actually, Zeus is by far the richest god in terms of onomastic attributes in Attica – as in many other Greek *poleis*. This statement is effective in documentary, quantitative and qualitative terms: to the 328 epigraphical testimo-

3 Parker 2008.

4 Brulé 2006.

5 Parker 2017.

6 On this issue, see Paul 2016.

7 See Paul 2010.

nies⁸ we must add hundreds of literary references displayed in a wide – chronological as well as typological – range, attesting some 40 different cult-epithets for Zeus in Attica. Bulks of Zeus denominations unsurprisingly pertain to mountain-tops (Anchesmios, Epakrios, Humettios, Karios, Kasios, Parnessios/Parnethios, Polieus), heights and vision from above (Epopetes, Epopsios, Hupatos, Hupsistos), weather and signs (Astrapaios, Auanter, Huetios, Kataibates, Maimaktes, Morios, Ombrios, Semaleos, Semios) and sovereignty, protection of communities and political life (see below), but also to social relationships (Epiteleios, Geleon, Heraios, Philios, Phratrios, Teleios, Xenios) or purification and the aversion of evil (Alastoros/Elasteros, Alexikakos, Apemios, Exakester, Katharios, Melichios, Melosios, Nephaliios), not to mention exclusive epithets pointing to agriculture (Georgos) and abundance (Ktesios).⁹ This, in itself can be seen as an expression of his divine sovereignty: beyond the specificities of his morphology, as the divine ruler of the cosmos, he plays a part in many aspects of the lives of the Athenians. From another point of view, one can suppose that, considering the bias of the documentation – we know much more about the institutional religious structures of the city-state (which we are still keen to call *polis*-religion, whatever the scale considered) – this richness is the expression of the heavy presence of Zeus in political and social institutions.

Indeed, Zeus was the first to bear epithets in Athens, from as early as the late 8th – early 7th century BCE.¹⁰ During the archaic period, he is the only god for whom several different (proper cult-) epithets are attested in Athens. As mentioned before, since he had more epithets than any other god, his functions are, as a matter of fact, wider. As another consequence, he should be conceived as the one who has *par excellence* many epithets – a point explicitly stated by ancient authors.¹¹ At least in epigraphy, he is the only god to be more frequently attested with an epithet than without, from the Archaic to the Roman imperial period, and whatever the type of inscriptions considered (Tab. 1a–b).¹² Thus, it

8 In the *DB MAP*, the element Ζεύς appears in 331 testimonies, out of a total of 2209 located in Attica. Then come Αθήνη / Αθηνᾶ (288), Ἀρτεμις (238) and Ἀπόλλων (214). With 375 testimonies, only the generic Θεός / Θεά (also registered in frequent expressions such as καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς οἷς πατριον ἦν) surpasses Ζεύς.

9 See Lebreton, *forthcoming*. For a previous overview of Zeus' cult epithets in Athens, see Wycherley 1964, 175–179.

10 In dedications from his sanctuary on Mount Parnes, Zeus is Parnes(s)ios and Hikesios: *SEG* 33, 244c-e = *DB MAP* S#5711–5713.

11 *X. Smp* 8.9.

12 Tab. 1a and 1b compare the number of testimonies in which deities are named with theonyms and epithets, or with theonyms only, in dedications from Attica up to (Tab. 1a) and from (Tab. 1b) 403/2 BCE onwards. To avoid sterile counting complexification and delimitation of the material, we based the graphs on all – but only – the dedications gathered in *IG I³ 2* (up to 403/2, Tab. 1a) and *IG II³ 4* (from 403/2 BCE onwards, Tab. 1b), although the inclusion or exclusion of a given inscription on categorising grounds can be a matter of legitimate discussion. In fact, these fascicules provide sufficient quantitative data to be representative of god-naming in dedicatory practice (widely understood, *i.e.* including labels on altars and boundary stones). From respectively about 500 (*IG I³ 501–1030bis*, 1049–1086bis; dedications and boundary stones from outside Attica were not taken into account) and 2000 (*IG II³ 4*) documents, only inscriptions in which the reading is uncertain and metrical ones were

Tab. 1a: Theonyms and epithets in dedications and labels up to 403/2 BCE (*IG I³*).

Deity	Theonym only	Theonym + epithet
Apollo	1	2
Artemis	0	3
Athena	150	6
Zeus	2	4

Tab. 1b: Theonyms and epithets in dedications and labels from 403/2 BCE on (*IG II³ 4*).

Deity	Theonym only	Theonym + epithet
Aphrodite	36	11
Apollo	23	33
Artemis	32	20
Asklepios	140	9
Athena	29	28
Demeter (and Kore)	38	12
Dionysos	25	8
Hermes	38	8
Zeus	6	87

seemed harder for ancient people to address or to refer to, and thus perhaps to conceive of, Zeus without an epithet.¹³

Focusing on Zeus' position in Athenian polytheism, this first part of the paper will follow two paths: the examination of Zeus' epithets semantically connected to sovereignty (1.2) and then those contextually associated with an actual role of city-protector (1.3).

1.2 Modesty of Sovereign Zeuses in Attica

A possible way to designate the tutelary deity in Greek is the epithet *hupatos* – “the most high”, hence “supreme”: in Pseudo-Euripides' *Rhesus*, one of the questions asked by the chorus to the unknown stranger (Ulysses) to find out more about his identity and origin is precisely, after his fatherland, who is the highest of the gods (*hupatos theon*) to whom he prays.¹⁴ There was indeed a cult of Zeus Hupatos in Athens. Ac-

excluded (and, of course, inscriptions without any divine name, such as *IG II³ 4*, 1560–1739). The graph only shows the “major” deities, at least those who have been given onomastic attributes in prose text (that is, up to the late 5th century, only Zeus, Athena, Apollo and Artemis).

¹³ Notwithstanding the many exceptions to this statement, this leads us to the “One and Many” issue, covered in part 2 of this book.

¹⁴ E. *Rh.* 702–703: τίς ἦν; πόθεν; ποίας πάτρας; | ποῖον <δ'> ἐπέυχεται τὸν ὑπατον θεῶν;

According to Pausanias, he had an altar on the Acropolis, before the entrance of the Erechtheion, where he received no *empsychon* (“animate”, *i.e.* animal) offering, but only cakes (*pemmata*) and wineless libations.¹⁵ The sacrificial calendar of the Marathonian Tetrapolis (ca 375–350 BCE) registers an offering of unknown nature to him, likely an animal.¹⁶ Just from these two testimonies of the cult of Hupatos in Attica, this Zeus appears to be a pretty modest god, without any clear political, sovereign or tutelary function. In Athens, Zeus Hupatos was obviously not worshipped as a *hupatos choras* god, an onomastic attribute that was, however, given to him by the Argian herald in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*.¹⁷ Only a 5th-century BCE boundary stone of “Zeus Hupatos of Athe(ns)?” in Elea (Velia), the interpretation of which remains unclear, may suggest that he held such a role for the Athenians.¹⁸ But still, his role in the Athenian acropolis, where, as Polieus, Zeus appears clearly to be guarantor of Athena tutelary/poliadic function, would still need to be explained: What is the Hupatos for? Perhaps he was only the product of an *exegesis* of the Homeric denomination used to speak to him by his daughter – who is *glaukopsis* in the *Odyssey* as quoted above, as well as in many dedications on the Athenian acropolis.¹⁹

In a different context, this observation is also true for another onomastic attribute of Zeus, quasi-synonymous to *hupatos*, namely *hupsistos* (also “the most high”). His cult in his shrine on the Pnyx (and perhaps also in the Piraeus) during the Imperial period, attested by some thirty dedications,²⁰ precisely sanctions a distance, or even a break, with political/civic or any social or collective institutions. These votives emanate from fairly powerless people, exalting a supreme god and naming him in consequence, not to attain empowerment, but simply to be cured. It seems that the less political or social possibilities they had, the more powerful they believed their god to be. This hypothesis about Hupsistos is not extendable to Hupatos: albeit synon-

¹⁵ Paus. 1.26.5. On wineless libations, see Pirenne-Delforge 2011.

¹⁶ *CGRN* 56 A, Col. II, l. 13 = *DB MAP* T#654: Διὶ Ὑπ[άτωι . . . ^{c.5} . . .]. All preserved entries register at least an animal: considering the financial purpose of the document, it would make little sense to dedicate an entry simply to cakes or other non-animal offerings. Full discussion in Lambert 2000, 60.

¹⁷ A. Ag. 509.

¹⁸ *IG Velia* 6 (2nd half of the 5th cent. BCE) = *DB MAP* S#13970.

¹⁹ *Glaukopsis* in dedications from the Athenian Acropolis: Kaczko, *Attic Dedicatory Epigrams* 106; 107; *IG* I³ 507; 508; 509bis; 544; 592; 667; 902bis (ca 650–500 BCE). On this onomastic attribute (*DB MAP* E#793), see Grand-Clément 2010.

²⁰ *IG* II³ 4, 1239–1276 (Athens, Pnyx) and 1291–1292 (in the Piraeus Museum, exact finding-place unknown). The god, when named (dedications without any divine onomastic attribute can be included in the dossier considering their type), can be designated as Zeus Hupsistos, Theos Hupsistos or Hupsistos – respectively 9 (*DB MAP* T#4273, 4305, 4312, 4313, 4315, 4320, 4322, 4325, 4350), 4 (*DB MAP* T#4272, 4275, 4310, 4324), and 20 (*DB MAP* T#4223, 4224, 4269–4271, 4274, 4276, 4277, 4299–4304, 4316, 4318, 4321, 4323, 4326, 4351) occurrences. But, apart from the space available for the inscription on the monuments, no rationale of this choice appears to be clear, especially considering the gender or motivations of the agents. On Hupsistos, see Belayche 2005.

ymous, the two epithets appear in different contexts, with needs from different agents, and thus with different connotations.

The use of another epithet of Zeus pointing to – albeit another form – of sovereignty, namely *Basileus*, “King”, also rarely appears in Athenian *polis* religion. Indeed, in the *Anabasis*, this onomastic attribute clearly identifies this god as the personal protector of Xenophon, as some scholars have already noted,²¹ but especially in situations of dramatic tension connected to monarchic power.²² But, outside Xenophon, testimonies of a cult to Zeus *Basileus* in Attica are scarce,²³ hinting that perhaps the author of the *Anabasis* chose this divine figure (*via* the Delphic oracle) based on its lack of actual political weight in Athens.²⁴

Moiragetes, “Leader-of-the-Moirai” or “Master-of-shares”, identifies Zeus as manager of cosmic distribution, among humans as well as immortals. Such a role is precisely the landmark upon which his sovereignty among the Olympians is based, according to Hesiod’s *Theogony*.²⁵ Once again, such an extent of power contrasts with the discretion of his cult in Attica. Its sole testimony can be found in the highly disputed 5th-century BCE regulation concerning the religious prerogatives of the Praxiergidai, in which an oracle (most likely from Delphi) prescribes or confirms the performance of a sacrifice to the Moirai, Zeus Moiragetes (and) Ge by this *genos*.²⁶ The modesty of this Zeus is not necessarily due to the scarcity of the testimony, but rather on his rank in the divine onomastic sequence. Here, he comes in second place, which may be quite surprising considering that he often tops divine lists.²⁷ But if we look more closely at the type of divine configuration, this second position is less surprising, or at least frequent enough to not be considered an accident and offer some kind of explanation. In fact, in Attica, as elsewhere in the Greek world, combinations such as Ares and Athena

21 *X. An.* 3.1.6; 6.1.22. See Parker 2004; Bruit Zaidman 2005; Bruit Zaidman 2013.

22 *X. An.* 3.1.11–12 (prospect of fighting against the Persian *king* Artaxerxes); 6.1.22–24 and 7.6.44 (sacrifices to the god to find out if Xenophon shall, respectively, be the *commander* of the expedition, and remain by the Thracian *king* Seuthes).

23 The god only appears, with Apollo Patroos and Demeter, in the oath taken in the court of Ardettos (Poll. 8.122). Other similar lists of divine witnesses of oaths taken by Heliasts mention Zeus, but without any epithet [D. 24.151; Din. fr. 29 (ed. Conomis); see also Ar. *Eq.* 941]. See also Sol. fr. 31 (ed. West), who prescribes a first prayer Δὲ Κρονίδη βασιλῆϊ to bring good fortune and glory to his *thesmoi* (see the contribution of V. Pirenne-Delforge in this volume, p. 199, note 136).

24 A similar, and even more doubtful, case is that of Zeus Pankrates, only invoked in A. *Supp.* 816 (see also Hsch. II 20), probable inspiration of the presence of the god in the vow of the so-called Themistocles’ decree (Meiggs – Lewis, *GHI* 23 = *DB MAP* S#3038, a Troezenian 3rd cent. BCE forgery). The implication of Zeus in the sanctuary of Pankrates by the Ilissos is not clear (*IG* II³ 4 649, 1470–1496; see Parker 2005, 419–421).

25 See Pironti 2009.

26 *CGRN* 24 A (ca. 460 BCE), l. 11–12 = *DB MAP* T#1046.

27 Zeus’ leading position appears quite clearly in interstate oaths (see Brulé 2005). It is less obvious in other types of documents: in the *DB MAP*, out of 139 testimonies including at least three divine powers in Attica, Zeus appears 23 times, including 15 times in first position.

Areia (as in the Athenian ephebic oath, see below), that is, the association of a deity A and a deity B with an epithet built on the name of deity A, often appear in this order, *i.e.* with the deity without an epithet first, followed by the deity who bears an epithet built on the name of the latter. This is the case with epithets simply deriving from a theonym (Aphrodite and Zeus Aphrodisios in Paros, the Damateres and Zeus Damatrios in Rhodos²⁸), but also with compounds including the suffix *-getes* (“leading”), which is quite surprising: the leader comes after the chorus, when he is supposed to lead. But the scheme is recurrent, with the Moirai and Zeus Moiragetes,²⁹ the Nymphs and Apollo Numphagetes³⁰ and the Muses with Apollo Mousegetes and Mnemosyne in sacrifices prescribed by Apollo of Delphi for the Archilocheion at Paros in the mid-3rd century BCE.³¹ As in the Praxiergidai decree, the structure of the divine configuration can be the result of an oracular habit. Another way to read the configuration Moirai, Zeus Moiragetes and Ge is to interpret Zeus’ position not as second (*i.e.* subaltern), but rather central, especially keeping in mind that Ge, particularly in Athens, can be identified with Themis,³² the deity who gave birth to the Moirai from Zeus, according to Hesiod’s *Theogony*.³³ These plural configurations could also be the expression of divine family ties, which possibly enhance what is at stake in the Praxiergidai decree: the sequence Moirai / [Zeus # Moiragetes] / Ge likely guarantees the renewal of generations and thus the survival of the community.³⁴

Therefore, except for 6th-5th-century metrical dedications to Athena from the Acropolis, where the goddess is sometimes called the daughter of the great (*megas*) Zeus,³⁵ it seems that the onomastic attributes of the god semantically designating him as (the most) great, powerful, high, supreme and so on, neither refer to an important collective cult nor to politics. What could sound paradoxical can be interpreted as the reflection of: 1. The deeply polytheistic conceptions of divine societies in ancient

²⁸ Respectively, *IG XII 5*, 220 (3rd cent. BCE) and *I.Lindos 183* (ca 200–150 BCE) = *DB MAP S#17514* and 13368.

²⁹ *CGRN 51* (Chios, 4th cent. BCE) = *DB MAP S#130*.

³⁰ *CGRN 17* = *DB MAP S#5039* (Thasos, ca 475–450 BCE), for which the iconography (the famous relief of the “Passage des Théores” in the Louvre) neither supports nor contradicts the text, since Apollo (left) and the group of the Nymphs (right) are facing each other, separated by a niche between them. Yet note the base dedicated Ἀπόλλωνι Νυμφαγέται | καὶ Νύμφαις from Cyrene (*I.Roman Cyrenaica C.317* = *DB MAP S#3634*, 1st cent. CE). The layout of *CGRN 52* = *DB MAP S#1* (Erchia, a 4th-cent. BCE five-column calendar) and *IG XII 6*, 527 = *DB MAP S#9241* (Samos, a 5th-cent. BCE opisthographic altar, for which sides A – Apollo Numphagetes – and B – Nymphs – are a mere editorial convention) makes it impossible to choose one order over the other.

³¹ Clay 2004, 104–110, no. 2, E1, Col. II, l. 3–4 = *DB MAP T#21838*.

³² A. Pr. 209–210 (but see *Eu.* 1–4). *IG II³ 4*, 1968 = *DB MAP S#6466* (Theatre of Dionysos Eleuthereus, 2nd cent. CE).

³³ Hes. *Th.* 900–905.

³⁴ Pirenne-Delforge/Pironti 2011, 103–104.

³⁵ *IG I³ 608*, 631, 632, [674, 687], 743, 752, [783], 862 = *DB MAP S#2157*, 2170, 2171, 2182, 2208, 2226, 2228, 2238, 2275 (550–450 BCE).

Greece, where it seems that it was hard for people to conceive of only one god mastering all aspects of life alone; 2. The quite structural distrust of the Athenian *polis* in autocratic political power, at least from the fall of the Pisistratids to the end of the Hellenistic period. From the Roman Imperial era, and especially from the reign of Hadrian onwards, a rather monarchic and centralised Zeus (re)emerges, in the guise of the Olympian and the Panhellenic. But given that things are always more complex than such a simple statement, we must precise that: 1. The Olympian Zeus was not only important during Hadrian's reign, but also a long time before; 2. During the Imperial period, Olympian Zeus did not cancel out other (especially political or city-protecting) Zeuses in Athens. It is now time to take a closer look at those major city-protecting Zeuses.

1.3 City-Protecting Zeuses: Musical Chairs Throughout the Centuries?

Investigating tutelary and city-protecting deities in the Greek world inevitably leads to the epithet *Polieus/Polias*. There was indeed a cult of Zeus *Polieus* in Athens, well attested from the late 6th century BCE to the Roman Imperial period, the main festival of which was the *Dipolia*, held for the god on the Acropolis in mid-Skirophorion (June/July).³⁶ Historiographically blurred by the well-known account by Theophrastus (*apud* Porphyrius) of the origin of the *Bouphonia* (the “Ox-slaying” ritual which was part of the *Dipolia*), pointing out the harshly disputed issue of violence in sacrifice, the political significance of this cult should nevertheless be justly estimated. In fact, another version of the aetiology of the *Dipolia* – by far less famous than that of Theophrastus/Porphyrius – given by Hesychius (Δ 1925) tells quite a different story:

They say that during the vote of the Athenians [to elect their patron deity], since Athena and Poseidon were in competition, Athena asked Zeus to vote for her, in return for which she promised him that the first sacrificial animal would be offered on the altar of the *Polieus* (ὕποσχέσθαι ἀντὶ τούτου τὸ τοῦ Πολιέως ἱερεῖον πρῶτον θύεσθαι ἐπὶ βωμοῦ).

The mention of the “first” *hiereion* (albeit not explicitly an ox) and of the altar of the *Polieus* allows us to associate this testimony with the *Dipolia*. The content of the text is clear: as the result of some kind of backroom negotiations, Zeus grants Athena the role of patron deity for the Athenians in exchange for the seat of the *Polieus* for himself – and the absence of a theonym before *Polieus* in the text perhaps reveals that this seat was awaiting its holder.³⁷ In other words, the cult of the *Polieus* – thus

³⁶ Whole dossier in Lebreton 2015.

³⁷ I warmly thank Thomas Galoppin for a stimulating discussion on the interpretation of this onomastic sequence, *Polieus tout court* and not (Zeus) *Polieus*; yet the specificities of such a lexicographic notice do not allow one to fully take the letter of the text for granted.

Zeus – guarantees the tutelary position of Athena in Athens. Other sources pertaining to the cult of this Zeus in Attica indeed confirm his competence in unifying the city-state, even if this epithet also denotes an acropolitian location and bears meteorological and thus agricultural connotations. This said, if the Polieus guarantees the cohesion of the *polis*, the Athenian documentation about him does not reveal a very active city-protecting function. On the contrary, Zeus seems to have assumed such a role as Olumpios and Soter (“Saving”, “Saviour”). Olympian Zeus appears as such in the framework of the Athenian foreign policy, at least twice between the mid-5th and the mid-4th centuries: a provision of the Chalcis decree of 446/5 – or rather 424/3? – designates him the recipient of the tithe of the goods confiscated from the Chalkidians who would not swear the oath,³⁸ the Athenian decree ratifying the alliance with Arcadia, Achaia, Elis and Phlious, concluded after the battle of Mantinea (362 BCE), includes a vow “to Olympian Zeus and to Athena Polias and to Demeter and to Kore and to the Twelve Gods and to the Semnai Theai”.³⁹ From the mid-4th century onwards, and especially after 338 BCE, Zeus *Soter* seems to take over in terms of protecting the Athenian city-state in a more defensive way. In Lycurgus’ *Against Leocrates*, the orator refers to him several times as a theological reflection of the *soteria* at stake in this speech, deeply rooted in the post-Chaeronean context.⁴⁰ During the Hellenistic period, the *Soter* still plays this role combining political freedom and military defence, as several inscriptions emanating from the garrison in Rhamnous after the liberation from the Macedonian rule in 229 show.⁴¹ The collective investment of Athenians in Zeus Olumpios and Soter, compared to Zeus Polieus, can also be seen in the properties owned by these gods and the number of animals sacrificed to them. In the inventory of the other gods of 429/8 BCE, the Olympian Zeus is the one most frequently mentioned,⁴² and about one century later he was still among the important divine land owners in Attica.⁴³ The accounts of the Treasurers of Athena and the *epimeletai*, in-

38 *IG I³* 40, l. 33–35 = *DB MAP T#2256*. The question actually arises as to which Olympian Zeus the tithe is to be paid: the one in Olympia (Elis), who received many tithe-dedications on war spoils? The Chalcidian one, whose sanctuary was the place where the decree was published (l. 61–63 = *DB MAP T#2260*)? Or the Athenian one, owner of many properties (land as well as movable assets), which would make more sense in such an imperialist decree?

39 Rhodes – Osborne, *GHI* 41, l. 7–9 = *DB MAP T#4332*. On this plural divine configuration, see Dušanić 2000; Brulé 2005, 152; Parker 2005, 406.

40 Lycurg. *Against Leocrates* 17 (with Athena *Soteira*) and 136–137 (three times, alone). Apart from quotations from other authors, the word σωτηρία occurs some 25 times (+ 9 times for σώζω and its derivatives/compounds) all along the speech: 8, 17, 18, 39, 42, 43 (x2), 44, 45, 46, 47, 52, 64, 67 (x2), 70, 86, 88, 95, 114, 123 (x2), 129, 131, 140, 142, 143 (x2), 144, 148 (x2), 149, 150 (x2). By comparison, ἀσφάλεια (and derivatives) is only used 6 times (42, 47, 114, 128, 143, 149) and ὑγίεια, never.

41 *LRhamnous* 22, 26, 31, 411, 421, 488; *IG II³* 4, 308 A, 311–318 = *DB MAP S#3021, 3023, 3024, 15680, 15681, 15808; 1116, 1117–1124 (229–99/8)*.

42 *IG I³*, 383, l. 78–79, 269–270, 276–277, 325–326, 348–349 = *DB MAP T#2704, 2732, 2734, 2742, 2752*.

43 Williams 2011, fr. c-d (ca 355–320), l. 1–2, 4–5, 7–8, [11?], 26 = *DB MAP T#3818–3821*.

cluding the income from the sale of the skins (*dermatikon*) of the sacrificed animals during the period 334/3–331/0 BCE, show that dozens of oxen were slain during the Olympieia, held for Olympian Zeus, whereas Zeus Soter received hundreds (by far the greatest amount).⁴⁴ Beyond the difficulties linked to the exceptional nature of such documents, which prevent us from carrying out a real comparison and evaluation of the evolution over the years, the Olumpios and the Soter seem to have been more sensitive to the ups and downs of Athenian history than the Polieus. Before and after the 5th–4th centuries, the figure of the Olympian Zeus was used, so to speak, by Pisistratus as well as Hadrian. From the 4th century and all throughout the Hellenistic period, Zeus *Soter* held a prominent position he apparently lost in Imperial times. In this game of musical chairs, Zeus Polieus, obviously more stable, seems to emerge as the final winner. At least, this is what we can read from the fact that his priest kept a central prohedry seat in the theatre of Dionysos Eleuthereus from the 2nd century BCE to the late Roman period; those of Zeus Olumpios and Soter were moved during the first centuries CE and were nowhere near as good.⁴⁵

Looking at semantically sovereign, but discreet, Zeuses, as well as more important ones backing up Athena in her tutelary function, we may get the impression that this god is simply divided between these numerous figures designated by different cult-epithets. But, in a polytheistic system, this is precisely wherein lies the extension of his power. Being the guarantor of cosmic and social order, his presence, like water, seeps everywhere, in the form of wide rivers as well as little droplets. Among the society of the gods, small Zeuses are just as important as big ones, since they contribute equally to the centrality of the god in the network of onomastic attributes: by his richness in bynames, Zeus relates to many other deities, more than any other great god or goddess does – even Athena in Athens. Finally, even without an epithet or another onomastic attribute, Zeus' sovereignty or centrality in Athenian polytheism can be shown. Who, other than him, could give cohesion to all the “(divine) witnesses” of the Athenian Ephebic oath? That is perhaps why he is in the middle of this list.⁴⁶

44 *IG II*², 1496 + 413+ = *DB MAP* S#2795, col. IV, l. 82–83 (Olympieia in 334/3) and 118–119 (Olympieia in 333/2): respectively 671 dr. and 500+ dr., thus 96 and at least 70 animals. *Ibid.*, l. 89–90 (sacrifices to Zeus *Soter* in 334/3) and 118–119 (sacrifices to Zeus *Soter* in 333/2): respectively 1050 and 2610 ½ dr., thus 150 and 377 animals. For the evaluation of ca 7 dr. per skin, see Jameson 1988, 107–112.

45 Priest of Zeus Polieus: *IG II*³ 4, 1917 = *DB MAP* S#6415 (2nd cent. BCE), *kerkis* VII (central), seat 4 (just next to the throne of the priest of Dionysos Eleuthereus); of Olympian Zeus: *IG II*³ 4, 1914 = *DB MAP* S#6413 (2nd cent. CE), *kerkis* VII, seat 1; of Zeus Soter and Athena Soteira: *IG II*³ 4, 1902 = *DB MAP* S#6328 (2nd–3rd cent. CE), *kerkis* IV, seat 5. See Maass 1972, 104 and plan G III d; 105 and plan G I a; 129–130 and plan D II e.

46 Rhodes – Osborne, *GHI* 88 (ca 350–325 BCE), l. 16–20 = *DB MAP* T#4281. The dynamic of this divine configuration could also be read – at least partly – in time and space: the order in which the deities are listed reflects a kind of journey which begins where the ephebes start, at the centre of the city (Aglaureion, Hestia/hearth); then, between the warfare they are about to practice (Enyo, Enyalios, Ares and Athena *Areia*) and the growth of the young people they still are (Thallo, Auxo, Hegemone),

2 The Near Eastern Zeus

In the Ancient Near East, the name Zeus is a multi-faceted mark of power. Despite his mightiness, he is not often a civic god and he shares the protection of the village, the city or the kingdom with other gods. Starting from the assumption that even an incontrovertible fact such as the supremacy of the gods' father responds differently depending on the stimuli, we will present, first of all, the case of a Semitic god who does not receive attributes of protection/power (adjectives such as *kurios*, *despotes*, *basi-leios* etc.), but who is qualified as Zeus only in Greek public inscriptions and through this attribute shows himself as the sole god of the place; secondly, we will test the case of Zeus Olumpios in the Near East, which is a peculiar product of Seleucid Age, and guarantor of Seleucid traditions, in this sense a sovereign deity.

2.1 Power From and Over Places

Just as for the Greeks, Zeus embodies the power over men and gods as early as Homer, the Near Eastern epigraphical and numismatic repertoire confirms the link between Zeus and the attributes belonging to this semantic field. From the iconography, he emerges as the enthroned god who rules over everything; thus, with the victory in his hands, he fits the “nikephoros” type; the “keraunophoros” type too, as the origin of the atmospheric events; the “ouranios” type, when he holds the stars; again, the “kataibates” type, when sitting on the peak of the mountain and dispensing his power from there in a high-low relationship, constantly present in the dynamic “divine space – human space”;⁴⁷ furthermore, he is armoured like the “dolichenus” type, when he is dressed in a Roman military outfit, with trousers and a Phrygian cap.⁴⁸ In the same way, onomastics paints a similar picture: he is often Megistos, Kurios or Despotes and even bears the Persian title Great King in one inscription from ʿUṭul Keram on the West of Sichem, dedicated to “Ares Hoplophoros (Bearing-arms) of Zeus Great King”.⁴⁹

they (first?) meet a seated (enthroned?) Zeus, to finally walk, in the company of wandering and evil-averter Herakles, in the *chora* to the boundaries of the city-state's territory (boundaries of the fatherland, wheat, barley, vines, olive-trees, fig-trees).

47 See Butcher 2004, who collects all of these monetary types present in the issues of Antioch, Seleucia Pieria, Cyrrhus and Hierapolis.

48 On Jupiter Dolichenus, see Facella 2006; Blömer 2015, 129–142; Blömer 2017, 96–112; Blömer/Facella 2017, 101–123.

49 *SEG* 8, 32 = *DB MAP* S#15718. See Seyrig 1962, 207; Ovadia 1975, 120; Lifshitz 1977a, 275; Di Segni 1997a, 268; Belayche 2001, 260–261; Lichtenberger 2003, 43. Hoplophoros is an epithet of Pallas in Thesaly (Helly, *Gonnoi* II 156 = *DB MAP* S#14894, ca 250–200 BCE). On Zeus and Ares, see Parker 2017. See also Jupiter Heliopolitanus as *Rex deorum* in one inscription from Berytus (Hajjar 1977, 197).

Nevertheless, the most widespread strategy for referring to the maximum power of a god in the Near East remains the dialectic between high and low, in which the high space belongs to the gods: they rule what happens on high, such as atmospheric events, as well as the social life that takes place below. That is why, apart from semantically related height attributes like *Hupsistos*,⁵⁰ topographical names of mountains and heights are frequently found. The Zeus of such and such mountain governs and regulates the world below and, consequently, mountain temples are places of pilgrimage and/or oracular seats. These sanctuaries were the core of the irradiation of the god's power and the elites linked to their management. The sanctuary of Baitokaike is an exemplary case.⁵¹

On the slope of the Al-Nabi Saleh Mountain, at a distance of 56 km from Tartous (Arados), we find the site of Baitokaike; only the ruins of the sanctuary with two buildings remain, but a village must also have been built there. The site has not been excavated; its Phoenician past remains undiscovered. A sanctuary already existed there in the Hellenistic Age, while the current and displayed state of the sanctuary is that of 2nd-3rd century CE; and one inscription, albeit engraved in that late period, contains a letter from an undefined king Antiochus, concerning the assignment of privileges, and thus may refer to the Seleucid Era.⁵² We can follow the hypothesis that the domain of Baitokaike, including the village, was integrated into the Seleucid area and granted as homage to someone from the royal entourage. The epigraphic repertoire adds data about the deity worshipped in this place, who received several onomastic attributes often including the name of the place: Θεῶ Βαιτοχειχει, Θε[ῶ μεγ]άλω [Βαιτο]κ[αικη], Θεῶ μ[εγίστ]ω Βετοχιχι, Θεῶ [μ]εγίστω ἀγίω ἐπηκόω Βαιτοχειχει, Θεῶ Βετοχιχι, Θεῶ ἀγίω Βετοχειχει, Θεῶ μεγίστω κεραυνίω Βηχιχι, are some of his names, with relative transcripts of the toponym/theonym Baitokaike.⁵³ The inscriptions date from Roman times and are all in Greek; the agents are mostly military and, in one case, a cavalry man. The god is so anchored to the place where his sanctuary resides that he is known by the name of the village, but he is also holy, great, the greatest and is always a *theos*. The use of the toponym that becomes a theonym gives strength to the hypothesis that we are dealing with a cult well rooted in the local fabric, something backed by the inscription of the assignment of privileges. It consists of four different documents in the same bilingual inscription (Greek-Latin): 1) an imperial rescript of Valerian and Gallienus (258/260 CE); 2) the letter of an unspecified king

50 See Belayche 2005 and, in general on the topic, the whole book Belayche *et al.* (eds.) 2005.

51 For an introduction to the site and the whole text translated, see Bonnet 2015, 132–149.

52 *IGLS* 7, 4028 = *DB MAP* S#1476. See Seyrig 1951, 191–206; Seyrig 1964, 9–50, especially 28–43; Baroni 1984, 135–167; Rey-Coquais 1987, 191–216; Feissel 1993, 13–26; Rigsby 1996, 504–511; Steinsapir 1999, 182–194; Dignas 2002, 74–84 and 156–167; Seibert 2003, 365–374; Freyberger 2004, 13–40; Yon/Gatier 2009, 138–143, no. 34; Bonnet 2015, 135–149.

53 *IGLS* 7, 4028, 4029, 4031–4035, 4037, 4038, 4041 = *DB MAP* S#1476, 1464, 1448, 1459, 1460, 1462, 1465–1468.

Antiochus who grants privileges for the sacred place; 3) a text sent to Augustus by the community regarding some practical provisions and, finally, 4) a colophon explaining the composite nature of the inscription itself. The text applies to an entire community, which describes itself as *polis*. It is, to some extent, a *pastiche* of the sanctuary's public history and its interactions with kings and emperors.

This is the only inscription in which the great god Baitokaike is called Zeus. Unlike the sanctuary's other inscriptions, in which the god shows different atmospheric and perhaps oracular characteristics,⁵⁴ in the inscription by Antiochus the god is the absolute ruler who governs and controls everything before earthly governors: following a report on the *energeia* of the god Zeus Baitokaike, the king decides to grant him the village of Baitokaike for eternity, from whence begins the divine *dunamis*.⁵⁵ "Zeus" Baitokaike is neither Kurios, nor Despotes, but he is the most powerful and the sole god of the temple and the village, from where his power emanates (*katarchomai*) and where it takes root. Thus, his *energeia*, his power exercised on the territory, classifies him as Zeus, namely as the ruler of the place and the worshippers who gather around his sanctuary. Although he shares functions and names, he is not Zeus in the epigraphical data from private citizens, soldiers and cavalry men. He loses this denomination in the passage from the exercise of royal and imperial power (inscription of the privileges) to the daily exercise of the cult (inscription of private agency). Thus, the supreme god of Baitokaike is a true epichorical deity in the sense that he is even named after his birthplace with all the different pronunciations (Βαιτοχειχει / Βετοχειχει / Βετοχιχι / Βηχιχι); at the same time, he is publicly Zeus for Seleucid and Roman authorities and for local ones, since the local elite is involved with the management, assembling and publication of the inscription. The uniqueness (there is no plural configuration in Baitokaike) and public agency of the decree contribute to shaping a sovereign god in the broader sense since being powerful implies neither political issues nor leadership functions, but its contextualisation outlines the profile of an atmospheric, unique, and almighty deity.

⁵⁴ See Rey-Coquais 1997, 929–944 (*SEG* 47, 1932), an inscription dated 2nd-3rd cent. CE which reports: "[. . .] having been maimed, I met 36 physicians and was not cured; I invoked the god and next he prescribed a plant for me" (trans. G. Marano). See Samama 2003, 565; Aliquot 2009, 157. Here, Aliquot doubts that the god Baitokaike is a healing god. Since the god is not named and the inscription was found outside the perimeter of the sanctuary, he believes it may be another deity.

⁵⁵ Revised translation from Rigsby 1996, 508: "Report having been submitted to me about the power of the god Zeus Baitokaike, it was decided to grant to him for all time that from which the power of the god in fact arises, the village of Baitokaike, which formerly was held by Demetrius son of Demetrius son of Mnaseas (dwelling) in Tourgona of the satrapy of Apamea, together with all its appurtenances and properties [. . .]." The words *energeia* and *dunamis* have of course two different connotations: in a way, the first approaches the fame and influence of the cult through his actions, and the second addresses the god's actual power on a local scale. On this connotation, see Bonnet *et al.* 2017, in particular discussed in the introduction (5–25).

2.2 From Controlling Places to Founding Traditions: What Does it Mean to be Olumpios?

Zeus Olumpios receives scattered cults all around the Near East. As we will see, where there is a cult to Zeus Olumpios there are also other equally powerful gods, even other Zeuses, finding their central place in local religious systems. Rivers of ink have been poured on the spread of the Olympian cult by the Seleucid rulers and Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but no unique answer has been given. Two main strands were followed in the 20th century: on the one hand, Elias Bickerman deals with the description of *1 Maccabees*, rejecting the hypothesis that Antiochus IV was a champion of Hellenism who used the cult of Zeus Olumpios as a rallying-point against the Near Eastern culture; on the other, Henry Seyrig, reacting to the scepticism of Bickerman, shows how the evidence of the cult of Zeus Olumpios arises at the same time and consequently he suggests a royal policy of syncretism between the Near Eastern storm god and Zeus Olumpios. From Seyrig's analysis, the policy of patronage vision consciously operated by Antiochus was established until the 1980s, when Kent J. Rigsby proposed that "Zeus Olympius was not an emblem of Hellenic culture or a convenient alternative to Baalshamin; to the extent that a god might serve as an emblem, here was an emblem of Seleucidness".⁵⁶ To some extent, we can still agree with this statement today. If, therefore, the reasons of Antiochus are partially explained but not exhausted in the search for a return to the "Seleucid" origins, which sounds like the return to the origins of the Maccabees who dreamed of a de-Hellenization of Jewish religious culture, we can still ask ourselves what was the answer from below to this policy of the origins: did the Olympian cult remain a royal one, free from the local religious configurations? Or was it absorbed?

Zeus Olumpios is attested in the Near East at Antioch, Emesa, in Southern Syria (once at Atheila and once at Anz), near Petra at Humayma/Hawara, the main Nabataean settlement on the desert plateau of Hisma, at Tili, modern Çattepe, while temples dedicated to him are attested in Seleucia Pieria, Jerash, Skythopolis and Samaria.⁵⁷ The latter are probably Seleucid foundations and, for at least three of them, we are aware of the existence of a priesthood of Zeus Olumpios, connected to the cult of Theoi Soteres,⁵⁸ while the temple of Zeus Olumpios in Jerash is known thanks to the large epigraphic corpus that dates back to the early Roman Imperial period.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Bickerman 1937, 36–48, 92–96; Seyrig 1939, 296–300; Rigsby 1980, 237–238.

⁵⁷ Antioch: *IGLS* 3, 1033 = *DB MAP* S#2730. Seleucia Pieria: *IGLS* 3, 1184 = *DB MAP* S#2733. Emesa: *IGLS* 5, 2455 = *DB MAP* S#2866. Southern Syria: *IGLS* 16, 108 = *DB MAP* S#6253 (Atheila); 1285 (Anz); 1481 (Hawran) = *DB MAP* S#8361. Tili: *I.Estremo Oriente* 56 = *DB MAP* S#6585. Skythopolis: *SEG* 8, 33. Samaria: *SEG* 8, 96. Jerash: *I.Gerasha* 2–7, 10, 13, 14 = *DB MAP* S#16450, 16452, 16479, 16480, 16482, 16485, 16080.

⁵⁸ See Graf 2017; Jim 2017; Jim 2022.

⁵⁹ On Jerash, see the exhaustive articles by R. Raja, especially on Hadrian and Zeus Olumpios: Raja 2013, 31–46; 2017, 171–185.

In Seleucia Pieria, a Seleucid foundation headed by Seleucus Nicator in person around 301 BCE, there are two rosters of civic priests from two consecutive years: the lists vary somewhat, but at the head of each is the priest of Zeus Olumpios and Zeus Koruphaios, then the priest of Apollo of Daphne, then that of the former kings, then that of the living king Seleucus IV (187–175). In the second list, a third Zeus is added *interlineam*, Zeus Kasios, in reference to Mount Casius, not far from the city centre. The temple of Olympian Zeus mentioned among the numerous priestly charges may have been located in the homonymous deme, identified as Olumpieus.⁶⁰ So, as we read, Zeus Koruphaios, “of the summit”, perhaps in reference to the town hill called Koruphe⁶¹ is not Zeus Olumpios, whose seat is the district at the heart of the city centre: this may indicate that in the city the status of the Olumpios differed from the one of the mountain god.⁶² He was the god of kings and then of emperors, thus sometimes associated with imperial cult,⁶³ while other Zeuses are engaged in the function of mountain and atmospheric deities, in this case Koruphaios and Kasios.

In Skythopolis, the list of priests does not give the same extensive information but is the only written testimony of a cult to Zeus Olumpios in the city dating back to the Seleucid Age. In Roman times, however, there is no longer evidence of Olympian Zeus, largely replaced by Zeus Akraios (Of-the-heights), and Dionysos.⁶⁴

In Jerash, the temple of Olympian Zeus tells a very different story. The sanctuary occupies a position of first order in the urban making. In fact, the *cardo* of the city faces it and its oblique position does not follow the Hippodamian plan. Here, a group of inscriptions shows that Zeus Olumpios is the civic god of Jerash along with Artemis. Certainly, the goddess is the one who retains a more local *facies*, if compared to Zeus. The ostentatious Greekness is one of the city’s many shared issues, founded by the Seleucids between the end of the fourth and the second century BCE with the name of Antioch on the Chrysorrhoeas.⁶⁵ The first temple of Zeus dates to the Hellenistic period and only during the early years of the first century CE some inscriptions emerge relating to the cult of Zeus Olumpios. Generally, temple inscriptions refer to state officials who donate sums of money and/or temples to reconstructions or images of the god; sometimes they are priests of the imperial cult. Transliterated Semitic names are rarer. In Jerash, both souls live together as parts of the public as well as the private. In the same way, Zeus Olumpios cohabits with many other gods, who mix Semitic,

⁶⁰ *IGLS* 3, 1183: a decree of 186 BCE granting citizenship to a “friend” of king Seleucus; the city enrolls the honorand in the deme Olumpieus and the tribe Laodikis.

⁶¹ According to Pol. 5.59.4.

⁶² For Keraunios in Seleucia Pieria, see *IGLS* 3, 1118, 1185, 1188, 1210; *RPC* IV.3 1953; V.3 2056–2057, 2081, 3938 (prov.) = *DB MAP* S#2732, 2734, 2736, 2737; 6138, 6140, 6145, 16367.

⁶³ On this specific issue, see Dirven 2011, 141–156.

⁶⁴ If Zeus is the only Akraios, numerous goddesses are Akraiai, namely Hera, Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite; see Pirenne-Delforge 1994, 309–369; Pirenne-Delforge/Pironti 2016, 205–210.

⁶⁵ “Antioch by the Chrysorrhoeas, the former Gerasa”. About the name, see *I.Gerasa* 30, 56, 58, 69, 143, 145(?), 147, 153(?); Seyrig 1950, 33 no. 45; Spijkermann 1978, 300–301; Lichtenberger 2003, 192.

Greek and sometimes Jewish issues. In the Seleucid foundations, he does not cover anything, nor does he impose himself on other existing cults. It remains a religious experience, originally Seleucid, which affects the whole community, not only those who are ethnically “Greeks”. While in the case of other cities, such as Seleucia and Skythopolis, we are not able to understand the attachment and spread of the cult, Jerash gives us a better-defined panorama: a cult of royal foundation, linked to the Seleucid tradition, is transformed over the centuries becoming a cult of local and urban tradition, accessible to the community and, particularly, to the political sphere, which manages buildings, extensions, donations, etc.

The Syrian Zeus Olumpios maintains weak ties with the original Greek deity: here, he is a mixture of Near Eastern traditions, of Seleucid matrix, but ones that over time remain almost untouched by what we call *interpretatio*. He coexists with other cults and never assumes a Semitic *facies*, despite his temples serving heterogeneous communities both ethnically and linguistically. In a way, he is a sovereign god, namely a god of kings and emperors, granting power to them and their offspring.

2.3 Contextualising Near Eastern Power

Divine names are fully invested in the processes of translation and overlapping, even if a Greek name is not always the literal translation or interpretation of a Semitic name, as we have seen with Zeus Olumpios. Looking at cases where this kind of overlapping between two or more divine powers is visible, the Near East reveals itself as a hotbed of composite divine identities. Sharing many features of the “storm gods” of Syro-Anatolian origin, he is the best candidate to play the role of prominent deity of a divine configuration. However, this absorption process of the name and/or iconography of Zeus from other deities based on common functions does not always find a match, as, for example, in what Robert Parker called *Zeus plus*.⁶⁶ We could define this as the combination of the names of two gods, like Zeus Ares, Zeus Helios, Zeus Poseidon, etc. In this case, when the names of two deities, who do not share aspects or functions, are juxtaposed, we conclude that here the name of Zeus constitutes a qualifying element, more than a theonym: Zeus would mean something like “Greater God”, a deity with universal powers. This assumption fits with Near Eastern data: Jerash reports the greatest number of divine constructions of this kind, from Zeus Kronos to Zeus Poseidon, passing through Zeus Helios Megas Sarapis. To this, we add the priests of Zeus Ares in Pella and the dubious reconstruction of a Zeus Bakchos in Skythopolis.⁶⁷ In any case, it seems to be a process belonging mostly to the Decapolitan area, perhaps influenced by the fluid use of the name Zeus employed at the same time to

⁶⁶ See Parker 2017.

⁶⁷ Respectively *I.Gerasha* 26; 39; 15, 16. For Pella, *SEG* 41, 1566; for Skythopolis, *CIIP* V.2, 7582.

define the Olympian deity (Zeus Olumpios) or other Greek features, the translation of Semitic deities, as well as the title of Seleucid rulers. Contrary to expectations, very often in the Near East, “Zeus plus” does not refer to the tutelary deity, but from time to time it qualifies one of the other deities who received a cult in the city. Although indicating the greatness of a deity, it does not imply an unconditional rulership over the places.

We have approached different shades of power, covering everything from the territories’ management to marks of rulership or royal traditions. When there is a transformation of a pre-existing deity into a Zeus, as in Baitokaike, his name is chosen because it already marks a unique and powerful character. The case of Baitokaike suggests that the name Zeus may hold a public function, as proven by the usage within the privileges’ text. There are many cases of this type, as well as cults that impose themselves at a supra-regional level, earning the name of Zeus: for example, the god of Aumos, deity of a group of villages in the Hawran, who in the 4th-century CE inscriptions is better known as “Zeus Aniketos Helios, god of Aumos”.⁶⁸ While the God from Baitokaike is deeply linked to the territory over which he governs with his power, on the contrary, Zeus Olumpios shows a different aspect of power approaching a peculiar shade of sovereignty; unlike many of the other Zeuses’ denominations, it does not seem to be mostly a way of translating, superimposing, juxtaposing, qualifying an otherness, namely, a Semitic deity’s name and the link with places is not transparent. It transmits a set of traditions, part of the Seleucid foundations in the Near East, and therefore preserves his cultural and founding role; nevertheless, it is found alongside the other Zeus’ cults arisen from different naming strategies (the various Zeus Akraios, Zeus Koruphaios, Zeus Arotios, Zeus Kasios, embrace more Semitic characteristics).

In any case, even such a clear mark of protection and, in a way, of sovereignty as the epithet *kurios*, “lord”, cannot be guaranteed to a god forever; indeed, depending on human choices it can shift from one god to another. That is the case of the gods of Abilene, a region of the so-called Anti-Lebanon.⁶⁹ According to the epigraphic evidence, the *kuria* is definitely accorded to Kronos who, respecting Philo of Byblos’ mythical account, is the civilising and founder king/god, in a privileged and enduring relationship with the territory. In one of these inscriptions a divine couple also appears: Zeus and Apis,⁷⁰ two gods showing their powerful influence within the Abilene religious landscape, both as oracular and ancestral gods, they order a man named Nymphaios to dedicate an altar to honour the *kurios* Kronos. Some other inscriptions

⁶⁸ Bonnet/Marano, *forthcoming*. Cf. C. Bonnet’s introduction to this volume, p. 15–16.

⁶⁹ Rey-Coquais 1997, 935–938; Aliquot 2004, 220–221; Aliquot 2009, ch. 5.

⁷⁰ SEG 39, 1565 = DB MAP S#3767: [Ἐ]τους ηο[υ] - - Κρόν]ω κυρίω κατὰ [χρησ|μ]ὸν θεῶν [Διὸς καὶ Ἄπιδος Ἀβίλης, ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας | τῶν κυρίων, Διόδωρος [- - -] καὶ Κλήμης Μοκιμου | καὶ Μερκούριος Σιμουντιω[νο]ς καὶ Μᾶρκος Λυσιμάχου | καὶ Αννιανος Μοκιμου καὶ Σα[ρ]πηδῶν Ἡρώδου καὶ | Ἡρόφιλος Ἀμμωνίου καὶ Διόδωρος Ἀβιδοταρου | καὶ Μαῦρος Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Κλαύδιος Μερκουράλιος | καὶ Διόδωρος Ζωίλου τὸν βωμὸν ἐποίησαν | ἐπὶ ἱερέος διὰ βίου Σοαίου Διοδότου.

prove this multiple nature of the couple, maybe also engaged with health and prosperity. In one case from Abila, a dedication is engraved on an altar with the image of Apis in a niche; here, the text mentions the couple Zeus and Apis as the *kurioi*: “The year 499 [187/8 CE], in the month of Audnaios, for the salvation of the Lord, to Zeus and Apis, to the lords, Lysas son of Zeno and Augusta daughter of Amathana, his wife, by acting piously, consecrated (this)”.⁷¹ For Lysas and Augusta Zeus and Apis are the real lords of the place, not, or not only, Kronos. In the same region, Nymphaios, aware of the influence of the oracular gods Zeus and Apis, considers Kronos the *kurios*, while Lysas and Augusta acknowledge Zeus and Apis as the *kurioi* of Abila. Are we to assume, then, that being designated *kurios* means that the community/ies believe(s) this god to have a permanent and stable control of a territory and that, in the case of Abilene, it belongs to Kronos?

Thus, there is no single Zeus, just as there is not a single meaning for his power. As we saw, he is enlisted where there is need for a divine presence with universal and atmospheric features and regarding the world’s government. Nevertheless, where a God is transformed into a Zeus, or a Zeus is added to the local “pantheon”, this does not necessarily mean that sovereignty and control of the territory is transferred to him, but rather that he shares this role with other deities, sometimes other Zeuses, sometimes Semitic deities, sometimes Greek deities . . . and, despite the Baitokaike decree, it is not guaranteed forever.

3 Conclusion

As we already noticed in the introduction, documentary as well as contextual discrepancies do not help when comparing our two cases-studies: are greater onomastic richness and connectivity with politics only dependant on source abundance, or rather on actual differences in conceptions of divine sovereignty and, more generally, cultural background and social organisation? Yet, convergences do emerge, if not pointing to Zeus’ sovereignty, at least in the god’s morphology. Albeit in different geographical contexts, the prominence of “Zeus” is rooted in the heights, from where the god manages cosmos and supervises mortals’ lives. Of course, this supervision takes a different guise from one region to another, depending also on the type of documentation a given society produces. In Attica, Zeus Epopetes, “He who watches from above”, crystallises this “Jovian” way of guaranteeing cosmic, or at least social, order; yet he is a very modest and local god, perhaps only known in the deme of Erchia.⁷² In the very

⁷¹ *SEG* 31, 1383 = *DB MAP* S#3768: Ἐτους θου’ Αὐδναίου, | ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας κυρίου, | Διὶ καὶ Ἀπιδι τοῖς κυ|ρίοις, Λύσας Ζήνω|νος | καὶ Αὐγουστα Ἀμαθα|νας γυνή αὐτοῦ | εὐσεβοῦντες ἀνέ|θηκεν.

⁷² *CGRN* 52 Γ 19–25 = *DB MAP* T#991 (Erchia, ca 375–350 BCE). *IG* II³ 4, 1865 = *DB MAP* S#3120 (exact origin unknown, 4th cent. BCE).

same direction, we find the Zeus Kataibates on Cyrrhus' coins (legend and iconography) starting under Trajan;⁷³ the god “who descends” from the heights and through an atmospheric phenomenon such as thunder never reached the level of global deity.

What is thus striking is that sovereign Zeuses are never really omnipotent: when named as such, they are not granted a massive cult (Hupatos in Attica) or they have to share the throne with another deity, be it another Zeus, as in Skythopolis, where the Olumpios was even supplanted by the Akraios. In deeply polytheistic religious systems, power is shared among the gods: Zeus Moiragetes only has the back of the Moirai, as the Polieus has that of Athena as patron-goddess of the Athenians; and even the mighty Olympian Zeus in Jerash must share his city with many deities. Thus, the only prominence of Zeus perhaps lies in his connectivity within the gods' society – except perhaps in some mono-sanctuary local communities (a *fausse impression* due to the scarcity of the documentation?). That is perhaps why, while Zeus can play many different parts in the field of sovereignty (protecting communities, ruling over a territory, guaranteeing politics, holding the cosmos), he never plays all of them at the same time.

Bibliography

- Aliquot, Julien (2004), “Aegyptiaca et Isiaca de la Phénicie et du Liban aux époques hellénistique et romaine”, in: *Syria* 81, 201–228.
- Aliquot, Julien (2009), *La Vie religieuse au Liban sous l'Empire romain*, Beyrouth.
- Baroni, Anselmo (1984), “I terreni e i privilegi del tempio di Zeus a Baitokaika (IGLS VII, 4028)”, in: *Studi ellenistici* 1, 135–167.
- Belayche, Nicole (2001), *Judaea-Palaestina. The Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine (Second to Fourth Century)*, Tübingen.
- Belayche, Nicole (2005), “*Hypsistos*. Une voie de l'exaltation des dieux dans le polythéisme gréco-romain”, in: *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 7, 34–55.
- Belayche, Nicole et al. (2005), *Nommer les dieux. Théonymes, épithètes, épicleses dans l'Antiquité*, Turnhout.
- Bickerman, Elias Joseph (1937), *Der Gott der Makkabder*, Berlin.
- Blömer, Michael (2015), “Religious Continuity? The Evidence from Doliche”, in: Michael Blömer / Achim Lichtenberger / Rubina Raja (ed.), *Religious Identities in the Levant from Alexander to Muhammed. Continuity and Change*, Turnhout, 129–142.
- Blömer, Michael (2017), “The God of Doliche in the East. From Local Cult to Imperial Religion”, in: Svenja Nagel / Joachim Friedrich Quack / Christian Witschel (ed.), *Entangled Worlds. Religious Confluences between East and West in the Roman Empire. The Cults of Isis, Mithras, and Jupiter Dolichenus*, Tübingen, 96–112.
- Blömer, Michael / Facella, Margherita (2017), “A New Altar for the God Turmasgade from Dülük Baba Tepesi”, in: Engelbert Winter (ed.), *Vom eisenzeitlichen Heiligtum zum christlichen Kloster. Neue Forschungen auf dem Dülük Baba Tepesi* (Asia Minor Studien 84), Bonn, 101–123.

73 *RPC* III, 3443–3445.

- Bonnet, Corinne (2015), *Les enfants de Cadmos. Le paysage religieux de la Phénicie hellénistique* (De l'archéologie à l'histoire 63), Paris.
- Bonnet, Corinne et al. (ed.) (2017), *Puissances divines à l'épreuve du comparatisme: constructions, variations et réseaux relationnels*, 175, Turnhout.
- Bonnet, Corinne / Marano, Giuseppina (forthcoming), "The Unconquered God of Aumos. A Reassessment of "Private Gods" in Syria", in: *My Name is your Name*. Proceedings of the conference held in Madrid, 2nd-3rd June 2021.
- Bruit Zaidman, Louise (2005), "Xénophon entre dévotion privée et dévotion publique : L'exemple de l'*Anabase*", in: Véronique Dasen / Marcel Piérart (ed.), *Idia kai dêmosia : Les cadres "privés" et "publics" de la religion grecque antique*, Liège, 99–111.
- Bruit Zaidman, Louise (2013), "Xénophon, l'oracle de Delphes et la divination", in: *Kernos* 26, 59–72.
- Brulé, Pierre (2005), "Le polythéisme en transformation : les listes de dieux dans les serments internationaux en Grèce antique (V^e-II^e siècles)", in: Nicole Belayche et al. (ed.), *Nommer les Dieux: théonymes, épithètes, épicleses dans l'Antiquité*, Turnhout, 143–173.
- Brulé, Pierre (2006), "La parenté selon Zeus", in: Alain Bresson et al. (ed.), *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne*, Bordeaux, 97–119.
- Butcher, Kevin (2004), *Coinage in Roman Syria. Northern Syria, 64 BC–AD 253*, London.
- Clay, Diskin (2004), *Archilochos Heros. The Cult of Poets in the Greek Polis*, Washington DC / Cambridge MA.
- Dignas, Beate (2002), *Economy of the Sacred in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor*, Oxford.
- Dirven, Lucinda (1999), *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos. A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 138), Leiden / Boston / Köln.
- Dirven, Lucinda (2011), "The Imperial Cult in Cities of the Decapolis, Caesarea Maritima and Palmyra. A Note on the Development of Imperial Cults in the Roman Near East", in: *ARAM Periodical* 23, 141–156.
- Di Segni, Leah (1997), *Dated Greek Inscriptions from Palestine from the Roman and Byzantine Periods* [PhD thesis, Jerusalem].
- Dušanić, Slobodan (2000), "The Attic ΕΥΧΑΙ of 362/1 BC (IG II² 112, lines 6–12), Arcadia, and the Eleusinian Goddesses", in: *Živa Antika* 50, 59–71.
- Facella, Margherita (2006), *La dinastia degli Orontidi nella Commagene ellenistico-romana* (Studi Ellenistici 17), Pisa.
- Feissel, Denis (1993), "Les privilèges de Baitokaiké", in: *Syria* 70, 13–26.
- Freyberger, Klaus Stefan (2004), "Das Heiligtum in Hösn Soleiman (Baitokaiké): Religion und Handel im syrischen Küsten Gebirge in hellenistischer und römischer Zeit", in: *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 14, 13–40.
- Graf, Fritz (2017), "Theoi Soterés", in: *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 18–19, 239–254.
- Grand-Clément, Adeline (2010), "Dans les yeux d'Athéna *Glaukôpis*", in: *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 12, 7–22.
- Hajjar, Youssef (1977), *La triade d'Héliopolis-Baalbek*, Volume 1. Leiden.
- Jameson, Michael H. (1988), "Sacrifice and Animal Husbandry in Classical Greece", in: Charles R. Whittaker (ed.), *Pastoral Economies in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge, 1988, 87–119.
- Jim, Theodora S. F. (2017), "'Salvation' and Ancient Mystery Cults", in: *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 18, 255–281.
- Jim, Theodora S. F. (2022), *Saviour Gods and Soteria in Ancient Greece*, Oxford.
- Jost, Madeleine (1985), *Sanctuaires et cultes d'Arcadie*, Paris.
- Kropp, Andreas J. M. (2021), "A Roman altar on Mount Gerizim: Rediscovering a civic icon on tetradrachms of Neapolis (Samaria)", in: *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 1–17.
- Lambert, Stephen (2000), "The Sacrificial Calendar of the Marathonian Tetrapolis: A Revised Text", in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 130, 43–70.

- Lambert, Stephen (2017), *Two Inscribed Documents of the Athenian Empire: The Chalkis Decree and the Tribute Reassessment Decree* (AIO Papers 8). <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/papers/aio-papers-8/> (seen 25.10.2021).
- Lebreton, Sylvain (2015), “Zeus Polieus à Athènes. Les Bouphonies et au-delà”, in: *Kernos* 28, 85–110.
- Lebreton, Sylvain (forthcoming), *Zeus d’Athènes. Polythéisme et paysages onomastiques*, Liège.
- Lichtenberger, Achim (2003), *Kulte und Kultur der Dekapolis. Untersuchungen zu numismatischen, archaologischen und epigraphischen Zeugnissen*, Wiesbaden.
- Lichtenberger, Achim (2004), “City Foundation Legends in the Decapolis”, in: *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 22, 23–34.
- Lichtenberger, Achim (2008), “Artemis and Zeus Olympios in Roman Gerasa and Seleucid Religious Policy”, in: Ted Kaizer (ed.), *The Variety of Local Religious Life in the Near East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, Leiden, 133–153.
- Lichtenberger, Achim (2017), “Coin Iconography and Archaeology: Methodological Considerations about Architectural Depictions of City Coins of Palestine”, in: Oren Tal / Zeev Weiss (ed.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period English: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*, Turnhout, 197–220.
- Lifshitz, Baruch (1977), “Scythopolis. L’histoire, les institutions et les cultes de la ville à l’époque hellénistique et impériale”, in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.8, 262–294.
- Maass, Michael (1972), *Die Prohedrie des Dionysostheaters in Athen*, Munich.
- Nielsen, Thomas Heine (2015), “The Arkadian Confederacy”, in: Hans Beck / Peter Funke (ed.), *Federalism in Greek Antiquity*, Cambridge, 250–268.
- Oleson John Peter / Reeves M. Barbara / Fisher Barbara J. (2002), “New Dedicatory Inscriptions from Humayma (Ancient Hawara)”, in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 140, 117–119.
- Ovadia, Asher (1975), “Greek Cults in Beth-Shean Scythopolis in the Hellenistic and Roman Period”, in: *Eretz-Israel* 12, 116–224 [hebr.].
- Parker, Robert (2004), “One Man’s Piety: The Religious Dimension of the Anabasis”, in: Robin Lane Fox (ed.), *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand*, New Haven / London, 131–153.
- Parker, Robert (2005), *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, Oxford.
- Parker, Robert (2008), “πατρῴιοι θεοί: The Cults of Sub-Groups and Identity in the Greek World”, in: Anders Holm Rasmussen / Susanne William Rasmussen (ed.), *Religion and Society: Rituals, Resources and Identity in the Ancient Graeco-Roman World*. The BOMOS-conferences 2002–2005, Rome, 201–214.
- Parker, Robert (2017), “Zeus plus”, in: Corinne Bonnet et al. (ed.), *Puissances divines à l’épreuve du comparatisme: constructions, variations et réseaux relationnels*, Turnhout, 309–320.
- Paul, Stéphanie (2010), “À propos d’épiclèses “trans-divines” : le cas de Zeus et d’Athéna à Cos”, in: *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 12, 65–82.
- Paul, Stéphanie (2016), “‘Pallas étend ses mains sur notre cité’. Réflexion sur le paysage épiciétique autour de l’Athéna ‘poliade’”, in: *Pallas* 100, 119–138.
- Pirenne-Delforge, Vinciane (1994), *L’Aphrodite grecque* (Kernos supplément 4), Liège.
- Pirenne-Delforge, Vinciane (2011), “Les codes de l’adresse rituelle en Grèce : le cas des libations sans vin”, in: Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge / Francesca Prescendi (ed.), *Nourrir les dieux ? Sacrifice et représentation du divin*, Liège, 117–147.
- Pirenne-Delforge, Vinciane / Pironti, Gabriella (2011), “Les Moires entre la naissance et la mort: de la représentation au culte”, in: Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère / Véronique Dasen (ed.), *Des Fata aux fées : regards croisés de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, Lausanne, 93–113.
- Pirenne-Delforge, Vinciane / Pironti, Gabriella (2016), *L’Héra De Zeus: Ennemie Intime, Epouse Définitive*, Paris.
- Pironti, Gabriella (2009), “Dans l’entourage de Thémis : les Moires et les ‘normes’ panthéoniques”, in: Pierre Brulé (éd.), *La norme en matière religieuse en Grèce ancienne* (Kernos supplément 21), Liège, 13–27.

- Raja, Rubina (2013) "Changing Space and Shifting Attitudes: Revisiting the Sanctuary of Zeus in Gerasa", in: Ted Kaizer / Anna Leone / Edmund Thomas / Robert Witcher (eds.), *Cities and Gods: Religious Space in Transition* (Babesch Supplement 22), Leuven, 31–46.
- Raja, Rubina (2017), "Zeus Olympios, Hadrian and the Jews of Antiochia-on-the-Chrysorrohas-formerly-called-Gerasa", in: Elizabeth Minchin / Heather Jackson (eds), *Text and the Material World: Essays in Honour of Graeme Clarke* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology), Uppsala, 171–185.
- Rey-Coquais, Jean-Paul (1987), "Des montagnes au désert: Baetocécé, le pagus Augustus de Niha, la Ghouta à l'Est de Damas", in: *Sociétés urbaines, sociétés rurales dans l'Asie Mineure et la Syrie hellénistique et romaine*, Strasbourg, 191–216.
- Rey-Coquais, Jean-Paul (1997), "Note sur deux sanctuaires de la Syrie romaine", in: *Topoi* 7, 929–944.
- Rigsby, Kent J. (1980), "Seleucid Notes", in: *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 110, 233–254.
- Rigsby, Kent J. (1996), *Asyilia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London.
- Samama, Évelyne (2003), *Les médecins dans le monde grec. Sources épigraphiques sur la naissance d'un corps médical*, Genève.
- Seibert, Jakob (2003), "Der Tempelbezirk des 'Blitzeschleudernenden Gottes'. Die Anlage von Baitokaike (heute Hosn Soleiman) in Syrien", in: *Antike Welt* 34, 365–374.
- Seyrig, Henry (1939), "Antiquités Syriennes", in: *Syria* 20, 296–300.
- Seyrig, Henry (1950), "Sur les ères de quelques villes de Syrie: Antioche, Apamée, Aréthuse, Balanée, Épiphanie, Laodicée, Rhosos, Damas, Béryte, Tripolis, l'ère de Cléopâtre, Chalcis du Liban, Doliché", in: *Syria* 27, 5–50.
- Seyrig, Henry (1951), "Antiquités syriennes 48. Aradus et Baetocécé", in: *Syria* 28, 191–206.
- Seyrig, Henry (1962), "Note sur les cultes de Scythopolis à l'époque romaine", in: *Syria* 39, 207–211.
- Seyrig, Henry (1964), "Monnaies hellénistiques. XII. Questions aradiennes", in: *Revue de Numismatique* 6, 9–50.
- Steinsapir, Ann Irvine (1999), "Landscape and the Sacred: the Sanctuary Dedicated to Holy, Heavenly Zeus Baetocaece", in: *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62, 3, 182–194.
- Spijkermann, Augustus (1978), *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia*. Edited with historical and geographical introductions by M. Piccirillo (Collectio Maior 25), Jerusalem.
- Yon, Jean-Baptiste / Gatier, Pierre-Louis (eds.) (2009), *Choix d'inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie, Amman / Beyrouth / Damas / Alep*.
- Weber, Thomas (2002), *Gadara Decapolitana. Untersuchungen zur Topographie, Geschichte und bildenden Kunst einer 'Polis Hellenis' im Ostjordanland* (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins), Wiesbaden.
- Williams, Arden (2011), "Leasing of Sacred Land in 4th-century Athens: A Reassessment of Six Inscribed Fragments", in: *Hesperia* 80, 261–286.
- Wycheley, Richard E. (1964), "The Olympieion at Athens", in: *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 5, 161–179.