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Introduction

What Does a Divine Name Do?

Abstract: The paper aims at exploring the many facets and uses of divine names in contexts. It provides a typology to clarify "what does a divine name do": spatialize, describe, appropriate, connect, and praise/exalt. Some case studies shed light on each function of divine names.

1 Naming, a "Sense Function"

Naming is no trivial act; it falls within those "sense functions" (*Sinnfunktionen*, in the language of Ernst Cassirer[1]) that organise the world and weave relationships. As Claude Lévi-Strauss writes in *The Savage Mind*, each human being, each group, according to their living environment, needs, language, and culture, names the human, the non-human and the superhuman. This process engages a conceptual organisation of the world based on methods of observation and theoretical approaches.[2] To name always implies to classify, be it oneself or others. *Naming the gods,* to echo the fundamental volume published in French in 2005, certainly responds to multiple and intertwined logics: to observe, to distinguish, to appropriate, to classify, to connect, to give meaning. To name is also to describe, to shape, to show, to represent, to activate knowledge, to compare: complex operations negotiated differently according to cultural contexts. Naming is therefore a sophisticated linguistic skill, rooted in space and time, that is developed through *praxis.* E. Cassirer thereby defends the idea that the function of "expression" (*Ausdrucksfunktion*) performed by names is achieved through practice. This is indeed the perspective adopted by the project "Mapping Ancient Polytheisms. Cult Epithets as an Interface between Religious Systems and Human Agency" (MAP) which is the origin of the collective volume *What's in a Divine Name?*[3] By choosing to gather up the divine names from the abundant Greek and West Semitic epigraphic documentation, over the long period of time that stretches from 1000 BCE to 400 CE, the MAP project

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1 Cassirer 1923–1929. See also Cassirer 1925. Cf. van Vliet 2016.
2 Lévi-Strauss 1962.
3 This book is also the result of a Workshop held in Toulouse in October 2022 to allow the authors to present and discuss a preliminary version of their paper.

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aims to address the remarkable variety of social practices involving divine powers and their designations. The MAP database, rich at this stage with more than 22,000 testimonies of divine names,[4] is designed to record a whole series of metadata and to explore the pragmatic logics behind the choices made when naming the gods: types of document, places, eras, types of agency and agents (gender, number, status, activities . . .), occasions, associated material, arrangements of onomastic elements . . . All these data, and the ways in which they determine the meaning(s) of a name, shed light on pragmatic taxonomies. At the crossroads of a multitude of parameters, divine names emerge in an unstable balance of conjunction and disjunction, composition and decomposition of the real, understood as a "set of events".[5] In this perspective, with Hermann Usener, we can speak of a process of "constant regeneration", of a great *onomastic theogony*, to use the terms applied by J. Scheid and J. Svenbro to Usener's work.[6] At the core of different historical and sociological dynamics, which the MAP project studies on a large scale, divine names play a major role in the fabric of religions, between demiurgy and theurgy, in the etymological sense of these terms.

Approaching names as interfaces between "religious systems" and "human agency", in accordance with the roadmap of the MAP project, implies working on the obvious and complex articulation between "expression" and "(re)presentation" (*Ausdruck* and *Darstellung*, in Cassirer), between structures and micro-adjustments ("micro-péréquations" in Lévi-Strauss' terms). In other words, a divine name is never entirely contingent, nor completely predictable. We could adopt a concept taken from the micro-history conceptual framework: the name belongs to the "exceptional ordinary".

Today, the MAP database provides a whole series of regions in the Mediterranean world fully covered and five query interfaces, allowing countless explorations of the logics underlying the naming choices made by the agents. It is a very stimulating tool to address the niggling question: *What's in a divine name?* Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet* (Act II, scene II), adds "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet". Juliet has just asked Romeo to disown his father or reject his name, because, she begs:

> 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
> Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
> What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
> Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
> Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!

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4 The database (https://base-map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr/) records divine onomastic sequences ("attestation" in French, "testimony" in English) found in sources (inscriptions on various material supports). The sequences or testimonies are broken down into onomastic elements, the smallest unit of meaning; we have therefore refrained from distinguishing between theonym, epithet and epiclesis to make the data recording as fluid as possible. Cf. Lebreton/Bonnet 2019.

5 Lévi-Strauss 1962, 47.

6 Usener 1896; Scheid/Svenbro 2005.

What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

To which Romeo responds by proposing "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptised" (Act II, scene II). And he goes on: "I know not how to tell thee who I am: My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself, because it is an enemy to thee; Had I it written, I would tear the word." This passage is very fitting for our subject: it raises the question of the materiality of the name, between corporeality and written form; it questions its effectiveness in terms of sensoriality and affects; it engages the question of onomastic identity and its genetic depth; it also evokes the dynamics of appropriation and belonging in relation to the name; finally, it suggests the versatility of the name conceived as an attribute which one can remove in order to adopt another, more relevant in a given social context. This is how Romeo and Juliet spin a new web of relationships by naming each other "love" and "dear saint". The power of the onomastic process is central to the plot, and not just in "the name of the rose".

Considered both fragments of knowledge and levers of ritual action, the names given to the gods, which the MAP database records and connects to a multitude of contexts,[7] provide a cartography of the divine worlds – polytheisms and monotheism –, incomplete, but far-reaching and definitely complex.[8] Therefore, the notion of "system" does not refer here to a closed and fix whole, which is sometimes called "pantheon", from an anachronistic and *etic* point of view, but rather to a vast set of existing and virtual relationships, that move without being chaotic: assemblages, configurations, arrangements, semantics interplays, networks, which are innumerable without being infinite. In this regard, it is interesting to monitor the progress of the recording of data in the MAP database: while the number of sources and testimonies continues to increase very steadily, the number of Greek and Semitic onomastic elements is starting to make slower progress; we have now more than 4,200 different elements, a huge stock that is hardly growing. Creativity in terms of divine onomastics therefore does has its limits. To compose a divine onomastic sequence made up of a minimum of two elements[9] – the longest sequence currently recorded in the database is a string of 143 elements – the agents of a given place and time obviously did not

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7 The database focuses on Greek-language and West Semitic sources throughout the wider Mediterranean world, from 100 BCE to 400 CE.

8 Onomastic strategies are also an excellent line of attack for observing the similarities and differences between these logics for organising the divine.

9 The MAP database contains a number of testimonies for a single element where this is an adjective or a noun acting as a theonym, such as *Hupsistos* by itself or *'dn* by itself.

have at their disposal this immense stock of elements, which, and this bears repeating, is a modern artefact. Nevertheless, by adopting the overarching view offered by the database, one is both amazed at the incredible wealth of nouns, epithets, propositions, etc. used to designate the gods and build up their portrait, and made aware of a threshold effect, because creativity in terms of divine onomastics had certain limits. A simple query allows to get the measure of this: in the MAP database, let us search for the Greek elements used in dedications only, all eras and places combined; there are over 1,500. If we order them by number of testimonies in which these elements appear, we see that around 700 of them – almost 50% – are only used once. Less than 300 elements (20%) are solicited at least 10 times, of which a significant number, around 50, are in fact theonyms. This first overall "mapping" indicates that there is a basic layer of relatively frequent onomastic elements. On the Greek side, one might be tempted to search there for the nucleus of a "pan-Hellenic" religion, but that would be a mistake because, *a contrario*, for most of these elements, they bear witness to local customs that are well-established and documented by extensive epigraphic files from a specific sanctuary, for instance. The 153 testimonies of the Greek element ἡ ἐν/ἐπὶ τῶι στρόφιγγι, "She who is in/on the pointed hill", echo the many inscriptions relating to the Nymphaion of Kafizin, on the island of Cyprus, where the local Nymph is almost ever designated with that element. The frequency of testimonies containing toponymic qualifications such as Ὀλύμπιος (475), Δήλιος (272) or Πύθιος (456) refers to forms of spatialisation that points to a local dimension, but that may also transcend it using various social strategies.

In terms of creativity, as evidenced by the reservoir of more than 4,200 onomastic elements applied to divine powers, it is worth highlighting two points: first, the fundamental role played by the typology of sources. For instance, the metric epigrams as well as the so-called "magical" texts (*defixiones* in particular) are very active producers of divine names and complex onomastic sequences. The former because they willingly draw from Homeric sources and use the originality of the lexicon as a token of distinction; the latter because the concern for ritual efficiency gives rise to creative assemblages and innovations, the originality, and even alterity, of which guarantees the power of action.[10] The second observation relates to micro-variations that are recorded across one locality or sanctuary, dialectal, grammatical, semantic or even stylistic, the scope of which is sometimes difficult to grasp. For example, how can we account for the synchronic use of the adjective Νέμειος, "Nemean" to qualify Zeus, and of the toponym Νεμέαι, "of Nemea", for the same divinity? Here, we are dealing with implicit logics that we run the risk of over-interpreting, although they certainly

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10 However, the *defixiones* from Attica before the Christian era invoke deities competent in a targeted field, without significant innovation. But, if we take into consideration those from Cyprus in the Roman era, the onomastic sequences that they mobilise or produce are much more original, often inspired by a Greco-Egyptian background, and even associated with incomprehensible names.

contribute to expanding the divine onomastic landscapes and the networks that make them up.

These initial considerations allow us to affirm that, in a divine name, first and foremost, there is complexity and depth. A divine name conveys history and memory, knowledge and conjecture, uses and inventiveness, constraints and freedom. Names determine and distinguish, but they also express a degree of uncertainty and they shape collective divine entities. They translate kinships, affinities, proximities, intersections, but they also construct territories, borders, distances. They express specific functions of the gods, their aptitudes and ways of being and acting, separately or together; they outline vast areas of expertise shared by many different divine powers, and they emphasize the status of the gods, as is the case with the qualification of θεός, which is by far the most widely used element in Greek divine onomastic sequences, with nearly 3,700 testimonies at present, whereas *b'l* and *'dn* in Semitic are both attested over 5,000 times.[11] Names are also used to locate, to root, to situate in an environment, and to express mobility, ubiquity because the gods live in a cosmic dimension, far beyond the human horizon. Names, finally, give body, shape, they "sensorialise" the gods according to anthropomorphic criteria, with a fundamental touch of otherness. In fact, if the onomastic elements reflect the perception that men have of gods, they also contribute to "othering", blurring or muddying their image.

By exploring a large quantity of divine names, as we do in the MAP project, we are convinced of the need to keep together all these onomastic strategies and not prioritise any of them, so as not to risk impoverishing a material of considerable diversity. Voice, portrait, narrative, hypothesis, fossil, index or trace, the name cannot be reduced to one single category. Evoked or summoned, read, sung, praised, etymologised, euphemised, blasphemed, translated, revealed or transmitted, diverted, appropriated, divine names contribute to the elaboration of a human discourse on the gods, a "theology" in the etymological sense of the term. Far from being just a label, that fixes an identity or a function, the name by which a god is designated is a powerful key for accessing the polytheistic and monotheistic archipelagos.[12] As we celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), his magnificent travelogue entitled *The Malay Archipelago* suggests that exploring onomastic "species" can turn into a great adventure, with fascinating landscapes, lush forests, strange animals, in short, an "ecology of the divine" conceived as the vast picture of the relationships that man builds with his environment, of which the gods are fully a part.

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[11] In this regard, the considerable weight of the inscriptions on the Tophet of Carthage should be noted, which repeat the same formula "To the Lady to Tanit Face of Baal and to the Lord to Baal Hammon" over 4,000 times, which has a major impact on the statistics and introduces a bias that must be taken into account.

[12] On the notion of archipelagos to represent the state of our knowledge, see Parker 2011, VII: "Amid a vast archipelago of scattered islets of information, only a few are of a size to be habitable."

To achieve this goal, the volume *What's in a divine name?* mobilises a range of specialists from multiple fields and orientations, to offer a multidisciplinary and cross-cultural exploration of divine names and the important issues they imply. By way of introduction to the seven thematic sections that mark out the route, it seems useful, in order to fully grasp the variety of onomastic strategies attested in the sources, to propose an experimental typology, based on the MAP database and other complementary tools or sources. The objective is to highlight some major orientations in the construction and use of divine names, without claiming to be exhaustive. With relevant examples, I will show how human agents have given shape and meaning to complex systems of gods by engaging various onomastic resources and cultural skills. I will avoid making rigid something which is fundamentally dynamic and I will show how divine names interweave several horizons of reference. Before coming to this, however, let me recall a few major stages in the abundant historiography on divine names, trying at the same time to stress how original the approach driven by the MAP project actually is.

2 "A Great Theogony"

The Homeric question has naturally played a propellant role in the early interest of humanists in the variety of divine names (*onoma, eponumia* or *epiclesis*). Renaud Gagné has masterfully traced the history of modern explorations into the polyonymy of ancient polytheisms.[13] Bocacce's pioneering study entitled *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (1360–1374) opened the way to targeted works on divine onomastics, in particular that of Julien de Havrech, *De cognominibus deorum gentilium*, in 1541.[14] Lists of divine names then flourished, echoing catalogs produced in Antiquity, such as Ἐπικλήσεις τῶν θεῶν, an *opus* consisting of at least twelve books, written by Socrates of Cos and quoted by Diogenes Laertius.[15] The so-called *paganorum Theologia* thus raises many questions: is it possible to go back through the many onomastic layers to a primitive monotheism?[16] The thesis written in 1889 by George Wentzel, a pupil of Wilamowitz in Göttingen, and entitled Ἐπικλήσεις θεῶν, *sive de deorum cognominibus per grammaticorum graecorum scripta dispersis,* puts forward an onomastic nomenclature of the Greek gods. In particular, it establishes a distinction between epicleses (cultic) and epithets (literary), without however striving to understand their meaning and scope, obsessed as his author was by a *Quellenforschung* perspective. As early as 1893, the

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13 Gagné 2021.

14 Julien de Havrech, *De cognominibus deorum gentilium*, Goyni, Anvers, 1541; cf. Petri Iacobi Montefalco, *De cognominibus deorum opusculum*, 1525 (*c.* 1407–1500).

15 Diog. Laert. 2.47.

16 Konaris 2016, 52–101.

collection by Karl Friedrich Heinrich Bruchmann, *Epitheta deorum quae apud poetas graecos leguntur*, came to light, as a supplement to Roscher's *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, while volume I,2 of the 4th edition of *Griechische Mythologie* by Ludwig Preller, published in 1894 by Carl Robert, provides a *Register der Beinamen* used for the gods. Two years later, in 1896, Hermann Usener developed his theory on the history of divine onomastics in *Götternamen. Versuch einer Lehre von der Religiösen Begriffsbildung,* a work which has had a considerable impact.[17] For the first time, the importance of divine names and epithets as an access to "religious concepts", as well as their empirical significance, was highlighted. By linking the representation of the divine to the system of naming, and connecting religious thought with ritual actions, Usener opened the way for studying the names of gods and their epithets as constitutive elements of polytheisms.

At the same time, developments in comparative philology and etymological explorations opened up the possibility of dealing with epithets in a diachronic perspective, by exploring their polysemy. However, scholars retraced the chain of their transmission as a process of corruption and aimed to identify their archetypal, unique, authentic meaning. The quest for origins led to essentialising the epithet or epiclesis, while the abundance of its uses was considered as a collection of errors. Such an opinion basically matches with the one already defended by Christian apologists. In fact, the emergence of Christianity reduced polytheisms to the rank of false religions, characterised by an uncontrolled proliferation of the divine and of divine names, and reduced "pagan gods" to idols or false gods.[18] From the Church Fathers to the historians of the early twentieth century, scholars gradually gave up trying to understand the complex architecture of the polytheistic religions. As Schmidt puts it, it became "l'impensable polythéisme" ("inconceivable polytheism").[19] The many lists of epithets did not help when it came to grasping how plurality worked as a relational system, and not as a chaos.

In 1932, Louis Gernet began challenging the essentialist approach to the divine and approaching the gods as a "système de notions".[20] He noted that epithets were used to contract or expand divine powers as well as to identify specific gods in ritual contexts. A generation later, Vernant and Dumézil accomplished a breakthrough with their dynamic and comparative understanding of the "society of gods". By asserting that gods were not people but rather powers,[21] Vernant laid the foundation for a new approach to polytheisms as complex systems with a multitude of relationships and polarities. Epithets then began to come out as resources to shape the systems of gods

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17 Cf. Scheid/Svenbro 2005.

18 See August., *De civ. D.* 6.9.1: "those very offices of the gods, so meanly and so minutely portioned out, so that they say that they ought to be supplicated, each one according to his special function."

19 Schmidt 1987.

20 Gernet/Boulanger 1932, 222. Cf. Scheid/Pirenne 2017.

21 Vernant 1965; Vernant 1974; Bonnet *et al.* 2017.

and to orientate human practices. Through the analysis of "faits de structure", Dumézil penetrated to the deeper strata of religious systems, while the influence of anthropology and sociology of religions encouraged scholars to pay more attention to the *emic* categories concerning the divine and to the contexts of enunciation of divine names. The MAP project combines both approaches and is inspired by the experimental and comparative exploration of polytheisms as historical, cultural products led by Marcel Detienne.[22]

The focus of MAP was to understand how the ancients conceived, organised, and managed the plurality of the divine. The collective volume published in 2005, *Nommer les Dieux. Théonymes, épithètes, épiclèses dans l'Antiquité,*[23] already tackles this huge question. In the preface, Pierre Brulé uses the concept of "divine landscape of epiclesis" to express the idea that each multifaceted god constitutes a micro-network constructed and expressed through epithets. Previously, in 1998, Brulé had laid the theoretical and methodological foundations of the first project for a database of Greek divine epithets (BDEG).[24] He had stressed the need for an exhaustive collection of epithets in order to work both on local, regional and global contexts, through an extensive approach to religious systems.

In 2003, Robert Parker published a seminal paper: "The Problem of the Greek Cult Epithet",[25] in which he states that the epithet "is a central but little discussed aspect of Greek polytheism". He added: "Perhaps the extraordinary infrequency, amid all the huge literature that exists on Greek religion, of theoretical discussions of the cult epithet as a category, is the product of a suspicion that there is indeed nothing illuminating to be said except about particular examples."[26] The MAP project intends to prove that *both* specific examples and the study of the entire system of epithets provide a deeper understanding of how religions work. In 2011, Henk Versnel, in *Coping with the Gods*, dealt extensively with the tensions between unity and diversity inherent to polytheism, considering that epithets are "ingredients for chaos."[27] As traces of *multiperspectiveness*, they bear witness to the fact that "various different conceptions of the unity or diversity of gods with one name and different epithets or different residences are stored in the mind of a person". One may add: not only in the mind of a single person, but in the collective imaginary of a whole social community. In fact, the ERC project 2012–2016 "Lived Ancient Religion. Questioning 'cults' and 'polis religion", headed by Jörg Rüpke in Erfurt,[28] used "appropriation", "experience" and "agency" as

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22 Detienne 1997 and 2009.

23 Belayche *et al.* 2005.

24 Brulé 1998. See also Brulé/Lebreton 2007.

25 Parker 2003.

26 Parker 2003, 175.

27 Versnel 2011, 60–87.

28 For a reassessment, Gasparini *et al.* 2020.

keywords and highlighted the importance of both social contexts and individual strategies in shaping ritual situations, included the naming processes.

Since 2017, the MAP project decided to explore the Semitic and Greek epigraphic texts comprehensively and comparatively in order to collect and map the divine names, conceived as onomastic sequences made up of a minimum of two onomastic elements. The previous conceptual grid, with a rigid distinction between theonym and epithet, on the one hand, and literary epithet and cultic epiclesis on the other hand, resulted too compelling and particularly inadequate for the Semitic languages. By studying the variety of uses, contexts, agents, occasions, intentions, objectives, which design and mobilise divine onomastic elements, MAP made it possible to observe and analyse dynamic networks that organise, synchronically and diachronically, the divine world. Thanks to its cross-cultural nature, the MAP database provides scholars with an experimental space meant to explore the strategies of interaction between human and divine, involving norms and creativity, local and global, texts and images.

3 Typology Test

3.1 Spatialise

The onomastic elements that serve to spatialise the divine powers are by far the most numerous.[29] They consist of toponyms (more than 750 of the 4,200 elements, close to 20%), expressed in the form of a noun or noun phrase, an adjective or a clause. If we add in the topographic elements ("space" category), we find over 1,000 elements, or 25%; with the elements that fall under the categories "mobility" and "limit/passage", we reach over 1,100 elements, close to 30%. For Semitic, all these categories cover over 150 elements out of less than 400 attested elements (theonyms excluded), which means that the Semitic elements used to spatialise the gods make up nearly 40%. But a quantitative approach is not sufficient. Connecting a divine power with space, invoking it with an onomastic element which refers to a region, a city, a landscape, a mountain, a port or the whole territory of a social group is much more than simply geolocating it. Whether we adopt Maurice Halbwachs' mnemotopy concept,[30] refer to the trilogy of "Here, There, Anywhere" coined by Jonathan Z. Smith,[31] apprehend landscapes the way Patrick Perez does in his paper "Ce que les Hopi m'ont appris sur le paysage"[32] or revisit the notion of localism in the footsteps of Hans Beck,[33] the rich-

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29 Galoppin *et al.* 2022.

30 Iogna-Prat 2011.

31 Smith 2003.

32 Pérez 2013.

33 Beck 2020.

ness and complexity of spatial language needs to be explored. To say of a god that he is from a place, using a toponym or a topographical feature, is at the same time to confine and expand him, or to isolate and multiply him, in space and in time, even beyond the agents' social background and their collective memory.

Let us examine an example. In the *Diegesis* of *Iambus* VII, a very fragmentary poetic piece,[34] Callimachus offers an etiological account concerning Hermes Perpheraios,[35] an adjective which can be translated as "wanderer", "rotating", but also "resistant", with reference to the various meanings of the verb περιφέρω. The onomastic element Perpheraios, which emphasizes Hermes' mobility comes as no surprise for a "passing" god.[36] The story told by Callimachus is that of a progressive integration of the god who, after various ordeals, ends up being honoured (τιμᾶται) in the city of Ainos in Thrace:[37]

> This is why Hermes Perpheraios is honoured in Ainos, city of Thrace: Epeios, before making the wooden horse, also made a Hermes, which was swept away when the Scamander flooded. It was then carried out to the sea that borders Ainos, where some fishermen caught it in their nets. When they saw it, they complained about their catch and, to keep warm, began to cut the Hermes up into pieces and set fire to it. Striking it on the shoulder, they just about managed to leave their mark on it but were unable to split it in two. They then tried to burn it whole, but the fire simply blazed around it. So they gave up and threw it back into the sea. When they once again found it in their nets, they came to believe he was a god or had been touched by a divinity; they erected a sanctuary dedicated to him on the shore and offered him their first catches, circling around him one after the other.[38] Upon the invitation of an oracle of Apollo, they welcomed him into the city and accorded him much the same honours as the gods.

The onomastic attribute applied locally to the god is a *hapax,* which is not echoed in the epigraphy. The story refers to the peregrinations of the god's image, forged in Troy and tossed about by the waves. Endowed with an intrinsic power,[39] Hermes ended up imposing his presence, first on the shore, then in the city.[40] At first consid-

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34 In this part, it is the statue that expresses itself in direct speech, as a kind of extension of the dedication of the consecrated object.

35 Callim., *Ia.* 7. Cf. Delattre 2007; Petrovic 2010, who backs the idea that "the seventh *iambos* is an allegorical representation of the iambic poetry". See also Acosta-Hughes 2002.

36 Kahn 1978.

37 Dan *et al.* 2019. It should also be noted that the term αἶνος means "narrative, story, fable, enigma", a meaning with which Callimachus certainly plays, as noted by Petrovic 2010, 218.

38 The restitution περιφέρων seems plausible in this story which aims to account for the epithet of the god.

39 The god uses ἐπῳδαὶ to defend himself.

40 A similar legend is told by Paus. (10.19.3) about a divine image collected by fishermen from Mithymna, on the island of Lesbos. The oracle of Delphi ordered that he be paid homage under the name of Dionysos. The text of the oracle, with the commentary of the philosopher Oinomaos, appears in Euseb., *Praep. evang.,* 5.36. In the fragmentary part of the *Ia.* 7, the speaking object refers to *Palaimones*, which evokes Palemon, the son of Ino-Leucothea who, accompanied by his mother, rushed into the sea from the Molouris rock, near Megara, and whose body washed up near Corinth. The Isthmian competitions were set up in his honour.

ered as a fishing waste, he is then treated as a piece of firewood, before reaching the status of a divine effigy or at least an object belonging to a god, worthy of receiving a place of worship and offerings; finally Hermes is welcomed at the heart of the civic space where he is honoured "almost (παραπλησίως) like the gods". The prefix *peri-* is of remarkable importance in this story, since it refers to both the spirals that the god makes in space before settling in the city and the ritual performance consisting in circulating the offerings for him from one actor to another. The story also spatialises the god between lived and imaginary space; Hermes Perpheraios moves from the margins towards the centre, from sea to land, and he inspires the circle, περιφορά, drawn by the cult officiants in the ritual, in memory of the itinerancy of the god.[41] At the same time, this movement marks the collective appropriation of the new god by each member of the community, a bit like during the festival of *Bouphonia*, when a circumambulation of oxen took place, or the *Amphidromia*, where people circle the fire . . . The god settles in Ainos thanks to the authority of Delphi, without however adopting the epithet of *Ainios*, attested only once to this day for Aphrodite.[42] However, the coinage of the city, from the 5th century BCE and until the Lagid period, features the image of a Hermes on a throne, bearded, wearing a *petasos*, a walking goat standing to the left of the throne. This image is associated with the head of Hermes on the obverse. What is this animal doing here? In the pottery iconography, it is not uncommon to see sacrificial scenes associating Hermes with a goat, not to mention that he is the father of the goat-footed god par excellence, Pan. Pierre Brulé, who dedicated an article to the goat,[43] refers to two passages from Diodorus (16.26) and Pausanias (10.5.7), according to which the *manteion* of Delphi was first discovered by goats, hence the custom of sacrificing these animals when consulting the oracle. Do the coins from Ainos, while drawing inspiration from a pattern widely spread in the region,[44] also allude to this ability and to the oracle of Delphi which legitimised the implantation of Hermes in Ainos? In any event, this case study shows that each name related to space is truly a Pandora's box. For instance, some traditions linked to the *nostoi* and known to Virgil (*Aen.* 3.13–18) recall that Aeneas stopped over at Ainos, like Hermes. Besides, Ainos, located at the mouth of the river Hebros, was an important commercial hub between the Aegean and the Northern regions. Hermes, a god often involved in transactions and trade, was particularly welcome there; the *Perpheraios* epithet made him a useful wanderer, who came from afar and became local protector, a "peripheral" roamer established at the centre of the city, celebrated through a circular ritual, with propitiatory virtues.

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41 Even the fire forms circles (περιέρρει) around the statue.
42 Martínez Fernández 1999, no. 6. Cf. *SEG* 49, 866.
43 Brulé 2007.
44 Psoma 2003.

3.2 Describe

The manifold divine onomastic elements captured in the MAP database provide access to the complex fabric of polytheisms: the variety of appellations plays a decisive role in multiplying the divine and presenting each god as a kaleidoscopic entity. In the famous passage by Herodotus (II.53), which attributes the first theogonies to Homer and Hesiod, among the constituent parameters of this contribution, the *eponumiai* stand alongside the *timai* and the *technai,* as well as the *eidea.* Giving "forms" to the gods is therefore part of the theogonic process and is linked to the names. Names and images belong to the domain of attributes that construct meaning (σημήναντες), allowing agents to use specific divine ingredients appropriately in the ritual communication. Since the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant, the question of the figuration of the invisible has been at the heart of the study of ancient religions.[45] In that perspective, it is important to pay attention to the spaces that host the representations and the rituals performed to activate them.[46] "Presentification" and "representation" are two key notions in this respect, which can help exploring the semantic scope of divine names. On the cover and in the Introduction to the MAP volume entitled *Noms de dieux,*[47] the composite and paradoxical portrait of Vertumnus-Rudolf of Habsburg painted by Arcimboldo illustrates the gap and the articulation between reality and image, a human and a divine portrait. As far as the gods are concerned, the notion of "surcorps", proposed by J.-P. Vernant and Ch. Malamoud, highlights the fact that the body of the gods belongs to the field of otherness; it is an index of a "transgression of body code",[48] even though it is anthropomorphic. The brilliance, vigour, beauty, size, unalterable and incorruptible character (like the Hermes of Ainos!) of divine bodies reflect a particular ontology, a distance from the human. Anthropomorphism, as demonstrated recently with the gods of Homer,[49] is a strategy that fuels the narrative and fills the sanctuaries. It arouses various reactions, in particular the criticisms of Plato and Christian authors, but, like the multitude of names, the variety of representations contributes to generating a divine in the plural. It is remarkable that Epicurus associates the existence of the gods κατ'ἀριθμόν, "according to number", to the "continuous stream of similar images" (ἐκ τῆς συνεχοῦς ἐπιρρύσεως τῶν ὁμοίων εἰδώλων).[50] However, anthropomorphism is frequently combined with theriomorphism or aniconism, as different options of "morphism" corresponding to strategies for constructing complex, changing, unstable divine powers.

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45 Vernant 1996. See, more recently, regarding several publications Huet 2014.
46 Jaccottet 2021.
47 Bonnet 2021; an English translation will be published in 2024.
48 Gagné/Herrero 2019b, 26.
49 Gagné/Herrero 2019a.
50 *Apud* Diog. Laert. X.139.

Countless onomastic elements fall under the category of *eidos* and correspond to these various strategies of "representation"/"presentification" of the divine.[51] They describe the gods, their appearance, their bodies or their gait, they associate them with colours or scents, an adornment or an attribute, they contribute hiding the gods behind a metaphor or an obscure comparison; all the scenarios are widely attested in the epigraphic corpora, both in Semitic and in Greek. These onomastic elements are categorised as "perception" in the MAP database and they are over 400 in Greek and barely 20 in Semitic. In Phoenician or in Hebrew, in Nabataean or in Punic, it is (so far) impossible to find a divine onomastic sequence describing the hair or the regard of a god, evoking his beauty or his brilliance, whereas there is a plethora of testimonies involving toponyms or titles (god, lord, master . . .). In Late Bronze Age Ugaritic texts, Aicha Rahmouni has identified 112 epithets, *lato sensu*, applied to the gods,[52] but most of them, even in poetic texts, refer to kinship or constitute titles without any real "descriptive" significance as to the appearance of the gods. A notable exception, in the Punic sphere, is Tanit describes as "Face of Baal" over 4,500 times, mostly in the tophet of Carthage, a qualification that is also, and probably above all functional and relational, not descriptive. No image of Tanit gives her a masculine visage and the parallel with Astarte "Name of Baal"[53] points rather to an onomastic attribute expressing the power of the goddess through proximity with the god.

One is all the more struck by the Greek abundance of onomastic elements that provide the gods with "body": Twelve of them describe the hair alone, seventeen relate to radiance or brilliance, at least another ten refer to the voice, the cry, the song; the colours are also very numerous, with so many nuances. To clear up this difference between Greek and Semitic epithets, it is important to remember that Semitic theonyms are often transparent or speaking nouns:[54] Shadrapha is the "healing god", the Baalat Gebal is the "Lady of Byblos", Rakibel is "the Rider of El", Yam is "the Sea", etc. Even if the significance of Greek theonyms has been the subject of many etymological speculations striving to discover their meaning, Artemis or Zeus, Poseidon or Hephaistos are definitely less transparent, hence the need or the desire to resort to *eponumiai* to make sense of their *o(u)nomata.*[55] In the wide range of Greek onomastic elements specifying the morphism(s) of certain deities, some are expected: the gods are beautiful, desirable, resplendent, large, polymorphic, visible, manifest, thundering and lightning, horned, winged, seen by all or all-seeing, golden or dark. But the gods also have

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51 I completely agree with Gagné/Herrero 2019b, 28, who contest the fact that the anthropomorphisation of divine personifications is seen as "homerisation" when it is a process that is widespread in inscriptions and therefore in ritual practice as well.

52 Rahmouni 2007.

53 Bonnet 2009.

54 Porzia 2020.

55 Theories relating to their foreign origin may have contributed to making it opaque in the eyes of the Greeks.

mighty hands or arms of water; they are related to wolves, bulls, eagles, dogs, snakes, lions, mice . . . Some onomastic elements fit with a strategy that consists in moving away from anthropomorphism and emphasizing the divine otherness: a god can thus be mute, invisible, hidden or secret, have a terrifying gaze, a bovine or "creepy" gaze, have three faces or be incorporeal. Adjectives such as *aphonos, anonumos, alalos, aglossos, anikonos, ategktos, astatos, ageros*, *alogistos, atrugetos, aphanes*, define the divine by a lack: no voice, no name, no speech, no language, no image, no sensibility, no stability, no age, no reason, no fatigue, no appearance, while *pan*-compounds express, on the contrary, their ability to master everything, to be superlatively powerful: *panomphaios, panderkes, panteoptes, panepiskopos, panteles, panoptes, pantheos . . .*

Without revisiting a complex and debated issue, it is worth addressing the question of the alleged divine anonymity. To call a god with a somehow tautological expression, such as "God/Lord of such a place", or with an expression that designates the god in a negative way (invisible, anonymous, etc.), is a strategy which does not imply that the name is taboo, but rather puts the emphasis on what is different about divine beings. The so-called "aniconic" images, such as rough or standing stones, may also be considered as differently iconic, according to a choice in the representation of the divine while signalling the limits of human knowledge of it.[56] Since to name is to categorise and classify, by calling a god "invisible" or "anonymous", "unstable" or "insensitive", language is used to emphasise the ontological and hierarchical distance between the human and the divine. A good example of these strategies is the well-attested and recently studied by Aleksandra Kubiak-Schneider[57] Palmyrene divine appellation "Blessed be his name for eternity", *bryk šmh l'lm'*. Attested over 200 times, this divine name is often associated with qualifications, such as "good", "compassionate", "merciful". As for the *mise en abyme* process in iconographic sources, called *Bild im Bild*, the name of the god contains the element "Name". The god has a blessed name, which enables him to effectively bring blessing, mercy and compassion to people, and what is more "forever". It would be futile, and even erroneous, to wonder "who is hiding" behind this name: "Blessed be his name for eternity" expresses, in its own way, in a culturally coded language, the nature and function of the divine entity that human agents deliberately mobilise with these words. "Blessed be his name for eternity" is not the odd invention of an original Palmyrene Arcimboldo; it is a commonly used divine name, well established in the local religious landscape, which corresponds to a subtle strategy that exalts the power of the name without entirely revealing the identity of the god. In the bilingual texts of Palmyra,[58] its Greek correspondent is often Zeus *Hupsistos kai Epekoos,* a prestigious and caring god, welcoming

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56 Porzia 2020; see also the section in this volume on "Names and Knowledge", 585–704.
57 Kubiak-Schneider 2021.
58 PAT 340a = *DB MAP* S#278; 340b = *DB MAP* S#1725; 340c = *DB MAP* S#1727; 344 = *DB MAP* S#1140; 377 = *DB MAP* S#1441; 412 = *DB MAP* S#7359; 1559 = *DB MAP* S#6423; 2755 = *DB MAP* S#8834; 2764 = *DB MAP* S#2558.

and benevolent, with a precise name and identity. To sum up, the name is at the very heart of the interaction between men and gods, and aims to "describe" the god in different ways.

3.3 Appropriate

Any act of human naming presupposes a form of "manipulation" of the gods. We have seen how it works for the onomastic elements linked to space. But there are many other ways to appropriate the gods through their names. Designating a god using an anthroponym seems to represent the climax of appropriation. Let us now look more closely to the "god of X" onomastic sequences, where X is a man or a woman. We will discover a much richer and subtler relational process than at first appears.

Giuseppina Marano and I recently studied the case of the "gods of X" in Syria.[59] There are 32 inscriptions of that type between the second and the fourth century CE. They come from rural contexts of Mount Lebanon and the Hawran, which present a similar structure: autonomous villages grouped around their sanctuaries, with a (high) priest at their head, and powerful notables who play a major role in the life of the community. The different "gods of X" thus refer to a double dynamic, both personal and collective, which should not be dissociated, but rather articulated. In fact, some inscriptions clarify the interconnected roles of the god and local benefactors in social and religious affairs. Let us consider the case of the set of 13 inscriptions mentioning the "god of Aumos" in the Hawran, more precisely in some villages of the Trachonitis, and 4 later inscriptions from Deir al-Leben. Most of the dedicants are magistrates (*pistoi*, "curators", *pronoetai* "administrators"), associations or groups, such as *koina*, and even entire *komai*, "villages", which point to a large social environment, and not a private, personal cult. For example, the inscription of Duweiri, west of Suweyda, recalls the construction of a barn used by several villages in 326 CE, under the supervision of the *pistoi* of the god of Aumos:[60]

> Under the consulate of our Lord Constantine Augustus for the seventh time and of Constantius Most Noble Caesar for the first time, under the supervision of Amelathos, priest (?), and of Chasetos, son of Rufinus, of the village of Harran and of Symmachus, son of Philip, of the village of Agraina, *pistoi* of the god of Aumos, were built a barn and the boundary wall.

The text suggests that in each village, a temple was dedicated to the god of Aumos,[61] who is sometimes designated as πατρῷος, "ancestral". All these attestations, dating from between the II and the IV century, reveal that Aumos was initially a prominent

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59 Marano/Bonnet, in press.

60 *IGLS* 15.254 = *DB MAP* S#1728.

61 *IGLS* 15.259 = *DB MAP* S#1769; *IGLS* 15.275–276 = *DB MAP* S#1770–1771.

figure in his village and that he founded a sanctuary for the local god, who was designated as *theos* Aumou, a name that reminded of his cultic commitment. Similar cases are attested for Maleichathos, Rabbos or Loaithemos. The local, ancestral cult, connected to a member of the elite who financed ritual activities for the sake of the whole village, gradually became a regional cult. It even aimed to gain an international audience by associating "global" gods, such as Zeus Aniketos Helios, the Greek counterpart of Sol Invictus, the betyl god of Emesa, whose cult was promoted by Heliogabalus (218–222) and experienced a revival in the Constantinian age. In fact, in Damatha, dedications are later made to the "Unconquered God of Aumos"[62] by the entire *koinon* of Damatha and a group of *pistoi*. Through his expanded name, the god of Aumos became close to Zeus himself. In Deir al-Leben, finally, different villages and tribes built an *aule* and the *peribolos* of "Zeus Unconquered Helios God of Aumos" (Διὸς Ἀνικήτου Ἡλίου θεοῦ Αυμου), in an inscription dating to 320 CE.[63]

In other cases, the name of the founder attached to the god refers to a particular experience at the origin of the cult. In Apamene,[64] local Zeuses are well attested, often connected with heights and designated by means of a toponym or a topographical epithet, such as κορυφαῖος, "Of the top".[65] In the inscription *IGLS* 4.1410, from the village of Frikya, a "god of Arkesilaos" is attested in a funerary context. A tomb, dating to 325 CE, richly decorated with rock carvings and inscriptions (*IGLS* 4.1409–1415) belongs to Abedrapsas, son of Dionysios. He commemorates the fact that his ancestral god, "the god of Arkesilaos" (ὁ πατρῷός μου θεὸς Ἀρκεσιλάου), appeared to him twice to favour his artistic business. The six reliefs decorating the mausoleum depict the dead and his whole family. The inscription emphasises the very intimate relation the deceased shared with the god, who is "his" god, who provides him with personal support, but also protected the whole lineage. In the nearby village of Mghara, an unpublished inscription from another tomb, dated 256 CE, refers to the priestly career of Aurelios Abdes Barathe, who was successively prophet, priest and high priest of the god of Arkesilaos. A second inscription addresses the god with the name of Zeus. Again, originating from a private foundation due to an unknown Arkesilaos, the cult of the "god of Arkesilaos" was then fully integrated into the collective religious landscape of the area. The god became the protector of the whole community, an epiphanic and oracular god, like the great Zeus Belos in the prestigious urban centre of Apamea.[66] In the neighbouring village of Schnaan, an unpublished inscription mentions "the gods of Arkesilaos" in the plural, which suggests that the original figure was declined into many different local figures.

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62 *IGLS* 15.298–299 = *DB MAP* S#1873–1889, with almost the same inscription. The datation is uncertain.

63 *IGLS* 16.25–27 = *DB MAP* S#6247–6249–6250.

64 On this area, see Balty/Balty 2014.

65 *IGLS* 2.652, 3 = *DB MAP* S#2632; IGLS 2.1184 = *DB MAP* S#2733.

66 Balty 1997.

Appropriation is thus a complex process, which involves different levels of agency and spatial scales. A divine name built with a human name is not simply a matter of personal, individual perspective. It makes sense within a collective framework, where the foundation of a cult and the financial support provided by a member of the local elite adds both distinction and cohesion. The private initiative encompasses, since the very beginning, social and territorial strategies, which may lead to significant evolutions in the naming process over time. The diffusion of the cult and the integration of new cross-cultural or "global" horizons contribute to reshaping the onomastic identity of the god, who is appropriated by different agents and gains new territories.

In light of these considerations, let us pay attention to various passages in the Old and New Testaments where the "god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" is mentioned.[67] In Exodus, chapter 3, in the scene of the burning bush, which is of course a divine epiphany, Moses becomes acquainted with the one who presents himself as "the god of your father, the god of Abraham, the god of Isaac and the god of Jacob" (3:6). In 3:13, Moses accepts his mission to lead the people out of Egypt, but he adds: "I will therefore go to the Israelites and say to them: 'The god of your fathers has sent me to you'. But, if they ask me what his name is, then what shall I tell them?" In response to which, the god replies with a very enigmatic name: "I am who I am", which can be translated in various other ways.[68] In 3:15, he explains it that way: "You will say the following to the Israelites: 'The Lord, the god of your fathers, the god of Abraham, the god of Isaac and the god of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.' "[69] Moreover, Yahweh suggests to Moses a series of miraculous acts in order to convince the people and give authority to his name; these miracles recall what the fishermen witnessed in Ainos to convince themselves that the divine was at work in the piece of scrap wood. Yahweh says: "take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground." (4:9). In another context, we observe an inverse dynamic, which sees a god giving his name to a man and not an anthroponym serving to designate a god; in Genesis 32:25–35, Jacob struggles with a "man" all night, right through to dawn. Unable to assert himself, the opponent strikes Jacob in the crook of the hip, then once the sun has risen, he gives up, while Jacob, aware that he is dealing with a superhuman entity, asks him for a blessing.

> 28 The man asks: "What is your name?" He replies: "Jacob."
> 29 He continues: "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel ("god of combat"), because you have fought with God and with men and have won."
> 30 Jacob requests: "Please tell me your name." But he replies: "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blesses him.

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67 See, for example, Mt 22:32.

68 Porzia 2021.

69 The expression is reinforced again in Ex 3:16 and in 4:5.

> 31 Jacob named the place Peniel (which means "face of God"), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."
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> 32 The sun rose above him as he passed by Peniel. He was limping because of his hip.

In this passage, the onomastic porosity is very strong; it permeates men, places, practices and gods. On the one hand, the god who manifests himself to Moses legitimises his power and his action by referring to the lineage who inaugurated his worship. His identity is part of a long history, that of a family, a tribe, a people; the "children" of Israel are called to follow "the god of the fathers". The name under which Yahweh presents himself is the sign of a transmission that consolidates his power, manifested by epiphanies and miracles, and a daily accompaniment through many vicissitudes. On the other hand, the name of Jacob, alias "Israel", becomes the symbol of the capacity of men to vanquish with the help of god, like the qualification of *Aniketos*, attached to the god of Aumos. In these names, divine and human intertwined, no one perceives the scent of the rose, but rather a whole palette of bouquets, which evoke memories, flavours, values, and the comfort of divine protection in the harshness of daily struggles. There is a world, a whole narrative (αἶνος), challenging enigmas, which we will now continue to explore.

3.4 Connect

How can we account for the Mediterranean dimension of the networks of gods? How may a typology of divine names shed light on the onomastic logics that link, connect, sketch out families or fields of expertise? Let us start by looking at kinship links, translated by names. The works of anthropologists and, for Antiquity, those of Jérôme Wilgaux[70] and Maurizio Bettini,[71] on the "elementary structures of kinship" highlight their profound implications on the relational framework of the social life; that of the gods is no exception to the rule. As Bernard Vernier writes, attention must be paid to the "rules of naming and likeness, which constitute two modes of symbolic appropriation of children and intervene in various relationships with the principle of filiation", because they "contribute to defining the plural identity of people."[72] Even if the gods are not reducible to "people", many are the onomastic elements which express a reticular divine kinship, able to bring closer or distance, a little like the name Montague, which, as Juliette knows well, is, and is not, consubstantial with Romeo ("After all, thou art thyself, and not a Montague"). So, as she wonders "What is a Montague?", it is possible to search among the 176 Greek and Semitic elements in the MAP database attached to the category "Kinship/domestic"; what is exactly the meaning of Kronid

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70 Bresson 2006, in particular Wilgaux 2006. See also Bonnard 2004.

71 Bettini 2009; Rawson 2010.

72 Vernier 2006.

(not to be confused with *Kronios* and *Kronion*), Alceid, Melanthid, Atlantis, Letoid, Nereid, Ouranid, Asclepiad . . .? In some onomastic sequences, in specific contexts, a god or a goddess may be called "son" or "daughter of": the Nymphs, for instance, are daughters of the waters just as Hermes is son of Zeus and Pan, son of Hermes, or Athena, the *Dios ko(u)re* par excellence and Kore, the "Daughter" of her mother by antonomasia. The Greek onomastic sequence "Horus Son of Isis and Osiris, who defended his Father Osiris" (Ὧρος ὁ τῆς Ἴσιος καὶ Ὀσίριος υἱός, ὁ ἐπαμύνας τῶι πατρὶ αὐτοῦ Ὀσίρει), attested in Sais and Leontopolis,[73] contains a micro-narrative the scope of which is easier to understand bearing in mind that it appears in the famous Decree of Memphis emanating from King Ptolemy V Epiphanes in 197/6 BCE and engraved on the Rosetta Stone. The king ascended the throne at the age of five or six, in 204, upon the death of his father Ptolemy IV. His mother, Arsinoe III, the regent, was assassinated soon after by would-be usurpers, but, having come of age in 197/6, the king was crowned in Memphis, the city of Ptah. This is why, from the prologue of the decree, Hephaistos is mentioned, in the Greek version of the text (also available in hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian), within the royal titulary, as "Hephaistos the Great, King of the Regions from top to bottom". The pharaoh is also qualified as "Living Image of Zeus, son of Helios", that is of Amun son of Re.[74] In the passage which commemorates the coronation feast celebrated by "the high priests and prophets, and those who enter the inner shrine in order to robe the gods, and those who wear the hawk's wing, and the sacred scribes, and all the other priests who have assembled at Memphis before the king", a long series of recitals legitimises the new king:

> Whereas king Ptolemy, the ever-living, the beloved of Ptah, the god Epiphanes Eucharistos, the son of King Ptolemy and Queen Arsinoe, the Gods Philopatores, has been a benefactor both to the temples and to those who dwell in them, as well as all those who are his subjects, being a god sprung from a god and goddess, like Horus the son of Isis and Osiris, who avenged his father Osiris, (and) being benevolently disposed towards the gods, has dedicated to the temples revenues in money and corn and has undertaken much outlay to bring Egypt into prosperity, and to establish the temples, and has been generous with all his own means.

The onomastic sequence relating to Horus, descendant of Isis and Osiris and defender of his father, obviously refers to the circumstances in which Ptolemy V came to the throne. The text emphasises his double filiation: he is the son of Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe, but he is also the divine son of Isis and Osiris, perfectly legitimate for exercising sovereign power over Egypt and showing a benevolent and generous attitude towards the gods, their temples and their powerful employees. As in the oaths or the hymns mentioned above, a pact is formalised between the gods, the king and the inhabitants, which includes rights and duties. The language of kinship is used here to effectively

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73 *DB MAP* T#7232 (Rosetta Stone) and *DB MAP* T# 7293 (copy).

74 Note that in line 16 of the same text, the god is also designated as *Phtha* in Greek, without *interpretatio*.

express this network by playing on a double register of kinship inscribed at the heart of political and religious practices intertwined. The images of the pharaoh will be established in each sanctuary, ἐν τῶι ἐπιφανεστάτωι τόπωι "in the most visible place", next to the κυριώτατος θεὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ, "the supreme master of the sanctuary", called "Ptolemy the defender of Egypt" and will be equipped with weapons provided by the gods, in order to seal the pact and "explain" it visually.

Kinship onomastic elements are also used to construct divine families, as is the case, in Aramaic, for Maran, Martan and Barmaryn, respectively "Our Lord", "Our Lady" and "The Son of our Lords", attested sometimes separately, sometimes as a couple and sometimes as a triad, especially in Hatra and Assur. Originally, *mrn* is most certainly a title conferred on the principal god of Hatra, Shamash, the sun god. Later or at the same time, *mrn*, Maran, is used as a theonym specified through other onomastic elements, such as *Gd*, "Fortune", in the sense that he is the protector of the place. He is also called Eagle and connected with Nabu, his scribe. Together, they are referred to as "great gods". Another configuration associates "Maran and Martan and Nergal the chief of the guards".

Other onomastic elements aim to highlight elective affinities, even within the same family. The vast kinship of Zeus,[75] which includes many children, conceived with various mothers, is a galaxy within the Greek divine world. However, if we scrutinise the onomastic associations of Zeus with certain children, and the way in which they share, or do not share, a common qualification underlining the bond of kinship, it becomes clear that the relationship with Athena is perceived and represented in a very unique way. Sticking to the testimonies in the MAP database containing only 2 divine powers (regardless of the number of onomastic elements), we find 297 of them containing Zeus and Athena, a large majority of which have a shared epithet, such as *Kunthios/Kunthia, Phratrios/Phratria, Amarios/Amaria, Boulaios/Boulaia, Horios/Horia, Apotropaios/Apotropaia, Phemios/Phemia, Soter/Soteira, Polieus/Polias* (feminine first only in Lindos), *Pantheios/Pantheia, Hupellaios/Hupellaia, Hellenios/Hellenia*, etc. At this stage of the registration in the database, only 5 testimonies connect Zeus and Apollo (alone), never with the same qualification; 6 with Aphrodite, of which only once, at Epidauros, with the common qualification of *milichios*, "sweet, mild"; 2 with Artemis under different qualifications; 1 with Hermes, without sharing. This is a very peculiar and significant management of onomastic kinship.

Onomastic resources can also be used to trace the outlines of a functional network. Let us consider the broad semantic sphere of wealth and abundance as expressed in the onomastic panoply of deities; there are indeed several dozen elements that fall into this domain, in particular those which, in Greek, are formed with the verbs "to give", "to bring". Many different things are supplied, provided or brought by the gods:[76] a bow, an arrow, a whip, a club, weapons, light, fire, a torch, gold, fruits,

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75 Cf. Bonanno/Bonnet, forthcoming.
76 Some of these divine names probably (also) refer to iconographic types.

apples, ivy, laurel, wheat, shoots, branches, pastures, water, abundance, seasons, victory, health, laws, sleep, dreams, *charis*, life, in short, diverse and varied goods.[77] We are dealing here with the very foundation of the interaction between men and the divine powers. The objective is to ensure a better life and gain a little mastery over the contingencies linked to nature, the cosmos, the human relationships. If this general principle is undoubtedly correct, upon closer inspection, it appears that not all the gods act in the same way on this level or are not equally responsible for supplying humans with goods of all kinds. In his study on the *karpophoroi* gods and related names,[78] Sylvain Lebreton notes the absence of the "heavyweights" of Greek polytheism, such as Apollo, Artemis, Athena and Aphrodite, seldomly mobilised to ensure the harvests, although sometimes associated with plant epithets. He therefore suggests distinguishing between "two phases of plant growth, each associated with different divine powers: that of twigs, young shoots, flowers, prior to fruiting, during which Apollo, Artemis, Athena and Aphrodite would notably intervene; that of the fruits, the production, for which other deities are summoned".[79] In contrast, it is Zeus, Demeter, Ge and Dionysos who are most frequently referred to as the gods watching over the fruits of the earth, from production to growth and harvesting, from the beauty of the fruits to their abundance and quality.[80] The variety of onomastic elements reflects the segmentation of action, as John Scheid has shown for the Roman world,[81] a process that raises the delicate question, tackled on the tragic scene, of human versus divine action and the relative autonomy of the former.[82]

If one logically expects Doter Hugieias, "Health-dispenser", to be reserved for Asclepios and that the Hoplophoros, "Armsbearer", is Pallas while the Hoplophulax, "Guardian of weapons", is Heracles, on the other hand, it is not Aphrodite who is Chrusophoros, "Gold-bearer" but Homonoia, while it is Pan, in Egypt, who is Chrusodotes, "Gold-dispenser". In fact, like the Egyptian Min, he opens the way leading to the desert and its fabulous resources.[83] While we easily identify Artemis, Hecate, Helios

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77 There is no evidence that the gods are credited with bringing death, although an Apollo Oulios ("fatal, mortal") is attested. On this epithet, see *infra*, p. 222–224.

78 Lebreton 2019.

79 Lebreton 2019, 146.

80 Interesting, in this regard, is the inscription of Didyma, dated between 284 and 305 CE (*I.Didyma* 504 = *DB MAP* S#12966), which records the consultation of the local oracle, through the prophet Damianos, regarding the erection of an altar dedicated to Kore Sotira (the "beloved sister" of Apollo, the request states) near the altar of Demeter Karpophoros. Apollo replied, in hexameters, that he agreed to an altar dedicated to Kore next to the altar of Demeter Karpotrophos ("Who feeds the fruit"), with confusion over the epithet, possibly due to the lapicide, unless it was the tongue of Damianos or Apollo himself that forked! Nevertheless, there is a small nuance between the one who brings the fruits and the one who makes them grow.

81 Scheid 2009.

82 Mishliborsky 2019.

83 Volokhine 2011; Bonnet/Galoppin 2021.

and Men in the epithet Phosphoros, "Light-bringer", this element is also used with Zeus. As with fruits, bringing light to men can reflect very different contexts and skills.

On the Semitic side, the Aramaic inscription of Tell Fekherye, dating from around 825 BCE and engraved on a statue of the King of Guzana, commemorates an offering made "before Hadad of Sikan, controller of the irrigation of heaven and earth" and recalls that "he brings abundance and provides pasture and water points for all the lands, and gives portions (of meat) and offerings (liquids) for all the gods his brothers"; the text continues: "controller of the irrigation of all the rivers, he makes all the lands prosperous, merciful god whose prayer is good, dweller in Sikan, great lord, lord of Haddysi". Hadad, like Zeus, is describes through complex onomastic sequences as the quintessential benefactor of men. To conclude this all-too-brief exploration of the field of divine generosity, an honorary Attic inscription, dating from the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 3rd century CE, celebrates, on the base of a marble acephalous Hermes, Jason son of Zethos, alias Logismos, and his devotion to the gods. In addition to the fact that he was zakoros of Asclepios and Hygieia, Jason carries the title of priest of "Hermes At the gate and Dispensor-of-charis, and Cultivated Land, and Desire" (Ἑρμοῦ Πυλήτου καὶ Χαριδώτου καὶ Γῆς Ἡμέρου καὶ Πόθου).[84] This magnificent polytheistic phrase associates divine powers "working" together; Hermes is, in the two *Homeric Hymns* dedicated to him, "dispenser of *charis*",[85] a god who lavishes wealth and promotes exchanges. On the other hand, Hermes is also often *Chthonios*, "of the earth", the fertile humus,[86] just as Ge, the Earth, is also *Chthonia*, while Pothos, Desire is generally attached to the sphere of Aphrodite and sexuality. A flexible but in no way random onomastic language gives birth to sophisticated arrangements of constantly reconfigured networks. Those who forged and used divine names of this kind constructed their religious landscape and expressed their vision of a world in which the divine powers, near and far, beneficent or terrifying, were inescapable interlocutors.

3.5 Praise/Exalt

In the context of an offering, a dedicant can choice to address Eshmun without any title or qualification, or Hermes without adding one or more additional onomastic elements.

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84 *IG* II² 3664 = *DB MAP* T#7891. Cf. Paus. (I.2.8) who mentions Hermes Propulaios at the entrance to the Acropolis alongside the Charites, perfectly compatible with Pothos, Aphrodite Pandemos being in fact located nearby. Also in Thasos, on the relief of the "Passage des Théores", Hermes and the Charites are associated (*CGRN* 17 B).

85 *HH4*, 574–575 ("Thus Anax Apollo loved the son of Maia with all his affection and additionally bestowed on him the *charis*"); *HH18*, 12 *(charidota);* the same verse describes him as *dotor eaon*, "giver of goods".

86 Almost 120 testimonies in the *DB MAP*.

Different motives can account for this option: economic reasons related to the cost of engraving, the generic (or non-specific) nature of the prayer addressed to the god, without targeting a particular aspect, local customs . . . Conversely, just as one can buy a bouquet of "simple" roses, or plant *Rosa gallica officinalis* or *Château du Rivau* in his garden, whose names evoke, for connoisseurs, colours, scents, and textures, a dedicant can also address "Eshmun Prince Saint of the Ydal spring" or "Hermes Enagonios" ("Of contests"). Creating an onomastic sequence with several elements – between 2 and 143 in the MAP database – provides the divine interlocutors with an appellation worthy of their *time*, their "dignity", as one would say in Greek. As the work of Claude Calame has shown,[87] prayers, hymns correspond to an "act of song addressed to a divinity; the latter is praised and finally invoked in exchange for the benefits that are asked of it. The hymn performance thus corresponds to an offering that is both ritual and musical." The laudatory dimension inherent in any divine denomination, even the simplest, is amplified in the case of the Homeric hymns, that are vocative and narrative performances involving the enunciator and the god being addressed, within a poetic contract. From this perspective, Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis* places polyonymy at the heart of the poem, as well as questions of rivalry between the goddess and her brother Apollo:[88]

> Artemis we hymn—no light thing is it for singers to forget her—whose study is the bow and the shooting of hares and the spacious dance and sport upon the mountains; beginning with the time when sitting on her father's knees—still a little maid—she spake these words to her sire: "Give me to keep my maidenhood, Father, for ever: *and give me to be of many names, that Phoebus may not vie with me.* And give me arrows and a bow [. . .]. And give me sixty daughters of Oceanus for my choir—all nine years old, all maidens yet ungirdled; and give me for handmaidens twenty nymphs of Amnisus who shall tend well my buskins, and, when I shoot no more at lynx or stag, shall tend my swift hounds. And give to me all mountains; and for city, assign me any, even whatsoever thou wilt: for seldom is it that Artemis goes down to the town".

Zeus, great orderer of the divine world, is invoked here by the goddess to bestow a series of attributes on her testifying to her rank: functional attributes (bow, arrows), onomastic attributes (polyonymy), a propriety (virginity), as well as an entourage (Nymphs and Oceanids) and a territory (mountains and cities). It should be noted that Zeus grants all of his daughter's wishes and gives her the gift of thirteen cities which will bear her name, a gesture which underlines the importance of eponymy.

Unlike Artemis, Hades apparently keeps himself at a distance from the logic of onomastic gifts, although he received, in book 15 (187–193) of the *Iliad*, his share of *time*. His name and his power, in various forms, are frequently honoured in epitaphs. In his kingdom, joined by Persephone, daughter of Zeus, he watches over those who have experienced demise. Yet, death, "alone among the gods, desires no gifts. Nothing can be obtained from her, neither by offering sacrifices nor making libations. She has

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87 Calame 2012.

88 Callim., *Hymn* 3.1–40 (italics are mine). On this text, see the analysis by Pisano 2021.

no altar and is not celebrated with songs."[89] This is why Hades, who reigns over the people of the dead, is distant from the usual logic of interaction with men. He is nonetheless Poluonumos, "With multiple names", in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (18), a polyonymy showing his relevant power and fame. The many names of Hades are also a resource for strategies of euphemism, even of avoiding for a particularly fearsome divine being. In terms of "polyonymy", the MAP database currently provides 10 Greek testimonies containing the element "polyonym", which have no counterparts in Semitic. A *defixio* of Jericho mentions "Ge Of the Earth and Hermes Of the Earth and Plouton and Persephone and Hecate Of many names and Artemis Bearer of light With Three faces Selene Face of a Calf and Calm and Oblivion and Desire and Envy and Night and Persuasion and Necessity and Moirai",[90] while in a Hymn of Narmouthis, Egypt, reference is made to a single goddess, Isis, who is also, incidentally, the only one along with Hecate to be Murionumos*: "Immortal Saviour, Of many names, Most Great Isis, Who protects the cities and all the citizens and their spouses and their property and their beloved children from war".[91] We also come across a "Polyonymous Eye", probably Helios, in a Hymn to Apollo from Susa,[92] Iran, while Artemis, Selene, Kore and Hecate are also described as "polyonymous". Upon closer inspection, except Artemis, they are not necessarily the deities most endowed with varied appellations; Zeus has many more and Kore, Selene and Hecate have relatively less. Therefore, the scope of this designation should be assessed not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. In the case of lunar powers like Selene or Hecate, linked to the Night, polyonymy expresses the plural and even universal character of a divine entity that is particularly difficult to grasp, present and absent, with different phases, as Thomas Galoppin showed in a recent article.[93] The multiplication of forms and names attributed to the Moon is "ultimately, so many ways to approach and interact with it."[94]

Among the 4,200 onomastic elements recorded in the MAP database, many are intrinsically or contextually related to the field of praise and exaltation. Different superlatives come to mind, like *megistos, hupsistos, hupatos, epiphanestatos, aristos . . .,* but also epithets such as: respectable, irreproachable, glorious, courageous, just, manifest, wise, powerful, holy, pure, undefeated, famous, precious, indestructible, beautiful, authentic, sovereign, noble, blessed. Elements categorised as "title" in the MAP database also play the role of amplifier of divine power, like *ʾdn, mrʾ* or *bʿl* (and the female counterparts) in Semitic, denoting gods or goddesses as "lord/lady, master, patron". The Greek terms *kurios* and *despotes,* recently studied by Nicole Belayche[95] and overrepresented in

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89 Æsch., fr. 279 Mette (= fr. 161 N.2 Radt²).

90 *CIIP* IV, 2837 (1ˢᵗ-2nd century CE) = *DB MAP* S#6467.

91 *I.Égypte métriques* 175 (1st century BCE-1st century CE) = *DB MAP* T#4327.

92 *IG Iran Asie Centr.* 33 = *DB MAP* T#9115.

93 Galoppin 2021.

94 Galoppin 2021, 80.

95 Belayche 2020.

the Greek-speaking East, have a similar function. The gods are also praised as "king" or "prince", in the same area, and of course as "god", a qualification which may seem tautological, but which underlines the quality of the person to whom a request is addressed; the logic is that of the *captatio benevolentiae.* These strategies, which could seem universal, even cognitively determined, are shaped by cultural uses. In Attica, out of a set of 2,186 testimonies in Greek,[96] we find 373 which use the element θεός – in 149 inscriptions, however, *theos* appears in the formula καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς "and to the other gods", which therefore do not imply a title. In Egypt, there are 573 inscriptions with the onomastic element *theos*, out of a total of 1,294, and 272 in Syria, out of a total of 664 Greek inscriptions. The percentage is of 17% in Attica, 47% in Egypt and 41% in Syria. In this last region, we also find 190 testimonies using the onomastic elements ʾl or ʾlh, meaning "god" in Semitic out of a total of 599, that is about 30%. It is therefore probable that the Semitic habit of calling a god "god" influenced the recurrent use of *theos* in Greek dedications from the Near East. The study of a large set of divine names reveals structural, permanent, general trends, and forms of constraints or determinisms; they are also inspired by uses and traditions, they are linked to spaces and times, languages, socio-economic organisations, as well as collective representations. They echo and forge the relationships between men and gods with finesse and nuance.

If the variety of names, the poly-, even the myrionymy, serves to build the power and the complexity of the divine, another strategy deserves our attention: the construction of long, sometimes very long onomastic sequences, including, moreover, superlatives: "Big is beautiful"! Angelos Chaniotis baptised this process *megatheism* seeing it as an effect of competition between cults[97] while Robert Parker, in *Greek Gods Abroad,*[98] turns it into a characteristic trend of the Hellenistic and Roman era, under the influence of Eastern cults. This might be a terminology of the divine influenced by practices originating in Egypt and Syria, where the Greeks learned to exalt their deities using long, emphatic statements, which end up becoming incomprehensible, opening the door to Christian apologists and their attacks against an insane polytheistic system. The MAP database allows us to put this reading to the test.

The 635 testimonies in Semitic languages from Syria contain sequences ranging from 2 to 31 elements. Only 6 of them (1%) contain 10 or more elements; with the exception of one, dating from the 2nd century CE, they all pre-date the Christian era, and even 600 BCE. In the same region, if we look at the testimonies in the Greek language, of which there are 664, they include between 2 and 143 elements, of which only 6, again, are made up of 10 or more elements; with the exception of one, they date above all from the Christian era, bearing in mind that less than 10% of the Syrian cor-

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96 As a reminder, the testimonies of divine onomastic sequences containing at least two elements, therefore a targeted corpus.

97 Chaniotis 2010.

98 Parker 2017.

pus predates the Christian era. On the Egyptian side, among the 1,294 inscriptions in Greek, comprising between 2 and 38 elements, there are 36 that include at least 10 elements, half of which are *defixiones*;[99] most are from the Roman period, but a few also date from the late Hellenistic period. Does it mean that these practises, already very rare in Egypt and the Near East, and fundamentally linked to the nature of the inscriptions – *defixiones*, hymns, acclamations – had a significant impact in Greece, notably Attica? Among the 2,186 Attic testimonies, containing between 2 and 26 elements, only 23 contain 10 or more elements, that is, 1.09%. They span between the very end of the 5th century, or rather the 4th century BCE, until Roman times, without, however, a clear trend being observed during a given period. What's more, these 23 testimonies are very coherent from a typological point of view since they are largely *defixiones*, plus a few oaths, lists, and prayers. The superlatives are not particularly numerous there. In the MAP database, the superlative element *Aristos* appears 6 times, including 2 inscriptions containing divine onomastic sequences with more than 10 elements, while *Epiphanestatos* is attested 40 times, mostly at Stratonicea, only once with more than 10 elements (in an honorary inscription).[100] *Epiphanestatos* is combined with *Megistos* 26 times, including over 20 times at Stratonicea, and no testimony is made up of more than 6 elements. However, the MAP database still needs to be completed for Asia Minor where, in the imperial period, long emphatic formulas are more numerous, not under the effect of an Anatolian influence, but of the phraseology of honorary inscriptions. They use titles that are largely their own[101] but they nevertheless encourage, by imitation, dressing the gods with qualifications as if they were pearls, as they do with the leaders or the cities.

Long divine onomastic sequences are generally very rare and do not really testify to a tidal wave which, from Alexandria or Seleucia, would reach Cape Sounion or the Macedonian shores. Praising, exalting the gods basically meets a need for publicity in a context of competition that is more appropriate to read on a regional or local scale (between Zeus and Hecate at Stratonicea, for example) than a Mediterranean scale.

4 Conclusion

The typology that I have just outlined out in no way exhausts the semantic and classificatory potential of divine names. It nevertheless shows the richness and complexity, morphological and syntactic, which emerge from the organisation into a system at various scales, from the plurality and fluidity of the divine powers, from the multi-

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99 It should be noted that certain *defixiones* are on papyrus and are therefore not yet accessible in the *DB MAP*.

100 Cf. Nicole Belayche's contribution in this volume, 435–461.

101 Cf. Anna Heller's contribution in this volume, 551–568.

tude of pragmatic strategies engages by the human actors, and from the historical, legal, economic, political social, moral contexts in which men and gods interact. Each single divine name, in the simplicity or complexity of its composition, is the index of knowledge and know-how on the part of individual and collective agents, often connected with a collective memory, a "mnemonymy", one could say, to echo Halbwachs' "mnemotopy". Following Herodotus (II.53), which puts the emphasis on the work of the poets, Homer and Hesiod, it is worth paying attention to the many gods' *eponumiai*, that reflect functions and forms, and made the divine accessible to men. As several narratives, including the one about Hermes Perpheraios prove, naming is the decisive step that enables the establishment of a cult and interaction with the divine power (almost) clearly identified, recognised, and therefore honoured.[102] Nobody, in Greece, would have apostrophised Zeus, like Juliet does, saying to him: "Thou art thyself, not a Zeus. What is a Zeus? It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a god. Oh! Be some other name! What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet; So Zeus would, were he not Zeus call'd, retain that dear perfection which he owes. Zeus, doff thy name!"

Conversely, the name is a Pandora's box available to men, who lift the lid and let out a thousand and one conjectures, etymologies, narratives, myriads of onomastic elements, which contribute to defining the fragrance and flavour of the divine powers. In Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, probably from early 3rd century BCE, the Stoic philosopher and poet asserts that men are born from Zeus "with, as their lot, a voice that reproduces you (= Zeus)" (ἤχου μίμημα λαχόντες), a human capacity that allows the poet to sing the power of the god in his hymn. He ends saying: "since there can be no greater glory for men or gods than this, duly to praise forever the Universal Law" (κοινὸν νόμον). Divine names are therefore much more than mere ornaments; they are an integral part of the divine power that resonates in the cosmos and ensures its harmony. They are, as Democritus asserts,[103] ἀγάλματα φωνήεντα: literally "sounding images/offerings", *agalmata* gifted with speech, representations which say what the gods are, speaking "objects" which are offered to the gods and which, ultimately, allow them to exist among men.

The seven sections in this volume offer a very open exploration of the main issues related to naming the gods. Specialists from various disciplines and multiple backgrounds were invited to consider configurations, knowledge, ritual practices, images, forms of agency, etc., in dialogue with the MAP database and the MAP project researchers; these exchanges gave rise to a four-day meeting in Toulouse in October 2022, which allowed for lengthy discussions on each other's lines of analysis. This work is ultimately a choral *agalma phoneeis*, which constitutes the culmination of a collective scientific

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102 It is worth mentioning that, in the story of Callimachus and in so many others, the appointment process itself is never explained, it is not specified who appoints Hermes Perpheraios and at what precise moment. See on this issue Alaya Palamidis' contribution, in this volume, 591–619.

103 Democr. (B 142 Diels-Kranz, *apud* Olympiod., *in Plat. Phileb.* 2, 242 Stalb). I thank Alaya Palamidis who drew my attention to this passage.

adventure. In this Introduction, I am only the spokesperson, just like Hermes Charidotes who opens the door.

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