

# The Onomastic Attributes of Greek Healing Deities

**Abstract:** The study of onomastic sequences elaborated on roots evoking illness, healing and health leads to a paradoxical observation. While it seems normal to attempt to specify the healing attributes of polyvalent deities such as Zeus, it is more surprising that Asklepios himself, who is the god of medicine, is also granted onomastic sequences related to healing. As we shall see, the choice of these qualifiers is subtly made according to the multiplicity of cult realities on the one hand, where onomastic polysemy echoes the polymorphy of the deities, and also according to the univocal character of the god of medicine, whose singularity authorises the use of attributes with less precise meanings than those granted to Herakles or even Apollo.

Ἐπίκησιν δέ νιν Αἴγλας ματρός Ἀσκλη-  
πιὸν ὠνόμαξε Ἀπόλλων, τὸν νόσων παύ-  
στορα, δωτῆρα ὑγείας, μέγα δῶρημα βροτοῖς.

According to the name of his mother Aigla, Apollo named him Asklepios, the one who puts an end to illnesses, the one who is in charge of giving health, a great benefit to mortals.<sup>1</sup>

The lexical field of the healing act in Greek<sup>2</sup> is structured around three main roots, all of which are present in the epic sources and which even appear in medical texts. Of course, over the centuries of language use, there have been variations in meaning, verbal creations and nominal disappearances, but generally speaking, for convenience, the majority of lexemes in this semantic group are found around the verbs<sup>3</sup> ἰᾶσθαι, ἀκεῖσθαι, and θεραπεύειν.

Hence, it is surprising, to say the least, that the ongoing competition between these three word families did not have a strong morphological impact on the construction of qualifications (adjectives or participles) applied to healing deities. Thus, only two radicals, one of which is predominant, were exploited to create these onomastic sequences, to which others from other semantic groups were added without any primary connection with healing or care. It is therefore natural that the distribution of the onomastic attributes presented here is essentially made in accordance with the radicals.

<sup>1</sup> *Peán of Isyllos* (IG IV<sup>2</sup>.1, 128 = DB MAP S#11032), l. 55–56. This text, written at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE by a citizen of Epidaurus, was presented as a dedication to Apollo Maleatas and Asklepios: in addition to the pean itself, Isyllos tells of a miracle that happened to him as a child.

<sup>2</sup> Unless specifically stated, all dates refer to before Christ.

<sup>3</sup> For convenience, we prefer to quote these verbs as a reference rather than going back to the root, which is sometimes debated, following Van Brock's classification.

The invocations to various divine powers made with the aim of obtaining a cure can therefore be divided into three major semantic fields, which can themselves be classified according to a chronological sequence linked to the evolution of a pathology: when the disease appears, one attempts to repel it, then to heal it before asking to remain in good health. Of course, no epigraphic or literary document ever displays the three phases of the therapeutic scheme together, and depending on the place and the date, we will have to deal with an onomastic formula that allows us to pinpoint the moment when the action of addressing the divinity takes place.

It could be objected that what has been placed here in third position, to call upon divine benevolence in order to avoid getting ill, would deserve to be in first place and to accompany, for example, a propitiatory votive gesture. The dating of texts mentioning onomastic attributes intended to invoke protective gentleness legitimately gives us cause to hesitate in the diachrony: while one of the best known onomastic sequences appears as early as the Homeric narratives,<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* in a sphere where divine therapy prevails over human medicine, most of the epigraphic sources invoking Apollo, Herakles or Asklepios in their protective functions appear at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. These were periods when belief in divine causality existed alongside rational medicine; many patients would first consult a doctor before turning to religion if this failed: it was therefore not unhelpful to seek the benevolence of the gods in a kind of over-activation of their powers, when human therapy had failed. To first ask Asklepios for divine protection against illness would be to deny its therapeutic effectiveness when one becomes ill afterwards.

This question of the thematic classification of healing onomastic sequences also has a wider resonance in the circumstances of the arrival of Asklepios' cult in Athens in 420. From this date onwards, the number of thanks given for healings, as opposed to propitiatory invocations, argues in favour of the working hypothesis presented here. In the same way that the gods' onomastic qualifications used in the 5<sup>th</sup> century may reflect the central historical event of the battle against the Persians<sup>5</sup> (the *Eleutherios*, *Tropaïos* or *Nike* flourished at that time, testifying to the concerns of the Athenians),<sup>6</sup> healing onomastic sequences are developed after the Great Plague of 430, of which Athens bore the stigma until 426. Soliciting the auspices of the gods after suffering a physical disaster was all the more relevant then.

However, the question of the steps in the therapeutic process (before, during, after) detected in the three semantic fields used to create the onomastic attributes remains secondary. It is more important to study the meaning of the words used before trying to understand the articulation of a triangle linking the divine interlocutor, the social agent and the elaboration context of these onomastic sequences. The choice

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4 Paieon: Hom., *Il.* 5.400–401 and 899–904 and *Od.* 4.231–232.

5 Parker 1996, 179–180.

6 But Paul 2016, 66.

was also restricted here to what we imperfectly call the “healing qualifications”<sup>7</sup> *i.e.* those based on a radical directly linked to the field of illness and medicine. This excludes Paieon in an epicletic position, for example, who would have been of little interest to the argument.<sup>8</sup> In the same way, the question was raised as to whether Thermios,<sup>9</sup> for example, an onomastic attribute of Apollo connected with hot springs that have therapeutic virtues, should be considered. However, as the root of the word is not related to the medical world, the onomastic attribute was eliminated.

Finally, as a last example, we hesitated to include what may seem to be the greatest symbol of a healing function, the affixed substantive ἰατρός, since it also referred to a hero as a name in itself. Insofar as it is a noun sometimes used alone, it does not exactly fit with the definition considered here for an onomastic sequence: an adjective or a noun qualifying the name of a divinity by conferring particular powers on them. But failing to mention Apollo Iatros, whose cult was so well known in the Milesian colonies of the Black Sea, would be like not mentioning Asklepios as the god of medicine.

Choosing to first focus on the terms rather than on the deities in action proved to be the most judicious method for the purpose in question, allowing us to approach the subject in a transversal way in order to avoid falling into a tedious list linked to the verticality of our usual conception of the pantheon: methodologically, it seemed more important to identify the divine functions expressed through onomastic elements rather than to categorise the lexical fields according to presuppositions about each deity in a field where the pre-eminence of Asklepios would have risked diluting the functions of the other gods.

In a healing context, the first prayers are aimed at repressing the disease before attempting to cure it. It is indeed notable that the majority of onomastic attributes and periphrases highlighting the divine fight against evil, however complex, belong to a sole radical. Whether in theme I (full root and zero-degree suffix) giving the radical αλκ- or under theme II producing the radical αλεξ-, it is primarily referring to the ability to fight, to repel.

## 1 Ἀλκτήρ

Many terms with a -τηρ suffix can be confronted with a parallel formation suffixed with -τωρ. The former denotes “the agent of a function” and the latter “the author of an act”. The nuance between the two can be translated, according to Benveniste, by “who has the mission of, the charge of” for nouns with -τηρ.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Because it is not always about healing, but also about putting off or being healthy.

<sup>8</sup> On the history of Paieon, who was first a god in his own right and doctor of the gods, then an Apollonian qualification, see Nissen 2009, in particular note 6 with an excellent summary of previous studies.

<sup>9</sup> Croon 1967, 225–246.

<sup>10</sup> Benveniste 1948, 45.

This is thus the case for ἀλκτῆρ, the correspondent of which is ἀλέκτωρ, the cockerel, literally “one who fights, who defends”. The agent name ἀλκτῆρ is found in epic language with the meaning of defender: Achilles had a duty to fight for Patroclus, “to be in charge of fighting ruin”, ἀρῆς ἀλκτῆρα γενέσθαι, Odysseus’ pointed spear has the task of “fighting dogs and men”,<sup>11</sup> ὁξὺν ἄκοντα, κυνῶν ἀλκτῆρα καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

Its specialisation in the medical field, however, comes into play quite early on in poetic texts. In Pindar’s *Third Pythic*, we observe an instance of appellative usage that probably cannot be strictly defined as an onomastic attribute but rather as a qualifier of Asklepios.<sup>12</sup> In line 7, the poet refers to him as the “hero in charge of fighting all kinds of diseases”,<sup>13</sup> ἥροα παντοδαπῶν ἀλκτῆρα νούσων. The link with Asklepios is repeated several centuries later in the Pean of Makedonikos. This hymn,<sup>14</sup> written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, reproduces the Pindaric language and vocabulary<sup>15</sup> in many places, even going so far as to describe the god as “the one who has the mission to fight diseases and human misfortune Asklepios, the merry boy”,<sup>16</sup> νούσων καὶ βροτέας [ἀλκτῆρα] δύης, Ἀσκληπιὸν εὐφ[ρον]α κοῦρον. The gap is unfortunate, but the multiple stylistic networks woven between the hymn and the inscription allow for a logical restitution of ἀλκτῆρα.

As for the derivative of this agent noun, it belongs entirely to the semantic field of healing. The adjective ἀλκτῆριον<sup>17</sup> literally designates that which combats a disease, thus the remedy, the antidote, and then qualifies a water with curative virtues.<sup>18</sup>

Several remarks can be made here: the sliding of meaning applied to Asklepios is obvious and easy to understand. Nevertheless, for this rare agent name only observed in poetic texts (with only four occurrences preserved), we feel the need to add νοῦσος (“disease”) to it when it concerns the god of medicine. How can we understand this need for semantic reinforcement with perhaps the only god who does not require it?

If we follow the distinction proposed above by Benveniste, the essence of Asklepios itself should have induced a suffixed name in -τωρ that refers to an idea of general action. In the absence of a zero-degree term and the word ἀλέκτωρ being reserved for a

11 Hom., *Il.* 18.100 (transl. A.T. Murray, W.F. Wyatt, *LCL*), *Od.* 14.531 (transl. A.T. Murray, G.E. Dimock, *LCL*).

12 If we assume that onomastic attribute is not synonymous with periphrasis, *i.e.* syntactic construction involving a verb.

13 Pi., *P.* 3.7.

14 According to the shape of the letters, but Fairbanks 1900, dated it back to 300.

15 *IG II<sup>3</sup> 4*, 777 = *DB MAP S#1328*, l. 9–10. For the commentary, among others Kolde 2003; Piguet 2012, 53–86.

16 *DB MAP T#1719*. The translation chosen by me is that of Benveniste 1948, 45 to maintain the strong idea of struggle rather than protection.

17 Substantivized in Nic., *Th.* 528.

18 Nonn., *D.* 45.348.

gallinaceous,<sup>19</sup> naturally ἀλκτῆρ came to the fore to surname Asklepios. It was then necessary to designate the function of which the god became the agent, the language of the epics setting the example. Characterising the divine onomastic attribute by νοῦσος is indeed justified if we understand that, in the poets' mind, it is not an overqualification of Asklepios, who does not need it, but rather a desire to follow an existing syntactic pattern that is frequently observed for other agent nouns when they are in epicletic function.<sup>20</sup>

## 2 Ἀλεξητήρ

The same system of alternation between the suffixes -τηρ and -τωρ is observed in the substantives ἀλεξητήρ and ἀλεξήτωρ, both of which are used to qualify gods.

The agent noun ἀλεξητήρ, built on the other expanded theme in -η, is first used in Homeric texts to refer to the defender in battle<sup>21</sup> before being found in the later poets without a qualification reserved for the gods: “conjurer of plague”,<sup>22</sup> λοιμοῦ ἀλεξητήρ, in Apollonius of Rhodes, “repelling artificer”<sup>23</sup> of flies, ἀλεξήτειρα δὲ τέχνη in an epigram voicing a mosquito net, or “death repelling”<sup>24</sup> plant in Nonnos. Aside from one occurrence in Xenophon,<sup>25</sup> the term is not used in prose, and probably an influence of this poetic usage causes the expression to be found in a late Macedonian epigram addressed to a statue of Asklepios: “a healing Asklepios, [he] dedicated to this house, charged with warding off diseases”,<sup>26</sup> Ἀσκληπιὸν ἱητήρα • θήκατο τῷδε οἴκῳ νοῦσων ἀλεξητήρα. The switch to a meaning closer to recovery for ἀλεξητήρ is evident here, due to the context of the dedication and the strongly marked semantic field.

To strengthen this specialisation of meaning, we can quote the periphrastic formula of dedication to Demeter by Herodes Atticus of an “(effigy) of Asklepios the initiated ( . . . ) who has warded off his illness”,<sup>27</sup> Ἀσκληπιὸ[ν] ( . . . ) νοῦσον ἀλεξί[σ]αντ’.

<sup>19</sup> Who appears to be the bird of Asklepios. Cf Socrates' last sentence in the *Phaedo*.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, γενέτωρ with the complement τέκνων applied to Eileithyia, refers to the progenitor, Pi., N. 7.1.

<sup>21</sup> Hom., *Il.* 20.396.

<sup>22</sup> A.R., 2.519.

<sup>23</sup> AP 9.764.

<sup>24</sup> Nonn., *D.* 25.529.

<sup>25</sup> X., *Oec.* 4.3: “Bad defenders”, κακοὶ ( . . . ) ταῖς πατρίσιν ἀλεξητήρες εἶναι, i.e., who do not fulfill their mission as defenders. About the alternation between the suffixes -τωρ and -τηρ, see Benveniste 1948, 48.

<sup>26</sup> IG X.2.2, 302 = DB MAP S#16445, 3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE, bearing a relief of the Dioskouroi.

<sup>27</sup> IG II<sup>3</sup>.4, 1051 = I.Eleusis 498. Commentary in DB MAP T#3817: “The qualifier *mustes* most probably refers to Asklepios' initiation to the Mysteries of Eleusis”.

Just like the function agent ἀλκτῆρ previously studied, ἀλεξητήρ is not used alone<sup>28</sup> and the parallelism is interesting when applied to the god of medicine: without any clear presumption of the influence of the former on the latter, the syntactic construction with νοῦσος can be explained in the same way.

This can be contrasted with the more general use of the agent noun ἀλεξήτωρ employed as a qualification for Zeus in Sophocles, when the chorus invokes “Zeus protector”,<sup>29</sup> Ζεῦ Ἀλεξήτορ.

Regarding the semantic evolution of these terms built on the same root, the fields of their use remain essentially poetic, and the expressions in which they are encountered in a quasi-fixed form draw from the crucible of metaphorical references that already exist in the epic sources. Van Brock already said about a term of the same root: “One is less surprised, therefore, to find in Aretaeus two examples of ἄλκαρ”.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the poetic colouring of the onomastic attributes of Asklepios is perfectly justifiable given the literary context in which they are set.

Alongside these agent nouns where the polysemy of the simple nominal form seemed to impose the addition of the complement νούσων, the creation of the progressive compound words ἀλεξίπνοος and ἀλεξίκακος definitively consecrates the belonging of these sequences to the field of the disease that is being repelled and allows them to be attributed in a wider way to Asklepios, but also to Apollo, Zeus, Herakles, Hygieia, Telesphoros and even Athena, according to a coherent distribution.

### 3 Ἀλεξίπνοος

The Homeric texts do not mention this adjective. In literary sources, it is often found in late gemmological essays to designate the virtues of some stones, but also in theological sources assuming a figurative meaning. Only one fragment by Sophocles links the term more anciently to the birth myth and genealogy of Asklepios, referring to Coronis, “the mother of the god who wards off suffering”,<sup>31</sup> μήτηρ ἀλεξιπό[ν]ο[ιο] θεοῦ.

The inscriptions confirm the therapeutic function of the adjective more obviously: in the Pean of Makedonikos, the transmission of knowledge to Asklepios is done because “the Centaur taught all the secrets of his art that ward off the suffering of men”<sup>32</sup> ἐδίδαξε [τ]έχνην πᾶ[σαν] κρυφίαν Κένταυρος ἀλεξίπνον. Then the imperial dedication of an altar by Africanus, priest of the Asklepieion in Epidaurus, confirms

<sup>28</sup> This is the case for the qualification of “Herakles in charge of removing evils”, ἀλεξητήρα κακῶν, *IG* XIV, 1003 = *DB MAP* S#15124. There is no healing function here as it is a hymn dedicated by someone whose life was saved by Herakles during a trip to Italy.

<sup>29</sup> Soph., *OC* 143.

<sup>30</sup> Van Brock 1961, 104.

<sup>31</sup> Page [1962] 1967, 380–381.

<sup>32</sup> Piguet 2012, 82, translation modified to link ἀλεξίπνον over [τ]έχνην.

the healing function of the onomastic attribute by associating it with “Asklepios, Hygieia and Telesphoros, who ward off suffering”,<sup>33</sup> Ἀσκληπιῷ κ(αὶ) Ὑγείᾳ κ(αὶ) Τελεσφόρῳ Ἀλεξιπόνις. The three phases of the evolution of an illness represented by the functions of the deities are thus united by a collective onomastic sequence that reinforces the personal role of each god: medicine, health, and convalescence.

The few attestations, in both literary and epigraphic sources, are thus essentially connected to the Asklepieian family when they concern divine functions. Their scarcity is probably due to the concurrence with Ἀλεξίκακος, which is established as a general onomastic attribute to designate the fight against disease.

## 4 Ἀλεξίκακος

The distribution between these two onomastic qualifications of similar morphological and semantic structure is indeed quite surprising: the first is restricted to the Asklepieian triad, while the second is delineated for the other deities, gods and goddesses or heroes.

The progressive compound adjective ἀλεξίκακος already appears in the *Iliad* to refer to “something that keeps away the evils of all Danaeans”,<sup>34</sup> τις ἀλεξίκακος πᾶσιν Δαναοῖσι. The common saving function – and without religious evocation – is found in the *parabasis* of the *Wasps* chorus when Aristophanes refers to himself as the “saviour who removes the evils of this country”, ἀλεξίκακον τῆς χώρας τῆσδε καθαρτὴν,<sup>35</sup> referring to his status as a poet scourging the Sophists. In Plutarch,<sup>36</sup> Niloxenus’ interjection before a half-man/half-horse monster indicates his frightened surprise without any clue to whether a particular deity is behind the “Ἀλεξίκακε”.

Generally speaking, the evils designated in the various literary occurrences do not necessarily denote pathologies.

In a broader sense, it is in the epigraphic sources that we observe the most mentions of the adjective in epicletic function. Two deities share the majority of Ἀλεξίκακος, Apollo and Herakles,<sup>37</sup> but it is Apollo who is invoked in a context of healings.

<sup>33</sup> IG IV<sup>2</sup>.1, 472 = DB MAP S#10377.

<sup>34</sup> Hom., *Il.* 10.20. Pl., *Cra.* 397e, quotes Hes., *Op.* 123 by adding to the original text the adjective ἀλεξίκακος: the men of the Hesiodic Golden Age are thus earthly *daimones* who “keep away evils and are the protectors of mortals”, ἀλεξίκακοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.

<sup>35</sup> Ar., *V.* 1043.

<sup>36</sup> Plu., *Moral.*, 149D.

<sup>37</sup> Due to an ambiguous rendition, we will leave aside IG II<sup>2</sup> 4850 = DB MAP S#5287, [Ἡρακλέως vel Ἀπόλλωνος Ἀγυιῆως Ἀλεξικάκου; more likely, Apollo is the god in question, according to other epigraphic occurrences such as IG II<sup>3</sup>.4, 953 = DB MAP S#2715. The epithet does not refer to a proven healing function.



Only one dedication is devoted in a general way “to the protecting gods, to the gods who keep away evils”,<sup>38</sup> θεοῖς προστατηρίοις, θεοῖς ἀλεξικάκοις. The archaeological context of the inscription does not help with identifying the deities involved. Nevertheless, if we accept that it comes from Kyme in Aeolis,<sup>39</sup> we know, thanks to Pliny<sup>40</sup> in particular, that the city had a large sanctuary dedicated to Apollo. The epithet Προστατήριος is moreover regularly attributed to him in Attica and in particular when associated with Ἄρτεμις Βουλαία and Φωσφόρος.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, would it be plausible to consider that the “protective gods, who keep away the evils” in Kyme’s dedication are Apollo and Artemis? While the healing qualities of the former are obvious, the intervention of Artemis in a therapeutic role is less clear.<sup>42</sup> However, we should remember that it was Diana Lyaea who, according to Latin authors, cured the whole of Sicily of a disease<sup>43</sup> and that Artemis was invoked in her sanctuary of Lousoi to cure of madness the daughters of Proetos, king of Tiryns.<sup>44</sup> Her status as Apollo’s sister also justifies this protective association.

The onomastic element Ἀλεξίκακος is given to Apollo in a text evoking the *Thargelia*<sup>45</sup> but “The text is too fragmentary to indicate the rituals probably performed for the god, nor the agents possibly involved”.<sup>46</sup> Despite the rarity of mentions of the god in a healing context, Pausanias nevertheless confirms this function by recalling the context of the elaboration of his attribute, which comes “according to the Athenians, from the fact that he indicated to them, through an oracle rendered at Delphi, the means of putting an end to the plague with which they were afflicted at the same time as the Peloponnesian war”,<sup>47</sup> Τὸ δὲ ὄνομα τῷ θεῷ γενέσθαι λέγουσιν, ὅτι τὴν λοιμῶδη σφίσι νόσον ὁμοῦ τῷ Πελοποννησίων πολέμῳ πιέζουσιν κατὰ μάντευμα ἔπαυσε Δελφῶν.

Again, regarding Herakles, the healing reference is not systematic despite his proven connection with Asklepios.<sup>48</sup> Thus, in the Miletoupolis sacrificial calendar

<sup>38</sup> See *DB MAP* S#10418.

<sup>39</sup> But *BE* 1978, no. 401 on this inscription (*I.Kyme* 33 = *DB MAP* S#10418).

<sup>40</sup> Gallet de Santerre 1947, 302–306.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. *Agora* XV, 261 = *DB MAP* S#3466.

<sup>42</sup> But S., *OT* 161, where Artemis is, along with Athena and Apollo, one of the three ἀλεξίμοροι gods invoked to end the pestilence.

<sup>43</sup> Frontisi-Ducroux 1981, 29–56 and 47 esp.

<sup>44</sup> B. 11.37–58 and 92–119: “The daughter of the noblest of fathers, who spies on wild beasts, heard his prayer: she bent Hera, and cured the virgins crowned with chalices of their impious madness. They immediately built her a sanctuary and an altar, they sprinkled her with the blood of sheep, they formed choirs of women.”

<sup>45</sup> *LSCG Suppl.* 14 C, l. 49.

<sup>46</sup> *DB MAP* T#1973.

<sup>47</sup> Paus. 1.3.4.

<sup>48</sup> Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 40.14–15, summarises this link, which had been established centuries ago, by reporting that Herakles was the first of the gods to receive the epithet ἀλεξίκακος and that a paean began with “O Paian Herakles Asklepios”. His cult was emphasised in the wake of the Great Athenian



written in the 350s BCE, the offering of an ox to Herakles, and then of a bull to “(Herakles) who keeps away the evils”,<sup>49</sup> Ἡρακλεῖ βοῦς, Ἀλεξικάκῳ ταῦρος, does not refer to a prerogative healer of the hero.<sup>50</sup> The distinction marked by the syntax is nevertheless worth highlighting, thus by demonstrating how the presence or absence of an onomastic sequence can provide information about the functional polymorphism of the divine agent. The question of the quality of Herakles arises, for example, in a dedication on a mid-4<sup>th</sup> century relief found in Piraeus.<sup>51</sup> If we accept that it is related to the Athenian sanctuary of Herakles Alexikakos,<sup>52</sup> built after the Great Plague of the 430s, we can then consider the connection with possible healing virtues.<sup>53</sup> This example shows, however, how ambiguous the semantic interpretation of functional onomastic attributes can often be, if we needed reminding it.

Besides the simple form of the epithet, we can note the morphological variant ἀπαλεξικάκος /ἀπαλλαξικάκος<sup>54</sup> applied to Herakles in a Delian inscription from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, “of Herakles who removes all evils”,<sup>55</sup> Ἡρακλέους Ἀπαλλαξικάκου as well as in a text from Chaeronea, “to Herakles who removes all evils, Hipparchos, in gratitude”,<sup>56</sup> Ἡρακλεῖ Ἀπαλεξικάκῳ Ἱππάρχος χαριστήριον.

The idea of healing is validated by the association of this epithet with Asklepios in the Epidaurus inscriptions, with the formula “to him who removes evils, God Asklepios, to Hestia, to Zeus Who removes evils”,<sup>57</sup> Ἀπαλλα[ξ]ικάκῳ θεῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ Ἑστία Δ[ιὶ Ἀ]παλλαξικ[άκῳ ---]. The same epithet is attributed here to Zeus; in general, his functions have little to do with disease. It is mainly Zeus Meilichios who is known to repel evils during the festival of Diasia although it is not possible to determine the nature of these evils which oscillate between general impurity (*atai*), sorrows (*aniai*) and gastric disorders (*asai*) attributed to the excess of sacrificial food consumed during these festi-

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Plague and his healing virtues were developed in many sanctuaries, attested by Paus. 9.24. In Ephesus, it is under the semantically close name of Herakles Apotropaïos that he fights the plague, Philostr., *VA* 4.10. Alfieri Tonini 2011, 37–46, esp. 39.

49 *I.Miletupolis* 1 = *CGRN* 83 = *DB MAP* S#14907.

50 In *CGRN* 83, 8–9, the authors note that Herakles “was widely venerated as the protector of houses in this form”.

51 *DB MAP* S#2959 = *SEG* 57, 202.

52 *SEG* 56, 4 for Herakles Alexikakos’ sanctuary.

53 Salowey 2015, 377–378.

54 There is semantic assimilation between ἀπαλεξικάκος and ἀπαλλαξικάκος, the second being built on the verb ἀπαλλάσσειν “to remove, deliver from”. Ἀπαλλακτικός in Aristotle is strictly used to refer to someone delivered from a disease (Arist., *Pr.* 959b, 26). To differentiate between these two forms of ἀλεξικάκος, and insofar as the prefix ἀπο denotes both the action of removing and completeness, they will be translated as “one who repels all evils”. See attestations in *DB MAP* T#13087 or again *DB MAP* T#13565.

55 *I.Délos* 2479 = *DB MAP* S#10440. *RICIS* 202/0379: “Le nom d’Héraklès Apallaxikakos (cf. ἀλεξικάκος) fait songer à Horus-Harpocrate”.

56 *IG VII*, 3416 = *DB MAP* S#16131.

57 *DB MAP* T#13565 = *I.Epidauros Suppl.* 53, 1–4.

vals.<sup>58</sup> Only the last element refers to physical pain. In the Epidaurian inscription, where Zeus is associated with Asklepios, who bears the same qualifier, it would be plausible to conclude that the healing power of the former is euphemistically reinforced: this would probably be the only evidence of a clear therapeutic function for this deity, as this quality does not apply to various onomastic sequences of Zeus: Zeus Apemios “who preserves from suffering” is established in a meteorological context, Zeus Disabeites Alexikakos, “Disabeites, who removes evils”, evolves in a local field<sup>59</sup> and the magical lead tablet from Phalasarna invoking Zeus Alexikakos in a blatantly poetically coloured language alongside Herakles Ptoliportheon, Iatros, Nike and Apollo, has multiple apotropaic purposes.<sup>60</sup>

The distribution between ἀλεξίπινος and ἀλεξίκακος is not easily explainable, but rather than thinking of a strict connection between the deities who bear them, we should first return to the origin of each composition.

The word πόνος has a long history that is not worth developing here. Derived from the verb πένοναι, it above all designates work, effort in labour, whether agricultural, gymnastic or, of course military, to mention only three of the major fields of occupation in Antiquity.<sup>61</sup> The meaning of physical suffering appears later, and mainly in the medical corpus,<sup>62</sup> whereas the term is already attested in Homer or Hesiod with the first meanings mentioned: already in Aeschylus, only the torments of childbirth are characterised by this term,<sup>63</sup> but we cannot restrict Neoptolemos’ sentence to Philoctetes to a single physical pain: “you know the whole scale of sufferings”,<sup>64</sup> διὰ πόνων πάντων φαίνεις.

Unlike κακόν, πόνος moves the usual reading cursor of onomastic sequences that construct a dichotomous system opposing disease and cure by introducing the notion of pain in the middle.

The imprecise meaning for πόνος that persists for a long time explains why Asklepios (and the triad mentioned earlier, with Hygieia and Telesphoros) can benefit from the

58 For details on the subject of nausea cured by Zeus, see Lebreton 2013, 106 and note 210 mainly. The author does not mention the onomastic attribute Ἀπαλλαξίκακος.

59 Worshipped on Parnes, Zeus Apemios does not possess a healing skill. This onomastic sequence is known only from Pausanias, 1.32.2, in association with Zeus Ombrios. Lebreton 2013, 73: “Le mal qu’on attend qu’il réduise à néant est probablement avant tout la sécheresse.” For Zeus Disabeites Alexikakos, French 1996, 87–98, no. 9. Jordan 1992, 191–194. The epithet Soter will not be studied because Zeus Soter does not strictly speaking possess a healing skill.

60 *I.Cret.* II, xix, 7 = SEG 43, 615.

61 “S’agissant d’Athènes, l’effort est toujours exploité ; il est vrai que, dans la guerre, l’époque classique ne veut voir que le beau côté, le côté du beau : ni gémissements ni douleur, ni sang ni larmes, toujours des hauts faits”, Loraux 1982, 191–192 and esp. 174.

62 *LSJ*, s.v., *passim*.

63 Loraux 1981, 37–67 and esp. 44.

64 *Soph.*, *Ph.* 760.

onomastic attribute Ἀλεξίπνοος: connected to the god of medicine, it then takes on an obvious functional meaning because of the univocity of the divine personality.

The word κακός, likewise, does not have any more initial semantic specialisation related to pain. However, unlike πόνος which can take on a positive meaning, κακός is only used in a negative context. Κακόν refers to any evil, a polymorphous impurity of which one must be rid. The polyvalence of divine powers other than Asklepios authorises the appropriation of the Ἀλεξίκακος epithet: sometimes it is associated with a divine action for an entire city, sometimes it expresses the need to create a healing specificity that will be linked to local contingencies and modes of intervention specific to each god: Herakles and Apollo become Ἀλεξίκακοι in the Attic context during the emergence of the Great Plague of Athens, which coincides with the Peloponnesian War:<sup>65</sup> the onomastic sequence takes on a polysemic ambivalence that the univocal Asklepieian qualification cannot possess.

## 5 Νόσιος

The two attestations of this epithet are surrounded by doubts in reading and interpretation.

The first occurrence is found in the Miletus ritual calendar<sup>66</sup> dated from the last quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The sequence ΔΙΝΟΣΙΩΙ, which appears between a regulation to Hera Antheia and Apollo Delphinios, has given rise to several readings but a Zeus Nosios has finally been admitted in place of a potential Dionysos.<sup>67</sup> Despite the lack of comparisons for this epithet, it is conceivable that it was a parallel type of construction, such as Νότος > Νότιος (the South wind /wet), that enabled this derivation. Is it a modified form of the latter used to refer to a range of properties well known for Zeus?<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Zeus Notios is not attested much more than Zeus Nosios<sup>69</sup> and we cannot imagine a morphological variation recalling a climatic phenomenon with any certitude.

<sup>65</sup> Of course, these are also the conditions of the arrival of Asklepios in Athens, but the Asklepieion of Piraeus, which remains the most important in the minds of the Athenians in terms of cult, is only founded in 388. *LSCG Suppl.* 11 and *LSCG* 21 for the religious regulations for the establishment of the cult with offerings to Maleatas, Apollo, Hermes, Iaso, Akeso and Panacea.

<sup>66</sup> *DB MAP* S#135.

<sup>67</sup> Tod 1956, 458 and to resume the discussion, *CGRN* 6, 10–11.

<sup>68</sup> “Si les tremblements de terre sont invariablement mis en relation avec les pouvoirs destructeurs ou apaisants de Poséidon, les aléas climatiques et atmosphériques ressortissent pour leur part au domaine de compétence de Zeus”, Thély 2016, chap. 1, § 31.

<sup>69</sup> Incidentally, Διὶ Νοτίῳ is a dedication found in Thessaly and out of the context of a sanctuary. Recorded with neither drawing nor photo in *Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον* 16 (1960), *Χρονικά* 182 and then included in *BE* 1964, no. 222 and in Heinz 1998, Kat. 17, with photo Abb. 77 (no legible text) = *DB MAP* S#15232.

The second occurrence of Νόσιος is also found in Miletus,<sup>70</sup> which mutually reinforces the two readings. Dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, it is inscribed on a marble slab that was later reemployed as a roofing element. However, this does not imply that it is an exercise in stonemasonry, as the editor claims.<sup>71</sup> On the contrary, the vocative form, Νόσιε, validates the idea of a dedication to the same god as that of the ritual calendar.

In view of all this, it is difficult to understand the referential context of a Zeus Nosios, “of diseases” at the Delphinion. Since the emergence of certain onomastic attributes is based on a local and concrete experience, it is possible that in Miletus, alongside Apollo Delphinios, the tutelary deity par excellence, and Zeus Soter<sup>72</sup> referring to a salvific virtue in the broadest sense, the need for a functional onomastic attribute related to illness was felt. It is interesting to note that in the midst of a range of onomastic qualifications from the same semantic field (the action of repelling evil or healing), this epithet introduces a variant construction<sup>73</sup> where the god is qualified by the negative element he is supposed to protect.

When the illness has nevertheless succeeded in imposing itself, it is a matter of invoking the divine powers intended to defeat it and heal the organism.

While the verb θεραπεύειν is used as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century with the meaning of “to cure medically”,<sup>74</sup> no divine qualification is built on its root. The θεράπων of the epic language from which it is derived first implied a service of a quasi-feudal nature, featuring a warrior bound to a chief in an unbreakable manner.<sup>75</sup> Here, “to serve” is a weakened translation because it fails to capture the full range of connections underlying this type of relationship, which also exists very early on between a human and a god,<sup>76</sup> when the meaning slides into a religious significance. The medical use of this morphological family is ambiguous: θεραπεύειν may concern the care of healthy bodies, thus opposing ἰᾶσθαι<sup>77</sup> which heals the body of its diseases, but in the classical period is used alternatively and without clear distinction to designate a healing action: the French verb “soigner” expresses this equivocal character as well. Why then is it never applied to a god in a healing function?

70 *I.Delphinion* 186 = *DB MAP* T#8834.

71 Kawerau/Rehm 1914, 165.

72 Graf 1979, 2–22. On Zeus Soter, note 73.

73 This could also justify the doubt that may exist about the interpretation. The only other case, also subject to caution, would be the onomastic attribute πυρετός, read in a 3<sup>rd</sup>-c.-CE Cilician dedication to the “God of fevers”, Θεῷ Πυρετῷ (*SEG* 39, 1503) The authors explain that it was probably the prevalence of malaria in the region that would have prompted the creation of this sequence.

74 Th. 2.47.4, about the Great Plague, “For at first neither were the physicians able to cure it through ignorance of what it was”, οὔτε γὰρ ἰατροὶ ἤρκουν τὸ πρῶτον θεραπεύοντες ἀγνοίᾳ.

75 Van Brock 1961, 115.

76 *h.Ap.* 388.

77 *Pl., Lg.* 684c: “It is as if gymnasium masters or doctors were recommended to attend to the care of the body and to cure diseases in pleasant ways”, καθάπερ ἂν εἴ τις γυμνασταῖς ἢ ἰατροῖς προστάττοι μεθ’ ἡδονῆς θεραπεύειν τε καὶ ἰᾶσθαι τὰ θεραπεύόμενα σώματα.

The answer seems to be because of its semantic ambivalence, as it designates both the actions of serving and healing,<sup>78</sup> and also of worshipping.

It is also with this last meaning that ulterior nominal derivatives are developed such as θεραπευτήρ, the servant, θεραπευτής, the worshipper and even θεραπεία which determines the cult devoted to the gods<sup>79</sup> before designating care:<sup>80</sup> we could not conceive of a tautological construction in which a god could be qualified by an onomastic attribute designating a cultic practice or service towards himself.

The two roots that created the verbs ἰάομαι and ἀκέομαι together contain the majority of onomastic formations denoting divine healing powers. The epic language uses both verbs simultaneously,<sup>81</sup> but the latter has a less restrictive usage than the former given that it is not limited to the medical field.

The Homeric language provides an insight into the complexity of the verb ἀκεῖσθαι, which can be translated by the fuzzy and convenient term “to care” (in French, “soigner”). By an effect contrary to the general rules of semantics,<sup>82</sup> ἀκεῖσθαι is first used in an absolute or transitive way as an equivalent of ἰᾶσθαι “to heal” when it essentially concerns a divine intervention that authorises immediate and miraculous healing; on the other hand, when referring to human physicians, the contexts very often lead to an understanding of the verb not as a resultative but rather as the active “to administer care”, or to a further weakening of its meaning with the idea of simply “to relieve, to calm”.<sup>83</sup> As such, the simple or compound form (ἐξ)ἀκεῖσθαι on which the onomastic sequence ἐξακεστήρ is elaborated moves out of the therapeutic semantic field to take on the concrete notion of repairing, boats for example,<sup>84</sup> νῆας ἀκειόμενος, but also moral wrongs in a metaphorical sense, in an intransitive way.<sup>85</sup>

This dilution of a primary meaning that would have been medical in favour of a simple notion of repair can be seen with ἄκος, which from Aeschylus to Herodotus via Plato, is not only rarely observed in prose, but even more rarely designates a medical action.

Did this semantic chronology play a role in the creation of onomastic attributes and their application to some gods rather than others?

<sup>78</sup> Even “heal” in a resultative sense completely concurrent with ἰᾶσθαι in the Epidaurus inscriptions. Prêtre/Charlier (eds.) 2010, 60 and 158.

<sup>79</sup> For example, E., *Ion* 187, “and worship of Apollo who guards the streets”, ἀγυιάτιδες θεραπείαι.

<sup>80</sup> In Thucydides, again, 2.51.4, ‘because each one was infected by mutual treatment’, ὅτι ἕτερος ἀφ’ ἑτέρου θεραπείας ἀναμιμπλάμενοι. Th. Hobbes’ seventeenth-century translation, incidentally, uses “visitation” to translate the term θεραπεία without meaning of care.

<sup>81</sup> 19 examples for the former, 21 for the latter according to Van Brock 1961, 75.

<sup>82</sup> If we accept an internal chronology of the epic texts established by Van Brock.

<sup>83</sup> Hom., *Il.* 4.36.

<sup>84</sup> Hom., *Od.* 14.383.

<sup>85</sup> Hom., *Od.* 10.69: “Make repentance, my friends!”, ἀλλ’ ἀκέσασθε, φίλοι.

## 6 Ἀκέσιος

The only mention of this onomastic element<sup>86</sup> is attributed to Apollo, whose cult statue stands on the agora of Elis according to Pausanias:<sup>87</sup>

The most notable things that the Eleans have in the open part of the agora are a temple and image of Apollo Akesios. The meaning of the name would appear to be exactly the same as that of the Ἀλεξίκακος, the name current among the Athenians.

Ἡλείοις δὲ ἐν τῷ ὑπαίθρῳ τῆς ἀγορᾶς τὰ ἐπιφανέστατα ναός ἐστι καὶ ἄγαλμα Ἀπόλλωνος Ἀκεσίου· σημαῖνοι δ' ἂν τὸ ὄνομα οὐδέν τι ἄλλοῖον ἢ ὁ καλούμενος Ἀλεξίκακος ὑπὸ Ἀθηναίων.

The equivalence with the epithet Ἀλεξίκακος allows us to insert this qualifier into the healing virtues, even though we have no information on the cult of Apollo Alexikakos in Athens.<sup>88</sup> However, the etymology modifies Pausanias' interpretation if we accept that one keeps away the evils while the other treats them. Should we see in this sequence a sole Apollonian function? Apollo's position in the agora is uncommon, as is also shown by the onomastic attribute Ἀγοραῖος applied exclusively to Zeus and Hermes. In Athens, the cult of Apollo Patroos on the agora is an influence of the religious organisation of the Ionian cities;<sup>89</sup> there, he represents the accomplished Athenian democracy, but the Dorian cities of the Peloponnese, on the other hand, never quite assimilate Apollo to a civic symbol. However, it is difficult to completely adopt R. Martin's argument, which sees the memory of popular traditions emanating from cities in "l'état primitif (. . .), occupées d'élevage, de la protection de leurs troupeaux"<sup>90</sup> in this absence of a political role. Indeed, the onomastic attribute Ἀκέσιος cannot be reduced to a single protective function.

Apollo was never supplanted by Asklepios in the Elean city, unlike in other cities, like Epidaurus, of course.<sup>91</sup> Since his temple has not been found, we know little about the cult that was devoted to him or the date of his appearance. Nevertheless, its thau-

<sup>86</sup> After some consideration, we have removed Ἀκέσις from the list of onomastic attributes: as a common noun, the term itself followed the semantic evolution already mentioned for all words with the root ἀκεῖσθαι by weakening and losing its medical meaning especially in inscriptions where it now only designates the – pragmatic – action of repairing. Syntactically speaking, this is not an onomastic attribute insofar as Ἀκέσις is also a hero assimilated to Telesphoros whose healing prerogatives are known rather late in Greece. Referring to an image of Evamerion in the temple of Asklepios of Titane, Pausanias gives the only literary reference to Telesphoros (2.11.7).

<sup>87</sup> Paus. 6.24, 6. Pilz 2020, 97. The temple has not been found, despite some proposals for interpretation (*Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον* 64 [2009], *Χρονικά* 369).

<sup>88</sup> Cf *supra* s.v.

<sup>89</sup> De Schutter 1987, 103–129.

<sup>90</sup> Martin 1951, 190.

<sup>91</sup> "In der Stadt Elis, finden sich in der Tat keinerlei Spuren der Verehrung des Asklepios; seine Funktion als Heilgott scheint dort von Apollon Akesios erfüllt worden zu sein.", Pilz 2020, 178.

maturgical function is undoubtedly ancient in Elis<sup>92</sup> and can be explained by the conjunction of several factors such as the equivalence with the Athenian Alexikakos and an onomastic sequence with an archaic tint elaborated on a root whose healing meaning derives from epic sources:

(. . .) On aurait alors affaire à un ancien groupe d’anciens termes de caractère magique qui ont pu être dépréciés lorsque la médecine a commencé à devenir une science et supplantés par des termes nouveaux (. . .) On voit alors que sur le plan même de la langue épique, ἀκεῖσθαι est déjà une survivance ; une fois donné ἰᾶσθαι, ἀκεῖσθαι était voué à disparaître comme terme médical en même temps que se dévaluait la réalité qu’il exprimait.<sup>93</sup>

This explanation by Van Brock confirms the idea that the choice of Ἀκέσσιος to qualify the Elean Apollo gives him a leading role in the city by reinforcing his primary healing prerogatives.

## 7 Ἀκέστωρ

Following Benveniste’s morphological distribution of agent noun suffixes in -τήρ and -τωρ, this onomastic attribute belongs to the category designating the author of an act, more generally than the agent of a function with a specific charge. It is a *unicum* that is addressed to Phoibos (Apollo) in Euripides when Orestes finds Hermione, “O Phoibos Akestor, give us a resolution of these troubles!”,<sup>94</sup> ὦ Φοῖβ’ ἀκέστορ, πημάτων δοίης λύσιν. The majority of French, German or English translations relate this onomastic attribute back to the notion of healer. Benveniste himself explains the difference between ἀκέστωρ, Apollo “the one who heals” and ἀκεστήρ which designates the horse bit brake “intended to calm or tame (the horse)”.<sup>95</sup> However, it is quite surprising that in one case the primary meaning of the suffixed root (“to heal”) prevails, while in the other it is the weaker meaning (“to appease”) that predominates. We are therefore led to ask ourselves what determines the meaning of an onomastic attribute: the divinity that carries it and the framework of elaboration or the etymology and morphology of the term. We have already seen above that the production of agent nouns obeyed alternation logics upon which recurrent syntactic phenomena were superimposed: nouns in -τήρ are thus often followed by a complement intended to specify the context in which their action is exercised, while nouns in -τωρ, more generic, do not require any over-qualification. In the tragedy featuring this Apollo Akestor, no narrative element indicates the need to pray to the healing nature of the god: neither Orestes nor Hermione

<sup>92</sup> For the healing functions of Apollo in the Homeric sources, Graf 2009, 66–68.

<sup>93</sup> Van Brock 1961, 110.

<sup>94</sup> E., *Andr.* 900. *Unicum* as an onomastic attribute. Otherwise, among others, Ath. 6.30 (237a) and *IG* IV, 729 (3<sup>rd</sup> c.).

<sup>95</sup> Benveniste 1948, 45.



suffer from any illness. Therefore, it seems logical to detach this onomastic attribute from the field of thaumaturgic deities and to see it instead as a generic use, as Zeus Alexetor, placing Apollo in the saving role of one who will alleviate dramas and repair situations.

## 8 Ἐξακεστήρ, ἑξακεστήριος

These two onomastic elements are the only prefixed forms built on the verb root ἀκεῖσθαι and the contexts seem to have made their interpretation ambiguous, alternating between the ancient semantic meaning (“who cares”)<sup>96</sup> and a purifying action.

The main document is a Solonian prescription reported by Pollux about an oath taken to three gods, “suppliant, purificator and *exakester*”,<sup>97</sup> τρεῖς θεοὺς ὀμνύναι κελεύει Σόλων, ἱκέσιον καθάρσιον ἑξακεστήρα. Here, we are dealing with a triple Zeus or three hypostases of the god, but the Athenian anchorage of the last two attributes is questionable.<sup>98</sup> The identification of the deity is assured by a gloss by Hesychius, “Exakesterios: Zeus and Hera”, ἑξακεστήριος· ὁ Ζεὺς καὶ ἡ Ἥρα. Other testimonies of the onomastic qualification are found in Magna Graecia, where it seems to have been fairly popular from as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

A locally produced achromatic olpe from a late 5<sup>th</sup>-century Sicilian Greco-indigenous site bears the post-firing graffiti “of Zeus Exakester”,<sup>99</sup> Διὸς ἑξακεστήρος. The original editor saw a “healing” Zeus but the interpretation was later corrected to a “purifying” god.<sup>100</sup> The cult of the chthonian deities and/or a Zeus Meilichios was attested from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE in Agrigento, although the vastness of the temple of Olympian Zeus<sup>101</sup> leaves little doubt as to the importance of the latter’s role. The excavations carried out on site at Monte Saraceno also seem to confirm the possibility of chthonian-type cult buildings.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>96</sup> In the literal translation of the onomastic attribute.

<sup>97</sup> Poll. 8.142.

<sup>98</sup> “L’identité de la divinité n’est pas explicitée, mais il ne peut s’agir que de Zeus qui est le seul, pour ainsi dire, à se voir attribuer ces trois appellations” (Lebreton 2013, 67). *Ibid.* for the rejection of the Athenian origin of the last qualification. The cult of Zeus Katharsios is well known in Olympia, Thasos and Hyllarima. For the triple designation, see also Valdés Guía 1999, 45.

<sup>99</sup> Calderone 1985, 102 = SEG 65, 774 = DB MAP S#11832.

<sup>100</sup> Manganaro 1992, 205–206, but who bases his interpretation on the presence of numerous attestations of anthroponyms derived from the same prefixed root in the Agrigento region.

<sup>101</sup> Unfinished due to the capture of the city by Carthage in 406. Monte Saraceno, after being controlled by Gela during the late 7<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, came under the influence of Akragas (Agrigento) in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>102</sup> For a summary, Boffa 2015, 94.

At the same time, a fragment of a 4<sup>th</sup>-century-BCE inscription found at Velia<sup>103</sup> with the restitution “of Zeus Exakesterios”, [Ζηνὸς (?) Ἐξακεστηρίου], provides the second attestation of this onomastic attribute in Magna Graecia. The restitution of Zeus nevertheless remains hypothetical,<sup>104</sup> the editor relying on the Solonian prescription reported by Pollux to justify it. “Mais cette épithète (“qui remédie aux malheurs”) peut s’appliquer également à Héra et Apollon”.<sup>105</sup> In a context of chthonian cults (to Hades, Persephone and Demeter), must the Eleatic deity Ἐξακεστήρ (the architrave bearing the inscription does not necessarily imply a suffixation in -ιος) be oriented towards Zeus and towards rescue prerogatives? There was an Apollo Oulios<sup>106</sup> in Velia and the city was renowned in the medical field. It seems that, regardless of the deity concerned, more importance should be given to a polysemy of the attribute, protective and healing, undoubtedly reflecting a state of local practices.

The practices of chthonian cults<sup>107</sup> are well attested in Agrigento (now San Biagio), Velia<sup>108</sup> and Mons Saraceno, and the topographical conformation suggests that the Demeter worshipped did not only have prophetic functions: in San Biagio, her oracle was famous and the presence of a sacred cave, basins and water point to a healing action similar to the one well attested in Patras.<sup>109</sup> Her therapeutic prerogatives are also depicted in literary sources,<sup>110</sup> Eleusinian cult practices and the association with Persephone and Asklepios in various sanctuaries. At Velia, three later inscriptions bear the names of physicians all named Oulis<sup>111</sup> and qualified as φῶλαρχοι.<sup>112</sup> The term has been interpreted both as a reference to a medical school and as having a symbolic meaning referring to hidden liturgies of the physicians in Elea.<sup>113</sup> However, in the context of current understanding of the site and according to the original meaning of φωλεύω “to hide in a cave”, it seems conceivable that it refers not

<sup>103</sup> Latin name for Elaea. Miranda 1982, 169–171 = *IGDGG* I, 50 = *DB MAP* S#13971.

<sup>104</sup> Other Eleatic Zeuses bore the onomastic attributes Ourios, Hellenios, Hypatos, Athenaios, Alastoros and perhaps Pompaïos, if we follow Guarducci 1966, 284–287.

<sup>105</sup> Morel 2000, 39.

<sup>106</sup> *Infra* s.v.

<sup>107</sup> Assuming that it designates propitiatory and purificatory rites linked to certain deities, which obviously include Demeter but also Zeus.

<sup>108</sup> Velia and Naples gave priestesses of Demeter in Rome, Cic., *Balb.* 24.55. In Velia, the honoured Demeter would be a Thesmophoros with cult under Athenian influence: Stat., *Silv.* 4.8.50, speaking of Naples, evokes an Attic Ceres.

<sup>109</sup> Paus. 7.21.11–12 for Patras. For Agrigento, Marconi 1929, 21ff. Although Le Dinahet 1984, 137–152.

<sup>110</sup> From the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 225–230 to the *Orphic Hymn* 39.20 where Demeter is referred to as “mistress of health”. For an overview of the healing functions in Delos, for example, see Roussel 1987, 244, no. 5.

<sup>111</sup> The link with the epithet of Apollo Oulios can be established. *Infra* s.v.

<sup>112</sup> *IG Velia*, 22–24.

<sup>113</sup> Rocca-Serra 1985, 169–74. Even Chantraine [1968–1980] 2009, s.v., translated as “head of a medical college”.

only to a brotherhood of physicians, the *Ouliades*, but also to a subterranean place evoking a cave, and thus to healing practices in an oracular setting.

It should be added that water was an important element of the Eleatic cults and that the spring found on the site was exploited by local doctors from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, then diverted to the sanctuary of Asklepios via a large canalisation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century,<sup>114</sup> but also used in healing practices linked to the chthonian deities of the site. All this archaeological and textual data validates the role of Demeter as a healer at these sites of Magna Graecia.

Once the framework in which the Zeus Exakester evolves is established,<sup>115</sup> what functions should he have? The term “purificator”, very often used to translate the epithet, does not account for the etymology but successfully maintains a semantic ambiguity: in the Solonian oath, it is clear that the environment is above all political and the sequence of the three onomastic qualifications is there to show that Zeus purifies the whole city. This is undoubtedly also the meaning intended by Dionysios of Halicarnassos<sup>116</sup> who associates, without any given context, two invocations “to the *exakesterioi* and *apotropaic* gods”, θεοῖς ἐξακεστηρίοις τε καὶ ἀποτροπαίοις.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to reduce this Zeus Exakester to a single expiatory meaning in a civic setting. The older existence of this god in Magna Graecia once again shows the adaptation of onomastic sequences to local cultic contexts. Besides the Zeus of Agrigento with different virtues (Meilichios or Olympian), the Zeus Exakester of the satellite site of Monte Saraceno and of Velia present chthonian functions linked to Demeter’s healing nature. If we also note that the ancient medical meaning of the verb ἐξακέομαι was maintained even in the Hippocratic corpus,<sup>117</sup> we have a wide semantic range that reflects the functional plurality of Zeus, from therapeutic prerogatives in Greek colonies to civic “offices”<sup>118</sup> in an Athenian context.

## 9 Οὔλιος

Only one occurrence of this onomastic attribute concerns Artemis, the others are devoted to Apollo. The cult of Apollo Oulios, “the one who brings health”, well documented by epigraphic and literary sources, was established in Miletus, Delos, Rhodes

<sup>114</sup> Pugliese Caratelli 1986, 227–236. Tocco Sciarelli 1999, 61–65 and *Idem* 2000, 51–58 and especially 56 for Asklepios.

<sup>115</sup> For a possible link between the city of Elea and a chthonian Zeus in the Agrigentine sphere, see Boffa 2015, 95.

<sup>116</sup> D.H. 10.2.6.

<sup>117</sup> Hp., *Vict.* 3.67 or *Mochl.* 25.

<sup>118</sup> Respecting the meaning of the suffix -τήρ in the names of functional agents according to Benveniste 1948.

and Cos.<sup>119</sup> Velia also honoured the god under this attribute judging by the mention of the term “Ouliades”, Ουλιάδης in two Eleatic inscriptions evoking Parmenides on the one hand and a *ιατρό[μαντις]* . . . Ἀπολλω[νος] on the other,<sup>120</sup> the *Ouliades* being to Apollo Oulios what the Asklepiades were to Asklepios, according to the interpretations.<sup>121</sup>

However, the epithet presents a semantic ambiguity. Although it is derived from the verb οὔλειν, “to be in good health”, it oscillates between a positive meaning, which most lexicographers use, and a negative meaning, “fatal”, which already exists in the epic sources.

The “good health” meaning would come from a contamination with the adjective ὅλος, which would thus refer to physical integrity: to be in good health is to be in completely good condition. Alongside the shortened definitions of Hesychius, with *e.g.* “οὔλειν: keep healthy”, οὔλειοιεν· ἐν ὑγείᾳ φυλάσσοιεν, Strabo<sup>122</sup> comments on the Apollonian attribute directly:

Oulios is the name that Milesians and Delians give to a specific Apollo, otherwise known as Apollo who provides health, god who heals, because the word οὔλειν means to be healthy: it is derived from the word οὔλή,<sup>123</sup> and is found in the formula “οὔλέ τε καὶ μέγα χαῖρε”.<sup>124</sup> Apollo is indeed the healer, and so is Artemis, whose name comes from ἀρτεμέας.<sup>125</sup>

Οὔλιον δ' Ἀπόλλωνα καλοῦσι τινα καὶ Μιλήσιοι Δήλιοι, οἷον ὑγιαστικὸν καὶ παιωνικόν· τὸ γὰρ οὔλειν ὑγιαίνειν, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ τὸ οὔλη καὶ τὸ “οὔλέ τε καὶ μέγα χαῖρε.” Ἰατρικὸς γὰρ ὁ Ἀπόλλων· καὶ ἡ Ἀρτεμις ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρτεμέας ποιεῖν.

The negative meaning, “fatal, disastrous”, is paradoxically given by the same sources, and Hesychius, in the space of a few lines of each other, gives the definition “bad health: painful”, ὀλοὸν κακόν, χαλεπόν: however, he is only adopting the meaning already used for a long time in the Tragic or in Hesiod,<sup>126</sup> for example, who twice qualifies “Ares, a fatal god”, οὔλιος Ἄρης.

As the older attestations support an earlier negative meaning, there have been attempts to explain the extreme semantic variation of the adjective, even outside the epicletic sphere.<sup>127</sup>

119 For the details, see the results partially recorded in the MAP database s.v., in Masson 1988, 173–183, no. 3–4, and the detailed commentary on the sources in Nissen 2009.

120 *IG Velia* 21 and 19. For the latter, restitutions vary, Ebner 1970, 262–267.

121 For the discussion of all interpretations of the links between Oulios, Ouliades and Oulis, see Morel 2000, 43, n. 102.

122 Str. 14.1.6.

123 The scar, *i.e.* the healed wound.

124 Tardieu's translation reads “health and great joy”. I would use the French word “salut” but prudently, I will not translate or comment on this exclamation.

125 In the *Iliad*, for example, 5.515, ἀρτεμής means ‘safe and sound’.

126 S., *Aj.* 932, οὔλιω σὺν πάθει, Hes., Sc. 192 and 441.

127 “Le glissement de sens se serait produit par le biais du vocatif οὔλε, ‘salut !’ – au sens d'intégrité physique et de santé – attesté dans l'*Odyssée* (24, 402), dans la formule citée par Strabon ; interprété

So, how should we consider the Apollonian epithet? In fact, this semantic ambivalence perfectly fits with the ambiguity of the god (or the inverse, but the sources do not allow us to affirm this) and has two explanations, one based on the etiological crucible of the god, the other on a language phenomenon identified in Greek literary sources. In the *Iliad*, Apollo sends the plague to men after Agamemnon violates the honour of his priest, Chryses, who asks the god to intercede to punish them.<sup>128</sup> The phenomenon of punishment in the form of divine disease is a well-worn narrative pattern in antiquity,<sup>129</sup> but while the redress of evil is sometimes accomplished by a mediator, a priest or purifying diviner (*kathartes*), in the case of Apollo, the god himself provides the cure. Other primary sources refer to the link between Apollo and the plague,<sup>130</sup> whether in a figurative or medical sense: Hesiod<sup>131</sup> emphasises his founding role in the deliverance from this evil of the plague inflicted by Zeus, since only the consultation of Apollo's oracle will allow men to be purified of hidden sexual and blood crimes. This duality of the Apollonian personality runs through Greek history, from the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon to the Great Plague of Athens, where the god is still the protagonist. At the same time, the “ambivalent” character of the onomastic attribute οὔλιος is fully justified in a language well versed in *enantiose-mia*,<sup>132</sup> the most famous example given in Sophocles,<sup>133</sup> “We call them Eumenides, so that with well-wishing power they may receive the suppliant as his saviors”, ὥς σφας καλοῦμεν Εὐμενίδας, ἐξ εὐμενῶν στέρνων δέχεσθαι τὸν ἱκέτην.

The bisemic and antinomic onomastic element attributed to Apollo thus evokes both one of the most characteristic aspects of the god's personality, his ability to be fatal in chastising humans, as well as his positive capacity to grant health, thus perhaps reserving the function of healing god *stricto sensu* for Paean<sup>134</sup> but above all for Apollo Iatros with whom he has many affinities.

Let us relate the significance of this Apollo Oulios to the rare occurrences of a Dionysos Hygiates, introduced by a quote in Athenaeus<sup>135</sup> and adopted again in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE by Eustathius of Thessalonica, where the virtues of wine consumed in measured quantities are reported, “This is why Dionysos is invoked everywhere as a physician (*iatros*). The Pythia even ordered some to invoke Dionysos as the god of

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comme un impératif, ce terme aurait donné naissance au verbe οὔλειν, ‘être en bonne santé’, according to Nissen 2009.

128 Hom., *Il.* 1.8.

129 Burkert 1994, 27–40 and esp. 28–30.

130 Petridou 2016, 175–176.

131 Hes., *Op.* 242–245. For the plague “constitutive of classical Greek political thought” see, among others, Dupont 1984, 511–524.

132 Palamidis 2019, 191–236, § 78 esp.

133 S., *OC* 486.

134 To whom he may have been assimilated: “Greeks and Romans could use epithets alone to stand in for a divine name, such as Delius for Apollo or Olympios for Zeus”, Graf 2009, 67.

135 Ath. 2.2 (36b).

health (*hugiates*) . . .”, διὸ καὶ καλεῖσθαι τὸν Διόνυσον πανταχοῦ ἱατρόν. ἡ δὲ Πυθία εἴρηκ’ ἐτισι Διόνυσον ὑγιάτην καλεῖν.

The link between Dionysos and Delphi was already known in the 5<sup>th</sup> century since the god was represented on the western pediment of the temple of Apollo, his tomb was in the *adyton*, and in the Apollonian cult, Dionysos served as a “substitute” during Apollo’s absence in the winter months.<sup>136</sup> A Paean to Dionysos<sup>137</sup> written by Philodamos of Scarpheus in the 340s, discovered at Delphi, refers to the god of wine as “lord of health”, ἄναξ ὑγείας.

This is a rare case of a divine qualification built on the root used for the word ὑγίης. Even more than Οὐλίος, perhaps, this root operates against disease: ὑγιάζειν means “to heal” and its passive successfully replaces the sometimes syntactically unsuitable forms of ἰᾶσθαι.<sup>138</sup> The *iamata* of Epidauros, on the other hand, employ the formula “he went out in good health”, ὑγίης ἐξῆλθε,<sup>139</sup> by introducing an underlying idea of care into this concise sequence, related to the previous state of the patient upon their arrival at the sanctuary. The term ὑγιάτης qualifying Dionysos includes this same notion of healing that provides good health, while expressly linking it to wine, the god’s attribute par excellence. Is it strictly speaking an onomastic attribute? No place of worship is clearly attested and one may wonder if it is not, like *Iatros* for Dionysos, an explanatory qualification of the god rather than a functional onomastic attribute.

## 10 Ἰητήρ/Ἱατρός

Remarkably, the root of the verb ἰᾶσθαι has given rise to only two onomastic attributes which seem to be interchangeable depending on the written sources in which they are found, *ιητήρ* and *ιατρός*, and which have the peculiarity of being essentially related to Apollo.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Plu., *Moral.*, Letter E 389 c.

<sup>137</sup> SEG 32, 552, 153. Also Calame 2009, 171–179 and most recently Brillet-Dubois 2018, 40 in particular.

<sup>138</sup> Van Brock 1961, 156 for the various terms of the same family.

<sup>139</sup> IG IV<sup>2</sup>.1, 121, 33 et *passim*.

<sup>140</sup> We will set aside the term *ιατρός* applied to Dionysos, which is never an onomastic attribute but appears as a qualification with explanatory value in Ath. 1.22e; 2.36b; Paus. 10.33.11, and notably in Plu., *Moral.* 647a, without any sanctuary being known: “Dionysos was regarded as a good physician, not only for having invented the use of wine, which is the most effective and pleasant remedy”, Ὁ δὲ Διόνυσος οὐ μόνον τῷ τὸν οἶνον εὖρεῖν, ἰσχυρότατον φάρμακον καὶ ἡδιστον, ἱατρός ἐνομήσθη μέτριος. See the synthesis in Lungu 2022, 71–100. Likewise, the complicated sequence “to the benevolent Mother of the Gods doctor (and to?) Aphrodite”, Μητρὶ Θεῶν εὐαντή< τῷ > ἱατρίνῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ engraved on the base of a statuette found in Piraeus (IG II<sup>3</sup>.4, 1324 = DB MAP S#3537) and dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> c. would require a full article of its own as there are so many interpretations. In any case, it is certain that the syntax prevents the qualifier “ἱατρίνῃ” from being associated with Aphrodite, especially

Let's take a look at Asklepios himself, described sometimes as Ἰατρός and sometimes as Ἱητήρ. The rarity of his qualification is worth highlighting, although one may struggle to understand why the god of medicine par excellence needs to receive such an obvious qualification.

"Asklepios Iatros" is known from Pausanias: "Then in Balagrai of Cyrenaica there is an Asklepios called Iatros who also comes from Epidaurus",<sup>141</sup> Τὸ δ' ἐν Βαλάγγραι ταῖς Κυρηναίων ἐστὶν Ἀσκληπιὸς καλούμενος Ἰατρός ἐξ Ἐπιδαύρου καὶ οὗτος. Two inscriptions confirm this onomastic sequence, one also from Balagrai,<sup>142</sup> and almost contemporary with Pausanias, with a dedication to "Asklepios Balagreites Physician", [Ἀσκληπ]ίω·Βαλαγγρεῖτῃ Ἱητρῶι, the other being a religious regulation from Cyrene<sup>143</sup> from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE indicating sacrifices to the "Physician, a pig", Ἱατρῶι ὕς, in which the noun Iatros in epithet position qualifies Asklepios without the need to name him.<sup>144</sup>

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, Vedius Alkisthenes, advocate of the treasury and sacred finances, makes an offering at the sanctuary of Asklepios in Lebena,<sup>145</sup> addressing his dedication to "Zeus Sarapis (and) Asklepios Physician, Titanios, Lebenaean", Διὶ Σεράπιδι Ἀσκληπιῶ ἱατρῶ Τειτανίῳ Λεβηναίῳ. Just like the complex sequence from Balagrai, the second and third epithets are toponymic. Titane, not far from Sicyon, was home to a sanctuary to Asklepios from the 5<sup>th</sup> century even though Pausanias' mention<sup>146</sup> of a *xoanon* of Coronis carried to the sanctuary of Athena seems to imply pre-existing cults. How are we to understand the juxtaposition of the functional onomastic sequence and two toponymic attributes in this inscription? It must undoubtedly be put into perspective in the context of the period. The sanctuary of Lebena was founded by the arrival of the god in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and at a moment when Asklepieia were flourishing throughout Greece. To mention Asklepios Lebenaean, but also Titanian, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE is to underline the antiquity of the sanctuary by recalling

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since two other parallel texts have no mention of the goddess. The translation of the late term is ambiguous: after presumably designating the midwife, the term underwent a semantic expansion to mean only the female equivalent of ἱατρός. Van Brock 1961, 66–67.

141 Paus. 2.26.9.

142 SEG 26, 1818 = DB MAP S#3678.

143 CGRN 190 = DB MAP S#2531, col. A.

144 Not to be confused with the unknown Hero Iatros, sometimes called only "Iatros" at Rhamnous, e.g. IG II<sup>3</sup>.4, 921 = DB MAP S#1450. Reference is made here to Graf 2006: "The (few and late) texts also present their proper names: Amphilochos (Athens near the Agora), Aristomachos (Marathon), Oresinios (Eleusis), Aristomachos (Rhamnous; also identified with Amphiaraios). The inscriptions almost always use the functional titles: the respective worshippers were only interested in the healing power; a mythology, where applicable, was secondary."

145 *I.Cret.* I, xvii, 27 = DB MAP S#11497. A single deity may have been seen in this sequence, Renberg 2017, 344, no. 27.

146 Paus. 2.11.2. Lolos 2005, 275–298.



its origin, and thus the preponderant role that Asklepios<sup>147</sup> still plays many centuries later, as attested by its rehabilitation by Julian at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.

In parallel, a late epigram from Macedonia, already mentioned above, evokes the statue of a “healing Asklepios”,<sup>148</sup> Ἀσκληπιὸν ἰατῆρα and another epigram, very incomplete, found in the sanctuary of Asklepios of Pergamon<sup>149</sup> famous from the 4<sup>th</sup> century includes the restored sequence “of the *temenos* of Asklepios the healer”,<sup>150</sup> τέμενος δ’ ἰκόμην Ἀσκληπιοῦ [ἰατῆρος].

To this group, where Asklepios is ἰατῆρ, we shall add a dedication partly in hexameters, where Q. Valerius Iulianus of Smyrna<sup>151</sup> offers “to Asklepios Healer, a statue of Zeus Soter with a silvery plaster base”, Ἀσκληπιῶ ἰατῆρι Διὸς Σωτῆρος ἄγαλμα σὺν βάσει ἀργυρέῃ γύψου μεστῇ, in a wish to attract a double protection, salvific and therapeutic.

This is probably a good place to make a distinction between the forms ἰατῆρ and ἱατρός which, as we have said, seem to take on the same meaning in the textual sources that cite them. This is apparently also the case in the epic language, which uses both terms almost equally.

Two examples can be cited which nevertheless allow us to temper this assumption of equivalence by recalling the suffix distinctions put forward by Benveniste: the first is in the *Homeric hymn to Asklepios*, where he is described as “healer of diseases”, ἰατῆρα νόσων Ἀσκληπιὸν. The second in the *Iliad*,<sup>152</sup> that describes Machaon as the “son of Asklepios, the excellent healer” φῶτ’ Ἀσκληπιοῦ υἱόν, ἀμύμονος ἱατῆρος, which parallels the phrase “he too, now needing an excellent healer” χρηίζοντα καὶ αὐτὸν ἀμύμονος ἱατῆρος, when he is wounded. Let us recall here that in the *Iliad*, Asklepios is still only a mortal physician not elevated to the rank of a god. The term ἰατῆρ is thus not working epically here but it already concerns Asklepios and, following Benveniste, the suffix -τῆρ indicates the agent of a function who has a mission. Many modern translations use “physician” rather than “healer”,<sup>153</sup> but we have retained it here to distinguish it from ἱατρός and to avoid any risk of anachronism.

In the later prosaic language, on the other hand, ἱατρός becomes the only form in use, whether in technical language or not: this is the practitioner, who has become a recognised professional, and the value of the suffix -τρός against -τῆρ is a specialisation derived from the name of the agent, an assimilation to a specific activity.

<sup>147</sup> Burgeon 2021, 279–294.

<sup>148</sup> IG X.2.2 302 = DB MAP S#16445. 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, with a relief of the Dioskouroi.

<sup>149</sup> See the always useful synthesis by Roulet 1952, 1–8.

<sup>150</sup> SEG 28, 974 = DB MAP S#16555. The full rendition of the text by Peek 1978, 710, is described as “étourdissante” by L. Robert in BE 1979, no. 385.

<sup>151</sup> I.Smyrna 757 = DB MAP S#5486.

<sup>152</sup> Il. 4.190. and Il. 11.835.

<sup>153</sup> On the other hand, according to Benveniste 1948, 46, the ἱάτωρ is “one who performs or has performed a healing”.

Van Brock's confrontation<sup>154</sup> between two verses of the *Iliad* concerning Machaon and Podaleirios, the sons of Asklepios, sheds some light on the interpretation to be given to the two terms used later as onomastic attributes:<sup>155</sup> ἰητῆρ' ἀγαθῶ, Ποδοαλείριος ἦδὲ Μαχάων, and ἰητροὶ μὲν γὰρ Ποδοαλείριος Μαχάων: "ἰητρός est le nom du 'praticien', de celui qui exerce l'art de la médecine, alors que ἰητῆρ semble présenter tout simplement un caractère de grandeur laudative et apparaît spécialisé comme une épithète décorative".

By looking back at the onomastic qualifications given to Asklepios in the above-mentioned texts, the distinction between ἰατρός and ἰητῆρ is easily explained: the second epithet is a poetic survival of the Ionian form adopted in the oldest sources,<sup>156</sup> whereas Asklepios Iatros, as designated in sanctuaries founded by the god in Epidaurus, Cyrene or Lebena is, once again, not tautologically overqualified, but simply named for his "professionalization", his univocal agency within a pantheon where every other god has several functions.

Besides these rare occurrences of Asklepios Ἰάτρος/ Ἰητῆρ, the major deity that has benefited from the onomastic attribute Ἰατρός is Apollo.

The point is not to review the history of the cult or to enumerate the textual occurrences.<sup>157</sup> In Greece proper, the first textual references to him as a physician seem to be literary, when he is commissioned to cure eyes gouged out by birds: "Moreover, let the ravens ( . . . ) gouge out their eyes, as a proof, and then let the physician Apollo heal them; he is paid for this",<sup>158</sup> οἱ δ' αὖ κόρακες ( . . . ) τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐκκοψάντων ἐπὶ πείρα: εἴθ' ὃ γ' Ἀπόλλων ἰατρός γ' ὦν ἰάσθω: μισθοφορεῖ δέ.

But it is especially in the Milesian colonies of the Black Sea that Apollo Iatros is venerated from the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, as in Sinope, Panticapaea, Olbia, or Histria; the doctor-god<sup>159</sup> was the patron of Apollonia, where his sanctuary housed

154 Van Brock 1961, 10. Similarly, ἰάσθαι denotes the achievement of the resultative treatment, while ἰατρεύειν is its accomplishment.

155 Hom., *Il.* 2.732 and *Il.*, 11.833.

156 And the restitution of ἰητῆρος in the Pergamenian epigram is thus justified whereas it might have been understood that the local Asklepios was designated as a physician.

157 Ustinova 2009, 245–299. For the occurrences, see the MAP database s.v. Ἰατρός / Ἰητρός (E#663). Some of the textual occurrences of Apollo Iatros are merely a manifestation of the importance of his cult in the cities concerned. *IGDOP* 58 = *DB MAP* S#3839, "to Apollo Physician who reigns over Istros", Ἀπόλλωνι Ἰητρ[ῶν] Ἰστρο μεδέοντ[ι]; *IGDOP* 57 = *DB MAP* S#3838 "to Apollo Physician who reigns over Borysthenes", [Α]πόλλωνι Ἰητ[τ]ρῶν Βορυσθένε[ος μεδέοντι]. On the onomastic sequences including gods "who reign over" + toponym, see Lebreton 2022.

158 Ar., Av. 585. The salary refers to the physicians of the period who treated the patients in exchange for a fee.

159 The cult of Apollo Medicus developed in parallel in Rome, where it was introduced in 431: "The plague silenced public dissension for that year. A temple was dedicated to Apollo for public healing", Liv. 4.25.3.

a 13-metre-high cult statue, the work of Calamis,<sup>160</sup> which was later taken to Rome. The explanation generally put forward to justify the creation of the cult to this Apollo Iatros is climatic:<sup>161</sup> the fact that the colonies of Miletus were more subject to the rigours of the northern cold than the Carian coasts meant that their populations would have very quickly felt the need to attract the favours of a medical god. However, there is no proof of this causality and the choice of the place of installation of Asklepieia, for example, was never made according to the climatic conditions inherent to a region but often because of the topographic conditions suitable for the establishment of this type of sanctuary.<sup>162</sup>

The development of the cult carried by the onomastic qualification of Apollo Iatros is significant. The therapeutic prerogatives of Apollo precede those of his son Asklepios; in Epidauros, the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas was founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE; in the textual sources, very soon after Homer, there was an assimilation of Apollo and Paeon as a healing god. Nevertheless, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE onwards, the rapid rise of Asklepios as the main god of medicine caused Apollo's primary role in this function<sup>163</sup> to fade. The mention of *Ἰατρός* next to the name of the god was then both a political means of reaffirming his role in the face of Asklepieian pre-eminence and also to mark the religious independence of the Pontic colonies from Miletus, the Ionian metropolis.

In the epigraphic sources, in addition to the fixed formulae where the god Apollo Physician reigns over the cities of the Black Sea, a vase<sup>164</sup> from the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century contains an engraved dedication to "Apollo Delphinian, Physician, Thargelian, Lycian, on behalf of Andokides". This is a rare case of a multiple onomastic sequence for Apollo. Beyond all the comments to which this graffiti may have given rise, we must retain once again a desire in a Milesian colony to underline an original link between the metropolis, where Apollo was venerated under the epithet of Delphinios<sup>165</sup> and Lykeios, and the specifically Olbian figure of the god under his qualification "Physician", which did not exist in Miletus. Far from reproducing the Milesian religious scheme as it is, the cult of this Apollo in Olbia shows, on the contrary, an integration

**160** Apparently specialised in statues of Apollo with healing virtues, in the 5<sup>th</sup> c., Calamis was the author of the statue of Apollo Alexikakos that Pausanias says he saw in the Athenian agora, 1.3.4.

**161** Graf 2009, 70: "Settling so far north in a climate that is much harsher than the climate of Turkey's west coast, the settlers must have felt an acute need for divine protection of their health: this explains the rise of Apollo 'Doctor'."

**162** For the reasons of the supra-local character of Asklepieia, Prêtre 2019, 175–187.

**163** However, in most of the Asklepieia, Apollo is present next to Asklepios as father and pre-existing healing deity. See the *Paeon of Isyllos*: "Not even at Trikke in Thessaly can you be tempted to descend into the *adyton* of Asklepios, without first offering a sacrifice on the pure altar of Apollo Maleatas" (*IG* IV<sup>2</sup>.1, 128 = *DB MAP* S#11032, l. 29–31).

**164** *IGDOP* 99. For a summary of the comments, *DB MAP* T#9108 in particular: "Notice the incorrect form *Δηλφινίωι*, the atticism *Ἰατροῖ*, and the possible testimony of *Θαργήλιος* as divine epithet (no parallel known so far)". Feraru 2015, 13–46.

**165** Without primary connection with Delphi. On the cult of Apollo Lykeios in Miletus, see Graf 1985, 220–225.

of Ionian elements with the well-established local identity of Apollo Iatros, which was perhaps characterised by indigenous beliefs.<sup>166</sup> His temple was built in Olbia before that of Delphinios, who was later elected as the tutelary deity of the new Olbian citizens,<sup>167</sup> and the onomastic sequence underlines the interactions that existed in a cultural and religious cosmopolitanism, far from any competition between the different Apollonian prerogatives.<sup>168</sup>

## 11 Conclusions

At the end of this study, we can ask ourselves whether the healing onomastic attributes and the deities attached to them present a particularity in regard to the whole onomastic system qualifying the society of the gods.

Alongside the gods with proteiform personalities intended to respond to the wide range of human needs, the functional uniqueness of Asklepios stands out, which immediately places him on the fringes of any attempt to aggregate him into a pantheon, be it panhellenic or local. The distribution of onomastic attributes according to the deities is generally explained by each of their characters. Asklepios, “under-qualified” in statistical terms compared to the other gods, is not “over-qualified” as soon as an onomastic attribute is added to him. In an effect that verges on pleonasm, the onomastic qualification of Asklepios Iatros gives no detailed information about his role, which is obviously known. Whether emphatic or tautological, whatever value one sees in it, it simply serves to establish the full quality of “actor” (unlike the suffix -τωρ of the author of an act and the suffix -τήρ of the agent of an action), at a time when the creation of Asklepieia ran in parallel to the rise of rational medicine. Attaching Iatros to Asklepios is more like giving him his title (as we address a doctor nowadays as “Doctor So-and-So”) than insisting on a qualification that is pre-acquired. On the other hand, the two epithets Ἀλεξίπνοος and Ἀπαλεξίκακος displace him from the sphere of active healing by introducing a combatant idea that corresponds well to the imagery created around Asklepios from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE onwards: as a god with a unique activity in among the functional polymorphism of the other deities, he does not fit with the usually transcendent character of the deities of the Greek pantheon, but rather gives the impression of a divinity closer to humans, their behaviour, their emotions and therefore their reactions.<sup>169</sup> It is therefore not altogether incongruous

<sup>166</sup> As with the Thracian divine healer Zalmoxis, Ustinova 2009, 273.

<sup>167</sup> Bravo 2000, 221–266, and esp. 237–241.

<sup>168</sup> Ustinova 2009, 264: “It is difficult to imagine that the paternal cult of Apollo Delphinios had to struggle its way against an opposition in a Milesian colony, or that the newcomers would risk insulting Apollo Iatros already worshipped in the city. The rise of Delphinios in Olbia to the rank of the patron of the city was most likely a gradual process.”

<sup>169</sup> Prêtre 2021, 69–75.

to grant him an intention of pugnacity thanks to an onomastic qualification built on a root with derivatives so frequent in the warrior world of the epic.

Functional onomastic sequences involving Asklepios are nonetheless rare. This is essentially due to the singular nature already mentioned. From the perspective of the devotees, the exchange with the god of medicine, the prayers, the offerings or the gratefulness, have an obvious universal character that exempts itself *de facto* from onomastic attributes. He is invoked for all sorts of diseases, and the pathologies in the *iamata*, and also later Aelius Aristides, are there to testify to this.

Given the functional supremacy of Asklepios, why invoke other deities by adding a healing onomastic attribute to them? The answer undoubtedly lies in a historical and local level linked to the cities. Besides the supra-local character of the Asklepieion of Epidauros or the vast influence of some other great sanctuaries to the god, the specific needs of the patients/worshippers introduce the necessity of having divine interlocutors that are geographically closer. By giving healing onomastic attributes to Apollo, Zeus or Herakles, one recognises their specific virtues: the local anchorage is often attested by a toponymic epithet but the thaumaturgical powers of the gods are specified by all these functional qualifications studied here. The need creates the onomastic sequence and the onomastic sequence creates the cult, to summarise this provocatively. Only the family of Asklepios benefits from places of worship while being generally exempt from onomastic attributes characterising them. On the other hand, the sanctuaries of the other healing gods are dedicated to Apollo Iatros or Herakles Alexikakos, for example. The idea of the coexistence of two types of deities, one generic and pantheonic, the other specifically for meeting local requirements, is not new. There have been many studies devoted to a single divine figure, in his generic form and in his “epicletic” particularities, linked to historical and geographical circumstances. However, the analysis carried out here starts from the nouns and not from the deities; in this sense, it moves the reflection rather from the society of the gods to that of men. In the world of healing deities, the distribution of functions is not based on a single divine figure that would be particularised according to place and necessity, but is carried out between the univocal personality of Asklepios, devoid of any plasticity, and the other gods, whose labile character lends itself to all kinds of onomastic creations according to the demands.

Two questions then remain. If we have succeeded in demonstrating the adaptability of the gods to therapeutic emergencies, why not apply the healing onomastic attributes to a broader set of gods? The pre-eminence of the figures of Apollo, Zeus and Herakles in this field is due above all to their primary quality. We will refrain from returning to the healing powers of Apollo, linked to his ability to trigger and then cure epidemics, whether they are characterised by real pathologies or symbolic of the ills of the city. The onomastic qualification of Pean is the most obvious one to designate the ancient medical activity of the god.

Herakles, for his part, has long been accepted in the classical pantheon as a god with therapeutic virtues. His strength is synonymous with a good constitution and the

Athenian cult devoted to him coincides with the Great Plague without incident. Demosthenes mentions it during the second oracle in the *Against Midias*, “let sacrifices be made for health and let Zeus Hypatos, Herakles and Apollo Prostaterios be prayed to”, Περὶ ὑγείας θύειν καὶ εὐχεσθαι Διὶ ὑπάτῳ, Ἡρακλεῖ, Ἀπόλλωνι προστατηρίῳ. Wedged between two gods whose onomastic attributes have a broad protective value, Herakles is exempted by implicitly referring to the mentioned health. Finally, Zeus, whose onomastic qualification Exakester is semantically ambiguous, is probably the god with the least obvious healing functions. Nevertheless, we will recall, for example, his ability to cure Io’s madness with simple touch, as Aeschylus tells us:

There at last Zeus restores you to your senses by the mere stroke and touch of his terrifying hand.  
And you shall bring forth dark Epaphos, thus named from the manner of Zeus’ engendering.<sup>170</sup>

τένταῦθα δὴ σε Ζεὺς τίθησιν ἔμφορνα ἐπαφῶν ἀταρβεῖ χειρὶ καὶ θιγῶν μόνον. Ἐπώνυμον δὲ τῶν  
Διὸς γεννημάτων τέξεις κελαινὸν Ἐπαφον.

Therefore, the reason for this restricted divine field undoubtedly lies in an ancient background inherent to the nature of the gods’ recipients of a healing onomastic attribute.

Finally, are we able to attempt a classification of the healing onomastic sequences? The stages of the healing process mentioned in the introduction are a means of studying them, depending on whether the divinities are invoked in a propitiatory manner to repel the disease, or in a gratulatory manner to be cured and then delivered from it. Nevertheless, the distribution is random, as the variety of texts does not reflect the moment of prayer to a specific god.

The semantic approach is undoubtedly the one that yields the most surprising conclusions about the language phenomena. Instead of regularly drawing from the ancient crucible of the large families of words related to illness, the Greeks used original lexical fields to create onomastic attributes, and the root \*alk, “to put off”, is the most productive next to the more expected root \*ak. It would still be necessary to understand how the creation and repartition of onomastic attributes takes place, depending on whether they reflect a cult (via inscriptions) or are cited in literary sources.

Last but not least, there is a clear distribution of qualifiers according to the deities: to Asklepios, god of medicine, onomastic attributes in the broadest and most univocal sense, to the other deities, polysemous onomastic sequences playing on multiple registers: here again, next to the Asklepiian singularity, the onomastic attributes of the other gods echoed the multiplicity of cultic realities linked above all to concrete experiences and specific needs.

<sup>170</sup> A., *Pr.* 849. Verbanck-Piérard 2000, 292: “Zeus pourrait également être investi en Attique de pouvoirs guérisseurs remontant à un substrat assez ancien”.

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