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Gods' Names – Gods' Images. Dedications and Communication Process in Sanctuaries

Abstract: The dedications with reliefs displayed in sanctuaries engage and validate a complex communication process of back and forth between the dedicator, the deity and the community attending the sanctuary. Based on the corpus of the so-called “My-sian reliefs”, an analysis of the onomastic sequence of the divinity(ies) is thus coupled with its visual counterpart, against the backdrop of the overall communication process of the stele in itself and its implication in the sanctuary. The persistence of the reliefs in representing deities in a very generic way, who are in contrast defined in the dedication texts through an onomastic sequence anchored in the local dimension of the sanctuary, opens up a reflection on the multiple levels of the conception and definition of the divine in antiquity, even in village sanctuaries and on stelae of poor aesthetic quality.

Are the onomastic sequences of ritually honoured deities represented in images? Is the image capable of making visible a ritual and local individualisation of a deity? And does it make sense for the image to seek to represent such individualisation? In order to address these complex and delicate questions, we will focus on the analysis of “bilingual” dedication stelae that contain both an inscribed verbal message and a visual message in the form of a relief. But this internal dialogue between text and image reaches its full expression only in the context of the sanctuary in which these stelae were placed and in relation to the overall communication process at work within the sanctuary.

1 Dedications and Communication

A deity in his sanctuary is indeed identifiable and recognisable to everyone by his definition, which we will call minimal or Panhellenic, involving above all his theonym: Apollo, Zeus, Athena, Artemis, etc. But this deity in his sanctuary is also individualised by all sorts of other elements: by his onomastic attribute, of course, which verbally and conceptually delivers part of his specific power, or even his mode of action or appearance; but he is also made specific by a whole set of strategies, be they ritual, behavioural, spatial or temporal, which give him a local dimension and anchor him in the cultic panorama of a given community. In the landscape provided by a sanctuary, the offerings or dedications that line the visitor's path, as tangible marks

of a devotional practice, are “speaking objects” in more ways than one.¹ They represent the material interface of a complex communication system involving both the dedicant and the deity in question, in his specificity, and also the whole community that frequents the sanctuary and identifies itself there. The dynamic combination of the three poles of this communication, at the centre of which is the offering, has been well highlighted and graphically synthesised by François de Polignac (Fig. 1).²

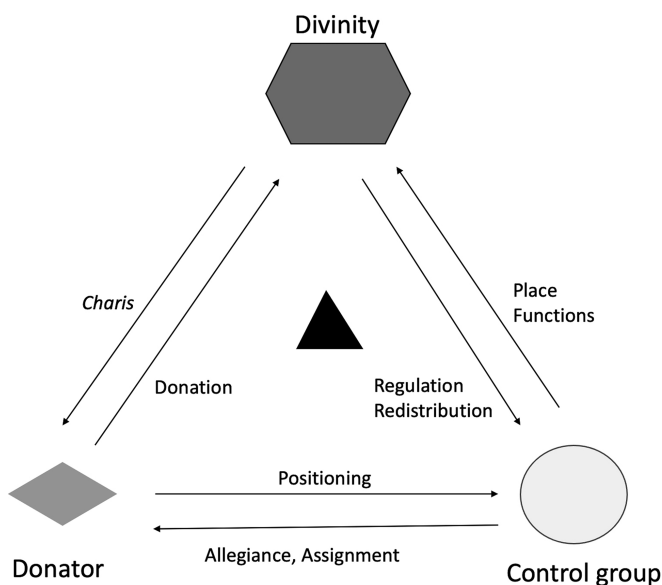


Fig. 1: Dynamic of the offering. de Polignac 2009, 32 (original terms have been translated).

This pattern is valid regardless of the nature, form or importance of the offering. When the offering is a dedication, the verbal communication linking, through the inscription and the ritual address, the dedicant and the divinity, in the eyes of the cult community, it really becomes a “telling object”. When this dedication is coupled with a relief, the communication becomes even more complex and is enriched with multiple conceptual echoes. These “bilingual” monuments offer a double message, both textual and visual,

¹ Two major milestones in the study of offerings or dedications are the large volume *Anathema*, which probes the various dedication practices across the periods and cultures of the ancient Mediterranean (Batoloni/Colonna/Grottanelli 1989–1990), and the 2006 colloquium, which focuses on the sacred dedications of the Greco-Roman world (Bodel/Kajava 2009). See in particular the question of the definition of categories as dedications by John Bodel (Bodel 2009). On a critique of the limiting terms of dedication or votive offering, cf. Rüpke 2018: here, we are indeed considering objects (dedication stelae and their combined messages) as communication strategies. On offerings in a communication system, see Rüpke 2009.

² Original chart, de Polignac 2009, 32, original terms have been translated.

which is nonetheless only one, since text and image are materially inscribed, jointly, on the same stele, the same support.³ The use of two distinct *media* and the differences, complementarities and even oppositions that seem to “separate” the two expressions from each other should not confuse us. It is the monument as a whole, in the nature and form of the support, the verbal message of the inscription and the visual message of the relief, that forms the offering, that makes sense and functions in this complex ritual communication. Images and texts build a system of communication that doubles the function of a standard offering, by referring doubly to the dedicators, the ritual, the divinity, the cult community, between reality and imaginary reference.

2 “Bilingual” Stelae from the Propontis

In order to address the question of the representation of the specific deity to which the offering is addressed, we will turn to a corpus of dedicatory stelae with relief, built on an iconographic basis, i.e. on the visual and not primarily verbal message. The presence of the representation of the divinity, and most often of the dedicants in front of the divinity, formed the selection criterion. Our analysis will therefore move from the image to the text and not first the other way round. These “bilingual” stelae come from the shores and hinterland of the Propontis, between Cyzicus, Daskyleion, Prusa and Nicaea.⁴ This material, most often crude, comes from village sanctuaries, the precise location of which is unfortunately impossible to determine. As Louis Robert points out about the material from this region, “Les Dardanelles étaient un centre très important de commerce des antiquités et des monuments y sont venus [. . .] de tous les sites des environs”.⁵ Most of these stelae have thus ended up in local museums or in Athens after numerous adventures that blur the lines of enquiry. On the basis of indications given by Lebas or Perdrizet⁶ it is, at best and on case-by-case basis, possible to trace these stelae and attribute them to particular regions. To provide a contrast with this homogeneous material, despite its territorial dispersion, lack of artistic quality and the fact that it originates from small rural sites, dated between the end of the Hellenistic period (2nd-1st century BCE) and the beginning of our era (1st century CE), in a second step, we will briefly mention some stelae from a different period, functioning in the same way as dedications in a sanctuary, with a relief showing the divinity and the dedicants, but this time coming from well-known, urban, even prestigious centres, with proven artistic

³ See e.g. Gaifman 2008 on the inextricable interweaving of textual and visual messages on dedicatory stelae, in this case to the Nymphs.

⁴ These reliefs are generally grouped together under the name “Mysian reliefs”. See Brehm [1996] 2010; Schörner 2021, 222–224 (with earlier references).

⁵ Robert 1936, 60.

⁶ Perdrizet 1899.

value. Comparing material with the same ritual and communicative function and the same support, but with different origins, dates, styles and prestige, will allow us to place these stelae in a wider framework of reflection, focusing especially on the value of the onomastic attribute in the general communication process of the sanctuary. The concepts of expression of the divinity that underlie these figurative representations will allow us access to a reflection on the emergence of supra-regional divinities, which are also free from any particular local anchorage.

Let us start with the Propontid stelae. A first overview of a representative sample of these reliefs allows us to distinguish obvious representative constants (Figs. 2–6).



Fig. 2: Mahmur Kōy (Panarma), early imperial period. Istanbul inv. no. 1503.

Mendel 1914, 837; Cook 1940, 880–88, cat. no. 46.⁷

Illustration from *Thesca* III 6c no. 61.

7 Ζεὺς Χαλάζιος σώζω[ν] | ἐπὶ Διον[υσίου]. | | Θρακιοκωμῆται τῷ θεῷ τὴν στήλλην καθι|έρωσαν ὑπὲρ
εὐκαρπίας καὶ ἀβλαβίας τῶν καρπῶν | καὶ ὑπὲρ ὑγείας καὶ σωτηρίας τῶν γεοκτειτῶν καὶ | τῶν συ-



Fig. 3: Unknown provenance, 2nd-1st century BCE. Bursa inv. no. 3119.
I.Prusa 1017 = *DB MAP S#8287*; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 4.⁸
Illustration from *I.Prusa*.

νερχομένων ἐπὶ τὸν θεὸν καὶ κατοικοῦντων | Θρακίαν κώμην· Μειδίας Στράτωνος τῷ θεῷ καὶ τοῖς
κωμῆταις | διοικήσας πρῶτος τὴν στήλλην ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἐπαν|γειλάμενος ἀποκατέστησεν. Literal
translation: “Zeus Chalazios who saves. Under (the priesthood?) of Dionysios, the Thrakiokōmetai (vil-
lagers of Thrakia) consecrated the stele to the god for fertility and the absence of damage to the crops
and for the health and safety of the cultivators, of those who gather to the god and who inhabit the
village of Thrakia. Meidias son of Straton, who first managed (the building of) the stele for the god
and the villagers, restored it, undertaking to do so at his own expense”.

⁸ Μηνόδωρος Σασαρο[.] | Ἀπόλλωνι Λεοντείῳ | vac. εὐχὴν vac. “Menodoros son of Sasar . . . to
Apollon Leonteios following a vow”.



Fig. 4: Unknown provenance, 2nd-1st century BCE. Bursa inv. no. 3265.
I.Prusa 1021; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 86.⁹
 Illustration from *I.Prusa*.

⁹ Μηνοθέα | Μενίσκου | Μητρι Διν | δυμήνη | vac. εὐχήν. “Menothea daughter of Meniskos to Mother Dindymene following a vow”.



Fig. 5: Unknown provenance, 2nd-1st century BCE. Bursa inv. no. 2580.

I.Miletupolis 8 = *I.Prusa* 1020; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 118.¹⁰

Illustration from *I.Prusa*.

10 Μενέφρων Ἀσζαρέτ[ου] | ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν | τέκνων Ἑρμῇ Μελητηνῷ | vac. εὐχὴν vac.
“Menephron son of Aszaretos for (the safety of) himself and his children to Hermes Meletenos follow-
ing a vow”.



Fig. 6: Triglia, “year 178” = 119 or 104 BCE. Athens MN 1485.

I.Apameia Pylai 35 = Perdrizet no. II; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 135.¹¹

Illustration from *I.Apameia Pylai*.

11 Οἱ θιασίται καὶ θιασίτιδες | [ἐ]στεφάνωσαν Στρατονίκην Μενεκρά[τ]ου ἱερωτεύσασαν ἐν τῷ η' καὶ ο' καὶ ρ' | [ἐ]τει Μητρὶ Κυβέλῃ καὶ Ἀπόλλωνι στεφά[ν]ωι γραπτῶι ἐν στήλλῃ καὶ κηρυκτῶι σὺν ται[νί] | αὶ καὶ ἄλλωι στεφάνω κηρυκτῶι σὺν ται[νί] | αὶ ἐν τῇ τοῦ Διὸς συναγωγῇ φυλαγαθήσασ[αν]. Literal translation: “The male and female members of the thiasos crowned Stratonike daughter of Menekratos who was priestess of Mother Kybele and Apollo in the year 178, (honouring her) with a crown inscribed on the stele and proclaimed with a band and with another crown proclaimed with a band for her benevolence at the assembly of Zeus”.

The centre of the scene is formed by the altar and the tree, which by graphic convention is to be understood as situated behind the altar. On the left are the human figures, represented in profile, who approach the altar in adoration – as indicated by the gesture of the right hand – and bring offerings and a victim with the necessities for the sacrifice. On the right is the deity or deities, depicted from the front and larger than the human figures, holding a phiale in the direction of the altar in their right hand, in the typical position of the so-called “opfernde Götter”, as we shall see later. This same general pattern is valid whatever the deity represented and invoked. One finds mainly Zeus, Apollo, the Mother, Hermes, or a couple of deities, such as Apollo and the Mother in this same situation.¹² The figures of the dedicants as well as the representation of the sanctuary are also part of a representative stereotype. The human figures refer to an offering or sacrificial action in a conventional manner, while the altar and tree function as signifiers for any extra-urban sanctuary. These reliefs are clearly the product of a representative mould, a kind of basic recipe that is generally valid, the sauce of which can be adapted to suit particular needs.¹³ This schematic homogeneity could lead one to consider a common provenance or even workshop. But the obvious stylistic differences prevent us from reducing the phenomenon so easily. This homogeneity refers to the same general conception of the dynamics of offering and dedication, rendered in image by this stereotyped scheme. Does this therefore mean that the dedicants accommodated themselves to a generic offer from the workshops, without it being perfectly suited to their wishes?¹⁴ This *lectio faciliior* is not appropriate here. We should rather accept the representative homogeneity as a choice and try to account for what it says about a shared conception of the meaning and ritual dynamics at stake, and what it implies about the communication processes within the sanctuary.

These perfectly generic scenes only become more particular when the deities represented are identified. Only the visual attributes distinguish one deity from another. The sceptre and/or eagle for Zeus, the cithara and long chiton for Apollo, the hat and short tunic for Hermes, the throne, lions and polos for the Mother, etc. The victims sometimes vary too, a large majority of them being sheep, all deities included, but also goats for Hermes and often a bull for Zeus.¹⁵ We therefore find a relief which, through the distinctive signs of the divinity, shows a sanctuary of Zeus, a sanctuary of

¹² Other deities or pairs of deities also appear, less frequently: Artemis, Asklepios, Dionysos, Herakles; Apollo-Artemis, Zeus-Artemis, Apollo-Asklepios, Apollo-Hermes, Zeus-Meter etc. See Brehm [1996] 2010, synthesis 298–371.

¹³ Brehm [1996] 2010, 37–51; Jaccottet 2021, 12–13.

¹⁴ Not all reliefs of this type are necessarily topped by a dedication following a vow. Cf. Fig. 6 and note 11 where it is an honorary decree from *thiasitai* honouring a priestess of Meter Kybele and Apollo. For a development of this issue, see below.

¹⁵ Schörner 2021, 223, who emphasises the increased frequency of bulls or humped oxen as the centuries progressed. Brehm [1996] 2010, 43–46 for the analysis of sacrificial scenes with bulls and the deities involved.

Apollo, a sanctuary of the Mother, etc. But we are still far from the representation of the particular sanctuary dedicated to the precise and functional divinity in which these stelae physically take place.

If we now examine the full message of these stelae, taking into account the inscriptions, we will note that the verbal dedications can take the minimal form of indicating the dedicant(s) and the specific god to whom the dedication is addressed,¹⁶ as well as sometimes more developed or even versified forms.¹⁷ These dedications often come from families but also from local communities, *katoikoi*, *metoichoi*, *thiasoi*¹⁸ and refer to a local deity most often specified by a particular and unique onomastic attribute. These onomastic attributes are generally topical and serve to anchor the Zeus, Apollo or Hermes honoured in such and such a village or town in the local territory. This is certain, for example, for a Zeus Tarigynos, who is expressly linked to a place called Tarigye appearing in one of the inscriptions¹⁹ out of the six concerned by this local onomastic specification.

3 The Divinity Between Onomastic Attribute and Generic Representation

We will focus on three stelae, each dedicated to an Apollo that the dedicatory inscription specifies in a distinct manner. The first one (Fig. 3), whose place of discovery could not be determined, invokes Apollo Leonteios, an onomastic attribute attested in a unique way; the second one (Fig. 7) dedicated to Apollo Krateanos, comes from the vicinity of Lake Manyas (Söve), a location deciphered by the concordance of eleven other inscriptions mentioning the same onomastic attribute of Apollo and from the vicinity,²⁰ and the third one (Fig. 8), which comes from Inegöl, in the vicinity of Yenişehir, is addressed to Apollo Libotenos, an onomastic attribute attested to date in this inscription alone.

It should be noted that the three dedications are minimalist, in the sense that they present only three elements: the name of the dedicant, the dative name of the

¹⁶ Above Figs. 3–5, and notes 8–10.

¹⁷ Above Fig. 2. and note 7. For a versified dedication, cf. *I.Miletupolis* 23; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 80, from Mustafakemalpaşa, 2nd-1st c. BCE, Bursa inv. no. 3160 (former 1117), discussed below (cf. note 40).

¹⁸ On these communities and the difficulty we have in specifying their private or official anchorage, see Brehm [1996] 2010, 62–68.

¹⁹ Six known dedications are addressed to this Zeus Tarigynos (Akkan/Malay 2007); we retain here the one with a relief: (Akkan/Malay 2007, 18–19 = *SEG* 57, 1191), from Akpınar (Cayster Valley, Nicaea), 1st c. BCE-1st c. CE, Ödemiş Mus., l. 1–2: τῶν ἐκ Ταριγυνης.

²⁰ Twelve votive reliefs are known for Apollo Krateanos. Cf. Mordtmann 1875, Haussoullier 1898, Michon 1906, and Brehm who summarises (Brehm [1996] 2010, 165–173; cat. no. 6–17).



Fig. 7: Söve (Cyzicus), 1st century BCE. Istanbul inv. no. 1593.
Mendel 1914, 852; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 11.²¹
Illustration from *Thesca* III 6c no. 59.

²¹ Γλαυκίας Ἀπόλλωνι | Κρατεανῶι εὐχὴν.



Fig. 8: Inegöl, 2nd-1st century BCE. Bursa inv. no. 2616 (former 343).

I.Prusa 40; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 18.²²

Illustration from *I.Prusa*.

local deity invoked and the occasion of the dedication, i.e. a vow.²³ The only distinction lies in the onomastic attribute of the Apollo in question. Whatever the meaning

²² Δημήτριος Διονυσίου | Ἀπόλλωνι Λιβοτηνῶ | vac. εὐχὴν.

²³ Compared to Maria Letizia Lazzarini's observations on Greek votive inscriptions (mainly from the archaic period), we note the absence here of the verb marking the dedication, but instead find the addition of the occasion, the vow. The dative alone, however, clearly indicates the object passing into the possession of the god, as does the even more stripped-down formula of the god in the genitive, preceded or not by *hieron* (ιερόν). Cf. Lazzarini 1989–1990.

of these onomastic specificities – whether they are epichoric²⁴ or refer to a particular identity or power of the local deity –, it should be noted that the three reliefs which crown these dedications are schematically identical, although stylistically distinct. The number of human figures represented varies in each case, respectively three, two and four, not corresponding to the statement of the dedication, which in each case includes only one man²⁵ who presents himself as the sole dedicant. But apart from this minimal schematic distinction, the elements present on each of the three stelae are perfectly similar. Apollo, whether he is Krateanos, Libotenos or Leonteios, is represented the same way each time, as an Apollo Kitharoidos, standing, facing forwards, wearing a long chiton and making a gesture of libation above the altar with his right hand holding a phiale.²⁶ Although there is indeed a local individuation of the divinity in the verbal dedication, even in its minimalist form, the relief remains very generic. The homogeneity of the three represented Apollos is even noteworthy. We are dealing with a well-known and widespread representative type, the Apollo Kitharoidos.²⁷ The hypothesis that what we have here is an echo of the Apollo of Daphne, the work of Bryaxis at the end of the 4th century BCE, as Linfert and Corsten would have it, is certainly tempting.²⁸ The late descriptions we have of this colossal statue, made of gilded wood and acrolithic, could correspond to the representative scheme of the stelae in question.²⁹ Not only the long tunic and the cithara, but also the phiale, held in the right hand, offer a striking similarity.³⁰ There is also a clear schematic parallel between the Apollo on our Propontid stelae and a dedication relief from Megara, also from the 4th century BCE.³¹ In both cases, in Megara as in Daphne, the referent is a cult statue. But a precise analysis, like that of Brehm, of the type present on the Mysian reliefs in comparison with the work of Bryaxis shows that there is probably no

²⁴ For Apollo Krateanos and its anchorage in a place, see the synthesis by Brehm [1996] 2010, 171–173.

²⁵ This is a normal and commonly noticed discrepancy. It should be noted that on the first stele, the dedicant does not specify his patronymic, presenting himself simply as Glaukias, whereas this precision appears in the two other dedications. The father of the dedicant on the third stele must have been of local origin, as the remains of his name Sasaro[suggest, whereas Dionysios, father of the second dedicant, seems more directly Greek. Onomastics often reveals patronymics of local origin. Cf. e.g. Fig. 5 (note 10).

²⁶ One could also mention reliefs with the same type of Apollo and with dedications to Apollo Kareios (Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 20) or Apollo Daphnousios (*SEG* 43, 880–883; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 38–41).

²⁷ See Flashar 1992.

²⁸ Linfert 1983, 165–173; Corsten 1987, 55.

²⁹ Egger 1889.

³⁰ On the Bryaxis Apollo, see Flashar 1992, 70–77.

³¹ Museum of Aegina, without inventory number (Svoronos 1912, 254–255; *LIMC* I s.v. Apollo [1984], 238 no. 418 a). Illustration: see Gaifman's paper, p. 260 fig. 4. See Flashar 1992, 17–24 (p. 17 no. 28 for other publications of this relief). This type with a phiale is also found on a Megarian coin of Septimius Severus: London, British Museum, Dep. of Coins and Medals, Inv. Megara 1972-8-7-6 (cast). See Flashar 1992, 20–22.

direct takeover of this Apollo of Daphne.³² To his specific remarks on posture, hair and circulation of the types, I will add a more general observation on the representation of the various deities present on these reliefs.

Indeed, it is noteworthy that all the deities, whoever they may be, are presented in the “opfernde Götter” position, with a phiale in the right hand, as if they were pouring a libation on the altar. This schematic staging is so systematic that it even affects deities who are represented far from the altar, as in the case of reliefs presenting two deities, for example an Apollo standing near the altar and a Meter sitting on her throne “beside” or “behind” Apollo. This representative scheme was chosen not for its realism or its reference to a well-defined statuary type for each deity,³³ but for its generic character and the meaning it conveys. Without returning to this thorny issue, we shall retain the combined interpretations of Annie-France Laurens and Paul Veyne:³⁴ the gods with the phiale are not performing a ritual; the phiale becomes a marker, an “object-adjectif” as Veyne says. It is subsequently the divine nature of the figure that is thus indicated and underlined, as well as a tacit agreement, a pact between men and gods, the acceptance on the part of the divinities of the devotions made by men. The phiale, in the hand of the gods, is the graphic and symbolic expression of their divine nature, which separates them from men, just as it is a sign of the concord between gods and men, which links them, as a necessary basis for the stability of any human community. In the reliefs we are dealing with here, the systematic choice to represent the gods in this ritual gesture makes it implausible that the representation of the divinity was always the takeover or direct quote of a statuary model. It is true that in Daphne, as in Megara, the Apollo Kitharoidos held a phiale in his right hand, but a larger model of the Apollo Kitharoidos without a phiale is just as conceivable. For the other divinities, it would indeed be difficult, in each case, to find a known model with a phiale. It is therefore better to consider the deities represented to be based on patterns made sufficiently obvious by the sharing of the same visual culture to refer to the generic deity that one wishes to depict and, in turn, the phiale to be a systematic addition translating the divine nature of the figure represented and the importance of reciprocity in the communication process at work within each of these village sanctuaries.

The entire scheme of these reliefs is thus generic and based on a wide consensus in conception, within the framework of a shared general culture; this repetitive and stereotyped scheme refers not to precise and individual places, acts and figures, but

³² Brehm [1996] 2010, 82–104.

³³ That such a search for precise statuary types for the Mysian reliefs is irrelevant, see Brehm [1996] 2010, 79–81.

³⁴ The latter builds his analysis as a continuation of the fine, notably iconographic, reflections of Annie-France Laurens. Laurens 1985; Veyne 1990. Cf. Simon 1953, Simon 2004, and Himmelmann 1996 (from a column in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). On this delicate question, cf. in the line of Vernant, Gaifman 2018, 152–157.

rather to types: typical dedicants, typical sanctuary – schematised by the altar and the tree –, typical ritual act,³⁵ typical deity, recognisable at first glance as Apollo, by visual and cultural memory, but not as the Apollo of the place, ritually invoked. We have, in the text, a very local god invoked as such for the advantages and benefits he can grant on the occasion of wishes and, in the relief, a consensual representation of a god in a widely known and recognised form.

4 Generic Relief and Various Verbal Messages

Before analysing this tension between the very specific and the generic further, we should first complete the statement of occurrences of the representative scheme in relation to inscriptions. We see the common representative type appearing, with dedicants, altar and deity, for honorary decrees. In the case of honours bestowed on a priest³⁶ or a priestess (Fig. 6³⁷), the scheme retains an obvious meaning since it is for the exercise of his or her priestly functions within the sanctuary and thus for the rituals practised there that the priest or priestess is honoured. The generic relief has been taken over as it is, but the stele may also show, above the common scheme, the particular honours bestowed on the priest. This is the case in the first of the above-mentioned inscriptions (not represented here), for a priest. A wreath with bands appears above the frame of the relief and the text states that the *thiasitai* crown the priest Asklepiades, son of Melidoros, on the stele and with a flower wreath with bands for life. The relationship between the text and the decoration is thus precise, since the crown, represented at the top of the stele, is expressly mentioned in the inscription in addition to the one that the priest will wear “in real life” every year. One would therefore be reluctant to consider that the main relief, with its pattern seen many times accompanying dedications, was chosen here for lack of anything better and simply used out of ease because it was what the local trade could provide. The relief was placed at a good distance from the top of the stele to make room for the crown. This low position of the relief is not found in dedication stelae. The stele was therefore commissioned specially, with a special request for the wreath and thus the position of the relief.³⁸ It would obviously have been possible to request a different

³⁵ On rituals represented as an imaginary of ritual, cf. Gaifman 2008.

³⁶ *I.Apameia Pylai* 33 = Perdrizet no. III; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 44, Triglia, end of the 2nd c. BCE, Athens MN 1486: relief showing Zeus; no mention of the god in the decree text.

³⁷ Relief showing Apollo and Meter Kybele, who appear by name in the inscription as a complement to the dative of *ἱερωτεύσασαν*. It should be noted that Apollo appears in the inscription without an onomastic attribute, unlike Meter Kybele.

³⁸ The second stele (Fig. 6) proceeds differently: the personalisation of the visual message concerns the dedicants, the *thiasitai*, that a second relief, placed under the generic dedication relief, shows banqueting.

decoration if the common scheme had been inadequate or not entirely suitable. The piety of the priest and the proper performance of his office can be expressed by the common design, without the idea that the worshipper in the relief represents the priest.

Let us continue our investigations. We come across this type of dedication relief again to honour a *strategos*³⁹ and even an athlete.⁴⁰ Both inscriptions are from *katoi-koi* and the deity represented is clearly Zeus in the second case, probably also in the first, although the relief is mutilated at the level of the deity's head. This gap in the first stele makes it unclear whether a crown was engraved on the top of the monument or not;⁴¹ the inscription text does not mention any specific mark of honour. The stele honouring the athlete, on the other hand, does have a crown in the tympanum of the pediment that tops the monument. The versified text mentions the crowns won in competitions with the tangible honour of placing the stele on the same footing (ισό-θρονον) as statues of honoured human figures. A second relief, placed on this stele below the typical relief, shows two figures in opposite contrapposto, one wearing a himation, on the right, the other naked, holding a palm (?) diagonally; an object evoking a vase is placed on the ground to the right of both figures. We probably have a representation of the athlete on the left, without it being possible to determine the identity of the clothed figure on the right (magistrate? or deity?). Was it intended to represent living human figures or statues? There is still some doubt as to the direct relationship between the text mentioning honorary statues and the second relief. Here again, the *thiasitai* requested and obtained a personalised decoration. If the typical relief used for the dedications is found on this stele, it is because it had a meaning and not because the *thiasitai* simply had to make do with what the market could offer. In the case of honours dedicated to priests or priestesses, the generic piety dimension induced by the figurative scenes is one more link in the complex communication chain at work within the sanctuary.⁴²

If this same scheme involving dedicants, acts of offering or sacrifice at the altar and divinity can be knowingly chosen to express in image dedications – and not only to the divinities represented⁴³ – as well as honorary decrees, it is because the tension

39 *I.Miletupolis* 20; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 72, from Alpağut? 1st c. BCE, Bursa, inv. no. 2584.

40 *I.Miletupolis* 23; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 80, from Mustafakemalpaşa, 2nd-1st c. BCE, Bursa, inv. no. 3160 (former 1117).

41 A special feature of this relief is that, in addition to the small human figure (servant?) who usually brings the victim to the altar, a second figure of the same size stands in front of the humped ox and holds a knife pointed at the animal's neck. The basket carried by a female figure behind the altar is also more detailed as four bulges have been depicted protruding from the rim, referring to offerings. Particular care has thus been taken in the execution of this relief.

42 On piety as a general message induced by bilingual stelae of dedication, see Gaifman 2008, in this case to the Nymphs.

43 Cf. for example a dedication to Aphrodite Pontia and Poseidon accompanied by a relief clearly showing a Meter and another deity (Aphrodite? Apollo?). *CCCA* I, 283; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 141, Cyzicus, 2nd-1st c. BCE, Istanbul inv. no. 2758.

we feel between text and image was resolved by the wider framework of the presentation of the stele. Moreover, the context of these stelae, set into the ground in a specific sanctuary, gave meaning to the text, the relief and the combination of the two expressions, carried by the same monument.

“Bilingual” Stelae, Onomastic Attributes and Communication in the Sanctuary

It is in this perspective and with these modes of functioning and text-image reference in mind that we should reconsider the question of the precise identity of the honoured deity and its verbal expression with or without translation into images. The presence of these local onomastic attributes in the texts seems perfectly natural to us, given that studies conducted since the middle of the 20th century have insisted on the individualisation of the divinity, most often by an onomastic attribute, in order to guarantee good communication with the divine. The theonym and, especially, the onomastic attribute, contain the particular *dunamis*, the sacred potential to which one appeals, especially when making a vow, as here, and failure to refer to it could jeopardise the success of the initiated exchange with the deity. It is on this paradigm that we seek to find, in images, signs of this essential element in communication with the divine, with regard to the efficiency of the local ritual practice and the expected benefits. But let us note that the verbal inscription of the onomastic attribute is not always a necessity. In great and prestigious sanctuaries such as Delphi or Olympia, are there not dedications to a Zeus or an Apollo without any mention of the expected onomastic attribute: Olympios for the former, Pythios for the latter? There is, of course, the famous helmet dedicated to the Zeus of Olympia by Miltiades before or after the battle of Marathon and bearing the inscription Μιλτιάδης ἀνέ[θ]εκεν [: τ]ῷ Δί (“Miltiades dedicated to Zeus”),⁴⁴ with no onomastic attribute, just as Miltiades has no patronymic. But other dedications, from individuals as well as communities, knowingly omit the onomastic attribute, something made obvious by the presence of other parallel dedications that do include this famous onomastic attribute.⁴⁵

44 *IG* I³ 1472 = *SEG* 14, 351. Olympia, Arch. mus. B 2600. Mallwitz/Herrmann 1980, 95–96, cat. no. 57, pl. 57; Kunze 1956, pl. 34; 35.

45 For example 1) Olympia: next to a spearhead dedicated to Zeus Olympios by an inhabitant of Thourioi as a tithe of a booty (*I.Olympia* 256), one finds, for instance, the dedication on a base of Philesios of Eretria to Zeus, probably from the beginning of the 5th century BCE (*I.Olympia* 248: Φιλῆσιος ἔποιει. | Ἐρετριῆς τῷ Δί): there would have been sufficient space on this base to inscribe the onomastic attribute. 2) Delphi: dedications of an Anatolian family towards the end of the 3rd century BCE (*F.Delphes* III.4, 166a: Ἀντοχος τὰ[ν] ἀδελφὰν καὶ τὰν θυγατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν Ἀπόλλωνι. Restitution proposed by way of example by Flacelière); dedication of the Lipareans (*F.Delphes* III.4, 182: [Λιπα]ρ [αἰ]ο[ι] ἀπό] Τ[υ]ρσ[ανών] Α[π]ρό[λλω]ν[ι]: restitutions guaranteed by neighbouring inscriptions from the same base, around the middle of the 5th c. BCE), or again dedication of Polemarchos, his wife and

Are these offerings to Zeus or Apollo less “effective” than those that name the deity of the sanctuary in all its specificity? Is it the Panhellenic notoriety of these sanctuaries and the deities honoured there that allow for these ellipses? Other examples in our Mysian sanctuaries put this argument into perspective. A dedication commemorating a vow made by a certain Asklepiades to Apollo, without specification;⁴⁶ another dedication commemorating a vow, by a certain Karsimaros to Zeus;⁴⁷ a dedicant bearing the theophoric name Matron who, successively and in the same sanctuary (in the vicinity of Cyzicus, close to the present village of Alpağut) makes a dedication to Meter Patroia and another simply to Meter, both times following a vow and both times with the same relief.⁴⁸ And Meter is invoked, under a similar relief, as a simple goddess, or the goddess (*thea*), near Daskyleion.⁴⁹ As has already been pointed out, the setting of the stelae in a particular sanctuary automatically resolves what might appear to be a significant lack or absence, or even a defect in the ritual dynamic. Placed in a sanctuary clearly identified as that of a particular deity, the “truncated” message is no longer such; and if the sanctuary is a space shared by the *oikoumene*, the reference to the identity of the local god is all the more obvious. Let us therefore at least acknowledge that what seems to us to be out of the ordinary with these reliefs, in terms of their ritual communicative task, i.e. the very generic character of the deities as well as the ritual acts represented, may very well also be the fact of the verbal dedications.

Rather than considering the generic character of the dedicatory reliefs a defect, an inability to represent the divinity in its local and cultural specificity, we should instead ask ourselves not about the absence of specificity, but rather about the reasons for a generic choice, not in a dynamic of failure or renunciation, but in the perspective of a multi-media (multi-sensory) communication within the sanctuary and

daughter, to Apollo in the 1st c. BCE (*F.Delphes* III.4, 259); dedication to Pythian Apollo, e.g. *F.Delphes* III.4, 246, dedication of Praxo for his grandson (3rd quarter of the 2nd c. BCE), or a statue dedicated by the *koinon* of the Amphictyons to Pythian Apollo in honour of the new Pythia, sister of Caligula (*F.Delphes* III.4, 257). Sylvain Lebreton’s detailed study of the epithets of Zeus in Athens in this volume also clearly shows the relatively common use of dedications featuring simple theonyms, without epithets. This use seems to have developed even from the 4th century BCE onwards. Cf. Lebreton/Marano tab. 1a and 1b and note 12.

⁴⁶ *SEG* 15, 771; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 21, unknown provenance, 2nd-1st c. BCE, Ankara Mus. no. 199. See also Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 31.

⁴⁷ Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 49, unknown provenance (area around Cyzicus), late Hellenistic–early Imperial period, Bursa inv. no. 9252.

⁴⁸ *I.Miletupolis* 12 a and b; Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 106–107, Alpağut, Imperial period, Bursa inv. no. 7840–7841. A third relief probably bears another mutilated dedication of Matron to the Mother (*I.Miletupolis* 12c; Brehm [1996] 2010 cat. no. 108), while a fourth relief has no inscription (Brehm [1996] 2010 cat. no. 109). It cannot be excluded that they may be different dedicators with the same name. Nevertheless, the use of an onomastic attribute for Meter remains optional in this sanctuary.

⁴⁹ Brehm [1996] 2010, cat. no. 96, Ergili – Daskyleion, late Hellenistic–early Imperial period, Istanbul Arch. Mus. Depot 1, inv. no. 5359.

even beyond.⁵⁰ what would have been the benefit of giving the deity represented, as well as the dedicants and the setting of the sanctuary itself, a unique and specific character? And, as a complementary proposal, what interest could be derived from this figurative indeterminacy, in terms of the general communication induced by these bilingual stelae themselves, and by their anchorage in a specific sanctuary?

If, indeed, these reliefs opt for a Panhellenic determination of the deities invoked, Zeus, Apollo, Meter etc., the gesture of libation attributed to the representation of this generic deity makes it close and effective: the god enters into the ritual dynamic by taking over the simplest cultic act that relates men and gods. The generic relief then becomes the visualisation of the ritual dynamics accepted by both sides, which in turn guarantees the proper functioning of the sanctuary, taken in a generic way, and the healthy foundations of the relationship between the community and the divinity. It should also be emphasised that, despite their poor artistic quality, these reliefs present a subtle image of the complex dynamics of the relationships induced by the offering. The deities are always represented facing forwards and not in profile like the dedicants. Is this due to the difficulty that local engravers would have encountered in representing a god in profile, identifiable in a generic way? This is doubtful, although it cannot be excluded. But the systematic of this representative choice in this vast region must have, if not another purpose, at least a particular meaning. If we once again take up the communication scheme induced by an offering proposed by François de Polignac (Fig. 1), we will note that the representation of the god facing forwards directly and unequivocally summons the spectator into the dynamics of the ritual scene evoked. The deity does not look at the depicted dedicants, nor into the “void”, but instead looks at the real potential dedicants walking through the sanctuary. This triangulation of visual addresses draws the involvement of the community as a whole in and through the ritual act represented, as well as in and through the ritual act experienced live. It can thus be considered that it is largely the stelae that make the sanctuary, that are the sign and signpost (σήμα) of the sanctuary, the sign and signal of the place of communication between divinity and human community. It is subsequently a communicative norm that is represented on these generic reliefs, a social norm as well, which constructs the sanctuary and the community as much as it expresses them. The community, even *in absentia*, remains in permanent ritual contact with the divinity through the indeterminacy of the figures and acts, through the performative function of the act represented, through the inclusion of the sanctuary visitor in the communication dynamic and through the gaze of the divinity on the visitor.

It should be noted that, in terms of their functioning and the communication dynamics, these poor quality reliefs go one step further than the traditional stelae that we

⁵⁰ Communication within the sanctuaries, at least in the most important ones, was the subject of particular attention. Studies on the placement of offerings in the Asklepieion of Pergamum reveal a clear spatial distinction of dedications according to the nature of the support, the form of the offering and the type of message inscribed. Cf. Ferretti 2021 and Ferretti 2022.

find addressed to the Nymphs (Fig. 9),⁵¹ to Artemis Brauronia (Fig. 10) or to Asklepios (Fig. 11) from the Athenian region, for example. The deities, in profile or at best in a three-quarter view, never look directly at the viewer of the offering but rather at the dedicants represented or into the “void”. However, the representational scheme used here is perfectly comparable to the Propontid scheme: deity, dedicants and, when present, offerings brought to the altar are represented in the same generic dynamic and in the same conception of man-god relations. But with a deity who escapes the frontality, the ritual and referential dynamics shown in the relief are closed in on itself, within the scene depicted. The often well-marked frame of these representations further emphasises the closed space that these reliefs represent. There are no openings to the outside world, no visual inclusion of the visitor. The quality of the relief and the virtuosity of the sculptor are artistic distinctions, but not iconographic criteria: The Propontid stelae, in their simplicity and even their stylistic awkwardness, convey a more elaborate ritual, religious and societal message than the superb stelae of Athens.



Fig. 9: Mt. Pentelikos, 300 BCE. Athens MN 4466.

SEG 29, 195.⁵²

Illustration: George E. Koronaios (CC BY-SA 4.0).

⁵¹ On the detailed analysis of these Nymph reliefs, see Gaifman 2008.

⁵² Ἀγαθήμερος | Νύμφαις | ἀνέθηκε. “Agathemeros dedicated (the stele) to the Nymphs”.



Fig. 10: Brauron, mid-4th c. BCE. Brauron, Mus. Arch. 1151.
SEG 52, 170.⁵³



Fig. 11: Attica, 340–320 BCE. Paris, Louvre MA 755.

But the analysis can take us even further. Representing a deity in a generic way, within the well-defined framework of a precise sanctuary, in relation to the verbal dedication

⁵³ Ἀρτέμιδι εὐξαμένη ἀνέθηκεν Ἀριστονίκη Ἀντιφάτους Θοραίως γυνή. “To Artemis following a vow Aristonike wife of Antiphates Thoraieus dedicated (the stele)”.

that makes the god unique and local, gives us the perception of a double representation of the divine. On the one hand, on the ritual level, a god with a particular *dunamis* whose attention is sought for specific causes, through ritual practices codified in a local manner, whether through sacrificial prescriptions, clothing, behaviour, possible required abstinences, etc. On the other hand, a supra-regional divinity widely recognised through the sharing of the same visual and referential culture. The god is shown from two complementary perspectives. The Apollo of the place that is ritually and onomastically invoked is also, as the relief emphasises, Apollo in a nutshell, the Apollo that everyone knows and recognises. The same reasoning can, of course, be applied to the graphically evoked ritual and the human figures represented as dedicants. The precise dedicant named in the inscription is, in the relief, the prototype of every dedicant that everyone is inclined to be or become. The local and prescribed ritual act is also a generic ritual act that everyone can recognise; ritual is represented in general, not a ritual. And it is in this figurative non-individuation that the very concept of ritual, which has no specific term in antiquity (except for the catch-all term *thusia*), takes shape, without being expressed verbally. The ritual represented in its generic form manifests the awareness of a concept that the terms do not capture.

This double reading of the god – as both local and recognised worldwide (in the sense of a shared Greek and Roman culture) –, as well as the double reading of the framework, the rite and the community, implies the awareness of this conceptual back and forth, between the particular and the generic, as indissociable and totally interdependent expressions at the basis of any cultic relationship, in its two poles of ritual efficiency and referential matrix. By introducing the representation of non-individualised, referential gods and rites into the sanctuary and individualised ritual practice, the dedicatory reliefs inscribed the particular into the general. Not only was there no benefit to be gained from a figurative individuation of the god and rites on the reliefs, but on the contrary, this individuation would have deprived the overall message of a dimension that is essential to an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the gestures and references summoned to a ritual site.

5 Particular, Generic and Supra-Regional Deities

In conclusion, I would like to open up the reflection and take the risk of forming a hypothesis in the form of an interrogation. Is this insistence on representing the honoured deity in a generic and widely recognised way, alongside and in addition to its local onomastic and ritual specificity, a conceptual clue, supporting or expressing the emergence of ubiquitous deities that can free themselves in part from a local identity in order to be honoured ritually? I am thinking here of deities, ritually honoured in sanctuaries, who often escape specification by an onomastic attribute: Asklepios, for example, who, although he bears some local epithets, notably epichoric, and is regularly referred to as

Soter, “Saviour”, is most often honoured without onomastic attributes;⁵⁴ or collective deities, such as the Muses, who also mostly escape onomastic determination. The absence of an onomastic attribute does not mean that these divinities do not have their own local profile, which the particularities of the place and/or of the local cult practice automatically confer on them. In the case of Asklepios, it should be noted that the representations of the god, with or without Hygeia, are also very stereotyped and generic. This pattern is even well-known and recognised enough to serve as a mould for a healing hero such as Amphiaraos, who has no visual identity of his own, but who is defined above all by an incubatory practice that brings him closer to Asklepios.⁵⁵ This onomastic non-specification of the god could perhaps be inferred from his healing *dunamis* and/or his relatively recent introduction; this remains to be proven. I will take another example to circumvent these objections: Dionysos. This god, whom the Ancients wanted to present as more “recent” than the others – an imaginary construction that has now been proven – has a richer iconography than any other divinity, while bearing numerous onomastic attributes, in particular from the 3rd century BCE onwards, that anchor him in particular rites as well as in very distinct local settings. And this multiplicity of onomastic attributes does not weaken in any way over the centuries, as witnessed for example by the varied and often local addresses he receives in the context of Dionysian associations that are widely spread both geographically and chronologically (3rd century BCE – 3rd–4th century CE).⁵⁶ This divinity experienced a particular development as the tutelary god of the guilds of artists, actors and professionals of the spectacle, the *Technitai*, who systematically placed themselves under his patronage. In the Hellenistic period, in the various centres where these *Technitai* associations flourished, their general, and I would say generic, name, which was likely to be declined, can be summarised by the usual formula: Οἱ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνεῖται, literally “the *Technitai* around Dionysos”, which a geographical precision then makes it possible to attribute to a certain perimeter of activity: the *Technitai* of Isthmus and Nemea, those of Ionia and Hellespont, those of Athens, etc. Cases where the theonym is specified by a very onomastic attribute are rare and linked to particular contexts, such as the *Technitai* of

54 In this volume, Clarisse Prêtre explores certain epithets of Asklepios in his specification of doctor with finesse. The analytical graphs of Athenian dedications proposed by Sylvain Lebreton in this volume also clearly show the propensity of the dedication process towards the Athenian Asklepios to free itself from any epithet (tab. 1b and note 12).

55 According to a similar procedure, the god Kabiros at the Kabirion of Thebes clearly took up the iconography of Dionysos, but maintained his archaic appearance, with beard and mature age, even though Dionysos was represented as a young man from the last third of the 5th century (Jaccottet 2011).

56 Jaccottet 2003 (and especially the index s.v. Dionysos, with all his onomastic attributes attested in the associative cults).

Dionysos Kathegemon, a dynastic divinity of the Attalids, which refers to a cult directly associating the god of the Technitai with the royal power.⁵⁷

In a very general and conventional way, the Technitai are under the patronage of a “naked” Dionysos. This is not surprising, since these associations travel and must be able to fit into many local cultural and cultic landscapes. For the Technitai are “the most pious of the Hellenes”⁵⁸ and the highest magistracy of the *koinon* of Ionia and those of Syracuse is that of priest, eponymous, since his name is used to date official acts.⁵⁹ A priest of Dionysos, without specification,⁶⁰ besides in Athens where the priesthood is that of Dionysos Melpomenos, well tinged with a theatrical rather than local anchorage.⁶¹ This non-specificity of the Dionysos of the Technitai and the priesthood clearly shows the diffusion of a supra-local Dionysos, without any identification that would link him too directly to such and such place or any particular ritual practice. This appearance of a Dionysos, culturally honoured, but without any specific *distinction*, is certainly linked to the type of theatrical and spectacular activity generally proposed by the Technitai. But it did not arise out of nothing. And is it at all coincidental that Dionysos is a divine figure who, more than any other, is ubiquitous in iconography, in all registers and media? The awareness, conceptually maintained by visual communication, that a local god is also and perhaps essentially a generic god common to all Greeks, is a necessary premise for this widely supra-regional development of certain deities.

Let us continue. When the Hellenistic Technitai-associations, which were distinct according to their geographical scope, became an “ecumenical” *synodos* in the imperial era – in the sense of an association active in the whole territory of the Empire and the *oikoumene*, the known and inhabited earth (by Greek and Roman) –, the question of the “ecumenism” of an indiscriminate Dionysos became even more acute as some emperors were included in the nomenclature of these synods as *neos* Dionysos. This is notably the case with Hadrian. Besides Ἡ ἱερὰ θυμαλικὴ σύνοδος τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνεῖται (“The sacred theatrical association of world-wide artists around Dionysos”), one will thus find decrees emanating from “the

57 E.g. CIG 3068A l. 1–2 = Le Guen 2001 I, no. 48 = Aneziri 2003 D11a, l. 3–5: ἔδοξε τῷ κοινῷ τῶν περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνι|τῶν τῶν ἐπ’ Ἰωνίας καὶ Ἑλλησπόντου καὶ τῶν πε[ρι] | τὸν Καθηγεμόνα Διόνυσον (Teos, 2nd quarter of the 2nd c. BCE). Cf. also, among others, the inscription cited in the next note.

58 IG XI, 4, 1061 + 1136 = Le Guen 2001 I, no. 45 = Aneziri 2003 D10, l. 21: ἐκ πάντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων εὐσεβέστατοι (Delos, around 180–167 BCE).

59 Le Guen 2001 II, 65–66.

60 On priests within the Technitai-associations, cf. Aneziri 2003, 127–135.

61 Cf. Aneziri 2003, 30–33 concerning the role of priest of Dionysos Melpomenos assumed by the priest of the Athenian Technitai. This cult was probably a public cult, whose gentile priesthood was at first reserved for the *genos* of the Euneidai. The two priesthoods then coexisted, as we can see from the two *prohedra* seats reserved in the theatre for each of the two priests of Dionysos Melpomenos. This public anchoring of the cult probably explains the presence, unattested elsewhere, of an onomastic attribute to the Dionysos honoured by the Technitai.

world-wide artists around Dionysos and the emperor Traianus Hadrianus Augustus Caesar, new Dionysos” (τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον καὶ Αὐτοκράτορα Τραϊανὸν Ἀδριανὸν Σεβαστὸν Καίσαρα | νέον Διόνυσον τεχνειτῶν).⁶² This cohabitation of two gods, Dionysos and the emperor as *Neos* Dionysos, expressed as such by name in this decree,⁶³ shows how the “ecumenism” of the Technitai rests on the “ecumenism” of a “naked” Dionysos and how this, in its “ecumenical” dimension, can become a model for a divine assimilation of emperors or other dynasts with a supra-local scope. It is no coincidence either that the first attestation of divine assimilation of dynasts through the use of the formula *neos* + theonym is with Dionysos, for Ptolemy XII, also significantly endowed with the name of *Auletes*, in 64 BCE.⁶⁴ In order to allow the powerful of this world to present themselves as a new god, these gods had to be devoid of local anchorage and thus become “ecumenical”.⁶⁵

What is the relationship between the appearance of these *Neoi Dionysoi*, the Technitai and our Mysian stelae? The generic character of the deities and their ritual context on the reliefs of the Mysian stelae contains within itself the concept of an “ecumenical” deity. The generalised use of the generic figuration of deities on dedications, be it in rural sanctuaries, in the heart of Athens or elsewhere, is an expression that anchors in people’s consciousness, as much as it contributes to its formation and expression, the supra-local dimension of the divine powers, which are nevertheless invoked specifically in each of the sanctuaries. It is on this basis and this double awareness of a particular and a generic, embodied by the divinity, that the cults of divinities with few onomastic attributes were able to develop, such as Asklepios, for example, who was worldwide (in the ancient sense of the word) present through his “ecumenically” recognised cult practices, and the Dionysos of the Technitai, who was

⁶² For this example, *I.Ancyra* 141. Another example, even more complex in its statement: *I.Ancyra* 143, l. 1–7: [ψή]φισμα τῆς ἱερᾶς Ἀδριανῆς θυμε|λι|κῆς συνόδου τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκουμέ|νης περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον καὶ αὐτοκράτορα | Τ|ραιανὸν Ἀδρια|νὸν Καίσαρα Σεβαστὸν | νέ|ον Διόνυσον [τε]χ|νειτῶν ἱερoneikῶν | σ|τεφανε[ιτ]<ω>ν καὶ [τῶν τοῦτων συναγω|ν]ιστῶν (“Decree of the sacred Hadrianic theatrical synod of the world-wide artists around Dionysos and the emperor Traianus Hadrianus Caesar Augustus, new Dionysos, victors of sacred games and wearers of crowns, and their fellow competitors”).

⁶³ *I.Ancyra* 141, l. 16–17: “the piety of the homeland towards both gods”: τήν τε εὐσεβείαν τῆς πατρίδος | εἰς ἀμφοτέρους τοὺς θεοὺς.

⁶⁴ One axis of the 2014–2018 Chronos research programme of the UMR 8210 AnHiMa (*Anthropologie et Histoire des Mondes Antiques*) was devoted to the premises and development of the *Neos* + theonym formula. “*NEOI*. Des hommes nouveaux dieux. De la titulature hellénistique *neos* à l’*imitatio* romaine” (Stéphanie Wyler and Anne-Françoise Jaccottet, direction). The results will be published soon, cf. Jaccottet/Wyler 2023. This programme has led to a larger research project, “*DIVI. Frontières et modalités de passages entre humain et divin dans le bassin méditerranéen antique*”, a five-year research programme for 2019–20223 UMR 8210 AnHiMa under the direction of Sylvia Estienne, Anne-Françoise Jaccottet, Stéphanie Wyler.

⁶⁵ On the various attempts and stages of rapprochement, or assimilation, before that, between Hellenistic dynasts and deities, cf. e.g. Caneva 2020 and Caneva 2021.

necessarily essentially supra-regional in order to respond to the plasticity that these associations had to manifest, in order to be able to adapt to all the different local areas and dynasts. The next step will be that of the *neoi* + theonyms, to which, as if by chance, Dionysos opens the way. The image, that of the dedicatory reliefs, as well as the abundant Dionysian iconography, plays the role of a vector of “universality”, not only in the sense of a shared cultural understanding, but also in the area of effective rituality capable of opening up to a supra-local dimension in certain circumstances.

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