

Cambridge University Press

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PART I

Gods and Heroes

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Introduction

FRITZ GRAF

Research on Greek gods and, to a lesser degree, on Greek heroes is caught in the essential tension that exists between the panhellenic status and the almost exclusively local worship of most gods and many heroes. This tension is as old as Greek reflection on the recipients of their cult. Hesiod and Homer already assumed that the gods they were singing about were known by and common to all Greeks, although their festivals, rituals, and even myths were first and foremost a local affair, performed in and for a city or even a village. But although local cults differed considerably, panhellenic narrations converged in shaping an overall image that transcended such local concerns; famously, Herodotus acknowledges this when he has Hesiod and Homer give the Greeks their gods. The same is true for many heroes. Being ancestors of local families, they are naturally worshipped at their graves; but their stories and, in a number of instances that grew over time, their cults spread through Greece and became panhellenic: here too, Herodotus' assumption of a basic unity of Greek religion appears correct.

For generations, scholars on Greek religion have adopted this same premise, without even recognizing or theorizing the tension between local and panhellenic: research into local cults was antiquarian only, or, once it had theoretical aims, it hunted for survivals, following Tylor's and Frazer's evolutionism that was readily adopted by the next generation of scholars such as Martin P. Nilsson or Ludwig Deubner. Only recently, after Frazer's and Nilsson's overbearing paradigm lost its grip on the minds of scholars, has the unity of Greek religion become a problem; but a book with the title *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* smacks somewhat of provocation even fifteen years after its publication, and the much regretted Simon Price must have intended it to be so.¹ As early as 1978, the much regretted Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood stipulated in a seminal paper that "the study of Greek divine personalities should be based on specific religious units and rely on internal evidence only,"² without however neglecting the interplay between

¹ S. Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks*, Cambridge 1999.

² C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Persephone and Aphrodite at Locri: A Model for Personality Definition in Greek Religion," *JHS* 98, 1978, 102 (reprinted as "Reading" *Greek Culture: Texts and Images, Rituals and Myths*, Oxford 1991, 150).

the local and the panhellenic. She took her cues from Jean-Pierre Vernant, who had posited that the Greek pantheon needed to be studied as a system, not as a list; although he did not confine research into this system to any local pantheon, but to its panhellenic manifestations, the primary system of Greek religion is the local pantheon. As a necessary corollary to her methodological stipulation, Sourvinou-Inwood focussed not on the myths but on the cults: if anything, the local cults gave the matrix in which to read the polysemy of panhellenic mythical narratives.³ To use the case study she presented: the cult of Persephone in Locri Epizephyrii is concerned with the transition from girlhood to bride, and in this context the rape of Persephone is read as a wedding story.⁴

Michael Jameson was a contemporary of Jean-Pierre Vernant, and a generation senior to Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood. To him, too, it came very easily to think of Greek religion in the framework of local religion. Michael Jameson the historian of religion was first and foremost also Michael Jameson the epigrapher – and inscriptions, like cults, are local only, tied to one place and one specific historical moment. It is not by chance that two of the four papers in the first part of this collection take their starting point from an inscription. The paper on Apollo Lykeios publishes and comments on an Athenian decree that Jameson was editing for the third edition of *Inscriptiones Graecae* I, the pre-Cleisthenic inscriptions of Athens; the one on Perseus begins with two late archaic inscriptions from Mycenae, one of them unpublished, the other one widely unknown, and turns the tension between local and panhellenic into a central topic: “The myth [of Perseus] was so widespread and had such a long history in art that it may be difficult to uncover its local form in the one place with a strong, early claim to the hero.” The other two papers think mostly locally as well: the Dionysus paper takes a large amount of its evidence from Athenian vase-painting, another very local medium (despite its huge international commercial success), and the paper on Echetlaeus comments on a detail of a painting in Athens’ Stoa Poikile with an eminently local theme, the victory at Marathon.

The focus on local evidence leads almost with necessity to a second typical move. In each case, the reflection on the god or hero who is central to the paper – Perseus, Echetlaeus, Dionysus, Apollo – quickly turns to the rituals connected with him; it is, after all, the rituals that explain local beliefs and

³ Her reason, however, was somewhat different: “Of the spheres in which a divine personality manifests itself, that of cult would be especially resistant to change under the impact of Panhellenic religion,” Sourvinou-Inwood 1978, 101.

⁴ For a more complex analysis, see now J. M. Redfield, *The Locrian Maidens: Love and Death in Greek Italy*, Princeton, NJ 2003.

local storytelling, and that also contribute to the panhellenic image of a given god or hero. Implicitly, this contains a theory of how gods and heroes are shaped; they receive their basic forms from the forces of local traditions that are based on rituals. This does not exclude other forces, such as those of ancient Near Eastern storytelling that so obviously shaped the traditions about Perseus, or of Athenian tragedy, as in the case of Dionysus, but it makes those forces chronologically secondary, shaping an already existing core that is determined by its functions in local festivals and rites. There is no need to assume (and no indication of it anywhere in Jameson's papers) that such a panhellenic elaboration was intentional in the sense that the archaic poets wanted to create a panhellenic unity; it rather followed from the fact that the audiences of the poets were translocal and, often enough, panhellenic.⁵

But this firm concentration on local cults is not simply a by-product of the necessities of being an epigrapher. In his more general reflections on Greek religion (which Michael Jameson was more willing to share in conversation than in print), the focus on the local was an explicit methodological position. It was Michael who, over drinks in San Francisco, turned my attention to what he thought was an exemplary realization of his methodological stance, Robert I. Levy's *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*.⁶ The book takes its title from the assumption that the city mediates between the microcosm of the individual and the cosmos, and it does for a contemporary Nepali city what we can only dream of doing for an ancient Greek city: to give "a systematic overview of the symbolic organization of one city," the traditional Hindu city of Bhaktapur.⁷ Even though we lack the detailed information Levy had, writing about a contemporary city, with his co-author Kedar Rāj Rājopādhāya, the chief Brahman priest of a temple that is "still at the center of the city's civic religion,"⁸ and a member of a priestly family that reaches back many generations,⁹ the methodological aim can be transferred with the necessary adjustment, and it has deeply resonated with Jameson's way of looking at his Greek material.

⁵ See E. Stehle, *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece: Nondramatic Poetry in Its Setting*, Princeton, NJ 1997; B. Kowalzig, *Singing for the Gods: Performances of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece*, New York and Oxford 2007.

⁶ R. I. Levy, *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*, Berkeley 1990. See Jameson, "Sacred Space and the City: Greece and Bhaktapur," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 1, 1997, 485–99 (chapter 13 this volume, pp. 302–15).

⁷ The quotation is from D. Holmberg, "Review of *Mesocosm*," *American Ethnologist* 20, 1993, 651.

⁸ Levy 1990, 7.

⁹ It is as if we could write a book on Athenian religion together with Timotheus the Eumolpid, or with an *exegetes*: the closest we come, in this case, are the fragments of Philochorus.

In the selection and interpretation of rituals, Jameson is firmly anchored in the advances his generation had made over the Frazer–Nilsson paradigm: social function is dominant. Jane Ellen Harrison, inspired by Émile Durkheim in Paris, had paved the way for such a reading of Greek ritual, against the evolutionary pan-agriculturalism of her Cambridge friends, and her own earlier work. Henri Jeanmaire and Louis Gernet followed Durkheim, marginal scholars in a Frazerian world; a generation later, Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914–2007) and Walter Burkert (b. 1931) turned functionalism and attention to social roles into the reigning paradigm. Jameson cites all of them, whenever appropriate.¹⁰ He firmly embeds Perseus, the local hero of Mycenae, in boys' rites of transition, and shows how the Athenian Apollo Lykeios is connected with the result of this same transition, men's role as hoplite citizens; in this perspective, all the functions of his Athenian sanctuary, disparate and somewhat random for earlier scholars, find an easy and convincing unity. Nowadays, the concept of 'initiation' has come under critical scrutiny, as have most other concepts developed by nineteenth- or twentieth-century social anthropology: tribal ritual patterns look different in specific local rituals and myths of archaic and classical Greece; loose terminology is seen as doing more harm than good, and the implicit evolutionary concept has become murky as to its historical realization.¹¹ Jameson's use of the concept of initiation, however, is careful and sparing, and he takes full account of local developments and functions: 'initiation' is essentially a descriptive tool. This does not mean that, in the background, there is no thought about evolution, but Jameson is not much interested in it: his interest is local, and functional.¹² He notes that, "among the West Greek speakers too, the relationship of Lykeios to other, initiatory aspects of Apollo is far

¹⁰ The third founding father of the new paradigm, Angelo Brelich, who paved the way for Vernant's and Burkert's influence in Italy, is present in the footnotes: Jameson is too careful a scholar not to know his work. A good introduction to Brelich's work is the collection of some of his papers: P. Xella, ed., *Mitologia, Politeismo, Magia e Altri Studi di Storia delle Religioni (1956–1977)*, Naples 2002; it deserves an English translation.

¹¹ The necessary reflection started with Angelo Brelich's monumental (and unfinished) *Paidés e Parthenoi*, Rome 1969; more recently, Walter Burkert's "'Iniziazione': un concetto moderna e una terminologia antica," in B. Gentili and F. Perusino, eds., *Le Orse di Brauron: Un Rituale di Iniziazione Femminile nel Santuario di Artemide*, Pisa 2002, 13–27, and my "Initiation: A Concept with a Troubled History," in D. B. Dodd and C. A. Faraone, eds., *Initiation in Greek Rituals and Narratives: New Critical Perspectives*, London 2003, 3–24.

¹² A somewhat more explicit reconstruction of an evolution concerns the way Echetlaeus developed from the plow-handle to a fully fledged plow hero: the starting point is again a ritual, the prayer for success while grasping the plow-handle. The background is, ultimately, Usener's *Augenblicksgötter und Sonderngötter in Götternamen: Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung*, Bonn 1929, 2nd edn, filtered through Lewis R. Farnell's application of the concept to hero-cults in *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality*, Oxford 1921, 71–94, 88.

from clear,” but leaves it at this,¹³ nor does he follow up his insights for the explanation of the well-documented evidence for the cult in Argos.¹⁴

This does not mean, however, that Jameson cannot see other functions, when necessary. He begins his interpretation of the hero Echetlaeus with a linguistic analysis of his name and concludes that the name and the hero must be connected with the plow. But he refuses any easy generalization of this insight, on the lines of Farnell’s “heroes of the field and crops”; the hero is connected not with the plow or plowing as such, but with the plow-handle, the key feature for regulating the depth of the plowing that is vital for the success of the crops. Through a host of comparative material, this leads to the very specific role of the handle in ritual that elegantly solves the quandary of why a hero connected with plowing would appear as a helper in battle, and refutes Farnell’s dismissive explanation as a “pseudo-historic aetiological story invented to explain a name and a half-forgotten cult.”¹⁵

At first glance, unlike the other three, the fourth paper, “The Asexuality of Dionysus,” might seem to concern itself not with cult, but with mythology and iconography. Its starting point is the paradox that the god who is most closely associated with the phallus, the “instrument and symbol of male sexuality,” is usually represented as “detached and unconcerned with sex.”¹⁶ But from representation – in Athenian ceramic iconography and in panhellenic Athenian mythology – the discussion quickly moves to cult and its complexities. In maenadism, the predominantly female cult of Dionysus, the phallus was absent, although sexuality was not, as the images of interaction between satyrs and maenads or Pentheus’ male fantasies demonstrate; in the cults that mostly or exclusively concerned males, however, such as the Athenian Greater and Rural Dionysia, the phallus was visibly central.

Jameson’s solution of the paradox is that Greek women were much less comfortable with the raw male sexuality displayed in the *phallegoria* and other male rites, and that this in turn shaped the representations in myth and iconography. The answer thus again makes cult into its key, in step with his basic methodological choice. It might sound persuasive, but there is one problem: representation in Greek culture is always male, even if it

¹³ Jameson, “Apollo Lykeios in Athens,” *Archaioagnosia* 1, 1980, 233 (chapter 3 this volume, pp. 41–61).

¹⁴ In my chapter on the god in Erythrae (*Nordionische Kulte*, Rome 1985, 220–6), I am indebted to Jameson’s brilliant paper that tempted me to explore the details of the non-Athenian cults in order to give a background for the scant Erythraean evidence; the picture I came up with is less heterogeneous than Jameson leads one to expect.

¹⁵ Farnell 1921, 88.

¹⁶ Jameson, “The Asexuality of Dionysus,” in T. Carpenter and C. Faraone, eds., *Masks of Dionysus*, New York 1993, 44 (chapter 4 this volume, pp. 62–80).

talks about female perceptions, and thus cannot be taken at its face value. Nor is raw male sexuality absent from female cults, as the Thesmophoria and Haloa with their aeschrology and their use of images of male genitalia show.¹⁷ Jameson deserves all the credit for pointing out the paradox and going a long way towards solving it; for once, however, he might not have arrived at the very end of the road.

Even if I cannot follow him here all the way, this does not detract from the fact that Michael Jameson, in his quiet way, was at the forefront of his generation's methodological stance on Greek religion. With Vernant and Burkert, Michael Jameson shared the belief that the city was the focus, as a place of religious experience that preceded and informed all secondary panhellenic generalizations; and he shared their belief in the key role which ritual played in this experience, preceding and shaping all other forms of representation of the supernatural, of gods and heroes, in myth and iconography. And he was able to combine this with his impressive expertise as an epigrapher into a combination few scholars since have been able to equal or surpass. Thus, his essays remain models – for epigraphers in how to think about Greek religion, and for historians of Greek religion in how to use the documents of epigraphy.

¹⁷ Attested by the famous Lucian scholion (H. Rabe, *Scholium in Lucianum: Dialogi Meretricii*, Leipzig 1906, 279), L. Deubner, *Attische Feste*, Berlin 1932, 61; see also the red-figured Athenian *pelike* with the image of a woman in a phallus garden, discussed *inter alia* by R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, Oxford 2005, 288.

1 | The Hero Echetlaeus

Pausanias, in speaking of the Stoa Poikile in the Agora at Athens, describes the famous painting of the battle of Marathon, which is dated in the second quarter of the fifth century BC.¹ He says, in part (1.15.3):

Here also are depicted Marathon, a hero after whom the plain is named, and Theseus, shown rising from out of the ground, and Athena and Heracles; for it was first by the Marathonians, as they themselves say, that Heracles was considered a god. Among the combatants especially conspicuous in the painting are Callimachus, who was chosen by the Athenians to serve as *polemarch*, Miltiades, one of those who served as *strategos*, and a hero called Echetlus, of whom I shall also make mention later.

It is this figure Echetlus or Echetlaeus whom I propose to consider. The later passage (Paus. 1.32.4–5) occurs in a description of the deme of Marathon and the battle which took place on its plain:

The Marathonians worship those who died in battle, calling them heroes, and also Marathon, from whom the deme gets its name, and Heracles; they claim that among the Greeks it was first by them that Heracles was considered a god. They also say that a man happened to be present in the battle, in appearance and outfit a countryman. He killed many of the barbarians with a plow and, after the battle, disappeared. When the Athenians inquired of the [Delphic] god, he gave only this answer about him: he ordered them to honor Echetlaeus as a hero.

The assistance of gods and heroes in battle is a familiar phenomenon. I need only mention here the Aeacids whose help had been asked before Salamis and who, as armed men, seemed to stretch out their hands from Aegina before the Greek triremes (Plut. *Them.* 15, cf. Hdt. 8.64, 84), while

Originally published in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 82, 1951, 49–61.

¹ On the date and the disputed authorship of the painting, see E. Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*, Munich 1923, II:637, 660–62. On the location of the Stoa, see E. Vanderpool, “The Route of Pausanias in the Athenian Agora,” *Hesperia* 18, 1949, 130, fig. 1, and 136; on the architectural fragments see H. A. Thompson, “Excavations in the Athenian Agora 1949: *Stoa Poikile*,” *Hesperia* 19, 1950, 327–9.

the hero Cychreus of Salamis appeared in the form of a snake on the Greek ships (Paus. 1.36.1). Before the same battle, a cloud of dust from which issued the Iacchus cry of the Eleusinian mysteries moved towards the Greek camp, testifying to divine support for the Greeks and the impending doom of the Persians (Hdt. 8.65). Other examples are at hand from all over the Greek world.²

If we consider who the figures are who give aid at such crises, we see that the heroes usually have some special connection with the place or the people, as in the case of Ajax and Telamon on Salamis (Hdt. 8.64) and the seven *archegetai* of Plataea (Plut. *Arist.* 11), or they have to be fetched to the spot as Aeacus and the rest of the Aeacids had to be brought from Aegina (Hdt. 8.64, 84) and were sent on another occasion by the Aeginetans to Thebes (Hdt. 5.80–1). Gods in the classical period gave help from a distance, as did Pan at Marathon (Hdt. 6.105.2–3), and it is probably in this way that we should understand Athena's position in this painting; but even so the gods with local attachments were more likely to be of service.³ Here, Marathon and Heracles were worshipped locally, for we know, besides what Pausanias tells us, that the Athenians camped on Heracles' precinct (Hdt. 6.108, 116) and that games were held at Marathon in his honor (Pindar *Ol.* 9.134ff., with scholiast).⁴ Athena and Theseus are the champions of the nation, and there is the legend of Theseus and the bull of Marathon (Plut. *Thes.* 14, Apollod. *Epit.* 1.5, Paus. 1.27.10); Plutarch knew a tradition that Theseus appeared in battle for the Greeks at Marathon (Plut. *Thes.* 35). Help may also come from a hero whose prime function is to give aid

² E.g., the Dioscuri, Hdt. 5.75 and Asclepius, *IG iv*² 1.128.58ff. (Isyllus) at Sparta; Ajax the son of Oileus, for whom a space was left in the ranks of the Italian Locrians and who in one battle wounded the Crotonian commander, Paus. 3.19.12–13; Conon, *FGrH* 26, F. 18. Cf. *GGR*, 678–9; J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias' Description of Greece*, 2nd edn, London 1913, 5, on Paus. 10.23.2.

³ The evidence does not show that gods were thought to take the field in person in the classical period, but we do not know the date of the battle between Tanagra and Eretria, in which Hermes appeared as an ephebe (Paus. 9.22.2). Nilsson 1941, 678–9 suggests that there was a reluctance to imagine panhellenic gods as fighting for one particular city (this would hardly prevent their participation in battle against the barbarians). At the level, however, at which these stories arose, it is doubtful that such contradictions would be felt, especially since supernatural figures generally appeared in victory, and not defeat, in itself an indication of which side they had decided to favor. Nor does this account for the reappearance of gods in battle in Hellenistic times when the gods are, if anything, less localized and more universal. It would seem that the predominance of heroes – a term that includes figures of diverse origin – in the stories from the classical period is due to the popularity of their cults, their local and intimate character, and the belief that many had been great men and especially great warriors, rather than to any reluctance to visualize the gods in battle. See A. D. Nock, "The Cult of Heroes," *HTHR* 37, 1944, 162–6.

⁴ On the popularity of the cult of Heracles at Marathon after the Persian Wars see E. Vanderpool, "An Archaic Inscribed Stele from Marathon," *Hesperia* 11, 1942, 335–6.