

Multiple cult epithets within the polis: Apollo Delios as a case study

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Introduction

In Greco-Roman antiquity, the fact that a deity possessed a great number of cult epithets or *epicleses* (“polyonymous”), indicated power and the importance of its corresponding cult.¹

Apollo is one of the deities who gathered a great variety of cult epithets around his divine persona;² these epithets manifested a wide range of qualities.

The issue of the parallel coexistence of different cults of the same god, with a different cult epithet in each case, even in the context of the same city, is a key question in the study of ancient Greek polytheism.³

The present paper focuses on the geographical area of the Aegean and in particular on the religious landscape of the cities in which the cult of Apollo Delios (Ἀπόλλων Δήλιος) is epigraphically attested.⁴ This toponymic epithet⁵ that accompanies Apollo reveals the place of

¹ Parker 2003, pp. 175 and 182. Versnel 2011, p. 61. Parker 2021, pp. 19 and 35.

² There is not an up-to-date systematic record of all of Apollo's epithets. However, a comparison with other gods, such as Zeus or Artemis, ranks Apollo among the deities with the greatest number of cult epithets. For some lists of Apollo's epithets which can be used as a starting point, although quite outdated, due to the numerous new epigraphic finds, see RE 2 (1895), 41–72, s.v. Apollon (K. Wernicke). Farnell 1896–1909, IV, pp. 357–432.

³ For some introductory remarks on the phenomenon, and particularly in relation to Apollo, see Parker 2003, p. 181.

⁴ There is no absolute agreement regarding the exact number of sanctuaries dedicated to Apollo Delios. For a relatively recent collated list of the testimonies in connection with the cult, with relevant bibliography see Grandjean and Salviat 2006, pp. 318–324. For the possible modes of transmission of a toponymic epithet, see Davies 2007, pp. 57–58, in relation to Apollo Pythios. A somewhat similar procedure, however, seems to have been the case for the cult of Apollo Delios.

⁵ For the category of the so-called toponymic and topographic cult epithets, see Graf 1996, p. 1834. Brulé 1998, pp. 20–21. Parker 2003, p. 176.

origin of the cult, namely the sacred island of Delos.⁶ This fact justifies the greater concentration of epigraphic evidence of this cult in cities of the Aegean islands, while the evidence in coastal areas of mainland Greece and Asia Minor is limited. This is due to the great importance of the island of Delos for the island communities of the Aegean, as a regional nesiotic cultural and religious node, located at the center of the trans-Aegean navigational routes.⁷

However, apart from this association with the particular sanctuary, nothing more can be safely said regarding any particular qualities that characterize Apollo with this epithet. A juxtaposition with other cult epithets accompanying the god in the context of the same city may highlight the particularities of the cult.

The cities of the Aegean

As case studies, four important city-states of the Aegean have been chosen, each with particularities both in terms of its process of formation and in terms of its religious landscape. These cities are Paros, Thasos, Kameiros and Kos. The four cities were selected due to their prolific epigraphic material related to the various cult epithets of Apollo. The epigraphic testimonies are mostly of Hellenistic date. However, individual examples date back to the fifth and even the sixth century BC, while certain cults of Apollo seem to have had a long-term presence. The large volume of the Hellenistic inscriptions—excluding the votive ones—is most likely due to the special political conditions of the period and the accompanying religious reforms. Especially in the case of Kos, the sacrificial calendars and the so-called sacred laws,

⁶ For the relationship of the island with Apollo and for a reconstruction of the rituals that took place there see Bruneau 1970, pp. 30–89.

⁷ Constantakopoulou 2007, pp. 38–58. Constantakopoulou 2015, pp. 275–278.

concerning regulations of the various local cults, are extremely informative.⁸ In Kameiros the catalogues of priests of the Hellenistic period reveal the official cults of the city and the evolution of the priesthoods over a long period of time.⁹

The starting point for the presentation and commentary regarding the cult epithets of Apollo will be the Cyclades, and specifically Paros, the island closer to Delos. The city was already prosperous in the second half of the sixth century BC, underlining its close relationship with the Delian Apollo, not only through the various dedications on the sacred island,¹⁰ but also through the existence of a sanctuary of the Delian deities (the so-called “Delion”) on Paros itself.¹¹

Next is the city of Thasos in the northern Aegean, which was a colony of Paros, founded by Parian settlers around 680–670 BC.¹² The colonists transferred many of the cults of the metropolis to the new city,¹³ including the cult of the Delian Apollo, whose sanctuary has been identified.¹⁴

Kameiros, in the North-Western part of the island of Rhodes, was a Dorian city and a member of the Dorian Hexapolis.¹⁵ In 408/7 BC, together with the other two cities of the island (Ialysos and Lindos), they were synoecized, creating a new urban center at the North-Eastern

⁸ Paul 2013, pp. 22–23. Of particular interest in the case of the city of Kos are the inscriptions regulating the sale of various priesthoods, see Parker and Obbink 2000. Parker and Obbink 2001.

⁹ Lala 2015, pp. 103–110.

¹⁰ Angliker 2017, p. 30 with note no. 25. Regarding the presence of Parian sculptures in Delos, see Kourayos and Daifa 2014.

¹¹ For the Delion of Paros see Rubensohn 1962. For the architecture of the temple see Schuller 1991 and for the cult statue of Artemis Delia see Despini-Kostoglou 2020, pp. 15–47 with pl. 1–26. It is the only extensively excavated sanctuary among the known Delia.

¹² Grandjean and Salviat 2012, pp. 38–40.

¹³ See Muller 2017.

¹⁴ For the Delion of Thasos see Grandjean and Salviat 2006. Grandjean and Salviat 2012, p. 134.

¹⁵ For the city of Kameiros see Nielsen and Gabrielsen 2004, pp. 1200–1202.

tip of Rhodes, which received the name of the island.¹⁶ However, despite its participation in the synoecism, the city continued to be inhabited, even possessing an extensive local pantheon, as shown by the rich epigraphic material. Among the gods worshipped, Apollo is a dominant figure, bearing a multitude of epithets. In addition to the cult of Apollo Delios,¹⁷ multiple other cults connected with various epithets are attested, some common and widespread in the Greek world and others exclusively local.

As is the case with Rhodes, Kos was a relatively new city (founded in 366/5 BC), created through the synoecism of older settlements of the island and taking its name.¹⁸ The cult of Apollo Delios is epigraphically attested,¹⁹ however his sanctuary has not been identified. At the same time, the importance of his cult is demonstrated by the existence of a network between the city Kos and Delos, through the regular sending of theories from Kos to the sanctuary of Apollo.²⁰

The epithets of Apollo

We begin the presentation with those cult epithets found in all four cities—or in most of them—as well as with epithets common throughout the Greek world. Then follows a rudimentary categorization of epithets into various groups, starting with toponymic epithets and continuing with individual groups of epithets based on the attribute of the deity which they underline in each case.

¹⁶ For the impact of the synoecism on the religious landscape of the island of Rhodes, see Parker 2009, pp. 205–210.

¹⁷ Tit. Cam. 50, 25–26. Tit. Cam. 90, 28–29 (both dated in the second century BC). Cf. Morelli 1959, p. 103.

¹⁸ Parker 2009, pp. 202–204.

¹⁹ IG XII 4 1,332 (middle or second quarter of the fourth century BC). IG XII 4 1,281 (158–138 BC). IG XII 4 2, 998 (27 BC–14 AD). IG XII 4 2, 838 (14–37 AD). IG XII 4 2,952 (after 54 AD).

²⁰ See Rutherford 2009.

Apollo Pythios

The cult of Apollo Pythios (Ἀπόλλων Πύθιος) is epigraphically attested in all four cities.²¹ In Paros the sanctuary of Apollo Pythios (“Pythion”) was a spot for the setting up of arbitrations (a so-called ἐπιφανέστατος τόπος i.e. a site in a Greek city—usually a sanctuary—of high visibility, where monuments were sure to be seen).²² The Thasian Pythion is located on the acropolis of the city,²³ and as in Paros and in various other cities, it served as an ἐπιφανέστατος τόπος, as well as a location for the safe-keeping of fines.²⁴ Especially for the case of Thasos, the cult came to the island with the Parian colonists, while the Pythian Apollo was also the one who gave the oracle in order for the colony to be established.²⁵ This fact is directly connected to the role played by the oracle of Delphi in the colonization process and to the status of Apollo Pythios as a god who legitimized the foundation of colonies, as well as the transfer and establishment of cults, included in this process.²⁶

Regarding its meaning, it was thought—already since antiquity—that the epithet derived from Pytho, the earliest name of the area of the later oracle of Delphi.²⁷ Like the epithet Delios, this epithet, with the corresponding cult, spread outside the main sanctuary of Delphi throughout the Greek world. It is therefore included among the so-called toponymic epithets,

²¹ Paros: IG XII 110 (undated). Thasos: IG XII Suppl. 350 (400–350 BC). IG XII 8, 267 (early third century BC).

²² For the possible location of the Pythion, see Rubensohn 1902, p. 190, who locates the sanctuary outside of the fortification walls, next to the Asklepieion. His identification, however, is probably not correct. For the aforementioned site of the so-called “Pythion”, see Berranger 1992, pp. 97–103. Melfi 2002, pp. 327–360. Berranger 1992, pp. 100 and 241 identifies the Pythion with the remains of a temple on the acropolis of the city of Paros.

²³ For the architectural remains and some sculptural finds from the sanctuary see Picard 1921, p. 88 and pp. 113–126, pl. 10–13. Holtzmann 1994, pp. 6–13. Grandjean and Salviat 2012, pp. 141–142.

²⁴ Pouilloux and Dunant 1994, pp. 238–287. Grandjean and Salviat 2012, p. 141. Trippé 2018, p. 322.

²⁵ Grandjean and Salviat 2012, pp. 38–39.

²⁶ Papadopoulou 2018, pp. 166–167. Trippé 2018, p. 322.

²⁷ *Iliad* IX 405. *Odyssey* VIII 80, XI 581. Hesiod *Theogony* 499. Herodotus *Histories* 1.54.1.

which are not directly related to any specific attribute or function of the god.²⁸ However, the importance of Apollo as an oracle god who legislates and the connection with the oracle of Delphi, possibly justifies its spread. In the same context, the function of many Pythian sanctuaries as places of deposit of public records and as ἐπιφανέστατοι τόποι is included.²⁹

The cult seems to have been one of the most important of Kameiros, with a separate priest almost throughout the third century BC.³⁰ However, towards the end of the third and in the second century, the cult is served jointly with other cults of Apollo by the same priest.³¹ Despite this, the name of Apollo Pythios keeps appearing first in all the inscriptions, a fact indicative of its importance.

The cult is one of the oldest of Kos, attested epigraphically from the fifth century BC up to the second century AD.³² It is noteworthy that there were more than one Pythia, with the sanctuaries in the oldest towns of the island still functioning even after the synoecism of Kos.³³

Apollo Karneios

The exclusively Dorian cult of Apollo Karneios (Ἀπόλλων Κάρνειος)³⁴ is attested epigraphically in Kameiros, on inscriptions of the second half of the third century BC.³⁵ During this period the

²⁸ Davies 1997, pp. 50–51. Davies 2007, p. 57.

²⁹ Davies 2007, p. 64.

³⁰ Tit. Cam. 17,20 (ca. 268 BC). Tit. Cam. 23,17 (ca. 258 BC). Tit. Cam. 27, II 5 (ca. 253 BC). Tit. Cam. 29,13 (ca. 251 BC). Tit. Cam. 30, II 5 (ca. 259 BC). Tit. Cam. 31,18 (ca. 247 BC). Tit. Cam. 35,20 (ca. 235 BC). Tit. Cam. 38,25 (ca. 223 BC). Tit. Cam. 39, II 4. Tit. Cam. 39a, I (ca. 221 BC). Tit. Cam. 56a 3 (third century BC). Possibly also in the first century BC if the dating of the inscription Tit. Cam. 56b 3 is correct.

³¹ The inscriptions indicate that in the second century BC the cult of Apollo Digenes as well as the cults of Apollo Pythios, Apollo Karneios and Apollo Mylantios were practiced by a single priest. This fact has been associated with certain administrative changes that took place in the city, after the earthquake of 227/6 BC, see Lala 2015, p. 108.

³² IG XII 4 2, 1202 (fifth century BC). IG XII 4 1, 332, l. 60–61 (fourth century BC). IG XII 4 1, 335 (fourth–third century BC). IG XII 4 2, 1205 (third–second century BC). IG XII 4 2, 529 (first century BC). IG XII 4 2, 1209. IG XII 4 2, 952 (first century AD). IG XII 4 1, 421 (second century AD).

³³ Paul 2013, p. 204.

cult had its own separate priesthood. However, for the last quarter of the third century BC and throughout the second century BC, the cult of Apollo Karneios shares a priesthood together with other cults of Apollo, with one priest appointed for all of them.³⁶ The cult of Karneios can be found throughout the Dorian world,³⁷ constituting a connecting element of the Dorian cities. Apollo Karneios possessed a wide range of attributes. In particular, the etymology of the epithet from the word κάρνος (=ram) suggests a pastoral status and a rural character of the god, corresponding to the primal nature of the cult.³⁸ However, gradually the cult acquired a military, warlike character.³⁹

The existence of the cult in Kos—one of the most ancient of the island⁴⁰—is explained through its Dorian background. The earliest epigraphic evidence of its presence dates back to the middle of the fourth century BC, and the latest can be dated to the first century AD.⁴¹ The

³⁴ For the cult in Sparta and its general traits, see Petterson 1992, pp. 57–72. For the cult in Rhodes, see Morelli 1959, p. 106.

³⁵ Tit. Cam. 31, 20 (ca. 247 BC). Tit. Cam. 38, 27 (ca. 223 BC).

³⁶ Apollo Pythios and Karneios: Tit. Cam. 40, II 6 (ca. 215 BC). Tit. Cam. 41,19 (ca. 210 BC). Tit. Cam. 43, II 7 (ca. 204 BC). Tit. Cam. 44,21 (ca. 203 BC). Tit. Cam. 44a I (ca. 200 BC). Tit. Cam. 45,19 (ca. 194 BC?). Tit. Cam. 46,26 (ca. 193 BC). Tit. Cam. 50,23 (ca. 183 BC). Apollo Pythios and Karneios and Mylantios and Digenes: Tit. Cam. 47,19 (ca. 192–186 BC). Tit. Cam. 7, I (ca. 172–167 BC). For this phenomenon in Kameiros, p.5 note 31.

³⁷ Craik 1980, p. 178.

³⁸ Petterson 1992, p. 59.

³⁹ Petterson 1992, pp. 60 and 63. It is uncertain which was the dominant aspect of Apollo Karneios in the local cult of Kameiros, but it is probable that a rural/pastoral element was more appropriate for the city, especially in a period during which it was not an independent city-state but a member of the Rhodian state, cf. epithets of Apollo in Kameiros, of similar nature, e.g., Epimelios/Epimelidios and possibly Epiknisios, Mylantios, cf. Morelli 1959, p. 103.

⁴⁰ For some particularities regarding the cult of Apollo Karneios in Kos, see Paul 2013, p. 68.

⁴¹ IG XII 4 1, 274 lines 11, 15, 22. IG XII 4 1, 275 (fourth century BC). IG XII 4 2, 1190 (second century BC). IG XII 4 2, 614. IG XII 4 2, 838. IG XII 4 2, 951. IG XII 4 2, 952 (first century AD).

local characteristics of the cult in Kos are not clearly discernible, as is the case with the cult of Apollo Karneios in other areas, but it is possible that a military element predominated.⁴²

Apollo Lykeios

Apollo Lykeios (Ἀπόλλων Λύκειος) appears on one inscription from Paros,⁴³ together with Apollo Symmachos (Ἀπόλλων Σύμμαχος) (=ally), describing two separate cults of the god. The first epithet is found in many regions of the Greek world,⁴⁴ while various interpretations have been proposed for its meaning, already since antiquity.⁴⁵ The most commonly accepted one associates the god with the wolf,⁴⁶ thus bearing a status as protector of herds.⁴⁷ The symbolism of the wolf has also been associated with adolescence, a period in which adolescent boys were on the fringes of society, before being introduced into adulthood.⁴⁸ Specifically in Athens, Apollo Lykeios oversaw this process of transition and integration of young people into the society of men.⁴⁹ The cult of Apollo Lykeios is also attested in the Parian colony of Thasos, where it seems to have been transferred from the metropolis, as is the case with the cults of Apollo Delios and Apollo Pythios. It appears on an inscription from ca. 100 BC found in the Prytaneion of the city.⁵⁰

⁴² Paul 2013, p. 264.

⁴³ IG XII 5, 134.

⁴⁴ RE II (1895) 58, s.v. Apollon (K. Wernicke). RE XIII,2 (1927) 2268, s.v. Lykeios (K. Bischoff). Farnell 1896–1909, IV, p. 118.

⁴⁵ For the epithet's association with light and the wolf, see Usener 1896, pp. 210–216. Farnell 1896–1909, IV, pp. 113–116 and 119–23, summarized in Jameson 1980, p. 229.

⁴⁶ Aeschylus *Seven against Thebes*, 146. Sophocles *Electra*, 645. Pausanias 10, 14, 7 mentions a bronze statue of a wolf, dedicated to Apollo, in the area of the great altar of Delphi.

⁴⁷ Farnell 1896–1909, IV, p. 123. Jameson 1980, p. 229.

⁴⁸ Vidal-Naquet 1986, pp. 53–56.

⁴⁹ Jameson 1980, pp. 231–232.

⁵⁰ IG XII Suppl. 389. Pouilloux and Dunant 1954, pp. 240 and 337.

The epithet *Symmachos* can be characterized as "propitiatory" and functional, referring to a desirable attribute that the worshipper sought or hoped that the god would obtain.⁵¹

Toponymic – Topographic Epithets

The group of toponymic epithets—in the context of this paper—includes cases exclusively from the island of Kos. An inscription of the third century BC⁵² mentions two separate cults of Apollo, as *Phyxios* and *Oromedon* (Ἀπόλλων Φύξιος, Ὀρομέδων). The inscription was found in the ancient deme of *Phyxa*, from which the first epithet derives.⁵³ The second one is etymologically related to the mountains (from the word ὄρος = mountain) and possibly indicates the place of worship of the god, thus functioning as a topographical epithet. It has even been suggested that it refers to a cult that existed on a mountain range on the island of Kos.⁵⁴ Those epithets and the corresponding qualities of the god, reveal the close connection of Apollo with the island of Kos in general and with the deme of *Phyxa* in particular.⁵⁵

Of particular interest are two epithets of Apollo, which do not derive from local toponyms of Kos. Apollo *Didymaios* (Ἀπόλλων Διδυμαῖος) is found on two dedicatory inscriptions of the first century BC.⁵⁶ The epithet derives from the sanctuary of Apollo in *Didyma* in *Asia Minor*. However, as can be inferred from the inscriptions, it is not a local cult of Kos, but a cult of *Miletus*, which was the homeland of the dedicants. Those were probably soldiers of the fleet of *Miletus*, who operated in Kos in the context of the *Mithridatic wars*.⁵⁷ The epithet *Kalymnios*

⁵¹ For this category of epithets see Graf 1996, p. 1834. Parker 2003, p. 180. Parker 2021, p. 39.

⁵² IG XII 4 1, 279.

⁵³ Paul 2013, p. 240. The deme of *Phyxa* is located a few kilometers southwest from the city of Kos.

⁵⁴ Herzog 1928, p. 17. Sherwin-White 1978, p. 302.

⁵⁵ Paul 2013, p. 241.

⁵⁶ IG XII 4, 566. IG XII 4, 567

⁵⁷ Paul 2013, p. 71.

(Ἀπόλλων Καλύμνιος) associates Apollo with the neighboring island of Kalymnos.⁵⁸ It is found on an inscription of the first century AD,⁵⁹ probably a dedication made by a citizen of Kalymnos.⁶⁰ Apollo Kalymnios could be Apollo Dalios of Kalymnos, who, due to his close relationship with the island, acquired this toponymic epithet when a citizen of Kalymnos addressed him outside its homeland.

Finally, the epithet *Kyparissios* (Ἀπόλλων Κυπαρίσσιος)—which is also epigraphically attested⁶¹—can be described as topographical, since it is connected to a specific cypress grove dedicated to the god,⁶² part of the Asklepieion of Kos. The presence of the god in the Asklepieion possibly indicates a healing property, which characterized Apollo long before the establishment of the cult of Asklepios.⁶³ This particular character of this epithet leads us to the next category.

Apollo as a healing and protective deity

The category includes four epithets. Two are attested in Kameiros, one in Kos and one in Paros. Most of them are common cult epithets, found in many areas of the Greek world, since this healing and protective aspect of Apollo was widespread and of great importance. An exception is the epithet *Pharmakios*, attested exclusively in Kameiros.

⁵⁸ Apollo Dalios was the most important deity of Kalymnos, where he is attested not only as Dalios (Tit. Cal. 30. 52. 105. 106. 108. 109. 130 B) but also as Kalymnios (Tit. Cal. 127B. 128B. 129B. 198), and within the context of the same sanctuary, see Craik 1980, p. 177. For the sanctuary of Apollo Dalios on Kalymnos see Bosnakis 2012, p. 157.

⁵⁹ IG XII 4 2, 537.

⁶⁰ Paul 2013, p. 72.

⁶¹ IG XII 4 1, 284 (ca. 300 BC). IG XII 4 1, 286 (middle of third century BC).

⁶² Parker 2003, 179 note 54.

⁶³ Burkert 1985, p. 147. Paul 2013, p. 183.

An inscribed altar from Kameiros bears a votive inscription to Apollo Apotropaïos (Ἀπόλλων Ἀποτρόπαιος) (= the averter) and Hekate Propylaea (Ἑκάτη Προπυλαία).⁶⁴ The very etymology of the epithet, combined with the epithet of Hekate, and the place where the altar was found—at the Propylaea of Kameiros—reveals its specific character. This is one of the most common and ancient attributes of Apollo, as a god who protects and prevents evil.⁶⁵ For this reason, he was often worshiped in places such as in front of the house entrance or city gates.⁶⁶

A temenos of Apollo Oulios (Ἀπόλλων Οὔλιος) is mentioned on an inscription of the late third century BC⁶⁷ from the deme of Isthmus, in the southwestern part of the island of Kos. According to Strabo,⁶⁸ the epithet derives from the word οὔλειν that is to “to be healthy”, from which derives also the word οὐλή (=scar). It is an epithet indicative of the healing properties of Apollo.⁶⁹

An inscription of the second century BC⁷⁰ mentions a priest of Apollo Pharmakios (Ἀπόλλων Φαρμάκιος) (=related to medicine), an epithet only known in Kameiros. It characterizes Apollo as a healing god.⁷¹

Finally, Apollo Prostaterios (Ἀπόλλων Προστατήριος) (= the protector), as his name suggests, protected gates and passages⁷² and by extension cities and their citizens.⁷³ Apollo

⁶⁴ Tit. Cam. 119. For the connection of Apollo with Hekate, see Zografou 2010, pp. 123–152.

⁶⁵ Morelli 1959, pp. 102–103. Cf. epithets of Apollo, underlining similar properties, e.g. Alexikakos, Prostaterios, see Themelis 1987, p. 107.

⁶⁶ Cf. epithets such as Agyieus, Thyraios, Pylaios, Propylaios, see Dietrich 1986, pp. 169–170.

⁶⁷ IG XII 4, 359.

⁶⁸ Strabo 14.1.6.

⁶⁹ For the cult of Apollo Oulios see Masson 1988. Capodicasa 1997. Nissen 2009, pp. 83–86. The cult is also attested in Delos, see Bruneau 1970, pp. 165–166.

⁷⁰ Tit. Cam. 90, I 30 (ca. 172–167 BC).

⁷¹ Morelli 1959, p. 110. Cf. the similar qualities of Apollo Apotropaïos, who was also worshiped in Kameiros, p. 7.

⁷² Hesychius, s.v. Προστατήριος.

⁷³ Themelis 1987, p. 107.

Prostaterios and Apollo Mousagetes (Ἀπόλλων Μουσαγέτης) (= he who leads the Muses) had separate cults with separate altars within the sanctuary of Archilochus in the city of Paros. They constituted members of a group of deities which were worshiped in the sanctuary, as it can be inferred from an inscription of the middle of the third century BC.⁷⁴ The cults were established after an oracle of Apollo himself.

Poetic – epic epithets of Apollo

On the occasion of the presence of Apollo Mousagetes on the aforementioned inscription, we move to the next category, the so-called poetic or epic epithets. Those epithets are frequently attested in literary sources usually having a “decorative” character without necessarily being connected to specific cults.⁷⁵ However, in our cases, two of the epithets are definitely associated with cults.

The epithet Mousagetes is attested in literary texts as early as the time of Pindar and remains popular until the Imperial period.⁷⁶ Its connection with Apollo is probably due to the relationship of the god with artistic life and with music.⁷⁷ This fact justifies the presence of Apollo with these qualities in the place of worship of the poet Archilochus.⁷⁸

The cult of Apollo Nymphegetes (Ἀπόλλων Νυμφηγέτης) (=leading the Nymphs) is known through an inscribed relief of the so-called “Passage of Theoroi” in the city of Thasos, dating back to 490–480 BC.⁷⁹ In the relief, Apollo is depicted holding the kithara (Kitharodos), with the

⁷⁴ SEG 15. 517. Kondoleon 1952, p. 53. Peek 1955. Kondoleon 1956. Nigdelis 1990, pp. 132–134. Berranger 2000, pp. 182–193.

⁷⁵ Parker 2003, p. 173.

⁷⁶ RE XVI, 1 (1933), 680 s.v. Musagetes (W. Kroll).

⁷⁷ Farnell 1896–1909, IV, p. 243.

⁷⁸ Kondoleon 1952, p. 50. Papadopoulou 2018, p. 164.

⁷⁹ IG XII 8, 358. For the reliefs and the Passage of the Theoroi in general see Pouilloux 1979. Grandjean 1988, pp. 307–308 and 483–485. Holtzmann 1994, pp. 29–59. Bélis 1995. Blondé – Muller – Mulliez 1996. Blondé – Muller –

Nymphs bringing him offerings and a woman crowning him. The inscription is a regulation defining the ritual of practice of the cult. The epithet is rare and outside Thasos it is found only in the attic deme of Erchia⁸⁰ and in Samos.⁸¹ The co-worship of the Nymphs and Apollo is not unknown,⁸² while the character of the cult of the Nymphs combined with that of Apollo is usually kourotrophic.⁸³

On two inscriptions of the sixth century BC, found in the so-called "Pythion"—outside of the fortification walls of the city of Paros⁸⁴—Apollo is characterized as Hekēbólos (Ἄπόλλων Ἐκηβόλος) (=the far-shooter). This typical epic epithet is widely attested in literary sources, without, however, having any particular religious significance.⁸⁵

Agricultural - pastoral epithets

Focusing on the religious landscape of Kameiros, it seems that Apollo bore a variety of epithets which can be described as agricultural and pastoral. This particularity of Kameiros in regard to Apollo perhaps reflects the special needs of its citizens, which were mostly occupied with this kind of activities.

Apollo Epiknisiōs (Ἄπόλλων Ἐπικνίσιος) is exclusively attested in Kameiros. The epithet is found on an inscribed altar.⁸⁶ One of the etymologies, perhaps explaining the meaning of the cult, is one proposed by Segre,⁸⁷ according to whom the epithet derives from the prefix ἐπι-

Mulliez 2000.

⁸⁰ SEG 21, 541 (375–350 BC).

⁸¹ IG XII 6, 527 (fifth century BC). IG XII 6, 528 (ca. 500–350 BC).

⁸² Larson 2001, p. 96.

⁸³ Parker 2005, pp. 426–432.

⁸⁴ IG XII 5, 147 and 158. Rubensohn 1902, p. 195. Jeffery 1990, p. 305, n. 29 and 30. Berranger 1992, pp. 263–264.

⁸⁵ For the epithet, especially in the epic context, see Pisano 2021, pp. 162–164.

⁸⁶ Tit. Cam. 120 (undated).

⁸⁷ Tit. Cam., p. 245, note.

and the word ἰκνίσιοις, which in turn derives from the term ἴκνυς, meaning dust, dirt. By extension, perhaps it is a cult centered around an ash altar.⁸⁸ Possibly, with these characteristics, it was a cult of rural/agricultural nature.⁸⁹ Alternatively, the epithet could derive from the word κνίσσα, i.e. the smell of the sacrificial victims, thus characterizing the god who oversees the sacrifices made in his honor.⁹⁰

Apollo Epimelidios (Ἀπόλλων Ἐπιμηλίδιος) (=he who watches over the sheep) is mentioned on an inscribed altar of the third century BC⁹¹ from the so-called "Agora of the Gods" in the city of Kameiros.⁹² The epithet is probably the same with the epithet Epimelios (Ἀπόλλων Ἐπιμήλιος), quoted by Macrobius.⁹³ As can be inferred from the etymology as well as from the commentary of Macrobius, Apollo was worshiped as a protector of flocks.⁹⁴

Apollo Mylantios (Ἀπόλλων Μυλάντιος) had an individual cult throughout the third century BC, as can be inferred from the epigraphic evidence.⁹⁵ His cult, however, was carried out together with other cults of Apollo by the same priest in the second century BC.⁹⁶ The epithet is associated with the unnamed Mylantian gods.⁹⁷ These deities are found exclusively in

⁸⁸ Cf. cult of Apollo Spodios in Thebes (Pausanias 9. 2. 7).

⁸⁹ Morelli 1959, p. 103.

⁹⁰ Craik 1980, p. 177.

⁹¹ Tit. Cam. 135.

⁹² For the "Agora of the Gods" and its various interpretations see Segre 1934, pp. 147–150. Caliò 2004, pp. 438–440. Caliò 2011, p. 346, note 6.

⁹³ Macrobius *Saturnalia* I 17, 45. RE VI 1 (1907), 173 s.v. Epimelios (O. Jessen).

⁹⁴ Morelli 1959, p. 104. For Apollo as a pastoral god, see Nilsson 1955, I, pp. 536–538.

⁹⁵ Tit. Cam. 15, B 10 (ca. 247 BC). Tit. Cam. 28, 9 (ca. 252 BC). Tit. Cam. 30, B 9 (ca. 249 BC). Tit. Cam. 38,42 (ca. 223 BC).

⁹⁶ Supra p. 5, note 31.

⁹⁷ For the cult of the Mylantian gods and of Apollo Mylantios see Hesychius, s.v. Μύλας and Μυλάντειοι θεοί. van Gelder 1900, pp. 303, 307–308. Morelli 1959, p. 107.

Kameiros and are related to the invention of mills for grinding grain.⁹⁸ This fact possibly underlines a specialized activity overseen by Apollo, connected with the protection of food production.

An inscribed altar of the Roman period⁹⁹ is dedicated to Apollo Petasites (Ἀπόλλων Πετασίτης). The epithet derives from πέτασος, which was mainly worn by farmers and shepherds in order to protect themselves from the sun. This association possibly indicates a cult of rural-pastoral character.¹⁰⁰ It is also possible that the epithet derives from some particular depiction of the god himself wearing the petasos.¹⁰¹

Special cases of cult epithets

Despite the various attempts at epithet categorization, a number of those are almost impossible to be categorized, or they can even bear characteristics that can fit into more than one category. The epithets of this type, in relation to the four case studies, are the following:

A literary fragment of Theophrastus¹⁰² informs us about the cult of Apollo Komaios (Ἀπόλλων Κωμαῖος) (=Apollo of the κῶμαι, i.e. small towns) in Thasos in the Classical period, in whose honor the Great Komaia were celebrated. As the epithet suggests, he was the god of the settlements on the island of Thasos, in each one of which he received sacrifices, while at the altars of the god oaths were given in connection with the purchase and sale of agricultural land. This feast was probably an expression of the unity of the territory of the city of Thasos¹⁰³ and a connecting element between the population of the city and the various settlements of

⁹⁸ Morelli 1959, pp. 107 and 146.

⁹⁹ Tit. Cam. 135.

¹⁰⁰ Morelli 1959, p. 108.

¹⁰¹ Parker 2021, p. 37 note 52.

¹⁰² Theophrastus, fragment 92.

¹⁰³ Grandjean and Salviat 2012, p. 68.

the island.¹⁰⁴ It is noteworthy that the cult of Apollo Komaios is also attested in the Thasian colony of Krenides (Philippi).¹⁰⁵

Two more epithets are attested in Kameiros. The cult of Apollo Aeigenetes (Ἀπόλλων Ἀειγενέτης) (=everlasting) is not attested epigraphically. Macrobius mentions sacrifices in honor of Apollo Aeigenetes, associating the cult with Helios.¹⁰⁶ It is possible that the epithet incorrectly refers to the epigraphically attested epithet Digenes (Ἀπόλλων Διγενής).¹⁰⁷ In turn, this epithet has the meaning of Diogenes, meaning the child of Zeus.¹⁰⁸

The last epithet is attested on a sacrificial calendar of the third century BC.¹⁰⁹ Here Apollo bears the epithet Pedageitnyos (Ἀπόλλων Πεδαγείτνυος), in honor of whom a sacrifice was performed during the month of the same name. A corresponding cult and month can be found in Attica, known however as Metageitnios/Metageitnion respectively.¹¹⁰ Plutarch associates the festival in Attica with population movements,¹¹¹ while according to Robert the movement indicated by the epithet is possibly related to the migration of Apollo to the land of the Hyperboreans.¹¹² Nevertheless, its exact function remains unclear.

¹⁰⁴ Papadopoulou 2018, p. 168.

¹⁰⁵ For the cult in Krenides/Philippi see Koukoulē-Chrysanthakē 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Macrobius *Saturnalia* I 17,35. Cf. Dio Chrysostom *Orationes* 31.11 who mentions that the Rhodians equated Apollo, Helios and Dionysus.

¹⁰⁷ Morelli 1959, p. 102. Tit. Cam. 47, 19 (ca. 192–186 BC). Tit. Cam. 7, 1 (ca. 172–167 BC). The inscriptions indicate that in the second century BC the cult of Apollo Digenes together with other cults of Apollo, was practiced by a single priest. Supra p. 5, note 31.

¹⁰⁸ Hiller von Gaertringen 1934, p. 199.

¹⁰⁹ Tit. Cam. 155, 3.

¹¹⁰ Parker 2005, p. 475.

¹¹¹ Plutarch *De Exilio*, 601 D.

¹¹² Robert 1886, p. 167, note 1.

Conclusions

With this short, but diachronic overview of the Apollonian sacred landscape of the Aegean, focusing on four case studies, we are led to the following:

Firstly, it is evident that certain epithets and, by extension, cults dominate over others, both geographically and temporally. This is especially the case for the cults of Apollo Pythios and Apollo Delios. Both cults are attested in all the aforementioned cities and have almost a timeless presence. This fact makes them "superregional" in a way, as they are connected to two panhellenic sanctuaries,¹¹³ and they do not seem to be exclusive to a specific ethnos, tribe or city nor underlying a strictly defined aspect of the deity. In particular in relation to the cult of Apollo Delios, it seems that it was not a strictly Ionian cult as it was thought already since antiquity,¹¹⁴ since its presence in Dorian cities was especially strong. Possibly these two cults reflect an earlier, broader and more general character of Apollo, without the division of his attributes and qualities, which is a later development.¹¹⁵ With equally important temporal presence, but exclusively connected to the Dorian tribe was the cult of Apollo Karneios.

In contrast to the so-called "superregional" epithets, a category with somewhat clearer boundaries is the group of toponymic and topographic epithets. These are associated with a specific location, without this always revealing something in relation to the character or of the cult, e.g. epithets such as Phyxios, Oromedon, Didymaios, Kalymnios. They are usually limited exclusively to the areas they derive from but can also be attested on dedications from residents of these areas outside their home city.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Burkert 1985, p. 143. Parker 2003, p. 178. Versnel 2011, p. 78.

¹¹⁴ *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 146–153. Thucydides 3, 104, 3–6.

¹¹⁵ Hellenistic Kameiros constitutes a typical example, with a multitude of epithets for Apollo, the corresponding qualities of which overlap in some cases.

¹¹⁶ Supra p. 8 for the cases of Apollo Kalymnios and Apollo Didymaios in Kos. cf. Parker 2021, pp. 42–43.

However, there are cases where a toponymic or topographic epithet, can reveal more than just a link with a particular sanctuary or city. For example, Apollo Kyparissios is connected with a particular sacred grove, but it is the location of this grove within the context of the Asklepieion, which reveals the healing property of the god and not the etymology of the epithet. Thus Kyparissios, can be included in the category of epithets which underline the healing and protective aspect of Apollo, such as Apotropaios, Pharmakios, Oulios, Prostaterios. The multitude of this kind of epithets shows that this primordial attribute of the god seems not to have been degraded even after the arrival and dominance of Asklepios in this particular context.

Another category of epithets of Apollo that can be defined with some precision are those which suggest a pastoral/agricultural character—particularly evident in Kameiros—such as Epimelidios/Epimelios, Mylantios, Petasites and perhaps Epiknisios.

In addition, there are also some so-called poetic epithets, which often appear in literary texts, such as Hekebolos and Mousagetes in Paros and Nymphegetes in Thasos. The last two in fact underline Apollo's relationship with the arts and especially with music.

Finally, some of the epithets cannot be strictly categorized. The epithet Symmachos in Paros, for example, can be considered as a functional epithet, underlining a very general ability of the god that the worshiper hopes to ensure,¹¹⁷ while the true meaning of the epithet Pedageitnyos of Kameiros is still obscure.

Through this simple categorization, it becomes evident that the strict division of epithets into different groups is not always easy, since some of those overlap either because of their very form or because of the need that they served. This process, however, constitutes a first step in the effort of understanding the complex structure that is Greek polytheism.

¹¹⁷ Parker 2003, p. 180.

So, what was the need that Apollo Delios served? All the aforementioned epithets show the level of specialization that a deity could acquire by bearing a particular epithet. The epithet Delios, with its enduring and extensive presence, seems to have expressed the desire of the inhabitants of the Aegean to maintain a close relationship with the sacred island, the birthplace of Apollo, while at the same time being integral members of the religious network centered on Delos.¹¹⁸ The fact that it does not seem to be exclusively associated with a certain ethnos or city, the absence of any distinct specialization—in contrast to the numerous epithets that the god carries—but also its toponymic connection with the sanctuary of Delos, possibly indicate that it was underlining a primary essence of the god, containing a multitude of properties and being common to all Greeks and especially to the islanders.

¹¹⁸ For the religious network centered around Delos, see Constantakopoulou 2007, pp. 38–58 and Constantakopoulou 2017, especially for the third century BC.

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