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Personal protection and tailor-made deities: the use of individual epithets

Abstract: The use of epithets was a fundamental component of Greek polytheism. The present study brings attention to a small subgroup of such divine bynames, referred to as *individual epithets* because they stem from the names of mortal individuals. The function of these epithets is to designate a deity specifically concerned with the individual in question, thereby providing a close relationship and personal benefits for the eponymous worshipper and his or her close kin. The article exemplifies the phenomenon through the investigation of a goddess Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* identified in Hellenistic Delos. Through the epithet *Dikaia*, two Athenian brothers, Dikaios and Asklepiades, sons of Dikaios, intimately tie the deity to themselves and their family. It is moreover proposed that a positioning of the epithet in its historical and physical context furthers our understanding of its origins and significance.

Résumé : L'usage des épithètes était une composante fondamentale du polythéisme grec. Cet article se penche sur un petit groupe de surnoms de ce genre, que l'on appelle des *épithètes individuelles*, dans la mesure où elles dérivent du nom d'individus mortels. Ces épithètes ont pour fonction de montrer qu'une divinité est particulièrement concernée par l'individu en question, fournissant dès lors une relation étroite et des bienfaits personnels pour le fidèle éponyme et sa famille proche. L'étude illustre le phénomène en investigant la déesse Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* que l'on rencontre dans la Délos hellénistique. Par l'épithète *Dikaia*, deux frères athéniens, Dikaios et Asklépiadès, fils de Dikaios, associent intimement la divinité à eux-mêmes et à leur famille. Il est en outre proposé qu'un remplacement de l'épithète dans son contexte historique et physique approfondit notre compréhension de ses origines et de sa signification.

The use of epithets in Greek cult

The gods and goddesses of the Greeks could be called by an infinite amount of epithets that presented their various functions and honours. The epithet of the deity attached a certain function to a certain god, and thereby its use in ritual established a link between the worshipper and the god relating to the named function. Therefore, in attempts at communication with the divine, epithets were used as precision tools: a suitable epithet would ensure that a prayer or promise reached just the right aspect of the intended recipient.¹

* I wish to thank the *Kernos* referees for their valuable comments that helped improve my text. I am also very grateful to Prof. E. Rystedt, Dr. H. Gerding and Dr. M. Mili for helpful discussions on an earlier version of the paper.

There is agreement among scholars that the use of epithets is a vital component of Greek polytheism and that, in spite of this, it is a surprisingly little studied phenomenon. Thus, many fundamental questions are still contested issues. There is for example no agreement among scholars as to which component of an epithet-clad god took precedence during interaction with the gods through prayer and sacrifice. When invoked through a double name, was it the choice of god, say Hermes, or the epithet, say, *Agoraios*, which mattered the most? Opinions cover the whole spectrum: Brulé argues that in theory, a god without an epithet is but “un artefact du langage” and not a true recipient of cult, whereas Pirenne-Delforge, without denying the importance of epithets, stresses the priority of the divine names, i.e., over-arching divine identities.² The related question of whether a god, through the use of a byname, in fact becomes a “new” and separate divinity, or whether on the contrary a collection of all epithets given to a certain god rather creates his or her unified identity, is likewise a vexed one.³ Discussions end unsolved, but often with the consolation that the ancient Greeks themselves apparently did not have a problem with a myriad of apollo co-existing with the great god Apollo.⁴

As Parker points out, as a further step towards an understanding of the role of epithets in Greek cult practice, it is clear that we must try to go beyond the temptation of mere collection and classification of epithets. Epithets, like the divinities themselves and their functions, have an historical and physical context, they do not “float in the air” and their place in time and space might in many cases be the key to our understanding of what are otherwise just empty titles.⁵ The present study tries to take these factors into consideration and presents a certain epithet, *Dikaia*, in context. The paper argues that the epithet belongs to a small group of divine bynames stemming from the names of mortal individuals and I therefore refer to them as individual epithets. The function of these epithets is to designate a deity specifically concerned with the individual in question, thereby providing a close relationship and personal protection for the worshipper and his or her close kin. Through the epithet *Dikaia*, two Athenian brothers, Dikaïos and Asklepiades, sons of Dikaïos,

¹ See for example R. PARKER, “The problem of the Greek cult epithet”, *OAth* 28, (2003), p. 173-183; P. BRULÉ, “Le langage des épicleses dans le polythéisme hellénique”, *Kernos* 11, (1998), p. 13-34; W. BURKERT, *Greek Religion*, Oxford 1985, p. 184.

² BRULÉ, *l.c.* (n. 1), p. 18-19; V. PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *L’Aphrodite grecque*, Liège, 1994; V. PIRENNE-DELFORGE, “La notion de « panthéon » chez Pausanias”, in V. PIRENNE-DELFORGE (ed.) *Les panthéons des cités. Des origines à la Périégèse de Pausanias*, Liège, 1998 (*Kernos*, suppl. 8), p. 129-148 (the latter study takes Pausanias’ treatment of deities/epithets as point of reference).

³ See for example PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 1), p. 175, with references to a classic study of Vernant (J.-P. VERNANT, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*, Paris, 1971, p. 87, n. 23) discussing the fact that Xenophon could have the favour of Zeus *Basileus* while simultaneously have fallen out of favour with Zeus *Meilichios*.

⁴ See for example PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 1), p. 181-182.

⁵ PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 1), p. 174, 176, 182.

restoration must depend on *IDélos* 2158. If the restoration is correct, it can be noted that Dikaios' offering also is of a private character. He did not present it in the capacity of priest, but after his term in office.⁹

Individual epithets

In a testamentary dedication from early Hellenistic Kos, a certain Diomedon creates a cult for the benefit of his family.¹⁰ Diomedon addresses his attention to a Herakles who holds the epithet *Diomedonteios*, thus, a Herakles invoked through a byname stemming from the given name of the dedicator Diomedon himself. Sherwin-White believes that the epithet becomes the means of "a merging, if not identifying" of Diomedon's personality with that of Herakles.¹¹ The designation *Diomedonteios* is however simultaneously an example of another phenomenon: a sub-group of bynames that I propose to call 'individual epithets'. Divine epithets in this complex can be adjectives or expressed through a genitive: what unites them is that they are derived from the names of mortals. They are thus individual in the sense of being created from the personal name of an individual as well as in the sense of themselves designating an individual god, known only from one very specific context and connected to specific individuals for personal benefits. Rather than expressing a merging of Herakles and Diomedon, I believe that the epithet *Diomedonteios* proudly calls attention to a personal relationship between the god and his worshipper, and indicates that Diomedon enjoys Herakles' special favour and protection. *Diomedonteios* designates a narrow and sharply defined aspect of Herakles, concerned exclusively with Diomedon and his offspring.¹² Another example of

2040. For the relations of Mithradates, Delos and Athens, see for example F. DÜRRBACH, *Choix d'inscriptions de Délos* vol. I, Paris, 1921, p. 188-189.

⁹ This would give a *terminus post quem* for the dedication, 94/93 or 92/91 BC. For a discussion on the temporal meaning of *genomenos*, with further references, see C. HASENOHR, "Les collègues de magistris et la communauté italienne de Délos" in *Les italiens dans le monde grec II^e siècle av. J.-C. - I^{er} siècle ap. J.-C.*, Paris, 2002 (BCH, Suppl. 41), p. 72, n. 29. Cf. G. SCHÖRNER, *Votive im römischen Griechenland. Untersuchungen zur späthellenistischen und kaiserzeitlichen Kunst- und Religionsgeschichte*, Stuttgart, 2003 (*Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium*, 7), p. 144, who believes that this wording implies that a dedication was put up as an official token on his duties. This is not the generally accepted interpretation, and it is not clear what evidence corroborates this standpoint.

¹⁰ *LSCG* 177=ICos ED 149. The stele presents three documents, carved by three different hands at various points in time. The first and earliest part of the inscription, A 1-B 55, includes the dedication to Herakles *Diomedonteios*. It has been dated (on account of the letterforms) to a period c. 325-300 BC. Herzog dated the remaining sections to c. 300 BC (1, B 56-68) and c. 280, or the early third century (2, B 69-D), respectively (R. HERZOG, *Heilige Gesetze von Kos*, Berlin, 1928, p. 29).

¹¹ S. SHERWIN-WHITE, *Ancient Cos. An historical study from the Dorian settlement to the Imperial period*, Göttingen 1978 (*Hypomnemata. Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben*, 51), p. 364.

¹² SHERWIN-WHITE, *o.c.* (n. 11), p. 364. Only the offspring of Diogenes could hold the priesthood of Herakles *Diomedonteios* (ICos ED 149 A, 9ff; D 136ff. See also SHERWIN-WHITE, *o.c.* (n. 11), p. 365, w. n. 631).

an individual epithet is to be found in the literary sources. Plutarch mentions in the *Moralia* that an Aphrodite *Dexikreontos* was invoked in Samos. The passage also suggests possible circumstances for the creation of such epithets: the name was given to the goddess as a token of gratitude after a proof of the goddess' goodwill. Following the advice of Aphrodite, the merchant Dexikreon set out on a commercially successful voyage and in the aftermath he thankfully dedicated a statue of this goddess.¹³

As far as we can tell today, as in the case of Herakles *Diomedonteios*, Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* was another deity that existed only in the context of a certain family, that of Dikaïos through his sons Dikaïos and Asklepiades. Surely the coherence of divine and mortal names is not a coincidence. Pierre Roussel comments briefly on the matter: "De plus il n'est point surprenant que des membres d'une famille où était porté le nom Δίκαιοϛ aient vénéré Isis *Dikaia*".¹⁴ I believe that we can qualify this statement and develop it further. I suggest that the Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* of the two Delian inscriptions is a personal protectress of the same exclusive kind as Herakles *Diomedonteios* and Aphrodite *Dexikreontos*, created through an individual epithet as an expression of (and a claim to) a special link between god and mortal.¹⁵ As far as we can tell from the present state of the evidence, this goddess was not honoured elsewhere. Whereas the fusion or assimilation of Isis and Aphrodite can possibly be found in one other inscription from Delos (the restoration is considered doubtful), and has been identified in other parts of the Greek world,¹⁶ the particular

¹³ Plutarch, *Quaestiones Graecae*, 54 (*Mor.*, 303c-d). I owe this important reference to the *Kernos* referees. Plutarch actually gives suggestions for the creation of the epithet, both are however connected to the power of Aphrodite: through her goodwill Dexikreon succeeded in a professional mission.

¹⁴ ROUSSEL, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 171, no. 162.

¹⁵ Perhaps Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* was the recipient of recurring worship, just as in the case of Herakles *Diomedonteios*, or perhaps only honoured by the preserved dedications, erected in the context of a specific family matter. This must remain unclear due to the present state of the evidence. For private cult foundations, see for example A. PURVIS, *Singular dedications. Founders and innovators of private cults in Classical Greece*, New York, 2003.

¹⁶ *IDélos* 2080. The editor considers the restoration of the name of Aphrodite as doubtful. Isis Aphrodite is also known from Amathous in Cyprus (*SEG* 38, 1501), Perinthos and perhaps from Egypt (Abu el-Matamir, A. BERNAND, *Le Delta Égyptien d'après les textes grecs* I, 4, Cairo, 1970, p. 925-926). A Delian Isis *Soteria* Astarte Aphrodite *Euploia Epekeos* is also attested, *IDélos* 2132: however, in this case it is unclear whether we are dealing with one or several goddesses. The geographical spread of Isis Aphrodite perhaps suggests that the combination was an established deity or an aspect of either Isis or Aphrodite (or both, depending on the circumstances). If the cross-cultural goddess Isis *Soteira* Astarte Aphrodite *Euploia Epekeos* is taken as a single deity, she surely had a strong aspect of a protectress of voyages, as specified by Isis *Soteira* and Aphrodite *Euploia*. Are these perhaps the connotations we should perceive by the other dedications to Isis Aphrodite (see below)? A temple of Aphrodite and Isis that seems to have existed in Dendyra should also be mentioned: A. BERNAND, *Les Portes du désert. Recueil des inscriptions grecs d'Antinoopolis, Tentyris, Koptos, Apollonopolis Parva et Apollonopolis Magna*, Paris, 1984, no. 27. A Delian

combination Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* is not otherwise attested. Nor does the epithet *Dikaia* occur in combination with either Isis or Aphrodite separately, and rarely, if at all, with other divinities.

The extant *Dikaia* examples furthermore date to a much later period. In an inscription dated to the second or third century AD, there is mention of the goddess *Dikaia* Nemesis.¹⁷ The epithet might also be identifiable in the goddess Artemis *Digaia Blaganitis*. Hatzopoulos argues that this epithet, spelt in various ways (*Deigea*, *Deigaia*, *Digaia*) is *Dikaia* in the Macedonian dialect. The published inscriptions mentioning the deity can be dated to AD 189.¹⁸ In two further dedications from the late Imperial period, an unknown goddess (or goddesses?) called *Hosia* and *Dikaia*, and Meter *Makaria Hosia Dikaia* are attested, but they all seem clearly unrelated to the Delian *Dikaia* inscriptions.¹⁹

More relevant for the understanding of Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* is the presence of an Isis called *Dikaioayne* in the epigraphic sources of Delos.²⁰ *IDélos* 2079 has an unknown find context, but *IDélos* 2103 was found in Sarapieion C and has been dated c. 114/113 BC. It thus originates from the same sanctuary and roughly the same chronological context as the *Dikaia* inscriptions.²¹ The contemporary existence of Isis *Dikaioayne* surely had bearings on the nature of Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* (see below).

Dikaia is the exact grammatical equivalent neither of *Diomedonteios*, (i.e. *Dikaieia*), nor of *Dexikreontos* (i.e. *Dikaion*). It however clearly belongs to the same group of bynames: a complex created by epithets expressing close connections between dedicator and recipient deity which are articulated through a play on the worshipper's given name. Although not strictly translatable as "of *Dikaios*" or "*Dikaian*", in the case of *IDélos* 2158, an intimate link between dedicator and recipient deity cannot be denied. *Dikaia*, the female

dedication to Isis Mother of the Gods Astarte, *IDélos* 2101, should also be mentioned in these circumstances.

¹⁷ *IG* X.2 1, 62.

¹⁸ M. HATZOPOULOS, "Artémis Digaia Blaganitis en Macédoine", *BCH* 111 (1987), p. 402-412; *SEG* 27, 277.

¹⁹ *TAM* V, 247; *MAMA* X, 158. See also *IG* IV, 563, *IEphesos* 203, w. add. p. 6, for male gods called *Dikaios*. It is of course notoriously hard to distinguish between formal epithets and 'normal' adjectives in many cases, and maybe to distinguish them would be to create an artificial taxonomy. For an epithet in adjectival form that may have originated as an independent deity, see the case of Artemis or Hekate *Enodia* (R. PARKER 2005, "Artémis Ilithye et autres : le problème du nom divin utilisé comme épiclese", in N. BELAYCHE *et al.* (eds.), *Nommer les dieux*, Rennes, 2005, p. 223. n. 32, with references to P. CHRYSOSTOMOU, *H θεσσαλική θεά Εν(ν)οδία ή φεραία θεά*, Athens, 1998, p. 187-288.

²⁰ *IG* II², 4702; *IDélos* 2079, 2103.

²¹ For other possible connections Isis-*Dikaioayne*, see P. ROUSSEL, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 147; DUNAND, *o.c.* (n. 7), 112, Y. GRANDJEAN, *Une nouvelle aréologie d'Isis à Maronée*, Leiden, 1975, p. 79-80 w. nn. 184/186. Isis is furthermore paired with several other goddesses in inscriptions found in the Sarapieion C. See for example *IDélos* 2059 (Nike Isis) and *IDélos* 2060 (Isis Hygieia).

variant of the name Dikaios, surely had an individual relationship to Dikaios and Asklepiades Dikaiou. It can even be argued that the possibility of a double entendre of the adjective *Dikaia* is preferable to the plain *Dikaieia* or *Dikaiou*. Not only is the goddess favouring Dikaios, but Justly so.²²

The possibility that Dikaios himself (and his father Dikaios) was named after the goddess, and not the other way around, must of course be considered. The rarity of the epithet in comparison with the frequency of the name however makes this unlikely.²³

The context of the inscriptions

Brulé pointedly puts his finger to the sad fact that the importance of positioning epithets and their origins in time and space goes hand in hand with a the frequent impossibility to do just that, due to the fragmentary state of the sources.²⁴ In the case of our dedications to Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia*, we are however fortunate enough to have the Delian find context of the votives as well as dates relating to the careers of the dedicators Dikaios and Asklepiades. If one accepts that the brothers, or perhaps their father, were the first to honour the goddess Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia*, one is presented with a relatively clear historical and geographical context for the first appearance of the goddess: Delos, in the last half of the second century BC, or in the beginnings of the first. I believe that the larger historical context corroborates these cultic origins.²⁵

²² The name *Dikaia* almost designates the goddess as a family member, the sister of Dikaios and his brother.

²³ I thank Dr. N. Papazarkadas for bringing the matter to my attention. 11 men named Dikaios are found in *LGPNI*, 25 in vol. II, 15 in vol. IIIa and no less than 46 in vol. IIIb, and 13 in vol. IV. The female name *Dikaia* can be found in vol. I (*Dikaie*, once), in vol. II (once), vol. IIIa (eight times), and vol. IIIb (12 times). We can compare the case of Dikaios and *Dikaia* with a dedication made by an Isidotos to Isis, *SEG* 30, 1777 (dated to the end of the 3rd-beg. 2nd century BC), or by a Dionysodoros to Dionysos, *SEG* 37, 1020. The curious pairing of the Egyptian triad Sarapios, Isis and Anoubis with Aphrodite in *IDélos* 2098 could perhaps also be explained by the fact that the dedicator's wife is named Aphrodisia? Cf. A. HAUVEITE-BESNAULT, "Fouilles de Délos. Temple des Dieux Étrangers (1)", *BCH* 6 (1882), p. 473. – Neither is the explanation that the dedications are due to Dikaios' family's particular devotion to the goddess Dike a likely one (M.-F. BASLEZ, *Recherches sur les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des religions orientales à Délos (II-ler s. avant notre ère)*, Paris, 1977 (Collection de l'École normale supérieure de jeunes filles, 9), p. 60). The dedications are simply not presented to this goddess. On theophoric names, see R. PARKER, "Theophoric names and the history of Greek religion", in S. HORNBLLOWER & E. MATTHEWS (eds.) *Greek personal names: Their value as evidence*, Oxford 2000, p. 53-79.

²⁴ BRULÉ, *l.c.* (n.1), p. 27.

²⁵ A possible previous existence of the goddess does not invalidate the contextual interpretation possible through the extant dedications. The date and setting of our dedications allow us to find at least one layer of the cult of the goddess, valid for the period of worship we can detect in the dedications.

The appearance of Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* specifically in the island of Delos during the time of Athenian dominance is not surprising. Most obviously, the pairing (or identification) of the Egyptian Isis and the Greek Aphrodite mirrors the international melting pot atmosphere of the island. But the deity also testifies to the religious “freedom” of Athenians outside their home city. Many cults were too closely attached to their local context to be exported by an Athenian sent to Delos. These circumstances brought the result that travellers and émigrés could make, and to a certain extent had to make, personal choices regarding which deities to approach in a given situation.²⁶ The Delian milieu and Dikaioi’ and Asklepiades’ outsider position, if not absolute prerequisites for the invention of a personal deity,²⁷ surely offered more fruitful ground for such actions than the comparatively conservative religious climate of Athens.

But why go to such lengths as to present a deity with a new name? Why not settle for the already forceful combination of Isis and Aphrodite, or perhaps use one of the countless epithet combinations already in circulation? I believe an important part of the answer is to be found in the Hellenistic religious setting.

Hellenistic religious preoccupations

The propaganda of Alexander and the successor kings frequently made use of divine ancestry and protection. Possibly this, or a slightly earlier context, is where we should start searching for the first appearances of individual epithets of gods in the Greek world. An inscription found in Eresos, Lesbos, makes mention of altars of Zeus *Philippios*.²⁸ Several interpretations of this epithet have been put forth. Habicht understands this god as presenting Philip as a manifestation of Zeus.²⁹ This is questionable, mainly because it goes beyond what the words actually state. As Badian points out, *Zeus Philippios* is literally Zeus of Philip, not Philip who is Zeus.³⁰ But other factors also work against it. The chronology of the cult makes it problematic to understand Philip as a *hypostase* of Zeus. Badian suggests that the cult of Zeus *Philippios* was instituted after the “liberation” of Eresos and Heisserer has likewise proposed the date

²⁶ J. MIKALSON, “Greek Religion. Continuity and change in the Hellenistic period” in *The Cambridge companion to the Hellenistic world*, G. BOUGH (ed.), Cambridge 2006, p. 209, 211, 217; J. MIKALSON, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London 1998, p. 208.

²⁷ Compare an example given by PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 1), p. 175, a “nounce coinage” of the deity Zeus *Epitéleios Philios*.

²⁸ IG XII 2, 526. The inscription has been dated to the Hellenistic period, but refers to pre-existing altars, see below n. 31.

²⁹ Ch. HABICHT, *Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte*, München, 1970 (*Zetemata*, 14), p. 14-15.

³⁰ E. BADIAN, “The deification of Alexander the Great” in H.J. DELL (ed.), *Ancient Macedonian studies in honor of Charles F. Edson* (Institute for Balkan studies, 158), Thessaloniki, 1981, p. 27-71, p. 41.

336 BC for the erection of the altars.³¹ This would mean that the altars were installed during the lifetime of Philip, something that in turn makes it very unlikely that they would come from a context of a veritable cult of the king. In spite of possible personal divine aspirations, the reception of exceptional – perhaps even divine – honours along with the semi-divine status of the Macedonian king, as far as we know Philip was not the recipient of proper cult even at the height of his power.

Sokolowski suggestion that Zeus *Philippios* corresponds to deities like Zeus *Heraios*, Zeus *Damatrios* and Zeus *Aphrodisios*, and that the epithet indicates a shared cult is another claim that cannot be sustained. In this reasoning, Sokolowski puts inscriptions combining the name of a god and the name of a mortal on a par with those combining the name of a god with that of another deity, and proposes that such epithets indicate “a partnership in a common cult or temple”.³² This understanding of the epithet *Philippios* (just as Habicht’s interpretation) fails to take account of the fact that it is just that, an epithet. Although interpretations vary in detail, with the exception of Sokolowski, scholars agree that the god present in such an epithet does not equal the actual recipient of cult. For example, Sissa and Detienne believe that epithets founded on the name of another god or goddess, such as *Aphrodisios*, or *Areios*, are due to the practice of sacrifice to one god on the altar of another.³³ A related interpretation of these cult titles involves connections between gods in a festival context: in Athens, for example, Zeus *Olympios* was possibly addressed as Zeus *Heraios* on the day of the yearly celebration of the *Hieros Gamos*.³⁴ These interpretations cannot be sustained as regards Zeus *Philippios*. Surely, at this point in history, Zeus was not an occasional visitor at the altar or a festival of Philip.³⁵

³¹ A.J. HEISSERER, *Alexander and the Greeks. The epigraphic evidence*, Norman, 1980, p. 68; E. BADIAN, “Alexander the Great between two thrones and heaven: Variations on an old theme” in A. SMALL (ed.), *Subject and ruler: The cult of the ruling power in classical antiquity* (JRA suppl., 17), Ann Arbor, 1996, p. 11.

³² F. SOKOLOWSKI, “Divine honors for Antiochos and Laodike at Teos and Iasos”, *GRBS* 13 (1972), p. 174, n. 11.

³³ “Sacrifice to one god on the altar of another could indicate their respective places in a hierarchy, possibly a hierarchy observed in one particular place, or on one particular day. [...] Zeus was very used to sacrifices made to him on the altars of others, so much so that on such occasions he would be called the Zeus of Hera (Zeus *Heraios*) or the Zeus of Demeter (Zeus *Damatrios*)” (G. SISSA & M. DETIENNE, *Daily life of the Greek gods*, Stanford, 2000, p. 162).

³⁴ PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 1), 180; PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 19), 221.

³⁵ We can furthermore see that with the possible and much later exception of Zeus *Areios* (attested in the Imperial period), the gods with “divine epithets” always combine one male and one female god. When two gods are combined, it seems that the pairing consists not of a god with an epithet, but of two juxtaposed names of deities, e.g., Zeus Ares, Aphrodite Hera (PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 19), p. 219-220, 225). Such a team of gods does not necessarily identify or assimilate the two deities. As Parker points out, these expressions do not deny the distinction between them, but acknowledge the difference (PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 19), p. 225). – Another approach

Rather, what the literal reading “Zeus of Philip”, or “Philippian Zeus”, fundamentally shows, is that for some reason the successful Macedonian king had a claim to a special relationship to this particular deity. Nilsson and Badian understand this relationship as that of a bodyguard, as it were. The altars belong to a cult of the King of the Gods as the Macedonian king’s personal protector.³⁶ Later evidence identifies a similar deity, Zeus *Selenkeios*. Two dedications dated to the Imperial period mention this god. Nock, however, is of the opinion that this god originated as a protector of the Seleucids.³⁷ Of the circumstances of the first uses of these two epithets, we unfortunately know nothing. Perhaps we should imagine a context of gratitude for a specific favour the god showed these rulers, as in the case of Aphrodite *Dexikereontos*? Or were they coined as a result of the continuous benevolence shown by Zeus that kept the kings on their thrones? In whichever case, I believe that it is the idea of special favours and protection, inherent in both scenarios, that lies behind the further development of divinities tailor-made through the use of individual epithets, those of kings as well as those of more ordinary people like *Dikaios*. The early epithets *Philippios* and *Selenkeios* may to some extent be the result of blurred lines between the divine and the mortal spheres, in a world where it became increasingly accepted to celebrate certain humans with divine honours. But the idea that is picked up and disseminated outside court circles, and finally visible in the appearance of a goddess like Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia*, is the possibility of a claim for personal protection and relations with the gods, the quest for which permeates religious dealings between deities and men during the Hellenistic period.³⁸

connects “divine” epithets with specific functions. As regards Zeus *Aphrodisios*, see also PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *o.c.* (n. 2). She argues that the epithet indicates not altar-sharing but the sharing of similar functions. In this case, Zeus thus takes on the civic competence of Aphrodite, her capacities as a goddess of concord and harmony (PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 406). Along the same lines, Parker argues that god-epithets such as Athena *Hephaistia*, or Aphrodite *Peitho* (that is, not a derivation of the name of a god or abstraction, but the lesser god or abstraction itself) designate “that part of Athena which resembles Hephaistos” and “the element of Peitho within Aphrodite”, respectively (PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 1), p. 178, see also PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 19), p. 221, 225). These approaches are again not relevant when the epithet is “mortal” and not derived from the name of a deity. – For a discussion specifically of Zeus *Aphrodisios*, and an interpretation of the epithet *Aphrodisios* as designating “either the consort or male manifestation of the goddess, see S.L. BUDIN, “A reconsideration of the Aphrodite-Ashtart syncretism”, *Numen* 51 (2004), p. 138.

³⁶ BADIAN 1981, *l.c.* (n. 30), p. 41; BADIAN 1996, *l.c.* (n. 31), p. 13; M.P. NILSSON, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, vol. 2, München, 1950 (*Handbuch der Altertumswiss.*, 5:2:2), p. 134.

³⁷ A.D. NOCK, “Notes on ruler-cult, I-IV”, *JHS* 48 (1928), p. 41-42; L. ROBERT, *Hellenica* VI, Paris, 1948, 24-26; Cf. P. FRASER, “Zeus *Selenkeios*”, *CR* 63 (1949), p. 92-94; J. & L. ROBERT, “Bulletin Épigraphique”, *REG* 64 (1951), 133-134, no. 46.

³⁸ V. DU SABLON, “Religiosité hellénistique et accès au cosmos divin”, *LEC* 74 (2006), p. 4 *et passim*; Z. STEWART, “La religione” in R. BIANCHI BANDINELLI (ed.), *Storia e civiltà dei Greci* 8, Milano, 1977, p. 532, 546, 557 *et passim*. Stewart stresses heavily that the search for salvation and protection largely concerns this life, not the afterlife.

A search for protection

Today scholars tend to stress the continuity of Hellenistic religious customs with those of earlier centuries.³⁹ Surely, what is visible as “change” in our sources is often the end result of gradual processes rather than sudden and sharp shifts in customs. However, their seeds certainly sown in preceding centuries, some changes are detectable and some concerns seem more pronounced. Increasing movement of people presented the polis with a more international outlook, and in a world where it was no longer self-evident that a citizen should be born, live and die in the same city, Hellenistic society stimulated religious interchange. In consequence, the Greeks both adopted foreign gods and created new ones through various forms of assimilation and/or syncretism.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Hellenistic world was a place dominated by new uncertainties. Entire cities could one day find themselves at the mercy of a single powerful individual, only to see these mighty rapidly fall from the height of power the next. The increasing popularity of the goddess Tyche is one well-known result of this fear of a fickle fate, and another is the above-mentioned general preoccupation with security.⁴¹ Protection became a religious priority for states as well as individuals.

This concern for safety constitutes a nexus linking two other phenomena often considered symptomatic of the Hellenistic period: individual religious choices and the wish for a more intimate relationship with the gods.⁴² The flourishing of private cult associations is often presented as a typical consequence of this religious climate,⁴³ because their popularity exemplifies that men and women to a larger extent chose to be initiated in mysteries and/or to participate in non-obligatory cults and religious associations, i.e., they were making more individual choices.⁴⁴ But the associations actually illustrate the security preoccupation complex in its entirety. For a group of *Hermaistai*, gathering for celebrations of Hermes,⁴⁵ the eponymous deity (as well as the

³⁹ See for example DU SABLON *l.c.* (n. 38), p. 19.

⁴⁰ See for example MIKALSON, *l.c.* (n. 26) & MIKALSON, *o.c.* (n. 26), p. 208; BUDIN *l.c.* (n. 35); PAKKANEN, *Interpreting early hellenistic religion. A study based on the cult of Isis and the mystery cult of Demeter*, Helsinki, 1996 (*Papers and monographs of the Finnish institute at Athens*, 3); A. MOTTE & V. PIRENNE DELFORGE, “Du « bon usage » de la notion de syncretisme”, *Kernos* 7 (1994), p. 11-27.

⁴¹ STEWART, *l.c.* (n. 38), 558-559.

⁴² DU SABLON *l.c.* (n. 38), p. 5.

⁴³ STEWART, *l.c.* (n. 38), 512-514; 518.

⁴⁴ STEWART, *l.c.* (n. 38), 513; PAKKANEN *o.c.* (n. 40), p. 113.

⁴⁵ We do not know much about the ideas connecting the eponymous god to the members of his or her association. It has been suggested that a kind of birthday club hides behind associations named after a god: a group of *Herakleistai* or *Dionysiaistai* would gather because they shared birthdays with these divinities (W. SCHMIDT, *Geburtstag im Altertum*, Gießen, 1908 [RGVV, 7], p. 12). In general however, scholars do not agree as to what extent club members were devotees

community of the religious group) offered protection, and the voluntary choice of joining this particular association and god instead of another one was a sign of individual preferences. The personal religious choices simultaneously express the wish for closer connections to the gods. To place oneself under the protection of a certain god through membership in a club that was even more exclusive than the citizen body is clearly an aspiration to a more favoured relation to this god, as compared to non-members. We thus come full circle, as, in turn, the wish for a personal relationship to a divinity brings us back to the search for security, in that divine intimacy presumably was meant to lead to better protection and other advantages.

The collegial grouping of magistrates around a patron deity is another example of the Hellenistic axis *wish for protection – individual cult choices – intimacy with the gods*.⁴⁶ Dedications presented by public officials, of both military and political status, provide testimony of a variant way of claiming special personal attention from a god, namely, through the use of very narrow epithets.⁴⁷ For example, 17/16 BC, in Cyrene, a college of nomophylakes erected the statue of an Aphrodite called by the epithet *Nomophylakis*. Thus, as their protectress, they choose an Aphrodite exclusively connected to their team. The selected epithet personifies the professional task of the nomophylakes and provides an intimate link between worshippers and goddess.⁴⁸

of their divine eponym. The creation of a cult association might have strong social and economical aspects, rather than religious (STEWART, *l.c.* (n. 38), 513; V. GABRIELSEN, *The naval aristocracy of Hellenistic Rhodes*, Aarhus, 1997, p.123-124; PAKKANEN *o.c.* (n. 40), p. 113-114), and it has been suggested that membership (at least in an Athenian context) provided means for women, metics and slaves to access the polis via fellow full citizen members (M. LEIWO, “Religion, or other reasons? Private associations in Athens” in *Early Hellenistic Athens. Symptoms of a change*, Helsinki, 1997 (*Papers and monographs of the Finnish Institute at Athens*, 7), p. 111, 116.

⁴⁶ J. WALLENSTEN, *ΑΦΡΟΔΙΤΗ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΗΝ ΑΡΞΑΣ*. *A study of dedications to Aphrodite from Greek magistrates*, diss. Lund University, Lund, 2003.

⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that this procedure in a sense goes in the opposite direction of that of the religious clubs. Instead of gathering round a certain deity, thereby creating a cult association, magistrates, gathering because of a certain office, create a god. Whereas the *Hermaistai* take their name from the deity, single officials or groups of magistrates give their professional titles to the gods.

⁴⁸ To the professional epithet *Nomophylakis* can be added other similar ones: strategoi honouring Aphrodite *Stratagis*, eisagogoi dedicating to Hermes *Eisagogos* and prytaneis to Zeus *Prytaneus*. *SEG* 9, 133; *IG* XII 6, 1; *IG* IX 12, 256; *SEG* 62, 543bis. I would also add an inscription where a nauarchos of Pantikapeon made a dedication to Aphrodite *Nauarchis*, *CIRB* 30, to this group. *Nauarchis* is an epithet that obviously belongs to Aphrodite’s aspect as a marine deity, she is an “admiral” in as much as she commands the sea. But I believe that in this particular case, the specific context of a dedication from a nauarchos to *Nauarchis* also allows an understanding of its meaning as a magistrates’ epithet. The epithet simultaneously works on two levels: *Nauarchis* is the admiral’s Aphrodite as well as the Admiral Aphrodite. Another result of this search for protection visible through epithets is the increasing attention given to deities (and humans) carrying the bynames *Soter* or *Soteira*. The epithet had connotations of salvation from most dangers, from disease and bad weather as well earthquakes and military threats (DU SABLON *l.c.* (n. 38), p. 7-9; A. CHANIOTIS, *War in the Hellenistic world*, Oxford, 2005, p. 146; MIKALSON, *o.c.* (n. 26), *passim*).

The devotion of Dikaios for Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* is emblematic of the same security nexus and thus an almost expected product of the Hellenistic religious atmosphere. As illustrated by ‘magisterial’ epithets, one area in which individual religious choices and the wish for special protection coalesce consists of cults to gods defined by very narrow epithets. The creation of an epithet such as that of *Dikaia* is a further step in the direction showed by for example the closely defined magistrates’ designations. Individual epithets, defined as formed from the name of specific persons, claim special relations and protection of a similar kind as that offered by the eponymity of the tutelary god of a cult association or by a professional epithet such as *Nomophylakis*, only of an even more restricted sort.⁴⁹ Dikaios’ and Asklepiades’ relationship to the goddess is not acted out through the relative anonymity of membership in a group of worshippers, nor based on the rather impersonal status as holder of a certain public office. The search for deities directly and personally involved in the life of an individual, could not be expressed more clearly than a god bearing a family name.⁵⁰ Through the designation *Dikaia*, this specific Isis Aphrodite provides personal protection as the made-to-measure guardian exclusively of them and their close kin.

The presentation in an official sanctuary of an offering to a god bearing one’s name is a bold public claim to a special relationship with the deity in question. An accompanying aspect of gratitude should however not be forgotten. The circumstances that first brought forth the honouring of *Dikaia*, and the reason the brothers believed they could claim divine goodwill, was perhaps a special favour granted Dikaios by Isis (and) Aphrodite, as in the case of Plutarch’s account of Dexikreon. At a first glance – and perhaps with an anachronistic perspective – the act of naming a god after oneself looks presumptuous. But the relationship between gods and men was of course one of interchange. Inherent in the existence of Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* are the humble servants Asklepiades and Dikaios *Isidos Aphrodites*.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The process of “slimming down” epithets referring to the social group constituting the worshippers perhaps begins with bigger ethnic or kinship groups, i.e., in epithets such as Athena *Phratría*, Zeus *Hellaios*, etc. For this group, see for example PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 1) p. 178. I thank Dr. M. Mili for pointing this out.

⁵⁰ STEWART, *l.c.* (n. 38), 555; DU SABLON *l.c.* (n. 38), p. 5.

⁵¹ It should also be noted that Isis and Aphrodite were powerful, but that their help, not the least in their Delian cults, could come at a prize, as in terms of “personal sacrifices”, such as dietary requirements and restrictions in behaviour and appearance. STEWART, *l.c.* (n. 38), 543; Ph. BRUNEAU, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l’époque hellénistique et à l’époque impériale*, Paris, 1970, p. 465; 472-473; P. ROUSSEL, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 288; P. ROUSSEL, *Délos colonie athénienne*, Paris, 1916, p. 269-270.

The protection of Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia*

Mikalson has suggested that the possibility of making choices as regards which god or goddess to honour made the selected deities more personal to their worshippers.⁵² Against this background, the combination of goddesses that was chosen as the personal protector of Dikaïos and his family becomes interesting.⁵³ Perhaps the pairing of Isis and Aphrodite provides a clue as to what kind of protection Isis Aphrodite *Dikaia* offered? As Parker points out, this type of pairing of deities does not necessarily imply an identification of the two. Thus, just as in the case of the Spartan goddess Aphrodite Hera, where Hera is not merely an epithet of Aphrodite, in our case Aphrodite is not a byname of Isis.⁵⁴ The combination Isis and Aphrodite rather reinforces similar characteristics shared between them. In Delos, Isis' benevolence towards humans is clearly pronounced in the epigraphic sources, but both Isis and Aphrodite were goddesses considered close to man and so perhaps easily approached in personal matters.⁵⁵ There were affinities between the (separate) Delian cults of Aphrodite *Hagne* and Isis, one being that dedications to these goddesses often were made after close encounters with them, erected after personal messages received in dreams or other visions.⁵⁶ The Isis component of Dikaïos' goddess furthermore had strong connotations of healing, health and protection of the family.⁵⁷ Health and safety was also offered through participation in the worship of Aphrodite *Hagne*, whose cult became very

⁵² MIKALSON, *l.c.* (n. 26), p. 211.

⁵³ It is of course not impossible that we should understand a *kai* between Isis and Aphrodite.

⁵⁴ PARKER, *l.c.* (n. 19), p. 225.

⁵⁵ DUNAND, *o.c.* (n. 7), p. 113; MIKALSON, *o.c.* (n. 26), p. 229. Du Sablon suggests that the traits of the Egyptian Isis that became most pronounced in the Greek cult of the goddess were those that were likely to lead to a more personal relationship to the divine sphere (DU SABLON *l.c.* (n. 38), p. 13).

⁵⁶ See for example dedications by the order of a god, *kata prostagma*, sometimes through the assistance of an interpreter of dreams: IG XI 4, 1262, *IDélos* 2059, *IDélos* 2080 (Possibly to Isis Aphrodite), 2101, *IDélos* 2103, *IDélos* 2105, *IDélos* 2106, *IDélos* 2278, *IDélos* 2284, *IDélos* 2389, and especially *IDélos* 2098, made shortly after 158/157 BC, on the order of Sarapis, Isis Anoubis, Aphrodite, thus, Aphrodite together with the Egyptian gods. See also BRUNEAU, *o.c.* (n. 51), p. 463-464; ROUSSEL, *o.c.*, (n. 51), p. 270; H.S. VERSNEL, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman religion I. Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes, Three studies in henotheism*, Leiden, 1990, p. 40; HAUVETTE-BESNAULT, *l.c.* (n. 23), p. 471-479. Aphrodite *Hagne* is of course the *interpretatio graeca* of the Syrian Goddess. The Syrian Goddess takes the name of *Hagne* Aphrodite at the time of our dedications. Because the assimilation was more or less complete at the time of *IDélos* 2158 – the Syrian goddess can for example be invoked by the name of Aphrodite only (*IDélos* 2265) and she is presented with *erotes* as an offering in *IDélos* 2251 and 2252) – I believe that this deity is of relevance for the discussion. See BRUNEAU, *o.c.* (n. 51), p. 346, 470; ROUSSEL, *o.c.* (n. 51), p. 262.

⁵⁷ MIKALSON, *l.c.* (n. 26), p. 213, 229; DU SABLON *l.c.* (n. 38), p. 13.

popular during the period of Athenian domination.⁵⁸ All these aspects of an Isis Aphrodite are also reinforced by the find context: the dedication was set up in Sarapieion C, where the Egyptian gods were approached as deities who listen to prayers, saviour gods, healers and maritime protectors.⁵⁹ This last ability probably takes precedence in the context of an island trading centre: it is important that both goddesses were mighty protectresses of seafaring and mariners: in other cult contexts they both carry the epithet *Euploia*, for example. Did Dikaios need special attention because of frequent voyages or maritime trade interests? Or perhaps, as an Athenian in Delos in the late second/early first century BC, he simply travelled frequently between the island and its home city.

The literal meaning of the epithet, *Just*, or *Righteous* does not in itself provide information of the goddess' sphere of activities. To be sure, in a contemporary aretology from Maroneia, Isis is hailed, among a multitude of other praiseworthy qualities, as having instituted justice for men⁶⁰ and furthermore the goddess Isis *Dikaiosyne* is present in an inscription from the Delian Sarapieion C. This is the same sanctuary where Dikaios and Asklepiades made their dedications and it is thus tempting to understand *Dikaia* as a conscious allusion to *Dikaiosyne*. But in the end, the goddess of *IDélos* 2158 was approached as *Dikaia*, and the epithet thereby merely gives us the character of Isis Aphrodite's behaviour. This might be precisely because the epithet *Dikaia* does not imply a specific aspect of the goddess as much as it draws attention to a special relationship between the dedicator and the goddess. Isis Aphrodite was '*Dikaian*', 'of Dikaios'.⁶¹ Obviously, this interpretation does not – and should not – in any way exclude that the epithet simultaneously had connotations of justice. Just Isis Aphrodite would justly see to the best interests of her dedicated servants.

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⁵⁸ MIKALSON, *o.c.* (n. 22), p. 235. For a recent study of aspects of the cult of Aphrodite in Delos, see C. DURVY, "Aphrodite à Délos: Culte privé et public à l'époque hellénistique", *REG* 119 (2006) p. 83-113.

⁵⁹ BRUNEAU, *o.c.* (n. 51), p. 463-464; ROUSSEL, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 289-290.

⁶⁰ GRANDJEAN, *o.c.* (n. 17), p. 18, l. 24, 29. This act is not mentioned in other aretologies. For Isis *Dikaiosyne*, see *supra* n. 17. Aphrodite on the contrary bears the epithet Unjust, *Adikos*, according to Hesychios.

⁶¹ In fact, *Dikaios* or *Dikaia*, observant of rules, fitting, righteous, is a word mostly used for characters of men, not gods, and this perhaps also strengthens the interpretation of the goddess as the *Dikaian* Isis Aphrodite.