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# Dionysos in Egypt? Epaphian Dionysos in the *Orphic Hymns*

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Radcliffe G. Edmonds III

# Dionysos in Egypt? Epaphian Dionysos in the *Orphic Hymns*

## 1 Aim

In the collection of hexametrical hymns from the Imperial period that style themselves hymns of Orpheus, two of the hymns to Dionysos invoke the god by a peculiar epithet, Epaphie, the Epaphian Dionysos.

‘Λυσίου Ληναίου.’ Κλυθι, μάκαρ, Διὸς υἱ΄, ἐπιλήνιε Βάκχε, διμάτωρ,  
σπέρμα πολύμνη(σ)τον, πολυώνυμε, λύσειε δαῖμον,  
κρυψίγονον μακάρων ἱερὸν θάλος, εὖιε Βάκχε,  
εὐτραφές, εὐκαρπε, πολυγηθέα καρπὸν ἀέξων,  
ῥηξίχθων, ληναῖε, μεγασθενές, αἰολόμορφε,  
παυσίπονον θνητοῖσι φανείς ἄκος, ἱερὸν ἄνθος  
χάρμα βροτοῖς φιλάλυπον, ἐπάφιε, καλλιέθειρε,  
λύσειε, θυρσομανές, βρόμι΄, εὖιε, πᾶσιν εὐφρων,  
οἷς ἐθέλεις θνητῶν ἢ δ’ ἀθανάτων † ἐπιφάυσκων  
νῦν σε καλῶ μύσταισι μολεῖν ἠδύν, φερέκαρπον.

*To Lysios – Lenaios*

Hear, O blessed son of Zeus and of two mothers, Bacchos of the vintage,  
unforgettable seed, many-named and redeeming demon,  
holy offspring of the gods born in secrecy, reveling Bacchos,  
plump giver of the many joys of fruits which grow well.  
Mighty and many-shaped god, from the earth you burst forth to reach the wine-press  
and there become a remedy for man’s pain, O sacred blossom!  
A sorrow-hating joy to mortals, O lovely-haired Epaphian,  
you are a redeemer and a reveler whose thyrsus drives to frenzy  
and who is kind-hearted to all, gods and mortals, who see his light.  
I call upon you now to come, a sweet bringer of fruit.<sup>1</sup>

While some commentators have in despair postulated textual corruption, others have suggested the epithet must refer to Epaphos, son of Zeus and Io, but have been at a loss to explain why Dionysos should receive such a title. I argue that the epithet identifies Dionysos with a divine figure in an Egyptian context who is

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1 Orph. *H.* 50. Cp. Orph. *H.* 52.9: ῥηξίχθων, πυριφεγγές, ἐπάφιε, κοῦρε διμάτωρ. ‘You burst forth from the earth in a blaze, Epaphian, O son of two mothers.’ Orphic fragments are cited from both the older edition of Kern 1922 and the more recent edition of Bernabé 2004, 2005, 2007.

identified in various sources as Osiris, Apis, and Epaphos. This Dionysiac Epaphos suggests some fascinating processes of syncretism in the interrelation of Greek and Egyptian culture, and the nature of these processes of identification of deities, as they appear in ancient thinkers such as Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Plutarch, sheds light on the very nature of Greek religion. The connections between the divine figures appear to be made, not on the level of the theological meaning of the god or his role in the divine hierarchy of the cosmos, but rather at the level of the vivid imagery of the ritual experience in the celebrations of the god. Dionysos is called Epaphian, then, not because the Greeks thought that he, like Osiris, was a chthonic lord of the underworld, but rather because they found the imagery in the myths and rituals associated with Apis and Osiris reminiscent of the rituals of Dionysos. This valuation, by the ancient Greek thinkers, of the ritual experience over the theological significance points to the ‘imagistic,’ instead of ‘doctrinal,’ nature of Greek religion and should provide modern scholars with some parameters for handling the evidence for the cults of Dionysos in ancient Greece.

## 2 Mythic Parallels

How could Dionysos be equated with Epaphos? Diodorus Siculus, in his list of the many figures of Dionysos, lists the son of Zeus and Io as the second, a ruler in Egypt who established the Dionysiac rituals there.<sup>2</sup> Epaphos provides the Greek ancestral connection to Egypt, the ancestor of the Danaids who return to Argos as well as the ancestor of Agenor, father of Kadmos who founded Thebes. Theban Kadmos is, of course, the father of Semele, mother of Dionysos.<sup>3</sup> Plutarch men-

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2 D. S. 3.74.1: τὸν μὲν οὖν πρῶτον Διόνυσον ἐξ Ἄμμωνος καὶ Ἀμαλθείας γενόμενον τοιαύτας οἱ Λίβυες ἱστοροῦσιν ἐπιτελέσασθαι πράξεις· τὸν δὲ δευτέρον φασιν ἐξ Ἰοῦς τῆς Ἰνάχου Διὶ γενόμενον βασιλεῦσαι μὲν τῆς Αἰγύπτου, καταδειξάαι δὲ τὰς τελετάς· τελευταῖον δὲ τὸν ἐκ Διὸς καὶ Σεμέλης τεκνωθέντα παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησι ζηλωτὴν γενέσθαι τῶν προτέρων. ‘As for the first Dionysos, the son of Ammon and Amaltheia, these, then, are the deeds he accomplished as the Libyans recount the history of them; the second Dionysos, as men say, who was born to Zeus by Io, the daughter of Inachus, became king of Egypt and appointed the initiatory rites of that land; and the third and last, sprung from Zeus and Semele, became, among the Greeks, the emulator of the first two.’ Cp. the list in Cic. *ND* 3.58 = test. 94 Kern = *OF* 497 I, where the second Dionysos is the son of Nilus, the river of Egypt. Lobeck 1829, 1130–1135, reviews much of the evidence, but does not speculate on the reasons why Dionysos might be identified with Epaphos.

3 Sch. A. *Pr.* 853: πρώτη γενεὰ Ἐραφος, οὗ Λιβύη, ἧς Βῆλος, οὗ Δαναός, οὗ αἱ πενήκοντα θυγατέρες, ὧς Αἰσχύλος πέμπτην γενεὰν εἶπεν. ‘The first generation is Epaphos, of whom was born Libya, of whom Belos, of whom Danaos, of whom were born fifty daughters, whom Aeschylus

tions that one ancient scholar, Mnaseas, argued that Dionysos was the same as Osiris, Serapis, Apis, and Epaphos, and, centuries earlier, Herodotus firmly identified the Egyptian Apis with Epaphos.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, none of these points of contact between them really explains the identification of Dionysos as Epaphian.<sup>5</sup> What could it mean in the Hymns?

One possibility that commentators have noted is the parallels between the myths told about them. While Epaphos appears most often as an entry in a genealogical list, there is one myth associated with him that bears a strong resemblance to the myth of the dismemberment of Dionysos. Both Dionysos and Epaphos are set upon by a band of older men bent on destroying the child of Zeus while he is still young. A similar story appears about the dismemberment of Osiris, and the similarities between these three sets of myth may have contributed to the assimilation of the figures.

While there is no solid evidence for the myth of the dismemberment of Dionysos before the Hellenistic period, the tale appears in traces in poets such as Euphorion and references in authors such as Diodorus Siculus.<sup>6</sup> Although it does

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says are the fifth generation.' Sch. E. Ph. 678: ἀπόγονος Ἐπάφου Κάδμος, ἐπεὶ Ἀγίηνορος ἔστιν υἱὸς τοῦ Βῆλου τοῦ Λιβύης τῆς Ἐπάφου τοῦ Ἰοῦς. 'Kadmos is the descendant of Epaphos, since Agenor is the son of Belus, son of Libya, daughter of Epaphos, son of Io.'

4 Plu. *Is. et Os.* 365F: ἐὼ δὲ Μνασέαν τῶν Ἐπάφω προστιθέντα τὸν Διόνυσον καὶ τὸν Ὀσίριν καὶ τὸν Σάραπιν, ἐὼ καὶ Ἀντικλειδῆν λέγοντα τὴν Ἴσιν Προμηθέως οὖσαν θυγατέρα Διονύσω συνοικεῖν· αἱ γὰρ εἰρημένα περὶ τὰς ἑορτὰς καὶ τὰς θυσίας οικειότητες ἐναργεστέραν τῶν μαρτύρων τὴν πίστιν ἔχουσι. 'I leave out of account Mnaseas's annexation of Dionysos, Osiris, and Serapis to Epaphus, as well as Anticleides' statement that Isis was the daughter of Prometheus and was wedded to Dionysos. The fact is that the peculiarities already mentioned regarding the festival and sacrifices carry a conviction more manifest than any testimony of authorities.' Hdt. 3.28.2: ὁ δὲ Ἄπις οὗτος ὁ Ἐπαφος γίνεται μόσχος ἐκ βοός, ἧτις οὐκέτι οἷη τε γίνεται ἐς γαστέρα ἄλλον βάλλεσθαι γόνον. Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ λέγουσι σέλας ἐπὶ τὴν βοῦν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατίσχειν, καὶ μὲν ἐκ τούτου τίκειν τὸν Ἄπιν. 'This Apis, or Epaphus, is a calf born of a cow that can never conceive again. By what the Egyptians say, the cow is made pregnant by a light from heaven, and thereafter gives birth to Apis.'

5 Ricciardelli 2000, 426–427 *ad loc.*: 'Vi è dunque più di un punto di contatto fra Dioniso ed Epafo, il che comunque non spiega perché Dioniso sia detto Ἐπάφιε.'

6 Phld. *Piet.* 44 = fr. 36 Kern = *OF* 59 I: (πρώτην τούτων) τὴν ἐκ μητρός, ἑτέραν δὲ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ μηροῦ, (τρίτην δὲ τὴν (ὅτε δι)ασπασθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν Τιτάνων) Ῥέ(ας τὰ) μέλη συνθεῖ(σης) ἀνεβίω[ι]. κάμ (τῆ) Μοψοπία δ' Εὐ(φορί)ω(ν) ὁμολογεῖ (τού)τοις, (οἱ) δ' Ὀρ(φικοί) καὶ παντά(πασιν) ἐνδ-ιατρε(ίβουσιν). 'The first of these was the birth from the mother, the second the one from the thigh, and the third birth was when having been dismembered by the Titans, he came back to life after Rhea gathered together his limbs. And in his Mopsopoiiai Euphorion is in agreement with these accounts, and the Orphics also absolutely go on about it.' Euphorion provides the earliest sure testimony to the tale of Dionysos' dismemberment by the Titans, but the date and significance of this story have been much debated. Linforth 1941, 307–364, provides a survey of the evidence,

not appear in collections such as Ovid or the mythographical compilation of [ps.] Apollodorus, it nevertheless, to judge from the brief and casual way in which the story is mentioned in other sources, seems to have been widely known. The myth was most popular in the Platonic tradition as an allegory of the One and the Many, and many references survive in the Neoplatonists, but the first detailed account that survives comes from the polemic of Clement of Alexandria.

τὰ γὰρ Διονύσου μυστήρια τέλεον ἀπάνθρωπα· ὃν εἰσέτι παῖδα ὄντα ἐνόπλιω κινήσει περιχουρόντων Κουρήτων, δόλω δὲ ὑποδύντων Τιτάνων, ἀπατήσαντες παιδαριώδεσιν ἀθύρμασιν, οὗτοι δὴ οἱ Τιτᾶνες διέσπασαν, ἔτι νηπιάχον ὄντα, ... οἱ δὲ Τιτᾶνες, οἱ καὶ διασπᾶσαντες αὐτόν, λέβητά τινα τρίποδι ἐπιθέντες καὶ τοῦ Διονύσου ἐμβалόντες τὰ μέλη, καθήψουν πρότερον· ἔπειτα ὀβελίσκοις περιπείραντες ‘ὑπείρεχον’ Ἡφαίστιο.’ Ζεὺς δὲ ὕστερον ἐπιφανεῖς ... κεραυνῷ τοὺς Τιτᾶνας αἰκίζεται καὶ τὰ μέλη τοῦ Διονύσου Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ παιδί παρακατατίθεται καταθάψαι. ὃ δέ, οὐ γὰρ ἠπειθήσε Δίί, εἰς τὸν Παρνασσὸν φέρω κατατίθεται διεσπασμένον τὸν νεκρόν.

The mysteries of Dionysus are perfectly inhuman. While he was still a child, the Kouretes danced around with clashing arms, and the Titans crept up by stealth and deceived him with childish toys. Then these Titans dismembered Dionysos while he was still an infant, ... The Titans ... tore him limb from limb, set a cauldron on a tripod and threw into it the limbs of Dionysos. First they boiled them down and, then fixing them on spits, ‘held them over Hephaestus (the fire).’ But later Zeus appeared; ... He assails the Titans with his thunderbolt and consigns the limbs of Dionysos to his son Apollo for burial. And Apollo, for he did not disobey Zeus, bearing the dismembered corpse to Parnassus, deposited it there.<sup>7</sup>

Characteristically, Epaphos gets less coverage than Dionysos. Hyginus, who also relates the dismemberment of Dionysos, tells that Juno arranged for the Titans to have Epaphos killed in a ‘hunting accident’ and then to rebel against Zeus.<sup>8</sup> Such a scenario suggests an Epaphos rather older than the infant Dionysos distracted by the shiny toys in Clement, but the evil step-mother trying to get rid of the child of her husband and another woman remains a constant, as does the identification

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while Detienne 1979 studies the broader set of stories of the death of Dionysos. More recently, Bernabé 1998, 2002a has argued that the myth is central to Orphic doctrine, contra Edmonds 1999, 2008, in which I argue that different components of the tale are combined at different times with shifting meanings, because no nucleus of Orphic doctrines ever existed.

<sup>7</sup> Clem. Al. *Prot.* 2.17.2–18.2 = OF 588 I.

<sup>8</sup> Hyg. *Fab.* 150: *postquam Iuno vidit Epapho ex pellice nato tantam regni potestatem esse, curat in venatu, ut Epaphus necetur, Titanosque hortatur, Iovem ut regno pellat et Saturno restituant.* ‘After Juno saw that Epaphus, born of a concubine, ruled such a great kingdom, she saw to it that he should be killed while hunting, and encouraged the Titans to drive Jove from the kingdom and restore it to Saturn.’

of the Titans as the villains. Apollodorus introduces a surprising variant, claiming that Hera got, not the Titans, but the Curetes to do her dirty work. The Curetes caused Epaphos to vanish, and so his mother Io wandered about seeking him.

τελευταῖον ἦκεν εἰς Αἴγυπτον, ὅπου τὴν ἀρχαίαν μορφήν ἀπολαβοῦσα γεννᾷ παρὰ τῷ Νεῖλῳ ποταμῷ Ἐπαφον παῖδα. τοῦτον δὲ Ἥρα δεῖται Κουρήτων ἀφανῆ ποιῆσαι· οἱ δὲ ἠφάνισαν αὐτόν. καὶ Ζεὺς μὲν αἰσθόμενος κτείνει Κούρητας, Ἰὼ δὲ ἐπὶ ζήτησιν τοῦ παιδὸς ἐτράπετο. πλανωμένη δὲ κατὰ τὴν Συρίαν ἄπασαν (ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἐμηνύετο (ὅτι ἦ) τοῦ Βυβλίων βασιλέως (γυνὴ) ἐτιθήνηι τὸν υἱόν) καὶ τὸν Ἐπαφον εὐρούσα, εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἐλθοῦσα ἐγαμήθη Τηλεγόνῳ τῷ βασιλεύοντι τότε Αἰγυπτίων.

At last she came to Egypt, where she recovered her original form and gave birth to a son Epaphus beside the river Nile. Him Hera besought the Curetes to make away with [Epaphus], and make away with him they did. When Zeus learned of it, he slew the Curetes; but Io set out in search of the child. She roamed all over Syria, because there it was revealed to her that the wife of the king of Byblus was nursing her son; and having found Epaphus she came to Egypt and was married to Telegonus, who then reigned over the Egyptians.<sup>9</sup>

The story of Osiris, as it appears in Greek sources such as Diodorus and Plutarch, also involves the same pattern of a band of enemies conspiring to destroy and dismember, and the same wandering to find. In Diodorus and Plutarch, however, Osiris is a ruling king who is murdered, not by his evil step-mother, but by his jealous brother, Set Typhon. In Diodorus' historicizing version, Set divides up the pieces of the body between his 26 co-conspirators, while Plutarch makes the dismemberment a separate episode, after Osiris is killed by being nailed into a coffin, dumped in the water, sought, and found by Isis.<sup>10</sup> The coffin with the dead Osiris floats off to Byblos, where it is found and incorporated into a pillar. Isis, when she learns of its location, retrieves the body from the pillar and begins to mourn it.<sup>11</sup>

In any case, the detail that seems important for Apollodorus to relate is that Io wandered in search of Epaphos, just as Isis wandered in search of Osiris in Plutarch, and that Io, like Isis, found what she sought in Byblos. Plutarch provides a few more details of Isis' wanderings, including that she was informed by a child that Osiris had gone toward Byblos and that, when she reached Byblos, she became the nurse to the royal family and attempted to immortalize one of the princes, a process disrupted by the child's mother. Plutarch's tale of Isis' wanderings, as many have noted, bears more than a little resemblance to the wanderings

<sup>9</sup> Apollod. 2.1.3.

<sup>10</sup> Cp. D. S. 1.21; Plu. *Is. et Os.* 358A, cp. 356AB.

<sup>11</sup> Plu. *Is. et Os.* 357A.

of Demeter near Eleusis, where she is informed of Hades' abduction of Kore by a shepherd boy (Triptolemos or Eubouleus or some other name) and where she acts as nurse and attempts to immortalize the prince, an attempt again foiled by an over-anxious mother.<sup>12</sup> In tales of the dismembered Dionysos, Dionysos' mother Demeter or Demeter's mother, Rhea, sometimes goes in search of the scattered pieces of the god, bringing together the pieces.<sup>13</sup>

While the similarities are notable, the resemblances seem, as several commentators have pointed out, to be rather superficial, with quite crucial differences between the accounts.<sup>14</sup> Io is the mother of Epaphos and Demeter (or Rhea) is the mother (or grandmother) of Dionysos, whereas Isis is the wife of Osiris – a very different relation, as the episode with the phallus of Osiris indicates! Not only is the figure who seeks different, but what is sought is different – the chunks of flesh torn from the infant Dionysos, the missing youth of Epaphos, or the coffined body of Osiris. Dionysos is dismembered; Epaphos made to vanish; Osiris imprisoned and chopped up after death. Such differences would seem crucial to any interpretation of the religious significance of the story – did the god die or not?

Indeed, in the individual interpretations of particular stories that survive in our sources, such details often carry important weight in the exegesis. Dionysos was divided into seven parts, Proclus argues, because seven corresponds to the soul, which divides things up and examines them analytically, whereas the preservation of Dionysos' heart by Athena represents the unity of the intellect.<sup>15</sup>

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12 Cp. *h.Cer.*, Apollod. 1.5.1.

13 D. S. 3.62.6 = fr. 301 Kern = *OF* 59 III, claims that the pieces of Dionysos were collected by his mother, Demeter, whom Diodorus also understands as Ge, the Earth. Diodorus lists the rebirth of Dionysos after his members are collected by Demeter as the third birth of Dionysos and claims that this version agrees with the *Orphica* (3.62.8 = *OF* 58). Bernabé 2002b, 75–80, tries to sort out the complicated testimonies in this passage. Cornutus *ND* 30 = *OF* 59 IV. has Rhea in the role of collector instead of Demeter. In the Platonic tradition, Apollo, etymologized as *a-pollon*, not many, is responsible for restoring the unity to Dionysos, who has been made multiple by the forces of division.

14 Cp. Otto 1965, 195: 'The myth of the death of Osiris differs from that of Dionysos in far to many important points ... These are not incidental characteristics.'

15 Cp. Procl. *in Prm.* 808 = fr. 210 Kern = *OF* 311 III: διὸ καὶ οἱ θεολόγοι τὸν μὲν νοῦν ἐν τοῖς σπαραγμοῖς τοῖς Διονυσιακοῖς ἀμέριστον προνοίᾳ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς σώζεσθαι λέγουσι, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μερίζεσθαι πρῶτως, καὶ ἡ εἰς ἑπτὰ γούν τομὴ ταύτης ἐστὶ πρῶτης· οἰκεῖον οὖν αὐτῇ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τῆς διαιρετικῆς καὶ τὸ θεωρεῖν μεταβατικῶς. οὐ δὲ θαυμαστόν ἐστιν οὐκέτι, τῶν θεῶν εἰδῶν ὁμοῦ καὶ ἡνωμένως ἐν τῷ δημιουργικῷ νῷ προῦφρεσηκότων, τὴν ἡμετέραν ψυχὴν διηρημένως αὐτοῖς ἐπιβάλλειν, καὶ νῦν μὲν τὰ πρῶτιστα καὶ κοινότατα θεωρεῖν εἶδη, νῦν δὲ τὰ μέσην ἔχοντα τάξιν, αὐθις δὲ τὰ μερικώτατα καὶ οἷον ἀτομώτατα τῶν εἰδῶν. 'This is why the theologians say that at the dismemberment of Dionysos his intellect was preserved undivided through the foresight of Athena and that his soul was the first to be divided, and certainly the division into seven is proper

Plutarch tells us that Isis' generation of Harpocrates with the phallus of the dead Osiris, which produced a premature and lamed child, signifies the process of correcting premature and imperfect thinking about the gods.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the figures in these stories are identified with one another, not for what the stories mean, but because of the common pattern of action within the myth – the schema of threat/destruction followed by search and lamentation. The images of the assaulted god, the searching goddess, and the mourning of the lost loved one are what prompt the initial connection; the explanations are secondary, examples of what Whitehouse would call 'spontaneous exegetical reflection' by Plutarch, or Diodorus, or Herodotus.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in a particular telling of the story, by any ancient author, the details create a specific myth with a particular meaning, but the general pattern, the mythic schema, does not have a fixed meaning that can be transferred from one instantiation to another. To belabor the point, the myth of the dismemberment of Dionysos does not have any particular meaning that transcends the uses to which it is put.

### 3 Ritual Parallels

We may detect a similar phenomenon in the way the ancient sources make comparisons with the rituals. Here too, modern scholars have complained that the parallels Plutarch, Herodotus, and others use are superficial, unable to support any serious identification of the Greek and Egyptian figures. Nevertheless, our sources repeatedly use these apparently superficial ritual parallels, and, rather than dismissing the arguments as superficial, we should consider why they might give such arguments, rather than the arguments from theological meaning we might expect –

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primarily to Soul. It is therefore appropriate that Soul should have the function of division and of seeing things discursively. It is no wonder, then, that whereas the divine Forms exist primordially together and unified in the demiurgic intellect, our soul attacks them separately, at one time contemplating the first and most universal Forms, at another time those that have a middle station, and again the most particular and, so to speak, the most atomic.'

16 Plu. *Is. et Os.* 358DE, 378C: τὴν δ' Ἴσιν ἐξ Ὀσίριδος μετὰ τὴν τελευταίην συγγενομένου τεκεῖν ἡλιτόμηνον καὶ ἀσθενῆ τοῖς κάτωθεν γυίοις τὸν Ἄρποκράτην. ... τὸν δ' Ἄρποκράτην οὕτε θεὸν ἀτελεῖ καὶ νήπιον οὕτε χεδρόπων τιὰ νομιστέον, ἀλλὰ τοῦ περὶ θεῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις λόγου νεαροῦ καὶ ἀτελοῦς καὶ ἀδιαφθρότου προστάτην καὶ σωφρονιστήν. 'Osiris consorted with Isis after his death, and she became the mother of Harpocrates, untimely born and weak in his lower limbs. ... And Harpocrates is not to be regarded as an imperfect and an infant god, nor some deity or other that protects legumes, but as the representative and corrector of unseasoned, imperfect, and inarticulate reasoning about the gods among mankind.'

17 Whitehouse 2000; cp. Whitehouse 2004a, 70–73, 113–117; Whitehouse 2004b, 218–220.



for example, Osiris and Dionysos are the lords of the dead, representing the rebirth of the human soul or its survival after physical death.<sup>18</sup> Plutarch considers the ritual parallels his most convincing argument when addressing Clea, an experienced priestess in both the rites of Dionysos and Osiris, who moreover is clearly well-versed in Platonic theology.<sup>19</sup> If there were ever an occasion for a discussion at a theological and doctrinal level, bypassing superficialities in favor of substantial theological arguments, this would be it. Yet Plutarch, although he does not avoid fairly complex and abstract discussions of theological principles, nonetheless grounds his argument in parallels of ritual experience.

Plutarch starts by comparing the burial rites for the Apis bull, which he identifies as Osiris,<sup>20</sup> with a Dionysiac procession.

ἃ δ' ἐμφανῶς δρῶσι θάπτοντες τὸν Ἄπιν οἱ ἱερεῖς, ὅταν παρακομίζωσιν ἐπὶ σχεδίας τὸ σῶμα, βακχείας οὐδὲν ἀποδεῖ· καὶ γὰρ νεβρίδας περικαθάπτονται καὶ θύρσους φοροῦσι καὶ βοᾷς χρώνται καὶ κινήσειν ὡσπερ οἱ κάτοχοι τοῖς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὀργιασμοῖς.

The public ceremonies which the priests perform in the burial of the Apis, when they convey his body on an improvised bier, do not in any way come short of a Bacchic procession; for they fasten skins of fawns about themselves, and carry Bacchic wands and indulge in shoutings and movements exactly as do those who are under the spell of the Dionysiac ecstasies.<sup>21</sup>

Dionysos must be the same as Osiris, since the actions of the fawnskin-clad, thyrsos-wielding celebrants are the same in the Egyptian festival and the Greek Dionysiac one; they both engage in ecstatic cries and movements while celebrating.<sup>22</sup> The Apis bull form of Osiris who is the object of this worship finds its

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**18** Cp. Otto 1965, 196: 'The lord of dying and of the dead himself goes through the horror of destruction and, when it is time, must be summoned forth into the light from the abyss of eternal night.' Otto, like Kerényi 1976, sees Dionysos as a god of life-force, but emphasizes also the imagery of death. Other scholars have frequently attributed the identification of the two gods because of an association with the fertility of the crops. Burton 1972, 97: 'However the identification of the Dionysos and Osiris must have been assisted by the fact that both were pioneers of civilization and that both were associated with corn.' Cp. How/Wells 1949–1950 on Hdt. 2.42. For fertility in general, cp. Lloyd 1976, 220–222.

**19** Plu. *Is. et Os.* 364E–365A. Contrast Casadio 1996, 212: 'Le analogie più superficiali sono quelle relative al culto.'

**20** Specifically, as the bodily image of the soul of Osiris – *Is. et Os.* 362D: 'Most of the priests say that Osiris and Apis are conjoined into one, thus explaining to us and informing us that we must regard Apis as the bodily image of the soul of Osiris.' Cp. 359B, 368C.

**21** Plu. *Is. et Os.* 364E.

**22** Griffiths (1970, 431–432) puzzles over the comparison. He notes that Egyptian evidence does suggest a mourning procession for Apis with an elaborate procession (citing Spiegelberg ZÄS 56, 1920, *non vidi*), including fawnskins, shouts and cries, but worries over the difference in affect.

parallel in the tauriform statues of Dionysos in Greece, as well as in the ritual invocations of Dionysos as a bull. The women of Elis cry, ‘Axie taure,’ while the Argives summon the Bull-born Dionysos from the depths of the Lernaean Lake.

Herodotus identifies this Apis bull, not with Dionysos, but specifically with Epaphos, a fact of which Plutarch was certainly not ignorant.<sup>23</sup> For Herodotus, then, all the rituals celebrated for Apis, both the joyous celebrations of his appearance and the lamentations of his death, must have seemed to fit with Epaphos, although he never explains this particular identification, merely describing Apis in terms of his ritual celebrations.<sup>24</sup> He does, however, connect Dionysos with Osiris in a number of places, again largely through the parallels of ritual. Herodotus notes the special sacrifice of a pig to the Moon and Dionysos, as he calls Isis and Osiris.

τὴν δὲ ἄλλην ἀνάγουσι ὀρθὴν τῷ Διονύσῳ οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι πλὴν χορῶν κατὰ ταῦτὰ σχεδὸν πάντα Ἑλλήσι· ἀντὶ δὲ φαλλῶν ἄλλα σφι ἐστὶ ἐξευρημένα, ὅσον τε πηχυαῖα ἀγάλματα νευρόσπαστα, τὰ περιφορέουσι κατὰ κώμας γυναῖκες, νεῦον τὸ αἰδοῖον, οὐ πολλῶ τεῶ ἔλασσον ἔον τοῦ ἄλλου σώματος· προηγέεται δὲ αὐλός, αἱ δὲ ἔπονται ἀείδουσαι τὸν Διόνυσον.

The rest of the festival of Dionysos is observed by the Egyptians much as it is by the Greeks, except for the dances; but in place of the phallus, they have invented the use of puppets two feet high moved by strings, the male member nodding and nearly as big as the rest of the body, which are carried about the villages by women; a flute-player goes ahead, the women follow behind singing of Dionysos.<sup>25</sup>

This phallic ritual for Osiris, along with the procession of women singing to the aulos, convinces Herodotus that the Greeks got the worship of Dionysos from Egypt, and indeed he starts his whole theory of Greek religion derived from Egypt from his description of this ritual. Herodotus credits Melampus with the

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‘The Apis-burial was doubtless full of feeling, but it was sad. A “cry of lamentation” is enjoined; when the bier is drawn by the priests “all the people raise a great cry of lamentation.” A very different atmosphere, one would think, from that of the Dionysiac revel.’ (432).

**23** Hdt. 2.38, 2.153, 3.27–28. Plutarch’s familiarity with Herodotus is attested by his entire treatise on the historical method of Herodotus, as well as many other citations. Curiously, Plutarch does not mention Herodotus in his treatise on Isis and Osiris.

**24** Linforth 1910 cites a number of earlier scholars who tried to make the identification on the basis of the names, Epaphos with Egyptian *He-Papi*, but notes that the Greeks transliterated the Egyptian name as Apis. Linforth postulates that the identification of Io with Isis prompted the invention of a son for Io to correspond with the child of Isis.

**25** Hdt. 2.48.2. Griffiths notes *ad loc*, 220: ‘It is strange that H. should regard the absence of χοροί as the major difference between Eg. and Gk. rites in honour of Dionysos.’

borrowing, specifically citing the phallic processions.<sup>26</sup> Diodorus Siculus, on the other hand, credits Orpheus with the borrowing, devising an elaborate scheme by which Orpheus adapted the rites of Osiris to please Kadmos in Thebes.<sup>27</sup> The phallic rites are once again the key link in the identification for the Greek thinker.

διὸ καὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας, ἐξ Αἰγύπτου παρελιηφότας τὰ περὶ τοὺς ὄργιασμούς καὶ τὰς Διονυσιακὰς ἐορτάς, τιμᾶν τοῦτο τὸ μῦριον ἔν τε τοῖς μυστηρίοις καὶ ταῖς τοῦ θεοῦ τούτου τελεταῖς τε καὶ θυσίαις, ὀνομάζοντας αὐτὸ φαλλόν.

Consequently the Greeks too, inasmuch as they received from Egypt the celebrations of the orgies and the festivals connected with Dionysos, honor this member in both the mysteries and the initiatory rites and sacrifices of this god, giving it the name 'phallus.'<sup>28</sup>

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**26** Hdt. 2.49.1–2: δη ὧν δοκεῖ μοι Μελάμπους ὁ Ἄμυθέωνος τῆς θυσίης ταύτης οὐκ εἶναι ἀδαῆς ἀλλ' ἔμπειρος. Ἕλλησι γὰρ δὴ Μελάμπους ἐστὶ ὁ ἐξηγησάμενος τοῦ Διονύσου τὸ τε οὐνομα καὶ τὴν θυσίην καὶ τὴν πομπὴν τοῦ φαλλοῦ· ἀτρεκέως μὲν οὐ πάντα συλλαβῶν τὸν λόγον ἔφηνε, ἀλλ' οἱ ἐπιγενόμενοι τοῦτω σοφιστὰι μεζόνως ἐξέφηναν· τὸν δ' ὧν φαλλὸν τὸν τῷ Διονύσῳ πεμπόμενον Μελάμπους ἐστὶ ὁ κατηγησάμενος, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου μαθόντες ποιεῦσι τὰ ποιεῦσι Ἕλληνες. [2] ἐγὼ μὲν νυν φημί Μελάμποδα γενόμενον ἄνδρα σοφὸν μαντικὴν τε ἐωυτῷ συστήσαι καὶ πυθόμενον ἀπ' Αἰγύπτου ἄλλα τε πολλὰ ἐσηγήσασθαι Ἕλλησι καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον, ὀλίγα αὐτῶν παραλλάξαντα. οὐ γὰρ δὴ συμπεσεῖν γε φήσω τὰ τε ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ποιούμενα τῷ θεῷ καὶ τὰ ἐν τοῖσι Ἕλλησι ὁμότροπα γὰρ ἂν ἦν τοῖσι Ἕλλησι καὶ οὐ νεωστὶ ἐσηγμένα. 'Now then, it seems to me that Melampus son of Amytheon was not ignorant of but was familiar with this sacrifice. For Melampus was the one who taught the Greeks the name of Dionysos and the way of sacrificing to him and the phallic procession; he did not exactly unveil the subject taking all its details into consideration, for the teachers who came after him made a fuller revelation; but it was from him that the Greeks learned to bear the phallus along in honor of Dionysos, and they got their present practice from his teaching. [2] I say, then, that Melampus acquired the prophetic art, being a discerning man, and that, besides many other things which he learned from Egypt, he also taught the Greeks things concerning Dionysos, altering few of them; for I will not say that what is done in Egypt in connection with the god and what is done among the Greeks originated independently: for they would then be of an Hellenic character and not recently introduced.'

**27** D. S. 1.23.2: Ὀρφέα γὰρ εἰς Αἴγυπτον παραβαλόντα καὶ μετασχόντα τῆς τελετῆς καὶ τῶν Διονυσιακῶν μυστηρίων μεταλαβεῖν, τοῖς δὲ Καδμείοις φίλον ὄντα καὶ τιμώμενον ὑπ' αὐτῶν μεταθεῖναι τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν γένεσιν ἐκείνοις χαρίζομενον· τοὺς δ' ὄχλους τὰ μὲν διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν, τὰ δὲ διὰ τὸ βούλεσθαι τὸν θεὸν Ἕλληνα νομίζεσθαι, προσδέξασθαι προσηγῶς τὰς τελετὰς καὶ τὰ μυστήρια. For they say that Orpheus, upon visiting Egypt and participating in the initiation and mysteries of Dionysos, adopted them and as a favor to the descendants of Cadmus, since he was kindly disposed to them and received honors at their hands, transferred the birth of the god to Thebes; and the common people, partly out of ignorance and partly out of their desire to have the god thought to be a Greek, eagerly accepted his initiatory rites and mysteries.

**28** D. S. 1.22.7.

Diodorus' Euhemeristic theory of how the Egyptian god became worshipped in Greece naturally differs from Herodotus' idea of the diffusion of divine knowledge from Egypt to Greece, just as they both differ from the more complex theories of Plutarch, but they all ground their comparisons in the similarities of ritual actions. Plutarch speaks of a specific ritual of Pamyliia for Osiris that resembles the familiar phallic processions of Greece, and he cites this rite as part of his list of ritual proofs for Clea that Dionysos and Osiris are one and the same.<sup>29</sup>

Also in Plutarch's list is the rousing of Dionysos Liknites, the god in the *liknon* or winnowing basket. Servius tells us that the *liknon* in which the infant Dionysos was placed was identified with the *liknon* in which Isis placed the remains of Osiris after his dismemberment.<sup>30</sup> The *liknon* was used to carry first-fruits offerings, and, in some rituals, a phallus. Again, what seems significant to the ancient thinkers making the connections is the use of the *liknon*, not what exactly the *liknon* bears or what its contents signify.

The pieces of Osiris, Plutarch tells us, were buried in a number of tombs around Egypt, and various cities thus claim to be the place where the god is

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29 Plu. *Is. et Os.* 355E: τὴν τῶν Παμυλίων ἑορτὴν αὐτῷ τελεῖσθαι Φαλληφοροῖς ἐοικυῖαν. 'It is in his [Pamyles, who took in Osiris] honour that the festival of Pamyliia is celebrated, a festival which resembles the phallic processions.' Cp. 365B. On this Hellenized form of an Egyptian epithet for Osiris, see Griffiths 1970, 297–298 and Lloyd 1976, 223.

30 Serv. *Georg.* 1.165: *id est cribrum areale. mystica autem Iacchi ideo ait quod Liberi Patris sacra ad purgationem animae pertinebant: et sic homines eius Mysteriis purgabantur, sicut vannis frumenta purgantur. hinc est quod dicitur Osiridis membra a Typhone dilaniata Isis cribro superposuisse: nam idem est Liber Pater in cuius Mysteriis vannus est: quia ut diximus animas purgat. unde et Liber ab eo quod liberet dictus, quem Orpheus a gigantibus dicit esse discerptum. nonnulli Liberum Patrem apud Graecos Λικνίτην dici adferunt; vannus autem apud eos λίκνον nuncupatur; ubi deinde positus esse dicitur postquam est utero matris editus. alii mysticam sic accipiunt ut vannum vas vimineum latum dicant, in quod ipsi propter capacitatem congere rustici primitias frugum soleant et Libero et Liberae sacrum facere Inde mystica.* 'The mystic fan of Iacchus, that is the sieve (cribrum) of the threshing-floor. He calls it the mystic fan of Iacchus, because the rites of Father Liber had reference to the purification of the soul and men were purified through his mysteries as grain is purified by fans. It is because of this that Isis is said to have placed the limbs of Osiris, when they had been torn to pieces by Typhon, on a sieve, for Father Liber is the same person, he in whose mysteries the fan plays a part, because as we said he purifies souls. Whence he is also called Liber, because he liberates, and it is he who, Orpheus said, was torn asunder by the Giants. Some add that Father Liber was called by the Greeks Liknites. Moreover the fan is called by them liknon, in which he is said to have been placed directly after he was born from his mother's womb. Others explain its being called "mystic" by saying that the fan is a large wicker vessel in which peasants, because it is of large size, are wont to heap their first-fruits and consecrate it to Liber and Libera. Hence it is called "mystic".'

buried, as he notes, Delphi claims to be the burial place of Dionysos.<sup>31</sup> At Memphis in Egypt, Plutarch explains, the Apis bull is regarded as the image of the soul of Osiris and the name of the city itself is interpreted as ‘the tomb of Osiris.’<sup>32</sup> In addition to the joyous processions of the god’s arrival, then, there are also rituals associated with his death. Herodotus recounts the lamentations and beating of breasts that take place in the festival at Bousiris, although he feels that it would be profane to discuss the figure who is being lamented, most likely because he feels that this ritual is similar enough to one in Greece where it is inappropriate to talk about certain aspects of a ritual in a public context.<sup>33</sup> Herodotus has a similar objection to discussing Isis rites which remind him of Demeter’s Thesmophoria, and there is little reason to doubt that the lamentation rites for Osiris seem to him like Greek rites for Dionysos.<sup>34</sup> Diodorus says bluntly that ‘The rite of Osiris

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**31** Plu. *Is. et Os.* 358A, 365A: ἐκ τούτου δὲ καὶ πολλοὺς τάφους Ὀσίριδος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ λέγεσθαι διὰ τὸ προστυγχάνουσαν ἐκάστῳ μέρει ταφὰς ποιεῖν. οἱ δ’ οὐ φασιν, ἀλλ’ εἶδωλα ποιουμένην διδόναι καθ’ ἐκάστην πόλιν ὡς τὸ σῶμα διδοῦσαν ὅπως παρὰ πλείοσιν ἔχη τιμὰς. ... Αἰγύπτῳ τε γὰρ Ὀσίριδος πολλαχοῦ θήκας, ὡσπερ εἴρηται, δεκνύουσι, καὶ Δελφοὶ τὰ τοῦ Διονύσου λείψανα παρ’ αὐτοῖς παρὰ τὸ χρηστήριον ἀποκείσθαι νομίζουσι. ‘The traditional result of Osiris’s dismemberment is that there are many so-called tombs of Osiris in Egypt; for Isis held a funeral for each part when she had found it. Others deny this and assert that she caused effigies of him to be made and these she distributed among the several cities, pretending that she was giving them his body, in order that he might receive divine honours in a greater number of cities. ... The Egyptians, as has already been stated, point out tombs of Osiris in many places, and the people of Delphi believe that the remains of Dionysos rest with them close beside the oracle.’ Cp. Philoch. *FGrHist* 328 F 7b ap. Io. Mal. *Chron.* 2.44.21.

**32** Plu. *Is. et Os.* 359B: ἐν δὲ Μέμφει τρέφεσθαι τὸν Ἄπιν εἶδωλον ὄντα τῆς ἐκείνου ψυχῆς, ὅπου καὶ τὸ σῶμα κείσθαι· καὶ τὴν μὲν πόλιν οἱ μὲν ὄρμον ἀγαθῶν ἐρμηνεύουσιν, οἱ δ’ ἰδίως τάφον Ὀσίριδος. ‘In Memphis, however, they say, the Apis is kept, being the image of the soul of Osiris, whose body also lies there. The name of this city some interpret as “the haven of the good” and others as meaning properly the “tomb of Osiris”.’

**33** Hdt. 2.61.1: ταῦτα μὲν δὴ ταύτη ποιέεται, ἐν δὲ Βουσίρι πόλι ὡς ἀνάγουσι τῇ Ἴσι τὴν ὀρθήν, εἴρηται προτερόν μοι· τύπτονται μὲν γὰρ δὴ μετὰ τὴν θυσίην πάντες καὶ πᾶσαι, μυριάδες κάρτα πολλοὶ ἀνθρώπων· τὸν δὲ τύπτονται, οὐ μοι ὅσιον ἐστὶ λέγειν. ‘This is what they do there; I have already described how they keep the feast of Isis at Busiris. There, after the sacrifice, all the men and women lament, in countless numbers; but it is not pious for me to say who it is for whom they lament.’

**34** Hdt. 2.61.1. See Lloyd *ad loc.* for a reconstruction of the Egyptian ritual from the Egyptian sources. Lloyd points out that the Egyptians have a class of rites, that are kept out of the view of the public and performed only by priests. This category does not correspond with the Greek mysteria or with rites, like the Thesmophoria that Herodotus mentions in 2.171, which were deemed profane to speak of, even if they were celebrated with a fairly large group of people (e.g., the women of Athens).

is the same as that of Dionysos and that of Isis very similar to that of Demeter, the names alone have been interchanged.<sup>35</sup>

Plutarch compares the Greek rituals of the Titanika and the Nyktelia to the things related about the dismemberment of Osiris.<sup>36</sup> Of the Titanika, we know nothing more than the name, which does suggest a version of the dismemberment tale involving the Titans, but Pausanias mentions a temple of Dionysos Nyktelios in Megara, and various sources attest to rituals for Dionysos Nyktelios, so the Nyktelia seems to be a *polis* cult, performed with a certain degree of secrecy, like the Thesmophoria or the rites of the Gerarai at the Athenian Anthesteria.<sup>37</sup> Such rituals might indeed be the sort of Dionysos ritual Herodotus had in mind, not a private or sectarian mystery, but a community ritual whose sanctity must be respected.

The lamentations in the rites of Isis strike another ancient commentator as resembling the rites of Demeter, which involve a search for her lost child. Lactantius tells us that the priests of Isis lament and mourn the lost Osiris and seek him as Isis did in the myth.<sup>38</sup> This search resembles the search for Dionysos in various Greek rituals such as the Agrionia, and Sourvinou-Inwood has identified a ritual

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35 D. S. 1.96.5: τὴν μὲν γὰρ Ὀσίριδος τελετὴν τῆ Διονύσου τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι, τὴν δὲ τῆς Ἰσιδος τῆ τῆς Δήμητρος ὁμοιοτάτην ὑπάρχειν, τῶν ὀνομάτων μόνων ἐνηλλαγμένων.

36 Plu. *Is. et Os.* 364F: ὁμολογεῖ δὲ καὶ τὰ Τιτανικά καὶ Νυκτέλια τοῖς λεγομένοις Ὀσίριδος διασπασμοῖς καὶ ταῖς ἀναβιώσεσι καὶ παλιγγενεσίαις. 'Furthermore, the Titanika and the Nyktelia agree with the accounts of the dismemberment of Osiris and his revivification and regeneration.'

37 Paus. 1.40.6: ἔστι μὲν Διονύσου ναὸς Νυκτελίου, πεποιήται δὲ Ἀφροδίτης Ἐπιστροφίας ἱερὸν καὶ Νυκτὸς καλούμενόν ἐστι μαντεῖον καὶ Διὸς Κονίου ναὸς οὐκ ἔχων ὄροφον. 'There is a temple of Dionysos Nyctelios, a sanctuary built to Aphrodite Epistrophia, an oracle called that of Night and a temple of Zeus Conius without a roof.' For Dionysos Nyktelios, Plu. *Quaest. Rom. et Gr.* 291A, mentions that Dionysiac ivy is used in the nocturnal rites of the Agrionia and Nyktelia, Ἀγριωνίος δὲ καὶ Νυκτελίου, ὧν τὰ πολλὰ διὰ σκότους δρᾶται, πάρεστιν. Nyktelios is also one of the names given to the dismembered Dionysos in Plu. *De E ap. Delph.* 388E. The nocturnal rites are designated mysteries in *EM s.v.* Νυκτέλιος: Ὁ Διόνυσος, ᾧ νύκτωρ τὰ μυστήρια ἐπιτελεῖται. The term 'mysteries' here, however, need not imply a private cult rather than a *polis* festival.

38 Lact. *Div. Inst. Epit.* 23: *Isidis sacra nihil aliud ostendunt, nisi quemadmodum filium parvum, qui dicitur Osiris, perdiderit et invenerit. nam primo sacerdotes ac ministri, derasis omnibus membris, tunsisque pectoribus, plangunt, dolent, quaerunt, affectum matris imitantes; postmodum puer per Cynocephalum invenitur. sic luctuosa sacra laetitia terminantur. his etiam Cereris simile mysterium est, in quo, facibus accensis, per noctem Proserpina inquiritur, et ea inventa, ritus omnis gratulatione ac taedarum jactatione finitur.* 'The sacred rites of Isis show nothing else than the manner in which she lost and found her little son, who is called Osiris. For first her priests and attendants, having shaved all their limbs, and beating their breasts, howl, lament, and search, imitating the manner in which his mother was affected; afterwards the boy is found by Cynocephalus. Thus the mournful rites are ended with gladness. The mystery of Ceres also resembles these, in which torches are lighted, and Proserpine is sought for through the night; and

schema involving such a search that plays out in different ways in different places, with different figures as the object of the search.<sup>39</sup> This kind of ritual search amid lamentation evokes another set of Greek identifications with Egyptian rituals. According to Plutarch, the rites of Isis include lamentations for another figure, Maneros, a child who dies while Isis is mourning Osiris. Accounts vary as to how this happened: he disturbed Isis while mourning and died when she looked on him in anger or perhaps he just fell off the boat while they were travelling together; his younger brother in any case had perished from the dreadful wail that Isis gave when disturbed in her process of trying to immortalize their youngest brother in her capacity as nursemaid to the royal family at Byblos. Again, what is striking about these tales is that why and how the boy died (and even which brother is lamented) – is unimportant; what is important is that he is lamented in the ritual.<sup>40</sup> Herodotus identifies Maneros as the Egyptian Linos, the youth lamented in the Linos song, a harvest song mentioned as early as Homer.<sup>41</sup> Although some stories have Linos killed because of his musical talents, in Argos Linos is lamented as the young prince who was torn apart in the midst of a

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when she has been found, the whole rite is finished with congratulations and the throwing about of torches.’

**39** Plu. *Quaest. Conv.* 716F–717A: οὐ φαύλως οὖν καὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν ἐν τοῖς Ἀγριωνίοις τὸν Διόνυσον αἱ γυναῖκες ὡς ἀποδεδρακότα ζητοῦσιν, εἶτα παύονται καὶ λέγουσιν ὅτι πρὸς τὰς Μούσας καταπέφυγεν καὶ κέκρυπται παρ’ ἐκείναις. ‘It is not an accident that in the Agrionia, as it is celebrated here, the women search for Dionysos as though he had run away, then desist and say that he has taken refuge with the Muses and is hidden among them.’ Cp. Paus. 3.22.2 for Dionysos at Larysion, Str. 12.4.3 for Hylas, and Paus. 1.43.2 for Demeter seeking Kore at Megara. Sourvinou-Inwood 2005, 346–351.

**40** Plu. *Is. et Os.* 357E. Maneros, Plutarch adds, may not even be the name of a person, but simply an expression, wishing for happiness.

**41** Hdt. 2.79.1–3: τοῖσι ἄλλα τε ἐπάξια ἐστὶ νόμιμα, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἄεισμα ἓν ἐστί, Λίνος, ὅσπερ ἐν τε Φοινίκῃ ἀοιδίμος ἐστὶ καὶ ἐν Κύπρῳ καὶ ἄλλῃ, κατὰ μέντοι ἔθνεα οὐνόμα ἔχει, συμφέρεται δὲ ὡυτὸς εἶναι τὸν οἱ Ἕλληνας Λίνον ὀνομάζοντες ἀείδουσι, ὥστε πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἄλλα ἀποθωμάζειν με τῶν περὶ Αἴγυπτον ἐόντων, ἐν δὲ δὴ καὶ τὸν Λίνον ὀκόθεν ἔλαβον τὸ οὐνόμα· φαίνονται δὲ αἰεὶ κοτε τοῦτον ἀείδοντες, ἔστι δὲ Αἴγυπτιστὶ ὁ Λίνος καλεῦμενος Μανερῶς. ἔφασαν δὲ μιν Αἴγυπτιοὶ τοῦ πρώτου βασιλεύσαντος Αἴγυπτου παῖδα μουνογενέα γενέσθαι, ἀποθανόντα δὲ αὐτὸν ἄνωρον θρήνοισι τοῦτοις ὑπὸ Αἴγυπτίων τιμηθῆναι, καὶ ἀοιδίῃν τε ταύτην πρώτην καὶ μούνην σφίσι γενέσθαι. ‘Among other notable customs of theirs is this, that they have one song, the Linus-song, which is sung in Phoenicia and Cyprus and elsewhere; each nation has a name of its own for this, but it happens to be the same song that the Greeks sing, and call Linus; so that of many things in Egypt that amaze me, one is: where did the Egyptians get Linus? Plainly they have always sung this song; but in Egyptian Linus is called Maneros. The Egyptians told me that Maneros was the only son of their first king, who died prematurely, and this dirge was sung by the Egyptians in his honor; and this, they said, was their earliest and their only chant.’

hunting expedition.<sup>42</sup> Herodotus remarks in amazement that everyone around the Mediterranean (Cyprus, Phoenicia and even elsewhere) seems to have a song like this, and Pausanias makes a similar comment, although he thinks that the lament for Linos spread around the world, even to the Egyptians, who call him Maneros.<sup>43</sup> Later sources include the Maneros and Linos songs in a list of work songs sung at the harvest, along with the Aletis song for Erigone and epilenaia songs sung at the vintage.<sup>44</sup> The scholiast to Clement, in defining ληναῖζοντας, refers to the rustic song sung at the wine trough, the ληνός, having to do with the dismemberment of Dionysos, again presumably a lament.<sup>45</sup> The ancient Greek religious thinkers, then, identified Maneros and Linos and perhaps even Dionysos Lenaios, on the basis of the ritual lamentation performed for them.

Again, the insignificance, for the ancient classifiers, of the crucial details of the story is striking to the modern scholar. It doesn't really matter who Linos or Maneros was, whether he was torn apart by his grandfather's hounds or fell overboard from Isis' funeral barge. Was Dionysos torn apart by Titans as an infant or Epaphos killed while hunting with the Curetes? Is it the harvest of the grain or the trampling of the grapes? For the ancient thinkers who make the identifications, these questions seem not to be of primary concern. The experience of the mourning ritual, the women lamenting and beating their breasts, the haunting wail of the song, that is what prompts them to identify the figures. So too, the exuberant processions, flaunting phalluses, and ecstatic cries that are found in rituals to Osiris or Apis in Egypt cause Herodotus, Diodorus, and Plutarch to identify them with Dionysos, since Dionysos too has rituals with such experiences in various places in Greece.

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42 Argive women and maidens in an annual festival lamented the death of Linos, who was torn apart as a youth by his maternal grandfather's hunting dogs (Call. fr. 26–31 Pf.).

43 Paus. 9.29.7: ἀποθανόντος δὲ τοῦ Λίνου τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῷ πένθος διήλθεν ἄρα καὶ ἄχρι τῆς βαρβάρου πάσης, ὡς καὶ Αἰγυπτίους ἄσμα γενέσθαι Λίνου· καλοῦσι δὲ τὸ ἄσμα Αἰγύπτιοι τῆ ἐπιχωρίῳ φωνῇ Μανέρων. 'On the death of Linos, mourning for him spread, it seems, to all the foreign world, so that even among the Egyptians there came to be a Linos song, in the Egyptian language called Maneros.'

44 Ath. 14.618c–620a and Poll. 4.52–53 list terms for many kinds of working songs, such as the harvest οὔλος or ἴουλος and those named after Βώριμος, Μανέρως, Λιτυέρσης and Ἡριγόνη (Ἀλήτις); winnowing songs (πιιστικόν or πιισμός); vintage songs (ἐπιλήνια).

45 Sch. Clem. Al. *Prot.* 1.2.2, p. 297.4–8. Note that the Aletis song was defined as a lament for the death of Erigone, who wandered in search of her murdered father, but also as Persephone, cp. *EM s.v.* Ἀλήτις (62.9).



## 4 Conclusion

We could dismiss these identifications as ‘superficial,’ stemming either from a blatant disregard of the ‘real’ meaning for the sake of the argument or from a desire to hide the true doctrines on which the identifications are ‘really’ being made. But the recurrence of this return to ritual to make the identifications should prompt us to reconsider the very way in which the ancient Greeks thought about their religion – their gods and their relations with them. We should take Plutarch seriously when he claims, after reviewing the opinions of many learned religious thinkers, that ‘the fact is that the peculiarities already mentioned regarding the festival and sacrifices carry a conviction more manifest than any testimony of authorities’ – the ritual similarities are the most important part of the argument.<sup>46</sup>

Such a weighting of the experience of the ritual over the religious doctrine signified by the festival seems counterintuitive to modern scholars of religion, but recent anthropological studies of religion by Whitehouse and others have shown that many cultures have a mode of religious transmission that works quite differently from the doctrinal mode to which we are accustomed, an ‘imagistic’ mode that relies on what Burkert has called ‘the extraordinary experience.’<sup>47</sup> Rather than regular forms of ceremony that include recitation of texts that reinforce the memory of particular doctrines and ideas, in imagistic religious contexts:

virtually no attempt was made to communicate religious ideas as bodies of doctrine. Revelations were codified in iconic imagery, transmitted primarily through the choreography of collective ritual performances. Religious representations were structured as sets of revelatory images connected by loose (and somewhat fluid) thematic associations, rather than as cohering strings of logically connected dogma.<sup>48</sup>

Such a set of images connected by loose associations describes quite well the nature of the evidence from the Greek-Egyptian context. The significance of the religious experience depends not on understanding the meaning of the myth or ritual but upon the vivid images of the myth (the goddess wailing for her lost loved one) or the extraordinary experience of the rite itself. That is to say, it is the similarity of the experience of the phallic procession or the ritual laments and search for the lost one that truly does matter most to the ancient Greek interpreter and thus truly is the most solid ground upon which he can explain a comparison of Greek and Egyptian rituals to a Greek audience.

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**46** Plu. *Is. et Os.* 365F: αἱ γὰρ εἰρημένα περὶ τὰς ἑορτὰς καὶ τὰς θυσίας οἰκειότητες ἐναργεστέραν τῶν μαρτύρων τὴν πίστιν ἔχουσι.

**47** Burkert 1987, 89–114.

**48** Whitehouse 2000, 14.

The connection of Dionysos to Apis and Osiris implied by the epithet *Epaphie* in the Hymn therefore does not depend on the identification of some chthonic or underworldly aspect of Dionysos. Indeed, it is striking, when examining the ancient testimonies that connect the deities, to note the absence of connections made between Osiris as ruler of the dead and Dionysos, the first connection made by most modern scholars. The ancient thinkers who identified the gods did so primarily on the basis of the kinds of ritual experiences associated with the two figures, not on the basis of a classification like chthonic or Olympian. Diodorus identifies Epaphos as the Egyptian Dionysos, not as the ruler of the dead or the one who conquers death, but as the one responsible for the rites in Egypt.<sup>49</sup> In Euripides' *Phoinissai*, the Theban chorus invokes Epaphos as the child of Io, who is the προμάτωρ of all the Thebans. Epaphos is thus an ancestor of Dionysos, an Egyptian child of Zeus who must be invoked by a barbarian (Egyptian) cry, hailed with foreign prayers and rites.<sup>50</sup>

By the time of Plutarch and the Orphic Hymn, the identification has become traditional; Plutarch can dismiss Mnaseas' presumably learned and lengthy identification of Dionysos, Osiris, and Serapis to Epaphos with a brief mention, while the Orphic Hymn tosses in the epithet, *Epaphie*, among a long string of other identifications for the god. To invoke Dionysos as Epaphian, then, is to evoke the kind of rituals for Dionysos which Greek thinkers for centuries had connected with rites of Osiris and Apis in Egypt, joyous processions celebrating the arrival of the god and mournful searches and lamentations for the absent god. Such rituals may indeed have been the same as those evoked by the epithet *Lenaie*, the aspect of Dionysos to whom the hymn is addressed. My investigation of the epithet, *Epaphie*, by means of the comparisons made by Greek thinkers such as Herodotus, Diodorus, and Plutarch, suggests that modern scholars need to take such ritual connections more seriously and abandon the attempts to find doctrinal

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49 D. S. 3.74.1: τὸν δὲ δευτέρων φασιν ἐξ Ἰοῦς τῆς Ἰνάχου Διὶ γενόμενον βασιλεῦσαι μὲν τῆς Αἰγύπτου, καταδείξει δὲ τὰς τελετάς. 'The second Dionysos, as men say, who was born to Zeus by Io, the daughter of Inachus, became king of Egypt and appointed the initiatory rites of that land.'

50 E. Ph. 676–689: καὶ σέ, τὸν προμάτορος / Ἰοῦς ποτ' ἔκγονον / Ἰεραφον, ὃ Διὸς γένεθλον, / [ἐκάλες] ἐκάλεσα βαρβάρῳ βοᾷ, / ἰώ, βαρβάρους λιταῖς· Ἰβᾶθι βᾶθι τάνδε γᾶν· – σοὶ νιν ἔκγονοι κτίσαν· καὶ διώνυμοι θεαί, | Περσέφρασσα καὶ φίλα / Δαμάτηρ θεά, / πάντων ἄνασσα, πάντων δὲ Γᾶ τροφός, / κτήσαντο – πέμπε πυρφόρους / θεάς, ἄμυνε τᾶδε γᾶ· / πάντα δ' εὐπετὴ θεοίς. 'And you, Epaphus, born from Io, our first mother, and child of Zeus: you I summon in foreign cry, oh! in foreign prayers: come, come to this land; your descendants settled here; and the goddesses of twofold name, Persephone and the kindly goddess Demeter the queen of all, Earth the nurse of all, won it for themselves; send to the help of this land those torch-bearing goddesses; for to gods all things are easy.'

significance in the myths of Dionysos, especially the dismembered Dionysos whose rites, Herodotus and Diodorus tells us, were brought from Egypt.

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# Redefining Dionysos

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