Antón Alvar Nuño / Clelia Martínez Maza /
Jaime Alvar Ezquerra (Eds.)

Calling Upon Gods, Offering Bodies

Strategies of Human-Divine
Communication in the Roman Empire.
From Individual Experience to Social Reproduction

PETER LANG

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This volume aims at analysing how self-experience of religious communication becomes a reflexive phenomenon reproduced in time and space to constitute a collectively shared narrative. The issues addressed in this volume investigate how individual, creative micro-strategies of communication with the gods became established patterns of behaviour, to what extent individual behaviour was mediated by cultural constraints, or why individual biographies of divine experience became *exempla* and identity markers.

The different chapters of this volume explore human-divine communication through three different study-cases: linguistic communication and, specially, the role and processes of construction of divine epithets; the use of the body as a tool for communication with the supernatural; and the role of objects in the human-divine communicative act.

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Lausanne - Berlin - Bruxelles - Chennai - New York - Oxford

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Divine Onomastic Attributes in the Graeco-Roman World. Proposal for a New Taxonomy

Abstract: This paper takes as its start point previous work on the classification of cult epithets and onomastic sequences, using this foundation to develop a new taxonomy that is "thematic" rather than "functional". In doing so, it focuses on the diverse meanings that divine epithets could encompass in the Graeco-Roman world. The taxonomy advanced here seeks to capture the multifaceted aspects of divine onomastic attributes, adapted to the sense they have in the specific social and religious contexts in which they occur. This approach not only assists in the interpretation of inscriptions, but also sheds light on both the evolving ways in which individuals communicated with the divine and the motivations behind their selection of specific onomastic attributes. The proposed taxonomy is an interrelated hierarchical schema that includes three main levels (environmental, divine, and human) with several subcategories. We argue that this taxonomy offers valuable insights into the intentional use of epithets, enriching our understanding of the mechanisms by which divine onomastic chains were constructed, and thereby enhancing our understanding of ancient religious beliefs and practices.

Keywords: Cult epithets, Divine onomastic, Gods, Names, Polytheism.

This article intends to present a synthesis of the methodological results of the research project *Epítetos divinos. Experiencia religiosa y relaciones de poder en Hispania* (EPIDI), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, and developed at the Institute of Historiography "Julio Caro Baroja" of the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (2018–2021).[1]

    The overall aim of EPIDI has been the analysis of the gods' onomastic attributes as a means of constructing the divine in relation to contingent forms of political

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organisation in *Hispania*, with particular emphasis on the interplay between individual creativity and social normativity. Within this general framework, the project has pursued three specific goals: (1) to establish the degree of interaction between individual and social agency by analysing, on the one hand, social patterns that have been influenced by individual innovations and, on the other, religious modifications clearly influenced by the social context; (2) to explore how women's agency is reflected in their use of divine epithets; (3) to compare the results of the analysis of the Hispanic documentation with that of other Latin-speaking areas of the Western Mediterranean, in particular North Africa.

In order to achieve these goals, the entire epigraphic record of the divine epithets attested in the three Roman provinces of *Hispania* (a total of ca. 1.300 inscriptions) has been collected into a database called *Divine Epithets in Hispania* (*DEpHis*) and housed in the open-access web-publishing platform Omeka S provided by the Library of Humanities, Communication and Documentation at UC3M.[2]

The same platform has served to build a second database, the *Sylloge Inscriptionum Religionis Africae Romanae* (*SIRAR*),[3] which contains the ca. 5.800 Greek, Latin and Neo-Punic religious inscriptions of Roman Africa collected within the framework of the research project *Lived Ancient Religion in North Africa* (LARNA).[4] Only occasionally have the onomastic items from the Iberian Peninsula been studied in comparison with others belonging to different territories, either in the Western or Eastern Mediterranean, in Latin as well as in Greek. Thanks to the synergy between EPIDI and LARNA, and the collation

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2   https://humanidadesdigitales.uc3m.es/s/DEPHis/page/inicio. On this database see now Alvar Ezquerra, 2020. This platform also includes three other databases of epigraphic and archaeological material: *La* gens isiaca *en Hispania* (https://www.uc3m.es/bibliot eca/colecciones/gens-isiaca-hispania), *Mitra en Hispania* (https://humanidadesdigita les.uc3m.es/s/mitra/page/inicio), and *Los cultos de Mater Magna y Atis en Hispania* (https://humanidadesdigitales.uc3m.es/s/mater-magna-y-atis-en-hispania); open-access catalogues of the material evidence for the Isiac and Mithraic cults in the Iberian Peninsula, as well as those of Mater Magna and Attis, published in Alvar Ezquerra, 2012, 2019, and 2022c, respectively.

3   https://humanidadesdigitales.uc3m.es/s/sirar/page/inicio.

4   2017-T1/HUM-5709 (PI: Valentino Gasparini). The LARNA project has been funded by the Autonomous Community of Madrid (Aids for the Attraction of Research Talent, 2018–2021). Some of the results of this project have already been published in Gasparini, 2020, 2021, and Forthcoming; Gasparini and Mastino, 2021; Alvar Ezquerra, Bonnet and Gasparini, Forthcoming; Fernández Portaencasa and Gasparini, Forthcoming.

of their respective databases, it has finally been possible to collect a significant sample of divine epithets.

This contribution does not present a detailed analysis of the power-related epithets in ancient *Hispania*,[5] but will adumbrate the methodological perspective developed throughout the entire course of research. The identification and definition of such an onomastic category cannot be undertaken as if it were an isolated phenomenon. From the very beginning, therefore, we have had to consider from a broader perspective all the possible strategies of naming the gods in Graeco-Roman polytheism. The development of a theoretical framework for the study of the divine onomastic attributes that we will present has, in turn, required a survey of the *status quaestionis* on this topical, but still largely unexplored, area of research.

1 The State of Research

It is a well-known fact that names played a crucial role in the definition and characterisation of the gods, defining them individually as well as in relation to each other, both in mythical narratives and in ritual practice.[6] Within these two spheres, though more prominently in religious praxis, gods were not simply designated by their theonym or proper name, but also by various surnames, nicknames or alternative appellatives with vastly different meanings that we commonly group under the rubric "epithets". Through the use of countless combinations of theonyms and attributes of widely different kinds, ancient people shaped and communicated with the multiple and mercurial divine *puissances* inhabiting the Graeco-Roman world.[7]

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5   This is the topic of the contributions by J. Alvar Ezquerra and J.C. López-Gómez , and B. Pañeda Murcia in this volume, pp. 119–147 and 149–214, as well as of the other references quoted above at p. 17, n. 1.

6   The first actual treatment of divine onomastics can be traced back to Usener, 1896. Cf. Scheid and Svenbro, 2005. More recent works include Gernet and Boulanger, 1970, 221–231; Gladigow, 1981; Borgeaud, 1996; Brulé, 1998; Parker, 2003; Belayche, Brulé, Freyburger et al., 2005; Parker, 2005; Brulé and Lebreton, 2007; Belayche and Brulé, 2010; Paul, 2010; Lebreton, 2016; Parker, 2017a and 2017b. The earliest database of Greek theonyms and epithets was created by the Centre de Recherche en Archéologie, Archéosciences, Histoire (CReAAH) of the University of Rennes (https://epiclesesg recques.univ-rennes1.fr). Other lists of epithets for specific gods are included, for example, in Schwabl, 1972 (Zeus) and Pirenne-Delforge, 1994 (Aphrodite).

7   The problem of the unity or plurality of the divine figure to whom different epithets are attributed has been treated extensively in Parker, 2003, 175 and 182, and Versnel, 2011, 60–87. Unity and plurality seem to be valid answers only depending on the context, as

It is precisely the complexity and extreme variety of forms of naming the gods in ritual communication, ranging from the simple theonym to lengthy sequences of grammatically and semantically diverse onomastic elements, that reveal the insufficiency and inoperability of the analytical category of the so-called "double cult name", i.e. the binomial "theonym + epithet/epiclesis", traditionally employed in the study of divine onomastics.[8] This binomial system, which specifically refers to the composite names under which the gods were worshipped,[9] combines the proper name of a god (generally in the first position) with a determinative (most often an adjective, but nouns, participles, and even phrasal units, also occur), either singling out a unique aspect of a deity or generically describing the deity's nature. It thus assigns to the theonym a dominant role as head of the binomial formula, assuming that it encapsulates the identity of the deity, whereas the dependent epithet merely qualifies it.

However, this supposed hierarchical relationship between the two elements is open to question. Firstly, it is very common for more than two appellatives to form a god's name, nor is the theonym necessarily placed first in the sequence. Secondly, in ancient sources, the theonym is quite often omitted and replaced by one or several epithets, which thus function independently of the theonym and constitute the principal or full name of a divinity in a given context (e.g. *Dea Syria* for Atargatis, *Dea Sancta Turibrigensis* for the Lusitanian Ataecina, etc.). In view of this, the idea that the theonym identifies and the epithet qualifies the divine appears overly simplistic and inexact, as the epithet itself may suffice to name a divinity.[10] Moreover, two or more onomastic elements can simply be juxtaposed on equal terms without any priority given to one or the other. This is the case, for example, with the association of two or more theonyms

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clearly expressed by Parker, 2003, 182: "[i]n different contexts the worshippers treats Zeus Meilichios both as a quite different figure from Zeus Basileus and as the same under a different aspect; and he is never forced finally to choose between the two perspectives".

8   Brulé, 1998, 2007a; Parker, 2003; Brulé and Lebreton, 2007, 220.

9   It is widely assumed that, in narrative and in everyday speech and oaths, the usual way of naming the gods was the simple theonym, in contrast with the almost ubiquitous presence of epithets alongside the theonyms in human-divine communication: Brulé, 1998, 17; Parker, 2003, 180; Brulé and Lebreton, 2007, 220.

10 Bonnet, Bianco, Galoppin et al., 2018, 589.

in cross-cultural "translations" of gods, such as Astarte Aphrodite, Apollo Harpocrates, or Ataecina Proserpina.[11]

Given the diversity of grammatical categories, meanings, and rhetorical functions of the onomastic elements composing a god's name, their multiplicity and variable ordering, and the frequent omission of the theonym itself, we need to develop more flexible and inclusive definitions and analytical categories that properly articulate the complex systems of divine nomenclature and can be applied to different polytheistic cultures. Important steps in this direction have already been taken by the project *Mapping Ancient Polytheisms* (MAP). *Cult Epithets as an Interface between Religious Systems and Human Agency* (2017–2023), coordinated by Corinne Bonnet at the University of Toulouse.[12] From a Greek and Western Semitic comparative perspective and on a long-term scale (ca. 1000 BCE – 400 CE), this research project aimed at understanding how ancient people, using variable appellatives in multiple combinations, conceived and shaped networks of multifaceted and fluid divine powers in religious practice. To this end, the MAP team has created a sophisticated conceptual and methodological apparatus that helps to grasp the mechanisms of construction of the divine as activated by naming strategies, the role of the gods' names in human-divine communication, and how the usage of divine appellatives sheds light on the relationship between normative regulation and personal experience.

The MAP theoretical approach starts out by evaluating the validity and usefulness of the traditional historiographical notions of "theonym", "epithet" and "epiclesis", all *etic* categories with no clear counterpart in ancient sources.[13] Therefore, in order to present the breakthroughs of the MAP project and, subsequently, EPIDI's own contribution to the study of divine onomastics, we

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11 On the different naming strategies relating to processes of *interpretatio*, see Parker, 2017a, 42–46. See also Parker, 2017b for the different types of onomastic sequences involving the juxtaposition of two or more theonyms.

12 FP7/2016, n° 741182. Some of the results of this project have already been published in several books and articles: Bonnet, 2017; Bonnet et al., 2018; Bonnet and Bianco, 2018; Bonnet, Bianco, Galoppin et al., 2019; Lebreton and Bonnet, 2019; Bonnet, 2021; Bonnet, Galoppin and Grand-Clément, 2021; Galoppin and Bonnet 2021. See also the website of the project (https://map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr) and its database of onomastic attributes in the Greek and Semitic worlds (https://base-map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr/login).

13 The ancient Greek and Latin terminology relating to divine names requires a separate specific study, as noted by Bonnet et al., 2018, 586, as well as by Lebreton and Bonnet, 2019, 272.

need to review the scholarly usages of these concepts in previous literature. By doing so, we will be able to assess the relevance of these notions, as well as of the various classifications of divine epithets deployed in modern historiography.

Epithets have commonly been subject to a twofold classification: firstly, a categorisation based on their literary or cultic origin and context of use, and their rhetorical *function*; secondly, a *thematic* arrangement according to their meaning.[14]

1.1 The "Functional" Classification

Scholars have traditionally distinguished between two main categories of divine epithets: "poetic" epithets, i.e. onomastic attributes qualifying or replacing the theonym of a deity that originate and are mainly used in poetry, and possess a descriptive, ornamental, mythological, honorific, or euphemistic value (e.g. Kore, i.e. "Maiden" for Persephone, and Pluto—derived from πλοῦτος, "wealth"—for Hades); and epithets or epicleses which, in their broadest sense, can be defined as attributes originating in the context of ritual practice.[15] "Poetic" attributes may of course also appear in cultic contexts, including hymns and votive epigrams, but always according to the above-mentioned strategy: they do not specify the nature or a particular aspect under which a divinity is worshipped, which is, on the contrary, the function commonly attributed to the "cult" epithets. In the same way, "cult" epithets may appear also in literature, but in specific relation to cult practices and language.[16] Both types of attributes can be adjectives, nouns, or syntagms, and can occasionally take the place of the theonym itself.

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14 One can also differentiate between local, regional and transregional cult epithets, as well as between those specific to a single deity and those shared by several gods, the so-called "*épiclèses trans-divines*" or "trans-god epithets": Brulé, 1998, 30–31; Parker, 2003, 174; Paul, 2010. We consider these distinctions irrelevant for the purposes of the EPIDI project.

15 The very first assessment of Greek "poetic" epithets is in Bruchmann, 1893, followed by Parry, 1928 (English translation: Parry, 1971). Rudhardt (1992 [1958], 90) clearly distinguished "poetic" from "cult" epithets. Subsequent scholars have generally accepted this differentiation and defined it in more detail: Parker, 2003, 173; Brulé and Lebreton, 2007, 220–223; Graf, 2010, 67; Lebreton, 2013, 9; 2016; Rose and Hornblower, 2016; Parker, 2017a, 2–32. Some recent studies still seek to organise and explain in this way the function of epithets in Homeric poetry: see the monumental work of Dee, 1994, 2001 and 2010, and Edmunds, 2019. For the divine epithets appearing in the Orphic hymns, see now Marcos Macedo, Kölligan and Barbieri, 2021.

16 Parker, 2003; Brulé and Lebreton, 2007.

As with the differentiation between theonyms and epithets, the distinction between "poetic" and "cult" epithets is essentially *etic* and operational. Nonetheless, some scholars find support for it in ancient sources, particularly in the following passage of Pausanias:

> "In the case of Poseidon, apart from the names (ὀνόματα) which poets have invented for him to adorn their verses and the local names (ἐπιχώρια [ὀνόματα]) which each community gives him privately for itself, the epithets (ἐπικλήσεις) which are in general use are Pelagaios and Asphalios and Hippios".[17]

Pausanias distinguishes between three types of ὀνόματα of the god according to their sphere and scope of application: poetic usages, epichoric or local appellatives, and those known to everyone independently of literary register or place of origin.

The terms ὄνομα and ἐπίκλησις are used in this passage interchangeably to refer to the alternative names of Poseidon that occur in different spheres, even though ὄνομα, by definition, has the more encompassing and generic meaning of "name" (of a person, a god, a place, or a thing), and can thus designate a full name or a part of it, principal or secondary.[18] Conversely, the term ἐπίκλησις was primarily used by ancient authors (since Homer), along with the noun ἐπωνυμία, to refer to the surnames or nicknames of the gods that we now call epithets.[19] By contrast, the Greek ἐπίθετον was never used in antiquity to designate such divine appellatives, nor indeed was the Latin *epithetum*, for both nouns were essentially employed linguistically with the general meaning of "adjective".[20] With regard to this terminology, Robert Parker notes that "the commonest word for a god's

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17 Paus., 7.21.7: Ποσειδῶνι δὲ παρὲξ ἢ ὁπόσα ὀνόματα ποιηταῖς πεποιημένα ἐστὶν ἐς ἐπῶν κόσμον καὶ ἰδίᾳ σφίσιν ἐπιχώρια ὄντα ἕκαστοι τίθενται, τοσαίδε ἐς ἅπαντας γεγόνασιν ἐπικλήσεις αὐτῷ, Πελαγαῖος καὶ Ἀσφάλιός τε καὶ Ἵππιος (transl. by Parker, 2003, 173). Parker (2003, 173; 2017a, 10) considers that this passage roughly justifies the distinction between "cult" and "poetic" epithets; *contra* Pirenne-Delforge, 1998a, 140–141 and 2008, 63–264; Lebreton and Bonnet, 2019, 273. See also Bonnet and Pironti, 2021.

18 LSJ, s.v. "ὄνομα".

19 LSJ, s.v. "ἐπίκλησις" and "ἐπωνυμία". Cf. Brulé and Lebreton, 2007, p. 219. Both words are polysemic, and, in their sense of "denomination", are not used exclusively of the names of the gods, nor are they strictly synonymous. Ἐπωνυμία seems to have a more encompassing signification than ἐπίκλησις, since it can designate the principal or full name of a god, in addition to its surname or nickname.

20 LSJ, s.v. "ἐπίθετος"; TLL, s.v. "*epithetum*". Ἐπίθετον is first employed as a synonym of ἐπίκλησις, and ἐπωνυμία in the *Etymologicum Magnum* of the 12th century.

epithet in Pausanias is ἐπίκλησις, whereas in earlier writers such as Herodotus it is ἐπωνυμία: both words are used of divine epithets of all types, cultic and poetic".[21]

Ἐπίκλησις also had the meaning of "invocation" or "calling upon", preserved in some modern languages such as English, French, and Spanish, where it designates the part of the Christian mass dedicated to the invocation of the Holy Spirit.[22] This latter meaning seems to be key to understanding why, while in ancient sources ἐπίκλησις designates both "poetic" and "cult" epithets, many scholars have adopted it to refer exclusively to the category of "cult" epithets, some defining it as a ritual "surname" or "name of invocation".[23] The word ἐπωνυμία has not been similarly appropriated.[24] In French historiography in particular, ἐπίκλησις is used to denote "cult-epithet", a usage apparently motivated by its second signification of ritual "invocation" of the divine.[25] By contrast, English and German authors prefer to use "cult-epithet" / "kultisches Epitheton", with "epiclesis" occurring only occasionally in English and German scholarship.[26]

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21 Parker, 2003, 173, no. 3.

22 *Collins Dictionary*, s.v. "epiclesis"; *Larousse Dictionnaire de Français*, s.v. "épiclèse"; *Biblia.work*, s.v. "epíclesis".

23 Graf, 2010, p. 67.

24 Brulé and Lebreton (2007, 219) and Lebreton and Bonnet (2019, 274) explicitly state that the preference for "epiclesis" rather than "eponymia" in modern literature is due to the fact that "epiclesis" also expresses invocation.

25 Brulé and Lebreton 2007, 218–219. The collective volume *Nommer les Dieux. Théonymes, épithètes, épiclèses dans l'Antiquité* (Belayche et al., 2005), a milestone in recent research into divine onomastics, distinguishes in its title between (literary) epithets and (cult) epicleses.

26 Bonnet et al., 2018, 575. The bilingual titles of Sylvain Lebreton's works are significant in this regard, since they translate the French "épiclèse" with the English "cult-epithet": "(Sur)nommer les dieux. Étude quantitative et qualitative du polythéisme hellénique à travers ses épiclèses" / "(By)naming the Gods. Quantitative and Qualitative Study of Ancient Greek Polytheism through its Cult-Epithets" (unpublished paper, presented in the *5th Day of Belgian Archaeological Research in the Greek World*, 4th March 2015); "À la recherche des figures chthoniennes de Zeus parmi ses épiclèses, en Attique et ailleurs" / "Looking for Zeus' Chthonian Figures among his Cult-Epithets, in Attica and Elsewhere" (unpublished paper, presented at the conference *Mémoires de la Terre*, ANHIMA, 2nd July 2015). However, in his dissertation, Lebreton keeps the Greek *epiklesis* in English: "Bynaming Zeus: Contribution to the Study of the Structures and Dynamics of Attic Polytheism through his Epikleseis, from the Archaic to the Early Imperial Period" / "Surnommer Zeus: contribution à l'étude des structures et des dynamiques du polythéisme attique à travers ses épiclèses, de l'époque archaïque

In addition to this lexical discrepancy, a more fundamental divergence can be discerned among scholars concerning the actual concept of "cult epithet" / "epiclesis": there is no universally accepted definition of the category. Whereas in its broadest sense it refers to any epithet or additional name originating in a cultic context, and by which a god is addressed in ritual communication, it can also be employed in the narrower sense defined by Pierre Brulé and Sylvain Lebreton, and most clearly by Robert Parker. According to these authors, the "cult epithet" or epiclesis is an adjective, a noun, or a syntagm that qualifies a theonym *in a restrictive sense* by singling out a specific feature of the divinity at hand, be it a particular aspect of its polymorphous nature, its attachment to a particular place or cultic community, or a peculiarity of its cult at a given location.[27]

Parker delineates two main functions for this type of epithet: (1) "to distinguish the god worshipped in one place from the same god worshipped in another", or to differentiate cult sites from one another; and (2) "to provide focus, to pick out one aspect or power amid the many of a god of broad powers", thereby specifying its nature or function in a particular cultic context.[28]

The "cult epithet" or epiclesis thus implies restriction, individualisation of a theonym, which it normally follows rather than precedes, in both direct invocations and indirect references to the gods in texts relating to cult practice (dedications, prayers, cult regulations, literary descriptions of sanctuaries, or references to ordinary interaction with the gods, etc.). Its essential role is differentiation, of cults as much as of specialised forms of a god.[29]

However, not all epithets of cultic origin have this restrictive function—quite the opposite. There are many attributes with a generalising value that make explicit qualities which are assumed to be inherent in divinity *qua* divinity, rather than a particular characteristic of an individual god, such as its greatness (*Altissimus*, *Hypsistos*, *Megistos*, *Summus*, etc.), or its saving power (*Soter*, etc.). In view of this, Parker distinguishes between "cult epithets" *stricto sensu* and epithets of a more celebratory type used in religious practice, namely "titles of respect" and "acclamatory epithets":

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au Haut-Empire" (2013). Fritz Graf also prefers the term "epiclesis" to "cult-epithet" in his German and English publications, which thus constitute an exception in the scholarly tradition of these languages: Graf, 1985 and 2010, 67. By contrast, Robert Parker employs "cult epithet" even in his publications in French: Parker, 2005.

27 Brulé, 1998, 18–19; Parker, 2003, 175–178; Brulé and Lebreton, 2007, 220 and 225.

28 Parker, 2017a, 13–14, already stated in Parker, 2003, 175–178. Cf. also Lebreton 2013, 9

29 Parker, 2003, 176–178; 2017a, 1–32.

"The cult epithet is perhaps best defined as one used in prayers and appeals to the god in prose, in dedications, and in indirect references to the god, and usually following the god's name. One cannot simply make it 'an epithet used in a cult context,' because hymns performed in cult often contained ornamental and honorific epithets borrowed from the poetic tradition; 'in prose' is added in the definition above to exclude such cases. 'Usually following the god's name' is added to exclude titles of respect such as *anax, potnia, despoina,* and *kurios* (all roughly meaning 'master/mistress'): these are common in prayers, but are not found in calendars of sacrifices, for instance; they do not individualise the god in the way that is here taken as a necessary characteristic of the cult epithet. A little different again are 'acclamatory' epithets such as *megas, epēkoos, epiphanes,* and *sōtēr* ('great,' 'who gives heed,' 'manifest,' and 'saviour') which celebrated the power of a god in hopes of assistance or, very often, in gratitude for assistance received".[30]

Parker's classification of divine epithets thus comprises four categories: (1) "poetic" epithets; (2) "titles of respect"; (3) "acclamatory" epithets; (4) "cult" epithets.

"Acclamatory" epithets and "titles of respect" certainly appear in ritual contexts—especially from the Hellenistic era onwards[31]—as do "poetic" epithets on certain occasions, but they differ from "cult" epithets in that they do not perform the essential function of the latter, i.e. to qualify a theonym in a restrictive sense or to individualise a deity. Instead, they are descriptive words or phrases added to a god's name and amplifying it. Nevertheless, as Parker himself has conceded, there is room for overlap and crossover between these four categories, since there are epithets that may belong to one class or another, depending on the context. This is the case with *Soter*, which can serve to extol a great god, or to indicate the function fulfilled on a given occasion by a divinity who has literally saved a devotee by restoring his or her health, or rescuing him or her from a danger. Likewise, *Hypsistos* has two significations, one literally relating to the altitude of the physical space where a deity is worshipped, such as the top of a mountain, and another more abstract sense that emphasizes the intense and extreme power of a deity in order to praise them.

Parker also stresses the fact that epithets belonging to all four categories were not only employed as qualifiers of a theonym, but also as alternative designations which could replace the theonym itself. When used in this way, Parker calls them "titles" rather than "epithets". He further identifies several reasons why a theonym

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30 Parker, 2017a, 10.

31 Before the Hellenistic period, the titles of respect do not appear in dedications (though they do in prayers), and the acclamatory epithets are not attested at all.

could be replaced by a "title": (1) euphemism, motivated by the fear inspired by the gods, the secrecy of "mystery cults", or other factors; (2) substitution of the theonym by an honorific accompaniment that subsequently became customary; (3) emphasis on divine attributes especially desirable in a particular context (e.g. "beauty" in patronesses of young girls or "goodness", in the sense of friendliness to man); (4) uncertainty about the identity of the god addressed; (5) habitual usage (e.g. Anake, a dual name for the Dioscuri).[32]

As Parker himself observes, some attributes do not easily fit into any of the four categories that he proposes. Examples are appellatives such as Zeus *Maimaktes* ("Raging") and perhaps Dionysos *Omestes* ("Savage"), apparently apotropaic usages which seek to divert the god from the attitude they express, and the strangely insulting, non-propitiatory epithets that Aphrodite occasionally bears, such as "Impious", "Unjust", or even "Whore".[33] These instances blur the dividing line between the descriptive attributes and the function-related cult epithets. Even more, if we take into account the polyonomy consisting of multiple epithets, such line seems even more vague.[34]

Despite these exceptions, Parker's fourfold classification of divine epithets is more comprehensive than the taxonomies of Brulé and Lebreton, since these pay only superficial attention to attributes with a descriptive, flattering, and propitiatory value. This is because both authors are primarily interested in the epicleses that individualise gods in cult praxis, and so set aside, as Brulé himself underlines, the attributes that express inherent qualities of divine power in general.[35] Thus, Brulé's model, narrowly based on the binomial "theonym + cult epithet/s", distinguishes only between "poetic" and "cult" epithets, and considers the latter as essentially restrictive.[36] Lebreton proposes a more nuanced classification by distinguishing epicleses from (1) epithets or other divine designations used in oaths and exclamations, which in most cases are the gods' theonyms alone; and (2) poetic (especially Homeric) epithets, sometimes employed in votive epigrams for aesthetic and ornamental purposes.[37] None of

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32 Parker, 2017a, 5–6 and 9. Cf. Brulé and Lebreton, 2007, 221–221, who only allow for the replacement of the theonym by a poetic or cult epithet in contexts in which the identity of the god is well known.

33 Parker, 2003, 180. For Aphrodite insulting epithets, Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, 235, n. 40 and 428.

34 See Bonnet, 2021b.

35 Brulé, 1998, 23.

36 Brulé, 1998, 18–20.

37 Lebreton, 2013, 9–11.

these two classes of appellatives necessarily refer to a cult performed for a god in the particular form it has in a specific religious context. Moreover, Lebreton divides cult epithets or epicleses into two subcategories: (1) cult epithets or epicleses in the strict sense, i.e. those designating a deity who is, in its individuality, the subject of an institutionalised cult involving a consecrated space or an altar, a specialised cultic agent, and/or rituals expressly performed for the god; and (2) cult epithets in a broader sense, i.e. those attested only by dedications, which are not sufficient to prove the existence of an officially recognised cult, but are just as significant in ritual communication.[38]

Although this distinction partially stresses the freedom of the worshippers in selecting divine appellatives in order to address the gods appropriately, it has little relevance for the study of divine onomastics: the epiclesed divinity is worshipped under the specific aspect indicated by the epiclesis, regardless of whether its cult is institutionalised and permanent, or temporary as the result of the agentive will of private devotees.[39] In any case, there is no place in Lebreton's taxonomy for descriptive attributes intended to praise or honour a deity.

To overcome the problems raised by the traditional (hierarchical) distinction between theonym and epithet, and by the undifferentiated use of the notion of "epithet" to designate everything that accompanies a "theonym", whatever its place and role in the onomastic sequence, the MAP team has developed a new conceptual apparatus to reflect more accurately the systems of divine denomination in the Greek and Semitic worlds.[40] According to this framework, the gods' names are *onomastic sequences* or *formulae* when they consist of more than one *onomastic element* or *attribute*.[41] This latter category straddles (and so blurs) the traditional distinction between the concepts of "theonym" and "epithet";[42] in addition, and

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38 Lebreton, 2013, 9–10.

39 Parker, 2003, 176: "[w]hat is primary is the way in which the epithet picks out a particular function of the god. The formalisation of this in cult, the creation of a specific cult dedicated to the god under that aspect, is a secondary phenomenon, if an exceedingly common one". Likewise, Brulé (1998), who contends that an epiclesis always involves worship, does not distinguish between institutionalised cult and occasional acts of worship, nor do Brulé and Lebreton in their joint paper presenting the *Banque de Données sur les Épiclèses Grecques* (Brulé and Lebreton, 2007, 222).

40 Bonnet et al., 2018, 587 and 589.

41 Bonnet et al., 2018.

42 Besides the problems raised by the so-called "double cult name" (theonym + epithet), the MAP team considers the notion of theonym as questionable for several reasons. First of all, they note that "la notion de « théonyme » suppose d'identifier une tête de syntagme à laquelle on attribue une fonction dominante, ce qui est parfois

much more so than the concept of "epithet" (at least in French),[43] it encompasses appellatives of all possible grammatical categories: adjectives, nouns (both common nouns and proper names of places, persons, ethnic groups, and gods, either in apposition or in the genitive), participial forms, and syntagms of distinct nature. The various onomastic elements forming a sequence are in turn related to each other in four possible ways: coordination (+), juxtaposition (/), qualification (#) and equivalence (=). The MAP team thus pays special attention to the nature of the bonds linking the elements of a sequence and, by assigning a different symbol to each type of link in their database, represents complex divine names under the form of mathematical formulae, even taking into consideration the formation of subsystems within the sequences (e.g. Κυρίῳ Διὶ καὶ Ἥρᾳ ἐπηκόοις: ([1. Kurios # 2. Zeus] + 3. Hēra) # 4. Epēkoos.)[44]

Two further notions have been developed by the MAP research group: first, "heteronym", i.e. a single attribute or a sequence that replaces a theonym and thus functions as an alternative name for a deity; second, "polyonymy", which refers to the practice of designating a god through multiple onomastic sequences or single attributes, either in one and the same context ("synchronic polyonymy"), or across time and space ("diachronic polyonymy").[45] From the perspective of the EPIDI taxonomy, these concepts are less central than the analytical categories and method mentioned in the previous paragraph. In our opinion, polyonomy is an extremely useful perspective to understand synchronic and diachronic approaches to polytheism. However, from a classificatory point of view, the

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impossible: en effet, les éléments peuvent être juxtaposés sans qu'une hiérarchisation ne s'impose vraiment" (Lebreton and Bonnet, 2019, 270). Moreover, they deem this concept problematic when an epithet assumes the function of an (omitted) theonym, or when a theonym functions as an epithet qualifying another theonym (Bonnet et al., 2018, 587).

43 In French, "*épithète*" relates mainly to an adjective rather than to a word of another grammatical category or to a phrase of non-adjectival nature. See *Larousse Dictionary*, s.v. "épithète" : "Élément linguistique, généralement un adjectif qualificatif, qui détermine un substantif ou un équivalent du substantif, sans l'intermédiaire d'un mot de liaison et sans pause (ou sans virgule dans la langue écrite)".

44 Bonnet et al., 2018, 568, no. 3: "La notion de formule, empruntée au domaine des mathématiques ou de la chimie, souligne le fait que chaque élément possède des propriétés particulières et que leur association ou liaison, selon des modalités variées, donne naissance à un « produit » qui n'est pas simplement la somme de ses composés. En chimie comme en mathématiques, les formules constituent une écriture, une formalisation symbolique".

45 Bonnet, 2017, 2019; Bonnet et al., 2018.

infinite combinations of polyonomy cannot be part of a close taxonomical grid, which is our purpose.

1.2 The "Thematic" Classification

The second type of classification of divine epithets found in the scholarly literature primarily concerns the category of "cult" epithets, although some of the suggested categories could also include certain "poetic" epithets. This is the thematic classification based on the meaning of the epithets—on a specific feature of the divinity which they denote, be it a particular aspect of its polymorphous divine nature, its belonging to a specific topographical or social context, or a peculiarity of its cult. However, the existing classifications of this type are generally partial, and only include the most common types of Greek epithet (e.g. toponymic, functional, topographical, etc.), or are built upon isolated case studies of the various epithets attributed to a deity within a Greek local or regional context. Latin epithets are only occasionally included in such studies.

Pierre Brulé, for example, has developed a classification of Greek epicleses largely based on those attributed to Artemis in Greece.[46] He distinguishes five principal categories: (1) epicleses using the theonyms of other gods, either an adjective derived from the god's name, or the theonym itself in apposition to the name of the deity: Aphrodite *Areia*, Hera Aphrodite, Artemis Eilythia, etc. They may indicate an intervention of the main deity in the sphere of action proper to the god whose name functions as an epithet; (2) epicleses relating to a place, which in turn include epithets referring to a particular aspect of the landscape (to a topographical, vegetal or animal environment), and attributes expressing the deity's association with a local community (toponymic), region, or ethnic group (national, ethnonymic); (3) epicleses expressing an action, such as movement on earth and at sea, and hunting; (4) epicleses linked to the female sphere, including attributes concerning childbearing, life stages of young girls, and domestic work, among other things; (5) epicleses relating to politics, war and civic institutions; (6) epicleses describing an aspect of the nature of a deity, such as its genealogy, mythical birthplace, appearance, or the (beneficial or malevolent) potentialities of the divine *dynamis*.

Four classes of "cult" epithets are broadly differentiated by Nicole Belayche and Francis Prost in the introduction to the third part of the collective volume *Nommer les dieux*:[47] (1) functional; (2) topographical; (3) toponymic; (4) historical.

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46 Brulé, 1998, 20–26. See also Brulé, 2021.
47 Belayche et al., 2005, 211.

As noted by Sylvain Lebreton, the latter category is a kind of hotchpotch devoid of coherence, "puisque d'après les exemples choisis pour l'illustrer (*Apollon* Huakinthios*, Athéna* Aphaia*, Vénus* Genetrix), elle semble regrouper des épiclèses identifiant une divinité mineure ou locale avec un « grand dieu » (avec le présupposé sous-jacent qu'elles sont le fruit d'un processus d'absorption) et d'autres qui ont bénéficié d'une promotion à l'initiative du pouvoir politique".[48] Many attributes actually fall outside this fourfold classification. For this reason, Lebreton proposes grouping the cult epithets in seven general categories:[49] (1) functional; (2) toponymic; (3) topographic; (4) relating to the celebration of the cult; (5) derived from the theonym of another deity; (6) derived from anthroponyms; (7) of obscure meaning. More specifically, he organises the various epicleses attributed to Zeus in Athens according to the taxonomy illustrated by the diagram in Fig. 1.[50]

In the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (s.v. "epithets, divine"), H. J. Rose and Simon Hornblower outline a high-level distinction between "poetic" and "cult" epithets, then proceed to mention only three main classes of cult epithet in Greek:[51] (1) purely local attributes, meaning that a deity is worshipped, or has a temple or altar at such-and-such a place; (2) appellatives indicating association with another god; (3) attributes expressing divine functions, either in general or alluding to some particular occasion in which a divinity exerted its power.

In the same entry Jerzy Linderski proposes a slightly different classification for Latin epithets, making a high-level distinction between informal epithets and those used in cult:[52] (1) literary attributes; (2) popular descriptions deriving from a particular (often iconographic) feature of a deity, or from a story concerning a deity; (3) geographical and local descriptions; (4) attributes indicating associations with another deity; (5) epithets referring to the civic standing of a god (e.g. Jupiter *Optimus Maximus*); (6) epithets describing the function of a deity or its particular manifestation.

Without distinguishing between Greek and Latin, Angelos Chaniotis, in his entry for "epiclesis" in the online *Brill's New Pauly*,[53] also offers a general categorization of divine onomastic attributes, comprising those that: (1) denote power, beauty or other specific qualities of a deity; (2) express the area where

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48 Lebreton, 2013, 11, no. 25.

49 Lebreton, 2013, 11.

50 Lebreton, 2013, 332.

51 Rose and Hornblower, 2016.

52 Linderski, 2016.

53 *Brill's New Pauly*, s.v. "epiclesis".

the divine power manifested itself (protection of civic institutions, marriage, agreements, household, birth, foreigners, crafts, natural prosperity, health, etc.); (3) allude to genealogy; (4) allude to birthday; (5) allude to birthplace; (6) indicate a specific cult centre; (7) relate to peculiarities of the cult and ceremonies performed for a deity; (8) express one deity's association with another.

In the same vein, Robert Parker identifies different types of "cult" epithet, and relates them to each of two essential functions that he assigns to these attributes—that is, distinguishing the god worshipped in one place from the same god worshipped in another, and singling out one role or quality amid the many of a god with wide-ranging powers. In relation to the first function, he distinguishes between epithets that:[54] (1) identify sites on earth (topographic and toponymic); (2) relate to a distinct trait of the rituals performed at a particular shrine (e.g. Hera *Aigophagos*, "Goat-Eating Hera"); (3) express a peculiarity of the deity's cult image in a given cult site (e.g. Aphrodite *Enoplios*, "Armed Aphrodite" in Sparta); (4) refer to the authority that established the cult (e.g. Aphrodite *Pythochrestos*, "Aphrodite Decreed by Delphi"), or to the private person who founded it (anthroponymic epithets); (5) allude to the funding that supports the worship (e.g. Dionysos *Demoteles*, "Publicly-Financed Dionysos"); (6) derive from the name of a festival celebrated at a sanctuary (e.g. Demeter *Thesmophoros*, named after the *Thesmophoria*); (7) relate to local history (e.g. Apollo *Archegetes*, "Leader", connected with the foundation and early history of a city). Linked to the second function of cult epithets are: (1) functional attributes; (2) attributes expressing a quality of the god; (3) epithets derived from the social group within which a god is worshipped (e.g. Zeus *Phratrios*, Artemis *Boulaia*, concerned with the affairs of the phratry or of the council); (4) sequences associating two or more theonyms (e.g. Artemis *Eileithyia*, Athena *Hephaistia*), a type that Parker has studied in detail in several publications.

Finally, the MAP project team has postulated around 40 semantic domains to classify the epithets in a way that avoids rigidity in their online database (Fig. 2), without any internal sub-grouping and with the provison that:

> "il est très probable que cette liste ne satisfasse personne, pas même nous, tant il est impossible d'exprimer la complexité sémantique et la polysémie véhiculée par les éléments à travers quatre petites dizaines de catégories [...]. Il répond pourtant à une nécessité : pouvoir regrouper les éléments ou les interroger au départ de catégories qui sont autant d'entrées thématiques dans les divers axes des recherches sur l'Antiquité (par

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54   Parker, 2003, 178–179 and 2017a, 12–17 and 25–28. See Parker, 2005 and 2017b specifically on sequences combining two or more theonyms.

exemple, la place des pratiques sexuelles dans les cultes, l'implication des dieux dans les activités sportives, les diverses formes de mobilité ou l'exercice de la justice, etc.). Les recouvrements entre les catégories retenues sont inévitables ; ils reflètent le réseau de significations multiples qui servent à parler des dieux, qu'il serait vain et contre-productif de vouloir rigoureusement compartimenter".[55]

2 A New Taxonomic Proposal

It is now time to articulate the position of the EPIDI research group in relation to the theoretical discussion of the concepts of "theonym", "epithet" and "epiclesis" raised by MAP, and to the classifications of divine epithets contained in previous studies.

First of all, we unequivocally accept and apply to the study of our epigraphic evidence the valuable notions of *onomastic sequences* or *formulae* and *onomastic element* or *attribute* developed by the MAP team. We also adopt MAP's method of analysing the sequences as "mathematical formulae", paying attention to the four types of bonds that link the constitutive elements (coordination, juxtaposition, qualification and equivalence). This is a major step forward for the state of research on the topic. If EPIDI still occasionally maintains the traditional differentiation between the terms "theonym" and "epithet", this is only for heuristic purposes. Its *DEpHis* epigraphic database only includes religious inscriptions containing epithets; inscriptions with a theonym alone are excluded. This provisional (and somewhat undesirable) limitation of the epigraphic database is imposed by the principal aim of the EPIDI project, i.e. the specific study of power-related epithets, and by the practical impossibility of collecting and examining every single religious inscription in Roman *Hispania* within the three-year timeframe of the project. The exclusion of inscriptions only containing a theonym is an aspect shared by both the EPIDI and the MAP projects.[56]

Secondly, and consequently, when we use the concept of "epithet", we do so *sensu lato* to refer to any word or syntagm that qualifies a theonym or replaces it as an alternative name, both in poetry and in cult, regardless of its grammatical category, its meaning, and its function within the rhetorical context.[57] "Epithet" and "onomastic attribute" are thus often used interchangeably in our works,

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55 Lebreton and Bonnet, 2019, 287.

56 See Lebreton and Bonnet, 2019, 293.

57 This broad sense of "epithet" is generally accepted at least in English and Spanish, in which it is defined as a characterising word or phrase accompanying or occurring in place of the name of a person or thing. See *Merriam-Webster English Dictionary* and *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. "epithet"; *RAE Dictionary,* s.v. "epíteto".

although the latter has a more encompassing meaning because it can also include the theonym. By "theonym" we simply mean the proper name of a god—just as by toponym, anthroponym, and ethnonym, we designate the proper name of a place, a person, and an ethnic group. The theonym can often be considered the principal element of the onomastic sequence in which it appears, insofar as it identifies the god, but it is by no means an essential element for divine identification: it can be omitted and replaced by one or several "epithets" of any grammatical category expressing a particular aspect or an inherent quality of the god. In linguistic terms, this substitution of an epithet or an epithetic sequence for a proper name is a form of synecdoche called "antonomasia".[58] The antonomasia can be a one-time naming strategy in a momentary rhetorical context, or a recurrent practice if the god ultimately ceases to be called by name altogether and is instead designated by a nickname. At this point, an epithet or an epithetic sequence can function as a full and autonomous divine name. Theonyms themselves can also be used as epithets of other theonyms, primarily as function- or nature-specifying attributes, indicating that a divinity is being revered under that aspect that it shares with the main role or sphere of action of the other deity.[59] These theonymic attributes are not the principal elements of the onomastic sequences in which they occur, since they do not identify, but rather individualise, a divinity. As a result, "theonym" and "epithet" are by no means self-explanatory categories, but semantically context-dependent notions.

Thirdly, while we find some value in the distinction between "poetic" and "cult" epithets, since these two classes of attributes are indeed found in different rhetorical contexts and with distinct functions, we reject the narrow definition of "cult epithet" or "epiclesis" proposed by Brulé, Lebreton and Parker. Instead, we understand this concept in its broadest sense as an attribute originating in ritual practice and by which one or several gods are addressed in cult, be it an element qualifying a theonym in a restrictive sense, or a descriptive appellative that does not individualise a divinity. Our notion of cult epithet thus encompasses Parker's categories of "cult epithet", "acclamatory epithet" and "title of respect", and solves the problem of the absence of specific classes for descriptive attributes in Brulé's and Lebreton's classifications. Parker's three-way distinction is problematic,

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58 *Collins English Dictionary*, s.v. "antonomasia". Also in Spanish, *RAE Dictionary*, s.v. "antonomasia". Unlike MAP's concept of "heteronym" (see above), "antonomasia" refers precisely to the action of replacing a theonym, not to the alternative name resulting from this substitution. It is thus an explanatory concept rather than a taxonomic label.

59 This class of epithets are called "divine > qualitative > relational > multi-theonymic" onomastic attributes in our taxonomy, as explained below.

inasmuch as communication with supernatural forces generally also involves exaltation and respect, in such a way that many (nature-specifying or function-specifying) epithets may have these connotations even though they do not belong *a priori* to the "acclamatory" or "respect" classes. Beyond the distinction between "poetic" and "cultic" attributes, we argue that the functions of epithets used in ritual practice—individualisation, differentiation, embellishment, euphemism, exaltation, respect demonstration, and perhaps others—should be determined on the basis of the specific rhetorical and cultic contexts in which they are used.

Consequently, the taxonomy of epithets that we have developed within the EPIDI project, in collaboration with LARNA, is not "functional" but rather "thematic", formulated on the basis of the various meanings of the cult epithets attested in inscriptions in *Hispania* and North Africa. In this regard, it should be noted that it is not the etymological signification of the attributes that we have considered, but the sense they have in the specific social and religious contexts in which they occur, which we have assessed through detailed examination of our sources.[60] Despite being created *ad hoc* for cult epithets, our classification may also be applied to poetic attributes, which can easily be grouped in one class or another depending on their meaning.

We now provide a detailed explanation of how we have structured our proposed taxonomy (Fig. 3). The flowchart is based on criteria of typological classification. As such, this phylogeny represents the result of a very *etic* intellectual exercise—ancient religious actors were not necessarily aware of it when selecting a specific epithet. We do not provide here a description of the subjective mental processes of the worshippers, but rather a tool in order to *approach* their own motivations. Even so, we are still interested in the agency of actors from their *emic* perspective. The diagram is a schematic but flexible[61] grid, intended to help historians to gauge the actors' degree of creativity, or alternatively their proneness to pre-established social habits. Among the several available strategies, the creation, appropriation, adaptation, and modification of specific onomastic attributes well reflect how ancient religious practitioners were constantly engaged in seeking to improve

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60 In this regard, Parker (2003, 179) has rightly noted that "any epithet could acquire a recognised set of associations quite unconnected with its formal 'meaning'. Apollo's epithet *Maleatas* is probably a toponym derived from a hill, 'Malea'. But Apollo *Maleatas* became associated with Asclepius, and it was apparently as a healer that he was introduced to new places within and without the Peloponnese".

61 We use the term "flexible" because we do not limit the grid to the initial etymological meaning of each epithet, and we do consider that an epithet can be part of more than one category.

their communication with the transcendent by means of semantic precision or ambiguity. Deities were not monolithic, static *personae* with a fixed number of assigned iconographic, as well as onomastic, attributes. Their powers were dynamically constructed and continually modified by individually activating or deactivating their "potentialities". Such premises are crucial for the correct understanding of the position of the epithets in our taxonomy. In contrast to the thematic classification of divine epithets summarised in the previous section, the EPIDI taxonomy is not merely a list of independent categories, but an interrelated hierarchical scheme proceeding from the general to the specific. It aims to systematise and to provide an analytical framework for the sheer diversity of divine onomastic attributes that designated and helped to articulate the nature of the gods in ancient polytheism. The assignment of a specific onomastic attribute to a specific category does not exclude further categorisations: the epithet *Auxiliaris* has completely different nuances when linked, for instance, to the different contexts of healthcare, army, power, etc., but it can also point towards more than one of these contexts at the same time. What we intend to provide is an analytical tool that illustrates the versatility and fluidity of divine appellatives in religious praxis. We believe that any given divine formula of invocation can reflect salient aspects of the life of the individual and of their social group. New contingent circumstances, new social structures, new personal experiences instigate new ways of communicating with the supernatural, and, as a result, the latter are continually being reformulated. The epicleses are an epiphenomenon of these variations. Nonetheless this epiphenomenon is significant, since it mirrors the vitality of the communicative forms that actors either inherited or created. Naturally, our schema cannot reflect the diachronic and dynamic changes that such onomastic attributes underwent over time but can only present a snapshot taken of a *longue durée* process.

2.1 The "Environmental" Level

The first level of our classification is arranged into three categories: "environmental", "divine" and "human". This tripartition reflects the three different kinds of experience that individuals might face: (1) the natural setting in which they were embedded; (2) the world of the gods or, in Jörg Rüpke's words, of "not unquestionably plausible supernatural agents";[62] and (3) other human beings. Although it could be argued that divine epithets stemming from the experience of the environment should be treated first, social relations have an equal claim

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62 Rüpke, 2015, 349.

to priority, since they are anterior to environmental experience, which, although individual, is socially constructed. Whilst on paper we need to place them one after the other, there is no compelling argument to uphold any priority among these three categories. We must also stress that the experiences of the environment, of the connections to the supernatural, and of social relations, are not static constructs, but are continually modified in response to the changing conditions of existence. Divine attributes can be created, popularised, or fall out of use, and their meaning can also be altered according to where and when they were adopted, overused, or abandoned. An informative example is the case of the denominative adjective *Augustus/-a*: this had deep political implications during the Empire, but its semantic range and the degree to which it was trivialised remain a matter of debate.[63]

"Environmental" attributes can in turn be classified into two categories, topographic and toponymic. Topographic markers, at a third level, are drawn from either real ("topographic > physical") or imaginary ("topographic > intangible") geography.[64] Topographic attributes do not refer to a specific place, as they are formed from a common noun. Toponymic attributes, on the other hand, refer to parts of the physical world but are based on proper nouns, i.e. names of regions, mountains, islands, settlements, etc. The difference between toponymic and topographic (both physical and intangible) affects human experience, because toponymic attributes situate the *cultor* in a more definite dimension than generic topographic references. This distinction has important repercussions for the appropriation of space and the construction of agencies. Under the subdivision "topographic > intangible" we have collected examples belonging to the ancient categories of Uranian and chthonic, such as *Altus*, *Caelestis*, *Chthonios*, *Infernalis*, *Infernus*, *Inferus*, *Kataibates*, *Ouranios*, *Superus*, *Supernus*, etc. *Olympicus* also belongs here inasmuch as, although it is an actual place, it bears connotations of an intangible conceptualization of the divine. The second-level toponymic group includes epithets such as *Appeninus, Balcarenensis*, *Clarius*, *Latiaris*, *Neapolitanus*, *Olympicus* (in its toponymic sense), and the genitives of *Achaia*, *Colonia Firma Astigi*, *Municipium Malacitanum*, etc. (e.g. Saturnus *Achaiae*, etc.).

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63 Villaret, 2019. See also J. Alvar Ezquerra and J.C. López-Gómez in this volume, pp. 119–147.
64 We have called the latter "intangible" as we believe that this term involves fewer conceptual problems than "imaginary" or "fictitious", which are concepts partially related to belief or inexistence.

We subdivide the "topographic > physical" attributes, at a fourth level, into "natural" and "anthropic". Within the "physical > natural" category we include, for example, *Aerius*, *Akraios*, *Campestris*, *Horestes*, *Limnatis*, *Hombrios*, *Pelagicus*, *Pelagius*, and *Pratarius*. Under this category we also include meteorological attributes such as *Pluvialis* and *Tonans*. As for "physical > anthropic" attributes, *Campestris*, *Castrensis*, *Temenites*, *Vialis* are prominent examples of this category. Again, some epithets may appear in two classificatory locations. *Colonia* and *municipium* (in the genitive) frequently occur as complements for deities such as the *genii*. For this reason, we place them in this group, but they are also included as a specifier in the toponymic group (*Municipium Malacitanum*, etc.). The context determines the ascription of each example to the most appropriate category. The appearance of terms in more than one category is not an inconsistency, but rather an expression of the permeability and flexibility of these epithets in the sense we underlined in note 61.

2.2 The "Divine" Level

The next major category encompasses attributes derived from the divine sphere. Here we make a second-level distinction between "qualitative" and "operational" epithets. The intention is to distinguish between those attributes proper to the divinity, which it exhibits without human prompting (at least according to practitioners), from those that correspond to its capacity to intervene in response to human invocation. We prefer "operational" to "functional" because the latter might imply a static conceptualisation of the divine potentialities. Were we to use "functional", we would be assuming an overly simplified distribution of competencies (i.e. "functions") for each divinity (e.g. Hermes "god of wisdom", etc.), as if each deity had a field of action or set of attributes strictly delimited and exclusive to themselves.

The "divine > qualitative" epithets define the god and have been divided, at a third level, into "inherent" and "relational". "Relational" refers to the position of the deity within a divine "social network", while "inherent" elements are those that express an aspect of the constitutive identity of the god: they refer either to its essence or to its potentiality. We do not want to draw upon the notions of "divine nature" and its "ontology", given the endless discussion they have generated in theological studies. We have accordingly used more descriptive and less contentious terms, and have avoided defining qualities as "intrinsic", which might foster a concept of the gods refracted through the prism of Spinoza's theology and theory of immanence.

At a fourth level, "inherent > substantial" attributes are those which label a defining inner trait of the god or indicate its divine condition. Examples of

this category are *Aeternalis*, *Bonus*, *Deus*, *Constans*, *Daimon*, *Divinus*, *Fatalis*, *Immortalis*, *Pius*, *Sanctus*, *Meilichios*, *Pedisequus virtutis*, *Perpetuus*, *Pudicus*, *Sobrius*, *Stoicus*, etc. Some divine designations cannot be ascribed to this group without qualification. *Luciferus*, for instance, verbalises the luminous condition of the invoked god, but it can also express how the divinity is seen and represented, and so could be assigned to the "human > configurational > representational" category of attributes which we will describe below.

The other inherent condition is the potential for action or activation that defines a god. The "inherent > potential" attributes still denote the power inherent in the divinity, a manifestation of which can be mobilised not in a permanent but in a contingent, specific way. Included among such potential qualities are *Auxilians*, *Fautor*, *Favens*, *Iuvans*, *Meilichios*, *Praesens*, *Repentinus*, *Permittens*, *Probans*, *Providens*, among others. Along with the case that we have noted in the description of the "inherent > substantial" attributes, we can include in this category the epithet *Tonans*, which expresses the essential and distinctive potentiality of Jupiter.

The other group of "qualitative" divine attributes is the "relational" one. These epithets articulate some degree of relationship between one deity and another, generally creating two conceptual dimensions. On the one hand, there are the "hierarchical" relationships that order the universe of the divine according to categories established by worshippers. They are extraordinarily expressive, transposing as they do human ideas and relationships onto the divine imaginary with a motley assortment of epithets, such as *Devorix*, *Hypsistos*, *Magnus*, *Maximus*, *Optimus*, *Pantheus*, *Primigenius*, or *Vetus*. This class of attributes may also include *omnes* and *ceteri/-ae*, insofar as hierarchical relationships can also include a zero-grade hierarchy in which two conceptually equal dimensions help to define gods in a relational context (as is the case with the formula *diis deabusque omnibus*).

The second "relational" category is the "theonymic" one, which comprises the adjectival use of a theonym ("adjectivised theonymic") or the apposition or concatenation of theonyms ("multi-theonymic"). The first class includes *Hephaistios*, *Hareios*, *Heraios*, *Iovigenus*, *Kroneios*, etc.; the second, Athena Nike, Zeus Helios Serapis, Aphrodite Peitho, etc. A particular feature of this latter group is its structural similarity to concatenations of different divinities, which often makes it difficult to decide whether an onomastic sequence refers to a single divinity or to several, as in the well-known case of Sol and Mithras, and their multiple onomastic sequences: Sol *Invictus*, *Invictus* Mithras, Sol Mithras, or Sol *Socius* and Mithras. In such a sense, the polyonimic analyses are especially significant, but individual analysis cannot include them as it would create infinite clusters or combinations.

Parker has studied the multi-theonymic onomastic sequences and has identified different contexts in which the strategy of theonymic juxtaposition takes place, such as cross-cultural "translations" of gods or *interpretationes*, incorporations of a lesser divine entity into a more powerful one, or even empowerments of a god as "the Highest".[65]

In relation to the second-level "operational" attributes, there are three third-level sub-categories that outline the specific divine power being mobilised for its influence on particular areas of life. Firstly, there are epithets related to "economic" activity: *Acquisitor*, *Auxites*, *Euploios*, *Frugifer*, *Karpophoros*, *Pelagius*, etc. Secondly, there are "social" attributes, which are further divided into third-level categories: "life-event", "domestic", and "healthcare". Although the distinctions are subtle, the first category integrates epithets linked to major life events, to age groups and to other types of life bond, including *Gamelius*, *Generator*, *Haoros*, *Iuvenis*, *Lochius*, or *Puellaris*. The second category encompasses all attributes involving "domestic" space, such as *Conlualis* and *Herkeios*. Finally, "healthcare" (therapeutic) epithets such as *Apemios*, *Auxilians*, *Cubantis*, *Defensor*, *Curator*, *Iatros*, *Medicus*, *Paian*, *Salutiferus*, *Soter*, express the anxieties, hopes, and expectations of people who, in their vulnerability, resort to these strategies of divine invocation to secure for themselves what everyday reality denies them. Finally, a third branch of the operational attributes corresponds to "institutional" epithets. We have divided them into "political" and "military". The latter category includes self-evident examples such as *Auxilians*, *Defensor*, *Depulsor*, *Invictus*, *Militiae potens*, *Pacator*, *Protector*, *Socius*, *Soter*, *Stator*, *Triumphator*, and so on. Other terms such as *Castrensis*, which are primarily topographic, can be included in this field depending on the context, just as the military *Socius* may have a secondary signification as *associate* or *partner* from a "qualitative > relational", "operational > social", or even "social > political" perspective. Even more so can entrenched military terms acquire political connotations, depending on their usage or historical context (e.g. *Comes*, *Invictus*, etc.).

Finally, the "institutional > political" category can be subdivided into a fifth level with three closely connected groups associated with government: "state-related" (*Conservator*, *Pacator*, *Protector*, *Soter*, etc.), "city-related" (*Agoraios*, *Ephorkios*, *Ktesios*, *Pasios*, *Phratrios*, *Polieus/Polias*, *Repulsor*, etc.), and "power-related" (*Augustus*, *Basileus*, *Despotes*, *Devorix*, *Dominus*, *Kurios*, *Rex*, etc.). It is this latter sub-category that forms the specific area of investigation for the EPIDI project.

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65 Parker, 2017b. See also Bonnet, 2019.

2.3 The "Human" Level

Attributes derived from the human level are grouped under three second-level categories: the first is confined to the sphere of the representation of the god ("configurational"); the second consists of elements of "parental" or familiar nature, as for instance *Patrius*, *Parens*, *Manes*, *Penates*, etc.; the third includes terms derived from specific personal, gentilic, or ethnic denominations ("onomastic").

The "configurational" group requires a more detailed explanation. Of course, configurations can be of various natures, but here we refer to the interaction of the epithet with the divine image. It includes those words that name divine representations or refer to the arrangement of divine images and the spatial dimension of cult activities. We thus further subdivide the configurational attributes into "ritual" epithets, which allude to the rituals with which or the sacred spaces in which a divinity is worshipped (e.g. *Hekatombaios* or *Synnaos*), and "representational" attributes, which include terms such as *Corolliticus* or *Biformis*. It is worth noting that epithets such as *Luciferus*, a word that also conveys substantiality, can be included in this last group when referring to the way a god is depicted, as on numerous coins of Diana *Lucifera* bearing torches.

The "onomastic" names are subdivided at a third level into "anthroponymic", "ethnonymic", and "pronominal" attributes. The first are derived from anthroponyms. This type has not been studied sufficiently, so that we have had to explore the phenomenon in depth in orders to analyse the mechanisms of transfer from personal name to epithet.[66] Epithets belonging to this category include *Cassianus*, *Diomedonteios*, *Extricatianus*, *Granianus*, *Sittianus*, etc. The "ethnonymic" epithets include *Barbarus*, *Gallus*, *Graecus*, *Mauricius*, *Maurus*, *Maurusius*, *Punicus*, *Phrygius*, etc. Finally, we have identified the existence of theonyms accompanied by possessives that constitute a distinct third-level group with their own function in religious epigraphy. We refer to these as "pronominal" attributes. This group includes instances such as *Genius meus* or *Domina nostra*. These possessives appear to form onomastic chains specifying a particular deity by means of a distinctive mark of ownership or belonging. Such pronouns evidently refer to an elided personal, family, or group name, and denote a particularly intimate relationship with the invoked deity underlined by the use of the possessive. From a conceptual and functional point of view, their construction is analogous to onomastic epithets. However, since no actual

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66 Alvar Ezquerra, Bonnet and Gasparini, Forthcoming.

personal or group name is specified, they cannot be integrated into another category, especially since this generic formulation may have been used by the devotee in deliberate contrast with onomastic sequences in which a name does appear. This is one of the few cases in which we have allowed grammatical form to determine a taxonomic decision, whereas our categorisation is normally predicated on descriptive-referential propositions.

In conclusion, the methodological analysis of epithets has enabled us to establish a taxonomic framework in which the divine onomastic sequences can be organised, and which has been informed as far as possible by an emic perspective. This proposed taxonomy is intended to serve as a tool to enhance our understanding of the mechanisms of constructing divine onomastic chains. It provides a visual representation of epithetic fields and their interconnections. This helps to identify areas of intentionality and operability in their use. We have found that the taxonomy can also be used to inform the restoration of the text in fragmentary or damaged inscriptions. We have explored the use of this taxonomy in some of the papers originating from our research project and have seen how it provides invaluable help in connecting epithetic families that, in turn, contribute to a more nuanced interpretation of the documents in general, as well as making thematic associations that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. We hope that other researchers, too, will find our taxonomy equally useful for their own work.
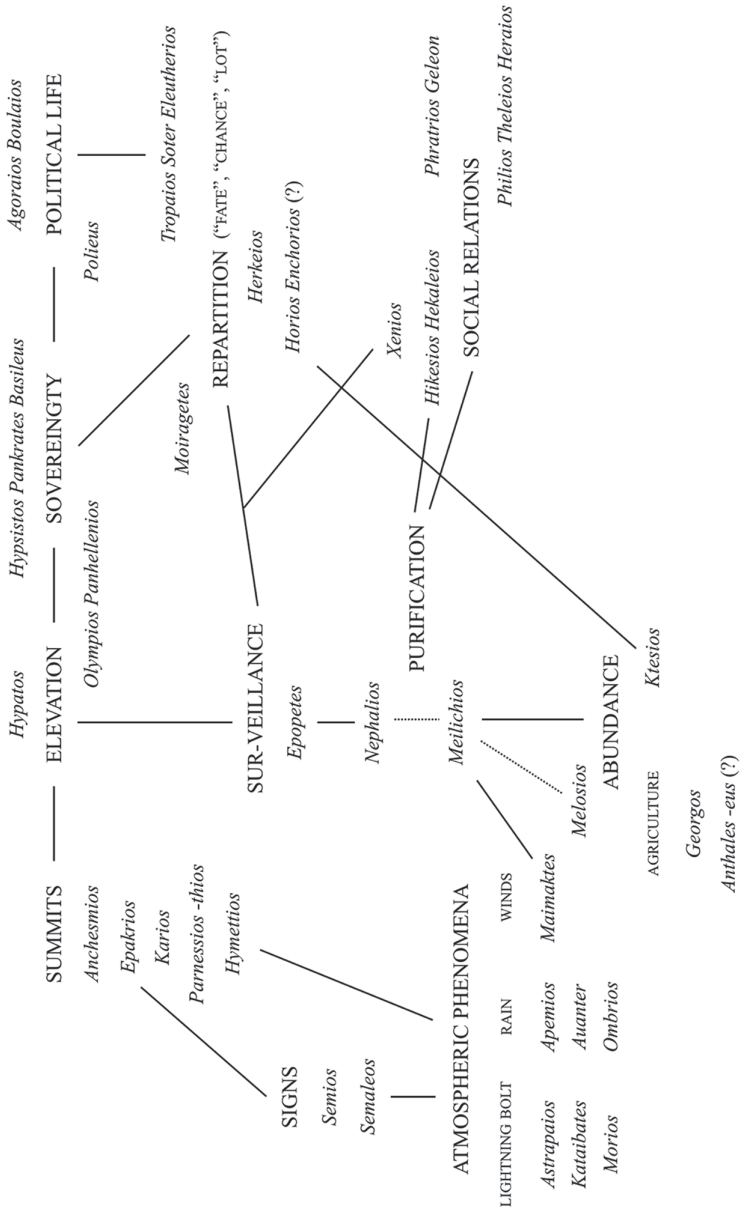
Figures

Fig. 1. Diagram of Zeus' epicleses in Athens (after Lebreton, 2013, 332).

Agriculture	Health	Property / Abundance / Richness
Animal	Justice	Protection / Beneficence
Animal husbandry	Kinship / Domestic	Quantity / Number
Barbaric name	Knowledge	Relational
Construction / Foundation	Limit / Passage	Seduction / Sexuality
Craft	Malevolence	Social
Cult / ritual	Mobility	Space
Divine sign	Natural phenomenon	Sport / Show
Extraction	Objects	Temporality
Fate / Fortune	Other	Title
Food	Perception	Toponym
Fishing / Hunting	Plant	Trade
Funerary / Underworld	Political	Unspecified / Unclear
Gender	Praise	War / Violence
Generation / Growth		

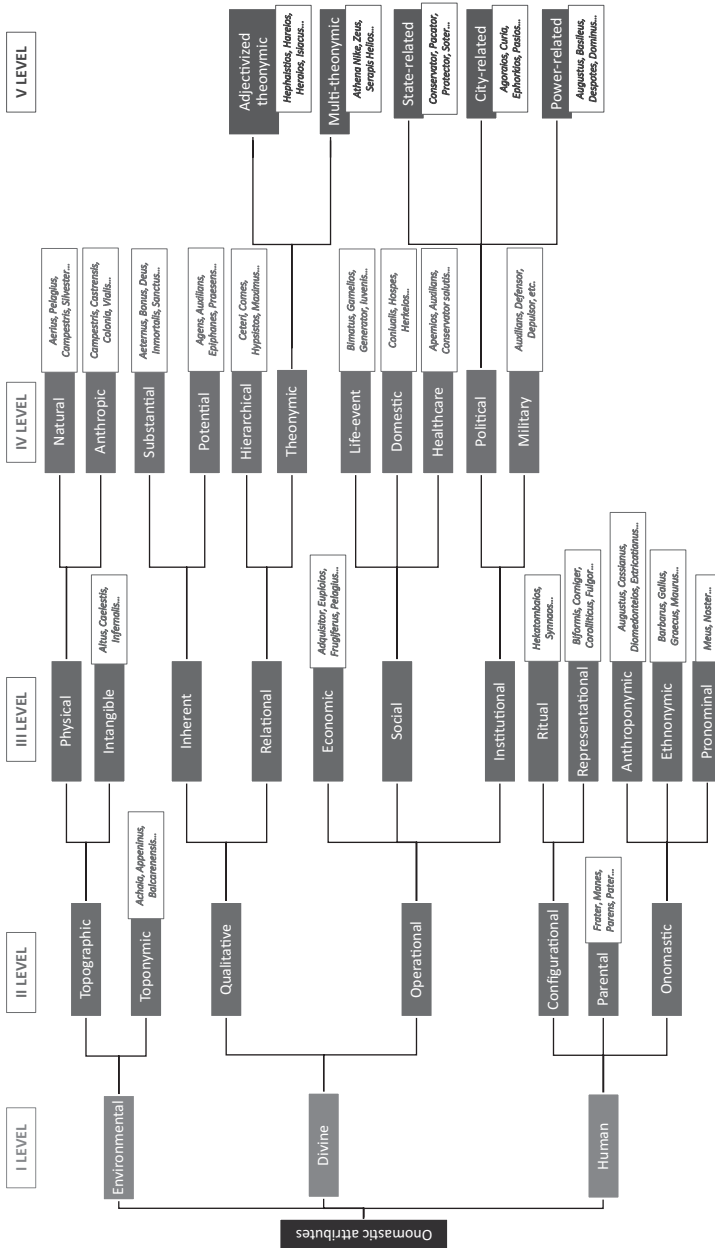**Fig. 2.** Semantic categories of attributes according to the MAP project.

Fig. 3. Thematic categories of attributes according to the EPIDI-LARNA projects.

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