

Political Religions in the Greco-Roman World

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*Discourses, Practices
and Images*

Edited by

Elias Koulakiotis and Charlotte Dunn

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INTRODUCTION

Until the 1980s, historical treatments of ancient religion focused mainly on myth, cult and ritual as a way to interpret the mental structures or primary emotions of ancient peoples. In these early attempts to articulate practice, scholars took primarily functionalist or structural approaches that prioritized the social dimensions of religion over the political,¹ but in the last few decades, a “political turn” in the study of religion has taken hold.² Awareness of the embedded nature of religion, together with the omnipresence of “politics” in almost every aspect of public and private life, has led scholars to concentrate intentionally on the relationship between these two concepts—politics and religion—and the specific physical, mental and literary spaces in which they interacted.³ Despite this intellectual shift, however, the aspects of this diptych are far from being exhausted, particularly from a comparative or juxtapositional perspective. For example, the *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (Spaeth 2013), while treating the different regions of the Mediterranean in a nuanced fashion, offers unifying comparative chapters on only social themes, such as gender, violence, and personal identity. Political themes, such as factional identity, propaganda, resistance, and governance, receive little direct attention. In a similar fashion, the more geographically focused survey of religion in ancient Greece, *A Companion to Greek Religion* (Odgen 2007), also concentrates its synthesis on social themes (e.g. Part VIII “Intersections: Greek Religion and...”), and offers no purposeful integration of the political context. Closer to our goal of interweaving politics and religion with social and material culture in their wider geographical frameworks is *The Oxford*

¹ E.g., Durkheim (1912); Mol (1977); Burkert (1972); (1977); Detienne (1963); Detienne, Gernet, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1981).

² This is by no means restricted to the scholarship of the ancient Mediterranean. One need only look to the many recent titles produced by Routledge such as Barber and Joyce (2017) on the ancient Americas, Mainuddin (2017) on the so-called “developing world,” and more general works such as Madaley (2003) and Fox (2012).

³ Such studies include: Bruit-Zaidman and Schmitt-Pantel (1992, and the revised French edition of 2017); Garland (1992); de Polignac (1995); Orlin (1997); Beard, North and Price (1998); Brown (2003); Mikalson (2010); Parker (2011); Scheid (2013); Ando (2016).

Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion (Eidinow and Kindt 2015), where special chapters are dedicated to centering religious practices within different communities,⁴ but even here, perhaps due to the “Handbook” nature of the work, treatment is general, topical, and confined to the Classical Greek world. Thus, it seems, the integrated study of politics, religion and society is still a desideratum.⁵

The present volume, the outcome of a colloquium held in July 2014 in Ioannina, Greece seeks to diversifying our understanding of political religions by assembling new, original research that investigates the political conceptualizations and implementations of religious practice in the ancient Mediterranean region from the 7th Century BCE to the 4th Century CE, in both Greek and Roman contexts. The underlying question taken up by the volume as a whole is: how were religious representations politicized among agents and audiences? That is, in what situations was Greco-Roman religious practice articulated, communicated, and perceived in political contexts, both real and imagined? By contexts we mean the communities and politics both below and above the community or city level. This can be families, demes, tribes, councils and associations, as well as poleis, *koina*, *ethne*, and empires. The focus on “below and above” is a marked shift from “polis-religion,” a predominant concept in examining religious matters in the last decades,⁶ and as such takes advantage of recent conceptual work on the local lived experience. Recent advances in the field of local/global interactions have begun to disclose the tension between the local sphere on the one hand, and regional/universal paradigms on the other. The use of political religions here in plural allows us to hint at this diversity of religious practice, in socio-economic as well as chronological and spatial terms. Indeed, the studies offered here describe by their very complexity an important network of relationships operating within the framework of Greco-Roman societies, often concerning different factions—be it individuals, groups or communities—as well as multiple spaces—be it public, private or shared. Three main concepts with particular heuristic qualities unite the various chapters: discourses, practices and images. These three concepts constitute privileged categories through which we might address the range of a community’s or an individual’s practice, and are consequently reflected by the main sections of the book:

⁴ See in particular the contributions by Kostas Vlassopoulos, Christy Constantakopoulou and Michael Flower.

⁵ The same holds true for Naiden 2013.

⁶ For an overview of “polis-religion” and its application and limitations, as well as relevant bibliography, see Kindt (2009); cf. Naiden (2013).

Part I, “Discourses, Legitimacy, Charisma” aims to uncover the creation of ideologies based on a close collaboration of political actors and the use of religion as a means of legitimation and acceptance. In this initial section, the problem of “belief” is not directly addressed; however, the articulation of “theological” notions and terms in political contexts (e.g. epiphany, omens and divination) figure largely. The same is true for the polytheistic dimension of Greek and Roman religious practice. Polytheistic complexity is taken as a given and instead, the focus of the analysis is rather on the impact of such polytheistic forces on communal life.⁷ Here, the role of personal charisma, of “propaganda,” its arguments, its articulation and structure are analyzed through various cults, practices and values. The language and rhetoric of legitimation and charisma thus is focalized through the appeal to the public. Here, the role of the ruling elites in creating and proliferating religious innovation is explored as a vehicle for political subversion and broader economic transformations.

Part II, “Practices, Rituals, Identities” interrogates the invention or re-elaboration of rituals in expressing new notions and ideologies, especially in terms of theatricality, attendance, or even “religious affiliation” as factors in promoting and maintaining social hierarchies and specific policies.⁸ Key themes are the space, time, and agents of these rituals and their political-religious conceptualization through verbal and non-verbal communication, individual and collective participation, and individual religiosity. The focus here is twofold, examining both the ways in which the powerful put policy into practice and enforced their political identities through religious structures, and how those policies were perceived and interpreted.

Part III, “Images, Spaces, Monuments” deconstructs human-generated landscapes, material culture, artistic representations and their power by analyzing art, iconography, narrative, dress, symbolic attributes, gesture and emotional expression. Analysis centers on the ways in which visual and physical religious materials shaped and communicated political perceptions (and receptions). That is, these chapters explore the relevance of physical (and metaphorical) monuments, artefacts and structures in (re)creating collective identity and (re)forming historical memory.

Discourses, Legitimacy, Charisma

The first study in the collection begins with the propagandistic interference in religious perception by a (in)famous political actor—Dionysius of

⁷ See Parker (2005); Lipka (2009); Bonnet, Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti (2016).

⁸ Chaniotis (2005), 141-166.

Sicily—and the benefits and costs that come with such interference. One of the most striking anecdotes associated with the rule of Dionysius occurred in a dream attributed to a certain woman of Himera, in which she saw a man in chains beneath the throne of Zeus, a man whom her guide identified as the *alastor* (avenger with the power and authority of the god Zeus) of Sicily and Italy. After a chance encounter with Dionysius and his spear-bearers, the woman later recognized him as the very *alastor* she had seen. This version of the anecdote, recounted by a scholiast on Aeschines on the authority of Timaeus (*sch. Aesch.* 2.10 = *FGrHist* 566 F 29), is clearly intended to reflect negatively on Dionysius as a stereotypical tyrant whose megalomania manifested itself in ruthless imperialism. But a slightly different version of the woman’s dream, found in Valerius Maximus (1.7. ext. 6), suggests that a positive version of the story also existed in which Dionysius portrayed himself as the *alastor* (i.e. “avenger”) of Sicily and Italy against the Carthaginians. This version was probably transmitted to posterity by Dionysius’ close associate, the historian Philistus. Thus, Dionysius himself circulated the positive version of this anecdote (stressing the avenging connotations of *alastor*), which coheres with his use of omens to invoke divine support and thereby legitimize his autocratic power as the liberator of Sicily from the barbarian menace. But the use of political religion proved to be a double-edged sword for the Sicilian tyrant, for Dionysius’ opponents (particularly the Platonic school) turned his own propaganda against him, taking advantage of the negative meaning of the word *alastor* (i.e. a tyrannical human aspiring to be Zeus). In the end, this negative connotation of *alastor* was the version of the omen that became the dominant one, and in later tradition not only was Dionysius considered a tyrant (with all the baggage that implies), but also an impious one.

Chapter Two deepens the analysis of royal propaganda, its articulation and reception by interrogating the exceptional (even by Spartan standards) heroization of Cynisca, sister to Kings Agis II and Agesilaus II of Sparta. Xenophon (*Ages.* 9.6) and Plutarch (*Ages.* 20.1; cf. *Mor.* 212b = *Apophth. Lac.*, *Ages.* no. 49), claim that Agesilaus encouraged his sister to breed chariot horses and enter them in the four-horse chariot race at Olympia to increase his own political and social status—and by extension that of the Eurypontid house—at the expense of elite Spartiates like Lysander who were also attempting to use equestrian victories as a springboard to important posts, offices, and prestige. Cynisca’s Olympic victories and her subsequent dedication of two impressive monuments in the sacred space of Olympia to commemorate those victories allowed Agesilaus to offer a religious challenge to Lysander, who had set up an important dedication of his own at Delphi that threatened to undermine the traditional charismatic

authority of the Spartan kingship. Traditionally, the Spartan kings' reputed lineal descent from the semi-divine Heracles (cf. Hdt. 6.52.1; 7.204, 220.4; 8.131.2) had set the kings above their fellow Spartiates and mortal men in general, but Lysander's naval monument at Delphi and his worship as a living god in Ionia and the Aegean islands (cf. Plut. *Lys.* 18.5 = *FGrH* 76 F 71) threatened this traditional royal charisma. Cynisca's heroization and public dedications at Olympia show that the traditional religious and charismatic authority that the Spartan kings enjoyed was no longer sufficient to bolster the royals' "heroic" status. New charismatic efforts were needed to legitimate the kingship. In the end, Cynisca's brothers' ideological struggle with Lysander reveals both the degree to which political power was intertwined with religious authority in classical Sparta and the effect that changing political circumstances had on the dyarchs' supra-mortal status.

Chapter Three develops the wider reception of the supra-mortal ruler by focusing on the development of the polis-centered hegemonic cults to the Macedonian kings Amyntas III (393-370/69) and Philip II (360/59-336). The Amyntion created in Pydna to Amyntas III, the sanctuaries to Philip II at Amphipolis and Philippi, the altars to Zeus Philippios (Philip as Zeus) at Ereos, and the honorary statues to Herakles and Artemis in Philip's name at Athens and Ephesos allow a unique window into how both the 4th Century Greeks and the Macedonian kings acted and reacted to changing perceptions of royal charisma. And while these honors by Greek poleis to Amyntas and Philip do not correspond to the establishment of hegemonic cult by Macedonians, their particular character is indicative not only of the importance of the 4th Century, post-Lysander tendency to treat outstanding men as gods, but also of the fact that Macedonian rulers were politicizing religion in the Greek poleis by encouraging (or at least not discouraging) hegemonic cult. And yet, encouraging hegemonic cults in the polis and thereby situating royal supra-mortality within its internal politics, and not the kingdom of Macedon itself, had costs for the Macedonian kings: the procession of the statue of Philip as the Thirteen Olympian at the theatre of Aigai may have been a contributing factor to his murder. Unlike the polis cults, this last event was the product of royal initiative, and was received with hostility by the Macedonians and the Greeks, though seemingly not with enough hostility to deter Alexander and his Successors from attempting similar acts. The lesson learned from Philip II seems to have been that the polis and not the king should take the lead in bridging the gap between humans and the gods, a cautionary tale that the Successors to Alexander and the Roman Emperors at least considered, if not always followed.

Chapter Four continues the theme of “bottom-up” reception by exploring how a non-royal individual, in this case the philosopher/historian Arrian of Nicomedia, used his connections as a religious magistrate to bring his native city to the attention of a royal, supra-moral, the Roman emperor Hadrian. As a priest of Demeter and Kore, Arrian used that status to (re)center Nicomedia within the Roman political system by linking his local cult of the goddesses to Hadrian’s newfound interest in and connections with, their much more famous Eleusinian Mysteries in Attika. Under Hadrian, Eleusis, the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore par excellence, had become closely associated with the *Panhellenion*, an international religio-political institution organized by Hadrian to (re)invigorate the cultural identity of the eastern provinces and to reinforce their loyalty to the Roman Empire. By stressing his connections with Hadrian’s favored cult, Arrian was able to highlight both the Hellenicity of his native city and its (and his) allegiance to the Roman emperor and support of that emperor’s favored projects. The result: advancement for Arrian to the consulship and military command and imperial patronage and its concomitant economic investment for Nicomedia.

Chapter Five recenters focus on the charismatic power of the Roman Emperor by analyzing a “ghost story” from the time of Emperor Severus Alexander. The contemporary historian Cassius Dio provides the only known testimony for this strange event, dated to the eve of the accession Severus Alexander, that one might call a kind of propagandistic ancient ghost story. In 221 CE, shortly before Severus Alexander’s proclamation as the co-regent of his cousin, the emperor known as Elagabalus, a ghost (*daimon*) appeared in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, claiming to be Alexander the Great. In a Bacchic revelry, accompanied by four hundred men dressing in fawn skins with thyrsi, this revenant of Alexander marched in a religious procession that recalling the Macedonian king’s historic procession through Carmania in 325 BCE (Justin 9.10.24-27). Traversing from Upper Moesia via Thrace to Byzantium, the ghost then mysteriously disappeared at Chalcedon, only to be replaced with the “real” manifestation of Alexander the Great, the soon-to-be emperor, Severus Alexander who suddenly appeared before the eyes of Chalcedonians. The whole event was staged as a propagandistic show commissioned by the royal family. Despite this seeming manipulation of divine signs, the manifestation of “Alexander the Great” was received well by the Roman people and served to legitimize Severus Alexander, showing that when done properly interference in religion can produce large rewards. When done improperly, however, as Dionysius I and Philip II discovered, the results can be disastrous.

Practices, Rituals, Identities

Chapter Six sets the stage for a study of practice by exploring how the rituals associated with the deity commonly known to Greeks as the “Mother of the Gods” (Μήτηρ θεῶν) served to underpin Athenian imperial identity and communicate Athenian sovereignty to both internal and external audiences. Starting with the Lydian kings Gyges and Croesus, the goddess, in her identity of Kybele, was depicted as a wise mother and nurturer of “lions,” i.e. kings (Hdt. 1.84.3). Throughout 5th Century historical writing, the Mother had played a symbolic and defining role for the Athenians; the Athenian burning of Kybele’s shrine in the Ionian revolt became the justification for Darius’ demand for Athenian submission to his sovereignty. This connection was neither arbitrary nor accidental, for the Athenians had come to see this Lydian Kybele as a symbol for the sovereignty of Asia now exercised by the Persians. If Athens could appropriate the symbol, she could legitimate her sovereignty over former Persian subjects in Ionia and beyond. Consequently, during Alcibiades’ Asiatic campaigns of 410-408 BCE, the Mother was embraced by the Athenians as a symbol of sovereignty over their empire. This was the occasion for the establishment in the Athenian agora of the Metroöon and the adjoining Bouleuterion, the symbolic heart of Athens’ democratic government. By linking the Mother cult physically to the center of Athenian democracy in this fashion, the goddess could nurture both the democratic system and the Athenian empire. That Aristophanes in the *Frogs* (1431-2) has the resurrected Aeschylus call Alcibiades a “lion cub,” whom Athens has “nurtured” must provide a contemporary reception of Alcibiades’ efforts to link the “nurturing” Mother cult and Athenian sovereignty.

Chapter Seven develops the idea that Aphrodite played a key role in the political, cultural and religious relations between Athens and Cyprus and in particular, between Athens and Salamis. From the very early archaic period, Cyprus was considered by the Greeks as the “island of Aphrodite,” because the local kings, and more generally the Cypriots themselves, favoured this image. The picture emerging from literary, epigraphical, and iconographic evidence supports the idea that the worship of Aphrodite *Ourania* in Athens reflects facets of her cult in Cyprus; whatever the precise provenance of Aphrodite *Ourania*, the Athenians seem to recognize her as the Cypriot goddess linked to civic and nautical affairs. In that context, literary and archaeological evidence allow for us to elaborate on the idea that the original purpose of Cimon’s expedition in Cyprus in 451 BC could be described as a struggle for the “liberation of the island of Aphrodite.” Although it is impossible to reconstruct in detail the Athenian propaganda

which certainly led up to Cimon's expedition, it is possible that such political and religious propaganda existed and that it was related to the Cypriot Aphrodite, who provided sailors with a safe voyage. Finally, chapter seven returns focus to "top-down" royal identity by probing the ways in which king Evagoras I of Salamis, who was also an Athenian citizen and was honoured as the protector and the liberator of the city, used the cult of Aphrodite to reinforce his relationship with Athens. Furthermore, from the very beginning of his reign, Evagoras pursued a policy of rapid expansion aiming at the political unification of Cyprus under the control of the Teukrides. In this respect, he was obliged to construct a new political and ideological identity that would enable him to justify his hegemonic ambitions. Aphrodite corresponded perfectly to these objectives. As he extended his control to new parts of the island, Evagoras took care to invest in local Aphrodite cults and propagate her image as one of his royal symbols. Evagoras and his successors' coinage exclusively bear the head of Aphrodite wearing a turreted crown in her guise as protector of the city.

Chapter Eight takes us in a literary direction, exploring the ways in which Plutarch's biographies of political leaders deployed religious traditions and rituals, most importantly the cult of heroes, to unmask elite power and identity. Plutarch's representation of the divine honors to Demetrius in Athens in the years in 307, 304 and 294 BCE allows him to observe and evaluate imperial cult and its function in his contemporary, Roman, world. What emerges is a moralizing tale about the corrupting nature of power and the ripples such power sends across communities. In addition, by focusing on charismatic religion as an element of royal identity, Plutarch has an opportunity to articulate his own personal devotion to the Apollo of Delphi, as well as his philosophical views as a "middle" Platonist. As such, Plutarch is able to comment on the dangers of a divine charismatic ruler who is a less-than-philosophical king. Most particularly harmful, Plutarch argues, is a divine ruler like Demetrius who excessively enflames the emotions of the masses, who themselves are not guided by a proper philosophical education (*paideia*). Since the people collectively cannot experience *paideia* in a practical way, there is consequently a greater need for a leader who has himself been inculcated in a system of philosophical education that produces wiser, more temperate rulers and statesmen. Politics and religion should only be joined under an emperor who has the benefit of a philosophical education.

Chapter Nine continues the focus on Plutarch's advice about the role of politicizing religion in royal ritual. Here, Plutarch sees warfare, even when successfully waged, as dangerous to the religious practice of individuals and the state unless it is properly managed by political leaders, who themselves

are guided by Hellenic *paideia*. In the *Lives* of *Lycurgus* and *Numa*, Plutarch emphasizes how the top-down, political application of religious ritual can function as a bulwark against the passions and tensions created by war. In fact, Plutarch shows how “informed” religion successfully tames the innate bellicosity of Spartans and Romans. In Greece, Lycurgus creates a finely-honed system that churns out cultured military men of legendary ability, using religion to temper the Spartiates’ potential for warlike savagery (cf. *Lycurgus* 21). Numa too, is conscious of the need to moderate the ferocity of the Romans (*Numa* 5-6) and his ultimate success in doing so is extensively reliant on the influence of religion. But the impact of religion in this pair of biographies brings more, perhaps unexpected benefits. In fact, Plutarch demonstrates how a state that employs religion as an opiate for its people’s warlike passions actually generates a stable and long-lasting hegemony, suggesting a philosophical vision of governance that potentially has implications for contemporary Rome.

Images, Spaces, Monuments

Chapter Ten shifts the conversation back to Archaic and Classical Greece and introduces this section on images by exploring the ways that women’s games mapped gender on the Panhellenic space of Olympia. The art of weaving, as a female avocation in honor of Hera, constituted a starting point for the emergence of a body of weavers as political and religious leaders. As the guardians of the goddess’ robes, these weavers became responsible for the supervision of many public events at Olympia, such as the female games, dances and purification rituals. Over time, this traditional group formalized into a Council of Sixteen Women, who, having as their main task the weaving of the Peplos of Hera, as well as the aforementioned secondary duties, gained the unique privilege of being in a position to forge peace treaties and arbitrate between opposing groups wishing to use Hera’s sacred space at Panhellenic Olympia. In contrast to the worship of Hera at Samos or elsewhere, or the worship of Apollo in Sparta, or even of Athena in Athens, where the offering of a woven textile remained embedded in the ritual context, at Olympia we see the emergence of an expanded devotional, mythological and political milieu. Indeed, the stories preserved in Pausanias trace how the weavers of the peplos transformed into a women’s council and took on a series of other devotional and political responsibilities that illustrated and confirmed the significant role of the goddess Hera in the social and political life of the Greek world. The forceful presence of the female domain in political affairs in this manner served to complement, in its own way, the forceful presence of Hera in the affairs of Zeus. Or, to put

it another way, the political religion of Hera's female weavers complemented the religious politics of the Zeus' male athletic games.

Chapter Eleven shifts the interplay between image and space by examining how communities in ancient Greece used pedimental sculpture to articulate and cement regional and local identities. By manipulating the Panhellenic and local mythologies represented on temples' pediments, local groups communicated their political agendas and identities to both internal and external audiences. The Argives used the subject-matter of Zeus' birth as a religious and political propaganda that their city-state was protected by the supreme god, while the Iliou Persis promoted Argos as the leader of the Panhellenic Campaign, enhancing the pride and prestige of the city-state. The Nikai-corner akroteria would also glorify Zeus' birth and crown the victorious Argive warriors. In an effort to propagandize their will to become allies with the Arcadians against the Eleans, the Triphylians incorporated the Arcadian myth of Zeus against Lykaon and his sons into the myth of the Gigantomachy in the east pediment of the temple to Athena Makistos. In addition, the Triphylians deployed the Nikai-corner akroteria to celebrate the victorious conflicts of mortals and immortals and express the hope that the Arcadians and the Triphylians will maintain their autonomy against the Eleans. In Epidauros the subject-matter of the pediments is very innovative: the Iliou Persis and the Trojan Amazonomachy would allude to the Greek-Persian Wars between 404 and 386 BCE, while the absence of divine epiphanies reveals the turn of social and state interest towards the heroic circle. Elsewhere, the Tegeans placed Atalante among a preponderance of famous Greek heroes on the temple of Athena Alea in order to underscore Tegea's role in the Arcadian Koinon, and thereby challenge the claims of rivals. Moreover, the battle between Telephos and Achilles would suggest Tegeans' ties with Mysia at the level of a metropolis to its colony, thus raising Tegea's prestige. Lastly, myths chosen by the Epidaurians and the Tegeans allude to the dramatic fragility of human nature and life, which Asklepios and Athena Alea protect.

Chapter Twelve explores further the ways that public images and performance communicate group identity by looking at how the sanctuary of Artemis Laphria represented the Aetolian Confederacy outside its federal center at Thermon. Artemis Laphria, also known as Artemis of Calydon, was depicted in monumental art all over Central Greece by the Aetolian Confederacy. Indeed, the Confederacy represented her on its coins and on its foreign monumental dedications more often even than Apollo of Thermos, the patron deity of Thermon. The Confederacy also sponsored official Aetolian cultic representations of Artemis Laphria at Delphi and encouraged individual Aetolians to perform their religious acts to this

“Aetolian” goddess in the Delphic sanctuary and thus to propagate the Aetolian identity among the other Greeks. Alongside the great religious and political festivals of the Thermika and the Panaitolika the Confederacy also used festivals to Artemis Laphria to help unify the Aetolian sub-regions. All of these efforts made room for local cult and local expression alongside federal cult and as a result created an opportunity for the periphery as well as the center to lead the conversation about Aetolian-ness.

Chapter Thirteen deepens the analysis of political dedications through an analysis of the discourse of euergetism. In particular, the language of approbation in Hellenistic honorific decrees for honorands who were active in a religious context and who were praised on account of their *aretē* (virtue), *eusebeia* (piety) and other virtues. Honorific decrees monumentalized as civic examples of praiseworthy behavior showcase the civic values which public decrees commended and disseminated among the Greek poleis. Thus, we see a code of shared values, which were exalted as public lessons in *aretē*, thus creating a gallery of models open to public view, which the inspired more dedication. Through this cycle, piety towards the gods and *aretē* are not displayed as abstract qualities but as concrete civic values through specific public services, which range from the righteous fulfilment of official religious duties and the financial contributions to sanctuaries, to diplomatic or artistic performances in religious contexts. Public and private, old and new deities’ cult groups, poleis and kings, citizens and foreigners alike, seem to adhere to a common honorific language when making public dedications. Politics and religion are explicitly or implicitly interconnected in the context of these dedicatory monuments, either as royal interventions for the bestowal of honours, or for the legitimation and acceptance of religious festivals. Although *eusebeia* is a prominent virtue in such a religious or religiously related context, however, its pairing with other virtues or aspects of *aretē*, suggests that in the context of public dedication its display was integrally connected with the civic behaviour of the dedicant/honorand; that is, the dedicants were not treated as pious followers of a cult who show reverence to the gods, but as civic benefactors who have rendered their multi-faceted services to the whole community. Thus, their benefactions are not just presented as pious actions towards the divine but mainly as praiseworthy political and civic behavior in a diverse yet, networking and communicating world.

Chapter Fourteen brings the study of monuments and political religions to a close by examining the shrines consecrated to the cult of the Roman emperor in the Greek East and their role in networking and communicating proper behavior. Here, the main themes of the book—Greek and Roman royal charisma, identity and image—all become lenses through which to

understand the Roman Emperor. Although there were no specific criteria that dictated the selection of the architectural form of imperial cult buildings, care was certainly taken by the dedicators as regarded the position these monuments held in the public and sacred landscape. The choice of the site for the erection of imperial temples in the Greek East depended on particular topographical and architectural criteria: in all cases the aim was to highlight the Roman presence in the midst of the civic and religious landscape by giving imperial shrines the most prominent position in town. Four main tendencies can be distinguished. First, the integration of imperial monuments into existing civic buildings such as the council house and the porticos of the agora contributed to the assimilation of Roman rule, and perhaps to its subordination to local institutions. Second, the same goal seems to have been achieved by constructing imperial shrines along main streets and avenues. Such locations offered easy access, which meant that the rituals performed in such imperial temples were progressively embedded in everyday life and public activities. Third, the purpose behind elevating imperial monuments on prominences within the city, such as the acropolis or other natural or artificial hills, made them visible from afar, especially to those passing through the city walls or sailing into or out of the harbor. On a symbolic level, such a perception of the imperial presence made clear to the observer the dominant position of Roman rule above the natural and architectural layout of the urban areas. Finally, the practice of the construction of the imperial shrines within the sacred landscape, particularly in the sanctuaries of patron divinities of the city or of regional, national, and Panhellenic fame, sanctified imperial power in that it helped to integrate festivities in honor of the emperor into traditional periodically recurring ceremonies.

In their approaches, the authors of this volume are aware of the plurality and the diversity of religious systems in representing and receiving power relations, as well as of their dynamic of change. In doing so, every category of source has been given its own merit, and keeping in mind that we deal with different but complementary sources of information, each of them have their own inherent "logic." As such, *Political Religions* is not meant to be a comprehensive synthesis of the interrelations between politics and religion but rather a methodological foundation and point of departure for future scholarly research and conversation by offering readers key incidents as case studies. Moreover, to a greater extent than in similar studies, a broader spectrum of sources is taken into account here: literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence are thoroughly discussed and put in a comparative

perspective so as to reveal subtle social and cultural functions of “political religions” throughout Greco-Roman Antiquity.

At this point, it is necessary to say a word about editorial choices. We decided to include bibliographies with each chapter, rather than synthesize them into a common list at the end. While this did allow for a (small) amount of duplication, we felt this was outweighed by the fact that each chapter could stand as a complete article, with the references close to hand. Following this theme, we also chose not to impose a “house” style for Latinizing (or not) ancient names, and so there is some variation throughout. While these variations have resulted in a lighter editorial footprint than some might have wished, we hope that readers will, in general, approve.

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PART I

DISCOURSES, LEGITIMACY, CHARISMA

CHAPTER ONE

DIONYSIUS I AND THE WOMAN OF HIMERA: A CASE STUDY IN THE PERILS OF POLITICAL RELIGION

FRANCES POWNALL

Even before Alexander the Great and his Successors changed the landscape of royal ideology in the ancient Aegean world, they were preceded by the Sicilian tyrants in the West, who developed their own methods of self-fashioning that ultimately proved to be highly influential on subsequent autocratic rulers. Arguably the most successful of the Sicilian tyrants was Dionysius I, who seized power in Syracuse at the end of the fourth century in a military coup, claiming to be preserving not just the city, but the entire island from the Carthaginian menace (Diod. 13.91-96). Fully aware that one of the most effective ways to galvanize the population of Syracuse behind him was to unite them against a foreign enemy, he made very effective use of liberation propaganda throughout his entire rule in order to justify first extending his hegemony over the entire island (not only against the Carthaginian settlements to the west, but also the native Sicel and Sicilian towns in the interior), and eventually his extensive military campaigns in Italy and further abroad into Greece and the Adriatic (all of which might otherwise be classified as naked imperialism).¹ As Sian Lewis has aptly remarked: “Of all Greek rulers, Dionysius comes through our sources as the most concerned with the manipulation of public opinion.”² To a ruler as adept as Dionysius at justifying his seizure of power and his expansionist campaigns as the defense of Sicily against the barbarian Carthaginians (who could easily be portrayed as impious), the invoking of divine support for his regime offered a heaven-sent opportunity to legitimize his autocratic power.

¹ For modern treatments of Dionysius I, see esp. Stohker (1958); Sanders (1987); Lewis (1994); Caven (1990); Pownall 2017b.

² Lewis (2000), 98.

The object of this contribution is to provide a brief overview of Dionysius I's use of religious propaganda in general, and then examine in closer detail one example in particular, which ironically was later turned against him by his political enemies.

Let us begin with a cluster of portents which foretold the future success of the tyrant and emphasized his unique access to the divine. For the most memorable and unique of these portents, Cicero cites Philistus of Syracuse, a contemporary and close personal friend of the tyrant, whose history was not only favorable towards Dionysius I,³ but also served as a vehicle for Dionysian propaganda:⁴

Dionysii mater, eius qui Syracosiorum tyrannus fuit, ut scriptum apud Philistum est ... cum praegnans hunc ipsum Dionysium alvo contineret, somniavit se peperisse satyriscum. huic interpretes portentorum ... responderunt, ut ait Philistus, eum, quem illa peperisset, clarissimum Graeciae diuturna cum fortuna fore.

As is narrated in Philistus ... the mother of that Dionysius who was the tyrant of the Syracusans, when she was pregnant with this very Dionysius, dreamed that she had given birth to a baby satyr. The interpreters of portents ... predicted, as Philistus says, that the child she bore would be the most famous man in Greece and would enjoy lasting good fortune (Cic. *Div.* 1.39 = *FGrH* 556 F 57a).⁵

Prophecies of this sort, foreshadowing the coming of a future hero, are a very common motif in the biographical tradition on great leaders, as in, for example, the dreams in Herodotus' narrative connected with the births of Cyrus the Great or Pericles.⁶ Therefore it is not surprising that Dionysius would circulate prophecies (presumably invented *ex eventu*) which justified his seizure of power with the implication that his rule was underpinned by divine support.

This message to Dionysius' current subjects, and subjects to be, was made even more blatant by the unique portent of a satyr-child. Satyrs are associated with Dionysus, for whom the mythical creatures serve as constant companions in literature and art, and even symbolize the god's

³ On Philistus, see Pearson (1987), 19-30; Sanders (1987), 43-71; Bearzot (2002); Meister (2002); Vattuone (2007) 194-96; Pownall (2013) and (2017a).

⁴ Sordi (1990); Vanotti (1994).

⁵ The same anecdote also appears in Val. Max. *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium bibri* 1.7 ext.7.

⁶ Hdt. 1.107-8 and 6.131.2 (cf. 1.84.3). On the significance of the portent of a royal woman giving birth to a lion, see Mark Munn in this volume.

association with drama, most obviously perhaps at the City Dionysia in Athens where each trilogy of tragedies was accompanied by a so-called satyr play. This association with Dionysus was undoubtedly a crucial aspect of Dionysius' self-fashioning, and not just a play on the happy coincidence of the similarity of their names.⁷ In fact, Dionysius appears to have been one of the first absolute rulers in the Greek world to appear with divine attributes, having himself portrayed as his namesake on a statue erected in Syracuse, if we can believe the testimony of Dio Chrysostom.⁸ As recent scholarship on theater in Sicily has demonstrated,⁹ Dionysius' own considerable dramatic and literary ambitions were motivated by a consistent program of self-presentation as a wise and just ruler in the tradition of the idealized monarch in fifth-century Attic drama. Dionysius' use of tragedy in particular and performance culture in general to legitimize his rule did not arise *ex nihilo* but was prefigured by the Deinomenid tyrants in the fifth century;¹⁰ in particular, Hieron's portrayal of himself as the "good king" may have served as an inspiration for his own self-fashioning.¹¹ Nevertheless, by circulating the birth omen of the satyr and by portraying himself with the attributes of Dionysus, Dionysius went far beyond the aspirations of his predecessors by turning himself into the living embodiment of the god of the theater.

In another context in the *De divinatione*, also on the authority of Philistus, Cicero narrates a second portent of Dionysius' greatness:

facta coniectura etiam in Dionysio est paulo ante quam regnare coepit, qui cum per agrum Leontinum iter faciens equum ipse demisisset in flumen, submersus equus voraginibus non exstitit; quem cum maxima contentione non potuisset extrahere, discessit, ut ait Philistus, aegre ferens. cum autem aliquantum progressus esset, subito exaudivit hinnitum respexitque et

⁷ Cf. Caven (1990), 20 and 235-36; Lewis (2000), 101-102.

⁸ Dio Chrys. *Or.* 37.2. It is perhaps it is going too far, however, to see this as the evidence for the establishment of a ruler cult to Dionysius I; cf. Sanders (1991), 280-83.

⁹ Duncan (2012); cf. Ceccarelli (2004), 125-7; Monoson (2012).

¹⁰ Kowalzig (2008); Duncan (2011); Morgan (2012) and (2015), esp. 87-133. Interestingly, the late-fifth-century Athenians seem to have responded to this perceived appropriation of "their" theatrical culture, particularly after the disastrous Sicilian expedition, by portraying Sicily as the epitome of all that was uncivilized and savage, the home of tyrants and barbarians, as is suggested by Euripides' satyr play *Cyclops*; cf. O'Sullivan (2012).

¹¹ On Hieron's royal ideology, see Pfeijffer (2005), 31-35 and Morgan (2015), 209-53.

equum alacrem laetus aspexit, cuius in iuba examen apium consederat. quod ostentum habuit hanc vim, ut Dionysius paucis post diebus regnare coeperit.

An inference was also made about Dionysius shortly before he began to rule. When he was on a journey through the territory of Leontini, he lost his horse in a river, and it became submerged in the currents. When he was unable to pull it out even with the greatest effort, he departed, as Philistus says, very distressed. But when he had proceeded a short way, suddenly he heard a whinnying, looked behind him, and was happy to catch sight of his excited horse, with a swarm of bees settled on its mane. This portent had such power that Dionysius began to rule a few days later (Cic. *Div.* 1.73 = *FGrH* 556 F 58).¹²

A miraculous portent such as this signifying divine right to rule is a fairly run of the mill device to legitimate an autocrat's rise to power.

But the choice of the animals that play the starring roles in this portent is highly significant. The horse is the favorite creature of Poseidon, and often achieves a semi-divine status in myth.¹³ Furthermore, the horse is a liminal figure that can pass between the living and the dead, humans and the gods, and can transfer this association with the divine to the select few who are able to handle it (in Pindar, this group is limited to poets, gods, and athletes). Similarly, the bee serves as a go-between linking the mortal world with the world of the gods, as indicated by Pindar's reference (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.60-61) to the Pythia at Delphi as the *μελίσσα Δελφίδος* ("the bee of Delphi"), who through her prophecies transmits the will of the gods to humans.¹⁴ Furthermore, the bee, and the honey it produces, represent powerful symbols of immortality and resurrection, as illustrated perhaps most powerfully in the myth of Aristaeus, the first bee-keeper (Verg. *G.* 4.315-558).¹⁵ In terms of Dionysius' manipulation of his own royal image, however, what is most striking is the association of the bee with Dionysus, whose nursemaid Macris (who is, not coincidentally, Aristaeus' daughter),

¹² The same anecdote also appears in Plin. *HN* 8.158 and Ael. *VH* 12.46.

¹³ Steiner (1986), 109-10.

¹⁴ Steiner (1986), 109 and 132-33.

¹⁵ In earlier traditions, Aristaeus is the son of Apollo (who is himself associated with musical performance) and the maiden Cyrene. Interestingly, Dionysius II seems to have rejected his father's identification with Dionysius in favor of Apollo; cf. Muccioli (1999), 474-77 and Ceccarelli (2004), 127. Aristaeus as the first provider of honey seems to be in keeping with his role as the bringer of good things to humans; cf. Gantz (1993), 93. It is probably not coincidental that the bee was one of the hieroglyphic signs for the king of Lower Egypt (later adopted by the Ptolemies); Stephens (2015), 68.

is said by Apollonius of Rhodes (4.1130-37) to have healed his burned lips with honey after his fiery birth. The bee, therefore, is likely to have been a very deliberate part of Dionysius' own self-fashioning as an earthly incarnation of his divine namesake.

In the hands of Philistus, who was willing to endorse Dionysius' own propaganda, the bee is clearly intended to be a favorable omen invoking divine support for the tyrant's regime. In the hands of a less apologetic source, however, this very same symbol of divine assent can also serve as a negative omen, as in, for example, the traditional association of bees with archaic tyrants, particularly the Cypselids of Corinth. The very name of Cypselus, the founder of the tyranny, derives from the *κυψέλη* in which he was hidden as a baby from his would-be assassins, who had been warned against his birth by an oracle (Hdt. 5.92ε). Although the word is usually translated as "chest," it most likely represents a ceramic beehive.¹⁶ Furthermore, the name of the wife of Cypselus' son Periander is Melissa (that is, "bee"), and she herself is both the wife and daughter of a tyrant (her father is the tyrant of Epidaurus; Hdt. 3.50.1-2). After Herodotus' narrative of the miraculous salvation of Cypselus as a baby, he proceeds to depict his rule as that of a stereotypical tyrant, and that of Periander as even worse (Hdt. 5.92ε-η). For our purposes, what is interesting about Herodotus' ambiguous account of the Cypselids is the juxtaposition of the *topos* of babies facing mortal danger at birth and miraculously surviving to grow up and become the saviors of their people (which Cypselus must have circulated himself to justify his usurpation of power), with the *topos* of the warning oracle of children destined to bring destruction to their people (which must have circulated after the rule of the Cypselids to justify their expulsion). The traces of both *topoi* in Herodotus' account suggest he is carefully negotiating between two diametrically opposed traditions, which use the same symbols, but transforms them as necessary to fit the appropriate political agenda.

A similar process of negotiation between contemporary apologetic and subsequent hostile traditions on Dionysius appears to be at play in the anecdote preserved in the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise on the political economy of states:

Διονύσιος Συρακούσιος βουλόμενος χρήματα συναγαγεῖν, ἐκκλησίαν ποιήσας ἔφησεν ἑωρακέναι τὴν Δήμητραν, καὶ κελεύειν τὸν τῶν γυναικῶν κόσμον εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἀποκομίζειν· αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν τῶν παρ' αὐτῷ γυναικῶν τὸν κόσμον τοῦτο πεποιθέναι, ἤξιου δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, μὴ τι μῆνιμα παρὰ τῆς θεοῦ γένηται· τὸν δὲ μὴ τοῦτο ποιήσαντα ἔνοχον ἔφησεν ἱεροσουλίας

¹⁶ Ogden (1997), 88-90.

ἔσσεσθαι. Ἀνενεγκάντων δὲ πάντων ἃ εἶχον διὰ τε τὴν θεὸν καὶ δι' ἐκεῖνον, θύσας τῇ θεῷ τὸν κόσμον ἀπηνέγκατο ὡς παρὰ τῆς θεοῦ δεδανεισμένος. Προελθόντος δὲ χρόνου καὶ τῶν γυναικῶν πάλιν φορουσῶν, ἐκέλευσε τὴν βουλομένην χρυσοφορεῖν τάγμα τι ἀνατιθέναι ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ.

Dionysius of Syracuse, wishing to collect money, convened an assembly and said that Demeter had appeared to him, and ordered him to bring the women's jewelry into her sanctuary. He claimed that he himself had already done so with the jewelry of the women from his own household, and now required the others to do so, in order to avoid any wrath from the goddess, announcing that anyone who failed to comply would be guilty of sacrilege. When they had carried in everything which they possessed in deference to both the goddess and to him, he sacrificed to the goddess and carried off the jewelry on the grounds that he was obtaining it as a loan from the goddess. After some time had passed and the women once again began to put on jewelry, he ordered that any woman who wished to wear gold had to dedicate an offering of a certain amount in the sanctuary ([Arist.] *Oec.* 2.1349a).

The epiphany of Demeter to Dionysius is very significant in terms of the deliberately theatrical aspect of his royal self-fashioning, for the performance of drama in Sicily was very closely tied to sanctuaries of Demeter and Kore, and the goddesses were particularly associated with the Deinomenid tyrants (and the abundance that they could provide).¹⁷ Demeter's actual appearance to Dionysius, therefore, could be read as the tyrant's continuing efforts at one upmanship over his Deinomenid predecessors, who had associated themselves with the goddesses only by virtue of acquiring their sacred objects (ἱερὰ).¹⁸

Furthermore, this anecdote is very similar to one that Herodotus tells of Periander (5.92η), in which he invited all the women of Corinth to participate in a festival at the sanctuary of Hera. Once they arrived there dressed in their fine clothes, the women were forced to disrobe, and Periander burned their clothing as an offering to the ghost of his dead wife. As Daniel Ogden has observed,¹⁹ the Periander anecdote appears to reflect sumptuary legislation, presumably directed against his aristocratic opposition,²⁰ and doubtless this is what lies behind the similar anecdote on

¹⁷ Kowalzig (2008).

¹⁸ Hdt. 7.153, with Kowalzig (2008), 132-33.

¹⁹ Ogden (1997), 93.

²⁰ On the association of sumptuary legislation with tyranny, see Mitchell (2013), 45-46: "By maintaining an ideology of restraint, at least in private expenditure, rulers were able to protect themselves at home from other members of the elite who might use wealth to make counter-shows of power."

Dionysius.²¹ But another link between both anecdotes is the desire of the autocrat to legitimize his rule by associating himself with a deity, Demeter in Dionysius' case and Hera in Periander's (just as the Herodotean Pisistratus famously associated himself with Athena in his second seizure of power²²). This religious propaganda, originally circulated in order to justify Dionysius' sumptuary restrictions on the elite (his political opponents), is subsequently transformed by hostile sources into an anecdote designed to illustrate a typically tyrannical abuse of power for private gain, which is made to appear all the more shocking and impious because it occurs within a religious sanctuary.

As this short review of Dionysius' use of religious propaganda as a legitimizing device for his autocratic rule has shown, he successfully tapped into the storehouse of traditional myth employed by the tyrants of Archaic Greece as well as his Deinomenid predecessors,²³ but consciously went beyond them. I would now like to turn to a detailed examination of one particular episode of Dionysius' use of religious propaganda, for it illustrates very neatly both how Dionysius skillfully employs the same archetypes as his predecessors in order to prove himself as superior to them, and how the transformation of the originally positive spin of the anecdote into a negative one is rooted in contemporary politics rather than the later anti-Dionysian Sicilian historiographical tradition.

This episode is the mysterious prophetic dream of the woman of Himera. The earliest reference to it occurs in the second oration of Aeschines, when he was prosecuted by Demosthenes in 343 for diplomatic misconduct in the Athenian peace negotiations with Philip II, which culminated in the infamous Peace of Philocrates. He begins by summarizing some of Demosthenes' arguments in his prosecution speech:

Ἐνεχείρησε δ' ἀπεικάζειν με Διονυσίῳ τῷ Σικελίας τυράννῳ, καὶ μετὰ σπουδῆς καὶ κραυγῆς πολλῆς παρεκελεύσαθ' ὑμῖν φυλάξασθαι, καὶ τὸ τῆς ἱερείας ἐνύπνιον τῆς ἐν Σικελίᾳ διηγήσατο.

And he attempted to compare me to the tyrant Dionysius of Sicily, and with a great deal of frenzied shouting he urged you to be on your guard against me, and he narrated the dream of the priestess in Sicily (Aeschin. *De Falsa Legatione* 10).

²¹ On the opposition of the Syracusan elite to Dionysius, see De Angelis (2016), 212-13.

²² Connor (1987).

²³ Cf. Lewis (2000) and Prag (2010).

There is no such reference either to Dionysius or to the dream of the priestess in Sicily (which the context in Aeschines demonstrates served as proof of the tyrant's wickedness) in the extant version of Demosthenes' speech (*De Falsa Legatione*, number 19 in his corpus); Demosthenes himself evidently removed this section before its circulation. Aeschines, on the other hand, retained it in the version of his own speech which he circulated after the trial. Thus, we can be certain that the anecdote of the dream as a minatory omen against a tyrant was familiar to an Athenian audience in the third quarter of the fourth century.

Nevertheless, it apparently was not so familiar to a later audience. A scholiast to the speech comments that Aeschines is incorrect in saying that the woman was a priestess, and chastises him for failing to specify that she was from Himera. The scholiast proceeds to provide a more detailed rendition of the dream, citing as his authority the third-century Sicilian historian Timaeus:

Τίμαιος γὰρ ἐν τῇ <I>στορεῖ γυναικὰ τινα τὸ γένος Ἴμεραΐαν ἰδεῖν ὄναρ ἄνιούσαν αὐτὴν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ πρὸς τινος ἄγεσθαι θεασομένην τὰς τῶν θεῶν οἰκίσεις· ἔνθα ἰδεῖν καὶ τὸν Δία καθεζόμενον ἐπὶ θρόνου, ὕφ' οὗ ἐδέδετο πυρρὸς τις ἄνθρωπος καὶ μέγας ἀλύσει καὶ κλοιῶι. ἐρέσθαι οὖν τὸν περιάγοντα ὅστις ἐστί, τὸν δὲ εἰπεῖν «ἀλάστωρ ἐστί τῆς Σικελίας καὶ Ἰταλίας, καὶ ἐάνπερ ἀφεθῆι, τὰς χώρας διαφθερεῖ». περιαναστάσαν δὲ χρόνῳ ὕστερον ὑπαντήσαι Διονυσίῳ τῷ τυράννῳ μετὰ τῶν δορυφόρων· ἰδοῦσαν δὲ ἀνακραγεῖν, ὡς οὗτος εἴη ὁ τότε ἀλάστωρ δειχθεῖς· καὶ ἅμα ταῦτα λέγουσαν περιπεσεῖν εἰς τὸ ἔδαφος ἐκλυθεῖσαν. μετὰ δὲ τρίμηνον οὐκέτι ὄφθηται τὴν γυναικὰ, ὑπὸ Διονυσίου διαφθερεῖσαν λάθρα.

Timaeus narrates in his sixteenth book that a certain woman of Himera saw herself in a dream rising up to heaven and being brought by someone to gaze upon the dwellings of the gods. She even saw Zeus there seated upon a throne, under which a large red-haired man was bound with a chain and a collar. She asked her guide who he was and he said: "He is the scourge of Sicily and Italy, and if he is released, he will destroy the lands." Upon awakening, shortly afterwards she encountered the tyrant Dionysius with his spear-bearers. When she saw him, she shrieked, because he was the very man who had been shown to her as the scourge then (i.e., in the dream). As soon as she had said this, she fainted and fell down to the ground. Three months later, the woman was no longer seen, because she had secretly been killed by Dionysius (schol. to Aeschin. *De Falsa Legatione* 10 [Dilts 27] = *FGrH* 566 F 29).

This dream, which is attributed to a woman of Himera rather than a priestess, clearly arises out of the negative tradition on Dionysius. The dream figure of Dionysius is explicitly identified as a destructive scourge

(ἀλάστωρ), while the corporeal Dionysius is portrayed as a tyrant, accompanied by spear-bearers (a bodyguard is the stereotypical accoutrement of a tyrant), swiftly dispatching any real or perceived political opposition (another stereotypical action of a tyrant).²⁴

But an alternative version of the dream, containing a few crucial differences, can be found in Valerius Maximus:

Intra priuatum autem habitum Dionysio Syracusano adhuc se continente Himerae quaedam non obscuri generis femina inter quietem opinione sua caelum conscendit atque ibi[dem] deorum omnium lustratis sedibus animaduertit praeualentem uirum flauī coloris, lentiginosi oris, ferreis catenis uinctum, Iouis solio pedibusque subiectum, interrogatoque iuue, quo considerandi caeli duce fuerat usa, quisnam esset, audiit illum Siciliae atque Italiae dirum esse fatum solutumque uinculis multis urbibus exitio futurum. quod somnium postero die sermone uulgauit. postquam deinde Dionysium inimica Syracusarum libertati capitibusque insontium infesta fortuna caelesti custodia libertatum uelut fulmen aliquod otio ac tranquillitati iniecit, Himeraeorum moenia inter effusam ad officium et spectaculum eius turbam intrantem ut apexit, hunc esse, quem in quiete uiderat, uociferata est. id cognitum tyranno causam tollendae mulieris dedit.

But while Dionysius of Syracuse was still restraining himself as a private citizen, a certain woman of Himera, who was of noble birth in her sleep, dreamed that she rose to heaven. There, after she had surveyed the dwellings of all the gods, she noticed a very strong man with reddish hair and a freckled face bound with iron chains beneath the throne and feet of Jupiter. When she asked the young man who was serving as her guide in the tour of heaven who this man was, she heard that he was the dreadful fate of Sicily and Italy and that once he was released from his chains he would be the ruin of many cities. The next day she circulated her dream widely. Afterwards Fortune, which was hostile to the freedom of Syracuse and the lives of the innocent, released Dionysius from the custody of heaven and cast him like a thunderbolt against their peace and tranquility. She caught sight of him in the midst of a crowd that dutifully rushed out to see him as he entered within the walls of Himera, and she cried out that this was the man that she had seen in her dream. When this came to the knowledge of the tyrant, it was the reason he did away with the woman (Val. Max. *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri 1.7 ext.6*).

The version of this anecdote that Valerius Maximus preserves is clearly still a hostile one, in its negative portrayal of Dionysius as a “dreadful fate”

²⁴ The two are probably connected, for a bodyguard is surely intended to protect a tyrant or would-be tyrant against his political opponents, his rivals among the elite, rather than the entire citizen body; cf. McGlew (1993), 76.