

Hermes's Rebellion and Olympian Arbitration - The Quest of Cretan Shepherds and the Oath to Órkios Zeus

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Abstract

This paper, the product of many years of participant observation among a cohort of older shepherds at the uplands of Ida Mountain in Crete, delves into aspects of their existential concepts and socio-cultural dynamics, norms, and unwritten laws; intangible facets of their abundantly endowed intergenerational heritage remarkably preserving diachronic roots reaching into the ancient world of Greece. Of particular interest addressed in this paper is the mythographic analysis of the Homeric Hymn to Hermes with a focus on its aetiological and chartering functions and their tracing and comparative evaluations of the causes and actions of the young shepherds' rite of passage in the Mylopotamos region of Ida Mountain along with references to the indelible impressions and symbolic meaning of ancient religious elements which in syncretism with Christianity illustrate the true dimensions of diachronic depth in the legacy of their traditional practices.

Keywords

Mythography, Homeric Hymn to Hermes, Crete, Shepherds' Rite, Oath to Zeus

Prologue on the earliest sheep shepherds

It is during the eleventh millennium BP (Rubin and Suess, 1955; Solecki and Rubin, 1958), at the warming interglacial transition from the harsh climatological and challenging environmental conditions for human survivorship, severely imposed by the cold stress of Younger Dryas (van Hoesel et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2001; Hughen et al., 2000), that the archaeological record revealed tangible traces of human transformations, from nomadic hunting and gathering ways of life to sedentism by the Proto-Neolithic inhabitants of Shanidar Valley (Solecki and Rubin, 1958; Solecki, 1955; 1963; 1981; Agelarakis, 1987/8) at the Zagros highlands of Iraq, who were progressively experimenting with and adopting herding relationships with sheep (Perkins, 1964, Vigne et al., 2005; Zeder, 2008).

The pride and skillful heritage of the expert hunter, deeply acquainted with the upland habitat, the behavioral and sociobiological intricacies of the wild sheep were to decisively serve in the capture, rearing, corralling, and gradual taming of select members of those favorable wild animal prototypes. This had kindled an ensemble of intimate interdependence between humans and the animals they henceforth were determined to protect and care for. These conditions, pivoting around the emergence of animal husbandry, essential for human survivorship and the potential for sustained growth, were generating new perceptions of optimal ecological milieus and of favored as desirable territories, seen with a rediscovered understanding of their carrying capacity potential, while progressively dictating to human groups involved innovative trajectories of vision, planning and behaviors, focal to the realities which were to envelop the roles requisite to shepherding; effectively staging the beginnings of the earliest *lineage* of sheep shepherds (Agelarakis, 2021). Further, human control over animals and the incipient domestication of cereals during the Proto-Neolithic in Shanidar, bequeathed unprecedented changes in the prehistoric dynamics of human ecology, socio-economic organizational abilities and cultural developments, establishing the bedrock and fundamental principles integral to the so-called Neolithic Revolution (Solecki et al., 2004). And yet, with all the transformative advantages in the human condition, the reconfigured concepts of perceived environments in relevance to sedentism interweaved with the processes toward food production and sustainable food security (Harlan and Zohary, 1966; Helbaek, 1959; Leroi-Gourhan 1969; 1981; Agelarakis 1989) were to also generate new identities with strong notions of ownership, territoriality, inter-group antagonisms and anthropology of conflict. It is in the Proto-Neolithic burial ground site of Shanidar Cave that cranial injuries, representing a crux of the fractures documented in the human skeletal record (Agelarakis, 1993), would have been consequential to cases of anthropology of conflict, not irrelevant to raiding events by individuals endeavoring boldly or stealthily out of covetousness or as activities tied to a rite of passage¹ attempting to seize valuable supplies and amassed wealth whereby the perpetrator(s) would have to face the determined efforts of the defenders put forward for their own protection, for their territory, their material culture and stored food, and particularly of their valuable zoetic possessions (Agelarakis, 2021).

¹ van Gennep, A., (1961), *The Rites of Passage*, University of Chicago Press; Turner, V., (1995), *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Routledge.

From the earliest records proscribing animal theft to the Cretan shepherds' rite of passage in Mylopotamos of Ida Mountain (Psiloritis)

Ever since the Proto-Neolithic, and over a diachronic arch that transcended the passage of millennia from prehistoric to early historic periods, the cumulative conditions that were to be afforded by the increasing complexities and intricate interrelations within the emerging habitat of the human web would not have left unscathed shepherds and their flocks. In addition to acts of nature causing perilous circumstances for the herd, seasonal weather conditions that could have affected the nutritious quality of animal fodder, the myriad of worries about vermin impact, predation, and animal disease, territorial dominance issues and ownership disputes over pasturelands in the routine of transhumance among shepherd interests would intensify. These would have been aggravated by land conquests and subjugation along with tribute payments and imposed levies, and even worse overshadowed by the predicament of raiding events for animal theft; conditions that were to dauntingly imprint aspects of the realities in the diachronic heritage of the shepherds.

The causes and effects of animal theft would have been a menace to the safety, wealth, and trade transaction potential of both individual and communal flock owners, prior to and continuing within the dynamics of the early urbanizing sociopolitical milieus, and apparently even through the emerging kingdoms and their successive royal dynasties. While the earliest written laws preserved to our days, the Sumerian code of Ur-Nammu² (2100-2050 BCE), had placed robbery as a crime second only to murder imposing the death penalty in both cases, the earliest evidence proscribing animal theft, with a predominant ranking of cattle followed by sheep, with severe fines against perpetrators or the death penalty, held the eight³ in sequence of the 282 rules among the casuistic laws in the code of Hammurabi⁴ (1792-1750 BCE); the sixth king of Babylon who had successfully united via military campaigns the southern region of Mesopotamia.

It appears however, that through the passage of time the institutions and statutes of written laws affecting draconian penalties to those caught would not have eliminated causative agents relevant to the act of animal theft. Ethnohistoric echoes and legends of oral tradition, along with ethnographic observations were divulging matters intrinsic to the affairs of the shepherds in Crete⁵, a region of particular interest to this paper, discerning of an enduring code of unwritten laws on animal thievery. Hence, among any other circumstantial cause-and-effect variables on animal theft purposes, a core area of interest for this paper pertained to the exegesis of the custom and the symbolic meaning of practices undertaken during the

² Harriet, C., (2004), *Sumer and the Sumerians*, Cambridge University Press; Kramer, S. N., (1994), *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Recorded History*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia; (1971), *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

³ Rule No. 8: "If any one steal cattle or sheep, or an ass, or a pig or a goat, if it belong to a god or to the court, the thief shall pay thirtyfold therefor; if they belonged to a freed man of the king he shall pay tenfold; if the thief has nothing with which to pay he shall be put to death." Further, rules 263-267 involved strict regulations on the conduct of hired shepherds particularly against neglect, deceit, and thievery on the animals that were entrusted upon them, see <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp>.

⁴ Pritchard, J., (2010), *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, Princeton University Press, Princeton; Van De Mieroop, M. A., (2006), *History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000 - 323 BC*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden; Richardson, M. E. J., (2000), *Hammurabi's Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.

⁵ For a well-explored ethnographic study addressing sociocultural concepts of shepherds in an upland community of northern Mylopotamos in Crete, see Herzfeld, M., (1985), *The Poetics of Manhood. Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

rite of passage to manhood combined with the quest for acceptance in the professional occupational-world of shepherding in communities on the upland range of northern Mylopotamos in Rethymnon, Crete. The author has been carrying out archaeo-anthropological research in the region since the early 1990s, benefiting all along from the broad-minded counsel of elder shepherd-interlocutors relating to hermeneutics on matters of their human ecology and of specific aspects of their intangible heritage; with contemplation gradually gaining insight on the symbolic meaning of patterns of cultural practices and of entrusted ways of thought and conduct that had been handed down to them through their intergenerational legacy.

The aforementioned custom involved the careful as clandestine planning, orchestrated as if it were a hunt, and decisive pursuance by the budding shepherd during a moonless night of animal thievery, for the capture and keeping of a trophy of ewes preferably taken from the flock of a dominant and influential shepherd in the region; a risky exercise involving chances of personal hazard if not peril⁶. Yet, the venture itself, particularly if successful, would cause a frenzy of investigations by the outwitted, defrauded and frustrated shepherd and his entourage aiming to identify the perpetrator. In due course, through the leaking, often purposefully, of inklings about the perpetrator's identity possibly by individuals known to both parties, or through a process of narrowing down to the probable perpetrator from a short list of suspects, arrangements would then take place by intermediaries for diffusing and resolving the conflict through the intervention of a mutually selected, experienced and communally respected older male individual from the community for his record of sagacity, to serve as the arbitrator. It is not uncommon as part of the practice that the matter may be settled by the return of the largest possible number of sheep⁷ to the owner, in return entailing an in-person introduction and reconciliation between the young and senior shepherd. Meanwhile, the denotative evidence of mental capability, craftiness, nimbleness, boldness and bravery of the young shepherd are not unnoticed by the elder counterpart, who regards these attributes as most valuable capabilities for survivorship and potential for growth in the very demanding ways of shepherding in the rough conditions on Ida Mountain of the Mylopotamos region. Thus, following a sincere pledge of no further harm by the budding shepherd, mutual promises of respect are made between the contenders. This reconciliation offers acceptance, sometimes the beginning of a friendship, and permission for the young shepherd to participate in merging interests and efforts with the older shepherd, who in some cases may function as his mentor, further strengthening their relationship. To a greater extent, the murmurs heard of the young shepherd's capabilities that brought him to the successful establishment of the new-founded alliance, epitomize in the eyes of his peers his special skills and aptitudes, yet also offer him a favorable reception and growing recognition within the broader cohorts of his social milieu and even the opportunity for admission into the admired group of powerfully established shepherds; one of the ultimate goals of his rite of passage.

The habitude of rite of passage for the young shepherd in the upland regions of Ida Mountain in Rethymnon⁸ comprises a complex multicomponent sequence of acts and actions requiring

⁶ As warned and urged by his fearful mother, objecting to the secret plans of her son.

⁷ One of the sheep may have been slaughtered, roasted in the open fire, and eaten by a very closed group of friends and confidants of the young shepherd to celebrate the successful endeavor.

⁸ Herzfeld in his excellent pioneering work in mountainous Mylopotamos describes the first animal theft of a young shepherd in the village of "Glendi" as "... an initiation, however informal, into manhood..", "The event is

will, subtle deeds, and diligence in the practice of the custom. However, unlike a restricted code of operation in the practice, the performer is engaged⁹ in uncharted as audacious acts in the ingenious breaking of mores by the trespassing of clearly demarcated thresholds and the stealing of guarded and uniquely earmarked sheep¹⁰ from a powerful community member. This is followed by the performer keeping quiet, avoiding unnecessary public appearances and suppressing restlessness while enduring psychological stress under a strict code of silence and in solidarity with any of his confidants and trusted supporters for the duration of this phase of the custom and even during subsequent events, precarious as they may be for the outcome of what the involvement of intermediaries might achieve toward the stage of arbitration and the course of handling the grievance(s); circumstances requisite of guileful yet of well-timed, delicate, as judicious performances by the young thief. In conditions of a resolved outcome, the process culminates with his decorous conduct, an affirmed pledge and observance to proprieties, followed by his acceptance in the broader social milieu and within the group of professional shepherds with recognition of rank and with prestige and reputation based mainly on capability and skill in the shepherding profession. Thus, his acceptance within the group of powerful shepherds allows him to reclaim “δοχέες” (areas of family land-rights) that may have been encroached¹¹, thus offering easement of access without antagonism of his flock of sheep and goats in the upland pasturelands, restricted as they are in their productivity of fodder by the carrying capacity limitations of the mountainous ecology. Hence, through a progressive readjustment of fodder resources, deterministic for the growth potential of the free-ranging flocks at the uplands of Ida Mountain, the exploitation of which had been dominated during previous years by a league of powerful shepherds, economic and social changes take effect on the individuals involved. Further, although the process set in motion each time the custom occurs ostensibly addresses the interests of a young shepherd coming of age and thus of his family, it invigorates nevertheless the dynamic of an important social function by reasserting regulations of conduct between powerful and less powerful shepherds, members of the same village community, absorbing when possible the dangerous potential of permanency in schemes of encroachment or the domineered utilization of the pasturelands by the alliance of a select group. This reaffirms and preserves the right for reparations of injustices where relevant, while it promotes respect and collaboration between shepherds with neighboring pasturelands, offering boons to the co-villagers at large; leveraging the bestowing to future budding-shepherds the possibilities for some flexibility toward growth and professional accomplishment whilst safeguarding the diachronic sustainability of the community which depends on the successful affairs of shepherding.

Thus, the rite of passage that evidently transitions the candidate to the status of an initiated member within the cohort of seasoned shepherds does not involve a single ceremony or

well understood to mark an *experience of passage*..”, see Herzfeld, M., (1985), *The Poetics of Manhood. Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p. 166.

⁹ At a juncture within the years of the adolescent age subgroup, yet variable on the chronological age of the individual and only according to when the performer feels ready, unless there were pressing issues because of social circumstances particular to the dynamics of his family, i.e., the need to protect inherited rights of the family such as a pastureland that continued to be trespassed by a powerful shepherd since the death of the young shepherd’s father.

¹⁰ Ear notchings for ownership identification take place in the early life of sheep and carry a permanent marking for the life of the animal, unique to the insignia of the flock owner. In past years, ear notchings have been gradually replaced by plastic ear tags as required by the European Union [Article 113 of the Animal Health Law, Regulation \(EU\) 2016/429](#). Hence, in cases of animal theft the perpetrator could easily replace the ear tags.

¹¹ Or even the negotiation of borders between pasturelands of disputed ownership which may have been in the past a serious reason of contention between families.

event, but a series of scaffolding events, which in the performance of the practice seem to be missing characteristics of strict conformity to invariance and formalism, while largely lacking symbolisms of consecration. Instead, there are incorporated flexibilities in the mode and tempo of operation, adjustable according to the unique circumstances of each individual performance of the custom, while disclosing important elemental components bearing to actions of defiance and rebellion combining a mechanism for social control with the aim to eventually be noticed and/or to resolve an unfairness committed by the powerful shepherd, whilst strengthening and solidifying the fellowship among both the young and the older shepherds' inner groups of confidants and supporters; and potentially even strengthening the ensemble of both parties in cases of lasting reconciliation¹².

In aiming to unveil aspects of traditionalism for the historic appeal of the custom, the evaluation of an explanatory hypothesis considered that a ritualization process of the candidate's initiation trial to membership of seasoned shepherds had incorporated the element of sheep thievery as a symbolic action to reflect on the capability, daring and courage to disregard and boldly challenge the echelons of power and authority¹³. Supposed possible causes for the rite would have been rooted in relatively recent historic periods. These could have been affected by the indignity suffered through the vicious persecution and despair under the 253 years of subjugation by the Ottomans (since 1669) and their allies, and then again as consequences of the atrocities afforded by the Axis powers during WW II in Crete and especially of those grave conditions experienced by the mountainous communities in Mylopotamos of Rethymnon. Narratives of elder shepherd-interlocutors, all of whom had personal experiences and memories vividly describing the annihilation of entire village communities, of inhumane torment, infliction, severe oppression and starvation endured by those that had survived under the Axis occupation, coupled by echoes of oral tradition on the Ottoman subjugation, could indeed lend plausible support in explanatory scenarios for the emergence of the rite.

However, a competitive explanatory hypothesis, while regarding that said conditions and experiences of more recent historic times could have bolstered traditionalism for the appeal of the rite, was instead standing for the intimations hinting to the probability that the practice could have had core elements tracing deeper roots as discerned by a prevalence of inherent tesserae of old threaded into Cleo's parchments. Thus, careful analysis of historical record fundamentals on the earliest recording of animal theft in the Hellenic world clearly unveiled an ensemble of evidentiary data on the relative chronology, the causes, the nature of conduct and actions involved along with vivid echoes of their symbolic meanings in the momentous genre of Hermes's theogonic bearing; endeavoring to claim his rights among the Olympians. These were reflective of the ancient foundations and diachronic correlations with the rite of the young shepherds of Mylopotamos, in their respective quest for recognition, fairness and acceptance among the dominant group of well-established shepherds of their community.

¹² For a comparative reflection of relationship dynamics and interests between family members, friends, confidants and antagonists within the context of the same village community as recorded through an ethnographic study in the island of Euboia in the 1900s see Du Boulay, J., (1994), *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village*, Denise Harvey Publisher, Evia, VII: The solidarity of the kindred, p. 142-168, and VII: The pursuit and control of family interest in the community, p. 169-200.

¹³ Particularly during what would be considered the first two (initial and transitional) out of the three phases of a ritual.

Homeric Hymn to Hermes-The patron of shepherds, flocks and pasturelands

Ancient hexameter quotations of rhapsodes' epic poems transferred to the written record had comprised a *prohoimion*, one of the so-called Homeric Hymns that were sang in performances honoring the gods in ancient Greece. The Hymn to Hermes¹⁴ which based on its linguistic attributes and syntactical structure is said to allude to the fifth century BCE¹⁵, provides in a rather amusing way a narrative starting from the god's subordinate birth within the walls of a cave in Arcadia through to his conspicuous acceptance in the glorious membership of the Olympians. Along with the humorous style of narrative there are embedded in the Hymn very important aetiological concepts offering explanations on the account of events in the storytelling of the god, as well as chartering elements providing archetypal norms of proper conduct versus taboos to be paradigmatically followed by mortals in the cult of the immortals. Inferences of the latter were addressed in the recitation of the Hymn not only in relevance to the god himself, but also to his agnate brother Apollo, to cult aspects on the ritual sacrifice of animals as offers to the Olympians, yet also uniquely recording the first arbitration among contending Olympians on matters of animal theft; namely on Hermes's surreptitious raiding of Apollo's cattle. In addition, a numerous account of conditions and events are chronicled in the hymn, such as the god's furtiveness, his discovery of the lyre, the earliest delivery by him of fire sticks and the making of fire¹⁶, his authoritative instruction for a code of silence enjoined to a witness of the animal thievery¹⁷, his deceptive assertiveness and manipulative negotiation ability, the dutiful function of Zeus to serve as the arbitrator between his sons, the offering of the lyre to Apollo as a means of reconciliatory payment¹⁸ exciting Apollo¹⁹ to assume among his other roles that of the god of lyre²⁰. Further, Hermes²¹, having implemented his clandestine plan with the aim to be discovered as the perpetrator and having caused astonishment to his consanguineous seniors by his abilities when caught and judged, was subsequently accepted to join the divine Olympians and even become of close friend and confidant to his older brother Apollo; although raiding the cattle herd may not have had initially as a main objective to befriend Apollo. Hermes, in successfully completing his quest, ascended among the admired and respected Olympians. In carrying out his well-planned quest, he showed determination to courageously defy danger and difficulties, succeeding in attaining a reformation of sorts from a youth of a rather obscure beginning to an integral as indispensable member of the pantheon. Among his other Olympian roles, he became the undisputed god of the pasturelands, the

¹⁴ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 1-580, p.112-159.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 14, revealing that it may be the latest among the thirty-three Homeric Hymns.

¹⁶ Hermes makes fire for the first time by inventing and using the fire sticks. At a different juncture titan Prometheus steals the fire from Olympus and transfers it to humans.

¹⁷ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 90-93, p. 120-121.

¹⁸ Chartering a norm in the act of negotiation in reconciliation, particularly as Apollo considered the lyre as equivalent in worth to his fifty cows, *ibid.* 4. 436-438, p. 146-149. In diachronic comparison, the reaching of a nonviolent settlement through the Hammurabi code was obliging one caught, or otherwise identified as the perpetrator in the stealing of animals, to settle in the best of cases with a tenfold in worth payment.

¹⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 918-920, p. 76-77; Burkert, W., (1985), *Greek Religion*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2.5, p. 143-149.

²⁰ Fascinated with the harmonious acoustics of its strings he would lead the dances accompanied by the Muses, for their birth and enjoyment in music and dance see Hesiod, *Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1-115, p. 2-13, and 915-917, p. 76-77.

²¹ Burkert, W., (1985), *Greek Religion*, Harvard University Press, 2.8, p. 156-159.

patron of the shepherds as sovereign over all sheep flocks as clearly discerned in the Hymn²², and the benefactor on the prosperity of goat and sheep flocks²³. Having gone through the challenging stages of an ambitious as clandestine endeavor he had created with foresight, and chartered by the process of his own reformation of identity and status the unique rite of passage for those young mortals that had all the reasons to conform and to act in accordance with his paradigmatic lead, to call upon him for his protection and benefactions²⁴, and to honor and observe his cult²⁵.

The earliest record of animal theft in Greek mythology: reasons and course of action in Hermes's quest and the first *Sasmós*

Elements chronicled in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes having pervaded time were to endure their function, undeviatingly deeply rooted in antiquity, in select practices of shepherds' traditions in Crete²⁶ with a particular focus on the upland range of northern Mylopotamos in Rethymnon. Hence, in reflecting on the aetiological concepts that might be construed from the narrative of the Hymn, a particular causative agent stands out that deserves attention, one that appears to have been leveraged through the rite of passage of young Hermes which was to elevate him to an Olympian. The spectacular oddity of Hermes's action, the crossing of thresholds and the carrying out of the marvelous thievery²⁷, had not as its cause the *hunger* for meat as initially stated in the narrative²⁸, nor was it intended to only serve as a display of his abilities, unattainable as it may have been for anyone else. It was rather a well calculated premeditated plan that was executed with fearless determination to cause his well-established Olympian half-brother's astonishment, consternation and perplexity, inspiring awe and wondering and thus enticing him to search and find the perpetrator. Not unlike the bafflement and frustration caused to a well-established, powerful, shepherd in upland Mylopotamos in

²² *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 571, p. 158-159.

²³ Hesiod, *Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 444-446, p. 38-39.

²⁴ E.g., The offering apportioned to Hermes and the subsequent prayer by Odysseus's swine-herder Eumaius, see Homer, *Odyssey*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 14. 435-436, 445-447, p. 68-69.

²⁵ Not only was Hermes the patron of shepherds, but among his other divine functions he was god of magic (cf. *ibid.* 4. 414-416, p. 144-145) and of healing named as "Κριοφόρος" (Ram-bearer) for having saved Tanagra from an epidemic by carrying on his shoulders a ram around the periphery of the city's fortification walls, and "Πρόμαχος" (First in Battle) for routing in the battle field an Eretrian invading force that landed in Tanagra, Pausanias, *Description of Greece: Arcadia*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) W. H. S. Jones, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, IX. xxii. 1-2, p. 264-265. Furthermore, at the sanctuary of Karnasus in Messinia, Hermes "Κριοφόρος" (Ram-bearer) and Apollo "Κάρνειος" (Carneius: Ram-horned) along with Kore, Demeter's daughter, were worshiped in initiation rites second in importance and holiness only to the Eleusinian Mysteries as reported by Pausanias, *ibid.* IV. xxxiii. 4-5, p. 354-355.

²⁶ Skillfully explored by Haft, A., (1996), "The Mercurial Significance of Raiding: Baby Hermes and Animal Theft in Contemporary Crete", *Arion*, Third Series, V. 4:2, p. 27-48.

²⁷ Conducted as if it were a hunt, yet for the trapping and herding of the animals with an effacing and disguising pattern of any identifying traces of his deed.

²⁸ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 64, p. 118-119. Apollo during his initial encounter with Hermes's deceiving arguments about the raiding of cows scornfully accuses him with the same expression, as a thief that would commit the same raiding "...όπόταν κρειών έρατίζων..." (anytime you would yearn for meat), *ibid.*, 4. 287, p. 134-135, as the consumption of meat was inappropriate for the Olympians. A variably paraphrased expression in the extant vernacular alludes to a proverb that incites hunters to take action for terrestrial game, and in some contexts for an impromptu raiding of sheep for immediate consumption.

his amazement and frenzy to discover who and how could, rather dared, to steal sheep from his flock²⁹ and thus challenge his authority and might. Hermes's plan also included an entrapment for Apollo in manipulative arguments, of deceit and denials of theft by Hermes, who unlike his elder brother mastered these domains³⁰ and succeeded in generating an impasse in order to request and even lead the way, in Apollo's perplexity yet without disagreement, for a splendid introduction with Zeus at the forum of Olympus as the arbitrator³¹. This was a consequential objective of Hermes's preemptive plan, who boldly devised and executed the scheme with a skillfully contrived plot for effectively securing an auspicious audience and a hearing with their father Zeus, seemingly as the arbitrator for the raiding of Apollo's cows, yet chiefly for addressing and resolving the important issues of the as of yet pending rights of Hermes at Olympus³². Thence, this was a timely pretext for an opportune as essential occasion for disclosing his paternal lineage at the assembly of the immortals³³, showing his filial respect and invoking the above-board recognition by his father and the binding protection thereto pertaining under the aegis of Kronides, while engendering at the concurrence of circumstances the context and dynamic potential for the bestowment upon him of favors and roles among the Olympians; based on his unique abilities and capacities³⁴.

In retrospect, the motive of Hermes's quest through animal thievery in order to be perceived and accepted into his rights as an Olympian was to be mirrored by the actions of animal thievery by the young shepherds of Mylopotamos, who in defiance and rebellion through the rite of passage aim to be noticed and following an arbitration to be accepted for their furtive as worthy deeds among the admired, dominant, powers of their professional world and/or to resolve an unfairness possibly resting in the hands of the latter. Hermes, in effect, was also to redress an unfairness, the grievance suffered by his mother Maia, the daughter of Pleione and Atlas³⁵. Maia had been avoiding contacts with the Olympians, keeping away in her cave-dwelling and concealing the well-kept secret of her relation with Zeus³⁶ under a lingering

²⁹ Very much like the feelings expressed by Odysseus in telling Penelope's suitor about nothing spared by "...a man...fighting for his own possessions, whether for his cattle or for his white sheep", *Homer, Odyssey*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 17. 468-472, p. 188-189.

³⁰ Apollo calls Hermes as "...πολύτροπε Μαϊάδος υιέ..." (ingenious trickster/cleverly inventive son of Maia), *ibid.* 4. 439, p. 148-149. The same epithet of "...πολύτροπον..." is used by Homer, in the beginning of *Odyssey*, to name Odysseus, see *Homer, Odyssey*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1. 1, p. 12-13; not irrelevant to the witty abilities of Odysseus's heritage from his maternal grandfather Autolycus, who had received the blessing of Hermes, see *ibid.* 19. 392-398, p. 262-263.

³¹ *Ibid.* 4. 312-321, p. 138-139.

³² Conditions which Hermes had already conferred with his mother Maia once he had returned to their cave dwelling after the raiding of cows, *ibid.* 4. 163-173, p. 126-127.

³³ *Ibid.* 4. 332, p. 138-139.

³⁴ Even upon his first appearance at the forum of the Olympians, Zeus shows his affection to Hermes while identifies him as with a build of a herald (φύην κήρυκος ἔχοντα), *ibid.* 4. 330-331, p. 138-139.

³⁵ For Maia, daughter of Atlas, see Hesiod, *Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 938-939, p. 78-79; For the love affair of the most beautiful of the Pleiades with Zeus see *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4.1-10, p.112-115; For the Pleiades as celestial bodies of the constellation of Callisto see *Homer, Odyssey*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, V. 271-272, p. 202-203, and Hesiod, *Other Fragments: Astronomy*, (2007), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 223-226, p. 298-301.

³⁶ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 4-9, p.112-115. Maia must have even been fearing for her son's fate, should he be discovered

oppression and looming threat of abstruse retaliation by the wrath and vindictive spirit of jealous Hera³⁷ she had against the loving consorts of Zeus and particularly for those who bore him sons; a case of which was to be experienced firsthand by Maia in the very proximal region of Arcadia through the tragic consequences that befell on Callisto, and in serving through Zeus's intervention as the foster mother to Callisto's son Arcas³⁸. Thus, in defiance to the danger of provoking powerful Hera's ire and rebelling against the predicament to continue to dwell in the cave, as unjust, undeserving and indignant to his patrimony, identity and innate abilities³⁹, Hermes's quest for reaching to his rights included the vindication of his mother's honor and deliverance from the looming oppression and potential of revengeful actions by Hera's jealousy⁴⁰. This task was attained by the last phase of his preemptive as surreptitious plan at the forum of the Olympians by engaging the catalytic gravity afforded on this matter by the mediation of his father⁴¹ and the friendship and support weighted by his famed agnate brother⁴²; consequent to their reconciliation as had been commanded by the arbitrator⁴³. Not unlike the cases of arbitration on animal theft by a young shepherd carrying out the practice of the rite in the uplands of Mylopotamos with a subsequent reconciliation, trust building and friendship⁴⁴ with the older, well-established, shepherd, and thus with acceptance and even support often times by the admired as commanding cohort of the professional membership in the region⁴⁵.

by Hera, worrisome after Hermes's thievery, of repercussions that would befall upon him by Apollo's actions, *ibid.*, 4. 155-161, p. 124-127.

³⁷ Hesiod, *Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 454, p. 38-39; *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 12, 1-5, p.192-193; Burkert, W., (1985), *Greek Religion*, Harvard University Press, 2.2, p.131-135.

³⁸ Apollodorus, *The Library*, (1921, reprint), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) Sir J.G. Frazer, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, III.viii.2, p. 394-397; Pausanias, *Description of Greece, Arcadia*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) W. H. S. Jones, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, III. 6-7, p. 356-357; For the constellation of Callisto see Homer, *Odyssey*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, V. 272-275, p. 202-203.

³⁹ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 166-169, p. 126-127.

⁴⁰ Aiming for an extrication from discrimination, for purging undercurrents of social injustice and even anguish imposed in this case by Hera. Soon after his ascent to Olympus Hermes would acquire the prosonym Argifontes for killing the exceedingly strong Argus Panoptes (the All-seeing, with eyes throughout his body) ordered by Hera to guard Io (the Argive princess loved by Zeus) tied to a tree metamorphosed to a cow; her son Epaphus born in Egypt once she had re-morphed to a human was murdered by orders of Hera, Apollodorus, *The Library*, (1921, reprint), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) Sir J.G. Frazer, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts II. 2-3, p. 130-135.

⁴¹ Zeus acted as the guarantor of Hermes's and Maia's safety, by accepting his paternal responsibilities for Hermes in the forum of the Olympians and further by allocating to his son the role of the herald for the Olympians; as was Zeus's plan all along, alluded in *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 10., p. 114-115, and 4. 331., p. 138-139.

⁴² *Ibid.* 4. 458-459, p. 148-149.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 4. 391-396, p. 144-145.

⁴⁴ For alternative cases of animal theft yet under the euphemism "Stealing to Befriend" see a good report in Herzfeld, M., (1985), *The Poetics of Manhood. Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, p. 163-205.

⁴⁵ In cases whereby reconciliation may not be promising, and violence may be looming, mediators and/or the arbitrator may intervene where possible to have one of the contenders or a member of his family baptize the offspring of the other, hence through a ritual sanctified by religion the relationship of the contenders changes by the bestowed function of godparent (ἀνάδοχος or σύντεκνος in Crete) to the offspring of the other. During the ritual of baptism, the godparent verbalizes formal utterances which function as an oath, invoking the divine in front of the participants at the sanctum of a church, while also declaring a riddance and negation of the evil power. At the culmination of the ritual, great responsibilities and obligations are established between the

As for the Olympian arbitration between the contending brothers, it could not have been any other to rule on it than their own father⁴⁶, the most senior, the wisest, the most respected and the most powerful among the Olympians, the supreme arbitrator administering justice to gods and mortals⁴⁷. By his judicious as enlightened intervention, following the deliberations made by the contenders, he calmly defused the conflict⁴⁸ counseling the brothers to reconcile while peremptorily obliging Hermes to disclose to Apollo where he hid the cows. Zeus's issuance of a declaratory judgement, a measure for preventing further conflict while determining to settle the dispute, instituted a proceeding on the matter of animal theft. This was the earliest recorded case of animal theft arbitration in the mythography of the ancient Hellenic world and ever more importantly based on the gravity of its precedent setting, adjured by the supreme of the Olympians. In truth, it represents foundation elements of the process of arbitration for dispute resolution, inclusive of cases of animal theft, in mountainous Mylopotamos, commonly known in Crete as “Σασμός” (Sasmós)⁴⁹. Not unlike the swearing of oaths for alliance, friendship and avoidance of discord between Hermes⁵⁰ and Apollo following their reconciliation by arbitrator Zeus, cases of arbitration where Sasmos is

godparent and the baptized offspring, along with a respected nexus of kinship between the two contending sides, generating alliances and the avoidance of future conflict. Such oaths and the expected behavioral decorum they oblige are remembered and respected intergenerationally as a bond of friendship, resonating echoes of old on the avoidance of conflict. A paradigm of the respected intergenerational bonds of friendship may be revealed from the battlefield of Troy between Glaucus son of Hippolochos and Diomedes son of Tydeas given the ties of friendship of their grandfathers, Homer, *Iliad*, (2001), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Trans.) A.T. Murray and W.F. Wyatt, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 6. 119-236, p. 282-291.

⁴⁶ *Homeric Hymn to Zeus*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 23. 1-4, p. 204-205.

⁴⁷ For he is the father of Εὐνομία (Lawfulness) and Δίκη (Justice) by his Titaness consort Themis, daughter of Gaia, cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 901-903, p. 74-75. Regarding the mortals who administer justice according to the will of Zeus cf. Homer, *Iliad*, (2001), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Trans.) A.T. Murray and W.F. Wyatt, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1. 238-239, p. 30-31.

⁴⁸ Reacting laughingly to Hermes's deceptive obfuscations, *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 389, p. 144-145. Similar was the reaction of Apollo upon listening to Hermes's deceptive excuses in Maia's cave, *ibid.* 4. 281-282, p. 134-135. Yet, Zeus's laughter it is argued had a different function than Apollo's. Zeus was pleased by the abilities of young Hermes to handle very difficult circumstances, worthy of the diplomatic role he was intending to allocate to him as the herald of the immortals, welcoming him by his side as his trusted assignee “Διός δ' ἐριούνιος υἱός” (Zeus's curser son) *ibid.* 4. 28, p. 114-115, and “σῶκος ἐριούνιος Ἑρμῆς” (strong helper Hermes) in Homer, *Iliad*, (2001), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Trans.) A.T. Murray and W.F. Wyatt, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 20. 72, p. 370-371. Hermes as the herald of the immortals (Ἄγγελος των αθανάτων) in the ancient religion was also serving as the *Psychopompos* (Ψυχοπομπός) or guide of souls. The domain of this function in Christianity is under the wings of Saint Archangel Michael the Taxiarch (Ἅγιος Αρχάγγελος Μιχαήλ Ταξιάρχης), cf. *Η Καινή Διαθήκη* (Bible), (1974), “Αποκάλυψης Ιωάννου” (Revelation), Αδελφότης Θεολόγων ο Σωτήρ, Αθήνα, IB' (12). 7-8. p. 1028-1029; Lawson, J. C., (1964), *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Religion*, University Books, New York, p. 45.

⁴⁹ Superbly and holistically addressed by Τσαντηρόπουλος, Α., (2004), *Η Βεντέτα στη Σύγχρονη Ορεινή Κρήτη*, Πλέθρον, Αθήνα.

⁵⁰ Unlike the two previous cases of Hermes's deceptive offers to take an oath in support of his innocence from the animal thievery, both to his brother, *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 4. 274-277, p. 134-135, and his father, *ibid.* 4. 381-384, p. 142-143, following the reconciliation by Zeus he takes a silent oath, as an initiated Olympian, by the request of Apollo who is still mistrusting of Hermes's potential behavior and needs to have him bound by an oath invoking Styx in his swearing. In case of επιορκία (forswearing) the immortal was to face severe consequences, *Hesiod, Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 793-806, p. 66-69. For a valuable review on matters and functions of oath taking, pivoting on god Hermes, see Fletcher, J., (2008), “A Trickster's Oaths in the “Homeric Hymn to Hermes”, *American Journal of Philology*, 129: 1, p. 19-46.

achieved in Mylopotamos hold promises of great significance sworn between reconciled contenders to avoid future conflict, to cultivate mutual respect, to form alliances if not to nurture friendship.

Shepherds' oath in Mylopotamos to *Órkios Zeus*

Zeus's presence in Crete has been primordial⁵¹ and with diachronically indelible traces especially in the uplands of Mylopotamos, worshiped in antiquity at the cave of Mountain Ida (Idaion Andron) from the Minoan to the Roman periods, whilst in our days a musicless male dance⁵² is performed in the cave by Cretan youths to honor ancestral memories; their fast paced thunder-resounding tread shaking the ground, alluding to the Cretan Kuretes warriors who masked with their dance the sounds of infant Zeus's from Kronos's ears⁵³. Zeus's name and birthplace is further commemorated in our days throughout the adjacent region to the Idaian Cave by the toponym of Neda's plateau and Ζούλακκος (Zeus's valley) sacralized in his honor since antiquity⁵⁴, and the very village called Ζωνιανά (Zoniana), while although fading from the vernacular the calling of his name as “Ζῶνε Θεέ” (Zeus god) in prayers invoking the divine is still remembered, and the description of natural events such as in rainfall, in lightning and thunder bolding are still uttered⁵⁵, echoing the ancient symbolism of his presence, by members of the older cohort in the region⁵⁶. Moreover, as astonishing as it may be when considering the unfading uniqueness and extraordinary strength of the shepherds' deep-rooted traditions in Crete, Zeus's name continues to be singularly invoked in

⁵¹ Since his early life refuge in Crete, when Rhea gave birth to Zeus and concealed him in a cave, Hesiod, *Theogony*, (2010), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) G. M. Most, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 477-484, p. 40-41. Regarding Zeus's birth taking place in the Diktaion Mountain Cave, see Apollodorus, *Library*, (1921, reprint) (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) Sir J. G. Frazer, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1. i. 6., p. 6-7. Regarding Rhea's entrustment of new-born Zeus's to nurses Adrastia and Ida (synonymous with mountain Ida) and his protectors Kuretes whom with their thunder-resounding musicless warrior dance masked Zeus's sounds, see *ibid.* 6-7. p. 6-9. Regarding Zeus's transfer by the Kuretes from the Diktaian Cave to Ida Mountain's cave (Idaion Antron), for his upbringing by the Nymphs see *Diodorus Siculus, Library of History*, (2000), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) C. H. Oldfather, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, V. 70. 2-3., p. 284-287. Regarding Zeus's mentoring of King Minos of Knossos every eight years cf. Homer, *Odyssey*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 19. 178-179, p. 246-247.

⁵² A dance performed without music by a group of young males, variably called “Πηδηχτός Μυλοποτάμου”, or “Ανωγειανός πεδηχτός”, or “Χορός των Κουρητών” (Jumping <dance> of Mylopotamos, of Anogeia Village, or the dance of Kuretes), is considered a modification of the ancient war-dance Pyrrhichios, danced by goddess Athena in full panoply once born out of her father Zeus, see Apollodorus, *Peri Theon*, P.Oxy. 20-2260-20 (2009), (Digital Eds.) S. Basin, H. Essler, *Studi di Egittologia e di Papirologia*, col. 2. 3-10 (<https://papyri.info/dclp/59148>); cf. Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, (1999), (Ed.) G.P. Gould, (Transl.) C. B. Gulick, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, XIV.631. a, p. 404-405.

⁵³ The Kuretes were performing their war dance [πρύλιν (in Cyprian) of πυρρίχη (Pyrrhichios) dance] to mask infant Zeus's noises hidden in the Idaian Cave, see Callimachus, *Hymns*, (1955), (Ed.) E. H. Warmington, Harvard University Press, London, I. 49-53., p. 42-43. For a similar function of Kuretes's dance, to cover up the birthing of Leto's children from the wrath of lurking Hera, see Strabo, *Geography*, (2000), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) H. L. Jones, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 14. i. 20, C640, p. 222-225.

⁵⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, (2000), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) C. H. Oldfather, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, V. 70. 4-5, p. 286-287. The region includes Neda's plateau, expanding below the Idaian Cave. Neda was the eldest of Nymphs around Rhea and was entrusted to bring baby Zeus in the concealed place in Crete, see Callimachus, *Hymns*, (1955), (Ed.) E. H. Warmington, Harvard University Press, London, I. 33-36., p. 40-41.

⁵⁵ “Βρέχει ο Θεός” (God is raining), for Zeus was the sky god; even if his dominion included the land.

⁵⁶ Interlocutors of the author from the villages of Eleutherna, Zoniana, Livadia, and Anogeia. Cf. Rodd, R., (1892), *The Customs and Lore of Modern Greece*, Argonaut Publishers, Chicago, p. 131-132.

the swearing of an oath, specific to matters of animal theft between contenders in order to clear suspicions and/or accusations for animal theft between accuser and accused.

During the practice of the ritual, taking place in the uplands of mountain Ida, the oath taker swearing still invokes the name of Zeus, the most divine among the gods of the ancient religion, appealing as in antiquity for his remediation and vindication from imputation, as Zeus *Orkios*⁵⁷, keeper and guarantor of oaths, punisher of sinners and of oath-breakers, “*Nῆ Ζά φάσκω σου καί κάτεχέ το, δε σου φταίω έργο (ή) βουλή μου*”⁵⁸. The oath, aims to protest and assert objections to the contentions of the challenger, starting with the strong particle of affirmation (*Nῆ*) in invoking divine Zeus (*Ζά*⁵⁹) “By Zeus I affirm to you and know it, I have not wronged you by my action or volition”.

When in the pasturelands of the mountain ridges the oath could take place by the invitation of the accuser whereby the oath taker would offer to take the oath while placing the palm of his hand on a discernible, well-founded, rock with a flatter top, where a cross would have been carved for the occasion, as part of the ritual⁶⁰. Hence, the oath ritual would encompass both the invocation of the divine, yet also would assign symbolic designations to the rock formation, converting it to a permanent tangible identifier of the ritual; comprised by the selecting of a discrete and well-formed standing stone as an altar (of religious significance in the polytheistic religion), the carving of the symbolic figuration on it (with religious significance in the monotheistic religion), the intended gesture of stretching the right upper extremity and touching it by the right hand⁶¹ (of religious symbolism in both religious traditions) while uttering the oath (invoking *Orkios* Zeus), would exhibit an interweaved ensemble of syncretism of the ancient polytheistic religion and Christianity.

⁵⁷ His epithet was Ὀρκίος (Ζεύς), Oath-god (Zeus), in the ancient ritual of oath taking. Pausanias recounts that from all Zeus’s statue representations he had seen in ancient Greece, the one in the Bouleuterion of Olympia, holding a thunderbolt in each of his hands, was to cause terror to sinners, Pausanias, *Description of Greece, Arcadia*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) W. H. S. Jones, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, V. xxiv. 9, p. 528-529.

⁵⁸ As it was trusted to the author in writing by Mr. Dimitrios Parasyris, teacher and local historian of Zoniana, indeed in the very vicinity of Neda’s plateau and the Idaion Andron (Zeus’ Cave in Ida Mountain).

⁵⁹ Accusative form of Dias (Δίας) in the ancient Doric dialect. Although the name of Zeus is called upon during the swearing, instead of his epithet *Orkios*, the oath taking should it be juxtaposed to the decorum in antiquity would not have involved desecration, cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, (1983), (Ed.) G. P. Goold, (Transl.) H. W. Smyth, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 160-163, p. 18-19, compared to the avoidance of mentioning the names of the divine, (Ἀπόλλων δ’ ἐν βροτοῖς ὀρθῶς καλῆι, ὅστις τὰ σιγῶντ’ ὀνόματ’ οἶδε δαιμόνων) see Φαέθων, *Euripides*, (1981), (Ed.) G. A. Seeck, *Sämtliche Tragödien und Fragmente, griechisch-deutsch, Band VI: Fragmente, Kyklop, Rhesos, München: Artemis (Sammlung Tusculum)*, 781 (1101), https://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/graeca/Chronologia/S_ante05/Euripides/eur_phae.html; cf. Euripides’ *Phaethon*, fragment 781 (ὅστις τὰ σιγῶντ’ ὀνόματ’ οἶδε δαιμόνων), cf., *Euripides: Phaethon*, (1970), (Ed.) Diggle, J., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

⁶⁰ Based on the narratives during ethnographic work of the author working with elder shepherds, interlocutors of the upland Mylopotamos region, between Eleutherna and Zoniana in northern Rethymnon. Of interest may be to consider a hypothetical concept that could have been perceived by the eyes of an ancient spectator of the symbolism of a discernible rock, naturally formed to simulate an aspect of a stele, a herma of sorts and thus a silent appeal to the patron of the ancient shepherds, on the top of which the physical touch of the palm of the hand on the carved cross during oath taking set it apart from the surrounding stones, of which there are plenty in the Mylopotamos uplands, dedicating it as the object to service the oath; and possibly of the releasing of the accusation for animal theft to the rock, as if in Hermes’s trial for killing the Argus Panoptes.

⁶¹ Demonstrating an “indicative” gesture, yet in the possibility of catharsis from blame by touching the stone it would combine a “demonstrative” function. For a good overview of gesture symbolism in legal contexts associated with oath taking since antiquity see Hibbitts, A. J., (1995), “Making Motions: The Embodiment of Law in Gesture”, *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues*, 6:51, 51-81.

Yet, if suspicions persisted, the one alleged of animal theft, particularly if innocent of the accusations, would agree to offer a repeat of the oath in favor of a final settlement that would absolve the matter, although this time the ritual practice would take place at the context of a sacred place. The confirmation of the oath would be given in the presence of the miraculous icon of St. George⁶², patron of the venerated Diskouri monastery in the region⁶³. The most venerated divinity of Saint George⁶⁴ in the Christian religious tradition had taken over, based on his august character and honorable deeds, the principal functions of two ancient gods, the Dioskouroi, the twin sons of Zeus and Leda, namely Kastor and Polydeukis, the hospitable Tyndaridai⁶⁵. In the polytheistic pantheon they were recognized for their pious dedication to observe the rites of the gods, attending them in feasts of Theoxenia⁶⁶, relevant to the will of *Xenios* Zeus. Further, the Dioskouroi in addition to having been assigned the supervision of the Olympic games⁶⁷ were considered in the ancient religion as protectors and saviors of mortals on land and sea⁶⁸, powerful allies in battle⁶⁹ and famous as were the Kuretes for their

⁶² Narratives of oral tradition entrusted to the author by interlocutors stipulate that taking a false oath in the presence of the miraculous icon of St. George causes severe effects to the sinner. Punishments were to either take place shortly afterwards (inclusive of a strike by lightning) and/or could be afforded as a condemnation that affected the kin of the sinner through intergenerational time; not unlike what was awaiting the transgression of oath breakers and sinners in antiquity. The use of the palm of the hand in antiquity in the touching of an object (particularly if an altar was not available) dedicated to the oath that was to be taken, may also relate to the metaphor of the giving of judgement by mortals based on Zeus's laws and the bearing of it in the palm of their hands, as mentioned by Achilles before taking an oath while addressing Agamemnon, Homer, *Iliad*, (2001) (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) A. T. Murray and W. F. Wyatt, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1. 233-239, p. 30-31.

⁶³ Ιερά Μονή Αγίου Γεωργίου Δισκουρίου (Holy Monastery of Saint George of Diskouri) <https://www.imra.gr/moni-diskoyriou.html>.

⁶⁴ Andrea Archbishop of Crete, *Engomion eis ton Megalomartyra Georgion*, (2003), in (Ed.) Archimandritis Xrysostomos Papadakis, (Transl.) Nikodemos Agioreitis, "Αγίου Μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου Τροπαιοφόρου", *Υμνογραφικά και εγκομιαστικά* (Αγίου Ανδρέου Αρχιεπισκόπου Κρήτης, *Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν Μεγαλομάρτυρα Γεώργιον*, μεταφρασθέν εἰς κοινήν διάλεκτον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου Νικοδήμου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου, στό ἀρχιμ. Χρυσοστόμου Παπαδάκη, *Αγίου Μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου τοῦ Τροπαιοφόρου, Ὑμνογραφικά καί ἐγκομιαστικά*), Publications of Holy Metropolis of Lemesos, Athens, p. 673-674.

⁶⁵ Referred with the name of their foster and true father "Tyndareos", King of Sparta, given that through a case of superfecundation Polydeukis (Pollux) was immortal by Zeus and Leda--Queen of Sparta, whereas Kastor was mortal by Tyndareos and Leda, see Apollodorus, *The Library*, (1921, reprint), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) Sir J.G. Frazer, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, III. x. 7., p. 22-23.

⁶⁶ Treating well the wandering or visiting gods, and thus chartering decorous behavioral conduct for humans, opposite to the rude and abusing conduct, exemplified here by Antinous, one of the suitors of Penelope against the suppliant guest-wanderer Odysseus, thus gravely violating the will of Zeus as *Xenios* and *Hikesios*, Homer, *Odyssey*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 17. 483-487, p. 188-191.

⁶⁷ Cf. Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, (1997), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) W. H. Race, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 3. 35-45. p. 82-85. Regarding a case of feast for the Dioskouroi, see Pausanias, *Description of Greece: Messenia*, (2002), (Ed.) J. Henderson (Transl.) W. H. S. Jones, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, xxvii. 2-3. p. 318-319.

⁶⁸ *Homeric Hymn to the Dioskouroi*, (2003), (Ed. and Transl.) M. L. West, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 33. 6-7., p. 218-219.

⁶⁹ Cf. Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, (2006), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) A. D. Godley, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, V. 75. p. 82-85, and Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, (2000), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) C. H. Oldfather, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Fragments of Book VIII. 32. 2. p. 424-425. Regarding their military victory against Aphidnae and the rescue of their abducted sister Helen by Theseus, see Apollodorus, *The Library*, (1921, reprint), (Ed.) J. Henderson, (Transl.) Sir J.G. Frazer, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, III. x. 7-8., p. 24-27.

respective war-dances⁷⁰. Hence, the cult of the twin sons of Zeus, at Diskouri, was fittingly connected with the inviolable presence of their father in the zone of the Idaian Cave.

It was possibly for the virtue of courage and the elements of admiration and inspiring reverence, embodied and spearheaded in Christendom against injustice and evil by the eminent as beloved mounted⁷¹ military Saint George the Triumphant⁷², that the legacies of the deeply rooted traditions and unfading Cretan memory at the slopes of mountain Ida persistent against the influences of time, continuing to abide by the ancient toponym, which commemorating the Dioskouroi through the easily pronounced *Diskouri* in the vernacular also perpetuated non-conflicting echoes of vestiges of old, on which it is claimed by oral tradition the walls of the monastery had been founded.

A theoretical evaluation on the organization of the myth and the shepherds' rite

The mythography of young Hermes's rebellious action to claim his rights among the Olympians, the disposition and configuration of acts carried out for the accomplishment of his purpose, relates to the underlying causes, the action pattern and sequence of acts performed by the young shepherd seeking to be perceived and recognized in order to gain access to his rightful position among the powerful shepherds in his Mylopotamos community. Theorems of social science and literary analysis proposed for the study of myth, rite, and ritual may be applied as worthwhile tools in the examination, unveiling, comparison and reflection on the coded elements of the human socio-cultural experience⁷³.

In the analysis of the Hymn narrative juxtaposed to the practice of the shepherds' rite, an evaluation of the sequence of events as integral components between the two quest patterns identifies according to the methodological approach of formalism⁷⁴ 23 remarkably shared fundamental functions. These are fixed in the right sequence between the schemes of the mythographic narrative and the practice of the rite, tesserae comprising the structural elements of the quest patterns: 1) there is an injustice or social pressure, 2) there is an aim to correct an injustice or claim a rightful position by the budding protagonist, 3) there is a clandestine planning of action orchestrated by the young protagonist, 4) the protagonist rebels against his mother's fears/objections, 5) the protagonist rebelling against the unjust or social pressure condition executes, despite the potential of serious consequences, the animal thievery during a night, 6) the protagonist steals from the victim's herd a number of female

⁷⁰ Plato, *Laws*, (1952), (Ed.) E. H. Warmington, (Transl.) R. G. Bury, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts VII.796. B., p. 28-29. It will be argued here on the relative chronology of war dances mentioned in this paper that the war dance of the Kuretes preceded and possibly even provided a precedent to the war dance performed in full panoply by goddess Athena, and even of the war dance of the Dioskouroi in the Lacedaemon, cf., *ibid.* B-C., p. 28-29.

⁷¹ Likewise, the Dioskouri were always featured in iconography and literary narrative as mounted warriors wilding the spear, as is St. George in Christianity.

⁷² Bearing an emblem of victory, he is the *protostate* in battle and patron of the military forces. St. George also serves, by the description of an excerpt of his *apolytikion*-prayer, as liberator of captives, protector of the poor, and healer of those suffering from ailments (“Ὡς τῶν αἰχμαλώτων ἐλευθερωτής, καὶ τῶν πτωχῶν ὑπερασπιστής, ἀσθενούντων ἰατρός..”), http://www.byzmusic.gr/apriliou/23_apriliou/.

⁷³ Under the premise that each of the theorems may offer useful, however variable points of presumption and reasoning, toward a uniquely construed, holistic, interpretation of the myth.

⁷⁴ Cf. Propp, V., (1927), (Transl.) L. Scott (1968), *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed., American Folklore Society and Indiana University, University of Texas Press, Austin. Propp initiated the formalist school, apparently an early version of structuralism.

animals, 7) the protagonist aims to mask all possible physical traces of the deed that could identify him, 8) there is an animal(s) harvested by the hands of the protagonist once he reaches a safe place after the theft, 9) the protagonist hides the rest of the animals, 10) the protagonist does not boast of the deed and aims to isolate/confine himself while playing the trick of innocence, 11) the victim of theft is a very powerful persona, 12) the victim is upset and bewildered by the thievery, 13) the victim aims to discover the perpetrator (protagonist)/asking informants and receiving some clues about the perpetrator, 14) the victim discovers the perpetrator although his lies and half-truths do not resolve the issue, 15) an independent persona of mutual respect and significant *gravitas* is proposed and accepted by both parties to serve as an arbitrator, 16) the arbitrator aims to reconcile the protagonist and the victim and rules for the release of the animals to the victim, 17) the release of animals or exchange of equal in worth goods is taking place, 18) recognition by the victim of the remarkable abilities, tenacity and courage of the protagonist to carry out such a deed, 19) reconciliation and promises/assurances or oath of no future harm are given between the protagonist and victim, 20) in taking the oath or promising no future harm to the victim the protagonist assumes responsibilities that symbolize his changed social status bringing him to the cohort of mature individuals, 21) friendship, and even collaboration is founded between the protagonist and the victim who now may function as a mentor and supported in future endeavors, 22) the protagonist is now accepted in the social context under a renewed status and role, 23) both the protagonist and his new friend or mentor or supporter benefit/conflict avoidance. Further, the *dramatis personae* in both quests pertain to the same number of five main characters, remarkably identified as for the same functions and significance: 1) the protagonist, 2) the protagonist's mother, 3) the witness or informant, 4) the victim, and 5) the arbitrator.

In addressing the question, why would the particular theme of the mythological narrative describing Hermes's quest survive through the passing of millennia to modernity, preserving not only in precise sequence the fundamental functions of the Hymn's narrative but also the same characters and respective significance of the *dramatis personae*, the theory of functionalism⁷⁵ would underscore the significant value of the myth in society, understood and recognized by the members of the social system as purposeful to social phenomena in helping to explain, justify and maintain the functional-structural needs⁷⁶ of the social system. Not unlike the function of the endeavors of the young shepherd striving to correct an injustice, or to claim a rightful position in the world of professional shepherding, bringing about a negotiation and eventually a change in the socio-economic dynamics of his community, effectively checking the potential of a protracted domineering on resources and power grip by

⁷⁵ Considered here with a focus on the study of myth, as an indispensable charter of sociocultural dynamics, and the availability of historic references on the thematic unit addressed in this paper despite the ahistoric concept of the theory in the study of societal conditions among indigenous and/or preliterate peoples as introduced by Malinowski, see Malinowski Bronislaw, (1922), *Argonauts of the Western Pacific, An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, E.P. Dutton & Co., New York; re-shifted and focused as Structural Functionalism to address the interrelations of societal institutions that may steadily strive to maintain the fabric of the social network, providing solutions for extant and developing social phenomena, thus of Structural Continuity, cf. Radcliffe-Brown, A. R., (1952), *Structure and function in primitive society*, The Free Press, New York, and Kuper, A., (Ed.), (1977), *The social anthropology of Radcliffe-Brown*, Routledge, Boston. For a commentary on the working of social structure in its day-to-day operations, cf. Watson-Gegeo, K. A., (1991), Firth, Sir Raymond, in (Ed.) C. Winters, *International Dictionary of Anthropologists*, Garland, New York, p. 197-199.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

a select-influential group, thus helping in supporting and maintaining key elemental components of the community dynamics in benefit of the larger social structure.

On the systematic and historical approach in the study of myth, Burkert's enduring conceptual contributions on structuralism identify "definable relations between parts or elements of a whole (system) which admit predictable transformations"⁷⁷. Hence, as in the narrative of the Hymn, the system of "definable relations" identified as underlying elements of conflict are resolved through a mediation of contradictions⁷⁸, and chartered by the myth. Likewise, resolved through the practice of the young shepherd's rite, resulting to an avoidance of continued aggression, eventually enhancing collaboration within the particular social context⁷⁹ and even promoting solidarity and friendship; conditions that benefit the interrelationships of underlying, interconnected, structures embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of Mylopotamos communities.

Feeling constrained to unnecessarily offer additional explanatory arguments in support of the otherwise clear understanding that the practice of the shepherd's rite on Ida mountain in particular and Crete in general is deeply rooted in the ancient Greek heritage, as chartered in the Hymn to Herms, considering Lévi -Strauss's illustrious structuralist declaration that "...we define the myth as consisting of all its versions; to put it otherwise: a myth remains the same as long as it is felt as such...analysis should take all of them (the variants) into account."⁸⁰, a paradigmatic approach is provided for perceiving and treating the practice of the young shepherd's rite as a variant if not an embodiment of Hermes's myth in their ideational world and diachronic experiences.

Epilogue on the shepherds of Mylopotamos on Ida Mountain

In the many years of acquaintance with shepherds' traditions in the uplands of Ida Mountain one may bear witness to the deep roots of their communal knowledge, their philosophical – existential questions about life, their contemplated faculty of reason and cognitive judgment pervaded by a way of life in agreement with Nature as if acceding to the primordial fecundity of Gaia and the powers of her Sky god-grandson; simulating a version of an ontogeny of physicalism which in tune with the rhythm of the lyra and the discursiveness in song culture and oral tradition converts the participant observer to a student of what may be perceived as a Homeric education. Their rich intangible heritage couldn't but portend to the student of ethnography the vast tangible legacy and socio-economic importance of shepherds⁸¹ and

⁷⁷ Burkert, W., (1979), *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, University of California Press, Berkeley, I. 2., p. 5; cf. (1994), (Transl.) J. Raffan, *Greek Religion*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts.

⁷⁸ Cf., Lévi-Strauss, C., (1978), *Myth and Meaning*, University of Chicago Press; (1974), (Transl.) C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf, *Structural Anthropology*, Basic Books, New York; (1983), (Transl.) J. and Doreen Weightman, *The Raw and the Cooked-Mythologiques Volume 1*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago (as a sample of the four volumes of *Mythologiques*).

⁷⁹ Hence considered in a non-universalistic context, cf. Harcourt, B. E., (2007), "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Poststructuralism?'," Public Law and Legal Theory Working Paper No. 156", Working Papers at Chicago Unbound, p. 1-31, <http://www.law.uchicago.edu/academics/publiclaw/index.html>

⁸⁰ Lévi-Strauss, C., (1955), "The Structural Study of Myth", *The Journal of American Folklore*, 68, 280, 4.II.2.-5.0, p. 435.

⁸¹ Listed as *po-me* (shepherd) in Linear B, Linear B Lexicon, Chris Tselentis, Internet Archive, p.110, <https://archive.org/details/LinearBLexicon/page/n109/mode/2up>, listed as *poimen* (ποιμήν) in the Homeric Lexicon, see Κοφινιώτης Ε., (1984), *Λεξικόν Ομηρικόν*, Μπάουρον, Αθήνα, p. 279, and Homer, *Odyssey*, (2002),

sheep shepherding⁸² in Crete, spanning through an uninterrupted diachronic range of millennia since the Neolithic in the archaeological record⁸³ and the evidentiary data yielded through the Bronze Age historical-linguistic records deciphered from Linear B tablets⁸⁴.

Cautiously filtering the alluring challenges offered by the passing of time, the shepherds of upland Mylopotamos permeated by incorruptible echoes and vibes emitted by the ceaseless powers of the ageless mountain cherish the legacy of their intergenerational wisdom, intuned with Nature and a deep understanding of the cycle of life of their sheep flocks, elements of a well-structured cosmos where both human action and providence strive for world order, ever considering and in respectful remembrance of their forebears' didactic and moralistic maxims. Keepers as they are of cultural history on Ida Mountain it seems to the percipient that they are themselves bound by a silent oath, no need for it to be uttered, an ancestral ethic to regard, abide by, and preserve values and traditions of old while they strive for progress in life free from smallness of mind, yet generous in kindness as perennial abiders to hospitality (*philoxenia*) in the very region where the ancient god that was destined to become the supreme Olympian and patron of *Xenia* had been safely hosted during the early most challenging period of his being.

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During the many years of archaeo-anthropological research in Crete, and particularly in Mylopotamos, I had the unique opportunity to be introduced into the world of the local shepherds. Over time strong friendships developed between us while I was discovering ways and views on life that had unfortunately been considered as obsolete in the social contexts of modernity. My deepest thanks go to them, and particularly to Christos (*Kougitis*), for their *philoxenia*, their unpretentious integrity and trust, their courage and good humor, the endless and continuing discussions on ideas and their intangible cultural heritage. This article is dedicated to those shepherd-philosophers, a promised token of thanks, even though posthumously for some of them. Thanks are also extended to Panayotis G. Agelarakis, who has been serving as an assistant in this ethnographic endeavor, for reading and making valuable comments for this article and for the continued discussions on the protection of the intangible cultural heritage.

This article also serves as the second one of a trilogy regarding an examination of diachronic cultural dynamics about sheep-shepherds. The first one (Agelarakis, 2021) addressed their earliest beginnings during the Proto-Neolithic period (11th millennium BCE) in Shanidar at the uplands of Baradost Mountains, in the Zagros region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

(Ed.) J. Henderson (Translators) A. T. Murray, and G. E. Dimock, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 10, 82, p. 364-365.

⁸² Killen, J. T., (1964), "The Wool Industry of Crete in the Late Bronze Age", *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, 59, p. 1-15.

⁸³ Sapouna-Sakellari, E., (2012), "Zominthos: The Wealth of Psiloritis", <https://www.archaiologia.gr>; Sakellari, Y., and Panagiotopoulos, D., (2006), "Minoan Zominthos", in (Eds.) I. Gavrilaki and Y. Tzifopoulos Y., *Mylopotamos from Antiquity to the Present: Environment, Archaeology, History, Folklore, Sociology*, Historical and Folklore Society of Rethymno, Rethymnon, p. 47-55

⁸⁴ Ventris, M. and Chadwick, J., (1956), *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, Cambridge University Press, p. 197 ff; (1973), 2nd edition, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*, Cambridge University Press, "Flocks of sheep at Knossos (Da, Dg)", p. 201-202, and "Flocks of sheep and consignments of wool at Knossos (Dk, DI)", p. 203-204.

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