Sicily was famous for her chthonic deities. According to tradition, Hades abducted Kore at Syracuse, Henna, or Aetna; Pindar calls Acragas Φερεοφόνος έδωκ (Pyth. 12.2); and the whole island was said to be sacred to Demeter and Kore (Diod. 5.2.3; Cic. Verr. 2.4.106). Indeed, archaeological and numismatic evidence abundantly confirms the literary sources. This paper deals with some previously unnoticed epithets of Sicily’s chthonic gods and with the reflection of their cult on personal names on the island.

I. The Kyria

Earlier in this century, a grave in ancient Centuripae, some 30 km southwest of Mt. Aetna, yielded an interesting lead curse tablet, first published by Domenico Comparetti after a drawing by Paolo Orsi, and again, in apparent ignorance of Comparetti’s edition, by Francesco Ribezzo with a drawing from autopsy. Neither text was satisfactory. Using Orsi’s and Ribezzo’s drawings, J. J. E. Hondius, “adiuvantibus Cr[onert] et Wil­h[elm],” produced in 1929 what is now the best text, SEG IV 61.

Abbreviations: DTAud=A. Audollent, Defixionum tabellae quotquot in­notuerunt (Paris 1904); DTWu=R. Wünsch, Defixionum tabellae (Berlin 1897); IGDS=L. Dubois, Inscriptions grecques dialectales de Sicile (Rome 1989); Jordan=D. R. Jordan, “A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora,” GRBS 26 (1985) 151-97.


In October 1998 I examined the inscription in the Syracuse Museum and can present a few improvements to the SEG text and a new sketch:

Syracuse H. 12.0, W. 16.4 cm
Museo archeologico regionale (inv. 39856)

1 κυρεία, ἐξάροις τὸν Ἐλέθ[ε]ρ-.
2 ρον, ἄν ἐγθεικήσας με, κοινὸς ἀργυρέας σπάδικαν,
3 ἄν ἐξάρθης αὐτὸν έκ τὸ ἄν-
4 ποιών ἔφευραν γένεος.
5 ἔφευρεν γένεος.

2: ἐ(κ)δεικήσας SEG. 3: ποιών ἄργυροι[ν] σπάδικα SEG. The cursive ε, ο, and ω, and particularly the ξ, formed almost in one continuous stroke, point to the Roman period. Forms such as Ἐλέθ[ε]ρον (for Ἐλεύθ[ε]ρον) and σπάδικαν (for σπάδικα) also point to a late date, and the spellings κυρεία and ἐγθεικήσας, in which ει is used for a short ι, exclude a date prior to Ιπ or IIP. The uncontracted forms ἄργυρεαν (3) and γένεος (5) do not contradict such a dating, for Doric forms are found even in Christian inscriptions from Sicily, e.g. ἔπεικ (IG XIV 506), λαβό (IG XIV 150). ποιών (3) is not a faulty spelling of ποιήσαω, for another inscription from Centuripae has the aorist ἐπείκει (IG XIV 576, IIP?) and similar forms are well documented in Greek.4 It would be also possible to read the future of

4 E.g. P. Kretschmer, Die griechischen Vaseninschriften ihrer Sprache nach untersucht (Gütersloh 1894) 7 (ἐποίησεν, VII); ARV² 1531 (ἐποίησεν, V*); Olympia 164 (ἐποίησεν, ca 392?); FdD III.2 70.51 (ἐποίησαντο, 112/111*); CorpPapRain 36 (ποίων, 266*), etc. The spelling with diaeresis ποίων (SEG) implies ποιήσαω (with η=ι/ι) as the origin of this form, but the date of the earliest instances of the phenomenon is against an itacist explanation.
The author asks an unnamed goddess to eliminate one Eleutherros and offers in exchange a silver σπάδις. The text belongs to the category of prayers for justice motivated by the hope of revenge for wrongs suffered. Unlike the authors of defixiones proper, authors of prayers for justice did not take the law into their own hands, but submitted their complaints to divinities. Typical features are the use of εὐδικέω (Lat. vindico), the offering of a votum to the deity, or the use of respectful forms of address. In this case the goddess is called κυρήα and she is addressed in the equally respectful optative εξάρως. It is worth remembering that Protagoras rebuked Homer for using the imperative in a prayer (ἀείδε), where he should have used the optative (FVS 80A20). Now who is the κυρήα? Preisendanz thought that she was Demeter, but she is more likely to be Persephone. In fact, Persephone appears to be a ‘vengeance’ goddess; in contrast to Demeter she is often invoked in Sicilian curse tablets and, as the wife of the lord of the lower world, she is known to have had titles of majesty and kingship (ἀνδριά, βασιλίς, δέσποινα, πασικράτεια, πότνια). In particular, the use of Κυρήα alone for Persephone must have been quite common, for it passed on to the Latins as her proper name, as we see in two inscriptions from Amaula (Mauretania


7 K. Preisendanz, “Fluchtafeln (Defixion),” RAC 8 (1972) 1–29, esp. 8.


10 A. Brugnone, IV infra (παρὰ Φεσσαφόνα, end III); SEG XXIX 929 (Γᾶ, Ἐρμῆ, Φεσσαφόνα, Πρ?), XXXIV 953 (τῇ κυρήα Περσεφόνη, τῇ κυρήα ἄδεινα), Π); MonAnt 24 (1916) 154 (Κόρα, Π?). The expression παρ’ τῶν ἑγανόν θεόν on a fifth-century curse from the Malphoros sanctuary at Selinus (IGDS 38) could allude to Demeter, but the ἑγανόν θεός could equally well be Persephone, who was also worshipped there.
Caesariensis): *CIL* VIII 9020 (*ILS* 4456: *Pluto, Cyria, et Ceres*) and 9021 (*ILS* 4457: *Plutoni et Cyriæ, Cereri*).\(^{11}\) Now from Diod. 14.70–77 and some ritual features it is generally accepted that the worship of Demeter and Kore (the so-called *Cereres*) came to Africa from Sicily.\(^{12}\) The inscriptions of Amaula, therefore, may be indirect evidence that the use of *Kypía* for Kore/Persephone was common in Sicily and that *Kypía* here should be identified with Persephone.

The *votum* promised is an ἄργυρεα σπάδιξ. A σπάδιξ is either a palm branch or a stringed instrument. Probably because of the detail about the silver, Comparetti interpreted σπάδιξ as the latter, and the editors of both *SEG* and *LSJ* consider that possibility. σπάδιξ here, however, should rather be interpreted as “palm branch,” for silver palms are well documented as offerings to various gods: *ILAfrica* 256 (palma argentea to Saturnus); *ILTun* 709 (palma argentea to Saturnus), 868b (palma argentea to Aesculapius and Pantheus); *ILS* 5471b (palma ex argento to the city-genius). A gold palm for an unknown god is documented at *CIL* X 1598 (Pozzuoli).\(^{13}\) Indeed the offering of branches is not completely unknown in the cult of Persephone, for Vergil’s *aureus ramus* was a gift (*Aen.* 6.142: *munus*; 408, 632: *donum*) to her.

**II. Plouto**

American excavations at Morgantina have produced six curse tablets (Jordan 116–21: I–IIp). One has two illegible lines followed by a phrase that has been edited as τὰν λιβέρτλαν αὐτῶς παρδέξαν, | Πλούτω καὶ Γα καὶ | ἔρμῳ.\(^{14}\) The name of the first deity invoked is striking. Valentina Hinz, in a discussion of the

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\(^{11}\) According to G. Wilmanns and H. Dessau, editors of *CIL* and *ILS* respectively, *Cyria* in the second inscription is a title of Ceres (*Plutoni et cyriæ Cereri*), but the copulative *et* indicates here the close relationship of Plouton and Kore, who were worshipped as a couple, as at *IG* XI.4 1235: Πλούτωνι καὶ Κόρη, Δήμητρι, Ἐρμῆ, Ἀνοψεῖδι κατὰ πρόστασιμα τῶν θεῶν.


\(^{13}\) For similar metal offerings see W. Deonna, *La vie privée des Déliens (= Trav.MémEFA 7.4 [Paris 1943])* 87–99.

worship of Demeter and Kore in Sicily, speaks of this tablet as a dedication to Ploutos, Ge, and Hermes, as if Πλούτω were the dative of Πλούτους. The parallel invocation Γά, Ἐρμᾶ καὶ θεοὶ καταδεχόντοι found in other tablets of the same series indicates, however, that the names of this text are vocatives and not datives. Πλούτω here is usually interpreted as the vocative of Πλούτωνις, and this interpretation is prima facie likely. Among the six Morgantina tablets, however, this would be the only instance in which final -v is omitted, and we may note that in general, omission of the nasal before a guttural is not very common. In order to explain this peculiarity one might think that the author confused the Latin form Pluto, but there is a likelier and more fruitful solution. An oracle reported by Phlegon of Tralles (FGrHist 257F36 X 24, 26, 31) calls Persephone Πλούτωνις and an Orphic fragment refers to her as Πλούτωνη (Kern Orph. frag. 200). Now, goddesses' names in -ώ, normally shortened forms or popular nicknames, are very common in Greek (e.g. Ἀφρώ, Βριμώ, Δή, Ἐννώ, Σιτώ). My proposal is to read not Πλούτω but Πλούτω, a local epithet of Persephone formed on the analogy of the name of her husband. The form Πλούτω may be interpreted either as a shortened form of Πλούτωνις/Πλούτωνη or as the feminine form corresponding to Πλούτος or Πλούτευς—alternative names of Plouton.

This suggestion needs two clarifications. In classical Greek the vocative of a name Πλούτω would have been Πλούτοι, but vocatives in -ώ are well documented in later Greek: cf. e.g. P.Gur. 1.5 (σωσόμευ Βριμώ), SB I 5961 (χαίρε Θεονώ), Hymn. Orph. 35 (Λητώ κυνάτεπλε), and the observations of C. Brixhe (REG 103 [1990] 225). One could also object that Πλούτω is the name of an Ocean nymph (Hes. Th. 355; Hymn. Hom. Cer. 422) and of the mother of Tantalus (e.g. Paus. 2.22.3), but such homonyms are common in Greek. Thus, Ἐρμόνη, in addition to being the name of the daughter of Menelaus and Helen, was also that of both Kore and Demeter at Syracuse (Hsch.).

15 Hinz (supra n.2) 33, 133. Her assertion that the tablets from Morgantina document the manumission of a slave and her dedication to the deity (134) is plainly wrong.

16 Cf. SEG XXIX, index s.v. Πλούτων, or IGDS, index p.288.

17 Such omission is much more frequent before a dental, but even so it is not documented in the texts from Morgantina: cf. Jordan nos. 117, 119, 121: Βενούσταν τού 'Ρούφου τῶν θεράπαινων.

If this interpretation is correct, the divinities invoked in this text would be the same as the triad Γα, Ἐρμῶς, and Φερσεφόνα invoked on another tablet of the same group (SEG XXIX 929) and frequently in other curse tablets (e.g. DTWh 101; DTAud 69; L. Robert, Coll. Froehner 11; Ziebarth, SBBerl [1934] 1022–50 nr. 13). Elsewhere I have noted the tendency of the Morgantina tablets towards variation, both in the names (Ῥοῦφως—Ῥοῦφως Σέξτιος—Σέξτιος) and in the verbal forms used in every tablet (ποτίδεκεσθαι—ποτίδεκεσθαι—ἀπωγαγεῖν). That of Φερσεφόνα—Πλούτω could be another instance.20

III. Gaos

A lead tablet from Camarina (IV—III a) recording the purchase of an οίκησιν and a κατηλείαν mentions a quarter “over the sanctuary of Gaos and Phersophassa,” λαύρα ὑπὲρ Γάου καὶ Φ[ε]ρσοσφάσας (probably for Φερσοφάσας).21 The occurrence of the localism Φερσόφοσσα instead of Φερσεφόνα, the form usual in Sicilian curse tablets, has a good parallel in Attic epigraphy, where the ‘poetic’ form Περσεφόνη is more frequent in curse tablets, while prose inscriptions have the proper Attic Φερφέραττα and its variants.22 Here Γαός is a form of γάιος/γαίος with consonantal t dropped between vowels; his actual identity, however, is less apparent. Hinz speaks of a “Heiligtum von Gaia und Persophasa,” but this is obviously not the case. Cordano interpreted Γαός as the name of a local and otherwise unknown πάρεδρος of Persephone, but it would be odd to find an obscure figure named before the goddess herself. This difficulty can be avoided if we understand Γαός as an epithet of Hades and see in this tablet a sanctuary of Hades and Persephone, a divine couple greatly honoured in Sicily.23 This

20 For a similar proposal (Πλούτω—the Ocean nymph?—instead of the transmitted Πλούτων in Lucian’s Tragopodagra), see H. Grégoire and R. Goossens, “La nourrice de la déesse Podagra,” AntCl 22 (1953) 419ff.
21 F. Cordano, BArte 26 (1984) 35–41 (IGDS 124, SEG XXXIV 940). For the sanctuary see now Hinz (supra n.2) 121.
23 The Sicilians celebrated their wedding at the Ἀνακαλυπτήρια (ΣΠind. Ol. 6.160) and Ἀθογάμα (Poll. 1.37).
interpretation presupposes that γάι(τ)ος ("earthly") has been used in the sense of χθόνιος ("of the nether world"), a common epithet of Hades. Such a use is probably a Doric colloquialism. The terms χθών, χθόνιος, καταχθόνιος, etc. were indeed typical of the language of poetry and religion and were alien to everyday speech, while γάι(τ)ος and related terms were ordinary Doric words. The writer of the text from Camarina used Γάος instead of Χθόνιος, just as he used Φερσόφασσα instead of Φερσεφόνα: both Γάος and Φερσόφασσα were colloquial forms more suitable for a prose text than Χθόνιος and Φερσεφόνα.

This interpretation may have some significance in the study of Aeschylus. At Supp. 156 Hades is called Ζεύς γάι(τ)ος (τὸν γάιον [του Μ, corr. Wellauer], τὸν πολυζευνότατον Ζηνα). Wellauer’s γάιον has been challenged on the grounds that γαίος does not elsewhere signify χθόνιος, but the text from Camarina may now prove that such a use was known in Greek. On the other hand, γαίος is one of the forms put forward by those who see Sicilian influence in the extant work of Aeschylus. Although recent studies tend to diminish the value of his alleged Sicilianisms, γαίος is one of the words still considered distinctively Sicilian. This inscription provides more positive evidence for a Sicilian origin, for it shows that this particular sense of γαίος (= χθόνιος) applied to Hades was current in Sicily. In adopting γαίος for one of his songs, Aeschylus gave poetic dignity to this popular epithet of Hades.

25 Cf. Epich. 42.9 K; Etym. Mag. 223.24; Hsch. s.v. It is not surprising that an author like Pindar does not use the word: G. Björk, Das Alpha impurum in die tragische Kunstsprache (Uppsala 1950) 332.
26 It may be relevant that an epitaph from Centuripae (IG XIV 581, I-II?) shows, instead of the learned formula θεῳ καταχθόνιῳς, the more local expression θεῷ καταγαίδιοις.
27 For Zeus (Chthonios, Catachthonios, etc.) in the sense of Hades see M. L. West, Hesiod: Works and Days (Oxford 1978) ad 465; Wilamowitz (supra n.24) 1307.
28 See the discussion in A. F. Garvie, Aeschylus’ Supplices (Cambridge 1969) 188f.
IV. “Priestesses of Demeter”?

We know that, from at least the fifth century B.C., the Eu-
menides received official cult in Selinus.30 In 250 B.C. the entire
population of Selinus was moved to Lilybaeum (Diod. 24.1.1),
and it is possible that this or a similar cult was continued in the
new city. A curse tablet from Lilybaeum recently published by
Antonietta Brugnone may contain an unnoticed allusion to the
Erinyes.31 The tablet has on Side A eight lines of text written
retrograde; Side B has only three short lines in Greek followed
by a list of nine Latin names in the Latin alphabet. Brugnone’s
text of Side A begins:

1 ← καταδέω Ζωσπρίωνα τας Μυμβυρ παρὰ Φερσε-
2 ← φόναι καὶ Τιτάνεις καταχθονίοις καὶ παρὰ,
3 ← π[ρ]ιχομένοις νεκυίοις ἐς τοὺς ἀτελέστους καὶ παρ.’
4 ← ἀ [.χάριαις Δάματρος παρ’ ἀπευχομε[n]α[ι]ν.

(κατα)χθόνιος belongs to the realm of poetry and religion (cf.
supra III). Thus PGM IV 1444–55 contains an invocation of
seventeen infernal powers, every one followed by the (solemn)
word χθόνιος (‘Ερμή χθόνιε καὶ Ἑκάτη χθόνια, καὶ Ἀχέρων
χθόνιε καὶ ὠμόφαγοι χθόνιοι καὶ πνεύματα χθόνια καὶ Ἀμαρ-
tίαι χθόνια, etc.).32 Φερσεφόνα is the form used by Pindar, Bac-
chylides, the Orphic Hymns but not in everyday Sicilian
speech (supra III). To judge from Plato (Cra. 404c) this form
was considered especially formidable, no doubt for it popularly
connoted the word φόνος (cf. Hymn. Orph. 29.16). The da-
tives in -οι and -αιαν have a strong epic flavor. It is clear
that the gods are named in the most elevated terms. This
solemn character suggests a supplement for the small lacuna
(one letter) of [.]αρῖας (line 4). Brugnone posits παρὰ
[ω]αρίαις (for παρὰ ἀρίαις), and understands ἀρίαι as “le
anomalie di stagione” during the months that Kore must spend

30 M. H. Jameson, D. R. Jordan, and R. D. Kotansky, A Lex Sacra from
Selinous (=GRBM 11 [Durham (N.C.) 1993]).
31 B. Bechtold and A. Brugnone, “Novità epigrafiche da Lilibeo. La tomba
186 della Via Berta,” Seconde Giornate internazionali di Studi sull’area elima.
Atti (Pisa 1997) 111–40. The editors date the tablet to the end of the IIIa. For a
new edition of this text see David Jordan’s article in this volume.
32 A similar text on a selenite tablet from Cyprus (IIIP) in D. R. Jordan,
“Late Feasts for Ghosts,” in R. Hägg, ed., Ancient Greek Cult Practice from
the Epigraphical Evidence (=Proceedings of the Second International Seminar
on Ancient Greek Cult, Swedish Institute at Athens, 22–24 November 1991
[Stockholm 1994]) 131–43, esp. 140.
in the Underworld. The sense, however, is not what is required (we expect some infernal deity or being), and to solve a difficulty by positing an anomaly in a lacuna is always questionable. My suggestion is to read [\(\lambda r\)l\(\alpha\)t\(\varsigma\)], viz. a late spelling of Doric \(\iota \rho \varepsilon \iota \alpha \varsigma\) (Attic \(\iota \varepsilon \rho \varepsilon \iota \alpha \varsigma\)) and a new instance, therefore, of the mixture of Doric and later forms seen insupra I. Both the plural and the sinister purpose of the text suggest that the \(\iota \rho \varepsilon \iota \alpha \varsigma\Delta \mu \alpha \tau \rho \varsigma\) were the Erinyes, who, as ministers of vengeance, are often invoked in curse tablets. This proposal is supported by Eur. Or. 261, where the Erinyes are called \(\varepsilon \varepsilon \varphi \rho \omega \nu \iota \varepsilon \rho \varepsilon \iota \alpha\) — "priestesses of the nether ones." The subordination of the Erinyes to Demeter is not documented elsewhere (they are often subordinated to Plouton), but we know that in several places Demeter had the title of Erinys. If this suggestion is correct, \(\iota \rho \varepsilon \iota \alpha\) could be a title of the Erinyes that was used independently by Euripides and this writer drawing on the same tradition. One cannot rule out, however, that this writer, who followed literary patterns, had Euripides or a tragic model in mind.

V. Personal Names

The recent publication of P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews’ Lexicon of Greek Proper Names III A (Oxford 1997) offers an immense field of research for scholars interested in the religion of Greek Sicily. The Greeks were always conscious of the meanings of their names; as a result they did not derive personal names from gods of ill omen. As Letronne put it, “les noms des divinités infernales ne sont jamais entrés dans la formation des

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34 On the Erinyes on defixiones see Versnel (supra n.6) 92 n.17. In Sicily they appear on MonAnt 24 (1916) 154 (Messina, I–IIp): \(\varepsilon \varphi \nu \iota \varepsilon \alpha \varepsilon \kappa \omega [\varepsilon \iota \sigma \nu] \nu \varepsilon \varepsilon \theta \rho \alpha \varphi \iota \sigma \kappa \tau \nu\).

35 According to C. W. Willink, Euripides: Orestes (Oxford 1986) ad loc., the use of \(\iota \rho \varepsilon \iota \alpha\) adds connotations of blood and slaughter suitable for the Erinyes.


37 A similar case in DTAud 79, where \(\Gamma \gamma\) is called \(\mu \hbar \tau \rho \omicron \omicron \omicron\) (sic) just as at Eur. Hec. 70f \(\chi \theta \omicron \omicron\) is called \(\mu \hbar \tau \rho \omicron \omicron \omicron\): E. G. Kagarow, Griechische Fluchtafeln (Lwow 1929) 60.
The name Ἔμμενίδοτος of Selinus (IDGS 50, ca 550\(^4\)) could allude to the kindly aspect of the Erinyes (Εὐ­­μενής), but as Ἔμμενής is an epithet documented for various deities (e.g. Zeus, Hermes, Nymphs), Ἔμμενίδοτος is likelier to allude to some other god or goddess. 39 Similarly, the name Ἐκτατιός of Himera (IGDS 14, ca 450\(^2\)) is not to be referred to the goddess of sorcery and black magic, but to the benevolent goddess as described at Hes. Th. 411–20 and enthusiastically worshipped in Asia, where Ἐκτατιός is frequent. Chthonic deities, however, may form personal names that are not properly theophoric. One of the oldest—and unnoticed—testimonia of the cult of Kore in Camarina is found in the personal name Κόρετος. 40 In Greek there is a group of personal names formed on the names of festivals and given to people born during those holidays. The personal names Ἀπαστοῦριος, Θηρήλιος, Παν­­ιθνιος, and Ἐορταῖος are formed on the feast names Ἀπα­­στόρια, Θηρήλια, Πανοιθνία, and the generic Ἐορτή. 41 Plutarch (Dion 56) documents a festival Κόρετα at Syracuse, during which Dion was killed in 353 B.C. The personal name Κόρετος of Camarina derives from the Κόρετα and shows that the festival was also celebrated at Camarina.

It is not entirely clear what was celebrated during the Κόρετα, for in Sicily the different episodes of Kore’s myth were the subjects of several separate celebrations (e.g. Κόρης Καταγωγή, Ἀνθεαφόρια, Θεογόμια). 42 One cannot rule out that Κόρετα was a generic name valid for any of these feasts. This sense is found in Strabo (2.3.4), who instead of using the official name of the festival of Kore in Cyzicus (τὰ Σωτῆρια) uses τὰ Κόρετα (σπον­­δοφόρον τοῦ τῶν Κόρεων ὄγωνος): he had no reason to use the official name and he simply used a generic and more common

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39 But, instead of Π(ω)ρία, Ἔμμενίδότο, Πεδιάρχο, the text could also be read Π(ω)ρία, Ἔμμενίθ(α) τὸ Πεδιάρχο: see Dubois’ commentary; also see D. R. Jordan, “A Meilichios Stone from Selinous,” ZPE 86 (1991) 279–82 (SEG XL 806).
40 F. Cordano, Le tessere pubbliche del tempio di Atena a Camarina (Rome 1992) no. 129, ca 450\(^2\).
41 See F. Bechtel, Die historischen Personennamen des Griechischen bis zur Kaiserzeit (Halle 1917) 522–26; R. Hirzel, Der Name (Leipzig 1918) 40–46.
42 See e.g. Nilsson, Feste 358; Polacco (supra n.2) 26.
designation of the festival.\(^{43}\) As for Sicily, Plutarch used τὰ Κόρεια to emphasize the impiety of Kallippos, who after swearing to Kore that he was not plotting against Dion, killed him at the feast of this very goddess (τὴν ἔορτην ἥς ἀμοσε θεό), no matter which one this feast was. Similarly, the name Κόρειος shows that the child was born during a feast of Kore.

The name of Demeter, unlike that of Persephone, does form theophorics. Curiously enough, however, these names do not seem to have been frequent in Sicily: there are some 100 theophoric names of Apollo, some 100 of Heracles, some 80 of Zeus, some 70 of Artemis, but only 35 bearers of Δαμάτριος or Δαματρία. It is significant that only one of the more than seventy Sicilian landowners and magistrates listed in Cicero's Verrines was called Demetrius (2.4.92). This is striking in view of the importance that literary sources ascribe to the cult of Demeter in Sicily: ιερὰν ὑπόρχειν τὴν νήσου Δημητρος καὶ Κόρης (Diod. 5.2.3). It would be tempting to interpret this dearth of 'Demetriac' names as a reflection of the chthonic connotations of her cult. Demeter’s absence on Sicilian curse tablets suggests, however, that, unlike her fellow chthonians, she was not considered a goddess of ill omen. A non-religious explanation may be possible. Most onomastic evidence in Sicily comes from official inscriptions; the majority of the proper names that are preserved are thus those of magistrates and officials of Sicilian cities. It is true that Demeter was an immensely popular deity in Sicily, but her cult and festivals seem also to have had a strongly plebeian (and feminine) character.\(^{44}\) It is fair to posit that—in contrast to the theophorics based on Apollo, Heracles, or Zeus—'Demetriac' names were not thought appropriate to the ruling classes, whose onomastics are the best known. Therefore, the evidence for the importance of this goddess in Sicily is not in conflict with the relative scarcity of

\(^{43}\) L. Robert, Documents d'Asie Mineure (Paris 1987) 166f.

\(^{44}\) D. White, "Demeter's Sicilian Cult as a Political Instrument," GRBS 5 (1964) 261–79, esp. 264ff.
personal names derived from hers, just as Homer's rare references to Demeter do not prove her insignificance in his time.  

MADRID  
June, 1999

45 J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980) 186f: "[In the *Iliad*] the gods who would be irreconcilably out of place in the society of Olympus—fertile Demeter, raging Dionysus—are as far as possible stylized out of the poem and the world" (my italics).

I am grateful to David R. Jordan for his numerous suggestions regarding the improvement of this paper, and to Dottoressa Curcio and her staff for facilitating my work in Syracuse.