

Kybēbos on the Boundary between Persians and Greeks

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Abstract: *The cultic figure referred to as kybēbos has been identified by lexicographers as a mētragyrṭēs, a begging priest of the Mother of the Gods identified as a eunuch. Calling this person a kybēbos associates him specifically with Kybebe, as the Mother of the Gods was known at Sardis and elsewhere in the Ionian/Aeolic sphere of Lydia and Phrygia, as a recently discovered shrine at Amisus in Pontus reveals (as Alexander Herda has shown, the goddess there bears the name Kybebo, in a dialect form where feminine names end in -o, as Leto, Sappho). Lexicographers attest that kybēbos was a figure known in the 5th century BCE, mentioned by Charon of Lampsacus, the playwright Cratinus, and Simonides. The last reference has commonly been assigned to Semonides of Amorgos in the 7th century rather than Simonides of Ceos in the 5th. Here arguments are presented to demonstrate the greater likelihood that it was Simonides of Ceos who mentioned the kybēbos in the context of remembrances of war and diplomacy between Greeks and Persians in the aftermath of the burning of Sardis and with it the shrine of Kybebe in the Ionian Revolt of 499–494 BCE.*

Keywords: *Herodotus, Kybēbos, Semonides, Simonides, Themistocles*

Kybēbos, as the lexicographers tell us, was “the one possessed by the Mother of the Gods,” or Kybebe as she was known to Phrygians and Lydians, or the one “the Ionians call the mētragyrṭēs, now called gallos,” referring to the begging priests of the Mother of the Gods and to the eunuchs who attended her cult in Hellenistic and Roman times.¹ Jan Bremmer has recently given a

¹ Photius *Lexicon* E–M 1145, s.v. κύβηβος: ὁ κατεχόμενος τῇ μητρὶ τῶν θεῶν,

thorough review of the relevant testimonia to the *kybēbos*, clearly showing that this figure was associated with the Lydian goddess, Kybebe, as she was known to the Greeks, who in turn was related to the much older Syro-Anatolian goddess, Kubaba.² Bremmer also draws attention to several aspects of Kubaba/Kybebe and how this goddess was understood by the Greeks that have seemed puzzling to commentators. Not the least of these is a puzzle that has emerged from the discovery of dedications to this goddess in a sanctuary of the late-sixth/early-fifth century at the Milesian colony of Amisus on the Black Sea coast of Anatolia that appear to name the goddess herself as *Kybēbos*. Several graffiti on fragmentary black glazed cups from the sanctuary give the goddess' name in variations of a votive dedication: [ὁ/ἡ δεῖνα] ἀνέθηκε(ν) τῇ Κυβηβῳι.³ Thanks to

θεοφόρητος· Χάρων δὲ ὁ Λαμψσακηνὸς ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ὑπὸ Φρυγῶν καὶ Λυδῶν Κυβήβην λέγεσθαι (*"Kybēbos: (A person) possessed by the Mother of the Gods, god-inspired. Charon of Lampsacus in his first book (says that) Aphrodite is called Kybebe by the Phrygians and Lydians"*); Photius, *Lexicon* E-M 1147, s.v. κύβηβον· Κρατῖνος Θράτταις τὸν θεοφόρητον· Ἴωνες δὲ τὸν μητραγύρτην καὶ γάλλον νῦν καλούμενον. Οὕτως Σιμωνίδης (*"Kybēbon: A god-inspired (person mentioned by) Cratinus in Thracian Women; The Ionians (call him) the begging priest of the Mother and he is now called gallus. Simonides (mentions him) in this way"*). Similar entries occur in Hesychius, Suda, and other lexica. Eustathius *Od.* 2.16, expounding on how elderly dodderers could be mocked, compares them to the "half-man, half woman, eunuch" (ἡμίανδρον καὶ ἡμιγύναικα καὶ σποδόρχην) whose mind was corrupted by Kybebe or some similar *daimōn*, and therefore was called a *kybēbos*.

² J.N. Bremmer, "Kubaba, Kybele and Mater Magna: The Long March of Two Anatolian Goddesses to Rome," in M. Kerschner (ed.), *Der Kult der Meter/Kybele in Westanatolien und in der Ägäis, Akten des internationalen Symposions an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften am 24. Oktober 2017* (Vienna 2020) 13–32, at 17–20; see also E. Laroche, "Koubaba, déesse anatolienne et le problème des origines de Cybèle," in *Eléments orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne. Colloque de Strasbourg 22–24 mai 1958*. (Paris 1960) 113–128; L.E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1999), 44–53, 121–141; R. Oreshko, "In Search of the Holy Cube Roots: Kubaba—Kubeleya—Κύβηβος—Kufaws and the Problem of Ethnocultural Contact in Early Iron Age Anatolia," in M. Bianconi (ed.), *Linguistic and Cultural Interactions Between Greece and Anatolia: In Search of the Golden Fleece* (Boston 2021) 131–166, at 139–144.

³ The inscriptions from Amisus are published by O.A. Şirin and M.

the insights of Alexander Herda, we need not be distracted by this particular puzzle. Herda has pointed out that the name appearing in the dative as τῇ Κυβηβῶι is not to be related to the nominative form, Κύβηβος, but rather to Κυβηβῶ, with a feminine ending in -ῶ typical of names in Aeolic and East Ionic Greek (*viz.* Δητώ, Σαπφώ). Κυβηβῶ is simply a variant of Κυβήβη in the late archaic dialect that prevailed at this colony of Miletus.

References to *kybēbos*, then, are to be understood as they long have been, as characterizations of a person under the influence of the goddess, Kybebe. It is noteworthy that all attributed mentions of this name come from fifth-century sources, specifically, from the comic playwright, Cratinus, from the historian, Charon of Lampascus, and possibly from Simonides, according to the citation by Photius *Lexicon* E-M 1147, s.v. κύβηβον... οὕτως Σιμωνίδης. All editors have assigned this fragment to Semonides of Amorgos, a writer of the late seventh century, however, and not to Simonides of Ceos, writing early in the fifth. Commentators have therefore, with some caution, cited Semonides fr. 36 as the earliest Greek testimony to *kybēbos*, and therefore to the cult of Kybebe.⁴ As a consequence, commentators on the cult of Kybebe have assumed that the disparaging descriptions of the *kybēbos* as a manic effeminized begging

Kolağasıoğlu, *Çakalca-Karadoğan Höyüğü: Arkaik Dönemde Amisos ve Kybele Kültü* (Samsun 2016) 32–36, and discussed by Bremmer “Kubaba, Kybele and Mater Magna” 19; see also Oreshko “In Search of the Holy Cube Roots” 148–153; see now A. Herda, “*Kybebo*, not *Kybebos*! On New Epigraphic and Archaeological Finds from the Milesian Colony of Amisos on the Black Sea, and their Meaning for the Origin and Spread of the Cult of *Kybebo-Kybebe-Kybele* in Asia Minor and Beyond. With an Appendix on the Name and Origin of Herodotos’ Mother, and his own Name,” *Il Mar Nero* 11 (2021/2023 [2024]) 67–145.

⁴ This fragment is cited as evidence for a κύβηβος known to Semonides in the seventh century BCE by W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1979) 102–103; H.S. Versnel, *Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes: Three Studies in Henotheism*, vol. 1 of *Inconsistencies in Greek Religion* (Leiden 1990) 109; Roller *In Search of God the Mother* 124; P. Borgeaud, *Mother of the Gods: From Cybele to the Virgin Mary* (L. Hochroth transl., Baltimore 2004) 145 n.20; Bremmer “Kubaba, Kybele and Mater Magna” 18; I. Rutherford, *Hittite Texts and Greek Religion: Contact, Interaction, and Comparison*. (Oxford 2020) 169; Herda “*Kybebo*, not *Kybebos*!” 93 and n.156.

priest and a eunuch should characterize the earliest attestation of Greek familiarity with Kybebe and her cult. But attribution of this fragment to Semonides of Amorgos is questionable, as I will show, and there is strong likelihood that the disparaging depiction of this representative of Kybebe became current within Greek literary circles only in the fifth century, specifically as a result of the violent rupture between Hellenic Europe and Persian-ruled Asia as a result of the Persian wars of the early fifth century.

Attribution of this fragment to Semonides of Amorgos is speculative. Late authors did not consistently distinguish between Σιμωνίδης and Σημωνίδης, as these names were homophonic in common Greek by the imperial period. So Martin West has observed that “Σιμωνίδου in a Stobaeus lemma may stand either for Simonides of Ceos or for Semonides of Amorgos.”⁵ While Atticist grammarians interested in phonology endeavored to distinguish these authors, late antique and Byzantine lexicographers failed to do so. Either author might be behind a citation of Σιμωνίδης. A distinction between these two poets may be possible from the context of a lemma when it can be compared to their better attested fragments, but it becomes almost arbitrary to name the author when the lemma is a single word.

Neither West nor Bergk before him gave any reason for assigning the fragment to Semonides of Amorgos. Pellizer and Tedeschi, however, in their edition of the fragments of Semonides, give the principal reason. As the lexicographers attest, the *kybēbos* was a disreputable character who must have been lampooned by Cratinus just as the *mētragyrēs* is disparaged in all later references. Such a figure was a suitable target for the sort of invective characteristic of iambicists like Archilochus, Hipponax, and Semonides.⁶ The elevated style of Simonidean lyric would hardly seem suitable for the mention of such a character.

But within the attested body of Simonides' works, there is a specific context that could very plausibly have provided the occasion to

⁵ M.L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin and New York 1974) 80.

⁶ E. Pellizer and G. Tedeschi (eds.), *Semonide: Introduzione, testimonianze, testo critico, traduzione e commento* (Rome 1990) 201, where they note that Hipponax mentions Κυβήβη (fr. 125 Degani, 127 West).

mention *kybēbos*, the “Kybebe-man”. To appreciate this possibility requires an understanding of the currents of cultural identity that were reshaping the image of Hellenism in the face of an aggressive assertion of power by the Persian rulers of western Asia. Simonides played a leading role in the process of self-presentation underway among Greeks in the wake of the invasion of Xerxes.

Simonides of Ceos is known for his elegies on Persian war themes. True to the spirit of elegy and epinician lyric in his day, Simonides represented the deeds of the Greeks in their battles of 480 and 479 as the work of divine providence, identifying the victorious Greeks as the contemporary embodiments of the heroic spirit of the epic past.⁷ The trauma of recent events was thereby palliated in a manner designed to be most pleasing to those of the Greeks who had gambled their very existence on the chance of resisting the full might of the Persian empire. Persian might, just fifteen years earlier, had wrought a terrible destruction on Miletus and on the Ionians who, as allies of the Athenians, had risen up against the power of Persia. In processing that episode through the public performance of tragedy, the playwright Phrynichus had brought censure upon himself for representing the horrors of war in his *Sack of Miletus* (Herodotus 6.21.2). Now, with the defeat of Xerxes behind them, Phrynichus could indulge his audiences in *Schadenfreude* by depicting the lamentations of the Persians and their followers, in his play, *Phoenician Women*. Phrynichus’ *chorēgos* was Themistocles, and the character who opened the play by announcing defeat to the assembled Persian elders was a eunuch.⁸

As the most celebrated Athenian of the war with Persia, Themistocles was as close to Simonides as he was to Phrynichus, all of them men who were taking the lead in formulating the public memory of

⁷ On the heroizing Persian war elegies of Simonides see D. Boedeker and D. Sider (eds.), *The New Simonides: Contest of Praise and Desire* (Oxford and New York 2001).

⁸ Testimony to the opening of Phrynichus’ *Phoenician Women* comes from the hypothesis of Aeschylus’ *Persians* on the authority of Glaucus of Rhegium. The *Sack of Miletus* was produced probably in 492, and the *Phoenician Women* produced in 476, see B. Zimmermann, W. Schmitz, H.-G. Nesselrath, and S. Matthaios, “Phrynichus,” in *Brill’s New Pauly Online* (2006).

recent events.⁹ Among the reports that associate Themistocles with Simonides is the testimony that Simonides gave praise to Themistocles for his restoration of the *telestērion* of the Lycomidae at Phlya, in Attica, which had been destroyed by the Persians.¹⁰ We know nothing more about the manner in which Simonides enhanced the celebrity of Themistocles in this connection, but the his association with this shrine of initiation points to a context appropriate for Simonides to name the *kybēbos*.

The mystic initiations of the Lycomidae at Phlya were celebrated in the name “of Earth, whom they call the Great Goddess,” and were said to have been celebrated even before the Mysteries were instituted at Eleusis.¹¹ These initiatory rites were said to be Bacchic, involving *orgia*, that is, enthused communion with the deity in a manner that could be considered not far removed from behavior of a “god-inspired” θεοφόρητος, as the *kybēbos* is characterized. The praise of such customs in a ritual context of great sanctity in Attica could be seen as a palliative antidote to the experience of a *kybēbos* who had proclaimed the authority of similar rites in the name of a foreign goddess. The very recent past provided just such an experience that could have prompted Simonides to affirm that the Athenians, guided by Themistocles in their affairs of politics and piety, were favored by divine providence.

Kybebe, namesake of the *kybēbos*, was a deity familiar to Phrygians and Lydians, as Charon attests, and among Ionian Greeks as well, as the finds from her sanctuary at Amisus attest.¹² She had a

⁹ On the celebrity of Themistocles see Herodotus 8.123–125; Thucydides 1.74.1; Plutarch *Them.* 17.

¹⁰ Anecdotal conversations between Themistocles and Simonides are reported by Plutarch *Them.* 5.6–7 (= Simonides *Testimonia* 12 and 17 Campbell, also *Moralia* 185c, 807b). Simonides as the source for Themistocles’ role in restoring the shrine of the Lycomidae is Plutarch *Them.* 1.3 (= fr. 627 Campbell; fr. 189 Edmonds; fr. 222 Bergk).

¹¹ Pausanias 1.31.4: Γῆς, ἥν Μεγάλην θεὸν ὀνομάζουσι. On the rites of the Great Goddess and their relationship to the Mysteries of Eleusis and later of Andania, see also Pausanias 4.1.7–8 and 9,30.12; Hippolytus *Haer.* 5.20.6; L. Deubner *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932, repr. 1966) 69–70.

¹² Charon, *FGrHist* 262 fr. 5 (= Photius *Lexicon* E-M 1145, s.v. κύβηβος, cited above, n.1); on the finds from Amisus see above with n.3. A sixth-century

shrine of great importance at Sardis, as Herodotus recalls.¹³ Herodotus refers to Kybebe dismissively as “a local goddess”, but her name will have had an ominous resonance among Ionians, and among the Athenians in particular, after the burning of her shrine during the Ionian assault on Sardis in 498, in the opening of the Ionian revolt. Herodotus makes the point that the burning of her shrine became the justification used by the Persians for the burning of the temples of the Greeks.¹⁴ The events that led the Athenians to join in the assault on Sardis are described by Herodotus as “the beginning of evils for Greeks and barbarians,” and this very event, the Athenian involvement in the burning of Sardis, could later be cited by Aristotle as a paradeigmatic example of an original cause.¹⁵ Memory of Athenian responsibility for this sequence of events clearly was long-lasting.

After the destruction of Miletus and the suppression of the revolt, Darius sent heralds to the cities of the Greeks to demand earth and water as tokens of their submission.¹⁶ Those who submitted would

graffito from Locri Epizephyrii names $\varphi(\upsilon)\beta\acute{\alpha}\beta\alpha$, attesting to the influence of the Lydian cult in western colonies, see D. Jordan, “Three Texts from Lokroi Epizephyrioi,” *ZPE* 130 (2000) 95–103, and discussions of J. de la Genière, “De la Phrygie à Locres Épizéphyrienne: Les chemins de Cybèle,” *MÉFRA* 97 (1985) 693–718; Bremmer “Kubaba, Kybele and Mater Magna” 17.

¹³ Herodotus 5.102.1: ἐν δὲ αὐτῇσι [sc. ἐν Σάρδισι] καὶ ἱρὸν ἐπιχωρίης θεοῦ Κυβήβης.

¹⁴ Herodotus 5.102.1: τὸ σκηπτόμενοι [sc. the burning of her *hieron*] οἱ Πέρσαι ὕστερον ἀντενεπίμπρασαν τὰ ἐν Ἑλλήσι ἱρά.

¹⁵ Herodotus 5.97.3 (referring to the ships sent from Athens to join the Ionians): αὐταὶ δὲ αἱ νέες ἀρχὴ κακῶν ἐγένοντο Ἑλλησί τε καὶ βαρβάροισι. Aristotle *An. Post.* 2.11 (94a36–94b7).

¹⁶ Earth and water were not specifically Persian symbols, but were meaningful as tokens of the domain of Artemis at Sardis (Artemis of Koloë) and Ephesian Artemis at Ephesus, as attested in a bilingual Lydian-Aramaic inscription funerary inscription: “Whosoever damages this stele or this grave chamber, ... to him, to his court and house, to earth and water, to whatever may be his possession, Artemis of Ephesus and Artemis of Koloë will bring destruction” (modified translation after G.M.A. Hanfmann and N.H. Ramage, *Sculpture from Sardis: The Finds Through 1975* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978) 162, no. 241; see also R. Gusmani, *Lydisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg 1964) 250 no. 1. In a more concise Lydian funerary inscription *Kufaw(s)* (= Kybebe) is named as the protective avenger: Gusmani *Lydisches Wörterbuch* 252 no. 4a, and *Lydisches*

be spared the punishment that Darius intended and Xerxes later administered to the unrepentant by burning their temples. The demand for earth and water must have been made in the name of the offended deity, Kybebe, and the messenger who was instructed to convey to the Greeks, and to the Athenians in particular, the gravity of their affront to that deity was probably the one who became known as a “Kybebe-man”, the *kybēbos*.

According to Herodotus, the most memorable feature of the mission of these emissaries was their infamous treatment at Sparta and at Athens. At Sparta they were thrown into a well, and at Athens they were thrown into the *barathron*, the pit of execution.¹⁷ Plutarch reports that Themistocles won praise for passing the death sentence on “the bilingual man” among the Persian emissaries because “he dared to use the Hellenic tongue to deliver barbarian demands.”¹⁸ Such a rationalization for so brazen a treatment of a messenger, represented as a praiseworthy act, strongly suggests that memory of the deed was embedded in some manner of encomiastic poetry, the sort and historical context of which suits the reputation of Simonides. Simonides’ attested praise of Themistocles in restoring the *telestērion* of the Lycomidae was clearly an affirmation of his piety by upholding native Attic traditions after the Persian threat

Wörterbuch, Ergänzungsband, Lieferung 3 (Heidelberg 1986) 258, also discussed by R. Gusmani, “Der lydische Name der Kybele,” *Kadmos* 8 (1969) 158–161; Bremmer “Kubaba, Kybele and Mater Magna” 17; Oreshko “In Search of the Holy Cube Roots” 152. On the Lydian origin of “earth and water” see the discussion of M. Munn, *The Mother of the Gods, Athens, and the Tyranny of Asia: A Study of Sovereignty in Ancient Religion* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2006) 222–225.

¹⁷ Herodotus 6.48, 94, and 7.32 refers the mission of Darius’ heralds; Herodotus 7.133 reports the fate of the heralds sent to Athens and Sparta.

¹⁸ Plutarch *Them.* 6.2: ἐπαινέται δ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ περὶ τὸν δίγλωττον ἔργον ἐν τοῖς πεμφθεῖσιν ὑπὸ βασιλείᾳ ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ ὕδατος αἴτησιν. ἐρμηνέα γὰρ ὄντα συλλαβὸν διὰ ψηφίσματος ἀπέκτεινεν ὅτι φωνὴν Ἑλληνίδα βαρβάρους προστάγμασιν ἐτόλμησε χρῆσαι. The execution of this messenger is reported in similar terms by Aelius Aristides, *Panath.* 99 (Behr Lenz = 122 Dindorf). Note that Themistocles was remembered also for his foundation of a shrine to Artemis *Aristoboulē* (“of Best Council”) established by the place where the bodies of executed criminals were disposed of: Plutarch *Them.* 22.1–2. Miltiades also had a role in the condemnation of the Persian heralds, according to Pausanias 3.12.7.

had passed. Such an affirmation of piety gave occasion for referring to Themistocles' earlier role in dealing with "barbarian demands" made in the name of "a local goddess" of Sardis. This is the context in which it is most probable that Simonides made mention of the κύβηβον, in the accusative and therefore as the object of some action described in his verses.¹⁹

Memory of the *kybēbos* lingered among the Athenians over the following century. The depiction of a eunuch as a person of immanent and alien power was remembered in ways intended to neutralize the fears that this person may have excited by intoning threats of divine vengeance in the name of the great goddess at Sardis.²⁰ Phrynichus' presentation on stage of a eunuch messenger bringing word of defeat to the Persian court was one such riposte. Simonides' praise for Themistocles and his affirmation of the sanctity of a venerable shrine of a great goddess of Attica was another form of sanitized memory, current at least until the reputation of Themistocles dimmed after his ostracism and exile.²¹ At some point in the third quarter of the fifth century, Cratinus made mention of the *kybēbos* in his comedy, *Thracian Women*, and again made reference to a begging priest of Kybele in another play, *Runaway Women*, where he is said to have mocked the seer, Lampon, by calling him an *agersiky-*

¹⁹ Simonides was capable of depicting discreditable characters in his *Miscellaneous Stories* (Ἀτάκτοι Λόγοι), where he represented the speech of slaves resembling that of uneducated foreigners (τοιούτων γὰρ ὡς εἰκὸς τὸ βάρβαρον καὶ παιδείας ἄμοιρον), as Alexander of Aphrodisias attests, in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* 818 (Hayduck = Simonides fr. 653 Campbell). It is noteworthy that Timotheus of Miletus, in his later epic poem on these events, represents the speech of a Lydian and a Phrygian appealing to the Mother and to Artemis of Ephesus to save them (*Persians*, lines 105–162, Campbell).

²⁰ It is possible to see an echo of such threats two generations later in the chorus of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* 392–402, where the goddess of Sardis, "Mistress Mother... enthroned on bull-devouring lions" (μᾶτερ πότνια... ταυροκτόνων λεόντων ἔφεδρε) is invoked to punish the hubris of the Atreid chiefs.

²¹ The fact that Themistocles ended his days as a servant of the Persian king at Magnesia on the Meander (Thucydides 1.138; Plutarch *Them.* 27–31) is ironic, and his devotion there to the cult of the Mother of the Gods there (Plutarch *Them.* 30; Strabo 14.1.40) was possibly even a specific expiation for his treatment of the messenger of that goddess in the time of Darius.

bēlis “Kybele begger”, using the name of the goddess more directly associated with Phrygia and playing on a double-entendre of the word, *kybēlis*, meaning a sacrificial axe.²² Lampon was a prominent public figure, known to have advised the Athenian assembly on religious matters, and this likening of him to a despised foreign priest indicates that such a figure was familiar to fifth-century Athenian audiences.²³

Herodotus also attests to a more ominous side to the memory of the executed Persian messengers, among whom we should understand was the *kybēbos*. Herodotus, describes the lingering sense of guilt that motivated the Spartans later to offer atonement to the Persians for the murder of the king’s emissaries. He states that the Spartans were not confident that they would escape divine retribution until many years later, when their own emissaries to the Persian court were taken prisoner by their enemies, the Athenians, and were summarily executed. This later event transpired in 430 BCE.²⁴ In reporting the expiation finally achieved by the Spartans, Herodotus also remarks on how memory of the affair of the Persian emissaries still hung over the Athenians: “Just what disagreeable consequences

²² Cratinus fr. 66 Kassel-Austin (= Photius A-Λ 146): Ἀγερσικύβηλιν Κρατῖνος Λάμπωνα τὸν μάντιν ὡς ἀγύρτην καὶ θύτην· κύβηλιν γὰρ ὁ πέλεκυς. οἱ δὲ ἐγερσικύβηλιν ἐν τῷ δράματι γράφουσιν, τὸν ἐφ’ ἑαυτὸν ἐγείροντα τὸν πέλεκυν (“*Agersikybēlin*: Cratinus (refers to) Lampon the seer as a beggar (*agyrēs*) and sacrificant; for *kybēlis* is the axe. In the play they write *egersikybēlin* on account of the fact that he himself raised (*egeirein*) the axe (*kybēlis*)”). The lexicographer here explains the puns on ἀγείρω, “to collect, beg,” vs. ἐγείρω, “to raise up,” and Κυβέλη, the goddess Kybele, vs. κύβηλις “an axe”. Κυβέλη the goddess was known as the Mother to audiences in Cratinus’ day, as she is named δέσποινα Κυβέλη Μήτηρ by both Pindar and Aristophanes: Pindar *Dithyrambs* fr. 80 (Maehle) and Aristophanes *Birds* 873–875.

²³ Lampon, who was also brought on the comic stage by Aristophanes, *Birds* 988, was involved in the founding of the colony at Thurii (Diodorus 12.10.3–4), was the first Athenian named as signatory to the Peace of Nicias (Thucydides 5.19.2), proposed a rider to the Eleusinian first-fruits decree (*IG* I³ 78, line 47), and was entitled to public meals at the Prytaneion of Athens, see M. Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2008) 123–134.

²⁴ Herodotus 7.133–137. Thucydides 2.67 reports the capture of the Spartan emissaries in the second year of the Peloponnesian War, and says that they were executed at Athens and thrown into the pit (ἐς φάραγγα).

were suffered by the Athenians for this treatment of the king's messengers, I am unable to say; perhaps it was the destruction of their city and the countryside around it – though I do not myself believe that this happened as a direct result of their crime.”²⁵ Herodotus is here being discreet, not venturing to pronounce upon the force of divine punishment as it might afflict the Athenians. He is more confident, however, in his description of the outcome for the Spartans: “This to me, at least, is clear evidence of divine intervention.”²⁶

Writing at a time when the war between Athens and Sparta was underway, and when anxieties over plague, the fortunes of war, and the possible effects of alleged acts of impiety were weighing on the Athenians, Herodotus was not going to remind his audience in more explicit terms of the risks that might still confront them as a consequence of long past offenses against the gods. He did so only indirectly, by repeatedly describing how divine retribution had worked out for others in the past. The question of the consequences for the execution of the emissaries of Darius was still a current concern, and Herodotus would only go as far as to say how the matter had resolved for the Spartans, and to remind his audience that the chain of events that led to the burning of the shrine of Kybebe at Sardis marked “the beginning of evils for Greeks and barbarians.”²⁷

²⁵ Herodotus 7.133.2 (translated by A. de Sélincourt): ὅ τι δὲ τοῖσι Ἀθηναίοισι ταῦτα ποιήσασι τοὺς κήρυκας συνήνεκε ἀνεθέλητον γενέσθαι, οὐκ ἔχω εἰπαί τι, πλὴν ὅτι σφέων ἡ χώρα καὶ ἡ πόλις ἐδηιώθη. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο οὐ διὰ ταύτην τὴν αἰτίην δοκέω γενέσθαι.

²⁶ Herodotus 7.137.2 (translated by A. de Sélincourt): δῆλον ὦν μοι ὅτι θεῖον ἐγένετο τὸ πρῆγμα. For other examples of Herodotus affirming in his own voice the outcome of divine intervention, see 1.34.1, 8.77, 9.65.2, 9.100.2. For discussion of these and related passages in Herodotus, see I. Linforth, “Named and Unnamed Gods in Herodotus.” *CPCP* 9 (1928); Munn *The Mother of the Gods* 292–316.

²⁷ Herodotus 5.97.3 (cited above, n.15). One possible “evil” to come from these events was the abstention of the Ephesians and Colophonians from observances of the Apatouria festival, a celebration of common ancestry among all Ionians. In noting this fact, Herodotus, again reticent about giving specific details, states that they removed themselves “on account of a certain murder” (1.147.2: κατὰ φόνου τινὰ σκῆψιν). It is notable that at Ephesus under the Persians, the *neokoros* overseeing the temple of Artemis was traditionally

Late in the Peloponnesian War, as Athenian fortunes were rebounding under the leadership of Alcibiades, the Athenians installed a statue of the Mother of the Gods in their old council house in the agora, thereby establishing the Metroön and devoting the building also to the custody of state archives.²⁸ Late sources attribute the establishment of this Metroön and archive, under oracular guidance, as penance for the murder of the *mētragyrtes* who had come to Athens to announce the divinity of the Mother of the Gods, but who had been put to death by the Athenians and thrown into the *barathron*.²⁹ One version of this account, recorded by Photius, specifies that the Athenians established this Metroön on the very spot where they had put the *mētragyrtes* to death, which is to say, on the spot – the old council house – where the resolution to execute the heralds sent by Darius had been passed.³⁰ A scholion to Aeschines 3, *Against Ctesiphon* 187.1, glossing a reference to the Metroön, states that a portion of the council house was devoted to Rhea (as the Mother of the Gods was often identified) “on account of that Phrygian” (διὰ τὴν αἰτίαν ἐκείνου Φρυγός), citing a

a eunuch bearing the name, Megabyzus (so Strabo 14.1.23; cf. Xenophon *An.* 5.3.6–7; Plutarch *Alex.* 42.1). Ephesian Artemis had close ties to Sardis in the Lydian and Persian eras (see above, n.16), and the Sardian Kybebe and Ephesian Artemis were honored together at Sardis, as a votive relief of the late-fifth/early-fourth century demonstrates (Hanfmann and Ramage *Sculpture from Sardis* 58–60, no. 20; Roller *In Search of God the Mother* 196–197 and fig. 52). Colophonians were devoted to Lydian customs, according to Xenophanes (fr. 3 Diels Kranz = Athenaeus 12.526a). It is a reasonable likelihood, therefore, that the “certain murder” that was the cause of their refusal to celebrate kinship with Athenians was the murder of the *kybēbos*, who could have been a spokesperson for Ephesian Artemis as well as Kybebe of Sardis.

²⁸ On the conversion of the old council house into the Metroön see T.L. Shear, Jr., “Bouleuterion, Metroon, and the Archives at Athens,” in M.H. Hansen and K.A. Raaflaub (eds.), *Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis*, Historia Einzelschrift 95 (Stuttgart 1995) 157–90 at 178–189; J.P. Sickinger, *Public Records & Archives in Classical Athens* (Chapel Hill 1999) 105–113; Munn *The Mother of the Gods* 326–332.

²⁹ Julian *Or.* 5, *On the Mother of the Gods* 159a-b; Photius *Lexicon* E-M 423, s.v. Μητραγύρτης; Suda *Lexicon* 99 s.v. Βάραθρον, 1003 s.v. Μητραγύρτης.

³⁰ Photius *Lexicon* E-M 423, s.v. Μητραγύρτης: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ᾠκοδόμησαν βουλευτήριον, ἐν ᾧ ἀνεῖλον τὸν μητραγύρτην.

work called *Philippics* as his authority. The reference to “that Phrygian” indicates that the figure of the *mētragyrṭēs* (itself a derogatory term for a devotee of the Mother of the Gods) was well known, and that he was the one called *kybēbos* in earlier sources as the lexicographers record. The reference to the *Philippics* is probably to a work known by that title either by Theopompus or Anaximenes, writing in the second half of the fourth century, at a time when the relations between the Hellenic and the Persian world were radically changing.³¹ This was also the time, as Alexander was on his way to burn Persepolis, when Aristotle could instruct his students that the Athenian role in the burning of Sardis was an exemplary primary cause. The “evils for Greeks and barbarians” that began from those events, and which made the *kybēbos* such a memorable figure, as I have argued, were still working out their consequences.

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³¹ See Munn *The Mother of the Gods* 58–66 and 254–261, for discussion of these accounts and their relationship to the events narrated by Herodotus.