

Phrygian Tales

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BEGINNING in the Hellenistic period, the Greek world saw the production of many pseudepigraphic texts that purported to represent the wisdom of various eastern peoples, especially Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Persians.¹ Among the more obscure are stories or writings described as “Phrygian,” known only from a handful of brief references in widely scattered authors. These references have so far been discussed only by scholars interested in elucidating particular passages, and have not received any general consideration in and of themselves.² Although their brevity and obscurity makes it difficult to reach many definite conclusions about these lost writings, it is nevertheless useful to reconsider them as a group. In this paper I briefly set out the evidence and assess what we may reasonably deduce from it. I argue that the term “Phrygian tale” was typically applied to two particular types of text, those that presented either euhemerizing or allegorical inter-

¹ On Egyptian pseudepigrapha, see especially G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind?* (Princeton 1993); on Persian, see J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés* (Paris 1938), with R. Beck, “Thus Spake Not Zarathustra: Zoroastrian Pseudepigrapha of the Graeco-Roman World,” in M. Boyce and F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism III Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leiden 1991) 491–565.

² Most of the evidence is gathered by A. S. Pease in his note on Cic. *Nat.D.* 3.42 (*M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum* [Cambridge (Mass.) 1955–1958]), by F. Jacoby at *FGrHist* 800 FF 4–13 in his collection of ethnographic writings on Phrygia, and by M. Winiarczyk as TT 93–98 in his edition of Diagoras (*Diagoras Melius Theodorus Cyrenaeus* [Leipzig 1981]); see also J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff 1970), on Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 29, 362B. The fullest discussion, and the best to date, is that of M. Winiarczyk, “Diagoras von Melos—Wahrheit und Legende (Fortsetzung),” *Eos* 68 (1980) 51–75, at 58–65.

pretations of divine myth, and that the reason for their being described as “Phrygian” was connected with popular belief in the antiquity of the Phrygians and their language.

The earliest datable reference to Phrygian writings comes from Dionysius Scytobrachion, by way of Diodorus Siculus. In Book 3 of his *Library*, Diodorus gives an account of the god Dionysus that he claims is told by the Libyans; his source for this is Dionysius. The work in question was what Jeffrey Rusten has called Dionysius’ *Libyan Stories*, a euhemerizing romance that, among other things, identified the Greek gods as in origin the rulers of a Libyan people called the Atlantioi. Their first king is Ouranos, who invents agriculture and is after his death regarded as a god by his people. His daughter Rhea marries Ammon, the king of a neighboring Libyan tribe; he, however, has an affair with a beautiful young woman named Amalthea, who gives birth to Dionysus. Ammon, fearing Rhea’s jealousy, hides the infant in the town of Nysa, and so forth.³ For present purposes, the details of the story do not much matter. Dionysius evidently cited as his authorities two supposedly ancient accounts of Dionysus’ exploits: a poem composed by Linus in “Pelasgian” letters, and “the poem called Phrygian” by Thymoites, the son of Thymoites, the son of Laomedon of Troy.⁴ Thymoites allegedly traveled through Libya and visited Nysa, where he learned all about Dionysus’ exploits from the natives. He then “composed the poem called Phrygian, employing an archaic dialect and alphabet.”⁵ Rusten has plausibly argued that these poems of Linus and Thymoites are “of the same order as Euhemerus’ Panchaeian stele and are meant only to

³ Dionysus: Diod. 3.66.4–74.1; Ouranos and the Atlantioi: 3.56–57; on the *Libyan Stories*, see J. S. Rusten, *Dionysius Scytobrachion* (Opladen 1982) 11–12, 76–80, and 102–112, and M. Winiarczyk, *Euhemerus von Messene: Leben, Werk und Nachwirkung* (Munich 2002) 138–142.

⁴ A Thymoites appears in Homer (*Il.* 3.146) as one of the elders of Troy; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.32–33. Dionysius was apparently the first writer to make him a son of Laomedon and thus a brother of Priam (cf. Dictys 4.22), and the only one to mention his homonymous son.

⁵ Diod. 3.67.5: καὶ τὰς κατὰ μέρος τοῦ θεοῦ τούτου πράξεις μαθόντα παρὰ τῶν Νυσαέων συντάξασθαι τὴν Φρυγίαν ὀνομαζομένην ποιήσιν, ἀρχαϊκοῖς τῆ τε διαλέκτῳ καὶ τοῖς γράμμασι χρησάμενον.

provide the necessary ethnographic and scholarly frame for the myths.” Nor was anyone meant to take them any more seriously than Euhemerus’ voyage to Panchaea: the *Libyan Stories* were “meant purely as entertainment.”⁶

Dionysius was writing probably between 270 and 220 B.C. From not much later comes our second datable reference to Phrygian tales; it, however, is very different. This is a passage of Lysimachus of Alexandria preserved in the scholia to Apollonius of Rhodes. Lysimachus, whose floruit can be dated with some confidence to ca. 200 B.C., wrote works on the homecomings of the Greeks from Troy and on the Theban cycle in which he collected numerous variants of the standard myths. According to the scholion, “Lysimachus of Alexandria, in the second book of his *Homecomings*, says ‘for Soudas and Aristotle the writer on Euboea and the author of the Phrygian *logoi* and Daimachos and Dionysius of Chalcis have not allowed the widespread view about Achilles to remain in force, but on the contrary some believe that he was born from Thetis the daughter of Cheiron, and Daimachos [believes that he was born] from Philomela the daughter of Aktor.’”⁷ We may draw two conclusions from this citation. First, unlike Dionysius, Lysimachus was almost certainly citing an actual text rather than inventing an authority: as a professed compiler he would have had little interest in faking his citations, and we can in fact identify several of his other authorities with otherwise attested writers.⁸ Since these are all writers of local histories, it is possible that the Phrygian *logoi* may have been a similar work. Secondly, the fact that Lysimachus says merely “the author of

⁶ Rusten, *Dionysius* 106 and 112.

⁷ *FGrHist* 382 F 8 = Σ Ap. Rhod. 1.558: Λυσίμαχος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ τῶν Νόστων κατὰ λέξιν λέγει· Σουίδαο γὰρ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ὁ περὶ Εὐβοίας πεπραγματευμένος καὶ ὁ τοὺς Φρυγίους λόγους γράψας καὶ Δαίμαχος καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Χαλκιδεὺς οὐ τὴν περὶ Ἀχιλλέωοο διασπαρμένην ἀφείκασιν μένειν ἐπὶ χώραο δόξαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον οἱ μὲν ἐκ Θέτιδοο αὐτὸν νομίζουσιν γεγονέναι τῆο Χείρωνοο, Δαίμαχοο δὲ ἐκ Φιλομήλαοο τῆο Ἀκτοροο.

⁸ In addition to citations in scholia, Soudas’ *Thesalika* (*FGrHist* 602) is cited by Strabo (7.7.12) and Aristotle of Chalcis’ *Περὶ Εὐβοίας* (*FGrHist* 423) is cited by Harpocration; Daimachos (*FGrHist* 65) is known only from scholia.

the Phrygian *logoi*” when he cites all his other authorities by name suggests that he did not in fact have an author’s name, but knew the Phrygian *logoi* only as an anonymous work. We can thus conclude that by ca. 200 B.C. there was in circulation an anonymous work known as the Phrygian *logoi* that dealt at least in part with details of mythic genealogies.

Chronologically, the next reference comes from Cicero, who in *De natura deorum* has his spokesman Cotta point out that there is more than one Hercules; the second in his list is “the Egyptian one born from Nilus, who they say composed the Phrygian writings.”⁹ This reference is as problematic as it is intriguing. The passage in which it occurs is almost certainly based on the same source as a lengthier passage from later in the same book (*Nat.D.* 3.53–60), in which Cotta enumerates multiple versions of thirteen other deities or sets of deities. Similar but less detailed lists appear in other later writers, and it is likely that they all derive from a lost work of Hellenistic date; certainly they display the characteristic marks of Hellenistic scholarship in their compilation of obscure mythic genealogies.¹⁰ One easily identifiable cluster in Cicero’s list is a group of Egyptian deities, all of whom are said to be the children of Nilus: in addition to Hercules, these include the Vulcan whom the Egyptians call Phthas (*Nat.D.* 3.55), the Mercury whom the Egyptians regard it as impious to name (3.56), the Dionysus who killed Nysa (3.58), and the Minerva whom the Egyptian inhabitants of Sais worship (3.59), as well as Vulcan’s son, the Sol of Egyptian Heliopolis (3.54). Some of these draw on well-known equations

⁹ Cic. *Nat.D.* 3.42: *alter traditur Nilo natus Aegyptius, quem aiunt Phrygias litteras conscripsisse.*

¹⁰ Arnobius may well have taken his almost identical list (*Adv.Nat.* 4.14–17) directly from Cicero (cf. Lactant. *Div.Inst.* 1.11.48, who cites Cicero by name), but Clement of Alexandria, whose list (*Protr.* 2.28.1–29.1) is too close to Cicero’s for the similarity to be accidental, was presumably relying on a Greek source. The most recent discussions, with full references to the primary sources and earlier scholarship, are F. Girard, “Probabilisme, théologie et religion: le catalogue des dieux homonymes dans le *De natura deorum* de Cicéron (III, 42 et 53–60),” in H. Zehnacker and G. Hentz (eds.), *Hommages à Robert Schilling* (Paris 1983) 117–126, and Winiarczyk, *Euhemerios* 161–163.

of Graeco-Roman and Egyptian deities, such as that of Vulcan/Hephaistos with Ptah and of Minerva/Athena with Neith, while other identifications, such as the unnamable Mercury, are entirely obscure.¹¹ The reference to Hercules falls in between: a number of other writers refer to an Egyptian Hercules/Herakles, although it is not clear that they all have in mind the same Egyptian god.¹² None of them, however, describe him as the author of Phrygian writings. Although we can accordingly say nothing about the nature of these Phrygian writings, it is nonetheless worth noting that the reference to them was apparently linked to this alternative genealogy of Egyptian gods headed by Nilus.

It is tempting to link the reference in Cicero with another reference that also brings together Herakles, Egypt, and Phrygian writings, although in a very different configuration. Unfortunately, the passage in question, from Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, is severely corrupt: although the reference to "Phrygian writings" itself is secure, the information for which Plutarch cites them varies significantly depending on the emendation one prefers.¹³ F. C. Babbitt, in his Loeb edition of 1936, makes Sarapis and Isis the son and daughter of Herakles, and Typhon his grandson by Alkaios; J. Gwyn Griffiths, following L. Parmentier, makes Sarapis the son of Herakles' daughter Charopô and Typhon the son of his son Aiakos; most

¹¹ Ptah: Iambl. *Myst.* 8.3, Porph. ap. Euseb. *Praep.Evang.* 2.11.46, and already on the Rosetta Stone (*OGIS* 90); Neith at Sais: Pl. *Ti.* 21E. The unnamable Mercury appears elsewhere only in the parallel passage of Arnobius (*Adv.Nat.* 4.14); he is not Thoth, so often identified with Mercury/Hermes, since that god appears separately in Cicero's list as the fifth Mercury.

¹² Pease, *Cicero's De Natura Deorum* II 1053, collects Greek and Latin references to the Egyptian Herakles. In Hdt. 2.42–43, Herakles is almost certainly Chonsu, the son of Amon-Re and Mut at Thebes, and possibly also the sky god Shu: A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II: Commentary 1–98* (Leiden 1976) 194–195 and 201–202, who points out that the two were often conflated. In Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 41, 367D, in contrast, he seems to be a sun god: Gwyn Griffiths, *De Iside* 457–458.

¹³ Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 29, 362B: οὐ γὰρ ἄξιον προσέχειν τοῖς Φρυγίοις γράμμασιν, ἐν οἷς λέγεται †χαροπῶς τοὺς μὲν τοῦ Ἡρακλέους γενέσθαι θυγάτηρ, †Ἰσαιοῦ δὲ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ὁ Τυφών.

recently, Chr. Froidefond in his Budé edition of 1988 suggests that Herakles was full of joy when his daughter Isis was born, but full of misery when Typhon was born.¹⁴ Again, for present purposes the details do not much matter. What is important is that these “Phrygian writings” of Plutarch recorded otherwise unattested mythic genealogies that made Herakles the father or grandfather of Typhon and perhaps of other deities associated with Isis. It is naturally impossible to date this text, although if editors are correct in restoring the name of Sarapis it could not have predated the foundation of that cult in the third century B.C.¹⁵

Whether Cicero and Plutarch were in fact referring to the same text is impossible to say.¹⁶ That both authors refer to Phrygian “writings” (*litterae* or γράμματα) rather than *logoi*, the term found in all other references, is no doubt merely a coincidence. The genealogies found in the two authors are not necessarily incompatible, since apart from Herakles himself the figures in them do not overlap. It is true that Cicero makes Hercules the author of the Phrygian writings whereas Plutarch makes him the subject; for this reason, some scholars have

¹⁴ Babbitt: ἐν οἷς λέγεται Σάραπισ υἱὸς μὲν τοῦ Ἡρακλέους γενέσθαι θυγάτηρ τ' Ἴσις, Ἀλκαίου δὲ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ὁ Τυφών; Gwyn Griffiths, *De Iside*: ἐν οἷς λέγεται Χαροποῦς τῆς μὲν τοῦ Ἡρακλέους γενέσθαι θυγατρὸς (ὁ Σάραπισ, Αἰακοῦ δὲ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ὁ Τυφών; Froidefond: ἐν οἷς λέγεται χάροπος μὲν τοῦ Ἡρακλέους γενέσθαι θυγάτηρ Ἴσις, αἰακτοῦ δὲ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ὁ Τυφών. For discussion see L. Parmentier, *Recherches sur le traité d'Isis et d'Osiris de Plutarque* (Brussels 1913) 15–20, and Chr. Froidefond, “Études critiques sur le traité *Isis et Osiris* de Plutarque,” *REG* 91 (1978) 340–357, at 350–354.

¹⁵ The possible link between Phrygian writings and Sarapis has made some commentators think of Timotheus, who is said to have written on Phrygian cults (*Arn. Adv. Nat.* 5.5) as well as on Sarapis (*Plut. De Is. et Os.* 28, 361A; *Tac. Hist.* 4.83); see Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 60–61, with further references. But since he seems to have done so under his own name, it is unlikely that he also composed anonymous “Phrygian writings” that likewise dealt with Sarapis. Parmentier, *Recherches* 19–20, followed by Gwyn Griffiths, *De Iside* 403, notes further that Timotheus identified Sarapis with Pluto (*Plut. De Is. et Os.* 28, 362A), a view that does not fit well with the genealogy suggested here, whatever its precise form.

¹⁶ Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 59, regards them as “gewiss identisch.”

suggested that Cicero misread or misunderstood his source. Yet it is not impossible to imagine a text representing this Egyptian Herakles as both author and subject, giving an account of the divine family of which he was a part.¹⁷

In two other passages Plutarch refers to Phrygian authorities in matters of myth and religion. First, in the dialogue *De defectu oraculorum* his character Cleombrotus asserts that “those men have resolved more and greater perplexities who have placed the race of daimons in between gods and men ... whether this is a *logos* of the magi around Zoroaster, or whether it is Thracian from Orpheus, or Egyptian or Phrygian.”¹⁸ It is far from clear whether or not this passage refers to actual texts or rather to vague traditions; nevertheless, it is striking that it locates the Phrygians firmly among other traditional exponents of ancient wisdom under whose names specific texts did circulate. The same group of authorities, minus Zoroaster and the magi, appears in the other passage, a fragment from the lost treatise *De Daedalis Plataeensibus*: “that ancient natural philosophy, among both Greeks and barbarians, was an account of nature encoded in myths ... is obvious in the Orphic poems and the Egyptian and Phrygian *logoi*.”¹⁹ In this passage the as-

¹⁷ Philo of Byblos provides an interesting parallel here: his authority, Sanchuniathon, allegedly took his information from writings of Taautos (i.e., Thoth or Hermes), written in Ἀμμουνέων γράμματα (*FGrHist* 790 F 1, from Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 1.9.23–26), yet Taautos himself also appears in the genealogy of gods (F 2, ap. Eus. 1.10.14). M. L. West, “*Ab ovo*: Orpheus, Sanchuniathon, and the Origins of the Ionian World Model,” *CQ* N.S. 44 (1994) 289–307, at 294, interprets these *grammata* as writings in the Ammonite script, and thus perhaps parallel to the Phrygian *grammata* of Herakles, whereas Winiarczyk, *Euhemerios* 101 n.35, follows the majority of scholars in interpreting them as an engraved stele found in the temple of Ammon.

¹⁸ *De def. or.* 10, 415A: ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκοῦσι πλείονας λῦσαι καὶ μείζονας ἀπορίας οἱ τὸ τῶν δαιμόνων γένος ἐν μέσῳ θέντες θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων ... εἴτε μάγων τῶν περὶ Ζωροάστην ὁ λόγος οὗτός ἐστιν, εἴτε Θράκιος ἀπ’ Ὀρφέως εἴτ’ Αἰγύπτιος ἢ Φρύγιος.

¹⁹ *De Daedalis Plataeensibus* F 157 Sandbach (= Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 3.1.1): ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἡ παλαιὰ φυσιολογία καὶ παρ’ Ἑλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις λόγος ἦν φυσικὸς ἐγκεκαλυμμένος μύθοις ... κατάδηλόν ἐστιν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς ἔπεσι καὶ τοῖς Αἰγυπτιακοῖς καὶ Φρυγίοις λόγοις.

sociation of the Phrygian *logoi* with the Orphic poems suggests much more strongly that Plutarch had in mind actual texts—in this case, explications of myths as physical allegories about the natural world.

With this last passage of Plutarch we might associate another slightly earlier text. According to Cornutus, “many and various myth-makings concerning the gods existed among the ancient Greeks, just as others existed among the magi and others still among the Phrygians and further the Egyptians and Celts and Libyans and other peoples”; as evidence he cites the lines from Homer (*Il.* 15.18–19) where Zeus reminds Hera of the time when he suspended her from heaven with two anvils slung from her feet, a story that he interprets allegorically (Hera is the air, the anvils are the earth and the sea, and so forth).²⁰ Although Cornutus could simply be saying that all peoples have their own myths, the similarities with the Plutarch passage suggest that he had something more specific in mind: we again find a list of ancient peoples who encoded their understanding of the physical world into allegorical myths, and among them again the Phrygians hold a prominent place.

Two writers later than Plutarch actually attribute Phrygian *logoi* to particular authors. The earlier is the Christian polemicist Tatian, who attacks the inconsistency of his opponents by pointing out that they condemn Christian disbelief in the gods and yet tolerate atheistic writings. The entire passage is of interest: “Diagoras was Athenian, but you took vengeance on him when he burlesqued the Athenian mysteries and, although you read his Phrygian tales, you hate us; although you possess the memoranda of Leon, you are disgusted at refutations from us, and although you have amongst you the opinions of Apion concerning the gods of Egypt, you banish us as the most god-

²⁰ *Theol. Graec.* 17: τοῦ δὲ πολλὰς καὶ ποικίλας περὶ θεῶν γεγονέναι παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς Ἑλλησι μυθοποιίας, ὡς ἄλλαι μὲν παρὰ μάγοις γέγονασιν, ἄλλαι δὲ παρὰ Φρυγῶν καὶ ἤδη παρ’ Αἰγυπτίοις τε καὶ Κελτοῖς καὶ Λίβυσι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἔθνεσι, μαρτύριον ἂν λάβοι τις καὶ τὸ παρ’ Ὀμήρῳ λεγόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ Διὸς πρὸς τὴν Ἥραν τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον· “ἦ οὐ μέμνη ὅτε τ’ ἐκρέμω ὑψόθεν, ἐκ δὲ ποδοῖν ἄκμονας ἦκα δύο ...”

less of men.”²¹

Before considering these Phrygian tales of Diagoras, we should consider the company in which Tatian places them. The earlier of these two writers is Leon, who probably in the early Hellenistic period wrote a euhemerizing account of the Egyptian gods in the guise of a letter from Alexander the Great to his mother. A number of Christian writers from Tatian onwards cited this text in their attacks on polytheism, and the numerous references show clearly that it was a euhemerizing romance or pseudo-history mixing Greek and Egyptian traditions and probably focused on Egypt.²² Apion, the first-century A.D. grammarian of Alexandria, is relatively well attested; unfortunately, we know virtually nothing of his opinions about the Egyptian gods, even though he presumably treated them in detail in his *Aigyptiaka*. Since other well-known accounts of Egyptian deities were likewise euhemerizing, there is a reasonable chance that Apion followed suit.²³

Given this context, it is likely enough that the Phrygian tales that Tatian attributes to Diagoras were similar in nature: a

²¹ *Ad Gr.* 27 (= Diagoras T 68 Winiarczyk): Διαγόρας Ἀθηναῖος ἦν, ἀλλὰ τοῦτον ἐξορησάμενον τὰ παρ’ Ἀθηναίοις μυστήρια τετιμωρήκατε καὶ τοῖς Φρυγίοις αὐτοῦ λόγοις ἐντυγχάνοντες ἡμᾶς μεμισήκατε. Λέοντος κεκτημένοι τὰ ὑπομνήματα πρὸς τοὺς ἀφ’ ἡμῶν ἐλέγχους δυσχεραίνετε· καὶ τὰς περὶ τῶν κατ’ Αἴγυπτον θεῶν δόξας Ἀπίωνος ἔχοντες παρ’ ἑαυτοῖς ὡς ἀθεωτάτους ἡμᾶς ἐκκηρύσσετε.

²² The references are collected at *FGrHist* 659. The chief discussions are F. Pfister, “Ein apokrypher Alexanderbrief: Der sogenannte Leon von Pella und die Kirchenväter,” in *Mullus: Festschrift Th. Klauser* (*JAC* Ergänzungsband 1 [1964]) 291–297, repr. *Kleine Schriften zum Alexanderroman* (Meisenham 1976) 104–111; and J. S. Rusten, “Pellaeus Leo,” *AJP* 101 (1980) 197–201, whose interpretation I follow; see now Winiarczyk, *Euhemerios* 72–73 and 147.

²³ The *Aigyptiaka* is presumably the work to which Tatian is referring, since he elsewhere cites it by name (*Ad Gr.* 38.1); the fragments (*FGrHist* 616 FF 1–6) certainly reveal rationalizing tendencies. Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 65, suggests that its approach to the gods was probably similar to Leon’s, but the citations give no indication either for or against this hypothesis. Diodorus’ account of the Egyptian gods is strongly euhemeristic (see Winiarczyk, *Euhemerios* 150–153), an approach that he may have taken from Hekataios of Abdera (*FGrHist* 264; for a recent discussion of this debate, see Winiarczyk, *Eos* 69–71); Manetho, on the other hand, shows little sign of euhemerizing tendencies in the extant fragments of his work (*FGrHist* 609).

euhemerizing account of the gods, perhaps set in Egypt and presenting a mélange of Egyptian and Greek myth.²⁴ That the author was actually Diagoras need not be seriously considered. None of the evidence reviewed so far suggests that any of these Phrygian tales could have antedated Alexander the Great. It is much more likely that this work was foisted on Diagoras only after the latter's reputation as an atheist had become fixed in the tradition. Although it is possible that the original author wrote it in the character of Diagoras, it is more likely, given the numerous references to anonymous Phrygian tales, that this work too was originally anonymous and merely assigned to Diagoras as a likely candidate.²⁵

The other author credited with Phrygian tales is Democritus. In this case we truly have nothing to go on, since the information is found only in Diogenes Laertius' appendix to his catalogue of Democritus' works: "some include as separate items the following works taken from his notes: 'On the sacred writings [or hieroglyphics] in Babylon', 'On those in Meroë', 'Periplus of the Ocean', 'On History', 'Chaldean *logos*', 'Phrygian *logos*', 'On fever and those whose illness makes them cough', 'Legal causes', 'Chernika(?), or Problems'."²⁶ These works were presumably already rejected as spurious by Thrasyllus, whose arrangement Diogenes seems to follow; this would then provide some indication of date. Since they seem to form a rather random group, context is of little use in helping us

²⁴ As cogently argued by Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 64–65. He notes as corroboration the fact that Arnobius (*Adv. Nat.* 4.29) includes Diagoras in his list of writers who taught that the gods were in origin men (along with Euhemerus and Leon of Pella, among others).

²⁵ So Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 65. On the atheism of Diagoras see in general F. Jacoby, *Diagoras ó "Αθεος* (Berlin 1959); L. Woodbury, "The Date and Atheism of Diagoras of Melos," *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 178–211, repr. *Collected Writings* (Atlanta 1991) 118–150; M. Winiarczyk, "Diagoras von Melos—Wahrheit und Legende," *Eos* 67 (1979) 191–213; Winiarczyk, *Eos* 51–75.

²⁶ Diog. Laert. 9.49 (cf. Democritus D.-K. 68 B 299a–h): τάττουσι δέ τινες κατ' ἰδίαν ἐκ τῶν Ὑπομνημάτων καὶ ταῦτα· Περὶ τῶν ἐν Βαβυλῶνι ἱερῶν γραμμάτων· Περὶ τῶν ἐν Μερῶ· Ὠκεανοῦ περίπλους· Περὶ ἱστορίας· Χαλδαϊκὸς λόγος· Φρύγιος λόγος· Περὶ πυρετοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ νόσου βησσόντων· Νομικὰ αἴτια· Χερνικὰ ἢ προβλήματα. Translation adapted from that of R. D. Hicks (Loeb).

guess the character of the Phrygian *logos*.

There are, however, two associations that might shed some light. On the one hand, it is tempting to connect the Chaldean and Phrygian *logoi* (as well as the works on the sacred writings in Babylon and Meroë) with the stories in the elder Pliny and Clement of Alexandria that Democritus based his works on the writings of various Near Eastern sages, among them “Dardanus from Phoenicia.”²⁷ Some scholars have identified this figure with the ancestor of the Trojans, and so have interpreted the Phrygian *logos* as the work allegedly derived from Dardanus.²⁸ This line of argument, however, seems to me very problematic, for it fails to explain why Pliny explicitly identified this Dardanus as being “from Phoenicia”; it seems more likely that the Phoenician Dardanus was at least in origin entirely distinct from the Trojan.²⁹ On the other hand, we may note

²⁷ Plin. *NH* 30.9: *Democritus Apollobechem Coptitem et Dardanum e Phoenice inlustravit, voluminibus Dardani in sepulchrum eius petitis, suis vero ex disciplina eorum editis*. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.15.69.4: Δημόκριτος γὰρ τοὺς Βαβυλωνίους λόγους ἠθικοὺς ἰδίους πεποιήται· λέγεται γὰρ τὴν Ἀκικάρου στήλην ἐρμηνευθεῖσαν τοῖς ἰδίοις συντάξει συγγράμμασι κᾶτα ἐπισημῆνασθαι ὡς παρ’ αὐτοῦ, “τάδε λέγει Δημόκριτος” γράφων. See further the comments of Wellmann and Diels at D.-K. 68 B 299 and of Jacoby at *FGrHist* 263.

²⁸ Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 59–60, with further references; he judges the connection of the Phrygian *logos* with Dardanus as “ziemlich sicher,” and regards as corroboration the tradition that Dardanus was reputed to have founded the mysteries of the Great Mother (Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.13, Arn. *Adv. Nat.* 2.73). It is important to note, however, that almost none of the evidence concerning Phrygian *logoi* contains any suggestion that they concerned the cult of the Great Mother: see further below, n.34.

²⁹ Several ancient writers besides Pliny mention a Dardanus who was an authority on magic: Columella *Rust.* 10.358 (*Dardaniae artes*), Apul. *Apol.* 90.6, Tert. *De anim.* 57.1, Arn. *Adv. Nat.* 1.52, Fulg. *Virg. Cont.* 86.2 Helm; cf. the spell entitled “the sword of Dardanus” at *PGM* IV.1716. M. Wellmann, “Dardanus 11,” *RE* 4 (1901) 2180, confidently asserted his identity with the ancestor of the Trojans, an identification that has often been repeated but remains entirely arbitrary. In fact, none of these writers says anything to suggest that their Dardanus was the Trojan, and Pliny actually implies the opposite. Wellman himself later accepted the more plausible proposal of R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Leipzig 1904) 163 n.4, who associated this Dardanus with the Darda (1 Kgs 4:31 = LXX 3 Kgdms 5:11) or Dardanus (Joseph. *AJ* 8.43) mentioned as a wise man contemporary with Solomon: see Bidez and Cumont, *Les mages* II 13 n.20, with further references.

the tradition that made Diagoras a pupil of Democritus (Suda Δ 523). This connection might indicate that the Phrygian *logos* attributed to Democritus was similar to, if not identical with, that attributed to Diagoras. Its salient characteristic in this case would be its atheistic implications.³⁰ This line of argument seems to me more plausible, although still highly speculative.

The last reference to Phrygian tales comes from Damascius: “according to Socrates in *Cratylus* [402A], Rhea is the flux of all things; and she establishes all things in themselves and calls them back to herself, as the Phrygian *logoi* also teach us.”³¹ Whether Damascius took this reference from an intermediate source or was himself familiar with these Phrygian tales is impossible to determine; at any rate, they seem to have contained the same sort of allegorical treatment of myth that we have encountered elsewhere.

There is little reason to think, as some scholars have supposed, that all these references concern the same text; it would in fact be very difficult to reconcile all of them.³² Moreover, as passages from other authors make clear, the term “Phrygian *logos*” could be applied to any story that had some connection with Phrygia.³³ But a striking feature of the references gathered here is that, in contrast to these other passages, none of them does have any obvious connection with Phrygia. A number of scholars have taken it for granted that any work described as “Phrygian” must have something to do with the cult of Cybele, but almost nothing in the evidence itself suggests any connection either with the goddess herself or with her attendants and

³⁰ Woodbury, *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 201–202; but see the criticisms of Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 63–64.

³¹ *De principiis* 282 (II 154.15 Ruelle): ἡ τε γὰρ Ῥέα πάντων ἐστὶ ροὴ κατὰ τὸν ἐν Κρατύλῳ Σωκράτην· καὶ πάντα ἴστησιν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἀνακαλεῖται πρὸς ἑαυτήν, ὡς καὶ οἱ Φρύγιοι διδάσκουσι λόγοι.

³² Same text: e.g., Woodbury, *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 201; contra, Winiarczyk, *Eos* 68 (1980) 62.

³³ See especially Ael. *NA* 2.21: λέγουσι δὲ Φρύγιοι λόγοι καὶ ἐν Φρυγίᾳ γίνεσθαι δράκοντας ...; *VH* 10.5: Φρύγιος οὗτος ὁ λόγος· ἔστι γὰρ Αἰσώπου τοῦ Φρυγός ...; *VH* 12.45: Φρύγιοι καὶ ταῦτα ἄδουσι λόγοι· (Midas as a child was fed grains of wheat by ants while he was sleeping). Cf. Hdt. 7.26.3: ὑπὸ Φρυγῶν λόγος ἔχει (concerning Marsyas).

associates such as Attis or the Korybantes.³⁴ Nor do we find any of the other mythic figures or tales normally associated with Phrygia, i.e. Midas, Marsyas, Manes, or Aesop.³⁵ “Phrygian” was of course also commonly used as a synonym for “Trojan,” a usage that was well established by the late fifth century B.C.³⁶ But the only one of the writers discussed here

³⁴ The single exception is the passage of Damascius referring to Rhea, who from an early date was identified with Cybele; yet even here the focus on the etymology of the name “Rhea” fits more with an allegorical treatise, as I propose below, than with a discussion of Phrygian cult. On the assumed connection with Cybele, see most recently Winiarczyk, *Euhemerus* 142–143. He appeals to the identification of Cybele with Isis, which Reitzenstein (*Poimandres* 164–165) and other scholars regarded as part of an official Ptolemaic policy. More recent scholars, however, have argued cogently that it was a matter of private and learned syncretism: A. D. Nock, “Ruler-Worship and Syncretism,” in his *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford 1972) 551–558, at 554–558 (first published 1942); F. Colin, ‘L’Isis ‘Dynastique’ et la Mère des Dieux Phrygienne: Essai d’analyse d’un processus d’interaction culturelle,’ *ZPE* 102 (1994) 271–295. There consequently seems little reason to assume it here. On the possible association with Cybele through Dardanus, see nn.28 and 29 above.

³⁵ On Midas (sometimes associated instead with Thrace), see L. E. Roller, “The Legend of Midas,” *CA* 2 (1983) 299–313, and “Midas and the Gordian Knot,” *CA* 3 (1984) 256–271; R. Drews, “Myths of Midas and the Phrygian Migration from Europe,” *Klio* 75 (1993) 9–26; F. Cassola, “Rapporti tra Greci e Frigi al tempo di Mida,” in R. Gusmani, M. Salvini, and P. Vannicelli (eds.), *Frigi e frigio: Atti del 1° Simposio internazionale* (Rome 1997) 131–152. On Marsyas see Hdt. 7.26.3, Xen. *An.* 1.2.8, Diod. 3.59, Paus. 10.30.9. Manes is identified by Herodotus (1.94.3, 4.45.3) as an early Lydian king, but later appears as Phrygian (Dion. Hal. *Ant.Rom.* 1.27.1–3, Alexander Polyhistor *FGrHist* 273 FF 73 and 126, Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 24, 360B). The identification of Aesop as a Phrygian is found first in Phaedrus (3.prol.52) and becomes standard in writers of the second century A.D. (Dio Chrys. 32.63, Gell. *NA* 2.29.1, Lucian *Ver.hist.* 2.18, Zenobius 5.16, Maximus of Tyre 32.1); see B. E. Perry, *Aesopica* (Urbana 1952) 215–216, for full discussion, and J. Dillery, “Aesop, Isis, and the Heliconian Muses,” *CP* 94 (1999) 268–280, at 269–271, on the emphatic description of Aesop in the *Life* as “a Phrygian from Phrygia.”

³⁶ According to Eustathius (*Il.* 2.862 = I 574.12–13 van der Valk; cf. Σ A *Il.* 2.862 = I 348–349 Erbse), “the ancients” say that although Homer distinguished Phrygians and Trojans, Aeschylus and later poets conflated them; Strabo similarly complains in more general terms about the tragedians’ practice of confusing Trojans and Phrygians (12.8.7, 14.3.3,

who obviously used the term with this meaning was Dionysius Scytobrachion, who describes the invented poem of Thymoites as “Phrygian” because its author was a Trojan and it was written in the Trojan script.³⁷ Yet even in this case the stories for which Thymoites was cited as an authority have nothing to do with Troy itself. In short, there is nothing very obviously Phrygian about these Phrygian tales, and the reasons for the epithet must accordingly be sought elsewhere.

Another striking feature of the evidence for Phrygian tales is that, despite its variety, it almost all refers to the same sort of material. We find very few of the motifs typically associated with pseudepigraphic texts of “oriental wisdom”: nothing on esoteric ritual techniques, no prophecies, no arcane lore about stones or plants. Apart from the vague suggestion of Plutarch that the theory of daimons may have been Phrygian in origin, all the writers cited here were clearly thinking of texts that dealt with divine myth and its proper interpretation. Most of them, in fact, seem to have had in mind one of two quite specific types of works.

One of these is the euhemerizing tale that presents myths of the gods as stories about ancient kings and heroes.³⁸ Such very clearly was Dionysius Scytobrachion’s “Phrygian poem”; even though Dionysius himself may have intended this to be understood as a fictive device, the *Libyan Stories* in which he employed this device were obviously euhemeristic. As I have argued above, the Phrygian tales that Tatian attributes to Diagoras were very likely also a euhemerizing account of the gods, set in

14.5.16). This usage is apparent in Aeschylus’ lost play Φρύγες ἢ Ἐκτορος λύτρα (FF 242–259 Mette), and is common in Euripides (e.g. *IA* 1053, *Hel.* 369, *Or.* 1381, 1480). See further E. Hall, “When Did the Trojans Turn into Phrygians? Alcaeus 42.15,” *ZPE* 73 (1988) 15–18, and *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford 1989) 38–39.

³⁷ For the description of Trojan script as “Phrygian letters,” cf. Σ Eur. *Or.* 432, where Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes frame Palamedes by forcing a captive γράψαι Φρυγίοις γράμμασι περὶ προδοσίας ὡς παρὰ Πριάμου πρὸς Παλαμήδην. The anonymous Phrygian *logoi* cited by Lysimachus might plausibly have also concerned Troy.

³⁸ Winiarczyk, *Euhemerios* 142–143 and 167, suggests that the “so-called Phrygian literature” was as a whole euhemerizing; but some was clearly not.

Egypt, perhaps, rather than Libya. Although other references are too brief or enigmatic to interpret with any certainty, at least some of them could plausibly fit the same pattern. Whatever lies behind the garbled passage of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* could certainly have come from a text of this sort, since these typically provided alternative genealogies of the gods; Dionysius' own *Libyan Stories* are a good example.³⁹ The identification of the writings mentioned by Cicero with those of Plutarch would provide further basis for this assumption, since the Phrygian writings of the Egyptian Herakles would thus serve as the fictive source for the euhemerizing narrative, just as the Panchaeon stele did for Euhemerus and the poems of Linus and Thymoites did for Dionysius.⁴⁰

The other type of story that recurs in our evidence is the allegorizing exposition of myth as a coded account of the physical world. The earliest reference to suggest a work of this sort is the passage of Cornutus, even though he does not seem to have had in mind any specific text. Yet the similarities with the passage from Plutarch's lost work on the *daidaloi* strongly suggests that texts known as "Phrygian tales" were in circulation that provided allegorical interpretations of traditional myths. The passage of Damascius, although more obscure, possibly refers to a similar sort of work.

But why would euhemerizing and allegorizing treatments of myth come to be called "Phrygian tales"? In the Hellenistic and Roman periods the Phrygians barely survived as a separate nation, and unlike the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians they attracted relatively little attention from ethnographers.⁴¹

³⁹ Cf. Nock, *Essays* 556 n.24, who saw it as a "learned Euhemerizing work, bearing on the old problem (Hdt. II 2) of the claims of Egypt and Phrygia for priority in culture."

⁴⁰ Or as the writings of Taaautos did, at one remove, for Philo of Byblos (above, n.17); see further Winiarczyk, *Euhemerios* 100–103. Winiarczyk (161–163) no doubt rightly concludes that the catalogue of homonymous gods on which Cicero drew was not euhemerizing, but the Nilus genealogy that was one of its sources may well have been.

⁴¹ Eastern Phrygia was overrun by Gallic invaders in the mid-third century B.C., with the result that the region was thereafter generally known as Galatia; there was consequently no Roman province of Phrygia until the

The epithet “Phrygian” was hardly an evocative one. On the contrary, the associations that it would have had for most people in the Graeco-Roman world were negative or potentially so, and few of them, moreover, were particularly distinctive. So, for example, Phrygia was commonly characterized as a source of slaves, and its inhabitants, like other servile eastern peoples, were notorious for their cowardice.⁴² On a more positive note, Phrygians were sometimes credited with the invention of augury, although they shared this honor with a number of neighboring peoples.⁴³ Thanks in part to the cult of

mid-third century A.D. The indefatigable Alexander Polyhistor produced a compilation of Phrygian ethnography in at least three books that included material on typical figures like Attis and Gallos, Marsyas, and Manes (*FGrHist* 273 FF 73–78); but the only other securely attested works on Phrygia were by a Hermogenes (*FGrHist* 795; probably Hellenistic) and a Metrophanes (796; probably late imperial).

⁴² See especially the cowardly Phrygian slave in Eur. *Or.* 1369–1526 (probably meant to be taken as a eunuch as well, according to Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* 157–158), and the popular proverb that “a Phrygian is the better for a beating” (Herodas 2.100–102, Cic. *Flacc.* 65). On Phrygians as slaves, note the fifth-century comic poet Hermippus, who identifies slaves as the sole import from Phrygia (from Ath. 1.27e = fr.63 Kassel-Austin); Aristophanes employs “Midas” and “Phryx” as typical slave names (*Vesp.* 433), as Theocritus (15.42) and Terence (*Ad.* 973) do “Phrygia”; the names “Manes” and “Mania,” also associated with Phrygia (above, n.35), were likewise commonly used for slaves (Strabo 7.3.12); cf. M. C. Miller, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century B.C.: A Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge 1997) 83, and K. DeVries, “The Nearly Other: The Attic Vision of Phrygians and Lydians,” in B. Cohen (ed.), *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art* (Leiden 2000) 338–363, at 340. See further Hipponax fr.27 West, Eur. *Alc.* 675, Men. *Aspis* 206, Juv. 11.147, Philostr. *VA* 8.7.12, Ael. *VH* 10.14. On Phrygians as cowards, see especially Tert. *De an.* 20.3: *comici Phrygas timidos inludunt* (and cf. Ar. *Av.* 1244–1245 for an example) and Strabo 1.2.30; in general, T. Long, *Barbarians in Greek Comedy* (Carbondale 1986) 141. It is worth noting that these characteristics do not appear in Attic vase painting, which however is largely concerned with Phrygians in the mythic contexts of Midas and Marsyas: DeVries 342–356. On the negative stereotypes of eastern peoples, see in general B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton 2004) 257–370.

⁴³ Cic. *Div.* 1.92, 1.94, 2.80; Tat. *Ad Gr.* 1.1, Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.74, *Suda* OI 163, Isid. *Etym.* 8.9.32; Cicero also attributes augury to the Cilicians (*Div.*

the Great Mother, Phrygians were widely associated with wild and exotic music, especially that played on pipes and on small cymbals and hand drums; the Phrygian mode, one of the basic attunements in Greek music, was seen by some as highly emotional, conveying a sense of excitement and frenzy.⁴⁴ For the same reasons, they were also associated with orgiastic and unrestrained religious behavior, particularly the practice of self-castration; the latter was often merged with the charge of cowardice into a general reputation for effeminacy.⁴⁵ In almost all these respects, the Phrygians obviously provided a negative foil that served to emphasize the independence, the manliness, the moderation, and the self-control of proper Greeks and Romans.⁴⁶ Equally obviously, none of these associations helps explain why they should be linked with the interpretation of myth.

Yet there was one attribute of the Phrygians that was both distinctive to them and accorded general respect: they were reputedly the most ancient people in the world. Historically, the Phrygians were at the height of their power, under their king Midas, just as the Greeks were entering that phase of accelerated cultural development and international contact that we

1.2, 1.25, *Leg.* 2.33), the Pisidians and Pamphylans (*Div.* 1.2, 1.25), and the Arabs (*Div.* 1.92, 1.94).

⁴⁴ Phrygian pipes and percussion: e.g., Eur. *Bacch.* 126–129, Lucr. 2.618–623, Catull. 63.21–22, Apul. *Met.* 8.30. Phrygian mode: Arist. *Pol.* 8.5, 1340b5, and especially 8.7, 1342a31–b11 (associating it with the flute and with Bacchic frenzy). On the cultural implications of “barbarian” music, see Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* 129–132.

⁴⁵ See especially Catull. 63 for religious frenzy and self-castration; cf. Ov. *Ib.* 451–454; contemptuous comments about the eunuch priests of the Phrygian Mother abound in Greek and Latin literature. Vergil exploits the identification of Trojans and Phrygians to have Aeneas’ enemies taunt him with effeminacy (see especially *semivir Phryx* at *Aen.* 12.99; cf. 4.215: *ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu*); see further N. Horsfall, “Numanus Remulus: Ethnography and Propaganda in *Aen.* ix, 598f.,” *Latomus* 30 (1971) 1108–1116, at 1109.

⁴⁶ See further (on barbarians in general) Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* 121–133.

know as the archaic period.⁴⁷ The greatness of the Phrygians in this early period must have made quite an impression on the Greeks, and it was not long before Midas had become a figure of mythic stature, associated with the time when mortals still had direct contact with the gods.⁴⁸ A relatively obscure but rather striking marker of the Phrygians' alleged antiquity was the story of Nannakos, a ruler of Phrygia in the days before Deucalion, who attempted to ward off the coming flood by encouraging his entire people to weep and beg the gods' mercy.⁴⁹ Much better known was the story of the Egyptian king Psammetichos, who tried to determine the original language of humanity by ordering two infants to be raised without any exposure to speech: the fact that their first word was *bekos*, the Phrygian word for bread, proved that the Phrygians were even

⁴⁷ The Eusebian chronicle gives dates for Midas of 738–696 B.C., which fit well with references to a king Mita in Assyrian texts from the reign of Sargon II; the latter, together with archaeological remains from Gordion, indicate a major regional power. Midas was perhaps the first powerful Near Eastern ruler with whom the Greeks came into contact (cf. Hdt. 1.14.2); see further Roller, *CA* 2 (1983) 300–302.

⁴⁸ Already in the mid seventh century B.C., Tyrtaeus can place him in the same company with such mythical figures as the Cyclopes, Boreas, Tithonos, Pelops, and Adrastos (fr.12.1–12 West). The story of his encounter with Silenos dates back at least to the mid sixth century; the stories that he acted as judge in the musical contest between Apollo and Pan (*Myth. Vat.* 3.10.7, Hyg. *Fab.* 191) or Marsyas (*Ov. Met.* 11.146–193) and that he received the golden touch from Dionysus (*Ov.* 11.85–145) are probably at least Hellenistic. On the transformation of Midas from a historical into a mythical figure, see further Roller, *CA* 2 (1983) 299–313, and Drews, *Klio* 75 (1993) 19–23.

⁴⁹ Hence the proverb found in Herod. 3.10, κῆν τὰ Ναννάκου κλάσω; it is explained by Zenobius (6.10 = *FGrHist* 795 F 2), who cites Hermogenes (above, n.41) as his authority for the story of Nannakos. A slightly different version appears in Stephanus of Byzantium (s.v. Ἰκόνιον = *FGrHist* 800 F 3), with the name Annakos, and in Ps.-Herodian (*Περὶ ὀρθογραφίας*, ed. A. Lentz, *Grammatici Graeci* III.2 p.499 and *De prosodia catholica*, III.2 p.363), with the name Nannakos. In Byzantine scholarship the phrase τὰ ἀπὸ Ναννάκου was understood as a byword for fabulous antiquity: *Suda* A 3448, N 24, T 2, T 71; Macarius 2.23 and 8.4; Apostolius 15.100.

older than the Egyptians.⁵⁰ By the imperial period, the antiquity of the Phrygians was proverbial.⁵¹

It seems likely that the antiquity of the Phrygians was the key factor in their being credited with the sorts of texts described here. This is certainly the case with Dionysius' choice of Thymoites as one of the fictitious authorities for his *Libyan Stories*, as the pairing with Linus makes clear. Linus was a rather nebulous mythic figure associated with music and poetry; he was known as the teacher of Herakles by the early classical period and by the end of the third century B.C. was credited with cosmogonic poetry like that attributed to Orpheus.⁵² Dionysius' observation that he wrote his account of Dionysus in "Pelasgian letters" alludes to a somewhat obscure tradition that the alphabet was not an import from Phoenicia, as the well known story of Kadmos would have it, but was instead an invention of the Pelasgians, the original inhabitants of the Aegean; traces of Linus' association with this invention are preserved in other texts as well.⁵³ Dionysius thus represented as his authorities two ancient figures, each of whom used an appropriate archaic script. To be sure, Thymoites' Phrygian poem was Phrygian

⁵⁰ Hdt. 2.2; for full discussion and further references see Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II* 4–12, who argues strongly that the story had previously appeared in Hekataios; P. Vannicelli, "L'esperimento linguistico di Psammetico (Herodot. II 2): c'era una volta il frigio," in Gusmani, *Frigi* 201–217, who sees Herodotus as the source of all other versions; and D. L. Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language, and Civilization* (Oxford 2003) 68–111.

⁵¹ Paus. 1.14.2, Arr. *FGrHist* 156 F 82, Apul. *Met.* 11.5, Hippol. *Haer.* 5.7, Origen *C. Cels.* 4.36, Claud. *In Eutrop.* 2.238–273.

⁵² Teacher of Herakles: Alexis fr.140 Kassel-Austin, Anaxandrides fr.16 Kassel-Austin, Achaïos 20 fr.26 Snell, Theoc. 24.105, Apollod. 2.4.9. Cosmogonic poetry: M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford 1983) 56–67.

⁵³ Dionysius himself combined the two accounts by having Kadmos bring the alphabet from Phoenicia and Linus adapt it for Greek use, so that archaic letters could justly be called both "Phoenician" and "Pelasgian" (Diod. 3.67.1); see further L. H. Jeffery. "ΑΡΧΑΙΑ ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ: Some Ancient Greek Views," in W. C. Brice (ed.), *Europa: Studien zur Geschichte und Epigraphik des frühen Aegaeis. Festschrift für Ernst Grumach* (Berlin 1967) 152–166, at 157–161; A. Corcella, "Dionisio Skytobrachion, i phoinikeia e l'alfabeto pelasgico": Per una corretta interpretazione di Diodoro III.67.1 (*FGrHist* 32 F 8), *AttiTor* 120 (1986) 41–82, at 77–82.

only insofar as it was Trojan, but the appeal to antiquity is clear. The “Phrygian writings” that Cicero and Plutarch associate with the Egyptian Herakles may also have had this name because of the archaic script in which their alleged sources were composed. The same concern for antiquity is suggested by Plutarch’s association of the Phrygians with other ancient authorities like Orpheus and the Egyptians.

But why did the antiquity of the Phrygians cause them to be linked with the interpretation of divine myth in particular? In order to suggest an answer, we must briefly consider why and how myth came to be interpreted in the first place. It is well known that in the Greek world of the fifth century B.C. the dominance of mythic narrative as an explanatory discourse began to be challenged by the emergence of other modes, historical, philosophical, and medical. Yet the centrality of myth in earlier Greek culture and its incorporation into classic works of art and literature, the Homeric epics above all, gave it a prestige that it never lost. One response on the part of many intellectuals was to co-opt that prestige by reinterpreting traditional divine myths as coded accounts whose real meaning could be revealed only by those with the proper interpretive key. An often-cited remark of Pausanias nicely sums up this view: “when I began this work I used to look upon these Greek stories as markedly on the foolish side; but when I had got as far as Arcadia my opinion about them became this: I guessed that the Greeks who were accounted wise spoke of old in riddles and not straight out, and that this story about Kronos is a bit of Greek wisdom” (8.8.3). In other words, divine myth could be appreciated as a type of ancient wisdom, one that through the application of the proper techniques could be mapped onto types of modern wisdom. By the Hellenistic period, a range of such techniques had been developed, of which the two most popular were precisely those attested for these Phrygian tales: the historicizing interpretation that saw the gods as ancient rulers and culture heroes, and the allegorizing interpretation that saw them as symbols of elements and

forces in the natural world.⁵⁴

To a large extent, no doubt, the appropriateness of these interpretive techniques could be demonstrated simply by their ability to “reveal” the modern wisdom that was alleged to lie encoded in the ancient narrative. For those who sought additional justification, however, an obvious strategy was to present these techniques as themselves having an ancient pedigree. It was in this particular context that appeal to the Phrygians became attractive. Not only was their antiquity widely recognized, but their language in particular was seen by some as in a sense the original and innate language of humanity. This, at least, was the clear purport of the story of Psammetichos, and at least one Hellenistic scholar evidently sought to capitalize on it.⁵⁵ We may also note in this regard the close association of Aesop, one of the archetypal Phrygians, with language and storytelling.⁵⁶ What people was thus better placed to authenticate interpretations of those peculiarly ancient articulations of language known as *mythoi*? We may perhaps even be able to discern in our references a shift in interpretive fashion, away from the euhemerizing approaches of Dionysius Scytobrachion and the Phrygian tales attributed to Diagoras, and towards the allegorical treatments cited by Cornutus, Plutarch, and Damascius. But what we can certainly discern in these references to Phrygian tales is the appropriation of the mystique of Phrygian antiquity (itself in large part a Greek construct) in order to support particular positions in Greek thought.

⁵⁴ See respectively, e.g., Winiarczyk, *Euhemeros*, and R. Lambertson, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley 1986).

⁵⁵ Neoptolemos of Parion, a scholar of the third century B.C. best known for his work *Περὶ γλωσσῶν Ὀμήρου*, also wrote a work entitled *Φρύγῳι φωναί*, in which he proposed an etymology of the word οὐρανός from the alleged Phrygian word *orou*, meaning “above”: Achilles Tatius *Isagoge* 5 = fr.20 in H. J. Mette, “Neoptolemos von Parion,” *RhM* 123 (1980) 1–24, with full discussion.

⁵⁶ See above, n.35, for Aesop as a “Phrygian from Phrygia.” According to the G recension of the *Life of Aesop* (7), the Muses at the behest of Isis bestow upon him “the invention of words and the weaving and making of Greek tales (λόγων εὔρεμα καὶ μύθων Ἑλληνικῶν πλοκὴν καὶ ποιήσεις)”; see the discussion of Dillery, *CP* 94 (1999) 268–271.

Such appropriation is of course characteristic of the whole phenomenon of Greek texts representing ancient “barbarian wisdom.” The tension between the authority that this appropriation bestowed on the Phrygians and the otherwise generally derogatory view of them in the Graeco-Roman world is likewise characteristic of Graeco-Roman views of barbarians in general: it is hardly necessary to point out that Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians were the butt of many disdainful sneers at the same time as they were seen as keepers of ancient wisdom.⁵⁷ Like the Egyptians and Babylonians, although on a smaller scale, the Phrygians were seen as an ancient people whose past might had degenerated into present servility. Yet they could nevertheless be presented as preserving an ancient understanding of the world that the Greeks themselves were only laboriously recreating.⁵⁸

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⁵⁷ See Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* 149.

⁵⁸ An earlier version of this paper was given at the Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of Canada in May 2004; I owe thanks to the audience on that occasion for their comments, and to John Dillery and the anonymous reader for this journal for their helpful suggestions and references.