Who's Afraid of Cypselus?
Contested Theologies and Dynastic *Anathēmata*

(UNCORRECTED DRAFT)

καὶ τόδε Φωκυλίδου· πόλις ἐν σκοπέλωι κατὰ κόσμον
οἰκεῦσα σμικρὴ κρέσσων Νίνου ἀφραινούσης.

"And this also from Phocylides. A small city on a hill, if it is run with order, is greater than foolish Nineveh."

The contrast between the ruins of the once-mighty Nineveh and the proud order of the small *polis* perched on its acropolis inscribed in Phocylides 8 W is a typical image from the poetic wisdom of archaic Greece.[1] The foolishness of the former capital of the great Assyrian empire, probably the largest city of its time, becomes the basis of its downfall.[2] It goes without saying that an insignificant number of Greeks ever actually saw the ruins of the massive Assyrian capital in the sixth century BCE, but a memory of its fall eventually entered the common imagination.[3] Throughout the Greek world, anyone who had ever heard the two lines of Phocylides could activate them to project a distinction between here and there, to strengthen local pride in the modesty of the well-governed *polis* and to underline the present dangers of arrogance. This is a message reinforced by distance. The catastrophic height of power embodied by *Ninos* became an ominous paradigm framing the choices of today. There is nothing more common than such portraits of radical shifts of fortune in Archaic and Classical popular wisdom literature.

The collapse of great power has always exercised the imagination. In early Greece, that was particularly true in the case of the overthrow of dynasties.[4] What is it that makes a ruling house lose everything it once had, and move from one extreme of the social spectrum to the other? The story told invariably involved the action of the gods and the limits of human existence, and as such activated fundamental theological issues. If the gods deigned to raise a certain line of descent to such heights at one point, how could they then cast it down so suddenly? The question was a focal point of thought on the nature of divine intervention in human affairs. All the thought-patterns and ideas, the concrete references and diffuse connotations, the conflicts and oppositions that constitute the implicit and the explicit expressions of theology could be activated to answer it. As all theological interrogations of the period, it was a problem pregnant with many potential solutions, a screen for projecting and playing out rival understandings of divine will and human misfortune.

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[1] See West 1978: 37.

[2] Cf. Drews 1965. For the size of Nineveh, see Halton 2008; for the fall of Nineveh in Jonah and Nahum, see e.g. Bolin 1995; Ego 2003; Klopper 2003.

[3] See e.g. Drews 1970; Anderson 1984.

[4] See McGlew 1993, p. 81-86; 124-156.

In this paper I will discuss one distinctive aspect of those theological interrogation in our sources, the reinterpretation of the monumental traces left by dynastic grandeur after the fall of a ruling line in early Greece. The immediate presence of these visible fragments of failed might in the great shared sanctuaries of Greece gave the stories they embodied an urgency that the memory of Nineveh's ruins could never attain. They offered a message based on (notional) proximity. Splendid physical witnesses of *megaloprepeia* and demonstrative piety at one time, these offerings became familiar icons of fortune reversal and paradigmatic disaster for all to see, and to discuss far and wide beyond the borders of the sanctuaries. Standing out from the forests of offerings that dotted the landscapes of these sanctuaries through their unparalleled value and association to catastrophe, they were triggers of often radically conflicting theological enquiry, privileged spaces of agonistic confrontation between rival interpretations of divine reward and punishment. They can be described as question marks on the religious system. How did Greek culture negotiate the transition from pious offering to emblem of disaster, and how should we assess the various recombinations of meaning subsequently attached to these monuments? I will use two case studies to illustrate some key points: the great golden *kolossos* of Cypselus at Olympia, and the famed generosity of Croesus for Delphi.

The theology written upon the Cypselid dedications

The legendary gifts of the Corinthian tyrants to the major Panhellenic sanctuaries set the stage for all their successors.[5] The spectacular dedications made by the Cypselids revolutionised the dedicatory practices of the time. These objects and buildings were there to provoke awe -- there was nothing like them when they were first shown.[6] Even seven hundred years after its manufacture the chest of Cypselos still inspired the most exuberant praise from Pausanias, a specialist in the evaluation of sanctuary dedications if ever there was one.[7] They not only embodied the might of the dynasty, but its claim to shape memory for generations to come, and to channel the presence of divinity in the centres of common religious practice and imagination. They were statements of duration and stability. Marvels of artistry that brought the display of wealth to new heights, these dedications were accorded pride of place in the building programmes of some of the most important sacred spaces of Greece. It can be said that the Cypselid dedications were nothing short of "dominant" for many decades in the landscapes of both Delphi and Olympia.[8] When the dynasty fell, these prominent monuments became objects of even more intense debate and contestation.

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[5] Plato, *Phaedrus* 236ab; Theophrastus F 128 Wimmer; Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F 178; Apellas *FGrHist* 266 F 5; Agaclytus *FGrHist* 411 F 1; Diogenes Laertius 1.96; Strabo 8.3.30; 8.6.20; Pausanias 5.2.3 with Maddoli and Saladino 1995, p. 190-191.; Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 400d-e; schol. to Plato, *Phaedrus* 236b; Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia* 45 Couvreur; Photius, *Lexicon,* sv Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα; Suda, sv Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα. Most sources are conveniently gathered in Papadopoulos 1980, p. 83-87. See further Lippold 1924, col. 120; Finley 1970, p. 107; Salmon 1984, p. 227; Salmon 1997: 66-67; Scott 2010, p. 42-45; 152. Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1313b18-25, with the comments of Anderson 2005, p. 192-193. For a discussion of the problematic notion of 'Panhellenism' in the study of sanctuary offerings, especially Olympia, and the complex game of local identities at play, see Kindt 2012, p. 123-154; cf. Scott 2010, p. 256-264.

[6] See Papadopoulos 1980, p. 9-12. According to Bommelaer (1991, p. 153), the treasury of Cypselus was "for centuries one of the oldest buildings of Delphi, if not the oldest." Scott (2010, p. 44) describes it as "an extremely imposing and impressive dedication."

[7] Pausanias 5.17.5; see Salmon 1984: 227; Carter 1989; Arafat 1995.

[8] Scott 2010, p. 152.

In *De Pythiae oraculis* 400d-e, Plutarch tells us that the citizens of Corinth sent delegations to both Delphi and Olympia, after the Cypselids were toppled, to ask that the inscriptions of the great dedications offered by their former rulers to the two sanctuaries be changed.[9] They wanted the treasury of Delphi and the golden *kolossos* of Olympia to be ascribed to the city as a whole, reinscribed with its name, and the inscriptions of the tyrants to be erased. Literally, they asked to "write the city" (ἐπιγράψαι τῆς πόλεως) on these monuments. The idea was to substitute one memory for another, and to keep the transactional *charis* linking the two places in the monumental landscape of the sanctuaries. There is no question of contesting the god's ownership of the *anathēma* in either case. What is involved is an appropriation of its symbolic value by the *polis*, and a claim to inherit the dialogue of reciprocity it establishes. Only the exterior, visible epigraphic attribution of the monuments is involved in the claim of Corinth to Delphi and Olympia, not the ascription of the many objects dedicated by Cypselus or Periander to the sanctuaries that were housed in treasuries, and that remained ascribed to them without any question.[10] The claim concerns the web of links that tied the sacred sites' topography with the spaces and times of the wider Greek world. That renegotiation of the relation that binds dedicator and recipient involves a radical reconfiguration of the varied theological connotations that had accrued around the monuments.

Delphi, we are told, accepted the Corinthian demand Corinth because it was just (*dikaion*), and the inscription of the Cypselid *thesauros* was accordingly modified.[11] Not that that change altered people's perceptions: Herodotus made a point of identifying Cypselus as the monument's first holder more than a century after the event, and much later both Plutarch and Pausanias still present that ready identification as a staple of local discussions.[12] The Pythia, after all, had famously declared Cypselus to be *olbios*, and it recognised him and his children as kings.[13] The notion that the building was a votive offering thanking the god for saving the founder of the dynasty remained familiar beyond the time of Plutarch.[14] Apollo's role in both the protection and the ascension of the tyrant, and the announcement of his dynasty's ultimate failure, are embodied in the monument that continued to commemorate the pious vow of the ruler *and* the collapse of his family at the same time.

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[9] See Bourguet 1912, p. 658; Jacquemin 1999, p. 216; 221. The "traditional" chronology, which places the fall of the Cypselids at the end of the 580s, rather than the 550s, or even the 530s, as some have proposed, remains the most plausible one. Will 1955, p. 363-440 probably has the fullest discussion of the problem. See still Ducat 1961; Servais 1969.

[10] For an example of a preserved Cypselid dedication on a golden bowl at Olympia (now in Boston), see Lazzarini 1976, p. 321. The authenticity of that object is generally no longer questioned. It is worth noting that the dedication identifies the Κυψελιδαί as the collective source of the dedication, just as the chest of Cypselus did (Pausanias 5.17.5), at least if we can follow Pausanias. Visitors of Plutarch's time continued to show great interest for the meaning of the Cypselid dedications, even if they obviously no longer made much sense to them: Plutarch, *Septem sapientium convivium* 163f-164b; Deonna 1951. Cf. the colourful theological reading of the Olympian *kolossos*, thoroughly transformed into a Neoplatonic monument, found in Hermias' scholia to *Phaedrus* 236ab.

[11] Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 400e. Part of that new inscription might actually have been found: see Bourguet 1912, p. 659.

[12] Herodotus 1.14; Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 400d-e; Pausanias 5.2.3.

[13] Herodotus 5.92ε. On oracles and the Cypselids, see Giangiulio 2010.

[14] Plutarch, *Septem sapientium convivium* 164a. It can be useful to consider that continuity in parallel with the unabated interest of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods in the famous legend of Cypselus' birth related in Herodotus 5.92. This is largely built around a number of hexametric oracles, notably one that predicted the downfall of his line after two generations. For the intermeshing of folktale, myth, hexametric oracles and narrative in 5.92, see e.g. Vernant 1988 [1981]; Stahl 1983; Moles 2007.

In contrast with Delphi, Olympia refused to accommodate the demands of Corinth and the name of Cypselus was never erased from the great golden *kolossos* of Zeus in the sanctuary of Hera.[15] The slight was such a severe blow that Corinth decided to exclude the citizens of Elis from participation in the Isthmian games.[16] From that moment on, the *kolossos* no longer served as a marker between the sanctuary and a city: instead, it emphatically linked the topography of Olympia to the memory of a fallen regime that had so profoundly impressed itself on the imagination of the Greek world.[17] Keeping the name of the Cypselids proudly displayed on one of the dominant features of the sanctuary against the will of Corinth was a bold statement.

Reducing that statement to the political dimension of the local power-struggles of the time is to cast aside an important part of its symbolic value, and the significance it clearly had for other regions and later times. Just as the contested figure of Periander was to retain a wide and vivid role in later Greek stories about power, wisdom, divine favour and transgression, both as one of the Seven Sages, and as a paradigm of cruelty and impiety, the legacy of the Cypselid dynasty continued to be disputed, questioned and challenged over the generations, as Herodotus 5.92 attests particularly well.[18] The presence of the golden *kolossos* in one of the chief locations of Panhellenism must have channelled much of that tension. The conflict over the attribution and the significance of the great dedication had powerful repercussions that spread across the Peloponnese and into the Greek world as a whole. The refusal of Olympia to alter the inscription, and thus the original relation that bound the divine recipient to the dynastic dedicants, had theological ramifications that cut at the root of what votives meant to different people, notably in their interactions with notions of ownership, identity, permanence and memory, justice and piety, and display.

The massive sculpture of wrought gold, the *sphurēlatos kolossos*, had been dedicated in the time of either Cypselus himself or Periander.[19] A spectacular display of pure wealth and experimental artistry, it showcased the aesthetics of a new technology on a scale without precedent in the Greek world.[20] It was a marvel. Before Pheidias' Zeus replaced it as the major representation of the god in the sanctuary, the Cypselid *kolossos* was the foremost *agalma* in

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[15] The *anathēma* is presented as an offering to Zeus in almost all our sources. Strabo (8.3.30), the scholia to Plato, and Hermias (see n. 5) identify the *kolossos* as a representation of Zeus. Agaclytus places it in the sanctuary of Hera.

[16] Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 400e-f; Pausanias 5.2.2-3; see Servais 1965, p. 167.

[17] Cf. the tantalizing possibility, raised by Servais 1965, p. 173-174, that some early Classical Corinthian staters stamped an image of the *kolossos* (image in Lacroix 1949, p. 72-73).

[18] See e.g. McGlew 1993, p. 61-74; Berger 2007. Cf. still the extensive discussion of later Cypselid traditions in Porzio 1912.

[19] Ephorus 70 F 178; Plutarch, *De Pythiae oraculis* 400e; Pausanias 5.2.3; Photius, *Lexicon,* sv Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα; see Will 1955, p. 414. The scholia to Plato and Hermias attribute it to the sons of Periander. Servais 1965, p. 149 rightly notes that the debate about the identification of the original benefactor suggests that his name was not inscribed on the statue. Most of our sources refer to the *kolossos* "of the Cypselids". Servais 1965, still accepting the old idea that the word *kolossos* only came to be associated with massive statues from the time of the *kolossos* of Rhodes onwards, and defending the views of Roux 1960, which have been convincingly refuted by Dickie 1996, argues for a life-sized statue. Plato, *Phaedrus* 236b hardly suggests "environ la taille humaine", as he writes on p. 163. On the great size of the statue, see Strabo 8.6.20. Strabo would not describe the statue as being εὐμεγέθης if its size was not particularly notable, something that fits much better with the fame of the dedication, and the notion of its immense cost.

[20] Pindar F 207 Maehler; Aeschylus, *Persae* 747; *Septem* 817; see Papadopoulos 1980, p. 77-80. For Plato (*Phaedrus* 236b), the word points obviously and without discussion to the Olympian *kolossos*, as it continued to do for Longinus (see note 24).

Olympia.[21] The great value of the offering remained proverbial for centuries, and Theophrastus even went so far as to compare it to the pyramids of Egypt as an example of the gigantic spending typical of dynasts.[22] Plato took it for granted that everyone knew about it.[23] Longinus could still allude to it in passing.[24] The long entry of Photius and the Suda on the *anathēmata* of the Cypselids gives pride of place to the golden monument.

The demand of Corinth to Olympia concerned the inscription that accompanied the statue, not the nature or the location of the object. As in Delphi, the city did not contest the monument itself, but attempted to appropriate its value and meaning through writing. It was the battle over the Cypselid inscription that focused the struggle for the statue's place and meaning in Olympia. What do we know about that inscription? It is a (now) rarely noted fact that Photius, drawing from earlier sources, transmits an elegiac distich that was purported to have been inscribed on the base of the statue.[25] That rather spectacular epigram, I believe, is directly related to the prominent inscription that the Corinthians wanted to destroy.

εἰ μὴ ἐγὼ χρυσοῦς σφυρήλατος εἰμὶ κολοσσός,
ἐξώλης εἴη Κυψελιδῶν γενεά. [26]

"If I am not a *kolossos* of wrought gold,
may the race of the Cypselids be destroyed root and branch."

The poem consists of one conditional sentence, a deceptively simple play on the traditional curse formula of *exōleia*: if X, may the *genos* of Y be destroyed root and branch.[27] We do not know if it was longer than the distich quoted by our sources. Whatever the case, the text that we have was demonstrably copied and parodied before the later third century BCE, which provides us with a firm *terminus ante quem*.[28] The fact that the last line of the epigram is clearly related to a verse from a Theognidean poem (894) seems to contradict the idea that this is a

[21] For a comparison of the two statues, see Strabo 8.3.30.
[22] Theophrastus F 128 Wimmer. It was clearly no longer in place at the time of Pausanias, who does not describe it in his relation of the Heraion (5.16.1-5.20.5; see also 5.2.3). See Servais 1965, p. 169.
[23] *Phaedrus* 236b; see Morgan 1994.
[24] 36.3; The case is argued very convincingly by de Jonge 2013.
[25] Although the *kolossos* epigram used to be a fairly standard object of discussion in 19th and early 20th century scholarship (see e.g. Geffcken and Herbig 1918, with bibliography), it has inexplicably all but disappeared from view since Servais' 1965 article. Recent research on early epigrams (see e.g. Day 2010 and Baumbach, Petrovic & Petrovic 2011) do not mention it, and it receives at best a passing comment in scholarship on Archaic Olympia (there is no reference to it in Scott 2010, for instance).
[26] Our two main witnesses, Photius' *Lexicon* and the *Suda*, drawing from Didymus Chalcenterus (p. 404 Schmidt), both present it as a distich. In Photius, the poem starts with εἰμὶ. The *Suda*'s text is almost identical with Photius. One difference is the presence of αὐτὸς ἐγὼ instead of εἰμὶ ἐγὼ at the beginning of the hexameter . The preserved text of both witnesses, in other words, a dedication calling on the destruction of the dedicator, is obviously nonsensical as is; see Servais 1965, p. 158-159. The αὐτὸς of the *Suda* is clearly secondary, a correction of εἰμὶ, a verb that would then appear twice in the same line, which is intolerable. The problem is solved with Cobet's neat conjecture (Cobet 1860, p. 426) of εἰ μὴ for the first εἰμὶ, easily explained by iotacism.
[27] For variations on the traditional formula of *exōleia* in the Archaic period, see Gagné 2013, p. 159-205.
[28] The dependence of both Photius and the *Suda* on Didymus Chalcenterus, and the fact that both the other authors mentioned in the entry, Apellas and Agaclytus, are anterior to him, was first established by Cohn 1884, p. 794. For the dates of Apellas (second half of the third century BCE) and Agaclytus, see Jacoby on *FGrHist* 266 and 411.

late pastiche.[29] A pastiche with wit and humour in mind would arguably contain wit and humour, as does the parody of the text found in Apellas Ponticus cited by Photius and the Suda (see below). Such a short pastiche as the text we have, without wit and humour, produced after the fall of the dynasty, would make little sense indeed, and would hardly have interested contemporaries enough to circulate as it did. Our understanding of the intricacy and variety of inscribed epigrams from the Archaic period has increased greatly in recent decades, and the fact that no exact contemporary parallels can be produced for the text hardly militates against its authenticity. If it did, we would also have to question the authenticity of Cypselus' chest, for instance, or the very peculiar bronze Cypselid palm-tree at Delphi, or even the *sphurēlatos kolossos* itself, for that matter. That monument was, after all, a wonder without precedent when it was produced.

None of the epigram's vocabulary would be out of place in the Archaic period, and the adaptation of the traditional oath-formula of *exōleia* to a novel use on the monument is far from an implausible proposition. The *only* other usage of the *exōleia* formula to have come down to us on an epigraphical text that has a claim to the early Archaic period, the "Oath of Founders" of Cyrene, also involves a *kolossos*, a rather rare word otherwise. In that text, we are told that *kolossoi* of wax were ritually destroyed as part of the performance of the *horkos*-ceremony to embody the binding power of the oath on later generations.[30] The ephemeral wax *kolossoi* of Cyrene are reflexes of the same logic as the proud, enduring monument of Olympia with its armour of gold. Their ritual liquefaction, just as its dedication in the sanctuary, is a claim on the *longue durée* of the centuries. The striking material property of the *kolossos* seals the words of a wish. But rather than embodying destruction, the Olympian *kolossos* functions as an assertion of permanence. It would be an astounding feat of chance indeed for that very specific association of *kolossos* and *exōleia* to be found coincidentally in both texts. The ritual manipulation of one text becomes the monumental speech-act of a statue in another.[31] The *kolossos* epigram uses the immense value of the offering, and the material characteristics of unsullied gold, to channel the great power of the *horkos* and make a bid on time. It transforms the monument into a solid oath. With Geffcken (1916, p. 12; 1918), and against Servais (1965, p. 160), I am entirely open to the idea that the distich was indeed part of a genuine Cypselid epigram. The *kolossos* epigram, at the very least, whatever its actual origin, circulated and was known in the early sixth century BCE.

Worthy of the most precious work of art on which it was (at least nominally) inscribed, then, was a sophisticatedly provocative, self-assured statement of the Cypselid dynasty given for all to see in the Panhellenic sanctuary. A rare glimpse into the wordgames of early Archaic tyrants? The continuity of the dynasty is linked to the nature of the dedication in the text.

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[29] Servais 1965, p. 165, n. 59 recognises the link between the two texts, and the necessary dependence of the Theognidean poem on the epigram. His attempt to argue it away by questioning the date of the Theognidean elegy, which can hardly be later than the sixth century BCE, is not convincing. It would demand a very convoluted trajectory to imagine the formula of that line moving from the totally unrelated Theognidean text to a fictive statue epigram in the Classical or Hellenistic period, whereas the movement from the epigram to the Theognidean poem in the Archaic period, as we will see, can be readily explained (cf. Young 1964, p. 333-335). The Theognidean text is built on the premise that the line evokes something that is familiar enough to all members of the audience to elicit an understanding of its references and connotations without any further prompt.

[30] ML 5.40-51. For discussions and bibliography about the date and interpretation of that text, see Gagné 2013, p. 171-174.

[31] The old theory of the *kolossos* as a ritual substitute (Benveniste 1932) cannot be followed, but it remains worthy of serious consideration. Cf. Roux 1960; Vernant 2006 [1965]; Ducat 1976; Dickie 1996.

That is the heart of the statement. The golden *kolossos* speaks in the first person and says: "if I am not a golden *kolossos.*" That is: if I am not what I am, may the line of the Cypselids disappear. The destruction of the dynasty is tied to a condition that is negated. The implication is that the destruction of the dynasty is itself negated by the positive condition. "Being what I am, may the opposite of *exōleia* happen." What was a foundational act in Cyrene is a statement of dynastic continuity on the Olympian dedication. Ever since the early Archaic period, the logic of symmetrically opposite outcomes was a staple of *exōleia* statements, with curse and blessing implying each other on both sides of the conditional wish that governs them.[32] We do not even need to postulate an incomplete text to see that logic operating in the epigram. In the text as we have it, the dangerous power of the ritual formula is anchored in the efficient presence of the dedicatory monument. The existence of the precious object stands opposed to the disappearance of the Cypselids. The poem thus proclaims a link between the great wealth of the dedicators, their protection by the gods, and the survival of their line. As long as the monument will be in place, so should the line.

The ability of the Cypselids to make a dedication of such value is a manifestation of power that nominally guarantees the continuity of the *genea*. Closer to the proud proclamations of the contemporary Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian kings than to Solonian restraint, the *kolossos* of the tyrants was designed as a poised statement of permanence.[33] The tangible presence of the statue was originally there to serve as an enduring witness of Cypselid dynastic might. Zeus, the object of the dedication, and Hera, the goddess of the sanctuary, were to be the guarantors of its stability. The forms of ritual, poetry and statuary have thus been combined to embody a theologically significant assertion of divinely sanctioned power. The traditional claims of the oath formula to endure over generations are channelled by the speech-act of the poem. If we allow the possibility that this is indeed the text that was actually inscribed on the statue base, or something related to it, the poem gives us an idea of the stakes at play in changing or keeping the inscription after the fall of the Cypselids. By refusing to erase it, the authorities of Olympia would have maintained what had once been a prominent statement of dynastic continuity in full view of the Greek world. There is no compelling reason to reduce this choice to political pressure from the Cypselid rulers of the Ionian sea who remained in power after the fall of the tyrants in Corinth. Was the original piety of the benefactors rewarded by the protection of the great sanctuary, thus becoming a vehicle of survival in time through the permanence of the statue? Or was the dedication now mostly read as a warning, the paradigmatic vestige of a failed transaction between rulers and divinity? No interpretative structure was in place to fix the theological significance of the old votive.

In the context of the struggles outlined above, the message of the statue from the tyrants of Corinth was bound to be contested, especially after the fall of the dynasty. One fascinating illustration of the forms opposition to it could take is the version of the epigram preserved in Apellas Ponticus, an author from the Hellenistic period mentioned by Photius and the *Suda*.[34]

εἰ μὴ ἐγὼ †ναξὸς† παγχρύσεος εἰμὶ κολοσσός,

[32] See e.g. Hesiod, *Op.* 280-285; ML 5.40-51; Demosthenes 54.41; Aeschines 2.87; *SGDI* 5058.40-47; *SIG* 360; cf. Faraone 2005.
[33] Cf. Deonna 1948, p. 192; 198-203.
[34] See note 28.

ἐξώλης εἴη Κυψελιδῶν γενεά.[35]

Minor changes in the words of the hexameter give the distich a radically different meaning. Whereas the verse of the inscribed epigram brought attention to the novel, cutting-edge technique of the *sphurelaton*, emphasising the precious hammered gold plates fixed on the wooden core of the sculpture, the text quoted by Apellas Ponticus states that the statue is made of solid gold. There is, of course, no such thing as a massive *kolossos* of solid gold. It is an impossible object. The new version thus turns the witty identity-play of the epigram into a simple counterfactual. As the statue is not made of solid gold, as it can't be made of solid gold, the epigram completely reverses the logic of the other text with this *adynaton*. It breaks the protasis and thus *becomes* a curse on the Cypselids, a real imprecation – it now actually calls on the destruction of the *genos* root and branch.[36] Its statement of impossible wealth acts as a devastating parody of the statue's arrogant boast. The value of the *kolossos* is no mark of permanence. The line of tyrants is indeed set for extinction in deed and in fame. There is a fundamental symbolic rift at play in this rewriting of the epigram. The superimposition of one epigram over the other subverts the whole idea of the *kolossos*.

That critical appropriation of the poem illustrates a logic of opposition that is also attested elsewhere. Various sources from the Hellenistic period, for instance, relate tales of conflict between the tyrants and the population of the city: the *kolossos* would have been formed from tithes levied on the Corinthians and the opponents of the dynasts, or it would have been used to spend the "excess wealth" of the city (and the opponents of the regime).[37] In other words, far from being a just dedication of enduring wealth protected by Zeus, it would instead represent the theft of unlawful acquisition, a monument of injustice. The echoes we hear of these stories could very well come from the narrative used by the city to justify this translation of origins from one party to another. The monuments were never the tyrants' to give, in that view; the city as a whole paid for them, *it* was the original benefactor, and that is what the inscriptions should acknowledge. Whatever the case, these stories certainly derive from traditions hostile to the Cypselids.[38] Like the version of the epigram found in Apellas Ponticus, they cannot be precisely dated, but they do provide us with an idea of the antagonism generated by the message of the *kolossos*.

One text which can be situated in that broad adversarial context is Theognis 891–4. The poem seems to be complete:

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[35] The first εἰμὶ of the transmitted text needs to be corrected to εἰ μὴ, as in the original epigram. None of the various interpretations proposed for νάξος (νάξιος in the Suda) seems entirely convincing to me. Herbig 1918, the most detailed discussion of the matter, argues for a ναξός (note the accent) related to νάσσω, which would reinforce the statue's reference to itself as being made of solid gold -- something related to ναστός, as opposed to κενός. Gallavotti 1962 argues instead for an improbable ἄξους, and believes that the χρυσοῦς σφυρήλατος of the *kolossos* epigram is in fact a secondary elaboration on the ἄξους παγχρύσεος of the Apellas epigram. See Papadopoulos 1980, p. 87 for a refutation. Cf. Servais 1965, p. 154-174, who also believes that the *kolossos* epigram is a secondary elaboration on the Apellas epigram, without really making a case for that scenario, considering the fact that, unlike the Apellas epigram, it is neither clearly humourous nor is it invective. His reconstruction of the model parodied by the Apellas epigram essentially ends up reconstructing the *kolossos* epigram, but without the formula of *exōleia*. Contrary to him, I do not have any *a priori* difficulty in seeing a creative adaptation of the *exōleia* formula in the text.

[36] See Servais 1965, p. 167-168.

[37] Aristotle, *Politica* 1313b; Ps.-Aristotle, *Oeconomica* 1346a; Theophrastus F 128 Wimmer; Photius, *Lexicon,* sv Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα; Suda, sv Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα; see Will 1955, p. 482-484.

[38] Something already seen by Cobet 1860. Cf. Servais 1965, p. 165-168.

οἵ μοι ἀναλκίης· ἀπὸ μὲν Κήρινθος ὄλωλεν,
Ληλάντου δ' ἀγαθὸν κείρεται οἰνόπεδον·
οἱ δ' ἀγαθοὶ φεύγουσι, πόλιν δὲ κακοὶ διέπουσιν.
ὡς δὴ Κυψελιδῶν[39] Ζεὺς ὀλέσειε γένος.

"The lack of courage! Not only is Kerinthos utterly destroyed,
but the noble vineyards of the Lelantine plain are being cut down.
The nobles are in flight and the wretched rule the city.
May Zeus indeed annihilate the race of the Cypselids!"

I would argue that the last line of the quatrain establishes the poem as an answer to the epigram. The combination of Zeus, the verb *ollumi*, the *genos* of Cypselids and the optative is decisive in that regard. What functions as a conditional curse in the epigram is turned into a wish in the poem. The emphatic *dē* of the first foot very abruptly brings attention to the well-known statement: "May Zeus *indeed* exterminate the race of Cypselids!" That last line functions as a conclusion for the other three. But how is it related to them? The answers provided by scholars have essentially consisted of variations on biographical and historical readings. A virtual war between Eretria and Chalkis has been conjured by historians on the basis of this text; proto-Cypselid leaders of an Athenian expedition imagined for the occasion; an author with strong personal ties to Euboea and Corinth fabricated; and very precise dates proposed: 510? 506?[40] The common idea is that the poem must answer the specific circumstances of an event. The role of the analyst is to recover the occasion and the biography of the poet who lived through this. The non-existent biography of the elusive Theognis, however, is very shaky ground indeed on which to build such elaborate scenarios.[41]

It seems preferable to me to read the poem as a message that is not tied to one fleeting moment, a poetic statement that can circulate in reperformance and remain relevant beyond any original occasion. The places and times mentioned by the epigram have significance in and of themselves. There are three temporal points in the text: the past destruction of the perfect *olōlen*, the potential future destruction of the optative *oleseie*, and the present destruction of *keiretai*.[42] The present, with its two lines in the middle of the poem, is placed at the very centre of the statement. The result of the perfect tense is carried into the present moment, and the optative wish is grounded in it. All this destruction reflects one point: the *agathoi* are now in exile and base men govern the city. We are not told what city that is, and the indeterminacy of the sentence makes it applicable to any circumstance, the *hic et nunc* of this and that enunciation in reperformance at any symposium. The very specific reference to the vineyards of the Lelantine plain, in line 2, can similarly be read as a figurative indication. Rather than referring to some local, precise skirmish, what the poem is saying by pointing to this famous

[39] Κυψελιδῶν is a safe and necessary emendation from Hermann for the nonsensical κυψελίζων or κυψελλίζον of the manuscripts.
[40] See Ferreri 2005 and Selle 2008, p. 238-239, with bibliography.
[41] As nothing allows us to place Theognis in Euboea and/or Corinth, the poem is still often said to be by someone else, and seen as a late, "spurious" addition to the collection (van Groningen 1966, p. 341; Selle 2008, p. 248.). But there is of course far from being a general agreement that authentic poems can clearly be distinguished from non-authentic poems in the *Theognidea*, or even that such a distinction between the two makes sense in a collection built around the authorising seal of such a distinctive persona. See e.g. Ford 1985; Cerri 1991; Pratt 1995; Edmunds 1997.
[42] Cf. van Groningen 1966, p. 339.

place is that the Lelantine War is going on right now. The greatest war since the fall of Troy, a paradigmatic moment of poetic memory, nothing less than the greatest war ever fought between Greeks, is being waged at this very moment.[43] It is not, however, a conflict of alliances and coalitions this time; *polin* is every city. This is a generalised civil war between *kakoi* and *agathoi*. As the *kakoi* win, the *agathoi* are leaving, and the *agathon oinopedon* is being cut down. In other words, the vineyard that provides the members of the audience at the symposium with the wine in their cup is about to disappear.

The city of Kerinthos, on the other hand, is already gone.[44] Euboea, once a jewel of the Greek world, is now a nightmare of civic strife. Great might has fallen as a result of this conflict, land and city now lie in ruins. What seemed permanent is no more. Could the new beating heart of the Greek world fall as well? Could Korinthos be the next Kerinthos? Does this have anything to do with the Cypselid rulers found all over the Ionian Sea? Or, alternatively, could what happened in Corinth pave the way for avoiding the fate of the Euboean city? "Let the tyrants fall!" Or: "As they've already fallen, the tyrants will fall!" The shout of "May Zeus *indeed* exterminate the race of the Cypselids!" in that view, becomes an exhortation for oligarchic revolution wherever there are tyrants.[45] It marks a contrast with the first words of the poem, which point to the present loss of nerves in the ongoing battle. The text thus functions both when the tyrants are still in power, and after they have fallen. Its curse functions as a rallying cry for aristocratic resistance to tyranny and mob rule everywhere. Its pointed message, built on the connotations of shared knowledge, is based on a direct confrontation with another famous text and an appropriation of its wording. A good part of the Theognidean corpus is notoriously composed of dialogues with other elegiac poetry, and what we have here is simply another such elegiac conversation – this time, notably, with a monument.[46] The last line of the poem establishes a reference to the statue. But why activate the *kolossos* epigram specifically?

By rewriting the formula of the famous statue in its own verse, the poem captures the message of one of the most famous monuments of the Greek world and coopts it for its own purposes. Zeus himself, the object of the Cypselid dedication, becomes the agent of destruction of the Cypselids in the Theognidean poem. The idea that the rich offering marked the stability of divine favour and inscribed the continuity of the dynasty in the great Panhellenic sanctuary is turned on its head. The *kolossos* is transformed into a witness of the downfall of the tyrants, a commemoration of the eventual collapse of their unjust rule, over and against the extravagant wealth they had managed to amass. The *sphurēlatos kolossos* is the perfect embodiment of the counterfeit gold so often decried in the Theognidean corpus, the covering of a worthless core by a glistening illusion. Rather than function as a testament to dynastic continuity, it thus comes to channel a call for the overthrow of illegitimate rulers. The exiled *agathoi* are on the move, away from their cities, but they have not given up the fight, from Euboea to Corinth, from Corinth to Olympia -- the axis traced by the three locations alluded to in the poem. Contrary to the static *kolossos*, the poem can circulate from symposium to symposium,

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[43] Thucydides 1.15.3 (cf. Archilochus F 3 W; Herodotus 5.99; Strabo 10.1.11-12; Plutarch, *Septem sapientium convivium* 153f; *Amatorius* 760e-761b). On the "Lelantine War(s)", see e.g. d'Agostino 1967; Fehling 1979; Lambert 1982; Giannatasio 1993; Parker 1997; Ferreri 2005.

[44] On Kerinthos, see Sampson 1975.

[45] As van Groningen 1966 (p. 340) notes, Camerarius (1551) already saw the reference to the Cypselids as a generic reference to tyrants, a reading that was abandoned in later centuries by scholars looking for historical precision.

[46] On elegiac conversations between texts and traditions, see Calame 2004; Irwin 2006, with bibliography. Young 1964 is still very much worth reading.

throughout the *poleis* of Greece, and proclaim its message of unrest and resistance. The reperformance of the poem inscribes itself on the memory of the monument. The anger leveled at the dynasts of the world is threaded in the language of curses, the projection of a force of generational destruction grounded in the efficient power of divine displeasure. The imprecation of the last line answers the somber portrait of the world out of joint presented in the first three verses. Zeus is obviously not on the side of the *kakoi* or the Cypselids in this picture. The pious offering of Olympia, with the inscription on its base, is recast as an emblem of injustice, and a call to arms. The poem shapes a theological stance in opposition to another.

The theology of the story of Croesus' dedications

If some fragmentary echoes of the trajectories of the Cypselid dedications can be detected in the cultural imagination of early Greece, the legacy of Croesus obviously left a far more prominent trace. The fact that with the end of Croesus a dynasty not only disappeared, but a whole empire collapsed, made his story stand out especially vividly. The great wealth of the Lydian king focused the legend of his power on issues of exchange and transmission, and his gifts to some of the most important sanctuaries of the Greek world, notably Ephesus, but especially Delphi, brought his fate into direct contact with the concerns of every single Greek city.

For more than two hundred years, from the first half of the sixth century BCE to the Third Sacred War, the highly visible offerings of Croesus occupied a critical place in the spatial configuration of Delphi. The *anathēmata* described by Herodotus in 1.50-52, such as the great lion of refined gold held on rows of precious ingots -- more than sixteen tonnes of precious metal, according to one estimate --, or the two massive *krateres* at the entrance of the temple, one of gold and the other of silver, were clearly set up, before the great fire of 548 destroyed that arrangement, to stand out in the central core of the sanctuary.[47] The silver *kratēr* alone, if Herodotus' text is to be believed, could hold up to a massive 20 000 litres.[48] Relocated "at the corner of the forecourt of the temple" (Herodotus 1.51), it served as the centrepiece for the annual Delphic ritual of the *Theophania*.[49] It is important to underline that, in the sanctuary that stood at the centre of the network of sacred landscapes of the Greek world, the object that channelled the annual appearance of the gods for the city was for centuries a visible embodiment of Croesus' pious generosity.[50]

The spatial configuration of votives, their usage and the discourses that surrounded them are matters of great theological significance in Greek religion. Nowhere is this clearer than with the offerings of Croesus at Delphi. Taken as a whole, Croesus' dedications even surpassed the spectacular gold and silver dedications of his own ancestor Gyges (Herodotus 1.14) -- the gold associated with *turannis* ever since the time of Archilochus (F 19 W). How could the pious man who had offered the most lavish gifts of all time to the god in Delphi be struck such a catastrophic blow? The emergence of the figure of Croesus as a contested theological paradigm in the later Archaic period is a direct product of that question.[51] The failure of pious

[47] Parke 1984 attempts a detailed reconstruction of the historical occasions of the offerings. Flower 1991 discusses the oral traditions surrounding Croesus' offerings and the question of his piety. On the configuration of the lion monument, see Roux 1990, p. 234-245.

[48] See Asheri 2007, p. 111-113. See also Fehling 1989, p. 223; Pritchett 1993, p. 132-138.

[49] Forrest 1982.

[50] Cf. Kindt's (2012, p. 55-89) discussion of "tyrant property turned ritual object" in late fifth-century Athens.

[51] Key discussions of the topic include Segal 1971; Oliva 1975; Peron 1978; Burkert 1985; Lamedica 1987; Tarditi 1989; Crane 1996; Frings 1996; Kurke 1999: 130-174; Belloni 1999; Duplouy 2000; Neri 2009; Cairns 2010: 65-66.

wealth challenged a dominant narrative of divine action. Not more than a few decades after the fall of Sardis, Croesus had already become an emblematic figure of normative Greek narrative on punishment from the gods, and he could appear in the places usually reserved to myth in poetry and vase-painting.[52] But what the audience saw on a vase like the famous Louvre G 197 from the Myson Painter, for instance, where Croesus dedicates his royal body to the sacrificial pyre with a pious libation, was not cued to a fixed tradition, and no one theological programme was activated by the image of the defeated king on his pyre.[53]

The diversity of possible responses to the theological challenge of the Croesus story is what stands out from the fragmentary record of the tale found in extant literature. Fundamentally opposed understandings of the king's downfall appear in all of them. Pindar's 1st *Pythian*, written in 470 for Hieron of Syracuse's victory at the chariot race in Delphi, sets up a distinction between the noble figure of Croesus and the evil Phalaris in the last section of the poem.[54] The memory of fame, he says, has two opposite poles, and the examples of Croesus and Phalaris are chosen to embody the contrast between the blame of savage cruelty and the praise of kind excellence.[55] The *philophrōn areta* of Croesus, a reference to his legendary generosity, is a *phatis* that doesn't die, a long-lasting celebration of virtue carried by the words of the *logioi* and *aoidoi* and performed in choral songs like the present one, or the sympotic occasion suggested at the end of the ode (97–8). The pious generosity of the eastern king is contrasted to the savagery of the contemporary Sicilian tyrant, as embodied in his own monument of shame, the brazen bull; the poem pits monument against monument. All that is mentioned in the text concerning Croesus is the survival of his kind excellence in the words of men, the fact that his generosity endured far beyond his life to reach later generations.

The text's silence concerning the fall of Croesus from power only strengthens the point, the fact that the fame of Croesus' virtue has indeed endured, something that procures him true felicity, over and above the catastrophic end of his rule and the mortality shared by all men. Poetry is the necessary vehicle of the tyrant's dedications in time. The unmentioned fate of Croesus is exactly what makes the poetic voice indispensable to the survival of his noble deeds. Through the memory of the *logioi* and the *aoidoi*, the generosity of the Lydian king is rewarded with the immortality of fame, a condition that allows Pindar to elegantly solve the conundrum of tradition posed by Croesus' fate in favour of pure exemplarity – one not deprived of some typically Pindaric ominous undertones, of course.[56] The achievements of the old eastern king meet those of the new western tyrant at the centre of the Greek world. Hieron, and his brother Gelon before him, had offered lavish gifts to Delphi, extravagant gifts, on a scale only comparable to those offered by Croesus before them, and the association between the dedications of the Mermnads and those of the Deinomenids remained a *lieu commun* of the sanctuary's monumental memory.[57] The interrelation of piety, memory, wealth and the extremes of fortune embodied by the gifts of Croesus made them particularly potent symbols of theological comparison. The programme of the sanctuary's dedicatory landscape is mirrored in the *Pythian* ode by the association of the two rulers; the sacred location is thus

[52] For the possibility of a Classical tragedy, if not a whole trilogy, written on the story of Croesus, see Page 1962; Snell 1973; Riecks 1975; cf. Chiasson 2003.
[53] See Duplouy 1999. Cf. the possibly related *ARV* 2 571, 74.
[54] *P.* 1.92-94.
[55] Gantz 1974.
[56] See Luraghi 2008-2009.
[57] Theopompus 115 F 193 *FGrHist*; cf. Scott 2010, p. 88-90.

uprooted into a movable format that can circulate in space and time and serve as a paradigm for all far and wide.

Bacchylides' response to the challenge of Croesus' downfall in his third ode takes a slightly different direction, and sheds a direct light on all the implications left in the shadow by Pindar's silences.[58] Written in 468 for Hieron's chariot-race victory at Olympia, it returns to the story of Croesus in much more detail than Pindar. The heart of the ode's mythical section is taken by an extensive narrative of Croesus' last moments on the pyre, and his dialogue with divinity.[59] As in Pindar, the emphasis is placed on making sense of Croesus' generosity in the larger scheme of things. *Charis* is the operative word in this section of the poem, the notion that the offering of Croesus establishes a form of exchange between the king and divinity, and that a certain reciprocity can be expected.[60] Croesus can bluntly ask: "Where is the *charis* of the gods?" ([πο]ῦ θεῶν ἐστι[ν] χάρις;).[61] The poem's answer offers a ready clarification.

The fact that the Lydian empire fell and that Croesus' dynasty was overthrown cannot be questioned. The ode simply removes that fact from the relevant considerations. The reason for this event to happen is firmly established as inevitable, a *peprōmena krisis* (25–6). There is no question of causality involved, and human cognition is taken out of the equation. The theological opacity of that fated event opens a space for shining light on another aspect of divine action in Croesus' fall. The exchange of reciprocity takes place on a different level.

The gods answer Croesus' question by their actions, confirming that there is indeed a relation of *charis* established by his pious gifts. Zeus extinguishes the pyre himself, an act that points to his refusal to accept the sacrifice of the king, and Apollo preserves him, keeps him safe (line 29: *phulax'*). He will be translated to the blessed realm of the Hyperboreans (lines 58–60), with his wife and daughters – that is, not only is his life saved, and given a hallowed status, but the possibility of his line remains intact. As in Pindar, the consequence of the king's paradigmatic generosity is framed in terms of posterity. But instead of the fame of men, Bacchylides explores the afterlife of piety. It is *eusebeia* (61) that is singled out as the cause for his salvation, and the excellence of his gifts to divinity that has brought him to the heights of this lofty paradigmatic status.[62] His piety has allowed for the efficiency of his prayer. Behind the appearance of collapse and punishment, the poet brings us to see that the king has in fact been rewarded, that the *eusebeia* of his gifts was not in vain. The counter-intuitive solution of Bacchylides transforms the challenge of the pious downfall into a lesson for rulers (63–6).

Some years later, Herodotus opted for a very different take in his telling of the tale of Croesus. Placing it right at the centre of the programmatic first section of Book 1, he thoroughly reframed it to fit the larger architecture of his vast narrative.[63] The fall of the Lydian empire serves as a template for the presentation of many dominant themes in the *Histories*, and the generosity of Croesus to the gods is located at the heart of the theological apparatus of the whole passage. The place of wealth in the determination of a man's worth is

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[58] Segal 1971 and Kurke 1999: 130-174 offer extensive discussions of the differences between the versions of the tale.

[59] Lines 24-62; see further Gagné 2013, p. 331-335.

[60] For the semantic range of early Greek *charis*, see e.g. Scott 1983; McChlachlan 1992; Parker 1998; Neri 2009; cf. Cairns 2010: 70-71.

[61] Lines 37-40.

[62] Lines 61-62; see Lamedica 1987.

[63] Notable contributions on the topic include Regenbogen 1930; Miller 1963; Krischer 1964; von Fritz 1967; Stahl 1975; Burkert 1985; Chiasson 1986; Shapiro 1996; Harrison 2000: 31-63; Visser 2000; Schwabl 2004; Pelling 2006; Kindt 2006; Versnel 2011: 179-201; 527-537; Grethlein 2010: 197-203.

one of the main objects of Croesus' exchange with Solon, a lesson of wisdom that is placed in direct dialogue with the pyre scene described by Herodotus (1.29–33 and 86–91).[64]

One key difference with Bacchylides is the fact that the causality of the kingdom's fall is described at some length as the outcome of a crime committed by Croesus' ancestor Gyges, and this very emphatically – at the beginning of the episode, in chapter 13, and again at the end, in chapter 91. A chain of responsibility is in motion that makes Croesus' generosity something entirely incompatible with the pious *charis* of Bacchylides 3. Simply put, the wealth that he so proudly displays to Solon, and which he uses to enrich the various sanctuaries of the eastern Mediterranean, most notably Delphi, was never his to give in the first place. Croesus has been spending the riches that his ancestors stole (see e.g. Herodotus 1.14: ἔσχον...ἀπελόμενοι). His generosity is an illusion. Even reduced to nothing on the pyre, he utterly fails to understand what Solon had told him, and proceeds to accuse the gods of having deceived him with ingratitude and false promises (1.90). With words reminiscent of Bacchylides 3, in a speech that emphasises the importance of the *anathēmata* dedicated by him to the sanctuary, he essentially asks the god if it is the custom of the Greek gods to lack *charis* for their benefactors. Phoebus' answer (as mediated by the Delphic oracle), Apollo's Justification (1.91), arguably one of the most significant expositions of explicit theology in classical literature, presents Croesus with the blunt truth that there is indeed little possible *charis* in this relation between divine and mortal.[65] The limitations of humanity prevent the type of reciprocity requested by the king. The failed understanding of Croesus illustrates his inability to see what hides in plain sight in the language of the gods. And, more importantly, his desire for something that cannot be offered shows the impossibility of the exchange. The few years of respite accorded to the king out of the goodwill of the god further disculpates divinity. In his further reappearances in Book 1, much later, Croesus shows that he has still understood little.[66] Saved from the pyre, he is allowed to live a long life as a slave (note *doulos*, for instance, in 1.89), and to die an obscure death, without success, *olbos*, or descendance – the absolute opposite of the models described by Solon to him in his speech of 1.30–31.

The text of Herodotus ends the story of Croesus with an extended review of his offerings throughout Greece in chapter 92. That passage serves as the seal of the entire Croesus narrative, the last occasion to reflect on the meaning of his story. It is no coincidence that Herodotus returns to the *anathēmata* of the dynast at the close of this section. Its description of the dedications that Croesus has made to sanctuaries at the four corners of the Greek world brings the story that has just been told in greater proximity to much of the audience. The main point of the passage is to bring our attention back to the origins of that immense wealth distributed by Croesus to so many gods and cities. As it is presented in the text of Herodotus, the fame of Croesus' generosity will indeed live on, as Pindar claimed in *Pythian* 1, and it will continue to feed the words of the *logioi* and the *aoidoi*, but with a meaning and a teaching of a much more menacing tone than in any other version. It is integrated into a large edifice of reflections on the relations of human and divine. The text does not simply transmit the perspectives of "sources" or "local traditions", such as the elusive Delphic priests so often mentioned in this regard, but it shapes its own vision of the paradigmatic meaning of Croesus'

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[64] Gagné 2013, p. 325-343.

[65] See Scheid-Tissinier 2000. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 3.43.4, where the absence of reciprocity between Apollo and Croesus is used by the Christian apologist to accuse the god/*daimōn* of betraying his 'friend' and being *acharistos*.

[66] 1.155-156; 207-208; 211; see Heni 1976, p. 117-118.

generosity. An entirely new programme of theology is inscribed on the tradition with this version of the tale, and it attempts to subsume all other accounts, even if it could never contain them.

Conclusion

The debates that raged over the meaning of the dedications from the Cypselid and Mermnad dynasties, some of the most famous and noteworthy objects of the Greek world at the time, involved fundamental questions of piety, divine agency, reciprocity, representation, ownership, memory, and punishment explored by Greek culture. The unprecedented value of the objects, and the spectacular downfall of the families that had dedicated them to the gods, quickly brought those interrogations in contact with the limits and the contradictions of many dominant theological programmes of Greek culture, and set the stage for the constantly renewed inquiry of the type reviewed above. Such textual portraits of the monuments proposed alternative stances in the ever-open contest for shaping the meaning of central figures in the Greek religious imagination. They were, as such, theological indices, fixed markers of meaning in the constantly shifting mosaic of possible thoughts about the gods. The theological index doesn't explicitly pursue the detailed ramifications of an issue. It traces a suggestive line of orientation for exploring the implications of a theological stance, and using it to channel further thought. It functions as an invitation for creative interpretation. The spatial configuration of the great common sanctuaries, and the stories attached to the contested monuments of fallen regimes, were matters of wide interest over and beyond the directly concerned parties, and the clashes of interpretation played out in poetry and elsewhere involved the thoughts and reflections of people over the four corners of the Greek world. The echoes of opposed perspectives briefly presented here are of course only tiny fragments of the immense discursive activity that must have been deployed over these questions, and they are all the more precious as witnesses to what has been lost.

Some idea of the stakes that were at play in these lost discussions can be summoned from what we know of the great fire of Delphi in 548/547. The destruction of the god's sanctuary raised obvious theological questions that continued to be addressed into Late Antiquity.[67] The fire devastated the temple of Apollo, as well as the greater part of the rich offerings made by Croesus to the sanctuary. The huge golden lion, emblem of the Mermnad dynasty, the most precious and visible monument of the sanctuary at the time, crashed on its base. The damaged lion lost a good part of its mass, and what was left, although it continued to elicit awe, came to embody the extent of the catastrophe for many decades to come.[68] The fire that ravaged Delphi happened almost exactly at the same time as the fall of Croesus and the collapse of the Mermnad dynasty -- possibly within months.[69] A striking coincidence. In opposition to the case of Nineveh, the proud ruins of the great eastern capital, this time, could

[67] See for instance the long disculpatory oracle (PW 470) cited by Porphyry and Eusebius (*Praeparatio evangelica* 6.2.2-6.3.1) and mentioned by Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Affectionum graecarum curatio* 10.40). The oracle explains the fire by a reference to the overarching power of *Aisa*. Parke and Wormell's dating of that oracle to their "Ninth Period" (30 B.C. to the End) seems rather arbitrary. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.53.3.

[68] According to Diodorus 16.65.6, it was melted down in 347/6; see Scott 2010, p. 124.

[69] The precise date of the great fire (548/7) of Delphi is essentially predicated on the Olympiad and Athenian archon-year that are mentioned in Pausanias 10.5.13 (cf. Herodotus 1.48; 2.180). Jerome places it in 549/548, while the Armenian text of Eusebius gives the date of 547/546; see still Frazer 1898, p. 328. For the date of Croesus' defeat, see Cahill and Kroll 2005; Stronach 2008.

be figuratively seen at the heart of the Greek world itself. The burned, disfigured lion stood there as a provocation, a trace of the pyre from Sardis.

In the oracle about the Delphian fire cited by Porphyry (see n. 67), the same reason offered by the Pythia in Herodotus 1.91 to explain the fall of Sardis is used by the Pythia to make sense of the destruction of Delphi. It is difficult to imagine that the great fire of 548/547 and the fall of Sardis in 547/546 were not placed in relation to each other in the imagination of a large number of people at the time when they happened. In Herodotus, notably, the prelude to the great offerings of Croesus at Delphi is an immense sacrificial pyre (Herodotus 1.50). The sanctuary that benefited so extravagantly from the Lydian king was devastated by flames at *exactly* the same time as Sardis was taken. The damage affected his offerings particularly severely. Could it be that the story of Croesus' pyre was related to this fire somehow in the early transmission of the tale? Or rather, could it be that it wasn't? The sacrificial libation of Croesus which is being poured down on the rising fire of the pyre in Louvre G 197 suggests the piety of his offerings, while the rich clothes and throne that are to be burned down with the king evoke the destruction of his immense wealth. The wooden logs of the pyre are neatly stacked in transversal rows, just as the famous rows of precious ingots that formed the base of the lion statue and burned down with it. In other words, Delphi is there in the background. One moment can be read through the other.

The massive monumental reorganisation of the sanctuary that took place after the fire had all of the Mermnad *anathēmata* moved away from the central open spaces of the temple terrace, and most of these dedications eventually found themselves housed in the Cypselid monument.[70] Even then, the work that saw the temple rebuilt continued to be associated with the figure of Croesus, as reflected in the report of Herodotus 6.125, where we are told that the riches of the Alcmaeonids, who oversaw the reconstruction of the temple, were in fact nothing more than a gift of the Lydian king himself, something that can be seen to echo great controversies.[71] What such controversies were, especially the earlier ones, how they changed and adapted to each other, we will never know in any detail, but it would be a mistake to reduce their logic entirely to the more strictly political dimensions, or to the fallacies of "local tradition". If the debates and contestations that we have briefly reviewed here are representative in any way of the open-ended process of monumental reinterpretation that was in place, we can at least imagine something of the dynamics of agonistic theology at work.

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[70] Herodotus 1.14; 50-51; Pausanias 9.1.5. Note that the great golden *kratēr* of Croesus was placed in the treasury of the Clazomenians (Herodotus 1.50) – a city with strong Lydian ties –, not the treasury of the Corinthians.

[71] Cf. Duplouy 1999; Anderson 2005, p. 189. See also the story of a possible appropriation of a Croesus dedication by the Alcmaeonids for Sparta echoed in Herodotus 1.51 (Prontera 1981); cf. Pausanias 10.5.13.

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