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jtorrao@ua.pt

Universidade de Aveiro
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RADULOVI, IFIGENIJA; VUKADINOVI, SNEŽANA; SMIRNOVBRKI, ALEKSANDRA

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“ΟΥΔΕΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΗΝ ΚΛΟΠΗΝ”; – Hermes the Transformer

“ΟΥΔΕΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΗΝ ΚΛΟΠΗΝ”; – Hermes, o Transformador

IFIGENIJA RADULOVIĆ, SNEŽANA VUKADINOVIĆ, ALEKSANDRA SMIRNOV-BRKIĆ¹ (*University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy, Dep. of History – Serbia*)

Abstract: Hermes holds a special place in Greek religion. His name is recorded on the Mycenaean tablets. Most Greek sources connect his cult with Attica and relate his name with ἑρμαῖος λόφος and its transformation into *Hermai*. Hermes got many epithets, reflecting his various functions and ancient origin. The paper deals with a possible origin of Hermes, his cult, describes various roles in Greek religion, political and symbolic connotations, (ab)uses of his cult as well as different representations and finally the transformation of the deity in the Christian period according to written and material evidence.

Keywords: Hermes; cult; chthonian; celestial; representation; transformation.

One of the most beautiful and probably best known representation of Hermes is the sculpture of Praxiteles, where Hermes is presented as a handsome young beardless man. However, through centuries the most common representations of Hermes became the *Hermai* pillars such as Alcamenes' *Hermes*² and those depicted on many Attic vases. According to ancient written sources *Hermai* pillars are original Athenian monuments and religious presentations due to which it was believed that Hermes' cult had Attic origin. Herodotus claims that the Athenians – who took this form of representation from the Pelasgians – had *Hermai* before all other Greeks, while Thucydides says that *Hermai* are of autochthonous Attic origin (κατὰ τὸ ἐπιχώριον)³. Attic *Hermai* were at first amorphous pillars made in wood and later in marble⁴, with the hairy head of mature Hermes on top of the pillar

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¹ ifigenijadraganic@yahoo.com; snezana_vukadinovic@yahoo.com; aleksandrasmirnov@gmail.com.

² This *Herm* stood in the entrance of the Acropolis as *Hermes Propylaios* (Paus., 1.22.8). The Roman copies are found in Pergamon and Ephesus.

³ Hdt., 2.51.1; Thuc., 6.27.1; cf. Paus., 1.24.3; 4.33.3.

⁴ Aristot., *Met.* 1002a22, 1017b17.

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and its phallus just above the base⁵. This religious monument stood in front of every Athenian house and sanctuary as the protector who guarded the entrance⁶. Nonetheless, their functions were various and still not clear enough. On the other hand Pausanias⁷ (8.17.2) maintains that similar religious monument existed in Arcadia but only in the form of a wooden pillar.

Although it was believed that Hermes' cult is of Attic origin, due to the number of statues and their prevalence in Attica, it is still obscure how those Hermai pillars were developed and what their primary function was. The Linear B tablets deny Attic origin of the cult since the name of Hermes is recorded in several Mycenaean tablets. His name is written as *e-ma-a2* transcribed in Greek as Ἐμαῖα (classical Greek, i.e. Attic contracted form Ἐρμῆς) testifying his old origin which dates back to the Bronze Age. The tables that bear Hermes' name are the Tn 316, Un 219 both from Pylos, Of 31 from Thebes, D 411 from Knossos. Hermes' name is always recorded along with female divinities, such as *Potnija*, *Posidaeja*, *Diwja*, (*H*)*era*, *Pere 82*, and *Ipemedēja*. Most likely his cult was connected to the cult of those female divinities. It is noteworthy that Hermes was also worshipped in the sanctuaries of female divinities such as Hera's at Samos, Hecate's as well as Muses', Apollo's in Arcadia and Demeter's and Despoina's in Messenia etc., but had no sanctuary of his own⁸. Only three temples⁹ are known to have been attributed to Hermes, and all of them in Peloponnesus, and more specifically in Arcadia¹⁰, where his cult was associated with the mythical place of his birth, the mountain Cyllene.¹¹

⁵ Cf. Herm, Attic red figured lecythus ca. 475 BC, Musée du Louvre, Paris, cat.TBA.

⁶ HARRISON (1903) 121.

⁷ Paus., 8.17.2.

⁸ PALAIMA (1999) 452.

⁹ According to SMITH (1871) 362, they were numerous. Pausanias also mentions another temple of Hermes in Elis founded by Pelops (5.1.7), but it is believed that it never really existed. In Lucian's satyr, Prometheus complains to Hermes that everywhere temples of gods and amongst them of Hermes' as well can be seen, but he has none of his own (Luc., *Promet.*14). We assume that Lucian probably used the "temple of Hermes" as *licentia poetica* having in mind numerous Hermes' representations.

¹⁰ Lycaon, the son of Pelsagus built the first temple (Hyg., *Fab.* 225).

¹¹ Paus., 8.17.1; 8.30.6 and 8.47.4.

Despite the fact that there were old wooden statues of Hermes that stood in the temples of female divinities outside Attica, such as the one in Arcadia, in the temple of Aphrodite,¹² the Attic tradition connects Hermai pillars with the Peisistratids, i.e. Hipparchos and their policy towards rural population. Siebert says that the anthropomorphic presentation of the pillars originates from the Bronze Age and that the so called *Hipparchos' Herm* has its ancient rustic ancestors¹³. In ancient sources¹⁴ it is said that the stone Hermai were firstly set up by rural roads in order to determine the direction and distance of the Attic villages, i.e. the half way between the rural deme and Athens. These ancient claims are corroborated by archeological evidence, such as the so called *Fourmont Hermai* from the late 6th century BC found near Koropoi where it is written that it stands half way from Athens to the village Cephale¹⁵. From the same period, around 520 BC is the earliest depiction of Hermai on vases¹⁶. The role attributed to the tyrant Hipparchus must have been in “canonizing” the old traditional wooden forms of Hermes, that could easily be damaged, and replacing them with the firmer ones, in stone or bronze, in order to confirm the position of his power by giving privileges to the rural population in accordance with the general policies of the Peisistratids¹⁷.

It is worth mentioning the interpretation given in the Pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Hipparchos* where stone Hermai had an educative (παίδευσις) purpose carrying on their body written verses in the form of Delphic maxims¹⁸. It is possible that the statue of Hermes “Herma” was developed and evolved from the so called ἔρμαϊος λόφος, which also stood as a sign on the roads. Ἐρμαϊος λόφος was built by passengers and travelers’ adding

¹² Paus., 8.31.6.

¹³ SIEBERT (1990) 375.

¹⁴ Ps.-Plato *Hipparch.* 228d-229b, in Harpocration and Suidas s.v. Ἐρμαῖ, and Hesychios. s.v. Ἰππάρχειος Ἐρμηῆς.

¹⁵ Cf. SEG X, IG P 837.

¹⁶ The vases are presented in ZANKER (1965) 30, 91-103.

¹⁷ Uniformly they constituted the Panathenaic festivals, the rhapsodes contests as well as the Great Dionysia which became the main festivals in democracy. Cf. KOLB (1977) 99-138.

¹⁸ QUINN (2007) 94-5.

stones, and consequently during the Classical period Hermes was related to travelers and sailors and became their patron deity¹⁹. The vase representations also show the face of Hermes on the top of these rocky hills and Babrius²⁰ confirms the existence of such rocky pile (λίθων δ' ὑπ' αὐτῷ σωρὸς). Since both the etymology of Hermes' name and this specific monument are unclear, Siebert claims that *Hermai* pillars do not originate from ἑρμαῖος λόφος²¹. In *Odyssey*²², Pausanias²³ and Polyaeus²⁴ *Herma* is a boundary stone/slab that marks the boundary between two estates²⁵. The erected phallus speaks of Hermes as of a rural cult related to the soil fertility rituals. Furthermore his most ancient presentation from Cyllene²⁶, as an erected wooden phallus, assert this Hermes' function, as well as the aforementioned common place of his worship, together with Demeter and Persephone.

Hermes is most likely pre-Hellenic deity²⁷ and is probably chthonian as Hecate, Demeter and Persephone with whom he shares sanctuaries and who are all primary chthonian deities²⁸. The mythical story of Hermes who resolves the fight between two snakes, which are considered typical chthonian attributes and one of Hermes' as well²⁹, corroborates his chthonian characteristics³⁰. His chthonian properties are evident in the role that he plays as the mediator between the Upper and the Underworld and in his epithets

¹⁹ BURKERT (1977) 243.

²⁰ Babr., *Fab.* 48.1-2.

²¹ SIEBERT (1990) 381; cf. FURLEY (1996) 27.

²² Hom., *Od.* 16.471.

²³ Paus., 3.10.6; 8.34.6; 8.35.2-3.

²⁴ Polyaeus., 6.24.

²⁵ PALAIMA (1999) loc.cit, characterizes Hermes as the god of boundaries who has no temple of his own.

²⁶ ...τῷ δὲ Ἑρμῆ τῷ Κυλληνίῳ... θύου δὲ πεποιμένον τὸ ἀγαλμὰ ἐστὶ, ὀκτῶ δὲ εἶναι ποδῶν... (Paus., 8.17.2).

²⁷ Herodotus claims that the Athenians took the form of Hermai from the Pelasgians (2. 51.1). Cf. also n.10 above.

²⁸ Cf. RADULOVIĆ-DRAGANIĆ, VUKADINOVIĆ (2013) 167-192.

²⁹ The Babylonian deity Ningishzida who is also a god mediator of the human and the divine, especially the female deity Ishtar, has snakes as his attribute. Cf. FROTHINGHAM (1916) 175-211.

³⁰ Hyg., *Astr.* 2.7.

as Psychopompos, the “transporter of the souls” of the dead: (cf. Ἑρμῆς Ψυχοπόμπος³¹ and Ἑρμῆς Χθόνιος)³². His chthonian characteristics are also underlined by Eitrem³³, who says that *Hermai* were usual funeral monuments in the time of Solon, according to Cicero’s statement that Solon had forbidden luxurious funerals by setting up *Hermai* on graves³⁴. *Hermai* or Hermes were usually depicted near tombs or deceased ones on Attic lecythi which were generally related to funeral rites.³⁵

Consequently, Hermes’ role as a chthonian divinity had to be resolved under the new cultural and historical circumstances that occurred with the invasion of the incomers who came with their own pantheon. Hermes was brought in collision with a celestial deity, in the well known myth of Hermes’ theft of Apollo’s cattle. Thus Hermes became not only a thief god, but also a baby god, the youngest amongst the Olympians. This mythical story, on the other hand, could not abolish Hermes from his other ancient functions. Many various epithets that stood with Hermes’ name describe his role and functions that he got in Greek religion. The variety of them proves the heterogeneity of his cult. He is the messenger (ἄγγελιοφόρος) and the boundary element between the human and the divine. He is always present, in every human action and libation as the mediator between the two worlds. That is why there are many pictures on Attic vases that depict this Hermes’ function where it is necessary to make a bond between the two spheres, the human and the divine, between the two worlds the Upper/Ce-

³¹ Diod., 1.96, Diog. Laer., 8.1.31. Cf. Attic red figured lecythos with Hermes Psychopompos attributed to the Phiale Painter, ca. 425 BC, Antikensammlungen, Munich, cat. 2797.

³² Aesch., *Pers.* 628, *Khoeph.* 1, Plut., *Arist.* 21.

³³ EITREM (1913) s.v. *Hermai* col.702.

³⁴ *De legibus* 2.64-5: *sed post aliquanto propter has amplitudines sepulcrorum, quas in Ceramico vidimus, lege sanctum est ne quis sepulcrum faceret operosius quam quod decem homines effecerint triduo, neque id opere tectorio exornari nec hermas quos vocant licebat inponi.* If Cicero’s statement is correct and does not use Herms as terminus technicus for the tombstones in general, Solo’s prohibition probably refers to *Hermai* as the symbol of the Peisistratids and tyranny.

³⁵ Cf. *Herma*, Attic red figured lekythos ca. 480 BC, Musée de Louvre, Paris CA 2935; *Hermes, Charon and a Woman*, Attic white-ground red figured lekythos attributed to the Thanatos Painter ca.440-30 BC, Munich, Antikensammlungen; see also note 31.

lestial and the Underworld/Chthonian³⁶. Furthermore, Hermes is a bond between everything that has two sides: in trade, he is the mediator between the merchant and the customer, in resolving cases, he connects the orator and the audience (listener), i.e. he is the protector as Ἑρμῆς Ψιθυριστής³⁷, of those who deal with words³⁸, that is why tongues were sacrificed to him³⁹. He is also a bond between thieves and their victims, for which he is called the god of thieves. And finally, he connects every prayer and every human action towards the divine and vice versa, for which he is called god's messenger. It is not by accident that Aristophanes in his *Peace* gives him the role of the ἑρμηνευτής (interpreter/interpretive communicator), the same role that Plato gives him in *Cratylus*⁴⁰. Even the origin of κηρύκων, the privileged religious social class of some Athenian families, is connected to Hermes — the divine herald⁴¹. Hermes' role in the world of words is clear in the quotation of Plato's dialogue, where Cratylus denies Hermogenes' name as a proper one, since he has no capabilities of interpreting. That is why he cannot be called Hermogenes, a *descendant of Hermes*⁴².

Let us now give a short notice to the attempt to extract the origin of Hermes' name from his role as an "interpreter", i.e. from the word ἑρμηνεύω (to interpret) and the whole doctrine of hermeneutics and hermeticism that developed in relation to Hermes. This notion connected the Greeks with the Egyptians and thus enabled syncretism of Hermes with Egyptian god Thoth as Hermes Trismegistos in Hermopolis (Khemnu).

³⁶ Cf. The sacrifice before Herma, Attic red -figured vase ca. 470 BC, Museo archeologico Nazionale, Invv. 127929. ZANKER (1965) passim, FURLEY (1996) 22 and the related bibliography.

³⁷ Harp., s.v. Ψιθυριστής Ἑρμῆς· Δημοσθένης ἐν τῷ κατὰ Νεαρίας, ἦν τις Ἀθήνησιν Ἑρμῆς οὕτω καλούμενος.

³⁸ Plato derives Hermes' name from εἴρειν ἐμήσατο Pl., *Crat.* 408a-b.

³⁹ *Od.* 3.332, 341; Aristoph., *Plout.* 1110, *Pax* 1060-2, *Aves* 1704-5; Cornutus, 16.

⁴⁰ Pl., *Crat.* 407e.

⁴¹ Odysseus' grandfather Autolykos was Hermes' descendant (Hom., *Od.* 19.394; Hom., *Il.* 10.267). The Kerykes families originate their family roots from the relationship between Telemachos and Nausicaa. Plut., *Alc.* 21.1; Ps.-Plut., *Vit. And.* 1; cf. MACDOWELL (1962) xiii.

⁴² Pl., *Crat.* 407e-408b.

Hermes' representation with the erected phallus also has different interpretations. As the chthonian deity, Hermes' cult is connected to the fertility rites and the cycles of birth and death. The ithyphallic representations of Hermes that stood before entrances and doors led to misunderstanding of his religious function. This could be interpreted in two ways: since every household had its own Herm, Hermes was the bond between the worlds dividing the outside and the inside of a house, the bond tying the householders/family with the state deities. He also symbolized fertility confirming the male potency of the householder that would ensure and bring offspring to the household/family (*oikos*), the basic unit of the society, as well as the symbol of male power in the house and the protector who defends the inner space and the residents from the violators, thieves and enemies, as well as any negative outdoor influences. Hence, his role here was apotropaic. This is testified by Aristophanes' verse in *Ploutos*⁴³. Burkert asserts this by comparing the ithyphallic representation of Hermes with other primitive ithyphallic representations, whose erected phalluses aimed to warn any intruders that the group was protected by a strong male⁴⁴. Such representation was understandable to everyone and either consciously or subconsciously conveyed a clear message. Thus, this simultaneous setting up of *Hermai* at doorsteps, entrances, crossroads and roads indicates and explains all those heterogeneous functions of Hermes⁴⁵.

Furthermore, Hermes' epithets are so numerous and so various, in order to show that Hermes stood for as a god protector wherever he was set up as: 'Αλεξίκακος⁴⁶ – the one who protects from evil, Προπύλαιος⁴⁷ – stood at the entrance and represents the residents' meeting with the outside world, Ἐρμῆς Στροφαῖος⁴⁸, is responsible for the door hinges, controlling either those who enter and those who go out, while Προθυραῖος's dwelling

⁴³ 1153.

⁴⁴ BURKERT (1979) 39–41.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ Aristoph., *Aves* 422.

⁴⁷ See note 2.

⁴⁸ “Παρά τὴν θύραν **στροφαῖον** ἰδρύσασθέ με” says Hermogenes in the mentioned Platonic dialogue.

is the very door, Ἐνόδιος⁴⁹ is the road escort, Ἡγεμονιος⁵⁰ is the leading one, Πομπαιῖος⁵¹ is the follower, Τρικέφαλος⁵²/Τετρακέφαλος is the one that stood at the crossroads, Ἐπιτέρμιος⁵³ at borders and boundaries, Ἀγνώιος⁵⁴ before gymnasiums, Εὐάγγελος⁵⁵ is the one that brought good signs and good news, Ἀγοραῖος⁵⁶ stood at agora, where most social activities were held, such as trading, counseling etc., Πρόμαχος⁵⁷, led to wars as the protector.

In the religion of the Athenian polis, Ἐρμῆς Ἡϊῶν holds special place⁵⁸. He symbolized the sea power of the Athenians after their naval victory over the Persians led by Cimon⁵⁹ in 476/5 BC near Eion at the river Strymon⁶⁰. Plutarch believes this monument was set up to commemorate the first Athenian victory with no defensive character, which on the contrary glorified the expansion of the territory and power of Athens⁶¹. This Hermes symbolized Athenian politics of expansion, the birth of Athenian empire and hegemony over the Greek states and finally, Hermes Eion was a symbol of the Athenian democracy itself. The inscription from this Herm is found in Aeschines' speech *Against Ctesiphon* glorifying those days⁶². This is how Hermes became the deity protector of democracy and the Athenian naval

⁴⁹ Arr., *Kyn.* 35; Theocritus, 25.4; Schol Pl. *Phd.* 107c.

⁵⁰ Aristoph. *Plout.* 1159, IG II2 1496.115, 2873.

⁵¹ Aesch., *Eum.* 91, Soph., *Ai.* 832, Eur., *Med.* 759, Diog. Laert., 8.1.31.

⁵² In Kerameikos, at the crossroads stood a three-headed Herm (τρικέφαλος). The quadrangle basis showed the courses. Stephanus Byzantinus quoting Philochorus says that it was built by Hipparchus' lover Procleides while Hesychius claims that Aristophanes' lost comedy *Τριφάλης* was related to this Herm. Cf. The Pan Painter, pelike ca. 470 BC, Louvre 10793.

⁵³ Hesych., s.v. Ἐπιτέρμιος.

⁵⁴ Aristoph., *Plout.* 1161; Paus., 5.14.9, IG II2 3023, IG V 1.658.

⁵⁵ Hesych., s.v. Εὐάγγελος.

⁵⁶ Pollux, 7.15; Paus., 1.15.1; 7.22.2, Aristoph., *Hipp.* 297; Schol Plut. *Moralia* 844b. Hesych., s.v. Ἀγοραῖος.

⁵⁷ Paus., 9.22.2.

⁵⁸ It stood in front of the Stoa of Zeus the Liberator (Ζεὺς Ἐλευτέριος).

⁵⁹ According to SMART (1967) 136-7, this was in 469 BC.

⁶⁰ Thuc., 1.98.1.

⁶¹ Cf. SMIRNOV (2007) 333-349.

⁶² Aeschi., 3.183-85.

state (arche), as well as the protector of merchants, sailors, travelers in general, all those who were closely connected to the Athenian democracy, becoming its fervent supporters, faithful to its interests as they own. Therefore, it is not strange that one part of the agora was called Ἐρμαῖ⁶³ due to the number of Herms that stood there, some raised as votive presents by merchants to their protector and others commemorating some personal success in public affairs⁶⁴. Aeschines⁶⁵ also mentions the Stoa of Herms at the same place, although Pausanias does not say anything about it. The archeological excavation also has not revealed its existence, but Harrison believes that it was ruined in Sulla’s attack and was never rebuilt⁶⁶. The Herms found there are from the 4th century BC. Ἐρμηῆς Ἀγοραῖος had special place in agora which was the anthropomorphic presentation of Hermes, confirmed by Pausanias⁶⁷ and Scholia to Aristophanes’ *Hippeis*⁶⁸. Near agora there was a Herm set up as a votive gift of the phyle Aegeis later known as the Herm of Andocides⁶⁹ because it was the only Herm in Athens that escaped the cutting of Hermocopids in 415 BC according to the testimony of Andocides⁷⁰. Since no other religious statue or monument that stood⁷¹ side by side with *Hermai* were ruined in this religious scandal, *Hermai* were chosen by the antidemocratic elements in Athens to express their revolt against the Athenian politics related to the Sicilian expedition and the Athenian democracy itself symbolized by Hermes. This symbolism was proved in the reaction of the Athenians (i.e. demos) who took this religious sacrilege very seriously as a political scandal targeted against the city

⁶³ Xen., *Cyn.* 3,2, *Lys.*, 23.2-3, *Aeschi.*, 3.183, *Harp.*, s.v. *Ερμαῖ*.

⁶⁴ Callimachus, the Athenian general, set one up after the victory in Marathon, Lysistrates in front of the Eleusionion, archon basileus before the Royal Stoa, etc.

⁶⁵ *Loc.cit.*

⁶⁶ HARRISON (1965)109-10.

⁶⁷ Paus., 1.15.1.

⁶⁸ 297.

⁶⁹ *Harp.*, s.v. *Ἀνδοκίδου Ἐρμηῆς*.

⁷⁰ *And.*, 1.62. It was supposed to be cut by the very action of Andocides who was a member of hetaireia that planned the sacrilege. Cf. DRAGANIĆ (2009) 45, 50 and the related bibliography.

⁷¹ Such as Hecate’s and Apollo’s, cf. *Arsitoph.*, *Vespaes* 804, 875 and a mockery related to Herms in 808.

(previously⁷² such sacrileges were overlooked and were not under attention nor were given any importance) and sentenced the violators to death. Hermes represented the Athenian himself any time he crossed his doorstep to exit the house⁷³. So the cutting of *Hermai*, their faces and most likely phalluses⁷⁴ did not have the connotation of religious sacrilege, but symbolically meant the decapitation of a person as well as the whole community, in this particular case the decapitation of *demos*, in the act that this would bring infertility, fruitlessness, uncertainty and finally the ruin and death of the Athenians. The dephallation was believed to lead to the extinction of a family, by leaving the house without offspring and finally death⁷⁵. Such an act resulted in chaos and fear amongst the Athenians with regard to the success of the naval expedition to Sicily, since it was believed risky to sail in the same ship together with those who offended gods⁷⁶, especially when the particular god was the guardian of travelers, sailors, soldiers, leaders, a god who was a bond between men and gods. This was an immense *hybris* for which the whole community would have to be punished, unless the responsible was to be found and punished (as confirmed in tragedies, such as in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*). The sacrilege against the patron deity of democracy meant a threat for the expedition and the democracy itself. As it was believed that *Hermai* were of Attic origin, Osborn explains that the cutting of Herm Eion had a special meaning as a symbol of the naval victory and was thus directly associated with the naval expedition to

⁷² Plato (*Leg.* 884) confirms such religious sacrileges by the Athenian youth. This kind of religious attack, like in the case of Hermocopids, had a conspiratorial character. FURLEY (1996) 91.

⁷³ OSBORNE (1985) 65.

⁷⁴ Although there are many evidence that phalluses were cut (Aristoph., *Lys.*1093) Thucydides' description lead us to confusing conclusion since he says that τὰ πρόσωπα (faces) were cut. On the other hand, *prosopa* could be the whole body, which is confirmed by Seneca' tragedy *Phaedra* (1047) and in the allusion of Aristophanes' verses in *Lysistrata* (1093-95).

⁷⁵ Artemidorus' explanation ὀρθὰ μῆδεα 1.45 corroborates the fact that this was the cutting of phallus. To this also point the *Hymn to Hermes* 304, 318, 387 and 408, as well as the Cyllenian Herms itself (Paus., 6.26.5) since he is essentially phallus. Being the mediator between people and Aphrodite, Hermes ensures successful results of the love act.

⁷⁶ GOMME - ANDREWS - DOVER (1970) 284.

Sicily⁷⁷. In the eyes of the Athenians without Hermes' help and mediation this naval attempt was not only dangerous but lead directly to death. In such circumstances, how could the Athenians sail without the help of Hermes Promachos, Hermes Hegemonios or other Hermeses. By cutting the *Hermai* pillars bad omen (οἰωνός)⁷⁸ was made, every connection between the Athenians and the gods was cut out! Side by side with the profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries, the affair of the Hermocopids became the best known religious scandal and probably the most notorious religious abuse in politics of Ancient Greece.

Along with *Hermai*, as a specific Attic religious monument, representations of young Hermes were related to Hermes' cult as the guardian of gymnasia which occur again only in the Athenian polis religion. Hermes was also depicted in sculpture, vase painting and in marble relief as a ram and calf bearer (Kriophoros and Moschophoros). This kind of representation has to do with the cult of Hermes that comes from Boeotia where he was firstly worshiped as the god savior who averted the plague from Tanagra by carrying around the city walls a ram on his shoulders. This cult is remembered in the annual sacrifice of a lamb that was carried round the city by the most handsome boy⁷⁹. This myth describes the process of purification of the city from the disease that led to drought and thus to famine which was the punishment for some hybris, a punishment brought by the gods to the community as the tale of Oedipus Tyrannus asserts (also from Boeotia, i.e. Thebes). We have to have in mind that Boeotia was one of the rare and most fertile granaries of Greece and the myth probably reflects the invasion of the Greek nomadic tribes who must have devastated the fields of Boeotia and changed the lifestyle of the agricultural population into the livestock farming one. In reality rams or calves saved people from starvation.

Plausibly at first Hermes was worshiped as the chthonian deity together with the female deities related to agriculture, this also points to the change of his position (i.e. to the transition) and function in the solar pantheon of the incomers, where he took his place somewhere in between:

⁷⁷ OSBORNE, (1985) 47-73.

⁷⁸ Thuc., 6.27.4.

⁷⁹ Paus., 9.22.1-2.

between the Celestial and the Chthonian gods, between the Upper and the Underworld where he finally got the role of the divine messenger. The representation of Hermes Trikephalos from Kerameiokos⁸⁰ most probably sublimes his three spheres of functioning: the chthonian, earthly and celestial. We found parallel and a similar deity amongst the South Slavs, Triglav or Trojan (the Three-headed god) who was also a chthonian and celestial deity, responsible for all three spheres encircling thus human lives in the circle of life, birth and death, i.e. the wheel of the year. He is represented with three heads⁸¹ and bears the name Triglav because he watches over the three dimensions of the world⁸². Actually, he “participates in the whole cosmic vertical and represents the unity of chthonic-solar (celestial) structure”⁸³. The chthonian and celestial characteristics of Hermes are asserted in another Pausanias’ description: in Arcadia and Messenia Hermes was also a shepherd god and was worshiped together with Apollo⁸⁴. This brings us back to the story of Apollo’s and Hermes’ clash over the cattle theft (where Hermes was described as a baby-god, the youngest of the “third generation of gods”), the theft which would place Hermes into the Greek solar pantheon.

During the 4th century BC and later on, Hermes was mostly represented in anthropomorphic sculptures as a young beardless man, quite the opposite from his depiction in the archaic and the 5th century art. In Roman religion Hermes was identified with Mercury who was originally an Etruscan god Turms.

Keeping in touch with the Egyptians during the Hellenistic period and in the long process of religious syncretism, the figure of Hermes was transformed and gained new characteristics. As mentioned above, in Egypt he was identified with Thoth, while by the Christians, as the wall paintings,

⁸⁰ See note 52 above.

⁸¹ PETROVIC (1995) 313.

⁸² PETROVIC (1999) 50, 165 et passim. Cf. ČAJKANOVIC (1994) 78-9, 183-4 et passim.

⁸³ PETROVIĆ (1999) 128.

⁸⁴ In the joint cult in Messenia both of them bear the epithet “κροιοφόροι” (cf. Paus., 4.33.4). In Arcadia Hermes also bears the same epithet as Apollo “ἐπιμελής”, cf. FARNELL (1896) 9.

mosaics and sculptures depict his figure as Hermes Kriophoros was adopted and transformed into the figure of Good Shepherd⁸⁵.

This article aims not to present the worship, myths, rites, functions and the cult of Hermes in all of Greece as well as all Hermes' representations in art, since there are too many. Our conclusion is that it seems that from the Mycenaean period to the Christian era, Hermes got many functions, characteristics and his cult had many varieties, probably assuming the characteristics of different deities through time who had similar roles and homonymic names reflecting the changes in the Greek soil and Greek world, starting from the change of population and the way of life to the (agri)cultural and religious changes. Hermes' various functions and heterogenic nature of his cult probably reflect the transitional period(s) in the Greek mainland, transforming and replacing one chthonian divinity in relation to celestial divinities as the god of the boundaries in every sense. Thus Hermes as the transporter of the souls – Psychopompos, i.e. the god of the road between the Under and the Upper world, became the patron deity of roads in general and the deity of everything and everyone that could be connected to that (travelers, sailors, merchants...). The etymology of the Etruscan god Turms, whose name most likely derives from the Indo-European root “drum”⁸⁶, overlaps with Hermes' role as “the god runner of the in-between”. We have to have in mind that St. Augustin also gave an interesting view on the etymology of Mercury's name deriving it from “medio currens” to which Hermes' role as the mediator also corresponds, the one who runs between two worlds. The Greeks, who were generally always trying to explain the words relating them to some phenomena, originated Hermes' name either from *hermios lophos*, *eirō*, or *hermeneuō*. They were also identifying their deities with the deities of other peoples who they

⁸⁵ In some cases this figure represented the so-called Shepherd of Hermas, from the Christian literature of the 2nd century which clearly shows the transition from Hermes Kriophoros into Good Shepherd of the Gospel of John. Cf. MURRAY (1998) 475, BRETT, (1942) 39, SYNDICUS (1962) 23.

⁸⁶ CRAWFORD (1872) 256, cf. also the etymology and meaning of the words *δραμοῦμαι*, *δρόμος*, *δρομή* and Serbian *друм*.

adopted, transformed and gave new functions in order to place the new/old deity into their own pantheon.

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Resumo: Hermes ocupa um lugar especial na religião grega. O seu nome encontra-se gravado nas tábuas de Micenas. A maioria das fontes gregas liga o seu culto com a Ática e relaciona o seu nome com λόφος ἑρμαῖος e a sua transformação em *Hermai*. Hermes recebeu muitos epítetos, refletindo as suas variadas funções e origens antigas. Este artigo aborda uma possível origem de Hermes e do seu culto, descreve os seus variados papéis na religião grega, conotações políticas e simbólicas, (ab)usos do seu culto, bem como diferentes representações e, finalmente, a transformação da divindade no período cristão, de acordo com testemunhos escritos e materiais.

Palavras-chave: Hermes; culto; ctónico; celestial; representação; transformação.

Resumen: Hermes ocupa un lugar especial en la religión griega. Su nombre está grabado en las tablillas micénicas. La mayoría de las fuentes griegas conecta su culto con la Ática y relacionan su nombre con ἑρμαῖος λόφος y su transformación en *Hermai*. Hermes tiene muchos epítetos, lo que refleja sus diferentes funciones y su origen antiguo. Este artículo considera un posible origen de Hermes y su culto, describe diversas funciones de este en la religión griega, connotaciones políticas y simbólicas, (ab)usos de su culto, así como diferentes representaciones suyas y, finalmente, la transformación de la deidad en el período cristiano de acuerdo con la pruebas escritas y materiales.

Palabras clave: Hermes; culto; ctónico; celestial; representación; transformación.

Résumé: Hermès occupe une place spéciale dans la religion grecque. Son nom se trouve gravé sur les planches de Mycènes. La plupart des sources grecques lie son culte à Attique et met en relation son nom avec λόφος ἑρμαῖος et sa transformation en *Hermai*. Hermès possède plusieurs épithètes, qui reflètent ses différentes fonctions et son origine ancienne. Cet article soulève le voile sur une autre origine d'Hermès et de son culte et il décrit les différents rôles qu'il joue dans la religion grecque, les connotations politiques et symboliques, les usages et les abus de son culte, les différentes représentations qu'il assume ainsi que, et d'après les documents écrits et les matériaux existants, la transformation de la divinité pendant la période chrétienne.

Mots-clés: Hermès; culte; chtonien; céleste; représentation; transformation.