

Archiv für Religionsgeschichte

Begründet von

Jan Assmann, Fritz Graf, Tonio Hölscher, Ludwig Koenen, John Scheid

Herausgegeben von

Susanne Bickel, David Frankfurter, Sarah Iles Johnston, Gabriella Pironti,
Jörg Rüpke, John Scheid, Zsuzsanna Várhelyi

Unter Mitwirkung von

Mary Beard, Corinne Bonnet, Philippe Borgeaud, Alexander Knysh, Charles Malamoud,
Stefan Maul, Robert Parker, Guy Stroumsa, Michel Tardieu, Youri Volokhine

Vierundzwanzigster Band

DE GRUYTER

Herausgeber

Prof. Dr. Susanne Bickel, Universität Basel, Departement Altertumswissenschaften, Ägyptologie,
Petersgraben 51, 4051 Basel

Prof. Dr. David Frankfurter, Boston University, Department of Religion, 145 Bay State Road,
Boston MA 02215

Prof. Dr. Sarah Iles Johnston, Ohio State University, Department of Classics, 414 University Hall,
230 North Oval Mall, Columbus OH 43210

Prof. Dr. Gabriella Pironti, Centre ANHIMA, INHA – Galerie Colbert, 2, Rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris

Prof. Dr. Jörg Rüpke, Max-Weber-Kolleg, Universität Erfurt, Nordhäuser Str. 63, 99089 Erfurt

Prof. Dr. John Scheid, Collège de France, 11 place Marcelin-Berthelot, 75231 Paris

Prof. Dr. Zsuzsanna Várhelyi, Boston University, Department of Classical Studies,
745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston MA 02215

Manuskripte werden erbeten an

Prof. Dr. David Frankfurter, Boston University, Department of Religion, 145 Bay State Road, Boston MA 02215
oder

Prof. Dr. Jörg Rüpke, Max-Weber-Kolleg, Universität Erfurt, Nordhäuser Str. 63, 99089 Erfurt

Durch die Veröffentlichung der Originalarbeiten in diesem Jahrbuch gehen sämtliche Nutzungsrechte an
den Beiträgen, einschließlich des Rechtes der Übersetzung, an den Verlag über.

Das Werk einschließlich aller Beiträge ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb
der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und
strafbar. Das gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und die
Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

ISSN 1436-3038

e-ISSN 1868-8888

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie;
detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

© 2023 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

Contents

Dossier

Dieux en séries ? Approche comparée des listes divines dans les religions antiques

(G. Pironti, C. Bonnet, R. Loriol, éd.)

Gabriella Pironti, Romain Loriol et Corinne Bonnet

Des dieux en série ? Quelques réflexions préliminaires et un cas d'étude — 3

Laurent Coulon

À propos des listes et séries divines en Égypte ancienne : la mise en série des formes d'Osiris à Karnak — 17

Marinella Ceravolo, Lorenzo Verderame

Les listes des dieux dans le Proche-Orient ancien. Les noms divins entre hiérarchie et puissance — 35

Gabriella Pironti

De la « liste » à la « configuration » de puissances divines : réflexions sur les « formes élémentaires » du polythéisme en pays grec — 77

Sylvie Perceau, Gabrièle Wersinger Taylor

Epistémologie et théologies : quand l'hexamètre dactylique oriente les listes divines (des Néréides d'Homère aux dieux racines d'Empédocle, quelques exemples) — 97

Daniela Bonanno

« C'est grâce à ces dieux que les Sélinontains sont vainqueurs ». Une liste de divinités dans l'inscription du temple G à Sélinonte — 129

Sylvain Lebreton

Les attributs onomastiques divins dans les listes de prêtrises en pays grec : motivations d'établissement et logiques organisationnelles — 153

John Scheid

Les listes de divinités à l'époque impériale — 175

VI — Contents

Romain Loriol

Pour en finir avec la « rupture de la *pax deorum* ». Nouvelles perspectives sur d'anciens signes — 189

Varia

Romina Della Casa

Scenes of a Disrupted Landscape in Hittite *Historiolae*: Ancient Notions of Smoke within Urban Environments of Anatolia — 227

Carman Romano

“Great Awe of the Gods Restrains My Voice”: Narrating the Efficacy of the Eleusinian Mysteries — 249

Carmine Pisano

At Zeus service: Hermes in the representations of the birth of Athena — 263

Colleen Kron

How to Become Immortal and Ageless: Affording Belief in Epitaphs with Extraordinary Claims — 281

Sarah Iles Johnston

Here Lies Hecate: Poetry and Apotheosis in Second-Century Mesembria — 305

Philippe Moreau

Les *Caristia*, fête de la parentèle à Rome — 319

Carmine Pisano

At Zeus service: Hermes in the representations of the birth of Athena

1 From narrative to images

In the *Theogony* Hesiod narrates that Zeus, having become king of the cosmos, consolidates his power through a series of marriages. First, the son of Cronus marries Metis (“the cunning intelligence”) and, when she is pregnant with Athena, he swallows her on the advice of Gaia and Uranus, in order to acquire the qualities necessary for a stable and eternal government and to avoid the goddess later generating a son stronger than his father.¹ Metis’ pregnancy is brought to term by Zeus himself, who delivers Athena from his head.² On this unusual birth, Apollodorus states that Zeus bore his daughter after Hephaestus hit him on the head with an axe.³ This detail, absent in Hesiod,⁴ is certainly ancient since it is found in most of the iconographic representations of the birth of Athena. The corpus is well known and has been analyzed from different perspectives.⁵ The purpose of this contribution is to investigate the role of Hermes in these scenes starting from a rather exceptional circumstance: the long inscription that runs vertically, from top to bottom, along the body of the god on the Kyllenios Painter amphora found in Cerveteri, in Etruria, and today preserved in Berlin (fig. 1).⁶

This black-figure amphora, made in Athens between 570 and 560 BC, presents an articulated representation of the birth of Athena in the presence of various deities, all named through inscriptions. The case of Hermes is particular. He has an inscription that is not limited to the theonym alone, but which consists of a sort of sentence, a real self-presentation, which the son of Maia pronounces before Hephaestus: ἡρμης εμυ Κυλληνιος (“I am Hermes Kyllenios”). The length of the inscription and its particular discursive nature have caused some amazement among art historians, who defined the artist as the Kyllenios Painter by virtue of the epithet that Hermes attributes to

1 Hes., *Th.* 886–900.

2 Hes., *Th.* 924–926. Cf. also Hom., *h.Ap.* 307–309.

3 Apollod. 1.36.

4 The version of Athena’s birth which includes the intervention of Hephaestus assumes that the god was born before the goddess. In Hesiod, however, the order of birth is reversed: Zeus gives birth to Athena from his head and Hera, angry, generates Hephaestus “without joining in love with anyone” (Hes., *Th.* 924–929). Also in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (305–355), the birth of Athena by Zeus arouses the anger of Hera, who, in this case, takes her revenge by generating Typhon.

5 Cf. Schefold (1992) 7–15; Malagardis (1997); Darthou/Strawczynski (2006) 49–54; Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2015) 43–47.

6 *BAPD* 310014 = *LIMC* Athena, 346 = *LIMC* Hermes, 681 (Berlin, Antikensammlung: F1704).



Fig. 1: Kyllenios Painter amphora with birth of Athena. Antikensammlung, Berlin. From *LIMC* Athena, 346 = *LIMC* Hermes, 681.

himself on the vase,⁷ and philologists such as Cornelius J. Ruijgh, to whom we owe for the majority of the transcription and interpretation of the inscriptions on the vases of this Athenian pottery painter.⁸ In the *Corpus of Attic Vase Inscriptions* (CAVI) the following observation by the scholar is reported: it is “remarkable that Hermes who is not very important in this story has such a long name”.⁹ Ruijgh’s statement seems to be dictated by an analysis of the literary tradition rather than by a comparative examination of the iconographic corpus. In fact, if we look at Hesiod’s and Apollodorus’ versions of Athena’s birth, Hermes – like most of the other gods – has no role in the narrative plot. However, if we put the narratives aside and focus on the figurative representations of the episode, the situation changes radically: the presence of Hermes – as we shall see shortly – is so common that it suggests that the god plays an essential role in the story; next to him appear a large number of other deities in addition to those present in literary texts. The circumstance invites us not to interpret the images in the light of the narratives, since the former do not appear to follow the same logic as the latter. Instead, images and narratives, as the case in question confirms, are two forms of language, which reflect shared knowledge in a different way, each on the basis of its own expressive code.¹⁰

In a polytheistic context, the birth of a god involves an overall reconfiguration of the pantheon, since the network of relationships that binds the divine powers has to incorporate the honors and prerogatives (*timai*) of the new divinity.¹¹ Now, in relation to the specific case, the narratives relate the birth of Athena putting certain protagonists of the story (Zeus, Metis, Hephaestus, the newborn goddess) in the foreground and leaving the other gods in the background, although they too are involved by virtue of the functioning mechanisms of polytheism. Liberated from the narratives, the images can *photograph* a different section, or even a larger section, of the pantheon

⁷ On the Kyllenios Painter cf. Bothmer (1944) and Kluiver (1996) 1–6.

⁸ Kluiver (1996) 5.

⁹ <https://www.avi.unibas.ch/DB/searchform.html?ID=2357> (seen 27.8.2020). Cf. also Kluiver (1996) 5.

¹⁰ Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2015) 46 and 55.

¹¹ Jaillard (2007) 69–98.

that is being restructured, making explicit what is implicit in the narratives and highlighting the methods and forms of participation of deities that do not appear in the texts. Among these deities, Hermes is so often present in the scenes of Athena's birth (he is found in 42 of the 88 representations recorded in the Beazley Archive Pottery Database, that is to say in almost half of the corpus)¹² that it appears necessary to reconsider his function in the light of the figurative syntax and of the systems of relationships that unite the gods within the iconographic pantheon.

2 An iconographic scheme and its variants

In Greek ceramography, the birth of Athena constitutes a rather widespread iconographic scheme, which is represented in a multiplicity of variants: from the simplest, with a reduced number of protagonists, to the most complex, where the theme of the birth of the new goddess (as happens with the wedding of Peleus and Thetis) serves as a pretext for an enlarged presentation of the assembly of the gods.¹³ Given the purposes of our investigation, which aims at identifying Hermes' role in such scenes, we will pay particular attention to the iconographic variants that include the god.

The simplest form of Athena's birth involves Zeus sitting on a throne with his newborn daughter, in the presence of Hephaestus or Eileithyia. On the lip of a black-figure cup from Vulci (550–540 BC),¹⁴ which presents the same version of the story attested by Apollodorus, Zeus is represented with a beam of lightning in his right hand while giving birth to Athena from his head. Flanking father and daughter is Hephaestus, who has just hit Zeus on the head with his axe and who makes a gesture of greeting towards the newborn goddess with his right hand. On an Athenian red-figure pelike from Nola (490–480 BC), Hephaestus is replaced by Eileithyia, deity of childbirth, who helps Zeus in the moment of labor.¹⁵ The god, seated on a throne and with a scepter in his hand, holds the little Athena, wearing a helmet, on his knees. Eileithyia raises her right arm in the direction of the goddess with a gesture of greeting and simultaneous amazement. More often there are two Eileithyiai, as on the side B of an amphora in Orvieto (550–500 BC)¹⁶ and on a cup in New York (ca. 550 BC),¹⁷ where they greet the

12 <https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/pottery/default.htm> (seen 27.8.2020).

13 *BAPD* 43278 (Athenian black-figure pyxis, 550–500 BC, New York, Shelby White & Leon Levy Collection: 105); *BAPD* 310013 (Athenian black-figure amphora, 575–525 BC, Paris, Musée du Louvre: E852); *BAPD* 310014 (note 6).

14 *BAPD* 301068 = *LIMC* Athena, 347 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 191 (London, British Museum: 18675–8.962).

15 *BAPD* 202586 = *LIMC* Athena, 370 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 44 (Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum: 728). Cf. also *BAPD* 31515 (fragment of an Athenian black-figure amphora, from the Agora of Athens, 550–500 BC, Athens, Agora Museum: P26650) and *BAPD* 32458 (fragment of an Athenian black-figure lekythos, from the Acropolis of Athens, 550–500 BC, Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Coll.: 1.2291). On Eileithyia see in particular Pingiatoglou (1981); Olmos (1986); Petrucci (2007); Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2013).

16 *BAPD* 46552 (Orvieto, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo: 1006).

17 *BAPD* 302576 = *LIMC* Athena, 369 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 39 (New York, Metropolitan Museum: 06.1097).

newborn Athena, standing and fully armed (with helmet, spear and shield) on the knees of Zeus.¹⁸ An amphora from Vulci (ca. 510 BC) preserved in Munich¹⁹ and a more or less contemporary amphora in Vatican City²⁰ are an interesting case. They present Zeus enthroned with a scepter and two Eileithyiai who raise their arms towards him to start the labor that will culminate in the birth of Athena. The goddess is absent from the scene, which portrays a moment before her birth, but in both cases she is represented on the other side of the vase (in the context of Paris' judgment on the amphora of Munich and next to Heracles on the amphora of Vatican City).

The presence of Eileithyia or of Eileithyiai is not an alternative to that of Hephaestus. These divinities, in fact, often appear all together in the scenes of Athena's birth. On an amphora from Vulci (ca. 510 BC), which has an Amazonomachy on the other side, the Eileithyiai greet Athena who comes out armed from the head of Zeus seated on a throne, while Hephaestus moves away to the right holding his axe, turning back to admire the prodigious birth.²¹ A red-figure hydria from Nola (ca. 450 BC)²² represents the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus in the presence of the astonished gods, Nike or Iris, Hephaestus and the two Eileithyiai, one of whom has both arms raised as a sign of wonder.²³

To summarise: the basic scheme of Athena's birth foresees Zeus enthroned with his daughter newly born or about to be born, Hephaestus and/or the Eileithyiai. An interesting fact is that Hermes appears in the main variants of this pattern with such frequency that it seems he is an optional but very important element.

On the left of an amphora in Berlin (490–480 BC) Zeus, rising from the throne (in the center), holds the newborn Athena in his arms, in front of Eileithyia and Hermes, who moves to the right but turns his head back in the direction of father and daughter (fig. 2).²⁴

A representation of this type returns on an amphora in Dallas (575–525 BC),²⁵ where Zeus gives birth to Athena from his head between an Eileithyia and a Hera Ei-

18 See also *BAPD* 18416 (Athenian black-figure amphora, 575–525 BC, Basel, H. Cahn: HC801) and *BAPD* 340568 = *LIMC* Athena, 339 (Athenian black-figure amphora, 550–500 BC, Budapest, Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts: 51.2). In some cases, we find more precisely an Eileithyia and a Hera Eileithyia, indicated by the crown she wears on her head and/or by a richer and more sumptuous clothing. Cf. *infra* and note 26.

19 *BAPD* 1574 = *LIMC* Athena, 341 (Munich, Antikensammlungen: 1545).

20 *BAPD* 303394 = *LIMC* Athena, 342 (Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano: 402.1).

21 *BAPD* 320177 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 7 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 197 (London, British Museum: B218). See also *BAPD* 9022660 (Athenian black-figure pyxis, from Ceramicus, Athens, Ceramicus: 1590).

22 *BAPD* 214704 = *LIMC* Athena, 357 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 14 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 200 (Paris, Cabinet des Médailles: 444).

23 On *BAPD* 202504 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 43 (Athenian red-figure krater, from Locri, 500–450 BC, Reggio Calabria, Museo Nazionale: 4379), Eileithyia expresses her wonder at the birth of Athena by leaning her hand on the chin.

24 *BAPD* 305527 = *LIMC* Hermes, 361 = *LIMC* Artemis, 1264 = *LIMC* Atalante, 71 (Berlin, Antikensammlung: F1837). See also *BAPD* 8771 (plate fragments from Brauron, 550–500 BC, Brauron, Archaeological Museum: 1) and *BAPD* 28096 (fragments of an Athenian black-figure pyxis, from Phocaea, 550–500 BC).

25 *BAPD* 9032035 (Dallas, Museum of Art).



Fig. 2: Athenian black-figure amphora with birth of Athena. Antikensammlung, Berlin. From *LIMC* Hermes, 361 = *LIMC* Artemis, 1264 = *LIMC* Atalante, 71.

leithyia (indicated by a richer clothing)²⁶ in the presence of Hermes and two male figures (a naked youth and a dressed adult). While Zeus parturient and Hera Eileithyia represent the center of the scene, the position of Hermes (on the right) is symmetrical to that of Eileithyia (on the left). Hermes is also associated with the Eileithyiai in the iconographic module depicting the moment immediately preceding the birth of Athena. On an amphora from Agrigento (ca. 520 BC),²⁷ the Eileithyiai start the labor of Zeus raising by their arms, while Hermes attends the scene on the left of the vase. The same subject is portrayed on an amphora from Nola (ca. 530 BC),²⁸ where the god appears on the right of the scene with his head turned towards Zeus in the center, while on the left there is the fragmentary figure of a young man. Other similar scenes feature a larger number of characters. The frieze below side A of a krater from Cerveteri (525–500 BC)²⁹ represents Zeus enthroned between two Eileithyiai raising their arms, Hermes moving to the right with his head turned in the direction of the parturient god, a female figure making a gesture of greeting near the son of Maia, and a man with a spear on the opposite side. Again, the position of Hermes is symmetrical to that of one of the Eileithyiai, suggesting a relationship between their respective functions. On the shoulder of an Athenian black-figure hydria (530–520 BC)³⁰ Zeus enthroned, the Eileithyiai with their arms raised and Hermes with his head turned are all accompanied by a male figure with a long robe performing a gesture of greeting and two female figures on either side of the whole representation.

In the scenes of the birth of Athena Hermes is not only present in the iconographic variant with the Eileithyiai, but also in the one with the Eileithyiai and Hephaestus. An amphora from Vulci (525–500 BC) portrays a central Zeus in labor between the Eileithyiai, on the right Hephaestus with an axe turning his head towards Zeus, on the left

²⁶ On the concept of Hera Eileithyia see Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2015) 46–47.

²⁷ *BAPD* 12446 = *LIMC* Athena, 338 (Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum: B1).

²⁸ *BAPD* 351035 (Berlin, Antikensammlung: F1862).

²⁹ *BAPD* 320217 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 51 (Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum: 3618).

³⁰ *BAPD* 340491 (Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig: Z368).



Fig. 3: Black-figure lekythos with birth of Athena. Copenhagen, National Museum. From *LIMC* Athena, 355 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 195 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 7b.

Hermes with a caduceus, in a position symmetrical to that of Hephaestus.³¹ The same characters reappear on a black-figure lekythos from Vulci (520–510 BC):³² in this case Hermes, whose position is again symmetrical to that of Hephaestus, makes a gesture of greeting in the direction of the newborn goddess and the scene is framed by two warriors, who seem to refer to the functional sphere of Athena (fig. 3).

Zeus enthroned, the little Athena, a single Eileithyia, Hephaestus with double axe, Hermes and a male figure with a long robe appear again on a fragment of an amphora from Locri (525–475 BC).³³ The presence of Hermes in such scenes is so common that scholars generally identify with the god the fragmentary figure appearing on the right of an Athenian hydria (ca. 550 BC),³⁴ that presents Hephaestus on the left and the parturient Zeus between the Eileithyiai in the center. In some cases, one might even think that representations including Hermes are one of the possible variants of the basic iconographic scheme. On an Athenian black-figure amphora dating from 550–530 BC (fig. 4),³⁵ Zeus is represented seated on a throne with a scepter in his hand in a moment before starting labor and giving birth to Athena, as on the aforementioned amphorae of Munich and Vatican City.³⁶ In this case, however, the Eileithyiai are replaced by Hermes with caduceus, who raises his right arm in the direction of his father. The scene is completed by young people with spears³⁷ that seem to refer to the imminent

³¹ *BAPD* 320085 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 196 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 7 = *LIMC* Hermes, 685 (London, British Museum: B244).

³² *BAPD* 10683 = *LIMC* Athena, 355 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 195 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 7b (Copenhagen, National Museum: B102).

³³ *BAPD* 351352 = *LIMC* Athena, 366 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 36 = *LIMC* Hermes, 660 (Reggio Calabria, Museo Nazionale: 4018).

³⁴ *BAPD* 100 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 194 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 10 (Rome, Musei Capitolini: 65).

³⁵ *BAPD* 11916 = *LIMC* Hermes, 719 (London, British Museum: B157).

³⁶ See notes 19–20.

³⁷ See *BAPD* 301317 (fragment of an Athenian black-figure amphora, 550–500 BC, Perugia, Museo Civico: 91): birth of Athena with Zeus enthroned, Hermes, male figures with spears.



Fig. 4: Athenian black-figure amphora with Zeus and Hermes. British Museum, London. From *LIMC Hermes*, 719.

birth of the armed goddess, who appears on the other side of the vase in the context of the struggle between Heracles and Geryon.

Since the documentation in our possession consists only of the surviving vases and it is, therefore, difficult to get a reliable idea of the full complex of ancient ceramographic production, statistical investigation can only produce precarious results. However, in the specific case in question, simple research conducted in the Beazley Archive Pottery Database reveals a significant fact beyond any necessary methodological precaution: among the deities that can be added to the basic scheme of the birth of Athena Hermes is by far the most attested.³⁸ This data radically negates the hypothesis of the god having a marginal role, which is premised on the almost unconscious habit of reading the images in the light of the narratives, where Hermes does not appear. In the narratives, as well as Hermes, there are not even many of the other deities that we find in the vascular images of the birth of Athena as an alternative or in association with the god of Kyllene. An examination of some of the most common divine configurations will allow a better understanding of the logics that preside over the figurative representation of the polytheistic pantheon.

³⁸ In addition to Hermes, Ares and Poseidon are attested: Ares on *BAPD* 23018 (Attic black-figure amphora, 575–525 BC, London, market, Sotheby's) and *BAPD* 201131 = *LIMC* Athena, 356 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 199 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 12 (Athenian red-figure cup, from Vulci, 525–475 BC, London, British Museum: E15); Poseidon on *BAPD* 30410 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 27 (Athenian black-figure hydria, Basel, private collection).



Fig. 5: Athenian black-figure amphora with birth of Athena. Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (VA). From *LIMC* Athena, 351 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 23 = *LIMC* Hera, 290.

3 Divine configurations represented

The iconographic module with a parturient Zeus, the Eileithyia and Hermes can be subject to further additions. One of the most attested is Ares. On a black-figure amphora from Palermo (550–525 BC), Hermes making a gesture of greeting and Ares with shield and helmet, respectively on the left and on the right, frame the scene of Athena's birth with Zeus cared for by an Eileithyia and a Hera Eileithyia wearing a crown.³⁹ Gabriella Pironti and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge observe: “La présence d’Ares arborant son bouclier à la naissance d’Athéna, dans cette position, vise sans doute à créer un effet de résonance avec la déesse armée qui vient de naître au centre de la scène”.⁴⁰ The same characters of the Palermo amphora are found on a contemporary Richmond amphora (fig. 5)⁴¹ with two small differences: this time Hera Eileithyia is on the right and no longer on the left of Zeus; the parturient god is portrayed in an unusual frontal position, like the newborn Athena, facing the observer of the vase. Finally, a similar scene, with Zeus between the two Eileithyia before giving

³⁹ *BAPD* 18014 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 24 = *LIMC* Ares, 72 (Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale: 1455). See also *BAPD* 21952 (Athenian black-figure amphora, 550–500 BC, Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi); *BAPD* 42002 (Athenian black-figure amphora, from Lentini, 550–500 BC, Lentini, Museum: 4677); *BAPD* 45073 (Athenian black-figure amphora, from Himera, 550–500 BC, Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale); *BAPD* 320071 = *LIMC* Hermes, 683 (Athenian black-figure amphora, from Tarquinia, 550–500 BC, Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese: RC7453).

⁴⁰ Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2015) 44, note 15.

⁴¹ *BAPD* 350434 = *LIMC* Athena, 351 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 23 = *LIMC* Hera, 290 (Richmond, VA, Museum of Fine Arts: 60.23).



Fig. 6: Athenian black-figure amphora with birth of Athena. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MA). From *LIMC* Eileithyia, 16 = *LIMC* Ares, 69 = *LIMC* Apollon, 818.

birth, is attested on side B of a Paris amphora from the second half of the sixth century BC.⁴²

These vases feature a well-defined set of divinities: Zeus, Athena, the Eileithyiai, Hermes and Ares. In other representations this divine configuration is subject to variations which concern above all the first element on the left of Zeus: Eileithyia or Hera Eileithyia. On an amphora from Cerveteri⁴³ and three amphorae from Vulci, all datable to between 575 and 525 BC, the Eileithyia on the left of Zeus is replaced by Apollo citharedus (see fig. 6),⁴⁴ while on another amphora from Cerveteri she is replaced by Poseidon with trident.⁴⁵ Poseidon is another of the deities who frequently appear in representations of the birth of Athena. On an Athenian black-figure amphora (575–525

⁴² *BAPD* 26140 (Paris, market, Antonovich). Such as in other cases, Hermes moves outwards but turns his head towards the center of the scene.

⁴³ *BAPD* 310333 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 16 = *LIMC* Apollon, 819 (Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum: 3596).

⁴⁴ *BAPD* 310305 (fig. 6) = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 16 = *LIMC* Ares, 69 = *LIMC* Apollon, 818 (ca. 540 a.c., Boston, MA, Museum of Fine Arts: 00.330); *BAPD* 310307 = *LIMC* Athena, 352 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 16 = *LIMC* Apollon, 819 = *LIMC* Ares, 71 (ca. 540 a.c., Munich, Antikensammlungen: J645); *BAPD* 310308 = *LIMC* Athena, 368 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 37 (Würzburg, Universität, Martin von Wagner Museum: 250). On the last amphora Ares is replaced by a male figure in a long dress. See also *BAPD* 310306 (Athenian black-figure amphora, 575–525 BC, New Haven, CT, Yale University: 1983.22) and *BAPD* 320382 = *LIMC* Athena, 367 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 40 = *LIMC* Apollon, 821 (Athenian black-figure amphora, from Orvieto, 550–500 BC, Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania: 3441), where Hermes is replaced respectively by Dionysus and Hephaestus (?) appearing on the left of Apollo. On *BAPD* 42066 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 41 (fragments of an Athenian black-figure amphora, 550–500 BC, Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum: 2205) Zeus gives birth to Athena amidst the Eileithyiai in the presence of Apollo citharedus and Ares.

⁴⁵ *BAPD* 310332 = *LIMC* Athena, 340 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 49 (Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano: 17701). In this case the tripod which appears as *episēma* of the shield of Ares refers to Apollo, the owl clinging to the scepter of Zeus alludes to Athena.



Fig. 7: Athenian black-figure amphora with birth of Athena. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (PA). From *LIMC* Eileithyia, 18.

BC),⁴⁶ Zeus gives birth to Athena between Apollo citharedus and Eileithyia. At the sides of the scene there are Ares with a shield and Poseidon with the trident, who is in the position generally reserved for Hermes. The husband of Amphitrite finds himself with Ares, parturient Zeus, Eileithyia and another female figure on an amphora preserved in Paris (550–525 BC).⁴⁷ On side A of a pyxis from Thebes, in Boeotia (ca. 570–565 BC),⁴⁸ Poseidon, with his head turned, appears on the right, occupying a place elsewhere typical of Hermes, with Hephaestus in symmetrical position on the left, the parturient Zeus between the Eileithyiai in the center, and two female figures at the edges. There are also cases in which Hermes and Poseidon are co-present, as on an Athenian hydria from Vulci (550–500 BC),⁴⁹ where the two deities with their characteristic attributes (caduceus and trident) frame the central scene comprising Zeus enthroned, an already adult Athena with aegis and helmet in hand, and two Eileithyiai, one of which holds a long spear. A last possible combination is attested by an amphora from Vulci (550–525 BC):⁵⁰ its faces present two different representations of Athena's birth between the Eileithyiai with Hermes on side A and Poseidon on side B.

Therefore, the iconographic scheme of Athena's birth with parturient Zeus, Hephaestus and/or the Eileithyiai can be enriched with other deities that are absent, like the Eileithyiai themselves, in the literary texts: a Philadelphia amphora datable between 575 and 525 BC (fig. 7) features the birth of Athena in the presence of the Eilei-

⁴⁶ *BAPD* 310313 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 16 = *LIMC* Apollon, 819 (Berlin, lost: F1699).

⁴⁷ *BAPD* 310303 (Paris, Musée du Louvre: F32). See also *BAPD* 4668 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 21 (Athenian black-figure amphora, Oldenburg, Stadtmuseum: XII.8249.1).

⁴⁸ *BAPD* 300499 = *LIMC* Athena, 345 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 4 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 188 (Paris, Musée du Louvre: CA616).

⁴⁹ *BAPD* 320038 = *LIMC* Athena, 371 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 45 = *LIMC* Hermes, 684 (Würzburg, Universität, Martin von Wagner Museum: L309).

⁵⁰ *BAPD* 340531 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 25 (Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia: 64217).

thyiai, with Hermes, Ares, Apollo, Poseidon, all appearing together, along with a female figure and a male figure crowned with ivy (Dionysus?).⁵¹

While it is easy to explain the presence of the Eileithyiai, by virtue of their function as goddesses of childbirth, for the other deities things are not so obvious. What is their role? Are these deities simple additions, aimed solely at filling the scene? Or does their presence have a deeper value? If this value exists, it must be sought within the functioning logics of Greek polytheism. As we have said, the birth of a new god involves a reconfiguration of the balance within the pantheon, necessary to accommodate the god's set of powers and honors. It is as if the other divine powers had to integrate the newly born god, renegotiating divisions and forms of cooperation. This renegotiation is represented in literary texts through various narrative devices, such as the dispute between Hermes and Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.⁵² The images, for their part, illustrate the reorganization of the pantheon by showing specific divine configurations particularly subject to this process of redefining relationships. In the case in question, Athena, born from the head of Zeus with the help of Hephaestus and the obstetric assistance of the Eileithyiai, is associated with the deities who are closest to her and who are therefore called, on the one hand, to make room for her inside the society of the gods, and on the other hand, to define her range of competences and to design her physiognomy. This is true for Hermes, who interferes with Athena in the sphere of the *mētis* and who, like the goddess, works as an envoy of Zeus;⁵³ for Ares, who shares the field of war with Athena; for Apollo, who is the closest son to Zeus (the only one to penetrate his *boulē*)⁵⁴ while Athena is *par excellence* the “daughter of Zeus” (*Dios korē*)⁵⁵, born directly from her father; for Poseidon, who interacts with Athena in the areas of navigation and horse racing;⁵⁶ for Hephaestus himself who, in addition to favoring Zeus' labor with the axe, is also a god endowed with *mētis* and shares the world of techniques and arts with Athena. Given these relationships, it is no coincidence that on the vessels the aforementioned deities are present at the time of Athena's birth. Their presence is not purely ornamental, but conveys a precise theological message that must have been clear to the Greek public. These are the deities whose *timē* is partly superimposable to that of the new goddess and who are, therefore, more directly called to welcome her, leaving her the space that is due to her. At the same time, in images which focus on the birth of Athena, these deities must say, through the prerogatives they share with the daughter of Zeus, who the newborn goddess is, where she fits into the pantheon and what she does: they must draw her *identikit*, tracing the contours of her *timē*. Athena's field of action is defined through a confrontation with the gods who interact more closely with her, confirming that, in the

51 BAPD 14652 = LIMC Eileithyia, 18 (Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania: 3440).

52 Cf. Jaillard (2007) 83–98 and Pisano (2014) 89–127.

53 Pisano (2016).

54 Hom., *h.Merc.* 535–538.

55 Aesch., *Eu.* 415; Eur., *Ion* 21; etc.

56 Detienne/Vernant (1991) 187–258.

polytheistic context, a divinity “exists only by virtue of the network of relationships that makes it a part of the divine system as a whole”.⁵⁷

We have so far explored one of the possible meanings of the divine configurations associated with the birth of Athena. This meaning, however, is not applicable to all sets of deities attested in such scenes. In fact, there are often divinities such as Hera, Dionysus and Artemis, whose prerogatives are far from those of the daughter of Zeus.

We have already seen that a Hera Eileithyia is present in the representations of the birth of Athena with the function of propitiating Zeus’ parturition. But Hera can also appear in such contexts as the divine sovereign. An amphora in Basel (550–540 BC) shows the birth of Athena between the Eileithyiai, one of whom gestures wonder and amazement, in the presence of an enthroned Hera, Poseidon, Hephaestus and a female figure.⁵⁸ A Hera with a crown (named through an inscription) appears in the birth of Athena represented on an amphora from Vulci (ca. 560 BC) next to Poseidon, Hephaestus, Apollo citharedus, Eileithyia (also with a crown), Ares and Heracles.⁵⁹ A Hera with a scepter witnesses the birth of Athena between the Eileithyiai with Dionysus, Poseidon and two female figures on an amphora from Cerveteri now in the Louvre (600–550 BC).⁶⁰ Dionysus is also found elsewhere. In the iconographic scheme including Hermes, Apollo, parturient Zeus, Eileithyia and Ares, the son of Semele can replace Hermes, as on an amphora in London (575–525 BC)⁶¹ and on a contemporary one in New Haven.⁶² In other cases Dionysus appears together with Hermes and other deities.⁶³ An amphora (ca. 540 BC), with unfortunately damaged decoration,⁶⁴ shows a parturient Zeus in the center, on the left Hermes (with winged sandals), Artemis, Hephaestus or Apollo, on the right Eileithyia, Dionysus (with an ivy crown) and another Eileithyia. Dionysus and Artemis with her twin Apollo are also present at the birth of Athena between the Eileithyiai on an amphora in Madrid (550–500 BC).⁶⁵ The Apollo/Artemis couple returns in the two representations of the birth of Athena in the presence of the Eileithyiai, which appear on both sides of an amphora in Geneva (550–540

57 Vernant (2006) 360.

58 *BAPD* 213 = *LIMC* Athena, 353 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 6 = *LIMC* Hephaistos, 193 = *LIMC* Hera, 288 (Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig: BS1921.328).

59 *BAPD* 310304 = *LIMC* Athena, 349 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 5 = *LIMC* Hera, 289 (London, British Museum: B147). The attribute of the crown, which Hera shares here with Eileithyia, serves to connect the goddess “d’une manière indirecte, mais visuellement assez claire, au groupe central constitué par Zeus et Athéna” (Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge [2015] 44).

60 *BAPD* 350214 = *LIMC* Athena, 348 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 19 = *LIMC* Hera, 291 (Paris, Musée du Louvre: E861).

61 *BAPD* 16979 (London, market, Christie’s).

62 *BAPD* 310306 (New Haven, CT, Yale University: 1983.22). In this case there are two Eileithyiai.

63 See *BAPD* 8196 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 22 (Athenian black-figure amphora, from Tarquinia, 575–525 BC, Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese: 626): birth of Athena with Zeus, Eileithyiai, Ares, Hermes and possibly Dionysus.

64 *BAPD* 5696 = *LIMC* Hermes, 687 = *LIMC* Eileithyia, 35 = *LIMC* Dionysos, 492 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Arthur M. Sackler Museum: 1960.326).

65 *BAPD* 29025 (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, coll. Varez Fisa: 1999.99.52).

BC).⁶⁶ Finally, on a red-figure pelike from Vulci (475–450 BC),⁶⁷ Artemis is associated with an Eileithyia on the right of the parturient Zeus, while on the left there are Posidon and Hephaestus.

How can we explain the presence of Hera, Dionysus and Artemis in scenes of this type? For Hera, who forms a fixed couple with Athena in the *Iliad*, a convincing answer was recently advanced by Gabriella Pironti and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, who see in the Olympic queen “une puissante instance de légitimation” of the children of Zeus: Athena, Dionysus, Heracles.⁶⁸ The two scholars observe: “la place et le rôle qu’Héra se voit attribuer dans l’iconographie de la naissance d’Athéna, où elle apparaît tantôt en Ilithyie, tantôt en souveraine, marquent l’accueil de la fille de Zeus parmi les Olympiens, son intégration immédiate et la légitimité de son statut divin”.⁶⁹ In support of this hypothesis, it may be recalled that on the aforementioned Basel amphora Hera welcomes Athena on side A and on side B presides together with Zeus at the introduction of Heracles on Olympus, operating in two parallel contexts of birth and filiation.⁷⁰ The analysis by Pironti and Pirenne-Delforge also allows us to recognize the connection between Dionysus and the birth of Athena. In both cases, we are dealing with two children of Zeus born from only the father: Athena from his head and Dionysus from his thigh.⁷¹ But what about Artemis? On the pelike from Vulci, the association with an Eileithyia in the context of Zeus’ parturition suggests an Artemis Lochia if not an Artemis Eileithyia.⁷² As regards the rest of the documentation, it can be observed that: in the representations of the birth of Athena Artemis generally appears paired with her twin Apollo; in two cases the Apollo/Artemis couple is associated with Dionysus and probably in one of these also with Hermes. Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Dionysus and Hermes are some of the children that Zeus conceives outside his marriage with Hera to integrate the Olympic family.⁷³ It can therefore be hypothesized that the representations of Athena’s birth that incorporate these divinities in variable combinations (in addition to the Eileithyiai with the function of divine obstetricians) intend to unite and offer to view the group of Zeus’ children. A confirmation of this hypothesis is provided by the aforementioned amphora preserved in Orvieto (550–500 BC), which presents the birth of Athena between the Eileithyiai on side B and on side A the Letoid family: Artemis with her bow, Apollo with his lyre, and their mother Leto with a flower.⁷⁴ The two faces of the vase distribute the same representation that elsewhere is con-

⁶⁶ BAPD 320417 (Genève, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire: MF154).

⁶⁷ BAPD 205560 = LIMC Hephaistos, 201 = LIMC Athena, 358 = LIMC Eileithyia, 13 = LIMC Artemis, 1275 (London, British Museum: E410).

⁶⁸ Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2015) 55.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁰ Cf. Laurens/Lissarrague (1990) 58; Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2015) 47.

⁷¹ For a detailed analysis of the two traditions see Bonnard (2004) 25–47 and Romani (2004).

⁷² On the relationship between Artemis and Eileithyia cf. Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2013) 73–74.

⁷³ See for example Hes., *Th.* 886–944.

⁷⁴ BAPD 46552 (note 16).

centrated in a single figurative register and which consists in a sort of presentation of the progeny of Zeus.

4 Speech and gesture

We have seen that Hermes is present in the divine configurations associated with the birth of Athena, both in that he shares a part of his field of action with the goddess, and in that he belongs to the group of the children of Zeus. But what is the role that the god plays in the scenes in which he is added to the basic iconographic scheme with Hephaestus and/or the Eileithyiai? If it is clear that Hephaestus and the Eileithyiai are called to help and follow Zeus' parturition, why is Hermes there?

In most of the vessels we have analyzed, the god attends the scene by performing a series of gestures. Once he raises his right arm in greeting in the direction of the newborn Athena.⁷⁵ On the vase in which he replaces Hephaestus and/or the Eileithyiai, a true variant of the basic iconographic module (fig. 4),⁷⁶ Hermes again makes a gesture of greeting by raising his right arm, this time however in the direction of Zeus about to give birth. This last vase, in particular, is eloquent as to the importance of the figure of Hermes in the scenes of Athena's birth, given that the god appears alone in association with the Olympic ruler. But what role is it about? In several cases Hermes moves towards the end of the vessel turning his gaze backwards to observe the birth of Athena. Although not typical of Hermes, this gesture, in Greek *epistrophē* ("turning back"), effectively expresses the personality of the divine herald, always *on the way*, in motion. Another clue in this sense is provided by the attributes of the god in this series of vases: caduceus, petasus and winged sandals. Starting with Homer, these attributes define Hermes as a herald or *kērux*. Now, if we think of the herald as a messenger, it is rather difficult to explain the functional link between the god and the birth of Athena. However, it should be borne in mind that in Greece the *kērux* does not operate exclusively as a messenger or *angelos*, delivering messages on behalf of third parties, but covers a much broader spectrum of functions: during assemblies and trials the herald invites bystanders to silence and circulates scepter and word among the various speakers; in mediation practices between two parties he acts as a modern ambassador or diplomat; during sacrifices he can act as *hiereus* ("priest") taking care of the preparations for the ceremony and in some cases of killing the victim; in a convivial context, acting as *diakonos* ("servant"), he maintains order at the table, gives everyone his share of food and more generally deals with "building a good fire, splitting up kindling, carving the meat or roasting the meat or filling the wine cups";⁷⁷ as *therapōn* of a *basileus*, he

⁷⁵ BAPD 10683 (note 32).

⁷⁶ BAPD 11916 (note 35).

⁷⁷ Hom., *Od.* 15.322–323, transl. Lattimore: Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, boasts in the presence of Eumaeus that he knows how to perform, by grace of Hermes Diaktoros, all the services that the humblest do in the home of nobles. See also Ath. 14.660a; Hesych. s.vv κήρυξ and κήρυκες.

welcomes guests into the house and receives their gifts, takes care of weapons and horses, drives the king's chariot and assists him in war as a faithful squire.⁷⁸ The figure of the *therapōn* is particularly interesting for the purposes of our investigation precisely because of the close relationship that binds him to a specific *basileus*, of whom he "takes care" (*therapeuein*).⁷⁹ This relationship is similar to the one that unites the *kērux* Hermes and Zeus, *basileus* of the immortals, on the vases: a relationship made of service and assistance, based on the king's trust in his minister, who is with him on every important occasion, for any eventuality that arises. Therefore, in the representations of the birth of Athena, while Hephaestus and the Eileithyiai have the function of helping Zeus' parturition, the god with the axe, the goddesses with their obstetric skills, Hermes seems there as *therapōn*, called to emphasize the royal status of Zeus (only the *basileus* has one or more *therapontes*) and eventually to "take care" of the king of the gods by carrying out subsidiary and supplementary tasks integrating those of his divine colleagues.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the Berlin amphora from which we started. The representation is divided into three groups of divinities, each of which has three elements (fig. 1). In the center is the most important group including: Zeus enthroned, from whose head an armed Athena emerges; on the left of the god an Eileithyia and on the right Demeter, a divinity we had not yet encountered in the scenes of Athena's birth, but who probably appears here as linked to the field of motherhood.⁸⁰ On the right of the vase is the group of divinities that are most difficult to recognize due to the precarious state of conservation of the images and related inscriptions. The only divinity that poses no problems is the last one on the right: Apollo. The other two, whose busts are not seen, are accompanied by two fragmentary inscriptions interpreted by Adolf Furtwängler as [Ευρ]υμεδ[ον] ("wide-ruling"), an epithet with a theonymic function indicating Poseidon (cf. Pind., *Ol.* 8.31), and Α[ν]φ[ι]τρ[ι]τ[ε], wife of the god.⁸¹ On the left of the vase is the group with Dionysus, Hephaestus and Hermes. Let's look closely at the last two deities. Hephaestus, axe in hand, limps to the left after hitting Zeus, but looks back in the direction of the king of the gods. Hermes holds the caduceus in his left hand as he raises his right arm towards Hephaestus in greeting. This gesture seems to have been translated into linguistic form by the inscribed formula "I am Hermes Kyllenios", with which the god greets Hephaestus by introducing himself. This long inscription poses a problem: what sense is there in greeting the arrival of Hephaestus if the god is going away? This problem is solved by taking into account a figurative technique widely attested in ancient ceramography, the "compact syntax", which Greek artists use to convey the idea of the temporal succession of events. In the scene in question, we must understand that the painter has represented, as if they were contemporaries, two successive moments: in the first Hermes greets He-

⁷⁸ On the figure and functions of the κῆρυξ cf. Pisano (2014) 51–66.

⁷⁹ Chantraine (1970) II, 430–431.

⁸⁰ On Demeter as a figure of motherhood cf. Bruit Zaidman (2013).

⁸¹ Furtwängler (1885) I, 243.

phaestus introducing himself as soon as the god arrives to strike Zeus with the axe; in the second Hephaestus, having completed his task, is now leaving. It is possible that the *epistrophē*, the turning back of Hephaestus, is not only a useful gesture to admire the event of Athena's birth, but is also the expedient through which the painter produces the compact syntax: Hephaestus looks towards Zeus because at first he came to hit him with the axe, which is also facing the central group of divinities, while he has the rest of his body stretched out towards the other side because, once he has hit Zeus, he moves away leaving the field to Eileithyia and Demeter.

If our reconstruction is correct, it follows that Hermes' role on the Berlin amphora is substantially in line with what we have already recognized in the other images of Athena's birth: as a good *therapōn* of the *basileus* of the gods, Hermes welcomes Hephaestus and introduces him to Zeus. But why greet Hephaestus with a self-presentation formula as if the gods did not know each other? As in other cases, the vascular inscription performs both an iconic and a linguistic function.⁸² From the iconic point of view, it draws a boundary line between the group of gods on the left and the one placed in the center: a boundary line that Hephaestus crosses under the guidance of Hermes, *kērx/therapōn* of Zeus. In other words, insofar as it attracts the eye of the observer to a particular point of the scene, the epigraph on the one hand separates, and therefore highlights, the central group of divinities, on the other it makes explicit the function of Hermes as the link between Hephaestus and Zeus. From the linguistic point of view, the formula pronounced by Hermes plays on a double referential register.⁸³ Of course, it is addressed in the first place to Hephaestus, but it is also made to be read and to be seen and therefore is also directed to the observers of the vase. In this sense the epithet/epiclesis *Kyllenios* is significant. It refers to Mount Kyllene, in Arcadia, the birthplace of Hermes according to the *Homeric Hymn*, but also the seat of a temple of the god that was in ruins at the time of Pausanias.⁸⁴ However, we should not necessarily think that on an Athenian vase the syntagm *Hermes Kyllenios* refers to the Hermes venerated in Arcadia. *Kyllenios* is not only a cult epiclesis, but it is also a literary epithet typical of Hermes in the epic tradition,⁸⁵ where the god acts as the herald of the king of the gods.⁸⁶ Considering the level of diffusion and knowledge of *epos* in Athens in the sixth century BC,⁸⁷ this data suggests that the onomastic sequence "I am Hermes *Kyllenios*" does not indicate the Arcadian god but the Homeric

⁸² Lissarrague (2013) 69–70.

⁸³ For the analysis of some comparable cases, relating to the use of the term *kalos*, see Lissarrague (2013) 70–74.

⁸⁴ Paus. 8.171–2. Cf. Jaillard (2007) 27–33.

⁸⁵ Hom., *Od.* 24.1; *h.Merc.* 304, 318, 408, etc. Even in the sphere of worship it happens that certain divinities are invoked with Homeric epithets: cf. for example the cases of Hera *leukolenos* (Friedländer [1948] nos. 10 and 34) and Athena *glaukōpis* (Friedländer [1948] no. 12).

⁸⁶ Cf. Pisano (2014) 41–87.

⁸⁷ For example Plato (*Hipparch.* 228b) attests that Hipparchus instituted rhapsodic recitations of Homeric poems on the occasion of the Panathenaea, which had been founded or perhaps re-founded by his father Pisistratus in 566–555 BC.

Hermes at Zeus service, providing the observer a clear and unequivocal clue on the role of the god in the representation of the birth of Athena.

5 Conclusions

The iconographic representations of the birth of Athena constitute a rather large and articulated documentary corpus. In the present study we have tried to provide a complete analysis of it, focusing in particular on the vessels that include Hermes, in an attempt to define the role of the god in these scenes. This role, which may appear marginal on the basis of the narratives, reveals all its importance if only one considers the recurring presence of the god in the images of the birth of Athena, in which Hermes is the divinity far most frequently added to the basic scheme with parturient Zeus, the newborn goddess, Hephaestus and/or the Eileithyiai. This data not only confirms that images and narratives are two different ways of echoing shared knowledge, but also invites us to investigate the logic behind the construction of figurative representations and the network of relationships that unite the divinities within the iconographic pantheon. In addition to Hermes, in fact, there are other deities that can appear in the representations of the birth of Athena, forming more or less constant divine configurations. The study of these configurations, particularly those including Hermes, reveals two interesting facts that help to understand why the god is there. In some cases, the deities who attend Athena's birth are those who share a part of their field of action with her and who are therefore called to define the identity of the new goddess, tracing the contours of her *tīmē*: in these cases Hermes is present because he interacts with Athena in particular functional spheres. In other cases, the representation associates and shows the group of the children of Zeus, of which Hermes is a part.

All these images express a precise theological meaning and it is normal to think that the same happens in those in which only Hermes is added to the basic scheme of the birth of Athena. In these cases the gesture of *epistrophē* and the attributes of the god (caduceus, petasus, winged sandals) show that Hermes operates as the *kēru(x)/therapōn* of Zeus, called to "take care" of the king of the gods by carrying out assistance and service tasks. On the amphora of the Kyllenios Painter in Berlin this role emerges with particular evidence: the painter alludes to it not only through the attributes of Hermes, but also through the inscription that runs vertically along the body of the god and the onomastic sequence with which he defines himself addressing Hephaestus a gesture of greeting. The inscription serves as a dividing line between two groups of divinities, emphasizing Hermes' function as an intermediary between Hephaestus (on the left) and Zeus (in the center). The epic syntagm Hermes Kyllenios confirms that the god represented is the Homeric Hermes in the service of Zeus. The inscription and the divine name, going beyond the pure linguistic value, do not just decline a specific divine figure, but perform, like gestures and attributes, a real iconic function to the extent that they contribute to building the meaning of the scene, confirming polytheism's wealth of means in the field of representation of the divine.

Bibliography

- BAPD: *Beazley Archive Pottery Database*. <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/pottery/default.htm> (seen 27.8.2020).
- Bonnard (2004): Jean-Baptiste Bonnard, *Le Complexe de Zeus. Représentations de la paternité en Grèce ancienne*, Paris.
- Bothmer (1944): Dietrich von Bothmer, “The Painters of ‘Tyrrhenian’ Vases”, in: *American Journal of Archaeology* 48, 161–170.
- Bruit Zaidman (2013): Louise Bruit Zaidman, “Déméter-Mère et les figures de la maternité”, in: *Mètis* N.S. 11, 93–108.
- Chantraine (1970): Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, II, Paris.
- Darthou/Strawczynski (2006): Sonia Darthou and Nina Strawczynski, “Naissance, reconnaissance, légitimation: les gestes de la filiation dans la céramique attique”, in: Lydie Bodiou, Dominique Frère, Véronique Mehl (eds.), *L’Expression des corps. Gestes, attitudes, regards dans l’iconographie antique*, Rennes, 49–59.
- Detienne/Vernant (1991): Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, Engl. transl. Chicago-London.
- Friedländer (1948): Paul Friedländer, *Epigrammata. Greek inscriptions in Verse: From the Beginnings to the Persian Wars*, Berkeley-Los Angeles.
- Furtwängler (1885): Adolf Furtwängler, *Beschreibung der Vasensammlung im Antiquarium*, I-II, Berlin.
- Jaillard (2007): Dominique Jaillard, *Configurations d’Hermès. Une “théogonie hermaïque”*, Liège.
- Kluiver (1996): Jeroen Kluiver, “The Five Later ‘Tyrrhenian’ Painters”, in: *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving* 71, 1–58.
- Malagardis (1997): Nassi Malagardis, “Héra la sans pareille ou l’épouse exclue? À travers l’image”, in: Juliette de La Genière (ed.), *Héra. Images, espaces, cultes*, Naples, 93–111.
- Laurens/Lissarrague (1990): Annie-France Laurens, François Lissarrague, “Entre dieux”, in: *Mètis* 5, 53–73.
- LIMC: Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich-München-Düsseldorf 1981–1999 and 2009.
- Lissarrague (2013): François Lissarrague, “La place des mots dans l’imagerie attique”, in: *Pallas* 93, 69–79.
- Olmos (1986): Ricardo Olmos, s.v. “Eileithya”, in: *LIMC* III/1, 685–699.
- Petrucci (2007): Sara Petrucci, “La luminosa levatrice degli dei. Ilizia tra archeologia e mito”, in: Simonetta Angiolillo and Marco Giuman (eds.), *Imago. Studi di iconografia antica*, Cagliari, 183–220.
- Pingiatoglou (1981): Semeli Pingiatoglou, *Eileithya*, Würzburg.
- Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2013): Gabriella Pironti and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, “Ilithyie au travail: de la mère à l’enfant”, in: *Mètis* N. S. 11, 71–91.
- Pironti/Pirenne-Delforge (2015): Gabriella Pironti and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, “Héra et les enfants de Zeus: la ‘fabrique’ de l’Olympe entre textes et images”, in: Nicole Belayche and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge (eds.), *Fabriquer du divin. Constructions et ajustements de la représentation des dieux dans l’Antiquité*, Liège, 41–57.
- Pisano (2014): Carmine Pisano, *Hermes, lo scettro, l’ariete. Configurazioni mitiche della regalità nella Grecia antica*, Napoli.
- Pisano (2016): Carmine Pisano, “Atena e Hermes nel campo della delegazione: modi d’azione a confronto”, in: *Pallas* 100, 103–118.
- Romani (2004): Silvia Romani, *Nascite speciali. Usi e abusi del modello biologico del parto e della gravidanza nel mondo antico*, Alessandria.
- Schefold (1992): Karl Schefold, *Gods and Heroes in Late Archaic Greek Art*, Engl. transl. Cambridge-New York.
- Vernant (2006): Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, Engl. transl. New York.