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Poseidon in Classical Attika: One God or Many? A textual analysis of epithets given to Poseidon in Classical Attika

Poot, Mette

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Poseidon in Classical Attika: One God or Many?

A textual analysis of epithets given to Poseidon in
classical Attika.

Mette Poot

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Introduction

Ποσειδωως ἐπὶ Σουνίοι [...] Ποσειδωως Καλανρεάτο

*Poseidon Sounion [...] Poseidon Kalaureatis*¹

The nature of Greek polytheism and the identities of its gods have been the subject of much scholarly debate. Central to this discussion is the question of how the Greeks conceptualised their gods. There seems to be a sliding scale with regards to this question. On one end, scholars have argued that only one version of the god exists, and epithets are merely additional names for the god; thus, Poseidon Sounion and Poseidon Kalaureatis are the same god. On the other end, we have the argument that every epithet shows a different god that shares a first name; thus, Poseidon Sounion and Poseidon Kalaureatis are, for example, seen as two different gods, even if they may have some aspects in common and share part of their names. Between the two extremes of this sliding scale lie a variety of arguments. For example, some argue that the different epithets that are given to a god show different parts of their power or even personality. Some even argue that each epithet does not show a different aspect of the god, but rather a localised version of the god, so Poseidon Sounion is not the same god as Poseidon Kalaureatis even if they are both Poseidon.

This debate helps us understand how the ancient Greeks thought about gods and their religious system by looking at the words and concepts they used, allowing us to understand the nuances of their culture better.

Historiography and Research Question

If we look at the field of classical Greek studies, we see two scholars who are firmly on the side of the Greeks only seeing one god: Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and Jean-Pierre Vernant. Sourvinou-Inwood has argued that there is a common iconographical type of each god which suggests unity in interpretation. She firmly states that “the gods who were worshipped in the different *poleis* were, of course, perceived to be the same

¹ /G I³ 369, in regard to loans from the sacred treasuries from the Other Gods.

gods”.² However, she does acknowledge that it was the *polis* that chose which aspect of each god to emphasise since it was the *polis* that anchored, legitimated, and mediated all religious activity, making the worship of a local variant a political choice.³ According to her, each *polis* had a religious system which interacted with the religious systems of other *poleis* and thus interacted with the more complicated world-of-the-polis system of the Panhellenic religious dimension.⁴ She claims that all of the Greeks saw themselves as one religious group even if the cults were different.⁵ She further argues that some sanctuaries use no epithet, even when important cultic elements were shared between different cults, which shows that epithets did not define a god.⁶

Vernant agrees with Sourvinou-Inwood that there was only one god. However, Vernant endorses the view that the unity of a god is “not that of a single and unique person but of a power whose various aspects may be manifested in different ways” since a god’s power represents a type of action.⁷ He argues that a god represents a specific power or authority that is defined in the power of the pantheons, thus the gods do not exist independently, but each god’s role is defined by how it relates to the others in the pantheon.⁸

Whereas Sourvinou-Inwood considers worship to be political, Vernant argues that the polytheistic pantheon is the product of contemporaneous socio-political structures, and he warns against putting it down to pure coincidence. Instead, he argues that, since the gods are part of a set arrangement, they may be as meaningful as “congruities and accordances”.⁹ This is not the only difference between the two scholars, Sourvinou-Inwood clearly sees only one god who was worshipped across wider Greece as a singular entity, whereas Vernant acknowledges that the Greeks worshipped specific manifestations of power of this god, even if the greater concept represented by the god was seen as universal.

² Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘What is Polis Religion?’, in: R. Buxton (eds.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford 2000) 13-37, there 18.

³ Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘What is Polis Religion?’, 15, 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁶ Henk Simon Versnel, *Coping with the Gods. Wayward Readings in Greek Theology* (Leiden 2011), 520-521.

⁷ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (London 1980) 99.

⁸ Jean-Pierre Vernant, ‘Grèce Ancienne et Étude Comparée des Religions’, *Archives des sciences Sociales des Religions* 41 (1976) 5-24, there 9.

⁹ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Inaugural address at the College de France* (Paris 1975) 7.

Jon Mikalson and Walter Burkert are on the opposite side of this classical debate; they argue that an epithet may reveal a different god with the same first name. Mikalson sees the different epithets of a god as referring to different aspects or manifestations of the same god, rather than as entirely separate gods. According to Mikalson a god can be defined in three ways: through the first name which is associated with the Panhellenic god, such as Poseidon, through their epithet, or through the designation of a place, often the one where their cult is located.¹⁰ He argues that each of those elements is critical to understanding the “conception of Greek worshiper would have of this or any other god”.¹¹ As different epithets may indicate different functions of a god, they were crucial not only in identifying the god, but also in identifying which of these aspects a worshiper should address in prayer.¹² Mikalson argues that even if epithets helped clarify which aspect of the god the Greeks were addressing or invoking in ritual or prayer, epithets did not have to create a new, separate god. However, he does acknowledge the complexity and flexibility of Greek religious thought and that in local cases an epithet could take on such a distinct identity that it almost functioned as a separate figure, but this was the exception rather than the rule.

Burkert on the other hand fully believes that Greek religion is a social structure that emerges from the *polis* identity. Thus, a god from a *polis* is solely from that *polis* and no other.¹³ According to Burkert “polytheism means that many gods are worshipped not only at the same place and at the same time, but by the same community and by the same individual; only the totality of the gods constitutes the divine world”.¹⁴ Religion, in his view, served to create and maintain both moral and civic order.¹⁵ He even characterizes it as a “means to maintain authority and domination.”¹⁶ Thus, polytheism was so diverse and chaotic because it emerged from the political interest of the *polis*, similar to what Sourvinou-Inwood states.¹⁷ However, Burkert does believe that religion

¹⁰ Jon Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion* (California 1998) 38.

¹¹ Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion*, 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, 39.

¹³ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Harvard 1985), 226.

¹⁴ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 216.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 246-247, 260, 264-268.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘What is Polis Religion?’, 15, 18.

naturally developed as a social construct that people really believed in, while Sourvinou-Inwood argues that Ancient Greek religion was purely based on politics.

Burkert views early Greek religion as an amalgam of relics and novel influences from changing social circumstances. Greek religions are thus the result from historical processes and influences from different directions. Burkert thus argues that the distinctive personality of a god is composed of four factors: the established local cult, the divine name, the myths told about the named being, and iconography, which makes it almost impossible to write the history of any god.¹⁸ Thus, the polytheistic world is chaotic and the Greek pantheon cannot be regarded as a closed and harmonized system according to Burkert.¹⁹

According to most, these opposing views of either one god or many cannot be reconciled. However, Henk Versnel has proposed a third option.²⁰ He argued that the Greeks had to live with the mutual exclusive realities sketched above, and that they accepted this.²¹ He suggested that a single superhuman figure, such as a god, saint, or hero, can assume different forms based on local and functional differences. As a result, this superhuman figure can appear as many distinct individuals as possible.²² Thus, he acknowledges that both opposing stances in the debate may be true, but never at the same time.

However, Versnel does argue that Greeks used to focus on the particular segment of divine identities that were required at that moment while ignoring “rival and incompatible images in the sociogram of the god in question”, thus, arguing that an epithet showed the difference between the aspects of gods.²³

The above outlined debate remains primarily theological. Although ancient literature is referenced, these sources do not focus on a single god in its geographical context to substantiate the arguments presented. To further this discussion, this thesis will focus on inscriptions from Attika that specifically reference Poseidon, taking geography as the primary distinction as coastal and inland *poleis* and *demes* are evaluated.

¹⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 119.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁰ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 84-97.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

²² *Ibid.*, 522.

²³ *Ibid.*, 84.

As Poseidon is associated with several dozen cult epithets, each with their own meaning, focusing on him may bring new interesting insight in the debate. As shown by the summary of the debate above, focusing on a single god such as Poseidon is effective because the Greek gods were not viewed uniformly. Since different poleis and demes worshipped the same god in different ways, leading to varied attributes and stories, the gods often embodied contradictions. Thus, studying one god helps illustrate the nuanced nature of the Greek perspective better than a generalized overview of multiple gods.

Furthermore, the perception and importance of a god varied significantly by location. By taking geography as the primary distinction, we can see a new way in which the Greeks conceptualized their gods, particularly when considering a god who is most often seen as a god of the sea. By analysing textual and archaeological sources, Poseidon will be used as a case study to assess which side of the debate holds more weight. In doing so, the following research question will be answered in this thesis: according to the study of the epithets given to Attic Poseidon during the classical era, did the Greeks see Poseidon as a single god with several aspects that could be worshipped individually, or did they see multiple Poseidons?"

Methodology

To answer the research question epigraphical sources will be utilized. Most of them are dated from the fifth to fourth century BCE, which makes them suitable to use in the context of this research. However, there are also two from the third century BCE, one from the second century BCE, and three from the first century BCE. These late sources are mostly used as supplementary evidence. There are some difficulties with these epigraphical sources: many inscriptions are damaged which makes it harder to read them and to fully understand the context in which they are written. A full list of the used inscriptions can be found in Appendix A.

Besides epigraphical sources, literature from a variety of authors, such as ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes, the Greek tragedian Euripides, the Hellenistic Greek poet Lycophron, and the Greek scholar and historian Apollodorus will be used. This literature is from the fifth to the second century BCE. Some later sources such as Pausanias and

Plutarch will be utilised. These later sources still have value, because some beliefs or interpretations may have been passed down through centuries. Additionally, later authors may have had access to documents that are now lost to us, providing valuable insights into the religious life of the past even if we should keep in mind that there could have been changes in time. Pausanias is a good example for this; he is one of the few that gives a detail description of things that no longer can be found or have decayed or been destroyed over time.

Besides textual sources, archaeological finds and other relevant objects will be utilized to provide a broader context.

This thesis will be organized into three chapters. The first chapter will examine the presence or absence of epithets in sources from coastal *demes*, while the second chapter will address an inland *polis* and *demes*. This division has been chosen because grouping the *polis* and *demes* as coastal or inland provides essential context for understanding differences shaped by geography, such as variations in the worship of specific aspects, powers, or gods. For instance, the worship of Poseidon, associated with the sea, would be expected to occur more frequently in coastal *poleis* and *demes* than in inland ones. A map with the indicated *polis* and *demes* can be found in Appendix B. The third chapter will address epithets that are not confined to a single place of worship or whose area of worship remains unknown.

Chapter 1: Coastal *demes*

This chapter will examine the textual evidence for the worship and representation of Poseidon in various coastal *demes* in Attika, exploring how these sources reflect the god's significance and the unique ways he was honoured in each coastal *deme*. The focus will lie on the epithets, or the lack of them, that are used to describe Poseidon in textual sources. To support the findings, attention will be given to archaeological finds and other relevant objects when available, providing a broader context for understanding Poseidon's role. The aim is to analyse which role the god, in his various shapes and forms, played in the larger frame of the religion from Attika. The chapter will be following the Attic coast from the west to the east, going from Eleusis to Piraeus, Phaleron, onwards to Halai Aixonides and ending in Thorikos after visiting Sounion.

Eleusis

Eleusis is a *deme* of the Athenian *polis* located at the crossroads of Athens, Boeotia, Megara, and Salamis.²⁴ While the Athenians viewed Eleusis as the “fringes of their territory”, others considered it a "destination" or a "gateway" to other regions.²⁵ Eleusis' association with the Mystery Cult of Demeter and Kore has attracted significant scholarly attention, giving it an air of mystery. However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in exploring other themes in Eleusis, such as the Poseidon cult.²⁶

We know that there was a Poseidon cult in Eleusis, since the remains of a second century CE temple were found just outside the Greater Propylaia. The temple is Doric amphiprostyle, with four monolithic columns on each side. Two antae were positioned at the ends of the *cella*'s flank walls on the east side. The building was situated on a four-step podium, which was composed of a core of small stones set in pozzolana and lime and covered with poros blocks. Marble was used to cover the four steps. The remains of two altars connected with the temple can be found in the outer court. There

²⁴ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

²⁵ Hans Beck and Sebastian Scharff, 'Beyond Mysteries: Introduction to the Local Horizon of Ancient Eleusis', in: Hans Beck and Sebastian Scharff (eds.), *Beyond Mysteries. The Local World of Ancient Eleusis*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 199 (Leiden 2025) 1-22, there 1.

²⁶ See for example: Hans Beck and Sebastian Scharff (eds.), *Beyond Mysteries. The Local World of Ancient Eleusis*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 199 (Leiden 2025).

are also the remains of a statue base in the northern part of the temple, usually assumed to have supported a statue of Poseidon.²⁷ The temple is now in a dire state. but it was identified as the temple of Poseidon and Artemis based on the passage of Pausanias quoted below, which is supported by various pieces of archaeological evidence.²⁸

Pausanias describes the Sacred Way to Eleusis in detail in his *Description of Greece*.²⁹ Within these passages, he also clearly describes how the temple looked:

Ἐλευσινίοις δὲ ἔστι μὲν Τριπτολέμου ναός, ἔστι δὲ Προπυλαίας Ἀρτέμιδος καὶ Ποσειδῶνος Πατρός, φρέαρ τε καλούμενον Καλλίχορον.

The Eleusinians have a temple of Triptolemus, of Artemis Propylaea, and of Poseidon Pater, and a well called Kallichoron.³⁰

His text clearly shows that Artemis Propylaea (“of the gate” or “of the portal”) and Poseidon Pater (“father”) were worshipped together in the same temple and that a well could be found in the same place, with no other objects nearby. Archaeological evidence has supported Pausanias’ text by showing that there is indeed a courtyard across the arches which were dedicated to Demeter, Kore and an emperor. A small temple can be found in the centre of the court which contains two altars, showing that at least two gods were worshipped in this temple. Other small altars found were in the vicinity of the temple, but it is unclear to whom they belonged.³¹ The altars outside the temple demonstrate that the altars within the temple were of greater significance and, as a result, they serve as evidence that the temple was indeed associated with the gods to whom the altars within the temple belonged. The late sixth century BCE Kallichoron

²⁷ Shannon Dunn, ‘Between Προσβατήριος and Πατρός: Poseidon at and around Eleusis’, in: Hans Beck and Sebastian Scharff, *Beyond Mysteries. The Local World of Ancient Eleusis*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 199 (Leiden 2025) 191-211, there 194.

²⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, in: William Henry Samuel Jones and Henry Arderne Ormerod (eds.), *Pausanias Description of Greece*, trans. William Henry Samuel Jones and Henry Arderne Ormerod (Cambridge 1918) 1.36.3 – 1.4.

²⁹ The Sacred Way was a road from Athens to Eleusis which was taken by the procession that celebrated the Eleusinian mysteries. It started at the Sacred Gate in the Kerameikos, the Athenian cemetery.

³⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.38.6.

³¹ Konstantinos Kourouniotes, *Eleusis. A Guide to the Excavations and the Museum*, trans. Oscar Broneer (Athens 1936) 40.

well that Pausanias describes can be found in the same courtyard, close to the northeast corner of the Greater Propylaea.³²

Pausanias also mentions the Kephisos river:

ῥεῖ δὲ Κηφισὸς πρὸς Ἐλευσίῃ βιαίτερον παρεχόμενος τοῦ προτέρου ῥεῦμα.

At Eleusis flows a Kephisos which is more violent than the Kephisos I mentioned above.³³

This river would flow close by the temple of Artemis Propylaea and Poseidon Pater and there is indeed a Kephisos river that flows north of the ruins of the sanctuary that was found. Furthermore, the Thriasian field and the vicinity of the sanctuary's north gate were inundated by the Kephisos River at least once.³⁴ The alluvial soil deposits at the north gate and in the eastern part of the sanctuary, as well as the existence of a drainage pipe east of the Greater Propylaea, show evidence of previous floods, supporting the theory that the area was inundated at least once.³⁵

As shown above, archaeological evidence supports the co-worship of Artemis Propylaea and Poseidon Pater at the temple. Therefore, it is very likely that Poseidon Pater was worshipped here along with Artemis Propylaea.

This theory is further supported by an earlier epigraphical source dated around the early fifth century BCE which records a possible connection between Artemis and Poseidon: *IG I³ 5*. This is an Eleusinian document which records the regulating of sacrifices which are possibly related to the festival Eleusinia.³⁶ In line 4 we see Poseidon and Artemis mentioned one after the other which shows a possible connection between them: [Ποσειδῶνι : [κρίον]ν : Ἀρτέμιδι : αἶγα, [for Poseidon a ram], for Artemis a goat.³⁷ This document is the first piece of evidence for a Poseidon cult in Eleusis as early as the early fifth century BCE. The inscription mentions a ram as a sacrifice for

³² Kourionotes, *Eleusis*, 45-46.

³³ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.38.5.

³⁴ Angeliki Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica: Cults and Iconography (ca. 510-300 B.C.E.)', (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University Baltimore, 2011) 81.

³⁵ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 81.

³⁶ *IG I³ 5*.

³⁷ *IG I³ 5*.

Poseidon, with no epithet, besides a sacrifice for Artemis, no epithet either.³⁸ However, since neither are given an epithet, it is unclear whether these were the same gods who were worshipped in the temple that Pausanias describes, even if it does show a connection between Artemis and Poseidon.

Poseidon Pater

It was not just Poseidon (without an epithet) who was worshipped in the temple, but Ποσειδῶνος Πατρός, Poseidon Pater. In this case the epithet refers to Poseidon as an ancestor to Eleusis. According to Pausanias, Eumolpus was the son of Poseidon and Chione, the daughter of Boreas and Oreithyia. He records this in 1.38.2:

τοῦτον τὸν Εὐμόλπον ἀφικέσθαι λέγουσιν ἐκ Θράκης Ποσειδῶνος παῖδα ὄντα καὶ Χιόνης: τὴν δὲ Χιόνην Βορέου θυγατέρα τοῦ ἀνέμου καὶ Ὀρειθυίας φασὶν εἶναι.

This Eumolpus they say came from Thrace, being the son of Poseidon and Chione. Chione they say was the daughter of the wind Boreas and of Oreithyia.³⁹

Since Eumolpus became a priest of Demeter and was a co-founder of the Eleusinian Mysteries, it would make sense that Poseidon as his father is then seen as a forefather of Eleusis. This description of Pausanias is the only textual evidence we have of Poseidon Pater. However, objects have been found which contain an indirect reference to the mythology surrounding Eleusis in which Poseidon is depicted as the father of Eumolpus.

One object which contains such a reference to the relationship with Poseidon and Eumolpus is a red-figure *skyphos* by Markon. Under one of the handles Poseidon sits on a stool holding a sceptre and a dolphin. On the reverse Amphitrite stands beside him, also holding a dolphin. Eumolpos is portrayed under the other handle and holding a sceptre just like Poseidon while he is seated on a *thakos* with a swan near him.⁴⁰ The symmetrical position of Poseidon and Eumolpos brings to mind the Pater myth, not

³⁸ IG I³ 5.

³⁹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.38.2.

⁴⁰ London, *The British Museum E 140*, Red-figure skyphos. Hieron Potter. Makron (Beazley). Ca. 480 BCE. The departure of Triptolemos. Among other gods Poseidon with scepter and dolphin. 1873,0820.375.

only because they are symmetrically positioned, which shows a connection between the two, but also because of the swan. According to Lewis Farnell, the swan ultimately alludes to Poseidon rather than Eumolpus because the swan lacks the meaning of Eumolpus' name, which is "sweet singer".⁴¹

Another example is a cup by the potter Brygos. On the cup, we can see a woman being pursued by Poseidon who is holding a rod.⁴² According to Angeliki Kokkinou, this woman is Chione, the mother of Eumolpos, which means that this cup is another reference to Poseidon as Pater. She does not give a reason as to why she believes the woman to be Chione.⁴³ Other sources name Aithra, the mother of Theseus as the woman who Poseidon is pursuing.⁴⁴ Given that the cup also shows Persephone holding torches and Demeter holding flowers, it would be more logical for the woman to be Chione instead of Aithra, alluding to the myth that connects Poseidon and Eleusis.

Finally, there is a vase, a *phiale mesomphalos*, dated around 500-450 BCE.⁴⁵ There are three groups that can be found on the interior of the vase. In the third group Poseidon and Amphitrite can be seen with Eleusinian gods. Martin Robertson has identified Plouton, Demeter, Persephone with Plutos on her lap, Amphitrite, Dionysos, Ares and Aphrodite on the vase. Behind Persephone Robertson identified Poseidon holding a rod, possibly once a trident.⁴⁶ As Poseidon stands behind Persephone with a child on her lap, it could be insinuated that the child was one of his children. However, the inscription names the child as Plutos, which disproves this theory. On the other hand, both the myth of Poseidon as forefather of Eleusis and the fact that Poseidon is often linked to gods from Eleusis shows that he is connected to Eleusis.

Iconographically we see three different attributes: a dolphin, a sceptre and a rod, which is a possible trident, which we have determined to be a way of depicting Poseidon Pater. These attributes show the iconographic association of Poseidon with other

⁴¹ Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* III (Oxford 1907) 236.

⁴² Frankfurt, *Liebieghaus ST V7*. From Vulci. Red-figure cup. Close to the Castelgiorgio Painter (Manner of the Brygos Painter by Beazley) ca. 485 BCE. Poseidon pursuing woman (Chione?)

⁴³ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 270.

⁴⁴ Henry Rudolph Immerwahr, *Corpus of Attic Vase Inscriptions* (n.p. 2008) there item 3740.

⁴⁵ Malibu (CA), *The J. Paul Getty Museum 81.AE.213, 85.AE.18, 85.AE.30, 63 85.AE.185, L. 92.AE.88.2-3*. Fragmentary red-figure *phiale mesomphalos*. Douris (by signature). Ca. 500-490 B.C.E. Interior: Assembly of Eleusinian gods, Poseidon and Amphitrite, Dionysos, Ares and Aphrodite (?), women and man running, warriors fighting between Athena and Apollo. Exterior: The contest of Herakles with Eurytos and his sons.

⁴⁶ Martin Robertson, 'A Fragmentary *Phiale* by Douris', in: The J. Paul Getty Museum (eds.), *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 5 (Malibu 1991) 75-93, there 87-91.

divinities worshipped at Eleusis. This is especially interesting since this should reflect the cult of Poseidon at Eleusis at that time, and thus how Poseidon Pater was seen.

Poseidon Prosbaterios and Poseidon Themeliouchos

Pater is not the only epithet for Poseidon that has been found in Eleusis. Two more epithets can be found in an honorary decree for the *dadouch* Themistokles Theophrastou Hagnousios, which provides a list of priesthoods for which the Eleusinian *genos* was responsible.⁴⁷ On that decree, the Marathonian Dositheos held the priesthoods of:

ἱερέως Διὸς Ὀρίου καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς Ὀρίας καὶ Ποσειδῶνος Προσ<β>α [σ] τηρίου
{Προσβατηρίου} καὶ Ποσειδῶνος Θεμελιούχου.

Zeus Horios, Athena Horia, Poseidon Prosbaterios and Poseidon Themeliouchos.⁴⁸

This is the first and only mention of Poseidon Prosbaterios (“of the access” or “of the approaching”) and Poseidon Themeliouchos (“foundation-Holder”) in Eleusis. It is, however, a significant mention since this shows that there was not one, but three Poseidons in Eleusis: Pater, Prosbaterios, and Themeliouchos.

The question remains whether they were seen as multiple aspects of one god or whether they were seen as different gods. Noel Robertson speculated that the three were different “avatars” of Poseidon, since all three were worshipped individually at the festival Haloea.⁴⁹ In another article written in the same year, Robertson reiterates that “two other avatars of Poseidon at Eleusis, Prosbaterios and Themeliouchos, can be associated with the winter season”.⁵⁰ The fact that they were all worshipped at a festival can also mean that they were seen as three different gods, and not just avatars.

⁴⁷ *I. Eleusis* 300.

⁴⁸ *I. Eleusis* 300, 16-17.

⁴⁹ Noel Robertson, ‘Poseidon’s Festival at the Winter Solstice’, *The Classical Quarterly* 34 (1) (1984) 1-16, there 3.

⁵⁰ Noel Robertson, ‘The Ritual Background of the Erysichthon Story’, *The American Journal of Philology* 105 (4) (1984) 369-408, there 405.

Kevin Clinton too refers to Poseidon Prosbaterios and Poseidon Themeliouchos by referring to their priests, giving credit to the ideas of multiple cults, and thus also of multiple gods instead of one.⁵¹ He makes no reference to Poseidon Pater, but he does mention Poseidon Erechtheus.⁵²

Shannon Dunn, on the other hand, discussed the various iconographic representations of Poseidon found around Eleusis. She makes a distinction between three epithets: Πατήρ, pater, which refers to Poseidon as an ancestor to Eleusis, Προσβατηρίου, prosbaterios, a marine epithet, and Θεμελιοῦχος, Themeliouchos, referring to earthquakes, showing that each epithet was worshipped separately from the others.⁵³

It has become clear that the three epithets did not belong to only one god, rather there were three different gods based on the evidence. There were not only three different cults for Poseidon in Eleusis, but also three different gods named Poseidon.

Poseidon without an epithet

There are more mentions of Poseidon in inscriptions from Eleusis without an epithet. An example of this is an altar dedicated at Eleusis as a thanks offering:

τίοι Ποσειδονι, τὸν θράνιν

to Poseidon a *thranis* (a swordfish)⁵⁴

The dedication was discovered at the site Eleusinia, near the sea, on the road from Eleusis to Megalo Peuko, a few kilometres from Demeter's sanctuary. There is no evidence that this was placed at a cult place of a Poseidon at Eleusis. However, since it was found near the sea, it would make sense for it to be a fisherman's offering. This is a rare case in which we can see a unique perspective of the local people from Attika and how they interacted with a god.

⁵¹ Kevin Clinton, 'The Sacred Officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 64 (3) (1974) 1-14, there 51,98.

⁵² Clinton, 'The Sacred Officials', 56, 68, 108.

⁵³ Dunn, 'Between Προσβατήριος and Πατρός', 196-197.

⁵⁴ SEG 16.19

Besides the altar dedication, there is also a sacrificial calendar from Eleusis dated c. 330 BCE, which indicates that Poseidon was given a cake as a sacrifice in lines 37-38:

Ποσ[ειδῶνι — — —]

πελα[νός — — —]

For Poseidon [...]

A cake [...] ⁵⁵

Unfortunately, the inscription is rather fragmented and the words that come after Poseidon are unreadable. The space after Ποσ[ειδῶνι] does suggest the possibility of an epithet, even if it is unclear which one.

The archaeological and textual evidence indicates the presence of multiple gods identified as Poseidon rather than a singular figure. Inscriptions demonstrate that the people of Eleusis worshipped three distinct gods, as reflected in the existence of separate cults, as is proven in *I.Eleusis 300* and the theoretical debate surrounding the two epithets outlined above. This interpretation is both consistent with the concept of multiple gods while also agreeing with the view that different epithets were used to distinguish between various gods by Greek worshippers.

Piraeus

Piraeus was a port *deme* within the area of Athenian *polis*, situated near Phaleron.⁵⁶ It was founded in the early fifth century BCE, when plans to make it the new port of Athens were implemented.⁵⁷ The port of Piraeus was one of the biggest ports in Greece, thus we would expect a lot of evidence of a cult Poseidon in Piraeus as it is a coastal *deme*. However, there are only three textual mentions of a Poseidon cult in Piraeus and there is little to no archaeological evidence for a protentional cult.

The only archaeological proof of the presence of a cult to Poseidon are gravestones inscribed with derivatives of the name Poseidon, indicating that people were named

⁵⁵ *IG II² 1363*.

⁵⁶ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

⁵⁷ Robert Garland, *The Piraeus: From the Fifth to the First Century B.C.* (Bristol 2001) 1-2.

after the god. For example, in the fourth century BCE, several Poseidippoi lived in Piraeus. One of the Poseidippoi came from Kolonos Hippios, a place which is known for the cult of Poseidon Hippios.⁵⁸ Two *syntriearchs* were named Poseidippos, which shows a clear connection to the sea.⁵⁹ Even a Poseidoros was found on a gravestone dated to the middle of the fourth century BCE just like a Poseidaos.⁶⁰ This evidence could point to a cult in Piraeus. However, there is no further archaeological evidence, such as temple of Poseidon in the *deme*, which proves that there was a cult in Piraeus.⁶¹

Although there is no archaeological evidence which attests to the worship of Poseidon in Piraeus, there is epigraphical evidence which shows that Poseidon did have a presence in the *deme*. The first example of epigraphical evidence is a marble stele bearing an important law from 375/4 BCE which concerns the inspection of silver coinage for signs of counterfeiting.⁶² Lines 42-43 mention that the official responsible for this task, the *Dokimastes*, is the one who πωρ δ' ἄν ἦι καὶ ἐμ Πειραιεῖ δοκιμαστῆς [τοῖς ναυκ], sits by the stele of Poseidon when performing his duty, which can be found in Piraeus.⁶³ However, the stele to which the inscription refers to has not been found yet. Thus, it remains unclear whether this stele had a religious significance or topographical character, especially since the status of gods or their attributes could be an object of cult activity outside of known sanctuaries.⁶⁴

Poseidon Pelagios

In Athens an inscription was found from Piraeus which includes an epithet for Poseidon, namely *IG II² 410*⁶⁵. This is an inscription recording honours for priests and religious officials issued by the *Boule*, dated around 340-330 BCE.⁶⁶ In line 18, Himareiaos is mentioned as the priest of Ποσειδῶνος τοῦ Πελαγίου, Poseidon of Pelagia or Poseidon Pelagios.⁶⁷ The epithet Pelagios is derived from the Greek word for the sea, meaning “of

⁵⁸ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 30.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶¹ Garland, *The Piraeus*, 132.

⁶² *SEG* 26.72.

⁶³ *SEG* 26.72, line 37,

⁶⁴ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 102.

⁶⁵ *IG II² 410*.

⁶⁶ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 102.

⁶⁷ *IG II² 410*, line 18.

the sea”, making it a marine epithet.⁶⁸ However, Himareiaos was from Phaleron, not Piraeus, which calls to question why Himareiaos was honoured in Piraeus. Especially since Pausiades, the priest of Ammon, was from Phaleron too.⁶⁹ However, Ammon was not originally a god from Piraeus but an Egyptian god that was merged with the Greek Zeus. This may show how a cult could move between places and be accepted in a new *polis* or *deme*, not only for Ammon but also for Poseidon Pelagios. Especially since Pelagios is a clear marine epithet, which is fitting for a coastal *deme* like Piraeus and Phaleron. However, nothing else is known of the Poseidon Pelagios cult in Piraeus, while the cults from which the other priests that are honoured in the decree belong do have a cult place in Piraeus, such as a temple or another sanctuary.⁷⁰

Finally, we have Pseudo-Plutarch who mentions that Lykourgos introduced a festival of Poseidon that should be held at Piraeus.⁷¹ However, it is disputed whether Pseudo-Plutarch refers to a festival for Poseidon, or to a festival in the month of Posideon. A. Koerte is one of the leading scholars who argue that Poseidon was honoured instead of Dionysus. He was the one who “corrected” “*tou Poseidonos agona*” to “*tou Poseideonos agona*” since Posideon was the month of the Dionysian festival in Piraeus.⁷² G. Ierano, on the other hand, argues that it was a festival for Poseidon and a festival in the month by referring to a hymn to Poseidon “which presents the stylistic characteristics of the dithyramb”.⁷³ Mikalson, however, connects Plutarch’s reference to Poseidon Pelagios.⁷⁴ He believes that this source shows a new shift in religion, shifting from the worship of the Athenian Poseidon Erechtheus in Piraeus to new gods. However, he does not make clear as to why he believes this.⁷⁵

Due to the lack of additional sources, we are unable to make any certain statements regarding the above-mentioned dispute. However, since Lykourgos was probably a

⁶⁸ Sylvain Lebreton, ‘Dionysos in the Mirror of Poseidon: Crossed Onomastic Portraits’, in: Corrine Bonnet (eds.), *The Names of the Gods in Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (Cambridge 2024), 71–94, there 86.

⁶⁹ Stephen David Lambert, ‘Ten Notes on Attic Inscriptions’, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 135 (2001) 51-62, there 52.

⁷⁰ Garland, *The Piraeus*, 44, 102-103.

⁷¹ Plutarch, *De Virtute Morali Lycurgus*, in: William Watson Goodwin (eds.), *Plutarch Morals*, trans. William Watson Goodwin (Cambridge 1874) 842a.

⁷² Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 103; Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion: a History* (Oxford 1996) 246.

⁷³ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 103.

⁷⁴ Jon Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens* (California 1998) 42, specifically footnote 93.

⁷⁵ Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, 42.

priest of Poseidon Erechtheus, it would make sense for him to mention a festival for Poseidon and not just a festival in the month Posideon.⁷⁶

Although Poseidon appears to have had a presence in Piraeus, it remains uncertain whether an actual cult existed in Piraeus itself, as these epigraphical sources do not confirm that there was a cult nor do the archaeological sources. The discovery of the Poseidon stele might have clarified this issue. Nevertheless, evidence such as the stele, the priest Himareiaos, and a possible festival for Poseidon indicates Poseidon's influence in Piraeus and shows that he was worshipped in the *deme*, even without a possible cult. Especially the honour given to Himareiaos in Piraeus highlights a religious connection among the *polis* and *demes* in Attika which shows the interaction between local religions with one another. The evidence from Piraeus shows how religious systems from *poleis* and *demes* could interact with the other and overlap, giving support to the theory of a chaotic pantheon from Burkert.

Phaleron

Phaleron, just like Piraeus, was a port of Athens, located around 5 kilometres to the southeast of Piraeus on the bay of the Saronic gulf.⁷⁷ It was the main port of Athens until Piraeus was developed as an alternative port by Thucydides.⁷⁸

The decree IG II² 410, which mentions Himareiaos, the priest of Ποσειδῶνος τοῦ Πελαγίου, Poseidon Pelagios, who was honoured in Piraeus but came from Phaleron, has already received considerable attention above.⁷⁹ The theory that this could indicate the movement of cults between *poleis* and *demes* has already been mentioned above and it is emphasized here. It seems reasonable that someone might bring their religious practices from their home *polis* to a new place. It, of course, can also indicate an overlap in pantheons.

Poseidon Hippodromios

There is a decree from Phaleron, SEG 21.527, which indicates the presence of a Poseidon. This is a decree of the *genos* Salaminioi concerning the resolution of a

⁷⁶ Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 292.

⁷⁷ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

⁷⁸ Garland, *The Piraeus*, 9.

⁷⁹ IG II² 410.

dispute.⁸⁰ This document not only records groups within the *phratries*, which supplied priests for older *polis* cults from Athens, but it also records sacrifices to the gods. In line 90-91 we see that in the month Boedromion Ποσειδῶνι Ἴπποδρομίῳ ὕν, Poseidon Hippodromios, was given a sow.⁸¹

What is curious to see is that not all gods that are honoured in the decree are given an epithet. So, we can see that it is Ἀρτέμιδι χοῖρον, ‘just’ Artemis, in line 90 who receives a piglet, and that Παναθηναίοις Ἀθηνᾶι ὕν, ‘just’ Athena, is given a sow at the Panathenaia in line 88. However, Ἀθηνᾶι Ἀγελᾶι χοῖρον, Athena Agelaa, receives a piglet in line 90, and Ἀθηνᾶι Σκιράδι οἶν ἐγκύμονα, Athena Skiras, receives a pregnant sheep in line 93.⁸² This shows that the epithet Hippodromios was chosen for a reason. Furthermore, it points to a cult at Phaleron since it was probably related to the hippodrome that was in the area Echelidai at Phaleron.⁸³ Marie-Françoise Baslez suggested that it were Phoenician worshippers of Poseidon who settled at Phaleron and that, based on the sacrificial calendar of the Salaminoi, it were the Phoinikes who administered the festival Kybernesia which would mean that it was their priesthood of Poseidon Hippodromios.⁸⁴ However, this does not yet provides us with an explanation for the non-marine epithet when both places were found at the coast.

The presence of Poseidon Pelagios in Piraeus and Poseidon Hippodromios in Phaleron indicates the movement of cults between places while also acknowledging a cult in Phaleron. The use of the Hippodromios epithet suggests a specific cult related to the hippodrome in the area of Echelidai at Phaleron, possibly administered by Phoenician worshippers. This evidence, just like in the evidence in Eleusis points to not just one Poseidon, but two: Poseidon Pelagios and Poseidon Hippodromios. The fact that both were used in a different context suggest that the Greek either chose these epithets deliberately to worship a specific aspect of Poseidon, or they worshipped two different Poseidons.

⁸⁰ SEG 21.527.

⁸¹ SEG 21.527, line 91-92.

⁸² SEG 21.527, line 88, 90, 93.

⁸³ Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 314.

⁸⁴ Marie-Françoise Baslez, ‘Culters et Devotions des Phéniciens en Grèce’, in Corinne Bonnet, Edward Lipiński, and Paolo Marchetti (eds.), *Studia Phoenicia IV: Religio Phoenicia* (Namur 1986) 289-306, there 291.

Halai Aixonides

Halai Aixonides is a *deme* that lies south of Aexone near the coast of the Saronic gulf.⁸⁵ It is known for its sanctuary for Apollo Zoster, among other things. There is evidence that they celebrated a festival to Poseidon in the “tunny” season.⁸⁶ Athenaeus, for example, notes that the Boeotians had a tradition of sacrificing eels at the festival for Poseidon and this offering was called the *thynnaion*.⁸⁷ Additionally, Athenaeus mentions that Antigonus of Carystus described a similar practice for Poseidon: according to Antigonus in *On Diction*, a certain group, whose name is unclear, would dedicate the first tuna they caught to Poseidon as a sacrifice as a thanks that no swordfish or dolphin cut through their nets.⁸⁸ This is a fairly uncommon sacrifice since fish offerings usually included fish miniatures, figurines, or even engraved metal plates.⁸⁹ However, Poseidon was naturally associated the most with tuna, his association with tuna even started before his association with dolphins.⁹⁰

Athenaeus’ work may not mention an epithet. It does show that the Poseidon who was worshipped in Halai Aixonides probably had a connection to the sea, or at least fishing. Which falls in line with the epithets we expect from coastal *demes*. While there is no epithet, it is clear that the Poseidon who was worshipped here was linked to the sea, which contradicts the idea that an epithet was needed to be used to show an aspect or power of a god.

Sounion

Sounion is a *deme* of Athens located southern portion of ancient Attika.⁹¹ The *deme* is well-known for its temple of Poseidon and its home to one of the most significant cults of Poseidon. The Sanctuary of Poseidon at Sounion is one of several sanctuaries devoted to the sea god that were established in areas where ships were particularly

⁸⁵ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

⁸⁶ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 107.

⁸⁷ Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, in: Henry George Bohn (eds.), *Or Banquet Of The Learned Of Athenaeus*, trans. Henry George Bohn (London 1854) 7.50.

⁸⁸ Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, 7.50; Harvey Alan Shapiro, ‘Poseidon and the Tuna’, *L’Antiquité Classique* 58 (1989) 32-43, there 41.

⁸⁹ Dimitra Mylona, ‘Animals in the Sanctuary. Mammal and Fish Bones from Areas D and C at the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Kalaureia’, *Opuscula* 12 (2019) 173-221, there 201.

⁹⁰ Shapiro, ‘Poseidon and the Tuna’, 41.

⁹¹ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

susceptible to the whims of the Aegean winds and other turbulence.⁹² Jessica Paga and Margaret Miles have argued that Sounion and its cult of Poseidon became even more significant when the Athenian navy was expanded around 483 BCE.⁹³ Around 500 BCE the Archaic large marble temple for Poseidon was constructed, possibly as an early effort under the new democracy.⁹⁴ The temple that can still be seen today is not the original temple. The current temple was built by the Athenian politician Perikles as a replacement of the Archaic-period temple that was destroyed by the Persians around 480 BCE.⁹⁵

Curiously, Pausanias did not mention a temple of Poseidon, only a sanctuary of Athena in the area:

τῆς ἠπειροῦ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς κατὰ νήσους τὰς Κυκλάδας καὶ πέλαγος τὸ Αἰγαῖον ἄκρα Σούνιον πρόκειται γῆς τῆς Ἀττικῆς· καὶ λιμὴν τε παραπλεύσαντι τὴν ἄκραν ἔστι καὶ ναὸς Ἀθηνᾶς Σουινιάδος ἐπὶ κορυφῇ τῆς ἄκρας.

On the Greek mainland facing the Cyclades Islands and the Aegean Sea the Sunium promontory stands out from the Attic land. When you have rounded the promontory you see a harbor and a temple to Athena of Sunium on the peak of the promontory.⁹⁶

However, the discovery of *IG II² 1270* in the area shows that the temple that Pausanias recorded in fact belongs to Poseidon, not Athena. The inscription is dated around 298/7 BCE, and it describes that a resolution should be written down on a stone pillar which then should be set up in the temple of Poseidon:

[ι λι]θίνει καὶ στῆσαι ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ Πο[σε]ιδῶνος, ὅπως ἂν εἰδῶσι πάντες οἱ.

⁹² Jessica Paga and Margaret Miles, 'The Archaic Temple of Poseidon at Sounion', *The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 85 (4) (2016) 657-710, there 689.

⁹³ Page and Miles, 'The Archaic Temple', 657-710.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 687.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 658.

⁹⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.1.1.

turn it into stone and set it up in the sanctuary of Poseidon, so that all may know.⁹⁷

There is more evidence for a cult of Poseidon in Sounion. For example, *IG I³ 8*, which was dated ca. 460-450 BCE, records the harbour fees and the cult of Poseidon in Sounion. In line 6 of fragment A, it makes a reference to a possible fee for the marines that was given to Poseidon: αἰ τοῖ [Π]οσειδῶνι τὸ ἐπιβατ]-.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, a part of the inscription is unreadable so we can only glean the meaning from the context of the text above. Nevertheless, it would be logical for the seafarers to be required to pay a fee for the Poseidon that is located at the coast, as his rage or contentment could ultimately determine their survival or death. This is further supported by the fact that Sounion was an important port.

Then we have a dedication to Poseidon which was made by an individual named Speusippos, as evidenced by an inscription of unknown date that was carved into the rock in front of a cave at the southern end of the Sounion promontory:

Πούσειδῶνι
Σπεύσιππος
εὐξάμενος
ἀνέθηκεν⁹⁹

This inscription is an example of honorary decrees that troops erected in the sanctuary of Poseidon.¹⁰⁰ As can be seen, this Poseidon was not given an epithet, which means that either Speusippos did not need to honour a specific aspect of Poseidon since he saw Poseidon just as Poseidon, or it could have been that there had not been enough space on the rock seeing how the four words were carved directly under the other. Furthermore, this inscription is interesting since it gives us more insight into how

⁹⁷ *IG II² 1270*, line 18-19.

⁹⁸ *IG I³ 8*, line 6.

⁹⁹ *SEG 54.327*. Literature does not provide a direct translation for this segment; however, a direct translation may be: Poseidon, Speusippos, pray, dedicate, or Poseidon, Speusippos, boast, dedicate. The first option seems more likely seeing the context. Translation my own.

¹⁰⁰ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 111.

individual people could see Poseidon instead of the state worship we have seen before from decrees.

Finally, we have a bronze Hydria of the fifth century, which has been associated with a festival dedicated to Poseidon at Sounion, as a possible prize in Attic games. On it, the text ATHENAIΟΙ ATHLA EK POSEIDONIO, Athena Athlon and Poseidon, can be discerned, which shows Poseidon without an epithet once again, but it also shows Athena with an epithet.¹⁰¹ This is of importance since it shows that gods with epithet were known and worshipped in Sounion. Thus, not giving Poseidon an epithet was a deliberate choice made by the *deme*.

Poseidon of Sounion

Ancient sources often associate Poseidon with the area of his worship. For example, in his play *Knights*, Aristophanes refers to Poseidon as Σουινάρατε, worshipped at Sounion or Souniaratos, when describing his different aspects.¹⁰² Aristophanes does not solely salute this Poseidon, who has a golden trident and reigns over the dolphins (559-560), but he also salutes ἵππι' ἄναξ Πόσειδον, Poseidon of the horse. Aristophanes makes a clear distinction here, not between two aspects, but between two gods. For if he had made a distinction between two aspects, he would not have mentioned that the Poseidon with a gold trident reigned over dolphins and that that was the one who was worshipped at Sounion. Instead, he makes it clear that it was not the Poseidon of horses but the Poseidon of dolphins that was worshipped at Sounion, thus that there were two different gods. This is further supported by other epigraphical evidence that calls Poseidon “apo Souniou”, “epi Sounio, and “epi Souniou”, which lends further credit to the idea that “of Sounion” is not just a geological epithet, but that this Poseidon is also seen as a different aspect, or even a different god.¹⁰³

We can find another Ποσειδοῖν ἀπὸ Σουνίου, Poseidon of Sounion, in *IG I³ 383*, an inscription that is associated with the First Kallias decree dated around 434/3 BCE.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Thessaloniki, Archaeological Museum inv. No. Πν888. Athla is the plural form of the Greek (and Latin) word athlon (ἄθλον), which can be translated as "athletic contest," "labor," "task," "struggle," or "pains". Full translation my own.

¹⁰² Aristophanes, *Knights*, in: Eugene O'Neill (eds.), *The Complete Greek Drama II*, trans. Eugene O'Neill (New York 1938) 551-564.

¹⁰³ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 111.

¹⁰⁴ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 66: *IG I³ 52* concerning the creation of a new treasury of the Other Gods.

This inscription is rather fragmented, but Ποσειδῶνι ἀπὸ Σουνίου is mentioned three times: in lines 106-107, 319, and 330.¹⁰⁵ Poseidon is also mentioned in lines 323-326, and 359, however is it unclear in which context because of the fragmentary nature of the inscription.

There is another mention of Poseidon of Sounion in *IG I³ 369*, an inscription that describes loans from the sacred treasuries around 433/2-423/2 BCE.¹⁰⁶ It contains a lengthy text that lists the interest-bearing loans that the Athenian State was given from the sacred treasuries of Athena Polias, Athena Nike, Hermes, and the "Other Gods" during the quadrennium from 426-5 to 423-2 BCE.¹⁰⁷ It was originally found on a marble stele on the Akropolis, and it provides a lot of insight into the religious world in and around Athens.

The inscription records Ποσειδῶνος ἐπὶ Σουνίου, Poseidon of Sounion, as among the "Other Gods" in line 62 and 82. It is clear that the Poseidon of Sounion was seen as a different god than the one that Athenians knew, especially since another Poseidon is also named in the inscriptions. Since the inscription refers to loans, this would not have been done if the two Poseidons were regarded as one god in Athens. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, in which the mentions of Poseidon in Athens will be discussed, and in the third chapter, where a closer look at mentions of epithets in Attika which are not bound to a specific location or cult will take place.

What arises now, is the theory that for Sounion, Poseidon was just that: Poseidon. We have definite proof of a Poseidon cult in terms of a temple and a festival. Ultimately, no epithet or anything that shows an aspect of a god in the sources from Sounion can be found. This shows that he was not worshipped under a specific aspect that we now know of. However, for other places around Sounion, there was a clear difference between a Poseidon and the Poseidon of Sounion. This shows a different way for worshippers to see a god, especially if the location has become an aspect.

¹⁰⁵ *IG I³ 383*.

¹⁰⁶ *IG I³ 369*.

¹⁰⁷ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 128.

Thorikos

Thorikos is a *deme* southern portion of ancient Attika close to Sounion.¹⁰⁸ In this *deme*, one inscription regarding Poseidon was found. The inscription is a sacrificial calendar dated to ca.440-400 BCE mentioning ἐπὶ Σούνιον Ποσειδῶνι ἄμνον κριτόν, at Sounion for Poseidon a select lamb.¹⁰⁹ As can be seen here, this inscription does not contain an epithet, but it does refer to the Poseidon of Sounion. This line shows two things. The first is that a local group could worship a god in the territory of another *polis* or *deme*. Since this is a sacrificial calendar, it shows that the people of Thorikos quite regularly made a sacrifice to the Poseidon of Sounion. Secondly, the Thorikos sacred calendar also includes the sacrifice of a sheep in Thargelion, in the sailing season, for the local nautical hero Sosineos. In an inscription from Pantikapaion, Poseidon himself was worshipped with the cult epithet Sosineos. However, in the case of the Thorikos calendar, the name of Poseidon is not mentioned along with that of Sosineos.¹¹⁰ This shows that the sea god did not absorb the hero in this region and thus can be seen as different from Poseidon Sosineos.

Poseidon receives a second offering in this inscription in the form of a full-grown victim in lines 23-24; ἐφ' ἄλλῃ: Ποσειδῶνι τέλειον. The location of this offering is a salt pan, which suggest a coastal site although it is unclear whether this site is Thorikos or another place.¹¹¹ However, this Poseidon was not given an epithet. Which shows that Thorikos either worshipped their own Poseidon or one from another place. However, it makes sense for Thorikos to worship their own Poseidon seeing as Thorikos is a coastal *deme*.

We once again see the interactions between religions in the *demes*. There is a clear worship of Poseidon of Sounion, while there is also clear difference in two Poseidons in the inscription. This raises the possibility that Thorikos worshipped their own Poseidon and the Poseidon from Sounion, showing that they were two different gods.

¹⁰⁸ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

¹⁰⁹ SEG 52.49, line 19.

¹¹⁰ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 117.

¹¹¹ SEG 52.49, line 23-24.

Analysis

Every single one of these coastal *demes* had a different way of worshipping Poseidon. We have observed three distinct gods with three distinct cults in Eleusis. The worship of Poseidon in Piraeus with a potential cult and a particular connection between the religions of Piraeus and Phaleron through Poseidon Pelagios, which also shows the movement of cults, just like Poseidon Hippiodromios in Phaleron. The sacrifice after the first tuna catch in Halai Aixonides demonstrates an aspect of Poseidon and how his worshippers perceived this aspect of him. Additionally, the evidence has shown that the Poseidon of Sounion is perceived as a distinct god from other Poseidons, as evidenced by the epithet's focus on his location. We have even observed that he could be worshipped by another *deme* as the evidence from Thorikos has proven.

As can be seen from the evidence, there is not a strict and disciplined version of polytheism. There is not just one Poseidon in the coastal *demes* of Attika; on the contrary, there were many, and their worship could interact with each other, creating a chaotic pantheon. However, it is still unclear how much overlap there was between the Poseidons. It shows that the theory that the polytheistic world is chaotic and the Greek pantheon cannot be regarded as a closed and harmonized system is true.¹¹² The evidence from these *demes* has also shown that the argument that there is only one god whose aspects leads to different epithet's is not fully true. After all, in Eleusis there were three gods and the Poseidon of Sounion was also seen as a different god.¹¹³ It does not seem that different activities were linked under one epithet since we have seen different marine epithets: Prosbaterios and Pelagios. This further proves the argument that epithets were used to distinguish between the different gods is right.¹¹⁴ The example of Sounion clearly disproves the idea that "the gods who were worshipped in the different *demes* were, of course, perceived to be the same gods" even if it may be true that important cultic elements were shared between different cults.¹¹⁵

Overall, the different ways people worship Poseidon in coastal Attika shows how flexible and multifaceted Greek religion was. The next chapter will show whether that was the same for *demes* that could be found further inland.

¹¹² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 305.

¹¹³ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 70.

¹¹⁴ Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion*, 57.

¹¹⁵ Sourvinou-Inwood, 'What is Polis Religion?', 18.

Chapter 2: Inland *polis* and *demes*

This chapter will examine the textual evidence for the worship and representation of Poseidon in the various inland *polis* and *demes*, exploring how these sources reflect the god's significance and the unique ways he was honoured in each. The focus will lie on the epithets, or the lack of them, that are used to describe the god in textual sources. To support the findings, attention will be given to archaeological finds and other relevant objects when available, providing a broader context for understanding Poseidon's role. The aim is to analyse which role the god, in his various shapes and forms, played in the larger frame of the religion from Attika. Athens will be the first inland *polis* considered, followed by the district Agrai and the *demes* Lakiadai, and Kolonos, which are Athens' outskirts, and a brief sidestep to the island Kalaureia, before concluding with Erchia.

Athens

Athens is the capital of Attika situated centrally in the region.¹¹⁶ As one of the most influential *poleis* in ancient Greece, classical Athens was a centre for philosophy, education, the arts, and democracy. The patron goddess of Athens was Athena. However, Poseidon also played a prominent role in Athens through his role in the founding myth of Athens. His importance to Athens is attested through various textual sources and archaeological evidence as can be seen from his worship at the Erechtheion, a temple on the Akropolis.

There are several discourses on the Erechtheion: not only as to who was worshipped at the Erechtheion, Erechtheus, a king of Athens, Poseidon Erechtheus or even possibly Athena Polias), but also whether the building that is now called the Erechtheion is the actual Erechtheion in which those gods were worshipped.¹¹⁷ This discourse is based on literary sources and the archaeological findings in and around the building that is now called the Erechtheion. Most of the literary debates are based on Pausanias as he is the one who describes the Erechtheion in detail.

¹¹⁶ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

¹¹⁷ Kristian Jeppesen, 'Where was the So-Called Erechtheion?', *American Journal of Archaeology* 83 (1979) 381-394; Hendrik Gerding, 'The Erechtheion and the Panathenaic Procession', *American Journal of Archaeology* 106 (2002) 289-401; Jeffrey Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles* (Cambridge, 2004) 164-180.

According to Pausanias one could find the altar of Poseidon in the Erechtheion. It was on this altar, according to an oracle, that sacrifices were made to Erechtheus.¹¹⁸ Other sacrifices were made to the hero Butes and to Hephaestus within the Erechtheion.¹¹⁹ However, he makes no mention of the worship of Athena in the Erechtheion, while he does mention a second temple dedicated to Athena Polias.¹²⁰ What makes this complicated is that Pausanias uses different terms for the shrine: temple (*neos*), house (*domos*), and precinct (*sekos/temenos*). Thus, based on his report it is difficult to say for certain how many buildings there were. Kristian Jeppesen argues that there might be two buildings based on the archaeological evidence. He argues that current evidence does not exclude the possibility that there had been a second building, which would have been the actual Erechtheion.¹²¹ He even goes as far as to question whether the Erechtheion that Pausanias described still exists.¹²² He supports his arguments by pointing out where the weak points in Pausanias' descriptions lie: (1.) according to Pausanias (1.27.2) the olive tree was found in the Pandroseion, the west temple of the Polia. However, according to Herodotus (8.55) the olive tree and the origins of the salt water could be found in the Erechtheion. (2.) Pausanias calls the Erechtheion a "double building" and he mentions that it contains seawater in a well. However, the current building that was dubbed the Erechtheion does not meet this description and finally (3.), Jeppesen questions what the purpose was of the "west compartment in the temple of the Polias if it was not used to house some of the fixtures or movable equipment" in Pausanias' Erechtheion since its purpose had not become clear from Pausanias' text.¹²³

If we look further into the possibilities of there being more temples on the Akropolis, we find that a temple was destroyed in 480 BCE before being rebuilt on a new site. Henrik Gerding refers to this new site as the Erechtheion, which implies that Athena would have been worshipped in the Erechtheion as Pausanias would have known it.¹²⁴ Gerding argues that the *neos* of Athena Polias was located in the west part of the

¹¹⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.26.5.

¹¹⁹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.26.5.

¹²⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.27.1.

¹²¹ Jeppesen, 'Where was the So-Called Erechtheion?', 381-394.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 393.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 393.

¹²⁴ Gerding, 'The Erechtheion and the Panathenaic Procession', 389.

Erechtheion based on the archaeological evidence and written sources.¹²⁵ His idea that it was only Athena who was worshipped in the temple is disputed by Homer. Homer mentions that Athena established Erechtheus “in her own rich shrine” which would mean that Athena and Erechtheus would be worshipped in the same temple.¹²⁶

Jeffrey Hurwit has also based a part of his argument on Homer, saying that according to Homer, Athena and Poseidon were worshipped in the same temple on Athens, although their cults belonged to different rooms and they had different priests who were chosen from the Eteoboutadai.¹²⁷ Hurwit agrees with Homer that Athena and Poseidon were worshipped in the same temple, arguing that the building with *caryatids* was the new Erechtheion in which Athena Polias was also worshipped.¹²⁸ However, Hurwit’s argument is mostly based on the written sources as he argues that a new temple was built directly from the cult room of Athena.¹²⁹ Hurwit further complicates the picture by arguing against the idea that the marks within the temple were made by a trident, instead he claims that they were made by the thunderbolt that Zeus threw to end the contest between Athena and Poseidon, which would raise the possibility that Zeus was worshipped in the temple too.¹³⁰ Pausanias, however, has made it clear that there was an altar for Zeus Hypatos outside the temple, which discredits the idea that Zeus would have been worshipped in the temple itself.¹³¹

If we combine the knowledge from the debate with the description from Pausanias, this means that Erechtheus, Poseidon Erechtheus and Athena Polias were all worshipped in the Erechtheion. There seems to be no clear answer to the question whether the Erechtheion is the actual Erechtheion as described in the literature. It is clear that a form of Poseidon was worshipped in the temple and that he was seen as a different person than Erechtheus, if we believe Pausanias’ words.

¹²⁵ Gerding, ‘The Erechtheion and the Panathenaic Procession’, 396-397.

¹²⁶ Homer, *Iliad*, in: Robert Fagles (eds.), *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (London 1990) 2.640-641.

¹²⁷ Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 166-167.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 164-180.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 164-180.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹³¹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.26.5.

Poseidon Erechtheus

The theory that the Poseidon who was worshipped at the Erechtheion was probably Poseidon Erechtheus is supported by multiple inscriptions found on and near the Akropolis, such as *IG I³ 873*. This is an inscribed *louterion* from ca. 450 BCE which was offered to Ποσειδονι Ερεχθει, Poseidon Erechtheus, and it was discovered near the Erechtheion.¹³² The placing of Ποσειδονι and Ερεχθει directly next to each other shows Ερεχθει is an epithet and not a second person, otherwise the word καὶ would have been in between, as we have seen in inscriptions and literature mentioned above.¹³³

Then we have Apollodorus who refers to the fact that Butes, the son of Pandion, got the priesthood of Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ τον Ποσειδωνος τον Ερεχθέως, Athena and Poseidon Erechtheus, while his brother Erechtheus got the kingdom.¹³⁴ This fragment supports the theory that Poseidon Erechtheus and Erechtheus were not seen as the same person by the Athenians.

Furthermore, we have various other inscriptions that refer to the priesthood of Poseidon Erechtheus. For example, *IG II² 4071* refers to Ιερέως Επεχθεων Ποσειδωνος, the priest of Poseidon Erechtheus, in what appears to be a list of various titles that were held at that time in Athens.¹³⁵

Poseidon Gaieokhos

Poseidon Erechtheus, however, does not seem to be the only epithet that was given to Poseidon in Athens. After all, we have *IG II² 3538*, which not only mentions the priest of Poseidon Erechtheus, but added a second epithet: Ιερεὺς Ποσειδῶνο[ς] Ἐρεχθέος Γαιήοχου, priest of Poseidon Erechtheus Gaieokhos (“the earth-holder”).¹³⁶

This would suggest that there could have been a cult dedicated to Poseidon Erechtheus Gaieokhos, however, there is another inscription that refers to Gaieokhos. *IG II² 5058* refers to two different priesthoods Ιερέως Ποσειδῶνος Γαιήοχοϋ και Ερεχθεως, the priest of Poseidon Gaieokhos and Erechtheus.¹³⁷ This inscription clearly refers to two

¹³² *IG I³ 873*.

¹³³ See for example pages 10 and 14 of this thesis.

¹³⁴ Apollodorus, *The Library*, in: James George Frazer (eds.) *Apollodorus, the Library*, trans. James George Frazer (Cambridge 1921) 3.15.1.

¹³⁵ *IG II² 4071*.

¹³⁶ *IG II² 3538*.

¹³⁷ *IG II² 5058*.

different priesthoods that were held, one for Gaieokhos and one for Erechtheus, showing that they were not one and the same epithet.

Poseidon of the Horse

The above inscriptions have already shown that there was at least one other epithet under which Poseidon was known in Athens, namely Gaieokhos, however, more epithets can be found in Athens. A decree dated to ca. 184/183 BCE was discovered in the Athenian Agora, honouring two Athenian *Hipparchoi* for their sacrificial offerings to Ποσειδῶνι τῷ Ἴππίῳ, Poseidon Hippios.¹³⁸ The cult of Poseidon Hippios will be discussed in more detail later, however it is interesting to see that this decree was found in the Athenian Agora and not on Kolonos Hippios, where the cult of Poseidon Hippios was located.

Even in literature, Poseidon has been referred to with different epithets. As has been argued in the previous chapter, Aristophanes does not see only one Poseidon with different aspects. He sees two clearly different gods in his *Knights*, a play which takes place in Athens. At first, he mentions ἵππι' ἄναξ Πόσειδον, Poseidon as master of horses, before he describes all aspects he believes belong to that title: delighting in the neighing of horses and the clatter of their hoofs, god of the swift galleys, and the god of equestrian contests.¹³⁹ His descriptive way of writing about Poseidon makes it all the more clear that he regards the second Poseidon he writes about as a different god. This Poseidon has a trident of gold, and reigns over dolphins, but most importantly, he is Σουιάρατε ὦ Γεραίστιε, worshiped at Sounion and at Geraestus.¹⁴⁰

In another one of his plays, *Clouds*, which also takes place in Athens, Aristophanes refers to Poseidon as Ποσειδῶ τῷ τῶν ἵππιον, Poseidon of the horse, once again.¹⁴¹ In the entire dialogue surrounding Poseidon in *Clouds*, not once is an aspect of him regarding the sea mentioned. This distinction in characterisation suggests that Aristophanes intentionally separates Poseidon's marine identity from his equestrian

¹³⁸ SEG 21.526.

¹³⁹ Aristophanes, *Knights*, 551.

¹⁴⁰ Aristophanes, *Knights*, 551.

¹⁴¹ Aristophanes, *Clouds*, in: William James Hickie (eds.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, trans. William James Hickie (London 1853) 83.

role, showing that these Poseidons were not the same and were seen as different gods by Aristophanes.

Finally, we have one fragment which shows the possibility of an epithet. Stephen Lambert made an overview of the sacrificial calendar of Athens based on several discovered fragments. This sacrificial calendar was a product of the revision of Athenian law which took place in two stages, between 410/9 and 405/4 and, after the interruption of the regime of the Thirty, 403/2 and 400/399.3.¹⁴² The fragment that is important here comes from Group B and is fragment 8, the second column:¹⁴³

<i>Group B</i>					
Fragment 8		col. 1		col. 2	
		-----		-----	non-stoich.
		-----	Δ┐	[<i>item</i>]	
		-----		[<i>divinity</i>]	
	[- -?]	[- - - - ε?]ξ	Δ┐┐	[ἐρὸν τέλειον ?]	
		-----		Ἄπ[ό]λ[λωνι <i>epithet?</i>]	
	5	-----	Δ┐┐	ἱερὸν τέ[λειον]	
		-----		ἐν Δήλωι ΤΑ/[- -]	<2
		-----		Ἄπόλλωνι [<i>epithet?</i>]	
		-----	[Δ┐┐]	ἱερὸν τέλ[ειον]	
		-----		Ποσειδῶν[ι <i>epithet?</i>]	
	10	-----	[Δ┐┐┐]	κριός <i>vac.</i>	
		-----		[Δ]ητο[ι] ἱερ[όν]	
		-----	[Δ┐┐?]	[τέλειον]	
		-----		-----	

Figure 1: Group B, Fragment 8; Lambert 2002, 365

A cult epithet for Poseidon was likely also originally indicated because the sacrificial offering is mentioned on a line separate from the recipient's name and there is space next to Poseidon's name. However, because the fragment is too damaged, we cannot be certain whether there was an actual epithet and which epithet it would have been.

Thus, we can discern four Poseidons in Athens: Poseidon Erechtheus, Poseidon Gaieokhos, Poseidon Hippios and a Poseidon of the sea which shows the multifaceted worship of Poseidon. Pausanias' descriptions, Homer's references of the Erechtheion, and inscriptions found in and on the Akropolis shed light on the intertwined cults of Athena and Poseidon, while Aristophanes' distinct characterizations emphasize the two different Poseidons. Apollodorus' mention of Butes' priesthood further underscores the

¹⁴² Stephen David Lambert, 'The Sacrificial Calendar of Athens', *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 97 (2002) 353-399, there 354.

¹⁴³ Lambert, 'The Sacrificial Calendar of Athens', 365.

diverse perceptions of Poseidon in ancient Athens. The presence of different Poseidons in Athens, each with specific roles and attributes, reflects the intricate nature of religious practices in the *polis*.

The next section will examine references to Poseidon in districts and *demes* on the outskirts of Athens to determine whether these same Poseidons are present or if there are additional variations of the god in and near the *polis*.

Agrai

Agrai was a district of Athens, laying south of the *polis* and south of Diomea.¹⁴⁴ It is known for the Panathenaic Stadium where the athletic portion of the Panathenaic Games were held. The Poseidon cult that can be found here is a rather odd one, since it is not a cult that arose from Agrai itself or even migrated from nearby *polis* such as Athens. Instead, it was the cult of Poseidon Helikonios that could be found here. According to Pausanias, the people of Helike took their worship of Poseidon Helikonios with them when they were expelled by the Achaeans to Athens.¹⁴⁵ One of the places where the cult settled was Agrai. Poseidon Helikonios even got an *eschara* atop of a local hill.¹⁴⁶ According to Lewis R. Farnell many cults settled down in Agrai. He even called Agrai “the home of many alien cults” thus it would not have been out of the ordinary for the cult of Poseidon Helikonios to settle down in Agrai.¹⁴⁷ The presence of Poseidon Helikonios in Agrai thus exemplifies how the migration of people and their cults contributed to the integration of different cults in new places in ancient Greece, demonstrating the ways in which local and foreign traditions could blend and reshape the religious landscape of Athens.

Furthermore, Agrai was also known as the host of the Lesser Mysteries, the preliminary rites for the Eleusinian Mysteries in which Demeter and Persephone were the main focus. While Poseidon had no direct role in the Lesser Mysteries, this shows a connection to Eleusis which means that the Poseidon cult in Agrai was not only connected to Athens, but it was also connected to the cult in Helike and the cults in

¹⁴⁴ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

¹⁴⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 7.24.5.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Simms, ‘Agra and Agrai’, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 43 (2002) 219-229, there 219.

¹⁴⁷ Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, 71.

Eleusis. The cult in Agrai is an interesting example because it shows how a cult was not only important in its own area, but also how it was intertwined with the religious systems around it.

The presence of the Poseidon Helikonios cult in Agrai exemplifies the integration of different cults in ancient Greece through migration. The connection to Eleusis through the Lesser Mysteries further highlights the intertwined nature of religious systems in the region, showcasing the cultural blending and reshaping of traditions. Agrai demonstrates the significance of local and foreign influences in shaping the religious landscape of Athens by adding another epithet to the already known list: Poseidon Helikonios.

Lakiadai

Lakiadai was a *deme* along the Sacred Way between Sciron and the Cephissus river, near the sacred fig-tree.¹⁴⁸ Lakiadai was named after the hero Lacijs. Pausanias described Lakiadai in his first book and he gave a brief overview of what can be found in Lakiadai: the tomb of Nicocles of Tatenrum, the altar of Zephyrus, a sanctuary of Demeter and her daughter.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, he mentions that σὺν δὲ σφισιν Ἀθηνᾶ καὶ Ποσειδῶν ἔχουσι τιμὰς, Athena and Poseidon were worshipped alongside Demeter and her daughter.¹⁵⁰ This falls in line with what we know from the Poseidon cults in Eleusis, however, in this case it is unclear which Poseidon would have been worshipped since, as we have seen above, there were three Poseidons in Eleusis and four Poseidons in Athens giving us various options for who this Poseidon could have been.

No remains of the sanctuary that Pausanias mentions have been found, which means we would need to rely solely on Pausanias' account. However, the Poseidon cult in Lakiadai has been linked to the cult of Poseidon Phytalmios, a cult that will be discussed further in the next chapter.¹⁵¹ Poseidon Phytalmios was associated with fertility and growth in agriculture. Thus, it would make sense for Poseidon Phytalmios to be worshipped together with Demeter since they are both fertility gods.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ For an approximate location, see Appendix B.

¹⁴⁹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.37.2.

¹⁵⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.37.2.

¹⁵¹ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 123.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 122.

The worship of Athena and Poseidon alongside Demeter raises questions about the specific Poseidon worshipped in Lakiadai. The link between the Poseidon cult in Lakiadai and Poseidon Phytalmios suggests a connection to fertility and agriculture, similar to Eleusis. Although it is uncertain which Poseidon was worshipped in Lakiadai, this shows the regional distinctions between cults and their worship while also showing, just like in Agrai, the intertwined nature of religious systems in the region.

Kolonos Hippios

There was a low hill to the north of Athens near the Academy of Plato and the river Cephissus. That hill was home to Kolonos, a *deme* of the *phyle* Aegeis, or as the hill is also known, Kolonos Hippios.¹⁵³ The cult of Poseidon is well attested on the hill. For example, we have an inscription which describes the secretaries of the *Hipparchoi* who were to erect one stele in the stoa of Hermes and another in the Poseidonion's area according to an honorary decree of the cavalry from around 282/1 BCE:

στήλαις λιθίναις δυεῖν καὶ στήσαι τὴμ [μὲν] πρὸς τῷ Ποσειδωνίῳ, τὴν δ' ἑτέραν ἐν
[τῆι σ]τοᾷ τῶν Ἑρμῶν.

on two stone stelai and stand one by the Poseidonion, and the other in the stoa of the Herms.¹⁵⁴

The Poseidonion that is mentioned in the inscription could most likely be found on Kolonos Hippios. On this hill, Poseidon was often honoured with the cult epithet Hippios. Euripides, for example, makes the connection between Poseidon and Kolonos very clear in his tragedy *Phoenissae* in line 1707. Oedipus calls Kolonos δῶμαθ' ἵππιου θεοῦ, home of the god of horses, in the dialogue.¹⁵⁵ The conversation is sufficiently explicit to demonstrate that Poseidon, and not another horse-related god, is being addressed here, even if he is not addressed by name. This notion is further supported by

¹⁵³ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

¹⁵⁴ SEG 21.525; Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 69.

¹⁵⁵ Euripides, *Phoenissae*, in: Whitney Jennings Oates and Eugene O'Neill (eds.), *Euripides. The complete Greek Drama II*, trans. Edward Philip Coleridge (New York 1938) 1707.

Pausanias' depiction of Kolonos Hippios as a sacred region in ancient Athens that included sanctuaries for Poseidon and Athena, as well as a heroic tomb for Oedipus, Theseus, Pirithous, and Adrastus. He reported that this hill contained an altar for Ποσειδῶνος Ἰππίου καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς Ἰππίας, Poseidon Hippios and Athena Hippias, however, this altar was destroyed by Antigonos during his invasion of Attika.¹⁵⁶

Pausanias is not the only one who has alluded to a sanctuary on Kolonos Hippios. Sophocles, who was born on Kolonos, mentioned the sanctuary too in his drama, the *Oedipus Coloneus*.¹⁵⁷ In this play the area of Kolonos Hippios is called sacred to Poseidon by Sophocles.¹⁵⁸ Not only does the drama take place on the Kolonos Hippios, but it is also the place where Oedipus hears from an oracle that his suffering will end, a pivotal point in the play. Sophocles references the altar of Poseidon twice, once as the place where Theseus conducted sacrifices to Poseidon and once as the place where Polyneikes sought asylum:

[Theseus] τίς ποθ' ἢ βοή; τί τοῦργον; ἐκ τίνος φόβου ποτὲ βουθυτοῦντά μ' ἀμφὶ βωμὸν ἔσχετ' ἐναλίω θεῶ τοῦδ' ἐπιστάτη Κολωνοῦ.

What is this shout? What is the trouble? What fear has moved you to stop my sacrifice at the altar to the sea-god, the lord of your Colonus?¹⁵⁹

[Polyneices] ἀλλ' ἐξερωῶ: καλῶς γὰρ ἐξηγεῖ σύ μοι: πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸν τὸν θεὸν ποιούμενος ἀρωγόν, ἔνθεν μ' ὧδ' ἀνέστησεν μολεῖν ὁ τῆσδε τῆς γῆς κοίρανος, διδοὺς ἐμοὶ λέξαι τ' ἀκοῦσαί τ' ἀσφαλεῖ σὺν ἐξόδῳ.

Then I will speak boldly, for you give me excellent guidance, [1285] first claiming the help of the god himself, from whose altar the king of this land raised me to come to you, with a guarantee to speak and hear, and go my way unharmed.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.30.4.

¹⁵⁷ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, in: Richard Jebb (eds.), *The Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles*, trans. Richard Jebb (Cambridge 1889).

¹⁵⁸ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 54-55.

¹⁵⁹ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 887-889.

¹⁶⁰ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 1284-1288.

As can be seen, Theseus refers to Poseidon as ἑναλίω θεῶ, the sea god whereas Polyneices refers to Poseidon as the ruler of Kolonos. This shows two interesting ways how Sophocles saw Poseidon. He does not solely refer to Poseidon as a sea god, but he also refers to Poseidon as ἵππότην, the horse-rider, who is the ruler of Kolonos Hippios.¹⁶¹ What is even more interesting is that in the same passage, Sophocles mentions that the place where Oedipus has arrived, a grove outside of Athens, is sacred to σεμνὸς Ποσειδῶν, august or venerable Poseidon.¹⁶² However, Sophocles says it is the neighbouring field that claims the ἵππότην as their ruler.¹⁶³ This shows that Sophocles saw the two gods as different gods, one who was sacred to the grove outside of Athens and one who was seen as the ruler of Kolonos.

Sophocles seems to see two main powers or aspects of Poseidon: one Poseidon is associated with horses, while another is associated with the sea. Poseidon is referred to for inventing the horse bridle and the oar, showing that he was not just seen as a god of horses, but also a god of the sea.¹⁶⁴ Sophocles attributes the aspect of the sea to Poseidon more often than the horse aspect. For example, he calls Poseidon τὸν πόντιον γαίόχορον, the earth-girdling Sea-god.¹⁶⁵ As can be seen above, Theseus wonders who dared to stop his sacrifice to the lord of Kolonos, ἑναλίω θεῶ, the sea-god.¹⁶⁶ In all three of these cases, Poseidon is not called by name, however, in line 1491 he is called the ἑναλίω Ποσειδωνίω θεῶ, sea-god Poseidon.¹⁶⁷ Sophocles' drama shows that Poseidon had at least two epithets at Kolonos Hippios: of the horse, and of the sea. However, since they are both referred to as the ruler of Kolonos, it does not appear that Sophocles saw them as two different gods, but rather as two aspects of the same god.

The epithet Hippios is well-attested in inscriptions too, even if most inscriptions are rather fragmented. One of these inscriptions is *IG I³ 383*. This inscription has already been mentioned earlier in regard to Poseidon of Sounion in the previous chapter. However, it also records, Ποσει[δῶνος] Ἴππιό, Poseidon Hippios in lines 59-60, showing a

¹⁶¹ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 58-60.

¹⁶² Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 54-55.

¹⁶³ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 55.

¹⁶⁴ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 714-719.

¹⁶⁵ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 1072-1073.

¹⁶⁶ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 888.

¹⁶⁷ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 1492.

new god.¹⁶⁸ Another inscription is *IG II² 4691*, this was an imperial dedicatory inscription found on the base which used to support a horse or horse rider statue.¹⁶⁹ It was dedicated to Πο]-[σει]δῶνι Ἴππ, Poseidon Hippios.¹⁷⁰ Lastly, we have *IG I³ 405*, which includes an inventory for the years 413/412-412/11 and 407/6-406-5 BCE compiled by the *neokoroi* of Ποσειδῶνος τῷ ἡ [ππίο], Poseidon Hippios.¹⁷¹ Poseidon is mentioned twice in the inscription itself, once with the clear epithet Hippios, Ποσειδῶνος τῷ ἡ [ππίο], the other time we can only read τῷ Ποσειδῶνος since the rest of the inscription is too fragmented.¹⁷² However, the inscription does show the prominent role of Poseidon Hippios in Kolonos Hippios.

The archaeological evidence, literature, and inscriptions all make it clear that Kolonos Hippios was the sacred region of Poseidon Hippios. He was even seen as the ruler of Kolonos Hippios according to the literature, however in some literary sources he is also called ἐναλίω θεῷ, sea god, which suggest that Poseidon had two different epithets at Kolonos Hippios. This raises the question whether there were two Poseidons or simply two aspects of the same god. Since Poseidon is only referred to ἐναλίω θεῷ in the literature, one would assume that it would have been the latter because it was a more external perspective. However, given that Sophocles was from Kolonos, it seems likely that he would have a greater understanding of the religion in the *deme* than someone from outside it. Nevertheless, it is also possible that Sophocles chose to make his play more approachable for a larger audience, connecting Poseidon Hippios with a more well-known Poseidon. Nonetheless, the *deme*'s inscriptions confirm that Poseidon Hippios received worship there, regardless of whether he was seen as an aspect of a greater god or a different god entirely.

Kalaureia

Kalaureia is located on Poros, an island in the Saronic Gulf near the coast of Troezen in the Peloponnesus. On the island, a Doric temple of Poseidon was built in the ancient sanctuary of Kalaureia, possibly around 520 BCE. Even if this island is not a part of

¹⁶⁸ *IG I³ 383*.

¹⁶⁹ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 71.

¹⁷⁰ *IG II² 4691*.

¹⁷¹ *IG I³ 405*.

¹⁷² *IG I³ 405*, line 3 and 18.

Attika, it is still worth to briefly mention it since we can find a reference regarding their Poseidon from an Athenian source, namely in *IG I³ 369*. This source, previously discussed above in relation to Poseidon Sounion, describes loans from several treasuries between 433/2 and 423/2 BCE. In the document, Ποσειδωος ἐπὶ Σουνίου, Poseidon at Sounion, is classified among the “Other Gods,” but line 74 also mentions Ποσειδωος Καλανρεάτο, Poseidon Kalaureatis.¹⁷³ This is the only inscription in which the cult epithet Kalaureatis is attested for Poseidon in Attika. The epithet has a more topographical character, referring to the amphictyony of Kalaureia.¹⁷⁴ Since Athens belonged to two amphictyonies, the *polis* had a public interest in Poseidon Kalaureatis.¹⁷⁵ According to Parker, there may have been a public shrine to Poseidon Kalaureatis in Athens.¹⁷⁶ Kokkinou, on the other hand, suggests that the shrine on Poros would have had the status of an Attic filial cult because the funds loaned by the Poseidon Kalaureatis sanctuary belonged to the Treasury of the “Other Gods” and were managed by the same officials.¹⁷⁷ Both Kokkinou and Parker agree that the cult likely did not interest most ordinary Athenians.¹⁷⁸ This suggests that the importance of the sanctuary for this Poseidon was shaped more by administrative connections than by religious devotion in Athens itself. However, the unique mention of Poseidon Kalaureatis in the inscription distinguishes him as a distinct god, showing that Poseidon Kalaureatis was a different Poseidon than the ones that the Athenians worshipped. This is comparable to Poseidon Sounion since Poseidon Kalaureatis is not the only one mentioned in the text. Once again this shows the diverse religious intertwinement in Attika.

¹⁷³ *IG I³ 369*.

¹⁷⁴ An amphictyony was an ancient Greek league of neighbouring states or tribes formed to protect a shared religious sanctuary, like the famous one at Delphi, acting as an early form of international body for mutual defence and religious observance, with members called *amphiktyones*.

¹⁷⁵ Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 27.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁷⁷ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 129.

¹⁷⁸ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 132; Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 28.

Erchia

Erchia was a *deme* in the east of Attika, and a *phyle* of Aegeis.¹⁷⁹ According to Stephanus of Byzantium Erchia was named after a resident who once hosted Demeter.¹⁸⁰ Much of what is known about Erchia comes from a sacrificial calendar of the *deme* that was dated ca. 375-350 BCE which was found in Spata.¹⁸¹ The calendar is divided into five columns of offerings. In it are listed 59 annual sacrifices to 46 divinities, for a total cost of 547 drachmae: 21 of these sacrifices were made in the *deme* itself, the other 38 in the neighbouring *demes* or in Athens.

In this calendar, Poseidon is mentioned twice. The first time, he is mentioned is in line 30 of column Δ:

Γαμηλιῶνος τ- ετράδι φθίν- οντος, Ποσειδῶνι, ἐν Ἡρας Ἐρχιᾶ(σιν), οἶς.

In Gamelion: On the 27th, to Poseidon, in the sanctuary of Hera at Erchia, a wether.¹⁸²

What is interesting here is not only that there is no epithet, but Poseidon is worshipped in the sanctuary of Hera in Erchia, something that raises several questions. Is this a one-time sacrifice that alludes to a festival or were the two gods worshiped together? Joan O'Brien connects Hera Hippias and Poseidon Hippios, whose altars stood at Olympia, and suggests their marriage was seen as "a form of animal husbandry."¹⁸³ She also proposes that Hera's 'horse-god' spouse may have been Poseidon Hippos since both gods were involved in the marriage rituals of Achilles' parents. Later, Poseidon gives Achilles horses and Hera gives those horses voices.¹⁸⁴ However, the problem with this reasoning is that neither Poseidon nor Hera was given an epithet in the calendar. Thus, we should look elsewhere for an answer.

¹⁷⁹ For the exact location, see Appendix B.

¹⁸⁰ Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnica*, in: August Meineke (eds.), *Stephani Byzantii Ethnicorum Quae Supersunt*, trans. Brady Kiesling (n.p. 1849) Ερχια.

¹⁸¹ SEG 21.541.

¹⁸² SEG 21.541. Δ 29-33.

¹⁸³ Joan O'Brien, *The Transformation of Hera. A Study of Ritual, Hero and the Goddess in the Iliad* (Maryland 1993) 200.

¹⁸⁴ O'Brien, *The Transformation of Hera*, 204.

According to Mikalson, the rite that is mentioned in the sacrificial calendar has been identified as the celebration of the Theogamia or Hieros Gamos in Athens.¹⁸⁵ The Theogamai was a festival of Hera in her role as protectress of marriage, and the celebration of this festival falls naturally into the domain of family. The festival may even have been celebrated exclusively by women according to Mikalson.¹⁸⁶ However, at Erchia, this celebration involved sacrifices to Zeus Teleios, to Poseidon, to Kourotrophos, and to Hera herself, all taking place in the sanctuary of Hera.¹⁸⁷ This is a sound explanation for Poseidon to receive an offer in Hera's sanctuary, and it further shows how intertwined the *deme's* religion was with Athenian religion.

Poseidon is mentioned a second time on the same column, a few lines down:

Σκιροφοριῶν-ος τρίτη ἴσ-ταμένο, Ποσε ἰδῶνι, ἐμ πόλ ε(ι) Ἐρχι(ᾶσιν): οἶς.

In Skirophorion: on the 3rd, to Poseidon, on the Acropolis at Erchia, a wether.¹⁸⁸

In this case, Poseidon was also not given an epithet, however, what is interesting is that this Poseidon is linked to Athens. On Skirophorion the 3rd, a festival named the Arrhephoria was held. It was established in honour of Athena. Mikalson, among other researchers, has argued this festival has been linked to the sacrifices of the Arrhephoria in Athens by showing that this sacrificial calendar also presents us with a sacrifice to Athena Polias, Aglauros, Zeus Polieus, and Poseidon on this date.¹⁸⁹ This implies that a local version of the state festival took place on the same date in Erchia. Furthermore, it shows a connection to the religion in Athens since it was originally an Athenian festival just like in the earlier lines.

The absence of any mention of an epithet for Poseidon in either of these references implies that the Poseidon worshipped in Erchia was simply Poseidon and not a Poseidon linked to either a particular aspect of his or another god or hero such as Poseidon

¹⁸⁵ Jon Mikalson, 'Religion in the Attic Demes', *The American Journal of Philology* 98 (4) (1977), 424–435, there 429.

¹⁸⁶ Mikalson, 'Religion in the Attic Demes', 429.

¹⁸⁷ Jon Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar of the Athenian Year* (Princeton 1975), 107.

¹⁸⁸ SEG 21.541. Δ 56-60.

¹⁸⁹ Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar*, 166-167.

Erechtheus. However, it is interesting to see how both sacrifices to Poseidon by the people of Erchia were connected to festivals and gods from Athens. The connection to festivals and gods from Athens such as the Arrhephoria, highlights the intertwined nature of the religious practices between Erchia and Athens. It shows an interesting interaction between the religions while also showing that their religion was their own.

Analysis

The worship of Poseidon in the inland *polis* and *demes* of ancient Attika reveals a complex and multifaceted religious landscape in regard to his cults. Not only was there an overlap between some of his cults, but some even stood on their own like the Poseidon Helikonios cult in Agrai. We have observed four distinct gods in Athens, each with specific roles and attributes, which showcases the intricate nature of religious practices in the *polis* and *demes*. The integration of different cults, as seen in the presence of the Poseidon Helikonios cult in Agrai, exemplifies the interconnectedness of ancient Greek religious traditions through migration and cultural blending. Furthermore, the connection between the Poseidon cult in Lakiadai and Poseidon Phytalmios shows regional distinctions and the intertwined nature of religious systems, similar to the situation in Agrai.

Additionally, the varying epithets and aspects of Poseidon, such as Poseidon Hippios and ἑναλίω θεῶ, sea god, raise questions about the perception of Poseidon as a singular god with different aspects or as distinct entities. This complexity is further highlighted by the absence of specific epithets for Poseidon in Erchia. The way the different versions of Poseidon interacted with the cults shows that they were important in their own areas while also proving that they were seen as different gods. However, what is interesting is that the epithets related to the land differ greatly while when referring to his marine aspect, he is most often called ἑναλίω θεῶ, sea god.

As we have seen there is not just one Poseidon in the inland *polis* and *demes* of Attika, on the contrary, there were many different gods and aspects, and they could interact with each other. We can draw the same conclusions as in the previous chapter. The theory that the polytheistic world is chaotic and that the Greek pantheon cannot be viewed as a closed and harmonized system is supported by the cults of Poseidon, which

were chaotic and comprised numerous gods that could overlap and stand apart from one another.¹⁹⁰

However, the theory that there is one god with different aspects which leads to different epithets could be true according to Sophocles records.¹⁹¹ Even the idea that that epithets were used to distinguish between the different gods seems to be right.¹⁹² After all, *IG I³ 369* has shown that there were multiple Poseidons, recording Poseidon Sounion and Poseidon Kalaureatis as two different gods. Arguments can be found for and against all three theories, however, it is clear once again that the idea that “the gods who were worshipped in the different *poleis* were, of course, perceived to be the same gods” is wrong.¹⁹³ There may have been an overlap in these Poseidons, but they were not the same god. After all, every epithet seemed to have a dedicated area.

Overall, the different ways people worship Poseidon in the inland *polis* and *demes* of Attika show how flexible and multifaceted Greek religion was, especially regarding the interactions between the *demes*. The next chapter will examine the textual evidence for other epithets that were attested to Poseidon, but which do not seem to have had a dedicated area of worship like the epithets of the past two chapters.

¹⁹⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 305.

¹⁹¹ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 70.

¹⁹² Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion*, 57.

¹⁹³ Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘What is Polis Religion?’, 18.

Chapter 3: Cults in non-specific areas of Attika

This chapter will examine the evidence for the worship and representation of Poseidon in cults that do not fall within one specific geographical area. As in the previous chapters, the focus will be on textual evidence, exploring how they reflect the god's significance and the unique ways he was honoured in each cult. The focus will lie on the epithets that are used to describe the god. Most of the literary evidence will come from later times, however since some beliefs or interpretations may have been passed down through centuries, they still have value. Additionally, later authors may have had access to documents that are now lost to us, providing valuable insights into the religious life of the past even if we should keep in mind that there could have been changes in time. The aim is to analyse which role the god, in his various shapes and forms, played in the larger frame of the religion from Attika. This chapter will cover the following epithets: Phytalmios, Asphaleios, Chamaizelos, Elates, Kynades, and Melanthos.

Phytalmios

Of all the epithets that will be discussed in this chapter, Φυτάλμιος, Phytalmios is the epithet that is the most often recorded in sources. Phytalmios means "Plant Nurturer," "the Nourisher," or "the Fostering One", a title which reflects Poseidon's connection to the fertility of the soil and the growth of plants.

The Phytalmios epithet is only mentioned once in epigraphical evidence from Attika. The inscription is *IG II² 5051* and it mentions ἱερέως Ποσειδῶνος Φυταλμίου, a priest of Poseidon Phytalmios.¹⁹⁴ According to Kokkinou, this inscription shows that a seat was reserved for the priest of Poseidon Phytalmios in the *proedria* of the theatre of Dionysos, which suggest that the priest in the inscription was an Athenian.¹⁹⁵

Literary evidence also places Poseidon Phytalmios in Attika. In his *Septem Sapientium Convivium* Plutarch refers to προηροσία Δήμητρι και Φνταλμίω Ποσειδωνι, Demeter Proerosia and Poseidon Phytalmios.¹⁹⁶ The Proerosia was a festival that was

¹⁹⁴ *IG II² 5051*.

¹⁹⁵ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 123.

¹⁹⁶ Plutarch, *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, in: William Watson Goodwin (eds.), *Plutarch Morals*, trans. William Watson Goodwin (Cambridge 1874) 15.

celebrated on Pyanopsion 6 just before the sowing; thus, Demeter Proerosia was probably honoured on that day.¹⁹⁷ The Proerosia was probably a festival of the Athenian state, but similar rituals have taken place in Piraeus and in Myrrhinos.¹⁹⁸ By mentioning Demeter Proerosia and Poseidon Phytalmios together, Plutarch makes a clear agricultural connection between them. Especially since the festival was held just before the sowing of seeds which follows a clear connection to the meaning of the epithet Phytalmios.

Plutarch also mentions Poseidon Phytalmios twice in *Quaestiones Convivales*. The first time is in passage 5.3 when Plutarch calls him Ποσειδωνι γε Φνταλμιω, Poseidon Phytalmios, when discussing the pine tree and to whom it was sacred: Ποσειδωνι γε Φνταλμιω or Διονύσω δὲ Δενδρίτη, Poseidon Phytalmios or Dionysus Dendrites.¹⁹⁹ The second time Plutarch mentions Poseidon Phytalmios, he says θεὸς λέγεται φυτάλμιος, for [Poseidon] himself is called the Phytalmios. This time it is in regards of the connection of Poseidon to fish and as the first father to whom the race of Hellen sacrificed.²⁰⁰ Whereas the first mention of Poseidon Phytalmios does have a relation to a plant, the second mention does not seem to be related to agriculture. Rather it is connected to the sea and Poseidon Phytalmios as forefather of a race, which raises the question if the epithet was an aspect of Poseidon or whether Poseidon Phytalmios was seen as a different god. Whereas in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* Poseidon Phytalmios is solely worshipped in Attika, it appears that in *Quaestiones Convivales* Poseidon Phytalmios is worshipped across Greece.

What is even more interesting, is that the epithet Phytalmios was not only attested to Poseidon, but also to Apollo, Dionysus and Zeus in other parts of Greece. This shows that it was not an epithet focused on an aspect of just Poseidon, but multiple gods.²⁰¹

The epithet Phytalmios highlights Poseidon's role as a god connected with agricultural fertility and the nurturing of life in Attika. The evidence from Attika, as well as

¹⁹⁷ Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar*, 67.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁹⁹ Plutarch, *Quaestiones Convivales*, in: William Watson Goodwin (eds.), *Plutarch Morals*, trans. William Watson Goodwin (Cambridge 1874) 5.3.

²⁰⁰ Plutarch, *Quaestiones Convivales*, 8.8.4.

²⁰¹ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 123.

literary references by Plutarch, demonstrate that Poseidon Phytalmios was recognised and venerated in both Attika and the wider Greek contexts.

Asphaleios

The epithet Asphaleios is recorded in multiple epigraphical sources, including a decree of Themistocles which was found at Troezen. This decree addresses the Greek strategy in the Greco-Persian wars under the guidance of Themistocles. One of the strategies includes that the generals had to sacrifice a propitiatory offering to:

Διὶ τῷ Παγκρατεῖ καὶ τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ τῇ Νίκῃ καὶ τῷ Ποσειδῶνι τῷ Ἀσφα[λ]εῖωι

to Zeus Pankrates, and to Athena, and to Nike, and to Poseidon Asphaleios²⁰²

It is interesting to note that besides Poseidon Asphaleios only Zeus Pankrates is given an epithet which shows that these epithets were deliberately chosen. Both epithets have a relation to war since Pankrates can be translated to All-Powerful and Asphaleios to Preserver. However, as there is no evidence of cults of Poseidon Asphaleios and Zeus Pankrates in Attika during the fifth century BCE and the cults only became common in the Hellenistic period, the reference to them is considered a “late element of the text”.²⁰³

The epithet Asphaleios is also known under Asphaleus and Asphales, and it represents "safety" or the absence of instability.²⁰⁴ Poseidon was worshipped under that epithet across the wider Greek world according to Pausanias.²⁰⁵ He reports that the epithet Asphaleios, along with Pelagios and Hippios were widespread cult titles for Poseidon in the Greek world:

Ποσειδῶνι δὲ παρέξ ἢ ὅποσα ὀνόματα ποιηταῖς πεποιημένα ἐστὶν ἐς ἐπῶν κόσμον καὶ ἰδίᾳ σφίσιν ἐπιχώρια ὄντα ἕκαστοι τίθενται, τοσαῖδε ἐς ἅπαντας γεγόνασιν ἐπικλήσεις αὐτῷ, Πελαγαῖος καὶ Ἀσφάλιός τε καὶ Ἴππιος.

²⁰² SEG 22.274.

²⁰³ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 124-125.

²⁰⁴ Lebreton, 'Dionysos in the Mirror of Poseidon', 84.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 84.

Besides the names given by poets to Poseidon to adorn their verses, and in addition to his local names, all men give him the following surnames: Pelageus, Asphaelios, and Hippios.²⁰⁶

While it is clear that Poseidon Asphaleios was worshipped in Greece, it was Aristophanes who linked Poseidon Asphaleios to Athens.²⁰⁷ In one of the passages from the chorus, they sing about how they had gained many victories for the Athenian fleets and they call upon Ποσειδῶν ἀσφάλειός, Poseidon Asphaleios, to support them in their old age.²⁰⁸ Sylvain Lebreton explains the mention of Poseidon Asphaleios as a “humorous reference to the cane that provides old men with the stability that their legs no longer provide as ‘Poseidon Asphaleios’” since Poseidon Asphaleios was supposed to bring stability.²⁰⁹

According to Lebreton, Poseidon Asphaleios is known under two main areas of expertise, the first is the sea and navigation and the second one is seismic activity.²¹⁰ Lebreton mentions that Poseidon Asphaleios was worshipped at gates together with Apollo and Artemis and concluded that this Poseidon is worshipped to ask for a guarantee of safety in the wider Greek world.²¹¹

The epithet Asphaleios highlights Poseidon's important role as someone who grants safety and stability, both at sea and on land, showing a new aspect of Poseidon. Its widespread worship across the Greek world, which through Athens, includes Attika shows the significance of this aspect of Poseidon we have not come across before in Attika, if not showing a different Poseidon all together.

²⁰⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 7.21.7.

²⁰⁷ Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, in: anonymous (eds.) *The Eleven Comedies*, trans. anonymous (Perseus library) (New York 1920s) 676-691.

²⁰⁸ Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 682.

²⁰⁹ Lebreton, ‘Dionysos in the Mirror of Poseidon’, 84.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

Chamaizelos

The epithet Charmaizalos is recorded in only one inscription, namely *IG II² 1367*. This is a sacrificial calendar of a private association dated to either the first or the second century CE and it mentions a sacrifice to Ποσιδῶνι Χαμαιζήλω, Poseidon Chamaizelos, on the eighth day of the month Posideon.²¹² The eighth of Posideon is named the Posidea and Poseidon was commonly honoured on this day. Scholars have designated this day of offering to Poseidon based on the above inscription.²¹³ On this day, Poseidon Chamaizelos was offered a cake made without wine, using precisely measured ingredients and shaped in a specific way:

Ποσιδεῶνος ἡ ἴσταμένου πόπανον χοινικιαῖον δωδεκόνφαλον καθήμεν[ον]
Ποσιδῶνι Χαμαιζήλω νηφάλιον.

Posideon: On the 8th from the beginning of the month, a round cake containing a choinix, with twelve bosses, flattened, for Poseidon Chamaizelos, wineless libation.²¹⁴

The epithet Chamaizelos (“down-on-the-ground”) does not appear elsewhere as a cult title for Poseidon or any other god, but its etymology clearly links it to the earth and plant life which suggest its association with agricultural fertility similar to many other gods listed in this religious calendar.²¹⁵ Notably, line 8 mentions offerings to Δήμη[η]τρι Κόρη, Demeter and Kore.²¹⁶ Furthermore, wineless libations are mostly found in the cults of chthonic or fertility gods which supports the idea that Chamaizelos was an agricultural epithet.²¹⁷ What is even more interesting here is that besides Poseidon Chamaizelos there is only one other god who is given an epithet: Διὶ Γεωργῶ, Zeus

²¹² *IG II² 1367*.

²¹³ Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar*, 89.

²¹⁴ *IG II² 1367*, lines 16-18.

²¹⁵ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 125.

²¹⁶ *IG II² 1367*, lines 8, 20.

²¹⁷ Albert Henrichs, ‘The “Sobriety” of Oedipus: Sophocles OC 100 Misunderstood’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 87 (1983) 87-100, there 97.

Georgos.²¹⁸ Zeus Georgos (“the husbandman”, “the tiller” or “the farmer”) was a god of farmland and of crops. He had a festival on the tenth day of Maimakterion.²¹⁹

As can be seen above, Demeter and Kore were not given an epithet, just like Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι, Apollo and Artemis. Demeter and Kore are more widely known as agricultural gods. Apollo and Artemis, on the other hand, are more well known for their aspects related to the sun and music, and the moon and the hunt respectively. Thus, it is interesting that Apollo and Artemis were not given an epithet which establishes a connection to agriculture to make them fit among the other gods as agricultural gods, as has been done with Poseidon Chamaizelos and Zeus Georgos.

Mikalson, however, says that the offering to them on the seventh of Pyanopsion supports the argument that the seventh day of every month was sacred to Apollo, which could explain why he was not given a specific epithet here. This does not explain yet why Artemis was not given an epithet. However, the agricultural nature of the other gods supports the idea that Poseidon was given the epithet Chamaizelos to show his agricultural connection in the calendar even if the role of Artemis remains unclear here.

Although it is uncertain whether Poseidon Chamaizelos was seen as a different god or as an aspect of Poseidon, we can say with certainty that this epithet was chosen for a reason in regard to the agricultural aspects of the epithet.

Elates

This epithet is only recorded once by Hesychius from Alexandria in his *Lexicon*. He mentions that Ἐλατις ὁ Ποσειδῶν ἐν Ἀθηναίαις, Poseidon Elates, is honoured in Athens.²²⁰ Since this is the only mention of this epithet, its precise meaning is unclear.

Kokkinou connects the epithet to Athens, saying that if there was indeed a cult for Poseidon Elates in Athens it would have been related to chariot or horse driving, just like the Poseidon Elater (“charioteer”) of Arkadia.²²¹ She acknowledges the possibility that the epithet was connected to rowing, even if she calls it a lesser possibility.²²²

²¹⁸ JG II² 1367, line 13.

²¹⁹ Albert Dietrich, *Abraxas - Studien Zur Religionsgeschichte Des Späteren Altertums* (Leipzig 1891) 123.

²²⁰ Hesychius, *Lexicon*, in: Friderico Ritschelio (eds.), *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* (n.p. 1867) Elates Poseidon.

²²¹ Kokkinou, ‘Poseidon in Attica’, 126.

²²² *Ibid.*, 126.

Unfortunately, she does not give a reason why for either of her theories, she just briefly mentions them.

If we look at mythology for an answer, we find Ἐλάτη, Elate, who was the daughter of Phimedia by either Aloeus or Poseidon. She was the sister to two Aloadae giants, and she was transformed into a fir tree together with Platanus.²²³ If Elate is indeed the daughter of Poseidon, then the epithet Elates would show a familial connection to her just as with Poseidon Erechtheus. The Greek word for firs is ‘elate’, named after her. This could have been a good support for a familial epithet for this Poseidon. However, the fir tree is sacred to Pan not Poseidon which diminishes the argument for the relation between the two and thus for a familial epithet since the sacred tree is incompatible.

However, Ἐλάτη can also mean an oar made of pinewood, λεύκαινον ὕδωρ ξεστῆς ἐλάτησιν, which gives the epithet a more marine undertone.²²⁴ As we have seen in previous chapters, Sophocles attributes the invention of the oar to Poseidon which supports the theory that Elates may be related to the invention of the oar.²²⁵ Thus making the epithet a title which was given in honour of the invention. The epithet can also be related to “elate”, an adjective which could mean loftily or proudly, making the epithet an adjective referring to a lofty or proud Poseidon.²²⁶

In the end, there are several possible meanings for the epithet Elates: it may refer to chariot or horse driving, rowing, or the invention of the oar. It may even suggest a familiar relationship between Poseidon and Elate or it may have been a poetic adjective for Poseidon. However, since there are no other sources that refer to Poseidon as Ελατις, we are unable to determine which of these theories is accurate.

Kynades

Hesychius mentions another epithet in his *Lexicon*, namely Kynades. He says that Κθναδης Ποσειδων, Αθηνησιν [εν]τιηται, Poseidon Kynades is honoured in Athens.²²⁷

²²³ Rosemary Wright, ‘A Dictionary of Classical Mythology’ (version September 2012), <https://mythandreligion.upatras.gr/english/m-r-wright-a-dictionary-of-classical-mythology/> (25 November 2025).

²²⁴ Logeion, ‘ἐλάτη’, <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/ἐλάτη> (25 November 2025).

²²⁵ Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 714-719.

²²⁶ Logeion, ‘Elate’, <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/elate> (25 November 2025).

²²⁷ Hesychius, *Lexicon*, Kynades Poseidon.

According to Morris Silver, Poseidon was a patron of transport and storage at Athens and he says that the epithet Kynades can also come from the dog-stem, Kyna.²²⁸ However, Silver does not explain the connection between the two statements or why Poseidon would receive an epithet based on the dog-stem besides saying that gods who are interested in commerce are also interested in dogs, implying that this Poseidon is a god connected to commerce.²²⁹

Kokkinou found another possible meaning. She mentions that Kynada was a kind of plant according to Hesychius, however she does not go further into this theory.²³⁰ If she is correct, this would mean that the epithet is another agricultural epithet.

Ultimately, the precise meaning of the epithet Kynades remains uncertain, but the evidence shows that Poseidon Kynades may have been worshipped in Athens. Since we have not heard of him in previous centuries, it is possible that he was only worshipped later on or the people, rather than the state, worshipped him.

Melanthos

There is no epigraphical evidence for this epithet, but Lycophron mentions it in his book *Alexandra*; Μέλανθον ἐγκλιθένθ' Ἴππηγέτην, Melanthos, the Lord of Horses, a title that is frequently attributed to Poseidon.²³¹ Isaak and Ioannis Tzetzes note in line 766 of their commentary that “Melanthos is Poseidon among the Athenians” yet there is no further literary evidence indicating that Poseidon Melanthos was worshipped in Athens.²³²

Eustathius of Thessaloniki does refer to Μέλανθον Ποσειδων παρα Λνχοψονι, Poseidon Melanthos of Lycophron, by associating the epithet with the dark colour of the sea, which is likened to the colour of wine.²³³ This is a simile commonly found in Homeric epics.²³⁴ This suggests that the epithet functions more as a descriptive term for

²²⁸ Morris Silver, *Taking Ancient Mythology Economically* (Leiden 1992) 162.

²²⁹ Silver, *Taking Ancient Mythology Economically*, 159.

²³⁰ Kokkinou, 'Poseidon in Attica', 126.

²³¹ Lycophron, *Alexandra*, in: Alexander William Mair and Gilbert Robertson Mair (eds.), *Callimachus, Lycophron and Aratus*, trans. Alexander William Mair (Cambridge 1921) 766.

²³² Isaak Tzetzes and Ioannis Tzetzes, *Ad Lycophronem*, in: Eduard Sheer (eds.), *Ad Lycophronem*, trans. Bruce Hartzler and Brady Kriesling (n.p. 1881) 766.

²³³ Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem*, in: Gottfried Stallbaum (eds.), *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem; ad Fidem Exempli Romani Editi* (n.p. 1847) verse 350.

²³⁴ Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem*, verse 350.

Poseidon rather than indicating a specific location or aspect, as seen with epithets such as Poseidon Sounion or Poseidon Hippios. Eustathius is not alone in linking the epithet to colour. According to N. Robertson, Melanthos meant black or dark, and he did not consider Melanthos a cult epithet, rather an adjective.²³⁵

There is another theory for this epithet: in Greek mythology Melanthus was a king of Athens who fled there after he and the other Neleidae were expelled. He ended the war that Xanthos the Boeotian was waging on Athens by killing him.²³⁶ According to Diogenes Laertius, Poseidon was a forefather of Melanthus, which gives us a second possibility for where the epithet comes from.²³⁷ If the Melanthos epithet derived from this lineage, it would suggest a connection between Poseidon and Athens through Melanthus, potentially indicating a cult site for Poseidon Melanthos in Athens. However, as mentioned above, there is no further literary evidence of a cult site for Poseidon Melanthos in Athens, nor any archaeological evidence.

In the end, the exact meaning of the Melanthos epithet and what it would have meant for the Greeks eludes us. However, based on the above-mentioned evidence, it seems that Melanthos was a descriptive epithet rather than one that showed a location or a particular Poseidon.

Analysis

The different epithets of Poseidon in these non-specific areas of Attika shed a new light on the worship of Poseidon and his multifaceted aspects in Attika and the wider Greek world. The evidence from Attika and literary references by Plutarch affirm the recognition and worship of Poseidon Phytalmios in both Attika and wider Greek contexts, highlighting the widespread influence of this aspect of Poseidon. Similarly, the significance of Poseidon Asphaleios is evident through its widespread worship across the Greek world, including Attika through Athens, revealing a new aspect of Poseidon as a guarantor of safety and stability. While the true nature of Poseidon Chamaizelos

²³⁵ Noel Robertson, *Festivals and Legends: The Formation of Greek Cities in the Light of Public Ritual* (Toronto 1992) 31.

²³⁶ Noel Robertson, 'Melanthus, Codrus, Neleus, Caucon: Ritual Myth as Athenians History', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 29 (3) (1988) 201-261, there 210.

²³⁷ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, in: Robert Drew Hicks (eds.), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers. Diogenes Laertius*, trans. Robert Drew Hicks (Cambridge 1925) 3.1.

remains uncertain, the deliberate selection of this epithet shows its relevance to the agricultural aspects of Poseidon's domain. Regarding the epithet Elates, the various possible meanings point to different aspects of Poseidon's domain, but the lack of additional sources limits our ability to determine the accurate interpretation. Likewise, the meaning and place of worship for the epithet Kynades remain ambiguous, adding to the enigmatic nature of this aspect of Poseidon. Moreover, the potential lineage connection between Poseidon and Athens through Melanthus offers an intriguing perspective on Poseidon Melanthos, suggesting a possible cult site, but the absence of literary and archaeological evidence complicates the interpretation of this epithet.

In essence, the epithets associated with Poseidon in these sources show that the people chose which epithets to worship based on which aspect of the god was needed. This follows the theory that epithets were used to distinguish between the different gods.²³⁸ Similarly, it supports the argument that there is one god with different aspects which lead to different epithets.²³⁹ However, this does not mean that the theory of many gods cannot be true. After all, the many different used epithets for different occasions can also point to multiple gods.²⁴⁰ The idea of there being only one Poseidon, on the other hand, is once again proven wrong.²⁴¹

Overall, the different epithets of Poseidon in Attika and in wider Greece once again shows how flexible and multifaceted Greek religion was.

²³⁸ Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion*, 57.

²³⁹ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 70.

²⁴⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 305.

²⁴¹ Sourvinou-Inwood, 'What is Polis Religion?', 18.

Conclusion

The question of how the Greeks worshipped their gods is at the heart of the intense scholarly debate surrounding the nature of Greek polytheism and the conceptualising of its gods. There are many positions in this debate, ranging from the claim that there is only one god regardless of the epithet that was given to him, to the claim that each epithet revealed a different god with each epithet highlighting a particular aspect of the god's power and function. The debate helps us understand how the ancient Greeks thought about gods and their religious system by looking at the words and concepts they used. This is an important debate since it helps allows us to understand the nuances of their culture better.

To further this debate and to assess which perspective holds more weight, textual and archaeological sources concerning the cults of Poseidon in Attika in the classical period and the various epithets he was given by these cults were analysed.

In the first chapter, the focus was on coastal *demes* to explore the ways Poseidon was honoured in each coastal *deme*. The aim was to analyse which role the god, in his various shapes and forms, played in the larger frame of the religion system of Attika. The *demes* which were discussed are: Eleusis, Piraeus, Phaleron, Sounion and Thorikos.

In the second chapter, the same question was posed for the inland *polis* and *demes* to determine whether a similar pattern as in the previous chapter could be identified, or if there were any intriguing differences based on geography. One would, for example, expect the worship of a marine aspect of Poseidon to be more prevalent in coastal *demes* than in inland *polis* and *demes*. One main *polis* was discussed in this chapter, Athens, together with several districts and *demes* around Athens: Agrai, Lakiadai, Kolonos Hippios, Kalaureia and Erchia.

The third chapter was dedicated to epithets that do not seem to have had a dedicated area of worship in one *polis* or *deme* like the epithets of the previous two chapters. These epithets were Phytalmios, Asphaleios, Chamaizelos, Elates, Kynades, and Melanthos.

The cultic worship of Poseidon in the coastal and inland *polis* and *demes* of ancient Attika reveals a complex and multifaceted religious landscape. The evidence from Eleusis, Piraeus, Phaleron, and Sounion illustrates the presence of multiple distinct

cults and gods associated with Poseidon, contradicting the idea of a strict and disciplined version of polytheism. Furthermore, whereas the evidence from Halai Aixonides demonstrates a new aspect of Poseidon, Thorikos has shown how a god from one *deme* could be worshipped by another, in this case the Poseidon of Sounion. The varied aspects of Poseidon and the lack of a unified system suggests a chaotic pantheon. This challenges the theories that the Greek pantheon was an organised system, the idea that an epithet shows a separate aspect of a god, and the theory that a different epithet did not always create a new god.

Additionally, the evidence refutes the notion that gods worshipped in different *demes* were perceived as the same god, highlighting the flexibility and multifaceted nature of Greek religion. This is shown most clearly in the cases of Sounion and Eleusis where we have in the case of the former a Poseidon who was clearly conceived as a different Poseidon from other *demes*, and in the case of the latter, we have three different Poseidons with their own worship.

The worship of Poseidon in the inland *polis* and *demes* of ancient Attika reveals a complex and multifaceted religious landscape, with both overlapping and separate cults. Athens showcases the intricate nature of religious practices with four distinct gods, each with specific roles and attributes. The integration of different cults, like the Poseidon Helikonios cult in Agrai, exemplifies the interconnectedness of ancient Greek religious traditions through migration and cultural blending.

The perception of Poseidon as a singular god with distinct aspects or as distinct entities is brought into question once again by varying epithets and aspects of the god, as seen in the absence of specific epithets for Poseidon in Erchia. The presence of multiple Poseidons, as recorded in *IG I³ 369*, supports the idea of varied worship. The integration of different cults supports the theory of a chaotic and non-harmonized polytheistic world. The varying epithets and aspects of Poseidon in the inland *polis* and *demes* show that arguments about the perception of Poseidon as a singular god with different aspects or as distinct entities, may be correct depending on the source. This shows that the Greeks could perceive Poseidon as one god, or as many. The idea, however, that the gods worshipped in different *poleis* and *demes* were perceived to be the same is still not accurate, as there were clear regional differences and dedicated areas for each epithet.

The epithets associated with Poseidon that were not bound to a *polis* or *deme* reveal a multifaceted god with diverse roles and attributes. The use of Phytalmios and Chamaizelos highlight Poseidon's agricultural aspects in Attika and wider Greece, and the epithet Asphaleios highlights his role of granting stability and safety. Furthermore, the enigmatic nature of the epithets Elates and Kynades presents intriguing perspectives on the multifaceted aspects of Poseidon even if their exact meaning is unknown. The worship of all these Poseidons in Attika and wider Greece emphasises the far-reaching worship of these specific aspects of Poseidon, showing a shared belief in Greece. The utilization of these various epithets has shown that the Greeks used a wide variety of epithets between which they chose to worship a specific Poseidon depending on the occasion and which aspect of him was needed.

The presence of multiple distinct cults and Poseidons in Athens, as well as the interconnectedness of different cults in various regions, showcase the intricate religious landscape within the area. The perception of Poseidon as a singular god with distinct aspects or as distinct entities is called into question by the varying epithets and aspects of the god, supporting different scholarly theories. While there may have been overlap between the worship of different Poseidons, it is clear that they were not perceived as the same god, as each epithet seemed to have a dedicated area.

The worship of Poseidon in Attika in the classical era shows the flexibility and multifaceted nature of Greek religion, reflecting the diverse interactions between the *polis* and *demes*, and the enigmatic nature of Poseidon. Looking at the region from a geographical perspective reveals the ancient religious connection between the various Attic *polis* and *demes*, coastal and inland, through migration and cultural blending. The presence of multiple distinct gods with specific roles and attributes in both coastal and inland *polis* and *demes* highlights the complex nature of religious practices in the region. Not only do the varying epithets show the different aspects of Poseidon and how he was conceptualised by the ancient Greeks, but they also shed a new light on his worship in Attika. The evidence from textual references and archaeological findings supports the various theories that epithets were used to distinguish between different aspects or powers of Poseidon. However, the presence of numerous epithets for different occasions also aligns with the theory that the epithets stood for different gods and that there was not one Poseidon, but many.

The answer to the research question is that Poseidon was not seen as one god by the Greeks from classical Attika, but instead they conceived different Poseidons in their *polis* and *demes*. What is interesting is that both the theory that epithets showed the difference between different aspects or powers of a god and the theory that every epithet showed a new god can be true, however not in the same *polis* or *deme* at the same time. It would either be that a different epithet showed a different aspect of the god, or it would show a new version of the god. This research has demonstrated the chaotic nature of polytheism and the fact that polytheism is a very diverse concept. However, it has also highlighted the significance of examining polytheism from the viewpoint of the culture we are studying, rather than merely from a distance. As cultural outsiders, we would believe that Poseidon was seen as the same god across the various *polis* and *demes*, but when we see things from the perspective of the culture's members, we notice a lot more nuances than we otherwise would.

Further research could investigate Poseidon and his epithets across the broader Greek world, beyond just Attika, to better understand the regional variations in his worship and his significance. Additionally, similar studies could be conducted on other gods within the various *polis* and *demes* in Attika and in wider Greece to determine if comparable patterns emerge in their local cults and religious identities. For example, examining the worship of Athena in different city-states or the regional variations of Apollo could yield valuable insights. By further developing a geographical approach like the one that has been used in this thesis, it becomes possible to see a new way the Greeks conceptualised their gods.

Moreover, this approach helps us understand the interconnectedness of places and phenomena. It will lead to a better understanding of why the Greeks honoured a specific form of their gods in those specific places. Eventually, this might lead to a comparison of the gods to determine how they related to one another in terms of cult worship, which gods were worshipped where, when, and, more importantly, why? A lens through which to view inter-*polis* relations in the religious marketplace is provided by the notion that a god is unique in all *poleis* and *demes*, which may have had a significant influence on the acceptance, alteration, or rejection of specific gods. These research directions could contribute to a deeper understanding of how local identities and religious practices

intersected in the ancient Greek world until we will eventually get a clearer picture of how polytheism works in the eyes of the ancient Greeks.

Appendix A: Index of inscriptions cited

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IG I³ 5.

IG I³ 8.

IG I³ 369.

IG I³ 383.

IG I³ 405.

IG I³ 873.

IG II² 410.

IG II² 1270.

IG II² 1363.

IG II² 1367.

IG II² 3538.

IG II² 4071.

IG II² 4691.

IG II² 5051.

IG II² 5058.

Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum:

SEG 16.19.

SEG 21.525.

SEG 21.526.

SEG 21.527.

SEG 21.541.

SEG 22.274.

SEG 26.72.

SEG 52.49.

SEG 54.327.

Eleusis. The inscriptions on Stone

I.Eleusis 300.

Appendix B: Map of Attika



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List of Abbreviations

IG *Inscriptiones Graecae*

SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*

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