

## **Naming and Mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean**



# **Naming and Mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean**



Spaces, Mobilities, Imaginaries

Edited by

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Volume 1

**DE GRUYTER**

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 741182).



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission

ISBN 978-3-11-079649-0

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-079843-2

e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-079845-6

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110798432>



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**Library of Congress Control Number: 2022941350**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2022 the author(s), published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

This book is published open access at [www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com).

Cover image: Bronze Coin from Seleucia in Pieria, Reign of Trajan, reverse: Betyl of Zeus Kasios within a shrine consisting of four pillars supporting a pyramidal roof surmounted by an eagle; beneath, ZEYC KACIOC (© private collection).

Typesetting: Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

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# Squaring Nemesis: Alexander's Dream, the Oracle, and the Foundation of the New Smyrna

## 1 Introduction

The ancient history of Smyrna is deeply rooted in the complex and intricate accidents that marked the Greek *ktiseis* in Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup> Originally located on the slope of Mount Sipylus, the *polis* is associated with extraordinary figures, whose names, like *agalmata* of memory, have enlightened a past as troubled as it is obscure. The accounts of its founding are mostly late, and based on a patchwork of traditions among which it is difficult to establish any order, but all of these curiously agree in awarding the city a particular prestige and an enviable territorial position.

In the speeches of Aelius Aristides, who chose Smyrna as his adopted homeland, it figures as a city favoured by the gods.<sup>2</sup> The *polis* had also embraced the Athenian Theseus as founder, and was competing with many others for the position of Homer's birthplace.<sup>3</sup> In later times, other prominent figures were inscribed in its memory: first and foremost Alexander the Great, to whom the sources of the Imperial age attributed the refounding of the city, on the other side of the river Meles.

Less glorious and idyllic is the portrait conveyed by more ancient sources: Herodotus' work, for instance, provides us the image of a *polis* contended by the Aeolian and Ionian worlds, and which was conquered through deceit by a group of inhabitants in exile from the nearby Ionian Colophon, who drove out the Smyrnaeans after allowing them to keep only their movable belongings.<sup>4</sup> From this moment, Smyrna was populated by the exiles from Colophon and then became fully Ionian.<sup>5</sup> Because of its new civic composition, it probably came to be represented within the *Panionion*, the confederation of Ionian cities in Asia Minor, through the

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a part of a research project financed by the A.v. Humboldt Foundation. I would like to thank Claudio Biagetti and Domitilla M. Campanile for their help at a time of great difficulty due to the closure of libraries during the pandemic and Benedict Beckeld for his careful revisions on this text.

<sup>2</sup> Aristid. *Or.* 17.3–6; Aristid. *Or.* 18.2. The translation of the complete works of Aelius Aristides is Behr 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Aristid. *Or.* 17.5; Aristid. *Or.* 15; Aristid. *Or.* 18.2; Aristid. *Or.* 21.8. A list of the seven cities that disputed the status of Homer's homeland is reported in *Anth. Pal.* 16.298.

<sup>4</sup> Hdt. 1.150.

<sup>5</sup> Smyrna is referred to as fully Ionian in 688 BCE, when it is remembered as the homeland of Onomastus, the successful boxer of the Olympian Games: Paus. 5.8.7. On Smyrna's passage to the Ionian dodecapolis: Moggi 2005.

duplication of the Colophonian vote.<sup>6</sup> Afterwards the city was destroyed by the Lydian Alyattes around 600 BCE, and then gradually came under the control of the Persian Empire.<sup>7</sup>

Strabo reports, in the first century BCE, that before their city's refounding the Smyrnaeans were a dispersed people, forced to live *komedon*, in villages. He was not aware of the tradition that attributed the new founding to Alexander, and instead assigns to his successors the initiative of the city's reunification: first to Antigonus Monophthalmus and then to Lysimachus. Finally, the geographer states unequivocally that the city was "the most beautiful" of that time.<sup>8</sup> The notion that the rebirth of Smyrna was due to Alexander began instead to circulate in the Imperial age. Pliny the Elder relates that it was founded by an Amazon and *restituta* by Alexander,<sup>9</sup> but it is Pausanias, in the seventh book of his *Periegesis*, who reports this episode in detail, affirming that Alexander was encouraged by the divine epiphany of the Nemeseis to lead the Smyrnaeans to the new site and that, before moving, they requested advice from the oracle of Claros.

Starting from the analysis of the Pausanias passage, this paper aims at investigating the role played by specific cults and sanctuaries in the process of the Smyrnaean refounding, in order to show in what terms these contributed to the construction of a new memory and to the reshaping of a new identity.

## 2 A Glorious Past for Smyrna

Pausanias includes the account of Smyrna's rebirth in a long digression on the Ionian and Aeolian colonisation in Asia Minor.<sup>10</sup> He stresses the profound gap between the city's ancient and painful past and its most recent and glorious one, which began when the arrival of Alexander the Great changed forever the fate of the *polis* and its position among the other cities of the area. He reports the visit of the Macedonian ruler in the following words:

Σμύρναν δὲ ἐν ταῖς δώδεκα πόλεσιν οὔσαν Αἰολέων καὶ οἰκουμένην τῆς χώρας, καθ' ἃ καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἔτι πόλιν [ἦν] καλοῦσιν ἀρχαίαν, Ἴωνες ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ὀρμηθέντες ἀφελόμενοι τοῦς

<sup>6</sup> *Schol. Pl. Thet.* 153c. On the structure and functioning of the Ionian Confederacy: Cassola 1958; Moggi 1976, 40–43, n°11; Ragone 1986 esp. 177.

<sup>7</sup> *Hdt.* 1.16. Sources on the synoecism between Smyrna and Colophon are collected in Moggi 1976, 40–43 n°11.

<sup>8</sup> "After Smyrna had been rased by the Lydians, its inhabitants continued for about four hundred years to live in villages (κωμηδόν). Then they were reassembled into a city (ἀνήγειρεν) by Antigonus, and afterwards by Lysimachus, and their city is now the most beautiful of all (καὶ νῦν ἔστι καλλίστη τῶν πασῶν)[. . .]", *Str.* 14.1.37, transl. Jones.

<sup>9</sup> *Plin. HN* 5.118.

<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of this digression within the framework of Pausanias work, see Moggi 1996.

Αίολεῖς ἔσχον· χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον καὶ Ἴωνες μετέδοσαν Σμυρναίοις τοῦ ἐν Πανιωνίῳ συλλόγου. Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ὁ Φιλίππου τῆς ἐφ' ἡμῶν πόλεως ἐγένετο οἰκιστὴς κατ' ὄψιν ὄνειρατος· Ἀλέξανδρον γὰρ θηρεύοντα ἐν τῷ ὄρει τῷ Πάγῳ, ὡς ἐγένετο ἀπὸ τῆς θήρας, ἀφικέσθαι πρὸς Νεμέσεων λέγουσιν ἱερόν, καὶ πηγῇ τε ἐπιτυχεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ πλατάνῳ πρὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, πεφυκνικία δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὕδατος, καὶ ὑπὸ τῇ πλατάνῳ καθεύδοντι κελεύειν φασὶν αὐτῷ τὰς Νεμέσεις ἐπιφανεῖσας πόλιν ἐνταῦθα οἰκίζειν καὶ ἄγειν ἐς αὐτὴν Σμυρναίους ἀναστήσαντα ἐκ τῆς προτέρας· ἀποστέλλουσιν οὖν ἐς Κλάρον θεωροὺς οἱ Σμυρναῖοι περὶ τῶν παρόντων σφίσις ἐρησομένους, καὶ αὐτοῖς ἔχρησεν ὁ θεός· τρὶς μάκαρες κείνοι καὶ τετράκις ἄνδρες ἔσονται, οἱ Πάγον οἰκήσουσι πέρην ἱεροῖο Μέλῆτος.

οὕτω μετῴκισαντο ἐθελονταὶ καὶ δύο Νεμέσεις νομίζουσιν ἀντὶ μᾶς καὶ μητέρα αὐταῖς φασὶν εἶναι Νύκτα, ἐπεὶ Ἀθηναῖοί γε τῇ ἐν Ῥαμνοῦντι θεῷ πατέρα λέγουσιν εἶναι Ὠκεανόν.

Smyrna, one of the twelve Aeolian cities, built on that site which even now they call the old city, was seized by Ionians who set out from Colophon and displaced the Aeolians; subsequently, however, the Ionians allowed the Smyrnaeans to take their place in the general assembly at Panionium. The modern city was founded by Alexander, the son of Philip, in accordance with a vision in a dream. It is said that Alexander was hunting on Mount Pagus, and that after the hunt was over he came to a sanctuary of the Nemeses, and found there a spring and a plane-tree in front of the sanctuary, growing over the water. While he slept under the plane-tree it is said that the Nemeses appeared and bade him found a city there and to remove into it the Smyrnaeans from the old city. So the Smyrnaeans sent ambassadors to Clarus to make inquiries about the circumstance, and the god made answer: –

“Thrice, yes, four times blest will those men be  
Who shall dwell in Pagus beyond the sacred  
Meles.”

So they migrated of their own free will, and believe now in two Nemeses instead of one, saying that their mother is Night, while the Athenians say that the father of the goddess in Rhamnus is Ocean. (Paus. 7.5, 1–3, transl. Jones)

In the first part of the account it is easy to perceive a clear echo of a remote past when Smyrna was still Aeolian. Later, when occupied by the Colophonians, it was accepted in the assembly of the *Panionion*. Pausanias then moves abruptly to the events of the fourth century BCE: he describes Alexander, wandering on Mount Pagus after a hunt, finding rest in the shade of a plane tree, near a spring, exactly where the sanctuary of the Nemeses was located. An epiphany of the deities comes in a dream to the sleeping king, bidding him to found a city right in that place and to lead the Smyrnaeans there. But the Smyrnaeans themselves, not considering Alexander’s vision sufficient, request a confirmation of the oneiric message from the oracle of Claros, whose sanctuary was in the territory of Colophon, twelve kilometres from the city.<sup>11</sup> The divine voice promises the inhabitants of the new *polis* wealth and prosperity. Pausanias’ account follows here a typical narrative pattern, already

<sup>11</sup> The first oracular response of Claros reported by the sources is precisely that mentioned by Pausanias concerning the refounding of Smyrna. Traces of these divine verses have been identified in an honorary decree from the second century BCE: see *I.Smyrna* II, 1 647=SEG 18.495; 26.1296.

used in similar situations, for example the refounding of Messene in 369 BCE.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, apart from the repetition of an oft-used model (dream-oracle-foundation), the rebirth of Smyrna in Hellenistic times does not seem to have any of the intensity that accompanied the reintegration of the Messenians into their native land.

The dramatic emphasis Pausanias uses in his description of the Messenians' *pathemata*<sup>13</sup> is absent from the charming and delicate account of the Smyrnaean rebirth, which one might have thought should also have included some painful events. It is evident, however, that we are dealing with a tradition that was invented in order to fabricate a glorious past for a city<sup>14</sup> that in the Imperial age was a flourishing centre of Greek culture.<sup>15</sup> The seat of a library, gymnasium, *musaion*,<sup>16</sup> and medical school,<sup>17</sup> Smyrna was also the favourite place for the orators of the second Sophistic, including Polemon and Aelius Aristides himself.<sup>18</sup> Loyalty towards Rome was rewarded through significant privileges such as, for instance, the exemption from taxes, internal autonomy, the repeated designation of the city as a seat of Imperial *neokoria*,<sup>19</sup> and, last but not least, support for the reconstruction of the *polis* destroyed by a terrible earthquake in 178 CE.<sup>20</sup> On this occasion, the orator Aelius Aristides once again evokes the extraordinary beauty of a city wounded by an unforeseeable catastrophe, in comparison with which other painful episodes, deeply impressed in Greek memory, such as the Trojan War, Athens' disastrous expedition to Sicily, or the destruction of Thebes, appear to be meaningless.<sup>21</sup> The orator directly addresses the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, who had visited the city some time before,<sup>22</sup> to urge them to intervene in the reconstruction of the city, in a letter whose tenor reveals his close relationship with the Imperial elites. Rome's support came quickly, so much so that Aelius Aristides, a few years later, after the reconstruction works had already begun, observes in the *Palinodia* how the city, founded by Theseus and brought to its present condition by Alexander,

**12** Paus. 4.20.4. On Pausanias and the Messenians, I cite Bonanno 2013 with further bibliographic references.

**13** Cf. for instance, Paus. 4.6.1; 8.4; 13.5; 14.5; 21.9–10, 26.6; 27.9–11; 29.13.

**14** The concept of “invention of tradition“ was initially explored, even if in relation to other historical contexts, in the essays collected by Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983.

**15** Broughton 1938, 750–752; Klose 1987, 5.

**16** Robert 1994, 9.

**17** Str. 12.8.20; 14.1.37.

**18** On Smyrna as centre of the Second Sophistic, see Franco 2005, esp. 361–368. On Polemon and the Smyrnaeans, Campanile 1999, 275–285.

**19** On the grant of *neokoria* to Smyrna and more in general on this privilege, see Burrell 2004, esp. 38–54. More specifically about the administrative functioning of its relationship with Rome, Dmitriev 2005, 246–265.

**20** On the earthquake and its chronology, see Cadoux 1938, 279, n. 3; *I. Smyrna* II, 1, n. 628; Franco 2005, 471–474; on Imperial aid to cities destroyed by natural disasters, Winter 1998.

**21** Aristid. *Or.* 18.7.

**22** Aristid. *Or.* 19.3.

while recognising two *archegetides* now desires a pair of founders (ἐπόθει δ' ἄρα καὶ ἡ τῆς πόλεως φύσις οἰκιστὰς διττοὺς, δύο τὰς ἀρχηγέτιδας νέμουσα).<sup>23</sup> By these words the orator is undoubtedly referring to the two emperors and the two goddesses of Alexander's dream, which had been portrayed for the first time on the reverse of a bronze coin under Marcus Aurelius thirty years earlier, in 147 CE.<sup>24</sup> The same scene is represented on the reverse of other coins, under Gordian III and Philip the Arab (242–249 CE).<sup>25</sup>

The relationship between the scene engraved on these coins and Pausanias' accounts is self-evident; it seems indeed to be the figurative representation of the Peri-egete's description. An analysis of its iconography provides further information: we see a languid Alexander alone under the shade of a tree, leaning on his shield. Two divine figures stand over him and face each other, wearing a *chiton* and *himation*, and covered with headdresses. A *bucranium* – as it has been interpreted<sup>26</sup> – seems to suggest a sanctuary setting as well as the performance of sacrificial rites that must have accompanied the founding of the new city (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: *The dream of Alexander at Smyrna*. Staatliche Münzsammlung, München. Photo Nicolai Kästner.

In comparison to the scene on the coin, however, Pausanias' account adds two important pieces of information, which have to be examined here: first, it notes the role of the Claros oracle in confirming the legitimacy of the Smyrnaeans' move to

<sup>23</sup> Aristid. *Or.* 20.20.

<sup>24</sup> Klose 1987, 29; Taf. 39–40 (R1–R13). Obv.: ΑΥΡΗΛΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ, Rev.: ΘΕΥΔΙΑΝΟΣ ΣΤΡΑΤ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ ΣΜΥΡΝΑΙΟΣ.

<sup>25</sup> Klose 1987, 29; Taf. 52 (R14); Taf. 54 (R1).

<sup>26</sup> Dahmen 2007, 83, n. 192.

their new territory and, second, it emphasises the peculiarity of the Smyrnaean cult, in which not one but rather two Nemeseis were worshipped.

### 3 The Oracle of Claros and the Sanctuary of the Nemeseis

In Pausanias' account, the epiphany of the Nemeseis and the response of the Claros oracle appear as not perfectly aligned but merely as overlapping in the storyline: as observed by Herbert W. Parke, the oracular response did not contain any reference to the two deities or their divine command, but only a prediction about the wealthy future of the Smyrnaean people in the new territory.<sup>27</sup> This almost imperceptible gap between the two different phases of the foundation could be interpreted as an indication of a tradition that was built up through successive stratifications, and only later brought together in the synthesis of the *Periegesis*.<sup>28</sup> An attempt to contextualise the different narrative units of this account may highlight the simultaneous interaction of different memories which contributed to the construction of the Smyrnaean past and support us in the understanding of the cult of the two Nemeseis. Above all, the role attributed to the oracle of Claros may well be understood in light of Smyrna's claim to be part of the Ionian dodecapolis, attested already in Herodotus.<sup>29</sup>

The historian mentions the wish of the Smyrnaeans to participate in the *Panionion*, which originally gathered, in Archaic times,<sup>30</sup> around the sanctuary of Poseidon *Helikonios* at Mycale.<sup>31</sup> In the first half of the fourth century BCE, the religious centre at Mycale was gradually abandoned because of several conflicts in the region, which obliged the Ionians to move the celebration of the *Panionia* to Ephesos.<sup>32</sup> The cult was later reactivated on a territory controlled by the newly rebuilt Priene,<sup>33</sup> after the

<sup>27</sup> Parke 1985, 127–128.

<sup>28</sup> A very persuasive reading of Alexander's dream as a foundation myth of the new Smyrna has been proposed by Kuhn 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Hdt. 1.143.

<sup>30</sup> The constitution of the Ionian confederacy has been variously dated by scholars: for a summary of the several suggestions, see Paganoni 2014, 46–47.

<sup>31</sup> Hdt. 1.148.

<sup>32</sup> D.S. 15.49.1–4. For the identification of these conflicts: Paganoni 2014, 49.

<sup>33</sup> Scholars have identified at Otomatik Tepe, near the village of Güzelçamli, on the slope of Mount Mycale, the location of the *Panionion* since the classical period. The location of the archaic *Panionion* is still debated: cf. on this topic Kleiner/Hommel/ Müller-Wiener 1967, 18–45, Herda 2006 and, more recently, Lohmann/Kalaitzoglou/Lüdorf 2017, 40. For a *status quaestionis* on the location of the *Panionion*, see Biagetti 2008; Horster 2013, 178 n. 3. On the role of the Prieneans and Prienean priests in the Ionian festivals, see Strab. 8.7.2; Strab. 14.1.20; Horster 2013, *passim*.



arduous recovery of the *aphidrymata*<sup>34</sup> from the ancient altars in Helike, in Achaia, former homeland of the Ionians.<sup>35</sup> Claros, for its part, also enjoyed an illustrious past, closely linked to that of Apollo at Delphi, of which it represented a branch of sorts in Asia Minor.<sup>36</sup> In the tradition circulating during the Hellenistic period, thanks to the poems of Nicander of Colophon, poet and priest at Claros, the sanctuary there was considered the first point of arrival of the Ionian colonisation, where the preliminary partitioning of the land among the colonists took place.<sup>37</sup> Vitruvius, in a very controversial passage of his work *De architectura*, reports that the sanctuary of Apollo *Panionios* was the first built by the thirteen colonies on the coast of Asia Minor, which were led by the Athenians and Ion, who gave the name to the entire region.<sup>38</sup> It is difficult to establish whether Vitruvius' reference to Apollo *Panionios* rather than Poseidon as the ancestral deity of the Ionians is to be interpreted as an oversight by a late author or a mistake in the philological transmission<sup>39</sup> or, as has been more reasonably assumed, as a reflection of the growing prestige of the oracular centre of Claros since the Hellenistic period.<sup>40</sup> Its deity seemed indeed to be worshipped also in Athens, as testified by an Attic inscription from the first century BCE on an altar consecrated to *Apollon Aguius Prostaterios Patroios Puthios Klarios Panionios*.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Vitruvius specifies that Smyrna was not originally among these Ionian cities founded on the Athenian initiative, but was only later integrated into the *Panionion*.

It is evident that Claros' positive answer for the founding of the new Smyrna thus provides a definitive solution for the aspirations of its citizens. This solution includes the consent of the Colophonians, former conquerors of Smyrna, in whose

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**34** The *aphidrymata* were probably reproductions on a small scale of the ancient altars. On their symbolic meaning, see Bonnet 2009.

**35** This episode is reported by and by D.S. 15.49 and Str. 8.7.2. An analysis of these events is in Prandi 1989; Paganoni 2014, 49–50.

**36** On the relationship between Claros and Delphi, see Sakellariou 1958, 153–154; Ragone 1986, 183–186; Ragone 2006, 62–63; Mongiello 2017, 198–200.

**37** Cf. Nic. *Al.* 9–11 and *Schol.* Nic. *Al.* 9–11. On the testimony of Nicander, see Sakellariou 1958, 151–152; Ragone 1986, 185–186; Ragone 2006, 65 n. 205.

**38** Vitruvius (4.1.4) adds that Smyrna was accepted among the members of the Ionian League thanks to Attalus and Arsinoe (*regio Attali and Arsinoe beneficio*). As commonly assumed, the text should probably be corrected by reading Lysimachus, husband of Arsinoe, instead of Attalus. On Smyrna and Lysimachus with respect to the Vitruvius passage, see Franco 1990, 115–117, and 1993, 315–317. Ragone 1986, 205 considers that the substitution of Attalus for Lysimachus in the Vitruvian testimony shows that the Roman author uses a source dating from a period in which the ruler of Pergamon had established his influence over the Ionian cities and had consolidated his relations with Smyrna and Claros, as the statues in honour of the Attalids seem to prove.

**39** This is the opinion of Cassola 1958, 162, n. 28.

**40** Ragone 1986, 186. On the importance of Claros in Hellenistic and Roman times, see Mac Sweeney 2013, 111.

**41** *IG II/III*<sup>3</sup> 4. 1764 ll. 2–3.

territory the sanctuary fell, to the refounding of the city,<sup>42</sup> but also acknowledges their clear ethnic belonging and completely obliterates their Aeolian past.<sup>43</sup> The Smyrnaeans, for their part, never ceased laying claim to this kinship with the Ionian world and especially with Athens: the reference to Theseus during an embassy sent to the Roman emperor Tiberius in 26 CE, in order to request his agreement to the building of a temple in his honour, is a significant example, as are the several allusions to the relationship with Athens in the orations of Aelius Aristides.<sup>44</sup> As Tacitus reports,<sup>45</sup> in a shortlist of eleven cities coming to Rome to compete for the privilege of *neokoria*, claiming among their merits greater antiquity and their relationship with the Roman people, Smyrna prevailed: its ambassadors, after having quickly mentioned their ancestors, and Theseus among them, recalled incisively their constant loyalty to Rome. No reference was made to the cult of the two Nemeseis,<sup>46</sup> to which the *Palinodia* of Aelius Aristides would later express a strong identitarian meaning for Smyrna, as attested also by the gift of two statues of the deities sent to the city by Emperor Trajan.<sup>47</sup>

Given this complicated framework, it is clear that any reconstruction of the background of Smyrna's foundation tradition involving Alexander and, above all, any explanation of the "originality"<sup>48</sup> of the cult of the double Nemesis under whose protection the rebirth of the city was placed, still remain problematic, in spite of all previous attempts.<sup>49</sup>

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**42** As incisively stated by Mac Sweeney 2013, 156, explaining the relationship between this *polis* and the sanctuary: "Claros was synonymous with Colophon, just as the Artemision was synonymous with Ephesus".

**43** The tradition of Smyrna's original belonging to the Ionian world probably arose in the Hellenistic period. Strabo (14.1.4) for instance seems to follow this tradition when he states that the *polis* was founded by the Ephesians coming from a district of their city called Smyrna, and he adds that Ephesos itself was originally named Smyrna, from the name of the homonymous Amazon. On this latter aspect, see Moscati-Castelnuovo, 1999, 160–161. On the Strabo passage, see Ragone 2006, 102–103. Moreover, according to Philostr. *VA* 4.5, *Panionia* were also celebrated in Smyrna in the first century CE.

**44** See for instance: Aristid. *Or.* 17.6; Aristid. *Or.* 18.2; Aristid. *Or.* 20.5; Aristid. *Or.* 21.4. On the role of Theseus in the construction of the Smyrnaean past, Franco 2005, 433–434.

**45** Tac. 4.55–6.

**46** According to Kuhn 2012, 20: "In the time of Tiberius the idea of Alexander as founder (*ktistēs*) had obviously not yet taken shape in the collective memory of Smyrnaeans". One may argue that the reason for the omission was perhaps that one of the requirements for obtaining the privilege of *neokoria* was having the most ancient lineage, which could have been more effectively claimed by referring to Theseus than to Alexander, who on the contrary would have evoked the relatively young history of the city.

**47** D. Chr. *Or.* 40.14.

**48** As Fleischer 1978 has shown, goddesses worshipped in pairs occur also in other cities in Greece and in Syria. Nemeseis are represented as a couple also in Ephesos, in a dedication probably belonging to a Smyrnaean, who wished to worship in another city the goddesses of his homeland.

**49** See for instance Kuhn 2012.

## 4 Two Nemeseis at Smyrna

The peculiarity of the Smyrnaean cult of the two Nemeseis has raised a huge debate among scholars, who have variously interpreted it<sup>50</sup> either as an allusion to the positive and negative aspects of retribution, or as the simultaneous devotion to both the European and the Asian Nemesis,<sup>51</sup> or finally as the association of the cult of the goddess in the old and the new city into a single cult.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately it is not easy to provide a definitive solution.

Even if we grant that this duplicated Nemesis aimed at combining past and present in the new poleic entity, this does not seem sufficient for explaining the association with Alexander and the spreading of this tradition only in the Imperial era. Furthermore, Pausanias' passage states clearly that the shrine of the two Nemeseis existed before Alexander's arrival in the region, and up to the rebirth of the city at the new site.<sup>53</sup>

In order to identify the elements that contributed to the success of this tradition, it is necessary to consider first of all the importance of Nemesis in the region and the profile of the goddess; secondly, the tradition's relationship with the personal story of Alexander; and, finally, the reasons that may have led the city, in the Imperial age, to promote the cult of Nemesis.

The worship of Nemesis must have been quite deep-rooted in Asia Minor. Pausanias seems to project the Smyrnaean cult of the Nemeseis far back in time when he states that the Smyrnaean *agalмата* were surmounted by two golden Charites made by Bupalus, a craftsman of the sixth century BCE.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, in the first book of the *Periegesis*, he gives precise details on the iconography of the goddess, stating that neither the Athenian statue nor the *xoana* of Smyrna have wings, because only later artists gave her wings, persuaded as they were that she manifests herself in matters of love.<sup>55</sup> The expression *ta hagiōtata xoana*

<sup>50</sup> A *status quaestionis* of the different positions can be found in Coman 1931, 28, n. 2; Herter 1935, 2363 ff.; Cadoux 1938, 220–221.

<sup>51</sup> Schweitzer 1931, 203; Cadoux 1938, 220–221.

<sup>52</sup> Farnell 1896, II 494; *contra* Klose 1987, 28, who states that the duplication of the goddess did not have any particular meaning for the essence (*das Wesen*) of the cult, since in Smyrnaean coinage Nemesis is represented both as a single figure and as a couple.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *supra* p.873.

<sup>54</sup> “At Smyrna, for instance, in the sanctuary of the Nemeses, above the images have been dedicated Graces of gold, the work of Bupalus (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τῶν Νεμέσεων ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀγαμάτων χρυσοῦ Χάριτες ἀνάκεινται, τέχνη Βουπάλου)” (Paus. 9.35.6, transl. Jones). On Bupalus and his chronology, see the discussion in Cellini 1994, 90–95.

<sup>55</sup> “Neither this nor any other ancient statue of Nemesis has wings, for not even the holiest wooden images (τὰ ἁγιώτατα ξόανα) of the Smyrnaeans have them, but later artists, convinced that the goddess manifests herself most as a consequence of love, give wings to Nemesis as they do to Love (οἱ δὲ ὕστερον – ἐπιπαινεσθαι γὰρ τὴν θεὸν μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῷ ἔραν ἐθέλουσιν – ἐπὶ τούτῳ Νεμέσει πτερὰ ὡσπερ Ἐρωτι ποιοῦσι)”, Paus. 1.33.7, transl. Jones.

(“the holiest *xoana*”), used to describe the Smyrnaean statues, reveals Pausanias’ assumption that these were very ancient artefacts, because the adjective *hagios* is mainly used in relation to monuments whose belonging to a remote past, a time of greater proximity between gods and men, made them particularly venerable.<sup>56</sup>

In the seventh book, at the end of his *excursus* on the refounding of Smyrna, he returns to Athens, further emphasising the differences in the worship of Nemesis in comparison to the Smyrnaean cult, which included two divine figures instead of one, and ascribing to the latter cult a belief in the deities’ descent from Night rather than Ocean.<sup>57</sup> The indication of Night as the mother of the two Smyrnaean Nemeseis must be interpreted in the context of Hesiod’s verses. In the *Theogony*, Nemesis is in fact evoked within a sequence of obscure forces born from Night, as *pema thne-toisi brotoisi*, a misfortune for mortal men. These mostly include the afflictions that shape humans and impose limits on their lives; they are forces that define the human temporal and physical spheres of action and outline their vulnerability.<sup>58</sup> Nemesis is a plague for the human race precisely because of her name, which derives from the Greek verb *nemo* and contains an allusion to the correct division of the parts that were broken by the Promethean ruse, which in turn condemned mankind to a life of grief and led to the definitive separation between mortals and immortals. In the same manner, as Night represents the limits of the *kosmos* in the Hesiodic *Theogony* and constitutes the space for all those forces that threaten it, the offspring she generates largely defines the aspects that keep man away from divine grace.<sup>59</sup>

The profile of Nemesis drawn already by Hesiod is therefore that of a double-faced power, whose effectiveness is realised in the simultaneous interaction of warning and containment. This duality must have found fertile ground in the Aeolian context, where Hesiod’s work was certainly well-known, as shown by the poet’s cursory references to his father’s journeys from Aeolian Cumae.<sup>60</sup> Moreover,

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**56** Starting from an analysis of the vocabulary of the *Periegesis* and in particular of the seventeen occurrences of *hagios* in the work, Pirenne Delforge 2006 has shown that the preference accorded by Pausanias to the antiquity of a place or an object is an expression of piety towards the gods and indicative of a time when the proximity between mortals and immortals was closer: this is a view of the past that V. Pirenne Delforge defines as “religieusement orientée” (p. 226).

**57** “So they (*scil.* The Smyrnaeans) migrated of their own free will, and believe in two Nemeses instead of one, saying that their mother is Night, while the Athenians say that the father of the goddess in Rhamnus is Ocean (δύο Νεμέσεις νομίζουσιν ἀντὶ μᾶς καὶ μητέρα αὐταῖς φασιν εἶναι Νύκτα, ἐπεὶ Ἀθηναῖοι γε τῇ ἐν Ῥαμνοῦντι θεῶν πατέρα λέγουσιν εἶναι Ὠκεανόν)”, Paus. 7.5.7, transl. Jones slightly modified.

**58** Hes. *Th.* 211–225, esp. 223.

**59** The inclusion of Nemesis among these powers constitutes – even with her threatening presence – an instance of regulation necessary for human social life and for the survival of mortals on earth. I have dealt with the figure and role of Nemesis in Hesiod’s works in Bonanno 2016.

**60** Hes. *Op.* 631–638.

Herodotus, another author from Asia Minor, gives us more precise indications about this divinity's mode of action. At the very beginning of his work, he programatically declares his intention to deal with both small and great cities, being fully aware that those that were once great had become small and vice versa, since, as he remarks, "human prosperity never continues in the same place".<sup>61</sup> The emblematic example of this changing fate, that suddenly and radically overturns human life, is undoubtedly the Lydian ruler Croesus, son of Aliattes, who once destroyed Ionian Smyrna. This sovereign, ingenuously confident in the power of his wealth, is the only figure in Herodotus' work expressly to face the catastrophic effects of the *ek theou nemesis megale* also announced through an oneiric vision, which triggers a sequence of reversals that will carry the Lydian kingdom to collapse.<sup>62</sup>

This evidence now allows us to postulate the widespread perception of Nemesis as a fearsome divine power with a dark and violent side, whose action is intrinsic to the human life and whose effects may be contained and even avoided through a correct code of behaviour. This sense may also apply to the verses celebrating Nemesis in the *Orphic Hymns*, a collection of poems dated to the second century CE, which were probably intended to accompany the celebration of nocturnal rituals performed by a Dionysiac association,<sup>63</sup> perhaps performed in Pergamum in Asia Minor.<sup>64</sup> In *Hymn 61*, devoted to Nemesis, the goddess represents a form of justice able to oversee the thoughts and words of mortals, urging them to a moderate and thoughtful life.<sup>65</sup> Nemesis was thus a figure that firmly inhabited the religious imagination of Asia Minor.<sup>66</sup> In Smyrnaean coinage she appears on several occasions in

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**61** Hdt. 1.5. Transl. Godley.

**62** Hdt.1.34.1.

**63** Graf 2009.

**64** Kern 1910 suggested Pergamon as place of origin for the *Orphic Hymns*. A *status quaestionis* on the different hypotheses proposed on this problem by scholars can be found in Ricciardelli 2000, XXVIII-XXX. A new insight has been offered by Lebreton 2012 who, while not providing a definitive answer to the problem, persuasively suggests that the *pantheon* of a group of *mystes* like that in the *Orphic Hymns* did not necessarily correspond to the civic *pantheon* of a specific city in Asia Minor.

**65** For an analysis of the portrait of Nemesis in the *Orphic Hymns*, see Bonanno 2021.

**66** However, the first concrete record of a Nemesis cult in Asia Minor can only be found in a fragment quoted by Strabo from Antimachus of Colophon, a poet who lived in the fifth and fourth centuries (Str. 13.1.13=Antim. Fr. 131 Matthews). He relates that on the banks of the river Aesepus, in the Troas, there stood an altar to Nemesis, built by the king Adrastus and that here the goddess was worshipped under the name of Adrasteia. I have dealt with the question of the relationship between Nemesis and Adrasteia elsewhere (Bonanno 2020), but would like to emphasise here the substantial overlap between two deities who, until the fifth century, appeared to be worshipped independently of each other, but who were later found increasingly side by side, probably by dint of the attribution to them of liminal spheres of competence, which encouraged worshippers to evoke them as a single onomastic pair in an attempt to intercept the power of one and/or the other. This was a fact that must not have been unfamiliar to Pausanias, who originally came from those same areas. This is demonstrated by the cross-references that can be traced in his work between

the Imperial age, alone in winged form from the age of Nero, and in pairs, without wings, from the age of Domitian.<sup>67</sup>

## 5 Alexander and the Double Nemesis

In comparison to the threatening and intransigent portrayal of Nemesis that was circulating at the time, the description provided by Pausanias of the Smyrnaean cult gives us a different view of this divine power. The Nemeseis of Alexander's dream appear as benevolent figures that promise positive change and the city's rebirth.

Nevertheless, the closer parallel established by Pausanias with the Athenian Nemesis worshipped at Rhamnous triggers a comparison between these two cults, encouraging us to further explore our preliminary impression. The account of the *aition* of the dedication of the Nemesis statue in Rhamnous, identified by Pausanias in the support given by the goddess to the Athenians against the "barbarians" on the occasion of the battle of Marathon,<sup>68</sup> seems in fact to run, quite as a subtext, through the tale of Alexander's dream in the seventh book. The historical tradition that makes Nemesis a force at the Athenians's disposal against the "barbarians" is echoed in the storytelling that surrounded Alexander's expedition to Asia, which – as already proclaimed by his father Philip – sought to liberate the Greek cities of Asia Minor and to take revenge on the Persians for the devastation of their sanctuaries during the Persian Wars.<sup>69</sup> The first goal Alexander achieved in a very short time. A symbolic geography locates the initial clash between Alexander and the Persians on the so-called Adrasteia plain in the Troad where, according to Callisthenes of Olynthus, one of Alexander's historians, a cult of Nemesis was based.<sup>70</sup> This is

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the presentation of the sanctuary of Nemesis at Rhamnous in Attica and that of the divinities who appeared to Alexander in his dreams on the occasion of Smyrna's refounding, as pointed out above.

<sup>67</sup> Klose 1987, 28–29.

<sup>68</sup> "About sixty stades from Marathon as you go along the road by the sea to Oropus stands Rhamnus. The dwelling houses are on the coast, but a little way inland is a sanctuary of Nemesis, the most implacable deity to men of violence (ἡ θεῶν μάλιστα ἀνθρώποις ὑβρισταῖς ἐστὶν ἀπαράιτητος). It is thought that the wrath of this goddess fell also upon the foreigners who landed at Marathon. For thinking in their pride that nothing stood in the way of their taking Athens, they were bringing a piece of Parian marble to make a trophy, convinced that their task was already finished. Of this marble Pheidias made a statue of Nemesis [ . . . ]", Paus. 1.33.2, transl. Jones.

<sup>69</sup> D.S. 16.89.

<sup>70</sup> Prandi 1985, 79. "This country was called 'Adrasteia' and 'Plain of Adrasteia,' in accordance with a custom whereby people gave two names to the same place, as 'Thebe' and 'Plain of Thebe,' and 'Mygdonia' and 'Plain of Mygdonia': According to Callisthenes, among others, Adrasteia was named after the king Adrastus, who was the first to found a temple of Nemesis", Kallisth. *FGrHist* / *BNJ* 124 F 28; Str. 13.1.13, transl. Jones.

where after the defeat of the “barbarian” troops on the shores of the river Granicus the mission for Greek freedom from the Persian yoke began. Alexander’s celebration of this first victory over the Persians is immediately placed in continuity with the role that was once played by Athens. Plutarch reports that Alexander sent three hundred captured shields to Athens, along with an inscription celebrating the success of all the Greeks, with the exception of the Spartans, who had been absent at Marathon.<sup>71</sup>

According to the tradition elaborated in Smyrna, the city was among those affected by Alexander’s road to liberation: here the conqueror was welcomed by the two Nemeseis, who are later represented in coinage, facing each other and in the act of bowing their heads to their chests, a gesture usually interpreted as “spitting on the bosom”, which in literary sources often accompanies the invocation to the goddess.<sup>72</sup>

This practice seems to represent a spontaneous form of *deminutio capitis*, which the devotees of Nemesis impose on themselves in order to avoid punishment whenever they have dared to indulge in verbal or non-verbal expressions of arrogance.<sup>73</sup> The two figures on the coin are not simply copies of each other, but iconographically distinct in their attributes: one holds a bridle, the other a measuring stick; one therefore has the faculty to physically restrain, to limit action and speech, and to ensure full control of the passions, while the other suggests with her warning faculty the obligations to be followed. Both attributes certainly fall within the sphere of management and control of the passions and, above all, of power.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the bridle seems to be particularly related to the individual story of Alexander and his relationship with Philip. Well-known is the episode when, in spite of his father’s mistrust, Alexander managed to tame the particularly rebellious horse Bucephalus, making of it a devoted war partner for the following thirty years. When Philip saw his son being successful in such a difficult enterprise, he told him to look for a kingdom worthy of him, since Macedonia was too small.<sup>75</sup> The story can be seen as prefiguring the king’s future achievements in

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71 Plu. *Alex.* 16.17; Arr. *An.* 1.16.7.

72 Call. fr. 687 Pfeiffer; Teoc. 6.39; *Anth. Graec.* 12.229; *Anth. Graec.* 12.251; Mesom. *Hymn.* 3.12. On the Nemesis gesture, see Hornum 1993, 12 and *passim*.

73 Bonanno 2020 § 35.

74 On the attributes of the Nemeseis, cf. Klose 1987, 29 and Dahmen 2007, 83, n. 192. Measuring and weighing are activities typically related to the exercise of authority. This close relationship between measuring and power has been analysed by Grimaudo 1998, 156–159. The bridle, or, to use the Greek term *chalinos*, often appears in the sources in the context of Nemesis (*Anth. Pal.* 16.223; Mesom. *Hymn.* 3.3.1; Vett. Val. 1.261.29), and is also undoubtedly a symbol of power. As stated by Villari 2001, 12 the *chalinos* as a divine gift (cf. S. *OC* 714) symbolizes power. It furthermore has an ambiguous nature that lends itself to multiple interpretations: either it can be considered as an instrument of violence and oppression in the exercise of power, or as a device of control against those who, incapable of withstanding the bridle, are equally unable to adhere to the code of aristocratic ethics, and are therefore automatically marked as *hybristai* (p. 67).

75 Plu. *Alex.* 6; 61.

Asia Minor and the ability with which he dealt with the delicate and unpredictable context of the former Persian Empire.

It is thus two complementary divine figures that appear in Alexander's dreams. Their different attributes allow us to postulate the profile of a composite power that, in the plural form of the name, does not merely reveal a generic doubling, but a concrete amplification of its range of competences:<sup>76</sup> we are dealing with a rigorous and highly complex "syntax" in which no detail is irrelevant.<sup>77</sup> The two Nemeseis, facing each other, each reflects the image of the other, and they seem to emphasize the importance of a didascalical message aimed at recommending to mortals that they should be careful in their interaction with this divine entity.

Another meaningful detail is that the epiphany of the two Nemeseis occurs in the shade of a plane tree, near a spring, in a setting clearly alluding to the oracular function of this tree, attested already in the *Iliad* by Calchas' inauspicious prediction about the ten-year duration of the Trojan war, a mythical archetype of every Greek expedition against the "barbarians".<sup>78</sup> In addition, plane trees frequently provide peaceful sceneries for philosophical conversations,<sup>79</sup> which a ruler like Alexander, who combined in himself military virtue and philosophy,<sup>80</sup> would certainly have appreciated.

In this lovely location full of symbols, the Macedonian king's encounter with the two Nemeseis takes place. Like the Athenians against the Persians at Marathon, he is favoured by the same power, which appears to him in an augmented form so as to emphasize his ability to accelerate history and to elicit unexpected changes from fate.

Plutarch clearly speaks of Alexander as a man of the *nemesis*, recalling the words pronounced by Darius III when pursued and trapped by an enemy whose temperance and magnanimity he was forced to acknowledge due to the fairness shown towards his wife:

[. . .] but if, then, a fated time has now come, due to the *nemesis* and the vicissitudes of things (ὄφειλόμενος νεμέσει καὶ μεταβολῇ), and the sway of the Persians must cease, grant that no other man may sit upon the throne of Cyrus but Alexander.

(Plu. *Alex.* 30.4, transl. Perrin, slightly modified)

The great Macedonian ruler is therefore responsible for the definitive overthrow of the Achaemenid Empire, and champion of the Athenians' long-awaited revenge, who are evoked several times during the expedition in Asia.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> On the double representations of gods in Greece, see Hadzisteliou Price 1971.

<sup>77</sup> Wallensten 2014, on the dedications to double or composite deities, speaks specifically of syntax.

<sup>78</sup> Hom. *Il.* 2.307.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. for instance, Pl. *Phdr.* 230b. On plane trees in the ancient world, see Giammatteo 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Plu. *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute* 4=*Mor.* 327f-328b.

<sup>81</sup> The ancient sources report for instance that Alexander avenged the impiety of the Persian Xerxes against the Attic temples by burning down the royal palace in Susa, after having listened to the claims of the Athenian *hetaira* Thais, (Plu. *Alex.* 38; D.S. 17.72). Some time later, having reached the extreme limits of the Persian Empire and preparing for the clash with the Indian ruler Porus, he arrived on the banks of



After all, Alexander's expedition merely reverses the fate of the Greeks, in particular the Athenians, and the Persians by conquering the throne that once had belonged to Cyrus the Great. Alexander is a ruler who is keen to manage multiple turns of fate and to elicit the epiphany of a double Nemesis able to change good into evil and vice versa. In fact, the deity is presented in exactly these terms by the dream interpreter Artemidorus from Daldi, near Smyrna. In the section of his work devoted to the oneiric epiphanies of the gods, he writes:

Nemesis is always good for those who live lawfully and moderate men and philosophers. [. . .] And some say that the goddess turns good things for the worse, and bad things for the better. (ἡ θεὸς αὐτὴ τὰ μὲν ἀγαθὰ ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τρέπει, τὰ δὲ κακὰ ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον).

(Art. *Oneir.* 2.37, transl. McCoy)

## 6 Worshipping Nemeseis at Smyrna

At the end of this overview it is evident that, by placing the refounding of their city under the sign of Alexander and of a double Nemesis, the Smyrnaeans were merely redrawing the opaque image of a past that perhaps had never existed or was in any case too difficult to recover, and that could therefore only be invented. They made up a tradition that may have known different stages of elaboration and to which the process of Alexander's mythmaking might also gradually have contributed. In Hellenistic times, such a tradition, even if prestigious, must have been very ineffective for a city that claimed a role within the Ionian *koinon*, to which it could legitimately have aspired merely by asserting a direct lineage from Athens. This tale would have appeared equally inconvenient in the early Imperial age, when a reference to Alexander would have indicated a relatively recent history of the city. Various instances probably contributed to the formation of this legend with all its components, but its main purpose was to pursue a prominent position for the city in the highly competitive context of Asia Minor in the Imperial age.

Was it perhaps the city rulers' intention to claim the status of a *polis*, whose sanctuaries favoured their dreams of glory,<sup>82</sup> in imitation of other important centres like the nearby Pergamum or Ephesus?<sup>83</sup> Or was there an aspiration to represent oneself as a city of many lives, able to resist multiple turns of fate, a city of which the two

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the Hydaspes, which had become dangerous due to torrential rain, and cried: "O Athenians, can ye possibly believe what perils I am undergoing to win glory in your eyes?", Plu. *Alex.* 60, 1–3, transl. Perrin.

**82** Cf. Weber 2015, 9–11.

**83** As observed by Dmitriev 2005, 251, Smyrna could not compete with the cultural prestige of Pergamon, former capital of the Attalid kingdom, or with the administrative position of Ephesus, which was the seat of the Roman provincial governor, but by the time of the emperor Caracalla it was granted the title of "first of Asia in beauty and greatness and most brilliant and *metropolis* of Asia and thrice temple warden of the Augusti", as testified in *I.Smyrna* II, 665, 2–4 (214–215 CE).

Nemeseis *archegetides* were perhaps an effective representation that emphasized the resilience of its inhabitants? The city of Smyrna had to appeal to this resilience again when thirty years after the first coin with Alexander's dreamlike vision on the reverse and the effigy of another philosopher ruler, Marcus Aurelius, on the obverse, it was forced to reinvent itself in an arduous task of rebuilding, even if it was supported by the Roman emperors' usual generosity.<sup>84</sup>

Unfortunately, the ancient sources do not provide us with precise information about the worshipping practices devoted to these divine powers, and the evidence we do have is complex and problematic. Nevertheless, the few details we can get from the epigraphic and archaeological material agree in assigning these deities an absolute centrality in the city's religious life. The two Nemeseis were probably worshipped on the south of the *agora*, on the slopes of Mount Pagus in the city's largest sanctuary.<sup>85</sup> Athletic competitions were organized under their name, as shown by the occurrence of an agonothete of the *megalon Nemeseion*.<sup>86</sup> Their sanctuary was subject to enlargement works, which are mentioned in a dedication from the beginning of the third century CE.<sup>87</sup> Here, a certain Papinius, who in the inscription refers to himself as a philosopher, in the fulfilment of a vow to the *kurios Serapis*, under whom he had been *en katoche* (ἐγκατοχήσας), dedicated an *oikos*, probably on land granted by the Emperor Caracalla in the area of the *Nemeseion*, and he consecrated it to the *kuriai Nemeseis*. By repeatedly using the adjective *kurios*,<sup>88</sup> as an onomastic attribute for Serapis and the *Nemeseis*, Papinius was declaring the similarity of his relationships to the deities, to whom he evidently acknowledged an authority over

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**84** Kuhn 2009 has showed in a very stimulating way how the construction of the Smyrnaean past by the city elites was able to articulate Greek memory as well as local traditions, and to foster efficient relations with the central government of Rome.

**85** Robert 1974, 187 [=1960, 331]. The *Nemeseion* at Smyrne is mentioned twice in the Pausanias' *Periegesis* (7.5.1 and 9.35.6). Scholars have proposed several hypotheses about its localization. Cadoux 1938, 221, places it directly upon Mt. Pagus. Petzl (*I.Smyrna* II, 1, 628 suggests that the shrine bordered the *agora*. Further hypotheses are collected in Kiliç 2014, 840–841 fig. 7, who adds that the temple should have been located in the area of the theatre on the northern slopes of Mt. Pagus. The only iconographic representation of the *Nemeseion* is found on the reverse of a *cistophorus* from the Hadrianic period, which shows a tetrastyle temple on a three stepped podium, with the Nemeseis facing each other: Metcalf 1980, 31, n° 28 and 37, Plate 8, fig. 115.

**86** *I.Smyrna* II, 1, 650 and 697. For a discussion on the *Nemeseia* in Smyrna, see Tataki 2009. For an overview of the onomastic attributes given to Nemesis, see Schweitzer 1931, 178–179.

**87** *I.Smyrna* II, 1, 725. It should be noted that the inscription is known to us only through an apograph. For this reason the attribution to Smyrna, even though highly probable, cannot be considered certain.

**88** On the use of the adjective *kurios*, see Chantraine 1968 s.v. κύριος, and, although in a different context, Campa 2019.

his own person, which perhaps should be understood in connection with his particular experience as *enkatochos*.<sup>89</sup>

In 250 CE, at the time of Decius' persecutions, the sanctuary of the Nemeseis, which probably also hosted the emperor's cult,<sup>90</sup> was the scene of a new affair that significantly marked the history of the city: the priest of the Catholic church Pionios, addressing the citizens and the little Jewish community in Smyrna, proudly declared his refusal to sacrifice to the goddesses and the emperor, and proclaimed his belief in the "living god" (θεός ζών).<sup>91</sup> On that occasion the city was able to resist the change that the devotees of the new religion would have brought about, and it ordered the martyrdom of Pionios, albeit reluctantly. Nevertheless, the two Nemeseis, once celebrated as an emblem of the rebirth of Smyrna, one of the major capitals of the Second Sophistic, had been definitively delivered by Christian rhetoric to the world of the idle *eidola*.<sup>92</sup>

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**89** On the institution of the *katoche* in general, cf. Delekat 1964 and more specifically on this inscription p. 163–164; 171. On the relationship between Caracalla and the philosophers, see Motta 2016, with reference to the dedication of Papinius, 171–172.

**90** *Mart. Pion.* 7.2; Robert 1994, 64–66; Dmitriev 2005, 258.

**91** *Mart. Pion.* 3.4; *Mart. Pion.* 20.4.

**92** Several occurrences of this word and its derivatives can be found in *Mart. Pion.* 4.9; *Mart. Pion.* 24; *Mart. Pion.* 13–14; *Mart. Pion.* 16.1.

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