

J. Davies asks ‘whether the process of selective and creative adaptations of oriental systems included political forms and ideas, ought not to be radical.’, and P. J. Rhodes too suggests ‘the possibility of borrowings in the organizations of communities’.¹

Encouraged by Davies and Rhodes ‘the City-God Policy of Solon’ has hypothetically been established, and proposed as Solon’s policy for the solution of the serious socio-economic crisis, and further for the building of a new citizen-centric social entity in Athens. It is sincerely and honestly requested that the following assumptions are distinguished from and are not criticized by ‘our present knowledge’ concerning ‘Solon’ and the matters in the first quarter/ half of the sixth century Athens, which are dealt with in this hypothesis, though it was formulated expanding and developing diverse views on them as the authors are referred. We will first try to probe that the source of inspiration of Solon’s principle was oriental socio-religious policy, the city-god centric social system.

Oriental city-god centric social system:

Early fourth to third millennium agriculture-based small city-states in the Southern Sumerian land entirely depended on the favourable benefit of their city-gods for their survival and prosperity, that is, for abundant and plentiful production and protection from enemies. The city-god was chosen according to a rule.² In many city-states, the chief ruler was almost invariably male,³ and consequently a goddess was the patron/city-god, notably such goddesses as Inanna in Uruk, Ninhursag in Kesh. The whole community participated in religious activities to obtain the best favour from their city-god. The chief ruler of the community led them, who was required to have absolute responsibility to satisfy their city-god perfectly.

Since the Akkadian hegemony over the Southern Sumerian city-states (c. 2340-c. 2150 BC), the divine status, function, and characters of the city-god were considerably altered from the original Sumerian principle. At the time of king Sargon of Akkad, this

¹ Rhodes: 1997: 2; J. Davies 1997: 33.

² EN: where a male deity is the city-god, its chief ruler should be female, where a female deity is the city-god, its chief ruler should be male; male city-gods: Enlil in Eridu, Utu in Larsa, Nanna in Ur. (cf. *TIT* 144-5, 375 n. 32) Sargon of Akkad first rejected it, and by the middle of 2nd millennium En-ship was abolished.

³ Postgate 1995, 396; 397: the chief ruler was one of the city-god’s people; Wiggermann 1995, 1863: comments that ‘a female-EN may not have had the same political power as a male EN.’ Cf. E. Stone 1995: 235-248.

theocentric Sumerian city-god social system began to decline and was shifted to human-centric social organization; and even the fourth king Naram-Sin deified himself as the city-god, and several kings followed him. ⁴

Even so the city-god idea and practice had long lasted and was widely distributed from the original region, though with considerable social, political, ideological changes and regional differences. In the eighth and seventh centuries at the very time when Greece was in a formative stage, Assyria and Babylon were expanding their power under the divine favour and support of their city gods Assur and Marduk respectively. The kings of Assyria and Babylon assigned all their war-victories and achievements to their city-gods, temple-construction and repairing, city wall- construction, for instance.

The primary function of the city-god was re/ investiture of kings' ruler-ship in the annual New Year Festival. Its core event, the City-Entry of the City-God was accompanied by a great spectacular Procession in which the whole population of the city participated, and the citizens regarded their participation as a statement of membership of their community. ⁵

This spectacular Procession was no doubt effective for the community members and city activities. To the Greeks too who were there as 'traders' and directly experienced the grand Procession of the City-God Festival as spectators, it was no less impressive and unforgettable, especially the people's idea and attitude to the Festival.

Solon marked this oriental city-god socio-religious system and practice as a promising effective method for the solution of the present problems, which adapted flexibly and appropriately in different circumstances and cultural environments as we will see. The most important measures of this policy are first of all to decide the city-god, secondly to build a temple of the city-god, thirdly to celebrate the city-god by a festival.

⁴ King-city-god: nine Mesopotamian kings during about 125 years, but never again after the last king Isham-Dagan 1953-35 BC. Cf. J. Oates: 41, 62.

⁵ Akitu-Festival: cf. Cohen: 400-406-52; cf. 244-7, 306-309, 312-313, 327-330. Jacobsen 1975: in Roberts & Goedicke (eds.), 65-95; Frankfort 1948: 313-333; Black 1981: 35- 59; the wall painting of Mari: Investiture of kingship, Parrot 1958 & 1960, 275-278. (cf. Colour Figure 7. A-C) (cf. n.36)

Solon's/ Athens' choice of Athena as its City-God

First of all, Solon chose goddess Athena among other Greek gods as the city-god of Athens. Solon did not just make Athena the city-god (as she would long have been worshipped), but he claimed for her a new definitive divine nature and function, that is, to rescue the city from crisis, as a rescue divinity, and he named her *Episkopos*/ guardian/ overseer of his city. Then, Solon pleaded to the divinity, *Episkopos*. What Solon required from the divinity was the divine protection from the divine punishment of Zeus, not to destroy his/ our polis because of citizens' injustice, lawlessness, as Solon expresses in his poem.

Some questions here arise for Solon's choice of Athena as the city-god of Athens.

Why did Solon choose Athena as the city-god of Athens in its crisis?

Why did Solon claim Athena for her protection from the divine punishment of the supreme god Zeus?

What can Athena do against the divine punishment of the supreme god Zeus?

What ability does Athena possess against Zeus' punishment?

It seems that Solon made a decisive creation for his *Episkopos*/ city-god.

Oriental city-gods could do nothing against the decisions of the supreme god and the assembly of the gods. Oriental city-gods had to follow the decision, and had to abandon their cities. The divine decision was absolute.

Solon made his city-god *Episkopos* of Athens much stronger/ more powerful than oriental city-gods. Solon believes that his Athena has special divine ability to protect his/ our city even from Zeus' punishment.

What is the special divine ability?

Athena has equal power to Zeus, and Athena can prevent Zeus' punishment with it.

On what ground does Athena possess the ability? How can Athena possess such a power? Zeus is supreme. His punishment is absolute. No god can prevent it.

In order to answer to these questions, we must now turn again towards the East for the (literary) sources to find out how Athena obtained such an absolute privilege, possession of her equal power to the supreme deity.

Athena's privilege, Athena's divine ability in the Greek pantheon was granted to Athena by birth. Athena was born with equal power and wisdom to Zeus, as described in Hesiod's *Theogony*:

ἴσον ἔχουσαν πατρὶ μένος καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλή. 896⁶

Athena holds her status as the first child of the chief god and his first wife, moreover born from her Father himself.

How could Hesiod make Athena have equal power to Zeus?

The episode of Athena's birth from (the head of) Zeus was presumably derived from an oriental myth as we have already seen in chapter I, 1. It can also be assumed that Hesiod might have known of Inanna(/ Ishtar)'s equal power to Anu, the chief god and her father in the Sumerian pantheon from some literary sources, hymns to Inanna/ Ishtar, and a myth '*Anu and Inanna*', for instance, and he would have had Inanna(/ Ishtar) in his mind when he characterised his Athena. Solon too may have marked the most favoured and worshipped oriental city-goddess Inanna (/Ishtar)'s equal power to the supreme god Anu, her father.

Inanna(/ Ishtar) is equal to her Father Anu the king of the gods.

She is seated among gods as an equal to Anu.

You (Inanna/ Ishtar) are supreme like Anu,

You rule the heavens and order the world with Enlil.

Anu, Enlil and Ea have lifted you (Inanna/ Ishtar) high,

They have made your authority greatest among the Gods.

They have given your heavenly station (the) highest of all.⁷

Solon's knowledgeable adaptation:

This remarkable feature of the oriental city-goddess (no doubt) might have been known to Solon through literary media, and through human media as well. Solon combined this privilege of the oriental city-goddess and that of Athena's by birth, and made his

⁶ Cf. West 1966: 404, on 896.

⁷ Hymns to Inanna/ Ishtar: Equal to Anu; '*Prayer of Lamentation to Ishtar*': ANET: 383-84; Foster 1993b: I, 66, ix, 3; Ishtar was elevated to the highest rank in the politically syncretised official Sumero-Akkadian pantheon as seen in the hymns and prayers.

city-god much more powerful than oriental city-gods, as powerful as the supreme god himself to prevent his polis from destruction by Zeus' divine punishment. Solon could do this in different social and cultural circumstances, in the acute need for a solution to the present serious crisis of his city. And Solon applied Athena's privilege/ divine nature for his aim, (which was already made by Hesiod who took it from oriental sources).

Homeric Athena:

In addition to this absolute privilege, Athena must have been chosen by Solon due to her other nature as the *Episkopos*, city-god of Our Polis, that is, Athena's trustful and reliable character. In the *Iliad* Athena frequently appears in a constantly devoted favourable attitude to the Achaians. This pro-Achaian attitude of Athena Solon doubtless had in mind. The three expressions given to Athena in his poem are very Homeric.

According to *LJS*,

Ἐπίσκοπος/ overseer/ guardian is applied only to Hector in the *Iliad* 22. 255, 24.729.

Μεγάθυμος/ great hearted, to Achilles in 20. 498, and to the Achaians/ Ἀχαιοί in 1. 123.

(to Athena: *Od.* 8. 520)

Ἵβριμος/ strong, mighty is particularly applied to Achilles (19. 48), Ares (5. 843), and Hektor (8.473).

Πάτρι/α: fatherhood, descent from a father: descent from mighty father.

Ἵβριμοπάτριη: descent from mighty father, daughter of a mighty sire, is an epithet of Αθηνά proper, 5.747; and even there is no masculine form, according to *LJS*. Here it may imply a mighty descent from a mighty father. (in the *Theogony* 587, in the creation of Pandora episode.)

This pro-Achaian active Athena in her constant favour could have perfectly matched the *Episkopos*, Guardian/ Protector and (Redeemer) which Solon himself was considering and expecting (expressed in his poem).⁸

⁸ Cf. *LJS*: ἐπιάρροθος-'helper, defender: in Homer always of gods that help in fight': Athena regards herself as ἐπιάρροθος to Diomedes encouraging and stirring his fighting spirit against Ares in 5. 828. Solon did not choose this expression and function for his city-god.

Thus, Solon's trust in Athena and her divine ability is based on her equal power to Zeus and specially privileged unique status by birth in the Greek pantheon. Athena, our *Episkopos* is *μεγάθυμος* and *ὄβριμοπάτρη* as strong as Zeus himself, the first child of the Father of the gods (and man), Zeus, and moreover born from her Father himself. Athena is a mighty descendant from her mighty father, supreme god. This is indeed the most significant key-factor in the present crisis to save Our Polis from the destruction by Zeus' divine punishment. Thus, by Solon Athena was made *the Episkopos* of Athens, the Protector, Helper, to rescue our polis from socio-economic crisis.

Solon made up his city-god of Athens, *Episkopos*, importantly by taking the fundamental principles of the oriental city-god centric social system, flexibly changed them, and added suitable necessary elements for the present solution, as the features of Athena in the *Iliad*. *Episkopos* Athena is the first city-god for public political function/purpose, the Patron God of a city in the Greek history, formally formed on the first fundamental tenet of civic piety expressed by Solon.

(cf. 11. 366 Apollo saves Hector from Diomedes, and Diomedes says: 'εἴ ποὺ τις καὶ ἔμοιγε θεῶν ἐπιτάρροθός ἐστι.' 12, 338-9: Aineias regards Zeus to be the ἐπιτάρροθος of the Trojans; cf. 12. 179 θεοὶ δ' ἀκαχέϊατο θυμόν/ 180 πάντες, ὅσοι Δαναοῖσι μάχης ἐπιτάρροθοι ἦσαν·')