THE CULT OF THE IRANIAN GODDESS ANÄHITĀ IN ANATOLIA BEFORE AND AFTER ALEXANDER

Abstract: This contribution investigates the origin and development of the cult of Anähitā in the Persian empire, Hellenistic kingdoms and Roman empire from the sixth century BC to the fifth century AD. Iranian, Armenian, Greek and Latin literary and epigraphic sources enable the author to follow the history of this popular cult from Bactria in the east to the shores of the Aegean sea in the west, from Persepolis in the south to Georgia (ancient Iberia) in the north.

The earliest source for the study of Anähitā’s place in the pantheon of the Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid Persia is the Avesta. The so-called “Younger Avesta” is a collection of hymns, prayers, and priestly rules on cultic purity that supplies unambiguous testimony to the vitality of Iranian “pagan cults”, and to the slow but inevitable formulation of a compromise between the old and the new, the reformed and unreformed in the contemporary religious currents. Its oldest stratum consists of the so-called “Great Yašt” – hymns to the ancient deities (yazata “beings worthy of worship”) – Anähitā, Tištṛya (Sirius), Mithras, Fravasīs (spirits of forefathers), Vərəthragnna (god of victory), Aši (goddess of Fortune), and others. The more Ahura Mazdā, the Creator, and his assistants – Aməša Spənta/Amesəsəspənds [“Holy Immortals”: Vohu Manah (Bahman), Aša Vahišta (Ardibehišt), Kšatra Vairya (Šahrevar), Spənta Armaiti (Espand), Haurvatat (Hordād) and Amərəst (Amurdad)] gained prominence in Zoroaster’s teachings, the more all the ancient divinities were pushed back, banished into the realm of lie and stigmatized as evil daemons (daeva). Nevertheless, even Zoroaster’s mighty word could not achieve a complete triumph over the popular religion, so that the most popular ancient deities returned in the collection of cultic hymns edited by the Zoroastrians. The ancient Aryan gods were thus raised to regain some former glory as mediators and angels of Ahura Mazdā, among them being also Anähitā, the only goddess in the religion of the Achaemenids, venerated in connection with both water and fire.
In the opinion of most researchers Anāhitā is a composite deity born of the assimilation of the Indo-Iranian divinity of waters known as Sarasvatī “She Who Possesses Waters”1 and an Elamite fertility goddess identified with the planet Venus (and much influenced by Mesopotamian Istar) whose cult was practiced by the Medes and Persians before they adopted Zoroastrianism, and who was worshiped under the name of *Anāhitī, the “Pure One”. The Iranian name of Sarasvatī was *Harahvatī and she was conceived as the great mythical river flowing from the Mt. Harā into the sea Vourukaša and as the source of all the waters in the world. In fact, Avestan Anāhitā is one of the forms of the “Great Goddess” who appears in many ancient eastern religions. She embodied the physical and metaphorical qualities of water,2 especially the fertilizing flow of water from the fountain in the stars.

The hymn number five in the adduced Avestan collection of hymns, known as Arōdvī Sūr Yašt and Ābān Yašt, extols the goddess Anāhitā. Judging by its style and the miscellaneous information gathered from the old-Persian inscriptions and various Greek sources, the hymn was probably composed in the reign of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (born 436, ruled from 404 to 359 BC) who was especially devoted to this goddess. In the hymn, the goddess appears under the name of Arōdvī Sūrā Anāhitā (Pehlevi Ardvīsūr). The first element of this name – Arōdvī – means “flowing, watery, moist”, the second element – Sūrā – “heroic, strong, mighty”, and the third – Anāhitā – “immaculate, pure, undefiled, untainted”. Consequently, this theonym consists of three epithets defining the nature of the deity, “The Humid Strong Immaculate One”.3 Persian, Greek, Armenian, Syrian, and Arab sources show that the third element of the Avestic name – Anāhitā – was felt to be the real name of the goddess, and that her worshippers preferred using it in cult. In the Middle Persian texts we encounter both variants – Ardvīsūr and Anāhid (the latter usually denotes the planet Venus), while the Achaemenid sources use only Anāhitā, Armenian Anāhid, Arab Anāhud and Greek Ἀναϊτις.

At the beginning of her hymn (I 1) the goddess appears as the broad, healing “Heavenly River” flooding canals and multiplying flocks, bringing fertility to fields under cultivation and prosperity to

---


estates and the whole country. From a river-goddess and a source of all waters, it is a small step to a fertility goddess in human and animal world, a step that was taken by the ancient Iranians. Summoned by her worshippers, the mighty goddess comes down to Earth as a star, in a chariot driven by four miraculous white horses (II 11; 13) personifying wind, rain, clouds and sleet. Her gifts to warriors and kings are victory over enemies, honour, health, wisdom and prosperity, whereas girls in their prayers to Anāhītā ask for valiant husbands and women for easy delivery. In the concluding part of the hymn (XXX 126-129) we have a detailed description of the goddess. She is depicted as a beautiful, strong, and tall girl; on her feet are golden shoes and she is richly arrayed in high-girt robe and jewel-encrusted mantle. In her hands she holds barāsman-rods, on her ears hang gold earrings, her neck is embellished by a necklace and her head adorned with a radiate golden crown; her coat made of thirty soft beaver skins shines as silver and gold.

Many authors have remarked that this description is unique in the Avesta. The impression imposed itself that it cannot be a figment of poetic imagination. Rather, its lines reflect the deep effect produced on the minds and feelings of worshippers paying homage to their goddess in the guise of venerable cult image. According to a fragment of the lost Βαβυλωνιακα of Berossus (fl. c. 290 BC), Artaxerxes Mnemon ordered that statues of Anāhītā be set up in the most important cities of the Empire: Babylon, Susa, Ecbatana, Persepolis, Bactra, Damascus, and Sardis. For the Iranians, unaccustomed to worshipping their gods in the form of anthropomorphic statues, this was a great innovation, which met with strong opposition from orthodox circles. In any event, royal patronage brought it about that

---

4 Clem. Alex. Protr: V 65. 2.
5 Cf. M. Boyce, “Iconoclasm among the Zoroastrians”, in: J. Neusner (ed.), Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Studies for M. Smith at Sixty, Leiden 1975, 93-111. It is possible that the Persian word for image *uzdaēsa (Middle Persian uzdēs) was coined then. “Zoroastrian theologians taught that originally Ahura Mazdā had made his creation in spirit-form only (Middle Persian mēnōgīhā). His Adversary, Anra Mainyu, countered with an evil creation, also intangible; and thereafter Ahura Mazdā by a mighty exertion of power enabled his mēnōg creation to ‘put on appearances’, that is, to take physical (gētīg) forms. This second stage was beyond Anra Mainyu’s capacity, and so the powers of evil have no material bodies of their own, but steal shapes to inhabit in the furtherance of wickedness. To the orthodox, therefore, an image maker was guilty both of impiety, in seeking to perform the act of creation himself (the prerogative of God the Creator), and also of rash folly, since he had fashioned an empty form which a daēva or evil being could enter to misappropriate the worship intended for the divinity, and grow stronger thereby” (Boyce, op. cit. 97). Cf. also P. Debord, Aspects sociaux et économiques de la vie religieuse dans l’Anatolie gréco-romaine (ÉPRO 88), Leiden 1982, 265-267. During the reign of Artaxerxes II, the first two inscriptions mentioning the triad Ahura Mazdā, Anāhītā and Mithras were set up in Susa and Ecbatana.
the image cult was firmly implanted. A pertinent question in this context is the model after which these statues were made. Most researchers are divided between a “Semitic” (E. Meyer, F. Cumont, M. Boyce) and a “Greek” (F. Windischmann, S. Wikander) option.

All the statues set up by Artaxerxes II are long lost, but we have at our disposal Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian material and Anāhītā’s reliefs produced outside Iran. Both groups show a complete absence of uniformity and canons, in general and within specific regions. The iconography of the goddess rarely takes on a specifically Iranian aspect: in the Achaemenid period she is found on gold intaglios, richly costumed, wearing either a crown or a high head-dress and veil, seated and holding a lotus flower and ring or wreath, a branch, a dove, or a jug; in the Parthian period she is often depicted as a fully armed warrior-goddess, while the Sasanian period shows predilection for her as a personification of the heavenly river holding a tilted pitcher from which the waters flow. The Sasanian iconoclasm was directed only against the freestanding cult-statues, not the relief-representations of deities. In their rock carvings (e.g., those at Naqš-i Rustam, made by the king Narseh who reigned from 290 to 303, or at Tāq-i Bustān made by Khosrow II (?), AD 592-628) the reigning kings are shown receiving investiture from the hand of Anāhīd who wears a mural crown with stepped crenellations and a sleeveless cloak or a richly patterned kaftan with a jewelled edge. The goddess was probably never represented nude.

We conclude that Anāhītā’s iconography was heavily influenced by local

---


8 The sculpture at Naqš-i Rustam is ultimately dependent on classical Greek models, whereas the figure from Tāq-i Bustān may be based on a local model (Shepherd [note 7] 55; 59). The capitals from Tāq-i Bustān again show Anāhīd offering a beribboned diadem to Khosrow II, this time holding a fruit or a lotus close to her breast in a gesture typical of many Near Eastern fertility figures.

9 Contra Shepherd [note 7] passim, in her interpretation of attribute-bearing female figures on Sasanian silver vessels.
traditions; we shall see that on Lydian monuments she appears in the guise of Greek or Ephesian Artemis.

Anāhītā’s sanctuaries in Persia and Media were numerous, the most ancient one being her temple at Pasargadae (Plut. Artax. 3) where she was worshiped as a war-goddess. Other splendid temples were built in Ecbatana (Plut. Artax. 27; Polyb. X 27: tiled with silver and surrounded by gold-plated columns, plundered by Antiochus III in 209 BC, but restored and still functioning when Isidore of Charax saw it in the first century AD), Kangāvar in Upper Media (Isidore of Charax, Mans. parth. 6),

Susa (Polyb. XXXI 9; Plin. NH VI 135; Josephus, Ant. Iud. XII 9. 1; Mart. Capella, De India VI: unsuccessfully attacked by Antiochus IV in 164) and Persepolis (at nearby Eṣṭakr between Pasargadae and Persepolis). The last named temple was probably built by Artaxerxes II and served as the central shrine of the whole Empire. In the Sasanian period its cult statue was removed and a sacred fire

installed in its place, probably before Ardašīr Pāpakān, grandson of Sāsān (the feudal ruler of Fārš under the Arsacids and the hereditary priest of Anāhītā in Eṣṭakr), established the Sasanian Empire in c. AD 224. Thereafter, the goddess of this shrine was known as Ādur-Anāhīd “Anāhīd of the Fire”, and the royal investiture ceremony was performed in this temple. Anāhīd was thus the patron divinity of the Sasanians, venerated without cult-statues. “Most of the many places in modern Iran, in mountains and by springs, which are named for “the Maiden” (Doktar) or “the Lady” (Bibī) were once sacred to Anāhīd”. Isidore of Charax mentions two temples of Anāhītā on the right bank of the Euphrates river, in Basileia and Beonan (Mans. parth. I, GGM I 247). A temple of Anāhītā was built in Demetrias on the Tigris near Arbela (Str. XVI 1. 4, p. 738 C), and her cult was also popular in Damascus, Palmyra, Hatra, Dura Europos (as Artemis-Nanaia), Babylon, and Bactra.

Ancient Armenia was a region steeped in the Zoroastrian culture of the Arsacids, and the Armenians were very devoted to

10 Excavated since 1969 (cf. V. G. Lukonin, “Hram Anahity v Kangavare”, VDI 1977, 2, 105-111). The structure is 220 m long and 210 m wide, and from the original building tens of columns 3.54 m high have remained. For another view, according to which these remains belong to a palace built in the time of Khosrow II, cf. E. Yarshater (ed.), Encyclopaedia Iranica, vol. I, New York 1985, s.v. Anāhīd (C. Bier).

11 Fire-temples were probably called *ātarōšan by the Parthians (Armenian atrušan), while a shrine to a yazata was called a *bagin “(a place) belonging to gods” (Boyce [note 5] 98-99).

12 Other shrines of Anāhītā were naturally built by springs and streams, and the name Āb-Nāhīd “(A)nāhīd of Water”, first attested in the Parthian period, is still commonly given to girls by Zoroastrians of the Yazdi area in Iran (Boyce [note 5] 105).

Anāhitā. Their northwestern province Acilisene had a renowned sanctuary of Anāhitā with many sacred slaves of both sexes, among them being also daughters of the most eminent families who practiced sacred prostitution before marrying, an element possibly borrowed from the Semitic religious practices (Str. XI 14. 16, p. 532 C). The sanctuary was situated at a place called Erez (modern Erzinçan) and allegedly housed a cult-statue of solid gold carried off by one of Marc Antony’s soldiers in 36 BC (Plin. NH XXXIII 82-83) but restored by Armenian kings. In the third and fourth century AD flower garlands and branches were placed as gifts on Anāhitā’s altar, and she was worshipped as a noble lady and mistress giving life and glory to her people, as the mother of all knowledge, benefactress of the whole human race and daughter of the great and mighty Aramazd. Other sanctuaries were in T’il in Acilisene, Aštišat (northwest of the Van lake) and the capital city of Artašat (Artaxata). At Aštišat, the goddess was represented on a throne between Vahaghn/Varahrān (Vagōthragna, yazata of victory identified with Heracles) and Astlik (Armenian Aphrodite), and honoured as “the golden mother of gold-born gods”. At Artašat, her paredros was Tiur/Tir (the oracular god assimilated to Apollo), and she also received devotion in a triad together with Aramazd and Vahaghn. A temple of Anāhitā partly constructed of wood was excavated at Dedoplis-Mindori in East Georgia (Kartli/Iberia).16

“The Achaemenid Empire attained its fullest extent under its first three kings; and for the next two centuries or so Iranians colonized in numbers the most attractive of its non-Iranian territories. Alexander’s conquest of the empire led, under his successors, to those colonists being cut off from Persia, but they proved generally able to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity under alien rule for many generations...The Iranians were not an urban people, and the way of life which these expatriates followed appears to have reflected that of Iran itself, with the nobles living for much of the year on their estates...It seems that nobles must have brought skilled farm workers with them from Iran, for in the 4th century AD many villages scattered about Cappadocia were entirely inhabited by...
Iranians, descendants of the original colonists...Such country people, living in small, culturally unified communities, appear to have been among the most stable and conservative groups in the Iranian diaspora...Zoroastrian priests themselves were an important element in the Iranian diaspora. Armies would have been accompanied by many priests, some ministering to officers, others to men, and when ex-soldiers were settled on the land, their priests with their families presumably remained with them. Other priests are likely to have come out with the peasant farmers, and more exalted ones with the nobility. Originally they were known collectively in eastern Mediterranean lands as magousaioi, a Greco-Semitic plural for Persian magu “Mage, priest”; but in time, locally at least, this term came to be used for Persian colonists generally, with Greek magoi used for the priests themselves...Temples were clearly important in enabling expatriate Iranian communities to maintain their identity by providing them with centers for religious and social life...In western Asia Minor records of ‘Persian’ temples cease from the 3rd century AD when they were suppressed by Christian edict, but still in the 6th century Khosrow I Anuširvan negotiated with a Byzantine emperor to have fire temples rebuilt in his domains, most probably in Cappadocia. In the 2nd-3rd century AD Bardesanes (in Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* VI 10. 16) wrote of ‘the descendants of Persians who lived out of Persia’ as being still numerous in Egypt, Phrygia, and Galatia, and maintaining their traditional customs there.”

Although the Greeks sometimes assimilated Anāhītā to Aphrodite (Her. I 131-132: Aphrodite Urania comparable to Assyrian Mylitta and the Arabian Alilat; Berossus, III, frg. 65), Athena (Plut. *Artax.* 3. 2) or Hera (ibid. 23. 7), they mostly viewed her as the Persian Artemis. According to a local tradition, the oldest Iranian sanctuary in Asia Minor was the one at Zela in Pontic Cappadocia. Strabo states...
that this sanctuary was founded in thanksgiving for a victory over the Sacae in the sixth century BC; the temple was built on an artificial mound raised on a rock in the plain. In this shrine Anāhītā received devotion together with Omanos (possibly the Avestan Vohu Manah “Good Thought” – protector of animal life) and Anadat (possibly the Avestan Amārōtāt “Immortality” – protector of vegetal life). Like its Hattic predecessors in the same region – the sacred cities of Arinna, Zippalanda and Nereik – Zela was a community of sacred slaves (ιερόδουλών πόλισμα). Anāhītā appears on civic coins since the reign of Trajan as Θεά Άναεῖτις.

Cappadocia was heavily Iranized ever since it became part of the Median empire in 585 BC. In Strabo’s time, it was full of Persian priests (μάγοι, πυραιθοί) and shrines (πυραιθεία) dedicated to Anāhītā and Omanos (XV 3. 15, p. 733 C). An Aramaic inscription attests Persian presence in the region of Mazaka (Roman Caesarea) in the second century BC, and a Greek inscription from the region of the Lake Tatta shows the vitality of Anāhītā’s local cult in the Roman Imperial period. In this Greek inscription the goddess has the epithet Βαρψοχάξαρα “Of the High Harā”. We are immediately reminded of Mt. Harā from Yašt 5. A newly found Greek inscription from Büyüktaşlı Höyük close to the southeastern shore of the same lake refers to the local sanctuary/sanctuaries of Zeus Φαρνάνδουα and Anāhītā.

Next to Pontus and Cappadocia, the most thoroughly Iranized satrapy in Asia Minor was the satrapy of Šfarda (the Lydian satrapy), particularly its inland regions. Its capital Sardis was the third city

22 Sacred slaves working on temple estates are attested in the Arsacid and Sasanian Iran, as well (A. G. Perihanjan, “K’ voprosu o rabovladenii i zemlevladenii v Irane parfjanskogo vremeni”, VDI 1952, 4, 14-20).
of the empire after Susa and Persepolis. When J. Keil published his classic article on the cults of Lydia, Anāhitā was the most popular local divinity with forty-four dedications. After eighty years, this number has almost doubled. In a region where many cults of local mother-goddesses flourished since times immemorial, Anāhitā was quite at home.

Three leading urban centers of Anāhitā’s cult in Lydia were in Hierocaesarea, Hypaepa and Philadelphia. Hierocaesarea is first attested in the time of Alexander the Great under the name of Hiera Kome, as a sacred village organized around the sanctuary of Anāhitā. According to a local tradition, the sanctuary was founded by Cyrus in the sixth century BC. Hellenistic kings and Roman generals honoured it by recognizing and extending its asylum-rights for two miles around the temple. In the Roman Imperial period (and probably earlier) private worshippers had the custom of donating their slaves to supplement the lower personnel of the temple.


30 Various local forms of Zeus, Men, and the “Mother” had forty, thirty-nine and thirty-four dedications respectively.

31 In her book Die lydischen Kulte im Lichte der griechischen Inschriften, Bonn 1999 (Asia Minor Studien 36), M. Paz de Hoz registers eighty-three dedications addressed to Anāhitā. The number of dedications addressed to local “Mothers” has risen to 123, Men is second with 113 dedications, and Zeus third with 101.


Designated as Περσική in the legends, and yet represented as Greek Artemis-huntress, Anāhitā monopolized the civic coinage. Another Greek feature of the goddess' cult in Hierocaesarea was her local festival known as τὰ μεγάλα Σεβαστὰ Ἀρτεμίσια. Outwardly and only superficially Hellenized, the cult continued to be practiced in the traditional manner, with Persian priests - descendants of Persian noble families settled in the region - chanting hymns incomprehensible to a Greek ear from a sacred book over altars with burning fire (Paus. V 27. 5-6). This complex cult with its mixture of Persian, Lydian and Greek elements attracted many devotees among the local population, including the descendants of permanently settled Romans.

Anāhitā's sanctuary in Hypaepa, whose foundation date remains unknown (sometime before Alexander), exhibits the same blend of Persian, Lydian and Greek cultural influences. Led by hereditary priests (μάγοι) with an ἀρχίμαγος at their head, her devotees worshiped the goddess as Ἀναϊτις, Ἀναϊτις Ἀρτεμις and Περσικὴ Ἀρτεμις. The annual (?) games called τὰ Ἀρτεμίσια attracted athletes, musicians and tragic poets. The civic coinage shows the goddess standing in her temple fully attired; on her head

---


36 In the adduced passage Pausanias refers to them as Λυδοὶ επίκλησιν Περσικοί.

37 Two Greek inscriptions mentioning (Persian) Artemis, one from Gölmarmara north of the Gygaea Lake (P. Herrmann, TAM V 2, no. 1245) and the other from Salihli east of Sardis (G. Petzl–H. W. Pleket. "Inscriptions aus Lydien", ZPE 34, 1979, 288 no. 17 (b)= P. Herrmann, TAM V 2, no. 1253), could also originate from Hierocaesarea, although we should not completely rule out the possibility of other shrines from the same region as the place of their origin. The Hellenistic text from Salihli is an ex-voto by οἱ ἐγ άρτεμην σέβειν ἄνδρον τοίς φιλότοις, άντι£υγοις ολκοῖς κρεκουσάς μάγανιν, ένθα Περσικώ νόμω ξενωθεῖς ιεροδουλοὶ τo Artemis on behalf of their ιερονόμος Menander. Hierodouloi and hieronomoi are both attested in Hierocaesarea in the Roman Imperial period [note 34].

38 According to J. Keil (RE 26, 1927, col. 2179, s. v. Lydia), the cult was established in the fifth century BC.

39 Cf. Athen. XIV 636 c, quoting a fragment from the lost tragedy "Semele" by Diogenes: Κλύω δε Λυδάς Βακτρίας τε παρθένως ποταμῷ παροίκους Ἀλυτι τμωλίαν θεού δαφνόκλιον κατ' ἄλος Ἀρτεμίν σέβειν ψαλιός τριγώνων περικέδων, ἀντιζύγως ὀλκίς κρέκοςς μάγανιν, εὔνα Περσική νόμῳ ἐνωθεῖς αὐλοὺς ὑμοῦχε χοροῖς. S. Reinach was the first to collect all the inscriptions, coins and literary sources about Hypaepa in his article published in Rev. arch. sér. 3, 6, 1885, 146-164.


is a high head-dress with a veil of figure-length proportions, and she maintains a stiff pose with outstretched arms.\textsuperscript{42}

In the Hellenistic city of Philadelphia, Anāhitā's cult attained the highest degree of Hellenization. The goddess retained her original name 'Αναϊτις prefixed by Θεά, Μήτηρ or 'Αρτεμίς, but her cult seems to have lost much of its Iranian nature. A Greek inscription from Philadelphia\textsuperscript{43} shows that the local cult practice included public confessions of ritual and ethical transgressions. The city honoured its principal goddess by organizing the games known as τα μεγάλα Σεβαστά 'Αναϊτεια.\textsuperscript{44} Her altars were to be found in the countryside as well.\textsuperscript{45}

The highest number of dedications addressed to Anāhitā, mostly dating from the second and third century AD, comes from the Lydian region situated along the middle course of the Hermos river and known in antiquity as Maeonia. Persian soldiers encamped at strategic positions along the royal road system "will have been the first to recognize the presence of their goddess, symbol of the fertile waters, in the imposing Hermos river and its tributaries, however remote from their Persian homeland they were flowing".\textsuperscript{46} Invoked as Κυρία, Μήτηρ or 'Αρτεμίς 'Αναϊτις, the great mistress, queen of villages, protected her devotees in life and in death; moreover, her watchful eye recorded all infringement upon divine and human laws and thus guaranteed the preservation of order and discipline in isolated and self-contained rural communities.

The most notable trait of Anāhitā's rural cults in Maeonia is her complete absorption within the local Anatolian pantheon: her Maeonian paredroi are not Iranian, as in Pontus and Cappadocia, but strictly local Apollo, Men and Sabazius, whom she dominates in their common shrines. Moreover, local religious traditions assigned her an anonymous Mother on the model of the "Mothers" of other deities. Attested on two monuments dating from the Hellenistic age, Anāhitā's Mother is portrayed as an enthroned mother-goddess flanked by


\textsuperscript{43} G. Petzl, Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens (EA 22), Bonn 1994, 113-114 no. 96 (= M. Ricl, Svest o grehu u maloazijskim kultovima rimskog doba, Beograd 1995, 179 no. 37).


\textsuperscript{45} G. Petzl, "Neue Inschriften aus Lydien (1)", EA 26, 1996, 3-8 no. 3=SEG 46, no. 1506.

\textsuperscript{46} Diakonoff [note 44] 161.
two lions. Rare reliefs depicting Anähitä herself show her in the guise of Ephesian Artemis with a moon-crescent on her back.

Maeonian countryside was dotted with numerous privately founded chapels and more important sanctuaries dedicated to Anähitä. These shrines were not only simple places of cult but pre-state ethnological structures founded on a patrimonial base: the goddess was the ruler and master, hers were the lands, hers the people, animals, waters, harvest, etc. Sanctuaries dominated the material life of neighbouring populations and the people of the sanctuary themselves were perhaps originally completely slave and parts of the patrimony (hieroi douloi); then they slowly developed into various statues (hieroi, hierodouloi and sim.), remaining tied to the sanctuary in a kind of symbiosis. Each sanctuary had its own administration, assets, and dependants, and was the focus of the social and economic life of its territory.

Maeonian confession inscriptions throw light on a very significant part played by the local sanctuaries of Anähitä and her divine paredroi in adjudicating disputes between humans. They register nearly twenty cases of conflicts between villagers (theft, failure to return a loan or a deposit, family altercations, slander) settled by the gods. The person suffering an injustice and unable (or unwilling) to find other means of asserting his right, could resort to divine aid by lodging a complaint with the local gods. At that moment, the village temple assumed some traits of a law-court, but without earthly judges and lawyers. We see villagers with their feeling of cohesion reluctant to address themselves to the city and state administration; instead, they prefer to settle their conflicts without interference from the state authorities, in a manner inherited from their forefathers, that was probably considered more effective than secular justice.

The “judicial process” in Lydian sanctuaries was opened by the sceptre-ceremony devised to open a “trial” and cede the case to the gods, who thereby became involved in the lawsuit. In front of this divine symbol, the disputing parties proceeded to a quasi-judicial process, which ended with a confession or a preliminary examination

47 Diakonoff, 147 no. 15=P. Herrmann, TAM V 1, no. 450. M. Paz de Hoz [note 31, 74] suggest that Anähitä’s Mother could be Leto. The second dedication to the same goddess (P. Herrmann, TAM V 1, no. 575) has no reliefs.

48 Diakonoff, 141 no. 1, fig. 3a-c= P. Herrmann, TAM V 1, no. 331 (“...standing frontally, while her arms, with pendent wool-binds, rendered as two staff-like objects, are stretched sideways...flanked by her stags ...with the usual costume, composed of bodice with several rows of ‘mammae’, and a tight apron, or ependytes, encasing the legs...behind her head, crowned by a polos...a moon-crescent is incised into the background...a veil or a cloak, covering the polos and the back of the head falls down with fold onto the shoulders and continues all the way down to the feet...”); 146-7 no. 14= P. Herrmann, TAM V 1, no. 449. Cf. also Fleischer [note 42] 133.
including giving an oath of innocence with a conditional self-curse. Taking an oath and/or depositing a curse meant giving the last word to the gods, who were expected to open an inquiry, prosecute and chastise the guilty or, in cases of theft, claim (a part of) the stolen property for themselves.49

Tablets reporting on the details of a specific case and invoking divine aid are referred to in Lydian inscriptions as πιττάκια, πινακίδια, τάβλαι.50 They must have been commonplace in every temple, hanging on the walls or deposited next to cult statues or on platforms (βήματα). In their wording, they reflected the form and terminology of petitions and complaints in secular courts of law, while the expected divine judgment was a substitute for inadequate human justice.

Although Lydian village priests did not possess autonomous judicial authority, their role in the whole process was not negligible. They were probably present at all the stages of the procedure taking place in the temple: they witnessed the lodging of the complaint, the setting up of the divine sceptre, and the taking of an oath. Moreover, as intermediaries between gods and their worshippers, they consulted the gods on the transgressor and communicated back divine answers and commandments. Fines in money or natural products were delivered to them or to their assistants – hieroi – and they took care that the transgressor erected a stele informing everyone of his sin, sometimes, perhaps, even helping to formulate the text of the inscription. For the villagers, divine justice was not something abstract. They firmly believed that the gods would punish the transgressor and help the injured party, and that human intervention was needed only on some “technical points” during the process of establishing connection with the divine world. After that, it was just of question of time and patience until the punished transgressor confessed his guilt and redressed the wrong he had done.

Anāhītā is one of those rare ancient deities whose history can be followed for over 2,500 years of human history, up to the modern period. Her cult still lives on among the Zoroastrians of Iran and India, giving ample proof of the eternal appeal her mother-figure has

49 H. S. Versnel (“Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers”, in: C. A. Farone–D. Obbink (eds.), Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion, Oxford 1991, 60-106) has admirably shown that similar practices are not confined to the Greek-speaking parts of the Roman Empire, since they appear in some western provinces (especially Britain and Spain) and Rome itself. He does not exclude the possibility that borrowing and transmission has taken place, facilitated by migration of soldiers from east to west.

50 Petzl [note 43] 44 no. 36; 76-77 no. 60 = Riel, 160-161 no. 18; 152-153 no. 9; P. Herrmann, TAM V 1, no. 362. The texts that were inscribed on them are termed by H. S. Versnel “prayers for justice”, “judicial prayers”, “prayers for legal help” [note 49, passim].
exercised on human hearts of diverse ages and areas. Her prominent place in the Greek and Roman literary and documentary tradition is the result of her ability to implant herself into a foreign soil and to capture the devotion of local populations who continued worshipping their protectress long after the Achaemenid and the Sasanian empires succumbed to their conquerors.

РЕЗИМЕ

Маријана Рицл: КУЛТ ИРАНСКЕ БОГИЊЕ АНАХИТЕ У АНАДОЛИЈИ ПРЕ И ПОСЛЕ АЛЕКСАНДРА

Култ иранске богиње Анахите може се пратити у античким изворима од времена Кира II, оснивача Персијског царства, до 4.-5. века н.е. Богињи је посвећена једна од химни старим боговима сачуваних у «Авести». Грчки извори нас обавештавају да је Артаксеркс II наредио да се Анахитине статуе поставе у најважнијим градовима Царства. Ирански колонисти донели су са собом овај култ на запад, у Јерменију, Понт, Лидију и обалски део Мале Азије. Захваљујући чињеници да је цела Анадолија од најстаријих времена поштовала Мајку богова у многим локалним обличјима, нова богиња, која је припадала истом кругу божанстава, нашла је многе присталице у свим поменутим крајевима. Натписи из времена Римског царства сведоче о виталности овог култа и о његовој изузетној популарности. Око Анахитиних храмова настала су многа насеља, од којих су поједина у римско доба добила статус града. У ранијем периоду знатан део њиховог становништва сачињавали су «свети робови» задужени за одржавање светилишта и рад на храмовним имањима.