'ΑΑΆΤΟΣ at Odyssey 22.5: Greek and Indo-European oaths

Marianina Demetri Olcott, San Jose State University
MARIANINA OLCOTT

'AΔΤΟΣ at Odyssey 22.5: Greek and Indo-European oaths

Abstract. The meaning of the word ἀδάτος at Homer's Odyssey 22.5 becomes clearer examined in conjunction with its occurrence at Iliad 14.271 where it is used as an epithet of the river Styx. Further discussion, by locating the word within the context of IE ordeal rituals, Greek cosmogony and the pre-IE mythology of Greek Arcadia, reveals a complex theology amalgamated from these different sources.

Odysseus, at one of the critical moments in the Odyssey when he is just about to slaughter the suitors (Odyssey 22.5) exclaims

οὕτος μὲν δὴ ἄεθλος ἀδάτος ἐκτετέλεσται.

What precisely does this verse mean? The word ἀδάτος in this verse has elicited a body of commentary, both ancient and modern, considerably out of proportion to its five occurrences in extant Greek literature.¹

A survey of recent translations of this verse provides the following: "That match is played and won!" (Rieu 1958: 328); "At last, at last the ending of this fearful strain" (T.E. Shaw 1969: 292). This last offering comes from the redoubtable Lawrence of Arabia who elsewhere in his translation (Od. 21.91) renders ἀδάτος as 'dire and infallible.' Then we have Robert Fitzgerald's rendering (1961: 409) "So much for that. Your clean-cut game is over." Perhaps the best rendering, which hints at the numinous qualities of ἀδάτος, is by Albert Cook (1967: 297): "This inviolable contest has been brought to an end." Whether the Greek text will support such a wide range of meanings is not the question here. Rather, I point out that none of the current translations appear to be in even remote agreement on the meaning of either the verse or the rare and possibly archaic word ἀδάτος. In my opinion, all these translations miss the many levels of meaning—theological, ritual and historical—upon which this verse operates.

The verse opens emphatically with the demonstrative adjective οὕτος, which is qualified by the postpositives μὲν and the emphatic particle δὴ. The latter, according to J.D. Denniston, "denotes that a
thing really and truly is so [and although] ἕν normally emphasizes the preceding word . . . [it] is more able to spread its influence over a whole clause (1966: 204).” This emphatic use here in Odyssey 22.5 is very appropriate to the context. The epic form ἄθλος which also occurs in this verse, never shows vocal contraction and thus betrays its antiquity from the presence of the digamma (Liddell, Scott and Jones 1968: sub ἄθλος). Its usual definition, ‘a contest for a prize’, is also appropriate to this context. But there are additional possible levels of meaning for this word. Aethloi or ‘contests for a prize’ frequently are associated with betrothals in the Greek epic poets Homer and Hesiod (Hesiod, Catalog of Women, 68.91 ff; Hesiod, Cat. of Women, 14; the contest for the hand of Atalanta, Homer, Iliad 3.73 ff; 3.94; 3.105; 3.245; 3.252; 3.256). All the above except the contest for Atalanta, present variations on the formulaic phrases ὀρκεσ στὶ τὸ μνω ἒμνωμ ’I cut faithful oaths’ and ὀρκόν ὀμνυμ ’I swear an oath’; the examples from the Iliad are used in the context of a contest between Paris and Menelaus to determine who shall have Helen.

That the present situation is also a betrothal aethlos for the hand of Penelope is reinforced by the fact that Penelope herself, prompted by a dream from Athena, proposes this particular aethlos to determine her own fate:

Od. 21.73 ἀλλ’ ἀγετε, μνηστήρες, ἐπει τόδε φαινετ ἄθλον.

(But come, suitors, since this appears to be the contest . . .)

In fact her very term for the drawing of the bow and the shooting of an arrow through a row of axeheads, which are to form the conditions of the aethlos, is ἄθλον τοῖο ἅνακτος ‘contestings of the chief’ (21.62), and again these same bow and arrows are called τάρτος ἄθλος ‘contestings of father’ by Telemachus (21.117). Furthermore, these betrothal contests are always guaranteed elsewhere in the epic by oaths, which with one exception use variations of the phrases ὀρκεσ στὶ τὸ μνω and ὀρκόν ὀμνυμ, and thus have a formulaic quality. The verse’s closing word, the perfect middle and passive verb form ἔκχτετελεσταὶ ‘it has been fulfilled’, also presents characteristics pertinent to oath formulae. Verbs based on the root - τελ- are a frequent occurrence in the Odyssey in lines and contexts which refer to Odysseus’ homecoming. And perhaps even more important for this discussion is the fact that another verb based on the - τελ- root, τελευτάω, appears regularly in oathing formulae common to both Hesiod and Homer (Iliad 14.277; Odyssey 12.304; 15.438; 18.59; Hymn to Delian Apollo 89). Thus this to be a customary element of oathing’s Greek epic.

As for the focus of the present discussion of its four attested occurrences, possible addition of the variant reading 1), reveals a variety of problems. These under the following headings: semantic

With respect to the semantic difficulties that our modern translations for one or other of the attested instances of the word, are Cook’s “inviolable” (1967).

A consideration of the ancient literature even more confused picture. We are defined as having completely contradicted: appears to begin with Apion, pupil of the Alexandrian scholar Didymus. Apion uses the word as ‘very harmful’ (πολυβλαβές), 22.5 as ‘harmless’ (ὁβλαβές). The same the 12th century AD lexicographer Synesius retains the word, quoting Iliad 14.271, as ‘very harmful (πολυβλαβές).” He thus the explanation of the obvious contradiction in these simultaneous meanings because the oaths the water is harmless (ὁβλαβές ‘very harmful’). The Etymologicum Magnum (MG) (Gaisford 1855: 699) glosses -άκας at 21.92 ‘causing harm or without harm’. Thus the etymology of the scholia to Homer around this word, we are plunged

Etymology also presents an incalculable problem: offers several possible etymological possibilities for this word has been argued with great erudition.
Hymn to Delian Apollo 89). Thus this word ἔκτετελεσταί also seems to be a customary element of oaths as they have been preserved in Greek epic.

As for the focus of the present discussion, ἀδάκτος, a consideration of its four attested occurrences in Greek literature, with the possible addition of the variant reading to Ap.Rh. 1.803 (cf. endnote 1), reveals a variety of problems. These problems may be categorized under the following headings: semantic, etymological and metrical.

With respect to the semantic difficulties, we have already noted that our modern translations for one of its occurrences, Odyssey 22.5, differ considerably. None of these suggested translations will fit the other attested instances of the word, although a case could be made for Cook’s “inviolable” (1967).

A consideration of the ancient lexicographical tradition presents an even more confused picture. We note that frequently the word is defined as having completely contradictory meanings. This confusion appears to begin with Apion, pupil of the famous 1st century BC Alexandrian scholar Didymus. Apion (Ludwich 1918: 218) glosses the word as ‘very harmful’ (πολυβλαβής) at Iliad 14.271 but at Odyssey 22.5 as ‘harmless’ (ἀβλαβῆς). The same confusion has persisted into the 12th century AD lexicographer Symeon (Sell 1968: 4) who glosses the word, quoting Iliad 14.271, as ‘either harmless (ἀβλαβῆς) or very harmful (πολυβλαβῆς).’ He then proceeds to an ingenious explanation of the obvious contradiction by stating that the word has these simultaneous meanings because ‘to those who abide by their oaths the water is harmless (ἀβλαβῆς); to perjurers, however, it is very harmful’. The Etymologicum Magnum Graecum (15th century AD) (Gaisford 1867: 1) appears to follow the same tradition as Symeon, probably Methodius, whom both cite. In addition, scholia to Homer’s Iliad, which has a scholarly tradition traceable back to the 5th century BC, are as confused as the lexicographical tradition. They, too, especially Scholia Townleyana to the Iliad (Maass 1855: 82) offer a collection of glosses no doubt culled from different traditions which again present contradictory meanings. Scholia to the Odyssey (Dindorf 1855: 699) glosses -άδακτος at 21.92 as ἐπιβλαβής ή ἀδεν βλαβής ‘causing harm or without harm’. Thus, after investigating ancient lexicography and the scholia to Homer as a possible source of enlightenment about this word, we are plunged further into darkness.

Etymology also presents an inconclusive picture. Current scholarship offers several possible etymologies for ἀδάκτος, each of which has been argued with great erudition. Central to all the discussions is
the derivation of ἀκατός from ἀκατή (Hesiod Theogony 230). On the etymology of ἀκατή or Classical Greek ἀκατή, however, scholars part company. To summarize their conclusions: ἀκατή derives from either ἄκατος ‘hurt, damage’ or ἄκατος ‘sate, satisfy’. For some commentators the fact that ἄκατος ‘sate’ offers the privative adjective ἀκατός, as in Iliad 5.388, suggests that ἀκατός represents either a double privative formed from ἄκατος, and therefore means ‘not insatiable’, or an intensive form of the privative, i.e., ‘very insatiable’. This, indeed, is the derivation argued in recent studies of the word by Moorehouse (1961: 16) and in a discussion of ἀκατή by Wyatt (1982: 269). Dawe (1968: 108) favors the older meaning of ἀκατή as ‘hurt, damage’; cf the πολυβλαβείς of the scholia. Francis (1983: 90) opts for a derivation of ἀκατή from ἁμαρ, ‘to blast’, and Doyle (1984: 3) favors ‘blindness, infatuation’ or in some cases ‘ruin, calamity’. From this brief survey, an etymological approach does not appear to be conclusive.

A prosodical analysis of the word reveals a disturbing fact: no one prosodical pattern will fit all occurrences of the word (see endnote 1). Iliad 14.271 presents a pattern which is not possible in the other occurrences: ἀκατή versus ἀκατή for all other examples. If, however, we consider our word from the standpoint of IE studies, especially those relating to IE oath rituals and mythology, we can perhaps make some tentative explanations for these anomalies.

I have drawn attention to the metrically anomalous verse, Iliad 14.271, where the ἀκατός water of Styx is termed the μεγάλος ‘greatest’ ὦς κόρος ‘oath’ of the gods. This paper will maintain that a clearer notion of the meaning of ἀκατός emerges from a close examination of this verse. That this notion of Styx water as the greatest oath was widespread in the Greek epic tradition represented by Homer and Hesiod is confirmed by many instances from the epic poets, for example, Hesiod, Theogony 384, 773ff; Hymn to Hermes 518; Hymn to Demeter 259; Hymn to Apollo 84; Homer, Odyssey 5.185 and Iliad 14.271 and 15.38. In Odyssey 5.185, the divine nymph Kalypso swears by the ‘down falling water of Styx which is the greatest and most awesome oath there is to the blessed gods’.

Epigraphic examples and references to the law courts indicate that oaths by water were a consistent feature of later Greek culture. A stela now in London of the 2nd century BC (Dittenberger 1920: no.953) contains a judgment between the city of Calyumann and some citizens of Coos. Here the testimony of the witnesses is to be read ‘without water’ (line 23—ἀναγιγνωσκέτω ὁ γραμματέας τὰς μαρτυρίως ἄκατος ὦδος ‘Let the scribe read the deposition without water.’) and the inscribed agreement opens with form (line 9 ἐδοκείμενο εὐθυρκείω ‘I truly swear’). Of even greater importance to this study is von Gaertringen 1913: no. 357 of the 3rd century BC an important Greek city near the reputed place of the inscription. The inscription concerns itself with the use of water—the inscription elicits the phrase τὸ ὄρνημα to go unharmed. Unfortunately at this point cannot be restored and, to determine the exact context of the phrase itself, that in Arcadia well into the 3rd century BC, an obvious variation on our focal words as is not clear from the fragment.

A consideration of further examples (45.8; 54.36; 57.21) indicates that the use of water in giving witness was a regular feature of Athenian law. Demosthenes 45.8, The First Speech (Demosthenes 45.8, 260), uses the phrase in its original sense: τὸ ὄρνημα ‘Take up the water of the temple’ or ποντίκη ‘Take up the water of the sea’. The phrase elicits the same formal deposition, and in 57.21, a case in which the phrase is recited and the water ritual is introduced on behalf of the plaintiff to the goddess of justice. From these examples we see that water is a truth testing situations well into the 4th century BC.

There is a particularly interesting example from the 3rd century BC. The Greek historian Herodotus (2.105.2) mentions the practice of the Spartans in the 6th century BC to guarantee the support of the inhabitants of the city of Sparta by making them swear by the water of the River Stymphalis. Herodotus go on to Nonacris that “the Arcadians believed in the sites of great oaths.” Once again the river and its context are firmly located within rituals involving oaths and, by this time, in conformity to the epic tradition. Here and in the Arcadian Styx, this practice of the oath reappears in the epic tradition. Here and in the epic tradition. Here and in the epic tradition. Here and in the epic tradition. Here and in the epic tradition. Here and in the epic tradition.

Let us progress to a closer examination of the inscription at Nonacris and compare what Hesiod has to say about water on cosmological poem Theogony. Theogony 155–156: ἀκατός ‘sate’ Jonah’s prompt aid against the great oath of the gods and further
from ἀδήτη (Hesiod Theogony 230). On the classical Greek ἀδήτη, however, scholars part their conclusions: ἀδήτη derives from either ‘state, satisfy’. For some commentators the privative adjective ἀδάρτος, as in Ἰλιάδος represents either a double privative (i.e. means ‘not insatiable’, or an intensive ‘very insatiable’. This, indeed, is the der- their primary occurrence in the word by Moorehouse (1961: 16) by Wyatt (1982: 269). Dawe (1968: 108) of ἀδήτη as ‘hurt, damage’; cf. the Francis (1983: 90) opts for a derivation of άδητος, and Doyle (1984: 3) favors ‘blindness, ruin, calamity.’ From this brief survey, it does not appear to be conclusive.

The word reveals a disturbing fact: no one occurrences of the word (see endnote 1). pattern which is not possible in the other uX for all other examples. If however, we to some extent in IE studies, especially those and mythology, we can perhaps make some of these anomalies.

To the metrically anomalous verse, Ἰλιάδα the water of Styx is termed the μεγάστος the gods. This paper will maintain that a role of ἀδάρτος emerges from a close exam- not found in the poetic tradition represented by Homer and no instances from the epic poets, for ex- 64, 773ff; Hymn to Hermes 518; Hymn to Ηίνος 84; Homer, Odyssey 5.185 and Ἰλιάδα 5.185, the divine nymph Kalypso- water of Styx which is the greatest and to the blessed gods’.

I refer to the law courts indicate that a significant feature of later Greek culture. A stela 5th century BC (Dittenberger 1920: no.953) the city of Calymnae and some citizens of the witnesses is to be read ‘without κέτω ὁ ἐρμαφρατεύος τὸς μαρτυρώας read the deposition without water.’) and the inscribed agreement opens with formulaic oath phrases and diction (line 9 εὐφροκέω ‘I truly swear’).

Of even greater importance to this paper is an inscription (Hiller von Gaertringen 1913: no. 357) of the 3rd century BC from Stymphale, an important Greek city near the reputed site of Styx’s falls in Arcadia. Within this context at line 177 of the inscription we find the phrase ἀδάρτος εἰμι εὐφροκέω to go unharmed. Unfortunately the full text of the inscription at this point cannot be restored and, therefore, we cannot precisely determine the exact context of the phrase. However, we can point out that in Arcadia well into the 3rd century BC in a truth testing situation an obvious variation on our focal word, ἀδάρτος, was still current.

A consideration of further examples from Demosthenes’ speeches (45.8; 54.36; 57.21) indicates that the pouring of water as a prelude to giving witness was a regular feature of legal proceedings at Athens. In Demosthenes 45.8, The First Speech Against Stephanos, water is poured as the initial deposition is read: σὺ δ’ ἐπιλύθη τὸ ὅραρ λέγε. τὸς μαρτυρόας ‘Take up the water and read the depositions.’ In 54.36, the same phrase is repeated again with reference to reading the formal deposition, and in 57.21, a case involving citizenship rights, the phrase is recited and the water ritual performed as witnesses are introduced on behalf of the plaintiff to testify to his right to citizenship. From these examples we see that water rituals were still important in truth testing situations well into the 4th century BC and beyond.

There is a particularly interesting example to investigate from the 5th century BC. The Greek historian Herodotus (6.74 ff) relates the attempts on the part of the Spartan king Cleomenes in the early 5th century to guarantee the support of the Arcadians in a revolt against Sparta by making them swear by the water Styx at Nonacris: ἐξορκοῦν τὸ Στυγγός ὄνομερ (6.74). Herodotus goes on to mention that it is here at Nonacris that ‘the Arcadians believe the water of Styx to be located.’ Once again the river and its oath-potent waters appear to be located within rituals involving oaths and/or truth-testing in complete conformity to the epic tradition. Here in the mythological complex relating to the Arcadian Styx, this paper maintains the best solution to the meaning of the word ἀδάρτος can be found.

Let us progress to a closer examination of the Arcadian Styx at Nonacris and compare what Hesiod tells us about the Styx in his cosmological poem Theogony. Theogony 401–402 reveals that Zeus in gratitude for Styx’s prompt aid against the Titans appointed her to be the great oath of the gods and further that she and her children would
be dwellers with him always (Theogony 386). Previous to Styx’s offer of aid Zeus (Theogony 393) had promised that whoever of the deathless gods should side with him would have the same prerogatives they enjoyed before his ascendency. It is safe to assume that Styx was included in this number, and that her previous prerogatives regarding oaths would now in the new order be confirmed by Zeus, as when he makes her the greatest oath of the gods. In addition, several of the epithets associated with Styx or with Styx’s water reinforce the assumption that she represents a very ancient stratum in Greek religion. One epithet of Styx water, ὤγγου, (Hesiod Th. 806) usually translated as ‘primeval’, refers to the aboriginal King of Thebes Ogyges (cf. Pausanias 1971: 9.5.1). Another epithet ὁγνεία refers to her parentage as daughter of Ocean, a pre-Olympian deity (cf. Liddell, Scott and Jones 1968: sub ὠγνεία). Elsewhere in Hesiod (Theogony 773), as the daughter of Oceanus, she is termed περισσοτέτως (oldest) and in Theogony 361 she is called προφερεστάτη (lit. ‘carried before’; here, ‘most excellent’ daughter of Oceanus). Other epithets especially from Hesiod and Homer (Odyssey 5.185; Iliad 15.38 and Hymn to Apollo 84), are purely descriptive and remarkably precise. At Hesiod, Theogony 785 ff., Bolte (1931: 462) one of the editors of the Pauly-Wissowa Real-Enzyklopädie article on Styx remarks ‘... it is as if Hesiod were standing before the falls themselves when he wrote the lines: ‘the many-named cold water which drops down from a high steep rock’’.

The Greek travel writer Pausanias (mid 2nd century AD), who preserves a great deal of mythological material about this site and especially for the region of Arcadia, records: ‘Not far from the ruins of Nonacris is a high crag: I have never seen a rock face so high; the water falls sheer down it, and this is the stream the Greeks call Styx (Pausanias 8.17). ‘In modern times (October 1895), Sir James Frazier who among other things wrote a monumental commentary on Pausanias’ travels in Greece, visited the site and confirmed this description (Frazier 1898 vol. 4: 250 ff.):

In about twenty minutes after leaving the village [of Solos] we come in sight of the cliff over which the water of the Styx descends. It is an immense cliff, absolutely perpendicular, a little to the left or east of the high conical summit of Mount Chelmos. [The cliff] seen from a distance appears to be streaked perpendicularly with black and red. The black streak marks the line of the water-fall to which it has given the modern name ‘‘Mavronero’’, ‘Black-water’. The color is produced by a dark incrustation which spreads over the smooth face of the rock. In the crevices of the cliffs to the right and left of the fall great patches of snow remain all the year through. The water... descends the smooth face of a cliff said to be over 600 feet high. The view from the top of the falls near the summit of Mt. Chelmos embraces nearly the whole range of Parnassus, Helicon Cithaeron, and the mountains to the distant Taygetus in Laconia on the south.

The falls of the Styx are the highest from which they fall, Mt. Chelmos, is, a geological study (1891: 130) the second (by mountain in Greece, reaching 7726 feet; vol. 4: 251), the falls are accessible only for the last part of which is through the pass of Taygetus gorge of the river Styx. Looking at (Hiller von Gaertingen 1931: Tab. VIII of the Ladon, (the major tributary of the river through Olympia, the site of the famous headwaters in the same mountain range of Chelmos, the very mountain which is to give the seven altars at ancient Olympia was its name (Pausanias 1971: 5.14.4). Contests of Greek and of IE society in general (H.) may safely assume that some form of it was involved in oaths associated with the to the ritual explicitly mentioned by Pausanias; involved the splitting of a boar’s head (c) between Paris and Menelaus over the race.

To return to the site of Styx: Given the falls at Nonacris in Arcadia and one of them might assume that the early Greeks (or games at Olympia began in 776 BC) also ship between Styx, the άρετος water, appear to be accidental that two water sources both have connections to IE society. Later in this paper I note that with water originating in a high mountain Iranian culture and may reflect an even.

Leake, who visited the site in 1806 of the falls in modern times (Frazier 1898) local inhabitants did not know the falls the name Draconera (Dragon waters) The local people, however, did present were poisonous—a tradition which goes (1971: 8.18.4 ff) who, relying on local time it brought death.’
Styx (Theogony 386). Previous to Styx’s offer he had promised that whoever of the deathless ten would have the same prerogatives they had. It is safe to assume that Styx was and that her previous prerogatives regarding re now be confirmed by Zeus, as when he a of the gods. In addition, several of the the Styx or with Styx’s water reinforce the s is a very ancient stratum in Greek religion. ωγόνιον, (Hesiod Th. 806) usually tran aboriginal King of Thebes Ogyges (cf. As another epithet ωγείωσ refers to her parent the pre-Olympian deity (cf. Liddel, Scott and Elsewhere in Hesiod (Theogony 773), as he is termed πρεσβυτάτη (oldest) and in προφερεστάτη (lit. ‘carried before’; here, of Oceanus). Other epithets especially from ιρ 5.185; Iliad 15.38 and Hymn to Apollo and remarkably precise. At Hesiod, Theog (92) one of the editors of the Pauly-Wissowa styx remarks... it is as if Hesiod all by themselves when he wrote the lines: ‘the rock which drops down from a high steep rock’... other Pausanius (mid 2nd century AD), who has mythological material about this site and Arcadia, records: ‘Not far from the ruins of I have never seen a rock face so high; the and this is the stream the Greeks call Styx (Styx)’. (October 1895), Sir James Frazer (Styx) wrote a monumental commentary on Pausa the site and confirmed this description (1895):

Leake, who visited the site in 1806 and gives us our first account of the falls in modern times (Frazer 1898 vol. 4: 252), reports that the local inhabitants did not know the falls by the name Styx but rather by the name Draconera (Dragon waters) and Mavronero (Blackwater). The local people, however, did preserve the tradition that the waters were poisonous—a tradition which goes back at least to Pausanias (1971: 8.18.4 ff) who, relying on local legend says that “once upon a time it brought death.”

The falls of the Styx are the highest in Greece and the mountain from which they fall, Mt. Chelmos, is, according to Philipson’s geological study (1891: 130) the second (by a very small margin) highest mountain in Greece, reaching 7726 feet. According to Frazer (1898 vol. 4: 251), the falls are accessible only after several hours of hiking, the last part of which is through the particularly difficult and precipitous gorge of the river Styx. Looking at a detailed map of the region (Hiller von Gaertringen 1931: Tab. VIII), one notices that the left fork of the Ladon, (the major tributary of the Alpheios, the river which runs through Olympia, the site of the famous Olympic games) too has its headwaters in the same mountain range (Aroanian Mountains) as Mt. Chelmos, the very mountain which is the source of the Styx. One of the seven altars at ancient Olympia was dedicated to the river Alpheios (Pausanias 1971: 5.14.4); contests guaranteed by oaths were a feature of Greek and of IE society in general (Hirzel 1902: 189 ff) and thus we may safely assume that some form of water ritual at Alpheios’ altar was involved in oaths associated with the Olympic contests, in addition to the ritual explicitly mentioned by Pausanias (1971: 5.24.9) which involved the splitting of a boar’s head (cf. the oath ritual at Iliad 3.279 between Paris and Menelaus over the return of Helen).

To return to the site of Styx: Given the close proximity of the Styx falls at Nomacris in Arcadia and one of the headwaters of the Alpheios, one might assume that the early Greeks (the first recorded pan-Hellenic games at Olympia began in 776 BC) also perceived the same relationship and between Styx, the άττικης water, and the Alpheios. It does not appear to be accidental that two water sources flowing from the same mountain range both have connections with oath-taking in ancient Greek society. Later in this paper I note that the association of oath rituals with water originating in a high mountain can be found in the Indo-Iranian culture and may reflect an even earlier religious system.

Leake, who visited the site in 1806 and gives us our first account of the falls in modern times (Frazer 1898 vol. 4: 252), reports that the local inhabitants did not know the falls by the name Styx but rather by the name Draconera (Dragon waters) and Mavronero (Blackwater). The local people, however, did preserve the tradition that the waters were poisonous—a tradition which goes back at least to Pausanias (1971: 8.18.4 ff) who, relying on local legend says that “once upon a time it brought death.”
But in fact chemical analyses of the water done in the late 19th century (Philipsson 1891: 134) indicate that the water contains no chemical precipitates. This would be the case if the water is snow melt as both Philipsson and Frazer have suggested from two facts: 1) the volume of water over the falls varies according to season and 2) in July when the air temperature was 35 Celsius the water temperature was 5 degrees Celsius (Philipsson 1891: 130). In Hesiod (Th 385) one of Styx water’s epithets is ψυχρόν ‘cold’ which prompted the scholars on this passage to assume that Styx is called άδοσχή meaning ‘baneful, harmful’ because of this coldness (cf. Scholia Townleyana).

It is also possible that the many fossil remains in the blackish-grey limestone (Tripolitza-Kalk) in the narrow gorge and at the source of the falls noted by Philipsson (1891: 134) contributed to the Styx’s baneful reputation, but this has nothing to do with her reputation for being poisonous. In another passage (1971: 8.17 ff) Pausanias records a local legend that the waters of Styx corrupted many inorganic substances, among them the metals silver, electrum (an alloy of gold and silver), bronze, and even pure gold (but not a horse’s hoof). Certain chemical substances especially sulphurous compounds can corrupt silver and gold but there is no evidence for such compounds in Styx water. What then is the explanation for this tradition recorded by Pausanias that Styx water was poisonous and could even corrupt metal? And is there any connection between this and the association with oaths?

Schwartz (1990: 293–95) has pointed out with reference to the Persian phrase saugand xurdan that its usual meaning ‘to drink sulphur water’ should be restricted only to extraordinary ordeals of truth testing, and that the Persian phrase in his estimation refers only to swearing an oath, not to an exceptional ritual as it is usually interpreted. Certainly Styx water in the Greek epic tradition was reserved for extraordinary truth-testings—the oaths of the gods—their μεγίστος ὁρκός. Truth-testing ordeals in other IE cultures are notably serious: in the Chandogya Upanishad 6.16 (Hume: 1954: 250), for example, is recorded a truth ordeal where the one being tested must grasp a heated ax in order to prove his claim to innocence. From a psychological perspective, an individual would not be prone to agree to such an ordeal unless he were convinced of the righteousness of his claims. The possibly fatal consequences of such a truth-testing ordeal, then, would act as a deterrent both to false claims and to inconsequential disputes. The Greeks, however, would probably have transformed such ordeals into athletic contests or other forms of aethloi at an early stage of their culture. But it is possible that the earliest IE invaders of the Peloponneseus, when they came upon the dramatic and nearly inaccessible site of Styx and learned that the site was a sacred place, perhaps even of truth-testing ordeals, perhaps employing the local traditions and helped to give it the poisonous, corrosive waters of Styx.

There are many indications of the vicinity of the Styx falls. According to the Hesiodic and Pindaric traditions, there is a mention of the site of the death and transformation of the hero Lycaon, into the ‘Bear’ constellation Ursa Major, which interests us because she almost certainly represents a local deity associated with the Lycaon constellation. Callisto, as Pausanias tells us, was the eponymous hero of Arcadia (Pausanias 18.10.7). Callisto, as Pausanias says, identifies the Pelasgians as a Aegean Bronze age migrations of the Indo-European peoples who later inhabitants called Helots. One of the factoring of truth-testing ordeals, perhaps employing the local traditions and helped to give it the poisonous, corrosive waters of Styx.

Thus if Arkas, Callisto’s son by Zeus, was the eponymous hero of Arcadia, then the Arcadians and from her own genealogy that Callisto and Zeus were coopted by Zeus Lycaios and their contests in honor of Zeus.

Let us summarize what we know about Callisto, daughter of the eponymous hero of Arcadia, mother by Zeus of the eponymous hero Callisto, and Callisto’s daughter by Zeus, Iolaus, who was the eponymous hero Arcadia. Thus a bear-goddess, Ariadne of Tegea (Franz 1890: 223–26) was the eponymous hero of Arcadia, mother by Zeus of the eponymous hero Callisto, and Callisto’s daughter by Zeus, Iolaus, who was the eponymous hero Arcadia. Thus a bear-goddess, Ariadne of Tegea (Franz 1890: 223–26) was the eponymous hero of Arcadia, mother by Zeus of the eponymous hero Callisto, and Callisto’s daughter by Zeus, Iolaus, who was the eponymous hero Arcadia. Thus
analyses of the water done in the late 19th
and early 20th centuries suggest that the water contains no
fluoride and that this would be the case if the water is snow melt-
water from the high elevations of the mountains. In some cases, the
water temperature was as low as 35 °C.

In Hesiod's (Th. 385) one of the ἄγκυρα κρύματος which prompted the scholiasts
to suggest that ἄγκυρας might be the ancient name
for this coldness (cf. Scholia Townleyana).

Many fossil remains in the blackish-grey
clay in the narrow gorge and at the source of the
Styx indicate that the river was a tributary of the Styx
and contributed to the Styx's baneful
properties. The river was believed to have been
associated with the god of the underworld,
and its waters were considered to be poisonous
to humans and animals. The Styx was also
thought to be the site of the death and transformation of the nymph Calisto, daughter of
Lycaon, into the “Bear” constellation Ursa Minor by Artemis. Callisto
interests us because she almost certainly represents an older strata
of religion which was fused with the sky-god religion of the IE invaders.

Calisto, as Pausanias tells us, was the daughter of Zeus and Arcas,
the eponymous hero of Arcadia (Pausanias 171: 8.4.1). In an earlier
chapter, Pausanias says that the indigenous population was called
Pelasgian after the autochthonous hero Pelasgus, son of Ge (Earth) and
grandfather of Callisto (Pausanias 171: 8.1.5). More recent research
identifies the Pelasgians as an Aegean people uprooted by the early
Bronze Age migrations of the Indo-Europeans into the Balkans. At
Il. 8.843 the Pelasgians are listed as allies of the Trojans and as coming
from Thessaly. As we have already seen, the autochthonous hero
Pelasgus is clearly associated by Pausanias with earlier populations in
Arcadia. It was Pelasgus, Callisto's grandfather, who according to
Pausanias (171: 8.1 ff) taught the inhabitants ‘how to use the acorn as
food’.

Thus, if Arcas, Calisto's son by Zeus, as eponymous hero
represents the IE Greek population, then we may safely conclude from this
and from her own genealogy that Callisto represents a Pelasgic or
pre-IE cult (cf. Hesiod 165: Fragment 181). Calisto's father Lycaon
son of Pelasgos) also exhibits very early 'culture-hero' features: he,
too, is associated, according to Pausanias (8.2 f), with very old rituals
involving wolf worship and possibly human sacrifice, all of which
were co-opted by Zeus Lycaios and thereafter transformed into athletic
contests in honor of Zeus.

Let us summarize what we know about Callisto: a local mythog-
rapher, Ariatchos of Tegea (Franz 1890: 236) locates her death and
transformation into a bear at the Styx falls at Nonacris. This locale is
also associated with Lycaon, her father, for, Nonacris was previously
time named after Lycaon's wife, Callisto's mother. She, Callisto, is
the mother by Zeus of the eponymous hero of the Greek Arcadians and she
is clearly connected by her grandfather Pelasgos with the aboriginal
population(s) of Arcadia. Thus a bear-goddess figure representative of
an older pre-Greek tradition, who elsewhere has the epithet ‘Megisto’ (Ariathos) is associated with the water source at Styx. Further, this same locale of Styx was the scene of her death at the hands of Artemis and her subsequent transformation into the bear constellation Ursa Major (Hesiod, Astronomy 3). Gimbutas has described (1974: 198) the great (Megisto?) Goddess of life and death (Styx is one of the rivers associated with the land of death in Greek mythology) who, in addition to her role as a water goddess suggested by her iconography, was at times represented with a bear face in the Vinca culture and with others with a bird face (Gimbutas 1974: 190). Hence Callisto, who is described in Pausanias as a nymph beloved of the IE god, Zeus, and mother to the eponymous hero, Arkas, of the Greek Arcadians, must be, as Gimbutas points out (1974: 198), a representation of that earlier water/bear goddess of old Europe sometimes associated in her iconography with snakes. Additionally, I point out that the local grand reported by Frazer (1898 vol. 4: 250 ff) in the 19th century call the waters of the Styx–Draconera Snake waters.

There is some archaeological evidence to support this supposition. Near to the falls at Styx 19th century Austrian excavators (Levi 1971: 417) found the vestiges of a temple to Artemis, the goddess ‘responsible’ for Callisto’s death and transformation. Already Farnell (1971: vol 3.338 ff) saw the Greek Artemis, and especially Artemis Brauronia, as one of the surviving manifestations of this pre-Greek bear goddess cult (cf. Gimbutas 1974: 198). From evidence provided by Bather and Yorke (1892: 227 ff) archaeological remains of cult practices in Arcadia at Bathos indicate the persistence of rituals associated with a fertility goddess where numerous figurines are described by the excavators as seated or standing female terracotta figurines of a very early period (before the 4th century BC) having bird faces. In turn these bird females were found in conjunction with smaller terracotta pig figurines. Later Greek religion associates pigs with chthonic fertility rituals. We know from Gimbutas that this is also the case with the Great Goddess.

Thus we find throughout the region of Arcadia vestiges of a cult to a pre-Greek goddess who may have survived in one form as the bear-nymph Callisto associated with the Styx falls at Nonacris and in another form as a water divinity Styx, who like her predecessor, the mother of life and death, retained an association with death and was thus regarded as one of the rivers of the underworld. Again Styx’s baneful reputation is attributable to a tradition, not to the chemical properties of her water.

I also argue that Styx absorbed IE traditions concerning oathing.

There is another interesting point of contact with Indo-Iranian oath traditions. A part of the Styx whose waters originate in Mount Chehel (§ 250 ff) and by Herodotus before his time. Her water collects in a shallow rocky basin perpendicular cliff face of about six hundred feet and has conjectured that the Indo-Iranian ‘mountain’ with its golden falls falling in the same way that Styx’s waters fall from it.

To conclude, waters flowing from range in Arcadia possessed oath pote was honoured with an altar at Olympia, and the other stream Styx, was worshipped by the gods. Such a belief and ritual finds Indo-Iranian beliefs and rituals. These, with an earlier pre-Greek theology.

What does all this reveal then about the weight of the evidence points to the translation of the adjective άυλης as being the exact meaning of which is also concludes the sense of ‘ruin, destruction’ and the intensive is often conjectured by especially Eustathius (1825: 618.40; 749). The privative alpha is related to έρυσις (Ruin) and Άυλης (offspring of ‘Ερυς (Strife). It is only subject to its sibling ‘Άρτη (Ruin) be should be. Thus άυλος & άυλης at Cined by imperishable oath. This means able’, ‘not subject to Άρτη (Ruin)’, find what about the other instances from Rhodos (see endnote 1)? The variant will make sense with the translation ‘invincible’. But Argonautica 2.77 is consistent the reading of the editors, Ap., Άυλος, άυλης. άυλος τε χερεων the nom. m. (Amicus and his boxing match with He of the Dioscurides) and the line to match Amicus was ‘imperishable as the other hand if we adopt the variant revised but found in the very important 10th
There is another interesting point of comparison between Styx and Indo-Iranian oath traditions. A part of the dramatic appearance of Styx whose waters originate in Mount Chelmos, noted by Frazer (1898 vol. 4: 250 ff) and by Herodotus before him (6.74 ff), is the fact that its water collects in a shallow rocky basin after a sheer fall over a perpendicular cliff face of about six hundred feet. Schwartz (1990: 295) has conjectured that the Indo-Iranian Mt. Saokenta means “oath mountain” with its golden falls falling into a golden lake in much the same way that Styx’s waters fall from a great height into a rocky basin.

To conclude, waters flowing from Mt Chelmos in the Aroanian range in Arcadia possessed oath potency—one stream the Alpheios, was honoured with an altar at Olympia where doubtless oaths were sworn, and the other stream Styx, was regarded as the greatest oath of the gods. Such a belief and ritual find definite similarities in older Indo-Iranian beliefs and ritual. These, in turn, were inextricably fused with an earlier pre-Greek theology at Styx.

What does all this reveal then about our verse from the Odyssey? The weight of the evidence points to a correct etymological interpretation of the adjective ἀόσιος as being related to the Greek word ἀός, the exact meaning of which is also contested but almost always includes the sense of ‘ruin, destruction’. The first alpha is privative, not intensive as is often conjectured by the ancient commentators especially Eustathius (1825: 618.40; 749.20; 770.30). ἀόσιος, then, without the privative alpha is related to ἀός or ἀότη as in Hesiad, Theogony 230 where Ὄρκος (Oath) and Ἀότη (Ruin, Destruction) are called the offspring of ’Ερυς (Strife). It is only fitting that Ὄρκος (Oath) NOT be subject to its sibling ’Αότη (Ruin) because oaths are imperishable, or should be. Thus ἐξεθλος ἀόσιος at Odyssey 22.5 is a contest guaranteed by imperishable oath. This meaning for ἀόσιος as ‘imperishable’, ‘not subject to Ἀότη (Ruin)’, fits all the Homeric examples. But what about the other instances from the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius (see endnote 1)? The variant reading to Argonautica 1.803 will make sense with the translation ‘imperishable’ in the sense of ‘invincible’. But Argonautica 2.77 is even more revealing. If we accept the reading of the editors, Ap.Rh.2.77 πυγμαχίην ἢ κάρτος ἀόσιος. ἢ τε χρέων the nom. masc. adjective ἀόσιος refers to Amycus and his boxing match with Polydeukes (son of Zeus and one of the Dioscurides) and the line translates as: where in the boxing match Amycus was ‘imperishable as to his strength, Κάρτος.’ On the other hand if we adopt the variant reading rejected by modern editors but found in the very important 10th century AD manuscript the Lau-
rentian (32.9) (cf. critical apparatus to Ap.Rh. 2.77) where the reading is neuter nom. ἄστον then the adjective refers to Κράτος (Strength). One can support this reading (Ap.Rh.2.77 πυγμαχίην ἢ κάρτος ἄστον ἢ τα χερείων) on genealogical grounds. Hesiod in Theogony 385 makes Styx the mother of Kratos and thus the epithet reserved for Styx’s water in Homer’s Iliad 14.271 is now transferred by a later poet to her offspring. In addition, the contest described by Apollonius has definite ‘aethlos’ features. It is ratified by ‘Law, Order’ θεσμός (Ap. Rh. 2.23) in a way reminiscent of the way on oath is used to ratify a contest in the epic. Such is the careful use of this adjective ἄστος/ ἄστον by the later poet and epic scholar Apollonius. Thus all attested uses of the word are brought back to Styx water, and contests, ἄθλος, which are covenanted by oathings—oathings ‘not subject to Ate.’

Depts. of Humanities & Foreign Languages
San Jose State University
San Jose, CA 95192.

ENDNOTE

1Homer, Iliad 14.271; Odyssey 21.91; 22.5. Apollonius, Rhodius, Argonautica 2.77; and the textual variant to 1.803. cf. the critical apparatus to 1.801 ff.

II.14.271 ἄγρει νόμι μοι ἄστον ἄστον Στυγήν ὑδῷρ
-- u-u-- u-- u-- u--
Swear it to me on Styx’ ineluctable water. (Lattimore 1951).

Od.21.91 μετετέρησαν ἄθλος ἄστον οὐ γάρ ὄν
- - - u-u-- u- u- u-
(Leave us the bow), a clean cut game it looks to me. (Fitzgerald 1963).

Od. 22.5. ὁ τοις μὲν ἔθελος ἄστος ἐκτελέσεται
-- u-u- u- u-u-- u-
So much for that. Your clean cut game is over. (Fitzgerald 1963).

Ap.Rh.2.77 πυγμαχίην ἢ κάρτος ἄστον ἢ τα χερείων
- u-u- u-u- u-u-
But there were weak points as well as strong in his opponent’s savage style.

- u-u- u-u- u-u- u-u-
And then 'not subject to Ate' Madness fell upon the people.
apparatus to Ap.Rh. 2.77) where the reading in the adjective refers to Κράτος (Strength). Second (Ap.Rh.2.77 πυγμαχίην ἦ κάρτος genealogical grounds. Hesiod in Theogony of Kratos and thus the epithet reserved for Ad 14.271 is now transferred by a later poet for the contest described by Apollonius has It is ratified by ‘Law, Order’ θεσμός (Ap. cent of the way on oath is used to ratify a is the careful use of this adjective άκατος and epic scholar Apollonius. Thus all attested back to Styx water, and contests, ἀεθλον, oathing—oathings ‘not subject to Ate. ’

Languages

ENDNOTE

1. 1.91; 22.6. Apollonius, Rhodius, Argonautica 2.77; and critical apparatus to 1.801 ff.

2. κατόν Στυγάδων θάλασσα

3. κατόν οὖ γάρ διό

4. it looks to me. (Fitzgerald 1963).

5. τοῦ ἐκτεταλέκτου

6. τοῦ ἐκ τῆς γραμμής

7. as strong in his opponent’s savage style.

8. ... καὶ τότε ἐπέστρεψ εἵπε δόμον αἰσχρον ἐμπετέρ

9. as fell upon the people.

REFERENCES


Cognitive Linguistics is a vibrant, rapidly expanding field of endeavor that has successfully taken root in linguistic circles. It is an area of wisdom of much of formal linguistic theory. One of the most recent is the Second International Cognitive Linguistics Conference held at the University of California at Santa Cruz, July 1993, in which ten plenary lectures and almost a hundred papers were presented ranging over a broad set of topics, including morphology, syntax, lexicosemantics and psycholinguistics and discourse theory.

In addition, the rapidly expanding field of Cognitive Linguistics is now extensive enough that it can be difficult to master it all. In such a situation, a person new to the field might find himself/herself perplexed. Fortunately, there is now an overview of what the field is like. Some of the best introductions are Langacker (1987, 1991) and Lakoff (1987). Taylor’s summaries of a number of theoretical approaches are particularly helpful. In addition, *Linguistic Categorization* is a rich source of ideas for those more grounded in the field can also benefit from a careful reading of it.

Taylor’s summaries of a number of theoretical approaches are particularly helpful. In addition, *Linguistic Categorization* is a rich source of ideas for those more grounded in the field can also benefit from a careful reading of it.