

Oriental Elements of Greek Religion in “The Orientalizing Period”^{*}: Focus on the Apollo Cult^{*}

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In the course of exchange and interaction between Greek civilization and oriental civilization in “The Orientalizing Period”, a lot of oriental elements appeared in Greek religion. Taking Apollo cult as an example, based on classical historical materials, this paper explores the oriental elements of Greek religion in “The Orientalized Period” from the aspects of names, functions, religious ceremonies and festivals. There are three main components in Apollo cult: One belongs to the Northern Greek people who immigrated to the south; one belongs to indigenous Greek people; and one belongs to the oriental Asian Minor people. The development of the cult of Apollo must have taken a long time. In the process, the Greeks absorbed various religious elements and small gods from other religions, and these religious elements and small gods gradually gathered under the name “Apollo”. The cultural exchange and integration embodied in the formation and development of the Apollo cult played a very important role in the universal identity of the Greeks.

Keywords: Ancient Greece, “The Orientalizing Period”, Apollo cult, oriental elements

Since Oswyn Murray proposed the concept “The Orientalizing Period” (Murray, 1980, p. 80; Li, 2014, pp. 187-204)¹, several scholars have focused on the relationship between Greek civilization and oriental civilization. In the communication and interaction between these two kinds of civilizations, a lot of oriental elements appeared in Greek religion. Martin Bernal attempts to clarify some previously unexplained aspects of Greek religion and mythology, especially the name of God. He discusses the connection between Egyptian eagle/bull, ram/goat cult, and the Greek Zeus and Dionysus cult; the ancient Egyptian Seth and the Greek goddess Aphrodite; the origin and spread of the cult of Apollo and Artemis; and the parallel relationship between the images of the two gods and Cadmus and Europa. In 1992, Sarah Morris published *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, in which she claims that from the Bronze Age to the Archaic Period, the entire eastern Mediterranean world culture is a “community”, in which interconnection and mutual influence are the normality. Greece was also a part of this “community”. Greece did not stop its connection with Near East after

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¹ In 1980, Oswyn Murray first proposed the term “The Orientalizing Period”. The title of the chapter six of his *Early Greece* is “The Orientalizing Period”. Murray claims, “Contact with the near east brought many changes to Greek society in the century from 750 to 650”. See Oswyn Murray, *Early Greece* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 80. Of course, although the concept of “The Orientalizing Period” appeared relatively late, there had been a lot of works concerned the interaction between Greek civilization and oriental civilization. For the discussion on the basic meaning and related concepts and terms of “The Orientalizing Period” in Greece, see Li Yongbin, “The Collision Between Classical Studies and Oriental Studies: The Modern Imagination of the Orientalizing Revolution of Ancient Greece”, in *Chinese Social Science*, Vol. 10, 2014, pp. 187-204.

1100 BC (Morris, 1992; Morris & Powell, 1997).² In 1997, Martin West examines the exchanges and communication between the Aegean region and the East, including religious exchanges. He systematically elaborates the influence which ancient Minor Asian culture has on the early Greek culture of the Archaic Period and the Classical Period. He declares,

Any illusions that the reader may have had about the autonomy of early Greek culture should have faded, or at any rate severely shrunk, in the wash of facts. Near Eastern influence cannot be put down as a marginal phenomenon to be invoked occasionally in explanation of isolated peculiarities. It was pervasive at many levels and at most times. (West, 1997, p. 59)

On March 15-16, 1990, the Alumni Association of the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University held an academic seminar on the theme “Greece between East and West, 10th-8th centuries BC”. In 1992, a conference proceeding was published according to the topic of the seminar (Kopcke & Tokumaru, 1992). The papers include macroscopic discussions from aspects of history and archaeology, as well as specific investigations from aspects of vessel components, religious sanctuaries, and figure legends. On September 7-8, 2002, St. John’s College of Oxford University held an academic seminar on the theme “Orientalization in Ancient Times”. The scholars at the conference not only discussed the “orientalization” of some specific areas or fields in the ancient Mediterranean, but also made some theoretical reflections and summaries on “orientalization”. In 2006, according to the topics discussed in this symposium, *Debating Orientalization: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Change in the Ancient Mediterranean* was published (Riva & Vella, 2006).

This paper focuses on “The Orientalize Period”³ of Greece, taking Apollo cult as an example, based on the ancient historical materials and existing research results, outlines oriental elements of Greek religion in “The Orientalizing Period” from names, functions, religious ceremonies, and religious festivals. The reason why the author chooses Apollo cult as an example is that Apollo is considered by many scholars as “the most Greek god” (Raffan, 1985, pp. 143, 405; Guthrie, 1985, p. 73; Rose, 1964, p. 134; Ogden, 2007, p. 49),⁴ and some scholars even declare that “he is the very embodiment of the Hellenic spirit” (Guthrie, 1985, p. 73).⁵

Oriental Elements of the Names and Functions of Apollo

The Greek name of Apollo is Ἀπόλλων; Gregory Nagy believes that the word originates from ἀπέλλαι (Nagy, 1994, pp. 3-4), and the most widely used variant of this name is Ἀπέλλων (Kern, 1926, p. 110; Guthrie, 1985, p. 73). Ἀπέλλων is an uncommon usage in the Greek dialect of Cyprus (to-i-a-pe-lo-ni = τῶι Ἀπειλῶνι), which is the result of the early dialect combining o-sounds into ε-tones. This uncommon usage of the Cypriot

² She also summarizes the close relationship between Greece and the East in the article “Homer and the Near East”, in *A New Companion to Homer*, eds. Ian Morris and Barry Powell, *Mnemosyne*, Suppl. 163 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), pp. 599-623.

³ The issues discussed in this paper focus on the “Orientalizing Period” from 750 BC to 650 BC, but due to the diachronic nature of the spread and evolution of religious elements and the uncertainty of ancient historical materials, the time period of certain issues will be extended.

⁴ The views of these scholars are supported by some basic historical facts: The cult of Apollo prevailed throughout the ancient Greek world; many important early temples and deities belonged to Apollo; Greek names with the name of Apollo were very common; the two regional centers of Apollo worship, Delos and Delphi, never lacked worshippers, and shrines dedicated specifically to Delos and Delphi were everywhere. Delos, a small island with no spring water, became the central market and public shrine of the Cyclades because of the temple of Apollo. Delphi is a remote village, but the oracle of Apollo enables it to gain a broad reputation.

⁵ Guthrie even believes that “Everything that marks off the Greek outlook from that of other peoples, and in particular from the barbarians who surrounded them—beauty of every sort, whether of art, music, poetry or youth, sanity and moderation—all are summed up in Apollo”.

dialect originates from the ἄπειλε in Homer’s epic, which means “promise, boastful promise; intimidation”, and the corresponding verb is ἄπειλεω. Nagy argues that the meanings of ἄπειλε and ἄπειλεω are based on a linguistic behavior, which is consistent with the meaning of ἄπέλλαι. Therefore, Ἀπέλλον is “he of the “ἄπέλια”, the god of authority who takes charge of all language-related behaviors (including chanting in a general sense and poetry in a special sense) (Nagy, 1994, pp. 3-4).

Apollo’s two nicknames are very evident oriental: Λυκείος (or Λυκίος) and Λετοίδες. Λυκείος has two meanings: One is the Lycian and the other is the Wolf-God (Guthrie, 1985, pp. 82-83; Homer, 1994, p. 80).⁶ Lucia is located on the southwest coast of Anatolia, now in the province of Antalya, Turkey. Homer has repeatedly mentioned the Lycian people, saying that they are allies of the Trojans (Homer, 1994, ii. 876, v. 470, v. 645, vi. 168, xi. 284, xvi. 437). Beginning with the meaning of Λυκείος on behalf of the “Lycians”, scholars analyze Λυκείος and Lycians from the perspective of etymology, and conclude that these two words are obviously closely related (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 1908, p. 31). Thus Apollo and Lucia also have a close relationship. From the meaning of “wolf god”, H. J. Rose speculates that Apollo was originally a god worshipped by shepherds. In Apollo’s original function, he uses the bow to drive out the wolves and other beasts, and he might have been worshipped by the shepherds as a “wolf god” (Rose, 1964, p. 136).

Λετοΐδε means “the son of Leto”, that is to say, the nickname of Apollo was obtained from his mother Leto. Herodotus believes that this custom of getting a name from mother is a unique one of the Lycians, because

Lycians have one custom which is their own and shared by no other men: they take their names not from their fathers but from their mothers, and when one is asked by his neighbor who he is, he will say that he is the son of such a mother, and rehearse the mothers of his mother. (Herodotus, *Histories*, i. 173)⁷

According to this, Vera Movitz believes that the nickname Λετοΐδες indicates that Apollo originates from Lycia and further believes that Leto and Leda, the goddess of Lucia, is actually the same god (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 1908, p. 31). The oriental elements of the names and the functions of Apollo are also supported by archaeological evidence.

In 1936, Hungarian scholar Bedřich Hrozný published some Hittite inscriptions found in Anatolia, which appeared on the four Hittite altars in two adjacent villages. Among the gods mentioned in these inscriptions, one is pronounced *Apulunas*, a god who keeps the gate. Nilsson believes that this gatekeeper of Anatolia exercises the same functions as Apollo of Greece (Guthrie, 1985, p. 86; Nilsson, 1940, p. 79). What Nilsson said is the Greek cult of Apollo Agyieus. Agyieus is a figurative tapered pillar. Greeks have such pillars at their doorsteps to stop the invasion of demons (Harrison, 1912, p. 407; Luo, 1981, p. 75).⁸ It is believed that the

⁶ Concerning the word Λυκείος, some scholars believe that the earliest roots should be traced back to -λυκ or -λυχ, the basic meaning is “the god of light”. Then Ἀπόλλων Λυκείος refers to Apollo as a name for the sun god. But few people now agree with this simple explanation, because classicalists almost reached a consensus that Apollo as the Sun God appears very late. See W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods*, pp. 82-83. Luo Niansheng and Wang Huansheng also translated Λυκείος as “born from the sun”, but added a note: either as “wolf-born” or “born from Lucia”. See Homer, *Iliad*, translated by Luo Niansheng and Wang Huansheng (Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House, 1st ed., 1994), p. 80.

⁷ According to academic tradition, the quotations of ancient Greek and Roman authors only annotate the chapters and lines, not the pages, and the classical works needn’t be listed in the reference.

⁸ J. Harrison quoted Habocration’s explanation: “Agyieus is a tapered column, and the Greeks put the column in front of the door. Some say it is Apollo, some say it is Dionysus, it is also said that it is both Apollo and Dionysus”. See J. Harrison, *A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, p. 407. Mr. Luo Niansheng believes that Agyieus is the nickname of Apollo. This nickname means “the protector on the street”. A conical stone pillar stood outside the ancient Greek gates, which symbolizes Apollo. See *Aristophanes’ Two Comedies*, translated by Luo Niansheng (Changsha: Hunan People’s Publishing House, 1981), p. 75, *Wasp*, Note 160.

divine stone has a specific protective function. This concept is prevalent throughout the Mediterranean region, including islands near the Eastern Mediterranean and coastal countries, where the Rēsep pillar was worshipped in the Bronze Age (Lynn, 2007, p. 87). Rēsep is originally a god worshipped by the Semites, and this god has many similarities with the Greek Apollo. In Homer’s epic, Apollo is the god of healing, but also the god of plague. For those who anger him, the arrow of Apollo means the plague (Homer, i. 45-53). Rēsep is also a god of plague, the way he brings the plague is to project a torch, but in Ugarit and Cyprus, it is also called “Rēsep with arrow”, and in both places, he always appears with a lion. The Apollo sanctuary in Amyklai may have preserved the name of Semite’s Rēsep in Cyprus—(A) *mukal*. Burkert believes that some bronze statues found in Greek regions not only represent Rēsep, but also the protector of Hittite, which is often associated with stag that is also depicted with bow and arrow. Among Cypriot cults, there is a ritual called Apollo Alasiotas, which may also be the appellation preserved from the Bronze Age (Burkert, 1985, p. 145).

Oriental Elements of Sacrificial Rituals Associated with Apollo

In the sacrificial rituals associated with Apollo, purification ceremonies are closely associated with the East. The purification ritual is a very important category in Greek religious rituals. Focusing on purification is an important feature of Greek society in the Archaic Age. Purification originates from cleaning activities in daily life. This ritual was called καθῖρω; its original meaning is “cleanse”. The religious meaning of καθῖρω is to cleanse sin and purify (Burkert, 1985, p. 76). Purification has two main meanings. One is to maintain self-cleanness in the course of interaction between human and God, including the human body and related material carriers, and even the entire city-state.

The other meaning is that some individuals or groups who have committed sins can eliminate sins and seek god’s forgiveness through some material power. Plato wrote:

To engage in sacrifice and communion with the gods continually, by prayers and offerings and devotions of every kind, is a thing most noble and good and helpful towards the happy life, and superlatively fitting also, for the good man; but for the wicked, the very opposite. For the wicked man is unclean of soul, whereas the good man is clean; and from him that is defiled no good man, nor god, can ever rightly receive gifts. Therefore, all the great labor that impious men spend upon the gods is in vain, but that of the pious is most profitable to them all. (Plato, *Laws*, 716e-717a)

Although Plato is a philosopher in the Classical Period, his words reflect a certain tradition of Greek society since the Homer era. From the words of Plato we can see that purification and sacrifice are inseparable. Homer’s epic records that after Apollo sent the plague to the Athenian military camp, Agamemnon first held such a purification ceremony when he sacrificed to Apollo. “The son of Atreus bade the people purify themselves. And they purified themselves, and cast the defilement into the sea, and offered to Apollo perfect hecatombs of bulls and goats by the shore of the barren sea” (Homer, i, 313-315). This is the earliest connection between Apollo and the purification ceremony. This connection developed further in the Archaic Period, which is most evident in festivals dedicated to Apollo. Thargelia Festival in Attica is an important festival dedicated to Apollo. The festival is held in two days. On the first day, the whole city held a purification ceremony, and on the second day there was a sacrifice to Apollo. Another festival, the Delia Festival, is also a festival dedicated to Apollo. Athenians send a sacred vessel to Delos every year on this festival. During the 30 days after the sacred vessel leaves Athens, the entire city of Athens will be purified. No livestock is allowed to be slaughtered

and death penalty is also forbidden.⁹

The connection between Apollo and the specific personal cleansing ritual is mainly embodied in the “purgatory” ritual, which is also a form of purification ritual. According to legend, soon after Apollo was born, he killed the great snake Python who had been sent by Hera to kill his mother Leto. Although Apollo killing Python is to revenge for his mother, he still needs to punish him in order to get forgiveness and take off the sin of the murderer. Then Zeus ordered Apollo to come to Aigialea and become a shepherd, grazing the flock for King Admetus and returning to Greece nine years later.¹⁰ The reason why people associate Apollo with purification and purgatory is related to this legend, but more importantly, is in the eyes of the Greeks, Apollo has unique “pure” and “holy” attributes.¹¹

In Aeschylus’s *Choephoroe*, Apollo personally presided over the purgatory ceremony to wash away the blood of Orestes from murdering his mother, telling Orestes that “there is one way to cleanse you: the touch of Loxias will set you free from this affliction” (Aeschylus, *Choephoroe*, 1059-1060). Another tragedy of Aeschylus, *Eumenides* describes the procedure of the purgatory ceremony in detail. “For the blood is slumbering and fading from my hand, the pollution of matricide is washed away; while it was still fresh, it was driven away at the hearth of the god Phoebus by purifying sacrifices of swine” (Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, pp. 282-283). The ritual of sacrifice with pig mentioned here is vividly depicted in the Apulian bell jar in the Louvre in Paris, which is supposed to be directly inspired by the text of Aeschylus. Apollo personally lifted the pig over the head of the sitting Orestes, then pierced the pig’s neck, and the pig’s blood flowed directly over his head. Then the pig blood disappeared, which meant that the guilt was washed away.

It is illuminating that this purification ritual has many similarities with the clean rituals in the Mesopotamia Civilization. Although we have no direct evidence that the Greek rituals come from Mesopotamia, linguistic evidence can explain certain problems. The Greek root καθαρ-, which means “clean” or “purify”, cannot find the corresponding etyma in Indo-European, but it is related to the Semitic root *qatar* in the field of purification, which means “smoke”. Sulphur is a cleansing substance related to the background of this word. In Homer’s epic, sulphur has both practical usage and ritual significance. In Akkadian language, the word *lu’u* or *luwwu* which means “dirty, stained” or “sully, pollute” is similar to the pronunciation of the word “λύματα” or “λύθρον”, which means dirt to be cleaned in Greek ceremonies (Burkert, 1992, p. 57).

Oriental Elements of the Festivals Associated With Apollo

In the early festivals dedicated to Apollo or in his name. Apollo is generally a god of fertility or ripening, because the most important activity in the early spring season is planting production in ancient society. The most important and complex of these festivals is undoubtedly the Thargelia Festival of Attica.

The Thargelia Festival is held on the 7th day of the Thargelion month (Burkert, 1985, p. 145).¹² It is roughly equivalent to May 20th in the modern Gregorian calendar. In the actual operation, people often combine the sixth and the seventh day of Thargelion month as the Thargelia Days. According to the legend of Attica and Delos, people believe that the sixth day is the birth date of Artemis, and the seventh day is the birth

⁹ Plato, *Phaedon*, 58a; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, iv, 8.

¹⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, ii, 7; x. 16; Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, iv. 90ff; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, p. 140.

¹¹ Apollo’s nickname Phoebus meant “pure” and “holy”. This is how Aeschylus, Plutarch, and other authors understood the meaning of the word. They also used the term to refer to the characteristic of sunlight and water. In Homer’s epic, Apollo is not only called “Apollo Phoebus”, but also just called “Phoebus” in some places.

¹² The number 7, which plays a special role in the cult of Apollo, may also be derived from the Semitic tradition.

day of her twin brother Apollo.¹³ But the god worshipped in this festival is mainly Apollo, and has little to do with Artemis. There are many explanations for the word θάργηλια. The first meaning is a kind of sacrifice, fresh bread or fresh fruit and vegetable, and a container for the sacrifice.¹⁴ The interpretation of Hesychius is θάργηλια· Ἀπόλλωνος ἑορτή· θάργηλος· ἡ ἱκετηρία (Farnell, 1907, p. 268). ἱκετηρία is a kind of “praying branch”, which is derived from a story related to Theseus. It is said that Theseus prayed to God with an olive branch full of various fruits before the expedition. This ritual is preserved and gradually forms a tradition of prayer branches.¹⁵

During the two days of the Thargelia Festival, two different celebration ceremonies were held. The day before was mainly the purification ceremony, and the day after was mainly the sacrifice ceremony. On the sixth day of Thargelion, the entire city was lined up. The earliest record of this tradition was found in Istros in the 3rd century BC. According to his records, “Athenians were in the habit of leading forth two men in the Thargelia, as a mode of purifying the city, these two men were called φαρμακοί,¹⁶ one on behalf of the men, and the other on behalf of the women” (Farnell, 1907, p. 270). He also said that this custom comes from a legend that a man named Pharmakos, who stole some sacred libation-cups from the Temple of Apollo, and then he was stoned to death by Achilles’ companions. He believes that what is done at the Thargelia Festival is an imitation of this matter. From this legend it can be inferred that the two scapegoats in Athens may have been stoned to death, or may have pretended to be stoned to death. Alluding to the fate of the two scapegoats is Lysias, who records vaguely and believes that the city might “purge itself of Andokides, should solemnly send him forth of its gates as a scapegoat and get rid of him” (Lysias vi. 53, quoted from Farnell, 1907, p. 268).

The satirist Hipponax recorded that the similar ceremony was held in Ephesus of Asia Minor. He said that the way people treated these two scapegoats was to beat them with fig branches and throw shrimps at them (Parke, 1977, p. 147). The purpose of this ritual is obviously to replace the previously cruel way of killing the scapegoat in a relatively mild way, and the reason for using the prawn is that this kind of animal is often used to hold a purification ritual.

On the 7th day of the Thargelion month, the fruits of many cereals will be dedicated to Apollo, and the way of which may be the so-called εἰρσιώνη, which also known as the praying branch, is generally believed to originate from ἔριον (wool), a bundle of wool. But it may also originate from the etyma εἶρ- or ἔρ- (speak), derived from the person who uttered to pray (Farnell, 1907, p. 268). From the interpretation of Hesychius, we can find the connection between Thargelia and εἰρσιώνη. εἰρσιώνη is a bunch of olive branches or laurel branches, tied with purple or white wool, surrounded by various fruits produced in this season, as well as flour cakes, small jars of honey, oil and wine. This is very similar to the form and function of ἱκετηρία mentioned above. Hesychius also said that the entire Thargelion month is dedicated to God, and in the Thargelia Festival, firstlings of all the fruits that were just appearing were carried round in procession and offered (to him) (Farnell,

¹³ In many myths and legends, Artemis and Apollo are twins. There are different opinions about who was born first and who was born later. See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 920; Apollodoros, *The Library*, i. 4; *Homeric Hymns to Apollo*, 45.

¹⁴ Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, 114a.

¹⁵ Plutarch, *Theseus*, p. 22.

¹⁶ The singular nominative is φαρμάκος, which means “scapegoat”. James Frazer has a very incisive discussion of this “public scapegoat”, which also gives a special introduction to the ancient Greek scapegoats. See James Frazer, *Golden Bough*, translated by Xu Yuxin, Wang Peiji, and Zhang Zeshi (Beijing: New World Press, 2006), pp. 545-548. In *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Harrison also gives a very detailed and in-depth discussion of the scapegoats and their related rituals. See J. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, translated by Xie Shijian (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2006), pp. 87-103.

1907, p. 268). Frazer also mentioned Thargelia Festival in *The Golden Bough*. He thinks this is not a festival of spring, but an early harvest festival celebrated in May, because some cereals and fruits have matured (Frazer, 2009, pp. 442-443).

In the Thargelia Festival, Apollo is worshipped as a god who could ripen all plants, which is quite different from the Apollo that is commonly found in Greek literature and art, especially in Attica art. According to general mythology, Apollo once grazed cattle for King Admetus.¹⁷ It is natural that he can become the protector of the herd. Because of his quick growth after birth,¹⁸ it is understandable that he has a special relationship with the growth of young people. However, he has little to do with the cultivation of agriculture and plants. This function originally belongs to Demeter, at least in the Attica region, and Demeter was the first one to be worshipped as a god of high yield and ripening plants. Before Athena came to Athens, she might also have a function of securing food for the people of Attica region (Parke, 1977, p. 148).

How does Apollo obtain the same function? The answer may come from the oriental elements of Apollo cult. The agronomic rituals held at the Thargelia Festival in Attica region may come from Ionia, and the Ionian ritual may initially come from Asia Minor. That is to say, Apollo in Asia Minor region has maintained many important functions. In the process of the spread of Apollo cult, other functions with characteristics of Asia Minor region are gradually reducing, and functions with Greek characteristics are gradually increasing. But in Attica region, functions of fertility and ripening are preserved because of the close relationship between agricultural production and people's lives.

Conclusion

Although we can be sure that there are many oriental elements of the Apollo cult in “The Orientalizing Period”. But as K. Wernicke said in the classical dictionary Pauly-Wissowa, “that any view which seeks to derive the manifold aspects of the historic Apollo from one original source is probably wrong” (Guthrie, 1985, p. 74). Li Yongbin and Guo Xiaoling reconstruct the main components of Apollo worship based on archaeological and etymological materials: One belongs to the Northern Greek people who immigrated to the southern Greece; one belongs to indigenous Greek people; and one belongs to the Oriental Asian Minor people (Li & Guo, 2011). The development of the cult of Apollo must have taken a long time. In the developing process, the Greeks absorb various religious elements and small gods from other religions, and these religious elements and small gods gradually gather under the name “Apollo”. This process was at least before Apollo was universally recognized by the Greeks and ranked in the 12 Olympians.

The spread of religious ideas has never been a simple question. When a concept, a doctrine, or a ritual crosses a cultural boundary, great changes it takes may not always be discovered under the surface of its continuity. Every foreign phenomenon can be misunderstood or reinterpreted to adapt existing religious and social modes. Therefore, as Oswyn Murray said, we must remember that for believers, the origin of his faith is not important, what matters is the rationality of faith and its relationship with earthly life (Murray, 2008, pp. 78-79). Although we say that Apollo is a god that combines various civilization elements, we can also trace the origin of a certain aspect of Apollo worship to very ancient times. However, in terms of the systematic Apollo cult, it undoubtedly has typical Greek national characteristics. That is to say, after the integration of various civilization elements, Apollo is shaped as a typical Greek god. When contacting and exchanging with the

¹⁷ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, ii. 7; x. 16; Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, iv. 90ff; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 140.

¹⁸ Apollodoros, *The Library*, i. 4; *Homeric Hymns to Apollo*, 300-306.

Eastern, what the Greeks absorb are the elements that are suitable for the Greek native soil. In fact, in the Classical Period, no matter where we saw Apollo, he was already well-known and the cult of him was everywhere in every aspect of people's lives. He is the god of purity, the god of healing, and the god of prophecy. One or more of these functions may be a reflection of his original nature. The reason why the Greeks accept such a god from the East (or elsewhere) is that he has one or more of these functions. After further purification and upgrading, these functions become obviously sacred. After the sacredness of these functions of Apollo, he gradually becomes the “most Greek god”. The youth, wisdom, and moderation he represents give a special temperament to Greek culture. The cultural exchange and integration embodied in the development of Apollo worship play a very important role in the general sense of identity of the Greeks.

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