

Karpophoroi deities and the Attic cult of Ge

Notes on *IG II² 4758*

Abstract

Karpophoros, fruit-bearing, is an epithet easily considered as “literary”, i.e., a poetic name with little or no relation to cult. The epigraphic sources, however, clearly show us that gods thus named were offered divine worship. The epithet is found in connection with several deities. Goddesses of agriculture, such as Demeter, and Ge, the Earth, naturally carry this name, but so do Zeus, Dionysos and a goddess known as “The Aiolian”, who was sometimes associated with Agrippina. This paper surveys deities known as karpophoroi and examines what their cult entailed. Its focus is, however, on a brief Acropolis inscription, *IG II² 4758*, where Ge is honoured as Karpophoros, in accordance with an oracle. The case study provides insights into the Attic cult of Ge, the epithet Karpophoros, as well as the use and function of epithets within Greek dedicatory language.

Keywords: Ge, Karpophoros, Athens, Acropolis, fruitbearer, inscription, oracle

Introduction

On the Athenian Acropolis, by the seventh column of the northern colonnade of the Parthenon, just a few metres from the temple, a brief inscription is cut into the living rock. It reads:

Γῆς Καρ | ποφόρου | κατὰ μαίην | τείαν

The inscription, which is datable to the 2nd century AD, designates a small area as sacred to Ge Karpophoros, i.e. to the fruit-bearing Earth, in accordance with an oracle. The succinct wording does not provide us with more details—no further information about who received the oracle, or on what occasion the oracle was sought. Today, the inscription is easily overlooked, but during antiquity the sacred space would have been clearly indicated and situated in an area of high visibil-

ity which most visitors would have passed.¹ Certainly, the inscription was noticed by one of the most famous visitors to the Acropolis—Pausanias. While visiting the Sacred Rock, Pausanias saw a statue of Ge “beseeching Zeus to rain upon her”, and the inscription has naturally been associated with this statue. Moreover, this account provides us with a possible context for the oracle: Pausanias’ interpretation concerning the erection of the statue was that “perhaps the Athenians themselves needed showers, or maybe all the Greeks had been plagued with a drought”.² The present paper will, however, initially put aside Pausanias’ explanation and explore where the few words of the inscription, *IG II² 4758*, take us on their own.

IG II² 4758 can be divided into three constituent parts: worship of Ge, worship of Ge specified through the epithet Karpophoros, and the *kata manteian*-formula. These parts will be studied one by one, and this approach will hopefully enhance our understanding of *IG II² 4758* in its entirety, and new insights concerning the epithet Karpophoros and the workings of epithets within Greek dedicatory language will be brought to light.

Cults of Ge in Athens

It is not possible to provide an extensive account of the worship of Ge in the context of this paper, and therefore, after a few general remarks, I will focus on the geographic context of our inscription, Athens and Attica. Although widespread, generally cults of Ge do not seem to have been of high importance in the civic sphere; Ge played her most significant

¹ Stevens 1946.

² Paus. 1.24.3, translated by W.H.S. Jones, Loeb edition 1918; Habicht 1998, 63; Heydemann 1870, 381–383.

roles in the world of thought and myth rather than in cult.³ The main traits of the cults that we do find were (naturally perhaps) agrarian and kourotrophic, but Ge was also considered to have oracular powers—famously so in both early Delphi and Olympia according to the traditions.⁴ This triptych of competences also belonged to Ge/Earth in Athens. Her fertility aspects, agricultural abilities and child-nursing competences are praised in oratory and drama,⁵ as well as being highlighted by our epigraphic sources. As examples of the first and second attributes, the prescribed sacrifice of a pregnant cow described in a document from Marathon, and the sacrifice of a pregnant sheep in the Erchia calendar can be mentioned: the sacrifice of pregnant animals is usually understood as relating to fecundity, both female and agricultural.⁶ As regards the child-nursing Earth, we have evidence that an Athenian Ge was associated with a deity Kourotrophos.⁷ This is a dedication dated to Imperial times,⁸ but literary sources indicate that the connection (though not the potential composite god) had been made much earlier, at least as far back as the Archaic period.⁹ The Erchia calendar stipulates a sacrifice to Ge alongside the Nymphs, Alochos, Achelous and Hermes: Parker has recently suggested that the presence of Alochos, “Wife”, could mean that Ge’s capacity as a nurse of children is being highlighted.¹⁰ The Marathonian sacrificial calendar furthermore lists a sacrifice to be made to Earth “at the oracle” grouped together with Zeus Hypsistos, Ioleos and Kourotrophos.¹¹ As regards the Earth’s mantic aspects in Athens and Attica, they are difficult to trace in the ancient sources, although it has even been suggested that perceptions of Ge’s oracular capacities developed specifically in an Athenian context.¹² It is however of significance that in the Marathonian

Tetrapolis, Earth is to be given a black ram “at the oracle”.¹³ It would, furthermore, not be surprising if the chasm within the area of Ge in the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios near the Ilissos river had oracular functions, but this is as yet pure speculation.

To understand a Greek god you must necessarily position him or her in relation to the other deities of the Hellenic pantheon, and complexes, teams, of specific combinations of gods can single out a specific function.¹⁴ From a Panhellenic perspective, we often find Ge approached next to the all-seeing Sun, Helios, and Zeus, in the context of oaths.¹⁵ Ge is likewise often invoked in the obscure world of curses, where a preferred companion was Hermes.¹⁶ In general, Earth was however most often associated with Zeus. This connection between Zeus-Ge (or should we say, Sky-Earth?) is clearly visible in Athens: the above-mentioned statue that Pausanias saw is a possible example of this connection, but this link can also be perceived in the sacred space accorded to Ge at the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios, as well as an area vowed to Zeus Meilichios, Ge and Athena.¹⁷ In the above-mentioned oaths, Ge is normally positioned between Zeus and Helios (and thus, interestingly, between Sky and Sun). The couple, Ge and Zeus, might moreover have received a pre-marriage sacrifice, *proteleia*,¹⁸ and it is possible that an object sacred to Ge has been identified in the sanctuary of Zeus on Hymettos, where the main aspect of the king of the gods was as a rain god.¹⁹ From this latter inscription, in combination with the statue seen by Pausanias, it has been suggested that Attic prayers to Zeus for rain were channelled through Earth, so to speak.²⁰

Aside from the deities discussed above, Attic Ge is also paired with Themis. A priesthood of Ge Themis is attested in Athens during the Imperial period, and, as noted above, Ge is associated with the deity Kourotrophos in the Roman period.²¹ From the evidence provided by Pausanias, we also know that Ge Kourotrophos was honoured next to the agricultural goddess Demeter Chloe, “of the green shoots”, in a shrine near

³ Larson 2007a, 157; 2007b, 67; Parker 2005a, 416; Georgoudi 2002; Nilsson 1967³ (reprint 1992), 456–461.

⁴ Parker 2005a, 416. Oracular powers: Aesch. *Eum.* 1–4; Paus. 5.14.10. For Delphi, see Johnston 2008, 56–60, 136; Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 192–243.

⁵ See, however, Georgoudi 2002 on the need to define (the character of) Ge the goddess, and ge, the earth of Athens and Attica.

⁶ Gawlinski 2012, 171; Parker 2005a, 416; van Straten 1995, 26 n. 41; Scullion 1994, 86; Georgoudi 1994; Nilsson 1967³ (reprint 1992), 151–152. However, see also Bremmer 2005 for a different view.

⁷ Kourotrophos can also be found as a separate deity in many Attic sacrificial calendars: Parker 2005a, 426–427; Lupu 2005, no. 1; Kearns 2010, 228, 298. As recipient of dedications, for example IG II² 4709, 4717, 4755. The identifiable dedicators were all female.

⁸ IG II² 4869.

⁹ Parker 2005a, 416, 426–427. For Ge Kourotrophos as implicitly present in the Parthenon frieze, see Simon 1982, 142–143. On composite, or double, deities, see Parker 2005b; Wallensten forthcoming 2014.

¹⁰ Parker 2005a, 416.

¹¹ IG II² 1358, col II ll. 13–14; SEG 50 168 A col II. See also Parker 2011, 112: the recipients form a group but receive separate offerings.

¹² Quantin 1992.

¹³ IG II² 1358.

¹⁴ Wallensten 2011.

¹⁵ Larson 2007a, 158; 2007b, 67–68. CH 25.1901.336, 31; IG II² 687. Restored: IG II² 127, 281; *Agona* 16, 115. See also IG XII, Suppl. 297. On the combination of the three gods, see Connolly 2007, 204. On touching the earth while swearing an oath, see MacLachlan 2007, 92, 240 n. 4.

¹⁶ Hermes and Ge: IG III App. 100, 101; Ziebarth 1934, 1 13, 1 22=SEG 54 524; Faraone 1991, 6, 14, 18–19, 24 n. 15, 25 n. 27; Jordan 1985, 163, no. 42=SEG 37 214 (also with Persephone).

¹⁷ Thuc. 2.15.4; Paus. 1.18.7; IG I³ 1084 (end of the 5th century BC).

¹⁸ Procl. *In Ti.* 40.

¹⁹ Langdon 1976, 15, no. 10.

²⁰ Langdon 1976, 97.

²¹ IG II² 5130; IG II² 4869. It can be noted that Themis is often considered a daughter of Ge, not least in Aeschylos’ version of Delphic mythology: Hes. *Theog.* 132–135; Orphic Hymn 79; Aesch. *Eum.* 1–2; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.1.3; Diod. Sic. 5.66.3. On “juxtaposed gods”, see Parker 2005b; Wallensten 2008; Wallensten forthcoming 2014.



Fig. 1. IG II² 4758 in situ. Photo: author.

the entrance to the Acropolis.²² The agricultural and nurturing qualities of Ge are thus clearly visible not only through her exclusive cults but also through the divine company she kept.

The epithets borne by Ge in Athens also confirm the hitherto discussed aspects.²³ She is invoked by the name of Olympia (probably because her precinct lay within the sacred area of Zeus Olympios), as Karpophoros in our inscription, and as Chthonia and Katochos (holding down) in two curses.²⁴ As regards votive gifts to the Earth, the Attic material is meagre.²⁵ Only one gift for Ge Kourotrophos from the Acropolis, which was presented by Kallias son of Agatharchos, and the possible

dedication to Gaia from Mount Hymettos have survived the passing millennia.²⁶

Epithets

I now move on to focus on the second word of the inscription, the epithet Karpophoros. Epithets were of course of central importance in ancient Greek cult. The deities of the Greek pantheon were addressed by an infinite number of such bynames, which presented their various functions and hon-

²² Paus. 1.22.3. For Demeter Chloe, see for example Parker 1987; Georgoudi 1994.

²³ It is of course possible to consider the composite deities Ge Themis and Ge Kourotrophos as incarnations of Ge with epithets, see references in note 20.

²⁴ IG II² 4521a; IG III App. 99, 101; Ziebarth 1934, 1. 13; 1.25=Audollent 1904, no. 79 (also Ourania?). Epithets of Ge found in non-Attic inscriptions: Eukarpia (*Gonnoi* II no. 203); Chthonia (*IGBulg* I² 398, mention of her megaron); Hedraia (*SEG* 12 513); Makaira Telesphoros ("who brings fruits to perfection", *IG* VII 2452); Meter (*IPorto* 7); Meter Olybris (*IEstremo Oriente* 16); Pantareta (*IG* IX, 2 491; Holleaux 1899, 500–503).

²⁵ I am referring to inscribed votive gifts, i.e., with Ge as the certain recipient deity.

²⁶ Incidentally, of eleven preserved inscribed dedications to Ge found in the Greek world, eight were made by men, and only one by a woman (in the ninth case, we cannot identify the donor). This does not sit well with the common idea that fertility cults were mostly a concern of women, and is thus possibly of significance for the character of Ge's worship. Other dedications to Ge: Attica, *IG* II² 4869 (Ge Kourotrophos); Epidauros, 6th–1st c. BC: *IG* IV² 1 285; Tenos, first half of 4th c. BC: *SEG* 31 748; Amasra/Amastris, late: Marek 1993, no. 27; Kalinka 1933, 61, no. 8; *Variétés* 1936, 237–238; Lycia, Arykanda: *TAM* II 794; *KILyk* I 228 (*MAMA* 8 2); Armenia, AD 150–200: *IEstremo oriente* 16 (Ge Meter Olybris); Italia (Latium), Portus, 2nd century AD: *IPorto* 7 (*SEG* 29 978); Larisa, 4th century BC, *SEG* 29 533; Thessaly, Ge Pantareta, Holleaux 1899, 500–503. Women: Ge Eukarpia, *Gonnoi* II, no. 203, 2nd–1st century BC; unknown dedicator (on an altar, in the nominative): Ge Anesidora ("Sending up sheaves", "Sending up gifts"), Pergamon, 2nd c. AD: *Ippl* 1912, 288 no. 19; see also Paus. 1.31.4.

ours. The epithet of the deity attached a certain function to a certain god, and thereby its use in ritual established a link between the worshipper and the god relating to the named function. In communication with the divine, the right epithet would ensure that a prayer or promise reached just the right aspect of the intended recipient. We can easily understand the need for such precise tools when the intended aspect was only a minor and unexpected interest of a god. But, in the case of our Acropolis inscription, the reason for an epithet is less obvious. For Ge, the Earth, to be addressed as fruit-bearing, is that not a tautology? Surely her capacity for bearing fruit must have been among the first associations that the name of Ge alone brought about? The pregnant victims sacrificed to Ge surely somehow “imitate” the pregnancy of the Earth as well as acknowledge and seek to assure her fecundity? I have tried to show elsewhere that there is a certain economy pertaining to inscribed votive language.²⁷ An epithet is normally added only when deemed necessary, usually when the context is unclear, as for example when an onlooker would need assistance in identifying the recipient of a dedication, or when a visitor to a shrine would be in doubt as to its specific owner and thus the requirements of the specific cult. For this reason, epithets describing the main functions of a god (often well-known and mythologically established on a Panhellenic level) are relatively rare, and when they are included in an otherwise succinct text, it is most likely for good reason. For example, of 55 separate epithets for Aphrodite found in dedications, only two refer to love and sex, and among 30 epithets characterizing Poseidon in votive inscriptions, four have associations with the sea or sea-faring.²⁸ So why is our Ge given this denomination?

First of all, it is of importance to establish that Karpophoros really is a functional byname of Ge, and not simply a poetic celebration of her flourishing and fertile nature. To the modern eye, Fruit-bearing may certainly have a literary ring to it, and indeed such a distinction between cultic (i.e. functional) epithets versus poetic bynames (used only to adorn the verses of poets) existed in antiquity.²⁹ However, a wider perspective on the epithet rapidly clears the horizon: a Panhellenic outlook negates Karpophoros’ possible restriction to poetry. For example, in Ephesos in the Imperial period, Ge Karpophoros had her own (male) priest and cult, as she did in Pisidian Termessos in the same period.³⁰ Moreover, there were widespread cults offered to other gods called by the name Karpophoros, and the epigraphic and literary sources offer

evidence of dedications, priests, festivals and mysteries in their honour. Against this background, Karpophoros is thus most likely to have been included in our inscription as a cultic or functional byname. Whoever allowed it to be carved wanted to draw attention specifically to this aspect of Ge’s nature. A corollary question then presents itself: How, exactly, should we understand Ge’s Karpophoros nature in the case examined here? Does it designate fertility in general? Or does it refer to female fecundity in particular, because, as the literary sources underline, Ge was considered the mother of all? I will now take a closer look at Ge’s Karpophoroi colleagues, in the hope that this will aid our understanding of the epithet. In the context of this article, I have limited my survey, with a few necessary exceptions, to the epigraphic sources.

Other Karpophoroi deities

Apart from Ge, epigraphy offers evidence for cults of Demeter, Dionysos, Isis, Zeus, and possibly Apollo Karpophoros. Demeter is, not surprisingly, the goddess most often associated with this title. Traces of the worship of Demeter Karpophoros can be found all over the Greek world, from at least the 4th century BC onwards. Her importance seems to increase in the Imperial period, and the material exhibits a domination of cults based in the cities of Asia Minor; however, it should be kept in mind that this impression could well be a result of somewhat slanted sources.

Starting with mainland Greece, the epigraphic sources are meagre. In Athens Demeter is honoured as Karpophoros in a 1st-century votive presented by a married couple, and possibly in a fragmentary 4th-century BC inscription.³¹ A *pyrophoros*, a bearer of a sacrificial fire, honoured the goddess in Epidaurus.³² Furthermore, there is possible mention of Ge Karpophoros in several (restored) Hellenistic oracles from Delphi.³³ This is what I have identified so far in terms of mainland epigraphic evidence.³⁴

Moving on to Asia Minor, the picture changes immediately. The cult of Demeter Karpophoros appears to have been important in Ephesos, where she was celebrated with

³¹ IG II² 4730, 4587. We can, moreover, note that Karpophoros becomes a common name in Roman and Imperial Athens. Does this indicate that we are missing an important part of the puzzle?

³² IG IV² 1 508.

³³ *FdD* III 3:343, for example. Cf. a fragmentary oracle from Kallatis on the Black Sea, which mentions a sanctuary of Ge, possibly with the title Karpophoros. I thank the anonymous reviewer for these references and fully agree with him or her that an examination of Ge as an oracular deity should be pursued.

³⁴ According to Pausanias, Demeter also received this cult title in Tegea, together with her daughter: Paus. 8.53.7.

²⁷ Wallensten forthcoming.

²⁸ Wallensten 2009; Wallensten forthcoming.

²⁹ Paus. 7.21.7. Parker 2003, 173, points out that the distinction between epithets used in cult and poetry cannot be absolute.

³⁰ *Ephesos* 902; *TAM* III 19; *TAM* III 161.

mysteries and sacrifices in the early Imperial period.³⁵ A 3rd-century AD document tells us that the goddess also had an altar and a sanctuary in the city's prytaneion.³⁶ The text may however cite or reformulate an earlier document, and some scholars thus suggest that for parts of the Hellenistic–Early Imperial periods, Demeter Karpophoros was probably the main deity of the Prytaneion.³⁷ We also know of a priestess of Sebaste Demeter Karpophoros (identified with Livia)³⁸ and her priest, who made a dedication to his goddess paired with the fatherland, Patris.³⁹ Even though there is evidence for private worship (one dedication to Plouton, Kore and Demeter Karpophoros),⁴⁰ the Ephesian traces of Karpophoros cult indicate that Demeter Karpophoros held an important position in the official sphere of the *polis*. Suys furthermore suggests that her capacity to care for the subsistence of the *polis* and its citizens lay behind her Ephesian prominence.⁴¹

As far as we can tell, this picture seems to hold true for Asia Minor in general, and possibly also for the Aegean islands. For example, in Pergamon, an unidentified *prytanis* of the Roman period presented a dedication to Demeter Karpophoros and in the 2nd century AD, the *prytanis* G. Claudius Seilianus Aisimus did the same to this goddess and her daughter.⁴² In Imperial Hyrkaniis, Lydia, Demeter Karpophoros was celebrated in connection with the cult of the emperors, the senate and the *demos* of the Romans.⁴³ Likewise, in 3rd-century AD Aigeiai in Cilicia (Alexandria ad Issum), Demeter Karpophoros was worshipped together with Dionysos Kallikarpos, in association with the cult of the Sebastoi.⁴⁴ A dedication to Demeter Karpophoros (and Zeus Olympios and Astrapaios), dating to the 2nd century BC, is from a private individual, but it is for the benefit of the rulers from Nikaia in Bithynia.⁴⁵ In Sardeis, on an altar dedicated to Demeter Karpophoros, the *demos* honours a former *agoranomos* and *grammateus* and his daughter (or mother), who was a priestess of the goddess. The altar

was decorated with symbols probably relating to the mysteries of the goddess.⁴⁶ Mention should also be made of an oracular response from Didyma concerning the cult of Kore, which makes mention of an altar of Demeter Karpophoros, as well as an inscription from Miletos that concerns an association of *temenitai* of Apollo Didymeus and Demeter Karpophoros.⁴⁷ The character of the cult is, however, unknown.

The Aegean islands also offer ample proof of the importance of the cult of Demeter Karpophoros in the public sphere. In Rhodes, Demeter and Zeus Karpophoroi were offered a votive monument by a military official after a successful career.⁴⁸ In Kos, Agrippina is identified with Demeter, as Sebaste Demeter Karpophoros, in dedications from the *demos* of Isthmos and other public bodies.⁴⁹ A similar case is to be found in Lesbos. In Mytilene, we have traces of a separate deity called Karpophoros, who in the Roman period was fused with Agrippina the elder and Agrippina the younger, as Thea Sebaste Aiolis Karpophoros Agrippina or the variation Thea Boulaia Aiolis Karpophoros Agrippina.⁵⁰ Another lady, Philippina, received the title Archepolis Karpophoros.⁵¹ Through the dedicators, usually the *demos* or a *gymnasiarchos*, and the combination of Karpophoros with the epithets Archepolis and Boulaia, these goddesses clearly had a distinct public character.

The limited evidence for the private worship of Demeter Karpophoros in the cities of Asia Minor and the Aegean islands is striking. Apart from the above-mentioned Ephesian dedication, I have identified a dedication from the curators of a guild of gardeners in Galatia (Pessinous), who thus presented their worship to Demeter Karpophoros.⁵² In a Pergamene dedication, Artemon son of Artemon makes a dedication to the goddess; however, it is possible that the dedication should be read together with another block, in which case the dedication was made for the *prytaneia* of Menogenes: this certainly gives an official character to the dedication, which is on the architrave of the southern stoa of the Demeter sanctuary.⁵³ Among the Aegean islands, Paros yields an inscription telling us that a married couple and their children built an altar for Demeter Karpophoros in the Roman era, and the island has

³⁵ *IEphesos* 213; Graf 2003, 247, 249–250.

³⁶ *IEphesos* 10.

³⁷ Suys 1998, 175–177. The mention of a fine payable in gold Darics has caused scholars to consider certain parts of the text as datable to a period before Alexander's liberation of the city. This, as well as a place for Demeter Karpophoros in the Prytaneion before the Imperial period, is not unanimously accepted, however; see references in nn. 7–10.

³⁸ *IEphesos* 4337.

³⁹ *IEphesos* 1210.

⁴⁰ *IEphesos* 1228.

⁴¹ Suys 1998.

⁴² Hepding 1910, 442, no. 25; *IPergamon* 2 291.

⁴³ *TAM V* 2 1335.

⁴⁴ *IGR III* 923, 924; *IGL.Syr* 3, 1 714; Heberdey-Wilhelm 1896, 16, no. 44; *MUSJ* 1908, 475, 71; *JSav.* 1973.166–167; Bru 2011, 143 wonders if the mention of the Sebastoi might be a somewhat later addition. See also *ICilicia* 78 (*SEG* 37 1248), to Dionysos Kallikarpos and Demeter Karpotrophos, Septimius Severus and Caracalla, AD 209–211.

⁴⁵ *IKios* 27; *Iznik* 701.

⁴⁶ Herrmann 1998, 495–508.

⁴⁷ Altar: *IDidyma* 504; *SEG* 28, 852; Fontenrose 1988, 147, 162 and nos. 30–31; Robert 1978, 471. Temenitai: Herrmann 1980, 230–233, no. c; *SEG* 30, 1341. See also *SEG* 30, 1344.

⁴⁸ Rhodos, Lindos, c. 100–50 BC; *Clara Rhodos* 2, 210, no. 48.

⁴⁹ *ICos* EV 248, perhaps also *ICos* EV 252 and Pugliese Carratelli 1963–1964, 182, no. 22. Claudius is simultaneously honoured as Zeus Soter EV 248.

⁵⁰ *IG XII* 2 208, 210, 212, 213, 258; *IG XII* suppl. 690 (very restored).

⁵¹ *IG XII* 2 232.

⁵² *IPessinous* 22; Strubbe 1984, no. 26. Demeter Karpophoros was pictured on coins of Pessinous.

⁵³ *IPpel* 1912, 283–284, no. 7.

yielded yet another (for us, anonymous) inscription mentioning this deity in the genitive.⁵⁴ However, we should naturally be aware of the fact that the lack of private dedications or other non-official inscriptions could perhaps be explained by varying local epigraphic habits.

The epigraphic attestations of other Karpophoroi deities are not as numerous. We know of a Zeus Karpophoros from 1st-century BC Rhodes, and this god was also worshipped in 2nd-century Andros.⁵⁵ During the Imperial era, Dionysos Karpophoros had an important cult in Scythian Istros, and the city might have had a cult of Apollo Karpophoros as well.⁵⁶ Finally, Isis Karpophoros received a gift from an Apollodoros in the Kyzikene, who when presenting this gift obeyed the direct order of the goddess.⁵⁷

If we try to summarize this evidence, we can conclude that the epithet Karpophoros can be tied to both male and female deities. It is geographically widespread and best represented in Asia Minor, where its use appears to have increased in the Imperial period. Moreover, taken together, the gods carrying the epithet all have well-known agricultural aspects: Demeter is of course the goddess of agriculture par excellence (the earth's capacities in this field goes without saying), Dionysos is a god of viticulture, and Zeus has major importance as a god of rain. Isis, who is represented in the material with a single dedication, is perhaps the less pronounced agricultural deity, but because of the broad spectrum of aspects she accumulated in the Greco-Roman world, and because of her associations with Demeter, her presence here should not come as a surprise. Perhaps more unexpectedly, we can also note a strong element of public cult in the Karpophoros dossier. The dedicators were often public bodies or officials, and honours to Demeter Karpophoros in particular were often offered in association with worship of the Imperial family.

As regards the primary meaning of the epithet, it seems quite clear that one should not complicate things too much. Karpophoros should be taken quite literally to mean the fruit-bearer, or fruit-bringer, in the sense of offering up the produce of the earth and subsistence to mankind. It does not appear to be the case that Karpophoros was ever associated specifically with female fertility. This somewhat metaphorical meaning has been suggested for the title Karpophoros, when it was given to the elder Agrippina in Lesbos: she was thus called because she gave birth to a daughter on the island. This is a rather improbable interpretation in this particular case, since the

younger Agrippina, who was honoured by the same epithet in the same city, did not have a child in Mytilene. But the epithet is also unlikely to refer specifically to female fertility on a general level, simply because male deities could bear the epithet as well.⁵⁸ Moreover, it can be noted that the empress Sabina, who never had children, was called by this name. Karpophoros should be taken to mean fruit-bearing in a literal sense.

Has this survey then only served to state the obvious? Fortunately, the answer is no. If it is not a coincidence of survival, the title Karpophoros was most often connected to Demeter, and in connection with this goddess we have enough material to search for further connotations of the epithet. As noted, the Demeter Karpophoros material has a pronounced "official" character. If we should understand Karpophoros as literally bringing forth fruit, it is somewhat surprising that this goddess received so little attention from private individuals. One would have thought that Demeter Fruit-bringer would have attracted the attention also of small-scale farmers.

Ginsburg has suggested, for the interpretation of the two Agrippinas linked to Karpophoros, that the epithet celebrates the Imperial ladies for securing agricultural productivity. The rule of the Imperial family brought peace and its blessings of prosperity; moreover, its individual members could prove important sponsors.⁵⁹ It is noteworthy that Demeter Karpophoros (and her sometime companion, Dionysos Kallikarpos) is often worshipped in association with the cult of the Sebastoi. I believe that Ginsburg's suggestion for Agrippina is relevant outside of the context of Mytilene as well. During the Imperial period, at least in connection with Demeter, the epithet Karpophoros takes on the specific connotation of bringing fruit to *feed the citizens*, in addition to its notion of a fruit-bringer in general. Suys has proposed that this nurturing ability was of importance for Demeter Karpophoros' prominence in the Ephesian pantheon, for example.⁶⁰ It is also possible that the later frequent association of Karpophoros god and emperor worship acknowledges that such a feeding capacity was now dependent also on the Theoi Sebastoi.

In Athens, Earth/Ge, had long been recognized as nourishing the citizens when IG II² 4758 was carved on the sacred rock. The idea that Athenians were sprung from their soil

⁵⁴ SEG 27 530; IG XII 5 226 & IG XII 5 Add. p. 311.

⁵⁵ IG XII Suppl 265.

⁵⁶ IScM I 198, 203, 204 (SEG 19 483–SEG 24 1124), 205 (SEG 24 1122), 206 (SEG 25 800); SEG 50 683B; Chiekova 2008, 9, 78, 84, 107, 129.

⁵⁷ IMT Kyz L Dascyl 2093 (=Radet & Lechat 1888, 194–195, no. 4).

⁵⁸ Ginsburg 2006, 102–103. She has moreover suggested that Karpophoros in this case could be taken literally to mean fruit-bearing: the Imperial ladies secured agricultural productivity, or more metaphorically, the rule of the Imperial family brought peace and its blessings of prosperity. It is possible, as the anonymous reviewer of this article suggests, that the epithet Kourotrophos should be tied closely to female fertility, in contrast with the more general fertility implicated by Karpophoros. Indeed, all identifiable Athenian dedicators honouring Kourotrophos (as a self-standing deity) are women, see n. 7.

⁵⁹ Ginsburg 2006, 102–103.

⁶⁰ Suys 1998, 177.

was commonplace at least since the Classical period, when Athenian rhetoric kept repeating the autochthonous origins of their *demos*. For the Athenians, the Earth was thus in a sense their mother, but, as Stella Georgoudi has shown, in Attic cult Ge was especially considered as their nurse or *trophos* in the double sense of nurturing the young citizen offspring (as Kourotraphos) and of bearing fruit for this purpose (as Karpophoros).⁶¹ In principle this means that, in an Athenian context, Ge would not have needed a byname designating her ability to bring forth food, even if it was specifically for the *demos*. The agrarian epithet Karpophoros, albeit with an added civic connotation of nourishing the citizens, would have been unnecessary. Therefore, if we accept that epithets usually were included in very brief dedications to make sure that the audience, be it divine or mortal, correctly understood its message, we still need to explain the presence of the epithet Karpophoros in IG II² 4758. Could it be the case that Karpophoros in this case means something different and unexpected? We surely have to admit that we cannot search for the same meaning every time an epithet is presented to a god, that there are changes to its meaning over time and space, and that its meaning sometimes depends on the deity. For example, the byname Agoraios (of the Agora) qualifies several gods, but for different reasons. Zeus is Agoraios because the agora is the place of political speech, whereas Hermes Agoraios owes his byname to the fact that the agora is the place of trade and exchange.⁶² The basic meaning of Karpophoros, fruit-bearing, certainly articulates Dionysos and Zeus in a different way from that of Karpophoros, when the term is attached to Ge. The epithet Karpophoros defines them more precisely than when designating Ge, since “to bear fruit” is not their primary aspect.

Does Karpophoros perhaps then hide a less literal meaning in IG II² 4758? This seems unlikely. I would like to argue that what is unclear in this case is not the meaning of the epithet, but rather that it was the geographical setting of the cult which could create nominal confusion. On the Athenian Acropolis, we need to take the sacred rock’s mythological landscape into account. I suggest that the epithet Karpophoros was included in our inscription in order to separate this aspect of Ge from her function as Kourotraphos. The latter aspect appears to have been the dominating aspect of Ge in the Acropolis area; indeed, it has been suggested that Athenians of the Classical and later periods, on seeing the name Kourotraphos alone, would have understood Ge.⁶³ There was

a sanctuary of Ge Kourotraphos and Demeter Chloe on the south slope, close to the entrance of the Acropolis,⁶⁴ and there may have been a Kourotrapeion on top of the rock. Based on the late evidence of the *Suda*, Hadzisteliou-Price has put forward the possibility that Kourotraphos Ge even had an altar “near the Erechtheion”, in which case it would have been very close indeed to the sacred area of the Karpophoros Ge currently discussed.⁶⁵ But even without this altar, the area around the Erechtheion would have evoked Kourotraphos Ge through the mythological complex connected to the cults celebrated there. The most immediate associations would be those of the birth stories of the early Athenian kings, of Erechtheus and the baby Erichthonios, and of Kekrops: they were nurslings of Ge, literally sprung up from her. All three kings are sometimes depicted as half-man half-snake, in order to underline their earthen ancestry. In Attic vase iconography, when handling the newly delivered Erichthonios to Athena, Earth herself is pictured like a woman rising up through the ground, visible from the waist up, and it has been suggested that the statue seen by Pausanias would have portrayed her in the same way.⁶⁶ Indeed, Erichthonios was considered as having established the tradition of making an offering to Kourotraphos before sacrificing to other gods, as an expression of gratitude to his mother and nurse, the Earth.⁶⁷ I suggest, then, that the epithet Karpophoros was needed due to the location of her sacred area: Ge needed to be qualified as Karpophoros, although this function was inherent in her nature, to clearly separate, in this instance, this aspect of Ge from that of Kourotraphos.

We are still left with the last part of our inscription, *kata manteian*. This formula reveals that the area of Ge Karpophoros was sacred to the goddess in response to an oracle. Nothing is known for certain about the context of this oracle, but most likely we can infer that, as most oracles, this one was sought for a specific reason. In epigraphic dedicatory language there is ample evidence of objects or areas being dedicated on the spontaneous order of the gods, but those are expressed otherwise: *kata epitagen*, or *kat’oneiron*, that is, by (direct) command of a god, or by a dream. If the statue that Pausanias saw on the Acropolis is indeed connected to our inscription, then we should probably follow his interpretation: the oracle was

⁶¹ Georgoudi 2002, 127. NB the important distinction made by Georgoudi between Ge the goddess, and ge the earth, Georgoudi 2002, *passim*.

⁶² Parker 2005a, 389.

⁶³ Hadzisteliou-Price 1978, 112.

⁶⁴ Paus. 1.22.3.

⁶⁵ Hadzisteliou-Price 1978, 114; *Suda*, s.v. Kourotraphos Ge.

⁶⁶ LIMC IV (1988) s.v. Ge, nos. 16, 18 (red-figure vases), 24, 25 (neo-Attic stone reliefs, Ge is pictured from the thighs up.) In no. 28, Ge delivers yet another child, Ploutos; Stevens 1946. The fact that our inscription was carved on the living rock, and not on a separate stele, makes perfect sense in view of these ideas and this iconography.

⁶⁷ *Suda*, s.v. Kourotraphos Ge; Hadzisteliou-Price 1978, 104–105; Daux 1963, 631.

sought because the Earth had ceased to be Karpophoros.⁶⁸ Many oracular responses specify to which aspect of a god, i.e., under which title, a god was to be honoured, often in order to change a situation for the better. In this case it is thus likely that an oracle (Delphi?) had told the Athenians to honour Ge precisely in her guise as Karpophoros.⁶⁹ This situation then brings us towards the same conclusion as that regarding the confusion caused by the location of the sacred precinct: the occasion and the reason for the oracle also needed to be further explained. On the occasion of the oracle, Ge was still Kourotrophos, and especially so on the Acropolis in the area of the Erechtheion, but her other fundamental aspect was in danger for some reason. In the situation that provoked the oracle, Ge therefore needed to be approached specifically as Karpophoros and specifically *not* as Kourotrophos. The epithet was added neither as a poetic beautification, nor as routine denomination stating the obvious, but as an important cultic clarification.⁷⁰

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⁶⁸ This is, however, perhaps not as certain as most scholars assume. In Pausanias' interpretation, the Athenians identify with Ge and beseech Zeus. But it seems strange to me that this situation should tie in with the inscription. Why institute a sacred area to Ge if Zeus is the beseeched god? The events should perhaps be separated.

⁶⁹ Cf. for example Fontenrose 1978, 248 no. H 11, 250 no. H 19, 253 no. H 28, 276 H 74; 1988, 202 no. 26, 237 no. A10; Parker 2011, 14. I thank the anonymous reviewer for underlining this central function of oracles.

⁷⁰ I hope that Berit would have liked this epigraphical excursion, its visits to the larger literary landscape of Greece and Turkey, and its attempt at looking at angles (other than the most obvious ones) of an inscription from her beloved Athens. It is with deep gratitude that I dedicate this paper to an extraordinary teacher and friend.

Abbreviations

Agora 16 = Woodhead, A.G. 1997. *Inscriptions: The decrees* (The Athenian Agora, 16), Princeton, N.J.

Clara Rhodos = *Clara Rhodos. Studi e materiali pubblicati a cura dell' Istituto storico-archeologico di Rodi* 1–10, Rhodes 1928–1941.

FdD = *Fouilles de Delphes* III. Épigraphie, Fasc. 3. *Inscriptions depuis le trésor des Athéniens jusqu'aux bases de Gélon*. 2 vols., eds. Georges Daux & Antoine Salaç, Paris 1932–1943.

Gonnoi 2 = Helly, B. 1973. *Gonnoi 2. Les inscriptions*, Amsterdam.

Hyllarima = McCabe, D.F., 'Hyllarima Inscriptions. Texts and List', *Searchable Greek inscriptions*, The Packard Humanities Institute, Cornell University & Ohio State University, <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/>.

ICos = Segre, M. 1993. *Iscrizioni di Cos* (Monografie della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente, 6), Roma.

IEstremo oriente = Canali de Rossi, F. 2004. *Iscrizioni dello estremo oriente greco. Un repertorio* (Inchriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, 65), Bonn.

Iephesos = *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*, 8 vols. (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, 11.1–17.4), eds. H. Wankel *et al.*, Bonn 1979–1984.

IGBulg I¹ = *Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgaria repertae*, vol. 1. *Inscriptiones orae Ponti Euxini*, ed. G. Mihailov, Sofia 1970.

IGR III = *Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes*, vol. 3, eds. R. Cagnat *et al.*, with J.F. Toutain, P. Jouguet & G. Lafaye, Paris 1902–1906 (reprint: Chicago 1975).

IKios = Corsten, T. 1985. *Die Inschriften von Kios* (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, 29), Bonn.

Iiznik = Şahin, S. 1979–1982. *Katalog der antiken Inschriften des Museums von Iznik (Nikaia)*, 2 vols. (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, 9–10, 1–2), Bonn.

IMT Kyz LDascyl = 'Inschriften Mysia & Troas, Mysia, Kyzikene, Lacus Dascylitis, nos. 2011–2104', eds. M. Barth & J. Stauber, Princeton (Packard Humanities Institute CD #7, 1996).

IPergamon = Fränkel, M. 1895. *Die Inschriften von Pergamon*, vol. 2, nos. 251–1334, *Römische Zeit* (Altertümer von Pergamon, 8.2), Berlin.

- IPessinous* = Strubbe, J. 2005. *The inscriptions of Pessinous* (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, 66), Bonn.
- IPorto* = Sacco, G. 1984. *Iscrizioni greche d'Italia: Porto*, Roma.
- IScMI* = Pippidi, D. 1983. *Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris antiquae. Series altera: Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et Latinae* Vol. 1. *Inscriptiones Histriae et vicinia*, Bucharest.
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