

A stellar apparition: the Indo-European *Männerbünde* in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, Yašt 8 and the *Vrātyakānda*¹

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Abstract: This article examines three comparative case studies looking for common features in hymns dedicated to deities of the Indo-European *Männerbünde*, in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, Yašt 8 to Tištriia and the *Vrātyakānda* of the Atharvaveda in particular. The first case study is the examination of their descriptions and epiphanies as stars, the second is the comparative study of the dragon-slaying myths of Apollo and Tištriia and its political implication and the last explores an enthronement motif present both in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo and the *Vrātyakānda*, not studied so far.

Keywords: Indo-European Poetics; Indo-European Culture; *Männerbund*; Apollo; Tištriia; Ekavrātya.

^{ES} Una aparición estelar: los *Männerbünde* indoeuropeos en el Himno homérico a Apolo, el Yašt 8 y el *Vrātyakānda*

Resumen: Este artículo examina tres estudios de caso comparativos buscando rasgos comunes en himnos dedicados a deidades de los *Männerbünde* indoeuropeos, en particular en el Himno homérico a Apolo, el Yašt 8 a Tištriia y el *Vrātyakānda* del Atharvaveda. El primer estudio de caso es el examen de sus descripciones y epifanías como estrellas, el segundo es el estudio comparativo de los mitos de las dracontomaquias de Apolo y Tištriia y su implicación política, y el último explora un motivo de entronización presente tanto en el Himno homérico a Apolo como en el *Vrātyakānda*, no estudiado por el momento.

Palabras clave: poética indoeuropea; cultura indoeuropea; *Männerbund*; Apolo; Tištriia; Ekavrātya.

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Summary: 1. Introduction. 1.1. State of the question: the Indo-European *Männerbünde* and the selected hymns. 1.2. The comparative method in Indo-European Poetics and culture. 2. A stellar apparition: archaeoastronomy and asterisms. 2.1. Dragon-slaying myths in h.Ap. and Yt 8 and their political purpose 2.2. Enthronement scenes in h.Ap. and AVŚ 15. 3. Concluding remarks.

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1. Introduction

Before we begin, it is necessary to give the relevant definition: within Indo-European studies (although it has sometimes been found and defined in cultures outside this framework), the technical term *Männerbünde* (literally ‘men’s unions’²) conventionally refers to a series of social institutions composed of young men who participate in initiation rituals in order to separate themselves from normative society and dedicate themselves to plundering. A conventional list of features is provided by Meiser (2002: 4-5) and is described as follows: *Männerbünde* may be defined by gender exclusivity (males), the choice of a single leader, military training, nudity or the use of animal pelts, savagery (as an altered state of consciousness) incarnated in the image of the wolf³ or other predators and a special relationship with death (as dead themselves or death-propagators). However, as the author acknowledges in the following pages (2002: 5-8), not all of these features are attested consistently across all Indo-European cultures where descendants of *Männerbünde* are found and thus caution is required in their reconstruction.

These institutions have been given other names in the scientific literature, such as *Jugendbünde*, *Bruderschaft*, warrior-band, sodality, brotherhood, or fraternity. However, it is necessary to recognise that in many cases, even if the authors are not aware of it, all these terms refer to the same notion. Therefore, in this paper I will refer to these institutions as *Männerbünde*, as it is the most frequent and recognisable one. The Indo-European reconstructed word that most authors consider might reflect the institutions is **korjos*⁴.

The point of departure in this case is that it is possible to study the ideology of these institutions in historical times (as evidenced in Apollinean cult, the veneration of *Tiṣṭriia* in later Zoroastrianism and *vṛātya* culture and practice in India) and thus a layer of Indo-European ideology itself, through hymns dedicated to the deities that reflect the *Männerbünde* in the divine sphere⁵. In the words of Bruce Lincoln (1999: 147), myth is «ideology in narrative form». Studying features of the *Männerbünde* in these texts is particularly interesting because mythical passages were used to illustrate the gods’ merits and attributes in order gain their favour, and thus features of the deities are more likely to appear directly rather than implied. Thus, it can be said that ideology appears in the hymnic genre through narrative and description. Because of this, hymns dedicated to deities of the *Männerbünde* are a major source for extracting information concerning how the institutions were perceived and how they evolved historically.

² I hereby will use the term in the plural to reflect the possibility that the term can be used to describe institutions that, despite a common origin, may have developed differently accounting for diachronic, diatopic and individual distinctions. For example, a valuable distinction was described by Selva (2019) in his doctoral thesis, where he differentiated (2019: 331) between formative, educational and therefore temporary practices (which he calls *Jugendbund*, ‘youth group’), which reflect mostly the situation in Greece and Iran, or participation as a permanent choice (which he calls *Gefolgschaft*, ‘group of followers’), which is more closely related to Indian ascetic practices.

³ For example, with the use of the Greek terms λύσσα, from the root for ‘wolf’, see Lincoln (1975), or ἀπάσθαλος, used especially for Apollo (see below).

⁴ Cf. McCone (1987: 114).

⁵ For a summary of the hymnic genre among the Indo-Europeans and its characteristics, cf. Campanile (1977: 55-77) and West (2007: 304-325).

For this purpose, I have selected just three hymns in the Indo-European tradition: the hymn to the Ekavṛātya (AVŚ 15, also called the *Vṛātyakānda*), from the *Atharvavedic corpus*, the hymn (Yašt) to Tištriia (Yt 8) from the *Avestan corpus*, and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (*h.Ap.*), thus revealing common themes or features among them separated into three sections (2.1 through 2.3): the star-like (and not originally solar) form of the chosen deities, the monster-slaying scene of Apollo and Tištriia and the poetic enthronement of Apollo and the Ekavṛātya⁶. This separation in different case studies, instead of a more holistic approach, allows to read textual relationships in a way that more easily exposes the individual developments of each branch. Although these texts may be deeply related and even share common archetypes, each of these sections can be treated independently according to the interests of the reader. The common trope followed in each of them is the combination of both a literary and historical approach which reflects on the individual developments that appear in each source, showing whenever possible the political position of *Männerbünde* in relation to normative society in their cultures as visible in the texts.

Furthermore, an added value of this contribution is to demonstrate the presence of features and themes of these institutions in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in particular: although the connection between Apollinean cults and *Männerbünde* has been recognized before (see below, section 1.1), the text has not yet received a study of literary elements that may reflect the institutions. I hope that the comparison with the other selected texts will illustrate the proposed association appropriately. Additionally, other common features in the texts will be presented which allow us to expose a possible common origin of some of the ideas or motifs present.

1.1. State of the question: the Indo-European *Männerbünde* and the selected hymns

The field of Indo-European *Männerbünde* is particularly complicated as there is no single monograph on the subject that covers it among the various families (Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Anatolian, Indo-Iranian ...) from a uniform perspective⁷. The work on the topic that originated the field of study is Heinrich Schurtz's *Altersklassen und Männerbünde. Eine Darstellung der Grundformen der Gesellschaft* (1902), which does not deal with Indo-European societies, but with what is considered, in a perspective typical of his time and quite outdated, "primitive societies"⁸. Later Elisabeth Weiser-Aall's (1927) and especially Otto Höffler's (1934) works came to link certain Germanic rituals and myths with old Indo-European *Männerbünde* practices. Their ideas were developed in close relation to the sphere of the German *Wandervogel* and *völkisch* movements respectively⁹, but many of their interpretations still hold up, as shown by their reframing by Kershaw (2000). Later, Stig Wikander (1938), mostly inspired by Höffler (1934), extended the analysis to Indo-Iranian *Männerbünde*, and was followed by Widengren (1968) on Iranian feudalism and a more typological work by Lincoln (1981).

A new wave of *Männerbünde* studies was initiated in works by Jan Heesterman (1962), Harry Falk (1986), who studied the Indian *vṛātya* under this framework, and Kim McCone (1985, 1986, 1986, 1987, 1990), who studied Celtic, especially Irish, attestations, relating them to other Indo-European sources.

In the Greek context, the only synoptic overview is von Cienimski's (2002) article. Other important studies include Petterson's (1992) study of Spartan festivals and, especially concerning Apollo, Fritz Graf's (1974, 1979) studies of collegial institutions in the colonies of the Anatolian coast and *Männerbünde* features in Apollinean cults. Graf (2008) also writes about Apollinean cults and these collegial institutions as *Männerbünde*. Walter Burkert's etymological study, «Apollo und Apellai» (1975), which links the name of the god with the Dorian assembly, has been fundamental.

⁶ The edition used for these texts are the following: Bernabé (2017) for the *Homeric Hymn* (*h. Ap.*), PANAI-NO (1990) for Yašt 8 and the text available at the TITUS text database <https://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/frames.htm?texte/texte2.htm> for the text of the *Atharvaveda*.

⁷ The closest is Das & Meiser (2002) collective work.

⁸ The general idea of the work, already quite outdated for its time, is that *Männerbünde* reflect the general male tendency to free association, particularly in contrast to the female tendency to the construction of families.

⁹ Cf. Burrell (2020: 234-238).

The general idea is that, in Greece, the morally neutral testimonies of the altered states of consciousness of the *Männerbünde* in the epic¹⁰ prove that the associated practices existed in the earliest layer of Homeric compositions, or at least in the *Iliad*, and that, historically, as these institutions did not fit with the development of the new model of hoplitic military organisation, they ceased to be practised and their associated traits stopped being appreciated as military skills¹¹. Because of this, Apollinean cults were reframed as elements of social bonding¹² and colonial cults¹³, and especially as educational institutions of the *Jugendbünde*¹⁴. These developments depended, however, very much on the situation and needs of the individual polis.

Apollo, as a god of the *Männerbünde*, is a young archer god that leads young men in colonial missions to establish new communities¹⁵. The scholarly treatment of this association in the *Homeric Hymn* has been generally focused on the episode where Apollo leads the Cretan sailors. An aim of this article, however, is to extend the view to other *Männerbünde* features or literary motifs that can be found in the poem.

Recently these studies have intensified concerning the Indian subcontinent (including Tamil sources) with the contributions of a group of researchers in articles written by Tiziana Pontillo or in volumes co-edited by her¹⁶. These works consider the *vrātya* as members of *Männerbünde* institutions in an Atharvavedic (in contrast to Rigvedic¹⁷) cultural framework. Summarizing very broadly, scholars have the tendency to describe the difference between these two individual developments of Indo-Aryan culture as an agonistical culture in which religious status is acquired by individuals through knowledge, corresponding with the Atharvavedic or *vrātya* culture, and a culture in which these features have to be first granted by birth, dividing society into the *varṇa* and *jāti* systems canonized eventually in the Rigvedic or Brahmanical culture¹⁸, which is much more concerned with state-supported sacrifice. The Ekavṛātya (to whom AVŚ 15 is dedicated) is the apotheosized member of the *vrātya* institution, probably as a somewhat-gnostic ideal destination for participants. Thus, the hymn selected here addresses not only a deity related to the *Männerbünde*, but the ideal form of its member, his characteristics and his behaviour and actions, and the way in which he is described is a direct reflection of values exalted in the agonistic *vrātya* culture.

In the Iranian context, older research has been revised by Amir Ahmadi (2015, 2018) and Touraj Daryaee (2018, 2021). Daryaee (2018) further reassesses the critique of the studies by Mary Boyce (1987), mostly centred around typological problems in Wikander (1938) and Lincoln's (1981) work (see above). Unfortunately, these proposals focus mostly on the historical (and not literary) reflections of the *Männerbünde* institutions of the Iranians, and thus describe it from internal sources which are critical of the institutions: due to historical reasons, *Männerbünde* practices seem to have been associated with the *dāeueu-* cults and demonized in early Zoroastrianism¹⁹. However, the spread

¹⁰ Cf. Lincoln (1975) & Bertolín Cebrián (2010).

¹¹ Cf. Bertolín Cebrián (2010: 346-347).

¹² Such as in the case of the cult of Apollo Patroos in Athens, cf. Valdés Guía (2008: 15-30)

¹³ Such as the *Molpoi* in Miletus and Olbia and the *kourêtes* in Ephesus, cf. Graf (1974) and Muscianisi (2021: 25-27).

¹⁴ Such as the Spartan *kriptēia* (and other stages of the famous *agōgē*) and the Cretan *agēla*, cf. von Cienimski (2002: 98-104).

¹⁵ Cf. also Janda (2022: 92-96).

¹⁶ Cf. Pontillo *et al.* (2015), Pontillo & Dore (2016) & Bindi *et al.* (2016).

¹⁷ Following broadly Parpola's (2015) dual-invasion hypothesis, by which a first (Atharvavedic) wave arrived in India, later followed by a second Indo-Aryan wave, which was responsible for the canonization of the *Rgveda*. The lack of clear archeological evidence for both invasions or migrations calls for caution, but an areal perspective can also account for the differentiation between both cultures, as exposed in Pontillo *et al.* (2015: 2). The areal hypothesis is further reinforced by Bronkhorst (2007) writings on a specific cultural area called the Greater Magadha, in which *vrātya* culture would be developed. I am, however, somewhat suspicious of the areal separation between these frameworks, especially accounting for the similarities in ascetic practice seen among traditions on which af Edholm (2024: 96-155) writes about.

¹⁸ Summarized in Pontillo & Dore (2016: 9-11), with further references.

¹⁹ Wikander (1938: 7) writes: «Ausserdem finden wir im Avesta Spuren anderer Kultformen, die wir nur als feindliche und gefährliche Mächte an der Peripherie des avestischen Geschichtsbildes auftauchen sehen. Ihre Eigenart scheint ganz unvereinbar zu sei sowohl mit derjenigen der hier genannten Kulte, als mit dem von

of Zoroastrianism implied a certain degree of syncretism and reintegration of the practice, leading scholars to believe that, in general, *Männerbünde* practices became assimilated into military training²⁰ and coming-into-power narratives²¹. The Avestan hymn to Tištriia would be reflective of a stage in which the legends of *Männerbünde* deities and heroes were reaccepted but adapted to the new religious paradigm, and thus the connection with the original institution might have been lost.

1.2. The comparative method in Indo-European poetics and culture

The recent critical article by Burmeister (2023) points out that the main problem of the publications by Höffler (1934) and McCone (1987) is the comparison of heterogeneous elements in a loose manner. Therefore, before making a comparison and taking up the perspective of the *Männerbünde* in the reconstruction of Indo-European society, the need for a solid methodological framework becomes apparent. To this end, I will draw on research and proposals on the comparative framework in Indo-European studies.

The presuppositions for the comparative method were laid down in Antoine Meillet's *La méthode comparative en linguistique historique* (1925). A fundamental distinction he makes is between typological comparison, the aim of which is to determine universal or at least frequent features of the languages to be compared, which can be classified according to various criteria, and phylogenetic comparison, the purpose of which is to be able to make observations at the historical level between related languages.

Both types of comparison are valid and useful depending on the objectives to be achieved. In Indo-European studies, however, a phylogenetic comparison should generally and for obvious reasons take precedence. Moreover, the phylogenetic comparison should focus not on the formal similarities of the testimonies studied, but on the diachronic differentiation processes, which, in the case of linguistics, correspond to phonetic changes.

In this case, on the other hand, the changes to be focused on are developments in poetic diction, in the treatment of themes and their relation of cause or effect with respect to the social institutions, applying the comparative method to other disciplines or areas of knowledge as well. Calvert Watkins, in his seminal work *How to kill a dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (1995), argued in practice for the possibility of a "Comparative Poetics", which would be devoted to the study of formulas and other elements of poetic diction, in this case in the poetic traditions of Indo-European languages from a phylogenetic perspective. Another factor to be taken into account in this field, specified by Enrico Campanile (1977), is the possibility of lexical variation in these elements of poetic diction: since a poet can innovate and reproduce a motif with a synonym (and in many traditions it is preferred or desired), comparative poetics must look not so much at the signifiers as at the signifieds (to use Saussure's terminology). Therefore, the establishment of cognates or direct etyms is valuable evidence when drawing conclusions in the field of comparative poetics, but not a necessary condition.

In another work Campanile (1990: 15) also develops relevant aspects on the application of the comparative method and its technical separation from lexical reconstruction:

Ci pare, quindi, necessario seguire un altro cammino e non identificare ingenuamente il metodo comparativo (che per la linguistica storica rappresenta un'acquisizione perenne) con la comparazione lessicale. In altre parole, ciò che noi qui dobbiamo trarre a confronto, non saranno più i singoli lessemi, bensì i testi: se i contenuti dei testi di più culture indoeuropee coincidono tra loro, noi ne dedurremo che questi contenuti sono eredità della cultura indoeuropea, ammesso che non esistano argomenti tali da farci ritenere che si tratti di creazioni parallele o di prestiti dall'una all'altra cultura.

Zarathustra selbst geschaffenen Synkretismus. Sie beruhen deutlich auf radikal verschiedenen religiösen und sozialen Grundlagen, die einige der iranischen Stämme immer ablehnen mussten».

²⁰ As Widengren (1969: 21) states: «Die militärische Organisation, wie wir sie im ältesten Iran finden, ist somit ein kriegischer Männerbund, verbunden mit dem Kultus eines heroischen Drachentöters, mit Mythen und Riten, in denen der Drache die zentrale Position einnimmt».

²¹ Cf. Alföldi (1951) and Álvarez-Pedrosa Núñez (2015).

The scientific study of an Indo-European institution has therefore to follow the above comparative framework in a rigorous way. Therefore, the justification of reconstructed features of the Indo-European *Männerbünde* by means of features of other institutions described as *Männerbünde* from a context outside Indo-European could be considered a methodological error.

2. A stellar apparition: archaeoastronomy and asterisms

In this section, I will discuss the astronomical links between Apollo, Tištriia and the Ekavrātya in the selected texts, as well as some other parallels in their respective cultures. The general thesis is that deities of the *Männerbünde* may have a specific relationship with stars and constellation of the night sky. This linkage has started to receive scientific attention recently²², and it allows to elucidate some obscure aspects in the interpretation and to delimit a feature shared by the divinities treated. The hymnic genre is particularly interesting in this regard, as it describes and highlights, as mentioned previously, the features of the deities explicitly to gain their favour.

One of Apollo's epiphanies in the *Homeric Hymn* is in the form of a star (ἄστέρι εἰδόμενος, *h.Ap.* 441). The text reads:

(440) ἐνθ' ἐκ νηὸς ὄρουσε ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
 ἄστέρι εἰδόμενος μέσῳ ἥματι· τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ πολλὰι
 σπινθαρίδες πωτῶντο, σέλας δ' εἰς οὐρανὸν ἵκεν·
 ἐς δ' ἄδυτον κατέδυσε διὰ τριπόδων ἐριτίμων.
 ἐν δ' ἄρ' ὁ γε φλόγα δαΐε πιφασκόμενος τὰ ἅ κῆλα,
 (445) πᾶσαν δὲ Κρίσην κάτεχεν σέλας· αἱ δ' ὀλόλυξαν
 Κρισαίων ἄλοχοι καλλίζωνοί τε θύγατρες
 Φοίβου ὑπὸ ῥιπῆς· μέγα γὰρ δέος ἔμβαλ' ἐκάστω.

There the sovereign bowman Apollo rushed from the ship, looking like a star in the middle of the day. Numerous sparks leapt from him, and the radiance reached up to the sky. He entered the sanctuary through the precious tripods. There he lit a flame, showing his arrows, and the radiance took hold of all of Crisa. The wives of the Criseans and their daughters with beautiful girdles cried out at the impetus of Phoebus, for great fear seized everyone²³.

This passage shows particularly how Apollo displays the brilliance of a star and some other stellar attributes, such as brilliance (σέλας, twice in the text), and emphasizes a very iconic comparison between his arrows and the beams of light from a star πιφασκόμενος τὰ ἅ κῆλα, πᾶσαν δὲ Κρίσην κάτεχεν σέλας. The text also notes how he shone «with the image of a star in the middle of the day» (ἄστέρι εἰδόμενος μέσῳ ἥματι), which is a strong argument found in this passage against a strict solar identification: the Sun shining during the day is not a noteworthy event; the identification is made with a star (ἄστέρι) and not with the Sun (one would expect ἥελίω); and, additionally, shining during the day is one of the main defining characteristics of the star Sirius, Tištriia in Iranian sources, during its heliacal rising in the hottest summer months²⁴, which might be another reason for identification among the deities. The link usually made between Apollo and a star is with the Sun only begins to become evident in later periods: in the Homeric hymns Apollo (*h.Ap.*, XXI, XXV) and the Sun (*h.Hom.* XXXI) are completely separate and share no attributes or epithets apart from ἄναξ (*h.Hom.* XXI.17), common to all gods and many humans.

²² Janda (2022: 133) writes «Entsprechend wird der Kult Apollons begonnen ha ben, der anthropomorphen Gestalt, die sich im Lauf jahrhundertelangen Erzählens und zunehmender Ablösung von seinem himmlischen Urbild herausformte und, an gesellschaftliche Ereignisse wie die Entwicklung der Jungmannschaft geknüpft, überragende Bedeutung gewann».

²³ All translations, unless otherwise noted, are the author's.

²⁴ Cf. Panaino (1995).

On the other hand, within the field of archaeoastronomy most attempts to find an alignment between the orientation of the temples of Apollo and the movement of the Sun have been unsuccessful. The temple at Delphi seems to be oriented to measure the movement of the constellations, in particular Lyra and Cygnus, which are linked to Apollo through the myth of the journey to the land of the Hyperboreans'. The myth is well reflected in the alignment of the temple as both constellations, which would be visible under normal circumstances, are concealed by the mountains around the sanctuary²⁵, as by the outer structure of the *naiskos* and *adyton* of the temple at Didymus, which, however, has its azimuth oriented to coincide with the heliacal rising of Lyra at the winter solstice, the date when Apollo would be in the land of the Hyperboreans²⁶. In both cases the structures seem to have been built intentionally to reflect the myth, one taking advantage of natural elements and the other architectural, so that the calendar, especially for the oracular function, could be oriented according to the presence of Apollo in the temple. In addition, fragments of Pindar's hymns to Zeus (fr. 32 & 33 Maehler) seem to depict Delos as a moving star and how the birth of Apollo serves as a reflection of his father's cosmological act, fixing the island in place as a pillar supporting the cosmos²⁷. We can, therefore, see the epiphany in this hymn as the stellar form of the god Apollo.

Going back to the hymn, he immediately he has another epiphany in his typical young ephebic form (πρωθήβη, v. 450):

ἐνθεν δ' αὖτ' ἐπὶ νῆα νόημι' ὥς ἄλτο πέτεσθαι,
 ἀνέρι εἰδόμενος αἰζήῳ τε κρατερῷ τε,
 (450) πρωθήβη, χαίτης εἰλυμένος εὐρέας ὤμους.

From there he flew back as a thought to the ship, with the image of a vigorous and strong man in early youth, his broad shoulders covered with hair.

We can establish an immediate correlation with Tištriia (*tištrīm stāram* «the star Tištriia» (Yt 8.2.1, etc.), which also has an epiphany in the form of a young man:

(Yt 8.13) *paoirīā dasa xšapanō*
spitama zaraθuštra
tištriīō raēuuā xʷarənanʷhā
kəhrpəm raēθβaiieiti
raoxšnušua vazəmnō
narš kəhrpa pañca.dasaṇhōç
xšaētahe spiti.dōiθrahe
bərəzatō auui.amaheç
amauuatō hunairīāṇcō.

The first ten nights, oh Spitama Zaraθuštra, Tištriia, the brilliant, the splendid, mixes his body driving through the lights with the body of a fifteen-year-old male, radiant, white-eyed, loud, very loud, vigorous and dexterous.

14. *taḍa aiiaoš yaθa paoirīm.*
vīrəm auui.yā bauuaiti
taḍa aiiaoš yaθa paoirīm
vīrəm auui.amō. aēiti
taḍa aiiaoš yaθa paoirīm
vīrəm ərəzušəm adaste.

²⁵ Cf. Martin Castro *et al.* (2015: 374, 381).

²⁶ Cf. Martin Castro *et al.* (2015: 384).

²⁷ Cf. Hardie (2000: 26-28), and on the column as an Indo-European cosmological element, v. Sadovski (2017).

Then, from the age when, for the first time, the man is entitled to a belt. Then, from the age when, for the first time, to man the force is directed. Then, from the age when, for the first time, man is given the germination of the testicles.

We can therefore see a pattern in the epiphany of both deities in these two hymns. Many terms can be directly associated semantically: σπινθαρίδες ('flashes') and σέλας ('brightness') with *raēuuā x'arənan'hā* ('bright and splendid'), πρωθήβη (first youth) with *narš paṇca.dasanhō* (fifteen-year-old man), αἰζηὺ τε κρατερὺ τε ('vigorous and strong') with *auui.amahe amauuatō* ('fortified, vigorous'). This indicates that Apollo and Tištriia are deities who share the attributes of brightness, youth, and strength in their epiphanies. This, combined with their role as victors over the serpent (v. *infra*), the mention of Tištriia's fertility (in combination with strength, as we will see of Apollo below) and the fact that Apollo, as Sirius, also shines «like a star in the middle of the day» are arguments that point to a common archetype.

However, the linkage goes further. As mentioned previously, Panaino (1995: 1-23) showed that Tištriia refers to the star Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky, whose heliacal rising is in the most intense period of summer. Tištriia's fight against the *Pairikā* would also correspond to this time of the year. The term might be translated as 'witch' as a general term, but, in the case of Tištriia, it describes the leader of the shooting-stars that appear in summer, bringing drought, as Panaino (1995: 19-23, 101-103) has identified. In the hymn to Tištriia the following is said:

Yt 8.39 *tištrīm stārem raēuuantəm*
xvarənanvhaṇtəm yazamaide
yō pairikā tauruuaiieiti
yō pairikā titāraieiti
yā uzāṇhaṭ anrō mainiuš
mamnūš stāram afšciθranam
vīspanam paiti.əretəe.

The star Tištriia, bright, splendid, we honour, which surpasses the *Pairikā*, which defeats the *Pairikā*, to those produced by Anra Mainiu thinking of stopping all the stars that contain the (brilliance of the) waters.

Yt 8.40 *tā tištriio tauruuaiieiti*
vīuuāiti hiš
zraianhaṭ haca vourukašāt
āat maēya us.frauuānte
huiiāriiā āpō barəntiš
yāhuua uruuāitiš aβrā
pərəθu aipi vījasāitiš
auuō.uruuaitiš hapta karšuuən.

Tištriia surpasses them, stops them before Lake Vourukaša, and so the clouds fly carrying waters of good harvests in which there are nimbuses of the wind, that spread from one side to the other enveloping the seven climates (Karšuuu²⁸).

There is a marginal Vedic character, Tišya, which reflects the same deity with a later dissimilation of the /t/ in the consonantal cluster. If we follow Panaino's proposal (1995: 33, supported by an earlier proposal by Fischer), Sirius (gr. Σείριος) would share the same Indo-European isogloss (from a PIE **tistrjo-* > **tisrjo-* > **tihrjo-* > **tihrjo-* > **Σίριος* > Σείριος), corresponding to an (at least) Greco-Indo-Iranian name for the star.

²⁸ It is an Iranian category that divides the world into climates. Evidently here it serves as an expression of the guarantee of prosperity for the whole cosmos.

Furthermore, the importance of Tištriia and Sirius in Iranian culture can be explained through the hymn: the heliacal rising, reflected by the fight of the god with the shooting stars (the *Pairikā*), marks the end of the hottest summer period, and the star gradually gains visibility during the night as autumn (and the rains) approaches, thus being the main calendrical reference for the end of summer and the start of the period of fertility and prosperity brought by the rains.

Tiṣya appears in two passages of the *Rgveda*. The first is a hymn to the *Marut*, Rudra's (an important archer deity, linked to the *Männerbünde* and praised as their leader²⁹) divine retinue (in the form of a *Männerbund*), in which themes of brightness and fertility are especially treated, while in the second he appears in a group of divine archers.

RV 5.54.13

*yuṣmāḍattasya maruto vicetaso rāyāḥ syāma rathyò váyasvataḥ
ná yó yúchati tiṣyò yáthā divò 'smé rāranta marutaḥ sahasrīṇam*

Oh bright³⁰ *Marut*, would that I could be the conductor of the wealth of youth which you bestow. O *Marut*, make it sweet a thousand times for me, like Tiṣya, who does not turn away from heaven.

RV 10.64.8

*trīḥ sapta sasrā nadyò mahīr apó vánaspátīn párvatām*agnīm ūtāye
krīśānum ástrīḥ tiṣyām sadhásthā ā rudrām rudréṣu rudríyam havāmahe*

To the three times seven flowing rivers, the great waters, to the great forests, to Agni, to Krīśānu-, the archers, to Tiṣya, and to Rudra, Rudra (strong?) among the Rudras, I call you to this point to help me.

Rudra as a divine hunter has another link to Apollo and Artemis. The parallel myths appear as follows in the Vedic *Brahmanas* and Greek sources: an archer god (Rudra and Artemis) sent by the gods to slay the lover (Prajāpati and Orion) of the goddess of Dawn (Uṣas and Έως), ultimately placing it in the sky as the constellation Orion. The representation of Prajāpati as a deer and Artemis as the archetypical έλαφνβόλος 'deer-hunter' also support the connection³¹. Apollo does not take part in this directly, despite urging Artemis, but his sister does.

On the other hand, this association with deer could etymologically be a factor in the importation of the epithet Δελφίνιος from the Hittite (or Hittite) Telipinu³², since both share many characteristics (the unbridled anger³³, the myth of disappearance -*mugawar* in Hittite- and the link with fertility). Both are also foundational gods³⁴. This factor would be a determining factor in the importation of the iconography of the Hittite deer-gods ('KAL in Hittite, DEUS.CERVUS in Hieroglyphic Luwian) to the figure of Apollo in particular.

However, going back to our close selection of texts, it is worth exploring, in addition, other Indian parallels that may elucidate other aspects of the *Männerbünde* deities and their relationship with the stars. In an article entitled «The Ekavrātya, Indra and the Sun», Moreno Dore (2015) argues convincingly for the linkage of the *vṛātya* with the Sun, especially from the description of his movement in the last *pāryaya* (AVŚ 15.18.5), *ahnā pratyāṇ vrātyo rātrīā prāṇ nāmo vrātyāya*, «during the day the *vṛātya* goes to the west, during the night to the east: homage to the *vṛātya*».

²⁹ Cf. Falk (1986: 63–65) and Janda (2022: 125).

³⁰ I understand it (*contra* Mayrhofer 1986: s.v) in both senses of the word, since *cetas-* is both splendour and mind (most translations only take up the latter meaning).

³¹ For sources and more information, see Janda (2022: 121–125, 2024: 153–153). On further connections between Prajāpati and deities of the *Männerbünde*, see below.

³² Cf. Bachvarova (2024).

³³ Expressed by the terms *karpi-*, *kardimiatt-* and *sāwar-* in CTH 324.

³⁴ Cf. Pace (2014).

However, only the explicit movement in the fifth line of this stanza makes one think unequivocally of the Sun and not of another star. On the other hand, Dore (2015) uses Whitney's (1904) translation of the first *pāryaya*, which I consider wrong. Below is the text with a revised translation:

AVŚ 15.1

*vrātya āsīd īyamāna evā sā prajāpatiṃ sām airayat
sā prajāpatiḥ suvārṇam ātmān āpaśyat tāt prājanayat
tād ékam abhavat tāl lālām abhavat tán mahād abhavat tāj jyeṣṭhām abhavat tād
brāhmābhavat tāt brāhmābhavat tāt tāpo 'bhavat tāt satyām abhavat tēnaprājāyata
sò 'vardhata sā mahān abhavat sā mahādevò 'bhavat
sā devānām īśām pāry ait sā īśāno 'bhavat
sā ekavrātyò 'bhavat sā dhānur ādatta tād evēndradhanūḥ
nīlam asyodāraṃ lóhitaṃ prṣṭhām
nīlenaivāpriyaṃ bhrātrvyam prórṇoti lóhitena dviśāntaṃ vidhyatīti brahmavādīno vadanti*

There was (once) a wandering *vrātya*, then he set *Prajāpati* on motion. He, *Prajāpati*, saw the brightness in himself and begot it. This became unique, this became star-like, this became great, this became eminent, this became *brāhmaṇ*, this became *tapas*-, this became truth, and these things he begot. He grew, he magnified himself, he became (the) great god. He surrounded the sovereignty of the gods, he became sovereign. He became *Ekavrātya*, he took a bow, it was *Indra's* bow. His belly (was) blue, his back red³⁵. With blue he envelops a hostile half-brother, with red he pierces one who hates him. So say the sages.

Firstly, the *communis opinio* on this text is that it is an apotheosis to a cosmogonic deity. However, Dore (2015) puts emphasis on the fact that the apotheosis is done through knowledge, and that this esoteric form of divinisation is characterised by grouping all deities within the deified human (2015: 57). In the *Veda* there would be, in addition, other hymns with the same function, such as RV 10.136, AVŚ 11.5, 13.4, dedicated to the *keśin*, the *brahmacārin* and an unidentified character respectively that would function as an integrated system³⁶.

On the other hand, the translation of *suvārṇam* I propose differs from Whitney's (1904). Indeed, one of its meanings is "gold" (as translated by Whitney 1904), but if we attend to its etymology³⁷ and its usage in the *Rgveda*³⁸ it is much more appropriate to understand it as 'good colour' and hence 'lustre' or 'brightness' (also evidenced), especially bearing in mind that the specific Vedic term for 'gold' is *hiraṇya*³⁹ and that the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.24.4-5 specifically distinguishes metals into the categories *suvārṇa*- 'of good colour' and *durvārṇa*- 'of bad colour', i.e., that colour (*vārṇa*-) rather than defining gold serves as a category for differentiating types of metals.

If we understand it as 'brightness' we can translate the passage as «(he) saw the brightness in himself and begot it». We can therefore understand brightness in the same way as the Apollonian σέλας and the *raēuuantēm* of *Tištirīam* and the text therefore describes not only a cosmogony, but also a catasterism. This can also be seen in the description of the creation of the *Ekavrātya*: it is *eka*, 'unique' and *lālām*, 'starry'. *Eka*- may allude here to *Sirius*, because it is the brightest star in the night sky.

³⁵ This reference to *Indra's* bow and its colours obviously alludes to the rainbow. The fact that *Indra's* and the *Ekavrātya's* bow as archer deities is the rainbow, which appears, naturally, after rain, may further allude to their connection to rains, control of waters and fertility (see 2.2).

³⁶ In his own words (2015: 62), «It is surprising to compare the expressions used by the poets in all these hymns. It is difficult to exclude the hypothesis that the authors may have had the same concepts in mind and perhaps even shared a poetic heritage, a common ideology to which all of them refer».

³⁷ Cf. Mayrhofer (1986: s.v. *varṇa* & *VAR*).

³⁸ Most utterances are similar to RV 10.68.3, where the *suvārṇā* [...] *gā* appears, to be translated as «cows [...] of good colour».

³⁹ The hymn of the tenth maṇḍala of the *Rgveda* dedicated to *hiraṇyagarbha*- (RV 10.121) seems to be an innovation in which Brahmanical ideology is already highly developed.

This can be further combined with another aspect of Prajāpati⁴⁰ that appears in the *Atharvaveda*. In AVŚ 4.15, Prajāpati is a steed churning the waters, which would bring him close to the image of Tištriia (see 2.2 below):

11. *prajāpatiḥ salilād ā samudrād āpa īrayann udadhīm ardayāti | prā pyāyatām vṛṣṇo āśvasya réto 'rvān etēna stanayitnūnéhi*
 12. *apó niṣīñcānn āsurah pitā nah |...*

Prajāpati, stirring up the waters of the flood and the ocean, sets the sea in motion. Let the current of the mighty steed of the oceans overflow! Thunder, come with him! Pouring out the waters, our Lord, Father!

Moreover, this apparently cosmogonic text also carries connotations in the realm of politics: the stellar form created by Prajāpati is also linked to sovereignty (*sá īśāno 'bhavat*, «he became sovereign») and to the elimination of possible rivals (*nīlenaivāpriyaṃ bhrātrvyam prōrṇoti lōhitena dviśāntam vidhyatīti*, «with blue he envelops a hostile half-brother, with red he pierces one who hates him») and he is unique (*eka-*) and great god (*mahādevò*), placing the Ekavrātya in a special position among the deities. Because of all of this, it can be said that the star-like form acquired by the Ekavrātya in his apotheosis is a main feature of his description and cult, and the ultimate goal of participants in *vṛātya* groups, both in a religious and a social context, as the preeminence acquired would also reflect in the political sphere of the material world.

Thus, Apollo and Tištriia share star-like (and also youth-like) epiphanies in their respective hymns, where poets give particular emphasis to their brilliance, and both receive cult on account of their connection to particular stars and constellations, such as Lyra and Cygnus in the case of Apollo and Sirius in the case of Tištriia. Furthermore, the connected deity of Indian *Männerbünde*, the Ekavrātya, is also described as brilliant, and this may be connected to a stellar form, which is, in turn, strongly bond to its political prominence among other deities. Another possible phylogenetical connection between deities of in Greece and India can be traced in relation to the constellation of Orion, and the myth of the non-permitted relationship between the constellation (Prajāpati in India and Orion in Greece) and the Dawn-Goddess, hunted by a deer-hunting deity (Rudra and Artemis respectively).

Considering the political and historical context presented above (section 1.1), it can be said that the sidereal cult that *Männerbünde* deities may have received in origin has been clearly preserved. An explanation could be that this is the case mostly because it does not confront with the new social structures that had arisen. The cult is also reinforced and used for new societal functions that gained significant importance through historical times: namely the oracular function of Apollo and the calendric cult of Tištriia, and as a prominent feature of the apotheosis of an individual to the position of Ekavrātya. These features may have been already present in earlier stages of Indo-European culture related to the cult of these stars and constellations, but they were further reinforced depending on the cultural practices of each branch.

2.1. Dragon-slaying myths in *h.Ap.* and *Yt 8* and their political purpose

A reconstructed dragon-slaying myth is the quintessential motif of Indo-European comparative poetics, especially after the publication of Calvert Watkins' *How to kill a dragon* (1995). A number of individual narratives have been traced to the archetypal Indo-European myth. The following is a brief collection of significant cases:

It is also worth making some etymological notes on the poetic formula, which often includes a **g^{wh}en-* ('to kill', gr. *θείνω*, ai. *hanti*, av. *jaiṇti*) and **og^{wh}is* ('snake', gr. *ὄφις*, ai. *áhi-*, av. *aži-*). These terms will appear in the narratives we will discuss later, but it is significant how they appear beforehand in the names of several of the characters mentioned in the Avestan legends (v. *aži-* in *Aži Dahāka* and *Aži Sruvara*, and *Vərəθraϋna*, composed of **wr_o-tro-* and **g^{wh}no-*, which has a cognate in ai. *vṛtrahān-*, Indra's epithet for his dragon-slaying myth against *Vṛtra*⁴¹).

⁴⁰ On the mythology developed from this recently created figure, cf. Joshi (1972).

⁴¹ On the connection between *vṛtrahān* and *Vərəθraϋna*, see Benveniste & Renou (1934).

GREECE	Zeus (assisted by different characters in Hellenistic literature) - Typhon
	Apollo - Python
	Herakles (assisted by Athena) - Geryon
IRAN	Oraētona (assisted by Vərəθrayna) - Aži Dahāka
	Kərəsāspa - Aži Sruvara, Gandarəβa (and in later literature after Dahāg, = Aži Dahāka).
	Tištīria (assisted by Ahura Mazdā) - Apaoša
INDIA	Indra (assisted by Vāyu and Agni) - Vṛtra
	Trita Āptya (assisted by Indra) - Viśvarūpa
ANATOLIA	Tarḥunna (various divine and human helpers) - Illuyanka
	Teššub (different divine and human helpers) - Ullikummi, Hedammu

In this section, I will focus on the dragon-slaying-myths associated with Apollo in *h.Ap.* and Tištīria in Yt 8 in order to give the common features that suggest attributes that are associated with the deities of the *Männerbünde* and thus with the role of participants of the *Männerbünde* in renewed views of social organization. The general thesis is that the similarities between these two texts are due to a single or many⁴² original dragon-slaying myths associated with deities of the *Männerbünde*, which were reshaped in accordance to societal and religious changes in both Greece and Iran, which in turn developed new features in parallel in both traditions.

Apollo kills the serpent Python to create his oracle. The event is narrated in the first Homeric hymn dedicated to him (*h.Ap.*). Then follows the passage (with the omission of the long excursus on the birth of Typhon):

ἐνθάδε δὴ φρονέω τεῦξιν περικαλλέα νηὸν
 ἔμμεναι ἀνθρώποις χρηστήριον, οἳ τέ μοι αἰεὶ
 ἐνθάδ' ἀγινήσουσι τελεέσσας ἐκατόμβας,
 (290) ἡμὲν ὅσοι Πελοπόννησον πείραν ἔχουσιν,
 ἡδ' ὅσοι Εὐρώπην τε καὶ ἀμφιρύτας κατὰ νήσους,
 χρησόμενοι· τοῖσιν δ' ἄρ' ἐγὼ νημερτέα βουλὴν
 πᾶσι θεμιστεύοιμι χρέων ἐνὶ πτόνι νηῶ.

Here I intend to build a beautiful temple for men to have an oracle, and all who consult it will always bring me complete hecatombs, whether they inhabit the rich Peloponnesus, Europe or the islands surrounded by streams. To all these I wish to declare my infallible determination, proclaiming from my rich temple.

Ὡς εἰπὼν διέθηκε θεμεῖλια Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων
 (295) εὐρέα καὶ μάλα μακρὰ διηνεκές· αὐτὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς
 λαῖνον οὐδὸν ἔθηκε Τροφώνιος ἡδ' Ἀγαμήδης
 υἱέες Ἐργίνου, φίλοι ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν·
 ἀμφὶ δὲ νηὸν ἕνασσαν ἀθέσφατα φύλ' ἀνθρώπων
 κτιστοῖσιν λάεσσιν, ἀοίδιμον ἔμμεναι αἰεὶ.
 (300) ἀγχοῦ δὲ κρήνη καλλίρροος ἔνθα δρᾶκαιναν
 κτεῖνεν ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς ἀπὸ κρατεροῦ βιοῖο
 ζατρεφέα μεγάλην τέρας ἄγριον, ἥ κακὰ πολλὰ
 ἀνθρώπους ἔρδεσκεν ἐπὶ χθονί, πολλὰ μὲν αὐτοῦς
 πολλὰ δὲ μῆλα ταναῦποδ' ἐπεὶ πέλε πῆμα δαφνοῖν.

⁴² Acknowledging the possibility of various similar or related archetypes is valuable here. For example, Janda (2022: 126-130), shows important parallels between the myths of Bellerophon and Tištīria. Despite this, he does not disregard a further connection with Apollo (on which we focus here), considering that all these myths relate to original stories concerning the star Sirius (see above).

Having said this, Phoebus Apollo built the foundation: wide, long and continuous. On it Trophonius and Agamedes, friends of the immortal gods, built a stone threshold. Around the temple they sculpted with stone marvellous lines of men, always worthy of singing. There stands the fountain of beautiful stream in which the sovereign Apollo, son of Zeus, slew with his mighty bow the serpent, gluttonous and huge. A wild beast, who did many evils to men on earth. Many to them, and also many to their long-legged sheep, for it was a bloodthirsty punishment.

(355) ὃς κακὰ πόλλ' ἔρδεσκεν κατὰ κλυτὰ φύλ' ἀνθρώπων
 ὃς τῇ γ' ἀντιάσειε, φέρεσκέ μιν αἰσιμον ἥμαρ
 πρίν γε οἱ ἰὸν ἐφῆκεν ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
 καρτερόν· ἡ δ' ὀδύνησιν ἐρεχθομένη χαλεπῇσι
 κεῖτο μέγ' ἀσθμαίνουσα κυλινδομένη κατὰ χῶρον.
 (360) θεσπεσίῃ δ' ἐνοπῇ γένετ' ἄσπετος, ἡ δὲ καθ' ὕλην
 πυκνὰ μάλ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ἐλίσσετο, λείπε δὲ θυμὸν
 φοινὸν ἀποπνείουσ', ὃ δ' ἐπηύξατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων·

He (Typhon) did numerous evils against the illustrious lineages of men, and she (Python), whoever met her, she bore (them) to their destined day, until a mighty arrow was shot at her by the far-shooting ruler Apollo, and she, overcome by severe pains, fell prone, gasping loudly and rolling on the earth. An unearthly cry arouse unspeakable, and writhing continuously she crawled back and forth through the forest. She let out her life, which she breathed out bloody, and Phoebus Apollo boasted (as follows):

ένταυθοῖ νῦν πύθευ ἐπὶ χθονὶ βωπιανείρη,
 οὐδὲ σύ γε ζωοῖσι κακὸν δῆλημα βροτοῖσιν
 (365) ἔσσειαι, οἱ γαίης πολυφόρβου καρπὸν ἔδοντες
 ἐνθάδ' ἀγινήσουσι τεληέσσας ἐκατόμβας,
 οὐδέ τί τοι θάνατόν γε δυσηλεγέ' οὔτε Τυφωεύς
 ἀρκέσει οὔτε Χίμαιρα δυσώνυμος, ἀλλὰ σέ γ' αὐτοῦ
 πύσει Γαῖα μέλαινα καὶ ἡλέκτωρ Ὑπερίων.

Rot now upon the earth, nurse of mortals! You will be neither a bad torment to living men, who eat the fruit of the fertile earth and bring here complete hecatombs, nor by any means Typhon or the ill-named Chimera will spare you from an ill-famed death, but here the black Earth and the shining Hyperion will make you rot!

(370) Ὡς φάτ' ἐπευχόμενος, τὴν δὲ σκότος ὅσσε κάλυψε.
 τὴν δ' αὐτοῦ κατέπυσ' ἱερὸν μένος Ἥελίοιο,
 ἐξ οὗ νῦν Πυθῶ κικλήσκεται, οἱ δὲ ἄνακτα
 Πύθιον ἀγκαλεύουσιν ἐπώνυμον οὖνεκα κείθι
 αὐτοῦ πῦσε πέλωρ μένος ὀξέος Ἥελίοιο.

So he said, boasting, and darkness covered her eyes, and the sacred power of the Sun made her rot there. Hence now it is called Pytho, and men call the sovereign (Apollo) Pythian by nickname, because the terrible power of the bright Sun made her rot there.

The dragon-slaying myth recorded for Apollo places him in parallel with the figure of his father, Zeus (especially when considering the long *excursus* on Typhon, omitted here). Additionally, the fact that both monsters (Python and Typhon) are related to each other further reinforces this idea. Thus, the hidden intention of the passage is to portray Apollo as a subaltern agent in Zeus' quest to gain and maintain power against natural or primeval forces still roaming the Earth.

However, the fundamental function of the dragon-slaying episode is to represent the establishment of order (κόσμος) as opposed to the savage nature reflected by the monster. In the words of Graf (2008: 25):

This is not just a mythical embellishment to show off the poet's abilities. Typhon was, after all, to become a major threat for Zeus' kingship, and Hesiod describes in long and graphic detail the cosmic battle that followed Typhon's bid for power. [...] Apollo's victory is comparatively elegant, as befits the god. Myths of dragon fights are always situated at the turning point from a chaotic primeval era to the orderly time of the present.

This sociogonic or cosmologic idea associated with the death of Python is reflected clearly when considering its function in the narrative: it precedes the foundation of a temple and the establishment of a cult, representing a colonising act. Nancy Felson (2009, 2011, 2013) has recently developed this idea further when discussing the typology of Apollonian violence. In short, Apollonian violence is described as ἀτάσθαλία, a type of violence associated with reckless and disrespectful young men and imposed on those who oppose their desires⁴³, especially women⁴⁴. Examples of this are the opposite cases of Delos and Telphousa. The former discusses with Leto the possibility of welcoming the birth of the twins and exposes her fears by saying (*h.Ap.* 67-69):

Λίην γάρ τινά φασιν ἀτάσθαλον Ἀπολλωνα
ἔσσεσθαι, μέγα δὲ πρυτανευσέμεν ἀθανάτοισι
καὶ θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν ἐπὶ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν.

They say that Apollo will be an extremely reckless one (ἀτάσθαλον), and that with great strength he will preside over the immortals and mortal men upon the fruitful earth.

Finally, Delos accepts the birth only on the oath that she will be rewarded with the establishment of the cult and great prosperity (vv. 80-82). However, Telphousa tries to deceive the god, and he violently throws a rock at her and establishes his cult (vv. 375-387):

(375) καὶ τότε ἄρ' ἔγνω ἦσιν ἐνὶ φρεσὶ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
οὐνεκά μιν κρήνη καλλίρροος ἐξαπάφησε·
βῆ δ' ἐπὶ Τελφούσῃ κεχολωμένος, αἶψα δ' ἵκανε·
στή δὲ μάλ' ἄγχ' αὐτῆς καὶ μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπε·
Τελφοῦς, οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες ἐμὸν νόον ἐξαπαφοῦσα
(380) χῶρον ἔχουσ' ἐρατὸν προρέειν καλλίρροον ὕδωρ.
ἐνθάδε δὴ καὶ ἐμὸν κλέος ἔσσεται, οὐδὲ σὸν οἴης.

And then Phoebus Apollo took notice in his mind that the fountain of the beautiful stream had deceived him: in anger he went down against Telphousa and quickly caught up with her. He stood by her side and said to her (lit. spoke this word to her): 'O Tephousa, you were not going to deceive me (lit. my mind) and keep this pleasant space and make your beautiful flowing water flow. Here will dwell my fame too, and not only yours'.

ἦ καὶ ἐπὶ ρίον ὥσε ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
πετραίης προχυτῆσιν, ἀπέκρυψεν δὲ ῥέεθρα
καὶ βωμὸν ποιήσατ' ἐν ἄλσεϊ δεινδρήεντι,
(385) ἄγχι μάλ' αὖ κρήνης καλλίρροου: ἐνθαδ' ἄνακτι
πάντες ἐπὶ κλησὶν Τελφουσίῳ εὐχετόωνται,
οὐνεκά Τελφούσης ἱερῆς ἦσχυνε ῥέεθρα.

⁴³ Cf. Felson (2013: 272).

⁴⁴ For cases not discussed here, cf. Felson (2009).

So he said, and the far-shooting ruler Apollo threw a heap of piled-up rocks on her, hid her streams and procured an altar in a leafy wood very close to the source of the beautiful stream. There the ruler is worshipped by all under the name of Telpousius, because he disfigured the streams of the sacred Telpousa.

In this way, the young god's violence also reflects his ability to control nature. It is also the form he uses to establish his cult and, being celebrated in worship, it is a fundamental element of his ἔργα and his τιμή.

Notable, with what will follow, is the case of the control of the waters in the Telpousa episode. This is the same function as Indra's struggle against Vṛtra, the gigantic serpent who keeps them trapped with his body⁴⁵. This is seen especially in RV 1.32, which takes up in the same way the idea of darkness that Apollo also imposes on Python. Here follows a selection of stanzas:

(1) *īndrasya nú vīryāni prā vocaṁ yāni cakāra prathamāni vajrī
āhann āhim ānv apās tatarda prā vakṣāṇā abhinat pārvatānām*

I will pronounce the manly deeds of Indra, the first that the *vajra*-bearer performed. He slew the serpent, released the waters and penetrated the bowels of the mighty (mountains).

(10) *ātiṣṭhantīnām aniveśanānām kṣāṭhānām mādhye nīhitam śārīram
vṛtrasya niṇyām ví caranty āpo dīrghām tāma āśayad īndrasatruḥ*

The body is placed amid the broken down and dead-end streams. The waters carry away the nameless body of Vṛtra. The enemy of Indra falls on his face in the perennial darkness.

However, the Indo-Iranian narrative that best corresponds to the Apollo and Python episodes of the *Homeric Hymn* is the fight between Tištriia and Apaoša, narrated in Yt 8. Before launching into the fight, the god has three epiphanies, one of which, as a young ephebe, was mentioned earlier. The second in the form of a bull and the third in the form of a horse. After each of these, the star asks for the honour due to himself. I reproduce the text below. As the three stanzas are the same except for one verse, I keep them together and note the variations in brackets:

(Yt 8.15,17,19)
*hō iθra viiāxmanieite
hō iθra parəsanieiti
kō maṇ nūṛaṁ frāiiazāite
gaomauuaitibiiō haomauuaitibiiō zaoθrābiiō
kahmāi azəm daḍaṁ
vīraiiaṁ vīraiiaṁ vaθβaṁ ištīm vīraiiaṁ vaθβaṁ
(gaoiiaṁ ištīm gaoiiaṁ vaθβaṁ /17)
(aspaiiaṁ ištīm aspaiiaṁ vaθβaṁ /19)
hauuaheca urunō yaoždāθrəm
nūṛaṁ ahmi yesniasca
vahmiasca aṇ'he astuuaitē
ašāt haca yaṭ vahištāt*

He now speaks in public, he now asks 'Who will honour me now with libations of milk and *haoma*? To whom shall I give wealth of men, a flock of men (wealth of cows, a herd of cows /17 wealth of horses, a herd of horses /19) and the purification of his soul? I am now worthy of veneration and of praise for earthly life for my aša, for he is the greatest.

In these strophes we clearly see that these narrative passages are reflective of the purpose of hymns in Indo-European literature (see section 1): praising the deity is a means to acquire his favour

⁴⁵ This story constitutes the first cosmogonic narration of Vedic testimony, cf. Mendoza Tuñón (2021).

and, in turn, get material benefits, correlating to the attributes of the god in his epiphanies. The ability of Tištriia to provide all these things also conveys his links to fertility and, thus, prosperity.

After saying this, he launches himself against Apaoša without receiving such veneration, and the fight ends in the first instance with the defeat and flight of Tištriia:

Yt 8.23 [...] *sādrēm mē ahura mazda*
uruuištrēm āpō uruuištrēm āpō uruuarāšca
baxtēm daēne māzdaiiesne
nōiṭ mām nūrām mašiiāka
aoxtō.nāmana yasna yazəṇte
yaḡa aniiē yazatāṇhō
aoxtō.nāmana yasna yaziṇti

My defeat, Ahura Mazdā! Withdrawal, waters and plants! Misfortune, Mazdean faith! Men now do not honour me with a name-invocation-liturgy, in the way the other gods are honoured with a name-invocation-liturgy.

Yt 8.24 *yeiḏi zī mā mašiiāka*
aoxtō.nāmana yasna yazaiiaṇta
yaḡa aniiē yazatāṇhō.
aoxtō.nāmana yasna yaziṇti
auui mām auui.baβriiām
dasanām aspanām aojō.
dasanām uštranām aojō
dasanām gauuām aojō
dasanām gairinām aojō
dasanām apām nāuuaiianām aojō

Because, if men had honoured me with a name-invocation-liturgy, in the way the other gods are honoured with a name-invocation-liturgy I would have attracted to me the force of ten horses, the strength of ten camels, the strength of ten bulls, the strength of ten mountains, the force of ten mighty waters.

In this way Tištriia gets Ahura Mazdā himself to worship him to provide him with the necessary vigour to face the demon Apaoša:

Yt 8.25 *azēm yō ahurō mazdā*
tištrīm raēuuāṇtēm x' arənaṇuḥaṇtēm
aoxtō.nāmana yasna yaze
auui dim auui.barāmi
dasanām aspanām aojō.
dasanām uštranām aojō
dasanām gauuām aojō
dasanām gairinām aojō
dasanām apām nāuuaiianām aojō

I myself, the one who is Ahura Mazdā, Tištriia, the shining, the splendid one, I honour (him) with a name-invocation-liturgy, to him I bring the force of ten horses, the strength of ten camels, the strength of ten bulls, the strength of ten mountains, the force of ten mighty waters!

After this, Tištriia attacks Apaoša again (stanzas 26 and 27 are the same as stanzas 20 and 21), but this time he has gained strength through worship and definitively defeats the demon, releasing the waters and fertility:

Yt 8.28 *həm tāciṭ bāzuš baratō*
spitama zaraθuštra
tištriiasca raēuuā°x° arənaṇ hā°
daēuuasca yō apaošō
tā°yūiōiiaθō zaraθuštra
ā.rapiθβinəm zruuānəm
ā.dim bauuaiti aiβi.aojā°
ā.dim bauuaiti aiβi.vaniiā°
tištriio raēuuā°x° arənaṇuhā°
daēūm yim apaošəm

The two put their paws together, oh Spitama Zaraθuštra, Tištriia, the brilliant, the splendorous, and the *daēuuā*, the one who is Apaoša. They fight, oh Zaraθuštra, until noon. Against him stands the powerful, the victor stands victorious in front of him, Tištriia, the brilliant, the splendorous, against the *daēuuā*, the one who is Apaoša.

Yt 8.29 *apa dim aḏāt°viiēti*
zraiaṇhaṭ°haca vourukašāt°
hāθrō.masanḥəm aḏβanəm
uštātātəm nimrauuaite
tištriio raēuuā°x° arənaṇ hā°
ušta mē ahura mazdā
ušta āpō uruuarāšcaṣ
ušta daēne māzdaiiesne
ušta ā.bauuāt°daiṇhauuō
us vō apəm aḏauuō
apaiti.ərətā°jasāṇti
aš.dānunəmca. yauuanəm
kasu.dānunəmca vāstranəm
gaēθanəmca astuuaitinəm.

This one chases him out of there of Lake Vourukaša by the distance of a *hāθra*. 'The best fortune!' he shouts, Tištriia, the brilliant, the splendid. 'My wish, O Ahura Mazdā, the desire of waters and plants! the desire of the Mazdean faith the wish will be fulfilled, oh countries! Water channels for you will sprout irresistibly, of fat grains, of wheat, of fine grains and meadows, (for you), those of the earthly world!'

In this way Tištriia regains control of the waters, which can be redistributed, and prosperity can again be guaranteed. Thus, Tištriia integrates his (violent) power into Ahura Mazdā's order as his executing arm, just as Apollo does this with respect to Zeus by bringing down the serpent (Python) that nurtured Typhon and establishing his oracle. In fact, Ahura Mazdā, speaking to Zoroaster, tells him the intention with which he created Tištriia:

Yt 8.50 *azəm daḏəm spitama zaraθuštra*
aom stārəm yim tištrīm
auuāṇtəm yesniata
auuāṇtəm vahmīata
auuāṇtəm xšnaoθβata
auuāṇtəm frasastata
yaθa maṃciṭ°yim ahurəm mazdəm

I created, oh Spitama Zaraθuštra, that star, Tištriia, with such a look to be honoured, with such a look to be extolled, with such an aspect to be satisfied, with such a look to be celebrated, as my own, I, (who am) Ahura Mazdā.

Lastly, Tištriia, said to confront the *pairika*- (see section 2.1 for the implications of this fight in the constitution of the calendar), correlates to Apollo's violence against female characters and monsters, also correlating with prosperity. It is clearly shown in the next strophe:

Yt 8.51 *auuaḡhāi pairikaiiāi*
paitištātaiaēca paitiscaptaiaēca
paititarataiaēca paitiaogəṭṭbaēšaxiāica
yā dužiiāiriia yaṃ
mašiiāka auui.dužuuacaḡhō
huiiāiriiaṃ nāma aojaite.

In front of that witch (*pairikaiiāi*) to stop it, to resist it, to defeat it, to return its enmity (to her), the one who is the Bad Harvest, the one whom men who speak badly treat by the name of Good Harvest.

Thus, one sees how the power of Tištriia, as high as that of Ahura Mazdā, serves to execute the will of Ahura Mazdā and protect creation. In this way, the violent capacity of these deities of the *Männerbünde*, Apollo and Tištriia, is redirected to a legitimate social function, namely the control and mastery of nature, serving as agents under the sovereign deity. However, how did this similar political framework come to be in both traditions?

The cultural context of production of these texts and the lack of a similar subaltern narrative in other Indo-European traditions points toward parallel polygenesis. In the case of Greece, the assimilation of *Männerbünde* into educational and colonial practices (see section 1.1) leads to a subordination of Apollo's power to his father. However, this does not contradict the fact that Apollo preserves most, if not all, of his individual power as an active and slaying deity who gains praise because of his violent capacity. In the case of Iran, the demonization of *daeūua*- cults in Zoroastrianism reshaped the practices of the *Männerbünde*, and they became part mostly of military training and organization⁴⁶. Thus, the reintegration of these deities of the *Männerbünde* as subalterns of the main deity of the pantheon would symbolize the radical mutation of the institution to contain it and make it fit with others in normative society.

2.2. Enthronement scenes in *h.Ap.* and *AVŚ 15*

This section will compare two enthronement scenes in the texts discussed, in particular in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and in the *Vrātyakāṇḍa*, in order to elucidate the possibility of a common origin and the conditions of the particular development of the original scene in each tradition. A necessary concept to be considered through this section is that, in Indo-European cultures, poetry has the somewhat magic capability to translate into material effects in the real, both natural and social, world. Because of this it is also very frequently described as a material (sewing, carpentry) discipline⁴⁷. The general thesis is that these two texts might be related to each other, and they might have had the function of reflecting the dominion of the deity of the *Männerbünde* over poetry and other divinities at the same time.

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* opens with a peculiar scene on Olympus: Apollo interrupts the banquet of the gods, and they stand up, frightened, until Leto disarms the young god. The text reads:

Μνήσομαι οὐδὲ λάθωμαι Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο,
 ὃν τε θεοὶ κατὰ δῶμα Διὸς τρομέουσιν ἰόντα·
 καὶ ῥά τ' ἀναΐσσουσιν ἐπὶ σχεδὸν ἔρχομένοιο
 πάντες ἄφ' ἐδράων, ὅτε φαίδιμα τόξα πιταίνει.
 (5) Λητῷ δ' οἷ μίμνε παρὰ Διὶ τερπικεραύνω,

⁴⁶ See section 1.1. above.

⁴⁷ Cf. Campanile (1977: 34-54) and West (2007: 35-40)

ἢ ῥα βίον τ' ἐχάλασσε καὶ ἐκλήισσε φαρέτρην,
καὶ οἱ ἅπ' ἰφθίμων ὤμων χεῖρεςσιν ἐλοῦσα
τόξα κατεκρέμασε πρὸς κίονα πατρός ἑοῖο
πασσάλου ἐκ χρυσείου· τὸν δ' ἐς θρόνον εἷσεν ἄγουσα.
(10) τῷ δ' ἄρα νέκταρ ἔδωκε πατήρ δέπαι χρυσεῖω
δεικνύμενος φίλον υἱόν, ἔπειτα δὲ δαίμονες ἄλλοι
ἐνθα καθίζουσιν χαίρει δέ τε πότνια Λητώ,
οὔνεκα τοξοφόρον καὶ καρτερόν υἱὸν ἔτικτεν.

I will remember, and I will not leave him hidden, the far-shooting Apollo. The gods tremble before him when he goes to the abode of Zeus, and all, when he extends his glorious bow, jump from their seats at his coming nearby. Only Leto remains seated next to Zeus, the one who enjoys the thunderbolt. She is the one who unstrings the bow and closes the quiver and, after taking the bow from his shoulders with her hands, hangs it on a golden nail on her father's pillar and leads him to sit on a throne. To him his father gives nectar in a golden cup, putting the attention of all on his beloved son. Then there the other gods sit down. Mistress Leto rejoices that she has begotten an archer and mighty son.

The arrival of the young man (who was considered ἀτάσθαλος even before he was born, see above and *h. Ap.* 67-69) poses a threat to the gods and to the established order⁴⁸. The tension is released when the young man is disarmed and enthroned (τὸν δ' ἐς θρόνον εἷσεν ἄγουσα) and when his father holds out the cup to him and gives him the reciprocated honour. In a way, Apollo suppresses his violent inclination in exchange for advantageous recognition⁴⁹. This is also reflective of the form of submission seen in section 2.2, as the deities of the *Männerbünde* are described with the same power of the deities of the main pantheon, representing then either a threat or an alternative to normative society or the *status quo* that is then peacefully suppressed and reintegrated.

In the third hymn (*pāryaya*) of AVŚ 15 there is also a scene of enthronement after the *vrātya* receives his apotheosis as Ekavrātya⁵⁰:

sá samvatsarām ūrdhvò 'tiṣṭhat tām devā abruvan vrātya kīm nú tiṣṭhasīti
sò 'bravid āsandīm me sām bharantv iti
tāsmāi vrātyāyāsandīm sām abharan
tāsya grīsmās ca vasantās ca dvāu pādāv āstām śarác ca varśās ca dvāu
brhác ca rathantarām cānūcyè āstām yajñāyajñīyam ca vāmadevyām ca tiraścyè
īcaḥ prāñcas tāntavo yājūṃṣi tiryāñcaḥ
vēda āstāraṇam brāhmopabārhaṇam
sāmāsādā udgīthò 'paśrayāḥ
tām āsandīm vrātya ārohat
tāsya devajanāḥ pariṣkandā āsant samkalpāḥ prahāyā víśvāni bhūtāny upasádaḥ
víśvāny evāsya bhūtāny upasádo bhavanti yá evām vēda

He stood for a year. The gods asked him: 'vrātya, why are you standing now?' He said, 'bring me a seat'. They brought a seat to the vrātya. Summer and spring were two of its

⁴⁸ Cf. Felson (2011).

⁴⁹ Cf. Felson (2011: 259-260).

⁵⁰ This particular section of the *Vrātyakaṇḍa* is understudied. Af Edholm (2017: 5) writes: «Another connection between the *vrātya* and sovereignty, not explored in the 2015 and 2016 volumes, is the symbolism of the *āsandī*, the seat or throne prepared for the *vrātya* by the gods in AVŚ 15.3. The seat, we read, is made out of the elements of liturgical speech and various parts of the cosmos». Pontillo (2012: 12-16) writes on the poetic-enthronement motif and covers this text and other parallels in later strata of the Vedic corpus but does not delve deeper into the significance of the text inside the *Vrātyakaṇḍa*. The other texts presented by Pontillo (2012) are also connected to sovereignty. As far as I know, this is the first time this *pāryaya* has been viewed from a comparative Indo-European perspective.

legs, autumn and rains (were) two. Brhát and Rathantará were the arms, Yajñāyajñīya and Vāmadevyá the garrison. The stanzas (*ṛc-*) the extended cords, the sacrificial formulae (*yájuṣ-*) the crossed cords. *Veda* the cushion and *Bráhmaṇ* the headboard. The songs (*sāma-*) the seat, the *udgītha-*, the back. The *vrātya* ascended that throne. Divine beings are his servants, purposes his messengers, all beings his attendants. All beings become attendants to the one who knows this.

This ekphrasis of the throne of the Ekavrātya takes up for the most part (with the sole exception of the verse alluding to the seasons) elements associated with the poetic and ritual tradition established as a canon prior to the production of the *Atharvaveda*⁵¹: Brhát, Rathantará, Yajñāyajñīya and Vāmadevyá refer to important families of reciters of the *Sāmaveda*, of which the *sāman-* and the *udgītha-* are two parts, just as *ṛc-* and *yájuṣ-* allude respectively to the *Rgveda* and the *Yajurveda*. *Bráhmaṇ* is a problematic concept, but it can be summarised here as the vital energy that brings about creation and prosperity and is accessed through ritual⁵².

The function of this passage is to define the Ekavrātya's field of power over all these elements and to emphasise the character's influence over them. In this way, the Ekavrātya is consolidated as the possessor of the forms of ritual knowledge that enable him to attain a degree of divinity⁵³. Poetic ability is the element that defines him as an enthroned deity. As the Ekavrātya is the divinized member of the *Männerbünde* and, thus, his ideal form, the submission of the other deities towards him reflects a political ideology by which the Ekavrātya's dominion over the field of poetry (or over knowledge in general, reflecting the gnostic-like perspective described by Dore 2015 & 2016) reflects his dominion over the previous, normative deities. Thus, *Männerbünde* practices allow their members to attain not only a special religious position, but also a political one, characteristic of the agonistical system of the *vrātya* culture (see section 1.1).

The poetic capacity as divine prerogative also appears in a fundamental passage in the structure of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*: the so-called "Pythian hymn" opens, apparently, with a scene of music and dance of the gods led by Apollo (182-206), which which in itself forms a unity through recourse to the *Ringkomposition*. The text is preceded by a brief account of the regions where Apollo is worshipped (Lycia, Meonia, Miletus and Delos, 179-181) and opens with a new arrival of Apollo singing on Olympus⁵⁴:

εἶσι δὲ φορμίζων Λητοῦς ἐρικυδέος υἱὸς
 φόρμιγγι γλαφυρῇ πρὸς Πυθῶ πετρήεσσιν,
 ἄμβροτα εἶματ' ἔχων τεθυωμένα: τοῖο δὲ φόρμιγξ
 (185) χρυσεύου ὑπὸ πλῆκτρον καναχὴν ἔχει ἱμερόεσσιν.
 ἔνθεν δὲ πρὸς Ὀλυμπόν ἀπὸ χθονός ὥς τε νόημα,
 εἶσι Διὸς πρὸς δῶμα θεῶν μεθ' ὁμήγουριν ἄλλων.

The son of Leto, the glorious one, goes tolling the hollow phorminx towards the rocky Pytho clad in immortal and perfumed garments. His phorminx under the golden plectrum has an enchanting sound. From there, towards Olympus from the earth, like a thought, he goes to the house of Zeus, to the gathering of the other gods.

This passage presents its own *Ringkomposition* (the first and last verses open with εἶσι) and presents Apollo as a god who travels with his poetic endowments (like the Ekavrātya in the second *pāryaya*). It continues with the direction of the divine choir by the god:

⁵¹ Which, most probably, was the last collection to be added to the canonical *corpus* of the *Vedas*, in turn composed also of the *Rgveda*, the oldest hymnic collection of India, the *Sāmaveda* and the *Yajurveda*. These texts, together with their main exegetical treatises (readers may be familiar with the *Brahmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*), constitute the Vedic canon, the earliest *corpus* of religious texts in India.

⁵² Cf. Gonda (1950: 10).

⁵³ Cf. Dore (2016).

⁵⁴ This examination of the text follows Muscianisi's (2024) article very closely.

αὐτίκα δ' ἄθανάτοισι μέλει κίθαρις καὶ ἀοιδή.
 Μοῦσαι μὲν θ' ἅμα πᾶσαι ἀμειβόμεναι ὀπὶ καλῇ
 (190) ὕμνευσίν ῥα θεῶν δῶρ' ἄμβροτα ἡδ' ἀνθρώπων
 τλημοσύνας, ὅσ' ἔχοντες ὕπ' ἄθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
 ζώουσ' ἀφραδέες καὶ ἀμήχανοι, οὐδὲ δύνανται
 εὐρέμεναι θανάτοιο τ' ἄκος καὶ γήραος ἄλκαρ.

Immediately the gods take an interest in the zither and the song. All the Muses at once answer him with a beautiful voice and sing of the immortal gifts of the gods and the hardships of men, who are borne by the immortal gods and who live witless and helpless and can find no remedy for death and no defence against old age.

In this particular passage, a feature to note is the haste with which deities join Apollo in his choral dance, as reflected by αὐτίκα 'immediately' and ἅμα 'at once'. This is also a reflection of his mastery over poetry, song, and dance, moving other deities to follow him almost without thought. The text continues as follows:

αὐτὰρ εὐπλόκαμοι Χάριτες καὶ εὐφρονες Ὕραι
 (195) Ἀρμονίη θ' Ἥβη τε Διὸς θυγάτηρ τ' Ἀφροδίτη
 ὀρχεῦντ' ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χειρὸς ἔχουσαι·
 τῇσι μὲν οὐτ' αἰσχρὴ μεταμέλπεται οὐτ' ἐλάχεια,
 ἀλλὰ μάλα μεγάλη τε ἰδεῖν καὶ εἶδος ἀγητή,
 Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα ὁμότροφος Ἀπόλλωνι.

For their part, the well-braided Graces, the benevolent Horai, Harmonia, Hebe and the daughter of Zeus, Aphrodite, dance, holding each other's hands by the wrist. Among them sings, neither reprehensible nor mediocre, but very great to behold and admirable in her image, Artemis, the archer, bred at the same time as Apollo.

(200) ἐν δ' αὖ τῇσιν Ἄρης καὶ εὐσκοπὸς Ἀργειφόντης
 παίζουσ'· αὐτὰρ ὁ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων ἐγκιθαρίζει
 καλὰ καὶ ὕψι βιβάς· αἴγλη δέ μιν ἀμφιφαίνει
 μαρμαρυγαί τε ποδῶν καὶ εὐκλώστοιο χιτῶνος.
 οἱ δ' ἐπιτέρπονται θυμὸν μέγαν εἰσορώωντες
 (205) Λητῷ τε χρυσοπλόκαμος καὶ μητίετα Ζεὺς
 οἷα φίλον παίζοντα μετ' ἄθανάτοισι θεοῖσι.

Among them also Ares and the good-sighted Argiphon dance, while Phoebus Apollo strides beautifully on the zither. Shining glitter around them, and the twinkling of their feet and their well-girded chiton. They rejoice in their great hearts Leto, she of golden curls, and the prudent Zeus, to see their beloved son dancing among the immortal gods.

This passage, apart from expounding Apollo's musical endowments, also serves as a catalogue of his prerogatives and divine functions: Muscianisi (2024) has developed that the following allusions are iconically portrayed in the texts:

- The Graces (from PIE *ǵʰer-) represent the bliss brought by the recitation of sacred songs and ritual formulae (cf. Skt. *hāryati*)⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Janda (2022: 137-141) also proposes that the three Graces, sometimes iconographically represented with Apollo, could also correspond to the three stars in the Belt of Orion, further confirming the arguments put forward in section 2.1.

- the Horai (seasons) and Aphrodite represent the fertility associated with the god⁵⁶.
- Harmony represents the god's role as guarantor of the cosmic order established by his father⁵⁷.
- Hebe corresponds to the vigour of ephebic youth.
- Artemis (as an archer, in the same way as when Apollo causes the plague in the first book of the *Iliad*) Ares, Hermes (through his epithet Ἀργειφόντης) symbolise the violence associated with the god, as do human sufferings such as death and old age.

It is reasonable to think that this passage, with the entrance of the god into Olympus and the immediate reaction of the gods, also reflects the beginning of the Delian hymn (1-13) and thus the enthronement and prerogatives of the god at his entrance. We might therefore see the ekphrasis of the Ekavrātya's throne, representing all the poetic endowments mastered by members of the *Männerbünde* after their apotheosis, as a reflection of the formally separate scenes in the poem of Apollo's enthronement and celebration, in which the god's prerogatives are represented more iconically in the circle of the dance. The recourse respectively to the ekphrasis and catalogue of the *Vrātyakāṇḍa* and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* would correspond to two creative crystallisations of a common enthronement scene in which the divine prerogatives of the *Männerbund* deity would be mentioned.

These scenes also have strong political connotations. The fact that in both cases the other deities appear as subordinates of the god of the *Männerbünde* may reflect, in contrast with the subordination of Apollo and Tīstriia to Zeus and Ahura Mazdā (seen in section 2.2), a situation in which the deities of the *Männerbünde* reach a superior status, as seen also in the cosmogonic catalogue in AVŚ 15.1 (seen in section 2.1). Thus, the relationship between hegemonic gods and deities of the *Männerbünde* is ambiguous, and changes in the individual texts of each branch depending on the context and the intention of the authors and their own relationship to *Männerbünde* institutions.

In this context, the submission of the other gods to the Ekavrātya reflects the special status members of the *Männerbünde* may attain through their poetical abilities. This represents not only a religious ideal, but also a political one, giving members of *vrātya* institutions the position of gods in Earth. In the case of Apollo, he has the power to instill fear in other deities to the point of gaining a special treatment among them. He also can lead other gods in a dance. His violent instincts are, however, domesticated by his father, Zeus, representing the political status of *Männerbünde* in Greek society, as they were instilled into collegial institutions in colonial settlements or into educational practices of the youth.

3. Concluding remarks

This article has explored a limited selection of texts from a philological perspective to try to bring forward common features associated with deities of the *Männerbünde*. In all three case studies, a philological approach to the hymnic literature of Indo-European cultures has proven a viable way to study shared motifs that very likely trace back to a common cultural background, and also how particular historical developments are an integral part of how particular cultural features develop among Indo-European branches and how the social institution of the *Männerbünde* was conceived among those who were in contact with it.

Focusing on just this selection of texts has further allowed to underline a number of features that can positively be reconstructed, namely the following:

- a stellar form may be a defining feature of the deities of the Indo-European *Männerbünde*, and it may be linked to their cult. All the characters discussed here are characterised by their brightness and have the image of a star. This is a determining factor in the

⁵⁶ See previous section. It is important to note that this fertility is a consequence of violence, cf. Felson (2013).

⁵⁷ Cf. Massetti (2014).

establishment and calendar organisation of their respective cults, such as the cult of Tištriia according to its heliacal rising approaching dawn or the cult of the oracular Apollo, which depends on the positions of Delphinus, Lyra and Cygnus.

- Apollo and Tištriia incorporate the same model of dragon-slaying myths. Both have similar motifs: they are subordinate deities of the main god, they send the opponent into darkness, guarantee fertility and prosperity and are worshipped because of this action. This is reflective of parallel social changes in both branches.
- Both Apollo and the Ekavrātya are enthroned by the gods, and their enthronement scenes reflect in diverse ways, depending on the development of each tradition, their mastery of poetic technique. Poetic technique, and its possibility to have effect on the real world, is a strong prerogative of deities of the *Männerbünde*, and is also a means to represent their political power.

All these texts carry, across the three case studies, insights into the political status of *Männerbünde* as the institutions developed in each branch.

Starting with Tištriia, he is reflective of the cult dedicated to a young warrior deity, most similar and equal in power to the main deity of the canonical pantheon (Ahura Māzda). He slays various threats to the *status quo* to maintain cosmic order and fertility. Other *Männerbünde* features may not appear directly, but this reflects the fact that *Männerbünde*, when reintegrated into Zoroastrianism through syncretism, were relegated to other social functions, and thus many of its characteristics were disconnected from the deity, as they might not have been well perceived in the new religious context. However, this does not exclude a reciprocal relationship between gods considered as equals, as Ahura Māzda gives power through direct praise to Tištriia in his moment of greatest need. In the case of the Ekavrātya, his representation mostly point towards a special position and power gained by *Männerbünde* practices. The focus is placed on the deified individual and what he becomes and what he acquires by participating in the institutions, highlighting his power in what would be an agonistic society in which interactions are (ideally) mediated by the social capital of knowledge. Apollo, on the other hand, shows a neutralization on the institutions and an assimilation to educational and colonial practices. He still is remarkably violent and powerful, even among the gods, deserving a special, enthroned, or leading position, but his efforts are redirected towards goals aligned with the main deity of the pantheon. Lastly, the star-like appearance of all these deities is reinterpreted politically through its relation to oracles (Apollo), calendar organization (Tištriia) and the individual acquisition of a god-like status (the Ekavrātya).

It has also allowed us to see how some texts, previously understudied among *Männerbünde* scholars, such as the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and the enthronement scene of the Ekavrātya, are also valuable sources for future comparisons and deeper studies. In general, choosing first the hymnic genre as the point of departure, and secondly conducting the study of the institution separated in smaller case studies of literary texts, lead to the interesting result of reflecting somehow the development of the institutions in each cultural frame, as particular practices and ideas appear or disappear, as well as presenting somewhat fossilized features in the form of attributes or characteristics of the deities which might seem out of fashion in relation to other characteristics of the culture in which they appear.

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