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THE MYTH OF INVENTING  
THE MANY-HEADED NOME

The twelfth Pythian ode of Pindar, dedicated to the victory of Midas the aulos player from Acragas (490 BC<sup>1</sup>), is our earliest direct evidence of the νόμος as a certain type of musical piece.<sup>2</sup> In a poetic text, Pindar changes the name νόμος πολυκέφαλος, known from elsewhere (*Sch. Pind. Pyth.* 12. 39, vol. II p. 268. 9 Dr.; Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 7. 1133 D–E; Hesych. s. v. πολυκέφαλος), into κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν νόμος (v. 23) and tells an etiological legend about it: after the killing of Medusa by Perseus, Athena created this instrumental aulos piece to imitate the woeful and terrible weeping of the two other gorgons and the hissing of the snakes on their heads (v. 6–12, 18–21). Apart from Pindar, this story can be found only in Nonnus of Panopolis (*Dionys.* 40. 227–233; 24. 36–38), who calls the invention by Athena θρηῆνος πουλυκάρηνος. Let us recollect the texts of both poets.

Pindar introduces the story of Athena’s musical invention in a narration of the myth of Perseus (*Pyth.* 12. 6–12, 18–27):<sup>3</sup>

- 6 ... αὐτόν τε νιν Ἑλλάδα νικάσαντα τέχνα, τάν ποτε  
Παλλάς ἐφεῦρε θρασειᾶν <Γοργόνων>  
οὔλιον θρηῆνον διαπλέξαισ’ Ἀθᾶνα·  
τὸν παρθενίους ὑπό τ’ ἀπλάτοις ὀφίων κεφαλαῖς  
10 ἄϊε λειβόμενον δυσπενθεῖ σὺν καμάτῳ,  
Περσεὺς ὅποτε τρίτον ἄϋσεν κασιγνητᾶν μέρος  
ἐνναλία Σερίφῳ λαοῖσί τε μοῖραν ἄγων.

...and (receive) him (sc. Midas) as well, who surpassed Greece in an art that Pallas Athena once invented, having weaved<sup>4</sup> the murderous

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<sup>1</sup> See Schroeder 1922, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Dornseiff 1933, 27.

<sup>3</sup> The text is cited from Snell–Maehler 1987.

<sup>4</sup> Held 1998, 382–384 convincingly proves that the meaning of διαπλέκω does not presuppose the combination of two sources of sound, but governs an inner accusative and means ‘produce’, in this case ‘reproduce’.

lament of the insolent <gorgons>. She heard it<sup>5</sup> as it poured out with direful toil<sup>6</sup> through the maidens' and the unapproachable serpents' heads, when Perseus gave a shout, bringing the third portion of the sisters as a doom to marine Seriphus and its population.

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ τούτων φίλον ἄνδρα πόνων  
 ἐρρύσατο παρθένος, αὐλῶν τεύχε πάμφωνον μέλος,  
 20 ὄφρα τὸν Εὐρύαλας ἐκ καρπαλιμᾶν γενύων  
 χριμφθέντα σὺν ἔντεσι μιμήσaiτ' ἐρικλάγκταν γόον.  
 εὔρεν θεός· ἀλλά νιν εὐροῖσ' ἀνδράσι θνατοῖς ἔχειν,  
 ὠνύμασεν κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν νόμον,  
 εὐκλεᾶ λαοσσῶων μναστῆρ' ἀγώνων,  
 25 λεπτοῦ διανισόμενον χαλκοῦ θαμὰ καὶ δονάκων,  
 τοὶ παρὰ καλλίχορον ναίοισι πόλιν Χαρίτων  
 Καφισίδος ἐν τεμένει, πιστοὶ χορευτᾶν μάρτυρες.

But after the virgin (sc. Athena) had saved her favourite man from these toils, she created the pipes' melody of every sound to imitate with the instrument the loud wailing of Euryale forced from her violently moving jaws. A goddess invented it; but, having invented it for mortal men to have, she called it “a nome of many heads” – that glorious tune concerned with man-driving contests, frequently passing through thin bronze and reeds, which, the dancers' trusty witnesses, dwell by the fair-dancing town of the Graces<sup>7</sup> in the sacred domain of Cephisis.

Nonnus describes the funeral ceremony held by Dionysus after the conquest of India. Among various kinds of mournful music, there is an aulos piece (*Dionys.* 40. 227–233):<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Making Perseus the subject of ἄιε (Sandys 1915, 309; Hummel 1993, 336–337; see *contra* Shevtsova 2008 [E. В. Шевцова, “Pind. Pyth. 12, 9–12”, *Материалы XXXVII Международной филологической конференции. Классическая филология. 11–15 марта 2008 г.*], 8–9) seems a pointless complication of the text: since it was Athena who set the threnos of the gorgons to aulos music, it is substantial what *she* heard.

<sup>6</sup> Köhnken makes the words δυσπενθέϊ σὺν καμάτῳ governed not by λειβόμενον, but by the verb in v. 11 (he accepts the reading ἄνυσσεν in Köhnken 1971, 122 n. 28 and 1976, 259–263, but ἄϋσεν in 1978, 92–93), so that they should qualify the actions of Perseus. See *contra* Radt 1974, 117–118; Angeli Bernardini 1995, 674.

<sup>7</sup> I.e. Orchomenus, cf. *Ol.* 14. 1–4.

<sup>8</sup> The text is cited from Keydell 1959.

καὶ Κλεόχου Βερέκυντες ὑπὸ στόμα δίζυγες αὐλοὶ  
 φρικτὸν ἐμυκήσαντο Λίβυν γόον, ὃν πάρος ἄμφω  
 Σθεννώ τ' Εὐρυάλη τε μῆ πολυδειράδι φωνῆ  
 ἀρτιτόμῳ ῥοιζηδὸν ἐπεκλαύσαντο Μεδούση 230  
 φθεγγομένων κεφαλῆσι διηκοσίησι δρακόντων,  
 τῶν ἄπο μυρομένων σκολιὸν σύριγμα κομάων  
 θρηνον πουλυκάρηνον ἐφημίζαντο Μεδούσης.

And the double Berecynthian pipes in the mouth of Cleochus droned an awesome Libyan lament, with which long ago both Sthenno and Euryale loudly wept over newly gashed Medusa with one voice from many throats: their snakes producing sounds from two hundred heads, they (sc. the gorgons) uttered wriggling hissing out of their grieving hairs – a many-headed dirge for Medusa.

Apparently, the same myth is meant by Nonnus in *Dionys.* 24. 35–38, where the river Hydaspes asks Dionysus for mercy:

μὴ δόνακας φλέξειας, ὅθεν σέο Μυγδόνες αὐλοί,  
 μὴ ποτέ σοι μέμψαιτο τεῆ φιλόμολπος Αθήνη,  
 ἢ ποτε Γοργείων βλοσυρὸν μίμημα καρῆνων  
 φθεγγομένων Λίβυν εὔρεν ὁμοζυγέων τύπον αὐλῶν.

Do not burn the reeds of which your Mygdonian pipes are made, so that you are never reproached by your song-loving Athena, who once invented the Libyan buzzing of conjugated pipes as a dreadful imitation of the gorgons' heads producing sounds.

Investigating the many-headed nome, it is curious to learn when the legend of its divine origin came into being: was Pindar the inventor of this story, or did he transmit an already present mythological tradition?

## I. Mythological Tradition

A definite kind of musical piece is not a typical object of an etiological legend. It lacks the general cultural significance to become an object of a folklore myth, which would rather ascribe a divine invention to such things that seem to accompany human life from time immemorial and are essential for it, such as a musical instrument or genre. A story of inventing the νόμος πολυκέφαλος is most likely a figment of just one poet's fantasy.

The αἴτιον of the many-headed nome as reported by Pindar and Nonnus is a unique connection of two myths, which are well attested independently of each other: Perseus' victory over the gorgons and the invention of the aulos. The element they have in common is Athena's participation.

The association of Athena with the story of Medusa is not an occasional detail: a version is attested that makes the goddess herself destroy the monster (Eur. *Ion* 991; Ps.-Apollod. 2. 46; Euhemerus ap. Hygin. *Astron.* 2. 12. 2).<sup>9</sup> The variant with Medusa killed by Perseus instead of Athena must have originated in Argos: Perseus is a local hero,<sup>10</sup> grandson of the Argive king Acrisius. In the latter story, Athena (together with Hermes) becomes his tutelary goddess (Pherecyd. *FGrHist* 3 F 11 ap. *Sch. Ap. Rhod.* 4. 1515a, p. 320. 12; 21–22 Weldel; Paus. 2. 21. 6; Ps.-Apollod. 2. 37; 41; 46; Hygin. *Astron.* 2. 12). The first representations of this plot in the visual arts date back to the seventh century BC;<sup>11</sup> the presence of Athena is frequent, beginning from the earliest monuments.<sup>12</sup> Pindar mentions her helping Perseus also in *Pyth.* 10. 45.

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<sup>9</sup> Roscher 1993a, 677; Rocher 1993b, 1696. Already in the *Iliad*, Athena can wear the aegis with the gorgon's head (*Il.* 2. 446 sqq. without mentioning the gorgoneion; 5. 738–742), but it belongs to Zeus (e.g. in *Il.* 21. 420 Athena is called αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος), who lends it to Apollo as well (*Il.* 15. 229). Among the epithets of Athena in later poetry are γοργοφόνη (Eur. *Ion* 1478; Orph. *Hymn.* 32. 8) and γοργῶπις (Soph. *Ai.* 450; fr. 760. 2 N. = 844. 2 *TrGF*; Eur. *Hel.* 1316).

<sup>10</sup> Kuhnert 1993, 2018; 2019 (“So reiche Erinnerungen an Perseus wie die argolische Landschaft hat keine andere aufzuweisen”); 2021–2025.

<sup>11</sup> Protoattic neck amphora, Eleusis, Archaeological Museum 544, ca. 670 BC (*LIMC* IV s.v. Gorgo, Gorgones no. 312); Cycladic amphora with a relief, Paris, Louvre CA 795, ca. 670 BC (*LIMC* *ibid.* no. 290, Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 1, pl. 1. 1); ivory relief, Samos, Archaeological Museum E 1, 625–600 BC (*LIMC* *ibid.* no. 291).

<sup>12</sup> Krauskopf 1988, 316. Scenes from the seventh century that include Athena are indicated in the previous footnote (*LIMC* IV s.v. Gorgo, Gorgones no. 312 and 291). For the sixth century, see *LIMC* IV s.v. Gorgo, Gorgones no. 292 (= Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 5, pl. 2, 3), 294 (= *BAPD* 320045; Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 9, pl. 4, 2), 307 (= Athena no. 12), 314 (= Athena no. 7; *BAPD* 300055), 315 (= *BAPD* 32480), 320 (= *LIMC* II s.v. Athena no. 504; *BAPD* 300468); *LIMC* VII s.v. Perseus no. 100 (= *BAPD* 350225), 152 (= *BAPD* 300028), 154 (= *BAPD* 8210); *BAPD* 11102, 28004, 300488, 300793, 302168, 302926, 310144, 320090, 350226. For the first half or the middle of the fifth century, see *LIMC* IV s.v. Gorgo, Gorgones no. 298 (= Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 11, pl. 6, 1), 299 (= *BAPD* 275462; Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 13, pl. 8, 1–3), 300 (= *BAPD* 209561; Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 14, pl. 9, 1–2); 301 (= *BAPD* 213438; Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 15, pl. 10, 1–2), 333+338 (= *BAPD* 215959), 337 (= *BAPD* 214401); *BAPD* 17065, 29855, 202629, 205773, 206339, 206702, 206718, 207171, 207172 (= Serfontein 1991, cat. no. 12, pl. 7, 1–2), 209561, 213438, 214401.

As regards the cultural myth of inventing the aulos, we know nothing about the tradition earlier than Pindar. Most our sources ascribe it to Athena, but prove aware of the version in which the goddess threw the instrument away and Marsyas the satyr picked it up.<sup>13</sup> Evidence of the story of Athena and Marsyas first appears in the mid-fifth century BC.<sup>14</sup> Those sources that, like the twelfth Pythian ode, do not refer to the myth of Marsyas and depict Athena calmly possessing and using her invention, are very few and do not antedate Pindar:<sup>15</sup> in Epicharmus, the goddess accompanied the military dance of the Dioscuri;<sup>16</sup> in Corinna, she taught Apollo to play the aulos;<sup>17</sup> besides, Diodorus Siculus includes producing both the instrument and the music for it in the list of her benefactions to mankind – but his wording does not exclude the version with Marsyas.<sup>18</sup>

Alternatively, our sources name the Phrygian aulos players Hyagnis, Marsyas, and Olympus as *πρῶτοι εὐρευταί* of the aulos.<sup>19</sup> This is evidently

<sup>13</sup> For detailed accounts, see Hygin. *Fab.* 165; Ov. *Fast.* VI, 695–710; Plut. *De cohibenda ira* 6, 456b–c; Ps.-Apollod. 1. 24; Tzetzes *Chil.* 1. 353–384. For a further list of sources depicting Athena as the inventor of the aulos, see Burckhardt 1930, 1992; Schauenburg 1958, 42 n. 42.

<sup>14</sup> A statue group by Myron on the Athenian Acropolis, ca. 457–447 BC: Paus. 1. 24. 1; Plin. *NH* 34. 57; *LIMC* VI s.v. Marsyas I no. 10–12. Athena and Marsyas on Attic vases of the fifth century: *LIMC* VI s.v. Marsyas I no. 9 (Athens, Acropolis 632, a replica of Myron’s statue), ca. 450–440 BC; *LIMC* II s.v. Athena no. 618 (Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F2418), 450–445 BC. Melanippides, *Marsyas* fr. 758 *PMG* (ap. Athen. 14. 7. 616 e).

<sup>15</sup> On a black-figure amphora from ca. 520–510 BC, that depicts Athena playing an aulos and Heracles playing a cithara (Basel, market, *LIMC* II s.v. Athena no. 617), Athena is probably represented as the goddess of the Panathenaia rather than the inventor of the pipes.

<sup>16</sup> Epicharm. fr. 92 K.–A. ap. *Sch. Pind. Pyth.* 2. 127: ὁ δὲ Ἐπίχαρμος τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν φησι τοῖς Διοσκούροις τὸν ἐνόπλιον νόμον ἐπαυλῆσαι.

<sup>17</sup> Corinna fr. 668 Page ap. Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 14. 1136 B: ἡ δὲ Κόριννα καὶ διδασθῆναί φησι τὸν Ἀπόλλω ὑπ’ Ἀθηνᾶς αὐλεῖν.

<sup>18</sup> Diod. Sic. 5. 73: εὐρεῖν δὲ καὶ τὴν τῶν αὐλῶν κατασκευὴν καὶ τὴν διὰ τούτων συντελουμένην μουσικὴν.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Polyhistor, *FGrHist* 273 F 77 ap. Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 5, 1132 F: “Υαγνιν δὲ πρῶτον αὐλῆσαι, εἶτα τὸν τούτου υἱὸν Μαρσύαν, εἶτ’ Ὀλυμπον (cf. Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 7, 1133 D–E). Only Hyagnis is mentioned in Aristox. fr. 78 Wehrli; *Marm. Par.* A 10. 19; *AP* 9. 340 (Dioscurid.); Nonn. *Dionys.* 41. 374. See Semenchenko 2019 [Л. В. Семенченко, “Марсий, Олимп, Гиагнид и миф об изобретении авлоса”], 914–924 for an attempt to trace three separate traditions regarding Marsyas, Olympus, and Hyagnis. – Standing apart is the evidence of Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 14, 1135 F, who has his Soterichus claim that Apollo invented both the

a rationalization of the myth, turning legendary heroes into historical characters.<sup>20</sup> However, the idea of the Phrygian origin of this instrument is much earlier than Pindar's time: Athenaeus (14. 18, 624 b) confirms his report that many aulos players had Phrygian names and were scornfully called "Phrygian slaves" with references to Alcman (*PLG*<sup>4</sup> III. 69) and Hipponax (*PLG*<sup>4</sup> II. 492).<sup>21</sup>

In all probability, originally two alternative legends were current, one ascribing the invention of the aulos to Athena, another to Marsyas (or some other Phrygian character), and the story of how Athena rejected the instrument and Marsyas found it is a conflation of two traditions.<sup>22</sup> Evidence at our disposal allows us to admit with caution that they merged in Athens in the middle of the fifth century BC.<sup>23</sup> It is often assumed that the hybrid myth originated (or at least was applied) as an attack upon

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aulos and the cithara (referring to ἄλλοι τε καὶ Ἀλκαῖος, fr. 3 Bgk = 307 c Liberman), and of Duris of Samos (*FGrHist* 76 F16 ap. Athen. 14. 9. 618 b–c), who ascribes the achievements usually associated with the Phrygians to a Lydian man named Seirites (see below part IV).

<sup>20</sup> Barker 2018, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Chuvin 1995, 122.

<sup>22</sup> Preller–Robert 1894, 223; Reinach 1912, 390–391; Burckhardt 1930, 1987; 1992; Weis 1992, 367; Semenchenko 2019, 923. – Hardly convincing is the hypothesis of Chuvin 1995, shared by Steiner 2013, 195–196, that Pindar had at his disposal a version with Athena making her discovery in Phrygia, and was the first to transfer it to Boeotia, consciously omitting any mention of the aulos' foreign origin. To the best of my knowledge, each time the *invention* of the instrument is localized in Phrygia, it is ascribed to Marsyas (Metrodorus of Chios ap. Athen. 4. 82. 184 a: ἐν Κελαιναῖς) or Hyagnis (*Marm. Par.* A 10. 19: ἐν Κ[ε]λ[α]ιν[αῖ]ς τῆ]ς Φρ[υγίας], add. Palmerius), but not to Athena. Since Marsyas bears the name of a local river, the story of him challenging Apollo and being punished for the defeat naturally takes place near Celaenae, and Strabo (12. 8. 15, p. 578) notes on this point that the lake that is the source of the rivers Marsyas and Maeander produces reeds appropriate for the mouthpieces of auloi. If Marsyas was initially a river god (Jessen <sup>2</sup>1993, 2439; 2445; Reinach 1912, 394; Burckhardt 1930, 1988), dealing with pipes is understandable for him. After the conflation of two myths, in order to explain why it happened to be a Phrygian satyr who picked up the aulos rejected by Athena, the goddess had to be imagined as *throwing the instrument away* in this region: thus, in Hygin. *Fab.* 165, after being ridiculed by other gods in Olympus, she left for the mountain Ida; in Prop. 2. 30. 16–18, she threw the pipes into Maeander; in Claud. *In Eutrop.* 20. 255–256, the *tibia* made of a Libyan plant was thrown away in Phrygia.

<sup>23</sup> It has even been conjectured that Melanippides, with his dithyramb "Marsyas" (see above n. 14), was responsible for this conflation: Boardman 1956, 19–20; Wüst 1967, 82 n. 6.

neighbouring Boeotia,<sup>24</sup> which was famous for aulos playing,<sup>25</sup> and/or because of the opposition to wind music<sup>26</sup> among Athenian intellectuals.<sup>27</sup> This version later prevailed, likely due to the cultural authority of Athens.

Out of prudence, let us see if the νόμος πολυκέφαλος itself (as heard by Pindar) can be regarded as evidence ascribing to Athena the creation of the aulos and of the nome that was its own prototype. In fact, both Pindar's description and the analogy with the instrumental Pythian nome depicting the victory of Apollo over Python<sup>28</sup> clearly show that this was a kind of programmatic aulos music with a narrative mythical subject and sound mimicry. The appearance of Athena in this piece seemed so evident to some scholars that they proposed to identify it with Ἀθηνᾶς νόμος (known from Plat. *Cratyl.* 417 e; Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 33. 1143 B; Poll. 4. 77).<sup>29</sup> However, the data we possess make this hypothesis improbable.

In his list of auletic nomes, Pseudo-Plutarch indicates that the many-headed nome was dedicated to Apollo (*De mus.* 7, 1133 D: νόμον αὐλητικὸν εἰς Ἀπόλλωνα τὸν καλούμενον πολυκέφαλον). Of course, this can be put into question if we suppose that its belonging to Apollo was inferred by someone who lived when the νόμος πολυκέφαλος no longer

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<sup>24</sup> Böttiger 1837, 12–16; Gildersleeve 1895, 366; Farnell 1896, 316; Van der Kolf 1927, 31; Wegner 1949, 155–156; Demand 1983, 88–89; Kasper-Butz 1990, 184; Papadopoulou–Pirenne-Delforge 2001, 54; Wallace 2003, 89. See *contra* Boardman 1956, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Poll. 7. 88 (κρουπεζοφόρους δ' εἶπε τοὺς Βοιωτοὺς Κρατῖνος διὰ ἐν αὐλητικῇ κρούματα); Dio Chrys. 7. 212 = *AP* 16. 28 (Ἐλλὰς μὲν Θῆβας νικᾶν προέκρινεν ἐν αὐλοῖς, an inscription claimed to be already extant by 335 BC); Plut. *Alc.* 2 (αὐλείτωσαν οὖν, ἔφη, Θηβαίων παῖδες); *Pelop.* 19. 1 (τὸν αὐλὸν εἰς τιμὴν καὶ προεδρίαν ἄγοντες). Note that the fame of Boeotian aulos players is not attested earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Demand 1983, 186; Roesch 1989, 206). For a considerable list of Boeotian aulos players of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century, see Huchzermeyer 1931, 47–48; Roesch 1989, 205–213; West 1992, 366–367 with n. 39.

<sup>26</sup> On the negative attitude toward the aulos in Athens after 450 BC, see Wilson 1999, 85–95; Wallace 2003, 82–90.

<sup>27</sup> Böttiger 1837, 17–19; Huchzermeyer 1931, 60–61; Lasserre 1954, 32; Weis 1992, 367; LeVen 2014, 105–106; Semenchenko 2019, 923.

<sup>28</sup> There are four extant descriptions of the Pythian nome: Strabo 9. 3. 10, p. 421–422; Poll. 4. 84; *Schol. Pind. Pyth.* hyp. a, vol. II p. 2. 8–15 Dr. (without mentioning the name νόμος Πυθικός), and Demetrius Laco, *De poematis* 2. 11 (*PHerc.* 1014, col. XLVIII; for the reconstruction of the text, see Romeo 1988a, 286; Romeo 1988b, 119, col. LII). The musicians had to depict, on aulos or cithara, the encounter of Apollo with Python, the death of the serpent, and the celebration of the god's victory.

<sup>29</sup> Schroeder 1904, 317–320; Schroeder 1922, 112; Gamba 1938, 243–246; Barker 1984, 240 n. 210; Phillips 2013, 39.

existed, but knew (or assumed, e.g., proceeding from the twelfth Pythian ode) that it was performed at the Pythian games.<sup>30</sup> Yet this information does not look unreliable in the context of Pseudo-Plutarch. His data dealing with the νόμος πολυκέφαλος originate in earlier sources, including Pratinas (1133 E), an author of the fifth century BC.<sup>31</sup> Besides, his words seem believable since the dedication of only one nome is reported: the author did not undertake the task of ascribing each of them to a certain divinity. Therefore, this passing reference appears as a given fact rather than a debatable question or a result of investigation, and it seems that Pseudo-Plutarch's source was sure of it. Now, if the dedication to Apollo is maintained by some of the nome's listeners, it follows that Athena was hardly represented in this piece, even as only a patron goddess of Perseus. Pindar's words do not contradict this conclusion.

Moreover, another attribution of the many-headed nome is attested: already at the time of Pratinas, it was considered a creation of the legendary aulos player Olympus (the elder or the younger) or his pupil, a certain Crates.<sup>32</sup> Of course, there is nothing unusual in ascribing the same invention to both a mythical and a "historical" author, and it has been justly indicated that for ancient historians such versions did not contradict one another.<sup>33</sup> Still the opposition of Athena to Olympus does look contrasting: if the story of inventing the many-headed nome by Athena had been reproduced in the nome itself, the alternative version would have involved a rationalist polemical fervour usually absent from the catalogues of inventors. Besides, in the classical period, Olympus was considered a pupil of Marsyas. Until the "historization" of the Phrygian aulos players came to a definite rupture with mythology, it would have been difficult to ascribe to Marsyas and his followers (who notoriously took possession of the instrument due to Athena's aversion to it) a piece that would depict Athena composing aulos music. Therefore, it seems most plausible that the many-headed nome used musical means to tell only the story of Perseus killing Medusa and escaping from the other gorgons, whereas the role of Athena was not represented in it.

<sup>30</sup> Guhrauer 1890, 443–444; Gamba 1938, 246; Phillips 2013, 39 n. 13.

<sup>31</sup> The identity and date of this Pratinas is a matter of discussion: he might have been active in the early (Garrod 1920, 132) or late 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Lloyd-Jones 1966, 228–230), but at any rate in the period when the nomes mentioned by Pseudo-Plutarch were still performed.

<sup>32</sup> Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 7, 1133 D–E; *Sch. Pind. Pyth.* 12, 39 c, p. 268. 14–15 Dr.: ὅδη ... ἦν λέγουσι τὸν Ὀλυμπον πρῶτον εὐρηκέναι.

<sup>33</sup> Barker 2018, 8.



## II. Pindar

Pindar does not display acquaintance with the story disparaging the aulos.<sup>34</sup> It is hardly possible to say whether he does not know or simply disregards it.<sup>35</sup> Anyway, the version with Marsyas will not concern us

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<sup>34</sup> Attempts by some scholars to prove that Pindar knew the version discrediting the aulos on the basis of the text of *Pyth.* 12 itself are not cogent. A hint at this is seen in the words *νιν εὐροῖσ' ἀνδράσι θνατοῖς ἔχειν* (Boeckh 1821, 345; Dissen 1847, 374; Gildersleeve 1885, 366; Christ 1896, 233; Papadopoulou–Pirenne–Delforge 2001, 45). Yet the *inf. finalis* governed by *εὐροῖσα* shows, rather, that the tune invented by the goddess was destined for the mortals from the very beginning (just like any invention by gods and cultural heroes), so Pindar only exploits a typical cult motif underlining the benefaction of the goddess to mankind (see Furley–Bremer 2001, I, 58). Still less convincing is an assumption that such a hint may be read out of Medusa's epithet *εὐπάρειος* (v. 16). Its interpretation as 'of fair cheeks' is sometimes rejected (Frontisi-Ducroux 1994, 256–257 with n. 40) on the grounds that a beautiful female face instead of a fearful or grotesque archaic mask is not attested for the gorgons in the iconography of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. In fact, the earliest extant images of a fair Medusa can be found (alongside the monstrous one) in mid-fifth-century vase painting depicting Perseus' story (Serfontein 1991, 17; 75; see a pelike by Polignotus, New York, Metropolitan Museum 45.11.1, 450–440 BC, *LIMC* IV s.v. Gorgo, Gorgones no. 301). However, already from the early classical period we have anthropomorphous images of Medusa, although they retain such features as a broad nose and a tongue hanging out of an open mouth (Serfontein 1991, 17; 37; 74–75). The alternative understanding of the epithet is 'with fat cheeks', and Papadopoulou–Pirenne–Delforge 2001, 44–45 claim that it hints at the cheeks of Athena, which became similar to the ugly swollen cheeks of the gorgons as she played the aulos (this similarity is postulated by Vernant 1991, 125–126). However, neither in Pindar nor in any other ancient text is there a shred of association of the gorgons' cheeks with that of aulos players – this is entirely a twentieth-century invention. Besides, the meaning 'of fair cheeks' is firmly backed up by calling the gorgons' heads 'maidenly' (*παρθενίους*, v. 9), which means that the poet imagined their appearance as anthropomorphous rather than monstrous.

<sup>35</sup> It is erroneous to claim (like Wilamowitz 1922, 145; Wüst 1967, 84) that Pindar would have necessarily voiced his disagreement with the traditional story *expressis verbis*. In *Ol.* 1. 46–53 the poet explicitly denies a widespread version of myth, but e.g. in *Isthm.* 4. 63, he substitutes it with a more decent variant without mentioning the alternative one. Chuvin 1995, 125–126 underlines on this point that Pindar might have been consciously omitting shocking details more frequently than we can recognize with certainty. – An extant fragment (fr. incert. 157 S–M: ὁ γὰρ Πίνδαρος διαλεγόμενον παράγων τὸν Σειληνὸν τῷ Ὀλύμπῳ τοιούτους αὐτῷ περιέθηκε λόγους· ὃ τάλας ἐφάμερε, νήπια βάζεις / χρήματά μοι διακομπέων) proves that Pindar had heard of Olympus and probably of Marsyas (if it is he who is called Σειληνός), but does not enable us to understand what exactly he had heard.

here. However, Pindar evidently relies on his audience's familiarity with the legend of Athena inventing the aulos. It is no mere chance that he does not offer a detailed narration<sup>36</sup> and even gives no explicit indication of the instrument's invention, but says that the goddess created a μέλος passing through bronze and reeds and called it the nome of many heads. Only the expression τέχνη, τάν ποτε Παλλάς ἐφεῦρε (v. 6–7) can imply αὐλητικὴ τέχνη as a whole, but even this is debatable, since (a) the meaning 'work of art' is evidenced for the word τέχνη,<sup>37</sup> and (b) a more special 'art' could be implied, such as that of performing the many-headed nome or συριγμός – a special effect in aulos playing (Poll. 4. 83, Xen. *Symp.* 6. 5), most probably suitable for imitating hissing. To my mind, it would be odd of Pindar to assert that Athena designed the new instrument capable of producing all kinds of sounds<sup>38</sup> only to imitate the terrible wailing of the gorgons. At most it can be argued that the poet implied two inventions made in succession: observing Perseus' feat, Athena conceived both the aulos and one of the pieces for it.<sup>39</sup> The text of the epinician allows no definite solution of this problem, which itself proves that in the twelfth Pythian ode Pindar was not interested in giving a general view of how the aulos and the art of playing it were invented.

Likewise, in this ode the poet was evidently less concerned about the heroic deed of Perseus than about inventing the many-headed tune. More lines are dedicated to the nome (14: v. 6–10 and 19–27) than to Perseus'

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<sup>36</sup> See Wüst 1967, 85–87 for a detailed analysis of references to the myths known to everyone (as contrasted to the narration of a new legend) in *Pyth.* 12.

<sup>37</sup> LSJ s.v. τέχνη IV: = τέχνημα 'work of art', 'handwork': Soph. *OC* 472 (κρατῆρές εἰσιν, ἀνδρὸς εὐχειρος τέχνη); fr. 156 *TrGF* (ὁ δ' ἔνθ' ὄπλοις ἀρρῶξιν Ἡφαίστου τέχνη).

<sup>38</sup> Pind. *Pyth.* 12. 19 αὐλῶν πάμφωνον μέλος, cf. *Ol.* 7. 12 παμφώνοισι τ' ἐν ἔντεσιν αὐλῶν, *Isthm.* 5. 27 ἐν αὐλῶν τε παμφώνοις ὁμοκλαῖς.

<sup>39</sup> This is the interpretation preferred by most scholars. Disson 1847, 371; 373 (cantum); 374 (tibiam); Gildersleeve 1885, 364; 365; Graf 1889, 6 ("primus igitur tibiarum cantus est nomus polycephalus"); Guhrauer 1890, 440; Christ 1896, 231; Schroeder 1922, 110 ("die Erfindung des νόμος πολυκέφαλος"); 112 ("der neuen Flötenweise"); 113 ("die Kunst", sc. Flötenspiel); Farnell 1932, 234; Dornseiff 1933, 27; Gamba 1938, 236; Wegner 1949, 154; Burton 1962, 26 ("melody"); 27; 28 ("the art"); Wüst 1967, 78–79, 88; Frontisi-Ducroux 1994, 240; 257; Angeli Bernardini 1995, 309–310; Chuvin 1995, 121 ("On ne peut pas, me semble-t-il, dissocier la flute et l'art du flûtiste. Seulement Pindare a voulu insister ici sur le jeu et non sur l'assemblage de l'instrument. Mais il s'agit bien de la première apparition de l'aulos parmi les hommes, sur une mélodie particulière"). Cf. a compromising proposal (Pöhlmann 2010–2011, 281): "Pindar's ode ... attributes to the goddess the invention of imitative aulos-playing".

story (8: v. 11–18). Addressing the well-known myth of Perseus, Pindar merely reminds the listeners of the familiar plot with several vivid details, as is typical of him.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, he gives a consecutive and extensive account of the invention of the νόμος πολυκέφαλος, which makes one suppose that *this* story was not common knowledge.

Thus, Pindar cited a myth of Athena helping Perseus to defeat the gorgons and at the same time knew her as the inventor of the aulos. I believe that the legend of composing the many-headed nome was his own creation.<sup>41</sup> U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff finds it uncharacteristic of Pindar to invent new mythical stories – rather, he could insert a new detail, a variation.<sup>42</sup> This is true, but here we are not dealing with a completely new story. Pindar only had to connect two existing myths adding a single peculiarity: watching Perseus’ feat inclined Athena toward music-making.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the poet had evident reasons to recollect both myths:<sup>44</sup> in an ode in honour of Midas the aulos player, it was natural to mention that his art was granted to mankind by Athena; as for Perseus defeating the gorgons, his story formed the plot of the many-headed nome – a piece that Midas most probably performed.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Burton 1962, 28; Wüst 1967, 72; Papadopoulou–Pirenne–Delforge 2001, 39. Cf. Schadewaldt 1928, 308 n. 1 (on the ring composition in *Pyth.* 12): “Pindar geht zunächst zum Wichtigsten, demjenigen was seinem Zwecke am nächsten liegt, gelangt von da aus Schritt für Schritt in den Bereich des Mythos hinein, und auf gleichem Wege wieder zu seinem Zweck zurück”.

<sup>41</sup> The same is the opinion of Guhrer 1890, 440 (Pindar engaged in poetic license when saying that the many-headed nome was the first piece played by Athena); Wüst 1967, 82–87.

<sup>42</sup> Wilamowitz 1922, 145: “Wäre Pindar ein Dichter wie Euripides, so könnte man ihm zutrauen, die Deutung aus der Perseussage selbst erfunden zu haben. Aber das lag ihm fern: wohl werden wir ihn wiederholt auf die Umänderung einer Genealogie oder einer Geschichte ertappen, aber dann macht er uns selbst darauf aufmerksam”.

<sup>43</sup> *Pyth.* 1. 1–24 can serve as a parallel: both Zeus’ eagle and the music of Apollo and the Muses sounding at the Olympus are traditional images, but it must be Pindar’s invention to make the eagle fall asleep at the sounds of Apollo’s lyre.

<sup>44</sup> Wüst 1967, 86.

<sup>45</sup> Boeckh 1821, 345; 546; Dissen 1847, 371; 374; Guhrer 1890, 440; Christ 1896, 234; Wilamowitz 1922, 144 (“Es ist ein unmöglicher Einfall, daß er etwas anderes als diese Weise [sc. νόμος πολυκέφαλος] geblasen hätte; das ganze Gedicht würde sinnlos”; Gamba 1938, 237; Burton 1962, 26 (“We are nowhere told in the text that Midas won his victory for a performance of the νόμος πολυκέφαλος, but it gives more point to the poem to assume that this was the case”); Wüst 1967, 86; Gentili–Luisi 1995, 8; Angeli Bernardini 1995, 309–310.

### III. Nonnus

It is natural to assume that Nonnus borrowed the myth of inventing the νόμος πολυκέφαλος from Pindar.<sup>46</sup> He calls the great Theban poet by name in *Dionys.* 25. 18–21, and several more passages probably based on Pindar’s verse can be found in his work.<sup>47</sup> Mentions of the many-headed nome in both poets resemble each other so closely – and at the same time without parallels in other sources – that the connection between them is beyond doubt.

However, there is a nuance: Nonnus both times calls the aulos piece “Libyan” (40. 228 Λίβυν γόον, 24. 38 Λίβυν τύπον αὐλῶν), whereas in Pindar the nome passes through the reeds that grow in Boeotia, near Orchomenus, at Lake Copais. It must be admitted that Nonnus’ epithet corresponds to the most common localization of the gorgons, Libya<sup>48</sup> (shared by Nonnus himself, *Dionys.* 25. 59; 30. 264; 31. 14), so it looks especially appropriate to the whole story (whereas the scholiast of Pindar has to invent the episode that Medusa’s sisters pursued Perseus up to Boeotia, as he tries to explain the mention of Cephisis<sup>49</sup>). Hence Wilamowitz concluded that Pindar and Nonnus had a common source: the story of creating the many-headed nome in Libya formed part of the Argive version of the Perseus myth, and Pindar slightly changed it to please his countrymen by making Boeotia the site of Athena’s invention<sup>50</sup> (implying that the goddess left for Boeotia after helping Perseus to return safely from Libya to Seriphus).

<sup>46</sup> Farnell 1932, 234; Vivante 1990, 125.

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Chuvin 1992, 64 n. 36; Gigli Piccardi 2006, 49–50.

<sup>48</sup> The gorgons are located in Libya in Hdt. 2. 91. 6; Aesch. *Phorcydes* fr. 262 *TrGF*; Eur. *Bacch.* 991; Aristoph. *Ran.* 477; *Sch. Pind. Pyth.* 10. 72 b; Diod. Sic. 3. 55. 3; Apoll. Rhod. 4. 1513–1517 with *sch.* 1515 a; Lucian. *Dial. mar.* 14. 2; on some vases beginning from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the gorgons have Negroid features: Attic white ground pyxis, Paris, Louvre MNB 1286, 460–450 BC; Attic red-figure crater, Catania, Museo Biscari 1677, ca. 460 BC (Serfontein 1991, cat. nos. 14; 21). Otherwise, they are sometimes placed in the West, at the Ocean (*Cypria* fr. 32 Bernabé; Hes. *Th.* 274–275, 282; Pherecyd. *FGrHist* 3 F 11 ap. *sch. Ap. Rhod.* 4, 1515a; Ps.-Apollod. 1. 39; Q. Smyrn. 10. 195; Strab. 7. 6. 3 p. 299), or in the Northeast (Aesch. *PV* 790–800, cf. Perseus visiting the Hyperboreans during his journey to the gorgons in Pind. *Pyth.* 10. 45).

<sup>49</sup> *Sch. Pind. Pyth.* 12. 31, p. 267. 19 Dr.: ἐπεδίωξαν γὰρ τὸν Περσέα μέχρι Βοιωτίας.

<sup>50</sup> Wilamowitz 1922, 145.

However, this point is arguable. It should be specified that in *Pyth.* 12 there is actually no statement that Athena's invention took place in Boeotia.<sup>51</sup> The poet only makes it clear that, since mortal men obtained the νόμος πολυκέφαλος, they performed it at the contests using bronze and Boeotian reeds. Likewise, the characteristic of the nome as an agonistic piece (μναστήρ ἀγώνων, v. 24)<sup>52</sup> is of course no reason to imagine that Athena herself had ever competed in aulos playing. A conclusion that, according to Pindar, the goddess invented the aulos near Orchomenus does not look better founded.

As for Nonnus, in both passages he calls the tune, not the instrument, "Libyan", which makes perfect sense since it imitated the wailing of the Libyan gorgons. Such a geographical indication is absent from Pindar's ode, but nor does the ode contradict the Libyan location. Moreover, Nonnus both times combines this characteristic of the nome with defining the aulos itself as Phrygian (Βερέκυντες αὐλοῖ *Dionys.* 40. 227; Μυγδόνες αὐλοῖ 24. 35).<sup>53</sup> These epithets might be seen as referring to the myth that this instrument was invented in Phrygia, but not necessarily. Nonnus is not consistent on this point. In 41. 374 he ascribes the invention to Hyagnis only; however, he also knows of Marsyas (son of Hyagnis, 10. 232–233), who was flayed by Apollo (1. 39–44; 10. 233) for playing "the

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Schauenburg 1958, 42 n. 2: "Wenn das Ereignis [sc. inventing the aulos] lokalisiert wird, dann meist in Phrygien <...>. Pindar verlegt es dagegen nach Libyen". – In *Dionys.* 13. 77–78, Nonnus explained the name of the Boeotian town of Mycalessus as an onomatopoeic imitation of Euriale's howling (Γραΐης θ' ἱερὸν ἄστρῳ καὶ εὐρυχόρου Μυκαλησσοῦ, / Εὐρυάλης μίμημα φερώνυμον ἀνθερεῶνος). Chuvin 1995, 124 indicates this passage as a borrowing from Pindar, arguing that only in Pindar did the gorgons chase Perseus up to Boeotia. However, a notion that the pursuit took place over continental Greece as well had probably existed independently of Pindar and was not connected with aulos playing: Ctesias derives the name of Μυκῆναι from the μυκηθμός of the gorgons who followed Perseus up to that city (Κτησίας Ἐφέσιος ἐν α' Περσηίδος, ap. Ps.-Plut. *De fluv.* 18. 6, 1161 C).

<sup>52</sup> The meaning of μναστήρ in this passage is 'one who records, cures, considers', cf. *Nem.* 1. 16 (πολέμου μναστήρα ... λαόν); *Isthm.* 2. 5 (Ἀφροδίτας ... μνάστειραν ... ὀπώραν); fr. 20 Snell (ἀγών ... μναστήρ στεφάνων). The meaning 'suitor', which also occurs in Pindar (*Ol.* 1. 80; *Pyth.* 9. 106), is less suitable.

<sup>53</sup> 'Mygdonian' (25 cases in Nonnus) and 'Berecynthian' (5 cases in Nonnus, among them *Dionys.* 13. 508 and 20. 305 referring to the aulos) are diffused poetic epithets indicating 'Phrygian' and, interchangeably, 'Lydian' (for the former, see *Il.* 3. 186 mentioning Mygdon, a Phrygian ally of Priam, and Paus. 10. 27. 1; for the latter, Strab. 10. 3. 12; 12. 8. 21): Chuvin 1992, 100.

aulos of Athena” (10. 234), but still affirms elsewhere (24. 35–38) that Athena would be upset by the burning of the reeds used for aulos making. Evidently, neither variant of the “Phrygian” legend (with or without Athena) is compatible with the story of the goddess inventing the νόμος πολυκέφαλος. It follows that Nonnus rather used the “geographical” characteristics of the aulos mechanically, as traditional *epitheta ornantia*<sup>54</sup> that could imply that the instrument was popular in the said region, or historically associated with it, or simply made there (the last option fits well the aulos players accompanying Dionysus, who was brought up in Phrygia). Nonnus’ acquaintance with the old poetic tradition is a sufficient explanation why he used this specification of the aulos.

Therefore, the two poets do not contradict each other about the place of invention, since neither of them actually indicates it. Instead, an additional argument for Nonnus depending on Pindar can be offered: it seems that his idea of the νόμος πολυκέφαλος is based on misinterpretation of the twelfth Pythian ode. By the lifetime of Nonnus, classical nomes had long since vanished. He imagines the many-headed nome as entirely mourning music, which to my mind is erroneous. First, this was a piece performed at the contests of aulos players, most probably including the Pythian games, and a pure lament would be inappropriate for such a performance model.<sup>55</sup> Second, its entirely mournful character is disproved by a parallel with the Pythian nome,<sup>56</sup> which also depicted hissing in a scene of Python’s agony, but nevertheless reproduced the whole story of Apollo’s combat with the monster and ended with celebrating the victory of the god. Third, grieving gorgons (as well as expiring Python) could hardly have stirred compassion in the audience.<sup>57</sup> If there had existed a myth previous to Pindar, it could not have described νόμος πολυκέφαλος as exemplary mourning. However, it is clear how such an idea occurred to Nonnus

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. e.g. Strab. 10. 3. 17, p. 471 (...ὁ δὲ τοὺς αὐλοὺς Βερεκυντίους καλεῖ καὶ Φρυγίους) and *Berecynthia tibia* in Hor. *Carm.* 3. 19. 18–19; 4. 1. 22–23; Ov. *Met.* 11. 16; *Fast.* 4. 181.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. the embarrassment expressed on this point by Farnell 1932, 234. The inappropriateness of lamenting music to the contests is confirmed by a report in Pausanias (10. 7. 5–6, probably not true, see West 1974, 5) on how αὐλοφῳδία, which was allegedly of mournful nature, was excluded from the program of the Pythian games.

<sup>56</sup> See above n. 28.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Pozdnev 2007 [M. M. Позднев, “Об одном мотиве застольной поэзии: Theogn. 1041 sq.”], 28: “Νόμος πολυκέφαλος вызывал какие угодно чувства, кроме скорби”.

while reading the twelfth Pythian ode: it is said twice there that Athena was inspired by the wailing (θρῆνος, γόος) of the gorgons. Actually, Pindar’s attention to this detail can be explained by admitting that the mimicry of sounds produced by the gorgons and the serpents on their heads formed the most impressive element of the nome<sup>58</sup> and the reason for giving it a name.<sup>59</sup>

#### IV. The “Libyan Lotus”

The hypothesis that Pindar already knew a myth that located the invention of the aulos in Libya linking it with the victory over the gorgons was advanced by A. Barker, as well.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Wilamowitz, he did not take Nonnus into consideration, but proceeded instead from the fact that the aulos is called the “Libyan lotus” in poetry and its explanation by Duris of Samos. However, I shall try to demonstrate that the poetic epithet could arise regardless of the gorgons’ story and on the whole irrespectively of mythology, whereas the words of Duris are rather an argument against the existence of a “Libyan” version of the myth.

In the cases of Λίβυς λωτός referring to the aulos, λωτός is apparently not a lotus flower, but a tree identified with *Zizyphus lotus*, one of several species of the plant called jujube in the buckthorn family (*Rhamnaceae*).<sup>61</sup> According to Theophrastus, it thrives in Libya (*Hist. plant.* 4. 3. 1 Ἐν Λιβύῃ δὲ ὁ λωτός πλεῖστος καὶ κάλλιστος), and its wood, dark, solid and beautiful (4. 2. 5), is used to make auloi, statues, furniture, and many other things (4. 3. 4 τῷ ξύλῳ δὲ [sc. χρῆσθαι] εἰς τε τοὺς αὐλοὺς καὶ εἰς ἄλλα πλείω; 4. 2. 5 ὁ λωτός, ἐξ οὗ καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα καὶ τὰ κλινία καὶ τραπέζια καὶ τᾶλλα τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιοῦσιν).

In the texts at our disposal, the association of the wind instrument with the lotus occurs for the first time in Pindar (*Parth.* 2, fr. 94 b, 14 S.–M.: αὐλίσκων ὕπο λωτίνων).<sup>62</sup> It then proves to be Euripides’ favourite way

<sup>58</sup> Guhrauer 1890, 442; id. 1904, 8: “pièce de résistance”; Pöhlmann 1960, 71: “Glanzstück der Tonmalerei des Nomos”.

<sup>59</sup> Christ 1896, 234; Guhrauer 1904, 441–442; Gamba 1938, 239. Pindar himself apparently follows this explanation of the name πολυκέφαλος.

<sup>60</sup> Barker 2018, esp. 10.

<sup>61</sup> [https://uses.plantnet-project.org/fr/Noms\\_grecs\\_de\\_Théophraste](https://uses.plantnet-project.org/fr/Noms_grecs_de_Théophraste) (consulted 08.03.2022).

<sup>62</sup> This passage slipped the attention of A. Barker, who considered it important for his argument that Euripides was the first to call the aulos the “Libyan lotus” (Barker 2018, 3–4).

of naming the aulos over the entire course of his career (13 cases): he uses Λίβυς λωτός 4 times (*Tro.* 544, *Hel.* 170, *IA* 1036, *Erecht.* fr. 370, 8 K.); simply λωτός 7 times (*HF* 11, *Heracl.* 892–893, *El.* 716, *Phoen.* 787, *Ba.* 160 and 587, *IA* 438); Λίβυς αὐλός 2 times (*Alc.* 346–347, *HF* 684), whereas αὐλός without a geographical specification occurs 6 times (*Alc.* 430, *Tro.* 126, *Ion* 108, *Hel.* 1351, *Ba.* 380, *Oedip.* fr. 556. 2 *TrGF*), and Φρύγιος αὐλός 2 times (*Ba.* 127–128, *IA* 576–577). As proved by Barker, neither the qualities nor the occasions of performance distinguish λωτός from a common aulos in poetry; moreover, in Eur. *Tro.* 544–545, the “Libyan lotus” accompanies the “Phrygian songs” (Λίβυς τε λωτός ἐκτύπει / Φρύγιά τε μέλεα).<sup>63</sup> After Euripides, this definition was still current: it occurs in Delphic paeans to Apollo (Athenaeus, 138 BC – λωτός βρέμων αἰόλοις μ[έ]λεσιν;<sup>64</sup> Limenius, 128 BC – Λίβυς ... [λωτός?]<sup>65</sup>), ten times in *Anthologia Palatina* (only λωτός/λωτοί, two times with a reference to the story of Athena and Marsyas),<sup>66</sup> in Hermesianax (λωτός: fr. 7. 37; 70 *CA*, ap. Athen. 13. 71, 597–598), in Orphic poetry (λωτοί: Orph. *Arg.* 1286), and finally in Nonnus, who is similar to Euripides in mixing the Libyan and the Phrygian together, as he mentions an aulos (*Dionys.* 15. 58–59: someone put λωτόν to his lips and played ἀρμονίην ... Μυγδόνοσ αὐλοῦ).<sup>67</sup>

The simplest and most plausible explanation of this poetic word usage is to suppose that it reflects the realities of everyday life: auloi can be made from the lotus tree (through an analogous metonymy, syrinx is called [Πανός] κάλαμος/κάλαμοι, Eur. *IT* 1126, *El.* 702, and the cymbals, χαλκός, Eur. *Hel.* 1346<sup>68</sup>), and the best lotus comes from Libya’s Cyrenaic region (Theophr. *Hist. plant.* 4. 3. 4: ξύλον δὲ κάλλιον

<sup>63</sup> Barker 2018, 4–5.

<sup>64</sup> Pöhlmann–West 2001 (= *DAGM*), no. 20 = Furley–Bremer 2001, II, 85–86 v. 12.

<sup>65</sup> *DAGM* no. 21 = Furley–Bremer 2001, II, 92–94 v. 13.

<sup>66</sup> *AG* 6. 94. 4 λωτούς and 9. 253. 4 λωτοῖς (Philippus of Thessalonica); 7. 182. 4 λωτοί (Meleager); 7. 186. 2 λωτός (Philippus); 7. 223. 3 λωτοῦ (Thyillus); 9. 266. 1 λωτῶν and 16. 220. 1 λωτούς (Antipater); 9. 409. 1 λωτοῦ (Antiphanes); 9. 517. 3–4 λωτούς (Antipater of Thessalonica: οὐ κεν Ἀθήνη / ἔρριπεν λωτούς τοῖα μελιζομένη); 16. 8. 7 λωτοί (Alcaeus, cf. 1–4: the satyr will never more take Τριτωνίδος ἔργον Ἀθάνας into his hands).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Dionys.* 10. 230–233 (as Ampelus played αὐλὸν ... Λιβυστίδος ὄργανον ἠχοῦς, Dionysus imagined hearing Marsyas, “Mygdonian aulos player, son of Hyagnis”) and both Nonnus’ passages dealing with the many-headed nome (*Dionys.* 40. 227 and 228; 24. 35 and 38: playing a Libyan lament on a Phrygian instrument).

<sup>68</sup> Barker 2018, 3.



τὸ ἐν τῇ Κυρηναίᾳ). It does not seem coincidental that no poet connected the definition of the aulos as a Libyan lotus with a hint at its mythological justification, whereas its combination with a reference to Marsyas the Phrygian is possible.

Thus, calling the aulos Λίβυς λωτός does not prove that there was a story that localized its invention in Libya. Yet, I must admit, nor does it exclude its existence, and, in fact, two sources demonstrate that such an idea occurred to ancient commentators while resolving the same problem as concerns us here: explaining a popular poetic epithet of the aulos.

The scholia on Euripides propose two explanations of this definition: either the aulos is made of the Libyan lotus (of which the scholiast did not have a clear idea, since he wrote λωτίνων καλάμων), or it was invented in Libya.<sup>69</sup> Hesitation between two versions seems to show that the African origin of the aulos was at least not a firmly established belief – rather, it looks like an *autoschediasma*.

On the same occasion, Duris of Samos (late fourth or early third century) gives a unique version of the instrument's origin (Duris *FGrHist* 76 F 16 ap. Athen. 14. 9. 618 b–c<sup>70</sup>):

“Λίβυν δὲ τὸν αὐλὸν προσαγορεύουσιν οἱ ποιηταί”, φησὶ Δοῦρις ἐν β΄ τῶν περὶ Ἀγαθοκλέα, “ἐπειδὴ Σειρίτης δοκεῖ πρῶτος εὐρεῖν τὴν αὐλητικὴν, Λίβυς ὢν τῶν Νομάδων, ὃς καὶ κατηύλησεν τὰ μητρῶα πρῶτος”.

“The poets call the aulos Libyan”, says Duris in the second book about Agathocles, “because the first inventor of aulos playing seems to be Seirites, a Libyan, one of the Nomades, who was also the first to play the hymns to the Mother on the aulos”.

If a myth of Athena inventing the aulos in Libya was current, it would perfectly suit Duris to back up his claim.<sup>71</sup> Instead, he ascribed the creation of a Libyan instrument to a local man (most probably contrived

<sup>69</sup> *Sch. Eur. Alc.* 346: Λίβυν τὸν αὐλὸν φησιν· ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἐν Λιβύῃ λωτίνων λεγομένων καλάμων ὁ αὐλὸς γίνεται· ἢ ὅτι ἐπὶ Τρίτωνι, τῷ ποταμῷ τῆς Λιβύης, εὐρέθη.

<sup>70</sup> Athenaeus is further cited by Eustath. *Comm. ad Hom. Il.* 4, p. 502. 14–15.

<sup>71</sup> Discussing poetry, Duris probably would not mind speaking of a supernatural being as the inventor of the instrument. Cf. mythological subjects he treats in the same work, *FGrHist* 76 F 17 and 21.

by Duris himself<sup>72</sup>), and in doing so he plainly had Seirites substitute for one of the Phrygian *πρῶτοι εὐρεταί*, rather than Athena: the Great Mother is apparently a Phrygian goddess, and *μητρῶα* are regularly associated with the Phrygians in the extant tradition<sup>73</sup> – their author is said to be Marsyas (Paus. 10. 30. 9), Olympus (Ps.-Plut. *De mus.* 19. 1137 d; 29. 1141 b) or Hyagnis (*Marm. Par.* A 10. 20). Therefore, the very fact that Duris resorted to a “Phrygian” myth, as he created his *ad hoc* explanation, proves that he had no “Libyan” myth about the invention of the aulos (and still less of the many-headed nome) at his disposal.<sup>74</sup>

In an etiological myth that ascribed the creation of the aulos to Athena, there could be no localization at all, and if there was one, it was probably the most variable part of the legend: any place associated with Athena and/or raising material of high quality for aulos making would do. Localization at Lake Copais would be a natural choice, since the best reeds were known to grow there (Theophr. *Hist. plant.* 4. 10. 1; 11. 8–9). It is possible (even if not as evident as sometimes claimed) that this myth was a Boeotian invention.<sup>75</sup> Some scholars supposed that the local school of aulos players considered Athena their patron goddess,<sup>76</sup> although evidence to back up this hypothesis is not profuse.<sup>77</sup> As we

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<sup>72</sup> Σειρίτης does not occur elsewhere as a name of a person, but the land of Seir (Σηίρ, in the Sinai Peninsula and not in Libya) is mentioned several times in the *Old Testament* (*Gen.* 14:6 et al.), so, according to Barker 2018, 7, Duris could make the personal name Σειρίτης out of an ethnonym. The exoticism of this name suggests that it was an *ad hoc* fabrication.

<sup>73</sup> Barker 2018, 7–8.

<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, one more historian, Dionysius Scytobrachion from Alexandria (ap. Diod. Sic. 3. 52–74), probably a contemporary of Duris (Barker 2018, 11: judging by *PHib* 2. 186, some of Dionysius’ work was written not later than the mid-third century BC, whereas Duris died ca. 260 BC), is known to transfer to Libya achievements commonly located elsewhere. He took it upon himself to compose the history of Libya by reinterpreting myths, and there are some tales closely associated with Phrygia (the ones dealing with the Argonauts, the Amazons, Dionysus, and the Great Mother) that he transferred to North Africa and ascribed to the Atlanteans, whom he placed in the West of Libya, close to the gorgons. In particular, he interweaved the Mother of Gods with a Phrygian (according to his own words) story of Athena, Marsyas, and Apollo (Diod. Sic. 3. 58–59). See Barker 2018, 10–12.

<sup>75</sup> Böttiger 1837, 16; Gruppe 1906, 278–279; Reinach 1912, 390; Farnell 1932, 234; Bowra 1964, 285; Wüst 1967, 82.

<sup>76</sup> Farnell 1896, 315–316; Schroeder 1904, 320; Angeli Bernardini 1995, 310.

<sup>77</sup> Van Keer 2004, 25 draws attention to the fact that Athena is never shown playing the aulos in Boeotian visual arts.

have already seen, two of the three authors who have Athena practice aulos playing are Boeotians: Pindar and Corinna.<sup>78</sup> Besides, Βομβυλεία, a Boeotian epiclesis of the goddess (Hesych. β 791 s. v.), could be related to the sounds of wind instruments.<sup>79</sup> Karl Otfried Müller<sup>80</sup> argued that the mythical tie of Athena to Lake Tritonis was of Boeotian origin: initially the goddess was associated with the river Triton, which empties into Lake Copais, and later this association was transferred to the Tritonis in Libya. In this case, mentioning Boeotia in the twelfth Pythian (if one admits that it had anything to do with localizing Athena's invention altogether) would not mean that Pindar changed the myth for patriotic reasons, but, on the contrary, that on this point he followed a legend native to his homeland – however, this legend dealt with the invention of the aulos and not of the many-headed nome.

Even if we assume that, in a myth earlier than Pindar, the invention of the aulos by Athena took place in Libya (an admission rendered improbable by Duris' *modus operandi*, as argued above), enough reasons for this idea can be given without resorting to the alleged association with the gorgons: Libya was famous for the lotus tree, and Athena was traditionally connected with Libya, particularly with the surroundings of the Τριτωνίς λίμνη (Hdt. 4. 188–189; Paus. 1. 14. 6; 2. 21. 6; Hesych. τ 1444 s.v. Τριτογενής; cf. Nonn. *Dionys.* 13. 345: Λιβυστίδος ... Ἀθήνης).<sup>81</sup>

Thus, we have no grounds to assume that some source before Pindar ascribed the invention of the many-headed nome to Athena as a witness of the event it reproduced, that is, slaying Medusa. This was likely Pindar's own addition to the myth of Athena inventing the aulos, and Nonnus later borrowed this detail from the twelfth Pythian ode.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Occurrence of this myth in Boeotia does not exclude its being known in other regions of Greece, in particular in Sicily, the native land of Epicharmus and Midas.

<sup>79</sup> Farnell 1896, 315; id. 1932, 234. However, this epiclesis is connected with the name of a Boeotian town in *Sch. Lycophr.* 786 (Βομβυλία δὲ καὶ Βομβύλιον πόλις καὶ ὄρος Βοιωτίας ... τιμᾶται δὲ ἐκεῖ καὶ ἡ Ἀθηναῖ Βομβυλεία).

<sup>80</sup> Müller 1844, 349–350.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Claud. *In Eutrop.* 20. 255–256: *Libycis iactata paludibus olim / tibia.*

<sup>82</sup> I am grateful to Prof. A. Verlinsky for helpful discussion.

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Among extant sources, only Pindar (*Pyth.* 12) and, about 9 centuries later, Nonnus of Panopolis (*Dionys.* 40. 227–233; 24. 36–38) tell the story of the inventing of the many-headed nome (an instrumental aulos piece depicting with musical means the victory of Perseus over the gorgons): it is said to have been created by Athena to imitate the wailing of the gorgons over decapitated Medusa, of which she was an eyewitness. It is argued that Pindar himself was the author of this etiological legend: he proceeded from two already current myths, that of Perseus patronized by Athena and that of Athena inventing aulos playing, and combined them to please his client, Midas the aulos player, who most probably won the Pythian victory performing exactly the many-headed nome. Nonnus borrowed the myth from Pindar. Geographical specifications, which are different in Pindar and Nonnus, do not contradict this conclusion.

Только у Пиндара (*Pyth.* 12) и, примерно 900 лет спустя, у Нонна Панополи-танского (*Dionys.* XL, 227–233; XXIV, 36–38) можно найти мифическую историю создания многоглавого нома (инструментального произведения для авла, изображавшего музыкальными средствами победу Персея над Медузой): его сложила Афина в подражание воплям горгон, на ее глазах потерявших сестру. В статье доказывается, что эту этиологическую легенду создал сам Пиндар на основе уже существовавших мифов о Персее и об изобретении авла Афиной, чтобы угодить клиенту – авлету Мидасу, который, скорей всего, одержал победу, играя именно многоглавый ном. Нонн же заимствовал ее у Пиндара. Наличие у двух поэтов не совпадающих географических отсылок не противоречит этому выводу.