

Ps-Plutarch, *On the Naming of Rivers, Mountains, and Things Found in Them*

translated in English in 2022 by Greta Hawes, Sonia Pertsinidis, and Charles Delattre

translated from the text of Calderón Dorda et al. (2003)

1. The Hydaspes

The wrath of Aphrodite caused Chrysippe to fall in love with her own father, Hydaspes. Unable to resist her unnatural desires and aided by her nurse,¹ she had sex with the aforementioned man in the middle of the night. The king did not do well out of the events. He buried alive the old woman who had ensnared him and nailed his own daughter to a cross. Overwhelming grief caused him to hurl himself into the Indos river, which was renamed the Hydaspes after him. It is a river in India and flows vigorously down into the Saronic Syrtis.

There is produced in this river a stone called lychnis ('lantern'). It is the colour of olive oil and exceedingly hot. When the moon is waxing, it is gathered to the accompaniment of flute melodies. The elites make use of it.

There is found there a plant, beside the so-called Gates, which is very similar to heliotrope. They pound it up, extract the juice, and anoint themselves with it at the hottest time of day. Thus they safely withstand the drying effect of exceedingly high temperatures.

The local people nail to crosses young maidens who have turned away from the gods and throw them into the river while singing the hymn to Aphrodite in their native dialect. Every year, beside the hill named Therogonos ('the bearer of wild beasts'), they bury an old woman who has been condemned. As soon as she has been buried, a mass of crawling creatures emerges from the mountain-ridge and devours swarms of flying creatures. Chrysermos recounts this in book 80 of his *On India*, and Archelaos records these things more precisely in book 13 of his *On Rivers*.

Below the river is a mountain called Elephas ('Elephant') for this reason. When Alexander of Macedon came to India with an army, and the local people had decided to fight him, an elephant belonging to Poros, the king of the region, suddenly became frenzied. It went up to the ridge of Helios and said in a human voice, "Lord and King, born of the race of Gegasios, do not do anything at all to oppose Alexander! For Gegasios is of Zeus." After finishing its speech, it died. Hearing these words, Poros was terribly shaken. In supplication he grasped

¹ We translate Hemsterhuys' conjecture συνεργούσης ('aided by') in place of the transmitted συνελθοῦσης ('accompanied by') since it makes better sense of Hydaspes' subsequent punishment of the nurse.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

Alexander's knees and begged for peace. When his request had been granted, he renamed the mountain Elephas. Dercyllos recounts this in book 3 of his *On Mountains*.

2. The Ismenos

The Ismenos is a river in Boiotia near the city of Thebes. It used to be called 'Cadmos' Foot' for this reason: after Cadmos killed the spring-guarding snake with an arrow, he discovered that the water seemed poisoned with its blood and so he went around the territory looking for a spring. Near the Corycian cave, by the providence of Athena, he pressed his right foot deeply into the clay. A river flowed forth from his footprint. Cadmos sacrificed a bull and gave this river the name 'Cadmos' Foot'. Sometime later, Ismenos, son of Amphion and Niobe, in desperate pain from an arrow shot by Apollo, threw himself into the aforementioned river. It was named the Ismenos after him. Sostratos recounts this in book 2 of his *On Rivers*.

Nearby is Mount Cithairon. It used to be called Asterion ('starry') for this reason. Boiotos, son of Poseidon, was trying to decide which of two distinguished women would make a more advantageous marriage. One night, while he was waiting for both of them on the heights of an unnamed mountain, a shooting star suddenly fell from heaven onto the shoulders of Eurythemiste and then disappeared from sight. Boiotos recognised this as a sign: he married her and named the mountain Asterion after this incident.

It was later named Cithairon for this reason. Tisiphone, one of the Erinyes, fell headlong in love with a handsome boy called Cithairon. Unable to restrain the intensity of her passion, she sent him a message suggesting a liaison. Terrified of the aforementioned's appearance, he did not give her the courtesy of a reply. So Tisiphone, thwarted in her plans, tore one of the snakes from her hair and hurled it at the insolent man. The serpent enveloped him tightly in its coils and killed him as he shepherded his flocks on the heights of Asterion. By the providence of the gods, the mountain was renamed Cithairon after him. Leon of Byzantium recounts this in his *On Boiotia*.

Hermesianax of Cyprus records this story: Helicon and Cithairon were brothers yet differed markedly from one another in character. Helicon was gentle and mild and looked after his parents attentively; Cithairon, by contrast, was greedy and coveted their power and property for himself. First, he murdered his father; but when he ambushed his brother and went to throw him off a cliff, he too fell over the edge. By the providence of the gods they were transformed into mountains with the same names: Cithairon, because of his outrageous behaviour, became an abode for the Erinyes; Helicon, because of his tender affection, a haunt for the Muses.

3. The Hebros

The Hebros is a river in Thrace. It used to be called Rhombos ('whirling'),² a name it got from the swirling rapids of its water. Casandros, the king of the region, married Crotonice and fathered with her a son, Hebros. Then, having had enough of his first wife, he married Damasippe, daughter of Atrax, making her stepmother to his son. She fell in love with her stepson and sent a message to him suggesting a liaison. He fled from his stepmother as if fleeing from an Erinyes, and dedicated himself to hunting. Thwarted in her plans, the licentious woman made false accusations against the chaste boy, saying that he wanted to rape her. Casandros was overwhelmed by jealousy and driven by impulsive anger to the woods. There, drawing his sword, he pursued his own son thinking him a traitor against his father's marriage. Trapped, the son hurled himself into the river Rhombos, which was renamed the Hebros after him. Timotheos recounts this in book 11 of his *On Rivers*.

Nearby is Mount Pangaion. It got its name for this reason. Pangaios, son of Ares and Critoboule, had sex with his daughter without realizing who she was. He was engulfed by despair and ran to Mount Carmanios where his overwhelming grief caused him to take up a sword and kill himself. By the providence of the gods, the place was renamed Pangaion.

There is produced in the aforementioned river a plant similar to oregano. The Thracians pluck the tips and place them in the fire after taking their fill of the food of Demeter. Inhaling the rising smoke with deep breaths, they are overcome with drowsiness and carried off into a deep sleep.

There is also produced on Mount Pangaion a plant called cithara for this reason. The women who tore apart Orpheus threw the limbs of the aforementioned into the river Hebros. By the providence of the gods, the head of the dead man changed its physical form into a serpent, while his lyre was made into a constellation as Apollo intended, and the plant called cithara appeared out of the flowing blood.

During the rites of Dionysos, this plant gives forth the sound of a cithara. The locals drape themselves in fawn-skins and wield thrysoi and sing a hymn: 'Whenever you are wise in vain, you will be wise'. Cleitonymos recounts this in book 3 of his *On Thrace*.

² We translate Bernardakis' addition, which makes sense of both the etymology and the subsequent name change: πρό[τερον] Ῥόμβος καλούμενος, τὴν προ]σηγορίαν εἰληφως.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

4. The Ganges

The Ganges is a river in India. It got its name for this reason. Calauria, a nymph, produced a son with Indos. He was universally admired for his beauty and named Ganges. He became intoxicated and had sex with his mother, without realizing who she was; she seduced him. In the days that followed, he learnt the truth from his nurse and overwhelming grief caused him to hurl himself into a river called Chliaros, which was renamed Ganges after him.

There is produced beside this river a plant that resembles bouglossos ('ox-tongue'). People are constantly pounding it up and keeping the juice. Late at night, they sprinkle it around the lairs of tigers. The potency of the scattered droplets makes the tigers unable to emerge and they die. Callisthenes recounts this in book 3 of his *On Hunting*.

Nearby is a mountain called Anatole ('rising sun') for this reason. While the nymph Anaxibia was enjoying spending time in the region, Helios saw her and fell in love with her. Unable to restrain his desire, he pursued the aforementioned woman, intending to force himself on her. Trapped, she fled into the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia which was on a mountain called Coryphe ('summit'), and she disappeared from sight. The god followed after her, and when he could not find his beloved anywhere, overwhelming grief caused him to rise up from that place. The locals renamed the mountain Anatole from this event. Caimaron recounts this in book 10 of his *On India*.

5. The Phasis

The Phasis is a river in Scythia that flows past a city. It used to be called Arctouros. It received its name because it is located in a frozen landscape. It was renamed for this reason. Phasis, the son of Helios and Ocyrhoe (daughter of Oceanos), caught his mother in the act of adultery and killed her. He was driven mad by the sudden appearance of the Erinyes and hurled himself into the Arctouros river, which was renamed the Phasis after him.

There is produced in the river a reed named leukophyllos ('white-leaf'). It is gathered there during the mysteries of Hecate at dawn to the accompaniment of a paean sung about it³, around the beginning of spring. Men who are prone to jealousy pick this plant for their own use, scatter it around the bridal bed-chamber, and thus ensure the marriage is unadulterated. If an intoxicated person is on the verge of committing an outrage and he enters that place, his sound judgment is snatched away, and he immediately starts reciting to everyone all the unlawful things he has done or intends to do. The people nearby seize him and hurl him, sewn up in a leather bag, into the so-called Mouth of Outrages. It is circular and resembles a well. After thirty days, the body is disgorged into Lake Maiotis, riddled with worms. Vultures then

³ We translate Gaulminus and Dindorf's conjecture παιανισμὸν ('the singing of a paean') in place of the transmitted πανισμὸν ('panic').

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

suddenly appear out of nowhere and tear apart the body. Ctesippos recounts this in book 2 of his *On Scythia*.

Nearby is Mount Caucasos. It used to be called the Marriage-bed of Boreas for this reason. Passionate desire caused Boreas to abduct Chione, daughter of Arctouros. He carried her down to a ridge called Niphante and he fathered with the aforementioned woman a son Hyrpax who succeeded to the kingdom of Heriochos. And the mountain was renamed the Marriage-bed of Boreas.

It came to be called Caucasos because of this event. After the battle between the giants and the Olympians, Cronos escaped Zeus' threats by going to the heights of the Koite of Boreas. There, he transformed himself into a crocodile and put an end to one of the local shepherds, Caucasos. He observed the arrangement of the dead man's entrails and proclaimed that his enemies were not far off. Zeus appeared, bound his father with a plaited woollen rope, and cast him down to Tartaros. Zeus then renamed the mountain in honour of the shepherd Caucasos. He chained Prometheus to it and forced him to be tortured by an entrail-eating eagle, because he had defied the laws with regard to the entrails. Cleanthes recounts this in book 3 of his *Battle of the Gods*.

There is produced on this mountain a plant called 'Promethean'. Medeia gathered it, ground it up and used it against the hostility of her father, as Cleanthes also recounts.

6. The Arar

The Arar ('join') is a river in Celtic territory. It received its name because it joins the river Rhodanos. It flows down into it through the territory of the Allobroges. It used to be called the Brigoulos but it was renamed for this reason. Arar ventured into a wood to go hunting and found that his brother Celtiberos had been killed by wild animals. Overwhelming grief caused him to mortally stab himself and to throw himself into the Brigoulos river, which was renamed the Arar after him.

There is produced in this river a large fish that the local people call skolopidos ('spike').⁴ When the moon is waxing, it is white, but when waning, it becomes completely black. When it has grown unduly large, it impales itself with its own spikes.

There is gathered in its head a stone similar to a lump of salt. It does wonders for quartan fever when applied to the left side of the body during a waning moon. Callisthenes of Sybaris recounts this in book 13 of his *On Gaul*, which Timagenes of Syria took as the basis for his discussion.

⁴ We translate σκολόπιδος as transmitted rather than the several conjectured alternatives. The allusion to a spiked palisade makes sense of the self-impalement described later in the paragraph.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

Nearby is a mountain called Lougdounon. It was renamed for this reason. Momoros and Atepomaros, after being overthrown by Seseroneus and following a commandment, came to this ridge to found a city. While they were digging the foundations, crows suddenly appeared. They flapped their wings all around and completely filled the trees. Momoros, being an expert in reading bird signs, named the city Lougdounon. For in their dialect they call a crow a *lougos* and an outcrop a *dounon*. Cleitophon recounts this in book 13 of his *On City Foundings*.

7. The Pactolos

The Pactolos is a river in Lydia near the city of Sardis. It used to be called Chrysorrhoas ('streaming with gold'). Chios, son of Apollo and Agathippe, was a skilled engineer but lived in poverty. He found a way into the treasuries of King Croesus in the middle of the night, carried out the gold and distributed it to members of his household. He was tracked down by the guards but, when he was about to be apprehended, he hurled himself into the river, which was renamed the Chrysorrhoas after him.

It was renamed Pactolos because of this event. Pactolos was the son of Poseidon and Leucothea. During the mysteries of Aphrodite he raped his own sister Demodice without realizing who she was. After he realized what had happened, overwhelming grief caused him to hurl himself into the Chrysorrhoas, which was given the name Pactolos after him.

There are produced in this river specks of Darius' gold, which are swept down into Eudaimon ('fortunate') Bay.

There is also produced in this river a stone called arouraphylax ('guard of ploughed land') which is similar to silver. It is gathered with great difficulty since it is mixed together with the specks of gold that are swept downstream. It has the following power. Lydian elites get hold of it by buying it up. They place it before the entrances to their treasuries and so ensure the safety of the gold deposited there. Whenever thieves approach, the stone emits the sound of a trumpet and the thieves, just as if they were being pursued by armed guards, are borne down the steep cliffs. The place where they die their violent deaths is called Pactolos' Watchtower.

There is produced a purple-flowering plant called chrysopolis ('golden city') because neighbouring cities use its tips to verify the purity of gold. They melt the gold and dip the plant in it. If the gold is pure, the leaves become golden but the substance of the plant is not affected. But if the gold contains any impurities at all, it spits out the moisture the flower is converted into. Chrysermos recounts this in book 3 of his *On Rivers*.

Nearby is Mount Tmolos which abounds with all kinds of wild beasts. It used to be called Carmanorios after Carmanoros, son of Dionysos and Alexirrhoia. He died after being wounded by a boar while hunting. It was later renamed Tmolos for this reason. Tmolos, son of Ares and Theogone and king of Lydia, was hunting on Mount Carmanorios when he caught sight of

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

Arrhippe, a maiden in Artemis' retinue. He fell in love with her and, overcome by desire, he pursued her intending to force himself on her. Trapped, she fled into the temple of Artemis. Despising any religious qualms, the sovereign violated the maiden inside the sanctuary. Overcome by despair, she put an end to her life with a noose. Deeply offended by this mistreatment, the goddess sent a frenzied bull against the aforementioned man. He was hurled into the air and impaled on palisade spikes. By such torture he died. Theoclymenos, son of the aforementioned, buried his father and renamed the mountain after him.

There is produced on this mountain a stone similar to pumice and found only rarely since it changes colour four times a day. It can be seen by maidens who do not yet know the ways of the world. When girls in the season of marriage see this stone, they will suffer no harm from potential rapists. Cleitophon recounts this.

8. The Lycormas

The Lycormas is a river in Aitolia. It was renamed Euenos for this reason. Desire caused Idas, son of Aphareus, to abduct Marpessa and carry her away to Pleuron. When Euenos learned what had happened he set about pursuing his daughter's abductor. When he arrived at the Lycormas he gave up all hope of catching him and threw himself into the river, which was renamed the Euenos after him.

There is produced in this river a plant called zarisa⁵ that looks like a spear. It does wonders for those with poor vision.

Nearby is Mount Myenos which is named after Myenos, son of Telestor and Alphasiboia. Myenos was desired by his stepmother and, not wanting to pollute the marriage-bed of his father, he withdrew to Mount Alphios. Telestor, fancying him protector of his wife, took his bodyguards with him into the wilderness and set about pursuing his son. Myenos, anticipating the aggressions of his father, threw himself down a precipice. By the providence of the gods the mountain was renamed Myenos after him.

There is produced on this mountain the flower leucoios, which withers and dies when the word 'stepmother' is used. Dercyllos recounts this in Book 3 of his *On Mountains*.

⁵ We translate the supplement from Stobaeus 4.36.17, ζάρισα προσαγορευομένη. The name suggests the Macedonian spear or pike, the σάρισα.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

9. The Maiandros

The Maiandros is a river in Asia. It used to be called the Anabainon ('going back') since it is the only river that flows from its own source back into itself. It was named the Maiandros after Maiandros, son of Cercaphos and Anaxibia. While waging war against the Pessinountians, Maiandros promised the Mother of the Gods that, if he were victorious, he would sacrifice whomever first congratulated him for his bravery when he returned bearing trophies. When the aforementioned man returned home, the first one to see him and congratulate him was his son Archelaos, along with his mother and his sister. Mindful of his pledge to the goddess, he had no choice but to lead his family to the altars. Despairing at what he had done, he hurled himself into the Anabainon river, which was renamed the Maiandros after him. Timolaos recounts this in Book 1 of his *On Phrygia*. Agathocles of Samos also records it in his *Constitution of the Pessinountians*.

Demostratos of Apameia records the following story. When Maiandros had just been elected general against the Pessinountians and had won a victory despite the odds, he distributed to his soldiers the offerings made to the Mother of the Gods. By the providence of the goddess, he was suddenly deprived of his right mind and killed his wife and son. A short time later he came to his senses and, regretting what he had done, threw himself into the river, which was renamed the Maiandros after him.

In this river, a stone is produced which is called, euphemistically, sophron ('of right mind'). If it is thrown into someone's lap, it drives them insane and makes them murder a family member. Once they propitiate the Mother of the Gods they are released from their suffering. Demaratos recounts this in book 3 of his *On Rivers*. Archelaos also records it in book 1 of his *On Stones*.

Nearby is Mount Sipylos which is named after Sipylos, son of Agenor and Dioxippe. He killed his own mother without realizing who she was. Driven mad by the Erinyes, he fled to Mount Ceraunium where overwhelming grief caused him to end his life with a noose. By the providence of the gods the mountain was named Sipylos after him.

There is produced on this mountain a stone resembling a cylinder. Whenever pious sons find this stone and dedicate it in the sanctuary of the Mother of the Gods they never commit impious errors but love their fathers and show affection toward their family members. Agatharchides of Samos recounts this in book 4 of his *On Stones* and Demaratos records it more precisely in book 4 of his *On Phrygia*.

10. The Marsyas

The Marsyas is a river in Phrygia near the city of Celainai. It used to be called Midas Spring for this reason. Once, when King Midas of Phrygia ventured into the more desert-like areas of his territory, he needed water. When he touched the earth it brought forth a golden spring whose water turned out to be gold. Feeling thirsty, and with his men in distress, he called upon Dionysos. The god heard him and made plentiful water rise up. After the Phrygians had drunk their fill, Midas named the river flowing from this source Midas Spring. It was renamed Marsyas for this reason. When Marsyas had been defeated by Apollo and his skin flayed, out of the flowing blood there were produced Satyrs as well as a river of the same name, called Marsyas. Alexander Cornelios recounts this in book 3 of his *On Phrygia*.

Euemeridas of Cnidos records the following story. The skin of Marsyas rotted away in time and fell to the ground. Then it fell into the source of the Midas Spring. A short time later, it was carried along downstream to a certain fisherman. Following the commandment of an oracle, Peisistratos of Lacedaimon founded a city beside the remains of the Satyr and named it Noricon from this incident. 'Noricos' is the word for a flayed hide in the Phrygian dialect.

There is produced in this river a plant called aulos ('reed flute'). If someone moves it to and fro in the wind it produces a musical melody. Dercyllos recounts this in book 1 of his *On Satyrs*.

Nearby is a mountain called Berecynthios. It got its name from Berecynthos, the first priest of the Mother of the Gods.

There is produced on this mountain a stone called machaira ('knife') which is similar to iron. If an initiate of the goddess's mysteries finds it, they become insane. Agatharchides recounts this in his *On Phrygia*.

11. The Strymon

The Strymon is a river in Thrace near the city of Hedonis. It used to be called Palaistinos after Palaistinos, son of Poseidon. While waging war against neighbouring cities he fell ill and sent his son Haliacmon to serve as general. Fighting recklessly, Haliacmon was killed. When Palaistinos heard what had happened, he sneaked away from his bodyguards and grief caused him to throw himself into the Conozon river, which was renamed the Palaistinos after him. Strymon, son of Ares and Helice, heard about the death of Rhesos, was overwhelmed with despair, and hurled himself into the Palaistinos, which was renamed the Strymon after him.

There is produced in this river a stone called pausilypos ('pain-reliever'). If someone suffering in grief finds it, they are immediately relieved of the condition that afflicts them. Iason of Byzantium recounts this in his *On Thrace*.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

Nearby are Mount Rhodope and Mount Haimos. These two happened to be siblings who fell in love with each other. He called her Hera and she gave him the pet name Zeus. Insulted and angered by this, the gods transformed both into mountains with the same names.

On these mountains are produced stones called philadelphoi ('sibling love'), which are raven-black in colour and human-like in form. When these are placed apart from each other and their name spoken aloud, they both immediately shatter. Thrasyllos of Mendes records this in book 3 of his *On Stones*. He records it more precisely in his *On Thrace*.

12. The Sagaris

The Sagaris is a river in Phrygia. It used to be called the Xerobates ('running dry') because of the following circumstance: in summertime, it is often seen to be dry. It was named Sagaris for this reason. Sagaris, son of Mygdonos and Alexirrhoe, was contemptuous of the mysteries of the Mother of the Gods and acted arrogantly towards priests and *galloi*.⁶ Insulted by the situation, she inflicted madness on the aforementioned. When he was out of his mind, he threw himself into the Xerobates, which was renamed the Sagaris after him.

There is produced in this river a stone called autoglyphos ('self-depicter'). It is found engraved with the Mother of the Gods. Whenever someone about to be castrated finds this stone, which is rarely, they are not affected but bravely endure the sight of this unnatural event. Aretades⁷ recounts this in his *On Phrygia*.

Nearby is a mountain called Ballenaion, which translates as 'royal'. It takes its name from Ballenaios, son of Ganymede and Medesigiste. When Ballenaios saw that his father was wasting away, he established a royal feast-day for the locals, which is still called Ballenaios today.

There is produced on this mountain a stone called aster ('star'). This typically shines like fire in the middle of the night at the beginning of autumn. It is called in the local dialect 'ballen' which translates as 'king'. Hermesianax of Cyprus recounts this in book 2 of his *On Phrygia*.

13. The Scamandros

The Scamandros is a river in the Troad. It used to be called the Xanthos but was renamed for this reason. Scamandros, son of Corybas and Demodice, accidentally saw the initiates of Rhea's mysteries. He went mad and, driven by a sudden impulse, went to the Xanthos, and threw himself into it. It was renamed the Scamandros after him.

⁶ The *galloi* were priests of the Mother of the Gods known in particular for their practice of self-castration.

⁷ We translate Müller's conjecture Ἀρετάδης in place of the transmitted Ἀρετάζης.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

There is produced in this river a plant called seistros ('rattle'), which resembles vetch but has seeds that shake to and fro, from which it takes its name. Those who hold it fear neither visions nor divine sightings. Demostratos recounts this in book 2 of his *On Plants*.

Nearby is Mount Ida, which used to be called Gargaros, where there happen to be altars of Zeus and the Mother of the Gods. It was renamed Ida for this reason. Aigesthios, the offspring of Diosphoros, fell in love with the maiden Ida, lay with the aforementioned, and fathered with her the so-called⁸ Idaean Dactyls. Because she lost her senses in the innermost sanctuary of Rhea, Aigesthios, in honour of the aforementioned, renamed the mountain Ida.

There is produced on the mountain a stone, kryphios ('concealed'), which appears only to initiates of the gods. Heracleitos of Sicyon recounts this in book 2 of his *On Stones*.

14. The Tanais

The Tanais is a river in Scythia. It used to be called the Amazonios because the Amazons bathed in it. It was renamed for this reason. Tanais, son of Berossos and Lysippe, one of the Amazons, was supremely chaste and hated all women. He worshipped only Ares and considered marriage dishonourable. Aphrodite forced him to desire his own mother. At the outset he fought against his feelings but, defeated by inescapable arrows of love and wanting to remain pious, he hurled himself into the Amazonios, which was renamed the Tanais after him.

There is produced in this river a plant called halinda. It has leaves like cabbage. The locals pound it up and anoint themselves with the juice. It makes them warm so that they can stoutly endure the cold. They call it in their dialect 'Oil of Berossos'.

There is produced in this river a stone that resembles crystal, which has the form of a human wearing a crown. Whenever a king dies, they set about electing a new ruler beside the river. If a person is found having that stone, he immediately becomes king and takes the royal sceptre from the one who has died. Ctesiphon recounts this in book 3 of his *On Plants*, and Aristoboulos records it in book 1 of his *On Stones*.

Nearby is a mountain called Brixaba in the local dialect which translates as 'ram's forehead'. It was named for this reason. Phrixos lost his sister Helle beside the Black Sea. He quite naturally became confounded and stopped on the summit of a peak and gave up. When some barbarians saw him and were advancing with weapons, the golden-fleeced ram peeped out and, seeing the crowd of men approaching, it adopted the voice of a human and woke up the sleeping Phrixos. Lifting up the aforementioned, the ram bore him as far as Colchis. The peak was named 'Ram's Forehead' after this event.

⁸ We translate Ghelen's conjecture εἰρημένους ('so-called') in place of the transmitted προειρημένους ('aforementioned').

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

There is produced on this mountain a plant called phrixa in the foreign dialect, which translates as 'angered by wickedness'. It is similar to rue. Step-children who get hold of it suffer no injustice from their stepmothers. It typically grows beside a cave called 'Boreas' Cave'. When gathered, it is colder than snow. Whenever a stepmother is plotting against someone, it shoots out flames. Men who are fearful of their second wives, by relying on its signal, avoid the prospect of their fears coming true. Agathon of Samos recounts this in book 2 of his *On Scythia*.

15. The Thermodon

The Thermodon is a river in Scythia which took its name from the following circumstance. It used to be called the Crystallos because it freezes even in summer; its location causes such a sight. It was renamed for this reason...⁹

16. The Nile

The Nile is a river in Egypt near the city of Alexandria. It used to be called the Melas after Melas, son of Poseidon. It was later called the Aigyptos for this reason: Aigyptos, son of Hephaistos and Leucippe, was king of the region. When a civil war caused the Nile to fail to rise and the locals to suffer a famine, Apollo Pythios declared that the crops would only flourish if the king sacrificed his daughter to appease the gods. With no other option in this terrible situation, the sovereign led Aganippe to the altars. After she had been butchered, overwhelming grief caused Aigyptos to hurl himself into the Melas, which was renamed the Aigyptos after him.

It came to be called the Nile for this reason. Garmathone, the queen of the region along the Aigyptos, lost her son Chrysochoas when he was in the bloom of his youth. Along with her household, she was performing pitiful laments for the aforementioned. But when Isis appeared suddenly, the queen put aside her despair for the moment and affected an air of joy as she graciously welcomed the goddess into her home. Isis wished to help Garmathone as a reward for her devotion and so she commanded Osiris to bring her son up from the place below. When Osiris had carried out her orders, Cerberos – whom some call Phoberos ('terrible') – howled. Neilos, Garmathone's husband, was suddenly possessed by the divine and he hurled himself into the river called Aigyptos, which was renamed the Nile after him.

There is produced in this river a stone similar to a bean. Whenever dogs see it, they do not howl. It works on those possessed by spirits: when placed in front of the nostrils, the spirit departs. Other stones are also produced, called collotes ('bind-together'). Swallows gather them beside the rising Nile and pile them up into the so-called Swallow Wall which blocks the

⁹ The rest of this entry has been lost.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

flow of water and prevents the territory from being destroyed by the deluge. Thrasyllos recounts this in his *On Egypt*.

Nearby is a mountain called Argillon for this reason. Desire caused Zeus to abduct the nymph Arge from Lyctos, a city in Crete. He took her to a mountain in Egypt called Argillon¹⁰ and there fathered with her a son called Dionysos. When Dionysos grew up he renamed the peak Argillon in honour of his mother. He raised armies of Pans and Satyrs and subjugated India to his own authority. He conquered also Iberia and left Pan behind to administer the region; Pan renamed the region Pania after himself. Subsequent generations made a slight adjustment and called it 'Spain'. Sosthenes recounts this in book 13 of his *On Iberia*.

17. The Eurotas

The wrath of Aphrodite caused Himeros, son of Lacedaimon and the nymph Taygetos, to violently rape his own sister Cleodice at a night-time festival without realizing who she was. When day dawned, he realized what had happened and despaired. Grief caused him to hurl himself into the Marathon River, which was renamed the Himeros after him.

It was later called the Eurotas for this reason. The Spartans were engaged in a war with the Athenians and were waiting for a full moon. Eurotas, the commander of the aforementioned, scorned all such superstitions and joined battle despite being warned by thunder and lightning bolts. He lost his army and fell into such despair that he hurled himself into the Himeros, which was renamed the Eurotas after him.

There is produced in this river a stone similar to a helmet, called thrasydeilos ('rash coward'). As soon as it hears a trumpet, it advances onto the riverbank; but when the Athenians are mentioned it sinks back into the depths! There are many of these stones dedicated in the temple of Athena Chalchioicos. Nicanor of Samos recounts this in book 2 of his *On Rivers*.

Nearby is a mountain called Taygetos which was renamed after the nymph Taygete, who was violently raped by Zeus. Overcome by grief, she put an end to her life with a noose on the heights of Mount Amyclaios, which was renamed Taygetos after her.

There is produced on this mountain a plant called charisia ('grace'). Women wear necklaces of it in early spring and it causes them to be loved more passionately by their husbands. Cleanthes recounts this in book 1 of his *On Mountains*. Sosthenes of Cnidos records it more accurately and Hermogenes took the subject from there.

¹⁰ This is undoubtedly a copyist's error. The original name of the mountain has been replaced by its later name given a few lines later; what the original name was is not possible to recover.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

18. The Inachos

The Inachos is a river in the Argolid. It used to be called the Carmanor. Haliacmon, a man from Tiryns, was tending his flocks on Mount Coccygion when he accidentally saw Zeus having sex with Hera.¹¹ He went mad and, driven by a sudden impulse, threw himself into the Carmanor, which was renamed the Haliacmon after him. It later came to be called the Inachos for this reason. After Io was raped by Zeus, her father Inachos, son of Oceanos, hounded the god, abusing him with curses and insults. Zeus grew angry at this insolent behaviour and sent Tisiphone, one of the Erinyes, after him. Inachos, tormented by her, threw himself into the Haliacmon River, which was renamed the Inachos after him.

There is produced in this river a plant called cynoura, which is similar to rue. Women seeking to safely terminate their pregnancies steep it in wine and apply it to their navels.

There is found in this river also a stone similar to beryl. When people planning to give false testimony hold it, it becomes black. There are many of these in the sanctuary of Hera Prosymnaia, as Timotheos recounts in his *On the Argolid*. Agathon of Samos also records this in book 2 of his *On Rivers*. Agathocles of Miletos says in his *On Rivers* that Inachos, because of his wickedness, was struck by Zeus' thunderbolt and dried up.

Nearby are the mountains Mycenae, Apesantos, Coccygion, and Athenaion, which were named for the following reasons:

Mount Apesantos used to be called the Selenaiion. Hera got Selene to help her avenge herself on Heracles. Selene, using magical incantations, filled a basket with foam from which a huge lion was produced. Iris, restraining it with her own belts, led it down onto Mount Opheltion. The lion dismembered Apesantos, a local shepherd, and killed him. By the providence of the gods, the place was renamed Apesantos after him. Demodocos recounts this in book 1 of his *On Heracles*.

There is produced on this mountain a plant called selene. Shepherds collect the foam produced by it at the beginning of summer, rub it on their feet and are thus unharmed by snakes.

Mycenae used to be called Argion after Argos Panoptes. It was renamed Mycenae for this reason. After Perseus killed Medousa, Stheno and Euryale, the sisters of the aforementioned murder victim, pursued the perpetrator. It was on this peak that they gave up hope of catching him and in despair they let out a roar (*mukethmos*). The local people renamed the peak Mycenae after this event. Ctesias of Ephesos recounts this in book 1 of his *On Perseus*.

Chrysermos of Corinth records this story in book 1 of his *On the Peloponnese*. When Perseus was being borne aloft over this ridge, the pommel (*mukēs*) fell from the hilt of his sword. Gorgophonos, king of Epidauros, had been exiled from his kingdom. He was told by an oracle

¹¹ We translate Hemsterhuys' conjecture Ἥρα ('Hera') in place of the transmitted Ρέα ('Rhea'). The latter would suggest an otherwise unattested episode of incest.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

to visit in turn the cities of the Argolid and, wherever he found the pommel of a sword, to found a city there. When he came to Mount Argion he found the ivory hilt and there he founded a city, which he named Mycenae after this event.

There is produced on this mountain a stone called corybas ('corybant'), which has the colour of a crow. If ever you find this stone and hold it close to your body, you will have no fear at all of apparitions of monsters.

Mount Apesantos was named for Apesantos, son of Acrisios. When he was hunting in that place, he stepped on a poisonous snake and died. The king buried his son and renamed the peak Apesantos; previously it had been called Selinountios.

Mount Coccygion was named for this reason. Zeus fell in love with his sister Hera and, despite feeling ashamed of who he was in love with, fathered with her a male child. In any case, the mountain that had been called Lyrceion was named Coccygion ('cuckoo') from this event. Agathonymos recounts this in his *On Perseus*.

There grows on this mountain a tree called palinouros. If any animal sits on it, it is held fast as if in bird-lime. The exception is the cuckoo: it is not affected. Ctesiphon recounts this in book 1 of his *On trees*.

Mount Athenaion took its name from Athena. After the sack of Troy, Diomedes was on his way back to Argos and climbed Mount Ceraunion. He established a sanctuary to Athena there and renamed the hill Athenaion after the goddess.

There is produced on the heights of Athenaion a root similar to rue. Whenever a woman eats this unknowingly, she becomes mad. It is called adrasteia ('inescapable'). Plesimachos recounts this in book 2 of his *On the Returns from Troy*.

19. The Alpheios

The Alpheios is a river in Arcadia near Olympian Pisa. It used to be called the Stymphelos after Stymphelos, son of Ares and Dormothea. He lost his horse-loving son Alcmaion. Overwhelmed with despair, he hurled himself into the Nyctimos river. It was renamed the Stymphelos after him. It came to be called the Alpheios for this reason. Alpheios, a descendant of the race of Helios, vied with his brother Cercaphos for glory and killed the aforementioned. Pursued by Erinyes,¹² he threw himself into the Nyctimos, which was renamed the Alpheios after him.

There is produced in this river a plant called cenchritis ('grainy') which is similar to honeycomb. Doctors boil it down and give it as a drink to those who have lost their senses, and thus cure them of their madness. Ctesias recounts this in book 1 of his *On Rivers*.

¹² We translate Hemsterhuys' conjecture Πουῶν ('Vengeances' = 'Erinyes') in place of the transmitted ποιμένων ('shepherds').

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

Nearby is a mountain called Cronios for this reason. After the fight between the Olympians and the Giants, Cronos escaped Zeus' threats by coming to Mount Ctouros, which he renamed Cronios after himself. He escaped detection for some time, then seized an opportunity and went to the Scythian Caucasos.

There is produced on this mountain a stone called cylindros ('cylinder') from this situation. Each time Zeus sends lightning bolts or thunder, the stones roll down from the heights in fear. Dercyllos records this in book 1 of his *On Stones*.

20. The Euphrates

The Euphrates is a river in Parthia near the city of Babylon. It used to be called the Medos after Medos, the son of Artaxerxes. Desire caused him to violently rape the daughter of Cordyes, Roxane. The following day, he was pursued by the king for punishment. Overcome by fear, he threw himself into the Xarandas river, which was named the Medos after him.

It came to be called the Euphrates for this reason. Euphrates, son of Arandacos, discovered his son Axourtas resting next to his mother and mistook him for one of his subjects. Jealous anger caused him to draw his sword and cut the man's throat. When he realized the truth of his irreversible act, overwhelming grief caused him to throw himself into the Medos, which was renamed the Euphrates after him.

There is produced in this river a stone called aetites ('eagle rock'). Midwives place this upon the stomachs of women having difficult labours and they give birth immediately and without pain.

There is also produced in this river a plant called axalla which when translated means 'hot'. Whenever those suffering from quartan fever place it upon their chests they are immediately cured of their symptoms. Chrysermos of Corinth recounts this in book 13 of his *On Rivers*.

Nearby is a mountain called Drimyllon. On this mountain is produced a stone similar to sardonyx. Kings use it in their royal insignia. It does wonders for poor sight when thrown into hot water. Nicias of Mallos recounts this in his *On Stones*.

21. The Caicos

The Caicos is a river in Mysia. It used to be called the Astraios after Astraios, son of Poseidon. He violently raped his sister during a night-time festival of Athena without realizing who she was and took from the aforementioned her ring. The next day he recognised his own sister's signet. Overwhelmed with grief, he threw himself into the Adouros river, which was renamed the Astraios after him.

It came to be called the Caicos for this reason. Caicos, son of Hermes and the nymph Ocyrrhoe, murdered Timandros, one of the elites. Fearing Timandros' relatives, he threw himself into the Astraios, which was renamed the Caicos after him.

There is produced in this river a poppy that bears stones rather than seeds. Some of these are black and similar to wheat. The Mysians throw them into freshly-ploughed land. If it is not going to produce much, they remain in place where they fell. But if a good crop is forecast, the little stones leap about like locusts.

There grows also a plant called helipharmacos ('sun-drug' or 'nail-drug') which doctors apply to women who are haemorrhaging and thus stop the blood-flow from the veins. Timagoras recounts this in book 1 of his *On Rivers*.

Nearby is Mount Teuthras which was named after Teuthras, king of the Mysians. He climbed Mount Thrasyllon to go hunting, saw an enormous boar and pursued it with his bodyguards. It escaped and took refuge as a suppliant in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthosia. While they were all forcing their way into the temple, the swine cried out loudly, proclaiming in a human voice: 'King, spare the favoured creature of the goddess!'. But Teuthras was caught up in the moment and killed the animal. Artemis was insulted by this act. She restored the boar to life and, as a punishment for what he had done, inflicted vitiligo and madness upon Teuthras. Ashamed of these afflictions, he lived thereafter on the heights. Lysippe, the mother of the aforementioned, learned of what had happened and ran into the woods. She brought with her the seer Polyidos, son of Coiranos. Together they investigated the matter fully and uncovered the truth; she sacrificed bulls to the goddess and so soothed her outrage. Once she had recovered her son – now of sound mind – she dedicated an altar to Artemis Orthosia. Then she adorned it with a golden boar rendered with a human head. And still today, this golden boar, pursued by hunters, enters the temple and cries out 'Spare me!'. Teuthras, who had against all hope regained his original appearance, renamed the mountain Teuthras.

There is produced on this mountain a stone called antipathes ('counter-effect'). When dissolved in wine it does wonders against vitiligo and leprosy. Ctesias of Cnidos recounts this in book 2 of his *On Mountains*.

22. The Acheloos

The Acheloos is a river in Aitolia. It used to be called the Thestios for this reason. Thestios, son of Ares and Peisidice, left for Sicyon on a household matter. After he had been there as long as was needed, he returned to his homeland. There he discovered his son Calydon resting next to his mother and, thinking that he was her lover, he killed his son not knowing who he was. When he realized the truth of his irreversible act, he hurled himself into the Axenos River, which was renamed the Thestios after him. It came to be called the Acheloos for this reason. Acheloos, son of Oceanos and a naiad nymph, had sex with his daughter Clestoria without realizing who she was. He was overwhelmed with despair and threw himself into the river Thestios, which was renamed the Acheloos after him.

There is produced in this river a plant called zaklon which is similar to wool. If you crush it and throw it into wine, it turns the wine into water that retains the aroma of wine, but not its potency.

There is found also a stone which is a dull blue colour, and which is called linourgos ('works with linen') for this reason. If you throw it onto a linen cloth, there is a kind of 'union of attraction' and it takes on the linen's appearance and becomes more white. Antisthenes recounts this in book 3 of his *On Meleager*. Diocles of Rhodes records it in more detail in his *On Aitolia*.

Nearby is a mountain called Calydon, which took its name from Calydon, the son of Ares and Astynome. When he accidentally saw Artemis bathing, she transformed his body into stone. By the providence of the gods the mountain, previously called Gyron, was renamed Calydon after him.

There is produced on this mountain a plant which has the name myops ('contracts-the eyes'). If someone throws it into water and washes their face with that solution, they lose their sight. Once they have appeased Artemis, their sight is restored. Dercyllos recounts this in book 3 of his *On Aitolia*.

23. The Araxes

The Araxes is a river in Armenia which got its name from Araxes, son of Pylos. Araxes fought with his grandfather Arbelos over the royal sceptre, and killed him with an arrow. He was pursued vengefully by the Erinyes and he hurled himself into the Bactros River, which was renamed the Araxes after him. Ctesiphon recounts this in book 1 of his *On Persia*.

Araxes, king of the Armenians, was engaged in a border war with the Persians. When the conflict was dragging on, he received an oracle that he would win victory if he sacrificed the two noblest maidens to the protective gods. He spared his own daughters out of paternal favouritism. Instead, he led to the altars and killed the much-admired girls of one of his

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

subjects. Mnesalces, the father of the murdered girls, was deeply affected by this but hid his outrage until the right moment. Seizing his chance, he ambushed and killed the sovereign's daughters. He left his homeland and sailed to Scythia. When Araxes learned what had happened, he was overwhelmed by despair and hurled himself into the River Halmos, which was renamed the Araxes after him.

There is produced in this river a plant called araxa in the local dialect, which is said to be translated as 'maiden-hater'. For when the aforementioned is gathered by maidens, it produces a flow of blood and the plant withers away.

A stone is also produced called sicyonos ('cucumber'), which is black in colour. Whenever an oracle demands human sacrifice, this stone is placed on the altars of the protective gods by two maidens. The priest merely touches it with his knife and it produces a copious gush of blood. At that moment, those celebrating the rite depart with cries of lament and carry the stone into the temple. Dorotheos the Chaldean recounts this in book 2 of his *On Stones*.

Nearby is a mountain called Diorphos after the earthborn Diorphos, about whom this story is circulated. Mithras wanted an heir but, because he hated all women, he mated with a rock. The rock became pregnant and, after the normal amount of time, it produced an infant by the name of Diorphos. In the prime of his youth, he challenged Ares to a duel and was killed. By the providence of the gods he was transformed into a mountain of the same name.

There is produced on this mountain a tree similar to a pomegranate. It bears a plentiful crop of round fruits that taste like grapes. If someone plucks one of these when they are ripe and speaks the name of Ares, it turns green in their hand. Ctesiphon recounts this in book 13 of his *On Trees*.

24. The Tigris

The Tigris ('tiger') is a river in Armenia which flows down into both the Araxes and the Arsacis swamp. It used to be called Sollax, which translates as 'flowing down'. It came to be called the Tigris for this reason. Dionysos became mad by the providence of Hera and he wandered both land and sea in search of relief from his afflictions. When he reached Armenia, he was not able to cross the aforementioned river and called upon Zeus for help. The god heard him and sent him a tiger. Dionysos crossed the river safely on the tiger's back and renamed the river the Tigris in honour of these events. Theophilos recounts this in book 1 of his *On Stones*.

Hermesianax of Cyprus records the following story. Dionysos fell in love with the nymph Alphisiboia but was not able to win her over with gifts or entreaties. He changed the shape of his body into the aforementioned tiger. He won her using fear. He seized his beloved, carried her through the river, and fathered with her a son, Medos. When Medos had grown

up he renamed the river the Tigris after the event. Aristonymos recounts this in book 3 of his *On Rivers*.

There is produced in this river a stone called myndan, which is entirely white. As long as someone is holding it, he is completely unharmed by wild animals. Leon of Byzantium recounts this in book 3 of his *On Rivers*.

Nearby is a mountain called Gauranon after Gauranos, son of the satrap Roxanes. He behaved piously toward the gods and was granted in return a gift. Out of all the Persians, he alone lived 300 years. After he died without any illness he was deemed worthy of a lavish tomb on the heights of Mausoron. By the providence of the gods the mountain was renamed Gauranon after him.¹³

There is produced on this mountain a plant similar to wild barley. The locals heat it with oil and smear it on themselves and suffer no illnesses right up until the moment when death is inevitable. Sostratos recounts this in book 1 of his *Account of Mythical History*.

25. Indos

The Indos is a river in India that flows with a great rush down to the land of the Ichthyophagoi ('Fish-eaters'). It used to be called Mausolos after Mausolos the son of Helios. It was renamed for this reason. During the mysteries of Dionysos, while the locals were engaged in worship of the god, Indos, who was a distinguished young man, violently raped Damasalcida. She was a *kanephoros*¹⁴ and the daughter of king Oxyalces. While he was being sought by the sovereign for punishment, fear caused him to throw himself into the river Mausolos, which was renamed the Indos after him.

There is produced in this river a stone called ...¹⁵ Whenever maidens carry it they have no fear at all of rapists.

There grows also a plant called carpule ('fruit'),¹⁶ which resembles bouglossos ('ox-tongue'). Taken with lukewarm water, it does wonders for those suffering from jaundice. Cleitophon of Rhodes recounts this in book 10 of his *On India*.

Nearby is a mountain called Lilaion after Lilaios, a shepherd. He was very devout; he devoted himself to Selene alone and he would celebrate the mysteries of the aforementioned in the middle of the night. The other gods were deeply offended by this dishonour and sent two

¹³ The manuscripts have 'Mausoron' and 'Gauranon' reversed in these two sentences; we translate Wyttenbach's conjecture.

¹⁴ A *kanephoros* is tasked with carrying a basket in a sacred procession.

¹⁵ There is a lacuna in the text here.

¹⁶ We translate the supplement from Stobaeus 4.36.22, καρπύλη καλουμένη.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

enormous lions against him. He was torn apart by them and lost his life. Selene transformed her benefactor into a mountain of the same name.

There is produced on this mountain a stone called cleitoris. It is very black in colour. The locals wear it in their ears as jewellery. Aristotle recounts this in book 4 of his *On Rivers*.

Sharing and remixing permitted under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC-BY)

This work forms part of the research project 'Estudios sobre tradición, transmisión y recepción de la mitografía griega. antigüedad, medievo y humanismo' (PID2019- 108931GB-I00 / SRA (State Research Agency) / 10.13039 / 50110001103)