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ROBERT PARKER

Greek Religion 1828–2017: the Contribution of Epigraphy

The 2016 issue of the specialist journal for Greek religion, *Kernos*, contains three articles discussing two religious texts that had been published very recently. One is a long Thessalian inscription apparently from the second century BC attesting a hitherto unknown mystery cult which required initiates to shave their heads; in this cult were celebrated two festivals, the Nisanaia and the Eloulaia, which took their names from months, but not from Greek months, rather from Nisan and Elul of the so-called «standard Mesopotamian calendar». The second is a calendar of sacrifices of about 22 lines from Arcadia dating to c. 500 BC. This provides not just what is only the second attestation of the unique Arcadian letter *tsan*, but also the first contemporary evidence for the religious world of archaic Arcadia. Amid much else it proves that festivals celebrated every eight years, ἐνναετηρίδες, were an authentic feature of archaic religion; they had hitherto only been attested centuries later.¹ The two new texts underline the ever increasing importance of inscriptions for the study of Greek Religion, visible for instance in ANGELOS CHANIOTIS' valuable Epigraphic Bulletin for Greek Religion which *Kernos* has hosted since 1991. The editor of *Kernos* highlights this point in a brief preliminary note, but goes on to remind the reader that «l'étude de la religion grecque n'est pas faite que d'épigraphie», and to mention some contributions based on literary evidence. I signal this editorial note because it may represent the first time that a scholar has ever found it necessary to insist that there is after all literary, as well as inscriptional, evidence for the study of Greek religion. In, let us say, the early 19th century, Greek religion was energetically studied, but no one would have felt the need to point out that one must read Homer as well as the inscriptions. The study of Greek religion at that date was in effect the study on the one hand of Homer, Hesiod, and other literary texts, on the other of works of art, so-called *Kunstmythologie*. My purpose here is to sketch the new opportunities opened for the study of Greek religion by the growth of epigraphy.

This article originated as a Festvortrag at the celebrations in June 2017 of the fiftieth anniversary of the incorporation of the Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik into the DAI. I ended by paying tribute to the Kommission and its journal *Chiron* for upholding the gold standard in epigraphic publication, and I gladly repeat that tribute here.

¹ Cf. M. P. NILSSON, *Die Entstehung und religiöse Bedeutung des griechischen Kalenders*, 1962, 46–48.

No natural and necessary starting point for this topic presents itself. That highlighted in my title is the date of publication of the first full volume of AUGUST BOECKH's *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* (individual fascicules had appeared in earlier years). In the following year CHRISTIAN AUGUST LOBECK published the two volumes of his *Aglaophamus*, which was reviewed by KARL OTFRIED MÜLLER in 1830.² LOBECK and MÜLLER are two of the scholars of that era whose names, at least, are still familiar to scholars of Greek religion. LOBECK may have been dismissed by NIETZSCHE as «ein zwischen Büchern ausgetrockneter Wurm»,³ but the spectacular learning of *Aglaophamus* ensures that it is still occasionally consulted. MÜLLER, however, pointed out that in his discussion of the Eleusinian mysteries LOBECK had missed the evidence of two inscriptions, one rather important.⁴ *Aglaophamus* is not in fact an inscription-free zone, but it is an inscription-light zone, even where it touches on topics to which inscriptions are potentially relevant. To hail this as a turning point might be rash: LOBECK may have had predecessors more alert to non-literary evidence than he was; but the attitude of MÜLLER is certainly a sign of the times. From this point on most scholars of Greek religion took the inscriptions seriously. MÜLLER himself was a martyr to epigraphy: he died tragically young of sunstroke contracted while copying an inscription at Delphi. His most famous book *Die Dorier* was published in 1824 before BOECKH's corpus had begun, when one still had to assemble inscriptions from here, there and everywhere, but MÜLLER did that energetically. When CIG started to appear, MÜLLER reviewed it,⁵ and in the new English edition of *Die Dorier* (1830) introduced CIG numeration; but he did not need to add new texts because, unlike LOBECK, he had already captured them from older publications. The other dominant figure of this period, FRIEDRICH GOTTLIEB WELCKER, was also an epigraphic enthusiast. His *Sylloge Epigrammatum Graecorum*, collected «ex marmoribus et libris»,⁶ was an early predecessor of the well-known collections of GEORG KAIBEL and WERNER PEEK and now the *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten*. He produced editiones princ-

² K. O. MÜLLER's *Kleine deutsche Schriften über Religion, Kunst, Sprache und Literatur*, II, 1848, 54–69, from GGA 13, 1830. On MÜLLER and the whole intellectual context see now M. D. KONARIS, *The Greek Gods in Modern Scholarship. Interpretation and Belief in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Germany and Britain*, 2016.

³ In the section «Was ich den Alten verdanke» of *Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt*.

⁴ What are now I.Eleusis 19 (IG I³ 6) and IG XIV 1389 (IGUR III 1155). Of the former, only B 5–47 and (not supplemented) A 24–41 were then available, but it was still described by MÜLLER as a «Haupturkunde». The latter, referred to familiarly by MÜLLER as the «Triopian inscription», was first edited by CASAUBON and attests Herodes Atticus' membership of the *genos Kerykes* (32–33).

⁵ MÜLLER, *Kleine deutsche Schriften*, I, 1847, 247–286, consists of reviews of various epigraphic publications, including CIG I fasc. 1 (from GGA, 1826).

⁶ *Sylloge epigrammatum Graecorum, ex marmoribus et libris collectit et illustr.* F. G. WELCKER, ed. 2, 1828. I have not managed to locate a copy of the first edition.

ipes of some inscriptions and studies of others,⁷ and in the masterpiece of his old age, *Griechische Götterlehre*, was still making use of recently published texts. He was also extremely alert to iconographic evidence, but that is another story.

Despite all this, the role of inscriptions remains quite restricted in the brilliant constructions of both these scholars. The explanation lies partly in their approach. WELCKER's title shows that his primary theme was a kind of theology, not the operation of religion within a society;⁸ both WELCKER and MÜLLER shared the dominant 19th century concern with roots, origins. But another and perhaps more important explanation lies in the limited materials available to them. So-called *Leges Sacrae* are not by any means the totality of the inscriptions that are important for religious history, but they provide a useful test case. Of the 181 collected in FRANCISZEK SOKOŁOWSKI's *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* (LSCG), just 17 appear in the first three volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, often in a much more fragmentary or ill-read condition than now; of the 88 in *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure*, just 12. The 160 contained in the supplementary volumes published by SOKOŁOWSKI and ERAN LUPU⁹ were absent from the corpus by definition except in special cases, as were the considerable number of new texts from Cos and Asia Minor still not contained in those supplements. Of the inscriptions chosen to illustrate an admirable recent source book for Greek religion, only three are already present in CIG, and of these one is too fragmentary to be very rewarding.¹⁰ Volume III of CIG appeared in 1853: if we go down to 1870, to include the texts from the east collected in part III of LE BAS' *Voyage archéologique*,¹¹ about 46 of the 181 texts of *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* had by then been published, about 16 of the 88 of *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure*. The first collection of *Leges Sacrae* under that name was that produced by HANS THEODOR ANTON VON PROTT and LUDWIG ZIEHEN in 1896 and 1906.¹² Their two volumes,

⁷ His *Kleine Schriften*, III, 1850, 236–326, treat inscriptions, e.g. (260–280) *Inscription in Andros* (from RhM 1843 and addenda in later numbers), on the Isis aretology published by L. ROSS, *Inscriptiones Graecae Ineditae*, II, 1842 (non vidi).

⁸ On the meaning of *Götterlehre* see A. HENRICH, *Welcker's Götterlehre*, in W. M. CALDER III et al. (ed.), *Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker: Werk und Wirkung*, 1986, 179–229, at 187–190. For WELCKER's view that *«Homer ist sehr jung»*, ib. 196. K. F. HERMANN's *Lehrbuch der gottesdienstlichen Alterthümer der Griechen*, 1846, is explicitly not a *Götterlehre* (p. viii), but the contribution of inscriptions remains modest.

⁹ F. SOKOŁOWSKI, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques, supplément*, 1962 (LSS); E. LUPU, *Greek Sacred Law. A Collection of New Documents*, 2005. Special cases: a text present in CIG might appear in SOKOŁOWSKI's *Supplément* if it had acquired new fragments in the interim, as in the case of CIG I 71 = SOKOŁOWSKI, LSS 3 (IG I³ 6: cf. n. 4 above).

¹⁰ E. KEARNS, *Ancient Greek Religion. A Sourcebook*, 2010. CIG I 459 (KEARNS p. 251: oracle recommending the consecration of the house of Demon) and II 3044 (p. 182f.: Teian curses) were printed then much as now, but I 436 (p. 123f., Archedemos of Thera's cult of the Nymphs) was much less well read.

¹¹ PH. LE BAS – W. H. WADDINGTON, *Inscriptions grecques et latines recueillies en Grèce et en Asie Mineure* (LE BAS, *Voyage archéologique en Grèce et en Asie Mineure* III).

¹² H. TH. A. VON PROTT – L. ZIEHEN, *Leges Graecorum sacrae e titulis collectae*.

which excluded texts from Asia Minor, contained 181 texts: so 135 of those 181 were published after 1870, and even the 1870s did not add many. The floodgates opened with the excavations of the 1880s and 1890s; it was in 1885 that ULRICH VON WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF wrote that *«die epigraphischen Funde allen Seiten der hellenischen Philologie neues Blut zuführen, und ihre Verwertung die Hauptaufgabe ist, welche die Wissenschaft unserer Generation gestellt hat»*.¹³

None of this will be a surprise to those familiar with the history of epigraphical discoveries: it is well known that the 6816 texts (plus addenda) of CIG have grown to a total that no-one can count – is half a million the guess sometimes offered? But it may be worthwhile to reflect from time to time on the implications of this growth. The issue is not merely of antiquarian interest, but relevant also in thinking about the sources of movement and change in scholarship. Is change due to new ideas, new paradigms, new interests, or to new evidence? The history of the study of Greek religion is normally told in terms of the former: MAX MÜLLER's solar mythology gives way to the Cambridge ritualists and to MARTIN NILSSON's agricultural fertility model, which gives way in turn to JEAN-PIERRE VERNANT's structuralism and WALTER BURKERT's primeval violence; then comes polis religion which has now been toppled, or so some think, by the religion of the individual – to give a ridiculously simplified sketch of the kind of account that might be given in an introductory lecture to undergraduates. But new ideas and new approaches are often suggested by new evidence: new texts make forms of enquiry possible that had not been so before, raise questions that nobody had ever thought of asking, create new areas for the subject. This is the process I now want to illustrate.

To start with CIG, a small number of the classic texts of Greek religion, the ones that as lecturer and teacher one refers to again and again, already appear in it. Most notable is perhaps the will of Epicteta, a text of about 300 BC which endowed an annual festival to be celebrated over three days by a large group of relatives in commemoration of herself, her husband and their dead sons. This classic document of Hellenistic self-heroisation had been known since at least the beginning of the 17th century,¹⁴ but was first securely located by BOECKH as deriving from Thera, where it has stayed ever since; it was soon joined by Diomedon's rather similar foundation from Cos which was published by LUDWIG ROSS, an early hero of religious epigraphy.¹⁵ BOECKH himself was the first editor of one important text, the sale of the priesthood of Artemis

¹³ U. VON WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, *Isyllos von Epidauros*, 1886, vi. Similar enthusiasm in his *Lectiones Epigraphicae* of the same year, *Kleine Schriften*, V. I, 1937, 256: *«Atticos lapides plures possidemus quam Graecos colligere poterat Boeckhiius»*.

¹⁴ CIG II 2448, now IG XII 3. 330. BOECKH cites it as *«primum edita apud Franc. de Zuliani, dein apud Gruter CXXVI–CCXIX ex priore editione»*. The first edition of J. GRUTER's *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romani* was c. 1603; GRUTER cites it as *«ex edito schedio Venetiis apud. Franc. de Zuliani»*, a source I have not traced.

¹⁵ L. Ross, *Inscriptiones Graecae ineditae*, III, 1845 (non vidi), now IG XII 4. 348.

Pergaia from Halicarnassus.¹⁶ In literary sources the practice of sale of priesthoods is attested once only, when Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his *Roman Antiquities* (2. 21. 3) praises Numa for not allowing priesthoods at Rome, in contrast to the practice of unspecified «others», to be allocated by sale or lot. ΒΟΕΣΚΗ noted that Dionysius, like the inscription, came from Halicarnassus; he shared Dionysius' disapproval of the practice, even pronouncing the word «simony». Further attestations of priesthood sales followed quite soon,¹⁷ and it became clear that the practice was neither exclusive to Halicarnassus nor a form of simony. Simony is secret bribery to secure priestly office, but priesthoods were advertised for sale in Greek cities quite openly. Evidence continues to grow;¹⁸ it has been the huge expansion of such texts that has taught us most of what we now know about the duties and privileges of priests. The first attestation is now probably on Chios c. 400,¹⁹ so the practice can no longer be blamed, as sometimes in the past, on the corruption of morals caused by Roman rule or the conquests of Alexander. The phenomenon is confined to the east Greek world but not universal even there; it remains a puzzle why, say, Cos sold priesthoods but Rhodes did not. But this was at least one key class of text that was already present in CIG, even if the chronology and scope of the phenomenon could not then be clear.

Another key class of document, this one present in CIG only in untypical form, is the calendar. The special value of a cult calendar is that it gives the full range of sacrifices offered by a given community, thus revealing the whole publicly worshipped pantheon. Admittedly calendars are still in very short supply: for no single polis do we have a complete calendar, but we do now have full calendars for some sub-polis groups and large fragments of polis calendars from Athens, Cos and Mykonos.²⁰ All CIG had was a calendar of a private Attic society of probably the 1st or early 2nd century AD containing almost exclusively vegetarian offerings to a puzzling range of gods including Nephthys and Osiris: a text so isolated that it is still hard to put to use.²¹ If one tries today to form a picture of the pantheon and festival year of Athens, three texts apart from fragments of the calendar are particularly valuable. These are, from the 5th century, records relating to the Treasurers of the Other Gods, which give us names of about 35 cults important enough to have had monies handled by a public board; the

¹⁶ De Graecorum sacerdotiis, Prooemium indicis lectionum aestivarum a. MDCCCXXX, now in *Gesammelte Kleine Schriften*, IV, 1874, 331–339: the text became CIG II 2656 (Syll.³ 1015, LSAM 73).

¹⁷ Cf. H. HERBRECHT, *De sacerdoti apud Graecos emptione, venditione*, diss. Argentoratum, 1885.

¹⁸ For the latest additions see H. U. WIEMER – D. ΚΑΗ, *Die Phrygische Mutter im hellenistischen Priene*, EA 44, 2011, 1–54 (now I.Priene [2014], no. 145); G. MADDOLI, *Vendita del sacerdozio della Madre degli Dei*, SCO 61.2, 2015, 101–118 (Iasos).

¹⁹ SEG 56, 996.

²⁰ Athens: S. LAMBERT, *The Sacrificial Calendar of Athens*, ABSA 97, 2002, 353–399. Cos: IG XII 4. 274–278. Mykonos: Syll.³ 1024 (LSCG 96).

²¹ CIG I 523, subsequently IG II² 1367, LSCG 52.

δερματικόν or skin-sale record, a text recording the proceeds from the sale of skins of animals sacrificed publicly in Athens in the late 330s, which offers a partial picture of the big public festivals of those years; and, from the late Hellenistic and Roman periods, the seats allocated to public priests in the front rows of the theatre of Dionysus.²² Of these texts ΒΟΕΚΚΗ had just a 35 line section of the δερματικόν. Numbers 523–547 of the Attic section of CIG made up a sub-section entitled <classis X: ordo sacrorum, termini, defixiones magicae, supellex varia>,²³ but it contained just 24 extremely miscellaneous items.

Let us now turn from all these negatives, the opportunities not open to ΒΟΕΚΚΗ's generation, to those that subsequently emerged. It would be possible to trace the history of discoveries step by step through the 19th century, to mention such highlights as the publication of the first Isis aretalogy from Andros in 1842²⁴ and the great mystery inscription of Andania in 1859,²⁵ and to pay tribute to the scholars who put them to use for religious history. A particular place in such a role of honour might go to HERMANN SAUPPE,²⁶ PAUL FOUART,²⁷ WILHELM DITTENBERGER,²⁸ VON WILAMO-

²² Treasurers: IG I³ 383 and 369. 55–97 (the latter now R. OSBORNE – P. J. RHODES, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478–404 BC*, 2017, 160). Dermatikon: IG II² 1496 (cf. R. PARKER, *Athenian Religion*, 1996, 227f.), just col. IV 65–101 of which appeared as CIG I 157. Theatre Seats: IG II² 5022–5164; M. MAASS, *Die Prohedrie des Dionysostheaters in Athen*, 1972.

²³ Inscriptions of religious import did of course occur under other sub-headings too. Thus the increase to 673 items in the text volume of LE BAS, *Voyage archéologique* (n. 11 above), pars I, Attica, section 1, Actes religieux, is due only in part to new discoveries made since CIG I of 1828. The Bodleian copy of this work is undated, but pars II, Peloponnese, is 1851.

²⁴ By L. ROSS, *Inscriptiones Graecae ineditae*, II, 1842 and immediately re-edited more fully by WELCKER (n. 7) and studied by SAUPPE (n. 26); for other early contributions see the lemma in IG XII 5. 739.

²⁵ S. KOUMANOUDIS published the stone three times in the Athenian journal *Philopatris*, as more of it was successively laid free (29/11/1858, 5/1/1859, 28/3/1859); it was immediately studied by SAUPPE (n. 26) and re-edited after autopsy with commentary by FOUART (n. 27 below, no. 326a).

²⁶ H. SAUPPE, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 1896, 178–193, ‘Hymnus in Isim’ (originally a pamphlet published at Zürich in 1842: it treats the Andros aretalogy); 215–224, ‘De inscriptione panathenaica’ (*Index scholarum aestivarum* Götting, 1858, on what is now IG II² 2311); 261–306, ‘Die Mysterienschrift aus Andania’ (*Abhandlungen der königl. Ges. der Wiss. Gött.* 7, 1859, 217–274).

²⁷ P. FOUART, commentary (1876?) on part 2 (Megara and Peloponnese), in LE BAS, *Voyage archéologique* (n. 11 above). For praise of FOUART's work see L. ROBERT, *Opera Minora Selecta*, III, 1969, 1683.

²⁸ W. DITTENBERGER, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, *Res Sacrae*, ed. 1, 1883, nos. 355–432, ed. 2, 1898–1901, nos. 550–816. The huge expansion between the two editions itself tells a story: some of those added in ed. 2 could have been included in ed. 1, but the majority were new finds, e.g. the great majority of those classed under *Collegia et sodalitates sacrorum causa institutae*, c. 724–748.

WITZ-MOELLENDORFF²⁹, VON PROTT and ZIEHEN.³⁰ But it may be more interesting to attempt a thematic approach and pick out the areas of enquiry that did not exist at all prior to epigraphic discoveries, or were enormously expanded by them.

Regional Religion

HANS-JOACHIM GEHRKE invented the concept of the Greek third world, the world beyond Athens and Sparta:³¹ in religious terms that concept has to be adjusted to become the Greek second world, because from literary sources we get only glimpses of the religious life of any Greek city other than Athens. So, for instance, in a book written before the flood of inscriptions had begun, KARL FRIEDRICH HERMANN's *Lehrbuch der gottesdienstlichen Alterthümer der Griechen* of 1846, 119 pages are given to cult, of which 14 go to the great panhellenic festivals, 57 to Attica, and just 42 to the rest of the Greek world. As readers of *Chiron* are well aware, almost everything, perhaps literally everything, that we know about the gods of Hellenistic and Roman Lycia comes from inscriptions, and the same is largely true of the whole of Anatolia. Since inscriptions are abundant in most of Anatolia, we are quite well informed about cults, and that is also the situation in, for example, Boeotia, Thessaly, Cos, Rhodes, and above all Delos. Where inscriptions are scarce, as in Corinth, there is still very little to be said. A religious history based entirely on inscriptions tends unfortunately to be thin and external, a listing of gods and titles, but there are many exceptions: a text from Cos reveals the elaborate ritualised procedure by which a sacrificial animal for Zeus Polieus was selected – it seems the victim assented to its own sacrifice by bowing its head to Hestia;³² the sheer organisational complexity of major festivals is made vivid by the Andania mystery regulations,³³ or those for the Demostheneia at Oenoanda published by MICHAEL WÖRRLE;³⁴ above all, the so-called *Beichtinschriften* of Maeonia and western Phrygia reveal to us a world of religious terror that we would never have suspected without them. It is hard to read without horror these

²⁹ Isyllos von Epidauros (n. 13), and *passim*.

³⁰ See n. 12 above.

³¹ H. J. GEHRKE, *Jenseits von Athen und Sparta: Das dritte Griechenland und seine Staatenwelt*, 1986. For references to some regional studies of cult see R. PARKER, *On Greek Religion*, 2011, 226 n. 6, to which add A. SCHACHTER, *Cults of Boeotia*, 4 vols., 1981–1994, and now S. PAUL, *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos*, 2013, and M. MILI, *Religion and Society in Ancient Thessaly*, 2015.

³² IG XII 4, 1. 278. 20: *θύεται δέ, αἱ μέ κα ὑποκύψει τῷ Ἴστίαι*, as interpreted by W. BURKERT, *Homo Necans. The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, 1983, 138 n. 10.

³³ Cf. N. DESHOURS, *Les Mystères d'Andania*, 2006; L. GAWLINSKI, *The Sacred Law of Andania: a new text with commentary*, 2012.

³⁴ M. WÖRRLE, *Stadt und Fest im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien: Studien zu einer agonistischen Stiftung aus Oinoanda*, 1988.

texts which display the belief that a minor ritual offence such as entering a sanctuary in a state of impurity might lead to the death of the offender or the offender's child.³⁵

Sub-groups within the Polis

It has always been clear in a general way that religious life percolated down through all the complex levels of organisation that made up Greek society. But without inscriptions little that was specific could be said, and probably nobody guessed the scale of activities that went on at these levels.³⁶ We now know that the calendar of an Attic deme could list offerings to about 40 different recipients, that of a *genos* to more than 20; whole complicated sub-group pantheons are now on display, and the sheer abundance of local heroes listed in these documents is a revelation.³⁷ Much of this evidence is Attic, but from Delphi we have the regulations of the *Labyadai* and from Chios of the *Klytidai* (both incidentally late 19th century finds).³⁸ Doubt remains about the exact nature of both groups – phratry, *genos*, *oikos*, tribe? – but the continuing vitality of these sub-polis entities in the late 5th and 4th centuries is unmistakable: at Iulis on the island of Keos behaviour at funerals is regulated by a law of the city (we know that of course from an inscription), but at Delphi the phratry, if that is what it was, of the *Labyadai* had its own funerary regulations.³⁹ The inscriptions provide the essential reminder of the elaborate interwoven tapestry of Greek religious life.

Alongside these hereditary societies there is also the world of voluntary associations, a sub-division of my second area. This again is a world the existence of which is known in a general way from a certain number of literary references: a law of Solon supposedly established their right to exist, and Lysias speaks of the Athenian hellfire club, the *κακοδαίμονισταί*,⁴⁰ but such societies would be a mere footnote in our accounts of Greek religion without the veritable torrent of inscriptions that has revealed

³⁵ The many addenda to G. PETZL's fundamental *Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens*, 1994, are trackable through the 'selected topics' indices to SEG s.v. Confession Inscription.

³⁶ Orgeonic groups, demes and voluntary associations occupy just a page and a half in HERMANN's *Lehrbuch* (n. 8 above), 28f. In G. F. SCHOEMANN, *Griechische Alterthümer*, II. Die internationalen Verhältnisse und das Religionswesen, ²1863, almost a hundred pages given to *Staatsculte und Feste* (418–515: demes occupy the last two pages) are followed by just eight for *Cultgenossenschaften* (516–520) and *Cult der Phratrien und Geschlechter* (521–524). These last two sections predictably undergo much revision in the ed. 4 by J. H. LIPSIUS, 1902. On the growth in evidence in this area between the first two editions of DITTENBERGER's *Sylloge* see n. 28.

³⁷ Deme: Erchia, LSCG 18. *Genos*: the *Salaminioi*, LSS 19 (P. J. RHODES – R. OSBORNE, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 BC*, 2003, no. 37), lines 84–93. Heroes: E. KEARNS, *The Heroes of Attica*, 1989.

³⁸ RHODES – OSBORNE, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (n. 37), 1 and 87.

³⁹ RHODES – OSBORNE, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (n. 37), 1, C 19–20, *hóδ'ó τεθμός πέρ τῶν ἐντοφίμων*. Iulis: IG XII 5, 593 (LSCG 97).

⁴⁰ Solon fr. 76a *Ruschenbusch* ap. Dig. 47. 22. 4; Lys. fr. 53 *Thalheim*, 195 Carey.

them to us in all their vitality and variety. Two regional volumes have been published containing 153 separate inscriptions issued by associations. These volumes are selective, not corpora, and the islands are still to come with potentially hundreds of examples from Rhodes; ANNE-FRANÇOISE JACCOTTET's corpus of inscriptions relating to Dionysiac societies contains precisely 200 numbers.⁴¹ These societies are extremely diverse in their aims, formality, stability, membership, and degree of religious seriousness – Aristotle describes them as existing for sacrifices (Eth. Nic. 1160 A 19–20), but in the same breath speaks also of pleasure – but all are central to an aspect of Greek religion which is being much stressed at the moment: though you were born into some cult commitments, you could enter voluntarily on others. There was an *à la carte* as well as a set menu, the individual had scope for religious choice.

Foreign Cults

As it happens, we have good literary evidence for the arrival of foreign cults in Athens in the 5th century: Plato's Republic begins with Socrates and friends attending the festival of Bendis in the Piraeus, Aristophanes in a comedy supposedly showed the foreign gods being put on trial and expelled from the city (Cic. Leg. 2. 37), and the disreputable things that happened at the Adonia continue to appear here and there in comedy.⁴² But the 842 pages of LAURENT BRICAULT's collection of inscriptions relating to Egyptian cults,⁴³ of which just 34 concern Attica, are a reminder that this was a panhellenic phenomenon. Without the inscriptions, virtually the only evidence we would have for the wide diffusion of Egyptian and Syrian cults in the Hellenistic period would be theophoric names such as Isidoros or Serapias formed from the names of Egyptian gods. The context where religious multiculturalism can be observed to a supreme degree in the Greek world is the Delos of the 2nd century BC, a place where Greeks, Romans, Italians, Syrians, Phoenicians, Egyptians and even a few Arabians worshipped their own gods and to a considerable extent one another's. The chief shrine of the Egyptian gods, Sarapieion C, contained so many dedications to gods other than the main Egyptian gods that PIERRE ROUSSEL famously described it as *«un véritable pandémonium»*.⁴⁴ We learn from literary sources about the political circumstances that created this unique cultural mix, but every single detail of this teeming religious life comes from inscriptions. I mentioned earlier the long new inscription that has revealed that festivals named from the Semitic month names Elul

⁴¹ Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations and Commentary, I, J. S. KLOPPENBORG – R. S. ASCOUGH, Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace, 2011; II, P. A. HARLAND, North Coast of the Black Sea, Asia Minor, 2014. A.-F. JACCOTTET, Choisir Dionysos. Les associations dionysiaques ou la face cachée du Dionysisme, 2003.

⁴² Cf. PARKER, Athenian Religion (n. 22), 152–198.

⁴³ L. BRICAULT, Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques, 3 vols., 2005.

⁴⁴ P. ROUSSEL, Délos, Colonie Athénienne, 1916, 251.

and Nisan were celebrated in Hellenistic Thessaly:⁴⁵ it would be hard to think of any other inscription that has brought quite such surprising news.

Individual Choice

There was always scope within Greek religion for individual choice. One aspect of this is what BURKERT calls «votive religion».⁴⁶ It is most impressively embodied in the great series of dedications of ἀπαρχαί, first fruits, and δεκάται, tithes, by individuals of all social classes from the Athenian acropolis. Most of these were products of the excavations of the 1880s, so not available to ΒΟΕΣΚΗ's generation. The 1870s and 1880s were in fact a uniquely productive period in illuminating many aspects of private religion. The first lead tablets recording questions put to the oracle at Dodona were published in 1878,⁴⁷ showing ordinary people putting everyday concerns to the god: «Agis asks Zeus about the blankets and pillows. Did someone from outside steal them?»; «Lysanias asks Zeus Naios and Diona whether the child Annylla is pregnant with is his»; «Kleoutas asks Zeus and Diona if it is beneficial and profitable for him to keep sheep».⁴⁸ In 1883 came the first instalment of the famous cures, ἰάματα, inscription from Epidauros,⁴⁹ with its startling opening «Kleo was pregnant for five years», but then with the aid of Asclepius gave birth to a son who ran straight to the temple fountain and washed himself. Many comparable marvels followed: it was revealed at a stroke that so called temple medicine was not medicine at all in any normal sense, but a matter above all of faith. There are no incurable diseases, the temple record proclaimed, Asclepius can cure any ill if you only put your trust in him. The same excavation brought to light one of the most remarkable documents of personal devotion from the classical period, the paean and other poems dedicated to the god by Isyllos of Epidauros.⁵⁰

Oracles and healing were for everybody: between these two had come, in 1879 and 1880, a more esoteric discovery, the first of the so-called Orphic gold leaves to be recognised for what it was, a Totenpass. One had in fact been published in 1836 but was mistaken for an oracular response. DOMENICO COMPARETTI in 1880 discussed the gold leaves just discovered in Thurii and corrected that mistake; he pronounced the

⁴⁵ J. C. DECOURT – A. TZIAPHALIAS, Un règlement religieux de la région de Larissa: cultes grecs et «orientaux», *Kernos* 28, 2015, 13–51.

⁴⁶ W. BURKERT, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 1987, 12–17; cf. I. PATERA, *Offrir en Grèce ancienne*, 2012; T. JIM, *Sharing with the Gods: Aparchai and Dekatai in ancient Greece*, 2014.

⁴⁷ By K. KARAPANOS, *Dodone et ses ruines*.

⁴⁸ E. LHÔTE, *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone*, 2006, nos. 121, 49, 80.

⁴⁹ The éditions principes were by P. KAVVADIAS, *Eph. Arch.* 1883, 197–228, 1885, 1–30, and 1918, 158–171; most of the texts are now easily accessible as RHODES – OSBORNE, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (n. 37), no. 102.

⁵⁰ Immediately edited by WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, n. 13 above.

word Orphic which, rightly or wrongly, has attached to the gold leaves ever since.⁵¹ So a single decade put the study of the private religion of classical Greece on a wholly new basis. As for curse tablets, one or two had long been known, and there were already two Attic examples in CIG, but the total grew continually in the 19th century, and the major corpora came in 1897 for Attica and 1904 for the rest of the ancient world.⁵² There are, obviously, many reasons why ERIC ROBERTSON DODDS' classic book *The Greeks and the Irrational* could not have been written in, let us say, 1880, but one very obvious one is that much of the evidence he used to such powerful effect had not then been discovered.

Ritual

A complicated issue that cannot be addressed in detail here is that of the role of inscriptions in religious practice.⁵³ Anyone entering a major sanctuary from roughly the 5th century onwards was confronted by much potential reading matter, but the purpose of those texts was not in the main to tell the visitor how to perform the rituals. The majority of so-called sacred laws concern disciplinary matters – things you may not do in a sanctuary – or the duties and perks of priests. The presumption is that traditional rituals will be performed traditionally, in accord with oral memory. Where detail is given about a ritual, a special explanation is needed: the ritual in question is new, or has been modified, or contains a detail where error is particularly likely and must be warned against. A few hymns are known from inscriptions in sanctuaries, but it has been plausibly argued that even in these rare cases the inscription was not intended to be useful, a text to be followed in future: it was put up as an honour to its author or as a commemoration of particular performance.⁵⁴ Mythological narratives are almost unknown. So Greeks did not learn the broad outlines of their religion or its rituals from inscriptions. All the same, special cases where precision was needed about a ritual do occur, and here epigraphy sheds precious light on ritual detail. A five word text from Cyrene, 'Sanctuary of Hekate. Incense is not brought',⁵⁵ is a paradigm case of a rule guarding against an easy mistake: most Olympian gods welcome incense but Hekate does not, presumably because she is a power of the underworld; so the rule, though not of course the explanation, has to be spelt out. However obscure and trivial

⁵¹ D. COMPARETTI, *Notizie degli Scavi 1880*, 152–162, on what are now *Orphicorum Fragmenta* F 32 c-e Kern, F 488–490 Bernabé.

⁵² R. WUENSCH, *Inscriptiones Atticae III (IG III)*, Appendix, *Defixionum Tabellae*, 1897; A. AUDOLLENT, *Defixionum Tabellae*, 1904.

⁵³ Cf. R. PARKER, *Epigraphy and Greek Religion*, in J. K. DAVIES – J. J. WILKES (ed.), *Epigraphy and the Historical Sciences*, 2012, 17–30.

⁵⁴ M. ALONGE, 'Greek Hymns from Performance to Stone', in A. P. M. H. LARDINOIS – J. H. BLOK – M. G. M. VAN DER POEL (ed.), *Sacred words: orality, literacy, and religion*, 2011, 217–234.

⁵⁵ LSS 133, Cyrene, 3rd c. BC?: 'Ιαρὸν Ἐκάτ[ας]. οὐ ποτιφέ[ρεται] λιβανω[τός].

such a rule may seem to us, this was a religion of ritual precision: the inscriptions remind us that these details mattered. Similarly, the calendar of the Attic deme of Erchia specifies that a sacrifice to Zeus Meilichios should be <wineless as far as the entrails>.⁵⁶ We knew that some offerings were accompanied by wine, some not; we also knew that distribution of the entrails among privileged participants was an important moment in sacrifice. But the discovery that a sacrifice could switch from wineless to vinous in mid-course at the entrail stage was an unexpected revelation of the nuances that could be involved. Almost every new sacrificial calendar brings a new specification of some kind; we keep learning from them, even if often it is a Socratic learning of how little we know.

An area where <how to> instructions for ritual were sometimes put out in the open on stone was that concerning purity and purifications. This is the theme of what are now two among the classics texts for the student of Greek religion, a long set of purity regulations from Cyrene published in 1927, and a lead tablet from Selinus that burst sensationally on the world in 1993.⁵⁷ These texts are unusual in that, inter alia, they provide guidance on how to perform rituals of purification: if you are suffering from some kind of polluting demon, they will teach you how to purify it away. This is just the kind of detailed guidance that sacred laws typically fail to provide; a special need to make specialised ritual knowledge public seems to have been felt in such cases.⁵⁸ We now have almost twenty inscriptions bearing in different ways on issues of purity, no single one of which appears in BOECKH's corpus. Literary texts speak in general terms of the need for purity, but all the precision and casuistry on this subject emerged later from stones. The most recent such text was published in 2017, from the sanctuary of an unnamed goddess at Thyateira in Lydia, and sheds new light on how pollution was conceived.⁵⁹ It begins <avoidance is practised>, i.e. one may not enter the temple, <after the death of a relative, from the day on which one buries him, or though not present hears of the death, for nine days>. So pollution is not necessarily caused by physical contact at all; one may not enter a temple for a fixed period after the death of a relative, even if one merely hears of it when many miles away. We also learn that a hetaira may only enter the sanctuary after purifying herself by sacrifice of a piglet in the presence of the neopoioi currently in office – a thoroughly unpleasant sidelight on the humiliations to which a sex worker in antiquity could be exposed.

⁵⁶ LSCG 18 A 40–43, Erchia, 4th c. BC: Δὲ Μιλιχίωι, οἷς, νηφάλιος μέχρι σπλάγχ[ν]ων.

⁵⁷ RHODES – OSBORNE, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (n. 37), no. 97 (LSS 115); M. H. JAMESON – D. R. JORDAN – R. D. KOTANSKY, *A Lex Sacra from Selinous*, 1993.

⁵⁸ Cf. PARKER, *Epigraphy and Greek Religion* (n. 53), 26–28.

⁵⁹ H. MALAY – G. PETZL, *New Religious Texts from Lydia*, 2017, no. 1 (Thyateira, 2nd c. BC?): ἀγνεύεται ἀπο ὀμαίμου κήδους ἀφ' ἧς ἂν ἡμέρας θάψη ἢ μὴ συνπαρῶν αἰσθηταὶ ἡμέρας ἑννέα.

Post-classical Greek Religion

The great literary sources on which accounts of Greek religion above all depend are the early poets and mythographers, supplemented centuries later by Pausanias; the intervening gap is not adequately filled by the mannered works of the Hellenistic poets. Fortunately into that gap come flooding inscriptions in huge numbers and often in considerable detail: many festivals were newly created or re-organised, so we are often given quite a full picture of the general shape of a ceremony even if not the minutiae of the rituals.⁶⁰ We also get a sense of the outreach of festivals: more than 50 texts were found in the agora of Magnesia on the Maeander containing replies to the Magnesians' invitation to the whole Greek world to join in celebrating their new festival of Artemis Leukophryene.⁶¹ This famous dossier is a spectacular illustration of the religious politics of a minor city in this extended Greek world, the aspiration to have one's own panhellenic festival. Another area worth picking out, amid very many possibilities, is that of ruler cult. CHRISTIAN HABICHT showed that cities established ruler cults not in a spirit of unfocused flattery but in gratitude for major benefits received, and it was largely through the precise historical contexts in which cults were set up, revealed by inscriptions, that he could build this truly transformatory argument. It was also through inscriptions that ELIAS BIKERMAN drew the crucial distinction between civic cults established by particular cities and dynastic cults promoted by rulers.⁶²

Still more important is the way in which inscriptions have refuted most of the fables convenues about Hellenistic religion. Even a Hellenistic historian as great as FRANK WALBANK claimed, in a short introduction to the Hellenistic world, that traditional Greek religion had become in this period an empty form. It was left to another great Hellenistic historian, PETER M. FRASER, in an appreciative review to point out 'the survival of belief in the traditional Greek deities among ordinary men and women throughout the Hellenistic world'.⁶³ WALBANK's conception was formed by Polybius, FRASER's by inscriptions. The other side of the old cliché about the decline of traditional religion in the Hellenistic period is its supposed replacement by foreign cults and ruler cults and the cult of Tyche. I have stressed the role of inscriptions in showing the spread of foreign cults and the historical contexts in which ruler cults were established, but they also reveal that these newcomers at best supplemented traditional

⁶⁰ A. CHANIOTIS, *Sich selbst feiern? Städtische Feste des Hellenismus im Spannungsfeld von Religion und Politik*, in M. WÖRRLE – P. ZANKER (ed.), *Stadt und Bürgerbild im Hellenismus*, 1995, 147–172.

⁶¹ Magnesia: O. KERN, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*, 1900, 16–87; K. RIGSBY, *Asyia*, 1996, nos. 66–131.

⁶² C. HABICHT, *Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte*, 1970; E. BIKERMAN, *Institutions des Seleucides*, 1938, 236–257. For a third category, that of civic cults as a reaction to the dynastic cult, cf. I. SAVALLI-LESTRADE, *Studia Hellenistica* 24, 2010, 133 f.

⁶³ P. M. FRASER, *History* 67, 1982, 299, reviewing F. WALBANK, *The Hellenistic World*, 1981: 'A chapter on religious developments ... largely ignores the survival of belief in the traditional Greek deities among ordinary men and women throughout the Hellenistic world.'

cults, and even that only in certain cities, never remotely replaced them. As for Tyche, she is epigraphically almost invisible, an idea, not a figure of cult. A favourite text of mine is the cult calendar issued by the island of Mykonos when its two cities synoecised c. 200 BC: there is no trace there of ruler cults, foreign gods, Tyche, nothing that would not make perfect sense two centuries earlier. The Olympian gods were alive and well and living on Mykonos.⁶⁴

This highlighting of six areas where inscriptions have been particularly important has, obviously, been very selective. But what does it all amount to? Has the understanding of Greek religion been completely transformed? In a sense, no: one will still tell a beginner to read Homer and Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns and to look at vases and sculptures, because most of the Greeks who made and read the inscriptions had done so too; along with what they learnt in the family, these were the sources from which they acquired their most basic conceptions of the divine world. I have stressed that almost every phenomenon illustrated by inscriptions is also known from literary sources: even the sale of priesthoods is mentioned, though once only and in very vague terms. But I have also stressed that many phenomena which without the inscriptions one could merely mention once, and pass on, can now be illustrated and discussed in detail; many whole books could not have been written without them.⁶⁵ Much depends on the questions one chooses to ask. If one's concern is traditional Götterlehre, or alternatively the religion of intellectuals and philosophers, the gains are much less, though even for Götterlehre not negligible, since new epithets and functions emerge all the time.⁶⁶ But if one is interested in religion's social embeddedness, its *Sitz im Leben*, it becomes reasonable to speak of transformation. The change here relates to a broader change in the study of religion. In the 19th century the study of religion was a quest for origins, the original impulse, the primal moment. This had the rather ridiculous consequence that all the evidence available, even the earliest in the poetry of Homer, was actually too late to show us what we wanted to discover. «Homer ist sehr jung», said WELCKER;⁶⁷ the challenge became to try to get back through the evidence to an earlier stage. (One famous inscription was long thought to enable us to do that, the Hymn to Zeus discovered at Palaiokastro in 1904 and published to huge excitement in 1910; but the belief that this celebrated a Zeus as *κοῦρος*, a survivor from the second millennium, is very insecure.⁶⁸) Almost nobody nowadays regards

⁶⁴ LSCG 96, better read as Syll.³ 1024.

⁶⁵ A recent example is J. MIKALSON, *New Aspects of Religion in Ancient Athens. Honours, Authorities, Esthetics and Society*, 2016.

⁶⁶ Philosophy has gained more from papyrology than epigraphy, though I have not forgotten the inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda.

⁶⁷ See n. 8 above. This position is developed, with her characteristic eloquence, by J. HARRISON, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 1903, vii.

⁶⁸ M. ALONGE, *The Palaiokastro Hymn and the Modern Myth of the Cretan Zeus*, in A. P. MATTHAIOU – I. POLINSKAYA (ed.), *ΜΙΚΡΟΣ ΗΙΕΡΟΜΝΗΜΩΝ*, *Meletes eis mnemen* Michael H. Jameson, 2008, 229–249.

that approach as either practicable or useful: our concern is with the religion of Greeks of the historic age, the Greeks we can actually observe. This is also of course what the inscriptions reveal. In a sense then a new theoretical orientation has given the inscriptions new importance, but there is also a sense in which the inscriptions have encouraged the change in orientation: one is encouraged to describe Greek religion as actually practised because the evidence allowing one to do so has increased so dramatically. It is also the case that recent theoretical developments have been heavily dependent on epigraphic evidence. The polis religion model is founded on all the many decrees which show the polis and its sub-units regulating matters of cult; the reaction against polis religion builds on the à la carte menu for Greek religion again revealed by inscriptions.⁶⁹ But, at bottom, the study of Greek religion is not a matter of playing off theory against evidence, or epigraphy against literary texts (or archaeology); these polarisations are unhelpful. We need conceptual help, information, and stimulus to the imagination from every quarter in order to penetrate this unfamiliar world.

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⁶⁹ For this debate see PARKER, *On Greek Religion* (n. 31), 57–61, with references (the article by J. KINDT there cited is now ch. 1 of her *Rethinking Greek Religion*, 2012); since then e.g. many contributions to J. RÜPKE (ed.), *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, 2013 and E. EIDINOW – J. KINDT, *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, 2016; T. HARRISON, *Beyond the Polis? New Approaches to Greek Religion*, *JHS* 135, 2015, 165–180.

