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Ritual Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean: Case Studies in Ancient Greece and Asia Minor

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1. MEDITERRANEAN RITUALS[1]

One of the many monuments the Athenians proudly showed their youth and the visitors to their city was the ship with which Theseus was believed to have sailed to Crete. In the course of the centuries the ship's wooden parts rotted, and the Athenians had to replace them, providing ancient philosophers with an unsolved puzzled: did Theseus' ship remain the same even though its rotten components were continually being replaced?[2] I cannot help thinking about this puzzle when I am confronted with diachronic studies on 'the' Mediterranean. Can the Mediterranean be a somehow distinctive object of historical and cultural study, given the continual change of its living (and therefore, ephemeral) components (human populations and their cultures, animals, and plants)? Or is the Mediterranean as a historical and cultural entity just a construct of the collective imagination of scholars who contribute to journals, books, or conferences that have the name 'Mediterranean' in their title?

[1] The views expressed here stem from the project 'Ritual and Communication in the Greek cities and in Rome', which is part of the interdisciplinary projects 'Ritualdynamik in traditionellen und modernen Gesellschaften' funded by the Ministry of Science of Baden-Württemberg (1999–2000) and 'Ritualdynamik: Soziokulturelle Prozesse in historischer und kulturvergleichender Perspektive' funded by the German Research Council (2002–5); references to my own preliminary studies on relevant subjects are, unfortunately, unavoidable. I have profited greatly from theoretical discussions with my colleagues in this project.

[2] Plu. *Theseus* 23.

The question of the unity of the Mediterranean should be asked not only 'vertically' (with regard to diachronic developments); it must be asked 'horizontally' as well. Can the Mediterranean in its entirety be a meaningful and distinctive object of study in any given period of the antiquity, given the heterogeneity of cultures and environments in this geographical region? And if continuities, convergences, and homogeneities can somehow be detected in a non-anthropogenous framework—for example there *is* such a thing as a Mediterranean climate, we can study Mediterranean seismic activities, and we know from personal observation the Mediterranean karstic landscapes—can we characterize cultural phenomena as 'Mediterranean phenomena'? Is there such a thing as a Mediterranean mentality, a Mediterranean way of life, typical Mediterranean cultic practices or rituals, or even Mediterranean values?[3] These questions sound rhetorical. Most of us would spontaneously deny the existence of *a* Mediterranean culture, *a* Mediterranean religion or *a* Mediterranean way of life, perhaps only making allowances for certain historical periods or certain limited aspects. It is necessary to rethink what is specifically 'Mediterranean' in Mediterranean studies, to distinguish between objects and observation and constructs—but also to ask ourselves if there is any legitimacy for Mediterranean studies other than the natural geographical limits of this closed sea, and if yes, which parameters we should take into consideration.

I have chosen to explore this issue by treating a cultural phenomenon for which geographical factors do not seem to be determinant: rituals. Admittedly, religious responses to space and landscape have often been observed, and P. Horden and N. Purcell have very aptly included in their *Corrupting Sea* a chapter on territories of grace.[4] This chapter deals with a great variety of subjects pertaining to the relation between religion and the physical environment and to geographical parameters, such as the topographical features of cult places (holy waters, high places, woods and groves, natural catastrophes such as bad weather, earthquakes and vulcanic activity), the

[3] See e.g. J. G. Peristiany (ed.), *Honour and Shame. The Values of Mediterranean Society* (London, 1965).

[4] *CS* 401–60.

sacralized economy, and the mobility of religious practices. The questions of continuities, survivals, and changes, convergences and divergences naturally occupy an important position in their discussion. Although no claim is made in this book (or has ever been made, at least to the best of my knowledge) that there is a 'Mediterranean' religion or that there is anything specifically Mediterranean in the religions of the ancient Mediterranean, still continuities in worship are detected in certain sites—the 'classical' example being the use of the same sacred space by pagans, Christians and Muslims; also similarities in the religious use of space and landscape practices with a wide geographical distribution in the Mediterranean have been observed. Interestingly, this discussion of continuities, survivals, and similarities in the sacred landscapes of the Mediterranean refers to *cult*, *religion*, *worship*, or the *sacred*; it does not to refer to *rituals*. Although rituals are often alluded to by Horden and Purcell, there is hardly any direct reference to the term *ritual* or to individual rituals, and very prudently so, for reasons that will be given in a moment.

2. FROM MEANINGS TO FUNCTIONS

But despite the prudence and caution that should be shown in the treatment of rituals as objects of a comparative or a diachronic study, yet rituals are essential for the understanding of cult, religion, and worship, for the use of sacred space, but also for the cultural profile of a group, in the ancient Mediterranean as in any other region and period. It was with the description of differences in rituals (especially burial customs and the rituals of dining) that many ancient historians (notably Herodotus) established cultural difference and identity between Greeks and barbarians or among the Greek communities.[5] In one of the longest and most detailed ancient treatments of rituals, in Athenaeus' description of the dining rituals of various peoples, the peculiarities of each group are detected through a comparison of the rituals at the dining table.[6] There is an unspoken, but

[5] e.g., F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus. The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988); R. Bichler, *Herodots Welt* (Berlin, 2000), esp. 48–56, 84–93, 123–31, 151–78.

[6] Athen. 4.148–54d.

relatively widespread view (in Germany in particular), perhaps influenced by the spirit of Protestantism, that religious beliefs and doctrines have a supremacy over rituals, that rituals are meaningless. And yet, scholars still search for the meaning of rituals no less than some antiquarians did in antiquity. Agatharchides narrates a very instructive anecdote:[7] 'The Boeotians sacrifice to the gods those eels of the Kopaic Lake which are of surpassing size, putting wreaths on them, saying prayers over them, and casting barley-corns on them as on any other sacrificial victim; and to the foreigner who was utterly puzzled at the strangeness of this custom and asked the reason, the Boeotian declared that he knew one answer, and he would reply that one should observe ancestral customs, and it was not his business to justify them to other men.' This anecdote of Agatharchides, rather than confirming the view of those who regard rituals meaningless, advises us to shift the focus of the discussion from meaning to functions. The Boeotians continued to sacrifice eels, not because of an original, now forgotten, obscure and entirely insignificant meaning, but because of the importance attached to the preservation of ancestral traditions for the coherence and identity of a community.

One of the primary functions of rituals, at least in the civic communities in Greece, was the communication between humans and other beings within and without human society.[8] Public religious rituals—sacrifice in particular, and other activities connected with sacrifice (the singing of hymns, ritual dances, etc.), rituals of purification and rituals of dedication—are privileged means of communication between mortals and gods; ritual activities establish the communication between the living and the dead, in the funerary cult and the cult of heroes; it is also with rituals—the secret rituals of magic—that men establish a contact with superhuman beings. Public rituals (such as

[7] *FGrH* 86 F 5 (from Athen. 7.297d).

[8] e.g. F. Graf, 'Zeichenkonzeption in der Religion der griechischen und römischen Antike', in R. Posner, K. Robering, and T. A. Sebeok (eds.), *Semiotik. Ein Handbuch zu den zeichentheoretischen Grundlagen von Natur und Kultur* (Berlin and New York, 1997), 939–58. Cf. N. Bourque, 'An Anthropologist's View of Ritual', in E. Bispham and C. Smith (eds.), *Religion in Archaic and Republican Rome and Italy: Evidence and Experience* (Edinburgh, 2000), 21–2.

oath ceremonies, banquets, processions, and initiatory rituals) play an important part also in the communication between communities, groups and individuals; the performance of rituals expresses symbolically roles, hierarchical structures, and ideals; rituals include or exclude individual persons or whole groups from communal life. Communication is also the aim of all those forms of ritual and ritualized behaviour that accompany the social and political life of the Greeks—the drinking party or the celebration of a victory, the honouring of benefactors or the assembly, the enthronization or the *adventus* of a ruler, or even diplomatic negotiations, as my next anecdote will hopefully demonstrate. In 86 BC Sulla was at war with Athens. After a long siege of their city the Athenians sent a delegation to negotiate with the Roman general. Plutarch reports:[9] 'When they (the envoys) made no demands which could save the city, but talked in lofty strains about Theseus and Eumolpus and the Persian wars, Sulla said to them: 'Be off, my dear sirs, and take these speeches with you; for I was not sent to Athens by the Romans to learn its history, but to subdue its rebels.' This anecdote may present more than the confrontation of Athenian oratory and Roman pragmatism. I think we have here the case of a misused and misunderstood ritual, the function of which would have been the establishment of the basis of communication, but which failed to do so. From the times of Plato's *Menexenus* to Aelius Aristides, the Athenians reminded themselves and others stereotypically and in an almost ritualized way of the same three victories over barbarians: the victory of Theseus over the Amazons, Erechtheus over the Thracians of Eumolpus, and the victory in the Persian Wars.[10] These standardized components of their cultural memory are to be found not only in orations held in festivals (in other words within the framework of a ritual), but also in their diplomatic contacts, e.g. with Sparta.[11] This ritualized use of history as an argument that can be observed in many occasions and in many forms in the history of Greek diplomacy, from the Peloponnesian War to the 'kinship diplomacy' of the

[9] Plu. *Sulla* 13.
[10] Plat. *Menex.* 239b–40e; Ael. Arist. *Panath.* 83–7, 92–114.
[11] Xen. *Hell.* 2.2.20; 6.2.6.

Hellenistic and Imperial period, established and facilitated communication among the Greek communities that shared the same cultural memory and values.[12] This diplomatic ritual failed in the case of Sulla, and quite naturally: Sulla himself was a barbarian aggressor, not unlike the Amazons, the Thracians and the Persians that had threatened the freedom of the Athenians in the remote past.

3. RITUALS AND CULTURAL TRANSFER

I have stretched out this communicative function of rituals and ritualized activities because I think it shows why we should include rituals and ritualized behaviour in comparative and diachronic studies of the ancient Mediterranean, despite all the obstacles and methodological problems that confront us. It would be misleading, for instance, to ignore the ritual components in discussions of continuities in the use of sacred space. Two Cretan sanctuaries with the longest record of an uninterrupted use as sacred places, the sanctuary in Simi Viannou and the Idaean Cave, demonsrate that it is exactly the change of the rituals that reveals substantial breaks in the tradition, discontinuities rather than continuities. In Simi Viannou there was a shift in the worship from sacrificial rituals and banquets to the initiatory rituals of ephebes in the historical period.[13] In the Idaean Cave the offering of food items in the Minoan period is replaced by blood sacrifices, the dedication of weapons—again, possibly in connection with military rites of passage—in the early historical period, and the celebration of a cult of death and rebirth.[14] That the continuity of use can be accompanied by

[12] See most recently C. P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

[13] A. Lebessi and P. M. Muhly, 'Aspects of Minoan Cult: Sacred Enclosures: The Evidence from the Syme Sanctuary (Crete)', *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1990), 315–36; A. Lebessi, 'Flagellation ou autoflagellation? Données iconographiques pour une tentative d'interpretation', *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 115 (1991), 103–23; K. Sporn, *Heiligtümer und Kulte Kretas in klassischer und hellenistischer Zeit* (Heidelberg, 2002), 85–9 (with the earlier bibliography).

[14] J. Sakellarakis, 'The Idean Cave: Minoan and Greek Worship', *Kernos* 1 (1988), 207–14; Sporn, *Heiligtümer* 218–23 (with the earlier bibliography).

a radical discontinuity in ritual practices is also demonstrated by the conversion of pagan temples. Scholars often refer to the existence of Christian churches on the ruins of pagan sanctuaries as a case of continuity in the use of sacred space; sometimes it was not the sanctity of the space that invited the Christians to build their places of worship there, but on the contrary its unholiness; not the effort to continue the sacred use of a site, but the effort to expel the pagan demons; the effort to conquer an unholy and impure place and *make* it sacred. As Horden and Purcell put it: 'the "hardware" of locality and physical form, including temple, church or tomb, is in practice infused with changing structures of meaning by ritual and observance.'[15]

Rituals have been and should remain an intrinsic part of comparative studies in the Mediterranean. There is a plethora of comparative studies on rituals that not only contain the name of the Mediterranean in their title, but also address the convergences and divergences in rituals in the ancient Mediterranean.[16] Without claiming the existence of *a* Mediterranean

[15] *CS* 422. For a methodological approach see P. Pakkanen, 'The Relationship between Continuity and Change in Dark Age Greek Religion: A Methodological Study', *Opuscula Atheniensia* 25–6 (2000–1), 71–88.

[16] To give only a few examples from the last decade or so, a conference in Rome was devoted to dedicatory practices in the ancient Mediterranean (G. Bartoloni, G. Colonna and C. Grotanelli (eds.), *Atti del convegno internazionale Anathema. Regime delle offerte e vita dei santuari nel mediterraneo antico, Roma 15–18 Giugno 1989*, in *Scienze dell'antichità* 3–4 (1989–90) (1991)); another conference in Lyon had Mediterranean sacrificial rituals as its subject (R. Étienne and M.-T. Le Dinahet (eds.), *L'Espace sacrificiel dans les civilisations méditerranéennes de l'antiquité: Actes du colloque tenu à la Maison de l'Orient, Lyon, 4–7 juin 1988* (Paris 1991); R. E. DeMaris, has studied the cult of Demeter in Roman Corinth as a 'local development in a Mediterranean religion' ('Demeter in Roman Corinth: Local Development in a Mediterranean Religion', *Numen* 42 (1995) 105–17); D. J. Thompson approached Philadelphus' procession in Alexandria as an expression of 'dynastic power in a Mediterranean context' ('Philadelphus' Procession: Dynastic Power in a Mediterranean Context', in L. Mooren (ed.), *Politics, Administration and Society in the Hellenistic and Roman World: Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Bertinoro 19–24 July 1997* (Louvain, 2000) 365–88); and L. LiDonnici has recently studied 'erotic spells for fever and compulsion in the ancient Mediterranean world' ('Burning for it: Erotic Spells for Fever and Compulsion in the Ancient Mediterranean World', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 39 (1998), 63–98). See also B. Gladigow, 'Mediterrane

religion or of *Mediterranean* rituals, these scholars regard a comparative study of rituals limited to this area as a meaningful task. And there are good reasons for doing so, at least in certain historical periods. The Mediterranean Sea has more often been a facilitator of communication than a barrier, and communication contributes to the wide diffusion not only of flora, fauna, and artefacts, but also of culture. And rituals are an important component of cultural traditions. Ritual transfer is, therefore, neither a rare nor a surprising phenomenon.[17] The mechanisms of the transfer and the factors that contribute—in certain periods—convergences in ritual practices are manifold and have so often been studied that a brief reference to the most common forms would suffice: massive movements of population—invasion, migration, conquest, and of course colonization, with the introduction of the rituals of the mother-city to the colony—were sometimes no more influential than the settlement of small groups of foreigners (especially merchants, garrisons, and exiles: for example, Ptolemaic mercenaries were as important for the diffusion of the cult of Egyptian deities, as the Roman army for the diffusion of many Oriental cults).[18] In addition to this, administrative measures of empires and even diplomatic contacts contributed to the uniformity of ritual practices. One should also underscore the missionary activity of individuals or organized groups. Finally, we should not forget the importance of canonical texts, either orally transmitted or written, for ritual transfer for instance, the uniformity of magical rituals throughout the Mediterranean or the uniformity

Religionsgeschichte, Römische Religionsgeschichte, Europäische Religionsgeschichte: Zur Genese einse Faktkonzeptes', in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H. S. Versnel* (Leiden, etc., 2002), 49–67.

[17] See, e.g. E. R. Gebbard, 'The Gods in Transit: Narratives of Cult Transfer', in A. Y. Collins and M. M. Mitchell (eds.), *Antiquity and Humanity. Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy presented to D. Betz on his 70th Birthday* (Tübingen, 2001), 451–76.

[18] M. Launey, *Recherches sur les armées hellénistiques* (réimpression avec addenda et mise à jour en postface par Y. Garlan, Ph. Gauthier, Cl. Orrieux, Paris, 1987), 1026–31; A. Chaniotis, 'Foreign Soldiers—Native Girls? Constructing and Crossing Boundaries in Hellenistic Cities with Foreign Garrisons', in A. Chaniotis and P. Ducrey (eds.), *Army and Power in the Ancient World* (Stuttgart, 2002), 108–9.

of rituals of mystery cults was to a great extent the result of the existence of ritual handbooks.[19]

In what follows, I will not discuss the mechanisms of ritual transfer and uniformity in the Mediterranean, but simply address some problems we are confronted with when we attempt to make rituals a meaningful subject of Mediterranean studies—either diachronically or in particular periods.

4. THE ELUSIVENESS OF RITUALS

Rituals belong to the most elusive phenomena of ancient religious and social behaviour. As widely established, stereotypical activities, followed consistently and (at least in theory) invariably, they are rarely described and hardly ever explained by those who perform them; they are rather described by those who observe them and are astounded at the differences from the rituals of their own culture, or they are described by puzzled antiquarians. Whereas religious activity at a site can be established by various means (e.g. through the existence of a cult building, ex-votos, or dedicatory inscriptions), we often lack any knowledge of the rituals involved; and the cult of a divinity may be practised continually, even though the rituals of the worship change. To give a few examples, there was a decline in the offering of blood sacrifice in the later part of the Imperial period, and instead a preference for the singing of hymns and the offering of libations.[20] Another change we may observe

[19] For magical handbooks see F. Graf, *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber: Die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Munich, 1996) 10; M. W. Dickie, 'The Learned Magician and the Collection and Transmission of Magical Lore', in D. R. Jordan, H. Montgomery, and E. Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 May 1997* (Bergen, 1999), 163–93. An impression of initiatory liturgical books is provided by the so-called 'Mithrasliturgie' in a papyrus in Paris (*Papyri Graecae Magicae* 4 475–824); see R. Merkelbach, *Abrasax III. Ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen, Inhalts* III (Opladen, 1992).

[20] S. Bradbury, 'Julian's Pagan Revival and the Decline of Blood Sacrifice', *Phoenix* 49 (1995), 331–56; see e.g. F. Sokolowski, *Lois Sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1955), no. 28; A. Rehm, *Didyma* II. *Die Inschriften*, ed. R. Harder (Berlin, 1958), no. 217; R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, 'Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros', *Epigraphica Anatolica* 27 (1996), 1–54, nos. 2 (Pergamon), 4 (Hierapolis), and 11 (Sardes or Koloe).

thanks to inscriptions with sacred regulations is a shift from the preoccupation with the ritual purity of the body to a preoccupation with the purity of the mind;[21] the relevant evidence dates from the fourth century BC onwards and is widely diffused in the eastern Mediterranean (in Macedonia and mainland Greece, in Crete and many islands of the Aegean, and many places in Asia Minor). Both changes in rituals occurred in sanctuaries used without any interruption and devoted to the same divinity. All this has been observed thanks to the rather unusual abundance of literary texts and above all of inscriptions (sacred regulations) in the respective periods. Such changes have a social parameter as well. Both aforementioned changes seem to have influenced only part of the worshippers, the intellectual elite and the persons that stood under its influence. Social and intellectual differentiations in the practice of rituals should be taken into consideration, but it is only in exceptional cases that our sources allow us to do so.

Another example of continual use of a sacred place connected with a disruption of ritual practices is provided by the altar of the Jerusalem temple. It was used as an altar for blood sacrifices throughout the Hellenistic period, with no interruption in its use—a wonderful case of continuity in rituals, one might have thought, if we did not have the literary evidence that informs us that for a period of three years and six months during the reign of Antiochus IV the altar was used for the sacrifice of swine;[22] the change of just one component of the ritual of blood sacrifice (the species of the sacrificial animal) provocatively demonstrated a disruption of the ritual tradition. In this particular case we happen to know of this short-term interruption, in others we do not, and it has often been observed that continuity in use of the same space does not necessarily mean its identical use.[23] It is

[21] A. Chaniotis, 'Reinheit des Körpers—Reinheit der Seele in den griechischen Kultgesetzen', in J. Assmann and Th. Sundermeier (eds.), *Schuld, Gewissen und Person* (Gütersloh, 1997), 142–79.

[22] Joseph. *Ant. Jud.* 12.253.

[23] A. Chaniotis, in J. Schäfer (ed.), *Amnisos nach den archäologischen, topographischen, historischen und epigraphischen Zeugnissen des Altertums und der Neuzeit* (Berlin, 1992), 88–96; L. V. Watrous, *The Cave Sanctuary of Zeus at Psychro. A Study of Extra-Urban Sanctuaries in Minoan and Early Iron Age Crete* (Liège, 1996), esp. 106–11; *CS* 404–11.

often this elusiveness of rituals that makes scholars very prudently talk about continuity of cult, but not of continuity of rituals.

But except for interruptions and disruptions that escape our notice, sometimes there are elusive continuities. Rites of passage in particular, long abolished or neglected, have the tendency to emerge in unexpected places and forms (very often as the background of literary narratives—an important subject that cannot be addressed here).[24] The activities of the Athenian ephebes in the Hellenistic period, after the artificial revival of the ephebic institutions but without the institutionalized performance of initiatory rituals, present an interesting case. An honorific decree of 123 BC describes these activities, which included participation in festivals, processions, and athletic competitions, attendance at philosophical schools, military exercises, visits to important historical monuments and sanctuaries, and acquaintance with the borders of Athenian territory; these activities are more or less standardized, since we find references to them in similar decrees. It is in this passage that we find the following report:[25]

> and they made an excursion to the border of Attic territory carrying their weapons, acquiring knowledge of the territory and the roads [lacuna] and they visited the sanctuaries in the countryside, offering sacrifices on behalf of the people. When they arrived at the grave at Marathon, they offered a wreath and a sacrifice to those who died in war for freedom; they also came to the sanctuary of Amphiaraus. And there they demonstrated the legitimate possession of the sanctuary which had been occupied by the ancestors in old times. And after they had offered a sacrifice, they returned on the same day to our own territory.

What at first sight seems a harmless excursion, acquires another dimension when we take into consideration the fact that in this period the sanctuary of Amphiaraus was *not* part of the Athenian territory, but belonged to the city of Oropos. The Athenians had lost this territory less than a generation earlier (this was the occasion of the famous embassy of the Athenian philosophers to

[24] Cf. J. Ma, 'Black Hunter Variations', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 40 (1994), 49–80.

[25] *IG* II^2 1006 lines 65–71.

Rome). The Athenian ephebes marched under arms into foreign territory, reminding their audience with speeches that the Athenians were the legitimate owners of the sanctuary, and then withdrew behind the Athenian border. This looks very much like the survival of an initiatory ritual: separation from urban life, liminality through visit of the borders of the territory, exposure to a danger and achievement of an important deed, and reintegration—return to Athens and acceptance into the citizen body.

5. ARTIFICIAL REVIVALS

A second problem involved in the study of continuities in rituals (but also in the study of religious continuities in general) is the fact that what at first sight seems a survival may well be an artificial revival. Some time in the fifth century AD, a pagan priest in Megara, one Helladios, set up an inscription on the monument of the dead of the Persian Wars, restoring Simomides' epigram (written almost one millennium earlier) and adding the remark that 'the city offered sacrifices up to this day'.[26] It would be a big mistake to take this statement as proof that this ritual had been continually performed in Megara for ten centuries. A long time after the prohibition of pagan sacrifices, Helladios provocatively defies the laws of the Christian emperors—a phenomenon to which I will return later. Here, we are more probably dealing with a revival rather than a survival.

This is more clear in my second example, a Milesian decree of the mid-first century concerning a banquet which should be offered by the *prophetes* (the priest of Apollo Didymeus) at Didyma to the *kosmoi* (probably a board of sacred officials responsible for some kind of decoration in the sanctuary) and by the *stephanephoros* to the *molpoi*, the old, respected priestly board of singers.[27] This decree was brought to the assembly by Tiberius Claudius Damas, a well-known citizen of Miletus.

[26] *IG* VII 53.

[27] P. Herrmann, *Inschriften von Milet*, Part 1 (Berlin, 1997), no.134 (with the earlier bibliography); F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1955), no. 53. For a detailed discussion of the religious context of Damas' initiative and further examples see A. Chaniotis, 'Negotiating Religion in the Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces', *Kernos* 16 (2003), 177–90.

Thanks to numerous inscriptions and coins we know a few things about his personality. He held the office of the *prophetes* for at least two terms and he initiated a coinage with representations of Apollo Didymeus and Artemis Pythie.[28] We are dealing with an individual with a particular interest in the old, revered, but also often destroyed and neglected sanctuary at Didyma. The actual subject of the decree is presented in fewer than six lines: The acting *prophetes* and the *stephanephoros* are obliged 'to organize the banquet of the *kosmoi* and the *molpoi* according to ancestral custom and in accordance with the laws and the decrees which have been previously issued.' Surprisingly enough, this short text is followed by twenty-four lines, devoted to measures preventing future violations of this decree and the punishment of wrongdoers. The responsible magistrates were not allowed to substitute this celebration with a money contribution.[29] Any future decree which did not conform to this decree should be invalid; its initiator would have to pay a fine, in addition to the divine punishment which awaits the impious; and the ritual would have to be performed, nonetheless. This decree is declared to be 'a decree pertaining to piety towards the gods and the Augusti and to the preservation of the city'. Damas was obviously afraid that his decree would be as persistently ignored by future magistrates as all those earlier laws on the same matter which he quotes. His concern must have been justified. Damas himself served as a *prophetes*, voluntarily; in the text which records his first term in this office Damas underscores the fact that 'he performed everything which his predecessors used to perform'. Such statements in honorific inscriptions indicate that some magistrates were less diligent in the fulfilment of their duties. Damas served a second term later, after a year of vacancy in this office;[30] not a single

[28] L. Robert, *Monnaies grecques. Types, légendes, magistrats monétaires et géographie* (Geneva and Paris, 1967), 50.

[29] That this occasionally happened, following the demand of the community, is demonstrated by a new inscription from Dag'mara/Karaköy (Tempsianoi?): a priest acceded to the request of the city and provided the money he was supposed to spend for banquets for the construction of an aqueduct (*c.*AD 180–92). See H. Malay, *Researches in Lydia, Mysia and Aiolis* (*TAM*, Ergänzungsband 23) (Vienna, 1999), 115 no. 127.

[30] Rehm, *Didyma*, no. 268.

Milesian had been willing to serve as a *prophetes*—not an unusual situation at Didyma.

Numerous inscriptions document a general unwillingness amongst the citizens to serve as *prophetai* and an even greater unwillingness to perform *all* the traditional rituals. In the long series of more than one hundred inscriptions that record the names of the *prophetai* many texts inform us time and again of the difficulties in finding candidates. One of the *prophetai*, Claudius Chionis, explicitly states that he served both as *archiprytanis* and as *prophetes* in a year in which 'no citizen was willing to accept either office'.[31] We get some information about Damas' second term as a *prophetes* from the above inscription from Didyma. It reports that Damas served voluntarily a second term as a *prophetes*, at the age of 81, and that 'he revived the ancestral customs' and celebrated the banquet in the sanctuary at Didyma twelve days long. Similar references to the rites performed by the *prophetes* appear occasionally in the inscriptions of the *prophetai*. The explicit certification that the particular priest had fulfilled his duties indicate that this was not always the case. And some officials seem to have done more than their predecessors. An anonymous *prophetes*, for example, provided the funds for a banquet for all the citizens for 13 days; he distributed money to women and virgins in a festival; he offered a dinner for the boys who officiated in a celebration; and he distributed money to the members of the council on Apollo's birthday.[32]

These sporadic references to revivals seem to me to reflect failures rather than success. This evidence (and there is much more from other cities) show us how an individual with a vivid interest in ancestral customs revived rituals long forgotten and neglected. The fact that inscriptions which refer to these initiatives survive does not permit the conclusion that the success of these initiatives was lasting. Damas' decree offers an interesting example of a revival which was apparently accepted by the people, but whose success was ephemeral. From his own

[31] Ibid. no. 272. Similar problems are alluded to in nos. 214 B, 215, 236 B III, 241, 243, 244, 252, 269, 270, 277, 278, 279 A, 286, 288, and 289.

[32] Ibid. no. 297. Two other *prophetai* claim that they had revived ancient customs, but their inscriptions are too fragmentary to allow us to see what exactly the object of the revival had been: nos. 289 and 303.

inscriptions we know that at least *he* followed the custom, but otherwise there are only sporadic references to this celebration. When the driving force of a revival was an individual, not the community, the revival often died with its initiator, exactly as certain festivals or cults did not survive the death of their founders. I have discussed this case in such detail, because it seems to me a very characteristic example of how misleading it may be to try to draw conclusions about the continual performance of rituals from isolated pieces of evidence. This example also demonstrates the role of individual personalities and idiosyncrasies for the performance of rituals, a subject to which I return later. Needless to say artificial revivals sometimes are accompanied with changes in meaning. The initiatory ritual of the flagellation in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta (known also from Crete) was revived as a touristic attraction in the imperial period.[33]

6. MISLEADING ANALOGIES: THE DAIDALA OF PLATAIA AND ITS MODERN EXEGETES

A third problem is that sometimes similarities in isolated elements of rituals attested in distant parts of the Mediterranean are regarded as proof of the identity of these rituals, or of an analogy between them. Let us take, for example, the carrying of the wooden image in a procession, the central ritual of the festival of the Daidala.[34] The aetiological myth is narrated by Plutarch and Pausanias:[35] once Hera had quarrelled with Zeus and was hiding. Alalkomenes advised Zeus to deceive Hera, by acting as if he were going to marry another woman. With Alalkomenes' help, Zeus secretly cut down a big and very beautiful oak-tree, gave it the shape of a woman, decorated it as a bride, and called it Daidale. Then they sang the wedding song for her, the nymphs of the river Triton gave her the nuptial bath, and Boiotia provided for flautists and revellers. When all this was

[33] Plu. *Mor.* 239d.

[34] For a more detailed discussion see A. Chaniotis, 'Ritual Dynamics: The Boiotian festival of the Daidala', in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H. S. Versnel* (Leiden, 2002), 23–48 (with the earlier bibliography).

[35] Plutarch, *FGrH* 388 F 1 (*peri ton en Plataiais Daidalon*); Pausanias 9.2.7–9.3.3.

almost completed, Hera lost her patience. She came down from Mt. Kithairon, followed by the women of Plataia, and ran full of anger and jealousy to Zeus. But when she realized that the 'bride' was a doll, she reconciled herself with Zeus with joy and laughter and took the role of the bridesmaid. She honoured this wooden image and named the festival Daidala. Nonetheless, she burned the image, although it was not alive, because of her jealousy. Pausanias gives us the most detailed description of the ritual:

In this way they celebrate the festival. Not far from Alalkomenai is a grove of oaks. Here the trunks of the oaks are the largest in Boeotia. To this grove come the Plataians, and lay out portions of boiled flesh. They keep a strict watch on the crows which flock to them, but they are not troubled at all about the other birds. They mark carefully the tree on which a crow settles with the meat he has seized. They cut down the trunk of the tree on which the crow has settled, and make of it the *daidalon*; for this is the name that they give to the wooden image also. This festival the Plataians celebrate by themselves, calling it the Little Daidala, but the Great Daidala, which is celebrated with them by the Boeotians, is a festival held at intervals of fifty-nine years, for that is the period during which, they say, the festival could not be held, as the Plataians were in exile. There are fourteen wooden images ready, having been provided each year at the Little Daidala. Lots are cast for them by the Plataians, Koronaians, Thespians, Thangraians, Chaironeis, Orchomenians, Lebadeis, and Thebans. For at the time when Kassandros, the son of Antipater, rebuilt Thebes, the Thebans wished to be reconciled with the Plataians, to share in the common assembly, and to send a sacrifice to the Daidala. The towns of less account pool their funds for images. Bringing the image to the Asopos, and setting it upon a wagon, they place a bridesmaid also on the wagon. They again cast lots for the position they are to hold in the procession. After this they drive the wagons from the river to the summit of Kithairon. On the peak of the mountain an altar has been prepared, which they make in the following way. They fit together quadrangular pieces of wood, putting them together just as if they were making a stone building, and having raised it to a height they place brushwood upon the altar. The cities with their magistrates sacrifice a cow to Hera and a bull to Zeus, burning on the altar the victims, full of wine and incense, along with the *daidala*. Rich people, as individuals sacrifice what they wish; but the less wealthy sacrifice the smaller cattle; all the victims alike are burned. The fire seizes the altar and the victims as well, and consumes them all together. I know

of no blaze that is so high, or seen so far as this (trans. W. H. S. Jones, modified).

From Frazer's times onwards the Daidala of Boeotia have fascinated scholars studying the relation between myth and ritual. Amongst the many studies on the Daidala the most influential approach recognizes the heterogeneity of the details described by Pausanias, but focuses on the construction and burning of the wooden image or images, investing this ritual with a variety of meanings which range from the idea of an annual fire expressing the rejuvenation of nature to the appeasement of a mighty chthonic goddess. This approach associates the Daidala with the spring and mid-summer bonfire festivals of modern Europe (of the Maypole or Johannesfeuer-type), at which a wooden image is brought to the settlement and burned. According to Frazer's interpretation, the Daidala represent the marriage of powers of vegetation; Hera's retirement is a mythical expression for a bad season and the failure of crops.[36] M. P. Nilsson speculated that the image which was burned represented a demon of vegetation that had to go through fire in order to secure the warmth of the sun for everything that lives and grows. Since this fire ritual had the purpose of promoting fertility, it was understood as a wedding; Hera was associated with this festival at a late stage, as the goddess of marriage; the discrepancies in the myths and the rituals reflect the late conflation of two separate festivals, a fire festival and a festival of Hera.[37]

The prominent position of a holocaust offering at two festivals of Artemis, the Laphria and the Elaphebolia, led A. Schachter to the assumption that the burning of the images at the Daidala was also originally dedicated to Artemis and at some later point connected with the cult of Hera.[38] Needless to say, the similarity between the Daidala on the one hand and the Laphria and the Elaphebolia on the other is rather

[36] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Part I: *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, 3rd edn. (London, 1913), ii. 140–1.

[37] M. P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung mit Ausschluss der attischen* (Lund, 1906), 54–5; *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, 3rd edn. (Munich, 1967), i. 130–1, 431.

[38] A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia* (London, 1981), i. 247.

superficial; the burning of slaughtered sacrificial victims at the Daidala cannot be compared with the throwing of living animals on the pyre at the Laphria. In addition to this, I can see no evidence for the assumption that in the holocausts of the Laphria and the Elaphebolia Artemis was conceived as the patroness of childbirth; and of course there is no evidence for the sacrificial burning of wooden images in these festivals of Artemis.

Finally, W. Burkert has attributed the Daidala to a category of myths and rituals the common theme of which is the departure and return of a goddess of fertility—well known from Oriental iconography and myth.[39] Burkert recognized an ancient Greek parallel in a representation on a *pithos* of the ninth century BC found at Knossos. A winged goddess, richly dressed and with a high *polos*, stands on a chariot. She is represented in two different ways in two panels on the two opposite sides of the *pithos*. In the one panel the goddess raises her hands on which two birds are seated. On the other panel the goddess has dropped her arms, her wings are lowered, the birds fly away. The trees in the first representation blossom, the trees on the other side do not. According to Burkert's plausible interpretation, the two panels are connected with a festival of the coming and the departure of the great goddess of fertility; the chariot implies that an image of the goddess was brought into the city. There are indeed obvious analogies to the myths and the ritual of the Daidala: the departure of an (angry) goddess and her return, the carrying of an image on a chariot. But there are also obvious differences: the representation from Knossos is the image of a goddess; the wooden *daidala* were not; the *daidala* were burned; and there is no indication that the image on the Knossian *pithos* is that of a bride.

Another parallel was recognized by Burkert in the report of Firmicus Maternus concerning a festival of Persephone.[40] A tree was cut and was used for the construction of the image of

[39] W. Burkert, 'Katagógia-Anagógia and the Goddess of Knossos', in R. Hägg, N. Marinatos, and G. Nordquist (eds.), *Early Greek Cult Practice. Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 26–29 June 1986* (Stockholm, 1988), 81–7.

[40] *Err. prof. rel.* 27.2.

a maiden, which was then brought to the city; there, it was mourned for forty days; on the evening of the fortieth day, the image was burned. This ritual is supposed to reflect the annual cycle of nature. The joy at the coming of the goddess was followed by the sadness at her departure in the fall. Again, the differences from the Daidala are no less striking than the similarities. Persephone's periodical death finds no analogy in any known cult of Hera; the wooden *daidala* were not brought to the city, they were not mourned, and they were not supposed to represent the periodical death of a virgin. Aelian and Athenaeus have reports of a similar festival at Eryx in Sicily, this time for Aphrodite—the festival Anagogia. It owed its name to the departure of Aphrodite, who was thought to leave for Africa, followed by birds (pigeons). Nine days later a very beautiful pigeon was seen coming from the south, and its coming was celebrated as the festival Katagogia. We observe, however, that in this festival there is no image, no marriage, no pyre. Burkert suggested associating this group of festivals with mankind's primordial fears: threatened by drought, bad harvests, infertility, and bad weather, people from time to time leave the area of agricultural activity and return to the forest, where they used to find food at the stage of hunters and gatherers. The burning of an image may be a survival of the great pyres on peak sanctuaries in Minoan Crete.

Modern research has not only isolated these two important components of the Daidala, the sacred marriage and the fire ritual; it has also pointed out that the burning of the Daidala can be conceived of as a sacrifice, and this is a very important element which is difficult to reconcile with the other two approaches. K. Meuli has assigned the sacrifice of the Daidala to the category of the 'chthonische Vernichtungsopfer', sacrifices offered to chthonic deities whose dangerous power should be appeased;[41] the myth about the quarrel between Hera and Zeus and the goddess' withdrawal can be associated with this interpretation, which, however, fails to explain other components of the ritual in the Imperial period (especially the allusions to a wedding). The fact that the *daidala* cannot be conceived as

[41] K. Meuli, 'Griechische Opferbräuche', in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühll zum 60. Geburtstag am 1. August 1945* (Basel, 1946), 209–10.

divine images led E. Loucas-Durie to the assumption that their burning was the substitute for a human sacrifice, which may have constituted a central part of the ritual in its early phase.[42]

I have dealt with the Daidala at some length—without mentioning all the interpretations offered so far—because it offers a characteristic example of the problems we face with similarities and analogies between rituals, especially when our sources come from a period in which the performance of the ritual is the result of amalgamations and syncopations.

7. RITUALS AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

A fourth obstacle in the way of studying rituals in a Mediterranean context is the fact that rituals present an aspect of worship that seems to be least related to geography, physical environment and landscape. One may raise one's hands in prayer, kneel before a cult statue, kiss an object of worship, pour a liquid during an oath ceremony, or take a ritual bath near the banks of the Nile or in the rocky landscape of Kappadokia—or virtually anywhere else. No geographical factors seem to be directly in operation when people perform rites of passage according to the threefold structure established by van Gennep and modified by Turner and others, whether they are in ancient Greece, medieval India, or a contemporary student fraternity.

This position which dissociates rituals from geographical factors and landscapes is related to a widespread attitude in the study of rituals that reappears in different forms from Frazer's *Golden Bough* to Burkert's *Creation of the Sacred*: rituals are primeval, they are not invented but transmitted—either through natural processes of acculturation or even biologically—and adapted to new cultural environments. According to this view, rituals observed in various cultures should be regarded as mutations or variants of archetypal forms.

It should not therefore be a surprise that the study of rituals in modern scholarship has primarily been a study of origins. Even when we have detailed descriptions of rituals from the Imperial period, such as the description of the Daidala in

[42] E. Loucas-Durie, 'Simulacre humain et offrande rituelle', *Kernos* 1 (1988), 151–62.

Boeotia, the question asked is not what the function of the ritual was in the period from which the eye-witness reports come, but how we can reconstruct the ritual's original form and meaning.

This is not the place to discuss the ethological background of rituals[43] or how meaningful the discussion of origins may be. Nonetheless, given the Mediterranean context of this volume, it is not inappropriate to emphasize the importance of physical environment, not for the origin of rituals perhaps, but certainly for their evolution and diffusion. Again, Horden and Purcell have presented a strong case for a distinctively Mediterranean sense of place and have shown that place can be a useful instrument of analysis.[44] The most important feature of the Mediterranean, in this respect, is the fragmented topography, a factor that contributes to divergences and divisions between cultural systems, but has in many periods also challenged Mediterranean populations to overcome this fragmentation. The challenge has made the Mediterranean a zone of 'lateral transmission of ideas and practices', including the transmission of rituals.[45] The significance of the physical environment as the setting in which rituals are performed can sometimes, unexpectedly, be observed when an attempt is made to reproduce the physical environment of a particular ritual in a new environment, the transmission not only of the environment, but also of its original setting. The best known example is the reproduction of Nilotic landscapes in sanctuaries of the Egyptian deities outside Egypt;[46] similar phenomena are the construction of artificial caves for the celebration of the Mithraic mysteries or for Dionysiac celebrations (compare the construction of caves in modern India to reproduce the cave of St Mary at Lourdes). One can include here the construction of pools for the worship of the nymphs,[47] and perhaps even peak sanctuaries on eleva-

[43] W. Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1996); id., 'Fitness oder Opium? Die Fragestellung der Soziologie im Bereich alter Religionen', in F. Stolz (ed.), *Homo naturaliter religiosus. Gehört Religion notwendig zum Mensch-Sein?* (Bern, 1997), 13–38.

[44] *CS* 401–60. [45] *CS* 404, 407–8.

[46] e.g. R. Saldit-Trappmann, *Tempel der ägyptischen Götter in Griechenland und an der Westküste Kleinasiens* (Leiden, 1970), 1–25.

[47] Cf. *CS* 431. Bakchic caves: Athen. 4.148bc. Cf. the term *androphylakes* ('the guardians of the cave') in an inscription of a Dionysiac association in

tions that do not deserve the designation mountain, but present 'imaginary mountains'.[48] The Samaritans on Delos were so bound to the holy place of their homeland that they designated their association as 'those who sacrifice in the holy sacred Mt. Argarizein' (*aparchomenoi eis hieron hagion Argarizein*).[49] Finally, even if it would be futile to look for rituals originating in the Mediterranean or practised only in the Mediterranean, one can observe certain preferences that to some extent are favoured by the physical environment, for example the prominent part played by processions or the widespread custom of setting up tents, attested in a variety of contexts, from the Hebrew *succah* to the Greek Thesmophoria and from the Ptolemaia of Alexandria to the *skanopageia* of Kos.[50]

8. THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS IDIOSYNCRASIES

A factor of enormous importance for the evolution of rituals—no matter whether we are dealing with revival or transmission, amalgamation or syncopation, aesthetic or ideological transformation—is the part played by individuals, their idiosyncrasy, personal piety, social position, education, or even political agenda. I have already referred to two men (unfortunately our sources mostly refer to men) whose role was essential for the revival of rituals: the priest Helladios in Megara and the *prophetes* Damas in Miletus. We often hear of persons who on their own initiative introduced cult and rituals from one place at another, for instance the Telemachos who introduced the cult of Asklepios in Athens or Demetrios who founded a sanctuary of the Egyptian deities at Delos.[51] Sometimes we hear of persons

Rome (G. Ricciardelli, 'Mito e performance nelle associazioni dionisiache', in M. Tortorelli Ghedini, A. Storchi Marino, and A. Visconti (eds.), *Tra Orfeo e Pitagora. Origini e incontri di culture nell'antichità. Atti dei seminari napoletani 1996–1998* (Naples, 2000), 274).

[48] For 'imaginary mountains' see R. Buxton, *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge, 1994), 81–96.

[49] R. Goggins, 'Jewish Local Patriotism: The Samaritan Problem', in S. Jones and S. Pearce (eds.), *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self-Identification in the Graeco-Roman Period* (Sheffield, 1998), 75–7.

[50] Thesmophoria: H. S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* (Leiden, 1993), ii. 236 n. 25.

[51] H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis* (Leiden, 1975).

who revived a neglected ritual, for example Damas who revived the ritual banquet at Didyma, Symmachos of Lyttos who revived the distribution of money to tribal subdivisions in his Cretan city on the occasion of the festivals Welchania and Theodaisia,[52] or Mnasistratos in Andania who gave the sacred books of the mysteries to the city, thus contributing to a reorganization of this cult.[53]

Let us take one of the most interesting cases of ritual transfer, the mysteries of the rural sanctuary at Panóias in northern Portugal.[54] A *lex sacra* informs us that the senator C. Calpurnius Rufinus founded a mystery cult dedicated to Hypsistos Sarapis, to deities of the underworld (*Diis Severis*), and the local gods of the Lapiteae. The texts mention a temple (*templum*, *aedes*) and various cult facilities constructed on the natural rock (*quadrata*, *aeternus lacus*, a *gastra*); their function is explained in several texts: *hostiae quae cadunt hic immolantur. Extra intra quadrata contra cremantur. Sanguis laciculis superfunditur* (1), *in quo hostiae voto cremantur* (3), *lacum, qui voto miscetur* (5). From these instructions given to the initiates Alföldy reconstructs the ritual, which included the preparation of sacrificial animals, the offering of their blood to the gods of the underworld, the burning of their intestines, a banquet, and purification. The mystery cult was probably introduced from Perge (cf. the Dorian form *mystaria*, for *mysteria*), Rufinus' place of origin. If we only had the dedicatory formula (Rufinus dedicated to Hypsistos Sarapis), we would naturally have assumed that Rufinus' activity was similar to that of Telemachos in Athens or Demetrios in Delos. The detailed description of the rituals shows that under the guise of mysteries of Sarapis we have an amalgamation of different ritual traditions. Rufinus is not an isolated case. The cult foundation of Alexander, the

[52] *I. Cret.* 1. xviii 11 (2nd/3rd century).

[53] F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* (Paris, 1969), no. 65. For the cult see most recently L. Piolot, 'Pausanias et les Mystères d'Andanie: Histoire d'une aporie', in J. Renard (ed.), *Le Péloponnèse. Archéologie et Histoire. Actes de la rencontre internationale de Lorient, 12–15 mai 1998* (Rennes, 1999), 195–228 (with earlier bibliography).

[54] G. Alföldy, 'Inscriciones, sacrificios y misterios: El santuario rupestre de Panóias/Portugal', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts—Abteilung Madrid* 36 (1995), 252–8: id., 'Die Mysterien von Panóias (Vila Real, Portugal)', ibid. 38 (1997), 176–246.

false prophet, at Abonouteichos is very similar, including the adaptation of heterogeneous elements from the cult of Asclepius, different oracular practices, Neopythagorean observances and doctrines, and the mysteries of Eleusis.[55] And a certain Dionysios who founded a mystery cult and a cult association at Philadelpheia composed a sacred regulation with strict moral and ritual observances not modelled according to a particular mystery cult, but influenced by many different traditions.[56] It is certainly not necessary to underline how difficult it is to grasp the personal religiosity of the individuals that introduced or revived rituals, not to mention the case of persons who performed rituals. How can we ever know how an Epicurean philosopher thought and felt when he served as a priest responsible for the traditional rituals scorned by his fellow philosophers?[57]

9. THE MANIFOLD CHARACTER OF RITUAL TRANSFER

Ritual transfer means not only the transmission of rituals from one place to another, it implies a far more complex process: the transfer of a ritual from a particular context to another—to

[55] See most recently U. Victor, *Lukian von Samosata, Alexander oder Der Lügenprophet* (Leiden, etc., 1997); G. Sfameni Gasparro, 'Alessandro di Abonutico, lo "pseudo-profeta' ovvero come construirsi un'identità religiosa I', *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 62 (1996) (1998), 565–90; ead., 'Alessandro di Abonutico, lo "pseudo-profeta" ovvero come costruirsi un'identità religiosa II', in C. Bonnet and A. Motte (eds.), *Les syncrétismes religieux dans le monde méditerranéen antique. Actes du colloque international en l'honneur de Franz Cumont* (Brussels and Rome, 1999), 275–305; A. Chaniotis, 'Old Wine in a New Skin: Tradition and Innovation in the Cult Foundation of Alexander of Abonouteichos', in E. Dabrowa (ed.), *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient World* (Krakow, 2002), 67–85. For the influence of magical rituals on Alexander of Abonouteichos, see A. Mastrocinque, 'Alessandro di Abonouteichos e la magia', in *Imago Antiquitatis. Religions et iconographie du monde romain: Mélanges offerts à Robert Turcan* (Paris, 1999), 341–52.

[56] S. C. Barton and G. H. R. Horsley, 'A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Church', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 24 (1981), 7–41.

[57] Rehm, *Didyma*, no. 285. For personal religiosity see F. Graf, 'Bemerkungen zur bürgerlichen Religiosität im Zeitalter des Hellenismus', in M. Wörrle and P. Zanker (eds.), *Stadtbild und Bürgerbild im Hellenismus* (Munich, 1995), 103–14.

a new social context, a new cultic context, a new ideological context. My last examples aim at demonstrating this complexity.

The first concerns the transfer of sacrificial rituals from the cult of the gods to the cult of the dead, the ruler cult, and the appeal to superhuman powers in magic. In all these cases the transfer is accompanied either by reversals or by syncopations. In the case of magic, for instance, the sacrifice takes place in the dark and involves the killing of unusual animals in unusual ways.[58] Analogous reversals can be observed in the *enagismoi* of funerary cult; in the ruler cult, the element of prayer, integral part of the sacrifice, hardly plays any role.[59]

My second example concerns the transfer of a ritual into a new ideological context. Let us take again the ritual of blood sacrifice. Until the late fourth century AD it was a widely attested and accepted practice. It was performed in private and in the community; it did not have a liminal position. Of course things changed after the year 391, when sacrifices were forbidden. The sporadic performance of sacrifices, attested by several inscriptions after this prohibition (e.g. the inscription of the priest Helladios in Megara), acquires a different meaning in the new historical context. It is not just the performance of a custom, but the demonstrative defiance of Christian legislation and observance of ancient customs in a period of religious intolerance.[60] But even before the prohibition, we know from

[58] Graf, *Gottesnähe*, 203–4. Cf. now S. I. Johnston, 'Sacrifice in the Greek Magical Papyri', in P. Mirecki and M. Meyer (eds.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Leiden, 2002), 344–58.

[59] S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984), 118–21; M. Clauss, *Kaiser und Gott: Herrscherkult im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1999), 413–19. In the East, the only unequivocal reference to a prayer (*euche*) to an emperor is in an inscription at Thyateira (*IGRRP* 4.1273, lines 11–13). More problematic are the references to *euche* in the context of the emperor cult in *SEG* 2.718 and 45.1719. For a discussion see D. Fishwick, 'Votive Offerings to the Emperor?', *ZPE* 80 (1990), 121–30, and A. Chaniotis, 'Der Kaiserkult im Osten des Römischen Reiches im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Ritualpraxis', in H. Cancik and K. Hitzl (eds.), *Die Praxis der Herrscherverehrung in Rom und seinen Provinzen: Akten der Tagung in Blaubeuren vom 4. bis 6. April 2002* (Tübingen, 2003), 3–28.

[60] General survey of the evidence: F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic religion and Christianization, c.370–529* (Leiden, 1993–4). Examples: A. Chaniotis,

the fourth century several cases of late pagans who emphasize in their inscriptions that they have observed the pagan rituals. Not so many people bothered to write epigrams commemorating the fact that they had offered sacrifices before the fourth century AD. In the period of advancing Christianization many did—for example Plutarch, *praeses insularum* during the reign of Julian, who mentions in an epigram on Samos the fact that he had sacrificed in the Idaean Cave,[61] or Vera in Patmos (fourth century), selected by Artemis to be her priestess; as a *hydrophoros* she came to Patmos from Lebedos in order to celebrate a festival which included the sacrifice of a pregnant she-goat.[62] Finally, ritual transfer may imply a radical change in the social context of its performance. It has been observed, for instance that initiatory rituals in early times performed by all the members of a community, survived as rituals of a privileged group (e.g. in Athens the ritual of the *arkteia*).[63]

10. CONTEXTUALIZING MEDITERRANEAN RITUALS

The plethora of 'Mediterranean' studies makes clear how urgent the need to conceptualize the Mediterranean is. This can only work if it goes along with the continual effort to contextualize 'Mediterranean' phenomena. I hope that the case studies presented here have shown the necessity to contextualize rituals and ritual behaviour in the ancient Mediterranean and their survivals in later periods. The title of the book with which the *heros ktistes* of our common subject, Fernand Braudel, inaugurated Mediterranean studies, reminds us that the study of the Mediterranean is the study of historical contexts.

'Zwischen Konfrontation und Interaktion: Christen, Juden und Heiden im spätantiken Aphrodisias', in C. Ackermann and K. E. Müller (eds.), *Patchwork: Dimensionen multikultureller Gesellschaften* (Bielefeld, 2002), 101–2.

[61] *SEG* 1. 405. For the identity of Plutarch see A. Chaniotis, 'Plutarchos, praeses Insularum', *ZPE* 68 (1987), 227–31.

[62] R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998), i. 169–70.

[63] On the *arkteia* see recently N. Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore, 1994), 107–14, and B. Gentili and F. Perusino (eds.), *Le orse di Brauron: Un rituale di iniziazione femminile nel santuario di Artemide* (Pisa, 2002).