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CHAPTER 2

Between Utterance and Dedication: Some Remarks on the Status of Textuality in Greek Ritual Practices

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TO THE HISTORIAN AND ANTHROPOLOGIST of Greek religion, "texts" present themselves first and foremost as written documents, on the basis of which the religious practices of the ancient world, as well as the systems of categories and representations that underpinned them, might be reconstructed and understood. As witnesses to the diversity of practices that characterized Greek polytheism, "religious" texts comprise a highly heterogeneous assemblage, consisting of cultic regulations, sacrificial calendars, accounts and inventories of temples and sanctuaries, oracular responses, or narratives of divine epiphanies and "miraculous" healings. In the main, these texts are epigraphic documents; "texts" that were written on more ephemeral supports have almost entirely disappeared. On a *prima facie* understanding—which, as will be shown below, is in fact largely misleading for the Greek world—the textualization of rituals seems to blend with more general processes of writing.

Yet some of these texts were an integral part of ritual performance itself. They could, for instance, serve as instruments for ritual performance, as per the lead tablets in the oracle of Dodone, on which a person consulting the oracle could write his or her question before the tablets were folded up and made unreadable.[1] They could also be uttered during the performance of the ritual, as per the hymn inscribed at the end of a sacred law regulating the sacrifices to Asclepios and Apollon in Erythrea in the fourth century BCE.[2] In such instances, the written document constitutes a text *in an entirely different sense*—namely, the text is part of the ritual, for example, because it is included as an object to manipulate, or by virtue of the instructions it contains for the ritual's correct performance, or because the text forms the "booklet" or the "score" of the ritual (at least for some of its parts). Such texts can be defined as "ritual texts" in a narrower sense since they are more directly involved in the performance of the ritual. However, we must immediately clarify that the contents of these texts are

1. E. Lhôte, *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone* (Geneva: Droz, 2006).
2. D.-L. Page, ed., *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 933–34.

almost entirely lost to us, even though many of the texts are mentioned in other sources (mostly literary sources). Those texts that existed in only one exemplar, or in few copies, and that were written on materials that did not withstand the passage of time, have disappeared. Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, with its distinctive focus on local particularisms, provides us with an invaluable source of information in this regard. For example, for the rites (*teleté*) of Dionysos and Demeter in Lerna, in Argolide,[3] the "things done" (*ta drómena*), that is to say the rite proper, were accompanied by the "things spoken" (*ta legómena*), which were inscribed in a Dorian dialect consisting of a mixture of prose and poetry onto a piece of copper shaped in the form of a heart. We may also mention in this context the passage concerning the rites belonging to Demeter Eleusinia in the small town of Phenea in the mountains of Arcadia.

> Beside the sanctuary of the Eleusinian has been set up what they name the Petroma, consisting of two large stones fitted one to the other. When every other year they celebrate what they call the "Greater rites" (*teletèn meízona*), they open these stones. They take from out them the writings that refer to the rites (*teleté*), read them in the hearing of the initiated, and return them on the same night.[4]

As far as Greece is concerned, the contents of these and other ritual texts were almost always inaccessible to us.

Which ritual strategies dictated these processes of textualization, understood this time as the usage of a written document in the performance of the ritual? The diversity of contexts does not permit a single answer. Instead the place and the use of the written text must be considered according to the specific strategies that were operative in each setting. All the more so since many contexts that might at first sight seem quite similar do not have the same approach to writing. In a significant number of cases, the need for secrecy favors recourse to a written text in order to ensure exactness in the performance of the ritual, while also restricting access to a small number of authorized persons in the relevant context. In such cases, the rite must not be revealed: it is *apórretos*, inexpressible, as Pausanias reminds us; on occasion a dream warns Pausanias against disclosing what must remain unspoken,[5] be it the name of a deity (for instance the *despoina* of Lykosoura[6]) or the rites themselves, "performed" and/or "uttered."[7]

3. Pausanias, *Descr.*, trans. W. H. S. Jones, LCL 188 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 2.37.3.
4. Pausanias, *Descr.* 8.15.1–2.
5. Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.14.3, 1.38.7.
6. Pausanias, *Descr.* 8.37.9.
7. Pausanias, *Descr.* 2.37.6.

Yet in many other cases, the secret nature of the rite is perfectly consistent with oral transmission. A *hieros logos* is not necessarily written.

One of the paradoxes of textualization in Greek polytheistic practices is that the texts that *are meant to be seen* do not necessarily have a "ritual" usage. (While these texts are meant to be seen, they are not necessarily meant to be read; this category refers to those texts whose main *raison d'être* is their public display.) It was not necessary for ancient Greeks to have a "sacred law" or a festal calendar with them in order to perform a sacrifice. Yet at times it was imperative that the corresponding texts be publicly displayed and accessible, so that anyone concerned might refer to them.[8] It also ensured that when a given rite—which was to be performed according to the customary usage (*nomos* or *patria*)—was not performed correctly, it was possible to turn to the written text. Conversely, the text that was manipulated in a ritual sequence could serve to *conceal* what had been written. This was the case in some oracular practices in which the written text containing the oracular question and/or the reply of the god was sealed. It was, for instance, the case for the oracle of Apollo *Koropaîos*, where the issue at hand was ensuring the faithful, and indisputable, transmission of the answer of the god.[9]

At this point, we also need to stress a key aspect of ancient polytheistic practices. These practices were predominantly *local*. To be sure, broader common patterns existed, and a shared sacrificial pattern meant that the majority of the great sacrificial feasts had a marked alimentary character in the Greek cities. Yet the details of those practices were always particular, made up of innumerable and significant variants. Such variants may be connected to some specific traits of the relevant deities, to the traditions of a certain sanctuary or city, to the distinctive aims pursued by the performed rite, or to the explicit connection to a given myth of origins.[10] As a matter of fact, it made little sense in ancient Greece to circulate texts outside the sanctuary or the community in which their usage was required. We must exclude here specific cases, such as those cults that considered themselves to have a "foreign," or transregional

8. M. Detienne, "L'espace de la publicité: Ses opérateurs intellectuels dans la cité," in *Les savoirs de l'écriture en Grèce ancienne*, ed. M. Detienne (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1992), 29–81.

9. L. Robert, "Sur l'oracle d'Apollon *Koropaios*," *Hellenica* 5 (1948): 16–28; S. Georgoudi, "Le porte-parole des dieux: Réflexions sur le personnel des oracles grecs," in *Sibille e linguaggi oracolari: Mito Storia Tradizione; Atti del convegno Macerata-Norcia Settembre 1994*, ed. I. Chirasi Colombo and T. Seppili (Pise: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 1998), 315–65 at 363–64; D. Jaillard, "Memory, Writing, Authority: The Place of the Scribe in Greek Polytheistic Practice," in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script*, ed. P. R. Davies and T. Römer (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2013), 23–34 at 27–28.

10. M. Detienne, "A Polytheistic Garden," in *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods*, ed. M. Detienne and G. Sissa, trans. J. Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 150–65.

dimension (such as the cult of Isis), or cults associated with marginal groups, like the enigmatic Orphics. Such cults are precisely less firmly anchored in a given territory because they are far less connected to a political community, a city.[11]

This "local" character applies first and foremost to those ritual "texts" that have a prescriptive dimension—those that state how a rite is to be accomplished—namely, the so-called sacred laws and regulations.[12] There is no panhellenic prescriptive text. If in the sacrifices described in the Homeric poetry the Greeks could recognize a *nomos hellenikos*—that is, a distinctively Greek way of sacrificing to distinguish them from the barbarians[13]—Homer would still be of little value for understanding how a Greek ritual was effectively performed, since the Homeric sacrifice does not exactly reflect what we know about how sacrifices were effectively offered in the cities of archaic and classical Greece.

But does it follow from this that the sacred laws inscribed on stone transcribe the local ritual custom? Do they represent something like the *text* of the rite? As fascinating and instructive as these documents may be in terms of what they tell us about the way(s) in which Greek polytheisms worked, to what extent can they be regarded as ritual codes, which comprise the systematic writing down of the customary rules governing local practice? Let us consider, for instance, the sacrificial calendars, such as the so-called calendar of Nikomachos in Athens (end of the fifth century BCE), or the calendar of the deme of Thorikos in Attic (fourth century BCE). The Athenian calendar edited by Nikomachos (as *anagrapheús*) is the work of a committee tasked with the collection, clarification, and revision of the list of sacrifices and "offerings" owed by the city.[14] The calendar recalls throughout the year the names of the deities, feasts, relevant sacrificial

11. A. Heinrichs, "Writing Religion: Inscribed Texts, Ritual Authority, and the Religious Discourse of the Polis," in *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece*, ed. H. Yunis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15–58 at 54; A. Heinrichs, "*Hieroi logoi* and *hierai biblioi*: The (Un)written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2003): 207–66.

12. R. Parker, "What Is Sacred Law?," in *The Law and the Courts in Ancient Greece*, ed. E. M. Harris and L. Rubinstein (London: Duckworth, 2004), 57–70; S. Georgoudi "Comment régler les *théia pragmata*: Pour une étude de ce qu'on appelle 'lois sacrées,'" *Mètis* 8 (2010): 39–54; M. Carbon and V. Pirenne-Delforge, "Beyond Greek 'Sacred Laws,'" *Kernos* 25 (2012): 163–82; M. Carbon and V. Pirenne-Delforge, "Codifying 'Sacred Laws' in Ancient Greece," in *Writing Laws in Antiquity—L'écriture du droit dans l'Antiquité*, ed. D. Jaillard and C. Nihan, BZABR 19 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 141–57.

13. Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.24.2; V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source: Pausanias et la religion grecque*, Kernos Supplément 20 (Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 2008), 179–83.

14. S.-D. Lambert, "The Sacrificial Calendar of Athens," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 97 (2002): 353–99.

victims or "offerings," prices to be paid for each one, and occasional details regarding their age, color, and other particularities, as well as the place of the celebration or the portion due to the priest and other officiants. By way of an example, let us consider the entry of the calendar corresponding to the fourteenth of Skirophorion, the day of the feast for Zeus *Polieús*, namely, the *Dipóleia*.

> [. . . ?] [the bovines] from the driving round, the first six [*price*];
> for the priestess, *apometra* [*amount*];
> the piglets [*price*];
> for the heralds who [*verb*] at the Dipólieia [*perquisites*][15]

Or let us consider, for the same month, the calendar of the deme of Thorikos. It combines feasts that are specific to the deme with others that parallel the rites that were celebrated for the entire city on the same date.

> In Skirophorion, an oath victim shall be provided; at the Plynteria, for Athena, a choice sheep; for Aglauros, a sheep; for Athena a choice lamb; for Cephalus a bovine worth not less than forty up to fifty drachmas; for Procris a sheep worth 20 drachmas (?).[16]

The document contains precise calendric prescriptions, yet none of its entries allows us to form a *clear and comprehensive view* of the ceremonies mentioned; the most relevant details for the performance of the sacrifices are not included. Most of the time, we have no idea of the sequence of gestures and words, or the various objects involved in the sacrificial procedure. Additionally, there are reasons to suspect that a significant portion of the sacrifices performed by the city or by the demes is not included in the calendar.

In other words, the ritual "code" here is nothing more than an incomplete calendrical *scheme*. It adds some specific ritual prescriptions that, we may presume, would have resulted in grave consequences if they were forgotten or that may have had an emblematic value. But most of the knowledge required for the performance of these rites was *not* written down. Rather, it rested upon traditional knowledge, the *nomos*, the *patria*, of which the written and published rule only selects a minimal portion. Similar calendrical outlines can be found in the ritual texts found at Ugarit in the late second millennium BCE, which mention day by day the deities and the sacrificial victims for various festivals during the

15. Translation from ibid., 394.

16. SEG 32.147; edition, translation, and commentary in E. Lupu, *Greek Sacrificial Law: A Collection of New Documents*, 2nd ed., Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 115–49.

year.[17] Yet such documents are by no means comparable to the detailed descriptions found in a book like Leviticus or certain writings from Qumran.

Therefore, the textual status of these inscriptions, which were published by and for the city itself, does not exactly amount to a "textualization" of the ritual procedure; the latter continues to be ruled and informed by a strictly customary *nomos*, whose knowledge is required for ritual performance given that such limited information is provided by the inscriptions themselves. These laws are mnemonic and clearly manifest the concern of the city for the affairs of the gods, but as written ritual prescriptions, they are irremediably deficient, insufficient. Or to put it differently: the contents of the "sacred law," when the latter is effectively put into practice, are always much more substantial than the written sketch itself. At times, the law might even be silent about what can be considered the most striking aspect of the rite, mentioning instead only very prosaic detail. This is the case, for instance, in the *Dipóleia* for the trial of the sacrificial knife (*machaira*) and the motif of putting the ox back on its feet. Neither of these is mentioned in the calendars. We only know about them because they caught the attention of antiquarians and philosophers.[18]

Is it possible to form a more precise idea of the criteria of selection that led to the writing down of specific portions, or aspects, of some rituals? There is an entire complex of myths about how a forgotten sacrifice was a major cause of disturbance in the relationship of a human community and its gods. The need for scrupulous and regular performance might explain why the calendric prescriptions showed such a concern for detail. Failure to respect the ritual specifics that were connected to a given power or cult would have likely invalidated or perverted the presumed effects of the rite. As such, the inscription provided an additional guarantee that could supplement the "shared knowledge" or specific competences of the officiants. Yet most of the time, the pragmatic dimension of the written text seems to have primarily concerned the management of possible conflicts between humans, rather than their relations with the gods. A significant portion of the instructions found in the sacred laws address matters related to *conflicts of rights or potential abuses to be feared*. Questions pertaining to the distribution of meat, especially the attribution of the *geraa* (the privileged parts of the animal), the remuneration of the officiants, and, more generally, various financial aspects (for instance, the cost of the sacrificial victims and the presentation of accounts), are given considerable attention in this corpus.[19] Issues

17. See, for example, RS 1.009; 24.253; 24.284. For the edition and translation of these texts, compare D. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult in Ugarit* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), ad loc., and his comments on p. 25.

18. J.-L. Durand, *Sacrifice et labour en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: La Découverte; Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1986), 43–86.

19. Georgoudi, "Comment régler les *théia pragmata*," 50–51.

concerning ritual exactness, by contrast, *frequently appear as a minor, subordinated topic in the written rules*. We may also recall in this context the requirement for public diffusion, already mentioned above, which was fundamental in a city like Athens, but largely absent (at least in this form) in an "oligarchic" city like Sparta.[20]

There are, however, some sacred laws that are more detailed when it comes to ritual procedure—for instance, those from Kos in the fourth century BCE,[21] or from Mykonos around 200 BCE.[22] Indeed, various details of the ritual were meticulously specified. Consider the following example:

> On the 11th: an ox is selected for Zeus *Machaneús* every other year, the one during which the *Karneia*-days take place, just as during Batromios the ox is selected for Zeus *Polieús*, and a piglet is preliminarily burned (whole), and a preliminary proclamation is made just as for (Zeus) *Polieus*. On the 12th: to Zeus *Machaneús*, three adult male sheep and the ox that has been selected (15) every other year, the one during which the *Karneia*-days take place; every other year, three adult male sheep. The priest of the Twelve Gods sacrifices these and provides the (supplementary) sacred offerings (*hierá*). He offers as a preliminary sacrifice for these (gods) at their common (altar), the things which the Phyleomachidai bring, a half-hekteus of barley-groats, a *tetarteus* of wine. From the ox, perquisites (*geré*) are given to the Phyleomachidai: the horns (or hooves), the shanks; from the sheep, the shoulder, (20) from which the divine portion (*theomoiría*) is cut [. . .]. On the same day: to Athena *Machanís* a selected heifer every other year, the one during which the *Karneia*-days take place; on the other year, (only) an adult ewe. The priestess sacrifices and is sprinkled about with sea water. No take-away from these (animals). As (supplementary) sacred offerings are given to the goddess: (25) four *kotylai* of olive oil, a *tetarteus* of wine, two new ewers and three new drinking-cups.[23]

Why such a luxury of details? This calendar was redacted after the synoikism of 366 BCE that merged all the communities of the island into a single city. This resulted in a fusion and reorganization of the cults, which up until then had been administered by the various cities that comprised Kos.[24] It also

20. Detienne, "Espace de la publicité."

21. *IG* 12.4, 274–78; *CGRN* 86 (*LSCG* 151); S. Paul, *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos*, Kernos Supplément 28 (Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 2013).

22. *CGRN* 156 (*LSCG* 96).

23. *CGRN* 86 (*LSCG* 151) D. 10–24; translation of M. Carbon and S. Peels in *Collection*, http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/file/86/.

24. Georgoudi, "Comment régler les *théia pragmata*," 51; Paul, *Cultes et sanctuaires*, 19–23, 149–50, 285–89.

meant that common cults had to be established for the new civic community. While it is difficult to assess the modifications and changes that were introduced, the general concern would have been to address the needs of a now unified city, and also to ensure the continuity, at the cost of some adaptations, of cults that belonged to the traditional prerogatives of the gods. This was a difficult operation. It created a complex situation that had the potential to disturb the proper functioning of traditional memory—a situation in which there was considerable risk of error or oversight, and a temptation to ignore the new rule, especially when the latter contradicted previous local practices. The detailed writing down of the rite would thus have seemed the most fitting or efficient instrument to ensure the effective performance of the ritual *nomos*. One century later, a similar context of synoikism gave rise to a detailed redaction of the Hellenistic calendar of Mykonos.[25] In the case of Kos, it is interesting to note that the usage of a greater specification of the written rules had a lasting impact on local practice. And yet, most of the ritual knowledge that was needed to perform the ritual gestures remained implicit. One cannot but ask to what extent the process by which the written rule was produced—the only one still accessible to us—does not actually conceal the processes of formalizing and transmitting the ritual through custom. It was, after all, the relationship with custom that gave the written rules their meanings and their pragmatic value.[26]

One should also note that the ritual exactness of the text is often a function of the *private* character of the ritual knowledge concerned, or its connection with groups that were more or less marginal in comparison to the official or dominant practices of the cities. The great "cathartic" law from Selinous (end of the fifth century BCE),[27] which is characterized by its precision in pronouncing the ritual, leaves the prescribing authority anonymous, yet the high degree of ritual expertise that it involved points to ritual specialists comparable to those mentioned in the *Derveni Papyrus*,[28] whose knowledge was, however, transmitted first and foremost orally. Could it be, then, that a certain degree of (written)

25. Reger, "The Mykonian Synoikismos," *Revue des études anciennes* 103 (2001): 157–81; for the cultic and pantheonic reconfigurations related to the 408/407 synoikism in Rhodes, compare Paul, *Cultes et sanctuaires*, 270–71.

26. For a complementary proposition on the "stratigraphy" of norms, compare A. Chaniotis, "The Dynamics of Ritual Norms in Greek Cult," in *La norme en matière religieuse en Grèce ancienne*, ed. P. Brulé, Kernos Supplément 21 (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2009), 91–105.

27. For the puzzling hybrid ritual prescriptions, possibly influenced by the Near East, compare M. H. Jameson, D. R Jordan, and R. D. Kotansky, *A Lex Sacra from Selinous* (Durham: Duke University, 1993); on the new Thessalian inscription from Marmatini, compare J.-C. Decourt and A. Tziaphalias, "Un règlement religieux de la région de Larissa: Cultes grecs et 'orientaux,'" *Kernos* 28 (2015): 13–51; R. Parker and S. Scullion, "The Mysteries of the Goddess of Marmarini," *Kernos* 29 (2016): 209–66.

28. Col. 20 ll. 3–4: *hósoi dè parà toû téchnem poiouménou tà hierà*.

textualization should be explained by other parameters, such as the relationship to the "client," specific functions, and other constructions of authority, as well as the specifics of the rite, or the distance from common (ritual) knowledge? For private mantic specialists like the Athenian chresmologues,[29] the resort to written oracles attributed to such-and-such god or such-and-such prophetic figure of acknowledged authority, like Bakis, conferred to these specialists the authority of divine sanction.[30] So, in many cases, the tendency to rely on the authority of writing must be understood in relation to the private or at least less official status of the ritualist, and, in such contexts, a more detailed written account of ritual specifics is related to very specific practices involving specialists with their own "private" knowledge.

Greek cities document the existence of specialists in exegeting rites. These specialists could either officiate privately or be officially commissioned by the city, as we see in Athens with the three exegetes designated by the *pólis* after the end of the Peloponnesian war.[31] They were consulted by individuals, as well as by magistrates, to illuminate difficult ritual issues;[32] a portion of their knowledge was transmitted in treaties of *Exegetics*, of which only a few rare fragments have survived.[33] Such writing down of ritual usages appears to have often been related to an "antiquarian" activity: the formatting of local traditions. The Athenian authors of *Exegetics* were also "Atthidographers" who wrote the ancient history of Attica and its myths.[34] It was a private scriptural activity, even though it could be linked to public functions (in the case of Athens's three public exegetes), or more traditional ones (the chresmologues). A fragment from Anticleides pertaining to the installation in the storerooms for house supplies of Zeus *Ktesios*—that is the Zeus of the acquisition, custody, and consumption of riches—attests to a distinctive prescriptive style that parallels the style of Hippocratic doctors.

> The *semeîa* of Zeus *Ktésios* should be established as follows. Place a lid on a new two-handled *kadískos*; wrap the handles with white wool, and from the right shoulder and the front . . . of the piece of wool; put whatever

29. See J. Dillery, "Chresmologues and *Manteis*: Independent Diviners and the Problem of Authority," in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, ed. S. Iles Johnston and P. T. Struck (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 169–220, whose arguments I do not follow; R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111–15.

30. Aristophanes, *Birds* 971–72; on prophetical chains, compare A. Motte, "Qu'entendait-on par *prophètès* dans la Grèce ancienne?," *Kernos* 26 (2013): 9–23.

31. J. H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Sacred and Ancestral Law* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1950).

32. Theophrastus, *Characters* 16; see the reference to "the superstitious man."

33. A. Tresp, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Kultschriftsteller* (Giessen: A. Töppelmann, 1914).

34. J. Dillery, "Greek Sacred History," *American Journal of Philology* 126 (2005): 505–26 at 508.

> you find into it; and pour in ambrosia. Ambrosia is clean water, olive oil, and fruit of all sorts; place these items inside it.[35]

For the modern historian, it is very difficult to interpret the various details in this text.[36] For the Athenian who enjoyed a ritual competence of cultural relevance, as well as shared knowledge on the god, the indications provided in this text were apparently enough to avoid serious mistakes and oversights. For instance, the instruction *kaì estheînai hó ti àn heúres* "put whatever you find into it," cannot be understood without prior knowledge, independent of the letter of the text. But who was *reading* and *using* such a text? The Athenian who had to perform this rite and could orally consult the exegete (as is attested by Theophrastus in his *Characters*)? The specialist whose advice was sought? Or the historian and the erudite who collected and rewrote the local specifics of a given cult? If the users of this and similar texts were predominantly to be found among ritual specialists, what was the role of this type of writing in the transmission of their knowledge? Only a complex, pluralist approach—one that acknowledges the presence of *different types* of memory operating together and that conceives writing and orality not in opposition but rather as complementing each other according to modalities that differed from one context to another—can allow us to formulate plausible hypotheses.[37]

However, it is among the groups and practices that were located in the margins of the "public" religion—and often difficult to define socially—that we see the largest flourishing of ritual texts: the *hieroi logoi* of the dionysiac associations in Ptolemaic Egypt; the so-called Orphic funerary plates (although their Orphic affiliation is questionable in my view); the papyri from Gumol, as well as various "magical" papyri (cases in which Egypt, the land of writing, plays a significant role);[38] or earlier on, the tablets from the *orphikoi* of Olbia.[39] An important part of this corpus of texts, the contents of which may in fact be "mythical" as much as ritual, is placed under the protean authority of

35. Anticleides, in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 473b–c, trans. from Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, vol. 5, *Books 10.420e–11*, trans. S. Douglas Olson, LCL 274 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

36. D. Jaillard, "'Images' des dieux et pratiques rituelles dans les maisons grecques: L'exemple de Zeus *Ktésios*," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 116.2 (2004): 871–93.

37. On the respective place of writing and orality in Athenian memory in the fifth century BCE, see R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 100–31.

38. For further discussion of these texts, and various other issues, see Heinrichs, "*Hieroi logoi* and *hierai biblioi*"; F. Graf and S. I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London: Routledge, 2007); C. Calame, "Les lamelles funéraires d'or: Textes pseudo-orphiques et pratiques rituelles," *Kernos* 21 (2008): 299–311.

39. Chapter 1, "L'Orphée de la mer noire," in M. Detienne, *Les dieux d'Orphée* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 22–25.

Orpheus.[40] However, the "marginal" position of these texts, especially in the Classical Period, is apparent in the case of the curses of Theseus against his son Hippolytus in the homonymous tragedy by Euripides (952–54).

> Will you puff yourself up, boast about these vegetarian meals (*apsúchon*) and, taking Orpheus as your master, act as a bacchant by honoring (*timôn*) the smoke (*kapnoús*) of innumerable books/writings (*pollôn grammáton*): you are uncovered.

The reference to the smoke—that is, the smoke of sacrifices—is a clear indication of the ritual dimension of these writings.

Even in the public space of the city, where writing of the ritual was subjected to specialized and sophisticated techniques, it remained—in certain contexts—a potentially *suspect* activity.[41] As was already highlighted, the writing of the ritual was often either unnecessary or secondary to the performance of the rite itself (this was a difference with the situation in Rome[42]), at least when the inscribed object was not integral to the ritual manipulations.[43]

This survey may either disappoint us or suggest that we have directed our attention primarily toward the more marginal areas of ritual practice. But it should in fact press us to reconsider our initial question: what is meant by the notion of "text" in the ritual practices of Greek polytheisms? Besides the diversity of definitions that the modern historian may provide, we also need to look at what the Greeks themselves included under the label of what we call "text." It is only by starting from the Greek practices themselves that we may be able to enter into a more "autochthonous" relationship to textuality, as well as to the connection between "text" and "rite."

I will begin here with an anecdote, which may be more invented than historical, but which is in any case meaningful to a system of representation and its corresponding ritual logic, and which, in a sense, better accounts for the status of the text than the mere inventory of Greek writings and their usages. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which was (in at least one of its versions) the object of a performance in a Delian festival, was kept as an *anáthema*, an "offering" deposited in the sanctuary of Artemis in Delos. In the mythical account found in the *Certamen*, it is Homer himself who would have recited the hymn beside

40. M. Detienne, *L'écriture d'Orphée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

41. Detienne, "Espace de la publicité"; Jaillard, "Memory, Writing, Authority," 24, 29, 32.

42. J. Scheid, *La religion des Romains* (Paris: A. Colin / Masson, 1998), 85.

43. On this last case, compare M. Carastro, "Les liens de l'écriture: *Katadesmoi* et instances de l'enchaînement," in *Architecturer l'invisible: Autels, ligatures, écritures*, ed. M. Cartry, J.-L. Durand and R. Koch-Piettre, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Sciences religieuses 138 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 263–91.

the horned altar dedicated to Apollo; the Delians, having conferred citizenship on Homer, transcribed the Hymn on wooden tablets in order to consecrate (*anéthekan*) it in the sanctuary of Artemis, which belonged to the then sanctuary of Apollo in Delos.[44] We also know from the Delian inventories that a "book" by the lyrical poet Alcaeus, of Lesbos, was among the *anathémata* deposited in the sanctuary.[45]

The parallel with other cases of dedicated archaic poems, such as the *Works and Days* by Hesiod, of which Pausanias was able to see an old "manuscript" made of skin in a sanctuary on the Helicon,[46] suggests—as Claude Calame has shown—that "the consecration of poems intended for oral performance in a sanctuary may well have been, especially on the occasion of the heroisation of their author, one of the triggers for their transcription."[47] I will not develop this aspect here, as interesting as it may be, but focus instead on the status of the writing that forms its corollary. To produce a written text does not serve to ensure its memorization or its transmission, or to provide a support for its oral enunciation, as we would spontaneously tend to assume. For that, *aoidoi* and rhapsodes, in particular, have quite efficient techniques at their disposal. Rather, the production of the text participates in a ritual practice both distinct from and complementary with the oral performance that took place in the context of a competition or a religious festival—the *anathéma*. The associated value of dedication and consecration has to do with the gesture of depositing the object, in this case the *inscribed* object, which, in the process, gains a new quality—it is *hieros*—and becomes the property of the god, under whose watch it is placed.[48] As such, it is another, complementary way to honor the gods, and to please them. The status of the deposited text is analogous to that of an "image" or a material "offering," such as a statue or a vase, presented to a divine power,[49] or to that of

44. *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod* 18, in *Homeric Hymns; Homeric Apocrypha; Lives of Homer*, trans. M. L. West, LCL 496 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 350.

45. *ID* 1400, 7; *ID* 1409. Heraclitus the philosopher would have dedicated his book in the Delian sanctuary of Artemis (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 9.6), Pindar's seventh Olympics in the sanctuary of Athena in Lindos (in golden letters, Scolia I, 195 Drachmann). See J. Herington, *Poetry into Drama: Early Tragedy and the Greek Poetic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 201–3.

46. Pausanias, *Descr.* 9.31.4.

47. C. Calame, "Montagne des Muses et Mouséia: La consécration des *Travaux* et l'héroïsation d'Hésiode," in *La montagne des Muses*, ed. A. Hurst and A. Schachter (Genève: Droz, 1996), 43–56 at 56: "la consécration de poèmes destinés à la communication orale dans un sanctuaire, pourrait bien avoir été, à l'occasion (notamment) de l'héroïsation de leur auteur, un des moteurs de leur transcription"; see also C. Calame, *Sentiers transversaux: Entre poétiques grecques et politiques contemporaines* (Grenoble: Millon, 2008), 133–43.

48. J. Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales de la pensée religieuse et actes constitutifs du culte dans la Grèce classique* (Picard: Paris, 1992), 22–30.

49. D. Jaillard, "L'image dans la stratégie du rituel," in *Image et religion dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine: Actes du colloque de l'École française de Rome, 11–13 décembre 2003*, ed. S. Estienne

the pieces of meat deposited on tables (*trapezómata*)—an important and often neglected constituent of the gods' portion in Greek sacrificial practices.[50]

The practice of inscribing poems that were orally performed during a feast or a ceremony is well documented. In the case of Delphi, it is enough to mention here the paean to Dionysos by Philodamos of Skarpheia (around 340–339 BCE), the hymn to Hestia and the paean to Apollo of Aristonoos (third quarter of the fourth century BCE), or the two paeans to Apollo that contain a musical notation and that were offered on the occasion of the Pythais festivals in 138–128 BCE.[51] For Crete, we may mention the hymn to Zeus *Diktaios* that was discovered in Palaikastro, nearby Mount Dikta, where an inscription from the third century CE transcribes an older inscription from the fourth or third century BCE.[52] In this case, the ritual orientation of the hymn is clearly shown by the *self-referential* nature of the utterances that were placed in the mouth of the choir of young people: they performed them in a declarative context in which their proclamations referred, among others things, to the altar around which the choir moved.

The production of the written text as *anáthema*, the object of a dedication, *duplicates* the cultic act. To the song uttered during the musical performance to confer honor (*géras*) to the god, whose *timé* is increased by the ritual,[53] is added the lasting deposition of the inscription inside the sanctuary. The writing here functions as a memory of the performance, but it is also an integral part of a specific, complementary religious act: the ritual deposit of an inscribed object for the god. The text may be related to a specific circumstance and not intended for other, later performances, or it can—on the contrary—comprise the very text of the cultic hymn that is uttered every year during the festival, as in the case of the Cretan inscription of Palaikastro.

But in this case, we need to ask what constitutes the ritual text proper? It is doubtful that the inscription was used to repeat and renew the performance, even in those cases where the text corresponded to a regular performance (rather

et al. (Naples: Centre Jean Bérard, 2008), 97–99; I. Patera, *Offrir en Grèce ancienne: Gestes et contextes*, Postdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 41 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2012).

50. D. Gill, "*Trapezomata*: A Neglected Aspect of Greek Sacrifice," *HTR* 67.2 (1974): 117–37; M. H. Jameson, "*Theoxenia*," in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence*, ed. R. Hägg, Kernos Supplément 26 (Stockholm: P. Åströms, 1994), 35–57; G. Ekroth, "Meat for the Gods," in *"Nourrir les dieux?" Sacrifice et representation du divin*, ed. V. Pirenne-Delforge and F. Prescendi, Kernos Supplément 26 (Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 2011), 15–41.

51. W. D. Furley and J. M. Bremer, eds., *Greek Hymns* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), respectively 2.5, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6.1, 2.6.2.

52. Ibid., 1.1.

53. D. Jaillard, "'Il réalisa les dieux immortels et la terre ténébreuse' (Hymne homérique à Hermès 427)," in *Linguaggi del potere, poteri del linguaggio: Atti del Colloquio internazionale del PARSA, 6–8 novembre 2008*, ed. E. Bono and M. Curnis, Culture antiche, studi e testi (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010), 51–66.

than a unique one). At most, the inscription ensured public diffusion, as per the inscribed law. As a ritual "text," the hymn is the "text" sung and danced by the choir, *not* the text inscribed. To be sure, it is possible that *another* written support, easier to handle and more ephemeral, was also used either for the composition of the hymn or for the training of the choir every year. But even so, it is only *from within the immanent logic of the ritual* that the process of textualization, as fixation of the authoritative version of the traditional hymn, may be properly understood. This means, among other things, that in Greece the relations between *text* and *ritual* cannot be understood primarily on the basis of the writing practice.

In the rite of the *anáthema* ("dedication/consecration"), the writing may form an integral part of the ritual handling itself. The deposited object may contain an inscription that describes the purpose of the ritual; it is, in fact, one of the oldest attested ways of using writing in Ancient Greece. On a statue from the end of the eighth or the beginning of the seventh century BCE we read, "Mantiklos dedicated me to the Far-Shooter, silver-bowed god, as a tithe; Phoibos, provide *charis* in return."[54] As is customary with the earliest dedications (mainly before 550 BCE), it is the object itself that speaks here.[55] When reading the inscription, a visitor to the sanctuary lent his voice to the object and reactivated the inscribed utterance; the practice of reading aloud was standard in Greece. In the process, the writing *does not duplicate* the words with which the dedicator consecrated the statue when he deposited it. Rather, the writing is part of a distinct declarative strategy, distinct from the speech uttered by the dedicator when he accomplished his dedication (which was, in this case, dedicated to the god in his own name).[56]

The transcription of a hymn, since I have chosen here to focus on this type of text, can also be included with the utterance of a "sacred law." The same paean, related to the cult of Asclepios, can be found in inscriptions from Erythrea in Asia Minor, Dion in Macedonia, and Ptolemais in Egypt, as well as in Athens. Here we are dealing with a distinct phenomenon, connected to cults whose transregional interests predominate over their local anchoring. In one of these instances, however, the text of the hymn not only is inscribed but also contains the *obligation* to sing the hymn in accompaniment to the sacrifice. The text of the paean is thus made available to those persons consulting Asclepios, who

54. M. L. Lazzarini, *Le formule delle dediche votive nella Grecia arcaica* (Rome: Accad. nazionale dei Lincei, 1976), 795.

55. J. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: An Anthropology of Reading in Ancient Greece*, trans. J. Lloyd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 26–43; P. Pucci, "Inscriptions archaïques sur les statues des dieux," in *Les savoirs de l'écriture en Grèce ancienne*, ed. M. Detienne (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1992), 480–97.

56. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia*, 44–63.

must have at their disposal not only the sacrificial rule but also the hymn to be uttered to the god.

> If anyone, after sleeping in the temple or making a vow is offering due sacrifice to Asclepius and Apollo, when he puts on the altar the sacred portion (*hierà moîra*), he must first sing this paean three times around Apollo's altar.[57]

After this follows the text of the paean. Here the written text no longer serves as a dedication, as per the *anáthema* discussed above, but serve as a *script* for the person consulting the god[58] and as a support for the *textualization* of the rule. The written text, however, acquired a function and status that are properly ritualized only if, and when, it was *uttered* by the visitor in the relevant ritual context, *in relation to the altar*, when the sacrificial offering was deposited in the sanctuary. The paean, which must be repeated three times, comprised part of the sacrificial speech. As a *ritual text*, it exists only *in* and *through* the ritual, as an element of the sacrifice by which humans and gods are brought together around the altar.

But when the possibility of utterance was suspended by the ritual procedure itself, the act of writing could be invested with a "religious" efficiency, in that the efficiency of the ritual act was concentrated within it. The Classical Greek world abundantly attests to the practice of ritual binding, the *katádesmos*.[59] These *defixiones* of lead, inscribed with signs, names, and malevolent formulas, which were then rolled up or folded and sometimes pierced with nails, were then buried in the ground, especially in graves or under sanctuaries. Formulas such as "I am writing (*katagrápho*) NP toward," followed by the invocation of various powers capable of binding and chaining (such as Hermes *Chtónios*, Gê *Chtónia*, Hecate, Kore, and others), appear to be strictly equivalent to formulas such as "I am binding" or "I am retaining NP toward." In such cases the graphic apparatus (that is, the written lead plates) is not meant to be read by humans, even less in a public space; it was deposited in the earth, "written downward" so that the bearer of the inscribed name would be possessed—that his tongue, some corporal functions, his various skills, or his renown would be bound. The linguistic dimension of the writing, in relation with the figurative handling and—occasionally—the piercing of the plates, mimics and performs the action of the divine powers that are summoned. The very act of inscribing the name

57. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, 933–34.

58. "As for script, I mean a narrower category, where the written text is a prerequisite for performance"; G. Nagy, *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 112.

59. M. Carastro, *La cité des mages: Penser la magie en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble: J. Millon, 2006), 163–88.

activates the binding, under the condition that the latter is buried—*tháptein*, the same verb used in funerary rites—and, by this gesture, entrusted to the action of the relevant powers. It is by being articulated with the ritual sequence, with the required gestures, that the written text receives its own efficacy.

As these examples suggest, it remains highly difficult to define in Greek, and according to Greek categories, the notion of "text." Such an approach would require us to analyze, in the wake of the seminal work by Jesper Svenbro,[60] the metaphors of weaving (*huphaínein*) that were used in the choral lyric of the fifth and fourth centuries to describe the processes involved in the composition of songs—"Weave (*exúphaine*), sweet Lyre, weave without further ado, on the Lydian mode, this song (*mélos*) loved by Oenone and Cyprus"[61]—or to describe the activity of the rhapsode as the one who "sews back up" the song (*ráphtein aoidén*).[62] There is also, from the late Hellenistic period onward, the complex interplay with the Latin *textus*, translated in Greek by *húphos*, fabric or web.[63] Plato speaks thus of the interlacing (*sumploké*) of the letters that "weave" the syllables,[64] or of the nouns and verbs that comprise the *lógos*.[65] This Greek concept of the "weaving" of the text does not exclude writing (as is already shown by the image of the *sumploké* formed by letters), but it is not based on it. The text exists not as a written form but as "spoken writing" (*une écriture parlée*), so to speak: that is, an audible utterance for which the writer uses the reader "as the instrument indispensable for the full realization of his written word"[66]—not unlike the *erastes* uses the *eromenes*. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, the writing is a "booklet" through which the absent writer is present (*parôn*), so long as, like the warp interweaving with the woof, he is able to unite himself with the reader who realizes the "text" through his voice.[67] The text, then, is not the writing itself but the weaving between writing and utterance, the actualization through the performance of the writing each and every reading. The studies on the genesis of epic traditions, especially those by Gregory Nagy on the Homeric traditions, have developed the notion of an *oral* textuality, the implications of which have not yet been sufficiently considered in the field of ritual studies.[68]

60. J. Svenbro, "The Cloak of Phaedrus: The Prehistory of the 'Text' in Greece," in *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*, ed. J. Scheid and J. Svenbro (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 111–30.

61. Pindar, *Nemean* 4, 44–46.

62. Hesiod, frag. 357; compare J. Svenbro, *La parole et le marbre* (Lund: Klassiska Institutionen, 1976), 201–2.

63. Svenbro, "Cloak of Phaedrus," 128.

64. Plato, *Politicus* 277d.

65. Plato, *Sophista* 259e, 262b–e.

66. Svenbro, "Cloak of Phaedrus," 125.

67. Plato, *Phaedrus* 228e.

68. G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 69–70.

By way of conclusion, I would like to offer one final comment on the ritual text in Greece, which involves a portion of the systems of categories and representations underlying Greek ritual practice and, as such, raises valid questions for the historian and anthropologist. Under certain conditions—depending on the ritual context—the ritual utterance can produce effects that are themselves described in the very terms of sacrificial practice, as we can read, for instance, in the following statement attributed to Pindar by Philodemus of Gadara: "By means of the poems, the honor (*timé*) [of the gods] grows [. . .]. Pindar was of the same opinion, when he was saying that he was going to sacrifice a dithyramb."[69] This power to augment the divine *timaí*, the prerogatives of the gods, the Greeks attributed it to the sacrifices by which men honor (*timân*) the divine powers, and it is in reference to this power of sacrifices that Philodemus introduces Pindar's image of the dithyramb sacrificed to the gods (*thúson dithúrambon*)—an image that emerges elsewhere when Pindar mentions, in the context of a poem sung on the occasion of the *theoxénia* of Delphi, a "meal of paeans" (*paieónon ádorpon euáxomen*).[70] We therefore also need to understand this sacrificial context for the hymnic utterance—namely, its capacity to increase the *timai* of the gods and to delight them—when we try to understand the status of the text in the ritual, as well as the various configurations of orality and writing that were present in the complex world of Greek polytheism. Even in the margins of the city, the writings of Orpheus that are said by Euripides's Theseus to have perverted his son, are still a form of sacrificial smoke "honored" (*timôn*) by Hippolytes—even if only the smoke of letters (*kapnous grammatôn*).

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69. Philodemus of Gadara, *De musica* 4, col. 21.6–13 = Pindar, frag. 86; see Jaillard, "Dieux immortels," 51–54.

70. Pindar, *Hymns* 6.127–28.

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