

legal document (p. 85)—unusual, precisely because it is neither religious nor funerary—recording the conveyance of land ‘in the territory of Lake Trasimene’ (p. 114) from a group of three (Cusu) plus two named individuals (the owners) to fifteen others (the recipients), under the auspices of a third group (the ‘guarantors’). ‘Children’ and ‘grandchildren’ are mentioned only for some of the latter. This seems odd, if the aim was that proposed by A. (p. 108), namely to ensure the validity of the arrangements beyond ‘l’arco della vita umana’. Accepting a suggestion of the ‘pers. comm.’ kind (p. 98 with n. 193), A. takes the word *vina* to indicate that vineyards were included among the pieces of land involved; for De Simone (op. cit. 83), *vina* means ‘sacred ceremony’.

And so on: expert linguistic disagreement of this order will clearly fuel debate for years to come. I limit myself here to archaeological considerations. It is difficult to understand why the *private* transaction postulated by A. would be enshrined in the costly *public* document represented by a bronze plaque that originally weighed more than 2 kg (De Simone, op. cit. 7). The deliberate breaking, or ‘killing’, of the Tabula also seems to be more appropriate in the religious/funerary sphere than in the legal one; and its excellent state of preservation could very well be the result of twenty-two centuries in a chamber tomb. This being the case, it may be relevant to note that in 1992, along with the seven fragments of the plaque, the carpenter handed in eight bronzes that he had allegedly found in the same place at the same time. They are listed in the official document reproduced in Appendix Ic (p. 121): two *pedistalli* (stands), one *incensiere* (*thymiaterion*), four *verghe* (rods, or spits), and a decorative palmette—all most probably of funerary origin. No further mention is made of these items. But then, we are not told either why the Tabula and its text could not be presented much sooner in the normal place: which is the ‘Rivista di epigrafia etrusca’ section of *Studi Etruschi*.

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GREEK ESCHATOLOGY

L. ALBINUS: *The House of Hades. Studies in Ancient Greek Eschatology*. (Studies in Religion 2.) Pp. 247, pls. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000. Paper, £19. 95. ISBN: 87-7288-833-4.

Albinus examines an interesting aspect of Greek religious studies, attitudes towards death in three different eschatological traditions: the ‘negative’ eschatology of Homeric discourse; the ‘positive’ eschatology of the Orphic discourse; and the Eleusinian mysteries, which he regards as in manifold rivalry to the first two. The approach presents some fresh interpretations of Greek eschatological beliefs and new perspectives especially on the Eleusinian mysteries. However, A.’s style of argument is difficult, and his language unnecessarily formulaic and heavy; he tends, perhaps intentionally, to bind binary oppositions into one sentence and thereby drains the meaning; for example: ‘The encounter between text and reader is rooted in a discourse that is neither totally the same, not totally other’ (p. 12).

A.’s methodological aims are ambitious: in his introduction we find references to Frege, Nietzsche, Foucault, Ricoeur, and Derrida. He draws upon fashionable discourse analysis by looking at the ancient Greek material as a discursive whole with intertextual relations: ‘Thus, I will have to admit that Scylla and Charybdis may lurk on the Horizon of the textual investigations at hand, namely as far as these will be

carried out from a point of view that pretends to be neither full-blooded structuralist nor full-blooded hermeneutical but yet something of both at the same time. The perspective may be called genealogical in the sense that I shall concentrate on how textual frames of meaning provide the grounds for other frames to appear or disappear, and how discursive limits border on each other by referring to other limits being the limits of eschatology' (p. 12, see also p. 96). The method is 'neither purely structural nor purely historical' (p. 15); it is easy to get lost in the jungle of grand ideas completely separated from the material.

Thereafter A. is rather enjoyable reading. In Chapter I on Homeric discourse, especially in the section on the concept of *psuche* (III) and the transformation of its meaning (V, VI), A. has much to say which is informative and clever. He examines critically the conceptions by Rohde, Otto, Böhme, Bickel, Wundt, and Arbman, and adds to Bremmer and Nagy. A. regards Hades as an allusion to a realm of invisibility, *psuche* as something like the image of vitality bound to the act of remembering, but in some contexts close to a ghost visible solely to those whose eyes have been opened to the realm of Hades. A. also interprets the funeral rites of Patroclus within the framework of van Gennep's tripartite structure of rites of passage. A., however, relies on outdated studies of the Early Iron Age, and does not clarify the terms Dark Age and Early Iron Age (e.g. p. 24). His bibliography is particularly outdated on the material evidence for funeral rites and hero cult in the Mycenaean world and in the Early Iron Age (esp. pp. 27–8, 40): little is used from the vast recent literature on the rôle of ancestor and hero cults and their relationship with literary tradition, and with the rise of the *polis* by, for example, C. Sourvinou-Inwood, C. Antonaccio, and F. de Polignac.

A. follows the transformation of the notion of *psuche* in the literary sources convincingly and interestingly. However, on the material evidence he obscurely states that 'interdiscursive polemics' between the Homeric epics and the cultic traditions will bring about at least some traces of an eschatological perspective that reflects a concrete cult activity (p. 71). Vagueness results from lack of engagement with archaeological studies: for example, 'an *eschara* is the hollow hero-shrine that may have "functioned" as a channel to the underworld' (p. 124) and 'the hollow altar used in the hero cult, the so called *eschara*, was another word for the vagina' (p. 180)—for *eschara*, see Ekroth in a forthcoming supplement of *Kernos*. The absence of Pl. 7b is a minor shortcoming, but the extended treatment of the *Nekyia* wall-painting by Polygnotos in the Lesche of the Knidians at Delphoi (pp. 132–140) is more seriously flawed. A. reconstructs this fifth-century painting as an amalgam of Homeric and Orphic motifs (Pl. 6), but his bibliography omits C. Robert, *Die Nekyia des Polygnot* (*HallWPr* 16, 1892), which is the source of the picture—instead it is credited to Hermann Schenck (also missing from the bibliography). M. D. Stansbury-O'Donnell's important reconstruction in *AJA* 94 (1990), 213–35 would have given a new perspective, but is also omitted.

In the third part of the book, 'The Mystery', A. constructs a link between the eschatological conceptions of Orphism and the mystery cults by examining the inscribed golden plates discovered in funerary contexts and related to Orphic discourse. He interprets them as liturgical devices in the rites for the dead. A. usefully formulates links between the three traditions he studies: the Eleusinian mysteries were connected to the Orphic tradition, which was linked with the Homeric tradition. A. suggests that the Panhellenic movement of Orphism had a strong effect in the Eleusinian cult of Demeter, and this resulted especially in turning men towards eschatologically oriented rituals in which the chthonic powers of death, sexuality, and rebirth formed the chain of continuity of being. However, there is one theme which is

hard to understand, namely A.'s opinion that the ancient Greek religion 'seems to have drawn one of its last breaths in the dark room of Eleusis' (p. 196; cf. the book's last sentence, p. 203).

Inadequate exploitation of archaeological evidence and the outdated bibliography diminish the book's value, but those who can handle A.'s convoluted style will find new thoughts about Greek eschatology.

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ORAL RELIGION

R. BAUMGARTEN: *Heiliges Wort und heilige Schrift bei den Griechen. Hieroi Logoi und verwandte Erscheinungen.* (ScriptOralia 110. Reihe A: Altertumswissenschaftliche Reihe, 26). Pp. 250. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1998. Cased, DM 96. ISBN: 3-8233-5420-5.

Gods talk, and sometimes, gods write, or their prophets write what the gods have been telling them. In some religions—the 'Religions of the Book'—this results in Sacred Scripture. Greek religion is generally, and rightly, considered as having no sacred scriptures: but from Herodotus onwards, we hear about *ἱεροὶ λόγοι*, 'sacred accounts', and often enough, these accounts must have been written. Baumgarten's wide-ranging study wants to find out what those 'sacred accounts' were and why they did not result in Sacred Books. To do so, he looks at several groups of verbal utterances, both oral and written, that the Greeks connected with their religion, that ended up in a written text, and that often were called *ἱερός*—oracles, Orphic and Pythagorean texts, texts in mystery cult, 'Egyptianizing' texts; in order to keep his topic manageable and to avoid the tricky problem of Christian influence, he limits his interest to pre-imperial times.

He progresses from more oral to more written. He begins with oracles (pp. 15–69), both the institutionalized and the 'free-lance' ones, the collections ascribed to Bakis and the Sibyl. The chapter, like the entire book, is well researched, but somewhat uninspired, and it suffers from the (perhaps unavoidable) need to rely to a large extent on specialist accounts, and to abridge and sometimes to distort complex arguments (e.g. the process by which the Romans obtained a new copy of their burnt collection of the Oracula Sibyllina, pp. 56f.). The conclusion—institutional oracles helped in decision-making and had no 'real' interest in the future—is neither new nor the full truth: at least Delphi played a large rôle in sanctioning decisions. More surprisingly, there is no discussion of inscribed oracles, although they start as early as the later sixth century (recently J. Rodríguez Somolinos, *Epigraphica Anatolica* 17 [1991], 69–71: Didyma), and some texts played important ideological functions (e.g. Olbia Pontica, L. Dubois, *Inscriptions grecques dialectales d'Olbia du Pont* [Geneva 1996], p. 146 no. 93, with W. Burkert's discussion, in J. Solomon (ed.), *Apollo. Origins and Influences* [Tucson, 1994], pp. 49–60, or the epigram of Arbinas at Xanthos, J. Bousquet, in: *Fouilles de Xanthos* 9 [Paris, 1992], 56).

Next Orphic literature (pp. 70–121), both the literary texts ascribed to Orpheus (and Musaios and, in Athens, Eumolpos) and the epigraphic documents of more doubtful paternity (the bone tablets from Olbia, the so-called Orphic gold tablets). B. rightly stresses the rôle that the poems of Orpheus and Musaios played in the mystery cults of Eleusis and of Dionysos, and the function that the gold tablets had in Bacchic ritual: