

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Students of Greek religion are fortunate in having at their disposal the best recent study of a 'dead' religion: Walter Burkert's *Greek Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985). Since the English edition is not essentially different from the German original of 1977, my survey will concentrate on developments since approximately that date. Although Burkert's handbook will be quoted only incidentally, its influence is pervasive, and is always to be presupposed. In the survey I shall offer a synthesis of new insights, join in some important debates, and offer various extended analyses as possible methodological models.

In the notes I quote only the most recent literature. Many of these studies are not the work of Anglo-Saxon scholars: the most important modern contributions have come from Switzerland and France; in third position, *ex aequo*, England and the Netherlands; the United States enters as fourth, with Italy as a potential runner-up. To quote only English publications would thus give a completely wrong impression.

Although it has not always been explicitly mentioned in this context, every country has its own culture which naturally influences the image of Greek religion that it produces. These images may range from a more romantic approach (the Germans), via a more philosophical (the French), to a more common-sensical (the English). The present survey, written by a Dutchman, is deliberately eclectic, but other students of Greek religion will surely unmask this pretension.

The turmoil of Dutch universities at this present time does not offer very favourable conditions for research, and I would not have succeeded in finishing this survey in time without the help of family and friends. Annemiek Boonstra energetically assisted me in a number of ways. My wife Christine and Matthijs den Besten helpfully commented on the first version. Professor Herman Brijder, Director of the Allard Pierson Museum (Amsterdam), kindly advised me in the choice of pictures and generously put the photographs at my disposal. Finally, Ian McAuslan was patient to a fault and skilfully edited the text at the last possible moment. I am, however, indebted most to Barbara Boudewijnse and André Lardinois, who, from their respective anthropological and classical expertise, weeded out mistakes and forced me to clarify or rethink numerous points. If this survey in some ways

contributes to a better understanding of Greek religion, it is largely due to their careful reading and stimulating discussions.

I have always enjoyed oral and written exchanges of opinion on Greek religion with friends and colleagues, old and new. It is therefore appropriate to thank Claude Bérard, W. Burkert, Richard Buxton, Claude Calame, Susan Cole, Ken Dowden (who kindly corrected the penultimate version of the first and last chapters), Chris Faraone, Nick Fisher, Fritz Graf (who discussed Orphism with me), Albert Henrichs, Jean-Marc Moret, Dirk Obbink (who discussed the gods with me), Robert Parker, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, H. S. Versnel, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet. The best way, of course, of starting the study of Greek religion would be to read the works of all these scholars.

Finally, I dedicate this modest book to the memory of my uncle Marius, who advised me to study Classics and was always there as a friend to talk to, not least in matters of religion. His untimely death was a great loss to his family and to all who were privileged to know him.

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