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978-0-521-51831-4 - The "Orphic" Gold Tablets and Greek Religion: Further Along the Path

Edited by Radcliffe G. Edmonds III

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THE "ORPHIC" GOLD TABLETS AND GREEK RELIGION

The "Orphic" gold tablets, tiny scraps of gold foil found in graves throughout the ancient Greek world, are some of the most fascinating and baffling pieces of evidence for ancient Greek religion. This collection brings together a number of previously published and unpublished studies from scholars around the world, making accessible to a wider audience some of the new methodologies being applied to the study of these tablets. The volume also contains an updated edition of the tablet texts, reflecting the most recent discoveries and accompanied by English translations and critical apparatus. This survey of trends in the scholarship, with an up-to-date bibliography, not only provides an introduction to the serious study of the tablets, but also illuminates their place within scholarship on ancient Greek religion.

RADCLIFFE G. EDMONDS III is an Associate Professor in the Department of Greek, Latin & Classical Studies at Bryn Mawr College. He is the author of *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets* (Cambridge, 2004).

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In some sense, this volume represents the thoughts that emerged, not from a single conference, but from a series of conferences. The first was a conference, "Roads Not Taken: Explorations of the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets," which, under the guidance of our mentor, Christopher Faraone, I put together with Sarah Cohen in 1997 at the Franke Institute for the Humanities at the University of Chicago while we were both graduate students. At that conference, Hans Dieter Betz presented an English version of the paper he was preparing for the festschrift for Walter Burkert that was published the subsequent year. Fritz Graf presented an overview of the tablets and their place within Orphic eschatological literature, ideas which were subsequently adapted and published in an Italian collection. Thomas Dousa, then a graduate student at the Oriental Institute at Chicago, presented a version of the paper he has expanded and revised for this volume. The second conference was the Vergilian Society's Symposium Cumanum "The Cults of Magna Graecia," in June 2002, where I first met Alberto Bernabé and Ana Jiménez and began our long, stimulating, and fruitful dialogue about the nature of Orphic materials. The third conference was "Orfeo y el orfismo: nuevas perspectivas," organized by Bernabé and his colleague, Francesc Casadesús, in Mallorca, Spain, in February 2005. At this conference I met Christoph Riedweg and Miguel Herrero, and began to formulate the idea of putting together this volume, including the papers that Herrero and I presented at that conference.

Some additions have been made to the papers that grew out of these conferences, notably the seminal article of Claude Calame, which was so influential for subsequent scholarship, and the work of Yannis Tzifopoulos. Dirk Obbink's paper had been presented at the APA in 1992, but was never published, although it was cited several times by members of that original audience. Christopher Faraone, whose essay also appears in this volume, was the one who suggested that I try to get it published, and I thank him

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and Dirk Obbink for their efforts in bringing this nearly lost text back into the light.

None of these essays has appeared in quite the same form before, but some have been translated or otherwise adapted from previously published pieces. Fritz Graf's chapter, "Text and Ritual: The Corpus Eschatologicum of the Orphics" was originally published as "Text and Ritual: The Corpus Eschatologicum of the Orphics," in *La letteratura pseudepigrapha nella cultura greca e romana, Atti di un incontro di studi Napoli, 15-17 gennaio 1998*, ed. Giovanni Cerri, Naples, 2000, pp. 59-77. "Are the 'Orphic' Gold Leaves Orphic?" by Alberto Bernabé and Ana I. Jiménez San Cristóbal is an adapted translation from their 2001 volume, *Instrucciones para el más allá. Las laminillas órficas de oro*, now published in English as A. Bernabé and A. I. Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008) *Instructions for the Netherworld. The Orphic Gold Tablets*, Leiden, Boston, MA and Cologne. "A Child of Earth am I and of starry Heaven': Concerning the Anthropology of the Orphic Gold Tablets" by Hans Dieter Betz was originally published as "Der Erde Kind bin ich und des gestirnten Himmels': Zur Lehre vom Menschen in den orphischen Goldplättchen," from *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert*, ed. Fritz Graf, B. G. Teubner: Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998, pp. 399-419, and has been translated for this volume by Maria Sturm. Claude Calame's "'Orphic' Invocations and Commentaries: Funerary Transpositions of Religious Discourse" was originally published as "Invocations et commentaires 'orphiques': Transpositions funéraires de discours religieux," from *Discours religieux dans l'antiquité*, ed. Marie-Madeleine Mactoux and Evelyne Geny, Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, no. 578, Les Belles Lettres: Paris, 1995, pp. 11-30, and has been translated for this volume by Sarah Melker. Christoph Riedweg's "Initiation - Death - Underworld: Narrative and Ritual in the Gold Leaves" was originally published as "Initiation - Tod - Unterwelt: Beobachtungen zur Kommunikationssituation und narrativen Technik der orphisch-bakchischen Goldblättchen," from *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert*, ed. Fritz Graf, B. G. Teubner: Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998, pp. 359-398, but has been adapted and translated for this volume by the author, with the assistance of Andreas Schatzmann, incorporating material from Riedweg's "Poésie orphique et rituel initiatique: Éléments d'un 'Discours sacré' dans les lamelles d'or," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 219: 459-481. My thanks to all of those involved in the laborious process of translation, adaptation, and editing of all these essays, and especially to Edward Whitehouse for his work on the indexes.

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NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow those of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn. Oxford 1999.