1 | Approaches to *theōriā*

Preliminary definitions and issues

1.1 Polis religion and Panhellenic religion

A general consensus has grown up in the last few decades that ancient Greek religion owes a great deal to the emergence of the Greek polis in or before the eighth century BC. The city-state did not create the religious system, elements of which are attested already in Mycenaean texts, but it adapted it to its own purposes, stamped its authority on it and gave it a new shape. Greek city-states promoted themselves as independent and self-sufficient political units, and religion clearly played an enabling role in that ideology by providing cults and festivals to which all citizens had access and which were in some cases unavailable to non-citizens. Thus, the predominant assumption has been that we come closest to Greek religion if we study it within the territory of the individual city-state, examining its cults, festivals, religious topography, and the intricate relationships between these and its political and social institutions.[1]

Although this model has been criticised recently for being simplistic, for example in omitting the role of individuals,[2] it remains the best interpretative tool we have for understanding the subject. However, even in so far as Greek religion is structured by the polis, it is not confined to the inner workings of the individual polis. One of the main ways religion works in ancient Greece is by facilitating connections with the broader world through networks that connected individuals and cults in different locations, and through a framework of common sanctuaries, where polis-identity comes up against the larger identity of being Greek.[3] Even contact between Greek and non-Greek is negotiated in part by the translation of religious ideas between cultures.[4] None of this means that we have to

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[1] Sourvinou-Inwood (1990:297 = id. (Buxton 2000:15)): 'the *polis* anchored, legitimated and mediated all religious activity'; Burkert (1995); Hansen (2006); Hansen and Nielsen (2004b). On the process of transformation from Late Bronze Age to Iron Age, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1978).

[2] Cf. the criticisms of Kindt (2009).

[3] This point has been made recently, for example by Kindt (2009) and Eidinow (2011).

[4] For religion as enabling cultural translation between groups, see M. Smith (2008).

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abandon the idea that Greek religion is structured at the level of the polis, but it requires that we attach much more emphasis than has often been allowed to interaction between one polis and another. The inter-polis is at least as important as the intra-polis, or to put this in Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood's terms, 'openings' are as important as 'closures'.[5]

The subject of this book is participation by the polis in extraterritorial cults, festivals and sanctuaries via the sending of sacred delegates (usually called *theōroi*) and delegations (usually called *theōriai*). The surviving evidence strongly suggests that the average Greek city was heavily involved in religious activities abroad. The stage for extraterritorial religious activity was a vast network of sanctuaries, some of them Panhellenic in reach, others particularly cultivated by people from a certain geographical region, larger or smaller, or from an ethnic group. As far as we can tell, Greek sanctuaries did not make it a condition on visitors that they had to be a Greek (although you had to be Greek to compete in the Olympic Games, perhaps in other athletic competitions as well),[6] so we may expect that many sanctuaries were visited by non-Greeks as well.

Extraterritorial religious activity took many different forms.[7] The most widespread reason for religious travel was (i) to take part in common festivals, as sacred delegates, individual worshippers, athletes or spectators. Another reason (ii) was to announce an upcoming festival, in which case, uniquely, the sanctuary would send out visitors rather than receiving them. Other important motivations were (iii) consulting oracles, (iv) making dedications at common sanctuaries, or (v) visiting mystery sanctuaries such as Eleusis and Samothrace for the purpose of initiation. In some cases (vi) regular cultic relations existed between cities and distant sanctuaries that were realised in the form of regular offerings (such as the *Pūthaïs* sent from Athens to Delphi). A special case of this (vii) is the regular sending of offerings by colonies to their mother-city. In some cases (viii) a number of states shared in the administration of a sanctuary, and sent delegates to a common council – these were known as 'amphiktionies'. Some sanctuaries (ix)

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[5] Sourvinou-Inwood (1988:227 = reprint 47–8) incorporated outward-facing religion into her model of polis-religion model via the concept of 'openings': 'In so far as religion defines and plays a considerable role in giving identity to the group – the *polis* and each of its subdivisions – there are closures in *polis* cults. But other factors, among them the perception of common Greekness and the Panhellenic dimension of religion, create pressures towards openings. Similar pressures were also created by religious activities which involved worship at sanctuaries other than those of one's *polis*, such as the consultation of oracles, pilgrimages, and the dedication of votives at particular sanctuaries, already attested in the eighth century.'

[6] See §16.1, p.265.

[7] Cf. fuller survey in *STG* 9–30; Rutherford (2000c).

promoted themselves as places where the sick had a chance of being healed by divine intervention – sanctuaries of Asclepius are particularly important here. Finally, (x) extraterritorial sanctuaries might also be visited by displaced persons or fugitives from justice seeking protection with the status of suppliants.[8]

Taking all of these together, the total volume of extraterritorial religious activity must have been very great. Any one city must have had relations with a large number of remote sanctuaries, and, conversely, any city, by organising and announcing its own festivals, might become a magnet for visitors from elsewhere. The practice is attested throughout Greek history: city-states were sending delegations to sanctuaries from the sixth century BC, and probably considerably before then; it continues through the fourth century BC, and is reinvigorated in the Hellenistic period, when many new festivals were established in Asia Minor and elsewhere; and it survives into first three centuries of the Roman Empire, albeit somewhat reshaped.

Some of these activities arise from the belief that certain sanctuaries offered potential for contact with the divine not available at home. For example, the appeal of major oracles such as Delphi, Dodona or Ammon is rooted in a shared assumption that the gods were more accessible there. It seems to be something of a universal in human religious practice that certain places are given special sacred significance in this way.[9] In other cases, although the activity takes place under the sign of religion, the major factor driving it is political: common festivals provide a way for different cities, and their citizens, to liaise and interact, to negotiate their differences and communalities, to create or affirm alliances. A common festival can also serve as a platform for a city to present itself to the outside world. In the limiting case, the Panhellenic religious network probably played a significant role in the evolution of common-Greek identity.

The agents who participated in extraterritorial religious activity could be either individuals acting on their own behalf or city-states or other political

[8] For (i) see §4; for (ii) see §5; for (iii) see §6; for (iv) see §7; for (v) see Dillon (1997a:60–73); for (vi) see §13.4 on the *Pūthaïs*; for (vii) see §4.3.3; for (viii) see §4.4.3; for (ix) see Dillon (1997a:73–86); for (x), instances include Demosthenes' supplication at Kalauria (see Strab. 8.6.14; Naiden (2006:202–5 and 325)) and that of Perseus at Samothrace (Livy 45.5, 3–12; Plut. *Aem.*23.6; Naiden (2006:257)).

[9] See Rigsby (1996:6); Morinis (1984:282) says, *à propos* of pilgrimage in India: 'It is not difficult to formulate the explicit meaning of pilgrimage as expressed and held by participants. They believe that the divine is more accessible at certain locations on earth, that these sites are continually infused with divine energy, and that whatever interaction one desires with a deity is more likely to reach fruition when pursued according to proper ritual and behavioural formulae in the hallowed place where the deity lives'.

units who send sacred delegates to sanctuaries or other places to represent them. Most of the forms of activity I listed above could be carried out by either individuals or civic delegates, though two of them can only be carried out by individuals: being initiated into the Mysteries, or seeking divine intervention at a healing sanctuary. Even here there is a grey area, because one of the sanctuaries with the most celebrated Mystery cults, Samothrace, also hosted a festival to which cities sent *theōroi*, and it was possible, at least in the late Hellenistic period, for someone to be honoured jointly as a *theōros* and a *mustēs eusebēs* (a 'pious initiate'), which presumably implies that state-delegates underwent initiation.[10]

The most common term for a sacred delegate is *theōros*, literally 'spectator', and the associated term for a sacred delegation is a *theōriā*. Other related terms are *arkhitheōros* for the leader, *theōris* for a ship regularly used by *theōroi*, and the verb *theōreō*, which usually means 'observe' but has the specialised sense of 'act as a sacred delegate'. These are not the only words used for sacred delegates: alternatives are *theopropos*, *hieropoios*, *hieragōgos*, *sunthūtēs* or *presbeutēs*, and many texts just talk about 'those sent to the sanctuary', or some similar periphrasis. However, *theōros* and *theōriā* are the closest thing to a standard vocabulary, used particularly when the purpose of the delegates and delegations was attending a festival or consulting an oracle, but in the case of other religious missions such as making dedications or announcing festivals.

The theme of this book is all forms of extraterritorial religious activity in which a city-state or other political entity sends sacred delegates to act on its behalf. Its aims are to give an account of the types of mission *theōroi* were sent to perform, who they were and what they did, and the political and cultural implications of their activities. Its scope is the full chronological and geographical range where Greek cities practise Greek religion, from the Archaic Hellas through the broader horizons of the Hellenistic world down to the festival culture of Roman Anatolia.

1.2 Defining *theōriā*

My main focus will thus be *theōroi* and *theōriā*, defined in the sense of 'religious delegate' and 'religious delegation'. These words are widely attested in Greek texts, and in inscriptions they occur in a number of dialectal

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[10] Dimitrova:no.13ii–17; see §17.2.1. For Eleusis, the best evidence for *theōroi* is *IG*2² 992 from the Hellenistic period (pp.319–22); *theopropoi* to Roman Claros may also have undergone a form of initiation: see §6.4.

variations, of which forms in *theōr-* are Ionic and Attic.[11] The most reason-
able explanation for how *theōros* developed this specialised application is
that the festivals that were the primary destination of these delegates were
regarded as spectacles in which the default form of participation was by
watching. *Theōros* thus becomes the perfect term for the civic delegate who
'observes' on behalf his city, which is the true spectator. The word *theōriā*
itself seems to have sometimes meant 'spectacle' or 'festival', and it was also
probably an advantage to this semantic development that *theōros* was some-
times felt to be related to the Greek word for 'god' – *theos*.[12] Indeed, modern
linguists are still divided about whether *theōros* should be analysed as 'sight-
watcher' (*theā* + (e.g.) *wōros) or 'god-watcher' (*theos* + (e.g.) *wōros.[13]

   Theōros and its derivatives also have a number of other, related senses,
and it may be useful to distinguish these at the outset. To begin with, there
is the general sense of 'observer' (*theōros*), 'observe' (*theōreō*) and 'observa-
tion' (*theōriā*) – a set of meanings synonymous with *theātēs*, *theāomai*, and
theā. The evangelist Luke (23.48) uses *theōriā* and *theōreō* of miraculous
events surrounding the crucifixion of Christ and the crowd's reaction to it:

καὶ πάντες οἱ συμπαραγενόμενοι ὄχλοι ἐπὶ τὴν θεωρίαν ταύτην, θεωρήσαντες τὰ
γενόμενα, τύπτοντες τὰ στήθη ὑπέστρεφον.

And all the crowds who were present at this sight, watching what happened, beat
their breasts and returned.

Despite the highly charged context, there is no reason to interpret *theōriā* in
a religious sense here.

   Secondly, *theōriā* and *theōreō* can be used of spectacles and festivals
watched by private individuals, without any suggestion of the idea of

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[11] Other attested forms are: θιαωρία: Boeotian, θεαρός, θεαορός: Arcadian, θεαρός, θιαρός: Doric,
    θεουρός: Thessalian, θεορός, θευρός: Paros, Thasos. For dialectal forms, see Buck (1955:§41,
    p.38); Bader (1972:222–3).
[12] See passages cited in §9.1, p.145.
[13] Bader (1972:227) favours the etymology in θέα-, though thinks that a doublet from θεό- may
    also have existed. θέα has been thought to go back to an Indo-European root meaning 'think'
    or 'contemplate': dheyH₂, a root also seems to be responsible for σῆμα (from the vocalisation
    dhyeH₂-): see Nagy (1983); id. (1990:62); Sihler (1995:191), and notice the collocation of
    θεωρός and σημαίνω in Theognis 805–10 (see §6.1). Beekes (2010:1.545, 536) sees the first
    element as θέα ‹*thāwā), but for him this is 'preGreek' (p.536). An obvious problem with the
    etymology from θεός is to explain how it was generalised to mean 'watch': Becker (1940:63–4)
    argued that the intermediary was the idea of θεωρία as a festival or spectacle, Koller (1957–8)
    that the key idea was religious travel, and that an original accusative of space was reinterpreted
    as a direct object. The alternative etymology from θέα seems more appealing, except that this
    form of the noun presupposes quantitative metathesis, which occurs only in Attic, whereas all
    dialect forms of θεωρός share a short first vowel. (Has an originally Attic form been
    generalised, perhaps precisely because speakers of those dialects falsely assumed it was related
    to θεός? See Kretschmer (1892:289 n. 2), Buck (1951)).

representing political authority.[14] The translation 'attend' (a festival) often seems appropriate. The 'Theoric Fund' (*to theōrikon*), used in Athens to pay for attendance at festivals, presumably owes its name to this sense. Here too there is an overlap with *theāomai* and *theā*.

Thirdly, *theōros* and *theōriā* seem sometimes, particularly in later texts, to have the meaning 'sightseer', 'sightseeing', yet another sense it shared with *theātēs*. This runs parallel to the 'sacred delegate' sense in that sightseers may well be found in religious centres and sanctuaries, but sightseeing is always carried out by individuals for their own sake, not by delegates for the sake of their city.[15]

Fourthly, in a very limited number of cases – roughly the accounts by Herodotus and others of the journeys of the wise men Solon and Anacharsis – *theōreō*, *theōriā* seems to mean something like 'travel on a voyage of exploration'.[16]

Fifthly, *theōros* was the name for a type of magistrate, presumably understood as an 'overseer', attested particularly often in Arcadia, but at other places as well, including Thasos.[17]

Finally, another important sense of *theōriā* is 'philosophical contemplation', an activity explicitly contrasted with action or practical reasoning.[18] This sense, attested from the fourth century BC, is manifestly the ultimate origin of the word 'theory' in modern English.[19] There is no reason to think that this sense originates with the religious sense of the word, but ancient philosophers often make explicit or implicit references to the religious sense.

The activities of the sacred delegate-*theōroi* who are the primary subject of this book were in general distinct from the six categories just listed. Two differences are particularly important. First, delegate-*theōroi* act on behalf of the political authorities who appoint them, and that is not true for any of the other categories, with the exception of magistrate-*theōroi*. Second, although delegate-*theōroi* owe their name to their being thought of as official spectators at sanctuaries, our sources tend to emphasise other activities, depending on the purpose of the mission, including arranging animal sacrifice, taking part in processions, consulting oracles and transporting dedications.[20]

1.3　Cities, sanctuaries and networks

Theōroi qua theōroi, were always on the move, continually in transit between the cities that sent them and the sanctuaries or festival-organising

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[14] See §4.1.　　[15] See §9.2, pp.150–5.　　[16] See §9.2, pp.149–50.　　[17] See §8.　　[18] See §19.1.
[19] According to *OED* online: 'In mod. use probably < medieval Latin translation of Aristotle.'
[20] See §9.1.

cities that were their destinations. In a perfect world, research in this area would begin by mapping out their movements for a given geographical zone and time period. Questions to be asked would include: How many delegations did any particular city send, and to where? How many delegations did any particular sanctuary receive, and from where, and how do these numbers vary over time? Additionally, since it is unlikely that all contact between cities and sanctuaries was mediated by *theōroi*, it would be desirable to figure out what factors governed their involvement. Unfortunately, time travel would be needed for us to be able to access data of sufficient quality and quantity to support this sort of analysis. The evidence that survives is patchy, and allows us to do no more than discern rough patterns for a few sanctuaries in certain periods.[21]

In principle, a city could send a *theōros* to represent it at any sanctuary, with the condition (usually) that it was outside its territory.[22] The most common destinations for them were the great sanctuaries, which had acquired, by being visited so much, the informal status of being national or Panhellenic. The most important venues were the festivals at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea and the Isthmos, which were widely advertised through the proclamation of the truce.[23] It is likely that many Greek cities sent a delegation to every enactment of these, and most of them sent one to at least some of the enactments. On a less regular timetable, *theōroi* were also sent to the oracles at Delphi, Dodona and, from the fifth century, also to Ammon in Libya (see Map 1).

These sanctuaries draw *theōroi* from all over the Greek world, but *theōroi* may also be involved when the clientele is more limited geographically. Most of the *theōroi* who visited Delos in the Hellenistic period came from the south-east Aegean, and earlier on they may have come from Ionia. Again, the mystery cult of Samothrace had a Panhellenic reputation, but Hellenistic records reveal that cities that sent *theōroi* were confined (mostly) to the northern and eastern Aegean.[24] Furthermore, in some cases a festival network functioning through *theōroi* was used as a framework for a political organisation, and some Hellenistic 'leagues' seem to have operated in this way. Ptolemy Philadelphos encouraged cities under Egyptian influence in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean to send *theōroi* to the Ptolemaia

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[21] See further §17.   [22] See §4.3.4.

[23] These festivals, and the sanctuaries associated with them, are often called 'Panhellenic', but it seems to me better to reserve the latter term for cases where religious activity is an explicit expression of a common-Greek identity; in most 'national' festivals, the element of ritual that was truly 'Panhellenic' was at most quite small; see further §16.1–2. For the notion of Panhellenism, see most recently Mitchell (2007) and Scott (2010:256–73).

[24] Delos and Samothrace: §17.2.

Map 1. The principal destinations of *theōroi* in the Greek world

festival at Alexandria, and the model for this may well be Athenian use of the framework of a festival network to administer its empire two centuries before.[25]

On the face of it, the number of festivals to which *theōroi* might have been sent increases dramatically in Hellenistic period, not just because of the activities of kings and leagues, but also because many cities established new festivals as a way of bolstering their claim to be recognised as 'inviolable', a status much valued in this war-torn period. Our sources inform us

[25] Leagues and Empires: §15.2–3.

about the invitations sent to cities all over the Greek world to recognise such festivals and to send *theōroi* to them, but they tell us much less about how great the uptake really was, or how long it lasted.[26]

Geographers and historians of religion working on pilgrimage have traditionally used the term 'catchment area' (a term originally coined, it would seem, by geographers with reference to the collection of rainfall) for describing the reach of a given sanctuary.[27] More recently, the vogue has been to describe patterns of connection and the associated movements between places in terms of 'networks', making use of the related concepts of 'social network theory' and 'connectivity'. The former gives us a vocabulary of 'hubs' (i.e. the sanctuaries), 'nodes' (i.e. cities that send delegations), and 'links' between the two.[28] This development has coincided with an increased interest among ancient historians in 'connectivity' between communities, brought into focus by Horden and Purcell in *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), but going back to Fernand Braudel's work on the Mediterranean half a century earlier.[29] If 'connectivity' is the quality, 'networks' are the patterns of links between operators which facilitate it. The 'network' approach has a lot to recommend it, but it also has one major limitation, at least in its current form, namely that it is too abstract and schematic to capture the power-relations and hierarchies which often seem to exist between participants in religious networks, and which the ritual framework itself often seems designed to disguise.

1.4 History of the subject

As far as I know, this book is the first attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of *theōriā*. There have been shorter surveys before,[30] and 1997 saw the appearance of a substantial and insightful survey of 'pilgrimage' in the Greco-Roman world by Matthew Dillon which deals with *theōriā* among other varieties.[31] One factor holding up the appearance of a synthesis is that so many of the primary sources are inscriptions from different periods

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[26] The evidence for these new festivals is set out conveniently in Parker (2004b).

[27] An excellent example of this methodology is Bhardwaj (1973), who studies contemporary pilgrimage in India. For the first use of 'catchment area', OED online gives the year 1885.

[28] Barabasi (2003); Strogatz (2003); Watts (2003). I sketched out how this might work in Rutherford (2007c).

[29] Horden and Purcell (2000); Braudel (1949).

[30] For example Ziehen (1934b); (Ziehen 1934c); Bill (1901); Wachsmuth (1975); Siebert (1973). I have not seen Meier (1837).

[31] Mention should also be made of the useful volume by Kötting (1950).

and regions. Some of these had been published already a century ago, and early attempts to deal with groups of them are Paul Boesch's path-breaking survey of *theōroi*-announcers (1908, facilitated by Otto Kern's edition of the inscriptions of Magnesia on the Maeander in 1900) and Axel Boethius' monograph on the Athenian *Pūthaïs* (1918), both of them still indispensable today. Another attempt to synthesise the Delphic material of the late Hellenistic period was Georges Daux's monograph of 1936. However, much of the epigraphy was not published until the mid-twentieth century, and some important documents have become known only in the last few decades. Some of the pioneering contributions of the twentieth century are in fact shorter pieces by epigraphers grappling with the new texts: several articles by Louis Robert, for example on the *theōroi* of Pergamum (1927), on the women *theōroi* of Roman Ephesos (1974), and, with Jeanne Robert, on documents from Hellenistic and Roman Claros (1989); several also by Georges Daux, e.g. his *editio princeps* of the convention between Delphi and Andros regulating the sending of an Andrian *theōriā* (1949a).

In recent decades, definitive studies of dossiers of text-corpora have begun to appear. For example, for Delos we have Philippe Bruneau's study of the Hellenistic period (1970), and now Véronique Chankowski's for the Classical period (2008). For Delphi, we have Georges Rougement's commentary of the earlier sacred laws from Delphi (*CID*1, 1977b), Georges Nachtergael's study of the Delphic Soteria (also from 1977), and Jacques Oulhen's unfortunately still unpublished thesis (1992) on the List of *Theārodokoi*, and the complex history of the Delphic Amphiktiony is now understood much better thanks to new editions of the inscriptions and other studies.[32] For Olympia, the difficult early documents, some of them relatively new discoveries, have been elucidated by Sophie Minon's recent study (2007). Susan Cole (1984) and now Nora Dimitrova (2008) have examined the records of *theōroi* from Samothrace. New studies of the material from Claros have recently appeared (Busine (2005); Ferrary (2005)), which supplement the earlier work of the Roberts (1989), although a detailed overview is still a desideratum. The new edition of Greek inscriptions of Kos (2010) has made available in a single volume one of the largest dossiers bearing on Hellenistic *theōriā*. Relevant topics that have received recent treatments are decrees relating to the proclamation of *asūliā* (inviolability) which often involved *theōroi*, brought together as a corpus by Kent

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[32] Roux (1979); F. Lefèvre (1998); Sànchez (2001).