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# GREEK RELIGION

*Second Edition*

BY  
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In Memory Of  
MARIUS DANIËL BREMMER  
(1933–1992)

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## 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.

Jan N. Bremmer  
Groningen, June 1994

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In 1995, Richard Hamilton concluded an appreciative review of the first edition (1994) with the words; ‘Let us hope B(remmer) is willing to give us an update in a decade’ (*BMCR* 1995.06.02). Alas, time went too fast to fulfil this wish, as the reprint (1999) only contained a few pages with addenda, but it gives me much pleasure that I am able to release a second edition after a quarter of a century. I had been updating the notes to some extent in the German (1996), Italian (2002), Dutch (2004), Spanish (2006), and French (2012) translations, but for the second edition I have wholly revised the notes and adapted the main text to take stock of new insights regarding the problems treated in the first edition, and also to add reflections on recent developments in the field, such as the discussions about the notion of belief, the nature and authority of *polis* religion, and the importance of mythology.

The first edition profited from the input of many colleagues. It is therefore sad to see that quite a few important scholars of Greek religion have passed away in the intervening years.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, we now have several collections of their articles at our disposal, which will make research into the study of Greek religion much easier than it used to be.<sup>2</sup> It also means, however, that we are in a kind of transitional stage in which interests have been shifting away from myth and ritual to cognitive approaches and to hitherto somewhat neglected aspects, such as magic, theology, local religion, or the place of animals in Greek religion.

I have been very fortunate that I could discuss the whole of the present edition with my friends Bob Fowler and Julia Kindt, who alerted me to oversights, obscure formulations, and new topics, while several individual chapters were commented upon by Anja Klöckner, Norbert Oettinger, and Katja Sporn. I am most grateful for the care and attention they have all given to my text, as well as to Phil Horky and John Taylor for soliciting the new edition and the latter also for reading my final draft so carefully. Finally, Hester Higton’s meticulous

<sup>1</sup> I remember with gratitude Walter Burkert (1931–2015), Marcel Detienne (1935–2019), Albert Henrichs (1942–2017), Michael Jameson (1924–2004), Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (1945–2007), Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1930–2006), and Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914–2007).

<sup>2</sup> See Vernant 2007; Burkert 2001–11; Jameson 2014; Henrichs 2019.

copy-editing greatly improved my text. I do not expect to complete a third edition, but I do hope that the present book will long remain a reliable guide to the fascinating world of Greek religion and mythology.

Jan N. Bremmer  
Groningen, November 2020



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APM	Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam
BNJ	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> (Leiden: Brill, 2007–)
CGRN	Carbon, J.-M., S. Peels, and V. Pirenne-Delforge (eds.), <i>A Collection of Greek Ritual Norms</i> (Liège, 2015–), <a href="http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/">http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/</a>
<i>Der neue Pauly</i>	<i>Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1996–2003)
FGrH	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin and Leiden: Brill, 1923–58)
IC	<i>Inscriptiones Creticae</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (Zurich and Düsseldorf: Artemis, 1981–2009)
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart: Hiersemann Verlag, 1950–)
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>

For texts and fragments I have used the most recent standard editions. Translations are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

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All APM photographs are from Allard Pierson, University of Amsterdam, Open Access. I am most grateful to Geralda Jurriaans-Helle for her help in procuring the photos at the time of the COVID-19 lockdown.

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