GREEK CULTS

R. HÄGG (ed.): *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Archaeological Evidence. Proceedings of the Fourth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens, 22–24 October 1993.* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska institutet I Athen 8°, 15.) Pp. 249, figs. Jonsered: Paul Aströms Förlag, 1998. Paper. ISBN: 91-7916-036-0.

R. HÄGG (ed.): *Ancient Greek Hero Cult. Proceedings of the Fifth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Department of Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, Göteborg University, 21–23 April 1995.* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska institutet i Athen 8°, 16.) Pp. 207, figs. Stockholm: Paul Aströms Förlag, 1999. Paper. ISBN: 91-7916-037-9.

There is a long and distinguished history of Scandinavian interest in Greek religion. Since Martin Nilsson Swedish scholars have shown a particular interest in the origins of Greek cult practice, and so have long experience in combining literary and archaeological evidence. This tradition is well represented by the two volumes of collected papers reviewed here. Both of these are the proceedings of small symposia held at the Swedish Institute in Athens. Where is this tradition of investigation taking us?

Well, at the very least, scholarly standards are being maintained. None of the contributors can be faulted for inaccurate or inadequate referencing, and many of the articles are very well illustrated indeed. That said, the contributions are a very mixed bag. Many of the articles (by Marangon, Bammer, Morgan, Huber, and Themelis) in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice* are essentially summary site reports, the evidence from which is often sharply at variance with what one might expect. Who would have thought that votive deposits at Messene (Themelis) would date back to the seventh century B.C.? Or that votive behaviour in seventh-century Eretria (Huber) involved the manufacture and destruction of a particular kind of ritual vessel, unique to the site? Some of these brief reports (Morgan on Isthmia, Bammer on Ephesos) reiterate points made at greater length elsewhere. Other contributions (Binder on Eleusis, Bookidis on curses, and Gebhard on Isthmia) are devoted to clarifying points of detail from single sites.

Only a minority of contributions is thematic. Of these, Bergquist builds on her earlier work on dining at sanctuaries by taking a closer look at the Herakleion on Thasos; Kron's contribution on sickles is as thorough and intelligent a study as one could wish for on this subject. Ekroth's study of altars places much greater weight on the archaeology than on the documentary evidence. No longer can a scholar treat the archaeological evidence as a source of convenient illustrative props for models derived entirely from late and fragmentary literary sources. This is a point also emphasized (albeit obliquely) by both Alroth (looking at changes in votive practice in the transition from classical to Hellenistic) and Hägg (who looks at osteology and sacrifice). Both these contributors make use of quantitative analysis, neither in a fully satisfactory manner. Alroth cannot decide whether the changes she sees are in any sense significant, and Hägg's statistics take the form of percentages, without giving any real indication of sample size.

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https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/51.1.73 Published online by Cambridge University Press

If there is a picture to be derived from *Cult Practice* it is one of great variation over both space and time. Close empirical analyses of archaeological data tend to undermine the grand generalizations of an earlier generation of scholars. Much the same could be said of the volume on Hero Cult, though here the contributors have not had to adhere to an ordinance forbidding them to make extensive use of literary evidence. Consequently, the contributors to this volume are more closely focused on broader historical questions. Only two (Gebbard and Dickie's on Isthmia, and Reithmüller on the Asklepeion at Athens) restrict themselves to a single site. The other papers are of varying quality. McCauley, on bone transferral, summarizes what others have said before. Antonaccio's interesting argument on colonization and hero cult depends in part on our accepting as fact her hypothesis that Greek tomb cults were cults to ancestors. Mazarakis Ainian provides a good overview of what might and might not have counted as 'hero cult' in Early Iron Age Greece. Kron and Shapiro rely principally on iconography to make good general points about 'patriotic heroes' and the Dioskouroi respectively.

The most interesting articles are those by Auffarth and Hall. Auffarth (demonstrating that American intellectual fashions have now reached Germany) puts forward the kind of argument one might have expected from Carol Dougherty, trying to explain why it was the marginal (both female and foreign) figures of the Danaides who were adopted as the hero ancestors of Argos. In a parallel argument (one that picks up many of the points that Shapiro made about the Dioskouroi) Hall attempts to explain why it is that heroes often assume a greater importance outside the locality to which myth would naturally attach them. It is not Agamemnon, but Perseus who was the principal hero of Mycenae. The volume is rounded off by Hughes's contribution on the significance of heroes and hero cult in Hellenistic and Roman times.

If the Hero Cult volume is the more coherent and interesting of the two, it still suffers from a certain lack of focus. There is little sense of the broader debates which might have lent direction to either volume. Both volumes have rendered an invaluable service in reminding us just how variable the patterns are, and how intractable the evidence is. They have shown us what can be done with a combination of philological scrupulousness and attention to archaeological detail. Most contributors, however, tend to shy away from general inferenecs about Greek society and religion. This is not, I think, because of a general 'incredulity concerning meta-narratives'. Rather, a general reliance on empirical investigation and inductive reasoning inevitably engenders an over-cautious attitude. The situation is not helped by the narrow circle from which the contributors to these volumes have come. To open up the subject, more explicit theorizing and more outsiders are both urgently needed.

University of Wales Cardiff J. WHITLEY

RELIGION IN ROMAN EGYPT

D. FRANKFURTER: *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance*. Pp. xvi + 314, 23 pls, 1 map. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. Cased, £32.50. ISBN: 0-691-02685-8.

For those who teach on Roman Egypt and have been frustrated by the lack of a good study of Egyptian religion with specific reference to the Roman period to which monoglot students can be referred, the title of this volume will raise expectations

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