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The Derveni Papyrus (*PDerveni*) and the Bacchic-Orphic *Epistomia*

Abstract: The paper focuses on the Derveni papyrus and the small corpus of the Bacchic-Orphic gold incised *epistomia*, both ‘written’ objects associated with burial practices. It examines issues of chronology and topography these written objects raise, as well as the texts themselves and their contexts with emphasis on the areas where the two sets of written objects meet and where they part their ways.

Keywords: Derveni papyrus, Bacchic-Orphic gold tablets/lamellae/*epistomia*, Homeric poetry, Homeric Hymns, Hesiod, Orphic poetry, Presocratics, Plato, burial practice.

The entire corpus of the *epistomia*¹ and the *PDerveni* betray certain similarities—to state the most obvious ones: both are associated, one way or another, with Orpheus; both are discovered in a burial context; the *PDerveni*-author comments upon ritual activities of the kind we suspect lie behind the *epistomia*; and both are rare specimens of what we may call—for lack of a better word—‘religious literature’, although such a genre never existed in antiquity until very late, for which Albert Henrichs (2003a, 2003b, 2004) presented decisive definitions and distinctions. These similarities apparently, if not inevitably, invite comparison, which has led research into two directions of inquiry: on the one hand, the

I first heard about the *PDerveni* back in 1981-82 when as an undergraduate student I attended at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki a seminar by Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou and Georgios Parássoglou, who presented to a group of stunned undergraduate students their readings and interpretations of the oldest book of Europe and the problems thereof. A few years later, as a graduate student at the Ohio State University, I attended another seminar on Greek Religion by Sarah Iles Johnston, who introduced to another group of stunned graduate students ‘unusual and out of the ordinary’ texts, among them the Derveni papyrus and the so-called ‘Orphic’ texts on golden tablets. Still a few years later, this time as lecturer in the University of Crete, I visited the Rethymno Archaeological Museum and came upon two unpublished gold *epistomia*, discovered in rescue excavations of a cemetery at Sfakaki, conducted by the 25th Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and the archaeologists Irene Gavrilaki, Stella Kalogeraki, and Niki Tsatsaki: one of them was incised with only two words, and the other with a longer text that demanded a re-edition and reconsideration of all the previously published *epistomia* from Crete (and elsewhere), because the new long text deviated from all previously known (for these see Tzifopoulos 2009); to them all I am most grateful, and also to Greg Nagy, Antonios Rengakos, Francesca Schironi and Albert Henrichs for their invitation to participate in the Symposium on the Derveni Papyrus and its 2006 edition, held at the Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington, D.C., July 7-9, 2008. For their incisive comments and criticisms I am indebted to Stavros Frangoulidis, Theokritos Kouremenos, and the audience at CHS.

¹ The word *epistomion/-a*, not in LSJ, does not appear to have been an ancient one; usually the words tablet, lamella, or leaf are employed to describe the gold incised objects discovered in graves. The word *epistomion*, however, has become a technical term among Greek archaeologists who have no problem identifying an object as such and using this term, when during an excavation of a grave they come upon a very small, gold, paper-thin, band on the mouth or near the cranium of the deceased, an object employed for covering the mouth. Not all *epistomia* are incised, and the text of those incised may be just one word, or a text of sixteen lines. Shapes of these vary, although they tend to approximate the shape and the size of the mouth. In addition to covering the mouth, sometimes the *epistomia* are placed on the chest or in the hand, and other times are folded and are placed inside the mouth, together with or instead of a burial-coin (for the entire corpus of *epistomia* see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2007, Graf and Johnston 2007, and Tzifopoulos 2009).

epistomia and the *PDerveni* are discussed as parallel examples of the same procedure and the same purpose with differences only in detail; and on the other hand, the *epistomia* and the *PDerveni* are not to be associated a priori because evidence is lacking and at any rate the present evidence does not permit such a relation or correlation even as a working-assumption.² The *PDerveni*, an allegorical commentary of sorts of a theo-/cosmogony poem in dactylic hexameters by Orpheus, and the small corpus of the Bacchic-Orphic gold incised *epistomia* from Italy, Crete, the NW Peloponnese, Thessaly, and Macedonia present analogous problems and betray both similarities and differences in terms of their date, findspot, nature, content and genre (literary or otherwise), and their interrelation, if any. In what follows, first the chronological and archaeological contexts are revisited, and then the texts themselves and their contexts are examined with emphasis on the areas where the two sets of written objects meet and where they part their ways.

The chronological and archaeological issues of the *PDerveni* have been of primary importance because of their implications, since Stylianos Kapsomenos' (1964) report at the meeting of the American Society of Papyrologists held in August 24, 1964 in Philadelphia and the discussion that followed in that meeting (that discussion is reprinted here in an Appendix as a point of departure for the present line of inquiry). In their *Greek Hymns*, Furley and Bremer have indicated that in dating the inscribed hymn from Palaikastro, Crete three separate chronological issues must be distinguished: the date of the inscription itself, the date of the composition of the hymn, and the date of the cult behind the hymn.³ These three different aspects should be distinguished for dating all of the incised *epistomia*—in fact, for dating all inscribed objects, particularly those we call 'literary'. In particular, the fact that the entire corpus of *epistomia* may be dated somewhere between the fourth century BCE and the second century CE does not necessarily bespeak the date of these texts' composition, or the date of the ritual behind the texts, which undoubtedly antedates the placement of the *epistomia* inside the graves. How far back one should go in assigning a date to the text's composition, or to the ritual's appearance (whether it be the fourth, the fifth, or perhaps even the sixth century BCE) it cannot be determined.

² For the former see e.g.: Most 1997, Betegh 2004, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2007, Bernabé forthcoming; for the latter: Janko 1997 and 2001, Kouremenos in KPT 2006, Burkert (forthcoming), all with previous bibliography. The articles in Laks and Most 1997 are the starting point for research on *PDerveni*; and Tsantsanoglou forthcoming outlines some areas for future study on *PDerveni*.

³ Furley and Bremer 2001, vol. 1: 69-70, vol. 2: 3-4.

These considerations are also relevant to the date of the *PDerveni*. Its chronology depends primarily but not exclusively on the archaeological context which points to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the third century BCE as the *terminus ante*. But this chronology is of course relative; it simply points to the date when the papyrus was placed on the pyre of the deceased of Derveni Tomb A. It is certainly not the date when the papyrus was written; unless someone is prepared to argue that it is an *entaphion*-object, produced solely for the deceased's pyre and subsequent internment, like the famous bronze Derveni-krater from Tomb B with the Dionysiac scenes. Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou (KPT, 8-9) on reviewing and comparing the script of the *PDerveni* and that of the earliest surviving papyri and of *dipinti* proposes a date between 340-320 BCE for the writing of the text. But again this is the date when the *PDerveni* was produced somewhere (Athens? Macedonia?) by a scribe who copied another papyrus, unless again someone is prepared to argue that the *PDerveni* is the original work (I will leave aside arguments about the professional-, amateur-, or epigraphical-like script). The third and most important date is the date of the composition of the text which in turn will serve as another *terminus ante* for the rituals and ideas expressed and commented upon in the text of the papyrus. This date too cannot be determined, except to suppose as a *terminus ante* the first half of the fourth century BCE and as a *terminus post* the sixth century BCE.⁴ One thing, however, is certainly undeniable, as the text itself proves: the composition of the work required first that the poem by Orpheus was circulating widely (how widely is arguable); second, that a version of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, of Heraclitus' work, and of the work of others were also public knowledge, whatever that may mean; and third, that the ritual practices commented upon in the first columns had already become something of a fashion, so as to warrant the author's corrective remarks.

The next and more complicated issue is the topographical, namely the findspot of the papyrus and its provenance. Outside Egypt and the Palestine, three papyri in all have been discovered in graves, but the *PDerveni* is the only one that has survived its discovery, and for that we will always be indebted to Petros Themelis' discerning eye and to the extraordinary skills of Anton Fackelmann.⁵ The problematics of the findspot

⁴ According to Burkert (forthcoming) the poem by Orpheus is a sixth century text and the commentary is a work composed around 400 BCE.

⁵ The other two papyri were not carbonized, a process which, as it seems, protected and saved the *PDerveni*: one was discovered in a fourth century BCE grave in Callatis (modern Constanza, Romania), at the same time of the *PDerveni* discovery, but, as soon as it came in contact with air, it disintegrated (one is

were already heard in 1964, namely whether or not the content of the text should accommodate the findspot and vice versa—to paraphrase Bradford Welles’ comment (Appendix): it is one thing to ask to be buried or cremated with your valuable possession of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but it is another thing to ask for Aristarchus’ commentary of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* to be placed inside the grave or on the pyre. A second and related issue that was also raised was whether or not this find was intrinsic in Macedonia, and at a time when, according to Welles: “they had no time for Orphism, commentated or pure,” to which Ronald Syme pondered: “one of the things we don’t know enough about is precisely the habitual culture of the landowners on the fringes of society.” When Frank Walbank was asked about the history of Macedonia at this period, he posed the provocative question: “Is it possible that this scroll was merely used as inflammable material? I know Martial refers to using papyrus on funeral pyres. Would that always be blank papyrus, or might it just be some scroll that the heirs of the person were not particularly interested in preserving?” (Appendix).

Not much has changed since 1964, and on present evidence both lines of argument are valid, depending on our readiness to accept their pros and cons. Richard Janko has revived Walbank’s brief remark as a caveat that we should always keep in mind, although Janko himself does not dismiss completely the other extreme position, i.e. that the papyrus may have been a precious possession and like all other possessions followed the deceased to the pyre and the grave.⁶ The question that begs for an answer is of course what kind of value.

reminded of the white sheet, covering the remains of the deceased inside the Timpone Grande in Thourioi, Italy, which disintegrated when touched by the excavators, a grave that also contained the gold incised tablet A4); and the other papyrus was discovered a few decades later together with writing-implements in a fourth century BCE grave in Daphne, a suburb of Athens, but again it disintegrated immediately into dust.

⁶ Janko 1997, 62 (repeated in less detail in Janko 2001, 1 n1): “Let us first dismiss from our minds the fact that the papyrus was preserved by being burned on a funeral pyre. This does not necessarily prove anything about its content; its combustion could have been accidental, in that it might have been used as waste paper to help ignite the blaze, much as we use discarded newspapers. That it was burned as a roll rather than torn up might speak against this; it may after all have been a precious possession of the person with whom it was burned. Valued books could be inhumed with their owners, as perhaps in the case of the roll of Bacchylides and certainly those of Hyperides in the British Museum, the volume of Timotheus known to have been found in its owner’s wooden sarcophagus at Abusir, or the roll discovered in the hand of the deceased (where it at once disintegrated) in a grave of the 4th century B.C. at Callatis near Constanza in Rumania; the same would presumably apply to cremations. But this book might have been valued for various reasons, speculation about which ought to follow, rather than precede, any identification of the author.” At present, however, neither the sizeable number of scenes on vases where pyres are depicted nor any Greek text dated before the Roman period provides any evidence whatsoever that papyri, rolled-up or discarded, were used for kindling the funeral pyre; instead, in a number of instances we have scenes on vases of people reading and teaching from a papyrus scroll (see e.g. figs. 5 and 6).

True, “archaeological facts rarely ‘speak’ as clearly as do texts,” as Janko (1997, 62) rightly emphasized, but the corpus of the Bacchic-Orphic incised *epistomia* presents a rare case of a comparandum to the *PDerveni*, albeit only to complicate things even further. The *epistomia* that have been unearthed during systematic excavations have been found either on or inside the mouth, on the chest, or in the hand of the deceased where they were placed during the inhumation-process; or, if the deceased was cremated, inside an urn where they were placed together with the deceased’s remains after the latter were gathered from the pyre. The *epistomia* that have survived were never placed on the pyre to be burnt with the deceased, and the reason, we all suspect, is obvious: what was written on them was intended for the deceased and his Underworld journey and so the incised object should not have suffered any damage from the fire. It remains to be seen whether or not *epistomia* were also made of perishable material which could not have survived the intervening years. If this were true, however, it would explain, for example, the complete absence of *epistomia* from Attica, where deceased with the same ideas on afterlife certainly lived and died, otherwise Plato’s castigation (see n28) would have been strange, to say the least.

As things stand, however, the *PDerveni* was not valued in the same way the gold incised *epistomia* were. If the deceased-*mystes* needed the golden texts with him/her in the grave and in the Underworld, the deceased buried in Tomb A, or at least his family members who prepared the tomb, were quite clear: the papyrus ought to have been burnt on the pyre, and ought not to have reached us. If the papyrus and its text had a function analogous to the one of the *epistomia*, as Betegh (2004, 56-68 and passim) argued trying to accommodate ritual and content,⁷ then one would expect the papyrus to have been placed inside the bronze krater with the deceased’s remains from the pyre, or inside the grave itself which was full to the rim. The papyrus, however, was discovered on the slabs covering the grave (fig. 1), together with the remains of spearheads and spikes, a pair of greaves, a shield or breastplate, and all the rest with which the deceased was dressed up on the bier which was placed on the pyre. After the grave was prepared with all the *entaphia*-objects (fig. 2) and the deceased’s remains were laid inside the krater (fig. 3), the grave was shut, and whatever remained of the pyre was

⁷ See also Bernabé forthcoming; Graf forthcoming. Most (1997, 117 and 134-135) and Tsantsanoglou (KPT, 2-4) suggest that the deceased may have been (a soldier) from Thessaly.

strewn above the grave (fig. 1).⁸ Did they not see that the papyrus was not burnt, or did they not care? Was the papyrus not as valuable as all these objects inside the grave, which the deceased probably needed to take with him? The deceased obviously needed a second pair of greaves (figs. 3 and 4) which was placed inside the grave, because the one he was wearing on the bier melted down on the pyre and became useless. But what was the need of the second pair? Are we to suppose that he was going to need the greaves anyway in the Underworld, but not the papyrus, or perhaps that no male in the family thought he could use the deceased's second pair of greaves? The deceased buried with the *epistomia* needed the texts with them inside the grave, on or inside the mouth, on the chest, in their hands. The deceased of Tomb A did not have such a need; or rather, such a need, if there were one, is not attested in the archaeological record, because the evidence did not survive. Consequently, the scenarios pro and con for associating the text on the papyrus and the funerary ritual for the deceased are far from being conclusive.

Even so, Derveni, the modern site of the ancient city Lete, is not the first place that comes to mind in relation to papyri (nor is Constanza or the suburb of Athens Daphne for that matter), and in 1964 Ronald Syme wondered about “the habitual culture of the landowners on the fringes of society” (Appendix). Differently formulated this statement has also been advocated for the deceased *mystai* carrying an *epistomion* in their grave. Because the *epistomia* originate in the ‘periphery or the fringes’ of the Greek world—Italy, Crete, the NW Peloponnese, Thessaly, Macedonia—the deceased and the texts have been understood as a ‘countercultural’ group with a ‘countercultural’ or ‘peripheral’ ideology on afterlife in comparison to the cultural and mainstream ideology of the polis.⁹ In order to discuss the fringes of society, however, one must also define the center, and that center, more often than not, is Athens and its literary production, and to a lesser degree Sparta. Macedonia presents a fitting example: could the late-fourth-and-third-centuries BCE Athens still be called a center in the same way it could be in the late sixth, the fifth, and the early fourth centuries BCE? Moreover, in studying burial practices there are hardly dominant and peripheral ideologies and practices, as the decision of the entire funeral process rested with each individual and his/her family;

⁸ Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997, 28–30.

⁹ Detienne 1975 and 2003, 155–157; Edmonds 2004, 41–43 and 108–109; Tzifopoulos forthcoming.

patterns of similar behavior are evident, but there is always some small detail that upsets the neat and expected pattern. At present, the habitual culture in Macedonia as relates to burial practice in the fourth and third centuries BCE comprises, in addition to the Derveni Tomb A with the papyrus, the following (I choose only the most spectacular deviations of what would have been a consistent pattern):¹⁰ the Derveni krater from Tomb B with its Dionysiac scenes;¹¹ twelve Bacchic-Orphic *epistomia*;¹² the outstanding paintings in the *Judgment Tomb* at Leukadia,¹³ and at the *Tomb of Persephone* at Vergina;¹⁴ remarkable gold foil-masks covering the faces (and sometimes the chest, arms, and legs) of male and female deceased in graves at Archontiko near Pella, Sindos, and Thessaloniki;¹⁵ and finally, from a cist-tomb at Agios Athanassios, the remarkable silver-plated cypress-*larnax* (fig. 5) inside which the pregnant mother's bones wrapped in purple gold were laid, as well as ivory fragments from the bier's decoration (a bier which, at least in one of its zones, was of a Dionysiac character), and on one of the walls a painting portraying a wooden box with two scrolls of papyri on top (fig. 6), an archaeological context which makes the excavator Maria Tsimbidou-Avloniti wonder if this may allude to the woman's musical activity.¹⁶ Should this scene be somehow related with the *PDerveni*? Is this how we should also imagine the deceased in Tomb A? Could the scene represent a *cista* containing 'sacred' texts? I could go on and on with scenarios, but I hope it is clear what I am getting at.

All these examples and more—the *PDerveni* and the *epistomia* included—point not to one common, across-the-board, pattern of burial practice and ideology on the fringes of, or peripheral to, society and polis-ideology, but, as Christiane Sourvinou-

¹⁰ On cults and rites of passage in Macedonia see Hatzopoulos 1994, 2002, and 2006. Rizakis and Touratsoglou (2000) discuss only monuments above the grave; for altars as grave markers see also Adam-Veleni 2002, 161-197 and 219-256; for the architecture of tombs in Macedonia see Miller 1982.

¹¹ Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997, 60-92; and Barr-Sharrar 2008.

¹² For the *epistomia* see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2007; Graf and Johnston 2007; and Tzifopoulos 2009.

¹³ Petsas 1966; Miller 1992; Rhomiopoulou 1997; Brécoulaki 2006; and Kottaridou 2006.

¹⁴ Andronikos 1994, especially 129-134 for a comparison of wall paintings in Macedonian tombs; Brécoulaki 2006; and Kottaridou 2006.

¹⁵ Chrysostomou and Chrysostomou 2001 and 2002.

¹⁶ Tsimbidou-Avloniti (2000, 553); I am indebted to Maria Tsimbidou-Avloniti for the photographs from this tomb and to Lillian Acheilara, in charge of the 16th Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, for permission to publish them. For another painted tomb in this area see Tsimbidou-Avloniti 2006. Katerina Tzanavari, in charge of the Derveni area and the study of the Derveni tombs, informs me that in one of them there are also intriguing scenes depicting papyri.

Inwood (1995, *passim*) has argued, to an individuation, a more personal and differentiated attitude of individuals towards death, even if in details, which may be independent one from another or interrelated.

Finally, turning to the text of the *PDerveni* and how it compares with the texts on the Bacchic–Orphic gold *epistomia*, a few crucial points of contact and departure on the two sets of texts are in order. Both the deceased in Derveni Tomb A and those carrying with them to the grave incised *epistomia* took the risk of their graves being looted, a very common hobby since antiquity, and the texts, if they were meant to be ‘secret’, being publicized. The conditions of the discovery of both sets of texts indicate that they were not meant to be discovered by us, and we may safely assume that we were not the texts’ intended audience: in the case of the *epistomia*, the texts contain instructions for the Underworld journey, and the intended audience is the guards of the Underworld spring or lake, the Underworld gods, and the initiate (or, at the most, during the ritual initiation and enactment, the *telestai* and the group of *mystai* present). In the case of the *PDerveni*,¹⁷ it is rather far-fetched to argue that the *PDerveni*-author composed the commentary-like treatise in order to become an *hieros logos* and an *entaphion*, accompanying to the grave the individual who had similar or identical ideas. Because of the fragmentary preservation of the text, we simply do not know, except for the fact that the papyrus ought to have been burnt together with his owner and his *cosmos*.

In referring to the poetry by Orpheus he is quoting and sets about to write an interpretive commentary, the *PDerveni*-author defines it in column VII as enigmatic (*ainigmata*): Orpheus composes his poetry in allegories, because this is the only way he can speak covertly about a *hieros logos* (in lines 7 and perhaps also 2) and present it to the public, i.e. in performance; this secret(?) *logos* is not to be spoken or heard of openly, but then the author proceeds to uncover and explain this ‘secret’ *logos* in this treatise. This is not the expected, narrow definition of *hierologeîn* (Henrichs 2000, 233 with n86),¹⁸ and in the *PDerveni*-author mind other texts are also closely related to Orpheus’ poem, to

¹⁷ On some literary aspects of the *PDerveni* ὑπόμνημα/commentary see Hunter (forthcoming), Obbink (forthcoming), Calame (forthcoming), Schironi (forthcoming), and Sistikou (forthcoming).

¹⁸ During the discussion at the CHS Conference, Albert Henrichs raised doubts about the supplement ἱερ[ολογῆ]ται in *PDerveni* column VII line 7 (and possibly in column VII line 2) and Dirk Obbink upon consultation found no trace of -ῆ- in the photograph of column VII. Rusten (forthcoming) proposes a more neutral supplement, e.g.: μεγάλα ἱερ[ά· ἡνικτ]αι; see also KPT, 74–75, 171–173; and Janko 2008, 39.

which he refers in order to strengthen his interpretation: the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Heraclitus, oracles, and other ‘epic’ poetry (column IV lines 5–7, column XXII line 12, and column XXVI lines 4 and 6–7). That Orpheus was a kind of ‘theologian’, as was the Cretan Epimenides and a number of other notables of the archaic period,¹⁹ is not new; the fact that Homer, Heraclitus, and who knows who else, as the papyrus is fragmentary, were also considered as some kind of ‘theologians’ is something new for so early a period.²⁰ It bespeaks an additional level of understanding not of all poetry, but specifically of the poetry touching upon matters divine. This understanding is achieved not while the poetry and presumably the rituals are performed in public, but in *exegesis*, i.e. according to Harvey Yunis,²¹ poetic interpretation through critical reading, similar to the one advocated by the rhapsode Ion in Plato, an *exegesis* which may or may not have been publicly performed.

Of the poem by Orpheus in question survive approximately 24 lines in dactylic hexameters, a poem whose formulaic language, as it compares to that of Homer and Hesiod, remains a desideratum. Apart from verbal echoes between the texts on the *epistomia* and the *PDerveni*, which in and of themselves may or may not be significant, there is one line which presents a striking parallel (column XIII line 4): αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος. The verb ἔκθορε in the Orphic poem does not present an *enigma* for the author in this place. Later, however, in column XXI, forms of the verb θόρνυμι occur, which may, arguably but not certainly, be related with the verb θρόσκω. Interestingly, the infinitive of this verb θόρνυσθαι follows ἀφροδισιάζειν in XXI lines 5–6 (Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία καὶ Ζεὺς καὶ ἀφροδισιάζειν καὶ θόρνυσθαι), upon which follows the commentary on ἀφροδισιάζειν, and after that we may suppose followed the commentary on θόρνυσθαι; for in the next column XXII the author comments on the many names of the female procreator.

¹⁹ Tsantsanoglou 1997, 121–122; Most 1997; Betegh 2004, 362–364; KPT, 75, 172–173; Biel forthcoming. Albeit a late source, Suda characterizes a number of Epimenides’ works as ‘riddling’, for which see Tzifopoulos 2009 with previous bibliography.

²⁰ On the surprising accommodation of theology to philosophy and vice versa see Laks 1997. For the reference to Heraclitus’ poetry by the *PDerveni*-author and the interaction between the philosopher and ‘Orphism’ see Sider 1997 and forthcoming; for Heraclitus and the mysteries see also Schefer 2000 and Drozdek 2001. Granger (2000) convincingly argues that the foolish and ignorant are portrayed by Heraclitus as living a life like the Homeric dead souls. On the complex issue of Orphism and the Presocratics see Burkert 1968 and 1997, Finkelberg 1986, the essays in Laks and Most 1997, and Bernabé 2002.

²¹ Yunis 2003, 195–198; and also Edwards 1991; Henry 1986.

Be that as it may, the choice of the verb *θρώσκω* is remarkable, all the more so because in Hesiod's *Theogony* where procreation is bursting profusely, this verb occurs only once (281): from Medusa's head *ἐξέθορε Χρυσάωρ τε μέγας καὶ Πήγασος ἵππος*. Elsewhere in archaic poetry, the verb is employed for only two divine births: in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 119: *Ἀπὸλλο ἐκ δ' ἔθορε πρὸ φώωσ;* and in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 20: *Ἑρμῆς μητρὸς ἅπ' ἀθανάτων θόρε γυίων*.²² In the remaining attestations a certain kind of movement is described: in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 430, Persephone narrates Hades' rush towards her from the opening of the earth: *τῇ δ' ἔκθορ' ἄναξ κρατερὸς πολυδέγμων*, Hades who, albeit not a newly-born, sees the light of day of the earth and moves suddenly and overwhelmingly to accomplish the abduction. In the numerous Homeric attestations (far more in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*), the verb again describes the movement of the heroes or gods in battle or in action, and more specifically, the way in which they jump from the chariot or rush towards and overwhelm the enemy.²³

The same verb is also attested in the texts of three *epistomia*, one from Pelinna, Thessaly (side A lines 7-10, side B lines 9-11): *ταῦρος εἰς γάλα ἔθορες, αἶψα εἰς γάλα ἔθορες, κριὸς εἰς γάλα ἔπεσες*; and in two texts from Thourioi (A1 lines 15-16 and A4 lines 5-6): *ἔριφος ἐς γάλα ἔπετες*.²⁴ In the text from Pelinna, at least, the expression does not seem to refer exclusively to birth, but also to movement, because in the beginning of the text the expected verb *γίγνομαι* is employed (*νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε*,

²² On this line and its interpretative problems see Calame 1997, 66-72; Jourdan 2003, ad loc.; Janko 2002, ad loc.; Burkert 2004, 89-93; Betegh 2004, 113; PEG 2004, 8 F; KPT, ad loc.; Bernabé 2007, 79-85.

²³ Greeks on Trojans or vice versa: *Iliad* 8.252, 11.70, 12.462, 14.441, 15.380, 15.573, 15.582, 15.623, 16.770, 20.381, 21.233, 21.539 (Apollo), *Odyssey* 17.233 (Odysseus); jumping from chariot: *Iliad* 8.320, 10.528, 16.427, 23.509; lot jumping out: *Iliad* 7.182, 23.353, *Odyssey* 10.207; Athena's landing *Iliad* 4.79; Iris' sea-landing 24.79; *Odyssey* 23.32 (Penelope from bed, at the moment when she identifies the beggar with Odysseus (23.25-31), and not earlier when Eurykleia announces to her Odysseus' return (23.4-9), for which see Winkler 1990, 156-157). These movements are sometimes likened in similes to those of animals (the lion, the dog, the eagle) attacking their prey, or to the movement of the sea: *Iliad* 5.161 (lion on cattle), 15.577 (dog on young deer), 16.773 (flying arrows), 21.18 (Achilles like a *daimon*); *Odyssey* 22.303 (eagles on birds; compare *Iliad* 16.427-430). One instance in which both verbs are employed (as in the text from Pelinna) is Hector's overwhelming attack, likened to that of a wave crushing a swift ship (*Iliad* 15.623-625): *αὐτὰρ ὃ λαμπόμενος πυρὶ πάντοθεν ἔνθορ' ὁμίλω, | ἐν δ' ἔπεσ' ὡς ὅτε κύμα θοῆ ἐν νηϊ πέσῃσι | λάβρον ὑπαὶ νεφέων ἀνεμοτρεφές*.

²⁴ On these expressions see Tsantsanoglou and Parássoglou 1987, 13; and Tzifopoulos 2009; Iakov (forthcoming) advances a challenging interpretation of the expression in the Pelinna text, i.e. that milk denotes the Milky Way to which the epithet 'starry' and the name Asterios in the B-texts are also related; in this way, the animals mentioned in the expression as falling headlong into the milk are probably the stars and constellations on the sky (which may indicate a number of reincarnations of the soul as well); there the soul of the *mystes* stays in transit, until it becomes itself a star, or returns to its star, reaching its final destination.

ἄματι τῶιδε κτλ.), as in the Thourioi A4 text (ἐγένου). Finally, in a controversial text, a hymn *kletikos* discovered in the temple of Dictaeon Zeus in Palaikastro near Itanos, Crete, the expression in strong anaphora θόρ' ἐς (θρῶσκω εἰς) is employed in two strophes as an appeal to the god to come and re-appear (reborn?), and jump/rush onto cattle, sheep, trees, the *oikoi*, the poleis, the ships, the young citizens, *themis*, in order to effect fertility.²⁵

These instances strongly suggest that epic, hymnic, and ritual poetry seems aware of the verb's semantics. Apparently, in certain texts the verb θρῶσκω is almost a technical term for describing the birth and the first movements of a god or a hero,²⁶ and the semantics of the phrase in these lexical contexts implies a fusion of two motifs: the way a particular child is born and the new-born's erratic jumping-movements when out of the womb, as well as the overwhelming charge of an animal or human when attacking—both motifs with special emphasis on new beginnings of a particular kind, be it birth, rebirth, or movement.

This striking instance may also indicate that the *PDerveni*-author, in addition to his being well versed in poetry and rituals of all kinds, was also aware of the semantics of the verb in different lexical contexts, and so also perhaps of the texts on the *epistomia*, or at least of the *legomena* and *dromena* in the rituals to which he refers in columns I-VII and XX. The texts on the *epistomia* (and perhaps other texts as well, among them the *PDerveni* poem by Orpheus) formed part of the *legomena* and the *dromena* in an initiatory ritual that promised a blessed afterlife. These texts need not be the ritual's *hieros logos*, unless the meaning of the term is broadened as is done by the *PDerveni*-author, with the exception of the *symbola* or *synthemata*—these enigmatic, as the *PDerveni*-author would

²⁵ Guarducci in *IC* III.ii [Dictaeum Fanum].2, line 24ff, commentary (pp. 16-17): ἀ[μῶν δὲ θόρ' ἐς ποί]μνια, καὶ θόρ' εὔποκ' ἐς [μῆ]λα, [κὲς λάϊ]α καρπῶν θόρε κὲς τελεσ[φόρος οἶκος]. [θόρε κὲς] πόληας ἀμῶν, θόρε κὲς ποντο(π)όρος νᾶας, θόρε κὲς ν[έος πο]λείτας, θόρε κὲς θέμιν κλ[ειτάν]; West 1965, 157-158; and Furley and Bremer 2001, vol. 2: 16-17. Perlman (1995, 162 with n11) has noted a discrepancy between the *Hymn*, where fertility is important and receives emphasis, and the Pelinna text, where the “ritual matrix ... does not stress fertility.” For the verb θρῶσκω in the texts of the lamellae and the Palaikastro hymn Alonge 2005. Depew (2000, 61-65 and 69-77) and Furley and Bremer (2001, vol. 1: 1-62) discuss the problematic distinctions between the genres of hymn and prayer. Calame (2009, 177-228) in his semiotic analysis of the dialogue in the texts on the lamellae and *epistomia*, and in hymns and prayers concludes that in both sets of texts there is an interesting interplay in the roles: poet – addressee (man/woman) – god.

²⁶ In the hymnic invocation of Dionysus by the women of Elis, preserved in Plutarch's *Moralia* (299a-b), the hero Dionysus, worthy bull, is to come ... to the temple storming on bovine foot (Furley and Bremer 2001, vol. 1, 369: ἐλθεῖν, ἦρω Διόνυσε, | Ἀλίωv ἐς ναὸν | ἀγνὸν σὺν Χαρίτεσσιν | ἐς ναὸν τῷ βοέω | ποδὶ θύων. | ἄξιε ταῦρε (they translate ἦρω as “Lord” on the basis of Mycenaean Greek ἦρα/ἦρω being equivalent to ‘Lady/Lord’; vol. 2, 374-375); for extensive commentary and the previous bibliography see Furley and Bremer 2001, vol. 1: 369-372; vol. 2: 373-377; Scullion 2001; and Tzifopoulos 2009.

have called them, passwords for identification and entrance into a special place in the Underworld.

However one understands the author of *PDerveni*, as a *mantis*, a *prophetes*, a *chresmologos*, an (*orpheo*)*telestes*, an *agyrtes*, a *magos*, a *goes*, an *Orphikos*, a *physikos*, a philosopher-poet (and that is the easy part, even though he may have been comfortable with one term and uncomfortable with the other),²⁷ what needs to be emphasized is that his methodology and commentary presuppose that the works ascribed to Orpheus and circulating in written form and through performances since at least the sixth century BCE, and the related literature (Homer, Heraclitus, and others), and the rituals (Dionysiac, Eleusinian, and other) in fashion at the *PDerveni*-author's time, were also thought of as texts, actions, beliefs, and ideas in need of interpretation by an intermediary.

His being an 'intermediary' between the human and the divine/*cosmos* and its true understanding accentuates the difficulty of our perception of him, because these intermediaries were, more or less, trusted by people, who had specific needs. In his harsh criticism of these charismatics in the famous *Republic* passage (364b-365a), Plato distinguishes two kinds of needs that peoples and cities have, and then addresses the way in which false religious practitioners accommodate their preaching to suit those needs. The first need involves an interest in this life: people want assurances and blessings during their lifetime. The second need of people is what happens to them after death.²⁸ This

²⁷ For discussion of these columns and the problematic identity of their author see Obbink 1997; Kahn 1997; West 1997; Tsantsanoglou 1997 and 2008; Most 1997, 118; Janko 2001, 18-24; Burkert 2004, 99-124; Betegh 2004, 74-91; and KPT, 45-59, 70-75, 82-83, 86-87, 161-174, 186-189, 193-197. Graf and Johnston (2007, 2007, 90-96, 158-164, 178-184) propose that the authors of the texts on the lamellae and *epistomia* may have been local or itinerant *orpheotelestai* (also called *bricoleurs*) a term which combines all (or almost all) the religious activities mentioned by Plato (n28); also Edmonds 2004, 4. Torjussen (2005) argues that Dionysus was most probably absent from the commentary whose author used Orpheus as an authority. According to Andrei Lebedev's (1996) hypothesis, Pharnabazos, the diviner of Hermes, and Aristoteles were two such individuals, both magicians and *orpheotelestai*, at work in Olbia, and, because of competition, they were writing curse-tablets against one another. In a parallel case, Emmanuel Voutiras (1998) has proposed that Timarete from Corinth most probably was an itinerant female magician active in fourth century BCE Pella.

²⁸ Plato, *Republic* 364b-365a (translation Shorey 1937, modified): But the strangest of all these speeches are the things they say about the gods and virtue, how so it is that the gods themselves assign to many good men misfortunes and an evil life, but to their opposites a contrary lot; and *agyrtai* and *manteis* go to rich men's doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices (*θυσίαις*) and incantations (*ἐπωδαῖς*) have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals any misdeed of a man or his ancestors, and that if a man wishes to harm an enemy, at slight cost (*μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν*) he will be enabled to injure just and unjust alike, since they are masters of spells and enchantments (*ἐπαγωγαῖς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις*) that constrain the gods to serve their end. And for all these sayings they cite the poets as witnesses (*μάρτυρας ποιητᾶς*), with regard to the ease and plentifulness of vice ... And others cite Homer as a witness to the beguiling of gods by men ... And they produce a bushel of books of Musaeus and Orpheus (*βίβλων δὲ ὄμαδον παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως*), the

appears also to be the case in *PDerveni* column V, although the text is fragmentary, where reference is made to oracles, but also to dreams, both of which are not misunderstood in what they say about Hades' *deina*.²⁹

Even though Plato's and the *PDerveni*-author's views cannot be taken as representative or mainstream, they both attempt to distinguish between true and false attitudes, true and false knowledge: it is misunderstanding and ignorance of what the rituals and their accompanying texts are really referring to when they touch upon matters divine and *cosmic*. Although perceptions are difficult to grasp, a bad poet does not make poetry bad, just as a bad *mantis*, *prophetes*, *chresmologos*, *orpheotelestes*, *agyrtes*, *magos*, philosopher-poet does not make these arts bad by definition.³⁰

The *PDerveni* and the gold incised *epistomia* reveal points of contact and departure both in terms of their chronological and archaeological contexts, and also in terms of their texts. Neither of these, however, is strong enough and conclusive in either direction. Even so, both are unique representatives of discourses on the nature of the divine and the *cosmos*, and on the afterlife and its ritual poetics that must have proliferated from at least the sixth century BCE onwards, if not earlier, vying for an attentive audience. More research will no doubt enhance further our understanding of them both, particularly the nature of the relation, if any, between the texts on the *epistomia* and the

offspring of the Moon and of the Muses, as they affirm, and these books they use in their ritual (καθ' ὅς θρηπολοῦσιν), and make not only ordinary men but states believe that there really are remissions (λύσεις) of sins and purifications (καθαρμοί) for deeds of injustice, by means of sacrifice and pleasant sport (διὰ θυσίων καὶ παιδιᾶς ἡδονῶν) for the living, and that there are also special rites for the defunct, which they call *teletai*, that deliver us from evils in that other world (αἱ τῶν ἐκεῖ κακῶν ἀπολύουσιν ἡμᾶς), while terrible things await those who have neglected to sacrifice (μὴ θύσαντας δὲ δεινὰ περιμένει). Betegh (2004, 80) understands Plato's attitude as negative and that of the *PDerveni*-author as positive; for a discussion of this passage and the one in *Laws* 909a-b see also Voutiras 1998, 123-127; and KPT, 45-59. Cf. Theophrastus, *Characters* 16.11; and Plutarch, *Sayings of Spartans* 224e.

²⁹ KPT, 70-71 and 161-166; Ferrari 2007, 207-208; Janko 2008, 50-51. On oracles and divination Johnston forthcoming.

³⁰ As in everything else, so in all these activities there were both true and false intermediaries, interpreters, and practitioners who catered to people's needs, and among them there were also fakes, who tried to earn a living by playing on people's superstitions and fears, and some may indeed have been local or Panhellenic jokes (Burkert 1987, 30-53). The distinctions we usually draw among these intermediaries and practitioners (religious or not) are abolished by Plato and the *PDerveni*-author, so as to emphasize their message, but neither Plato nor the *PDerveni*-author believe that the art itself is to blame; blame and reprobation must fall on the ignorant, self-proclaimed intermediaries, who misunderstand and misapply the art with ridiculous results. Betegh (2004, 364-370) correctly in my view understands the interpretative method followed by the *PDerveni*-author as similar to that of interpreting oracles, but this need not be different from allegorical interpretations; see also Johnston forthcoming. For Plato's pronouncements in the *Republic* as prophetic see Virvidakis 1996; for the Orphic and anti-Orphic Plato see Kingsley 1995, 112-132; Cosi 2000, 146-150; and for the terminology of the mysteries employed by the philosopher Riedweg 1987.

poem by Orpheus commented upon by the *PDerveni*-author, both of which present analogous problems in need of interpretation by an intermediary.

But until then, and in spite of Plato's and the *PDerveni*-author's warnings against ignorance, and in spite of their discourses on the true nature of things, Greeks continued business as usual: they attended initiation rituals, procured a gold incised *epistomion*, and, when time came, they were buried with it. At least for these deceased we know this much: they were buried content and assured that special treatment awaited them in the Underworld in the belief that they 'earned' what we would call, for all intents and purposes, 'paradise'. For the deceased in Derveni Tomb A, who took with him on the pyre the allegorical commentary on a theo-cosmogony poem by Orpheus, we do not know even this much.

APPENDIX:

The following discussion between Eric Turner, George Daux, Bernhard van Groningen, Claire Preaux, Charles Bradford Welles, Herbert Youtie, Kurt von Fritz, Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Frank Walbank, Sir Ronald Syme, and Herbert Musurillo followed Kapsomenos' (1964) presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Papyrologists in Philadelphia, August 24, 1964 (*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 2, 1964, 15-23).

Professor E. G. Turner, University College, London

I must say how much I, personally, have enjoyed this exposition. It was so clear. I also enjoyed the opportunity to see so many pictures. The point that has occurred to me in regard to these pictures is the relative size of the writing, and also its purpose. Is it a good book hand? Was the papyrus of Derveni the work of a practiced scribe? I am sure that we must admit that it is so, but I suspect that it is a very small handwriting, whereas the Timotheus was a large one. This was obscure, I think, in our pictures.

The immediate thing that comes to mind when I think of papyri like the one of Derveni is in fact the Crito of Plato, which is, of course, early third century. It is a very small handwriting, and the letters are tiny. Now the individual forms of the letters are not very much like those of the Derveni hand, but the impression of the hand and the style as a whole is, and this does warn one, I think, to be a little careful where we have such a small amount of comparative material, because this is very definitely a book and a book hand. The Timotheus is a very poorly written book in my opinion--a very gross hand--and the contract of 311 is after all a business document written by a scribe of quite different character. Again, it is very difficult to compare inscriptions because there you are working with a chisel and not with a pen.

These are the sorts of cautions which enter my mind. At the same time, I have not seen anything quite like the letter forms or the layout so clearly set out, and this is what makes me think that it ought to go into the fourth century. Whether it is earlier or, perhaps, a little bit later, I do not know, but I believe that it is the earliest Greek papyrus. I would be ready to support that. Of course we are apt to compare material from different places, from different environments, and from different media. This is still a caution which must be maintained. It is not merely a question of Egyptian and Greek inscriptions; it is even Macedonia. But no more shall I say.

Professor Georges Daux, L'École Française d'Archéologie

I think that there is not much to await from the inscriptions. I do not think that the examples which we have so far would prove anything. I think that the most important thing is the writing from the papyrological point of view, and in light of the evidence it is quite certain that it belongs to the fourth century on the whole. There is also an inscription which was not mentioned; certainly the inscription on the vase belongs clearly to the fourth century. So I think that the contribution of archaeology and of epigraphy and of the form of the inscription on the vase are very important factors for the dating of the manuscript of the papyrus.

Professor B.A. van Groningen, University of Leiden

There is just one thing I would like to mention because I think it is rather too often forgotten. Now my age is 70, and I write practically in the same way as when I was 20. If after 2,000 years there is a scrap of manuscript which was written by me, it could not possibly be said whether it was written in 1964 or in 1904, and I say that we must always be careful and not be too precise in our datings because you always have the difference of half a century in one man's life.

Professor Claire Preaux, University of Brussels

I should say that the papyrus shows us that the cursive style of writing was not formed in the fourth century B.C. I was struck by the fact that the marriage contract of Elephantine was written exactly in a book style. We see the cursive writing being formed under our eyes in the beginning of the first half of the third century B.C., and when you look at the writing of even a man like Zenon, the famous manager of Apollonius' estate, it is not exactly cursive. This man must have learned writing in Caria, not in Egypt. He brings with him the type of writing for documents as well as for books which was in use in the Greek world at the end of the fourth century or at the beginning of the third.

So this papyrus then confirms us in what we could deduce from the papyri of Egypt that there probably was no cursive writing in Greece in the fourth century B.C. We must imagine that Plato, Aristotle, or Demosthenes wrote this way, which is just the unique way of writing Greek, whether it is on stone or papyrus, either quick-writing or not quick-writing. This adds a social meaning, because it means that probably writing was not so much known, after all, --less known among people than we would perhaps expect.

Professor C. B. Welles, Yale University

Mlle. Preaux and others have introduced the term "cursive". I don't know what it means, of course, and probably no one else does either, but it is conveniently used to indicate a style of writing in which the pen is lifted as little as possible from the papyrus. It has seemed to me sometimes in practice to study almost as if it were Japanese --the sequence of strokes with which a writer makes letters, if indeed there is a sequence of strokes and not all one stroke.

One letter struck me particularly in this papyrus of Professor Kapsomenos, and seemed to be extremely interesting. I had the impression that the sigma was actually made in one stroke without lifting the pen from the paper. It seemed to me also that at least in some cases the omega was made in the same fashion, that is, starting at the left with a little loop, then going up looping again, and off. Would Professor Kapsomenos like to comment on that point? (Professor Kapsomenos agreed that the sigma was made in a single stroke.)

Professor H. C. Youtie, University of Michigan

The word "cursive" has, of course, always bothered us. It always needs definition. Actually, it is a word which could conveniently be abandoned. Mlle. Preaux, I think, almost instinctively gave us the better approach. I, myself, am trying to remember this too. She said, "quick or not so quick". This is the secret, of course. The quicker it gets, the more cursive it gets. I need not go through what the elementary books say to explain it. So actually I am now trying to say 'fast writing', and I don't use 'slow writing' usually, since ordinarily I am dealing with documents. They are all relatively fast, and therefore, they are all more or less cursive. The faster they are, the more cursive they will get because the scribe will make more loops.

I would say that we could very well abandon the word "cursive". It has traditional value so that one hates to let the word go, but it is much vaguer than 'quick or fast writing'. Even that is a relative term, of course, but perhaps in current English 'fast' is a more intelligible word than 'cursive'. That is about as much as one can say.

About the date of this papyrus, I agree with everyone that this is a fourth century hand. I feel strongly that it is a fourth century hand, but I agree with Professor van Groningen in the point of his remarks. I feel that the attempt to date undated literary manuscripts in anything under a century is not today going to succeed. We don't know that much. It is one thing to have an inscription which tells you it was written in 346 B.C., but if the papyrus doesn't tell you when it was written, if it is not a fast hand, you are really in trouble. And everyone is in trouble every time he tries to date a literary hand. He feels in trouble, and that is his best indication. I always feel in difficulty with an undated papyrus, and often even when it is a document, I must pull my forces together,

and look and compare and depend upon all my predecessors for a judgment. It is so comforting to open Schubart or something similar, and find an adjusted list of cursive documents. Much of this is secure, but not so secure that we can hope to date within 25 or even 50 years. I can't do it! Grenfell and Hunt were perhaps the only one who had the feeling that they could date within decades. They were under an illusion. We know today that unless they were really much, much more imbued with ancient handwriting than anyone living today, that they could not do it. My own feeling is that I can't do it and I have not met anyone who can.

Professor Welles: Would you, before you leave the microphone, explain whether you regard this particular papyrus as fast written or slow written, or something in between?

Professor Youtie: Within the limits of visual judgment that we use, I think that most of us would put this among the slow moving. But you must compare it with Mlle. Preaux' ostraka, if you want really fast writing. And of course, it is all relative. Mlle. Preaux wrote--if you don't mind my referring to your beautiful article on the ostrakon palaeography--a magnificent thing. It is a masterpiece, and anyone who wants to know about fast writing would do well to read Mlle. Preaux' article in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Volume 40. Now, that is fast writing, and then it slows down to what we call a literary hand. If you call a papyrus a literary hand, then you mean that it is slow. If you call it a document, then you usually mean that it is fast.

Professor Welles: I think that since we are friends here, and only our voices are being recorded, I might say that I do not entirely agree with my colleague from Michigan that it is impossible to make a fairly accurate dating of a literary hand, but I respect his judgment, and it is second to none.

Professor Kurt von Fritz, University of Munich

Professor Kapsomenos has told us how this carbonized papyrus was unrolled by Mr. Fackelmann from Vienna. Now this seems to open further possibilities. As everyone knows, there are a great many carbonized papyrus rolls which may contain most interesting material. The question then arises whether the time might now have come to try to unroll them and to make an attempt to read them. Of course, this is a very difficult question in various ways. In the first place, one might say that it would be better to wait until still more improved methods have been developed because at present, there is of course always some kind of destruction. So far, it has not been possible to unroll the rolls in such a way that every bit is preserved.

On the other hand, when I was in Vienna last April I was told that after Mr. Fackelmann had done some work for Professor Kapsomenos and his Greek colleagues, he had improved his method by experimenting with papyrus rolls which he himself had carbonized. In other words, there is a possibility of very great improvement in the near or distant future.

In the second place, the rolls are in the hands of our Italian colleagues, and they of course are very anxious to preserve these rolls and not have them experimented with, unless there is a very good prospect of them being harmed as little as possible. But at the same time, I thought it might be interesting to all of you at least to mention the problem, and perhaps we could ask some of our Italian colleagues who may be here whether they have talked to their colleagues at Naples about it, or whether they might be able to discuss it with them, and if in the future such an enterprise were entered into, whether some money might be found to do something about it.

Perhaps we might start in this way, that we would not at first start by trying to unroll these papyrus rolls, but rather get some money for further experimentation for the next few years so that then, if an entirely satisfactory method should be developed, we could proceed with great safety to the papyri.

Professor Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Oxford University

I have heard a most careful, excellent exposition, and then comments by some of the greatest experts in the world on papyri, and the consensus of their impressions that the date is fourth century is most impressive. Well, if they are right, this is a most sensational fact from the point of view of content. Who ever knew that the Greeks were writing commentaries on poetry, and on Orphic poetry at that, as early as the fourth century? Professor Kapsomenos in his learned commentary regarding possibilities, possible authors, at the end of his paper mentioned Metrodorus of Lampsacus and Epigenes, but unfortunately these are shadowy figures. We know very little about them. In the case of Epigenes, the whole question of date is a very open one.

It may well be that the manuscript is not as early as most speakers today have thought. We clearly have so little material for the history of Greek writing in the period in question that even though most of the experts who discussed the paper have the impression that the find must be as early as the fourth century, I think we should be rash if we regarded that as an absolute certainty. How strong the archaeological evidence is for the dating is not yet clear. But if the text really is so early, its importance for the history of scholarship and of Greek religion is very great. As impressive as the consensus in favor of the early date has been, we have so little of Greek writing of this period that it would be exceedingly dangerous if the hypothesis of an early date were to be generally accepted without careful consideration of all the difficulties involved.

Professor Daux

Now I must say that I quite agree that it is impossible to date a papyrus within about 50 years, but for epigraphy it is not exactly so for the fourth century. As I said, there is an inscription on this beautiful vase which was found, published since and it will be published more--and there is no doubt that the inscription and the dialect are from the fourth century. There is no doubt that the archaeological finds are from the fourth century. There is no doubt about it.

I am very skeptical about dates in general, but in the fourth century, in this period of Greek art, you can be certain of the dates of certain magnificent works. You could not date this vase from the third century. It is quite impossible. You can discuss it between 350 and 330--perhaps about 320 --but you cannot put it in the third century. I think this is one of the cases where the archaeological and epigraphical evidence brings some security to papyrology. I insist on that and I believe it.

Professor van Groningen

I am sorry, ladies and gentlemen, to detain you just one moment more, but I would like to say something. If I remember well, Plato commented on a poem of Simonides in the Protagoras, and if Plato did that, I think we can presume that such interpretations and spoken commentaries were rather usual. If such things were done verbally, I hardly doubt that they should have been written down from time to time. So I do not think that this commentary is such a big surprise. Of course, I could be mistaken, but I just give my impression.

Professor Welles

What does surprise me in a certain sense is not so much that a man might have wished to have buried with him some Orphic hymns or might choose to have manuscripts of Orphic hymns consumed in his funeral pyre, which I suppose would remain with him just as effectively, but that he should have done this with a commentary seems to me a little remarkable. And it also interests me that this should have occurred in Macedonia, in a rather exciting period of Macedonian history, when someone might think that the Macedonians had no time for Orphism, commented or pure.

Professor van Groningen: No, no, no, no, no!

Professor Welles: No?

Professor van Groningen: Well, of course, as you might know, I wasn't there either. However, I would like to say this. My country was occupied during the war for five years, and the situation was very, very, difficult, but nevertheless very good work, even on classical epigraphy, was done in that time, so why not in Macedonia?

Professor Welles: I was working around rather to another matter, but since we have here someone who knows very much about Macedonia at least in the later period, and certainly in the earlier period too, I wonder if we might hear from Professor Walbank.

Professor F. W. Walbank, University of Liverpool

I have nothing to say, except to pose a question. Is it possible that this scroll was merely used as inflammable material? I know Martial refers to using papyrus on funeral pyres. Would that always be blank papyrus, or might it just be some scroll that the heirs of the person were not particularly interested in preserving?

Sir Ronald Syme, Oxford University

I would say that the presence of a commentary on poetry or any literary work at so early a period does seem to me to be remarkable. But one of the things we don't know enough about is precisely the habitual culture of the landowners on the fringes of society. We might find parallels in the South of France for this sort of thing, might we not?

Professor Herbert Musurillo, Fordham University

I would like to agree with Dr. Lloyd-Jones on the question of the sensationalism of this commentary in one respect, that as far as I know this would be the first excellent commentary using the allegorical method for Homer. You remember that Horace in Epistles I and II –Trojani belli scriptorem– speaks of the allegorical interpretation of the Iliad and the Odyssey, and we don't have any commentaries of this sort. This would be, so far as I know, the first sizeable piece.

In this connection, Philo of Alexandria regularly used the allegorical method, and we are not quite sure where he derived it from. It not only came undoubtedly from the Midrashi method of interpreting the Pentateuch, but in this case we will have a sort of background for saying that Philo was adapting some of the methods of the Greek commentators and grammarians. So, from this point of view I agree with the sensational method of the commentary on this papyrus, and I would like to see some more work done on this aspect of it.

Professor Kapsomenos: It is not a commentary on Homer, because Horner is just quoted to explain some words in the poem.

Professor Musurillo: I did not mean Homer specifically, but the use of the allegorical method in general.

Professor Welles: We shall conclude this first report of our meeting by congratulating Professor Kapsomenos on his work and the extraordinary nature of his discovery and assuring him that we all shall wait with bated breath for the full evidence to appear in print.

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FIGURES



Fig. 1: Derveni Tomb A, the slabs covering the tomb on which whatever remained of the pyre was strewn, among them *PDerveni* (after Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997, 28 fig. 5)

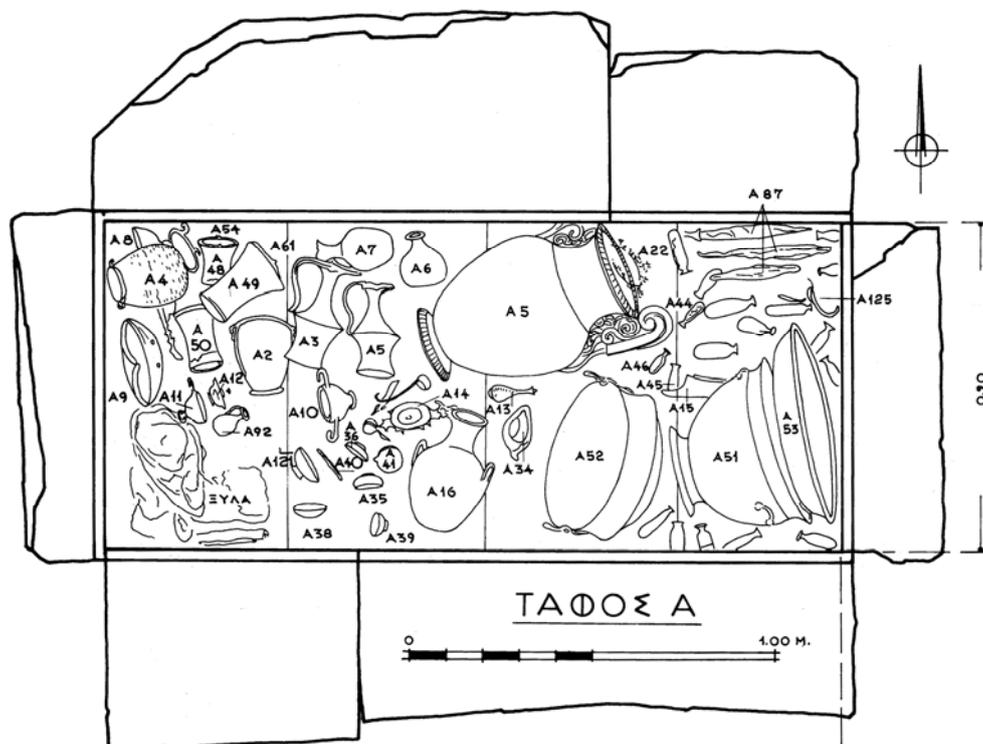


Fig. 2: Derveni Tomb A, drawing of the interior of the tomb with the *entaphia*-objects (after Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997, 29 fig. 6)



Fig. 3: Derveni Tomb A, the bronze krater inside which the remains of the deceased were laid (after Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997, pl. 1 A1)



Fig. 4: Derveni Tomb A, the second pair of bronze greaves found inside the tomb (after Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997, pl. 7 A15)



Fig. 5: Agios Athanassios, the interior of the tomb with the silver-plated larnax in the forefront and on the opposite wall the papyri on top of a box (after Tsimbidou-Avloniti 2000, 568 fig. 2)



Fig. 6: Agios Athanassios, detail of the papyri on top of a box (photo Maria Tsimbidou-Avloniti)