

REVIEWS

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Burkert, Walter (2003) *Kleine Schriften II: Orientalia*. Herausgegeben von M. Laura Gemelli Marciano in Zusammenarbeit mit Franziska Egli, Lucius Hartmann und Andreas Schatzmann. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. (*Hypomnemata: Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben*. Supplement-Reihe; 2/2.) VIII, 298 p. ISBN 3-525-25271-4. Price: €49.90.

The book under review is a collection of 16 essays, which were originally published between 1979 and 2001. The papers are in English, German and Italian, and give an overview of the scholarly production of the renowned classicist during two decades on the topic of Greek and Oriental cultural connections. The papers concentrate on religion and cults, on literature and mythology. While discussing these *Kleine Schriften*, one has to bear in mind that the more famous and systematic work on Greek-Oriental cultural relations is *The Orientalizing Revolution* by the same author, originally written in German (1986) and published in English in 1992. Subsequently the author has written further on the same subject for a more general reader, originally in Italian *Da Omero ai Magi: La tradizione orientale nella cultura greca* (1999), later in German *Die Griechen und der Orient* (2003) and in English *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (2004). The book has also been translated into Spanish and French.

The reader who is familiar with the “corpus” of Burkert’s texts on Oriental matters can here and there recognize the same issues and topics re-emerging many times. His works are always very readable, the ideas proposed well reasoned and mostly not of any “provocative” kind. As a classicist, Burkert must be lauded for his open-mindedness to the Oriental connections of Greek civilization. His ideas might have been considered provocative twenty years ago, when the first edition of his *Orientalizing Revolution* was published, but less so today.

In my judgement, there is not much speculation in this book either – the author is always cautious and methodologically sound in bringing forward and judging the evidence for the Eastern-Western contacts. This is both a strength and a weakness of the book in the present reviewer’s opinion. The weakness lies in sometimes discussing the evidence in a very general way that gives the reader a sense of being in class rather than being taken on a journey of exploration. Thus in my view the following essays can be read as general introductions: “The Logic of Cosmogony” (no. 14) deals with ancient cosmologies; the papers “Migrating Gods and Syncretisms” (no. 2) and “La religione greca all’ombra dell’Oriente” (no. 3) are about the phenomena of syncretism in the ancient world. The theories of game and the notion of trickster are discussed in the context of the Mesopotamian and Greek mythology in the essay “Götterspiel und Götterburleske” (no. 7). The paper “Oriental Symposia: Contrasts and Parallels” (no. 8) presents evidence for banqueting in the sources of East and West, and arrives at the conclusion that the Greek institution of *symposion* might have drawn some influence from the East. The essay “Hesiod in Context” (no. 11) studies the widespread

phenomenon of abstract nouns used as the names for divinities, mostly of justice and order both in Greece and the Ancient Near East.

A group of essays deals with the aspects of Oriental and Greek mythology and their interrelations. "Literarische Texte und funktionaler Mythos" (no. 1) is a general introduction to the study of myth. "Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels" (no. 4) studies the myths of Heracles and Ninurta, myths on cosmogony and iconographic parallels. There are many recent discussions of parallels in the heroic deeds of Ninurta and Heracles, see also in M. West *East Face of Helicon* (Oxford 1997), pp. 458–72 and A. Annus *The God Ninurta* (Helsinki 2002), *passim*. The next essay in Italian (no. 5) studies the "cultural heroes" from a more general point of view.

The essay "Von Ullikummi zum Kaukasus" (no. 6) is important for incorporating folkloric data in the study of the transmission of ancient myths to the modern times. The case under study is "die Felsgeburt des Unholds". The terminological affinities in sacrificial vocabulary are discussed in the "Lescha-Liškah. Sakrale Gastlichkeit zwischen Palästina und Griechenland" (no. 9), which proposes a West-Semitic origin for the Greek words *leschē* and *bōmos*. No. 10, "Kronia-Feste und ihr altorientalischer Hintergrund" tries to explore the background of Greek festivals for Kronos in the Hurro-Hittite "Epic of Manumission" and the Akkadian texts dealing with *andurāru*, the royal release for debtors. The next two essays study possible Oriental influences on the world view of Anaximandros either from the Persian ("Iranisches bei Anaximandros," no. 12) or from the Assyrian side ("Orientalische und griechische Weltmodelle von Assur bis Anaximandros," no. 13). The title of the 15th essay in the book is "Königs-Ellen bei Alkaios: Griechen am Rand der östlichen Monarchien". The last essay in the book, "La via fenicia e la via anatolica" (no. 16) discusses the latest evidence for Greek contacts to the East, which suggests, according to the author, that the contacts through the Phoenicians, "via del mare" were much more direct than previously thought.

In recent years, an international *Melammu* project has been launched, where Prof. Burkert is a board member. The project studies the intellectual heritage of Assyria and Babylonia in East and West, and has a database online on the internet (<http://www.aakkl.helsinki.fi/melammu/>). It is hoped that through this medium intercultural studies of the ancient world will get a new impetus.