



Jan Bremmer at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, 2007  
[photo Christine Nguyen/Getty Research Institute]

# Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity

Studies in the History of Religions in  
Honour of Jan N. Bremmer

*Edited by*  
Jitse Dijkstra, Justin Kroesen,  
and Yme Kuiper



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2010

MNASISTRATOS, THE 'HIEROPHANT'  
AT ANDANIA (IG 5.1.1390 AND SYLL.<sup>3</sup> 735)

VINCIANE PIRENNE-DELFORGE

Within the broad range of his interests and competences, some years ago Jan Bremmer devoted a seminal paper to religious secrets and secrecy in classical Greece in which he concentrated on the period from the end of the sixth to the end of the fifth century BC.<sup>1</sup> The main focus of his analysis was the varied quality of religious secrets and secrecy, from the talismanic nature of some hidden graves to the holy content of mystery cults, through more or less serious secrets elaborated by groups searching for an exclusive identity. The present tribute to Jan will build on this interest, bringing into focus another chronological scope and a definite place: the time will be Roman and the place Messenian.

The mysteries of Andania, in Messenia, are attested by literary and epigraphic evidence. Inscriptions will be the main focus of this paper but let us first have a glance at the literary sources before proceeding to the inscriptions.

As is usual where local Greek mysteries are concerned, literary evidence on the subject is provided only by Pausanias. The *Periegesis* (4.1–30) offers a large amount of information on the history of Messenia, more than about any other place described by Pausanias. In his presentation of the most ancient times of Messenia, we are told that the mysteries of Demeter and Kore brought from Eleusis and performed in Andania were the core of the religious identity of the region and its inhabitants from the very beginning of their existence (4.1–2). Therefore, just before Messenia became subject to the Spartan hegemony, the local hero Aristomenes buried a bronze *hydria* containing the instructions for performing the secret rites (*teletê*) in honour of the Great Goddesses, in anticipation of more propitious times when he could recover this talismanic object and reactivate its ritual prescriptions (4.20.3). In the fourth century BC, when the city of Messene was in the process of being

---

<sup>1</sup> J.N. Bremmer, "Religious Secrets and Secrecy in Classical Greece", in *Secrecy and Concealment. Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (eds. H.G. Kippenberg and G.G. Stroumsa; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 61–78.

established by the Theban Epameinondas, the *hydria* was discovered thanks to a double dream, received by Epameinondas himself and the Argive general Epiteles (4.26.6–8). The priests, whose families had taken refuge in Eleusis centuries before (4.14.1) and who had returned to fight in the Second Messenian War (4.15.7; 16.2), set down in books the *teletê* written on the tin scroll found inside the *hydria* (4.27.5). Afterwards, the ritual was re-enacted in the Karnasian grove, which belonged to the Messenian territory near Andania. Pausanias was still able to see the bronze *hydria* during his visit to the spot in the middle of the second century AD (4.33.4–5).

All these facts belong to a broader ‘historical’ reconstruction of Messenian origins, which has been recognized as a kind of politico-religious propaganda elaborated to supply the new city of Messene with prestigious and ancestral roots just after its foundation.<sup>2</sup> The part played by Pausanias himself in this reconstruction, for which he is our sole informant, is difficult to define precisely but he certainly interfered with its content, in particular regarding the Attic references to Eleusis and to the family clan of the Lycomidae who settled in the deme of Phlya.<sup>3</sup> Methapos, a member of this clan, had, according to Pausanias, reformed the mysteries of Andania, as well as he established the Theban mysteries of the Kabeiroi (4.1.7–8). But it is likely that neither the Thebans nor the Messenians knew this figure, supposedly a priest and a deviser of all sorts of mysteries. Pausanias’s source on some aspects of these mysteries was certainly Athenian, more precisely, a lettered tradition borrowed from the Lycomidae.<sup>4</sup>

The epigraphic evidence is the second part of our information about the mysteries of Andania. The most famous inscription is a well-con-

---

<sup>2</sup> M.N. Valmin, *Études topographiques sur la Messénie ancienne* (Lund: Blom, 1930), 15; W. Speyer, *Bücherfunde in der Glaubenswerbung der Antike. Mit einem Ausblick auf Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 66–68, who considers this tradition as a ‘Fälschung’ related to Epameinondas; M. Casevitz, J. Auberger, *Pausanias. Description de la Grèce, tome IV. Livre IV: La Messénie* (Paris: Collection des Universités de France, 2005), xiv–xix; N. Deshours, *Les Mystères d’Andania. Étude d’épigraphie et d’histoire religieuse* (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2006), 167–211. *Contra*: W.K. Pritchett, *Studies in Ancient Greek Topography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1–31. Cf. J. Siapkas, *Heterological Ethnicity. Conceptualizing Identities in Ancient Greece* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 2003), 61–87, 154–169, 255–262.

<sup>3</sup> V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source. Pausanias et la religion grecque* (Liège: Centre International d’Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, 2008), 304–312.

<sup>4</sup> N. Robertson, “Melanthus, Codrus, Neleus, Caucon: Ritual Myth as Athenian History”, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 29 (1988): 201–261 (252–254).

served regulation of 194 lines, which provides many details concerning the ceremonial and administrative context in which the mysteries were performed. In 26 sections, this text raises several issues: the oaths made by the officials, their designation, the dress worn by the participants, the setting up of the procession, the erection of architectural structures such as *thésauroi*, the supply of sacrificial animals, the penalty in case of infringement and the organization of the sacrificial meal or of the market during the festival. The content of the mysteries themselves is not mentioned, of course. In this regard, some information is rather allusive. We hear of 'the capsule and the books' which a man named Mnasistratos gave, together with 'whatever else may be arranged for the sake of the mysteries' (lines 11–12). These elements come to light in the sections regarding the transmission of the cult objects from one college of *hieroi* to the next.<sup>5</sup> The garments worn by the *hierai* 'for the stage setting of the gods' (εἰς θεῶν διάθεσιν, line 24) are mentioned in the section entitled 'Dress'. In the section 'Procession', we find, among other elements and persons, the carriages driven by girls *hierai*, 'on which are displayed baskets containing the *hiera* for the mysteries' (κίστας ἐχούσας ἱερά μυστικά, line 30). The gods concerned by the ritual are first mentioned in the oath which refers to 'the gods for whom the mysteries are performed' (τοὺς θεοὺς, οἷς τὰ μυστήρια ἐπιτ[ε]λεῖται, lines 2–3) and also when all the actors of the procession are listed: just after Mnasistratos, who opens the retinue, we find the priest 'of the gods for whom the mysteries happen, with the priestess' (ἔπειτεν ὁ ἱερεὺς τῶν θεῶν οἷς τὰ μυστήρια γίνεται μετὰ τᾶς ἱερέας, lines 28–29). As usual, sacrificial animals are an important part of the procession. Here are listed (lines 33–34) a gravid sow for Demeter, a ram for Hermes, a young sow for the Great gods, a boar for Apollo Karneios, and a ewe for Hagna, the goddess of the spring to whom I will return below. In the section concerned by the provision of the animals, the same are mentioned—as well as animals for purifications and a hundred lambs for the *prôtomystai*—and we are told that the young sow for the Great gods was two years old (line 69).

This text is full of interest in many respects but Mnasistratos will be the centre of our attention here since he is the only participant to be explicitly named, without any title, while all the others are anonymous

<sup>5</sup> Such sacerdotal transmission generally called *paradosis*—here *paradosios*—is well attested in the epigraphical evidence regarding the duties of priests and priestess. For example, IG 2<sup>2</sup>.1346 (= LSS 122). See S. Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion. The People, Their Dedications, and the Inventories* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1989), 103–110, 245–246.

and only identified by their official qualification (*hieroi*, *hierai*, priests, priestesses, and so on). This man is said to have transmitted the books and the ‘capsule’<sup>6</sup> to the *hieroi*, who will do the same to the next team of *hieroi* in charge of the mysteries. The regulation also refers to an advance of 6,000 *drachmai* made by Mnasistratos for a—not otherwise defined—wreath offered by the city. Mnasistratos would be reimbursed for this huge sum of money, and he would take care of ‘the spring named Hagna in the ancient writings’ and of the statue bearing the same name as the goddess, as long as he was alive. He would take part in the sacrifices and the mysteries with the *hieroi*, also receiving what the sacrificers would display on the table near the spring, with the skins of the victims (lines 85–89). His share would also include some cash removed from one of the *thésauroi* built in the sacred grove and connected with the spring Hagna (lines 92–94). Finally, he would share the sacred meal with his family and the priests.

Who is this Mnasistratos? The regulation summarized above implies that he was a rich Messenian, who acted as a benefactor in the religious life of his city, therefore receiving privileges connected with the cult for which he had transmitted the *biblia* in his possession. Since Pausanias’s fourth book and the inscription were read in parallel by scholars, it has been widely accepted that Mnasistratos belonged to the priestly clan that had been in charge of the mysteries for centuries.<sup>7</sup> Such an assessment was also supported by another text, which is the second inscription to be produced in this dossier. The stone was found at Argos, one century ago, during the French excavations conducted by W. Volgraff.<sup>8</sup> This is an oracle given by the local Apollo Pythaios to Mnasistratos called ‘the hierophant’ and sent by the city of Messene to ask the god about two items, the traditional sacrifice to the *Megaloi theoi* and the mysteries to be celebrated in honour of gods whose names have unfortunately been

<sup>6</sup> In the expression τὰν δὲ κάμπτραν καὶ τὰ βιβλία, ἃ δέδωκε Μνασίστρατος (lines 11–12), the word κάμπτρα is puzzling. I take up Henrichs’ interpretation that the word refers to the cylindrical case in which papyrus rolls were stored and carried: A. Henrichs, “*Hieroi logoi* and *hierai bibloi*: The (Un)written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2003): 207–266 (248–249, n. 149).

<sup>7</sup> E.g. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 279; F. Graf, “Lesser Mysteries—Not Less Mysterious”, in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (ed. M.B. Cosmopoulos; London: 2003), 241–262 (243); Henrichs, “*Hieroi logoi* and *hierai bibloi*”, 249; Deshours, *Mystères d’Andania*, 75–77.

<sup>8</sup> W. Volgraff, “Inscriptions d’Argos”, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 33 (1909): 175–200 (178–179).

lost in the damaged corner of the stone. As the construction of the god’s response is asymmetrical (‘(this is convenient to) offer to the Great Gods Karneioi the sacrifice they like in accordance with the ancestral custom, and I also prescribe to the Messenians to celebrate the mysteries [...]’),<sup>9</sup> there are two ritual levels in the divine injunction: on the one hand, the traditional sacrifice performed for the Great gods ‘Karneioi’ has still to be offered<sup>10</sup> and, on the other, something else had to be done about mysteries by the city of Messene. The exact novelty of this last command has been much discussed by scholars, some of them taking Pausanias’s testimony about the mysteries at face value,<sup>11</sup> while others suspect such an erudite confection to be a late forgery. The former consider that Mnasistratos gave up the priestly function of hierophant in aid of the city, which therefore installed the college of *hieroi* to perform the mysteries: in this respect, the regulation is seen as a ‘restoration’ of the ancestral mystery cult under the supervision of the hierophant belonging to the family clan devoted to the cult.<sup>12</sup> The latter consider that the *diagramma* attests to the foundation of mysteries, which are a new component added to some traditional sacrifice in honour of the Great gods of the Karneiasion, the grove of the Karneios.<sup>13</sup> Besides Pausanias’s ‘novel’ of the Messenian origins, the main argument supporting the hypothesis of a restoration or a reform is the title given by the oracle to Mnasistratos and this will be the focus of the analysis below.

<sup>9</sup> *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 735.17–28: χρῆσιμος ὁ γενόμενος τᾶ πόλει τῶν Μεσσηνιαίων ἀνεγράφη κατὰ τὸ ψάψισμα τῶν ἀρχόντων καὶ συνέδρων, μαντευομένου Μνασιστράτου τοῦ ἱεροφάντα περὶ τᾶς θυσίας καὶ τῶν μυστηρίων | ὁ θεὸς ἔχρησε· Μεγάλους Θεοῖς Καρνεῖους καλλιερῶν κατὰ τὰ πάτρια, λέγω δὲ καὶ Μεσσηνιαίων ἐπιτελεῖν τὰ μυστή[[ρια – – –]]. See M. Piérart, “L’oracle d’Apollo à Argos”, *Kernos* 3 (1990): 319–333; L. Piolot, “Pausanias et les Mystères d’Andanie. Histoire d’une aporie”, in *Le Péloponnèse. Archéologie et histoire* (ed. J. Renard; Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1999), 195–223 (214–215); Deshours, *Mystères d’Andania*, 66–72.

<sup>10</sup> The translation of the word as an *epiklêsis* and not as a temporal reference to the festival Karneia is the most convincing: Deshours, *Mystères d’Andania*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> See the recent—uncritical—overview by S. Guettel Cole, “Professionals, Volunteers, and Amateurs. Serving the Gods *kata ta patria*”, in *Practitioners of the Divine. Greek Priests and Religious Officials from Homer to Heliodorus* (eds. B. Dignas, K. Trampedach; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 55–72 (69–72).

<sup>12</sup> M.L. Zunino, *Hiera Messeniaka. La storia religiosa della Messenia dall’età micenea all’età ellenistica* (Udine: Forum, 1997), 324; Deshours, *Mystères d’Andania*, 69–77. See also above, n. 6.

<sup>13</sup> U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1932), 528–536; Robertson, “Melanthus”, 251; Piolot, “Pausanias et les Mystères d’Andanie”, 217–220.

Before proceeding, the chronological anchorage of the epigraphic evidence has to be addressed. The Andanian regulation is dated by the inner reference to ‘the 55th year’, which has been understood in connection with the Achaean era since the discovery of the stone. Therefore, the text was dated to the year 92/91 or 91/90 BC.<sup>14</sup> Recently, the excavator of Messene, P. Themelis, made the insightful observation that the ‘55th year’ might be the 55th year of the Actian era, and not the 55th year after the conquest of Greece, dating the regulation of the mysteries to AD 24.<sup>15</sup> This new date allows us to give Mnasistratos all the more consistency in the public life of Messene as he may be identified with the Mnasistratos, son of Philoxenidas, known from an honorary inscription of AD 42.<sup>16</sup> In this text, he is praised by the *gerontes* of Artemis Oupesia (Ortheia) for his generous and munificent financial contribution to the imperial cult and the public expenses (ἐν τε ταῖς τῶν Σεβαστῶν θυσίαις ἐν τε ταῖς | [πολε]ιτικάις δαπάναις [παρέ]χων τε καὶ δαπανῶν | πάντα μεγαλοψύχως καὶ μεγαλομερῶς, lines 8–11), as well as for his benefactions towards the college of the *gerontes* of Artemis itself. He was at the same time secretary of the *synedroi* and president of the *gerousia* of Artemis.<sup>17</sup> In Messene, the main organ of government was the *synedroi*, whose secretary was an important official. Mnasistratos therefore had a prominent political position in the city, just like his father Philoxenidas who was secretary of the *synedroi* in AD 2/3.<sup>18</sup> Mnasistratos’s son, Asclepiades, was praised as ‘star of the sacred council’ at the end of the first or in the early second century AD,<sup>19</sup> confirming that we are dealing with a wealthy and influential family of Messene, over three generations at least, during the early imperial period. Before Themelis suggested the new date for the cult regulation of Andania, it had been assumed that the ‘reformer’ of the mysteries was an ancestor of the homonymous Mnasistratos, son of Philoxenidas, who is designated in the inscription of AD 42

<sup>14</sup> Deshours, *Mystères d’Andania*, 50–51.

<sup>15</sup> P. Themelis, “Ανασκαφή Μεσσήνης”, *Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας* 156 (2001): 74–78 (= A. Chaniotis, “Epigraphic Bulletin for Greek Religion 2004”, *Kernos* 20 (2007): 317–318, no. 268); P. Themelis, “Τα Κάθνεια καὶ ἡ Ἀνδανία”, in *Ἀνάμνημα ἔργα. Τιμητικὸς τόμος γιὰ τὸν καθηγητὴ Β.Κ. Λαμπρινουδάκη* (eds. E. Simantoni-Bournia, A.A. Laimou, L.G. Mendoni, N. Kourou; Athens: 2007), 509–528 (522–523).

<sup>16</sup> *SEG* 23.208, 54.466. See N. Deshours, “Cultes de Déméter, d’Artémis Ortheia et culte impérial à Messène (Ier s. av. notre ère—Ier s. de notre ère)”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 146 (2004) 115–127 (118–120).

<sup>17</sup> Deshours, “Cultes de Déméter”, 119, 121.

<sup>18</sup> *SEG* 23.206; Themelis, “Ανασκαφή Μεσσήνης”, 77; Themelis, “Κάθνεια”, 523.

<sup>19</sup> *SEG* 11.982.5–6; Deshours, “Cultes de Déméter”, 119.

as a worthy offspring of his family (ἀξίως τῶν προγόνων, lines 10–11) in his benefactions. Nevertheless, as the letter form of the regulation of the Andanian mysteries is in accordance with inscriptions surely dated to the first century AD,<sup>20</sup> the new date gives a greater coherence to the 'Mnasistratos dossier'.<sup>21</sup>

Let us go back to the Karneiasion and to the cult that was performed in this part of the Messenian country. Andania, which was in ruins when Pausanias visited it,<sup>22</sup> was situated in the disputed northeast part of Messenia, as attested by Strabo who, following Demetrius of Skepsis, located Andania in Arcadia.<sup>23</sup> The chronological scope of his testimony is difficult to define more precisely but the territorial problems between Arcadia and Messenia, which were already attested in a fragmentary text found in Olympia,<sup>24</sup> have recently been confirmed by an inscription brought to light in the urban centre of Messene by P. Themelis.<sup>25</sup> The new evidence is to be dated just after 182 BC, when the Messenian revolt against the Achaean *koinon* failed and the Arcadian general Philopoimen died. After the revolt, the northern cities of Andania and Pylana were included into the Achaean *koinon* and Megalopolis took the opportunity to claim possession of these cities and their respective territories, as well as two other localities unattested in any other textual source. The decree found by Themelis gives evidence of a verdict pronounced by six Milesian judges, under the supervision of the officials of the *koinon*

<sup>20</sup> On this point, see Themelis, "Κάρνεια", 522–523.

<sup>21</sup> The name Mnasistratos is mentioned once more in an inscription recording financial contributions without any context (IG 5.1.1532.11). He gives the most substantial sum of money in the recorded list of contributors. The date of this document is much discussed, as well as its possible connection with the *dossier* concerning the *oktobolos eisphora*. On this complicated issue, see L. Migeotte, "La date du relevé de l'*oktobolos eisphora*", *Topoi* 7 (1997): 51–61. If IG 5.1.1532 was dated to the first century AD, and not the first century BC as proposed by Migeotte, Mnasistratos's liberalities would be attested once more.

<sup>22</sup> Pausanias 4.33.6.

<sup>23</sup> Strabo 8.3.6, 8.3.25.

<sup>24</sup> W. Dittenberger, K. Purgold, *Olympia V: Die Inschriften von Olympia* (Berlin: Asher, 1896), no. 46 = G. Thür, H. Taeuber, *Prozessrechtliche Inschriften der griechischen Poleis: Arkadien* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994), no. 31.

<sup>25</sup> P. Themelis, "Κρίμα περὶ χώρας Μεσσηνίων καὶ Μεγαλοπολιτῶν", in *Ιστορίες για την αρχαία Αρκαδία. Proceedings of the International Symposium in Honour of James Roy, 50 χρόνια Αρχαίας (1958–2008)* (ed. G.A. Pikoulas; University of Thessaly, Stemnitsa: 2008) 211–222. I would very much like to thank P. Themelis for sending me his text before publication. Cf. C. Grandjean, *Les Messéniens de 370/69 au I<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère. Monnayage et histoire* (Athens: École française d'Athènes and Paris: De Boccard, 2003), 227–229.



gathered within the Karneiasion. The Messenian possession of this part of their territory was confirmed. The Karneiasion as meeting place was all the more appropriate as its location near Andania made it an integral part of the disputed land.

Before the discovery of this inscription, the name of the Andanian sanctuary was only attested by the regulation of the mysteries (the same form: Καρνείασιον) and by Pausanias (a slightly different form: Καρνάσιον).<sup>26</sup> The epigraphic form makes of the grove a sanctuary of Karneios, the well-known Doric deity Apollo Karneios, whose numerous sanctuaries are listed by Pausanias in the neighbouring Laconia.<sup>27</sup> As we saw, he also refers to a statue of Apollo Karneios within the grove, with some others of Hermes and Hagna, the eponymous goddess of the spring.<sup>28</sup> In the Andanian regulation, Apollo Karneios is told to receive a boar and his priestess is listed among the sacerdotal officials, who participated in the sacred meal after the sacrifice but not in the procession, perhaps because the grove was the main location of her sacerdotal office.<sup>29</sup>

Through an inscription of the early third century BC, we learn that the Karneias Leon and six *hieroi* dedicated a bronze statuette to Karneios, certainly Apollo Karneios. P. Themelis, who recently found the text at Messene, during the excavations of the theatre, underlines that this is the first direct attestation of this cult within the city.<sup>30</sup> The word 'Karneias' is glossed by Hesychius and we may infer from his testimony that Leon was a young unmarried man representing his tribe at the Karneia.<sup>31</sup> If the number of *hieroi* is based on the same division by tribe, as it also

<sup>26</sup> Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 52 (n. 16).

<sup>27</sup> Pausanias 3.21.8, 24.8, 25.10, 26.5, 26.7. In Messenia itself, at Pharai, Pausanias (4.31.1) saw another *alsos* with a spring, devoted to an Apollo whose *epiklêsis* Karneios is the result of an emendation; in fact the manuscripts give a name to the grove, which is Κάρνιον, a beautiful parallel to the Karneiasion. See Robertson, "Melanthus", 249 (n. 134).

<sup>28</sup> I do not address here in detail the problem of discrepancy between the gods listed by Pausanias and the gods attested in the Andanian regulation. On this point, see Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source*, 304–312, and review of Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, in *Kernos* 21 (2008): 337–341. See briefly below, in the conclusion of this paper.

<sup>29</sup> IG 5.1.1390 = LSCG 65.97. See Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 122–123. I assume that this Karneios is the same as Apollo Karneios at lines 34 and 69. *Contra* Robertson, "Melanthus", 249. On another sanctuary of Karneios at Messene, see below.

<sup>30</sup> Themelis, "Ανασκαφή Μεσσήνης", 73; Chaniotis, "Epigraphic Bulletin 2004", no. 268; P. Themelis, "Κάρνεια", 509–528.

<sup>31</sup> Hesychius, ζ 838, s.v. Καρνέαι. See Themelis, "Ανασκαφή Μεσσήνης", 73; idem, "Κάρνεια", 515.

seems to be the case for the *hieroi* of the mysteries,<sup>32</sup> it implies that there were thirty of them (six from each of Messene's five tribes). In his commentary on the inscription, P. Themelis made a direct connection between these *hieroi* and those who were in charge of the organisation of the mysteries. Therefore, he considered that they were men selected by lot among prominent Messenians and initiated in the mysteries of Andania.<sup>33</sup>

The status of *hieroi* and *hierai*, attested in Laconia as well as in Messenia, is a controversial issue, because the evidence is scant—except for the Andanian regulation.<sup>34</sup> It is not certain whether the *hieroi/hierai* in Messene had exactly the same meaning as those attested in Laconia.<sup>35</sup> Be that as it may, Messenian *hieroi* seem to have been temporary agents drawn by lot in each of the five Doric tribes to perform a precise task within the context of a definite cult.

As far as the dedication of Leon and the *hieroi*, on the one hand, the Andanian regulation, on the other, are concerned, it seems highly probable that the main concerns of these annual practitioners of the divine were the celebration of the Karneia and the performance of the mysteries respectively.<sup>36</sup> As the dedication dates to the early third century BC, it invalidates the hypothesis that the creation of a college of *hieroi* in the Andanian regulation was made necessary by the fact that Mnasistratos

<sup>32</sup> IG V 1, 1390 = LSCG 65.7: ... και ἄλλον ἀντὶ τούτου κλαρωσάτω ἐκ τᾶς αὐτᾶς φυλᾶς, '(...) let draw by lot another one (i.e. a *hieros*) from the same tribe'.

<sup>33</sup> Themelis, "Ἀνασκαφή Μεσσηνίας", 73; idem, "Κάρνεια", 515.

<sup>34</sup> The whole evidence and historiographical dossier were clearly provided and discussed in 2002 by P. Brulé and L. Piolot, "La mémoire des pierres à Sparte. Mourir au féminin: couches tragiques ou femmes *hierai*? (Plutarque, *Vie de Lycurgue*, 27, 3)", *Revue des études grecques* 115 (2002): 485–517 (499–515), on which I build this part of my argument.

<sup>35</sup> It seems quite certain that religious interaction took place, since some important cults, which are also attested in Laconia, are found in Messene at each stage of its history. This is certain at least in the case of Apollo Karneios, Artemis Ortheia and the Dioscuri: R. Parker, "Spartan Religion", *Classical Sparta. Techniques behind Her Success* (ed. A. Powell; London: Routledge, 1989), 142–172 (145, 151). The cult of the Dioscuri has been attested on the site of Messene since the archaic period: P. Themelis, "The Sanctuary of Demeter and the Dioscuri at Messene", *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Archaeological Evidence* (ed. R. Hägg; Stockholm: Swedish Institute at Athens, 1998), 159–186 (183–185). For Ortheia, see P. Themelis, "Artemis Ortheia at Messene. The Epigraphical and Archaeological Evidence", in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice*, 101–122.

<sup>36</sup> I owe the expression 'practitioners of the divine' to B. Dignas and K. Trampedach, in the epilogue to *Practitioners of the Divine*, 231–242. The expression encapsulates all the people who held an office related to the divine sphere, at the private or the official level.

had given up his office of hierophant.<sup>37</sup> Drawing citizens by lot in each tribe to designate *hieroi* was probably a normal procedure before performing a festival that involved a lot of people and a perfect organisation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to underline the relationship of these temporary teams of officials to the sacred sphere, implied by the name of their office: since the mysteries included initiates of both sexes, and stage settings, in which women seem to have had a role to play, *hierai*, who were women as well as girls, were added to the *hieroi*. The girl-*hierai* had to drive the carriages carrying baskets with the sacred objects.<sup>38</sup>

P. Themelis believes that the *hieroi* of the early third century BC were initiates of the Andanian mysteries. Such a conclusion is based on two assumptions: 1) the Karneia of the early third century BC were held in the Karneiasion; 2) mysteries were performed there at this time. The statue of Karneios dedicated by Leon and the *hieroi* was erected within the city, but this could have been the urban counterpart of the rural one, and we may subscribe to the first assumption.<sup>39</sup> The second one is weaker, as shown above in the discussion about the feeble credibility of the ‘myth-historical’ reconstruction of Messenian origins. Nothing in the inscription of Leon implies that his six co-dedicators were initiates of Andania, unless we believe that the mysteries were held at this time within the grove, a point which still has to be demonstrated or disproved, addressing in particular Mnasistratos’s status of hierophant, to which I shall return.

The host of details provided by the 26 sections of the Andanian regulation is rather uncommon and the text seems therefore to elaborate something exceptional by its novelty. As the beginning of the inscription is probably missing, we are unable to reconstruct the civic procedure of

<sup>37</sup> Deshours, *Mystères d’Andania*, 82, who connects *hieroi* and *hierai* with ‘secret initiation’, since some *hierai* are attested for Artemis in Messene and interpreted as ‘initiées dans le culte d’Artémis Ortheia’.

<sup>38</sup> IG 5.1.1390 = LSCG 65.24, 29–30 (see above).

<sup>39</sup> In the Andanian regulation, we are told that the *hieroi* and the priest (of the gods of the mysteries) have to receive the oath pronounced by the *hierai* the day before the mysteries in the sanctuary of Karneios (IG 5.1.1390 = LSCG 65.7–8: τὰς δὲ ἱεράς ὄρχιζέτω ὁ ἱερεὺς καὶ οἱ ἱεροὶ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ | τοῦ Καρνείου τῷ πρότερον ἀμέραι τῶν μυστηρίων τὸν αὐτὸν ὄρκον . . .). It is generally supposed that this sanctuary is another way to designate the Karneiasion but it would be more convenient to locate this sanctuary at Messene, since the procession certainly went from the city to the Karneiasion. Two successive trips of twenty kilometres on two successive days seem to be unlikely. If I am right in locating this sanctuary of Karneios at Messene, then the oath attests to the connection between the rural sanctuary and the urban one, where the statue dedicated by Leon was erected.

its elaboration or to know if the *diagramma* was referring to the Argive oracle about the ancestral sacrifice to the Great gods Karneioi and the *teletê*. Be that as it may, let us compare the text to other cult regulations of the Hellenistic and imperial periods. In many texts of this kind, we can discern three layers of prescriptions:<sup>40</sup> 1) a hard core of ritual practices generically designated as 'ancestral customs' and 'customary norms', which does not tolerate deviation and which gives a festival its particular colour; all these *nomima* and *patria* do not have any identified mortal author or inventor and are non-negotiable; 2) a second layer, which depends on *nomos*, consists of local instructions regarding, for example, the sacrificial process: the number and gender of the victims, the parts reserved for the participants, the exclusion of some categories of persons, and so on; the sumptuary regulations are a part of this layer too; 3) a third level consisting in stage directions and concerning all the ritual elements, which can be discussed and changed to modify the impact of a ritual process.

Turning to the Andanian text, a first observation deserves consideration. We do not find any word referring to ancestral customs in the largely preserved part of the inscription. The semantic field of *πάτριος* is not attested. As far as *νομίζειν* is concerned, we find one occurrence: in the nineteenth section concerning the sacred meal, the text refers to the meat to be taken by the *hieroi* for the dinner,

once the *nomima* for the gods have been removed from each (sacrificial animal conducted in the procession).<sup>41</sup>

Only the sacrificial part to be offered to the gods depended on the customary norms and did not have to be explicitly mentioned. This seems to be the only issue pertaining to the first layer of prescriptions discerned above. Therefore, we need to go back to the oracle delivered by Apollo to find this register with the distinction made between 'the sacrifice', which the god recommends offering in a beautiful way *kata ta patria*, and the *teletê*, for the celebration of which all oracular command is lost.<sup>42</sup> As the expression 'the sacrifices and the mysteries' is a recurrent one

<sup>40</sup> I owe the analysis of the 'sacred laws' in three layers to the paper of A. Chaniotis, "The Dynamics of Ritual Norms in Greek Cult", *La norme en matière religieuse en Grèce ancienne* (ed. P. Brulé; Liège: Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, 2009): 91–105.

<sup>41</sup> *IG* 5.1.1390 = *LSCG* 65.95–96: Ἱεροῦ δείπνου· οἱ ἱεροὶ ἀπὸ τῶν θυμάτων τῶν | ἀγομένων ἐν ταῖς πομπαῖ ἀφελόντες ἀφ' ἑκάστου τὰ νόμι[μα] | τοῖς θεοῖς [τὰ λοι]πὰ | κρέα καταχρησάσθωσαν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν δείπνον μετὰ τῶν ἱερῶν ...

<sup>42</sup> See above, n. 9.

in the Andanian regulation,<sup>43</sup> we may suspect that such a combination reflects the Apollinian order, even if the mere *thysia* for the Great gods has become the *thysiai*—probably for all the gods to whom an animal has to be supplied. We may infer that the single connection of the ‘custom’ with the divine sacrificial part is in accordance with this background. On the second level—the ‘*nomos*’ level—we may bring together the vast majority of the thematic sections concerning ritual aspects,<sup>44</sup> putting aside the financial and spatial dispositions, which are only indirectly connected with any ‘ritual *nomos*’.<sup>45</sup> On the third and last layer, we only find the procession, which is carefully organized, with each participant in his/her due place: Mnasistratos at the head of the retinue, followed by the different priests and officials, the girls *hierai*, driving the carriages with the sacred objects, other sacerdotal figures, and then the *hierai* and the *hieroi*. The exact location of the animals is not determined but they must be escorted in the procession.<sup>46</sup> If these mysteries are a restoration of an ancestral custom closely related to the foundation of Messene and, more generally, to the Messenian identity, as advocated by scholars who blindly follow Pausanias, the predominance of the second and third levels with almost no reference to the first, the ‘ancestral custom’, is puzzling.

Let us finally return to a couple of elements which were quickly touched upon at the beginning of our discussion. In the second section, entitled παραδόσιος, ‘transmission’, are mentioned, as we saw, ‘the capsule and the books’ which Mnasistratos gave, together with ‘whatever else may be arranged for the sake of the mysteries’ (lines 11–12). In the seventeenth section, entitled περὶ τᾶς κρήνας, ‘concerning the spring’, the text prescribes that ‘Mnasistratos will be in charge of the spring named Hagna by the ancient writings and of the statue near the spring, as long as he is alive; he will take part in the sacrifice and the mysteries with the *hieroi* and receive what the sacrificers will display on the table near the spring and the skins of the sacrificial animals.’<sup>47</sup> Books and writings are referred

<sup>43</sup> IG 5.1.1390 = LSCG 65.39, 74, 75, 85–86, 183–184.

<sup>44</sup> The oaths (§ 1, 5), the transmission of the texts and the *impedimenta* used in the mysteries (§ 2), the different headdresses and garments of the participants (§ 3–4), the supply of the animals (§ 12), the punishment and penalty in case of infringement or offence (§ 7–10, 14–15, 23, 25), the designation of the musicians (§ 13), the honorific parts of Mnasistratos (§ 17–19).

<sup>45</sup> Financial implications and expectations (§ 11), refuge for slaves (§ 16), constructions within the grove (§ 18), market organization (§ 20), water supply and baths (§ 21–22), designation of the civic officials (§ 25–26).

<sup>46</sup> § 6, lines 28–34.

<sup>47</sup> § 17, lines 84–86: περὶ τᾶς κρήνας. τᾶς δὲ κρήνας τᾶς ὄνο(ι)μασμένας διὰ τῶν

to, but nothing in the text justifies any assimilation between the 'ancient writings' and the *biblia* transmitted by Mnasistratos. On the contrary, the expression ἀρχαῖα ἔγγραφα would be more appropriate in reference to an old inscribed stele which would have named the spring within the Karneasion itself or, perhaps, an inscription engraved on the basis of the statue erected near the spring.<sup>48</sup> Concerning the *biblia*, let us point out that they have no special quality: 'antiquity' or even 'sacrality' are not associated with them in the regulation. Moreover, the *hiera mystika* driven by the girls (*parthenoi*) during the procession do not appear in the section 'transmission'. The 'sacred objects' do not seem to be a part of the gift made by Mnasistratos and to be transmitted to the successive colleges of *hieroi*.<sup>49</sup> If the *biblia* are not ancestral heritage nor a precious deposition kept in a sacerdotal family for centuries, what might they be and where do they come from? No firm answer is available and hypothesis will be the only way to tackle these questions, taking into consideration the notion of 'ritual dynamics',<sup>50</sup> which implies considering ritual as cultural and historical matter, submitted to evolution, change or even creation.

In this respect, we may infer from the absence of any reference to antiquity or custom for the books that they could quite easily have resulted from an erudite investigation<sup>51</sup> managed by the wealthy Mnasistratos to promote and increase the prestige of the ancient cults of the Karneasion—the traditional sacrifice confirmed by the oracle—in a more up-to-date ritual since, in the early imperial period, mysteries were in vogue and displayed in new contexts.<sup>52</sup> Lucian gave us the most

---

ἀρχαίων ἐγγράφων Ἄγνας καὶ τοῦ γε[γε]νημένου ποτὶ τῆι κρᾶναι ἀγάλματος τὰν ἐπιμέλειαν ἔχέτω Μνασίστρατος, ἕως ἂν ζεῖ, καὶ μετεχέτω μετὰ τῶν ἱερῶν τὰν τε θυσιᾶν καὶ τῶν μυστηρίων, καὶ ὅσα καὶ οἱ θύοντες ποτὶ τῆι κρᾶναι τραπεζῶντι καὶ τῶν θυμάτων τὰ δέσματα λαμβανέτω Μνασίστρατος.

<sup>48</sup> LSJ *s.v.* ἐγγράφω: 1) make incisions into; 2) mark in or on, paint on; 3) engrave, inscribe.

<sup>49</sup> As implied in Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 71 and 223, who speaks of 'sacred books' and 'sacred objects' given by Mnasistratos as a hierophant who had inherited them. See also Deshours, "Cultes de Déméter", 125.

<sup>50</sup> The concept was first coined by A. Chaniotis, "Ritual Dynamics: the Boiotian Festival of the Daidala", *Kykeon. Studies in Honour of H.S. Versnel* (eds. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff, H.W. Singor, F.T. van Straten, J.H.M. Strubbe; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 23–48. See also the essays edited by E. Stavrianopoulou, *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World* (Liège: Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> On these investigations, see A. Chaniotis, *Historie und Historiker in den griechischen Inschriften* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1988).

<sup>52</sup> Robertson, "Melanthus", 251.

elaborated—and caricatural—example of such a creation with the figure of his false prophet, Alexander of Abonouteichos who, among many other things, established a mystery cult constructed as a *bricolage* of pre-existing traditions.<sup>53</sup> Besides such an extreme example, ritual innovation or adaptation were the main trends of the imperial cult in the Greek world, for which mysteries were produced.<sup>54</sup> One would not imagine for these rituals the ancestral transmission of sacred *biblia*, even though we must not underestimate the ritual expertise of the people in charge of such elaborations. Another example is contemporary with the Andanian regulation. An inscription found in Cremna in Pisidia honours the hereditary priest of Artemis Ephesia.<sup>55</sup> One member of the priest's family—probably his grandfather—seems to have introduced the cult and the mysteries celebrated in honour of Artemis.<sup>56</sup> These mysteries are said to have been 'found' and transmitted further within the family (τὰ εὐρεθέντα | καὶ παραδοθέντα ἱεροτελεῖ μυστή|ρια τῆς θ(ε)οῦ, lines 6–8). We do not know how they were 'found' or what their content or form was,<sup>57</sup> but the working-out of these mysteries was a recent phenomenon, which did not imply a long and ancestral tradition.

In order to reinforce these arguments, let us recall the background of euergetism in this time. It is all the less credible to consider Mnasistratos as a hierophant who would have given up his office since the contemporaneous tendencies in the devolution of sacerdotal duties point in the opposite direction. For example, at Gythion in Laconia, in the first century BC, the lifelong priesthood of Apollo was transmitted to an *euergetês* and to his son.<sup>58</sup> At that time, financial support was closely connected with ritual investment. In the neighbouring Arcadia, some decades before, we are told that two women of Mantinea, Nikippa and Phaena, were lauded

<sup>53</sup> See A. Chaniotis, "Old Wine in a New Skin: Tradition and Innovation in the Cult Foundation of Alexander of Abonouteichos", in *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient World* (ed. E. Dąbrowa; Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2002), 67–85.

<sup>54</sup> A. Chaniotis, "Der Kaiserkult im Osten des Römischen Reiches", in *Die Praxis der Herrscherverehrung in Rom und seinen Provinzen* (eds. H. Cancik, K. Hitzl; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 3–28 (19, with bibliography at n. 63).

<sup>55</sup> G.H.R. Horsley, "The Mysteries of Artemis Ephesia in Pisidia: A New Inscribed Relief", *Anatolian Studies* 42 (1992): 119–150 (121 for the text); A. Chaniotis, "Priests as Ritual Experts in the Greek World", in *Practicioners of the Divine*, 17–34 (31).

<sup>56</sup> Horsley, "Mysteries of Artemis Ephesia", 123.

<sup>57</sup> See the discussion in Horsley, "Mysteries of Artemis Ephesia", 142, and his comparison with Andania.

<sup>58</sup> *IG* 5.1144 = *LSCG* 61.

for their generous support and active participation in the religious life of their city. Nikippa assisted the priestess of Kore in many respects: in particular, she took care of the housing and the proper performance of the mysteries.<sup>59</sup> These women were not priestesses but closely associated with ritual performance.

The figure of Mnasistratos presents a combination of generosity and ritual initiative as well as expertise, which implied his concrete participation in the festival celebrated in the Karneiasion and his lifelong association with the cult of Hagna. He invested a substantial financial contribution in the organization of the first ceremony. Moreover, he probably structured a *teletê* on the basis of existing cults and erudite exploration. In this sense, he was the founder of the cult. The establishment of these mysteries had, therefore, to be endorsed by an oracular command and the engraved Argive oracle gave him the convenient status of the 'one who teaches rites', *hierophantês*.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, as far as the Messenian epigraphic dossier connected to Mnasistratos is concerned, he is never called hierophant, which is a strong indication that the title was more probably an honorific mention inside the epigraphic display of the oracular consultation.<sup>61</sup> Mnasistratos did not belong to any sacerdotal family clan of hierophants before the Andanian regulation and he did not hold this specific office afterwards.

Some inscriptions dating from the first and second centuries AD have to be considered before concluding this analysis.<sup>62</sup> The first one associates, on the same altar, the Great gods [*Kar*]neioi *Epiphaneis*, the

---

<sup>59</sup> IG 5.2.265. See M. Jost, "Évergétisme et tradition religieuse à Mantinée au Ier siècle avant J.-C.", in *Splendissima civitas. Études d'histoire romaine en hommage à F. Jacques* (eds. A. Chastagnol, S. Demougin, C. Lepelley; Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 193–200.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. H. Wankel, *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Habelt, 1979), no. 10: in the imperial period, an inscription reproduces two selections from an earlier text, where an official called a hierophant must teach what has to be done for each god and explain how to sing the paean at the sacrifice, the procession, and the *pannychis*, which 'has to be performed according to ancestral custom'. In this text, the hierophant is an official bearing the title, which does not seem to be the case for Mnasistratos. But the parallel is interesting since the qualification is clearly associated to ritual expertise and not particularly with the performance of mysteries.

<sup>61</sup> A very fragmentary oracular response from Claros has recently been found in Miletos and offers the mention of a hierophant. Unfortunately the stone is too damaged to give any element of comparison with the Argive oracular order. See SEG 52.1159 = N. Ehrhardt, W. Günther, "Funde aus Milet XV. Neue Orakelinschriften", *Archäologische Anzeiger* (2002): 47–57 (56, no. 4).

<sup>62</sup> They are analysed by Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 218–220.



*Patroioi (theoi)* and the Emperor Augustus.<sup>63</sup> The text can be dated to the last two decades of Augustus's reign.<sup>64</sup> Another text, dated to the second century AD, honours Tiberius Claudius Crispianus who had been *hieros* of the Great gods.<sup>65</sup> Finally, a dedication found in Olympia and honouring the Messenian P. Aelius Ariston *hierophantês* dates to the Hadrianic period and indicates that this title could have been held by a Messenian at that time.<sup>66</sup>

The Andanian regulation does not refer to the imperial cult, but the inscription of the gods *synbômoi* implies a relationship between the emperor and the Great gods, which is a common way of including him into the traditional pantheon of a city. If the new date of the regulation is correct—AD 24—the association between the Great gods and the emperor is older than the initiative of Mnasistratos and could partly explain it. We may also understand his will to increase the impact of ritual performances that connected the city with an ancient rural sanctuary, in a place which might have been temporarily lost by Messene in several moments of its history. Unfortunately we do not have the detail of these episodes.

The story told by Pausanias was full of miracles, premonitory dreams and powerful symbols. His positive evaluation of the Andanian mysteries (the second ones after the Eleusinian *teletê*) had a great impact on the modern evaluation of their antiquity and of the place they occupied in the Messenian memory and identity. A major part of the scholarship on the subject has been obsessed with the necessity to reconcile the presence of Great gods in the Andanian regulation and the Great goddesses exalted by Pausanias visiting the Karnasian grove. Whatever solution may be found on this point, Mnasistratos has never hold the office of hierophant descending from the priests who were supposed to have taken refuge in Eleusis during the First Messenian war. He was a rich Messenian of

<sup>63</sup> SEG 43.163, with the restitution of Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 218: [Θεῶν]ν Μεγάλων | [Καρ]νειῶν Ἐπιφανῶν | συνβόμων Πατρῶ(ι)ων | καὶ Σεβαστοῦ Καίσαρος.

<sup>64</sup> L. Migeotte, "Réparation des monuments publics à Messène au temps d'Auguste", *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 109 (1985) 597–607 (604); Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 218–219.

<sup>65</sup> SEG 11.984. Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 219, who interprets the genitive plural Μεγάλων Θεῶν as referring to the *Megalai theai*, as attested by Pausanias visiting the Karnasion grove.

<sup>66</sup> Dittenberger and Purgold, *Inscriptionen von Olympia*, no. 459. Deshours, *Mystères d'Andania*, 220.

the early imperial period, whose family actively took part in the political and cultural life of the city, and probably also an enlightened erudite, whose interests in ritual topics gave a new life to the festival held at the Karneiasion. In this very sense, he was the hierophant named by the Argive Apollo.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Just like Alexander of Abonouteichos, who was a hierophant in the mysteries he created. I would like to thank Angelos Chaniotis for calling my attention to this fact, and for commenting on a first draft of this paper. I am further very much obliged to Bénédicte Ledent and Elizabeth L'Estrange (University of Liège) for improving the English text. All the remaining errors are mine.