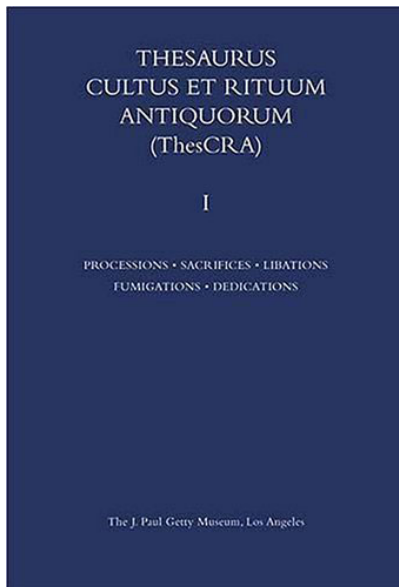


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Lambrinoudakis, Vassilis, and Jean Balty, eds.

Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum (ThesCRA), Vol. 1: Processions, Sacrifices, Libations, Fumigations, Dedications

Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004. Pp. xix + 612 + CD-ROM. Hardcover. \$225.00. ISBN 0892367881.

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The book reviewed here is the first volume of a monumental work that will eventually comprise five volumes: the *Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum (ThesCRA)*, published by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and by the Fondation pour le *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, Basel. In a certain sense it is a complement to the *LIMC* (published 1981–99 in eight double volumes [text and plates]), which presents primarily iconographic (also numismatic) source material with regard to deities and mythological figures, mainly of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman antiquity. The *ThesCRA*, on the other hand, focuses on the “human” side of ancient Greek, Etruscan, and Roman religions, that is, on cult and rituals.

The structure of the *ThesCRA* was developed by the late P. Bruneau. It serves to present the source material in a systematic manner and thus to make orientation and comparisons easier than in a conventional, alphabetically arranged lexicon. Fundamentally, the *ThesCRA* is subdivided into two great parts. The first three volumes deal with the “Level of Dynamic Elements, of Activities.” Thus, the first volume (2005) contains chapters on processions, sacrifices, libation, fumigations, and dedications; the second volume (2005) contains chapters on purification, foundation rites, initiation, heroization and apotheosis, banquet, dance, music, and rites and activities related to cult images. The third volume will contain chapters on divination, gestures and acts of prayer, gestures and acts of

veneration, *hikesia* (supplication), *asylia*, oath, malediction, profanation, and magic, as well as an addendum to the second volume on foundation rites. The fourth and fifth volumes are devoted to the “Level of Static Elements.” The fourth volume will contain chapters on cult places and representations of cult places, and the fifth will contain chapters on cult personnel and cult instruments. A third level dealing with the religious dimension of everyday life in the Greek and Roman worlds (including marriage and funerary rites) is intended and mentioned in the introduction to the first volume but does not belong to the present outline of the *ThesCRA*. Depending on the provenance or choice of the authors, the chapters and sections (or parts of sections) are written in English, French, German, or Italian.

In the first volume, the chapters on processions (1–58) and on sacrifices (59–235) are subdivided into sections about the respective elements in Greek, Etruscan, and Roman religions. The shorter chapters on libation (237–53) and fumigations (255–68) are not subdivided into separate sections. The final chapter on dedications (269–450), however, comprises sections about dedications in Greece, Cyprus and ancient Italy, and the Roman empire. The sections consist of several parts, each with an introductory essay and a catalogue that is subdivided into literary sources, epigraphic sources, papyrological sources, *realia*, and iconographical sources with detailed descriptions. After this text section—which also contains some illustrations—there is a plate section (139 pages) with a representative selection of artifacts and iconographic source material that is referred to in the text section. The plate section is, of course, a compromise between the ideal of comprehensiveness (the work is called “Thesaurus”) and editorial practicability. The authors present many more artifacts and artistic representations, photos of which can be found in the *LIMC* or in other publications indicated in the catalogues. Thus, on a first level the reader gets basic information about certain aspects of particular ancient religions (e.g. “processions in ancient Greek religion”), which is illustrated by the ancient texts and by the selection of *realia* and artistic representations contained in the volume. On a second level, the catalogue provides references to and descriptions of further material that cannot be displayed in the volume but nevertheless is instructive for the topic.

The treatment of the different subjects manifests a wide range of methodological approaches; for example, the chapter on sacrifices is characterized by interdisciplinary cooperation between the analyses of source texts (philology), of artistic representations (archaeology and history of art), and of the remains of sacrificial animals (archaeozoology). The variety of approaches also becomes evident in the structures of the single chapters. There is no standard outline, but the scholars responsible for each chapter have organized the material in the manner judged appropriate. While the section on Greek processions is organized according to the honored gods, heroes, or mortals, the section on

Roman processions presents the source material with regard to participants and procedures (different types of processions and kinds of movement).

The structure outlined above, however, also invites some critical questions: The *ThesCRA*, in continuation of the *LIMC*, is mostly confined to Greek and Roman (“classical”) religions; Etruscan religion is treated because of its impact on Roman religion (as already in the *LIMC*). Yet Egyptian religion and its spread in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds play only a marginal role (the same is true for other oriental religions; in the *LIMC* they are called “peripheral”). Thus in the section on Roman processions, the cult of Isis is mentioned under “E. Andere Prozessionen” along with processions in the imperial cult. In the section on Greek sacrifices, two representations of sacrifices to Ammon and to Nephthys and Osiris (2.a.277) are found under the heading “Dieux et héros mineurs.” The chapters on libation and fumigation treat these rites for ancient Egypt separately (2.b.D and 2.c.D). The large chapter on dedications, however, mentions dedications for Egyptian deities only in a highly selective and scattered way in the section on Roman dedications (e.g. 2.d.740, 753, 927). In the introduction to that chapter, E. Simon writes: “Spezielle Probleme hätte auch Ägypten geboten, das in römischer Zeit mehr noch als im Hellenismus zu den Ursprüngen seiner Religion zurückkehrte. Das musste hier entfallen, doch sind ägyptisch-hellenistische Kulte (Isis, Sarapis) in einem Teil der Beiträge berücksichtigt.” Particular treatment of Egyptian religion would surely have made the *ThesCRA* too large. The section on Roman dedications manifests still another difficulty: it treats dedications in Italy and in the provinces of the Roman empire, which results in overlaps with the indigenous religions. Thus, dedications to Greek deities in Greek sanctuaries such as Epidauros are treated in the section on Roman dedications, when they are from the imperial epoch (e.g., 2.d.722, 729). This indicates a problem of definition: What do we understand by “Roman religion”? To state the question in polar terms, Is it the cult of the traditional gods and goddesses of the city of Rome, or is it generally religion in the Roman empire? Clear-cut solutions hardly seem possible.

These two points, however, are by no means intended as criticism of faults or weaknesses of the *ThesCRA*. They rather indicate fields where the multifaceted phenomenon of religion in the Mediterranean area in antiquity refuses to be squeezed into a single schema. So the scholars responsible for the *ThesCRA* deserve even more respect and admiration for organizing the huge amount of source material in such a way that it serves not only as a repertorium for experts but also as an easily accessible and serious source of information for scholars from neighboring disciplines. Of course, due to the price (\$1,215.00 for the complete work), most scholars will be content to have the library own it—but for the libraries of institutions that are concerned with classics and/or religious studies in the broadest sense, it is a “must.”

This leads to a question that should be asked when this work is reviewed in the *RBL*: Why is it important for biblical studies? Since it is widely accepted that knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts is necessary to understand biblical texts and other documents of early Judaism and early Christianity, exegetes also (must) address ancient religions—often without being experts in that field. The *ThesCRA*, due to its systematic outline, offers solid basic information and at the same time lets the sources speak for themselves, thus showing a great diversity in the religions of the ancient Mediterranean world. This is an important corrective with regard to some oversimplifications that sometimes happen in biblical scholarship, such as the general-purpose term “paganism” or the careless use of the compound “Greco-Roman culture.” Biblical (particularly New Testament) scholars will find a rich and usable treasure of source material for reading biblical texts in their religious and cultural contexts and for better understanding the world in which “our” texts were composed.