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## INTRODUCTION

ANDRÉ LARDINOIS, JOSINE BLOK AND MARC VAN DER POEL

This volume contains a selection of papers presented at the conference 'Orality, Literacy and Religion in the Ancient World,' hosted by the Classics Department of the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, in collaboration with the Department of Ancient History of Utrecht University in July 2008. This conference was the eighth in a series of biennial conferences on orality and literacy in the ancient world and the first one ever held in Europe. Earlier conferences were hosted in Tasmania, Australia (1994), Durban, South Africa (1996), Wellington, New Zealand (1998), Columbia, Missouri (2000), Melbourne, Australia (2002), Winnipeg, Canada (2004) and Auckland, New Zealand (2006).<sup>1</sup> After Nijmegen (2008), the ninth conference was held in Canberra, Australia (2010), while the tenth meeting will be organized in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 2012.

As of the fifth conference in Melbourne it had become customary to connect the general theme of orality and literacy with a more specific topic, but the interaction between orality, literacy and religion had not been addressed yet. We therefore expected that this topic would meet with great interest. Moreover, we could make use of an old convent, Soeterbeeck, outside the town of Nijmegen, as a suitable place to host the conference. The alluring topic and location attracted over 80 abstracts, from which 30 papers were selected to be presented at the conference. In addition, Rosalind Thomas, author of *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989) and *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1992), agreed to deliver the key-note address. Of these papers twenty are included in this volume. They cover five, partly overlapping, areas of study: Greek literature, Greek law, Greek and Roman religious texts, Roman literature and Early Christian literature.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed description of these conferences and their proceedings, all published by Brill in Leiden, see the introduction of Anne Mackay in *Orality, Literacy, Memory in the Ancient Greek and Roman World* (Leiden 2008). The editors would like to thank the contributors for their valuable comments to parts of this introduction, most especially Niall Slater and Evelyn van 't Wout.

A prevalent view in the current scholarship on ancient religions holds that state religion was primarily performed and transmitted in oral forms, whereas writing came to be associated with secret, private and marginal cults, especially in the Greek world.<sup>2</sup> In Roman times, religions would have become more and more bookish, starting with the Sibylline books and the *Annales Maximi* of the Roman priests and culminating in the canonical gospels of the Christians. It is the aim of this volume to modify this view or, at least, to challenge it. Surveying the variety of ways in which different types of texts and oral discourse were involved in ancient Greek and Roman religions, the contributions to this volume show that oral and written forms were in use for both Greek and Roman state and private religions. To give but a few examples: one of the first surviving uses of writing in ancient Greece was the recording of secular and sacred *polis* laws (Ch. 5), while the so-called “golden tablets” of the obscure, Orphic sects reproduce oral communications in writing (Ch. 10); a relatively late Church Father, such as Augustine, composed a psalm for oral delivery (Ch. 20), while the Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus could contemplate in a written treatise the significance of the ‘unknowable names’ of the gods, whose correct pronunciations were preserved in spoken ritual (Ch. 14).

Oral and written communications existed side by side and interacted intermittently in Greek polis religion and in the religions and philosophies of the late Roman empire. It seems that from the earliest use of writing the ancients realized its potential to preserve and circulate words beyond the immediate presence of the speaker, and applied it to reach these effects or deliberately decided not to do so. The efficacy traditionally associated with oral forms of communication remained unchallenged and in several cases was drawn upon when transformed into a written form. In other words, the appreciation of oral and written forms in the religious life of the Greeks and Romans had less to do with the kinds of religion they practised than with the differing effects they ascribed to these modes of communication.

The first set of papers in the volume focuses on the role of religion and the divine in Greek literature. It is well known that Herodotus credits Homer, together with Hesiod, with creating the image of the Greek gods (Hdt. 2.53). For our theme, it is interesting to note that Homer did so first in an oral poem, probably composed to be performed at a

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Albert Henrichs, “Hieroi Logoi” and “Hierai Bibloi”: The (Un)Written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece, *HSCP* 101 (2003) 207–266.

religious festival, which soon acquired a written form that continued to educate the Greeks about their gods long after the archaic era. Elizabeth Minchin (Ch. 1) examines the way the gods of Homer's *Iliad* speak, from the perspective of discourse analysis. In considering the words of the gods as verbal behaviour she studies the ways in which they communicate with each other: how status, generational distinctions, gender, and divinity itself are reflected in their speech, and how social alignments are managed—and disrupted—through talk. She concludes that, with some small but significant exceptions, the gods use the same speech genres as humans do, thus emphasizing their anthropomorphic guises.

Fiona Hobden in her contribution about the Greek symposion (Ch. 2) reminds us how difficult it is to separate sacred from profane types of behaviour in ancient Greece. She argues that in the search for understanding the political and social significance of the Greek symposion, the religious dimensions of the event are often underplayed. Yet these drinking parties began with libations and prayers, their participants sang hymns and told tales of heroic endeavour, and the *andrōn* was decorated with images of the divine and mythological realm, preserved today on the painted drinking vessels used by the symposiasts. Whatever political alignments, social relationships, and personal or communal identities were negotiated in the symposion, it was not a secular affair. Rather, as she argues, symposiasts were imbedded within a web of divine invocation, celebration, and association stimulated by their oral performances of poetry and their readings of the surrounding imagery, especially the figured pottery, which further collapsed the boundaries between the sympotic and mythological domains.

Maria Pavlou (Ch. 3) emphasizes the power of performed poetry to bridge the gap between the present and the mythological past. Examining the way in which Pindar registers the relationship between past and present in his cult songs, especially in his *Paeans* and *Dithyrambs*, she refers to Mircea Eliade's anthropological study *The Eternal Return* (1945), in which he argues that myths and rituals do not merely commemorate but re-enact the religious past (*illud tempus*). Pavlou argues that Pindar explicitly comments on the periodic and recurrent character of the festivals within which his poems are performed, and emphasizes their continuous repetition since their first occurrence back in mythical times. Moreover, Pindar often collapses the quantitative distance between the mythical event celebrated and the ongoing ritual, thus inviting his audience to transcend both time and space. Finally, Pavlou contrasts this fusion

of time frames with Pindar's treatment of time in his *Epinicia*, where he also makes a connection between the mythical world and the world of the victor, but presents the two time periods as more distinct. Unexplored, because beyond the scope of this paper, is the question of what the effect of this poetry might have been once it was written down. Initially the written forms of Pindar's poems must have facilitated the reperformances of the songs.<sup>3</sup> Later, in Hellenistic and Roman times, they helped Greek readers to bridge the gap between their own present and the classical past of Pindar, which had become for them a new kind of *illud tempus*.

In the fourth and last contribution to the section on Greek literature, Ruth Scodel examines the correspondences between the mixture of mystery religion and allegorical and philosophical interpretations found in the so-called Derveni papyrus and in some of Euripides' tragedies. P. Derveni is a fourth-century copy of a fifth-century discussion of a sixth-century poem attributed to Orpheus, and is already in itself of immense interest for the connections between orality and literacy in classical Greek philosophy and religion. Its author's faith lies in natural philosophy, but his book interprets a canonical, but apparently esoteric Orphic text. In some of his tragedies, Euripides exhibits a similar interest in mystery religions, books and natural philosophy. Still, as Scodel points out, these works were produced for very different audiences. Whereas Euripides' plays were orally performed at a state festival for a citywide audience, the Derveni papyrus appears to have been written for a select readership. Again it seems hard to draw any firm distinctions between the interests of public and private cults and the subjects of oral and written forms of communication.

The next set of four papers focuses on Greek law. Among the numerous ancient Greek laws and decrees extant in writing, the majority by far are inscribed in stone. The conditions under which these inscriptions were made, their subsequent histories as objects, and the problems of historical and textual interpretation they pose, differ fundamentally from those of literary texts. In the late nineteenth century, H. von Prott and L. Ziehen selected and published inscribed laws dealing with religious matters such as sacrifice, purification and management of divine property under the name *Leges Graecorum sacrae*. A new collection was made by F. Sokolowski (1955, 1962, 1966) under the title *Lois sacrées* and

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. the contributions of B. Currie and T. Hubbard in *Oral Performance and its Context*, ed. C.J. Mackie (Leiden 2004).

recently E. Lupu published a fresh edition of several key texts.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as Lupu argues and Robert Parker reminds us in a contribution to a volume on Greek law, “sacred law” refers to neither a notion nor a practice in ancient Greece; the Greeks made no difference between laws on sacred matters and other laws.<sup>5</sup> It may be convenient for our present academic purposes to employ a label for a subset of texts that elicit a range of particular questions, but we should be aware that the definition of this subset is of our own making. If the identity of “sacred laws” is therefore ambiguous, always to be envisaged within the wider context of all Greek laws, so is the identity of this corpus as written documents. Like all ancient texts, written laws bear some relation to the oral world around them and need to be understood within that oral context. Michael Gagarin, Sarah Hitch and Evelyn van ’t Wout address both issues from various angles, illuminating the intricate connections between oral and written, human and divine in the body of Greek law.

Gagarin (Ch. 5) investigates why “sacred laws” were written down, authorised and displayed in public areas. He approaches them as specific instances of the creation of written laws, a transformation from oral into written regulation that in his view was the result of the increase in scale of Greek communities in the archaic period. More and different people had to share the same areas, requiring rules valid for and observed by all those who previously could go by their own, oral traditions. Gagarin points out that notably early Cretan laws refer to matters ‘human and divine’ as a fixed formulation covering the entire range of human obligations. He argues that “sacred” and “secular” were distinct concepts, but that “sacred laws” included elements that could be called secular, whereas many secular laws contained religious obligations.

The oral component of ancient Greek laws would seem to be lost without a trace. Conversely, the absence of a body of written sacred texts has suggested that, on the one hand, Greek cult consisted predominantly of ritual acts rather than words, and, on the other, that Greek priests had little authority since there was no verbal creed that they, and they alone, could uphold. Disproving all three assumptions, Sarah Hitch (Ch. 6) shows that many Athenian laws contain clear references to ritual speech, either prayers or proclamations or speech acts performed by religious officials, notably priests and priestesses, as part of cultic actions of various

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<sup>4</sup> E. Lupu, *Greek sacred law: A collection of new documents* (Leiden 2005).

<sup>5</sup> R. Parker, What are Sacred Laws?, in *The Law and the Courts in Ancient Greece*, eds. E. Harris and L. Rubinstein (London 2004) 59–70.

kinds, which are, however, not reproduced on the stone. Occasionally, the reasons for not publishing the spoken texts are stated explicitly: such sacred texts are not to be used by those other than the priestly personnel in this particular context. Knowledge of these oral texts, performing them according to ancestral custom and expounding them in accordance with tradition, was integral and fundamental to the traditional priesthoods belonging to certain Attic families. Clearly, these ancestral prerogatives gave the priests and priestesses unmistakable authority, in particular through the ritual speech acts by which they created the connection with the divine. Since religious speech acts were also required at frequent occasions such as the meeting of the council and assembly or the beginning of a battle, the common view that the authority of Greek priests was limited to the area of the temple grounds is untenable. The fact that the texts themselves remained oral and therefore obscure to readers, Hitch argues, reflects both religious scruples and a perception of the limits of the written word.

Whereas these laws contain references to speech acts performed to an audience beyond the inscribed stone, Van 't Wout (Ch. 7) argues that the formula, used in classical Greek laws, that someone be *atimos* ('deprived of social acclaim') is a speech act addressed to the audience of the stele itself. This audience consists of the community involved in making the decision and all its members in the future. Against the prevalent interpretation, Van 't Wout advances evidence that *atimia* was not a well-defined, legal condition of disenfranchisement. Instead, someone who deems that his or her value to the community is underrated, could contend to be *atimos*, an assertion with an inherent claim for social recompense. With the speech act declaring someone *atimos*, a community cut off any such claims. Comparing this formula in the mid-fifth century Athenian decree for settlement at Brea with the archaic oath preserved in the Foundation Decree of Cyrene, Van 't Wout draws a parallel between the self-imprecation by the community at Cyrene in case of defection from the colony, and the exclusion from the community at Brea of anyone who raises his voice against the common agreements. In the latter case, the formula 'will be *atimos*' is used as an entrenchment clause with a quasi-magical effect, to protect the interests of the community against future claimants and the danger of social instability they might pose.

While these three contributions investigate oral elements in written laws, Rosalind Thomas (Ch. 8) addresses the oral surroundings of legislation and other decision making in the classical Athenian democracy.

Recently, some scholars have emphasised the highly literate quality of Athenian policymaking, resulting in numerous legal inscriptions and written decrees. Thomas notes, however, that Athens in these descriptions is equipped with disconcertingly modern features, evoking a social use of writing and written texts reminiscent of modern bureaucratic states. Against this view, she emphasizes the impact of oral attitudes and behaviour, for better and for worse, on the core institutions of the Athenian polis: the assembly, the council and the popular courts. Shouting, booing, laughter and interruption were highly effective in influencing all decisions made in these bodies; oral presentations of decrees and speeches and the verbal responses of the audience were part of every proposal in the assembly and every lawsuit in the courts. The mass audiences of the participatory democracy and the oral pressures affecting the decision making process need to be kept in mind, when we look at the transmitted texts recording these decisions with their beguiling neatness.

The power of speech, especially when cast in poetic metre, has played a prominent role in Greek and Roman religion as far back as we can see. In his essay, Christopher Faraone (Ch. 9) examines an important moment in the history of the incantation when Greeks in the late classical period begin to write down magical charms that had previously been orally performed. This series of inscribed lead amulets from Crete and *Magna Graeca* provides for the first time important new evidence that the Greeks used hexametrical verses to ward off danger from their houses and persons in a manner similar to those of the mythical Orpheus and the historical Empedocles. Parallels, moreover, between these new texts and literary accounts allow us to see where and how contemporary authors quote or paraphrase traditional charms and how these charms change from one area of Greece to another and from one time period to the next. Variations in these texts point to an even older (and now invisible) oral pre-history. Of great interest is the singer's claim "to know" especially powerful charms. Faraone shows that the inscribed lead amulets, on the other hand, testify to an entirely new phenomenon: the special power of the physical presence of these same incantations once they are preserved in writing.

Interaction between orality and literacy also seems to be at work in what are among the most fascinating ancient ritual objects, the so-called "gold tablets", associated with Bacchic or Orphic mystery cults. These tablets were buried with the dead and were intended to help them on their journey to the underworld. Originating from diverse



places and times in antiquity, these tablets show conspicuous differences and similarities in appearance and wording. Franco Ferrari (Ch. 10) addresses two major questions concerning these tablets: first, is there a single, original model underlying the variations in the texts, and, second, is there a common model of ritual in which the tablets were used? As to the first problem, Ferrari argues for the conception of a fluid “palaeotype” (rather than a fixed archetype) that came into being over time in a process of continuous interaction between oral memorisation and written recording. This palaeotype should not be conceived as a fixed formula or a standard text, but rather as a pattern underlying the extant texts. If the texts on the gold tablets thus appear to be the result of “bricolage”, as Ferrari calls it, of oral and written forms, they are also a bricolage in ritual respects. On some tablets, Ferrari identifies two alternating voices in the text and the use of different metres (dactylic hexameters and iambs) normally applied in different (ritual) contexts. The texts represented on these tablets therefore reflect a certain fluidity both in wording and in the ritual contexts in which they were used, despite their fixation in writing.

Could the fixation of an oral text in writing be used for or even prescribe future performance of such a text? In the case of hymns to the gods, as Mark Alonge (Ch. 11) argues, this does not seem to be the case. Discussing examples of hymns inscribed in stone from the late classical to late Imperial times, he observes that a hymn could be inscribed immediately following its performance or as much as five centuries later, depending on the purpose of the inscription. A paean to Dionysus was inscribed at Delphi to commemorate the honours bestowed on its creator, Philodamos, and, by implication, the *charis* of the god the poet had helped to create for the Delphians who performed the hymn. Other inscribed hymns are themselves votive gifts to the gods that recreate their performances in stone. For a particularly enigmatic case, a hymn to Zeus found at Palaikastro in Crete, Alonge argues that the hymn was created in the third century BCE, but inscribed as late as the third century CE. In the meantime it was probably, at least in part, orally preserved. Hymns led separate lives in oral and in written form; the latter appear to be commemorations of particular performances rather than notations for future use.

Ana Rodríguez-Mayorgas (Ch. 12) considers the possible function of the *Annales Maximi*, a written record produced by the supreme pontiff in Rome and preserved until the late 2nd century BCE. Rodríguez-Mayorgas opposes the idea of some scholars that the *Annales Maximi*

were a newsletter that disseminated official information in the early republic, and argues in favour of their religious nature: the supreme pontiff recorded prodigies and other revelations that demonstrated the involvement of the gods with the Roman state. Rodríguez-Mayorgas also opposes the view, first voiced by Cicero, that the *Annales Maximi* were a historical document, arguing that the pontiffs did not concern themselves with the past but with the present state of affairs. In later times, the eighty books comprising the *Annales Maximi* became a symbol of the power and continuity of the college of supreme pontiffs in Rome.

Religious potency was ascribed to the hexameter line until the end of antiquity and not only in the magical incantations traced by Faraone (Ch. 9). Homeric epic composed in the same metre experienced its own peculiar transformations. Originally composed for oral recitation and subsequently disseminated in written form, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were exploited for divinatory purposes in late antiquity and the early Byzantine world. Andromache Karanika (Ch. 13) shows that a *homeromanteion* (“Homer-divination”) consisting of 216 single lines culled from both epics, was created for a new type of performance. When asked a question, the *homeromanteion* would provide the answer through a special procedure that would select the appropriate line. The same process, culling lines from Homer and setting them in a new context, was applied to create other genres at the time, such as the *cento* (a poem made up of recognizable lines from earlier poetry). That many of the lines found in the *homeromanteion* also appear in the contemporary *Homerocentones* of Eudocia, a poem about the passion of Christ stitched together from Homeric lines and phrases, demonstrates their general popularity. The specific lines included in the *homeromanteion*, however, seem to have been selected for their particular purpose: many contain imperatives and future tenses and are culled from direct speeches of the characters in the epics, thus re-inventing homeric performance and authoritative speech in late antiquity.

Evidence for the power of oral speech in magical contexts is also found in other late antique religious texts. Examples of magical formulae are the so-called ‘unknowable names’ of the gods, often represented by long strings of vowels. They were taken to be the secret names of the gods, and using them would call or even compel the divine to action. Crystal Addey (Ch. 14) finds a new key to the meaning of such names in the work of the Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus. In his treatise on theurgic (“god-working”) ritual, Iamblichus explains that the ‘unknowable names’

of the gods represent *symbola*, elements created in the divine world and linked with the human world. They are part of the language of the gods, which is, according to Iamblichus, non-discursive, paradoxical and enigmatic, unlike the words spoken by the gods in Homer (Ch. 1). An oral tradition preserved the correct use and pronunciation of these names, as also reflected in late antique magical papyri but with distinct features and purposes of their own. In theurgic ritual, Addey argues, using the 'unknowable names' was a speech act allowing the soul of the human speaker to 'assume the mantle of the gods' and ascend to the divine realm.

With the contributions of Rodríguez-Mayorgas, Karanika and Addey we have firmly entered the Roman world. Three further contributions are centred on Roman pagan literature. Niall Slater (Ch. 15) studies how the comedies of Plautus can function as a source for our knowledge of early Roman religion. In particular he examines how the religious language of these plays was received by and interacted with the broader religious culture of the original Roman audience. He discusses a number of passages that focus on aspects of the religious attitude of the Romans, such as the concept of *religio*, the involvement of the gods in human affairs, the figure of the cunning slave who exerts god-like power in the plays, and finally *pietas* or *Pietas*, the abstract divinity who is personified in Plautus for the first time. Plautus' plays, like the epics of Homer or the tragedies of Euripides, were originally intended to be orally performed before a city-wide audience, but through reperformances and as reading texts they continued to influence Roman notions of the divine for a long period of time.

Vanessa Berger (Ch. 16) focuses on the function of orality in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, especially in the early parts of the work, the first and third decades. She argues that orality contributes in various ways to the structure of Livy's historical narrative, which was largely based on written sources. First, an appeal to 'tradition' gives the historian a certain degree of freedom in his reconstruction of the remote past: by attributing something to *fama* ('general talk') he can claim things with a certain credibility for which he has no written proof. Furthermore, the historian's appeal to tradition helps build a sense of community, for stories backed up by *fama* represent what the Romans share as a people. The notion of oral communication thus helps Livy to realize one of the main goals of his work, namely to create a common history that can serve as a moral guide for the next generations. Berger further shows that this function of orality also manifests itself within Livy's own work, for example in speeches,

where an orator may stress his proper religious attitude by his invocation of the gods or his appeal to the religious feelings of his audience. It is in such passages that the efficacy of oral speech is recognized even in the written work of Livy.

In the last contribution on Roman pagan literature, Bé Breij (Ch. 17) discusses Roman declamation, a genre of fictional speeches in the deliberative and judicial mode. She concentrates on a hitherto neglected aspect of these declamations, namely the fact that the bizarre fictional world of these texts, which played a role not only in Roman education but also in the literary culture of the Roman elite, created a space for ethical reflection. Careful analysis of the surviving declamations therefore reveals aspects of the moral discourse with which a typical member of the Roman elite grew up as a young man and which he continued to voice as an adult. Breij shows the value of declamation as a source for this aspect of Roman culture by means of an in-depth analysis of its treatment of *pietas*, a key value in Roman culture and society, which Slater also discusses in his contribution to the volume (Ch. 15). The examples Breij discusses reveal that *pietas* is presented in some declamations as a supreme, settled and unchanging virtue, but in others, in which some kind of moral dilemma is brought up, it is the object of critical reflection revealing willingness to probe the moral values inherited by tradition.

Finally, three contributions deal with the literature of the early Christians in the Roman Empire. Akio Ito (Ch. 18) studies the role of orality in the letters of the apostle Paul, especially in his letters to the Romans. First he points out that these letters were read aloud in the communities to which they were sent. They thus record, as it were, the spoken words of Paul brought alive to the community by an official reader. This notion of oral communication is strengthened by the fact that Paul presents himself as a messenger of the gospels. Ito focuses on two roles Paul ascribes to himself in this capacity, namely that of a herald and a teacher. Ito analyzes Paul's self-portrayal as a herald on the basis of intertextual references to passages from the Hebrew Scripture, in which the notion of the herald who publicly proclaims the will of God to the people is central. He shows Paul's role as an oral teacher by focusing on characteristics that his letters share with the genre of diatribe, a popular form of oral discourse in the philosophical schools of Paul's time. Ito's paper thus demonstrates that, even when Paul communicated in writing with Christian communities he could not visit in person, he liked to present himself as addressing them in person and by means of the spoken word.

James Morrison (Ch. 19) recognizes a similar appreciation of the spoken word by the early Christians, but in this case in the revelations of God to the apostles. Morrison focuses on the apostles Peter and Paul in the book of Acts. He argues that, although they are completely different persons—Peter being an illiterate fisherman, Paul the highly literate, bilingual Roman citizen—, the account of Acts shows that they are comparable in one important respect, namely the fact that God revealed himself to them and conferred on them their commission through the spoken word. This paper furthermore shows that in the book of Acts, the oral encounters between God and the apostles are modelled both on passages from the Hebrew Scripture and on famous episodes from Greek literature, such as Euripides' *Bacchae*, so that Jewish and non-Jewish readers alike could identify with them.

Vincent Hunink in his contribution (Ch. 20) examines a relatively unknown work by Augustine in which orality plays a major role: his so-called psalm against the Donatists. This 'psalm' is a poetic text of 297 lines, which Augustine composed for the ordinary believers in his church in 393. Hunink briefly analyzes the structure and content of the text and then discusses in detail its specific metrical qualities. He shows that this is not a regular poem, because it is neither entirely metrical nor entirely rhythmical, but a psalm, which, like the psalms in the Hebrew bible, was intended to be sung to the believers gathered in Church. It thus shows that even in the Christian churches at the end of the Roman Empire importance was attached to the oral performance and delivery of certain religious messages.

This psalm of Augustine, as well as the many sermons he produced, demonstrates the enduring value ascribed to oral communication throughout antiquity in (originally) "marginal cults", such as Christianity, and central cults alike. Written texts regularly imitated or relied on elements of oral communication in order to increase their own efficacy. Writing, however, had its own qualities, such as its durability and its capacity to communicate over great distances of space and time: inevitably, therefore, all evidence we have of orally performed texts from antiquity is preserved for us in writing. The qualities of writing were soon recognized by the early Greeks, as evidenced by their recordings in stone of secular and sacred laws and their writing down of Greek literature and poetry. Homer had an impact on the beliefs of more Greeks as a written than as an orally performed text. Oral texts ultimately depended on literacy for their survival, while written texts relied, to an important degree, on these oral traces for their legitimacy. Both kinds of texts were

considered indispensable as modes of communication in the religions of the ancient world, and each of the contributions in this volume aims to further the larger project of tracing their enduring interdependence throughout antiquity.