

MA CULTURAL ASTRONOMY AND ASTROLOGY
COSMOLOGY, MAGIC AND DIVINATION
WEEK 2 NOTES
CRYSTAL ADDEY

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

What is magic? What is religion? What is divination? How do we define these phenomena and the practices associated with them? Can divination help us to distinguish between 'religious' and 'magical' practices?

THEMES FOR THIS WEEK:

- The role of divination within magical and religious practices
- Controversies, connections and boundaries between religion and magic
- What is divination? What is magic? What is religion? What are the connections and boundaries between them and how can we define them?
- Anthropological and historical perspectives and debates on the nature of magic and religion.
- Case study: curse tablets and "prayers for justice" – between religion and magic?

CONTROVERSIES, CONNECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES BETWEEN RELIGION AND MAGIC

When we look at the ancient world, many of the practices, texts and rituals, which have been defined as either 'religion' or 'magic' by modern scholars, share strong similarities. For example, in ancient Greece and Rome both often involved the use of ritual, prayer, sacrifice and the invocation of gods and goddesses. Both often involved the use of divination: in fact Classicists have often looked at divination either within the context of so-called 'religious' practices and ritual or within the context of so-called 'magical' practices. Yet both sets of practices often claim to offer a special relationship with the divine and both often claimed to be 'therapeutic' in some sense: offering individuals help, advice, guidance and support in a spiritual, social and/or medical context.

The nature of Greek religion: In this regard, it is also important to consider that Greek religion was polytheistic, pagan and 'embedded' within everyday life: the Greeks did not have a word for 'religion' (the Romans give us the word *religio* from which our word is derived). Unlike Christianity and other monotheistic religions, there was no central institution (like the Church), no dogma and no central, foundational sacred text from which moral and behavioural rules and precepts are derived (although the Greeks clearly did have a range of texts, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which were seminal within their culture and religious practices).

Classicists have often characterised Greek religion as being primarily concerned with praxis or action rather than belief, and it is certainly true that Greek religion was primarily regulated (on a local cultic level) and 'measured' by the correct observation of practices (rather than a set of beliefs) at the correct times. However, we must be very cautious here since a set of common and shared practices implies (or implicitly assumes) a set of shared ideas or at least a shared 'worldview' and a shared sense of efficacy and meaning: one of the major aims of this course is to explore ancient ritual practices in the context of their cosmologies, worldviews, and metaphysical and philosophical assumptions and ideas.

Greek religion was characterised by local cults and religious practices and observances relating to the 'city-state' (*polis*). It also involved 'mystery cults' (such as the

famous mysteries at Eleusis, where Demeter and Persephone were the central deities involved) which were characterised by initiation and secrecy (so much so that there is almost no surviving evidence of what happened during mystery cult rituals and initiations).

Magic has long been defined by scholars with reference to its relationship to religion on the one hand and science on the other. But given the fact that ancient Greek religion (and to a lesser extent, Roman religion) was so different from many modern notions of 'religion' (particularly monotheistic expressions and conceptions of religion), there are grounds for questioning whether such a categorisation is at all valid when examining ancient ritual practices. As Murray and Rosalie Wax have argued:

A clear distinction can be made between "magic" and "religion" *when the latter is Judaeo-Christian in nature*; likewise, a clear distinction can be made between "magic" and "science" of the Western variety. Regarding these distinctions as of fundamental significance, Durkheim, Frazer and others elaborated them and utilized them in the foundation of their theoretical edifices. *Yet, the basis and merit of these distinctions was precisely their limitation; they were wholly ethnocentric and made no sense when applied to the cultures of peoples who did not share the Judaeo-Christian religions or the Western variety of science.* Eminent anthropologists of the most disparate schools, e.g., Marett, Goldenweiser, Lowie, Radcliffe-Brown, recognised that the magic/religion and magic/science dichotomies were inutile and condemned them as misleading [my italics].¹

Additionally, we have to exercise great caution when examining ancient 'magic,' since the Western notion of 'magic' may well be derived from Graeco-Roman conceptions and ideas (although the Greeks and Romans do not seem to have defined magic in exactly the way in which we would now): see the discussion of the views of Fritz Graf below.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND DEBATES ON THE NATURE OF MAGIC AND RELIGION.

Anthropologists, historians and Classicists have long debated the nature, meaning(s) and possible definition of the term 'magic,' its relationship to religion on the one hand and to science on the other hand. The scholarly literature on conceptions and possible definitions of 'magic' and its relationship to religion and to science is vast.² It is important to have some idea of the anthropological and historical debates regarding the nature of magic, religion and science since, in the ancient world, the practice of divination, in whatever guise, almost always took place within what we might term a religious, magical or scientific context. In addition, our assumptions and preconceptions of what 'magic,' 'religion' and 'science' are will influence our interpretation of divination and it is important to be aware of our own implicit assumptions and to be self-reflective about them.

Since the phenomena and practices which we might refer to as 'magical' or 'religious' have occurred (and have been observed and studied) in such diverse contexts, both chronologically and geographically, scholarly consensus generally holds that that a universal notion of magic, applicable across all times and cultures, is impossible to define and may not

¹ Murray and Rosalie Wax, "The Notion of Magic," *Current Anthropology* 4.5 (1963), p.495.

² These notes are intended to introduce you to some of the key ideas and debates on the nature of magic and religion and their relationship to each other. However, they are in no sense definitive and should be treated only as a starting point for your own consideration and reflection. In particular, many of the anthropological debates discussed here are presented as simple summaries of the major arguments, which are often much more nuanced and subtle than can be presented in such a short summary: I recommend first-hand exploration and analysis of the anthropological theories and debates discussed here.

even exist. Such a view is encapsulated by Sir Edmund Leach, a distinguished anthropologist, who stated:

As for magic, which readers of Fraser's *The Golden Bough* might suppose to lie at the very centre of the anthropologist's interests, after a lifetime's career as a professional anthropologist, I have almost reached the conclusion that the word has no meaning whatsoever.³

Leach wrote in these terms because he considered that the notion of magic was not a universal one and may therefore have little or no place in the description of societies lacking any such concept.

The Classicist Derek Collins has recently made a very similar statement regarding the impossibility of obtaining a satisfactory understanding and definition of magic:

There is no one way to understand all magic across all instances even for one culture at one historical moment. Magic is a busy intersection, to borrow from a classic anthropological statement about ritual, and as such there are always different religious, social, cultural and performative routes that have to be pursued in explaining it.⁴

APPROACHES TO CATEGORISING 'MAGIC' AND 'RELIGION'

Within Classical scholarship, the views of Sir James Frazer, as propounded in his seminal work *The Golden Bough*, remained central for many years and his views can clearly be seen in much of the work of Classicists over the past century. Many Classicists still seem to use his view as an implicit assumption underlying their discussions of the nature of magic and religion. Frazer developed the conception of magic as a pseudo-science and ascribed to the magician a worldview which could be seen as the perspective of the contemporary Western scientist: magic was a phenomenon whose "fundamental conception is identical with that of modern science; underlying the whole system, is a faith, implicit but real and firm, in the order and uniformity of nature." "One event follows another necessarily and inevitably, without the intervention of any personal or spiritual agency."⁵ Frazer also defined magic directly in relation (and opposition) to religion, the latter of which he characterised as assuming a variable nature subject to the arbitrary will of supernatural powers:

"By religion, then, I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life...It is true that magic often deals with spirits, which are personal agents of the kind assumed by religion; but whenever it does so in its proper form, it treats them exactly in the same fashion as it treats inanimate agents, that is, it constrains or coerces instead of conciliating or propitiating them as religion would do."⁶

Frazer opposed magic and religion on the basis that magic compels and coerces divine beings, whereas religion propitiates, supplicates and begs them. In his view, the religious person can only worship and supplicate powers which he believes to be incomprehensible, whereas the magician deceives his clientele with the claim that the powers of nature are subject to his control and manipulation. Frazer's orientation derides magic as pseudoscience and superstition.

³ E. Leach, *Social Anthropology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, 133.

⁴ Derek Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, 2.

⁵ James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, London 1911-15, 220.

⁶ James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, London 1911-15, 222.

This approach is now often dismissed and criticised by Classicists and anthropologists, although it is important to note that such an approach can often be seen operating as a powerful and implicit assumption in some of their work. Frazer's approach has been criticised because many, ancient so-called 'magical' invocations and spells shows a supplicatory, humble and respectful approach and attitude towards the gods. A very interesting example of such an invocation is the so-called "Mithras Liturgy" at PGM (the abbreviation for the *Greek Magical Papyri*) IV.475-829 (in Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago 1986, pp.48-54 – for an extract of the Mithras Liturgy see Appendix 1), which records and gives the invocations and instructions for an ascent ritual designed to enable the practitioner's soul to ascend to the gods and to attain immortality. Another interesting example (to be examined in much more detail later on) is the case of the *defixio* or binding spell, often recorded on curse tablets (*katadesmoi*): the language of these curses and binding spells is often very similar to the traditional language of religious prayer: i.e. they remind the god of some service rendered in the past, with a strong suggestion that he is thereby obliged to help in the present crisis as well. This type of pattern represents the same procedure as the (religious) prayer of the priest Chryses in Book of Homer's *Iliad*: here the priest reminds Apollo of his piety on many occasions, so that the god may feel readier to punish the Achaeans for the harm they have committed against Chryses and for their blasphemy.

See Murray and Rosalie Wax's article "The Concept of Magic", *Current Anthropology* 4.5 (1963), pp.496-497, for a discussion of anthropological critiques of Frazer's view and categorisation of magic; many of the critiques rest on the results of ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in diverse contemporary cultures, tribal groups and societies, where a distinction between 'magic' and 'religion' does not seem to be operative and cannot be observed.

However, despite such evidence, many Classicists continue to operate with Frazer's theory as an implicit assumption. See, for example, the comments of Matthew Dickie in his book *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, who claims that such a view originates in ancient Greece and Rome:

My concern is with the criteria that Greeks used as a matter of intuition in classifying an action as magical, not with what a Greek would have said, if asked, magic was...For most Greeks and Romans it looks as though the defining characteristic in this latter sense was that the magician, in contrast to a priest or worshipper following the practices of proper religious observance, did not humble himself before the gods, but treated them as creatures who could be bent to his will, as beings to whom he was prepared to apply force and coercion.⁷

There is some ancient evidence that might point in this direction (and Matthew Dickie points to the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* in particular) but, as Dickie himself notes, study of the way in which the gods were addressed in fourth-century B.C. Athenian curse tablets and magical formulae of the fourth century AD do not show coercion being applied to the gods but, if anything, an approach that is prayerful and supplicatory.

Magic and Religion: Intentions and Aims

The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski argued that we should distinguish magic from religion based upon intention (the intention of the practitioner?): he claims that magic is employed to achieve concrete, mostly individual goals. Religion, however, is not primarily

⁷ M. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, London: Routledge, 2001, p.26.

purpose-motivated, or at most focuses on long-term goals which concern collective issues in society.⁸

Again, this argument is problematic in relation to the ancient context: it is challenged by the nature of many so-called ‘magical’ invocations from the Graeco-Roman World, some of which have a higher spiritual intention or aim. As above, a particularly good example is the Mithras Liturgy *PGM* IV.475-829, which states that its purpose is to cause the ascent of the practitioner’s soul to the divine realm and to enable them to gain immortality. In Late Antiquity (approximately second to sixth/seventh centuries AD/CE), the type of ritual called ‘theurgy’ (used and discussed extensively by Neoplatonist philosophers such as Iamblichus and Proclus) also challenges Malinowski’s claims: this type of ritual, which was used by many philosophers and intellectuals, aimed to unite the soul of the practitioner with the divine and to cause mystical union with the divine at the highest level possible.

Malinowski’s arguments (in terms of their applicability to ancient cultures and practices) are also challenged by the nature of many ancient Greek religious rituals, which have concrete, practical goals and often operate according to a similar rationale and procedure as so-called ‘magical’ rituals (on this point, see Appendix 2 for an extract of an article written by the Classicist Robert Fowler).

Social Approaches and the public / private divide

The second famous approach to magic was to explain it in terms of social categories: see the work of Emile Durkheim, for whom religion is the communal cult and beliefs of a group, the expression of collective identity. Magic, on the other hand, is an individual, private practice, which may be secret and a potential threat to group identity.⁹ Marcel Mauss, another famous anthropologist, follows Durkheim in evaluating magic from a social and moral standpoint.¹⁰ Social prohibition forms the boundary between magic, seen by society as subversive, and religion, sanctioned by society. Therefore religious practices are predictable, prescribed and official while magical practices are considered unauthorised and abnormal.

This approach seems somewhat more reasonable and is held by many Classicists who see social context and attitudes as very important (for example, Fritz Graf, Robert Fowler, Derek Collins, to name but a few). However, there are still problems with this view. One such problem is that much religion in the ancient world was private, such as private, individual domestic worship of the gods. Another problem is that some kinds of so-called ‘magical’ invocations and curses which appeal to justice are found in public locations: they were often set up in public squares and carved on gravestones. The mystery cults of the ancient world also present a challenge to this view. The most famous of these were the Eleusinian mysteries (often referred as the mysteries of Eleusis, or the mysteries of Demeter and Persephone), held at Eleusis near Athens, but there were many more in Antiquity. These were public rituals yet required initiation and were kept secret from non-initiates. They involve a more individual and spiritual approach which cannot really be classified as wholly ‘public.’

Did the Greeks invent the (Western) concept of ‘magic’?

The Classicist and historian of Greek and Roman religion, Fritz Graf, has examined Greek and Roman magic, arguing that the opposition between magic and religion existed self-consciously in these cultures although at an earlier stage in their existence, they did not make

⁸ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science, Religion and Other Essays*, New York: Doubleday, 1954, pp.87-90.

⁹ Emile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912), 62.

¹⁰ Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, London: Routledge, 1950, 18-25.

any such distinction.¹¹ He argues that a combination of two major factors gave rise to the hiving off of magic from religion, of which it had previously been an integral part. The first of these factors is the fact that self-conscious philosophical reflection on the nature of the divine had led to a purified conception of the gods, at odds with assumptions about the nature of the divine made by those who practised *mageia*. The second factor was that natural science (especially in the form of medicine) began to look at nature as a closed system free from divine intervention – changes in nature were to be attributed to physical causes only. This combination of factors produced a radically altered conception of the relation between the world of gods and the world of men that marginalised the role played by certain religious specialists whose activities were thus forwards classified as *mageia*.

Thus, Fritz Graf argues that magic as a discrete category of thought had its origins in the Greek world of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

For an interesting critique of Graf's views and theory, see Matthew Dickie's comments in his *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, p.21.

Magic as a manifestation of ritual power and/or as a subclass of religious ritual

Currently Classicists often view magic as a manifestation of ritual power and as a subclass of religious ritual.

cf. for example: Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, introduction to *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, 3-5 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Einar Thomassen, "Is magic a subclass of ritual?" in *The world of ancient magic*, ed. David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery and Einar Thomassen, 55-66 (Bergen: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999).

THE ROLE OF DIVINATION WITHIN MAGICAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Given the anthropological and historical debates regarding the nature and possible definition(s) of magic, can divination help us to distinguish between 'religious' and 'magical' practices? Do these categories aid our study of divination or limit it? Does divination have its own worldview and assumptions, or is it always undertaken and conceptualised within 'religious' and 'magical' frameworks and contexts? I pose these questions as food for thought – there are certainly no simple or easy answers to them. In fact, much of this course will explore precisely these types of questions.

For your consideration, here are two examples of divination from ancient contexts, one from a 'religious' context (*catoptromancy* or mirror divination in the Temple of Demeter in Patras in Greece) and one from a 'magical' context (from the Greek Magical Papyri, a collection of papyri discovered in Egypt: they are a disparate collection of spells, invocations, recipes etc. for many different types of rituals):

Divination in a religious context

Next to the grove is a sanctuary of Demeter; she and her daughter are standing, but the image of Earth is seated. Before the sanctuary of Demeter is a spring. On the side of this towards the temple stands a wall of stones, while on the outer side has been made a descent to the spring. Here there is an infallible oracle, not indeed for everything, but only in the case of sick folk. They tie a mirror to a fine cord and let it down, judging the distance so that it does not sink deep into the spring, but just far enough to touch the water with its rim. Then they pray to the goddess and burn incense, after which they look into the mirror, which shows them the patient either alive or dead. This water partakes to this extent of truth...

Pausanias, *Description of Greece* VII.21.11-12

¹¹ Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)

Divination in a magical context

PGM VII.359-69:

Request for a dream oracle: Take a strip of clean linen and write on it the following name. / Roll it up to make a wick, pour pure olive oil over it and light it.

The formula to be written is this: "HARMIOUTH LAILAM CHOOOUC H ARSENO PHRE PHREU PHTHA HARCHENTECHTHA."

In the evening then, when you are about to go to sleep, being pure in every respect, do this: Go to the lamp, say 7 times the following formula, extinguish the light / and go to sleep.

The formula to be spoken is as follows: "SARCHMOUNE PAEMALIOGOTEREENCH, the one who shakes, who thunders, who has swallowed the serpent, surrounds the moon, and hour by hour raises the disk of the sun, 'CHTHETHONI' is your name. I ask you, lords of the gods, SETH CHRES: reveal to me concerning the things I wish."

The Mithras Liturgy, PGM (Greek Magical Papryi) IV.475-829 (An extract)

Be gracious to me, O Providence and Psyche, as I write these mysteries handed down [not] for gain but for instruction; and for an only child I request immortality, O initiates of this our power (furthermore, it is necessary for you, O daughter, to take / the juices of herbs and spices, which will [be made known] to you at the end of my holy treatise), which the great god Helios Mithras ordered to be revealed to me by his archangel, so that I alone may ascend into heaven as an inquirer / and behold the universe.

This is the invocation of the spell:

“First origin of my origin, AEEIOYO, first beginning of my beginning, PPP SSS PHR[E], spirit of spirit, the first of spirit / in me, MMM, fire given by god to my mixture of the mixtures in me, the first of the fire in me, EY EIA EE, water of water, the first of the water in me, OOO AAA EEE, earthy material, the first of the earthy material in me, / YE YOE, my complete body, I, NN whose mother is NN...now if it be your will, METERTA / PHOTH (METHARTA PHERIE, in another place) IEREZATH, give me over to immortal birth and, following that, to my underlying nature, so that, after the present need which is pressing me exceedingly, I may gaze upon the immortal / beginning with the immortal water...I, born mortal from mortal womb, but transformed by tremendous power and an incorruptible right hand / and with immortal spirit, the immortal Aion and master of the fiery diadems – I, sanctified through holy consecrations – while there subsists within me, holy, for a short time, my human soul-might, which I will again / receive after the present bitter and relentless necessity which is pressing down upon me – I, NN, whose mother is NN, according to the immutable decree of god, EYE YIA EEI AOEIAY IYA IEO. Since it is impossible for me, born mortal, to rise with the golden brightnesses of the immortal brilliance, OEY AEO EYA EOE YAE OIAE, stand, O perishable nature of mortals, and at once [receive] me safe and sound after the inexorable and pressing / need. For I am the son PSYCHON DEMOU PROCHO PROA, I am MACHARPH [.]N MOU PROPSYCHON PROE.”

Draw in the breath from the rays, drawing up 3 times as much as you can, and you will see yourself being lifted up and / ascending to the height, so that you seem to be in midair. You will hear nothing either of man or of any other living thing, nor in that hour will you see anything of mortal affairs on earth, but rather you will see all immortal things. For in that day / and hour you will see the divine order of the skies: the presiding gods rising into heaven, and others setting. Now the course of the visible gods will appear through the disk of god, my father, and in similar fashion the so-called pipe, / the origin of the ministering wind....And you will see the gods staring intently at you and rushing at you.

So at once put your right finger on your mouth and say:

“Silence! Silence! Silence!

Symbol of the living, incorruptible god!

Guard me, Silence, NECHTHEIR THANMELOU!”

Then make a long hissing sound, next make a popping sound, and say:

“PROPROPHEGGE MORIOS PROPHYR PROPHEGGE NEMETHEIRE ARPSSENTEN PITETMI MEOY ENARTH PHYRKECHO PSYRIDARIO / TYRE PHILBA.”

Then you will see the gods looking graciously upon you and no longer rushing at you, but rather going about in their own order of affairs.

So when you see that the world above is clear / and circling, and that none of the gods or angels is threatening you, expect to hear a great crash of thunder, so as to shock you....

APPENDIX 2

Robert L. Fowler, “Greek Magic, Greek Religion,” in Richard Buxton (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 318, 324-25.

Although the definition of magic is notoriously difficult, for heuristic purposes its often-noted tendency to be oriented towards the achievement of specific goals (enhancing fertility, securing the attention of one’s beloved, etc.) may serve to focus discussion. In what follows I will suggest that this tendency is also found in some important Greek rituals that are not normally thought of as magical, and that, consequently, the distinction between ‘magic’ and ‘religion’ does not lie so much in the substance of the ritual acts as in their social context (p.318).

The magical or goal-oriented aspect of some rituals is indeed readily acknowledged by scholars, if not always put front and centre in discussion. The rain-making of the Eleusinian Mysteries was mentioned above; this was not the only agrarian connection of the ritual. Another readily granted example is the Thesmophoria for Demeter, the most widespread religious rites in Greece; these involved throwing a dead pig into the earth, to be excavated later, chopped up, and mixed in with the seed corn of every family participating. The pig is Demeter’s fertile animal, and this is simply fertility magic; making the crops grow was a very important purpose of this festival, if not the main one. Although this aspect is usually recognised, modern interpreters normally place more stress on the social function of the festival in providing women an opportunity to express solidarity in the face of oppressive Greek men. This was of course an important part of the festival, but to distribute the stress so may tell us more about our own times and preoccupations than about ancient reality.

Other examples will readily be conceded once pointed out, though they are rarely introduced simply as instances of magic. Scapegoat rituals, by which the evils of a whole city are transferred ceremoniously on to the head of an animal or some unfortunate human, who is then driven beyond the bounds of the country, thus purifying the city, can hardly be described by any other term but magic. Sacred marriages, by which the copulation of humans is ritually performed in the belief that it will enhance the fertility of the crops, are an obviously magical business. The complete destruction of an animal in full view of an enemy army prior to joining battle is another elementary piece of sympathetic magic.

In addition, there are cases in which the magical/ instrumental aspect has been quite overlooked. First, the Panathenaia. This festival of all Athenians on Athena’s midsummer birthday involved a spectacular parade through the city up to the Akropolis, where oxen were sacrificed and a new robe, the peplos, was presented to Athena in the form of her ancient statue in the Erechtheum. Modern discussions of the festival stress its social function in uniting all classes, and make much of its location at the beginning of the civic year. It is, beyond doubt, a New Year’s festival of renewal and regeneration. But it is something else too. Scholars who write on the Panathenaia naturally mention the peplos, but seem to regard it merely as a pious gift. Yet it is much more than this. The peplos of ritual is the aegis of myth, Athena’s impenetrable armour won in the battle of the Giants, those older, monstrous forces of chaos who threatened the orderly and just government of the Olympian gods. The aegis rendered Athena invulnerable. The ancient statue of Athena on the Akropolis was a talisman upon whose preservation the safety of the city depended, like the Palladion of Troy which had to be stolen by Odysseus and Diomedes before the city could be taken. The goddess who protects the citadel, housed in the king’s own palace, is a figure already in Mycenaean religion; this statue is Athena. Putting the peplos on the talisman was an act of simple magic. In its fabric was always woven one theme, and one theme only: the battle of the Giants. The message could hardly be plainer: to give Athena a new robe was to secure the protection of the city. In the fifth century BC, this was surely an important purpose of the proceedings; one can imagine the fears of the citizens were anything to go wrong with the presentation (pp.324-325).