

**PILGRIMAGE  
CENTRES**

## §5 ELEUSIS: INITIATES OF THE MYSTERIES

Amongst the most important religious celebrations of a Panhellenic nature were the mystery cults, the best known of which were the Eleusinian Mysteries.<sup>1</sup> There were several mystery celebrations throughout the Greek world, and, in addition to the Eleusinian, the Samothracian and Andanian rites attracted pilgrims from all over the Hellenic world. The Andanian mysteries have been referred to frequently already; the long cult inscription dealing with these mysteries is a valuable source of knowledge about the practical side of pilgrimage, while the Samothracian mysteries are important, and are the subject of a recent monograph.<sup>2</sup> The Eleusinian Mysteries, however, were by far the most popular of the mystery celebrations,<sup>3</sup> and despite the attention which has been paid to them by scholars, their practices and cult ritual still require further study.<sup>4</sup> They remained popular from at least the beginning of the classical period until the demise of paganism, and this is one of the reasons why they attracted so much polemical attention from Christian writers.

Mystery cults differed from other religious celebrations in that the worshippers involved were not permitted to reveal their experiences. The mystery celebrations as a whole were in direct opposition to the rest of Greek religious practice, which was open and quite public. Aspects of Greek worship in general were overt in their performance and the evidence of worship, such as dedications of clothing, armour, consecrated horns and votive offerings, and cult images such as Herms, were displayed where all could see them: there was nothing in the Hellenic world similar to the Christian injunction against deliberate displays of public piety designed to capture

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<sup>1</sup> For Eleusis, see Mylonas *Eleusis* esp. 224-316; Kerényi *Eleusis*; Burkert *Mystery Cults passim*; idem *Homo Necans* 248-97.

<sup>2</sup> Cole *Theoi Megaloi*; idem *ANRW* 2 18.2 (1989) 1564-98; ch. 1 nn. 53, 84, 100; n. 19 below; see figs. 1.3, 1.4; Andania: *LSCG* 65, for which see ch. 3 nn. 12-13, 15-18, 29, 41, ch. 4 nn. 19-26, 28-30, 32-33, 35, 37, 44-46, 90-93, 111-13, 116, 120, 151, with text, and n. 11 below.

<sup>3</sup> There were other mystery celebrations in honour of Demeter (Paus. 2.14.1; Diod. 5.3.4-5.3, 5.77.3), but Eleusis was able to promote itself as the most important centre. This was no doubt largely due to the attachment of Eleusis to Athens politically and Athens' position as a political and cultural giant in the classical period. Dio. 1. 5.4.4 states that as the Athenians were kind to Demeter she gave them the gift of the Eleusinian Mysteries; cf. *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 270-74. As with other religious centres there were games, in addition to religious activities, at Eleusis: for the Eleusinia, see *IG I<sup>3</sup> 5*, c. 500; [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 54.7; Rhodes *Commentary* 608-09.

<sup>4</sup> Burkert *Homo Necans* 248-97, especially 256, is too optimistic in claiming to have revealed the secret of the mysteries.

the attention and admiration of others.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, knowledge of the mystery celebrations at Eleusis was to be revealed only to those being initiated, and therefore pilgrims attending these mysteries were forbidden to disclose their experiences. While the activities of other pilgrims would have been the subject of detailed discussion on their return home, this would not have been the case for the pilgrims to Eleusis, or other secret mystery celebrations, and it may be assumed that this may in itself have been one of the attractions of participation.

Despite this prohibition, evidence concerning the mysteries is available, but should be treated with caution.<sup>6</sup> The secrecy of the rite is in itself well documented. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, which is the best source of knowledge about Eleusinian Demetriad mythology, contains the first references in literature to the mysteries: "...no-one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter..." anything about them.<sup>7</sup> According to Sophokles, the mysteries were "locked in a golden silence",<sup>8</sup> while in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, silence is imposed on the mystai who feature prominently in the underworld.<sup>9</sup> Pausanias in describing Eleusis is prevented from writing about what was inside the sanctuary wall as a dream holds him back, "and what the uninitiated are not permitted to see they are of course not to learn about."<sup>10</sup> Another dream prevented him from discussing the Eleusinion at Athens, while elsewhere in his work he begs the reader's forgiveness for failing to reveal the nature of the mysteries of Demeter and Kore in Boeotia.<sup>11</sup> According to Aelian, a curious

<sup>5</sup> NT *Mt.* 6.1, cf. 23.5.

<sup>6</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* esp. lines 94-313. For commentaries on the Hymn: Wehrli *ARW* 31 (1934) 77-104; Mylonas *Hymn to Demeter and her Sanctuary at Eleusis*; Walton *HTR* 45 (1952) 105-14; Richardson *Homeric Hymn*. Local Attic historians touched on the subject (see Burkert *Homo Necans* 250 n. 9 for details), and Sopatros wrote a fictitious speech about someone who dreamed that he was initiated: Sopat. *Rhet. Gr.* 8.110-24 (Waltz), discussed below nn. 43, 93, 107; ch. 4 n. 72 with text, (cited by Mylonas *Eleusis* 272 with n. 104; Burkert *Homo Necans* 250 with n. 10). Note also the [λόγοι Ἡρα]κλέους μὴ ἐωμέ[νου τελε]εῖσθαι τὰ Ἐλευσίνια, *Pap. d. R. Univ. Milano* (1937), # 20, (for which see Ruck *The Road to Eleusis* 79; Burkert *Homo Necans* 250 n. 10). Burkert *Homo Necans* 250 notes that philosophical writings take on the language of the mysteries.

<sup>7</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 478-79: σέμνα, τὰ τ' οὐ πως ἔστι παρεξ[ίμ]εν [οὔτε πυθέσθαι,] / οὔτ' ἀχέειν· μέγα γάρ τι θεῶν σέβας ἰσχάνει αὐδῆν.

<sup>8</sup> Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1050-53: οἷ πότνια σεμνὰ τιθηνοῦνται τέλη / θνατοῖσιν, ὧν καὶ χρυσέα / κλήης ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ βέβα/κε προσπόλων Εὐμολπιδᾶν.

<sup>9</sup> *Frogs* 321-22.

<sup>10</sup> Paus. 1.38.7: καὶ τοῖς οὐ τελεσθεῖσιν, ὁπόσων θεῶν εἴργονται, δῆλα δῆπον μηδὲ πυθέσθαι μετεῖναί τ' ἔφισιν.

<sup>11</sup> Paus. 1.14.3 (Eleusinion); 9.25.5-6 (Boeotia); note also 4.33.5 (Andania); Hdt. 2.171.1-2.

individual who climbed up a rock to see over the walls of the Eleusinian sanctuary in order to find out what happened in the celebrations fell off and died.<sup>12</sup>

The parodying of the mysteries, the performance of mock mystery celebrations outside of their sacred context at Eleusis, was a crime against religious belief, a case of *asebeia*, and the juries for the trials arising out of the profanations were made up of initiates only.<sup>13</sup> The case against Alkibiades is a particularly well known one; his political career suffered, his property was confiscated, and he was condemned to death because of the allegation that he and his companions parodied the mysteries at a dinner party.<sup>14</sup> The orator Andokides in 400 had to defend himself against the charge that he had no right to attend the Eleusinian Mysteries because he lay under a ban for his part in this profanation of the mysteries in 415. Under the decree of Isotimides passed in the wake of the scandal of the profanation, all those guilty of impiety were debarred from entering temples or the Athenian agora.<sup>15</sup> Diagoras of Melos in the fifth century trivialised the mysteries by telling people about them, and by doing so dissuaded people from being initiated, and as a consequence, he was sentenced to death.<sup>16</sup> Lucian records that Demonax was accused of being the only Athenian not to be initiated in the mysteries, but that he justified this by stating that if he were to be initiated and found the mysteries to be trivial, he would not be able to keep silent before the uninitiated, while if they were beneficial, he would have to let everyone

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<sup>12</sup> Ael. fr. 58.8 (cited by Mylonas *Eleusis* 226 with n. 10); cf. ch. 4 n. 8, with text. Asklepios was more sympathetic in a similar case: *JG* IV<sup>2</sup> 1, 121, iama 11; see ch. 8 n. 45. Entrance into the sacred area was permissible only to the hierophant and a non-hierophant who entered died soon afterwards: Ael. fr. 12 (cited by Mylonas 226 with n. 9); Suda s.v. Ἱεροφάντης. For prohibitions on entry into temples, see ch. 4 nn. 4-15, with text. For modern discussion of the silence required of the initiates, see Mylonas *Eleusis* 224-29; Burkert *Homo Necans* 248-56; Parke *Festivals* 56.

<sup>13</sup> Andok. 1.28, cf. 1.12, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Thuc. 6.27-28, cf. 60-61; Xen. *Hel.* 1.4.14; Plut. *Alk.* 19-22; Andok. 1.11, cf. 1.12, 16-17; Isok. 16.6; Clem. *Protrep.* 2.11; and note the statement of Isok. 16.6 that the city would be as angered if anyone parodied the mysteries as by attempts to overthrow the democracy; cf. Andok. 1.36. Note also the case of Andokides: Andok. 1; [Lysias] 6. MacDowell *Andokides* 211 attempts to identify as comic poets three of those denounced by Andromakhos and Teukros as having participated in the mock celebration of the Mysteries in 415.

<sup>15</sup> Andok. 1.71; [Lys.] 6.9, 24; see MacDowell *Andokides* 200-03.

<sup>16</sup> Ar. *Birds* 1072-73; Diod. 13.6.7; the Arab source Al-Mubassir (translated in Jacoby *FGH* 3b Suppl. 1, 198; cf. Woodbury *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 188-90); Suda s.v. Διαγόρας; *FGH* 342 Krateros F 16 (Schol. Ar. *Frogs* 320); *FGH* 326 McLanthios F 3 (Schol. Ar. *Birds* 1073). There was a reward, of one talent, for the person who killed Diagoras, and, the scholiasts add, two talents if he was brought in alive; see Jacoby *FGH* 3b, *Suppl.* 1, 199-201, *Suppl.* 2, 165-67. On the date of Diagoras' impiety, see Jacoby *FGH* 3b, *Suppl.* 1, 199-201; Woodbury *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 178-211; see also Jacoby *Diagoras*.

know about them, as befitted a philanthropist.<sup>17</sup> Lucian's statement implies that the majority of Athenians at this period were initiates. In the Roman period, Horace refused to travel on board the same ship as someone who had parodied the mysteries, believing that the ship was bound to come to grief.<sup>18</sup> Livy records the story that two Acarnanian youths from Aetolia who were not initiated had entered the temple of Ceres (i.e. Demeter) during the initiation ceremony, having merely followed the crowd, unaware of their sacrilege. They betrayed themselves by asking questions about what was going on, and although it was obvious that they had wandered in by accident, they were put to death as if they had committed an "atrocious crime".<sup>19</sup> The story need not be historical, but the implications are clear: the secrecy of the mysteries was inviolable. According to Diogenes Laertius, a certain Theodoros, asking of the hierophant, the chief priest, who, in regard to the Eleusinian Mysteries, were the impious, received the reply that it was those who explained them to the uninitiated. "Then you are impious," countered Theodoros, "as you explain them to the uninitiated." For this untimely retort, Theodoros narrowly escaped being brought before the *Areopagos* through the intervention of Demetrios of Phaleron, tyrant of Athens from 317-07, while an alternative version records that he was condemned to drink hemlock.<sup>20</sup>

Significantly, Diodoros states that the celebrations which were the object of secrecy at the mystery celebrations of Eleusis and Samothrace were performed publicly in Crete, but his statement is contradicted by the fact that Eleusis was the mystery centre *par excellence*, and that non-Athenians went to Athens, not Knossos.<sup>21</sup> It is important, however, to look at what Diodoros actually records, as he reports that it is the Cretans who allege that what others celebrate as mystery rites are performed publicly on Crete. The illogic is clear: if the mystery celebrations at Athens were secret, the Cretans, except for initiates sworn to secrecy, could not know that their mysteries were precisely the same, and therefore no religious similarities between Eleusis and Crete in this matter need be assumed.

Aeschylus was accused of parodying the mysteries, evoked by a stage prop in one of his plays. He argued that he did not know that what he had shown was secret: perhaps there was a thin line between what was secret and what was not, and only an

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<sup>17</sup> Luc. *Demon.* 11.

<sup>18</sup> Hor. *Odes* 3.2.25-29. For the Eleusinian Mysteries in the Roman period, see esp. Alderink *ANRW* 2, 18.2 (1989) 1457-98; Clinton *ANRW* 2, 18.2 (1989) 1499-1539).

<sup>19</sup> Livy 31.14.7-9: "tamquam ob infandum scelus interfecti sunt" (8); cf. ch. 4 n. 8, with text. As at Samothrace, only initiates could enter the holy place: *LSCG Suppl.* 75a.

<sup>20</sup> Diog. Laert. 2.101.

<sup>21</sup> Diod. 5.77.3, accepted by Burkert *Homo Necans* 252.

initiate could, in any case, judge.<sup>22</sup> Pausanias' statement that he would not even reveal what was inside the sanctuary can be taken as an indication that he at least thought that everything within the sanctuary could be known by initiates only,<sup>23</sup> which implies that entry to the sanctuary at any time was only possible for initiates: for Pausanias at least a description of the sanctuary was in itself a revelation of forbidden secrets.

Supporting the evidence that secrecy was required is the fact that though this secrecy had been violated, it was on very rare occasions. Diagoras is the only person reported as having betrayed the secret, and Alkibiades did not so much betray the secret of the mysteries as parody them. While this may seem improbable in view of the fact that thousands attended the mysteries every year, and Eleusis operated for probably upwards of a millenium,<sup>24</sup> this secrecy was possible because of the nature of the initiates. They were the pious people of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, confident in their initiation, who looked forward to a happier time in the afterlife than the dismal Hades offered by Homeric tradition. To reveal the secret of these "awful mysteries, not in any way to be transgressed, inquired about or divulged, for great reverence of the gods checks speech" was to jeopardise this paradise, to invoke the wrath not only of the civil authorities, but, far worse, of the gods themselves.<sup>25</sup> When several persons were tried by jury for their participation in the parody of the mysteries in 415, only initiates were allowed in the *dikasterion*.<sup>26</sup> This exclusiveness implies the seriousness

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<sup>22</sup> Arist. *Nik. Eth.* 1111a (3.1.17); *Ael. Var. Hist.* 5.19; Aeschyl. fr. 218 (Dindorf); Clem. *Strom.* 2.14; Herakleides fr. 170 (Wehrli): for Aeschylus as undergoing initiation in the mysteries in the underworld: Ar. *Frogs* 886-87. See Mylonas *Eleusis* 227; Burkert *Homo Necans* 252 n. 20; Wallace *Areopagos* 107; Sutton *Hermes* 1.1 (1983) 250-51.

<sup>23</sup> Paus. 1.38.7. Burkert comments that scruples concerning the secrecy of the mysteries increased with time and that this "...heightened secrecy veiled the shrinking power of the mysteries..." (*Homo Necans* 253; cf. Mylonas *Eleusis* 227 n. 13). However, it is not demonstrated that the mysteries became less popular as time went on, and the third century AD decree on the organisation of the mysteries (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 1078*) indicates a flourishing cult. Simply because there are references later than the fifth and fourth centuries to the secrecy of the cult, this is not indicative of greater scruples: there are just as many examples from the classical period. Of the two later examples mentioned by Burkert, for Pausanias see above, while the second is the case of the Neopythagorean Numenius: he dreamt that the Eleusinian goddesses, dressed as prostitutes outside of a brothel, said to him that he had prostituted the Eleusinian secrets in a philosophical work (Macrob. *Comm. Somn. Sc.* 1.2.19; cf. Burkert *Homo Necans* 252; idem *Mystery Cults* 85 with 160 n. 113). Note, however, the increasing hieronymy, first evidenced in the third century BC (*IG III<sup>2</sup> 1934*), associated with the Mysteries; see Clinton *Sacred Officials* 9-10.

<sup>24</sup> Burkert *Homo Necans* 252: "Indeed, how could something be kept a secret when it was shown to thousands every year?"

<sup>25</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 478-79.

<sup>26</sup> Andok. 1.28, 31, cf. 1.12; see n. 13 above, with text.

with which the offence was regarded, the number of initiates who were available for jury service, and the fact that the initiates could be readily determined. Our sources are explicit on the mystery surrounding the Eleusinian rites, and despite the thousands who witnessed and partook of the mysteries annually, scholars are unlikely ever to discover the precise nature of the cult practices.

Silence was thus required of the initiate, and it is the resulting secrecy which hinders attempts to describe the experiences of the initiates during initiation. To be an initiate was to be a *mystes* and undergo initiation, *mysis*; the term *telete* was also used of the initiation ceremony. The chronology of the days given over to the celebrations is fairly clear: initiation into the mysteries took place in two stages, at the Lesser and at the Greater Mysteries. The first stage at the Lesser Mysteries was only a preparation for initiation into the Greater Mysteries, and no tangible benefits seem to have accrued from participation in the Lesser Mysteries unless this was followed by the actual initiation at the Greater Mysteries held later. After initiation at the Greater Mysteries, one could seek a higher degree of initiation at a subsequent celebration, being able to participate in the *epopteia* and become an *epoptes*.<sup>27</sup> It is possible that the Lesser Mysteries were a prerequisite for participation in the Greater Mysteries, and the evidence of Demetrios' initiation in the Lesser Mysteries can perhaps be taken even further as evidence that they were compulsory. Demetrios, son of Antigonos, arriving in Athens as its liberator in 307/6, wished to be initiated and to pass through all of the levels of initiation. To accommodate him, the Lesser Mysteries, which had already taken place, were repeated by renaming the current month Anthesterion, so that they could be restaged. This need not be taken as evidence for the compulsory nature of the Lesser Mysteries, but at least indicates that Demetrios thought that participation in the Lesser Mysteries would enhance his initiation at the Greater Mysteries.<sup>28</sup> A scholiast, however, records that participation in the Lesser Mysteries was compulsory,<sup>29</sup> and while it has been argued that the receipts of income for the Lesser Mysteries in 408/7 were so low, when compared with those for the Greater Mysteries of the same year, that few individuals could have undergone initiation in the Lesser

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<sup>27</sup> For discussions of these terms, see esp. Simms *GRBS* 31 (1990) 183-95, who deals with earlier literature on the subject; see also Burkert *Homo Necans* 248-49; idem *Mystery Cults* 7-10; Mylonas *Eleusis* 237-39; Kerényi *Eleusis* 45-47. On the *epopteia*, see esp. Burkert *Homo Necans* 265 n. 1, noting esp. Plat. *Symp.* 210a.

<sup>28</sup> Plut. *Demet.* 26.1-5.

<sup>29</sup> Schol. Plat. *Gorg.* 497c (cited by Burkert *Homo Necans* 266 with n. 7; translated in Rice, Stambaugh *Sources* 191-92). For the Lesser Mysteries as having been compulsory for attendance at the Greater, as a "preliminary exercise", see Mylonas *Eleusis* 243; Burkert *Homo Necans* 266 n. 7.

Mysteries, this argument is unconvincing, and the scholiast's statement should be accepted.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that the Athenians sent out spondophoroi for both the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries, providing a sacred truce for both celebrations,<sup>31</sup> indicates that the authorities considered the Lesser Mysteries to be of significance. While, if the Lesser Mysteries had not been compulsory, this would have made initiation for non-Athenians easier, there is no reason to suppose that this would have been considered as a factor of significance. It could have been thought that making provision for non-Athenians to travel safely to Athens for the Lesser Mysteries was consideration enough for those who wished to be initiated, and at any rate if the Lesser Mysteries had been compulsory before the Mysteries gained popularity outside Athens, it is extremely unlikely that the Athenians would have altered the existing state of affairs simply for the convenience of non-Athenians. The fact that the Athenians annually sent out spondophoroi for the Lesser Mysteries, admittedly not a great expense, indicates that there was an expectation on the part of the cult authorities that non-Athenians would attend the Lesser Mysteries. The sacred truce was proclaimed for the Lesser Mysteries just as it was for the Greater. The fact that the Lesser Mysteries were held again for the sake of Demetrios must indicate that, at the very least, the Lesser Mysteries were considered to be quite important, and there is a strong presumption that participation in the Lesser Mysteries was essential for a would-be initiate in the Greater.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, if the Lesser Mysteries were not compulsory, participation by pilgrims in the Eleusinian Mysteries would have been easier, for instead of coming to Athens twice, or staying at Athens from the period of the Lesser Mysteries until the Greater almost seven months later, pilgrims need only have come once and stayed for

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<sup>30</sup> Parke *Festivals* 60 and Clinton *Sacred Officials* 13 n. 13 doubt the compulsory nature. Clinton 13 n. 13, cf. Simms *GRBS* 31 (1990) 183 n. 1, points out that there is a disparity between the receipts for the Greater and Lesser Mysteries of the order of 4,399 2/3 drachmas as against 45 1/6 respectively in 408/7 (*IG I<sup>3</sup>* 386.144-46). If the amounts for the Lesser Mysteries as recorded in *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 386.144-46 are accepted, then the fifteen drachmas to have a slave initiated in the month of Anthesterion, as recorded in *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1672.207, could not refer to the Lesser Mysteries. It should be pointed out, however, that the reference to the Lesser Mysteries has been restored: ΔΔΔΔΓΙ ἐκ [τῶν ἐν Ἄγραι]σι μυστηρίων.

<sup>31</sup> See ch. 1, esp. nn. 18, 22-23, 38-39, 60, 63-65, 74, 76, with text.

<sup>32</sup> The Lesser Mysteries clearly stood in a relationship of purificatory preparation for the Greater Mysteries: Schol. Ar. *Wealth* 845, καὶ ἔστι τὰ μικρὰ ὥσπερ προκάθαρσις καὶ προἀγνευσις τῶν μεγάλων; cf. Polyain. 5.17.1. As noted in ch. 1 n. 19, *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 6B gives the dates for the truce for the Lesser Mysteries (.36-47): Gamelion 15 through Anthesterion to Elaphebolion 10; and for the Greater Mysteries (.17-27): Metageitnion 15 through Boedromion to Pyanepsion 10.

a short time. But these are not grounds for assuming that the Lesser Mysteries were not compulsory, and again the religious authorities might well have felt no need to relax any requirement of attendance at the Lesser Mysteries in order to make participation by non-Athenians easier. If the Lesser Mysteries were a prerequisite for initiation in the Greater Mysteries, then pilgrims wishing to be initiated would need to have attended both ceremonies, and it can be assumed that pilgrims would have travelled to Athens for the first stage, returned home, and travelled back to Athens for the Greater Mysteries. Though inconvenient, those who genuinely wished to become initiated and to benefit from the experience would presumably have been willing to undertake the two journeys. It is so possible (though there is no specific reference to this) that the pilgrims could become initiated in the Lesser Mysteries in one year and return for the Greater Mysteries in another year, if this were more convenient than travelling to Athens twice in one year.

Little is known concerning the Lesser Mysteries which took place at Agrai in the month of Anthesterion (Gregorian calendar months February and March), and they have been curiously overlooked by the source material. There is so little evidence concerning them that even the precise dates of the celebration are unknown,<sup>33</sup> but if there were large numbers of participants, then it appears that the Lesser Mysteries would be held twice, especially in the year in which the Eleusinian athletic festival took place,<sup>34</sup> and this would seem to strengthen the argument that the Lesser Mysteries may have been a compulsory preliminary for initiation into the Greater. They seem to have involved fasting, and the main theme of the celebration may have been that of purification.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Plut. *Demet.* 26. 1-4, cf. 26.5; Schol. Plat. *Gorg.* 497c (cited by Burkert *Homo Necans* 266 with n. 7; translated in Rice, Stambaugh *Sources* 191-92); Schol. Ar. *Wealth* 845; cf. Mylonas *Eleusis* 239 n. 80. Mommsen *Feste* 406 suggested on the basis of the truce for the Lesser Mysteries, which lasted from Gamelion 15 to Elaphebolion 10 (see above), and comparison of these dates with those for the truce for the Greater Mysteries (a period of exactly the same length), that the most important day of the Lesser Mysteries was Anthesterion 20 (accepted by Burkert *Homo Necans* 265 n. 2; cf. Mikalson *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 120-21 who tentatively suggests Anthesterion 20-26 for the festival). Agrai was outside of the walls of Athens (Steph. Byz. s.v. "Ἀγραι καὶ Ἄγραι"); Parker *LCM* 14.10 (1989) 154-55 on Dioskorus at Agrai; cf. Sokolowski *LSCG* 18A.38-39 (where, for the demesmen of Erkhia, Agrai was considered to be "in the city"); Mylonas *Eleusis* 240.

<sup>34</sup> *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 847.22-24; cf. Mylonas *Eleusis* 239 n. 81.

<sup>35</sup> For general details, see Mylonas *Eleusis* 239-43; Kerényi *Eleusis* 48-52; Lauenstein *Mysterien von Eleusis* 127-54.

The Greater Mysteries took place in the month of Boedromion (Gregorian calendar months September and October)<sup>36</sup> and opened with an event which did not involve those wishing to be initiated. This was on the thirteenth day of Boedromion, when the *ephebes* journeyed to Eleusis, and on the next, the fourteenth day of Boedromion, they escorted the sacred objects from Eleusis to the Eleusinion at Athens:<sup>37</sup> these sacred objects, *hiera*, were stored in chests known as *kistai*. The *hiera* went by carriage escorted by the Eleusinian priestesses, but as the bridge at the Rheitoi streams was only five feet wide and thus unsuitable for carts, the priestesses carried the *kistai* across the Rheitoi at this point.<sup>38</sup> The return of the *kistai* to Eleusis formed the focus of the procession which took place on the nineteenth of Boedromion.

The first day of the Greater Mysteries in which initiates played a part was the fifteenth day of Boedromion: the *aghyrmos*.<sup>39</sup> On this day, the *arkhon basileus* summoned the initiates, both the Athenians and the pilgrims who had come from other states, to the painted Stoa. The hierophant and the *dadoukhos*, torch-bearer, were present, and the *hierokeryx*, sacred herald, read out a proclamation, *prorrhesis*, inviting participation in the mysteries.<sup>40</sup> This proclamation debarred those of barbarous tongue and those who were polluted from participation.<sup>41</sup> Those in a state

<sup>36</sup> For a concise summary of the chronology of the Greater Mysteries, see Dow *HSCP* 48 (1937) 112-16; Mikalson *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 54-60, 65. Mylonas' study of the Greater Mysteries is ordered chronologically day by day: *Eleusis* 245-80; and see fig. 5.3 for a table of events.

<sup>37</sup> *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1078.9-15. In this case the *ephebes* might necessarily have had to be initiates, since they came into such close proximity to the sacred objects. The inscription is from the Roman period but as Harrison *Prolegomena* 151 notes the provisions are stated to be in accord with "ancient usage" (*IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1078.10-11); but note Mylonas *Eleusis* 246; cf. Mikalson *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 54; Burkert *Homo Necans* 249 with n. 7. See fig. 2.2 for a map of the processional route from Athens to Eleusis.

<sup>38</sup> *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 79 (c. 421; Rheitoi bridge five feet wide); cf. *LSCG Suppl.* 15.36; Mylonas *Eleusis* 245-46; Clinton *Sacred Officials* 14; Parke *Festivals* 59-60. See Plut. *Phok.* 28.5 on the *kistai*. The caryatids of the Lesser Propylaea at Eleusis (see site plan, fig. 5.1) carry *kistai* on their heads (see fig. 5.8); cf. *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 79.9-11.

<sup>39</sup> Hesych. s.v. ἀγυρμός. The day of the ἄλαδε μύσται, the second day of the mysteries, is known to have occurred on the 16th, so the 15th is accepted as the first day of the mysteries; cf. Mikalson *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 55, with bibliography at 55 n. 1.

<sup>40</sup> For these officials, see Mylonas *Eleusis* 229-30, 232-33; Clinton *Sacred Officials* 10-68, 76-82.

<sup>41</sup> *Isok.* 4.157: Εὐμολπίδαι δὲ καὶ Κήρυκες ἐν τῇ τελετῇ τῶν μυστηρίων διὰ τὸ τούτων μῖσος καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις βαρβάροις εἶργεσθαι τῶν ἱερῶν ὥσπερ τοῖς ἀνδροφόνοις προαγορεύουσιν. (At Burkert *Greek Religion* 459 n. 13, 5.147 is a misprint.) See also Suet. *Nero* 34.8; Dio Chrys. 17.5; Luc. *Pseudom.* 38; Ar. *Frogs* 369-70 with Schol. (parody of the *prorrhesis*); Theo. S nym. 14.20-25; Philostr. *Apoll.* 4.18 (Edelstein *Asclepius* 1, T565, p. 316); Orig. *Cels.* 3.59; Liban. *Decl.* 13.19, 52 (cited by Burkert *Greek Religion* 459 n.

of pollution were naturally excluded as the mysteries were religious ceremonies. According to Isokrates, the Persians were excluded because of their attacks on Greece,<sup>42</sup> but the emphasis on the initiates being able to speak Greek appears to have been an important feature of the ceremony, and may not have wholly been due to Athenian hostility towards their non-Greek enemies, the Persians. The central most important factor for an initiate was the ability to understand the explanations accompanying the rituals, and there is the story of the young man who had a dream that he was initiated into the mysteries but, because in the dream he could not hear clearly the words spoken by the hierophant, he was not to be considered initiated.<sup>43</sup> Thus an understanding of the words of the ceremony, spoken, of course, in Greek, was essential for full participation in the mystic ritual, and accordingly true initiation could not be enjoyed by those who did not speak Greek.

Presumably in the earliest times only Athenians would have been initiated in the rites, and this would not have been a matter of law but presumably of practice. With the dawning of the classical period, however, the popularity of the cult increased as its fame spread throughout the Greek world. According to one myth, Herakles and the Dioskouroi were adopted by Athenian citizens so that they could become initiated, which seems to indicate that it was thought that at an early period access to the mysteries was restricted to Athenian citizens.<sup>44</sup> Of course, like other mystery celebrations, participation in the cult was voluntary.<sup>45</sup> Women in childbirth, according to Callimachus, were forbidden from attending mysteries of Demeter, and he also has an age limit of sixty for participation. Whether the Eleusinian Mysteries or

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13). Cf. Harrison *Prolegomena* 151-52; Foucart *Mystères* 151-52; Mylonas *Eleusis* 247-48; Burkert *Greek Religion* 286 with 459 n. 13; Dow, *Healy Sacred Calendar* 19-20. The spondophoroi sent out throughout the Greek world indicate the Panhellenic nature of the Eleusinian Mysteries (*JG I*<sup>3</sup> 6B.17-27, 36-47); see ch. 1 nn. 23, 74 with text. See also [Lys.] 6.5; Andok. 1.132.

<sup>42</sup> Isok. 4.157.

<sup>43</sup> Sopat. *Rhet. Gr.* 8.110 (Waltz) (cited by Mylonas *Eleusis* 272 with n. 194; Burkert *Homo Necans* 250 with n. 10); cf. ch. 4 n. 72, with text.

<sup>44</sup> Plut. *Thes.* 33.1-2 (Herakles); Xer. *Hell.* 6.3.6 (Herakles and the Dioskouroi); cf. Walton *HTR* 45 (1952) 110; Simon *Festivals of Attika* 28; Kerényi *Eleusis* 52-59. Kerényi *Eleusis* 51 fig. 10 has been claimed as a relief representing Herakles arriving at the Ilissos for initiation into the Lesser Mysteries. Herakles is more fully discussed in connection with the Lovatelli urn and Torre Nova sarcophagus, below nn. 96-105, with text; figs. 5.4, 5.5.

<sup>45</sup> Hdt. 8.65.4 on the Eleusinian Mysteries indicates that initiation was open to anyone whether Athenian or a Greek from elsewhere: τῆ, δὲ ὀρθὴν ταύτην ἄγουσι Ἀθηναῖοι ἀνὰ πάντα ἕτεα..., καὶ αὐτῶν τε ὁ βουλόμενος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων Ἑλλήνων μνεῖται; see also Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 1.42.119.

simply Demetriad mysteries in general are meant here is unclear.<sup>46</sup> Children were excluded from the Eleusinian Mysteries, and this was unusual, as most of the mystery celebrations did allow children to be initiated,<sup>47</sup> but at Eleusis, all the *mystai* were adults except for the “child of the hearth”, whose role, according to Porphyry, was to propitiate the goddess on behalf of all the initiates.<sup>48</sup> The mysteries involved a comprehension of the rites, and an understanding of the revelation which was at the core of the ceremony, and this presumably explained the restriction by which children, who might not understand the explanations, or the ritual, were excluded. It appears from the fact that Demonax the Cypriote did not become an initiate and that this was one of the accusations in a prosecution brought against him, that all or most other Athenian males were Eleusinian initiates.<sup>49</sup>

Apart from the proclamation by the *hierokeryx*, little else seems to have happened on the fifteenth, though there would doubtless have been some explanation either official or unofficial as to what was to occur over the course of the next few days. It is possible that it was the responsibility of the *mystagogos* of each initiate to make these explanations, and all of the initiates would have had a *mystagogos*, literally, a *mystes* guide. Thus it seems, as at Delphi, where a consultant of the oracle had to be introduced by a local citizen, that the sacred place was approached through the medium of one who had acquaintance with the sanctuary, for the *mystagogoi*, who guided the *mystai*, had to be initiates. Andokides as *mystagogos* initiated a Delphian and other “guest friends”,<sup>50</sup> and non-Athenians with Athenian connections thus found their way to initiation smoothed by local contacts. Foreigners without such links would have needed to find their own *mystagogos*, and presumably the first day of assembly, the *aghyrmos*, provided this opportunity. It is usually held that each *mystes* had his or her own individual *mystagogos*, but the evidence for an individual *mystagogos* comes from a restored inscription which has been taken to provide for

<sup>46</sup> Callim. *Hymn Dem.* 130-31 with Fopkinson *Callimachus* 179-80; cf. Burkert *Mystery Cults* 37 (his interpretation that the hymn restricts the mysteries in question to women does not seem necessary).

<sup>47</sup> Burkert *Mystery Cults* 52, with 15 n. 115; cf. ch. 4 nn. 22, 26, 120, with text, for children, specifically daughters, at Andania.

<sup>48</sup> Παιὶς ἀφ’ ἑστίας: Porph. *Abst.* 4.5; *Hesp.* 49 (1980) pp. 263-68, side A, line 41 (the selection of the child of the hearth, with p. 285); Burkert *Homo Necans* 254, 280; Clinton *Sacred Officials* 98-114; cf. Burkert *Mystery Cults* 52 with 151 n. 115; Mylonas *Eleusis* 236-37; Sokolowski *HTR* 52 (1959) 3; cf., for children as suppliants at Epidauros, ch. 8 n. 78, with text.

<sup>49</sup> Luc. *Demon.* 11; see also above n. 17, with text.

<sup>50</sup> Andok. 1.132: μῶν μὲν Ἄ... <τὸν> Δελφόν, ἔτι δὲ ἄλλους ξένους ἑμαυτοῦ.

individual *myesis* with a penalty if group *myesis* occurred;<sup>51</sup> it is, however, possible to read the text as having no reference to individual initiation. Leaving aside the restored text, there is no other evidence for individual initiation as a requirement, and given that the evidence for this rests on such uncertain grounds, it must be provisionally rejected. Another inscription records the cost of the initiation of five slaves, which Clinton argues was a “violation” of individual initiation. Simms, however, is correct in pointing out that the entry does not indicate group initiation but simply records that five slaves were initiated, and the expenditure involved; the entry has no relevance to the number of *mystagogoí*.<sup>52</sup> Group initiation would have made attendance easier for non-Athenians, as they would not have needed to find an individual *mystagogos*, but could “enrol” with an existing group, presumably on the first day of the mysteries. If group initiation were the case, there may have been a set number of *mystai* for each *mystagogos*, and more *mystai* could have been accommodated in the *telesterion* if group initiation was the norm. Just as, however, there is no firm evidence for the necessity for a *mystagogos* for each initiate so there is none for group initiation.

The second day, the sixteenth, witnessed an increase in the intensity of the celebration, when the pilgrims took part in a pilgrimage to the sea, a prelude to their much longer pilgrimage to the site of Eleusis. The pilgrims made their way to the sea with cries of “to the sea, *mystai!*”<sup>53</sup> Here they apparently washed themselves and a little pig which they had brought with them;<sup>54</sup> this pig, thus cleansed, was later

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<sup>51</sup> *IG I<sup>3</sup> 6C.26-30* restored by Merritt *Hesp.* 14 (1945) pp. 70-71, 77; but subsequently questioned, idem *Hesp.* 15 (1946) p. 251 (for line 29); see also Sokolowski *HTR* 52 (1959) 4; Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 20-21; Simms *GRBS* 31 (1990) 186-87. For one *mystagogos* for each *mystes*, see Mylonas *Eleusis* 237, 249; Parke *Festivals* 62 with 194 n. 54; Burkert *Greek Religion* 287 with 460 n. 20 incorrectly cites *LSCG Suppl.* 15. See also the references to *mystagogoí* at *LSCG Suppl.* 15.18, .25, .35 (restored).

<sup>52</sup> *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1673.24* (cf. *IG II<sup>2</sup> 1672.207*); Clinton *Ark. Eph.* (1971) 91; Simms *GRBS* 31 (1990) 187 n. 14.

<sup>53</sup> Hesych. s.v. ἄλαδε μύσται; *IG II<sup>2</sup> 847.20*; *IG I<sup>3</sup> 84.35-36*. *EM* s.v. Ἱερά ὁδός confuses this with the sacred road to Eleusis; Schol. Aesch. 3.130; Polyain. *Strat.* 3.11.2 gives the date of this event as Boedromion 16; cf. Mylonas *Eleusis* 249 n. 122.

<sup>54</sup> The sacrifice of the pig: Ar. *Frogs* 237-38, *Peace* 374-75 (with Schol., in answer to Robertson *Homeric Hymn* 21, this passage can have no temporal bearing on when initiation could take place); Epimarkhos *Od. Aut. fr.* 100 (Kaibel); Ar. *Acharn.* 729-835, esp. 747, 764 for mystery piglets. On the pig sacrifice in general, cf. Simon *Festivals of Attika* 32; Mylonas *Eleusis* 249; Parke *Festivals* 62-63. Burkert *Homo Necans* 258 with n. 10 (and idem *Greek Religion* 286, cf. *Mystery Cults* 100, noting 75) states that the initiate gave the pig “in his stead.” However, whatever the significance of the pig, it is unlikely to have been in any sense a ritual substitution: the evidence for the cult does not point in this direction. The scholiast on Ar. *Acharn.* 747 which Burkert cites in his support need not bear Burkert’s interpretation (ἐκαστος δὲ τῶν μνουμένων ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ ἔθνευ); cf.

sacrificed, probably on the same day as the journey to the sea, rather than at Eleusis.<sup>55</sup> On one occasion when a pilgrim was washing his pig in the harbour Kantharos, at the Piraeus, he was seized by a shark, which devoured his legs. The Athenians took this, not unnaturally, as an evil omen.<sup>56</sup> As the initiates were from all classes of society, the sacrifice to Demeter had to be one which was within economic reach of all, and, just as Asklepios accepted the lowly chicken, Demeter accepted the piglet, which was relatively cheap and easy to raise or acquire.<sup>57</sup> Mylonas, however, comments that the purificatory nature of pig sacrifice was the most important element in the choice of this animal.<sup>58</sup> The pig sacrifice was presumably of fundamental significance: real communion with the gods could only take place through sacrifice, and would have prepared the initiates for their coming experiences. The purificatory power of the sacrifice, if it took place on the sixteenth, would have extended over several days, as the initiates were required to keep themselves in a state of purity on the subsequent days: from their purification and possible sacrifice of the pig on the sixteenth until the completion of the ceremonies at Eleusis, they did not re-enter the profane world but remained in a sacral state of mind and body.

What happened on the days of the seventeenth and eighteenth of Boedromion is uncertain; the day of the Epidauria occurred on one of these, but it is not known which.<sup>59</sup> The day which was not the Epidauria must also have had some significance, or it would not have been included in the ceremonies: if it was the day of “Hither the

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Parker *Miasma* 283 n. 10. Burkert's comment that the pig sacrifice as a substitution in initiation rites amongst South Sea agrarian cultures could possibly represent “...a distant historical connection with the Demeter mysteries...” is anthropologically naive. The sea was considered to be purifying: Aeschyl. *Pers.* 578; Eur. *Iphig. Taur.* 1192; Mylonas *Eleusis* 249; Parke *Festivals* 62; Parker *Miasma* 226-227 with 227 n. 108. The sacrificial pig is represented in art, see figs. 5.4, 5.6, and note the references at Burkert *Homo Necans* 257 nn. 3-4. See ch. 4 nn. 52, 110, 113; ch. 8 nn. 46-48, with text, for water in ritual purification.

<sup>55</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 249-50; cf. Burkert *Homo Necans* 258.

<sup>56</sup> Plut. *Phok.* 28.6 (322 BC); Aesch. 3.130 with Schol.

<sup>57</sup> Plato *Rep.* 378a; cf. Harrison *Prolegomena* 16; for the rooster as a thanksgiving offering, commonly given by the poor to Asklepios, see ch. 8 nn. 184-86, with text.

<sup>58</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 249-50 n. 126, with references to the pig's purifying qualities; see also Parker *Miasma* 30 n. 66, cf. 283 n. 11; cf. Golden *Class. Views* 7 (1988) 4, n. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Deubner *Attische Feste* 72 suggested that the 17th was the day known as ἱερεῖα δεῦρο, “Hither the Victims” (Philostr. *Apoll.* 4.18 (Edelstein *Asclepius* 1, T565, p. 316)); see the discussion and criticisms of Mikalson *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 56 (who suggests, 56 & 58, that the Epidauria could have occurred on the 17th; Foucart *Mystères* 317-23 and Dow *HSCP* 48 (1937) 113 date the Epidauria to the 17th. Mylonas *Eleusis* 250-51, opting for the 18th as the day of the Epidauria, states of the 17th that “Scholars do not quite agree as to what happened on this day” (250); cf. Parke *Festivals* 63.

Victims” this implies sacrificial acts, possibly on behalf of the city.<sup>60</sup> The Epidauria is significant, for on this day the initiates stayed indoors, probably in preparation for the major events of the next few days, the *pompe* to Eleusis and the revelation in the *telesterion*.<sup>61</sup> When the god Asklepios was introduced to Athens in 420/19, he was housed by the goddesses at Eleusis until he was established in his own shrine, and part of the story was that Asklepios was late for the celebration of the mysteries, so what had taken place so far was performed again in order that he might participate.<sup>62</sup> This might suggest the possibility that late pilgrims were given the same privilege, especially since, although the preliminary rites occurred on the fifteenth and the sixteenth, there was a break between these and the day when the procession to Eleusis took place.

It was the fifth day of the celebrations, the nineteenth day of Boedromion, that saw the beginning of the most important part of the mysteries, and this was the day of the trek from Athens to Eleusis, a distance of some twenty-two kilometres, and for those in the procession this would have been a pilgrimage of a day’s duration.<sup>63</sup> The sacred objects removed from Eleusis on the fourteenth were now returned on the nineteenth,<sup>64</sup> accompanied this time by those seeking initiation in the cult; the *ephebes* were once again responsible for conducting the *hierai*.<sup>65</sup> The priests and priestesses

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<sup>60</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 250.

<sup>61</sup> Epidauria: Paus. 2.26.8; *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 974.11-16. Indoors: [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 56.4 with Rhodes *Commentary* 626-27; Rhodes’ interpretation 626-27 that the initiates spent the day in the temple of Asklepios (not all at once, surely, implying a constant stream of “visitors” to the temple), need not be accepted. The comparative evidence which he cites (*Ar. Wealth* 411, 621) refers to incubatory procedure in the cult of Asklepios, and is not a suitable comparison. See Mylonas *Eleusis* 251, who suggests that the day was one of rest; Parke *Festivals* 63 for it as spiritual preparation: the day was probably a combination of both; cf. ch. 8 n. 22, with text.

<sup>62</sup> Philostr. *Apoll.* 4.18 (Edelstein *Asclepius* 1, T565, p. 316); cf. *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 4960a (Edelstein *Asclepius* 1, T 720, pp. 374-75), cf. ch. 8 nn. 23, 133, with text; Paus. 2.26.8; Mylonas *Eleusis* 251.

<sup>63</sup> For the procession, see *LSCG Suppl.* 15; Lauenstein *Mysterien von Eleusis* 164-81; Mylonas *Eleusis* 252-58; Parke *Festivals* 65-67; Burkert *Greek Religion* 286-87; idem *Homo Necans* 277-80. In addition to the sacred way from Athens to Eleusis (see fig. 2.2), note the sacred way between Miletos and the temple of Apollo at Didyma, which also formed the focus of a pilgrimage: Gödecken *ZPE* 66 (1986) 217-53; Schneider *AA* (1987) 101-29; Robertson *Phoenix* 41 (1987) 361, 363; Fontenrose *Didyma* 74-75.

<sup>64</sup> For the date, see *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1078.18-22. Mylonas *Eleusis* 256-57 n. 151 and Mikalson *Sacred and Civil Calendar* 59 point out that several sources give the date of the procession as the 20th (Plut. *Phok.* 28.2, *Cam.* 19.10; with Eur. *Ion* 1376 giving the 20th for the night festival), but explains these references by stating that the procession did not arrive at Eleusis until sunset, and according to Greek practice the day began at sunset, so that the procession, according to Greek reckoning, arrived on the 20th.

<sup>65</sup> *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1078.18-22.

removed the *kistai* from their resting place in the Eleusinion, and they journeyed along the Panathenaic Way, through the agora and on to the Dipylon gate, and the Iakkheion. The statue of Iakkhos in that shrine was taken out, and a priest, the *iakkhagogos*, accompanied it in a carriage at the front of the procession.<sup>66</sup> The initiates may have joined this procession at the Pompeion near the Dipylon gate.<sup>67</sup> At whatever place the initiates joined the procession with the *kistai*, the atmosphere must have been of an intense nature. The initiates, in a state of preparation over previous days, were now ready for their initiation. The feeling of excitement, and the extraordinary intensity which regularly comes of being part of a large group, united with a single purpose in mind, must have created a tension of anticipation. The initiates would have set off for Eleusis; some perhaps a little nervous at the rites and the secrets of the goddess in which they were to participate, which meant death if revealed or profaned.

The *mystagogoí* and the *mystai* formed, in procession, a huge mass of humanity with a sole religious purpose in mind. This was unquestionably the largest procession in the Greek world, the one which was most extensive in length and size, and probably the largest mobile group gathering ever to be assembled for a religious purpose, on an annual basis for about a thousand years, in the Greek world. For its size, there is adequate testimony: Herodotos tells the story of how during the second Persian invasion a vision was seen of a cloud of dust, as might have been caused by thirty thousand men on the march, rising from Eleusis, accompanied by the singing of the Iakkhos hymn as if the initiates were making their procession; this sounded like the voice of the throng making its way to Eleusis.<sup>68</sup> The Periklean *telesterion* held only about three thousand; Herodotos' number of thirty thousand would then be either an exaggeration, or represent the number of initiates in the city which would indicate that most of the male population of Athens was initiated, the dust presumably being raised by all male initiates coming to the defence of the city.<sup>69</sup> Only an army would have surpassed the procession as an assembled mobile group.

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<sup>66</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 253-54; see Plut. *Arist.* 27.4 (the Iakkheion); Paus. 1.2.4 (the building for the preparation of processions); Ar. *Frogs* 324; Poll. *Onom.* 1.35. Plut. *Them.* 15.1 refers to the initiates accompanying the "mystic Iakkhos". The association of Iakkhos with the mysteries is first attested in Herodotos 8.65.1, unconvincingly explained by Simon *Festivals of Attika* 33. For Iakkhos, see Burkert *Greek Religion* 287 with 459 n. 14; idem *Homo Necans* 279.

<sup>67</sup> Thus Mylonas *Eleusis* 252; cf. Parke *Festivals* 65.

<sup>68</sup> Hdt. 8.65.1-6; Plut. *Them.* 15.1, *Perikl.* 28.1-2; cf. *FGH* Poseidonios 87 F 36 (#51) (Athen. 213d): τὴν ἑρὰν τοῦ Ἰάκχου φωνήν.

<sup>69</sup> Hdt. 5.97.2 gives 30,000 as the number of male Athenian citizens.

The Iakkhic chant is known from Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where the happy initiates chant: "Iakkh' o Iakkhe, Iakkh' o Iakkhe".<sup>70</sup> Great crowds, noise, and a festive atmosphere were the preliminaries to the commencement of the ritual which would lead to the revelation of the mysteries. Presumably many made the journey on foot; others, at least in the earlier period, would have gone by cart,<sup>71</sup> but the procession would presumably have stayed as more or less a cohesive unit, the pace unhurried. The Niinnion tablet shows initiates carrying staves and bundles wrapped in cloth tied to a stick and carried over the shoulder, timeless attributes of the traveller, presumably containing provisions, and perhaps clothes for the initiation ceremony.<sup>72</sup> The initiates were also garlanded, which is at least some evidence that pilgrims, as they made their way to their sacred destination, were identifiable by their wreaths.<sup>73</sup>

The procession took the route called the "Sacred Road",<sup>74</sup> which started from the Dipylon gate, passing the gymnasium of the Academy, going through the pass between Aigaleos and Mount Pokilon, and reaching the shrine of Pythian Apollo (the site of the Byzantine church at Daphni). They then proceeded down to the bay of Eleusis, which they skirted, crossing the streams known as Rheitoi, and later the Eleusinian river Kephisos.<sup>75</sup> At the Rheitoi, where the bridge over the streams was only five feet wide and was not for carts, so that the priestesses walked over the bridge, carrying the *kistai*,<sup>76</sup> the ceremony of the *krokosis* would take place. The descendants of Krokon, according to myth the first dweller in the area, would tie a saffron coloured ribbon on the right hand and left leg of each of the mystai, and this presumably gave the pilgrims a welcome chance for a rest as they were doubtless now

<sup>70</sup> Ar. *Frogs* 316-17, 325, 341: "Ἰακκῆ' ὦ Ἰακκῆ."

<sup>71</sup> In the fifth century the pilgrim mystai could go to Eleusis by carriage: Ar. *Wealth* 1013-14, so that a procession which was a mixture of walkers and wheeled vehicles can be imagined; in the fourth century Lykourgos is reported to have banned this practice: see ch. 4 n. 88, with text.

<sup>72</sup> For the Niinnion tablet, see fig. 5.5, though Simon *Festivals of Attika* 32 n. 56 believes that this tablet does not belong to the mysteries but to the festival of the Holoa (for which see Simon 35-37). For the bundle of provisions: Parke *Festivals* 65. Distinct from this are the bunches of twigs which mystai carried: Hesych. s.v. Βάκχος; Schol. Ar. *Knights* 408; Serv. *Aen.* 6.136. Burkert *Homo Necans* 278 interprets the twigs in an ethnobiological fashion: the branch as a weapon enhancing physical strength, and giving the carrier "superior standing" (cf. Burkert *Structure and History* 43-44). Initiates could dedicate to the gods the clothing in which they had been initiated: *FGH* 326 Melanthios F 4 (Schol. Ar. *Wealth* 845); cf. ch. 4 n. 43, with text.

<sup>73</sup> Ar. *Frogs* 330 with Schol. See fig. 5.7 where the pilgrims carrying their bundles are wreathed.

<sup>74</sup> Paus. 1.36.3: ἤν' Ἀθηναῖοι καλοῦσιν ὁδὸν ἱερὰν; Polemon wrote a lost work on the sacred procession from Athens to Eleusis (fr. 10d, p. 44 = Harp. s.v. ἱερὰ ὁδός).

<sup>75</sup> This description is based on Mylonas *Eleusis* 254-55; Parke *Festivals* 66. Paus. 1.38.1 notes that the Rheitoi were sacred to Demeter and Kore (Persephone); see fig. 2.2.

<sup>76</sup> *IG* I<sup>3</sup> 79 (esp. .10, .14, where *kistai* are meant); cf. n. 38 above, with text.

beginning to be weary.<sup>77</sup> A ceremony of purification by washing also took place here.<sup>78</sup>

When the procession came to the river Kephisos the mysteries as an expression of the sufferings of Demeter, and a re-enactment of the Demeter-Persephone myth, began in earnest.<sup>79</sup> As the pilgrim initiates crossed a bridge over one of the streams, important Athenians amongst them were subjected to abuse, mockery and the display of obscene gestures.<sup>80</sup> It is with Demeter's sufferings that the initiates identify in this ritual act, and they are cheered up, like her, by buffoonery. The theme of a better hope in the afterlife does not stem from Persephone's annual death and rebirth (her descent and return from Hades, winter and spring), but from the fact that Demeter's sufferings came to an end. The world which was barren due to her grief became reborn with the return of Persephone; Demeter is the key to the Eleusinian Mysteries, not Persephone. Diodoros points out that during the celebration of the rites of Demeter amongst the Sicilians those participating spoke coarsely towards each other, as Demeter, although distressed by the rape of Persephone, laughed at the coarseness of Iambe.<sup>81</sup> The apotropaic nature of jesting is clear, as it drove away Demeter's cares and worries; in the same way, the insults, aimed at the important, would have entertained all those crossing the bridge, while abuse of the leaders of the community might have served a cathartic purpose, releasing social pressures, perhaps in the same way as masters and slaves reversed roles for the Roman Saturnalia. In this way, the pilgrims were leaving behind the care and worry of the profane world for the sacred

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<sup>77</sup> Phot. s.v. Κροκοῦν (cited Parke *Festivals* 194 n. 63); Paus. 1.38.2; Mylonas *Eleusis* 256, correctly rejecting the suggestion of Deubner *Attische Feste* 77, that as this ceremony would have been too time consuming on the journey it actually occurred in Athens some time between 15th and 19th of Boedromion. Paus. 1.38.1 notes that these streams were the ancient boundary between Athens and Eleusis when the latter was still independent.

<sup>78</sup> Hesych. s.v. Πειτοῖ; cf. Parker *Miasma* 284 n. 12.

<sup>79</sup> The pilgrim initiate, in various ways, identified with the sufferings of Demeter. However, Burkert *Mystery Cults* 74-75 states that the extent to which the worshipper's fate is linked to that of the goddess is a theme requiring "some caution": "...if Persephone returns to this world every year, a joyous event for gods and men, the initiates do not follow her..." (75). For the role of the Demeter-Persephone myth in the religion of Demeter, see the references at Burkert *Mystery Cults* 155 nn. 34, 35.

<sup>80</sup> Hesych. s.v. γεφυρίς, γεφυρισία. Hesychius places the joking, the *gephyrismos*, aimed against reputable citizens on the Eleusinian Kephisos; Strabo 9.1.24 (400) on the Athenian Kephisos. Foucart *Mystères* 335; Mylonas *Eleusis* 256 n. 150; Parke *Festivals* 66; Burkert *Homo Necans* 278 accept Hesychius' geography; Mylonas *Eleusis* 256 n. 150 takes Strabo as referring to the return journey. Cf. *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 202-04: the jesting of Iambe; that there is a link between Iambe's jesting, *aiskhrologia*, and the *gephyrismos* rite seems almost certain: Wilamowitz *Glaube der Hellenen* 2.53; Kerényi *Symb. Osl.* (1960) 11-16; Burkert *Homo Necans* 278 with n. 20.

<sup>81</sup> Diod. 5.4.7.

state.<sup>82</sup> From there the initiates came to the sanctuary at Eleusis, having made their way safely from Athens. In hundreds of years there was only one recorded period of discontinuance of the Eleusinian procession, when, during the Peloponnesian War, after the occupation of Dekeleia by the Spartans, the initiates made the journey by sea.<sup>83</sup> In 335 when news reached Athens of the destruction of Thebes, Athens' ally, by Alexander III (the Great) of Macedon, the Greater Mysteries were cancelled, but what stage they had reached is not made clear.<sup>84</sup>

Having arrived at the sanctuary, the Eleusinian rites themselves commenced, and many of these rites were connected with the experiences of Demeter as recorded in the *Homeric Hymn* in her honour. The night of the nineteenth was presumably spent in general celebration, and for the day of the twentieth the pilgrims had a chance to rest, with the ceremony of the *telesterion*, the central rite of the mysteries, when the pilgrims became initiated, taking place on the night of the twentieth.<sup>85</sup> Certain restrictions were in force for this period, and part of the Eleusinian *synthema* recited by the initiates during the Eleusinian rite, according to Clement, was as follows: "I fasted, I drank the *kykeon*."<sup>86</sup> While Clement's evidence is unreliable, there is nothing in this *synthema* that could not have been presupposed from a reading of the *Homeric Hymn*, according to which Demeter fasted as part of her anguish for the loss of her daughter Persephone. In particular, on arrival at Eleusis, Demeter sat and neither laughed nor tasted food or drink.<sup>87</sup> It is probable, therefore, that the pilgrims

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. Burkert *Homo Necans* 278, who does not see the *gephyrismos* as having this liberating character; for Ar. *Wasps* 1361-63 (with Schol. 1361) as a reference to this ritual, see Rusten *HSCP* 81 (1977) 158. Plutarch refers to an acclamation at a crossing of the bridge in connection with the Eleusinian Mysteries: Plut. fr. 60 (Sandbach) (Proklos on Hesiod *Works and Days* 389), the Greek text is quoted in Kerényi *Eleusis* 208 n. 57, translated 127, "Cross the bridge, O Kore, before it is time to begin the threefold plowing". This does not seem to refer to the ritual joking, and the meaning is unclear; cf. Burkert *Homo Necans* 278 n. 19; for *aiskhrologia* in the Mysteries, see also Rosen *AJP* 108 (1987) 421. For the bridge over the Eleusinian Kephisos: *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1191; *Anth. Pal.* 9.147 (both referring to Xenokles' role in the construction of the bridge).

<sup>83</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.20-21; Plut. *Alk.* 34.4-7 (discussed in ch. 2 nn. 37-40, with text).

<sup>84</sup> Arr. *Anab.* 1.10.2 (not stating that the procession of the 19th was in progress and had to be stopped, *contra* Mylonas *Eleusis* 257); cf. ch. 2 n. 42, with text.

<sup>85</sup> Note that according to Greek practice the new day began at sunset, see above n. 64.

<sup>86</sup> Clem. *Protr.* 2.18, discussed fully below: "ἐνήστευσα, ἔπιον τὸν κύκεῶνα".

<sup>87</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 200 (fasting at Eleusis at the palace of Keleos), 49-50 (fasting before arrival at Eleusis, cf. 129), 304 (fasting in the temple built for her by the Eleusinians); cf. Callim. *Hymn Dem.* 12. For the fasting, see Arbesmann *Fasten* 75-83. Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 213 cites Callim. *Hymn Dem.* 6 that the Alexandria procession of the *kalathos* occurred on a day of fasting. But the religious context of Callimachus' hymn to Demeter is the subject of debate, see Hopkinson *Callimachus* 35-39, and thus this hymn provides no certain parallel. Moreover, any pre-processional fasting in other cults would need to involve a procession of an analogous distance to be a valid

to Eleusis also fasted in imitation of the goddess, though the precise period when this fasting took place is uncertain. The march from Athens to Eleusis on an empty stomach was perhaps not impossible, and the discomfort would have been a fitting act of empathy with Demeter, while the rigours of fasting would have aided the religious experience. Food was renounced in the clear expectation of the good things which initiation with all its blessings would bring, while abstinence heightened a sense of anticipation and thus made the religious experience more meaningful. Fasting presumably also included abstention from wine, for Demeter declined the offer of wine made by Metaneira, the wife of Keleos, stating that it was not lawful for her to drink red wine, whereas, when the *kykeon* was mixed for her, Demeter drank it because it was “holy.” Clearly this reflects ritual practice: wine was not allowed (at least for a certain period of the mysteries), but the *kykeon* was permissible as the drink of the initiates.<sup>88</sup> Fasting seems to be the only abstinence required of the initiates, and in addition, there seem to have been certain foodstuffs which were generally forbidden.<sup>89</sup> There were apparently no rules for sexual restraint, except for the hierophant.<sup>90</sup>

In the myth, Demeter thus breaks her fast first with the drinking of the *kykeon*, the composition of which has been the subject of much discussion. It has been

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comparison (the Eleusinian *pompe* was 22 kilometres in duration). According to Ovid *Fasti* 4.535-36, the *mystai* broke their fast when the stars appeared.

<sup>88</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 206-11 (refusal of wine: οὐ θεμιτόν οἱ ἔφασκε / πίνειν οἴνου ἔρυσθρόν (207-08); Demeter drinks the *kykeon* (211): ὀσίης ἕνεκεν). Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 224, with bibliography, cites Schcl. Nik. *Alex.* 130 as stating that Demeter would not take wine because of her grief. Wine was clearly permissible during some stage in the mysteries, as Khabrias made his distribution of wine for his naval victory at Naxos on the second day of the festival, Boedromion 16 (Plut. *Phok.* 6.7; Polyain. *Strat.* 3.11.2 (the day the *mystai* journeyed to the sea: τὸ Ἰαλαδέε μύσταυ); cf. Plut. *Cam.* 19.6), indicating that wine drinking was permissible on the 16th. Themistokles had had Iakkhos as ally for the battle of Salamis and Khabrias had had the *mystai*: Polyain. 3.11.2; cf. ch. 4 nn. 79-82, with text.

<sup>89</sup> Ael. *Nat. An.* 9.51; *FGH* Melanthios 326 F 2 (Athen. 325c) with Arbesmann *Fasten* 76-77; Parker *Miasma* 358; cf. ch. 4 n. 64, with text.

<sup>90</sup> The *hierophant* underwent temporary castration by using herbs or hemlock: Hippol. *Philos.* 5.8.40, Hieron. *Adv. Iov.* 1.49, Schol. *Perz.* 5.145, Serv. *Aen.* 6.661, Orig. *Cels.* 7.48 (these quoted in Burkert *Homo Necans* 284 n. 46); Jul. *Or.* 5.173d; cf. Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 25.95.154. See Mylonas *Eleusis* 230 (who cites Strobaios 4, p. 73, *non vidi*); Parke *Festivals* 58; Burkert *Homo Necans* 283-84 (cf. *idem Mystery Cults* 169 n. 118); Clinton *Sacred Officials* 116. Paus. 2.14.1 cannot mean, as Mylonas *Eleusis* correctly points out 230 n. 25, *contra* Burkert *Homo Necans* 284 n. 46, that the hierophants did not marry, and suggests that hierophants' marriages, as attested by other evidence, took place before they took up their duties (much as the Delphic Pythia could be married at the time of taking up office and set the husband aside for the course of her duties; see ch. 6 n. 135, with text). Paus. 2.14.1 should be taken as implying that hierophants could marry, and would abstain from sex (according to the late sources) during the celebration of the mysteries; on this cf. Paus. 7.25.13.

considered either a harmless concoction consisting of barley meal, penny-royal and water, or a powerful narcotic which gave drug-induced hallucinatory experiences to the initiates, the narcotic value coming from the fermentation of the grain, or from the fact that the *kykeon* contained opium.<sup>91</sup> But such emphasis on the *kykeon* is not in accord with the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, where the *kykeon* ends her fasting, but no further significance is attached to it. Demeter's sufferings are far from over as she drinks it, and it is simply a refreshment for the goddess in the course of her trials and tribulations. It presumably, therefore, had a similar significance for the *mystai*. For Demeter, the drinking of the *kykeon* took place upon arrival at Eleusis, and the *mystai* probably also drank it soon after their arrival, but it was not central to what they were about to encounter in the *telesterion*, which focused on the *kistai* which were brought out of the *anaktoron*.

Pilgrims travelled from all over the Greek world, and later from the Roman, in order to be initiated at the Eleusinian Mysteries; even the Athenian initiates themselves were pilgrims, spending a day travelling from Athens, and several nights away from their homes. The preliminary ceremonies before arrival are clear enough, though many details are lacking or uncertain, but the evidence is inconclusive for the nature of the experience which the pilgrims underwent when they arrived at Eleusis; some details, however, can be postulated. Much uncertainty surrounds the nature and ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and naturally the prohibition on talking about them is largely responsible. Christian sources provide the most specific testimony, but their polemical nature has long been noted, and to an extent it must be considered to colour both their description and their judgment.<sup>92</sup> However, the evidence in general allows some idea of the procedures to be deduced and some features can be described with

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<sup>91</sup> Composition of *kykeon*: *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 208-09; γλήχον (βλήχον) is translated as penny-royal or soft mint. On opium, see Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 345; Kerényi *Eleusis* 180; Burkert *Mystery Cults* 108-09; idem *Homo Necans* 281-82 n. 36; Rosen *AJP* 108 (1987) 416 n. 4. For fermented barley grain, see Kerényi *Eleusis* 178-79 (and the γλήχον as inducing hallucinations 179-80); Wasson et al. *Road to Eleusis passim*, esp. 37-50, noting in particular 47: "Clearly ergot of barley is the likely psychotropic ingredient in the Eleusinian potion..."; see also Wasson *Persephone's Quest*; Burkert *Mystery Cults* 108-09. For full discussion of the *kykeon*, with references to the theories on its significance, see Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 344-48; an older but still useful treatment is Delatte *Cycéon*. For a discussion of the *kykeon* mentioned at Hipponax fr. 48 Dg., see Rosen *AJP* 108 (1987) 416-26. Watkins *PAPA* 122.1 (1978) 9-17, esp. 15, places the *kykeon* in an "Indo-Iranian" context, arguing that the drinking of mixed potions was a "central cultic act" in Indo-Iranian and Indo-European religion, and prefers a hallucinogenic nature for the *kykeon*, 15-17.

<sup>92</sup> For criticisms, see Mylonas *Eleusis* 287-316, esp. 287-88, but note 263; Kerényi *Mysterien* 107-12; idem *Eleusis* 116-19; but cf. Burkert *Homo Necans* 251, who is more inclined to accept the Christian writers.

certainty. Most significantly, it can be noted that the mysteries were an experience of the senses. The necessity of hearing what was said in the mysteries was made clear by the story concerning Sopatros, and in addition worshippers needed their sight. The importance of viewing the *hierá* is made clear by the case of Antiphilos who claimed that he was blind when he went to be initiated, but on the night of initiation both his eyes and his soul were purged of darkness, with the result that he travelled back to Athens without the aid of his staff, his eyes rather than his words proclaiming the rites of Demeter who, in order that he might be initiated, had cured his lack of sight. Revelation that was based on viewing was clearly crucial to initiation, and the mysteries were an audio-visual experience.<sup>93</sup>

The archaeological evidence is scanty, and there are two items which primarily form the focus of discussion: the Lovatelli urn,<sup>94</sup> and the Torre Nova sarcophagus.<sup>95</sup> But the main consideration in dealing with any type of artistic evidence is that art is unable to give any insight into the secret of the mysteries. The literary evidence is absolutely specific: nothing to do with the events in the telesterion was to be revealed. Aeschylus, for producing a stage prop which was reminiscent of the mysteries, was taken to court. These reliefs will at best provide details of what happened before the secret part of the ceremony, and serve largely to confirm what we know already, while of consideration is the fact that the Lovatelli urn and the Torre Nova sarcophagus are both non-Athenian in origin.

The Lovatelli urn and the Torre Nova sarcophagus both represent aspects of initiation which are clearly related to the myth of Demeter and the tale of Herakles' initiation; Herakles wished to be initiated into the mysteries but had murdered the centaurs and was thus impure.<sup>96</sup> The Lovatelli urn has one scene in which a pig

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<sup>93</sup> Hearing: Sopat. *Rhet. Gr.* 8.110, discussed above n. 43, below n. 107; ch. 4 n. 72, with text. Antiphilos: *Anth. Pal.* 9.298. The votive relief of Eukrates could be relevant here; see fig. 5.9. The relief, which was found at Eleusis, records that Demeter cured Eukrates, and the pair of eyes on the relief suggest that the cure was ophthalmological in nature. It is normally assumed that this relief indicates that Eukrates was cured in the same way as Antiphilos (Kerényi *Eleusis* 97-98; Burkert *Mystery Cults* 20 with 141 n. 37); cf. *IG IV<sup>2</sup>* 1, 121, iama 11, above n. 12, ch. 8 n. 45; for the restoration of sight, see also ch. 8, esp. nn. 68, 109, 158, with text.

<sup>94</sup> Fig. 5.4; Roussel *BCH* 54 (1930) 58-65; and see the bibliography at Burkert *Homo Necans* 267 n. 12. Three scenes are represented on the urn.

<sup>95</sup> Fig. 5.5; see the bibliography at Burkert *Homo Necans* 267 n. 12. The sarcophagus (Burkert *Homo Necans* 267 n. 12 points out that it is actually an ossuary) belongs to the second century AD, and is from Asia Minor.

<sup>96</sup> Apollod. 2.5.12; Plut. *Thes.* 30.5; Diod. 4.14.3, who states that the Lesser Mysteries were specifically inaugurated for the purification of Herakles; cf. Mylonas *Eleusis* 208; Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 22. The Lovatelli urn and the Torre Nova sarcophagus are generally associated with the Lesser Mysteries (Mylonas *Eleusis* 208; Kerényi *Eleusis* 52-59; Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 22),

sacrifice is being made; the pig is purified by a libation of water poured by a male figure, while the figure on the right side of the depiction of the sacrifice in both cases is clad in a lion skin and as such is identified as Herakles. The Torre Nova sarcophagus indicates a sacrificial procedure, but without a piglet, and a fire and a libation are depicted. The attested pig sacrifice by initiates is connected to the Greater Mysteries, with the pig washed on the second day of the celebrations (the sixteenth of Boedromion), and the Lovatelli urn presumably depicts this act of sacrifice.

The second scene in both reliefs shows a figure seated on a stool, with the figure's head covered with a garment. On the Lovatelli urn a female figure holds a winnowing fan above the head, while on the Torre Nova sarcophagus a similar figure holds an up-ended lighted torch behind it. The usual interpretation is that these reliefs represent purification rites,<sup>97</sup> with the covered head symbolising the exclusion of the profane world, from which he will emerge with new knowledge when the rites are revealed to him, and become part of a new community. On the Torre Nova sarcophagus, purification by fire seems to take place, perhaps an allusion to the fire in which Demophoön the child of Keos and Metaneira was laid by Demeter in order that his mortality might be burnt away and replaced by immortality.<sup>98</sup> The covered head also recalls the veil of Demeter, when she sat sorrowfully on a stool in the palace of Keleos, this pain and grief of Demeter being experienced by the initiate as well. As Demeter underwent suffering before revealing the mysteries to the Eleusinians, so the initiates will have to experience the same by empathy before the mysteries can be revealed to them.

The fact that the figure is seated, and on a skin, could represent the "enthronement" referred to by Hesychius, who refers to *thronosis* as a preliminary ceremony for the initiates.<sup>99</sup> On the Lovatelli urn, the figure is represented as sitting on his own lion cloak, while the Torre Nova sarcophagus depicts a skin of some kind. Demeter sat on a stool covered with a ram skin at Eleusis, and this is perhaps a re-enactment of this part of the myth, and since this element of the myth took place at

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but there is no reason for this connection except that it is known that Herakles was initiated at the Lesser Mysteries and purified there of his murder, and they are connected with the Greater Mysteries by Burkert *Greek Religion* 286; idem *Homo Necans* 267-68. The main elements of the scenes depicted are a pig sacrifice and the veiled initiate, and the initiate belongs as readily to the Greater as to the Lesser Mysteries, while the pig sacrifice is known to be a main event of the Greater Mysteries (but unattested for the Lesser), so that sarcophagus and urn should be considered to indicate aspects of the Greater Mysteries.

<sup>97</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 205-07; Burkert *Homo Necans* 267-68.

<sup>98</sup> Demophoön: *Hom. Hymn. Dem.* 233-62; Demeter seated and veiled: 193-97; seated by the well of Eleusis: 98-100 (cf. Paus. 1.39.1).

<sup>99</sup> Hesych. s.v. θρόνωσις.

Eleusis, it can be connected with an aspect of the Greater Mysteries, particularly since it follows on from a depiction of a pig sacrifice.<sup>100</sup> These first two scenes on both the Torre Nova sarcophagus and the Lovatelli urn are strongly reminiscent of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and both are clearly reflections of ritual, for which the *Hymn to Demeter* provides an *aition*. The mythical case of Herakles is an example of the ritual, which was not designed for him alone as a murderer, but, since it reflects the *Hymn*, was doubtless a ritual purification which all initiates underwent.<sup>101</sup>

A third element which both the urn and the sarcophagus depict is a seated figure, brandishing a torch, presumably Demeter with the flame with which she scoured the earth in search of Persephone.<sup>102</sup> A snake is with her, but there is no need to follow the Christian sources who give the mysteries an orgiastic nature, and a reptile in this context should not be associated with sexuality.<sup>103</sup> On the Lovatelli urn (but not on the sarcophagus relief) a worshipper stands before Demeter in this final scene: the identification of this figure with Herakles is questioned,<sup>104</sup> but there is no reason why this could not be another depiction of Herakles.

These reliefs can only be used with caution to clarify the experience of the pilgrim. If the pig sacrifice depicted on the urn is associated with the pig purified on the sixteenth of Boedromion and later sacrificed, and if the sarcophagus is held to depict the same incident, though not portraying the pig sacrifice, then the urn and sarcophagus probably both represent Herakles' initiation into the Greater Mysteries. Herakles was particularly associated with the Lesser Mysteries; on the other hand, initiation in the Lesser seems to have been compulsory, and moreover implies initiation in the Greater. The reliefs suggest that elements of the Demeter mythology as recorded by the *Homeric Hymn* to this goddess were part of the Eleusinian

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<sup>100</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 196. The "Fleece of Zeus" was used to purify homicides (Mylonas *Eleusis* 208; Parker *Miasma* 285, 373) and this could be why Herakles is depicted as seated upon it. Burkert *Homo Necans* 267 thinks that the artist of the Lovatelli urn made an error in having the figure seated on a lion's skin.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 22 (though he connects it with the Lesser Mysteries).

<sup>102</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 47-48, 61; see figs. 5.4, 5.10, perhaps 5.5, for Demeter with torch.

<sup>103</sup> Clem. *Protrep.* 2.16-19 (the rite involved revealing female genitalia, amongst other things). Burkert *Homo Necans* 269 notes that the snake is a "very general symbol" but continues that the "snake arouses a fear of death and a secret sexual fascination..."; idem *Mystery Cults* 74 also errs in stating that there "are hints of Demeter's sexual relations in an Eleusinian setting and the birth of a child" (referring to the young prince Demophoön who is placed in Demeter's care). At Epidauros, women sleeping in the abaton dreamt that they were made pregnant by snakes: there was no fear or repulsion involved; see ch. 8 n. 136, with text; figs. 8.9, 8.10, 8.11.

<sup>104</sup> Burkert *Homo Necans* 269 n. 17; Mylonas *Eleusis* 207 (who suggests Iakkhos); there is no reason why Mylonas' suggestion should not be correct (*contra* Burkert *Homo Necans* 269 n. 17). On the sarcophagus, a male figure to the left of the seated Demeter could be Iakkhos.

ceremony, and represent ritual practices derived from Demetriad mythology. The art does not purport to represent the hidden secret, as the veiled candidate awaits initiation, and the importance of the reliefs lies in giving pagan evidence that the elements of the myth were part of the mysteries. When Christian sources give further evidence that other aspects of the myth as detailed by the *Homeric Hymn* were part of the rites, then perhaps some credence can be attached to them, but it cannot be deduced from this that the myth will reveal the secret of the mysteries. The *Hymn* itself contains the injunction of silence pertaining to the secret, so it is unlikely that the *Hymn* itself would betray the secret. There is one further consideration concerning the Lovatelli urn, in that its three scenes are sometimes taken as representing three aspects of initiation; if the figure in the third scene is the initiated Herakles, then this scene could be taken as depicting the climax of initiation, the *epopteia*.<sup>105</sup>

When they arrived at Eleusis, the initiates were probably given instructions: “to those entering the temenos of Eleusis the program was stated, not to advance into the adyton.”<sup>106</sup> The adyton was where the *kistai* were stored, the *anaktoron* of the *telesterion*. The *kistai*, or more correctly their contents, were presumably the focus of whatever took place in the *telesterion*, and could be revealed only at the correct moment. It seems clear that there was a spoken element in the secret rites.<sup>107</sup> Aristotle states that initiates “do not need to understand anything”,<sup>108</sup> and as there was clearly a spoken element which had to be heard, the import of his statement is presumably that the ritual was not complicated. Those who profaned the mysteries in 415 not only revealed the rites to the uninitiated but also spoke the secrets of the rites,<sup>109</sup> which shows that whatever was said by the cult personnel was not complicated; there was no complex liturgy. Perhaps what was said took the form of simple statements of explanation. Plutarch provides some details about what occurred inside the *telesterion*: the initiates crowded together, making a good deal of noise, jostling one another, and this is hardly indicative of an awe-struck pious multitude. The atmosphere, however, must be borne in mind, with thousands of initiates going through the doors of the *telesterion*, finding their seats, attempting to remain with their

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<sup>105</sup> Dieterich *RhM* 48 (1893) 276; Harrison *Prolegomena* 546; Kerényi *Mysterien* 70; contra Mylonas *Eleusis* 207. It should also be noted that while it is always assumed that the urn and the sarcophagus represent the mysteries, Mylonas 208 adds a few cautionary comments.

<sup>106</sup> Proklos *Diadokhos in Alkib.* 1.5, p. 288 (translated by Mylonas *Eleusis* 261). For the *anaktoron*, see figs. 5.1, 5.2.

<sup>107</sup> Sopat. *Rhet. Gr.* 8.110 (Waltz) (cited by Mylonas *Eleusis* 272 with n. 194; Burkert *Homo Necans* 250 with n. 10); Mylonas *Eleusis* 272-73 regards this spoken element as the *legomena*.

<sup>108</sup> Arist. in Synesios *Dio* 48a (cited by Mylonas *Eleusis* 228).

<sup>109</sup> [Lysias] 6.51.

*mystagogoi*: reverential awe and silence would follow soon enough when the rites were about to commence.<sup>110</sup>

It has been thought that there was a sacred drama which took place before the initiates went into the *telesterion*. In the *Homeric Hymn*, Demeter seeks Persephone with torches, and Christian sources are also explicit that this was represented as part of the ritual. Lactantius states that Persephone is sought at night, by the light of burning torches, and with her discovery rejoicing begins and the torches are waved about.<sup>111</sup> Tertullian states there is a sacred drama in which the priestess is abducted.<sup>112</sup> According to Clement, “Deo (Demeter) and Kore (Persephone) are the subject of a mystic drama, and Eleusis celebrates with torches the wandering and raving and sorrow.”<sup>113</sup> These late Christian sources are the basis for modern scholarship on the sacred drama which is said to have occurred before the actual initiation, and the polemic of the Christians in general about the mysteries is ignored: “...our sources are late and not very reliable, but still they can be trusted for statements that were not made under the influence of syncretism and of late Gnostics....”<sup>114</sup> It is simple, of course, if one accepts such statements to reconstruct the drama: Demeter’s wandering search by torchlight and Persephone’s return.<sup>115</sup> But if the Christian authors are left aside, there is no clue in the pagan sources about a sacred drama, and there is no reason why the mysteries should have had such a feature. Mylonas divides the mysteries into three parts: *dromena*, *deiknymena* and *legomena*, and includes the hypothetical sacred drama in the *dromena*, and while it seems that there was in fact no sacred drama, it is clear that there were *dromena* of some sort. Plutarch writes of “things being performed” but this need not be taken as supporting the idea of a sacred drama.<sup>116</sup> Besides, the myth of Demeter, which was well known, could not have formed part of the forbidden things which could not be spoken or of the secret of the mysteries themselves, and even if there were a sacred drama it therefore makes no contribution to unravelling the secret of the mysteries.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 81d-e. For the *telesterion*, see figs. 5.1, 5.2.

<sup>111</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 47-48, 61; Lact. *Inst. Epit.* 18.23.7, *Div. Inst.* 1.21.24.

<sup>112</sup> Tert. *Ad. Nat.* 2.7; see Mylonas *Eleusis* 310-11.

<sup>113</sup> Clem. *Protrep.* 2.12: Δηὼ δὲ καὶ Κόρη δράμα ἤδη ἐγενέσθη μυστικόν, καὶ τὴν πλάνην καὶ τὴν ἀρπαγὴν καὶ τὸ πένθος αὐτῶν Ἐλευσὶς διαδουχεῖ. See also Minuc. Felix *Octav.* 23.2; cf. Liban. *Lecl.* 14.31.

<sup>114</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 263 is generally critical of these sources; cf. n. 92.

<sup>115</sup> See the reconstructions of the drama in Mylonas *Eleusis* 261-65; Kern *Griechischen Mysterien* 75-76; Foucart *Mystères* 392; Fa-nell *Culis* 3.175; Burkert *Homo Necans* 275-76.

<sup>116</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 81e refers to things performed and things shown (*dromena* and *deiknymena*); see Mylonas *Eleusis* 261-72 for the *dromena*.

<sup>117</sup> Kerényi *Eleusis* 26-27, who notes that there was no stage at Eleusis for the presentation of a sacred drama, though this is not an insuperable obstacle.

The revelation probably centred around the *kistai*, which were normally stored in the *anaktoron*, a part of the rite referred to as the *deiknymena*. Much of the discussion about the experiences of the initiates in the *telesterion* centres around the renowned *synthema*, password, which Clement of Alexandria records: “I have fasted, I have drunk the *kykeon*, I have taken from the *kiste*, having done my task, deposited into the basket and out of the basket into the *kiste*.”<sup>118</sup> It is possible that this *synthema* contains the kernel of fact which lay at the heart of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The fasting and the *kykeon* are aspects of the Demeter myth, and precisely because these are part of the myth, the *synthema* provides no key to the secret of the mysteries. The *kistai* seem to offer a clue, and it is around the *kistai* that most speculation has developed, because they were an important element of the sacred procession, and the hierophant’s role is clear: he was the revealer of the sacred cult items, and these were almost certainly contained in the *kistai*. The mysteries were something seen,<sup>119</sup> and the central element of the Eleusinian rite probably focused on the contents of the *kistai*.

Clement claims to reveal the contents of the *kistai*: sesame sweets, cakes in the shape of pyramids and balls, lumps of salt, a serpent, fennel, a woman’s *kteis*, pudenda, and other items.<sup>120</sup> While the initiates are said to have stated that they had taken and replaced objects in the *kiste*, this seems a complicated procedure for the thousands of initiates who were in the *telesterion*. If all worshippers had to manipulate the objects which they contained, this would have complicated the nature of the ceremony, and quickly destroyed any sort of order or pious reverence as the initiates pressed forward to take their turn; this procedure would also have been far too time-consuming. As for the contents of the Eleusinian *kistai*, Clement need not be correct here in stating that they contained foodstuffs. It would be unlikely that the sacred items would have been handled by the assembled body of initiates, and even though the initiates were pure, surely only the cult personnel, perhaps only the hierophant himself, could be suffered to touch the *hiera*.

While Clement may possibly have heard first-hand accounts from pagan apostates in Alexandria who had been initiated at Eleusis, his “evidence” must still be taken as untrustworthy. There may have been a *synthema* at the mysteries, but it was not the one Clement preserves, and the contents of the *kistai* are not as he states. He is apparently ignorant, as are the other Christian authors, of the true nature of the

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<sup>118</sup> Clem. *Protrep.* 2.18; cf. Arnob. 5.26. Note Mylonas’ discussion *Eleusis* 271, 295 on Lobeck’s emendation of ἐργασάμενος to ἐγγευσάμενος (from “having done my task” to “having tasted”), with reference to Athen. 478d. Farnell *Cults* 3.186 takes up Lobeck’s suggestion, but the preference now lies with interpreting the *synthema* without emendation.

<sup>119</sup> [Lys.] 6.51; Andok. 1.31; Mylonas *Eleusis* 273-74.

<sup>120</sup> Clem. *Protrep.* 2.19.

mysteries, and it is clear that there were many local celebrations of Demeter myths.<sup>121</sup> Alexandria, the home of Clement, had its own mysteries and it is suggested that he appropriated a garbled version of the Alexandrian programme as the model for his denunciation of the Eleusinian rites.<sup>122</sup> It can also be noted that it is possible that Clement did know that the rites were asexual in character and that there was nothing orgiastic about them, for in one passage, Clement describes Christ as the mystic hierophant who, by his light, guides the believer.<sup>123</sup>

Tertullian explains that the rites were shameful, as the initiates were tortured before admitted to candidature; those wishing to become *epoptai* waited five years before the *epopteia* to enhance their expectation, but after all this, the godhead was only the image of a phallus. Tertullian writes of the *epoptai*, and not of the *mystai*, and the fact that all his other details, concerning the *epopteia*, are known to be wrong almost certainly must mean that that the phallic detail is to be dismissed, and the mysteries are not to be connected with male sexuality.<sup>124</sup> Asterios, a further Christian writer, claims that a sacred marriage took place between the hierophant and Demeter's priestess: the lights were extinguished and they coupled in the darkness, and salvation came for the assembled *mystai* through this union.<sup>125</sup>

The contents of the *kistai* were probably innocuous, for the purity necessary for mystery initiates would have excluded ritual based on a crude sexuality of phallus and

<sup>121</sup> Paus. 2.14.1, 8.15.1.

<sup>122</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 300-01; Clinton *Sacred Officials* 8; cf. Burkert *Mystery Cults* 37 with 147 n. 44.

<sup>123</sup> *Protrep.* 12.92: ἱεροφάντεϊ δὲ ὁ κύριος. This is a strange comparison, given that at *Protrep.* 2.19 it is stated that the mysteries (which are conducted by the hierophant) involve female genitalia.

<sup>124</sup> Tert. *Valent.* 1: "Tota in adutis divinitas tot suspiria epoptarum, totum signaculum linguae, simulacrum membri virilis revelatur" (quoted by Mylonas *Eleusis* 276). Dieterich accepted the idea (cited by Mylonas *Eleusis* 296 with n. 17), claiming that the initiate placed the phallus in his breast, then back in the *kiste*, thus symbolically uniting himself with the goddess and becoming her child. Mylonas 296 with nn. 19-21 mentions other unconvincing theories (Burkert *Homo Necans* 270-71 n. 21 also summarises modern scholarship on this matter). Körte has the *kiste* containing not a phallus but a female pudenda, *kteis*, (recalling Clem. *Protrep.* 2.19), which the initiate slid over his body, becoming thus reborn, a child of Demeter. Kern carried the idea further: the initiate manipulated his own phallus in the *kteis* (which would imply that there were hundreds of phalli and pudendae in the *telesterion*). Picard had a model phallus and *kteis* placed from *kiste* to basket. Many objections are raised to these (scholars cited by Mylonas 296 n. 22): in brief, it should be stated that reconstructions of the mysteries which focus on the male initiate neglect the female initiate, and that the rites at Eleusis can not be shown in any way to have a sexual orientation, or even a fertility orientation which took the form of rites centering around the sexual organs.

<sup>125</sup> Asterios *Hom.* 10; on Asterios, see Mylonas *Eleusis* 311-16, with criticisms of the "sacred marriage" theory.

puḍenda, especially as, in a neglected passage, Diodoros states that the antiquity and purity, *hagneia*, of the mysteries have made them famous amongst mankind.<sup>126</sup> Theophrastos refers to agricultural implements, which ancient man “consigned to secrecy and encountered as something sacred”, perhaps in connection with rites of Demeter, and it is plausible to suggest that the secret of the mysteries was associated with agriculture, and that the contents of the *kistai* were antique agricultural implements.<sup>127</sup> The hymn itself has a clear basis in agriculture, which was clearly the gift of the goddess, and this basis of the mysteries remained important in the classical period.<sup>128</sup> Triptolemos, for example, went forth from Eleusis to spread this art amongst humankind.<sup>129</sup> Hippolytus, the Christian apologist, describes the revelation as “the Athenians initiating people at the Eleusinia and showing to the *epoptai* that great and marvellous mystery of perfect revelation, in solemn silence, cut wheat.”<sup>130</sup> The wheat in itself was not a secret, of course, though it could be said that the wheat represented the mystery.<sup>131</sup> It seems best to accept as the most probable reconstruction of the events that the hierophant revealed the contents of the *kistai*, whatever these happened to be, with some form of accompanying verbal explanation, and that these contents were probably connected with primitive agricultural ritual.

A rejection of the Christian testimony, however, removes from the available evidence definitive statements about the contents of the *kistai*, which explains why scholars, even the most erudite, continue to make use of these sources, ignoring their inconsistencies, and striving to extract from their garbled and hostile accounts some kernel of truth to explain the mysteries. It seems most reasonable to conclude that while certain details about the ritual can be deduced, the secrecy of the mysteries remained well guarded. The initiates came in their thousands over the centuries, and while there can be no certainty about the nature of the pilgrims’ experiences in the

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<sup>126</sup> Diod. 5.4.4.

<sup>127</sup> Porph. *Abst.* 2.6; Burkert *Greek Religion* 286; idem *Homo Necans* 272-73 with 272 with n. 30, referring to corn grinding tools. Mylonas *Eleusis* 84-85, 273-74 suggests that the *kistai* contained Mycenaean relics.

<sup>128</sup> Isok. 4.28-29.

<sup>129</sup> For Triptolemos: Paus. 1.14.2; *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 477; Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.6; cf. Isok. 4.28-29; Plut. *Kim.* 10.7. See fig. 5.11 for a relief of Demeter and Persephone with Triptolemos.

<sup>130</sup> Hippol. *Philos.* 5.8.39 (translated by Mylonas *Eleusis* 275); see also Hippol. 5.8.40, with Mylonas 306-10; Burkert *Homo Necans* 288-91 (Greek text at *Homo Necans* 289 n. 70).

<sup>131</sup> Not a secret: Mylonas *Eleusis* 275, contradicted by Burkert *Homo Necans* 290 n. 77: “The secret is hidden in what is familiar.” Mylonas will not accept Hippolytus’ statement because Tertullian *Valent.* 1, writes of the phallus as the secret (see above n. 124, with text). Hippolytus also states that the hierophant cried aloud, in the course of the ritual in the *telesterion*, “The Lady Brimo has brought forth a holy boy, Brimos”; Brimos was a name for Demeter, but also for Hekate; see Burkert *Homo Necans* 288-90.

*telesterion*, why they came is apparent: the mysteries guaranteed the blessings of a better afterlife. As the *Hymn to Demeter* promises, “Blessed is he amongst mortal men who has seen the mysteries, but for those who are not initiated there is a wretched existence in the gloom of Hades”,<sup>132</sup> or, as Sophokles phrases it, “Thrice blessed are those that have seen these rites and then come to Hades: there is life there for them alone; for the others, everything is evil.”<sup>133</sup> This message is repeated by Pindar, “Blessed is he who after seeing these rites goes to Hades; he knows the end of life, he knows its Zeus-given beginnings.”<sup>134</sup> Concern about the afterlife is a common human preoccupation, and the Homeric view of this was hardly pleasant: in the well-known passage, Achilles, the famous warrior at Troy, would rather live as a servant of a poor man than be a shade in Hades, while Odysseus’ glimpse into the underworld, with shades who cannot speak without drinking sacrificial blood, is unappealing. Some heroes, such as Menelaos, received everlasting life in the pleasant Elysian fields, an underground utopia,<sup>135</sup> but in the Homeric version of Hades, the ordinary mortal had little to look forward to. Contrasted to this Homeric view are the happy lines in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* which describe the life of the initiates in Hades: they are distanced from evil, they have feasted, they dance happily.<sup>136</sup> This contrast, however, between two different types of afterlife need not suggest that the mysteries grew up as a reaction against the Homeric view. It is clear that the Eleusinian cult centre was extremely ancient, and Eleusis in fact represents a variant religious belief to the Homeric, an alternative view probably as old, and if the archaeological evidence at Eleusis attesting to Mycenaean activity at the site can imply cult observances along the same lines as the classical, then the mysteries could have had a history spanning almost two millennia.<sup>137</sup>

Pagan sources provide some clues about the events in the *telesterion*. Plutarch records that the *telesterion* would be in darkness, and then the door of the *anaktoron*, the holy of holies, would open to reveal a great light,<sup>138</sup> at which the initiates were

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<sup>132</sup> *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 480-82.

<sup>133</sup> *Soph. fr.* 837 (Pearson).

<sup>134</sup> *Pind. fr.* 137 (102) (Maehler); *Anti. Pal.* 11.42.3-6: after being initiated life is more carefree, and in death the heart is even more carefree. *Isok.* 4.28 states that initiation in the mysteries allows one to hope for more than otherwise from the afterlife, and also from life.

<sup>135</sup> Achilles: *Od.* 11. 489-91; Odysseus consults the dead: *Od.* 11.123-635; Menelaos: *Od.* 4. 561-69.

<sup>136</sup> *Ar. Frogs* 340-416.

<sup>137</sup> For the Mycenaean origin of the mysteries, see Mylonas *Eleusis* 23-54; Kerényi *Eleusis* 18-25. In particular, note that the *anaktoron* built on the site of a Mycenaean building, never changed its position, despite enlargements of the *telesterion*, see fig. 5.2, cf. 5.1.

<sup>138</sup> *Plut. Mor.* 81e; on the importance of the *anaktoron*: *Max. Tyr.* 39.3k (translated by Burkert *Greek Religion* 286), “As long as you have not reached the *Anaktoron*, you are not initiated.”

silent and amazed. At this point the *telesterion* would become dimly lit. To this Dio Chrysostom, who writes of mysteries, without specifying Eleusis, adds that the initiate would see mystical sights and mystical voices, and, in the sanctum, “darkness and light would appear to the initiate in alternation.”<sup>139</sup> Darkness and light are direct visual stimuli, but darkness has special qualities, and is in many ways a primeval stimulus. In the darkness, humans are confronted by the unknown, there is always a sense of anticipation, and often fear. The light from the *anaktoron* would bring relief from this, and then would reveal the relics displayed by the *hierophant*.

The climax of the Eleusinian Mysteries was the experience in the *telesterion*. As the participants left with their *mystagogoi* they emerged no longer as ordinary individuals but as *mystai*, or if they had previously been *mystai*, as *epoptai*. As *mystai* and *epoptai* they were entitled to blessings which others were denied, and while they had probably entered the *telesterion* anxious and expectant, in view of the great mystery that was to be revealed to them, as they left, they were in the position of the happy *mystai* of Aristophanes’ *Frogs*.

The next day, the twenty-second, was known as the *plemokhoai*, when the initiates made libations to the dead from vessels of this name, and perhaps this rite was connected with the Eleusinian promise for a better afterlife for the deceased. The day was also spent in general festivities.<sup>140</sup> The *boule* was required to meet in the Eleusinion at Athens on the day after the completion of the mysteries, presumably in order to make a report about their conduct, and possibly to investigate any misdemeanours or complaints arising out of the celebration. A meeting of the *boule* in the *bouleuterion* and Eleusinion is attested for the twenty-fourth of Boedromion.<sup>141</sup> Since the rite in the *telesterion* occurred on the twenty-first, and the *plemokhoai* on the day after, this leaves the twenty-third of Boedromion as the last day of the Greater Mysteries, and on this day the return to Athens would have occurred. There is no evidence that this was in any way a procession such as had set out on the nineteenth of the month, and initiates presumably made their way home at their own pace. It has been suggested that non-Athenians may have chosen not to return to Athens but to

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<sup>139</sup> Dio Chrys. 12.33. Kerényi *Eleusis* 10 interprets Plut. *Them.* 15.1, in which at the time of the second Persian invasion (480/79) a great light is seen flashing from Eleusis, as the light in the *telesterion* during the mystery celebration.

<sup>140</sup> *Plemokhoai*: Athen. 496a-b; Hesych. s.v. Πλημοχώρη; Poll. *Onom.* 10.74; Mylonas *Eleusis* 279; Deubner *Attische Feste* 91.

<sup>141</sup> Requirement for *boule* to meet: Andok. 1.111; the meeting of the *boule*: *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 848.27-32 (Dow *Prytaneis* 81-85, no. 36); cf. Rhodes *Boule* 35. For misdemeanours committed during the Mysteries, see ch. 4 n. 78, with text.

depart directly from the bay of Eleusis, and practical considerations presumably would have determined the decision in individual cases.<sup>142</sup>

In the accounts of the Eleusinian *epimeletai* and the *tamiai* an initiation of two slaves cost thirty drachmas. This initiation took place in the month of Anthesterion, and could thus plausibly be connected with the Lesser Mysteries held at Agrai in that month.<sup>143</sup> If this were the cost of the Lesser Mysteries, presumably that for the Greater Mysteries was equivalent if not greater. The pig sacrificed as part of the Greater Mysteries would be an expense to be borne by the initiate,<sup>144</sup> and a cult inscription provides some information about the cost of initiation for the Greater Mysteries: the *hieropoios* received a half obol per day for the mysteries, while the priest of Demeter received an obol a day; the priest of the altar, the cleanser of the Two Goddesses, and the “all-holy priest” each received a half obol from each initiate. These expenses alone would have amounted to a considerable amount.<sup>145</sup>

The Eleusinian Mysteries, with their probable Mycenaean origin, continued throughout the classical period. In AD 364 Valentinian as emperor decreed that all nocturnal pagan rites be abolished, and Zosimos states that the emperor began the abolition at the hearth, a clear reference to the “child of the hearth”, a protagonist of the mysteries. Zosimos states, however, that Praetextatus, an initiate of Eleusis and proconsul of Greece, protested, arguing that the abolition of the mysteries would be unbearable to the Greeks, and records that the emperor relented, and that the rites continued.<sup>146</sup> According to Eurapios, the mysteries came to an end with the destruction of the Eleusinian sanctuary in AD 396 by Alaric the Goth. The last of the hierophants was himself something of an imposter, being a non-Athenian, and also a

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<sup>142</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 280. Mylonas also suggests that the *gephyrismoï* mentioned by Strabo 9.1.24 (400) as taking place at the Athenian Kephisos may have taken place on the return journey; see above, n. 80, with text.

<sup>143</sup> *JG* II<sup>2</sup> 1672.207. Mylonas *Eleusis* 237; Parke *Athenian Festivals* 61 assume that the 15 drachmas would be for the Greater Mysteries; Kerényi *Eleusis* 59 takes the fact that the payment was made in Anthesterion as an indication that the payment was for the Lesser Mysteries; but see above, n. 30, with text. Parke *Festivals* 60: payment for the Greater Mysteries might have occurred at the day of the *aghyrmos*. For the costs of initiation, see Kerényi *Eleusis* 59-60; Parke *Athenian Festivals* 60; Mylonas *Eleusis* 237; Richardson *Homeric Hymn* 21.

<sup>144</sup> Mylonas *Eleusis* 238; Parke *Festivals* 63 state that the pig was provided by the state out of the initiation fee; however, there is no evidence for this claim. In *Ar. Peace* 374-75, Trygaios asks for a loan of three drachmas in order to buy a pig so that he might be initiated, and this seems to vitiate the suggestion.

<sup>145</sup> *JG* I<sup>3</sup> 6C.

<sup>146</sup> Zos. *NH* 4.3.2-3; see also Kerényi *Eleusis* 11-12.

Mithraic priest and as such sworn not to preside over the ceremonies of other gods.<sup>147</sup> Over a millennium of pilgrimage activity thus came to an end, but in the meantime, the Eleusinian Mysteries had been one of Athens' great gifts to Hellenic civilisation,<sup>148</sup> and a great instigator of pilgrimage throughout the Hellenic world.

The mysteries would have played an important political role in attracting visitors of all classes to Athens, and ensuring the goodwill towards the city of prominent persons in the Hellenic world who wished to be initiated, like Demetrios son of Antigonos, thus adding immeasurably to Athens' prestige. Within Athens, initiates were not only numerous but influential: even Alkibiades, condemned to death for his alleged part in the parody of the mysteries in 415, used them to enhance his status and popular standing in the city by recommencing the Eleusinian procession under armed guard in face of the Spartan occupation of Dekeleia on his return from exile.<sup>149</sup> The very parody of the mysteries and the publicity of the subsequent trial, considering the status of those involved and the *furore* which their actions had caused in the city, attest to the social and religious standing of the mysteries, as an institution worth attacking by free-thinkers, this status being further demonstrated by the superstitious awe attached to such profanation, and the deeply rooted belief that sceptics and scoffers would attract immediate divine retribution, to such an extent indeed, that it was better to avoid entirely the company of profaners of the cult, especially while travelling.

It is clear that many thousands would have attended the Eleusinian Mysteries each year. The majority of these would no doubt have been Athenians, but there would also have been a reasonable number of foreigners, encouraged to attend by the sacred truces. The cost seems to have been reasonably high, if fifteen drachmas for a slave is any indication, and it would have been an event that many would have needed to save up for. It is possible that the more affluent would have predominated, given the expense, but on the other hand the evidence for mass involvement suggests that many did make the financial outlay required for initiation. The mysteries were not simply an act of religious worship with immediate benefits for the pilgrim, but there was a clear promise that the life in the hereafter would be better for those initiated, which would have been a strong inducement to attend. If Plutarch is to be believed, Sophokles' lines that only those who had seen the Eleusinian rites would be blessed in Hades had caused myriads of people to be despondent, and these unfortunates were the uninitiated.<sup>150</sup> Eleusis, therefore, seems to provide evidence that failure to make a

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<sup>147</sup> Eunapios *Vitae Sophistarum* 7.3 (from Kerényi *Eleusis* 194); cf. Lauenstein *Mysterien von Eleusis* 43-44.

<sup>148</sup> Cic. *Leg.* 2.14.36.

<sup>149</sup> See ch. 2 n. 40, with text.

<sup>150</sup> Soph. fr. 837 (Pearson); Plut. *Mor.* 21f.

pilgrimage could have serious consequences. Diogenes the Cynic, in response to Sophokles' statement, is said to have been provoked into expressing astonishment that a robber would have a better afterlife than Epaminondas, the famous Theban, just because the former had been initiated.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, there also seemed to be a belief that for initiates this life would be improved in quality.<sup>152</sup> That so many Athenians were initiates indicates that the mysteries were high on the list of religious priorities, and since initiation was restricted to adults, initiation for many may have taken place at adulthood, in effect marking a transition from adolescence to adulthood. Women were not excluded from the cult; perhaps the expense involved meant that fewer women were initiated than men, but it can perhaps be assumed that married men would want their wives and daughters to join them in leading a happy afterlife, rather than condemning them to a shadowy Homeric Hades. Secrecy concerning the rites was crucial for the participants, and clearly breaches of this were met by the full force of the secular and divine authorities. The fact that this silence was maintained for centuries must indicate that this aspect of the mysteries was taken very seriously, and also highlights the importance which individuals attached to initiation. Non-Athenians made the pilgrimage to Athens and thence to Eleusis to gain Demeter's blessing, and for Athenians, as well as others, the journey from Athens to Eleusis along the sacred way, and back again, also constituted a pilgrimage which gave them better expectations of the life to come.

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<sup>151</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 21f; Jul. *Or.* 7.238a; Diog. Laert. 6.39 (Jul. and Diog. mention Agesilaos as well); cf. Plut. *Mor.* 761f.

<sup>152</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 11.42