

# RITUAL TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

PHILOLOGY, PRAGMATICS, AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Series edited by Jens E. BRAARVIG und Velizar SADOVSKI

Vol. 1:

*The Ritual Sphere in Cultic Texts and Practices  
from the Ancient and Early Medieval East*

ed. by Paola COTTICELLI-KURRAS and Velizar SADOVSKI  
with the editorial assistance of Alfredo RIZZA



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## PREFACE BY THE SERIES EDITORS

Philology and Religious Studies are intrinsically interconnected; no serious form of *Religionswissenschaft* – neither on a comparative and historical nor on a descriptive-synchronic level – is possible without a solid philological fundament. In the course of the last two or three decades, the philological study of ancient and classical texts, traditionally the very core of the humanities, has been either completely marginalized within university departments or, at some universities, even altogether banished from the academic portfolio. This tendency is partly due to general policies of higher education, but one can argue that it is primarily a consequence of trends within the humanities themselves.

In particular, the systematic shortening of programmes in classical languages (Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, classical Arabic and Chinese etc.) in the course of a reductionist university reform erroneously designated as “Bologna process” has been producing generations of specialists in religious studies chronically deprived of a direct contact with the primary texts of the spiritual movements and religious doctrines in question. While there is ample reason to lament this development, one must also take action to ensure the preservation and flourishing of the rich academic traditions within the different fields of philology and of the disciplines logically connected with it, such as philosophy, history of religions, social and cultural anthropology. Without these fields, which historically and conceptually lie at the very core of the study of human culture, the very existence of the humanities as a meaningful academic activity is at risk.

The newly founded series *Ritual Text and Contexts* aims to close this gap and to provide a suitable forum for the study of phenomena in the field of tension between the major domains mentioned above. The aim is to remove the blurred boundaries between the analytical study of linguistic monuments and their hermeneutic interpretation and to make sense of the hitherto no-man’s-land between the main subject areas. The spheres of primary interest will range from monographs dedicated to various case studies, via handbooks of comparative or contrastive character up to thematic conference proceedings like the first volume, *The Ritual Sphere*, which we would like to herewith introduce to its readers.

This monograph series is coming to existence thanks to an intensive cooperation between the Series Editors and the Scientific Committee, as parts of

the activities of the international *Multilingualism Research Group* (Vienna – Oslo – Rome), to whom belong all protagonists of this dialogue. Proceedings of the meetings (more than 30 as per 2020) of the *Multilingualism Research Group* are regularly published in four international monograph series: the first two volumes appeared at the ÖAW in Vienna in the series *Multilingualism and the History of Knowledge*, directed by four of the founders of the Multilingualism Research Group – Jens Braarvig for the Norwegian Institute of Philology, Mark Geller for the University College of London and the *Max Planck Institute for the History of Science*, Velizar Sadovski for the Austrian Academy of Sciences and Gebhard Selz for the University of Vienna. A further volume with the proceedings of the Berlin meetings in 2010 and 2011 has been published in the *Max Planck Studies in Multilingualism* under the title *Multilingualism, Lingua Franca and Lingua Sacra* (Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge: Studies 11), Berlin: Editions Open Access, 2018, ed. by Markham Geller and Jens Braarvig. Three brand-new volumes – in honour of M. Mayrhofer and R. Schmitt, as well as the proceedings of the *Achaimenidika* Symposium of the Group in co-operation with the *DARIOSH* project (Naples/Viterbo) – are in preparation for print at the Austrian Academy of Sciences Press.

The Editors and the Scientific Committee of the monograph series *Ritual Texts and Contexts* express their joint conviction that this new scholarly framework will canalize the efforts not only of the members of the *Multilingualism Research Group* but of numerous scholars interested in the revival of the co-operation between philological and religious studies and will grant appropriate opportunities of preparing publications and concomitant scholarly meetings for many years ahead.

Oslo – Vienna, *Ferragosto* 2020

Jens BRAARVIG

Velizar SADOVSKI

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Paola COTTICELLI-KURRAS and Velizar SADOVSKI	Introduction by the Volume Editors ..... 7
Claus AMBOS	The history of the cult of the sky-god Anu in Uruk: Philological and archaeological evidence ..... 9
Paola COTTICELLI-KURRAS	Speech and acts of King and Priest in Hittite ritual texts: an Indo-European heritage? ..... 47
Clelia MORA	Religion, kingship and power in the Hittite empire period ..... 71
Antonio PANAINO	“Multi-functional” <i>paternitas</i> and millenarianism in <i>Wištāsp Yašt</i> 1,3–5 ..... 83
Flavia POMPEO	‘To lie’ between myth and history: some remarks on the meaning of the Old Persian verb <i>duruj-</i> in the light of Avestan mythology ..... 99
Rosa RONZITTI	‘Essere con’: poesia del caso strumentale nell’inno RV III 60 ..... 125
Adriano V. ROSSI	Building Rituals in Achaemenid Susa? Some remarks on the final lines of A <sup>2</sup> SA ..... 139
Velizar SADOVSKI	The craft of ritual action. (Ritual formulae and ritual pragmatics in the Veda and Avesta, VI) ..... 157
Silvia SALIN	Anti-witchcraft rituals in the Assyro-Babylonian medical texts: an overview ..... 179
Lorenzo VERDERAME	The Substitute King ( <i>šar pūhi</i> ): an Assyrian ritual of the first millennium ..... 195
Ran ZADOK	The worship of Netherworld deities in Susiana from the middle of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> to the end of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> millennium BC within the general cultic-cultural framework of Elam: a preliminary survey ..... 211





## INTRODUCTION BY THE VOLUME EDITORS

The present volume contains proceedings of the International Conference *The Ritual Sphere – texts, practices and institutions in a comparative linguistic and historical perspective* that took place in March 2016, convened by the University of Verona in co-operation with the *Multilingualism Research Group* (Vienna – Oslo – Rome) and the Institute of Iranian Studies of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. This publication appears thanks to the generous support of the University of Verona and its *Dipartimento di Culture e Civiltà*.

In the framework of this Conference, specialists in Sumerology, Assyriology, and Comparative Indo-European – in particular Indo-Iranian and Anatolian – Studies, discussed various linguistic, philological and religious-historical problems of cultic texts and practices, both intrinsically, i.e. in the specific context of the archaic cultural traditions in question, and especially in cross-cultural perspective: from the levels of ritual lexicon, text structures, composition of sacred texts (hymns, mantras, litanies, entire ceremonies), up to various levels of application of these texts in the everyday religious practice of the communities concerned and their implications for the history of ritual.

Specific themes and topics of the papers united in the present volume include: sacred royalty and the question of official rituals between self-reflection and self-aggrandizement (Adriano V. ROSSI); royal activities and meta-activities in the Ancient East between solemn sacrifice and political propaganda (Lorenzo VERDERAME); interrelations between medicine and magic, poetics and pragmatics of medical ritual, alias “how to heal with words” in Ancient Near East (Silvia SALIN); possibilities of reconstruction of ritual and textual traditions and/or forms of areal influence and osmosis of traditions, studied on the material of ritual words and actions applied by the Hittite king and the priest <sup>LÚ</sup>SANGA (Paola COTTICELLI-KURRAS); ritual texts and organization of knowledge in Ancient Asian Cultures, esp. lists, catalogues and systems for classification of the universe in the form of litanies and liturgies (Velizar SADOVSKI); worship of Netherworld deities and a prosopographical, social and ethno-cultural glance at the various categories of persons involved therein: priests, exegetes, cultic attendants etc. (Ran ZADOK); linguistic and pragmatic strategies applied by Vedic poets to develop a ‘poetry of grammar’ in composing their ritual eulogies (Rosa RONZITTI); research into the social pragmatics of speech, incl. the linguistics of false speaking and verbal manipulation in the context of public talking as

social ritual (Flavia POMPEO), and, vice versa, research into foundational legends of temples and sanctuaries traditionally regarded as “pious frauds” that, however, turn out to be based on real contents in the light of the analysis of their ritual and theological background (Claus AMBOS), as well as the ritualization of the relationship between the royal institution in the period of the Hittite Empire and the deities of state cults, expressed in religious devotion and 'sacralization' of the sovereign as means to gain and keep hold of power, in a complex political situation characterized by struggles within the ruling dynasty (Clelia MORA).

The present volume unites eleven contributions of participants in our Conference – Claus AMBOS (Göttingen), Paola COTTICELLI-KURRAS (Verona), Clelia MORA (Pavia), Antonio C. D. PANAINO (Bologna/Ravenna), Flavia POMPEO (Rome), Rosa RONZITTI (Genoa), Adriano V. ROSSI (Naples), Velizar SADOVSKI (Vienna), Silvia SALIN (Verona), Lorenzo VERDERAME (Rome), Ran ZADOK (Tel Aviv). Two further papers presented at the same symposium – by Federico GIUSFREDI (Verona) and by Ela FILIPPONE (Viterbo) – have been submitted for print to a linguistic journal and a jubilee volume, respectively, due to previous obligations taken in the framework of their authors' third-party funded projects. From the very beginning of the initiative onwards, this scholarly co-operation has been enjoying extremely generous support from our home institutions, to which we would like to express our sincere gratitude.

For their enthusiasm and engagement in the intense intellectual contact, we are grateful to all authors involved and their home institutions. We are indebted to Alfredo RIZZA (University of Verona) for his precious editorial co-operation with regard to this volume. Moreover, we would like to underline the invaluable help we enjoyed for the part of the organizational committee of the Verona workshop, Federico GIUSFREDI, Alfredo RIZZA and Stella MERLIN DEFANTI, all three of them from the University of Verona.

We cordially thank *Hermes Academic Publishers* in Oslo and the Norwegian Institute of Philology, represented in both cases by Jens E. BRAARVIG and Amund BJORSNES, for the highly professional and personally very pleasant co-operation, but also for continuous scholarly inspiration, sincere friendship and active support in the course of our long-standing exchange of ideas – and in so many joint dialogues between Oslo, Verona, and Vienna.

Verona – Vienna, *Ferragosto* 2020

Paola COTTICELLI-KURRAS

Velizar SADOVSKI