

*Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa.* By SANDRA BLAKELY. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xiv + 328. Cloth, \$90.00. ISBN 978-0-521-85500-6.

Where to begin with a book as unique as Blakely's on ancient Greek *daimones* and African metallurgy? Although B. provides a useful compendium of evidence for the different ancient Greek *daimones* (the Daktyloi, Telchines, Kouretes, Korybantes or Kabeiroi), her book does not simply discuss their relationship to Greek iron-working technology. Nor is it a superficial overview of one or two African cultural systems whose smelting traditions bear upon select aspects of the Greek material. Rather, B. successfully discusses both the Greek and African material (particularly the practices of the Fipa of Tanzania and the BaKongo), and most important, the similarities and notable differences visible in the mythic and ritual response to iron technology in each cultural context.<sup>1</sup> Throughout, B. also offers fascinating comment on the historical development of cultural comparativism in classical scholarship on the *daimones* (e.g., pp. 79–82, 199–202).

Some classicists may balk at the cross-cultural approach of this book, even though B.'s goals include highlighting specific differences between cultural systems and challenging the modern scholar to pinpoint meaning for the Greek *daimones* dependent upon specific circumstances, as opposed to a generalized synchronic interpretation or broad and wishful analogies with other cultures. B. herself notes at the start (p. 2) that the evidence for ancient Greek *daimones* is paltry and contradictory, and her anthropological and comparative approach to society and technology together is thus refreshing, and illuminates the smattering of ancient Greek material through noticeable disjunction, not necessarily parallelism. In what follows I comment only on some of B.'s main points.

B. presents the Greek *daimones* as distinct types, while noting common ties to the great goddess and her child, autochthony, mysteries, dance and even certain territories. Variability, however, seems to be a hallmark of the *daimones*, particularly in ritual. Most important, given the usual images of these groups, B.'s observations and comparisons suggest that many Greek *daimones* were not linked solely to metallurgy or even considered gods of the smithy; yet each group's relation to metals affects its proximity to the Great Mother. The more metallurgy, the less maternal principle and the more destructive, physically bizarre and criminal the *daimon*. She offers a particularly fine discussion of the iconography and other testimonia for the Kabeiroi and usefully compares Dionysiac and satyr tradi-

<sup>1</sup> At the outset I should acknowledge a lack of experience with the African traditions, which limits my response to B.'s use of this material.

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tions with the Boiotian Kabeiroi, concluding that the Kabeiroi provide a model for a non-Hellenic group that has little, if anything, to do with Hephaistos and smiths (pp. 38–54).

B. situates her study of African iron in local traditions and ritual performance, using an approach informed by ritual functionalism. In different sections of the book, B. nicely details—both culturally and philologically—examples of Greek material close to ritual performance, e.g., the important 4<sup>th</sup>-century BCE inscribed Eretrian Hymn to the Idaian Daktyloi and the Palaikastro hymn to the Kouros. She also includes fine discussions of magnetic amulets (pp. 139–47) and Herakles Daktylos as Egyptian Bes (pp. 145–51), and is at her best when she discusses the 6<sup>th</sup>-century Argive epic *Phoronis*, whose magical and ethnically foreign Daktyloi assert the importance of iron in a competitive ritual and political context (pp. 192–214), and the Telchines of Pindar's *Olympian* 7 (pp. 215–26).

B.'s analysis of African sociotechnology leads her to discuss the Greek *daimones* in terms of their powers in medicine, performance, social hierarchy, gender and magic. In discussing African traditions, especially those of the Fipa of Tanzania, she argues that the metallurgical craft of Greek *daimones* are not associated with female child-bearing itself or sexuality; rather, the *daimones* seek to protect the child (particularly Zeus) and its mother through a display of martial power. Tanzanian comparanda also suggest reading the Greek *daimones* as military figures concerned to mark their own territory as distinct from that of the mother figure and to ensure the territory's fecundity through armed dance. Certain *daimones* are more associated with apotropaic magic or destructive magic in general (e.g., the Telchines), but this has little to do with their metallurgical skills.

B. also raises the controversial issue of cultural diffusion between Greece and Africa. Notably, the evidence she adduces for Greek and African iron technology militates against derivation, perhaps most importantly so for the old hypothesis of Mediterranean origins for African metallurgy through Phoenicia.

One might wish for a less synchronic approach to the sources for the *daimones*. B. begins her chapter on iconography, for example, with a discussion of the image of Kabeiros on imperial coinage of Thessaloniki, which she tenuously links to the mysteries of the Lemnian Kabeiros; she then turns immediately to the metallurgical imagery of the Lemnian Kabeiroi from Aischylos' few fragments (see pp. 33–8). This temporal juxtaposition of different types of sources is often hard to follow, although the paucity and chronological scope of the evidence (literary in particular) means that B.'s method might have been the only one possible (see esp. pp. 27–31, 227). B. does comment, when possible, on chronological development of the different groups (e.g., pp. 21–2).

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At times B.'s dense style comes close to a list of sources and makes for a difficult read. She is occasionally repetitive, although mostly between the chapters and the introduction. The bibliography is complete, the indexes useful and the illustrations excellent. The notes, unfortunately, are not, for too often the references include no page numbers; the reader is left to refer to entire articles and even books. The text is quite clean, although there are a few minor errors.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these flaws, B.'s book is the first of its kind: a deep, multidisciplinary look at the varied and mysterious Greek *daimones*, as well as a successful elucidation of these shadowy figures through comparison with modern African communities.

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<sup>2</sup> e.g. "accouterment" and "degrees" (for "decrees"), both on p. 17.