

Abstract

Magi in fifth-century BC Athens?

Professor Kyriakos TSANTSANOGLOU

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

The earliest Iranian sources offer but scarce information about the Magi. Our existing knowledge, coming principally from Herodotus, was lately increased thanks to the references to them in the Derveni papyrus. These references to certain ritual practices of the Magi that passed on to Greek initiates (P. Derv. VI 2, 5, 9) have been widely discussed and now constitute commonplace data in the study of both Iranian and Greek religions. My intention in the present paper is to try to show that more references in the papyrus, where the Magi are not mentioned either accidentally or because of the fragmentary state of the document, might also be associated with the religious beliefs and practices of the Iranian priestly caste. I also plan to discuss the possibility of an infiltration of Magi in fifth century Athens.