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The Destiny of the Dead

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Abstract

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This subject explores the attitudes about burying the deceased that were common in Attica and throughout Greece during the eighth and fourth centuries BC. Homer's epic poetry, archeological findings, vase paintings, and the works of later historians, philosophers, and other notable individuals are among the materials that were studied.

This paper shed light on the destiny of the dead in ancient Greece and the morals of the tyrants in using the dead people to reach to their goals¹. As according to Herdotous he mentioned that the dead people aimed to have a luxury ending similar to their true life with all its features. The Greeks considered the dead person is an important part from their lives not neglected or a forgotten part. The subject it sounded to be normal but in limits, as any fault from the living person in the dead sake, the fault will be a civic worry. According to the ancient thought the relation between the living and the dead should be respected and framed, as the living needed the help of the dead in solving and revealing secrets, and the dead needed a good burials suitable to their ex life. The ancient Greeks believed much in their fictional stories and myths, as they believed that the man after death will live another life according to his belief, but the after life in ancient Greece was not only divided into two places but also there was an extra place would be occupied according to the actions and believes of the humans.

Introduction

By the sixth century B.C., the Greeks had firmly established their beliefs about the afterlife and the customs surrounding burial. Homer depicts the Underworld in the Odyssey as being located far below the surface of the earth. There, Hades, the brother of Zeus and Poseidon, and his wife Persephone, ruled over innumerable roving groups of shadowy figures known as the "shades" of all the deceased. It was not a joyful location. Odysseus was informed by the specter of the renowned warrior Achilles that he would prefer to be a destitute serf on Earth than the ruler of the dead in the Underworld².

¹ S. JOHNSTON, *Restless Death: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece*, California Press, 1999, p. vii.

² Odyssey 11: 489–91; Department of Greek and Roman Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art October 2003.

The Greeks held that the psyche³, or spirit of the deceased, departed the body as a little breath or puff of wind at the time of death. Then, in accordance with the customary procedures, the deceased was ready for burial.

Literature from antiquity highlights the importance of a decent funeral and calls for skipping burial customs as an affront to human dignity⁴. The three stages of the elaborate burial rites were generally performed by the deceased's relatives, who were mostly women: the prothesis (laying out of the corpse), the ekphora (funeral procession), and the interment of the deceased's body or cremated bones⁵.

The body was clothed (75.2.11) and laid out on a high bed within the home after being cleaned and anointed with oil. Friends and family gathered to grieve and pay their respects during the prothesis. Greek art depicted the lamentation of the dead as early as the Geometric era⁶, when images showing the dead surrounded by mourners were painted on vases. The dead were then carried to the cemetery in a procession known as the ekphora⁷, which often happened right before dawn, after the prothesis. Although very few items were actually buried, graves were frequently marked with imposing earth mounds, rectangular constructed tombs, ornate marble stelai, and sculptures to guarantee that the departed would not be forgotten.

Ancient Greek funeral customs were impacted by ideas about pollution and modern beliefs about the afterlife, but they were also shaped by a need to keep expenses down, avoid upsetting the community, and avoid giving people with nefarious political intentions an opportunity to take advantage of the funeral process. The ideal Greek life should be one of abundance, health, and honor; it should also include living to a ripe old age, honorably burying one's parents, and, in the end, being duly buried by one's own children⁸.

The study of death in the Greek world remains a central topic in research whose main focus is on the political, socio-economic, and demographic structures of Greek society, which both embody and are exemplified by it, rather than the religious beliefs related to death. Debates centered around kingship, civil ideology, self-identity, elite legitimation, group membership, social stratification, and land ownership feature it most heavily. The dying link with the polis has really proven to be one of the most fascinating areas of expansion in Greek history studies⁹.

According to the ancient religion the destiny of the dead persons was determined, either to be not guilty and join Osiris in the Iyarw fields, or guilty and his heart was devoured by Ammut¹⁰. According to the ancient Greeks concepts it was quite different, as three major

³ Psyche was the goddess of the soul in ancient Greek and Roman mythology. Born a mortal woman, her beauty rivaled that of Aphrodite (Venus) and inspired the love of Aphrodite's son, Eros, god of desire.

⁴ Illiad, 23:71.

⁵ Department of Greek and Roman Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art October 2003.

⁶ Scholars subdivide the Geometric Period into three basic segments: Early Geometric (900-850 B.C.E.), Middle Geometric (850-760 B.C.E.), and Late Geometric (760-700 B.C.E.)

⁷ Before dawn on the third day, the body was removed from its place of honor in the home and either placed in a horse-drawn carriage or carried by pallbearers to the final resting place. Along the way to the cemetery, the ekphora (funeral procession) grew in number as more and more people joined the line of mourners.

⁸ F.P., RETIEF, L., CILLIERS, "Burial Customs, the After Life and the pollution of death in ancient Greece", Vol 26, 2006.

⁹ R., GARLAND, *The Greek Way of Death*, New York, p. x, 2001.

¹⁰ M., ANDREAS; R., LUCARELLI, *The Oxford Handbook of the Egyptian Book of the Dead*, Oxford, 394-5, 2023.

concepts—eschatological judgment¹¹, cosmological necessity¹², and reincarnation or metempsychosis¹³. The dead soul, having departed from the body, travels to the location of postmortem judgment with other souls in the first section. There, it witnesses their assignment to a millennium of rewards and punishments in (or below) the earth and heaven. The spirit chooses not to pursue these spirits any farther but instead hears others who have returned from the sky or the ground share their stories of the past millennium, including what those who descended saw¹⁴.

It discusses the literary and archeological evidence for burial customs connected to the English phrase "to be disposed of like rubbish." These ways of disposing of dead bodies include exposing them to the weather, to carrion animals, to the sea, or to pits or natural fissures without following the customary burial procedures¹⁵.

It appears that the ancient Greeks did not describe the careless disposal of corpses with a metaphor related to trash. This is not shocking, as the idea that anything undesired may be referred to as rubbish is a relatively new concept and is typical of the throw-away society seen in Western Europe and the United States. The most common expressions in ancient Greek texts describing the careless disposal of human remains included verb forms that meant "throwing away,"¹⁶.

The legislation pertaining to the obligation of burial among the ancient Greeks was quite strict. However, under certain severe circumstances, burial was prohibited. Denying the criminal's body burial was the gravest punishment possible for the crime for which execution is the punishment. In a designated area of the city, these bodies—at both Sparta and Athens—were thrown into a pit together with their clothes and halter so that the flesh may decompose or be consumed by carrion birds¹⁷.

When someone was found guilty of crimes against society in ancient Athens, the most frequent penalty for them was to be executed by being thrown into the Dead man's Pit¹⁸.

The Burial Customs in ancient Greece

It depended on location and time period¹⁹:

Cremation: This was practiced widely, with evidence dating back to 1000 BC. Athens, in particular, was known for cremating their dead and placing ashes²⁰ in decorated urns. This

¹¹ Eschatology, the doctrine of the last things. It was originally a Western term, referring to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim beliefs about the end of history, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, the messianic era, and the problem of theodicy (the vindication of God's justice).

¹² Since the Universe could, under different circumstances, conceivably not exist (contingency), its existence must have a cause – not merely another contingent thing, but something that exists by necessity (something that must exist in order for anything else to exist).

¹³ In philosophy, metempsychosis is the transmigration of the soul, especially its reincarnation after death.

¹⁴ St., HALLWELLI, "The Life-and-Death Journey of the Soul: Interpreting the Myth of Er", p. 446-7, 2013.

¹⁵ A. LINDENLAUF, "Thrown Away like Rubbish- Disposal of the Dead in Ancient Greece", UCL, 2001, p.86.

¹⁶ A. LINDENLAUF, *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁷ Fr. PIERREPONT, "The Burial Customs of the Ancient Greeks", Brooklyn, 1891, p. 13.

¹⁸ A. LINDENLAUF, "Thrown Away like Rubbish- Disposal of the Dead in Ancient Greece", UCL, 2001, p.88.

¹⁹ A., MASTERSON, THUCYDIDES, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 460-400 BCE.

²⁰ The colors result from skilful exploitation of the high iron content of Athenian clay through the ingenious process of differential firing. The black areas of the black or red shaped vase were painted with a fine solution of the same clay that was used for the body of the vase.

practice became prominent in Athens during the archaic period, but burial remained the most common practice throughout most of Greece²¹.

Athens: During the Archaic era (c. 800-480 BC), cremation became the predominant practice. Athens was a notable exception to this rule. Then urns were filled with ashes.

In Greek mythology, regardless of burial or cremation, the souls of the dead needed to be ferried across the River Styx by Charon, the ferryman, to reach the underworld, Hades²².

The second part of the sixth century B.C. offer an abundance of imagery that sheds light on a variety of topics related to Greek culture, such as religion, mythology, sports, everyday life, symposia, athletics, and battle. Several artists explored diverse methods to surmount the constraints of black-figure painting, which prioritized incised detail and silhouette. The red-figure method, which provided more sketching options and eventually replaced the black-figure technique, is credited to the potter Andokides' studio and is traditionally dated to around 530 B.C.²³.

According to some academics, cremation may have been viewed as a symbolic act of cleansing that readied the soul for the hereafter. In this way, cremation might be considered an aid to the departed, rather than a need for physically across the Styx²⁴.

Burial: This was also common, especially outside of Athens. After 1100 BC, Greeks increasingly used individual graves rather than group tombs²⁵.

With the exception of Athens, the majority of Greek city-states followed the burial custom. Depending on their socioeconomic standing, cemeteries were situated in close proximity to population centers²⁶.

Early Bronze Age (Prior to 1100 BC): Single graves for those of lesser means were occasionally found alongside group interments in chamber tombs. The aristocracy of the well-known culture of Mycenaeans had ornate chamber tombs. Later Periods: Individual burials spread more widely after 1100 BC.

A cemetery in the outside Kerameikos neighborhood, which is northwest of Athens and is directly beyond the gates of the old city wall, was home to many of the best examples of Attic burial monuments. Athenian families started burying their dead in basic stone sarcophagi around the end of the fifth century B.C. In grave precincts that were organized in man-made terraces supported by a tall retaining wall facing the cemetery road. Rather than being erected over the actual graves, a family's marble memorials were arranged along the terrace's edge²⁷.

²¹ R., GARLAND., *The Greek Way of Death*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, p. 1-2, 1985.

²² A., AUGUSTYN, "Charon in Greek Mythology", Encyclopedia Britannica.

²³ Department of Greek and Roman Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 2003.

²⁴ R., GARLAND., *Ibid.*, p. 13; Coins for Passage, The deceased were often buried with a coin placed over their eyes to pay Charon for passage. This belief applied to both buried and cremated individuals.

²⁵ Department of Greek and Roman Art. "Death, Burial, and the Afterlife in Ancient Greece." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dbag/hd_dbag.htm (October 2003)

²⁶ Garland, Robert. *The Greek Way of Death*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985.

²⁷ R., GARLAND., *The Greek Way of Death*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985; Department of Greek and Roman Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 2003; Gr, MICHAEL, and J. HAZEL. *Who's Who in Classical Mythology*. London: Dent, 1993.

AM CRAIG, WA GRAHAM, D KAGAN, "The Heritage of World Civilization", 2014; M, MANSOUR , "Beyond Culture and Civilization", 2023; MG, MACLIN, " The Rivers of Civilizations", 2015.

The Destiny of the Criminal's Body

Alternatively, the criminal's lifeless body was thrown into this hole, which was most likely outside the city, in the corner between Town Hall and Long Wall, behind a cliff face of Pnyx rock. The word "báratheron," which originally meant "the place of execution and disposal," evolved to signify "criminal" or "human who deserves to be cast into the báratheron" due to the widespread use of this punishment in Athens. The term "báratheron" has a negative connotation, which is further demonstrated by its metaphorical meaning of devastation²⁸.

The Goddesses of Fates (Moirai)

The Greek deities of fate were called Moirai. There are two accounts of their genesis, and it's important to note that they are both found in Hesiod's *Theogony*²⁹.

- The first is that Nyx, a primordial deity and the embodiment of night, created them on her own.
- The second is that they were born to Zeus and the goddess of law and tradition, Themis, a Titan of the first generation.
- The Moirai, whose name means "portions" or "shares" of life, assigned each individual a certain fate by allocating them a certain amount of both good and evil throughout their lives. Each of their names—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos—represents a different role that they each play in tying, measuring, and breaking the strings of fate.

"The spinner," Clotho, makes reference to turning the wheel of fate.

These three goddesses represented fate: Atropos (cutting), Lachesis (allotter), and Clotho (weaver). They were thought to weave the thread of life, gauge its length, and finally sever it, figuring out when a person would die.

The elaborate burial ceremonies, which usually consisted of three parts—the prothesis (laying out of the body), the ekphora (funeral procession), and the interment of the body or cremated ashes of the deceased—were carried out by the deceased's relatives, most of whom were women³⁰.

The Final Judgment

A person is a body with at least two distinct sorts of souls within it: the body soul or souls that are active while the person is awake and the free soul, which is only active after the person passes away or loses consciousness. The midriff-based spirit known as the thymos is in charge of passion and emotions. The psyche would eventually take up these roles. The psyche, who in Homer's day was the breath of life departing a dying person, would often travel to Hades to remain as an emotionless shade³¹.

We discover that, despite their seeming contradiction, the *Odessyes* provide hope for a happy afterlife, whilst the *Illiad* does not. The psyche may continue to live after death as speaking ghosts or perhaps as sentient beings. Even yet, the *Illiad* concedes that something remains in Death's stronghold—a ghost or phantom, true, but devoid of any actual breath of life³².

²⁸ A. LINDENLAUF, *Ibid.*, p. 88-9.

²⁹ A., BUREAU, "The Moirai- Greek Goddesses of Fates", *Greek News*, ancient Greek History, October 2023.

³⁰ M., THOMAS, *Sisters of Fate: The Myths that Speaks Themselves*, 2013, p. 3.

³¹ G., A., STILWILL, *Afterlife: Post-Mortem Judgments in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece*, p. 41. Lincoln, 2005.

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The Attendance of the Final judgment"

After being taken to the Underworld by a Psychopomp and paying Charon to bridge the Acheron, deceased souls would travel a path until they reached the sitting figures of Aeacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthys. There are differing accounts of the three judges of the dead sitting in front of Hades' palace and the judgment of the dead occurring on the Plain of Judgement³⁴.

It was stated that Aeacus judged those from Europe, Rhadamanthys judged those from Asia, and Minos would only decide if Aeacus or Rhadamanthys were uncertain. Nevertheless, the three judges would not determine the everlasting destiny of each soul. Since the Greeks had previously accepted the existence of a life beyond death in Homer, it would seem reasonable to assume that a man's actions in this life would be punished in Hades if he were to be unfair and cruel in this life.

The big sinners are not models for judgment since average men and women can't aspire to commit crimes on this magnitude and may be allowed to gibber; the souls of men only gibber; Minos³⁵ does not judge the dead for earthly wrongs; and the souls of men only gibber. It says that these crimes are not considered to be acts of immortality for the great sinners³⁶. The Greek goddess of justice, law, and order is called Themis. Dike was a member of the Horae³⁷ and the daughter of Zeus and Themis. Dike and Themis are comparable in that Dike was a goddess of justice and law and collaborated with Themis to uphold the Fates' decree.

The dead would either spend eternally in Tartarus³⁸ if they had been evil, in Elysium³⁹ if they were worth it, or in Asphodel Meadows⁴⁰ if their past life had been neither good nor bad, depending on the ruling of the judges of the underworld. Of course, the goal was to reach Elysium, which was considered by the Ancient Greeks to be heaven. Those who lived in the Asphodel Meadows had a dull and pointless life, while those who were sent to Tartarus faced punishment.

Rhadamanthys

Like Minos, Rhadamanthys⁴¹ was the son of Europa and Zeus, but his brother banished him because he may have been a rival for the throne of Crete.

³³ G., A., STILWILL, *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁴ L., MACK, Judges of the Dead in Greek Mythology, in Greek Legends and Myths,

³⁵ In Greek mythology, the island of Crete was ruled by a monarch named Minos. He was regarded as Zeus and Europa's son. According to the tales, Minos accomplished a great deal, such as settling the numerous islands in the Aegean Sea and ascending to the throne by Poseidon's will.

³⁶ G., A., STILWILL, *Ibid.*, p. 43-4.

³⁷ The Horae (Horai, sing. Hora) were the personifications and goddesses of the hours and the seasons; in Greek mythology, they were subsequently seen as deities of justice and order. Usually found in groups of three, they were the daughters of Zeus and the Titaness Themis.

³⁸ Alongside the Elysian Fields and the Asphodel Meadows, a section of the Greek Underworld is typically connected with the term Tartarus in Greek mythology. Tartarus is a term for a primeval god in Greek mythology, although this part of the Underworld is also connected to perpetual punishment.

³⁹ B., YOURLMAZ, "Eylisum", Journal of Religion and Film, 2014.

⁴⁰ JWP, PHILIPS, "Asphodel and the Spectral Places", in Derrida today, 2012.

⁴¹ Rhadamanthys, Like Minos, Rhadamanthys was the son of Europa and Zeus, but his brother banished him because he may have been a rival for the throne of Crete. After arriving in Boeotia, Rhadamanthys founded a

After arriving in Boeotia, Rhadamanthys founded a new kingdom at Ocaleia, which he would reign until his death. Fairness and honesty would be King Rhadamanthys's defining characteristics. He approached whatever he undertook with the utmost integrity.

Rhadamanthys was the judge of the dead from Asia and would be referred to as the Lord of Elysium in the Underworld, suggesting that he reigned over paradise and the heroes who lived there. It should be noted that not all of the dead would be judged, since some genuinely good or some truly bad may be sent to Tartarus or Elysium (or the Isles of the Blest) by the whim of a strong deity, usually Zeus in these cases.

Conclusions

- The emphasis was not on balancing the heart against Maat (truth). The Greeks made judgments based on a person's life experiences. Greeks made judgments based on a person's life acts, as opposed to Egyptians who assessed a person's heart against Maat (truth).
- Elysium: The Egyptian Fields of Reeds meets heaven for the righteous. Asphodel Fields: A dull, uninteresting life for the common man.
- Tartarus: A location akin to the Egyptian Duat where the wicked go to suffer punishment. In ancient Greece, the outcome of your trial did not immediately define where you will end up.
- Good deeds led to paradise: Living a moral life made it more likely that you would arrive at the paradisaic paradise. Consider it a prize for leading a good life.
- Typical Life, Typical Afterlife: If you had a normal life—good or bad—you would have ended up in the impartial Asphodel Fields.
- The goal of the ruling was to evaluate the whole of the individual's actions. Even with a few little offenses and a few good deeds, one might not be sent to Tartarus but rather wind up at the Asphodel Fields.
- In contrast to the Egyptians, who had a complex ceremony involving the weighing of the heart, the Greeks had no formal judicial system for the final decision. Though it operated in a different way, the Greeks did have a notion of judgment including judges.

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Elysium



The Elysium Fields design



The Asphodel Meadows



The Tartars



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الملخص

يستكشف هذا الموضوع المواقف المتعلقة بدفن المتوفى والتي كانت شائعة في أتيكا وفي جميع أنحاء اليونان خلال القرنين الثامن والرابع قبل الميلاد. من بين المواد التي تمت دراستها، شعر هوميروس الملحمي، والاكتشافات الأثرية، ولوحات المزهريات، وأعمال المؤرخين والفلاسفة وغيرهم من الأفراد البارزين.

تلقي هذه الورقة الضوء على مصير الموتى في اليونان القديمة وأخلاق الطغاة في استخدام الموتى للوصول إلى أهدافهم. كما ذكر هيردوتوس أن الموتى كانوا يهدفون إلى الحصول على نهاية فاخرة تشبه حياتهم الحقيقية بكل مميزاتها. وكان اليونانيون يعتبرون الميت جزءًا مهمًا من حياتهم لا يهمل أو ينسى. يبدو الموضوع عاديًا ولكن في حدود، كأى خطأ من شخص حي في حق الميت، فإن الخطأ سيكون قلقًا مدنيًا. وبحسب الفكر القديم، يجب احترام العلاقة بين الأحياء والأموات وتأطيرها، فالأحياء يحتاجون إلى مساعدة الأموات في حل وكشف الأسرار، والأموات بحاجة إلى دفن جيد يتناسب مع حياتهم السابقة. آمن اليونانيون القدماء كثيرًا بقصصهم وأساطيرهم الخيالية، حيث كانوا يعتقدون أن الإنسان بعد الموت سيعيش حياة أخرى حسب اعتقاده، ولكن الحياة الآخرة في اليونان القديمة لم تكن مقسمة إلى مكانين فقط بل كان هناك أيضًا مكان إضافي سيكون مشغولًا وفقًا لأفعال البشر ومعتقداتهم.

معلومات المقالة

الكلمات المفتاحية

الظلال؛
قربانين الدم؛
الآلهة الخفية؛
التارتور.

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المجلد ٢٧، العدد ١،
(٢٠٢٤)،
ص ٩٩-١٠٨.