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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MUSES AND THE CULT OF THE DEAD

Research on the cult of the dead, heroes in particular, as well as the cult of intellectuals as part of this subject matter, has recently attracted attention of many researchers.

Nevertheless, despite increased scientific interest, many issues still require additional analyses. One of them is the issue of the connection between the dead and the cult of deities located in a heroon or its vicinity (or possibly evoked on a tombstone inscription). Frequently it is not known which cult appeared in a particular place as the first, and which, or for what reasons, was added later. In some cases, an attempt can be made to identify the deceased with a deity or to detect some special relation between the dead, their family or community and the worshipped deity.

One of the special cases of the connection between the cult of gods and the cult of the dead (the cult of intellectuals in particular) is the appearance of the Muses, goddesses usually interpreted as deities of inspiration (especially the poetic one), in a sepulchral context. Apparently, certain connections of the Muses with poets, rhetors or philosophers could have been expected in the funerary sphere, too. Goddesses, however, appear in the Hellenistic epoch in the context of sepulchral cult of ordinary people as well.

In this study, I would like to briefly examine selected cases of the aforementioned connections and indicate potential interpretative contexts of this phenomenon.

First examples of the connections of the Muses with the sphere of death may be perceived in their role in heroes' funerals. Obviously, the most popular example is the funeral of Achilles, which is mentioned in the last song of the *Odyssey*.¹ In such a case, the Muses may be interpreted as a prototypical choir of girls/women typical of a funeral rite.

Additionally, their role in this sphere may be connected with the meaning of the song/story about the deceased, post-mortem glory and generally the remembrance of the dead.² What is more, such a function of the Muses and songs created under

¹ Hom. *Od.* 24.60–64; cf. Pi. *I.* 8.56a–60; in *Aithiopsis* cf. Kinkel *FEG* p. 34; Philostr. *VA* 4.16.

² Cf. J. Barringer, *Divine Escorts. Nereids in Archaic and Classical Greek Art*, Ann Arbor 1995, passim.

their patronage has already been indicated many a time.³ Let us only recall that one of the Muses mentioned by Hesiod was named Clio ('Recounting/Celebrating', 'Making famous'), and their mother was, according to the predominant tradition, Mnemosyne ('Memory'). Moreover, some statements made by poets seem to suggest not only a vital role of songs in attaining glory in one's lifetime and after death, as in the case of Kyrnos from *Corpus Theognideum*,⁴ but presumably a better lot in the realm of the dead.⁵

It is worth indicating that in several passages from Plutarch regarding sacrifice for the Muses offered by the Spartan king before a battle, there appears an explanation, repeated a couple of times, suggesting that music (sc. Muses) is necessary there so that "the fighters could commit acts worth the words and deserving remembrance."⁶ Another, even more interesting example, is the cult of the Muse Clio in Amphipolis connected with the grave of Rhesus who was regarded there as her son.⁷

The connection with the Muses also appears in descriptions of deaths of some mythical poets. Alternatively, the places of their cult or their statues are linked (more or less apparently) with the cult of goddesses. Merely a few examples thereof are as follows.

In the tradition preserved in Eratosthenes and probably going down to Aeschylus, the Muses collected Orpheus's limbs and prepared a burial of his body torn to pieces by maenads.⁸ On the other hand, we learn from Pausanias's narrative about the Valley of the Muses that near the grove of the Muses at the foot of Helicon there were also images of Linos, Thamyris and Arion.⁹ What is more, every year, before sacrifice to the Muses was offered in the sanctuary, one was also offered to Linos.¹⁰ The same Pausanias informs us that there was a hill in Athens called *Mouseion* regarded as a place where Mousaios used to sing and was eventually buried.¹¹ Furthermore, "classical" poets or philosophers become similarly connected with the Muses (most probably in the fourth century) in the religious

³ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 6.357–358, Sa. fr. 55; Ib. 282, 47–48 C.; Pi. fr. 20b 1–16 SM; cf. E. Stehle, *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece. Nondramatic Poetry in its Setting*, Princeton 1997, pp. 219–220 + n. 33.

⁴ *Theogn.* 237–254, cf. *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis*, T. J. Figueira, G. Nagy (eds.), Baltimore 1985.

⁵ Sa. fr. 55; Pi. fr. 20b 1–16 SM – L. Kurke, *The Traffic in Praise*, London 1991, pp. 62–82; J. M. Bremer, "Death and Immortality in Some Greek Poems", in: J. M. Bremer *et al.* (eds.), *Hidden Futures. Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World*, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 109–124.

⁶ Cf. Plut. *Lyk.* 21; *Apophth. Lac.* 221a; 238 b–c.

⁷ Cf. Marsyas from Pella, *FGrHist* 135 fr. 7 = schol. *ad Eur. Rhes.* 346, cf. T. Mojsik, *Antropologia metapoetyki: Muzy w kulturze greckiej od Homera do końca V w. p.n.e.* [Anthropology of metapoetics: Muses in Greek culture from Homer until the end of 5th c. BC], Warsaw 2011, pp. 138–140; on the cult of Rhesus, see V. Liapis, "The Thracian Cult of Rhesus and the Heros Equitans", *Kernos* 24, 2011, pp. 95–104.

⁸ Eratosth. *Catast.* 24; Aesch. fr. 82 Mette (fr. 23–25 *TrGF* [vol. 3] = Orph. test 113 Kern); cf. the death of Rhesus – *Eur. Rhes.* 975–979.

⁹ Paus. 9.29–30.

¹⁰ About the death of Linos cf. schol. b Hom. *Il.* 18.570 (= fr. 880 Campbell). On the Valley of the Muses, cf. T. Mojsik, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–86.

¹¹ Paus. 1.25.8.

sphere. We have numerous proofs indicating the cult of, e.g. Homer or Hesiod, surrounded by the Muses.¹²

From less known sources, on the other hand, it is necessary to mention a passage from the biography of Euripides written by Hermippos, which indicates that a tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysus I, was to collect Euripides's working tools after his death and place them in the temple of the Muses.¹³

The statues of the schools' founders, Plato and Aristotle, were found within mouseions at the Academy and Lyceum.¹⁴

The fictitious biography of Aesop is a singular example showing possible relations between the Muses and intellectuals. In the preserved version of the story, Lycurgus, a king of Babylon, wishing to honour Aesop, funds a heroon to the ex-slave and places his statue surrounded by the Muses, presumably in the place of Apollon Mousagetes.¹⁵ A similar gesture appears earlier, too, when Aesop himself erects a temple dedicated to the Muses on Samos, with either the statue of Mnemosyne or of himself among them. The very place of his liberation is later named *Aesopeum* by the Samians.¹⁶ Apart from that, shortly before his death in Delphi, Aesop is seeking shelter against an enraged crowd in the temple of the Muses, from where Delphi's citizens drag him out by force.¹⁷ We also know that he was eventually to be granted the cult of a hero in Delphi.¹⁸

At the same time, it is worth noticing that there are interesting parallels between the description of Aesop's death and Pythagoras's death in the biographies of philosophers written in the Empire period.¹⁹

One of the most popular and at the same time in a way model examples of the cult of a heroic poet related to the Muses is the cult of Archilochus on Paros, well attested to for the third century.²⁰

Altars devoted to gods, including the Muses, Mnemosyne and Apollo Mousagetes, stood in the poet's *temenos* as well. In this case, the relation between the cult of the Muses and the post-mortem cult quite obviously results from linking the goddesses with Archilochus's poetic skills, which is confirmed in the quoted story about the meeting with the Muses on the Mnesiepes inscription.

¹² Homer: relief of Archelaos of Priene (cf. D. Pinkwart, *Das Relief von Archelaos von Priene und die "Musen von Philiskos"*, Bonn 1965); Homereion in Alexandria – Ael. *VH* 13.22; in Smyrna – Strab. 10.1.37; Certamen 17 [307 Allen]; *homereion gymnasion*: CIG 2221 = Kaibel 860; Ios: IG XII, 5. Hesiod: IG VII 1785 – *synthytai Mousōn Hesiodeiōn*; Plut. *Numa* 4.6–9; cf. M.-C. Bealieu, "L'héroïsation du poète Hésiode en Grèce ancienne", *Kernos* 17, 2004, pp. 103–117.

¹³ Hermippos fr. 94 Wehrli.

¹⁴ Plato – Diog. Laert. 3.25; Aristotle – Diog. Laert. 5.51; cf. P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, Berkeley 1995, pp. 69–70.

¹⁵ *Vit. Aes.* 123.

¹⁶ *Vit. Aes.* 100.

¹⁷ *Vit. Aes.* 134.

¹⁸ *P. Oxy.* 1800 = Perry test. 25.

¹⁹ Cf. Iust. 20.4; Porph. *VP* 57; Diog. Laert. 8.40; Iambl. *VP* 30. 171. On the possible cult of the Muses in the Pythagorean association, cf. T. Mojsik, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–65.

²⁰ Editions of Mnesiepes' inscription: N. M. Kondoleon, "Neai epigraphai peri tou Archilochou", *Archaiologike Ephemeris* 91, 1952, 32–95; G. Tarditi, *Archiloco*, Introduzione, testimonianze sulla vita e sull' arte, testo critico, traduzione, Roma 1968; D. Gerber, *Greek Iambic Poetry*, Cambridge 1999. Cf. D. Clay, *Archilochos Heros. The Cult of Poets in the Greek Polis*, Cambridge Mass. 2004.

Certainly, the cult did exist in some form at the end of the fourth century, which is in turn confirmed by the Dokimos inscription.²¹ It is not clear, however, when it was introduced, whether it was the same cult, or since when it was devoted to Archilochus as a poet. It is quite apparent from the Mnesiepes inscription that the form of the cult described therein developed as late as the third century.²² Therefore the assumption that in every case there must be a reference to the same “Archilochus” results from the adoption of a concrete research perspective, which is probably most visible in the work of Diskin Clay tracing the cult of poets.²³

Despite certain doubts, the cult of Archilochus as a poet undeniably existed from the third century onward and, what is more, it was accompanied by the cult of the Muses. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the inscription enumerates a long list of other deities worshipped in the place together with the poet.

All the more, however, it seems that the presence of the Muses in this context may be interpreted as guidance explaining the connection between the cult and intellectual skills of the honoured man, and thus their presence may be to a certain extent regarded as a touchstone in the phenomenon of the cult of intellectuals.

Moreover, the epigram placed near the entrance to the heroon of Antigonos of Knidos dates from the third century as well. The deceased is identified with a man of the same name who lent the citizens of Miletus 6000 silver Rhodian drachms. It is evident from the epigram’s text that the Muses were also worshipped in the sepulchral area, but mostly with songs. Nevertheless, it is possible, and some researches are ready to accept this assumption, that apart from the confirmed cult of Pan, the cult of the Muses was also present in the *temenos*.²⁴

The situation is similarly uncertain with regard to a sepulchral epigram of Arideiktēs of Rhodes, dating from the third century. Diskin Clay believes that the deceased could have been a poet and Platonist, and that the remark about the Muses in the epitaph refers to their cult in the Academy.²⁵

The most interesting example of the connection between the cult of the Muses and the cult of the dead can be found in the so-called testament of Epikteta.²⁶ It is an inscription from the end of the third century containing a description of the organization of sepulchral cult of her family and the erection of mouseion. The text indicates that the cult was introduced after the (undeniably premature) death of her first son, Kratesilochos. The inscription informs us that Epikteta’s husband, Phoinix, and her second son Andragoras died afterwards. Following her husband’s recommendation, Epikteta finished the construction of the mouseion and erected the statutes of the Muses and heroes. Additionally, she funded the annual three-day festival of the Muses and heroes, to whom she included herself, her husbands and sons. The association of male relatives donated from her funds was to look after the graves and mouseion and offer sacrifice.

²¹ CEG 2.674 Hansen = Arch. test. 2 Gerber.

²² Arch. test. 3. A col. II. 14–19 Gerber; cf. col. I, 1–13.

²³ D. Clay, *op. cit.*, passim.

²⁴ E.g. D. Hughes, “Hero cult, heroic honors, heroic dead: some developments in Hellenistic and Roman Periods”, in: R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Hero Cult*, Stockholm 1999, p. 170.

²⁵ Cf. D. Clay, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–87.

²⁶ LSCG 135 = IG XII 3.330; A. Wittenburg, *Il testamento di Epikteta*, Trieste 1990.

The inscription does not mention whether her sons or her husband were intellectually distinguished. This made it quite difficult for the scholars to explain what made Phoinix, who seems to have been the initiator of the mouseion's construction, connect a common sepulchral cult with the Muses. At the present stage of research on the cult of these goddesses and heroisation of the dead, one explanation seems particularly probable: the cult of the deceased Kratesilochos must have been connected with the boy's interrupted education. A possibility of such an interpretation was suggested already by Wilamowitz in his comments to the information about the inscription: "Ob sie als Schulkinder gestorben waren".²⁷

Such an interpretation is particularly strengthened by the knowledge of extremely strong connections between the cult of the Muses and the process of education. The available evidence regards didaskaleion, music, as well as philosophical schools or intellectual institutions such as the *Mouseion* in Alexandria.²⁸

In this context, information contained in the inscription from Istros, also dating from the third century, it is worth reconsidering.²⁹ It also concerns a mouseion, a festival, and an association looking after the place. So far, however, scholars have claimed that in this case we cannot speak of a sepulchral mouseion. L. Robert raised the problems of a lack of *enagismos* and the difficulty in understanding the phrase τὸ Μουσεῖον τοῦ πατρὸς.³⁰ His first objection was called into doubt by the research carried out by, *inter alia*, Gunnel Ekroth,³¹ whereas the second may be questioned by a reference to information regarding the sepulchral mouseion contained in the testament of Epicteta.

Even if not all the details of the sepulchral endowment are known, it may be assumed that the problem of its interpretation is again an open issue. This means that the interpretation presuming the existence of a sepulchral mouseion is as probable as that of a mouseion being an euergetic foundation for the polis.

Equally interesting evidence connecting the intellectual abilities of the boy who died young with the cult of the Muses can be found in the information regarding Epiphanes of Same on Kephallenia. The account of Clemens of Alexandria indicates that Carpocrates's son was well educated, particularly in the field of Platonism, and even started to teach himself despite his age of seventeen years. After his death he was worshipped in Same like a god – "a temple of vast blocks of stone was erected and dedicated to him, with altars, sacred precincts and a museum".³² The last piece of information brings to mind the evidence regarding Epicteta and the entire context of the Hellenistic cult of heroised intellectuals.

²⁷ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, Berlin 1931–1932, vol. II, 140, n. 2.

²⁸ Cf. Aesch. 1.10; Theophr. *Char.* 22.6; Athen. 8.348d; *Diog. Laert.* 6.69; Herodas, 3; *Syll.* 578; *Diog. Laert.* 5.51–52; *Diog. Laert.* 4.1. About Academy and Lyceum see J. P. Lynch, *Aristotle's School. A Study of a Greek Educational Institution*, Berkeley 1972; Alexandrian Mouseion – P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Oxford 1972.

²⁹ *I. Histriae* I.1, 16–20 – D. M. Pippidi, *Inscriptile din Scythia Minor Grecesti si Latine*, vol. 1, Bucuresti 1983.

³⁰ Cf. *REG* 68, 1955, 240: "La discussion de P. sur le Mouseion funéraire ne convient pas ici, car il n'est pas possible de joindre le mots τὸ Μουσεῖον τοῦ πατρὸς, comme on l'a fait, et il n'y pas trace de culte funéraire, d'*enagismos*, etc."

³¹ G. Ekroth, *The Sacrificial Rituals of Greek Hero-Cults*, Liège 2002.

³² *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 3.2 (184 Staehlin).

Even if we accept that Clemens's information may be not precise, the assumption that to Clemens's readers in the second century A.D., a mouseion might (still) be a part of the sepulchral cult and was apparently connected with the deceased's education and intellectual skills, is indeed interesting.

The following preliminary conclusions may be drawn from the above-mentioned considerations:

1. Linking goddesses and their songs with remembrance and glory (including post-mortem glory) should be perceived as one of the main reasons for including the Muses into the sepulchral cult.

2. The connection between the goddesses and education and patronage over intellectual development is equally important; the inscription of Epicteta indicates that this includes patronage over interrupted development. Furthermore, it seems that in some cases a burial place itself has intellectual connotations, e.g. the gymnasium (Homereion on Chios), library (Alexandria), or the vicinity of a philosophical school (Plato, Aristotle).³³ In any case, ephebes and officials from the gymnasium, especially the gymnasiarch, were frequently engaged in organizing and performing cult activities at heroes' tombs.³⁴

Undeniably, the significance of intellectual sphere in the Hellenistic period increased with the establishment of the *Mouseion*, Alexandria and Pergamon Library and, most of all, with the rising importance of education based on reading literary texts in Greek culture. What is more, travelling scholars and poets who recited their works or taught at gymnasia played an important role.³⁵ Competition between *poleis* within this scope, on the other hand, intensified parallel to the political changes and the increase of restrictions with regard to other spheres of rivalry.³⁶ A good example of building social and political capital by strengthening the position and prestige in the sphere of culture is the competition between the Greek cities for the origin and location of Homer's grave. As Diskin Clay said: "Cities honor themselves by honoring the great men and women of their distant past [...]"³⁷ In some cases, the links between a personage from the past and a given city were apparently very loose and created rather than reconstructed.

3. The Muses also appear as classical patrons of poets, which is clearly confirmed by the cult of Archilochus on Paros. It is undoubtedly similar as far as the heroic cults of Homer or Hesiod are concerned. The best example of the existence of such connotations is the stele of Archelaos of Priene.³⁸

³³ Cf. A. Hardie, "Philitas and the Plane Tree", *ZPE* 119, 1997, pp. 21–36. F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, Rome 1985, p. 139: "Als Goettinnen der mousike, spaeter jeder intellektuellen Aktivitaet, fuegen sie sich ein in Gymnasion, das Bildungszentrum der griechischen Jugend".

³⁴ Cf. the cult of Aleksimachos on Amorgos and Aratos in Sicyon – D. Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

³⁵ G. Zanker, *op. cit.*, p. 159: "public lectures often focused on the interpretation of great writers of the past. In this way, the poets of old and the philosophers were elevated to the status of authorities who provided guidance in all of life's important matters. Cities would institute genuine hero cults for their own intellectual heroes, complete with appropriate sacrificial rituals".

³⁶ D. Clay, *op. cit.*, p. 94: "desire for the autonomy of fame increased as political independence became a distant memory [...] the rivalry involved in the cult of poets and philosophers (what we would term "intellectuals") becomes intense as other forms of rivalry are excluded".

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

³⁸ D. Pinkwart, *op. cit.*

4. In some cases goddesses may also be linked with musical performances, or even competitions planned as a part of a (cyclical) festival within the vicinity of the sepulchral area (Antigonus of Knidos?).

5. Of course, not much is known about the significance of the cult of the Muses in individual places (e.g. Istros, Paros, Thera, Same etc.). Thus it is difficult to say whether there was a connection between the Muses from the heroic cult and the state or private institutions. Presumably, only certain cases can be found where a sepulchral cult was added to the already existing cult of the Muses in the Academy and Lyceum. This area undeniably requires further research. Moreover, it is worth emphasizing that the results thereof may significantly influence the perception of the functions of the Muses within the cult of the dead which have been suggested above.

MUZY I KULT ZMARŁYCH – PRÓBA REKONESANSU

Streszczenie

Chociaż badania nad kultem zmarłych, zwłaszcza zaś herosów, a w obrębie tej problematyki nad kultem intelektualistów, przyciągnęły w ostatnich latach uwagę wielu badaczy, to wiele zagadnień wciąż pozostaje nieopracowanych. Jednym z takich przypadków jest związek kultu bogów z kultem zmarłych. W obrębie tego zagadnienia szczególnym przypadkiem jest z kolei pojawianie się w kontekście sepulchralnym Muz, bogiń zazwyczaj interpretowanych jako bóstwa inspiracji (zwłaszcza poetyckiej). Najciekawsze zaś przypadki tego typu związków napotykamy w kontekście kultu grobowego zwykłych ludzi. W artykule zostały poddane analizie wybrane przypadki takich związków (inskrypcja Mnesiepesa, tzw. testament Epiktety, inskrypcja z Istros, kwestie heroizacji intelektualistów – Homera, Hezjoda, Eurypidesa etc.), a także wskazane zostały potencjalne konteksty interpretacyjne zjawiska.