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The Body of the King: Space and Power

The Sick Body

The king is suffering, the king is sick, so he sends for the diviners to cure him. The diviners set to work and soon tell him the cause of his illness: a perjurer. The remedy: cut off his head. To put it another way, the royal indisposition is a symptom of perjury and it does not appear to be possible to find any other cause for it, for the diviners "for the most part tell him that such and such a man . . . has forsworn himself."1 It is perjury that always and more than anything else physically affects the king. When a Scythian commits this crime the king immediately feels the painful effects: a number of strange relationships between the king and his subjects stem from this.

Herodotus here describes a situation that is the reverse of the well-known one involving a just king. A good and just king ensures the prosperity of his country: the land brings forth rich harvests, the herds proliferate, and the women produce "children like their parents."2 In contrast, a bad king, one who commits a crime, who allows himself to indulge in hubris or is not mindful of justice, causes a loimos: famine spreads, the herds do not reproduce, and the women are barren. But in both these cases, it is the king, whether good or bad, who influences his subjects and country; the possibility

1. Herodotus 4.68.
of this influence being reversed so that the subjects influence the person of the king is never even considered as a possibility. Yet that is exactly what seems to happen among the Scythians, where a subject who is criminal and unjust may harm the king. In all logic, loyal subjects should, in contrast, promote his health and increase his prosperity.

The Blood of the Oath

How do the Scythians swear an oath? "They take blood from the parties to the agreement by making a little hole or cut in the body with an awl or knife [machaira] and pour it mixed with wine into a great earthenware bowl, wherein they then dip a scimitar and arrows and an axe and a javelin; and when this is done, the makers of the sworn agreement themselves, and the most honourable of their followers, drink of the blood after solemn imprecations [kateuchontai]." In the Toxaris Lucian describes a similar blood-brothers’ ritual: each of the two contractors makes a cut in his finger and lets the blood flow into a single container, and, before drinking, each of them dips the tip of his sword into it.

Folklorists such as H. Gaidoz of France, ethnographers such as J. Frazier, classicists such as G. Glotz, or sociologists such as the Durkheimian G. Davy have noted many examples of blood covenants. But the first scholar to have advanced a theory concerning

3. On the various royal rites, see B. Boux, Le Problème des Argonautes (Paris, 1949). On the Persian side, note the following prayer of King Darius: "May Ahuramazda bring me help, together with all the other gods, and protect this country from the enemy army, bad harvests, and lying."

4. Hdt. 4.70. An oath was taken among the Lydians (1.74) with similar cutting of the body and licking of the blood. Among the Arabs (3.8), the palms of the contractors’ hands are cut with a stone, but the blood is not drunk.

5. Lucian Toxaris 37. G. Dumézil, Légende sur les Nartes (Paris, 1930), p. 165, gives the following description of the ritual of the oath of brotherhood: "The two contractors fill a bowl with spirits or beer, toss in a silver coin and each then drinks three times, swearing to keep faith. The formulae pronounced are, for example: ‘May this drink become poison, may this silver become anger, if I do not love you more than a brother,’ or ‘I swear by this silver, by this gold, to keep faith.’ (The Ossetians considered silver as something sacred, possessing the power to punish.)"


these practices is Robertson Smith. In his opinion, there can be no
kinship except by blood and no bond except by kinship and that is
the basis of the blood-covenant, the alliance through blood. “Con-
tractors who can only be linked as kin and who are not naturally
related by kinship, if they wish to be linked, render themselves kin
artificially. Since kinship means sharing the same blood, they must,
through a rite of communion which may take various forms, share in
each other’s blood.” This is how Smith introduces the idea of
communion, which is central to his own idea of sacrifice and which
he then proceeds to develop more fully.
According to Glotz, “the ordeal is an oath in action, the oath an
ordeal in words,” but the Scythian oath appears, through its ritual,
to be an ordeal both in action and in words. At any rate, the oath, a
combination of action and words, represents an anticipated ordeal.
In his study of the oath in Greece, Benveniste points out that there
are solid grounds for “identifying the horkos with an object: whether
it be a sacred substance or the scepter of authority, the essential
element is always the object itself rather than the act of speech.” In
this case, it is a mixture of neat wine and blood that is the consecra-
ting “object . . . that contains the power to punish any failure to
honor the word given.”

The wine is mixed with “the blood of the contractors [ton to
horkion tamnamenon].” What is the significance of this expression,
when no mention is made of the sacrifice of any victim? The formula
horkia tanmein is only to be found in Homer, in a few archaic Ionian
inscriptions, and in Herodotus, where it means both “to sacrifice
victims” and also “to conclude a pact.” Horkia “originally designated
the horkia iereia, then came to signify the ‘ceremonies of oath-
taking,’ while horkion on its own came to mean ‘pact.’” So in the
text with which we are concerned, horkion and horkia simply mean

8. W. R. Smith Marriage in Early Arabia (Cambridge, 1885), pp. 56–59, and
jusjurandum.
11. See the references in J. Casabona, “Recherches sur le vocabulaire des
12 Ibid., p. 214.
"pacts," "oaths." But why this combination of *horkia* and *tannein*? According to Casabona, the expression initially denoted "the rite that consisted of cutting victims into pieces when oaths were sworn and—at the time of the constitution of the Homeric formulae, at any rate—no doubt essentially when military pacts were sealed." Subsequently, when that custom had fallen into disuse, the expression was taken to mean "to slaughter victims" and, in Attic particularly, the word *temno* was related to the rite in which animals' throats were "cut." The important thing was making the blood flow from the animal's cut throat. It was not so much a matter of sacrifice in the strict sense of the term as of "a kind of blood libation." Now, the Scythian oath was also based on a kind of blood libation or, to be more precise, the blood was first poured into a bowl, where it was mixed with wine. Furthermore, this "libation" was not obtained from the blood of an animal victim but from the human contractors in person. This, of course, is the first fundamental difference between the Scythian ritual and a Greek oath: the contractors are in effect their own victims. Admittedly, they do not cut their own throats, but they do "make a little hole" (*tupto*) with an awl or "cut" themselves with a *machaira*. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that even if *horkia tannein* simply means "to swear an oath," as Casabona believes, the expression is nevertheless not out of place in the context of blood-letting: blood is involved and it flows — not very much, perhaps (*smikron*), but it does come from them. We may also take it that these cuts or incisions they inflict upon themselves operate as so many reminders, by virtue of the scars they leave: the Scythians record their acts of commitment upon their bodies.

Wine, and in particular wine that is neat, is connected with the

13. Casabona notes that Herodotus uses *ommunum* for this type of private oath, p. 214. The only exception appears to be the Scythian oath, sworn between two private individuals: could it be that the public/private distinction is not applicable to Scythian society?


16. The scene parodying the swearing of oaths (Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 18ff.) certainly refers to this chapter of Herodotus. For an explanation (albeit an extremely moderate one) of this passage, see Casabona, "Recherches," pp. 323–26.
oath. In the swearing of oaths, wine is poured out, and in daily life the ritual of oath-taking can even be reduced to a simple libation. "Through wine, one is tied by the bonds of an oath," runs one inscription—a wine which, to judge from virtually all the examples, is not to be consumed but is all spilt at once. Now we come to the second aberration in the Scythian ritual: wine is used in the ceremony as in "normal" practice, but instead of being a libation, it is a drink, instead of spilling it all, those involved in the ritual drink it.

The most fundamental deviation from the Greek ritual relates to the quality of the blood and the way it is used. This is human, not animal, blood. Furthermore, simply to make it flow from an animal’s throat and to cover the victim with it does not suffice. It must be mixed with wine and drunk; wine and blood are mixed in a great bowl, as wine and water are mingled in a Greek crater. Herodotus does not report one case in which Greeks drink human blood: they are the Greek and Carian mercenaries in the service of the pharaoh Amasis. Before engaging in battle against the Persians, they slaughter two children and collect their blood in a crater; then, having added wine and water, each man takes a drink of it. Herodotus rationalizes this sacrificial scene, explaining it as an act of vengeance: the two children were the sons of Phanes. This Phanes, a native of Halicarnassus, was one of Amasis’s mercenaries who had left his employer and offered his services to Cambyses. His former comrades held this against him and made a point of killing his children before their father’s very eyes. The charge of monstrousness which could be leveled at this sacrifice, which is both propitiatory and connected with an oath, is thus answered by ascribing the act to vengeance.

The Seven against Thebes provides another example of the connections that exist between blood and oath-swatching. The messenger tells Eteocles:

There were seven men, fierce regiment commanders,
Who cut bulls’ throats into an iron-rimmed
Shield, and with hands touched the bulls’ blood,
Taking their oath by Ares and Enyo,

By the blood-thirst
Either to lay your
With the ground, so
A bloody paste of the

This ritual is already "sweetened" with wine, is smeared on the hands, and is ascribed to the seven mothers of Thebes. Blood is always bull is particularly so, since the slaughtering of a bull is to kill oneself, and the blood of a bull is to force him to say that "the legendary suicidal ode was oral distorted by people’s words, in the case of the holy words, in the case of the holy something like: "May this blood which I swear is false." An ancient liquid affected by a false oath in Styx: when a god swears a god’s golden ewer in which the perjurer he falls down, iner a year. Herodotus does not describe the ceremony: he says nothing about the prayer. All we know is [teuchontai polla].” Did the world, ‘May this drink become poi event, the action of dipping in the oath is fail, without fail, strike down. To the Greeks, a perjurer who swore a false oath or, to

21. Aeschylus Seven against T
and the mercenaries dip not their hand.
"These oaths they sealed by sacrif
Greeks dipping a sword in the b
Atlantis also drink a mixture of bu
22. C. Glotz, L’Ordeal de l’exemple are collected.
By the blood-thirsty god of Battle Rout,
Either to lay your city level
With the ground, sacked, or by their death to make
A bloody paste of this same soil of yours. 21

This ritual is already “sweetened” (the blood comes from a bull and it is smeared on the hands, not imbibed), but Aeschylus nevertheless ascribed it to the seven monstrous warriors attacking the seven gates of Thebes. Blood is always a fearsome beverage, but the blood of a bull is particularly so, since it passes for a poison: to drink the blood of a bull is to kill oneself, and to force somebody else to drink the blood of a bull is to force him to commit suicide. But Glotz believes that “the legendary suicide by the blood of a bull is really simply an ordeal distorted by people who no longer understood it.” 22 In other words, in the case of the oath, the wording might have been something like: “May this blood become poisonous to me if the oath which I swear is false.” An extreme and mythical example of what a liquid affected by a false oath can do is provided by the waters of the Styx: when a god swears a great oath, he spills out the contents of the golden ewer in which the waters have been collected; if he is a perjurer he falls down, inert, and remains so, without breathing, for a year. 23 Herodotus does not record the words pronounced during the ceremony: he says nothing about the invocation, the promises, or the prayer. All we know is that “there were many prayers [kateuchontai polla].” Did they, in the manner of the Ossetians, say: “May this drink become poisonous to me?” It seems probable. In any event, the action of dipping weapons into the bowl appears to suggest that if the oath is false, they too will become poisonous and will, without fail, strike down the perjurer.

To the Greeks, a perjurer was certainly a criminal. He was a man who swore a false oath or, to be more precise, as Benveniste explains,

21. Aeschylus Seven against Thebes 42–48; cf. also Xenophon Anabasis 2.2.10: the mercenaries dip not their hands but their swords into a shield filled with blood. “These oaths they sealed by sacrificing a bull, a boar and a ram over a shield, the Greeks dipping a sword in the blood and the barbarians a lance.” The kings of Atlantis also drink a mixture of bull’s blood, wine, and water (Plato Critias 119ε ff.).

22. G. Glotz, L’Ordalie dans la Grèce primitive (Paris, 1904), p. 112, where the examples are collected.

one who added (epei) an oath (horkos) to a statement or promise which he knew to be false. 24 For him there could thereafter be no rest or salvation, as the Pythia explains to Glaucus, who comes to consult her to find out whether through a false oath he can keep money entrusted to him which he would prefer not to return: "But an oath has a son, anonymous, with neither hands nor feet. Yet swiftly he pursues him [the perjurer] until he seizes him and destroys all his descendants and all his house. The descendants of the man who keeps his word will enjoy a better fate." 25

The perjurer thus causes his own ruin and that of his oikos; a kind of loimos descends upon him and his. But the important point is that his punishment is a matter for the gods, not for men. Demosthenes states that a perjurer commits an injustice, an impiety against the gods (adikei tous theous); 26 and, in truth, "no ancient Indo-European code provided sanctions against a perjurer. His punishment was reckoned to come from the gods, since they were the guarantors of the oath." 27 Yet the Scythians, strangely enough, did provide such a punishment. Having been identified by the diviners, the perjurer was beheaded. They did not leave it to the gods to wreak vengeance and reestablish the order that had been upset in this way—at least, they certainly did not in the case of a false oath sworn "by the royal hearths [basileias histias]," swearing by the royal hearths being "their greatest oath [megiston horkon]."

Imprecations against perjury usually promised perjurers sterility for their women and the extinction of their hearth. 28 Thus, Glaucus, as a punishment for having considered not returning what had been entrusted to him, beheld his hearth (histia) annihilated: "There is, at this day, no descendant of Glaucus, nor any household that bears his name; he and his have been utterly uprooted from Sparta." 29 A close link thus exists between perjury and hearths; perjury puts his hearth in peril, he himself his own hearth. But among the Scythians, an astonishing transference takes place, to him himself. The king immunizes him. No doubt this only happens to royal hearths, 30 but why not to the Scythian royal hearth, immediately to Hestia? Why is it made manifest here?

The Body of the Goddess

The first question this passage raises is, quite generally, that of Hestia’s position; it is but natural enough, Hestia occupies a central role in the Scythian tales. It is to her, after all, that the Scythians, the Scythians tombs, of which Idanthrysus, the king of the Hestia in his reply to Daras, who asks him where manizes only two: "Zeus, and Hestia, the Scythians." So Hestia, his Hestia in his hearth, their despotes. And what is the position in relation to the other gods, perhaps? Hestia is a goddess to Hestia. 32 And we Hestia through swearing by the hearth, to whom we are told simply that the hearth suffers.

On the subject of Hestia, of whom the tongue Hestia is called Ta-

25. Hdt. 6.86. This declaration echoes a few lines in Hesiod: Theogony 231–32, Works and Days 219, 282ff., 321ff.
26. Demosthenes 48 (Against Olympos) 52.
28. For imprecations against the perjurer, see Rudhardt, Notions Fondamentales, p. 208 n. 4.
29. Hdt. 6.86.
30. Hdt. 4.59. "The only god, and foremost Hestia, and second wife of Zeus; after these, Apollo, Ares"; cf. below, p. 174. Hestia is mentioned in connection with a few names with whom we are told simply that they suffer.
31. Hdt. 4.127.
32. Idanthrysus nevertheless
link thus exists between the oath and the hearth: whoever commits perjury puts his hearth in danger, brings destruction down upon his own hearth. But among the Scythians, the perjuror, through an astonishing transference, damages not his own hearth but the king himself. The king immediately falls sick (kame) and suffers (algeei). No doubt this only happens when an oath has been sworn “by the royal hearths,” but why does the impiety, the injustice toward the royal hearths, immediately rebound upon the person of the king? Why is it made manifest in the body of the king?

The Body of the King: Hestia and Nomadism

The first question this poses is that of the royal hearth and, more generally, that of Hestia’s place in the Scythian pantheon. Curiously enough, Hestia occupies the place of paramount importance among the Scythians. It is to her, in preference to all other deities, that they address their prayers. Next in importance come Zeus and Ge.30 Idanthyrsus, the king of the Scythians, testifies to the supremacy of Hestia in his reply to Darius. When the Great King bids him submit, he answers that where masters (despotes) are concerned, he recognizes only two: “Zeus, my forefather, and Hestia, queen of the Scythians.”31 So Hestia, being the basileia of the Scythians, is also their despotes. And what is the king in relation to Hestia? Is his position in relation to the Scythians the same as hers in relation to the other gods, perhaps? That would make him, in a sense, analogous to Hestia.32 And we should remember that in cases of perjury through swearing by the royal hearths, it is he who is afflicted and who suffers.

On the subject of Hestia, Herodotus adds that in the Scythian tongue Hestia is called Tabiti.33 Dumézil notes that this is the only

30. Hdt. 4.59: “The only gods whom they propitiate by worship are these: first and foremost Hestia, and secondly Zeus and the Earth, whom they deem to be the wife of Zeus; after these, Apollo, and the Heavenly Aphrodite, and Heracles and Ares”; cf. below, p. 174. Hestia is seldom mentioned in the Histories: the only people mentioned in connection with her, apart from the Scythians, are the Egyptians, of whom we are told simply that they know nothing of her.
31. Hdt. 4.127.
32. Idanthyrsus nevertheless mentions that Zeus is his ancestor.
33. Hdt. 4.59.
name whose meaning is immediately clear: she is called Tabiti, which means "the one who heats"—that is to say, her name is almost identical to that of the luminous Indian Tapiti, the daughter of the sun. If Hestia is the basileia of the Scythians, we have seen that swearing by "the royal hearths [tus basileias histias]" was the most solemn of all oaths for a Scythian. So Hestia is the hearth. Dumézil, citing this same Herodotean text, points out that among the Ossetians "the hearth is the holy place par excellence: the most solemn oath is sworn 'by the hearth,' while holding onto the iron chain suspended above the hearth." As for the importance of the royal fire, we find that it is emphasized in Iran during the Sassanid period: the king had his own personal fire, lit when he came to the throne and extinguished when he died. The years of his reign were counted from the time it was first lit. Herodotus does not say that it was the same for the Scythian kings, but the example helps us to understand that the royal fire may have constituted a point of reference, marking a point in time and the beginning of a period for contracts.

Why does the text refer to "royal hearths" in the plural? We know from the chapters devoted to the origins of the Scythian people that there were three kings: if each king had a hearth it is not strange to find "royal hearths," in the plural. All the same, chapter 68 only mentions the king of the Scythians ("when the king of the Scythians is sick"), as if he were the sole sovereign. So, in the immediate context, these plural hearths belong to one, sole, singular person. But there is another possible explanation: the same person has several successive hearths. As a nomad, the king moves from place to place and his hearth moves with him; alternatively, simpler still, the plural may reflect the royal "we."

But there is an association here that we must find surprising: Hestia and nomadism. How can a nomad revere Hestia above all else? Hestia is connected with space and its representations; she

34. G. Dumézil, Romans de Scythie et d'alentour (Paris, 1978), p. 143. Dumézil suggests a connection between the Indian Tapiti, daughter of the sun; the Ossetian Acrux, also a daughter of the sun; and Herodotus' Hestia-Tapiti.

35. Dumézil, Légendes sur les Nartes, p. 154. Cf. his Religion romaine archaïque (Paris, 1966), p. 318: "Among the modern Ossetians, the last descendants of the Scythians, it is also the fire spirit who is mentioned at the end of the 'general prayer' addressed to fourteen gods or spirits, which provides a framework for all special liturgies."

relates to the terrestrial expanse, she is even an "expression"³⁷ of space, but her domain is that of human beings with fixed abodes, not of nomads. The *Homerian Hymn* puts it as follows:³⁸ "Hestia, in the high dwellings of all, both deathless gods and men who walk on earth, you have gained an everlasting abode and highest honor. Glorious is your portion and your right [gersas kai time]." The house is Hestia's allotted place among both gods and men and, as the *Homerian Hymn to Aphrodite* states, there she "is enthroned in the midst of the house"³⁹ and there she is unmovable. So she is the center of domesticated space and, that being the case, this center represents the values of fixity, immutability, permanence.⁴⁰ Now, the point is that Scythians, precisely, do not have fixed houses; they are "house-bearers" (phereoi kol), who carry their dwellings on waggons (iokemata epi zeugeion).⁴¹

The fixity of the hearth, the rootedness of the home: these concepts are unfamiliar to the Scythians, who are constantly engaged in driving their herds before them, moving on from one encampment to the next.

All things considered, it would seem logical if, among nomads, Hestia's role should be reduced, even dispensed with, while that of her "neighbor," Hermes, ought to be important, even the most important of all. However, if Hestia is, curiously enough, the principal Scythian deity, equally surprisingly Hermes is altogether absent from their pantheon.⁴² Yet Hermes is the master of the *agros*, the lord of the land reserved for pasturage, far away from cultivated fields, and of the open spaces where wild animals are hunted.⁴³ And surely the whole of Scythia, an area of *eschatta*, is a land of *agros*. Hermes' specialty is that of moving from one place to another. "To

³⁸ *Homerian Hymn to Hestia* 1.1–3.
³⁹ *Homerian Hymn to Aphrodite* 30.
⁴⁰ Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes," p. 126: "Hestia represents not only the center of the domestic sphere: fixed in the ground, the circular hearth denotes the navel which ties the house to the earth. It is the symbol and pledge of fixity, immutability and permanence."
⁴¹ Hdt. 4.46.
Hermes, the outside, escape outward, movement, interchange with others." Yet the Scythians give no recognition to the son of Maia, while all in all, for a Greek it was Hestia and Hermes who expressed spatial relationships. These two powers formed a couple:

by virtue of their polarity, the Hermes-Hestia couple represents the tension which is so marked in the archaic representation of space: space requires a center, a nodal point with a special value, from which all directions, each different qualitatively, may be channeled and defined; yet at the same time space appears as the medium of movement, implying the possibility of transition and passage from any one point to another.  

Hestia "centers" space and Hermes "mobilizes" it.  

From these two figures who express space (Hestia together with Hermes), the Scythians appear to have selected Hestia on her own, as if they set a higher value on the center, at the expense of opportunity to move outward and mobility, despite the fact that they are people who do not know the meaning of staying still.

What should we make of the fact that it is Hestia, not Hermes, whom the Scythians revere? In the first place, this is a royal Hestia. She is constantly linked with the king: "As Queen of the Scythians, she is 'the royal hearth.'" So her position depends on that of the king and her power depends on that of the sovereign. This mention of the royal hearth refers back to a bygone age in Greece, when no city hearth as yet existed and the hearth of the royal household played the role of primary importance: "The preeminent value of the royal hearth still survives, here and there, in the memory of poetry." In tragedy, the royal hearth and the city hearth are sometimes opposed or confused. But in Scythia there can be no such duality, for since the sole power is royal power there is no common hearth apart from the royal hearth. In that sense Hestia truly is the basileia of the Scythians.

Moreover, the royal hearth is the place and the object of the most solemn of oaths, the most binding oath, the one that, if perjury is involved, may cause the king to sicken. In Greece, in contrast, Hestia is not numbered among the oaths sworn. Yet, as we know, one oath sworn at Eleusis was that Demosthenes "swore to ten Boulaian] that he committed to men who ... existed there an altar to Hestia, but there was nothing corresponding to the Scythians by the royal hearth. The medium for the most part was where they came. The center of the Scythian society was that of Hestia mentioned by J. Dumézil as "a center" for space. Yet, to meetings and exchanges, the center in part, represents escape, already belonged to Hermes.

Dumézil noted that an oath was sworn by the hearth, in keeping with Herodotus's text, recently simply been democratized by the Scythians who have retained neither. In that sense, the hearth can be invoked equally by all, and there is no need to call on the royal hearth; this is a sort of "decentralized" or, at any rate, decentralized power. In contrast, Herodes...

45. Ibid.
47. E.g., Aeschylus, *The Suppliant Women* 365ff.
48. The most frequently invoked goddess was Poseidon, Demeter; cf. Butchart, *Poseidon*.
50. Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes," p. 48, also thought that it appears as an innovation to say that Hestia already belonged to Hermes.

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Hestia is not numbered among the deities generally invoked when oaths are sworn.48 All the same, during the classical period there was, we know, one oath sworn by Hestia Boulaia: Aeschines writes that Demosthenes "swore by Hestia Boulaia [ten Hestian epiomose ten Boulaian] that he congratulated the city for having entrusted this mission to men who . . . ."49 So within the precincts of the Boule existed an altar to Hestia and she was involved on certain occasions; but there was nothing comparable to the central role played among the Scythians by the royal hearth, which was both the guarantor and the medium for the most solemn contracts. Within the space of Scythia the royal hearth represented and functioned as a sort of junction: when two Scythians wished to make an agreement, this was where they came. Through the oath, the royal Hestia truly was the center of Scythian society and in this respect conforms to the Hestia mentioned by J.-P. Vernant, the Hestia who "provides a center" for space. Yet, to the extent that it is she who authorizes meetings and exchanges, she who is where oaths are sworn, she also, in part, represents escape outward and mobility, "as though Hestia already belonged to Hermes."50

Dumézil noted that among the Ossetians the most serious of all oaths was sworn by the hearth, and he compared this information with Herodotus's text, remarking, however, that "the custom has simply been democratized or decentralized among the Ossetians, who have retained neither a king nor any unity."51 Among them, any hearth can be invoked equally well to guarantee a commitment, and there is no need to call on the "agent of exchange" represented by the royal hearth; this is a society that has been "democratized" or "decentralized" or, at any rate, where there is no dominant royal power. In contrast, Herodotus's Scythia is characterized by the

48. The most frequently invoked deities are Zeus, Apollo, Demeter, or Zeus, Poseidon, Demeter; cf. Rudhardt, Notions fondamentales, p. 204.
50. Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes," p. 159: "the polarity that is so marked a characteristic of all the goddess's relations with Hermes is such a basic feature of archaic thought that it appears as an integral attribute of the hearth-goddess, as though Hestia already belonged to Hermes."
presence of the king as the center of power. His hearth is the place through which contracts must pass, and it provides the point of reference for all social relations. At the limit, individual Scythians have no hearth of their own; their only true hearth is that of the king.

The diviners declare that "such or such a man (naming whoever it is) of the citizens [ton aston] has forsworn himself by the king's hearth." This statement contains one quite astonishing word: it is, clearly, astoi, city-dwellers or citizens. The fact is that as soon as we find ourselves in this context of oath-swear and the royal hearth, the Scythians must be astoi. The procedure of oath-swear and the invocation of the royal hearth turn the Scythian society into a koinonía of astoi, as if their nomadism no longer counted. They suddenly become a fixed and centered community; that constantly shifting world of theirs is forgotten. It is fascinating to note how Herodotus presents the royal hearth as the hearth of the city—the hearth that guarantees the contracts of the astoi—and how it assumes the role of Hestia koine, the common hearth of the city. At the same time, however, we are presented with the strange relationship that exists between it and the person of the king, and this turns it into something quite other than the hearth of the astoi.

In this connection between the body of the king and the social body which obtains among the Scythians, the royal body extends until it finally swallows up the social or political body. It is a notion whose strangeness compares to that of a theory elaborated much later, in medieval England, in relation to the double nature of the king. Kantorowicz has explained this duality of the royal body: "The king has two bodies, the one whereof is a body natural, consisting of natural members as every other man has, and he is subject to passions and death as other men are; the other is a body politic, and the members thereof are his subjects." The two bodies are at the same time completely distinct and perfectly united. But in the case of the Scythian king, a fault on the part of the body politic (a perjury) affects the king's natural body (he suffers). By calling into question the foundation for the possibility of a contract, the crime of perjury attacks the king physically. In Greece, perjury puts one's strikes at the hearth of the last analysis, the only real hearth of the king is so dominant to the hearth. So, in the fullest center for the space and universe.

As for nomadism, the practice of Scythians into astoi, seems to be on in that plural form we mentioned. Because the king is constant in the next, even if each one provides a center not so much space. The Scythian people constellations of passing acron changing position, each one of them remains at a constant distance.

How to discover the causes of his health and sickness.

As men of knowledge and practice, they least to the truth: their skill enables them to find out the cause of their sickness, that is, to point out the cause of the perjury. Their knowledge tells them that the cause of death over the Scythians, because they are too risk their lives. If, at the time of their admission, they have been prosecuted, there are many willow wands. . . . The king, they lay on the ground and many willow wands. . . . They then pick up the wands and they gather up the wands and speak they gather up the wands and sing together." Another category is the bark, which they "plait and Marcellinus, similarly, write the bark."

52. The same "forgetfulness" occurs in connection with Salmoxis (Hdt. 4.95), who invites the chief among the astoi to the communal meals that he organizes among the Getae.


54. Hdt. 4.67.
attacks the king physically. Perjury is thus a form of regicide. In Greece, perjury puts one's own health in danger; and if, in Scythia, it strikes at the hearth of the king, is not that a way of saying that, in the last analysis, the only real hearth there is that of the king? The figure of the king is so dominant that he is the only person truly to possess a hearth. So, in the fullest sense, Hestia is the one who provides a center for the space and unites the Scythians.

As for nomadism, the presence of Hestia, which transforms the Scythians into astoi, seems to have eliminated it. But perhaps it lives on in that plural form we mentioned just now: why the royal hearths? Because the king is constantly on the move between one hearth and the next, even if each one is the same as the last, and Hestia thus provides a center not so much for the geographical as for the social space. The Scythian people thus perhaps resemble one of the constellations that pass across the heavens: although they are always changing position, each of the stars that goes to compose them remains at a constant distance from every other.

How to Produce the Truth

To discover the causes of his sickness, the king calls in the diviners. As men of knowledge and power, they are the administrators of the truth: their skill enables them to know the true cause of the king's sickness, that is, to point out who, of all the Scythians, is the perjurer. Their knowledge thus confers on them the power of life and death over the Scythians, but there is another side to the coin: they too risk their lives. If, at the end of the exercise, they are bound to admit they have been pseudomantis, "lying diviners," they are executed. There are many of them, and "they divine by means of many willow wands. . . . They bring great bundles of wands, which they lay on the ground and unfasten, and utter their divinations [thespizousi], laying the rods down one by one; and while they yet speak they gather up the rods once more and again place them together."54 Another category of diviners, the Enareis, use lime-tree bark, which they "plait and unplait" in their fingers. Ammianus Marcellinus, similarly, writes of the Alains: "They divine the future

54. Hdt. 4.67.
by a strange method; they cut up very straight sticks and, at a given moment, they arrange them in a particular way, uttering secret formulae: in this way they discover what is going to happen.\textsuperscript{55} In the 1880s, the Russian scholar V. S. Miller, in his \textit{Ossetian Studies} (1881–1887), was the first to illuminate Herodotus's text by establishing a connection between these procedures and the customs of the modern Ossetians.\textsuperscript{56}

So it is the patterns formed by the sticks or the way they move that enables the diviners to decode the answer to the question posed. But in his description of this procedure, Herodotus cannot prevent himself from ascribing more importance to what is said than to what is seen, so that the manipulation of the rods is, finally, simply an accomplishment to the words that are pronounced. It is first and foremost the words that count: "they utter their divinations [\textit{thespizoust}],"\textsuperscript{57} To establish a connection between the two levels, Herodotus simply coordinates them through \textit{ana}, meaning "at the same time": "while they yet speak, they gather up the rods once more and again place them together." The two activities are juxtaposed, not really articulated: the rods certainly do not dictate the words; as for the words, what need have they of rods? By using the Greek oracular vocabulary of divination, Herodotus thus stresses what is heard rather than what is seen.

56. Dumézil, \textit{Romans de Scythie et d’alentour}, pp. 212ff. "Among the Ossetians, sorcerers are held in high esteem . . . S. Y. Koviev tells us: ‘Each sorcerer has four little rods with one end split. These enable him to divine the meaning of all events. The sorcerer approaches the sick man, sits on the ground, and asks for a cushion of a particular color and a sheet or clean carpet which he spreads out, meanwhile reciting a particular formula. He takes the four rods from his pocket, places them on the ground in two pairs, each joined at the split ends. As for the two free ends of each pair, one rests on the cushion, the other is held by the sorcerer. Holding one end of each pair in each hand, the sorcerer loudly pronounces the names of a number of spirits who may have sent the sickness. With each name, he asks that it be the correct one, either the pair of rods on the left or the pair on the right should rise up and, of course, at the moment chosen by the charlatan, cleverly and imperceptibly he lifts the pair that is supposed to rise.’"
57. R. Grahay, "La Bouche de la vérité." in \textit{Divination et rationalité}, ed. J. P. Vernant (Paris, 1974), p. 204. "\textit{Thespizos} appears, albeit somewhat obscurely, to be connected with \textit{theos}, god, and with a verb implying ‘declaring,’ attested in the form of \textit{enepo}, the aorist being \textit{espon}. (See also \textit{thespesios}: with a divine voice.) The word thus appears to mean ‘to pronounce divine words.’ Similarly, \textit{chrao}, ‘from \textit{chre}’ (it is necessary, it is normal) appears to be a verb implying ‘saying’ and meaning ‘to say \textit{chre}.’"

rather than what is seen.

58. J.-P. Vernant, "Paroles. "The Greeks set a high value on interpreting signs and procedures which they regarded as minor "oracular dialogue," in which the function of those consulting him. This procedure, with the beyond is in line with Herodotus's writing is not only a recent practice, or character, functions as an extension of the oracle"

59. Hdt. 3.1, 130.
rather than what is seen, without thinking of connecting the two. For a Greek, divination was first and foremost an oral procedure. 58 Introducing this Greek schema serves both to reduce and to devalue the "otherness" of the Scythian custom, for the Scythian divination is interpreted in terms of the Greek and meanwhile it is reduced and devalued, since the lime-tree bark or willow rods apparently serve no purpose.

The diviners are summoned by the king to make their diagnosis. There appear to be no doctors in Scythia and no medicine apart from divination. Not that the text stresses that fact in any way, for recourse to diviners in cases of sickness is presented as going without saying. Simply, since the king is involved, it is necessary to send for the diviners "most in repute." It is, however, worth noting that when the Great Kings fall sick, they turn not to magi but to doctors. Cambyses sends for an Egyptian doctor to cure his eyes, and Darius turns to Democedes of Croton to treat his foot. 59 Does the Scythian way of proceeding really go without saying, or does Herodotus only pretend to present it as doing so? Whatever the case may be, divination is the functional equivalent of a diagnosis. To name the perjurer is to indicate the cause for the king's sufferings (dia tauta algeei o basileus): that is why your daughter is dumb!

To locate the cause of the evil is also to condemn the guilty party, so the diagnosis is a form of judgment and the divination also functions as an ordeal. The diviners are, in their own way, truly "masters of the truth," 60 and their words combine divination and justice. Greece also was familiar with this form of justice which resorted to divination. In Mantinea, as late as the fifth century, "in an affair of sacrilege, a tribunal composed of a mixture of priests and

58. J.-P. Vernant, "Paroles et signes muets," Divination et rationalité, p. 18: "The Greeks set a high value on oral divination. Rather than techniques for interpreting signs and procedures involving chance, such as the throwing of dice, which they regarded as minor forms, they preferred what R. Crahay has called 'oracular dialogue,' in which the words of the god respond directly to the questions of those consulting him. This preeminence of the word as a means of communication with the beyond is in line with the basically oral character of a civilization in which writing is not only a recent phenomenon but, by virtue of its entirely phonetic character, functions as an extension of the spoken language."

59. Hdt. 3.1, 130.

judges fixes the sanction which may be inflicted upon the guilty, but has the verdict depend upon an oracle. Of course here, the fact that sacrilege is involved is relevant to the use of this archaic procedure, which Glotz describes as "an ordeal without suffering." As they pronounce their formulae and shuffle their rods in order to discover the sacrilege embodied in the perjurier, the Scythian diviners are likewise operating a kind of "ordeal without suffering": it is not a matter of discovering truth of a historical nature, which could be done by holding an inquiry. Instead, through "the correct application of the procedure, ritually carried out," the truth is declared; it is not proven. It is used as proof but cannot itself be proven. This ancient type of proof, divination, is, furthermore, decisive: if the second batch of diviners, through their divination, confirms the "diagnosis" of the first batch, the perjurier must forthwith (itheos) be put to death. The sentence is automatically determined by the outcome of the divination. Similarly, in the opposite case, when a majority of diviners pronounce in favor of the innocence of the man denounced as perjurier by the first group of diviners, the first diviners must automatically die (dedoktai). That is how it is; there is no appeal against the sentence, and the divination, once more, provides the decisive proof.

Thus, where the king is concerned, divination is at once a diagnosis, an ordeal, and an archaic type of proof, but it is also more. The moment the perjurier is brought before the diviners, the setting suddenly changes and we find ourselves in a court of law with a trial taking place. From this point onward, the perjurier or the one whom divination has declared to be such is regarded as "the accused": he is "arrested" and "brought up." What does he do? Like any accused, he begins by denying the charge: no, he is not a perjurier. His denials

transform the confrontation.

king summons other diviners.

By challenging the legal accused forces the king to in charge of the course of the court sitting in judgment upon the defendant. With this new distribution of power the legal agon in which the king can convince or convict.

But the limits of the agora real dialogue. In his defense, who know, use divination and divination, to make it quite other words, this Scythian Orestes, whose task it is to goods are divided among the first diviner Megistias, "having esidon e

61. Glotz, L'Ordelie, p. 5. It is also worth noting the Megarian custom, mentioned by Theognis (543ff.): "I must give each party their fair due by resorting to diviners, to birds and to burning altars, so as to avoid making a shameful mistake."

62. Detienne, Maîtres de vérité, p. 49.

63. Gernet, Anthropology, p. 222.

64. Hdt. 4.68: "Forthwith the man whom they allege to be forsworn is seized and brought in, and when he comes the diviners accuse him, saying that their divination shows him to have forsworn himself by the king's heaths and that this is the cause of the king's sickness; and the man vehemently denies he is forsworn. So when he denies it, the king sends for twice as many diviners; and if they too, looking into their art, prove him guilty of perjury, then straightaway he is beheaded and his
transform the confrontation into a trial for, on hearing his plea, the
king summons other diviners, twice as many in number.

By challenging the legitimacy of the action against him, the
accused forces the king to intervene and assume the position of judge
in charge of the course of the proceedings. Here again, the Scythian
king plays an astonishing role. He is at once the patient about whose
body the doctor-diviners gather and also the one presiding over a
court sitting in judgment upon an attack against his “body politic.”
With this new distribution of roles, the diviners are no sooner
brought face to face with the accused-perjurer than they become
prosecutors and adopt a legal vocabulary. They “convict” him of
perjury (elegkhousi)—elegkhos being sufficient proof for convic-
tion—they “condemn him, after convicting him” (katadesosi), or else
they “find him innocent” (apolusosi). All these expressions belong to
the legal agon in which speech becomes a dialogue seeking to
convince or convict.

But the limits of the agon are soon reached, for there can be no
real dialogue. In his defense, the accused can do no more than “plead
not guilty” and “vehemently deny” (deinologein); there is no way for
him to prove his innocence by demonstrating it. The diviners, men
who know, use divination as evidence, but to the extent that this
knowledge cannot be questioned and this evidence “cannot be put to
any positivistic use,” it continues to function as proof in the archaic
sense of the term. In their attempt to win a conviction, the diviners
do no more than invoke their divination, “saying that their divination
shows him to have forsworn himself [epiörkesas phainetai en tei
mantikei],” or that “they can see in the divination [esorontes es ten
mantiken],” This time Herodotus stresses the ocular nature of the
divination, to make it quite clear that it cannot be questioned. In
other words, this Scythian “court” is not the Areopagus of the
Oresteia, whose task it is to pass judgment, not in accordance with
oaths sworn, but on the basis of evidence and the testimony of
witnesses. This is no “investigation.”

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[goods are divided among the first diviners; but if the later diviners acquit him, then
other diviners come and yet again others. If then the greater number acquit the
man, it is decreed that the first diviners shall themselves be put to death.”


66. Hdt. 4.68. An equivalent use of this verb is to be found at 7.219, where the
diviner Megistias, “having esidon es ta ira, announces that . . .”]
This strange court has one more important surprise to spring on us. In the end, the rule of majority decision is observed. If the majority of the diviners condemn the accused, he is beheaded; if the majority pronounce him innocent, he is released. Aristotle cites this law as an example of the naïveté but also of the simplicity and barbarity of the legislation of past times. Other cases are also known, in particular in Crete, where an oath sworn in a group in this fashion was decisive.

This procedure, well known in ancient legal systems, indicates a kind of turning point since it reveals, rather naïvely, the need for proof, but it partakes of a primitive concept of justice: neither “witnesses to the truth” nor “witnesses to credibility,” as has sometimes been understood, the co-swearers, by their collective willingness, are not affirming a fact but are rendering a decision concerning the “law.” That is, if they are numerous enough, they assure the “victory” of the familial party they represent.

Although a comparison with this procedure may throw some light on how the Scythian “court” functioned, significant differences remain between the two. The Scythian diviners do not represent any “family party,” and above all they swear no oath; there is no co-swearers of an oath, simply co-divination.

67. We should note one problem about Herodotus’s description of these events: the king sends for three diviners, then six. If the six confirm the divination of the first three, the man is executed; if they challenge it, the king sends for others, until a majority opinion emerges. But is there not already a majority when the first group of six makes its pronouncement? Or perhaps each group’s vote counts equally.

68. Aristotle Politics 2.5.10–12. 1259a (plethos ti marturion).

69. The custom was simply to fix the necessary number of co-swearers; the rule of the majority was also sometimes applied, as a (fragmentary) clause in the Gortyn code indicates. Victory went to the party on whose side the greatest number swore (nikes d’otera k’hoi p [lies a] monos). See C. Sautel, “Les Preuves en droit grec archaïque,” Recueils de la Société J. Bodin 16 (1965): 135–41.

70. Gernet, Anthropology, p. 192.

71. To complete the picture, we should also remember that the diviners, by drawing lots, divided (dialagecanousi) the possessions of the condemned man among themselves. What was the significance of this drawing of lots? It is the only time this verb is used in Herodotus.

All in all, this text, albeit the few comparisons we have made between production of the truth, divination, proof, and as evidence. Of course, the fact that Herodotus takes the example, is the king cured of the presumed perjurer fine and the traveler could not help to create another event, it provides evidence for the foundation, pre-law, and law.

The sickness of the king and the truth, the result of which is that the perjurer and the diviners are not a true perjury (pseilmantias). In either case, it is in some circumstances, he is treated by their enemies. To cut off his Scythian. We already know who suffered this assuredly by the Scythian nomoi, was beheaded. The perjurer is an enemy and a confirmer that to swear falsely on the very basis of the Scythians, the death of their death is strange enemies but undergo a nomo...

72. The expression alethemantis.
73. Hdt. 4.64.
74. Hdt. 4.80.
All in all, this text, albeit simple in appearance, is a difficult one. The few comparisons we have considered have shown that in this production of the truth, divination functions at once as an ordeal, as a proof, and as evidence. Of course, part of the difficulty stems from the fact that Herodotus takes good care not to provide details: for example, is the king cured once the perjurer has been executed? If the presumed perjurer finally turns out to be innocent, do the diviners have to discover another? But the rapidity of the sequence of events helps to create an impression of "otherness." It is one way the traveler can suggest distancing. The text is difficult to understand because it is difficult to imagine how Herodotus's audience may have received it. How was this trial regarded? As some bizarre procedure? As an archaic way of revealing the truth? Or, on the contrary, as a procedure to which one might oneself resort, under some circumstances? After all, in Mantinea, even in the fifth century, in a matter of sacrilege the judgment depended on an oracle. In any event, it provides evidence of the close interrelation among divination, pre-law, and law.

The sickness of the king sets in action a procedure for producing the truth, the result of which is to "prove" that the perjurer is a true perjurer and the diviners are true diviners, or, alternatively, that the perjurer is not a true perjurer and the diviners are false diviners (pseudomantis). In either case, the end result is one or more executions. The perjurer is beheaded (apotamnousi ten kephalen), in other words, he is treated as an enemy, for the Scythians beheaded their enemies. To cut off his head is to consider him no longer to be a Scythian. We already know of one example of a famous Scythian who suffered this assuredly humiliating death: Scyles, traitor to the Scythian nomoi, was beheaded by order of his own brother. So the perjurer is an enemy and a traitor and the death inflicted on him confirms that to swear falsely by the royal hearths is to undermine the very basis of the Scythian koinonia. As for diviners who ultimately turn out to be "masters of falsehood," they too must be eliminated. The ritual of their death is strange and unique: they are not treated as enemies but undergo a nomad death. "Men yoke oxen to a waggon

72. The expression alethemantis is applied to Cassandra (Aeschylus Agamemnon 1241).

73. Hdt. 4.64.

74. Hdt. 4.80.
laden with sticks and make the diviners fast amid these, fettering
their legs and binding their hands behind them and gagging them;
then they set fire to the sticks and drive the oxen away by frightening
them. 75 The diviner who has revealed himself to be a bad doctor,
incapable of diagnosing the sickness of the king, incapable of produc-
ting the truth, is expelled, away from the royal body. He is not
insulted, beaten, or stoned, but burned. He goes to annihilation out
on the steppes, where his ashes will be dispersed: a pharmakos, but
one who is charged only with his own “fault,” he dies for having been
a pseudomantis, a master of falsehood. Before a dead king is buried,
he is paraded before his subjects; an individual passes among his
relatives before he is buried; but the diviner is tossed onto a wagon,
to be consumed in the flames. His charred body will have no burial
and nobody will come to gather up his ashes. He is wiped out; the
steppes are like the sea.

Masters of truth and masters of accusation as they are, the diviners
are also the king’s doctors, but only at the peril of their own lives.
Their power may be great but their frailty is no less so. This
combination of strength and frailty is the mark of the ambiguity of
their status vis-à-vis the power which they serve and which has need
of them. Such ambiguity is in no way surprising to the Greeks, who
were quite familiar with the question of relations between the
diviner and the sovereign: witness the figure of Tiresias. 76 Moreover,
the ambiguity of their position is further reinforced since, among the
many Scythian diviners, there are some (the Enareis), who are
“androgynous.” 77 But here again the story of Tiresias, who was first a
man, then a woman, then a man again, serves as testimony to the fact
that the Scythian diviners simply belong to that same category of
mediators whom the Greeks were prone to represent to themselves
as ambiguous beings.

75. Hdt. 4.69.
76. Detienne, Maîtres de vérité, p. 50 n. 111. On Tiresias, see L. Brisson, Le
77. A number of texts mention the Enareis: Hdt. 1.105.4.67. Hippocratic Corpus
Airs, Waters, Places 22: here the Enareis are men who have become impotent and
who live and dress as women, but there is no suggestion that they are diviners;
Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 7.7. See also L. Brisson, “Bi-sexualité et médiation en

The king’s sickness demonstrates the central figure in a despotist
social body tend to become patient by whose sickbed, who, from start to finish,
dealer of death. The central position held by Hestia are royal hearths.

The Dead E.

And I will tell you: when the body shall be brought to the
they be forty people who are sword by those who
kill, they say: “other world!”

Marco Polo, D.

Funeral rites have always observers, travelers, and every see, they tell much about the involved. To those who know piece together the system the man or woman whose funerary the question which now a discourse allot to the death this figure in the rhetoric of the Scythian kings to reproduce.

Death is a sign of otherwise renewed tension between you die and I will tell you when as a discriminator, it is also a

78. E. Durkheim, Les Formes 557ff.
79. Hdt. 4.71–73.
The king’s sickness demonstrates that the royal person is the central figure in a despotic power in which the royal body and the social body tend to become confused. At the same time that he is the patient by whose sickbed the solicitous gather, he is also the judge who, from start to finish, controls the entire procedure: he is the dealer of death. The centrality of this power is expressed through the position held by Hestia and by the fundamental role played by the royal hearths.

The Dead Body: The Kings’ Funerals

And I will tell you of another great marvel: when the bodies of these Great Khans are brought to these mountains for burial, even if they be forty or more days distant, all the people who are met on the way are put to the sword by those bringing the body. And as they kill, they say: “Go and serve your lord in the other world!”

Marco Polo, Description of the World, chap. 69

Funerary rites have always been considered choice morsels by observers, travelers, and ethnologists. To those who know how to see, they tell much about the life of the tribe, ethnic group, or society involved. To those who know how to listen, they make it possible to piece together the system of representations of the group to which the man or woman whose funeral is being celebrated belonged.78 So the question which now arises is, what place does Herodotus’s discourse allot to the death of “the other”? What is the pertinence of this figure in the rhetoric of otherness, if we take the funeral rites of the Scythian kings to represent an example par excellence of it?79

Death is a sign of otherness and is an important factor in the ever-renewed tension between what is the same and what is other: it produces a manifestation of difference. It could be said, “Tell me how you die and I will tell you who you are.” But even as it makes its mark as a discriminator, it is also a category and a subject for classification.

79. Hdt. 4.71–73.
It is quite possible for the observer to construct a table of funerary customs ranging across the spectrum from extreme sameness to extreme otherness. In his treatise On Mourning, Lucian recognizes the pertinence of such distinctions when he declares that "the Greek burns, the Persian buries, the Indian covers with glass, the Scythian eats, and the Egyptian salts" the body.\textsuperscript{80}

**Death and the Civic Space**

Death is connected with space. It is even an element in the representation of space: what does a community do with its dead? Are they kept in the house? Are they put in a special place? In this sense, the otherness of death and the otherness of space are probably two sides to a single coin.

Where did the classical city put its dead? As a rule they were not buried inside the town.\textsuperscript{81} There were obviously a number of exceptions: for instance, the rule does not appear to have obtained in the case of children; Pausanias mentions the presence of tombs inside Megara;\textsuperscript{82} and a necropolis has been found inside the walls of Tarentum. And then there is Sparta, which marks out its difference on this point too: "In order to do away with all superstitious terror, he [Lycurgus] allowed them to bury their dead within the city and to have tombs of them near the sacred places."\textsuperscript{83} Faced with this strange fact, Plutarch rationalizes as follows: if Lycurgus defied normal practice, it was clearly with pedagogical motives. In this way "he made the young familiar with such sights and accustomed to them, so that they were not confounded by them and had no horror of death as polluting those who touched a corpse or walked among graves."\textsuperscript{84}

But another category also constitutes an exception to the rule:

\textsuperscript{80} Lucian On Mourning 21. Note that Lucian attributes to the Indians (preservation under glass) what Herodotus records as being the practice of the Ethiopians (3.24) and to the Scythians what Herodotus attributes to the Indians. So this is a constellation of terms that are distributed among "the others" in a number of ways: the stock of characteristics is fixed but their distribution is variable.


\textsuperscript{82} Pausanias 1.43.2.

\textsuperscript{83} Plutarch Life of Lycurgus 27. Lycurgus is thus doubly opposed to the general rule: he permits burials not only within the town but also close to the temples.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.

that of the heroes. Where a rapid digression to consider the funeral ceremonies for the hero by giving him a great funeral, Cleisthenes wished to be similarly, in 476, Theseus was buried outside the town," in the Theseion, the heroes, also often favored by the city founders, such as Bacles and Magnesia on the Meander. Parnassus even suggests that the heroes are customarily buried in the temple.

One other possible reason, and, in particular, the great victory of Oxylus was buried in a temple, it is the tomb of the prince of the city, "is neatly fitted into a series of the city walls, with a view to the gates. . . . At Eretria, the worthies were guarded the west.

Finally, there was a third and advantageous to install a temple. At Coroebus, the first Olympian Games (\textit{epi toi perihi}),\textsuperscript{93} and his temple.

\textsuperscript{85} It is possible to reconstitute by E. Rohde, \textit{Psychê} (trans. Paris, Alteratum (Giessen, 1912); R. Manus.

\textsuperscript{86} Hdt. 5.67.

\textsuperscript{87} Plutarch Life of Cimon 8.


\textsuperscript{89} Pindar \textit{Pythian} V.87ff.

\textsuperscript{90} Thucydides 1.138. 5.11.

\textsuperscript{91} Scholium, to Pindar \textit{Olympian} 9.

\textsuperscript{92} Pausanias 5.44.


\textsuperscript{93} Pausanias 8.26.3.
that of the heroes. Where does the city bury them? We must make a rapid digression to consider this question in order to understand the funeral ceremonies for the Scythian kings. The city tends to honor a hero by giving him a grave in the agora. Adрастus, of whom Kleisthenes wished to be rid, was lodged in the agora of Sicyon; similarly, in 476, Theseus was officially installed "right in the center of the town," in the Theseion. Another category, close to that of the heroes, also often favored with the honors of the agora was that of the city founders, such as Battus at Cyrene, and, later, Themistocles at Magnesia on the Meander and Brasidas at Amphipolis. A scholium to Pindar even suggests this to have been the general rule: "Oikistai are habitually buried in the town centres."

One other possible resting place for heroes was the town walls and, in particular, the gates to the town. For example, Aetolus the son of Oxilus was buried in the very gateway of Elis. And then there is the tomb of the prince of Eretria, excavated by C. Bérard, which is neatly fitted into a series of hera for the most part situated within the city walls, with a view to providing a supernatural defense for the gates. . . . At Eretria, the shades of the prince in tomb 6 and his warriors guarded the western gate facing Chalcis, the city’s rival.

Finally, there was a third place where it was sometimes considered advantageous to install a hero: on the frontiers of the territory. Coroebus, the first Olympic victor, thus rests "on the frontiers of Elis [epi toi perati]," and his tomb is said to "mark the limit [horizei]" of

86. Hdt. 5.67.
87. Phutarch *Life of Cimon 8, Life of Theseus* 36; A. Podlecki, "Cimon Skyros and Theseus, Bones." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 91 (1971): 141. The other mythical kings of Athens, when they have a special place allotted to them, are accommodated on the Acropolis: e.g., Erechtheus, Cecrops, Pandion.
88. Pindar *Pythian* V 87ff.
89. Thucydides 1.138, 5.11.
90. Scholium, to Pindar *Olympian I* 149.
91. Pausanias 5.44.
the country; another Coroebus, the son of Mygdon, is buried "on the borders [en horoi] of Phrygia." 94

These few examples will suffice to show that heroes may be buried equally well in the agora, in a town gateway, or on the frontiers of the country. 95 Thus, from the point of view of the representation of the territory, an equivalence exists among the three places. For the primary function of a corpse honored in this way is to mount guard, to defend the territory or ensure victory for it. For example, Herodotus gives a detailed account of the vicissitudes of Orestes' remains. 96 The Spartans were repeatedly defeated in battle by the Tegaeans. Such regularity could only be occasioned by the hostility of some god, so they consulted the Pythia, who promised them victory on the day when they would bring home the bones of Orestes: they would then "become the protectors of Tegae." After searching for a long time, a Spartan by the name of Lichas finally discovered the bones in Tegae itself, in a blacksmith's forge. He brought them back to Sparta, where they were buried on the agora, "and ever after this time the Lacedaemonians got much the better of the men of Tegae in all their battles." In similar fashion, Theseus was brought back to Athens from Skyros. In Plutarch's opinion, the reason why this was considered desirable was above all because his armor-clad ghost had appeared to the soldiers at Marathon. 97 When Cimon took possession of the island, he was "ambitious to discover the grave of Theseus and eventually found the coffin of a man of extraordinary size, a bronze spear lying by its side, and a sword." 98

Conversely, the city might wish to rid itself of a hero whom it believed to be damaging it. Cleisthenes was anxious to "eject" Adrastus from the agora of Sicyon because he was an Argive, for Cleisthenes was at war with Argos. Having Adrastus there in the agora was like harboring a traitor in the very heart of the city. The Pythia did not approve of Cleisthenes' plan, so he was obliged to give it up and tried instead to get Adrastus to depart "of his own free will" through the following ruse: close to the pyrtanume, also on the

agora, he installed Melanippe, a young woman said to be Adrastus's worst enemy.

A hero may thus be very useful to Tegaeans "lost" Orestes, thus, eventually, dominion over Spartans acquired what they had been seen as the territory's masters. It is understandable that the Pythia's last word, in these matters, was: 99

Finally, there are those who believe the Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, humours future, devised a plan at night by a certain road where to kill the man they met and then go in pursuit of the person the two young men wanted to kill Periander himself. He came by his nephew: the incident was: namely, having his tomb vii of course, people threw the corpse of Theseus unburied, violated the tomb of Theseus's bones. 100 We should note the corpse, instead of being buried and already kind of pharmakos which the city would have accepted. In contrast to such an eating, and it was secret burial place, there may prevent the possibility of the hero being protector-hero was buried outside the city for their own superiority. This is the reason he writes that the heroes will not find. 101 The most telling case is this: When he is on the point of death, the only one to know the hero, the man then acts as Theseus's kind of "tomb":

94. Pausanias 10.27.1.
95. In the cases of the two Coroeboi, it is a matter of the territory, not the city.
96. Hdt. 1.67–68. For a more detailed account of these peregrinations, see Rohde, Psyche, p. 133.
97. Plutarch Life of Theseus 36.
98. Pausanias 1.15.3.
100. Jacoby, FGrHist, 60 F 304.
102. Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus 1109.
agora, he installed Melanippus, another hero, whom he considered to be Adrastus’s worst enemy.

A hero may thus be very closely bound to a territory: when the Tegaeans “lost” Orestes, they also lost their military supremacy and, eventually, dominion over the territory. By the same token, the Spartans acquired what the Tegaeans had lost. The hero can thus be seen as the territory’s metonym. That being so, it is altogether understandable that the Pythia should wish to have a say, or even the last word, in these matters.

Finally, there are those who are buried in secret places. Thus, Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, no doubt worried about his posthumous future, devised a ruse: “He ordered two young men to go out at night by a certain road which he pointed out to them; they were to kill the man they met and bury him. He afterwards ordered four more to go in pursuit of the two, kill them and bury them.”99 The first person the two young men encountered was, needless to say, Periander himself. He clearly wished to avoid what subsequently happened to his nephew Cypselus as soon as he was overthrown, namely, having his tomb violated. Nicholas of Damascus writes: “The people threw the corpse of Cypselus beyond the frontier, leaving it unburied, violated the tombs of his ancestors and emptied out the bones.”100 We should note that detail: “beyond the frontier.” The corpse, instead of being beneficent, may, on the contrary, become a kind of pharmakos which is expelled from the territory.

In contrast to such an egoistical and tyrannical reason for having a secret burial place, there might be an altruistic and heroic reason: to prevent the possibility of enemies of the city, knowing where a protector-hero was buried, from seizing his bones and thus ensuring their own superiority. This is the reason alluded to by Plutarch when he writes that the heroes have “secret” tombs “which are difficult to find.”101 The most telling example is that of Oedipus at Colonus.102 When he is on the point of death he sends for Theseus, who is to be the only one to know the precise spot where he is to die. The blind man then acts as Theseus’s guide, leading him to the exact place of his “tomb”:

100. Jacoby, FGrHist, 60 F 60.
102. Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus 151ff.
I'll lead you to the place where I must die;
But you must never tell it to any man,
Not even the neighbourhood in which it lies.
If you obey, this will count more for you
Than many shields and many neighbours' spears. 103

This army of reinforcements offered by Oedipus will make it possible to protect Athens from the ravages which the “children of the earth” might otherwise inflict on her. Banished from Thebes, Oedipus is now the one who is best placed to protect Attica against Thebes. He is transformed from a pharmakos into a protector-hero. 104 In this way the secret burial place, like the secret password for a garrison in time of siege, renders the offered protection more effective.

This digression on the tombs of the heroes may help us to gain a better understanding of the funeral rites of the Scythian kings. They can be implicitly referred to this spatial schema while at the same time they make it function differently.

**The Tomb and Eschatia**

Where are the kings buried? Among the Gerrhi, 105 The Gerrhi live in the land of the Gerrhus and are the most distant (eschata) of the peoples ruled by the Scythians. To reach this country, it is necessary to travel up the Borysthenes River, that is, northward, for forty days. The destination marks the point at which the Borysthenes becomes un navigable and beyond which it is unexplored. Further up (to katuperthe) its exact course is not known, nor yet what peoples it passes through. It is also at this point that the Gerrhus tributary diverges from the Borysthenes, eventually to flow into the Hypaikiris. 106 The Gerrhus thus delimits a zone of eschata beyond which stretch great expanses about which nobody has any information, 107 not even any based on hearsay, and it is here, in this peripheral zone, that the Scythians bury their kings. Why here? In their case, unlike that of the heroes, it is not a matter of installing them so that they can

103. Pausanias knows of two tombs of Oedipus: one is situated in the Areopagus, within the very walls of the Sanctuary of the Semnoi (1.28.7); the other at Colonus, where there was a heroon devoted to Perithoos, Theseus, Adrastus, and Oedipus. 104. J.-P. Vernant, *Tragedy and Myth* (Brighton, 1981), pp. 87ff.
105. Hdt. 4.71.
106. Hdt. 4.56; cf. map, p. 16.
107. Hdt. 4.53.
108. Hdt. 4.121.
109. Hdt. 4.127.
protect the northern "frontier" of the country against invasion from wild or particularly bellicose peoples, since nothing is known of what lies beyond. I believe that they are placed here not to protect but themselves to be protected, just as the body of a hero is protected by being given a secret burial. For the Scythians, the north is a protection, a refuge; that is made clear enough at the time of Darius's invasion. One of the precautions taken then is the evacuation of the women, the children, and most of the herds: "all these they sent forward, charged to drive ever northward."\(^{108}\)

Even installed on the margins of Scythia, the kings are still linked with the "territory"; were they not, it would be hard to see why they should be protected. That is certainly the meaning of the words of Idanthrysus, the king of the Scythians, when he sends Darius (who cannot understand why he refuses to engage in battle against him) the following message: "Find the tombs of our fathers and try to destroy them. Then you will know whether we will fight you for those graves or no. But until then we will not join battle unless we think good."\(^{109}\) Idanthrysus clearly sees a link between the royal tombs and the country. To find and violate the former would be to strike at the latter. To find the tombs of the kings would be the equivalent to finding the tomb of a hero in Greece and thereby acquiring (an at least virtual) dominion over the territory.

During his lifetime the king occupies a central position, as is indicated by the fundamental place of Hestia, the "queen of the Scythians," and also by the importance of the oath sworn by "the royal hearths." His position is, in the most precise sense, that of center, but it is a mobile center.

Then what is the explanation for the fact that, once dead, he is carried off almost to the limits of the known world? No doubt it is partly because, to the Scythians, the north is a zone of refuge; but there is also another, more fundamental, reason: to wit, nomadism. A city buries its heroes in its agora, in its gateways, or on its frontiers; positioned as they are, these tombs mark out a particular space and help to create a representation of the civic territory. However, as Idanthrysus reminds Darius, the Scythians have "neither towns nor cultivated land"; instead, they are a people with pastures and encampments. Their territory is an area of pastureland, not an

\(^{108}\) Hdt. 4.121.
\(^{109}\) Hdt. 4.127.
ordered space. How should they treat their dead kings, who occupy a
central position and represent a central point, when no agora exists
to receive their bodies? The text tells us that once the king is dead,
the Scythians “load” (analambanousi) his body onto a wagon. We are
not told where it is—the point being, precisely, that it is nowhere,
there is no institutional place for it; the king can die anywhere. While
alive, he is a mobile circle whose circumference is everywhere, its
center nowhere. The compromise elaborated between the exigencies
of nomadism and a functional centrality is represented by an
“excentric” fixed point: the tomb will be situated in the margins.
Having no towns or cultivated land to defend, the Scythians have no
need to engage in a pitched battle against Darius, who, if we pursue
this logic, is not an invader. If, however, he finds the royal tombs, he
does become an “invader,” against whom it is then necessary to fight.
So the space of the pastureland is not a totally undifferentiated space.
It includes a nodal point that represents it metonymically. Herodotus
makes this metonymy explicit: to bury their king, the Scythians
dig a “great four-cornered pit (tetragon)” in the country of the
Gerrhi. A bit further on in the text, the narrator mentions that the
Scythian territory is, by and large, square: “Scythia, then, being a
four-sided country . . .”110 To establish the burial space of the
Scythian kings, Herodotus thus adopts the Greek schema that
establishes the relationship between the civic space and the tomb of
a hero, but since nomadism is the operator in the case of the
Scythians, what was at the center remains at the center, yet becomes
“excentric.” Herodotus conceives of this burial space in the same
terms but operates a displacement: for the city, the zone of the
eschata is what is furthest from the center, but for the Scythians it is
precisely the eschata that is regarded as the center. Moreover, it is
this excentric place, this point fixed on the frontier, that makes it
possible for the space of Scythia to be seen as nomad space. The very
logic of the narrative thus demands that these tombs be placed, not
within the Scythian “territory” (which would be to deny its nomadic
character), but on the borders (which confirms it to be an undifferen-
tiated space with no fixed point of reference).

Before this space of death is reached, a number of strange and
impressive ceremonies take place, ceremonies which appear to
comprise a striking element of otherness. In Greece, the ceremony

of prothesis normally took place on the corpse, having been visited
by either his closest relatives or displayed on a bed. This ceremony,
which is followed by the death, usually lasted five days. It was
not only to confirm death but the performance of the traditional
family to pay their last respects. There was no procedure analogous to
the king’s body is borne on a wagon and people receive it and then
comes to him to pay their last visit. This procedure, however,
The explanation is on Scythians’ nomadism. The mobile one; the wagon
round trip (perieltheim) to as it were, the expression
procession, to which Hex.
ekphora, would put his authority of the past;111
that those manifested that a common model for all future.

Confirmation that it is not an explanation for this inverso
even of ordinary corpses: the visit their relatives. Just as
ordinary man is moved from
wagon, “doing the rounds”
took forty days for the king
ordinary individuals were
days before being buried.

110. Hdt. 4.101.
111. Kurtz and Boardman, C.
112. M. Alexiou, The Ritual i
confirms that, in the geometrical
magnificent, public affair, with
horses, followed by kinswomen,
113. Hdt. 4.73. I think it bet
of *prothesis* normally took place between death and the funeral rites: the corpse, having been washed and dressed by the womenfolk—either his closest relatives or women over sixty years of age—was displayed on a bed. This display, which took place the day following the death, usually lasted for one day. "The purpose of the *prothesis* was not only to confirm death, but also to provide an opportunity for the performance of the traditional lament and for the friends and the family to pay their last respects." But among the Scythians we find no procedure analogous to the *prothesis*. Quite the contrary: the king's body is borne on a wagon from one people to another; each people receives it and then passes it on to the next, until finally it reaches the Gerrhi, who are the last of all. So his subjects do not come to him to pay their last respects; rather, he pays each of them a last visit. This procedure, then, is the exact reverse of the *prothesis*. The explanation is once again found to be connected with the Scythians' nomadism. The central figure of the king can only be a mobile one; the wagon traveling northward, but en route making a round trip (*perietheia*) to visit each of his subject peoples in turn, is, as it were, the expression of this role. Furthermore, this long procession, to which Herodotus does not refer with the usual term *ekphora*, would put his audience in mind of the funeral rites of the great families of the past, and it was precisely against the *hubris* that those manifested that the city had sought to react by imposing a common model for all funerals.

Confirmation that it is Scythian nomadism that provides the explanation for this inverse *prothesis* is to be found in the treatment even of ordinary corpses: they too are placed on wagons and sent to visit their relatives. Just as the king passes from people to people, the ordinary man is moved from house to house or, rather, from wagon to wagon, "doing the rounds [*perigous*]" of his relatives (*philous*). It took forty days for the king to reach the Gerrhos; the corpses of ordinary individuals were also moved around (*periagonal*) for forty days before being buried.


112. M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 7: "Attic vase painting confirms that, in the geometric and archaic periods, the ekphora had been a magnificent, public affair, with the bier carried on a wagon and drawn by two horses, followed by kinswomen, professional mourners and armed men."

113. Hdt. 4.73. I think it better to translate *philous* as "relatives."
Mutilate, Embalm, Strangle

Each in turn, all the peoples of the Scythian "empire" take part in this funeral procession. What form does their required participation take? "Those that receive the dead man at his coming do the same as do the Royal Scythsians; that is, they cut off [apotamnontai] a part of their ears, shave [perikeiron] their heads, make cuts round [peritamnontai] their arms, tear [katamussontai] their foreheads and noses, and pierce [diabuneontai] their left hands with arrows."114 We must imagine not only the procession advancing from one people to the next, but also all the mutilations that take place wherever it passes: an ineffaceable wake stretches from the country of the Royal Scythians all the way to that of the Gerrhi. The narrator gives us absolutely no information as to the identities of "those that receive the dead man": the entire scene is described using the intemporal present tense and with not the slightest indication as to who is speaking.

The vocabulary used to describe these scenes is not without interest for, on the whole, it applies generally to the barbarian world, in which the infliction of mutilation was a form of the exercise of power.115 The Great Kings, and sometimes the pharaohs, practice mutilation, and it is also a feature of certain rituals connected with warfare, in particular among the Scythians. A clear link exists between mutilation and the sphere of law.116 Thus, in the city no mutilation is practiced: the bodily integrity of the citizen must be preserved. Torture is reserved for slaves, in circumstances where their evidence is required or when the truth has to be extorted from them. It is interesting to note that exclusion from the polis is inseparable from exclusion from truthfulness. Conversely, to practice mutilation is to place oneself beyond the sphere of law, and among the Scythians neither law nor even pre-law holds any sway. Thus, mutilation, self-mutilation, even beating one's breast on the occasion of funerals, is initially banned, even as the Scythians, their women of the house . . . with their garments belted and with them all the women, beat themselves, their garments

Such practices also point to the city not yet truly a religious relic of the period before the god came to Athens and became Athenians. . . . milder [post. by taking away the harsher] women had usually indulged in "harsh and barbaric" practices to the text: "Laceration of the flesh, lamentations and the bewailing of another he forbade."119 So such "excessive" manifestations were not allowable: following the death of a friend, Achilles does not hide his tears.120 And before his death, Achilles does not hide his tears.121 Similarly, in the Suppliant Women can do neither: we have poured tears.122 Such manifestations of grief, however, are also particular to women; they are a source of danger which at any time introduce excessive pain.

114. Hdt. 4.71.
115. Katamussso is a hapax in Herodotus. Perikeiro is also used in 3.154, when the Persian Zopyrus mutilates himself. Peritamn is used, in particular at 4.64, in the description of the Scythian method of scalping, and at 2.162, in connection with the mutilation of an Egyptian by the pharaoh. Apotamn can be used in the same register (the cutting off of an arm, nose, ears, or head).
116. L. Gernet, Recherches sur le développement de la pensée juridique et morale en Grèce (Paris, 1917), and Glotz, Solidarité.
occasion of funerals, is initially a feature of areas outside the city. As well as the Scythians, the Egyptians may be mentioned: “All the women of the house . . . roam about the city beating themselves, with their garments belted about them and their breasts showing, and with them all the women of their kin; and they too, for their part, beat themselves, their garments belted likewise.”

Such practices also point to an ancient past, a time before, when the city was not yet truly a city. In Athens, for example, they were a relic of the period before the legislation of Solon. When Epimenides came to Athens and became friendly with Solon, “he made the Athenians . . . milder [πραοτέρους] in their rites of mourning . . . by taking away the harsh and barbaric practices in which their women had usually indulged up to that time.” The nature of these “harsh and barbaric” practices is made clearer a bit further on in the text: “Laceration of the flesh by mourners, and the use of versified lamentations and the bewailing of anyone at the funeral ceremonies of another he forbade.” In the world of epic, on the other hand, such “excessive” manifestations of mourning were perfectly acceptable: following the death of Patroclus, Achilles and the Myrmidons abandon themselves to prolonged weeping and “find some solace in their tears.” And before setting fire to the funeral pyre of his friend, Achilles does not hesitate to make him an offering of his own locks. Similarly, in the world of tragedy, the chorus of The Suppliant Women can declare: “Our nails cut furrows down our cheeks; / We have poured dust over our heads.”

Such manifestations of mourning put one in mind of earlier times, but they are also particularly associated with women. In the city, women are a source of danger; if the lawgiver is not careful, they may at any time introduce excess into funeral ceremonies. They no doubt

117. Hdt. 2.85. “Mourning includes a whole series of ritual actions (scattering dust, scratching, wounding) which express both the statutory grief of the relatives and the social loss of status which, through the ban, affects them, with the effect of debasing them in a religious sense” (Gernet, Recherches, p. 218).
118. Plutarch Life of Solon 12.8.
120. Homer Iliad 23.6ff.
121. Homer Iliad 23.140.
122. Euripides The Suppliant Women 836.
have their special part to play at different moments in the ceremony, but it is important to establish limits which they must under no circumstances exceed. The law of Iulis, for example, lays down which women are authorized to enter the house of the deceased and states that the ekphora must take place "in silence." In the case of the Scythian kings, Herodotus does not say whether the funeral procession was accompanied by weeping and lamentations, but it appears to have taken place in total silence.

While the participants in the funeral procession mutilate themselves, the king's corpse is, in contrast, the object of particular honor, for it is embalmed: "His body is cut open and cleansed and filled with cut marsh-plants and frankincense and parsley and anise seed, and sewn up again." Such an operation is altogether surprising, and the plants used by the Scythian embalmers do not appear anywhere else in the Histories, except for frankincense, which is also used by the Egyptian specialists in embalming. As for the method, it "is reminiscent" of the ritual of sacrifice to Isis, in the course of which the victim was filled with aromata. Why these plants? They are among the aromata, known for their "pleasant smell", their function is the same as that of the fragrant plants which the Egyptians slip into the stomach of the sacrificial victim. But one of them, parsley, also appears in Greece in a funerary context. The soldiers of Timoleon who catch sight of mules laden with parsley take this to be an evil omen since "we are generally accustomed to wreath the tombs of the dead with parsley"; there was even a proverb according to which "one who is dangerously sick 'needs only parsley.'"

Pliny also mentions "parsley consecrated at funeral meals."

123. Recueil des inscriptions juridiques grecques, 1st fasc., no. 2, p. 11: "The women who have attended the ceremony will return from the monument ahead of the men . . . In the house of the deceased, after the body has been removed, no other women should enter apart from those who are already defiled."
124. Hdt. 4.71.
125. Hdt. 2.86. Frankincense also appears at 1.183, 2.40, 6.97.
128. Plutarch Life of Timoleon 26. Timoleon replies that it is in no way an ominous sign, since parsley has been used for crowns in the Isthmian games. Cf also E. Leutsch and F. G. Schneidewin, Corpus Paraenemographorum graecorum, vol. 2, p. 639.
129. Pliny HN 22.44.113.

While a connection between the Greeks, the fact never the Scythians operate a consistent embalm the corpse of a king.

Before the embalming, "coating the body in wax." It is also customary among the body in the earth, . . . embalming in Sparta. Thus, the Spartan king refers the reader to outside the context of the differences in each case. The particular meaning to the king seems that all corpses were could be contracted by the king. There was no mummy of one's father and no debt. As for the Greek corpse was simply washed and adorned by the closest relations.

The body of the Scythian king, this long, inverted prothesis, as such, was conducted. It's splendor of this silent scene was希腊 audience? The change announced, and the speech: some silent movie, must cease. of a "spectator" left speech.

In Athens on the occasion of the soldiers, the ceremony was words of an appointed orator: an important speech was than an orat egen of the andes agath of the orator reduced to the minimum. Scythians, in contrast, not
While a connection between parsley and death may thus exist for the Greeks, the fact nevertheless remains that in this context the Scythians operate a considerable displacement, since they use it to embalm the corpse of a king.

Before the embalming another operation is carried out, that of "coating the body in wax." The practice is unusual but not unique: it is also customary among the Persians, who "before they bury the body in the earth, . . . embalm it in wax." It is also attested in one case in Sparta. Thus, the Scythians’ way of preparing the body of their king refers the reader to Egypt, to the Persians, and finally (but outside the context of the Histories) to Sparta, with certain differences in each case. The question is, is it possible to assign a particular meaning to those differences? Among the Persians, it seems that all corpses were covered with wax. In Egypt, embalming could be contracted by the payment of a misthos; there were three tariffs, and a mummy might even possess a certain value, since the mummy of one’s father could be used as a pledge to guarantee a debt. As for the Greek city, it rejected embalming utterly: a corpse was simply washed, anointed with oil, and dressed and adorned by the closest relatives or by women over sixty years of age.

The body of the Scythian king was sent off on a wagon, and when this long, inverted prothesis was completed, the funeral ceremony, as such, was conducted. It is not easy to comment on the gruesome splendor of this silent scene: what impact did it make upon the Greek audience? The charge of “otherness” that it carries is pronounced, and the speechlessness of the scene, which unfolds like some silent movie, must certainly have been matched by the silence of a “spectator” left speechless.

In Athens on the occasion of public funerals held to honor dead soldiers, the ceremony was a celebration of the city through the words of an appointed orator. Loraux has shown how much more important speech was than vision, in the context of the "fine death," that of the andres agathoi. At such funerals, spectacle was reduced to the minimum; what counted was speech. Among the Scythians, in contrast, nobody says a word; there is no official

130. Hdt. 1.140.
131. Hdt. 2.66.
132. Hdt. 2.136.
pronouncement upon the death, no lamentations on the part of the
king’s subjects to express the bereavement of the community. Rath-
er, the corpse is paraded on a wagon, as a spectacle, just as the body
of the Persian Masistius, also paraded on a cart, is said to be “worth
the viewing.” Why this silence? It can be explained by the
Scythian nomadism. The city represents a full koinonia and has
forged a thoroughly political form of speech to express and commemo-
rate itself. Nomads are just the opposite, for they are hardly even a
“community”: what could they possibly have to say, commemorate,
or celebrate?

But, in truth, the situation is probably more complex. Although
the Scyths do not raise their voices and they pronounce no words,
they do speak, but in their own fashion—with and through their
bodies. By mutilating themselves, they record the Scythian law
upon their bodies, turning these into a celebration and a funeral
speech for the dead king. Through the scars they will bear, their
bodies will become memorials. Moreover, these mutilations are
not the result of a haphazard excess of violence. On the contrary,
they are a part of the funerary ceremonial: they must be carried out at the
moment when the corpse is received, and the parts of the body
where they must be inflicted are quite specific (the head, the arms,
the left hand). Furthermore, to obey this etiquette is to acknowledge
not only the power of the king but also that one is Scythian: “The best
way of testifying to oneself and to others that one belongs to the same
group is to imprint the same distinctive mark upon one’s body.”
The visible sign speaks of belonging. Every body marked in this way
makes its contribution to the composition of the “coat-of-arms” of the
Scythian kings. In Greece, it is the public slaves who are branded
with the city’s arms, for a Greek, is it not royalty which, in the last
analysis, always blocks the word, whether spoken or written? Thus,
the Scyths can speak only through their bodies and then only to
declare that they are subjects.

The mutilation of the subjects is offset by the embalming of the
king. Indeed, it is only in relation to one another that the two
operations can be fully understood to become a “fine corpse”:
plants, wax prevents decay, self-wounding, degradation, forbids both mutilation, by
which it is disgusted, as two of the orator’s speech which
emerge from this trial stroke. They seem truly to exist as a
funeral rites. The progress of the long procession of mutilated
repsents their true consti-
thing but separate bands
when it notes that once the
great barrow of earth, vying
as great as possible” at the
because that is so, the vari-
some kind of a sense of enm-

The royal sema, out there territory and marks its cen-
to reference but also, in a curious
marking a point of be
[eniauton]” that the second
contrast, between the king’s de-
elapsed or, equally, six. The
more precisely, time did not
now on the Scyths have
disposal.

Once he is dead, more-

134. Hdt. 9.25.
137. P. Ducrot, Le Traité des prisonniers de guerre dans la Grèce antique
138. Hdt. 4.71.
operations can be fully understood. The abasement of the former corresponds to the exaltation of the latter. The lot of the deceased is to become a "fine corpse" (the viscera are replaced by aromatic plants, wax prevents decomposition); that of the subjects is atikia, self-wounding, degradation for their bodies. In contrast, the city forbids both mutilation, by which it is horrified, and embalming, by which it is disgusted, as two types of behavior marked by hubris; it is the orator's speech which makes a citizen's death a "fine death."

The Scythians thus form a community whose emblem is, as it were, constituted by the marks they inflict on themselves; but it is interesting to note that they are perhaps never so much a community as at the moment of the king's death, and that the king is perhaps never so much a king as when he is dead. Durkheim and others have shown that ceremonies of mourning are the means whereby a community demonstrates that it is not damaged, even that it will emerge from this trial stronger than before. As for the Scythians, they seem truly to exist as a community only at the moment of these funeral rites. The progress of the corpse on its cart, followed by the long procession of mutilated men which grows longer after each halt, represents their true constitution. Up to this point they were nothing but separate bands of nomads. The text records this change when it notes that once the ceremony is completed, "they all make a great barrow of earth, vying zealously with one another to make this as great as possible";138 at this moment they form a community and because that is so, the various groups that compose it experience some kind of a sense of emulation.

The royal sema, out there on the eschata, represents the Scythian territory and marks its center. It thus becomes a spatial point of reference but also, in a curious way, a temporal point of reference of a kind, marking a point of beginning. It is "after a year has passed [eniautoi]" that the second ceremony must be performed. In contrast, between the king's death and his funeral two months may have elapsed or, equally, six. There was no fixed period for that; to put it more precisely, time did not enter into the arrangements. But from now on the Scythians have a temporal point of reference at their disposal.

Once he is dead, moreover, the king is at last provided with a

138. Hdt. 4. 71.
proper house: a huge space is arranged for him and he is assigned a large team of servants—all of which puts one in mind of the house of the Great King. From this point on in the narrative, the emphasis is laid on fixity. To construct the awning of branches set up over the corpse, Scythians "plant" spears in the earth. To "raise" the macabre ring around the tomb, as one raises a monument, they "plant" posts in the ground and these then serve to support the stuffed horses, each of which is, furthermore, tethered by a peg.

In his lifetime, the king roams through Scythia on horseback; when he is dead he makes his last and longest journey on a wagon. Once he is buried, that is the end of it: the horses are stuffed and the wagons are dismantled, for wheels are used to set up the ring of horsemen and these can only be the wheels of the wagons. They are cut in half through the middle, arranged on the ground flat side down, and used as supports to hold up the horses. The wagon is thus taken to pieces and its "principle" of mobility, namely, the wheels, is transformed into its opposite, an instrument of immobility. It is the end of all the traveling; the nomadism is over. In life the king was a mobile center; in death he becomes a fixed but "excentric" center of a ring which is itself immobile.

The description of the funeral rites, bewildering as it is, incorporates a number of elements that differ from Greek practices. For instance, Solon forbids "the burial with the dead of more than three changes of raiment"; the law of Iulis specifies that the three shrouds should not be worth more than one hundred drachmas and lays down the quantities of wine and oil (three congai) that it is lawful to use. Set alongside the profusion of the Scythian funerary furnishings, these prescriptions are striking. There is also a contrast in the size of the monuments, for the burial mounds of the classical and even the archaic period are a far cry from the construction raised for the kings; and another contrast in the nature of the constructions, for the Scythian monument is built with natural materials including, in addition to earth, a sheet of leaves, wooden spears, and beams, and a screen of reeds, while the Greeks burial, and sometimes even praying.

The most striking contrast around the tombs. The Scythian cupbearer, a cook, a great entire normal entourage; strangulation is a non-Greek is one difference. Further, normal mode of sacrificing of their kings' tombs is the people, corresponds, in the sacrificing an ox to the dead. Follow the custom of your practices could hardly being an ox is counterbalanced the way back to the epic another human sacrifice of sacrificed twelve Trojans in them to the sword.

Then comes the second ceremony that takes place sacrifice (fifty people are which, to us, seems to be sacrificed are, again, men.

139. Hdt. 4.72.
140. Plutarch Life of Solon 21.
141. The disparity in social status is not enough to account for the difference. One is referred to the aristocratic funerals from which the city wished to preserve itself.
142. Kurtz and Boardman, C.
143. Apries is strangled by smother women (3.150). The Scythian son of Battus I, is strangled "On Capital Punishment."
144. Hdt. 4.60.
145. Plutarch Life of Solon 22.
146. Homer Iliad 23.175. In deceased; whether it is his friend identical.
147. They are Scythian by his orders; the Scythians have no blood interesting piece of evidence on normally bought and was not eg.
screen of reeds, while the Greek tombs are made of stone, bricks, and sometimes even plaster, and they constitute a proper building.  

The most striking contrast, however, lies in the actions performed around the tombs. The Scythians strangle (apopnigei) a concubine, a cupbearer, a cook, a groom, a messenger, horses—in short, the entire normal entourage of a barbarian king. In the first place, strangulation is a non-Greek form of execution or murder;\(^{143}\) so that is one difference. Furthermore, in Scythia strangulation is the normal mode of sacrificing.\(^{144}\) The action the Scythians perform on their kings' tombs is therefore a sacrifice: the strangling of these people corresponds, in the city, to Solon's prohibition against sacrificing an ox to the dead,\(^{145}\) or to the stipulation at Iulus: "in sacrifice, follow the custom of your ancestors." The contrast between the two practices could hardly be greater: the prohibition against slaughtering an ox is counterbalanced by a human sacrifice. We must turn all the way back to the epic, that is to say, to a distant past, to find another human sacrifice on a funeral pyre: to Achilles, of course, who sacrificed twelve Trojans in honor of Patroclus (but did so by putting them to the sword),\(^{146}\) together with four mares and two pet dogs.

Then comes the second phase, in a way the most enigmatic: the ceremony that takes place at the end of one year. This is an immense sacrifice (fifty people are strangled), with the creation of a setting which, to us, seems to belong to some fantastical description. Those sacrificed are, again, members of the king's household.\(^{147}\) The image

142. Kurtz and Boardman, Greek Burial Customs, pp. 79ff., 105ff.
143. Apries is strangled by the Egyptians (Hdt. 2.169). The Babylonians smother women (3.150). The Scythians strangle sacrificial animals (4.60). Arkesilas, the son of Battus I, is strangled by his brother (4.160). Cf. Gernet, Anthropology, "On Capital Punishment."
144. Hdt. 4.60.
146. Homer Iliad 23.175. In both cases it is a matter of giving pleasure to the deceased: whether it is his friends or his enemies who are sacrificed, the purpose is identical.
147. They are Scythian by birth. Those who serve the king do so at his express orders: the Scythians have no bought servants (argurometoi therapontes). This is an interesting piece of evidence on slavery, for it shows that for Herodotus a slave was normally bought and was not eggennes.
of the circle, already mentioned, appears once again in this funerary context: the royal *sema* is at the center of his fifty servants who surround him in a macabre ring of stuffed figures.

After the funeral ceremony comes the ritual of purification, as is to be expected. But while such a ritual may be expected, the form that it takes in this instance is much less so. Yet the enigmatic nature of these steam-baths to some extent disappears as soon as one realizes that they are structured by an opposition between water on the one hand and fire and smoke on the other. The whole chapter hinges on the expression *anti loutrou*: for them, this purification stands in lieu of a bath, but at the same time it is the opposite of a bath. Some scholars, Meuli for one, believe that this ceremony stems from the procedures of ecstatic religions. Hemp is a type of hashish, so we appear to find ourselves in a context of shamanism.

In Greece, water is repeatedly used in funerary rites, in particular for purification following burial. For instance, the law of Iulis stipulates that “those who are defiled should wash their entire bodies with much water and will then be pure.” The same is true for Athens.

However, this opposition between water and fire-and-smoke does not explain the behavior of the Scythian women, who are here for the first time distinguished as a group. They smear their faces and bodies with a paste made from various plants mixed with water. Legrand suggests that Herodotus is here confusing funerary rites with cosmetic care. Yet, after this operation the women are declared to be pure (*katharai*). Besides, consider the ingredients used to make this paste: they “pound on a rough stone cypress and cedar and frankincense wood, pouring water also thereon.” That is altogether astonishing when one remembers that Scythia is quite devoid of wood, except in the region known as the Hylaea. And the presence of frankincense is even more surprising: incense came from the country of aromatic plants, namely, Arabia, which was “the only country” in the world that produced incense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon, and

laudanum, a country which, whereas Scythia was known of precious woods, was famous for its aromatic plants, its "sweet". The purification ceremony thus becomes very personal: side of the men, the quasi-literate hemp (but what kind of women, an ointment made of their hair.

One last feature under the Scythian male...

When the Scythian male...

“hwell with joy [agameno]... involved here: on only to oruontai in connection with Persia who, when bringing... “cry and howl.”

May be suggested amending it, mainly while Meuli regards it as... sphere surrounding the corpse does not normally belong to occasion surprise... remembered that Herodotus lived in *etnea*, “lairs.”

So this is a scene of purification... water: this is its fundamental... the women at least) it take... interpret the significance of other scenes of a similar type.

150. Scholium to *Clouds* 838.
152. *Katharai kai lamprai*; but the sense of purity certainly cannot be entirely excluded.
155. Homer *Odyssey* 5.64; funerary significance.
156. Theocritus *Epigrams* 8.
158. *Hdt.* 3.117.
laudanum, a country which was baked and rebaked by the sun, whereas Scythia was known as a cold country. This paste, composed of precious woods, was characterized by the essential feature of aromatic plants, its "sweet smell." The cypress is sometimes recognized by its "sweet smell," as is the cedar. This purification ceremony thus belongs as a whole to an aromatic context: on the side of the men, the quasi-aromatic fumes given off by the smoldering hemp (but what kind of communication do they set up?), for the women, an ointment made from aromatic woods.

One last feature underlines the strange nature of this ceremony. When the Scythian males are in this "vapour bath" they are said to "howl with joy [agamenoi oruontai]". A kind of double meaning is involved here: on only one other occasion does Herodotus use oruontai in connection with people, to wit, those living in central Persia who, when bringing their complaints before the Great King, "cry and howl." Generally, the word is applied to animals (dogs, wolves), in particular wild animals. Many commentators have suggested amending it, mainly because of the presence of agamenoi, while Meuli regards it as yet another sign of the trancelike atmosphere surrounding the ceremony. In any event, since this word does not normally belong to the vocabulary of purification, it is bound to occasion surprise, although at the same time it should be remembered that Herodotus several times noted that the Scythians lived in ethea, "lairs."

So this is a scene of purification that does not involve the use of water: this is its fundamental difference. Furthermore, (on the side of the women at least) it takes place in a decidedly aromatic context. To interpret the significance of these differences, we must examine other scenes of a similar type.

154. Hdt. 4.75.
156. Theocritus Epigrams 8.4.
157. Hdt. 4.75.
158. Hdt. 3.117.
The Spartan Kings

The grandiose and in some respects unique funeral rites of the Scythian kings point to a number of connections with Sparta. It is therefore worth pondering whether the funeral rites of the Spartan kings might not be classed as a case of otherness where death is concerned, indicating that there might be a divide even within Greece itself.\textsuperscript{160}

In tackling this question Herodotus explicitly proceeds on the basis of a number of comparisons which make the context in which he situates such ceremonies clear beyond any doubt: "The Lacedaemonians have the same custom at the deaths of their kings as have the barbarians of Asia."\textsuperscript{161} A little further on he notes a resemblance to Persian customs: the new king cancels out debts just as the Great King "at the beginning of his reign forgives all cities their arrears of tribute."\textsuperscript{162} Then, immediately after the passage on the funeral rites, he introduces a new comparison: "Moreover, the Lacedaemonians are like the Egyptians in this too in that . . . ."\textsuperscript{163} The \textit{kai tade} indicates clearly that where funeral rites are concerned the Egyptians belong to this same configuration. And the Scythians may also be associated with the barbarians of Asia, the Persians, and the Egyptians. The Spartans, then, find themselves in a company that is, to put it mildly, characterized by "otherness."

Herodotus says nothing definite about how the corpse is treated, except that there is an \textit{ekphoria} on a display bed and that there has to be a corpse to display there, whether it be a real or a false one. The fact is that "if a king has perished in war, they make an image of him, an \textit{eidolon}." The importance attached to the king's corpse is also conveyed by the rule according to which the remains of a king who has died abroad are repatriated. Plutarch explains that "it was the Spartan custom, when men of ordinary rank died in a foreign country, to give their bodies funeral rites and burial there, but to carry the bodies of their kings home."\textsuperscript{164} How was it possible to bring the king back? By carrying him in the form of honey or wax. Thus, when Ptolemy III of Egypt, "his body was coated with wax, and placed in a box, and was carried to Alexandria and buried there."\textsuperscript{165} According to Plutarch, Agesipolis, who was brought to Sparta in fact "coated his body with wax, and buried him in Sparta."\textsuperscript{166} This use of wax or honey to transport the bodies of kings is common among the Scythians. It is the only known example of a temporary kind.

Who took part in the funeral processions? The women of the town, women who are free individuals from every "perioikoi" were obliged to bear the burial burdens. Tyrtaeus had already noted that their companions are required by the law to participate in the sinister destiny of death since it is a remarkable observation: greater care is taken that to be the laws for measures prescribed by Plutarch were kept separate.

Also, these funerals are the result of compulsions. It is "necessary, in other words, representing the penalties," that the horsemen make the rounds of the town. The scholium to Pindar provides a further indication: "in this time it concerns not the past, the Megarians, then . . . ."

\textsuperscript{160} On the difference between Athenian and Spartan funerals, see Loraux, \textit{L'invention d'Athènes}, pp. 45–47.
\textsuperscript{161} Hdt. 6.58.
\textsuperscript{162} Hdt. 6.59.
\textsuperscript{163} Hdt. 6.60.
\textsuperscript{164} Plutarch \textit{Life of Agesilaus} 40.4.
\textsuperscript{165} Diodorus 15.93.6.
\textsuperscript{166} Plutarch \textit{Life of Agesilaus} 5.3.
\textsuperscript{167} Xenophon \textit{Hell.} 5.3.1.
\textsuperscript{168} Tyrtaeus, fr. 5 Diehl.
\textsuperscript{169} Plato \textit{Laws} 12.958d ff.
the king back? By carrying out a kind of embalming process, using honey or wax. Thus, when Agesilaus died on his way back from Egypt, "his body was coated with honey and taken back to Sparta to be buried." According to Plutarch, the Spartans, having no honey, in fact "coated his body with wax." Another example is that of king Agesipolis, who was brought, preserved in honey, home from Chalcis. This use of wax or honey puts us in mind of the Persians and Scythians. It is the only known Greek example of embalming, even of a temporary kind.

Who took part in the funeral rites? When the king died, horsemen rode throughout Laconia to announce the news (periaggelousi). In the town, women went the rounds (periiousai), beating saucepans; two free individuals from each household (one man and one woman) were obliged to bear the marks of mourning (katamainesthai); periioikoi were required to attend the funeral, and so were helots. Tyrtaeus had already noted, in connection with the helots, "They and their companions are required to mourn their masters each time the sinister destiny of death strikes." Herodotus makes another remarkable observation: great promiscuity prevails on the occasion of funerals, since men and women are "intermingled" (summiga). Such a thing ran totally contrary to the customary legislation, whether we take that to be the laws of Solon, the law of Iulus, or even the measures prescribed by Plato in the Laws: men and women are kept separate.

Also, these funerals are despotic in character: they are governed by compulsion. It is "necessary" (anagke), it is "required" (dei), "on pain of severe penalties," that a predetermined number of individuals, representing the people as a whole, should assemble at Sparta. The horsemen cover the length and breadth of Laconia, the women make the rounds of the town, and people gather from every side. A scholium to Findar provides another example with a similar gist, but this time it concerns not the Spartans but the Corinthians. In the past, the Megarians, then subject to Corinth, had been forced to

165. Diodorus 15.93.6.
166. Plutarch Life of Agesilaus, C. Nepos Agesilas 8.7.
167. Xenophon Hellenica 5.3.19.
168. Tyrtaeus, fr. 5 Diehl.
travel to Corinth to attend the funeral of a Bacchiad king. The 
movements occasioned by these funerary ceremonies completely
confirm the spatial inversion represented by the Scythian nomos of
the inverted prothesis. By contrast, in Sparta and Corinth, the king
is a fixed and central point around which people gather, not—as in
Scythia—a mobile point that makes the rounds of his subjects.

To summon the people to mourn, women “beat upon saucepans,”
just as in Egypt, men and women, traveling to Boubastis to celebrate
the festival of Artemis and mingling in the ships conveying them,
“clap their hands.” At the beginning of the funeral ceremony, probably
in the agora of Sparta, the participants “wail in lengthy
lamentation [oimogeis diachrontai apletois].” Oimoge is a word more
generally associated with tragedy, but Herodotus applies it only to
the Persians. The Persians “lament loud and long” when Cambyses is
sick. When, at Susa, they learn of the defeat at Salamis, they
“lament loud and long”; and at the death of Masistius, they cut
their hair and beards and the manes of their horses and “lament loud
and long.” So this is a non-Greek context, and it is interesting to
note the suggestion of a similarity between the Spartans and the
Persians in this connection.

These statutory lamentations naturally stand in opposition to the
legislation of other cities and in particular to the laws of Athens
which, ever since Solon, had prohibited the funeral lament (threnos)
or had laid down a code for its use, limiting it to women. For
examples of the protracted wailing which brought “satisfaction,” it is
necessary to turn back to epic. As we have noted, the Scythians knew
nothing of the threnos. For them, funeral rites were all spectacle,
purely visual; speech played no part at all. The funeral rites of the
Spartan kings also inclined chiefly to spectacle and to the visual but
did include an element of speech, albeit almost inarticulate, to wit,
this “endless wailing” which was required from the participants. In

contrast to these two types of the burial of the Athenian
society, the Athens was reduced to a minimum; displayed, only the bones
are given a tribal rather than an individual voice of the orator, itself the
three ceremonies suggest a funeral speech in Athens.

The Lacedaemonians (Sparta) and, like them, “wail” and also
practice, too, ran counter to the non-Greek world, where
a scratch one's face during funerary rites and the mutilation and embalming
was to acknowledge oneself a Scythian. In Athens, neither
acknowledged itself through the mutilation of the dead to have been a
proper city, but the city did select the deceased to mourn and the
Lacedaemonian collectivity that was to attend the king.

Through their lamentation, they declare that the king who has
died is mourned by every single time. The only
name he has, in the last analysis, is not one, which must be pronounced,
is repeated at every royal burial, yet another difference from
is the king or, rather, the in

170. Scholium to Pindar Nemea VII 155.
171. Hdt. 2.60.
172. Hdt. 3.66.
175. On this question of the threnos, see, most recently, Loraux, L’Invention
176. Thucydides 2.34.
contrast to these two types of ceremony, let us for a moment recall the burial of the Athenian soldiers who had fallen in battle. This was a ceremony in which speech was very much to the fore while the visual was reduced to a minimum. The corpses themselves were not displayed, only the bones, and even that prothesis was probably a tribal rather than an individual affair; all that mattered was the voice of the orator, itself the voice of the city. A comparison of these three ceremonies suggests a functional equivalence between the funeral speech in Athens, the lamentations in Sparta, and the inverted prothesis in Scythia. But the differences between the three societies are expressed, precisely, in the discrepancies in the three manifestations (which range from seeing to listening and from a maximum to a minimum degree of koinonia).

The Lacedaemonians (Spartans, periôkoi, helots, men and women alike) "wail" and also "violently strike their foreheads." This practice, too, ran counter to the laws of Solon and refers us to the non-Greek world, where it was customary to strike oneself or to scratch one's face during funeral ceremonies. Among the Scythians, mutilation and embalming went together, and to mutilate oneself was to acknowledge oneself, and to be acknowledged by others, as a Scythian. In Athens, neither practice was customary: the city celebrated itself through the mouth of its official orator, by recognizing the dead to have been worthy of it. Sparta represents an intermediary state: it practiced no systematic embalming and no real mutilation, but the city did select a number of individuals who were delegated to mourn and thereby manifest their membership in the Lacedaemonian collectivity while acknowledging a certain dependence on the king.

Through their lamentations, however, the Lacedaemonians declare that the king who has just died "was the best," and this they do every single time. The only articulate statement produced by this city is, in the last analysis, no more than a formula, always the same one, which must be pronounced but which has no meaning, since it is repeated at every royal burial. In any case—and this constitutes yet another difference from the funeral speech—what is celebrated is the king or, rather, the institution of royalty, that is, of hereditary

176. Thucydides 2.34.
monarchy, not the city as such. Furthermore, it is an exaggerated formula, as we realize when we compare Solon’s law which “forbids speaking ill of the dead.” The gap between not speaking ill of the dead and declaring the deceased to be the best king ever was one that the Spartans did not hesitate to cross.

To complete our examination of these Spartan funeral rites, which present both resemblances to and also differences from those of the Scythian kings, let us consider the positioning of the tombs. Since the Spartan king is the fixed point around which people gather, it comes as no surprise to find him buried inside the city; furthermore, Sparta, in contrast to other Greek cities, displays no disinclination to bury the dead inside the city walls. According to Pausanias, the Euryponidai had their tomb at the end of the Alpheis way leading from the agora, while the Agiadai were accommodated to the west of the agora.

If there are two sides to death, the death of the Spartan kings is closer to the death of “others,” and Herodotus draws attention to its otherness by giving it a spatial reference. He likens these funeral rites to the practices of the barbarians of Asia in general—the Persians, even the Egyptians; and we may certainly add the Scythians to that list. When Xenophon came across such evidence of otherness in the fourth century, he was to treat it quite differently. Instead of interpreting it, so to speak, “horizontally,” he did so “vertically,” noting that at their deaths the Spartan kings “were held in honour not as mere men but as heroes.” It was one sign, among many others, that the image of the king had changed.

The Leader Must Have Heads

The Scythians first appear in the Histories in the guise of masters of hunting in the service of Cyaxaros. When Darius invades Scythia, the war they wage against him is one in which they are now quarry, now hunters, and in the end take him in battle with him. Wars of hunting, and they use this...

But when we read the charts, how does the image is noticeably changed? Huntmen hunting and fighting for war. If warfare remains a hunt, the Scythian warrior carries on to his head a share of the booty: he scalps the head by making a cut and shaking it off the skull. He ox and kneads the skin with it for a napkin, fastening it taking pride in it.

Beheading, scalping, taming.

Who in the Histories, decapitation? Let us, for the method of execution and the exercise of power—and control.

The Tauri decapitate them with them to set on pole seven conspirators enter usurper, they kill the Magi and Harpagus crucify Hist send his head to Darius.

178. Plutarch Solon 2.1; Demosthenes Against Leptines 104, Against Boeotos 2.49.
179. Xenophon Constitution of the Lacedaemonians 15.9 and Hellenica 3.31: ouk *h*os anthropous, *all* *h*os heroas tous Lakedaimonion basileis protetinekas; or, on the subject of Agis, *etuche semnoteras e kal* anthropon taphes.
now hunters, and in the end they prefer chasing a hare over engaging in battle with him. Warfare, for them, is simply an extension of hunting, and they use the same methods for both.\textsuperscript{180}

\textit{Head-hunting}

But when we read the chapters devoted to the customs of war,\textsuperscript{181} this image is noticeably changed. The Scythians no longer appear as huntsmen hunting and fighting all at once, but as “made for war”; and if warfare remains a hunt, it is a man-hunt or, to be precise, a head-hunt. The Scythian warrior carries to his king the heads of all whom he has slain in the battle; for he receives a share of the booty taken if he brings a head but not otherwise. He scalps the head by making a cut round it by the ears, then grasping the scalp and shaking it off the skull. Then he scrapes out the flesh with the rib of an ox and kneads the skin with his hands and, having made it supple, he keeps it for a napkin, fastening it to the bridle of the horse which he rides and taking pride in it.\textsuperscript{182}

Beheading, scalping, tanning . . . .

Who in the \textit{Histories}, apart from the Scythians, practices decapitation? Let us, for the moment,\textsuperscript{183} leave aside beheading as a method of execution and punishment—that is to say, as a form of the exercise of power—and concentrate on the decapitation of corpses. The Tauri decapitate their enemies and take their heads home with them to set on poles, high above their houses.\textsuperscript{184} When the seven conspirators enter the palace to assassinate Smerdis, the usurper, they kill the Magi and cut off their heads.\textsuperscript{185} Artaphernes and Harpagus crucify Histiaeus of Miletus, then decapitate him and send his head to Darius.\textsuperscript{186} After Thermopylae, Xerxes, passing

\begin{footnotes}
180. Hdt. 1.73.
181. Hdt. 4.64–66.
182. Hdt. 4.64.
183. Cf. below, p. 333.
184. Hdt. 4.103. They say that in this way they have “guardians” to watch over their houses. The custom is therefore different from that of the Scythians.
185. Hdt. 3.79.
186. Hdt. 6.30.
\end{footnotes}
among the corpses, has Leonidas’s head cut off and orders it to be “impaled”. The verb here (anastaurosai) is the same as that used to describe the custom among the Tauri. One more example is provided by the people of Amathus, a city in Cyprus. Onesilus had tried to start a revolt against the Great King; when the people of Amathus refused to join him he besieged their city, but without success. When the revolt was crushed by the Persians and Onesilus was killed, the people of Amathus cut off his head and hung it over their gateway. Revenge and derision: the town would now be “protected” by the one who had been incapable of seizing it. However, Herodotus goes on: “and the head being set there aloft, when it was hollow a swarm of bees entered it and filled it with their cells. On this an oracle was given to the Amathusians (for they had enquired concerning the matter) that they should take the head down and bury it and offer yearly sacrifice to Onesilus, as to a hero. This the Amathusians did, and have done to this day.” Thus, the intervention of the bees condemned the practice, and, as a result of the words of the oracle Onesilus passed from excessive infamy to the highest honor: his head, treated as though it were his intact body, was buried and he acquired a status equivalent to that of a hero or of a protector of the city.

As for the Persians, although they do occasionally do such things, it is not usual practice for them. Herodotus in fact makes it clear that he regards the treatment meted out to Leonidas as proof of Xerxes’ anger against him, for generally “the Persians are of all men known to be the most inclined to honour valiant warriors.” Herodotus totally condemns the action, saying that Xerxes “outraged the body” or, of the scalp, then and decapitated, The Scythian makes him his scalp. The Greeks, when treated, the scalp becomes (or has been well known for it as) an expression skuthisai of Sophocles, skuthisai chrenos, “the head shaved in a Scythian manner.” Hesiod, by referring to the Scythians, such expressions, snippet, wrack on a beach, in the Scythians’ reputation as savage men.

Reinach has collected the stories on this practice of decapitation and the related peoples. It is attested in the Cilician, and the Dacians, in Iberia, and, of course, the Scythians.

They are perhaps even more notorious as people who practice scalp. The verb used is skuthisai, with the compounds apskuthezio and periskuthisho, with Apokasthezio is glossed by Xerxes, “to cut out and remove the scalp.” It is also mean “to shave comically in a head Scythian-cropped.” The Thracian tribe, the Sarapatai, were who cut heads”—a savage manner.

The Scythian makes him out of the scalp. The Greeks, when treated, the scalp becomes (or has been well known for it as) an expression skuthisai of Sophocles, skuthisai chrenos, “the head shaved in a Scythian manner.” Hesiod, by referring to the Scythians, such expressions, snippet, wrack on a beach, in the Scythians’ reputation as savage men.

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187. Hdt. 7.238.
188. Hdt. 5.114.
190. Hdt. 7.238. This passage should, of course, be compared with 9.78, in which Pausanias refuses to do as Lampon suggests and have the corpse of Mardonius impaled (crucified) in retaliation for Leonidas: “that would be an act more proper for barbarians than for Greeks, and one that we deem matter of blame even in barbarians.”

191. Skuthisai on its own (late) epitides Electa 241, “razor-cropped” (G. Kinkel, Epigrammata graeca (Berlin 192. Euripides The Trojan W.
195. Aristophanes 1.521 Kock
196. Tragicorum graecorum f.
197. K. Latte, ed., Leonidas, lambanomenon (palemon) on ta
euchrono (Copenhagen, 1953).
thizo and periskuthizo, which may mean specifically “to scalp.” Apokuthizo is glossed by the Suda and by Stephanus of Byzantium as “to cut out and remove the skin of the skull with the hair.” But it can also mean “to shave completely.” Thus, Hecuba tells Helen: “You should walk submissively in rags of robes, / Shivering with anxiety, head Scythian-cropped”; similarly, in Athenaeus apokuthizein means to cut someone’s hair as an insult to him. Strabo mentions a Thracian tribe, the Saraparæ—which means, more or less, “those who cut heads”—a savage mountain people who “practise scalp ing and decapitation [periskuthistes kai apocephalistes].”

The Scythian makes himself a kind of “napkin” (cheiromaktron) out of the scalp. The Greek means “hand-towel.” After being treated, the scalp becomes a kind of towel. The Scythians appear to have been well known for this practice since there seems to existed an expression skuthisti cheiromaktron; it is to be found in a fragment of Sophocles, skuthisti cheiromaktron ekkekarmenos (or ekkedarmenos), “the head shaved [or, scalped] to make a napkin in the Scythian manner.” Hesychius uses the expression and explains it by referring to the Scythians’ custom of scalping their prisoners. Such expressions, snippets of which one comes across, like seawrack on a beach, in the entries of the lexicographers, testify that the Scythians’ reputation as scalpers was firmly established.

Reich has collected the classical texts that provide information on this practice of decapitation among the Celts and “neighboring or related peoples.” It is attested among the Germans, the Alemani, and the Dacians, in Iberia, in Scythia (Reich cites the chapter in Herodotus), and, of course, in Gaul, for which two sources are

191. Skuthizo on its own (late) means “to drink with excess,” “to shave” (Euripides Electa 241, “razor-cropped in the Scythian manner”) as a sign of mourning (G. Kaibel, Epigrammata Graeca. 790–98) and “to speak Scythian.”
192. Euripides The Trojan Women 1026.
195. Aristophanes 1.521 Kock; Xenophon Cyropaedia 1.3.5.
cited. One is Diodorus, the other Strabo, both of whom summarize Poseidonius of Apamea, who had traveled in Gaul at the time of the Roman conquest. The following few lines of Diodorus illustrate the customs of the Gauls and at the same time testify to the differences between the Gauls and the Scyths:

They cut off the heads of the enemy fallen and attach them to the necks of their horses. As for the bloodstained remains, they give them to their grooms and carry them off as booty, performing a triumphal march and singing a hymn of victory; as for their trophies, they nail them to their houses as is done with certain animals killed in hunting. As for the heads of the most renowned enemies, they embalm them carefully with the oil of cedars and preserve them in a chest.

As well as manufacturing napkins, the Scyths, clearly most industrious in this respect, are skilled at making drinking bowls from skulls. This special treatment is reserved for their “worst enemies.” Herodotus provides us with the trade secrets: “Each saws off all the part beneath the eyebrows and cleanses the rest. If he be a poor man, then he does but cover the outside with a piece of raw hide, and so makes use of it; but if he be rich, he gilds the inside of it and so uses it for a drinking cup. Such cups a man makes also of the head of his own kinsman with whom he has been at feud and whom he has vanquished in single combat before the king.”

An echo of these special skills is to be found in Strabo, citing Apollodorus and Eratosthenes: the Black Sea was called Axenos on account of its storms and also because of the cruelty of the tribes in the region, in particular the Scyths, who “sacrifice strangers, eat human flesh and drink from skulls.” Similarly, Pliny mentions the Man-eaters who live a ten days’ march from the Roman cities, whose human skulls, the scalps of their enemies, are picked up. They use scalp-like cloaks (chlaines) resembling the Phrygian practice of flaying: “Many took the scalps of dead enemies’ right hand, and wearing them as quivers and “there are murderers who carry their body and turn it about with the aid of a frame.” What can be the meaning of this fashion? Herodotus mentions in this way that they are displayed (periphereian) as a sign of his valor.

But it is the head that one usually finds. “A soldier, a warrior brings no head, he brings a conveniently broken one, because the king presides over the disposal of heads” and the use of them in the Homeric distribution of loot is ascribed to the man who has gathered in “most of the Homeric distributions” and who makes common property of them when he is defeated. The practice of apportioning the loot, not just the spoils of war but all the loot gathered, was common among the Greeks in the Homeric distribution. The story of the Greek soldiers who were wounded in the battle is that of the alteration of the value of the loot and the spoils of war. The story of the Greek soldiers who were wounded in the battle is the story of the alteration of the value of the loot and the spoils of war. The story of the Greek soldiers who were wounded in the battle is the story of the alteration of the value of the loot and the spoils of war.

199. Diodorus 5.29.5. For example, to refer to the heads, Diodorus uses the word *akrothphinon*, meaning “first fruits”—to be precise, the top of the pile of booties—and these “first fruits” are fixed by the Gauls to the doorways of their houses, whereas in Scythia the heads are taken to the king.

200. Hdt. 4.65. Herodotus provides no explanation at all as to why this treatment is reserved for the worst enemies and for relatives (who may thus, it seems, be included in the category of worst enemies). Note, too, how the difference between rich and poor is expressed in Scythian society: the Scyths are alone in their practice of drinking from skulls. The Issedones (4.26) preserve the skulls of their dead relatives; they clean them, strip them bare and gild them, and use them as *agalmata* in their yearly ceremonies in honor of the dead.

201. Strabo 7.3.6.


204. *Apoïeiro*; *flaying,* here understood as “apportion.” (Pliny *NH* 7.2.12: “I have a royal order at hand.”)
who live a ten days' march north of the Borysthenes and “drink from human skulls, the scalps of which they wear as napkins, on their chests.” The image evokes our worthy Scythian craftsmen.

Herodotus mentions another special feature in their treatment of their enemies' corpses, one the tradition does not appear to have picked up. They use scalps stitched together to make themselves cloaks (chlaines) resembling the "capes of shepherds." They also practice flaying: "Many too take off the skin, nails and all, from their dead enemies' right hands and make thereof coverings for their quivers" and "there are many too that flay the skin from the whole body and carry it about on horseback stretched on a wooden frame." What can be the purpose of these bogeys paraded about in this fashion? Herodotus makes no suggestions, simply noting that they are displayed (peripherein). Perhaps the warrior shows them off as a sign of his valor.

But it is the head that qualifies him to share in the booty. If the warrior brings no head, he forfeits his right to booty. Considering that the king presides over the distribution, this behavior is reminiscent of the Homeric distribution of booty: the booty is what is set down "in the middle"; all the objects thus become xuneia keimena, objects made common property, which it is the king's duty to apportion. But in Homer, simply having taken part in the operation (the sacking of a town or a raid) seems to have been enough to entitle a warrior to a share of the booty. When, after the sack of Ismarus,

203. Hdt. 4.64: Kataper baietas, baiete = a shepherd's cloak, a garment made from animal skins. Note the effect of this comparison: the Scythians are shepherds who wear garments made from skins, but in this case they are human skins. Dumézil (Légendes sur les Nartes, p. 153) compares this chapter to the incident in the life of Batraz where "he assembles the wives and daughters of the Nartes and orders them to sew him a coat from the skin of the heads which he gives them; whereupon the unfortunate women begin to wail: 'It is the skin of the head of my father,' said one, 'of my fiancé,' of my brother,' said the others."
204. Apodeiro. "flaying," here means the flaying of a corpse (Hdt. 5.25). Darius had a royal judge flayed. But at 2.40, 42 and 4.60, it is a matter of flaying a sacrificed animal. Similarly, except for this example and 7.26, where it is a matter of the "skin" of Marysas the Silenian. ekdeiro means the flaying of an animal (2.42, 7.70). The presence of the imperfect en indicates an intervention on the part of the narrator in his account.
205. Iliad 1.124; Detienne, Maîtres de vérité, pp. 84--85.
Odysseus distributes a share to each of his men, he requires no additional proof of their actions or valor. Furthermore, the booty made common property does not account for all the booty, for each warrior endeavors to seize his own "individual" booty: to wit, the arms of the enemy he has overcome. Although Herodotus does not specify how the distribution was organized—was all the booty divided up by the king? Was it enough to bring along a single head? Or were the shares proportional to the number of heads presented?—he yet again represents the king as the central and dominant figure on whom all transactions depend.

To underline the contrast, we may compare this Scythian method of distribution with that of the Greeks—after Plataea, for example: Pausanias laid down that the booty was not to be touched and ordered the helots to collect all the precious objects; then, once the tenth part had been set aside for the gods, "they divided the remainder and each person received according to its desert." So Pausanias played an important role here, at least in the organization of the distribution, which was based on the criterion of "merit." The actual booty was allotted people by people; only the prizes for aristeia, valor, were awarded individually.

_The Arithmetic of Aristeia:_

_Drinking Wine, Drinking Blood_

A decapitated head entitles a warrior to a share of the booty, but it is also the sign of his aristeia: the warrior keeps the scalp "for a napkin, fastening it to the bridle of the horse which he himself rides and taking pride in it [agalletai]." Having prepared for the effect that he means to create (with the sentence ending with agalletai), the narrator intervenes and explains how it is possible to take pride in so abominable an action: "he is judged the best man [aner aristos...]

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207. Herodotus 9.81. On the question of booty, see W. K. Pritchett, _The Greek State at War_ vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974), pp. 53–84. On the distribution of booty, it may be interesting to recall the rule that obtained in the army of the Ten Thousand: anything acquired by a soldier out marauding on his own belonged to him; but "whenever the entire army set out, if an individual went off by himself and got anything, it was decreed to be public property" (Anabasis 6.6.2–10).
kekritis] who has most scalps for napkins.”²⁰⁹ So in the last analysis, taking scalps is simply a way of proving oneself to be a “man of courage.” The same goes for the skulls fashioned into drinking cups: “if guests whom he honours visit him, he will serve them with these heads and show how the dead were his kinsfolk who made war upon him and were worsted by him; this they call manly valour [tauten andragathein legontes].”²¹⁰

The fundamental “otherness” of Scythian behavior can be reduced to this, the manner of their quest for aristeia, and we may use it to gauge the difference between their concept of aristeia and the Greek one. As a matter of fact, Herodotus pays considerable attention to this question of the prizes won for valor and is at pains, after each battle, to report who received such prizes. The Histories contain no fewer than twenty-three examples of such awards.²¹¹ Aristeia is no longer manifested through individual exploits, as it used to be in archaic combat. Instead, it results from a strict observance of the rules of hoplite warfare: fighting in position, holding one’s place in the phalanx. Xerxes, unable to make anything of all this, can only scoff when Demaratus explains to him that the law, the despotes, of the Lacedaemonians always bids them do the same thing: “They must never flee from the battle before whatsoever odds, but abide at their post and there conquer or die.”²¹² The distinction between the two forms of aristeia, the old and the new, is illustrated clearly in the behavior of two Spartans, Aristodamus and Poseidonius, during the

²⁰⁹. Hdt. 4.64.
²¹⁰. Hdt. 4.65. L. Robert, Laodicée du Lycos (Paris, 1969), p. 307 n. 2: “The word andragathia, like andreia, does not mean ‘merit’ in any vague sense but quite specifically physical courage (of athletes, etc.) and above all military courage, and andragathia refers to great exploits in warfare, not simply merits.”
²¹¹. Pritchett, The Greek State at War, vol. 1, p. 285, sets out a table of the aristeia in Herodotus. Herodotus is the only historian to consider the matter with such care: is that perhaps, as J. de Romilly suggests, because “his model remains the epic”? (Histoire et raison chez Thucydide [Paris, 1956], p. 113). In any event, Herodotus believes it his duty to find out the names of those who showed the greatest courage. Thus, he knows, even if he does not record them, the names of all those who fell at Thermopylae: “their names I have learnt for their great worth and desert [hos andron axion genomenon], as I have learnt besides the names of all the three hundred” (7.224).
battle of Plataea. Which was the braver of the two? According to the Spartans, Aristodamus had certainly accomplished great exploits (erga megala) but he had “pressed forward . . . from his post,” “in frenzy” (lusson), as a man seeking death, whereas Poseidonius had proved himself a man of courage without abandoning himself to lussa or courting death: he was, thus, the more courageous.

The Scythians attach scalps to the reins of their horses, and the one who has the most is deemed the most courageous. In Greece, however, aristeia must be recognized by the city or cities before it may proclaim itself. Thus, after the battle of Salamis the strategoi take a vote to decide on the prizes for valor. Finally, one more contrast: in Scythia the scalps are both the direct manifestation of aristeia and at the same time its symbol (they are considered as so many decorations). In Greece, a greater distance is set between aristeia on the field of battle and its recognition by the city: the prizes allotted for bravery take the form of either a choice portion of the booty, money, a wreath, or simply a speech of praise. Thus, on his return to Sparta, Eurybiades, the commander of the fleet at Salamis, received an olive wreath as his prize for bravery.

The Scythian aristeia might be said to resemble Homeric aristeia in that it is an individual exploit, but in that respect alone. The fundamental difference is that Homeric combat is never a head-hunt, despite the fact that certain warriors—Dolon, Hippolochus, and Coos, for example—are finally beheaded. The decapitation of a fallen warrior appears only in the form of a threat, in Book 17 in particular, when Hector, to outrage the corpse of Patroclus, “wanted to behead him” and “give it to the dogs of Troy.” But although Euphorbus and Hector resolve on such a deed, and Iris talks of it, it nevertheless remains no more than a threat.

Finally, the mutilation, displayed, is presented by Herodotus as a manifestation of aitia, or motivation, from the point of view of the victor.

“To mutilate a body is to take your revenge avenging itself: this is the formula of aitia in particular the ritual of the aithals, where there may be a number of aitia. Through it, a group or individual transfers it to the power of the other.”

Further, “the power of the other” is a symbol of aristeia: “One of the holding named the aithal as the symbol of aitia, and of the province [nome] mixed of those Scythians who have not achieved this do so styled, and they consider that he have slain not one but many of them both.” So to have killed “many enemies” gives the victor only the representative form of the scalps that he has already.

214. Aristodamus, the sole survivor from the three hundred, had lived in Sparta ever since, in shame and degradation (oneidos kai attimie).
215. Herodotus, for his part, considers Aristodamus to have been by far the braver.
217. Ibid., p. 289.
nevertheless remains no more than a threat. The Greeks do not hunt for heads but seek to obtain a trophy, a sign of victory and a mark of valor, by seizing the arms of the warriors whom they kill: "In Homer’s Greece, armour replaced heads," but a trophy is certainly needed if their renown is to spread.

Finally, the mutilation of the corpse, which is decapitated and flayed, is presented by Herodotus purely as a mark of aristeia, not as a manifestation of aikia, outrage. The mutilation is considered only from the point of view of the living, not at all from that of the dead. "To mutilate a body is to distress its soul" and prevent it from avenging itself; this is the explanation for outrages done to corpses, in particular the ritual of maschalismos. According to Gernet, "there may be a number of explanations for the practice of aikia. Through it, a group or individual avenged their own people; through it too the power of the dead enemy could be annihilated [maschalismos] . . . and through it also a warrior doubled his own power, his own courage." But among the Scythians, mutilation in war represented first and foremost the arithmetic of aristeia.

Among the Scythians, then, the scalp was invariably both a mark and a symbol of aristeia; in Greece, in the fifth century at least, aristeia was proclaimed through a vote to allot the prizes for bravery. However, in Scythia there also existed a symbolic procedure for recognizing aristeia: "Once in every year, each governor [nomarch] of a province [nome] mixest a bowl of wine in his own province, whereof those Scythians drink who have slain enemies. Those who have not achieved this do not taste this wine but sit apart, dishonoured; and they consider this a very great disgrace. But those who have slain not one but many enemies each have two cups and drink of them both." So to have killed gives one the right to drink, to have killed "many enemies" gives one, not the right to drink a great deal, but simply a double ration, while not to have killed at all relegates one to a position outside the community. The governor, who can only be the representative of the central power, is the banquet

222. Glotz, Solidarité, p. 63.
224. Gernet, Recherches, p. 216.
225. Hdt. 4.66.
226. This is the only time that this figure appears in the whole Scythian logos.
master or, rather, the assessor of *aristeia*; the scalps bestow a right to wine, blood bestows a right to wine.\(^{227}\)

On this occasion, at least, the Scythians appear as drinkers of wine but, in Herodotus as in the general tradition, their relations with wine are no simple matter, since they are also represented sometimes as drinkers of blood, sometimes as drinkers of milk.\(^{228}\)

In the *Histories*, wine is considered a "civilized" drink. When Croesus is preparing to attack the Persians, a Lydian who enjoys a great reputation as a *sophos* advises him not to do so, pointing out that there can be nothing to gain and much to lose by marching against people who dress in leather, never eat their fill, and "have no use for wine, but are water-drinkers";\(^{228}\) in other words, there is no point in attacking real savages. In the fable that Cyrus displays to the Persians to persuade them to revolt against the Medes, wine again has a role to play. Having gathered them together, on one day he makes them clear a field of thistles; on the next he serves them a rich banquet with much wine. The moral is that they will live as on the second day if they pay attention to him, as on the first day if they remain enslaved by the Medes.\(^{229}\) Finally, wine is the only present Cambyses offers to the king of the long-lived Ethiopians that finds favor in his eyes and is not considered to be a trap. The Ethiopians, for their part, are drinkers of milk;\(^{230}\) "He was vastly pleased with the draught and asked further what food their king ate and what was the greatest age to which a Persian lived. The Fish-eaters told him their king ate bread, showing him how wheat grew, and said that the full age to which a man might hope to live was eighty years. Then, said the Ethiopian, it was no wonder that their lives were so short, if they ate dung; they would never attain even to that age were it not for the strengthening power of the draught—whereby he signified to the Fish-eaters the wine—for in this, he said, the Persians excelled the Ethiopians."\(^{231}\)

Wine is a civilized drink, to be included among the *agatha*, but it may also serve to trick the drinker into a further involvement. The Massagetae,\(^{232}\) since they set the example, may even have "covered" (agatha), Croesus could well know the country of the Massagetae, and the sitting of dishes (*sitia pantoia* akretou) and then retire, leaving them to the有效的, they will drink the queen of the Massagetae, a copy of the Massagetae, leading to a great slaughter. Perhaps a cumined pharmakov,\(^{234}\) depending on whether or not they have a *pharmakon*.

When Tomyris had defeated the Persian king and she "spoke these words to her conqueror, you have not even as I threatened, so *aimatos koreso*.\(^{235}\) This banquet organized by Cyrus to pass from the one drinker of wine is not just for the blood just as it were uncivilized. Drinking wine, drinking two actions are associated: wine, neat wine, and blood.

227. Dumézil, *Romans de Scythe et d'alentour*, pp. 227ff., compares this crater to a bowl that appears in the legend of the Nartes; this bowl of the Nartes, the *nartamonge*, which had the power of revealing the truth, by making a sign confirmed or negated the Nartes' claims about their exploits.

228. Hdt. 1.71.

229. Hdt. 1.126.

230. Hdt. 3.23.

231. Hdt. 3.22.

232. Hdt. 1.207.


234. Hdt. 1.212.

may also serve to trick those not familiar with it. It thus has a role to
play in the scenario devised by Croesus to get the better of the
Massagetae. Since the Massagetae have "no experience of good
things" (agatha), Croesus suggests that Cyrus should advance into
the country of the Massagetae, prepare a great banquet with all kinds
of dishes (sitia pantoa) and many craters of neat wine (oinou
akretou) and then retire, leaving behind only soldiers of inferior
caliber. It will then be easy to surprise the Massagetae "full of wine
and food" and accomplish "mighty deeds." The plan depends partly
on the fact that the Massagetae are "drinkers of milk"; not only will
they now drink wine but, their ignorance rendering the trick doubly
effective, they will drink it undiluted. After the disaster, Tomyris,
the queen of the Massagetae, sends word to Cyrus telling him that he
has conquered not by strength, in a proper battle, but through a trick
leading to great slaughter and that he owes his success to wine, which
is a cunning pharmakon. And wine certainly does possess all the
ambiguity of a pharmakon, being either a poison or a remedy,
depending on whether or not one knows how to use it.

When Tomyris had defeated the Persians, she sought out Cyrus's
corpse and plunged the head into a skin filled with human blood,
and she "spoke these words of insult to the dead man: "Though I live
and conquer you, you have undone me, overcoming my son by guile;
but even as I threatened, so will I do, and give you your fill of blood
[ainatos koreso]." This was the queen's answer to the ruse of
the banquet organized by Cyrus; but this time, instead of wine, human
blood is served. The scene is based on the assumption that it is easy
to pass from the one drink to the other. In Tomyris's eyes, Cyrus the
drinker of wine is in truth a drinker of blood, so he will be served
blood just as if it were undiluted wine.

Drinking wine, drinking blood: there is one context in which the
two actions are associated or confused, that of oath-swearing, when
wine, neat wine, and blood are mixed together. The Scythians

236. K. Kircher, Die sakrale Bedeutung des Weines im Altertum (Giessen, 1910),
pp. 82ff.; Gernet, Anthropology, p. 168: "The one is the equivalent of the other [wine
and blood]; both belong to the same group, which is clearly opposed to the group
composed of milk-and-honey libations."
swear an oath by mixing wine and blood in a bowl and drinking it. The equivalence between the two also manifests itself in the customs of war: “A Scythian drinks of the blood of the first man whom he has overthrown.” So a young Scythian is not a full warrior until he has completed this rite of initiation; but later, on the occasion of the annual ceremony, whether or not the warriors drink a cup of wine depends on whether or not they have slain enemies. They pass from blood (the first time) to wine (each year) and wine is the symbolic equivalent of blood. At the same time, however, this transition to the symbolic level clearly indicates the distance separating the first time from those that follow. The first time is repeated, but in such a way as to indicate that it will never again be the same: from blood, the warriors pass on to wine.

In some circumstances, then, Scyths drink blood, in others they drink wine; and they also drink milk. As early as chapter 2, Herodotus explains how they obtain their milk. In fact, tradition often represented them as drinkers of milk: Strabo collects all the references to the practice from Homer down to Ephorus. The Iliad mentions “the lordly Hippomenes who drink mares’ milk,” and a fragment of Hesiod identifies this people with the Scyths. Aeschylus, in a lost play, mentions “the Scyths who eat mares’ cheese and know eunomia.” And finally, Hippocrates also recognizes the Scyths to follow a diet based upon milk and cheese. Alongside this current of opinion which associates the drinking of milk with justice and eunomia, there also developed an image of the Scyths as a cruel people, cutting off heads and drinking from skulls. Reflecting on this double tradition, Ephorus attempted to make sense of it by making a geographical and ethnic distinction: on the one hand, there were the “good” Scyths who, as the sacred formula had it, abstained from all living creatures (ton zoon ap-echethai), drank milk, and were known for their justice; on the other, the “bad” ones, the eaters of human flesh.

On the one hand, Scyths are celebrating the delight of its soft luxuries. In his account, Herodotus writes that because of the custom of marrying is an unfortunate one, where the vine does not exist, Anacharsis whether flutes or vines.

But, on the other hand, Herodotus and still being a Scythian as inveterate drinkers, on the occasion of the swearing of the drink “like fish.” “To drink,” in the sense, is mentioned early in the fates of the Spartan king who had come to drink (Darius) to drink undiluted when they wished to drink, but to drink when they wished to drink. Chamaileus of Heraclea in Aethon, all speak of our “Scythian drink.” So to say, but to drink wine undiluted, the one missing the normal ratios of wine to milk. One dabbles in the wine, and he went “mad” beverage.

237. Hdt. 4.64. 238. Hdt. 4.2.
239. Strabo 7.3.7; Iliad 13.5–6.
240. Hdt. 7.3.7.
244. Ephorus does not specify what they drink. It may be blood, or wine, but equally it may be milk.

245. Athenaeus 10.441d.
246. Diogenes Laertius 1.104.
248. Hdt. 6.84. We may also have in mind a pretext that he made men mad.
249. Anacreon, in Poetae lyri (Athenaeus 427b) also tells the graveorum fragmenta 2, 748 (= Athenaeus 427b).
On the one hand, Scythia is seen as a country ignorant of the vine, that is to say, of the delights of civilization, but, more important, also of its soft luxuries. In his play entitled *The Bacchae*, Antiphanes writes that because of the drunkenness of women, a man who marries is an unfortunate wretch "except in Scythia, the only place where the vine does not even grow."245 Similarly, when a Greek asks Anacharsis whether flutes exist in Scythia, he replies, "No, nor yet vines."246

But, on the other hand, there is the tradition, beginning with Herodotus and still being echoed by Athenaeus, that represents the Scythians as inveterate drunkards. Not content to drink wine on the occasion of the swearing of oaths or at their annual ceremony, they drink "like fish." To drink "in the Scythian fashion" is a proverb which refers to the drinking of neat wine.247 The expression, used in this sense, is mentioned early on by Herodotus, when he is recounting the fate of the Spartan king Cleomenes. The Lacedaemonians claimed that Cleomenes went mad because he learned from the Scythians (who had come to Sparta to propose an alliance against Darius) to drink undiluted wine. From that day on they themselves, when they wished to drink "purer" (or less diluted) wine, said that they were going to drink "in the Scythian manner."248 Anacreon, Chamaileus of Heraclia in his book *On Drunkenness*, and Achaius, in *Aethon*, all speak of drinking "in the Scythian fashion" or of "Scythian drink."249 So to drink wine is the mark of a civilized man, but to drink wine undiluted is the mark of a savage and represents a transgression. One dabbles in this transgression as soon as one alters the normal ratios of wine and water. "To drink in the Scythian fashion" is not necessarily to drink totally undiluted wine, but to add less water to it than usual. Only Cleomenes drank totally undiluted wine, and he went "mad" (manenai). Pure wine is a dangerous beverage.

245. Athenaeus 10.441d.
246. Diogenes Laertius 1.104. There are a number of comments about wine and drunkenness in the chapter devoted to Anacharsis.
248. Hdt. 6.84. We may also note that the Scythians rejected Dionysus on the pretext that he made men mad.
Pondering the etymology of the word skýphos, Athenaeus proposes, among other suggestions, that it should be derived from skýthos since the Scythians have such a reputation for getting drunk; and, he adds, Hieronymus of Rhodes, in his work on Drunkenness, even writes that "to get drunk is to behave like a Scythian [to metusai skuthisai]", so skuthizo means "to shave one's hair off" but also "to become drunk."

Plato has one final touch to add to this picture of Scythian drunkenness. It applies to men as well as to women. The Athenian of the Laws declares: "You [Lacedaemonians], as you say, abstain from it altogether, whereas the Scythians and Thracians, both men and women, take their wine neat and let it pour down over their clothes and regard this practice of theirs as a noble and splendid one." 251

Occasional drinkers of blood, constant drinkers of milk, excessive drinkers of wine: such are the Scythians. It is pointless to seek to reduce these traditions for, in truth, they are essential to the aporia of the Scythian character. We need only think of Polyphemus, the Cyclops: he is a drinker of milk and an eater of cheese, but also an eater of men. He is familiar with "wine of our own made from the grapes that our rich soil and the timely rains produce" but he does not know how to drink and behaves like a drunkard. When Odysseus offers him wine, he drains it at a draught, neat, and asks for more. 252 So in his case, the two beverages milk and neat wine simultaneously mark out a savage.

War is a hunt and, first and foremost, a head-hunt. Warfare is an habitual occupation, and the Scythians are made for war. But—and here is what is so astonishing—warfare appears as an organized and codified activity. Among nomads, who rate very low on the score of koinonia, such elaborate organization. Yet whenever Herodotus mentions the space of Scythia is no longer organized into separate territories divided into districts over each one. Ares, the particular sacrifices, often no one knows which, much must be attended to; the sanctuary of Ares is refuges, and once every year, the enemy celebrate the enemies slain: symmetrical significance to 253.

Finally, in these customs, the place falls to the king. He allotting shares only again, no "banquet" (through the institution of nomarchs), he allot a cup of wine to each enemies in the course of the day; preside over all judiciary quarrels, they engage in social drinking and the victor makes a drink: again it is the king who alone have heads!

As the leader of the humble Scythian king is certainly one of the three great centuries, royalty was despotic and royal. In life he was the most powerful, but the excentric center of the power, the Scythian king was not a monarch. During his lifetime, his heir was chosen by public exchanges and through the drinking body. Any betrayal to his heir royal body and the social body on him, it was necessary to be killed by him, he was embalmed and the Scythian

250. Athenaeus II.499c.
251. Laws 637c. The Scythians' relations to wine are also the subject of one of the Aristotelian Problems (1.7): the Scythians love wine because they are both "hot" and "dry," whereas children, who are also "hot" but are "wet," do not like it.
252. Odyssey 9.353ff.: "I handed him another bowlful (kissameron = drinking bowl, milking pail) of the ruddy wine. Three times I filled it up for him, and three times the fool drained the bowl to the dregs. At last . . . the wine fuddled his wits" (360–62). The wine was a present from Maron, the priest of Apollo at Ismara: "When they drank this red and honeyed vintage, he used to pour one cupful of wine into twenty of water" (9.208–10). On the other hand, when drunk "neat, it was a drink for the god." (9.205), a remark which should be taken literally: mortal men are unable to tolerate it.

253. Hdt. 4.62.
koinonia, such elaborate social organization indeed seems surprising. Yet whenever Herodotus comes to report on the customs of war, the space of Scythia is no longer an undifferentiated pastureland but is organized into separate zones, each with an administration: the territory is divided into nomes with a nomarch or governor appointed over each one. Ares, who is the object of a special cult and particular sacrifices, often human ones,\(^{253}\) has a sanctuary in each nome, which must be attended every year. The organization of space is complemented by a regular ordering of time: once every year the sanctuary of Ares is refurbished and he is honored there by sacrifices, and once every year a "banquet" is held by the nomarch to celebrate the enemies slain by each warrior; furthermore, there is a symbolical significance to this official ceremony.

Finally, in these customs connected with warfare, the central place falls to the king. He presides over the distribution of booty, allotting shares only against decapitated heads. As "master of the banquet" (through the intermediary of his representatives, the nomarchs), he allots a cup of wine (or two) to whoever has slain enemies in the course of the year. As "master of justice," he must preside over all judiciary duels: when two related Scythians have a quarrel, they engage in single combat in the presence of the king, and the victor makes a drinking cup of the skull of his foe. So here again it is the king who authorizes the decapitation: the leader must have heads!

As the leader of the hunt against Darius and as war leader, the Scythian king is certainly a despotes: for the Greeks of the fifth century, royalty was despotic and a barbarian leader was bound to be royal. In life he was the mobile center of power. In death he became the excentric center of the territory, his corpse a point of anchorage: the Scythian people were tied to his dead body like a ship at anchor. During his lifetime, his hearth was the foundation for all (contractual) exchanges and through it the Scythians were constituted as a social body. Any betrayal to his hearth caused him to fall sick, just as if the royal body and the social body were indeed two yet also one; to cure him, it was necessary to behead the perjurer. At his death his body was embalmed and the Scythians mutilated themselves. Through

\(^{253}\) Hdt. 4.62.
this ceremony which left its marks on their bodies, they acknowledged themselves to be Scythians and subjects: their bodies upon which the royal coat-of-arms was incised reminded them that they formed a social body and, through this mnemonics of power, the royal body and the social body were strangely woven together.

Space and the Greek Ox

What gods do the Scythians worship? What do they communicate with their gods? Is this what makes the Greeks face their identity as a nomad? We may suppose that, just as the ox also leaves its traces in the earth, it also stamps its mark upon the realm of their gods. Take the example of the ox. The ox is fundamental. Through this sacrificial amenality that it introduces we can grasp the community of eaters of meat. But, as the political order of the polis begins to time the expression, if it turns the ox into the city, what can be the role of this perspective, sacrificial and foundational, in human groups, establishing wherein their "otherness"?

But before turning, we must remember a warning by Herodotus that he is far from comprehensibility.
