

## THE THRACIAN FUNERARY RITES (HER. 5.8) AND SIMILAR GREEK PRACTICES

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The only comprehensive evidence we possess of Thracian "Totenkult" is Herodotos' brief account of the Thracian funerary rites (5.8).<sup>1</sup> The last honors to be paid to the dead are funeral games of which Herodotos mentions only the μονομαχία. These kinds of games are attested for several Indo-European nations beginning with the Greeks.<sup>2</sup> The earliest source for funeral games are the Homeric epics, in which they occur several times. In this paper, I shall discuss the text of Herodotos to argue that the Thracian μονομαχία as well as all the other mortuary practices closely resemble the funerary ritual that ends with the ἄθλα ἐπὶ Πατρόκλῳ in the *Iliad*. As I shall point out further, the rites attested by Herodotos for the Thracians diverged from contemporary Greek customs which were several centuries removed from the Homeric epics. The burial practices of the Thracians were actually closer to those observed in Macedonia, which we know about, however, from sources other than Herodotos. Among these are funeral games involving a μονομαχία. The chariot races or chariots depicted by themselves that occur in Hellenistic paintings from Macedonian and Thra-

1. The following works will be cited in abbreviated form: Manolis Andronikos, *Totenkult, Archaeologia Homerica III W* (Göttingen 1968); Ludmila Jivkova, *Le tombeau de Kazanlâk*, trans. by Dr S. Tsonev (Sofia 1974); G.S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962); Donna C. Kurtz, John Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (London 1971); Ludolf Malten, "Leichenspiel und Totenkult", *Röm. Mitt.* 38/39 (1923/24) 300-340; Karl Meuli, "Der Ursprung der Olympischen Spiele", *Die Antike* 17 (1941) 189-208; Vassil Micoff, *Le tombeau antique près de Kazanlâk* (Sofia 1954); Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: Seelenkult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen I* (Freiburg 1898); Lynn Emrich Roller, *Funeral Games in Greek Literature, Art and Life* (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1977); M.M. Willcock, *The Iliad of Homer II* (London, 1984).

2. See Malten, "Leichenspiel"; Meuli, "Olymp. Spiele".

cian funerary monuments may well have reference to such games. I propose the same interpretation for two scenes painted in the so-called "Kazanlak" tomb.

# I.

This is how Herodotos describes the funerary customs of the Thracians and, specifically, of wealthy individuals (5.8):

ταφαὶ δὲ τοῖσι εὐδαίμοσι αὐτῶν εἰσὶ αἶδε' τρεῖς  
μὲν ἡμέρας προτιθεῖσι τὸν νεκρὸν καὶ παντοῖα  
σφάζαντες ἱρήια εὐωχέονται, προκλαύσαντες  
πρῶτον· ἔπειτα δὲ θάπτουσι κατακαύσαντες ἢ  
ἄλλως γῇ κρύψαντες, χῶμα δὲ χέαντες ἀγῶνα  
τιθεῖσι παντοῖον, ἐν τῷ τὰ μέγιστα ἄεθλα τίθεται  
κατὰ λόγον μουνομαχίης. ταφαὶ μὲν δὴ Θρηίκων  
εἰσὶ αὗται.

The author begins with the pre-burial rites, goes on to the mode of burial, and concludes with the activities immediately following and forming part of the burial ceremony. The former rites are: 1) the *prothesis* (προτιθεῖσι τὸν νεκρὸν), i.e. the lying in state of the dead after he has been laid out;<sup>3</sup> 2) a feast (εὐωχέονται) preceded by the slaughter of "sacrificial" victims (ἱρήια);<sup>4</sup> and 3) the lamentation for the deceased (προκλαύσαντες), i.e. the obligatory rite of mourning the dead.<sup>5</sup>

It is a well-known fact that the Greek rite of *prothesis* aimed at providing an opportunity for family and friends to pay their last respects to the dead and to perform the traditional lament.<sup>6</sup> The Thracian custom described by the verb προτίημι served the same purpose as the participle προκλαύσαντες suggests. The family of the deceased left the dead lying in state for three days, τρεῖς μὲν ἡμέρας προτιθεῖσι τὸν νεκρὸν, during which time they slaughtered a variety of animals for a feast evidently attended by the assembled relatives and friends of the dead, καὶ παντοῖα

3. For the meaning of προτίημι/αι νεκρὸν (=to lay out a dead body, let it lie in state), see LSJ s.v. προτίημι II. The word for the dressing or shrouding of a corpse is περιστελλῶ which occurs twice in Herodotos, at 2.90.1 and 6.30.2; it has a narrower sense since the act it describes in these two passages is *not* followed by the *prothesis* of the dead.

4. See Powell's Lexicon s.v. ἱρήϊον.

5. I have not been able to consult E. Reiner, "Die rituelle Totenklage der Griechen", *Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft* 30 (1938).

6. See Kurtz-Boardman, *Burial Customs* 143f.

σφάζαντες ἱρήια εὐωχέονται; before doing so, however, they first performed a ritual lament, προκλαύσαντες πρῶτον. As the preposition προ- of προκλαίω implies, this lament was "preliminary", that is the dead was lamented again during the burial ceremony.<sup>7</sup> And since the *prothesis* lasted for three days, the burial of the dead must have occurred on the fourth day.<sup>8</sup>

Herodotos speaks of two modes of burial: the Thracians either burned the corpse and buried its remains in the earth, θάπτουσι κατακαύσαντες, or they simply interred it, ἢ ἄλλως γῇ κρύψαντες.<sup>9</sup> In other words, cremation was practiced or alternatively the body was inhumated. In either case, they raised a mound over the grave and held nearby a variety of athletic contests, χῶμα δὲ χέαντες ἀγῶνα τιθεῖσι παντοῖον. At the competition in question, the greatest prizes were set for the duel, because of its importance, ἐν τῷ τὰ μέγιστα ἀεθλα τίθεται κατὰ λόγον μουννομαχίης.<sup>10</sup>

Funeral games with individual competitions like boxing and wrestling are often attested for the Greeks,<sup>11</sup> but fights in armor, as suggested by the word μουννομαχίης, are less frequent. The only extant literary description of funeral games including this sort of duel goes back to the *Iliad*. After the burial of Patroklos was complete, the Achaeans constructed a tumulus and celebrated games, among which there was a duel fought by armed warriors. The burial mound mentioned by Herodotos in our description of the Thracian rituals, as well as the contests and the μουννομαχίη, recall the tumulus over Patroklos' grave and the games in his honor involving the duel in armor. But these are not the only similarities. In fact, not only the practices following the burial of the Thracians, but also the mode of burial (cremation)

7. Ritual lamentation was performed both at the house of mourning and at the grave, see D. Wachsmuth in *Kleine Pauly* 5 (1975) col. 898. Προκλαίω, like προσφάτω or προγράφω, denotes the "preliminary" act described by the second part of the word.

8. The Greek *prothesis* occurred on the day after death, and the burial was enacted on the third day, see Kurtz-Boardman 144f.

9. The first to understand the precise meaning of θάπτουσι κατακαύσαντες ἢ ἄλλως γῇ κρύψαντες is A. Semenov, *Wochenschrift für Klass. Philol.* 52 (1911) 1429f.: "die Thraker verbrannten die Toten und begruben dann die unverbrannten Reste, oder aber: sie begruben einfach den Toten, ohne ihn vorher zu verbrennen." But his correction of ἄλλως to ἀπλῶς is not necessary. "Ἄλλως here means 'merely'; see Powell's *Lexicon* s.v.

10. For the proper interpretation of this phrase, see H. Stein, *Herodotos III*<sup>3</sup> (Berlin 1894, reprint ed. 1963) 9, ad 5f.

11. See Malten, "Leichenspiel" 302-317 (passim).

and the rites performed prior to burial resemble the manner in which Patroklos was buried and the honors paid to him before the *ekphora*. A close comparison of the relevant texts should persuade us. Before doing so, however, I shall first discuss the Homeric passages in which the funerary rites in question occur.

## II.

The pre-burial rites for Patroklos began at night,<sup>12</sup> inside Achilles' tent. There Patroklos' friends (*hetairoi*) first washed and groomed him (18.343ff.). Then they laid the dead on a bier and shrouded him from head to foot with a sheet and a mantle, i.e. they enacted the rite of *prothesis* (18.352f.).<sup>13</sup>

ἐν λεχέεσσι δὲ θέντες ἑανῶ λιτὶ κάλυψαν  
ἐς πόδας ἐκ κεφαλῆς, καθύπερθε δὲ φάρει λευκῶ.

The dead was bewailed overnight (18.354f.). On the next morning, he still lay on the bier, turned towards the entrance of Achilles' tent, with his friends weeping around him (19.211-13):

ὃς (i.e. Patroklos) μοι ἐνὶ κλισίῃ δεδαϊγμένος ὀξεί χαλκῶ  
κεῖται ἀνὰ πρόθυρον τετραμμένος, ἀμφὶ δ' ἑταῖροι  
μύρονται.

Patroklos was left to lie there throughout that day and the following night.<sup>14</sup> During the day, the Achaeans fought with the Trojans, and Achilles killed Hektor. After the battle was over, all the Achaeans were dismissed with the exception of the Myrmidones, i.e. the compatriots of Patroklos (23.1ff.). Achilles urged them to drive their steeds close to the dead in order to mourn him, while still mounted and in their armor. And he reminded them that lamentation was an honor paid to the dead (γέρασ ... θανόντων, 23.9). After doing so they were to unharness and all partake of a meal there.

The manner of lamenting the dead is described in the next seven lines (23.12-18):

12. The sun sets at *Il.* 18.239f., i.e. right after Achilles receives the dead who is carried from the battlefield, on a litter.

13. For the Homeric *prothesis*, see Andronikos, *Totenkult* W 7-9. Of the two technical terms denoting the laying out and leaving of the dead to lie in-state, i.e. *προτιθημι* and *περιστέλλω*, only the latter appears in Homeric epic (*Od.* 24.293).

14. See Andronikos, *Totenkult* W 9.

οἱ δ' ὤμωξαν ἀολλέες, ἦρχε δ' Ἀχιλλεύς.  
οἱ δὲ τρις περὶ νεκρὸν εὐτριχας ἤλασαν ἵππους  
μυρόμενοι· μετὰ δέ σφι Θέτις γόου ἡμερον ὥρσε.  
δεύοντο ψάμαθοι, δεύοντο δὲ τεύχεα φωτῶν  
δάκρυσι· τοῖον γάρ πόθεον μήστωρα φόβοιο.  
τοῖσι δὲ Πηλεΐδης ἀδινού ἐξῆρχε γόοιο  
χεῖρας ἐπ' ἀνδροφόνους θέμενος στήθεσσιν ἑταίρου·

The Myrmidones cried out all together, and with Achilles leading the way, they drove their horses three times around the dead while weeping. Then Thetis stirred them to sing a sorrowful dirge (γόος). Among them Achilles began to sing a melancholy song while placing his hands on Patroklos' breast. The phrase γέρας θανόντων (23.9), the word γόος,<sup>15</sup> the description of the mourners as a choir (ὠμωξαν ἀολλέες) led by Achilles (ἦρχε δ' Ἀχιλλεύς/Πηλεΐδης ...ἐξῆρχε γόοιο) and Achilles' placing his hands on the dead's breast indicate that this lamentation, which takes place immediately *before* the partaking of the meal, is a "ritual" act.

The lamentation of the Myrmidones was followed by the feast that Achilles offered to them after they removed their arms and unyoked their horses (23.29-34):

αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσι τάφον μενοεικέα δαίνυ  
πολλοὶ μὲν βόες ἄργοι ὀρέχθεον ἀμφὶ σιδήρῳ  
σφαζόμενοι, πολλοὶ δ' ὄϊες καὶ μηκάδες, αἶγες·  
πολλοὶ δ' ἄργιόδοντες ὕες, θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφῇ,  
εὐόμενοι τανύοντο διὰ φλογὸς Ἑφαίστοιο·  
πάντη δ' ἀμφὶ νέκυν κοτυλήρυτον ἔρρεεν αἶμα.

This repast is called a τάφον<sup>16</sup> μενοεικέα, i.e. an "abundant funeral feast". Its description focuses on: 1) the slaughter of three different kinds of animals (bulls, sheep and goats); 2) the singeing of the bristles of slaughtered boars over the fire, and 3) the offer to the dead of the animals' blood, which was collected in a cup and poured on the ground around the dead. It is evident that this meal, at which animals are slaughtered and singed, is primarily an occasion for "sacrificing" the animals' blood to the dead.

15. Its actual meaning is that of the "kunstlosen, von den Hinterbliebenen angestimmten rituellen Totenklage", see Reiner (above, n. 5) 5 with n. 6 (cited by Andronikos, *Totenkult* W 12).

16. "Epulum funebre", see Ebeling's *Lexicon*, s.v. 1) τάφος.

On the next day, i.e. the second<sup>17</sup> day after Patroklos' death, the dead was carried out to be cremated. When they reached the appointed spot, the Myrmidones and the other Achaeans performed a lament which lasted nearly until sunset (23.164f.):

ποίησαν δὲ πυρὴν ἑκατόμπεδον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,  
ἐν δὲ πυρῇ ὑπάτη νεκρὸν θέσαν ἀχνύμενοι κῆρ.

The actual burial took place on the next day, i.e. the third<sup>18</sup> day (23.252-56):

κλαίωντες δ' ἐτάροιο ἐνηέος ὅστέα λευκὰ  
ἄλλεγον ἐς χρυσὴν φιάλην καὶ δίπλακα δημόν,  
ἐν κλισίῃσι δὲ θέντες ἐανῶ λιτὶ κάλυψαν  
τορνῶσαντο δὲ σῆμα θεμειλιά τε προβάλλοντο  
ἀμφὶ πυρὴν· εἶθαρ δὲ χυτὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἔχευαν.

The Achaeans collected the unburnt remains of the corpse (the bones) in a golden *phiale* which they placed, after covering it with a linen sheet, in the so-called κλισίῃσι.<sup>19</sup> Then "they made round the place of the tomb and put out a circle of stones at the base".<sup>20</sup> Finally, they raised a mound by piling up earth.

When the burial was over, and before the Achaeans scattered, Achilles organized many funeral games (23.257f.):

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς  
αὐτοῦ λαὸν ἔρυκε καὶ ἵζανεν εὐρὺν ἀγῶνα

There were eight different sorts of events (23.262-897) which were held close to the burial spot.<sup>21</sup> The prizes were spoils of war,<sup>22</sup> and

17. See *Il.* 23.109f.

18. See Andronikos, *Totenkult* W 9.

19. In the Homeric epics the word κλισίη is always used for "small" structures intended for "impermanent" or periodic occupation, like a soldier's hut or herdsman's cottage, see Mary O. Knox, "Huts and Farm Buildings in Homer", *CQ* new ser. 21 (1971) 27-31. It has always been thought that the κλισίῃσι here refers to the tent of Achilles, but it is preferable to assume that it signifies some sort of "small" tomb structure of "temporary" character; cf. P. Thielscher's (*Philol. Wochenschrift* 33/34 [1937] 958-60) suggestion that κλισίῃσι refers to the "Totenkammer". In epigraphical texts, the κλισία is occasionally used to denote a "grave", see *LSJ* s.v. κλισία I.

20. So Willcock, *The Iliad* 302, ad 255.

21. The end of the foot race is at the spot where Achilles had slaughtered the oxen for Patroklos, as suggested by *Il.* 23.774f.

22. This is implied by several instances: see Asteropaios' breastplate at 560; the silver crater at 741-47; the spear, shield and helmet of Sarpedon (798-800); the sword of Asteropaios (807f.); the throwing weight of Eëtion (826-29); and the female slaves set as prizes at 263, 704.



were awarded not only to the first and second victor but to all the competitors.<sup>23</sup> The first four events (23.262-797) were among the favorite sports of the Greeks: chariot racing, boxing, wrestling and the foot-race. The duel (23.798-825), which is of special interest to us, is the first of the three<sup>24</sup> "doubtful" events with difficulties of interpretation.<sup>25</sup> It is a well-known fact that these latter events are "elaborations" added to the games.<sup>26</sup> Willcock has shown, however, that the composition of the fight in armor and the other "doubtful" games is in harmony with the rest of the *Iliad*.<sup>27</sup> And he reminds us that the single combat is a common feature of funeral customs among which are involved the first gladiatorial exhibitions at Rome. Thus, from an antiquarian point of view, as Willcock rightly remarks, the duel in honor of Patroklos "is probably the most authentic of the events". Given that this is the only extant description of a duel held as a sporting event, such as the Thracian *μουνομαχίη*, it is worthwhile to examine the text more closely (23.798-825):

αὐτὰρ Πηλεΐδης κατὰ μὲν δολιχόσκιον ἔγχος  
 θῆκ' ἐς ἀγῶνα φέρων, κατὰ δ' ἀσπίδα καὶ τρυφάλειαν,  
 τεύχεα Σαρπήδοντος, ἃ μιν Πάτροκλος ἀπηύρα. 800  
 στῆ δ' ὀρθὸς καὶ μῦθον ἐν Ἀργεῖοισιν ἔειπεν  
 "ἄνδρε δῶμα περὶ τῶνδε κελεύομεν, ὃ περ ἀρίστω,  
 τεύχεα ἔσσαμένω, ταμεσίχροα χαλκὸν ἐλόντε,  
 ἀλλήλων προπάροιθεν ὁμίλου πειρηθῆναι.  
 ὁππότερός κε φθῆσιν ὀρεξάμενος χρῶα καλόν, 805  
 ψαύσῃ δ' ἐνδίνων διὰ τ' ἔντεα καὶ μέλαν αἶμα,  
 τῷ μὲν ἐγὼ δώσω τόδε φάsgανον ἀργυρόηλον  
 καλὸν Θρηϊκίον, τὸ μὲν Ἀστεροπαῖον ἀπηύρων  
 τεύχεα δ' ἀμφοτέρωι ξυνήϊα ταῦτα φερέσθων  
 καὶ σφιν δαῖτ' ἀγαθὴν παραθήσομεν ἐν κλισίῃσιν". 810  
 Ὡς ἔφατ; ὥρτο δ' ἔπειτα μέγας Τελαμώνιος Αἴας,  
 ἂν δ' ἄρα Τυδεΐδης ὥρτο, κρατερός Διομήδης.  
 οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐκάτερθεν ὁμίλου θωρήχθησαν,

23. With the exception of the discus throw (826-49) for which there is only a single prize (the *solos*) for the victor.

24. The other two are the discus throw (826-49) and the archery contest (850-83).

25. Suspicions have been cast on them ever since the Alexandrian school. The problems are set out in several modern commentaries, see, for example, W. Leaf, *The Iliad* II<sup>2</sup> (London 1902) 528-33 (*passim*) and, recently, Willcock, *The Iliad* 310.

26. See Karl F. Ameis, C. Hentze, *Homer's Ilias* II<sup>4</sup> (Leipzig 1906, reprint ed. 1965) 90, ad 798-825; G.S. Kirk, *The Songs* 223.

27. See M.M. Willcock, *The Iliad* 310, ad 798-883; 798-825.

ἔς μέσον ἀμφοτέρω συνίτην μεμαῶτε μάχεσθαι,  
 δεινὸν δερκομένω· θάμβος δ' ἔχε πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς. 815  
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ σχεδὸν ἦσαν ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντες,  
 τρις μὲν ἐπήϊξαν, τρις δὲ σχεδὸν ὀρμήθησαν.  
 ἔνθ' Αἴας μὲν ἔπειτα κατ' ἀσπίδα πάντοσ' ἔϊσιν  
 νύξ', οὐδὲ χρό' ἵκανεν· ἔρυτο γὰρ ἔνδοθι θώρηξ·  
 Τυδεΐδης δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα ὑπὲρ σάκεος μεγάλιοι 820  
 αἰὲν ἐπ' αὐχένι κῦρε φαεινοῦ δουρὸς ἀκωκῇ.  
 καὶ τότε δὴ ῥ' Αἴαντι περιδείσαντες Ἀχαιοὶ  
 παυσάμενους ἐκέλευσαν ἀέθλια ἰσ' ἀνελέσθαι.  
 αὐτὰρ Τυδεΐδῃ δῶκεν μέγα φάσγανον ἦρωσ  
 σὺν κολεῷ τε φέρων καὶ εὐτμήτῳ τελαμῶνι. 825

Achilles brought out and put down in the ring a long spear, a shield and a helmet, the armor which Patroklos had stripped from the body of Sarpedon. Then he stood up and addressed the Argives. He urged the two best warriors to arm themselves to compete in a duel with sharp weapons before the assembly. The fighter "who is (the) first of the two to get in a stroke at the other's fair body, to get through armour and dark blood and reach to the vitals"<sup>28</sup> would be proclaimed victor. Achilles would award him a magnificent silver-nailed Thracian sword that he had stripped from the body of Asteropaios. Both contestants, however, were to receive in common the armor of Sarpedon. Achilles also promised to host a "fair" dinner (δαῖτ' ἀγαθὴν) for both men at his shelter.

Aias and Diomedes rose up to fight. They each armed themselves on one side of the assembly and then advanced, furious for combat and with dangerous looks, against one another, moving toward the centre, as wonder seized the Achaeans. Three times Aias and Diomedes rushed upon each other and attacked at close quarters.<sup>29</sup> Then Aias stabbed with his spear at Diomedes' shield, but did not get through to the skin, for his breastplate inside guarded him.<sup>30</sup> In his turn, Diomedes kept constantly grazing the neck<sup>31</sup> of Aias with the point of his spear over the top of the latter's shield. At this point, the Achaeans, concerned for Aias, called for them to stop and divide the prizes

28. The translation is R. Lattimore's (*The Iliad of Homer* [Chicago 1951] 471).

29. See Willcock's (*The Iliad* 310, ad 817) comments.

30. There are two precedents for this, at *Il.* 5.280ff. and 7.249-54.

31. The neck of the opponent is often the target, see *Il.* 5.657.



evenly.<sup>32</sup> Achilles, however, carried forth the sword, with its scabbard and sword belt, and gave it to Diomedes.<sup>33</sup>

The condition set by Achilles, "who is (the) first of the two to get in a stroke at the other's fair body, to get through armour and dark blood and reach to the vitals", suggests that the duel was not meant to be a mock fight (σκιαμαχία) — the victor must inflict some sort of wound on his opponent (if only a "superficial" one).<sup>34</sup> The description of the actual fight not only confirms this point, but also implies that one of the two contestants (Aias) ran the risk of being seriously wounded or even killed. This is why the spectators rushed to put an end to this game. Thus, though the above condition had not been fully realized, Achilles gave the first prize to Diomedes who evidently had the upper hand.

It has never been observed before that the prizes, which constitute nearly an entire set of armor (sword, spear, shield and helmet) are *extraordinary*, i.e. they are not common spoils of war. As we have seen, they are said to have been stripped off the Paeonian and Lycian leaders by Achilles and Patroklos, respectively.<sup>35</sup> The only other equivalent prize is the cuirass of Asteropaios, which similarly served as an "extraordinary" prize for Eumelos (23.560-62). The latter was a champion, but he failed to gain the first prize in the chariot race, because of an unexpected accident. To compensate him for his bad luck, Achilles suggested he be given the second prize. Antilochos objected, however, and Achilles resorted to another solution: he offered Eumelos the cuirass of Asteropaios, which had not been counted among the other prizes. The "fine" dinner at Achilles' tent, δαῖτ' ἀγαθὴν παραθήσομεν ἐν κλισίῃσιν, is also an *extraordinary* honor. For those competing in the duel are the only contestants promised such a meal. Willcock, however, noticed that this sort of honor has an antecedent in the *Iliad*.<sup>36</sup> At 7.314f. Agamemnon slaughtered a bull at his tent to celebrate the victory of Aias over Hektor (κεχαρηότα νίκη, 312) in their single

32. Similarly at 23.736 Achilles urges Aias and Odysseus to take the prizes "in equal division", ἀέθλια δ' ἴσ' ἀνελόντες.

33. There is a precedent for this at *Il.* 7.303f.; Hektor carried his silver nailed sword, with its scabbard and swordbelt, and gave it to Aias (δῶκε ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον, / σὺν κολεῷ τε φέρων καὶ ἐϋτμήτῳ τελαμῶνι) who had proven to be his superior in the duel.

34. For the difficulties in the interpretation of line 806, see Leaf (above, n. 25) 528, ad loc.; cf. Ameis-Hentze (above, n. 26) 90, ad loc.

35. For the spoiling of Sarpedon and Asteropaios, see *Il.* 16.663-65; 21.183.

36. See Willcock, *The Iliad* 310, ad 810.

combat. At the subsequent meal, Agamemnon honored Aias with the νότοισιν (= back, 321), i.e. the *best* portion of the bull's flesh.

Given that the chariot-race is the most important of the funeral games in honor of Patroklos, the unprecedented prizes for the fight in armor may sound odd. Indo-European parallels for this sport indicate, however, that: 1) suits of armor of *extraordinary* value, such as those worn by kings, were a common prize; 2) even when the duel was a mock fight (σκιαμαχία), the contestants occasionally ran the risk of being wounded or killed; and if those present did not interfere, might actually kill one another.

The first point is attested for the Gauls by Polybios (3.62.5). Hannibal set up a contest in armor for which the prizes were "Gaulish suits of armor, such as their kings used to deck themselves with when about to engage in single combat": πανοπλίας Γαλατικής, οἷαις εἰώθασιν οἱ βασιλεῖς αὐτῶν, ὅταν μονομαχεῖν μέλλωσι, κατακοσμεῖσθαι. The contestants were prisoners of war who fought in pairs for life or death. The second point concerns the Celts. According to Poseidonios (ap. Ath. 154a-b), the Celts occasionally fought duels after dinner. They assembled under arms, engaged in mock fights and made feints at one another; but sometimes they proceeded even to the point of wounding each other, and then, irritated by this, if those present did not intervene to restrain them, they went so far as to kill one another: ἐν γὰρ τοῖς ὅπλοις ἀγερθέντες σκιαμαχοῦσι καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀκροχειρίζονται, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ μέχρι τραύματος προΐασιν καὶ ἐκ τούτου ἐρεθισθέντες, ἐὰν μὴ ἐπισχῶσιν οἱ παρόντες, καὶ ἕως ἀναιρέσεως ἔρχονται.

It is evident that the prizes for this sport (suit/s of armor) were of *extraordinary* value because of its *particular* importance; for, unlike the other games, the duel involved the real danger of a fatal result for one or both of the contestants.

### III.

Let us now review the Homeric and Thracian funerary rites. The practices performed prior to the *ekphora* of Patroklos as well as the mode of burial and the mound over the tomb, beside which funeral games involving a duel are held, all have parallels in the rites described by Herodotos for the 5th-century B.C. wealthy Thracians. The former practices began with the *prothesis* (ἐν λεχέεσσι δὲ θέντες / προτιθεῖσι τὸν νεκρὸν) and ended with

an abundant feast (τάφον μενοεικέα / εὐωχέονται) for which *many* and *various* animals were slaughtered (πολλοὶ μὲν βόες ... σφαζόμενοι, πολλοὶ δ' ὄϊες καὶ μηκάδες αἶγες· πολλοὶ ... ὕες ... / καὶ παντοῖα σφάζαντες ἱρήια). In both cases, the feast was preceded by the preliminary ritual lament for the deceased (ὠμωξαν ἀολλέες ... Θέτις γόου ἡμερον ὥρσε ... / προκλαύσαντες πρῶτον). As we see in Homer, the dead was lamented again during the funeral, immediately before the cremation of the corpse.

Thus far the only difference lies in the duration of the *prothesis*. Patroklos was left lying in state for a single day, at the end of which the Myrmidones held a funeral feast beside him, after they had first lamented him. The Thracian *prothesis*, however, lasted as long as three days. When exactly did the lamentation and the feast take place? My guess is that the relatives and friends of the deceased came for three days to lament him first; but, at the end of each day, they were entertained with a sumptuous meal in the presence of the dead.<sup>37</sup>

Herodotos calls the slaughtered animals ἱρήια, i.e. "sacrificial" victims, because they were evidently "sacrificed" to the dead. This sort of sacrifice is well illustrated in Homer. The blood of the victims was collected in a cup and poured on the ground all around the dead, as a "libation" or χοή:<sup>38</sup> πάντη δ' ἄμφι νέκυν κοτυλήρυτον ἔρρεν αἶμα. This offering, which served as the dead's "portion" of the meal,<sup>39</sup> aimed at "appeasing" his soul.<sup>40</sup> The soul was thought to remain close to the body until the corpse was buried.<sup>41</sup> As for the mourners' banquet beside the bier, this was actually their last supper with the deceased, before the body was cremated.

Moving now to the disposal of the body and the activities following, both the Myrmidones and the Thracians burned the dead and interred the unburnt remains. This procedure, which I

37. G. Kazarow's (*RE*<sup>2</sup> VI A [1936] col. 535) understanding that the feast was held *after* the dead had been lain in state and had been mourned for three days, is not supported by the text. The same is true for A.D. Godley's (Loeb) translation in which both the lamentation and the feast are placed *after* the three-day *prothesis*.

38. The libations "feeding" the dead are called χοαί, see K. Hanell, *RE*<sup>2</sup> VI A (1937) s.v. *Trankopfer*, col. 2136.

39. As Rhode, *Psyche* 25 has remarked.

40. See *ibid.*

41. While the body of Patroklos lay in state his soul appeared to Achilles who was weeping on the seashore, see *Il.* 23.59ff.

have discussed in detail for Patroklos, is succinctly described by Herodotos as θάπτουσι κατακαύσαντες. The Thracians, however, as we know from Herodotos, alternatively practiced inhumation ἢ ἄλλως γῇ κρύψαντες (i.e. θάπτουσι). Of this latter custom there is no evidence in Homer.<sup>42</sup> It is worth noticing that inhumation is by far less expensive than cremation;<sup>43</sup> this may account for the alternative use of these two practices. Finally, both groups covered the tomb with a mound of earth (εἶθαρ δὲ χυτὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἔχευαν / χῶμα δὲ χέαντες) and competed at *many* and *various* funeral games (εὐρὺν ἀγῶνα / ἀγῶνα τιθεῖσι παντοῖον) including a fight in armor. In both cases, the games followed directly after the funeral and formed part of the burial rites (αὐτοῦ λαὸν ἔρυκε καὶ ἵζανεν ... ἀγῶνα / χῶμα δὲ χέαντες ἀγῶνα τιθεῖσι).

With regard to the duel, the prizes for Aias and Diomedes are weapons of heroes, and are coupled with a dinner. As I have argued, these prizes, plus the dinner, are extraordinary because of the risks run by the contestants. This explains why Herodotos says of the Thracian games that the fight in armor is given the greatest prizes κατὰ λόγον, i.e. "by reason of its importance". Herodotos' plural τὰ μέγιστα ἀεθλα further implies that the prizes were at least two, whether awarded to a single pair of fighters, as in Homer, or to several pairs of competitors. Naturally, not only the victors but all those competing at the Thracian funeral games must have been awarded prizes. This is a rule of funeral games,<sup>44</sup> of which the prizes serve primarily as "memorials" of the deceased.<sup>45</sup>

Herodotos does not specify what the other Thracian funerary contests were, the ἀγῶνα ... παντοῖον. There is, however, some later evidence for horse racing. At *Hellenica* 3.2.5, Xenophon reports that after the Thracian Odrissae returned to their camp, they buried their men, drank much wine in their memory, and held a horse race: ἐπεὶ μέντοι ἐπανῆλθον οἱ Ὀδρύσαι, θάψαντες τοὺς ἑαυτῶν καὶ πολλὸν οἶνον ἐκπίνοντες ἐπ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ἵπποδρομίαν ποιήσαντες ... Given that the Thracians were

42. See Andronikos, *Totenkult* W 21f.

43. See G. Reynolds, *Tumuli: The Literary Evidence as a Guide to the Interpretation of the Archaeological Remains* (New York University 1965) 37-39.

44. At the sixteenth-century A.D. funeral games in honor of a chieftain of the Kirghiz people ten prizes were set for the horse race, see Meuli, "Olymp.Spiele" 200.

45. Like the *phiale* given by Achilles to Nestor at 23.618f.

known from Homer onward as ἵπποπόλοι (busied with horses),<sup>46</sup> horse races must have been among the favorite Thracian games, and the same is very likely true for chariot races. The games in honor of Patroklos begin with a chariot race, which is the only equestrian event mentioned, but this may be due to the economy of the epic form; for among the Greeks, horse races were second only to chariot races.<sup>47</sup>

As in the case of Patroklos, the rites described by Herodotos concern only socially prominent Thracians, i.e. the wealthy: ταφαὶ δὲ τοῖσι εὐδαίμοσι αὐτῶν εἰσὶ αἶδε. From this group of Thracians should be excluded the Getae, the Trausi and the Thracians dwelling above the area inhabited by the Krestonaiοι, whose customs (νόμοι) in general Herodotos distinguishes from those of all other Thracians: νόμοισι δὲ οὗτοι παραπλησίοισι πάντες (i.e. the Thracians) χρέωνται κατὰ πάντα, πλὴν Γετέων καὶ Τραυσῶν καὶ τῶν κατύπερθε Κρηστωναίων οἰκεόντων (5.3.2). Of these, the Getae occupied northeastern Thrace, i.e. the area between the lower Danube and Mt. Haemus, while the Trausi dwelled in the central zone of the mountain range of Rhodope.<sup>48</sup> As for the third group of Thracians, these must have dwelled to the north of Mt. Dysoros, on the Chersonese, which defined the northernmost point of the area occupied by the Krestonaiοι, between the rivers Axios and Strymon.<sup>49</sup> Herodotos further refers to the belief of the Getae in an afterlife and provides examples of funerary customs observed by the other two groups of Thracians. How much these customs differed from those of the rest of the Thracians is evident from what he says about the Trausi (5.4) who instead of lamenting the dead, buried them with laughter and rejoicing. Consequently, the funerary rites described by Herodotos at 5.8 were not universal to Thrace but confined to the area roughly defined by the Aegean sea, Mt. Rhodope and Mt. Haemus.

46. See R.J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London 1924) s.v. ἵπποπόλος.

47. At Olympia, for example, the horse race was the second event after the chariot race, see E.N. Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World* (Oxford 1930) 228.

48. For the former, see J. Weiss, in: *RE* VII, 1 (1912) cols. 1330-34; for the latter, see E. Oberhummer, *RE* VI A, 2 (1937) cols. 2245f.

49. For the area occupied by the Krestonaiοι, see E. Oberhummer, *RE* XI, 2 (1922) col. 1718.



The fact that the Thracian funerary rites in question all have antecedents in the *Iliad* does not mean that in the lifetime of Herodotos, the Thracians and the Greeks shared similar customs. The Greek funerary practices of the Classical period were several centuries removed from those reflected in the Homeric epics.<sup>50</sup> Among these latter practices, the funerary rites for Patroklos constitute a particular case because they contain several unique elements. Let me now note these peculiarities.

The *prothesis* of the illustrious dead in Homer always lasts longer than a week,<sup>51</sup> the only exception being that of Patroklos. This may be due to the fact that Patroklos died during war time and was buried while the war was still going on.<sup>52</sup> The sacrifices and the feast beside the dead are also unique.<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere in Homer, the relatives' meal at the house of the deceased is held after burial is over, and there is no mention of sacrifices.<sup>54</sup> The sacrifices and the feast probably reflect some very old Greek customs.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the ritual lamentation of the dead during the *prothesis*, as well as the cremation of the corpse and the burial of the remains in a tomb covered by a mound, are universal in Homer, even if descriptions of them differ in detail.<sup>56</sup> The same is true for the funeral games, of which, however, only

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Exactly when the Homeric epics were composed and written down is not known;<sup>58</sup> by the Classical period, however, most of the customs such as those recorded in honor of Patroklos or other heroes had changed or died out. The funerary ritual was now more simple. The *prothesis* regularly lasted one day,<sup>59</sup> during which time alone lamentation for the dead occurred.<sup>60</sup> Animal sacrifices, if there were any, were limited to the burial place,<sup>61</sup> and the relatives and friends shared a meal<sup>62</sup> at the house of the deceased not during the *prothesis* but after burial was over. As to the cremation of the corpse and the burial of its remains in a tomb covered with a mound, the observance of this practice occasionally continued in the Classical period, either for individuals or for the mass burials of those who had died in battle.<sup>63</sup> Funeral games, however, were no longer held by aristocratic families as they had been in the earlier period.<sup>64</sup> They were, instead, organized by the state in honor of groups<sup>65</sup> of people or exceptional individuals who had died in war.<sup>66</sup> These games usually formed part of a memorial cult and consisted of equestrian, athletic and musical contests from which, however, the fight in armor was absent.

It is apparent that Herodotos recorded the Thracian funerary rites in question because they diverged from the customs to which he and his audience were accustomed. In spite of significant differences however, they remained akin to the prevalent Greek

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practices. This is why Herodotos described them by using technical terms familiar to the Greeks, like *προτιθεῖσι* and *προκλαύσαντες*.<sup>67</sup>

However, funeral games including a fight in armor, as well as the alternating practices of cremation (plus burial of the remains) with inhumation, and the building of a burial mound over the tomb were in fashion in 4th-century B.C. Macedonia.<sup>68</sup> Alexandros organized funeral games in honor of his companion Hephaistion and the Indian philosopher Kalanos; and when he died, he was buried in accordance with Macedonian funerary practice, νόμῳ τῶν Μακεδόνων (Paus. 1.6.3) and was honored with similar games.<sup>69</sup> A duel is attested for the games in honor of Philippos Arridaios, Eurydike and Kynna, who were buried by Kassandros at Aegae: καὶ μονομαχίας ἀγῶνα ἔθηκεν, εἰς ὃν κατέβησαν τέσσαρες τῶν στρατιωτῶν (Diyillos ap. Ath. 155a).<sup>70</sup> The duel was fought not by Macedonian nobles but by four of Kassandros' soldiers. Evidently there were two pairs of contestants. The partitive genitive τῶν στρατιωτῶν suggests that they came from the ranks of the Macedonian army which must have attended the games in honor of the Macedonian royalty.<sup>71</sup>

Depictions of duels fought by two pairs of soldiers, occasionally accompanied by chariot races and horse races, occur on late archaic objects of exclusive funerary use, the so-called Clazomenian sarcophagi.<sup>72</sup> Several scholars have interpreted these scenes as funeral games<sup>73</sup> which appear, in vase painting, as early as the geometric period.<sup>74</sup> Chariot races or chariots alone painted on the

67. In a technical, funerary sense the verbs *προτιθεμι* and *προκλαίω* first occur in 5th-century authors (Herodotos applies them to the rites of the Thracians alone), see *LSJ*, s.v. *προτιθεμι* II, *προκλαίω* II.

68. For the latter practices, see Kurtz-Boardman 273ff. and the sensational recent discovery of the royal tombs at Vergina: M. Andronikos, *Vergina: The Royal Tombs and the Ancient City* (Athens 1984) 55ff.; see also 31-37.

69. See Roller, *Funeral Games* 21f. and nn. 57-59 (sources).

70. The funeral games are also mentioned by Diodoros, see below, n. 71.

71. It is interesting that Diodoros (19.52.5) mentions the funeral games in connection with Kassandros' enrollment of Macedonians for his campaign into the Peloponnese: *τιμῆσας δὲ τοὺς τετελευτηκότας ἐπιταφίους ἀγῶσι κατέγραφε τῶν Μακεδόνων τοὺς εὐθέτους, διεγνώκως εἰς Πελοπόννησον στρατεύειν*.

72. Discussed by Malten, "Leichenspiel" 312-14.

73. See *ibid.* (with earlier bibliography); see also Gardiner (above, n. 47) 25; F. Hölscher, *Die Bedeutung archaischer Tierkampfbilder* (Würzburg 1972) 47f. R.M. Cook (*Clazomenian Sarcophagi* [Mainz/Rhine 1981] 115f.), on the contrary, believes that the intention of these scenes is primarily decorative and that there is not enough evidence to support their interpretation as "funerary" games.

74. See Andronikos, *Totenkult* W 121-26 and pls. 10, 11.

interior of Macedonian<sup>75</sup> and Thracian<sup>76</sup> tombs may well imply the continuity of this tradition through the Hellenistic period. The so-called Kazanlāk tomb provides us with a good example of a chariot race<sup>77</sup> involving three bigae which are separated by pillars.<sup>78</sup> It adorns the cupola of the funerary chamber and below it there is the representation of a funerary banquet. In the antechamber of the same tomb there are two unique scenes which, I think, also refer to funeral games. They are painted in two narrow friezes running along either side of the gabled ceiling.<sup>79</sup> The central portion of each frieze shows a pair of soldiers confronting each other, each of whom are similarly flanked by groups of horsemen and foot soldiers. The warriors in these groups are spectators and are occasionally seen moving towards the center.

The paintings in question are usually interpreted as battle scenes illustrating the diplomatic and military activity of the owner of the tomb.<sup>80</sup> The central episode of the east frieze is thought to be a "negotiation" scene,<sup>81</sup> while that on the west frieze is certainly a duel between a pair of soldiers. Micoff, in particular, attempted to identify the forces on the southern half of each frieze as Thracian.<sup>82</sup>

The above interpretation, however, meets with several difficulties. In the first place, there is no distinction to be seen

75. A chariot race run by 21 two-horse chariots (= bigae) is shown in the frieze running around the upper part of the walls that enclose the antechamber of the so-called Prince's Tomb; it constitutes the only pictorial decoration of the tomb's interior, see M. Andronikos (above, n. 68) 202, 206 and pls. 166-68; the tomb is dated to the last quarter of the 4th c. B.C., see p.224. Chariots are also painted in the pannels decorating the legs of a sarcophagus situated in a later Macedonian tomb, see *ibid.*, p.35 and pls. 13f.

76. A frieze showing a chariot race is on the upper part of the walls inside a tomb excavated in the plain of Kazanlāk, near Măglis; the monument has not yet been officially published; it is mentioned by I. Venedikov, T. Gerassimov, *Thrakische Kunst*, p.58 and pl. 77 (see also p.337, n. 77); it is dated to the 3rd c. B.C.

77. See V. Micoff, *Kazanlāk*, in particular 13, 15 and pls. VI, XXIIIff.; A. Vassiliev, *Das antike Grabmal bei Kasilak*, trans. by M. Matliev (Sofia 1959) 17 and pls. 29f.; Jivkova, *Kazanlāk* 74f.; see also R.F. Hoddinott, *Bulgaria in Antiquity: An Archaeological Introduction* (London 1975) 98-103.

78. Similar pillars appear in the chariot races shown on the Clazomenian sarcophagi, see Cook (above, n. 73) 115.

79. See Micoff, *Kazanlāk* 8, 15-17 and pls. XXXVf.; Vassiliev (above, n. 77) 11f. and 17-19; Jivkova, *Kazanlāk* 49-54 and pls. 14-19.

80. With the exception of Venedikov-Gerassimov (above, n. 76) 57, who speak of "kriegerische Tänze in zwei vielfigurigen Kompositionen".

81. See Micoff, *Kazanlāk* 15.

82. See *ibid.* 15f.; cf. Hoddinott's (above, n. 77) 100 comments.



among the warriors from either half of the friezes. They are all dressed and armed in a similar manner (the central pairs included); they carry light weapons and one of them is shown without any helmet.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, only a single pair of warriors is engaged in combat, i.e. those in the middle of the west frieze. The others are all watching or, occasionally, moving towards the centre. Such a representation of a battle scene is unprecedented. Finally, the two soldiers in the middle of the east frieze advance towards each other not in a friendly fashion, as it has been thought, but ready to engage in combat. This is why they both wear helmets and carry their entire panoply: a long curved sword, which they stretch forth in the right hand, two spears and a shield in the left hand. In fact, these are the only warriors shown with a complete suit of armor, i.e. helmet, shield, two spears and a sword. It is evident that they carry all the weapons with which they are about to fight a duel, i.e. a *μονομαχία*.<sup>84</sup> The slightly opened lips of the warrior on the left support this interpretation. He is challenging his opponent to a fight. Ever since Homer, this is the usual prelude to a duel.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, the soldiers in the middle of the west frieze are shown just before the end of the duel. For the soldier on the right has fallen on his knees and raises his shield to protect himself from the blow of his opponent. The duel is apparently coming to an end.

If my interpretation of the two central scenes is correct, the subject presented is an *ἀγὼν μονομαχίας* engaged in by two pairs of warriors, one on the east frieze and one on the west. The two pairs are shown at two differing phases of their *ἀγὼν*. The duel on the east frieze is about to begin: the contestants advance against one another while brandishing their weapons and are ready to engage in combat at close quarters. On the west frieze the duel is close to an end: the defeated warrior has fallen to his knees and is trying to protect himself from the blow of his opponent. The attendance of the *ἀγὼν μονομαχίας* by groups of other soldiers should not surprise us. As I have pointed out above, the funeral games in honor of the Macedonian royalty were attended

83. According to the description of Jivkova (*Kazanlık* 51), this is the footsoldier in the southern half of the west frieze.

84. Duels usually began with the use of the spear and ended with the sword, see, for example, the Homeric duel at *Il.* 7.244ff. Fighting with two spears is characteristic of duels illustrating funerary games in Italy, see Malten, "Leichenspiel" 326f., and pls. 16f.

85. See for example *Il.* 7.226-43.



by the entire army, from the ranks of which came the two pairs of soldiers competing in the duel. Armed warriors are also shown in pictorial representations of funeral games.<sup>86</sup> In view of this, it seems very likely that the Kazanlăk frescoes in question refer to the sort of ἀγὼν μουννομαχίης attested by Herodotos. After all, this was the most important of all Thracian funerary contests.<sup>87</sup>

86. See the Clazomenian sarcophagi discussed by Malten, "Leichenspiel" 312-4.

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