

ARCHAIC PERIOD OF GREEK LITERATURE: GREEK FOLKLORE AND MYTH

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Abstract:

This article is devoted to the archaic period of Greek literature. The most ancient written monuments of Greek literature - Homer's poems "Iliad" and "Odyssey", folklore and myths of ancient Greece.

Key words: *folklore, legend, myth, epic, poetics, fairy tales, spells, songs, proverbs, riddles.*

The oldest written monuments of Greek literature are the poems "Iliad" and "Odyssey", attributed to Homer (p. 30). These large epics with developed narrative art, with already established techniques of the epic style, should be considered as the result of a long development, the previous stages of which left no written traces and, perhaps, have not yet found written confirmation at all.

Ancient scholars (for example, Aristotle in "Poetics") had no doubt that "before Homer" there were poets, but there was no historical information about this period in ancient times. Only stories of a mythological nature circulated about this time: an example of them can be the tale of the Thracian singer Orpheus, the son of the Muse Calliope, whose singing enchanted wild animals, stopped flowing waters and made forests move after the singer.

Modern science has the opportunity to fill this gap to a certain extent and, despite the lack of a direct historical tradition, paint a general picture of Greek oral literature "before Homer." To this end, ancient literary studies attracts, in addition to the information that can be gleaned directly from Greek writing, also material provided by other related scientific disciplines.

The Iliad and Odyssey took shape already at the last stage of the development of tribal society, at the end of the "highest stage of barbarism" and at the turn of the era of "civilization." The nature of verbal creativity characteristic of the earlier stages of pre-class society is well known

from ethnographic observations of primitive peoples and from the remnants of this creativity in the folklore of civilized peoples.

Very few texts have survived from Greek folklore, and in relatively late records: however, even this insignificant material shows that the basis of Greek literature is the same types of oral literature that usually take place at the stage of tribal society: myths and fairy tales, spells, songs, proverbs, riddles, etc.

Classic studies in the field of primitive poetry belong to the great Russian literary critic, academician Alexander Veselovsky (1838 - 1906); his works on “historical poetics” are also of great value for the history of ancient literature, they make it possible to introduce Greek folklore and the development of Greek poetry into a broad historical connection, and clarify their place in the general process of literary development.

One of the most important features of primitive poetry is that it is the poetry of a collective from which the individual has not yet emerged; Therefore, its main content is the feelings and ideas of the collective, and not of the individual. Another feature is syncretism (Veselovsky’s term), characteristic of ancient poetry, that is, “the combination of rhythmic, archaic movements with song - music and elements of words.”[2]

At these earlier stages, the verse word does not appear independently, but in combination with singing and rhythmic body movements. The rhythm of labor operations is accompanied by a musical word, a song in time with the production process. The work song of a work collective engaged in the execution of the same labor action in the order of simple cooperation is one of the simplest types of song creativity.

Ancient sources report songs sung during the harvest, squeezing grapes, grinding grain, baking bread, spinning and weaving, drawing water, and rowing. The texts that have reached us date back to a relatively late time. An authentic example of a work song has also been preserved, the song of flour millers, composed at the beginning of the 6th century. on about Lesbos: “Shallows, mill, shallows. After all, Pittacus also ground, ruling in the great Mytilene.” This “shoal, mill, shoal” is sung in Greece to this day, but in modern Greek folklore “Pittacus” is no longer mentioned, and newer social material has been introduced instead.

The song also accompanies the ritual game that is performed before every important act in the life of a primitive group. The dependence of man of this time on natural and social forces incomprehensible to him, his powerlessness before them, was expressed in fantastic, mythological ideas about nature and ways of influencing it.

“All mythology overcomes, subdues and shapes the forces of nature in the imagination and with the help of the imagination.” [3] One of the surest means of achieving success in any action is, according to primitive ideas, magic (magic), which consists in first performing this action with the desired result. Before setting off on a hunt, fishing, war, etc., hunting groups reproduce in an imitative dance those moments that are considered necessary for the successful completion of the undertaking.

Agricultural tribes create a complex system of rituals to ensure the harvest. In this case, mythological ideas associated with the depicted process also serve as material for game reproduction: for example, when warm weather approaches, they play out the struggle between summer and winter, ending, of course, with the victory of summer, in order to “consolidate” it, and “kill” winter, i.e. They drown or burn an effigy representing winter.

In this case, the ritual game reproduces the natural process, the change of seasons, but reproduces it in a mythological understanding, as a struggle between two hostile forces that appear to be independent beings. The transition from one state to another is often represented in the images of “sweeping away” and a new “birth” (or “resurrection”).

This includes, for example, the “initiation of young men” rituals, widespread in primitive society. Even at a very early, prenatal stage, the division of society into groups based on

gender and age (“sex-age commune”) was established, and the transition from the “age class” of young men to the “class” of adults usually consists of a ceremony in which the young man “dies” and then “reborn” as an adult (a ceremony of this type is preserved in the Christian rite of tonsure). The death and resurrection of the god of fertility plays a huge role in the religion of many ancient Mediterranean peoples - Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks.

The place of “death” and “resurrection” can be taken by other images: “disappearance” and “appearance”, “abduction” and “finding”. Thus, in Greek myth, the god of the underworld “kidnaps” Kore (Persephone), the daughter of Demeter, the goddess of agriculture; however, Cora spends only a third of the year underground, the cold time; in the spring it “appears” on the earth, and with it the first spring vegetation appears. An equally important point in agrarian ritual is “fertilization”: in Athens, the sacred “marriage” of the god Dionysus with the wife of the archonking, the religious head of the city, took place annually. From the combination of such rituals, a ritual performance, “drama,” is created, the forerunner of literary drama.

The ritual game is accompanied by a song, and the song has the same meaning as the ritual dance; it is considered as a means of influencing nature, as an aid to the process for which the ritual is performed.

Since the community takes part in the ritual as part of its various groups, the ritual song, like the work song, is performed collectively, in choir. The choir's composition reflects the gender and age stratification of primitive society; Thus, the Greek ritual choir usually consists of persons of the same sex and the same age division; choirs of girls, women, boys, husbands, elders, etc. participate in rituals, separately or together, but as independent choral units, sometimes entering into struggle, “competition” among themselves (in Greek - “agon”).

In other places, after the harvest, children carried “blessings”, olive or laurel branches entwined with wool, on which various fruits hung; Hanging these branches at the doors of the house, the children's choir promised the owners an abundance of supplies and all kinds of prosperity and asked them to give something. The nature of the spring search for the first flowers appears to be a dance, probably performed by two choirs.

In Athens in the 5th century. BC e. we encounter the custom of alternate performance and even improvised songs by the participants of the feast, who passed a myrtle branch to each other in a certain “crooked” order (the song was called “skoliy”, i.e. “crooked”). In the Odyssey, which depicts feasts of the family nobility, a necessary part of the feast is a professional singer, who delights those gathered with his songs about the deeds of men and gods.

Such epic songs were no longer attached to a specific ritual: the hero of the Iliad, Achilles, in inaction, “delights himself with the ringing lyre,” singing “the glory of men.” The pre-literary period dates back to the emergence of various types of cult songs, hymns, prayers, etc. These songs received different names in ancient times depending on which deity they were addressed to (for example, paean and nome in the cult of Apollo, dithyramb in the cult Dionysus), on the composition of the choir (for example, parthenium - the song of a choir of girls), the method of performance (procession, dance, etc.), but the common term for all cult songs was the word “hymn”.

The Greek hymn is usually a prayer addressed to one or another god, but in its structure it retains remnants of an earlier stage in the development of religion, when a person sought to bind with the magical power of a rhythmic word the demon whose help seemed necessary, to force the demon to fulfill human will. His power is indicated - this is done so that God cannot make an excuse that he is unable to fulfill the request of the suppliant. Then mention is made of the honors which were bestowed upon the god, and which placed upon him the obligation to repay the favor with favor, and the contents of the request are stated.

This hymn structure will be found many times in ancient literature. The motif of describing the power of a deity provides especially many opportunities for artistic development, since in connection with this myth about his various “deeds” can be told.

All genres of Greek folklore are permeated with mythological material from tales of gods and heroes. The emergence of mythological ideas dates back to a very early stage in the development of human society. Among peoples at the stage of hunting and gathering economy, myths in the vast majority of cases are stories about the origin of certain objects, natural phenomena, rituals, institutions, the presence of which plays a significant role in social life.

The primitive hunter is especially interested in animals, and each tribe has many stories about how and whence the different species of animals came, and how they acquired their characteristic appearance and coloring. The story is based on the analogy of human experiences. For Australians, the red spots on the feathers of the black cockatoo and the hawk come from severe burns, the whale's breathing hole from a blow from a spear, which he once received in the back of the head while still a man.

There are similar stories about the emergence of rocks, lakes, and rivers; The windings of the river are associated with the movement of some fish or snake. Stories about the origin of fire are common everywhere, with fire usually being hidden somewhere and then stolen for people (at the hunting stage, people are much more likely to find things than to make them). The subject of the myth is also the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon, and the constellations; the myth tells of their arrival in heaven and how their form, direction of movement, phases, etc. were created. Animals and motifs of transformation play a significant role in all these stories.

At the same time, each tribe, each group has myths about its origin, which determine their relationships with each other, myths about how all kinds of magical rituals and spells were established. Myth is never considered as fiction, and primitive peoples strictly distinguish fiction, which serves only for entertainment, or stories about true events in the native tribe and among foreign peoples, from myths, which are also thought of as true history, but especially valuable history, establishing norms for future.

The social function of myth is to be an ideological justification and guarantee of the preservation of the existing order in nature and society. Justification is achieved by the fact that the emergence of the corresponding objects and relations is transferred to the past, when especially revered beings established a certain world order; the telling of a myth aims to instill confidence in the strength of this order, and sometimes the very process of storytelling is considered as a magical means of influencing the preservation of this order and is often accompanied by corresponding magical actions or is an integral part of a cult ceremony.

Myth is the “sacred history” of the tribe, and its guardians are social groups that are called upon to maintain the inviolability of existing customs - old people, in later stages - shamans, sorcerers, etc., depending on the forms of social stratification. The “sacred” appears to be the prototype, norm and driving force of the ordinary.

One of the most important prerequisites for myth education is the attribution of properties of the human psyche to environmental objects. Everything living, as well as moving and thus appearing to be alive - animals, plants, the sea, heavenly bodies, etc. - are thought of as personal forces that perform certain actions for the same reasons as people. The cause of everything is seen in the fact that someone once made it or found it. Another, no less important prerequisite for myth education is the insufficiently differentiated ideas about things, the inability to distinguish the essential aspects of a thing from the non-essential; thus, the name of an object seems to be an integral part of it.

Primitive man considers it possible to “magically” influence a thing, performing any actions on a part of the thing, on its name, image or similar object. Primitive thinking is “metaphorical”: it admits that a part of a thing, or its property, or a similar object, a story about a thing, its image or a dance performance can “replace” the thing itself. These features of primitive thinking pose before science a difficult question about the history of thinking, about the stages

through which it passed. The French scientist Lévy-Bruhl created a theory of "pre-logical thinking", from which he deduces the origin of myths.

One should, however, beware of the idealistic interpretation of mythological thinking, the idea that primitive consciousness does not reflect objective reality. The peculiarities of the thinking of primitive people are rooted in the low development of abstract forms of thought, in insufficient awareness of the properties of an object, due to the low level of development of productive forces, and insufficient ability to actively change nature. Myth-making is not a simple game of fantasy; This is a stage in the process of exploration of the world through which all peoples have passed. "...low economic development before the historical period had as its addition, and sometimes even as a condition and cause, false ideas about nature." [5]

The richly developed mythological system is one of the most important components of the heritage that Greek literature received from previous stages of cultural development, and myth-making went through many stages before it was cast into the forms known to us from Greek mythology. A large number of layers deposited in different eras were discovered in it, and "the past reality is reflected in the fantastic creations of mythology." [7] Greek myths contain numerous echoes of group marriage, matriarchy, but at the same time they also reflect the historical fate of Greek tribes in later times.

As the main form of ideological creativity in pre-class society, mythology is the soil on which science and art subsequently grow. These forms of ideology are not yet differentiated, they merge in myth, which is a fantastic understanding of nature and social relations and, at the same time, their "unconscious artistic processing in folk fantasy," unconscious precisely in the sense that the artistic moment has not yet been highlighted and not realized.

We have seen that mythological fantasy, unlike later artistic fantasy, perceives its images as a special, "sacred" reality, different from everyday reality. Greek myths tell about the origin of natural phenomena and objects of material culture, social institutions, religious rituals, the origin of the world (cosmogony) and the origin of the gods (theology).

The mythological tales of the Greeks reflect those ideas about nature that were mentioned above in connection with various forms of ritual play. The struggle between good and evil forces, death and resurrection, the descent into the kingdom of the dead and a safe return from there, the abduction and return of the stolen - all these are common plots of Greek myth, widespread among other peoples.

As observations of the verbal creativity of primitive peoples show, such narratives most often take the form of a prose tale and in many ways resemble a modern folk tale. No examples have survived from the Greek folk tale: in a developed ancient society, the educated strata treated with contempt "old wives' stories" for children or in the women's half of the house, and fairy tales were not collected.

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