
ВОПРОСЫ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ И ФЕДЕРАТИВНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ

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ВОПРОСЫ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ И ФЕДЕРАТИВНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ

Научный журнал

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В.Ф. ПОКАСОВ

*кандидат исторических наук,
Ставропольский государственный педагогический
институт, Россия, г. Ставрополь*

И.А. АНУПРИЕНКО

*кандидат исторических наук,
Ставропольский государственный педагогический
институт, Россия, г. Ставрополь*

Г.И. МАЛЯВИНА

*кандидат исторических наук,
Ставропольский государственный педагогический
институт, Россия, г. Ставрополь*

А.С. ГОНЧАРОВ

*бакалавр Ставропольского
государственного педагогического института,
Россия, г. Ставрополь
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-3244-8155*

МАГИЧЕСКИЕ ПРАКТИКИ В ПОВСЕДНЕВНОСТИ ДРЕВНИХ ГРЕКОВ

Настоящая статья посвящена изучению магических практик, ритуалов и обрядов эллинского мира в классический и архаический периоды. Актуальность темы связана с необходимостью обращения к ранее не рассмотренному аспекту истории ментальности Древней Греции. Практическая значимость заключается в возможности использования материалов работы в дальнейшем изучении культуры и массовых магических практик греческих магов и оракулов. В методическом аспекте материалы исследования можно использовать на занятиях по историческим и культурологическим дисциплинам на уровне высшего учебного заведения. Научная новизна исследования связана с обращением к новому частному аспекту ментальности и повседневности Древней Греции рассматриваемого периода. В методологический аппарат вошли специально-исторические, социологические и культурологические методы. Специально-исторические методы: нарративный метод, идеографический метод,

историко-генетический метод, историко-системный метод, историко-типологический метод, историко-сравнительный метод, проблемно-хронологический метод, метод исторической периодизации, метод исторического моделирования, реконструктивный метод, структурный метод, функциональный метод, метод актуализации исторического знания. Социологические методы: анализ документов, метод экспертной оценки, метод парных сравнений, метод идеальных типов. Культурологические методы: моделирование преобразующих культурных практик, культурно-генетический метод, культурно-системный метод, метод анализа бытовой культуры, метод анализа игровой культуры, семиотический метод, компаративный метод. Результатом исследования стало подтверждение авторской гипотезы о том, что исчезновение магических практик в повседневности древних греков было связано с тем, что они противоречили культовой ментальности и обращались не к божественной природе мира, а к Хаосу, мифологическому первоначалу.

Ключевые слова: Греция, повседневность, магия, миф, культ, обряд, амулет.

V.F. POKASOV

*Candidate of Historical Sciences
Stavropol State Pedagogical Institute,
Stavropol, Russia*

I.A. ANUPRIENKO

*Candidate of Historical Sciences
Stavropol State Pedagogical Institute,
Stavropol, Russia*

G.I. MALYAVINA

*Candidate of Historical Sciences
Stavropol State Pedagogical Institute,
Stavropol, Russia*

A.S. GONCHAROV

*Bachelor, Stavropol State Pedagogical Institute,
Stavropol, Russia
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-3244-8155*

MAGICAL PRACTICES IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS

The present article is devoted to the study of magical practices, rituals and ceremonies of Hellenic world in Classical and Archaic periods. The topicality of the topic is connected with the necessity of addressing a previously unexamined aspect of the history of the mentality of Ancient Greece. The practical significance lies in the possibility of using the materials of the work in the further study of culture and mass magical practices of Greek magicians and oracles. In the methodological aspect of the study materials can be used in courses on history and cultural disciplines at the higher education institution. The scientific novelty of the study is associated with a new private aspect of mentality and everyday life in ancient Greece in the period under consideration. The methodological apparatus included special historical, sociological and culturological methods. Special historical methods: narrative method, ideographic method, historical-genetic method, historical-systemic method, historical-typological method, historical-comparative method, problem-chronological method, historical periodization method, historical modelling method, reconstructive method, structural method, functional method, method of actualization of historical knowledge. Sociological methods: document analysis, method of expert evaluation, method of paired comparisons, method of ideal types. Culturological methods: modelling of transformative cultural practices, cultural-genetic method, cultural-systemic method, method of analysis of everyday culture, method of analysis of game culture, semiotic method, comparative method. The result of the study was the confirmation of the author's hypothesis that the disappearance of magical practices in the everyday life of the ancient Greeks was due to the fact that they contradicted the cult mentality and turned not to the divine nature of the world, but to Chaos, the mythological original.

Key words: *Greece, everyday life, magic, myth, cult, rite, amulet.*

Introduction. Mythology played a unifying, formative role for all ancient Greek culture (for the Archaic and partly for the Classical periods). It began to take shape already in the Crete-Mycenaean period. The most ancient were the deities that embodied the forces of nature. From the union of Gaia, the earth, and Uranus came the titans. The eldest titan was Ocean, the youngest was Kronos. One of Uranus' daughters was Aphrodite, born of the foam of the sea near the island of Cyprus, the goddess of love and beauty. Through Hittite borrowings the most ancient gods of the Greek pantheon are closely connected with the common Indo-European system of religious beliefs.

In the Archaic period the main types of monumental sculpture were formed – the statues of a naked boy-athlete (kuros) and a draped girl (kora). Kuroses were always sculpted in a full-length pose of walking. One leg always protruded forward and the face was decorated with an archaic smile. But there is no naturalness in these sculptures: it looks as if the kuroses are only pretending to walk, the position of the limbs is inorganic. There is no individuality in the sculptures of young men – they are all the same. Not even their facial expressions differ, it's an «archaic smile» everywhere. The sculptures of girls are much more diverse. These statues were created with some variable features. It is believed that it was this 'sign cult' that gave rise to the first magical practices.

Similarly, the ancient Greeks borrowed magical practices, which, however, were not as widespread as the cult rituals. The unpopularity and irrelevance of the nascent magical practices led to their displacement by the urban population, becoming part of village culture and penetrating into certain parts of the Mysteries. We set ourselves the task to find out what was the essence, structural and functional features and the mental component of magical practices in the everyday life of the ancient Greeks.

The hypothesis of the study is that the flowering of magical practices was associated with the emergence of spiritual culture of oracles, and the decline and unpopularity of magical rituals in the Hellenic world as a whole - the contradiction between the prevailing cultic mentality, involving the appeal to the Cosmos and the gods as its main embodiments, and the worship of Chaos among magicians, who believed in the absolute foundation of nature and the divine world.

Overview of sources and historiography. The source base is represented by four groups of sources: 1) the works of contemporary historians; 2) philosophical works; 3) reference works; 4) artistic sources.

The works of contemporary historians are represented by the complete works of Plutarch [15-20]; the eight volumes of Strabo's Geography [22]. These sources allow to determine the attitude of the polis population to magicians, and also contain the most reliable (among the survived) information on the magical rituals and everyday practices of the inhabitants of settlements and villages.

Philosophical works are represented by Aristotle's treatises, including Categories (3), Metaphysics (4), Meteorology (5), On Dreams (6), On Memory and Reminiscence (7), On the Soul (8); Oneirocritica by Artemidor of Daldia, a two-volume work which compiled and structured the main practices of Greek magicians [9; 10]; and the complete works of Plato, including the most important dialogue for this study, The State [14].

The reference works are presented by the collection «Magika Hiera», which includes extracts from ancient sources on various rituals and ceremonies of the archaic and classical periods [13]. The handbook was compiled by foreign cultural historians and anthropologists A. Faraone, J. Strubbe, H. Versnel, R. Kotansky, J. Scarborough, S. Eitrem, F. Graf, J. Winkler, H. Betz, C. Phillips.

The literary sources are represented by the comedies by Aristophanes [1; 2]; the tragedies *Alcestitis* by Euripides [11]; the work *Astrology / On Astrology* by Lucian of Samosata [12]; the tragedies by Aeschylus, including the most important ones for this research *Hoefors*, *Oresteia*, *Electra* and *Seven against Thebes* [23]. The artistic sources reveal the mental complex of Greek magicians as depicted by ancient writers.

The historiography of research on the subject is rather sparse. Among the prominent researchers we can single out the work of B. Russell, who in his famous work «*A History of Western Philosophy*» gives a detailed description of various cults and rituals of the ancient world [21]. His study on ancient philosophy, however, may well be used in the history of mentality, as the author himself refers to primary sources.

1. Experience of magical practices. Mycenaean Greece was divided into kingdoms, each with a population living in cities and large estates belonging to the nobility. The kingdoms were ruled by kings who claimed divine origin and ruled from capitals, analogous to polis, which contained palaces or citadels-acropolises («*High Cities*») that were erected on the highest hills in the area for the purpose of effective defense. In the Dark Ages, palaces, kings and manors ceased to exist, the population dwindled, cities were abandoned or turned into villages among the ruins, and the royal bureaucracy was replaced by more primitive forms of authority in the form of a tribal structure. Apparently, it was the magical practices of the Mycenaean kingdom that became the foreign cultural element that later manifested itself in the culture of Attica.

The first distinctive magical practice that went against the public opinion of the ancient Greeks was necromancy, which never existed in a coherent structured form, but nevertheless had a notoriety among the urban population. Necromancy is the science of summoning the spirits of the dead for divination or fortune telling, as well as for obtaining their help in magical matters. Although people in ancient Greece publicly condemned necromancy, it was secretly practised everywhere. Plutarch writes that one of the earliest examples may be found in the *Odyssey*: Odysseus performs an elaborate ritual to contact the spirits of the dead by combining sacrifice and prayer [15]. Plutarch himself describes this ritual more than once in his biographies of great Greek commanders and heroes [16; 17; 18].

Another literary account comes from Plato, who was sceptical about necromancy. Aeschylus repeatedly describes the ritual of the necromancers which they performed on the river Acheron, where the Oracle of the Dead advises the envoy Periander, the tyrant of Corinth. Physical evidence of necromancy has been found on hundreds of curse tablets. An exact description of the ritual has not survived, only that sources of fire, the hair of the «victim» and dug pits are known to have been used [14].

A ritual with obol linings and a ritual with invocation of the dead by a wooden, clay tablet were known [8]. The first ritual was needed for the deceased to pay

Charon, the underground boatman. The second ritual was used for the spirit to do the hard physical work for the magician. From extant sources, we can judge that the magi really believed that the dead could do physical work for them, or – wanted to convince the inhabitants of settlements and villages, perhaps even the inhabitants of the polis.

While the first ritual has already been described in detail by antiquarian historians, the second remains understudied. Let us describe it in basic detail. The magician who places the tablet in the grave is not sure whose grave it is; therefore, he refers to the 'soul' or 'ghost', whether male or female. He is also unsure whether this ghost can do the job alone, so he tries to ensure success by invoking both the gods of the dead and the souls of the dead, whose graves are nearby. The magician especially seeks help from maidens and young people who have died untimely, i.e. before they have completed a full life, including marriage and the birth of children. The magician first makes a wax doll, sews the hair of the deceased to it, then fills in a table with the name, date of death and cause of death of the deceased. The next night he lights four «sacred lights» and recites a set of incantations. The ritual is then completed [13].

Interestingly, the ancient Greeks were very upset when they saw wax dolls on graves. Otherwise they placed heavy boulders on the deceased so that the dead man would not rise. Perhaps this is why the population of Attica and other parts of Hellas eventually came to despise magicians, to the point where they began to be ostracized.

B. Russell, believes that in Hellenistic cultures necromancy rituals were performed by priests and sorcerers in a state of incubation. It seems most plausible that incubation followed all the preparatory acts: setting up a pit in which the sleeper was kept, building a fire, slaughtering sheep and reciting prayers and incantations. The measures necessary for the management of the spirits, who appeared on a call, took, depending on the circumstances, or before and after incubation, or mentally during the dream itself [21].

It is also worth mentioning that the ancient Greeks were very superstitious. Almost every disease had its own decoctions and healing potions, which could only heal the patient through the «placebo effect». The functions of the potions were very diverse indeed. For example, in order for a woman to achieve a slim waistline, it was necessary «...to take a few hairs from a donkey's grits, burn them and crush the ashes, and then put them in a drink for the woman» [13].

In order for a woman to say the name of the man she loved, it was necessary «...to put the tongue of a bird under her lip or on her heart and ask a question <...> after which she would say his name three times». These and other potions, which came from myths, were reinforced in ancient drama and reflected in everyday life [13].

Superstitions related to the counting of quantitative relations were also widespread. They were especially reinforced in the practices of the atomists and

Pythagoreans. To cite a few examples. Pythagoras, believed that the square root of two was an irrational number, so it could not be expressed by any simple fraction. This shocked the philosopher, as he was sure that his teachings could give an exact answer to any question, including mathematical ones [21].

When the followers of Pythagoras stumbled upon this seemingly innocuous example of the limitations of knowledge, it undermined the very essence of their beliefs. Mathematics for the Pythagoreans was inseparable from mysticism and religious life, and the structure of the cosmos, they believed, was linked to mathematical harmony. The Pythagoreans tried to keep the matter secret, but one member divulged it outside the brotherhood [13]. The traitor was eventually drowned. Many scholars, including B. Russell, describe this man as the first martyr of the ancient world [21].

Sacrifice was considered an inseparable part of the cult. However, it was also used in the rites of the Greek magicians. In ancient Greece mainly oxes, goats and sheep were sacrificed, but there were also some «unconventional variants». According to Plutarch, the Spartans slaughtered puppies in honour of Enialius, the god of war. Sometimes animal sacrifices got out of hand as it happened after the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. Spartans sacrificed too many animals then, which caused a famine in 490-488 B.C. After that many magicians were ostracised and had to leave Sparta [19; 20].

In the reference book «Magika Hiera» there is a description of how the Athenians promised the goddess Artemis that they would sacrifice one goat in her honour for each enemy to be killed in the Battle of Marathon. The initiative for the sacrifice was taken by the magi, forcing the other inhabitants of the polis to support their idea. Herodotus reports that the Athenians killed over 6400 of their enemies, after which they ran out of goats. The magicians were outraged and prophesied dire consequences. But instead of procuring goats from their neighbours, the Athenians undertook to perform a ritual sacrifice every year, killing 500 goats in honour of Artemis. The dissatisfied magicians were ostracised [13].

2. The rise and fall of magicians. It cannot be said that magical practices were unrelated to the object culture, but their spread was held back by the various cults of the gods. Magicians worshipped nature and considered Chaos its only incarnation, so the bulk of the polis population believed that magicians were blindly following relics. The vast majority of Attica believed in the magical properties of amulets, the magicians decided to take advantage of this to popularise magical practices among the rural population [22].

The peasants, who were constantly worried about the weather, were particularly vulnerable; they placed all their hopes in the magical properties of these amulets. Many of the peasants wore amulets around their necks or on their wrists to ensure abundant rainfall for their crops. Magicians used this superstition to earn money and attract followers [22].

It should be highlighted that all sorts of amulets were common: amulets against robbers, amulets for good luck, contraceptive amulets, amulets to attract a lover and protective amulets, amulets against spells and harmful magic directed at the amulet holder, etc. Some of them took very curious shapes that were supposed to enhance their magical properties: Egyptian crabs, noses, eyes. Magicians also sold amulets in the form of genitals, which were supposed to increase fertility in the family [23].

The peak of the rise in the popularity of amulets was the formation of the first and only magical cult, the cult of the «Living Goddess». The cult emerged during the reign of Pisistratus (560-527 BC). Pisistratus was a tyrant who ruled Athens several times. According to Herodotus, Pisistratus once gained power over Athens in a rather unusual way by taking a tall and beautiful peasant woman and dressing her as the goddess Athena. He put armour on her and rode beside her in a chariot into the city. At this time a group of heralds announced that the goddess had brought Pisistratus to seize control of the city. Thereafter the girl was worshipped until the tyrant's death [13].

Regarding the verbal expression of magical practices, it should be pointed out that ancient incantations written on tablets are found in all polis today. Many of them were related to the practice of medicine, either to help someone get better, to increase the effectiveness of medicines, or even to poison or harm enemies.

Although such incantations were mostly found in written form, it was believed that their effectiveness could be enhanced by accompanying them with concrete actions. This included writing down certain words and mystical symbols. Medicine and mysticism were closely linked in polis culture. A consequence of this was the transformation of magicians into oracles [3; 5].

The word «oracle» in the politics of Attica could mean two closely related concepts: a statement made by some deity (mostly through an intermediary) or a place where such statements were made. Many of these statements were answers to human questions [4; 6]. Some were simple «yes» or «no» statements, while some others may have been presented in an implicit or ambiguous form. The magicians moved away from practising in small settlements and began to call themselves oracles in order to maintain a perception of the original essence of Chaos and to get along with the cultists [11].

This decision allowed the magicians to gain a foothold in Delphi, a period of flourishing magical practices, but at the same time they became more «closed» [1; 2]. There are practically no primary sources about oracle-mages and their everyday life of oracle-mages; we know only that some representatives of Greek magicians continued to practice astrology and oneiromancy (interpretation of dreams).

Astrology influenced Greek minds in two ways: either it was stated that the behaviour of the planets had an unavoidable influence on human affairs [7], or it acted as a guide in relation to the human personality, depending on the position

of the heavenly bodies at the time of human birth [5]. Many ancient Greek astrological treatises have survived. For example, Lucian's work *Astrology*, which partially reveals the everyday life of magicians of the classical period [12].

Up until the decline of magical practices in the era of Plato and Aristotle we can say that the ritual of dreaming and divination by the content of dreams was widespread. The idea that dreams can foretell the future was widespread in ancient Greece. The ancient soothsayer Artemidorus of Daldia wrote a work called *Oneirocritica* in which he revealed some of the complex meanings associated with «mind games». For example, to see a weasel in a dream means a wicked and cunning woman, as well as a lawsuit. To see an old woman in a dream portends the death of a sick person, etc. [9; 10].

Artemidorus classifies allegorical dreams in detail and describes the method of interpreting dreams, the essence of which is expressed as follows: «for the interpretation of a dream is nothing else than the comparison of the like» [9]. Artemidor's methodology consists in constructing metaphorical or metonymic connections between dream objects and situations and reality. In almost all cases, Artemidor explains the reason for the dream analogies is that human life repeats itself in a circle [10].

Conclusion. Thus, we can conclude that magical practices were not popular among the Greeks. Because of the destructive potential of magical actions, which Plato specifically points out, and because they were outside of the polis religion, magic was undoubtedly an antisocial activity in the Greco-Roman world and we cannot put it into a certain social context. However, despite the supposed anti-social and marginal connotations of magic, it set the stage for high literature and even the fine arts. Magi only rose to prominence through the popularity of oracles, mainly the Delphic Oracle. But then, along with the beginning of the synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures in the Hellenistic era, magical practices decline and almost completely disappear in the Early Middle Ages.

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