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The Representation of Pyre in Greek and Roman Arts

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Abstract

The discovery of decorated pottery dating back to the period points to the presence of pyres of the emperors Alcmena, Croesus and Petrocles. And through references and archaeological evidence affected the burning of corpses and explained the extent of the spread of funeral pyres, and evidence of the practice of burning in the early tenth century BC. Also, the use of crematoriums in special periods starts from some of them in India during the modern era, with some differences in crematoriums, the most important of which is the crematorium of Hephaistos, friend of Alexander, which includes formality and exceeds 60 meters in height. As for the pyre in the Roman art, it was represented on many coins, and depicted many emperors and their pyres. It consists of three or four floors, where burning was practiced during the first century BC and continued until the fourth century AD.

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1. Introduction

Cremation was known in Syria and Palestine in the Stone Age, as well as the usage of pottery in preserving the deceased ashes. It seems that these rites were transformed from Syria and Palestine into Anatolia throughout the 15th century BC, when cremation was also introduced into the Mycenaean Civilization, and especially to the Aegean Islands. Anatolia is considered the main hub for the spread of cremation in the Middle Bronze Age, notably in cities like Karabuk, Kaniz and Dilkaya. The oldest graves were found in the Alicia tomb, as many were put into urns. As for mythical examples related to cremation, they are represented through ¹Herakles, Hibi, ²Dionysus, ³Medea and ⁴Demeter. Each had tried to immortalize their offspring by letting them go through the fires to be purified (Tomorad, 2009, 12-28)The Greek civilization was influenced by the Cretan Civilization in the middle of the second millennium BC, where people were too concerned with their dead in a way close to worshipping. The dead were buried in pottery sarcophagi or large jars. Food and tools were put alongside to help the dead in their afterlife. People used to visit their dead in certain occasions and pray to their gods for the deceased to rest in peace.

2. Literature Review

The contemporary Mycenaean Civilization was also influenced, where people believed in the afterlife; a reason for putting tools and funerary attachments with their dead. They were also influenced by their Achaean ancestors, who burnt their dead, as well as being done by the Dorians; probably for being unsettled peoples, who were incapable of taking care of graves, especially after the Dorian descent. Through the

¹ Hercules is one of Greek mythology's most celebrated characters. Son of Zeus and a demi-god with superhuman strength, Heracles became the ultimate symbol of masculine power and braver (last accessed 12/8/2023) (<https://www.theoi.com/greek-mythology/heracles.html/>)

²Dionysus was the god of wine-making, orchards and fruit, vegetation, fertility, [festivity](#), insanity, ritual madness, [religious ecstasy](#), and [theatre](#) He was also known as **Bacchus** https://www.greekmythology.com/Other_Gods/Dionysus/dionysus.html (last accessed 12/8/2023)

³Medea was known in most stories as a sorceress, but also as a witch, and is often depicted as a priestess of the goddess [Hecate](#) is the daughter of [King Aeëtes](#) of [Colchis](#), a niece of [Circe](#) and the granddaughter of the sun god [Helios](#). Medea figures in the myth of [Jason](#) and the [Argonauts](#), appearing in [Hesiod's Theogony](#) around 700 BCE but is best known from [Euripides's](#) tragedy [Medea](#) and [Apollonius of Rhodes's](#) epic [Argonautica](#). :,2008, 1- <https://www.greeklegendsandmyths.com/medea.html> (last accessed 12/8/2023)

⁴ Demeter was the Ancient Greek goddess of the harvest. She was a very important goddess to Ancient Greek people <https://www.theoi.com/Olympios/Demeter.html> (last accessed 12/8/2023)

11th and 10th centuries BC, the five civilizations (Cretan, ⁵Mycenaean, ⁶Achaean, ⁷Dorian and Eastern civilizations) were moulded together and paved the way for a new life, emerging within the city states. Until then, the relation between body and soul was mysterious, as well as the fate of the soul in the afterlife (Tomorad, 2009,12-28).

The Greeks used to bury or cremate their dead, believing that they will live in the domain of the god of death. Retribution was also uncertain with the age of the great philosophers, since the 7th century BC, new ideas have emerged around the conception of death and retribution. The most important was the Orphism, which was concerned with hymns and rituals that guide the dead in dealing with the underworld deities during his judgment. Souls descend to the underworld for judgment and later to be resurrected for retribution, according to Pythagoreanism, that is considered the soul to replace the human body for committing sins in the upper world. When the body dies, the soul abandons it and go through a chain of reincarnations from one body to another until its purification, returning to the holy upper world afterwards (Davey,1935,245).

⁵ Mycenaeans were influenced by the earlier [Minoan civilization](#) (2000-1450 BCE) which had spread from its origins at [Knossos](#), Crete to include the wider Aegean Mycenaea, [Architecture](#), art and religious practices ⁵ were assimilated and adapted to better express the perhaps more militaristic and austere Mycenaean [culture](#) (last accessed 27/9/2023)(https://www.worldhistory.org/Mycenaean_Civilization

⁶Achaean is the name of the people inhabiting in the area of Achaia in Greece. However, its definition changed throughout history. Homer used the term in his epics, Iliad and Odyssey, to collectively describe the Greeks. Other collective names were also used, the most common being Danaans and Argives (last accessed 12/8/2023)(<https://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/Mortals/Achaeans/achaeans.html>

⁷ Dorian: one of the four major ethnic groups into which the [Hellenes](#) (or Greeks) of [Classical Greece](#) divided themselves (along with the [Aeolians](#), [Achaeans](#), and [Ionians](#)) (<https://brewminate.com/the-dorian-tribal-invasion-of-ancient-greece> last accessed 12/8/2023)

The Pyre in Greek Art:

The process of burial, which is dated to the 11th – 7th century BC, was common in Greek cemeteries, along installing funerary stelae for the dead, which was clear in the tumulus; burial sites were composed of various halls buried under earth piles and stone to form a hill, where the burial chamber lies underneath. The chamber hosts a large number of deceased people; rich or poor, men or women.

The procedure of cremation for nobles within the Macedonian Empire – dated to the 7th century BC – had a large amount of human bones. Through the excavations between 1994 and 1996, various tombs were uncovered, four of them are dated to the second half of the 6th century BC and two are dated to the 5th century BC. Each of them contained golden slabs, bronze jars and weapons, reflecting the wealth of the owner and how they belong to the rich and dynastic class (fig. 1) (Gesell, 1990,52).



Fig (1)

Describe: weapons, reflecting the wealth of the owner and how they belong to the rich and dynastic class

Source: Kottaridi,2001,4

Two swords with silver-nailed, ebony-coated handles were uncovered, in addition to large spearheads (fig 2), a bronze helmet (fig. 3) and remains of armors, various jars and oinochoe bronze plates. These graves are dated to the first half of the 6th century BC (Andronikos 1969, 164).



Fig (2)

Describe: swords with silver-nailed

Source : Kottaridi,2001,4



Fig (3)

Describe : bronze helmet

Source : Kottaridi,2001,6

In the same graves, many pottery, ebony and bronze jars were found, some of which are funerary, which are called Hydria vases along various pots, scoops and cups. Their condition was deteriorated due to being exposed to cremation fire. Many bronze urns were uncovered containing the ashes of the deceased along many textures from offerings within, as well as some gifts (fig. 4).



Fig (4)

Describe: Many bronze urns were uncovered containing the ashes of the deceased along many textures from offerings within, as well as some gifts

Source: Kottaridi,2001,7

Non-plated cooking pots were discovered, which were used the same as the bronze caldrons. The caldron is a large pot used for boiling water or other things, as well as used for preserving the ashes of the dead (fig. 5) Many uncovered graves belonged to warriors, which contained weapons, bronze helmets, spears and swords.



Fig (5)

Describe: a large pot used for boiling water or other things

Source: Kottaridi,2001,8

Excavations showed that these graves belonged to men. In the first half of the 5th century BC, women were buried and not cremated. Gold and gems were buried with them. Evidences proved that in the time of Alexander I (499 – 445 BC), heroes were cremated and their wives buried. In the second half of the 5th century BC, the process of cremation became expensive that it was only done by the rich, high-positioned officials, rulers and their families, and few ranks of the army. In the 4th century BC, cremation spread within the lower classes. For example, in the reign of Philip II (359 – 336 BC), cremation had appeared among simple Macedonian citizens, as well as finding belongings like combs and potteries; evidence of how these citizens were of the lower status (Kottaridi, 2001, 5). Cremation was more suitable for people who were killed during battle. The Philippian wars and the conquests of Alexander were a more suitable atmosphere for cremation to the Greeks, according to Diodorus (Diodorus, XVIII, 13) Ptolemy, after the cremation of the soldiers of Perdiccas, had conquered Egypt and ordered the making of a suitable funeral for them and sending their bones to their families and friends; a proof of the Macedonian respect for the funerary rites and the generalizing of cremation and burial. Bones of the deceased were wrapped in a purple texture and preserved in a marble pot, decorated with scenes of the deities. From observing these examples, the idea of a Macedonian grave becomes clear; a construction of an underground resting place. It was then that the idea of the funerary pyre, as a large building for inserting the body within to be cremated, had emerged (Kottaridi, 2001, 10).

An example of this pyre is the one of King Philip II, in the shape of a grand, mausoleum-like construction or a tomb. It was built of wood and limestone. Inside the grave rests the king on a gilded and ebonized kline, wearing a wreath of vine leaves. The king was cremated along various belongings like shields, swords, spears and lances, in addition to funerary wreaths made of gold, as well as jars of food, fruits, fish, birds, rabbits, cattle, pigs and a group of hunting dogs. King Philip was placed beside his wife. (Gesell, 2007, 5).

Archeological evidences proved that the wife of Philip, Meda, princess of Thrace, whom Philip had married after his return from his campaign in Scythia – was cremated in the same grave. According to her homeland traditions, she followed her husband to the pyre flames, considering herself his companion to the afterlife. Her action is unexplainable, except for being his favorite, perfect, loyal wife; an example

for mythical heroes. The king had granted her many valuables of jewelry, boxes full of gold and an urn for her bones inside. These belongings are of the same value as Philip's. Moreover, she was granted a gilded and ebonized kline, decorated with more riches than that of the king (Philpot,1991,107). The funeral ceremony of Philip II is considered among the richest and most elegant funeral ceremonies in Ancient Greece. After excavating in Greece between 1987 and 1990, especially in the region of Kafusi Farunadana, Eastern Crete, 107 remains of graves dated to the early Iron Age were found, as they contained cremated bones inside handled amphoras (Gesell, 2007, 1).

Though it was frequently practiced, cremation is rarely depicted in Greek art. There is an engraving preserved in the Napoli Museum depicting Achilles preparing Patrokles to be put over the pyre (fig.6).



Fig (6)

Describe: an engraving preserved in the Napoli Museum depicting Achilles preparing Patrokles to be put over the pyre

<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/O2.1.html>(last access:8/8/2023)

Patrokles, cousin of Achilles, who tried to push Achilles to fight once more, is said by Homer that, while crying, "Here had fallen the most courageous amongst the killed and injured of the Greeks. Do they take no pity, oh Achilles? Does loss not disturb thee? Would thee remain languid and hesitant, distanced from the fire of battle. I beg thee to lend me thy weapon, and send me to fight in thy name. Shall the Trojan think I am thee and strike their hearts with asunder with fears? And victory might be claimed (Homer,Iliad,XX.III, 42).

However, Achilles had refused, pushing Patrokles into stealing his armor and going to battle along the warriors, believing he is Achilles. After knowing his cousin's slaughter, Achilles swears to avenge him by killing Hector, promising Patrokles. Achilles promises to feed Hector to the dogs and slaughter a dozen of the Trojans.

Afterwards, Achilles drives his chariot thrice around Patrokles' corpse, preparing the pyre. The Myrmidons – a group of Greek mercenaries led by Achilles, hero of the *Iliad*, who played a great role in shifting the result of war – therefore, they were being rewarded by burning their personal shields, even the unworn bronze armors and sacrifice horses and mules, as well as shaving their hair (Graves, 2018, 20-63)

Achilles had built a pyre for Patroklos after the war in his honor. He sent warriors on mules and carts to collect wood for the pyre. A funerary procession was made, as Achilles sacrificed Trojan youth in honor of Patrokles, according to Homer in the *Iliad*. Achilles sacrificed many animals and a dozen of the Trojans then lit them on fire (Homer, *Iliad*, XXIII, 52).

Achilles was depicted naked; a symbol of heroism, except in the worshipping of Herakles, who has a sword, tied to his neck, as he slaughters the Trojan girls on the pyre of Patrokles. In his left hand was a sword, which he uses for slaughtering, while the girl lies on the ground with her hands tied behind her back. She is depicted wearing a chiton and a belt below her breasts, and her head is tilted below to face her fate and the punishment of Trojan defeat. Behind him, his soldiers stood presenting their offerings on the pyre of Patrokles. Atop of the pyre, we can see the bronze shields; a symbol of honoring the Myrmidons that not to be worn again, as well as funerary urns for the deceased's bones. One of the urns contained mule fatty oils to cover Patrokles' body before cremation. These mules and horses were offered on the funerary pyre (Venit, 1999, 641-669)

Regarding burning the living on a pyre, there are examples like that of Alcmene, known as Electryone, considered daughter of Anaxo and Electryon son of Perseus and Andromeda, wife of Amphitryon, who gave birth to Iphicles and Laonome. Hesiod had described her as a woman of both wisdom and beauty. He compared her to Aphrodite, adorned by Zeus. Alcmene had encouraged her husband Amphitryon to go to Thebes and avenge his brother. Indeed, he did via a campaign against the Taphians and Teleboans. During, Zeus had visited Alcmene, **shape-shifted** as her husband Amphitryon, thus giving birth to Herakles. When Amphitryon returned to Alcmene, he started telling his victories against the Teleboans. However, Alcmene told him that he visited her last night, this knowing later from Tiresias what Zeus had committed (Hesiod, *Theogonia*, 859).

The story of Alcmene delivering Heracles had different versions. Homer's *Iliad* narrates that Alcmene was about to deliver Herakles, Zeus told all the gods that today a boy will be born who will rule all around him ((Homer, *Iliad*, XXIII, 66).

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* narrates the hard labor of delivering Herakles by Alcmene due to his large body, making her suffer for seven days and nights, until Alcmene had stretched her arm and Lucina begged for the goddess of labor, but ⁸Hera ordered Lucina to stop the labor through magic. Alcmene's servant had noticed the strange attitude of Lucina and recognized Hera's doings. Afterwards, she successfully delivered the child safely, surprising Lucina and broke the curse, delivering Herakles (Ovid, 1922, 205)

The same story was narrated by Pausanias (Pausanias, III, 1.1.1) There are also two stories about how Alcmene had died. The first one was her on her way from Thebes to Argos and died in Megara. The grandsons of Herakles had argued about her burial place. Some insisted on carrying her to Argos and the others to Thebes to be buried next to Amphitryon. In the end, they decided to bury her in Delphi, saying that she must be buried in Meg (Ovid, *Met*, 1.1). As for the other version of the story, when Alcmene died, she was transformed into stone and worshipped as the moon goddess in Athens. However, she was greatly connected with Themes and Beotia. Her greatest characteristics were wisdom, endurance and beauty, considered the mother of Herakles. Her season of worshipping was from the beginning of the New Year until midwinter; a superstition of Herakles being born in midwinter. Small trees were burnt by the end of winter to encourage the growth of new spring trees in a more beautiful and greater way. Thus, Alcmene had inherited the title of the priestess of the moon goddess, which she represented (Embke, 2018, 26).

Alcmene was represented on a pottery Bell Carter, preserved in the British Museum, London (fig. 7) dated to the 4th century BC.



Fig (7)

Describe: a pottery Bell Carter represented Alcmena in the British Museum.

<https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/O2.1.html>

Two men were also represented, both were wearing short chlamys and holding in their right hand a torch, standing near and towards the pyre to lit it on. To the right stands Amphitryon, the husband of Alcmena and to the left stands one of his generals, wearing a belt atop of his chest used for holding weapons. The later also wears a military helmet over his head. He stands torching the pyre of the woods. Over the pyre is a representation of the rainbow; a method used by Amphitryon in identifying the truth of **whether** his wife had cheated him with Zeus or not. Alcmena raises her hand towards the sky in calling for Zeus to help her in proving his love for her. Therefore, Zeus sends two Nephelae to extinguish the pyre's fire and stand next to Alcmena to assist her. Each of the Nephelae holds a jar of water to extinguish the fire from the sky, in which they were successful.

Therefore, Zeus had saved Alcmena, proving for the husband her innocence and devotion for him. To the right Hera stood watching in silence from the sky. (Labyrinth geographical decorative motifs, circular motifs for the clothes and chess motifs for the sleeves of Alcmena's dress and Zeus garment had dominated the scene. White motifs circle the mouth of the vessel. The myth refers to the threatening of Amphitryon to Alcmena by placing her above a pyre against her proclamation of how Zeus had robbed her of her virginity, according to the theatre of Euripides (Thomas, 1991, 135, f. 167).

An amphora, dated to the 5th century BC, preserved in the Louvre Museum in Paris, presented Croesus over a pyre (fig.8).



Fig (8)

Describe: Amphora, dated to the 5th century BC, preserved in the Louvre Museum in Paris, presented Croesus over a pyre

<https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/dictionary/Dict/ASP/dictionarybody.asp?name=Croesus>
(last access 28/8/2023)

The myth tells, after the fall of the Empire of Medea in 549 BC, how he found himself against Cyrus the Persian king. He had confronted with Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian, thus the two kings – Nebuchadnezzar and Croesus – formed a league, supplied with soldiers from Egypt and Spartan ships. However, this league was defeated at the hands of Croesus, due to the betrayal of Uribeatos of Ephesus, who escaped to Persia with gold entrusted to him. Croesus marched to the borders of the empire and secured a primal victory. However, the tables were turned and he was forced to retreat to Sardis. He was followed by Croesus, who conquered the city.
(عمرى إبراهيم، وسوزان روبه، 2012، 215).

The poem by Bacchilides narrates that Croesus wanted to escape by burning himself along his fortune in a funeral pyre like the last Assyrian king Sarcos; however, he fell a prisoner to Cyrus before attempting to burn himself. Herodotus and Xenophon narrate that Cyrus had imprisoned Croesus so that to burn him alive later. However, Apollo came to rescue him((Beazley, 1963, 220).

The artist was keen on representing the historical scene on the amphora. Although the event is related to the East, he attempted to relate the event with Athens, in the time when the Persians had raised Athens to the ground, to what happened in Lydia at the hands of the Persians, when they were victorious over Croesus. The attempt of Croesus, the Persian king, to burn his servant Euthymos, presents him as a hairy, bearded man, showing only his lower half, as related to the servants, bowing before him, holding a torch to light up the pyre. Croesus, king of Lydia (c. 560 – 540 BC), is presented in a seated position over his throne above the pyre, and placed over his head a wreath of laurel. The throne was presented in the design of Ionic columnar capitals, decorating the columns in acanthus leaves.

Greek spiral motifs spurring out of the acanthus and the laurel wreath had spread over his head, as well as the usage of geometrical motifs in various designs, like that of the hands, vessels and ground, where his servant stands and where his throne, where he is seated, rests, atop of the pyre. Motifs had varied among geometrical and floral ones, executed in a marvelous design all over the vessel. Scenes were executed in a life-size design, as well as the distribution of shades. Circular geometrical motifs, in addition to Eastern features like the lotus flower atop of the king's scepter in his left hand, had appeared along the unique design in representing his black beard and hair.

Eyeliners are Eastern features, indicating that the heroes are non-Greek. This design was used on Red Figure pottery, where the red color was used over the black background. Thus, the person appears to shine amidst the darkness. The unique feature of this work of art is the representations without a motif boarder atop and below the scene, as it was commonly known. (Beazley, 1963, 238).

The Pyre in Roman Art:

As for the pyre in the Roman period, all the depictions are confined to the cremation of the Roman emperors. It was one of the deification methods for the Roman emperor, and a religious and funerary method during the Roman Empire. Herodian the Syrian who wrote during the 3rd century AD, narrates about the deification of Emperor Septimius Severus. He states in one of his passages the following: (Herodian of Antioch's, 1961, 515,516)

"Procedures and rites of deification start few days after the emperor's death in the presence of a grand procession, including people from various classes. We see Imperial court statesmen, representatives of the peoples of the empire, syndicate representatives, senators, and the newly crowned emperor at the front. We see the latter's role in the procession in bidding his predecessor farewell, as well as his important presence in gaining public favor and showing his loyalty and devotion to the deceased emperor. (دو غلاس، 2014، 122)

The procession begins by (Herodian of Antioch, 1961,520) making a posthumous wax statue, and then placed on a gilded and ebonized funerary kline. To the left of the bed, the senators stand in a row in black attire. To the right of the kline stand the emperor's widow and his sons. Afterwards, a speech is said in honor of the deceased emperor. Hymns and cremation follow the speech's end, where the kline is placed inside the

crematory. The human trail at the procession surrounds the pyre in a circular way. Finally, fire is lit and an eagle is released to ascend into the sky during the fire.

Dio Cassius describes the pyre as a construction in the shape of a tower or a structure within the market, consisting of three or more storeys, decorated with statues – as shown in the following examples. The arrangement of the crematories pictures is chronological.

Other coin (fig. 9) of the Sestertius category, minted in Rome in the reign of Antoninus Pius, with an image of his companion and wife Faustina the Elder, covering her head and directed to the right, surrounded by the inscription *DIVA.AVGVSTA.FAVSTINA*. On the reverse is a representation of a four-storey pyre, decorated with garlands and columns. Atop of the pyre is a statue of Faustina the Elder mounting the quadriga, surrounded with the inscription *CONSECRATIO* (Mattingly, 2003, 436).



Fig (9)

Describe: coin of the Sestertius category, minted in Rome in the reign of Antoninus Pius, with an image of his companion and wife Faustina the Elder, covering her head and directed to the right, surrounded by the inscription *DIVA.AVGVSTA.FAVSTINA*. On the reverse is a representation of a four-storey pyre, decorated with garlands and columns. Atop of the pyre is a statue of Faustina the Elder mounting the quadriga, surrounded with the inscription *CONSECRATIO*

Source: Mattingly,2003,f.43, 115.

Another denarius (fig. 10) struck in Rome, and dated to the reign of the Marcus Aurelius in 180 BC, depicts the head of Antoninus Pius directed to the right with the inscription *DIVVS.M.ANTONINVS.PIVS*. On the reverse is a depiction of a four-storey pyre. The lower storey is decorated with garlands and textures. The upper floor is centered with a door with arches hosting human statues to its sites. The third storey is decorated with a group of human statues. The **fourth** storey is decorated with

lighted torches on the sides of the pyre. The pyre is topped with a quadriga chariot with a statue of Antoninus Pius, surrounded with the inscription CONSECRATIO.



Fig (10)

Describe: Another denarius coin in Rome, and dated to the reign of the Marcus Aurelius in 180 BC, depicts the head of Antoninus Pius directed to the right with the inscription DIVVS.M.ANTONINVS.PIVS. On the reverse is a depiction of a four-storey pyre

https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/marcus_aurelius/ric_0275_commodus_txt(last access 12-7-2023)

An aureus dated to the reign of Commodus (fig. 11), with the head of Marcus Aurelius directed to the right with the inscription :DIVUS.M.ANTONINVS.PIVS. On the reverse is a depiction of a four-storey pyre. The lower storey is decorated with garlands and textures. The upper floor is centered with a door with arches hosting human statues to its sites. The third storey is decorated with a group of human statues. The **fourth** storey is decorated with lighted torches on the sides of the pyre. The pyre is topped with a quadriga chariot directed by Emperor Pertinax, surrounded with the inscription CONSECRATIO, and underneath the inscription S.C.(Matingly,2003,154).



Fig (11)

Describe: Commodus coin, with the head of Marcus Aurelius directed to the right with the inscription :DIVUS.M.ANTONINVS.PIVS. On the reverse is a depiction of a four-storey pyre

<https://numismatics.org/pocketchange/burges> (last access 5/7/2023)

Another denarius (fig. 12), minted in Rome, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, depicts an image of Antoninus Pius surrounded by the inscription DIVA.AVGVSTA.FAVSTINA. On the reverse is a representation of a four-storey pyre, decorated with garlands and columns. Atop is a statue of Antoninus Pius, surrounded with the inscription CONSECRATIO (Matingly, 2003, 154).



Fig (12)

Describe: denarius minted in Rome, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, depicts an image of Antoninus Pius surrounded by the inscription DIVA.AVGVSTA.FAVSTINA. On the reverse is a representation of a four-storey pyre

<https://www.coinarchives.com/6952704719673b46dfbde973c9b273c7/img/heritage/271920/image40233.jpg> (last access 6/7/2023)

A denarius with depiction of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (fig. 13)—minted in Rome, dated to the era of Emperor Commodus, 180 AD. Emperor Aurelius is depicted, directed to the right, with an inscription DIVVS.M.ANTONINVS.PIVS. On the reverse is a pyre of four storeys. The lower floor is decorated with garlands and textures. The upper floor in centered with a door with arches on the sides hosting human statues. The third storey is decorated with a group of human statues. The **fourth** storey is decorated with lighted torches on the sides of the pyre. Atop of the pyre was a quadriga chariot, surrounded by the inscription CONSECRATIO. (Matingly, 2003, 156).



Fig (13)

Describe: denarius with depiction of Emperor Marcus Aurelius minted in Rome, dated to the era of Emperor Commodus, 180 AD. Emperor Aurelius is depicted, directed to the right, with an inscription DIVVS.M.ANTONINVS.PIVS. On the reverse is a pyre of four storeys

<https://en.numista.com/catalogue/pieces265531.html>/(last access 17/2023)

Another coin (fig. 14) of the Sestertius category, minted in Rome, during the reign of Alexander Severus in the year 222 AD, depicts Emperor Caracalla directed to the right, surrounded with the inscription DIVO.ANTONINO.MANGO. On the reverse appears a five-storey pyre. The lower level is decorated with garlands, torches and textures. The second storey is centered by a funerary bed, where Caracalla rests. He is flanked by two arches decorated with columns. The fifth storey is decorated with lamps and textures. The pyre is topped with a quadriga, directed by Caracalla with the inscription CONSECRATO and below it the two letters S.C (Frazer,2017,1-27)



Fig (14)

Describe: coin of the Sestertius category, minted in Rome, during the reign of Alexander Severus in the year 222 AD, depicts Emperor Caracalla directed to the right, surrounded with the inscription DIVO.ANTONINO.MANGO. On the reverse appears a five-storey pyre

<https://www.coinarchives.com/d25a0b3ffaadd471f96b08a4936be563/img/roma/e55/image00822.jp>(last access 22/8/2023)g

Another coin (fig. 15) of the Sestertius category, minted in Rome during the reign of Gallienus in 258 AD, depicts a bust of Caesar Valerianus II, surrounded with the inscription DIVO CAES VALERIANO. On the reverse a five-storey pyre decorated with garlands and columns. Atop of the pyre is a statue of Valerianus II, surrounded with the inscription CONSECRATIO (Frazer,2017,1-27)



Fig (15)

Describe: coin of the Sestertius category, minted in Rome during the reign of Gallienus in 258 AD, depicts a bust of Caesar Valerianus II, surrounded with the inscription DIVO CAES VALERIANO. On the reverse a five-storey pyre
https://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/germania_inferior_numismatics_gin/229/product/ar_denarius_divus_antoninus_pius_rome_after_161_ad_funeral_pyre_beauty_/901736
/last access 6/7/2023

A coin of Antoninianus (fig. 16) was minted in Cyzicus in the reign of Emperor Quintillus, 279 AD, with the bust of Emperor Claudius II, crowned by the ray crown of the god Sol, directed to the right, as well as an inscription DIVO.CLAVDIO. On the reverse appears a pyre of three storeys. The lower storey is decorated with tile-like planks, centered with an arch. On the sides of the second storey are two human statues, each looking to the opposite direction of the other, as well as holding a spear. The same storey is decorated with the same motifs like that of the prior. The third storey shows a flamed altar with fire ascending. It is inscribed with CONSECRATIO ((Frazer, 2017, 25)



Fig (16)

Describe: Coin of Antoninianus was minted in Cyzicus in the reign of Emperor Quintillus, 279 AD, with the bust of Emperor Claudius II, crowned by the ray crown of the god Sol, directed to the right, as well as an inscription DIVO.CLAVDIO. On the reverse appears a pyre of three storeys

https://www.vcoins.com/de/stores/romae_aeternae_numismatics/136/prot/divus_claudius_ii_gothicus_posthumous_ant_funeral_pyre_statuesduc_ric_256_rare/83(last access 17/7/2023)

Methods of cremation had differed from one region to another. For examples, cremation in Gaul is different from that of Greek territories. The difference is not only between provinces, but also on a local level. Cremation was somehow similar in the Western part of the Roman Empire, as mentioned by Maurice a cultural harmony in the Roman world during territorial expansions (Antichthon, 2000, 1). Cremation is a long process, as it requires a suitable place and sufficient amount of wood, in addition to artistic skills, as it requires nailing to avoid its collapsing (Vernhet, 1986, 88). Its construction is part of the undertaker's job, in case of the unavailability of friends or relatives for this job (Noy, 2000, 156 – 166). We can find many examples, including the Didos Pyre, described by the poet Vergil(Virgil, Aen. 6.223-4) . It was also described by the historian Lucian(Lucan 5.634-5), that Didos built a private pyre and tossed it to the flames.

In 90 BC, the Italian leader, Fedidesius of Scala ordered the construction of a inside a temple and held a banquet with his friends. He then swallowed poison and tossed himself into the pyre, which his friends had lit. In Carthage, during the Spanish war in 46 BC, Scapula the rebel built a private pyre and ordered his squire to slit his throat, and his friend to light the pyre. During the period of 44 BC, Stesas, one of the shelter seekers, had ordered his servants to build a pyre and lit it up, making them believe that he made a fake funeral escape, in which he threw himself. Usually, crematories are built in unusual places, like the pyre of Julius Caesar, which was built in a public space. The pyre of Claudius was built in the hall of the Senate. Both had violated the 12th band, which prevents cremation within city walls (Antichthon, 2000, 2).

The process of cremation within a pyre is called "pyra", and the place of cremation of the corpse is called "bustum" (Mckinley, 1994,134). Crematories designed in one hole are usually 1.86 m. in depth. Some German scientists from the 17th century suggest that cremation is done via 21 square blocks of wood. Parker Person(Pearson, 1999, f. 1.1)

suggests the usage of one ton of wood for cremation (Taylor, 1981, 42) crematories are built in open-air areas, away from graves to facilitate its size expansion. Rites

performed around the pyre differ from wrestling to bull wrestling (Boatwright, 1985, 495). Vitruvius had also described the construction of pyres in layers of tree branches; same design used in modern constructions for the regular flow of oxygen that facilitates burning. Seneca described the pyre of Heracles that "all wood and branches are coated and piled". Servius commented that pyres are shaped like altars (Daremborg-Saglio, n.1, f. 3363). Best wood used for cremation was oak, pine, willow, poplar, beech, cherry, and tarred pine. Lucan (Lucan 9.55-6) mentions a suicide attempt on a pyre made of green fig wood, resulting in death due to suffocation (Taylor, 1981, 46). Tables and chairs were used for the pyre of Claudius in the Senate. Incense facilitates the burning process and hides the smell. In the funeral of Sulla a large amount of incense and cinnamon were donated to be used on the deceased's corpse (Antichthon, 2000, 8). Pliny (Pliny, Natural History, XXXVI, 48) refers that crematories were painted with the same material as ships:

Crematories are coated with sorts of wax found in oases. It is more common in ships, especially cargo ships in the current times. We decorate it with paints and inscriptions, making the cremation process a familiar thing. Each wrestler competes to decorate his place.

Herodian, (Herodian 4.2.10) mentions that imperial crematories are decorated with gold on the outside, along ebony sculptures and a collection of paintings. It was customary to cremate people and bury their crematories privately. Group cremation is a sign of common love between people. One Romanus, of 22 years old, died on the same day of Guilis Delesium, 7 years old. Both were cremated together as one person (Toynbee, 1971, 11). Sometimes, the kline is made of ebony and gilded, like the kline of Pertinax (Antichthon, 2000, 9). Many decorated klines were found, with divine drawings of the gods like Cupid, Nike and Dionysius, made of Terracotta. Pliny mentions stories about resurrections over the pyre; however, without the ability to save them. Although these stories are unbelievable, the heat of the crematory might have resulted to the cramped movements of the corpse over the pyre. (Janssens, 1972, 159-60)

Imperial pyres, depicted on Roman coins (figs. 9-16), from the reign of Antoninus Pius and later on, indicates a double door on the second storey. According to (Pliny, Natural History, xxxvi, 30), door openings were unlocked before starting the

fire, as it looks towards the sky. Burning process was done through fire openings "Facem Subdere". Fathers were keen on lighting their sons' pyres. There are various elements that accompany the deceased, mentioned in historical sources, like weapons. Sattius mentions that these weapons indicate the position of the funeral and its belonging to a hero, and not a common man. Breaking pots and glass vessels over Roman pyres is considered part of the funeral rites in many cultures. Cups and pots had to be used prior to the cremation for a pre-funeral meal. Burnt lamps made of metal were also found, as well as seashells and sea meals, traces of oil, fig, and many fruits in the remains of pyres in London (Pliny, Natural History, xxxvi, 30) had certified that the presence of animals is thing of pride. One Regulus had sacrificed his son's pets over his pyre. Caracalla had attempted to change the funeral of the assistant scribe Vesius to a funeral like that of Patroklos. He sacrificed many animals before cremation, as well as burning part of his hair; a Gallic tradition. In some funerals, relatives of the deceased toss messages they wrote for him into the fires, even if the deceased was illiterate. Texts related to the afterlife were burnt as well over gilded papers in crematories of Southern Italy, Crete and Thessaly in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC (Catullus, 59.5, Lucan 8.738).

Pyres are still used in India, where funerary pyres are similar to those of the Greeks and Romans, regarding **different minor** details. (Person, 1999, 50, fl.1)

Cremation passes through known procedures; a duty from the descendants. Al-Bairouni says, "As for India, the descendant has to wash, perfume and wrap the dead, then cremate them with sandal or wood. Some of their bones were carried to the Ganges River. They are thrown in the river to flow with the water and the remains of the ash in put in urns. The justification of cremation is that fire cleanses man . On the other hand, the human soul ascends to the heavens in a straight line through the flames (Toynbee, 1971, 49-50).

3. Research objectives

3.1. Why did Greece and emperors of Roman use pyre?

3.2. Identify the different forms of in pyre in art, whether on pottery or coins?

3.3. An explanation of what the Pyre consisted of in the Greek and Roman Age?

4. Results and Conclusion

The Greek and Roman civilizations had followed two funerary practices: inhumation and cremation. In Greek art pyre scenes included burning the living and cremating the dead. In Roman art pyre scenes are confined to cremation of the dead.

All tools (burial – crematorial) reflected feelings and caring of the living. Throwing objects to the pyre reflects sadness and anxiety, like plucking hair, and putting objects prior to the fire, reflects wealth of the deceased. The main purpose of cremation is to reduce the mass of the body into ashes as fast as possible. Crematories also had other features, like its grand size and contents were to dazzle and show pride for the dead, or a center for the rite to attract people's sympathies.

Among the important funerary items are pottery (plates, cups), glass vases (cups and jugs), metal tools and jewels (darts, daggers, rings, clips), various jewels (rings, necklaces, arm rings, earrings) made of various materials (gems, metal, wood, bones), as well as bones of animals from the funerary feast.

The most important of **the** tombs are the Tumuli, consisting of piles of dirt and stone. Bronze urns containing ashes were preserved there as well, along **with** offerings and gifts.

The Greek tomb: it is an underground tomb. Burial is performed via the usual method or cremation. It was then when the Greek pyre was introduced. Usually it is built with limestone and wood. Inside the tomb, the deceased is placed, decorated. The dead were to be cremated along funerary hymns and rites. As for Roman pyre, it is a construction of three to five levels. The lower one is decorated with mosaics and lamps. The main element of this level is the altar. The second one contains a chamber with sculptures, where the body is delivered. It is usually decorated with arches hosting human statues. The **T**hird one consists of arches with human statues. The last one, on both sides, is burning lamps. In the deceased is a man, he is represented atop of the pyre a quadriga with the deceased emperor as the charioteer. In the dead was a member of the imperial family or any other, they are represented holding a palm branch, scepter or a spear. The quadriga is replaced with a big₇ in case the deceased is a woman.

Methods of cremation varied from one region to another, as well as some funerary rites in Gaul and Greek territories. Special imperial pyres appeared; however, it was larger than the usual crematories, like that of Faustina. It had special features like being decorated with gilded curtains and many ebony sculptures. Currently India followed the similar pyres that were used for cremation in ancient Greece.

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