

Elements of salvation in the Greek myths on the Hyperboreans

Elementos de salvação nos mitos gregos sobre os Hiperbóreos

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Our archaeological evidences. Hyperboreans, fiction or reality?

At our very first glimpse on the matter of the Hyperboreans, many scholars would give advice that there is not so much to say if we take into account the extant archaeological evidencies. No one can deny that there is not a place, even of small extent and not very rich material wealth, which can be entitled as properly Hyperborean. This situation of course leads to the conclusion that their localization can be found only in mythical geography, not in the real world. Actually, this was the position taken by Strabo, when rejecting the tales on the Hyperboreans as simple literary proposals, good for entertainment or leisure. Nevertheless, two kind of arguments help to cast light on the Hyperboreans. On the one side, the trade routes that linked the Mediterranean area with Northern Europe provide some very interesting informations on the image that Greek could have on the people living there. On the other side, the mythical motives associated to the nations of Northern Eurasia cast also some light on the Hyperborean question.

Some of the elements that help to construct the mythical narration have been borrowed from reality under the form of the products originating in the far Northern Europe and arrived to Greece by means of their importation. Beyond any doubt the most appretiated was amber, which is mentioned by Hesiod –and

Herodotus as well ¹-, but gold is also involved, as the crowns used by the Hyperboreans are carved in this metal. Actually, the fact that Herodotus deals with gold and amber altogether is in itself quite significant. Furthermore, already in 1967 Gatz stated that the arrival of these appretiated products became a powerful fulcrum to imagine mythical ages and territories (Gatz, 1967, p. 194). Yet this idea was formerly suggested by Jüthner in 1923, when he recognised in the Homeric poetry the idealization of the Northern people as a consequence of the richness of their material culture ². The arrival of these products began of course with trade ³, as Hecataeus records in a double sense, for he mentions Greek visitors from the one hand, and the Hyperborean Abaris from the other.

Our second argument lays on the artistic motives shared by different people, Indo-European or not, living in Northern Europe of rather in Northern Eurasia.

The association of the Hyperboreans with the Celts could be explained from two different, but not excluding, perspectives: it is pretty clear that to a Greek audience Celts lived in a far land, somewhere beyond the sea and mastered by a rather cold climate; therefore, some kind of geographical sense could approach both peoples, Celts and Hyperboreans; but there is a second possibility, that of the artistic shape of a long list of silver and golden artifacts that have been found both in the Celtic, Germanic and Scandinavian area, and in the Eurasian region inhabited by the Scythian and other Indo-European and not-Indo-European nations. Just to be short, let us give two examples of the kind of artifacts we are thinking of: first, the necklaces of the so-called *torques* type, attested in the Galician and Lusitanian culture⁴, as well as in the British Isles – having Ireland as their centre of production⁵ – and the German area. The same can be said about

¹ Hdt. III 115-116: αὐταὶ μὲν νῦν ἐν τε τῇ Ἀσίῃ ἔσχαται εἰσι καὶ ἐν τῇ Λιβύῃ. περὶ δὲ τῶν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ τῶν πρὸς ἐσπέρην ἔσχατιῶν ἔχω μὲν οὐκ ἀτρεκέως λέγειν: οὔτε γὰρ ἔγωγε ἐνδέκομαι Ἡριδανὸν καλέεσθαι πρὸς βαρβάρων ποταμὸν ἐκδιδόντα εἰς θάλασσαν τὴν πρὸς βορρην ἄνεμον, ἀπ' ὅθεν τὸ ἤλεκτρον φοιτᾷ λόγος ἐστὶ, οὔτε νήσους οἶδα Κασσιτερίδας ἐούσας, ἐκ τῶν ὁ κασσίτερος ἡμῖν φοιτᾷ. πρὸς δὲ ἄρκτου τῆς Εὐρώπης πολλὰ τι πλεῖστος χρυσοὺς φαίνεται ἑών: ὅκως μὲν γινόμενος, οὐκ ἔχω οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀτρεκέως εἶπαι, λέγεται δὲ ὑπὲρ τῶν γρυπῶν ἄρπάζειν Ἀριμασποὺς ἄνδρας μονοφθάλμους. *These then are the most distant lands in Asia and Libya. But concerning those in Europe that are the farthest away towards evening, I cannot speak with assurance; for I do not believe that there is a river called by foreigners Eridanus issuing into the northern sea, where our amber is said to come from, nor do I have any knowledge of Tin Islands, where our tin is brought from. But in the north of Europe there is by far the most gold. In this matter again I cannot say with assurance how the gold is produced, but it is said that one-eyed men called Arimaspians steal it from griffins* (transl. A.D. Godley).

² Cf. Jüthner (1923, p. 58): Den ersten Anstoss zu solcher Betrachtung der Barbaren hat, wie wir sahen, Homer gegeben, indem er die Lebensweisen der Nordvölker sachlich beschreibt, sie aber mit dem der Vorstellung eines Wunschlandes entnommenen Zuge der Gerechtigkeit ausstattet.

³ On the amber artifacts discovered at the archaeological sites see Navarro (1925); Buck (1966); Harding & Hughes-Brock (1974); Hughes-Brock (1995); Sansone (2016, p. 17). On the influence of the Mycenaean trade on northern Europe, see Piggott (2017, p. 134).

⁴ On the literary evidences see Castro Pérez (1984-1985). But the artistic motifs and the industrial technique point to an importation from the Scandinavian or German area, cf. Clark (1932); Becker (1954); Taylor (1980, p. 25). The origin of the amber materials could certainly be local, not at all originating in a trade movement from the Baltic area, cf. Taylor (1980, p. 45).

⁵ See Cahill (2002); Taylor (1980).

another type of Late Bronze Age decorating motif, the gold and amber necklaces found in the Wessex area, usually called *lunulae* by the British scholars; although the origin of the amber materials could certainly be local, not at all originating in a trade movement from the Baltic area (Taylor, 1980, p. 45), the artistic motifs and the industrial technique point to an importation from the Scandinavian or German area (Clark, 1932; Becker, 1954. See also Lomborg, 1967; Wrede, 1975; Kinnes, Longworth, McIntyres, Needham & Oddy, 1988). Both types, torques and *lunulae*, are attested in the Eurasian area, and their dating seems to be higher than formerly pointed up: scholars used to place these evidences not before the first half of the IVth. century B.C., as the pieces from Solokha and Tolstaya Mogila (Ukraine), now in the Saint Petersburg Hermitage w (Meyer, 2013, p. 121, 208). Simultaneously, the main attempt of the scholarly research has been to link the Scythian torques with the Persian art ⁶. Yet the chronology of some of the pieces has been redated and placed on the VIIth. century B.C., even as a tenable *terminus ante quem* (Smagulov, Demidenko & Erzhibitova, 2009).

The mythological background of the Hyperborean dossier.

The mythological discourse about the Hyperboreans is first of all featured by their geographical emplacement (Athanasakis 2002, 286-287, underlines the lack of a real knowledge on the matter). The North-Eastern connection of the Hyperboreans is also underlined by the fact that in the Phaethon's myth the hero fell either on the river Eridanus, that Aeschylus identified with the Rhône (A. frg. 107 Mette)⁷, or on the Boreal sea, as we can read in Herodotus (III 115)⁸. As abovesaid, geography tends to look for a mythical explanation, instead of finding an exact place for the Hyperborean territory. This having been said, the main characteristics of their mythical ethopoiia are the eschatological bias and the strong connection with Apollo.

Hyperborean eschatology lays on the extreme situation of their territory, as we know that it is located in far north, namely close to the boreal pole, and on the banks of the Ocean that performs the boundary of the inhabited land. Both characteristics suggest that the Hyperborean land is placed between the real world and the netherworld, although they are not similar emplacements. If we place this land close to the sun –and alternatively the moon–, this means that its inhabitants are subject to the influence of the immortal and eternally fair gods. In a different way, the situation of this land on the very boundary of the physical space conveys the idea that from there the journey to the netherworld must be easy and quick. Therefore, the liminar situation of the Hyperborean land can point either to the divine world or to the human underworld.

⁶ Minns (1913 (= 2013), p. 60); Jacobson (1995, pp. 105-106). Hubert (2013 (= 1934), p. 101, n. 2) accepts the Scythian origin of the Celtic torques, which seems to be an odd explanation.

⁷ A. frg. 107 Mette.

⁸ Hdt. III 115.

On the other side, the geographical site of the Hyperboreans, as it is defined by Hecataeus -ταύτην ὑπάρχειν μὲν κατὰ τὰς ἄρκτους, κατοικεῖσθαι δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν ὀνομαζομένων Ὑπερβορέων-, suggests that they live in paradise because of the following reasons: they live in the most close place to the sun –and probably to the divine world-, so that they share with gods the ideas of justice and beauty; therefore, they are unaware of war, lie and treason, and devote their lives to the worship of the solar god(dess); accordingly with this closeness to the gods, their land brings up two harvests in year, so that they can comfortably supply their needs; moreover, this marvellous land offers them extremely worthy products, namely gold and amber, considered eternal. Of course, the cult to Apollo is also closely related to the geographical site of the Hyperboreans. On this matter, Ahl examines the relationship between the solar chariot of certain myths –Phaethon in the Greek mythology- and the position of swan regarding the constellations (Ahl 1982).

If we consider the territory assigned to the Hyperboreans as a place beyond the sea boundaries, it is a place not suitable for any human life. If we consider it as a place beyond the sun's dawn, the result is the same. Therefore, no matter if our perspective on the Hyperborean land follows the pattern of the west-oriented insight, or the pattern of the north-oriented insight: no matter if our perspective takes into account a more or less eschatological bias, Hyperboreans must be or not human if they point to the west, or servants of the gods if they point to the north.

Our Hyperboreans show a close relationship with other people. First of all, we know from Homer that they were associated to the Hippomolgoi and the Abii. These three nations were sharing their geographical position somewhere in the northern lands, as abovesaid; their acquaintance with horses –and probably with migration-; and their liking for justice.

Still the most exact parallel is, in our opinion, that established with another mythical people, the Odysseic Phaeacians. Hyperboreans and Phaeacians both live in a far land beyond the usual travel routes. Both have a strong trend for justice, share immortality with the gods or at least live for a long time, they have an extraordinary skill for technique, and their ability in displaying an artistic prowess is also extremely outstanding (Cook, 1992; Kirby, 2012). Some scholars have also argued that Phaeacians were the extraordinary humanlike beings that led to the underworld the souls of the dead people ⁹. It is beyond any doubt that, according with the Homeric text, Phaeacians are close to the gods and blessed with an immense wealth –including gold- ¹⁰. Moreover, their land is located under a double veil of shadows coming from the mountains and mist coming from the sea ¹¹. The physical frame in which both peoples live, Phaeacians and Hyperboreans, coincide both in location and characteristics.

⁹ Welcker (1833). This author made a explicit reference to a German people, *Teutonische Todtenschiffer*, believed to convey in their ships the dead people to the underworld.

¹⁰ Hom. *Od.* V 35, VI 203, VII 199-203, and V 38, VI 308-309, VII 86-92 and 98-102, respectively.

¹¹ Hom. *Od.* V 278-281 and VII 267-268.

As the Hyperboreans are described by their closeness to the divine world, so the Phaeacians enjoy being the beloved people of gods:

ἤ μή ποῦ τινα δυσμενέων φάσθ' ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν;
οὐκ ἔσθ' οὗτος ἀνὴρ διερός βροτὸς οὐδὲ γένηται,
ὅς κεν Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἵκηται
δηιοτῆτα φέρων· μάλα γὰρ φίλοι ἀθανάτοισιν.
οἰκέομεν δ' ἀπάνευθε πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ,
ἔσχατοι, οὐδέ τις ἄμμι βροτῶν ἐπιμίσγεται ἄλλος.

*Ye do not think, surely, that he is an enemy? That mortal man lives not, or exists nor shall ever be born who shall come to the land of the Phaeacians as a foeman, for we are very dear to the immortals. Far off we dwell in the surging sea, the furthestmost of men, and no other mortals have dealings with us*¹².

On the other side, as the Hyperboreans are featured by their skill in music, dance and song and live in a fertile land that bring them all that they need, so the Phaeacians are benefited with a blend of magic and techniques that assure them comfort and wealth:

οὐ γὰρ Φαιήκεσσι κυβερνητῆρες ἔασιν,
οὐδέ τι πηδάλι' ἔστι, τά τ' ἄλλαι νῆες ἔχουσιν·
ἀλλ' αὐταὶ ἴσασι νοήματα καὶ φρένας ἀνδρῶν,
καὶ πάντων ἴσασι πόλιας καὶ πίονας ἀγροὺς
ἀνθρώπων, καὶ λαῖτμα τάχισθ' ἁλὸς ἐκπερώσιν
ἠέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμέναι· οὐδέ ποτέ σφιν
οὔτε τι πημανθῆναι ἐπι δέος οὔτ' ἀπολέσθαι.

*For the Phaeacians have no pilots, nor steering-oars such as other ships have, but their ships of themselves understand the thoughts and minds of men,] and they know the cities and rich fields of all peoples, and most swiftly do they cross over the gulf of the sea, hidden in mist and cloud, nor ever have they fear of harm or ruin*¹³.

From another point of view, the place of the Hyperboreans in the Greek cosmology can be defined by means of a comparison *a contrario*: their counterpart are the Cyclops, for this non-human group is featured by injustice, ignorance of politics and social life, complete unacquaintance with the fine arts, lack of any sense of hospitality and friendship, absence of trends for industry, trade and techniques in general, and even for construction of houses and agriculture. Homer makes an interesting comparison in opposing Phaeacians and Cyclops¹⁴, and this same opposing distance links Hyperboreans and Cyclops.

¹² Hom. *Od.* VI 200-205 (transl. A.T. Murray).

¹³ Hom. *Od.* VIII 557-563 (transl. A.T. Murray).

¹⁴ Llinares (1999, 226), on Hom. *Od.* VI 4-6: *La construcción del relato es significativa, pues jugando sutilmente con los efectos de contigüidad o de metonimia, desde el principio de este episodio tendremos oportunidad de asistir al desarrollo detallado del contraste entre unos y otros, los ciclopes y los feacios, antiguos y belicosos vecinos que tuvieron que separarse alejándose unos de otros para encontrar la paz.*

Besides the relation of the Hyperboreans with other mythical northern people, there is a special balance that puts together in perfect symmetry two nations: our Hyperborean stay at the northern pole of this axis, while at the southern pole we find the Ethiopians. Moreover, the relation established between Hyperboreans and Scythians is paralleled by that established between Ethiopian and Egyptians. Scythians and Egyptians are historical nations relatively well known to a Greek audience. There was some satisfactory information about their history, habits, way of life, and so on. Hyperboreans and Ethiopian remained, however, in a twilight zone, for there were more questions to be answered than evidencies to be checked. Hyperboreans were mythically outlined rather at the Archaic and the Classical Age, while Ethiopians were rather at the Imperial Age.

Of course, this is not real Ethiopia, but an imagined territory subjected to a construction. Fernández-Garrido reaches the conclusion that the image of the country, as it is projected by the novel, was much more indebted to a mythical construction than to reality (Fernández Garrido 2003; see also Dworacki 2009).

Which are the main links between Hyperboreans and Ethiopians? Of course, the first was the long distance from the core of the world for a Greek listener or reader. Opposite distance is also symmetrical, inasmuch as it is equal in size but contrary in direction¹⁵. There is also a balanced counterpart in the corresponding feracity of the land, since Hyperboreans and Ethiopians can benefit from a favourable nature. The capital of their country, Meroe, is depicted in very peculiar terms, as an island¹⁶. Moreover, to a certain extent the Ethiopian gold-digging ants display the same role as the griffins do in northern territories (Hdt. IV 21, 1; Paus. I 25, 6).

A special theme is that of the living symbol of immortality own to each one of these two peoples: on the one side, Hyperboreans are represented by swan; on the other, Ethiopians are by Phoenix. Certainly, only Aelian gives us the motive of swan in connection with the Hyperboreans. Nevertheless, a text from Philostratus shows the parallel between swan and Phoenix:

¹⁵ Hdt. III 114: ἀποκλινομένης δὲ μεσαμβρίας παρήκει πρὸς δύνοντα ἥλιον ἡ Αἰθιοπία χώρα ἐσχάτη τῶν οἰκεομένων: αὕτη δὲ χρυσὸν τε φέρει πολλὸν καὶ ἐλέφαντας ἀμφιλαφέας καὶ δένδρεα πάντα ἄγρια καὶ ἔβενον καὶ ἄνδρας μεγίστους καὶ καλλίστους καὶ μακροβιωτάτους. *Where south inclines westwards, the part of the world stretching farthest towards the sunset is Ethiopia; this produces gold in abundance, and huge elephants, and all sorts of wild trees, and ebony, and the tallest and handsomest and longest-lived people* (transl. A.D. Godley).

¹⁶ Hld. X 5: Ἡ γὰρ δὴ Μερὴ μητρόπολις οὖσα τῶν Αἰθιόπων τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἐστὶ νῆσος τριγωνίζουσα ποταμοῖς ναυσιπόροις τῷ τε Νεῖλῳ καὶ τῷ Ἀσταβόρρῃ καὶ τῷ Ἀσασόβῃ περιρρεομένη, τοῦ μὲν κατὰ κορυφὴν ἐμπύπτοντος, τοῦ Νεῖλου, καὶ πρὸς ἑκάτερα σχιζομένου, τῶν ἐτέρων δὲ δυοῖν κατὰ πλευρὰν ἑκατέραν θατέρου παραμειβόντων καὶ αὐθις ἀλλήλοις συμπίπτοντων καὶ εἰς ἓνα τὸν Νεῖλον τὸ τε ρεῦμα τὸ τ' ὄνομα ἐνικωμένον. Μέγεθος δὲ οὖσα μεγίστη καὶ ἡπειρον ἐν νήσῳ σοφίζομένη (τρισχιλίους γὰρ τὸ μῆκος, εὐρὸς δὲ χιλίους περιγίγρεται σταδίοις); ζώων τε παμμεγεθὼν τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ ἐλεφάντων ἐστὶ τροφὸς καὶ δένδρα παραλλάττοντα ἢ κατ' ἄλλας φέρειν ἀγαθὰ. Ἐκτὸς γὰρ ὅτι φοίνικές τε ὑπερμήκεις καὶ τὴν βάλλανον εὖστομοὶ τε καὶ ὑπέρογκοι, σίτου τε καὶ κριθῶν στάχυες τὴν μὲν αὖξησιν ὥστε καὶ ἵππεά πάντα καὶ καμηλίτην ἐστὶν ὅτε καλύπτειν, τὸν δὲ καρπὸν ὥστε καὶ εἰς τριακόσια τὸ καταβληθὲν ἐκφέρειν, καὶ τὸν κάλαμον φύει τοιοῦτον οἷος εἴρηται.

καὶ τὸν φοῖνικα δὲ τὸν ὄρνιν τὸν διὰ πεντακοσίων ἐτῶν ἐς Αἴγυπτον ἤκοντα πέτεσθαι μὲν ἐν τῇ Ἰνδικῇ τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον, εἶναι δὲ ἓνα ἐκδιδόμενον τῶν ἀκτίνων καὶ χρυσῶ λάμποντα, μέγεθος ἀετοῦ καὶ εἶδος, ἐς καλιάν τε ἰζάνειν τὴν ἐκ τοῦ ἀρώματος ποιουμένην αὐτῷ πρὸς ταῖς τοῦ Νείλου πηγαῖς. ἃ δὲ Αἰγύπτιοι περὶ αὐτοῦ ἄδουσιν, ὥς ἐς Αἴγυπτον φέρεται, καὶ Ἰνδοὶ ξυμμαρτυροῦσι προσάδοντες τῷ λόγῳ τὸ τὸν φοῖνικα τὸν ἐν τῇ καλιᾷ τηκόμενον προπεμπτηρίους ὕμνους αὐτῷ ἄδειν. τουτὶ δὲ καὶ τοὺς κύκνους φασὶ δρᾶν οἱ σοφώτερον αὐτῶν ἀκούοντες.

*And the phoenix, he said, is the bird which visits Egypt every five hundred years, but the rest of that time it flies about in India; and it is unique in that it gives out rays of sunlight and shines with gold, in size and appearance like an eagle; and it sits upon the nest; which is made by it at the springs of the Nile out of spices. The story of the Egyptians about it, that it comes to Egypt, is testified to by the Indians also, but the latter add this touch to the story, that the phoenix which is being consumed in its nest sings funeral strains for itself. And this is also done by the swans according to the account of those who have the wit to hear them*¹⁷.

The bird so described seems to have been identified with Garuda, which is consecrated to the god Vishnu. If so, it can belong to the common Indo-European heritage. No far from this extraordinary bird are the Persian Simorgh, the immortal eagle linked to the first function, sovereignty, with both healing and gnostic powers – it is also related, outside of the Indo-European domain, to the Turkish Kerkés and the Arabic Anqa-, and able to survive to the end of the world because of its power to regenerate itself; and the Slave Zhar-ptitsa (Russian жар-птица), another wonderful bird showing kindness and care for human beings, and featured by immortality, brightness, wisdom and beauty. Both Simorgh and Zhar-ptitsa combine their magical powers with a brilliant aspect, where warm colours as red, orange, and golden yellow, are highlighted.

A contrary conclusion can be drawn after the information afforded by Hecataeus of Abdera regarding the language own to the Hyperboreans. Nothing in itself suggests that the sentence ἔχειν δὲ τοὺς Ὑπερβορέους ἰδίαν τινὰ διάλεκτον means that not a word is intelligible to a Greek-speaker. Yet it cannot be discarded that Hecataeus wants to tell that their language is completely strange; otherwise said, he could be telling to his audience that the Hyperborean language is no related to any other, a statement that opens the possibility to understand it as not-Indo-European.

The Hyperboreans and the ideas about immortality

As a consequence of all the abovesaid arguments, our Hyperboreans are featured by several characteristics, most of them alien to the Indo-European religious tradition. This fact opens a very challenging debate on the limits of this religious heritage, its debts towards other religions and the possible blend of these borrowings with the original Indo-European system.

First of all, the Hyperboreans are linked to the idea of the immortality of any human being, which is in clear contradiction with the eschatological Indo-

¹⁷ Philost. Vit. Apol. III 49 (transl. F.C. Conybeare).

-European beliefs. Maybe there was from very old times a contradiction between the eschatology of the upper classes, based on a restricted idea about the outer life, and that of the lower classes, much more inclined to conceive a real new existence. In our opinion, the aim of a rebirth in a divine world is perfectly compatible with the necessity of keeping the cohesion of a given society. In other words, the Hyperborean myth can be explained according with two alternative hypotheses: it can be explained either as a tale borrowed from other cultures, or as a result of a popular eschatology opposed to that supported by the upper class.

Second, the Hyperboreans convey the idea of a bright, luminous netherworld –not more thought of as an underworld–, placed in heaven, where gods drive golden chariots. This scenario fits with the idea of a desirable and humanized afterlife, instead of the unattractive description, both physical regarding the local frame and psychological regarding the nonexistent interrelationship between the individuals, of the Indo-European underworld (Glasenapp 1961; Velasco 2011).

Third, it could be hypothesized a relationship between the Hyperboreans and the Hesiodic myth of races (Hes. *Op.* 106-201), so that they could be defined as a people belonging to the golden age. Shared trends are the protection and closeness offered to them by the gods, the absence of illnesses and of any hard work for living, the gift of a peaceful and quiet life spent in banquets and feasts, and the possession of an immeasurable wealth¹⁸. The main difference between the golden race and the Hyperboreans deals with their respective locations, since Hesiod places this race in a far past, when Cronos was the main god in heaven (Hes. *Op.* 111), while the Hyperborean myth locates them in a far land.

Fourth, the Hyperboreans are allowed to contact with gods, another idea which is completely alien to the Indo-European religious tradition. Certainly, in the field of those beliefs that could be called the *para-Indo-European religion*, shamans were allowed to experience different kinds of divine status, such as travels beyond life and death, extracorporeal travels, transmigration to another body (Bremmer 1987, 18; Aguilar 1993), and glossolaly, besides their acquaintance with magical powers. The practice of the oracular consultation can be placed at the boundary between the standard inherited tradition and this alternative kind of religious thought.

And fifth and last, there is a strong association between the Hyperboreans as a mythical people and the motif of the travel to the netherworld. They are not only settled in a liminal space, be it imagined at north or at west; they are also featured by an ordinary life where the symbols of immortality –gold, amber (Athanasakis 2001)– become representative of their culture and their beliefs as well.

¹⁸ West (1978, 183) rejects the idea that this wealth is anything else than corn, but the parallels quoted in his argumentation seems quite far from the mythical discourse in which the Hyperborean dossier must be found. A more nuanced view in Verdenius (1985, 87), who nevertheless keeps thinking of agriculture and grazing.

Conclusion. Main features of the Hyperboreans

Our final lines will concrete in a clear way how the Hyperboreans are described and which profile do they have. The main features of their description are distributed into five fields: geographic location; characteristics of the territory; origin and main treats of the race; religious behaviour; and utopic character of this construction. We also give into brackets the name of the sources for every feature.

Geographic location

Closeness to the moon (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Cold land (Homer)
Northern wind rules their land (Homer)
Territory characterised by its high mountains (Homer)
Island as their territory (Hecataeus of Abdera)

Characteristics of the territory

Huge feracity of their land (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Perfect climate (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Milk as diet base (Homer)
Horses as their main animal (Homer, Hesiod)
Amber is a typical product of their land (Hesiod, Herodotus)
Gold (Pindar)

Origin and main treats of the race of the Hyperboreans

Descendants of the Titans (Pherenicus)
Rightness as their own feature (Pindar)
Longevity (Pindar)
Immortality (Pindar)
Lack of illnesses (Pindar)
Own language (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Friendship with Greeks (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Greek visitors (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Travel to Greece (Hecataeus of Abdera)

Religious behaviour

Leto was born in the island (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Apollo visits periodically their land (Hecataeus of Abdera of Abdera)
The cult of Apollo and Leto includes 'white nights' (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Hecatombes provided with donkeys (Pindar)
Magnificent temple (Hecataeus, Aelian)
City dedicated to the god (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Inhabitants, priests of Apollo (Hecataeus of Abdera)
Dances in honour of the god (Pindar)
Songs in honour of the god (Pindar, Hecataeus of Abdera, Aelian)
Golden crowns of the celebrants (Pindar)

Utopic construction

They belong to the realm of utopy (Strabo)

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Resumo

As fontes historiográficas e poéticas sobor dos hiperbóreos amosan que tanto o conceito coma a súa imaxe foron construídos dende uma perspectiva mítica, aínda que foron desenvolvidos principalmente por geógrafos e comerciantes. Nembargantes, existem elementos que tiveran a ser emprestados á tradição indo-europeia, embora isto não significa *tout court* que sejam criações indo-europeias. Este artigo quere analizar o lado escatológico do dossier hiperbóreo, especialmente a partires das fontes dos historiadores Heródoto e Hecateo de Abdera. Além da operação hermenéutica pra decodificar o quadro mítico em que estan incluídas as nossas fontes, os materiais arqueológicos podem fornecer uma sustentável pedra de toque pra verificar a validade da reconstrução dista ideia religiosa.

Abstract

The Greek historiographical and poetical sources about the Hyperboreans show that both their concept and their image were constructed from a mythical perspective, in spite of being developed mainly by geographers and of course trademen. Yet there are elements that must have been borrowed to the Indo-European heritage, although this does not imply *tout court* that they are properly Indo-European creations. This paper aims at analyzing the eschatological side of the Hyperborean dossier, especially after the Herodotean and Hecataean sources. Besides the hermeneutical operation of decoding the mythical frame in which our sources are embedded, the archaeological materials can provide a tenable counterpart touchstone to check the validity of the suggested reconstruction of such a religious idea.