

Kapcár, Andrej

The origins of necromancy or How we learned to speak to the dead

Sacra. 2015, vol. 13, iss. 2, pp. 30-58

ISSN 1214-5351 (print); ISSN 2336-4483 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/137705>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

The Origins of Necromancy or How We Learned to Speak to the Dead

Andrej Kapcár, FA MU, Department of Archaeology and Museology

e-mail: andrej.kapcar@gmail.com

Abstract

As far as human history goes, death and dying has always been an important, though in many occasions tragic, event that influences the everyday life of the community. With the development of more complex and elaborate ideas about the afterlife and the underworld, humans have started to think through methods for contacting the dead. The reasons may vary, ranging from the emotional to the purely pragmatic, but the effort remains the same. A multitude of rituals have been developed over time aimed at reaching the deceased and summoning them to the land of the living. And thus the function of the necromancer was born – and the person who is able, or knows of ways, to speak to the lifeless. But are we able to determine where this practice originated? When the moment that man was thought to himself that he might be able to overstep the thin line between life and death?

Keywords

necromancy, death, funeral magic, psychology of death, sociological behavior, occultism, magic, divination

Introduction

Throughout time, people have always been fascinated by death, dying and the afterlife. Funerary practices, grave decoration, post-mortem rites and rituals have accompanied humankind from the brink of civilization and have not left us even up to modern times.

The final departure of an individual had always had a crushing effect on the socio-economic structure of a society, going even further if the society consisted of only a scarce number of members. The closer the ties between the ancestors, or other dominant figures of the community, the stronger the need to preserve those bonds in some way, even after death.

The most commonly known practices – including the handling of the corpse, the preparation of the funeral place, and a certain time reserved for mourning – were not the only actions closely intertwined with the deceased. In the shadow of the “mainstream” rites were also found different ones, built on the idea that through the dead one could archive certain benefits, guidance or wisdom. Many of these customs were carried out in secrecy, away from the view of the public, shrouded

in a veil of mystery. Maybe it is here that we could find the origins of the occult practice that would later be known as necromancy.

Methodology and Goals

The processing of such a complex topic as the necromantic manipulation of the dead can be a difficult task to accomplish, especially if the facts provided by history are often vague and based in the realm of myths and legends. This paper does not have the goal of documenting all of the current approaches and researchers contributing to the topic of necromancy, but rather to provide a brief introduction to the subject and set a possible framework as to where the practice may have originated. The main source of information in the analysis has been anchored in the written documents of antiquity which could also serve as the foundation stone in the search for the origins of necromancy in order to provide at least some form of certainty. As we go further back in history, the lack of written evidence and the increased stress on material goods is a fertile ground for speculations and unproved theories that are accepted by some, disregarded by others. Here we might theorize as to whether the practices of the oldest periods of human history might really have been connected to necromancy per se, or if they served a different purpose, but again, that is not the goal. These rather serve as a possible motive for the later evolution of the practice, one of multiple possible prologues to the whole story.

The Search for Origins – Setting the Timeframe

Even if it would be tempting to concern ourselves with the time periods in which necromancy had already “bloomed”, the goal of this paper lies elsewhere – to determine the presumed origins of this practice. For our needs we will concentrate on the earliest known direct proof of the divination of the dead and then gradually venture even further into history, where the lack of written words serves as a fertile ground for speculations and hypotheses, inbound from the certainty of evidence.

The numerous references to communication with the deceased found in the Bible, the approach of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, as well as the extensively described rituals of the Renaissance already lie beyond our period of interest and will be mentioned only as a reference to older practices.

The timeline to be followed is somewhat different from what might, perhaps, have been expected. The oldest period of history, with certain evidence recorded by multiple authors, can be dated to Hellenic Greece. From there, by going further back into the past we can only assume the presence of necromancy based on indirect evidence; but nonetheless the aim of this paper is to advance towards the oldest possible practices, present long ago before the expression established itself in any documented vocabulary.



Img. 1. *The witch of Endor conjures the soul of Samuel on behalf of Saul* – Front plate of Joseph Glanvil's "Saducismus Triumphatus: Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions", London, 1682.

What Is Necromancy and What Was Its Use?

Before we go any further into the explanation of why humans felt the need to turn themselves to the afterlife in their search for answers, we will have to build a framework on what can be understood by the term necromancy.

In general, the term necromancy covers all the divination practices connected with the spirits of the dead.

The expression *necromancy*, a 17th-century English derivation (Aldrich, 2002: 146) of the Italian word *nigromancia* (*black magic*) can be traced back to the Latin word *necromantia*, with the same meaning as its later Italian counterpart. But for the real roots of the word, we have to go even further into the past – the Latin expression was borrowed from the pre-classical Greek word νεκρομαντεία (*nekromanteía*) consisting of two words – *nekrós* – νεκρός (dead, corpse) and *manteía* – μαντεία (divination).

First reports of the word in this context come from the early Christian theologian Origen of Alexandria, 3rd century AD. In his citation of the *Recognitions of Clement*, he describes how Simon the Magus said:

By means of ineffable adjuration I called up the soul of an immaculate boy, who had been put to a violent death, and caused it to stand by me: and by its means whatever I command is effected. And (the soul freed from the body) possesses the faculty of foreknowledge: whence it is called forth for necromancy.¹ (Roberts, 1995: II/XIII).

The root of the Hellenistic word can be, on the other hand, found in the classical Greek word *ἡ νέκυια* (*nekyia*), the cult practice of questioning the ghosts about the future. The earliest reference to this rite can be found in Book XI of the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus is instructed to perform a ritual, sacrificing a ram, thus summoning the ghosts of the dead to question them about his further steps to reach the Halls of Hades (Homer, 1891).

The expression necromancy (as an act), or necromancer (as a person) *per se* was understood during different periods of time, locations and cultures, by multiple authors in various meanings. As already mentioned, the original meaning was to describe practices involving divination by means of the spirits of the deceased.

This practice was at a later time supplemented by the idea of an individual raising either a corpse or a part of it back to life to do his bidding. Since in the Middle Ages the possibility of raising a deceased person from death was attributed only to the miracles of God, any actions that would be aimed at similar results were perceived as “demon magic” and strictly condemned by the Catholic Church.

The practitioners of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance included the names of angels or saints in their spells, masquerading them as prayers, creating thus a new syncretic form of necromancy that would be practiced by many of the well-known occult figures of the Renaissance (John Dee or Edward Kelly) (Kieckhefer, 1998: 43).

Why this occurred may still be debated. One of the explanations may be that they wanted to avoid persecution by Christian authorities, another might point to the fascination with the Kabbalah, or as a means of further exploring and implementing some aspects of Christian mysticism.

The most recent perception of the art of necromancy is from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, where it is generally described as all the practices involving ritual magic, sometimes even omitting the whole involvement of the dead. On the other hand, this new structure often includes sigil magic, channeling, divination, demonology, black magic and other occult practices (Godwin, 1834: 75)².

¹ “Pueri incorrupti et violenter neceti animam adjurantantis ineffabilibus evocatem adsistere mihi feci; et per ipsam fit omne quod jubeo. Statim et praescientiam habet (anima), propter quod evocatur ad necromantia.” (Roberts, 1995: II/XIII).

² Mostly because of the correlation between the words necromancy and nigromancy



Img. 2. Engraving of John Dee and Edward Kelly summoning "in the act of invoking the spirit of a deceased person", Astrology by Ebenezer Sibly, London, 1806.

Finding the Roots – The Uncertain History of Necromancy

Antiquity

As has already been discussed, the origins of the expression of necromancy can be traced back to the Hellenistic period of ancient Greece and it is also here that we will start our research into its practice.

The earliest and one of the most prominent works mentioning the existence of necromancy is the *Odyssey*, by Homer. This Greek epic poem, fundamental to the Western canon and the second oldest complex written work of Western civilization, dating back to the 8th century BC, describes the journey of the Greek hero Odysseus, or Ulysses in the Roman tradition³. After the fall of Troy Odysseus traveled for ten years on his way home to Ithaca, taking part in multiple adventures and surviving numerous perils.

In Book XI, unable to find his way back home to Ithaca, Odysseus consults the sorceress Circe and is instructed in various rites he has to perform in order to reach the ghost of the Theban Tiresias (Homer, *XI*: 138; cited in Ogden, 2001: xxiii).

At the beginning of the practices named *nekyia*, Odysseus digs a trench with his sword and around it they pour libations for all the dead, first mixed with honey, the second time mixed with sweet wine, the third time mixed with water and then they sprinkle white meal over it. Odysseus promises the hordes of the dead, that when back in Ithaca he will offer them a barren heifer in his palace and build for them a huge sacrificial pyre. Especially for Tiresias he will sacrifice an all-black sheep that excels among other sheep. Then he cuts off the heads of several sheep he has brought for this occasion, letting the blood flow into the trench. Not until then do the masses of the dead appear – young and old, as well as a vast number of soldiers, still bearing marks of their mortal wounds. In the last part of the ritual, the sheep are skinned and burned on a pyre, in order to invoke the gods Hades/Pluto and his wife Persephone/Proserpine (Homer, *XI*: 25–50; cited in Ogden, 2001: xxiv).

³ The oldest one is the *Iliad*, from the same author, also written in the 8th century BC, but it is presumed it predates the *Odyssey* by several years. The *Odyssey* serves, in some parts, as a sequel to the *Iliad*.



Img. 3. *Odysseus, between Eurylochos and Perimedes consulting the spirit of Tiresias, side A from a Lucanian red-figured calyx, 380 BC.*

What can be understood from this section? First, the necromantic art Odysseus was practicing could not be aimed at a single individual, even if his initial goal was to question Tiresias. The invocation summoned all of the dead of Hades, who came at his calling. Second, the idea of the necromancer controlling the dead is also not present here. As the story goes further, Odysseus is first visited by his departed companion Elpenor, who died and was left unburied at the palace of Circe, then by his mother Anticlea and finally then comes the blind prophet Tiresias. All of these characters converse with Odysseus, questioning or advising the hero in his further quest, not showing any sign of obedience or obligation. Thirdly, all of the dead are drawn by the fresh blood that they hasten to drink⁴. Tiresias also advises Odysseus, that the spirits he would like to question should also be allowed to drink from the sacrificial blood. Here we observe what would later infamously become a dominant trait of necromancy – the practice of blood sacrifice needed for interaction with the underworld.

⁴ Tiresias asks the Greek hero to step aside for him to drink the blood first, and only after this is he willing to answer the questions of Odysseus.

Also note should be taken of the conversation between Odysseus and Elpenor. The youngest of Odysseus companions gets drunk, falls from a ladder and breaks his neck on the island of Circe. Because the rest of the party hasten to fulfill more urgent matters, the body remains unburied (Homer, XI: 51; cited in Ogden, 2001: xxiv) and this points to the widespread fear of the Greeks of the restless dead – those that died but did not receive a proper funeral. This category of the dead was feared, and according to the general belief, even avoided by the other dead. Several measures could be taken in order to give these revenants their final rest, among others the construction of cenotaphs, or empty tombs⁵.

The symbol of the descent into the underworld present in the *Odyssey*, known as *katabasis*, is described in multiple other Greek poems and epics⁶. In book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the hero Aeneas, with the help of the Sibyl, the priestess of Apollo, in search of the ghost of his father seeks the entrance to the underworld. After several tasks and encounters with monsters, warriors and tortured souls he is finally able to meet his father, who tells him of the future history of Rome (Virgil, VI: 637–901; cited in Louden, 2011: 209).



Img. 4. *The engraving of Aeneas and Sibyl in the underworld*, by Bugell, J. L., *Peplus virtutum Romanarum in Aeneia Virgiliano eiusque rebus fortiter gestis, ad maiorem antiquitatis et rerum lucem, communi iuventutis sacratae bono, aere renitens*, Nuremberg, 1688.

⁵ The word cenotaph derives from the Greek *kenotaphion* (κενοτάφιον), consisting of two words *kenos* (κενός) – “empty”, and *taphos* (τάφος) – “tomb”.

⁶ *Kata* (κατά) – “down” and *basis* (βαίω) – “go”.

When compared with Odysseus, we notice that Aeneas does not invoke the dead, but rather takes the journey himself. Even if the story is missing the important invocation aspect, the result is approximately the same – divination with the help of the dead.

Several other descents into the underworld by various characters from Roman mythology can also be found in several works by different authors (Ovid's *Metamorphoses* among others). Juno travels into the land of the dead to consult the furies (Ovid, 2010, 416–463), one of the twelve labors of Hercules was to capture the guardian of the underworld, the multi-headed hound of Hades, Cerberus (Apollodorus, 1921, 5:12), the abduction of Proserpina by Pluto (Persephone and Hades), and the journey by Proserpina's mother Ceres into the underworld in order to rescue her daughter (Ovid, 2010: 552–615, 658–712),



Img. 5. *The abduction of Persephone by Hades – Hellenistic painting from the royal tomb of Aiges by Vergina.*

or the effort of Orpheus to return his beloved wife, Eurydice. Proserpina, moved by the heartfelt song of Orpheus allows Eurydice to leave, under the condition that Orpheus does not look back until they reach the exit. He fails to abide by this requirement and his wife disappears forever and the legendary musician is struck by her death a second time (Ovid, 2010: 1–110).



Img 6. *Orpheus Mourning the Death of Eurydice*, painting by Ary Scheffer, 1814.

Here one might also mention another form of katabasis, but from the Epic of Gilgamesh. At the beginning of tablet 12, Gilgamesh mentions a toy, made by his own hands, which has fallen into the underworld. His friend Enkidu volunteers to retrieve it, but even if he is instructed by Gilgamesh as to what actions to avoid, he is careless and is soon after captured and held prisoner. Also noticeable is that Enkidu provides the description of the underworld through communication with Gilgamesh. As the state of the tablet did not provide further information on how they were communicating, by some it is regarded also as a form of possible necromancy (*Gilgamesh* 12: 11–78; cited in Loudon, 2011: 206).

Even though none of the stories point directly to the practice of necromancy, several points still prove useful to its research, especially in the connection with the older periods that will be covered in later chapters. The main point being the

accessibility of the realm of the dead, but not necessarily in “both directions”. Most of the time the ability to travel between the two realms is positively provided to mortals. Although difficult and demanding, after the accomplishment of several tasks the hero is able to access the underworld, but not vice versa. The dead have to remain in their realm and can be summoned only through a ritual, or with the permission of a higher deity. Secondly, the dead are able to communicate. They are not just formless shades inhabiting the depths of Hades, but they still keep their memories and character. They can be questioned, they can be beneficial and on several occasions they evaluate the past, or foretell the future. Lastly, the hero uses their services for his own benefit – mostly seeking advice in things to come.

In these cases we do not have the classical concept of a necromancer, the magus or a sorcerer who uses rituals to conjure the spirits and uses them according to his own needs, but if we leave this part out, the outcome is still the same – it is a discourse with the spirits of the dead with the intention of seeking help beyond the “conventional” means.

The Oracles of the Dead

The Oracles of the Dead were known under many different names in the antiquity but their meaning was approximately the same – a place where one could communicate with the dead, dedicated to either Hades or his wife Persephone, the deities of the underworld⁷. The term was mostly used with one of the four most famous places – Acheron in Thesprotia, Avernus in Campania, Heracleia Pontica on the south coast of the Black Sea and Tainaron at the tip of the Mani Peninsula, even if there were a vast number of smaller sites. Heracleia and Tainaron were located in natural caves, modified by certain man-made means and Acheron and Avernus were placed beside lakes (Ogden, 2001: 18).

The ritual itself involved the consumption of several meals prepared for this occasion, consisting among others of supposedly hallucinogenic lupines and beans, the ritual sacrifice of animals and purification after which the consultor would fall into a sleep during which he would encounter the dead in his dreams (Ogden, 2001: 19).

Beyond the mythological narratives there were other records of practical necromancy in antiquity recorded by several well-known historians.

Greek Sources

Plutarch in his *De sera numinis vindicta* (Section 17) mentions Collondes who slew Archilochus, a favorite of the Muses, in a fight, and was therefore ejected by the Pythian priestess. He had to humble himself through prayer and sacrifice, appeasing the evoked ghost of Archilochus to undo his deed (Plutarch, *XVII*: 41, cited in Ogden, 2002: 190).

⁷ The oldest expression being *nekuomanteion* – prophecy-place of the dead/5th century BC (Herodotus, 5.92; cited in Ogden, 2002: 188); *psuchogogion* – drawing-place of ghosts/4th century BC (Theophrastus, 24; cited in Ogden, 2002: 188); *psuchomanteion*-prophecy-place of the dead/end of 4th century BC (Crantor of Soli, Plutarch, X: 109bd, Cicero, 115; cited in Ogden, 2002: 188); *psuchopompeion*-sending-place of the dead/1st century AD (Plutarch, cited in Bolte, 1932: 2046); *nekuor(i)on* – seeing-place of the dead and *nekromanteion*-prophecy-place of the dead – latinized/5th century AD (Hesychius; cited in Ogden, 2002: 188).

In the same work Plutarch describes several other cases of necromancy – in section 10 he describes the fate of Pausanias, king of Sparta, who for no apparent reason kills his lover, Cleonice of Byzantium. After this deed, haunted by frightening visions and apparitions, he travels to the Oracle of the Dead in Heraclea to conjure the murdered woman. She appears and announces in brief that his hauntings will cease after his arrival at his hometown of Lacedaemon. Her prophecy comes true, but not as he expects since after his return he dies (Plutarch, X: 31; cited in Ogden, 2002: 189).

Herodotus in his work the *Histories* (*Book V.*, chapter 92G) mentions the Corinthian tyrant Periander and his interaction with the ghost of his dead wife Melissa. Melissa has been murdered by Periander, based on false accusations by his concubines. Only she knew the whereabouts of a deposit left behind by his friend, which causes the tyrant to send messengers to the Oracle of the Dead on the river Acheron, to evoke and question the ghost. On the first try, even though the evocation is successful, Melissa refuses to reveal the location, for she is naked and cold since the garments she was buried in were never burned. As evidence regarding her identity for her husband she mentions that “he had put his loaves into a cold oven”. Periander realizes that it is really his deceased wife (only he knows that he had had sexual intercourse with her dead body), orders all of the woman of Corinth to gather, strip naked and have their clothes burned, as a sacrifice to Melissa. Only then is the ghost of Melissa satisfied and she divulges the location of the deposit (Herodotus, V 92G: 2–4; cited in Ogden, 2002: 188).

Another work by Plutarch, “*Consolatio ad Apollonium*”, section 14, provides an example of a combination of oneiromancy (the divination through dreams) and necromancy. Euthynōus, the son of Elysios has suddenly died without any apparent cause. His father, in doubt as to the possibility of poisoning, visits the Oracle of the Dead. In the temple he falls asleep and is visited by the ghosts of his father and then his son who provides him with the information he is seeking (Plutarch, XIV; cited in Ogden, 2011b: 179)⁸.

Latin Sources

Among the Roman authors who mention the topic of necromancy one might mention Horace and his work *Satires*, where he describing the sightings of witches (Canidia). Hideous to look at, they can tear a black lamb apart with their teeth, filling the trenches with blood so that they can summon the dead (Horace, 2005: 23–50).

From Cicero we hear of Vatinius’s Pythagoreanism. In his speech against Vatinius from 56 BC he asks about the “monstrous and barbarous ways” and his engagement “in rites of an unparalleled wickedness, after having summoned up the spirits of the dead and after having sacrificed boys to the Di Manes of the Underworld and then consulting their spirits” (Dickie, 2005: 163)⁹.

⁸ The answer he is seeking comes in form of a note, handed to him by his dead son. After he opens the note, he reads the notice: “Verily somehow the minds of men in ignorance wander; Dead now Euthynōus lies ; destiny has so decreed. Not for himself was it good that he live, nor yet for his parents” (Plutarch(a), 1928: 70).

⁹ It should also be mentioned, that two years later Cicero in his speech *Pro Vatinio* successfully defended Vatinius, clearing him of his charges and even praised him for his Pythagoreanism which he had

A similar situation can be found in the report of the poet Lucan (*Pharsalia*, Book VI), describing Sextus Pompeius, the son of Pompey the Great, who travels to the magician Erichtho to learn the outcome of the battle at Pharsalus between the forces supporting his father and those supporting Julius Caesar. It is not clear if Sextus is personally present, or even participating in the ritual, but it is clear, that the outcome requires a blood sacrifice of young boys. The freshly killed corpse who is summoned back to life refuses to tell Sextus what awaits him, but advises him to go back to Sicily and summon the ghost of his father, who will answer all of his questions (Lucanus, 1905).

Among other records of several well-known historians we might also mention the emperor Claudius, who showed interest in several forms of magic and divination as well as in necromancy, Appius, the friend of Cicero and Emperor Drusus, Nero or Caracalla who all practiced the divination of the dead (Dickie, 2005: 163)¹⁰.

Even though the existence of necromancy was mentioned on many occasions by multiple authors, the incarnations and actual rites were described vaguely at best. The importance of blood for attracting the dead is visible in most of the practices. The blood of the sheep described in the *Odyssey*, the warm blood poured into the veins of a corpse to restore it to life and the entrails of children as an offering for the gods, described by Lucan or Cicero.

We can also observe a major shift in the approach towards the existence of necromancy between the Greek and the Roman period. While in Hellenic Greece the practice was, based on the descriptions, considered to be something more or less beneficial, despite its bloody content, in the times of the Roman Republic and the Empire, its existence was becoming unacceptable, as seen from the usage in arguments against a political opponent. Another important difference is the sacrificial subject – the shift from animal towards human sacrifice, underlining the more sinister tone the practice was beginning to evince.

Necromancy in the East

Not just the Greeks and the Romans had an elaborate belief in the underworld and with it a close connection to necromancy. Multiple other nations, mostly from the Middle Eastern region, also had their own ways of communicating with the dead. On several occasions, the practitioners in this art from other regions were also mentioned by Greek sources, often even declaring that the knowledge originated with the nations of the East. Strabo, in his work *Geography* reports that magicians, among others also diviners of the dead, originated in Egypt, Babylonia or Etruria¹¹. Among the most prominent mages, as well as necromancers, were

previously criticized.

¹⁰ Tacitus – *Annal*, II, XXVII, Suetonius – Nero, XXXIV, Dio Cassius, LXXVII, XV, Pliny the Elder – *Historia Naturalis*, XXX, V–VI.

¹¹ “What truth there may be in these things I cannot say; they have at least been regarded and believed as true by mankind. Hence prophets received so much honour as to be thought worthy even of thrones, because they were supposed to communicate ordinances and precepts from the gods, both during their lifetime and after their death; as for example Teiresias, “to whom alone Proserpine gave wisdom and understanding after death: the others flit about as shadows.” Such were Amphiaraus, Trophonius, Orpheus, and Musæus: in former times there was Zamolxis, a Pythagorean, who was accounted a god among the Getæ; and in our time, Decæneus, the diviner of Byrebitas. Among the Bosporani, there was Achaicarus; among the Indians, were the Gymnosophists; among the Persians, the Magi and

the Chaldeans, and foremost the Sabians; the mages of Persia, who are believed to have taught the art of the divination to several of the already mentioned Greek and Roman sorcerers; and the priests of Babylonia and Egypt.

Isaiah 19:3 mentions the existence of the practices of divination and oracles in Egypt,

The spirit of Egypt shall fail her, and I will daze her wits, till men go about consulting oracle and diviner, wizard and soothsayer.

and in Deuteronomy 18:9–12, Moses warns the Israelites against the imitation of the Canaanite occult practices:

None must be found among you to consecrate son or daughter by making them pass through the fire, to consult the soothsayers, or keep watch from dream-revelations and omens; there must be no wizard, or enchanter, none who consults familiar spirits and divinations, and would receive warnings from the dead.

Chaldeans, Magi and the Wise Men of the East

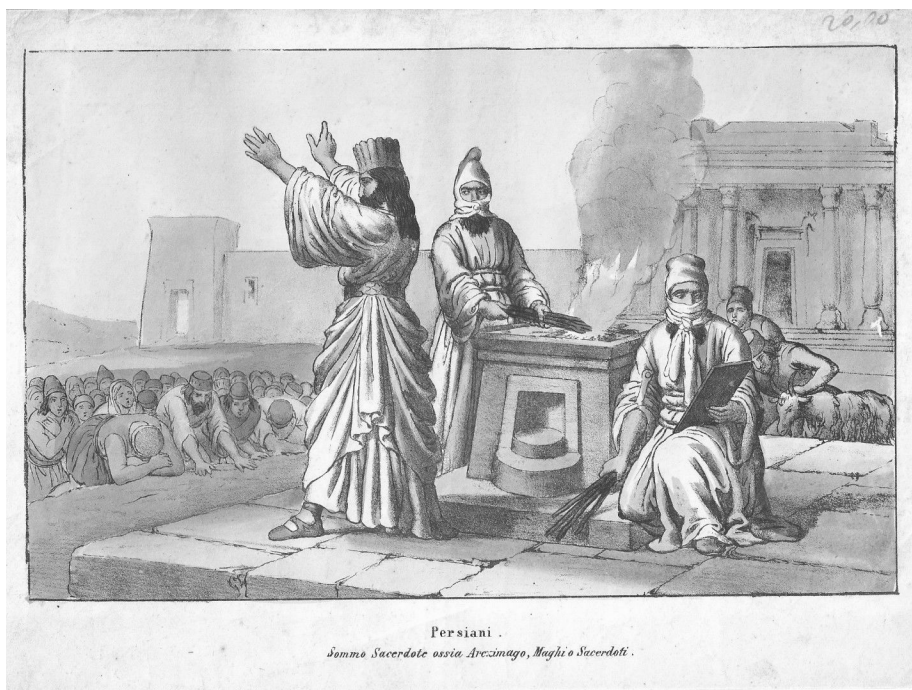
The magi, or the wise men was a cumulative expression covering mysterious, magic practicing figures that extended their influence over Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, India and even farther to the east. Known under many different names – Chaldeans, Magi of Persia, Manzazuu or Sha’etammu – all were considered respected patrons of knowledge, often consulted by kings and rulers in regard to important decisions¹².

In Babylonia, the practice of asking the dead for help and advice was relatively common. The necromancers, called Manzuzuu or the Sha’etammu (etammu being the word for “spirit”) believed that the deceased were free of the bonds of the material world and thus closer to god. As such they possessed knowledge that no mortal could know and they were able to see the future and warn about events to come (Godwin, 1834: 175).

When Ardashir I, the founder of the Sassanian Empire ascended to the throne of Persia in 226 AD, he issued a call for all the Magi from all parts of his new dominion to assemble. According to the records more than eighty thousand of the wise men gathered. Even to that day they still preserved their position and popularity among the people, strongly clinging to their hierarchy, traditions and institutions (Godwin, 1834: 176).

Necymanteis, and besides these the Lecanomanteis and Hydromanteis; among the Assyrians, were the Chaldeans; and among the Romans, the Tyrrhenian diviners of dreams.” (Strabo, 1903: 2:39).

¹² “The Chaldean necromancers are upon us. Be constant, and fear nothing.” (Cumberland, 1813: 141)



Img. 7. Artistic reconstruction of the Persian Magi/ costumed Zoroastrian priests, hand drawn picture, 1858.

The magic of the Egyptians was closely connected to the cult of Osiris and the eschatological beliefs of the underworld. The soul of the deceased had to assist Osiris on his journey through the realm of the dead, defending him from the attacks of several enemies. These labours, together with his clear conscience and the prayers and magical formulas were most important in the judgment of the dead person. The incarnation that could be found on mummies had a protective effect on the pilgrimage with Osiris, while the single magical formula protected the body from destruction, as well as repelled evil spirits that could possess it in the meantime, forcing the body to reanimate as a living corpse. According to Egyptian beliefs and practices, these spirits were ghosts of the condemned that managed to return to the earth before their annihilation in the “second death” (Lenormant, 1877: 89).



Img. 8. *Opening of the Mouth ceremony, showing two priests and two mourners with ritual tools. Painting from the tomb of Khonsu in Gurna, XIX Dynasty.*

Not much is known about the origin of the Sabians (or Sabeans). According to some of the surviving Islamic sources they were a Middle Eastern religious group, mentioned three times in the Quran as one of the People of the Book (the others being Christians and Jews). Some of the hadiths consider them simply as converts to Islam.

From the Quran:

Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve (2:62)

Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. (5:69)

Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Magians and those who associate (others with Allah) surely Allah will decide between them on the day of resurrection; surely Allah is a witness over all things. (22:17)

A more detailed view of the Sabians is provided by Maimonides (1125–1204) in his translation of *The Nabataean Agriculture*, and his *Guide for the Perplexed*. Among other things, he claims that the Sabians themselves attempted to influence the stars and developed into soothsayers, enchanters, sorcerers, necromancers, charmers, fire-passers, practitioners of theurgic magic of every sort (Stern, 1998: 119).

One of their possible origin stories is connected with the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun of Baghdad, who forced the Harranians to choose and convert to one of the "religions of the book" recognized by the Quran¹³. In order to retain their belief, they chose to identify themselves with the Sabians, maybe an extinct sect of Mandeans or another unknown faith in southern Mesopotamia.

The newly renamed Harranian Sabians acknowledged Hermes Trismegistos as their prophet (possibly through his identification with Idris/Enoch in the Quran), and the *Hermetica* was considered their holy scripture (Churton, 2002: 26–27)¹⁴.

Shamanism, the Root of Necromancy?

Even if the origin of necromancy *per se* is dated to antiquity, it still does not answer the question where and how it appeared. It would be hard to believe that the Greeks "invented" it. More plausible would seem that it was either an older practice, assimilated by the Greek pantheistic religion and home cults, or that it migrated with travelers from other regions.

Following this logic, we would need to concentrate on religious systems with partially similar approaches towards the dead pre-dating Greek polytheism. In this case shamanism, even with the broad variety of its practices differentiated from region to region, would seem like a logical predecessor. Let us take a closer look at why this could be a relevant possibility.

The shamanic tradition is centered around the charismatic figure of the shaman, a character chosen by the spirits who serves as a mediator between the middle realm of the humans, the upper realm, where the high spirits reside, and the lower realm, the home of the dead, as well as the gods, demons and monsters of the underworld.

Another skill attributed to most of the shamans (we are talking about "traditional" shamanism, located mostly in Northeast Asia, South and Central America, south and central Africa and Australia) is the handling of the soul and communicating with spirits. If a person was sick, according to the belief, the soul of the person was either stolen by a maleficent spirit or taken directly to the underworld. The shaman then undertook a dangerous journey to retrieve the soul, often visiting the realm of the dead.

The same example can be used in his practice of divination. The spirits knew the future, and during his trance he could negotiate with them to divulge it to him. He was also the one who could speak to the deceased and bring messages, or fulfill tasks in the service of the living or the dead.

The shaman also served as a *psychopompos*, the guide of the souls of the dead who would bring them safely to the underworld.

¹³ Harran was a major city in Upper Mesopotamia, 44 kilometers SE of today's Şanlıurfa, Turkey. During its long history it was also part of Assyria, the Hittite Empire, the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Neo-Babylonia, Persia, the Seleucid Empire, the Roman Empire and finally the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphate.

¹⁴ *Hermetica* is a 2nd–3rd century AD book, the foundation of later Hermeticism. It consists of dialogues between a teacher, presumably Hermes Trismegistus, and his disciple. The topic of their conversation revolves around the divine, the mind, nature, the cosmos, alchemy, astrology and similar matters.

As we can see, the shamanic practices are similar to those of the necromancer. Talking to spirits, visiting the dead, summoning them if needed, divination, or katabasis (though this is not that typical for the role of the necromancer) were present. Certain similarities can also be found in the approach towards spirits in the cultures where necromancy was active, even if distant in location, hierarchy or developmental level. Both of them were closely connected with the spirit world. In regions influenced by shamanism, spirits were the cause of, but also the solution to, most of the problems. They were part of the everyday life of the community, even though direct communication was reserved for the few chosen ones. Superstition of the kind that the logical mind of today would place among the realm of fairy tales was inseparable from the rest of the tasks and actions of every member of the community. The realm of the dead was not something surreal, metaphorical or unreachable, but only distant and still as real as the one inhabited by the living.

The flourishing cultures of Greece and later Rome were not that different in the matter of belief. The presence of supernatural beings, gods, and of course ghosts, spirits and revenants was noticeable even in the highest places of the socio-economic hierarchy. The general fear of the “restless dead” was common in ancient Greece. The restless dead were the victims of murders, furious about their fate, who still had the potential of harming or bringing misfortune to the living. Specific precautions were undertaken to prevent the dead from returning (the building of kenotaphs, purifications of the body, the living space, or the burial ground, etc.) and to punish those whose crimes were extraordinary even in the afterlife. Plato in his work *Laws* suggests that all murderers should be executed and their remains should be thrown out beyond the city limits unburied. An extended form of this punishment was meted out to murderers of family members or children. They were to be left unburied at the crossroads, and it was advised that every *archon* passing by throw a rock at the deceased one (Tsaliki, 2008: 5).

Antique “Shamans”

The connection between the shamans and the necromancers does not stop at the stage of mere comparison. When we look closely at the most prominent characters connected with necromancy in ancient Greece, we find out that two names stand out above all others – Orpheus and Pythagoras. Interestingly, both of them are sometimes described as “Greek shamans” (Ogden, 2001: 116), because of their actions in regard to soul manipulation, healing, traveling between the realms of the dead and the living, as well as the mysteries and secrecy following their cult. Moreover, their followers or pupils (in the case of Pythagoras) were often also well-known and iconic characters presumably practicing the art of necromancy¹⁵.

But what do these characters of antiquity have in common with the shamans of Northeast Asia? Several attributes, tasks, or deeds in multiple records are the evidence of abilities that surpass those of mere mortals. The shaman has the ability to send his soul away from his body and travel to remote areas. Epimenides was said to be able to send his soul away from his body at any given moment (Suda s.v., 1993: 139). Aristeas was believed to have written his poem *Arimaspeia* after

¹⁵ To name a few – Aristeas of Proconessus, Hermotimus of Clazomenae, Epimenides of Cnossus, Abaris the Hyperborean, Zalmoxis the Thracian, Empedocles of Acragas (Ogden, 2001: 116).

his soul left his body through the mouth, took the form of a crow and traveled to the distant lands of Hyperbora, Arimaspa or Cimmeria (Herodotus: 4.15; Strabo: C21; Pliny: 7, 10; cited in Ogden, 2001: 118). Hermotimus is said to have gained his powers of prophecy during one such soul flight (Pliny 174; Plutarch: 592c–d; Apollonius: 3; Tertullian: 44; cited in Ogden, 2001: 118)¹⁶. The flight of the soul was considered to be a way of gaining the ability of prophecy in general. Pythagoras thought that only a purified soul could be detached from the body and travel to other realms (Iamblichus: 70, 106, 139; cited in Ogden, 2001: 118). Such a soul was able to converse with the gods and thus acquire knowledge of the future or the unknown past. Following this logic, a dying person was particularly adept at divination, since his soul has already left, but he still had sufficient control over bodily functions to be able to speak (Diodorus: 18.1; cited in Ogden, 2001: 119)¹⁷.

Another example of shamanic abilities was the power of bilocation – to appear in two places at the same time. Aristetas was witnessed to appear simultaneously at Proconessus and Cyzicus (Herodotus, 1920: 4.14), Pythagoras at Metapontum and Croton (Aristotle, 2004: F191).

Also important was the possibility of suspending their lives for a long period of time and then returning back to the living – Pythagoras disappeared into the underworld for 207 years prior to his return (Laertius, 1972: 8.41). Aristetas disappeared for 240 years (Herodotus, 1920: 4.13–15). Epimenides, as a boy, slept for 57 years in a cave (Diels & Kranz, 1903: DK 21, B20). The main reason the “shamans” disappeared was to acquire wisdom, or to travel to the underworld.

Pythagoras himself, according to some reports by Augustine, learned the necromantic craft from the Persians (Augustine, 1829: 1829, 1829, 319). His actions closely connected with the conjuration of the dead were probably known during the time of Cicero, where he used the Pythagorean background of Vatinius in his speeches against him (Cicero:18; cited in Ogden, 2001: 117). Iamblichus writes that when Pythagoras, questioned about what it meant that he had dreamed about his dead father, replied that it meant nothing, he was simply speaking to him (Iamblichus: 139; cited in Ogden, 2001: 117).

Empedocles, a pupil of Pythagoras, is another who has been described as a practitioner of necromancy. On one occasion he told his disciples, that they would “bring from Hades the strength of a dead man” – pointing to the conjuration of spirits and using them to his advantage. He is also attested to have permanently brought a woman back from the dead who had been deceased for thirty days (Empedocles: 111; cited in Ogden, 2001: 118).

An interesting example of necromancy is the exorcism of the ghosts of Athens accomplished by Epimenides. The supporters of the tyrant Cylon were murdered while leaving the acropolis. According to the story, soon after that the city was plagued by a pestilence that was explained to have been an attack of ghosts. Epimenides, brought to cleanse the city, based on a report by Diogenes Laertius (1972: 60), ordered the populace to let a number of black and white sheep roam

¹⁶ Hermotimus died during one such flight once his helpless body, presumably dead, was burned by his enemies (Ogden, 2001: 119).

¹⁷ One of the events that Pythagoras was able to predict was earthquakes. These, according to his theory, were caused by large gatherings of the dead, and one could foresee the calamity by drinking underground water from a well (Pliny, 1855: 2.191).

the city freely. The spots where the sheep lay down to rest were marked and the animals were sacrificed to “the relevant god”. Afterwards an anonymous altar was erected at the same place. The spot where the sheep rested was the place where each one of the supporters was killed, and the “relevant gods” were either their own ghosts, or protective deities that acted on behalf of the victims. Another variation of the myth tells that instead of sheep, two young men had to be sacrificed to appease the raging spirits (Plutarch: 12; cited in Ogden, 2001: 118).

Another interesting fact about Epimenides, also in connection to necromancy, was that he went on with his prophecies even after his death, through his own corpse (Suda s.v, 1993). It is said, that his skin was found covered in tattooed letters and afterwards it was accordingly preserved, the letters having formed oracles. Pythagoras (Scholiast Lucian: 124; cited in Ogden, 2001: 122) and Zalmoxis (Porphyry: 15; cited in Ogden, 2001: 122) were also tattooed according to the records.

Thus far we have described only the actions of Pythagoras and other characters usually described as Pythagoreans. Another even older cult closely connected with necromancy, as well as with the Pythagoreans, were the Orphics. The Greeks linked the two together, as they believed that Pythagoras was initiated into the mysteries directly by Orpheus. In recent research Pythagoreanism is considered an organized and doctrinal form that took root in the non-organized and non-doctrinal Orphism (Ogden, 2001: 123).

Orpheus himself is often considered a “shaman”, mostly because of his music, and his ability to communicate with animals. Thracian by birth, he traveled to Greece and then to Egypt, where he learned from Hermes the ability of a *psychopompos*, a guide of the dead.

His most regarded necromantic deed is his descent into the underworld to retrieve his dead wife Eurydice. He descended into the land of the dead in two separate places, in Acheron and Tainaron. As described by Virgil, as well as Ovid, the condition by which Orpheus could lead Eurydice out of the underworld was not to look back during the whole duration of the journey. He failed to do so and thus was his wife lost for the second time (Virgil(a), 2008: 453; Ovid, 2010: 63). A slightly different story of Orpheus is recorded by Plato, who describes how Orpheus actually did bring his wife back from the underworld, though it was not the real woman, but rather her ghost, and that he used his song to charm her. Plato, as well as Isocrates, also imply that Eurydice was not the only one whom Orpheus brought back (Plato(a), 1967: 315; Plato(b), 1925: 179). A part of the Aeneid also explicitly describes the retrieval of Eurydice as an evocation (*evocare*), where Orpheus used his songs, accompanied by his lyre, as spells. Varro suggests that Orpheus wrote a poem on the evocation of the soul called *Lyre*, where he connects the seven strings of the instrument to the seven heavenly spheres through which the soul travels after death to purify itself (Nock 1927; West, 1983: 30–32). According to the classical Attic approach, Orpheus gained his knowledge of the afterlife after lifting Eurydice’s veil (Hecataeus of Abdera, 1939: 264, Diodorus, 1953: 96).

Orpheus himself met a violent end. Torn limb from limb by the furious women of his native tribe, his dismembered head was reported to have floated down the river of Hebrus still emitting muttered cries for Eurydice. It was carried to the island of Lesbos, where it resided in a cave, and still capable of speech, it provided prophecies

not only to the people of Lesbos, but to everyone in need and to such an extent that its fame reached even to Babylon (Ovid, 2010: 55; Philostratus, 1871: 172). Aeneas of Gaza, from the fifth century A.D., even claims that the ghost of Orpheus could be evoked by a sacrifice of a cock and some additional special formulas (Aeneas of Gaza, 2012: 18–19). It is noteworthy that even Eliade sees similarities between the prophecies of the severed head of Orpheus and the practices of the Yukagir shamans (Eliade, 1964: 391).



Img. 9. *Orpheus taming wild animals with his songs* – a mosaic dating to 194 AD, found in Şanlıurfa, Turkey.

Ancestor Worship and Ancestor Cults

Even if shamanism is considered to be one of the oldest religions, the origins of necromancy may lie even further in the past. The first similarities with the necromantic rituals and practices of the later periods could be rooted in the cult of the ancestors that may be traced back to the Stone Age.

The veneration of the dead, which also includes ancestors, is one of the oldest religious practices in human history and surprisingly still survives even today. The whole concept of the ancestor cult stands on two principles:

- the dead still hold continual affairs in the land of the living, and wish to provide beneficial help to mortals
- the fear of the dead, based on their vengefulness, requires certain rituals to appease them

As we can see, both of these pillars are very similar to the practices of the later necromancy. The benefit for the living, the provision of help and advice, has a close connection with the need to foretell the future known from the later divination practices. On the other hand, the soothing of the dead can be observed as similar to protective rituals against the anger of spirits that might plague the household or individuals, a practice now known as exorcism. Both of these practices also involve the direct communication with the dead.

Since this practice was (and still is) widespread throughout the world, including in vast numbers of nations and cultures, to generalize the nature of this practice would be bordering on audacity. However the similarities in goals the practitioner is trying to achieve with necromancy cannot be argued. If we reduce the whole idea of necromancy to its oldest known meaning, communication with the dead to gain certain benefits for oneself or a contractor, its relation to the ancestor cults would be more than comparable.

The Oldest Evidence of Manipulation with the Dead

As already outlined, the exact origin of the practice of venerating the dead is almost impossible to determine. From the point of view of archeology we can determine that intentional manipulation with the body of the deceased dates back to the Neanderthals¹⁸. To nobody's surprise, in a period this old it is extremely difficult to determine even the intention behind the burial (hygienic/empathic/religious reasons), not to mention practices and goals the tribe members were aiming for. We can only assume that the Neanderthals, or for that matter Homo Sapiens of the Paleolithic, had some concept of the afterlife, a concept that would serve as a basis for any complex and abstract idea of harnessing the power of the deceased to someone's benefit.

The archaeological sites that would point out a cult linked to the ancestor cult can be found in today's Turkey, the Levant and Palestinian territories. Jericho, Tell Ramad, Yiftahel, Nahal Hemar in the Levant, or Çatal Hüyük and Köşk Höyük in present day Turkey are just a few sites where researchers have found unique evidence of post-mortem activity in relation to deceased ancestors, particularly the creation of plastered skulls (Özbek, 2009: 380). These artifacts are believed to have been used in religious as well as secular practices. In most cases they

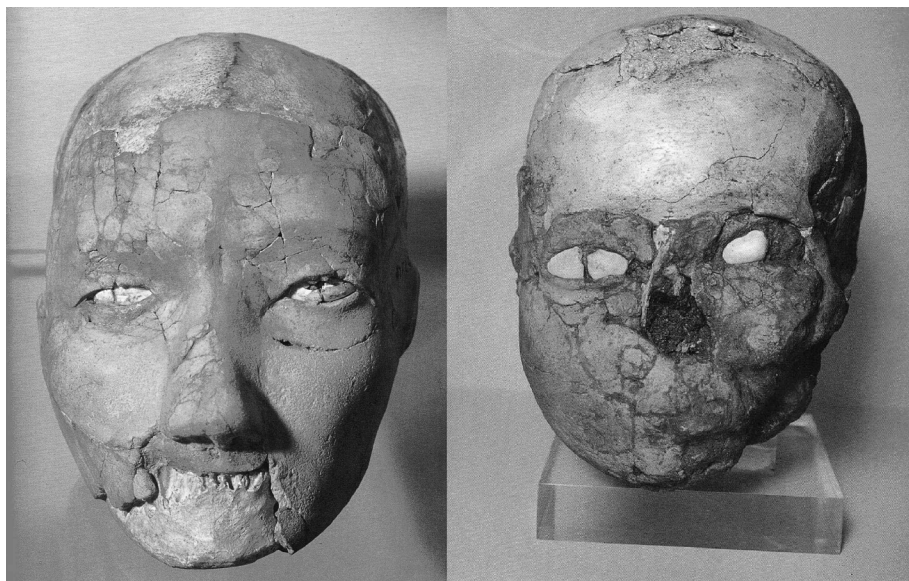
¹⁸ One of the oldest certain examples of burials was found in 1908 in the French locality Le Moustier. The discovered grave contained the remains of an approx. 15 year old boy buried on his left side. The grave contained, among other things, pieces of chipped stones, stone weaponry and the remains of several burned bones, presumably food for the deceased. The skeleton is between 50 000–45 000 years old (Hauser, 1909: 178).

are interpreted either as memorials of the deceased or as necromantic artifacts (Aufderheide, 2009: 360; Croucher, 2012: 400).

The two oldest and most prominent sites are Çatal Hüyük and Jericho.

Çatal Hüyük, dating back to 7500–5700 BC, was a large Neolithic settlement, southeast of the present-day city of Konya. The settlement consisted exclusively of private buildings with no trace of a public building, even though the function of some decorated rooms remains unclear to this day. The houses were clustered closely together in a honeycomb-like maze. The entrance was through a hole in the roof. No streets were evident on the site, meaning that the population must have moved through the roofs of the houses. The advanced culture inhabiting this area practiced a relatively unusual burial custom. The dead were buried within the village. Human remains have been found beneath the floors, or mostly beneath the hearths and beds. The bodies were either tightly tied up together, sometimes placed in baskets, or left outside to decompose freely, with the bones collected and placed in the living area afterwards. The heads were sometimes removed and decorated with plaster and color (McNamara, 2011: 70–71).

This type of manipulation with the skulls is more typical of the site of Jericho. This Neolithic site is one of the oldest inhabited areas in the world with its oldest phase dating back to 10,000 BC. The mentioned plastered skulls were found in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B phase (PPNB), dated between 7220 to 5850 BC. In total, 10 skulls were found. Each had its jaw removed, and was covered with plaster; shells were used as eyes, probably to imitate the facial features of the deceased person. It is assumed that the skulls were kept in people's houses, while the rest of the bodies were buried beneath the floor or in the rubble of abandoned buildings (McNamara, 2011: 70).



Img. 10. *Plastered human skull from Jericho, the British museum.*

It is assumed, that all examples of unconventional burial rites served as ways of venerating the dead. This theory has also been supported by the fact that some of the skulls from some of the mentioned locations bear marks of artificial deformations, maybe in the attempt to make the skulls look older, more suitable for the ancestor cult (Arensburg & HersHKovitz, 1989: 115–131)¹⁹. A different explanation presented by several researchers is that the skulls and burials served as a form of hunting magic (Bienert, 1991: 9–23), or war trophies (Özbek, 2009: 382). Another explanation that has gained popularity in recent years is that the skulls served as a form of genealogy proof – that people deduced their origin from their ancestors based on the facial looks, or purely artistic expressions. Lastly, the skulls could also have been used in a mythological, or religious context as a connection between the land of the living and the land of the dead, or as a form of protection against evil (Goring-Morris, 2000: 109; Verhoeven, 2002: 252). In any case, the elaborate handling of the human remains would point to the important link between the inhabitants of these places and the deceased.

Conclusion

As we can see, some form of evidence of necromancy can already be seen in the oldest cultures of humankind. The approach of the living towards the dead did not change significantly through the course of history; living humans were always caught somewhere between respect, fear and avoidance. The death of a person was always the great unknown. Even in the modern society of today, where the final departure can be explained from the perspective of medical sciences as a decline in the biological functions, the idea of dying is still shrouded in mystery. One can be rational only to a certain degree, most likely when the question of death does not concern one directly. Social and emotional bonds are severed by the demise of a close friend or relative. In such a situation it is only understandable to assume that a desperate person is willing to try methods beyond the realm of the logical and the scientific. It is also not too surprising that in the ages of superstition the people were more prone to what, by today's standards, would be considered unconventional methods.

From the previous examples, we can determine two main reasons to practice necromancy:

- To summon a relative or friend with whom the contractor had unfinished business to attend to.
- To summon a known figure, not necessarily a person whom one knew personally, to gain some sort of knowledge, insight or other benefit for oneself.

Even if the difference seems minor at first view, this could serve as a method to categorize necromancy into two main groups – *sympathetic necromancy* (to conjure a person with an emotional link to the contractor – Orpheus and his wife Eurydice)

¹⁹ Even though new approaches point out that the difference in age and gender of the plastered skulls could be proof that the cult was not only reserved for older males (Bonogofsky, 2003: 1–10).

and *beneficial necromancy* (to conjure a person that has some sort of knowledge about events beneficial to the contractor – Odysseus and Tiresias).

An interesting fact also comes to mind in the cases of beneficial necromancy – the importance of the summoned spirit is closely dependent upon the concept of the world held by the contractor. Most of the examples of conjured spirits were from close proximity (either geological, temporal or “ideological”) to the summoner. It might be quite possible that all the ghosts and spirits from distant times and areas would be adapted to the current situation of the conjurer. Something similar can be seen in the depiction of hell in the 14th century Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri and his description of its nine circles. Dante’s guide in hell is the Roman poet Virgil. During his travels across the first circle of hell (Limbo) he meets many prominent characters from Antiquity, such as Homer, Aristotle or Cicero, who were unable to reach heaven because they were not believing members of the Christian religion.

Also of note is the importance of blood in the described rituals. Homer, Lucan or Horace mention that necromancers used blood in order to call the dead. Blood is the life force that sustains them and renders them able (or willing) to speak. The importance of blood is one of the most noticeable rites in almost all of the religions and cults even today. The ochre color in the graves of the Stone Age, blood rituals in Antiquity, Aztec and Mayan beliefs in the concept of the universe, the importance of blood in Judaism and Islam (the disposal of blood during the preparation of meat), the Matam of the Shia or the Holy Blood of Christ are just a fraction of all the blood-related practices and ideas that accompany the religious beliefs of mankind. No wonder then that the most important fluid also finds its way into the communication with the deceased. The renown this practice gained was also the foundation of the later infamous linking of all the occult practices to blood rituals and sacrifices, rendering occultists outcasts who were active in practices harmful to the general public.

The roots of necromancy can be positively traced back to early Antiquity, with documented practices of several cultures and frequent interactions between them mutually influencing each other. The necromancers of the past are mentioned by many sources, including the Bible and the Quran. A multitude of Greek and Roman historians described the rituals of their own contemporaries, as well as foreigners from different lands. The belief which accounted the dead to be wiser, because of their closer proximity to god, and thus able to provide visions and prophecies beyond the ability of mere mortals was present in several cultures of Antiquity.

Nevertheless the origins of the conjuration of the dead is probably older. Similarities reaching back to the practices of shamanism, or even to the ancestor cult can be traced back to the Stone Age. But whether the unusual burial customs and the handling of corpses and bones were really part of an elaborate “necromantic” practice, as a means of placing oneself under the protection of an ancestor, or to appease his needs in reaching forth to the land of the living, will likely remain uncertain.



Img. 11. *Scenes of divination, including haruspication, pyromancy and necromancy*, by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1473–1531), *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, France, year unknown.

Bibliography:

Primary Sources:

- Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus with Zacharias of Mytilene: Ammonius*. Trans. S. Gertz, J. Dillon, & D. Russel. R. Sorabji (Ed.) (2012). New York: Bloomsbury.
- Annaeus Lucanus, *Pharsalia*. Trans. E. Ridley (1905). London: Longmans, Green & Co.
- Apollodorus, *The Library*. Trans. J. G. Frazer (1921). London: William Heinemann / G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Apollonius, *Historiae Mirabiles*. Trans. A. Westermann (1839). London: Apud Black and Armstrong.
- Aristotle, *The Metaphysics 984b20*. Trans. H. Lawson-Tancred (2004). London – Lew York: Penguin Books.
- Arensburg, B. & HersHKovitz, I. (1989). Artificial skull “treatment” in the PPNB period: Nahal Hemar. In I. HersHKovitz (Ed.), *People and Culture in Change: Proceedings of the Second Symposium on Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic Populations of Europe and the Mediterranean Basin* (pp. 115–131). Oxford: B. A. R.

- Aufferheide, A. C. (2009). *Overmodeled Skulls*. Duluth: Heide Press.
- Augustine, *City of God*. Trans. C. A. Lobeck (1829), Königsberg: Aglaophamus.
- Bacon, R., *De Nigromancia*. Trans. M. A. Macdonald (Ed.) (1998). Gillette: Heptangle Books.
- Bienert, H. D. (1991). Skull cult in the prehistoric near east. *Journal of Prehistoric Religion*, 5, 9–23.
- Bonogofsky, M. (2003). Neolithic plastered skulls and railroading epistemologies. *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, 333, 1–10.
- Chevallier, T. (1833). *A translation of the epistles of Clement of Rome, Polycarp and Ignatius, and of the apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, with notes by T. Chevallier* (p. 199). Cambridge: J. & J. J. Deighton.
- Cicero(a), M. Tullius, In Vatinius. Trans. C. D. Yonge (1891), *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*. London: B. A.
- Cicero(b), M. Tullius, De Divinatione libre duo. In Trans. A. S. Pease (1963), *On Divination* (pp. 153–474). Darmstadt: Urbana.
- Cicero(c), M. Tullius, *Tusculanae Disputationes*. Trans. A. W. Peabody (1886), *Tusculan Disputations*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Croucher, K. (2012). *Death and Dying in the Neolithic of the Near East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diodorus, 18.1. Trans. I. Kalitsounakis (1953).
- Diogenes Laertius. Βίοι καὶ γῶμαι τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκμησάντων. Trans. R. D. Hicks (1972), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Godwin, W. (1834). *Lives of the necromancers or an account of the most eminent persons in successive ages who have claimed for themselves or to whom has been imputed by others the exercise of magical powers*. London: F. J. Mason.
- Goring-Morris, N. (2000). The quick and the dead: The social context of aceramic Neolithic mortuary practices as seen from kfar HaHoresh. In I. Kujit (Ed.) (2000), *Life in Neolithic Farming Communities: Social Organization, Identity, and Differentiation* (pp. 103–136). Boston: Springer.
- Hauser, O. (1909). Découverte d'un squelette du type du Néandertal sous l'Abri Inférieur de Moustier. *L'Homme Préhistorique*, 7(1), 178–179.
- Hecataeus of Abdera. *FGH II* by Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 264 F25. Trans. I. Bekker & F. Vogel (1939). Leipzig: Loeb Classical Library edition.
- Herodotus, *The Histories*. Trans. A. D. Godley (1920). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Homer, *Odyssey*. Trans. B. B. Powell (2014). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Horace. *The Satires*. Trans. A. S. Kline (2005). Luxembourg: Poetry in Translation.
- Iamblichus, *The Life of Pythagoras*. Trans. T. Taylor (1818). London: J. M. Watkins.
- Kieckhefer, R. (1998). *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.
- Lenormant, F. (1999). *Chaldean Magic – Its Origin and Development*. Boston: Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC.
- Murphy, E. (2008). *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record*. Oxbow: Oxbow Books.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. C. Martin (2010). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Özbek, M. (2009). Remodeled human skulls in Kösk Höyük (Neolithic age, Anatolia): A new appraisal in view of recent discoveries. *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 36(2), 379–386.
- Philostratus the Athenian, *Heroicus*. Trans. C. L. Katser (1871). Lipsiae: Bibliotheca Teubneriana.
- Plato(a), Protagoras. In Trans. W. R. M. Lamb (1967), *Plato in Twelve Volumes, vol. 3* (pp. 309–362). London: Harvard University Press.

- Plato(b), Symposium. In Trans. H. N. Fowler (1925), *Plato in Twelve Volumes, vol. 9* (pp. 172–223). London: Harvard University Press.
- Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*. Trans. J. Bostock (1855). London: Taylor and Francis.
- Plutarch(a), *Consolatio ad Apollonium*. Trans. F. C. Babbitt (1928). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Plutarch(b), *De sera numinis vindicta*. Trans. W. W. Goodwin (1874). Cambridge: John Wilson and Son.
- Plutarch(c), *Moralia*. Trans. W. W. Goodwin (1878). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Plutarch(d), *Solon*. Trans. B. Perrin (1914). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*. Trans. E. des Places (1982). Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Scholiast Lucian, The Cock. In Trans. H. W. Fowler (1905), *The Works of Lucian of Samosata* (pp. 124). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strabo, *Geography*. Trans. H. G. Bell (1903). London: George Bell & Sons.
- Suda s.v., *Epimenides*. Trans. J. Svenbro (1993). New York: Cornell University Press.
- Tertullian, *De anima (On the Soul) Chapter 44*. Trans. P. Holmes (1868). London: T&T.
- The Bible*. (n.d.). Found [10.12.2016] on <http://www.newadvent.org/>.
- The Holy Qur'an*. (n.d.). Found [10.12.2016] on <https://quran.com/>.
- Theophrastus, *De igne*. In J. P. Deschepper (Ed.) (1973), *A post-aristotelian view of the nature of fire. Edited with introduction, translation and commentary by Victor Coutant. Revue Philosophique de Louvain, 71*. Leuven: Editions de L'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie.
- Tsaliky, A. (2008). Unusual Burials and Necrophobia: An insight into the Burial Archaeology of Fear. In E. Murphy (Ed.), *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record* (pp. 1–16). Oxbow: Oxbow.
- Verhoeven, M. (2002). Ritual and ideology in the pre-pottery Neolithic B of the Levant and southeast Anatolia. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 12(2), 233–258.
- Virgil(a), *Aeneid*. Trans. F. Ahl (2008). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Virgil(b), *Georgics, Book IV*. Trans. H. R. Fairclough (1999). London: Harvard University Press.
- H. Diels & W. Kranz (1903). Xenophanes of Colophon. In H. Diels & W. Kranz (Eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 21 B20* (pp. 38–58). Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.

Secondary Sources:

- Aldrich, C. (2002). *The Aldrich dictionary of phobias & other word families*. Victoria: Trafford Publishing.
- Bolte, F. (1932). Tainaron. In G. Wissowa & A. Pauly (Eds.) (1932), *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft IV* (pp. 2030–2046). Berlin: J. B. Metzler.
- Churton, T. (2005). *The Golden Builders: Alchemists, Rosicrucians, and the First Freemasons*. New York: Weiser Books.
- Cumberland, R. (2016). *The Posthumous Dramatick Works of the late Richard Cumerland, ESQ., vol. II*. London: Wentworth Press.
- Dickie, M. W. (2003). *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*. New York: Routledge.
- Diels, H. & Kranz, W. (1903). *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker griechisch und deutsch, Xenophanes*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Lauden, B. (2011). *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McNamara, P. (2011). *Spirit Possession and Exorcism: History, Psychology and Neurobiology, volume 1: Mental States and the Phenomenon of Possession*. Oxford: Praeger.
- Nock, A. D. (1927). The Lyra of Orpheus. *The Classical Review*, 41(5), 169–171.
- Ogden, D. (2004). *Greek and Roman Necromancy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Ogden, D. (2001). The Ancient Greek Oracles of the Dead. *Acta Classica*, 44, 167–195.
- Ogden, D. (2009). *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, A. & Donaldson, J. (1995). *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Simson, J. & Weiner, E. (2003). *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) (3rd. Ed)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stern, J. (1998). *Problems and Parables of Law: Maimonides and Nahmanides on Reasons for the Commandments*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Van Raalte, M. (2010). The Nature of Fire and its Complications: Theophrastus' De Igne 1–10. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 53(1), 47–97.
- West, M. L. (1984). *The Orphic Poems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Images:

- Img. 1. *The witch of Endor conjures the soul of Samuel on behalf of Saul – Front plate of Joseph Glanvil's "Saducism Triumphatus: Or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions", London, 1682.* Found [09.12.2016] on <https://archive.org/details/saducismustring00glan/>.
- Img. 2. *Engraving of John Dee and Edward Kelly summoning "in the act of invoking the spirit of a deceased person", Astrology by Ebenezer Sibly, London, 1806.* Found [09.12.2016] on <http://www.fromoldbooks.org/Sibly-Astrology/pages/edward-kelly/987x1275.html/>.
- Img. 3. *Odysseus, between Eurylochos and Perimedes consulting the spirit of Tiresias, side A from a Lucanian red-figured calyx, 380 BC.* Found [10.12.2016] on https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Odysseus_Tiresias_Cdm_Paris_422.jpg/.
- Img. 4. *The engraving of Aeneas and Sibyl in the underworld, by Bugell, J. L., Peplus virtutum Romanarum in Aenea Virgiliano eiusque rebus fortiter gestis, ad maiorem antiquitatis et rerum lucem, communi iuventutis sacratae bono, aere renitens, Nuremburg, 1688.* Found [10.12.2016] on <http://dcc.dickinson.edu/images/eimmart-aeneas-and-sibyl-underworld>.
- Img. 5. *The abduction of Persephone by Hades – Hellenistic painting from the royal tomb of Aiges by Vergina.* Found [10.12.2016] on <http://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2014/10/16/amphipolis-full-mosaic-reveals-the-abduction-of-persephone/>.
- Img. 6. *Orpheus Mourning the Death of Eurydice, painting by Ary Scheffer, 1814.* Found [10.12.2016] on https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e3/Ary_Scheffer_-_Orpheus_Mourning_the_Death_of_Eurydice%2C_1814.jpg/.
- Img. 7. *Artistic reconstruction of the Persian Magi/ costumed Zoroastrian priests, hand drawn picture, 1858.* Found [08.12.2016] on http://www.britishmuseum.org/collectionimages/AN01482/AN01482906_001_1.jpg/.
- Img. 8. *Opening of the Mouth ceremony, showing two priests and two mourners with ritual tools. Painting from the tomb of Khonsu in Gourn, XIX Dynasty.* Found [08.12.2016] on https://hairanddeathinancientegypt.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/khonsou31_eh_18_pm_7ii-www-osirisnet-net.jpg/.
- Img. 9. *Orpheus taming wild animals with his songs – a mosaic dating to 194 AD, found in Şanlıurfa, Turkey.* Found [09.12.2016] on <https://www.dma.org/art-deaccessioned-artworks/orpheus-taming-wild-animals/>.
- Img. 10. *Plastered human skull from Jericho, the British museum.* Found [10.12.2016] on <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/2014/07/03/what-lies-beneath-new-discoveries-about-the-jericho-skull/>.
- Img. 11. *Scenes of divination, including haruspication, pyromancy and necromancy, by Hans Burgkmaier the Elder (1473–1531), Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France, year unknown.* Found [10.12.2016] on <http://community.artauthority.net/work.asp?wid=78957&pos=92>.