

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.
William Henry Denham Rouse
Excerpt
[More information](#)

GREEK VOTIVE OFFERINGS.

INTRODUCTION.

PLAN OF THE BOOK.

WHATEVER is given of freewill to a being conceived as superhuman is to speak strictly a votive offering. The motive is simple, but not always the same: the occasion is accidental, or, if it be determined, the gift is not compulsory. This definition excludes all taxes, whether paid to a god or a government, and includes the sacrifice of animals at the altar. But some taxes or customary contributions are so closely associated with votive offerings, or so clearly grow out of them, that no strict line can be drawn; and to discuss the principle of the sacrifice would lead us far afield into questions of comparative custom, whilst the details of sacrifice are not instructive for our present purpose. Sacrifice will therefore be only touched on by the way, and a few pages will be given to the consideration of ritual fines. On the other hand, tithes and firstfruits paid in kind are important to us, both in themselves and for their developments, and something must be said of them. The main purpose of the book, however, is to collect and classify those offerings which are not immediately perishable; and by examining the occasion of their dedication, and the statements made about it, to trace if possible the motives of the dedicator and the meaning which the act had for him.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

We shall begin with the Worship of the Dead, which is demonstrably one of the oldest found on Greek soil, and the customs connected with it. The second chapter will deal with Tithes and Firstfruits. Next will be considered several important occasions for the dedication of votive offerings: Victory in War and the Games; deliverance from Disease, Danger, or Calamity; the crises of Domestic Life; memorials of Honour and Office; memorials of Ritual; and Propitiation of an offended deity. A brief survey will be taken of things dedicated for their rarity, and of some curious developments of the main custom. We shall then collect the formulae of dedication, and indicate how the objects were disposed of. Lastly, a general review will gather up all the threads together, and draw the necessary conclusions.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

I.

THE DEAD, THE HEROES, AND THE CHTHONIAN
DEITIES¹.

τῆς Ἑλλάδος προσελθοῦσης τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ ἐρωτώσης ὅπως
δει τιμᾶν τὸν Ἡρακλέα μετὰ τὴν ἀποθέωσιν, εἶπεν ὁ θεός· νῦν
μὲν ὡς ἦρωα, ἀΐριον δὲ ὡς θεόν.

SCHOL. PINDAR *Nem.* II. 38.

EVERY student of primitive culture knows how common a practice it is to immolate men, women, and animals at the funeral, and to send with the dead into his new home food and drink, and the articles which by analogy with this world he might be expected to want. In case of burial, food is placed upon the mound and drink poured into the earth, whilst the tools or utensils are laid with the body in the tomb; in case of burning, the offerings may be destroyed by fire. In the *Odyssey* we see the underlying principles in all their bare savagery, when Ulysses cuts the throats of his victims over a ditch, and the insubstantial shades by drinking of the blood gain a momentary strength to answer his questions. On the other hand, at the funeral games of Patroclus there is immolation of victims, but its meaning is not so much as hinted at. To argue that the practice described in the *Odyssey* grew up after the date of the *Iliad*, is impossible; because in the former we have a complete parallel to the practices of savages, while the civilisation of the *Iliad* is too advanced to admit of such practices beginning there. The *Iliad* is in fact earlier in date, but later in culture, than the ninth book of the *Odyssey*; it is silent of many things, such as the mutilation of Cronus, which crop up first at a later date.

¹ See Furtwängler, *Collection Saboureff*, Introduction; Roscher, *Lex. der Mythol.*, s.v. Heros.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

And the worship of the dead is attested not only by literature but by archaeology: moreover, there is evidence of continuity. The excavation of the beehive tomb at Menidhi in Attica brought to light a series of sacrificial vases, which proved that the cult had been practised there without a break from the Mycenaean to the classical age. We are justified then in assuming that the *γέρας θανόντων* included more than a barrow and a stone slab; and in regarding the burial of toys and vases in the tombs of a later day as the survival of an outgrown belief.

The rites done for the dead seem to have included a funeral feast, periodically or yearly renewed, which was celebrated at the tomb¹. Royal and noble houses would naturally have a family tomb²; and the tendency in Greece as elsewhere was to deify the founder of the race. So the Scythian kings were honoured by the immolation of wives and slaves, by the offering of firstfruits and golden cups³. Those who died after the great founder of the family would naturally join him, and become as he was. Partly for fear of what harm the ghosts could do, and partly from hope of their help, the survivors were scrupulous in doing what might please them. The tomb was filled with weapons and utensils which belonged to them in this life, or which they might be likely to want in the other. All these are strictly votive offerings⁴; they are dedicated on a special occasion, and for the purpose of propitiation, to a being conceived

¹ *τρίτα, ἐνατα* (Isaeus, ii. 37), *τριακάδες* in Lexicographers, *γενέσια* (Herod. iv. 26). Lucian describes how garlands and myrrh were offered, wine poured into a trench, and the offerings burned (*Charon* 22). Compare the inscr. of Ceos, *IGA* 395, where mention is made of wine and oil, of sacrificial vessels, of the month's mind and the year's mind. Customary sacrifice to the dead in Olynthus: Athenaeus, viii. 334 F. So in Modern Greece: at Patmos, for example, the memorial feasts and services after a death are *τρήμερα, ἐννιαήμερα, σαράντα, τριμήνα, ἑξαμήνα, χρόνια, δίχρονα, and τριχρονα*.

In the Greek and Russian churches, those who are named after a saint keep his day holiday; but it is perhaps fanciful to see a connexion between this tribute to a spiritual father and ancestor worship.

² Roscher, *Lex.* i. 2459, 2474.

³ Herod. iv. 71, 72. Battus and the old kings of Cyrene seem to have had divine honours, Herod. iv. 161.

⁴ Euripides speaks of *ἀναθήματα νεκροῖς*: *Suppl.* 983. Votive offerings in Argive tombs: Frazer, *Pausanias* ii. p. 173. In tombs of slain warriors: *op. cit.* v. p. 141.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE DEAD, THE HEROES, AND CHTHONIAN DEITIES. 5

as superhuman. Since, however, a distinction soon grew up between burial rites and divine ritual, I do not propose to follow out the former through all its history. Nor is it important to consider here whether or no divine ritual was always derived from the ritual of the dead. As Furtwängler acutely remarks, the pouring of a libation is meaningless unless it be connected with beings who dwell in the underworld; and this at least was extended to non-chthonian deities. But at the outset the two kinds of ritual approximate. It would appear that the recurrent feast was carved on a slab of stone and set up over the grave, perhaps as a perpetual memorial of the willingness of the living to serve the dead; and the burial rites gave rise to a type of relief which was of importance in the history of art.

This is the so-called Hero Feast or Death Feast: the earliest form is best seen in a series of ancient Spartan reliefs, of which the following may be considered typical¹. Two figures, a male and a female, are seated upon a throne. The male figure holds in his right hand a goblet, and extends his left in a posture which is hard to interpret: it is neither a blessing nor an accepting, the hand being held vertical². The female holds a pomegranate in her right hand, and the left holds her veil. A large snake curls under the throne, the head appearing over its back. Before the pair is seen a couple of tiny figures, a man and a woman, he holding a cock and an egg or some little object, perhaps fruit or cake, she a flower and a pomegranate. In this relief the enthroned figures turn towards the right of the spectator, but in some of later date they turn to his left. Other attributes, such as the dog, also appear³, and sometimes there is no female. The heroized pair are always distinguished by being larger in size than the human adorers; a natural convention, seen often in the sculptures of Egypt and Assyria⁴. From the rough working of the lower part of these slabs they appear to have been fixed in the earth.

¹ *Coll. Sab.* i. pl. 1; see for the whole series, *AM* ii. 301 ff., 459, iv. 163, 193, vii. 163. They date from the seventh or sixth century. See fig. 1.

² Perhaps the ambiguity is due to the artist's limitations.

³ *AM* ii. pl. 22.

⁴ Philostr. *Her.* 296 (685) τὸ εἶδος

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

The earlier examples have no inscriptions to guide us in the interpretation, but the later ones are inscribed with names. They may therefore be confidently regarded as sepulchral. This view is supported by several other facts. Along with the first slab an inscription was found recording that the place was sacred to Hermes¹. The snake is carved on an



FIG. 1. Archaic Spartan relief: deified ancestors with votaries.
Collection Sabouloff, i. pl. 1.

early Spartan tombstone², and it is well known to be associated with the chthonian powers. Its habit of lurking in

ἔς ἤρω ἔφερε μέγαν τε καὶ καλὸν καὶ
ἀνδρείον οὐκ ἄν τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονότα.
In India I once saw a marionette
show, representing the siege of Delhi ;
in which the English general was
twice the size of his men, and the

Great Mogul within towered high over
the walls of his citadel.

¹ Ἐρμᾶνος, *IGA* 60.

² *Annali* xxxiii. pl. C. Snake identified
with the hero Cyclops: Paus. i.
36. 1.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE DEAD, THE HEROES, AND CHTHONIAN DEITIES. 7

holes of the earth, its mysterious movement and uncanny eye, its silence and deadly power, have caused this creature to be regarded with superstitious awe in many parts of the world. The Greeks of a later age believed that snakes issued from the dead man's marrow¹; and that is not the kind of idea which is likely to have originated in a later age. Not by Greeks alone is the serpent regarded as the incarnation of wisdom²; and amongst them it continued to be associated with oracular caves and shrines. Flowers, eggs, and cock were no doubt sacrifices; and we know how the cock became the traditional poor man's offering to Asclepius³. The whole scene, then, represents one scene in the ritual of the dead, the sacrifice to wit; and as living and dead are supposed to meet in the ritual banquet⁴, so the deified ancestors, or heroes, are represented as present at the feast or as preparing to partake in it.

Out of this early cult of ancestors appears to have grown the whole system of Hero-Worship in Greece; and this is no mere inference, for a similar principle produces the same results until long after the Christian era. To heroes are applied those terms which express ideas relating to the dead: they are "the Stronger," "the Averter," "the Protector⁵." Mortal men in time become heroes and even gods, as in the case of Asclepius and the Dioscuri⁶. Even oracles, and the practice of sleeping in

¹ Philostr. *Her.* 288 (670); Roscher i. 2467.

² *Genesis* iii. 1.

³ I am not prepared to say that the cock had also a symbolic meaning: it was a very common sacrifice. His crow is now believed to frighten away the ghostly powers of the night; the Kalikazari in Cyprus and Cos, the witches or goblins of northern Europe. But I see no proof that the early Greeks held any such view, or that they conceived of their dead as having no power in the daytime. Sacrifice was however done to the heroes at sunset (Paus. vi. 23. 3, Schol. Pind. *Isth.* iv. 110) or at night (viii. 14. 11); and Athenaeus says (xi. 461 B)

χαλεπούς καὶ πλήκτας τοὺς ἥρωας νομίζουσι, καὶ μᾶλλον νύκτωρ ἢ μεθ' ἡμέραν.

⁴ Compare Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 255 ff. Cf. Paus. ii. 10. 1. The hero certainly partakes in Daulis: Paus. x. 4. 10, "the blood they pour through a hole into the grave, the flesh they consume on the spot."

⁵ οἱ κρείττονες (see Hesych. s. v.), ἀποτρόπαιος, ἀλεξίκακος. Arist. *ap. Plut. Cons. ad Apoll.* 27. Furtwängler, p. 21, Roscher i. 2474. The old woman in Aristophanes calls out for help ὦ Ἡράκλεις, ὦ Πᾶνες, ὦ Κορύβαντες, ὦ Διοσκόρω. *Eccl.* 1069.

⁶ For Asclepius see ch. v. The Dioscuri are men in *Il.* iii. 236, heroes or gods in *Od.* xi. 300.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the precinct for the purpose of consulting them, are attested for the dead among the Nasamones¹, and alluded to elsewhere². Sometimes the descriptive titles become abstracted and personified as heroes, a point which has significance when we remember that the Pelasgians did not name their gods³. Thus we find Amynos at Athens, the Defender⁴; Eumenes, the Kindly, at Chios⁵; Sosias, the Saviour, at Olbia⁶. Soter, the Saviour, was added to the name of Brasidas heroized⁷, and to Demetrius and Antigonus at Athens; and in later days inscriptions are common which dedicate statues to the Roman Emperors under the title of Founder and Saviour⁸. Such titles imply protection in general, but others are more particular. There are heroes who specialize in war, as Phylacos the Guardian at Delphi⁹, Teichophylax at Myrina¹⁰, and Promachos at Psophis¹¹; Eunostos of Tanagra¹² and Deloptes¹³ of Samos have other functions which the names make clear. Or again, the healing of disease was the special function, and this especially where the worship centred round a medicinal spring¹⁴. Such are the Hero Physician at Athens¹⁵, and Asclepius at Tricca, of whom more anon. If there is a cave of mysterious vapours, oracle and prophecy come to the front, as in the case of Amphiaraus and Trophonius. But the idea of power in general is never lost sight of, and it is ascribed to the mighty dead throughout Greek history. Brasidas and Sophocles have already been mentioned as heroized; similar honours are ascribed to Philippos of Croton¹⁶, Onesilos at Amathus¹⁷, even to

¹ Herod. iv. 172.² Plut. *Consol. ad Apoll.* 14, Herod. v. 92.³ Herod. ii. 52.⁴ *AM* xxi. 330.⁵ Athenaeus, vi. 266 D; compare the title Eumenides, and the Good People in English folk-lore.⁶ Dittenberger, *Sylloge*, 248¹⁰¹.⁷ Thuc. v. 11. Sophocles was heroized after his death as Dexion, because he had welcomed Asclepius to Athens: ἀπό τῆς τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ δεξιώσεως, *Et. Mag.*⁸ οἰκιστής, κτίστης, σωτήρ: e.g. *CIA* iii. 493 ff., *AM* xviii. 10 Trajan σωτήρι

καὶ κτίστη τῆς οἰκουμένης. See Furtwängler 22, Roscher i. 2516.

⁹ Herod. viii. 39. Aristomenes was also useful: Paus. iv. 32. 4.¹⁰ Hesych. s.v.¹¹ Paus. viii. 24. 6.¹² Plut. *Quaest. Gr.* 40.¹³ *AM* xxv. 172.¹⁴ Athenaeus xi. 512 F τὰ θερμὰ λουτρά τὰ φαινόμενα ἐκ τῆς γῆς πάντες Ἡρακλέους φασὶν εἶναι ἱερά.¹⁵ *CIA* ii. 403. Frazer, *Pausanias* ii. 149. Theagenes in many places: Paus. vi. 31. 9.¹⁶ Herod. v. 47.¹⁷ Herod. v. 114.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE DEAD, THE HEROES, AND CHTHONIAN DEITIES. 9

such unlikely persons as Theagenes the athlete in Phocis and many other places¹. The Homeric heroes one and all seem to have had this honour paid to them. Ulysses was a hero in Laconia², Agenor in Argos³, Protesilaus in the Chersonese⁴, even Hector in Boeotia⁵. The warriors who fell at Plataea were worshipt as heroes with offerings of garments, firstfruits, and all that was customary year by year⁶; the Spartans built a shrine to Maron and Alpheus who fell at Thermopylae⁷; and until late days a public vote might make heroes of the gallant dead⁸. Epicteta of Thera, in her well-known will, took upon herself this state function. She left her property to endow a shrine to the Muses and the Heroes, the last being herself and Phoenix her husband, with their two sons. In their honour recurrent feasts were to be kept up, with sacrifice and libation, when the statues of the heroes were to be adorned with garlands⁹. In course of time the idea lost all its meaning, and hero, like the German *selig*, came to be a synonym for the dead¹⁰.

The heroes do more than protect mankind; they also punish them for wrongdoing, or at least for an offence against themselves¹¹. In early times, of course, the line is not drawn distinctly between a ritual and a moral offence; but

¹ Paus. vi. 24. 3. The unsuccessful suitors of Hippodamia were worshipt as heroes: Paus. vi. 21. 11.

² Plut. *Quaest. Gr.* 48.

³ Plut. *Quaest. Gr.* 50.

⁴ Herod. ix. 116; Philostr. *Her. passim*, who mentions also Nestor 303 (696), Diomede and Sthenelus 304 (699), Philoctetes 305 (702), Agamemnon and Menelaus, Idomeneus and Ajax 307 (706), Chiron and Palamedes 308 (708), Odysseus 312 (716), Teucer 315 (721), Aeneas, Sarpedon, Alexander 316 (723), Helenus, Deiphobus, Polydamas, Euphorbus 317 (725).

⁵ Lucian, *Deor. Conc.* 12; Lycophron 1205; Roscher i. 2482.

⁶ Thuc. iii. 58 *πατέρων τῶν ἡμετέρων θήκας, οὗς ἀποθανόντας ὑπὸ Μήδων καὶ*

ταφέντας ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἐτιμῶμεν κατὰ ἔτος ἑκαστον δημοσίᾳ ἐσθήμασιν τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις νομίμοις, ὅσα τε ἡ γῆ ἡμῶν ἀνεδίδου ὠραία, πάντων ἀπαρχὰς ἐπιφέροντες.

⁷ Paus. iii. 12. 9, vi. 11. 9.

⁸ Collitz iii. 3196 *ὡς ἦρω τιμῆν (Coreyra); BCH xvii. 98 ἡ πόλις ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν ἀφηρώσειν.* A statue of Aristeeas was dedicated to Apollo at Delphi for similar reasons, Herod. iv. 15.

⁹ *IGI* iii. 330. So the great Nicholson's spirit is still propitiated with worship and offerings: Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, ii. 301.

¹⁰ *IGS* i. 1715 and *Index*.

¹¹ Schol. Arist. *Birds*, 1490 *οἱ ἦρωες δυσβργητοὶ καὶ χαλεποὶ τοῖς ἐμπελάζουσι.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45642-6 - Greek Votive Offerings: An Essay in the History of Greek Religion.

William Henry Denham Rouse

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Philostratus tells us that in his day they were the guardians of morals to some extent¹. It is perhaps not rash to identify them with the mysterious daemons of Homer, who visit the habitations of men, marking their uprightness or evildoing².

Traces are found of human sacrifice offered to heroes, not only in such celebrations as the funeral games of Patroclus, but in the story of Sperthias and Bulis³, and in the victims sacrificed to Scedasus and his daughters before the battle of Leuctra⁴. But in the times we have to do with, the usual sacrifices were firstfruits in kind, and various animals: cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats, even horses, and sometimes fish⁵. In their honour the Arcadians celebrated regular feasts with their slaves in archaic fashion down to historical times⁶. The heroes were brought into connexion with every meal by the libations which were poured to them in general and in particular⁷, and by the custom, that any food which fell from the table was sacred to them⁸: this assumes an earlier offering of the firstfruits of the meal. Besides, eatables and drinkables were offered at the shrine, the offerer inviting the shades to join in his banquet⁹; this became later the *θεοξένια* of the Dioscuri, Heracles and others¹⁰. The shrines generally included the hero's grave in a

¹ Philostr. *Her.* 294 (680).

² *Od.* xvii. 485 *καὶ τε θεοὶ ξείνοισι φερούκτες ἀλλοδαποῖσι παντοῖοι τελέθοντες ἐπιστροφάουσι πόλης, ἀνθρώπων ὕβρι τε καὶ ἐνομίην ἐφορῶντες.*

³ Herod. vii. 134—7.

⁴ Plut. *Pelop.* 20; see also Herod. iv. 71.

⁵ Thuc. iii. 58; Roscher i. 2506, with authorities. For the horse, see Philostr. *Her.* 294 (681). A white horse was sacrificed in Athens at the tomb of Toxaris, the Stranger Physician: see Frazer, *Pausanias* ii. 148. A late Greek romance speaks of a horse as sacrificed at a girl's tomb: *Ἐρωτικά Διηγήματα* iii. 20.

⁶ Hecataeus, *ap.* Ath. iv. 149 D: *ὅταν δὲ τοῖς ἥρωσι θύωσι, βουθυσία μεγάλη γίγνεται καὶ ἐστιῶνται πάντες μετὰ τῶν*

δούλων· οἱ δὲ παῖδες... μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἐπὶ λίθων καθήμενοι γυμνοὶ δεῖπνοῦσιν.

⁷ Schol. Aesch. *Ag.* 245.

⁸ Roscher i. 2507. Compare Hecataeus *ap.* Ath. iv. 149 c. The Arcadians μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνον σπονδὰς ἐποιούντο, οὐκ ἀπονιδάμενοι τὰς χεῖρας ἀλλ' ἀποματτόμενοι τοῖς ψωμοῖς, καὶ τὴν ἀπομαγαλιὰν ἕκαστος ἀπέφερε, τοῦτο ποιῶντες ἕνεκα τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἀμφόδοις γινομένων νυκτερινῶν φόβων.

⁹ Philostr. *Her.* 291 (675), 326 (742).

¹⁰ *ξενισμός* or *θεοξένια*, *CIA* i. 4, Paton, *Inscr. of Cos*, 36 b²³, c³⁸; Roscher i. 1169 (vase painting); Heuzey, *Miss. arch. de Mac.* 419 pl. 25. 1 (relief). Schol. Pind. *Nem.* vi. 68, *γίνεται ἐν Δελφοῖς ἥρωσι ξένια, ἐν οἷς δοκεῖ ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ξένια καλεῖν τοὺς ἥρωας.*