

'To the black-walled house of Persephone...': Persephone's claim to rule the Underworld in Early Greek Religion

1. Pindar, fragment 133 (Race); from Plato. Meno. 81b. Translation W.H. Race.

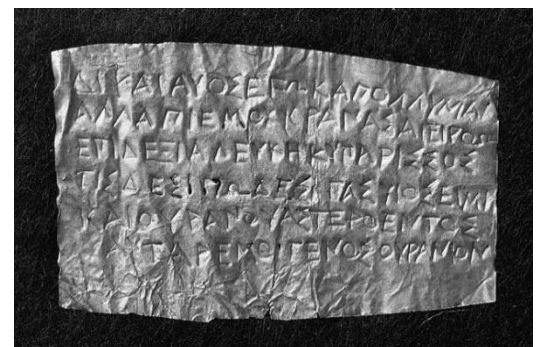
οἷσι δὲ Φερσεφόνα παινᾶν παλαιοῦ τένθεος
δέξεται, ἐς τὸν ὑπερθεὺν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτω ἔπαι
ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν, ἐκ τᾶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοί
καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφία τε μέγιστοι
ἄνδρες αὖξοντ'· ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἦροες ἀ-
γνοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλέονται.

But for those from whom Persephone accepts requital for the ancient grief, in the ninth year she returns their soul to the upper sunlight; from them arise proud kings and men who are swift in strength and greatest in wisdom, and for the rest of time they are called sacred by men.

2. Gold tablet from Thuri, 4th century BCE. OF 489. Edmonds A2; Graf/Johnston 7; Bernabé/Jiménez L10a. Edition and translation Edmonds.

Ἔρχομα<ι> ἐ<κ> κα<θ>α<ρ>ῶν {σχονων} καθαρὰ, χ<θ>ονίων βασίλ<υ>ει<α>,
Εὐκλε καὶ Εὐβουλεῦ {ι} καὶ θεοὶ <καὶ> δαίμο<ν>ε<ς> ἄλλοι·
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένο<ς> εὐχομαι ὄλβιον εἶναι
πο<ι>νὰν δ' ἀνταπέ<ι>τε<σε>ι<σ>' ἔργων ἕνεκα οὔτι δικα<ί>ων.
εἴτε με Μο<ι>ρα ἐδάμασ<σ>' {ατο} εἴτε ἀστεροπῆτα κ<ε>ραυνῶν.
νῦν δ' ἰκέτι<ς> ἦκω πα<ρα>ὶ ἀγνή<ν> Φε<ρ>σεφόνε<ι>αν,
ὥς με<ι> πρόφ<ρ>ω<ν> πέμψη<ι> ἔδρας ἐς εὐαγέ<ι>ων.

Pure I from the pure, Queen of those below the earth,
And Eukles and Eubouleus and the other gods and daimons;
For I also claim that I am of your blessed race.
Recompense I have paid on account of deeds not just;
Either Fate mastered me or the thunderer flinging the lightning bold.
Now I come, a suppliant, to holy Persephone,
That she, gracious, may send me to the seats of the blessed.



Gold tablet from Thessaly. The J. Paul Getty Museum.

3. h.Hom. Dem. 364-369. Trans. Martin L. West.

ἔνθα δ' εὐῶσα
δεσπόσσεις πάντων ὅποσα ζῶει τε καὶ ἔρπει,
τιμὰς δὲ σχήσησθα μετ' ἀθανάτοισι μεγίστας,
τῶν δ' ἀδικησάντων τίσις ἔσσειται ἡμᾶτα πάντα,
οἳ κεν μὴ θυσίησι τεον μένος ἰλάσκωνται
εὐαγέως ἔρδοντες, ἐνάσιμα δῶρα τελούντες.

'By being here, you will be mistress of everything that lives and moves, and have the greatest privileges among the immortals, while there will ever be punishment for those who act unrighteously and fail to propitiate your fury with sacrifices, in holy performance, making the due offerings.'

4. Examples of pinakes from Lokri



The abduction of Persephone. Image source: L. Costamagna and C Sabbione, *Una città in Magna Grecia Locri Epizefiri*, Laruffa Editore, Reggio Calabria 1990 fig. 62



Persephone and Hades on the throne. Image source: G. Incorpora, *Locri Antica e Geraece*, P. Nuovo ed., Bologna, 1980, 2nd ed. 47.

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