

The Birth and Development of the Idealized Concept of Arcadia in the Ancient World

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ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG
www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-164-4
ISBN 978-1-80327-165-1 (e-Pdf)

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Cover: The Circle of the Black Fury Painter, oinochoe (Malibu, Getty Museum)

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Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the Lord Marks Charitable Trust, the Onassis Foundation, the Kanellopoulos Foundation and the Norwegian Institute of Athens for the grants which have enabled this research and have led to this book. Thanks are due to Lady Dr Marina Marks, Dr S. Papadimitriou, Dr Eleni Korka and to Prof. Jorunn Økland for their assistance in obtaining these grants. Two of these funds were channeled through the Society for Messenian Archaeological Studies, and my sincere thanks are due to Prof. Petros Themelis for facilitating this.

Finally, the Kostopoulos Foundation decided a grant in my favor which was channeled through the International Arcadian Society. I thank both these institutions and in particular Dr. Strongyli and Dr. Kaltezioti.

Early versions of my study were submitted to the Hermitage, St Petersburg, the University of Cambridge, and the Norwegian Institute at Athens. I am most grateful indeed to Dr Anna Trofimova, Dr Nigel Spivey, and to Prof. Jorunn Økland for inviting me to do so.

This book was written in Athens, within the company of a stimulating community of scholars devoted to this unique city's Classical Antiquity. I would like to thank all the members of this community for helping to provide the intellectual environment that so nourishes a perceptive scholar.

Athens, 14 December, 2021

Introduction

The Peloponnesian region of Arcadia has for long time been regarded as a land of green groves and meadows, where peaceful shepherds lived unburdened by the problems and negative influences generated by the city life.

Although the notion of this idealized land became so iconic in European culture, as far as this author knows there is no publication which explains in detail why and how this notion was born, developed and established itself in our mainstream culture: most scholars who studied this concept have argued that this 'Arcadian Dream' was no more than an 'invention' of Virgil.¹

The following chapters seek to show both that this conclusion is unsupportable, and that what was involved instead was a long process from Archaic to Late Hellenistic times.

¹Sparse and unsystematic references to the harmonious and peaceful concept of Arcadia in Ancient Greece can be found, *inter alia*, in Hannah 1986: 86-105; Himmelmann 1996: 193-202; Jones 2010, *passim*; Casanova and Egea 2012: 6-19 and Moroth 2013: 133-322.