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FUNERAL RITES: A REFLECTION OF THE AFTERLIFE IN ANCIENT GREEK AND YORUBA TRADITIONAL BELIEF

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Abstract

The anxiety regarding the afterlife and immortality has been with man since the dawn of civilization. The question of afterlife is the most important personal question that can be asked in the light of the realization of one's own mortality. The Afterlife is a generic term for a continuation of existence after death. But the form which an unending or indefinitely human life would take is obscure. However, it is generally believed that the souls of the departed persons make a journey to a specific region or plane of existence. The idea that there can be some continuation in existence after death manifests in religious and traditional beliefs, as well as in the actions and practices of the living, like funerary practices, ancestor worship, the concept of divine judgment, the doctrine of reward and punishment for the soul and the concept of the living-dead. This paper has as its task to examine how funeral rites reflect the concept of afterlife as a philosophical and religious belief among the ancient Greeks and the Yoruba of Nigeria.

Introduction

The issue of death and what happens to man after death has been of great concern to humanity in general. Around the globe, people of different religions and cultures reflect on our existence and try as much as it is humanly possible to find out the purpose of existence and what happens when we die. People of different cultures, including the Greeks and the Yoruba, express different ideas and views of what happens after death, which has been termed 'Afterlife' or 'Hereafter'. The concept of afterlife in religion and philosophy refers to a continuous existence in a realm after death. According to this concept, there is an aspect of an individual, the soul, that does not die but lives on after death. There are various views of the afterlife, there is a view that this continued existence takes place in a spiritual realm, while in another popular view, the individual is reborn into this world to start the life cycle over again, in most cases, without the memory of what his previous life was. There is yet another popular opinion that the dead go to a specific plane of existence after death as judged by God or gods according to the past deeds in the previous life. This paper examines the last view of the concept of afterlife as expressed by the ancient Greeks and in Yoruba traditional belief.

The practices of funeral rites among the ancient Greeks and the Yoruba people of Nigeria are greatly influenced by the belief in afterlife, some of which are still practised today. The Greeks, as is the case with other cultures, express different concepts about afterlife and immortality; the circumstance dictates how the idea is expressed. The early Greek literary sources, such as Hesiod and Homer, reveal human beings as either suffering or enjoying from some form of personal survival after death. In Homer, for instance, the souls of the dead simply descend to Hades where they are easily recognised as the individuals they were in their previous life with their memory intact. They are also rewarded in

Hades or Elysium or punished in Tartarus, depending on the deeds of the previous life.

The Yoruba, like the Greeks, believe that an afterlife is a continuation of this life, only in a different setting. The abode of the dead is usually placed outside this earthly abode, which is sometimes thought of as separated by a stream. However, the qualification for participation in afterlife is determined by the nature of one's previous life and the nature of one's death. Those who qualify to enter or pass to the realm of afterlife are later referred to as ancestors. In other words, it is not all the dead that are eligible to enter into the ancestral land. For a qualified soul to enter into the Hades as is the case with Greeks or the ancestral land of the Yoruba certain funeral rites must be performed. There are certain similarities and variations in Greek and Yoruba funeral rites and conceptions of afterlife. These are examined in this paper.

Death and Preparation of the Body for Afterlife in Ancient Greece

Although some Greek philosophers, like Socrates, welcomed and accepted death calmly, as common to all men, the Greeks, in general feared death. During the Homeric Age, the Greeks believed that, at the moment of death, the $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ (psyche) or the spirit of the dead leaves the body through the mouth or an open war wound after which the deceased is prepared for burial according to the honoured ritual of the time and the last wishes of the deceased. The epics of Homer emphasise the necessity of proper burial and funeral rites, omission of which can have a devastating effect on both the living and the dead. The Greeks believe that the soul, also called ghost, having departed from the body at death, journey to the underworld kingdom called *Hades*, which is ruled over by a god named Hades and his queen, Persephone. During the Homeric age, it was not just the soul of the wicked that descended to Hades after death; rather, all mortal souls,

whether good or bad, went down to the underworld.

Funeral is an important issues in the ancient Greek world. The Greek word for funeral κήδομαι----- (kēdeía) is derived from the verb funeral κήδομαι (kēdomai), meaning attend to or take care of someone. From Homer's *Iliad* and other literary sources, children and other surviving relations were expected to ensure that the dead received befitting burial and proper funeral rites. This was to prepare them for afterlife. If they did not, the deceased could not be regarded as being truly dead and its soul might wander about in distress between the upper world and the underworld. Although, what constituted "proper funeral rites" varied from place to place and time to time, mere disposal of the dead body by burial or cremation was the very least expected. Aristotle even mentions that when an unknown corpse was found at the road side, the corpse would be buried by civic official with the assistance of slaves (*Athenian Constitutions*). This was done in order to ensure that the corpse would not be exposed and become prey to vulture and, according to Parker (1983:43-45), "to neglect to perform this duty could expose one to divine punishment." Symbolic burial is equally acceptable, a good example is found in *Antigone* of Sophocles, where Antigone performs a symbolic burial for her brother, Polynices, by sprinkling dust over his body (*Antigone* 254-255).

Generally, the funeral for a Greek was carried out in different stages in preparing the body for burial and the soul for afterlife. The first step was the πρόθεσις (*prosthesis*) or wake which took place indoors, usually in the house of the deceased. When death occurred, the first thing done was to close the eyes and mouth of the deceased by the next of kin and the body washed by the women of the household, who, according to Retief and Cilliers (2005:53), must be over the age of sixty, salved and clothed normally in white or red material (Parker, 1983:43-45). If the deceased was a soldier, he was dressed in military cloaks. It was also customary to

place a crown on the head of the corpse. After the body was prepared, the corpse was then laid on a bed with its feet facing the door.

The *prothesis* in the Homeric age could have lasted days, for example, in *The Iliad*; Hector's body is not burnt until the ninth day. But by the time of Plato it lasted for a day or three, in accordance with the law of Solon. The major aim of this lying-in-state, according to Plato, was to "distinguish between a swoon and a genuine death" (*Laws*, 959a). That is, to be sure that the deceased was truly dead and not just unconscious. The *prothesis* was a mourning period during which traditional respects were also paid by relatives and friends. Describing what transpired during the mourning, Peter Toohey (2010: 363-364) claims that the mourning was led by women chanting dirges, tearing their body and clothing, and striking their torso, particularly their breasts. Margaret Alexious (1974:6) asserts that "kinswomen, wrapped in dark robe, stood round the bier the chief mourner, either mother or wife, was at the head, and others behind." The most important aspect of *prothesis* was the ritual lament. This ritual lament was not just a spontaneous outbreak of grief; rather, as clarified by Alexious (1974:4), it was carefully controlled in conformity with the ritual of every stage. During the ritual lament, professional mourners were hired to lead off the lament with the lament known as *threnos* with the family singing the *goos* while a chorus of women cried out in accompaniment (Alexious, 1974:11-12).

Following the *prothesis* is *ἐκφορά* - (*ekphora*) funeral procession. Before dawn on the third day, the body would be carried to its resting place in a funeral procession. During the *ekphorah*, the corpse was taken to the grave by pall-bearer. Initially, these pall-bearers were family members and friends but in later times corpse-bearers were hired. Musicians were also hired to provide music. Unlike the *prothesis*, the *ekphora* was led by men while women; who had to be close family

members, followed behind. In some communities, it was customary to make sacrifice before they started the procession. While proceeding to the cemetery, the mourners would stop at every corner and lament so as to attract attention. The women tore their hair and slashed their cheeks with their finger nails. With time, however, this ritual was forbidden. According to Plutarch, as cited by Alexious (1974:12), "Solon forbade laceration of cheeks, singing of set dirges and lamentation at other people's tombs."

The *ekphora* was followed by the burial and the *περίδειπνον* - *perideipnon*. The Greeks practised two types of burial-inhumation and cremation. During Homeric age, as suggested by Garland (1985:34), cremation was the common practice as depicted in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. When a corpse was cremated, the relatives gathered the ashes and put them in a container to be buried in a grave. In case of inhumation, the body or the corpse was wrapped in a cloth, sometimes enclosed in a coffin and interred in a grave or tomb. As noted by Retief and Cilliers (2005:54), animal and human sacrifices were made at the grave side. In *Iliad*, Homer describes how Trojan youths were sacrificed at the burial of Patroclus, the dearest friend of Achilles who was slain by the Trojan famous prince, Hector. Garland (1985:34-36) also notes that "the wives and horses of war heroes were sometime buried with them". After the interment of either the body or the ashes, offerings of food and ointments were made to the dead. These offerings were set down in the grave, and according to Cicero (*Leg. II. 25, 63*), as cited by Retief and Cilliers (2005:54), grains were traditionally strewn over the grave after it had been filled in. This rite was repeated three days later and was followed by the drinking and pouring of libation for the gods while gifts were left either in or on the grave for the deceased.

The burial was followed by *περίδειπνον*- *perideipnon*. The family would return to the house of the deceased for a feast

on his behalf to celebrate his life praising a life, well spent by the deceased. The dead man was regarded as the host, and this feast was a sign of gratitude towards those who took part in burying him. This occasion was enjoyed with great conviviality by those who were present, wearing crowns and festive wreaths believing that the spirit of the dead was there with them (Garland, 1985:37).

Three days after the funeral, the house and household objects would be thoroughly cleansed with sea water and hyssop. This was done out of the belief that the people and the house had been contaminated by death. This ritual washing was performed by a free person (Retief and Cilliers, 2005: 55) and the house was sprinkled with sea water. New fire had to be brought from another place before offerings could be made in the fireplace (Marshall 2000:10).

Kurtz and Boardman (1971:149-151) and Johnston (1999:156) are of the opinion that annual rites to celebrate the dead and other rituals performed were extremely important to the Greeks, depending on the desires of the deceased and the family. Seven different rites were performed at the grave side. They might be carried out on the birthday of the deceased and at any other times deemed necessary to appease the spirit of the deceased. These rites included the *γενέσια* - *Genesisia*, *νεμέσια* - *Nemesia*, *νεκύσια* - *Nekusia* and *ἐπιταφία* - *Epitaphia*. These rites might have involved libations of wine, oil, milk, honey mixed with water or milk poured upon the ground, as well as offerings of flowers, wreaths and ribbons anointed with perfumes and some other things placed on the graves. And at times, elaborate banquets were sometimes prepared, burned in honour of the dead, and buried in a trench (Retief and Cilliers, 2005:56).

Performing the proper rituals for the dead was crucial. This is to assure the successful passage of the soul of the deceased into the afterlife. Failure on the part of the living to attend properly to either the rite of passage or continued

maintenance through graveside libations and offerings could be provoked the unhappy revenants. If these important rituals were not properly completed, it was not only the deceased that would suffer between worlds until the rites of passage into the underworld were completed; it was also possible that the whole groups of people would suffer because of the unhappy state of the soul. It has also been suggested that cities beset by famine and pestilence sometimes seek relief by paying special cult to the ghost of local individuals whom they assumed are causing the problems (Johnston, 1999:156-158).

According to Greek history, deceased buried with funeral rites were granted full access to the *Αδης* - Hades. Those without proper burial rites, on the other hand, were not allowed to enter. Such was the case of Elpenor, Odysseus' war-friend, who complained about his lot to Odysseus during his visit to the underworld. Elpenor implored Odysseus to perform his funeral rites less he becomes "a curse, rankling the high gods" (*Odyssey*, 11:70-79). There are various routes to Hades through which any of the souls can make the journey to Hades. Robert Graves (1990:112) asserts that one of the routes was Aornum. The gates of the Hades were guarded by fearsome hound Cerberus, who wiggles his tail for the new arrivals but does not allow any to depart. The souls going to Hades were ferried by Charon across the river Styx which divided the world of the dead from the world of the living. Charon, according to Greek mythology, was the son of Erebus and Nyx. He is depicted as a sulky old man, or as a winged demon carrying a double hammer. Literary sources also reveal that the Greeks buried coins, also called *δανάκη*, with their dead, with which the souls could pay for their passage across the river (Toohey, 2010:363). The god Hermes is expected to assist the soul to get to the underworld safely and also to guide it back and forth to the upper world when necessary. Those who could not afford the passage, or not admitted by

Charon, were doomed to wander on the banks of the Styx for a hundred years.

Hades has been described in various ways in mythological, historical and literary accounts. For instance, Retief and Cilliers (2005:45) describe the situation in Hades as follows:

*Within Hades, the soul lived a neutral,
undifferentiated shadow- existence,
Without personal characteristics or understanding.
There was no reward or
Punishment for earthly action, and no contact with
the living.*

With Homeric accounts come a lot of certain contradictions concerning the nature of the underworld, as noted by Sourvinou-Inwood (1995: 66-70, 94-103) who also suggests that these contradictions may be due to the fact that "Homer collated the original tales from the pre-Homeric era" and, by his own time, there had been certain alterations. With this "the early and the later components of the poems therefore do not reflect the opinion of a single era". The concept of reward and punishment was introduced in *Iliad* (*Iliad* 3.276-280, 19.359-360). In *Odyssey*, Homer makes the underworld a terrifying place. For example, while speaking about Odysseus' first encounter with the dead, he explains that the souls or ghosts of Odysseus' friends "all came thronging around that hole (and) cries they made were unearthly" (*Odyssey*, 11:43). In his further account, Homer describes the souls as living in a state that was neither pleasant nor unpleasant; lacking consciousness, not recognising one another and even unable to speak to Odysseus until they had tasted the blood of the sheep offered by Odysseus. Literary portrayals, such as contained in the *Odyssey*, suggest that the underworld is dank, dark and boring with little or nothing to do to pass eternal time. It is of little wonder that the energetic soul of Achilles told Odysseus in the underworld that he would "rather be stuck on a farm, a drudge for some other threadbare man

with hardly a life or resources than rule all those who waste away and are dead here” (*Odyssey*, 11:487-491). Homer also portrays the souls as looking like their former bodies as well as retaining the desires and grudges they hold while alive. For instance, the soul of Ajax, who feels he has been cheated by Odysseus while alive, refuses to return Odysseus greeting when they meet in the underworld (*Odyssey*, 11:551-568). Garland (1985:4, 10) gives a description of Hades “as gradually becoming a more pleasant place with the distance between the dead and the living decreasing”. Earlier, he has mentioned that the souls in Hades become aware of the friendly or inimical rituals that are performed at their graves and the condition.

From Greek philosophy, mythology and religion, as reflected in literary sources, it is evident that the Greeks believed reward and punishment to be a special feature of the underworld. Texts and myths talk of judges in the underworld. Most commonly mentioned in this role are Minos, the former King of Crete, who was renowned for his fair judgment; his brother Rhadamanthus, who had been a lawgiver in Crete; and Aeacus, who had ruled Aegina. As depicted in *Odyssey* (11.568-571), initially, these judges are presented as settling disputes among the dead, rather than deciding the fate of a newly arrived soul in the Hades. The concept of judgment in this context is different from that of the Egyptians or some other religious beliefs in which by the dead are judged according to their past deeds. It is also important to mention here that the notion that the dead are expected to receive either rewards or punishments after death was fairly widespread in the Greek Classical period. This concept of reward and punishment developed among the Greeks, according to Morford and Lenardon (1995: 295), in the 5th century B.C.E. In most cases, the lot of the soul depended on its behaviour while alive and things were supposed to be evened up after death.

The judges, Minos, Rhadamanthys and Aeacus judge the souls in Hades and pronounce sentence on them, rewarding the just souls with life in *Ἠλύσιον* - Elysium, condemning the unjust to punishment in a part of the Hades called *Τάρταρος* - Tartarus. The Elysium is also referred to as *Ἠλύσιον πεδῖον* - Elysian Plain. Initially, Elysium was separated from the realm of Hades and admission was primarily reserved for mortals related to the gods and other heroes. Later, it expanded to include those chosen by the gods, the righteous, and the heroic, where they would remain after death, to live a blessed and happy life, and indulging in whatever employment they had enjoyed in life (Zaidman, 1992:78). The Elysian Fields were, according to Homer located on the western edge of the Earth by the stream of Okeanos (*Odyssey*, 4:568). During the time of the Greek oral poet, Hesiod, Elysium was also known as the Isle of the Blessing. Hesiod describes Elysium as a place of enjoyment devoid of sorrow and pains. In his work titled *Works and Days*, he says:

And they live untouched by sorrow in the island of the blessed along the shore of deep-swirling Ocean, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, far far from the deathless gods, and Cronos rules over them (Hesiod, 170).

Homer refers to Elysium as paradise when he describes the last days of Menelaos thus:

*...to Elysian Field at the earth's far end with blond Rhadamanthus.
The lives of men down there surpassingly easy.
No snow, no powerful storms, hardly a rainfall:
only the high-toned Westwind steadily blowing,
the Ocean cooling you all by sending you good air.
(*Odyssey*, 4:563-568).*

Pindar also describes the reward waiting for those who live a virtuous life:

accepted” The idea of re-incarnation among the Greek philosophers at this point can be attributed to their absorption of the Egyptian cultural and religious concept of life after death. But most importantly, the concept of reincarnation must have been adopted in order for the Greek philosophers to be able to prove the immortality of the soul beyond the concept of the underworld -Hades, Elysium or Tartarus.

Thus, more systematic theories of immortality began with a religious movement known as Orphism, founded by Orpheus in the sixth century B.C. The Orphic believe that human souls are immortal and that, after death, the souls are judged according to their actions on earth. Orphism centres round the god Dionysus, “whom they believed to have died and was reborn in somewhat the same manner as Christ” John Sanford (1991:74). Orphic devotees believe that by following rituals and living a pure life, they can “unite their souls with the immortal Dionysus.” In order to achieve this, they partake in communion meals, which they eat with the god and thus unite themselves to him. According to Orphism, by partaking in the nature of Dionysus, their souls ultimately can become immortal. The doctrine of purification of the Orphic allows for the reincarnation of the soul which was later expounded by Plato.

Yoruba Concept of Afterlife

In Yoruba traditional belief, just like the Greeks, death is not viewed as the end of life; rather, it is regarded as a transition from one form of existence to another or a journey to the ancestral world. The qualification for participation in afterlife is determined by the nature of one’s past deeds and the nature of one’s death. Therefore, as Gbadegeşin (1997:1) puts it, “conception of the meaning of life and the meaning of death are important for understanding the meaning of life”. The meaning of life as an important presupposition of the Yoruba is encoded in their attitudes to others. to the

community, to the ancestors and to the deities. Thus, to them, the meaning of life is to deliver the message of Olódùmarè, the supreme creator, according to his wishes. The Yoruba are also of the view that for a deceased to be able to enter into the ancestral world or even become an ancestor, necessary funerary rituals must be performed. These rituals are usually the responsibility of the children of the deceased; hence, the Yoruba attach great importance to getting married and bearing children.

Since death is seen as marking the beginning of a new life, the aged, especially, do not fear death. But as noted by Gbadegeşin (1997:1-2), Yoruba traditional society is divided into two, the *awo* (the sage) and the *ògbèrì* (the ignorant). The *ògbèrì*, according to Gbadegeşin, fear death because it marks the end of an existence that is known and the beginning of another that is unknown. On the other hand, immortality and afterlife is the dream of the *awo* as Èjì - *Ogbè* (an aspect of Ifá divination poetry) puts it:

*Mo dògbògbò Orosè
 N ká ká nínú
 Mo digha oké
 Mo lé gbòin*

*I have become an aged Osè tree
 I will no longer die
 I have become two hundred mountains rolled into one
 I am immovable (Gbadegeşin, 1997:1).*

Hence, when an aged person realises that death is approaching, he welcomes it by rearranging the setting of his household and preparing his family for the eventuality. And, at times, makes arrangements for his funeral and burial as well as distributing or sharing his belongings among members of his household, immediate and extended.

Generally, full burial is accorded the deceased who died at ripe old age and left children behind, but the Yoruba believe

that it is after the necessary rituals have been offered that the deceased is reinstated as an ancestor because he has living descendants of the right category. As Fortes (1965:129) puts it, "his reinstatement in this status establishes his continued relevance for his society". Mbiti (1992:125) describes the ancestors as "the living dead" because, even though dead, people believe that they are living either in heaven or in the other world where they can perform their duties as ancestors. The idea that human beings can survive bodily death is a notion that gives meaning to the why of human existence at all. To the Yoruba, personal survival is a valid conclusion, because it validates the picture of Ultimate Reality (Olódùmarè) who initially gave life to individual person. Within the Yoruba context, the living dead are the ancestors. But it must be noted that not every dead person can become an ancestor, a person who leaves no descendants cannot become an ancestor spirit.

At the death of an aged, there are certain funerary rituals to be performed in order to prepare the deceased for the journey home to the ancestral land and the task of becoming an ancestor. These rites, as noted by Roland Robertson (1969:57), are of primary significance as a mechanism for expressing, reasserting and reinforcing life after death. Funeral in Yoruba simply means *isinkú* - taking care of the corpse. This is not just a matter of burying the corpse; it involves series of rituals performed before and after burial of the deceased, but the circumstances of death and religious affiliation of the deceased largely determine the kind of funeral rites to be performed. The rites also vary from locality to locality. In some communities, the first step taken at the moment of death is to ascertain the cause of death.

In the case of someone believed not to have died through a natural cause, for instance, it is also believed that the soul of such one may be in danger of further molestation from the evil spirits who have been influenced by the malpractices

of the sorcerers, other family members may also be in danger of such fate. In order to prevent this, according to Ellis (1999), a *babaláwo* - diviner, is sent for and, after making his enquiries, he performs some rituals. A sheep or goat is sacrificed, and the carcass, sprinkled with palm-oil, is carried outside the town, and deposited at a spot where two or more paths meet, known as *ikóríta męta*, which has the effect of causing the evil spirits to disperse in as many directions as there are paths. The *babaláwo* then prepares the water of purification with shea butter and edible snails. Dipping into the vessel a palm-branch, he sprinkles fluid on the corpse, the room, and those present. As he does this, he invokes the soul of the deceased to leave the house as soon as the funeral rites have been performed, and proceed peacefully to its destination, wishing it a safe journey.

The next step is like the Greeks' *prothesis*, called *iwękú* - washing the corpse. The corpse is cleansed with rum, or a decoction of aromatic herbs to make it pure and qualified for admittance into the abode of the ancestors, and attired in its best clothes. The thumbs and the great toes are then tied together. If the deceased is a man the head is shaved, and the hair, carefully wrapped up in a piece of white cotton, is buried in the earth behind the house. According to Olajubu and Olupona (2003:101), if the deceased is female, the hair is plaited to make her look beautiful, the nails are cut and the exposed parts of the body are stained with a decoction of the bark of a tree, which gives a reddish hue to the skin. Finally, the corpse is wrapped up in many native cloths, and placed on a mat at the door of the room.

Idowu (1996:205) notes that one of the first rites performed is to slay a fowl which is called *Adię - iránà* - the fare-fowl. This is done in order to make the road easy for the deceased. During the lying-in-state, a yam is prepared and a portion of it is placed at the foot of the bier; this food is regarded as food for the deceased. While the corpse is lying-in-state,

the chief mourners, the widows and daughters, are not expected to participate in the death-feast that follows. In fact, according to Ellis (1999), "they are shut up in an adjacent apartment, where they are compelled by custom to remain during the three days that a corpse invariably lies in state". During the period of being secluded, they are forbidden to take bath, and, for at least a day, custom requires them to refuse all food, after which they usually allow themselves to be persuaded to take some nourishment.

The actual burial of the corpse is seen as a kind of preliminary event to the funeral process during the interment, the children, relatives, friends and neighbours of the deceased gather round with gifts, such as clothes, money and other material things meant for the use of the deceased in the next life. As noted by Idowu (1996:205), when the corpse is lowered into the grave, the children and relatives of the deceased draw near it, according to the family status, with a sacrificial victim, a goat, and offer their gift through the "officiant" or *bábá isinkú*. As the gift is offered, the deceased is implored to accept the offer and not to sleep wherever he may be but rather to open his eyes wide and watch over his children and belongings and also to be ready to fight for them whenever there is need. Relatives, friends and neighbours of the deceased who wish to send message to their own people who are already in the ancestral land are also allowed to do so either verbally or materially.

The next rite to be performed is known as *Bí bá òkú ya' hùn*, Idowu (1996:205) refers to this rite as "entering into a covenant with the deceased, while Olajubu and Olupona (2003:100) call it "separation of the dead from the living". This rite is performed in order to break off any physical connection or relationship between the dead and the living and for the living to say farewell to the deceased as well as impresses "it upon him that now he is no longer in his former earthly state" but belongs to another realm. And that he now has the

responsibility of watching and protecting those he left behind. This rite is performed, according to Idowu (1996:205), by the "officiant" who descends into the grave and slays the sacrificial victim. He splits kola nuts and puts certain items, such as food, beside the body. As noted by Olajubu and Olupona (2003:100), this ritual can also be carried out by destroying the religious or professional paraphernalia of the deceased and retaining only a fraction of it for the children in case they want to consult with him as an ancestor at a later date. During the interment, after the body has been lowered into the grave, items such as food, rum, and cowries are placed in the grave and the body is sprinkled with the blood of a he-goat, sacrificed to propitiate *Èlégbà* (the Devil). A few cowries are thrown in, and then the grave is filled up. There are other various articles placed in the grave depending on the guild of the deceased. For instance, during the burial of an *àyàn* - a drummer, after all the necessary rituals have been done, *Pàlà* and *Òpáilù*, instruments used for beating drums, are put at the left hand of the corpse in the grave. After this, the grave is covered up while other necessary rituals follow (Ellis, 1999).

The funeral, according to Drewal (1992:38-39), involve seven days of ritual called *ètùtù*, which are performed "to convey the spirit of the deceased to its other-worldly realm where it remains along with other ancestral spirits." The first day of the ritual is known as *ojò-isikù*; it is the day of interment. The third day is for feasting and is called *Ìtaòkù*. the seventh day, *Ìje-Òkù* or *Ìje-Ìje* is meant for public celebration. On this occasion, according to Ayantayo (1988:119-122), if the deceased is a drummer, one of the drummers will climb the roof of the house of the deceased. The man on the roof will be dancing to the drumming going on. After some times a fowl will be thrown and he must catch it; if he does not catch the fowl, certain rituals must be performed. The fowl is then slaughtered, with the blood poured on the ground,

while the man on the roof steps on it as he descends from the roof.

After this ritual, dancing will continue, as relatives, friends and well-wishers follow the children of the deceased and the drummers to the marketplace. At the market place, all the drummers will be beating their talking drums while the participants will be dancing in turn. One of the songs they sing really reflects their belief in an afterlife and that the dead can bless or afflict their offenders. The song goes thus:

*Ènì sẹ́hin dòkú
Lòòkú jóò má gbè*

*Those who participate in the funeral rituals
Will be blessed by the dead.*

This song emphasizes the need for all the colleagues to participate since failure to do so will be accounted for in the world beyond.

It is noteworthy that both the Greek and Yoruba perform a funeral rite of animal and human sacrifices at the grave side. For instance, Homer (*Iliad* 18; 336-337) describes how some Trojan youths were sacrificed at the burial of Patroclus. Not to be left out is the funerary ritual of war heroes whose wives and horses were also buried with them. According to Kurtz and Boardman (1971: 144-147) and Garland (1985:34-36), there is evidence that this kind of funeral rites even occurred in the Classical era, even though, Solon had forbidden such sacrifices. From Yoruba traditional set up, the king is regarded as sacred and as Mustapha et al (1991:41-42) explain, the burial of a king is sacred and secretive. After all the necessary sacrifices have been performed with various rites and rituals, human beings were known to have been buried with kings. This is known as “*Abóbakú*”. This was done because it was believed that a king could not go on a journey alone; he must be accompanied. It was also done so

that the king would have people to send on errand in the hereafter, just like in the normal life on earth.

According to Idowu (1996:206), several days after the burial, another rite is performed; it is known as *Fifa eégún òkú wọlé* - 'Bringing the spirit of the deceased into the house'. With this rite, it is believed that the *egúngún*- (masquerade) provides the link between the living and the ancestors and, at times, are seen as representing the ancestors. Thus the *egúngún* are represented as playing a role that cuts across descent-group (Morton-Williams, 1967:340-347, Bascom, 1969:93-94,). When this rite is being performed, in some areas, it is customary for an *egúngún* to come out from the room of the dead man seven days after the burial. The masquerade must have the same physical appearance with the deceased and should be able to imitate the dead man as he brings greetings from the dead man to the other members of the family and people in the compound. This is why they refer to the *egúngún* as *Ará Orun Kinkin*- visitor from heaven - (Mustapha, 1991:73-74).

Like the Greek, the Yoruba perform other rites at the grave side of the deceased at a later time either to appease the deceased or the gods, depending on the circumstance. In most cases, children pray and make annual offerings to a dead parent for spiritual protection. According to Abimbola (1973: 75), each adult who dies becomes an *òriṣa* to his own family since all ancestors are viewed as such. These beliefs are related to the concept of *orí*. As noted by Bascom (1969a:72), these annual sacrifices are made on the day on which the founder used to make offerings to his own *orí*; this is like the *Genesia* of the Greeks. There are other ceremonies performed in remembrance of the deceased, one of such is known as *Íyeyìn òkú padà*. This ceremony can be performed at any time, even 'several years' after the burial. This is why the Yoruba, during such funeral ceremony, sing as follows:

Òkú olówó, ọ̀dún mètá
Òkú olòṣì, ọ̀ṣù mètá
Òkú Ọ̀lómọ̀m̀ àṣeéṣetunṣe.

The burial of a rich man is celebrated for three years.

The burial of a wretched man is celebrated for six months.

The burial of a man with children is celebrated year after year.

The funeral rites practised in ancient Greece and in Yoruba traditional setting, including the ritual lamentation, the grave gifts, the animal and human sacrifices as well as the periodical rituals performed days and years after the burial and more importantly the coin put in the mouth of the deceased during burial, did not just represent a sentimental show of respect for tradition or for the deceased. Rather, they were performed out of religious conviction of ensuring that the deceased gain an entrance to the underworld, and there remain as ancestors. To the Greeks, the realm is Hades, Elysium or Tartarus, depending on the deeds of the deceased while alive. The question that readily comes to mind now is 'where is the location of the afterlife or hereafter of the Yoruba?' To answer this question, Dopamu (2006:12) suggests that the Yoruba will probably point to the sky, indicating the heaven. To them, the heaven is just above and covered by the clouds. The Yoruba speak of heaven as a place that exists in literal terms. Heaven is viewed by the Yoruba as a very pleasant place to go, and a place that the aged look forward to with eagerness. When an old person is being buried, he is warned to live in heaven according to the established pattern of the place:

Má jòṣkùn
Má jekóló
Má bá wọ̀n kọ̀lẹ́ imọ̀ bọ̀ ba dọ̀ run
Ohun tí wọ̀n bá ñ jẹ́ ní lájúlẹ́ ọ̀run ní kí ọ̀ bá wọ̀n jẹ́.

features as those of the present life. The picture of the afterlife, especially for the Yoruba, is a life of an unending fellowship of one's in the community kinsmen who have gone into the great world beyond.

From the Greek and the Yoruba standpoints, it is obvious that, in order to become an ancestor or to be able to gain entrance into the great beyond, that is the afterlife, proper burial rites and funeral rituals must be performed. If these are not done such a dead person can neither go into the underworld nor become or, in any way, be regarded as an ancestor. With this, it is evident that those regarded as evil, such as witches and wizards, whose corpses are thrown into the "evil forest" without burial, cannot become ancestors. One of the questions that can now be raised is "what becomes of the souls of these so called evil people whose dead bodies are deposited in the evil forest to be consumed by wild animals?" Since the corpses are not buried and proper funeral rites are not performed, can their souls pass to the heaven the abode of Olódùmarè for judgment or have they received their judgment already? There is nothing in Greek or Yoruba tradition, oral or written, that indicates what becomes of the dead whose body is cast into the evil forest.

Although, the Greeks name the place of afterlife as, Hades, Elysium or Tartarus, the Yoruba refer to this place as *òrun rere* or *òrun àpáàdi*. To the Yoruba, whichever the soul goes to depends on the judgment of the gods or Olódùmarè. However, the nature and the location of the afterlife is not analysed. The concept of afterlife does not incorporate any specific idea of what the life in the afterlife really is except that it is a form of continuation of life that surpasses that of the earth. When an elderly person dies, the Yoruba will say that such one has gone to the 'great beyond'. Many Yoruba people refer to the location of the afterlife as heaven, while some believe that to travel to the place of the afterlife, the dead must be ferried to the other side of the river that

serves as boundary between the earth and the world beyond. In addition to this many refer to the location of the afterlife as the land of the ancestors.

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