

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

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

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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 unsoportable, 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.