



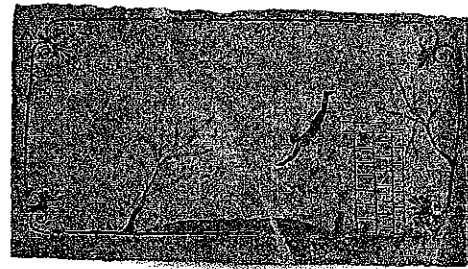
KING OF THE UNDERWORLD
Zeus ruled the earth and sky; Poseidon, the sea. The third of these divine brothers was Hades, king of the underworld, also known as Pluto. Eventually the underworld came to be known simply as Hades.

Death and the afterlife

DEATH CAME EARLY for most people in ancient times, because life was very harsh. Young men often died in battle; young women died in childbirth. The Greeks believed in – or hoped for – some kind of life after death, although their ideas about this state varied. The kingdom of the dead was generally thought to be deep in the earth, and therefore many people buried their dead. But sometimes corpses were cremated on a funeral pyre. The soul was sometimes shown as a tiny winged person, and some Greeks believed that it escaped from the body and rose up to become one of the stars, waiting until it could be reborn in a new body. Gods such as Dionysus, who, like the vines he protected, died and was reborn each year, gave people hope of new life. The corn goddess, Demeter, whose daughter, Persephone, was snatched away by Hades, the god of the underworld, claimed back her daughter for part of the year (spring and summer). Tombs were decorated with pictures of feasts and the dead person's favorite things, and food was placed in the grave, so that the dead could be happy in the afterlife.



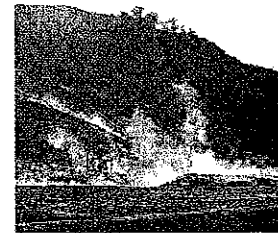
FLASK OF FAREWELL
Offerings to the dead included narrow flasks known as *lekythoi*, which contained oil used to anoint the body. They were decorated with delicately painted scenes of farewell. This dead warrior, perhaps a victim of one of the many wars in fifth-century B.C. Greece, receives his helmet from a woman. The goose at their feet, the bird of Aphrodite (pp. 20–21), hints at their relationship.



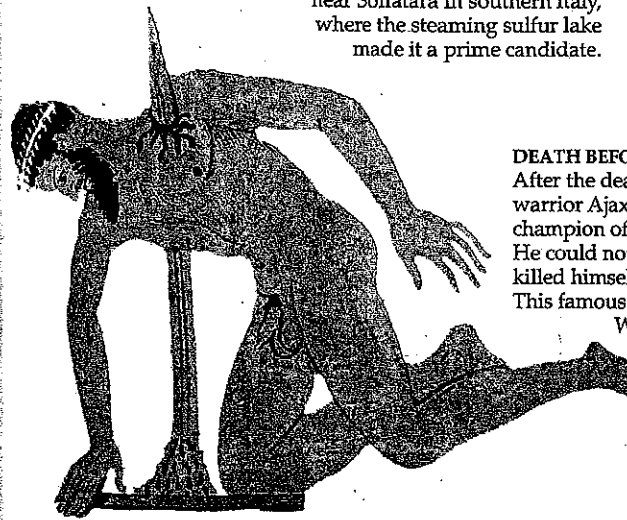
THE DIVER
This delightful painting was found on the inside of a stone sarcophagus (coffin) found at Poseidonia, a Greek city in southern Italy, later called Paestum. It probably represents the leap of the dead into the unknown.



FARE FOR THE FERRYMAN
Charon was the grim ferryman who carried people across the black waters of the river Styx and into the kingdom of the dead. In this painting by John Stanhope (pp. 12–13), the underworld is a gloomy place with whispering reeds and spindly trees through which dead souls can be seen making their way to the river. The one-way trip in Charon's punt cost one Greek coin. The family of the dead sometimes left a coin on the corpse for the journey.



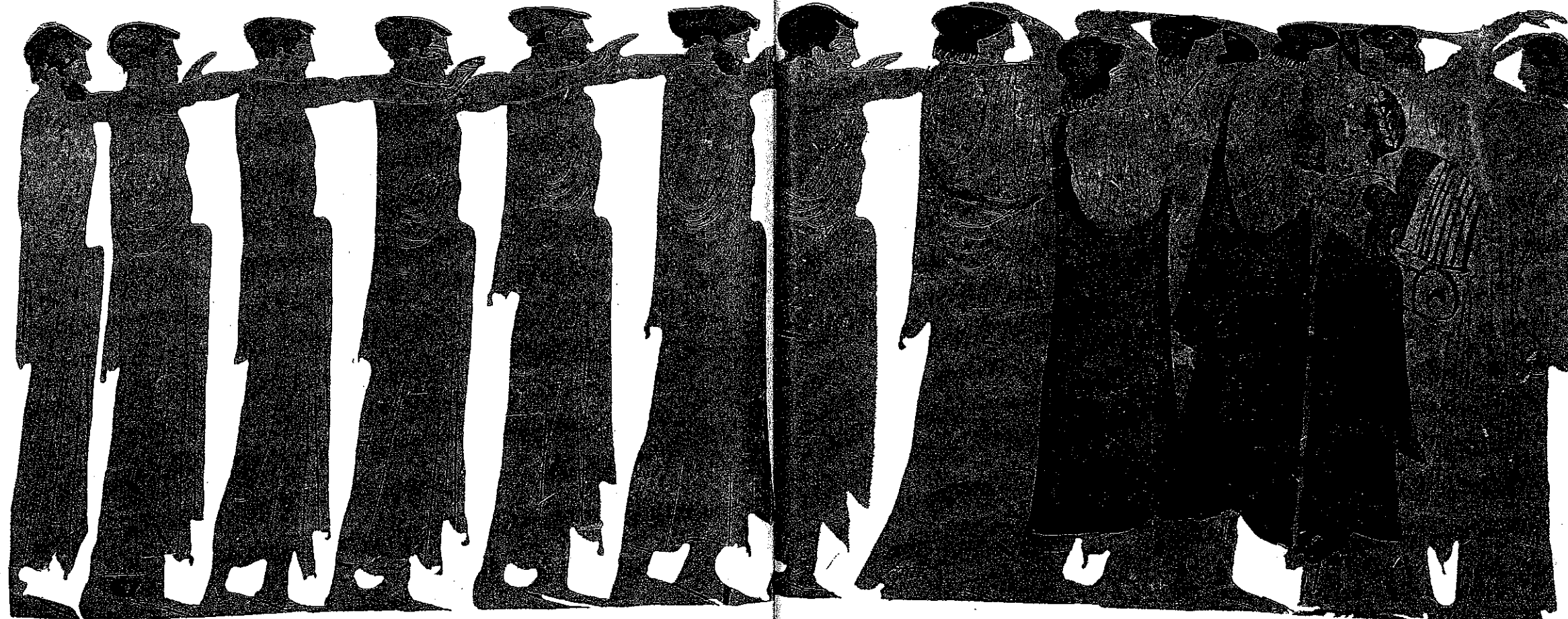
THE ENTRANCE TO HADES
Ancient people thought that certain places might be the entrance to the underworld. Many Greeks settled near Solfatara in southern Italy, where the steaming sulfur lake made it a prime candidate.



DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR
After the death of Achilles, the great warrior Ajax failed to become the champion of the Greeks fighting at Troy. He could not live with the shame, so he killed himself by falling on his sword. This famous incident from the Trojan War is often shown on painted pots and is also the subject of a play by Sophocles (pp. 38–39).



TOMBSTONE
At certain periods in Athens, tombstones, carved in marble and originally painted in bright colors, were placed above graves. Above the carving of the dead person, the sloping lines of a roof suggested a temple or shrine. Here the dead man, Xanthippos, sits on an elegant curved chair, his children shown on a smaller scale beside him. His name is carved above him. It is not really known why he was holding a foot; possibly he was a shoemaker.



MOURNING LINE
A Greek funeral was a dramatic event. The body was laid out on a couch, with the feet facing the door to ensure that the spirit would leave. A wreath was placed on the head. A procession of mourners wearing black robes escorted the corpse. The women cut off their long hair as a sign of grief and gave a lock of it to the dead person. They also tore at their cheeks until the blood ran.