

Libraries and their Role in Greek and Norse Mythology: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract - The analysis attempts to establish value in both Greek and Norse mythologies by comparatively examining libraries as cultural hubs as well as physical structures that advanced knowledge preservation and distribution therein. For instance, the Muse's conception of knowledge and its cultural significance in transmitting information through literature indicates the advanced state of Greece, as they depended heavily on oral and written traditions to spread information. On the contrary, Norse temples relied on storytelling Skalds and rune engravings for knowledge preservation, although such practices are placed within a more decentralised context. Rather than featuring stained glass windows depicting the stories that lie within, the Skalds' performances kept the cultural memories alive in people's minds and served as the centrepiece. Unlike Germanic tribes, whose cultural practices were much less sophisticated, both of these mythologies have placed value on knowledge within varying contexts of religion and culture. This leads to the assumption that they did possess such facilities, although not explicitly described or illustrated. This statement puts forth the necessity to study more Austrian literature and archaeological material to comprehend and provide a detailed answer concerning the nuances of knowledge management in the realm of these two profound traditions.

Keywords: Greek, Norse, Mythology, Library of Alexandria, Material Culture, Comparative Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, libraries are considered to be the hub for the preservation and diffusion of information. Libraries have historically functioned as repositories for old texts, scrolls, and manuscripts that have been preserved throughout generations for the betterment and development of the respective societies and their descendants. The importance of libraries is not only to store but also to protect the works of literature, science, philosophy, and religion from around the world. Thus, by keeping the work protected and safe in its contained sphere, they give educational materials for students and researchers, ensuring in-depth knowledge in a variety of disciplines of studies such as history, medicine, astrology,

astronomy, language and literature, and diverse religious texts, amongst others (Cvijić & Milošević, 2020). Libraries can also be seen as a significant element of religious rituals because they store various religious writings and scriptures. It is recognised as the birthplace of culture and tradition (Frazer, 1921; Handri et al., 2024). The libraries also make arrangements to keep the legal documents, treaties, and records that were critical to society's order and governance. Even the ancient library of Alexandria was regarded as Greece's cultural hub, with experts gathering there to exchange their ideas with one another. They facilitated intellectual exchange and collaboration (Canfora, 1990). However, while libraries are crucial because they are a powerhouse of knowledge, they were once reserved for the privileged and educated class, emphasising the social stratification of that society, but they were later made available to everyone (Sumithra & Sakshi, 2024).

Greek mythology has always provided a wide range of scope for research and documentation. Various scholars have written books on the subject, focusing on different aspects of Greek mythology. The Companion to Greek Mythology, edited by Roger Woodard, gives an extensive view of Greek myths and their forms and uses in literature, art, religion, and politics (Kalantari et al., 2021). Gregory Nagy's work on Greek mythology and poetics has given insights into the transformation of Indo-European linguistic and cultural heritage into distinctly Greek social institutions, with emphasis on the role of language in transmitting mythology (Nagy, 1992). Ironically, Greek mythology has been well studied, but there is a comparative lack of study between Greek and Norse mythologies in the given context (Geng, 2024). This gap in the literature opens a future avenue of research to understand the similarities and differences between these two rich mythological traditions. Concluding, the literature available is predominantly on Greek mythology, with copious studies regarding its origin, development, and cultural influence. Robin Hard's revised edition of H. J.

Rose's work gives valuable guidance to the Greek myths, their genesis, sources, and significance. However, there is a lack of comparative studies between Greek and Norse mythologies in the above context, thus providing a potential area for further investigation that could provide valuable insights into the shared and unique aspects of these two influential mythological systems (Hard, 2003).

The study will explore the role of libraries in the ancient era, which will be multi-disciplinary. It integrates cultural history, sociological understanding, and information science. The study will be navigated through historical and comparative analysis methods and the research questions will address significant issues of the role of libraries, their role in cultural exchange, and the significance of access and social stratification (Price, 2020; Hulloli, & Savanur, 2020). Through historical examination of primary and secondary sources of popular libraries such as the Library of Alexandria, the instant study aims to discover of knowledge and shaping of societal values (El-Abbadi, 1990). The multi-faceted approach will enable an in-depth examination of the role of libraries in ancient civilisations and their lasting legacy in the transmission of knowledge (Prakash & Prakash, 2023).

II. METHOD

The qualitative method examines primary literary and historical sources. The primary sources of data are: The study uses comparative, qualitative, and interdisciplinary approaches to address the functions of libraries and the preservation of knowledge in Greek and Norse mythologies. The Iliad and the Odyssey, Theogony and Works and Days, The Library, The Prose Edda, and The Poetic Edda are the sources for which a text analysis approach is used. These texts present evidence of the way knowledge was disseminated via oral tradition, texts, and material culture. This study also uses historical and comparative approaches to examine the centralised repository of knowledge in Greek civilisation at the Library of Alexandria (Canfora, 1990) and the decentralised system of the Norse as evidenced in Skaldic poetry and rune stone inscriptions (Byock, 2001). The research further is contextually relevant so that the mythological allusions are interpreted in their historical and cultural context and not in terms of assumptions of contemporary times (Nagy, 1992).

In addition, this research applies source triangulation by comparing primary literary sources with secondary scholarly critiques to ensure validity. By incorporating historical and archaeological studies findings (Price, 2020; Boardman, 1980), the research validates knowledge preservation cultural significance in both cultures. The research design determines how Greek myths dwelled on divine inspiration by the Muses (Hesiod, 2007), whereas Norse mythology assigned wisdom at the behest of Odin and the holy runes. The abundant comparison, however, is acknowledged as a lack of availability of archaeological data concerning library architecture for the Norse. Future research will continue to examine how discoveries in archaeology and comparative

mythology influence the evolution of knowledge systems in ancient civilisations.

III. DISCUSSION

The system of their education and their way of representation. Despite the Library of Alexandria being founded on historical facts, it soon became rooted in folklore (Price, 2020). Its sheer size and esteemed reputation had a significant part to play in solidifying its legendary status and in shaping the way libraries were viewed in the future. The stories of its destruction, whether completely true or false, came to symbolise a powerful metaphor for the fragility of knowledge and the urgent necessity of preservation (Canfora, 1990). The stories emphasise the Greek philosophy of acquiring and conserving knowledge, demonstrating the value of knowledge over its immediate utility. It is a fact that such a wonderful library existed in real life and served to navigate the cultural significance attached to learning and intellectual aspects in ancient Greece. The magnanimous status of the Library of Alexandria is proof of one of the lasting cultural heritage of the quest for knowledge and the conservation of education (Price, 2020).

The comprehensive accounts of its destruction act as a reminder of the vulnerability of cultural heritage and the continued imperative to safeguard and conserve knowledge. The Library of Alexandria was an important centre of scholarly life, and scholars and researchers from across the ancient world flocked to it (Nagy, 1992). The current comparative study is to explore the vital importance that libraries, both physical and metaphorical, have taken in Greek and Norse mythology, especially concerning the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. Libraries in ancient Greece, such as the Library of Alexandria, served as a cultural centre for storing many forms of knowledge, such as literature, science, and religious texts, in the shape of books, scrolls and scriptures, which shaped society's ideals and intellectual pursuits considerably (Hard, 2003). The Muses in Greek mythology illustrate the sacred quality of knowledge and its quest through oral as well as written traditions

In contrast, Norse mythology suggests a decentralised approach to preserving knowledge, with the use of runes and oral recital by the Skalds. Runes were the script representation, while the recital by the Skalds was used for retaining cultural memory (Boardman, 1980). Both myths, although providing no specific literary representations of any library, maintain intrinsic merit in knowledge along with its appreciation and preservation, where the cultural differences and the religious are contrasted. This sort of analysis should be carried out on the literary source and the archaeological record that would provide enlightenment on the development of knowledge among these two-literate myth-making traditions that are about human development and cultural identity.

The written endeavour and intellectual creation within its limits were the impetus for the creation of different

disciplines: literature, philosophy, science, and mathematics. The mere existence of such an institution, real or mythologized, is a reflection of the cultural significance attached to the collection and repository of knowledge (Nagy, 1992). Therefore, the mythological status of the Library of Alexandria cannot be solely explained by exaggeration; it is a reflection of an entrenched cultural belief about the significance of knowledge and learning. The timelessness of fascination with the Library of Alexandria remains one of the testaments of its long-time symbolic power, popularity and influence on modern concepts of libraries and the significance of knowledge and its preservation. The Muses, nine Greek gods of inspiration in Greek mythology, were at the centre of the Greek idea of knowledge and its preservation (Hesiod, 2007). Closely tied to memory, creative expression, and the arts, they are to preserve knowledge but also create new understandings and their disciples. They are therefore considered custodians of knowledge, with their role ensuring passing down to subsequent generations (Byock, 2001).

The existence of such structures underscores the fact that much is placed on obtaining and safeguarding knowledge. In myth and literature, they represent reminders of what the society puts out as valuable creative and intellectual endeavours in Greek society. Their function reflects a belief system in which knowledge is a divine reciprocal good needed for human flourishing. The influence of the Muses upon the arts and sciences mirrors the interrelationship of those disciplines and their conjoined role in the pursuit of the advancement of knowledge (Hard, 2003). The association of the Muses with the inspiration and the memory suggests that the early Greeks conceived of knowledge as something to be creatively tended and remembered. The Muses functioned as officials of divine and human communication, facilitating mutual inspiration and ensuring that the knowledge generated was not only remembered but creatively used to produce new works of art and literature (Sturluson, 2005). This analysis demonstrates the dynamic and processual character of knowledge within Greek culture since it was seen as a process that is constantly being refashioned by human creativity and divine inspiration.

The role of the Muses also carries over to the intellectual creativity paradigm in general, demonstrating the Greek perspective that knowledge and art are intertwined and an integral part of a thriving society. Finally, the importance placed on divine inspiration implies that the pursuit of knowledge was a huge and religious quest, hence ensuring an ultimate feeling of meaning and purpose in life (El-Abbadi, 1990). In ancient Greece, before the dawn of mass literacy, oral tradition formed the most influential mode of transfer of knowledge. This was a process of memorisation, recitation, and careful passing of traditions and tales. This system represented a dynamic living library where knowledge is stored and transferred through the human mind, memory, and performance (Boardman, 1980). The art of rhapsodes, or professional receivers, was at the centre of the preservation and transmission of this knowledge. Oral tradition was at the centre of the growth of Greek culture and identity.

Transitioning to a written culture did not eliminate oral performance; instead, the two existed and conditioned each other, and oral performance remained central to interpreting and disseminating written texts (Nagy, 1992). The oral tradition provided knowledge with the fluidity and freedom of improvisation and innovation in the means of communicating.

The ancient Greeks reached mass literacy, and following this, their whole population was dependent on an oral system for passing on knowledge. This necessitated intricate systems of memory, recitation, and the careful transmission of stories, customs, and information over generations (Homer, 1999). The system used human memory as an operation technique, resulting in a living knowledge repository that sent information via performance delivery. Professional rhapsodes who recited epic poetry had intricate obligations to preserve and spread this knowledge throughout their societies. Since the adoption of written systems, oral tradition has been an essential component of Greek culture (Frazer, 1921). Despite the emergence of writing culture, it did not eliminate the value of oral performance because it brought together both written and oral literacy.

Norse mythology by examining the presence of libraries within its cultural context. The study looks at how runes and epic stories helped to protect sacred knowledge and cultural traditions, as well as how verbal storytelling and script-based documentation worked together to keep Norse traditions alive. Runes served as the ancient Norse alphabet, establishing a writing mechanism for preserving both knowledge and historical material (Boardman, 1980). Various things, including stones, tools, and swords, had inscriptions indicating that Norse peoples used a storage system that spread information across multiple areas rather than centralising it, as in the Library of Alexandria. The social and political aspects of Norse civilisation contributed to their decentralised form of knowledge conservation, which separated keeping information from focused city-state authority centres (Sturluson, 2005). Stone engravings demonstrate the Norse people's dedication to eternal preservation because knowledge appeared highly valued as a resource that needed permanent maintenance.

Norse civilisation relied on professional poets and storytellers known as Skalds to spread and protect Norse intellectual ideas. Their ability to perfectly repeat remembered material, as well as their poetic expertise, ensured the survival of valuable traditions, legends, and historical accounts (Hard, 2003). Norwegian society entrusted Skalds with the task of preserving cultural memory because these entertainers were responsible for passing along important knowledge to future generations. The performances drew together cultural significance since they took place in prominent venues where key members of society would gather (Price, 2020). The Skalds maintained crucial cultural memory through their performances, ensuring the preservation of knowledge from ancestral traditions and historical records.

The study investigates the significant role of material culture, which ranges from items to buildings, in expressing knowledge in both Greek and Norse societies. The research analyses how physical items functioned as memory vessels, highlighting cultural underpinnings related to traditional activities and collective recall systems (Hesiod, 2007). Ancient Greek cultural history became visible through pottery vessels and statues because they contained visual images that combined historical records with myths for collective knowledge preservation. The artefacts suggested both decorative interest and educational function because they communicated cultural values and transmitted knowledge throughout succeeding generations (Canfora, 1990). The detailed information depicted on these objects delivered complex stories, moral instruction, and historical events, which made them important information receptacles.

Comparison of Knowledge Preservation in Greek and Norse Mythology

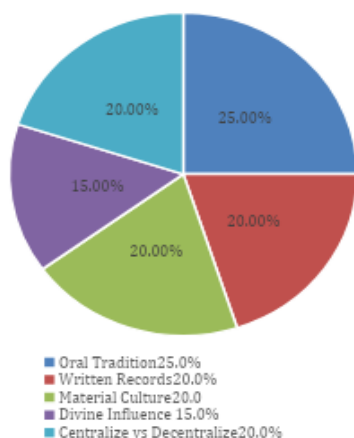


Fig. 1 Knowledge Preservation in Greek and Norse Mythology

In Fig. 1, the comparison between knowledge preservation in Greek and Norse mythology can be seen. Although Greek and Norse mythology share similar oral traditions, symbolic wisdom practices, and divine knowledge conservation strategies, they also have diverse mechanisms for conserving information and unique cultural influences as a result of these tactics (Homer, 1999). These divergent approaches appear to be due to differences in cultural values and information transfer objectives. Each community chooses a medium and visual style for communicating information depending on its cultural heritage. Norse culture memorialised historical events and family history by inscribing runes on runestones. These things, carefully placed in public spaces, demonstrate a desire to impart knowledge to the public, resulting in cultural shifts and identity construction (Sturluson, 2005).

These stones included historical information such as genealogical facts, commemorations of significant events, and personal authorial comments. The stone material used for writing signifies the assumption that essential knowledge will be useful indefinitely. Different cultural interpretations of knowledge manifestation emerge from an examination of tangible manifestations seen in Greek and Norwegian cultures (Frazer, 1921). Greek artefacts communicated with viewers through detailed visual storytelling and artistic

illustration. Runestones among Norse artefacts had short inscriptions with symbols and simple runes to transmit their messages with limited written means.

Similarities across Knowledge Systems

Oral tradition as the primary mode of knowledge transmission: Written documentation was unknown in both Greek culture and Norse civilisation until spoken traditions became the major means of archiving. Homer, an ancient Greek poet, produced epic poems such as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, which he passed orally. The Norse Skalds preserved mythology and historical documents by shaping them into poetry lyrics (Byock, 2001). They viewed knowledge as a dynamic, performative process because oral storytelling was prevalent in both communities. Use of mythology in knowledge preservation: The Muses, nine legendary goddesses of inspiration, governed both the preservation and transfer of knowledge, particularly through poetry, history, and philosophy (Hesiod, 2007). The Norse god Odin was endowed with wisdom and knowledge after dedicating himself to gaining the runes, indicating written wisdom paired with magical insight. Sacred heavenly creatures served as intermediaries in both faiths, demonstrating that wisdom reflected a tremendous sacred power.

Symbolic representation of knowledge in material culture: Throughout history, both cultures have combined their accumulated knowledge into physical artefacts. Greek knowledge preservation is shown in vase paintings, statues, and inscriptions, along with depictions of historical events and mythological narratives (Boardman, 1980). The Norse carved Runestones possessed short textual messages about historic persons and mythological occurrences, according to Price, (2020). The discovered artefacts confirm both societies valued knowledge preservation because they established both artistic and literary means of documentation.

Differences in Knowledge Systems

Centralised or decentralised knowledge storage: Greek knowledge systems included concentrated storage locations, particularly the Library of Alexandria, which played a significant role for researchers and intellectuals (Canfora, 1990). This library's extensive collection comprises philosophical texts as well as scientific and literary documents. The Norse knowledge system was mostly made up of decentralised elements such as runes engraved onto stone monuments, weapons, and tools, whereas the Greeks kept their information in the Library of Alexandria, a formally designated institution (El-Abbadi, 1990).

Literacy and Writing Systems: Each community created a written system, but the means used to achieve this development varied. The Greeks used an alphabetic system to compose philosophy as well as poetry and historical accounts (Hard, 2003). The Norse people primarily used runes for writing, avoiding extensive literary documentation in favour of mystical or memory-keeping chores (Byock,

2001). Writing existed for intellectual objectives but only for formal rituals in Norse countries, whereas the Greeks dedicated their writing system to intellectual development on a broader academic scale.

Impact of Religion and Cosmology on Knowledge Systems: The impact of religious beliefs and cosmological frameworks in shaping Greek and Norse societies' perceptions and appreciation of knowledge. The research investigates how mythological ideas affect views about knowledge, establishing their connection to power systems and regulating concepts of authority. In Greek mythology, knowledge frequently appears as divine giveaways from gods or divine force inspirations (Hesiod, 2007). The religious connection to knowledge shows its divine nature while connecting it to holy higher powers. The celestial goddesses known as Muses

are crucial to this notion because they represent creative force and divine knowledge, genesis.

The belief system portrays knowledge as a necessary road to knowing God and attaining enlightenment and divine wisdom (Hollander, 1962). The Norse cosmology concept holds that knowledge exists throughout the nine worlds via Yggdrasil, the world tree, because all realms are interconnected. Scientists believe that knowledge preservation is essential for maintaining cosmic order and understanding divine relationships between humans and gods across numerous divine worlds. The Norse cosmology system demonstrates the interconnectedness of knowledge because it plays a vital role in managing the complex worldview as well as cosmic balance.

TABLE I COMPARATIVE TABLE: GREEK VS. NORSE MYTHOLOGY

Aspect	Greek Mythology	Norse Mythology	Citations
Primary Knowledge Transmission	Oral and Written Traditions	Oral Tradition (Skalds, Storytelling)	Hesiod, (2007); Byock, (2001)
Writing System	Alphabetic System (scrolls, manuscripts)	Runic Script (Carved on Stones, Weapons)	Hard, (2003); Snorri Sturluson, (2005)
Storage Method	Centralized (Libraries, Alexandria)	Decentralized (Runestones)	Canfora, (1990); Price, (2020)
Religious Influence	Muses as Divine Inspiration	Odin Wisdom and Runes	Nagy, (1992); Snorri Sturluson, (2005)
Material Culture Usage	Pottery, Inscriptions, Sculptures	Runestones, Sagas, Carvings	Boardman, (1980); Price, (2020)

As shown in *Table I*, the study of mythological effects on knowledge development in different civilisations displays divergent perspectives. The divine beginnings of knowledge occur in Greek mythology as a concept that connects supernatural components with human cognition (Hard, 2003). The Norse cosmological worldview describes the dispersion of knowledge throughout the universe as a means of maintaining cosmic order. These civilisations differ significantly in terms of worldviews, understandings, and cultural values of knowledge (Price, 2020). The religious qualities of knowledge remain key components for the belief

systems, although there are substantial variances in terms of religious consequences.

IV. RESULTS

The study confirmed that neither Greek nor Norse mythology contains direct library representations; rather, their essential knowledge frameworks derive from aspects such as story patterns and symbolic symbols. Physical artefacts connected with material culture communicated knowledge through their physical form, demonstrating cultural core values and spiritual beliefs (Hard, 2003).

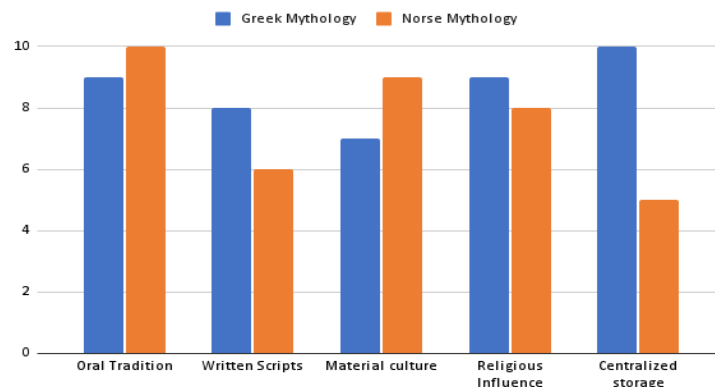


Fig. 2 Knowledge Preservation Data

In *Fig. 2*, the comparison between knowledge preservation in Greek and Norse mythology can be seen. Religious ideologies, paired with cosmological outlooks, influenced how information was regarded to be sacred and divine, as

well as its total worth assessment (Boardman, 1980). Both cultures used oral traditions as well as established writing systems (the Greek alphabet and runes) to determine knowledge storage mechanisms, access procedures, and

channels of transmission. Academics' approaches to knowledge differed fundamentally between China and Greece due to contradictory social systems and cultural norms (El-Abbadi, 1990).

TABLE II INFLUENCE OF MYTHOLOGY ON SOCIETY IN GREEK AND NORSE TRADITIONS

Aspect	Greek Mythology	Norse Mythology
Moral and Ethical Influence	Provided structured moral lessons through God's interaction with human.	Focused on warrior ethics honour and faith
Impact on Governance	Inspired philosophical discussions on democracy and justice.	Influenced Viking laws and clan-based governance
Representation in Art and Literature	Depicted in sculptures, epic poetry, and drama	Reflected in rune carvings, sagas, and Skaldic poetry
Religious Practice	Structured rituals, temples, and priesthoods dedicated to gods	Belief in Valhalla for warriors and Hel for the unhonored

Table II above shows how these myth traditions moulded social structures and cultural practices. Greek and Norse mythologies have had a major impact on their societies. They have shaped moral values, governance, art, religion, and ideas about life after death. Greek myths, with their well-organised stories, taught ethics through the deeds of gods and heroes. This influenced philosophy and politics (Hard, 2003). Norse myths, on the other hand, focused on warrior ethics and honour. These beliefs are often mixed with daily life (Sturluson, 2005).

V. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The approach is limited by the fact that mythical stories are just partial representations of actual knowledge management methods in historical cultures. There are research opportunities to investigate how archaeological discoveries about libraries and knowledge repositories in ancient Greece and Scandinavia link to mythological portrayals. A study of many literary genres from each culture would provide more detailed information about the various means by which knowledge was organised and distributed throughout society. The study's shortcomings illustrate that academia requires collaborative research approaches to analyse prior knowledge systems.

VI. CONCLUSION

Understanding the concept of libraries in Greek and Norse mythologies requires moving beyond a literal interpretation and focusing on the underlying principles of knowledge management within their respective cultural and historical contexts. By examining the roles of oral tradition, writing systems, material culture, and religious beliefs, we gain a richer understanding of how these ancient societies valued, preserved, and transmitted their knowledge. While the physical structures of libraries as we know them might not be explicitly present in their myths, the spirit of knowledge preservation and dissemination is undeniably embedded within their narratives, reflecting fundamental aspects of their cultural identities and intellectual practices.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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