

Mortality and Immortality in Ancient Greek Religion.
The case of heroic cult in the *Periegesis* of Pausanias.
Kerasia Stratiki

Pausanias, through his *Periegesis*, presents the most widespread cults, especially hero cults, in ancient Greek places and notably by the totality of information concerning some particular regions. Concerning hero cult in ancient Greece, there is a rule accepted by all the specialists of Greek religion: for the Greeks, a hero is a man, a woman or a child who became “hero” only after their death. Concerning the emphasis on the death of the heroes and certain rules on the heroic cult, we have to underline that in a polytheistic culture there are always very strong exceptions. I want to focus my attention on these exceptions of heroic nature: for the Greeks, a hero is a man who became “hero” not only after his death but also after his disappearance. I wonder if this kind of disappearance was identified with death, since the body, the principal characteristic of mortals, disappeared, as it happens with death. It is obvious that the myth and cult of heroes represent in the best way the flexibility between mortality and immortality in Greek religion. But essentially, heroes hadn’t been considered immortal (gods), since the specific characteristic of their nature and their terrestrial existence had an end, a death or a disappearance.