University of Alberta

Athena and Poseidon: The Contest for Athens

by

Isabelle Anne Donald

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

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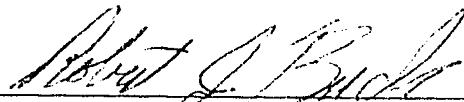

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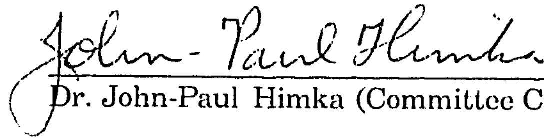

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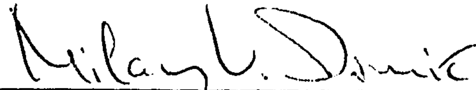

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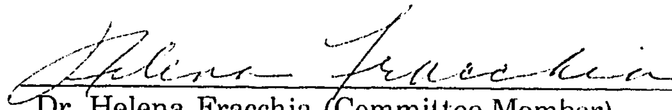

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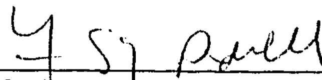

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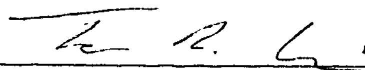

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DEDICATION

To Nikki, Sascha, and Cassandra

ABSTRACT

The myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon tells how Athens acquired both its patron goddess, and a name. Victory in the contest was contingent on the gifts which each god offered to the city. Athena presented the olive, and Poseidon, the sea. Athena won the contest, either because she planted the olive tree before Poseidon created the sea, or because the olive was judged to be the more valuable gift. The earliest references to the myth do not occur until after the mid-fifth century B.C. That a myth so crucial to the early history of Athens does not appear until such a relatively late date implies that the myth is not traditional, but rather a creation, perhaps of the century in which it first appears.

The possibility that the myth is an invention has long been recognized. Farnell proposed that the myth derived from the importance to Attika of olive cultivation. The olive tree, an attribute of Athena, grew beside her temple on the Akropolis, and so the cultivation of the olive came to be regarded as the gift of Athena. Harrison suggested that the basis for the myth was found in the presence on the Akropolis of an olive tree, a well, and, what were reputed to be the marks of a trident. More recently, scholars have begun to consider the role of Poseidon in the development of the myth. Binder, for example, has suggested that the myth was a response to the victory at Salamis which led to the establishment of the cult of Poseidon on the Akropolis of Athens.

No study into the myth's origin has adequately examined all the testimonia connected with the contest. This thesis investigates the origin of the myth, through a survey of the cults of Athena and Poseidon in Athens in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., an assessment of the importance to Attika of the olive and the sea, and an examination of all literary and artistic sources for the myth.

PREFACE

In the spelling of Greek I have, like most authors, compromised between transliteration and common English usage. Generally, Greek diphthongs and vowels have been transliterated directly into English, so that, for example, ος appears as "os" instead of the more traditional Latin "us." But while "k" appears almost exclusively for the Greek κ, "ch" rather than "kh" has been used to translate χ. For the most part, the names of authors and titles are transliterated in the body of the thesis, but not in the Bibliography. At the same time, the names of many well-known historical figures and places usually follow traditional spelling. Thus, Thucydides, Plutarch, and Athens appear alongside Aischylos, Bakchylides, and Troizen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my gratitude to the members of my Supervisory Committee for their advice and guidance in the preparation of the thesis. In particular, I am indebted to Robert J. Buck for his patience and understanding as I slowly gathered and analyzed what seemed to be a profusion of sources, both ancient and modern. His knowledge of myth, and its place in Greek religion and history, was invaluable, and his confidence in my abilities encouraged me at all stages of my work. I would also like to thank Helena Fracchia and John R. Wilson for their comments and suggestions.

I also wish to thank the Killam Trusts for their support during two years of my doctoral program. Without their generosity the completion of this thesis would have been more difficult, and have taken a much longer period of time.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following list includes abbreviations for selected books, dictionaries, and encyclopaedias. With a few exceptions, abbreviations for classical journals are those used in *L'Année Philologique*, and for ancient authors, the *OCD* and *LSJ*. The most obvious exceptions to the latter concern the abbreviations for the *Homeric Hymns*, where, in the named hymns I have used Greek rather than Latin names. Thus, the *Hymn to Demeter* is abbreviated as *h. Dem.* rather than *h. Cer.*

ABV	Beazley, J.D. 1956. *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*. Oxford.
ARV[2]	Beazley, J.D. 1963. *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*[2]. Oxford.
DABF	Beazley, J.D. 1951. *The Development of Attic Black-Figure*. Berkeley.
ABFH	Boardman, J. 1974. *Athenian Black Figure Vases*. New York.
ARFH	Boardman, J. 1975. *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Archaic Period*. NY and Toronto.
CAH[2]	Boardman, J. *et al.*, eds. 1982——. *Cambridge Ancient History*[2]. Vols. 3 and 4. Cambridge.
Cunliffe	Cunliffe, R.J. [1924] 1963. *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*. London; Reprint, Norman, OK.
DAA	Raubitschek, A.E. 1949. *Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis*. Cambridge, MA.
Daremberg-Saglio	Daremberg, C. and E. Saglio, eds. [1887] 1962. *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*. Paris. Reprint, Graz.
DCM	Grimal, P. 1986. *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. Trans. A.R. Maxwell-Hyslop. Oxford.
Enc. Brit.[14]	*Encyclopaedia Britannica*[14]. 1973. Chicago.

FGrH	Jacoby, F., ed. 1923-58. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Berlin and Leiden.
Frazer, *Apollodorus*	Apollodorus. 1921. *The Library*. Trans. Sir J.G. Frazer. Loeb Classical Library.
Frazer, *Pausanias*	Pausanias. 1913. *Pausanias's Description of Greece*^{2}. Ed. J.G. Frazer. Vols. 1-6. London.
IG I^{2}	de Gaertringen, F.H. ed. 1924. *Inscriptiones Graecae*^{2}. Vol. 1. Berlin.
LIMC	Boardman, J. and L. Kahil, *et al.* 1981——. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zurich and Munich.
Leaf and Bayfield	Homer. [1895-98] 1965-68. *The Iliad of Homer*. Ed. W. Leaf and M.A. Bayfield. 2 Vols. Reprint, London.
LSJ	Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, and Sir. H.S. Jones. [1940] 1985. *Greek-English Lexicon*^{9}. Rev. reprint, Oxford.
OCD^{2}	Hammond, N.G.L. and H.H. Scullard, eds. 1970. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*^{2}. Oxford.
OED	Murray, J.A.H., H. Bradley, W.A. Craigie, and C.T. Onions, eds. *Oxford English Dictionary*. [1933] 1961. Oxford
OLD	Glare, P.G.W. 1982. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford.
Stanford	Homer. [1958-59] 1977-84. *The Odyssey of Homer*^{2}. Ed. W.B. Stanford. 2 Vols. Reprint, London.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The contest between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens was a pivotal event in the mythic history of the city. A late version of the myth recounts how the two gods each offered a gift to the people of the unnamed but soon-to-be-named city. Poseidon presented the sea, and Athena, the olive tree. Athena was judged the victor. Then she named the city Athens after herself. Some accounts of the myth report that Athena's victory was determined on the basis of priority, since the goddess produced a witness who said that she had planted the olive tree before Poseidon had created the sea. In other accounts, however, Athena won the contest because the olive tree was judged to be the more valuable gift.

This thesis investigates the origin of the myth. Binder has remarked that "the testimonia for the contest have never been completely collected, never been studied in chronological order, and the differing lines of tradition have never been disentangled."[1] But neither she, nor any other scholar, has attempted such a detailed investigation into the myth's origin.[2] This study would appear, therefore, to be a desideratum.

---

[1] Binder (1984) 15.

[2] Binder's own conclusion (p. 22 of her article) seems almost incidental to her study. See p. 9 below.

The myth, and its variations, pose several questions. For example, what is the significance of each of the gifts? Why should the olive be considered more valuable than the sea? What is the relevance of the claim of priority? Finally, why was there any necessity for a contest?

Athena had long been the chief goddess of Athens. The earliest allusion to her special relationship with the city occurs in the Homeric epics (*Il.* 2.547-49; *Od.* 7.80). But Homer makes no reference to the contest. In fact, the first evidence for the myth in Greek literature and art does not occur until after the middle of the fifth century B.C.[3] It is curious that a myth so crucial to Athenian history does not appear until such a relatively late period. The possibility must be considered that the myth is not old, and, indeed, that it may even have been invented,[4] perhaps close to the time when it first appears in literature and art.

The scholarship and sources on the myth of the contest will be examined shortly; first, however, consideration must be given to the question 'what is myth?' This includes a brief discussion on the relationship between myth and history in the Greek world. The connection between these two seemingly incompatible subjects is as important to the myth of the contest as it is to other myths, such as the Trojan War, which narrate what are alleged to be historical events.

What is Myth?

Burkert defines myth as "*a traditional tale with . . . reference to something of*

---

[3] All dates are B.C. unless otherwise indicated. The myth is briefly mentioned by Herodotos (8.55) and is the subject of the west pediment of the Parthenon, which was completed c. 432.

[4] Plutarch says as much. See *De frat. amor.* 489b.

collective importance."[5] The word "traditional" implies that the origin of the tale is unknown or unimportant, and that it has been transmitted, usually orally, through successive generations.[6] Among Greek myths, the Trojan War, the labours of Herakles, and Theseus' killing of the Minotaur, are traditional tales. So is the account of Apollo's successful claim to the shrine at Delphi (*h. Ap.* 277ff.).[7] Since the myth of the contest also describes how a particular site, the city of Athens, became sacred to a goddess, it too seems to be traditional. But there is a problem. Other myths, such as events connected with the Trojan War, and allusions to the labours of Herakles, are found in the earliest Greek literature and art. In fact, Nilsson long ago argued for the Mycenaean origin of much of Greek mythology.[8] But the myth of the contest does not appear to have such ancient roots. The first references to the myth occur, almost simultaneously in both literature and art, late in the fifth century. The implication is that the contest is not a traditional myth in the usual sense.

If a myth has collective importance, it should have some relevance to society, perhaps as a charter for a social or political institution, or as a text for a ritual.[9]

---

[5] Burkert (1979) 23. For a discussion of Burkert's definition of myth, see Bremmer ([1987] 1988) 1-4. For tradition in myth see also Kirk (1974) 23-28.

[6] See Burkert (1979) 2.

[7] According to the commentary to the *Homeric Hymns* ([1936] 1980) 183, the hymn to Apollo is the "oldest in the collection." The editors suggest (p. 184) that the hymn was already current in the eighth century, which would make it contemporary with the epics of Homer. On the other hand, the hymn to Athena (*h. Hom.* 28), which narrates the birth of the goddess, may be a creation of the fifth century. See Herington (1963) 64, n. 1, and Chapter Two, n. 18, below. The birth of Athena, however, does appear in literature (Hes. *Th.* 924-26) and art as early as the seventh century. The artistic depiction occurs on shield bands found at Olympia. See Carpenter (1991) 71, and 87, fig. 98.

[8] Nilsson ([1932] 1972) passim.

[9] See Burkert ([1979] 1982), 23. Bremmer (1987) 7, proposes that Burkert's definition of myth be simplified to "traditional tales relevant to society."

Ritual is an important component of religion, which, in Greece, as Nilsson has remarked, "was social, collective, and played a very important part in state politics."[10] Kirk has pointed out that, as far as we know, few Greek myths have any connection with rituals,[11] though this was not the view of Harrison, who believed that myth "is the spoken correlative of the acted rite."[12] Robertson, following the same line of thinking, concurs, and goes so far as to suggest that "ritual [is] the begetter of myth."[13] He also asserts that this "ritual origin . . . [is] plainer for Athenian myths than for others."[14] Whether, in fact, an origin in ritual lies behind the myth of the contest will be mentioned briefly in Chapter Four. Since the myth is directly concerned with the city of Athens, and its people, its political and social implications seem clear. And it is these aspects of the myth which must now lead to a consideration of the relationship between myth and history.

Myth and History

What scholars today consider to be myth was often regarded as history by the Greeks and Romans. Both Herodotos (1.1-3) and Thucydides (1.3, 9) seem to have accepted the Trojan War as a true event, and its participants as historical figures.[15]

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[10] Nilsson ([1951] 1986) 16. See also Nilsson ([1940] 1961) 123.

[11] Kirk (1974) 223-53.

[12] Harrison^2 ([1912] 1927) 328.

[13] Robertson (1991) 61.

[14] Ibid., 70.

[15] Herodotos' description of Io, Europa, Medea, and Helen as seemingly real persons, and his report that the Persians believed that the destruction of Troy by the Greeks was the ultimate cause of the Persian Wars, are called parodies of myth and rationalism by Flory (1987) 24-29. See also Lateiner (1989) 240, n. 74.

Thucydides describes Agamemnon as though he had been an actual Mycenaean king (1.9). Herodotos says that the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos was descended from Neleus (5.65.3-4), the father of the Achaian hero Nestor, who is portrayed so sympathetically by Homer in the *Iliad* (1.247-53, and passim).

Even today myth is often confused with history, in that both are "intended as a true narrative."[16] But the differences between them are usually reasonably clear. History is ideally based on relevant evidence, and proceeds by reasonable inferences, which are "consistent with other conclusions reached concerning the same period or sequence of events."[17] Myths seek

> either to advocate a certain course of action or to justify acceptance of an existing state of affairs . . . [and] are, therefore, believed to be true, . . . because they make sense of men's present experience. They tell the story of how it came about. And events are selected for inclusion in a myth, partly because they coincide with what men think *ought* to have happened, and partly because they are consistent with the drama as a whole.[18]

This description clearly points to the collective importance of myth as a traditional tale in Burkert's definition of myth, or as a kind of socially important history.[19] This collective importance is evident in the promotion of certain actions, which are acceptable either to the state or to a particular group. In this way a myth becomes relevant to the people among whom it is told. Customs and institutions are

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[16] Tudor (1972) 123.

[17] Ibid., 124. Tudor's thesis includes such diverse myths as the Roman foundation myth, the Christian myth of the millennium, and the myth of the proletarian revolution.

[18] Ibid. Of course, this statement does not apply to all Greek myths, e.g. the wanderings of Odysseus or Perseus' rescue of Andromeda from the sea-monster would seem to be merely entertaining stories. But herein lies another aspect of myth. As Dietrich (1977) 68, points out, myth "contributes to our understanding of an extremely wide area of human experience."

[19] See pp. 3-4 above.

validated or confirmed by the myth,[20] and a society is assured of its continuity. Herein lie the connections between myth and ritual, as well as the fondness among the Greeks, for charter myths and *aitia*, which explain why the world had become the way it is now.

As Boardman says, "much Greek myth was also in a way history, and . . . stories might be popularised, adjusted or invented in the interests of individuals, families or states."[21] When myth is transformed through conscious revision, especially by the state, it can become a political tool. Although myth as propaganda in the ancient world is usually associated with Augustan Rome,[22] it also had its place in the political landscape of Athens.[23] According to Tudor, "just as . . . religious myths deal with gods and their worship, so political myths deal with politics."[24] But politics and religion converge in the myths of fifth-century Athens, and the distinction between them is often unclear. An obvious case is the myth-cycle of the hero Theseus.[25] But it is also likely that politics influenced various divine myths, since the gods who appeared as characters in the myths were the same gods who were worshipped in cult. Nilsson has remarked that "changes in political life and the rise of democracy . . . caused certain changes in religion."[26] In addition, many changes

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[20] Kirk (1974) 60. His statement pertains to the charter theory of myth.

[21] Boardman (1984) 239.

[22] Tudor (1972) 65-90.

[23] See Nilsson ([1951] 1986) 49-64, and Chapter Four, *Attic Mythology*, pp. 198ff.

[24] Tudor (1972) 17.

[25] See Nilsson ([1932] 1972) 163-79.

[26] Nilsson ([1940] 1961) 138.

were also precipitated by "the successes of the Persian wars," which some authorities believe, "wholly transformed the face of Athenian religion."[27] This raises a further question. Is it possible that the myth of the contest, which describes the rivalry between Athena and Poseidon for the sovereignty of Athens, is an allegory for an historic rivalry between the two cults, which may have occurred in the years following the Persian Wars?

Scholarship

While most studies relative to Athena mention the contest, few scholars have devoted any attention to the myth itself. The focus has tended towards an artistic or archaeological interpretation of the west pediment of the Parthenon, in particular the central group of Athena and Poseidon, through comparison with depictions of the myth on other antiquities, and in the literature.[28]

Nevertheless, scholars from antiquity to the present have pondered the reasons behind the myth. According to Plutarch (A.D. 50-120), the ancient Athenian kings disseminated the story of the contest in an attempt to draw the people away from the sea and back to the land, so that they might live off the fruits of agriculture rather than the sea (*Them.* 19.3). To Plutarch, the olive serves as a metaphor for agriculture in general. Among modern scholars, however, the olive as an attribute of Athena, as well as its importance to the Attic economy, has been seen as a reason for the myth. Farnell (1896) thought that "the produce of the olive-tree had an almost religious

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[27] Garland (1992) 1.

[28] The west pediment was largely destroyed in 1687-88. Gardner (1882) 244-55, has collected a number of artistic interpretations from the late 1800s. Among recent scholars who follow a similar approach, see, for example, Bruno (1976) 55-67, and Simon (1980) 239-55.

value for the men of Attica, and the physical side of Greek civilization much depended on it."[29] He goes on to argue that the cultivation of the olive, and the worship of Athena, in Athens, were closely linked, and, since an olive tree grew on the Akropolis, "its cultivation was naturally considered as the boon of Athena."[30] Nilsson (1967) seems to have shared this opinion, for he says

> Da Athena nun einmal zur Beschützerin der für Attika so wichtigen Ölbaumzucht geworden war, wobei mitgewirkt haben mag, daß der Schutzbaum der Stadt, der heilige Ölbaum, dicht bei ihrem Tempel wuchs, entstand der bekannte Mythos, daß sie im Streit mit Poseidon um das attische Land den ersten Ölbaum emporwachsen ließ.[31]

Earlier in the century, Harrison (1906) saw the origin of the myth in the tokens produced by Athena and Poseidon, which "had been on the Acropolis from time immemorial . . . a gnarled olive-tree, a brackish well, three holes in a rock."[32] For Harrison, it was not only the olive tree of Athena, but also the 'sea' created by Poseidon, and the marks left by his trident, that led to the origin of the myth in an elaborate aetiology.

The majority of past studies, then, have seen the origin of the contest solely in the presence on the Akropolis of the olive tree, and its association with Athena. But with the exception of Harrison's observation concerning the tokens of Poseidon, few other scholars appear to have given any importance to the role of Poseidon in the development of the myth. Several recent studies, however, have suggested that Poseidon may have been as essential to the origin of the myth as Athena herself. But

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[29] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:293.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Nilsson (1967) 442.

[32] Harrison (1906) 58.

few of these studies elaborate further on the myth itself.

Jeffery, for example, in a paper presented in 1983, argues that the "strife was *not* an ancient myth, but a political one, created for the time: that is, Poseidon symbolised the city-states of Corinth, Sparta and Boiotia, the three leaders against Athens in the First Peloponnesian War (*ca.* 460-446)."[33] Jeffery also argues from the phraseology on three dedications that the cult of Poseidon first appeared on the Akropolis in the years between c. 475-450.[34] Binder concurs that the cult of Poseidon on the Akropolis was established late in Athenian history, and argues that the founding of the cult to the sea god, and "the creation of the legend of the contest between Athena and Poseidon," were both motivated by the victory at Salamis.[35] More recently, Garland has taken a different approach. He points out that the priests for the cults of Athena and Poseidon were drawn from two separate branches of the Eteoboutadai *genos*, and says "it is tempting to detect traces of genuine rivalry between these two priesthoods for prime position in the new state in the myth" of the contest.[36]

---

[33] Jeffery ([1983] 1988) 125. Jeffery mentions that an early draft of her paper was presented at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens in 1979.

[34] Ibid. Jeffery gives two dates for the first appearance of the cult of Poseidon. First she says that the dedications indicate that the cult appeared "*ca.* 475-50 — not earlier." Later she gives a date of *ca.* 480 for the first of these dedications.

[35] Binder (1984) 22. But see Shapiro (1989) 105.

[36] Garland, 1992, 30-1. I assume that the "new state" is the resurgent Athens as the leader of the Greeks after Salamis.

Sources

Source-material for the period under review is fragmentary, and, therefore, references will be drawn freely from all periods of Greek and Roman antiquity as necessary. These include both Greek and Latin literature, whether poetry, history, philosophy, or mythography, inasmuch as all these genres "make use of the same mythic heritage, although with different perspectives and intentions."[37] In Greek literature, as already mentioned, the earliest reference to the contest comes from the fifth century B.C., while the most complete version is from the second century A.D. Several accounts of the myth are found in Latin literature, and date from the first century B.C. through to the Mediaeval period. Other sources for the myth include sculpture, vase-painting, and coins, primarily Greek in origin. References will be made to other documents, such as inscriptions, for clarification and explication where relevant.

Methodology

The focus of this thesis is an examination into *how, why,* and *when* the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon originated, and to expand upon recent attempts to answer this question. The study begins with a survey of the cults, selected myths, and historical developments which may have influenced the cults and myths, of Athena and Poseidon in Athens during the period from c. 560 to 430. The importance to Athens of the olive and the sea, the gifts which the two gods offered to the people of the city, will then be considered. References are drawn from literature

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[37] Brillante (1990) 100. Brillante actually refers only to history and poetry, but, in fact, the different genres all rely on "the same mythic heritage" whenever myth is their subject.

and myth beginning with the Homeric epics and continuing to late antiquity. Archaeological evidence from the Bronze Age, and earlier, is used whenever applicable.

The final part of the study closely examines the myth itself. This is accomplished through a discussion of the most important literary sources, and variants, as well as depictions of the myth in art. The place of myth in fifth-century Athens will also be considered. The Theseus myth-cycle, which is generally accepted to have emerged in the later part of the sixth and the early fifth centuries, will be discussed as an example of myth as history. Political, religious, and economic developments in Athens during the fifth century will be examined, as necessary, in order to determine what influence these might have had on the evolution of the myth. The Persian Wars and, in particular, events subsequent to the battle of Salamis, are given special emphasis.

The thesis is set out in five chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction. Chapter Two surveys the cults and selected myths of Athena and Poseidon in Athens, during the sixth and fifth centuries. Chapter Three discusses the gifts of the protagonists. Consideration is given to the place of the olive in Athenian, and Greek society, as well as the importance of the sea in the daily life of Athens. Chapter Four examines the myth of the contest as recorded in literature, and in art. It also considers why the myth first appears in the second half of the fifth century. Chapter Five is the Conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

ATHENA AND POSEIDON ON THE AKROPOLIS

The focus of this chapter is an examination of Athena's relationship with the city of Athens, as expressed in cult,[1] myth, and art (apart from the myth of her contest with Poseidon, which will be discussed in Chapter Four). It also includes a similar, although briefer, examination of Poseidon's association with Athens and its chief goddess. Most of the evidence is drawn from the period between 560 and 430 B.C. A small but significant amount of other material, both earlier[2] and later[3] than the period under discussion, also provides important information concerning the study. Nevertheless, the principal sources remain the art and literature of the sixth and fifth centuries. These must be studied before it is possible to investigate the origins and aetiology of the myth of Athena and Poseidon.

A. *ATHENA*

Greek literature leaves no doubt that Athena was the chief goddess of Athens.

[1] Other cult centres will be mentioned whenever relevant.

[2] Such as the epics of Homer and Hesiod, as well as the evidence of art and archaeology.

[3] Two later and particularly valuable sources are, for mythology, the collection of myths called *The Library*, probably compiled in the first or second century A.D., but attributed to Apollodoros, who lived in the second century B.C., and, for cult, *The Description of Greece* by Pausanias, whose work, composed in the second century A.D., is the chief source of information on Greek religious customs and monuments.

It is impossible to know when she became that city's chief goddess,[4] although Homer, who perhaps lived in the eighth century,[5] refers to Athens as "the city of Athene" (*Il.* 2.546–49).[6] Since the story contained within the *Iliad* takes place during the Bronze Age, the implication is that she was believed to have been the chief goddess of Athens as far back at least as the Trojan War, and, perhaps, earlier.[7] There was an intimate connection between Athena and the people of Athens, among whom she was known simply as "the goddess" (Hdt. 8.41; Th. 1.126).[8] The city was named after her (Soph.

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[4] The myth of her contest with Poseidon reputedly answers this question. Traditionally, the contest is said to have occurred during the reign of Kekrops, the mythical first king of Athens (Apollod. 3.14.1). Garland (1992) 27–28, suggests that Athena became the supreme state deity (*Polias*) of Athens during the Dark Age, perhaps in the eighth century. According to Herodotos (5.82.2–3), the goddess was worshipped as *Polias* when the Epidaurians asked the Athenians for some olive trees, so that they might make statues of their own gods. Coldstream (1977) 135, places this event in the mid-eighth century.

[5] Bowra, *OCD*[2], s.v. "Homer," 524, says "we may . . . place Homer before 700."

[6] The Athenian entry in the Catalogue of Ships has been considered by many scholars to be an interpolation, the result of the so-called Peisistratean recension. Davison (1955) 5–7, and 16–17, makes a convincing argument against this notion, and suggests that all the evidence for Athenian interpolations in Homer originated with two fourth-century Megarians, who apparently tried to "discredit the Athenian text of Homer." Davison, 18–21, also points out that the earliest source which claims that Peisistratos first arranged and had all of Homer committed to writing is Cicero *De oratore* (3.34.137). On the Athenian entry in general see Simpson and Lazenby (1970) 56, "Athens."

[7] A further reference to Athena's association with Athens occurs in the *Odyssey* (7.80–81). The chronology 'established' by Greek authors of the Classical and Hellenistic periods place the date of the fall of Troy between c. 1240 (according to Hellanikos) and c. 1184 (according to Eratosthenes)—see Pearson (1939) 214–15, and Thomas (1993) 31. See also comment by Page (1959) 95, n. 159, that "the 'traditional dates' . . . are merely speculative guesses."

Ventris and Chadwick[2] (1973) 126, state that Athena "is clearly named" in the Linear B tablets from Knossos, as *a-ta-na po-ti-ni-ja* (*Athanāi Potniāi*). As *a-ta-na* alone, her name may also have been recorded at Mycenae. "It seems clear," they say, "that at Knossos πότνια is used as the epithet of Athena, exactly as in the Homeric πότνι' 'Αθηναίη [*Il.* 5.305]." It should also be noted that Homer uses πότνια to describe other goddesses besides Athena, e.g. Hera (*Il.* 1.551), and also mortal women, e.g. Antikleia (*Od.* 11.180).

[8] See Burkert (1985) 139. Her worship extended beyond Athens into the Attic countryside. Pausanias (1.26.7) says that "the city and the whole land alike are sacred to Athena—for in their demes they hold Athena no less in honour than the established worship of other gods."

OK 107-8; Eur. *Ion* 1555-56). Apollodoros (3.14.1) reports that Athena, on laying claim to the patronage of Athens, named the city after herself.[9] Thus, at one and the same time, the city acquired both a patron goddess and a name.

While Hesiod, c. late eighth, or early seventh century,[10] makes no association between Athena and Athens, he is the first extant poet to refer to her close relationship with Zeus, her father, a consequence, no doubt, of her unusual birth.

αὐτὸς δ' ἐκ κεφαλῆς γλαυκώπιδα
  γείνατ' Ἀθήνην,
δεινὴν ἐγρεκύδοιμον ἀγέστρατον
  ἀτρυτώνην,
πότνιαν, ᾗ κέλαδοί τε ἅδον
  πόλεμοί τε μάχαι τε

([Zeus] himself brought forth from his
  head grey-eyed Athene,
the awe-inspiring, strife-stirring, host-
  leading, the unwearied,
mistress, whom the din of wars and
  battles delights)

(*Th.* 924-26)[11]

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[9] Scholars are divided as to whether Athens took its name from Athena or the reverse. Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968) 490, states emphatically, "the town Ἀθῆναι is named after the goddess Ἀθήνη, not *vice versa*." Simon (1983) 106, however, believes that Athena "entered the Attic pantheon relatively late, [and, as a consequence?] she seems rather to have been named after Athens." Burkert (1985) 139, apparently concurs, for he says, "since *-ene* is a typical place-name suffix - Mykene, Pallene . . . - the goddess most probably takes her name from the city." See also Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:258, who notes that the city took its name from the goddess, and then, "by a reverse process the Attic city gave to its tutelary goddess the longer name Ἀθηναία, . . . common in Homer [and] a sign of the great antiquity and celebrity of the Attic cult."

There are other traditions concerning how Athens was named. Herodotos (8.44.2) says that the people began to be called Athenians after the accession of Erechtheus, which implies that this early king named the city Athens. On this see Loraux (1993) 38, and n. 5. And according to Plutarch, Theseus gave the city its name (*Thes.* 24.3).

[10] West, in the "Prolegomena" to Hesiod, *Works and Days* ([1978] 1980) 30-31, says "it must be considered unlikely that [Hesiod's birth] was earlier than 750 or later than 720."

[11] All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

It has been suggested that Hesiod invented this myth, although not "out of whole cloth."[12] Kirk has remarked that the story of the birth of Athena may be evidence that the Greeks retained "certain pieces of genuinely mythical fantasy" which originated in a much earlier time period.[13] But in Hesiod's account of the myth it is not only Athena's atypical birth which is of interest, but also the emphasis which the poet places on her likeness to Zeus. After the description of Metis, Athena's mother, and how Zeus dealt with the threat which she posed to his newly-won sovereignty, the poet says that "[Athena] had might and wise counsel equal to her father" (*Th.* 896, ἶσον ἔχουσαν πατρὶ μένος καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν). In a different passage in the *Theogony*, Hesiod provides positive evidence that at the very moment of her birth Athena is a warrior by nature, that is, an armed fighter, just like her father (925-26).[14] But in describing Athena's martial nature, Hesiod does not specifically show, as art would, that she was born armed, although it might be implied.[15]

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[12] Brown (1952) 142.

[13] See Kirk ([1970] 1973) 244-45. Elsewhere, (1974) 120-21, Kirk has also stated that "there is a smack of sophistication and scholarship about this piece of theogony." West (1966) 401, in his commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony*, suggests that "originally [the birth of Athena] was an independent motif, connected with the primitive view of the head as the source of generation." The earliest representation in art of such a birth occurs in a relief on an eighth-century pithos from the island of Tenos, which shows the birth of an armed male god from the head of a goddess. Vanderpool (1954) 240-41, suggests that the scene may "represent the birth . . . of Zeus," since the new-born god holds what may be a thunderbolt. See also Brown (1952) 142, who notes that "miraculous eccentric births are a stock motif in folk tales."

[14] Zeus' own role as a warrior was emphasized earlier in the *Theogony* (687ff. and 853-57). According to Nilsson[3] (1967) 433, and Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968) 499, Athena acquired her martial nature during Mycenaean times when she was the chief goddess in the palaces of warlike kings.

[15] A passage attributed to Hesiod (*frag.* 343, cited by Chrysippus, *frag.* 908), says that Metis, who was traditionally the mother of Athena (Hes. *Th.* 886-88), made her daughter's armour, including the *aigis*, with which she was born (18-19). The Loeb edition of Hesiod and

The earliest account that Athena was fully armed at birth is alleged to have been made by Stesichoros (*frag.* 56), perhaps near the end of the seventh or in the early sixth century.[16] The first artistic depictions are from the same time period.[17] According to the description in the *h. Hom.* 28, Athena was born armed (4-5), and shaking a sharp-pointed spear (9).[18] In the *Iliad* (5.736ff.) Homer portrays Athena as a warrior when she dons Zeus' war tunic and takes up a huge and sturdy spear to rout the heroes "against whom the daughter of a mighty father is angered" (5.745, οἷσίν τε κοτέσσεται ὀβριμοπάτρη).[19] Athena's association with Athens and her status as a warrior were, thus, clearly established by the end of the seventh century at the latest, and probably much earlier.

Lattimore's translation of the *Theogony* both include this passage between lines 929 and 930, although Lattimore sets brackets around it. West does not include it in his edition of the *Theogony*. On p. 402 he says that "the source of Chrysippus' fragment is not certainly known." Brown (1952) 131, n. 3, also says that the "Chrysippus variant . . . is now generally agreed to be not authentic."

[16] Schol. on Ap. Rhod. 4.1310. According to Bowra, *OCD*^{2}, s.v. "Stesichorus," 1012, "the *Suda* places [Stesichoros'] birth at 632-629 B.C. and his death 556-553 B.C." Borthwick (1970) 321, says that Athena's traditional panoply, at birth, was a "helmet, round shield and spear."

[17] Carpenter (1991) 71 and 87, fig. 98, states that the earliest artistic depiction of the birth of Athena occurs on "shield bands from Olympia from the end of the 7th century and beginning of the 6th." Athena is shown wearing a helmet and carrying a shield and spear. The subject was popular in black-figure vase-painting in the period c. 570-530 in Athens. In the fifth century, it was also the subject of the east pediment of the Parthenon (Paus. 1.24.5).

[18] The actual date of this hymn is unknown. Herington (1963) 64, n. 1, records the suggestion of F. Winter that "it is contemporary with the Parthenon." But cf. Brown (1952) 140-41, n. 34.

[19] It has sometimes been stated that Homer's use of the epithet ὀβριμοπάτρη indicates that he knew the myth of Athena's birth from the head of Zeus. Brown (1952) 140, however, says that the epithet "proves nothing." Further, on Ares' words to Zeus at *Iliad* 5.875-80, Brown says if one compares line 880 with *Odyssey* 20.201-2 "it becomes clear that it does not in itself imply a paternity any different from Zeus' paternal relationship to mankind." Athena's close association with Zeus probably had its origin in Homer. Shapiro (1989) 113, points out that one example of this close association, and one which also indicates that her martial nature is inherited from Zeus, is the *aigis*: in Homer it belongs to Zeus (*Il.* 2.375 and passim); in Archaic art, to Athena alone.

Solon, who is the first extant Athenian poet,[20] emphasizes both aspects of Athena. In a poem which Solon probably wrote when he was archon, c. 594/3, he criticizes the leaders of Athens for their greed and corruption, and he warns his fellow-citizens that the city will suffer the consequences for the actions of evil men. At the same time, in the opening lines of the poem, Solon presents an image of Athena as the guardian-goddess who will protect the city despite the impending evil.

ἡμετέρα δὲ πόλις κατὰ μὲν Διὸς
  οὔποτ' ὀλεῖται
αἶσαν καὶ μακάρων Θεῶν φρένας
  ἀθανάτων·
τοίη γὰρ μεγάθυμος ἐπίσκοπος
  ὀβριμοπάτρη
Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη χεῖρας ὕπερθεν
  ἔχει.

(Our city will never be destroyed by the
  decree of Zeus
or the will of the immortal gods;
for such a guardian, the great-hearted
  daughter of a mighty father,
is Pallas Athene who holds her hands
  over us.)

(3.1-4)

Solon's use of the epic epithet ὀβριμοπάτρη, "daughter of a mighty father," is a reminder that Athena is an Olympian, and that her power is closely linked with that of her father. It reinforces both Homer's depiction of Athena the warrior and Hesiod's description of her birth. She is indeed her father's daughter. But she is not

[20] Knox (1978) 43, remarks that "we do not have . . . so much as a word, which can be attributed to an Athenian writer and securely dated between the Archonship of Solon and the battle of Salamis." See also Shapiro (1989) 1.

subordinate to Zeus, as some scholars have suggested of Hesiod's Athena.[21] Solon clearly implies that she is ready to oppose her father if he decrees any harm to *her* city, the city over which she stands as ἐπίσκοπος.[22] The definition of ἐπίσκοπος is "one who watches over, overseer, guardian,"[23] and it is derived from or cognate with other words which place emphasis on the act of watching, such as σκόπος, "one that watches, one that looks about or after," and σκέπτομαι, "look about carefully, spy."[24] In his use of the Homeric epithets ἐπίσκοπος and μεγάθυμος (great-hearted), a word which usually denotes a hero,[25] Solon portrays the goddess as the epitome of the Homeric warrior, who ever alert, watches over her city.

The epic image of Athena shows her as the protector of the heroes in the mythological cycles. But her role as the protector of cities is also well established; for in the *Iliad* (6.88-95, 269-76, 293-312) we see her as the guardian-goddess of Troy.[26] Now, in the early sixth century, Solon portrays Athena as the guardian of Athens,

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[21] For example, Brown (1959) 134-35, believes that the goddess is subordinate to her father from the moment of her birth, since "by giving birth to [Athena] out of his own head Zeus finds a way to release her safely subordinated to himself." See also Arthur (1982) 77-78, who claims that Athena's peculiar birth and filial devotion is an expression of "female subordination to male."

[22] While Brown (1952) 134, sees Hesiod's Athena as subordinate to her father, he also believes (p. 139) that Solon presents a "new Athena [who] can stand up to Zeus." See also Garland (1992) 29, who says that Solon "intimates that Athena exercised her guardianship over Athens . . . by intercession with her father."

[23] *LSJ*, s.v. ἐπίσκοπος. Anhalt (1993) 76-77, says "nowhere else in extant epic or lyric poetry is a god called the *episkopos* of a city," although in the *Iliad* the gods are called ἐπίσκοποι ἁρμονιάων (22.255, guardians of agreements), and Andromache refers to Hektor as the ἐπίσκοπος of Troy (24.729).

[24] *LSJ*, s.v. σκέπτομαι.

[25] *LSJ*, s.v. μεγάθυμος. In the *Odyssey* the epithet is used twice to describe Athena.

[26] Cf. Lorimer (1950) 447, who believes that these passages are interpolations, since "nowhere else in Homer is Athena associated with Troy."

clearly defining her role as the protector of cities in the historical sphere.[27]

To learn more about Athena's association with her favourite city, and its people, during the sixth century, it is necessary to turn to an author who was not an Athenian. Herodotos of Halikarnassos, who lived during the fifth century, provides the earliest reference to the devotion of ordinary Athenians towards their goddess.[28] In his *History* Herodotos recounts (1.60.4-5) the rise of the tyrant Peisistratos, who gained control of Athens, probably for the second time, under the *aigis* of Athena.[29]

According to the account, Peisistratos drove into Athens in a chariot accompanied by a tall and attractive woman, named Phye, who was dressed to impersonate Athena. Herodotos tells us that messengers had previously been instructed to urge the people to welcome the tyrant to their city, because the goddess herself was bringing him to her Akropolis. Persuaded by such rumours, the Athenians hailed the woman as Athena and eagerly received Peisistratos. Thus the tyranny was restored.

Herodotos calls this episode a "ridiculous trick" and he is amazed that the Athenians, whom he says were the most intelligent of the Greeks, could be so deceived.[30] While his attitude may be the result of a certain scepticism, expressed

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[27] Herington (1963) 62-63, says that Solon "departs entirely from Homer in representing Athena as the champion of Athens in particular."

[28] Frost (1985) 67, calls Herodotos "our first real authority" for the sixth century. Herodotos also provides the first literary reference for the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon.

[29] For the dates of Peisistratos' tyranny I have followed Adcock (1924) 174-81 and Rhodes (1976) 219-33.

[30] The Athenians were well acquainted with Athena's numerous epiphanies in myth, e.g. Hom. *Il.* 5.792ff. and passim, and *Od.* 13.221ff. and passim. In fifth-century tragedy epiphanies of the goddess occur in a number of plays. Grote (1907) 3:327, n. 1, remarks that Herodotos' criticism does not allow for "the alteration and enlargement which had taken place in the

elsewhere in the *History*,[31] towards the gods, it may also be that Herodotos misunderstood the devotion felt by the Athenian people towards their goddess.

Herodotos' story has been dismissed by some modern scholars as mere fabrication or even political manipulation.[32] In a recent article, however, Connor has drawn attention to the ceremonial aspects of the episode.[33] In particular, he suggests that one may infer a comparison between the arrival of Peisistratos and Athena/Phye on the Akropolis to a sacred procession which unites the whole community and its leaders with the gods. Viewed from this perspective, it is possible to consider the entire episode as ritualistic and, like many genuine rituals in the daily life of the ancient Mediterranean world, the focal point is not so much the human participants but the divine.

The religious element cannot be overlooked. Peisistratos undoubtedly felt the same respect towards the goddess as Solon did earlier in the century, or at least he

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Greek mind during the century between Peisistratus and Perikles." On the other hand, at the battle of Marathon many Athenians reported seeing the hero Theseus leading the battle against the Persians (Plut. *Thes.* 35.5).

[31] For example, Herodotos seems to imply that the gods owed their genealogies, their names, and their powers—perhaps their very existence—to Homer and Hesiod (2.53). In his commentary on Herodotos 1.60, Sayce (1882) 33, remarks that "Herodotos belongs to the sceptical age of the Sophists," while Rose (1940) 81, says that rumour may have contributed to the spread of the story and its acceptance into Athenian tradition.

[32] See Connor (1987) 42 and n. 11. Grote (1907) 327, n. 1, says that Herodotos took the story "as a deception from the beginning, and he did not perhaps take pains to put himself into the state of feeling of those original spectators who saw the chariot approach, without any warning or preconceived suspicion." But, according to Herodotos, the people had been forewarned. See p. 19 above.

[33] Connor (1987) 42-44. Cf. Robertson (1992) 143, n. 41, for his criticism of Connor's interpretation. Robertson also infers (pp. 142-43) that the Athena/Phye episode is an *aition* for the conveyance of the Palladion in a chariot back to Athens from the sea, where it had been taken for purification. On this latter point see Burkert (1985) 79. The Palladion, a wooden statue of Athena which, according to myth had been brought from Troy, stood in the Athenian court which tried cases of involuntary homicide (Paus. 1.28.8).

was aware that many Athenians did. In addition, as Andrewes notes, "the story of [Peisistratos'] return to Athens with Phye impersonating the goddess . . . claims for him a special relationship with Athena,"[34] one that was similar to her association with the mythic heroes Odysseus, Perseus, or Herakles. Athena's patronage of the heroes had been a familiar theme in literature since the time of Homer. The theme appears in Archaic art where she is primarily the helper of Perseus. During the sixth century Herakles becomes the most popular of the heroes in Attic art, probably because Athena was his patroness.[35] In several articles Boardman has proposed a connection between Peisistratos' arrival in Athens accompanied by Athena/Phye and the frequent appearance on black-figure vases from around the mid-sixth century of a scene which shows Athena as a charioteer leading Herakles to Olympos.[36]

The apotheosis of Herakles, undoubtedly, was of some religious importance to the people of Athens, since, according to one tradition, the Athenians were the first to worship the mythic hero as a god (Diod. Sic. 4.39.1). The Athena/Phye episode, which at first glance appears as mere spectacle, has its own religious significance, one intimately connected with the chief goddess of the city. The Greeks generally regarded the gods with awe.[37] There is little doubt that Peisistratos, as an astute politician, recognized how important it would be to link his name as closely as possible to that of this powerful goddess and to win her approval in his bid for power. The spectacle

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[34] Andrewes, *CAH*^{2}, 3/3:411. Shapiro (1989) 20, says the story "may suggest that he was already recognized [not, that he claimed] to have a special relationship with the goddess."

[35] *ABFH*, 221.

[36] Boardman (1972) 60-65; and (1984) 243.

[37] Sixth-century individuals who may not have accepted this view of the gods include Xenophanes of Kolophon and the pre-Sokratic philosophers.

thus contrived, and taking place before the very eyes of her worshippers,[38] could have easily convinced the pious that the goddess had given her approval to his claim to rule her city.[39]

The period of Peisistratos' tyranny seems to have been crucial to new developments in the religious and cultural life of Athens. It is unknown what role the tyrant himself may have played in these developments, since there are virtually no *testimonia* and only a few remains of buildings and fragments of sculpture and vase-paintings on which to base one's assumptions.[40] Nevertheless, these remains seem to indicate the increased importance of religion and myth in the political and civic spheres after the mid-sixth century.[41] While these developments pertain to other gods as well as to Athena, it seems likely that Peisistratos would have paid special attention to the cult of the goddess who had looked favourably upon his tyranny.

The Cults and Festivals of the Goddess

While the evidence for the cult of Athena in Athens is more abundant than for

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[38] As a ritual which unites the community (see p. 20 above). Connor (1987) 44, also refers to the event as a "shared drama."

[39] Despite the goddess' approval Peisistratos was expelled again c. 556 by his political enemies (Hdt. 1.61). Ten years later he defeated his opponents in a battle at Pallene, near Marathon, and returned to Athens (1.62-64) where he held power until he died c. 528-27.

[40] Shear, Jr. (1978) 1, says "should we seek to document these developments . . . with the evidence of literature and archaeology, our inquiry is at once impeded by a frustrating dearth of factual information about archaic Athens. . . [and] the almost total absence of contemporary historical records."

[41] The increased emphasis on religion pertains not only to the cult of Athena. Frost (1990) 6, believes "that Peisistratos brought some version of the worship of his own local cult, Brauronian Artemis, to the Acropolis" and that he was "probably responsible for adding honors for Dionysos from Eleutherai." Pausanias (1.2.5) reports that the god of Eleutherai was introduced into Athens by a certain Pegasos on the advice of the Delphic oracle. This was undoubtedly before the time of Peisistratos.

any other divinity, it is still relatively sparse.[42] Her cult on the Akropolis was devoted to Athena *Polias*,[43] the City Goddess. As Herington points out "no doubt πολιάς . . . originally meant 'she who dwells on the πόλις', the old-fashioned name for the Acropolis."[44] The cult-title *Polias* appears in literature for the first time in Herodotos (5.82), but the cult of Athena may well have gone back to the Mycenaean Age.[45] This does not infer a continuity of cult so much as a "conviction of the sanctity of this area on the north side"[46] of the Akropolis. It is not known when the Akropolis was set aside solely for sacred buildings but by the second quarter of the sixth century it had become the principal sanctuary of Athena *Polias* with at least one major temple dedicated to her.[47]

The Temple

The existence of a temple to any god was of paramount importance in the Greek world since it "represented to all men the presence of a god and was itself the monument of that presence."[48] It is not certain when the first temple to Athena was

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[42] See Shapiro (1989) 18. See also Herington (1955) 28.

[43] *LSJ*, s.v. Πολιάς, "guardian of the city." Likewise πολιâτις and πολιοûχος. See also Fougeres, Daremberg-Saglio, s.v. "Minerva," 1913.

[44] Herington (1955) 6ff. and 11. Athena was also worshipped as city goddess in other Greek cities including Sparta, Athens' opponent during the Peloponnesian War.

[45] Shapiro (1989) 19.

[46] Hopper (1963) 7 and 13. He emphasizes that the link is tenuous.

[47] See Shapiro (1989) 5. Garland (1992) 174, claims that the cult of Athena *Polias* was established on the Akropolis between c. 750-700.

[48] Scully ([1962] 1979) 43.

built on the Akropolis.[49] Thucydides' account (1.126.11) of the attempt by Kylon and his followers to seize the Akropolis in c. 635 mentions a temple,[50] which indicates that one must have existed by the seventh century. Homer (*Il.* 2.547-49) mentions the "rich temple" of Athena. This temple may have been constructed during the eighth century, at the time when the poet is reputed to have composed his epics, or earlier.[51] The so-called Archaic temple on the Akropolis was built c. 525 by Peisistratos' son and successor, Hippias. The best-known temple of Athena is the Parthenon,[52] completed in 432. It contained the chryselephantine statue[53] of Athena, sculpted by Pheidias, and its sculptures were devoted to the mythology and

[49] For discussion of the various temples associated with Athena see Hopper (1971) 110-18.

[50] Shapiro (1989) 19. According to Hyginus (*De Astron.* 2.13) Erichthonios was the first to build a temple on the Akropolis. On Erichthonios see pp. 46ff. below.

[51] Travlos (1971) 52 and 143, believes that a Geometric temple was built on the site of a Mycenaean palace, and that it "was replaced by a larger temple at the end of the 7th or beginning of the 6th century B.C. which in turn was succeeded by the Peisistratid temple, the Old [Archaic] Temple of Athena."

[52] Herington (1955) 13, notes that the "first certain and accurately datable authority for the name Parthenon of the whole building is Demosthenes [22.13]." The Parthenon was constructed on the site of an incomplete temple, which was begun in the decade between the battles of Marathon and Salamis. According to Hopper (1971) 118, "the columns were well advanced" when it was destroyed by the Persians in 480.

[53] This statue, dedicated in 438, is also called the Athena *Parthenos,* a name first used by Pausanias (5.11.10; 10.34.8). Herington (1955) 6, says Pausanias' "phraseology suggests that this is a popular nickname, not an official title." Herington also says (p. 43) that "there was no such cult-title as Athena Parthenos." Despite the presence on the Akropolis, after 438, of two statues of Athena, there was only one cult, which was devoted to the ancient image of Athena *Polias.* The old statue had been removed from Athens by Themistokles before the battle of Salamis in 480 (Plut. *Them.* 10.4). Herington suggests (pp. 22-23) that when the statue was returned to Athens, it "may have been housed in the half-ruined Doerpfeld temple, re-roofed for the purpose," presumably until it was placed in the new Erechtheion which was completed c. 406. See also Hill (1953) 176.

cult of the goddess. The Gigantomachy appears in the east metopes,[54] the birth of Athena on the east pediment, and the contest with Poseidon on the west pediment. The frieze shows a representation of the procession which took place during her major festival, the Panathenaia, and, therefore, was devoted to the cult of Athena.[55] Several Athenian festivals were devoted to Athena, but the Panathenaia was the most important in terms of its religious and political significance. It is also the best known of all Greek festivals.[56]

The Panathenaia

The Panathenaia was celebrated annually on the 28th of the month of Hekatombaion, traditionally the birthday of Athena.[57] The early history of the

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[54] The metopes are badly damaged, but the subject of those on the east seems certain. An Amazonomachy was probably depicted on the west metopes. On the sculptures see Robertson (1963) 48. The Gigantomachy was depicted on the inside of the shield of the chyselephantine statue of the goddess, and the Amazonomachy on the outside of the shield (Paus. 1.17.1; Pliny *HN* 36.4.18). This latter mythic battle took place on the Aeropagos when the Amazons invaded Athens to reclaim their queen Antiope, whom Theseus had abducted and brought back to Attika. The Amazons were defeated by the Athenians. Some scholars, including Brommer (1979) 21-22, have suggested that the depiction on the west metopes was actually a battle between Greeks and Persians.

[55] This is the traditional interpretation. But see Connelly (1996) 53-80, esp. 57-61 and 67, who suggests, from a reading of Euripides' *Erechtheus frag.*, that the frieze may depict the sacrifice of the daughters of Erechtheus, attended by a ritual procession commemorating the first "sacrifice in honor of Erechtheus and his daughters, as ordained by Athena herself."

[56] Simon (1983) 55.

[57] Mid-summer, approximately the end of July or early August. Pinney (1988) 471, claims that "the currently widespread notion that the Panathenaea celebrates the birth of Athena is a modern conjecture." She also says that the Gigantomachy is the *aition* for the festival, although, according to Robertson (1985) 267, the Gigantomachy is the *aition* for only one event in the Panathanaic games, the *apobates*. Recently, Connelly (1996) 77, has suggested that the death of Erechtheus and the sacrifice of the Erechtheids—with more emphasis on the latter—may be the *aition* for the Panathenaia.

festival is obscure. Apollodoros (3.14.6) attributes its founding to Erichthonios,[58] while Plutarch (*Thes.* 24.3) gives that honour to Theseus.[59] Pausanias (8.2.1), referring to the athletic contests, which were a part of the festival, says that the original name was *Athēnaia* and that it was changed to Panathenaia in the time of Theseus.[60]

During the mid-sixth century—traditionally in the year 566—the festival was expanded to four days in every fourth year, and called the Great Panathenaia.[61] This quadrennial festival also included athletic contests. During the first half of the sixth century Panhellenic festivals throughout Greece were being reorganized or expanded, and the expansion of the Panathenaia may have been the Athenian response to a general phenomenon.[62] By including athletic competitions, the Panathenaia would

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[58] Harpokration, s.v. Παναθήναια, also says that Erichthonios first celebrated the festival. On Erichthonios as the original founder of the festival, see Robertson (1985) 258-66.

[59] See Frazer, *Apollodorus* 2:93-94, n. 3. Davison (1958) 24-25, refers to what he calls the double origin of the festival, the mythical (founded by Erichthonios) and the political (founded by Theseus). It should be noted that while we regard both Erichthonios and Theseus as mythical figures, the Athenians probably considered both to be historical.

[60] Harpokration, s.v. Παναθήναια, indicates that the original name of the festival was Ἀθήναια. He also says that the Great Panathenaia was celebrated every four year. Davison (1958) 23, remarks that the name Παναθήναια seems to always refer to the Great Panathenaia.

[61] On the traditional date of 566 and the involvement of Peisistratos in the expansion of the festival, see Davison (1958) 26-29. According to the Scholion to Aristides' *Panathenaikos* 189.4, Erichthonios established the 'Little' Panathenaia, while Peisistratos established the Great Panathenaia.

[62] See Davison (1958) 26, and Shapiro (1989) 19. In an earlier article, Davison (1955) 12, says "the Panathenaea, as its title shows, was not intended by its founders to be a Panhellenic festival (at most it was designed to appeal to citizens of those Ionian cities which were believed to have been founded by emigrants from Attica), and did not in fact become one, even in Athens' greatest days."

rival the games which took place at Olympia or Delphi.[63]

Victory in the games was bestowed by Athena *Nike*. Daly suggests that the cult of Athena *Nike* was established at the time of the founding of the Great Panathenaia "with emphasis on the victory to be won in the new games."[64] Daly notes further that Nike does not seem to have been an independent deity or to have had a separate cult prior to the time of Alexander the Great.[65] She was the personification of victory (νίκη), and appears first in Hesiod (*Th.* 384) where, as one of the daughters of Styx, she represents the victory which Zeus anticipates in his war against the Titans.[66] When Nike again appears in Greek literature during the late sixth and early fifth centuries, she is, as Daly points out, "the giver and rewarder of victory in armed conflict . . . and in peaceful contest."[67] She is also closely linked with Athena.[68]

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[63] The Olympic Games were traditionally established in 776. The Great Panathenaia took place in the third year of the Olympiad. In addition to the usual athletic contests such as foot-races, boxing, and wrestling, common at the other Panhellenic games, the Panathenaia also included contests which had a connection either with Athena, or with Erichthonios, the mythical founder of the festival. These included the *apobates* (companions of the charioteer), said to have been introduced by Erichthonios (Eratosth. *Kat.* 13), and the pyrrhic dance, which was performed in full armour. The usual tradition is that Athena herself first danced the pyrrhic, either at the time of her birth (Lucian *Dial. D.* 13), or, according to Dionysios of Halikarnassos (*Ant. Rom.* 7.72.7), after the defeat of the Titans, i.e., the Giants. (The Titans and Giants were often confused even in the Classical period—see this chapter, n. 101 below.) Like other Panhellenic games, the Panathenaia included competitions in music and poetry. The recitation by rhapsodes of Homer was probably introduced by Peisistratos' son Hipparchos, at the time his brother Hippias was tyrant, during the 520s.

[64] Daly (1953) 1127. See Garland (1992) 39 and 102, who cites evidence for the erection of an altar to Athena *Nike* on the Akropolis in the mid-sixth century. See also *DAA* no. 329.

[65] Daly (1953) 1124.

[66] Donald (1990) 25, and n. 25.

[67] Daly (1953) 1125. According to Bakchylides (11.1–7), *Nike* stands beside Zeus on Mount Olympos and judges mortal excellence, while Pindar (*Isthm.* 2.23-28) describes how the victorious athlete at Olympia falls upon the knees of golden Victory.

[68] Daly (1953) 1126–27.

As *Nike* the goddess presided over the Panathenaic contests and crowned the victor with a wreath of olive leaves (Schol. on Plato *Prm.* 127a). But the most prestigious prizes were awarded to the winners in the gymnastic contests and in chariot racing. These were the Panathenaic amphorae, filled with olive oil (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 60.2–3; Pind. *Nem.* 10.35–36), and depicting the prize-winning event on one side of the vase and a portrait of Athena on the other.[69]

The Panathenaic Amphorae

The earliest Panathenaic amphorae are dated, on the basis of stylistic evidence,[70] to approximately 560, shortly after the traditional founding-date of the Great Panathenaia. In the portrait of Athena which appears on each amphora, the goddess wears a helmet and carries a shield and a raised spear and has her *aigis* draped around her shoulders over her peplos. She is always seen from the left, and her feet are set wide apart as she strides forward.[71] Carpenter calls this image Athena *Promachos*.[72] Her image as a warrior is familiar from early Greek literature. Hesiod describes her as "the rouser of strife, the leader of hosts, the unwearied, whom

[69] Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 60.3) says that only the winners in the gymnastic contests and horse-racing received vases filled with olive oil, while winners in musical competitions received silver money and gold objects. But see Davison (1958) 36, who says that amphorae were also presented to winners in the music contests. He adds that several Panathenaic amphorae exist from the sixth century "bearing . . . a picture representing a musical contest."

[70] Davison (1958) 27. On the Panathenaic amphorae see *DABF,* 88–100.

[71] Shapiro (1989) 27.

[72] Carpenter (1991) 46. But see Pinney (1988) 468, who proposes that the image shows Athena performing "a victory dance, the pyrrhic." Pinney seems to play down the image of a fighting Athena. In fact the pyrrhic was a war-dance and connected as much with the goddess as *Promachos*, as it was with victory and celebration such as the defeat of the Giants, where Athena may have first danced the pyrrhic (see this chapter, n. 63 above), and its performance at the Panathenaic games. *LSJ*, s.v. πυρρίχη, gives the definition "*war-dance.*"

the din of wars and battles delights" (*Th.* 925-26). In the *Iliad* (5.733ff.) Athena is portrayed in the war tunic and *aigis* of her father as she goes to the defence of her favourites among the Achaian warriors. Early Greek art also portrayed the goddess as a warrior. The depictions of her birth in full armour on seventh-century shield bands from Olympia has already been noted.[73] Sixth-century black-figure vases from Boiotia depict Athena armed for war with helmet, shield, and a "spear brandished above the head."[74] In Attic art, however, it is only in the mid-sixth century that she begins to appear with her full accoutrements of war.[75] Earlier depictions usually show the goddess unarmed, and even when she does carry a spear or a shield, she does not assume the militant stance which was popularized on the Panathenaic amphorae.[76]

The chief characteristic of the portrait of Athena on the Panathenaic amphorae is the "consistency of [the] image over many generations," which may suggest that it represents a statue.[77] The rituals connected with the Panathenaia, such as the presentation of the newly-woven peplos and the sacrifices, were centred around the

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[73] See this chapter, n. 17 above.

[74] Schachter (1981) [illegible]. The author also points out that such images may be related to the cult of Athena *Itonia*, [illegible] was the patroness of warriors.

[75] Shapiro (1989) 37, and *DABF*, 15.

[76] Marx (1988) 383, lists a breakdown of the known representations of Athena, both armed and unarmed, in Attic art between 675 and 530.

[77] Shapiro (1989) 27. Elsewhere, Shapiro (1993) 216-17, offers more explicit evidence that the goddess was portrayed as a statue on vases. In particular, he cites two pseudo-Panathenaic amphorae, c. 550-30, on both of which an owl sits on the shield of Athena *Promachos*. The owl, of course, was sacred to Athena. Shapiro states (p. 217) that "in all these instances, the owl seems in part to signify that "Athena" is a statue and not the living goddess."

ancient cult image of Athena *Polias*.[78] Whether it was the latter statue which inspired the portrait of the goddess on the Panathenaic amphorae, or a new statue dedicated especially for the reorganization of the Panathenaia is unknown.[79] Before considering the question further, it is necessary to look more closely at what is known about the ancient image of Athena.

The Cult Statue of the Goddess

The ancient cult statue of Athena was said to have been set up by Erichthonios (Apollod. 3.14.6). It was made of olive wood (Schol. on Demosthenes 22.13) and was believed to have fallen from the sky (Paus. 1.26.6). Pausanias also says that the image was the most revered object on the Akropolis. Its legendary origin implies great antiquity. Romano suggests that the cult statue may date "at least to the beginning of the eighth century."[80] Herodotos (5.71) records that Kylon and his followers sat as suppliants before a statue on the Akropolis. This may well have been the ancient cult statue of Athena, and would have been housed in the temple mentioned by Thucydides (1.126.11) in his account of Kylon's attempt to establish a tyranny.

The appearance and pose of the cult statue is unknown and has caused considerable debate among scholars, in particular, as to whether or not the image was seated or standing.[81] This matter is of some importance since, if the statue were

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[78] Further discussion of the various rituals connected with the Panathenaia can be found in Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:297-98; Deubner, [1932] 1966, 22-35; and Parke (1977) 33-50.

[79] Herington (1955) 41. See also *ABFH*, 167.

[80] Romano (1980) 53.

[81] Kroll (1982) 65-68, has a discussion of the various opposing views.

seated, it could not have been the prototype for the image of Athena on the Panathenaic amphorae. Romano believes that the ancient statue was "originally a simple, possibly even a crude wooden image."[82] Shapiro sees the statue's legendary antiquity and the tradition that it was made from olive wood as "compatible with a *xoanon*, a crudely carved wooden statue, perhaps little more than a plank fashioned into roughly human form."[83] If the cult image was no more than a plank of wood, it seems unlikely that it was seated,[84] or that it could have given rise to the Panathenaic image of the goddess.

To Farnell the evidence of both art and literature is proof that the image of Athena *Polias* stood erect and armed.[85] He cites as an example a black-figure vase by the Berlin Painter (Staatliche Museen 1697, *ABV* 296) showing a group of worshippers leading a cow to the large altar which stood before the Erechtheion. Standing behind the altar is Athena, armed with her helmet, shield, and spear, and

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[82] Romano (1980), 45. But see Kroll (1982) 74, who, referring to the naturalistic face of the goddess which appears on coins, says if the image was "genuinely aniconic, the face would have had to have been a late addition." He believes (70-71) that the cult statue was standing and bases his opinion on the evidence of Athenian bronze coins from the late third century. To him the Archaic composition of the figure and the manner in which the peplos falls implies that what we see on the third-century coins is the ancient image of the goddess.

[83] Shapiro (1989) 25. Pausanias (1.26.6-7) calls the image which he saw in the Erechtheion an ἄγαλμα. A wooden image was usually called a *xoanon*. Romano (1980) 351-52, says that Pausanias uses *xoanon* "to refer to an image of a deity, usually a cult image, which is made of wood or a combination of wood and another material." Pausanias does not describe the image or tell us what it was made of. Herodotos (5.71) and Plutarch (*Them.* 10.4) also call Athena's cult image an *agalma*.

According to the definitions in *LSJ* the words were used interchangeably: ξοάνον "*image carved* of wood;" later, "generally, *image, statue*, esp. of a god;" ἄγαλμα, originally, "*pleasing gift*, esp. for the gods;" "*statue in honour of a god*;" "generally, *image*."

[84] Shapiro (1989) 25.

[85] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:334-36. Shapiro (1989) 27, also suggests that when Athena is shown in cult scenes on vases, it may be "as an epiphany of the goddess."

who, Farnell believes, represents the cult image which, as the goddess, has come outside of her temple to receive the sacrifice. Shapiro, discussing a group of vases which show sacrifices to Athena, says that "taken together these scenes demonstrate without question that there was a statue of an armed Athena in the sixth century which was intimately linked with the Panathenaic festival."[86]

Thus it seems likely that an erect and armed statue of Athena stood on the Akropolis during the period when the first Panathenaic amphorae were produced, although it cannot be determined whether or not it was the ancient cult image.[87] Shapiro calls this statue of Athena a "Promachos type."[88] This statue seems to look forward to the statues of Athena *Promachos* and Athena *Parthenos*, sculpted by Pheidias in the mid-fifth century, both of which were fully armed. According to Shapiro "the ancient image was apparently completely unarmed, with the exception of aegis and gorgoneion, which are more symbols of her divinity, descent from Zeus, and protective nature than they are ordinary armor."[89] This seems to indicate that there were indeed two statues of Athena on the Akropolis during the sixth century. While it seems obvious that the ancient unarmed image was Athena *Polias*, it is also certain

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[86] Shapiro (1989) 29.

[87] Some scholars believe that there were two cult statues, one standing erect and armed, and one seated. According to Lorimer (1950) 449, the seated cult statue was "not earlier than *c.* 550" while the erect image was "more ancient." And Herington (1955) 44, remarks that Athena *Polias* "is likely to have been seated" while the "sixth-century predecessor [of Athena *Parthenos*] showed her not only armed, but striding into battle." See also Harrison (1957) 209, who says there is "no parallel for a striding draped statue in Athens at this early date." She thinks that the Archaic statue, "the Athena of the hekatompedon, like the later Parthenos, was standing still, though fully armed."

[88] Shapiro (1989) 29. *LSJ*, s.v. πρόμαχος "as a name of tutelary gods, 'Αθηνᾶ Alciphr. 3.51 [*c.* fourth century A.D.]." Ehrenberg[2] ([1973] 1986) 455, n. 132, says Athena *Promachos* is "Athena *Polias* in battle."

[89] Shapiro (1989) 26.

that as city goddess she must have been a warrior,[90] for the protection of the city was her chief concern and by necessity it would have called upon her skills as a warrior.

In this aspect of Athena one can find a connection between her image in cult and in myth. Myth had long described Athena as a warrior (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 5.736ff. and passim), but it is not until the mid-sixth century that she acquires a warlike image in Attic art.[91] This happens just at around the same time as the first Panathenaic amphorae, with their portrait of the goddess armed for battle, begin to appear. It is also likely that the image of Athena on the Panathenaic amphorae influenced the way in which artists portrayed the goddess in those myths which gained in popularity in Athens during the sixth century such as her birth, the apotheosis of Herakles, and the Gigantomachy.[92] It is to the mythology of Athena that one must now turn and to a small selection of myths which had particular relevance for her and her relationship with the city of Athens during the sixth and fifth centuries.[93]

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[90] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:308, remarks that "her warlike character was inseparably blended with her political and social; and it is hard to say which of the two was the original."

[91] Marx (1988) 383-84, says that before the first quarter of the sixth century Athena was portrayed in Attic art as a "passive unarmed goddess," and the change "into an agressive armed goddess" began at around the same time that Peisistratos rose to power in Athens. Boardman (1984) 241-42, however, points out that Athena is well represented outside of Athens in early Archaic art, and in at least half of the extant pieces she is armed. This correlates with the image of the goddess which is presented by Homer and, also, by Hesiod (*Th.* 924-26).

[92] See Shapiro (1989) 37-38.

[93] Except for the myth of her contest with Poseidon, which will not be discussed until Chapter Four.

The Mythology of the Goddess

The majority of the myths involving Athena originated in parts of Greece outside of Attika, a fact which is reflected both in art and in literature. The earliest representation of the birth of Athena occurs on seventh century "shield bands from Olympia."[94] Hesiod, who lived in Boiotia, and Homer, who may have come from the island of Chios, probably composed their poems during the eighth or seventh centuries. In the epics of Homer, and in other mythic cycles which are known only through fragments or from art, Athena appears most frequently as the helper and advisor of the heroes of saga.

Prior to the sixth century there are few representations of Athena in Attic art.[95] The earliest are from the seventh century and depict her as the helper of the hero Perseus.[96] After the first quarter of the sixth century the goddess and her mythology begin to dominate the work of Athenian artists.[97] One of the most popular subjects was Athena's birth, which appears frequently on a number of black-figure vases from around the mid-sixth century.[98] When she is shown as the patron of the heroes, the hero who is granted her protection and assistance is usually Herakles.

Three important myths in which Athena plays major roles, and which evolved significantly during the sixth and fifth centuries will now be examined. The first of these is the Gigantomachy which, beginning at about the mid-sixth century, became

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[94] Carpenter (1991) 71.

[95] Marx (1988) 385.

[96] Shapiro (1989) 37.

[97] Boardman (1984) 242.

[98] Carpenter (1991) 71.

one of the most popular myths in black-figure vase-painting. The other two myths concern the final episode in the story of the House of Atreus as told by Aischylos in his *Eumenides*, and the legendary king of Athens, Erechtheus. The only connection among the three myths is the presence of Athena, although in all three her role is significant. In addition, in each of the myths Athena reveals one of her primary characteristics: warrior, guardian, or patron of the heroes.

Athena and the Gigantomachy

The mythic battle known as the Gigantomachy took place between the Olympian gods and the Giants, and occurred after the Giants attacked Mount Olympos (Ov. *Met.* 1.151-53). Apollodoros says that the Giants hurled rocks and torches at the sky (1.6.1.) The battle had a special place in the myths of Athens during the sixth and fifth centuries. Hesiod (*Th.* 183-86) mentions the birth of the Giants from the earth (Gaia) after she absorbed the blood of Ouranos who had been castrated by his son Kronos. The first reference to this mythic battle occurs in Pindar (*Nem.* 1.67-69) where the prophet Teiresias describes the fate of the Giants "when the gods shall engage [them] in battle on the plain of Phlegra/ their shining hair will be fouled with earth/ under the onslaught of [Herakles'] arrows" (ὅταν θεοὶ ἐν πεδίῳ Φλέγρας Γιγάντεσσιν μάχαν/ ἀντιάζωσιν, βελέων ὑπὸ ῥιπαῖσι κείνου φαιδίμαν/ γαίᾳ πεφύρσεσθαι κόμαν). Athena had summoned Herakles to help the gods after they received an oracle which said that they could not defeat the Giants without the aid of a mortal (Apollod. 1.6.1).

There are several allusions to the Gigantomachy in fifth-century Attic tragedy. Aischylos (*Eum.* 295) and Euripides (*HF* 1193-94 and *Ion* 988) both agree with Pindar

that the site of the mythic battle was Phlegra, although some later sources claim that it took place at Pallene.[99] There are also references to Athena's own part in the battle. Euripides describes how the goddess kills the Giant Enkelados with her spear (*HF* 908),[100] and then, triumphant, "waves her Gorgon-shield" over her victim (*Ion* 209-11).[101] The earliest connected account of the Gigantomachy is found in Apollodoros (1.6.1-3).

The earliest depictions of the Gigantomachy in Attic art are on black-figure vases dedicated on the Akropolis c. 560-550.[102] It was the subject of one of the pediments of the Archaic temple built on the Akropolis in c. 525, and a surviving statue shows Athena killing a Giant.[103] But this statue does not present a martial goddess in the same way as do the Panathenaic vases of the same period, or as Euripides, writing in the late fifth century, describes Athena in the *Ion* (209-11). Shapiro sees this image of Athena as "fierce and unrelenting in combat, [while] her face has a gentle, serene beauty which . . . captures the spirit of the Homeric Athena,"[104] the warrior and friend of the Achaian heroes.

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[99] Herodotos (7.123) reports that a region in Thrace called Pallene used to be called Phlegra. According to Frazer, *Apollodorus* 1:43, n. 3, "the scene of the battle of the gods and Giants was laid in various places."

[100] Athena buried Enkelados under the island of Sicily. Later in the same play Amphitryon proudly describes how his son stood in the ranks of the Gods, as they killed the Giants on the Plain of Phlegra (*HF* 1193-94). On the Gigantomachy generally see Vian (1952) passim.

[101] In some of Euripides' other plays the Gigantomachy is confused with the Titanomachy (*Hek*. 466-72 and *IT* 222-34).

[102] Carpenter (1991) 74.

[103] But see Shapiro (1989) 38, n. 173, who says that he accepts recent arguments for a date of c. 510 for the statue.

[104] Ibid., 38-39.

Herington says "for Athenians, this cosmic battle was Athena's peculiar triumph."[105] This is made evident in several ways. In the sixth century, as the myth of the Gigantomachy evolved, Athena became the most important warrior after Zeus. In both the sixth and fifth centuries the subject was sculpted on temples built on the Akropolis, on one of the pediments of the Archaic temple, c. 525, and in the late fifth century, on the east metopes of the Parthenon.[106] It was also engraved on the inside of the shield of the chryselephantine statue of the goddess (Pliny *HN* 36.4.18). Finally, the scene in which Athena kills the Giant Enkelados was embroidered into the newly-woven peplos (Schol. in Ar. *Eq.* 563) which was presented to the cult statue of the goddess at the Greater Panathenaia.

In the Gigantomachy Athena plays a pivotal role as a warrior, who fights on her own behalf, as she evolves from her usual role in myth as the patron of the heroes. In the next myth, which focuses on the concluding episode in the myth of the House of Atreus, once again Athena takes on the role as the patron of a hero. At the same time, she is portrayed in her primary role in cult as the guardian of Athens. While the Gigantomachy experienced its evolution in Athens during the sixth century, the myth of Orestes and the Erinyes/Eumenides seems to have found its genesis entirely during the fifth century in the work of one of the city's greatest poets.

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[105] Herington (1955) 60.

[106] The battle was also a popular subject in the figurative arts elsewhere in Greece, being sculpted on the east frieze of the Siphnian Treasury and on the west pediment of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (Eur. *Ion* 205-18). In the Hellenistic period it adorned the great altar at Pergamum.

Athena and the Eumenides

The *Eumenides*, the third play in Aischylos' trilogy the *Oresteia*, focuses on the working out of a curse of murder and vengeance in the House of Atreus. The opening scene of the play shows Orestes at Delphi, where he is pursued by the Erinyes, who seek vengeance for his crime of matricide. Apollo commands Orestes to go to Athens and supplicate the ancient image of Athena (79-80). Orestes arrives in Athens and prays to the goddess, entreating, in a sense, the same kind of protection which she bestowed on heroes such as Odysseus or Herakles.

The theme of the play is justice,[107] in particular, how to reach a compromise between ancestral loyalties which demand retribution for crimes against the family, and a new kind of justice in which, as Kuhns points out, "the ways of the family do not frustrate the ways of the city."[108] In the mythological context of the *Eumenides*, Athena provides a solution to this dilemma by creating an institution (484), the Areopagus,[109] and appointing judges (483) who will henceforth determine guilt or

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[107] On justice and the *Eumenides* see Podlecki (1966) 74ff.

[108] Kuhns (1962) 65-66. He adds that "the well-being of the *polis* requires that political morality override the ancestral, and the latter, though it cannot and ought not be extirpated, be at least controlled."

[109] Historically the Areopagus (Hill of Ares) was the site where the ancient Council met. Over the centuries the Areopagus gradually lost its ancient privileges, and c. 462/1 Ephialtes deprived it of most of its remaining political and judicial powers (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 25.2-4). The *Oresteia* was produced in 458 and some scholars have seen in the *Eumenides* the author's own affirmation of the reduced role assigned to the Areopagus. See Podlecki (1966) 80-94.

The Areopagus was opposite the northwest face of the Akropolis (Hdt. 8.52.1). In the play Athena says that the hill was named after the god Ares because the Amazons, who had come to Athens to wage war against Theseus, had sacrificed to Ares on this very hill, where they had set up their camp (685-90). Apollodoros (3.14.2), however, recounts that the hill took its name from Ares when the god was tried there in the *first* trial for homicide. Ares had killed Halirrhothios, the son of Poseidon, who had raped Ares' daughter Alkippe. Poseidon brought Ares to trial before all the gods who assembled on the hill which was subsequently named the Hill of Ares, that is the Areopagus. See also Pausanias (1.28.5) and Euripides (*El.* 1258ff.).

innocence, and decide punishment. Athena herself assumes the role of an impartial and conciliatory arbitrator.[110]

In the play the focus of the debate is whether the murder of a mother or a father, a wife or a husband, a woman or a man, is of greater consequence. Before the trial opens the Erinyes,[111] who are the avengers of crimes against the kinship group, insist that the murder of a mother is the worst of crimes (210-12),[112] while Apollo denounces the Erinyes for treating the marriage contract with dishonour (213-18). Then the antagonists present their case. Orestes admits that he killed his mother (588) as commanded by Apollo (594). The Erinyes claim that Klytaimnestra's crime against her husband was not as serious as Orestes' matricide, because she was not a blood-relative of the man she killed (605). Finally, in exasperation, Apollo declares that the mother is not the true parent of a child (658-59), and offers as his proof Athena, who, he says, did not have a mother but only a father since she is "the child of Olympian Zeus" (654-73).[113]

A theory of embryology similar to this argument seems to have been in vogue during the mid-fifth century. Aristotle (*Gen. An.* 763^{b}30) attributed it to Anaxagoras

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[110] Dover (1957) 231, points out that "the Chorus must be regarded as entrusting the decision to Athena in the confidence (not uncommon in litigants) that an impartial judge is bound to decide in their favour."

[111] Aischylos reports that the mother of the Erinyes was Night (322, Νύξ). In Hesiod's *Theogony* (185) the Earth (Gaia) is the mother of the Erinyes. Gaia is also the mother of the Giants. See pp. 35-37 above.

[112] Elsewhere (421) they claim to drive anyone from their home who has killed another human being.

[113] Winnington-Ingram (1948) 143, says that "the purpose of this argument is to defend matricide from the charge that it violates the relation of kinship, and the god has been driven to the position at which it is the only argument which can do so." See also Kuhns (1962) 69-70, who points out that "this argument is an effort to establish . . . the necessity to make the family subordinate to the city."

(c. 500-c. 428),[114] who came to Athens in 480 and was active there as a philosopher at the time when Aischylos wrote the *Oresteia*. Thus Apollo exploits a new scientific theory to make his point, although, mythologically it is weak. For, as Zeitlin points out, while "the argument draws upon the new scientific theories of the day . . . [and] looks forward in its advancement of new intellectual trends, it looks backward in relying for proof of this contention on the mythic concept of Athena's birth from the head of Zeus."[115] Apollo is mistaken when he says that Athena did not have a mother, since it can be said, as Herington clearly states, that Zeus "was both her father and her mother."[116] In fact, long before the fifth century, Hesiod (*Th.* 886-89) had named the goddess Metis, whom Zeus swallowed before he gave birth to Athena, as the mother of his daughter.

Athena's birth from the head of Zeus and her special relationship with her father are of particular relevance to the drama as it unfolds. Indeed, in Herington's words, it is "a motif of crucial importance to the entire action of the *Oresteia*."[117] The first reference to Athena's birth occurs in Apollo's speech in which he declares that "there may be a father without a mother" (663). Athena reacts by immediately cutting off debate. The citizens of Athens judge the case, casting equal votes for Orestes and the Erinyes (795).[118] But Athena breaks the tie by voting to acquit Orestes because,

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[114] Diodorus Siculus (1.80.4), who wrote in the first century B.C., also claims that the Egyptians believed that the father was the sole parent of the child.

[115] Zeitlin (1978) 168.

[116] Herington (1955) 57.

[117] Ibid., 69.

[118] Whether the number of jurors are equal or unequal has long been a matter of controversy. Roisman (1987) 155, n. 15, gives a partial list of scholars on both sides of the argument dating back to 1835. Roisman herself believes that "Athena's vote made the sides equal." But see

she says, no mother gave her birth (736). Then she adds, "I approve the male in every way, . . . [and] with all my heart, I am a faithful follower of my father" (737-38).[119]

Athena's championship of the male is not a negative characteristic. As Zeitlin argues, as a "female born of male, [Athena] can ally herself with male interests and still display positive nurturant behavior."[120] This is implicit in her patronage of the heroes, whether Odysseus or Herakles or even Orestes. Some feminist critics see Athena as a masculine creation, not only because she is a warrior goddess, but also because of her patronage of "mortal warriors and heroes."[121] But this latter role also reveals her feminine qualities, as she cares for and protects her favourite heroes. This aspect of Athena is nowhere more evident than in the *Odyssey* (13.287-89) when she greets Odysseus as he returns to his home on the island of Ithaka. In the *Oresteia* she extends her care and protection to Orestes as she acquits him of the charge of murder and provides "him with the salvation he had sought."[122]

Now Athena reveals that she and Zeus are of one mind, a further indication of the close relationship between father and daughter. Both agree that Orestes' murder of his mother is no worse a crime than Klytaimnestra's murder of her

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Kuhns (1962) 65-66, who says that "the tie vote of the Athenian citizens is indicative of an ethical and political fact: among men there will always be divided allegiance to the demands of ancestral morality and to the demands of political morality."

[119] In fact, it is a mythological truth that Athena supports the male, since, in the mythic cycles, her primary role is as the patron of the heroes. But see Roisman (1987) 158, who claims that "in her choice of a motive for acquittal Athena appears merely to seize upon an excuse just offered to her by her brother."

[120] Zeitlin (1978) 172.

[121] See for example Pomeroy (1975) 4.

[122] Zeitlin (1978) 172.

husband (739-40).[123] Athena's decision demonstrates that the rule of law and justice is necessary if the state is to function in an orderly manner, for in a civilized society no difference can be accorded the murder of a father or a mother, or a stranger.[124]

Athena must still placate the Erinyes. Insisting on their ancient privileges (778-80), they threaten to destroy Attika (781-87). Again Athena's closeness to Zeus is obvious. Zeus and Athena both share the quality of Metis,[125] assimilated by Zeus when he swallowed Athena's mother, and inherited by Athena at her birth. Now Athena uses her innate intelligence, and urges the Erinyes to yield to persuasion (794, πίθεσθε),[126] and not to harm Attika. As she had done previously in her decision to vote for Orestes, Athena again identifies herself with her father to point out that Zeus himself gave the oracle that Orestes should not suffer any harm for what he did (797-99). She points out that she too relies on Zeus (826), and that she alone of the gods knows the keys to the chamber in which his thunderbolt is sealed (827-28). Despite the threats which the Erinyes make against Attika (829), there will be no need to use Zeus' weapon now.[127]

When the Erinyes challenge Athena "with the wisdom of age" (838,

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[123] Sommerstein, *Eumenides* (1989) 230, commentary on lines 736-40, says that "Athena's reason for taking the view she takes in 739-40 is that it is the view taken by Zeus." Thus, like Hesiod and Solon before him, Aischylos also emphasizes the special relationship which exists between Zeus and his daughter. Sommerstein also points out (229) that the murder of Agamemnon "jeopardized an entire οἶκος. . . [and] coincides with the opinions of both male and female characters earlier in the trilogy."

[124] See also Podlecki (1966) 78, on what he calls "*civic* virtue."

[125] *LSJ*, s.v. μῆτις, "*wisdom, skill, craft; counsel, plan, undertaking.*"

[126] *LSJ*, s.v. πείθω, "*prevail upon, persuade,* usu. by fair means; *persuade* one *to* . . ."

[127] Sommerstein, *Eumenides* (1989) 246, says "this is our earliest reference to Athena having the right to use the thunderbolt."

παλαιόφρονα), the goddess acknowledges their claim to greater wisdom than she has, but, again referring to her father, she adds, "Zeus [also] granted me good understanding" (849-50). Then Athena says to the Erinyes, "if reverence of Πειθώ (Persuasion)[128] is sacred to you, and the soothing charm of my words, perhaps you will remain" (885-87) as honoured deities. Finally appeased, the Erinyes say that they will honour a city held in such honour by Athena and Zeus (917-18).

The Erinyes have been transformed. But they seem to be identified with what must have been the pre-existing cult of the Semnai Theai at the foot of the Areopagus.[129] Athena promises them a sanctuary in "caverns" (805), which are appropriate shrines for chthonic deities. Like the Erinyes the Semnai Theai were chthonic, but unlike the Erinyes, who had no real cult in Greece,[130] they had an ancient one in a cave-sanctuary at the foot of the Areopagus. Undoubtedly it is here that the Erinyes will receive their worshippers (856).

Herington calls the *Eumenides* "the noblest and most extensive monument to the 'Solonian' Athena."[131] In Solon's description of Athena,[132] the use of epic epithets is a reminder that Athena's origin and her power both stem from Zeus, but also that she is the guardian of Athens and protects it even, if necessary, against Zeus. In the *Eumenides* Athena is firmly established as the guardian of the city, and yet she

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[128] Πειθώ was one of the daughters of Tethys and Okeanos (Hes. *Th.* 337-49).

[129] See Farnell ([1896] 1971) 5:437ff. and Sommerstein, *Eumenides* (1989) 10-11 (Introduction). Cf. Lardinois (1992) 316, who says that not only are the Erinyes identified with the Semnai Theai, but that the identification was also anticipated earlier in the play.

[130] Except, perhaps, at Sparta and Thera. See Farnell ([1896] 1971) 5:437.

[131] Herington (1963) 68.

[132] See pp. 17-18 above.

continually identifies her power, her wisdom, even herself with her father. She rules Athens through him.[133] Still, the role accorded to her by Solon over a century earlier has been expanded. No longer does she guard Athens only against the transgressions of the gods or human invaders. She is also the guardian of its laws and of the interests of each of its citizens, even to the extent of protecting them from one another.[134] And by assigning the establishment of the Areopagus court of homicide to Athena, Aischylos assures Athenians that the guardianship of the city and justice for its citizens are all under the *aigis* of the City Goddess.

The final myth from this group of three myths in which Athena plays a significant role also appears to have developed substantially during the fifth century. Again Athena assumes her role as the patron of a hero, but this time in the sense of a foster-mother.[135] This hero, however, is more elusive, since he may have been an early Athenian king or, perhaps, even a god. The latter identification also provides a connection both in myth and in cult between Athena and Poseidon, her rival in the contest for the patronage of Athens.

Athena, Erechtheus, and Poseidon

Athena was associated both in myth and in cult with Erechtheus, a legendary

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[133] Herodotos reports that when the Athenians asked the Delphic oracle, for a second time, what they should do to protect Greece from the Persian invasion, the Pythia responded "Pallas Athena cannot placate Olympian Zeus, although beseeching with many words and cunning wisdom" (7.141.3, οὐ δύναται Παλλὰς Δί' Ὀλύμπιον ἐξιλάσασθαι,/ λισσομένη πολλοῖσι λόγοις καὶ μήτιδι πυκνῇ). Herington (1963) 66, suggests that Apollo rejected the idea that Athena has as much influence with Zeus as the Athenians thought she did. See also Garland (1992) 29, n. 4.

[134] As *Pallas* Athena, the city goddess was also goddess of the law courts located in the agora. For Athena as protectress of law see Fougeres, Daremberg-Saglio, s.v. "Minerva," 1916.

[135] Harrison[3] ([1903] 1922) 300, calls Athena the "foster-mother of heroes."

king of Athens. The earliest reference to him occurs in Homer's *Iliad* (2.547-51) where we read about

> δῆμον Ἐρεχθῆος μεγαλήτορος, ὅν
> ποτ' Ἀθήνη
> θρέψε Διὸς θυγάτηρ, τέκε δὲ
> ζείδωρος ἄρουρα,
> κὰδ δ' ἐν Ἀθήνῃς εἷσεν, ἑῷ ἐν
> πίονι νηῷ·
> ἔνθα δέ μιν ταύροισι καὶ ἀρνειοῖς
> ἱλάονται
> κοῦροι Ἀθηναίων περιτελλομένων
> ἐνιαυτῶν
>
> (the realm of great-hearted Erechtheus,
> whom once Athene,
> daughter of Zeus, nurtured after the
> grain-giving earth bore him,
> and gave him a place in her own rich
> temple;
> and there, as the years circle round, the
> sons of the Athenians
> propitiate him with sacrifices of bulls and
> rams)

Although this passage has been regarded as a sixth-century interpolation,[136] nevertheless it presents the traditional picture of Erechtheus. He is born from the earth (Hdt. 8.55) and nurtured by Athena who gives him a place in her temple.[137] We also learn that Athens is his land (Eur. *Hip.* 1094-95). While this might suggest that Erechtheus is its king (Hdt. 8.44; Eur. *Ion* 724; *Erech. frag.* passim), he is also worshipped there as a god or, at the very least, a hero. The *Odyssey* seems to present a more definite picture of Erechtheus as a king. Athena, disguised as a young girl, has just led Odysseus into the city of the Phaiakians (*Od.* 7.19ff.). Then she left

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[136] See this chapter, n. 6 above.

[137] Garland (1992) 34, sees these lines as evidence that the goddess allowed the "inception" of Erechtheus' cult in her temple.

Scheria and returned to Athens where she "went into the close-built house of Erechtheus" (7.81, δῦνε δ' Ἐρεχθῆος πυκινὸν δόμον). This description of Athena entering Erechtheus' palace suggests that the memory still lingered long after the Bronze Age of the palace of the king which contained the shrine of the goddess.[138]

Both passages indicate an ancient and close mythological connection between Athena and Erechtheus. Historically, an association is known to have existed by about the mid-eighth century,[139] when, according to Herodotos, the Athenians required the Epidaurians to make annual sacrifices to both Erechtheus and Athena *Polias* (5.82), in payment for some sacred olive trees which they felled in order to set up statues of the goddesses Damia and Auxesia.

In later centuries Erechtheus was diminished considerably in importance,[140] in myth by Erichthonios, and in cult by Poseidon.[141] Erichthonios is not attested with certainty until after the mid-fifth century,[142] but by the fourth century he seems to have been "firmly established in the Athenian mythological tradition,"[143]

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[138] See Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968) 488. Lorimer (1950) 436, says "it seems a fair assumption that the Mycenaean palace is the strong house of Erechtheus and his successors, and that it remained in use long enough to be known at least by repute to the poet of the *Odyssey*." Hopper (1963) 2, remarking on the importance of both *Od.* 7.78-81 and *Il.* 2.546-55 says, "late and interpolated or not, they stress the association of Athena and the rock of the Acropolis with an ancient king of Athens."

[139] See Coldstream (1977) 135.

[140] Mikalson (1976) 141.

[141] For Poseidon see pp. 55ff. below.

[142] Parker ([1987] 1988) 200-1, and 211-12, n. 60, says that "Erichthonios is first certainly so named, apparently, on the kylix of the Codrus painter, c. 440/30 [*ARV* 1268] . . . [and] the same vase also names a distinct Erechtheus." Parker adds that "earlier references to Erichthonius are either not verbatim [e.g. Pindar *fr.* 253] . . . or may refer to someone else (Sophocles fr. 242.1)."

[143] Mikalson (1976) 141-42.

while, at the same time, Erechtheus had come to be regarded as a legendary human king and the ancestor of the Athenians.[144] Originally, the two figures may have been identical.[145] Nilsson proposed that the name Erechtheus is an "abbreviated byform," or, variation, of Erichthonios.[146] This suggests that, although he was unknown to Homer, Erichthonios was the earlier figure. This idea seems to have been given authenticity by Euripides in the *Ion* (267-68), where Kreusa says that Erichthonios was the grandfather of her father Erechtheus. As it is, the chief difference between their myths is that Erichthonios is known only as a child, and adolescent (Hyg. *De Astron.* 2.13), while Erechtheus becomes a king of Athens.[147]

Like Erechtheus, Erichthonios was born from the earth but he was given a father, the god Hephaistos (Eur. *Ion* 267-70; Isok. *Panath.* 126; Paus. 1.2.6).[148] He was born shortly after Athena's victory in her contest with Poseidon (Kallim. *frag.*

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[144] Rosivach (1987) 295-96.

[145] Frazer, *Pausanias* 2:169. But cf. Robertson (1985) 256, who claims that "Erechtheus and Erichthonius differ completely from the outset."

[146] Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968) 562. Dietrich (1974) 174, concurs. But see Mikalson (1976) 141, n. 1, who asserts that "Erechtheus was the original name, and that Erichthonius was a secondary formation." Cf. Robertson (1985) 255, who states that "the two names . . . are perfectly transparent and altogether different." On the usual definition of Erichthonios' name, see this chapter, n. 148 below.

[147] Powell (1906) 14.

[148] Apollodoros (3.14.6) says that Hephaistos tried to rape Athena. The goddess resisted his advances and Hephaistos' semen fell on the Earth which gave birth to Erichthonios. This story may have been invented to explain his name. See Frazer, *Apollodoros* 2:91, n. 1. Parker (1987) 209, n. 31, says that the "derivation of Erichthonios' name from wool, *erion*, and earth, *chthon*, is apparently not attested before the third century."

In Erichthonios' birth from Earth (Gaia), there is a link with each of the previous myths. Both the Giants and the Erinyes were, according to Hesiod (*Th.* 185), born from the Earth. The engendering of the latter offspring is similar to that of Erichthonios, since the Earth absorbed the blood from the genitals of Ouranos, and then gave birth to the Giants and the Erinyes.

260.18-25). Gaia or Ge (Mother Earth) presented the child to Athena,[149] who put him in a chest which she gave to the three daughters of Kekrops, the mythical first king of Athens.[150] The goddess instructed the girls not to open the chest but two of them, out of curiosity, disobeyed. When they looked in the chest, the two girls were so terrified that they threw themselves off the Akropolis to their deaths (Eur. *Ion* 272-74; Paus. 1.18.2).[151]

Accounts vary as to what the girls saw in the chest, but Euripides (*Ion* 21-23) says that Athena placed two snakes in the chest to guard Erichthonios,[152] although some later accounts claim that the child was either part or entirely snake-like in appearance.[153] The snake was one of Athena's attributes, which may explain its role in this myth. But Erichthonios himself also may have been associated with the snake. In the fifth century there was a widely-held belief that a snake guarded the Akropolis, where it lived in the temple which housed the cult statue of the goddess (Hdt. 8.41.2-3). Frazer has suggested that originally Erichthonios may have been this

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[149] Attic vase-painting has several representations of Gaia presenting the child to Athena. Carpenter (1991) 74, reports that "the earliest is on a black-figure lekythos from the end of the 6th century." Gaia was also known as *Kourotrophos* at Athens, a title which Athena took for herself when she adopted Erichthonios from Gaia. See Simon (1983) 106.

[150] Powell (1906) 17, suggests that Athena's concealment of Erichthonios may be another aspect of her contest with Poseidon.

[151] The scene appears on an Apulian Calyx-krater, c. 390-380, in the J. Paul Getty Museum. See Mayo (1982) 88, cat. no. 18.

[152] For the various traditions see Frazer, *Apollodorus* 2:91-93.

[153] See list of sources in Powell (1906) 6-7. The authors who report that Erichthonios was human in form include Euripides, Apollodoros, Ovid, and Pausanias, all of whom wrote between the fifth century B.C. and second century A.D., while those authors who claim that he was part or wholly snake-like, wrote in the second century A.D. or much later. Kekrops, the first king of Athens, was also reputed to be part snake and, like Erichthonios, was also born from the earth (Apollod. 3.14.1). Powell also notes (p. 17) that "the appearance of a snake is usually ascribed" only to Erichthonios, and not to Erechtheus.

sacred snake.[154] According to Pausanias (1.24.7), a snake, which "might be Erichthonios," lay beside the shield of the chryselephantine statue of Athena *Parthenos* sculpted by Pheidias.[155] The presence of the snake in Pheidias' sculpture may have been influential in the transformation of the infant Erichthonios from human to snake-like form in the later accounts of the myth of his birth. For example, Hyginus (*De Astron.* 2.13) says that when the Kekropidai opened the basket, the snake fled and took refuge behind the shield of Athena.

The snake which lived on the Akropolis was undoubtedly a typical house snake whose function was to act as the "protector and guardian of the house" of the goddess.[156] Nilsson remarks that the concept of the house snake may have

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[154] Frazer, *Pausanias* 2:169, "in the oldest form of the legend Erichthonius . . . was probably nothing but the sacred serpent of Athena." See also Powell (1906) 19. Herodotos' account suggests that the Athenians identified the snake with Athena. Before the Battle of Salamis, when the Athenians heard that the snake had not eaten the food set out for it, they believed that the goddess had abandoned the Akropolis. According to Plutarch (*Them.* 10.1), Themistokles spread the story that the goddess had abandoned the Akropolis and was guiding the people to the sea—either as a means of escape or to show that victory would come from the sea.

[155] Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968) 497-98, does not believe that the snake was the embodiment of Erichthonios since snakes were associated with Athena in places other than Athens, such as Boiotia. Schachter (1981) 116, reports that Athena *Itonia* apparently "shared her temple at Koroneia with a god called variously Zeus or Hades," who may be depicted on a sixth-century Boiotian black-figure vase as a snake. Nilsson (p. 497) believed that the snakes which guarded Erichthonios, and frightened the daughters of Kekrops, show that Athena's "association with the snake is old and intimate." The continuation of this association in historical times strengthens Nilsson's contention that originally Athena was the Minoan palace goddess (see n. 158 below).

[156] Ibid., 325. See also Kearns (1989) 111, who notes that snakes are often viewed as "protective powers." In the latter part of the fifth century the Giants (see pp. 34-37 above) were usually portrayed as serpent-footed (see Apollod. 1.4.1). In the *Eumenides* (see pp. 37-43 above), the Erinyes seem to be portrayed as Gorgons (47-48), who, of course, had snakes instead of hair on their heads. Rose[6] ([1958] 1985) 85, states that "in art and literature, [the Erinyes] are . . . generally wreathed with serpents, or having serpents in their hair or carried in their hands." There is a distinct difference, however, in the occurrence of the snake in these three myths. Whenever the snake is perceived as Erichthonios himself or as an attribute of Athena, it is beneficial, but in the case of both the Giants and the Erinyes, it is something hideous and terrifying.

originated in Minoan Krete, where the snake was the guardian of the house, and the chief deity was a house goddess "whose sacred animal was the snake."[157] Nilsson has also argued that Athena's association with the snake, as well as the owl, and other birds (Hom. *Od.* 1.320 and passim), "seems to give very strong support for the view that [she] is a direct descendant of the Minoan palace goddess."[158] It is also possible that the snake was the sacred animal of a goddess, who was indigenous to the mainland, and to Athens.[159]

What of Erichthonios' own origin and his connection with the snake? The myth of his birth and upbringing parallels what Nilsson calls the myth of the Divine Child,[160] a "male child [who] generally was the offspring of the Mother Goddess, or an equivalent figure," and who is either taken away or given up by his mother to be raised by others as a foster-child. Thus in the story of the birth of Zeus in Krete (Hes.

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[157] Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 491. He adds that the goddess "developed from the cult of the snake as the guardian of the house." Nilsson also remarks (pp. 325ff.) that the idea of the house snake was a well-known phenomenon in other parts of Europe, and elsewhere, from antiquity to the present day.

[158] On this theory see Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 498, and (1967)^3 347ff. See also Blegen (1940) 2, who suggests that "perhaps it would be more accurate to say that [Athena] is not a descendant but the same deity in a different environment, since her migration to Attica must almost surely be ascribed to a date far earlier than the best known phases of the Palace cult." The use of the word "migration" is interesting, for it implies that the goddess had not always been worshipped in Athens—an idea which is impossible to prove, although it may be fundamental to the myth of her contest with Poseidon.

[159] If one follows Nilsson's theory, then Athena's association with the snake, and birds, goes back to Minoan times; her warlike attributes, to the Mycenaean. But see discussion of the Mycenaean painted plaque (National Museum, Athens, No. 2666) by Rehak (1984) 544, who proposes that the Minoan goddess, like her Mycenaean counterpart, was also a warrior goddess. Dietrich (1974) 156-58, claims that the focus of both Late Minoan and Late Helladic (Mycenaean) religion was the cult of a nature goddess, who had her sacred animals, and also protected the palace.

[160] On the subject of the Divine Child, I have, for the most part, followed Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 534ff., who points out that many of his conclusions are hypothetical.

Th. 479–80), the young god is raised not by his mother, but by Gaia.[161] Another aspect peculiar to this new-born child, including the child Zeus, is that he is the representative of the new vegetation,[162] and a symbol of its growth.

Although the myth of the Divine Child seems to have existed everywhere in the Mediterranean area,[163] as far as the Greek world is concerned, Nilsson suggests that it may have originated in Minoan Krete and spread from there to Mycenaean Greece.[164] At the very least, a pre-existing cult of the Divine Child on the mainland may have come under Minoan influence at the end of the Middle Helladic period (c. 1500). The religious ideas associated with the Divine Child and the growth of vegetation were also important motifs in the Eleusinian Mysteries, which go back to the Mycenaean Age.[165] At Eleusis the Divine Child is Ploutos, who "like the Zeus-child, [is] a representative of vegetation, . . . [in particular] the spirit of the crops,"[166] that is, the mature harvested grain. Ploutos is born from the earth (Gaia), who gives him to another goddess, usually Demeter but sometimes Athena, to raise.[167] At Athens the Divine Child is Erichthonios, whose mother is the earth.

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[161] It seems certain that the myths of the god Zeus, who was introduced into Greece by Indo-European invaders c. 2000, were later conflated with the Kretan myths of the Divine Child. See Nilsson² ([1927] 1968) 534ff and Dietrich (1974) 13ff.

[162] See Nilsson² ([1927] 1968) 535, and Dietrich (1974) 14.

[163] Dietrich (1974) 14.

[164] Nilsson² ([1927] 1968) 555–58.

[165] Ibid., 562. Nilsson also comments (pp. 576–77) that the Eleusinian Mysteries may have had a Minoan origin. In *h. Dem.* 123, Demeter says that she came from Krete.

[166] Ibid., 561-62. Nilsson notes that "Ploutos is wealth in the old sense, the fruit of the fields," i.e. the mature crop. Ploutos is normally represented as an old man.

[167] Ibid., 560–63. Nilsson adds that Athena's presence may be explained by the "constant determination of Athens to associate herself with the Eleusinian mysteries."

Earth entrusts him to Athena, who, as a foster-mother, takes charge of his upbringing, thus revealing the "nurturant behavior" which Zeitlin sees as a natural part of Athena as a female.[168]

The Divine Child was also associated with the snake. As one sees in the case of Ploutos, in Greece the Divine Child symbolized not so much the growth of vegetation but the mature crop. Before the advent of the Divine Child, the snake was already the guardian of the house and its store of grain. As these different concepts came together, in particular through the conflation of the myths of the Indo-European and the Kretan Zeus, the child and the snake came to be regarded as joint-guardians of the house and its stores.[169] In this way, Erichthonios, as the Divine Child at Athens, could have been envisaged as the guardian-snake which lived on the Akropolis.[170]

The earth is the mother of the Divine Child, whether it is Ploutos or

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[168] See p. 41 above.

[169] The concepts of the Divine Child, who is Zeus, the mature crop, and the snake, represents the coming together of several different ideas. Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 542, says that when the Greeks invaded Greece they worshipped Zeus as the protector of the house and its store of grain. But in Greece the snake was already the guardian of the house and its stores, and it subsequently became identified with Zeus "who was made to appear in the shape of a snake." Later the Greeks went to Krete and found the Divine Child who "also was called Zeus, although it was not a house-god, but performed Zeus' function of protecting vegetation."

The snake had a prominent place in the cult at Eleusis, although it was not associated directly with Ploutos, but rather, as Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 563, points out, with the "hero of agriculture, Triptolemos."

[170] Frazer, *Pausanias* 2:169, says "the traditions that Erichthonius was half a man and half a serpent, or merely a man guarded by a serpent, represent the usual successive stages of popular belief through which an animal god passes in the course of sloughing off his animal form and donning that of a man."

Erichthonios, or even Zeus.[171] But Erichthonios reveals his close affinity with the earth through his name which he derives from ἐρι-χθών, "the very earthy one."[172] His name, which enhanced the tradition that he was "earthborn" (Hdt. 8.55, γηγενής), identified him still more with the snake. Snakes were also intimately connected with the earth, since it was obvious that they habitually moved in and out of holes in the ground. The snake was associated with chthonic deities, especially heroes, who were widely believed to manifest themselves in the form of snakes after death.[173] And Erichthonios was also regarded as a hero. He had long been associated with the Akropolis, as a legendary king, as a Divine Child, as a guardian. But Athena had always been its chief goddess, while Erichthonios "was degraded to the rank of a hero,"[174] who from the time of Homer down to the fifth century was also known as Erechtheus.

The next part of Erechtheus' story provides a connection between the god/hero and Poseidon. While he was king of Athens Erechtheus fought a war against an invading Eleusinian army led by Eumolpos, a Thracian and a son of Poseidon.[175]

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[171] Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 572, and n. 34. Mother Earth plays a secondary role in the myth of the birth of Zeus. In the original myth Zeus may have been the son of the earth. See West's commentary on Hesiod, *Theogony* ([1966] 1988), 298, line 479. Frazer, Jr. (1969) 262-63, suggests that Athena herself may originally have been an "earth-mother." Nilsson^3 (1967) 442-43, disagrees.

[172] Kearns (1989) 111. Dietrich (1974) 18, says "the names of these young gods generally are etymologically transparent." See also this chapter, n. 148 above for a different interpretation of the name.

[173] Burkert 1985) 205-6. See also Hild, Daremberg-Saglio, s.v. "Erechtheus-Erichthonios," 808.

[174] Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 564.

[175] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:36, says that Euripides is our earliest source for Poseidon as the father of Eumolpos. The mythic war between Athens and Eleusis may reflect historical wars between the two cities during the seventh century—see Mylonas (1961) 25. The name Eumolpos was associated with Eleusis, since the *h. Dem.* (474-76) says that a certain Eumolpos

After he sacrificed one of his daughters (Apollod. 3.15.4),[176] Erechtheus was victorious in the battle and he killed Eumolpos. Poseidon, outraged at the death of his son, in turn killed Erechtheus with his trident (Eur. *Ion* 282), and hid him beneath the earth (*Ion* 281; *Erech. frag.* 65.59-60). In the final scene of the *Erechtheus* Athena orders that a precinct be constructed on the Akropolis (ἐμ μέσηι πόλει) for Erechtheus,[177] that he receive sacrifices of oxen, and that he should take the name of "holy Poseidon" (σεμνὸς Ποσειδῶν), "on account of the one who killed him" (*Erech. frag.* 65.90-93).[178]

In fact Erechtheus does not take the name of Poseidon. Rather it is the god

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founded the Mysteries, while Pausanias reports (1.38.3) that, after their defeat in the war, the Eleusinians came under the control of Athens, but they maintained control of the Mysteries. Thucydides (2.15.1) says that the army led by Eumolpos was Eleusinian, but according to Isokrates (*Panath.* 193), it was Thracian. Farnell ([1876] 1971) 4:37, remarks that "the 'Thracian' migration conveys nothing more than the impression of a vague remembrance that the Eumolpidai came from North Greece." For Thracian incursions into Greece see Buck (1979) 67-68. The fragments of Euripides' *Erechtheus* only mention Thracians (10.48 and 17.4). Spaeth (1991) 341, and n. 65, suggests that "perhaps the Thracians were the allies of the Eleusinians in the play, but the fragments which we possess lack a reference to the latter." And Carrara (1977) 26-27, proposes that Euripides may have changed Erechtheus' opponents from Eleusinians to Thracians. On this see again Spaeth (1991) 341, and n. 64.

[176] On the report of Euripides' *Erechtheus* (*frag.* 50.4, 34-35, 38-39), the king sacrificed one daughter while in the *Ion* (277-78) Kreusa says that her father (Erechtheus) sacrificed all of his daughters *except* for herself since she was a newborn baby.

[177] Apollodoros (3.14.7) says that "when Erichthonios died he was buried in the same [place as the] precinct of Athena." See Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968) 563.

[178] The goddess appointed Praxithea, Erechtheus' wife, as her first priestess (*Erech. frag.* 65.95-97). According to Apollodoros (3.15.1), Erechtheus' brother Boutes acquired the hereditary priesthoods of Athena and Poseidon *Erechtheus*. Pausanias (1.26.5) says there was an altar dedicated to the hero Boutes in the Erechtheion as well as paintings of members of his clan. Garland (1984), 92, remarks that the priestess of Athena *Polias*, like the priest of Poseidon *Erechtheus*, was appointed from the Eteoboutadai for life. According to Frazer, *Apollodoros* 2:101, n. 2, Boutes was the mythological ancestor of the Eteoboutadai, and Hesiod (*frag.* 223), says that Poseidon was the father of Boutes.

who appends the name of the hero to his own as an epithet,[179] and who is subsequently worshipped under his new identification, Poseidon *Erechtheus*[180]. While Euripides makes no mention of the new cult there is evidence that the two were worshipped together by the mid-fifth century (*IG* I^2, 580, dated to 460–450).[181] In addition Pausanias (1.26.5) tells us that in the late fifth-century Erechtheion there was an altar to Poseidon on which sacrifices were made to Erechtheus "in accordance with an oracle."[182] Athena's appearance at the conclusion of Euripides' *Erechtheus* provides a mythological reason for the joint-cult to Erechtheus and Poseidon. It also points to an association in cult between Athena and Poseidon, gods who, according to the myth, had contested long ago for the right to divine rule in Athens.[183]

B. POSEIDON

Poseidon was worshipped throughout Greece and the islands in historical times as the god of the sea.[184] Sailors and fishermen alike feared the god's anger and propitiated him to avert danger at sea and to show their gratitude for successful voyages. The poet of the *Homeric Hymn* (22.5) calls him the "preserver of ships."

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[179] Lacore (1983) 217, suggests that there is a fusion between the hero and the god. But see also Spaeth (1991) 337, who says while the two figures were associated in cult from the mid-fifth century, their assimilation "can be dated securely only from the 1st century B.C."

[180] See Burkert (1983) 149.

[181] See Spaeth (1991) 337, n. 36.

[182] There were also altars to the hero Boutes and to the god Hephaistos.

[183] Lacore (1983) 229-30, points out that Poseidon made two attempts to secure power in Athens: the first was his contest with Athena, which he lost; the second occurred when he killed Erechtheus. The battle between Erechtheus and Eumolpos for Attika transfers the conflict from the divine to the heroic. See also Spaeth (1991) 358, and Burkert (1983) 157.

[184] For Poseidon generally see Burkert (1985) 136–39.

Herodotos (8.121.1) says that after the victory at Salamis the Athenians dedicated three captured Phoenician triremes, including one at the Isthmus, which Pausanias says belonged to Poseidon (2.1.7), and one at Sounion, which was the site of a major sanctuary to the sea god.[185]

Poseidon's name occurs in the Linear B tablets from Pylos, where he was a principal god during the Bronze Age.[186] The *Odyssey* (3.4–11) describes how the citizens of Pylos made sacrifice to Poseidon as "the Earthshaker" (ἐνοσίχθων), a traditional Homeric epithet which might imply that he was associated with earthquakes long before he became god of the sea.[187]

Unlike the cult of Athena or of such gods as Artemis and, possibly, Dionysos, the cult of Poseidon in Athens does not seem to have been promoted by Peisistratos. This seems to be a curious oversight since the tyrant claimed descent from Neleus (Hdt. 5.65.3–4) whose own father was Poseidon (Apollod. 1.9.8).[188] According to tradition the descendants of Neleus, in particular Melanthos who became a king in Athens, left Pylos after it was destroyed by Herakles, or the Heraklids, and eventually

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[185] There was also a sanctuary to Athena at Sounion. See Scully ([1962] 1979) 161–64. Boardman (1985) 169, speculates that the theme of the contest between Athena and Poseidon may have been depicted on a pediment of the temple of Poseidon at Sounion, "with less emphasis on defeat."

[186] Ventris and Chadwick^2 (1973) 280 and 288. See also Shapiro (1989) 103.

[187] Guthrie ([1950] 1955) 96. Another Homeric epithet which designates Poseidon as the Earthshaker is ἐννοσίγαιος. He was also called γαιήοχος, possibly "holder of the earth." See Rose and Robertson, *OCD*^{2}, s.v. "Poseidon," 867.

[188] Shapiro (1989) 103, notes that Peisistratos did not invent this claim since the story went back at least to the seventh century. He also believes (p. 106) that Peisistratos did in fact champion the cult of Poseidon because the god was his own ancestor.

migrated to Attika (Paus. 2.18.8-9; 7.24.5).[189]

The Cult of the God

There are no records of any Athenian festival specifically dedicated to Poseidon,[190] and while there is no firm evidence for his cult at Athens during the Archaic period,[191] by the second half of the fifth century he was worshipped there as Poseidon *Erechtheus*. His cult, however, was closely associated with that of Athena *Polias*, an indication of his secondary position and perhaps a reflection of the outcome of his contest with the goddess for divine patronage in Athens.[192] There was no separate temple to the god but he had an altar in the late fifth century Erechtheion, which he shared with Erechtheus (Paus. 1.26.5).[193] As a further indication of his

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[189] See also Hdt. 2.65.3. Later, a grandson of Melanthos, another Neleus, led a colony from Athens to Asia Minor and either settled near the city of Miletos (Paus. 7.2.2-4) or founded the city (Hdt. 9.97). At Mykale, not far from Miletos, there was a sanctuary to Poseidon *Helikonion*, the Panionion (Hdt. 1.148). Pausanias (7.24.5) reports that Neleus and his followers were driven out of Helike, where there was a sanctuary to Poseidon *Helikonion*, in Achaia. First they went to Athens and then they migrated to Asia Minor. The implication is that they took the cult of Poseidon with them to each of their destinations. See Shapiro (1989) 102-3.

[190] Shapiro (1989) 101. See also Parke (1977) 97, who points out that the sixth month of the Athenian calendar, Poseideon, was dedicated to Poseidon. The name implies a festival, the *Poseidea*, which was common in Ionia where Poseidon was worshipped extensively.

[191] Shapiro (1989) 104. Nilsson[3] (1967) 449, has stated that Poseidon was "presumably" worshipped in the palace of the Athenian king in Mycenaean times. This implies that the god was worshipped alongside Athena since Nilsson has also argued (p. 433) that Athena was a palace goddess in the Mycenaean period. See also Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968) 498ff.

[192] See also Burkert (1985) 221.

[193] Major sanctuaries to Poseidon were located outside of Athens at Kolonos where he was worshipped as Poseidon *Hippios* and at Sounion. He shared both sites, however, with Athena who had her own sanctuaries in each place. At Kolonos the god was worshipped as Poseidon *Hippios* and the goddess as Athena *Hippia*. Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:14, says that the cult of Poseidon *Hippios* was one of the god's most important cults. They were also worshipped conjointly as Athena *Hippia* and Poseidon *Hippios* at Korinth. See also pp. 65-66 below.

close association with the goddess, the priest of Poseidon *Erechtheus* and the priestess of Athena *Polias* both came from the *genos* of the Eteoboutadai (Apollod. 3.15.1).[194]

Poseidon and Athena were associated together at the *Skira*, a festival which actually honoured Demeter. The priest of Poseidon *Erechtheus* and the priestess of Athena *Polias*,[195] left the Akropolis and walked in procession, under a "large white sunshade" (*skiron*)[196] carried by the Eteoboutadai, along the sacred way towards Eleusis. Their destination seems to have been Skiron[197] which had a joint shrine to Demeter and Persephone. According to Pausanias (1.37.2), Athena and Poseidon were also worshipped there. This ritual may well have symbolized the mythic war between Athens and Eleusis when Erechtheus, under Athena's patronage left the city to challenge the Eleusinians led by Eumolpos.[198] Whereas formerly Poseidon had given his support to Eumolpos, who was his son, the god is now identified by his cult-title *Erechtheus* and is made to represent the Athenian king.

The earliest authority for the cult of Poseidon *Erechtheus* is a fifth-century

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[194] See also commentary in Frazer, *Apollodoros* 2:101, n. 2. Garland (1992) 30, says that it was a separate branch of the Eteoboutadai who administered the cult of Poseidon and suggests that this "may hint at a rift within the *genos*," and could, thus, be the reason behind the myth of the contest between the two gods. See Chapter One, p. 9 above.

[195] And the priest of Helios. See Simon (1983) 23.

[196] *LSJ*, s.v. σκίρον.

[197] Deubner ([1932] 1966) 47. See also Simon (1983) 24. Pausanias (1.36.4) says that the place was named after Skiros, a seer who died in the fighting between the Eleusinians and the Athenians at the time when Eumolpos led an army against King Erechtheus of Athens.

[198] See Burkert (1985) 24, and Parker (1987) 204. Simon (1983) 24, believes that Poseidon's connection with the *Skira* came from his close association with Eleusis. He was the father of Eumolpos whose descendants formed a distinguished Eleusinian clan. There was also a temple to Poseidon at Eleusis where he was worshipped under the epithet *Pater*.

dedicatory inscription found on the Akropolis.[199] While both Poseidon and Erechtheus are mentioned in Homer there is no connection between the two[200] and it is only in Attika that Poseidon took the epithet *Erechtheus*.[201]

The cult of Poseidon seems to have increased in importance after the Persian Wars, which can undoubtedly be ascribed to the Athenian victory at Salamis and to the conviction that it was the god of the sea who had contributed to their success. Poseidon's relationship to the hero Theseus may also have played a part since, according to one tradition, Poseidon was the hero's father.[202] While Theseus had been celebrated as an Attic hero since the institution of the democracy c. 510, his popularity increased after 490 when he led the Athenians in battle at Marathon (Plut. *Thes*. 35.5).[203] Ten years later Theseus' father, Poseidon, made his own contribution to the Athenian cause when he granted them victory at Salamis. Only two years later

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[199] *IG* I^2, 580, dated to 460-450. See p. 55 above, and also Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:49.

[200] According to the *Iliad*, "the sons of the Athenians propitiate [Erechtheus] with sacrifices of bulls and rams" (2.550-51, μιν ταύροισι καὶ ἀρνειοῖς ἱλάονται/κοῦροι 'Αθηναίων). Robertson (1985) 236, says that "the sacrificial bulls and rams disclose the god Poseidon," while Davison (1958) 25, believes the passage refers to the Athenian worship of Athena. The uncertainty is caused by the pronoun μιν and whether it refers to Erechtheus or to Athena. Lorimer (1950) 447-448, says that those who believe that only female victims were offered to female deities are mistaken and concludes, from evidence, which she cites, that male victims could be sacrificed to "the martial type of Athena as late as the sixth century." But see Frazer, Jr. (1969) 263-64, who connects the sacrifice of bulls and rams in the *Iliad* with Poseidon. He points out that a sacrifice with the same victims occurs in the *Odyssey* (1.25) when Poseidon visits the Ethiopians, and "one of the Pylos tablets tells us of offerings to Poseidon in the form of a bull and two rams." In Frazer's view the Homeric accounts "probably represent sacrifices going back to Mycenaean times."

[201] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:50. See Hesychius, s.v., who says 'Ερεχθεύς [is] Ποσειδῶν ἐν 'Αθήναις.

[202] This was the tradition at Troizen. At Athens, however, the hero's father was the legendary king Aigeus. The two traditions may have been combined sometime in the late sixth century. See Shapiro (1982) 294, and Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:53, who suggests that the name Aigeus may have been a title of Poseidon.

[203] Shapiro (1982) 294.

he seems to have become a symbol of this naval supremacy when Athens assumed leadership of the Delian League.[204] Both events no doubt led to the increased prominence of his cult in Athens.

Art, Cult, and Mythology

Poseidon plays a relatively minor role in the mythological stories popular in Athens during the sixth century. When he does appear in the mythic narratives on black-figure vases, he is most often only one among several other gods, for example, at the Wedding of Peleus and Thetis, which was attended by Poseidon and his wife Amphitrite, and all the other gods. The scene was depicted by Kleitias on the François Vase, dated c. 570, as well as by Sophilos (c. 580-570) on a dinos, which was found on the Akropolis.[205] An earlier krater by Sophilos, which was dedicated on the Akropolis, survives only in fragments, one of which "has the name ΠΟΣΕΙΔΟΝ alongside a horse's head."[206] A second fragment includes the figures of Kekrops and his daughter Pandrosos, both of whom figure prominently in early Athenian myth.[207] The tomb of Kekrops and the sacred olive tree were both in the precinct of Pandrosos, the Pandroseion, which was located on the east side of the Erechtheion. The latter vase-painting has led Shapiro to suggest that Poseidon's presence "on the Akropolis [before the fifth century] was no late phenomenon."[208]

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[204] Ibid., 296.

[205] *DABF*, 17.

[206] Shapiro (1989) 104-5.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid., 105.

If Poseidon was connected in some way with these early Athenian cult-figures during the Archaic period, it may explain why "vase-paintings [seem to] attest to an especially close relationship between the sea god and Athena."[209] As Shapiro points out, in vase-paintings Poseidon is "regularly present whenever Athena is the center of attention,"[210] as, for example, at her birth. By the mid-sixth century Poseidon plays an active role, along with Athena, in depictions of the Gigantomachy. But the rest of the Olympians, as well as the mortal hero Herakles, are also shown taking part in this mythic battle.[211]

Poseidon and Athena appear together on a number of vases by the Amasis Painter (c. 560-515). The best-known of these is the neck-amphora in Paris (*ABV* 152, no. 250; *LIMC* 2/2, no. 472) in which the two gods face one another in an apparently friendly manner. The goddess is portrayed fully armed as Athena *Polias* but it is not at all clear how the figure of Poseidon should be interpreted. Their depiction together might suggest the kind of "special relationship" which exists between equals, although, perhaps, it should be best understood "in terms of proximity of cult."[212]

C. THE NATURE OF ATHENA AND POSEIDON

In Aischylos' play the *Seven Against Thebes* (127-34) the Chorus prays to all the gods who guard the city of Thebes. But, in particular, they call on Athena and Poseidon and beseech them to protect their city and to deliver it from the fear of war.

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[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid., 106.

[211] Carpenter (1991) 75, and fig. 112 (reconstruction of *ABV* 107.1, c. 560).

[212] Shapiro (1989) 107.

σύ τ', ὦ Διογενὲς φιλόμαχον
  κράτος,
ῥυσίπολις γενοῦ,
Παλλάς, ὅ θ' ἵππιος ποντομέδων
  ἄναξ
ἰχθυβόλῳ μαχανᾷ Ποσειδάν,
ἐπίλυσιν φόβων, ἐπίλυσιν δίδου.

(Oh you Zeus-born lover of battle
  strong Pallas
be the city-protector,
Oh Poseidon lord of horses, ruler of the
  sea
with your fish-striking trident,
grant us release, release from fear.)

In their appeal to the two Olympians, the Chorus describes the spheres of power held by each—Athena as the city-protector, and Poseidon as the lord of horses and the ruler of the sea. Through these descriptions of the respective roles of Athena and Poseidon in myth and cult, whether in this play or in other literature, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the individual characters of the two gods.

Hesiod and Homer first described the nature of Athena. In Hesiod, as later in Aischylos' play, Athena is described as the lover of war (*Th.* 926). This is clearly expressed in the *Iliad* when she rouses the fighting spirit in each man as the warriors go off to battle (2.446-54). Athena also advises and protects her favourite heroes. She helps Odysseus in his plan to punish the suitors (*Od.* 13.287ff. and 22.205ff.), and later mediates peace between Odysseus and the suitors' families (24.529ff.). Thus, by an extension of her role as an advisor, Athena is also a mediator, bringing together disputing parties for the benefit of the wider community.

Athena's talent as an advisor, a mediator, and a protector, reveals the same characteristics which a benevolent king or leader would show in governing his city and its people. In this way, Athena's basic nature shows her to be the goddess of the

city and the institutions fostered by the city, such as the establishment of courts of law (Ais. *Eum.* 681ff.). Even her martial nature has its place in the city. As the City Goddess, Athena is the protector of the city, and always ready to fight and to defend her domain and its people.

Athena's role as the City Goddess (*Polias*) of Athens was mentioned earlier in the chapter.[213] But, as Burkert points out, "Athena is everywhere the pre-eminent citadel and city goddess."[214] Her temple was often the important temple in a city, and was located on the akropolis, whether at Athens, or Sparta, or even Troy (*Il.* 6.297).[215] This goddess of the citadel was also the armed maiden—*Pallas*, an epithet which may refer to her status both as a warrior and as a virgin.[216] So she is often called in Homer (*Il.* 2.78 and passim), and invoked by the Chorus of Theban young women (Ais. *Sept.* 130) when they call upon the goddess to protect their city (Ais. *Sept.* 127-30).

But Athena's martial nature is balanced by her interest in peaceful handicrafts.[217] She granted women skill at weaving (*Od.* 7.110). She even demonstrates this skill herself, for according to Homer, the goddess wove her own peplos (*Il.* 5.735). As the goddess of carpenters, Athena advised either Argos or Danaos how to build the first ship (Ap. Rhod. 1.19; Apollod. 2.1.4), and she helped Epeios to

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[213] See p. 23 above.

[214] Burkert (1985) 140.

[215] Although at Thebes her altar and her image were both in the open (Paus. 9.12.2).

[216] *LSJ*, s.v. Παλλάς, "commonly deriv. from πάλλω, either as *Brandisher* of the spear, . . . but prob. orig. *virgin, maiden*."

[217] Burkert (1985) 141.

build the Trojan horse (*Od.* 8.493). Burkert notes that Athena's different "spheres of competence" are united by "the force of civilization: the just division of roles among women, craftsmen, and warriors and the organizational wisdom which achieves this."[218] By means of such wisdom Athena counsels civic leaders to govern justly (Ais. *Eum.* 696-97).

The Chorus invokes Poseidon both as the lord of horses and the ruler of the sea (Ais. *Sept.* 130). This draws attention to the contrasting natures of the sea god and Athena. While Athena is worshipped in the very centre of civilization on the citadel, Poseidon finds his worshippers close to the natural world in the countryside and, especially, along the seacoasts.[219] Schumacher reports that most sanctuaries to Poseidon are usually located outside of the city, and he sees in this arrangement an indication of Poseidon's general character: he is a god of "elemental powers, who was never closely associated with the high achievements of the polis-society, and dissociated from moral values, intellectual advance or technology."[220]

In contrast with the harmony of the city, Poseidon's realm is a violent and unruly domain. In the *Iliad* he uses his trident to guide the waves as they strike the walls of Troy (12.27-28). He sends the storm which destroys Odysseus' raft and leaves the hero struggling in the waves (*Od.* 5.282ff.). As the "earthshaker" (*Il.* 7.445, ἐνοσίχθων) Poseidon was thought to cause one of the most violent and destructive phenomena in the natural world. These associations with the violence of the storm

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[218] Ibid.

[219] Schumacher (1993) 83. On the map included in the article (p. 64, Fig. 4.1), the location of sanctuaries of Poseidon are clearly indicated near or on the seacoast. On the opposite spheres of power of the two gods see also Burkert (1985) 139, and 221.

[220] Schumacher (1993) 82. See also Burkert (1985) 139.

or the earthquake reveal much about Poseidon's own character. He is easily angered and responds to what he considers an insult by reacting as violently as do the forces of nature under his control. And he usually acts alone, for Poseidon is often portrayed as a solitary figure. Although he joins the rest of the gods in their assemblies on Mount Olympos (*Il.* 20.13–15), and takes part in the 'Theomachy' (21.435ff.), he is just as likely to be found apart from the rest of the gods, sitting alone on a mountain peak and watching the battle unfold before him (13.10–14). This is in contrast to Athena who for the most part is actively involved making plans, giving advice or moral support, or taking part in actual battle beside one of her favourite heroes (5.835ff.).

Finally, there is one area in which the two gods complement one another. For in Poseidon's role as the lord of horses (Ais. *Sept.* 130), he has a counterpart in Athena. The two Olympians were worshipped together at Korinth and at Kolonos as Athena *Hippia* and Poseidon *Hippios*.[221] But while the two complement one another in their association with the horse in cult, in myth there is the same opposition between them as there is in their separate domains of the city and the sea. Poseidon was said to have created the first horse.[222] But the horse was tamed through the *techne* of Athena. Pindar describes how Athena invented the bit which she gave to the Korinthian hero Bellerophon so that he could ride the winged horse Pegasos (Pind. *O.* 13.64–82).[223] And in her invention of the bit Athena once again demonstrates the

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[221] At Olympia, according to Pausanias (5.15.5-6), Poseidon *Hippios* was worshipped together with Hera *Hippia*, while Athena *Hippia* shared an altar with Ares *Hippios*.

[222] *Etym. Magn.*, s.v. ἵππιος ὁ Ποσειδῶν.

[223] In Soph. *OK* (714), the Chorus claims that Poseidon created the "taming bit for horses" (ἵπποισιν τὸν ἀκεστῆρα χαλινὸν). According to Detienne and Vernant (1978) 212, n. 92, this is because Athens wants to challenge the rival claim of Korinth that the bit was invented in their city.

superiority of her domain, for while the horse is a creature of the countryside, tamed it was as much a part of civilized society as craftsmen and women, courts of law, and civic institutions.[224]

The opposition between Athena and Poseidon might be considered as a factor which naturally draws them into competition with one another, as in their contest at Athens. But since other myths describe contests between Poseidon and various gods, it seems that the sea god had a predilection for contests of this type.[225] Pausanias writes, however, that "he believes that the Athenians were the first to boast about their city by telling this kind of story" (2.1.16).

One myth which does bring the two gods together in another contest concerns the city of Troizen. Here the results were quite different than at Athens,[226] for Pausanias (2.30.6) says that Zeus commanded the rivals to hold the region in common. According to Frazer, this legend "proves a close similarity between the religion and mythology of Troezen and Athens."[227] Athena was worshipped at Troizen as *Polias*, just as she was in many other cities,[228] but Plutarch says that Poseidon was also regarded as the guardian of the city (*Thes.* 6.4, πολιοῦχος). The statements by Pausanias (2.30.8) and Strabo (8.14) that Troizen used to be called

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[224] Athena also built the first ship, which is another indicator of civilization, since it allows for progress through travel, trade, and communication between different cities. See Burkert (1985) 139.

[225] Many of these accounts are late, but it is quite probable that they originated in an earlier time-period. On this see Brillante (1990) 113.

[226] Where Poseidon submerged the whole of Attika under the sea. The contest at Athens is the subject of Chapter Four.

[227] Frazer, *Pausanias* 2:272. On the association between Poseidon and Theseus and Athens see Chapter Four, p. 200ff.

[228] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:299.

Poseidonia may indicate an ancient and viable cult to the god in that city. The joint association in cult of Athena and Poseidon at Troizen in historic times may well have been reflected in the myth, which told of Zeus' decision to award the city to both gods as a place where they would rule as equals.

Other myths of contests in which Poseidon was one of the protagonists report the same outcome as at Athens, although with less detail. According to Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 741a), the sea god was defeated at Delphi by Apollo, at Argos by Hera, at Aegina by Zeus, and at Naxos by Dionysos. The most important of these sites are Delphi and Argos. According to Pausanias (2.33.2), Delphi used to be sacred to Poseidon, who gave the site to Apollo in exchange for Kalauria, although Strabo (8.14) says that Poseidon received Tainaron from Apollo in exchange for Delphi.[229] Kalauria was an island off the coast of Troizen, and was the meeting-place of the Kalaurian Amphictyony, a league of city-states, including Athens, which existed in about the ninth century.[230]

Both Pausanias (2.15.5) and Apollodoros (2.1.4) also report Poseidon's defeat by Hera at Argos. Pausanias says that the judges of that contest were the 'rivers' Inachos, Kephisos and Asterion, and they decided that the land should belong to Hera. And although Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 741a) claims that in all the contests Poseidon accepted defeat without resorting to anger—contrary to the usual accounts, at least concerning his defeat at Athens—at Argos, as at Athens, Poseidon's reaction was far from conciliatory. Pausanias gives two different versions as to what

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[229] Strabo also says that Poseidon gave Delos to Leto (Apollo's mother). On Kalaureia and Tainaron see Schumacher (1993) 72-76.

[230] Schumacher (1993) 75.

punishment the god inflicted on Argos. Either he flooded the surrounding country (2.22.4), just as he had done in Attika, or he dried up the waters of the rivers who had judged the contest (2.15.5). In the latter version Pausanias says that is the reason why these rivers only flow after it rains, and why they are always dry in the summer. In the account which describes how Argos was punished by means of a flood, Pausanias reports that Hera herself persuaded Poseidon to turn back the sea.

Pausanias also reports a dispute between Poseidon and Helios at Korinth (2.1.6-7). This contest was judged by a certain Briareos,[231] who assigned the Isthmos and surrounding areas to Poseidon, and the citadel of Korinth to Helios. Why Helios should have been involved in a contest with an Olympian god is unclear. In the historic period his only major cult was on the island of Rhodes (Pind. *O.* 7.55-76).[232] Farnell suggests that Helios may have been worshipped at Korinth during the Mycenaean era, and was later displaced.[233] According to Morgan Poseidon "belonged" at the Isthmos,[234] but she admits that there is "no unequivocal evidence" for his cult before the sixth century, when inscriptions and plaques "stress his maritime attributes."[235] She also remarks on the proximity of this region to the sea, a factor present in the establishment of many sanctuaries devoted to Poseidon.[236]

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[231] Was this one of the Hekatoncheires? Morgan (1994) 136, reports a fragment which may record that the dispute took place after the Titans had been defeated and sent to Tartaros.

[232] Burkert (1985) 175.

[233] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 5:419.

[234] Morgan (1994) 141.

[235] Ibid., 112-13.

[236] Ibid., 113. See also Schumacher (1993) 82-83.

Why Poseidon was involved in so many contests with other gods is unclear.[237] If the myths are ancient, it may be that one or the other of the gods involved was an intruder, whom immigrants to the region tried to impose upon a previous cult.[238] But it may also be a reflection of a political and historical reality: that the rise of the polis, and the civilization which attended it, may have led to the creation of such myths. Poseidon's nature provides a clue. If one mentions only two of the gods, Apollo at Delphi, and, in particular, Athena at Athens, it can be seen that the worship of both these gods promoted the rise of a more orderly society with emphasis on the development of new moral codes and intellectualism along with a technology which together brought about the brilliant achievements in art, literature, and philosophy of the fifth century.[239] Since Poseidon had no part in these developments, he was for the most part restricted to those places which were part of the natural world, the rural landscape, and especially the sea.

D. SUMMARY

It seems clear from the epics of Homer that Athena was chief goddess of Athens by the eighth century, if not earlier. Hesiod's description of her birth from the head of Zeus, revealed a close affinity with her father. This relationship was

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[237] According to Bernal (1991) 88, Athena's "battles with Poseidon at Athens, Troezen and elsewhere [?] . . . parallel those fought by Nēit against Poseidon's Egyptian counterpart Seth." He does not give an explanation for Poseidon's contests with other deities. Herodotos apparently regarded Nēit as the counterpart of Athena, for he says that Athena was worshipped at Saïs (2.59.3), which was the major cult-centre of the Egyptian goddess (*Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Sais").

[238] Schachermeyr (1950) 23, notes that Poseidon's contests with Athena, Zeus, and Helios, all take place around the Saronic Gulf. Might this suggest a common origin for these myths?

[239] See also Rhodes (1995) 93.

emphasized as artists began to depict the goddess fully armoured at birth, stressing that, as Zeus' daughter, it was her nature to be a warrior.

During the sixth century there seems to have been an increased presence of the goddess in the daily life of the city and its people. Solon described her as the guardian *par excellence*. Later in the century, the restoration of the tyranny of Peisistratos was given divine sanction, when the popular leader was escorted in a chariot to the Akropolis by a woman disguised to impersonate Athena. Her chief festival, the Panathenaia, was reorganized, and artists began to glorify Athena the warrior on the Panathenaic amphorae. It seems likely that the representation of Athena as an armed warrior (*Promachos*) on the Panathenaic amphorae influenced new developments in her mythology which occurred at this time.

In literature and art prior to the sixth century Athena appeared primarily as the patron of the heroes. After the mid-sixth century she acquired a more independent role in her myths. In the Gigantomachy, for example, Athena plays a leading role as a warrior who fights on her own behalf. During the fifth century, in Aischylos' *Eumenides*, Athena is firmly established as the guardian of the city. Her role has also been expanded from that described by Solon in the previous century, for now she not only guards Athens against the decrees of the gods or the crimes of human beings, she also protects its laws and the interests of each of its citizens. At the same time her establishment of a court of homicide assures Athenians that the guardianship of the city and justice fall under the *aigis* of the City Goddess. The new myths continue to emphasize Athena's traditional and close relationship with Zeus, which was first expressed by the epic poets. She fights beside her father in the Gigantomachy, and in the *Eumenides* she identifies her power, and her wisdom, with him.

During the fifth century the myth of the birth of Erichthonios/ Erechtheus, and his death, provide a link between Athena and Poseidon. As a representative Divine Child, Erichthonios/Erechtheus' association with the sacred snake on the Akropolis, and Athena's attribute of the snake, all suggest that the myth of his birth may go back to Minoan or Mycenaean times, and lend credence to the argument that Athena herself is the descendant of the Minoan mother goddess. Homer recounts that Athena receives Erechtheus, into her temple, which, later, takes his name, the Erechtheion. After Erechtheus is killed by Poseidon in retaliation for the death of Eumolpos, Poseidon's son, the worship of Erechtheus is incorporated into that of the god. Poseidon takes the name of the hero as his epithet and is subsequently worshipped as Poseidon *Erechtheus*. While Poseidon has a place in Athena's temple, his cult is secondary to that of Athena *Polias*.

The individual characters of Athena and Poseidon reflect their different spheres of activity both in cult and in myth. He was the controller of the sea, and the sender of the earthquake, both violent natural forces, while she was a force for civilization which brings together all humankind with their various skills under the protection of the city and its goddess. Poseidon's contest with Athena at Athens was not a unique myth, since he competed with various gods for supremacy in many cities and regions, but as at Athens he was usually defeated.

The myth of the contest between Poseidon and Athena was the sea god's first challenge to Athena's supremacy in Athens. This will be the subject of Chapter Four. The battle between Erechtheus and Eumolpos seems to have been Poseidon's second challenge to Athena. Why the god presented either challenge to the goddess still remains to be discovered. Chapter Three will look closely at the gifts (the olive and

the sea) which the protagonists presented to the people of Athens and will attempt to discern what importance these might have had in the development of the myth of the contest.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GIFTS OF ATHENA AND POSEIDON

Chapter Two looked at the two protagonists in the contest for the patronage of Athens, in particular Athena, in the period between c. 560 and 430, in order to determine the status of the two gods in the city of Athens during this time-period. Chapter Three focuses on the gifts which Athena and Poseidon offered to the people of Athens, the olive and the sea. The discussion will not be restricted to Athens in the case of either gift. The study of the olive will begin with the Bronze Age, and then continue with references to the various uses of the olive tree, and its products, in daily life, as described in literature and myth from the time of Homer through to the fifth century. The sea will be covered more briefly than will the olive. Although there will be some mention of what is known from archaeological evidence about sea travel and trade in the Bronze Age, for the most part references to the sea in all periods down to the fifth century will be drawn from literature. Later sources will be used as required.

A. *THE OLIVE*

The olive and its oil were essential to life in the Greek world. Olives were eaten as food, while the oil was used in cooking, as fuel for lamps, and rubbed on the body after bathing, and after physical work and exercise, in the Classical period and

later. It was also the basis of perfumes. During the sixth and fifth centuries Athens exported olive oil into the area of the Black Sea, and possibly Egypt, in exchange for wheat and other products.[1]

Greece and the islands of the Aegean are particularly well-suited for the growing of olives, and vines, both of which are able to thrive in thin and rocky soil, and to withstand the droughts which are common in Greece during the summer.[2] The olive is cultivated almost everywhere along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea today. The wild olive may have originated in the eastern Mediterranean region, but the exact place where it was first domesticated and cultivated for its fruit and its oil is unknown.[3] The earliest evidence for the olive in the Greek world comes from Santorini (Thera), where imprints of olive leaves have been found in volcanic deposits dated to c. 12000 B.C.[4] A single olive stone, probably from a wild olive, has been found at the Neolithic site of Souphli in Thessaly.[5]

Krete, the home of one of the earliest civilizations in Europe, may also have been the place where the olive was first used and cultivated in the Aegean. At Myrtos in southern Krete, olive stones and vats for separating oil have been found.[6] Olive

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[1] French (1964) 79 and 123.

[2] Boardman (1976) 188.

[3] Ibid., 187.

[4] Renfrew (1972) 269. In my discussion the term "Greek world" refers to the mainland, Krete, and the islands of the Aegean, from the prehistoric through the Minoan and Mycenaean periods to the Classical era.

[5] Renfrew (1972) 269. But see Runnels and Hansen (1986) 301, who point out that "it is not as yet possible to distinguish between wild or domesticated olive stones."

[6] Boardman (1976) 188.

presses have been discovered at other Minoan sites.[7] Colin Renfrew notes that traces of olive oil have been found in soil within a jug from the Early Cycladic period, in a grave on the island of Naxos.[8] It is not known, however, whether these traces of oil are from the wild or domestic olive and, if it was from the domestic olive, whether the trees were cultivated locally.[9] Renfrew also reports that two lamps were found in the same grave, which seem to represent the "earliest certain use of olive oil in the Aegean."[10] It is possible, of course, that the lamps might have been fuelled with a different vegetable oil or even animal fat.[11]

Both olives and olive oil are mentioned in the Linear B tablets from Knossos, and some tablets record orchards with hundreds of olive trees.[12] Other tablets record the distribution of oil both to persons and to divinities.[13] Although olive oil is mentioned less frequently on the tablets from Mycenae and Pylos, Ventris and Chadwick believe that the archaeological evidence shows "that olive oil was in extensive use in Mycenaean Greece."[14] This might imply that the production of olive oil was limited, and that it was, perhaps, a luxury item. The Linear B tablets also

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[7] Renfrew (1973) 134.

[8] Renfrew (1972) 285.

[9] Runnels and Hansen (1986) 302. Blitzer (1993) 166, suggests that material and written evidence, as well as comparison with "prehistoric agricultural developments elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean—demonstrates that the domesticated olive plant was already widely cultivated by the Early Minoan period on Crete."

[10] Renfrew (1972) 285.

[11] Runnels and Hansen (1986) 305.

[12] Ventris and Chadwick^2 (1973) 133, and 217-21.

[13] Ibid., 217 and 303.

[14] Ibid., 217.

record the rationing of olives at both Knossos and Pylos, which seems to indicate that the olive tree was cultivated at this time both for its oil and for food.[15]

The use of the olive and olive oil during the late Bronze Age in Greece and Krete is documented by the Linear B tablets. In order to determine its importance to the later Greek world, it is necessary to turn to Greek myth and literature. The earliest works of Greek literature were composed near the end of the Dark Ages. The epics of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are both set in the Bronze Age, and tell of the heroic deeds of kings and princes who lived in cities such as Mycenae and Pylos. Thus it might be thought possible to examine the Homeric epics for references to the production and use of items which were important to daily life during the Bronze Age. In fact, as Boardman, and many others have pointed out, the Homeric poems "reflect more of contemporary life [that is, of the eighth and seventh centuries] than that of the heroic Bronze Age."[16]

Boardman has also said that the olive is of "little account" in the Homeric poems.[17] Other scholars have thought it strange that "there are no Homeric references to the actual cultivation of the olive . . . and no references at all to the

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[15] Ibid., 218-20. But see Wright, Jr. (1972) 195, whose examination of sediment cores from an area near Pylos, found little evidence of olive pollen during the late Bronze Age, and suggests that "perhaps olives had really not been developed as a major food crop in Greece during Mycenaean" times. "It is a striking fact," he adds "that there is no mention in the Homeric epics of the consumption of olives or olive oils." But see p. 99 below.

[16] Boardman (1976) 190. On the other hand, the business of growing olive trees, the harvesting of the fruit, and the production of oil had probably changed little between the time of the Bronze Age and the seventh century. In the present century, at least until quite recently, in some parts of the Mediterranean the harvesting of olives and the pressing of oil were carried out in much the same way as they were thousands of years ago. See Carrington (1971) 208.

[17] Boardman (1976) 190.

extraction of the oil."[18] But the epics deal with the exploits of the gods and heroes, not with the rationing of food, records of household accounts, or the daily activities of the farmer, and so there is no reason why discussion of the growing of olives or the processing of oil should find an important place in the poems. Olive groves are, however, mentioned in the *Odyssey*. As Odysseus approached the palace of Alkinoös, on the island of Scheria, he could see orchards of "flourishing olive trees" (7.116, ἐλαῖαι τηλεθόωσαι). Nevertheless, the poet puts considerably more emphasis on the vine and its products (7.122-26). There are also olive orchards on the farm of Odysseus' father, Laertes (24.246-47), and while there is no mention of how olive oil is obtained, both the olive tree and its oil are of considerable importance in the *Odyssey*, and even assume a symbolic role. This will be examined in due course.

In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod, who may have lived in the later part of the eighth, or the early seventh century,[19] describes, among other things, the daily life of the farmer. As such, one would imagine that the poem would mention the very things about the olive and its cultivation that Wace and Stubbings, for example, are surprised not to find in the epics of Homer, and yet it does not.[20] And although Hesiod does refer to the use of olive oil, it is only a single reference, in which the poet describes how a young girl anoints her freshly bathed skin with olive oil (*Op.* 522, ἐλαίῳ). Boardman suggests that "Hesiod's ignorance"—presumably of olive

[18] Wace and Stubbings (1962) 529.

[19] For the date of Hesiod see West in the "Prolegomena" to Hesiod, *Works and Days* ([1978] 1980) 30-31.

[20] Pliny says that Hesiod does mention olive cultivation, or, at least he mentions one aspect of it, that it was slow-growing (*HN* 15.1.3). In this Pliny is either mistaken, or he is making reference to a work by Hesiod which is no longer extant.

cultivation—might reflect local conditions in the area of Boiotia where the poet lived.[21] For at the same time Boardman also points out that the olive must have been economically important in Greece during the eighth and seventh centuries, since the evidence of pottery seems to indicate that oil was imported by the Greek colonies in Italy and Sicily.[22] Perhaps this oil came from olive groves located in other regions of Greece, such as the Peloponnese.[23]

That the olive had been an essential part of daily life in Greece and the islands as far back as the Bronze Age is apparently confirmed both by archaeology and the Linear B tablets. But the evidence of the poets who wrote in the late Dark Ages[24] is ambiguous. Homer, whose epics are set in the Bronze Age, but in all probability reflect conditions contemporary with their composition, mentions olive groves, while, Hesiod, who might well have mentioned both olive orchards and the cultivation of olives in his *Works and Days*, does not.

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[21] See Boardman (1976) 190. The evidence concerning olive cultivation in Boiotia is not clear. Greig and Turner (1974) 192-93, say, that in the region of Lake Kopaïs [in Boiotia], there "appear[s] to have been two distinct phases during which olives were cultivated." The earliest phase seems to have begun c. 3200 and continued to c. 1200. The latest is not certain, but, "the gap between the olive cultivation periods appears to correspond with the time of the Dark Age [c. 1100-700]."

[22] Boardman (1976) 190. According to Pliny (*HN* 15.1.1), the olive tree did not grow in Italy at the time of Tarquinius Priscus (c. 600), and yet Boardman says that vases for perfumed oil were being made in Etruria by the end of the seventh century. While Boardman sees this as evidence that oil was produced locally, the Etruscans could have acquired perfumed oil through trade with the Greek cities of south Italy. Dunbabin (1948) 226-27, indicates that Korinthian pottery including aryballoi, probably filled with perfumed oil, seem to have been exported in quantity to southern Italy between c. 725 and c.550.

[23] Wright, Jr. (1972) 199, has suggested that olives were grown widely in the southwest Peloponnese in the period c. 1100-700.

[24] West (1980) 10, says "we must not think of Greek literature as *beginning* in the eighth century but as *coming into view*." The earliest literature—epic poetry—"must have been exclusively oral" until the introduction of the Phoenician alphabet during the eighth century (p. 12).

It is to the literature, however, in particular the Homeric epics, that it is necessary to turn in order to find out more about the olive tree, its products, and their use. Olive trees, olive wood, and olive oil are all mentioned in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the heroes reveal a certain familiarity with the olive, such as one would expect of individuals who are reputed to have lived during the late Bronze Age. The next part of this chapter will look more closely at the olive tree in literature and myth. The sacred olive tree of Athena will also be mentioned.

The Olive in Myth and Literature

The Olive Tree

The first description of an olive tree in Homer occurs in the *Iliad*. A simile compares the death of the hero Euphorbos at the hands of Menelaos to the uprooting by a storm of "a flourishing young olive shoot" (17.53, (ἔρνος . . . ἐριθηλὲς ἐλαίης). The man who nurtured the tree "watered it generously, so that/ it grew with profuse beauty" (17.54-55, ὅθ' ἅλις ἀναβέβροχεν ὕδωρ/ καλὸν τηλεθάον). While it may be poetic fancy, it is interesting to note that the tree is watered and not left to find what moisture it can from the soil or dew. Olive trees can tolerate up to six months of drought during the summer, but today the benefits of watering are "yields of five to ten times those in the unirrigated orchards."[25] In Roman times it was known that when olive trees were given extra water that the fruit produced higher amounts of oil, especially when followed by a period of warm weather (Pliny *HN* 15.3.10). Perhaps in this simile from the *Iliad* there is an indication that even in the

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[25] *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Olive." A characteristic of the olive tree is that unwatered it only produces a good crop in alternate years, but when the trees are watered regularly they will bear fruit every year.

late Bronze Age—or the early Archaic period—the olive grower was already aware that if he provided his trees with extra water the result would be higher yields of fruit and oil.

The olive tree is mentioned several times in the *Odyssey*. After Odysseus has climbed ashore at the mouth of a river in Scheria, he goes inland to find a place to sleep. He finds a suitable spot where "he slips underneath two bushes/ which grew from the same spot, one of wild, and one of cultivated olive" (5.476–77, δοιοὺς δ' ἄρ' ὑπήλυθε θάμνους/ ἐξ ὁμόθεν πεφυῶτας ὁ μὲν φυλίης, ὁ δ' ἐλαίης). The part of the island on which Odysseus has found shelter appears to be wild underbrush and trees. It does not seem to be part of a farmer's plot of land, yet there is a domesticated olive growing there, next to, or grafted onto, a stump from which a wild olive also grows.[26] Boardman remarks that Homer makes a distinction between the wild and the cultivated olive tree.[27] Yet the meaning of φυλία is not certain.[28] Pausanias (2.32.10) seems to regard φυλία, or φυλλία,[29] as a wild olive in the same way as κότινος and ἔλαιος are also wild olive trees.

Ithaka, Odysseus' island home, boasts "an olive tree with spreading leaves, at the head of the harbour" (*Od.* 13.102, ἐπὶ κρατὸς λιμένος τανύφυλλος ἐλαίη),

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[26] Schein (1970) 76, says that the trees were "intertwined wild and domesticated olive trees." According to pseudo-Aristotle (*Peri Phyton* 820[b]), the cultivated olive was sometimes grafted onto wild olive trees. See Wright, Jr. (1972) 195, who says that "wild trees are often domesticated by the addition of grafts from cultivated trees."

[27] Boardman (1976) 190. Soutar ([1939] 1971) 147, believes that the two stems growing from one root are different; one is an olive, while the other is a lentisk, "an evergreen shrub of the cashew family" (*Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Mastic").

[28] *LSJ*, s.v. "φυλία," says "a kind of tree mentioned with the olive" in the *Odyssey* (5.477). It can, however, in a poetic sense, mean "a kind of *wild olive*."

[29] According to *LSJ*, s.v., φυλία = φυλλία.

which Athena points out to Odysseus as she reacquaints him with his homeland (13.346). The Phaiakians left Odysseus' treasure "beside the trunk of the olive tree" (13.122, καὶ τὰ μὲν οὖν παρὰ πυθμέν' ἐλαίης ἀθρόα θῆκαν). Later Athena and Odysseus together "sat down against the trunk of the sacred olive" (13.372, Τὼ δὲ καθεζομένω ἱερῆς παρὰ πυθμέν' ἐλαίης), and planned how they would punish the suitors. The olive tree is described as "sacred," not because of its later association with the goddess, but due to its proximity to the "holy cave of the nymphs who are called the Naiads" (13.103-4).[30] The Naiads were water nymphs who "incarnate the divinity of the spring or stream which they inhabit."[31] The cave on Ithaka contained within itself a stream with "everflowing waters" (13.109).

The setting on Odysseus' island-home of Ithaka with its sacred spring and a nearby olive tree, almost resembles an even more sacred site, the Akropolis of Athens. There, in historical times, grew the sacred olive tree of Athena, planted by her, according to myth, at the time of her contest with Poseidon. Nearby was a spring (sea) of water, which myth recounts was created by Poseidon in the same contest.

The sacred olive tree of Athena grew in the Pandroseion, an open-air sanctuary to Pandrosos, who was one of the three daughters of Kekrops, the legendary first king of Athens. Chapter Two mentioned how Athena entrusted the rearing of Erichthonios, the son of Gaia and Hephaistos, to the daughters of Kekrops.[32] Pandrosos was the only one of the sisters who did not look in the basket containing the child, and as a reward for her obedience, Athena "entrusted a part of her [own] precinct and the care

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[30] Cunliffe, s.v. "ἱερός, (4) ν 372."

[31] *DCM*, s.v. "Naiads."

[32] See Chapter Two, pp. 48-49 above.

of the olive tree" to Pandrosos.[33] Thus Pandrosos acquired a cult and worshippers, and at the sacrifice during the Great Panathenaia a ewe was sacrificed to Pandrosos for each cow sacrificed to Athena.[34] Jane Harrison, however, asserts that Pandrosos must have been worshipped on the Akropolis before the time of Athena.[35] The fact that the olive tree grew in the precinct of Pandrosos presupposes that it had always grown there, for "why should Pandrosos have other people's olive trees planted in *her* precinct?"[36] Thus, according to Harrison, Athena took over the sacred enclosure of Pandrosos, and acquired possession of the olive tree which became one of her attributes, and whose very existence was later credited to her in the myth of her contest with Poseidon.

The names of two of the daughters of Kekrops are the same as the words for dew; Herse, "dew," and Pandrosos, "all dew."[37] Nilsson calls Pandrosos "the all Dewy one,"[38] and the third sister, Aglauros, "the Bright one."[39] The latter name may refer to the glistening effect which early-morning dew casts on the ground. Nilsson also points out that the names are connected with "the atmospheric conditions which

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[33] Simon (1983) 45.

[34] Ibid., 61. She notes that "Pandrosos did not have an altar of her own but rather had κοινοβωμία ("community of altar") with Athena."

[35] Harrison (1906) 55.

[36] Ibid. Burkert (1985) 85, points out that "most sanctuaries have their special tree."

[37] *LSJ*, s.v.

[38] Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 562.

[39] Ibid. *LSJ*, s.v. ἄγλαυρος, ον = ἀγλαός, "*splendid, shining, bright*." See also Jeppesen (1979) 391-92, who suggests that Aglauros is also a "suitable name for the nymph of a fountain," and infers a connection between Aglauros and Poseidon, and the spring which the god created on the Akropolis. According to the myth, however, Poseidon created a salt spring, while the nymphs were normally spirits of fresh water.

promote the growth of vegetation and the crops."[40] The names are appropriate for the nurses of Erichthonios who, as the Divine Child, was responsible for the return of vegetation in the spring.[41] But the myth of Pandrosos and her sisters is not connected to just any vegetation, but rather to one particular part of nature—the sacred olive tree on the Akropolis.

In historical times a secret festival, called the Arrephoria, was celebrated on the Athenian Akropolis during the month of Skirophorion, in midsummer, perhaps about a month before the Panathenaia. Pausanias (1.27.3) says that on the night of the festival two little girls (the Arrephoroi) carried unknown, and unmentioned, things down to the precinct of Aphrodite in the Gardens (ἐν Κήποις) and, having left what they had brought, carried something else back up to the Akropolis. According to Simon "there is full agreement among scholars that [the myth of Pandrosos and the new-born Erichthonios] is the *aition* for the rite of the Arrephoroi."[42]

It has already been noted that Pandrosos and her sisters are associated with dew, and consequently with the moisture required by all vegetation. Dew and vegetation, notably the sacred olive tree, also have their place in the rite of the Arrephoroi. Deubner pointed out the connection between dew and the olive tree,[43] but he did so, according to Simon, without taking "Aphrodite's participation in the rite into consideration."[44] As Pausanias says, the Arrephoroi take unknown things to the

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[40] Ibid.

[41] See Chapter Two, p. 51f. above.

[42] Simon (1983) 45.

[43] Deubner ([1932] 1966) 14.

[44] Simon (1983) 45.

precinct of Aphrodite ἐν Κήποις (1.27.3). Simon points out that "Aphrodite in the Gardens was connected with a tree or trees, as her epithet suggests."[45] But Aphrodite had another epithet, *Ourania*, as goddess of the planet Venus, and she was "responsible for the dew, which was believed to be a gift of that planet."[46] Thus it seems that the Arrephoroi, on their return to the Akropolis, may have carried dew from Aphrodite to provide moisture for the sacred olive tree, in the same way that Pandrosos and her sisters represent the dew which will provide moisture for the new growth of vegetation which appears when Erichthonios is born from Gaia (Mother Earth).[47]

But to return to the *Odyssey*—the olive tree which grew near the harbour on the island of Ithaka was sacred, due to its association with the Naiads, and the sacred stream of water. This tree seems to anticipate the sacred olive tree of Athena, which grew on the Athenian Akropolis. It was also associated with a spring of water, the sea, presented by Poseidon as his gift to the people of Athens at the time of his contest with Athena. But this olive tree may have had a prior association with another deity, Pandrosos, who also seems to have had connections with water. The sacred olive tree on Ithaka, as well as the bush of wild and domestic olive which sheltered Odysseus when he reached Scheria, are symbols of Odysseus' restoration to his homeland. This symbolism becomes more obvious in the wood of the olive tree, which is described in the next section of the chapter.

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 43-44.

[47] Aphrodite had other connections with water. Scully ([1962] 1979) 183, says that the sea belonged to Aphrodite first, and later to Poseidon, and, according to Walton, *OCD*², s.v. "Aphrodite," 80-1, Aphrodite was "widely worshipped as a goddess of the sea and seafaring."

Olive Wood

The wood of the olive tree is "resistant to decay."[48] It is also "hard to work but extremely decorative, and . . . an ideal material for the enterprising wood carver who can integrate its natural pattern into the design of his product."[49] Some of these qualities of olive wood would surely have been noticed by artisans during the Bronze Age. According to Boardman olive wood "seems to have been much in use from the Late Bronze Age" in the ancient Near East.[50] For the Greek Bronze Age it is necessary to turn to myth and literature to find evidence for the use of olive wood. In the Homeric epics olive wood was apparently much prized for axe handles. In Book 13 of the *Iliad* Menelaos kills the Trojan Peisandros whose weapon is "a fine axe well-made of bronze on a long polished/ olive-wood handle" (13.611-13, καλὴν/ ἀξίνην εὔχαλκον, ἐλαΐνῳ ἀμφὶ πελέκκῳ/ μακρῷ ἐϋξέστῳ). And as Odysseus prepared to leave Kalypso's island, the goddess gave him a great bronze axe which was fitted with "a very beautiful olive-wood handle" (*Od.* 5.234-36, στειλειὸν περικαλλὲς ἐλάϊνον). Perhaps this "very beautiful" axe handle incorporated the decorative qualities inherent in the wood. For use as a weapon, however, it was not necessary to carve the wood of the olive into something beautiful. According to Pindar (*O.* 7.29), the staff which Tlepolemus used to kill Likymnios was of hard-grained olive wood.

Olive wood also plays an important role in the careers of some other mythical figures. Pausanias (2.31.10) says that Herakles made his club from the wild olive which he discovered by the Saronic Gulf. He also says, but with some scepticism (ὅτῳ

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[48] *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Olive."

[49] Carrington (1971) 208.

[50] Boardman (1976) 191.

πιστά), that when Herakles leaned his club against a Herm at Troezen, it took root in the earth and grew up again into a wild olive tre which still grows there.[51] The story seems as improbable as is Theokritos' account that when the hero made his staff from "a shady wild-olive, bark and all" (25.208, αὐτόφλοιον, ἐπηρεφέος κοτίνοιο), he tore up an olive tree "whole, with all its close-packed roots" (25.210, σὺν πυκινῇσιν ὁλοσχερὲς ἔσπασα ῥίζαις).

The best-known instance of the use of olive wood as a weapon occurs in Book Nine of the *Odyssey*. As Odysseus plans how he and his men can escape from the cave of the Kyklops, Polyphemos, the hero notices "a great bludgeon of green olive wood" (*Od.* 9.320). The Kyklops had cut it down, presumably from a wild olive tree which grew on his island, and left it to dry so that he could make a shepherd's staff to guide him when he herded his sheep.[52] The stake of drying olive wood was so huge that Odysseus was able to chop off a fathom (9.325), which he "sharpened/ into a point, and put over the blaze of the fire to harden" (9.327-28). "When the beam of olive, green as it was, was nearly/ at the point of catching fire and glowed, terribly incandescent" (9.378-79), Odysseus and his men pulled it from the fire, and pushed the sharpened point into the eye of Polyphemos, blinding him (9.382-90). The wood of the olive tree thus becomes the means by which Odysseus and his men are able to escape from their prison. This is not the first, or only time in the epic, that the olive

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[51] According to Theophrastos (*Hist. Pl.* 2.1.2) an olive twig (κλωνός) although "planted firmly" (καταπήγνυμι, *LSJ*, s.v.) will not grow. Presumably he is distinguishing between a polished stick of olive wood, such as Herakles' club, and an actual cutting which is planted for the purpose of propagation (cf. 2.1.4). But at 5.9.8 Theophrastos says that even finished olive wood will sprout shoots if there is moisture present.

[52] The poem does not say that olive trees grew on the island, but there is wheat, barley, and grapevines (*Od.* 9.110).

tree, and its wood, proves to be a help to Odysseus. As Thalmann points out, in the *Odyssey* "wood, especially of the olive, tends to be associated with Odysseus's salvation and restoration to home."[53] Previous examples, which I have mentioned, include the axe with its beautiful handle made of olive wood which Kalypso gave to Odysseus so that he could build a raft and begin his journey away from her island (5.236), and the shelter provided by the wild and domesticated olive trees growing together near the river on the island of Scheria (5.476–77). With regard to the blinding of Polyphemos, Schein points out that, in most stories of this type, the stake is made of metal, but, here, olive wood is substituted.[54] But the substitution is proper to the entire *Odyssey*, for "in some essential way Homer associated olive wood and olive trees with Odysseus."[55]

Near the end of the epic, Odysseus is restored to his rightful place as king in his palace on the island of Ithaka. Even here the olive tree is a symbol of his restoration. Before Penelope will accept that, finally, her husband has returned home, she tests him by ordering the serving-woman to bring Odysseus' bed into the hall and make it up for him to sleep there. Odysseus is angry, and probably amazed, because it would be impossible for anyone to move the bed. He describes how he built his marriage bed from the stout trunk of an olive tree (*Od.* 23.190–91, "trimming the trunk from the roots up" (23.196), and "fashioning the bed post" (23.198). Carrington mentions that the unusual shape of many olive trees "make them good material for

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[53] Thalmann (1992) 74.

[54] Schein (1970) 75.

[55] Ibid., 76. See also n. 8 on p. 76 where Schein points out that the olive is a survivor, like Odysseus.

unusually-designed rustic furniture such as small tables, stands for plants, and wooden candelabras."[56] It does not seem from Carrington's description that an olive tree could have provided much more wood than would have been essential for the carving of the bed post. Yet clearly it is an integral part of Odysseus' marriage bed. What is more, the trunk of the tree is still rooted in the ground, and the only way in which anyone could remove the bed would be by "cutting underneath the stump of the olive" (23.204, ταμὼν ὕπο πυθμέν' ἐλαίης).

The peculiar construction of the bed has been seen as a symbol of the strength of Odysseus' marriage.[57] But Stanford, in his commentary on Book 23, finds it strange that this old olive tree was even left inside the palace. He says "nobody has satisfactorily explained this curiosity,"[58] and he asks why Odysseus did not remove the tree before he built the bedroom. One suggestion is that the olive tree must have been sacred.[59] Stanford doubts that the Greeks would have treated a sacred tree in this way, and makes his own suggestion; this type of construction may go back to a much earlier time-period when "felling a tree with stone weapons [was] a long and tedious business."[60]

There could also be another explanation, one symbolized by the fact that the tree is still alive. Olive trees hold tenaciously to life, and "if the top dies back a new

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[56] Carrington (1971) 208.

[57] Thalmann (1992) 118.

[58] Stanford, 2:399-400.

[59] Stanford, 2:399, cites J. van Leeuwen. *Odyssea* (Leyden, 1917) for this explanation.

[60] Ibid., 400.

trunk will often arise from the roots."[61] When the Persians sacked Athens in 480 they burned the Akropolis, and the sacred olive tree of Athena. According to Herodotos, "on the next day after the incineration, when the Athenians . . . went up to the sanctuary, they saw that a shoot had sprouted up from the stump [of the olive tree] as much as a cubit in length" (8.55, δευτέρῃ δὲ ἡμέρῃ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμπρήσιος Ἀθηναίων . . . ὡς ἀνέβησαν ἐς τὸ ἱρόν, ὥρων βλαστὸν ἐκ τοῦ στελέχεος ὅσον τε πηχυαῖον ἀναδεδραμηκότα).[62] It seems likely, then, that even though Odysseus had trimmed the branches and bark from the trunk of the olive tree, that it had continued to grow and to put out new shoots.[63] Thus the tree would have to have been pruned regularly. But perhaps this was Odysseus' intention when he used a living olive tree. In this way the ever-living strength of the olive tree would stand as a permanent symbol of the continuing vitality of Odysseus' marriage, and his home, the palace at the centre of his kingdom.[64]

According to myth, olive wood was highly prized for the making of weapons, either for the weapon itself, such as Herakles' club, and the olive wood stake with which Odysseus blinded Polyphemos, or as handles for axes, which were used both as weapons and as tools. Odysseus built his marriage bed from the trunk of an olive tree. The continuing existence of this tree is a symbol of the stability of Odysseus' marriage, and his restoration to his house, and his kingdom. This olive tree, at the

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[61] *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Olive." See also Detienne (1973) 295.

[62] Pausanias (1.27.2) says that the shoot grew two cubits in height on the same day that the tree was burned.

[63] See Theophr. *Hist. Pl.* 5.9.8, and this chapter, n. 51 above.

[64] Tracy (1990) 137.

centre of Odysseus' palace, like the one near the harbour of Ithaka, also looks forward to Athena's sacred olive tree on the Akropolis. For, although Odysseus had trimmed the tree with an axe, it is still living, rooted in the soil, as an enduring symbol of life, in the same way that the sacred olive tree on the Akropolis grew a new shoot the day after it was destroyed by the Persians.

The next part of this chapter looks at what must be considered the most important product of the olive tree, its oil. For in the ancient world, as well as the modern, the olive tree has been cultivated primarily for its oil. This section will be followed by a brief mention of the use of olives as a source of food.

Olive Oil

The olive was prized especially for its oil, and in the Homeric epics references to olive oil occur more frequently than to either the olive tree or its wood. It would seem that olive oil should have formed an important place in the diet, and yet it is not mentioned as a food in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. Rather, in the epics, the oil seems to have been used primarily in religious rituals, or for hygienic and cosmetic purposes. The latter uses will be mentioned first.

Just as the young girl in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (522) anoints her skin after bathing, Homer's gods and heroes also follow their bath by anointing their skin with olive oil, whether it is Odysseus and Dolon who rinse off the sweat from their bodies in the sea after their reconnaissance mission into Trojan territory (*Il.* 10.572ff.), or Hera who bathes with ambrosia as she prepares for her seduction of Zeus (14.170). When Nausikaa, the daughter of the Phaiakian king, went down to the river to wash clothes, her mother gave her "liquid olive oil in a golden oil-flask" (*Od.* 6.79) so that

the princess and her attendants could anoint themselves after bathing. When Odysseus appeared before the girls, Nausikaa lent her olive oil to the stranger (6.215). In the *Odyssey* the heroes usually do not bathe or anoint themselves; rather it is usually servants (4.49), or the daughters of one's host (3.466), who carry out this task. At Sparta Helen tells Telemachos how, once when Odysseus disguised as a beggar crept into Troy, she recognized him, and bathed him, and anointed him with olive oil (4.252).

The olive oil which the heroes use for anointing is often described as rich (*Od.* 4.466; 6.96) or liquid (6.79), while the oil which the goddesses have is also ambrosial, and often fragrant. Thus Hera "anointed herself with rich olive oil/ ambrosial sweet, which imparted its fragrance for her sake" (*Il.* 14.171–72, ἀλείψατο δὲ λίπ' ἐλαίῳ/ ἀμβροσίῳ ἑδανῷ, τό ῥά οἱ τεθυωμένον ἦεν). And when the oil was "stirred even in the palace of Zeus, with floor of bronze, yet/ the fragrance from it was wafted toward both earth and heaven" (14.173–74, τοῦ καὶ κινυμένοιο Διὸς κατὰ χαλκοβατὲς δῶ/ ἔμπης ἐς γαῖάν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν ἵκετ' ἀϋτμή). But mortals too, apparently, had access to fragrant oil, since the *Odyssey* describes how fragrant oil was kept in the storerooms of Odysseus' palace on Ithaka (2.339). Boardman believes that "perfumed oils were something of a luxury," noting that Nausikaa kept her oil in a golden flask (*Od.* 6.79).[65] Apparently, to Boardman, the value of the container indicates the worth of its contents. While this may often be true, in this context it seems merely to state the obvious—that an oil-flask used by a

[65] Boardman (1976) 193.

princess would be made from precious metal rather than clay.[66]

The *Odyssey* does not say specifically that Nausikaa's oil was fragrant. Perhaps Boardman assumes that it was since it was rubbed on the skin after bathing, in the manner of bath oils of the present day. Ventris and Chadwick report a series of tablets found at Pylos which list quantities of olive oil stored in the palace at Pylos, and is clear that some of the oil was prepared for use as ointments.[67] Oils are also mentioned which were scented with rose, sage, and cyperus.[68] Boardman notes that the use of perfumed oils in more recent times dates back at least to the "later eighth century," judging by survivals of good quality oil flasks.[69] Homer's mention of fragrant oils was undoubtedly influenced by their use in his own time, although it is tempting to suggest that it may reflect the memory of such items from the late Bronze Age. The Linear B tablets do not report what the use of perfumed oil might have been, and it remains unknown, other than it was used as offerings to deities.

Despite the fact that Odysseus' palace retained stores of fragrant oil, the poets give the impression that it was primarily used by the gods. Hera's use of fragrant oil (*Il.* 14.171-72) has already been noted. The Homeric Hymns also describe how, after Aphrodite entered her temple at Paphos, and the Graces had bathed her, "they anointed her/ with immortal oil such as glistens on the everlasting gods,/ ambrosial sweet, which imparted its fragrance for her sake" (*h. Aphr.* 61-63, χρῖσαν ἐλαίῳ/

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[66] In the Homeric epics even commonplace objects are often made of precious metals, e.g. the water jug from which the maidservant pours water for washing the hands is made of gold (*Od.* 1.137).

[67] Ventris and Chadwick[2] (1973) 476-77.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Boardman (1976) 192.

ἀμβρότῳ οἷα θεοὺς ἐπενήνοθεν αἰὲν ἐόντας,/ ἀμβροσίῳ ἑδανῷ, τό ῥά οἱ τεθυωμένον ἦεν). From the descriptions of the various uses of oil by the gods, it seems that perfumed oil was a luxury only for human beings.

Olive oil was also used to anoint the hair of goddesses and the manes of horses.[70] *Homeric Hymn* 24 (3) describes how "liquid olive oil trickles down from the hair" (αἰεὶ σῶν πλοκάμων ἀπολείβεται ὑγρὸν ἔλαιον) of the goddess Hestia. At Patroklos' funeral games Achilleus speaks to his horses and reminds them how his companion "used to anoint their manes with/ liquid olive oil" (*Il.* 23.281-82, ὑγρὸν ἔλαιον/ χαιτάων κατέχευε). According to the *Iliad*, tanners used oil to soften hides (17.392f.).

From the Homeric epics one also learns that olive oil imparted a shiny surface to linen. In the description of the shield which Hephaistos crafted for Achilleus, the smith-god engraved an image of a dancing floor where the men were dressed in "chitons/ of fine-spun work, glistening softly with olive oil" (18.595-96, χιτῶνας/ εἵατ' ἐϋννήτους, ἦκα στίλβοντας ἐλαίῳ). Leaf and Bayfield report that "oil was actually used to give a gloss to cloth."[71] Book Seven of the *Odyssey* describes the serving women in Alkinoös' palace weaving, and as they weave, "liquid olive oil trickles off the close-woven linen cloths," (7.107, καιροσέων δ' ὀθονέων

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[70] Oil would give lustre to the hair—and to the horses' manes—but the primary reason for its use must have been to counteract dryness from exposure to the sun and wind. Undoubtedly this was also the reason for rubbing oil on the body after bathing (see p. 80 above). In the "Discussion" to Boardman (1977) 195, E.J. Moynahan of Guy's Hospital, London, mentions that olive oil would help protect the skin from dehydration caused by dry winds in the Eastern Mediterranean. He also says that sailors in antiquity used olive oil to protect the skin from the combination of salt and wind. On the other hand, the description of Hera anointing herself with fragrant oil gives the same sense of luxuriousness that we associate with the use of bath oils from advertisements on television or in magazines, and may indicate that the use of olive oil for this purpose had become commonplace.

[71] Leaf and Bayfield, 2:463, on *Il.* 18.596.

ἀπολείβεται ὑγρὸν ἔλαιον).

Stanford says that "elsewhere ὀθόνη seems to mean 'fine linen', but 'wool' suits the general context better here."[72] He does not say why wool should be preferred to linen in the palace of Alkinoös. Lorimer, who disagrees with Stanford, says "it is certainly linen that is woven in the palace of Alkinoos [*sic*], for up to modern times oil had been used in many regions to give a glossy finish to linen, but it has no place in the preparation of wool."[73] According to Wright and Lawler, the Ionic tunic, or chiton, was made of linen, while the Doric, was made of wool.[74] Since the Homeric epics are traditionally said to have originated in Ionia, Homer would surely have referred to the Ionic, or, linen, chiton. Even today "the finer [linen] yarns are usually wet spun, . . . [since] wet spinning produces a more compact and uniform yarn than dry spinning and is therefore the method commonly employed for all the finer yarns, and those in which the maximum strength must be realized, or a uniform smooth yarn produced."[75]

Sometimes the oil which graced linen clothing was perfumed. Before Odysseus left the island of Kalypso, the goddess bathed him and "put fragrant clothing upon him," (*Od.* 5.264, εἵματά τ' ἀμφιέσασα θυώδεα καὶ λούσασα). And in Odysseus' palace Penelope took her husband's bow from a peg on a high platform where there

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[72] Stanford, 1:324, on *Od.* 7.107.

[73] Lorimer (1950) 371–72. On the contrary, olive oil is blended with wool fibres before it is carded in order "to reduce fibre breakage, fly, waste, and static electricity . . . and generally to facilitate processing." (*Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Wool," and "Olive Oil.") See also Shelmerdine (1995) 102–3, who provides evidence that oil was probably used in the preparation of both linen and wool during the Mycenaean era.

[74] Wright and Lawler, *OCD*[2], s.v. "Dress," 364–65.

[75] *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Linen Manufacture."

were chests, "in which were stored fragrant pieces of clothing," (21.52, ἐν δ' ἄρα τῇσι θυώδεα εἵματ' ἔκειτο). But as in the case of the use of perfumed oil, as far as ordinary mortals are concerned, it seems that perfumed oil was used only for clothing in the palace of Odysseus. Otherwise it was a prerogative of the gods. In the *h. Dem.*, when Demeter revealed her true nature to the people of Eleusis, "from her fragrant robes a lovely smell was dispersed", (277-78, ὀδμὴ δ' ἱμερόεσσα θυηέντων ἀπὸ πέπλων/ σκίδνατο). According to some scholars, "fragrance is a sign of divinity."[76] This seems to confirm that perfumed oil was a luxury, and generally reserved for the gods, despite its presence in Odysseus' storerooms, either in liquid form, or as a glossy finish on linen.

Olive oil was commonly used in the regions around the ancient Mediterranean as fuel for lamps.[77] But while archaeologists have discovered lamps at Minoan and Mycenaean sites, there are "no identifiable lamps" from Greece in the period between the end of the Bronze Age and the early seventh century,[78] a time-period covering the Dark Ages. Boardman remarks on this "absence of lamps," and says that the reason may have been a shortage of olive oil.[79] He suggests that "the olive trees

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[76] Allen, Halliday and Sikes in the commentary to the *Homeric Hymns* ([1936] 1980) 163, on *h. Dem.* 277.

[77] See Bailey, *OCD*², s.v. "Lamps," 577.

[78] Ibid. This may only mean that lamps from this period have not yet been found. There is little in the way of material remains from the Dark Ages, since few sites have been excavated. I would like to thank both Dr. Buck and Dr. Fracchia for drawing this to my attention. But see Stanford, 2:438, on *Od.* 19.33-34, who states that "recent discoveries have disproved the belief that lamps were unknown in Greek lands from c. 1100 to 700." He does not cite a reference for the discoveries.

[79] Boardman (1976) 190. But, as Runnels and Hansen (1986) 305, have pointed out concerning the Bronze Age, other types of oil or fat could have been used as fuel. See p. 75 above.

might have been destroyed or left to grow wild."[80] In an analysis of olive pollen from northern Greece and the region around Lake Kopais in Boiotia, Greig and Turner discovered two different periods of olive cultivation, and reported that the gap between the two periods "appears to correspond with the time of the Dark Age."[81] They suggest that there is "a link between the lack of olive growing," and the instability and disorganization of the times, which must have had an effect on the cultivation and harvesting of crops.[82]

Perhaps other forms of lighting took the place of lamps during the Dark Ages. Some of the different possibilities are mentioned in epic literature. Nausikaa tells Odysseus how her mother Arete sits beside the hearth, and weaves "in the light of the fire" (*Od.* 6.305, ἐν πυρὸς αὐγῇ). The suitors in Odysseus' palace "set up three braziers (λαμπτῆρας) in the great hall/ to provide light" when darkness fell (18.306-8). Torches were also used for lighting. While Demeter searched for her daughter, she held "blazing torches in her hands" (*h. Dem.* 48). Only one lamp is mentioned in the Homeric epics. In the *Odyssey*, as Odysseus and Telemachos gather weapons for their approaching battle against the suitors, "going before them, Pallas Athene, holding/ a golden lamp, gave them brilliant light" (19.33-34, πάροιθε δὲ

[80] Boardman (1976) 190.

[81] Greig and Turner (1974) 192-93. See also Runnels and Hansen (1986) 302-4.

[82] Greig and Turner (1974) 193. But see Chadwick ([1976] 1980) 121, who says that olive trees will produce fruit "with the minimum of attention" for this tree has the advantage that its labour requirement is very small, except for the short season of the harvesting of the crop." Wright, Jr. (1972) 196, however, points out that when olive trees are not properly cared for, the soil around the trees becomes overgrown with weeds and shrubs, which compete with the olive for moisture from the soil. The implication is that fruit production would be reduced.

Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη/ χρύσεον λύχνον ἔχουσα, φάος περικαλλὲς ἐποίει).[83] It can only be conjectured whether the presence of Athena implies that the lamp, which the goddess is holding, was fuelled with olive oil since there is no mention at all of the kind of fuel the lamp burns.[84]

Lorimer has suggested that the reference to the lamp in the *Odyssey* "commemorates," the first lamp dedicated to Athena on the Akropolis.[85] She says that a lamp, which likely burned before the cult image of the goddess, must have been destroyed in 480, and suggests that this lamp inspired the reference to the golden lamp carried by Athena in the *Odyssey*.[86] This implies that the lamp must have been very old, and, that the reference to it in the *Odyssey* is an interpolation. Lorimer, in fact, argues that the passage was likely interpolated during the "Peisistratean age."[87] She does not, however, suggest what material might have been used to create this first lamp, and notes that the first recorded golden lamp is the one which Pausanias says (1.26.6-7) stood in the Parthenon.[88] This lamp was crafted by Kallimachos at

[83] Stanford, 2:438, suggests that the lamp in the *Odyssey* is "perhaps an echo of some incident in religious cult or myth." Elsewhere (2:317), he says that λύχνος is a "portable kind [of lamp] such as has been found at Mycenae and near Phaestus in Crete."

[84] According to the Scholia on the *Odyssey* (19.34), the lamp was either a torch, or else Athena herself radiated the light, much as a "light shone from the goddess Demeter and filled the doorway" of the palace of Keleos at Eleusis (*h. Dem.* 189).

[85] Lorimer (1950) 511. Nevertheless, Lorimer seems unconvinced that any lamps were actually dedicated to the goddess, for she says "of the five lamps found on the Acropolis of Athens some at least must have been dedicated to Athena."

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid. See also Wace and Stubbings (1962) 529, who say that this single "reference to a lamp has often been [so] suspected."

[88] Lorimer (1950) 511.

the end of the fifth century.[89] From the evidence, then, it seems that the first golden lamp was dedicated to Athena at a relatively late period. This raises the question, why is the lamp in the *Odyssey* golden? If the passage is interpolated, why should the lamp be made of gold, if no such lamp had yet been dedicated to the goddess? It seems just as possible that Kallimachos may have taken the idea of making a golden lamp for Athena from this reference in the *Odyssey*.

Archaeology indicates that olive oil was used in Greece during the Bronze Age. The Linear B tablets record offerings of fragrant oils to deities. Perfumed oils are also mentioned in the Homeric epics, where they are used only by the gods. The fragrant oil which was stored in Odysseus' palace may have been reserved for use in rituals. From the descriptions in Homer it seems that olive oil was used primarily for hygienic and cosmetic purposes. Oil was used to anoint the body after bathing, and also to give a glossy finish to linen cloth. In all probability the threads were moistened with oil prior to weaving, since wetness increased the strength of the fibres, and provided for a more uniform weave.

Lamps in ancient Greece were commonly fuelled with olive oil, although other types of oil or fat were also used. Only one lamp is mentioned in the Homeric epics, although whether or not it burned olive oil is unknown. That the lamp belongs to Athena may be significant, and the fact that it was golden may anticipate the golden lamp fashioned by Kallimachos for the Parthenon at the end of the fifth century.

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[89] Pausanias also says that the lamp held enough oil so that it burned night and day for one year and was refilled with oil on the same day each year. It was filled with oil from the sacred trees which grew in the Akademia outside the walls of Athens.

The Olive as a Food Source

In only one place in the Homeric epics does the poet mention the use of olives for food. While Odysseus is visiting the Underworld (*Od.* 11.590), he sees Tantalos surrounded by water and fruit trees, including olive trees, covered with plentiful fruit, all out of his reach.[90] It was mentioned earlier that the Linear B tablets record the rationing of olives at both Knossos and Pylos. Thus it seems likely that olives were eaten as food during the Bronze Age, as they were later in Classical Athens where they formed an important part of the diet.[91] Aristophanes mentions the eating of olives on at least two occasions (*Ekkl.* 308 and *Ran.* 988), although references to food in comedy may often be little more than a "caricature [of] reality."[92] In the *Ekklesiazousai,* for example, the Chorus complains that before the introduction of pay for attending the Ekklesia, men were content merely to debate, and to bring their own dinner as well. They suggest that a skin of wine, a loaf of bread, two onions, and three olives were sufficient food for such a banquet.

Up to this point references to the olive, whether to the tree itself and its wood, or to the fruit and the oil derived from it, have generally pertained to its use in daily life, that is, as it is used by the living. Even the symbolic use of the olive tree as a bed post in the *Odyssey* still relates to everyday human concerns. But the olive, especially its oil, but also the branches and leaves, played a vital role in rites connected with the dead. The next section of the chapter will deal with this aspect of the olive.

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[90] The implication is that Tantalos would eat the olives fresh off the tree just as he would have eaten apples or figs. In fact, as Forbes and Foxhall (1978) 37, point out, "olives cannot be eaten fresh because of the extreme bitterness of the juice."

[91] Sparkes (1962) 123.

[92] Ehrenberg (1951) 319-20.

The Olive in Funerary Rituals and Cult

Olive Oil

In addition to the hygienic use of olive oil to anoint the body after bathing, oil was also used in funerary rituals. As previously mentioned, traces of olive oil were found in soil within an Early Cycladic jug from a grave on the island of Naxos.[93] The Linear B tablets do not record the use of olive oil in funerary rituals during the Mycenaean period. Much later, however, in the fifth century, olive oil was presented as grave offerings in oil flasks which were called lekythoi.

For evidence of the use of oil in funerary rites during the late Bronze Age, or the Dark Age, it is necessary to refer again to the Homeric epics. The *Iliad* recounts how Achilleus "placed two-handled jars of oil and honey" (23.170, ἐτίθει μέλιτος καὶ ἀλείφατος ἀμφιφορῆας) on Patroklos' funeral pyre. In Book 24 of the *Odyssey* the soul of Agamemnon tells the soul of Achilleus, "you were burned in the clothing of the gods, and abundant/ oil and sweet honey" (24.67-68, καίεο δ' ἔν τ' ἐσθῆτι θεῶν καὶ ἀλείφατι πολλῷ/ καὶ μέλιτι γλυκερῷ). Stanford says that the oil and honey are "probably vestiges of the method of embalming to preserve the dead bodies of distinguished persons customary in Mycenaean times."[94]

The word ἄλειφαρ denotes "*unguent, anointing-oil, oil, fat,* used in funeral sacrifices."[95] It does not seem to designate olive oil in particular. The Linear B

[93] According to Runnels and Hansen (1986) 302, "the fact that this was a grave offering may suggest that it [i.e. olive oil] was remarkable for its rarity."

[94] Stanford, 2:415, on *Od.* 67-68. See also Leaf and Bayfield, 2:549, on *Il.* 23.168. In Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (633-35) the heroine tells Orestes, whom she does not yet recognize, that since he is from Argos she will quench his ashes with golden olive oil, and pour honey over his pyre.

[95] *LSJ*, s.v. ἄλειφαρ

tablets record offerings of both honey and olive oil, along with other food items, to the gods.[96] They do not, however, indicate whether these or other offerings were made in connection with funeral rites. Nevertheless, records of the offerings of olive oil to divinities, for example at Pylos where fragrant oils were offered to Poseidon, who was a principal god in that Mycenaean city, would suggest that olive oil had its place in cult during the Greek Bronze Age.[97]

In the *Iliad* there are also occasions where olive oil is used for the preservation of the body. Achilleus' companions, after bathing Patroklos' body, "anointed it with rich olive oil/ and poured fully-aged unguents onto his wounds" (18.350-51, ἤλειψαν λίπ' ἐλαίῳ/ ἐν δ' ὠτειλὰς πλῆσαν ἀλείφατος ἐννεώροιο). Here there is a clear distinction between the words for olive oil and unguent. For the use of ἐννέωρος with ἄλειφαρ, the Greek lexicon suggests that the adjective may mean "*of full age*," while Leaf and Bayfield say "possibly it was thought that oil which would keep sweet for nine years must be itself an antiseptic."[98] But it seems that the ambrosial oil that was the special prerogative of the gods was a preservative par excellence. Aphrodite anointed Hektor's body with "rose-scented ambrosial olive oil/ so that [Achilleus] might not tear it as he dragged it about" (*Il.* 23.186-87, ῥοδόεντι δὲ χρῖεν ἐλαίῳ/ ἀμβροσίῳ, ἵνα μή μιν ἀποδρύφοι ἑλκυστάζων), and clearly the corpse appeared as though newly dead twelve days later (24.31).

Olive oil seems to have played a significant role in funerary rituals throughout Greek history. The probable traces of olive oil in an Early Cycladic jug from a grave

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[96] Ventris and Chadwick² (1973) 283, 309-10.

[97] Ibid., 303, and 478-83.

[98] *LSJ*, s.v. ἐννέωρος. See Leaf and Bayfield, 2:443.

on Naxos parallels the practice of offering lekythoi filled with olive oil on graves during the fifth century. According to the *Iliad*, jars of oil and honey were placed on the funeral pyre of Patroklos. The epic also mentions the use of olive oil to preserve corpses. But besides the oil, the leaves and branches of the olive tree also appear in funerary rites, and it to these that the next section of this chapter will give consideration.

Olive Leaves and Branches

The leaves and boughs of the olive tree were used in certain religious rituals. The idea that religious significance could be attached to such things was ancient, for, as Nilsson has discerned, the branches of trees, although not necessarily of the olive, were already considered sacred in Minoan and Mycenaean times.[99]

Myth tells how olive branches assumed an important role at the Olympic games. According to the usual tradition, Herakles established the games at Olympia (Pind. *O.* 2.4).[100] Pausanias says (5.7.9) that the first athletic event held at Olympia was a foot-race run by Herakles and his brothers, who came from Mount Ida in Krete.[101] Herakles crowned the winner with a branch from a wild olive tree, which

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[99] Nilsson[2] ([1927] 1968, 264.

[100] According to other accounts, Pelops established the Olympic Games (Phlegon *FGrH* 257 F 1). Pelops was worshipped as a hero at Olympia and was offered sacrifices even before Zeus (Schol. in Pi. *O.* 1.149).

[101] Pausanias' account apparently describes a different Herakles from the one with whom most of us are familiar. In this account Herakles is the eldest of five brothers, who are called the Kouretes. Their original home was Mount Ida, and it was to them that Rheia entrusted her son Zeus after his birth on the island of Krete. Herakles is usually said to have been the son of Zeus, yet here he is obviously older than the supreme god. Perhaps Pausanias' account represents an older view of Herakles before his myth became conflated with that of Zeus who then became Herakles' Olympian father. According to Frazer, *Pausanias*, 3:484, opinions in the ancient world were divided as to whether the Olympian Games were founded by the famous

he had just brought to Olympia from the land of the Hyperboreans (Paus. 5.7.7; Pind. *O.* 3.13-16). Because there was such a large quantity of wild olive available, the hero and his companions made up a bed from the leaves which were still green in order that they might go to sleep (Paus. 5.7.7). Thomson says that the leaves "had to be still green . . . [because] the practice had a ritual significance."[102] Why ritualistic activity should be connected with leaves that "had to be still green" is not made clear. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the leaves would have been green because the olive tree is an evergreen, and it is likely that the branches were taken from the living tree.

Nevertheless, the leaves of the olive did have significance in certain Greek rituals. According to Plutarch (*Lyk.* 27.1), the traditional law-giver Lykourgos gave the Spartans new regulations for burials, notably that "they cover the body in a red military cloak (φοινικίς) and lay it on the leaves of the olive tree." It must be assumed that the olive leaves on which the Spartans laid the dead were green, like the leaves on which Herakles and his brothers had slept in the mythical past. Rohde suggests that the Spartans were merely following an ancient custom, and says that "everything points to the retention of primitive usage."[103] Apparently Rohde sees an example of such primitive ritual in the *Iliad* where the bones of Hektor are wrapped in "purple" (24.795, πορφυρέοις) robes, "clearly a vestige of an older custom which

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hero or by Herakles from Mount Ida. See also this chapter, n. 101 above.

[102] Thomson (1941) 215. His translation of the passage suggests that the activity of sleeping on the green leaves was repetitive—and thus, presumably, a ritual—but surely it only happened once, i.e. after this first foot-race which saw the establishment of the Olympian Games (Paus. 7.7.9), unless, of course, Thomson infers that such foundations were always followed by some sort of ritual as confirmation of the event.

[103] Rohde[8] (1925) 192, n. 61.

survived unchanged in Sparta."[104] It is impossible to know what significance was attached to the purple robes used to wrap Hektor's bones, and whether or not Bronze-Age warriors wore distinctive cloaks in battle. In the case of Spartan burials, however, the red military cloak was, undoubtedly, a symbol of the military life to which the Spartans were dedicated.

The lying of the body on a bed of olive leaves may have had some religious significance connected with the gods of the underworld. Pliny (*HN* 35.160) remarks that the Pythagorean style of burial was upon the leaves of "myrti et oleae et populi nigrae." These trees were, according to Rohde, "regularly sacred to the χθόνιοι."[105] As further evidence of the association of the olive in funerary rites, the Hellenistic poet Kallimachos reports that olive branches were laid under the corpse, and, also, that mourners wore olive wreathes (*Iamb.* 4.42-3).[106]

Thomson believes that magic could be attributed to the green leaves, which, "for living and dead alike, was the newness [renewal?] of life."[107] He does not specifically say what this magic was, but it seems certain that any magical quality assigned to the olive tree came about because the tree was evergreen, and the leaves, which appeared not to shed, but were continually replaced, were perceived as existing

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid. The myrtle, like the olive, is an evergreen. The black poplar, however, is not.

[106] The wearing of a crown of leaves, though not necessarily from the olive tree, at funerals takes place even today in certain parts of the world. In a recent article, with an accompanying photo in *National Geographic*, Thompson (1994) 73-74, 84-85, describes a funeral in Ghana where a female mourner wears a crown of leaves, made from a native vine, "as protection against the powerful spirits that are feared at funerals." Perhaps the purpose of the olive leaves, or leaves from the myrtle or black poplar, among the Pythagoreans and the Spartans, was also intended to protect the dead and mourners alike from spirits of the underworld.

[107] Thomson (1941) 215.

forever. Thus the leaves of the olive represented not so much a renewal, but the continuity of life. This idea would have appealed especially to the Pythagoreans, who believed in reincarnation.[108] Perhaps in Sparta the notion of continuity was seen to exist in the family of the deceased. This may be why the olive also had associations with birth. In Attika, when a male child was born, it was the custom to hang an olive-wreath outside the door.[109] The olive wreath was apotropaic, and it was for this reason that Kreusa placed a wreath of olive leaves around her new-born son before she exposed him (Eur. *Ion* 1433).[110]

Olive branches played a significant role in some other rituals. It was particularly associated with Apollo, whose shrine at Delphi had a grove of sacred olive trees. Apollo was the god of suppliants, and olive branches were carried by those who wished to supplicate the god (Kallim. *Iamb.* 4.79-80). Orestes arrives at the shrine of Apollo carrying "a branch of a tall olive tree/ appropriately wreathed with a large piece of wool" (Ais. *Eum.* 43-44, ἐλαίας θ' ὑψιγέννητον κλάδον,/ λήνει μεγίστῳ σωφρόνως ἐστεμμένον). But other gods could also be supplicated with olive branches. The Chorus of citizens tells Oidipous to take up twenty-seven olive branches and, with alternating hands, to lay them down and say a prayer (Soph. *OK* 483-84), to appease the "Terrible Goddesses, the Daughters of Earth, Daughters of the Darkness" (39-40, αἱ γὰρ ἔμφοβοι/ θεαί σφ' ἔχουσι, Γῆς τε καὶ Σκότου

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[108] Coxon, *OCD*², s.v. "Pythagoras," 903-4.

[109] See Hesychius, s.v. "στέφανον ἐκφέρειν," who adds that a woollen fillet was used, if the child was female. According to Deubner (1909) 648, the woollen fillet would have preceded the use of olive leaves. Deubner also suggests that any differentiation in the wreathes must be late. It is also possible that the use of an olive wreath for a male child symbolized the continuity of the family within the *genos*.

[110] Deubner (1909) 648.

κόραι), that is, the Eumenides (42, τὰς πάνθ᾽ ὁρῶσας Εὐμενίδας). In Aischylos' *Eumenides* the "Terrible Goddesses" are transformed into beings who will bring benefits to the city of Athens, but at Kolonos, while they are called Eumenides, they are still to be feared, and apparently have no link with Athena. Aischylos' play establishes this link, and it seems appropriate that branches from Athena's special tree should be used to placate them.

As this section has indicated, the leaves and branches of the olive tree were used in connection with a variety of rituals. A branch of wild olive was used to crown the victors at the Olympian Games, a practice begun, according to myth, by Herakles. Olive leaves and branches had apotropaic significance, and, perhaps for this reason, they had a place in rites connected with birth and death. At Athens an olive wreath was hung over the threshold of a house where a male child was born, and at Sparta the bodies of the dead lay on a bed of olives leaves. Olive branches were also used to supplicate the gods. Thus, the leaves and branches of the olive tree, as well as its oil, as noted earlier in this chapter, were closely bound to the lives of the Greeks, not just on a daily basis, but throughout their entire lives. It was undoubtedly for this reason that the Greeks ascribed a mythical origin to this marvellous tree. Those myths—for there are at least two—will form the subjects of the next two parts of this chapter.

The Origin of the Olive Tree

According to myth Athena created the first olive tree, which she planted on her Akropolis, at the time of her contest with Poseidon. But while the olive was one of the goddess' attributes, it was also closely associated with her father, Zeus. Burkert points

out that Athena and Zeus together watch "over olive trees in general,"[111] and Farnell noted long ago that "outside Attica there are few places in Greece where the olive was so associated with the goddess."[112] At Olympia, for example, it was sacred to Zeus, and in the Olympian games the prize was a crown of wild olive leaves (Paus. 5.15.3; Ar. *Pl.* 585-6). And just as there is a myth which tells how Athena created the first olive tree, so there is also a myth which describes how the olive first came to Olympia.

Pindar (*O.* 3.19-23) says that the altars to Zeus had already been consecrated, and the Olympian games ordained, but there were no trees growing at Olympia. It was Herakles, who "brought the grey-hued adornment of the olive" (*O.* 3.13, γλαυκόχροα κόσμον ἐλαίας) to this sanctuary of Zeus. Herakles had discovered the olive trees when he was carrying out his third labour. As he sought the "doe with golden horns" (3.29) in the land of the Hyperboreans (3.31), Herakles "stood and marvelled at the trees,/ and he longed to plant them around the limits of the race-course that is rounded twelve times" (3.32-34, δένδρεα θάμβαινε σταθείς./ τῶν νιν γλυκὺς ἵμερος ἔσχεν δωδεκάγναμπτον περὶ τέρμα δρόμου/ ἵππων φυτεῦσαι). So he asked the Hyperboreans "for the all-welcoming sanctuary of Zeus, a shady tree/ common to all men, a crown of the deeds of valour" (3.17-18, πιστὰ φρονέων Διὸς αἴτει πανδόκῳ/ ἄλσει σκιαρόν τε φύτευμα ξυνὸν ἀνθρώποις στέφανόν τ' ἀρετᾶν).

Pausanias also describes how the olive was brought to the site of Olympia, and he adds that the olive trees were wild: "it is said that the wild olive was introduced

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[111] Burkert (1985) 141.

[112] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:293.

into Greece by Herakles from the land of the Hyperboreans, men living beyond the home of the North Wind" (5.7.7, κομισθῆναι δὲ ἐκ τῆς Ὑπερβορέων γῆς τὸν κότινόν φασιν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους ἐς Ἕλληνας, εἶναι δὲ ἀνθρώπους οἳ ὑπὲρ τὸν ἄνεμον οἰκοῦσι τὸν Βορέαν).[113] Pausanias also implies that there was only one olive tree, or, at least one wild olive tree, growing at Olympia when he says it "is called the olive of the Beautiful Crown, and from its leaves are made the crowns which is customary to give the winners of Olympic contests" (5.15.3, καλεῖται δὲ ἐλαία Καλλιστέφανος, καὶ τοῖς νικῶσι τὰ Ὀλύμπια καθέστηκεν ἀπ' αὐτῆς δίδοσθαι τοὺς στεφάνους.) Perhaps only one of the original trees brought to Olympia by Herakles had survived.

It is interesting to note that both Pindar and Pausanias report the tradition that Herakles brought the olive tree south into Greece from the land of the Hyperboreans. Pindar mentions a more definite geographical location, the river Ister (*O.* 3.14). To the Greeks the Ister was the lower course of the river Danube—as it flows from the Iron Gates to the Black Sea. It seems obvious that this region of Europe is too far north for the growing of olives.[114] Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, the earliest record of the olive in Greece occurs in the northern part of the country in Thessaly.[115] While Thessaly is neither particularly far north, nor is it

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[113] Pausanias (2.31.10) also says that Herakles discovered the wild olive by the Saronic Gulf, which is near Troizen, and that he made his club from this olive tree. Perhaps Pausanias means that the hero discovered another olive tree in this part of Greece. In pseudo-Aristotle (*de mirab. ausc.* 834a51), it is reported that Herakles took a cutting from a wild olive growing near the Ilissos river, between Athens and the Peiraeus, and planted it at Olympia. According to Frazer, *Pausanias*, 3:484, this story was apparently told at Athens.

[114] See Carrington (1971) 22, for a map which shows the distribution of the olive tree around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The mouth of the Ister/Danube lies much further to the north.

[115] See p. 74 above.

near the Ister, it may have seemed so in the minds of early story-tellers drawing on fading memories of long-forgotten heroic traditions.

Thus, the olive was sacred not only to Athena, but also to Zeus, especially at Olympia. But Zeus did not create the olive tree. That privilege belonged to Athena, and implies a special relationship between the goddess and her sacred tree. The next part of the chapter will look closely at this association, and consider some of the reasons how and why it developed.

The Olive and Athena

The previous section told how Herakles brought the wild olive from lands north of Greece to Olympia. But the myth of Athena's contest with Poseidon says that the goddess planted the first olive tree on her Akropolis (Eur. *Ion* 1434).[116] Could it be that the olive which Athena created was domesticated? Farnell says that the olive tree which grew on the Akropolis was wild,[117] yet, apparently, there was an ancient tradition which associated Athena with the domesticated olive. According to Diodorus Siculus (5.73.7), "to Athena men ascribe the gift to mankind of the domestication and cultivation of the olive-tree . . . for before the birth of this goddess this kind of tree

[116] Le Lasseur (1919) 43, and 322, refers to a legend that Kekrops brought the olive to Attika. She does not elaborate. Harrison ([1903] 1922) 261-62 says that Kekrops "was a typical culture hero . . . and taught [the Athenians] to cultivate the olive." Neither Le Lasseur nor Harrison give the ancient sources for an association between Kekrops and the olive. But see Philochoros (*FGrH* F 93-98 and commentary, and Schol. in Ar. *Plut.* 773), for Kekrops as the king who brought civilization to Athens and in whose reign the first olive tree grew on the Akropolis.

[117] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:293. Farnell also says that, according to Euripides, Athena planted the first olive tree in Salamis. But in the passage, to which he is referring, the Chorus are describing the island of Salamis "which lies over against the sacred hill, where Athena/ first revealed the shoot of the grey olive" (*Tro.* 801-2, τᾶς ἐπικεκλιμένας ὄχθοις ἱεροῖς, ἵν' ἐλαίας/ πρῶτον ἔδειξε κλάδον γλαυκᾶς 'Αθάνα). What this seems to say, is not that the olive first grew at Salamis, but that Salamis overlooks the Akropolis, i.e. the sacred hill, on which Athena first planted the olive.

was found only along with the other wild woody growths."[118]

How did the olive tree come to be associated with Athena? Nilsson, who has argued that Athena may be descended from the Minoan palace goddess,[119] has also remarked that "the sacred olive tree of Athena calls to mind the Minoan tree cult."[120] Earlier in the chapter it was noted that Krete may have been the earliest location for the use of the olive and its oil, and perhaps also of the cultivation of the olive, in the Greek world.[121] It seems certain that the palace goddess must have watched over the crops and orchards, including the olive trees, which grew in the fields surrounding the palaces of Minoan Krete, and, later, of Mycenaean Greece as well. Nilsson does not indicate the kind of tree which was venerated in Minoan religion.[122] But from the evidence of the Linear B tablets for the distribution of olive oil to divinities at Knossos,[123] and epic and tragic literature, which describes the use of olive oil and branches in rituals, it is possible that the olive acquired a particular sanctity, so that it naturally became sacred to the palace goddess, who, in this connection, is surely to be regarded as Athena.

There may be traces of this association between Athena and the olive in the

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[118] According to Burkert (1985) 141, the gift of Athena was the cultivated olive. That Athena may have planted, or created, the cultivated olive, may well show that the Athenians were aware that the domesticated olive produces larger quantities of oil than the wild olive. See Forbes and Foxhall (1978) 38.

[119] Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 498-99, and (1967)^3 347f. and 433. Of course, as Nilsson makes clear, Athena was also a Mycenaean palace goddess.

[120] Nilsson^3 (1967) 349.

[121] See pp. 74-76 above.

[122] On the tree cult see Nilsson^2 ([1927] 1968) 262-88.

[123] Ventris and Chadwick^2 (1973) 217 and 303.

Odyssey. Athena is the protectress of Odysseus, who himself has a special relationship with the olive. Odysseus uses an olive-wood stake to blind Polyphemos, in order to effect his escape from the Kyklops' cave. An olive tree stands at the centre of Odysseus' palace on Ithaka, and it was from this tree that the king had carved one of the posts of his marriage bed. There is also an olive tree growing near the harbour on Ithaka, and it is beside the trunk of this tree that Athena and Odysseus sit so they can plan vengeance against the suitors. This last reference, albeit slight, is, as Marx points out, "the first certain connection" between Athena and the olive tree.[124]

But a single olive tree also grew on the Akropolis of Athens. Farnell suggested that it was from the existence of this tree, which grew beside the temple of Athena, that the olive "naturally came to be associated with" the goddess.[125] It is unknown how early this association began. Athena is shown with the olive as her attribute in extant Attic black-figure vase-paintings from about the mid-sixth century. According to Marx, the olive tree "itself is shown only once in the presence of Athena" in Attic vase-painting from the years c. 550–540.[126] But, vase-paintings from this same period also depict Athena carrying an olive wreath as she attends her favourite heroes.[127] Marx suggests that in these scenes the goddess may actually be Athena *Nike*, and that the olive "wreath which she holds is a victory wreath, like those used

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[124] Marx (1988) 353.

[125] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:293.

[126] Marx (1988) 354. This scene is an episode from the Trojan War—Achilleus' ambush of Troilos. Marx also implies (p. 352) that the association between the goddess and the olive can be found in her cult statue which was made of olive wood.

[127] Ibid., 355.

to crown victors in athletic contests," such as the Panathenaic Games.[128] In the last century Jane Harrison wrote that in Athens "at one period of her development [Athena] was 'Ἀθηναΐς, the sacred olive-tree" itself.[129] Her hypothesis, of course, is impossible to prove. If this perception had existed in an earlier time-period, then it had disappeared by the historical era. There is no evidence in standard Greek literature that Athena was ever regarded as the olive tree. Cook, however, mentions that Nonnos, who probably lived in the fifth century A.D., apparently used the name of Athena "as a simple equivalent of ἐλαία" (*Dion.* 15.112).[130] It seems likely that if Athena was ever regarded as the olive tree, this concept was current at a relatively late period in the history of Athens.[131]

This brief look at the connections between Athena and the olive clearly demonstrates that it is unknown how the goddess acquired this important attribute. While the relationship may go back to the Minoan tree cult, it is equally possible that it originated from the mere fact that an olive tree grew near her temple on the Akropolis. At the same time, her connections with the olive in Athens had a significance which reached beyond the sacred, and the mythological, for it seems

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[128] Ibid., 355-56. On Athena *Nike* and the Panathenaic Games, see Chapter Two, pp. 27-28 above.

[129] Harrison (1895) 89. Hesychius, s.v. 'Ἀθηναΐς· ἡ ἐλαία [καὶ 'Ἀθῆναι ἄστυ], which Cook (1940) 3/1:763, translates as the "Athena-tree." It should be noted that Cook is rather sceptical of Harrison's conclusions.

[130] Cook (1940) 3/1:763, n. 4. The Loeb edition of the *Dionysiaca* has ἐλαίης, but, according to the Lexicon to Nonnos, s.v. ἐλαίη, the usage of ἀθήνης occurs in Berlin Papyrus L.

[131] In addition to Nonnos, other late references to Athena as the olive tree occur in Favorinus *lex.*, s.v. 'Ἀθῆνα, ἡ ἐλαία, cited by Cook (1940) 3/1:763, n.4, and the *Etym. Magn.*, s.v. 'Ἀθηναΐς, ἡ ἐλαία· καὶ 'Ἀθηναία, ἡ ἀγριελαία. Favorinus *floruit* near the end of the first century A.D., while the *Etymologicum Magnum* is dated to approximately the eleventh century A.D. According to Forbes and Browning, *OCD*², s.v. "Hesychius," 512, the lexicographer Hesychius (see n. 129 above) "probably belongs to the fifth century A.D."

certain that here Athena was principally associated with the domesticated olive. The domestic olive, and its oil, in particular, was of paramount importance to the Athenian economy. From this fact, it was an easy extension of Athena's original association with the olive, whether it went back to Minoan times, or only as far as her sacred tree on the Akropolis, to a new association, as the protectress of the domestic olives trees of Attika. And at this point in the chapter, it seems appropriate to examine the relationship between the olive and Athena's favourite city.

The Olive and Athens

During the sixth and fifth centuries the export of olive oil was an important aspect of the Athenian economy, but the olive seems to have been associated with Athens from a much earlier date. Because the soil of Attika was not suitable for the growing of wheat, this part of Greece may have turned at an early stage to the growing of vines and olives, and the production of wine and oil, which could be traded for wheat.[132]

In the early sixth century, Solon forbade the export of all agricultural produce except olive oil (Plut. *Solon* 24.1). It is widely believed that olives and olive oil were the chief Athenian exports even before the beginning of the sixth century. Seltman, for example, says that "before the age of Solon the cultivation of olives must have been by far the most important Attic industry, for the olive grows slowly, and the trade was a flourishing one long before the dawn of the sixth century."[133]

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[132] Boardman (1976) 190.

[133] Seltman ([1924] 1974) 9. See also Bailey (1940) 70, who suggests that trade in oil was important to Athens from c. 650.

During the tyranny of Peisistratos, the production and export of olive oil increased. Dio Chrysostom (25.3) says that Peisistratos ordered the planting of olive trees, and that prior to this time, Attika was ψιλὴν καὶ ἄδενδρον, which is unlikely since olive oil was being exported in, and probably before, Solon's time. Since full production of oil does not occur until olive trees are 40 to 50 years old, the trees would have to have been planted long before Peisistratos gained power.[134] The increased export of olive oil may have been a stimulus to the pottery industry in Athens. French notes that "the quantity of Attic Black Figure pottery dated to the years 560 to 520 seems to surpass that of any previous period," and is found throughout the Aegean, and in both the eastern and western Mediterranean.[135] French also points out that it is the plain amphorae which provide the best evidence of increased trade in oil and also wine.[136]

According to French, after the Persian wars there was an urgent need to plant olive trees to replace losses incurred during the wars.[137] At the same time, the numbers of men who returned to farming and food production had also dropped, since men had been attracted to "enrichment" with the fleet, and away from the hard work

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[134] *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Olive." When irrigated, olive trees reach full production at 15 to 20 years, but at 40 to 50 years when "dry-farmed" which was, and still is, the usual practice in Mediterranean countries.

[135] French (1964) 43. During this period Athens seems to have dominated the pottery industry throughout the Mediterranean. Hannestad (1988) 222, points out that one of the requirements for the production of fine pottery was an "abundance of fuel," to fire the kilns. She suggests that branches pruned from the olive trees, and waste from olive-pressing, may have been used as fuel, and "there was thus a symbiotic relationship between the olivegrowing [*sic*] and the ceramic production."

[136] French (1964) 50.

[137] Ibid., 82–83.

of farming, even after the wars had ended.[138] Whether or not this may have been a factor in the development of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon will be examined in Chapter Four.

In addition to the sacred olive which grew on the Akropolis, twelve olive trees, called the *moriai*, grew at the Akademia, an open space of land set aside for military exercises just outside Athens.[139] The *moriai* were sacred to Athena, from whose Akropolis they were said to have been transplanted, presumably with cuttings taken from the first olive tree which the goddess had created.[140] Mansfield cites two different origins for the *moriae*: "some Atthidographers," he says, "stated that the grove had grown up from a shoot taken from the olive-tree on the Akropolis, while others maintained that they were offshoots of the olive-tree in the Academy."[141] Mansfield does not suggest the origin of the single tree growing in the Akademia, but Pausanias reports that in the Akademia there was "an olive tree said to be the second [one] that appeared" (1.30.2). Pausanias does not say whether or not Athena might also have planted this tree.

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[138] Ibid., 109. The situation would then have been similar to what it was claimed to be in the time of the ancient Athenian kings, who spread the story of the contest between Athena and Poseidon in an effort to draw the people away from the sea and back to the land (Plut. *Them.* 19.3). Plutarch tells this story in his description of Themistokles' improvements to the port facilities at the Piraeus. According to Plutarch, at the time it was said that Themistokles was attempting to join Athens to the sea, a policy that was contrary to that of the former kings of Attika (19.2).

[139] According to Cook (1940) 3/1:762, they were called the *moriai* "because on them depended the fate (*móros*) of the people." But the Scholia on Aristophanes' *Nubes* 1005, says that the *moriai* took their name from the sacred olive tree on the Akropolis which was called *moria* because Halirrothius, Poseidon's son, had met his fate (*móros*), when he tried to cut it down to avenge his father's defeat by Athena in their contest. See Frazer, *Pausanias*, 2:394.

[140] *Suda*, s.v. "Μορίαι."

[141] Mansfield (1985) 240, n.37.

The olive oil which was presented to the winners in gymnastic contests and chariot racing at the Panathenaic Games came from the *moriai* (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 60.2).[142] The *moriai* also grew on private land.[143] Apparently not all the olive trees which grew in Attika, whether on private property, or at the Akademia, were sacred.[144] Birge says that "although Attic μορίαι did not grow in one spot, Athenians considered them a group in a legal sense."[145] The idea of such a grouping lies behind Aristotle's comment that formerly "the council of the Areopagus brought to trial anyone who dug out or broke down a sacred olive tree" (*Ath. Pol.* 60.2), and is the subject of a speech by Lysias of the man who was brought before the Areopagus, and charged with the removal of a sacred olive stump from his property (Lys. 7).

According to a story told by Herodotos (5.82.2), the olive trees of Attika were credited with special sanctity as early as the mid-eighth century.[146] After their crops failed the Epidaurians consulted the Delphic oracle. They were advised to set up statues of Damia and Auxesia, and that the statues should be made from the wood of the cultivated olive. The Epidaurians asked the Athenians to give them an olive

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[142] *IG* II^2.2311 records some of the prizes awarded at the Panathenaic Games during the period 440-350. For example, the inscription indicates that the winner of the two-horse chariot race received 140 amphorae of olive oil. Two scholars have recently estimated the value, in *today's* terms, of the 140 amphorae of olive oil—and have reached quite different results. Young (1984) 125, estimates the value at $94,920 U.S., while Miller (1991) 79-82, gives a more conservative estimate of $44,440 U.S.

[143] Nilsson^3 (1967) 442. During the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans cut down the olive trees growing all over Attika, except for the *moriai* in the Akademia, because anyone who harmed them was accursed (Schol. on Soph. *OK* 701). See Frazer, *Pausanias*, 2:394.

[144] Birge (1982) 213-14.

[145] Ibid., 215.

[146] On the view that the event described by Herodotos took place during the eighth century, see Coldstream (1977) 135.

tree to cut down, believing that the olive trees which grew in Attika were especially sacred. Then Herodotos adds, "but it is also said that at that time there were olive trees nowhere else on earth except at Athens."

While the most ancient cult images were probably made of wood, "in only a few instances can it be shown that there was some sacred significance attached to the origin or variety of wood from which *xoana* were made."[147] As it happens, the ancient cult image of Athena *Polias* was made of olive wood,[148] and Romano believes that the wood of the olive tree was used for the cult image of the goddess because the olive held "some special meaning for the Athenians" due to its association with Athena.[149] It might also be that the particular sanctity attributed to olive trees in Attika, as Herodotos reported, led to the use of olive wood for the goddess' image.

In myth the ever-living olive tree grew in the house of Odysseus as a permanent symbol of the continuing vitality of his marriage, and his home. In fifth-century Athens it would become a symbol of the vitality of the city. The olive had come to represent economic stability in the sixth century. Now after the devastation caused by the Persians, it was Athena's sacred olive tree which assured the Athenians that their city would rise from the ashes and regain not only its previous glory but even surpass it. The story told by Herodotos that the sacred olive tree grew a new shoot the day after it was burned by the Persians seems to reflect a belief in the city's own rebirth. Burkert calls its almost immediate regrowth "a vivid assertion of the

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[147] Romano (1980) 359.

[148] On the cult image, see Chapter Two, pp. 30-33 above.

[149] Romano (1980) 360.

unbroken vital force of Athens."[150] Cook says that "there is reason to think that the Olive . . . was regarded as the life-tree of Athens on whose preservation the very existence of the state depended."[151] Harrison, calling the sacred olive tree the "fate-tree of the state, [adds that] the city, ruined by the Persians, could only revive when it sent forth a new shoot."[152]

The vitality of the olive tree was represented not only by its persistent growth in the face of what should have been adversity, but also by its longevity,[153] as well as by its evergreen leaves. Since it lived through several human generations, the olive tree seemed to be a fixed entity. Its leaves, which appeared never to shed, reinforced a belief in this seeming immortality. In reality, as Plutarch says, the olive did lose its leaves, but it was not conspicuous because, "as the first are shed others are growing in their place; like cities, each is ever-living and continuous" (*Quaest. conv.* 723e-f).[154] Plutarch's comparison with the city provides a further reason why the olive tree was regarded as a symbol of Athens. In the fifth century, the population had seen their city arise from the ashes of the destruction of the Persian wars, just as Athena's sacred tree had risen "phoenix-like in a new life out of the ashes of its former self."[155] It seemed that their city would live forever through all the generations, just

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[150] Burkert (1985) 85.

[151] Cook (1940) 3/1:760.

[152] Harrison (1895) 89.

[153] Detienne (173) 295, n. 1, cites the commentary to Pliny *HN* 16.234 by J. André who says that the olive tree can live from 1,000 to 2,000 years.

[154] Translation by E.L. Minar, Jr., *et al.* (Loeb Classical Library, 1961). Plutarch does not restrict his observation to the olive tree, since he mentions that the myrtle and the laurel also do not appear to shed their leaves.

[155] McDevitt (1972) 234.

like the sacred olive tree on the Akropolis.

By the time of Solon, Athena's sacred olive tree was well-known, even outside Athens. According to Plutarch (*Sol.* 12.5-6), the Kretan Epimenides, one of the seven sages, was invited by the Athenians to their city where he assisted Solon in the making of new legislation, and for his payment he asked that he receive "nothing more than a branch from the sacred olive tree."

In Sophokles' *Oidipous at Kolonos*, written just before the poet's death in c. 406, after Theseus has assured Oidipous that he will never come to grief now that he has arrived at Kolonos, the Chorus sings an ode praising the beauties and wonders of the land and the city of Athens. The second strophe is a paian to the olive, the greatest token of divine favour.[156]

ἔστιν δ' οἷον γᾶς
'Ασίας οὐκ ἐπακούω,
οὐδ' ἐν τᾷ μεγάλᾳ Δωρίδι νάσῳ
Πέλοπος πώποτε βλαστὸν
φύτευμ' ἀχείρωτον αὐτοποιόν,
ἐγχέων φόβημα δαΐων,
ὃ τᾷδε θάλλει μέγιστα χώρᾳ,
γλαυκᾶς παιδοτρόφου φύλλον ἐλαίας·
τὸ μέν τις οὐ νεαρὸς οὐδὲ γήρᾳ
συνναίων ἁλιώσει χερὶ πέρσας ὁ
γὰρ εἰσαιὲν ὁρῶν κύκλος
λεύσσει νιν Μορίου Διὸς
χἀ γλαυκῶπις 'Αθάνα.

(There grows such a plant that
I do not hear tell of in the
land of Asia nor ever yet in the
great Dorian island of Pelops,
unconquered, self-renewing, the
terror of hostile spears,
which flourishes most greatly in this land,
the leaf of the grey olive, nurturer of
children.

[156] McDevitt (1972) 234.

Neither anyone young nor old will make it
barren or destroy it.
For the all-seeing eye of Zeus
Morios and grey-eyed Athena
keep their gaze over it.)

(695–706)

The Chorus describes the wonder of the sacred olive on the Akropolis which, unconquered, renewed itself after it was destroyed by the Persians. This single, miraculous tree is representative of all the olive trees in Attika, and so every olive tree, not only the one growing on the Akropolis, is "a symbol . . . of the security and indomitability of Athens."[157] But although the olive is capable of renewing itself, it still has need of a guardian. While Athena *Polias* is the obvious choice for this role, in fact, she is not the sole guardian of the olive at Athens. It was mentioned earlier that Athena's power, as well as her origin, stemmed from her father.[158] But although her father was worshipped as Zeus *Polieus* at an altar on the Akropolis (Paus. 1.24.4), Athena was the sole guardian of her city, and it was she who protected it, if necessary, from the whims of Zeus (Solon 3.1–4). But Zeus and Athena together, as Burkert has pointed out, watch over all olive trees.[159] This is made clear by their common epithet, *Morios*, which designates them as guardians of the sacred olive trees at the Akademia, and by the close association between the two gods and the olive at

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[157] Ibid., 234–35.

[158] Chapter Two, pp. 43–44 above.

[159] Burkert (1985) 141.

the principal sites of their worship, Olympia and Athens.[160] But the olive was especially revered at Athens where, according to Detienne, the sacred olive tree was regarded as "l'arbre de tous les citoyens."[161] As such the Athenians could be assured that just as the sacred olive on the Akropolis and the *moriai* were protected by both Athena and her father, they themselves were also doubly protected.

It was pointed out earlier in this part of the chapter, that the olive undoubtedly came to be associated with Athens because the soil of Attika was especially suited to the growing of olives. While olive oil may well have been exported from Athens even before the sixth century, it was during this century that the production and export of the oil increased dramatically. In addition to the sacred olive tree on the Akropolis, other sacred trees, the *moriai*, which were sometimes claimed to be descended from shoots taken from the sacred olive tree on the Akropolis, grew in the Akademia just outside Athens. The olive trees of Attika were apparently regarded as sacred as far back as the eighth century, and it was even thought that they grew nowhere else. Although the sacred olive on the Akropolis was destroyed by the Persians, it grew a new shoot the very next day, and, thus, assured the people that, like itself, their city would recover from the devastation of war, and "bring forth new shoots in place of the old" (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 14.2.4). It seems likely that the economic benefits provided by the olive trees of Attika, and the renewal of the sacred olive tree on the Akropolis after the Persian Wars, together with its association with the City Goddess, contributed to the formation of the myth of the creation of the first

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[160] According to the Schol. on Sophokles' *OK* 705, *Morios* was the name for Zeus *Kataibates* at the Akademia. The god was also worshipped as *Kataibates* at Olympia (Paus. 5.14.10). *LSJ*, s.v. καταιβάτης "a name of Zeus *descending in thunder and lightning*."

[161] Detienne (1973) 297.

olive tree at the time of the contest between Athena and Poseidon.

The sacred olive was protected both by Athena and by Zeus, and thus assured the citizens of Athens that they, and their city, were also protected by the gods. But while the gift of Athena brought prosperity and divine prestige to the city, still other gifts enhanced its security. These were the gifts of Poseidon.[162] Alternative versions of the myth tell how the sea god offered the city either the sea or the horse. After the Chorus in the *Oidipous at Kolonos* has exalted the olive, it praises the gifts of Poseidon, which have brought to their own city "the glory of horses, and their noble foals, the glory of sea power" (711, εὔιππον, εὔπωλον, εὐθάλασσον).[163] With such words the Chorus acknowledges the importance of each of the gifts of Poseidon, both of which have brought such renown to their city. At this point the chapter will turn to the gifts of the sea god. The horse will be mentioned after the sea, and then only briefly, for it is the sea which is Poseidon's natural element, and the usual gift in most accounts of the myth of his contest with Athena.

B. THE SEA

One need only look at a map of Greece to realize how much a part of daily life the sea must always have been for the population. The mainland is indented with numerous bays, and nearly severed by the Gulf of Corinth, while the surrounding seas are dotted with many islands. To the south-east, in the Aegean, the Cyclades, and the Dodecanese form what could be called stepping stones on the way to Asia

[162] McDevitt (1972) 236.

[163] Since the Chorus devoted one strophe to the praise of the olive, but only a few lines to each of the gifts of Poseidon, along with praise of the city, it seems that the olive still might be the most important gift.

Minor. Further to the south lies the island of Krete, where the earliest civilization in the Greek lands developed.

While the first inhabitants of the Greek mainland and the islands must have been familiar with the sea, the people who brought the Greek language into these lands were not. They invaded Greece by moving south from inland regions to the north in successive waves beginning c. 2000, and eventually fused with the native, and more advanced, population to create the Mycenaean civilization.[164] The Greek language became dominant, but it did not, for the most part, displace the names of places, or things with which the invaders were unfamiliar.[165] Such was the case with θάλασσα (sea), since the word appears not to be Greek, and most probably was used by the pre-Hellenic population for the sea.[166] Thus the Greeks absorbed the foreign term θάλασσα into their language, although they also used words from their own language to indicate the sea. As Guthrie says, "confronted with the Mediterranean, the Greeks called it 'the salt element' (ἅλς), 'the flat expanse' (πέλαγος, equivalent in meaning to the Latin *aequor*), or 'the way across' (πόντος, cf. πόρος and Latin *pons*)."[167] All of these terms are used for the sea in the poets, but θάλασσα would become the most common term in prose.

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[164] Hammond, *OCD*², s.v. "Greece," 478.

[165] See Burn ([1966] 1982) 30-31. Such names often terminate in -nthos/ -ntha or -sos [-ssos]/ -ssa.

[166] Guthrie ([1950] 1954) 97, and Meillet (1975) 12-13. But see Nyman (1980) 69-73, who cites evidence suggesting that θάλασσα may be related to θάλλω, "*sprout, grow, thrive*; . . . *bloom*" (*LSJ*, s.v.). Rose and Robertson, *OCD*², s.v. "Poseidon," 866, also note "the paucity of Greek names for fishes."

[167] Guthrie ([1950-] 1955) 97. According to *LSJ*, s.v., ἅλς is used "generally of shallow water near shore," πέλαγος is "esp. *high sea, open sea*," and πόντος is also "*open sea*." *LSJ* also notes that θάλασσα usually indicated the Mediterranean.

While the invaders may not have had prior familiarity with the sea, they adapted to this new element, and, as the Homeric epics and later literature and history shows, they made it their own. The sea afforded ease of travel along the coast, and to the islands, thus opening up communication, both friendly and hostile. Trade developed along with piracy and warfare. How quickly these developments took place is unknown, but it seems obvious that seafaring must have played an important role in the Mycenaean world.

The Linear B tablets mention ship construction as an occupation,[168] although it is unknown whether the ships were built for the purpose of trade or warfare, or both. Nevertheless, a group of tablets from Pylos seems to reveal some sort of naval or military activity in the period preceding the destruction of the city. According to Ventris and Chadwick one group of tablets lists a number of "rowers to be provided by various towns [near Pylos] for an expedition to Pleuron."[169] The authors speculate that Pleuron may be "the important Aetolian city of that name," and, thus, "their journey may have some connexion with the disturbances constituting the 'Dorian invasion'."[170] The second group of tablets seems to indicate the disposition of troops "to guard the coastal regions" near Pylos.[171] But, although the tablets give some hint of the crisis which was about to overwhelm the Mycenaean kingdoms, they provide virtually no information about the organization of their navies, the numbers

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[168] Ventris and Chadwick^{2} (1973) 123.

[169] Ibid., 183.

[170] Ibid., 138. The notion of a Dorian invasion is now obsolete.

[171] Ventris and Chadwick^{2} (1973) 184.

of ships, and crews who were involved, or even whether there was a permanent fleet or merely one hastily gathered in a time of crisis.

The tablets do not mention either ships or crews at Knossos, although that city in Krete may have been the first thalassocracy. Thucydides (1.4) reports the tradition that Minos, the legendary king of Knossos, was the earliest person to possess a navy.[172] With this fleet he was able to control the greater part of the Aegean Sea, and apparently cleared the sea of pirates. Minos may have been a quasi-historical figure, who gave his name to the Minoan civilization, and played a leading role in the myths of Athens, such as the tribute of the Athenian young people, and Theseus and the killing of the Minotaur, which might suggest "a real contest between prehistoric Attica and Crete."[173] Extant representations of Minoan ships occur mostly on seals, which do not show much detail.[174] There do not appear to be any depictions of ships on vases or frescos from Knossos, but frescos discovered at the late Bronze Age site of Akrotiri, and now in the National Museum in Athens, illustrate what may be a sea battle as well as a naval expedition comprising a flotilla of ships, which are either departing or arriving in port or, perhaps, taking part in a ceremonial procession.[175] These frescos have provided modern scholars with what is surely the best indication

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[172] See also Hdt. 3.122.2.

[173] Rose, *et al.*, *OCD*² s.v. "Minos," 692, says that Minos may have been a dynastic title of the rulers at Knossos.

[174] Casson (1971) 32-34, and fig. 34-51. A ship is also depicted on a gold ring, dated to the period LH IIIa, from the Mycenean city of Tiryns. See Morgan (1988) 122-23, and fig. 68.

[175] The north frieze apparently depicts a shipwreck, possibly the result of a sea battle. See Doumas (1983) 86-88. The south frieze has been interpreted as the voyage and arrival of a fleet, perhaps from a foreign land (Doumas, pp. 105-6). Morgan (1988) 145, however, suggests that the scene depicts a "nautical procession . . . [representing] the resumption of the navigation season."

we have today of the appearance of ships from the Minoan period.[176]

While the sea provided the Greeks of the Bronze Age with a means of transportation for trade and warfare, it must also have been a source of food. Fishbones and the remains of shellfish have been found at Mycenae.[177] A late Bronze Age fresco from Akrotiri shows a fisherman proudly displaying his catch. It is not known if the octopus was considered a delicacy as it is today in the Mediterranean, but it often appears as a decorative motif on vases from Minoan Krete.

Since Greece is virtually surrounded by the sea, it was inevitable that it would play a significant role in daily life. Yet the Greeks themselves only became familiar with the sea after c. 2000 when they migrated from the north. Seafaring, whether for trade, travel, warfare, or piracy, seems to have been well-developed by the late Bronze Age. The Minoan civilization was apparently supported by a strong navy, perhaps even before the Mycenaean culture developed on the Greek mainland. But in order to understand further the importance of the sea in Greek life and history, it will be necessary to turn, as it was in the case of the olive, to the literature.

The Sea in Myth and Literature

Since, for the most part, the Greeks were in close contact with the sea, it is not surprising that the sea is mentioned frequently in their literature. Their interest is not sentimental, but rather one that takes for granted that the sea is something

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[176] According to Morgan (1988) 121, "the depiction is unprecedented; [and] provides valuable information on Aegean ship technology." But whether the ships are warships or merchant vessels, or both, must depend on the interpretation of the frescos.

[177] Ventris and Chadwick[2] (1973) 130.

which has to be crossed to reach their destination, wherever that may be. What stands out, in particular, is the emphasis placed on the danger of the sea, the fury of the storm, and the terrible possibility of death by drowning. This picture of the sea is the common one, beginning with Hesiod and Homer.

In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the poet reflects on just these dangers when he advises his brother that he should "remember all works/ in their right season, but especially seafaring" (641-42, ἔργων μεμνημένος εἶναι/ ὡραίων πάντων, περὶ ναυτιλίης δὲ μάλιστα), for one will only profit, "if the winds hold off their harsh gales from [the ship]" (645). Mid-summer promised the best weather for sailing (663) when the winds were steady.[178] At this time both the ship and its crew would be safe from storms, "unless/ Poseidon, the Earthshaker, of his own free will,/ or Zeus, . . . wish to destroy them" (667-68). In Hesiod's view the only reason for going to sea was the chance to make a profit from surplus produce. The sea presented a fearsome challenge, which it was otherwise best to avoid, for "it is terrible to die among the waves" (687).[179] According to West, Hesiod's dislike "for the hardships and dangers of seafaring was a normal Greek attitude," and one often expressed in literature.[180]

But if Hesiod seems particularly harsh in his description of life at sea, perhaps it is because at heart he is really a landlubber. He admits that he does not have much knowledge of ships or of seafaring, and that he has only made one voyage, and that from Aulis to Euboia (*Op.* 649-50), a distance of perhaps ten kilometres. On the

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[178] Soutar ([1939] 1971) 73-74.

[179] West, in his commentary on Hesiod's *Works and Days* (1978) 325, on line 687, says "because the drowned man gets no burial."

[180] Ibid., 313-14, on line 618.

contrary, many of the heroes in Homer's epics are familiar with the sea, although they too recognize, and experience, its dangers. In the *Odyssey*, "the Greek epic of seafaring,"[181] Nestor says that the open sea is "vast and terrible" (3.322). But Homer describes not only the stormy seas faced by the Greeks and, in particular, Odysseus as he struggled to return to his homeland, but also the calm sea and steady winds which favoured the voyage of Telemachos.

In the *Works and Days* both the ship and its crew can be destroyed if either Poseidon or Zeus wills it. In Homer the gods also play a role in determining the fate of a ship at sea. The 'Telemachy' tells how Athena "sent a favourable wind/ Zephyros, strongly blowing over the wine-dark sea" (*Od.* 2.420-21) to guide Telemachos on his way to Pylos. But the same goddess "stirred up a foul wind and high waves against" the Greeks, after they had left Troy, because they had offended her (5.108-9). As Odysseus attempts to return to his homeland, he must contend with storms sent either by Poseidon (5.291ff.), who seeks to punish the hero because he had blinded Poseidon's son, the Kyklops Polyphemos (1.69), or Zeus, who punishes Odysseus and his crew because the men had killed the cattle of Helios (12.404ff.). In epic poetry the sea was an element controlled at will by the gods. If the winds are favourable, the sea can give swift passage (3.176-77), but more often it is something to escape from (1.12).

Homer uses numerous epithets to describes the sea. Sometimes it is "peopled by fish" (*Il.* 9.4, ἰχθυόεις), and at other times it is "barren" (1.316, ἀτρύγετος).[182]

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[181] Soutar ([1939] 1971) 76. A later seafaring epic is the *Argonautika* by the Hellenistic poet Apollonios Rhodios.

[182] *LSJ*, s.v. ἀτρύγετος, "*unharvested, barren*. The lexicon adds that the word was explained by the Scholiast on *Od.* 1, c. as if from ἀ- priv. τρυγάω, or by Hdn. Gr. 2.284 as ἀτρύτος *never worn out, unresting*."

Although it likely that ἰχθυόεις is used simply as an epithet, it is a reminder that the sea is also a source of food. There are, however, few references to seafood in the epics. Nevertheless, the heroes were familiar both with fishing and diving for shellfish. The description of how Patroklos hooked and dragged a victim out of his chariot, just "as a man/ sitting on a jutting rock drags a sacred fish/ out of the sea with his line and gleaming hook" (*Il.* 16.406-8) makes this clear. Later Patroklos mockingly praises another victim as so good an acrobat that if he were on the sea he could feed many men by diving for oysters (16.745-47).[183] In the first reference the fish is described as ἱερός. Why is this so? Leaf and Bayfield, who maintain that the Homeric heroes did not eat fish, suggest that "the epithet arose out of some sort of taboo . . . in early times against eating fish."[184] But if ἱερός refers to a taboo, why is someone fishing in the first place? Stanford suggests that "possibly the common people of the Homeric Age ate fish while it was unfashionable only for the upper class."[185] Certainly the only references to the eating of fish do give the impression that fishing might be something that the men only turned to as a last resort.[186]

There are two such references, both in the *Odyssey*. When Odysseus' men were

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[183] Leaf and Bayfield, 2:405, on *Il.* 16.747 say "what they (τήθεα) were we do not know; the recognized translation 'oyster' will do as well as any other." They also note that oyster shells have been found at Mycenae.

[184] Ibid., 393, on *Il.* 16.407. Leaf and Bayfield also mention Curtius' proposal that ἱερός originally meant "vigorous" and only later acquired the meaning usually ascribed to it. They say, "if this is correct, we have a ready explanation of such expressions as . . . ἱερὴ ἐλαίη." If this were so, then the olive tree on Ithaka, beside whose trunk Odysseus and Athena sat down to plan the punishment of the suitors, would be "vigorous" rather than "sacred" (see p. 81 above.) According to Walton, *OCD*^{2}, s.v. "Fish, Sacred," 440, various oriental peoples held the fish as sacred, and in Egypt the priests did not eat fish. On this see Hdt. 2.37.

[185] Stanford, 1:279, on *Od.* 12.368-69. See also Burkert (1983) 207.

[186] See also Leaf and Bayfield, 2:393, on *Il.* 16.407.

stranded on the Island of the Sun, held there by the South Wind, it was only after their provisions ran out that, "by necessity, roving about they turned to hunting/ both fish and birds, whatever would fall into their hands/ with curved fishhooks, for hunger distressed their bellies" (*Od.* 12.330–32). Earlier in the epic Menelaos tells Telemachos that when he and his men were stranded in Egypt, on an island in the Delta, that the crew had also turned to fishing after their provisions were exhausted (4.368–69). It is clear that some scholars, for example, Leaf and Bayfield as well as Stanford, and others, believe that the Homeric heroes did not usually eat fish, and, since the epic is set in the Bronze Age, neither then did the Mycenaean Greeks.[187]

This is surely erroneous, since, as previously indicated, fish, as well as remains of shellfish, have been found at Mycenae. There are, however, other considerations. The Homeric epics were composed in the late Dark Ages, and reflect more of contemporary life than they do of the Mycenaean period. Therefore, if fish was not eaten at any time in Greek history, it would most likely have been in the period during which the poems were composed. More importantly, the Homeric epics are describing the heroic deeds of men and gods. They are not accounts of how people lived their daily lives. While it is true that feasts of roast meat are often described in some detail (*Il.* 7.314ff. and passim), it should be noted that these occasions are most often "ceremonial or religious,"[188] and usually include a sacrifice to the gods (1.458ff. and passim). Fishing and fishermen are not common in Greek mythology. Diktys, who rescued Danae and Perseus from the sea, is sometimes said to have been a fisherman, and a sea god named Glaukos was formerly a fisherman who, after he ate a particular

[187] See Wace and Stubbings (1962) 525.

[188] Ibid., 523.

herb, became immortal and threw himself into the sea and became an attendant of Poseidon.[189] Hunters and herdsman appear frequently in the myths, and include some of the greatest heroes, such as Herakles, most of whose labours involve a hunt. Even gods such as Apollo (*h. Herm.*) and Helios (*Od.* 12.322ff.) have herds of cattle. The emphasis on hunting in the mythology undoubtedly results from the fact that the Indo-European ancestors of the Greeks came originally from regions far inland where fishing was not commonplace, but hunting and herding were.[190]

The most important role of the sea in the Homeric epics is as a means of transportation. The Trojan war could only begin once the Greek fleet had sailed across the Aegean to land near the city of Troy. The Catalogue of Ships in Book Two of the *Iliad*, whether historical or not, describes the Achaians and their allies, and the number of ships which they brought to Troy (2.494ff.). The ships are not actually engaged in combat. Rather they are troop-carriers, which are beached off the coast of Troy while the warriors go inland to fight the Trojans.

Just as trade was important to Hesiod in the *Works and Days*, so it was in the Homeric epics. There are several references in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to trade, or to objects which must have been acquired through trade. Athena, disguised as Mentes, a leader among the Taphians, tells Telemachos that she is sailing to Temese

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[189] *DCM*, s.v. "Glaucus, 4."

[190] See also Buxton (1994) 97, who suggests that during the Archaic and Classical periods "any mode of livelihood [such as fishing] which diverged from that of the grain-growing peasant-farmer risked being seen as inferior." Whether this attitude can be applied to an earlier age is conjectural. Fields and crops are mentioned in few myths—usually when they are threatened by monsters such as the Kalydonian boar, which then becomes the object of a hunt, the favoured activity of many heroes.

to trade iron for bronze (*Od.* 1.184).[191] Many of the traders who are mentioned by Homer are Phoenician, and just as many of the precious objects, which are the possessions of the heroes on both sides in the Trojan conflict, come from Phoenicia, or Egypt. The elaborate robe which Hekabe and her women presented to Athena was "the work of Sidonian women" (*Il.* 6.289), and, at the funeral games for Patroklos, Achilleus set out as a prize, a silver krater made by a Sidonian craftsman, and brought to Troy by Phoenician traders (23.740ff.).

The Phoenicians lived at the eastern end of the Mediterranean in an area roughly equivalent to modern Lebanon, and their principal cities included Tyre and Sidon. They called themselves Canaanites. It was the Greeks who called them Phoenicians, from φοῖνιξ, "*purple* or *crimson*," probably a reference to the reddish-purple dye which the Phoenicians produced from a shellfish called the murex, and over which they seem to have had a monopoly in the ancient world.[192] When the Homeric epics were composed, the Phoenicians had long been renowned as seafarers (*Od.* 15.415). Merchant ships from Byblos are mentioned in texts from the Egyptian Old Kingdom, c. 2500.[193] During the later Bronze Age the only Mediterranean sea traders mentioned on Egyptian monuments seem to be the Minoans.[194] Phoenician seafaring apparently reached its zenith only after the destruction of the Minoan and

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[191] According to Wace and Stubbings (1962) 543, the Taphians lived in the north-west part of Greece. It is not known, however, where Temese was, although Tamassos in Cyprus, which has been suggested, was a known source of copper.

[192] Harden (1971) 135-36. φοῖνιξ had numerous other meanings, including "date-palm." *LSJ*, s.v.

[193] Ibid., 40 and 148.

[194] Burn, *OCD*, s.v. "Phoenicians," 826.

Mycenaean kingdoms, "who had dominated the Mediterranean sea routes for many centuries."[195] Harden suspects that Phoenician trade in the area of Greece and the Aegean islands must have died out after the revival in the eighth century of Greek trading and colonizing interests.[196]

The Greeks and Phoenicians may have had contact with one another from a very early date. Greek mythology attributed the foundation of the city of Thebes in Boiotia, to Kadmos, formerly a resident of Tyre. The continent of which Greece is a part reputedly took its name from Europa, the sister of Kadmos. According to Burn, "the discovery [in 1964] of a cache of inscribed Mesopotamian cylinder-seals in a Mycenaean site on the Cadmea [at Thebes] raises the question whether there is any historic basis to the legend" of Kadmos and his journey from Tyre to Thebes.[197]

While most of the traders mentioned in the Homeric epics are Phoenicians, there is no reason why the Greeks themselves would not have engaged in trade. Wace and Stubbings note that archaeological evidence shows "that Mycenaean Greece was in frequent contact with the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean."[198] One must assume that commerce went both ways. Nevertheless it is unknown whether there were other nations, besides the Phoenicians, who also produced skilled seafarers.

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[195] Harden (1971) 149.

[196] Ibid., 152. It was probably during this time-period that the Greeks adopted the Phoenician writing-system and adapted it by changing some of the symbols into vowels, thereby creating the alphabet.

[197] See Rose, Parke, and Robertson, *OCD*, s.v. "Cadmus," 187, and Buck (1979) 40. Buck also suggests (p. 57) that "the story of Cadmus . . . [and] of colony-founding immigrants from overseas, may well have originated in Asia Minor in the seventh century."

[198] Wace and Stubbings (1962) 542. According to Soutar ([1939] 1971) 74, "in the time of Homer commercial enterprise by sea was in its infancy." Whether he means in the time that Homer himself lived or the time-period in which the epics are set is unclear.

From the evidence of the literature then, it is clear that the Greeks regarded the sea with awe and respect. To them it was a symbol of danger, and controlled by the gods. Hesiod counselled that one should avoid travel by sea except at mid-summer. Homer's *Odyssey* provides vivid descriptions of the storms, sent by Zeus or Poseidon, which destroy the ships of the Greeks who are trying to return home after the Trojan War. Both Hesiod and Homer depict the sea as a means of transportation, either for trade or warfare, but there is little mention of the sea as a source of food. From the Homeric epics one gathers that most trade was in the hands of the Phoenicians, a fact which undoubtedly reflects contemporary conditions. Nevertheless, it must be assumed that the Mycenaeans themselves were also engaged in sea-trading. These seafaring interests probably came to an end with the demise of the Bronze Age civilization, but began to be revived by the eighth and seventh centuries when Hesiod and Homer composed their works. While the Greeks themselves may have regarded the sea with awe and fear, they were also capable of envisioning another race who saw the sea as a refuge, and showed no fear in venturing upon it. These were the Phaiakians, who will form the subject of the next part of this chapter.

The Phaiakians

The Phaiakians are a mythical race, "skilled beyond all men/ in rowing a swift ship on the high sea," (*Od.* 7.108-9) amongst whom Odysseus found refuge from the sea on their island home of Scheria.[199] Their home appears to be located in the midst of the sea, far apart from other men, and at the edge of the world (6.204-5). The

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[199] Stanford, 1:308, on *Od.* 6. 8, says "Homer does not call Scheria an island." But see Rose, *OCD*², s.v. "Scheria," 959, who cites *Od.* 6.204 as indication that it was an island.

island is also safe from invasion (6.201-3). As Segal notes, "the sea, the source of danger and death for Odysseus . . . is for them a means of protection."[200] For the Phaiakians there is no fear of destruction at sea (8.562-63). It is obvious that the Phaiakians have to be expert seafarers if they should ever want to leave their island, surrounded as it is by the sea, but there is another reason for their fame. Their king, Alkinoös, and his queen were descended from Poseidon (7.56ff.), who had given them the gift of good seamanship (7.34-35). He may also have given them their magical ships, which required no steersmen or steering oars, since the very ships could understand the minds of men, and sailed without any direction (8.557-61).[201]

Unlike most nations in the real world of the historic Mediterranean, the Phaiakians do not have any interest in warfare (*Od.* 6.270), nor is there any mention of trade. Rather, they use their expert seafaring skills for the benefit of travellers (8.31-33, and passim), and with their magic ships, traverse the sea with complete safety, conveying all men to their destination, wherever it may be (8.319-21). But Alkinoös knew of a prophecy which said that one day Poseidon would be angry with the Phaiakians, because they provided safe passage across the sea to all men (8.566), and that he would surround their city with a great mountain, thereby, isolating it from the rest of the world (8.567-69).

It is not, however, because the Phaiakians willingly and safely transport all men across the sea that they incur Poseidon's anger, but that they provide transportation to one particular man, Odysseus, the man who had blinded Poseidon's

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[200] Segal (1962) 27.

[201] The notion of magic is undoubtedly correct, considering that some scholars view the Phaiakians as inhabitants of fairyland, e.g. Wace and Stubbings (1962) 437.

son, Polyphemos (*Od.* 9.382ff.), and against whom the god has been angered ever since (1.69). But Alkinoös disregards the prophecy (8.570-71),[202] even after he has heard Odysseus' tale about Polyphemos, and how the Kyklops had prayed to his father, Poseidon, to delay the hero's homeward journey. In Poseidon's view, by conveying Odysseus back to Ithaka, the Phaiakians had abused his gift, and, now, what he had given, he would take away. He did not, however, isolate the Phaiakians' city from the world, since Zeus convinced him to soften his punishment. But he did end their days of providing a passenger service to one and all, by turning the ship, which had taken Odysseus home, into a stone fettered in the middle of the Phaiakians' harbour (13.161ff.).[203]

To the Phaiakians, the sea provided protection from the outside world. While Poseidon hindered Odysseus in his attempt to return to his homeland, he gave the Phaiakians the gift of expertise in seafaring, and ships which steered themselves. But, finally, even the Phaiakians felt the power of the sea god. It is not entirely clear, however, what kind of power Poseidon used against them. At this point, then, it is necessary to look more closely at the god, and at his various functions, in particular, his relationship to the sea. This examination should enable one to better determine the mode of action which the god used to punish the Phaiakians.

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[202] Segal (1962) 31.

[203] Wace and Stubbings (1962) 308, say that Scheria "has since ancient times been identified with Corcyra (e.g., in Thucydides i.25)," and Stanford, 2:205 (on *Od.* 13.156-57), says that "supporters of the view that Phaeacia is Corcyra proudly point to the shiplike rock in the harbour of the town, locally called 'the ship of Odysseus'."

The Sea and Poseidon

Guthrie says that Poseidon is "first and foremost . . . the god of the sea."[204] Poseidon himself says that he was allotted the sea when Zeus and his brothers divided the world among themselves (*Il.* 15.187–191). But it is in the description of his actions against men that one can see that the sea is his element. In the *Works and Days* it is Poseidon who sends the storms which destroy ships and drown men (667–68).[205] In the *Iliad* Poseidon sends his waves against the wall built by the Achaians (12.27–28). And in the *Odyssey* he stirs up the storm which causes Odysseus' shipwreck and delays his landfall on Scheria (5.291ff.). But there are many indications that the sea was not Poseidon's only field of activity.

Poseidon's earliest connections seem to have been with the earth, and fresh water, rather than the sea.[206] Undoubtedly it was this association which led to the inclusion of the earthquake in Poseidon's sphere of activity. His traditional Homeric epithets ἐνοσίχθων or ἐννοσίγαιος, "the earthshaker" (*Il.* 7.445, 455, and passim), γαιήοχος, "earth-carrying" (13.43, and passim), seem to give support to this view.[207] While Poseidon's origin is problematic, "he appears to be native Greek, not pre-Hellenic,"[208] and it is likely that he came into Greece with the Greek-speaking tribes who entered the peninsula beginning c. 2000, perhaps as a horse-god (see below). It must have been after this time that he became god of the sea, although the

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[204] Guthrie ([1950] 1955) 95.

[205] As in the *Odyssey*, Zeus is also implicated.

[206] Rose and Robertson, *OCD*², s.v. "Poseidon," 866–67.

[207] *LSJ*, s.v. ἐνοσίχθων, ἐννοσίγαιος, and γαιήοχος.

[208] Rose and Robertson, *OCD*², s.v. "Poseidon," 866–67. See also Guthrie ([1950] 1955) 97.

earliest depictions of the god with his marine attributes—the trident, or a fish—date from the sixth century.[209] His early connection with the earth has already been mentioned, but whether he was already associated with earthquakes or had acquired this function also after he arrived in Greece is unknown. It is not clear why a sea god should be associated with earthquakes, and in cult Poseidon was generally worshipped as a sea god, and only "sporadically as god of earthquakes."[210] And while it is as a sea god that Poseidon usually exercises his power in the *Odyssey*, it may be that, on at least one occasion, he acts in his capacity as the god of earthquakes, and that is when he punishes the Phaiakians.

The prophecy recalled by Alkinoös (*Od.* 8.567-69), as well as Poseidon's threat (13.149-52), is in two parts. The first part predicts that Poseidon will wreck a Phaiakian ship, which could be a hint that the ship will be destroyed by a violent storm at sea.[211] But the second part of the prophecy says that Poseidon will surround the Phaiakian city with a great mountain, and isolate it from the rest of the world. This may well have been imagined to be the description of the type of damage caused by a severe earthquake. As it is, this part of the prophecy did not materialize, since Zeus told Poseidon to inflict a less drastic punishment on the Phaiakians, and

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[209] Poseidon is shown holding a trident, and occasionally a fish, on painted plaques dated to the sixth century, found at Penteskouphia, his shrine near Korinth (*LIMC* 7/2, nos. 105, 106). An Attic red-figure vase from the late sixth century also shows the god carrying a trident and a fish (*LIMC* 7/2, no. 142). On some vases from the early sixth century, the god holds his trident while riding a *hippokampos* (*LIMC* 7/2, no. 153).

[210] Rose and Robertson, *OCD*^{2}, s.v. "Poseidon," 867. See also Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:5, who says "it seems clear that wherever men prayed to Poseidon they associated him with the sea, whatever other functions they assigned to him."

[211] In Lattimore's translation of the *Odyssey*, the verb ῥαίω (8.569 and 13.151) is translated as "stun," which might imply that Poseidon would take away the power of understanding men's thoughts (8.559-60) from the ship and, thus, render it incapable of movement, unable to steer itself.

to spare their city (13.158). Poseidon did strike their ship, however, not by destroying it in a storm, but by turning it into a rock as it approached the harbour (13.161-64). Although such an event would be impossible in the real world, in the context of the myth, it may be imagined as an attempt to describe Poseidon's original function as the god of earthquakes.

Whether Poseidon was god of the sea or of earthquakes, his chief attribute was the trident. He used it to guide the flood which destroyed the Achaian wall at Troy (*Il.* 12.24-28), and to stir up the storm which wrecks Odysseus' raft as he approached Scheria (*Od.* 5.291ff.). Aischylos describes the trident as an "implement for striking fish" (*Sept.* 131, ἰχθυβόλῳ . . . μαχανᾷ).[212] Burkert says that Poseidon's trident is the "trident harpoon" which was used for tunny-fishing.[213] But Makkay believes that Poseidon's trident was not originally a fishing spear at all.[214] Rather it is analogous to similar metal forks, although not necessarily tridents, which "are known from the Near East, Asia Minor, the Levant, . . . and Greece . . . [and which] functioned as insignia, symbols of power or attributes."[215] Makkay's article discusses a metal fork found in the Northern Balkans, "an area which figures prominently as a possible background for the Greek migration" southward into Greece.[216] Makkay argues that since metal forks have been found at Mycenae and Dendra in royal burials where they were symbols of power, and it is known that the trident was

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[212] *LSJ*, s.v.

[213] Burkert (1985) 137.

[214] Makkay (1983) 340-41.

[215] Ibid., 314.

[216] Ibid., 341.

associated with Poseidon from at least the time of Homer, that the god "was already endowed with the trident prior" to his arrival in Greece.[217] That the trident was symbolic of some kind of power, and was not originally a fishing spear, is the more reasonable when one considers that Poseidon was probably not a sea god when he first arrived in Greece. Nevertheless, once he took over the realm of the sea, it became his element, as well as the gift, which, according to myth, he presented to the people of Athens.

That Poseidon's earliest functions were connected with the earth and earthquakes is revealed by his Homeric epithets, and, perhaps, by the punishment which he inflicted upon the Phaiakians. His traditional attribute, the trident, connects him with the sea and spear-fishing, though originally it may have been a symbol of authority wielded by the people who worshipped him, and who brought the god with them when they emigrated southward into Greece. By historical times, however, Poseidon was regarded almost solely as the god of the sea, and, as such, he was able to present the sea as a gift to Athens at the time of his contest with Athena.

Poseidon and the Horse

Some accounts of the myth of the contest claim that the god gave Athens an alternative gift. This is the horse. For in addition to his role as the god of the sea and earthquakes, Poseidon was also worshipped as the god of horses, and "at one time [he] was equine in shape."[218] The reason for this association "is most probably that he

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[217] Makkay (1983) 340-41. Whether Poseidon was as an important god at Mycenae as he appears to have been at Pylos (see Chapter Two, p. 56 above) is unknown.

[218] Guthrie ([1950] 1955) 95. Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:14, 74, n. 4, lists the locations of cults to Poseidon as a horse-god.

was brought in by the first wave of Indo-European invaders who also brought the first horses" into Greece.[219] These invaders came from the north, and Farnell maintains that the cult of Poseidon *Hippios* points to northern Greece, and especially to Thessaly, where horsemanship was likely developed as an art of war.[220] But while the horse is occasionally said to have been the gift of the sea god, at least by Roman authors, it is not mentioned as such by Herodotos.[221] Nor is it likely that the horse is represented as the gift of Poseidon in the depiction of the contest on the west pediment of the Parthenon.[222] Thus, it is not the horse, but the sea and its associations with Poseidon, and the city of Athens, which are emphasized in this study of the origins of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon.

The final section of this chapter dealing with the sea will now look briefly at the importance of the sea for Athens, particularly during the sixth and fifth centuries.

The Sea and Athens

By the mid-fifth century Athens was mistress of the Aegean, a distinction she had acquired due to the "role played by the Athenian fleet in the defeat of the Persians at Salamis in 480 and also from the Athenian maritime empire . . . in the

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[219] Rose and Robertson, *OCD*², s.v. "Poseidon," 867.

[220] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:23-25.

[221] Frazer, *Apollodorus*, 2:78-79, n. 1, says that the horse is mentioned by Vergil (*G.* 1.12-14) and the late Latin mythographers, "but is not countenanced by Greek writers." Further references to Poseidon and the horse are mentioned in Chapter Four, pp. 163ff. below.

[222] The horses originally depicted in the sculptures of the west pediment must have drawn the chariots which transported the two gods to the Akropolis. A horse also appears in the representations of the contest on two red-figure vases, dated c. 400. In each illustration the horse likely symbolizes the two pair of horses from the pediment. See Chapter Four, pp. 180-82 below.

Aegean following the Persian Wars."[223] Despite the importance of the sea in the affairs of Athens during the fifth century, she did not acquire a naval force until late in her history, and compared with other Greek states at the end of the Archaic period, her power at sea was at best "second-class."[224]

As Haas points out, the earliest "references to Athenian maritime activity occur in the so-called 'Catalogue of Ships' in the *Iliad* and in the various legends concerning the travels of the Athenian hero, Theseus."[225] The Athenian Entry from the Catalogue of Ships has often been suspected of being a sixth-century interpolation.[226] Nevertheless, it does give some indication of the strength of the Athenian contingent at Troy—50 ships (*Il.* 2.556)—which was about the average number provided by most cities or regions named in the Catalogue.[227] According to the legends of Theseus, his first sea voyage took him to Krete as one of the young men sent as tribute to the king, Minos. Minos himself apparently came to Athens to bring the tribute back to Krete, but the Athenians provided the ship which carried Minos and the young people to Krete (Plut. *Thes.* 17.3). Plutarch also says (23.1) that the ship was a triakonter (a 30-oared ship) and that it was preserved by the Athenians until the time when Demetrios of Phaleron was governor of Athens, that is, sometime

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[223] Haas (1985) 29.

[224] Ibid. Although, according to Plutarch (*Them.* 19.3), the sea seems to have played an important role at a much earlier stage in Athenian history, if his story that the ancient Athenian kings had to draw the people away from the sea and back to the land implies that Athens was a sea power when these events took place.

[225] Haas (1985) 31.

[226] See Chapter Two, n. 6 above.

[227] The cities which supply the largest contingents of ships are all known to have been principal sites during the Bronze Age: Argos, Tiryns, Mycenae, Sparta, Pylos, and various cities in Krete all under the command of Idomeneus.

between 317 and 307.[228] Homer does not mention the triakonter in his epics, but Casson says that "it almost certainly existed."[229]

That Athens did not have a particular interest in the sea at the end of the Dark Ages is indicated by the fact that while many other Greek cities were establishing colonies around the shores of the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea, Athens did not. But during the sixth century Athens established several colonies near the Hellespont.[230] This may suggest that Athens now had trading interests into the Black Sea, as well as some kind of navy.

According to Nilsson, Peisistratos established Athenian sea power.[231] During his tyranny the island of Naxos in the Cyclades became a "haven and supply point," for Athenian ships, an enterprise which seems to have been "primarily commercial, . . . [and] conveniently situated for the trading run between Attica and the Hellespont, or Athens and Miletus."[232] After about 560 Attic black-figure pottery is found throughout the Aegean, in Asia Minor, and Egypt. Attic vases had reached south Italy and Etruria beginning c. 620 to 600, and by c. 550 they had supplanted the earlier Korinthian imports to Italy.[233] In addition "much pottery has been found

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[228] He was appointed governor by Kassander. See Walbank, *OCD*^{2}, s.v. "Demetrius (3)," 325. On the triakonter itself, see also Pl. *Phd.* 58a-b.

[229] But in the Bronze Age or the eighth century? See Casson (1971) 44-45. On p. 43 Casson remarks that what Homer says about ships "fits very well with what we know of eighth-century galleys from other sources."

[230] Haas (1985) 43.

[231] Nilsson (1986) 49.

[232] French (1964) 48-49. French also remarks that while initially the aim of Athenian expansion overseas was commercial, it also "set Athens on the road to imperialism."

[233] Dunbabin (1948) 242-43.

which was clearly designed only as utility containers for liquid products, especially oil and wine."[234] According to Haas it should not be taken for granted that the pottery and its contents were being transported by a an Athenian merchant fleet, but rather, "Athenian goods were often traded by carriers originating from other Greek states."[235]

French maintains that after the fall of the Peisistratids Athens declined as a sea power.[236] But this situation began to change after 493 when Themistokles began construction of a proper harbour at the Piraeus.[237] Then in 484 he persuaded the Athenians to use the wealth amassed from the silver mines at Laureion to build 200 ships (triremes) to use in the war against Aegina (Hdt. 7.144.1). The conflict between the two states had been going on since the sixth century, and, according to Haas, had the "characteristics of organized piratical raids."[238] Presumably with the new warships, Themistokles intended to put an end to this conflict once and for all in Athens' favour. According to Herodotos the "outbreak of this war at that moment saved Greece by forcing Athens to become a maritime power" (7.144.2),[239] just in time to face a more formidable enemy, the Persians. Thucydides reports that Themistokles told the Athenians that they must become a sea power (1.93.3-4), while Plutarch (*Them.* 4.3) says that when Themistokles persuaded the Athenians to turn

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[234] Ibid., 43-44.

[235] Haas (1985) 39.

[236] French (1974) 76.

[237] Haas (1985) 41.

[238] Ibid., 45.

[239] Translation by de Sélincourt (1972) 490.

to the sea, he emphasized that not only could they ward off the Persians but, they would also be able to become the leader of the Greeks. After the Persian Wars this in fact happened as Athens assumed the leadership of the confederate fleet in the Aegean.[240] This alliance, formalized as "the Athenians and their Allies" (called the Delian League by modern historians) in 478/7, would later become an Athenian empire.

Why did Athens delay so long in becoming a maritime power? Haas points out that the various conflicts, such as border disputes, which Athens had over the years with neighbouring states, "emphasize the priority that the Athenians attached to the protection of their all-important arable countryside."[241] By the standards of the rest of Greece, Attika had extensive farmlands which "promised a reasonable degree of social stability provided that population did not expand too rapidly."[242] Thus, the pressure of overpopulation did not provide the stimulus for colonization that it seems to have done in other Greek city-states.[243] There was little reason, therefore, for the Athenians to have much interest in the sea until the rise of commercial and imperialist aspirations during the tyranny of Peisistratos.

Compared with other Greek city-states, Athens acquired a naval fleet late in her history. The interest in seafaring began during the sixth century when Athens undoubtedly saw the benefits to be gained by trading surplus olive oil and wine in exchange for wheat from the regions to the north of the Black Sea. In the early part

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[240] Haas (1985) 88.

[241] Ibid., 42.

[242] French (1964) 7-8.

[243] On the reasons for Greek colonization in general see Ehrenberg[2] ([1973] 1986) 16.

of the fifth century Themistokles persuaded the Athenians to build triremes to help their cause in the war against Aegina. As it turned out, this was a momentous decision for the city, since the ships were available in time to give Athens the advantage at the battle of Salamis. Their decisive role in that conflict set the stage for Athenian domination of the Aegean. It may also have increased the importance of the cult of the sea god at Athens, which, in turn, may have led to the creation of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon.

C. SUMMARY

The olive had thrived in Greece and the adjacent islands since well before the beginning of the Bronze Age, when evidence first appears, primarily in the Linear B tablets, of the use of olive oil at Pylos and Knossos. The tree and the various uses of its products, whether olive oil, wood, or leaves and branches, are mentioned by Homer, although the descriptions may be a reflection more of the time the Homeric epics were composed rather than the Bronze Age.

The earliest, and almost inconsequential, reference to Athena and the olive tree occurs in the *Odyssey* (13.372). But it is a reminder of the sacred olive which myth claims Athena planted on her Akropolis at Athens. In some versions of the myth of the birth of Erichthonios, it is also claimed that Athena entrusted the care of the olive tree to Pandrosos, the only daughter of Kekrops who obeyed the goddess' instructions not to look in the basket containing the child. In historical Athens the cult of the Arrephoria seems to imitate this myth, including the carrying of dew to provide moisture for the sacred olive tree.

But a different myth of the origin of the olive tree attributed its discovery to

Herakles. This was the wild olive which the hero brought to the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia. It may be that Athena was responsible for the domestication of the olive, and this is implied by Diodorus Siculus (5.73.7). It is interesting, however, that there is a myth of origin for the olive at both Olympia and Athens, particularly in view of the fact that at Athens both Zeus and Athena protected the olive trees.

The olive was especially important to the economy of Attika. In the early sixth century Solon prohibited the export of all agricultural products except olive oil. Perhaps because of this, as well as its association with Athens, the olive trees of Attika acquired a particular sanctity. The *Odyssey* describes how Odysseus built his marriage-bed from the trunk of an olive tree (23.190-98), which then stood in his palace as a symbol of the continuing vitality of his marriage, and his kingdom. By the fifth-century in Athens the economic prosperity provided by the olive made it a symbol of the vitality of the city, especially after the sacred tree on the Akropolis grew back almost immediately after it had been burned by the Persians.

The sea must have been important to the daily lives of the Greeks, even in the Bronze Age. Reference to the construction of ships occurs in the Linear B tablets. The depiction of ships on frescos from the Bronze Age site of Akrotiri provides what may be the best information on ship technology from that period. The many references to the sea which appear in the *Odyssey* undoubtedly reflect Greek contacts with the sea during the eighth century. Nevertheless, it does indicate that communication by sea whether for travel, trade, or warfare was commonplace, although there is little reference to the sea as a source of food. The Homeric epics clearly indicate that the god of the sea is Poseidon. This is particularly evident in the *Odyssey*, and the description of the mythic race called the Phaiakians, and their fate, demonstrates the

god's power in all his spheres of activity.

While Athens was the mistress of the Aegean by the mid-fifth century, she was a late-comer by Greek standards. Athenian maritime trade may have been established by Peisistratos, but it was not until the time of Themistokles that Athens finally acquired a fleet, just before the Persian invasion of Greece. And after her success at the Battle of Salamis, Athens was the leading maritime power in the Aegean. In previous centuries the main interests of the Athenians had been the maintenance of their agricultural land, but now many men preferred to remain with the fleet and did not return to farming. It seems possible that Athenian naval supremacy led to the increased importance of the sea god, Poseidon, in Athenian religious, and political, affairs.

Nevertheless, there was a connection between the olive and the sea. In the sixth century the olive had given stability to the Athenian economy. This came about primarily through exports, which had to be carried to foreign lands in ships which sailed on Poseidon's sea. Neither god was expendable; nor were their gifts. Both were necessary to the life of Athens. The making of the conflict between the two gods, and its resolution, is the subject of Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONTEST FOR THE PATRONAGE OF ATHENS

The previous chapters have examined the background to the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon. Chapter Four deals specifically with the contest itself. The first part of the chapter brings together the sources, and discusses the basic outline of the myth, and its variants. The chapter continues by looking at the place of mythology in Athens during the fifth century. In a comparison with the myth of the contest, the Theseus myth cycle, which is generally accepted to have evolved in the later sixth and the early fifth centuries in Athens, will be examined briefly. The possibility that the myth of the contest was created in Athens takes up the final portion of the chapter, which also contains my conclusions. Pertinent references will be drawn from throughout both Greek and Roman antiquity.

A. THE MYTH

Sources

References to the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon occur in Greek and Roman literature, including history, philosophy, and mythography, and in art. The earliest source dates from the final third of the fifth century B.C., while the latest, at least as far as this study is concerned, dates from the fifth century A.D.

During this period the myth admitted a number of variations, but the basic "outline is constant."[1] This part of the chapter surveys the most important literary sources of the myth, whether Greek or Latin, early or late. Other sources will be cited at the places in the chapter where they are most relevant.

The Myth in Literature

The first extant author to mention the contest between Athena and Poseidon is Herodotos, whose *History* was published c. 430 or 425.[2] The reference is brief, and occurs in his description about how some Athenians, who served with the Persian army, were ordered by Xerxes to make sacrifice on the Akropolis on the day after the site was burned. The historian continues,

> ἔστι ἐν τῇ ἀκροπόλι ταύτῃ Ἐρεχθέος τοῦ γηγενέος λεγομένου εἶναι νηός, ἐν τῷ ἐλαίη τε καὶ θάλασσα ἔνι, τὰ λόγος παρὰ Ἀθηναίων Ποσειδέωνά τε καὶ Ἀθηναίην ἐρίσαντας περὶ τῆς χώρης μαρτύρια θέσθαι.
>
> (on this Akropolis there is a temple of Erechtheus, who is said to be the Earth-born, in which there is an olive tree and a sea. The story told by the Athenians is that Poseidon and Athena set these down as evidence of their claim[3] when they contended about [the sovereignty of] the land.)
>
> (8.55)

Herodotos does not elaborate the myth. In fact, it seems likely that the only

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[1] Robertson (1963) 52. But see Mylonas (1940) 33-34, who says "it must be remembered, however, that the representation of the contest on the west pediment of the Parthenon [completed c. 432, and the earliest source for the myth] must have influenced the tradition considerably, and that consequently any statements dating from a later period could not be accepted at their face value."

[2] Cf. Fornara (1971) 34, and Sansone (1985) 9. Both argue that Herodotos was still writing after 425, and that Book Eight may have been written considerably later than the usually accepted date.

[3] *LSJ*, s.v. μαρτύριον, "testimony, proof," i.e., evidence.

reason he mentions it at all is to explain the existence of the sacred olive tree. He then describes the miracle which the Athenians saw once they reached the Akropolis—a new "shoot which had sprouted up as much as a cubit in length from the stump [of the olive tree]" (8.55, βλαστὸν ἐκ τοῦ στελέχεος ὅσον τε πηχυαῖον ἀναδεδραμηκότα).[4] Herodotos' allusion to the contest provides few details regarding the myth, only the names of the participants, and their gifts, the olive tree and the so-called sea. These gifts, or tokens, are as central to the myth as are the gods themselves. It is probable that Herodotos saw the tokens when he visited Athens, certainly by the 440s.[5] It seems likely then, that the tradition concerning the contest, and how the olive tree and the sea were placed on the Akropolis, already existed by that date, and, therefore, several years before the *History* was published.

Euripides makes several indirect references to the myth. In the *Ion*, whose date of composition is unknown, Kreusa says that "Athena first brought [the olive] to the Akropolis" (1434), and in the *Troades*, which was first performed in 415, the Chorus of Trojan women tells how "Athena first revealed the shoot of the grey/ olive" (801-2, ἐλαίας/ πρῶτον ἔδειξε κλάδον γλαυκᾶς 'Αθάνα). Although, in both of these instances, Athena is credited with the honour of being the first to bring the olive to Athens, there is no reference to the actual conflict with Poseidon. But in the latter play Athena herself alludes to an old quarrel between the two gods. The goddess wishes to enlist Poseidon's help in her vengeance against the Greek fleet as it leaves Troy, and she asks the god if it is possible to "resolve their former enmity" (*Tro.* 50, λύσασαν ἔχθραν τὴν πάρος). Although the allusion makes no reference to the

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[4] Or two cubits, as Pausanias says (1.27.2).

[5] Denniston and Pearson, *OCD*², s.v. "Herodotus," 508.

contest at Athens, it can be assumed to be that particular conflict. While the two gods also contended at Troizen, for example,[6] the latter story was not as famous as the Athenian myth. Brief references to the contest also occur in the works of some authors who lived into the fourth century, such as Xenophon (*Mem.* 3.5.10), and Plato (*Menex.* 237c). Both authors assume an audience who is familiar with the myth.

The most complete account, in Greek, of the contest between Athena and Poseidon does not appear until several centuries later. It is given by Apollodoros in the *Library*, which was probably written in the second century A.D., although its reputed author actually lived in the second century B.C.[7] According to Apollodoros, the contest took place during the time when the mythical king Kekrops ruled Attika. At that time,

> ἔδοξε τοῖς θεοῖς πόλεις καταλαβέσθαι, ἐν αἷς ἔμελλον ἔχειν τιμὰς ἰδίας ἕκαστος. ἧκεν οὖν πρῶτος Ποσειδῶν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἀττικήν, καὶ πλήξας τῇ τριαίνῃ κατὰ μέσην τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ἀπέφηνε θάλασσαν, ἣν νῦν Ἐρεχθηίδα καλοῦσι. μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον ἧκεν Ἀθηνᾶ, καὶ ποιησαμένη τῆς καταλήψεως Κέκροπα μάρτυρα ἐφύτευσεν ἐλαίαν, ἣ νῦν ἐν τῷ Πανδροσείῳ δείκνυται. γενομένης δὲ ἔριδος ἀμφοῖν περὶ τῆς χώρας, διαλύσας Ζεὺς κριτὰς ἔδωκεν, οὐχ ὡς εἶπόν τινες, Κέκροπα καὶ Κραναόν, οὐδὲ Ἐρυσίχθονα, θεοὺς δὲ τοὺς δώδεκα. καὶ τούτων δικαζόντων ἡ χώρα τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἐκρίθη, Κέκροπος μαρτυρήσαντος ὅτι πρώτη τὴν ἐλαίαν ἐφύτευσεν. Ἀθηνᾶ μὲν οὖν ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς τὴν πόλιν ἐκάλεσεν Ἀθήνας, Ποσειδῶν δὲ θυμῷ ὀργισθεὶς τὸ Θριάσιον πεδίον ἐπέκλυσε καὶ τὴν Ἀττικὴν ὕφαλον ἐποίησε.
>
> (the gods decided to take possession of cities, in which each would have his or her own distinctive cult. Poseidon reached Attika first, and striking the middle of the Akropolis with his trident, he displayed a sea which now they call by the name of Erechtheis. After him Athena

[6] Pausanias (2.1.6) believed that the Athenian myth preceded similar legends elsewhere.

[7] See Chapter Two, n. 3 above. References by Roman authors to the contest, including several important versions which are mentioned below, had already appeared in the first century B.C.

> arrived, and with Kekrops as a witness of her taking possession, she planted an olive-tree, which is now pointed out in the Pandroseion. After the two came into conflict concerning the disposition of the country, Zeus separated them, and appointed judges, not as some have said, Kekrops and Kranaos, nor Erysichthon, but the twelve gods. And when these had made their decision the country was awarded to Athena, since Kekrops gave evidence that she planted the olive first. Then Athena called the city Athens after herself, and Poseidon, provoked to anger, flooded the Thriasian plain, and submerged Attika under the sea.)
>
> (3.14.1)

Although Apollodoros' account includes more information than the one given by Herodotos, the focus of the myth is the same: Athena and Poseidon strive for the patronage of Attika, and each presents a gift, or token, to the people of the soon-to-be-named city. But the additional details provided by Apollodoros are not superfluous, for it is through them that one can examine the myth more closely by comparing this account with other versions.

In common with most myths, the contest between Athena and Poseidon varies somewhat from author to author. These variations can be examined through a series of questions. What was the reason for the conflict? who were the judges? what were the grounds on which they based their decision? what was Poseidon's gift? and, what was his reaction to the judgement? Each of these variations is discussed in connection with the different accounts of the myth, with special attention being given to the most complete versions, beginning with Apollodoros.

According to Apollodoros the contest took place simply because the gods wanted sovereignty over certain cities, whose inhabitants would then worship a particular god as their chief divinity. As the discussion of other versions of the myth will show, later in this chapter, Apollodoros is the only extant author who specifically mentions that the reason for the conflict is the quest for power—to become the guardian deity of the

city. And while he says that one of the results of the contest is that the goddess named the city of Athens after herself, he does not imply that this was a possible reason for the strife between the two gods. But, as will be seen in due course, the naming of the city is the raison d'être for the contest among several other authors.

The question of who judged the contest will be examined later in the chapter.[8] Therefore, the next important question, after what was the reason for the contest, concerns the grounds on which the judges awarded victory to Athena. In some accounts of the myth the decision depends on which of the two gods made his/her claim first (priority), while in other versions it is based on the usefulness (value) of the gift. This question is essential to an interpretation of the myth, and its possible origin.

Parker says that "in late versions [of the myth] the land was to belong to the god who could offer the greater benefits to Attica. . . . [but] it looks as if in the classical legend the issue was merely one of priority."[9] And Binder points out that "the criterion of priority appears much earlier [in the literature] than the criterion of value,"[10] although, today, the prevailing view seems to be that the value of the gift affected the outcome of the contest. She identifies three testimonia which refer to priority rather than value as the determining factor in the awarding of the contest to Athena. These include Isokrates, the Scholion to Aristides' *Panathenaikos*, and

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[8] It is especially pertinent to Varro's account of the myth. See pp. 157ff. and Appendix Two below.

[9] Parker ([1987] 1988) 198.

[10] Binder (1984) 16–18. She claims that Ovid (*Met.* 6.70ff) provides the first reference to value as the grounds for judging the contest.

Apollodoros.[11]

According to Isokrates, "Poseidon had taken possession of the land before Athena [did]" (*Panath.* 193). It is this prior claim by Poseidon, and its rejection, which Isokrates gives as the reason why Eumolpos, Poseidon's son, invaded Attika and fought against Erechtheus, who later ruled in Athens.[12] The Scholion to Aristides says that Athena and Poseidon contended for one reason only, that "whoever [of the gods] was the first to display something in the same place, would be lord of this city" (Schol. to Aristid. *Panath.* 106.11, ὅστις πρότερον ἐν αὐτῇ δείξειέ τι, ταύτης κύριος ἔσται). Finally, Binder cites Apollodoros, in whose account of the myth, as she points out, "Poseidon loses the contest because he had no witness to prove that he came first."[13] Parker comments how strange it is to our way of thinking that Athena won the contest merely because she had a witness.[14] Clearly, from the account in Apollodoros, Athena could not have planted the olive tree before Poseidon created the sea, since the author emphatically states that the goddess reached Attika after the arrival of her adversary.

Why did Poseidon not have a witness, or why did no other mortal see him

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[11] Ibid., 16-18. Isokrates, an Athenian orator, lived from 436 to 338 B.C. Aristides was born c. A.D. 117, and studied rhetoric at Athens. Both authors wrote a work called *Panathenaikos*. The Scholion to Aristides probably appeared somewhat later than Aristides himself. Each of these authors would seem to have had the opportunity to become familiar with the Athenian tradition of the myth. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Apollodoros lived in the second century B.C., and probably did not write the work which is attributed to him.

[12] On Erechtheus and Eumolpos see also Chapter Two, pp. 53-54 above.

[13] Binder (1984) 18.

[14] Parker ([1987] 1988) 198. According to Garland (1992) 164, however, "Poseidon was defeated not because his miracle was inferior to his rival's but because he violated the established rules governing trials of strength in the Greek world by failing to appoint any witnesses to corroborate his miracle." He concludes that Athena "won not by merit but by default."

reach the Akropolis prior to Athena? In all probability the result of the contest was predetermined by Athena herself, whose innate intelligence and foresight prompted her to come to the Akropolis with a well-devised plan to ensure that victory would be hers. In the *Odyssey* Athena says that "among all the gods/ [she] is renowned for resourcefulness (*metis*) and subtlety of mind" (13.298–99, ἐν πᾶσι θεοῖσι/ μήτι τε κλέομαι καὶ κέρδεσιν). The important word here is *metis*.[15] Metis, of course, was the name of Athena's presumed mother, and "it is through her mother then that Athena is well-endowed in metis."[16] To Detienne and Vernant *metis* implies a way of thinking which combines "wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, [and] opportunism."[17] Such terms describe Athena as she appears both in the *Odyssey*, and in the contest with Poseidon.

Detienne and Vernant also point out that in "the intelligent ability referred to as *metis* . . . the emphasis is always laid on practical effectiveness, [and] on the pursuit of success."[18] And so, intent on her impending victory, the daughter of Metis deceives Poseidon by choosing a witness who will testify that she had planted the olive tree before Poseidon created the sea. The god's wrath is inevitable. Just as he vented his anger against the Phaiakians because they helped his enemy, Odysseus, whose guardian goddess is Athena (*Od.* 13.161ff.), now Poseidon caused Attika to be submerged beneath the sea. The comparison with the *Odyssey* is apt. Murray makes

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[15] Cunliffe, s.v. μῆτις, and μητίομαι. The definitions given for the verb μητίομαι include "*to devise, plan, contrive, scheme to bring about.*" On μῆτις see also Chapter Two, n. 125 above.

[16] Detienne and Vernant (1978) 179.

[17] Ibid., 3.

[18] Ibid., 11.

the observation that in the *Odyssey* "the adventures of Odysseus are turned into a contest between Athene and Poseidon, a contest which forms one of the most central and characteristic of Athenian myths, and, as in the Attic myth, Athena . . . has the best of it."[19]

It was noted earlier that one of the variations which occurs in the different accounts of the myth concerns Poseidon's reaction to the decision of the judges. Thus, contrary to the devastation which the god causes in the version told by Apollodoros, in some other accounts of the myth Poseidon does not wreak havoc on Attika. According to Aristides, for example, the god continued in his affection (ἔρως) for Athens, and granted its citizens as many favours as did Athena (*Panath.* 106).[20]

The chapter now turns to several versions of the myth found among Latin authors. These accounts tend to have more variations than do their Greek counterparts, and some depart considerably from all other versions of the myth, whether Greek or Latin. For example the first century B.C. antiquarian Varro begins his account of the myth in this way.

> Cum apparuisset illic repente olivae arbor et alio loco aqua erupisset, regem prodigia ista moverunt, et misit ad Apollinem Delphicum sciscitatum, quid intellegendum esset quidve faciendum. ille respondit, quod olea Minervam significaret, unda Neptunum et quod esset in civium potestate, ex cuius potius nomine duorum deorum, quorum illa

[19] Murray (1934) 312–13. See also Parker ([1987] 1988) 199. According to Murnaghan (1995) 65, the action in the *Odyssey* is divided "into two phases, one controlled by Poseidon and the other by Athena, [and] expresses an opposition between the two divinities that runs through the mythological tradition."

[20] Aristides also says that, although Poseidon lost the contest, he granted the Athenians the ability to conquer their adversaries in naval warfare (*Panath.* 106). This statement is likely a reference to the victory at Salamis. Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 741a) also says that Poseidon was not angered by his defeat. As proof, he cites the fact that Poseidon shared the Erechtheion with Athena. The late Roman mythographer Hyginus says that Zeus (Jupiter) prevented Poseidon (Neptune) from flooding the land (*Fab.* 164).

signa essent, civitas vocaretur. isto Cecrops oraculo accepto cives omnes utriusque sexus (mos enim tunc in eisdem locis erat, ut etiam feminae publicis consultationibus interessent) ad ferendum suffragium convocavit. consulta igitur multitudine mares pro Neptuno, feminae pro Minerva tulere sententias, et quia una plus inventa est feminarum, Minerva vicit.

(When an olive tree suddenly had appeared at [Athens] and water had burst forth at another place, these portents frightened the king [Kekrops], and he sent a messenger to Apollo at Delphi to ask how this matter ought to be interpreted or what should be done. The god replied that the olive signified Minerva, the water Neptune, and that it was up to the citizens to choose from which of the two gods, whose signs they were, they preferred that the city should be named. After the oracle had been received, Kekrops called together all the citizens of both sexes (for at that time it was the custom in that place, that women should also participate in public consultations) to vote. Then after the crowd had been consulted, the men voted for Neptune, and the women for Minerva, and because there was one more woman, Minerva won.)

(*Fr.* 11)[21]

It is immediately apparent that Varro's account of the myth is substantially different from the version recorded by Apollodoros. Frazer calls it "rationalistic."[22] There is certainly little of the fantastic quality which distinguishes most myths. For example, neither is there an epiphany of the gods, nor do they offer a gift as such to the city. Rather, their symbols, or attributes, the olive tree and the sea, spontaneously appear as omens of an unknown eventuality. It is not clear whether either, or both, of the portents even occur on the Akropolis. Why Varro's account differs to such a degree from the one by Apollodoros, for example, is unknown, but it may simply be that the Greeks were generally more concerned with the divine, while the Romans tended more toward "the human response"[23] in literature, art, and myth.

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[21] Also cited in August. *De Civ. D.* 18.9.

[22] Frazer, *Apollodorus*, 2:78, n. 1.

[23] Fracchia (1987) 204.

But this version of the myth contains other significant variations. The first of these concerns the reason why the contest took place. According to Apollodoros, the dispute between Athena and Poseidon occurred because the gods wanted sovereignty over certain cities, where distinctive cults would be established to a particular god. In Varro's account of the myth, this desire for power, and worshippers, is merely implied. The actual reason for the contest appears in the preface to the description of the sudden appearance of the olive tree and the sea, in which Varro "declares this is the reason that Athens got its name." The interpretation of the portents confirms this view, for the response from the oracle of Apollo was that the citizens are to choose between which of the two gods after whom they would prefer that the city should be named. In Varro's narration of the myth there is no question concerning either priority or value of a gift, since neither god is present in Attika, nor do they actually offer a gift to the people of the city.

The most significant variation in Varro's account of the myth occurs after the interpretation of the portents, and concerns who judged the contest. Minor discrepancies in the names and the number of the judges occur in all versions of the myth. According to Apollodoros, Zeus appointed the twelve gods to judge the contest, while Kallimachos says that Zeus voted with the twelve immortals (*Fr.* 260.25-26).[24] The Roman mythographer Hyginus claims that Zeus was the sole judge (*Fab.* 164). Other accounts say that Kekrops, the legendary first king of Athena, judged the contest. Aristides, perhaps in an allusion to Kekrops, says that the rivals themselves referred the matter "to those who at that time held sway in the land" (*Panath.* 106).

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[24] Whether he means that Zeus was one of the twelve immortals, or in addition to them, is unclear. Zeus, as well as Athena and Poseidon, are usually considered to be among the twelve Olympians.

Several versions of the myth claim that Kekrops played a significant role at the contest.[25] In Apollodoros' account, Athena appointed Kekrops as her witness, and it was due to his testimony that she won her victory. Kallimachos also reports that Kekrops was a witness (*Fr.* 260.25-26). This was at the time when Zeus and the twelve immortals judged the contest. Elsewhere, however, Kallimachos says that Kekrops himself was the judge (*Iamb.* 4.68). The tradition which accorded the role of judge to this mythical king goes back at least to the fifth century, when Xenophon a reports a remark by Sokrates that the contest was judged by Kekrops and his supporters (*Mem.* 3.5.10, οἱ περὶ Κέκροπα). It seems obvious, as Castriota has pointed out, that the supporters of Kekrops are the "ancient inhabitants of Athens."[26]

The reference to the ancient inhabitants of Attika as judges in the contest has relevance for Varro's account of the myth. According to this version, Kekrops called together all the citizens to vote for the god after whom they preferred that their city should take its name. Thus the inhabitants of Attika judged the contest. It is not clear whether or not Kekrops also voted. But it is clear that the citizens, who were called upon to act as judges, included both men and women,[27] for Varro says that, at that time in Attika, women, as well as men, had the right to vote. According to him, the women outnumbered the men, by one, and since the women all voted for Athena (Minerva), and the men for Poseidon (Neptune), victory went to the goddess, and the

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[25] Parker ([1987] 1988) 198, says that the contest was "the one great event of his reign."

[26] Castriota (1992) 148.

[27] In Xenophon's reference to the myth (*Mem.* 3.5.10) there is no way of telling if women were included among the supporters of Kekrops, as they would have been incorporated in the generic and masculine οἱ. It unlikely, however, since the partisans of a king would undoubtedly have been other princes and the heads of aristocratic and patriarchal families.

city was named after her. The judges' decision leads to the same result here as it does in Apollodoros' version of the myth. Poseidon is enraged by the rebuff, and floods the plain of Attika. Apollodoros ends his account at that point. But Varro adds some further information. He says that the Athenian men placated the god's wrath by punishing the women, so that they lost certain rights, including their citizenship and the right to vote, which they had just exercised in judging the contest.[28]

Varro's account of the myth was also reported by St. Augustine (*De Civ. D.* 18.9) who added his own commentary to it. According to him the men punished the women because they feared "the waters of Neptune more than the weapons of Minerva." His remark is curious, since nowhere in Varro's account of the myth does Athena (Minerva) threaten the city or its people with her weapons. But Poseidon (Neptune) reveals his power, even before the contest takes place. Just as the water, a symbol of the god, had suddenly burst forth in the city, as a portent, so Poseidon (Neptune) suddenly unleashed the awful might of the sea against the people who had voted for his rival. The abruptness of this portent was a symbol of what the sea, and the god, could do if thwarted. The olive tree was also a portent, and, according to Varro, appeared just as suddenly. But the olive is a sign of peace (Serv. *Comm. Verg. Georg.* 1.12), and like the goddess, posed no threat to the city. In the sixth and fifth centuries it also represented economic prosperity.[29] The Athenian men were right in their decision, for they knew they would benefit from the olive, but only by making peace with the god of the sea first.

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[28] On the rights of Athenian women and Varro's account of the myth, see Appendix Two below.

[29] See Chapter Three, pp. 113-14 above.

Earlier in this chapter it was mentioned that in most versions of the myth the decision of the judges depends either on the priority or on the value of the gift. While there seems to be little question that priority was the reason that the judges awarded the contest to Athena in Apollodoros' version of the myth, neither priority or value can be seen as a deciding factor in Varro's account. Nevertheless, "in Latin sources the intrinsic value of the gift [usually] is the determining factor."[30] Binder claims that "the first well-dated reference to the contest judged on the value of the tokens is in Ovid (*Met.* 6.70ff)."[31] In Book Six of the *Metamophoses*, Ovid describes how the goddess herself weaves the myth of her contest with Poseidon (Neptune) into a tapestry. She depicts "the gray olive, burdened with fruit" (6.81), and "the gods gaze in awe" (6.82, mirarique deos) at this miracle.

But despite their admiration, it is not absolutely clear that the gods award victory to Athena (Minerva) because they regard the olive to be of greater value than the sea. That the olive is described at greater length than is the sea, may imply greater value, but nowhere is this explicitly stated. Nevertheless, in her depiction of the olive the goddess demonstrates the same innate intelligence which enabled her to claim victory in Apollodoros' version of the myth. There it was a question of whether the god or the goddess made the prior claim. Here the god is only able to produce a spring of salt water (6.77), while the goddess not only creates an olive tree, but one already fully mature. In that respect the olive may be the more valuable, but only because Athena (Minerva) reveals its full potential.

Ovid refers to the contest as "the old quarrel concerning the name of the land"

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[30] Palagia (1993) 40.

[31] Binder (1984) 18. Likewise Palagia (1993) 52, n. 6.

(6.71, antiquam de terrae nomine litem). Thus, in respect to the reason for the contest, Ovid concurs with Varro. It is primarily among Latin authors that the naming of the city of Athens is given as the reason for the contest. As will be seen later in the chapter, the fourth-century A.D. commentator on Vergil, Servius, specifically states that Poseidon (Neptune) and Athena (Minerva) "contended concerning the name of Athens" (*Comm. Verg. Georg.* 1.12). But the late Latin mythographer Hyginus reports that the reason for the contest was to determine which god "would be the first to found a town in Attika" (164, qui primus oppidum in terra Attica conderet).

Further variations in the myth appear in the works of other Latin authors. The most significant variation—even considering the ones mentioned by Varro—concerns the gift of Poseidon. All of the versions discussed up this point, whether Greek or Latin, have indicated that Poseidon's gift was the sea. But the late Latin authors usually claim that it was a horse. How did the idea of this alternative gift arise? In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid uses the word *fretum* to describe the salt spring which Poseidon creates with his trident (*Met.* 6.75-77).[32] According to Anderson, *fretum* is an "odd" word, and he points out that, in many manuscripts of the *Metamorphoses*, it was "corrupted . . . to *ferum*, supposedly to refer to a horse."[33] Nevertheless, the idea that Poseidon's gift was a horse, instead of the sea, seems not to have originated with Ovid.

Vergil makes no specific reference to the contest between Athena (Minerva)

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[32] *OLD*, s.v. fretum, 3) "the sea, the deep;" "sea-water."

[33] Anderson, in his commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Books 6-10 (1972) 162, n. 77. *OLD*, s.v. *ferus*, "a wild animal, beast, creature."

and Poseidon (Neptune). But in the *Georgics*, he invokes "Minerva/ the creator of the olive" (1.18–19, oleaeque Minerva/ inventrix). A few lines earlier, the poet had invoked "Neptune for whom/ the earth, struck by [his] great trident, brought forth the spirited horse" (1.12–14, o, cui prima frementem/ fudit equum magno tellus percussa tridenti/ Neptune). The allusion to Athena (Minerva), does call to mind the famed mythological contest, and the olive tree, which the goddess presented to the people of the city which would soon bear her name. But in that contest, according to the authors whose accounts have been examined so far, Poseidon's gift was the sea. It is not clear whether or not this passage in the *Georgics* is a reference to the contest between Athena (Minerva) and Poseidon (Neptune). If it is, Vergil is the first extant author who says that the gift of Poseidon (Neptune) was a horse rather than the sea. And while this brief allusion to the myth of the contest suggests that knowledge of Poseidon's alternative gift may have been current, it seems likely that the sources for it were rather obscure since they were neither quoted by other authors nor, for that matter, have they survived.

As previously mentioned, Poseidon was both a god of the sea, and of the horse.[34] These roles may not be contradictory. Guthrie points out that Poseidon was also "lord of fresh water . . . and many springs were attributed to a blow from his trident," including the salt spring on the Akropolis at Athens.[35] Guthrie also suggests that, originally, "it was not a blow from the trident, but a stamp of his hoof,

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[34] See Chapter Three, pp. 137–41 above.

[35] Guthrie ([1950] 1955) 95, and 96, n. 1.

which caused [the springs] to gush forth."[36] It is interesting to note that in the version of the myth told by Varro, that, while there is no reference to Poseidon (Neptune) as a horse, the water suddenly bursts forth, as though the earth had been struck either by a trident, or perhaps by a hoof.

Poseidon was not only worshipped as a horse god, but, according to some traditions, he also created the horse. Farnell says that this legend comes from Thessaly, where Poseidon is said to have produced the first horse, Skyphios, by striking a rock with his trident,[37] the same way in which he had created the sea at Athens. Poseidon was also the father of two famous horses of myth. At Thelpousa in Arkadia it was said that the swift horse Areion was the offspring of Poseidon and Demeter (Paus. 8.25.5-7), and, according to Hesiod, the winged horse Pegasos was the son of Poseidon and the Medusa (*Th.* 278-83). It is unknown whether or not Vergil was familiar with this legend.[38] But even if he were, it may not have had any influence on his allusion to the horse as the gift of Poseidon (Neptune), in the *Georgics*.

In order to look more closely at Vergil's allusion to the horse in Book One of the *Georgics*, it is necessary to examine a commentary on this very passage, the work of the fourth-century writer Servius. It is also one of the latest versions of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon. Servius' account includes several variations which have not appeared previously. This is what he says.

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[36] Ibid. The winged horse Pegasos, whom Hesiod (*Th.* 278-83) says was a son of Poseidon, is said to have created the spring of Hippokrene on Mount Helikon by stamping his hoof.

[37] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:14, and *Etym. Magn.*, s.v. ἵππιος ὁ Ποσειδῶν.

[38] Although, his younger contemporary Ovid was. See *Met.* 6.118-20.

> cum Neptunus et Minerva de Athenarum nomine contenderent, placuit diis, ut eius nomine civitas appellaretur, qui munus melius mortalibus obtulisset. tunc Neptunus percusso litore equum, animal bellis aptum, produxit; Minerva iacta hasta olivam creavit, quae res est melior conprobata et pacis insigne.
>
> (When Neptune and Minerva contended about the name of Athens, it pleased the gods that the city would be called by the name of the one who offered the better gift to mortals. Then Neptune struck the shore with his trident, and produced a horse, an animal fitting for war; Minerva hurled her spear, and created an olive tree, which was acknowledged the better gift, and the sign of peace.)
>
> (*Comm. Verg. Georg.* 1.12)

The basic outline of the myth, as Servius tells it, is similar to that of most other versions, excepting, of course, Varro's account. Like most Latin authors, Servius says that the reason for the contest pertains to the naming of the city of Athens. The chief variations concern not only the gift of Poseidon (Neptune), but also the grounds on which the judges—the gods, as in most versions—based their decision. It was noted earlier that Binder finds the earliest reference to value as the basis for judging the contest in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (6.81-82).[39] But the discussion of that passage indicated that, as the determining factor in the outcome of the contest, the value of the gift is merely implied. Servius, however, states clearly that the contest will be won by the god who offers the better gift to mankind. This assertion, and the acknowledgement that the olive tree is the better gift, suggests that the earliest account of the myth in which value is indisputably the deciding factor is the version told by Servius.

The most significant variation in Servius' version of the myth pertains to the gift of Poseidon (Neptune). In Book One of the *Georgics* Vergil says that the god

[39] See this chapter, n. 10 above.

created the first horse when he struck the earth with his trident (1.12–14). Servius concurs with Vergil's account. Nevertheless, in the commentary, which follows his description of the contest, Servius appears to question Vergil's allusion to the horse. For he says, "if [Vergil] is going to speak about agriculture, it is a contradiction to invoke the god of the sea" (incongruum est, si de agricultura locuturus numen invocet maris). This suggests that Servius either was not aware that Poseidon (Neptune) was also a horse god, or, perhaps, that he was unfamiliar with the Thessalian tradition that the god had created the first horse, Skyphios, when he struck a rock with his trident.[40] And yet Servius does refer to the legends that Poseidon (Neptune) was the father of the horse which was named either Areion or Skyphios.

According to Servius, the reason why Vergil names the horse as the gift of Poseidon (Neptune) is because he is foreshadowing Book Three of his poem, where the horse has a prominent place in the work. This observation is correct. The proem to Book One of the *Georgics* forms the introduction to the entire poem. The first four lines summarize each of the four books, and are followed by an invocation to the gods of agriculture and the country (1.21), who oversee the various agricultural activities with which each of the books is chiefly concerned.[41] Thus, Vergil invokes Ceres, the goddess of grain (7–8), which is the subject of the first half of Book One. He then invokes Liber, the god of the vine (7–9), and Athena (Minerva), the goddess of the olive tree (18–19), as a prelude to his discussion of trees, including both the vine and the olive, in Book Two. Book Three deals with farm animals, so Vergil invokes Pan, the god of herds and flocks (17), which he describes in the second half of that book.

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[40] See p. 165 above.

[41] With the exception of Book Four.

Since the first half of Book Three is devoted to horses and cattle, the poet invokes Poseidon (Neptune) as the god of horses and bulls (12–15). This earlier allusion to the god as the creator of the first horse, also foreshadows the reference in Book Three where Poseidon (Neptune) is called the ancestor of the horse (3.122).

It seems likely that Vergil's purpose in the *Georgics*, in mentioning the horse as the gift of Poseidon (Neptune), may have had less to do with any tradition which claimed that the god had created the first horse at the time of his contest with Athena, and more to do with the intent of the work as a whole. In a didactic poem on agriculture it was appropriate that the gift of Poseidon (Neptune) should be a horse rather than the sea. Vergil's allusion to the horse as the gift of Poseidon may have had considerable influence on later retellings of the myth, for the late Latin mythographers claim that the gift of Poseidon is a horse rather than the sea.[42] But while Servius agrees with Vergil on this point, in the preface to his account of the myth, he also notes that the most ancient versions say that the god "created the water" (*fudit aquam*) instead of the horse. In the mediaeval period, the horse seems to have been accepted without question, which undoubtedly explains why the word *fretum* (sea) in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (6.77) was corrupted to *ferum* (horse) in many manuscripts.[43]

The first author to mention the contest between Athena and Poseidon is

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[42] See Frazer, *Apollodorus*, 2:79, n. 1, who says that the horse is not countenanced by Greek writers.

[43] See p. 153 above. See also the Mythographi Vaticani in *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini* ([1834] 1968), First Vatican Mythographer 2, and Second Vatican Mythographer 119. Both accounts quote Servius almost word for word. The Mythographi Vaticani date from the Mediaeval period.

Herodotos, whose *History* was written c. 430 B.C. Other references occur in the works of Greek authors writing in the fourth and third centuries B.C. The most detailed account is that of Apollodoros, and was probably compiled in the second century A.D. While this version is late, it closely parallels other Greek accounts. There are also several accounts of the myth in Latin beginning in the first century B.C.

A number of variations occur in the different accounts of the myth. The most important of these concern the reason for the contest, the grounds on which the contest was judged, and who the judges were. Apollodoros says that the gods wanted to establish their own cults in various cities, while among most Latin authors, the naming of the city becomes the sole reason for the contest. In Apollodoros the priority of claim is the basis on which the contest is judged. It is not until Servius that the decision of the judges is based on the value of the gift.

While most authors say that the twelve gods judged the contest, Varro reports that the judges were the citizens of Athens, and that they included both men and women. According to his account, it was because the women had voted in favour of Athena (Minerva), that Poseidon (Neptune) flooded the land of Attika out of revenge. The sea god only caused the waters to recede after the women were punished by, among other things, losing their right to vote.

Although Vergil does not mention the contest, he does allude to the horse as the creation of Poseidon (Neptune). In the same context he mentions Athena (Minerva) as the creator of the olive. This may be why both ancient and modern authors have assumed that Vergil is referring to the horse as the gift of Poseidon (Neptune). Servius, in his *Commentary on Vergil's Georgics* (1.12), apparently agrees, since he gives his own version of the myth in which the god creates a horse rather

than the sea. But he also says that the reason why Vergil mentions the horse at this point in his poem is because it is pertinent to agriculture, which is the theme of the *Georgics*. Despite this anomaly, later Latin accounts of the myth also say that the gift of Poseidon (Neptune) was the horse rather than the sea.

Literature provides only a part of the ancient testimony on the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon. The myth was also depicted in art. The next part of the chapter will look at these representations, and consider the similarities and differences which exist between the presentation of the myth in literature and in art.

The Myth in Art

The myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon was the subject of the west pediment of the Parthenon. This is the "earliest known depiction of the story."[44] The carving of the sculptures began in 438/7, and may have continued until 432 B.C. when the Parthenon was completed.[45] Thus, the west pediment is nearly contemporary with the earliest literary allusion to the myth in the *History* of Herodotos (8.55). The design of the sculptures is attributed to Pheidias, who also made the chryselephantine statue of Athena which stood inside the Parthenon.

Pausanias is the only author from antiquity who mentions the subject of the west pediment, and even he says very little—merely, that the sculptures showed the "rivalry of Poseidon against Athena for the land" (1.24.5, ἡ Ποσειδῶνος πρὸς Ἀθηνᾶν ἐστιν ἔρις ὑπὲρ τῆς γῆς). He gives no details about the composition of

[44] Palagia (1993) 40.

[45] Ibid., 7–8.

the piece or the location of individual figures. Pausanias also mentions another depiction of the myth, which he saw on the Akropolis. This was apparently a free-standing group of statues, where "Athena is shown displaying the olive tree, and Poseidon the wave (1.24.3, πεποίηται δὲ καὶ τὸ φυτὸν τῆς ἐλαίας ᾿Αθηνᾶ καὶ κῦμα ἀναφαίνων Ποσειδῶν). This representation of the contest seems to have been near the altar of Zeus *Polieus* (1.24.4).

Although Pausanias says little about the depiction of the myth on the west pediment, he does describe the tokens which were pointed out to him as evidence for the contest. He says that inside the Erechtheion he saw "sea-water in a reservoir" (1.26.5).[46] He also says that the sign of a trident appears on the rock. Concerning the sea-water and the mark of the trident, Pausanias says, "these tokens of Poseidon are said to have appeared at the time of his dispute about the land" (1.26.5, λέγεται Ποσειδῶνι μαρτύρια ἐς τὴν ἀμφισβήτησιν τῆς χώρας φανῆναι).[47] He also saw the sacred olive tree, but says that the Athenians "have nothing to say about the olive, other than it was the token of the goddess at the time of the contest for the land" (1.27.2).[48]

Since Pausanias gives no further information about the ornamentation of the west pediment, it is necessary to turn to other sources from art, both ancient and

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[46] Pausanias is not impressed, for he says that there are similar phenomena at other inland sites.

[47] Jeppesen (1979) 382, points out that the so-called trident marks may also "have been considered lightning marks." Places struck by lightning were usually associated with Zeus *Kataibates*, or "Zeus *descending in thunder and lightning*" (*LSJ*, s.v. καταιβάτης).

[48] Pliny says that the olive tree was still reported to be alive in his own time (*HN* 16.240), although, Cicero, in the first century B.C., questioned whether in fact this was true (*Leg*. 1.1.2). And according to a report in Strabo (9.1.16), the historian Hegesias (c. 250 B.C.) reputedly saw the mark of Poseidon's trident on the Akropolis.

more recent, to determine how the myth might have been represented. The Parthenon seems to have survived virtually intact up to 1687. In that year a Venetian attack against the Turks, who had stored ammunitions inside the temple, largely destroyed the cella, as well as a number of columns of the peristyle, and severely damaged the pediments.[49] The west pediment suffered further damage in 1688 when the Venetians attempted to remove some of the sculptures. The figure of Poseidon and the horses of Athena fell to the ground and were shattered. Today, only "battered torsos and smaller fragments" of the west pediment survive.[50] Fortunately, drawings of the pedimental sculptures had been made by Jacques Carrey in 1674, and today these provide the best evidence for the original delineation on the west pediment of the contest between Athena and Poseidon.[51]

Representations of the myth occur elsewhere in Greek and Roman art. The statues of Athena and Poseidon displaying their gifts, which Pausanias saw near the altar of Zeus *Polieus* (1.24.3), have not survived. Of the remaining works of art, two Attic red-figure hydrias from c. 400 B.C. seem to provide the best information concerning the original design on the west pediment. The first hydria (Appendix I, Fig. 2) is in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, and is the best studied, inasmuch as it was discovered at Kertsch in the Crimea in 1872. The second (Appendix I, Fig. 3), which was only discovered in a cemetery in the Greek city of Pella in 1980, is now in the Pella museum.[52] A comparison with Carrey's drawings shows that the principal

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[49] Palagia (1993) 9-10.

[50] Hopper (1971) 165.

[51] Palagia (1993) 10-11, 40-52, and pl. 3 and 4.

[52] Ibid., 44, and 54, n. 82, and pls. 10 and 11 (*LIMC* 7/2, nos. 242 and 241).

characters in the myth are depicted on both hydrias much as they were on the west pediment, although there are variations. The contest is also depicted on a South Italian red-figure bell krater, dated c. 360 B.C.[53] Later representations include a relief sculpture from Smyrna from the first century A.D.,[54] and a number of Roman medallions and Athenian coins minted during the second century A.D.

The depictions of the myth on the west pediment, and on the two red-figure hydrias, will be described first. It should be noted that, in comparison with the literature, fewer variations occur between the different artistic representations of the myth. The focus is entirely on the two rivals, who are placed at the centre of each composition. The chief problems concern Poseidon's gift, and the role of the other individuals who are depicted, in particular those on the pediment, and whether or not they are the judges of the contest. These questions will be considered in due course.

The sculptures of the west pediment will be described before the red-figure vase-paintings. The description is based on the evidence of Carrey's drawings, and a modern restoration (Appendix I, Fig. 1).[55] Athena and Poseidon dominate the centre of the composition, and, at the same, appear to be rushing "diagonally outward from it."[56] This chiasmic arrangement emphasizes the divine confrontation. Two pair of horses, which originally drew chariots, rear up towards the gods. Athena's chariot is

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[53] For which see pp. 191-92 below.

[54] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:323. But see Jeffery (1988) 126, who suggests that it belongs to the fourth century B.C.

[55] Palagia (1993) pl. 3, 4, and 22. The restoration is by M. Cox. Palagia, 40, remarks that "there is some controversy as to the identification of the figures." See also Brommer (1963) 1:182, for a list of identifications of individual figures up to 1959, and Palagia (1993) 61, for identifications since 1963.

[56] Scully ([1962] 1979) 181. Palagia (1993) 44, calls this "a classic example of the heroic diagonal."

barely visible in Carrey's drawing, but her charioteer, Nike, the personification of victory, can be observed stepping down from the chariot.[57] The messenger-god, Hermes, stands behind Athena's horses. Looking towards the north corner of the pediment, behind Hermes and Nike, are a number of figures usually identified as Kekrops, and his children. Kekrops was the king of Athens at the time the contest took place.

On the opposite side of the pediment, the messenger-goddess, Iris, and Amphitrite, Poseidon's consort, are shown behind the horses of Poseidon. Amphitrite may be stepping down from her husband's chariot.[58] Beneath Amphitrite's feet is a sea-creature, either a dolphin, or as Palagia suggests, a *ketos*, "an appropriate companion to Poseidon's consort."[59] The figures behind Amphitrite, and towards the south corner of the pediment, are usually identified as Erechtheus, an early king and hero of Athens, and his family.[60] Neither the olive tree, nor the sea, are visible in Carrey's drawing, although, it is believed that the olive "stood on the axis of the pediment between the two contestants."[61] The figures at the extreme north and south corners of the pediment are thought to be river gods.

On the two red-figure hydrias the myth is presented in a more abbreviated version than it is on the Parthenon, at least as far as the complement of gods and

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[57] Palagia (1993) 44. For Nike see Chapter Two, pp. 27-28 above.

[58] Palagia (1993) 49.

[59] Ibid. As are dolphins. See *DCM*, s.v. "Amphitrite."

[60] But see Spaeth (1991) 339ff., who suggests that many of these figures are Eleusinians. The identification of individual figures, except for the central group of gods, is tentative although the consensus among scholars has generally been that the figures to the left of Poseidon include Erechtheus and his family.

[61] Palagia (1993) 46.

heroes is concerned. But the vase-paintings provide other details about the myth, which have long since disappeared from the west pediment. Athena and Poseidon dominate each composition, just as they do on the pediment. But on the St. Petersburg hydria Poseidon stands awkwardly as though hesitant to leave the scene of his defeat.[62] Both gods carry their traditional weapons—Athena, a spear and a shield, Poseidon, a trident. The gods would also have been armed in the composition on the west pediment, but the weapons had evidently disappeared before the drawings were made. An olive tree, also missing from the pediment, stands between the gods. On the St. Petersburg hydria, a snake, coiled around the base of the olive tree, appears to dart menacingly towards Poseidon. Near the top branches of the olive tree is a flying Nike. To the right of Athena is Dionysos, accompanied by a leopard. Floating above Dionysos is an unknown figure, who may be Eris.[63] To the left of Poseidon is a horse, whose bridle the god holds in his left hand. Behind the horse stands Poseidon's consort, Amphitrite. At the extreme left of the painting, a man, identified as Kekrops, sits on a rock.[64] Two dolphins, which may be analogous to the sea creature on the west pediment, swim near the feet of Poseidon. The Pella hydria includes an anomaly, which is not present on the vase from St. Petersburg. This is a thunderbolt, which flashes towards the ground, and almost touches the olive tree. Simon has suggested that a thunderbolt was also included in the configuration on the

[62] Bruno (1976) 63, suggests that the reason for Poseidon's unusual position is that the artist "lack[ed] the special awareness of a sculptor" when he tried to copy the image of the god from the composition on the west pediment. As a result, he says, the artist "could not make up his mind whether to show the figure as moving to the right or to the left, so that in the end he compromised by having the weight planted equally on both feet, which is wrong."

[63] Gardner (1882) 246.

[64] Ibid.

west pediment.[65] In the restoration of the central portion of the pediment, reprinted in Simon's article, the thunderbolt seems to streak from the roof of the pediment directly towards Poseidon.

It is obvious from this description of the artistic depictions of the contest, that art presents the myth quite differently from the way in which it is described in the literature. In literature, an author can describe the climax of the myth, as well as events both preceding and following it. But in art, as Lowenstam points out, "all the incidents must be collapsed into one picture, or a particular moment of the narrative is chosen with allusions to earlier and/or later events."[66] It seems evident that it was the second of these methods which was chosen by the artists who depicted the myth on the west pediment of the Parthenon, and on the red-figure hydrias.

The particular moment shown in each of the artistic representations is the victory of Athena.[67] This is clearly expressed on the vase-paintings by the depiction of the olive tree, just planted, but fully mature. Nike flies near its topmost branches, and points towards Athena, symbolizing her victory. The olive tree had already disappeared from the west pediment, when Carrey made his drawings, but it must have been part of the original composition.[68] Nike also appears on the pediment, but as Athena's charioteer, and she is not a member of the central group of figures. It

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[65] Simon (1980) 246-47, and fig. 1.

[66] Lowenstam (1992) 122, and 173. See also Hanfmann (1957) 61, and 76, who notes that artistic narration in the Classic sense can be summed up by a term used by Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1451^{a}4), εὐσύνοπτος. *LSJ*, s.v., "*easily taken in at a glance, seen at once.*"

[67] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:324. More recently other scholars have suggested that the moment occurs after the victory, when Poseidon inundates Attika. See Robertson (1981) 95.

[68] Palagia (1993) 46-47.

seems appropriate, however, that the goddess of victory should escort Athena to the Akropolis, and her contest with Poseidon. Nike is not mentioned in the literary accounts of the myth. It was suggested earlier in the chapter, however, that Athena undoubtedly arrived on the Akropolis with a well-devised plan to ensure that victory would be hers.[69] The presence of Nike in the illustrations of the myth on the west pediment, and in the vase-paintings, confirms Athena's prior intentions.

While the olive tree is clearly visible on both red-figure vases, and its place on the pediment, although not precisely determined, seems unquestioned, the sea is a another matter. Binder claims that since "no fragment has been identified as water, [the sea] was not there."[70] Poseidon had not yet created it, she says, since "Pheidias chose the one possible moment to make victory visible: the second in which the olive had materialized while Poseidon summoned up his strength to rive the rock."[71] Binder further dismisses suggestions that the sea creature beneath the feet of Amphitrite on the pediment symbolizes the sea. According to her, "an olive tree at the vortex of the action must be matched by a salt spring at the vortex of the action, not by a sea creature off to one side."[72] Based on the evidence of Carrey's drawings of the composition, it is impossible to determine whether or not a dolphin was depicted closer to the centre of the pediment. Nevertheless, each of the hydrias depicts at least one dolphin swimming near Poseidon's feet, and, therefore, near the centre of the

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[69] See p. 156 above.

[70] Binder (1984) 19.

[71] Ibid. But in Apollodoros' account Poseidon created the sea *before* Athena created the olive tree.

[72] Binder (1984) 19.

composition where the olive tree stands.[73] That the sea is symbolized on the Pella hydria seems to be confirmed by the dolphin which points its snout downwards towards the roots of the olive tree, and, thus, towards the sea, newly created by the trident which the god has just pulled out from the rock.[74]

On the vase-paintings, and, almost certainly on the west pediment as well, Athena is depicted with her aigis, and carrying a shield, and a spear. In this representation of the goddess, the artists are following an iconographical convention which only began in the mid-sixth century in Attic art, although in literature it went back to the time of Homer and Hesiod.[75] But these depictions of Athena in her traditional accoutrement also imply that she uses her spear to create the olive tree. This is contrary to events in some literary versions of the myth. In Apollodoros, for example, as Cook says, she "merely planted her olive-tree."[76] But according to some Latin authors, the olive tree appeared only after the goddess had either struck the earth with her spear (Ov. *Met.* 6.80), or had hurled it at the ground (Serv. *Comm. Verg. Georg.* 1.12).

On the St. Petersburg hydria both gods are depicted holding their weapons with the tips pointing downwards, which has suggested to some scholars that the contest had not yet taken place.[77] The presence of the olive tree confirms otherwise.

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[73] The St. Petersburg hydria depicts two dolphins, one between Poseidon's feet, and one to his left beneath the feet of Amphitrite.

[74] See also Simon (1980) 250.

[75] See Chapter Two, pp. 15-16 above.

[76] Cook (1940) 3/1:754.

[77] On this see Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:324, and especially Cook (1940) 3/1:753-54.

The weapons have long since disappeared from the west pediment. But Palagia believes that Poseidon would have been depicted holding his trident in the same way that he does on the St. Petersburg hydria.[78] Perhaps a better comparison can be made with the Pella hydria. On that vase the depiction of the god appears to have more affinity with the statue in Carrey's drawing of the pediment than it does with the St. Petersburg hydria. The trident is still pointed downwards, but one can sense that, at the very moment that Poseidon begins to move away from the centre of the composition, he is also pulling his weapon upwards and away from the rock.

As Lowenstam has pointed out, in addition to the particular moment which is shown in the artistic narrative, references to both "earlier and/or later events" are also part of the composition.[79] Two interesting allusions to a later stage in the myth are depicted on the Pella hydria. In the first, the tip of Athena's spear points directly at the olive tree, and at the same time, towards the prongs of Poseidon's trident. The weapons seem to meet at the exact centre of the composition. In the juxtaposition created, there is an allusion to the dispute, which Apollodoros says, ensued between Athena and Poseidon after Kekrops testified that the goddess planted the olive before Poseidon had created the sea. The second allusion refers to the next event which occurs in Apollodoros' account of the myth. Zeus separated the rivals, and appointed judges to decide the winner in the contest. Zeus himself does not appear on the vase, but the artist envisions the god, symbolized by his thunderbolt, which visibly streaks between the olive tree and the clashing weapons, and separates the two

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[78] Palagia (1993) 47.

[79] Lowenstam (1992) 173.

combatants.[80] If the thunderbolt was also present in the composition on the west pediment, as Simon suggests, this too, was a clear allusion to Zeus' attempt to bring the contest to a less violent conclusion.[81]

The most obvious allusions to future, and past, events in the contest is found in the pose of the two rivals. Both gods seem about to rush away from the centre of the composition. In the case of Poseidon, the implication is clear. The god is depicted just at the moment when, angered by his defeat, he hurries away to cause the flood which inundates the whole country. It is less clear why Athena should be shown leaving the scene of her victory. There is another suggestion, however, which agrees with Apollodoros' account of the myth. According to Binder, Athena "is running towards Kekrops because her victory does not count until he gives the word,"[82] that is, the king testifies, that the goddess had planted her olive tree before Poseidon created the sea. Apollodoros said that Athena asked Kekrops to be her witness when she arrived on the Akropolis, and only then did she plant the olive tree. But on the pediment Kekrops sits near the extreme right corner. In order for the artist to show that the king was Athena's witness, it was necessary to create the illusion that at the very moment when the goddess reaches the Akropolis, she asks Kekrops to witness the planting of the olive, even while the tree itself looms up beside her.

There are also allusions to even earlier events. On the west pediment two pair of horses, which originally drew chariots, are shown on either side of Athena and

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[80] For the thunderbolt as the embodiment of Zeus' power, see Donald (1990) 34 and 62.

[81] Palagia (1993) 44, says that the thunderbolt crashes into the olive tree. But it is unlikely that Zeus would have risked destroying the tree. At the Akademia Zeus *Morios* protected the sacred olive trees (Schol. on Soph. *OK* 705.)

[82] Binder (1984) 20.

Poseidon. The horses rear up as they are suddenly brought to a halt by the charioteers. While these actions appear to be simultaneous with the planting of the olive tree, it is obvious that they imply an earlier event—the arrival of the gods on the Akropolis. The literary versions of the myth do not mention how Athena and Poseidon reached the Akropolis. But according to Brommer, the sculptures of the west pediment clearly depict the two gods "storming towards each other in their chariots, one from each side."[83] This allusion to the arrival of Athena and Poseidon on the Akropolis is not as clearly illustrated on the red-figure hydrias. Only one horse is depicted on each vase. On the St. Petersburg hydria, the horse rears up behind the god, who holds its bridle in his left hand. On the Pella hydria the horse seems less spirited, and it is not restrained by the god.

Earlier in this chapter it was noted that, among the late Latin authors, Poseidon's gift was the horse (Serv. *Comm. Verg. Georg.* 1.12).[84] Palagia claims that these Latin versions of the myth "reflect a classical Greek story, illustrated by [the] two Attic red-figure hydrias," in St. Petersburg and Pella.[85] While it is true that Poseidon is credited in some traditions with the creation of the first horse, this is not

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[83] Brommer (1979) 47. Trendall (1967) 51, and 55-56, pl. 25.3-4, describes a pelike, c. 400, from the museum at Taranto, which, he says, "must depict the moment when the two gods are setting out for the contest." Athena is shown driving a chariot, and accompanied by a young woman, while Poseidon is riding a horse. His companion, a young man, who is also on horseback, has been identified by Weidauer (1969) 91-93, as Eumolpos. Weidauer believes that the scene on the pelike recounts the myth of the contest, which is symbolized by the olive tree growing upright between the two gods. Clairmont (1971) 491-92, however, has proposed a different interpretation. He suggests that the scene actually depicts Eumolpos riding towards Athens for his battle against Erechtheus. Poseidon accompanies his son. Athena represents Athens, and her companion is Erechtheus' daughter who "rides into the field to die her sacrificial death before the actual battle begins."

[84] See pp. 163ff. above.

[85] Palagia (1993) 40.

necessarily the horse which is shown on either of the two hydrias.[86] The descriptions of the vase-paintings have already demonstrated that the myth was presented on them in a more abbreviated version than it was on the pediment. The complement of attendant gods and heroes was reduced in number, and so, obviously, were the number of horses. Therefore, it is likely that the single horse depicted on both vases is a symbol of the two pair of horses represented on the west pediment. Poseidon's ancient association with the horse may well explain its presence next to him in the vase-paintings. As the god of horses, and the creator of the horse, according to some traditions, it was appropriate that Poseidon and the horse should be shown in such close proximity.[87]

It may well be that the convention of a single horse on the vases led some later authors to conclude that Poseidon must have created the horse rather than the sea, at the time of his contest with Athena. Earlier in the chapter, however, it was determined that the reference by the late Latin authors to the horse as the gift of Poseidon arose from a brief allusion in Vergil's *Georgics* (1.12–13), which seems to have had nothing whatsoever to do with the contest. Rather, Vergil refers to the horse as Poseidon's creation because it is an appropriate attribute in a didactic poem on agriculture, where the horse figures prominently. It is this allusion to the horse which more than likely influenced accounts of the myth among the late Latin authors. While it is possible that there were classical Greek versions of the myth which reported that

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[86] On the South Italian bell krater, the horse standing near Poseidon is Pegasos, sometimes said to be the son of Poseidon. See *LIMC*, 7/2, no. 243.

[87] Athena also was associated with the horse, and was worshipped as Athena *Hippia* conjointly with Poseidon *Hippios* at Korinth, and at Kolonos. See Chapter Two, n. 193 above. Detienne (1971) 174–75, and 181, discusses the respective roles of Athena and Poseidon as they relate to the horse.

Poseidon had created a horse in place of the sea, or even that Athena had struck the rock with her spear and created the olive tree, these accounts have not survived. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that when the late Latin authors refer to the horse as the gift of Poseidon, that this is a true reflection of any Greek account of the myth, either in art or in literature.

The variations, which have been observed so far, between the different accounts of the myth in art and literature have been relatively insignificant. Most occur in the use of symbols in the art to verbalize actions described in the literature. No author mentions Nike, for example, but as a symbol of Athena's victory she is present in all versions of the myth. Other symbols such as the dolphins to represent the sea, or the thunderbolt, as Zeus, separating the rivals, can also be compared with descriptions of events as they unfold in the literature. There is, however, one notable variation which does occur between accounts of the myth in art and literature. This concerns the part played by the gods, other than Athena and Poseidon, and the mortals.

In the literary versions of the myth either the gods or the people of Attika judge the contest. Apollodoros firmly rejects the idea that anyone but the twelve gods gave judgement, although he "acknowledges the tradition," by mentioning the names of several Attic heroes.[88] The representation of the myth on the west pediment depicts few of the Olympian gods, except for the rivals, although some lesser divinities are included. For the most part, the remaining sculptures seem to represent human figures, including Kekrops, who is named in the literary sources as either a judge, or

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[88] Castriota (1992) 147. The heroes are Kekrops, Kranaos, who ruled after Kekrops, and Erysichthon, a son of Kekrops.

a witness. On the red-figure hydrias, the figure either of a single god or a human is apparently intended to be the representative of the deities or mortals respectively. Since the majority of the figures on the pediment are likely human rather than divine, it has been suggested that the pediment concurs with the version of the myth given by Varro, in which the people judge the contest, and not with the accounts related by either Ovid or Apollodoros. Castriota, for example, argues that "neither of the versions with Olympian judges . . . accord with the sculptures of the west pediment."[89]

In fact, neither Ovid or Apollodoros say that the gods were present on the Akropolis during the contest, although, according to Ovid, they observed the event from their "lofty home on Mount Olympos" (*Met.* 6.72). But the only certain member of the Olympian gods, besides Athena and Poseidon, depicted on the pediment, is Hermes. On the St. Petersburg hydria, Dionysos seems to be the sole representative of the twelve gods, and it is possible that he assumes the same role on the Pella hydria.[90] In the vase-paintings, therefore, Dionysos undoubtedly stands as a symbol of all the gods. This is not necessarily the case, however, with the figure of Hermes on the west pediment.

Apollodoros says that after Athena called on Kekrops to witness that she had planted the olive before Poseidon created the sea, the gods quarrelled over which of the two had the more valid claim to Attika. It was at this point that "Zeus separated

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[89] Ibid.

[90] According to Spaeth (1991) 343, there may be other divinities in addition to Dionysos on the vase. Since they are unidentified, it is unknown whether or not they are Olympians. I am grateful for Spaeth's description of the Pella hydria, since pl. 11 in Palagia's study of the pediments only shows a portion of the vase.

[the rivals, and] appointed . . . the twelve gods as judges" (3.14.1, διαλύσας Ζεὺς κριτὰς ἔδωκεν, . . . θεοὺς δὲ τοὺς δώδεκα). This does not imply, however, that either Zeus or the rest of the Olympians went down to the Akropolis, as Athena and Poseidon had obviously done. Indeed, the depiction of the myth on the Pella hydria indicates that it was not Zeus himself, but his symbol, the thunderbolt, which separated the two rivals.[91] And just as Zeus was not present on the Akropolis, neither were the other Olympians. Rather they made their judgement on Mount Olympos, and Hermes, as the messenger of Zeus, carried it to the Akropolis, where he presented it to the two rivals. Thus, Hermes appears on the west pediment in his traditional role as the messenger of the gods.[92]

Castriota, however, argues that the arrival of Hermes on the Akropolis, as depicted on the pediment, indicates that the messenger-god has brought a message from Zeus commanding Athena and Poseidon "to submit to the judgment of others."[93] The others, according to Castriota, are not the gods, but mortals—the inhabitants of ancient Attika.[94] Thus, he suggests that the pediment accords with the version of the myth reported by Varro, even though several centuries separate this account and the completion of the Parthenon. Castriota firmly believes that the tradition "that the Athenians had collectively settled the divine contest . . . seem[ed] to have existed already in the fifth century," since Xenophon says that Sokrates referred to it (*Mem.*

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[91] See pp. 179-80 above.

[92] Iris was also the messenger of Zeus, particularly in the *Iliad*. But she was not one of the twelve Olympians. Brommer (1979) 50, notes that the figure of Iris "corresponds typologically to the Hermes in the left-hand half of the pediment."

[93] Castriota (1992) 147-48.

[94] Ibid., 148.

3.5.10).[95] But why does Castriota not mention that elsewhere Sokrates also refers to the gods as the judges of the contest (Pl. *Menex.* 237c)?[96] And even if a similarity existed between the tradition of citizen-judges in the literature and on the west pediment, there would still be a contradiction, at least in the way that Castriota has interpreted the figure of Hermes. For while it is true that Varro reports that the citizens of the soon-to-be-named city judged the contest, nowhere does he state that either of the contenders were present when the judges made their decision. Thus there is no reason why Hermes should have to bring a message from Zeus to the Akropolis.

As it is the human figures on the west pediment are surely not depictions of ordinary Athenians. Rather they must represent the mythic kings, heroes, and heroines of the early city.[97] For the most part, each of these individuals had some association with Athena or Poseidon in myth, either in the contest, or in the war between Eumolpos and Erechtheus which was said to have taken place in the succeeding generation. According to the myth the contest itself took place during the reign of Kekrops, and the king was also Athena's witness. In the tradition which reports that the people judged the contest, Kekrops also plays an important role. But,

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[95] Ibid., 146.

[96] According to Castriota (1992) 147, the versions of the myth with Olympian judges cannot "be documented before the first century B.C. at the earliest." This is incorrect. While Vidal-Naquet (1981) 206, refers to Sokrates' speech in the *Menexenus* as "ironical," this does not necessarily imply that what Sokrates says is not true. Certainly the tradition with the gods as judges must have already been established, for why else would it have been mentioned? Another early source for this tradition is Kallimachos (c. 305–240), who refers to Kekrops both as judge (*Iamb.* 4.68) and as witness (*Fr.* 260.25-26). The latter occasion occurred at the time when Zeus and the twelve immortals judged the contest.

[97] As tentatively identified by the majority of scholars since 1873. See Brommer (1963) 182, and Palagia (1993) 61.

in that case, he would probably be the only one among the assembled inhabitants of ancient Attika on the pediment who does, since the rest belong to completely different generations, even including his young daughters. As it is, that Kekrops is depicted on Athena's side of the pediment serves to emphasize his part in her victory. For only he can offer testimony that the goddess did plant the olive tree first.

Among the heroes and early kings of Attika Kekrops alone appears on the vase-paintings. On the St. Petersburg hydria, a figure identified as Kekrops sits on a rock to the left of Poseidon. While it is unclear why he is not on Athena's side of the composition, as the sole Athenian hero portrayed, it seems probable that he must stand as a symbol for all the Attic heroes, who are depicted on the pediment. On the Pella hydria, the king is placed on the side of the composition near Athena, but, in that painting, Erechtheus, a hero and later king of Athens, may also be present.[98] In addition to Kekrops, his daughters, Pandrosos, Herse, and Aglauros, also appear on the right side of the pediment. It was they who were instructed by Athena to nurse the infant Erichthonios, who is probably identical with Erechtheus.

Erechtheus and his family are depicted on Poseidon's side of the pediment. Erechtheus' close association with Poseidon in myth is analogous to the contest between Poseidon and Athena. He was the fourth king of Athens, after Kekrops, Kranaos, and Amphiktyon (Apollod. 3.14.5-6). While he was king, Eumolpos, Poseidon's son, invaded Attika to avenge his father's loss to Athena in the contest for the patronage of Athens (Isok. *Panath.* 193). Erechtheus killed Eumolpos, and he in turn was killed by Poseidon, who took his name as an epithet. Poseidon was subsequently worshipped on the Akropolis as Poseidon *Erechtheus*. The other figures

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[98] Spaeth (1991) 343.

on the left side of the pediment include Praxithea, the wife of Erechtheus, and the first priestess of Athena *Polias* (Eur. *Erech. fr.* 65.95-97). Among the children of Erechtheus and Praxithea is their daughter Kreusa, whose son Ion was the mythical ancestor of the Ionians (Eur. *Ion* 1587-88).

It seems clear that most of the sculptures on the west pediment likely represent a compendium of the early heroes and heroines of Athens. But their role in the composition is not to judge the contest. Rather, it is to observe, as a comparison with the myth on the east pediment demonstrates. On the east pediment the myth depicted is the birth of Athena.[99] The event takes place on Mount Olympos.[100] The Olympian gods, and other divinities, are in attendance to welcome a new member of the family to their ranks. On the west pediment the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon takes place on the Akropolis of the soon-to-be-named city. And there, just as the gods who are depicted on the east pediment attend the birth of the new goddess in their own realm, so the early kings and heroes of Athens assemble to observe the contest in which the same goddess will acquire the patronage of their city. The theme of divinity is carried further. Palagia points out that the parallel between the Olympians in the east pediment and the heroes of Attika in the west, affirm that

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[99] The exact composition, and identification of the figures on the east pediment is less easy to determine than on the west. The central figures, including Athena and Zeus, were removed when the Parthenon was converted into a church by the early Christians. On the east pediment see Palagia (1993) 18-30.

[100] According to tradition, Athena was born beside the river Triton. Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:266-69, mentions the various legends of Athena's birth beside different rivers each named Triton: Boiotia (Paus. 9.33.7), Arkadia (Paus. 9.33.7), and Libya (Ais. *Eum.* 292-93; Schol. on Ap. Rhod. 1.109). Farnell also believes that the epithet Τριτογένεια, which perhaps denotes "born near or from some kind of water" (p. 266), originated in Boiotia and spread to Libya via Cyrene, from which it "was diffused over the Greek world" (p. 268). See also Schachter (1981) 114.

"the Athenian Acropolis . . . is thus given equal status to the abode of the gods."[101]

Palagia has remarked that the identification of some of the sculptures on the west pediment is tentative.[102] Nevertheless, it seems likely that the number of figures representing female Athenians is larger than those representing males.[103] Castriota finds that "the predominance of the women among the assembled Athenians is striking, especially in the light of Varro's account" of the myth.[104] Several of the figures have been identified as the families, including the daughters, of Kekrops and Erechtheus. Castriota believes that the emphasis on women, especially on those who are mothers, is "a means of stressing their majority support for Athena, as well as suggesting . . . the loss of matrilineal succession."[105] This is a reference to the account of the myth as reported by Varro, in which Athena (Minerva) won the contest because all the women, who outnumbered the men, voted for the goddess. At the urging of Poseidon, Zeus punished the women by taking away their right to vote, and—what is especially important to Castriota's argument—the right to pass down their name to their children.

Palagia also finds some correspondence between the west pediment and Varro's version of the myth which, she says, "may in fact account for the large number of women in the west pediment."[106] This implies that the original source for Varro's

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[101] Palagia (1993) 8.

[102] Palagia (1993) 40.

[103] Ibid., 61.

[104] Castriota (1992) 148.

[105] Ibid. Castriota also argues (p. 146) that the scene "ultimately exemplifie[s] . . . the repression of women." On this aspect of the myth see also Vidal-Naquet (1981) 198-99.

[106] Palagia (1993) 40.

account predated the sculptures. Even Xenophon, the earliest author who says that the contest was judged by the ancient Athenians, wrote his account after the completion of the Parthenon. It is curious why there should be complete agreement between the art and any specific literary version of the myth.[107] If the west pediment truly reflects Varro's account of the myth, why does it not accord with all aspects of that particular version? According to Varro, none of the gods, including the two competitors, were present. And yet, at the centre of the composition on the pediment, are the two gods, Athena at the very moment of her victory, and Poseidon ready to challenge her claim, just as the contest is described by Apollodoros, and several other authors. In an effort to make the mortal figures on the pediment into the male and female citizen-judges required by Varro's account, Castriota ignores the focal point of the myth, the contest itself.

Nevertheless, it does seem obvious that there were two different traditions concerning the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon: one with the gods as judges, and one with the people—that is, those who lived in the time of Kekrops—as judges. Most myths contain a number of variations, and it is quite possible that, in a mythopoeic society, two different traditions, each with a different group of judges, had evolved during the same time-period. In the case of the myth of the contest at Athens, in the late fifth century. It is also possible that some variants of the myth—such as the women in Varro's account, or the horse which Vergil describes as the gift of Poseidon—originated from a misunderstanding of the pedimental figures on the part of a guide or a visitor to the Parthenon. It is just as

[107] But see Connelly (1996) 58ff., who bases her proposed reinterpretation of the Parthenon frieze on a reading of the fragmentary text of Euripides' *Erechtheus*.

likely that the variants, whether in art or literature, can be attributed solely to artistic creativity.

Except for a South Italian red-figure bell krater from Campania, dated c. 360,[108] there are few extant representations of the contest until later antiquity. On the bell krater the contest is depicted in much the same way as it is on both Attic red-figure hydrias. There are two notable variations, however.[109] The depiction of the flying horse Pegasos has already been mentioned. Although Pegasos is sometimes said to have been the son of Poseidon (Hes. *Th.* 278–83), no literary reference to the myth mentions that Pegasos was born at the time of the contest.

The second variation is more significant, and may have implications for later representations of the contest. It has already been shown that it is the moment of victory which is depicted on the west pediment and on the Attic red-figure hydrias. The olive tree stands fully mature between the two gods, as Athena prepares to defend her victory, while Poseidon threatens either to challenge her claim, or to rush off and inundate the land of Attika. But the scene on the Campanian bell krater seems to show an intermediate stage in the myth. Both gods stand at ease, while Poseidon places one foot on a rock. The olive tree stands fully grown between them. The particular moment depicted must occur just after Zeus has intervened to stop the dispute, and the two rivals are waiting for the decision of the gods. At the same time Athena points to the olive tree, clearly indicating that victory is hers. Several centuries separate the bell krater from later artistic representations of the contest.

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[108] *LIMC*, 7/2, no. 243. See also Trendall (1967) 377, and 411.

[109] Excluding the most obvious difference, that the positions of the two gods are reversed—Athena stands on the left, and Poseidon on the right.

And while there is no evidence that this particular vase may have influenced later artists, the scene illustrated on the bell krater is similar to that which predominates in later works of art.

On a relief sculpture from Smyrna, dated to the first century A.D.,[110] the depiction of the myth is similar to the one on the Campanian bell-krater, although, with certain differences. Athena and Poseidon stand at ease on either side of a table, apparently waiting for a decision as to the winner of the contest. Again Poseidon has one foot placed on a rock. In contrast with other depictions of the myth, and the literary accounts, there are two olive trees, one behind each god. According to Cook, the olive is "duplicated for symmetry's sake."[111] The sea is symbolized by the dolphin, which is coiled around an anchor. Perhaps the most significant difference between the depictions on the relief and the bell-krater is the presence of Nike, who stands behind the table, and reaches into a voting-urn. This scene recalls Varro's account of the myth. But it seems unlikely that the artist of the Smyrna relief would have drawn his inspiration from that source, due to what is likely to have been the very different locales in which both works originated.

Varro is the only author who specifically says that the winner of the contest was determined by a vote. All versions of the myth, however, require some kind of judgement, which is reached either through a vote of the people, or by a decision made by the twelve gods, or by Zeus alone, or by the Attic king Kekrops. This has led some scholars to refer to the contest as a trial.[112] For example, Cook remarks on

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[110] Cook (1940) 3/1:757-58, and fig. 545. On the date see this chapter, n. 54 above.

[111] Cook (1940) 3/1:757, n. 2.

[112] See Oliver (1968) 103, and Binder (1984) 20 and 22.

"the orderly and decorous nature of the proceedings—the two litigants, the rival claims, the production of evidence and material exhibits, the peaceful settlement by adjudicators on the ground of well-attested priority."[113] In the case of a trial, the matter would have been debated before the jurors, and then put to a vote, just as Varro says in his account.[114] But the notion of this kind of procedure could also be extended to the decision made on Mount Olympos. Most literary accounts are vague as to how the gods reached their decision. But it is clearly implied on the Smyrna relief, where the voting-urn symbolizes the vote of the twelve divinities, who, according to Farnell, "are grouped on each side" of the sculpture.[115] Finally, the myth was represented on a number of minor antiquities from the first and second centuries A.D. Cook mentions a bronze medallion from the reign of Antoninus Pius, which shows essentially the same scene as that which appears on the Smyrna relief.[116] The major difference is that Poseidon is sitting at the table, while Athena stands beside it. Other Roman medallions from the second century, as well as a silver buckle found at Herculaneum, omit the voting-urn, and the table, and focus on the two gods, and the olive tree between them.[117] The myth also appears on a number of late Athenian coins, most of which were minted during the period beginning with

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[113] Ibid., 751, n. 1. These legal aspects in the myth have led Cook to conclude that it is "comparatively recent." He does not, however, suggest when it might have originated.

[114] In a second version of the myth, Varro actually refers to it as a lawsuit, and not as a contest (*Fr.* 10; August. *De Civ. D.* 18.10).

[115] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:323. Fig. 545 in Cook (1940) 3/1:757, shows only the central part of the relief.

[116] Cook (1940) 3/1:758, fig. 546.

[117] Ibid., 755-56, fig. 541 and 543.

the reign of Hadrian and ending with Marcus Aurelius.[118] The coins are distinguished by two separate designs.[119] Both show Athena and Poseidon facing one another, with the olive tree between them. On the first, Poseidon threatens Athena, who raises her shield, while a snake, coiled around the olive tree, darts at the god. One conspicuous difference between this design and all other depictions of the myth is that here Athena does not carry a spear. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the design bears some resemblance to the painting on the St. Petersburg hydria. The second design, however, along with the previously-mentioned medallions, and the silver buckle, belong to the same artistic tradition which began with the Campanian bell-krater in the mid-fourth century B.C.

The first artistic representation of the contest between Athena and Poseidon appeared on the west pediment of the Parthenon, which was completed c. 432 B.C. The composition is, therefore, contemporaneous with the earliest literary account in the *History* of Herodotos.

Today the pediment has been largely destroyed and the best evidence for the original composition occurs in drawings made by Jacques Carrey in 1674. Other ancient sources include two Attic red-figure hydrias, dated c. 400, and now in St. Petersburg and Pella. Except for a Campanian red-figure bell-krater, dated c. 360, all other extant sources are late. They include a relief sculpture from Smyrna from the first century A.D., and a number of Roman medallions and Athenian coins which were

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[118] Head ([1911] 1963) 389-90. Coins depicting the myth may also have been minted as late as A.D. 211.

[119] Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner ([N.d.] 1964) 130-31, and pl. Z, nos. 11-12, and 14-17. See also Svoronos (1975) pl. 89, nos. 1-18.

minted in the second century A.D.

In comparison with the literary accounts of the myth, there are few variations among the artistic sources. The chief difference concerns what part of the myth is illustrated. The composition on the west pediment, and the red-figure hydrias, depict the moment of Athena's victory. The newly planted, but mature olive tree, stands at the centre of the composition between the two rivals. Athena turns towards Kekrops to ask for his testimony that she had planted the olive tree before Poseidon created the sea. At the same time Poseidon prepares either to challenge Athena, or to inundate the plain of Attika. Evidence for the sea, as the gift of Poseidon, seems to have disappeared from the pediment, but on the hydrias it is symbolized by dolphins swimming near the feet of the god. The Campanian bell-krater, and all later representations of the contest, show a different stage in the myth. In the majority of the depictions, the two gods wait patiently for the decision as to the winner of the contest. The relief sculpture from Smyrna and a Roman medallion from the reign of Antoninus Pius both include a voting-urn in the composition, which seems to have some relevance to Varro's account of the myth, in which the contest is decided by means of a vote.

In addition to its focus on a particular moment in the contest, the art also alludes to earlier and later stages in the myth. On the west pediment two pair of horses, which formerly drew chariots, refer to the arrival of the gods on the Akropolis. It is unlikely that the single horse illustrated on the Attic red-figure hydrias represents the gift of Poseidon. Rather, it is a symbol of the two pair of horses on the pediment. On the Pella hydria the juxtaposition of Athena's spear and Poseidon's trident alludes to the dispute which occurred between the gods after Athena claimed

victory. The thunderbolt streaking past the olive tree symbolizes Zeus as he separates the two gods, just before he appoints the twelve gods to judge the contest.

The question of whether the gods or the people of Attika judged the contest is as pertinent to the art as it is in the literature. Since the majority of figures on the west pediment are humans, some scholars have argued that the composition agrees with Varro's version of the myth in which the men, and women, of Athens are the judges. But none of the literary accounts, which claim the gods as judges, specifically state that the gods were present on the Akropolis at the time, although Ovid says that they observed the contest from Mount Olympos. The presence on the pediment of the messenger-god Hermes seems to indicate that the decision of the twelve gods was made on Mount Olympos and then delivered to the two rivals on the Akropolis.

It seems likely that the human figures represented in the composition, are the kings, heroes, and heroines of ancient Attika. Each of these was closely associated in myth with either Athena or Poseidon, or, in the case of Kekrops, with the contest itself. Their presence on the pediment does not necessarily indicate that they are the judges, however. Rather they attend the contest as spectators. That this is the case can be shown by comparing the composition on the west pediment with that on the east. The east pediment depicts the birth of Athena on Mount Olympos, where the twelve gods gather to welcome the new goddess to their ranks. On the west, the different generations of the early heroes and heroines of Athens gather to observe the contest which ultimately will grant to the same goddess the privilege of becoming the chief deity in their city.

While identification of the human figures on the pediment are tentative, more female than male Athenians may be present. This does not prove, however, that the

composition agrees with Varro's account of the myth, in which Athena (Minerva) won the contest because the women outnumbered the men, since several of the female figures seem to represent the young daughters of Kekrops and Erechtheus. Despite possible correlations between Varro and the west pediment, there are also contradictions. For example, in Varro's account neither of the rivals appears on the Akropolis. But on the pediment, as well as in all other depictions of the myth, Athena and Poseidon are the central figures, just as they are in the versions of the myth by Apollodoros and Ovid.

It seems likely, therefore, that two different traditions concerning the judges of the contest developed, probably sometime in the late fifth century. It is quite possible that this variation, whether it occurs in literature or in art, can be attributed in part to artistic and literary creativity.

The final part of Chapter Four will look at the development of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon, and examine its place in Attic mythology. The section will begin with a brief overview of the incorporation of other Greek myths into the Attic tradition. As an introduction to Athenian mythology, this part of the chapter will briefly examine the myth cycle of Theseus, as a politically-motivated myth which developed in the late sixth and early fifth centuries. Finally, the chapter will examine the myth of the contest, including precedents for the myth, and consider various reasons why the myth of a contest between Athena and Poseidon may be a distinctly Athenian myth of the fifth century.

B. ATTIC MYTHOLOGY

"In the great days of Athens the Athenians and their great poets strove to surround the city with a mythical glory corresponding to its renown in their own age; but it is recognized that the prominence of Attic mythology is late."[120] The antiquity of the majority of Greek myths almost certainly arises from the fact that, for the most part, they are often connected with the great centres of Mycenaean civilization.[121] The most famous heroes come from Mycenae, and other nearby cities, or from Thebes.[122] In contrast, no Athenian hero of note sailed to Troy, and, with the exception of Theseus, few others play any part in other myths. Nilsson has observed that "the mythical importance of Attica corresponds closely" with the fact that, compared with the Argolis or Boiotia, the Mycenaean ruins are "not very significant."[123]

While few Athenian heroes appear in the mythological cycles, the opposite is true in the case of their chief goddess. Athena was the pre-eminent patroness of the heroes, a tradition which went back at least as far as the Homeric epics. The success which the heroes attained often depended upon her presence or participation during their exploits.[124] In the sixth and fifth centuries, art and literature brought some of the heroes into closer connection with Athens. The first of these is Herakles, whose

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[120] Nilsson ([1932] 1972) 161.

[121] Ibid., 181, and 184–85.

[122] The most popular Greek hero, Herakles, forms a link between the two regions which produced the most myths, for he was born at Thebes, and performed six of his twelve labours in the area around Mycenae and Tiryns.

[123] Nilsson ([1932] 1972) 161.

[124] See, for example, the metopes of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. Carpenter (1991) fig. 173.

labours were a recurrent theme in Attic black-figure vase-painting from about the mid-sixth century. The reason for this popularity seems to have been that Peisistratos identified himself with "Athena's favourite hero."[125] Herakles' labours did not take him to Athens. According to Euripides, however, after the hero returns from the Underworld with the hound of Hades, he is driven mad by Hera, and kills his wife Megara, and their children (*HF* 875ff.).[126] At the end of the play Theseus leads Herakles back to Athens for purification (*HF* 1321ff.). Other fifth-century poets also make Athens and its immediate environs a destination for certain heroes. Thus Orestes goes to Athens to be exonerated by Athena of the crime of matricide (Ais. *Eum.* 235ff.),[127] and Oidipous dies at Kolonos where he becomes in death a protector of Athens (Soph. *OK* 1521-25).[128]

At the same time as the Athenians were assimilating some of the myths from other parts of Greece into the local tradition, they also began to develop their own mythology. Athenian myths are, as Parker remarks, "intrinsically Attic, in that the city's origins and institutions form their subject."[129] In comparison with other Greek myths, it is therefore, "a distinctively 'political mythology.'"[130] Viewed from this perspective, the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon, which discloses

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[125] Boardman (1972) 59.

[126] The usual version of this myth say that Herakles, driven mad by Hera, murdered his wife and children, and then was ordered by the oracle at Delphi to atone for the murders by performing the twelve labours. See *DCM*, s.v. "Heracles," 195-96.

[127] See Chapter Two, pp. 38ff. above.

[128] There was a sanctuary to Athena *Hippia* at Kolonos, but the goddess does not play an important role in this play.

[129] Parker ([1987] 1988) 187.

[130] Ibid.

the origin of the cult of Athena as the chief deity in Athens, may also have been politically motivated.

Other Athenian myths fulfil these criteria. Certain aspects of the myth of Erechtheus, such as his war in defence of Athens, his death, and subsequent assimilation into the cult of Poseidon, pertain both to the political life of the city and to the origin of a new cult. The myth of Ion, the son of Erechtheus' daughter Kreusa, tells how the hero became the eponymous ancestor of the Ionians. According to Euripides, the four Attic tribes were named after the sons of Ion, whose descendants later migrated to Ionia (Eur. *Ion* 1575-88).

There is one other Attic myth which rose to prominence earlier than the myth of the contest, and about which more is known, or can be inferred, of its origin and subsequent development. This myth concerns the hero Theseus, and it is the subject of the next part of the chapter.

Theseus

Until the mid-sixth century the myth most often associated with the hero Theseus was the killing of the Minotaur. But by the mid-fifth century he had become the most famous hero of Attika, and had accomplished deeds which made him the rival of Herakles. Although the mythic cycle places his birth at Troizen, in the Argolis, Theseus seems to have been an authentic Attic hero. Nilsson has pointed out that the oldest myths about Theseus are localized in Marathon and Aphidna in northern Attika.[131] And Connor remarks that Theseus was particularly venerated

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[131] Nilsson ([1932] 1972) 166, and 170.

at Marathon.[132] According to Nilsson, there is little doubt that Theseus' best-known exploit, about how he entered the Labyrinth and killed the Minotaur, contains some reminiscences of Minoan Krete, while other early myths, such as the capture of the Marathonian bull, and the rape of Helen, may also go back to the Mycenaean Age.[133] Among the oldest myths associated with Theseus, the killing of the Minotaur was well-known outside of Attika. One of the earliest depictions of this myth occurs on a seventh-century plaque in gold relief from Corinth.[134] In the early sixth century other scenes from the Kretan cycle begin to appear on Attic black-figure pottery. The François Vase, c. 570, shows Theseus dancing with the Athenian young people whom he has rescued from the Minotaur.[135] Ariadne watches the dance, while holding the ball of yarn, which she used to enable Theseus to escape from the labyrinth.

The preeminence of Theseus at Athens seems to have increased during the later years of the tyranny of Peisistratos and his sons.[136] It has already been noted that Peisistratos apparently identified himself with Herakles as the protégé of Athena. This is reflected by the dominance of the myths of Herakles in Athenian art from

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[132] Connor (1970) 143.

[133] Nilsson ([1932] 1972) 166, and 170-71. The name Theseus, as *te-se-u*, has been found on a tablet from Pylos, albeit some distance from Attika. See Ventris and Chadwick[2] (1973) 101. On Theseus and Krete, see also Kirk (1974) 156, who suggests that the Kretan cycle "seems to reflect, and perhaps to justify, some dimly-remembered historical event, and so provide a model for the political elaborations to which many other parts of the Theseus story owe their existence."

[134] Carpenter (1991) 163, and fig. 245.

[135] Ibid., fig. 248.

[136] Connor (1970) 145.

about the 560s.[137] Despite the popularity of Herakles, he was a Peloponnesian hero, and none of his labours had taken place in Attika. Whether or not Peisistratos promoted Theseus as a hero of Attika is unknown, although the first artistic evidence for the mythic capture of the Marathonian bull appears on Attic vases after c. 540, which is probably not long after Peisistratos returned from exile and defeated his enemies near the town of Marathon.[138]

It is towards the end of the sixth century, however, after the overthrow of the Peisistratids, that Theseus suddenly emerges as the pre-eminent Athenian hero. It is possible that the political changes, which resulted from the democratic reforms undertaken by Kleisthenes, led to Theseus' new status.[139] The union of the individual regions of Attika into a single state with Athens as the political centre (*synoikismos*) had occurred early in its history, perhaps even by the late tenth century.[140] In later times the *synoikismos* was attributed to Theseus (Thuc. 2.15; Isok. 10.35; Plut. *Thes*. 24.1). Now, at the end of the sixth century, the reorganization by Kleisthenes of the Attic tribes and demes (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 21.1-4), seems to have inspired the idea of "a new kind of synoecism."[141] One, in fact, that had been anticipated by the original *synoikismos*, instituted by Theseus in the distant past. In this way, Theseus came to be regarded as the founder of Athens, and as the hero of

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[137] Boardman (1984) 243.

[138] Carpenter (1991) 162.

[139] Ostwald, *CAH*^{2}, 4:325.

[140] Snodgrass. "The Later 10th and Earlier 9th Centuries." *CAH*^{2}. 3/1:668. Cf. Thomas (1982) 340, and 348-49, who suggests that the *synoikismos* may have taken place as early as the late thirteenth century.

[141] Ostwald, *CAH*^{2}, 4:325.

the democracy.[142]

At the same time, new myths about Theseus begin to appear, first, in Attic vase-painting, and later, in literature. While the old legends associated with the hero remain at the centre of his mythic cycle, the new myths tell of previously unknown episodes in Theseus' early life, before he went to Knossos, and of later adventures, which occurred after he returned from Krete. It seems clear that some of these myths are an attempt to make Theseus into the rival of Herakles.[143] In the myths which tell of the hero's youth, Theseus, like Herakles before him, performs a series of labours. There is a difference between the deeds of the two heroes, not just in number—Theseus undertakes only six labours compared to the twelve performed by Herakles—but in kind, as well. Nilsson says that, "the deeds of Herakles are those of an old mythical hero who slays ferocious beasts, [while] Theseus puts down highwaymen and robbers, enemies of a peaceful and civilized life."[144] This in itself clearly shows that Theseus' labours were a recent addition to his myth cycle. In some of the myths, which recount Theseus' exploits after he had become king of Athens, the two heroes are united. While trying to abduct Persephone, Theseus became a prisoner in the Underworld, and had to be released by Herakles, who had gone to the Underworld to bring Kerberos back to Eurystheus. And according to Euripides, after Herakles had killed his wife and children, Theseus welcomed him to Athens to be

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[142] See Den Boer (1969) 1, and 4.

[143] Nilsson ([1932] 1972) 164.

[144] Nilsson ([1951] 1986) 55. See also Boardman (1975) 228, who calls Theseus' labours "a pallid but deliberate imitation [those] of Herakles." The labours of Theseus included one ferocious beast, the Crommyonian sow, although Plutarch reports a version of the myth which said that the victim was actually a female robber named Phaia, who was called a sow on account of her lifestyle (*Thes.* 9).

purified (*HF* 1321ff.). In the oldest myths of Theseus, the hero did not have a divine patron. But by the early part of the fifth century, Theseus, like Herakles, and most of the other Greek heroes, becomes the protégé of Athena, even in the oldest parts of his mythic cycle.[145]

The evolution of Theseus into the national hero of Athens seems to have reached its peak in the years following the Persian Wars. The first reason for this development pertained to an event which was said to have occurred at the battle of Marathon in 490. According to Plutarch, the Athenians honoured Theseus as a hero because many of the veterans of Marathon believed that they had seen his apparition (φάσμα) in full armour rushing in front of them against the Persians (*Thes*. 35.5). A few years after the battle of Salamis, the Delphic oracle advised the Athenians to bring the bones of Theseus back to Athens from the island of Skyros, where he had died, and to bury them with honour (Plut. *Thes*. 36.1). There seems to have been no question in the minds of the Athenians, that Theseus had once been a real person from their early history.

After Kimon captured Skyros in c. 476/5 he claimed that he had 'discovered' the hero's grave on the island, and he brought the bones back to Athens where "the Athenians welcomed them with splendid processions and sacrifices as if Theseus himself were returning to the city" (Plut. *Thes*. 36.2). The hero's remains were enshrined in the Theseion which was "newly erected"[146] not far from the agora (Paus. 1.17.2). It is not entirely clear why Kimon promoted the figure of Theseus,

[145] Carpenter (1991) fig. 249, shows an Attic red-figure hydria, c. 470, with Athena urging Theseus to leave the island of Naxos after he has abandoned Ariadne, who is being led away by Dionysos.

[146] Francis (1990) 49.

although Garland suspects that the legend that a "*phasma*" of the hero had joined the Athenians, and Kimon's father, Miltiades, in the battle at Marathon "can hardly be a coincidence"[147]

There may be another reason why Theseus' popularity at Athens increased at this time. This is related to the myth of his birth. Like Herakles, Theseus also was said to have had two fathers, one human, and one divine. His human father was the Athenian king Aigeus. His divine father was Poseidon, Athena's competitor in the contest for Athens. Theseus' mother was Aithra, a woman of Troizen, in the Argolis. According to Apollodoros, Theseus was conceived when Aigeus stopped off at Troizen to visit Aithra's father, Pittheus (3.15.6-7). But he then adds that Poseidon visited Aithra on the same night. Plutarch, however, reports that Pittheus spread a rumour that Poseidon, the guardian deity of Troizen, was the boy's real father (*Thes.* 6.1).

It is not clear why Theseus, as a hero common only to Attica, was born at Troizen, although, according to Nilsson, Aithra's father, Pittheus, is the "eponymous hero of the demos of Pithus . . . [in] Attica."[148] Therefore, both his parents may have been of Attic descent. Nilsson also believes that the birth myth is a recent addition to the myth cycle.[149] Sourvinou-Inwood, however, claims that there were originally two versions of the Theseus myth, one Attic, in which Theseus' father was Aigeus, and one Troizenian, in which his "father was probably Poseidon, and only Poseidon."[150]

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[147] Garland (1992) 84-85.

[148] Nilsson ([1932] 1972) 167.

[149] Ibid., 169.

[150] Sourvinou-Inwood (1979) 18. But see Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:53, who says that "in all probability Αἰγεύς is a title of Poseidon himself."

She also suggests that the two variants were harmonized by at least the ninth century, when Athens and Troizen may have had close contact with each other during the period of the Kalaureian Amphictyony.[151] The result was a compromise myth in which Theseus was the son of Poseidon, the chief god of the Amphictyony, but also the son of Aigeus, which "confirm[ed] the partial localisation of the legend in Attica."[152]

Shapiro agrees that the Troizen birth-myth is very old, but he suggests that the two different traditions were not amalgamated until late in the sixth century.[153] He also suggests, however, that the hero's Troizenian origin may not have been acknowledged by Athenian artists until after the battle of Salamis.[154] According to Shapiro, the new emphasis, after 480, on Theseus' place of birth was probably due to two reasons. First, before the battle the Athenians sent away from Attica all of their women and children, and Troizen was selected as a safe haven for most of them (Hdt. 8.41.1; Paus. 2.31.7).[155] The second reason was connected with the battle of Salamis itself, when Poseidon, Theseus' Troizenian father, "must have seemed . . . [to be]

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[151] Ibid., 20-1. According to Mylonas (1940) 35, the cult of Poseidon must have existed in Athens "at the time when the amphictyony was formed and was flourishing." He suggests that this was c. 1400.

[152] Ibid., 21.

[153] Shapiro (1982) 294.

[154] Ibid. Shapiro bases his conclusion on the evidence of extant vases. But see Ostwald, *CAH*^{2}, 4:323, who comments on the difficulty of giving a precise date to artefacts, and why this becomes a problem at a time in Athenian history when, in the space of a few decades, there occurred such notable events as the fall of the Peisistratids, the reforms of Kleisthenes, and the battle of Marathon.

[155] Shapiro (1982) 294. Herodotos also says that some of the women and children were sent to Aegina and Salamis.

protecting the Greek fleet."[156] But although Poseidon may have protected the fleet at Salamis, the victory itself seems to have been presaged by Athena. Plutarch says that before the battle an owl flew through the fleet and perched on the mast-head of Themistokles' own ship (*Them.* 12.1). The owl was an attribute of Athena. By the time of Aristophanes the veterans of Salamis looked back on the event and remembered the owl's flight as an announcement of the approaching victory (Schol. in Ar. *Vesp.* 1086).[157]

Both the safety of Troizen, for Athenian women and children, and Poseidon's protection of Attic ships, and their crews, at Salamis, undoubtedly reminded the Athenians of their hero's birthplace. But it seems more likely that recognition of the part played by Poseidon in the victory at Salamis would have focused on his role as god of the sea, more than on his connections with Troizen, since he was worshipped by sailors everywhere in Greece.[158] At Artemesion, after a storm had destroyed a large number of Persian ships earlier in 480, prayers and libations were offered to Poseidon *Soter* (Hdt. 7.192.2).[159] But even if the god was not honoured with the same epithet at Salamis, he was, as the *Homeric Hymn* says, "the preserver of ships" (*h. Hom.*

[156] Ibid.

[157] On the owl as a "harbinger of victory" see Anderson (1991) 154.

[158] Rose and Robertson. *OCD*^{2}, s.v. "Poseidon," 867.

[159] Herodotos had mentioned previously (7.189) that the Athenians had called upon Boreas, the son-in-law of Erechtheus, for his assistance in warding off the Persians. The Athenians were convinced that Boreas had sent the storm which destroyed many of the Persian ships at Artemesion. As a consequence, they established a sanctuary to the god beside the river Ilissos. It was here that Boreas had abducted Erechtheus' daughter, Oreithyia. Pausanias says (1.19.5) that Boreas helped the Athenians because he was connected to them by marriage. Garland (1992) 71, apparently ignores the prayers and libations, which Herodotos says the Athenians offered to Poseidon *Soter* at Artemesion, and says (n. 3) it is less certain whether they also rewarded Poseidon. He believes, however, that "Boreas' alleged intervention point up Athens' increasing preoccupation with the sea." Boreas, of course, was the north wind.

22.5, σωτῆρά τε νηῶν).[160] It is clear that the Athenians acknowledged Poseidon's part in the victory, for Herodotos says that after the victory they dedicated three captured Phoenician triremes, one at the Isthmus, one at Sounion, and one at Salamis (8.121.1). Although Herodotos does not indicate to which gods the dedications at Sounion and the Isthmus were made, in all probability Poseidon was the beneficiary.[161] Sounion was the site of a major sanctuary to the god, while, according to Pausanias, the Isthmus was assigned to Poseidon at the time of his dispute with Helios, and "from that time, they say, the Isthmus has belonged to [him]" (2.1.6-7, ἀπὸ μὲν τούτου λέγουσιν εἶναι τὸν ἰσθμὸν Ποσειδῶνος).[162]

Two years after Salamis, in 478/7, Athens became the leader of an alliance, with its treasury established on the island of Delos, which was formed to protect the Greeks from any future Persian threat.[163] At around this time allusions to Poseidon and his son appear with increasing frequency in both art and literature. Shapiro has demonstrated how this emphasis on the kinship between Theseus and Poseidon "symbolizes Athens' new naval supremacy as head of the Delian League."[164] In one of his *Odes*, Bakchylides describes how Theseus dives to his father's watery kingdom and visits Amphitrite and the Nereids (17.101-11). According to Pausanias (1.17.3), this scene ornamented one of the walls in the Theseion. Since this shrine and its

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[160] *LSJ*, s.v. σωτήρ, "*saviour, deliverer . . . a preserver.*" The epithet was usually applied to Zeus, not to Poseidon.

[161] At Salamis the trireme was dedicated to the hero Ajax.

[162] On the temples of Poseidon at the Isthmus and at Sounion see Scully ([1962] 1979) 158-59, 161-64.

[163] Meiggs, *OCD*², s.v. "The Delian League," 319. The League was the final formation of an alliance formed in 481 against the Persians.

[164] Shapiro (1982) 296.

paintings are lost, we can only conjecture how the episode might have been depicted.[165] Attic red-figure vases from the second quarter of the fifth century, however, clearly show the evolution of the myth in the years following the battle of Salamis. Its earliest depiction occurs on a vase from c. 500 (Louvre, G 104; *ARV*² 318.1).[166] Shapiro points out that on this vase Athena appears as the patron of Theseus.[167] But after 480, and the appearance of Bakchylides' *Ode*, "the episode focuses more and more on the meeting of Theseus and Poseidon, until it is reduced to a static two-figure group, a kind of emblem celebrating Athens' mastery of the sea."[168] At the same time, it also raises the question whether the prominence given to Poseidon in art and literature indicates the greater prestige of his cult in Athens, and the possibility of a conflict between the god of the sea and the City Goddess.

It seems clear that political developments in Athens during the late sixth and early fifth centuries led to the pre-eminence of Theseus as an Attic hero. The most significant addition to his myth cycle was undoubtedly his association with the *synoikismos*, which came to be regarded as a precursor to the democratic reforms of the late sixth century. The evolution of Theseus into a national hero reached its peak after the Persian wars. At Marathon his apparition was seen leading the charge against the Persians. He does not, however, appear to have played any role at Salamis. This was left to his divine father, Poseidon, who as the god of the sea and

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[165] See Francis (1990) 49-50.

[166] Shapiro (1982) 296 and fig. 3.

[167] Shapiro (1992) 39.

[168] Ibid., 39-40.

sailors, helped to destroy Phoenician ships at Artemesion, and to preserve the ships of the Athenians at Salamis.

After the Persian wars, the acknowledgement of Poseidon's role at Salamis, which was undoubtedly enhanced by his relationship to the popular hero of Marathon, may well have contributed to an apparent increase in the prominence of the cult of the sea god at Athens. It is possible that here may be found the genesis of the myth of the contest with Athena. This will be the subject of the next part of the chapter.

C. THE CONTEST

Genesis of a Myth

The myth of the contest for the patronage of Athens is comparable to the myth-cycle of Theseus, in that it too seems to have developed comparatively recently. The earliest references to the contest occur after the mid-fifth century. This does not, of course, preclude the existence of the myth prior to this time. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that a myth so important to the early history of Athens would not have been described, at least in art, at a much earlier date if it had been current.[169] As it is, a hypothetical date for the first appearance of the myth must be sometime during the early years of the 440s. There are two reasons for this premise. The myth must have been known when construction of the Parthenon was begun in 447/6, since it seems obvious that the program for the artistic representations would have been conceived at the same time as the architectural plans were drawn up. In addition, Herodotos

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[169] See commentary by Harrison in Verrall and Harrison (1890) xxvi.

may well have become acquainted with the myth at the time when he last visited Athens, which seems to have been no later than 443.[170]

The lack of earlier evidence, then, seems to indicate that the myth of the contest first appeared at approximately the mid-fifth century. It seems certain, then, that the myth is not a traditional tale, which had originated in the remote past, but rather, was an invention of the fifth century. Why would such a myth be created? It has already been shown in Chapter Two that Athena had long been ensconced in her temple on the Akropolis. Why, then, should there be any question that she had not always been the chief deity of Athens? In the mid-fifth century, however, some event, or series of events, must have occurred, which led to the creation of a myth, explaining how, and why, Athena had become the City Goddess. According to Garland, "radical re-evaluations [of religion] most commonly took place at moments of crisis."[171] He adds, "typically it was when the Greeks won a spectacular military victory, . . . or re-defined their social and political identity, that they responded either by endorsing a new cult or enhancing the prestige of an already existing one."[172] It seems possible, then, that the creation of this myth was a response to events which occurred in Athens during and after the Persian wars. In the context of religion, the apparent rise in the popularity of Poseidon at this time, to judge by the evidence of art and literature, would seem to have had the most influence on the development of

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[170] Denniston and Pearson. *OCD*², s.v. "Herodotus," 508.

[171] Garland (1992) 1. In this context I understand Garland to mean crisis in the sense of "a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent; now applied *esp.* to times of difficulty, [or] insecurity," in other words, a disaster, such as a war. The word, however, can also denote "a turning-point." See *OED*, s.v.

[172] Garland (1992) 1.

such a myth.[173]

Athena's official status as the guardian-goddess of Athens can be documented at least from the time of Solon in the early sixth century. Her association with the city is remarked even by Homer, and, thus, it may be inferred that Athena was regarded as the chief deity in Athens as far back as the Bronze Age. The same antiquity cannot be established with any certainty for the cult of Poseidon in Athens. According to Binder, "there is no literary, epigraphical, or archaeological evidence to indicate that the cult of Poseidon existed on the Acropolis before the battle of Salamis."[174] Jeffery cites three dedications to the god from the period c. 480 (*IG* I^2, 706) to c. 450 (*IG* I^2, 580).[175] Only the latter specifically mentions the god by name--and then as Poseidon *Erechtheus*. In Chapter Two reference was made to Pausanias' account that Poseidon had to share his altar in the Erechtheion with Erechtheus "in accordance with an oracle" (1.25.5).[176] This dedication from the Akropolis may be the earliest extant evidence for the inception of the new cult.[177]

With such meagre evidence it is practically impossible to determine whether

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[173] But see Harrison (1906) 64, who suggested that "at some time of political upheaval, possibly *even as late* [my italics] as the time of Peisistratos," Athena "reasserted herself." According to her theory, Athena was the "ancient matriarchal goddess," and the patron of both the tyrants and the democracy.

[174] Binder (1984) 21. Garland (1992) 31, on the other hand, claims that, despite the lack of evidence, Poseidon was likely "worshipped on the north face of the Acropolis from very early times." And Shapiro (1989) 102, referring to Kekrops, says that "generally, myths involving the legendary Kings of Attika are genuinely old," although he admits (p. 102, n. 11) that the kings and myths may have been invented. This was the view of Harrison[2] ([1912] 1927) 267.

[175] Jeffery (1988) 125.

[176] Chapter Two, p. 55 above.

[177] But see Mansfield (1985) 251, who points out that dedication *IG* I^2, 580 is the "earliest *preserved* [my italics] evidence of the cult of Poseidon on the Akropolis."

this would have involved the establishment of a new cult to Poseidon, or the increase in the prestige of an existing cult to the sea god. In either case, might this have been perceived as an encroachment on the cult of the City Goddess? And if so, what would have been the reaction of the *polis* and its citizens? Sourvinou-Inwood has remarked that "the Greek *polis* articulated religion and was itself articulated by it; religion became the *polis'* central ideology, structuring, and giving meaning to, all the elements that made up the identity of the *polis*."[178] Thus, the establishment or enhancement of a cult, especially one devoted to a god as powerful as Poseidon seems to have become after the Persian Wars, may have been regarded with concern by both religious and civic officials in Athens. The city administered the cult of Athena *Polias*, and had likely done so since at least the time of Peisistratos. In return, the goddess protected the city, and "shielded its political liberty and its economic welfare."[179] Any encroachment upon the state cult would have been a concern to the civic officials. But at the same time any increased interest in the cult of Poseidon may have been tacitly supported by the civic administration, for had it not been Poseidon who had granted Athenian ships victory at Salamis? And had he not given control of the sea to Athens, and, perhaps, even the leadership of the Delian League?

But the myth not only recounts the rivalry between Athena and Poseidon. The gifts which the two gods offered to the city are also an integral part of the narrative. Further, some of the literary accounts emphasize the idea of competing gifts, with Athena winning the contest because the olive was considered to be the most valuable or useful gift. The Persian Wars had left Athens in ruins. The farms in the Attic

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[178] Sourvinou-Inwood (1990) 304.

[179] Stubbs (1976) 439.

countryside had suffered severe damage, and would take several years to recover. In the case of the olive trees, up to twenty years were required before full production would be reached.[180] But Athens still had its naval flotilla, although, somewhat reduced in size. Further, the Phoenicians had withdrawn their fleet from the service of the Persian king, and had returned home.[181] This resulted in a power vacuum in the Aegean, which Athens, by virtue of its naval strength, and its prestige as the victor at Salamis, was able to exploit for both political and economic gain.[182] After it assumed the leadership of the Delian League in 478/7, Athens was in a position to benefit significantly from its control of the sea.

The benefits were not only political, for leadership of the Delian League seems to have assisted in the development of Athenian commerce throughout the Aegean, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea.[183] In the first instance, trade was stimulated by the demand in Attika for imported food in the aftermath of the Persian Wars.[184] Merchant vessels, whether Athenian or foreign, conveyed their cargoes to the Peiraeus. But, later, according to French, it became advantageous for most traders to divert their ships to the Peiraeus, which became a clearing house for the international export-import market in the Aegean.[185] In this way Athens became

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[180] French (1964) 109.

[181] Ibid., 84.

[182] Ibid. The financial benefits, which accrued to Athens from allied tribute, will not be mentioned, since they lie outside the scope of the thesis.

[183] On Athenian political power under the auspices of the Delian League see Meiggs ([1972] 1973) 205ff. For the economic and commercial benefits to Athens see French (1964) 107ff., who also points out (p. 109), that Athenian commercial growth after 480 is mostly conjecture.

[184] French (1964) 83, and 109-10.

[185] Ibid., 118.

a centre for international trade.

French points out that leadership of the Delian League also exacted a cost, particularly in the "diversion of labour into non-food-producing activities [such as] naval service" which provided greater "opportunities for enrichment."[186] Thus, it seems likely that after the Persian Wars many of the men who had been recruited as sailors likely did not wish to return to the hard work of farming.[187] If French is right, this must have had a detrimental effect on all types of farming in Attika, and perhaps on grain production more so than on olives, or vines. This fact, along with the increase in international trade, undoubtedly contributed to the rise of commercial farming in Attika, which favoured the production of olive oil and wine over grain.[188] After the mid-fifth century, the rural economy seems to have concentrated almost solely on the production of oil and wine in response to high prices and export demands. There was another bonus for the farmer. Olives and vines required only part-time attention, so the farmer could supplement his income by working in the port, or by going to sea in the summer. In the case of the olive, this was especially advantageous since the "harvest falls in mid-winter, when shipping was tied up in Greece."[189] Historically, at least, the olive and the sea—the gifts of Athena and Poseidon—were not competitive, rather they complemented one another. Thus, despite the emphasis on the value or usefulness of the gift in some versions of the myth of the

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[186] Ibid., 95 and 109.

[187] According to French (1964) 139, the number of slaves "employed as farm hands seems rather doubtful."

[188] Ibid., 128–33.

[189] Ibid., 130–31.

contest, it seems unlikely that the myth developed from an historical rivalry between the olive and the sea.

It seems appropriate. then, to return to the idea that the creation of the myth can be attributed to the rise in popularity of the cult of Poseidon in the decades following the Persian Wars. But contrary to Binder's argument, which suggests that the victory at Salamis was the sole catalyst for the invention of the myth,[190] Salamis must be considered only its precursor. As mentioned previously, leadership of the Delian League had given Athens political and economic power in the Aegean. Since this power had devolved from Athenian control of the sea, it could justly be regarded as the gift of Poseidon. But the ascendancy of Athens, and the extent of its sea power, had alarmed other Greek states (Thuc. 1.90.1), and by c. 459/58 Athens was at war with Korinth, and shortly thereafter with Sparta and Boiotia (Thuc. 1.105.2). It is these events—today referred to collectively as the First Peloponnesian War—which Jeffery has proposed as the raison d'être for the myth of the contest.

According to Jeffery's argument, Poseidon was a symbol of the Greek states which were opposed to Athens, that is, Korinth, Sparta and Boiotia, all of which had major cults to Poseidon.[191] The implication of the myth would then be, that Poseidon must be defeated, just as the Greek states who opposed Athens must be defeated. But even at Athens Poseidon had to be worshipped, since Athenian sea power now depended on the god. This was surely made clear to the Athenians in one of the first encounters of the war, when their fleet was defeated by the Korinthians (Thuc. 1.105.1).

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[190] Binder (1984) 22. See also Chapter One, p. 9 above.

[191] See Jeffery (1988) 125 and 126.

During the early years of this First Peloponnesian War Athens sent an expedition to Egypt to assist in a rebellion intended to end Persian rule in that country (Thuc. 1.104.2). According to Thucydides, the Athenians gained control of the Nile and captured two-thirds of Memphis. But the campaign eventually ended in disaster. The Persians drove the Greeks to the island of Prosopitis where they were barricaded for eighteen months (1.109.4). Finally, the Persians diverted two channels of the river and left the Greek ships beached on dry land. The Athenians burned their ships, and, retreating before the Persians, marched to the Greek colony of Kyrene. Only a few survived the march (1.110.1). A relief squadron of 50 triremes sailed to Egypt, but it was almost annihilated by the Phoenician fleet (1.110.4).

The duplicity of Poseidon's nature must have been obvious. He may have contributed to Athens' success at Salamis, and given them leadership of the Delian League—yet even this was no guarantee of victory either at home or in foreign lands. It was clear that the gift of the sea god promised either success or failure. And whatever the outcome, he had to be propitiated, for Poseidon was a god to be reckoned with.

Political developments in Athens in the decades following the Persian Wars may also have played a part in the creation of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon. Kimon's promotion of Theseus as the Athenian hero *par excellence* has already been mentioned. The depiction of Theseus with his divine father in vase-painting and literature seems to have symbolized Athenian naval supremacy and their leadership of the Delian League. There seems little question that, in Kimonian Athens, Poseidon would have become an important cult-figure in the continuing conflict with Persia, and the maintenance of the Delian League.

Kimon's political leadership came to an end when he was ostracized in 461.[192] Earlier in 462/1, while Kimon was absent from Athens, Ephialtes, an associate of Perikles, had successfully deprived the Council of the Areopagus of most of its political power (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 25.2-4). The Areopagus had been controlled by the aristocracy, and its loss of prestige and power is seen as a "democratic advance."[193] Ephialtes was assassinated soon afterwards, but his reforms set the stage for the rise of the radical democracy. Under the leadership of Perikles the demos assumed control of the administration of civic affairs in Athens (*Ath. Pol.* 27.1).[194]

Garland suggests that the demos may have been responsible for a new attitude towards religion in Athens during the second half of the fifth century, with Athena as the primary beneficiary.[195] "From the 450s onwards," he says, "the Athenian state increasingly came to see itself as dependent upon the exclusive patronage of Athena."[196] The devotion of the city and the people towards Athena had always been strong, but now it became more evident than it had been before.[197] This may have been a reaction to the policies of the previous Athenian administration during which the cult of Poseidon seems to have increased in popularity, although there seems to be no evidence that the cult of the City Goddess was neglected. The importance of the

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[192] Meiggs ([1972] 1973) 89.

[193] Ibid.

[194] See Francis (1990) 19. But Meiggs ([1972] 1973) 156, says that Perikles did not become the dominant figure in Athenian politics until c. 450.

[195] Garland (1992) 100. After the treasury of the Delian League was transferred to Athens in c. 454 Athena received the *aparchai*, one-sixtieth of all the tribute from the allies. See Garland, p. 106.

[196] Ibid., 106.

[197] Ibid., 99.

cult of Poseidon to the fleet and to Athenian leadership and control of the Delian League was as necessary as before,[198] but in their disdain for the previous regime it is likely that Perikles and the demos seized the opportunity to enhance the cult of the City Goddess as a symbol of Athens and as an expression of her leadership in the Aegean.[199] As far back as the time of Solon in the early sixth century, Athena had been regarded as the guardian of Athens.[200] But now "the allies . . . were encouraged to regard the patron goddess of Athens as in part their own."[201] An example of this new policy seems to have been the inclusion of the other members of the Delian League in the celebration of the Panathenaia.

It seems likely that the origin of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon can be found in the period sometime after the mid-fifth century, and that it's creation can be attributed to two factors: the rise in popularity of the cult of Poseidon in the period after the Persian Wars, especially, during the leadership of Kimon; and, a desire on the part of the demos to confirm Athena in her role as City Goddess of Athens, and at the same to promote her as the guardian-deity of the empire. But despite the importance of the gift of the sea god, Athena, and not

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[198] The Delian League was gradually transformed into an empire after peace was negotiated with Persia c. 450. See Meiggs ([1972] 1973) 152.

[199] See Boardman (1985) 169.

[200] In the sixth century Solon described Athena as the ἐπίσκοπος of Athens. Sometime during the fifth century a new epithet may have been used for the first time to describe the goddess. This was μεδέουσα—*LSJ*, s.v. μέδεων—which first appears in a document called the 'Decree of Themistokles.' Jameson (1960) 199 (text) and 210, says "it is the most emphatically national of her epithets—others may have an Athena Polias but only Athenians have an 'Αθηνᾶ 'Αθηνῶν μεδέουσα." If the Decree is authentic, it may be dated to c. 480. The epithet also occurs in Ar. *Eq*. 585. Meiggs ([1972] 1973) 295-97, reports evidence for the cult of 'Αθηνᾶ 'Αθηνῶν μεδέουσα in allied territories. See also Garland (1992) 106.

[201] Meiggs ([1972] 1973) 305.

Poseidon, was the chief deity in Athens, and it was she who watched over the city from her Akropolis.

As for the gifts, there seems to be no evidence that historically the olive and the sea were competitive, but their symbolism is obvious. The sea was the gift of Poseidon, for he had given Athens control of the sea at Salamis, as well as the leadership of the Delian League, and political hegemony in the Aegean. The olive, as the gift of Athena, had been associated with her for as long as her sacred tree had grown beside her old temple on the Akropolis. This association as well as the importance of the olive and its oil to the economy of Attika made it the obvious gift from Athena to her people.

Who would have created the myth? This question is impossible to answer, but like all good stories, it was not created at once. Its inspiration came from the mythopoeic spirit of the times, and it evolved by being talked about and told again and again.[202] The shape of the myth was realized by the artist (Pheidias?) who depicted it on the west pediment of the Parthenon. While the myth was not traditional, it became so, as it diverged into the variants revealed by later art and literature.

The Parthenon

The Parthenon was built on the site of a partially constructed temple, which was begun during the decade following the battle of Marathon.[203] This new temple

[202] The notion of a contest between Athena and Poseidon could have been derived from their traditional rivalry the *Odyssey*. As well, Poseidon seems to have had a reputation for contests of this type (see Chapter Two, pp. 66ff.).

[203] Hopper (1971) 118, for a discussion of the "older Parthenon."

was apparently intended to replace an earlier structure which may have been built during the tyranny of Peisistratos, and was "intentionally demolished" c. 488.[204] Many of the columns for the post-Marathon temple seem to have been in place when the Akropolis was sacked and burned by the Persians in 480. The Akropolis was left in ruins until the beginning of the Periklean building program.[205] According to the fourth-century orator, Lycurgus, the Greeks had made an oath not to rebuild any of the temples destroyed by the barbarians, but to leave the ruins as a memorial for posterity (*Leocr.* 81). But after Perikles became the leader of Athens, the decision was made to rebuild the temples on the Akropolis (Plut. *Per.* 12.1-2).[206]

Construction of the Parthenon began in 447/6 and the entire project was controlled by the demos. According to Francis, the reforms of Ephialtes "marked a turning-point [both] in the development of Athenian constitutional government and, . . . in the history of her public building."[207] Few public buildings had been built in the decades following the Persian Wars, but those that were had been commissioned by members of the aristocracy. The age of Kimon was, in the words of Meiggs, "still an age of aristocratic patronage."[208] But under the radical democracy the demos decided what public buildings were to be built. Thus, the decision to build the Parthenon was likely made as much by the demos as it was by Perikles, with whom

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[204] Ibid.

[205] See Meiggs ([1972] 1973) 597, concerning speculation on a temple to Athena begun under Kimon.

[206] The treasury of the Delian League, which had been transferred to Athens, and the safekeeping of Athena, c. 454, was used to finance the building of the temples.

[207] Francis (1990) 19.

[208] Meiggs (1963) 44.

it has long been associated. In the view of Meiggs, the Parthenon "was the creation of a free democracy, initiated, controlled, and approved by the popular assembly."[209]

The implication of this involvement by the demos in the construction of the Parthenon is that they may also have influenced the sculptural program of the temple. Scholars are generally in agreement that the traditional mythic battles depicted on the metopes were inspired by the success of Athens in the Persian Wars.[210] But these particular myths were not unusual themes on public buildings. The Trojan War and the Amazonomachy were both depicted in the Stoa Poikile, which was constructed during Kimon's leadership.[211] The latter myth, which had special relevance to Athens, and to Theseus who played a part in the battle, was also displayed in the Theseion,[212] as was a Centauromachy. Similar themes had dominated previous buildings on the Akropolis. The Gigantomachy, which was particularly associated with Athena, had ornamented the Archaic temple built by Hippiest, the son of Peisistratos, in the last quarter of the sixth century.

Two of the myths depicted on the Parthenon were unique to Athena. Her birth, probably in armour, a symbol of her role as a war goddess and the defender of the city, appeared in the east pediment. The earliest descriptions of this myth occur in non-Attic art and literature. But the west pediment showed a completely new myth, unknown before it was sculpted on the Parthenon. This was the contest between Athena and Poseidon for divine sovereignty in Athens. Athena won that contest, and

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[209] Ibid., 45.

[210] Boardman (1985) 168.

[211] Francis (1992) 94.

[212] Ibid., 50.

the prominent position given to the myth on the west pediment must have assured the people that Athens was Athena's own city.[213]

The Judges of the Contest

Herodotos, who is the first extant author to mention the contest, does not mention the judges. But all subsequent literary accounts of the myth report that the contest was judged either by the gods or by the people of Athens. Xenophon reports a remark by Sokrates that the contest was judged by Kekrops and his supporters (*Mem.* 3.5.10). In the first century B.C., Varro claimed that the judges were the citizens of Athens,[214] and that the contest took place when Kekrops was the king of Athens.

Plato also provides a reference to the contest. In the *Menexenus* (237c) Sokrates ironically declares that Athens was so beloved by the gods, that they even quarrelled over the city.[215] While questions have been raised as to whether Plato is the author of the *Menexenus*, the remark about the contest *is* attributed to Sokrates, and may be as as reliable as Xenophon's account.[216] Thus, it seems that by the late fifth century, two different versions concerning who judged the contest were already current. A later source, but still earlier than Varro, is found in Kallimachos (c. 305-240). He refers to Kekrops both as judge (*Iamb.* 4.68) and as witness (*Fr.* 260.25-26). On the latter

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[213] Or, as Harrison (1967) 58, says, that "Athena was Athens."

[214] On Varro's account that the women of Athens also voted in the contest see Appendix Two.

[215] See also this chapter, n. 96 above.

[216] Denniston, *OCD*[2], s.v. "Plato," 842, suggests c. 386 as a publication date for the *Menexenus*, while Mosley, *OCD*[2], s.v. "Xenophon," 1142, says that Bk. 3 of the *Memorabilia* was written c. 355/4. Both dates occur some year after Sokrates' death.

occasion, he says, Zeus and the twelve immortals judged the contest.

Can any of these accounts confirm whether or not the judges were depicted in the original delineation of the myth on the west pediment of the Parthenon? It was mentioned earlier in the chapter that some scholars would like to believe that the Varro's account of the myth is the canonical version, and that the citizens whom he mentions as the judges of the contest are depicted on the pediment.[217] Since the demos controlled all aspects of the building of the Parthenon, this might imply that they imagined themselves to be the judges of the contest, and that these are the people who are portrayed on the pediment. But these human figures do not seem to represent the ordinary citizens implied by Varro in his version of the myth. For although the myth was a creation of the fifth century, it is set in the heroic past, and the people, whether they are judges or spectators, seem to represent the generations of Athenian kings and heroes—Kekrops and Erechtheus, and their children—all of whom were associated in myth and cult with both Athena and Poseidon. In this way the Athenians were able "to associate themselves with their forebears, to bask in their heroic aura and, thus, to suggest their own heroic potential."[218]

The Gifts and their Priority or Value

In the late literary accounts of the myth the contest is decided on the basis of the priority or value of the gifts. This question does not appear in Herodotos, the only account which is contemporary with the depiction of the contest on the west pediment of the Parthenon. In Apollodoros' version the contest is settled by the priority of the

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[217] See, for example, Castriota (1992) 148.

[218] See Rhodes (1996) 66.

olive tree, which, according to the testimony of Kekrops, Athena had planted before Poseidon created the sea. The notion of the value of the gift is emphasized for the first time in Servius' commentary on Vergil's *Georgics*. It is less clear in Ovid's version of the myth,[219] but may be implied since the Athena (Minerva) clearly creates the olive tree after Poseidon (Neptune) produces the sea.[220] Is priority or value important to the myth in the fifth century?

In the earliest artistic representation of the myth on the west pediment of the Parthenon, the most prominent feature of the depiction seems to have been the olive tree, which must have originally appeared, as it does in the other artistic works, at the very centre of the composition between the two gods. Historically, neither of the gifts seem to have been competitive. Control of the sea had given Athens political domination of the Aegean, as well as economic prosperity at home. The olive had brought prosperity to Attika at least as early as the time of Solon in the early sixth century, and by the mid-fifth century its oil had become a major Athenian export.[221] Thus, both gifts were valuable to the people of Attika.[222] But the olive had priority over the sea. For, like Athena, whose attribute it was, the olive was an important factor in the lives of the Athenians long before Athens had turned her attention either to the sea, or to Poseidon. Thus, the issue of either the priority or the value of the gift may well have been an essential component of the myth from the very beginning.

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[219] But see Binder (1984) 18.

[220] Ibid., 19.

[221] French (1964) 188.

[222] Murnaghan (1995) 65, has suggested that the reason that the olive tree was the more useful was because it was "more conducive to the human control of nature."

An Interpretation of the Myth

A review of the literary accounts shows that the myth of the contest is clearly aetiological, for it explains how and why Athena was the City Goddess of Athens.[223] At the same time the myth is also, as Harrison, and others, have suggested, an *aition* for the first appearance of the olive tree in Athens.[224] But the tree which Athena planted was the domestic olive (Diod. Sic. 5.73.7), since it was the oil from domesticated trees which brought prosperity to Athens. This was Athena's gift to the city. Sourvinou-Inwood suggests that an even greater significance can be attached to the olive. She says that the gift of Athena "was the sign sealing the relationship between Athena and Athens, and the olive-tree was thus the symbolic core of Athenian *polis* religion and the guarantee of Athens' existence."[225]

In this respect the myth also confirms the existence of the city.[226] An important part of the story concerns the naming of Athens by Athena, so there seems to be little question that the myth is an *aition* for the name of the city. The report by Hyginus that "Athena (Minerva) founded the city of Athens in her own name" (364, Minerva ex suo nomine oppidum Athenas condidit), also indicates that it is a charter for the city's foundation.[227] But this was a later variant of the myth, although in the early fifth century, according to Plutarch, Alkibiades says that their fathers called

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[223] Despite Garland's claim (1992) 29, that "no *aition* or foundation legend has survived relating to the goddess's entry into Athens." Surely the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon is in fact such an *aition*.

[224] Harrison (1906) 58. See also Nilsson[3] (1967) 442.

[225] Sourvinou-Inwood (1990) 306.

[226] Ibid.

[227] On charter myths in general see Kirk ([1970] 1973) 256–58. According to Kirk (256), some charter myths have an aetiological aspect. See also Vidal-Naquet (1981) 206.

Athena the foundress (*Alk.* 2.5, ἀρχηγέτις).[228] Elsewhere, Plutarch says that Theseus was the founder of Athens (*Thes.* 1.2).[229] In fact, Theseus was said to have effected the *synoikismos* of Attika (Thuc. 2.15; Plut. *Thes.* 24.1). The hero founded the Athenian state, but Athena founded the city. It is unknown whether the question of who founded the city was an issue at the time of the creation of the myth, although Theseus had been much promoted by Kimon in the period before the demos took control of Athens. The major literary accounts all indicate that the city existed before the contest took place. But only after the goddess had won the patronage of the city and named it for herself, did it have an identity. It was the city of Athena.[230]

Despite Robertson's argument that Athenian myths "are linked at every turn with the shrines and festivals of Athens and Attica,"[231] there seems to be little evidence that the myth was connected with a specific ritual,[232] as was the case of the rite of the Arrhephoria and the myth of the Kekropidai.[233] Rather, the myth

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[228] See also Schol. in Eur. *Hipp.* 974. For modern scholars who accept Athena as the founder of Athens see Burkert, *CAH*^{2}, 5:257-58, "Athenian Cults and Festivals," and Kuhns (1962) 73, n. 13.

[229] Den Boer (1969) 1, apparently concurs with Plutarch that Theseus founded Athens.

[230] According to Herington (1955) 55, it must have seemed obvious to the Athenians that Athena had named the city, since it was a "mere fact of language, that the Athenian sounded Athena's name whenever he mentioned his own city." See also Loraux (1993) 61, n. 126, who points out that "no other city *in Greece* derives its name in this way from a divinity." And Augustine (*De Civ. D.* 18.10), claims that the explanation for how Athens got its name is "historical not mythical." In a way this is true, for while the name went back into unrecorded history, it was only in the fifth century that a reason for how Athens got its name was determined.

[231] Robertson (1991), 70.

[232] But see Burkert (1983) 156--57, who sees in Poseidon's defeat the ritual death of Erechtheus. But is it possible that the contest could have been an *aition* for the Panathenaic Games? See Chapter Two, n. 57, on Gigantomachy as *aition* for Panathenaia.

[233] See Chapter Three, pp. 83-84 above.

expresses what appears to be an historical fact, that while Poseidon became an important cult-figure in fifth-century Athens, he had not always been so.[234] Athena had long ago laid claim to the Akropolis, and the devotion of the people, as expressed in the myth which described how she had succeeded to her position as the guardian-goddess of Athens, by defeating the intruder,[235] Poseidon, in a contest set in the mythic past.[236]

Reconciliation

Although defeated in his contest with Athena, the sea god was still necessary to Athens, and had to be propitiated, since his natural element, the deceptive sea, was necessary to Athenian political and commercial supremacy in the Aegean. The solution to this dilemma was found in another myth, which may also have been created at about this time, one in which Poseidon is granted a part in the state cult through his admittance into the Erechtheion, the temple which sheltered the cult image of Athena. This new myth tells of the death of the early king and agricultural

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[234] See also Cook (1940) 3/1:751.

[235] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 4:47, has previously suggested that Poseidon was an intruder, but in the pre-Mycenaean period. Mylonas (1940) 34, concurs, for he says "the story of the contest simply indicates that the cult of Athena supplanted that of Poseidon at Athens some time *before* [my italics] the historic period." If it is true that the cult of Poseidon was not established on the Akropolis until after the Persian Wars [see p. 202 above, and Binder (1984) 21], then obviously the god was an intruder in the sanctuary of Athena.

[236] Mansfield (1985) 251-52, seems to doubt that the myth was a fifth-century invention, for he asks "how was Athena's invention of the olive . . . explained before the myth . . . was disseminated?" Perhaps, the need for an explanation only arose when the myth of the contest was created. The plot demanded that the two gods each present a gift to the city, and the goddess required a gift with which she was as intimately associated as Poseidon was with the sea. This was the olive.

hero, Erechtheus, a story which first appears in the play by Euripides in c. 423.[237]

As Burkert has observed, "in cult, Poseidon was identified with Erechtheus."[238] Mythologically, this identification is explained by the myth of the war between Eumolpos and Erechtheus, and by the subsequent death of the Attic hero. As previously noted, this myth has been seen as a second contest between Athena and Poseidon.[239] Poseidon, however, wins this contest, when he kills Erechtheus and buries him in a chasm in the earth (Eur. *Ion* 281; *Erech.fr.* 65.59-60). The god now becomes identified with Erechtheus, and his worship "is justified by affiliating him . . . to the goddess."[240] Athena's own association with Erechtheus was established at the time of his birth, and persists in the name of the temple, the Erechtheion, which sheltered her cult statue. By becoming "as like as possible to Erechtheus, the acknowledged *protégé* of the goddess,"[241] Poseidon is able to secure a share in an altar in the old temple of the City Goddess.

The two myths—the contest between Athena and Poseidon, and the death of

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[237] For the literature on the date see Connelly (1996) 57, n. 27.

[238] Burkert (1983) 157.

[239] See Chapter Two, n. 183 above, and Lacore (1983) 229-30. Spaeth (1991) 342, claims that reports, such as the one made by Isokrates (*Panath.* 193), that Eumolpos invaded Attika because Poseidon had prior claim to the land, "suggest that the war between the Athenians and their opponents represented a continuation of the contention of Athena and Poseidon [albeit] on a new level: rather than a struggle between two divinities, it became a battle between two heroes." See also Clairmont (1971) 488, and 490, where he notes that the difference between the two myths is that in the *Erechtheus*, Athena settles the issue with mere words.

[240] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:271.

[241] Cook (1940) 3/1:758.

Erechtheus—are reciprocal.[242] The latter myth is an *aition* for the cult of Poseidon *Erechtheus*, and for the establishment of the priesthood of Athena *Polias*.[243] It also confirms the result of the earlier contest between Athena and Poseidon. To Farnell, the myth of Erechtheus' death represents a reconciliation between Poseidon and the Athenians.[244] But this reconciliation is tenuous, for both myths clearly indicate that Athena is secure in her position as the chief deity in Athens. And Poseidon, although he has been granted a place in the Erechtheion, the old temple of the goddess, and a role in the state cult, must always remain subsidiary to her in Athens.

D. SUMMARY

The earliest literary reference to the contest occurs in the *History* of Herodotos, c. 430. The account briefly mentions the dispute between the two gods, and the tokens which they presented to the city. The most complete accounts of the myth do not appear until much later. The first extant Greek version is attributed to Apollodoros, who lived in the second century B.C., although the work itself was apparently written in the second century A.D. The earliest Latin version is by Varro, who lived in the first century B.C.

The literary accounts vary considerably. The reasons given for the contest

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[242] Spaeth (1991) 342-43, in fact, points out the connections between the two myths, beginning with the statement by Erechtheus himself that "Eumolpos shall not raise the upright trident instead of the olive tree on the foundation of the city" (Eur. *Erech. frag.* 10.46-49, οὐδ᾽ ἀντ᾽ ἐλάας . . . / τρίαιναν ὀρθὴν στᾶσαν ἐν πόλεως βάθροις/ Εὔμολπος). According to Spaeth, the mention of the tokens [attributes?] suggests the connection between the two myths. But only the olive was a token of the actual contest, since Poseidon did not offer his trident as a gift, unless she infers the trident as a symbol of the sea.

[243] After Athena ordered the establishment of a cult to Erechtheus, she designated his widow, Praxithea, to be her first priestess (Eur. *Erech. fr.* 65.95-97).

[244] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:271.

include the desire to establish a cult in the city (Apollodoros), or to give a name to the city (Ovid, Servius). Athena's gift is always the olive, but Poseidon's gift is either the sea, or a horse. One of the most persistent questions, which arises in both the literary and artistic versions of the myth, concerns the judges. According to Apollodoros, Ovid, and Servius, the twelve gods were the judges. Kallimachos gives two conflicting accounts, in which either Zeus and the twelve gods judged the contest, or Kekrops, the mythical king in whose reign the contest took place. Apollodoros says that Kekrops was Athena's witness that she had planted the olive tree before Poseidon created the sea. According to Varro, the people of Athens judged the contest. Varro also says that at the time when the contest took place, the female inhabitants of the city had the right to vote, but because they voted for Athena, they lost this right. Regardless of whether or not the judges were the gods, or the people of Athens, in the literary versions of the myth, their decision was based either on the priority or on the value of the gift.

The Latin accounts of the myth contain the most variations. Varro's account deviates the most—not only because the people judge the contest, but also because it seems to rationalize the myth. The gods do not actually travel to the Akropolis. Rather their symbols appear and are regarded as portents. The other major variant concerns the gift of Poseidon. In the majority of the accounts of the myth, the god's gift is the sea. Vergil names Poseidon as the creator of the horse in his *Georgics*, and, while he does not specifically mention the contest in his poem, later allusions to the horse as the gift of Poseidon seem to stem from this reference. The horse is the preferred gift among the late Latin mythographers.

The earliest artistic evidence for the contest appears on the west pediment of

Parthenon, which was completed c. 432. Two Attic red-figure hydrias, dated c. 400, complement the representation on the west pediment. Along with a drawing of the sculptures of the west pediment, which was made in 1674, they have enabled scholars to interpret the work as it appears in art. Later artistic representations vary considerably from that on the west pediment. The depictions on the Parthenon and the Attic red-figure vases focus on moment of Athena's victory. Later works, including a fourth-century B.C. Campanian red-figure bell-krater, focus on the moment while the two gods await the decision as to the winner of the contest. Athenian coins from the second century A.D. show either the actual dispute or the moment before the final decision is made. While the horse appears on the Attic red-figure hydrias, its purpose is almost certainly symbolic. The sea is presented entirely through the depiction of dolphins. Only the olive tree is prominently displayed in all the artistic representations.

It is obvious that the myth is illustrated somewhat differently from the way in which it is described in the literature. The literary accounts present a series of events, while the art depicts a particular moment in the contest. The representation on the west pediment includes a number of human figures, whom some scholars have interpreted as the male and female citizens mentioned by Varro as the judges in his account of the myth. Since the decision of the gods is symbolized by the appearance of Hermes, it seems likely that the human figures represent the early kings, heroes, and heroines of Athens, all of whom play a role in the myths of the early city, and who are connected in some way with both Athena and Poseidon.

The myth is consistent in both art and literature. The outcome of the contest is always the same, and is contingent on the gifts presented by the gods. Whether one

gift or another should be the most useful, or valuable, casts an interesting light on the origin of the contest, for how could it be determined in the mythic past that one gift would be more valuable than another in the future? This conclusion could only be made after both gifts have proved their worth, which appears to confirm that the contest was an invention of a later period.

Extant evidence seems to indicate that the cult of Poseidon may only have been established on the Athenian Akropolis after the Persian Wars. Public interest in Poseidon had likely increased by virtue of his position as the divine father of Theseus, the hero of the democracy. But his cult began to assume greater importance after Salamis, when it seemed that Poseidon had given control of the sea to Athens. Poseidon also benefitted from Kimon's promotion of Theseus in the early years of the Delian League. Athenian leadership of the Delian League, and the political and economic benefits which resulted from their domination of the Aegean, also appeared to confirm that Poseidon had bestowed special favours upon Athens. But these favours could only be maintained through constant propitiation of the god, since the threat of disaster at sea was always present, and had to be averted. Thus, the prestige of his cult must have been perpetually enhanced.

The cult of Athena *Polias*, however, was the focus of political-religious tradition in Athens. The worship of Athena can be traced back at least the time of Solon, perhaps even to the eighth century, and was a source of stability and identity for the city of Athens. At Salamis the goddess, through her sacred animals, had encouraged the people to seek safety outside the city and predicted the victory of the Athenian fleet. After the battle, the miraculous regrowth of her sacred olive tree had announced the future glory of Athens. The demos were especially attached to Athena and, after

the mid-fifth century she may have been regarded as the symbol of Athenian domination of the Aegean.

Two factors seem to have played a part in the creation of the myth: the rise in popularity of the cult of Poseidon after the Persian Wars, and a desire on the part of the demos to confirm Athena in her role as City Goddess of Athens. The symbolism of the gifts is obvious: the sea was the gift of Poseidon, for he had given Athens victory at Salamis and leadership of the Delian League; the olive had long been associated with Athena, and this association as well as the important role it played in the economy of Attika made it the obvious gift from the goddess to her people.

All phases of the construction of the Parthenon were controlled by the demos, which raises the question whether or not this might have had some influence in the sculptural program of the temple. But except for the purely local and new myth of the contest, the majority of the rest of the sculptures illustrate the usual mythic battles which had also ornamented buildings erected as far back as the sixth century. Some scholars have suggested that the human figures on the pediment seem to with Varro's account of the myth in which the citizens of Athens judge the contest. The implication may be that the demos imagined themselves to be the judges of the contest, and that they are represented by the figures on the pediment. It seems more likely that although the myth was a creation of the fifth century, that it was set in the heroic past, and that the figures on the pediment depict the successive generations of Athenian kings and heroes.

While competition between the olive and the sea does not appear to have been instrumental in the development of the myth, it did become the focus of the artistic and the literary accounts. In the latter genre the issue either of the priority, or the

value, of the gifts is an essential component of the myth from its very beginning. The literary accounts of the myth tend to emphasize that the olive was the more valuable gift. This could stand as a metaphor for the important role which the olive played in the Athenian economy. As far as the actual contest is concerned, it makes little difference whether or not Athena wins on the basis of priority, or on the value of her gift. Historically Poseidon had only recently given Athens control of the sea, but the olive, the gift of Athena, had long been an important factor in the Athenian economy. Both gifts were useful to Athens, but the olive may have been perceived as the most valuable, for it had formed the basis of the Attic economy since at least the sixth century.

The literature clearly shows that the contest is an aetiological myth which explains why Athena was the City Goddess. It is also an *aition* for the first appearance of the olive tree in Attika. But Athena's gift was the domestic olive, since it was oil from domesticated trees which brought prosperity to Athens. Only in the literature is the myth an *aition* for the name of the city, and in one late account (Hyginus), a charter for its foundation. Although the major literary accounts indicate that the city existed before the contest took place, it was only after the goddess had won the patronage of the city, and named it for herself, that it had an identity, as the city of Athena.

The myth of Erechtheus' death at the hands of Poseidon represents a tenuous reconciliation between Poseidon and the city. The Athenians recognized that the god must be acknowledged, since he had protected their ships at Salamis, and had granted Athens leadership in the Delian League. Through the assimilation of Erechtheus, the god, now Poseidon *Erechtheus*, the early king and agricultural hero of

the city, assumed his own place in the history of Athens. At the same time the new myth confirms the result of the earlier contest between Athena and Poseidon. Athena is securely established as the chief deity in Athens, and the guardian of the empire, while Poseidon is subsidiary to her, But in becoming Poseidon *Erechtheus*, the god has gained a place in the cult of the City Goddess.

Together both myths restored the balance between past and recent history. Athena remained secure on her citadel, while the sea god was reconciled with the city through the establishment of a cult dedicated to Poseidon *Erechtheus*. At the same time, his defeat by Athena was emblazoned on the west pediment of the Parthenon for all Athenians to see, forever.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

According to a late myth, Athena and Poseidon contested for the patronage of Athens. The two gods each offered a gift to the people of Athens—a city which had not yet been named. Poseidon offered the sea, and Athena, the olive. After Athena was judged the victor, she named the city Athens after herself. This contest describes a pivotal event in the early history of the city, and yet there is no evidence for the myth in either art or literature until after the mid-fifth century B.C. The possibility, therefore, exists that the myth may have been invented.

This thesis investigated the origin of the myth, through a chronological examination of all the literary and artistic sources, and attempted to disentangle the "differing lines of tradition" which Binder referred to in her paper from 1984.[1] It includes a study of the cults of Athena and Poseidon in Athens during the sixth and fifth centuries, and an examination of the importance of the olive and the sea to Athens. No previous study of the myth has attempted such a detailed enquiry into its origin.[2]

Allusions in the Homeric epics (*Il.* 2.547-49; *Od.* 7.80) to Athena's close association with Athens imply that she may have been the chief deity of the city as

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[1] Binder (1984) 15.

[2] For previous discussions on the myth's origin see Chapter One, pp. 7-9.

far back as the Bronze Age. According to Herodotos (5.82.2) the goddess was worshipped as Athena *Polias* (City Goddess) by at least the eighth century. In the early part of the sixth century Solon described her as the supreme guardian of the city. In the fifth century in Aischylos' play the *Eumenides* Athena's role was expanded to include the protection of Athenian law and the interests of individual citizens.

Political events in the mid-sixth century may have led to the introduction of innovations in the myths and cult of the goddess. Whether these changes were influenced by the tyrant Peisistratos, whose restoration to power at about this time was reputedly sanctioned by Athena (Hdt. 1.60.4-5), is open to conjecture. In literature and art prior to the sixth century, Athena appeared primarily as the patron of the heroes. After the mid-sixth century she was depicted as a leading warrior in the Gigantomachy, which was one of the most popular myths in Attic black-figure. The myth was also prominently displayed on the pediment of the Archaic temple to the goddess.

The most significant innovation concerning the cult of Athena was the reorganization c. 566 of her chief festival, the Panathenaia, which was expanded to a four-day event in every fourth year. At the games, held in conjunction with the quadrennial festival, the prizes included the so-called Panathenaic amphorae, filled with oil from the sacred olive trees known as the *moriai*, and adorned with a portrait of Athena as a warrior. This image was already familiar from epic literature. Attic art, however, prior to the sixth century usually portrayed the goddess unarmed. But with the appearance of the earliest Panathenaic amphorae in the mid-sixth century, the image of the goddess as Athena *Promachos* becomes the norm.

In contrast to the antiquity of the cult of Athena in Athens, there is no firm

evidence for the cult of Poseidon on the Athenian Akropolis prior to the fifth century. His role in the popular myths of the sixth century is limited, although he does participate, along with the other Olympians, and especially Athena, in the Gigantomachy.[3] No Athenian festival was devoted specifically to Poseidon.[4] The earliest extant dedications from the Akropolis to the god are dated between c. 480 and c. 450.[5] The latter is to Poseidon *Erechtheus*, a cult title acquired, according to myth, through his assimilation to the early Athenian king and hero Erechtheus.

Homer describes how Athena gave Erechtheus a place in her temple, where he received sacrifices from the Athenians (*Il.* 2.547-51). According to an account in Herodotos (5.82.2), Erechtheus was worshipped together with Athena *Polias* in Athens during the eighth century. Erechtheus was killed by Poseidon, in retaliation for the death of Eumolpos—Poseidon's son—who had led an army against Athens to avenge his father's defeat in the contest with Athena. Poseidon, with the blessing of Athena (Eur. *Erech. frag.* 65.90-93), then took for himself the hero's former place in the old temple of the goddess, where he was worshipped as Poseidon *Erechtheus*.

The gifts which the gods presented to the city at the time of their contest were important to the Greeks, and to the Athenians in particular. Archaeology shows that the olive had thrived in Greece and the islands since well before the beginning of the Bronze Age, when the Linear B tablets record the use of olive oil at Pylos and Knossos. The Homeric epics mention the olive tree, and the various uses of its products, including the oil, wood, leaves and branches, although the descriptions may

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[3] Shapiro (1983) 83.

[4] Ibid., 101.

[5] Jeffery (1988) 125.

be a reflection of the time during which the poems were composed rather than of the Bronze Age.

A different myth claims that Herakles first brought the wild olive to Greece, to the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia (Paus. 5.7.7). But the tree that Athena created at Athens was the domesticated olive (Diod. Sic. 5.73.7), since it was the domestic olive which was economically important to Athens. In the early sixth century Solon forbade the export of all agricultural products except olive oil (Plut. *Solon* 24.1), suggesting the olive was vital to the Attic economy as early as the Archaic period. Athena's own association with the olive recalls the tree cult of Minoan times,[6] although it has been argued that the association originated solely from the existence of the single olive tree which grew beside her temple on the Akropolis.[7] When this sacred olive was destroyed by the Persians in 480, it grew a new shoot on the very next day (Hdt. 8.55).

The sea must surely have been a significant force, whether as a means of transportation for merchant and naval vessels, or as a source of food, for the Greeks of the Bronze Age. While there are few references which pertain to the sea, or ships, in the Linear B tablets, art and archaeology present a different picture. Depictions of ships are found on Minoan seals, and frescos discovered at the late Bronze Age site of Akrotiri display what may be a naval battle as well as the departure or arrival of a fleet. The archaeological evidence lends credence to Thucydides' report (1.4) that Minos, the legendary king of Knossos, virtually controlled the Aegean with his navy. The sea is mentioned frequently in the Homeric epics, in particular the *Odyssey*, but

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[6] Nilsson[3] (1967) 349.

[7] Farnell ([1896] 1971) 1:293.

these allusions may reflect contacts with the sea during the eighth century. Literature reveals that the Greeks regarded the sea with awe and respect. To them it symbolized danger, and it was controlled by the gods, in particular by Poseidon, who was allotted the sea when Zeus and his brothers divided the world among themselves (*Il.* 15.187–191).

Athens did not become a sea power until late in her history.[8] During the sixth century, Peisistratos seems to have been instrumental in the establishment of Athenian trading interests in the Cyclades and the Hellespont.[9] But it was not until the time of Themistokles that Athens finally acquired a fleet of triremes (Hdt. 7.144.1), just when the Persians launched their invasion of Greece. After her victory at the battle of Salamis, Athens became the leading maritime power in the Aegean.

The earliest references to the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon occur after the mid-fifth century. It was the subject of the west pediment of the Parthenon, which was completed c. 432. Herodotos refers briefly to the contest, and the gifts which the two gods presented to Athens, in his *History* (8.55). But the most complete account of the myth was written in the second century A.D. According to this account, the contest took place because the gods wished to establish their particular cult in the yet-unnamed city. The naming of Athens is the reason for the contest in many of the literary accounts, while the outcome of the contest is contingent either on the priority or on the value of the gift.

The cult of Athena *Polias* was administered by the state, and was, therefore, the focus of the political-religious tradition in Athens, and the source of stability and

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[8] Haas (1985) 29.

[9] French (1964) 48–49.

identity for the city. Extant evidence reveals that the cult of Poseidon may only have been established on the Akropolis of Athens after the victory at Salamis, when it seemed that the god had given Athens control of the sea. Athenian leadership of the Delian League, and the political and economic benefits which ensued, also appeared to confirm that Poseidon had bestowed special favours upon the city. But it was also remembered that, at Salamis, Athena herself had been the true guardian of her people, and the prophet of their victory and the future glory of Athens. After the mid-fifth century the attachment of the demos to Athena became stronger than it had been before, and she may have become a symbol of Athenian domination of the empire.

Two factors seem to have led to the creation of the myth: the rise in popularity of the cult of Poseidon in the years following the battle of Salamis, and a desire on the part of the people to confirm Athena as the City Goddess and guardian-deity of Athens. The symbolism of the gifts is obvious: the sea was the gift of Poseidon, who had given Athens victory at Salamis and leadership of the Delian League; the olive had long been associated with Athena, and this association as well as the important role it played in the economy of Attika made the olive the obvious gift from the goddess to her city.

Historically, there is little evidence of competition between the olive and the sea, although the notion of competing gifts becomes the focus of the literary and artistic accounts of the myth. Poseidon had only recently given control of the sea to Athens, while the olive, the gift of Athena, had long been an important factor in the Athenian economy. Thus, the question of whether the contest was decided in Athena's favour because she had planted the olive before Poseidon had created the sea (priority), or because the olive was the most valuable or useful of the two gifts (value),

was an essential component of the myth from its very beginning.

Since the demos controlled all aspects of the building of the Parthenon, there is the implication that they may have influenced the sculptural program on the temple. It has been suggested that the human figures on the west pediment concur with Varro's account of the myth, which says that the citizens of Athens judged the contest. But it seems rather that the human figures on the pediment were intended to represent the early kings, heroes and heroines of Athens, all of whom had close associations with Athena and Poseidon in myth and cult. As for the judges of the contest, it is clear that by the end of the fifth century there were two different traditions, one with the gods and one with the people of Athens as the judges.

In the literature the contest is clearly an aetiological myth, which explains why Athena was the City Goddess of Athens. It is also an *aition* for the first appearance of the domestic olive in Attika. In one late version of the myth, it is a charter for the foundation of Athens, since only after the goddess had named the city did it have an identity—as the city of Athena.

Although Poseidon had been defeated, the sea was necessary to the security, and prestige of Athens, as well as to its economy. The myth of Erechtheus' death and assimilation by Poseidon acknowledged the power of the sea god and reconciled him to the city. But while he acquired a place in the old temple and the cult of the City Goddess, Poseidon remained subsidiary to her. Together both myths restored the balance between the mythic past and recent history. At the same time the depiction of the myth of the contest on the west pediment of the Parthenon was an expression of its preeminence and a guarantee to the people that Athens was Athena's own city.

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APPENDIX ONE

The artistic sources for the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon are described in Chapter Four.[1] The earliest depiction of the myth was on the west pediment of the Parthenon, which was completed c. 432. Today the sculptures of the pediment are fragmentary at best, but a reconstruction is possible based on the drawing of the pediment by Carrey in 1674, and two Attic red-figure hydrias, both dated c. 400. The first of these is also the best known–the St. Petersburg hydria, which was discovered in 1872. The second hydria was found at Pella as recently as 1980. While there are some differences between it and the hydria from St. Petersburg, together they essentially confirm how the myth was depicted on the west pediment of the Parthenon. Due to the importance of these three works of art in any study of the myth, they are illustrated in this Appendix.

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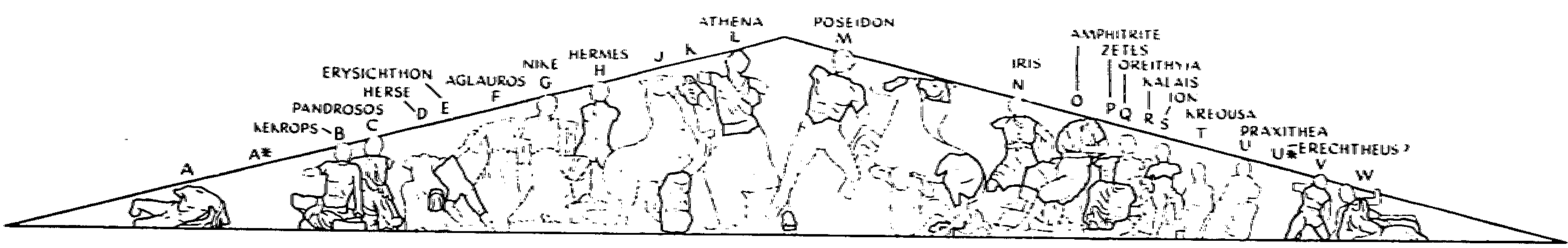
[1] Chapter Four, pp. 160–87.

1. Artistic restoration of the west pediment of the Parthenon, c. 432. Drawing by M. Cox, from Palagia (1993) fig. 22.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2. Attic Red-Figure Hydria, c. 400, St. Petersburg, Hermitage, KAB 6a. From Palagia (1993) fig. 10, after *Hermitage, Monuments of Ancient Greek Art from the Black Sea* (National Gallery, Athens 1989), no. 18.

3. Attic Red-Figure Hydria, c. 400, Pella Museum 80.514. From Palagia (1993) fig. 11, after *Greece and the Sea* (Amsterdam 1987), no. 104.

APPENDIX TWO

One of the versions of the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon, which was recounted in Chapter Four, is by the Roman antiquarian Varro.[1] It was remarked then that there is little of the fantastic in this variant of the myth. And yet Varro's account does contain at least one element which is almost certainly imaginary. This concerns the judges and, in particular, how the decision of some of the judges produced unexpected and negative results for themselves. To reiterate, according to Varro (*Fr.* 11), both the men and women of Attika judged the contest. He says that the women at that time outnumbered the men, by one, and since the women all voted for Athena (Minerva), and the men for Poseidon (Neptune), the goddess won the contest. Poseidon was enraged, and flooded the land. So the Athenian men appeased the god by punishing the women. This punishment comprised the loss of the right to vote, to give their name to their children, and to be called Athenian women.

It is in the description of the punishment of the women of Athens, that Varro's account of the myth departs considerably, not only from other versions of the myth, but also from historical reality. First, there is no evidence that any Greek women had the right to vote.[2] Second, the remark that women would no longer be allowed to give

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[1] Chapter Four, pp. 157-61 above.

[2] Just (1989) 13, although the women in Aristophanes' *Ekkleziazousai* (266 and 297) talk about voting. In the modern era women only acquired the right to vote after a struggle for such rights and privileges which began in the nineteenth century. See *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Women's Suffrage."

their name to their children implies that, up to the time when the contest took place, descent in Attika was matrilineal. Whether or not this custom ever existed in Greece cannot be proven, but it did not exist in historical Athens.[3] On the other hand, matrilineal descent has been reported in some societies,[4] and was known to the Greeks. Herodotos relates a story that seems to show the existence of matriliny among the ancient Lykians (1.173). According to Pembroke, Herodotos regards this custom as "the antithesis of Greek ones."[5]

Finally, the women lost the right to be called Athenian. St. Augustine, who also reported Varro's account of the myth (*De Civ. D.* 18.9), and has added his own commentary to it, censures Athena for not defending the women who were responsible for her victory. "At least," he says, "she could have allowed them to be called Athenian women, and to be entitled to the name of the goddess" (Athenaeas saltem vocari liceret et eius deae mereri vocabulum). St. Augustine's comment that the women of Athens were not permitted to be called "Athenian women" has elicited strong opinions on the part of feminists.

According to Loraux, for example, there are no Athenian women, since "the word for 'female Athenian' ['Αθηναία] does not exist."[6] This is supported, she says,

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[3] But see Patterson (1994) 212, n. 9, who says that "Athens was not a strictly patrilinear society in which property rights only descended through—or were restricted to—men. Inheritance of both property and civic status devolved to and through women as well as men." Varro's account of the myth only mentions that women would not be able to pass their name down to their children.

[4] *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. "Matriliny."

[5] Pembroke (1967) 20.

[6] Loraux (1993) 116. See also Vidal-Naquet (1981) 198, who says "thus in the classical city there are no 'women of Athens' — only the wives and daughters of the 'men of Athens'."

by "the facts of language agreeing with mythic discourse."[7] The mythic discourse to which she refers, of course, is the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon as related by Varro.[8] Although Varro's account of the myth varies considerably in many respects from all other versions, Loraux seems to regard it as the canonical Attic account. As a feminist Loraux finds this one of particular interest, since it confirms for her why there are no female Athenians (Ἀθηναίαι), that is, female citizens[9] with the same political rights as those of Athenian men.[10] She says "if the opposition between masculine and feminine formed the structure of Athenian society, . . . then it was up to myth to furnish the guarantee of immortality for this unequal arrangement."[11]

Patterson, on the other hand, argues that Athenian women were citizens, if we "understand 'citizens' in the broader, not solely political or Aristotelian, sense of

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[7] Loraux (1993) 116.

[8] Ibid., 113.

[9] Loraux (1993) 119. Vidal-Naquet (1981) 199, sees Varro's account of the myth an expression of "the exclusion of women from the body politic." On this see also Tyrrell and Brown (1991) 181. But Patterson (1981) 174, n. 33, says that she does "not regard the story of Varro . . . as authoritative on this point."

[10] But according to Aristotle, Athenian women were citizens. In the Ἀθηναίων Πολιτεία (26.3) he reports the passing of legislation, proposed by Perikles in 451, which restricted Athenian citizenship to those whose parents were "both citizens" (ἀμφοῖν ἀστοῖν). The thrust of Loraux's argument is that even if the women of Athens were citizens, they did not have the same privileges as did Athenian men, i.e., to vote, to be elected to the *boule*, or to debate in the *ekklesia*. See Patterson (1994) 201, who comments on this "dominant view . . . [of] citizenship as a bundle of political rights and denies that women were part of the 'citizens' club' that was classical Athens. Feminine forms of the term 'citizen' (*aste* or *politis*) are taken as empty names." Patterson sees this attitude as "erroneous."

[11] Loraux (1993) 115-16. That the women of Athens were denied what we have come to regard as the rights and privileges of citizenship, is comparable to the fact that in the first quarter of the present century, women in Canada were not considered to be "persons," and, as such, were denied certain political rights, in particular, the right to hold public office. The law was challenged, and women were finally declared to be "persons" on October 18, 1929. See MacEwan (1975) 133-35.

members of the community of state, entitled to the protection of the city and owing it allegiance and service."[12] No word specifically denoting Athenian women (*Athênaiai*) exists in extant literature,[13] but Patterson points out that women "might be recorded as *Athênaioi* . . . [since] the priestess of Athena Nike was chosen 'from all the Athenians'."[14] And yet, despite Loraux's contention that Varro's account of the myth of the contest confirms the denial of citizenship, and its privileges, to the women of Athens, and St. Augustine's criticism of the goddess because she did not allow the women to be called Athenian women, in literature of the fifth century the women themselves do not appear to have shown any resentment towards the goddess. In Euripides' *Ion*, for example, note the excitement of Kreusa's serving women at Delphi when they see the artistic depictions of Athena glorying in her victory over the giant Enkelados: "I see Pallas, my goddess" (209-11, λεύσσω Παλλάδ', ἐμὰν θεόν). Women were also much in evidence as participants in the Panathenaia and other rites leading up to this major Athenian festival in honour of the goddess.[15]

It seems certain that the myth of the contest between Athena and Poseidon first appeared sometime after the mid-fifth century. In the earliest depiction of the myth the competing gods are observed by individual human beings, who are almost certainly to be identified as the early heroes and heroines of Attika, in particular

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[12] Patterson (1981) 161. She does point out that "their citizenship was for the most part passive." The *Enc. Brit.*[14], s.v. defines citizenship as "a relationship between an individual and a state originating under terms prescribed by the law of that state and giving rise to certain duties and rights which such law attaches to 'citizenship.' Citizenship also denotes the individual's status of being thus related to a state, that is, of being its citizen."

[13] Loraux (1993) 247

[14] Patterson (1981) 163. But see Loraux (1993) 247, who remarks that "in the inscription concerning the priestess of Athena Nike, . . . the ending, masculine or feminine, is missing."

[15] Burkert (1985) 228-30.

Kekrops and Erechtheus and their families, which include all of their young daughters. There is no proof that the humans actually judged the contest, since there are two almost contemporaneous references both to divine and human judges. But since the majority of identifications show that the female figures on the west pediment outnumber the male, this may provide an explanation as to how the notion arose that the women had judged the contest. What other influences played a part in the evolution of the myth over time can only speculated, but some of the variations, particularly in Varro's account, may also be attributed to the differences between Greek and Roman culture, and the centuries which lay between the fifth and first centuries B.C. Finally, there is no way of knowing why the story of how the women of Athens lost the right to vote—a privilege which, there is no reason to believe, they had ever held—as well as their citizenship, became attached to the legend.