

Table 1 Continued.

SALES-TAX RECORD OF PRIESTHOODS (c. 300–260 BC)		SACRIFICIAL CALENDAR OF GODS WHO RECEIVED OFFER- INGS (SECOND CENTURY BC)
<b>Personifications (cont.)</b>		
Eirene	500	Eirene Homonoia Nike
<b>Heroes</b>		
Achilles, Thetis, the Nereids	Not preserved and 80	Anchianax Athamas
Dioscuri	500 and 200–999	Erythros
Heracles	1,921	Heracles Heracles Kallinikos Heracles Kallinikos at the Gate [] hero
Heroes	440	Phanagoras
<b>Monarchs and such</b>		
King Alexander	1,000–1,999	King Alexander King Antiochos The Kings Rome Queen (Stratonike)
<b>Unidentified, unclear</b>		
[] Epimachos	200	Epimachos [] Epiteichea [] at Leuke [] to Mimas
[]	820 and 710	

Note: Bold indicates a standard sale, nonbold a secondary sale, and underlining indicates a form of sale known as *diasystasis*. On the types of sale, see Dignas, *Economy of the Sacred*, 252–55.

will exist in any given city is predictable, though not its detailed contents. Personifications have a certain place, while natural forces are represented directly only by the river Aleon and by Helios; but the Erythraeans may well have honored nymphs and performed rites of aversion to winds without having instituted public priesthods of either. The chthonians are represented by the Ablabiai, the “Harmlessnesses,” a unique and surely euphemistically named group. Few heroes appear, apart from the ubiquitous Heracles and the Dioscuri; but throughout the Greek world there were many more heroes than there were priests of heroes.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Power and Nature of Heroes

Few religions, it has been noted, get by with a cast consisting simply of major gods and mortals. In Greece, Titans, Giants, Satyrs, Silens, Corybantes, Kouretes, Telchines, Daktyls, Hours, Graces, and nymphs complicate the picture, to say nothing of other abstract qualities discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>1</sup> Some of these figures of difficult classification exist primarily in myth (Titans, Giants) or representation (Satyrs), while others are recipients of cult. Among these last much the most important are the heroes.

#### The Nature of Heroes

I shall approach them with some generalizations about the heroes of the classical age that come close to being uncontroversial, though they do not quite achieve it. Heroes were dead mortals believed by Greeks to have retained

1. See Brelich, *Eroi*, 325–35. For an excellent introduction to Greek heroes, see Ekroth in *Companion*, 100–14; note too A. Seiffert in *ThesCRA* 4:24–38, on hero shrines. I steer clear of the fascinating issues attaching to postclassical hero cult, now well treated by C. P. Jones, *New Heroes in Antiquity: From Achilles to Antinoos* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010). I sketch the problem of the early history of hero cult in appendix 5, below p. 287.

after death the power to influence human affairs, or at least to deserve continuing honor on a scale not accorded to the ordinary dead; they therefore received cult not from their kin alone. Though most heroes about whom anything was known—some were anonymous—were believed to have belonged to the so-called age of heroes, the class was not closed and there could be added to it, typically by a decision of the assembly (either directly, or through a consultation of Delphi), both further figures from the mythological period and even historical individuals.<sup>2</sup> (Occasional instances even appear to be recorded of individuals heroized during their lifetimes; but such cases are aberrant if they occurred at all.) They were tied to particular territories more closely than were gods: particular lands had both gods and heroes who “possessed” or were in them, but whereas gods were typically associated with many lands, only heroes (and foreign gods) were normally local (ἐπιχόριοι).<sup>3</sup>

As dead mortals who retain power they resemble Christian saints, but they differ from them also in crucial ways. Unlike the saints, their role is not to intercede on behalf of mortals with a higher power; they hear and answer prayers in their own right.<sup>4</sup> And piety and moral virtues do not normally make a hero; star quality, exceptionality, newsworthiness are the relevant criteria in a majority of cases. Doubtless the deranged mass-murdering athlete Cleomedes of Astypalaia has received too much attention and should not be allowed to overshadow founders of colonies, for instance, or the chaste Hippolytus entirely; but it is important that such a figure could be

2. Direct: e.g., Diod. 16.90, Plut. *Tim.* 39.5. This seems to have been the commonest way with popular leaders, despite Plato's stipulation that oracular authorization should be sought (*Resp.* 540B–C). In the case of Aratus, an oracle was consulted about the legitimacy of burying him *intra muros*, not about the heroic cult he was to receive (Plut. *Arat.* 53). Not surprisingly, the assembly vote might have been preceded by informal displays of popular enthusiasm: Currie, *Cult of Heroes*, 194, citing Thuc. 4.121.1 (Brasidas) and Plut. *Dion* 29.2 with Diod. Sic. 16.20.6. Through Delphi: either in response to a general question about welfare (Foucart, *Culte des héros*, 49–50) or a specific question about strange occurrences (Paus. 1.32.5, the phantom who appeared at Marathon; *ibid.* 6.9.6–9, the homicidal Cleomedes of Astypalaia; for Herodotean instances see p. 117 below). How often the heroes created on private or small group initiative (below, n. 49) acquired public acceptance is an interesting question. In CEG 854 a Cypriot from Salamis claims to have established Naulochus (eponym of Naulochon, the city's harbor) as a protecting hero of Priene, but the site—a niche in a tower of one of the city gates (*ThesCRA* 4:37 no. 41)—shows he must have had authorization; perhaps he just paid for a statue. How kindly Hero/Drimakos, honored by both runaway slaves and slave owners on Chios (see p. 238), came to be recognized is a tantalizing and unanswerable question.

3. Gods and heroes of lands: see e.g. Thuc. 2.74.2, 4.87.2; Soph. *El.* 67 with P. Finglass's note *ad loc.*; local heroes: Hdt. 5.66.2; 8.39.1, cf. Pirenne-Delforge, *Pausanias*, 244. Heroic cult of living? Currie, *Cult of Heroes*, 160–63.

4. Foucart, *Culte des héros*, 77–78. But one of my copyeditors pointed out from her own Roman Catholic upbringing that what I say about saints represents doctrine, not practice: “God was presented to me as rather corporate and distracted, compared with the saints, and the angels, for that matter, who were the ones you turned to, to get things done.”

believed to have become a hero even if it is an exaggeration to take him as the ideal type.<sup>5</sup>

The controversial element in those generalizations must now be addressed. An influential view is that Greeks used the term “hero” both of dead mortals who received cult and also of certain minor supernatural figures, what A. D. Nock charmingly described as “gods in a small way.”<sup>6</sup> In terms of their functions it is certainly helpful to think of almost all heroes as “gods in a small way,” local gods. And many heroes have speaking names that seem to identify them as powers that do certain things rather than ex-mortals with a biography. A classic example here is Taraxippos, “horse-disturber,” a name linked to a mound of earth in the shape of a round altar beside the racecourse at Olympia; horses unaccountably went out of control when they passed Horse-Disturber unless the charioteers propitiated him by sacrifices. Another is “fly-catcher,” Muiagros, to whom preliminary sacrifices were made at a certain festival at Alipheira, after which “the flies caused no more trouble.” At Larissa in Thessaly a dedication was made in the third century “to the hero City Warden, (dedicated by) Nikolaos son of Eupolis, and his fellow City Wardens.” The hero sounds like a transparent divinization of a function, not an individual. One can also quote the well-known facts that not all hero cults took place at tombs, and that the modes of sacrifice to heroes often differed little if at all from those to gods.

Taraxippos and Muiagros sound to us very much like instances of what Usener called “special function-gods” (*Sondergötter*) or even “momentary gods” (*Augenblicksgötter*). But it does not follow that the Greeks too understood them so, and Pausanias in fact has a long discussion of Taraxippos that is very instructive. “The Greeks have varying views about Taraxippos,” he begins, and goes on to list five different current theories about mortals who might be buried under the mound or whom it might commemorate as a cenotaph. A different possibility had been put to Pausanias by an Egyptian: there was no body under the mound, but something buried by Pelops, presumably a magical object of some kind. Pausanias himself, however, favors the view that Taraxippos is an epithet of Poseidon of Horses; rather inconsistently, he goes on to say that “at Isthmos too there is a Taraxippos, Glaukos son of Sisyphus.”<sup>7</sup> What the case shows is that Greeks might pay cult to a

5. For Hippolytus honored for chastity (σωφροσύνη), see Eur. fr. 446. Cleomedes: Paus. 6.9.6–8.

6. Nock, *Essays*, 593 (from *HTR* 37 (1944): 162).

7. Taraxippos: Paus. 6.20.15–19. Muiagros: Paus. 8.26.7. City Warden: *SEG* 27.205 (similar are dedications by generals to “Aphrodite of Generals” and the like: J. Wallsten, *Kernos* 21 [2008]: 92). Muiagros obviously resembles the Zeus Apomuioi of Elis (Paus. 5.14.1: at Cape Leucas the flies

power designated by a name without knowing what kind of being—hero, god, or magical force—underlay the name. But it shows also that, in Pausanias's day at least, if Taraxippos was a hero, then he was not a minor god but a mortal who had acquired that title after death. Pausanias is for these purposes a late witness, but no instance to my knowledge has been quoted of an individual whom a Greek clearly regarded as being both a hero and not a quondam mortal.<sup>8</sup> Heroes were sometimes loosely spoken of as gods, as we will see, but gods (one enigmatic fragment of a hymn to Dionysus aside) were not spoken of as heroes.

The case is perhaps different with heroines. Some heroines are single, identifiable figures from myth entirely parallel to heroes, and in those cults where every hero is paired with a heroine they are clearly precisely analogous; but we also find heroines, in contrast to heroes, receiving offerings as a group, like nymphs. And a group such as "the heroines of Thorikos" (Thorikos being a *dēme* in southeast Attica) can be conceived, again like nymphs, as the supernatural guardians of a region. Are they then in effect Nymphs under a different name, and thus small gods rather than deceased mortals? The conclusion is not inescapable: heroines could no doubt serve as guardians of a region while also being envisaged as women of past ages, consigned to collective anonymity by the general destiny of women in a society in which the best woman is the one least spoken of. On the other hand, Apollonius Rhodius seems simply to identify the nymphs and the heroines of Libya. Some interaction seems to have occurred between the classes of nymph and heroine, a reminder of the fluidity of all these classifications. But there was no parallel class of male nymphs to affect the understanding of heroes. The argument can still stand, therefore, that, in contrast perhaps to heroines, heroes were never interpreted as minor gods.<sup>9</sup>

themselves supposedly received the sacrifice, Ael. NA 11.8), but, as with Taraxippos, the uncertainty whether a *Muiagros*/*Apomuios* was a divine epithet or a hero does not imply uncertainty as to what a hero was. Cf. Sosipolis, a hero in Mesambria (*IGBulg.* 5.5103), an epithet of Zeus in Magnesia on the Maeander (*LSA* 32), a δαίμων ἐπιχώριος in Elis (Paus. 6.20.2).

8. After discussing the evidence for heroines as minor goddesses, Nock, *Essays*, 596 n. 81, enigmatically writes, "Cf. the hero Ptoios (P. Perdrizet, *BCH* XXII, 1898, 244)." But the hero Ptoios has human genealogies. In the transmitted text of the hymn of the women of Elis in Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 36, 299B, they summon "hero Dionysus" (for the many conjectures see Schlesier in *Kykeon*, 165 n. 20); even if the text is sound, it is little to build a case on.

9. On heroines see Larson, *Heroine Cults*; E. Kearns, "The Nature of Heroines," in *Sacred and the Feminine*, 96–110. Hero-heroine pairs (Larson, 28–29): above all in the Marathon calendar (p. 112 below), but also, e.g., in Elis (Paus. 5.15.12) and implied by the couples of standard "hero reliefs" (p. 114 below). Heroines as group (the instances are all Attic): Ar. *Nub.* 315; *LSCG* 18 A 19, E 3–4 (Erchia); several cases in the Thorikos calendar (below, p. 112), *LSS* 20.14–16. The argument is that nymphs and heroines were partially assimilated, not that they were identified (they occur separately

Functionally, however, minor gods is what in effect they were; and the best way to think of the heroes is not as a bipartite class consisting both of minor gods and of dead mortals, but as a single class of figures who were understood as dead mortals but exercised the powers of small-scale gods.<sup>10</sup> The question obviously arises of why such powers should be ascribed to the ancient dead; and an easy answer may seem to lie in the idea often expressed in Homer that men of past ages could accomplish "easily" feats that even ten "mortals such as men are now" would struggle to achieve. Many men of that time had a divine parent and so were literally *ἡμίθεοι*, "half-gods," by birth, and others slip in loosely under the same rubric even though both their parents were mortal; Hesiod can speak generically of the warriors who fought at Thebes and Troy as "the godlike race of heroes, who are called *ἡμίθεοι*," and prose authors of the classical period treat "heroes" and *ἡμίθεοι* as synonymous.<sup>11</sup> The "easy answer" is, however, widely rejected on the grounds that (1) many heroes who received cult were anonymous and so cannot have been identified by their worshippers with figures from that greater and more glorious time; and (2) some of the greatest heroes of the mythological period never received cult, or only tardily.

In answer to the second objection, the claim is not that the Greeks made a systematic effort to ensure that all the great names known from poetry were also worshipped; it is, more modestly, that where cult occurred it was understood by reference to the idea of an age of *ἡμίθεοι*. The first objection too can be readily met. Pausanias tells of a hero shrine at Tronis in Phocis of an anonymous "hero Archegete" that received daily offerings: some said that the hero was the warrior Xanthippos; others Phokos, grandson of Sisyphus. He tells also of an altar at Phaleron inscribed merely "of the hero,"

in *LSCG* 18). Libyan heroines: Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.1322–23, cf. 2.504–5; Nicaenetus I Gow-Page *HE* (*Anth. Pal.* 6.225); Callim. fr. 602.1; Larson, 23, treats them as a special case, reasonably denying that Callim. *Hymn.* 3.184–85 provides a mainland identification of nymphs and heroines (she accepts Callim. fr. 66.1, but the context is too fragmentary for the case to be wholly clear). I hesitate to build on Wilamowitz's supplement in *IG* 12.3 suppl. 1340, which would show that Artemidorus of Perge thought that heroines fostered crops.

10. Cf. Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 134: "What tends to differentiate the hero from the god... is the addition of a historical perspective, the hero as man of a specific time in history... We have in the hero the convergence of cult paid to a sort of intermediate being with narrative traditions and popular history."

11. Hes. *Op.* 159–60; cf. the very important Hom. *Il.* 12.23 (for the same generic usage in archaic poetry, see J. Bremmer, "Hero Cult," 24); for prose usage, see, e.g., Xen. *Symp.* 8.28 with 31 (where note that several of the "demigods" lack a divine parent); Pl. *Crat.* 398c *ἡμίθεοι* οἱ ἥρωες. Prose authors of the fourth century quite often speak of demigods with reference to recipients of cult whom we would term heroes (e.g., Isoc. 4.84, 9.70), and also use the term as a general designation for men of the mythological period (e.g., Pl. *Apol.* 28C, 41A); Isocrates has the series *ἡμίθεος-ἀθάνατος* (9.39, cf. 3.42).

hemi-  
theoi

whom, however, "those who take trouble to know more than others about local traditions know to be Androgeos" (son of Minos). Pausanias was told by an old man that a curious tomb in the agora of Elis that most locals could not identify in fact belonged to Oxylus. The Attic "hero doctor" seems to have been variously identified as Amphiaraus or Aristomachus.<sup>12</sup> The working assumption was always, therefore, that an anonymous hero was indeed a figure from the age of ἥμίθεοι. Probably it was the existence of a manifestly ancient tomb that caused the presence of a hero, whose identity could only be guessed at, to be suspected.

The prose authors mentioned earlier in whom we find an identification, implicit or explicit, between "heroes" and ἥμίθεοι (i.e., figures from the mythological age) are Attic: Xenophon, Plato, and Isocrates. From their experience of Attic deme life they will have been familiar with the same mix that we find in the calendars of famous heroes, heroes who are little more than names, and heroes who are not even that. They were happy nonetheless to equate heroes, without exception, with ἥμίθεοι. Their evidence amounts to formal refutation, for the classical period, of the objections mentioned above. In the understanding of their worshippers in the fourth century, cult heroes were ἥμίθεοι: it is as simple as that. Historical individuals could be heroized when they displayed, exceptionally, the same extraordinary qualities as were inherent in the ἥμίθεοι by their very nature. Some god, Isocrates outrageously suggests, caused the Persian wars in order to allow the Athenians of that time to display their excellence "and not die ingloriously, but receive the same rewards as those descended from the gods and called ἥμίθεοι."<sup>13</sup>

No doubt to the eye of logic this understanding of the nature of heroes has its difficulties. Not all, perhaps not even a majority, of the heroes of cult could boast a divine parent even when they unambiguously belonged to the mythological age. It could not then be said, in explanation of the special powers that they exercised in life and retained after death, that they were, in Aeschylus's words, "those close in stock to the gods... those in whom the divine blood is not yet extinct." ἥμίθεοι in the strict sense could only emerge through sexual contact between god and mortal, a form of contact that Herodotus, for instance, seems to have thought could not occur. But there are still heroes for Herodotus even if he doubts the premise on which

12. Paus. 10.4.10; 1.1.5; 6.24.9. Hero doctor: see Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 172 (and for Aristomachus SEG 50 168 A 2 19–20).

13. Isoc. 4.84.

the conception of a special age of heroes/ἥμίθεοι was based.<sup>14</sup> The graves of men of the mythological era are still powerful, a worshipper might have insisted, however that power is to be explained.

Heroic mythology, the vision of an age of ἥμίθεοι, is always the conceptual underpinning of hero cult, but the interdependence is more evident in some cases than in others. Often the hero is active after death in the same spheres in which he operated in life, "since they are unwilling completely to abandon the nature they had when they were on earth."<sup>15</sup> Amphiaraus and Asclepius were, respectively, prophet and healer both as men and as heroes; Agamemnon's herald Talthybius avenged wrongs done to heralds even from the grave. Sometimes distinctive features of the cult have their origin in experiences of the hero during life: women may not partake of the sacrifices to the descendants of wife-murdered Agamemnon at Taras; heralds are banned from the cult of Okridion, women from that of Eunostos, because of bad experiences of these two heroes with, respectively, a herald and a woman. Aeschylus and Sophocles are operating within this idiom when they make Orestes and Oedipus promise to show favor to Athens after death in gratitude for the generous treatment that we see them receiving onstage.<sup>16</sup> The heroes whose biography no one now knows are obviously at the opposite extreme. But they earn cult because of the presumption that, but for the ravages of time, there would have been tales to tell about them.

The past justifies the cult; yet the cult is not rooted in antiquarianism or nostalgia. Even the innocent-seeming claim that hero cult represents a "use of the past," or an attempt to establish continuities with previous generations, needs to be treated with some caution. Doubtless the Spartan argument that as Agamemnon's heirs they should lead the Greek coalition against Persia could have been supported by the cult that they accorded him. But such was not the concern of the many faithful who left more than ten thousand objects in the sanctuary at Amyclae that he shared with "Alexandra" (a figure identified in literary texts with Cassandra). For them he was, we presume,

14. No sexual contact: Harrison, *Divinity and History*, 88–89; heroes: e.g., Hdt. 2.45.3. Aeschylus: fr. 162 from *Niobe*; Radt in his edition collects much interesting evidence for the continuing resonance of the concept.

15. Max. Tyr. 9.7 p. 109 Hobein (speaking of *daimones*, his word for souls departed from the body, but giving as his examples heroes such as Asclepius).

16. Aesch. *Eum.* 764–71; Soph. OC 576–82, 621–23, 1518–34; cf. Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 48–53, with other tragic examples. The Attic cult of the Herakleidai (on which see chap. 1 n. 59) will have been in part based on similar ideas. Talthybius: p. 7 above; Agamemnon at Taras: chap. 1 n. 59 above; Eunostos: Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 40, 300D–301A; Okridion: ibid. 27, 297C–D.

a powerful local helper. Heroes, like gods, were worshipped for the benefits that they could provide in the present.<sup>17</sup>

It is this similarity of function that explains the blurring that often occurs on the borderline between hero and god. It is not just that a small number of major figures—Heracles, the Dioscuri, Asclepius, Amphiaraus, around the Black Sea Achilles—burst the heroic mold to become as powerful as gods. Such cases normally receive some form of explicit mythological justification, as in the myth of Heracles' reception on Olympus; Pindar too recognized the anomaly when he applied to Heracles the unique description "hero god," as did Herodotus when he postulated two Heracleses: one mortal, one divine.<sup>18</sup> But even quite minor figures are sometimes inadvertently described as gods: an Athenian decree regulating the cult of "the hero doctor" twice speaks of him, despite his name, as "the god," and in the epigram that records how Naulochus was established as a "city guardian" of Priene he changes from hero to god within two lines.<sup>19</sup> If a hero provides the same service as a god, a worshipper can slip into speaking of him as one.

Heroes are biographically dead mortals, functionally minor gods.<sup>20</sup> That formulation helps to explain the chief anomalies or inconsistencies in their cults. Sacrifice is sometimes made to them in a way that assimilates them to the dead, sometimes not (or at least not clearly so). The site of their cult is sometimes a grave, real or supposed, sometimes not. Contact with them is sometimes polluting, sometimes not. The variations in cult are oscillations on the line between dead mortal and minor god. But no hero is one or the other exclusively.

Some heroes, it may be objected, seem more like symbols than powers. The founders of cities were routinely accorded hero cult after their death,

17. Cf. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 204: hero cult's "concern is with effective presence, not with the chain of blood across generations." "Use of the past": J. Whitley, *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 2001), 150–56; cf., e.g., A. Mazarakis Ainian, in *Thesara* 2:133. Agamemnon: Hdt. 7.159; G. Salapata, "Myth into Cult: Alexandra/Kassandra in Lakonia," in *Oikistes: Studies... A. J. Graham*, ed. V. B. Gorman and E. W. Robinson, 131–59 (Leiden, 2002).

18. Pind. *Nem.* 3.22, where Maas's normalizing conjecture  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  has not been generally accepted: other considerations aside, speed is appropriate neither to the hero nor the context; Hdt. 2.44.5. On "immortalized mortals," see Sourvinou-Inwood, *Hylas*, 326–45.

19. IG 2<sup>2</sup>.839 (LSCG 41); CEG 854; the Attic orgeonic hero Hypodektes too is a "god" in IG 2<sup>2</sup>.2501; cf. Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 125, who also mentions Soph. OC 65, where Colonus the *archēgos* of the deme is a "god"; for Herodotean examples, see Harrison, *Divinity and History*, 160; note too J. Bremmer, "Hero Cult," 20.

20. I derive this position essentially from Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, esp. 1–2, 125–29. Inconsistencies: Ekroth in *Companion*, 100–14.

yet only one private dedication to a founder-hero has ever been discovered;<sup>21</sup> private dedications to the ten Attic heroes after whom the Clisthenic tribes were named are also very rare. And were not the honors paid to the war dead just that, honors, rather than part of the exchange of benefits that Greeks sought to establish in their dealings with gods? But even if there were some heroes whom individuals did not approach with particular, personal requests, public cult still ensured their general benevolence. And Pericles supposedly said that the war dead, like the gods, not only "received honors" but also "conferred benefits."

The argument thus far has sought to bring out the sense in which the heroes can be seen as a unified category. There has by contrast, in the wake of L. R. Farnell's division of them into seven types, been a tendency to stress their diversity.<sup>22</sup> Certainly there were greater and lesser heroes, and different heroes to some extent had different capabilities (one would doubtless not turn to Taraxippos in time of sickness), even if the extreme specialization familiar from popular Catholicism did not exist: the doughty rustic Echetaios, "he of the plowshare," supposedly fought at Marathon alongside more obviously military heroes. There was no standardized form of cult, even though there were practices that recurred regularly; even within Attica, it has been noticed, we find in different demes (a) individual heroes linked with a single heroine, (b) individual heroes linked with a cluster of heroines, and (c) clusters of heroines worshipped on their own apart from heroes.<sup>23</sup> And the biographies of heroes, mythical, and still more noticeably historical, read very differently. One can imagine a Lucian or a Menippus having merry fun juxtaposing figures from the extremes—Matton, for instance, Kneader, honored among cooks in

21. It is reproduced as the frontispiece to Malkin, *Religion and Colonization*. Clisthenic tribal heroes: Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 85–86. Pericles: Stesimbrotos FGrH 107 F 9 ap. Plut. *Per.* 8.9.

22. L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921). Farnell's seven categories were in part designed to find a compromise between previous more monolithic theories, which made all heroes faded great gods, or "special gods" in Usener's sense, or heroized mortals: cf. Brelich, *Eroi*, 15–16. Brelich rightly stresses that if one takes this view, one needs also to explain how such diverse beings came to be lumped together. Brelich's book is a notable but ultimately overschematic attempt to show how the heroes of both myth and cult derive from a single heroic template: the "ideal" hero is associated with nine interrelated spheres of human experience or activity (death, warfare, athletics, prophecy, healing, mysteries, rituals of growing up, city foundation, kinship groups); but he is also marked by traits of excess and monstrosity that differentiate him from current mortals. Brelich assumed both heroic myth and cult to have very ancient origins, and one would like to know how he might have modified his views in light of the discontinuities in hero cult apparently revealed by archaeology (p. 287 below).

23. Larson, *Heroine Cults*, 26–34. Echetaios: Paus. 1.32.5. Specialization in popular Catholicism: see, for instance, the guidebook by H. Gancel, *Les saints qui guérissent en Bretagne* (Editions Ouest-France, 2000).

Sparta, with Brasidas, the great Spartan general, or the maiden-deflowering hero of Temesa and the chaste Hippolytus.

But a category can be capacious and flexible without being conceptually incoherent. The most important documents for the study of hero cults are surely the Attic cult calendars: they allow us to see the full set of sacrifices made to heroes and heroines over a year by a particular worshipping group in a particular place, in relation sometimes to a landscape. I present here the relevant extracts from the calendars of three demes and one *genos*; the first is probably to be dated c. 430, the others in the first half of the fourth century. (Names of heroes are in italics.)

#### Deme of Thorikos (SEG 33.147 = NGSL 1)

For *Kephalos* a chosen sheep, for *Prokris* a table.

For *Thorikos* a chosen sheep, for the *heroines of Thorikos* a table.

For *Young Man* a full-grown victim.

For *Thorikos* a bovine costing 40–50 dr., for the *heroines of Thorikos* a table.

For the *Herakleidai* a full-grown victim, for *Alkmene* a full-grown victim.

For the “*Lords*” [*Kastor and Polydeukes*] a full-grown victim, for *Helen* a full-grown victim.

For *Philonis* a table.

For *Above-the-Plain* (Ὑπερπέδιος) a sheep, for the *heroines of Above-the-Plain* a table, for *Nisos* a sheep, for *Thras* [ ] a sheep, for *Save-Ship* (Σωσίβεως) a sheep, for *Rhogios* a sheep, for *Gate-Holder* (Πυλῶχος) a piglet, for the *Gate-Holding heroines* a table.

For *Aglauros* a sheep [*this offering is made along with one to Athena at the Plynteria*].

For *Kephalos* a bovine for not less than 40 and up to 50 dr., for *P[ro]kris* a sheep.

#### Deme of Marathon (SEG 50.168 A col. 2)<sup>24</sup>

For the *hero* [—] a piglet, 3 dr.; table for the *hero* [—].

For [—] a bovine, 150 dr., a sheep, 12 dr.; for the *heroine* [a sheep, 11 dr.].

For *Ioleos* a sheep, 12 dr. [*this offering forms part of a group with others to Earth, Zeus Hypatos and Korotrophos*].

24. I omit the offerings “before the Skira” to Hyttenios and (alternate years) Galios (lines 30, 51): they are unknown, and not certainly heroes.

For the *hero Pheraios* [*Pheraian hero?*] [a sheep, 12 dr.]; for the *heroine* a sheep, 11 dr.

For *Aristomachus* a bovine, 90 dr., a sheep, 12 dr.; for the *heroine* a sheep, 11 dr.

For *Young Man* a bovine, 90 dr., a sheep, 12 dr., a piglet [3 dr.]; for the *heroine* a sheep, 11 dr.

For the *hero at Drasileia* a sheep, 12 dr., a table, 1 dr.; for the *heroine* a sheep, 11 dr.

For the *hero beside the Hellotion*, a sheep, 12 dr., a table, 1 dr.; for the *heroine* a sheep, 11 dr.

#### Deme of Erchia (SEG 21.541 = LSCG 18)

For the *heroines*, at Schoinos in Erchia, a sheep, no carrying away, skin to the priestess, 10 dr.

For *Basile*, at Erchia, a white lamb, burnt whole, wineless, 7 dr.

For *Epops*, at Erchia, a piglet, burnt whole, wineless, 3 dr.

For *Alochos* (“*Wife*”), on the hill at Erchia, a sheep, 10 dr.

For the *heroines*, at Pylon at Erchia, a sheep, no carrying away, skin to the priestess, 10 dr.

For *Semele*, on the same altar (*as an offering to Dionysus on the same day*) a goat, to be handed over to women, skin to the priestess, no carrying away, 10 dr.

For the *Herakleidai* a sheep, at Erchia, no carrying away,<sup>25</sup> 12 dr.

For *Leukaspis*, at Erchia, a sheep, wineless, no carrying away, 12 dr.

For the “*Lords*” [*Kastor and Polydeukes*], at Erchia, a sheep, 12 dr.

For *Menedeios*, at Erchia, a sheep, no carrying out, 12 dr.

For *Aglauros*, on the citadel at Erchia, a sheep, no carrying away, 10 dr. [*in association with several sacrifices to gods*].

#### *Genos* of Salaminioi (ZPE 119 [1997]: 86–88)<sup>26</sup>

For *Ioleos* a sheep, burned whole, 15 dr.; for *Alkmene* a sheep, 12 dr.; for *Maia* (*Nurse?*), a sheep, 12 dr.; for *Heracles*, a bovine, 70 dr.; for the *hero at the Salt Flat*, a sheep, 15 dr.; for the *hero at Antisara*, a piglet,

25. For the addition of this specification to the stone here and in B 59, see Scullion, “Olympian and Chthonian,” 105 n. 85.

26. Older texts, e.g., in G. V. Lalonde et al., *The Athenian Agora*, vol. 19, *Inscriptions* (Princeton, 1991), I 4a; LSS 19.

3½ dr.; for the hero at the Tower, a piglet, 3½ dr.; in alternate years, for Ion, a sheep.

For Eurysakes a pig, 40 dr.

For hero Phaiax [Phaeacian hero?] a piglet, 3½ dr.; for hero Teucer a piglet, 3½ dr.; for hero Nauseiros a piglet, 3½ dr. [these offerings accompany a large offering to Poseidon].

For Theseus a pig, 40 dr.

For Skiros a sheep, 15 dr. [this offering accompanies one to Athena Skiras].

The details are not of importance here, but several general points emerge. A first, very obvious, is the quite unexpected abundance of heroes and heroines honored by each of these relatively small groups. A second, revealed at Thorikos in particular, is the landscape-mapping role of heroes and their women: heroines of Thorikos, Above the Plain, Gate-Holder. A third is the tendency of many heroes and heroines to operate as minor partners in association with gods: they receive lesser offerings when gods receive greater, just as they often share their precincts and, in myth, are cast as their servants.<sup>27</sup> A fourth, the one most relevant to the present argument, is the easy mingling of heroes of what might seem to be diverse types. There are anonymous heroes (the heroes "at Drasileia" and "beside the Hellotion" at Marathon; "at the salt flat," "at Antisara," "at the Tower" of the Salaminioi); heroes with a name but no surviving legend (e.g., Pheraios and Aristomachus at Marathon; Thorikos, Thras-, and Rhogios at Thorikos); heroes with apparently functional or speaking names (e.g., "Save-Ship," "Gate-Keeper," at Thorikos); and a good admixture of heroes known and often well-known from myth.<sup>28</sup> But there is no reason to think that in sorting them thus into classes one is tracking divisions perceived by the ancients. All are just (as it might be) the heroes of Erchia.

Another class of evidence can be called in support, one which has received strangely little attention in this regard. The "banqueting hero" relief is a characteristic form of dedication; it typically shows a male reclining on a couch with a table of foodstuffs in front of him, a female seated beside him, and a standing youth waiting on him. Confusion long prevailed and

27. Aglauros at Thorikos; Ioleos at Marathon; Semele, and Aglauros, at Erchia; the heroes Phaiax, Teucer, and Nauseiros among the Salaminioi. Cf. E. Kearns, "Between God and Man: Status and Function of Heroes and their Sanctuaries," in *Sanctuaire grec*, 65-99, at 77-93; A. Seiffert in *ThesCRA* 4:26.

28. At Thorikos Kephelos and Prokris, Herakleidai, Alkmene, "Lords," Helen, Philonis, Nisos, Aglauros; at Marathon Ioleos; at Erchia Epops, Semele, Herakleidai, "Lords," Aglauros; among the Salaminioi Alkmene, Heracles, Ion, Eurysakes, Teucer, Theseus, Skiros.



FIGURE 3. A banqueting-hero relief, Attica, late fourth century. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, Sculpture 3873. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture/Archaeological Receipts Fund.

has yet to be completely dispelled about this iconography, because it is found both on votive reliefs dedicated to heroes (occasionally also gods) and, with increasing frequency, on tombstones; accordingly the type used normally to be referred to as a *Totenmahlrelief*, "banquet of the dead relief," and attempts were made to bridge the gap between heroes and dead persons by the hypothesis that the recipients were recently dead persons treated as heroes. But in 1965 it was clearly established that the heroes were the original honorands of such reliefs and the transfer of the iconography to the dead was a secondary development, not occurring before the fourth century.<sup>29</sup> Weapons may

29. By R. N. Thönges-Stringaris, "Das griechische Totenmahl," *AM* 80 (1965): 1-99, confirmed in the monumental study of Dentzer, *Banquet couché*; on the later development see J. Fabricius,

be shown on the wall behind the banqueter, and a horse's head often appears anti-naturalistically in a frame in a corner: both are symbols of heroic status. Smaller figures of worshippers, perhaps leading a sacrificial animal, often approach the heroic couple from the left. The many specimens found in the precinct of Agamemnon and Alexandra at Amyclae near Sparta disprove all idea that the heroes so honored were necessarily recently dead. Aeneas Tacticus in the fourth century alludes casually to a "heroic (votive) tablet" (πινάκιον ἡρωικόν) as an object on which one might inscribe a secret message; he envisages another common type, one that shows the hero as a rider. The passing reference shows that these were generic forms of offering; it follows that heroes had enough in common for generic offerings to be appropriate. In a papyrus fragment probably from Aristophanes' *Heroes*, the Heroes duly speak as a body; they declare themselves guardians of human morality who punish transgressions.<sup>30</sup>

### The Power of Heroes

The question thus far has been that of what the ancients believed heroes to be. There follows that of the motives for the worship of heroes, the benefits that worship of heroes brought. Moderns have often tended of late to answer that question in broadly political terms: hero cults are used to legitimate territorial claims or claims to hegemony or the power of a ruling elite or the prestige of individual groups, or simply as a way of forging group identity. Ancients would have given a very different kind of answer: for them what mattered was not the hero as an idea but the hero as a power genuinely effective for good or ill. It would doubtless be crude to use the pious ancient understanding as a stick with which to chastise the unimaginatively secular assumptions of modern scholarship; even actions strongly motivated by belief can scarcely escape having a political dimension. But it is certainly worth beginning from the evidence of Herodotus, a privileged witness because of the quantity of testimony that he offers to fifth-century understandings of the effectiveness of heroes. Several long-established heroes show powers of diverse kinds. Two "local heroes" of Delphi (ἐπιχώριοι ἥρωες), Phylakos and Autonoos, drive

*Die hellenistischen Totenmahreliefs* (Munich, 1999). These works are abundantly illustrated; for a few specimens see *ThesCRA* 2, pl. 22, nos. 100, 107; pl. 26, no. 184; pl. 46, no. 46.

30. Fr. 322 K/A. Aeneas Tacticus: 31.15. Agamemnon: see n. 17 above; for another remarkable heroic votive assemblage (from Messene), see P. G. Themelis in R. Hägg, ed., *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Archaeological Evidence* (Stockholm, 1998), 157–86. Riding hero: e.g., *ThesCRA* 1, pl. 70, nos. 60, 61; 2, pl. 22, no. 108.

the Persian invaders away from the sanctuary (8.39.1); Astrabakos leaves his hero shrine in Sparta and, disguised as King Ariston, visits Ariston's wife around the corner and engenders Demaratus (6.69);<sup>31</sup> Helen (but perhaps she should count rather as a goddess) transforms an ugly child into a great beauty (6.61.2–5); Protesilaus brings dead fish back to life as a warning to Artyactes that, though dead, he will avenge the wrongs done to him (9.120.1–2). Images of the Aeacids are fetched from Salamis or Aegina to serve as battle helpers, even if the Thebans after a defeat send them back and ask for men instead (5.80–81.1; 8.64, cf. 8.83.2).

Herodotus also recounts the circumstances leading to the establishment of several new hero cults. Onesilos, younger brother of the king of Salamis in Cyprus, was killed while seeking to force Amathous to join the Ionian revolt; the Amathousians cut off his head and positioned it above the city gates; a swarm of bees settled in the head, and an unspecified oracle, consulted about the portent, instructed the Amathousians to sacrifice to Onesilos as a hero (5.113.2–114). Philippos of Croton in the late sixth century was an Olympic victor and the most beautiful Greek of his day. When he joined Dorieus's assault on Egesta and was killed, he "got from [the Egestaians], because of his beauty, what no one else did": they put a hero shrine on his tomb and still propitiate him with sacrifices (5.47). The Agylaeans stoned Phocaeans survivors from a sea battle; all living creatures that passed the site of the stoning became twisted or mad, and on Delphi's advice they established large-scale offerings and athletic competitions for the victims (1.167.1–2).

In these three cases the peoples who set up the cults were, as it happens, non-Greek or only partly Greek, but there is no hint from Herodotus that their behavior, sanctioned in one case by Delphi, was anything other than very natural (the Egyptians, by contrast, are explicitly said not to honor heroes, 2.50.3). And he records a closely comparable case of the Akanthians: when Xerxes' honored officer Artachaies, the tallest of Persians and the loudest-voiced of all mankind, died of disease at Akanthos, the whole Persian army built a mound for him; and now on oracular advice the Akanthians sacrifice to him as a hero, invoking him by name (7.117).<sup>32</sup> On Delphic advice, the Spartans brought home the bones of Orestes and thus established a new cult (though of an old hero), as a talisman to improve their fortunes in their

31. On "neighboring heroes" such as Astrabakos, see J. S. Rusten, *HSCP* 87 (1983): 289–97.

32. Artachaies' fame is underlined if E. K. Borthwick's brilliant conjecture, which introduces him to *Ar. Ach.* 709 (*BICS* 17 [1970]: 107–10), is accepted. On the mourning for another giant Persian, Masistios (*Hdt.* 9.20–25.1), see A. Petropoulou in *Ancient Greece and Ancient Iran*, ed. S. M. R. Darbaudi and A. Zounatzi, 9–30 (Athens, 2008).



wars with Tegea (Hdt. 1.67–68). Again on Delphic advice, the Athenians set up a precinct of the Aeginetan hero Aiakos in the agora to help them in their Aeginetan wars (5.89.2–3). Herodotus also mentions the heroic honors customarily paid to founders of colonies (1.168; 6.38.1), and a case of colonists who on Delphic advice “establish” a mythical hero in their new foundation (1.167.4).

Onesilos, Philippos, Artachaies, and the Agyllaeans all received cult from their erstwhile enemies, in accord with a pattern attested in several other cases.<sup>33</sup> The Agyllaeans and, arguably, Onesilos had been treated in ways that violated civilized norms, and portents signaled the need for reparation; but the only motive given for the honors accorded Philippos and Artachaies is their exceptional physical characteristics. We should also note, however, that Onesilos was a king's brother and a military leader, Philippos an Olympic victor, and Artachaies a high-ranking Persian whom his compatriots buried in a huge mound: it was a blend of social prominence and remarkable attributes or fortunes that made them into heroes. None of this supports a view of hero cult as a device of legitimation or identity politics; one does not acquire legitimacy or group solidarity by worshipping an enemy.

There is very little at all in Herodotus to justify such an approach. The bringing home of the bones of Orestes by the Spartans (1.67–68) has long, it is true, been interpreted in these terms, as a signal sent by the Spartans to the Peloponnese, since Orestes was an Achaean, that Sparta was an Achaean and not a Dorian state; but, even if correct,<sup>34</sup> this is a rationalizing reinterpretation and not what Herodotus says. Better support comes from Clisthenes of Sicyon's attempt, when at war with Argos, to expel the Argive hero Adrastus from his hero shrine in the agora of Sicyon. At one level Clisthenes is certainly playing with symbols to foster anti-Argive feeling. But even here Herodotus's understanding is different. He goes on to tell how, forbidden to expel Adrastus by Delphi, Clisthenes sought to induce Adrastus to leave of his own accord, by establishing in the prytaneum of Sicyon a cult of his worst enemy Melanippus (5.67). Adrastus is a real presence, therefore, who retains the affections and antipathies of his mortal existence.

What needs to be done is to seek bridges between the kinds of explanation for hero cult offered by Herodotus on the one hand, and by politically minded modern historians on the other. Only where no bridge can

33. M. Visser, “Worship Your Enemies,” *HTR* 75 (1982): 403–28; cf. Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 50.

34. For a powerful denial, see D. Boedeker, “Hero Cult and Politics in Herodotus: The Bones of Orestes,” in *Cultural Poetics*, 164–77.

be found will a choice have to be made. The role of the cults in creating a sense of identity and reinforcing group solidarity is easy. In colonies, the cult of the founder could evidently provide a focus of loyalty for settlers recruited perhaps from different parts of the Greek world without shared traditions; so could other hero cults<sup>35</sup> established at the time of foundation. This functional explanation fits easily, like the two halves of an indenture, with the more pious account whereby the colonists honor the colonist for his achievements and the protection he continues to bring them.

When Messenia was liberated from Spartan domination in 369, Messenian heroes were ceremoniously called home; the Messenians would not have been a free people, equal citizens in the commonwealth of cities, without their own protecting heroes. Messenia is the one region of Greece in which the bringing of offerings to Mycenaean graves, elsewhere a phenomenon largely confined to the archaic and early classical period, resumes in the fifth century and increases greatly in intensity in the fourth. The post-369 boom probably reflects a repopulation of the territory with heroes, in parallel with the turn to much more intensive cultivation of the liberated region; the cults beginning in the fifth century were perhaps already symbols and focuses of a Messenian nationalism growing stronger (or for the first time emerging) after the great helot revolt of the midcentury.<sup>36</sup> Further examples of the social utility of such cults of broadly patriotic stamp, such as that of war heroes, could very easily be amassed. On a miniature scale, the devotion of the city wardens of Priene to City Warden can count as another example of the same phenomenon.<sup>37</sup> The particularity of heroes made them an ideal focus for group loyalty, the rennet around which social groups coagulated. (But let it be noted in passing that many heroes were not particularly suitable for such purposes, the “enemy-heroes” mentioned above, for instance.)

But could individuals or restricted groups exploit hero cults to their advantage in any sense other than this? Doubtless it was of advantage over a long period to the Battiad monarchy in Cyrene that their ancestor, founder of the colony, was honored as a hero, much as the kings of France profited from the veneration paid to their predecessor St. Louis. The same possibility was available, though never exploited for very long, where a founder-hero passed on power dynastically (like Miltiades in the Chersonese or several

35. Delphi helped colonists discover “secret burial places of heroes”: Plut. *Pyth. Or.* 27, 407F; cf. Malkin, *Religion and Colonization*, 5; heroes could also be imported to colonies (Hdt. 1. 167. 4).

36. See Boehringer, *Heroenkulte*, 243–371, esp. 340, 367–69; Luraghi, *Ancient Messenians*, 239–45. Calling home in 369: Paus. 4.27.5–6.

37. See n. 7 above.

Sicilian tyrants). But such instances were unusual; and it has been acutely argued that, in the normal case, the hero cult accorded to the founder marked the end of the phase in a colony's life when altogether extraordinary powers were permitted to an individual.<sup>38</sup>

Families sought cachet by claiming descent from heroes, and it is sometimes suggested that the reopening of Bronze Age tombs to bring offerings is the work of groups concerned to equip themselves with prestigious ancestors.<sup>39</sup> Yet it is a commonplace of scholarship that hero cult, in contrast, say, to the worship of ancestors, transcends individual families and belongs to the collectivity. The commonplace needs to be nuanced to acknowledge that in Attica, the one region where the evidence is available for inspection in detail, many hero cults were administered by pseudo-kinship groups (*genē*, or groups of *orgeōnes*), not by the city or by one of its formal subdivisions. But since 1976 it has been widely accepted that actual families and the pseudo-kinship groups were different entities with different interests.<sup>40</sup> The appeal by families was normally to genealogical legend, not specifically to tombs, and the possibility of a powerful family exploiting a hero cult to its lasting benefit remains purely hypothetical. (So too does that of similar exploitation by a *genos* or society of *orgeōnes*.) Cimon's success in "bringing home the bones of Theseus" from Skyros in the 470s brought him, according to Plutarch's credible report, enormous popularity; there are some indications that Cimon's family claimed descent from the hero.<sup>41</sup> But the precondition for Cimon's coup de théâtre was Theseus's abrupt rise to celebrity in the preceding years. Cimon did not make the hero great, nor could he appropriate him, but merely exploited his celebrity at a particular moment.

The persons to whom a hero really mattered, it should be remembered, were those who visited his shrine, prayed to him, brought votives when their prayers were fulfilled, participated in his sacrificial banquets. Hero cults

38. F. de Polignac, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State* (Chicago, 1995), 132–33. Boedeker similarly argues that Orestes was a good hero for the Spartans to bring home in the sixth century because he had no descendants ("Hero Cult," n. 34 above). Battiads: Pind. *Pyth.* 5.95; Miltiades: Hdt. 6.34–41; cf. Currie, *Cult of Heroes*, 5, who speaks of the cults of Gelon in Syracuse, Theron in Acragas, Hieron in Aitna.

39. So S. Alcock, *AJA* 95 (1991): 456–58, sees hero cult being exploited by powerful families in the Hellenistic period to lay claim to distinguished ancestors; D. Damaskos in *ThesCRA* 2:142, speaks of "legitimations—bzw. Durchsetzungsversuch von politischen Parteien."

40. On the work of F. Bourriot and D. Roussel, see in brief Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 61. On the heroes of *genē* and of *orgeōnes*, see Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 64–79. Commonplace: Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 715; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 204; W. Schuller in *ThesCRA* 2:130; most emphatically R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual* (Oxford, 1994), e.g., 109–14.

41. Plut. *Cim.* 8.5–7; cf. *Thes.* 36.1–4; Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 168–70 (*ibid.*, 168 n. 54 for the family connection).

united groups because groups participated in them together. The bringing home of a hero's bones, that common practice, is often interpreted, by contrast, as a way for a state to send out messages to other states; so too the establishment of a cult for a figure of high mythological profile. The Seven against Thebes, it has been noted, were not all Argive even though the expedition set out from Argos; by establishing a shrine to them in the sixth century, therefore, the Argives were staking a claim to a role of leadership in the Peloponnese.<sup>42</sup> But the message would have been effective only if other Peloponnesian states had participated in the cult; as it was, the only people to whom the Argives were sending the message was themselves, and they doubtless needed no convincing. The same objection applies to most interpretations that have been offered of the bringing home of a hero's bones. When such an event occurred, the response that we need to consider is that of the receiving state. The context of the most famous instance, that of the bones of Orestes, was a prolonged and unsuccessful war. A recent study urges us to "set aside the obvious morale boost that the successful fulfilment of the oracle brought to the Spartans."<sup>43</sup> We should, rather, restore the morale boost to its rightful place.

A decision to heroize the newly dead was, it is true, often almost inevitably politically charged. The tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton received "honors equal to those of gods and heroes" at Athens (even if the word "heroes" is never applied to them), probably from quite soon after the overthrow of the tyranny: both those nostalgic for the old order and those who knew the tyrannicides' role in its overthrow to have been exaggerated must have looked askance when the decree was passed. The assassin of the Sicyonian populist leader Euphron was acclaimed at Thebes as another tyrant slayer, but Euphron's fellow citizens "brought him home as being a good man, buried him in the agora, and revere him as leader (*archēgetēs*) of the city." "To such an extent, it seems, do most people regard those who bring them benefits as being good men," comments Xenophon sourly.<sup>44</sup>

But even when the recently dead were heroized, the title to the honor was not always "for political services." Sophocles was supposedly given cult under the new name Dexion, "receiver," for his role in the reception of the new god Asclepius in Athens; the late tradition to that effect received unexpected support when fourth-century epigraphic evidence emerged

42. J. M. Hall, "Beyond the Polis: The Multilocality of Heroes," in *Hero Cult*, 49–59.

43. B. McCauley, "Heroes and Power: The Politics of Bone Transfer," in *Hero Cult*, 85–98 (a useful survey), at 88; cf. n. 34 on the case of Orestes.

44. Xen. *Hell.* 7.3.12. Tyrannicides: Dem. 19.280; cf. Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 136 n. 55.

for a hero Dexion associated with the cult of Asclepius. If the tradition is indeed historical,<sup>45</sup> Sophocles' standing as the grand old man of tragedy surely contributed to the wish to pay him cult, even if the explicit justification was religious. We are also told that several great athletes of the fifth century were heroized. Unfortunately the sources are all late: they record extraordinary legends that are profoundly revealing for one side of the image of the hero (the hero as uncontrollable force, in the case of the mass killer Cleomedes), but quite fail to set the decision to heroize in a specific, credible context. To fill the vacuum, political interpretations have been attempted in these cases too.<sup>46</sup> But no aspect of late archaic and early classical Greek culture is better established than the idolization of successful athletes; the evidence is abundant, that from the history of statuary for instance, but none perhaps more telling than a short phrase in Thucydides: he is describing the reception of the Spartan general Brasidas by the people of Scione in 423, and says that they "garlanded him and approached him as if he had been an athlete." The greatest general of his day in Greece raised to the level of a sportsman! Whatever political interests may have been at play in particular cases, the core phenomenon that permitted such exploitation was the charisma of sporting success.<sup>47</sup>

Into the play of interests surrounding hero cult a new interest has been introduced of late: that of the potential hero himself. Hieron, Diodorus claims (but how could he know?), founded Aetna "desiring to have heroic honors" there. And why should not athletes have nourished similar aspirations, and

45. It is doubted by A. Connolly in a careful study, "Was Sophocles Heroized as Dexion?," *JHS* 118 (1998): 1–21 (where see the testimonia). He argues that a Hellenistic or later biographer brought the tradition of Sophocles' role in receiving Asclepius into association with the minor and obscure cult of a Dexion who had nothing to do with the poet; this seems to me harder (Connolly's 20 n. 104 notes the difficulty) than the problems he detects (heroization of a poet in the fifth century; heroization under a new name). The sources speak of "the Athenians" honoring Sophocles, and Istros even has annual sacrifice decreed by the assembly (*FGrH* 334 F 38). But Dexion's altar is in a precinct owned by the *orgeōnes* of Amynos and Asclepios. Do the sources speak loosely? Or was the public cult in charge of the *orgeōnes*? In the latter case, did they establish it and the city adopt it? Or did they establish it on request from the assembly?

46. F. Bohringer, "Cultes d'athlètes en Grèce classique: Propos politiques, discours mythiques," *REA* 81 (1979): 5–18: good comments in Currie, *Cult of Heroes*, 126–29, 152–57 (with many further references). We know too little to build much on the interesting lack, which Bohringer stresses, of attested cult for the greatest of all athletes, Milon of Croton. J. Pouilloux, "Théogènes de Thasos... quarante ans après," *BCH* 118 (1994): 199–206, withdraws his own earlier political interpretation of the heroization of Theagenes of Thasos; even the fifth-century date of the heroization is now in doubt.

47. Thuc. 4.121.1. Being tied to class interests, athletic charisma was, I do not deny, contested and problematic in various ways; it was given more scope in some cities than in others. But it existed. Statuary: see R. R. Smith, "Pindar, Athletes, and the Early Greek Statue Habit," in *Pindar's Poetry*, 83–139.

worked while still alive to realize them, when they knew of other athletes who had escaped ordinary death in this way?<sup>48</sup> In the third century one Artemidorus, a man from Perge who settled in Thera and earned citizenship by building various sanctuaries, was eventually able to announce:

The prophetess of the god at Delphi sent an oracle [ ] proclaiming Artemidorus a [divine? new?] immortal hero.

He seems to be claiming a status as hero that is not private only but generally recognized; and we can scarcely doubt that he pressed for his own consecration. The new perspective, through the eyes of an individual confronting his own mortality, is intriguing; but the individual's power to realize his hopes, since the decision to heroize was collective, will normally have been very limited. Prosperous citizens of the Hellenistic period endowed foundations to finance sacrifices to be made to themselves and their family members, as heroes, after their death; one secured the approval of an oracle before doing so. But these were private affairs; such individuals were normally heroes for their relatives alone.<sup>49</sup> It is important too not to exaggerate the place of recently heroized persons among the great ranks of heroes. If one lists all attested cases, their numbers may appear impressive.<sup>50</sup> But the numbers for any single city are very small, whereas even individual demes of Attica could offer ten or so heroes from the age of demigods.

Scholars in the main explain divine cults in terms of the benefits the gods are believed to have in their gift. The point of the preceding discussion has been to argue that hero cults should be viewed in the same way: the argument continues the earlier argument that functionally heroes were minor gods. And no political explanation of a hero cult will have much power that does not start from the experience of the worshipper who visited the shrine and, where it was not consumed in the flames, ate the sacrificial meat.

48. The central thesis of Currie, *Cult of Heroes*. Hieron: Diod. Sic. 11.49.2.

49. Artemidorus: *IG* 12.3.863, with *IG* 12.3 *Suppl.* 1349 and *IG* 12 *Suppl.* p. 90 (where Hiller compares a story about Heraclides of Pontus's attempt to get himself declared a hero, Heraclides Ponticus frs. 14–15 Wehrli): χρησμὸν ἔπεμψε θεοῦ Δελφοῖσι [προφήτης ε- - /φράζονσ' ἄθανάτων [θε]τὸν ἥρωα [Ἀρ]τεμίδωρον]. Hellenistic foundations: see, e.g., Nilsson, *Geschichte*, 2:115–17; oracular approval *LSA* 72 (*Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 1044). It had always been possible for private individuals to set up hero shrines for whom they pleased (Theophr. *Char.* 16.4; cf. the shrine of his teacher supposedly set up by Parmenides, Sotion fr. 27 Wehrli ap. DL 9.21, and the famous passage of Plato quoted on p. 59), but there was no pressure on third parties to acknowledge such heroes.

50. Cf. A. Connolly's list, *JHS* 118 (1998): 21, with Currie's addenda, *Cult of Heroes*, 87 n. 2; Eudamos and Lydiadas of Megalopolis are important new Hellenistic cases, *SEG* 52.447–49. Boehringer, *Heroenkulte*, 36, notes the rarity, and rightly points to the depersonalization that a heroized individual underwent: he became a narrative pattern, a type.

epithet "of the City" and so was an appropriate "chthonian" recipient of the small holocaust.<sup>8</sup>

The main offering to Zeus Polieus in that Coan festival was accompanied by the offering of a pregnant sheep to Athena Polias. That is the detail that, above all, suggests that these gods of the city were also concerned with the city's fields; for the connection between pregnant victims and agricultural growth is, surely, one of the rare transparent elements in Greek ritual.<sup>9</sup> It is, however, startling, here and in one Attic instance, to find none other than Athena as recipient of the pregnant victim. What should we then say? That Athena (Polias) is a (part) chthonian? That she has a chthonian aspect? It might be easier merely to say that here, unusually, she has an association with agriculture. And here lies the weight of the case for describing as chthonian only the limited number of gods so described in ancient sources. To establish that the cult of Zeus Polieus has an association with agriculture advances our knowledge. To label it chthonian merely substitutes for that precise description a vaguer one.

8. RO 62 (LSCG 151 A) 29–38; see Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian," 81–89, dissenting from Graf, "Milch, Honig und Wein." Muses and nymphs: Suda v 356 = Polemon of Ilium fr. 42 Preller.

9. Though for a different view, see J. N. Bremmer in *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 155–65. Athena Polias on Cos: RO 62 (LSCG 151 A) 55–56; Athena Skiras receives a pregnant sheep in LSS 19.93 (Salaminioi, Attica).

## APPENDIX 5

### The Early History of Hero Cult

The first principle in the study of ancient religion should be to observe what can be observed, and refrain from fantasizing about "origins" that are not open to investigation. But the cult of heroes is a special case, because it is arguable that its origin, or at least a radical change of direction, is indeed available for inspection. The topic is highly obscure, but also highly important, because here for once the word "history" found in the titles of *Histories of Greek Religion* may have a justification: a key transformation in the very hierarchy of the divine world perhaps occurs before our eyes.

The conception of hero cult as a phenomenon stretching back into the mists of time (still found, for instance, in Brelich's *Gli eroi greci* of 1958) has been problematic since archaeologists observed that, in several areas of the Greek world, Mycenaean tombs, unused for centuries, were reopened for cult purposes in the late eighth century; the new cult was often evanescent, but in a few cases continued for several centuries.<sup>1</sup> Classical sources speak of the typical location of a hero cult as the hero's tomb, and it is intuitively plausible

1. The phenomenon was first emphasized by J. N. Coldstream, "Hero-Cults in the Age of Homer," *JHS* 96 (1976): 8–17. The archaeology is now surveyed by Antonaccio, *Ancestors*, and Boehringer, *Heroenkulte*. Written sources treating tombs as location for hero cult: R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual* (Oxford, 1994), 114–23.

that men of the eighth century, who disposed of their dead differently, imagined impressive Mycenaean tombs as harboring individuals from the age of demigods; it is therefore widely supposed that these offerings at Mycenaean tombs provide our first archaeological evidence for the cult of heroes. In parallel with the new cults at ancient tombs, we can perhaps observe archaeological instances of historical individuals who received continuing, and apparently collective, cult after death. Both types of hero—the mythological and the recently dead—would therefore emerge archaeologically at about the same time. A complicating factor is that reuse of Mycenaean tombs for contemporary burials had also occurred sporadically from the eleventh century. Where cult seems to imply respect and a sense of distance, reuse suggests relaxed familiarity.<sup>2</sup>

Even prior to these archaeological discoveries, literary evidence had often been thought to create a difficulty about retrojecting the cult of heroes to primeval time. But the difficulty can perhaps be got round. The silence of Homer on the subject need not be the obstacle that it has been taken to be: in strict verisimilitude Homer's characters cannot pay cult to the heroes if they themselves are those heroes, the men of the age of ἥμιθιοι; there were not yet any heroes available for them to worship. One allusion to the worship of a past mortal does appear to slip in, if only in the Catalog of Ships: the "youths of the Athenians" bring sumptuous offerings to Erechtheus, though in a temple, not at a grave.<sup>3</sup>

It is more disconcerting that, in his myth of five ages in *Works and Days*, Hesiod fails to assign any cultic function to "the divine race of the heroes, those who are called ἥμιθιοι" and who fought and died at Thebes and Troy. Instead, Zeus transported them to the Isles of the Blessed, where they now live, "fortunate heroes," free from care (170–73). Hesiod does know of quondam mortals who live on in the human sphere as gods in a small way, but they are not the heroes: it is the men of the golden age who are now "reverend

2. Cf. C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "The Hesiodic Myth of the Five Ages and the Tolerance of Plurality in Greek Mythology," in *Greek Offerings*, ed. O. Palagia, 1–21 (Oxford, 1997), at 6. Reuse is much emphasized by Antonaccio, *Ancestors*; cf. in brief Antonaccio, "Archaeology of Ancestors," 49. Historical individuals: see references in Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 37, and A. Seiffert in *ThesCRA* 4:25; but interpretation of the prime exhibit, the "hero shrine at the West Gate" of Eretria, remains controversial (Antonaccio, *Ancestors*, 228–36). Certain or plausible cases of long-lasting cult at Mycenaean tombs come from Menidi and Thorikos in Attica (Boehrer, *Heroenkulte*, 48–59), Mycenae (*ibid.*, 164–66), Tiryns and Berbati (*ibid.*, 178–84), and now Metropolis (n. 12 below).

3. *Il.* 2.546–51. For further arguments to indicate Homer's knowledge of hero cult, see Currie, *Cult of Heroes*, 48–59. Brelich, *Eroi*, 387, robustly argues that the word ἥρως, commonly taken to mean "lord, warrior" in Homer, already has its later sense: so too H. van Wees, *Status Warriors: War, Violence and Society in Homer and History* (Amsterdam, 1992), 8. But the debate on that issue rumbles on... (Currie, *Cult of Heroes*, 60–70; Bremmer, "Hero Cult," 17–18).

powers (*daimones*) upon the earth, good, averters of evil, guardians of mortal men, wealth-givers" (122–23, 126), while those of the silver age "are called blessed mortals under the earth, second [to the golden age men], but honor accompanies them too" (141–42). That distribution of functions is not one with which we are familiar from the classical period. But Hesiod was a speculative theologian, seeking to reconcile a myth of metallic generations that succeeded one another with the separate tradition of an age of heroes; one could speculate that, in order to assign a properly honorable post-mortem destiny to the men of the golden and silver ages, he split up the patrimony of the heroes.<sup>4</sup> It is significant that he attests for the first time the conception of the "divine race of the heroes" as belonging firmly to the past. Homer too, however, has the conception of a great lost age: not only does he often contrast the feeble men of today with those of the past, but in the one exceptional passage of retrospect that opens book 12 of the *Iliad* he speaks (line 23) of the "race of half-divine men" (ἥμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν) as having perished in the dust of the plain of Troy. The conceptual underpinning for a cult of heroes (if not necessarily under that name)<sup>5</sup> is present in both authors.

The weight of the case for a decisive change reverts therefore to the much-discussed archaeological evidence. After a period of energetic theorizing, a certain pessimism has emerged about the possibility of developing a unified explanation to account for it: the phenomenon occurs in parts of the Greek world that were historically in very different conditions;<sup>6</sup> even within a single region, the types of offering may seem to indicate worshipping groups of different character;<sup>7</sup> and serious uncertainties exist not only about the interpretation of particular cases but also about the proper description (tomb cult? ancestor cult? hero cult?) of whole classes of activity. The emphasis in this debate has mostly lain on the eighth-century phenomenon rather than on the history of hero cult in a longer view. In relation to that longer view, the

4. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Hesiodic Myth" (n. 2 above), 6–9. She argues, by a different route, that the Hesiodic passage is compatible with cult paid to heroes (but not to men of the silver age). Lane Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 367–68, challenges the widespread view that Hesiod's myth of ages is a borrowing from Near Eastern sources.

5. Bremmer has argued, "Hero Cult," 15–26, that (1) the term "hero" in a religious sense is not attested before the sixth century, and accordingly (2) we should not speak of hero cults before then. "Surely we can speak of hero-cults only when there is a clear concept of heroes" (17). But on his own showing, 24–25, a clear concept of "demigods" existed much earlier.

6. J. Whitley, "Early States and Hero-Cults: A Reappraisal," *JHS* 88 (1988): 173–82. For surveys of the debate see Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 129–32; Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 36–39; Boehrer, *Heroenkulte*, 13–15.

7. A main theme of the valuable detailed study of Boehrer, *Heroenkulte*: see, for instance, 103 on the contrast between three Attic cults (Thorikos, Menidi, and the "sacred house" at Eleusis).

best that can be done at the moment is to identify the possibilities that seem to be available, and the difficulties that confront them.

1. What we observe is not the emergence of hero cult but a huge increase in its popularity under the impulse of Homeric epic. This was the view of J. N. Coldstream, to whom much of the credit for identifying the eighth-century phenomenon belongs. That the epic tradition had some influence on cult in the archaic period appears certain; it would be a strange coincidence otherwise that Achilles and Diomedes, the two greatest warriors of the *Iliad*, became in particular regions such godlike figures, or, to take a small example, that a naval hero at Phaleron should be identified as a "Phaiacian hero" (in tribute to the naval skills of Homer's Phaiacians).<sup>8</sup> But many objections have been advanced to the specific claim of a sudden surge of influence in the eighth century.<sup>9</sup>
2. Hero cult existed before the eighth century (cf. the Homeric Erechtheus, honored in a temple), but at this point assumed a new and for the first time archaeologically visible form, attaching itself to tombs. The difficulty here is obviously that of explaining the new form. But the uneven archaeological visibility of hero cult, typically conducted on a fairly small scale, is a complication that must always be taken very seriously.<sup>10</sup>
3. Hero cult did indeed emerge for the first time in the eighth century, under strong new social pressures. The problem of identifying those pressures has already been mentioned. The extraordinary diversification that the cult then underwent would also remain to be explained; a particular issue would be how the connection with real or supposed tombs with which the cult began could have become optional.

8. I do not understand Burkert's argument, *Greek Religion*, 204–5, that Achilles' Black Sea cult depends on his birth from the sea goddess Thetis and is therefore independent of Homer: he is her son in the *Iliad*. On Diomedes and Achilles, see pp. 244–46; on "Phaiacian hero," Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 38–39. Coldstream: n. 1 above.

9. Currie, *Cult of Heroes*, 49 n. 14, cites twelve countervoice.

10. I do not know that archaeologically one could prove that heroes were worshipped in fourth-century Attica at all. It would be interesting to compare archaeological and literary/epigraphic evidence for hero cult region by region: I anticipate that great disparities would emerge. The tripod dedications beginning in the ninth century in the Polis cave at Ithaca would prove the preexistence of a different form of hero veneration, if one could be sure that they honored Odysseus (see I. Malkin, *The Wanderings of Odysseus* [Berkeley, 1998], chap. 3). M. Deoudi, *Heroenkulte in homerischer Zeit* (BAR international series 806, Oxford, 1999) (critically reviewed by G. Ekroth in *OpAth* 28 [2003]: 204–7) accepts more phenomena as clear evidence for hero cult than most scholars and so takes the archaeological evidence back earlier, but still detects a great intensification in the late eighth century (27, 39, 62).

4. The cults of the eighth century at Mycenaean tombs have nothing to do with hero cult. What they attest is "ancestor cult": such hero cults as existed at this date were celebrated in sanctuaries; the partial coalescence of hero cult with cult at tombs was a later development. This view has acquired considerable support.<sup>11</sup> But ancestor cult as it is known from many ethnographic descriptions did not take place in Greece; and the closest Greek equivalents to ancestors, the Tritopatores, were not normally worshipped at tombs though they might be worshipped near them. The explicit evidence that cult at reopened Mycenaean tombs might be addressed to heroes used to rest on a single fifth-century shard inscribed "I belong to the hero" and found in the region of Grave Circle A at Mycenae. That shard has now been joined by a roof tile of the seventh/sixth century, from a most impressive new instance of continuing cult paid to a reopened tomb at Metropolis in Thessaly (a region where the phenomenon had hitherto been unknown). The tile is inscribed ]EAIATIION[ (last letter doubtful); within these letters a reference to a shrine, Aia-tion, of the Thessalian hero Aiatos has been identified. A slight doubt lingers, because one of the iotas is redundant and no obvious way of supplementing the whole presents itself. The counterargument, however, that early hero cults were never practiced at tombs is based on a limited number of cases,<sup>12</sup> and depends on the exclusion of precisely those cults at tombs of which the character is in debate. One might rather suppose that, as later, some hero cults were located at tombs, others not.
5. A reconfiguration of the supernatural world occurred.<sup>13</sup> There had always been mortals, figures of legend, who remained powerful after death, but hitherto their status had been ill defined or they counted

11. Advocated especially by C. Antonaccio, at length in *Ancestors*, briefly and clearly in "Archaeology of Ancestors"; accepted, e.g., by Bremmer, "Hero Cult," 20 and in part by F. de Polignac, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State* (Chicago, 1995), 140–41. Tomb/ancestor cult in Antonaccio's broad definition goes back to the tenth century (see *AJA* 98 [1994]: 402–3). For dissent see Boehrer, *Heroenkulte*, 42–45, 47 n. 4. On Tritopatores see Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky, *Selinous*, 107–14: I write "not normally" to allow Selinous as a possible exception.

12. Antonaccio in fact allows only one certain case, the Menelaion at Sparta ("Archaeology of Ancestors," 62)—which the ancients treated as divine, not heroic! The postulated cult of Phrontis on Cape Sounion (Antonaccio, *Ancestors*, 166–69) is an early instance of a hero cult at the place believed, however wrongly, to be the site of the hero's tomb. Shard from Mycenae: IG 4.495; Antonaccio, *Ancestors*, 51. Aiatos: B. G. Intzesiloglou, "Aiatos et Polycléia: Du mythe à l'histoire," *Kernos* 15 (2002): 289–95 (*SEG* 52.561); for the hero, see Polyaeus, *Strat.* 8.44.

13. For varieties of this approach, see Kearns, *Heroes of Attica*, 129–37; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 204–5; Bremmer, "Hero Cult," 19.

vaguely as gods; they were now accorded a specific status as demigods or heroes, and the fact that, unlike gods, they had passed through death might be stressed by the link with a tomb. Some "gods in a small way" also entered the class, and were therefore given, insofar as anyone cared to inquire into the matter, human parentages; but they did not necessarily acquire also a tomb. The putative reconfiguration, it should be noted, was not carried through very effectively, since, as we saw, heroes were often loosely spoken of as "gods," though not gods as heroes.

A firm choice between these options can scarcely be made in the present state of research. Some element of "pick and mix" among them is doubtless possible. A problem that arises in almost all cases is that of the relation between hero cults that were and were not conducted at supposed tombs. ("Supposed" is crucial here; for Greek understandings, the question whether the supposed tombs were real ones is quite irrelevant.) Many of our uncertainties about hero cult hover around that relation. From the Attic cult calendars there is unfortunately no way of telling the kind of emplacement at which each offering was made, and thus the relative frequency of the two kinds. This uncertainty may interconnect with the problematic issue of the forms of hero cult, which often closely resembled those of divine cult, but were sometimes assimilated more to the cult of the dead.<sup>14</sup> Were offerings at tombs more likely to involve destruction of the victim, those at little sanctuaries to be made "as to the gods"? The question hangs in the air. What it confirms, thus suspended, is the mixed character of the heroes, mortals by biography, small gods in power.

14. See p. 110. The process of equipping hitherto tombless heroes with tombs continued into the Hellenistic period: see Pirenne-Delforge, *Pausanias*, 230–32, on Phoroneus at Argos (citing M. Piérart) and on Paus. 2.23.7–8. Heroes spoken of as gods: see p. 110.

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On much-debated topics, I sometimes cite only a recent contribution, adding the symbol [+] to stress that this work refers to earlier studies that remain important. What follows is not a list of all works mentioned in the notes, but of those cited by an abbreviated title (author plus title for monographs and journal articles; title only for collections of inscriptions and of essays).

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