

THE “REPATRIATION” OF ORESTES AND THESEUS

LA “REPATRIACIÓN” DE ORESTES Y TESEO

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ABSTRACT:

This article wishes to exam the removal of Orestes’ relics from Tegea to Sparta and Theseus’ from Skyros to Athens. It is notable to see how two acts with religious connotations could serve in parallel several goals such as political interests and dominant rights along with religious sentiment. The present study also discusses the role of Dephi in these stories and if the bone-movers would gain political advantage from the Oracle. The aim of this paper is to make evident the role each incident played in the concurrent politics of each city, the political significance of heroic relics and the advantage which the bone movers gained from their act.

RESUMEN:

El objetivo de este artículo es examinar el traslado de las reliquias de Orestes de Tegea a Esparta y las de Teseo de Skyros a Atenas. Es notable observar cómo dos actos con connotaciones religiosas pueden servir paralelamente a diversos objetivos, como intereses políticos o derechos de dominación, a la vez que al sentimiento religioso. El presente estudio discutirá sobre el papel de Delfos en estas historias y si los encargados de trasladar los restos ganarían alguna ventaja gracias al Oráculo. La intención de esta contribución es evidenciar el papel que cada episodio jugó dentro del contexto político de cada ciudad, la significación política de las reliquias heroicas y el beneficio obtenido por parte de los encargados del traslado de las mismas.

KEYWORDS: Orestes, Theseus, heroic relics, Delphi, Kimon, Theseion.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Orestes, Teseo, reliquias heroicas, Delfos, Cimón, Teseion.

I. Introduction

The Oracle of Delphi², by the end of the 7th century BC, was, with very little doubt, an increasingly crucial institution for a wide circle of Greek cities and their new foundations spread out across the Mediterranean world. The Oracle of Delphi soon began to acquire fame and prestige and to attract powerful and wealthy clients from distant parts of Greece. Cities as well as individuals began to consult it. It had acquired some pan-Hellenic reputation by 700; Sparta brought constitutional reforms to Delphi for approval perhaps in the early 7th century³. It had been consulted by kings in the East and by tyrants in mainland Greece, as well as by communities and individuals on issues as diverse as constitutional reform, war, land allotment, oaths, purification and the avoidance of famine (and many more issues if one

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² On Delphic Oracle in general see Parke and Wormell 1956; Fontenrose 1978; Scott 2014.

³ The period of Delphi’s greatest prestige lasted from approximately 580, following the Amphictionic takeover as a result of the First Sacred War, to 320, around the time of Alexander’s death. There is no good evidence that Delphi’s reputation sank after 480 because of Medizing pronouncements during the Persian Wars. Fontenrose 1978, 5.

is inclined to believe all the stories)⁴. From the 6th century it was the most popular of Greek Oracles, attracting clients from all Greece and beyond. Sparta has often been highlighted for its close connection with the Delphic Oracle⁵.

From the 7th until the 5th century BC Greek city-states attempted to discover relics of heroes⁶. The Delphic Oracle enhanced its prestige by gaining a reputation as the main source of information about where to find bones and how to identify them. It also had a great moral power and as a result its oracles, functioned as divine validation in the city states' practices. In this way, oracles seemed to give a religious privilege to the city states, as well as their leaders. Every city sought the "peculiar glamour" –the religious anointment and political power conferred by heroes' remains because their bones were a vital physical link to the glorious past. Several instances of a community acquiring bones in order to strengthen its political position over that of its neighbors are recorded⁷. This study will focus on two repatriations of heroic bones: Orestes' and Theseus'⁸, the political connotations of each case and the establishment of their cults. We also intend to discuss how the return of relics, a symbolic action which carried religious associations drew a political advantage on the cities which received the bones, but also to the people who led these procedures.

II. "The repatriations"

II.1. Orestes

According to Herodotus⁹, sometime in the mid 6th century BC, Sparta engaged in a series of wars with Arkadian Tegea and suffering humiliating defeats, enquired of the Delphic Oracle, Pythia responded them that "they must bring home the bones of Orestes son of Agamemnon". When they were unable to discover Orestes' tomb, they sent once more to the god to ask where he was buried and they were provided some puzzling clues. Although they could not at first find his bones, even after the oracle provided clues of their whereabouts (somewhere in Arkadia), the Spartan Lichas (who was one of the ἀγαθοεργοί) serendipitously discovered the location and stole the bones through tricks. Then they buried them in the agora of Sparta¹⁰. Ever since then, the Spartans were far superior to the Tegeans whenever they met each other in battle and they had subdued most of the Peloponnese. So the power of the hero was transferred from one location to another.

The removal of Orestes' relics from Tegea to Sparta came at a time when Sparta was still in the process of establishing its hegemonic position in Peloponnesos, having thoroughly secured Laconia and Messenia¹¹. In the early 6th century the Spartans turned next to Arcadia, but the road to hegemony proved rough as the Spartans suffered continuous defeats at the hands of the Tegeans. They therefore employed Sparta's traditional Pelopid associations. Sparta in order to expand its influence through peaceful means, thus better achieving the plan of forming a partnership with the cities and legitimating its hegemonic policy. Spartan propaganda sought to have Sparta recognized as the official heir of the pre-Dorian tradition of the Peloponnese. This recognition and presentation of Sparta –which was

⁴ Scott 2014, 63.

⁵ For an analysis on Sparta's connection with the Delphic Oracle see Scott 2014, 56-57.

⁶ Mayor 2000, 112.

⁷ Other cases of bone removals are: Tisamenos from Helice to Sparta (Paus. 7.1.8), Rhesus from Troy to Amphipolis (Polyaenus *Strat.* 6.53), Pelops from Euboea to Olympia (Paus. 5.13.4), Hector from Troy to Thebes (Lycoph. *Alex.* 1194-1195, 1204-1205; Paus. 9.18.5), Arcas from Maenalus to Mantinea (Paus. 8.9.3-4), Minos from Sicily to Crete (Diod. 4.79, 1-2), Alcmena from Thebes to Sparta (Plut. *Mor.* 577e), Hippodameia from Midea to Olympia (Paus. 6.20.7), Orpheus from Libethra to Dion (Paus. 9.30.7), Aristomenes from Rhodes to Messene (Paus. 4.32.3), Hesiod from Naupactos to Orchomenos (Paus. 9.31.6; 9.38.3) or from Ascrea to Orchomenos (Souda s.v. τὸ Ἡσιόδειον γῆρας; Tzetz. *Vit. Hes.*; Procl. *On Hes. Op.* 631).

⁸ Hdt. 1.66-68; Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 36; *Vit. Kim.* 8.

⁹ Hdt. 1.67-68.

¹⁰ Paus. 3.11.10: ἀνάκειται δὲ καὶ Δήμου τοῦ Σπαρτιατῶν ἀνδριάς μεγέθει μέγας. Καὶ Μοιρῶν Λακεδαιμονίσις ἐστὶν ἱερόν, Ὀρέστου δὲ τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος πρὸς αὐτῷ τάφος: κομισθέντα γὰρ ἐκ Τεγέας τοῦ Ὀρέστου τὰ ὀστέα κατὰ μαντείαν θάπτουσιν ἐνταῦθα.

¹¹ Patterson 2010, 40.

propagandized from the middle of the 5th century– could serve its purpose, which was the establishment of a league in Peloponnese, in which its role would be hegemonic. In general, we consider that Sparta's past was constructed through the appropriation of the Greek golden past in order to become the most dominant city-state of the Peloponnese and take the leadership of the Peloponnesian League, which was to be founded in a couple of years. Consequently, Sparta with this hegemonic role could make the first step in establishing the Peloponnesian League.

Scholars have tried to account for the policy that lies behind this case and have specifically wondered why Orestes should be the hero that the Delphic oracle told the Spartans to find. The traditional view is that the Spartans were emphasizing their pre-Dorian (Achaean) identity as they reached out to their Arcadian neighbors. Though still dominant, the Spartans were to be seen as legitimate hegemonies rather than as usurping conquerors in the regions beyond Laconia and Messenia. The process would begin with Tegea, whose final defeat was not by conquest but by treaty¹². As a diplomatic method, this embrace of a dual identity was not uncommon in the Greek world¹³. For Sparta to employ myth in its dealings with Tegea, it had to turn to a local Arcadian hero, one whom it could also claim as a native son¹⁴.

Patersson¹⁵ cites the different opinions of scholars on this case. First, Boedeker has rejected the significance of Orestes as an element in a Spartan foreign policy¹⁶ by arguing that his significance was internal, a hero with no familial connections to the elite families who could thus represent the new unity of "equals" that the Lycurgan constitutional reforms brought about¹⁷. Moreover, she makes an important distinction that has not been considered in the foregoing discussion, that having the means to overcome Tegea does not automatically translate into Tegea's acknowledgement of Sparta's right to do so in the first place¹⁸. This is true enough, given that the Tegeans had not previously had a cult of Orestes. Indeed, Herodotus tells us that they had not even realized that they possessed Orestes' bones before Lichas stole them. However, this state of affairs need not preclude a role for Orestes in Sparta's foreign policy¹⁹.

Phillips sees the evidence as amounting not to a change of policy but only to a change in strategy. He makes the sensible point that removing the bones was not a sign of some sort of reconciliation with pre-Dorians en route to legitimacy. Sparta's policy of expansion and conquest was in full operation throughout the sixth century²⁰. Indeed, the pre-Dorians of Arcadia and elsewhere would have taken a hostile view to the appropriation of the hero, but that would not have entered the calculations of the Spartans. If Tegea eventually became Sparta's staunch ally in later periods, it was the result of the full force of Spartan policy, which entailed the appropriation of the bones of several heroes and the continued

¹² On this view: Dickins 1912, 21–24; Cartledge 2002, 120. For further bibliography: Boedeker 1998, 173–174 n.10; Phillips 2003, 303 n.7. The idea of Sparta's Dorian/Achaean duality comes through in the story of Cleomenes' visit to the Athenian Acropolis, where he said that he was "an Achaean" rather than a "Dorian" when Athena's priestess denied him entry into the goddess' temple (Hdt. 5.72). For further on this incident see Phillips 2003, 308–309.

¹³ Patersson 2010, 41: Duality also characterized the identity of the Athenians, who conceived themselves as a people of both autochthonous and Ionian origins.

¹⁴ Malkin 1994, 27–28.

¹⁵ Patersson 2010, 41–42.

¹⁶ There is also the suggestion that the choice of Orestes indicates a new direction, not only in the foreign policy, but also in national self-definition. Sparta might have been sending a new signal to the people of Peloponnese: no more war of annexation resulting in helotage, but a hegemonic policy of alliances based on Sparta's common heritage through the house of Pelops (Pelops-Atreus-Agamemnon and Menelaus-Orestes). For Sparta, Orestes might have represented its right to take the leadership of the Peloponnesian hegemony. The Heracleidai were unsuitable for this role and thus, a new "Orestes policy" emerged. (Malkin 1994, 29) It has, also, been suggested that this policy was directed internally – for example, that the ephor Chilon together with Kleomenes sought to gain more power through it or that the ephors used it against the kings. (Dickins 1912; Forrest 1968, 75–77; Strogetskii 1971).

¹⁷ Boedeker 1998, 168–169.

¹⁸ Boedeker 1998, 167.

¹⁹ Patterson 2010, 42.

²⁰ See Phillips 2003, 310–311.

conquest and interference in regions in which the Spartans were allegedly already legitimate. Tegea's alignment was also the result of the curious way in which the authority granted a tradition by collective memory transforms the political potential of a propagandizing myth²¹.

Apart from Orestes, also useful were his son Tisamenus and father Agamemnon. Through Orestes the Spartans could claim legitimacy in Arcadia and the Argolid, while Agamemnon reinforced their link to the latter. Orestes' son Tisamenus gave them Achaea in the north of the Peloponnesos²². Phillips has characterized this expedition against Achaea as a conquest, not an attempt at alliance²³. The argument is convincing and very much in keeping with the way the Spartans had used the Return in the formative periods of their hegemony²⁴.

The opposite opinion is that Sparta in the early 6th century, in its attempt to justify its land claims about Argos and Arkadia, it tried to resurrect some stories which actually indicated that the οἶκος of Pelops, having Sparta as a centre, had controlled the whole Peloponnese in a previous time. As a consequence, through the action of the transferal of the Atreides' hero from Tegea to Sparta, the latter attempted to approach the Arkadians using diplomatic means, following the unsuccessful efforts to conquer the region. According to the myth, the royal dynasty of Mycenae had originally ruled the Peloponnese. The Spartans believed that as Dorians they were relative newcomers to the area, in the sense that their ancestors had arrived in Laconia three generations after the fall of Troy and thus had not taken part in the events of the heroic age of Greece. It was legendary said that as soon as the Dorians arrived in the company of Heracleidai, they had driven out or enslaved the original inhabitants i.e. the Achaeans. The Spartan belief that their ancestors had won Laconia from the descendants of the Achaeans made them conscious of their status as latecomers. They realized that they were not the original inhabitants of the land and the great legends and myths of the Greeks were not about their own ancestors, but the ancestors of the people they had dispossessed. The foundation of the shrine of Helen²⁵ and Menelaus at Therapne²⁶ (where they are buried) in the early 8th century B.C. shows that the Spartans were trying to come to terms with their relationship to the epic past²⁷. In the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. the Spartans made repeated efforts to establish some kind of connection between themselves and the former rulers of Laconia, such as Agamemnon, Menelaus, Helen and Orestes²⁸. The Spartan appropriation of Orestes' bones has frequently been seen as an effort to get the Tegeans, who were descendants of the pre-Dorian inhabitants, to accept Sparta's claim to be the legitimate heir of the original pre-Dorian rulers.

One could argue that in this way, the Spartans invented a new myth, which, alongside with the myths of the return of the Heracleidai, built a bridge to the heroic past of the Greeks, from which the Dorians as newcomers had been excluded. Thus, the Spartans reinvented themselves as descendants or successors of the royal house which had once reigned over the Peloponnese in the heroic era. To this royal house Menelaus had indeed also belonged;

²¹ Patterson 2010, 42.

²² Paus. 7.1.8. Phillips (2003, 312) associates this appropriation with the removal of the "pre-Dorian tyrant" Aeschines of Sicyon soon after 556/5 BC.

²³ Cf. Leahy 1955, 30-31.

²⁴ There is also another opinion that seems to explain the case *a posteriori*: Mayor (2000, 111) stresses that Tegea lies in a prehistoric lake basin that contains the remains of mammoths and other Ice Age mammals like those found around Megalopolis and Olympia. Taking this into account, Huxley (1979) suggests the following: in the 8th or 7th century BC, when the cult of hero relics began, large bones of a Pleistocene date were discovered and given a respectful burial in a 7-cubit coffin fit for a hero. The Tegean affair was resolved by the Orestes Bones Policy. I think that this opinion step aside the religious sentiments of ancient Greeks and bases everything on politics.

²⁵ Nilsson 1972, 73 mentions that the worship of Helen had its origin in Mycenae and she was always worshipped as a goddess in the region of Therapne, possibly in the Mycenaean ruins located next to the Menelaion.

²⁶ Archeological excavations brought to light the remains of a temple in Therapne, which is dated around the late 8th century. (Tomlinson 1992, 248-249) The votive inscriptions found there identified the place and individuals mentioned by Pausanias.

²⁷ McCauley 1999, 89.

²⁸ The Spartan efforts mentioned by Boedeker 1998, 164-177. There was, also, a cult of Agamemnon at Amyclae, for further see Cartledge 1979, 137-139, who believes that it is originated around 550 B.C.

he had reigned over Sparta in a previous time and his nephew Orestes had succeeded him as a king at Sparta²⁹. It is also notable that around the same time that Homer first described Menelaus as king of Lacedaemon³⁰, the Spartans established a cult centered on the Menelaion³¹ at Therapne³². By the sixth century, they embraced Menelaus' nephew Orestes as a significant cult figure³³, giving rise to the story told by Herodotus and Pausanias of how they ultimately prevailed over Tegea³⁴.

The transferal of Orestes' bones could be seen as a part of the Spartan endeavor³⁵ to connect itself with the House of Agamemnon. A text which seems to "serve" this Spartan intention is Stesichorus' Ὀρέστεια. In this work, Stesichorus went considerably beyond the bare outlines of the story as sketched in the *Odyssey*, and seems to have made use of a poem by Xanthus³⁶, of whom almost nothing but this is known³⁷. But his shaping of the myth may none the less be largely his own and has a character which suits the Spartan claims and ambitions in the early 6th century BC, when it was extending its control over Arcadia and the relics of the Argive kingdom of Pheidon. To justify itself it revived stories that the house of Pelops had once reigned from Sparta over the whole of the Peloponnese. These means were used it thought to supersede the claims of Argos, which were based on the possession of Agamemnon's capital and kingdom, by other claims based on descent and ancient rights. A good example of its methods may be seen in its treatment of Tegea. Having failed to subdue Tegea in war, it brought itself into an alliance, and part of the procedure consisted of finding the bones of Orestes at Tegea and bringing them to Sparta³⁸. With the bones of Orestes in its possession, Sparta could point to its spiritual descent from Agamemnon³⁹.

The Ὀρέστεια of Stesichorus served this Spartan policy in different ways. First, he placed the home of Agamemnon in Lacedaemon⁴⁰, though Homer placed it in Mycenae⁴¹, and the transference looked like a deliberate innovation of Stesichorus. Pindar went a step further and placed it at Amyclae⁴², but this was probably because at Amyclae there was an alleged tomb of Agamemnon⁴³. I believe that we do not strain the point in saying that the difference between the versions of Pindar and Stesichorus is significant because it illustrates the growth of legend. Pindar is more precise in that he names not a district but a town and Stesichorus does not seem to have reached such a point. His main concern was to detach

²⁹ Welwei 2004, 223.

³⁰ *Il.* 2.581-587; *Od.* 4.

³¹ Patterson 2010, 40.

³² Malkin 1994, 47-48; McCauley 1999, 89 n.12; Cartledge 2002 104-105.

³³ Thus Pausanias (2.18.6) has the original Orestes himself as their king, "with the Spartans approving" (Λακεδαιμονίων ἐφέντων).

³⁴ *Hdt.* 1.65-68; *Paus.* 3.3.6; cf. *Paus.* 3.11.10.

³⁵ Sparta with the bones could prove its relative connection with Agamemnon. Other aspects of these politics are the foundation of hero cults, the erection of monuments, and the existence of vases depicting the members of Atreides' family (for the distribution of these scenes see Prag 1985) and the poems glorifying Menelaus, Agamemnon and Orestes include important aspects which greatly influenced the Spartans.

³⁶ For further see Bowra 1961, 82.

³⁷ *Athen.* 12. 512 f.

³⁸ *Hdt.* 1. 68.

³⁹ The duration and the potentialities of this policy can be seen in the 5th century when Cleomenes, king of Sparta, in answer to the priestess of the Athena on the Acropolis at Athens, who told him that he could not enter the shrine, replied ὦ γύναι ἀλλ' οὐ Δωριεύς εἰμι ἀλλ' Ἀχαιός (*Hdt.* 5.72.3), meaning that he was no mere Dorian but the successor of Achaean kings like Agamemnon. Herodotus, also makes the Spartan envoy, Syagrus say to Gelon of Syracuse: ἦκε μέγ' οἰμώξειε ὁ Πελοπίδης Ἀγαμέμνων πυθόμενος Σπαρτηήτας τὴν ἡγεμονίην ἀπαραιρησθαι ὑπὸ Γέλωνός τε καὶ Συρηκοσίων (*Hdt.* 7.159). The Spartan kings sometimes found it convenient to forget their descent from Heracles and to boast of their descent from Agamemnon. For this, some manipulation of tradition was indispensable and in it, Stesichorus had contributed. If the Spartans could persuade the other inhabitants of the Peloponnese that Agamemnon and Orestes had ruled in Sparta, they had done something to assert their claim to be the real descendants of the Achaean kings who had been the overlords of a united Greece (Bowra 1961, 113).

⁴⁰ *Schol. Eur. Or.* 46: Ὀμηρος δὲ ἐν Μυκῆναις φησὶ τὰ βασιλεία του Ἀγαμέμνονος, Σπρσίχορος δὲ καὶ Σιμωνίδης ἐν Λακαϊδαίμονι.

⁴¹ *Hom. Od.* 3. 304.

⁴² *Pind. Pyth.* 11. 32.

⁴³ *Paus.* 3, 19, 6.

the murdered king from Argos, and he did this by placing the palace and the murder in Lacedaemon⁴⁴. As Bowra⁴⁵ stresses this was claimed as his home, and here he must have come to his end. In saying this, Stesichorus condoned and assisted the Spartan propaganda of his age.

Also, Stesichorus called either Agamemnon or Orestes, and more probably Orestes, βασιλεὺς Πλεισθενίδας, just as in the *Νόστοι* he applied Πλεισθενίδας to either Menelaus or Agamemnon⁴⁶. The place of Pleisthenes in the genealogy of the House of Atreus is certainly awkward. There is no room for him in the descent Tantalus, Pelops, Atreus, Agamemnon, and it is not convincing to argue that Pleisthenes was the father of Agamemnon but died young, and so Agamemnon was called the son of Atreus⁴⁷. It looks as if Πλεισθενίδας implied some other, alternative descent for Agamemnon which was superseded by the more popular Homeric version. Ibycus, who was irresponsible in matters of mythology, calls Agamemnon both Πλεισθενίδας and Ἄτρεος παῖς⁴⁸, but that is a light-hearted acquiescence in confusion. Pleisthenes may well have been a son of Pelops and had his own place in tradition outside the Homeric scheme, but when he appeared as the father of Agamemnon in Stesichorus' Ὀρέστεια, it was probably due to the poet's desire to avoid any associations with Argos and the name of Atreus. Atreus was not merely a discreditable ancestor; he had no standing at Sparta, and his grave was at Mycenae⁴⁹. If Spartan interests demanded a glorification of Agamemnon, some other father than Atreus had to be found, and Pleisthenes supplied the need. To this piece of manipulation Stesichorus gave his support.

There is an important point to be made about the way Agamemnon came into play in the Spartan expansion. It was not through an appropriation of his bones but by a manipulation of myth, especially by Stesichorus, whose *Oresteia* may have helped to create a "Spartan" Agamemnon⁵⁰. So firmly entrenched had the "Spartan" Agamemnon become by the fifth century that Pindar not only accepted this association with Lacedaemona but narrowed it down to Amyclae⁵¹ and he did so for no other reason than that it had become accepted tradition by this point⁵². The cult of Agamemnon that developed at Amyclae may have reflected that village's desire to promote an antiquity that belied its newcomer status in the Spartan synoikism. What allows for such acceptance by Pindar's time would have also allowed for the other claims that the Spartans had made, and for this reason as well, Tegea would eventually have followed suit and acknowledged the basis of Sparta's claims to hegemony in the Peloponnese⁵³.

One could observe that Orestes was a hero with great political significance and his transferal to Sparta via a Delphic oracle in these historical circumstances actually served Sparta's interests and ambitions for a hegemonic role in the Peloponnese. Sparta's interest must have been pre-doric and it did not occur from the war against Tegea. The word ἐπαγαγομένους⁵⁴ in the Herodotean narration indicates a process of return to Sparta. The latter consists a version that Sparta started to propagandize from the middle of the 5th century, in order to serve its purpose, which was the establishment of a league in Peloponnese, in which its role would be hegemonic. Sparta sought to bend the resistance of Argos via the appropriation of the basic hero of Argos, Agamemnon. For this action to be done, legitimization from the Delphic oracle needs to be drawn. For the validation of the propaganda, justification was required. In the pre-archaic times, Agamemnon was presented like a Spartan hero, while in the archaic period as a hero of the Mycenae. One may wonder why the seven cities that Agamemnon promises to Achilles are in Messenia, as mentioned in

⁴⁴ Bowra 1961, 113.

⁴⁵ Bowra 1961, 114.

⁴⁶ *P.Oxy.* 2360, col. ii. 4.

⁴⁷ Hes. fr. 98 R.

⁴⁸ Fr. 3. 31-32 D.

⁴⁹ Paus. 2.16. 6.

⁵⁰ Patterson 2010, 42.

⁵¹ On Amyklae see Cartledge 2002, 90f.

⁵² Pind. *Pyth.* 11.31-32. See Phillips 2003, 313-314. Cf. Hall 1999, 55-59.

⁵³ Patterson 2010, 43.

⁵⁴ Hdt. 1. 67. 2.

the *Iliad*⁵⁵. The answer is that this is actually a reflection of a previous tradition which displayed Agamemnon as the king of Sparta or the southern part of the Peloponnese in general. In addition, in the fourth book of the *Odyssey*⁵⁶, when Menelaus narrates his adventures after the fall of Troy, there is a reference to the Agamemnon's correlation with the wider region of south Peloponnese. This reference might be relevant to the tradition according to which Agamemnon was the leader of Laconia. Consequently, we could conclude that this is an endeavor to form hegemonic politics. This implies that through the claim that Agamemnon was a king either in Sparta or its wider region, he is entitled to be the leader of the Peloponnese. All the above mentioned serve the purpose of strengthening the Spartan political ideology over Argos. It is about the creation of a whole ideological construction which aims at Agamemnon's appropriation and through it, placing the leadership of Sparta in the Peloponnese back in the Homeric times, thus gaining the necessary validation.

II.2. Theseus

The other case is the repatriation of Theseus from Skyros to Athens⁵⁷. This particular case seems to be a little problematic regarding its dating and Kimon's role in it. Firstly, it is important to take a look at the existing sources for this case, i.e. Thucydides, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, Pausanias⁵⁸.

It is notable that Thucydides⁵⁹ mentions only the conquest of Skyros and not Theseus' return to Athens. Thucydides deals with the Athenian conquest of Skyros 'after' that of Eion, which follows the retreat of Xerxes' army from Greece. His brief account provides no other information than the violent enslavement of the Dolopian inhabitants and the settlement of Skyros by the Athenians. While Kimon's command is recorded for Eion (Thuc. 1.98.1)⁶⁰, there is no mention of any general or of further activity on the island. We learn that Athens conquered and settled Skyros after the early 470s BC: the event is simply presented by Thucydides among the first steps of the growing Athenian *arche*⁶¹. On the other hand, one could argue that the brief mention of Thucydides to the campaign to Skyros with no mention to the "return" of Theseus to Athens does not mean that Plutarch's narration is his own afterthought confection, based on the consideration that Thucydides conceived history as a political reflection, and that's why clears his narration from everything that could obscure the intended logical strictness.

However, the narration of Diodorus Siculus may clarify this issue. Diodorus cites the earliest known reference both to the conquest of Skyros and the return of Theseus' relics. He mentions the event in two separate sections of his work. He dates the conquest in 470/69 (Diod. 11.60.1) or a bit earlier. In the 11th Book of Diodorus there is no mention of the return of the bones, which, however, this is found in the 4th Book: "The Athenians, however, repenting of what they had done, brought back his bones and accorded him honours equal to those offered to the gods, and they set aside in Athens a sacred precinct which enjoyed the right of sanctuary and was called after him the Theseum"⁶². Diodorus refers neither to Kimon, nor to the Delphic oracle⁶³; nothing links Diod. 4.62.4 to 11.60.2, and nothing proves that Diodorus intentionally broke the story into two separate parts⁶⁴. Consequently, one could well

⁵⁵ Hom. *Il.* 10. 144-154.

⁵⁶ Hom. *Od.* 4. 512-520.

⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that Zaccarini in his article published in 2015, argued that most of the stories on the return of Theseus' relics cannot safely be dated to the 5th century.

⁵⁸ Thuc. 1.98.2; Diod. 4.62.4; Plut. *Thes.* 36; *Kim.* 8. 5-7; Paus. 3.3.7.

⁵⁹ Thuc. 1.98.2.

⁶⁰ The conquest of Eion is generally dated ca. 476/5, following *schol. ad Aeschin.* 2.31 67a Dilts (2.34 Dindorf) and Plut. *Thes.* 36.1: Delorme 1986; cf. Loomis 1990; Badian 1993, 86, 90.

⁶¹ Cf. Thuc. 1.97.2.

⁶² Diod. 4.62.4.

⁶³ Zaccarini 2015, 176 argues that this whole part of the story may well take place and end in a remote antiquity, close to the death of the hero.

⁶⁴ Apparently, his source, as Zaccarini 2015, 177, did not follow the (possibly) Aristotelian dating of the recovery: unfortunately, the nature of such a source is obscure. Although Diodorus states that Ephorus, Callisthenes,

argue that he does not connect Kimon and the 5th century conquest with the return of Theseus relics⁶⁵.

It is suggested that the conquest of Skyros in late 470s (Diod. 11.60.2) possibly is based on a 4th century tradition⁶⁶. In the same spirit it has been assumed that Ephorus⁶⁷ stands behind the literary papyrus *P.Oxy. XIII, 1610*⁶⁸, of which two brief, disjointed fragments mention Kimon, Skyros (fr. 6) and Lykomedes (fr. 7), the murderer of Theseus on the Skyros⁶⁹. It is very interesting to cite here Zaccarini's⁷⁰ opinion about the way the story of Theseus was created. He suggests the existence of two main, originally separate themes which were progressively enriched and eventually entwined by the time of Plutarch. The first is the tradition, dating back at least to Thucydides, of the Athenian conquest of Skyros after Xerxes' retreat, attributed to Kimon at least by the time of Diodorus or his sources, and dated after Phaidon's archonship as early as Plutarch's sources⁷¹. The second major theme is the recovery of Theseus' bones from the island. This story is first attested in the fourth century BC, possibly placed by Aristotle *περὶ τὰ Μηδικά*, connected to a divine response, and eventually attributed to Kimon no earlier than Plutarch. The earliest extant 'evidence' for Kimon's involvement with Skyros and the bones respectively dates over four centuries (Diodorus) and over five centuries (Plutarch) after his own time: these probably represent the latest additions to the whole story. Although Diodorus knows both themes, it is Plutarch who marks their meeting point through the junction provided by Delphi.

In order to find a *terminus post quem* for dating the recovery of Theseus' relics we should trace back the origins of the story of Theseus' death on Skyros⁷². Parke and Wormell, elaborating on Robert's cautious assessment⁷³, state that the death on the island 'may have even been invented at this time [*scil.* that of the recovery, ca. 476/5], but at least it is not likely to be earlier than the mid-sixth century'⁷⁴. However, as a matter of fact, not even one 5th century source records Theseus' death on Skyros. At best, the earliest extant connection between Theseus and Scyros dates back in the fourth century, if we believe that Heracleides' *Epitome* preserves Aristotelian material only⁷⁵. Other sources recording such a connection are limited to Plutarch and later authorities⁷⁶. It is worth trying to investigate the context of the 470s with regard to Theseus' possible links to the island. As early as the 6th century, stories on Theseus feature a number of (limited) lexical affinities with Scyros⁷⁷. On the other hand, a tradition⁷⁸ which dates back to early epics (e.g. *Il.* 9.666) connected Scyros and Lykomedes

Theopompus, and Apollodorus of Athens treated no events earlier than the return of the Heraclids (Diod. 1.5.1; cf. 4.1.3), just about any author may have included a digression concerning Theseus. Hence, Diodorus' source for the passage in Book 4 is impossible to identify, and his motives remain even more obscure. The same issue affects Book 11: although it is tempting to speculate about Ephorus' work, we definitely cannot assume that Diodorus' Book 11 reproduces it in a systematic manner.

⁶⁵ Zaccarini 2015, 176-177.

⁶⁶ Zaccarini 2015, 192.

⁶⁷ According to Zaccarini 2015, 177 despite the obvious thematic and textual similarities it bares with Diodorus 11.59-61, this papyrus also presents significant divergences from his work: both works certainly belong to the same tradition, but their relative position within it is hard to determine, and it is even harder to argue that the papyrus preserves Ephorus' account. See Rubincam 1976, 357-66; Green 2006, 26-7; Parmeggiani 2011, 379-380; cf. notes in Zaccarini 2014, 167.

⁶⁸ *P.Oxy. XIII. 105-113; ATL III. 159; cf. FGHist 70 F 91.*

⁶⁹ See Zaccarini 2015, 177.

⁷⁰ Zaccarini 2015, 179. His article presents this opinion in detail.

⁷¹ Zaccarini 2015, 187-189.

⁷² Zaccarini 2015, 185.

⁷³ Robert 1921, 755-756.

⁷⁴ Parke and Wormell 1956, I. 200 n.4 (cf. 181); cf. Mills 1997, 12.

⁷⁵ Cf. Zaccarini 2015, 175-180.

⁷⁶ Apollod. 3.13.8 (*Ep.* 1.24); Paus. 1.17.6; 10.26.4; Tz. *ad Lyc.* 1324. Cf. *RE* 13.2, s.v. Lykomedes (2).

⁷⁷ See further Zaccarini 2015, 185-186.

⁷⁸ As Zaccarini 2015, 186 mentions that this story was well-known in fifth-century Athens: apparently, in the early decades it was painted in the *Anakeion* by Polygnotus, who took some liberties from the Homeric version (Paus. 1.22.6); toward the end of the century, it was alluded to by Sophocles (*Ph.* 239-41; 343). Furthermore, both Sophocles (*TrGF* FF 553-561 Radt) and Euripides (*TrGF* FF 681a-686 Kannicht) wrote a tragedy titled *Scyrians* (Σκύριοι); the few remains are enough to prove that these plays centred respectively on Neoptolemus' and Achilles' adventures on the island. Admittedly, most of this is negative evidence: yet, it is rather puzzling that, if

with young Achilles: the two are commonly depicted together in Greek art⁷⁹. In fact, fifth-century theatre has a rather different perspective on the end of Theseus' reign⁸⁰: it is convenient to recall it in comparison with fourth century sources since the earliest testimonial on his ties the hero with Scyros ('Aristotle' through Heracleides) and dates in this period⁸¹.

According to Plutarch, the transfer of Theseus' bones to Athens occurred in 476/5, when Kimon led an Athenian expedition to Skyros, where he knew Theseus had died⁸². Plutarch (*Thes.* 36) mentions that the Athenians were consulting the Delphic oracle that year⁸³, but for what purpose he does not reveal. On that occasion, the Pythia bid them to restore the bones of Theseus to Athens for "honorable" burial. There was much political gain in Athens for this act of piety, to be sure, but what needs further emphasis is that this benefit accrued for both the community of the Athenians and for an individual, Kimon⁸⁴.

Pausanias (3.3.7) reference to the repatriation of Theseus is important for two reasons. The first one is that Pausanias, as Plutarch does, connects Theseus' return to Athens with Kimon's campaign. The second is that Pausanias seems to present the two cases (Orestes' and Theseus') as parallel. Parker mentions that many Athenians would have heard of the advantage that the Spartans had acquired in the previous century by "bringing home the bones" of their hero Orestes⁸⁵. Consequently, this image may have promoted the return of Theseus to Athens as a part of Kimon's campaign, although the dating according to the existing sources seems to be different. Pausanias suggests that removing the bones from Skyros was a prerequisite for conquering the island⁸⁶. In fact, one wonders what the need would be because Kimon's force overwhelmed the opposition and was able to secure the island. The removal of the bones would in fact have been in the aftermath of the conquest. Nonetheless, long-term benefits were to be gained for the return of the bones to the Athenians, who celebrated with processions and sacrifices and built a new Theseion to house the bones (*Plut. Thes.* 36.2). Obviously, there was much to celebrate now that Athens' national hero was back home, for it was he, they believed, who had founded Athens by uniting the villages of Attica into one *polis* (*synoikism*), who had established the democracy, and who appeared at Marathon to help deliver victory to the Athenians⁸⁷. His association with these ideas led Theseus to become a focus of Athenian identity in the nascent years of its golden age when men like Kimon were laying the foundations of the Athenian empire.

In this context, scholars have also come to the conclusion that Theseus had imperial uses and that, for example, he was to be seen as a hero for all the Ionians who constituted

Theseus' bones really had been found a few decades before, all of these sources preferred Achilles' story on Scyros to Theseus'. They certainly show that fifth-century Athens safely and commonly connected Achilles with Lykomedes and Scyros, while the same cannot be proved for Theseus. It is notable that none of these authors actually knew anything about Theseus' death on Scyros.

We also cite Mayor's (2000, 112) opinion that the archaeological research has shown that Skyros has rich early Greek settlements and tombs dating to 1000-700 B.C., and the fertile northeast part of the island does have Miocene sediments where large Pikermi-type fossils might be found. Thus, it is likely that Kimon had rediscovered some large prehistoric bones that had been given a hero's burial centuries earlier.

⁷⁹ Cf. *LIMC*, s.v. Lykomedes (I). The *Achilleion* landing that is located in Scyros by late sources (e.g. Eust. 4.339 ll. 9–10) certainly depends on this tradition.

⁸⁰ On Theseus in Attic tragedy see Mills 1997.

⁸¹ Zaccarini 2015, 185-186.

⁸² According to an Athenian legend, Theseus had been murdered there (*Plut. Kim.* 8.5) -pushed off a high cliff in the northeast of the island sometime in the 9th century B.C., but the residents of the island denied the murder and refused to allow a search for his remains.

⁸³ *Plut. Thes.* 36.1. Podlecki 1971, 141-142 points out that Plutarch's date, "in the archonship of Phaedon", applies only to the oracle and not necessarily to the end of the campaign or the discovery of the bones. See also Walker 1995, 76 n.164.

⁸⁴ Patterson 2010, 39.

⁸⁵ Parker 1996, 168-169.

⁸⁶ Paus. 3.3.7. Though silent about Theseus, Thuc. 1.96-98 and Diod. 11.60 discuss the capture of Skyros in the context of the expansion and enforcement here and elsewhere (e.g., Eion, Carystos, Naxos) of Athenian imperial might in the Pentecontaetia, the fifty-year period between the Persian and the Peloponnesian War that saw Athens create a naval empire behind the façade of the Delian League.

⁸⁷ See further Kearns 1989, 117–119; Walker 1995, 35–55.

the Delian League⁸⁸. Whether a particularly Ionian hero or not, certainly from the Athenian point of view, the possession of these bones legitimized their empire, for it enabled them to claim that their ability to protect the pan-Aegean basin from further Persian threats emanated from a home-grown greatness that Theseus exemplified.

As for Kimon, Plutarch⁸⁹ suggests that his prestige at Athens was greatly enhanced after he brought back the relics. There is little doubt that Kimon worked hard to gain political profit for himself and his family from the campaign on Skyros. He did so with great care, however. Never one to liken himself to Theseus, which would have been frowned upon in a democracy, Kimon instead took on the traditional role of a well-to-do citizen contributing to the health of his city, which was his way of rehabilitating the fortunes of his family after his father Miltiades had fallen into ill favor⁹⁰. He may also have pursued this plan to get the better of his rival Themistocles, the hero of Salamis (that other great battle in the Persian Wars), who by this time had fallen even further out of public favor⁹¹. In addition to the Theseion, other monuments celebrated the association of Kimon's family with Theseus. One of them, at Delphi, depicted Miltiades alongside Apollo and Athena, while, in Athens, the Stoa Poikile, built by Kimon's relative Peisianax, featured paintings of mythological and historical battles of great significance to the Athenians, including Marathon. Thus, although Kimon was no fan of democracy nor indeed of imperialistic aims that would seek to suppress other states where aristocrats such as himself suffered the consequences, he demonstrated great service to the democracy for the sake of his own status. Nor was he the only individual in the Greek world to try to profit politically from myth.

If one follows Plutarch's version of the story he has to observe the fact that some years after the invasion of Xerxes, Kimon was to find Theseus' relics in response to the oracle. Kimon would have had many reasons for this; one of them may be an identification⁹² with synoikism of what took place during Xerxes' invasion and of what took place after it, i.e. the refoundation of Athens. However, there are many other reasons for Kimon's action. King Theseus⁹³ was a more convenient person for he was a man of the upper class. Moreover, Theseus could also be the founder of the Areopagus⁹⁴. If this was so, Kimon's initiative in finding Theseus' bones acquires an additional explanation. Kimon (and the Areopagites as well) tried to take advantage of it for strengthening their popularity (in defiance of Themistocles' popularity or because of its decline)⁹⁵. In this way the Areopagites may, for example, have recalled that they were the benefactors of the Athenians at the time of the evacuation⁹⁶.

It is very interesting to note that Peisetairos, in Aristophanes' *Birds*, appears as a comic version of Theseus, who in the traditional view (Thuc. 2.15.2)⁹⁷ implemented the *synoikismos*, the unification of the small independent towns of Attica into a coherent whole, and thus made possible the rise of Athenian power⁹⁸. We have to do with a pure example of political mythology, created to underscore Athenian identity⁹⁹. Theseus had not always been

⁸⁸ Walker 1995, 10–13 has cast doubt on an "Ionian" Theseus. Whereas Herter (1939) had argued that Theseus was originally a pan-Ionian hero who appeared wherever Ionians lived, i.e., in Attica, Thessaly, and Troezen, Walker demonstrates that Theseus was very much an Attic hero from the beginning, in part because of a lack of cult and myth devoted to Theseus in the Ionian states of Asia Minor.

⁸⁹ Plut. *Kim.* 8.6.

⁹⁰ For further references see Walker 1995, 55–61.

⁹¹ Podlecki 1971, 143.

⁹² Goušchin 1999, 174.

⁹³ Who only later was to have a democratic reputation: see Goušchin 1999, 176.

⁹⁴ Goušchin 1999, 174.

⁹⁵ On Themistocles: Goušchin 1999, 169 and n. 14. On Kimon's attitude to the Areopagus: Plut. *Kim.* 15.3, 17.3; *Per.* 9.5.

⁹⁶ Goušchin 1999, 174.

⁹⁷ Thucydides cites that under Theseus Attic demes ceased to have independent magistracies, and that he established one common Bouleuterion and one Prytaneion.

⁹⁸ Kanavou 2011, 396.

⁹⁹ Cf. Parker 1987, 187–214, who notes that Attic mythology is primarily of political character and relates to the city, unlike other Greek myths which treat more universal themes. Theseus is the best-known example, but a

part of Athenian memory, as he is known to us from the 5th century. His function was upgraded and the relevant myths were altered in the 6th century, so that Athens might acquire its own local hero (parallel to Heracles for the Dorians), to add prestige to its historical past¹⁰⁰. This is further shown by the hero's iconography which underwent significant change at that time: on Attic red-figure vases Theseus is depicted wearing a crown, along with Aegeus holding a sceptre, the symbol of the kingship to be inherited by the hero¹⁰¹. Additionally, Theseus' bones were transferred from Skyros to Athens (Paus. 3.3.7), which he would henceforth protect¹⁰².

Attic tragedy¹⁰³ presented Theseus as the founder of Athenian democracy (also as a ruler and protector of the weak)¹⁰⁴. According to Pausanias (1.17.2-6) Theseus' bones were buried in the great shrine founded by Kimon in a prominent part of the city¹⁰⁵. That honour was especially appropriate for an ἥρωος κτίστης or οἰκιστής. He was not the city's founder (the Athenians took pride in their autochthony)¹⁰⁶, and was therefore not honoured as a *ktistor*, but he still received praise as a hero who made a fundamental contribution to the organisation of the city he protected; *synoikismos* takes the place of *oikismos*¹⁰⁷. Theseus was honoured by sacrificial and athletic festivals (Theseia, Synoikia, Kybernesia, etc.)¹⁰⁸. The rise of Theseus to the role of organizer of the Athenian political past was complemented by the inauguration of cults and festivals¹⁰⁹. Kanavou (2011, 400) concludes that the parallelism between Theseus and the comic hero is not exact, but it is suggestive. Outside the comic context, Theseus had been paralleled with Kleisthenes and Kimon¹¹⁰.

Athens appropriates Theseus, a well known hero, all over Greece. Theseus' restoration to Athens gives a great prestige to the city-state and opens the path for Athens to become the main hegemonic city of the Delian League. This transferal also aimed at pointing to the recent heroic past of Athens, which was entwined with the Persian Wars and especially the battle of Marathon. Theseus' bones had been brought to Athens after the Delian League was founded. This transportation was in fact a step towards the establishment of the Athenian hegemony in the Delian League. As McCauley stresses¹¹¹, when Kimon brought Theseus's bones to Athens he was bringing not only the Athens founding hero, but also the hero who had assured his appeared at Marathon and ensured his father's (Miltiades') greatest victory. Kimon gained great political prestige and according to Plutarch, Kimon's popularity was increased as a result of the transferal of Theseus' bones back to Athens¹¹².

political function is also inherent in early Athenian myths which were adjusted to promote the concept of Athenian autochthony.

¹⁰⁰ Until then Theseus does not seem to have had particular Attic connections; in the archaic period he was chiefly known as an abductor of women (Helen, Ariadne, Persephone), centaur fighter (*Il.* 1.265, [Hes.] *Sc.* 182), and killer of the Minotaur: Walker 1995, 15-20. Even if his roots lie in Attica (as Walker argues, esp. 13-15), a political significance for him was only conceived at a later stage. On the rise of Theseus see Kearns 1989, 117.

¹⁰¹ Older iconographical themes involving Theseus include the abduction of Helen (on vases from the 7th century); his early iconography suggests a panhellenic hero (cf. Walker 1995, 20). The most popular theme in his iconography overall is his fight with the Minotaur: Woodford 1994, 940-943, nos. 228-263.

¹⁰² Kanavou 2011, 395-396.

¹⁰³ Soph. *OC*; Eur. *Supp.*, *HF*.

¹⁰⁴ See Kearns 1989, 119, for references. Thucydides (2.15) claims that he performed the *synoikismos* while remaining a monarch. But he was not to be seen as an absolute monarch, as Soph. *OC* 916-917 suggests (the city is not his slave, but a free city; cf. Eur. *Supp.* 406-408).

¹⁰⁵ Theseus' bones were located at the Theseion (Wycheley 1978, 64; Parker 1996, 196). The paintings of the Theseion included an Amazonomachy, a Centauromachy and other deeds of Theseus (Paus. 1.17.2: see Barron 1972, 20-45). Theseus has three other shrines in addition to that founded by Kimon (e.g. Kearns 1989, 168-169).

¹⁰⁶ See Kearns 1989, 110-112; Parker 1987, 187-214.

¹⁰⁷ Kearns 1989, 112.

¹⁰⁸ Kanavou 2011, 398-399.

¹⁰⁹ He had his own festival, the Theseia; another, the Oschophoria, was related to his adventure in Crete, where he was able to kill the Minotaur and stop the annual sacrifice of Athenian youths and maidens. See Walker 1995, 20-24.

¹¹⁰ Kearns 1989, 117-119.

¹¹¹ McCauley 1999, 91.

¹¹² Plut. *Kim.* 8. 6: ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ μάλιστα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἠδέως ὁ δῆμος ἔσχεν.

It is worth noting Podlecki's view about Theseus' repatriation¹¹³. He stresses that Kimon's theatrical coup may have been in response to the rising popularity of Themistocles. There was a natural rivalry between the man responsible for the victory at Salamis won by the democratic oarsmen of the triremes, and the man whose father had won the Battle of Marathon, an old-style campaign fought by the wealthy hoplites. Kimon had at last matched the wily politician who had solved the oracle about the Wooden Walls by finding the answer to another oracle and an even older question about the location of Theseus' body¹¹⁴. The sort of political capital that Kimon hoped to gain from the expedition to Skyros and his rivalry with Themistocles, which lay behind this campaign are completely within the normal rules of politics in an ancient city-state¹¹⁵.

After Kimon had returned with the bones of Theseus, a new hero's shrine was erected in the centre of the city to house the remains. It was either a totally new sanctuary complete with hero shrine, or else a new hero shrine which was built in a preexisting sanctuary to Theseus¹¹⁶. Kimon would have built his impressive new shrine in this old sacred space. The return of the bones and the building of this new shrine gave new life in the cult of Theseus¹¹⁷. Nothing is known about the form of the new Theseion¹¹⁸. Kimon's Theseion was decorated with paintings which illustrated three episodes from the myth of Theseus: the invasion of Attica by the Amazons, the battle with the Centaurs and his visit to Poseidon's palace¹¹⁹ under the sea¹²⁰.

III. Pythia's role

Oracles could well influence politics by causing certain actions of the city to acquire different connotations. Given that it would be important to examine the role of Pythia¹²¹ in the incidents. Although Pythia was accused of being bribed¹²² on several occasions, but we should underline that there was no accusation of bribery attached to either of these stories.

¹¹³ Podlecki 1971.

¹¹⁴ Podlecki 1971, 143.

¹¹⁵ Walker 1995, 56.

¹¹⁶ Neither the ancient Greeks nor modern scholars can agree among themselves on this issue. Among those who believe that Kimon's hero shrine was the first Theseion in Athens: Pausanias 1:17, 6; Diodorus 4: 62, 4; Jacoby, *FGrH*, commentary on 327 (Demon) fr. 6, 208; Barron 1972, 21; Connor 1970, 159; Rhodes 1981, 211 commentary on 15, iv; Bérard 1983, 47. Among those who believe that there was already a Theseion and that Kimon built his new tomb in this older sanctuar: Euripides, *Madness of Heracles*, 1328-1333; Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians* 15,4; Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*, 23: 5; Jacoby, *FGrH*, commentary on 328 (Philochorus) fr. 18, 309; Thompson and Wycherley 1972,124.

¹¹⁷ Perhaps it was at this time that the state appointed its own priests to look after the cult of Theseus, and these priests would have replaced the Phylalidai in Kimon's Theseion. Deubner 1932, 224; Herter 1939, 293; Calame 1990, 154. Jacoby believes that all four sanctuaries honoring Theseus were in the hands of state priests from the very beginning (Jacoby, *FGrH*, commentary on 328 (Philochorus) fr.18, 309).

¹¹⁸ Barron 1972, 22 conjectures that it was a square space surrounded by a stoa on three or four sides.

¹¹⁹ The last of these paintings was by Micon, and it is generally assumed that he painted the others. By examining the style of vase paintings which he believes are based on the works in the Theseion, Barron concludes that the other paintings were by Polygnotus, and that there was also a fourth work by Polygnotus (depicting Theseus rising from the Underworld) on a fourth wall not mentioned by Pausanias (Barron 1972, 43-44). In fifth-century art, the Amazons and the Centaurs often stand for the barbarians, so the two paintings that showed these battles doubtless recalled Athenian successes in the Persian Wars;(Herter 1939, 295-296) the third painting may have honored the thalassocracy of Athens in that it associates the king of Athens with the Queen of the Sea, and Theseus had paid this underwater visit during a dispute with Minos, the first of the Greeks to rule the waves. The Theseion honors the Athenians, therefore, rather than Kimon, though he did gain popularity by honoring them and their hero in this way.

¹²⁰ Paus. 1.17.2-3.

¹²¹ On Pythia, see Fontenrose 1978, 196f; Flower 2008, 222-226; Connelly 2007, 72-81.

¹²² Kleisthenes bribes Pythia (Hdt. 5.66.1; 5.63; 6.123.2) as did the Spartan king Pleistoanax and his brother (Thuc. 5.16). Other examples of alleged bribery of the Pythia are Hdt. 6.66.3; Plut. *Mor.* 860c-d. There was a story that the Spartan Lysander, in an effort to change the Spartan constitution so that the kingship would be an elective office, attempted unsuccessfully to bribe both the Pythia and the priestess of Dodona. See Plut. *Lys.* 24-26; 30; Diod. 14.13. Plutarch cites the 4th century B.C. historian Ephorus as his source at *Lys.* 25.3 and 30.3. Flower 1991, 81-83) argued that this incident is unhistorical.

Nor is there any indication that the Greeks themselves doubted that Pythia would have given such an oracle nor does anyone seem to have doubted that the bones had been correctly identified. Modern scholarship has argued that Pythia must have been influenced by those who had something to gain from it and that, of course, the bones could not have belonged to Orestes or Theseus, since Orestes and Theseus were mythical and therefore could have no bones. The suspicions are aroused by Pythia's ability to provide such politically convenient oracle and the ability of the bone movers to find and identify the bones of mythical heroes¹²³. Some scholars thought that these cases are examples of a purely cynical manipulation of religion for political gain and they did not contain any genuine religious feeling by the bone movers. This opinion seems to be anachronistic because the ancient Greeks in their majority did not doubted that Pythia would have given such oracles nor does anyone seem to have doubted that the bones had been correctly identified. The oracle intended to cover all possible outcomes of the war. The point that should be underlined here is what probably lies behind Pythia's order to the Spartans to fraternize with Tegea is most likely the dissatisfaction of a group of Spartans (possibly the ephors) at being constantly defeated by Tegea. The blame for the difficult situation the city found itself in, is usually attributed to the kings, who were the leaders of the army. Pythia's oracle immediately solved Sparta's internal problem: it is Apollo's will to abandon the plan to conquer Tegea, and not Sparta's or the kings' military incapacity. Through the action of the Atreides hero's bones' transferal from Tegea to Sparta, the latter was now attempting to approach the Arkadians through diplomatic means, following the unsuccessful efforts to conquer the region. Given the huge size of Orestes' bones and his weapons, it can well be assumed that the transferal resulted in boosting Spartan morale. The transferal and the simultaneous erection of Orestes' tomb in the agora¹²⁴ prove their intention to claim his origin. These two cases did not seem to be two examples of pure propagandistic use of actions with religious connotations. The religious meaning of these incidents is far more important for ancient Greeks and we can understand this by examining the worship of the two heroes after their repatriations.

IV. Worship

Death is an indispensable attribute of heroes; their bones as well as their graves were a cult object. Much of the hero's power resided in the bones; for that reason it was essential that a city or sanctuary have possession of the bones and keep them at a particular location, often hidden so that they could not be stolen¹²⁵. The power of the hero's bones also accounts for the fact that hero cults could be transferred from one locality to another. The importance of the possessions of such bones can be justified by the ancient Greek belief that some kind of divine power was hidden in the heroic bones, which favored and protected those who held them. These heroes were thought to have protective powers over their *poleis*, accessible to those who practiced their cults as part of the civic rituals of the *polis*¹²⁶. The reasons for worshipping a hero and for initiating a hero cult were diverse. Many heroes performed extraordinary deeds and were venerated as founders of cities and sanctuaries, as ancestors of distinguished families, or as inventors of ingenious things or devices¹²⁷.

Hero shrines were not located at Mycenaean tombs, so there was nothing to prevent a hero from having several shrines in his honor, sometimes even in different states¹²⁸. The Greeks, however, assimilated the two types of hero worship and often referred to hero shrines as hero graves. This led to the extremely odd result that a hero was often said to

¹²³ McCauley 1999, 92.

¹²⁴ Paus. 7, 1, 8.

¹²⁵ Ekroth 2009, 125.

¹²⁶ Patterson 2010, 38.

¹²⁷ Ekroth 2009, 121.

¹²⁸ Walker 1995, 8.

have several different burial places¹²⁹. The assimilation of hero shrine and hero grave also led to a slightly distasteful innovation in the worship of heroes, one that we first hear of in the 6th century and that the Spartans seem to have been responsible for. As far as we can tell, the Spartans were quite content with hero shrines alone and they did not worship heroes at Mycenaean tombs, but they made up for this lack by raiding such tombs elsewhere. They then built what undoubtedly were exceptionally efficacious hero shrines by burying the stolen corpses in them and thus, they created a hero shrine that truly was a hero grave. By so doing, they deprived the other state of that hero's protection and transferred it to themselves¹³⁰. The Spartans did not steal just any old corpse from any old tomb; with the help of oracles they deliberately tried to find the grave of a particular epic hero, though in practice they were delighted if these investigations led to any corpse that looked vaguely heroic and Mycenaean. The most celebrated example of such a hunt was the Spartan quest for the bones of Orestes during their war against Tegea, which took place around the middle of the 6th century BC. The people of Tegea seem to have had no idea that they possessed the remains of Orestes, and they certainly had no idea where these remains might be located. The Tegeates were quite impressed, however, when the Spartans found the body of an ancient warrior and removed it to their own land, declaring that it was indeed the body of Orestes. In fact, the Tegeates were so impressed that they accepted the claim of Sparta to be the protector of the pre-Dorian peoples of the Peloponnese, since it now possessed the great hero of those peoples. As a result, the Tegeates and many other non-Dorian states of the Peloponnese became allies of Sparta¹³¹. According to Walker (1995, 8-9) the possession or seizure of a hero's corpse was a serious matter and the Spartan example was followed by other states. Although such behavior might seem a little grotesque to our eyes, the Greeks felt that it was perfectly natural¹³². The very indignity of such squabbles is in itself a remarkable testimony to the overriding importance of hero cults throughout the age of the city-state, and to the extraordinary lengths to which the Greeks would go to win the favor of a hero.

The city of Sparta by means of transferring Orestes' bones, had in fact taken possession of a valuable "relic". Given the huge size of Orestes' bones¹³³, which indicate the hero's supernatural power, it can be assumed that the transfer had the effect of boosting Spartan morale¹³⁴. The transfer and the simultaneous erection of Orestes' tomb in the agora prove their intent to claim his origin.

The main function of hero worship was, then, to legitimize the authority of the city-states and to create a sense of solidarity among their citizens¹³⁵. By respecting the Great Dead, by building shrines and inaugurating festivals in their honor, by assuming the role of their successors, the city-states invested themselves with the glory of the heroic age. To this general rule, the cult of Theseus was no exception. In fact, he was an ideal candidate for a hero shrine because he had a very colorful career and was well known throughout Greece. He was, however, unusual in one important respect: unlike Erechtheus, he did not come from the city of Athens. He was adopted by the city from outside, but by the end of the sixth century he was already honored as the greatest of its heroes, the archetype of all Athenians¹³⁶.

¹²⁹ Oedipus had no less than four "graves"—one in Thebes, another in the sanctuary of Demeter at Eteonos, a third at Colonus in Attica, and a fourth in the city of Athens: Kearns 1989, 50. The presence of two hero graves in one state is particularly objectionable, and Kearns argues that we must choose between them. On this particular theme see Kearns 1989, 208-209.

¹³⁰ Such attempts to win over the heroes of another state were quite common, though they did not always take this form: Kearns 1989, 47-48.

¹³¹ Sealey 1976, 83-84.

¹³² Walker 1995, 9.

¹³³ For the size of the bones see Huxley 1979, 145-148.

¹³⁴ Welwei 2004, 225.

¹³⁵ The hero unifies the community and personifies its essential characteristics: Kearns 1989, 133.

¹³⁶ Walker 1995, 9.

The popularity throughout Athens of the cult of Theseus was something of an innovation¹³⁷. At the beginning of the 6th century his image was almost as popular in Athenian art as that of Heracles¹³⁸; but in the middle of that century Heracles became extremely popular in Athenian mythology and art¹³⁹. The obvious flowering of the Theseus saga in art can be seen from the end of the 6th century; but before the finds of Kimon the legendary king may have been honoured mainly by aristocratic *genē*, i.e. by the Alcmaeonids¹⁴⁰.

The scholars wondered why there was such enthusiasm for finding and worshipping Theseus' bones. Some of them regard Kimon's action as due to his alliance with the Alcmaeonids (in particular as an immediate result of his marriage with Isodice)¹⁴¹. Others find an obvious personal interest in Kimon's attention to Theseus. Two poems of Bacchylides¹⁴² dedicated to Theseus may be inspired by Kimon (Bacchyl. 17, 18)¹⁴³. The legend of Theseus was also treated by Pherekydes (*FGrHist* 3 FF 148-53), who was linked in some way to Kimon and his family¹⁴⁴. It may be an attempt by the Philaids to bind themselves to Theseus genealogically¹⁴⁵. A third school of thought regards Kimon's action as an attempt to be a popular politician, undertaken in the time of the decline of Themistocles' popularity after Salamis (Plut. *Them.* 22.1, Diod. 11.27.3)¹⁴⁶. In this connection Podlecki pays special attention to the connection of Theseus (and of Kimon's father Miltiades) with Marathon, where he was supposed to have appeared and helped the Athenians (Plut. *Thes.* 35; on Theseus and the deme of Marathon see Paus. 1.27.8-10). It may be that Kimon (sel 170) drew attention to Marathon in order to play down Salamis¹⁴⁷. Finally, some scholars connect the revival of the legend of Theseus with the emergence of the Delian League. Theseus being an Ionian hero was then turned into an imperial one¹⁴⁸.

At the battle, of course, Kimon's father had been a general; and there is reason to think that the family even laid claim to descent from the hero. We would like to know more of the oracle that instructed the Athenians to bring home the hero's bones. If it was indeed, as Plutarch says, freshly issued by Apollo, the god showed himself alert and sensitive to the mood of the day.

Theseus eventually owned three shrines in addition to the great one founded by Kimon, and was honoured by a sacrificial and athletic festival on the grand scale, the Theseia, which was perhaps established on this occasion. To finance his cult, a special cult was levied, "the five drachmas for Theseus", possibly on the supposed descendants of the boys and girls whom he had rescued from the Minotaur. And yet the Athenians still felt that these honours did not fully match his merits. There were, they observed, many more shrines in Attica of Dorian Heracles: they must once have belonged to Theseus, and have been surrendered by him, with typical magnanimity, to his much-suffering colleague. And a whole series of existing festivals underwent an interpretatio Theseana: the Synoikia, the Hekalesia,

¹³⁷ Goušchin 1999, 169.

¹³⁸ Boardman 1975, 2-3.

¹³⁹ See Goušchin 1999, 169 n.8

¹⁴⁰ Goušchin 1999, 169.

¹⁴¹ e.g. C. Sourvinou-Inwood (n.3), 109. W. der Boer writes of reconciliation with his opponents: (n.3), 7.

¹⁴² Parker 1996, 168 stresses that for the last forty years Theseus' popularity and prestige had been soaring; at about this time, he was portrayed as an intensely glamorous figure in *Dithyrambs* 17 and 18 of Bacchylides, one of the then not even written for Athens; and he was believed to have brought aid to the Greeks at Marathon, a patriotic intervention that was soon to be commemorated in a famous painting in the Stoa Poikile.

¹⁴³ Walker 1995, 83-111 (n. 9); Strauss 1993, 107 (n. 9).

¹⁴⁴ Huxley 1973, 137-143; Blamire 1989 (n. 5), 87; Strauss (n. 9), 107, 237 n. 18.

¹⁴⁵ Davies 1971, 293 ff.

¹⁴⁶ Goušchin 1999, 169.

¹⁴⁷ Podlecki 1971, 141-143; Sourvinou-Inwood 1971, 109 (n. 3). In Polygnotus' painting *The Battle of Marathon* in the Stoa Poikile Theseus appeared from the earth (Paus. 1.15.3: on Theseus and the deme of Marathon see Paus. 1.27.8-10). Theseus seems to be Heracles' rival in Marathon: here Heracles was first honoured, as the Marathonians themselves believed (Paus. 1.15.3; 32.4); in Marathon the Heracleia were established in honour of Heracles (Woodford 1994, [n. 8], 217-218); and Heracles together with Theseus was among the deities who helped the Athenians in the battle against the Persians. So the Athenians could well honour Heracles also.

¹⁴⁸ Goušchin 1999, 170.

the Kybernesia, the Oschophoria, the Pyanopsia, a procession to the Delphinion, all became in some way commemorations of events in his career. By the fourth century, the great source of ritual meaning was Theseus¹⁴⁹.

If possession of Theseus' bones was a precondition for his worship, all this must have grown up after 476/5. But a *genos*, the Phytalids, seems to have had some role in his cult, and one would not in general expect such a body to acquire new privileges at so late a date. Possibly, however, a special explanation is available in this case: the Phytalids may have owed their promotion to the influence of the great man of their deme Lakiadai, none other than Kimon. However that may be, it is still perhaps more probable that an existing cult was greatly expanded to celebrate the hero's return. In the absence of literary evidence, many details of Theseus' fortunes in the mid-century remain tantalizingly vague. As a son of Poseidon, he could become a symbol of Athenian heroism by sea as well as by land, and it was with a great sacrifice at Rhion to him and his father (duly commemorated by an inscription at Delphi) that Phormion's fleet celebrated its victories in the Corinthian gulf in 429¹⁵⁰. More startlingly, by the time of the Supplices of Euripides, perhaps of the 420s, Theseus has already acquired his paradoxical role as the democratic king- a role that demonstrates, by its exquisite anachronism, the continuing vitality of the mythological thought in the late fifth century. In becoming a democrat, Theseus did not cease to be a national hero, at a time when loyalty to the democracy was among the most valued virtues. Earlier in the century, emphasis lay rather on hating the barbarian enemy. That virtue Theseus displays as leader in the many desperate defensive battles against invading Amazons that decorate the vases of the mid-century. This graceful but doughty fighter was doubtless Kimon's Theseus.

V. Conclusion

The two cases of repatriation that we discussed in this article seem to have many similarities in their structure¹⁵¹ as shown by the ancient sources. However, they are not to be considered as equivalent. One could argue that Theseus' repatriation was created as a literary equivalent of other cases of transfers in ancient times.

In addition to the hero's importance to a community's internal identity, as I have showed in this article, he sometimes also fulfilled the need of the city to establish its relationship with other states, often for promoting a hegemonic or hierarchical relationship. Through the removals each city sought to appropriate a heroic, "golden" past and establish a future hegemonic role. The transfers of both Theseus' and Orestes' bones demonstrate how the employment of a hero's special protective powers for an immediate objective could later become the base for more wide-ranging endeavors: the consolidation of an Athenian naval empire in the fifth century, the consolidation of a Spartan hegemonic *imperium* across the Peloponnese in the sixth¹⁵².

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¹⁴⁹ Philochorus FGrH 328 F 18 (four shrines); Ar. Plut. 627-628 (first reference to Theseia); Eur. HF 1328-1331 and Philoch. FGrH 328 F 18 (surrender of shrines to Heracles); below, App. 2 A s.v. Phytalidai (tax). On interpretation briefly Herter 1939, 304-305, more fully Kearns 120-124; Calame 1990, ch. 3. See in general on Theseus' cult Herter 1939, 1223-1229.

¹⁵⁰ Paus. 10.11.6 (Athenian access to Delphi in 429); cf. Thuc. 2.83-92, M/L 25, and for the shrine of Poseidon at Rhion, Strabo 8.2.3.

¹⁵¹ On the similar structure of these stories see Moreau 1990, 216.

¹⁵² Patterson 2010, 42.

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