

THE PROPITIATION OF PELOPS
AN ANALYSIS OF THE CULTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
ANCIENT GREEK HERO

A thesis submitted by Stephen B. Quinlan on
January 1996 in partial fulfilment of the Master of
Arts degree at the Department of Religious
Studies, University of Ottawa



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-15662-1

Canada



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION: PAGE 1

A. Approaches to the Study of Hero Worship	P.1.
<i>a. Pertinent Contributions to the Study of the Hero Cult</i>	P.1
<i>b. The Contribution of the Present Investigation</i>	P.12
B. Basic Features of Greek Religion	P.15
<i>a. An Overview of Olympian Religion</i>	P.15
<i>b. The Hero as a Constituent of Greek Religion</i>	P.19

CHAPTER I: PAGE 23

The Elementary Features of Olympian Religion as Presented in the Poetry of Hesiod

A. Cosmology	P.24
<i>a. The Primal Entities</i>	P.24
<i>b. The Cosmic Axis</i>	P.30
<i>c. The Succession Myths and the Sovereignty of Zeus</i>	P.33
B. Mortal Existence	P.34
<i>a. The Origin of Sacrifice and the Affliction of Pandora</i>	P.35
<i>b. The Myth of the Mortal Races</i>	P.38

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER II: PAGE 48

Prefigurations of the Hero Cult in the Homeric Epics

A. The Use of the Term ἥρωας in the Epics	P.49
B. Funerals and Burials	P.52
C. Ancestral Tombs and the Polis	P.59
D. The Consultation of the Spirit of Teiresias	P.64

CHAPTER III: PAGE 75

The Propitiation of Pelops

A. The Foundation Myths of Olympia	P.76
B. The Stadium Race and the Altar of Zeus	P.79
C. The Features of the Cult of Pelops	P.80
D. Archaeological Finds Pertaining to the Cult of Pelops	P.83
E. Pelops as Olympia's Greatest Hero	P.85
<i>a. The Myth of the Childhood of Pelops</i>	P.85
<i>b. The Sovereignty Myth of Pelops</i>	P.94
F. The Propitiation of Pelops and the Olympic Festival	P.99

CONCLUSION: PAGE 103

APPENDIX A: PAGE 105

Site-Plans of the Sanctuary at Olympia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDIX B: PAGE 106

A Hero's Tomb Excavated at Lefkandi

REFERENCES TO THE ANCIENT SOURCES: PAGE 107

BIBLIOGRAPHY: PAGE 109

FOREWORD

This thesis is the product of my initial investigation into the broad topic of ancient Greek religion. I have chosen to explore the hero cult as, in my research, it had become evident to me that it is a topic that has received comparatively little attention. Despite its neglect, the hero cult is an aspect of Greek religion that carries a high degree of potential with regard to arriving at a fuller appreciation of the ancient Greek devotional complex. I therefore hope to use this work as the foundation for a deeper and more detailed analysis of the subject at the doctoral level.

I shall introduce my analysis by surveying the pertinent contributions to the study of the hero cult and by presenting my own approach in relation to those taken by previous investigators. I shall also provide an overview of Olympian religion and the function of the hero within this context. In the first chapter of the thesis, I shall explore the themes of cosmology and mortal existence in the poetry of Hesiod poetry to outline the elementary features of Olympian religion, the context in which I have chosen to explore the cultic significance of the ancient Greek hero. My discussion of the Homeric epics will explore the aspects they contain that serve to define the features of the hero cult. Finally, I shall analyze the known information regarding the Pelops cult in order to arrive at the an appreciation of the function of the hero cult in relation to the celebration of an Olympian god.

INTRODUCTION: 1

A. APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF HERO WORSHIP

a. Pertinent Contributions to the Study of the Hero Cult

Relative to the gods, the heroes as components of the ancient Greek devotional complex have received scant attention. Much of the initial research into the hero cult has attempted to demonstrate its archaism, that is, its pre-Homeric origin. To this extent, scholars had regarded the cult as a vestige of the aboriginal, fertility-based religion that dominated the region prior to the Indo-European migrations. In this light, the heroes were the original deities of the land later subordinated by the gods of the invaders and reduced to the status of quasi-divine legendary personages. Complimentary to this speculation are the theoretical elaborations of primitive religion advanced by early anthropologists. Scholars at the turn of the century explained the mythical heroes and the persistence of their cults as dissipated "survivals" that hearkened back to the ancestor worship and fertility magic of the indigenous primitives¹.

The "faded god" theory has largely fallen out of vogue, replaced instead with a similar theory of survival². Scholars generally regard the hero cult as a continuation of the burial customs accorded the monarchs and chieftains of the Mycenaean civilization that occupied, more or less, the same territory as ancient Greece. Archaeological findings have supported this position by demonstrating the

¹ P. Foucart, *Le culte des héros chez les grecs* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1908), pp. 36-37.

J. E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1903), pp. 325-331.

² W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 205. Burkert provides a compromise regarding the controversy as to whether or not the hero was an ancient deity or a deceased person honoured with a cult. In keeping with contemporary findings, he situates the origin of the hero cult at the advent of polis formation and regards the spread of epic poetry as the principal vehicle for its perpetuation. However, he cites numerous examples of hero cults that indicate their archaic, chthonic origin.

INTRODUCTION: 2

correspondence between the sites of hero worship and Mycenaean tombs. Within this context, the myths of the heroes are the reminiscences of the great deeds and personalities of this former period. Such investigations have added definition to the historical development of the hero cult by revealing its Bronze Age antecedents. The shortcoming of the strictly archaeological approach is its silence with regard to the significance of the hero cult within ancient Greek culture. The hero cult--and Olympian religion of which it is a component--is a modification and overlay of ritual practices and customary beliefs that doubtless have a high degree of antiquity; however, it expresses a different religious sentiment from its precursors and therefore it is my position that one must approach its study from a contextual perspective, with reference to the beliefs presented in Hesiodic and Homeric literature, the most influential sources of Olympian religion. Archaeological data do little to inform researchers regarding the religious attitudes that generated them; the relevant disclosures within the textual sources therefore provide the appropriate basis for data interpretation.

Contemporary scholarship has focused on the heroes' part in the elaboration of cultural space, polis formation, and the establishment of social institutions. This lays emphasis on the heroes' crucial function as "founders." Heroic legends are replete with civilizing quests, the establishment of cults to their immortal parents, and numerous other culture-bringing activities. Indeed, the ancient Greeks viewed their culture as the legacy of the exploits performed by both the gods and, in a more immediate sense, the heroes. The heroic function of foundation brings into focus the role of the hero within the context of Olympian religion, and thus provides a promising point of departure for a deeper analysis of the hero as a religious figure. Unfortunately, contemporary treatments also ignore the aspects of veneration accorded the hero. This oversight, in a very real way, prevents a fuller understanding of polis culture as a system of civic duties that derived from the

INTRODUCTION: 3

founding acts of heroes. Devotional practices coalesced with civic duties; these served to coordinate and attune private and social life with the functions and requirements of the individual gods that comprised the Olympic pantheon. The heroes, the earthly articulations of Olympian rule, were believed to have established polis culture as the cultural context in which the lives of mortals could most closely approximate the polity of the immortals³. From this perspective, it is necessary to examine hieratic functions within the context of religious belief and not simply to overlook them as “routinized” gestures undertaken to preserve a *status quo* of social cohesion.

In the following discussion, I shall present the contributions of the most influential treatments of the hero cult. The intention of this survey is to highlight the approaches taken by these studies in order to situate my own research within the scholarly tradition.

Erwin Rhodes’ *Psyche* (1898), the point of departure for modern academic inquiry into hero worship, explored the hero cult in relation to ancient Greek beliefs regarding the soul and the afterlife. Rhode postulated that the hero cult had its origin in ancestor worship, the religion of the primitive Hellenes⁴. In keeping with this perspective, he speculated that the identities of the original clan leaders died out over time; however, the features of their cults endured in the form of worship to anonymous spirits located at grave sites. It was these spirit-cults that provided the basis for later hero worship. The influence of epic poetry was crucial for establishing the hero cult as the poems supplied names and legendary exploits to the forgotten ancestors whose grave cults remained. In this way, the celebration of great individuals combined with the surviving remains of ancestor worship to fix the

³ S. Scully *Homer and the Sacred City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 54-68. Scully’s discussion of the symbolism of Achilles’ shield is also pertinent, p. 126.

⁴ E. Rhode, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950, original German edition, 1898), p. 118

INTRODUCTION: 4

character of the ancient Greek hero cult⁵. Furthermore, the cult reacted against the pessimistic view of the afterlife presented in the Homeric epics⁶. Hero worship promoted the belief that death did not annihilate conscious existence. The attainment of hero status by contemporary individuals expressed, as Rhode understands it, an optimistic attitude regarding human existence; it asserted the prospect of a transcendent, spiritual afterlife based on the belief in the survival of the soul⁷.

L. R. Farnell's *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (1920) covers the same terrain as Rhodes' book. Farnell presented the hero cult within the context of the belief in the soul's post-mortal existence; in fact, he regarded hero worship as the vehicle for the evolution of eschatological faith in ancient Greece⁸. To this end, Farnell organized different hero cults into categories that demarcate the progression of the Greek religious sentiment from its origins in nature worship and its focus on matters of survival to a higher expression that promotes the immortality of the individual soul and derives laws and morality from this tenet. In support of this, he devised an evolutionary scheme that classifies hero cults in sequential progression from primitive hero-gods and goddesses (Linus, Charilla, Ino-Leucothea) through an emerging humanization and individualization to the ultimate attainment of hero

⁵ Rhode, *Psyche* 125.

⁶ Rhode, *Psyche* 122.

⁷ "The worship of heroes began as an ancestor cult and an ancestor cult it remained in essence, but it had now been widened to a cult of certain greater human souls who had raised themselves above their fellows by peculiar powers exercised in many, and by no means predominantly moral directions. Many of them were of later ages or even of the quite recent past; and in this lies the peculiar importance of their cult. They show that the company of spirits is not fixed and made up; individual mortals are still continually being raised to that higher circle after the completion of their earthly lives. Death does not end all conscious existence nor does the gloom of Hades swallow up all life" (Rhode, *Psyche* 138).

⁸ L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 2: "Now the study of this phenomenon (the hero cult) in Hellenism is important from every point of view. It was associated, and in later periods, became ever more intimately associated, with the higher religion; it was a social and constructive force, shaping morality and law; and it was one of the sources to which we can trace certain currents of Greek philosophy, notably the Academic."

INTRODUCTION: 5

status by historical persons⁹. The belief in the continued existence in the soul, preserved and refined through the evolution of the hero cult, effected a transformation in the religious attitude of the Greeks. The submissive, this-worldly focus of nature religion dissipated as a result of the soteriological prospect arising out of the belief in the immortality of the soul. The worship of the spirits of exceptional individuals, the basis for the hero cult, served as the medium for the transformation of ancient Greek religious attitudes.

Although several early studies of the hero cult had made reference to Mycenaean burial customs, it was Martin P. Nilsson who established the analysis of the material evidence brought to light by archaeology as the basis for the study of hero worship. Nilsson attempted to demonstrate the continuity between a Mycenaean cult of the dead and the later Greek hero cult. He based his inquiry on the archaeological deposits at two sites, a beehive tomb at Acharnae in Attica and the tombs of the Hyperborean Maidens on the island of Delos. At both these locations the data had revealed a continuous cult from the Late Mycenaean Period (c. 1400-1120) to the fifth century. On the basis of these findings, Nilsson reasserted the origin of the hero cult in the cult of the dead and postulated that the funerary nature of the cult was later applied to "minor deities, daemons and also to local and dispossessed gods, who were not found worthy to rank with the real gods". Nilsson's study thus reaffirmed the "faded god" status of the hero and homologized Mycenaean funerary rites to the later hero cult.

The archaeologist J. N. Coldstream has used the physical data unearthed at Mycenaean tomb sites to support Farnell's claim that a renewed form of hero

⁹ These categories of hero cults form the headings of the chapters of his book. At the end of his presentation, Farnell discussed the eschatological beliefs expressed within the Orphic doctrines. He regarded these as constituting "higher religion" in ancient Greece and as the sources for later philosophical speculation on the nature and *telos* of the soul.

¹⁰ M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Ancient Greek Religion* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1949), p. 614.

INTRODUCTION: 6

worship resulted from the spread of epic poetry". The epics preserved the memories of the Mycenaean princes, and the desire to establish links with these legendary figures appears in three types of material worship dating from the eighth century: (1) The practice of leaving votive offerings at Mycenaean tomb sites attests the rapid growth of hero cults. (2) The rich burials during the eighth and seventh centuries were influenced by the heroic burials depicted in the epics. (3) Some late Late Geometric (750-700) figured scenes recall the Heroic Age¹². The archaeological finds have demonstrated that the flourishing of hero cults centred at Mycenaean tombs corresponds with the spread of epic poetry throughout ancient Greece. Additionally, Coldstream posited a political motivation for the spread of hero cults. He speculated that the Dorian rulers may have appropriated certain figures of epic poetry as their own local heroes in order to cement their power over the indigenous populations of the Greek mainland¹³.

Anthony Snodgrass, perhaps the most influential British archaeologist studying ancient Greece, has also viewed the spread of hero cults in the eighth century from a sociopolitical perspective¹⁴. He begins his study entitled, "Les origines du culte des héros dans la Grèce antique," by posing the question: What did Greek society *consciously* require of its heroes? The response he gives is that the heroes had, in some way or another, to serve posterity. Snodgrass elaborates upon his claim by surveying the archaeological data pertaining to the proliferation of hero cults during the latter half of the eighth century, a time that coincided with a radical reconfiguration of ancient Greek society. At this time the Greeks acquired a

¹¹ J. N. Coldstream, "Hero-Cults in the Age of Homer," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 96 (1976), p. 8.

¹² Coldstream, "Hero-Cults" 14.

¹³ J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece* (London: Ernest Bearn, 1977), pp. 347-348.

¹⁴ "What thinking or imagining lay behind this practice? The likeliest explanation is that it originated in local attempts to consolidate the ownership of the land. As such it would be connected with the contemporary rise of the city sanctuaries except in the very indirect sense that both are linked to the rise of the polis, and thus with settled land holding. But by instituting the cult of a local hero, a community would acquire a sense of security in an age of apparently fluid and unpredictable settlement" (A. Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece: The Age of Experiment* [London: J. Dent and Sons, 1980], p. 39).

INTRODUCTION: 7

more focused--and practical--interest in earlier Mycenaean civilization. Several cultural features reflect this interest and contributed to the sentiment that the former era was both more sophisticated and more glorious--most important of which was the inspirational quality of epic poetry. Additionally, the Greeks retained an authentic historical recollection of this former culture. Finally, they were impressed by the visual stimulation produced by Mycenaean deposits such as the use of writing, administrative structures, sophisticated art forms and habitations within fortified enclosures. The cumulative effect of the Mycenaean legacy was the creation, in the Greek mind, of a Heroic Age that existed prior to their own time. The ancient Greeks enlisted their knowledge of Mycenaean culture into the development and definition of their emerging society by regarding themselves as the heritors of this more glorious past¹⁵.

With regard to the hero cult itself, Snodgrass claims that the evidence indicates, in many instances, its temporal priority to--or at least its accompaniment with--divine worship. Furthermore, historical knowledge did not determine the choice of cult locations, rather it was the sociopolitical transformations that had occurred in Greece between 750-700 that decided these¹⁶. He takes exception to Farnell's position, later supported by the findings of Coldstream, that the spread of hero cults was directly attributable to the transmission of epic poetry throughout Greece. He supplies three reasons for his refutation.

(1) A form of hero worship existed as early as the end of the tenth century (Pelops at Olympia)¹⁷, a date well before the spread of the epics. Also, heroes such as Academus (Attica) do not appear in any of the surviving epics, probably because of their highly localized significance. (2) The hero cults that emerged during

¹⁵ A. Snodgrass, "Les origines du culte des héros dans la Grèce antique." in; J-P. Vernant & G.Gnoli, eds *La mort, les morts dans les sociétés anciennes* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 110-113.

¹⁶ A. Snodgrass, "Les origines" 113-114.

¹⁷ The cult of Pelops, as I shall discuss later, cannot be dated with accuracy. The date Snodgrass adopts is the one at which offerings began to be deposited within the Olympia sanctuary.

INTRODUCTION: 8

the latter half of the eighth century--and concurrently with the epics--were located at Mycenaean tombs. These attest the practice of inhumation within various forms of chamber structures. The Homeric epics, however, depict funerary practices that involve cremation, the burial of the ashes within an urn beneath a raised mound and marked off by a pillar. (3) As Theodora Hadzisteliou Price (1973) has demonstrated, both Homer and Hesiod were already aware of hero worship¹⁸. Snodgrass concedes that the creation of certain hero cults (Agamemnon, Menelaus) had resulted directly from the diffusion of epic poetry. In fairness to Farnell, this was not his point--and one he adopted from Rhode. As previously stated, Farnell explored the evolution of the hero cult from its origin in nature religion. Farnell understood heroes, at this primitive stratum, to be cult-divinities, or faded gods. Epic poetry, particularly the works of Homer, provoked an evolutionary advance in hero worship by presenting the heroes as highly individuated and mortal. The epics did not create hero worship, rather they effected a *rapprochement* between the heroes and their audiences by emphasizing the degree of their humanity.

Snodgrass answers his initial question regarding the practical function the hero cult served by exploring the cultural transformation that occurred during the eighth century. At this time, the Greek territories experienced a sharp population increase that made necessary a transition from migratory pastoralism to sedentary land cultivation. The resultant demographic stasis precipitated polis formation. Within this cultural context, land entitlement became the foundation of citizenship. However, conflicts between the migratory herders and the newly-established cultivators sought to establish a link with the legendary rulers of the land, the heroes of the former era. The worship of local heroes at their grave sites provided this link. Thus the heroes, the representatives of the prestigious past, served as the

¹⁸ A. Snodgrass, "Les origines" 114-115.

INTRODUCTION: 9

guarantors and protectors of the newly-defined cultural space¹⁹.

Claude Bérard, drawing largely on the archaeological finds at Eretria in Euboea, builds upon Snodgrass' research to explore the hero cult as a phenomenon associated with the emergence of the polis. He, however, focusses on the ideological and political aspects of "heroization" within polis culture. To this end, he seeks to account for the appropriation of extra-urban hero tombs and their relocation within the polis walls. The establishment, Bérard claims, of a hero shrine is as distinctive a feature of the polis as are the sanctuary of the polis divinity and the agora²⁰. Furthermore, the introduction of new hero cults corresponds to political developments. This is evidenced most clearly in Athens where the cult of Theseus assumed a prominence over the cults of earlier founders (Erechtheus, the Tyrannicides, Cleisthenes' eponymous heroes) following the repulse of the Persians²¹.

How, then, does Bérard account for the political function of the hero cult? He understands the institution of a hero cult as a *récupération de la mort d'un prince*. As the "avatar" of a Mycenaean prince, the hero possessed a political authority (symbolic but nonetheless effective) that could not devolve upon a living person, a member of the society of equals that constituted the polis citizenry²². Within polis culture, the hero--the allegory of the Mycenaean ruler--preserved the structure of royal sovereignty and acted as a preventative against the acquisition of absolute

¹⁹ A. Snodgrass, "Les origines," 116-117.

²⁰ C. Bérard, "Récupérer la mort du prince: héroïzation et formation de la cité," in: *La mort, les morts dans les sociétés anciennes*, p. 94.

²¹ C. Bérard, "Récupérer la mort," 96.

²² "L'héroïsation est un cas particulier de prosopopée: ce que les princes ne peuvent plus risquer à dire librement, ils tentent de continuer à l'exprimer par le truchement de leurs ancêtres héroïsés dont le statut social est ainsi plus ou moins transformé. Les morts d'élite exercent donc, dans le cadre institutionnel de la cité en formation, un pouvoir qui ne serait plus toléré s'il était détenu par ces mêmes personnes vivantes. Grâce aux héros, la cité--c'est-à-dire leurs héritiers directs--résout un problème de <<crise de souveraineté>> en préservant certaines valeurs qui ne peuvent plus se déployer librement dans le nouveau système social et politique qui s'instaure" (C. Bérard, "Récupérer la mort," 94).

INTRODUCTION: 10

power by a living person. In this way, the promotion of a hero as founder and ruler of the polis resolved what Bérard terms a *crise de souveraineté*. The polis, by transforming the Mycenaean prince into the "prosopopoeic" Hero, retained the appearance of monarchical rule while, concurrently, transferring effective political power to the council of citizens.

François de Polignac, like Bérard, regards the study of the hero cult from a religious perspective as a distortion insofar as it denies the heroes their historical dimension²³. He shares, along with Snodgrass and Bérard, the view that the cult was essentially a component of the redefinition of Greek society during the eighth century. dePolignac regards the transformation of the Mycenaean sepulchre to a cult site as an act of propaganda that served to justify the ownership of the surrounding territory. In this way, the hero cult was established to secure a sacred connection with the ancient inhabitants of the land. As an act of appropriation and sovereignty, the hero cult was largely an instrument by which aristocratic groups legitimated their ownership of the land and, eventually, their control over political offices within the emerging polis²⁴.

de Polignac sees in the foundation myth of the polis a reflection of the means by which it achieved its territorial definition. Homer provides the prototype of the foundation myth²⁵ and its pattern, dePolignac demonstrates, reemerges in the foundation myths of Megara and Argos. The hero, most often a stranger to the

²³C. Bérard, "Récupérer la mort," 90.

"En dépit de leur valeur intrinsèque (*Farnell's and Brelich's works*), ces classifications ne peuvent dissiper l'extrême confusion qui règne à propos des héros et leurs culte: les héros semblent être tant de choses à la fois qu'on ne sait plus très bien ce qu'ils sont en fait. Car, en présentant le culte héroïque comme phénomène quasi intemporel, sans que l'on sache ni quand, ni comment, ni pourquoi il est apparu, ou évolua au cours du temps, elles ôtent sa dimension historique" (F. de Polignac, *La naissance de la cité grecque* [Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 1984], p.128).

²⁴de Polignac, *La naissance de la cité grecque*, 131-132.

²⁵de Polignac, *La naissance de la cité grecque*, 133. The references he provides are as follows: *Iliad*, 10. 414 sq.; 11. 166, 371; 24. 350.

INTRODUCTION: 11

land²⁶, defeats a representative of chaos (Citheronian Boar) or introduces cultural practices (sedentary agriculture, matrimony, organized defence, etc.). The effect of the hero's founding activities is the transformation of the land from a pre-formal chaos to a habitable space²⁷. The characteristic feature of this transformation is the establishment of a network of cult locations, both extra-urban and intramural, that coordinate civic functions (initiation, strategic defence, the organization of human groups, etc.) according to a *centre décisionnel*, or a nucleus of political power. The sanctuary of the polis divinity, the aristocratic council, and the tomb of the founding hero, the conqueror of the polis territory and the champion who defined its civic landscape, constituted the administrative locus of the polis. By maintaining the structure of divine sovereignty and retaining the presence of the founding hero, the first and last ruler of the polis, the *kratos* of the polis elites assumed a transpersonal dimension that preserved the form of monarchical rule. At the same time--and in seeming contradiction--it concentrated real political power on the decisional process effected by the members of the aristocratic council²⁸. To this extent, dePolignac's analysis reiterates Bérard's position that the polis hero acts as a figurehead by lending a prestigious authority to political functions insofar as these derive from and extend the cultural creations inaugurated by the founder of the polis.

²⁶ Ce caractère centripète du culte du fondateur expliquerait-il que le héros provienne presque toujours de l'extérieur? Même en étant l'écho de lointaines migrations ou de conquêtes anciennes, son origine étrangère, loin de constituer un handicap à son adoption politique, lui donne l'avantage sur les autochtones vaincus et les éponymes sans visage, exclus de la création de la civilisation de la *polis*, dans les récits comme dans les cultes (à l'exception d'Athènes)" (de Polignac, *La naissance de la cité grecque*, 138.).

²⁷ de Polignac, *La naissance de la cité grecque*, 134-148.

²⁸ "Ainsi prend corps le pôle urbain de la constitution de la *polis*. Comme ses cultes divins, les cultes héroïques du noyau urbain (ou pré-urbain) signalent son accession au statut de centre décisionnel de la nouvelle organisation sociale s'agréant autour des cultes du territoire. À la semblance de ces derniers, mais en sens contraire, ils tissent un lien symbolique entre le centre et la périphérie, et leur caractère centripète accompagne celui de la formation de l'autorité politique par synoecisme de pouvoirs locaux, aux prix d'une contradiction dans la souveraineté: l'effacement de celle-ci par l'exaltation de héros mythiques et l'héroïsation des princes de la génération postée sur le seuil de la cité dépeint la naissance d'une aristocratie unifiée s'initiant aux règles fondamentales de l'isonomie guerrière et politique" (de Polignac, *La naissance de la cité grecque*, 150-151).

b. The Contribution of the Present Investigation

The studies undertaken by Snodgrass, Bérard and dePolignac have situated hero worship within the context of the political structures of the city-state. To this extent, these authors have highlighted the significance and vitality of the hero cult with regard to both polis formation and political administration. We can infer from their studies how important it was for the Greeks to regard their way of life as an extension of a sanctified past. One of the most notable means of ensuring this communion was the preservation of the heroic founder, the inventor of the polis and the agent of Olympian rule, in the form of the tomb cult.

The investigations of contemporary scholars, however, have consciously ignored the interconnection between religious belief and cultural definition. The bifurcation of the religious and the political achieved by these studies impedes a fuller understanding of the hero's significance by reducing the legendary founder to an instrument of political expediency. For the hero cult to have been an effective component of the polis, it must have been valorized within the belief system that infused ancient Greek culture. To this extent, it is necessary to explore the religious modality the hero embodied with reference to the sources that disclose ancient Greek religious attitudes.

My thesis will examine the hero cult within the context of Olympian religion. I shall take the position that ancient Greek devotions were valorized and informed by the Hesiodic and Homeric texts²⁹. These were the most influential texts for the

²⁹ "Only an authority could create order amid such a confusion of traditions. The authority to whom the Greeks appealed was the poetry of Hesiod and, above all, of Homer. The spiritual unity of the Greeks was founded and upheld by poetry--a poetry which could still draw on living oral tradition to produce a felicitous union of freedom and form, spontaneity and discipline. To be a Greek was to be educated, and the foundation of all education was Homer" (iv. Burkert *Greek Religion* 120).

INTRODUCTION: 13

transmission of Olympian religion³⁰. By focussing on the veneration of the hero at the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, I shall attempt to offer an appreciation of the hero's specific religious modality as drawn from the spiritual landscape charted out by the earliest extant texts.

From the perspective of the history of religions, the period of my investigation--the mid-eighth to the mid-fifth centuries--witnesses the dominance of the Olympic pantheon over the religious beliefs and devotions of ancient Greece. Much emphasis must be placed on the role played by the Hesiod and Homer in cementing the hegemony of Olympian religion and, as well, in defining its features. These works set forth a cosmology, establish relationships between mortals and immortals, speak of the afterlife, and put forward the paradigms for mortal conduct; all of which effected a redefinition of the beliefs informing the devotions that constituted ancient Greek religion. However, because they make scant reference to the hero cult proper, I shall make use of the writings of Hesiod and Homer primarily to elucidate the rationale governing the aspects of hero worship. My investigation will assume that the religious beliefs expressed in these works were normative, and therefore provide the appropriate basis for the Olympian belief system which informed ancient Greek devotions.

In detailing the features of the hero cult, I shall make use of the Pelops cult centred at Olympia as an exemplary instance of hero worship. There are several reasons for choosing the Pelops cult: (1) Its location within the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia made it panHellenic in scope. In myth, Pelops and his descendants

³⁰ My position, in conformity with Burkert's above-quoted statement, is therefore in radical opposition to the view taken by B. C. Dietrich who states that the Homeric and Hesiodic poems cannot be considered as religious writings.

"The reason that Homer's and Hesiod's ideas successfully cut across inherited religious traditions, despite the secular nature of their poems, was mainly political. Through some, as yet not entirely explicable, cause the secular epic hero became identified with his cultic counterpart in the archaic age. The latter most probably was older than Homeric epic. But, judging from the predilection for epic topics in art and the proliferation of the hero cults at the time, the cultic hero changed under the impact of epic poetry (here Dietrich reflects the position put forward by Rhode and Farnell) after the eighth century BC. Whatever his antecedents might have been, his title now, on analogy with the epic hero, helped to bring the gods closer to this world" (B. C. Dietrich, *Tradition in Greek Religion* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986] p. 92).

INTRODUCTION: 14

achieved sovereignty over the Mycenaean heartland by supplanting the Danaïd-Perseïd dynasty and they brought this civilization--preserved in the Greek imagination as the Heroic Age--to its apogee. (3) The mythical biography of Pelops is very extensive and reveals fully the life-experience of the hero. It includes: (a) exploits that correspond with initiatory scenarios; (b) narrative elements that associate the hero with the victim chosen for divine sacrifice; (c) the hero's defeat of a representation of "chaos" and hence his participation in the order-establishing--or culture-bringing--activities of the gods; (d) his ascension to a vast sovereignty as the earthly representative of Zeus; (e) and finally, Pelops' crime against the immortals, a common motif in the biographies of heroes that reveals a certain attitude about the human project and the pathetic nature of the mortal condition. (4) The description of the propitiation of Pelops is the most detailed depiction of the hero cult in the literary sources. The information provided regarding the cult of Pelops and its association with the cult of Zeus at Olympia makes possible an analysis of its function within the framework of the Hesiodic and Homeric cosmology and belief system. Furthermore, the textual data provides the basis for--again within the context of the Olympian belief system elaborated by Hesiod and Homer--an elucidation of the significance of the relationship between Zeus and Pelops within the climate of the Olympia festival. Thus, prior to exploring the cult of Pelops, I shall treat separately the contributions of Hesiod and Homer pertaining to hero worship in order to elucidate the beliefs and ritual precedents that constituted this aspect of the ancient Greek religion.

B. BASIC FEATURES OF GREEK RELIGION

a. An Overview of Olympian Religion

Ancient Greek devotions involved an adherence to customary gestures performed in acknowledgement of an organized multiplicity of superhuman forces, or divine beings. Each of these divinities regulated a specific aspect of life³¹, hence their number, conceivably, equalled that of the features of reality³². The members of this vast divine society were wilful agents who shared the human body but perfected it both in beauty and permanence. Among themselves, the immortals were not equals either in status or influence. The divine hierarchy had at its apex the cosmic arbiter, Zeus, while his immediate subordinates, defined collectively as the Olympic Pantheon, comprised his siblings and certain of his divine progeny. A great assortment of lesser deities presided over natural phenomena (winds, rivers, etc., were deities), and features of culture (an array of abstract concepts regulating human affairs were also gods: Persuasion, Victory, Reconciliation, among others). This complex divine network, presided over by Zeus, structured existence into an

³¹ A metaphorical representation of the specific jurisdictions of each of the gods is provided in *Iliad* 14. 166-168 which relates that no other god may unlock the door into Hera's chamber.

³² W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 216-222. Burkert's discussion of the "thought patterns in Greek polytheism" provides an excellent overview of Greek polytheism. He, however, considers the "compactness and clarity of its organization" a distinction of Greek polytheism when compared to other similar traditions. This appears to me to be somewhat of a distortion. The "family community" of the gods is clearly present in Homer; however, when one considers the vast number of cult epithets each of the gods received and the way these modified the gods' functions, the system becomes far less "compact." Burkert, in contradiction to this statement, provides a very good overview of the confusing polyvalence of the ancient Greek devotional complex (W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* 119-120).

INTRODUCTION: 16

ordered and coherent totality (κόσμος)³³.

The gods were transcendent only in a limited sense. Traditional Greek belief did not postulate the existence of an unconditioned, acosmic demiurge; rather divinity was in this regard a product of cosmic generation. The gods, like all features of existence, were subject to fate (μοῖρα-αἶσα-ἀνάγκη-δίκη); the element of cohesion that infiltrated and bound the disparate aspects of reality into an ordered and determined totality. The gods as well were "limited" by their fated allotments to a fixed range of activities that extended from their specific modalities. In this way, the gods were the vehicles by which fate channelled itself throughout the differentiated universe.

The location of the immortal realm (Ὀλύμπος) expressed the dominance of the gods over terrestrial existence. It was somewhere aloft and provided the vantage point from which the gods oversaw their earthly jurisdictions. The immortals created and controlled mortal life. The gods brought mortals into being, shaped them in their own image, defined the context of their existence, and placed at their disposal the means for their continuance and perpetuation. Mortals (ἄνθρωποι, βροτοί) acknowledged their submission to the gods (θεοί, ἀθάνατοι) and sought their continued involvement by means of devout gestures, principally through the performance of the blood sacrifice (θυσία). The medium of the victim offering (the principal component being a white coloured, unblemished ruminant) established the linkage between Olympus (enduring life, cosmic supremacy) and

³³Jean-Pierre Vernant provides a framework for appreciating the coherent association the Greek pantheon incorporated in the following way: "Une religion, un panthéon nous apparaissent ainsi comme un système de classification, une certaine façon d'ordonner et de conceptualiser l'univers en y distinguant des types multiples de pouvoir et de puissance. En ce sens je dirai volontiers qu'un panthéon, comme système organisé impliquant entre les dieux des relations définies, est en quelque sort un langage, un mode particulier d'appréhension et d'expression symboliques de la réalité. Je serais même porté à croire qu'entre le langage et la religion il y a, à ces époques anciennes, comme une co-naturalité. La religion, lorsqu'on l'envisage du point de vue des formes de pensée, apparaît contemporaine du langage. Dans la série animale, ce qui caractérise le niveau humain, c'est la présence de ces vastes systèmes de médiations que sont le langage, les outils, la religion" (J-P. Vernant, *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Librairie François Maspero, 1974), p. 106).

INTRODUCTION: 17

the terrestrial plane (death resulting from deterioration) for the purpose of acknowledging the creative and life-sustaining activities of the gods on mortals' behalf. The sacrificial act expressed the submission of mortals to the power and permanence of the gods while, concurrently, it elevated humanity above a vegetative, hence meaningless, existence by enabling mortals to draw from and share in divine potency. Communion with the gods (sacrifice) aligned humanity with the cosmic order the gods maintained by granting mortals a participatory--if subordinate--status in the divine project.

The ancient Greeks regarded terrestrial existence, hence mortal life, as the nexus between antithetical cosmic domains. Although the gods resided on the transcendent plane of Olympus, they were born and grew to maturity on earth. It was not until they achieved their permanent states that they gained access to Olympus. Furthermore, many of the gods had set aside for themselves earthly regions, usually their birth-places, as their special preserves. They also held residence in the sanctuaries dedicated to them by their mortal progeny, the heroes. These were the sites of the gods' cults, the locations where mortals accessed specific expressions of divine power. As a result of the vast network of cult sites, the sacredness produced by the presence of the gods saturated the earth. However, in opposition to Olympian influence the manifestations of the Underworld, the other cosmic realm situated below the earth and equidistant to the elevation of Olympus, also infiltrated the terrestrial expanse. The infernal plane, ruled but abhorred by the Olympians, contained the articulations of Chaos that produced the earthly condition of dissipation and, ultimately, death.

The Underworld was for many of the gods a place of banishment that confined heavenly transgressors in a state of impotence as they were excluded from the seat of divine power, Olympus. For mortals, it was the location of a despondent afterlife. The souls (ψυχαι) of the dead, disembodied and therefore

INTRODUCTION: 18

deprived of sharing in the divine form, fluttered about in an undefined state amid the perpetual gloom that permeated the realm of Hades. In the ancient Greek view, death was the result of the dissipating effects of the forces of the Underworld. These forces absorbed the substance of the living and, through death, cleaved them from the divine emanations of Olympus. Death itself was for the ancient Greeks the definitive characteristic of earthly life and the span of the chasm between mortals and their eternal overseers. The contagion (μίασμα) thought to effuse from the dead infected those with whom it came into contact and rendered them unsuitable for participation in the company of the Olympians. Purificatory techniques (καθάραρις) dispersed this pollution and restored the defiled to a suitable state for engaging in the celebration of life (honouring the gods). The extension of Olympian rule over the infernal plane modified the pessimism regarding death. This belief evoked the possibility for better prospects in the afterlife as the forces of Enduring Life prevailed over those of Chaos (annihilation).

The Underworld and the corrosive brood it contained were subject to Olympian rule. Chthonic deities and demigods (heroes) regulated the effects of dissipation in a manner that ensured the continuation of life through regeneration. Death thus gained value as the necessary condition by which life renewed itself. The gods of the lower world received sacrificial rites of propitiation both to avert an overabundance of their powers (earthquake, pestilence, drought, etc.) and, additionally, to promote fertility for which dying was an indelible component. The association of the chthonic deities with death lent a funerary character to their rites of appeasement. Chthonic sacrifice took place after sundown and involved the slaughter of a black coloured victim that the celebrants later burnt on the altar fire.

Chthonic propitiatory rites and the sacrificial banquets devoted to the Olympians constituted the principal ritual components of the religious festival (ἑορτή). In this way, mortals acknowledged the polarities of divine power (life-

INTRODUCTION: 19

death) and attuned themselves to the cosmic emanations that shaped and defined their existence. Furthermore, the extension of Olympian rule throughout the cosmos attenuated the tension exercised on earthly existence by orienting the disparate forces that impinged upon it according to a unifying point of reference, expressed by the universal supremacy of Zeus.

b. The Hero as a Constituent of Olympian Religion

The ancient Greeks conceived of a time prior to their own when mortals were greater and experienced a more intimate association with the immortals. These were the heroes (ἥρωες) who were the progeny of the gods and therefore the mortal articulations of Olympian rule. As the earthly representatives of the Olympians, they served to establish the cultural boundaries and ethical norms that defined ancient Greek culture. Hence the heroes were primarily “Founders” (ἀρχηγέται) whose cultural creations, by virtue of the intimacy between themselves and their immortal patrons, were the products of divine approbation. To this extent, the ancient Greeks regarded their culture, defined by heroic exploits, as a reflection of the cosmic order maintained by the Olympians.

Heroes epitomized the mortal condition by their proximity to the immortals. They were, compared with contemporary mortals, the possessors of a superabundance of vitality and enlisted their energies in the furtherance of the divine project. They defeated monstrous creatures (manifestations of chaos), experienced a fantastic mobility that enabled them to breach the threshold of the Underworld, and were, in rare instances, translated to Olympus by the gods. As much as they were beloved by the gods, they also experienced divine wrath more intensely. The persecutions of the heroes at the hands of the gods were the results of their violations of Olympian rule. The heroes’ neglect for their submission to the gods

INTRODUCTION: 20

and their prideful motivations of self-interest (ὑβρις) ushered in their demise and introduced a malignancy (νόσος) into their kingdoms and family lines. The crimes of the heroes, along with their consequences and atonements, played a central role in their myths and provided a crucial contribution toward the definition of the ancient Greek spiritual and ethical landscapes.

The ancient Greeks regarded the heroes as demigods (ἡμίθεοι) and, in that capacity, accorded them cultic honours. These took place often at the grave sites of the heroes but also at shrines that commemorated the foundation of living institutions inaugurated by the heroes. The grave cults of heroes generally had a chthonic and funerary character. The hero's grave (ἥρωον) was the site of propitiation. It was often an open structure with four columns supporting a roof and enclosing a sunken altar (βόθρος). The altar rested directly on the ground and contained a hole in its middle that descended to the hero's ossuary. During a solemn procession held after the setting of the sun, the ritual participants, clad in mourning attire, chanted dirges and led a black coloured victim (most often a goat or a ram) to the hero's grave. The principal officiant dug a ditch to the west of the grave and, turning west, poured water into the ditch leading to the grave. During the task, he pronounced the following words: ὑμῖν ἀπονίμμα οἷς χρη καὶ οἷς θέμις³⁴. He then poured unguents (χοαί) into the ditch. The officiant held the victim, its head lowered, over the grave hole and slit its throat. The sacrificial act of propitiation (ἐναγίζω) transferred the fresh blood of the victim to the remains of the hero. The participants sometimes ate the flesh of the victim or, instead, burned the carcass on the altar as they considered it defiled (ἄγος).

The hero cult extended the influence of the heroes beyond their capacity as

³⁴ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 9.410a: "For after some preliminary remarks regarding *enagismata*, he (Anticleides in *The Expositor*) writes: Dig a trench on the west side of the grave. Then, standing beside the trench, face the West, and pour water over it saying these words: "I pour this cleansing water (aponimma) to you as is right and lawful." After that, pour scented oil."

INTRODUCTION: 21

founders to include that of “maintainers.” The regular repetition of their cults according to the calendar of festivals served both to commemorate the heroes’ founding acts and to enlist their support in the continuation of their cultural creations (whether it be a polis, a sanctuary to a god, etc.). To this extent, the principal act of the rite--the pouring of the blood into the grave--“enlivened” the hero and thereby renewed the hero’s connection with his or her cultural creation along with the human community it served³⁵. The cult, then, demonstrated the belief that the heroes, despite their mortality, maintained an *effective presence* among the living; directed at the preservation of their cultural creations. In this light, the ritual gestures performed under the auspices of their cults sought to activate the heroes’ creative potential, believed to permeate their graves and relics. The hero cult ensured the continuation of Olympian rule over earthly existence by infusing the heroes’ creations with the sacred power the heroes regulated.

Sacrifice to the hero occurred on the night preceding the festival of the Olympian god. The temporal priority of the hero sacrifice resulted from the belief that the heroes had established the devotions to the gods. As the semi-divine founders of the regularly recurring festivals, the heroes were “enlivened” prior to the celebrations that they might inaugurate the proceedings in conformity with their creative capacity. The fact that the heroes also received sacrificial honours indicates their own sacred status. They were the progeny of the gods united with mortals and thus shared in both modes of being. Although they experienced death, they nonetheless carried on an efficacious afterlife whereby they intervened on behalf of their venerated communities as protectors of the cultural creations under their providence. Certain components of their cults (the sunken altar at the grave-shrine, the black coloured victim, the night-time ceremony) reveal the heroes as chthonic potencies associated with the Underworld. This accords with the mortal

³⁵ Burkert stresses the fact that the hero cult was concerned with “effective presence” and therefore should not be regarded simply as a commemorative ancestor cult (W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 204).

INTRODUCTION: 22

dimension of the heroes' natures that, apart from certain exceptional instances, barred them access to Olympus, the ontological plane of eternal life and the source of divine power. Olympian rule, however, pervaded the Underworld and the heroes, as articulations of Olympian rule, shared in the regulation of the infernal forces (deterioration, death) that impinged upon the living. In a symbolic sense, the heroes' deaths, commemorated by their tombs and shrines, granted an enduring quality to their cultural creations through the medium of their regularly repeated funerary cults. Sacrifice to the hero sought to access the heroes' enduring creative potential (the divine component of their natures) and to enlist this power in support of the continuation of ancient Greek culture, the earthly reflection of Olympian order (κόσμος).

With regard to the cult of Pelops at Olympia, W. J. Slater has recently attempted to demonstrate that a banquet was held in the hero's honour³⁶. I shall present Slater's argument in my discussion of the cult of Pelops in the third chapter of my thesis. In brief, Slater infers the staging of a hero banquet from certain details supplied by the poet Pindar in his *Olympian Ode* 1. Because the matter of a banquet is impossible to resolve conclusively, my investigation will not dwell on this point. I shall instead investigate the relationship between the cult of Pelops and the worship of Zeus, the divine patron of the sanctuary at Olympia. My position is that the myths of Pelops assert his intimate association with Zeus, and, by virtue of this association, the devotions at Olympia included the worship of Pelops during the quadrennial celebration of the Games.

³⁶ W. J. Slater, "Pelops at Olympia." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 30 (1989), pp. 485-501

THE ELEMENTARY FEATURES OF OLYMPIAN RELIGION
AS PRESENTED IN THE POETRY OF HESIOD

I shall begin my analysis of the cultic significance of the ancient Greek hero by exploring the religious beliefs that upheld it. For this purpose, I shall focus in my discussion of Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days* on the themes of cosmology and mortal existence, the basic features of Olympian religion. From a religious perspective, an understanding of the nature of reality--and the place of man within it--as determined by a transcendental authority establishes the matrix of belief that informed devout activities, the hero cult included. With regard to the ancient Greek devotions, Hesiod's songs provide this foundation, as they set forth a cosmology and describe the characteristics of the mortal races. Hesiod's poems, therefore, achieve the highest status as textual representations of the ancient Greek religious attitude¹

Hesiod clearly defines the heroes as a distinct race prior to his own; he identifies them as demigods, to whom later men owe glory and honour. His poetry communicates the view that certain prior generations, the Golden Men and the Heroes, experienced a beatified existence by virtue of their close association to the immortals. Hesiod also expresses the view that certain prior generations of mortals maintain an active contact with the living that is enlisted into the maintenance of the cosmic order established by the gods.

¹ "Beside Homer stands Hesiod, an original and tangible poetic figure. In the *Theogony* he created a basic textbook of Greek religion. Here the powers of the universe and in particular the ruling gods are introduced in a meaningful and memorable context through the device of genealogy, begetting and giving birth" (W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 122).

A. COSMOLOGY**a. *The Primal Entities***

In Hesiod's *Theogony* existence arises from the interactions between the four Primal Entities introduced in lines 116-122. First to emerge was Chaos, followed by Earth, Tartarus and Eros; I shall explore their depictions in the poem.

Chaos is first to emerge (116), and the first to generate other cosmological entities (123). Apart from its initial mention, Chaos makes only two other appearances in the song. "Aweful" Chaos is said to have "become heated," καῦμα δὲ θεσπέσιον κάτεχεν Χάος (700), when Zeus let fly his lightning during the Titanomachy. Chaos is again mentioned in relation to the Titans; Hesiod situates their place of banishment "beyond gloomy Chaos," πέρην Χάος ζοφεροῖο (814). Hesiod presents the lineage of Chaos and, to a certain extent, its progeny disclose an appreciation of their source. Chaos is however necessarily ambiguous and, for this reason, eludes precise definition.

Erebus and Night emerge from Chaos (123). Erebus is situated "below the ground" (ὑπὸ χθονός), and is associated with banishment. First, the impetuous Titan, Menoetius, is relegated by Zeus to Erebus (514). Uranus suppressed his hideous sons, the Hecatonchires in Erebus, and, from there, they were liberated by Zeus and enlisted as allies in the Titanomachy (671). Erebus assumes the masculine role in union with Night and generates Day and Aether (124). This is the first instance of sexual union in the song (125), and the only instance of this means of generation in the line of Chaos.

Night abides in the Underworld as well (748), but, of course, is not confined

CHAPTER 1: 25

to it. After her first children, she, as Chaos did before her, self-generates a multitude of unfortunate offspring: frightful Doom, the black Kêr, Death, Sleep, the tribe of Dreams, Blame, Distress, the Hesperides, the Destinies, the Fates; Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, Nemesis, Deceit, Friendship, Age, and Strife who, following Night, auto generated Toil, Forgetfulness, Famine, Sorrows, Fightings, Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying Words, Disputes, Lawlessness, Ruin, and Oath, the greatest affliction (211-232). These are the perpetuations of Chaos which introduced into the differentiated cosmos the quality of defect.

G. S. Kirk relates the neuter noun Chaos to the same root as the verb χαίνω (χάσσω) and its equivalents, "gape, gap, yawn². However, Kirk's identification of Chaos as the gap between earth and sky requires one to step outside the song as it is presented to us. Hesiod clearly states that Chaos precedes both earth and sky (and furthermore presents a myth to explain the separation of these two!); it is therefore difficult to see in it the product of their separation. This is in fact where M. L. West situates Chaos, seeing in it "that space between Earth and Tartarus which is called a χάσμα in 740³."

Jean-Pierre Vernant offers a structural analysis of Chaos, arriving at his assessment by exploring its patterns of association with and opposition to the

²G. S. Kirk & J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 27.

Earlier on Kirk suggests that Chaos is a "bounded interval, the gap between earth and sky, p. 23. To quote him at greater length: "The evidence seems to point to the following conclusions. For Hesiod's source, at all events, the first stage in the formation of the differentiated world was the production of a vast gap between sky and earth. By Hesiod the emphasis is placed on the nature of the gap itself, not on the act of separation which produced it. The gap is conceived as dark and windy—dark, because aether and sun had not yet come into being, and windy, because this is the natural condition of the region..." (p. 31).

³M. L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 192.

CHAPTER 1: 26

other generator of the cosmic components, Earth⁴. Vernant, in order to preserve the harmony of his Chaos-Earth binary pair, assigns to Chaos the rather ungainly--in light of its generative capacity--gender of masculinity. While the birth-giving male is present in Greek mythology, and in Hesiod specifically (*Theogony*, 929^h), this designation appears rather forced in connection with Chaos. If Chaos were indeed male, it would seem unlikely that fecund Earth would not profit from her connection with "him," as she does with all the other masculine entities with whom she is in contact. Rather, Chaos appears to be a parallel principle to Earth which expresses itself on a different ontological level from that established by Earth; a level which is impossible to define precisely but which suggests an ineffable state most closely associated with death and the Underworld. The perpetuations of Chaos--its progeny--have access to and influence over life and material existence, but they, as will be more clearly demonstrated later, abide--with the exception of Aether--in the Underworld.

Earth is "the broad-breasted, the ever-secure seat of all the immortals" (Γαῖ' εὐρύστερνος, πάντων ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ [ἀθανάτων]) (117-118), the source of stability and the generator of matter and life, both mortal and immortal. It is through her initial articulations that space is organized and the forms of matter established. Her first creative act was to give birth to the Sky, equal to herself" (126), "covering her on every side" (127), and an ever-sure abiding place for the immortal gods" (128). Earth establishes the median between Olympus and the Underworld, and perhaps serves as a barrier against the infection of Heaven by

⁴ J-P. Vernant, "Greek Cosmogonic Myths," in: Y. Bonnefoy, ed. *Mythologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 69.

On the basis of its structural features, Vernant presents Chaos as the antithesis of Earth: "The Gaping Chasm which is born before anything else is without bottom and without top: it is the absence of stability, the absence of form, the absence of density, the absence of fullness. As a "cavity," it is less an abstract region--the void--than an abyss, a vertiginous whirlpool that swirls ever deeper, without direction or origination. Yet, as an "opening," it opens into that which, while being connected to it, is also its opposite" (p. 69).

CHAPTER 1: 27

the more unfortunate members of Chaos' brood. After setting forth the starry Heavens, she then sprouted the mountains (129), and surrounded herself laterally with Pontus (133), the Salty Waters. Thus was the world of concrete forms established.

After setting forth her limits, Earth populated the space she had established by uniting with her male progeny. Uranus fathered upon her the successively hideous immortals, the twelve Titans (133-138), the three Cyclopes (139-146), and finally the three monstrosities, the Hecatonchires ("One Hundred-Handed") (147-153), described as ἄπλαστοι, "unformed, misshapen." With Pontus, Earth produced a line of aquatic deities, some of which mated with the Titan Oceanus, a cosmic river that encircles Pontus (789-792). Earth also joined with her infernal sibling Tartarus to produce the monster Typhon (821), the last and greatest threat to the sovereignty of Zeus.

Tartarus is located beneath terrestrial Earth, Τάρταρά τ' ἠερόεντα μυχῷ χθονὸς (119). The close association of Tartarus with Earth is also suggested in the expression τάρταρα γαίης. As stated, the two primal entities united to produce the final threat to Olympian rule, the monster Typhon. Hesiod's use of the neuter plural noun τάρταρα to refer to it suggests that, rather than being a fixed locality despite its specific placement below the earth, it characterizes, like Chaos and Erebus, an ineffable state closely associated with death and the Underworld. However, it is not consistently referred to in this manner, but receives either the masculine or neuter singular declension when it designates a cosmic region (683, 721, 725, 736, 807) or the mate of Earth (822).

Tartarus is described as a great chasm (740) filled with violent winds, and reviled by the gods. Hidden from the sun's rays, it is a place of gloom (760). It is closely associated with Chaos--not only by its designation as χάσμα μεγά but in

CHAPTER 1: 28

relation to the place of banishment of the Titans as well⁵. Whereas their goal had been previously identified as "beyond gloomy Chaos," it is additionally located as "under Tartarus," ὑποταρτάριοι (851). Tartarus is also the locale of the banishment of his offspring Typhon, from whom baneful (and chaotic) winds are emitted. The monster Typhon is presented in the poem as the great challenger to the cosmic order established and maintained by Zeus. This monster was conceived with the assistance of "golden Aphrodite" (821-822). The detailed presentation of Typhon's fierce and "chaotic" appearance establishes this monster as an embodiment of the primal force of Chaos, concretized through the agency of Earth, and set to overwhelm the order presided over by Zeus in the upper world (819-880). As with the initial myth of succession in which Cronus ascends to dominion over Uranus, we see in the Typhon myth as well Earth's mutable and destructive capacity, her periodical need to disengage the established forms in order to carry on her generative function.

Tartarus and Erebus are closely related as both are situated below the earth and serve as places of banishment⁶. They both share the qualities of Chaos and, to repeat, are associated with death and the Underworld.

Despite being introduced with promising credentials, Eros, "the noblest among the

immortal gods," ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι (120), he receives the most

⁵ Tartarus is also the place where Zeus will banish the gods should they defy his directives (*Iliad* 8. 10-13). The titans Cronus and Iapetus are also "surrounded by deep Tartarus," βαθεὺς δέ τε Τάρταρος ἄμφω (*Iliad* 8. 481). Their place of banishment is further located at the extremity of the earth and sea and beyond the rays of Helios (*Iliad* 8. 478-481).

⁶ The close association of Tartarus and Erebus, Chaos' initial progeny, is also present in Homer. The House of Hades is located in Erebus (*Iliad* 8. 867-868). The Erinyes abide in Erebus (*Iliad* 9. 571-572). The spirits of the dead warriors Atymnius and Maris depart to Erebus (*Iliad* 14. 327) and it is from Erebus that the spirits of the dead emerge in the Necyia (*Odyssey* 11. 37, 564; 20. 355-356). Circe instructs Odysseus when making sacrifice to "the glorious tribes of the dead," κλυτὰ ἔθνη νεκρῶν, to turn the heads of the victims toward Erebus while he looks backward at the infernal streams (*Odyssey* 10. 526-529). The direction of Erebus is precisely defined as being in the West (ζόφος), where the sun sets (*Odyssey* 12. 81). The Homeric epics associate Erebus both with the darkness of the Underworld and the West, associated with the darkness and night as the location of the setting sun. It is also the environment in which the spirits of the dead abide.

CHAPTER 1: 29

meager of mentions among the primal entities. Eros is described as the “loosener of the limbs of the gods and mortals.” He overwhelms their minds and disrupts sound discourse. Later, it is said that he aligns himself with Aphrodite following her emergence (201) and is then no more spoken of. Eros is the only one of the primal entities who does not generate any offspring. He may therefore be regarded as the principle of attraction fulfilling itself in creativity. While Earth initially generates without Eros, she ceases to do so after surrounding herself with the cosmic forces that are capable of exploiting her fecundity.

The action of Eros is not entirely lacking in the line of Chaos, as Erebus and Night, Chaos' first progeny, unite to produce the fortuitous offspring, Aether and Day. To a certain extent, one can see in the self-generated progeny of Night antithetical principles to that which is represented by Eros as many express forms of association in which Eros is lacking. Structurally, Eros appears to be set off in opposition to Chaos. This is expressed formally by their respective placements in the primal generation, first and last. Also, Chaos has a neuter gender with the female capacity for procreation, whereas Eros is masculine but neutral with respect to mating roles. They thus harmonize neatly in formal oppositions. Chaos, as the yawning gap, expresses the state of separation while Eros necessitates its reverse. Eros stands out as the finest of the immortals while, conversely, Chaos characterizes the state of the gods' radical exclusion, their banishment in the Underworld. Finally, Eros is enlisted into the perpetuation of life whereas Chaos limits and corrodes it, ultimately bringing it to an end.

b. The Cosmic Axis

The four Primal Entities constitute the basic elements of the cosmos, and it is through their interactions, primarily through the generation of progeny, that the cosmos is structured and differentiated. Most important in this regard is the first myth of succession. Uranus, as stated above, suppressed his hideous offspring, the Hecatonchires, within the depths of the Earth (later we are told that Zeus freed them from Erebus, 669) causing her great discomfort and reversing her generative function (159-160). In reaction, Earth enlisted the aid of Cronus, the youngest and most fearsome of the Titans, and equipped him with an adamantine sickle made especially for her revenge. She then revealed to her son the place where Uranus concentrated his nightly visits upon her (176). Cronus carried out his assignment and thereby achieved sovereignty over the heavens.

Cronus' emasculation of Uranus also resulted in the indelible separation of sky and earth. Another Titan, Atlas, was assigned by Zeus the task of supporting the sky upon his shoulders and away from the earth (516). In this way the tripartite division of the cosmos is established⁷: a brazen anvil dropped from heaven would fall for nine days and nights before striking the earth on the tenth. Likewise would it fall for the same length of time before attaining the bottom of Tartarus. (720-725).

This triple-layered scheme may be transposed onto the point of juncture between the orders of the cosmos described at length by Hesiod (736-814). It is at this desolate place where the cosmic regions meet (736-739), and where Atlas stands supporting his burden before the pit that leads into Tartarus. This pit, the opening into the Underworld, is encircled by a bronze fence and three layers of night (726-728). Should a man be so unfortunate as to cross this gate, and

⁷The layering scheme articulated by Hesiod is also present in Homer. Zeus states that the depth of Tartarus is as far beneath Hades as heaven is above the earth (*Iliad* 8. 16)

CHAPTER 1: 31

descend into the pit leading into Tartarus, he would be buffeted about by the violent blasts of its winds for an entire year without still having reached its depths. (742-744). Hesiod twice mentions the gods' abhorrence of Tartarus.

The home of Night is beneath the feet of Atlas and within the great chasm. She shares her residence with her daughter Day, although they never occupy it at the same time but pass each other in opposite directions at the threshold dividing the cosmic planes (749). The children of Night, Sleep and Death, abide in the presence of their mother both during her excursions to the upper world and within her infernal home. They are spread over the earth just as day bears light (754-756). Hesiod emphasizes the radical dichotomy between Day and light on the one hand and Night and Death on the other. The beneficent character of the daylight, "sweet to men," μέλιχος ἀνθρώποισι (763) is contrasted with Death, described as having a "steely heart and brazen spirit" (764). Iron and bronze^a are the metals that identify the mortal races in *Works and Days* particularly victimized by death. One may perhaps also see in these metals, especially bronze as it is used to establish the threshold between the upper and lower worlds--additionally, it describes the falling anvil which measures the distances between the cosmic realms--an allusion to the sacrificial blade; in the irreversible instant of its penetration, the *machaira* transports the victim-offering from life to non-being.

The place of banishment of the Titans^b is presented in relation to this place at the end of the earth (728-731). They are held in by brazen walls built by Poseidon and watched over by the Hechatoncheires (732-735). As discussed above, the jail of the Titans has elsewhere been identified as being under Tartarus and beyond Chaos. The "echoing halls" of Hades and Persephone have their

^a Iron and bronze are also the metals used to refer to the entrance into Tartarus. Its gates are made of iron while its passage-way (οὐδός) is bronze (*Iliad* 1. 426).

^b Cronus is mentioned in relation to the "gods below" and, in this capacity serves as witness to the Oath of Styx (*Iliad* 8. 478-481). *Iliad* 15. 225 alludes to the Titanomachy and the banishment of the Titans. Cronus and Iapetus are located in Tartarus, beyond the extremities of earth and sea (*Iliad* 8. 478-481)

CHAPTER 1: 32

entrance close by this threshold (768)¹⁰. It is guarded by a hound, Cerberus of course, who allows all entrants to pass unmolested but turns to devour any who try to leave (769-774). Finally, the river Styx is located in this vicinity. Like Atlas, the personified upper branch of the cosmic axis, she too straddles the cosmic realms, and may be seen to represent the lower branch of this same axis. Styx flows out of her father, the world-encircling Oceanus and down into the Underworld (776). The vaulted roof of her house is supported by silver pillars and extends upward to heaven (779). Styx lives apart from the gods, and has a rather ambivalent status among them despite herself and her children being the first of the immortals to aid Zeus in the Titanomachy, and her being of Titanic stock even. She remains "hated by the immortal gods, terrible Styx," στυγερὴ θεῶς ἀθάνατοι, δεινὴ Στύξ (775-776). This is due to the fact that she embodies the waters used in the oath of the gods" which, if transgressed, forces the delinquent god to suffer a cataleptic trance of sorts for an entire year and then spend the next nine apart from the other immortals (793-805). The punishment for the transgression of the oath of Styx suggests the banishment experienced by the Titans. The infernal waters carry with them the cleavage and dissolution identified with the Underworld and hence evoke the abhorrence of the gods. It is only fitting that the gods must maintain themselves in the state of order which they embody--they must be true to their modalities--and subject their virtue to the test of the oath whenever it is called into question.

Thus does Earth establish the boundary between the world of life, light, and material existence situated above her and the insubstantial gloom down below. The sky, held aloft and separate from the earth, is the abiding place of the gods from where they express their sovereignty, liberated as they are from the more corrosive effects of Chaos' line. The Underworld is the abode of Night and Death,

¹⁰ This placement corresponds with the reference in the *Iliad* 8. 16.

¹¹ *Iliad* 14. 271-276.

CHAPTER 1: 33

and confines the fallen gods, the Titans, in a state of radical exclusion. It is the tension exerted by the cosmic polarities that fixes the condition of earthly existence.

c. The Succession Myths and the Sovereignty of Zeus

The ascension to power of Cronus was accompanied by a curse from Uranus that the Titans¹² would have vengeance exacted upon them (210). Cronus, insecure in his rule and fearing a similar fate to that of his father, suppressed his own children by swallowing them immediately after their birth. He did this after having learned that he too would be displaced by his son. Rhea, understandably outraged by her husband-brother's actions, consulted Gaia and Uranus to devise a stratagem against Cronus. Pregnant with Zeus, Rhea was spirited to Crete where she bore her child, concealed by Gaia in a cave under Mount Aegeum. In the child's stead Cronus was fed a swaddled stone. When Zeus had come of age, Gaia beguiled Cronus while Zeus forced his father to regurgitate his older siblings. Lastly, the rock came up, and Zeus dedicated it at Delphi. Zeus also liberated the Cyclopes and was rewarded with the control over lightning and thunder, the symbols of his own rule (Zeus' birth and ascension to sovereignty are related in lines 453-506).

The Titans responded to Zeus' threat by organizing themselves and launching an attack from their base at Mount Othrys. The battle raged on indecisively for ten years before Gaia revealed to Zeus the concealed location of the Hechatoncheires (617-626). Zeus introduced to them an unknown feeling of exaltation by feeding them nectar and ambrosia, the sustenance of the immortals (642); in their gratitude, they enlisted into Zeus' cause. The assistance of the Hecatonchires proved decisive, and the defeated Titans were sent to the end of the world and banished under Tartarus where they were locked in Poseidon's brazen

¹² Hesiod states that they received their name from Uranus, their father, because they "strove, stretched, strained," (πτοίνω) to accomplish a wicked deed, to usurp his sovereignty (207-210).

CHAPTER 1: 34

cell and guarded by their vanquishers¹³.

The rule of Zeus is framed by Hesiod within two victories of cosmic proportions; the victory over the Titans, the progeny of Earth and Sky (the upper cosmic structures), and his defeat of the monster Typhon, the issue of Earth and Tartarus (the lower aspects). By his victories in these battles, Zeus succeeded in expressing his dominance over the three cosmic realms. As the *kosmokratôr*, his will corresponds to universal order. Whereas his grandfather Uranus made his wife swallow his children, and his father Cronus himself swallow his children, Zeus, acting on the counsel of Earth and Uranus, swallowed his wife Metis as a preventative against usurpation (890-891). The ingested goddess Metis dispenses advice to Zeus from within his body. Zeus, then, has not only united the opposites under his dominance by his conquests over the Titans and Typhon, but also, by having subsumed Metis within himself, unifies the polarities of gendered existence. In this way, as the immortal and completed being--the androgyne--Zeus completely transcends the experience of fundamental cleavage that establishes the context of mortal existence as it is expressed in the myth of Prometheus.

B: MORTAL EXISTENCE

The myth of Prometheus, appearing in both the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, addresses the divided nature of human existence, both in its separation from the completed and enduring existence of the immortal gods and in its own internal dividedness, as it is expressed in gender differentiation. The condition of

dividedness is, in the myth, precipitated by a fall--a loss of the original intimacy with

¹³ *Iliad* 15. 187-193 describes the division of the domains among the sons of Cronus following their victory. Zeus lords over the Heavens, Poseidon rules the waters, and Hades has dominion over the murky darkness (ζόφον ἠερόεντα). Earth and Olympus are shared by all three.

CHAPTER 1: 35

the gods--and this cleavage produces the experience of suffering. To this extent, the myth of the mortal races retains a thematic harmony with the Prometheus-Pandora myth despite the incompatibility of the content of both narratives. Both myths express the attitude that the mortal condition has not always been defined by alienation and suffering; that, despite the present antipathy (itself the source of mortal suffering), there existed a time when mortals enjoyed the company of the immortals. Additionally, both myths hold out the prospect for a return to the original harmony between the ontological orders expressed by mortals and immortals.

a. The Origin of Sacrifice and the Affliction of Pandora

During a dispute between mortals and immortals at Mecone, the Titan Prometheus, son of Iapetus and Clymene (507-508), mediated the disagreement by dividing the portions of an ox with the intent to befuddle Zeus (535-541). He set before the men the flesh concealed within the paunch, while he placed before Zeus the bones disguised by the beast's fat. Although he sensed the ruse, Zeus complied and accepted the allotment placed before him (549-551), all the while plotting retribution against mortals for Prometheus' insolence. It is on the basis of this selection that mortals burn the bones of oxen upon their altars in acknowledgment of the gods (556-557). Zeus however did not suffer this disrespect to pass but withdrew from mortals the privilege of fire (562-564).

Prometheus responded on behalf of the mortals by kindling a flame from Olympus and brought it to men concealed in a fennel stalk (565-566). When Zeus noticed the light emitted by the earthly fires, he further devised a retribution against them and punished Prometheus for his crime. Unlike his brother Menoetius ὤβριςτος Μενόϊτιος, (514) whom Zeus banished in Erebus, Prometheus was chained and impaled on a crag. An eagle, Zeus' symbol of justice, visited the Titan

CHAPTER 1: 36

daily, perpetually eating his liver¹⁴ which regenerated over the course of the night. It was Heracles who finally slew the bird and freed Prometheus, according to the will of Zeus (521-531).

In punishment for their acceptance of Prometheus' stolen gift, Zeus commissioned the smith-god Hephaestus to fashion for men the *kalon kakon* (585), or woman. The god crafted her out of earth and enlisted the aid of Athena in adorning her. Hephaestus made for her a wonderful crown of gold on which were engraved the images of all living creatures (570-584). Her garments were made of silver and she wore a veil and a wreath of flowers. The smith-gods creation was the progenitor of the "race of women" (γένος γυναικῶν), which afflicts men with sorrows and absorbs their livelihood. Hesiod states that woman places man in double jeopardy; if he unites with her, he must suffer the debilitating condition she imposes upon him, as the drones do the bees, but if he is to avoid her, he will have no hope of continuance after death (589-607). Even in a good marriage, grief cannot be avoided as the children will be disruptive (607-610).

After admonishing his brother Perses, Hesiod, in *Works and Days*, resumes the story of Prometheus' theft of fire and the creation of Pandora to explain the cause of mortal suffering. She is named Pandora (*Works and Days* 81) as all the immortals presented her with gifts. Athena taught her needlework and weaving (*Works*, 63). Aphrodite bestowed upon her graciousness, longing, and cares (*Works*, 65-66). Hermes put in her "the attitude of a bitch and a thieving nature" (κύνεόν τε νόον καὶ ἐπικλοπον ἦθος) (*Works*, 67). Although forewarned by Prometheus, Epimetheus, his inept brother, nonetheless accepted Pandora along with her jar as a gift from Zeus delivered by Hermes. Following receipt of the gift,

¹⁴ The liver is a particularly important component of sacrifice. It is the most significant of the "noble viscera," the *splanchna*. The lobes of the liver, as mantic apparatus, disclosed the will of the gods, that is, their willingness to accept or refuse the sacrifice (J-L. Durand, "Greek Animals," in M. Detienne & J-P. Vernant. *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989] p. 98). This function of the liver, however, is not attested to in either Hesiod or Homer. The tasting of the *splanchna* is part of the sacrificial feast described in *Iliad* 1. 464.

CHAPTER 1: 37

mortals began to suffer and their lives to be shortened on account of their misery (*Works*, 90-93). Once on earth, Pandora removed the lid from her jar and the plagues put within it by the gods were dispersed throughout the world. Hope was the only gift of the gods not to escape from the container, compelled as it was by the will of Zeus to remain within (*Works*, 94-105).

The intervention of Prometheus on humanity's behalf has been entirely unfortunate. Preceding Prometheus' ruse the mortal race enjoyed a rather effortless existence lived in community with the gods:

Πρὶν μὲν γὰρ ζώεσκον ἐπὶ χθονὶ θυλ' ἀνθρώπων
νόσφιν ἄτερ τε κακῶν καὶ ἄτερ χαλεποῖο πόνοιο
νούσων τ' ἀργαλέων, αἳ τ' ἀνδράσι Κῆρας
ἔδωκαν. (*Works*, 90-92)

"For previously the tribes of men lived on the earth
unaffected by and away from evils, away from
difficult toils, diseases and hardships which the
Kêres have brought to men."

Prometheus had established for men the terms of their communion with the gods by assigning the sacrificial allotments. The division of the sacrificial portions, having received the sanction of Zeus, codifies Prometheus' crime and confronts mortals with their radical separation from the stable and enduring existence enjoyed by the gods. The punishment imposed by Zeus upon mortals for Prometheus' crime, the withdrawal of fire, carried with it the inability for civilized existence. Not only does the control of fire make culture possible, it is necessary for sacrifice--for communicating with the gods--upon which mortals depend to elevate themselves beyond mere animality. Prometheus responded to this crisis by surreptitiously reestablishing the network of communication but, in so doing, precipitated another cleavage; this time embedded in the very fabric of mortal existence. Sexual

CHAPTER 1: 38

differentiation imposes, if Hesiod's logic may be so interpreted, the tension--or the strife--which alienates and debilitates mortals in punishment for their acceptance of fire, the possession of the gods¹⁵. However, along with woman comes Hope (Ἑλπίς). The paradoxical state of Hope hidden in Pandora's jar (at once inaccessible for the present, yet still preserved for posterity) carries with it the prospect for a return to the primordial unity, the shared company of mortals and immortals who, as Hesiod states, have a common origin: ὥς ὁμόθεν γεγάασι θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι. (*Works*, 108)

b. The Myth of the Mortal Races

Lines 109-201 of *Works and Days* describe the genealogies of the mortal races. There are five of these, each of which is designated by a corresponding metal with the exception of the fourth, the Heroic Race, and each of which is generated separately by the gods. The races all have separate origins and they undergo their declines without spilling into or begetting another race. The final race was the one Hesiod claimed as his own.

During the reign of Kronos, the gods dwelling on Olympus (the Titans presumably)

¹⁵ "On comprend mieux alors la place privilégiée que le récit accorde à Pandora, dont la duplicité est comme le symbole d'une existence humaine ambiguë. Dans le personnage de Pandora viennent s'inscrire toutes les tensions, toutes les ambivalences qui marquent le statut de l'homme, entre bêtes et dieux. Par le charme de son apparence extérieure, pareille aux déesses immortelles, Pandora reflète l'éclat du divin. Par la chienne de son esprit et de son tempérament internes elle touche à la bestialité. Par le mariage qu'elle représente, par la parole articulée et la force que Zeus ordonne de mettre en elle, elle est proprement humaine (*Tr.* 61-2: ἐν δ' ἀνθρώπου θέμεν αὐδὴν καὶ σθένος). Encore cette humanité à laquelle elle participe comme compagne de l'homme, revers inévitable de l'état masculin, ne va-t-elle pas sans ambiguïté. Parce qu'elle parle le langage de l'homme, qu'il peut dialoguer avec elle, elle appartient à l'espèce humaine, mais elle fonde un γένος γυναικῶν, une race de femmes, qui n'est pas exactement celle des mâles sans être tout à fait autre chose. Et la parole articulée que Zeus lui a conférée comme aux hommes ne lui sert pas à dire ce qui est, à transmettre à autrui le vrai, mais à cacher le vrai dans le faux, à donner dans la forme des mots l'être à ce qui n'est pas, pour mieux tromper l'esprit de ses partenaires masculins (*Tr.*, 78)" (J-P. Vernant, *Mythe et société*, 192-193).

CHAPTER 1: 39

created the Golden Race of men (110). Their period of existence was characterized by a life lived like that of the gods; free from despair, hardship, pain, and the decrepitude of advancing years (112). They yielded to death as to sleep (116). Earth provided for them effortlessly and abundantly, and they were loved by the gods (120). At its conclusion, this race was covered over by the earth but its members maintained a post-existence, they are the δαίμονες ἄγνοι ἐπιχθόνιοι (122), who serve as φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων (123). These dwell on the earth enveloped in mist, observing the just acts of mortals and dispensing wealth (125-126). This station was a royal gift of honour bestowed upon them, presumably, by the gods (126).

The poet is quick to point out that the Silver Race was "much inferior" (πολὺ χειρότερον) (127), and differed both in physical stature and moral disposition from the preceding race (128). The Silver child remained dependent on its mother for the first one hundred years of its life (130). Upon attaining maturity, he had a brief existence as a result of his insolence. The Silver Race was given to harming one another and failed to acknowledge the gods with sacrifice as men must (136). For this, Zeus, by this time having succeeded Cronus, had done with them (138). Despite their inveterate puerility, this race too is accorded funerary honours, however of a lesser order than those accorded the Golden Men. In their post-existence they are known as ὑποχθόνιοι μάκαρες θνητοῖς (141)

CHAPTER 1: 40

Hesiod emphatically describes the brutal might of the Brazen Men¹⁰ (145). They gave themselves over to the arts of Ares, and annihilated themselves on the battlefield (152). They fashioned all their implements, including their dwellings, with bronze as they had no knowledge of iron (151). It is stated that they did not eat bread (146) which suggests they were not cultivators, but their need to fashion implements further suggests that they had to sustain themselves by means of their own enterprise. Hesiod relates that Zeus was their creator and he fashioned them from ash trees, ἐκ μελιῶν (145). Following their self-extinction, they abide without posterity in the house of Hades (153).

The Race of Heroes is described as having been more just and virtuous than the Bronze Men. They are the "the divine race of hero-men who are called demigods--the preceding peoples--throughout the limitless earth," ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος, οἱ καλέονται / ἡμίθεοι, προτέρη γενεῇ κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν (159-160), but were also given to war and a portion of their number succumbed in the epic battles of Thebes and Troy (166). The victorious survivors however were translated "into the Islands of the Blessed," ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι (171) where they have reactualized the life experience of the Golden Men, but have perfected it insofar as they are free from death (this is not explicitly stated). Like the Golden Men, the Heroes too are lorded over by Cronus whom Zeus released and appointed to this office. Finally,

¹⁰ Bronze has in both Hesiod's and Homer's poetry a particularly evocative symbolism. Bronze, the metal of armament, is "sharp" and "unyielding"; it gleams like the Dog of Orion, the brightest of the stars that signals both the harvest and the time of pestilence (*Iliad* 22. 25-31). Bronze is also the metal used in the construction of thresholds and passage-ways, particularly the demarcation between life and death. The placement of the Bronze Race, separating the Gold and Silver Men from the Heroes and Iron Men may also be seen to delimit a certain boundary. As I shall attempt to demonstrate in my later discussion, there are a striking number of correspondences between the Race of Gold and the Heroes on the one hand, and between the Silver and Iron Men on the other. Owing to these similarities, the Gold and Silver races appear to prefigure the Heroes and contemporary mortals. The Brazen Men establish a median between these two groupings and, unlike any of the other races, are completely ignored by the gods. To this extent, they are the basest expression of mortal existence, a fact that is amplified by their self-annihilation as a result of their extreme violence. The Brazen Men are anonymous and forgotten in contrast to the other races which, in one capacity or other, have contact with the present.

CHAPTER 1: 41

the Heroes receive both honour and glory (169^b).

The Race of Iron is the one in which Hesiod situates himself. He introduces his description of the Iron Race by stating his wish to have been born either before or after it (175). Life for these mortals involves daily toil and nightly suffering (178). The gods appear to be not simply indifferent to mortals, but even hostile as "the gods will give them troubles that are hard to bear," χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας (178), although they have recourse to some goodness amid their evils (179). However, this amount of goodness is in the process of dissipating under the pressure of the strife that marks this age (182-192). Hesiod forecasts the future prospects for this race as follows:

Strength will be right and reverence will cease to be; and the wicked will hurt the worthy man, speak false words against him, and will swear an oath upon them. Envy, foul-mouthed, delighting in evil, with scowling face, will go along with wretched men one and all. And then Aidōs and Nemesis, with their sweet forms wrapped in white robes, will go from the wide-pathed earth and forsake mankind to join the company of the deathless gods: and bitter sorrows will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil (195-201).

The race will finally be extinguished by Zeus when children are born grey-headed (181).

Apart from the Heroic Race, the overall exposition appears to outline a progressive sequence of degeneration from a blissful condition at its origin to the present state of

CHAPTER 1: 42

dissolution with even worse prospects for the more immediate future, that is, until the extinction of the Race of Iron. This is reflected both in the moral symbolism of the races' metallic nomenclature as well as their lot in the afterlife. In both cases the Heroic Race stands out as an anomaly. The gradation of metals is self-evident, and each communicates a distinct moral quality which is reflected in Hesiod's description. The Golden Race had a noble and effortless existence, and enjoyed the love of the gods. The reason for its extinction is not stated and must remain an enigma. However, this race was generated by the immortals during the reign of Cronus and, as we know from the *Theogony*, this Titan was dislodged by Zeus. This speculation is encouraged by the disclosure that the following race, the Silver Race, was under the rule of Zeus.

Thus, while situated at the beginning of Hesiod's chronology, the Race of Gold extends back into a prior epoch, that of the reign of the Titans and, as such, was the product of the mature and refined craft work of these long-established heavenly rulers. In radical contrast to the Golden Men is the race of Silver which follows them. These are described as being utterly puerile. They are an immature race insofar as they cannot assume the responsibilities of social living; they cannot desist from harming one another and they disavow the gods. In this way, they give the impression of being something of a botched first-attempt undertaken by the newly ascended generation of immortals. In any event, the Silver Race was dispensed with by Zeus because they would not offer sacrifice to the gods. They are described in the most ignominious terms by Hesiod.

The Brazen Race was created by Zeus and sprung from ash trees, and this designation of origin also refers to the mortals who disputed with the gods at Mekone. However, the Prometheus myth cannot be transposed onto the Race of Bronze as the life experiences of the mortals related in the two accounts are incompatible. The association of humans with ash trees seems to relate a general

CHAPTER 1: 43

view about the association of mortal existence with vegetative life. Hesiod describes the Brazen Men as *aplastoi* (148) and this designation is born out by their life-experience. Unlike the Race of Silver, which is described as μέγα νήπιος and are thus *aplastoi* in its own right, the Bronze Men are "not like the Silver Men but are fearsome and strong" (οὐκ ἀργυρέω οὐδὲν ὁμοῖον...δεινόν τε καὶ ὄβριμον). In fashioning the Bronze Race, Zeus appears to have over-compensated for his previous creation's puerility by giving these a superabundance of manly strength. The effect of this compensation however produces the same result as these too could not achieve the interpersonal harmony necessary for social living. The Brazen Men come to an end at their own hands and pass forgotten into the domain of Hades.

Hesiod supplies several interesting features about this enigmatic race of mortals. First, the fact that they require implements sets them off radically from the two previous races. The Golden Race, of course, had no need of tools as their life substance was freely provided to them by the abundant earth. They lived in symbiosis with nature and were cared for by the gods; therefore they did not require the mediating function of culture. The Silver Race too is described without reference to tools but, rather than being symbiotic with their environments, they were in a protracted state of complete dependence on their mothers. Needless to say, the mother of the "Silver Child" is logically problematic, but appears simply to be a device used by Hesiod to emphasize their prolonged childhood, hence their condition of dependence. Upon separation from their mothers, the Silver Men failed at the tasks incumbent upon the citizen; to be reasonable with one's fellows, and to give the gods their due. While it was primarily their ὕβρις towards the gods that brought about the downfall of the Silver Race, it was the ὕβρις of the Brazen Men directed at each other which precipitated their own decline.

The emergence of the Heroic Race interrupts Hesiod's metallic scheme and

CHAPTER 1: 44

reintroduces into his chronology the perfection of the origins as it was expressed by the Race of Gold. The earth, upon which they came into being, is described as "all-nourishing" (χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ) (157) and the race itself as "more just and noble" (δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον) (158). Like their Brazen predecessors, their age was defined by warfare, and those who perished on the battlefields shared the same fate as the Men of Bronze. However, the surviving victors were translated by Zeus to the Islands of the Blessed. Hesiod's presentation of this destination closely approximates the account of Proteus to Menelaus of the ' Ἠλύσιον πεδῖον in the *Odyssey* 4. 563. In this place on the shores of Oceanus and far from the gods and men¹⁷, the Heroes live joyously under the rule of Cronus as had the Golden Men.

The suggestion that the heroes of epic lore received a funerary cult can only be inferred from Hesiod's statement that they are accorded τιμὴ καὶ κῦδος (169b). However, their seemingly indolent and aloof existence beyond the mortal domain would appear to render them unavailable for worldly intervention, unlike the spirits of the Gold and Silver Men. At the end of the *Theogony*, Hesiod presents Φαέτοντα, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελον ἄνδρα (987) and further described as δαίμονα διον (991), who was mythically associated with the goddess Aphrodite, and whose spirit served as the nocturnal watcher of the goddess' shrine. Phæton's depiction is reminiscent of the hero cult as he is a spirit who maintained an active presence (associated with the night, the time of hero propitiation) at the sanctuary of a god. Hesiod relates that he was awarded prizes at the contests established in honour of Amphidamas at Chalcis (*Works*, 654). The fact that funerary games were held for Amphidamas does not necessarily make of him a hero, as some have

¹⁷ The location of the Islands of the Blessed may be homologized with the placement of the Cosmic Axis described above.

suggested¹⁸.

The spirits of the first two races continued to exercise an influence on the lives of mortals past their own period. The spirits of the Golden Men are described as mobile and invisible δαίμονες which protect the living and serve as Zeus' observers of justice among mortals (250-255). The spirits of the Silver Men abide at their grave sites (or, at least, remain beneath the earth), and their honours seem to suggest the propitiation of anonymous spirits located at ancient graves¹⁹.

Hesiod introduces his description of the Iron Race with the wish to have been born either before or afterwards, and not belong to this race at all. The prospects of this race are not good, and it will come to an end in the same way as the race of Silver, by the hand of Zeus. The Iron Men, just as the Heroes recreated the life-experience of the Golden Men, share common features with their Silver predecessors. Zeus will exterminate them for the same reasons as he did this former race, for their enmity to one another, and for their lack of respect for the gods, οὐδὲ θεῶν ὅπιν εἰδότες (187). However, the life's course of the Iron Men will degenerate to the point where it exactly reverses that of the Silver Men; instead of a protracted infancy followed by a rapid demise upon maturity, the Iron Men will, before being abolished by Zeus, be born in a geriatric condition. Hesiod also admonishes his brother Perses using the very description he applies to the Silver Men, μέγα νήπιε (286).

Much of Hesiod's description of the Iron Race is given in the form of a prophetic forecast that outlines its steady degeneration. The dissipation brought about by the effects of Strife, the child of Night, which have found their expression in mortal affairs, will ultimately exhaust the life-force of mortals. The evanescence of life must be accepted, but it need not be submitted to fatalistically--and this is the

¹⁸ M. L. West regards Amphidamas as a hero (M. L. West, *Hesiod, Works and Days* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 326-327. Claude Bérard also takes this view (Bérard, "Récupérer," 98).

¹⁹ M. L. West, *Hesiod, Works and Days*, 186.

CHAPTER 1: 46

thrust of Hesiod's appeal. He is putting forward in *Works and Days* a prescription for right living in hard times that involves the informed choice between the two Strifes operating in the world, Οὐκ ἄρα μοῦνον ἔην Ἐρίδων γένος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν εἰσὶ δύω (11-12). With the knowledge of why things are the way they are orientation in the world becomes possible. Knowledge of Zeus' supremacy and the awareness that it is founded upon justice, the powerful and divine force accessible to mortals, makes it possible to live harmoniously within the cosmos, as Hesiod admonishes his brother Perses (i.e., "Everyman") to do.

In light of Hesiod's forecast this will become ever increasingly more difficult, but it is not inaccessible to his contemporaries. Hesiod maintains that the immortals are still near to mortals and Zeus' "watchers" are still active in the world (249-253). Furthermore, Zeus will intervene in human affairs (1-10, 238-247). Hesiod expresses the practical virtue of justice by linking it with fertility and honest labour undertaken with a mind turned towards it:

οὐδέ ποτ' ἰθυδίκησι μετ' ἀνδράσι λιμὸς ὀπηδεῖ
οὐδ' ἄτη, θαλίσσης δὲ μεμηλότα ἔργα νέμονται.
(230-231).

"And nor does famine follow upon truly just men,
nor ruin, but, caring for their work, they tend to their
pastures in prosperity."

Justice elevates humanity beyond bestiality (275-280) and establishes the terms of the relationship between mortals and immortals. It is through just acts that mortals express their natures and these can only be undertaken with knowledge of Zeus' sovereignty over the cosmos.

Hesiod's songs communicate healing knowledge. As the "attendant of the Muses," Μουσάων θεράπων, Hesiod "sings the fame of former men and the blessed gods

CHAPTER 1: 47

who hold place on Olympus" (*Theogony* 100-101). The effect of his song is to produce a forgetfulness of existential suffering (*Theogony* 98-103) by awakening in his audience the memory of the gods' (ἀθανάτων ἱερὸν γένος αἰὲν ἔόντων) abiding dominion over Creation (*Theogony* 105-115). In his celebration of Olympian rule, Hesiod establishes the patterns of belief underlying the vast array of pious acts that constitute the ancient Greek devotional complex.

Hero worship is not unaffected by Hesiod's disclosures. Certain of the elect among the god-like Heroes, themselves demigods, have perfected mortal existence by re-establishing its original condition as expressed by the Golden Race. Of all the preceding races, the Heroes are the only ones to have certain of their members individually identified (all in relation to the epic battles of Thebes and Troy). In the context of the song, contemporary mortals, who preserve the memory of their deeds, acknowledge the honour and glory of their semi-divine predecessors. These ὀλβιοὶ ἥρωες continue their existence far from the gods (*Works* 169) and apart from mortals at the ends of the earth (*Works* 168).

The Silver Men, described as ὑποχθόνιοι μάκαρες θνητοῖς (*Works* 141) and the recipients of *timê*, define these former mortals as chthonic potencies and, perhaps, the recipients of a cult. However, their honour appears to stem from their great antiquity--hence their proximity to the blissful origins--and not from the gods who obliterated them. The members of Golden Race endure as δαίμονες ἀγνοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι (*Works* 122) protecting mortals from harm and safeguarding justice. Thus all the former races, with the exception of the bellicose Brazen men, maintain an effective presence among the living. The Golden Race and the Heroes-*hemitheoi*, however, endure as articulations of Olympian rule.

PREFIGURATIONS OF THE HERO CULT IN THE HOMERIC EPICS

While Hesiod contributes the belief in the heroes as a separate and prior mortal race which he describes as demigods, the Homeric epics render palpable the life-experience of these privileged beings by recounting their greatest exploit, the Trojan War'. In his telling, Homer supplies a vast amount of material of religious significance as the thrust of his narrative contributes an appreciation of the way in which the will of Zeus interconnects with the lives of mortals. The ritual components of the hero cult, while not presented in a systematic fashion, are nonetheless present in the epics. Furthermore, their depictions accord with the Hesiodic belief that the "former men" serve, among the living, as vehicles for the maintenance of Olympian rule. I shall highlight these features in order to substantiate my claim that, as with Hesiod, the Homeric epics contribute the matrix of belief that informed the worship of heroes in ancient Greece

Prior to the publication of Theodora Hadzisteliou Price's article "Hero-Cult and Homer,"² scholars had generally regarded the hero cult as an archaic "survival" later transformed as a result of the transmission of epic poetry³. Hadzisteliou Price, however, has asserted the position that the hero cult was a feature of the religious repertoire contained within the Homeric epics. Her insights support the most recent archaeological evidence that confirms the vitality of the hero cult at the proposed dating of the epics'

¹ It is not insignificant that Hesiod, in his description of the Heroic Race, makes mention of, along with the battle of Thebes, the expedition to reclaim Helen from the Trojans.

² T. Hadzisteliou Price, "Hero-Cult and Homer" *Historia* 22 (1973), 129-144.

³ This is the view first advanced by Rohde. H. J. Rose's contribution to the Oxford Classical Dictionary's most recent edition (1970) claims that the hero cult is not present in Homer.

CHAPTER 2: 49

composition in the eighth century. Furthermore, the references to certain aspects of hero worship in Homer attest its significance within the context of polis culture. In the following discussion, I shall elaborate upon the contributions made by Hadzisteliou Price.

A. THE USE OF THE TERM ΗΡΩΣ IN THE EPICS

The appellation *ήρωας* is widely used in the epics as a title of honour and is also used collectively, as in *ήρωες Δαναοί* or *ήρωες Ἀχαιοί*. Not only the great champions of the epics are identified as heroes but this term also describes the Phæacians, a people who enjoyed a particularly intimate rapport with the gods (*Odyssey* 12. 44). Hector the Trojan champion is called a hero (*Iliad* 10. 416). He is also revered by his fellows as a god (*Iliad* 22. 303-304, 434) and is described as a god among men (*Iliad* 24. 258). Hector, however, is not a son of the immortals, often a criterion for hero-status, as his enemies well know (*Iliad* 10. 50). When Apollo protests against Achilles' treatment of Hector's corpse Hera reminds the god of the fact that Hector is born of a mortal, while Achilles is the son of a goddess and therefore worthy of greater honour (*Iliad* 24. 55-64). Her remark effectively excuses Achilles' sacrilegious acts because of his closer proximity to divinity. Similarly, Apollo attempts to incite Æneas to challenge Achilles by reminding him that he has the superior goddess--Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus--as a mother (*Iliad* 20. 105-107). Thus, while the honorific designation of *ήρωας* is broadly applied, and therefore not easily defined with any measure of precision, those who are the direct offspring of the gods clearly enjoy a higher esteem. Having said this, however, it must be pointed out that certain heroes who have mortal parents achieve the highest level of prestige, as for instance Odysseus, Diomedes, Ajax, and Agamemnon.

CHAPTER 2: 50

There is some indication that ἥρωας denotes in the Homeric epics the class of demigods as it does in Hesiod. In *Iliad* 12. 23, the poet refers to the dead warriors in this way: ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν⁴, *Odyssey* 4. 562-565 also conforms to the description of the heroic race articulated in Hesiod. Hadzisteliou Price argues that the frequent usage of the term does not make it correspond to a Mycenæan formula⁵, nor can it be regarded simply as a device of poetic discourse. The broad usage of the appellation does not negate the possibility that the Homeric hero is equivalent to a demigod. The heroes' lineages are always traced back to a god, very often Zeus (i.e., Διοτρεφής, Διογενής); this represents a highly significant--perhaps the single most significant--criterion of hero status in its semi-divine quality.

An additional and related feature of the epics is the pervasive nostalgia for a glorious past. In itself, this sentiment greatly contributed to the status the epics enjoyed. The attitude that greatness belonged to a bygone age is expressed early on in *Iliad* 1. 259-270 when Nestor, the most senior and experienced of the Achæan warriors, recalls the former generation of heroes. These men, the wizened general declares, were much greater than his present contemporaries, and he describes certain of them as "like unto the gods" (ἀντίθεος and ἐπιείκελος ἀθανάτοισιν). In a similar vein,

Odysseus defers to the memory of the earlier heroes Heracles and Eurytus

⁴ This is the only explicit reference to the Homeric heroes as demigods. B. C. Dietrich states that it draws "attention to the hero's divine descent rather than his semi divine nature." (B. C. Dietrich, *The Origins of Greek Religion* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), p. 91.). I cannot understand how one may differentiate between these two aspects; the heroes, in my view, are semi divine (*hemitheoi*) because they are the progeny of the gods.

⁵ Hadzisteliou Price argues that the "Ti-ri-si-ro-e" tablet from Pylos does not shed any light on the usage of the term "hero" in Mycenæan times, nor does it indicate hero worship. (Hadzisteliou Price, "Hero-Cult," 131).

"Le mycénien fournit la forme de datif *tiriseroe* à Pylos...= τρις-ηρωι. Le mot est commodément traduit <<héros>> d'Homère quel que soit leur rang... Le culte des héros ignorés des textes homériques est certainement très ancien, puisqu'il est attesté, semble-t-il, en mycénien ou le datif *=τρις-ηρωι signifie <<au triple héros>>, c'est-à-dire <<au héros très antique>>, cf. Τριτοπάτορες, etc..." (P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Grecque : Histoire des mots* [Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1968], p 417.).

CHAPTER 2: 51

stating that these men approached the immortals in their skill at archery (*Odyssey* 8. 224-225). Sarpedon, the beloved son of Zeus, is taunted by Heracles' son Tlepolemus with the rebuke that he is greatly inferior to Zeus' former mortal progeny (*Iliad* 5. 633-637). Thus the view that the past constituted a period when there existed a greater intimacy between mortals and immortals is clearly expressed in the epics. Additionally, Diomedes, Ajax, Hector and Æneas easily lift stones that not two contemporary mortals could lift (*Iliad* 5. 303-304; 12. 382, 445-449; 20. 285). Such examples, however, appear trivial when compared with the general depiction of the life-circumstances of the Homeric heroes. Both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are set in a fantastic time when the gods engaged themselves directly in the affairs of mortals. The intimacy between the gods and heroes serves to elevate the Homeric personages to a status well beyond the aspirations of later generations. Thus the frequent usage of the term ἥρωας in the epics--along with such characterizations as ἰσόθεος, ἀντίθεος--does not negate the religious connotation of the term. Instead, it reinforces the designation of the Homeric characters as the constituents of a higher order; a class of beings that experienced a greater intimacy with the gods.

Perhaps because the epics are set in the Heroic Age, the Homeric poet(s) do not present the features of the hero cult in a cohesive and systematic fashion. The hero cult was the possession of a later race of mortals and served as the means by which the later mortals acknowledged the founding acts of their culture-establishing predecessors. The Homeric epics perform this very same function; as such, they too comprise an extremely significant aspect of hero worship. However, the single most important contribution of the epics was their inauguratory function in shaping a collective identity that

CHAPTER 2: 52

we refer to as "ancient Greek." Given the status of the epics, many of their depictions establish the paradigms for cultural attitudes and practices that extend throughout their sphere of influence⁶. With regard to the hero cult, the presentation of funerary beliefs and the consultation of the spirit of Teiresias by Odysseus, are especially significant as disparate--but nonetheless constitutive--elements of an emerging hero-cult.

B. FUNERALS AND BURIALS

The Homeric epics place crucial emphasis on the performance of funeral rites.⁷ The narratives disclose two basic functions of obsequies (κτέρεα): (1) to establish the soul (ψυχή) in the Underworld where it will abide eternally; (2) to serve as an enduring testimonial to the fame (κλέος) of the deceased. In both ways, the funeral is the means by which the inconsequence of mortal existence is overcome. To this end, the Homeric funeral comprises the cremation of the body of the deceased and the erection of a mound and pillar over the remains.

Divine law safeguards the right of mortals to receive a standard burial (*Iliad* 24, 113-114, *Odyssey*, 11. 72). More specifically, mortals are due a cremation of their remains, as expressed in the formula, "I honour the one having died with fire" (λαγχάνω θανόντα πυρός) (*Iliad* 7. 79-80; 15. 350; 23. 76). The fact that cremation constitutes the basic funerary rite can be inferred from the reference to the cremations performed by both armies on behalf of

⁶ C. Mossé, *La Grèce archaïque d'Homère à Eschyle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984), pp. 17-20.

⁷ I. Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society: The Rise of the Greek City-State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 46-47.

M. P. Nilsson contrasts the depictions of burial in the epics with Mycenaean burial. Cremation was not practiced by the Mycenaeans while it was customary in ancient Greece.

CHAPTER 2: 53

the war dead (*Iliad* 7. 427-432). Following death, the souls of the departed descend to Hades (*Iliad* 22. 362). However, for the soul to make this transition, it must pass through the flames of the pyre. On the night preceding his funeral, the spirit of Patroclus appears to Achilles and states that he will not be able to leave Hades once his corpse has passed through the fire (*Iliad* 23. 76). Additionally, the spirit of Elpenor appears to Odysseus with the request that he be cremated and interred beneath a mound marked off by his rowing oar as a commemorative pillar. He states that if this is not done, Odysseus will anger the gods (*Odyssey* 11. 71-78). Both instances convey the belief that the soul departs to Hades after death; however, it is only by means of cremation that the soul is properly established in the realm of the dead. Prior to cremation and burial, the spirits of both men are depicted as existing in an ambiguous state that has them at once among the living and the dead. The depictions in the epics make clear that cremation is the right of all mortals; it is sanctioned by the gods and completes the soul's passage into the Underworld.

Fire is the basic element of culture and, as such, the principal vehicle by which the gods are acknowledged in the sacrificial act (θύσια)^a. As the basis of obsequies, cremation commemorates the deceased as a member of culture, the expression of the gods' relationship with mortals.

^a Jean-Pierre Vernant makes an eloquent comparison between cremation and sacrifice that emphasizes the religious-cultural function of fire. To quote him at length: "Si l'on compare le rituel du sacrifice et les pratiques funéraires, on constate que <<la part du feu>> s'inverse : dans le bûcher funèbre le feu consume ce qui, dans le sacrifice, est au contraire préservé pour être consommé par les hommes : les chairs de la victime, lourdes de graisses, part des <<hommes mortels>> qui en font leur repas, ayant besoin pour subsister de manger, suivant les exigences d'une vie périssable qu'il faut indéfiniment nourrir pour qu'elle ne s'éteigne pas. Les <<os blancs>> de l'animal sacrifié, immangeable et incorruptibles, immangeables parce qu'incorruptibles, sont brûlés sur l'autel comme part des dieux immortels auxquels ils parviennent sous forme de fumées odorantes. Ces mêmes os blancs, dans les funérailles, demeurent sous terre comme la trace--prolongée par le tertre, leséma, la stèle--que laisse ici-bas la personne du mort, la forme dans laquelle il reste, dans son absence, présent au monde des vivants" (J-P. Vernant, *L'individu, la mort, l'amour: Sois-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne* [Paris: Gallimard, 1989], pp. 71-72).

CHAPTER 2: 54

Consequently, a death that is not brought to completion by cremation is the ultimate expression of exclusion. Odysseus, fearing he may perish at sea, expresses the regret that he was not slain at Troy as he would then have received funeral rights and his κλέος would have endured. Death at sea--an anonymous passing--is described in this passage as a "miserable death" (λευγαλέος θανάτος) (*Odyssey* 5. 311-312). As well, Hector threatens his troops with death without the right of fire (λαγχάνω θανόντα πυρός), should they tarry in battle (*Iliad* 15. 350).

The corpse ravaged by beasts⁹, however, is the greatest degradation to which a mortal may be submitted, "this is indeed the most wretched thing for miserable mortals" (τοῦτο δὴ οἰκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν) (*Iliad* 22. 76)¹⁰. In this passage, Priam fears that he may be mangled by his own house dogs. He also fears a similar fate for his son (*Iliad* 22. 89). Hector taunts the mortally wounded Patroclus with the prospect that his body will be fed to the vultures (*Iliad* 17. 836). Achilles tosses Lycaon into the river so that his body will be consumed by the fishes and therefore go unburied and unmourned (*Iliad* 21. 122-127). The corpse of Astyanax, his mother predicts, will be ravaged by worms and devoured by dogs, as Hector, his father, can no longer defend the city (*Iliad* 22. 508-509). Ægisthus, the murderer of Agamemnon and hence the violator of divine law, deserves, in Nestor's eyes, to have his corpse rent apart by birds and dogs in the fields far from the cultural space defined by the city (*Odyssey* 3. 258-261).

The most significant portrayal of the opposition between customary (divinely sanctioned) obsequies and the ignominious disposal of the corpse

⁹ J. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 167-223.

¹⁰ J-P. Vernant, *L'individu, la mort, l'amour*, 41-49.

CHAPTER 2: 55

at the jaws of beasts (precultural, savage) is Achilles' treatment of the corpse of Hector. During the funeral lamentations of Patroclus, the wrathful (bestial) Achilles declares that he will dispose of Hector's corpse by giving it over to the dogs. To compound his savagery, he vows that he will slaughter twelve Trojan warriors over his companion's pyre (*Iliad* 23. 21-23). Following the funeral of Patroclus, Achilles continues to defile the corpse of Hector and thereby provokes divine anger (*Iliad* 24. 113-119). Upon having the judgment of Zeus relayed to him by his mother Thetis, Achilles defers to it and agrees to return the corpse of Hector for burial (*Iliad* 24. 139-142). By conforming to the will of Zeus, the character of Achilles undergoes a profound transformation attested by his treatment of Hector's corpse. The *Iliad* concludes with a celebration of Achilles' civility through the medium of the guest-host relation comprising himself and Priam, the king of Troy and Hector's father. The encounter between Achilles and Priam places emphasis on the hero's compassion and empathy for his war-foe. Not only does Achilles return the body to the king, he grants Priam a cessation of battle appropriate to the length of time needed for the funeral of Hector, the Trojan champion (*Iliad* 24. 656-658).

The attention paid to the corpses of those to whom the gods grant honour further demonstrates that the performance of obsequies expresses divine will. Zeus dispatches Apollo to the battle site to remove the corpse of Sarpedon before it is captured by the Achæans. The god bathes the corpse in a river, anoints it with ambrosia, dresses it in "divine clothing," ἄμβροτα εἵματα, and has it conveyed by Sleep and Death to the slain warrior's homeland (*Iliad* 16. 677-683). Thetis promises to preserve the corpse of Patroclus intact and nurses the corpse with nectar and ambrosia for this purpose (*Iliad* 19. 28-39). Hector's body is protected by the gods

CHAPTER 2: 56

from the outrages Achilles inflicts upon it. Aphrodite anoints Hector's body with ambrosia and protects it from the dogs, while Apollo veils the corpse from the deteriorating effects of the sun (*Iliad* 23. 184-191). Hermes comforts Priam with the knowledge that the corpse of his son has not been ravaged by birds and dogs, nor has it deteriorated in any way, despite the passage of twelve days from the time of his death (*Iliad* 24. 410-423). The depictions in the epics make clear that the attention given the corpse by the gods--as the maintainers of cosmic order--stands in radical opposition to its treatment by savage beasts, a manifestation of "chaos."

The grandeur of the funeral ceremony directly reflects the status of the deceased, and therefore the degree to which the person was honoured by the gods". Hector's funeral was to consist of nine days of lamentation, a day of feasting, followed by the day on which his funeral mound was to be raised (*Iliad* 24. 665-668). Had king Agamemnon died in battle, he would have received a great burial mound raised by the entire Achæan army as a statement to his glory and to perpetuate his fame (*Odyssey* 24. 32-34). Achilles' funeral is especially grand, as the gods joined with mortals for seventeen days of lamentation. His burial completes the funeral of Patroclus by having the remains of both heroes placed within the same urn, a gift from Dionysus, and interred within an enormous barrow situated upon a promontory overlooking the Hellespont. Furthermore, the spirit of Achilles is told that the contests celebrated in his honour ranked as the greatest ever held for a departed hero (*Odyssey* 24. 90). In contrast, persons of lesser stature received modest burials, as, for instance, the vanquished king of Cilician Thebes, Eëtion (*Iliad* 6. 416-420), Elpenor (*Odyssey* 12. 8-15), or, at the extreme, the common battle dead who are cremated but not buried (*Iliad* 7. 427-432).

¹¹I. Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society* 46.

CHAPTER 2: 57

The celebration of games (ἄεθλα) is a prominent feature in both epics, and contests typically serve to commemorate the passing of powerful persons. Games are mentioned in connection with the funerals of Patroclus (*Iliad* 23. 257-897), Amarynceus (*Iliad* 23. 630-631), Œdipus (*Iliad* 678-680), and Achilles (*Odyssey* 24. 85-97). The Olympic Games are alluded to (*Iliad* 11. 696-702), and there are two references to contests that are unconnected with a funeral ceremony (*Odyssey* 8. 143-233; 21. 256-268). Achilles' fatal chase of Hector around the walls of Troy is equated by the poet with a funeral contest (*Iliad* 22. 163-164). However, the most elaborate depiction of contests is of those held for Patroclus. The prizes awarded for the events (all having a martial significance and, among them, the chariot race is preeminent) serve as memorials for the slain warrior (*Iliad* 23. 619). While a detailed analysis of the games is not necessary for my immediate purposes, it is appropriate to draw attention to the involvement of the immortals in the proceedings. Firstly, the gods are significantly absent during the lamentations and burial of Patroclus. When Achilles makes a prayer to the Winds, Iris, the messenger of the gods, dispatches the invocation. She informs the Winds that she cannot enjoy their hospitality as she must hurry to the land of the Æthiopians to join the other Olympians in a sacred feast (*Iliad* 23. 193-207). Although the gods are absent during the burial ceremonies, they are prominent in the games. Losing in contests is attributed to neglect for the gods (*Iliad* 23. 546-547). Athena trips Ajax during a race to safeguard victory for Odysseus in answer to his prayer (*Iliad* 23. 770-783). Because Teucer failed to promise a sacrifice for Apollo before letting fly his arrow, the god prevented him from hitting the target (*Iliad* 23. 862-864). Meriones, by contrast, vowing to make a sacrifice to Apollo, strikes the target. Following the mourning and burial, the games are a return to life. The games effect a

CHAPTER 2: 58

transition in the status of the departed individual insofar as he is no longer an active presence but now an inspiring memory. The community of mourners vie with one another to win prizes; memorials to the deceased man (perpetuations of his κλέος) and testimonials to the gods' favour. The cohesive and restitutive effect--its role in uniting the community following the loss--achieved by the celebration of contests is expressed at the conclusion of the games held for Patroclus. The final act of Achilles as judge of the games is to award Agamemnon a prize and to acknowledge his status as ruler of the Achæan forces (*Iliad* 23. 884-894). In this way, Achilles abolishes the rupture between himself and the king caused by Agamemnon's removal, at the commencement of the epic, of Achilles' war-prize, the insult which caused Achilles to withdraw from the battle.

In conclusion, the Homeric burial has as its basic features the cremation of the body and its burial within a mound and marked by a pillar. The funerary procedures effect both the transition of the soul into Hades and the preservation of the memory of the deceased among the living. The extravagance of its aspects (length of lamentation, size of mound, contests) reflect the status of the deceased, which itself was linked with the degree of honour the person was accorded by the immortals. In contrast, death without obsequies--particularly an ignominious death between the jaws of beasts--relegates the departed to chaos and oblivion. Thus, by commemorating a deceased person according to the culturally established means (obsequies and the enduring display of a mound and stele) the cultural community acknowledges the loss while, concurrently, it preserves the status of the deceased as a constitutive participant among them¹².

¹² The function of obsequies as a reflection of the honour the deceased is accorded by the gods is articulated in the most explicit passage relating the radically determinative role the immortals exercise over mortals. It is expressed by Achilles to Priam in the climactic moment of the epic as they are commiserated over their mutual losses, *Iliad* 24. 525-533.

C. ANCESTRAL TOMBS AND THE POLIS

In tracing his and Hector's paternal lineage back to Zeus, Æneas relates to Achilles the hallowed account of the foundation of Troy (*Iliad* 20. 213-240)¹³. The genealogy outlines the establishment of Ἴλιος ἱρή in the Dardanian plain by the populations dwelling upon the slopes of Mt. Ida. The city is very often characterized as "sacred," and the poet has Zeus claim, perhaps for rhetorical purposes, that Ilium (Troy) is the city most dear to him by reason of the frequent sacrifices he receives from its citizens (*Iliad* 4. 44-49)¹⁴. The tomb of Ilus, the city's eponymous hero, is situated outside the urban walls and upon the Dardanian plain (*Iliad* 11. 166-169). Ilus' tomb is conspicuous, not only because it is a μέγα σῆμα (*Iliad* 24. 349), but it is also the location of the Trojan military council (*Iliad* 10. 414-415). Hector and his generals plan

¹³ de Polignac claims that this passage serves as the prototype for the foundation myth of a polis (de Polignac, *Naissance*, 133). See further, Scully, *Homer*, 25.

¹⁴ The city is later claimed to be hated by the gods who refuse the sacrifice offered to them by the Trojans--this after Hector manifests his *hybris* by expressing the desire to be honoured on a par with Athene and Apollo (*Iliad* 8. 550-552).

"The Homeric polis is a paradoxical unit of inherently self-contradictory components: it is immortally and mortally constructed as well as divinely and humanly defended. In its union of temples and sacred *agora* on the one hand and urban dwellings and humankind on the other, the polis holds within its embrace the holy and the earthbound. Yet in spite of this apparent contradiction, the Homeric polis in its entirety is deemed sacred" (Scully, *Homer*, 16). Scully provides a very thorough analysis of the terminology used to designate sacrality with regard to cities and places. Troy is most often referred to as sacred. On the sacred status of Troy, he contributes the following: "So these four arguments--temples, divine walls, proud height, piety--seem insufficient in explaining the nature of Troy's sacredness. Analysis should begin by considering the four Olympians who especially identify themselves with the building of Troy or securing its well-being: Zeus, Poseidon, Athena, and to a lesser extent Apollo (one has to wonder if Scully has not perhaps confused the order of the latter two gods). Zeus sets in motion the chain of events that will lead to the founding of Troy, as assuredly he stimulates the founding of all Greek cities. The Olympians oversee all that is praised in the world; so it must be that those things which are most highly esteemed of human creation are said to derive from the supreme ruler of the gods" (Scully, *Homer*, 24). "Sacred Troy rising from the plain deserves its epithet precisely because the polis, inspired by Zeus, leads man toward the uniquely human. The act of civilization itself is sacred and partakes of the divine. The polis, even more than the "political" community, is a religious one, separated as it is from nature (itself sacred, but for different reasons), the place of shelter guarding those within" (Scully, *Homer*, 26).

CHAPTER 2: 60

the defence of the city at the tomb of its founder. It may be inferred that, by planning their defence strategy at the tomb of the founding hero, Hector and his chieftains seek to access the founder's creative forces (Ilus' κλέος) and enlist these into the preservation of their threatened city¹⁵.

Earlier on in the narrative (*Iliad* 2. 786-815), Zeus' messenger Iris, appears to the Trojans in the form of a mortal, although Hector recognizes her divine status. She takes on the appearance of Polites, the Trojan sentinel standing atop the funeral mound of Aesyetes¹⁶ (the only mention of this hero in the narrative) by which the Trojans held their assembly. The tomb is situated at the public meeting-place next to Priam's gate¹⁷. Standing atop the barrow and overlooking the *agora*¹⁸ in the appearance of Polites

("Citizen"), one of Priam's sons, Iris addresses the king and warns him that

¹⁵ "Par surcroît, Illos est le héros éponyme d'Illion ; fils de Trôs et père de Laomédon, il est l'un des fondateurs de Troie. Ce n'est donc pas un hasard si, en période de crise, les chefs troyens se regroupent autour du prince mort qui symbolise les origines de la cité et dont ils attendent inspiration et conseil..." (C. Bérard, "Récupérer," 93).

¹⁶ Aesyetes' tomb seems to correspond to the Mycenaean gate shrine. Hadzisteliou Price summarizes Chr. Kardara's research on the early position of Erechtheus' shrine on the Acropolis. The position of the ancient Erechtheum parallels that of Aesyetes' tomb insofar as both are located next to city-gates. It is unfortunate that Hadzisteliou Price does not include the highly significant reference to this tomb in her analysis, Hadzisteliou Price, "Hero-Cult" 136-137.

Claude Bérard also discusses the location of a hero shrine by the polis walls in relation to the martial function of the hero, citing the examples of early shrines of Erechtheus and Laomedon (C. Bérard, "Récupérer," 94). This Trojan founder, son of Ilus, is associated by myth with the divine construction of the Trojan walls (*Iliad* 7. 452-453; 21. 441-460). Laomedon's tomb, however, is not mentioned in the *Iliad*. Zeus, as the divine overseer of the foundation of Troy had placed into Laomedon's service Poseidon and Apollo. Laomedon failed to honour the gods for their aid in the construction of the polis wall (in fact, he abused them), and thereby precipitated the vulnerability of the walls. Later sources have located the tomb of Laomedon by the Scaean gates and have associated the tomb with the fate of Troy; the inviolability of the walls was guaranteed by the presence of the tomb (M. Robertson, "Laomedon's Corpse, Laomedon's Tomb," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 2 (1970) pp. 24-25).

¹⁷ Scully locates Aesyetes' tomb "somewhere between the city and the Greek camp (Scully *Homer*, 12)." However, the tomb is contiguous to the agora and within the city walls. Iris, at the top of the barrow, is described as standing near (ἀνχοῦ ἱσταμένη) to the warriors assembled in the agora (*Iliad* 2. 790).

¹⁸ The location of the agora is given as being by the gates of Priam (οἱ δ' ἀγορὰς ἀγόρευον ἐπὶ Πριάμοιο θύρῃσι) (*Iliad* 2. 788). It is interesting to note the progression of the Trojan line of descent as it relates to polis features: Ilus, the eponymous founder, has his tomb in the plain where he settled his population. Laomedon, son of Ilus, is associated with the polis walls built during his reign. Finally, the gates of the polis are identified with the reigning monarch, Priam.

CHAPTER 2: 61

battle is imminent. In her address, she places the command of the Trojan forces upon Hector. His first act as general is to lead his forces outside the city gates and arrange his battle alignments on a steep mound, which, the poet states, is known to mortals as Bateia ("Thorn Hill"), but the gods know the hillock to be the tomb of Myrine, the "dancer" (*Iliad* 2. 811-814). Again the tomb of a hero, in this case one who is unknown to mortals, provides the setting for martial strategy. These three references to Trojan burial mounds clearly attest the martial function of the tombs of the polis ancestors¹⁹. The inference that the ancestral tombs, hence the ancestors themselves, are enlisted into the maintenance (further reinforced by the proximity of Æsyetes' tomb to the polis agora) and defence of the city may be confidently drawn from the prominent role the ancestral tombs play with regard to the strategic defence of the city.

The tomb of Ilus also provides the setting for the foreshadowing of Achilles' death before the walls of Troy (*Iliad* 11. 368-383). Diomedes, leaning on the stele atop Ilus' barrow and despoiling the slain Agastrophus of his armour, is struck in the foot by Paris' arrow. This episode foreshadows Achilles' death at the walls of Troy, also by Paris' arrow struck at his heel²⁰. Just as Diomedes serves as a stand-in for Achilles²¹ in the poet's allusion, the funeral stele of Ilus symbolizes the walls of the city that bears his name. While the tomb of Ilus functions as a martial *bouleuterion*,

¹⁹ Scully, in his otherwise thorough treatment of the Homeric polis, completely overlooks the protective function of the Trojan ancestral tombs.

²⁰ Achilles' death by an arrow struck at his heel (his only point of vulnerability as this is where his mother Thetis held him when immersing him in the Styx) is not mentioned in the epics. *Iliad* 22. 358-360 has the spirit of Patroclus tell Achilles that Paris and Apollo will slay him before the Scaean gate.

²¹ Athena amplifies the *menos* of Diomedes (*Iliad* 5. 125) to a point where he attacks even the gods (*Iliad* 5. 379-381). Diomedes is referred to as "the best of the Achaeans" (*Iliad* 5. 414), a designation otherwise reserved for Achilles. Diomedes also attacks Apollo, who reminds him of his mortal status (*Iliad* 5. 440-442), just as Apollo later does to Achilles (*Iliad* 22. 8-14). The depiction of Diomedes in Books 5-7 closely parallels Achilles' re-entry into the battle after hearing of the death of Patroclus and beginning with his transfiguration by Athena (*Iliad* 18. 202-219).

CHAPTER 2: 62

there is never any suggestion that the hero eponymous was the focus of cultic veneration. This lacuna renders the identification by Hadzisteliou Price of Ilus' *sêma* with the *herôon* of the fully developed polis rather strained²². Furthermore, the extramural location of the tomb makes it an unlikely site for propitiation to the polis hero. Rather the examples cited serve to demonstrate that Ilus' grand barrow not only commemorates the hero-founder, but, as well, serves as a microcosmic representation of the city that bears his name. If one is to infer the presence of a polis hero-shrine, it is more likely to be Æsyetes' tomb owing to its intramural location in proximity to the polis agora.

The tomb of Laomedon, son of Ilus and father of Priam, is conspicuously absent from the epic; however, Laomedon's role as one of the polis founders (he is associated with the construction of the Trojan wall) is extremely significant. Laomedon is first mentioned in relation to the horses Zeus gave to Tros in exchange for his son Ganymedes, and these horses were passed down to Tros' grandson, Laomedon (*Iliad* 5. 269). Heracles had earlier sacked Troy in order to get possession of Laomedon's mares (*Iliad* 5. 640-642). It is later stated that Heracles' sack of Troy was the result of the dishonour Laomedon paid to Poseidon, the builder of the wall and a god who is also closely associated with horses²³. Laomedon's impiety has precipitated the vulnerability of the polis, thus it is not surprising that his tomb

²² "That the tomb of Ilos and Hector's military assembly are outside the city does not make much difference, as the Homeric agora was sometimes outside the city as in Phaeacia in the passages mentioned above. The fact that Hector's council was a military assembly strengthens the case that Ilos' tomb was a heroon" (Hadzisteliou Price, "Hero-Cult" 139.).

²³ Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1169-1243.

Homeric Hymn to Poseidon 22:

Ἐννοσίγαιε, θεοὶ τιμὴν ἐδῶσαντο
ἱπποῶν τε δμητῆρ ἔμεναι σωτῆρα τε νηῶν.

"Earthshaker, the gods have granted honour to you
to be tamer of horses and saviour (protector) of ships."

CHAPTER 2: 63

plays no part in the preservation of Troy²⁴. Poseidon states Laomedon's impiety: instead of paying the gods for their service, Laomedon threatened to cut off the ears of both himself and Apollo, bind their feet together and cast them off to far away islands (*Iliad* 21. 450-455). Because of Laomedon's *hybris*, Poseidon seeks to destroy utterly the arrogant (ὑπερφίαλοι) Trojans. Thus, as a result of Laomedon's crime against the immortals, the city is vulnerable and, ultimately, fated for destruction²⁵. Laomedon, while a polis founder, had violated the terms of the gods' involvement in the construction of the polis; this transgression excludes him from being a protector of Troy. The sacrilege of Laomedon infuses his cultural creation (the polis wall) with a defectiveness that will ultimately precipitate the fall of the polis²⁶.

The tomb perpetuates the κλέος of the deceased person it contains. In the case of the eponymous hero, his κλέος is indelibly linked with the stability and prosperity of the community he has established. The association between the polis and the founder's tomb is expressed by the poet's use of the tomb as a symbol for the polis itself. To this extent, the final reference to

²⁴ Martin Robertson supplies the following regarding the function and placement of Laomedon's tomb: "Servius, commenting on *Aeneid* 2. 13, *fatisque repulsi*, says: "According to Plautus there were three (dooms); to wit, the life of Troilus, the preservation of the Palladium, the inviolability of Laomedon's tomb, which had been in the Scaean gate"; on 2. 241: "For we know that while Laomedon's tomb, which had been above the Scaean gate, was inviolate, the fate of Troy was safe." On 3. 351, he gives the origin of the Scaean gate's name as "from Laomedon's corpse, that is the *Scenoma*, from ἐκνήωμα which had been above it in the lintel (*A cadavere Laomedontis, hoc est Scenomate, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐκνηώματος, quod in ejus fuerat superliminio.*)" (M. Robertson, "Laomedon's Corpse, Laomedon's Tomb," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 11 [1970], 24-25).

²⁵ In addition to Poseidon, the goddesses Hera and Athena are especially hostile to the Trojans. The reason for this, ostensibly, is the Judgement of Paris (*Iliad* 24. 28-30), which declared Aphrodite to be more beautiful than these goddesses.

²⁶ The Achaean wall, likewise a profane construction (*Iliad* 12. 8-9), is destroyed by Poseidon and Apollo (*Iliad* 12. 17-18). Its destruction serves as a foreshadowing of the sack of Troy. Poseidon compares the Achaean wall, built without sacrifices, to the wall he and Apollo had built for the hero Laomedon. He complains to Zeus that the *kleos* of this new wall will become so great that his wall will be forgotten (*Iliad* 7. 445-453). Thus, the parallelism of the two walls is evident.

CHAPTER 2: 64

the tomb--which introduces the climax of the narrative--is particularly evocative. Priam, the grandson of Ilus and the final king in the founder's line, resolves to plead for the return of the body of his son Hector, the champion of Troy. On his night-time journey to the Achæan camp, Priam stops at the tomb of his illustrious ancestor (*Iliad* 24. 349). It is there by the tomb that the god Hermes²⁷ manifests himself and declares to the king the measures the immortals have taken to preserve the body of his son. Furthermore, Hermes has been dispatched by Zeus to ensure the recuperation of Hector's body that he may receive a funeral befitting his status and reflecting the honour he is granted by the gods. Thus the founder's tomb is the site of a theophany that guarantees the commemoration of the death of Hector, the embodiment of the fate of Troy²⁸. Just as the theophany at the intramural tomb of Æsyetes at the commencement of the epic declared the status of Hector as defender and champion of the polis, the theophany at its conclusion guarantees the permanence of the hero's κλέος by means of the obsequies accorded him by his community, the citizens of Ilium.

D. THE CONSULTATION OF THE SPIRIT OF TEIRESIAS

Book Eleven of the *Odyssey*, known as the Necyia, provides the prototype for the sacrifice to a divinity associated with the Underworld in ancient

²⁷ Like Iris, who had originally appeared on the barrow of Aesyetes, Hermes is a divine messenger--but one of considerably greater status. He is called in the passage ἐπιόινιος, "Helper."

²⁸ "Even more than Ajax, Hektor typifies the transference of defence from the physical rampart to an individual, and is commonly portrayed as the very soul of the city-holding defence. Seneca makes the equation explicit: *tu murus eras umerique tuis / stetit illa decem fulta per annos*. "[Hektor] you are (*sic.* read, "were") the city wall and supported on your shoulders she stood for ten years (*Troades* 126-127)... Hektor's name, which means "the one who holds," is undoubtedly an abbreviation for Hekhepolis, "the one who holds the polis." In its reverse form, *poliouxhos*, his name becomes an epithet ("protecting the city") which, like Polieus and Polias, always describes the guardian deity of a city" (Scully, *Homer* 59.).

CHAPTER 2: 65

Greece. This form of sacrifice typically--although not universally--served as the principal ritual component of the hero cult²⁹. To this extent, an analysis of its features as they are presented in this passage will greatly elucidate the significance and justification for this act of devotion as it was practised in ancient Greece.

Following the goddess Circe's directives, the hero Odysseus journeys to the nexus between the earth and the underworld. This nebulous region lies beyond the rays of the sun and its perpetual darkness is equated with the infernal murk. Here, Odysseus performs the necessary tasks required to bring the spirit of Teiresias into his presence and to obtain from him instructions for his safe return. The preliminaries for the consultation involved digging a ditch (βόθρος) into which he poured a libation for the dead (χοὴν χεόμην πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι) (26). The libation consisted first of milk and honey, then wine and water, followed by a sprinkling of white barley. Odysseus then vowed to offer to the dead a barren heifer along with gifts on his hearth fire (ῥέζειν ἐν μεγάροισι πυρὴν) (31) upon his safe return home. To Teiresias alone he was to sacrifice a black ram. After his prayers to the dead, he cut the throats of the victims (a ram and a black ewe) with their heads turned toward Erebus (*Odyssey* 10. 528) so that their blood flowed into the *bothros*. Finally, Odysseus' comrades flayed the victims and burned their carcasses.

The ψυχή of Teiresias requests permission to drink the blood of the sacrificial victims that he may deliver his prophecy. Teiresias confirms Odysseus' successful return, and forecasts a long and prosperous life for the hero. However, the prophecy of the dead seer consists mainly in communicating to Odysseus his duties to the gods. First, Teiresias reveals

²⁹ J-P. Vernant, "Greek Religion," *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987), 108-109.

CHAPTER 2: 66

to Odysseus the wrath the god Poseidon has for him, owing to the injury caused to the god's son Polyphemus. Nonetheless, Odysseus can expect a difficult but successful completion to his ordeal, provided he submits to the authority of the gods--" if you are willing to restrain your and your comrades' spirit" (αἶ κ' ἐθέλῃς σὸν θυμὸν ἐρυκακέειν καὶ ἐταίρων) (11. 105)³⁰ . Teiresias cautions Odysseus against harming the cattle of the sun-god, Helios--a transgression that will result in the loss of his ships and comrades. He terminates his prophecy by describing the procedures of reparation Odysseus must perform to Poseidon, the lord of the sea, after the conclusion of his ordeal.

Odysseus is informed by Circe that he must journey to the House of Hades and Persephone before undertaking his return home. He must go there to consult the spirit of Teiresias, who, alone among the dead, has been granted understanding: τῷ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνεια (*Odyssey* 10. 494). Teiresias' enduring knowledge is in radical contrast to the dead in general, who are described as having "powerless heads" (*Odyssey* 10, 536). The *psyche* of Teiresias does not have the power to influence events, thus he cannot assure a safe return home; his power lies solely in his mantic capacity. He is consulted prior to undertaking the voyage home in order to obtain the requisite knowledge for a successful conclusion. As previously stated, the bulk of the seer's instructions consists in relating to Odysseus the pious actions he must extend to the gods.

The significance of this passage with regard to the hero cult is not so much Teiresias' oracular function, although this is a feature of certain hero cults. Rather, what is particularly important is Teiresias' elect status in death insofar as he is capable of exercising his exceptional abilities (knowing and

³⁰Odysseus delivers this same injunction to Achilles (*Iliad* 9. 255-256). The admonition of Teiresias carries the weight of a divinely-ordained imperative as, in his oracular capacity, he is communicating the will of the gods.

CHAPTER 2: 67

disclosing the will of the gods) following his physical demise. This is a fundamental characteristic of hero-belief and hence, one of the bases for their cults. It was by means of cultic devotions that the celebrants sought to access and realize the powers the heroes expressed in their lives. Odysseus performs the infernal sacrifice³¹ for the purpose of consulting the spirit of Teiresias who, in his earthly existence, was portrayed as the greatest of seers. After death, Teiresias was granted by the goddess Persephone, queen of the underworld, retention of his oracular capacity. Thus, the *Necyia*--given the status of the Homeric epics--presents the paradigmatic representation of funerary sacrifice performed with the intention of accessing the exceptional powers of an "elect" spirit who had possessed these powers in life.

Another relevant aspect of hero cults was their frequent association with Olympian worship. The chthonic ceremony extended to the hero very often preceded the festival of the god. This passage does not overtly present the cultic association between hero and Olympian; however, the pattern of this association is expressed in Teiresias' prophecy. Odysseus' landing on Circe's island marks the point in his *nostos* when the immortals involve themselves directly in the hero's ordeal. To this extent, it is here that Odysseus' journey acquires a religious dimension (insofar as it is connected with divine intention). Circe, prevented by the gods from possessing the hero, supplies Odysseus with a set of instructions for commencing his homeward return. Odysseus' initial task is the consultation of the spirit of Teiresias, for which Circe supplies him with the requisite directives and

³¹ The Homeric poet uses the same terminology in the description of the sacrifice to Teiresias as he uses for divine sacrifice. In both cases sacrifice is typically characterized as *ρέζειν τὸν ἱερὸν, ἔρδειν ἱερὰ ἢ λερεύειν*. The verb *θύειν* has a limited use in Homer and refers to the preliminary burnt offerings, *ἄργματα θύσε θεοῖς* (*Odyssey* 14. 446). On this matter, refer to J. Cassabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en Grec* (Aix-En-Provence: Editions Ophrys, 1966), p. 82.

CHAPTER 2: 68

paraphernalia. It is from Teiresias that Odysseus learns of his transgression against Poseidon. He learns that the god will punish him, but also that he will achieve his goal, provided he submits to divine will. Teiresias' final injunction is to inform Odysseus that, after completing his ordeal, he must undertake a rather peculiar pilgrimage culminating in a grand sacrifice to the sea-god, followed by hecatomb offerings to each of the Olympians. The Necyia discloses the religious dimension of the Odyssey by framing the hero's ordeal within the ritual sequence of the inaugural chthonic sacrifice (in which Odysseus learns of his crime against Poseidon) and concludes with a celebratory Olympic sacrifice (whereby Odysseus completes his penance and restores himself to the favour of the Olympians).

The consultation of Teiresias presents the constitutive features of the funerary sacrifice offered to an Underworld divinity. The setting for the procedure as described in the text establishes its ritual context. The location of the consultation corresponds to a funerary geography. It is performed at the extremity of the earth in the grove of Persephone, where the the world-encircling Oceanus feeds the infernal waters. It is a place that is shrouded in perpetual darkness. Night in Homer is presented as a powerful goddess: "Night, the subduer of gods and men," (Νύξ δμῆτ' ἔρπει θεῶν...καὶ ἀνδρῶν) (*Iliad* 14. 259) whom not even Zeus wishes to displease. Night and Helios function as antithetical powers, and their opposition is reflected in the respective Underworld and Olympian sacrificial contexts. With regard to Olympian sacrifice, it is performed in the presence of Helios. Athena urges the celebrants of an offering to Poseidon to conclude their feast because the sun has set (*Odyssey* 3. 335-336). Olympus, the realm of the immortals, is described as eternally luminescent (*Odyssey* 4. 45), whereas Tartarus is perpetually gloomy (*Iliad* 8. 13).

CHAPTER 2: 69

The selection of a black-coloured victim is an additional characteristic of funerary sacrifice. When the two armies agree to resolve their conflict by staging a confrontation between Menelaus and Alexander, they choose sacrificial offerings for both the gods Ge and Helios. A black ewe is chosen for Ge, the chthonic divinity *par excellence*, and a white ram is dedicated to Helios (*Iliad* 3. 103-104). The god Poseidon (γαιήοχος, ἐνοσίχθων), an Olympian with chthonic characteristics, receives an offering of nine black bulls at sunrise (*Odyssey* 3. 6). With regard to the sacrificial altar, the recessed *bothros* dug to receive the blood offered to the spirit of Teiresias is in structural contrast to the location of Hector's sacrifices to Zeus. These occur on the ridges of Mt. Ida or at the highest point of Troy: ἐν πόλει ἀκροτάτῃ (*Iliad* 22. 172). A final point of contrast between the two sacrificial techniques is expressed in the nomenclature of the drink-offerings; σπονδή, σπένδω for the gods, χοή, χέω for the spirit of Teiresias.

The funerary sacrifice offered to Teiresias, by virtue of the status of the Homeric epics, establishes the paradigm for the worship of an Underworld divinity. Teiresias, as the constituent of a special class of the defunct--a spirit whom the gods have permitted to retain the exceptional abilities he exercised in life, serves as an ideal representation of the ancient Greek hero. Odysseus' consultation expresses the belief that the performance of the appropriate devotions can activate a "powerful" spirit and make it an effective presence among the living. Finally, the Underworld divinity (the extra-mortal condition of the hero) functions as an articulation of Olympian rule as demonstrated by the fact that Teiresias was "chosen" by Persephone and, furthermore, by his knowledge of the will of the gods.

CHAPTER 2: 70

Theodora Hadzisteliou Price's article has contested the view that the hero cult is not present in the Homeric epics. Her examination of the internal evidence was prompted by archeological findings that have determined the contemporaneity of the cult with the transmission of the epics. Of particular importance is her discussion of the etymology and usage of the appellation ἥρωας by the Homeric poet(s). She also makes a strong case for the "unitarian" view of the epics' composition and points out effectively that disputed passages such as Book Eleven of the *Odyssey*, if later added, were nonetheless included early on. In any event, the "canonical" Homer is best left to stand as is, while keeping in mind that the poems are most likely the product of a collective compilation and have drawn their features from a variety of periods and locales. Hadzisteliou Price's article also provides a very good survey of the archeological data relating to the proliferation of hero cults during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE and her sources are still fresh, as more recent data support this dating of the origin of the hero cult. Her insight that the hero cult was a component of polis culture from its inception during the eighth century has been supported by the more recent studies by Bérard and Snodgrass.

The weakness of her contribution is her failure to examine her citations within the context of the epic narratives; instead she explores these by juxtaposing them with similar features presented in later sources as well as with archaeological data. While it is certainly acceptable--and even enlightening--to seek external and complimentary validations such as those supplied by archaeology and related documentation, the deficiency of her analytical strategy becomes clear in her identification of the tomb of Ilus as a *heroon*. She does not analyze all the references to the tomb as a means of arriving at an understanding of its function within the poem. In addition, she

CHAPTER 2: 71

ignores the reference to Æsyetes' tomb which corresponds more closely to the examples of polis hero-shrines she cites. For some reason, she is compelled to locate the Trojan agora by the tomb of Ilus and cites references to the agorai of Ithaca and Phæacia to support the view that the Homeric agora need not be within the walls of the polis³². Again, had she considered the reference to Æsyetes' tomb, the placement of the Trojan agora could not be at Ilus' tomb, far as it is from the city walls. Book 2. 787-788 of the *Iliad* specifically locates the Trojan place of assembly by the gates of Priam. A little later on, it is made clear that both Asyetes' tomb and the agora are within the polis gates (*Iliad* 2. 809). It must be said, however, that Hadzisteliou Price was the first to draw attention to the tomb of Ilus in connection with hero worship--and this insight has been influential, particularly in the work of scholars who have explored the hero cult in relation to polis formation³³.

I have attempted in my discussion of the function of Ilus' tomb to identify it as a locus of power that is intimately associated with the city that bears this founder's name. The *Iliad* discloses the power of the founder's tomb in the following ways: (1) by having the Trojan military council convene at it; (2) by having it serve as a metaphorical representation of the city itself; (3) and by the theophany that occurs at it. Ilus' tomb is indeed highly significant as a feature in the narrative and, additionally, as an indicator of the nascence of the hero cult. The Trojan ancestral tombs preserve the κλέος of the former men they contain and, additionally, that of the polis which emerged as a result of their founding activities. This κλέος, emanating from the tombs and encompassing the city, is integrated into its military and political organization for the purpose of ensuring preservation and stability.

³² See footnote, 18.

³³ Bérard, "Récupérer," 93-94. de Polignac, *La naissance de la cité grecque*, 133.

CHAPTER 2: 72

As the locus of theophany, the ancestral tombs reveal the ancestors to have been the implementors of divine order. This sacred connection is further maintained and continued (given that the gods still use the tombs in the epics) by the enduring presence of the founders' graves.

The Homeric epics thus express a fundamental belief out of which the ancient Greek hero cult emerged. The grave site of a founder (be it of a polis, a divine sanctuary, a cultural practice, moral precept, etc.) testified to the enduring presence of the gods among mortals. The hero-founders (the possessors of an enduring and effective κλέος by virtue of the honour (τιμή) accorded them by the Olympians) ascended to an elect status among the dead. Their status was defined by the heroes' ability to intervene effectively among the living in support of the preservation of their cultural creations. With regard to Ilus, there is no mention of a cult; nor is there any mention of a cult at any of the Trojan tombs. As stated previously, the tomb of "dancing" Myrine is unknown to the Trojans (but recognized by the gods) yet nonetheless plays a role in the military defence of the city. For this reason, none of the funerary barrows under discussion can be equated with the polis hero-shrine, the site of sacrificial offerings. Rather, they serve to express the sacred connection between the κλέος of the founding ancestors and their cultural creation, the polis itself.. In this way the Homeric poetry reveals a defining feature of the hero cult--that the tombs of the culture-bringing founders (the mortal articulations of divine intention) are locations of divine power enlisted into the preservation and maintenance of their cultural creations.

The Necyia, perhaps a later addition to the *Odyssey*, outlines the propitiatory techniques (the ritual gestures) which "activate"--or make present --the powerful dead among the living. The sacrificial offerings, having a

CHAPTER 2: 73

chthonic character, are inverted reflections of the Olympian *thysia*. The spirit of Teiresias, the archetypal seer, discloses the will of the gods to Odysseus upon being "enlivened" from having imbibed the fresh blood of the victim offered to him. The performance of the ritual occurs in a funerary setting which may be homologized to the hero-shrine as the place where the living seek contact with the powerful dead, the *hêrôes-hemitheoi*. In this way, the depiction of the consultation of Teiresias contributes the other constitutive feature of hero cults; the sacrificial techniques enacted by the living and directed at the demigods for the purpose of obtaining the benefit of their particular powers. These ritual gestures, performed at the hero-shrine--often the grave site of the hero--expressed the cultic devotions accorded to the ancient Greek hero.

The two instances, the ancestral tombs and the consultation of Teiresias, then, achieve a thematic correspondence; they both express complimentary attitudes regarding the effective presence of the "elect" (mortals who had served as instruments of Olympian rule) dead in the service of posterity. The Homeric epics thus elaborate the features of the hero cult. What is more important, they infuse these with a meaningful content by disclosing their significance within the context of the Olympian belief system. As with the hero cult, the singing of the epics made present to the devout audience the prior age; the time when the immortals involved themselves intimately in the lives of mortals to make manifest in evanescent existence

CHAPTER 2: 74

the enduring order that is itself the statement of divine intent³⁴ .

³⁴ "Par la mémoire du chant répété à toutes oreilles, d'abord, par le mémorial funéraire offert aux yeux de tous, ensuite, une relation s'établit entre un individu mort et une communauté de vivants. Cette communauté n'est pas de l'ordre de la famille ; elle ne se limite pas non plus aux frontières d'un groupe social particulier. En arrachant le héros de l'oubli, la mémorisation le dépouille du même coup de ses caractères purements privés ; elle l'établit dans le domaine public ; elle en fait un des éléments de la culture commune des Grecs. Dans et par le chant épique, les héros représentent les <<hommes d'autrefois>>, ils constituent pour le groupe son <<passé>> ; ils forment ainsi les racines où ils se reconnaissent eux-mêmes parce que c'est seulement à travers la geste de ces personnages disparus que leur propre existence sociale acquiert sens, valeur, continuité" (J-P. Vernant, *L'individu* 83).

THE PROPITIATION OF PELOPS

In the the preceding chapters I have elucidated the formative elements of the ancient Greek hero cult as they are presented in Hesiod and Homer. The thrust of this analysis has been directed toward an appreciation of the cultic significance of the hero within the context of Olympian religion. To this end, these textual sources have revealed the heroes as constituents of a separate and prior race of mortals who, in their lives, experienced an intimate rapport with the immortals; and who, following their deaths, maintained an *effective presence* among those who retained their memory. This memory held the heroes to be the mortals who, in their lives, made manifest on earth the will of the gods. Owing to their status as *hērmitheoi* the heroes received cultic tribute primarily at the location of their grave sites, which often were located in the vicinity of the cultural institutions they had founded. The specific form of sacrifice that defined the hero cult acknowledged the hero as a potency of the Underworld, and served both an inaugural and intercessory function insofar as it prepared the celebrants for their participation in the company of the Olympians. I shall endeavour to substantiate this last claim by exploring the cult of Pelops within the context of the Olympia festival, the panHellenic celebration of the cosmic supremacy of Zeus.

The main sources for my discussion are the *Olympian Odes* of Pindar and Books 5-6 of Pausanias' *Description of Greece*. Pindar, a lyric poet from Boeotia, celebrates in song Olympic victors. His *Odes*, composed early in the fifth century BCE, provide the earliest mention of Pelops in relation to Olympia, but, most importantly, his verses communicate this hero's great status with regard to the

CHAPTER 3: 76

beliefs and rites pertaining to the Games. Pausanias, a Greek from Asia Minor (in fact, from the same region as the believed place of origin of Pelops), wrote his *Description* in the second century CE. I draw from Pausanias information relating to the origin of the sanctuary and the features pertinent to the cult of Pelops. I use other ancient sources to supply details that lend a greater clarity to my presentation. Unfortunately, there is no detailed account of the specific forms of worship at Olympia and, therefore, my analysis is limited to a reasoned speculation as to why and in what manner was Pelops worshipped at Olympia.

A. THE FOUNDATION MYTHS OF OLYMPIA

The very name of the Olympia sanctuary attests its preeminent status with regard to the worship of the Olympian gods, and of Zeus in particular as the supreme Olympian. The Greeks regarded the Olympic Games as their most sacred rites on a par, in Pausanias' day, with the Eleusinian Mysteries (Pausanias, 5. 10. 1). The foundation myths of Olympia, which reflect the pattern of belief articulated in Zeus' sovereignty myth of Hesiod's *Theogony*, confirm the great prestige of the festival. Pausanias relates that it was the Golden Men, the first and most blessed race of mortals, who first built a temple and held contests at Olympia in honour of their heavenly ruler, Cronus (5. 7. 6)¹. And it was at the location of the sanctuary that Zeus either vied with Cronus for the lordship or later held contests to commemorate his victory (5. 7. 10). Apollo was registered as an early victor over Hermes in the foot-race and over Ares in boxing. Because of Apollo's successes at the contests, the Pythian flute-song was played as part of the ceremonies (5. 7. 10). Thus, as with many such places, Olympia had a sacred history which situated its origin at a time long past when the gods or "first peoples" were active

¹ Pindar does not mention Cronus' prior reign over the sanctuary, although he frequently mentions the Hill of Cronus in relation to Olympia. Pindar attributes the naming of the hill to the hero Heracles who, for the poet, instituted and defined all aspects of the sanctuary.

CHAPTER 3: 77

on earth.

Pausanias has also a variant account of the origin of the Games, i.e. Heracles², the Idaean Dactyl, inaugurated the competitions at Olympia. He learned of the Games from the Hyperboreans, a fantastic people who lived beyond the North Wind, and staged them at four-year intervals. Idaean Heracles competed with his brothers in the foot-race and crowned the victor with a wreath of wild olive. After the flood that had occurred in the time of Deucalion, Clymenus, a Cretan descendant of Heracles, restored the Games and erected an altar to his ancestor and to the other Curetes. Endymion, the son of Aëthlius, overcame Clymenus and had his sons race at Olympia for the rulership of his kingdom. A generation later, Pelops honoured Zeus by staging the Games in a more extravagant fashion than they had been previously. Pelops' descendants, having become rulers throughout Greece, continued the tradition, and Heracles, son of Amphytrion and great grandson of Pelops, established the funerary devotions to his ancestor within the sanctuary of Zeus. Heracles may have, along with his many innovations, also instituted the chariot race which, more than any of the other competitions, commemorated the defining achievement of Pelops (5. 8. 1-4).

Pindar, our earliest source, attributes, as previously mentioned, the foundation of the sanctuary entirely to the pan-Hellenic hero Heracles. Heracles measured out the boundaries of the *Altis*, the sacred enclosure of the sanctuary, and established the festival with victory contests (*Olympian Ode* 3. 21). He introduced the wild olive tree to Pelops' "ground" below the hill of Cronus as it was devoid of them, ἀλλ' οὐ καλὰ δένδρε' ἔθαλλεν χῶρος ἐν βάσσαις Κρονίου Πέλοπος (*Olympian Ode* 3. 23). He brought the trees from the land of the Hyperboreans to use the leafy branches as victory crowns in the Olympic contests (*Olympian Ode* 3. 15-16). Thus in Pindar's account, the sanctuary was originally the location of Pelops' grave

² While this mythical figure shares the same name as the Heracles from the Heroic Age, Pausanias describes the founding activities of both separately. They are, therefore, distinct mythical figures.

CHAPTER 3: 78

on which Heracle later founded the sanctuary of Olympian Zeus and where he had established the contests in the god's honour.

The myths of the origins of the sanctuary served to acknowledge Zeus as the supreme Olympian ruler. His status as such was achieved by defeating his father Cronus, an event believed to have occurred at the site of the sanctuary. As Hesiod declares, the ascension of Zeus precipitated a reconfiguration of the cosmic power structures and hence, redefined the terms of relationship between mortals and immortals. Olympia, as the site at which the rule of Zeus was established, served as the foremost location for the ancient Greeks to acknowledge Zeus' cosmic supremacy. The celebrants of the Games, the devotees of Olympian Zeus, regarded themselves as a mortal race that was, compared to their immediate predecessors the heroes, at a greater remove from the company of the gods. However, the legacy of the Heroic Age was recuperated and "reactivated" by the celebrants in the performance of the devotions that were held to be founded by the heroes. This attitude is reflected in the ascription to Heracles, son of Zeus and himself elevated to Olympus, of the foundation of the sanctuary along with its principal cultics. Heracles honoured his ancestor Pelops³ by constructing a *bothros* to him next to the altar of Zeus and offering him funerary sacrifices at it. In this way the cult of Pelops was integrated through the vehicle of myth into the devotions at Olympia.

³ Heracles' ancestral connection to Pelops is maintained on both his mortal father's and mother's sides. Heracles' father Amphitryon was the son of Astydameia, daughter of Pelops and Hippodameia. His mother Alcmena was also the grand daughter of Pelops and Hippodameia (R. A. Brooks, *A Genealogical Chart of the Gods and Heroes of Ancient Greece* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997]).

B. THE STADIUM RACE AND THE ALTAR OF ZEUS

According to Pausanias, the Games were "renewed" (ἀνανεώσασθαι) by the Elean king Iphitus⁴ and a contemporary of the Spartan ruler Lycurgus. On the instructions of the Delphic Oracle, he reestablished the festival after a long period of lapse. Initially, the revived contests were probably limited to the foot race (Pausanias. 5. 8. 6) at a stadium directly in front of the great altar of Zeus⁵. This altar was the focus of devotions to Zeus. It was made of the ashes from the sacrifices that were held at it and was shaped and solidified by a paste composed of ash brought from the sanctuary's *pytaneion* and water drawn exclusively from the nearby Alpheius river (Pausanias. 5. 8. 11). In Pausanias' day, the altar stood twenty two feet high and had a circumference at its first stage, called the *prothysis*, of one hundred and twenty five feet. It was at this stage, to which stone steps led up, that victims were sacrificed. The thighs of the victims were carried to the top of the altar on steps cut into the ash. Given the position of the first stadium, it is likely that the original foot-race formed part of the sacrificial ritual centred at the altar of Zeus. Perhaps the contest served to determine the most appropriate celebrant for transportation of the victim's thigh pieces to the altar fire⁶.

⁴ Pausanias states that Iphitus was ordered by the Delphic Oracle to reinstitute the Games and offer to Heracles, the hero-founder of the Games, divine sacrifices despite the fact that the Eleans had previously regarded him as an enemy (5. 4. 6). Basing their claims on the material evidence uncovered at the site, archaeologists have set the date for the first Olympiad at the end of the eighth century (A. Mallwitz, "Cult and Competition," 96-99. See also, H. M. Lee, "The First Olympic Games of 776 B.C.," in: *The Archaeology of the Olympic Games*, 110-118.).

⁵ H. M. Lee, "The First Olympic Games," 113.

The great number of tripods dating from the tenth to the seventh centuries may have been prizes, or dedicatory offerings following a victory and would thus suggest athletic events from the time of origin of the sanctuary. The cauldrons, however may simply have been dedicatory offerings commemorating a sacrificial banquet and do not in themselves evidence competitions.

⁶ Walter Burkert quotes Philostratus (*Gymn.* 5): "When the Eleans had slaughtered the sacrificial victim according to their custom, its consecrated parts would lie on the altar, though not as yet set on fire. The runners would stand at a distance of one stade from the altar, in front of which there was a priest signalling the start with a torch. And the victor would set fire to the consecrated parts and then depart as an Olympic victor" (W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983], p. 97). I was not able to verify Burkert's reference to Philostratus.

CHAPTER 3: 80

In Pindar's day (fifth century) the festival contained a full complement of athletic events that spanned a period of five days (*Olympian Ode* 5. 6). The Games were held during the mid-summer (August) moon (*Olympian Ode* 3. 20) of a leap year which counted thirteen lunar months.

C. THE FEATURES OF THE CULT OF PELOPS

The cult of Pelops formed part of the devotions at Olympia, and, as such, was an instrument in the acknowledgment of Zeus as the supreme deity of the Greeks. Pelops was worshipped at a sacred precinct, the Pelopion, that was situated midway between the temples of Zeus to its south and Hera at its north. The great altar of Zeus, the centre of worship at Olympia, stood directly behind the Pelopion *en route* to the original foot-race stadium, thus the Pelopion was placed directly to the west of the altar of Zeus⁷. The poet Pindar, in the early fifth century BCE, refers to the Pelopion as Pelops' tomb and the place of "blood-offerings," αἱμακρούσια made to the hero (*Olympian Ode* 1. 90-93). Pausanias, writing almost seven centuries later, situates Pelops' tomb roughly two kilometres to the east of Olympia near the sanctuary of Artemis Cordax (6. 22. 1). He describes the Pelopion as a *temenos* in which the great hero Heracles was the first to sacrifice to Pelops at the *bothros* it enclosed (5. 13. 1-2). This sacrificial tradition was maintained in Pausanias' day by the yearly-appointed Elean magistrates and involved the offering of a black coloured ram to Pelops.

It is difficult to infer from Pausanias' description whether or not a sacrificial banquet of broad participation was held in Pelops' honour, although certain restrictions relating to the feast are made clear: the diviner has no share (ἀπὸ

⁷ A detailed plan of the sanctuary, including the respective locations of the three stadia, is given in A. & N. Yalouris, *Olympia: Guide to the Museum and Sanctuary*. (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon S. A., 1993), pp. 28-29.

CHAPTER 3: 81

ταύτης οὐ γίνεται τῷ μάντει μοῖρα τῆς θυσίας) (5. 13. 2); and the consumption of the victim's flesh conferred an impurity that barred access for the partaker, both among the Eleans and the visitors, to the Temple of Zeus (ὅς δ' ἄν ἡ αὐτῶν Ἑλλείων ἢ ξένων τοῦ θουμένου τῷ Πέλοπι ἱερείου φάγη τῷ κρεῶ, οὐκ ἔστιν οἱ ἐσελθεῖν παρὰ τὸ Δία) (5. 13. 3). Pausanias compares this restriction to a similar prohibition among the sacrificers to Telephus, the hero at the Asclepium in Pergamum, who were required to bathe in the river Caïcus before entering the temple of Asclepius. This comparison seems to suggest that a hero-banquet may, in Pausanias' time, have been held for Pelops; however, no banquet is mentioned in relation to Telephus. The conjecture that a hero-banquet formed a part of the worship of Pelops is drawn largely from the sacrificial terminology Pausanias uses; he employs the verb θύω to describe the sacrifice, and this designation most likely includes the consumption of the ἱερόν. In further support of a possible banquet, Pausanias provides the restrictions relating to it. He specifically states that a cult attendant, the "woodman" (ξυλεύς) receives only the neck of the ram (τράχηλον δὲ μόνον δίδοσθαι τοῦ κριοῦ καθέστηκε τῷ ὀνομαζομένῳ ξυλεῖ) (5. 13. 2). Therefore, in the late second century CE, one person at least feasted in honour of Pelops. The woodman was "one of the servants of Zeus" (ἔστι δὲ ὁ ξυλεὺς ἐκ τῶν οἰκετῶν τοῦ Διός) (5. 13. 3.) who had the task of supplying white poplar wood for civic and private sacrifices. It is possible that the woodman's specific office conferred on him alone a claim to the flesh of the victim used in the blood-offering to Pelops. In any event, a single ram is insufficient for a feast of any magnitude. A further complication is the uncertainty as to whether Pausanias' account refers to the sacrifice in honour of Pelops during the staging of the Games, or whether he is merely describing ongoing ritual activities at the site performed independently of the quadrennial festival.

CHAPTER 3: 82

Apart from the sacrificial offering of a black ram, we are left with no other details regarding the worship of Pelops. For instance, the composition of the cult participants remains a mystery. Apart from the sacrificing magistrate, the diviner and the woodman, all of whom are cult attendants and thus performed the ongoing sacrifices at the sanctuary, none are known. Moreover, we do not know in what manner the athletes took part in the worship of Pelops. Pausanias provides a highly detailed description of the sanctuary at Olympia and the vast number of altars and shrines it contained, all of which received monthly sacrifices or libations from the Elean cult-attendants. Unfortunately his account, though exhaustive with regard to the material features of the sanctuary, does not describe the devotions pertaining to the Games. However, both the fact that the Pelopion was a major cult centre located close to the great altar of Zeus and that Pelops was the “greatest of Olympia’s heroes”,⁵ strongly suggest that his worship played a major role in the devotions associated with the Olympic festival.

Pindar describes the Pelopion as a “frequented tomb” (τύμβος ἀμφίπολος) (*Olympian Ode* 1. 93) and also as “Pelops’ ancient tomb” (αρχαῖον σᾶματος παρά Πέλοπος) (*Olympian Ode* 10. 24). These characterizations attest the Pelopion, described as the hero’s grave, as a site of funerary hero-offerings. Pindar’s *Olympian Odes* deal directly with the Games and therefore his reference to Pelops’ cultic aspects fall under their auspices. To this extent, Pindar’s allusions to the cult provide the most profitable clues for exploring the propitiation of Pelops within the context of the festival of Olympian Zeus. I shall discuss Pindar’s references to Pelops’ tomb at greater length in my analysis of the myths that legitimized Pelops’ association to the sanctuary and its rites. At this point, there is another feature of Pelops’ presence at Olympia to which the poet refers that requires preliminary

⁵ Pausanias states that Pelops was honoured by the Eleans over the other heroes at Olympia just as Zeus was over the other gods (ἡρώων δὲ τῶν ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ τοσοῦτον ποτετιμημένος ἐστὶν ὁ Πέλοψ ὑπὸ Ἠλείων ὅσον Ζεὺς θεῶν τῶν ἄλλων) (5. 13. 1)

discussion.

While, in Pindar's poetry, it is the hero Heracles who had both established the sanctuary and inaugurated its contests (*Olympian Odes* 2. 3; 3. 11-35; 6. 65-70; 10. 22-25, 43-45), the site that Heracles had chosen was formerly the property of his ancestor Pelops (*Olympian Odes* 1. 23-24; 3. 23; 5. 9-10; 9. 5-10). The poet refers to the sanctuary as "Lydian Pelops' manly domain in which the renown (of champions) shines" (λάμπει δέ οἱ κλέος ἐν εὐανορί Λυδοῦ Πέλοπος ἀποικία) (*Olympian Ode* 1. 23-24). The thrust of this verse communicates Pelops' status as a territorial founder both by identifying him as "Lydian," hence a foreigner, and the land on which the sanctuary stood as his colony, an *apoikia*. Pelops gained possession of this land (χωρος), the dowry of Hippodameia ("Mistress of Horses") (κάλλιστον ἐδνόν Ἴπποδαμείας) (*Olympian Ode* 9. 10), by his defeat of the former ruler, Oenomaus ("Wine-King"). Pindar's clear identification of Pelops as Λύδος ἥρωας Πέλοψ (*Olympian Ode* 9. 9) emphasizes the hero's foreign origin and his role as the victorious colonizer of the land on which the sanctuary stood. Pelops' status as colonizer was reflected in and amplified by his monarchical line of descendants who perpetuated his Zeus-given rule over the lower Greek mainland during the Heroic Age. By virtue of the perpetuation of his rule, Pelops had his name imprinted on this territory, the Peloponnese (Island of Pelops).

D. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS PERTAINING TO THE CULT OF PELOPS

The physical data relating to the cult of Pelops at Olympia are ambiguous. In 1928-29, W. Dörpfeld proposed that a Mycenaean tumulus had occupied the same space as the later Pelopion⁹. The discovery of a Mycenaean tumulus accorded with the very frequent linkage made by archaeologists between

⁹ A. Mallwitz, "Cult and Competition Locations at Olympia," in: W. Raschke, ed. *The Archaeology of the Olympic Games* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 81-89.

CHAPTER 3: 84

Mycenaean burial sites and the emergence of hero cults during the eighth century. It also corresponded with Pindar's mythical account of the sanctuary which states that Pelops' grave was its original feature. However, Dörpfeld's "Pelopion I" has never achieved broad acceptance and an early connection between the sanctuary and a Mycenaean tomb is not unanimously upheld¹⁰.

The Pelopion that Pausanias describes dates from the early fifth century BCE¹¹, a dating that corresponds to the compilation of Pindar's *Odes*. The archaeological data do not allow us to claim an earlier date for the cult of Pelops. This is not surprising as the cult features, perhaps limited to a simple *bothros* situated in the vicinity of the altar of Zeus, did not comprise enduring material features. Pindar, however, describes the funerary sacrifice to Pelops as a well-established practice, and it is certain that Pelops was from early on in the ancient Greek period a prominent figure at Olympia. Although the celebration of contests is associated with the funerals of powerful mortal individuals in both Homer and Hesiod, in Olympia the Games were held for Zeus. Pelops, as the hero most closely associated with Zeus' sovereignty by virtue of the royal sceptre he received from the divine patriarch, served both as the mortal articulation of Olympian rule and the paradigmatic Olympic victor.

¹⁰ The German archaeologists reaffirmed the existence of Dörpfeld's Pelopion I (G. Touchais, "Chronique des fouilles en 1987, Olympie [fouilles de l'institut Allemand]," in *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 112 [1988] 632-633). However Alfred Mallwitz, the director of the digs at Olympia in 1988, insists upon the fact there was not a Mycenaean tumulus located at the site (A. Mallwitz, "Cult and Competition," 77-112. Such prominent investigators as M. P. Nilsson and François dePolignac have also rejected the association of a Mycenaean tumulus with the Olympia sanctuary.

¹¹ The earlier Pelopion was a circular structure (A. & N. Yalouris, *Olympia* 11, and also A. Mallwitz, "Cult and Competition," 86).

E. PELOPS AS OLYMPIA'S GREATEST HERO

Pelops as a Lydian or Phrygian emigre who arrived at the Greek mainland from his native home near Mount Sipylus in Asia Minor. According to one version, he was driven from his father's kingdom by the Phrygian Ilus (Pausanias, 2. 22. 3), a vassal of Tantalus (Æschylus, *Niobe*, fr. 158). By virtue of his great wealth, Pelops succeeded in gaining power at Pisa, a kingdom in the western Peloponnese neighbouring Olympia, and his many descendants either became rulers themselves or married rulers (Thucydides, 1. 9. 2). Thus the House of Pelops became, in the legendary past, synonymous with kingship throughout the land that bears the hero's name, the Peloponnese. Pelops, along with Danaus, Cadmus and the Carians, was among the Asian barbarians who gained rule in Greece (Isocrates, *Helen* 68).

Two features of Pelops' mythical biography confirm his status as the foremost hero at Olympia. Firstly, his ordeal which resulted in his elevation by the gods to Olympus where he apprenticed as Zeus' cup-bearer. Secondly, his possession of the sceptre awarded to him by Zeus which bestowed upon his rule the distinction of divine approbation. Both of these episodes serve to establish an association between Pelops as Olympia's principal hero and Zeus, the supreme Olympian who was the focus of veneration at the sanctuary. I shall discuss both features within their mythological contexts and highlight their significance with regard to the devotions at Olympia.

a. *The Myth of the Childhood of Pelops*

The myths (Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 1. 61) relate that, prior to arriving in the lower Greek mainland, Pelops spent his childhood in the palace of his father Tantalus

CHAPTER 3: 86

centred near Mount Sipylus in Lydia. Tantalus, child of Zeus (Euripides, *Orestes* 5) and Pluto (Pausanias, 2. 22. 3), ruled the northwestern region of Asia Minor, including Lydia, Phrygia and the Dardanian plain in which Ilium was situated. That Tantalus was particularly favoured by the gods is evident from the commensal relationship he enjoyed with the Olympians. However, in an act of extreme insolence, he abused this privilege by offering his son, whom he killed and dismembered with a knife and boiled in a cauldron, as a feast to the gods assembled in his home (Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 18. 20-30). The immortal company, outraged by their host's action, quickly returned their portions to the cauldron in which the boy was cooked and undertook to reverse the infamy. The procedure, however, was incomplete as Demeter, distracted and distressed by the loss of her daughter, had gnawed Pelops' shoulder blade¹². In compensation, the gods replaced the lost part with an ivory prosthesis. The restitution of Pelops was, in fact, a transformation; the child emerged from the cauldron an embodiment of beauty. The god Poseidon immediately fell in love with Pelops and brought him to Olympus in his chariot where he attended upon the gods at their feasts (*Olympian Ode* 1. 40-45).

Pindar, the earliest source for this myth, seeks no part in promoting its sinister aspects. Instead, he attributes the infamous banquet to the gossip of "jealous neighbours" (φθονεροί γειτόνοι) (*Olympian Ode* 1. 47), and accounts for Tantalus' eternal punishment in another way: Rather than feeding the gods the food of the meanest of beasts (human flesh), Tantalus devised to steal the immortal sustenance, the divine nectar and ambrosia, and to serve these to his table-mates. For his crime, Tantalus received his famous punishment and,

¹² Pindar states that it was the goddess Clotho, the Moira who had the task of determining the span of mortal life (*Olympian Ode* 1. 26-27). The poet also describes Pelops' ivory shoulder blade (*Olympian Ode* 1. 27) but does state that it was Demeter who ate the original one. C. Kerényi provides the reference to the scholiast on Lycophron 152 which relates that Demeter ate the shoulder as she was distressed by the loss of her daughter (C. Kerényi *The Heroes of the Greeks* [New York: Grove Press, 1960], p.59).

CHAPTER 3: 87

additionally, his son Pelops was banished from the company of the immortals (Pindar *Olympian Ode* I. 25-66). Pindar thus accounts for the crime of Tantalus by regarding it as an over-extension of his greed and a concomitant disregard for his mortal status. As for Pelops, Pindar retains the motif of the infatuation of Poseidon upon seeing the youth at a banquet Tantalus had held for the gods, along with his subsequent translation to Olympus by his divine patron. The poet also relates Pelops' emergence from the cauldron, drawn forth by the Fate Clotho, and calls to attention his "gleaming shoulder" (φαίδιμος ὤμος) (*Olympian Ode* I. 26-27). Despite the significant modification, Pindar's bowdlerized version of the myth preserves its central theme of commensal relations between the Olympians and the House of Tantalus. To account for Tantalus' crime, the poet substitutes the ignominious dish (Pelops' boiled flesh) which the Lydian king--the man most honoured by the immortals--served to his divine company, with the perfect nourishment, the "undecaying" (ἄφθιτον) nectar and ambrosia which sustains the gods in their immortal condition. How Tantalus obtained the food of the gods for distribution among his "feasting peers" (ἀλίοκοι συμπόται) (*Olympian Ode* I. 61) is not expressly stated; however, Tantalus' insolence resulted in his son's banishment from Olympus upon Zeus' discovery of the crime (*Olympian Ode* I. 65-66). The first *Olympian Ode* emphasizes the particular honour Pelops received from the immortals by highlighting three specific events: (1) The gods' transformation of the boy by his immersion in the "pure cauldron" (καθαρός λέβης). (2) The patronage he subsequently obtained from Poseidon who, enamoured of the boy, bore him up to Olympus. (3) Pelops' apprenticeship on Olympus as Zeus' cup-bearer. To this extent, the childhood myth of Pelops, as Pindar presents it, glorifies Pelops as a uniquely-blessed mortal who was chosen by the gods to act as the servant of Zeus on Olympus.

Despite Pindar's disavowal of Tantalus' nefarious feast, there have been

CHAPTER 3: 88

recent attempts to relate the "sinister" version of the myth to the rites of Pelops at Olympia. Walter Burkert, who puts great stock in the "dark" nature of sacrifice, and the chthonic sacrifice in particular, sees in the dismembering of Pelops and his reconstitution within the sacrificial cauldron the central myth of Pelops at Olympia. He claims a local, that is Elean, origin for the myth by virtue of its close analogy to the Arcadian myth of Lycaon¹³. This setting is further supported, Burkert points out, by the fact that the shoulder blade of Pelops was displayed at Olympia and not in Lydia. Furthermore, the priestess of Demeter Chamyne observed the stadium events from the vantage point of the goddess' altar. In this way, the principal actors in the myth, Pelops, Demeter and Zeus, accord with the basic cult components of the sanctuary, the Pelopion, the Stadium and the great altar of Zeus.

Burkert asserts that the "cannibalistic myth of Pelops" provides the *ætiology* for the original contest at Olympia. In his reconstruction, the initial phase of the Olympia rite occurred at night, at the Pelopion, where the hero was "drenched with blood" from the chthonic offering¹⁴. The following day, the racers, under the surveillance of the priestess of Demeter Chamyne, vied for the honour of completing the sacrifice to Olympian Zeus.

The presence of the priestess of Demeter Chamyne (the epithet is derived from the verb χαεῖν, "to gape," "to yawn") is, despite Burkert's tidy explanation, rather ambiguous, although her appellation does suggest the goddess' chthonic aspect. In his description of the sanctuary, Pausanias attaches the myth of the rape of Persephone (a myth which is connected to the "cannibalistic myth" of Pelops) to the location of Demeter's temple along the north embankment of the hippodrome (6. 21. 1). It must be pointed out, however, that the stadium to which

¹³ W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 99-100.

¹⁴ "The name *Pelops* can be interpreted to mean 'dark-face,' the antithesis of the god of daylight. The agon (the foot-race, presumably) took place in the daytime and could not be continued into the night... Thus the preparatory sacrifice to Pelops occurred at night" (W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 97).

CHAPTER 3: 89

Pausanias refers--and at which he situates the Demeter altar¹⁵--is Stadium III, built during the mid-fifth century BCE and shortly after the construction of the Classical Pelopion. The two previous stadia, each having their finish lines within the Altis enclosure, have no demonstrated association with a Demetrian cult. This is not to say that the Stadium III did not inherit its Demeter altar from the previous stadia, only that such a claim cannot be made from the knowledge at hand.

A specific restriction barring the participation of women may account for the presence of the priestess of Demeter Chamyne at the Games. This restriction did not extend to virgins who were permitted as spectators and the priestess may simply have served as the protectress of these girls. Admittedly, such a speculation is equally as tenuous as that of Burkert. However it appears more probable that the presence of the priestess of Demeter at the Stadium has to do with the sexual prohibitions and gender restrictions relating to the Games rather than the priestess' reflecting and thus encoding of the ætiological myth into the ritual proceedings of the sanctuary as Burkert would have it. Pausanias makes clear that the priestess of Demeter is the only woman permitted to assist at the Games and relates this fact before stating that the feminine restriction does not apply to virgins (6. 20. 9). It seems likely, then, that the priestess served a supervisory role, however symbolic, over the girls in attendance. Ritualized athletic contests have an obvious sexual component, as becomes clear from the rules of abstention preceding the contests and the celebration of dances in honour of Artemis Cordax at their conclusion (mythically instituted by Pelops who imported the cult from his native Lydia, Pausanias, 6. 22. 1). It must be kept in mind that a vast number of deities received cultic honours at Olympia in Pausanias' day and associating most of these with the agonistic events, by and large, an act of conjecture.

An additional objection to the claim that the "cannibal myth" established the

¹⁵ The altar of Demeter Chamyne was located on the northern embankment of Stadium III while her temple was situated across the stadium from the altar within the space between this stadium and the hippodrome.

CHAPTER 3: 90

paradigm for the original contest is that Zeus, contrary to Burkert's assertion, does not play a central role in it. Instead, it is his brother Poseidon who becomes enamoured of the resurrected and reconstituted Pelops, transformed through the rite of the cauldron, and raises the boy up to Olympus. Zeus, although the supreme god, was one of many gods at the banquet. Thus Tantalus' insolence was not aimed specifically at Zeus but at the whole of the assembly of the gods who each received a portion of the human flesh. Burkert, to support his claim of an Elean origin for the myth, links it with Lycaon's Banquet, a similar myth from the neighbouring region of Arcadia¹⁶. Nonnos, writing in the fifth century CE, relates both the myths of Lycaon offering his son Nyctimus to Zeus and Tantalus' similar banquet for the gods in sequence (*Dionysiaca* 18. 20-30). However, the most detailed source for the Arcadian Lycaon myth is, once again, Pausanias (8. 1-2. 7). While the Lycaon myth involves human sacrifice and a meal of human flesh (Nonnos, Pausanias, 8. 2. 3, Ovid *Metamorphoses*, 1. 226-230), the motif of human sacrifice is too widespread to draw conclusions about the relationship--apart from a thematic connection--between the banquets of Lycaon and Tantalus. In any event, the discussion is little more than quibbling; even if the myth was invented locally (in Elis), it is always set in Lydia as Pelops is in all accounts a "dark faced" (as his name may be interpreted to mean) Asian, and his father's kingdom is firmly established by the myths in Asia. To regard Pelops as a "local boy," as Burkert seems to suggest we ought to do, is a distortion of Pelops' mythical biography and leads to an erroneous understanding of Pelops' hero-function (that of colonizing founder-victor) at Olympia.

Burkert also states that the display of Pelops' shoulder blade at Olympia argues in favour of an original Elean setting for the myth. The shoulder blade in

¹⁶ "After Pindar, the Greeks often changed the setting of this cannibalistic banquet of the gods to Sypylos in Asia Minor. Modern mythologists think that the myths of Tantalos and Lykaon must have influenced each other. But because both clearly depict a sacrificial act, from cutting the victim up and cooking him in a kettle, to the typical closing 'revival' by putting together his bones, both are bound to a specific locality to ritual. Pelops' shoulder was displayed at Olympia, not in Asia Minor" (W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* 99).

CHAPTER 3: 91

question, although this is never specified, is the ivory prosthesis that Pindar calls attention to following Pelops' emergence from the cauldron. The shoulder blade was present at Olympia because this is where the hero was believed to have died. It is therefore impossible to understand Burkert's claim for an Elean origin for the myth owing to the presence of the bone. With regard to the Olympia sanctuary, the shoulder blade of Pelops was a particularly numinous relic and received special attention because it symbolized Pelops' blessed status and commemorated his ascension to Olympus¹⁷. Its display at Olympia preserved the honour the gods accorded Pelops and maintained an enduring sacred association between the Olympians and the mortals who celebrated their rule.

W. J. Slater has also explored the relationship between the "cannibalistic myth" and the obscure rites of Pelops¹⁸. Much of his study is devoted to an analysis of the hero-banquet and its probable inclusion in the worship of Pelops at Olympia. Slater correctly points out that hero-sacrifice was very frequently followed by a feast in the hero's honour¹⁹. In this light, the strict dichotomy between funerary (heroic) and divine (Olympian) sacrifice is a formalistic construction as many instances combine aspects of either type. This is so particularly with regard to the communal consumption of the victim's flesh. Slater infers this practice at Olympia from Pindar's depiction of Pelops at Olympia in *Olympian Ode*. 1. 90-93:

νῦν δ' ἐν αἰμακουρίαις

ἀγλαῖσι μέμικται,

Ἄλφειοῦ πόρῳ κλιθείς,

¹⁷ During the Trojan war, the soothsayers prophesied that the Greeks would not take the city until the bow and arrows of Heracles and a bone of Pelops were fetched. Philoctetes brought the army the shoulder of Pelops but, on his homeward journey, he was shipwrecked and the bone was lost. Many years later, a fisherman caught the bone in his net and marvelled at its size. The fisherman went to Delphi to find out what should be done with the bone. It so happened that there was at the same time a delegation from Elis at the oracle seeking deliverance from a pestilence that had beset their land. The Eleans recovered the shoulder and were subsequently rid of the plague. In gratitude to the fisherman, the Eleans appointed him and his descendants as the guardians of Pelops' bone (Pausanias, 5. 13. 7).

¹⁸ W. J. Slater, "Pelops at Olympia," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 30 (1989) 485-501.

¹⁹ Slater, "Pelops" 488-489.

CHAPTER 3: 92

τύμβον ἀμφίπολον ἔχων πολυξενωτάτῳ παρὰ
βωμῷ.

"And now in splendid blood-offerings

(Pelops) shares

While in repose by the ford of the Alpheius,

He has a frequented tomb alongside the altar most-visited."

Slater argues that the image Pindar produces in these lines is equivalent to the frequent pictorial representations of recumbent heroes assisting at their own banquets²⁰. Pindar, a Boeotian, uses his local terminology, αἱμακουρία, to denote the hero-sacrifice. Furthermore, the use of the verb μείγνυμι emphasizes the presence and participation of the hero at the sacrifices held at his tomb, and the description of the blood-offerings as "splendid" characterizes the rites of Pelops in a positive way. Thus Slater draws out the celebratory nature of the sacrificial rites of Pelops as implied in Pindar's passage.

Slater, however, overlooks the pertinent reference in Pausanias and this results in his neglect of the impurity produced by the consumption of Pelops' sacrificial offering. While it is true that modifications in ritual practices likely took place between Pindar's time and that of Pausanias, this specific feature, I would argue, was equally applicable at the earlier date. Even though *enagizein-haimakouria* may not "preclude a common meal," as Slater points out, it did confer, in the case of Pelops, a condition of defilement requiring purificatory actions (perhaps a bath in the Alpheius) before the celebrants could enter into the company of Zeus. Because the consumption of the flesh of Pelops' victim produced defilement, it seems unlikely that the celebrants would have banqueted in honour of Pelops before celebrating the Games, although it is impossible to resolve this matter conclusively.

²⁰ Slater, "Pelops" 491-492. In contrast to the staging of a hero-banquet, the *haimakouria*, I think, more likely refers to the nourishing of the hero with the blood of the victim as depicted in Euripides, *Hecuba* 536-537: ἐλθε δ' ὥς πῆς μέλαν κόρης ἀκραιφνὲς αἶμα', "Come that you may drink the pure, dark blood of the virgin."

CHAPTER 3: 93

Slater infers from the vast number of cauldrons left as votive offerings at the site a connection between Pelops' hero-feast and his childhood "cannibalistic myth"²¹ . In support of his inference, he draws an analogy with the Christian symbol of the Cross. The cauldron of his father was, for Pelops, the site of his death and dismemberment--his father's grave impiety--and, concurrently, the location of his reintegration and resurrection as testimony to the gods' redemptive function. Thus, to extend Slater's logic, as with the presence of the Crucifix at the rite of Communion²² , the sacrificial cauldron, in service at the feast of Pelops, codified both the human capacity for evil and, concurrently, the salvific capacity of the divine. The sacred quality of the cauldron of Pelops, as the myth relates, is evident as a place of purification and rebirth. Pindar does refer to the cauldron out of which Pelops was lifted by the Fate Clotho as "pure" (καθαρός λέβης. *Olympian Ode* 1. 26) but this is in no way unique to the particular cauldron referred to in the myth. The cauldron was generally regarded as pure because it, along with the tripod on which it stood, was a physical component of the *thysia* which celebrated the relationship between mortals and immortals. Furthermore, Pindar explicitly denies any association with Pelops' transformation as he emerged from the cauldron and a feast his father held for the gods in which he was served as the meal.

Slater's analysis is a good counter to Burkert's rather sinister interpretation of the rites of Pelops at Olympia. He convincingly argues that, despite the presence

²¹ "The cauldron, here as in other myths, is the place of both dismembering and reintegration, of death and rebirth. It is also the place in which myth and ritual meet. Pindar knows of a myth in which Pelops is chopped limb from limb into the boiling water of a cauldron; he knows of a myth whereby Pelops is taken from a cauldron with an ivory shoulder; here too the cauldron is attested as a symbol of death and rebirth. We know of the importance of the cauldron at Olympia from the many archaeological finds; its importance in the rituals of Pelops is symbolized in the myth of Pelops" (Slater, *Pelops* 497).

²² "If we accept that the cauldron is central to the rituals of Pelops at Olympia, and that, although by its very mystery it could give rise to wild myths, its sacral existence and primary purpose were not in doubt. This purpose was in the minds of the listeners that of a *Jungenkochen*; it was the cauldron of rebirth, not dismemberment, just as--to use a modern analogy--the cross which is an instrument of torture can be viewed by the faithful as a sign of hope and redemption" (Slater, *Pelops* 500).

CHAPTER 3: 94

of *enagismata* associated with this particular form of sacrifice, heroic rites nonetheless had a celebratory quality. Slater effectively argues that this attitude conditioned, as suggested by Pindar's lines, the rites of Pelops at Olympia. However, his speculation is tenuous for precisely the same reason as Burkert's; both scholars mistakenly lay primary emphasis on the "cannibalistic myth" to account for Pelops' function within the larger ritual complex centred at Olympia and devoted to Zeus. Both of their attempts to connect the "cannibalistic myth" with the rites of Pelops distort, in my view, the function of the hero's cult. From my perspective, the most important features of the childhood myth are precisely those which Pindar clearly asserts and which highlight Pelops' status as a blessed mortal (owing to his ascension to Olympus) who experienced a profound intimacy with the Olympians and with Zeus in particular. The childhood myth of Pelops achieved its significance with regard to the Pelops cult not because it encoded the rites associated with it, but rather because it confirmed the association of Pelops with the worship of Olympian Zeus.

b. The Sovereignty Myth of Pelops

The childhood myth of Pelops celebrates Pelops' status as a mortal who was beloved by the Olympians and, in addition, introduces two motifs that are especially pertinent to his later acquisition of sovereignty over the territory in which the sanctuary of Olympia was situated. As in the childhood myth, it was Poseidon who had conveyed Pelops to Olympus following his transformation in the cauldron, the god later bore him to Olympia in his chariot after he had served his apprenticeship among the gods (*Olympian Ode* l. 75-78). Secondly, reflecting his service to Zeus on Olympus, Pelops, the victorious king, served as the mortal

CHAPTER 3: 95

articulation of Olympian rule by means of Zeus' bestowal upon him of the divinely-wrought sceptre (*Iliad* 2. 103-104). Thus, the principal features of the childhood myth are taken up again in the myth of his acquisition of rule; a rule that was perpetuated by his descendants and served to establish the monarchical lines at the apogee of the Heroic Age. The king Pelops, the eponymous hero of the lower Greek mainland, was by virtue of his particular distinctions the earthly representative of Zeus' cosmic supremacy

To recount the principal features of the myth, upon his arrival at Olympia Pelops received from Poseidon a golden chariot drawn by winged horses for the purpose of racing against Oenomaus (*Olympian Ode* I. 86-87). A victory over the established monarch meant that Pelops would acquire the hand of the king's daughter and a dowry that consisted of the king's land (*Olympian Ode* 9. 9-10). Prior to Pelops' acceptance of the challenge, Oenomaus had slain thirteen suitors²³ who had undertaken the competition (*Olympian Ode* I. 79-81) thus marking the competition as a race to the death. These are all the features Pindar relates of the myth; however, as with the childhood myth, the poet expunges its more dubious aspects.

Philostratus (*Pelops* 9) states that king Oenomaus was the son of Ares who engaged in the savage practice of hanging the decapitated heads of the slain suitors at the gateway of his palace²⁴ as a warning to prospective contestants. Pelops, perhaps daunted by the prospect of a negative outcome, made a surreptitious contract with Oenomaus' charioteer Myrtilus who was enamoured of Hippodameia. To ensure the victory, Myrtilus replaced the lynch-pins on the king's chariot with ones made of wax (Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 33. 296; 37. 338-340)). In

²³ The number of suitors slain by Oenomaus appears to reflect the number of lunar months that constituted the leap year, the time at which the Games were held.

²⁴ Certain features identify the sanctuary as occupying the same location as Oenomaus' palace. Part of the sanctuary's features included the altar on which the king held sacrifices to Warlike Zeus. Two other altars (Zeus of the Courtyard and Zeus of the Thunderbolt) were built over the foundations of Oenomaus' palace (Pausanias, 5. 14. 6-8).

CHAPTER 3: 96

recompense for this act, Myrtilus was to receive the bridal night. During the race, Myrtilus jumped from the chariot as the wheels gave way, apparently close to the finish-line and just before the king was about to overtake Pelops²⁵. The king died in the wreckage and thus Pelops acquired Oenomaus' daughter and throne. Pelops, however, reneged on his contract with Myrtilus, the son of Hermes, and murdered him rather than granting him his right of intercourse with Hippodameia. This crime against Hermes (Euripides *Orestes* 1546-1548) introduced into Pelops' family the divine retribution which his descendant Orestes, the last of the great heroes of the sanctified past, finally purged. Thus, the sceptre of Zeus, conveyed to Pelops by the divine messenger Hermes, not only sanctified the rule of the Pelopids, it also bore the *nosos* that so afflicted its possessors.

A myth that celebrates victory by cheating and triumph with treachery sets, in the modern view and apparently in Pindar's estimation as well, a poor example for competitors. In fact, Walter Burkert dismisses the myth's attachment to the Games, apart from seeing in it a demonstration of the increasing influence, during the seventh century, of the Elean magistrates over the staging of the Games²⁶. Rather than according it the status as the myth that established Pelops as the greatest of Olympia's heroes, Burkert dismissively explains it as a veiled representation of "the strange tabus of Elean animal-husbandry rites." Such a conclusion points to an egregious distortion of the rites at Olympia as they are presented to us in the literary sources. Burkert is concerned to distil out of the information relating to the site its most archaic aspects that, as he elaborates in *Homo Necans*, deal with the anxieties and precipitant "patterns of action" (i.e. rituals) resulting from the cultural

²⁵ The race course may have stretched from Olympia to the Isthmus as Pelops' chariot was displayed in Celae, near Corinth (Pausanias, 2. 14. 4).

²⁶ "But all of this does not touch upon the heart of the Olympic festival. Rather, in its details the myth of Hippodameia reflects the strange tabus of Elean animal-husbandry rites; and the fact that it penetrated to Olympia testifies to growing Elean influence in the seventh century" (W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 95-96).

CHAPTER 3: 97

transformation in which human groupings adopted the hunt as a means of securing their food supply. His project then, as reflected in his over-valuation of the "cannibalistic myth," determines the significance of the various myths and rituals according to their archaism, meaning the way these most closely approximate the concerns of "slaughtering man."

According to the traditional dating, the four-horse chariot race was included in the list of competitions at the twenty-fifth Olympiad in 680²⁷. This dating is, in the light of archaeological evidence, arbitrary and unreliable; however, it does suggest that the chariot race was not an original event at Olympia. This later addition is also reflected in the mythical, or sacred, history of the Games, when Heracles first ran the chariots (Pausanias 5. 8. 3-4). Heracles also initiated the propitiation of Pelops during his revitalization and broad reformation of the sanctuary. Thus, in the mythical account, both the worship of Pelops and the staging of horse-driven contests formed part of the cultic innovations believed to have been enacted by Heracles during the Heroic Age.

The ostentatious quadriga was unique to equestrian competitions. It is absent from the battle depictions of Homer, nor for that matter, is it present in the great chariot race that inaugurated the funeral games of Patroclus, where the competitors clearly compete in their war-chariots. However, in the Homeric reference to the games held at Elis, the poet does state that the quadriga was involved (τέσσαρες ἀθλοφόροι ἵπποι αὐτοῖσιν ὄχεσθην) (*Iliad* 11. 699). This line was, however, disputed in antiquity. In his description of a chest dedicated in the Heræum, Pausanias states that the chariot of Pelops was driven by two winged horses (5. 27. 7). This depiction may be the result of stylistic limitations or, perhaps, reflects an older version of the myth; Pindar does not state the number of horses that drove Pelops' chariot. Whether driven by two horses or four, the chariot nonetheless testified to nobility and reflected the glorious deeds of the previous age,

²⁷ Lee, "The First Olympic Games," 114.

CHAPTER 3: 98

the time of the hero-kings so powerfully communicated in the Homeric epics. Philostratus the Elder states that the quadriga was a Lydian invention, developed for the purpose of games and not for battle, perhaps introduced into Greece by Pelops (*Imagines-Hippodameia* 1. 17). The central part of the east pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia depicted the competition between Oenomaus and Pelops as involving quadrigas (Pausanias, 5. 10. 6). Thus, the sovereignty myth of Pelops crowned the entrance to the great temple of Olympian Zeus.

The hippodrome, unexcavated as yet, incorporated many aspects of Pelops' victorious chariot race; enough to state confidently that the myth served as the exemplary model for this particular competition. The first feature of the race course Pausanias relates is the *Taraxippus*, a structure in the shape of a round altar and located on the south side-wall of the course, across from the far turning post. Apparently, the structure had, as its name implies, an unnerving effect on the horses. Pausanias contributes several myths regarding the structure, most of which associate it with the victory race of Pelops (6. 20. 15-19). The statue of Hippodameia, because of its location atop the near turning-post, both faced the charioteers as they left the starting-gate and also marked the course's finish-line. Pindar attributes the ongoing cultic honours accorded to Pelops to his victory over king Oenomaus (*Olympian Ode* 1. 88-93). Philostratus the Elder (*Imagines-Hippodameia* 1. 17.) states that there were thirteen mounds alongside the hippodrome, each being the graves of the suitors slain by Oenomaus²⁸. The chariot-race, the most prestigious of Olympia's competitions, encoded the myth of Pelops' victory-ride into the physical structure of the hippodrome.

Thus, at least from the time the Olympia festival grew into a broad gathering

²⁸ Pausanias does not relate this feature of the hippodrome. He locates the common grave of the suitors near the ruins of Harpina, an ancient city founded by Oenomaus and named after his wife. These ruins were roughly five kilometres away from the Olympia sanctuary. Pelops, Pausanias states, erected a monument to them and supplies the names of the eighteen suitors listed in the *Great Eoëae* 10 (attributed to Hesiod). Pelops offered yearly hero-sacrifices (ἐννοίζειν) to the slain suitors following his victory (Pausanias, 6. 21. 8-11). Pausanias does not, apparently, endorse the myth of the thirteen suitors so clearly asserted by Pindar and others.

CHAPTER 3: 99

of the Greek-speaking peoples, Pelops reigned as its greatest hero. Two features of his mythical biography facilitated his promotion to this status; being of non-Greek origin his position did not promote the interests of any particular locality, and as the mythical monarch whose line established the second Mycenæan dynasty, Pelops acquired a panHellenic dimension. His association with the divinely-instituted rule that brought the legendary past, the Heroic Age, to its height established Pelops as the mortal articulation of the will of Zeus, a distinction confirmed by his cultic association with the Olympian ruler. The chariot race, the Olympic competition directly connected with Pelops' definitive mythical exploit, was itself a means of recuperating and reflecting the prestige of the sanctified past. The cult of Pelops at Olympia therefore celebrated his *kleos* as the founder of the monarchical lines of the Heroic Age. As a child, Pelops was compensated for the extreme brutality of his father, just as Zeus was rescued by Rhea from a like propensity in his own father Cronus. Similarly, Pelops' victory over the old king of the land that resulted in his achievement of sovereignty over Olympia reflected Zeus' conquest of Olympus by his defeat of Cronus, the former ruler of the domain of the gods. Furthermore, both the victories of the gods and the hero took place on the same territory; a belief that consolidated the association of the two cults. To this extent, Pelops served as the mortal articulation of Zeus' rule

F. THE PROPITIATION OF PELOPS AND THE OLYMPIC FESTIVAL

While both Pindar and Pausanias confirm the great cultic significance of Pelops at Olympia they do not situate the hero's rites within the greater devotional complex that constituted the worship at the sanctuary. As a result of this textual omission, such an undertaking is, unfortunately, conjectural. The most appropriate point of departure for this project is to examine the relationship between the forms of

CHAPTER 3: 100

worship accorded both the hero and the god within the context of the religious festival. A very clearly articulated account of this association is provided by Pausanias' description of the Hermæa, an Arcadian agonistic festival derived from the Olympic Games (8. 14. 10-12); therefore it has a high degree of credibility as a model for hero worship within the context of a festival in honour of an Olympian god²⁹.

The Hermæa were celebrated by the Arcadians at Pheneus. Close by their temple of Hermes, the Pheneans displayed the grave of Myrtilus, who was the son of Hermes. As Oenomaus' charioteer, Myrtilus guaranteed Pelops' victory. Pausanias also relates that Myrtilus desired Hippodameia but lacked the courage to take up Oenomaus' challenge. Pelops murdered Myrtilus and cast his body into the sea when the son of Hermes sought to deflower Hippodameia as recompense for his part in the victory. The Pheneans somehow obtained the body of the hero and interred it behind the temple of Hermes. Pausanias uses the standard terminology (insofar as it reflects the Homeric consultation of Teiresias) to describe the sacrificial procedure accorded Myrtilus: καὶ νύκτωρ κατὰ ἔτος ἐναγίζουσιν αὐτῷ (and every year they sacrifice to him as to a hero) (8. 14. 11-12). Thus the Hermæa were commenced with a preliminary, nocturnal blood-offering at the resident hero's grave site. In this manner, the worship of Myrtilus served an inaugural and intercessory function with regard to the staging of the Hermæa. To continue with this example, Myrtilus, the semi-divine son of Hermes maintained an effective presence within the sanctuary of Hermes whereby his inaugural propitiation served to prepare the celebrants for entry into the company of the Olympian god. The funerary nature of the cult (its location at the grave site, the night-time ceremony) acknowledged the hero's mortality, while the victim offering proclaimed the abiding presence of the hero at the cult location. This presence

²⁹ Pelops as noted above was closely associated with Hermes in myth. Pausanias relates that it was Pelops who introduced the worship of Hermes in the Peloponnese, his motivation being to try to placate the god for the murder of Myrtilus (5. 1. 7).

CHAPTER 3: 101

was made "effective" by the blood-offering whereby the transference of the victim's fresh blood into the grave-pit "enlivened" the hero-demigod. The *enagizein* of Myrtilus, celebrated at his grave-site within the precinct of Hermes, functioned as a preliminary ritual which accessed the local hero who spanned, by virtue of his semi-divine status, the mortal and divine conditions. The *herôon*, made numinous by its location within the god's space and by sacrificial apparatus--the *bothros*--was indeed a means of recuperating the sanctified past in which the hero lived and to reactualize this sacred time, this time when the gods were among mortals. By reestablishing the hero as an effective intercessory presence the community of worshippers prepared themselves for participating in the festivities that honoured the Olympian.

The preliminary and inaugural function of the hero cult with regard to the festival of the god is expressed in its night-time occurrence on the eve of the festival. Furthermore, the nocturnal and funerary character of the rite draw out the radical distinction between the mortal condition of the celebrants (characterized by dissipation and finalized by death) and the enduring presence of the immortals upon which earthly existence was believed to depend. Through the vehicle of his cult, the hero, as the embodiment of both mortal and divine conditions, served to span this ontological gap. Because the cult directly addressed the fact of the hero's death as reflected in the slaughtering ritual which directed the sacrificial flow downward to the Underworld, it assumed a quality of defilement (ἄγος). As a preventative against the potential contamination the ritual imposed, the celebrants abstained from consuming the victim's flesh in accordance with the Homeric pattern outlined in the consultation of Teiresias.

The nocturnal, preliminary worship of Pelops may be inferred from an

CHAPTER 3: 102

analysis of the ritual structures within the Altis³⁰. The central feature of the sanctuary, to repeat, was the great altar of Zeus. It was approached from the east, the same direction toward which the temple of Zeus (and Greek temples generally) faced. The Pelopion stood behind it, that is to the west of it. In opposition to both Zeus' altar and temple, the Pelopion was entered from a west-facing gate. The West, as the location of the sunset and hence the point of entry of night, as Hesiod relates, establishes the nocturnal context for the hero-offering to Pelops. The victim chosen for the blood-offering, a single black ram, precluded a general feast in honour of Pelops for the simple reason that it did not supply enough meat for a banquet of any scale. The dark colouring of the victim also marked it as a funerary offering. Furthermore, we know that there were explicit restrictions regarding the consumption of Pelops' victim, and that consuming it debarred one (who did not undertake to restore his purity) from entering the temple of Zeus.

The propitiation of Pelops served to introduce the celebrants, drawn from the entire Greek-speaking world, into the company of Olympian Zeus. By virtue of his culture-defining victory--insofar as it introduced the line of rulers throughout Hellas during the apogee of the Heroic Age--Pelops served as the vehicle by which Olympian rule was articulated throughout the mortal domain as it was defined by ancient Greek culture. As the ancestor of the great heroes whose exploits defined the features of ancient Greek culture, in addition to his own founding activities and associations with the Olympians, Pelops was indeed the most appropriate hero whose cult served to introduce the celebrants into the company of Olympian Zeus.

³⁰ Jane Renfrew claims that the propitiation of Pelops occurred on the second night of the festival, as the full moon rose above the horizon (J. M. Renfrew, "Food for Athletes and Gods," in W. Raschke, ed. *The Archaeology of the Olympic Games*, 177). She does not provide a reference for this; however, it is definitely possible, as that was the day on which the chariot races were held (Pausanias, 5. 9. 3). This schedule refers to Pausanias' day and he also relates that the sacrifices to Zeus occurred as well on the second day of the festival. I tend to favour Burkert's claim that the sacrifice to Pelops, as with the sacrifice to Mytilus during the Hermaea, was held on the night before the principal sacrifice to Zeus and prior to the chariot events.

My exploration has been stimulated by Walter Burkert's evocative assertion that the cult treated the effective presence of the hero. I have sought to arrive at an appreciation of the topic within the context of the ancient Greek religion, a perspective that has largely been ignored. To this end, I have explored the poetry of Hesiod and Homer as the most influential sources pertaining to the religious beliefs of the ancient Greeks.

On this matter, Hesiod's poetry establishes the matrix of belief, constructed upon the foundations of cosmology and the nature of mortality, that defined the relationship between the divine (the enduring, the powerful) and the mundane (the defective, the evanescent). With regard to hero worship, Hesiod declares the heroes to be a prior and distinct expression of mortality. He defines the heroes as demigods. The Hesiod's poem *Works and Days* communicates a certain nostalgia for the life-experience of the original peoples, the Golden Men, and asserts the belief that their beatified existence had been recuperated and perfected by certain members of the Heroic Race; no doubt those whose renown had endured into his own time through the vehicles of myth and cultic devotions. Finally, Hesiod proclaims that the "former men" retain a contact with contemporary men, despite their degenerating circumstances, in the capacity of overseers of the manifestation of divine intention.

Homer presents the heroes as mortals who were the descendants of the gods. More significantly, the gods intervened in the heroes' lives to make their will manifest on earth. As such, the exploits of the heroes, closely supervised by the gods, served as exemplary models for human conduct. Owing to this, the epics provided the basis of ancient Greek education and their recitation was often a feature of religious festivals, as for instance

CONCLUSION: 104

the Panathenaic. Although it is not a popular view to regard the poetry of Homer and Hesiod as *hieroi logoi*, it is my view that they served this function insofar as they clearly delineated the terms of the relationship between men and gods which the ancient Greeks regarded as normative..

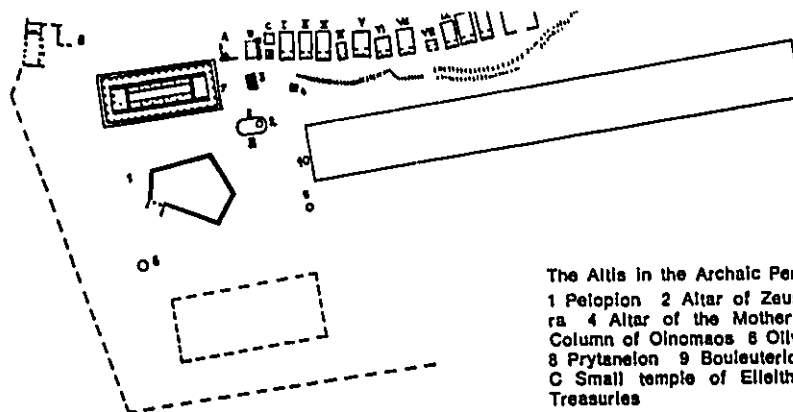
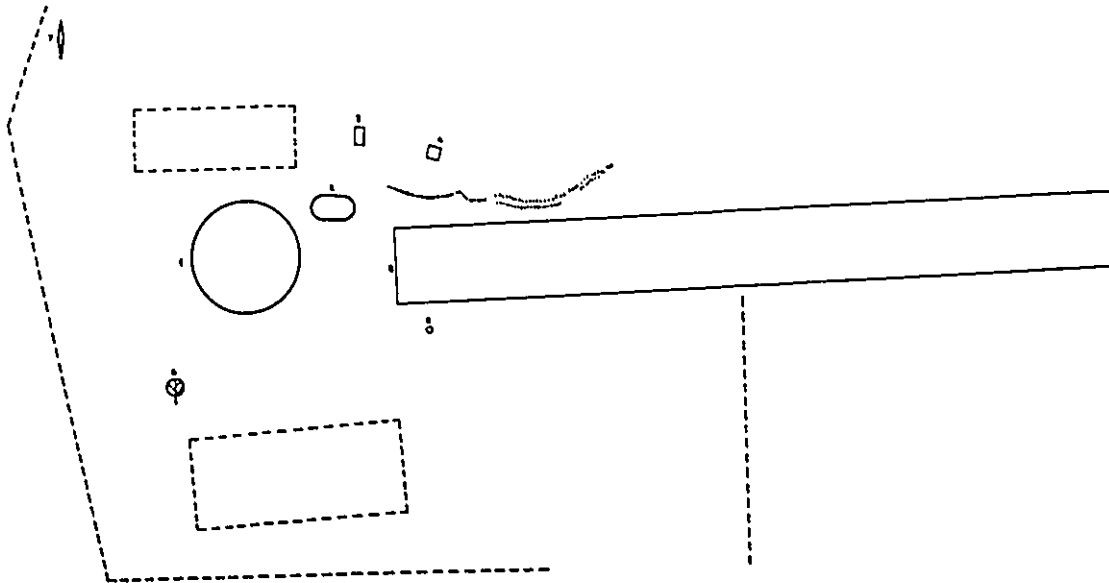
As I have attempted to demonstrate, the epics of Homer disclose the basic features of the hero cult which proliferated concomitantly with the transmission of the epics. Although the cult is not presented in a systematic fashion anywhere in the epics, the depictions the consultation of Teiresias and the protective function of the Trojan ancestral tombs relate the basic elements of belief (the *kleos* of the "elect" dead--the founder--is preserved at the location of his tomb and that his enduring and dynamic *kleos* may be enlisted into the maintenance and preservation of his cultural creation) that informed the cultic devotions accorded to the ancient Greek heroes. Correlatively, the consultation of Teiresias provides a meticulous depiction of the procedures that constituted funerary sacrifice, the means of propitiating the hero. Given these two examples, the assessment that the hero-cult is an "un-Homeric" aspect of Greek religion ought to be reconsidered.

As the earthly representatives of the gods, the primary function of the heroes was that of foundation. Given their status as semi-divine founders, the heroes were accorded cultic honours that sought to reactivate their enduring creative capacity of at the location of the hero-shrines, typically their tombs located within a polis or divine sanctuary. The distinctive features of the cult evoke its preliminary and intercessory function as it served to make the celebrants acknowledge their own mortality and further served to prepare them for entry into the company of the gods. The *enagizein* offered to the hero rendered the celebrants suitable for participation at the sacred festival.

SITE-PLANS OF THE SANCTUARY AT OLYMPIA

The Altis in the Protogeometric and Geometric Period (1100-700 B.C.)

1 Pelopion 2 Altar of Zeus 3 Altar of Hera 4 Altar of the Mother of the Gods 5 Column of Olinomaios
6 Olive-tree 7 Altar of Hestia (?) 8 Stadium



The Altis in the Archaic Period (700-500 B.C.)

1 Pelopion 2 Altar of Zeus 3 Altar of Hera 4 Altar of the Mother of the Gods 5 Column of Olinomaios 6 Olive-tree 7 Heraion 8 Prytaneion 9 Bouleuterion 10 Stadium
C Small temple of Eleithya A, B, I-XII Treasuries

A HERO'S TOMB EXCAVATED AT LEFKANDI

During excavations undertaken in 1981, British archaeologists, under the direction of Mervin Popham¹, have unearthed an elaborate grave at a location named Toumba. The site is in the vicinity of the modern town of Lefkandi on the island of Euboea and dates from the eighth century BCE.. While the structure first appeared to be the temple of an Olympian god, its contents revealed it instead as an elaborate grave. In its centre were found the ashes of man, whom Popham identifies as a hero-warrior, along with the buried remains of a woman and horses (the number of them is not given). Much jewellery and pottery were also interred within the grave. This structure, as Popham points out, clearly reflects the elaborate burials accorded the Homeric princes, and in fact, its dating corresponds with the composition of the epics.

Because of the elaborateness of the grave, Popham identifies it as a herōon despite there being no evidence that it was a place of sacrifice. Yet, Popham states that "it was in use for a short period of time" (p. 173) although he does not say what type of use was made of it or even when this "use" occurred. The reason Popham gives for its abandonment is that it was inadvertently constructed over a Mycenaean cemetery. When this was discovered, the people were driven by religious dread to conceal the grave-structure beneath a tumulus (p. 174).

The presence of such elaborate graves, no doubt constructed for the remembrance of the rulers at that time, must certainly have influenced Homer in his telling of the obsequies performed on behalf of the slain heroes in his epics. The Homeric burial mounds are never identified as being the locations of hero sacrifices. For this reason, I have difficulty with Popham's identification of this grave, its grandeur and similarity to a temple duly noted, with what I am led to believe as the more typical feature of a herōon, namely the presence of a sunken altar (*bothros*).

¹ Popham, M., Touloupa, e. & Sackett, L. H., "The Hero of Lefkandi," *Antiquity* 56 (1982), pp. 169-174.

REFERENCES TO THE ANCIENT SOURCES: 107

<u>Athenaeus</u> , p. 20 n20	201	90-93	169
<i>Deipnos</i> , 9. 410a,	669	94-105	168
	159	90-92	141
<u>Aeschylus</u> , p. 85	176	p. 38	122
<i>Niobe</i> , fr. 158	516	108	
	720-725	109-201	<u>Homer</u> , p.15, n31
<u>Euripides</u> , p. 62n.23	736-814	p. 39	<i>Iliad</i> , 14. 166-168
<i>Hippol.</i> , 1169-1243	736-739	110	p.28
p. 86	726-728	112	8. 10-1 (n.5)
<i>Orestes</i> , 5	p. 31	116	8. 481 (n.5)
P. 92	742-744	120	8. 478-481 (n.5)
<i>Hecuba</i> , 536-537	749	122	8. 867-868 (n.6)
p. 96	754-756	123	9. 571-572 (n.6)
<i>Orestes</i> , 1546-1548	763	125-126	14. 327 (n.6)
	764	126	p. 30
<u>Hesiod</u> , p. 24	728-731	127	8. 16 (n.7)
<i>Theogony</i> , 116-122	732-735	128	p. 32
116,	p. 32	130	8. 16 (n10)
123,	768	136	14. 271-276 (n11)
700,	769-774	138	p. 31
814	776	141	1. 426 (n.8)
123	779	p. 40	8. 478-481 (n.9)
514	775-776	145	15. 225 (n.9)
p. 25	793-805	152	p. 34
67	p. 33	151	15. 187-193 (n.13)
124	210	146	p. 40
748	453-506	145	22. 25-31 (n16)
211-232	617-626	153	p. 49
740	642	159-160	10. 416
p. 26	207-210 (n12)	166	22. 303-304, 434
929t	890, p. 34	171	24. 258
117-118	p. 35	p.41	10. 50
126	507-508	169b	24. 55-64
127	535-541	175	20. 105-107
128	549-551	178	p. 50
p. 27	556-557	179	12. 23
129	562-564	182-192	1. 259-270
133	565-566	195-201	p. 51
133-138	514	181	5. 633-637
139-146	p. 36	p.43	5.303-304
147-153	521-531	148	12. 382, 445-449
789-792	570-584	p. 44	20. 285
821	589-607	157	p. 52
119	p. 44	158	24. 113-114
683	987	169b	7. 79-80
721	991	654	15. 350
725	p.47	p. 45	23. 76
736	100-101	250-255	p. 53
807	98-103	187	7. 427-432
822	105-115	286	22. 362
740		p. 46	23. 76
760	<i>Works</i> , p. 35	11-12	p. 54
p. 28	81	249-253	15. 350
851	63	1-10	22. 76
821-822	65-66	238-247	17. 836
819-888	67	230-231	21. 122-127
p. 29	p. 37	p. 47	22. 508-509

REFERENCES TO THE ANCIENT SOURCES: 108

- p. 55
 23. 21-23
 24. 113-119
 24. 139-142
 24. 656-658
 16. 677-683
 19. 28-39
 p. 56
 23. 184-191
 24. 410-423
 24. 665-668
 6. 416-420
 7. 427-432
 p. 57
 23. 257-897
 23. 630-631
 23. 678-680
 11. 696-702
 22. 163-164
 23. 619
 23. 193-207
 23. 546-547
 23. 770-783
 p. 58
 23. 884-894
 p. 59
 20. 213-240
 4. 44-49
 11. 166-169
 24. 349
 10. 414-415
 8. 550-552 (n14)
 p. 60
 2. 786-815
 2. 790 (n17)
 2. 788 (n18)
 p. 61
 2. 811-814
 11. 368-383
 22. 358-360 (n20)
 5. 379-381 (n21)
 5. 440-442 (n21)
 22. 8-14 (n21)
 18. 202-219 (n21)
 p. 62
 5. 269
 5. 640-6
 p. 63
 21. 450-455
 24. 28-30 (n25)
 12. 8-9 (n26)
 7. 445-453 (n26)
 p. 64
 24. 349
 p. 66
 9. 255-256 (n30)
 p. 68
14. 259
 8. 13
 p. 69
 3. 103-104
 22. 172
 3. 6
 p. 71
 2. 809
 p. 95
 2. 103-104
 p. 97
 11. 699
- Odyssey* p.28
 11. 37 (n.6)
 11. 564 (n.6)
 20. 355-356 (n.6)
 10. 526-529 (n.6)
 12. 81 (n.6)
 p. 44
 4. 563
 p. 49
 12. 44
 p. 50
 4. 562-565
 p. 51
 8. 224-225
 p.52
 11. 72
 p. 53
 11. 71-78
 p. 54
 5. 311-312
 3. 258-261
 p. 56
 24. 32-34
 24. 90
 12. 8-15
 23. 862-864
 p. 57
 24. 85-97
 p. 65
 11. 26
 11. 31
 10. 528
 p. 66
 11. 105
 10. 494
 10. 536
 p. 68
 3. 335-336
 4. 45
 p. 69
 3. 6
- Homeric Hymn* p. 62, n.23
Poseidon, 22
- Isocrates*, p. 85
Helen, 68
- Nonnos*, p. 86
Dionysiaca, 18. 20-30
 p. 90
 18. 20-30
 p. 95
 33. 296; 37. 338-340
- Ovid*, p. 90
Metam., 1. 226-230
- Pausanias*, p. 76
 5. 10. 1
 5. 7. 6
 5. 7. 10
 p. 77
 5. 8. 1-4
 p. 79
 5. 8. 6
 5. 8. 11
 5. 4. 6, (n4)
 p. 80
 5. 13. 1-2
 6. 22. 1
 p. 81
 5. 13. 2
 5. 13. 3
 p. 82, (n8)
 5. 13. 1,
 p. 85
 2. 22. 3
 p. 86
 2. 22. 3
 p. 89
 6. 22. 9
 p. 90
 8. 1-2. 7
 p. 91
 5. 13. 7, (n17)
 p. 96, (n25)
 2. 14. 4
 p. 97
 5. 8. 3-4
 p. 98
 5. 10. 6
 6. 20. 15-19
 p. 100
 8. 14. 10-12
 8. 14. 11-12
- Philostratus*, p. 95
Pelops, 9
 p. 98
Hippodameia 1. 17
- Pindar*, p. 77
Ol. 3. 21, 23, 15-16
- p. 80
Ol. 1. 90-93
 p. 82
Ol. 1. 93
Ol. 10. 24
 p. 83
Ol. 2. 3
Ol. 3. 11-35
Ol. 6. 65-70
Ol. 10. 22-25, 43-45
Ol. 1. 23-24
Ol. 9. 10
Ol. 9. 9
 p. 85
Ol. 1. 61
 p. 86
Ol. 1. 40-45
Ol. 1. 47
 p. 87
Ol. 1. 25-66
Ol. 1. 26-27
Ol. 1. 61
Ol. 1. 65-66
 p. 91
Ol. 1. 90-93
 p. 93
Ol. 1. 26
 p. 94
Ol. 1. 75-78
Ol. 2. 103-104
 p. 95
Ol. 1. 86-87, 79-81
Ol. 9. 9-10
 p. 98
Ol. 1. 88-93
Thucydides, p. 85
 1. 9. 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY:109

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

Aeschylus, *Niobe*, fr. 158.

Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*.

Euripides, *Hecuba*.

-----, *Hippolytus*

-----, *Orestes*.

Hesiod, *Theogony*.

-----, *Works and Days*.

Homer, *Iliad*.

-----, *Odyssey*.

Homeric Hymn 22, *To Poseidon*.

Isocrates, *Helen*.

Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*.

Pausanias, *Description of Greece*

Philostratus, *Imagines*.

Pindar, *Olympian Odes*.

Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian Wars*.

All references to the primary sources have been drawn from the editions of the Loeb Classical Library.

B. SECONDARY SOURCES

Bérard, C. "Récupérer la mort du prince: héroïzation et formation de la cité." *La mort, les morts dans les sociétés anciennes*. Eds. J-P. Vernant, & G. Gnoli. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 89-105.

Bremmer, J. *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Brooks, R. A. *A Genealogical Chart of the Gods and Heroes of Ancient Greece*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

Burkert, W. *Greek Religion*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985.

-----, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Casabona, J. *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec*. Aix-En-Provence: Editions Ophrys, 1966.

Coldstream, J.N. *Geometric Greece*. London: Earnest Bearn, 1977.

-----, "Hero-Cults in the Age of Homer." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 96 (1976) 8-17.

de Polignac, F. *La naissance de la cité grecque*. Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 1984.

Dietrich, B. C. *The Origins of Greek Religion*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974.

-----, *Tradition in Greek Religion*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986.

Farnell, L. R. *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920.

Foucart, P. *Le culte des héros chez les grecs*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1908.

Hadzisteliou Price, T. "Hero-Cult and Homer." *Historia* 22 (1973) 129-144.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:111

- Harrison, J. E. *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1903.
- Kerényi, C. *The Heroes of the Greeks*. New York: Grove Press, 1960.
- Kirk, G. S. & Raven, J. E., *The Presocratic Philosophers*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1957.
- Lee, H. M. "The "First" Olympic Games of 776 B.C.." *The Archaeology of the Olympics*. W. J. Raschke, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988) pp. 110-118.
- Mallwitz, A. "Cult and Competition Locations at Olympia," *The Archaeology of the Olympics*. W. J. Raschke, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 79-109.
- Morris, I. *Burial and Ancient Society: The Rise of the Greek City-State*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Mossé, C. *La Grèce archaïque d'Homère à Eschyle* Paris: Éditions du Seui, 1984.
- Nilsson, M. P. *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Ancient Greek Religion*. New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1949.
- Raschke, W. J (ed.). *The Archaeology of the Olympics: The Olympics and Other Festivals in Antiquity*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
- Redfield, J. *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Renfrew, J. "Food for Athletes and Gods," *The Archaeology of the Olympics* W. J. Raschke, ed (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 174-181.
- Rhode, E. *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.
- Robertson, M. "Laomedon's Corpse; Laomedon's Tomb." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 2 (1970) 23-26.
- Scully, S. *Homer and the Sacred City*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Slater, W. J. "Pelops at Olympia." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 30 (1989) 485-501.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:112

- Snodgrass, A. *Archaic Greece: The Age of Experiment*. London: J. Dent & Sons, 1980.
- , "Les origines du culte des héros dans la Grèce antique." *La mort, les morts dans les sociétés anciennes*. J-P. Vernant & G. Gnoli, eds. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 107-119.
- Touchais, G. "Chronique des fouilles en 1987, Olympie (fouilles de l'institut Allemand)." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 112 (1988) 632-633.
- Vernant, J-P. *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne*. Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 1974.
- , *L'individu, la mort, l'amour: Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1989.
- West, M. L. *Hesiod, Theogony* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- , *Hesiod, Works and Days* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978
- Yalouris, A. & N. *Olympia: Guide to the Museum and the Sanctuary*. Athens: Ekdotike Athenon S. A., 1993.
- Yalouris, N. *Olympia: Altis and Museum*. Munich: Verlag Schnell & Steiner, 1972

D. REFERENCE WORKS

- A Homeric Dictionary*. Autenrieth, G. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958.
- Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue Grecque: Histoire des mots*, Chantraine, P. Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1968.
- Greek-English Lexicon*. Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
- Mythologies*. Bonnefoy, Y. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Eliade, M. ed. New York: Macmillan, 1987.
- The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Hammond, N. G. L. & Scullard, H. H. eds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.