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ROYAL SUCCESSION IN HEROIC GREECE*

This article is about the rules of succession in Bronze Age Greece as reflected in Greek tradition. The question as to whether or not the figures dealt with by this tradition are historical is of little relevance to the present discussion: what I seek to recover is not the history of one royal house or another but rather the recurring patterns according to which the members of these houses – no matter whether real or fictitious – were expected to behave when it came to the question of accession to the throne and transmission of the kingship to their successors.

I

Contrary to appearances, Greek heroic tradition does not supply sufficient evidence for seeing the kingship as transmitted from father to son. Consider, for example, the story of Pelops, a newcomer from Asia Minor, who became king in Elis in virtue of his marriage to Hippodameia, daughter of the local king Oinomaos. Although Pelops is said to have fathered many sons, the remarkable thing about this king is that none of his sons succeeded him on the throne. Actually, the tradition does supply an explanation as to why the two most prominent sons of Pelops, Atreus and Thyestes, did not succeed their father in Elis: Pelops exiled the two brothers to punish them for the murder of their step-brother Chrysippos, Pelops' son by another wife. The difficulty, however, is that this story can hardly account for the rest of Pelops' sons, who became kings elsewhere rather than in Elis itself.[1] This compares with the case of Peleus and Telamon, the sons of Aiakos king of Aigina, who are also said to have killed their step-brother, Phokos, and because of this were exiled by their father: Peleus became king in Phthia, Telamon in Salamis.[2] It goes without saying that the behaviour of Pelops and Aiakos toward their sons is strikingly at variance with what could be expected of dynastic kings, for it appears that no sons were left to succeed these kings on the throne. The next kings of Elis and Aigina must have been of a different line. That this is far from being an unusual situation can be seen from the case of Oineus and his descendants. The Aetolian entry in the Catalogue of Ships contains a brief remark to the effect that the leaders of the Aetolians in the Trojan war were not of Oineus' line, because by that time no sons of this king were left: *οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' Οἰνῆος μεγαλήτορος υἱέες ἦσαν, | οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτ' αὐτὸς ἔην, θάνε δὲ ξανθὸς Μελέαγρος*.[3] The explanation is far from exact, because even after Meleagros' death Oineus' son Tydeus and grandson Diomedes still remained to be accounted for. Now Tydeus, again, had been exiled from Aetolia for murdering a relative; he went to

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[1] Pelops and Hippodameia: Pind. *Ol.* 1.67–71, 88; the murder of Chrysippos: Hellan. 4 F 157 (= Schol. *Il.* 2.105); Thuc. 1.9.2; the sons of Pelops: Pind. *Ol.* 1.89; Schol. Eur. *Or.* 4. According to Pindar, Pelops fathered six sons, but other sources give him more. For the discussion see M. L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 109–10.

[2] Pind. *Nem.* 5.14–16 with Schol.; Diod. 4.72.6–7; Hyg. *Fab.* 14; Paus. 2.29.2.

[3] *Il.* 2.641–2, athetized by Zenodotus; cf. Leaf's commentary *ad loc.*

Argos, where he married a daughter of king Adrastos. His son Diomedes, who married another daughter of the same king, succeeded his father-in-law on the throne, whereas his grandfather Oineus, left with no direct descendants in Aetolia, was succeeded by his son-in-law Andraimon.[4]

Let us take some additional examples. Bellerophontes went from Greece to Lycia, where he married the king's daughter and became king. Teukros, instead of returning to his native Salamis after the Trojan war, settled in Cyprus, where he became king; his father Telamon was left in Salamis with no male descendants to succeed him. Melampous came from Messenia to Argos, where he cured the daughters of the king Proitos of their madness, married one of them and became king; although Proitos had a son of his own, this son, Megapenthes, is said to have been born too late to succeed his father. Xouthos came from Thessaly to Athens, helped king Erechtheus in his war against Euboea, married his daughter and became king, and so on.[5] Of course, every specific situation is usually provided with a more or less plausible explanation but, leaving the explanations aside, we are left with a recurrent pattern which is not dissimilar to Hecataeus' concise account of Orestheus son of Deukalion: 'And Orestheus son of Deukalion went to Aetolia to become king (ἐπὶ βασιλείᾳ).'[6]

Who were the successors of Pelops in Elis, of Aiakos in Aigina, of Telamon in Salamis? Our sources do not supply the answer. Indeed, the genre of the king-list, widespread in literatures of the ancient East, was totally alien to Greek heroic tradition. Instead, this tradition arranged the names of kings according to the genealogical principle. The distinction between the two genres, the genealogy and the king-list, is not merely conventional: while the king-list is committed to preserving the unity of place, the genealogy would follow the given line of descent wherever its representatives are found. The genealogy and the king-list can only concur when the king-list follows dynastic succession from father to son: if the king is not succeeded by his son, the identity of his successor cannot be established on the basis of the genealogy.

Yet, although the early tradition follows only genealogical sequences, attempts at drawing up something similar to king-lists do emerge from time to time in later sources. Let us consider the perspective of royal succession as preserved in Pausanias' account of the first kings of Attica: 'This Amphiktyon became king in the following way: Aktaios is supposed to have been the first king of what is now Attica: when he died Kekrops, who was married to his daughter, inherited the monarchy, and then Kekrops had three daughters, Herse, Aglauros, and Pandorsos, and a son Erysichthon. This son was never king in Athens, since he died in his father's lifetime, so Kranaos, the most powerful man in Athens, inherited the monarchy of Kekrops. The story goes on that Kranaos had daughters as well, one of whom was Atthis, after whom the country of Attica is named (it was previously called Aktaia). Amphiktyon, who was married to Kranaos' daughter Atthis, none the less rebelled against him, and put an end to his reign. He in his turn was thrown out by Erichthonios and his fellow rebels.'[7] It can be seen from this account that of the four kings who according to Pausanias succeeded Aktaios on the throne, not even one was son of his predecessor. At the same time, at least two of these kings, Kekrops and Amphiktyon, were definitely their predecessors' sons-in-law. In his account of another early kingdom,

[4] Tydeus Apollod. 1.76; Diomedes *Il.* 5.412; Andraimon Apollod. 1.64, 78, cf. *Il.* 2.638.

[5] Bellerophontes: *Il.* 6.155–95; Teukros: Pind. *Nem.* 4.46–7; Paus, 2.29.4; Melampous: *Od.* 15.225–41; Apollod. 2.28–9, cf. 1.102; Xouthos: Eur. *Ion* 57–64, 289–98; Strab. 8.7.1, p. 383; Paus. 7.1.2.

[6] Hecat. 1 F 15.

[7] Paus. 1.2.6 (trans. by P. Levi), cf. Apollod. 3.180–6.

that of Megara, Pausanias explicitly states that in the royal succession Nisos–Megareus–Alkathoos, attested for Megara, the kingship was transmitted from father-in-law to son-in-law.[8]

To be sure, accession to the throne as a result of marriage to the local king's daughter is a well-known motif in Greek heroic tradition. Not only the first kings of Athens and Megara, but also Pelops, Bellerophontes, Melampous, Peleus, Telamon, Teukros, Andraimon, Diomedes, and many others achieved kingship by virtue of their marriages to the daughters of their predecessors. This is usually understood to mean that the daughter's husband would succeed his father-in-law if the latter had no sons of his own (the *epiklēros* pattern). Sometimes, even if a son is actually attested, he can be disposed of as one who, like Proitos' son Megapenthes, was allegedly born too late or, like Kekrops' son Erysichthon, died too early to succeed his father on the throne.[9] On the whole, however, the rate of the sonless kings in Greek tradition is as extraordinary as the rate of the kings who exile their sons, and it can hardly be a mere coincidence that the sons of the latter category of kings usually become sons-in-law and successors of the former.

But even if we admit that all those kings who were succeeded by their sons-in-law were indeed sonless or had lost their sons, this still would not solve the problem of the well-attested sequence Tyndareos–Menelaos, which, again, is not based on the father-to-son succession: Menelaos succeeded Tyndareos by virtue of his marriage to Tyndareos' daughter Helen. At the same time, Tyndareos definitely had two sons, Kastor and Polydeukes, who were alive when their sister was given in marriage to Menelaos. Yet, the crown goes neither to Kastor nor to Polydeukes but to Helen's husband Menelaos. Moreover, Helen's brothers not only do not dispute their father's decision to make one of Helen's suitors king of Sparta – as the *Catalogue of Women* clearly shows, they were even actively involved in choosing the man who was supposed to become their father's successor.[10]

Thus, although there can be no doubt that Tyndareos had male descendants, the kingship was still bestowed on his son-in-law rather than on one of his sons. At the same time, it would be wrong to conclude that dynastic succession is altogether irrelevant here, because if the king is succeeded by his son-in-law, this would mean that the queen is succeeded by her daughter (Fig. 1). That is to say, in Sparta, and obviously also in other places for which kingship by marriage is attested, rather than a line of kings, we have a line of queens that runs from mother to daughter.[11]

[8] Paus. 1.41.5 *διαδέξασθαι δὲ τὴν βασιλείαν γαμβρὸν Νίσου τε Μεγαρέα καὶ αὖθις Ἀλκάθουν Μεγαρέως*.

[9] Megapenthes: Apollod. 2.29; Erysichthon: Paus. 1.2.6. Another example of a similar exegesis is preserved by Pausanias in his account of the early kings of Megara (1.41.3–5, cf. n. 8). Alkathoos son of Pelops killed the lion of Kithairon, married the daughter of the king Megareus, and became king in his stead. Yet Megareus had two sons of his own, Euippos and Timalkos. According to the Megarian version, Euippos was slain by the lion of Kithairon, whereas Timalkos was even earlier killed by Theseus. However, Pausanias demonstrates conclusively that the version of Timalkos' early death is invalid.

[10] Hes. frr. 197.3–4; 198.7–8; 199.1–3 M–W.

[11] In a number of versions, Orestes succeeds Menelaos in Sparta by virtue of his marriage to Hermione, the daughter of Menelaos and Helen. Thus, according to Paus. 2.18.6, Orestes became king of Sparta because the Spartans preferred him to Nikostratos and Megapenthes, Menelaos' sons by a slave-girl. However, according to Hes. fr. 175 M–W, Nikostratos was son of Menelaos and Helen; this version is followed in Apollod. 3.133, cf. West, op. cit., p. 119 and n. 203. The alleged illegal birth of Nikostratos looks suspiciously similar to the late birth of Megapenthes and the early death of Erysichthon and Timalkos (see n. 9). It is probable, then, that the mother-to-daughter succession in Sparta should be continued so as to include Hermione as well.

Leda ~ Tyndareos
↓
Helen ~ Menelaos.

Fig. 1. Mother–daughter succession.

It was noticed long ago that in historic times in Asia Minor there still existed a 'marriage custom, according to which inheritance and kingship was [*sic*] transmitted through the female line, which often led to the practice of incest within royal families.'[12] The status of the Hittite queen affords an additional example:

> It is generally agreed that the peculiar position of the Hittite queen, whose title, *tawanannaš*, was inherited only on the death of her predecessor and was retained for life, can only be explained as a survival of a system of matrilinear succession which must once have prevailed among the ancient Khattians. It has been suggested that the king (*labarnaš*) was originally merely 'the queen's consort': the Indo-European immigrants would have achieved kingship by marrying the local 'matriarch', as did so many heroes of Greek legend who succeeded to thrones in Anatolia by marrying the daughter of the local king and, having done so, sought to establish their own patriarchal system.[13]

However, as far as the present evidence goes, there is no reason to treat the matrimonial accession to the throne as an imported custom. If the case of Bellerophontes who went to Lycia and became king by marrying the local king's daughter can serve, as it often does, as demonstration of the fact that this form of kingship was specifically Asianic, what should we say then of Pelops who, having migrated in the opposite direction, became king in Greece in exactly the same way? Moreover, figures like Bellerophontes or Pelops, who migrate from one land to another, are relatively rare in Greek tradition: as a matter of fact, the majority of our examples deals with heroes who never left Greece.

Each single case, taken alone, proves nothing. But the evidence is cumulative, and the persistence with which the same basic situations recur suggests that kingship by marriage represents the general rule. Still more so when we are fortunate enough to possess a document that can only be properly explained by application of this rule. I mean the situation in Ithaca as described in the Homeric *Odyssey*.

It has always been recognized that the social background of the Ithaca situation is difficult in more than one respect. To recapitulate the standard analysis by M. I. Finley, it is far from clear why the king's son Telemachos not only cannot assume automatically the position of his missing and presumably dead father, but is even ready to entertain the possibility that the future king of Ithaca is to be found somewhere among the local nobles who are wooing his mother.[14] The position of Odysseus' father Laertes is still more puzzling: 'Why did he not sit on the throne of Ithaca? ... Nor is there a hint that Odysseus had usurped his father's position ... Yet, so far was the ex-king from authority that all the while the suitors were threatening to destroy the very substance of his son and grandson, Laertes could do no more than withdraw in isolation to his farm, and there to grieve and lament.'[15] Finally, there is

[12] W. M. Ramsay, *Asianic Elements in Greek Civilization* (London, 1928), p. 238.

[13] O. R. Gurney in *CAH*[3] ii.1, p. 667.

[14] M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*[2] (Harmondsworth, 1979), pp. 84–5. Characteristically, not only the suitors but also Telemachos himself state explicitly on more than one occasion that Odysseus' son is not considered the next king of Ithaca: Telemachos' real concern is not so much with the kingship as with his *oikos* which is being destroyed by the suitors, See *Od.* 1.394–5, 400–2; 20.334–7.

[15] Finley, op. cit., pp. 86–7.

every reason to wonder why those who wish to occupy Odysseus' position insistently connect this with marriage to the king's wife Penelope. To quote Finley again, 'the Penelope situation had become so muddled in the long prehistory of the *Odyssey* that the actual social and legal situation is no longer recoverable.'[16]

Finley's analysis, as indeed many other analyses of the social situation in Ithaca, proceeds from the presumption that Odysseus' legitimate successor on the throne of Ithaca is his son Telemachos, that the king who preceded Odysseus was his father Laertes, and that the usurpation of the throne planned by the suitors can hardly have anything to do with Odysseus' wife Penelope. The trouble, however, is that neither Telemachos, nor Laertes, nor the suitors behave in accordance with this presumption, and this is exactly what makes the Ithaca situation problematic. It seems, however, that the behaviour of the protagonists of the *Odyssey* as indeed the entire situation reflected in this poem will become much more consistent when approached in the vein of the matrimonial accession to the throne.

If the dynastic succession is transmitted from mother to daughter, the king's son cannot count as his father's successor for reasons of incest: compare, indeed, the case of Oidipous, which is perhaps the most clear-cut case of the father-to-son succession in heroic Greece. Accordingly, this would disqualify both Odysseus' father Laertes and Odysseus' son Telemachos from the position of king of Ithaca. The only person who would count in such a situation is the new husband of Odysseus' wife Penelope. As a matter of fact, this conclusion comes close enough to those arrived at by many *Odyssey* scholars. Thus, Finley, though rejecting solutions based on matriarchy or matrilinear descent, nevertheless admits that the prerogative of bestowing the kingship 'mysteriously belongs to Penelope'.[17] The solution proposed by him is as follows: 'Along with his [Odysseus'] rule, his successor was also to take his wife, his widow as many thought. On this point they were terribly insistent, and it may be suggested that their reasoning was this: that by Penelope's receiving the suitor of her choice into the bed of Odysseus, some shadow of legitimacy, however dim and fictitious, would be thrown over the new king.'[18] Comparison of Penelope's case with that of Klytaimestra, whose receiving the man of her choice into the bed of Agamemnon made a king of Aigisthos, shows clearly enough that it was not merely a shadow of legitimacy but this very legitimacy itself that marriage with the queen was to bestow on the new king of Ithaca.[19]

When a social practice becomes obsolete, and situations created by it continue to circulate in the popular tradition, it is only natural that the tradition, wherever it remains true to itself, should attempt to produce plausible explanations purporting to account for the situation in question. This seems to be the reason why in the course of time the institution of kingship by marriage, which can be shown to underlie many episodes of Greek legend, was either reinterpreted in the vein of later ideas of succession or simply blurred by a host of stock motifs, such as those of the exiled prince, the sonless king, and the like. However, neither the story of Helen's marriage nor that of Penelope and her suitors, sanctioned as they were by the authority of Homeric tradition, lent themselves to this kind of emendation. As it happens, it is these two cases that throw light on the cumulative evidence, supplied by Greek legend, as to the nature of royal succession in Bronze Age Greece.

[16] Ibid., p. 90. [17] Ibid., p. 91. [18] Ibid., p. 90.

[19] Similar situations are also attested for Argos, where Kometes son of Sthenelos married the queen Aigialeia and simply expelled the former king Diomedes on his return from Troy, and for Crete, whence the former king Idomeneus had been expelled exactly in the same way, see Apollod. *Epit.* 6.9–10.

II

As early as in 1905, J. G. Frazer pointed out that the succession of the first Latin kings was in the female line, that is, through marriage with the king's daughter or wife: in support of his argument Frazer also adduced several episodes from Greek legend, including some of those discussed above.[20] Frazer, as well as other scholars afterwards, took this evidence to mean that kingship by marriage amounted to matrilinear reckoning of descent or, to put it in his own words, that we have 'a state of society where nobility is reckoned only through women, in other words, where descent through the mother is everything and descent through the father is nothing.'[21] However, examination of the evidence involved shows that, as far at least as the Greek materials are concerned, the interpretation proposed by Frazer is unwarranted. The simple and undeniable fact is that reckoning of descent in the Greek genealogies is strictly patrilinear. Though the Greeks, from Homer to later genealogists, were perfectly able to trace a person's descent up to Deukalion himself or to another prehistoric forefather,[22] nothing even remotely similar to this can be found in the female line. Any attempt to trace a sufficiently long and reliable line of matrilinear descent is doomed to failure, obviously because Greek heroic tradition, our main source, shows a lack of interest in genealogies reckoned through women.[23] This seems to indicate that patrilinear reckoning of descent and kingship by marriage were not mutually exclusive after all. Accordingly, determining the relationship between the two is our next task.

Greek tradition is unanimous in that the Aiolid Melampous came from Messenia to Argos, where he cured king Proitos' daughters, married one of them, Iphianassa,

[20] *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship* (London, 1905), pp. 238–41.

[21] Ibid., p. 234.

[22] Glaukos' genealogy, as adduced at *Il.* 6.152–5, 195–206, comprises six generations (Aiolos–Sisyphos–Glaukos–Bellerophontes–Hippolochos–Glaukos); Aineias' at *Il.* 20.215–40 eight (Zeus–Dardanos–Erichthonios–Tros–Assarakos–Kapus–Anchises–Aineias); and Kodros' genealogy as adduced by Hellanicus (see n. 23) comprises twelve generations.

[23] As clearly follows both from the reconstruction of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* by Merkelbach and West and from West's subsequent analysis of the structure of this poem, the women are invariably treated here as subordinated to the overall patrilinear arrangement of the genealogical material, see R. Merkelbach and M. L. West, *Fragmenta Hesiodea* (Oxford, 1967) and West, op. cit., pp. 31–50, 173–82. The same can be said of the Greek genealogy in general. The twelve-generation genealogy of Kodros by Hellanicus can serve as an example. Hellanicus gives the following sequence: *γίνεται γὰρ Δευκαλίωνος μὲν καὶ Πύρρας... Ἕλλην· Ἕλληνος δὲ καὶ Ὀρσηίδος Ξοῦθος Αἴολος Ξενοπάτρα· Αἰόλου δὲ καὶ Ἰφιδος τῆς Πηνειοῦ Σαλμωνεύς· Σαλμωνέως δὲ καὶ Ἀλκιδίκης Τυρώ· ἧς καὶ Ποσειδῶνος Νηλεύς· Νηλέως δὲ καὶ Χλωρίδος Περικλύμενος· Περικλυμένου δὲ καὶ Πεισιδίκης Βῶρος· Βώρου δὲ καὶ Λυσιδίκης Πενθίλος· Πενθίλου δὲ καὶ Ἀγχιρρόης Ἀνδρόπομπος· Ἀνδροπόμπου δὲ καὶ Ἡνιόχης τῆς Ἁρμενίου τοῦ Ζευξίππου τοῦ Εὐμήλου τοῦ Ἀδμήτου Μέλανθος. οὗτος Ἡρακλειδῶν ἐπιόντων ἐκ Μεσσήνης εἰς Ἀθήνας ὑπεχώρησε, καὶ αὐτῷ γίνεται παῖς Κόδρος* (Hellan. 4 F 125). Note that of the two women taking part in this genealogy, Henioche is treated in strictly patrilinear terms, and her introduction together with her husband Andropompos does not affect the agnatic reckoning of the descent of their son Melanthos. As distinct from this, Tyro looks like an intruder on the patrilinear scheme: she is represented as continuing the line of her father Salmoneus, and her son Neleus is represented as her successor. This fits in perfectly well with the *epiklēros* pattern, known to us from the historic period: in the absence of sons, the father's line would be continued by his daughter whose sons would count as male descendants of their maternal grandfather, see e.g. L. Gernet, 'Sur l'épiclérat', *REG* 34 (1921), 337–79. If the *Ehoiai* were indeed part of the *Catalogue* rather than a separate poem (see West, op. cit., pp. 31–2), it is not out of the question that this was the principle according to which the major Ehoiai (including that of Tyro) were introduced into the poem.

and thus became king.[24] According to some, Melampous' marriage was accompanied by a dynastic arrangement stipulating that not only Melampous himself, but also his brother Bias would receive a share in the kingship: as a result, the Argive kingdom was divided into three parts, of which two went to the descendants of Melampous and Bias and one to the representatives of the local dynasty, descendants of Proitos' son Megapenthes.[25] Yet a closer examination of this arrangement shows that the tradition of the tripartite kingship of Argos should not be taken as meaning that at any given moment there were three kings jointly ruling over Argos. To begin with, of the three persons who presumably became kings of Argos upon the agreement between Melampous and Proitos (Melampous, Bias, Megapenthes), only Melampous himself can be seriously taken into account as king of Argos. Bias' alleged marriage to a daughter of Proitos, which was supposed to be part of the arrangement, is incompatible with his marriage to Neleus' daughter Pero, which is one of the principal Greek traditions as regards the ancient heroines.[26] That Bias' marriage to an Argive princess cannot be authentic follows also from the fact that, while the descendants of Bias and Pero are well known to Greek tradition, there is no trace of Bias' children by a daughter of Proitos. As to Megapenthes, we saw above that the entire issue of his late birth was most probably intended to account for the disturbing fact that a son of Proitos did not succeed his father in Argos (see n. 9).

In the next generation, Melampous' sons Antiphates and Mantios are hardly more than names, and there is no trace of such kings in Greek tradition.[27] As distinct from this, Talaos, presumably son of Bias and Pero, is explicitly referred to by Pindar as the ruler of Argos.[28] However, placing Talaos a generation after Melampous is difficult for chronological reasons. Indeed, if we try to synchronize the line of Melampous with that of his brother Bias, we shall find that the four-generation sequence Melampous–Antiphates–Oïkles–Amphiaraos is answered by a three-generation sequence Bias–Talaos–Adrastos, which is hardly possible not only because Melampous and Bias were brothers but also because their descendants Amphiaraos and Adrastos must belong in the same generation.[29] Significantly, such an early authority on Greek genealogies as Pherecydes of Athens does not include Talaos in his list of the children of Bias and Pero.[30] In view of this, it seems reasonable to take Talaos as grandson rather than as son of Bias and Pero and accordingly to place his kingship in the next generation. This would leave us with Megapenthes' son Anaxagoras as the only candidate to succeed Melampous: Anaxagoras was known not only as king of Argos but even as the founder of a clan.[31]

Accordingly, the representatives of the next generation must have been Oïkles (Melampous' line), Talaos (Bias' line), and Hipponoos (Megapenthes' line). Of these

[24] Pherec. 3 F 114, cf. *Od.* 15.238–41.

[25] Herod. 9.34; Diod. 4.68; Apollod. 1.102; 2.28–9; Paus. 2.18.4.

[26] *Od.* 11.281–97; 15.226–39; Pherec. 3 F 33. In the *Catalogue of Women*, Hes. fr. 37.5–15, it is already as the husband of Pero that Bias goes to Argos, presumably only to receive a share in Proitos' kingdom, cf. West, op. cit., n. 109 on p. 79, whereas *Od.* 15.235–9 definitely implies that Bias remained in Pylos and that Melampous went to Argos alone.

[27] *Od.* 15.242–55, cf. Hes. fr. 136 M–W; Pherec. 3 FF 115–16. For the discussion of Melampous' descendants see West, op. cit., pp. 79–81.

[28] *Nem.* 9.13–15.

[29] That of the Seven against Thebes. This is further supported by the fact that not only Adrastos but also other sons of Talaos (Aristomachos, Hippomedon, Mekisteus, Parthenopaios, Pronax) are referred to in various sources as participants in that expedition.

[30] At 3 F 33.37, Pherecydes only names Perialkes, Aretos, and Alphesiboia as children of Bias and Pero. The first mentioning of Talaos as son of Bias and Pero is Ap. Rhod. 1.118–20.

[31] *Οἱ Ἀναξαγορίδαι* Paus. 2.18.5; 2.30.10. On Anaxagoras' genealogical position see West, op. cit., p. 177, cf. also p. 81 and n. 111.

three, Oïkles, though famous enough, has never been associated with Argos, whereas Hipponoos certainly was king elsewhere.[32] This would entail that Melampous not only ruled alone but also was succeeded by a single king, who was neither his own son nor son of his brother Bias, but Anaxagoras son of Megapenthes, and that the latter was succeeded by Talaos, a representative of the line of Bias. This seems to indicate that the tripartite kingship of Argos should be understood as successive, that is, that only representatives of the clans of Melampous, Bias, and Megapenthes had the right to sit on the throne of Argos in turn, rather than that they occupied the throne at one and the same time. This should help us to decide who was the Argive king in the generation of the Seven.

This generation was represented by Amphiaraos (Melampous' line), Adrastos (Bias' line), and Kapaneus (Megapenthes' line). If the Argive kingship was indeed transmitted in rotation, the next in turn was Melampous' descendant Amphiaraos. Yet, it was Bias' descendant Adrastos who is usually seen as king of Argos in the generation of the Theban war.[33] Note, however, that Adrastos was at home also in Sikyon and it is only as the Sikyonian king that he is known to the composer of the Catalogue of Ships.[34] Moreover, Sikyon and not Argos was the place that had Adrastos' *herōon* and cult.[35] As distinct from this, no other kingdom is attested for Amphiaraos, whereas his sons appear as Helen's Argive suitors in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*.[36] In view of this, there seems reason to suppose that Amphiaraos' original position was misinterpreted in the later tradition which, naturally enough, believed that Talaos' successor on the throne must have been his son Adrastos rather than his son-in-law Amphiaraos.[37] Accordingly, the Argive 'king-list' from Proitos to the generation of the Theban war can be represented as shown in Fig. 2 (the names of the actual kings of Argos are italicized).[38]

Let us turn now to the female line of the royal house of Argos. Here, the sequence Proitos–Melampous is answered by the sequence Stheneboia[39]–Iphianassa, a clear-cut case of mother-to-daughter succession. Unfortunately we have a lacuna in the following generation, because neither the name of Anaxagoras' wife nor indeed that of any other queen who could have succeeded Iphianassa is known to us. But the queen in the generation after that was surely Talaos' wife Lysimache, and her daughter was Amphiaraos' wife Eriphyle, the sinister protagonist of the Theban saga.

[32] According to Apollod. 3.87 and Paus. 8.36.6, Oïkles was at home in Arcadia; as follows from Diod. 4.35.1–2 and Apollod. 1.74, Hipponoos was king of Olenos in Achaia.

[33] See, however, Pind. *Nem.* 9.13–14, where Adrastos and his brothers are seen as having been expelled from Argos by Amphiaraos: *φεῦγε γὰρ Ἀμφιαρῆ ποτε θρασυμήδεα καὶ δεινὰν στάσιν πατρίων οἴκων ἀπό τ' Ἄργεος· ἀρχοὶ δ' οὐκ ἔτ' ἔσαν Ταλαοῦ παῖδες, βιασθέντες λύᾳ.*

[34] *Il.* 2.572 *καὶ Σικυῶν', ὅθ' ἄρ' Ἄδρηστος πρῶτ' ἐμβασίλευεν.* [35] Herod. 5.67.

[36] Hes. fr. 197.6–7 M–W.

[37] Adrastos' kingship at Argos was rejected on independent grounds by M. P. Nilsson in *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (Berkeley, 1932), pp. 113–14, see esp. p. 114: 'Adrastos was not king of the city of Argos, though he is genealogically annexed to the kingly house of Argos.'

[38] Obviously, the strict application of the principle of tripartite kingship would cast doubt on the legitimacy of Diomedes' kingship, attested for the next generation: Diomedes belonged to none of the three clans whose representatives sat in turn on the throne of Argos (though in some sources he is connected through the female line with the clan of Megapenthes). This doubt was expressed by Pausanias in 2.30.10, in whose opinion the kingship of Argos really belonged to Kapaneus' son Sthenelos. Surprisingly enough, Pausanias' conclusion fits in perfectly well with the order of the rotation as represented in Fig. 2: the 'legal' successor of Amphiaraos is the representative of Megapenthes' line in the next generation, that is, Kapaneus' son Sthenelos. In the Catalogue of Ships, *Il.* 2.563–6, Diomedes in fact occupies the place of the descendants of Amphiaraos.

[39] Or Anteia, see *Il.* 6.160.

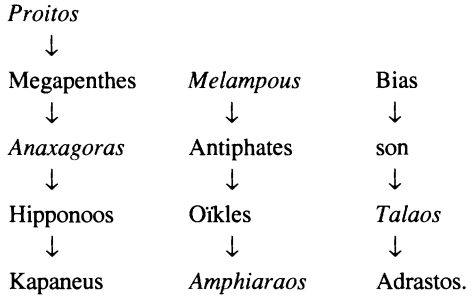

Fig. 2. Argive 'king-list'.

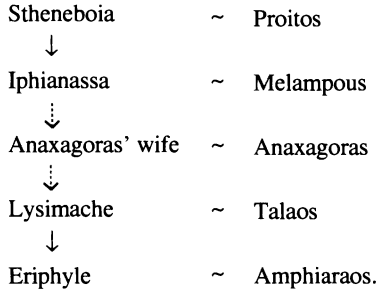

Fig. 3. Female line of royal house of Argos.

In view of the fact that both the Stheneboia–Iphianassa and the Lysimache–Eriphyle sequence clearly present mother-to-daughter successions, there is reason to infer that Anaxagoras' queen was the daughter of Iphianassa and Melampous and the mother of Lysimache (Fig. 3).

We can see now that kingship in rotation was specially designed to fit the matrimonial accession to the throne.[40] Indeed, as a comparison of the male and the female line clearly shows, the purpose of this arrangement was to guarantee an ordered male succession under the conditions of kingship by marriage. That this would be a correct interpretation of the tripartite kingship of Argos is corroborated by the fact that similar arrangements can be shown to have existed in other kingdoms of heroic Greece as well.

Thus, Amyklas, the son of Lakedaimon and Sparta, is credited by Apollodorus with the stem Amyklas–Kynortas–Perieres–Oibalos–Tyndareos, which is unsatisfactory in that it forces us to postulate two kings named Perieres, Perieres son of Kynortas and Perieres son of Aiolos; in addition, Apollodorus occasionally takes Perieres as father of Tyndareos.[41] Only Perieres son of Aiolos is known to Pausanias, and he consistently represents Tyndareos as son of Oibalos.[42] It seems that Apollodorus' confusion regarding Perieres' genealogical position resulted from contamination of Amyklas' genealogy with the king-list of Amyclae: that is to say, Perieres the Aiolid, who succeeded Kynortas and was followed by Tyndareos, was

[40] Cf. Frazer, op. cit., pp. 254–7.
[41] Apollod. 1.87; 3.117; 3.123 (with Frazer's Loeb commentary *ad loc.*).
[42] Paus. 2.21.7; 3.1.3–4; 4.2.2, cf. 4.2.4.

erroneously taken by him as son of the former and father of the latter.[43] If we add to this that, according to Pherecydes and others, Amyklas was in fact succeeded by his son-in-law Argeios son of Pelops,[44] we shall be able to suggest that the original succession was Amyklas–Argeios the Pelopid–Perieres the Aiolid–Tyndareos the Amyklaid, that is, that the kingship of Amyclae was, as in the case of Argos, based on rotation between three patrilinear clans – those of Amyklas, of Pelops, and of Aiolos.

The rulers of Bronze Age Thebes are usually seen as descended from Kadmos. Yet, the tradition has also preserved the names of Theban kings, such as Pentheus or Kreon, who were not of Kadmos' line. Both are descendants of Echion, one of the earth-born Spartoi, who became Kadmos' son-in-law by marrying his daughter Agaue. Since the descendants both of Kadmos and of Echion emerge in our sources as kings of Thebes, and since the 'earth-born' nature of Echion suggests a local origin for his clan, there is reason to suppose that, as in the case of Argos, in Thebes too we have a dynastic arrangement between the local clan and the clan of the newcomer Kadmos.[45] There is little evidence as to the female line of the royal house of Thebes, but the fact is that queen Iokaste, marriage to whom made the newcomer Oidipous king of Thebes, was both widow of Laios, a representative of the line of Kadmos, and sister of Kreon, who represented the line of Echion.

There are two conflicting traditions as regards the royal dynasty of Mycenae. On the one hand, Mycenae was generally believed to have been founded by Perseus, a prince of the royal house of Tiryns, and at least one Perseid, Perseus' grandson Eurystheus, is firmly attested as king of Mycenae. On the other hand, Mycenae is firmly associated with the Pelopids Atreus, Thyestes and Agamemnon, and Homer's account of the holders of the royal sceptre of this city totally ignores the Perseids.[46] This discrepancy has recently given rise to the suggestion that one of the two traditions as to the kings of Mycenae, namely, the tradition that connects it with the Pelopids, is not authentic.[47] Yet, the examples of Argos, of Amyclae and of Thebes suggest that we are again dealing with a dynastic arrangement intended to achieve cooperation between the two clans, the Perseids and the Pelopids, in securing the royal position at Mycenae.

If the descent had been reckoned in the female line, anyone would have done as the queen's husband and, accordingly, the king.[48] However, we saw that it was only the representatives of several patrilinear clans that could become in turn kings of Argos, of Amyclae, of Thebes, of Mycenae. Likewise, although the suitors of Helen, like any other group of suitors known to us from Greek tradition, intended to achieve kingship by marrying the royal heiress, their own status was determined only in agnatic terms, namely, by attaching the name of the father and often also of the

[43] That Amyklas' genealogy as given by Apollodorus resulted from a contamination and that the correct sequence should be Kynortas–Oibalos–Tyndareos has been shown on other grounds by West, op. cit., p. 67 n. 86.

[44] Pherec. 3 F 132 *Ἀργείος δὲ ὁ Πέλοπος ἔρχεται παρ' Ἀμύκλαν εἰς Ἀμύκλας, καὶ γαμεῖ τοῦ Ἀμύκλα θυγατέρα Ἡγησάνδραν* (= Schol. *Od.* 4.22), cf. also Schol. Eur. *Or.* 4.

[45] In his account of Boeotia, Pausanias represents the succession of the kings of Thebes during and after the Trojan war as alternating between the descendants of Polyneikos' son Thersandros and those of Peneleos, the leader of the Boeotians in the Trojan war, see Paus. 9.5.14–16, cf. *Il.* 2.494. Nothing is known of Peneleos' origin, but he was certainly not descended from Kadmos. It may be significant in this connection that Leitos, the other non-Kadmeian leader of the Boeotians in the Trojan war (*Il.* 2.494), is given the epithet *γηγενής* in Eur. *Iph. A.* 259.

[46] *Il.* 2.102–8.

[47] West, op. cit., pp. 157–9.

[48] Cf. Frazer, op. cit., pp. 234–5.

grandfather to the candidate's name.[49] This seems to entail that, although the royal succession was transmitted in the female line, the question who would be the next king was decided on the basis of patrilinearly reckoned descent.

From our point of view, the king would simultaneously be a member of two nomenclatures: that of descent (the 'genealogy'), which was reckoned from father to son, and that of local rulers (the 'king-list'), which could only be reckoned on the basis of the mother-to-daughter succession.[50] Yet, as the absence of matrilinear genealogies and king-lists clearly shows, it was only the agnatically reckoned descent that eventually counted. Considering that, under the conditions of kingship by marriage, only the king-lists could preserve unity of place, the fact that Bronze Age nobles did not care to keep such lists shows clearly enough that they determined their identity in tribal rather than in local terms. The heroes of Bronze Age Greece saw themselves as the 'Aiolids', the 'Perseids', the 'Pelopids', rather than as the 'Thebans', the 'Mycenaeans', or the 'Argives'. This would mean that, when tracing their genealogy, the descendants of Kadmos, who in historic times were found in Thera and in Cyrene, ignored those kings of Thebes who were not of their line; as the descent group of Echion either did not survive into the historic period or exerted no influence on Greek tradition, the Kadmeian part of early Theban history was the only one to be preserved. For the Herakleids, the early history of Mycenae was the history of Perseus and his descendants Eurystheus and Herakles; for the Pelopids, it was inextricably united with the houses of Atreus and Thyestes. Since in the course of time the Perseids had become associated with the Dorians and the Pelopids with the Aeolians of Asia Minor,[51] it should come as no surprise that the Mycenae of the Dorian and the Mycenae of the Aeolian tradition in fact exist in two different dimensions. There is reason to suppose that this lack of local identity, embedded as it was in early Greek genealogical thinking, was directly responsible for the well known fragmentation of the legendary history of Greece. Given the character of royal succession in heroic Greece, the true local perspective, if it ever existed, could only be fixed in the matrilinear lists of the queens (cf. n. 62).

Yet, even if it is true that we are dealing with a society in which mobility was a distinctive male feature, this is not to say that women could under no circumstances change their original residences. Note that such cornerstones of Greek tradition as the legends of Io, of the Danaids, of Europe, do concern the migration of females. Characteristically, the migrations of women of royal blood are usually connected in our sources with movements of population. Thus, the Danaids, whose arrival in Greece was generally regarded as due to a foreign invasion, were eventually given in marriage to the winners of a race contest and, together with their local husbands, founded new settlements all over the Peloponnese.[52] Messene daughter of Triopas is

[49] Hes. fr. 197.6 M–W *νίὼ δ' Ἀμφιαράου Οἰκλείδαο ἄνακτος*; 198.9–10 *Θόας Ἀνδραίμονος υἱὸς δίου Ἀρητιάδαο*; 199.5 *υἱός τ' Ἰφίκλοιο Ποδάρκης Φυλακίδαο κτλ.*

[50] Note that kingship by marriage would make the king simultaneously at home at two different places: where he was born as the king's son and where he ruled as the queen's consort. It follows from this that in order to determine the place of kingship we must locate wife and daughter, whereas the place of birth can be determined by locating mother and sister.

[51] In so far as the founders of the Aeolian colonies in Asia Minor claimed to be descendants of Orestes' son Penthilos, see Strab. 9.2.3, p. 400, 9.2.5, p. 402; Paus. 2.18.6; 3.2.1; cf. 7.6.1–2. Note that the formation stage of Homeric tradition is firmly associated with these Aeolian colonies.

[52] The race contest for the daughters of Danaos: Pind. *Pyth.* 9.195–206, Paus. 3.12.2, Apollod. 2.21. According to Pausanias (3.22.11), Side in Lacedaemon was named after Danaos' daughter; Amymone the Danaid discovered the springs of Lerna, and the local river was named after her (2.37.1, cf. Apollod. 2.13; Hes. fr. 128 M–W); Achaios' sons Archandros and

said to have arrived in Messenia from Argos with collected forces of Argos and Lacedaemon; together with her local husband Polykaon son of Lelex she founded Andania, the new royal capital of Messenia.[53] Manto, the daughter of Teiresias, led a migration from Thebes to Asia Minor, where she founded Colophon together with her Cretan husband Rhakios.[54] Kyrene, the daughter of Hypseus king of Lapiths, was carried by Apollo to Libya, where the city of Cyrene was named after her.[55] Significantly, the movements of women involved not only the foundation of new cities but also the introduction of new cults. Thus, according to Herodotus, the Danaids brought with them to Greece the mysteries of Demeter, whereas Messene was credited with the establishment of the mysteries of Demeter in her new city of Andania.[56] Manto, daughter of a priest and herself a priestess, founded a shrine of Apollo at Clarus.[57] Io, whose descendants in the East were generally seen as Argive colonists,[58] was priestess of Hera of Argos. It seems, therefore, that, as distinct from the migration of the royal males, whose accession to kingship in other lands only concerned their patrilinear clans,[59] the migration of females involved expansion of the communities of their origin, thus amounting to foundation of a colony.[60]

The terms 'matriarchy', 'matrilinearity', 'mother-right', lavishly used in works on ancient society in the first half of this century, have recently given way to a much more restrained and sceptical attitude. This is not to say, however, that the facts that inspired this once so popular 'matriarchal' literature have ceased to exist. However, it is strongly felt today that the real situation was much more complex than the

Architeles came to Argos from Phthiotis and married Skaia and Automate, daughters of Danaos; Archandros gave his son the name of Settler (*Μετανάστης*; Paus. 7.1.7). Cf. also Paus. 4.30.2; 4.35.2; 7.22.5; 10.35.1.

[53] Paus. 4.1.1–2, cf. 4.3.9; 4.27.6; 4.31.11.

[54] Paus. 7.3.1; 9.33.1–2.

[55] Pind. *Pyth.* 9.5–70 (see esp. line 54, where Kyrene is called *ἀρχέπολις*), cf. Hes. fr. 215 M–W. Kyrene is discussed in detail in West, op. cit., pp. 85–9.

[56] The Danaids Herod. 2.171; Messene Paus. 4.1.5 and 9; 4.2.6; 4.26.8.

[57] Diod. 4.66.5–6; Apollod. 3.85; Paus. 7.3.1; 9.10.2–3.

[58] See esp. Pindar on Argos in *Nem.* 10.5 *πολλὰ δ' Αἰγύπτῳ καταοίκισεν ἄστη ταῖς Ἐπάφου παλάμαις*. See also n. 62 below.

[59] Glaukos' account of his genealogy in *Il.* 6.152–206 can serve as an example. Although Glaukos is well aware that his grandfather Bellerophontes came to Lycia from Argos, this does not make him see himself as an Argive. Would the situation have been different if Bellerophontes had brought his Argive wife with him and Glaukos had been the descendant of both? It seems that something to this effect is suggested by the famous story of the Epizephyrian Locrians, related by Aristotle and Polybius; among them only the descendants of the hundred women who had been taken from Locris upon foundation of the colony were considered *εὐγενεῖς* (Polyb. 12.5.6–8, cf. Arist. fr. 541). This is usually taken as evidence of matrilinear reckoning of descent among the Locrians; yet a comparison with fifth-century Athens, where only those who were of Athenian descent on both their father's and their mother's side counted as Athenian citizens, is perhaps more relevant here. Note that in his account of the Ionian colonization of Asia Minor Herodotus states unequivocally that in so far as the Athenian colonists did not bring women with them, but married Carian wives, their descendants could not pass for genuine Athenians (1.146).

[60] The only case of post-Bronze Age colonization in which a woman was actively involved seems to be the story of the foundation of Massalia by the Phocians of Asia Minor told in Strab. 4.1.4, p. 179: the colonists were instructed by an oracle to take with them a *ἡγεμών* from the Ephesian Artemis: this *ἡγεμών* was a woman called Aristarcha (a cultic epithet of the goddess), one of the most prominent women of Ephesus (*τῶν ἐντίμων σφόδρα γυναικῶν*); she became the priestess of Artemis in the new settlement. Strabo's account, unparalleled in the foundation legends of the archaic and classical age, has given much trouble to historians (see the excellent discussion by I. Malkin in *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece* [Leiden, 1987], pp. 69–72); it is possible, however, that it will appear more consistent if taken in the Bronze Age context.

pioneers of the matriarchal theory were ready to admit.[61] We saw above that kingship by marriage did not involve matrilinear reckoning of descent. The same seems to be true of the relation of this institution to so-called 'matriarchy' in so far as the latter is understood to the effect that the societies that practised kingship by marriage were actually ruled by women. It is true of course that in the specific situation created in Ithaca the person who was to choose the next ruler happened to be the queen, but the situation of Penelope, as well as that of other wives who had been left at home for the years of the Trojan war (cf. n. 19) was rather exceptional. The normal situation is that of the daughter who, like Helen, is given in marriage by her male relatives. It is these male relatives, the bride's father and brothers, who usually chose the next king. That is to say, although one could become king only through marriage with the royal heiress, the institution of kingship by marriage was practised in a society that was politically controlled by men.

It seems that the position of the queen can be satisfactorily accounted for if we assume that she was the priestess of the goddess of the land. The importance of the mother-goddess in Bronze Age Aegean societies is too well known to be dwelt upon here: the figure of the Goddess stood at the centre of the cult at this early period and it is generally agreed that, while she herself was represented by her priestess, her male consort had his human counterpart in the figure of the 'king-priest'. Accordingly, the king owed his position of local ruler to his being the queen's consort. If we assume that the priestess transmitted her position to her daughter(s), we shall have a line of queens going back to time immemorial, in fact to all those local nymphs and eponyms of cities whose names open the greater part of Greek genealogies.[62]

When did kingship by marriage come to an end? It seems to me that the answer to this question lies with the fact that all the genealogies circulated in Greek tradition were those of kings. Now kingship ceased to exist in most of the Greek states as early as the Dark Age, and it is obvious that the institution of kingship by marriage would have come to an end together with the abolition of kingship as such.[63] Yet, this still does not entail the abolition of the 'queenship', in so far as the main function of the latter was religious rather than political. If the political power of the king ensued from his being the consort of the queen who was priestess of the local goddess, the king's loss of his political status could not deprive the queen of her priestly status. The priestess was bound to perform her functions along the same lines under any regime, whether monarchic or not. This means that, so long as the priestess transmitted her

[61] An excellent illustration of this complexity can be found in S. Pembroke's study of the terms of kinship on the sepulchral inscriptions of Lycia 'Last of the Matriarchs', *JESHO* 8 (1965), 217–47. See also M. Broadbent, *Studies in Greek Genealogy* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 1–17.

[62] Priestesses of Hera of Argos, whose succession was one of the systems used in Greek chronology (see Hellan. 4 F 79b, Thuc. 2.2.1), might well represent such a dynasty. Unfortunately, almost nothing has been preserved of Hellanicus' *Ἱερεῖαι*, which dealt with the subject, but Jakoby's reconstruction (*ad* Hellan. 4 FF 74–84) brings out the names of Io, the Danaid Hypermestra, Perseus' grandmother Eurydike, Eurystheus' daughter Admete, and so on; statues of all of them could be seen at the Argive Heraion even at the time of Pausanias, see Paus. 2.17.3 and 7, cf. Thuc. 4.133.

[63] The material on the wives of the Spartan kings is too meagre to allow any definite conclusion to be reached on its basis, but such principal features of the kingship in Sparta as the absence of rotation between the two royal houses, the lack of mobility and, above all, the father-to-son succession show clearly enough that what we have here is a form of kingship essentially different from that practised in the Bronze Age. The only form of rule in which elements of kingship by marriage can be observed even in the historic period is tyranny; see the illuminating paper by Louis Gernet, 'Marriages of Tyrants', in L. Gernet, *The Anthropology of Ancient Greece*, English translation by J. Hamilton and B. Nagy (Baltimore and London, 1981), pp. 289–301.

position to her daughter(s), her matrilinear dynasty continued to exist, though the political consequences it once entailed had gone. That this is likely to have been the case is supported by some striking examples of matrilinear sequence which can be shown to have existed in priestly families up to the Hellenistic period.[64]

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[64] See especially Broadbent's reconstruction of the genealogy of a family of Epidaurian nobles in op. cit., pp. 18–23. As Broadbent has shown, the unifying element in the genealogy is a direct female descent line for the women of the family, which is likely to have been preserved for eight successive generations from the 3rd century B.C.; she suggests that the women of the family, who bear the names Chariko and Laphanta in alternate generations, were priestesses of the local female deities Damia and Auxesia.