

XII. Megacles

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Megacles the son of Alcmeon, who was for a short time the father-in-law of Pisistratus (Hdt. 1.59), has generally been identified with Megacles the son of Alcmeon who was the successful suitor for the hand of Agariste (6.127). This identification is found in the Alcmeonid stemmata of Toepffer and of Kirchner.¹ It also lies behind the accounts of the modern historians² and is accepted by Herodotus' editors and commentators who point out either that he erred some thirty or forty years in his chronology by making Megacles' father Alcmeon a contemporary of Croesus,³ or that the marriage of Megacles and Agariste must have been early enough for them to have had a daughter of marriageable age at the time of Pisistratus' second rise to power.⁴ Another editor points out the apparent inconsistency between the two accounts; for in one Alcmeon's enrichment by Croesus clearly precedes the marriage of Megacles and Agariste while in the other the marriage of their daughter to Pisistratus at the time of his second tyranny presumes that Megacles and Agariste had been married several years before Croesus had ever come to the throne.⁵

This reasoning is correct so long as the two stories are considered to be about the same Megacles. But a careful examination of Herodotus' evidence shows that the historian himself had in mind two distinct individuals who bore the name Megacles, son of Alcmeon. One was the Shoreman and the other was the Suitor of Agariste. The clear chrono-

¹ J. Toepffer, *Attische Genealogie* (Berlin 1889) 243; *RE* s.v. "Alkmeonidai" 1557-60; J. Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica* (Berlin 1901) 2.53; see also U. Kahrstedt, *RE* s.v. "Megakles" 126, and E. Vanderpool, *Hesperia* 15 (1946) 274 f., who is interested only in the addition of two new names found on the ostraca.

² G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte* (Gotha 1895) 2.306; H. T. Wade-Gery, *CAH* (Cambridge 1925) 3.555; K. Beloch, *Griechische Geschichte* (Berlin and Leipzig 1926) 1².302 ff.; G. de Sanctis, *Storia dei Greci* (Florence 1939) 1.530. The identification is not, however, found in Grote.

³ So H. Stein, *Herodotus* (Berlin 1882) note on 6.125; R. W. Macan, *Herodotus, the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Books* (London 1895) 1.380, notes on 6.126.1 & 2.

⁴ So W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford 1928) 2.116, note on 6.125; Ph.-E. Legrande, *Hérodote* (Paris 1948, Budé) 6.125, note 3; 6.126, note 2.

⁵ E. Abbott, *Herodotus Books V and VI* (Oxford 1893) 162-63.

logical evidence that they were not even of the same generation outweighs the fact of homonymia.⁶

In the first passage, Herodotus (1.46–64) tells the closely related stories of Croesus' several embassies to Delphi, his search for a strong Greek alliance, and the account of the state of affairs at Athens discovered by his investigation. Later, he makes a clear and deliberate cross-reference to these events when he tells (6.125) how Croesus rewarded Alcmeon son of Megacles who had worked with and zealously aided those Lydians from Sardis who had come to the oracle at Delphi at Croesus' bidding.⁷ There can be no doubt that this cross-reference consciously establishes a synchronism between Croesus' gift to Alcmeon in the sixth book and those events from the last year or two of Croesus' reign mentioned in the first book, especially those events pertaining to the Alcmeonid clan.⁸

We may use this conscious synchronism as the basic date of our investigation. Relative to this basic date (giving it no set value in terms of our own era and using the Herodotean terminology exclusively) we must determine first the distance-date to the marriage of Megacles and Agariste and then the distance-date to the marriage of Megacles' daughter to Pisistratus. The sum of these two distance-dates will give the total time-interval between the two marriages.

Of the events mentioned in 6.125–26 the two which are chronologically significant are (1) Alcmeon's Olympic victory, which came after his enrichment and consequent acquisition of a racing stable, and (2) the subsequent Olympic victory of Clisthenes of Sicyon after which he announced the open-house of a year's duration which would begin sixty days after the festival and conclude with the betrothal of his daughter. Thus Herodotus interposes an interval of *at least* five years and two months between the enrichment of Alcmeon and the marriage of his son, Megacles. The first possible child of this marriage (Herodotus mentions only Clisthenes and Hippocrates, 6.131) could not have been born before the beginning of the seventh year after our basic date.

⁶ For other examples of homonymia which do or could lead to false identification see J. E. Powell, *Lexicon to Herodotus* (Cambridge 1938) s.vv. "Chilon," "Labyne-tus," "Aeaces," "Evelthon."

⁷ For Herodotus' use of cross-references see J. E. Powell, *The History of Herodotus* (Cambridge 1939) Appendix 2, 89–90.

⁸ Prof. H. T. Wade-Gery, who has read a draft of this paper, pointed out that the real proof that the story of Alcmeon's enrichment (6.125) is a conscious cross-reference to the account of Croesus' embassies to Delphi (1.47–55) lies in the key words *ἐπὶ τὸ χρηστήριον* (6.125.2) which echo the many uses of *τὰ χρηστήρια* in the earlier passage.

The marriage of Megacles' daughter to Pisistratus is the main event of the second tyranny, which ended in the eleventh year before the battle of Pallene (1.61–62). Pallene in turn is one of those events of Athenian history which Herodotus has consciously synchronized with Croesus' last years, for Croesus' investigation of the Greek states just prior to his attack on Cyrus revealed that "Pisistratus was tyrant in Athens and, of the Athenians themselves, some had fallen in the battle (*sc.* Pallene) and some were in exile along with the Alcmeonidae" (1.64.2–65.1). Thus we see that Herodotus has placed an interval of *at least* twelve years between the marriage of Megacles' daughter and the Lydian embassies to Delphi, for we must allow at least a few months duration for the second tyranny, and it is also probable that Pisistratus had already been in power for some time before Croesus made his investigation. This, together with the previous figure, makes a period of *at least* eighteen years separating the marriage of Megacles' daughter to Pisistratus and the marriage of Megacles to Agariste.

It has already been shown that Herodotus, as he wrote in the sixth book the story of Alcmeon's enrichment and the marriage of his son, Megacles, clearly had in mind what he had written in the first book concerning Croesus' embassies to Delphi and what his investigation of the Greek states had revealed of Alcmeonid participation in Athenian politics. It is obvious therefore that he thought of the two Megacles' as two separate individuals, one who had a daughter of marriageable age *at least* eighteen years before the marriage of the other Megacles to Agariste. In fact the daughter of Megacles the Shoreman must have been *at least* thirty-five years old at the time of Agariste's marriage (and well over fifty before Agariste's daughter, a hypothetical first child born in minimum time, could have grown to marriageable age).⁹

And so we know that Herodotus has written of two different men whose names and whose fathers' names were the same (hence the confusion). But we also know that both men were descended from the man responsible for the Cylonian curse. Megacles the Shoreman was under

⁹ This distinction between the two Megacles' is chronologically consistent with the rest of Herodotus' account of sixth-century Greece. The chronological implications of this paper will be discussed in a subsequent article. It can be shown that Herodotus, contrary to the traditional view that he had no chronology at all for the years before 500, had an entirely consistent chronological picture of the sixth century. Herodotus' chronology may not reflect the *true* chronology, but at any rate his testimony about the Megacles' may no longer be used as evidence for the early date (ca. 570) of Agariste's marriage. One must either date the marriage near the mid-point of the century (as Herodotus does), or one must find a witness stronger than Herodotus to vouch for the earlier date.

the curse, for that was the excuse offered by Pisistratus for avoiding offspring by Megacles' daughter (1.61.1); and Clisthenes, who was called accursed by Isagoras and Cleomenes (5.70-71), inherited the taint from his father, the younger Megacles. It should also be pointed out that the grandfather of the younger Megacles was also named Megacles (6.125.1) and was of the same generation as Megacles the Shoreman. Thus the two older men were closely related, perhaps identical. This relation can be illustrated by parallel stemmata (which could easily be combined into one) including all the members of the family mentioned by Herodotus:

Alcmeon

