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XV THE MYTH OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

One of the best known Greek myths is that of Jason and his Argonauts, who sailed to Colchis to fetch the Golden Fleece. The myth is already mentioned in the *Odyssey* as ‘world famous’ (12.70) and is a good illustration of both how the Greeks appropriated oriental motifs and the roads along which these motifs reached them. It also well illustrates some of the problems that a student encounters during his investigation into relationships between Greece and the Orient, and the kind of questions that still remain. Subsequently, we will look at the events leading up to the sacrifice of the ram with the golden fleece (§ 1); the Hittite background of the Fleece (§ 2); the connection of the Fleece with the aegis of Zeus and Athena (§ 3), the killing of the dragon (§ 4), and the escape of Jason with Medea’s help (§ 5). We conclude with a study of the routes along which the myth of the Golden Fleece reached Greece (§ 6).

1. *The sacrifice of the ram with the golden fleece*

Let us start with a classic description of the first part of the myth, as told by the mythographer we usually call Apollodorus.¹ His main source, directly or indirectly, must have been the enormously learned, but unfortunately lost work *On Gods* by the Athenian scholar Apollodorus (*ca.* 180-120 BC). This is clear from the fact that the Roman Hyginus (*Fab.* 2-4), who lived before Pseudo-Apollodorus, basically tells the same story. Both mythographers, then, went back to the same handbook, which must have made use

¹ For Apollodorus see this volume, Chapter V, section 1.

of many plays and poems that are no longer available to us. Thus, via Apollodorus, however indirectly, we still have access to older stages of the myth of the Golden Fleece, amongst which Euripides' play *Phrixos A*, in particular, seems to have been an important source. So, what does he tell us?

Of the sons of Aeolus, Athamas, who ruled over Boeotia, fathered a son Phrixus and a daughter Helle by Nephele. Subsequently, he married Ino, by whom he had Learchus and Melicertes. Ino plotted against the children of Nephele and persuaded the women to roast the wheat. They took the wheat and did so without the knowledge of the men. Having been sown with roasted wheat, the earth did not yield the yearly crops.² So Athamas sent to Delphi to inquire how to end the famine. But Ino persuaded the envoy to say that according to the oracle the sterility would cease if Phrixus were sacrificed to Zeus.³ When Athamas heard that, he was forced by the inhabitants of the land to bring Phrixus to the altar. But Nephele caught him and her daughter and she gave them a ram with a golden fleece that she had received from Hermes, and borne through the sky by the ram they crossed land and sea. When they were over the sea lying between Sigeum and the Chersonese, Helle slipped into the deep, and the sea was called Hellespont after her because she had died there. Phrixus reached the Colchians, whose king was Aietes, son of Helios and Perseis, the brother of Circe and Pasiphae, the wife

² Ino's ruse occurred almost certainly in Euripides' *Phrixos A* and *B*, cf. the *hypothesis* to *Phrixos A* fr. 820a, 822b and 828; note also Accius, *Athamas* fr. 2.

³ According to Hyg. *Fab.* 2, there was only one envoy.

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of Minos. He received him and gave him one of his daughters, Chalcioppe. Phrixus sacrificed the ram with the golden fleece to Zeus Phyxios, but its skin he gave to Aietes, who nailed it to an oak in a grove of Ares. Phrixus had the following children by Chalcioppe: Argus, Melas, Phrontis and Cytisorus (1.9.1, tr. J.G. Frazer, slightly adapted).

The myth of the Golden Fleece was popular all through antiquity, and there are many variants. We will, though, limit ourselves as much as possible to the older traditions, those going back to the pre-Hellenistic era.

The myth starts with the localisation of Athamas.⁴ Strangely enough, the king did not have a fixed place. Whereas Apollodorus locates him in Boeotia, just like Euripides' *Phrixos B*,⁵ the latter's *Phrixos A* makes him 'king of the Thessalians'.⁶ Thessaly is also connected with Athamas in Herodotus (7.197.3),⁷ and this seems to be the older tradition,

⁴ The Boeotian king Athamas was connected to several myths, which were a popular subject of both tragedies and comedies, but we will study only the episodes that are most relevant to the motif of the Golden Fleece, cf. Aesch. *Athamas* F 1-4a; Soph. *Athamas* fr. 1-10 and *Phrixos* fr. 721-3; Eur. *Ino* fr. 398-423, *Phrixos A and B* fr. 818c-38; Xenocles *TGrF* 33 F 1; Astydamas *TGrF* 60 F 1; Antiphanes fr. 17; Amphis fr. 1; *TGrF* Adespota fr. 1; C. Schwanzas, "Athamas," in *LIMC* II.1 (1984) 950-53; T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore and London, 1993) 176-80.

⁵ Note also Hell. *FGrH* 4 F 126 = F 126 Fowler; AR 2.1153, 3.266; Paus. 1.44.7, 9.34.5.

⁶ Note also Eur. fr. 822a.

⁷ Note also AR 2.514 with scholion; Strabo 9.5.8; *Et. Gen.* α 130, 529 (Halos).

the more so since there were people called Athamanes in Northern Greece.⁸ In both cases, though, the myth was tied to a sanctuary of Zeus Laphystios, ‘Devourer’, and it seems reasonable to suspect that the grisly character of this Zeus, whose name suggests cannibalism, has to be connected with this myth of a failed human sacrifice. It is probably significant that the place where Oedipus had murdered his father was called Laphystion.⁹

Like many a Greek male, Athamas had married for a second time, and his new wife tried to get rid of her stepchildren, Phrixus and Helle. It is typical of Greek mythology that the name of the king is always fixed, but that the names of his wives vary.¹⁰ This is also the case in this myth. Athamas’ new wife’s name is Ino in Euripides,¹¹ but Demodike in Pindar (fr. 49), Themisto in Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 F 98 = F 98 Fowler) and Euripides (*Hyg. Fab.* 2), Nephele in Sophocles,¹² and Gorgopis in the famous Sophist Hippias of Elis (*FGrH* 6 F 11). Hostility towards stepchildren is also a familiar motif in Greek mythology and as popular a theme in tragedies, as it is in modern fairy tales.¹³ In Apollodorus’ version, the hostility does not carry erotic overtones which, given the normally considerable age difference in Greece between husband and wife, could also be the case, as the stepmother must have often been of more or less the same

⁸ Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F 119; Achaeus *TGrF* 20 F 38; Lucr. 3.188; E. Oberhummer, “Athamania” and “Ἀθαμάντιον πεδίον,” in *RE* 2 (1896) 1928f.

⁹ Nic. Dam. *FGrH* 90 F 8.

¹⁰ Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London, 1988²) 45.

¹¹ Eur., *Phrixos A, B*; A. Nercassian, “Ino,” in *LIMC* V.1 (1990) 858-61 at 659.

¹² Soph. fr. 4a; M. Pipili, “Nephele II,” in *LIMC* V.1 (1992) 782f.

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age as her stepson. However, later versions do.¹⁴ They employ the motif of the ‘desperate housewife’, which in Greek literature is found first in the *Iliad*, where the hero Bellerophon rejected the overtures of the wife of King Proitos, who had given him asylum. She denounced him before her husband, who sent him to his father-in-law, the king of Lycia, with a letter containing ‘many life-destroying things’ (*Il.* VI.152-210). Homer’s version of the myth contains two motifs which most likely derive from the Near East, since both occur in the Old Testament: the Potiphar episode from the story of Joseph (*Genesis* 39) and the fateful letter David sent to his chief-of-staff to get rid of Uriah the Hittite, the man whose wife, Bathsheba, he wanted to marry (*2 Samuel* 11-2).¹⁵ We do not know how Homer found these motifs, but it is notable that precisely the hero that is connected to a cluster of oriental motifs also rides a horse, Pegasus, whose name recalls the Luwian weather-god Pihaššašši.¹⁶

In the case of Ino, we do not hear any particulars about the relationship. Yet it is interesting to note that we have here a sex-segregated society, as Ino is able to talk to the Thessalian women without the presence of men.¹⁷ The motif is clearly old and indeed

¹³ P. Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers* (Leiden, 1995) 20-49.

¹⁴ Hyg. *Astr.* 2.20; schol. Pind. *P.* 4.288a.

¹⁵ P. Frei, “Die Bellerophontessage und das Alte Testament,” in B. Janowski *et al.* (eds), *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament* (Freiburg and Göttingen, 1993) 39-65.

¹⁶ M. Hutter, “Der luwische Wettergott pihaššašši und der griechische Pegasos,” in M. Ofitsch and C. Zinko (eds), *Studia Onomastica et Indogermanica* (Graz, 1995) 79-97.

¹⁷ L. Gernet, *Polyvalence des images. Testi e frammenti sulla leggenda greca*, ed. A. Soldani

already present in Euripides (*Phrixos A*).¹⁸ One could think of a festival like the Thesmophoria, which the men were prohibited from attending, as the occasion of the conspiracy. The effect of Ino's scheming was a dearth, an effect already mentioned by Euripides (*Phrixos A*). Hyginus (*Fab. 2*) also mentions a *pestilentia*, and indeed, hunger and epidemics, *limos* and *loimos* in Greek, went hand in hand in antiquity.¹⁹ Like a good king – one remembers Oedipus – Athamas sent an envoy to Delphi, who came back with the message that the king had to sacrifice his son Phrixus in order to end the dearth.

The message from Delphi presupposes that the king had committed a grave fault against the gods, which had to be punished. And indeed, several notices inform us that in case of famine the king was considered to be the real culprit. After the Edonian king Lycurgus had killed his son, the land remained barren. When Apollo declared that the land would bear fruit if the king was put to death, the Edonians had him killed by wild horses (Apollod. 3.5.1). And Plutarch (*M. 297bc*) tells that the Ainianes, a tribe in the North of Greece, had killed their king by stoning when there was a great drought. In fact, an old tradition also speaks of a sacrifice of Athamas himself as a purification of the land, presumably because of a drought or a plague, a tradition used by Sophocles in his tragedy *Athamas*.²⁰ There is an interesting parallel in the Old Testament. When there was a famine

(Pisa, 2004) 129-35.

¹⁸ For such meetings of women being typical for a more archaic milieu see L. Gernet and A. Boulanger, *Le génie grec dans la religion* (Paris, 1970²) 51f.

¹⁹ See this volume, Chapter X, note 35.

²⁰ Hdt. 7.197.3; Soph. fr. 1-10; Ar. *Nub.* 257 with scholion, cf. S. Byl, "Pourquoi Athamas est-il cité au vers 257 des Nuées d'Aristophane? ou de l'utilité des scholies," *Les Etudes Classiques* 55

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in the time of King David, the Lord explained that it was caused because the previous king, Saul, had slain the Gibeonites. David got the clue and executed all the sons of Saul that were left, except for Jonathan's son Mephiboseth, who was lame and therefore not a potential rival to the throne.²¹ The parallel shows an important problem in the study of the relationships between Greece and the Orient. Did Greece take over the theme of the king's responsibility for the land from the Orient? That is unlikely, since similar ideas are well attested in Indo-European and other traditions.²² Similarity, then, does not always mean borrowing, but can also be caused by, as in this case, the existence of a comparable royal ideology.

In our case, the oracle asked for the death of the son, and in later versions even for the death of both Phrixus and Helle.²³ The recipient of the sacrifice is also specified, namely Zeus. This is not always the case with a human sacrifice, as it is not unusual that the asking or receiving gods are anonymous, but, like other Greek divinities, such as Artemis and Dionysos, even Zeus was regularly associated with human sacrifice, however surprising this may be.²⁴ Phrixus knew his role and Hyginus tells that "he voluntarily and willingly

(1987) 333-36.

²¹ 2 *Samuel* 19.26 (lame), 21.1-14 (execution).

²² Bremmer, "Medon, the Case of the Bodily Blemished King," in *Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Rome, 1980) 68-76 at 74-76.

²³ Philosteph. *FHG* 3 F 37; *Ov. F.* 3.861; *Zen.* 4.38.21-2; schol. *Aesch. Pers.* 70a; schol. *Ar. Nub.* 257; schol. *AR Prol.* Bb; *Eust. on Il.* VII.86; *Apost.* 58.21-2.

²⁴ For interesting observations on the gods and heroes of Greek human sacrifice see H.S. Versnel, "Self-Sacrifice, Compensation, Anonymous Gods," in *Entretiens Hardt* 27 (1981) 135-

promised that he would free the community all alone from the calamity”.²⁵ Now the nexus calamity-oracle-royal youth-voluntary death-end of calamity is well known in Greek mythology. The many studies dedicated to this phenomenon have demonstrated that we encounter in those cases the influence of the scapegoat ritual, and that is also clearly the case with Phrixus.²⁶

At an early stage, the scapegoat ritual must have influenced the ideas about the king or his family being responsible for the well-being of the community.²⁷ This is clearly also the case in the myth of the Golden Fleece: the victim is a youth, Phrixus, who voluntarily goes to the altar (above). Voluntariness of a victim was an important part of Greek sacrificial ideology and is often stressed in Greek scapegoat rituals.²⁸ Yet the sacrifice of Phrixus was not accepted, even though an Apulian volute crater of about 340 BC shows Athamas already

94 at 171-79; S. Georgoudi, “À propos du sacrifice humain en Grèce ancienne: remarques critiques,” *Arch. f. Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1999) 61-82.

²⁵ Hyg. *Fab.* 2: *Phrixus ultro ac libens pollicetur se unum civitatem aerumna liberaturum*. The motif already occurs in Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 98 = F 98 Fowler and, probably, Euripides, *Phrixos B*, cf. F. Jouan and H. van Looy, *Euripide, Tragédies* VIII.3 (Paris, 2002) 354, from which it may well be derived, as the motif of voluntary self-sacrifice is typically Euripidean (see below note 28).

²⁶ The connection with the scapegoat ritual is also noted by W. Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred* (Cambridge Mass. and London, 1996) 117.

²⁷ As is persuasively argued in his discussion of the scapegoat ritual by R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 258-80 at 259.

²⁸ See this volume, Chapter X, section 3.2.

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brandishing the sacrificial knife.²⁹ It is that highly dramatic moment that a father personally has to sacrifice his own child, just as Agamemnon had to sacrifice Iphigeneia and, in *Genesis* 22, Abraham his son Isaac.³⁰ And at that dramatic moment Phrixus' mother Nephele substituted a ram for him, whose golden fleece Hesiod already mentioned and which is standard in fifth-century versions of the myth.³¹ Such a substitution was not totally uncommon in Greek mythology, as Artemis had substituted a deer for Iphigeneia.³² One is of course also reminded of the ram that was given as a substitute for the sacrifice of Isaac,

²⁹ Ph. Bruneau, "Phrixos et Helle," in *LIMC* VII.1 (1994) 398-404 at no. 1; L. Giuliani, *Tragik, Trauer und Trost. Bildervasen für eine apulische Totenfeier* (Berlin, 1995) 26-31, 88-94; idem and G. Most, "Medea in Eleusis, in Princeton," in C. Kraus *et al.* (eds), *Visualizing the Tragic* (Oxford, 2007) 196-217 at 208-11.

³⁰ Agamemnon: Aesch. *Ag.* 209-11, 224-5, 228-46; Eur. *IT* 360, 565; *TGrF* Adesp. fr. 73 (?); Varro fr. 94-5, cf. J.P. Cèbe, *Varron. Satires Ménippées* 3 (Rome, 1975) 453-4; Lucr. 1.99; Cic. *Off.* 3.95; Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.199-200, 206; Hyg. *Fab.* 98; Apollod. *Ep.* 3.22. Isaac: see most recently V. Sussman, "The Binding of Isaac as Depicted on a Samaritan Lamp," *Israel Expl. J.* 48 (1998) 183-9; E. Kessler, "Art leading the story: the 'Aqedah' in early synagogue art," in L.I. Levine and Z. Weiss (eds), *From Dura to Sepphoris: studies in Jewish art and society in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth RI, 2000) 73-81.

³¹ Hes. fr. 68; Pind. *P.* 4.68, 231; Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 99 = F 99 Fowler; Eur. *Med.* 5, *Hyps.* fr. 752f.22-3.

³² For Iphigeneia see Bremmer, "Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece: the case of Iphigeneia," in E. Noort and E.J.C. Tigchelaar (eds), *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (Leiden, 2001) 21-43; G. Ekroth, "Inventing Iphigeneia? On Euripides and the Cultic Construction of Brauron," *Kernos* 16 (2003) 59-118.

which seems to be another example of an independent parallel.³³

Whereas the substitute animals were immediately sacrificed in the cases of Iphigeneia and Isaac, the ram with the golden fleece carried Phrixus and Helle through the sky to Colchis. Such flying rams soon became unacceptable to the Greeks, and the fourth-century, rationalizing mythographer Palaephatus (30) already introduced a high official called Ram, who equipped a boat for Phrixus and Helle to bring them to Colchis. In the course of the flight Helle fell from the ram and drowned in the water ever since called Hellespont.³⁴ The name is already found in Homer (*Il.* II.845 etc.), and probably was given first to the North Aegean and Propontis before the advancing Greeks gave the name to the present Hellespont.³⁵

On arrival in Colchis, Phrixus sacrificed the ram to Zeus Phyxios, 'Of escape'.³⁶ This particular Zeus also was the recipient of a sacrifice by Deukalion after the Flood and seems to have been at home in Thessaly.³⁷ The fleece he gave to King Aietes, who in turn

³³ For analyses of this famous sacrifice see most recently L. Kundert, *Die Opferung/Bindung Isaaks*, 2 vols (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1998); Noort and Tigchelaar, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*; E. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge, 2004).

³⁴ Bruneau, "Phrixos et Helle," no. 27-44 (from about 390 BC onwards).

³⁵ Hdt. 6.33; Strabo 7 fr. 22; H. Hoenigswald, "Hellêspontos," in J. Penney (ed.), *Indo-European Perspectives. Studies in Honour of Anna Morpurgo-Davies* (Oxford, 2004) 179.

³⁶ AR 2.1147, 4.119; Apollod. 1.9.1; schol. Hes. *Th.* 993a; Schol. Pind. *P.* 4.431, *O.* 9.65; schol. Aratus 225; Eust. on *Il.* VII.86; Bruneau, "Phrixos et Helle," no. 45-6, 51 (from second quarter of fifth century BC onwards).

³⁷ Apollod. 1.9.1; Schol. AR 2.1147 (Thessalian); schol. Aratus 225; Eust. on *Il.* I.10; this

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gave his daughter Chalciopé to Phrixus as wife.³⁸ This type of marriage is still typical of archaic times: the outsider is incorporated into the king's retinue by marrying the king's daughter. The same happened to Bellerophon (*Il.* VI.192) and Tydeus (*Il.* VI.121),³⁹ just as Alcinoüs tried to keep Odysseus by offering him a daughter (*Od.* 7.313);⁴⁰ in the Old Testament Saul offers his daughters Merab and Michal to David to keep him in his retinue (1 *Samuel* 18). The already mentioned Palaephatus (30) made fun of this special treatment of the skin and noted: "Observe how rare hides were in those days, for a king to accept a fleece as dowry for his own daughter" (tr. Stern). The Golden Fleece had clearly lost its fascination in Palaephatus' time!

2. *The Hittite background*

Originally, Phrixus' arrival in Colchis may well have concluded the myth of his sacrifice and escape, as we hear no more about him. Yet this was not the opinion of the Greeks of the Archaic and Classical Age, as one of the most popular Greek myths, that of Jason and the Argonauts, relates the recovery of the Golden Fleece by Jason. The connection between the two parts of the myth of the Golden Fleece looks somewhat artificial, and one cannot escape

volume, Chapter VI, section 2.

³⁸ Palaephatus 30; Eratosthenes 19; Hyg. *Astr.* 2.20. For a possible reflection of Phrixus on local coinage see J. Hind, "The Types on the Phasian Silver Coins of the Fifth-Fourth Centuries BC (The 'Kolkhidhi' of Western Georgia)," *Num. Chron.* 165 (2005) 1-14.

³⁹ For Tydeus see also Pherecydes F 122b Fowler; Eur. fr. 558; Apollod. 1.8.5.

⁴⁰ É. Scheid-Tissinier, *Les usages du don chez Homère* (Nancy, 1994) 110-14; note also Eur. fr. 72 (Alcmaeon).

the impression that originally both parts had been separate. However this may be, Jason's great adventure begins with an oracle to Pelias, king of Iolkos, that he would be killed by a man wearing only one sandal. The prediction became reality when Jason, having lost one of his sandals after crossing the river Anauros, came to a sacrificial feast of Pelias.⁴¹ To preempt a possible rival, he sent Jason to fetch the Golden Fleece from King Aietes of Aia in Colchis. Jason built a ship of fifty oars, a so-called penteconter,⁴² and set off with 50 young men, the famous Argonauts.⁴³ The one sandal,⁴⁴ the group of 50,⁴⁵ the young age of the

⁴¹ The oracle is a standard part of the myth: Pind. *P.* 4.78 with scholion; AR 1.5-7; Hyg. *Fab.* 12-3; Val. Flacc. 1.2708; Apollod. 1.9.16; *Orph. Arg.* 56-7; Servius on Verg. *Ecl.* 4.34; schol. Lycophron 1,175.

⁴² Eur. *Hyps.* fr. 752f.21, cf. Bremmer, "Oorsprong, functie en verval van de pentekonter," *Utrechtse Historische Cahiers* 11 (1989) 1-11.

⁴³ For the various lists of Argonauts see the tables in P. Scarpi, *Apollodoro, I miti Greci* (Milano, 1996) 678-80; add Val. Flacc. 1.352-488; *POxy.* 60.4097, re-edited by M. van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers' Digests?* (Leiden, 1997) no. 61; B. Scherer, *Mythos, Katalog und Prophezeiung. Studien zu den Argonautika des Apollonios Rhodios* (Stuttgart, 2006) 49-56. For the Argo on coinage of Iolkos see K. Liampi, "Iolkos and Pagasai: Two New Thessalian Mints," *Num. Chron.* 165 (2005) 23-40 at 24-30.

⁴⁴ The best discussion is now P. Grossardt, *Die Erzählung von Meleagros* (Leiden, 2001) 14-5; add Eur. *Hyps.* fr. 752f.38; M. Robertson, "Monocrepis," *GRBS* 13 (1972) 39-48; L. Edmunds, "Thucydides on Monosandalism (3.22.2)," in *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow on His Eightieth Birthday* (Durham NC, 1984) 71-75; J. Neils, "Jason," in *LIMC* V.1 (1990) 629-38 at no. 2-4.

⁴⁵ Bremmer, "Transvestite Dionysos," *The Bucknell Review* 43 (1999) 183-200 at 189.

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crew,⁴⁶ the presence of maternal uncles,⁴⁷ the test and the return to become king: everything points to an initiatory background of the Argonautic expedition.⁴⁸ Yet such an interpretation does not explain the Golden Fleece. So, what was its nature?

The earliest, fullest accounts of the second sequence of the myth are given by Pindar and Apollonius of Rhodes, whom we will take as our guides. However, they are not the oldest sources, and we sometimes have to supply them with older authors and iconographic representations. After Jason had arrived in Colchis, he went to the palace of King Aietes. The king was the son of Helios and clearly derived his name, ‘the man from Aia’, from the island of Aia, where Helios rises each day.⁴⁹ This connection of Aia with the sun must be a Hittite heritage, as Aia is the name of the wife of the Sun in Hittite and Mesopotamian religion.⁵⁰ However, the land of the sun was located in Colchis, modern Georgia, only after Homer, when the Greeks had reached their most eastern frontier.

Although the sheepskin is known as the Golden Fleece, some of the oldest sources describe the Fleece as being purple.⁵¹ Initially, apparently, its precious value was more

⁴⁶ A. Moreau, *Le mythe de Jason et Médée* (Paris, 1994) 120.

⁴⁷ F. Graf, “Orpheus: A Poet Among Men,” in Bremmer, *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*, 80-106 at 97; Moreau, *Le mythe de Jason et Médée*, 121.

⁴⁸ Graf, “Orpheus,” 97f.

⁴⁹ Aietes’ father: Hes. *Th.* 957; Eumelos fr. 2 D = 3 B; Pind. *P.* 4. 242; Eur. *Med.* 746-7; Ov. *Met.* 7.96. Aia: *Od.* 12.4; Mimnermus fr. 11A; A. Lesky, *Kleine Schriften* (Berne, 1966) 26-62.

⁵⁰ E. Ebeling and E. Forrer, “A.A.,” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* I (Berlin and Leipzig, 1932) 1-2; E. Laroche, *Recherches sur les noms des dieux Hittites* (Paris, 1947) 119.

⁵¹ Simonides *PMG* 576; Acusilaus *FGrH* 2 F 37 = F 37 Fowler; Macr. *Sat.* 3.7.2 (Etruscan

important than its exact colour.⁵² It is also interesting to note that the sources vary as to where exactly the Fleece was to be found. Our oldest literary sources situate it in the palace of King Aietes,⁵³ which brings the Fleece closer to the Greek mainland traditions (below). In the later standard tradition the Fleece was nailed to an oak in the temple grounds or grove of Ares,⁵⁴ which brings the Fleece closer to its ritual background (below), even though it is sometimes on the top of a rock on vases.⁵⁵

In antiquity, the golden nature of the Fleece was explained in a rationalizing manner by the Colchian custom of collecting gold from streams via sheepskins with a shaggy fleece,⁵⁶ whereas modern scholars have explained the Fleece by rain magic, the search for amber or the cosmic tree.⁵⁷ It is only from the middle 1970s onwards that scholars have

version, below).

⁵² For the high esteem of purple in Archaic Greece see M. Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels, 1970) 16f.

⁵³ Hes. (?) fr. 299; *Carmen Naupacticum* fr. 8 D/B.

⁵⁴ AR 4.123-82; Hyg. *Fab.* 3, *Astr.* 2.20; Apollod. 1.9.1; Servius on Verg. *G.* 2.140; schol. Pind. *P.* 4.431; schol. Arat. 348. The oak is already mentioned by Eur. *Hyps.* fr. 752f.23.

⁵⁵ Neils, "Iason," no. 36f.

⁵⁶ *TGrF* Adespota fr. 37a; Strabo 11.2.19; Appian, *Mithr.* 103, cf. O. Lordkipanidze, "The Golden Fleece: Myth, Euhemeristic Explanation and Archaeology," *Oxford J. Arch.* 20 (2001) 1-38.

⁵⁷ For a survey of earlier, unpersuasive explanations and his own unpersuasive explanation, see H. Wagenvoort, "La Toison d'Or," in R. Chevallier (ed.), *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire offerts à André Piganiol*, 3 vols (Paris, 1966) III.1667-78.

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started to connect the Fleece with a Hittite cult object, the so-called *kurša*.⁵⁸ However, the connection has not been completely thought through yet, and a systematic investigation can still make some progress.

What was this *kurša*? Previously, scholars translated the term with both ‘shield’ and ‘fleece’,⁵⁹ but the first meaning has more recently been dropped in favour of the second one, after its representations were identified in 1989.⁶⁰ In fact, the *kurša* was a fleece in the shape of a bag,⁶¹ which could be made of the skins of at least three different animals: oxen,⁶²

⁵⁸ V. Haas, “Jasons Raub des goldenen Vliesses im Lichte hethitischer Quellen,” *Ugaritische Forsch.* 7 (1975) 227-33 and “Medea und Jason im Lichte hethitischer Quellen,” *Acta Antiqua* 26 (1978) 241-53; M. Popko, *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion* (Warsaw, 1978) 114; Burkert, *Structure and History*, 10; S.P. Morris, “The Prehistoric Background of Artemis Ephesia: A Solution to the Enigma of her ‘Breasts’?,” in U. Mus (ed.), *Der Kosmos der Artemis von Ephesos* (Vienna, 2001) 136-51 at 140-48 and “Potnia Aswiya: Anatolian Contributions to Greek Religion,” in R. Laffineur and R. Hägg (eds), *Potnia. Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age* (Liège, 2001) 423-34 at 431-2 (I had overlooked both studies by Morris in the first version of this chapter).

⁵⁹ For the translation ‘shield’ see still H. Otten, “*Kurša*,” in *Reallex. Assyriologie* VI (1980-83) 372; H.A. Hoffner, Jr. (ed.), *Perspectives on Hittite Civilization: Selected Writings of Hans Gustav Güterbock* (Chicago, 1997) 107 (1964¹).

⁶⁰ Hoffner, Jr., *Perspectives on Hittite Civilization: Selected Writings of Hans Gustav Güterbock*, 137-45.

⁶¹ For the most recent discussions see M. Popko, “Anatolische Schutzgottheiten in Gestalt von Vliesen,” *Acta Antiqua* 22 (1974) 309-11, “Zum hethitischen ^(KUS)*kurša*-,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 2 (1975) 65-70; *Kultobjekte*, 108-20 and “Anikonische Götterdarstellungen in der

sheep and goats. As the first one is less usual and does not play a role in Greek mythology, we will limit ourselves to giving one example of each of the latter two. In the Old Hittite myth of Telipinu, we read that after his return

Telipinu took account of the king. Before Telipinu there stands an *eyan*-tree (or pole). From the *eyan* is suspended a hunting bag (made from the skin) of a sheep. In (the bag) lies Sheep Fat. In it lie (symbols) of Animal fecundity and of Wine. In it lie (symbols of) Cattle and Sheep. In it lie Longevity and Progeny. In it lies The Gentle Message of the Lamb. In it lie... and...In it lies...In it lies The Right Shank. In it lie Plenty, Abundance, and Satiety.⁶³

In addition to sheepskins, goat skins were used. In a somewhat later fragment we read:

altanatolischen Religion,” in J. Quaegebeur (ed.), *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (Louvain, 1993) 323-24; G. McMahon, *The Hittite State Cult of the Tutelary Deities* (Chicago, 1991) 250-54; V. Haas, *Geschichte der hethitischen Religion* (Leiden, 1994) 454-59; J. Puhvel, *Hittite Etymological Dictionary* 4 (Berlin and New York, 1997) 270-75; H. Gonnet, “Un rhyton en forme de *kurša* hittite,” in S. de Martino and F. Pecchioli Daddi (eds), *Anatolica Antica. Studi in memoria di Fiorella Imparati*, 2 vols (Florence, 2002) I.321-27.

⁶² *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* 13.179, 22.168.

⁶³ *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi* XVII.10 iv 27-35, tr. H.A. Hoffner, Jr., *Hittite Myths* (Atlanta, 1990) 17; for the Hittite text, with translation and explanatory notes, see J.V. García Trabazo, *Textos religiosos hittitas* (Madrid, 2002) 137-9; without notes, V. Haas, *Materia Magica et Medica Hethitica* (Berlin and New York, 2003) II.772f. For another example of a *kurša* made of sheep skin see *Catalogue des textes hittites* 336; for the skin of a lamb, Haas, *Geschichte*, 719.

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[T]hey drive in one billy goat and then wash it. They sweep and then sprinkle the buildings of the palace into which they drive it. The dog-men kill the goat in the same way. [...] to no one [(they? x. They give] the hide to the leatherworkers. [Fro]m (it) [the leatherworkers mak]e the [new] hunting bags.⁶⁴

A sheep *kurša*, then, is essentially a hide with wool, but in the case of goats it is also “specified as ‘rough, shaggy’ (*warhui-*),⁶⁵ i.e. a fleece with the long curling hair of an angora (= Turkish *Ankara*) goat still on it. The bag has a strap handle by which it can be hung on a peg, with the contents accessible”.⁶⁶ Now the *kurša* could be hung on the *eyan*-tree, which was most likely a kind of oak but possibly a yew.⁶⁷ It could also be hung in a special building, ‘the house of the hunting bags’, probably a (room in a) temple, where it had

⁶⁴ *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* XXII.168, tr. McMahon, *Hittite State Cult*, 165f. For a *kurša* made from a goat skin see also *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi* VII.36, XXV.31 obv. 11-13, XXX.32 I 9-10, LV.43.

⁶⁵ For the term see now N. Oettinger, “Hethitisch *warhuizna-* ‘Wald, heiliger Hain’ und *tiyessar* ‘Baumpflanzung’ (mit einer Bemerkung zu dt. *Wald*, engl. *wold*),” in P. Taracha (ed.), *Silva Anatolica* (Warsaw, 2002) 253-60.

⁶⁶ C. Watkins, “A Distant Anatolian Echo in Pindar: The Origin of the Aegis Again,” *HSCP* 100 (2000) 1-14 at 2.

⁶⁷ Oak: Haas, “Medea und Jason,” 247. Yew: Puhvel, *Hittite Etymological Dictionary* 1.2, 253-57.

a special place: ‘the place of the god’.⁶⁸ In one case, it is worshipped in the temple of the war god Zababa,⁶⁹ what may have given rise to its being hung in the temple of Ares, but other buildings are also mentioned, and the place of the *kurša* clearly depended on local circumstances.⁷⁰

Telipinu’s *kurša* functioned as a kind of cornucopia filled with all kinds of material and immaterial good things, but the *kurša* could also function as the symbol of a deity and be worshipped as such. This was in particular the case with the god Zitharija of Hattusa, who, originally, was a Hattic deity.⁷¹ The *kurša* was even taken along during war expeditions,⁷² and one is reminded of the Israelites bringing along the Ark of the Covenant for their fight against the Philistines (1 *Samuel* 4-6). In a cult inventory text, it is related that Zithariya’s hunting bag carried an image of a sundisk of gold, which is, perhaps, one of the reasons why the Golden Fleece was so closely associated with the sun.⁷³ In later times, the *kurša* became the attribute of a divinity rather than being the divinity itself.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ McMahon, *Hittite State Cult*, 183 (special place), 264-67.

⁶⁹ *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* X.2 I 14.

⁷⁰ Popko, *Kultobjekte*, 110.

⁷¹ His close association with the *kurša* is just one of the indications of its Hattic origin.

⁷² K. Balkan, *Ankara Arkeoloji Müzesinde bulunan Boğazköy tabletleri* (Istanbul, 1948) 14 (+) V 12 ff.

⁷³ *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi* XXXVIII.35 I 1-5, ed. L. Jakob-Rost, *Mitt. Inst. Orientforschung* 9 (1963) 195f.

⁷⁴ Popko, *Kultobjekte*, 113, who compares *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi* XX.107 + XXIII.50 II 25ff.

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Leather bags naturally wear away, and it is therefore understandable that they were regularly renewed. This happened in particular during the Hittite Purulli festival, a kind of spring New Year festival, when the old bags were burned and new ones prepared.⁷⁵ Naturally, with the demise of the Hittite states the *kurša* must have gradually lost its significance. Yet such powerful symbols are perhaps re-interpreted rather than totally abolished, and Herodotus relates that there was a bag (*askos*) hanging in Phrygian Kelainai, which he understandably interpreted as the skin of Marsyas,⁷⁶ but which more likely was a latter-day *kurša*.

3. *The kurša and the aegis*

Having looked in some detail at the *kurša*, we can now see that the sheepskin and the goatskin both developed in different but also converging directions. In a brilliant article, Calvert Watkins has recently argued that the aegis of Athena derives from our *kurša*.⁷⁷ Herodotus' (4.189.2) description of the tasseled goatskins worn by Libyan women shows that, according to the Greeks, the aegis was a goatskin, even though in mythology Athena's aegis could be the skin of the Gorgo, Pallas, Asteros or a monster called Aegis – evidently a rather late rationalizing explanation.⁷⁸ The aegis was imagined in different ways.

⁷⁵ Popko, *Kultobjekte*, 114.

⁷⁶ Hdt. 7.26; Xen. *An.* 1.2.8; Popko, "Anatolische Schutzgottheiten," 70. For Marsyas see I. Weiler, *Der Agon im Mythos* (Darmstadt, 1974) 37-59; A. Weis, "Marsyas I," in *LIMC* VI.1 (1992) 366-78.

⁷⁷ Watkins, "Distant Anatolian echo'.

⁷⁸ Gorgo: Eur. *Ion*, 995; Virg. *Aen.* 2.616, 8.438; Luc. 9.658. Pallas: Epicharmus fr. 135; Cic. *ND*

Sometimes it is clearly represented as a shield with a shaggy fringe,⁷⁹ which representation must have been at the basis of the Spartans calling their armour ‘aegis’.⁸⁰ It is highly interesting that this interpretation coincides with modern interpretations of the *kurša* as ‘shield’. This must mean that the Greek poets had learned about the *kurša* via texts or oral presentations, not from seeing the real thing. Yet the aegis could also be imagined as a kind of woolen bag or net,⁸¹ containing allegorical entities (*Il.* V.738-42), as is the case with the *kurša* of Telipinu (above).⁸² In the case of Zeus, his aegis was made of the skin of the goat Amaltheia,⁸³ but this goat was also the owner of a ‘horn of plenty’!⁸⁴

As Greek imagination could develop the goatskin of the *kurša* into a real goat, Amaltheia, it is not surprising that also the sheepskin could develop into a real sheep, be it a

3.59; Apollod. 1.6.2; Clem. Alex. *Pr.* 2.28.2; Firm. Mat. *Err.* 16.2; schol. Lycophron 355; A. Henrichs, “Philodems “De pietate” als mythographische Quelle,” *Cronache Ercolanesi* 5 (1975) 5-38 at 29-34. Asteros: *Meropis*, cf. A. Henrichs, “Zur Meropis: Herakles’ Löwenfell und Athenas zweite Haut,” *ZPE* 27 (1977) 69-75. Aegis: Dion. Scythobr. *FGrH* 32 F 8 = fr. 9 Rusten.
⁷⁹ *Il.* XV.306-10, with the excellent discussion by Janko, although he wrongly explains Zeus’ aegis as a ‘thunderbolt’.

⁸⁰ Nymphodorus *FGrH* 577 F 15, cf. Paus. Att. α 40.

⁸¹ Lycurgus fr. 24; Harpocration s.v. *aigidas*; Ael. Dion. α 48; Paus. Att. α 40; Suda α 60.

⁸² See also Burkert, *Kleine Schriften* II, 180-1: a comparison of Telipinu’s *kurša* with Athena’s aegis.

⁸³ *POxy.* 42.3003, re-edited by Van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers’ Digests?*, no. 52; schol. *Il.* XV.299, 318.

⁸⁴ Bremmer, “Amaltheia,” in *Der Neue Pauly* I (1996) 568-9.

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ram or a lamb. This is the case in the myth of Atreus and Thyestes, which was already related in an ancient epic, the *Alcmaeonis* (fr. 5 D = 6 B), and thus reaches back to the Archaic Age. Although the relevant tragedies by Sophocles and Euripides are almost totally lost,⁸⁵ it is clear from the more detailed story that emerges in the fifth century⁸⁶ that both Atreus and Thyestes claimed their right to the throne on the basis of the possession of the golden lamb. In other words, the Golden Fleece served as a royal talisman,⁸⁷ as a *regni stabilimen*,⁸⁸ that was connected with the prosperity of the people. Interestingly, the motif of the ram as royal talisman occurs in the seventh-century Persian *Artachšir i Pâpakân* too, which suggests that the motif had also travelled eastwards, not only westwards.⁸⁹

There probably is a further testimony to the Anatolian connection. Macrobius quotes the following sign from an Etruscan book, the *Ostentarium Tuscum*, that had been translated into Latin by the, probably, first-century BC Roman scholar Tarquitiuus:⁹⁰

a sheep or a ram sprinkled with purple or golden markings presages for the leader of a class and of a race the greatest prosperity and an access of wealth; the race prolongs its generations in splendor and brings them greater happiness (*Sat.* 3.7.2, tr.

⁸⁵ Soph. fr. 140-1 (*Atreus*), 247-69 (*Thyestes*); Eur. fr. 391-97b (*Thyestes*).

⁸⁶ Eur. *El.* 725-6, *Or.* 812-3, 997-1000 with scholion; Apollod. *Ep.* 2.10-11.

⁸⁷ Note also schol. *Il.* II.106; Gernet, *Polyvalence des images*, 49-52, 142-44.

⁸⁸ Accius, *Atreus* fr. 5, cf. Seneca, *Thy.* 230: *possessor huius regnat*.

⁸⁹ A. Krappe, "Atreus' Lamm," *RhM* 77 (1928) 182-4.

⁹⁰ E. Rawson, *Roman Culture and Society* (Oxford, 1991) 301; M. Haase, "Tarquitiuus [I 1]," in *Der Neue Pauly* 12/1 (2002) 34f.

P.V. Davies).

In other words, for the Etruscans, the appearance of a purple or golden ram promised prosperity and progeny for the ruler and his land,⁹¹ which comes rather close to the *kurša* of Telipinu. Now the question of the Etruscan homeland has long been a hot item in classical scholarship. Recently, my compatriot Rob Beekes has put forward a number of compelling arguments that the Etruscans came from North-West Anatolia,⁹² not that far from the original area of the myth of the Tantalids. Once again, then, our evidence seems to point to Anatolia as the origin of the Greek lamb/ram with a golden fleece.

Clearly, the three qualities of the *kurša* (protector in battle, symbol of royalty and symbol of cornucopia) were all taken over by the Greeks in their imagination of the aegis.⁹³ Yet when the sheepskin had lost its initial religious meaning, its great value had to be re-established. That is probably why it was ascribed the quality of the precious commodities purple or gold.

There might even be another Oriental motif present in this myth as well. When

⁹¹ There may be a connection here with the rams and lambs being spontaneously dyed purple or saffron in Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue* (42-45, with Coleman). E.M. Irwin, "Colourful sheep in the golden age. Vergil, Eclogues 4.42-45," *EMC* 33 (1989) 23-37 is not helpful.

⁹² R. Beekes, *The Origin of the Etruscans* (Amsterdam, 2003).

⁹³ The close connection of the aegis and the Golden Fleece was already seen by L. Gernet, *Anthropologie de la grèce antique* (Paris, 1968) 119-30 (first published in 1948, when the value of Hittite evidence for ancient Greece only started to become understood); see also Gernet, *Polyvalence des images*, 152-55.

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Thyestes had produced the lamb, Zeus helped Atreus by suggesting that Atreus should stipulate that he should be king if the sun should go backward.⁹⁴ Is there in the background some connection with the story in *Joshua* (10.12-3) about the sun and the moon not moving until the Israelites had avenged themselves on the Amorites?

Now the myth of Atreus and Thyestes is part of the family myth of the Tantalids. Tantalus came from Sipylus in Lydia, and these myths must have been ‘exported’ by Aeolian bards in the early Archaic Age, probably via Lesbos.⁹⁵ In the myth of Tantalus’ wooing of Oenomaos’ daughter Hippodameia, we meet a charioteer called Myrtilos.⁹⁶ There can be little doubt that his name points to the Anatolian *hinterland* of Sipylos, given the existence of Hittite kings called Muršili;⁹⁷ in fact, during the reign of the Hittite king

⁹⁴ Soph. fr 738; Eur. *IT* 193-5 and 816, *Or* 1001-4 (with an interesting note by Willink on the effect of the myth on philosophical speculations), *El.* 699-746, *Thy.* fr. 397b; Pl. *Plt.* 269a; Polyb. 34.2.6 (= Strabo 1.2.15); Lucian, *De astrol.* 12; Apollod. *Ep.* 2.12.

⁹⁵ For Oenomaos being king of Lesbos see Theopompus *FGrH* 115 F 350 (burial of Pelops’ charioteer on Lesbos); schol. Eur. *Or.* 990; C. Robert, *Die griechische Heldensage* I (Berlin, 1920⁴) 208, 214f. Note also the mention of the Atreids in Alcaeus, fr. 70.6.

⁹⁶ Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 37 = F 37 Fowler; Soph. *El.* 509; Eur. *Or.* 992, 1548; Pl. *Crat.* 395c; I. Triantis, “Myrtilos,” in *LIMC* VI.1 (1992) 693-6.

⁹⁷ For earlier examples of the name Mursilos (all on Lesbos!) see Alcaeus, fr. 70.7, 241, 302b (?), cf. G. Bastianini *et al.*, *Commentaria et lexica graeca in papyris reperta* I (Leipzig, 2004) 148-9, fr. 305a.19, 305b.8, inc. auct. 34, 8-10 Voigt, cf. Bastianini, *Commentaria*, 243, S 267 Page; schol. fr. 60, cf. Bastianini, *Commentaria*, 96; *POxy.* 35.2733, 12; Myrsilos *FGrH* 477 T 1; J.A.S. Evans, “Candaules, whom the Greeks name Myrsilos...,” *GRBS* 26 (1985) 229-33. Note also Myrsilos as a name of a Lydian king: Hdt. 1.7.2.

Mursilis II (ca. 1350-1320 BC) priests recommended to fetch the gods ‘of Laspa’ (= Lesbos).⁹⁸ Several indications, then, point to a connection between the Golden Fleece and Anatolia.⁹⁹

4. *The killing of the dragon*

After Jason had passed two tests, he managed to steal the Golden Fleece with the help of Medea. The Fleece had been guarded by a dragon, and Pindar specifies that it was “right by the ferocious jaws of a dragon”, which was larger than the Argo itself.¹⁰⁰ The location is of course chosen for its dramatic possibilities, but it may also be an echo from an old tradition. Rather early Greek and Etruscan vases display a man emerging from the mouth of a serpent, most famously on a cup by Douris (ca. 480-470 BC) where we see Jason actually in the jaws of the dragon.¹⁰¹ It is noteworthy that such pictures stop after the descriptions of Jason’s fight against the dragon by Pindar and the tragedians. Apparently, a disgorged hero no longer was acceptable to the civilised Greeks of the fifth century.

But how did Jason manage to circumvent the dragon? According to our oldest

⁹⁸ *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi* V.6.57-64. For the special position of Lesbos see now K. and S. Tausend, “Lesbos – Zwischen Griechenland und Kleinasien,” in R. Rollinger and B. Truschnegg (eds), *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: Die antike Welt diessseits und jenseits der Levante* (Stuttgart, 2006) 89-111.

⁹⁹ For a possible Oriental background of Atreus’ name see M.L. West, “Atreus and Attarissiyas,” *Glotta* 77 (2001) 262-66.

¹⁰⁰ Pind. *P.* 4.245; Herodorus *FGrH* 31 F 63bis = F 52A Fowler.

¹⁰¹ Neils, “Jason,” no’s 30-32.

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descriptions, he slew the dragon, but Pindar adds *technais* ('with tricks').¹⁰² The expression may well point to the role of Medea, who in part of our tradition charmed the dragon to sleep.¹⁰³ In Medea's first appearance in Greek literature in Hesiod, she is considered to be a goddess and depicted as the niece of the witch-like Circe and the daughter of Idyia ('the Knowledgeable One'), a fitting name for an expert in magic.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, there is also Aphrodite whose presence in this part of the myth seems obligatory: in the late archaic *Carmen Naupacticum* (fr. 7^A D = 6 B) she diverted Medea's parents so that Jason would return home safely; on the more or less contemporary Cypselus-chest, she was present at the marriage of Jason and Medea (Paus. 5.18.3), and in Pindar's fourth *Pythian Ode* she taught Jason "to be skilful in prayers and charms" (217) and made Medea fall in love with Jason (219).

Is this killing of the dragon by Jason with the help of a woman a free invention by a Greek mythmaker or did he take his inspiration from an Oriental source? The first possibility is not impossible. We have an excellent parallel in the myth of Theseus and Ariadne, where we find the same scheme: a young girl, who is the daughter of the king,

¹⁰² Pind. *P.* 4.249; Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 31 = F 31 Fowler; Herodorus *FGrH* 31 F 52 = F 52 Fowler.

¹⁰³ Antimachus fr. 73-74; AR 4.145-61; Ov. *Met.* 7.149-58; Val. Flacc. 8.68-120; Apollod. 1.9.23; Neils, "Jason," no's 37-48. According to Eur. *Med.* 480-82, Medea killed the dragon herself.

¹⁰⁴ Hes. *Th.* 956-61 (Circe), 992-1002 (goddess), cf. F. Graf, "Medea, the Enchantress from Afar," in J. Clauss and S. Johnston (eds), *Medea* (Princeton, 1997) 21-43.

helps the young stranger to defeat the monster, escapes with him and is later dropped.¹⁰⁵ The scheme is widespread, as the Tarpeia myth illustrates, and there is no reason to deny its influence on the Golden Fleece myth.¹⁰⁶ Yet the difference from the normal pattern is Medea's supernatural status and the persistent presence of Aphrodite. This makes another possibility at least worth investigating.

In a stimulating article, the German Hittitologist Volkert Haas has compared this episode of the Golden Fleece myth with the Hittite myth of the dragon Illuyankaš,¹⁰⁷ which has come down to us in two versions, one with detailed names and the other with mainly anonymous protagonists.¹⁰⁸ In the first one, the monster is lured from his lair by a meal and trussed with a rope by a mortal who was 'recruited' by the goddess Inara before being killed by the Storm-God.¹⁰⁹ We may at least wonder if Inara is not eventually behind Medea

¹⁰⁵ For the older stages of this myth see C. Calame, *Thésée et l'imaginaire Athénien* (Lausanne, 1996²); *POxy.* 68.4640.

¹⁰⁶ For the scheme see J.N. Bremmer and N.M. Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography* (London, 1987) 68-70 (by Horsfall); J. Lightfoot, *Parthenius of Nicaea* (Oxford, 1999) 245.

¹⁰⁷ Haas, "Medea und Jason". For the etymology of Illuyankaš see most recently J.T. Katz, "How to be a Dragon in Indo-European: Hittite *illuyankaš* and its Linguistic and Cultural Congeners in Latin, Greek, and Germanic," in J. Jasanoff *et al.* (eds), *Mír Curad. Studies in Honor of Calvert Watkins* (Innsbruck, 1998) 317-35.

¹⁰⁸ For texts and translations see Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 11; García Trabazo, *Textos religiosos hititas*, 82f. Note also the illuminating juxtaposition of themes in Burkert, *Structure and History*, 8; for persuasive verbal parallels, C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon* (Oxford, 1995) 448-59.

¹⁰⁹ For Inara see A. Kammenhuber, "Inar," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* V (1980) 89-90;

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and/or Aphrodite.

In the other version, the Storm-God first loses parts of his body that are recovered before his final victory. Echoes of the latter version have been demonstrated in the Greek myth of the monster Typhon, who took away Zeus' weapon and sinews before eventually being defeated by him.¹¹⁰ Homer located the battle between Zeus and Typhon "among the Arimoi" (*Il.* II.783), which must be somewhere in Southern Anatolia,¹¹¹ but fifth-century authors already explicitly locate Typhon in Cilicia, even in a cave, and later Greek tradition located Typhon's cave even more precisely, in Cilician Corycus.¹¹² Here was a famous sanctuary of Zeus, and the names of its priests, which have come down to us in a famous inscription, demonstrate that the local population contained a strong Luwian element.¹¹³ Moreover, in the *Halieutica* (3.9-25) of the late second-century Oppian, who probably was an inhabitant of Corycus, we find a version of the Typhon myth that contains the motif of

Haas, *Geschichte*, 436f.

¹¹⁰ Apollod. 1.6.3, cf. Burkert, *Structure and History*, 9; A. Ballabriga, "Le dernier adversaire de Zeus: le mythe de Typhon dans l'épopée grecque archaïque," *RHR* 207 (1990) 3-30.

¹¹¹ Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon*, 450f.

¹¹² Cilicia: Pind. *P.* 1.17, 8.16; Aesch. *PV* 351; schol. Pind. *P.* 1.31 (cave); Lucan 3.226 (cave). Corycus: Callisthenes *FGrH* 124 F 33; Pomp. Mela 1.76; Curt. Ruf. 3.4.10; Apollod. 1.6.2; Nonnos, *D.* 1.258; Hoffner, Jr., *Perspectives on Hittite Civilization: Selected Writings of Hans Gustav Güterbock*, 41 (photos of cave).

¹¹³ Ph. Houwink ten Cate, *The Luwian Population Groups of Lycia and Cilicia Aspera During the Hellenistic Period* (Leiden, 1961) 203-15; H.C. Melchert (ed.), *The Luwians* (Leiden, 2003) 101-04 (by T.R. Bryce).

the meal. In other words, it links up with the first version of the Illuyankaš myth, whereas the versions of Apollodorus and Nonnus can be connected with the second version.¹¹⁴ Both versions, then, seem to have been current in Anatolia at the same time, just like the older Hittite versions.¹¹⁵ There remains the question why a Greek source combined the motif of the *kurša* with that of the defeat of Illuyankaš. The answer may well lie in the fact that both the *kurša* and the myth of Illuyankaš played an important role at the Hittite Purulli festival, the first as an important focus of the ritual (above), the latter as the myth of the festival.¹¹⁶

5. *The escape*

After Jason had managed to steal the Golden Fleece with the help of Medea, the couple escaped from Colchis with the Argonauts. But how did they do it? Our most detailed account from Greek sources is that of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*.¹¹⁷ His description

¹¹⁴ This important insight by Houwink ten Cate, *Luwian Population Groups*, 209 has been overlooked in subsequent discussions.

¹¹⁵ G. Beckman, "The Anatolian Myth of Illuyanka," *J. Anc. Near Eastern Soc.* 14 (1982) 11-25 at 24.

¹¹⁶ For texts and translation see Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 11; A. Ünal, "Der Mythos vom Schlangendämon Illuyanka," in O. Kaiser (ed.), *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, vol. III.4 (Gütersloh, 1994) 808-11; G. Beckman, "The Storm-God and the Serpent (Illuyanka) (1.56)," in W.W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, vol. I (Leiden, 1997) 150-1; García Trabazo, *Textos religiosos hititas*, 83-85.

¹¹⁷ Cf. U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos II*

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is brief, but, as we shall see, realistic:

Under the command of Medea's brother Apsyrtos, the angry Colchians immediately began to pursue them down the river Ister, and blocked off virtually every exit to the sea, except for two islands, which were sacred to Artemis. Here the Argonauts sought refuge. Negotiations were initiated, and it was agreed that Jason could keep the Fleece, but that Medea should stay behind in the temple of Artemis on one of the islands. Unhappy with this decision, Medea convinced Jason to take her home with him. Jason proposed to accomplish this by luring Apsyrtos into the temple and murdering him. Medea supported the scheme by sending false messages to Apsyrtos, promising to steal the Fleece and hand it back to him. Tempted by her treacherous offer Apsyrtos came to the sanctuary of Artemis at night and was jumped upon by Jason as he spoke with his sister. Medea quickly covered her eyes with her veil, to avoid seeing Jason hit her brother "as an ox-slayer strikes a big, powerful bull". Jason cut off Apsyrtos' extremities and "three times he licked up some blood and three times he spat out the pollution, as killers are wont to do to expiate treacherous murders". Deprived of their commander, the Colchians became easy prey for the Argonauts, who successfully defeated them (4.452-76).

The murder of Apsyrtos raises several questions. Working from this overview of the event, we will attempt to answer four interrelated questions: 1) how was the murder committed? 2) where did it take place? 3) who committed it? and 4) why was it committed?

Judging from his comparison to an ox-slayer, who was employed at sacrifices to stun the largest victims, oxen and the bull, by hitting them on the back of the head before

(Berlin, 1924) 191-6.

their throats were slit,¹¹⁸ Jason killed Apsyrtos by jumping upon him from behind. Although the Greeks had few objections against killing enemies in whatever way they could during the archaic period, in later times they condemned the idea of killing ‘by stealth’, and fiercely condemned such murders.¹¹⁹ The killers themselves also felt this social disapproval, which was reflected in the serious pollution attached to their act. So, to prevent the ghost from returning and avenging himself, they mutilated the corpse by cutting off the extremities, just as Jason cut off Apsyrtos’ extremities, and tied the severed parts round its neck and under his armpits.¹²⁰ It also was common for Greek murderers to lick up and then spit out the blood of their victims, as Jason did, in order to rid themselves of the *miasma* they had incurred.¹²¹ It is typical, furthermore, of the Greek mentality of the

¹¹⁸ G. Berthiaume, *Les rôles du mágeiros* (Leiden and Montréal, 1982) 18-9; F.T. van Straten, *Hierà kalá* (Leiden, 1995) 107-9; J. Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia. Attische Tieropferdarstellungen auf schwarz- und rotfigurigen Vasen* (Münster, 2002) 288f.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Parker, *Miasma*, 132-3 (stealth).

¹²⁰ On this ritual, which was called *maschalismos*, see most recently M. Teufel, *Brauch und Ritus bei Apollonios Rhodius* (Diss. Tübingen, 1939) 91-104; M. Schmidt, “Eine unteritalische Vasendarstellung des Laokoon-Mythos,” in E. Berger and R. Lullies (eds), *Antike Kunstwerke aus der Sammlung Ludwig I* (Basel, 1979) 239-48 at 242-3; R. Parker, “A Note on *phonos*, *thysia* and *maschalismos*,” *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 9 (1984) 138 (commenting on *SEG* 35.113); R. Ceulemans, “Ritual mutilation in Apollonius Rhodius’ *Argonautica*,” *Kernos* 20 (2007) 97-112. All literary sources on the ritual go back to the third-century BC grammarian Aristophanes of Byzantium fr. 412.

¹²¹ For spitting out of pollutions, see Parker, *Miasma*, 108, 133 note 111; Th. Oudemans and A. Lardinois, *Tragic Ambiguity* (Leiden, 1987) 183.

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post-archaic period that these actions were to no avail; Zeus decreed that not only Jason, but Medea as well would suffer countless pains despite their efforts at self-purification (4.557-61).

Apollonius made the killing even more abominable by situating it in a temple. For the Greeks, death of any kind within a sanctuary amounted to sacrilege. Indeed, in 426/5 B.C., it was decided that all existing graves, except for the tombs of heroes, had to be removed from Apollo's sacred island Delos. The scholiast on Euripides' *Medea* 1334, who seems to have only vaguely remembered this passage of the *Argonautica*, specifies that Apollonius situated the murder at an altar. If that really had been the case, the murder would have been even more horrible. Greek suppliants sometimes took refuge at altars to avoid death; murder at the altar was sacrilege in the extreme, therefore, and it was expected that the gods would severely punish the offenders. In myth, disasters were traced to such murders; in history, they were long remembered.¹²²

The scholiast will have made a mistake, because according to the Euripidean passage on which he was commenting, Medea killed her brother "near the hearth". Like

¹²² Cf. Parker, *Miasma*, 33 (death in temple), 182-5 (murder at an altar); Bremmer, "Walking, standing, and sitting in ancient Greek culture," in J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg (eds), *A Cultural History of Gesture* (Cambridge, 1991) 15-35 at 25; A. Pomari, "Le massacre des innocents," in C. Bron and E. Kassapoglou (eds), *L'image en jeu de l'Antiquité à Paul Klee* (Lausanne, 1992) 103-25; D. Steuernagel, *Menschenopfer und Mord am Altar. Griechische Mythen in etruskischen Gräbern* (Wiesbaden 1998); A. Maggiani, "'Assassinari all'altare'. Per la storia di due scheme iconografici greci in Etruria," *Prospettiva* 100 (2000) 9-18; L. Giuliani, *Bild und Mythos* (Munich, 2003) 203-8.

altars, the hearths of either private houses or cities - the sacred centres that symbolized the solidarity of the family and the community - were places where suppliants could expect protection.¹²³ Euripides probably pictured Apsyrtos at his ancestral hearth, as both Sophocles (fr. 343), and Callimachus (fr. 8) state that his murder took place at home. Like Apollonius, then, Euripides represented the murder as particularly sacrilegious. Both poets drew on a long tradition of such murders, since already in the *Odyssey* (3.324-5) Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra are portrayed as killing Agamemnon ‘at the (ancestral) hearth’.

Curiously, the mythographer Pherecydes (a perhaps older contemporary of Sophocles and Euripides), presents a rather different version of Apsyrtos’ death. According to him, Medea took the young Apsyrtos with her when the Argonauts fled from Colchis by ship. As her father Aeetes pursued them, she killed her brother and cut him into pieces, which she then threw into the river in order to delay her father’s pursuit. Roman authors, including Ovid, combined the various versions of the murder in innovating ways, telling of how Apsyrtos was killed in a battle at the mouth of the Danube and his limbs scattered over the neighbouring fields.¹²⁴ It is clear, then, that in the oldest sources available (Pherecydes, Euripides), it was Medea herself who killed her brother and that this tradition recurs in later sources.¹²⁵

But how old is this tradition? Wilamowitz suggested that the name Apsyrtos was

¹²³ Cf. Bremmer, “Walking, standing, and sitting,” 25.

¹²⁴ Cic. *Manil.* 22; Ov. *Trist.* 3.9.21-34, *Her.* 6.129-30, 12.131-2; Val. Flacc. *Arg.* 8.261-467; Apollod. 1.9.24.

¹²⁵ Later sources: Call. fr. 8 (probably); Strabo 7.5.5; Hermogenes 2.28, 31, 35; *Arg. Orph.* 1033-4; Steph. Byz. *a* 579.

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already included in the *Corinthiaca*, an epic credited to the early archaic Corinthian poet Eumelos. He based this supposition on the fact that Medea played a considerable role in Eumelos' epic and that Apsyrtos' name often was connected with the Apsyrtides Islands, near the Illyrian coast and within the Corinthian sphere of influence.¹²⁶ This etymology was so popular that in early Imperial times the grave of Apsyrtos could be shown to tourists passing the islands (Arrian, *Periplus* 6.3), and the sixth-century historian Procopius (*Bellum Gothicum* 2.11-2, 14) mentions that in his time the inhabitants of Apsaros, a city that once was called Apsyrtos, still claimed that the murder had taken place on the islands. Even if Wilamowitz' suggestion is correct, which is not at all certain, does that allow us to conclude that Medea's fratricide belongs to the oldest *strata* of the myth of the Argonauts?¹²⁷

As Fritz Graf has convincingly argued, originally Medea was a divine character, who functioned as iniatrix for Jason.¹²⁸ In support of his thesis we may perhaps compare Odysseus, whose voyage also displays unmistakably initiatory elements.¹²⁹ During his wanderings he stays for a while with Circe, who strongly resembles Medea as loving goddess and 'witch', and who is explicitly identified as the sister of Medea's father Aeetes

¹²⁶ Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* II, 193f. For a possible, if unlikely, Abchasian etymology of Apsyrtos, see G. Charachidzé, *Prométhée ou le Causase* (Paris, 1986) 335 note 3.

¹²⁷ Unfortunately, virtually all archaic Argonautic poetry has been lost. For a small fragment, though, see now *POxy.* 53.3698, mentioning Orpheus, Mopsos, and Aeetes.

¹²⁸ Graf, "Medea, the Enchantress".

¹²⁹ See Bremmer, "Heroes, Rituals and the Trojan War," *Studi Storico-Religiosi* 2 (1978) 5-38.

(*Od.* 10.137).¹³⁰ Did the poet of the *Odyssey* want us to see a connection here? This does not seem impossible, as he also supplies another clear initiatory pointer. Before Odysseus arrives at the Phaeacians, he is saved by Ino Leukothea, who gives him a veil. She has been persuasively compared to the ‘divine helper’ in folktales who assists the hero at a critical moment, as analysed by the great Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) in his classic study of the morphology of the folktale,¹³¹ but in his later study of the historical roots of the folktale Propp puts the helper and the object given by her in an explicitly initiatory context.¹³² And indeed, Ino Leukothea still functioned as an initiatory goddess in historical times.¹³³ As the poet of the *Odyssey* clearly knew the myth of the Argonauts,¹³⁴ the parallel between Circe and Medea is a further argument for Graf’s view of Medea as an

¹³⁰ For the resemblance between Medea and Circe, see G. Crane, *Calypso: backgrounds and conventions of the Odyssey* (Frankfurt, 1988) 142.

¹³¹ Cf. A. Heubeck *et al.*, *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey I* (Oxford, 1988) 282 (on *Od.* 5.333-4: by J.B. Hainsworth). ‘Divine helper’: V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 1928¹ (Austin, 1968²) 39-50.

¹³² I have used the French translation of this seminal work, which originally appeared in Russia in 1946: V. Propp, *Les racines historiques du conte merveilleux* (Paris, 1983).

¹³³ See the discussion by F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985) 405-6; Bremmer, “Transvestite Dionysos,” 189.

¹³⁴ On this much discussed problem, see most recently W. Kullmann, “Ergebnisse der motivgeschichtlichen Forschung zu Homer (Neoanalyse),” in J. Latacz (ed.), *Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung* (Stuttgart, 1991) 425-55 at 449-52.

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original initiatory goddess.¹³⁵ Apparently, Homer still realised the initiatory nature of Medea, just as other mythmakers of early Greece.¹³⁶

But if Medea was a goddess in the oldest *strata* of the myth of the Argonauts, she can hardly have been the murderess of Apsyrtos from the very beginning. Where, then, did the motif of the dismembering fratricide originate? It is noteworthy that a *maschalismos* is also found in Sophocles' drama about Achilles' murder of the Trojan prince Troilos,¹³⁷ which took place in the sanctuary of Apollo Thymbraios before the walls of Troy. Curiously, in the same sanctuary another *maschalismos* took place as well: here, snakes tore to pieces the priest Laokoon and his sons, literally so, as a late fifth-century, South-Italian krater illustrates. The motif, then, is at home at this sanctuary and may have been inspired by a kind of abnormal sacrifice.¹³⁸ Now we also know that on one of the early

¹³⁵ Note also that the encounter between Circe and Odysseus was the most popular theme on the vases of the Theban Kabirion, a sanctuary in which initiations took place: J.-M. Moret, "Circé tisseuse sur les vases du Cabirion," *Rev. Arch.* 1991, 227-66.

¹³⁶ Graf, "Medea," 39-43.

¹³⁷ Soph. fr. 623; for the myth see most recently E. Mackay, "Visions of tragedy: Tragic structuring in Attic black-figure representations of the story of Troilos," *Akroterion* 41 (1996) 31-43; G. Hedreen, *Capturing Troy* (Ann Arbor, 2001) 120-81; R. von den Hoff, "'Achill, das Vieh'?" Zur Problematisierung transgressiver Gewalt in klassischen Vasenbildern," in G. Fischer and S. Moraw (eds), *Die andere Seite der Klassik: Gewalt im 5. und 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Stuttgart, 2005) 224-46 at 228-34.

¹³⁸ For this suggestion and the connection of the two murders, see Schmidt, "Eine unteritalische Vasendarstellung"; E. Simon, "Laokoon," in *LIMC* VI.1 (1992) 196-201 at no. 1; A. Kossatz-

Etruscan vases Achilles is shown as cutting off the head of Troilos and so making his own flight possible.¹³⁹ Can it be that an archaic poem about the Argonauts borrowed a motif from the myths surrounding the Trojan War, just as Homer had borrowed from the Argonauts' myth?

Unfortunately, the oldest traditions do not explain why Medea killed her brother. It seems reasonable to presume that she used her dead brother to delay the Colchian 'posse', since this is the motive given for the dismemberment of Apsyrtos at sea in later sources. Admittedly, it has been suggested that the dismemberment of Apsyrtos served as a sacrifice to avert extreme danger at sea, but the fact that in the oldest tradition Apsyrtos was killed at home shows that this interpretation can be valid at most only for the later versions of the story.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, a 'realistic' reading does not explain why Greek myth either ascribed the fratricide to Medea or why it was a brother - rather than a sister, for example - whom Medea killed.

Our understanding of the murder, therefore, will be enriched by an examination of Greek attitudes towards the relationship between sister and brother.¹⁴¹ Brothers and sisters

Deissmann, "Achilleus," in *LIMC* I.1 (1981) 37-200 at no's 282-372 and "Troilos," in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 91-94.

¹³⁹ This is the suggestion of A. Lesky, in *RE* 7A (1948) 603f.

¹⁴⁰ *Contra* H.S. Versnel, "A Note on the *Maschalismos* of Apsyrtos," *Mnemosyne* IV 26 (1973) 62-3, considered as 'not very persuasive' by C. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies. Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (London, 1990) 286.

¹⁴¹ Cf. J.J. Bachofen, *Gesammelte Werke* VIII (Basel and Stuttgart, 1966) 157-86; C.A. Cox, "Sibling Relationships in Classical Athens: Brother-Sister Ties," *J. Fam.Hist.* 13 (1988) 377-95 at

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erected gravestones for one another, and Athenian grave reliefs regularly display a brother and sister standing together.¹⁴² As is so often the case with gravestones, the reliefs should not be taken as a reflection of real life but as a statement of the ideal relationship: the parents probably wanted to stress the closeness of their children. And as far as we can see, they generally succeeded in their attempts, as we regularly hear of close contacts between brothers and sisters. In the tragic history of Periander (ca. 625-585), as related by Herodotus (3.53); and in this form not impossibly his own invention,¹⁴³ the Corinthian tyrant, having failed to mend the rift between himself and his son Lycophron, finally sends Lycophron's sister in order to persuade him, hoping that she would succeed where he had continually failed. Around 500 B.C. Simichos, the tyrant of Sicilian Centuripi, was so impressed by Pythagoras' teaching that he abdicated and divided his goods between his sister and his fellow citizens.¹⁴⁴ In the fifth century, we may perhaps see as examples of

380-2 and "Sibling relationships in Menander," in A. Bresson *et al.* (eds), *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'antiquité à l'âge moderne* (Bordeaux, 2006) 153-8 at 153-6; M. Golden, *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens* (Baltimore, 1990) 121-35; J. Alaux, "Sur quelques pièges de la parenté. Soeurs et frères dans la tragédie athénienne," *Annali Scuola Normale Pisa* III 25 (1995) 219-42. In general: L. Davidoff, "Quello che è straniero. Inizia nel rapporto "fratello-sorella"," *Quaderni Storici* 28 (1992) 555-65.

¹⁴² P.A. Hansen, *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* (Berlin and New York, 1983) index, s.v. *adelphos/ê*; Golden, *Children and Childhood*, 125-9.

¹⁴³ See the fine analysis in C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *'Reading' Greek Culture* (Oxford, 1991) 244-84.

¹⁴⁴ Porph. *VP* 21.

the close bond between brother and sister the joy of recognition manifested between Electra and Orestes in Sophocles' *Electra* and the close cooperation between the same pair in Euripides' *Electra*, although in these cases the joy and the initiative seem to be more on Electra's part than on Orestes'. In the fourth century, Onetor's sister helped him to defraud Demosthenes (Dem. 31.11-2) and Dionysodorus asked his sister to visit him in prison before his execution (Lysias 13.41). A sister even committed suicide in grief at her brother's death (Lysias fr. 22). Such suicides may not have been as unusual in ancient Greece as one might expect; Callimachus (*Ep.* 20 = 32 GP) dedicated an epigram to a girl from Cyrene who committed suicide on the very same day as her brother had died.¹⁴⁵

The mourning sister is also a familiar figure in Greek mythology. In Xenocles' *Likymnios* (*TrGF* 33 F 2) Alcmene mourned her brother. The sisters of Meleager (below) mourned their brother until Artemis changed them into birds called *meleagrides*. And, of course, the sisters of Phaeton mourned him eternally, having been transformed into weeping poplars.¹⁴⁶ Greek myth also knew of other examples of a close contact between sister and brother(s). When Meleager had withdrawn from the battle around Pleuron, his sisters came to beseech him to resume fighting (*Il.* IX.584). Alcmene refused to marry Amphitryon unless he avenged her brothers' death (Apollod. 2.4.6), just as in Euripides'

¹⁴⁵ A. Ambühl, "Zwischen Tragödie und Roman: Kallimachos' Epigramm auf den Selbstmord der Basilo (20 Pfeiffer = 32 Gow-Page = *AP* 7.517)," in A. Harder *et al.* (eds), *Hellenistic Epigrams* (Leuven, 2002) 1-26, who also compares Theocritus, *AP* 7.662 = 9 GP; Diod. Sic. 3.57.5 (Selene and Helios); Ov. *Met.* 2.340-66 (Heliads).

¹⁴⁶ Meleager: Soph. fr. 830a; Ant. Lib. 2.6; Ov. *Met.* 8.542-6; Hyg. *Fab* 174. Phaeton: *SH Adesp.* 988; Ov. *Met.* 2.340-66.

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Trojan Women (359-60), Cassandra vowed to murder Agamemnon in vengeance for the deaths of her father and brothers. Hyginus (*Fab.* 109) relates the strange story of Priam's daughter Iliona, who raised her brother Polydorus as her own son and her real son by the Thracian king Polymestor as her brother. When, after the fall of Troy, the king gave in to the Greeks' requests to do away with the Trojan prince, Polymestor unknowingly killed his own son instead.

In Greece, this close contact between brothers and sisters must have continued even after the sister's marriage, seeing as how from Homeric times until the end of the classical age there was a close relationship between a man and his sister's son, for whom the uncle often served as a role model.¹⁴⁷ The interaction between brother and sister must sometimes have been so close that political opponents could successfully insinuate that they enjoyed an incestuous relationship, as in the case of Cimon and his sister Elpinice; similarly, young Alcibiades was accused of having entered his sister's house "not as her brother but as her husband".¹⁴⁸

In fact, brothers were supposed to guard the honour, and in particular the sexual honour, of their sisters. When the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus slighted Harmodius' sister by refusing, at the last minute, to let her act as basket-carrier in the Great Panathenaea

¹⁴⁷ For many examples, see my "The Importance of the Maternal Uncle and Grandfather in Archaic and Classical Greece and Early Byzantium," *ZPE* 50 (1983) 173-86 and "Fosterage, Kinship and the Circulation of Children in Ancient Greece," *Dialogos* 6 (1999) 1-20.

¹⁴⁸ Cimon and Elpinice: And. 4.33; Plut. *Cim.* 4.5-7; H. Mattingly, "Facts and Artifacts: the Researcher and his Tools," *The University of Leeds Review* 14 (1971) 277-97 at 285-7. Alcibiades: Lysias 14.28.

procession, Harmodius was sufficiently angered to murder Hipparchus.¹⁴⁹ We also find this concern for the sister's honour in myths. Troilos was ambushed by Achilles when he accompanied his sister to a fountain (above). When Alcmaeon, who first had married Arsinoe, tried to regain his wedding present to Arsinoe in order that he might give it to his second wife, Callirhoe, Arsinoe's brothers killed him (Apollod. 3.7.5-6). Events could turn out just as seriously when the sexual honour of the sister was at stake. Among the various versions current about the death of Alcibiades that Plutarch relates in his biography (39.5), is one that says that the brothers of a girl whom he had 'corrupted' killed him. We find this concern also in myths. When Agamemnon had killed the first husband of Clytaemnestra and married her against her will, her brothers, the Dioskouroi, came after him to rescue their sister (Eur. *IA* 1148-56). Having sacked Tenedos, Achilles pursued the beautiful sister of Tenes, who tried to defend her. The sister escaped, but Tenes was killed by Achilles (Plut. *M* 297ef). The Greek poetess Myrtis (*ap.* Plut. *M* 300-1) told the sad story of the chaste hero Eunostus, who resisted the advances of his cousin Ochna. She subsequently denounced him to her brothers, who became incensed and killed the innocent boy in an ambush. Equally tragic was the end of Apemosyne. When Hermes fell in love with her, she first eluded the god by outrunning him. To catch her, he spread fresh hides on the path she took home from the spring;¹⁵⁰ when she slipped on the hides, the god grabbed his oppor-

¹⁴⁹ Cf. B. Lavelle, "The Nature of Hipparchos' Insult to Harmodios," *Am. J. Philol.* 107 (1986) 318-31.

¹⁵⁰ In Greek and Roman myths, girls are particularly vulnerable to attack while they are fetching water, cf.. Bremmer and Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography*, 52 (with earlier bibliography); I. Manfrini, "Femmes à la fontaine: réalité et imaginaire," in Bron and Kassapoglou, *L'image en*

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tunity. When Apesymone told her brother about the rape, he, failing to believe her, kicked her to death (Apollod. 3.2.2).

It is only in the fourth century that we hear of brothers who fail their sisters. Diocles refused to find a husband for his widowed sister so that he could continue to exploit her services (Isaeus 8.36), and Olympiodorus let his sister live in poverty ([Dem]. 48.54f). In the latter case, the orator adds that she was “a sister of the same father and the same mother” to make the horror of the story greater. Timocrates was reproached for having “sold his sister into export” - that is to say, to have married her off to an inhabitant of Corcyra (Dem. 24.202-3). Is this story a sign of its times, an indication that the character of the family was changing and friendship was becoming more important than earlier periods? In any case, we should take into account that brother-sister conflicts are very rare in Greek myth.¹⁵¹ When Phalces murders his sister Hynetho, he does so unintentionally (Paus. 2.28.3) and when, in Euripides’ *Helen*, the priestess Theonoe opposes her brother, she is reconciled with him by the end of the play.

The close relationship between sister and brother is equally attested in contemporary Greece. Among the Sarakatsani, as elsewhere, a brother is expected to guard his sister against rape and insults. He also watches over his sister after his father’s death and she, in turn, provides him with new social and political connections by her marriage. Maniote folk laments even suggest that sisters would avenge their brothers when no male relative was available, or else bring up their own sons to fulfil this duty upon reaching adulthood.¹⁵²

jeu, 127-48.

¹⁵¹ As observed by S.C. Humphreys, *The Family, Women and Death* (London, 1983) 71.

¹⁵² Sarakatsani: J.K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage* (Oxford, 1964) 178f. Elsewhere:

Did the close relationship between brother and sister lead to conflicts of interest after her marriage? There are two cases in particular that reveal some of the tensions often suffered by a Greek married woman. Already in *Iliad* we hear of Meleager, who killed his maternal uncles during that most famous of all mythical hunts, the Calydonian boar hunt. Meleager's mother, Althaea, was so enraged by the deaths of her brothers that she cursed her son, and, at least in later versions of the story, committed suicide.¹⁵³ A different conflict is narrated by Herodotus (3.119), who tells of how the wife of Intaphernes,¹⁵⁴ after the arrest of her husband, children and near relatives, went to the palace (literally: the doors)¹⁵⁵ and kept up a lament.¹⁵⁶ Finally, the king allowed her to choose one prisoner to be saved. She chose her brother. When asked why by the surprised king, she explained: "I can always

J. Du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford, 1974) 157. Mani: G. Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices. Women's laments and Greek literature* (London and New York, 1992) 84-6.

¹⁵³ For a full analysis, see Bremmer, "La plasticité du mythe: Méléagre dans la poésie homérique," in C. Calame (ed.), *Métamorphoses du mythe en Grèce antique* (Lausanne, 1988) 37-56; see also R. Seaford, "The Structural Problems of Marriage in Euripides," in A. Powell (ed.), *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality* (London, 1990) 151-76 at 166f.

¹⁵⁴ For the wife's lack of name see Bremmer, 'Plutarch and the Naming of Greek Women', *Am. J. Philol.* 102 (1981) 425f.

¹⁵⁵ For the expression see S. West, "Croesus' Second Reprieve and Other Tales of the Persian Court," *CQ* 53 (2003) 416-37 at 434 note 91.

¹⁵⁶ For Intaphernes' downfall see C.W. Müller, "Der Tod des Intaphrenes," *Hyperboreus* 8 (2002) 222-31, reprinted in his *Legende – Novelle – Roman* (Göttingen, 2006) 309-35; S. West, "Croesus' Second Reprieve," 433-36.

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have another husband ... but in no way can I ever have another brother”.

This story is not unique; already at the end of the 19th century, scholars began to find parallels in India and Persia.¹⁵⁷ The oldest parallel is found in the *Jātaka* (1.7 [67]), a collection of stories about the former births of the Buddha, which might date to the last centuries B.C.¹⁵⁸ A woman whose son, husband, and brother are arrested, is allowed by the king to choose one of them to be saved and chooses her brother because “[another] son, o Lord, [I may find] in my womb; a husband by searching the street, but I do not see the place from which I could recover a brother”.¹⁵⁹ The fact that these words are a verse within a story told in prose leaves open the possibility that the verse originally belonged to an earlier tradition and was only later incorporated into the *Jātaka*. Such incorporation clearly has taken place in some versions of the Sanskrit *Rāmāyana*, which seem to quote the second half of this Pali verse. When Rama gets into a fight during the quest for his wife

¹⁵⁷ India: T. Slezák, “Bemerkungen zur Diskussion um *Sophokles, Antigone 904-920*,” *RhM* 124 (1981) 108-42 at 124 note 27 and Müller, *Legende – Novelle – Roman*, 319 note 28 have overlooked that C.H. Tawney, *Indian Antiquary* 10 (1881) 370-1 was the first to notice the resemblance between the Indian and the Greek examples, not R. Pischel, *Hermes* 28 (1893) 465-8

¹⁵⁸ Previous discussions of the Indian material have not taken matters of chronology and textual criticism into sufficient account. If I have made more progress in this respect, this is due completely to the advice of Hans Bakker and Harunaga Isaacson; see also Müller, *Legende – Novelle – Roman*, 319-31.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. V. Fausbøll, *The Jātaka together with Its Commentary being Tales of the Anterior Births of Gotama Buddha* I (London, 1877, reprint 1962) 306-8, tr. E.B. Cowell (ed.), *Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births translated from the Pali by Various Hands* I (Cambridge, 1895) 102-04.

Sita, he believes that his younger brother Laksmana has fallen in battle and he exclaims: “A wife could be [found] anywhere, even a son and other relatives, but nowhere do I see the place where is [another] brother born from the same womb”. The fact that this verse calls Rama’s brother a ‘brother of the same womb’ although he is only a half-brother, seems to support the decision of the recent critical edition of the *Rāmāyana* to relegate this version to the critical apparatus.¹⁶⁰ The reading accepted by the critical edition is indeed somewhat less pointed:

Of what use to me is the recovery of Sita, of what use is even my life to me, when I now see my brother lying down fallen in battle? By searching it is possible to find a woman equal to Sita, but not a brother like Laksmana, an associate, a comrade (6.39.5-6).

In their present form, the Indian examples are at least a few centuries later than Herodotus, although the possibility cannot be excluded that the *Jātaka* incorporated older material into its text. In any case, there is no proof that the Herodotean motif is to be derived from India.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Cf. the *Valmiki-Rāmāyana* critical edition, 7 vols (London, 1960-75) ad 6.39.5. For the close relationship between the two brothers see R.P. Goldman, “Ramah Sahalaksmanah: psychological and literary aspects of the composite hero of Valmiki’s *Ramayana*,” *J. Indian Philos.* 8 (1980) 149-89.

¹⁶¹ *Contra* R. Beekes, ““You can get new children...,”” *Mnemosyne* IV 39 (1986) 225-39 at 231-3; Müller, *Legende – Novelle – Roman*, 325-9.

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It is highly interesting to see that the motif recurs in the Near East in the Middle Ages.¹⁶² In the Persian *Marzuban-nama*, a collection of fables and anecdotes written between 1210 and 1225, we find the tale of a king named Zahhak, who has to feed two serpents that grow out of his shoulders with human flesh. One day, the husband, son and brother of a certain woman named Hanbuyi are seized for this purpose. Pitying the lamenting woman, the king allows her a choice of one of the three. After various considerations, she chooses her brother because, she says, she can marry again and have another son, but as her parents are separated she can never have another brother. When the king hears her story, he orders that her husband and son should be released as well.¹⁶³

Curiously, we find a close parallel in a story of the notorious Umayyadic governor al-Hajjāj (died 714 A.D.) in a roughly contemporaneous, mid-eleventh-century Arabic anthology. After the governor had arrested the husband, son and brother of a certain woman she was allowed to choose one of them to be spared. She answered: “My husband? I shall find another. My son? I shall again be a mother. But I shall never find again my brother”. Because of her eloquent answer in rhyming prose (the Arabic has *al-zawj mawjûd, wa-l-ibn*

¹⁶² For other examples see U. Masing, “Bruder eher als Gatten oder Sohn gerettet,” in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 2 (1976) 861-4; C. Tuplin, “Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*: education and fiction,” in A. Sommerstein and C. Atherton (eds), *Education in Greek Fiction* (Bari, 1997) 64-163 at 128-9; W. Hansen, *Ariadne’s thread: a guide to international tales found in classical literature* (Ithaca, 2002) 62-66.

¹⁶³ Sa’d al-Din Varavini, *The Marzubān-nāma*, ed. Mirzā Muhammad of Qazwin (London, 1909) tr. R. Levy, *The Tales of Marzuban* (London, 1959) 16f. The parallel was first noted by Th. Nöldeke, *Hermes* 29 (1894) 155f.

mawlûd, wa-l-akh mafqûd) the governor released all three prisoners.¹⁶⁴ Being so close in time and space these two stories must be connected, but, unfortunately, we can no longer trace the paths along which these stories travelled. An oral tradition, though, seems more than likely.

Before we think of a connection between the Herodotean passage and the Indian, Persian and Arabic parallels, we should note that the motif also is popular elsewhere. In West Africa, the following problem has been recorded:

During a crossing of a river, a proah capsizes. On it was a man with his sister, wife and mother-in-law, none of the latter being able to swim. Whom did he save?

Interestingly, the following comments are added:

If you save your sister and let your wife drown, you have to pay a new dowry. If you save your wife and abandon your sister, your parents will strongly reproach you. But if you choose to save your mother-in-law, you are an idiot!¹⁶⁵

Just as conflicts between natal and conjugal family must have been widespread, so, too, can

¹⁶⁴ I owe this parallel to Geert Jan van Gelder, who refers me to the following edition: Al-Râghib al-Isfahânî, *Muhâdarât al-udabâ' I* (Bûlâq [near Cairo], 1870) 225.

¹⁶⁵ D. Paulme, *La mère dévorante. Essai sur la morphologie des contes africaines* (Paris, 1976) 51-4.

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problems such as the one illustrated by Herodotus arise independently.¹⁶⁶

However this may be, there is widespread agreement that the Herodotean anecdote was echoed by Sophocles in his *Antigone* (909-12),¹⁶⁷ where Antigone bursts out:

The husband lost, another might have been found, and child from another, to replace the first-born; but, father and mother hidden with Hades, no brother's life could ever bloom for me again (tr. Jebb).

There is, of course, something incredibly poignant to her exclamation, as her brother is already dead. Moreover, the Athenian audience may not have approved of a girl who preferred her brother over her husband.¹⁶⁸ Yet would they strongly have disapproved of

¹⁶⁶ Note also the following altercation in Seneca's *De remediis fortuitorum* (the text was published in the *Rev. Philol.* NS 12, 1888) 118-27 at 127): *S. Amisi uxorem bonam. - R. Soror reparari bona non potest: uxor adventicum est; non est inter illa quae semel unicuique contingunt.*

¹⁶⁷ Cf. the detailed demonstration by Szlezák, "Bemerkungen zur Diskussion," 112-3; S. West, "Sophocles' *Antigone* and Herodotus Book Three," in J. Griffin (ed.), *Sophocles Revisited: Essays presented to Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones* (Oxford, 1999) 109-36. The passage at lines 904-20 has often been suspected, but its authenticity has more recently been stressed by Oudemans and Lardinois, *Tragic Ambiguity*, 186-7, 192; Griffith *ad loc.*; H. Lloyd-Jones and N.G. Wilson, *Sophoclea* (Oxford, 1990) 138, and, especially, M. Neuburg, "How Like a Woman: Antigone's 'Inconsistency'," *CQ* 40 (1990) 54-76.

¹⁶⁸ As is forcefully argued by C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Sophocles *Antigone* 904-920: a reading," *Annali dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli* 9-10 (1987-88) 19-35, "Assumptions and the creation

her choice?¹⁶⁹ The loyalty of Athenian males was first to their parents and kinsmen, only after that to their wife and children.¹⁷⁰ Would Athenian men really have expected their own sisters to behave differently? Real life must have posed great problems to Athenian wives more than once.

Having examined the brother-sister relationship, we now are in a better position to answer the question why myth presented Medea as killing her brother. At least three elements of the murder are noteworthy. First, our discussion of the Athenian sibling relationships has made it clear why it was a brother whom Medea murdered rather than, say, a sister or cousin. Whereas sisters would probably be friends with one another and brothers possible rivals, a sister's brother normally would have been the one member of the family who would serve as her protector after the death of her father. In other words, by killing her brother, Medea permanently severed all ties to her parental home. After the murder of Apsyrtos, there was only one way to go: follow Jason and never look back.

Second, the oldest layers of Greek myth deliberately polarized reality by representation of meaning: reading Sophocles' *Antigone*," *JHS* 109 (1989) 134-48 and "Sophocles' *Antigone* as a "bad woman"," in F. Dieteren and E. Kloek (eds), *Writing Women into History* (Amsterdam, 1990) 11-38.

¹⁶⁹ Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 163 unequivocally states that the women would have followed the ties of blood.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. K.J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 1974) 272, 302-3; M. Visser, "Medea: Daughter, Sister, Wife and Mother. Natal Family *versus* Conjugal Family in Greek and Roman Myths about Women," in M.J. Cropp *et al.* (eds), *Greek Tragedy and Its Legacy. Essays presented to D.J. Conacher* (Calgary, 1986) 149-65, with many

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ting Medea as having only one brother, although the modern ideal of a two-child family did not exist in ancient Greece. Third, considering that, among sibling relationships, the one between brother and sister was particularly close, we may assume that Medea's act evinced great feelings of horror on the part of the Greek audience. Indeed, just as the Greeks considered parricide such an appalling crime that the murder of Laios by Oedipus was virtually never represented on Greek vases, so we do not find a single certain artistic representation of Apsyrtos' murder.¹⁷¹

One feels somewhat uneasy in distinguishing between various kinds of murder, but it is clear that the Greeks considered infanticide less appalling than the murder of adults. The former did not incur the same taboos or penalties, since it disturbed society to a much lesser extent; in fact, exposure, which often amounted to infanticide, was a normal Greek practice.¹⁷² This difference may well explain why already at an early stage some mythmakers, who must have felt bothered about the fratricide, tried to make the murder less horrible by presenting Apsyrtos as a child. Sophocles (fr. 343) calls him a boy and Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 F 32) relates that Medea took him, small as he was, from his bed,

perceptive observations on the myth of Medea.

¹⁷¹ Parricide: Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London, 1987) 49. Apsyrtos: C. Clairmont, "Apsyrtos," in *LIMC* II.1 (1984) 467 and M. Schmidt, "Medeia," in *LIMC* VI.1 (1992) 386-98. For a possible exception see J. Oakley, "The Departure of the Argonauts on the Dinos Painter's Bell Krater in Gela," *Hesperia* 76 (2007) 347-57.

¹⁷² The practice has often been discussed. See most recently, with extensive bibliography, M. Golden, "The Uses of Cross-Cultural Comparison in Ancient Social History," *Échos du monde classique* 36 (1992) 309-31 at 325-31.

etymologising his name as *Axyrtos*, literally ‘unshorn’, and handed him over to the Argonauts to be killed. Even more clearly, Sophocles (fr. 546) states explicitly that Apsyrtos was only a half brother of Medea, being the son of a Nereid. Apollonius (3.242) also says that Apsyrtos was the son of a Caucasian concubine, Asterodeia, whereas Medea herself was the daughter of Aetes’ later official wife Eidiua.¹⁷³ In other words, some versions of the myth tried to ‘soften’ the murder by making it look more ‘innocent’ to Greek eyes. Not every mythmaker agreed, though. Although Apollonius makes Jason the murderer and not Medea, he still implicates her strongly in the killing, as Apsyrtos’ blood paints his sister’s silvery veil and dress red (4.474); similarly, in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (1389f.) the blood of her husband strikes Clytaemnestra, although Aegisthus is the actual murderer.¹⁷⁴

Our discussion of Apsyrtos’ murder has, I hope, illuminated the reason that Medea murdered her *brother*. This is not to say that the meaning of the murder is altogether crystal clear even now. It is still unexplained why an archaic poet let Medea kill her brother in such a particularly gruesome way. And why did Greek myth represent Medea as the killer par excellence? Is there a connection with the initiatory background of the expedition of the Argonauts?¹⁷⁵ The role of Medea in the myth of the Golden Fleece still poses many problems.

¹⁷³ In another archaic epic, the *Carmen Naupacticum* (fr. 7^B D = 6 B), Aietes’ wife has again a totally different name, Eurylyte (see note 10).

¹⁷⁴ This detail has to be added to other echoes of Agamemnon’s death in Apollonius’ epic, see R. Hunter, *The Argonautica of Apollonius* (Cambridge, 1993) 61 note 69.

¹⁷⁵ For this background, see Graf, “Orpheus,” 95-9 and “Medea,” 39-43.

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6. *The routes of transmission*

When we now look back, we can see that the myth of the Argonauts was made up from elements that may have reached Greece via, at least, two different routes. Walter Burkert has recently devoted an, as always, stimulating article to these routes: the ‘via fenicia’ and the ‘via anatolica’.¹⁷⁶ The latter must have been the route of the later ‘Royal Road’ of the Persians that went from Sardis to Susa.¹⁷⁷ The road was probably not newly constructed by the Persians, but made use of existing routes. It connected the Anatolian *hinterland* with exactly the Greek area where we first find those Anatolian ‘imports’ we have already discussed or touched upon: the scapegoat ritual (Chapter X), the Kronia festival (Chapter V), the myth of the Tantalids (above), and the temple of Kybele in Kolophon (Chapter XIV). When we see that Cyrus the Younger went straight from Sardis to Kelainai (Xen. *An.* 1.2.6-7), where the *kurša* had probably survived into the time of Herodotus (above), we realise the important function Phrygia must have had in these transmission processes. In fact, Phrygia was also famous for its wealth in sheep (Hdt. 5.49) and, as we already saw, its woolly goats. The contacts of Greece with Phrygia were early. Not only did Midas dedicate a throne at Delphi (Hdt. 1.14.2), but on two very early Corinthian vases, an aryballos of about 625 BC

¹⁷⁶ Burkert, *Kleine Schriften* II, 252-66. For Anatolia see now also M. Bachvarova, “The Eastern Mediterranean Epic Tradition from *Bilgames and Akka* to the *Song of Release* to Homer’s *Iliad*,” *GRBS* 45 (2005) 131-53.

¹⁷⁷ D.H. French, “Pre- and early-Roman roads of Asia Minor: The Persian Royal Road,” *Iran* 36 (1998) 15-43; see also the routes in V. Şakoğlu, “The *Anatolian Trade Network* and the Izmir Region during the Early Bronze Age,” *Oxford J. Archaeology* 24 (2005) 339-61.

and a hydria from 570-550 BC, we can see a character called *Phryx*, ‘Phrygian’, and on the famous François vase “some of the labels show phonological features which seem to point to “Phrygian”-type languages”.¹⁷⁸ But the Hittites were also not far away: the monument on Mt Sipylos, which the Greeks later identified as Niobe daughter of Tantalus, contains Hittite hieroglyphics.¹⁷⁹

The most southern point of Anatolian influence on this Ionian area was Miletus. This can hardly be chance. Colchis derived its name from a country that is called Qulha in reports of Urartian military expeditions of about 750 BC. The reports strongly suggest that it was located to the east of Trapezus.¹⁸⁰ Given the connections of Trapezus with Miletus and the production of the poem(s?) about the Argonauts by, most likely, a Milesian author,¹⁸¹ Miletus may have heard about the myths and rituals of its *hinterland* via its colonies, via traders that arrived along the land route and via traders that arrived from Cilicia and Cyprus.

Cilicia will have been one of the places of influence, as versions of the Illuyankaš myth had survived the breakdown of the Hittite empire in Cilician Corycus, perhaps by people closely associated with the local sanctuary of ‘Zeus’. Now the name Typhon is

¹⁷⁸ R. Wachter, “The Inscriptions on the François Vase,” *MH* 48 (1991) 86-113 at 93-5 and *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions* (Oxford, 2001) 324-5; E. Olshausen, “Phryges, Phrygia,” in *Der Neue Pauly* 9 (2000) 965-7.

¹⁷⁹ J.D. Hawkins, “Tarkasnawa King of Mira: “Tarkondemos”, Bogazkoy sealings and Karabel,” *Anat. Stud.* 48 (1998) 1-31.

¹⁸⁰ M. Salvini, *Geschichte und Kultur der Urartäer* (Darmstadt, 1995) 70f.

¹⁸¹ M.L. West, “*Odyssey and Argonautica*,” *CQ* 55 (2005) 39-64 at 58.

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related to Safon, a holy mountain in Northern Syria, to the north of Ugarit:¹⁸² this points to Phoenician influence, as has long been seen. Such influence should hardly be surprising. The sheer presence of Phoenician inscriptions, pottery and iconography in the region is remarkable,¹⁸³ and recent findings have even demonstrated the existence of several Luwian-Phoenician bilingual inscriptions in ninth-seventh century BC Kizzuwatna, the area of Corycus.¹⁸⁴ Unfortunately, we are not in a position to reconstruct exactly the 'via fenicia', and an influence from ports with a Greek presence, such as Al Mina,¹⁸⁵ also remains

¹⁸² See most recently C. Bonnet, "Typhon et Baal Saphon," in E. Lipiński (ed.), *Studia Phoenicia*, vol. V (Leuven, 1987) 101-43; J.W. van Henten, "Typhon," in *DDD*², 879-81; P.W. Haider, "Von Baal Zaphon zu Zeus und Typhon. Zum Transfer mythischer Bilder aus dem vorderorientalischen Raum in die archaisch-griechische Welt," in R. Rollinger (ed.), *Von Sumer bis Homer. Festschrift M. Schretter* (Münster, 2005) 303-37.

¹⁸³ For a very detailed survey of all the evidence see E. Lipiński, *Itineraria Phoenicia* (Leuven, 2004) 109-43; add N. Arslan, "Phönizische Funde aus dem Rauhen Kilikien," *Bull. Ant. Besch* 80 (2005) 1-6.

¹⁸⁴ J.D. Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, 3 vols (Berlin and New York, 2000) I.48-58 (Karatepe 1); R. Tekoglu and A. Lemaire, "La bilingue royale louvito-phénicienne de Çineköy," *CRAI* 2000, 961-1007 (Karatepe 2); note also A. Archi, "Kizzuwatna amid Anatolian and Syrian Cults," in De Martino and Pecchioli Daddi, *Anatolica Antica*, 47-53.

¹⁸⁵ For the highly debated nature of Al Mina see most recently J. Boardman, "Greeks and Syria: Pots and People," in G. Tsetschladze and A. Snodgrass (eds), *Greek Settlements in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea* (Oxford, 2002) 1-16; H.G. Niemeyer, "Phoenician or Greek: Is There a Reasonable Way Out of the Al Mina Debate?," *Ancient West & East* 3 (2004) 38-50; G. Lehmann, "Al Mina and the East. A Report on Research in Progress," in A. Villing (ed.), *The*

possible.

Opposite Cilicia there is Cyprus, which had close ties, however obscure their exact nature is, to Corycus.¹⁸⁶ Here the Greek alphabet was perhaps taken over from the Phoenicians, who had started to settle on the island from the second part of the tenth century BC onwards,¹⁸⁷ and here the author of the *Cypria* (1 D/B) learned the motif of the overpopulated earth that derives from the *Atrahasis*.¹⁸⁸ So, let us conclude our study of parallels and routes of transmission with one last example drawn from this island. One of the most striking parts of Athena's aegis was the head of the Gorgo Medusa, which had been cut off by Perseus,¹⁸⁹ another hero with strong Oriental connections, in particular with Cilician Tarsos.¹⁹⁰ Perseus' weapon was a *harpê*, the Greek word for sickle that probably derives from a West Semitic word for 'sword',¹⁹¹ probably another sign of the Phoenician influence

Greeks in the East (London, 2005) 61-92.

¹⁸⁶ See the discussion by Lightfoot, *Parthenius*, 183-85.

¹⁸⁷ Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis*, 18 (alphabet); Lipiński, *Itineraria Phoenicia*, 37-107 (a wide-ranging survey of the 'Phoenician expansion in Cyprus').

¹⁸⁸ Burkert, *Orientalizing Revolution*, 100-04.

¹⁸⁹ L.J. Roccas, "Perseus," in *LIMC* VII.1 (1994) 332-48 at no's 28-80, 87-150b; K. Topper, "Perseus, the Maiden Medusa, and the Imagery of Abduction," *Hesperia* 76 (2007) 73-105; G. Hedreen, "Involved Spectatorship. In Archaic Greek Art," *Art History* 30 (2007) 217-46 at 221-7.

¹⁹⁰ W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1983) 210 note 26 (coins).

¹⁹¹ Oriental connections: Burkert, *Orientalizing Revolution*, 83-85; add Pomp. Mela 1.64; P. Harvey, "The Death of Mythology: The Case of Joppa," *J. Early Christ. Stud.* 2 (1994) 1-14. Sickle: L. Robert, *Hellenica* 10 (1955) 12; Roccas, "Perseus," *passim*; N.V. Sekunda, "Anatolian

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on the island. After his victory Perseus put Medusa's head in a *kibisis*, a kind of hunting bag (*kurša!*), as vases clearly illustrate.¹⁹² As the word *kibisis* occurs virtually only in Perseus' myth and is a Cypriot dialect word of non-Indo-European origin,¹⁹³ this part of Perseus' myth must have come via Cyprus. It will be no surprise that precisely in the area of Southern Cilicia and Northern Syria representations from the ninth and seventh century have been found that strongly resemble the Greek Gorgo, one even on a shield.¹⁹⁴ The 'via fenicia' probably converged with the 'via cilicia' on Cyprus.

It is time to come to a close. The myth of the Golden Fleece is a stirring tale of murder, scapegoats, royalty, youthful love, treason and men behaving badly. It has also turned out to be a tale constructed out of motifs and elements from both Greece and the

War Sickles and the Coinage of Etenna," in R. Ashton (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Coinage from Turkey* (London, 1996) 9-17; M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997) 291 (etymology); M. Miller, "In Strange Company: Persians in Early Attic Theatre Imagery," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 17 (2004) 165-72 at 168-71.

¹⁹² Rocco, "Perseus," no's 139-41, 143, 145, 150ab; note also A. Hughes, "The "Perseus Dance" vase revisited," *Oxford J. Archaeology* 25 (2006) 413-33 at 426.

¹⁹³ Hesiod, *Sc.* 224; Alcaeus fr. 255.3 Lobel/Page= inc. auct. fr. 30 Voigt (possibly Perseus); Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 11 = F 11 Fowler; Call. fr. 177.31 (= *SH* 259.31), fr. 531 (seemingly nothing to do with Perseus); Apollod. 2.4.2; Hsch. κ 2600 (Cyprus); *Et. Magnum* 512; E.J. Furnée, *Die wichtigsten konsonantischen Erscheinungen des Vorgriechischen* (The Hague, 1972) 365 (non-Indo-European); West, *East Face*, 454.

¹⁹⁴ B. Gufler, "Orientalische Wurzeln griechischer Gorgo-Darstellungen," in M. Schuol *et al.* (eds), *Grenzüberschreitungen. Formen des Kontakts zwischen Orient und Okzident im Altertum*

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Orient. In the end, human nature knows no national or cultural borders.¹⁹⁵

(Stuttgart, 2002) 61-81 at 79.

¹⁹⁵ For advice and observations I thank Annemarie Ambühl, Douglas Cairns, Annette Harder, Sarah Iles Johnston and Ian Rutherford.