

Chapter 2

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Mythic Highways of the Megarid

Situated on the land bridge connecting the Peloponnese to the rest of mainland Greece, the ancient polis of Megara was in a position that was both privileged and perilous. With land and sea access to all points of the compass, Megara was well-placed to profit from trade and traffic passing from the Peloponnese to central Greece or from the Corinthian to the Saronic Gulf. Nevertheless, the strategic advantages of Megara’s position also worked against it, squeezed as it was on east and west by its competitive neighbours Corinth and Athens. Megarian territory itself was peculiarly porous, in that their enviable locale also meant that the Megarid was repeatedly penetrated by others. What was local for Megara was a highway for others, near and far, and the many wars that pitted the Peloponnesian states against Athens or Boiotia inevitably resulted in armies marching through the Megarid.¹

Early legends of Megara often stress the notion of the Megarid as a place of passage: people pass through, but they do not tend to stay (unless they die). Although we find the odd attempt on the part of the Megarians to claim at least a limited autochthony, even their

¹ See Legon 1981: 33–40; Smith 2008: 84–86. “The issue constantly before the Megarians was whether to encourage, aid, obstruct, or ignore this traffic, weighing such factors as friendship, profit, and security” (Legon 1981: 33–34). For a recent and nuanced study of the characteristics of the region of the Isthmus of Corinth and their impact on human development, see Pettegrew 2016.

royal dynasties seem to come from away. Of course, the tangled complex of Megarian legend was subject to pressures and distortions by the traditions of its more powerful neighbours, particularly the Athenians. But enough of the Megarian voice survives to suggest that even the Megarians themselves – as well they might – often saw their territory as a thoroughfare for others.

Megara between Dorian and Ionian

The first century geographer Strabo remarks on the Isthmus of Corinth as a natural and long-recognized boundary, which at the same time was the subject of frequent disagreement (the inescapable fate of all boundaries):

Since the Peloponnesians and Ionians were having frequent disputes about their boundaries, on which, among other places, Krommyonia was situated, they made an agreement and erected a pillar in the place agreed upon, near the Isthmus itself, with an inscription on the side facing the Peloponnesos reading: ‘This is Peloponnesos, not Ionia,’ and on the side facing Megara, ‘This is not Peloponnesos, but Ionia.’²

From the description, it seems that this vaunted pillar was situated in the area near Krommyon and the narrowest neck of the Isthmus. Aside from suggesting that boundary disputes stretched back to time immemorial, the story also implies that the division between the Peloponnese and the lands beyond the Isthmus was not purely geographic: there was a clear ethnic component to it as well. The fourth century BCE Attidographer Androtion also spoke of the pillar and the implied ethnic division:

There are other Iaones besides the Iones [i.e., Ionians]. For Androtion says that, after determining the boundary from [i.e., with] Lakedaimon they set up a stele (inscribed) as follows: “These (lands and peoples) are not Peloponnesos but Iaones”. And (the) Iones, from the other side, (set up a stele inscribed) in this

2 9.1.6; Loeb translation, slightly adapted.

way: “These (lands and peoples) are not Iaones but Peloponnesos”. As a result, some are on this side, others on that side.³

The story of the pillar is generally rejected as mythic, though Nicholas Jones marshals some arguments in favour of accepting the possibility of a kernel of truth behind it.⁴ Strabo tells the story in the context of his arguments – or rather, the arguments of the Atthidographers he is quoting – to the effect that at this point in the heroic age (roughly the time of the Trojan War), Megara itself had not yet been founded, the Megarid was controlled by Athens, and its inhabitants were considered to be Ionian (9.1.5). According to Strabo, when Attica was divided among the four sons of the Athenian king Pandion – Aigeus, Lykos, Pallas, and Nisos – the Megarid was awarded to Nisos as his share of the Athenian patrimony; he thereupon founded Nisaia, which became the Saronic port of the historical polis of Megara (9.1.6).⁵

Strabo reports the unanimity of the Atthidographers on this point, though he does record disagreement as to the actual extent of Nisos’ territory: “Now Philochoros says that his kingdom extended from the Isthmus until the Pythion, but according to Andron only as far as Eleusis and the Thriasian plain.”⁶ “From the Isthmus” (ἀπὸ Ἰσθμοῦ) is fairly clear: although the term “Isthmus of Corinth” has often been used loosely (both in antiquity and today) to refer to the entire land bridge stretching from the Peloponnese to the eastern

3 Androtion of Athens *BNJ* 324 F61b (*schol. Iliad* 13.685 (B); translation N.F. Jones). Cf. Androtion *FGrH* 324 F61a, which does not appear in *BNJ* (see the next note), and also Strabo 9.1.5.

4 Harding 2008: “The stele is, of course, a fiction and represents one of the most tendentious fabrications of the *Atthis*, created in blatant service of the Athenian claim to have ruled the Megaris” (49–50; see also Harding 1994: 189–191). Jones 2015 (*apud* Androtion *BNJ* 324 F60c, second paragraph and following). Unfortunately, this section of the *BNJ* entry on Androtion is problematic: F61a is missing, and the commentary that appears at F60c seems (from the second paragraph on) to be the commentary that was supposed to be attached to F61a. From personal correspondence with Professor Jones, I gather that the most likely source of this confusion was a problem with the upload to the *BNJ* site.

5 Myths of early Athens are confusing and contain doublets, including two Pandions and two Kekropses. This Pandion, father of Nisos, is the son of Kekrops; an earlier Pandion, said to be the son of Erichthonios, was father to Prokne and Philomela (see further below). Pausanias seems to conflate the two (1.5.2–4). Both Pandion and Nisos are in fact likely to have been Megarian heroes in their origins: as Robert Fowler puts it, “Nisos is self-evidently at home in Nisaia, and the story of exile and return of the other three brothers is a back-handed attempt to make Megara Athenian” (Fowler 2013: 482). See also Kearns 1989: 115–117, 188, 191–192; Harding 2008: 49.

6 Strab. 9.1.6 (Andron of Halikarnassos *BNJ* 10 F14; Philochoros of Athens *BNJ* 328 F107; *BNJ* 329 F2); translation D.L. Toye.

Megarid, the narrow neck at the western end was always thought of as the “true” Isthmus.⁷ Nisos’ kingdom thus reached beyond the heights of Geraneia, and no doubt included the Perachora peninsula.⁸ The eastern border was somewhat in dispute: the Athenian Philochoros allowed for an extension as far as the deme of Oinoe in the extreme northwest of Attica, while the Halikarnassian Andron drew the boundary further east at Eleusis and the Thriasian plain.⁹

To continue for the moment with Strabo’s version, which relies heavily on the Atthidographers: after the division of the Athenian kingdom (and its subsequent reconsolidation, over which Strabo passes in silence), the return of the Herakleidai resulted in the Doricization of many regions. When the Herakleidai attacked Athens, ruled by King Kodros at the time, they were defeated, but managed to retain the Megarid (Strabo does not offer any new definitions of its boundaries). They founded the city of Megara, magically turned all its Ionian inhabitants into Dorians, and then destroyed (instead of just repositioning) the pillar (9.1.7).¹⁰

In Strabo’s version, Nisos rules the Megarid as part of his Athenian paternal inheritance, and there is no sign of any group of distinct “Megarians” until after the Dorian takeover. Pausanias reports a more complex story, though one which still tends to privilege Athenian primacy and ownership, especially since he goes out of his way on more than one occasion to criticize the Megarian accounts of their own mythistory:

Next to Eleusis is the district called Megaris. This too belonged to Athens in ancient times, Pylas the king having left it to Pandion. My evidence is this; in the land is the grave of Pandion, and Nisos, while giving up the rule over the Athenians to Aigeus, the eldest of all the family, was himself made king of

7 See Pettegrew 2016: 15–16, 31, 38–39, 141–142.

8 On conflicting Megarian and Corinthian claims to the Perachora peninsula, see Hammond 1954; Salmon 1972; Legon 1981: 66–69; Smith 2008: 97.

9 See Taylor 1997: 22–23; Fowler 2013: 482; Jones 2016 (*apud* *BNJ* 328 F107). Philochoros’ boundary marker in the north and Andron’s in the south are not necessarily mutually incompatible, though Strabo seems to have seen them so.

10 See also Hdt. 5.76 (who awards a leading role to the Spartans); Strab. 14.2.6; Paus. 1.39.4–5; *BNJ* 487 F3.

Megara and of the territory as far as Corinth. Even at the present day the port of the Megarians is called Nisaia after him.¹¹

King Pylas, then, was king of Megara prior to Pandion's Athenian lineage taking over. Megara thus had presumably already been founded, though Pausanias has nothing more to say about its ruler Pylas in this context.¹² If we turn to (Pseudo-)Apollodoros for more detail, we discover that Pandion was driven into exile from Athens and, taking refuge with Pylas, married his daughter Pylia.¹³ When Pylas himself went into exile, the Megarian throne passed to Pandion as the Megarian king's son-in-law, and ultimately to Nisos, Pylas' grandson.

Between them, Strabo and Pausanias report three different versions of the foundation and/or refoundation of Megara:

[The Herakleidai] made an expedition against Attica. But being defeated in battle they retired from the whole of the land except the Megarian territory; this they occupied and not only founded the city Megara but also made its population Dorians instead of Ionians.¹⁴

Subsequently in the reign of Kodros the Peloponnesians made an expedition against Athens. Having accomplished nothing brilliant, on their way home they took Megara from the Athenians, and gave it as a dwelling-place to such of the Corinthians and of their other allies as wished to go there. In this way the Megarians changed their customs and dialect and became Dorians, and they say that the city received its name when Kar the son of Phoroneus was king in this land. It was then they say that sanctuaries of Demeter were first made by

11 Paus. 1.39.4; Loeb translation, slightly modified. Pausanias does not specify the source of his information, but this account seems to lean more towards the Athenian tradition. On Pausanias' account of Megara's mythic kings and heroes, and their connections with the physical spaces of the Megarian polis, see Bohringer 1980.

12 Pylas (Pylos, Pylon) appears later in Pausanias as the eponymous founder of Pylos in Elis and Pylos in Messenia (4.36.1; 6.22.5-6), but Pausanias provides no more detail about Pylas' dynasty. On the accounts of the foundation of Megara, see further below.

13 Cf. Paus. 1.5.3.

14 Strab. 9.1.7; cf. 8.1.2 and 14.2.6.

them, and then that men used the name Megara (“Chambers”). This is their history according to the Megarians themselves. But the Boiotians declare that Megareus, son of Poseidon, who dwelt in Onchestos, came with an army of Boiotians to help Nisos wage the war against Minos; that falling in the battle he was buried on the spot, and the city was named Megara from him, having previously been called Nisa. In the twelfth generation after Kar the son of Phoroneus the Megarians say that Lelex arrived from Egypt and became king, and that in his reign the tribe Leleges received its name... They say further that Nisos was succeeded by Megareus, the son of Poseidon, who married Iphinoë, the daughter of Nisos, but they ignore altogether the Cretan war and the capture of the city in the reign of Nisos.¹⁵

In one version, recorded by both Strabo and Pausanias, Megara comes into being in the aftermath of the failed Heraklid attack on Athens, and its population is Dorianized under the influence of Corinthians and other Peloponnesians who settle there. Scholiastic comments on Plato’s *Euthydemos* and Pindar’s *Nemean 7* state outright that Megara was an *apoikia* of Corinth.¹⁶ In the Megarian version, their city’s name was of much greater antiquity, having been named from the worship of Demeter in the time of the mythical Kar, some fifteen or sixteen generations before the Trojan War.¹⁷ The Boiotians, on the other hand, who claimed Megara’s eponymous hero Megareus for themselves, dated the naming of Megara to the generation of Nisos, immediately before the Trojan War. Pausanias does not explicitly state that his Megarian sources directly contradicted the Boiotians, though the implication is that they did.¹⁸

15 Paus. 1.39.4–6 = *BNJ* 487 F3 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F2a); in 1.41, Megareus is king by reason of his kinship with Nisos.

16 Ephorus *BNJ* 70 F19 = *schol. Euthydemos* 292e; Demon of Athens *BNJ* 327 F19 = *schol. Nemean Odes* 7.155b. Skymnos of Chios (*GGM* 1.216) asserts that the Dorians who settled Megara were mostly Corinthian and Messenian. See Legon 1981: 45. Parker 2011 (*apud Ephoros BNJ* 70 F19), citing Hanell 1934, argues that the cultic evidence shows that Dorian influence in Megara came primarily from Argos (note that Kar was a son of the Argive culture-hero Phoroneus).

17 On the mythic traditions about Megara’s royal dynasties, see Legon 1981: 42; Smith 2008: 93–97.

18 Liddel suggests the possibility that the Megarians themselves might have played up their Boiotian connections “for diplomatic reasons” (2007c *apud BNJ* 487 F3).

The hero Megareus deserves a word or two of his own, since not even the Megarians (or at least any of their extant records) claimed him as a native Megarian.¹⁹ In chapter 39 of Book 1, Pausanias reports the Boiotian account that Megareus, a son of Poseidon, came from Onchestos in Boiotia to assist Nisos of Megara in his war against Minos; he died in the war, was buried at Megara, and bequeathed his name to the city.²⁰ The Megarians evidently agreed that Megareus was a son of Poseidon and that he came to Megara in the time of Nisos, whereupon he married Nisos' daughter Iphinoë and ultimately succeeded to the throne. They seem to have rejected, however, the notion that Megareus died in the war with Minos and thereupon became a sort of eponymous “founder”.

Pausanias expresses his aggravation with the Megarian historians (and/or contemporary Megarians with whom he may have had conversations) for their refusal to acknowledge that Minos' war against Nisos resulted in the fall of Megara:

Not far from the tomb of Hyllos is a temple of Isis, and beside it one of Apollo and of Artemis. They say that Alkathous made it after killing the lion called Kithaironian. By this lion they say many were slain, including Euippos, the son of Megareus their king, whose elder son Timalkos had before this been killed by Theseus while on a campaign with the Dioskouroi against Aphidna. Megareus they say promised that he who killed the Kithaironian lion should marry his daughter and succeed him in the kingdom. Alkathous therefore, son of Pelops, attacked the beast and overcame it, and when he came to the throne he built this sanctuary, surnaming Artemis Agrotera (Huntress) and Apollo Agraios (Hunter). Such is the account of the Megarians; but although I wish my account to agree with theirs, yet I cannot accept everything they say... The fact is that the Megarians know the true story but conceal it, not wishing it to be thought that their city was captured in the reign of Nisos, but that both

19 I do not see on what grounds Liddel (2007c *apud* BNJ 487 F1) draws the conclusion that Megareus was the ancestor of Nisos and Skiron.

20 Cf. also Paus. 1.42.1; Skymnos of Chios GGM 1.216. Megareus' father is variously reported as Poseidon, Hippomenes, Apollo, Aigeus, Onchestos, and Zeus; see sources cited by Liddel 2007c *apud* BNJ 487 F3.

Megareus, the son-in-law of Nisos, and Alkathous, the son-in-law of Megareus, succeeded their respective fathers-in-law as king.²¹

What we are seeing, of course, is the rival use of myths of foundation and eponymy by all parties to establish historical claims about priority and primacy and righteousness. The differing versions reflect the efforts of both Megara and Athens, and to a lesser extent Boiotia and Corinth, to assert their competing claims not only to territory but also to the more intangible desiderata of *kleos* and *timē*.²² Since the Greeks tended to accept the legendary past as historical, myths of war and peace, of city-foundations, and of the heroic defeat of enemies and monsters could all be employed as charters to lay claim to prior rights, whether it be over a piece of land, a sanctuary, a religious rite, a water-source, a priestly office, or things even less palpable. The myths of Athens and Megara in particular are extensively intertwined and reflect no doubt the historical tensions between the two states over territories such as Salamis and Eleusis.²³ And myths are not purely charter: such stories were not created with the sole intention of using them as propaganda. Myths also serve as aetiology, and many of these stories may have developed as a way of accounting for the situation of historical Megara.

The significant point here is how many of these stories isolate Megara, and leave it caught between two solitudes. To return to the “famous pillar” (τὴν θρυλουμένην ἐν Ἴσθμῳ στήλην), Plutarch claims that it was actually erected by Theseus once he had conquered the Megarid and consolidated the Athenian state.²⁴ The story of the pillar in and of itself suggests that both Athens and the leading Dorian states of the Peloponnese saw the real divide between them and ‘the other’ as the narrowest neck of the Isthmus, next door to Corinth. Some reason had to be found to account for Dorian Megarians coming from the wrong side of the pillar, and a clash between the Ionian Athenians and the Dorian

21 Paus. 1.41.3–5 = *BNJ* 487 F14A (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F8a, F9). Cf. Nikandros *BNJ* 271–272 F8; Dieuchidas of Megara *BNJ* 485 F10 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 2 F8); Paus. 1.39.5.

22 See Hanell 1934: 35–48; Harding 1994: 18991; Higbie 1997; Liddel 2007c *apud* *BNJ* 487 F3; Fowler 2013: 481–482.

23 The dispute over Salamis in the Archaic period: Piccirilli 1974, Legon 1981: 137–140, Higbie 1997, Taylor 1997: 21–47, Smith 2008: 101; Megarian–Athenian relations in the fifth century: Legon 1981: 183–256, Harding 1994: 191, Smith 2008: 102–104; the dispute in the 350s and 340s over the sacred *orgas*: Legon 1981: 122–131, 285–290; Liddel 2007b, 2007c, and 2008. See also Beck, this volume.

24 *Thes.* 25.3; see Harding 2008: 50.

Peloponnesians in the time of Kodros offered an excellent aetiological opportunity, as did the version of Athenian absorption of the Megarid in the time of Theseus. Against these dominant versions, the Megarian account of an ancient foundation by Kar some four or five hundred years before the Trojan War found little traction outside of Megara itself.²⁵

Legend thus conflated the Megarians with their Ionian neighbours, leaving them betwixt and between, which was often to be their fate in the historical period.²⁶ It is possible that their natural sympathies may have lain with the Dorians of the Peloponnese (although such putative sympathies did not prevent them from having boundary disputes with Corinth).²⁷ Nevertheless, they were often compelled to throw in their lot with Athens and/or Boiotia. This was the case in 480 BCE, after the Battle of Thermopylai, when the Peloponnesians wanted to withdraw behind the Isthmus wall: the Megarians joined their voices to the Athenians in trying to persuade the Peloponnesians to fight first at Salamis, and then again at Plataia.²⁸

Heroes and Highways

Foundation accounts had a tendency to privilege the actions of others – Athenians, Spartans, Boiotians, Corinthians, Argives – in the creation of the Megarian state and the establishment of its culture. Naturally, many of these stories do not reflect the Megarian “regime of truth”. The (Athenian) stories of Theseus in particular emphasize the barbaric chaos that dominated the Megarid prior to his civilizing actions.²⁹ But other legends of the Megarid also speak to the passage of travelers through its territory, and in this case, most of the stories seem to be Megarian in origin. The fate of these travelers is generally not a happy one.

25 Even so, Kar, as a son of Phoroneus, had clear Peloponnesian (Argive) roots.

26 The Megarian dialect was essentially Doric, with some Ionicisms; see Buck 1955: 165-166; Liddel 2007c *apud* *BNJ* 487 F3.

27 See Beck, this volume, who cautions against reading too much into the “Dorianness” of the Megarians.

28 *Hdt.* 8.60a; 8.71-74; 9.7a. See Legon 1981: 165.

29 Other – putatively historical – accounts characterize sixth-century Megara as a chaotic and lawless place: see Forsdyke 2005. Of particular interest is the story that the Megarians attacked and killed a number of sacred ambassadors who were traveling through the Megarid (*Plut. Mor.* 304e-f; Piccirilli 1973: no. 6); cf. the Aristophanic caricatures of Megarians as uncivilized boors. On Alkathous as a civilizing figure in Megara, see Bohringer 1980: 9.

Pausanias clusters a number of these tales together in book 1 as he is describing the monuments of Megara (the fact that he is describing monuments is obviously responsible for the preponderance of death as a connecting motif):³⁰

There is also the tomb (μνημα) of Kar, son of Phoroneus, which was originally a mound of earth (χωμα γης), but afterwards, at the command of the oracle, it was adorned with mussel stone (λιθω κογχίτη).³¹ The Megarians are the only Greeks to possess this stone, and in the city also they have made many things out of it (1.44.6).

There is a citadel here, which also is called Nisaia. Below the citadel near the sea is the tomb (μνημα) of Lelex, who they say arrived from Egypt and became king, being the son of Poseidon and of Libya, daughter of Epaphos (1.44.3).

On the road to the Town-hall is the shrine (ἡρώον) of the heroine Ino, about which is a fencing of stones, and beside it grows olives. The Megarians are the only Greeks who say that the corpse of Ino was cast up on their coast, that Kleso and Tauropolis, the daughters of Kleson, son of Lelex, found and buried it, and they say that among them first was she named Leukothea, and that every year they offer her sacrifice (1.42.7).³²

There are legends about the rocks, which rise especially at the narrow part of the road. As to the Molourian, it is said that from it Ino flung herself into the sea with Melikertes, the younger of her children. Learchos, the elder of them, had been killed by his father. One account is that Athamas did this in a fit of madness; another is that he vented on Ino and her children unbridled rage when he learned that the famine which befell the Orchomenians and the supposed death of Phrixos were not accidents from heaven, but that Ino, the

30 This paper focuses largely, though not wholly, on the accounts of Pausanias, who provides the most direct comparison and commentary on Megarian and Athenian accounts; it does not purport to be an exhaustive study of Megarian mythistory.

31 Geraneian limestone.

32 See *BNJ* 487 F7 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F4a).

step-mother, had intrigued for all these things. Then it was that she fled to the sea and cast herself and her son from the Molourian Rock. The son, they say, was landed on the Corinthian Isthmus by a dolphin, and honours were offered to Melikertes, then renamed Palaimon, including the celebration of the Isthmian games (1.44.7-8).³³

*Cf. BNJ 487 F7a: Not far from Megara is a place called 'The Track of the Beauty', along which, according to the Megarians, Ino rushed down to the sea holding her child.*³⁴

Here is something else that I heard in Ereneia, a village of the Megarians. Autonoë, daughter of Kadmos, left Thebes to live here owing to her great grief at the death of Aktaion, the manner of which is told in legend, and at the general misfortune of her father's house. The tomb (μνημα) of Autonoë is in this village (1.44.5).

On going down from this sanctuary [of Artemis Agrotera and Apollo Agraios] you see the shrine (ἡρώιον) of the hero Pandion. My narrative has already told how Pandion was buried on what is called the Rock of Athena Aithyia (Gannet).³⁵ He receives honours from the Megarians in the city as well (1.41.6).

Not far from this is the grave (τάφος) of Tereus, who married Prokne the daughter of Pandion. The Megarians say that Tereus was king of the region around what is called Pagai of Megaris, but my opinion, which is confirmed by extant evidence, is that he ruled over Daulis beyond Chaironeia, for in ancient times the greater part of what is now called Greece was inhabited by foreigners. When Tereus did what he did to Philomela and Itys suffered at the hands of the women, Tereus found himself unable to seize them. He committed suicide in Megara, and the Megarians forthwith raised him a barrow (τάφον αὐτίκα ἔχωσαν), and every year sacrifice to him, using in the sacrifice

33 Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F3a; cf. also F3b.

34 Plut. *Mor.* 675e (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F4b).

35 On the Megarian coast; see also Paus. 1.5.3; 1.39.4 (cited above). See Fowler 2013: 482.

gravel instead of barley meal; they say that the bird called the hoopoe appeared here for the first time (1.41.8–9).³⁶

Farther on is the tomb (μνημα) of Eurystheus. The story is that he fled from Attica after the battle with the Herakleidai and was killed here by Iolaos (1.44.10).³⁷

On coming down from the citadel, where the ground turns northwards, is the tomb (μνημα) of Alkmene, near the Olympieion. They say that as she was walking from Argos to Thebes she died on the way at Megara, and that the Herakleidai fell to disputing, some wishing to carry the corpse of Alkmene back to Argos, others wishing to take it to Thebes, as in Thebes were buried Amphitryon and the children of Herakles by Megara. But the god in Delphi gave them an oracle that it was better for them to bury Alkmene in Megara (1.41.1).³⁸

Hard by is the tomb (μνημα) of Hyllos, son of Herakles, who fought a duel with an Arkadian, Echemos the son of Aeropos. Who the Echemos was who killed Hyllos I will tell in another part of my narrative, but Hyllos also is buried at Megara (1.41.2).³⁹

When you have gone down from this road you see a sanctuary of Apollo Latoios, after which is the boundary between Megara and Corinth, where legend says that Hyllos, son of Herakles, fought a duel with the Arkadian Echemos (1.44.10).⁴⁰

There is also a hero-shrine (ἥρωον) of Aigialeus, son of Adrastos. When the Argives made their second attack on Thebes he died at Glisas early in the first

36 See *BNJ* 487 F8 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F3).

37 Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F18.

38 See *BNJ* 487 F15 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F16).

39 Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F9.

40 Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F17.

battle, and his relatives carried him to Pagai in Megaris and buried him, the shrine being still called the Aigialeion (1.44.4).⁴¹

Adrastos also is honored among the Megarians, who say that he too died among them when he was leading back his army after taking Thebes, and that his death was caused by old age and the fate of Aigialeus (1.43.1).⁴²

*Cf. Dieuchidas of Megara BNJ 485 F3: Dieuchidas, in the third book of the Megarian Histories, says that the cenotaph of Adrastos is in Sikyon, but that he himself is buried in Megara.*⁴³

Near the shrine of the hero Pandion is the tomb (μνημα) of Hippolyta. I will record the account the Megarians give of her. When the Amazons, having marched against the Athenians because of Antiope, were overcome by Theseus, most of them met their death in the fight, but Hippolyta, the sister of Antiope and on this occasion the leader of the women, escaped with a few others to Megara. Having suffered such a military disaster, being in despair at her present situation and even more hopeless of reaching her home in Themiskyra, she died of a broken heart, and the Megarians gave her burial. The shape of her tomb is like an Amazonian shield (1.41.7).⁴⁴

They say that there is also a shrine (ἱεῖον) of the heroine Iphigenia; for she too according to them died in Megara. Now I have heard another account of Iphigenia... A sanctuary of Artemis was made by Agamemnon when he came to persuade Kalchas, who dwelt in Megara, to accompany him to Troy (1.43.1).⁴⁵

41 Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F7a; cf. also F7b.

42 Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F14.

43 *Schol. Nemean Odes* 9.30a. "The connection with Megara was an expression of Megarian patriotism and rivalry with the Sikyonians" (Liddel *apud* BNJ 485 F3, citing Hanell 1934: 97 and Jacoby *FGrH*; Piccirilli 1975: no. 2 F3).

44 See BNJ 487 F9 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F7).

45 See BNJ 487 F10 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F15). A few lines later Pausanias reports a sanctuary of Artemis, said to have been built by Agamemnon; he specifies that this took place when Agamemnon came to Megara to persuade the prophet

The Megarians have another citadel, which is named after Alkathous. As you ascend this citadel you see on the right the tomb (μνημα) of Megareus, who at the time of the Cretan invasion came as an ally from Onchestos (1.42.1).

Between this and the hero-shrine (ἥρῶον) of Alkathous, which in my day the Megarians used as a record office, was the tomb, they said, of Pyrgo, the wife of Alkathous before he married Euaichme, the daughter of Megareus, and the tomb of Iphinoë, the daughter of Alkathous; she died, they say, a maid. It is customary for the girls to bring libations to the tomb of Iphinoë and to offer a lock of their hair before their wedding (1.43.4).⁴⁶

There is also a sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros. On going down from it you see the tomb (μνημα) of Kallipolis, son of Alkathous. Alkathous had also an elder son, Ischepolis, whom his father sent to help Meleager to destroy the wild beast in Aitolia. There he died, and Kallipolis was the first to hear of his death. Running up to the citadel, at the moment when his father was preparing a fire to sacrifice to Apollo, he flung the logs from the altar. Alkathous, who had not yet heard of the fate of Ischepolis, judged that Kallipolis was guilty of impiety, and forthwith, angry as he was, killed him by striking his head with one of the logs that had been flung from the altar (1.42.6).⁴⁷

Beside the entrance to the sanctuary of Dionysos is the grave (τάφος) of Astykrateia and Manto. They were daughters of Polyidos, son of Koiranos, son of Abas, son of Melampous, who came to Megara to purify Alkathous when he had killed his son Kallipolis (1.43.5).⁴⁸

In the Town-hall are buried, they say, Euippos the son of Megareus and Ischepolis the son of Alkathous. (1.43.2).

Kalchas to accompany him to Troy, but the connection with Artemis suggests this may have been part of the Megarian tradition that Iphigenia died there.

⁴⁶ See Liddel *apud* *BNJ* 487 F6 on the confusion over the identity of Iphinoë; see also Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F13.

⁴⁷ Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F5.

⁴⁸ Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F11.

The Megarians have a council chamber which once, they say, was the grave (τάφος) of Timalkos, who just now I said was not killed by Theseus (1.42.4).⁴⁹

The Megarians have also the grave (τάφος) of Koroibos. The poetical story of him, although it equally concerns Argos, I will relate here. They say that in the reign of Krotopos at Argos, Psamathe, the daughter of Krotopos, bore a son to Apollo, and being in dire terror of her father, exposed the child. He was found and destroyed by sheepdogs of Krotopos, and Apollo sent Vengeance (Ποινή) to the city to punish the Argives. They say that she used to snatch the children from their mothers, until Koroibos to please the Argives slew Vengeance. Whereat as a second punishment plague fell upon them and stayed not. So Koroibos of his own accord went to Delphi to submit to the punishment of the god for having slain Vengeance. The Pythia would not allow Koroibos to return to Argos, but ordered him to take up a tripod and carry it out of the sanctuary, and where the tripod should fall from his hands, there he was to build a temple of Apollo and to dwell himself. At Mount Geraneia the tripod slipped and fell unawares. Here he dwelt in the village called the Little Tripods (Tripodiskos/Tripodiskoi). The grave of Koroibos is in the market-place of the Megarians. The story of Psamathe and of Koroibos himself is carved on it in elegiac verses and further, upon the top of the grave is represented Koroibos slaying Vengeance. These are the oldest stone images I am aware of having seen among the Greeks (1.43.7-8).⁵⁰

As we would expect, the graves (or monuments) of the legendary kings of Megara, Kar and Lelex, were to be found in Megarian territory, as were those of Pandion and Megareus, as we saw above.⁵¹ The children of Megarian kings also had prominent memorials: Alkathous' daughter Iphinoë and his sons Ischepolis and Kallipolis, and Megareus' sons Euippos and Timalkos. Alkathous himself had a *herōon*, used for the civic

49 See *BNJ* 487 F14B (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F8b).

50 Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F19. See Rigsby 1987.

51 It is clear from Pausanias' descriptions that in many cases where he mentions a *μνημα* he also means to imply a burial.

archives in Pausanias' day.⁵² One might have expected to find a memorial to Nisos (other than the eponymy of the port), but it does not seem that Pausanias' local guide showed him anything along these lines.⁵³

We also learn from these passages that, according to the Megarians, a surprising number of non-Megarian legendary figures were buried in Megarian territory. Leaving aside for the moment the fact that most of Megara's prominent kings also came from the outside (or, as may be the case with Pandion and Nisos, were co-opted by the more dominant Athenian version), we find connections with Boiotia, with Sikyon, with Argos, with Thrace, and of course, with Athens.

Alkmene, the mother of Herakles, and also his son Hyllos were buried in Megara.⁵⁴ In both cases it would seem that Megara was not their ultimate destination: Alkmene is explicitly said to have been on her way from Argos to Thebes. As for Hyllos, since he died in combat with the Arkadian Echemos, we must presume that his body was returned after his death from the Peloponnese to Megara. Herakles' cousin and tormentor Eurystheus also had a grave in Megarian territory, where he was killed by Iolaos as he fled from Attica.⁵⁵

The Amazon Hippolyta likewise had not intended Megara to be her final resting-point; she simply died there from grief after the debacle in Athens. Two of the unfortunate daughters of Kadmos and Harmonia had graves in Megara: Autonoë, because she could not bear to live in Thebes any longer, and Ino, because in her madness she apparently ran all the way from Orchomenos in Boiotia so that she could hurl herself and her child into the Saronic Gulf from the steep cliffs of the Megarid. Plutarch – that is to say, the Megarians – even identified the route along which she ran through Megarian territory. The Argive/Sikyonian hero Adrastos died on his way through the Megarid after the

52 Bohringer 1980 points to the close connection between many of the monuments and the political spaces of the Megarian state.

53 Paus. 1.19.4 locates a μνημα of Nisos near the Athenian Lykeion; Thucydides, however, using very vague language, may reference a monument or shrine of Nisos in Megara in the fifth century (4.118.4).

54 The fact that one of Herakles' unfortunate wives was called Megara would appear to be a coincidence.

55 Ps.-Apollodoros has him killed by Hyllos on the Skironian Way (*Library* 2.8.1).

expedition of the Epigonoï against Thebes.⁵⁶ Even Iphigenia was claimed by the Megarians.

Pausanias reports at length a foundation myth involving the legendary Koroibos of Argos. Tasked with seeking purification for himself and the city of Argos for having killed an agent of Apollo's vengeance, Koroibos traveled to Delphi. He was there instructed that he could not return to Argos and was instead to settle wherever he dropped the tripod that he had taken with him from the sanctuary. The tripod slipped from his grasp as he was making his way through Megarian territory, and he thereupon founded the settlement of Tripodiskoi/Tripodiskos. Koroibos received the special distinction of a grave in the Megarian agora.

Most, though certainly not all, of the famous graves in Megarian territory were thus graves of foreigners and exiles and wayfarers. Tereus, on the other hand, seems to have been adopted wholesale by the Megarians. According to the Megarian version of the myth, Tereus' kingdom was centered on Pagai, in the part of the Megarid bordering the Corinthian Gulf, whereas other sources place Tereus in Thrace or in Daulis (Phokis).⁵⁷ After raping his sister-in-law Philomela and then cutting her tongue out so that she could not tell his wife, her sister Prokne, Tereus suffered the terrible vengeance of the two women when they cooked up his young son and served him to his father at a banquet. In Ovid's poetic version in the *Metamorphoses*, all the players end up being turned into birds; in the less romantic tale reported by Pausanias, Tereus simply kills himself, and is given a hero's burial and sacrifices. Tereus seems a rather peculiar choice for full-on heroic expropriation:⁵⁸ at least Koroibos and Alkathous, even if imperfect, were civilizing heroes, killing monsters and founding communities. Tereus, on the other hand, like Thyestes, was primarily known for the terrible wrong he did to others and the terrible fate he suffered in return. Still, heroes are often beings who both do and suffer dreadful things: thence comes

56 Dieuchidas of Megara's claim that the Sikyonian monument to Adrastos was only a cenotaph, and that the hero himself was buried in Megara, suggests an ongoing rivalry over the claim to this particular figure; Herodotus' story of the seventh-century tyrant Kleisthenes' efforts to oust Argive Adrastos from Sikyon speaks to the same phenomenon of pursuing contemporary political rivalries and ambitions through the medium of legend (Hdt. 5.67-68). See also Hall 1999.

57 Thrace: Ovid *Met.* 6.424-674, Paus. 1.5.4, Ps.-Apollod. *Library* 3.14.8; Daulis: Paus. 1.41.8. Tereus, as a son-in-law of Pandion (I or II), had ties to Athens (and, arguably, to Megara).

58 Such a comment of course presupposes that the figure of Tereus was not in fact Megarian in its origins.

their power. Heroic sacrifices, moreover, might be intended as propitiation of a vengeful spirit.⁵⁹

Megara was in no way unusual in claiming the graves of heroes and heroines, including those from elsewhere (though Pausanias does make the observation that the Megarians were the only ones among all the Greeks to claim the body of Ino). On the contrary, this was a widespread phenomenon. Herodotus remarks that ever since the Spartans retrieved the bones of Orestes from Tegea, they went from victory to victory (1.68). As for the Athenians, they brought home the body of Theseus from the island of Skyros shortly after the Persian Wars, and buried it in the heart of the city, where the tomb became, as Plutarch says, “a sanctuary and place of refuge for runaway slaves and all men of low estate who are afraid of men in power, since Theseus was a champion and helper of such during his life, and graciously received the supplications of the poor and needy”.⁶⁰

Orestes and Theseus are just two of the more famous examples; every Greek city-state had heroic tombs they could point to. But it is striking how many of the legendary individuals in the Megarian tales are passing through Megara and either have no – or only a tangential – connection to Megara itself. On the one hand, this is of course an obvious sign that Megara has co-opted these figures, both as a means of propping up the Megarian side in rivalries with Athens, Boiotia, and others, and perhaps also, as Jonathan Hall suggests, as a way to create diplomatic links with other poleis.⁶¹ Megara was not the only state whose ‘local’ heroes came from somewhere else, and other states claimed some of the same individuals as the Megarians did.

Nevertheless, there does seem to be a curiously fitting symbolic reflection in these tales of the nature of the Megarid itself and its place in the mythic mind of the Greeks as primarily a place of passage. If we return briefly now to the kings of Megara, it seems that ultimately virtually none of them is Megarian. In an Athenian-coloured tale of Pandion and Nisos, this is hardly surprising: Emily Kearns has shown how these figures, originally Megarian, were pulled into the Athenian orbit by Athenian storytellers and historians. But even the

59 Ekroth (1999: 155) suggests that the replacement of barley with pebbles in the rites for Tereus is to be connected to “the particular circumstances connected with Tereus’ actions and his death”.

60 Plut. *Thes.* 36. See Kearns 1989: 47-53; Hall 1999: 50; McCauley 1999; Welwei 2002.

61 Hall 1999: 52.

legendary Kar and Lelex came from the outside, and though over time their descendants might be considered to be bona fide Megarian rulers, the truth is that we have very little in the way of actual stories about bred-in-the-bone Megarian kings.⁶² The sons and grandsons of Kar are simply nameless place-holders in the genealogical chart, just as Kar and Lelex themselves appear to be little more than eponyms of ethnic groups.⁶³

Kings such as (the Boiotian) Megareus and (the Eleian) Alkathous are more fleshed out in the tradition.⁶⁴ The Megarian tales of Megareus and Alkathous recognized both their non-Megarian roots and the loss of all their sons and hence the end of their dynasties.⁶⁵ Alkathous inherited Megareus' throne on the strength of his feat in killing the lion of Kithairon and through his marriage to Megareus' daughter Euaichme. The Megarians were apparently silent on the matter of the succession upon the death of Alkathous, but Pausanias fills in the gap:

Another sanctuary has been made here to Athene of Victory and another to the Athene of Ajax. The Megarian sacred officials say nothing about it, but I shall record what I suppose happened. Telamon the son of Aiakos lived with Periboia the daughter of Alkathous, and I imagine his son Ajax made the statue of Athene when he inherited Alkathous' throne (1.42.4).⁶⁶

62 Kar, as a son of Phoroneus, probably hailed from the Peloponnese, and Lelex came from Egypt (contrast the Athenian absolute insistence on their own autochthony: see Kearns 1989: 110-115).

63 Interestingly, Skiron is the one descendant of Lelex (Paus. 1.39.5) around whom genuine Megarian tales collected; see further below.

64 Alkathous, as a son of Pelops and Hippodamia, was a pre-Dorian Peloponnesian, probably associated with Elis (Theognis 1.774; Paus. 1.41.6; Piccirilli 1975: 41; cf. Liddel 2007b *apud* Dieuchidas of Megara *BNJ* 485 F10). The dominant version of Megareus is that he was of Boiotian origin, though if "Megaros" (Paus. 1.40.1) is to be identified with Megareus, Pausanias found at least one Megarian version in which he was as autochthonous as could be, being the son of Zeus and a local nymph (see Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F1, and cf. no. 6 F1; Liddel 2007c *apud* *BNJ* 487 F4). Megaros lived in the time of the flood: again the Megarians emphasize the antiquity of their own community. On Alkathous and the other kings of Megara see Seeliger 1893.

65 Megareus' son Timalkos, according to the Megarians, was killed by Theseus (a story which Pausanias vehemently rejects); his other son Euippos was killed by the lion of Kithairon (Paus. 1.41.4-5). Alkathous' son Ischepolis died in the hunt of the Kalydonian Boar, and his younger son Kallipolis died at his father's own hands (Paus. 1.42.4)

66 It is hard not to see the (clearly non-Megarian) story that Salaminian Ajax ruled Megara as yet another manifestation of Megarian-Athenian rivalry.

The last king of Megara was yet another foreigner: “When Agamemnon’s son Hyperion the last king of Megara was killed by Sandion in greed and arrogance, they decided no longer to have one king, but to select governors and obey them in turn.”⁶⁷ The story is a peculiar one: nowhere else is Agamemnon credited with a son named Hyperion, and the figure of Sandion is a complete cipher. It is true that other tales gave Agamemnon an attachment to the Megarid, as we saw above: the Megarians claimed that Iphigenia was sacrificed in Megara, and that Agamemnon built a sanctuary to Artemis there when he went to persuade the prophet Kalchas – who lived in Megara – to join the Trojan expedition.⁶⁸ Still, there is little to explain the impulse behind the creation of the figure of Hyperion and his reign in Megara, beyond perhaps a desire to create connections to the Argolid and/or to the legends of the Trojan War.

In spite of Pausanias’ complaints about Megarian chauvinism and their refusal to acknowledge certain truths, it seems that even the Megarians recognized the transitory nature of their royal dynasties, including the repeated passage of the throne to a foreign son-in-law. This recognition might account for the insistence on the twelve unbroken generations of Kar’s descendants. Their kings and founders were alien wayfarers, some of them exiles, as were so many of the other heroic figures associated with the Megarid. If one was to travel at all, at least by land, the highways of the Megarid were difficult to avoid, a reality that allowed the Megarians to claim the graves of so many legendary characters. But as a destination in and of itself, Megara held little appeal to the outside world, and the Megarians themselves, with apologies to the Beatles, would have seemed to be nowhere men living in a nowhere land.

67 Paus. 1.43.3. Pausanias does not specify that this story was Megarian in origin, and it is not included in Liddel’s compilation of anonymous Megarian historians (*BNJ* 487); nevertheless, the fact that it is told in the context of a Megarian account of their own constitutional development makes it likely that the story of Hyperion is a Megarian myth; Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F8. See Piccirilli 1975: 179 n. 43 for an obscure tradition of a later Megarian king called Klytios in the time of the Bacchiads.

68 Paus. 1.43.1 = *BNJ* 487 F10. Pausanias parses out the individual narrative elements, but it is likely that the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the Artemis sanctuary, and Kalchas were all part of the same mythic event. The dominant tradition has the sacrifice take place at Aulis in Boiotia, but there was an Athenian tradition that it occurred at Brauron (Kearns 1989: 27–33), and the Megarian story may have arisen out of competition with Athens (Liddel 2007c *apud* *BNJ* 487 F10).

Theseus – Bad Boy of the Megarid

This brings us now to one of the most famous of wayfarers through the Megarid: Theseus, the great saviour of Athens, emulator of Herakles, son of gods and kings, slayer of dragons, legislator extraordinaire, and creator of the Attic state. Aside from the stories around his conception, with their suggestion of the dual paternity of Aigeus and Poseidon, the first extended tale we have about him is his David and Goliath-style rite of passage as he made his way across the Isthmus from Troizen to Athens. As a somewhat more civilized figure than Herakles, Theseus' opponents, at least on this stage of his journeys, were mostly human rather than bestial, though he did have to deal with one particularly nasty pig (at least it had only one head and the regular number of limbs). The Krommyonian Sow may or may not have been considered to belong to the Megarid: earlier we saw that Krommyon's territory was right on the edge of the legendary boundary between the Peloponnese and the Not-Peloponnese.⁶⁹ But certainly within the Megarid was one colourful character who in the Athenian discourse branded it as a land of brigands: Skiron.⁷⁰

Theseus killed Skiron on the borders of Megara, hurling him onto the rocks. According to the prevalent account Skiron robbed passers-by. But others say that with arrogance and insolence (ὑβρεῖ καὶ τρυφῇ), he would stretch out his feet to strangers, order them to wash them, and would then kick out and push them into the sea as they did so.⁷¹

The Molourian rock they thought sacred to Leukothea and Palaimon; but those after it they consider accursed, in that Skiron, who dwelt by them, used to cast into the sea all the strangers he met. A tortoise used to swim under the rocks to seize those that fell in. Sea tortoises are like land tortoises except in size and for

⁶⁹ Strabo definitely puts Krommyon in the Megarid at the time of Theseus' adventures (8.6.22; cf. 9.1.1); see Smith 2008: 97.

⁷⁰ Strabo also puts Sinis/Pityokamptes in the same general area as Skiron (9.1.4).

⁷¹ Plut. *Thes.* 10.1 = *BNJ* 487 F1 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F6a); Liddel translation.

their feet, which are like those of seals. Retribution for these deeds overtook Skiron, for he was cast into the same sea by Theseus.⁷²

Theseus slew Skiron, the Corinthian, son of Pelops, or, as some say, of Poseidon. He in the Megarian territory held the rocks called after him Skironian, and compelled passers-by to wash his feet, and in the act of washing he kicked them into the deep to be the prey of a huge turtle. But Theseus seized him by the feet and threw him into the sea.⁷³

The myth of Theseus and Skiron is vividly linked to a notorious mythic and real highway of the Megarid: the Skironian Way. Skiron's very name means something that is "hardened", and may refer to the limestone of the cliffs that form the southeastern terminus of the heights of Geraneia as they plunge into the Saronic Gulf:⁷⁴

After Krommyon are the Skironian Rocks. They leave no room for a road along the sea, but the road from the Isthmus to Megara and Attica passes above them. However, the road approaches so close to the rocks that in many places it passes along the edge of precipices, because the mountain situated above them is both lofty and impracticable for roads. Here is the setting of the myth about Skiron and the Pityokamptes, the robbers who infested the above-mentioned mountainous country and were killed by Theseus. And the Athenians have given the name Skiron to the Argestes, the violent wind that blows down on the traveler's left from the heights of this mountainous country.⁷⁵

Today the Skironian Rocks are known as Kakí Skála, and the engineering of the roads and the railway that run along the coast here bear witness to the challenge of navigating this highway in antiquity.⁷⁶ Not until the time of the Roman emperor Hadrian was the road

72 Paus. 1.44.8 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F*4b); Loeb translation, slightly adapted.

73 Ps.-Apollod. *Epit.* E 1.2-3; Loeb translation, slightly adapted.

74 LSJ *σῖρον* (τό), *σκιρός* (ἄ, ὄν), *σκίρος* (ὁ); Hanell 1934: 40.

75 Strab. 9.1.4; Loeb translation, slightly adapted. Cf. also Diod. 4.59, who rationalizes the story by saying Skiron dispatched his victims at a place called Chelonē ('Tortoise').

76 See Legon 1981: 34-35; Smith 2008: 84.

sufficiently widened that chariots going in opposite directions could pass one another.⁷⁷ It was along this stretch of Megarian highway that the robber Skiron worked his wicked wiles, forcing passers-by to wash his feet and then kicking them off the rocks into the sea, where their remains were devoured by a monstrous tortoise. Theseus naturally made Skiron's punishment fit his crime: he flung the Megarian mugger from the Skironian Rocks, and presumably the tortoise made its last meal off its erstwhile benefactor.

The term “Skironian Way” is attested at least as early as Herodotus, who has the Peloponnesians breaking it up in order to block a Persian land advance across the Isthmus in 480 BCE.⁷⁸ Skiron's preferred method of murder – throwing people into the sea – probably reflected a very real fear of this perilous roadway, especially perhaps in stormy weather. But the Megarians put their own spin on Skiron:

The historians from Megara, attacking the legend and, according to Simonides, “waging war on antiquity”, say that Skiron was neither an insolent man nor a robber but that he was a punisher of robbers, and he was a kinsman and friend of good and just men.⁷⁹

To the Megarians, Skiron was thus a heroic figure, their own version of a saviour, who punished robbers and made the roads safe for others. Far from kicking random strangers into the sea, the Megarians claimed that Skiron was the one who was responsible for making the Skironian Way passable at all.⁸⁰

In Athenian versions of the tale, Skiron's genealogy is immaterial. For the Megarians, however, concerned to support the idea of Skiron as a local hero, his heritage, his marriage ties, and his posterity were all very important, so much so that contradictory accounts arose.⁸¹

77 Paus. 1.44.6 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F6b).

78 Hdt. 8.71-74. Nisos' patrimony was described by Sophokles as “the coast of Skiron” (Strab. 9.1.6; see Higbie 1997: 294).

79 Plut. *Thes.* 10.2 = *BNJ* 487 F1 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F6a); Liddel translation. See Fowler 2013: 482-483.

80 Paus. 1.44.10. Neither Jacoby nor Liddel (2007c) include this passage in the collection of fragments of unknown Megarian historians, but it is very clear that this is a Megarian story.

81 For Skiron as a cult hero in Megara, see Hanell 1934: 21, 40-45; his genealogies, Seeliger 1893: 34-36.

Kleson was born to Lelex, and to him Pylas, and to him Skiron, who married the daughter of Pandion. And later Skiron came to dispute the leadership with Nisos son of Pandion, and Aiakos arbitrated in the dispute, giving the kingship to Nisos and his descendants, while the leadership in war was to belong to Skiron.⁸²

For in fact Aiakos is considered the most righteous of Greeks, and at Athens Kychreus the Salaminian is honoured as a god and the virtue of Peleus and Telamon is known by everyone. Now, Skiron was son-in-law of Kychreus, father-in-law of Aiakos, grandfather of Peleus and Telamon, who were sons of Endeis, daughter of Skiron and Chariklo. Accordingly it is not likely, they say, that the best would enter into family relationships with the worst, receiving and giving the biggest and most valuable pledges. They say that this [the death of Skiron] took place not when Theseus first went to Athens, but that he later took Eleusis from the Megarians, having deceived its leader Diokles, and killed Skiron. And such are the discrepancies in these matters.⁸³

Some say that the Isthmian games were instituted in memory of Skiron, and that Theseus thus made expiation for his murder, because of the relationship between them; for Skiron was a son of Kanethos and Henioche, who was the daughter of Pittheus.⁸⁴

Theseus slew Skiron, the Corinthian, son of Pelops, or, as some say, of Poseidon.⁸⁵

Skiron is thus variously reported to have been a son of Pylas or a grandson of Pittheus, and to have been married to a daughter of Pandion or a daughter of Kychreus of Salamis. He also – like Lelex, like Megareus, and like Theseus himself – was said to have been a son of

82 Paus. 1.39.6 = *BNJ* 487 F3; Liddel translation.

83 Plut. *Thes.* 10.3-4 = *BNJ* 487 F1 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 5 F6a); Liddel translation. Cf. Paus. 2.29.9; Ps.-Apollod. *Library* 3.12.6.

84 Plut. *Thes.* 25.4 (Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F4a); see Fowler 2013: 483.

85 Ps.-Apollod. *Epit.* E 1.2.

Poseidon. The version reported by Pausanias bonds Skiron tightly to the Megarian royal family, making him the (only?) son of Pylas and through his marriage the son-in-law of Pandion and brother-in-law of Nisos. There came a time when the two brothers-in-law, Nisos and Skiron, disputed the right to the throne, but given the pejorative Athenian traditions about Skiron the robber, it is noteworthy that they sought a peaceful resolution to their rivalry. The pious Aiakos, ruler of Aigina, was asked to arbitrate between them, and Nisos was awarded the throne, while Skiron was granted the office of war leader.⁸⁶ And it was in his role as war leader, Plutarch implies, that Skiron met his fate at the hands of Theseus when the latter aggressively invaded Eleusis and took it from the Megarians.

Plutarch's genealogy makes Skiron a grandson of King Pittheus of Troizen and has him married to Chariklo, the daughter of Kychreus of Salamis. In the context of competing Athenian and Megarian mythic traditions, the Salaminian connection is significant. The daughter of Skiron and Chariklo, Endeis, was married to Aiakos, and bore him two sons, Peleus and Telamon. Skiron was therefore great-grandfather to two of the greatest heroes of the Trojan War: Achilles and Salaminian Ajax. It was evidently part of the Megarian argument that Skiron's noble family ties were enough in themselves to demonstrate that he was an upstanding and virtuous man.

The genealogical traditions link Skiron to Theseus, a connection that might actually have been hard to avoid, given the intertwined nature of Athenian and Megarian mythic claims to royal personages and territory. If Skiron was the son of Pylas and son-in-law of Pandion, then he was both Theseus' great-uncle and his uncle by marriage. If, on the other hand, he was considered to be a grandson of Pittheus, then he was Theseus' first cousin.⁸⁷ If Skiron was a son of Pelops, he was Theseus' uncle, and if, finally, he was a son of Poseidon, he could arguably have been Theseus' half-brother. Because the Megarian historians survive only in fragments, we cannot say whether they explicitly castigated Theseus for killing a kinsman when he dispatched Skiron, but it seems likely. It is not hard to imagine that Plutarch's information on Theseus' institution of the Isthmian Games – as

⁸⁶ Paus. 1.39.6: Σκίρωνι δὲ ἡγεμονίαν εἶναι πολέμου. See Piccirilli 1973: 246-249 (no. 6*).

⁸⁷ Ps.-Apollodoros (*Library* 3.15.5) reports a tradition that Aigeus was the illegitimate son of one "Skyrios", and it has been suggested that this should be amended to "Skiron" (Fowler 2013: 483); that would make Skiron Theseus' grandfather.

expiation for the murder of his kinsman Skiron – ultimately derived from a Megarian source.⁸⁸

Athenian and Megarian disagreements about Skiron extended beyond the question of whether he was a free-ranging bandit or a noble, even royal, war-leader. The Athenian cult of Athena Skiras, both in Attica and on Salamis, the settlement of Skira/Skiron on the borders of Attica and Eleusis, and the place-name Skiras in Salamis were all linked – by the Megarians – to their hero Skiron. Athenian accounts, on the other hand, unwilling to grant a Megarian robber such extensive eponymic power, claimed that a certain ‘Skiros’ was responsible.⁸⁹ He was identified as a seer from Dodona who came to assist the Eleusinians in their war with Erechtheus, founded the sanctuary of Athena Skiras at Phaleron, and was subsequently buried at Skira/Skiron.⁹⁰

Like Pandion and Nisos, then, the figure of Skiron is an important nexus in the complex of legends binding Athens and Megara together. It was obviously important to the Megarians to create a heroic impression of the much-maligned Skiron and a less than heroic impression of the insufferably perfect Theseus.⁹¹ In the Megarian versions, Theseus does not kill Skiron the bandit – no such person exists – but rather Skiron the duly-appointed war-leader and defender of homeland, in an apparently duplicitous attack on Eleusis.⁹² Theseus is moreover responsible for the death of Skiron’s son, Halykos, who fights at the side of the Dioskouroi to rescue Helen from the clutches of her raptor Theseus; Megareus’ son Timalkos is killed by Theseus on the same occasion.⁹³

88 Plut. *Thes.* 25; at the end of the chapter, Plutarch cites both Hellanikos and Andron of Halikarnassos, but it is not clear that he is ascribing this particular detail to them (see Higbie 1997: 281 n. 12).

89 Hdt. 8.94.2; Strab. 9.1.9; Paus. 1.1.4, 1.36.4; Harpokration *Lexicon sv.* Σκίρον = Piccirilli 1975 no. 1, F1; Praxion of Megara *BNJ* 484 F1; see also Piccirilli 1975: no. 6 F*14a. Cf. the scholiast’s remarks on Clement of Alexandria’s *Protreptikos* 2, 17 p. 302, 18–21 (= Piccirilli 1975: no 6. F*14b).

90 There is also Skiros, a mythical king of Salamis (Kearns 1989: 198), whom the Megarians also probably identified with Skiron (see Praxion of Megara *BNJ* 484 F1; Taylor 1997: 49–50 [conflating the names of Skiron and Skiros]; Fowler 2013: 483).

91 Perhaps this also accounts for Megarian claims of connections to Herakles? See Higbie 1997: 281–282.

92 Plut. *Thes.* 10.3. Skiron’s role in defending Eleusis resonates with the Athenian story of the seer “Skiros”, helping Eleusis against Erechtheus; it seems likely that this is one more example of conflation and/or an attempt at differentiation.

93 Plut. *Thes.* 32.6–7 = Hereas of Megara *BNJ* 486 F2 (Piccirilli 1975 no. 3 F2); Paus. 1.41.4–5, 1.42.4.

The story of the abduction of Helen leads to the observation that even the Athenians found it problematic to rescue Theseus' reputation when it came to women. The Megarian historian Hereas challenged Athenian attempts to soften Theseus' abandonment of Ariadne,⁹⁴ and Plutarch's rather shame-faced account of Theseus' *amours* may well reflect Megarian narratives of Theseus raping his way through the Megarid:

There are...other stories also about marriages of Theseus (περὶ γάμων Θησέως) which were neither honorable in their beginnings nor fortunate in their endings... For instance, he is said to have carried off (ἄρπάσαι) Anaxo, a maiden of Troizen, and after slaying Sinis and Kerkyon to have ravished (συγγενέσθαι βίᾳ) their daughters; also to have married (γῆμαι) Periboia, the mother of Ajax, and Phereboia afterwards, and Iope, the daughter of Iphikles; and because of his passion for Aigle, the daughter of Panopeus, as I have already said, he is accused of the desertion of Ariadne, which was not honorable nor even decent; and finally, his rape (ἄρπαγήν) of Helen is said to have filled Attica with war, and to have brought about at last his banishment and death...⁹⁵

Plutarch does not specify that any of these stories were part of a specifically Megarian tradition, but given that Sinis and Kerkyon – other foes of Theseus as he passed from Troizen to Athens – are involved here, and given the general anti-Theseus tone of Megarian historiography, it would not be surprising if at least some of them were. Earlier in his life of Theseus, Plutarch had reported quite a different version of Theseus' 'seduction' of the daughter of Sinis, where the precocious hero promises to treat her honorably: she sleeps with him willingly, and he then finds a husband for her.⁹⁶ This surely would have been the version more in keeping with the Athenian tradition about Theseus.

94 Plut. *Thes.* 20.2 = Hereas of Megara *BNJ* 486 F1 (Piccirilli 1975 no. 3 F1).

95 Plut. *Thes.* 29. Plutarch is critical of Theseus' behaviour with women, though the latter's feats in this realm probably were intended to establish a heroic masculinity on a par with Herakles'. See Piccirilli 1974: 415–422. The Megarian poet Theognis speaks of love (ἔρωσ) "destroying great Theseus" (2.1233).

96 Plut. *Thes.* 8.

The Greeks placed a considerable amount of weight on being ‘right’, or perhaps being ‘righteous’, in their interstate interactions, whether mythical or historical (and of course they made far less distinction between those categories than we do). Time and distance did not matter: if travelers through the Megarid were to be continually reminded that they were traversing the ‘Skironian Way’, it suited the Megarians that the eponymous villain be rehabilitated. The fourth-century BCE Megarian historians Praxion and Dieuchidas and Hereas fought against the dominant Athenian canon of the heroic Theseus civilizing the Megarid, as did their anonymous fellow-citizens, no doubt all the way down to Pausanias’ day.⁹⁷ It might be that none of their neighbours would have been convinced – both Plutarch and Pausanias were skeptical – but for the Megarians, this defiant expression of localism was one way of asserting their own distinctive identity against the overwhelming presence of the ‘other’, both pressing on their borders and traveling along their highways.

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⁹⁷ BNJ 484–487.

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