

## Chapter 3

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### **Megarian Myths: Extrapolating the Narrative Traditions of Megara**

Studying the local in the framework of localism is to study the parameters that constrain the lives and thoughts of people who conceive of themselves as belonging to a particular place. I am inspired by Conceptual Metaphor Theory,<sup>1</sup> where the physical structures of the brain that encode sensory-motor experience are recruited by the brain for cognition about all abstract things.<sup>2</sup> The local experience of individuals in their landscape and culture, much of this dependent on their home territory and mobility, is the source domain for their thinking about everything else, including places and people that are not present, and not part of their locale. The local referents and their dynamics – sensory-motor experience in the first place, but also geography, rituals, stories, institutions, ancestries, cuisine, economic activities, etc. – structure the thinking of those embedded in the locale and constitute an individual’s template of cognition.

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1 The importance of the local and local experience in Conceptual Metaphor Theory can be seen in the work of Z. Kövecses, e.g. “In many cases the ‘same’ bodily phenomenon may be interpreted differently in different cultures and that activities of the body (and the body itself) are often ‘construed’ differentially in terms of local cultural knowledge.[...] And yet, it seems to me reasonable to suggest that the kinds of bodily experience that form the basis of many conceptual metaphors [...] can and do exist independently of any cultural interpretation (be it either conscious or unconscious). They are products of the kinds of physical bodies we have. However, this is not to say that these products of the body cannot be shaped by local cultural knowledge” (2006: 42).

2 Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 255–258.

The embodied local experience of individuals was recognized as important in structuring their worldview long before Conceptual Metaphor Theory was formulated. In Henri Lefebvre's reading of Marx and Engels, social space – the human being's local environment – was “the outcome of past actions” but also “what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others.”<sup>3</sup> One's lived environment constrains the possibilities of life. In cognitive experiments earlier in the twentieth century, it was discovered that “virtually everything to which the organism has been exposed” produces an “internalized schema” that systematizes cognitive behaviour.<sup>4</sup> From several indicators in the cognitive and social sciences over the last 50 years, we maintain that the sensory-motor experience of the local environment is the material from which human cognition is built. Experience of the local is *the source domain par excellence*.

This study is an attempt to reconstruct what Hans Beck calls in this volume the “Local Discourse Environment” as it can be extrapolated from cults, sacred sites, and festivals, since these are places of memory, venues for the “dissemination and veneration of local traditions.” There are distinct features of the Megarian worldview or thought-world, and these assist in reconstructing the narrative traditions.

### **Megarian Duality: *entre deux terres et deux mers***<sup>5</sup>

A list of dualities or binary oppositions could be drawn up for any ancient Greek city, but I argue that the local Megarian worldview was particularly characterized by a duality that is in large part due to its peculiar geography and topography.<sup>6</sup> There were two pre-Greek founders; Kar was indigenous to Argos, son of the autochthonous first king of Argos, and grandson of the River Inachus; Lelex came from Egypt, was son of Poseidon and Libya, and great-grandson of Zeus and Io.<sup>7</sup> There are two acropoleis,<sup>8</sup> a feature not common in

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3 Lefebvre 1991: 73.

4 Nelson 1969. See also Restle 1961.

5 Muller 1984: 250, “Ces particularités de la Mégaride, entre deux terres et deux mers, expliquent la vocation commerçante plutôt qu'agricole de Mégare et l'importance qu'ont prise très tôt les voies de passage de son territoire.”

6 Muller 1984: 255.

7 Herda 2016: 78-82; Robu 2013-2014: 72; Paus. 1.39.

8 Danner 1997: 143; Legon 2004: 464; Paus. 1.40, 42.

Greek poleis but shared, notably, by Argos, whence Kar came to Megara,<sup>9</sup> and also by Dreros on Crete, Idalion on Cyprus, Melos, and Halikarnassos.<sup>10</sup> The acropoleis, Karia and Alkathoa, at the center of the city, are linked by the agora that stands in the valley between them, and divide the city into northern and southern districts.<sup>11</sup> Situated on the Isthmus of Corinth, the territory of Megara has a double opening to the sea,<sup>12</sup> containing ports both to the north on the Corinthian gulf (Pagai, Aigosthena) and to the south on the Saronic gulf (Nisaia). The northern ports link Megara especially to Boiotia, Phokis (Delphi), and, less importantly for the narrative traditions, to points West, and to Attica and the eastern Mediterranean world via the southern port. Hero cults located on the way to Pagai connect Megara to Thebes (Autonoë, Hyllos, Alkmene),<sup>13</sup> while those at Nisaia (Nisos, Lelex) link it to Athens and Egypt.<sup>14</sup> The main roads for land travel lead to Corinth in the West and to Attica and Boiotia in the East, linking Megara to the two largest regions of mainland Greece, the Peloponnesos and the Balkan Peninsula, containing its most formidable states.<sup>15</sup> East-west positionality is reflected also in cults and tombs, as the tomb of Kar, the Peloponnesian founder of Megara, is located on the coastal route to Corinth (Paus. 1.43).

Megara was involved in overseas settlement both in the West and in the East, with a shift occurring early, around 700 BCE, from activity in Italy to activity in the Black Sea and Propontis.<sup>16</sup> These activities would have magnified a Megarian's sense that their community was oriented towards important and powerful places both to the West and to the East. Megara was a necessary node in both maritime and land-based trade.<sup>17</sup> The main

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9 Robu 2013–2014: 72; Paus. 1.39.

10 Argos, s.v. *OEAGR*; Idalion, s.v. *PECS*; Wright 1992: 247. Melos, Cherry and Sparkes 1982: 53–56. Halikarnassos, Penrose 2016: 173.

11 Muller 1984: 252.

12 Muller 1984: 249.

13 The locations of the monuments in Megara mentioned by Pausanias are contested, as few have been identified archaeologically. Here I follow the placements given in Herda 2016: 118 (map by N. Farakias after O. Alexandri 1970: 24–25). For an alternative placement of the monuments, see Muller 1981: 210.

14 Nisos, for whom Nisaia is named, was king of Athens before Aigeus, and became king of Megara. Robu 2013–2014: 71.

15 Muller 1984: 251.

16 Herda 2016: 33, 66; Robu 2013–2014: 76.

17 Legon 2004: 462; Muller 1984: 250.

east-west road, from Corinth to Boiotia and Attica by way of Tripodiskos, and the north-south road connecting the ports, both pass unbroken through the agora.<sup>18</sup>

A Megarian's lived experience is conditioned by these dualities, and the resulting ambiguity. All dualities presuppose a third term, and this is the Megarian, who mediates and adjudicates among these competing forces. The various terms of these dualities were not considered equally by those living in Megara. The cults and associated narrative traditions of Megara indicate an orientation towards the north and east, and a general neglect of Corinth, while nevertheless engaging with the Peloponnesos through stories of Argos, Pylos, and the house of Atreus. Mt. Geraneia separates Megara from Corinthian territory to the West, and from a high point in Megara important features of the landscape of Boiotia (Kithairon, Helicon) and Delphi (Parnassos) were visible.<sup>19</sup> The stories associated with Geraneia are not related to Corinth, but rather to the origin of Megara and to Argos. In a foundation story additional to the one involving Kar and then Lelex, the eponymous hero/founder Megaros, child of Zeus and a Sithnid nymph (whose springs provide fresh water to Megara), escaped Deukalion's flood on Mt. Geraneia (Paus. 1.40). Koroibos of Argos gave a name to Tripodiskos, on the slopes of Geraneia, after being ordered by the Pythia to carry a Delphic tripod until it fell, and had his tomb in Megara, adorned by the most ancient Greek sculptures known to Pausanias (Paus. 1.43). The visual environment assisted in the avoidance of Corinth in Megarian myths, and the reason for this avoidance may have been the all-too-powerful influence of Corinth and the Dorians on Megara.<sup>20</sup> The Megarians did not hesitate to adopt the mythic traditions of their neighbours, as Peter Funke explained at the Megarian Moments conference, but under conditions of Corinthian and Dorian dominance, especially in the eighth and seventh

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18 See Figure 1; Muller 1984: 252-255.

19 Legon 1981: 22.

20 "The Megarians succeeded in averting complete absorption by Corinth [in the second half of the eighth and the early seventh centuries], but lost irretrievably a large portion of their domain [west of Geraneia]. Relations between the two states were poisoned for centuries to come" (Legon 1981: 60, see also 63-64). The hostilities with Corinth may have developed a pan-Mediterranean importance if Herda (2016: 61-66) is right that Megara sided with Eretria and Miletus against Chalkis, Corinth, Karystos, and Samos on the losing side of the Lelantine War. For anti-Corinthian hostility in connection with the Lelantine War, see Theognis 890-893: Οἱ μοι ἀναλκίης· ἀπὸ μὲν Κήρινθος ὄλωλεν, / Ληλάντου δ' ἀγαθὸν κείρεται οἰνόπεδον· / οἱ δ' ἀγαθοὶ φεύγουσι, πόλιν δὲ κακοὶ διέπουσιν. / ὥς δὴ Κυπελιδῶν Ζεὺς ὀλέσει γένος. Although Megara experienced recovery and great wealth in the mid-sixth century, it was forced, with Corinth, into the Peloponnesian League at the end of that century (Legon 2004: 463).

centuries, Megara asserted its identity by dwelling on its mytho-historical relations with Attica and Boiotia.<sup>21</sup> This forms the most noticeable duality in the local discourse environment found in the narrative traditions; figures from Athens and Thebes are a consistent presence in Megarian myths.<sup>22</sup>

### **Megara in the Middle and the Theme of Vicissitude**

Surrounded by these powerful neighbours, vitally aware of threats and opportunities arriving from the four cardinal directions, and bounded in a narrow, only moderately fertile plain between Mt. Geraneia and Mts. Kerata and Pateras on an isthmus belonging to the unpredictable god Poseidon,<sup>23</sup> Megarians could not escape the sense of being *in medias res*. The situation of Megara is not altogether different from the city-states of Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age, with their shifting allegiances<sup>24</sup> to the Hittites and Egyptians, situated on the trade routes between Egypt, the Hittites, and Babylonia. The very real vicissitudes of fortune to which Megarians were subject, especially aggression from the Athenians and Corinthians, has left its mark on the local discourse environment.

The poetry of Theognis is imbued with anxiety over and the experience of sudden changes in fortune.<sup>25</sup> Concerns about drastic forms of social mobility, violence, and deceit characterize the Theognidean worldview, as Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp pointed out at the Megarian Moments conference, and the Theognidean persona feels beset by different, overpowering forces coming from multiple directions. These concerns are found throughout the Theognidean corpus, but here I limit myself to the work of the Kynos-poet, Theognis.

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21 Figueira 1985: 116, 120.

22 A further motivation for this might be sought in Megara's joint colonial ventures with Boiotia (Robu 2013-2014: 66) and Ionian Miletus (Herda 2016: 70-76).

23 Paus. 2.1; See Robu 2013-2014 for the importance of Poseidon at Megara.

24 As the allegiance of Megara frequently shifted in the Classical period between Attica and the Peloponnesos (Legon 2004: 463).

25 Cobb-Stevens 1985. Herda dates Theognis to the mid-sixth century BCE.

One consistent concern of Theognis is that he, his friends, and his city stand at the brink of calamity, with poverty, exile, civil war, and conquest by external forces looming over them.<sup>26</sup>

‘Κύρνε, κύει πόλις ἤδε, δέδοικα δὲ μὴ τέκηι ἄνδρα (1080-1082b)  
ὑβριστήν, χαλεπῆς ἡγεμόνα στάσιος·  
ἄστοι μὲν γὰρ ἔθ’ οἶδε σαόφρονες, ἡγεμόνες δέ (1082a)  
τετράφαται πολλὴν εἰς κακότητα πεσεῖν.’

This city’s pregnant, Kyrnos, and I fear she might give birth!  
To a despicable man! Vanguard of harsh civil war.  
Because, while the townspeople still are sound, the brinksmen  
lead us off the edge into a mighty evil.

The city, the individual, and his partisans are prone to destruction and ruination, but not yet done for. A remedy is available – moderation of expectation and comportment<sup>27</sup> – requiring one to steer a steady course between competing forces coming from different directions.

‘Ἦσυχος ὡσπερ ἐγὼ μέσσην ὁδὸν ἔρχεο ποσσίν, (330-1)  
μηδ’ ἐτέροισι διδούς, Κύρνε, τὰ τῶν ἐτέρων.

Be safe like me and tread the middle path,  
and do not give, Kyrnos, the possessions of one to another.

Μηδὲν ἄγαν σπεύδειν· πάντων μέσ’ ἄριστα· καὶ οὕτως, (334-5)  
Κύρν’, ἔξεις ἀρετὴν, ἦντε λαβεῖν χαλεπόν.

Don’t try too hard. The middle is best of all. And this way,  
Kyrnos, you will have dignity, which is hard to take away.

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<sup>26</sup> Other poems in the Theognidean corpus sharing this theme are vv. 256-259, 944-947, 1209-1216.

<sup>27</sup> Cobb-Stevens 1985: 163.

Part of this posture is an abdication of power politics, a refusal to compete with those who strive for domination, because of the all-too-likely potential loss. This theme of vicissitude, the anticipation of inevitable reversals, was forged in the Megarian locale, which had seen significant losses of territory to Corinth in the second half of the eighth and in the seventh centuries, and to Athens in the late seventh and sixth centuries. Between and among these losses, Megarians experienced an anti-Corinthian, anti-aristocratic, pro-Athenian tyranny in the seventh century and a demagogic democracy in the early sixth.<sup>28</sup> Theognis clearly shows awareness of the losses to Corinth and the tyranny but may not refer to the loss of Salamis to Athens for chronological reasons.

Some poems of Theognis presuppose that the calamity has occurred, and Theognis is living with sore disenfranchisement in a ruined city.<sup>29</sup>

Πάντα τάδ' ἐν κοράκεσσι καὶ ἐν φθόρῳ· οὐδέ τις ἡμῖν (832-5)  
αἴτιος ἀθανάτων, Κύρνε, θεῶν μακάρων,  
ἀλλ' ἀνδρῶν τε βίη καὶ κέρδεα δειλὰ καὶ ὕβρις  
πολλῶν ἐξ ἀγαθῶν ἐς κακότητ' ἔβαλεν.

All our affairs have gone to ravens and ruin. And we cannot  
blame, Kyrnos, the blessed immortal gods,  
but violence, wretched greed, and heedlessness  
cast us from mighty good into evil.

The power group of Megara's oligarchic constitution has been displaced by those Theognis finds inferior, who must nevertheless be accommodated and feared.

Κύρνε, πόλις μὲν ἔθ' ἦδε πόλις, λαοὶ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι, (52-68)  
οἱ πρόσθ' οὔτε δίκας ἤιδεσαν οὔτε νόμους,

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28 Legon 2004: 464. Theagenes' first known policy was to sacrifice the cattle of the aristocrats, presumably to distribute the food to the poor, and he was allied to Kylon of Athens by marriage making Kylon Theagenes' son-in-law.

29 Other poems in the Theognidean corpus sharing this theme are vv. 846-849, 619-620, 666-682, 1012-1015.

ἀλλ' ἀμφὶ πλευραῖσι δορὰς αἰγῶν κατέτριβον,  
ἔξω δ' ὥστ' ἔλαφοι τῆσδ' ἐνέμοντο πόλεος. (55)  
καὶ νῦν εἰς' ἀγαθοί, Πολυπαΐδη· οἱ δὲ πρὶν ἐσθλοὶ  
νῦν δειλοί. τίς κεν ταῦτ' ἀνέχοιτ' ἐσορῶν;  
ἀλλήλους δ' ἀπατῶσιν ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι γελῶντες,  
οὔτε κακῶν γνώμας εἰδότες οὔτ' ἀγαθῶν.  
μηδένα τῶνδε φίλον ποιεῦ, Πολυπαΐδη, ἀστῶν (60)  
ἐκ θυμοῦ χρεῖης οὔνεκα μηδεμιῆς·  
ἀλλὰ δόκει μὲν πᾶσιν ἀπὸ γλώσσης φίλος εἶναι,  
χρῆμα δὲ συμμείξις μηδενὶ μηδ' ὀτιοῦν  
σπουδαῖον· γνώσει γὰρ οἰζυρῶν φρένας ἀνδρῶν, (65)  
ὥς σφιν ἐπ' ἔργοισιν πίστις ἔπ' οὐδεμία,  
ἀλλὰ δόλους ἀπάτας τε πολυπλοκίας τ' ἐφίλησαν  
οὔτως ὡς ἄνδρες μηκέτι σωιζόμενοι.

Kyrnos, this city's still a city, but her people are different  
who before now heeded not law nor custom,  
but wore goat skins round their flanks,  
and grazed, like stags, outside this city. (55)  
And now they are the noble, Polypaides. And those who before were good  
now are wretched. Who, seeing clearly, could have forestalled these things?  
They laugh as they prey one on the other,  
knowing the marks neither of evil nor of good.  
Make none of them your friend, Polypaides, these indwellers, (60)  
in your heart, for any reason;  
but pretend to be a friend, in speech, to all.  
Share your real affairs with none of them ever, therefore,  
else you would know the brains of dreary men, (65)  
that there is no honesty in their deeds, no honesty at all,  
but they love tricks, deception, and schemes  
so much that they are men who can not be saved.

Here is advice suited to vicissitude's valleys. The enemy is victorious, Theognis and his friends must change to suit the times, but never change their true selves. The reversal has



come due to the changeable nature of inferior men, always ready to shift allegiances and betray friends for personal advantage,<sup>30</sup> turning to one of the poles of geopolitical influence over Megara.

Another part of the posture Theognis adopts is a valorization of the parochial above the foreign, demonstrating one aspect of a Megarian particularism that many contributions to this volume address. Stuck in the middle of destabilizing forces conceived as external to his beloved city, Theognis highlights the importance of local experience.<sup>31</sup>

μήποτε φεύγοντ' ἄνδρα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι, Κύρνε, φιλήσηϊς· (333a-b)  
οὐδὲ γὰρ οἴκαδε βᾶς γίνετ' αὐτὸς ἔτι.

Do not ever give your trust to an exile, Kyrnos,  
since he is not the same as before when he comes home.

For Theognis, the local shapes the man, and since the returned exile now has another local experience shaping his outlook, he may not be constrained by the same standards of behaviour that made him trustworthy before. That non-local experience is a cause for suspicion, since it may be the source of unwanted innovations, and since it may suggest allegiance to those destabilizing outside forces.

Theognis bears witness to a certain aspect of the Megarian worldview; they are *in medias res*, and I mean this in the sense of being positioned in the middle, and also in the literary sense of being part of a story in progress, of which the Megarian was not the sole or primary author. Many of the narrative traditions one can detect in Megara are the result of attempts to appropriate the stories and heroes of Athens, Thebes, and Argos,<sup>32</sup> to cause Megara to play a role in those stories and make the stories relevant for Megarians. This is not due to any real chronological priority of those states or their traditions, but because of the great power of Attica, Boiotia, and the Peloponnesos relative to Megara. Alongside

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30 Cobb-Stevens 1985: 162.

31 Another poem in the Theognidean corpus that shares this theme is vv. 782-787.

32 Figueira 1985: 116, 120, on Athens; Herda 2016: 89-92 and Nagy 1985: 78, on Thebes; Paus. 1.39; 6.19, on Argos.

these adapted stories are stories indigenous to Megara, which demonstrate Megarian particularism.

### **Megarian Particularism**

Although the work of Theognis and the Theognidean corpus “transcended archaic Megara and its parochial factionalism,” and became a Panhellenic possession, they nevertheless are “the crystallization of archaic and early classical poetic traditions emanating from Megara,”<sup>33</sup> and represent a particular engagement with heroes and gods. The heroes and gods mentioned therein must have local importance, even if their selection by the poets who contributed to the *Theognidea* may have been conditioned by a desire for Panhellenic currency.

The divine and heroic landscape of the *Theognidea* is quite limited. The grouping of Apollo, Artemis, Zeus, and Leto is prominent as is appropriate for Megara, where Apollo is patron god,<sup>34</sup> having built the walls as a favour to Alkathous (772-82), and festivals to him give names to four of the months,<sup>35</sup> and where Agamemnon is said to have dedicated a sanctuary to Artemis.<sup>36</sup> Pythian Apollo was the Megarians’ oracular god, and he appears in this role in the *Theognidea*.<sup>37</sup> Apollo and the Muses feature prominently as patrons of the poets’ vocation.<sup>38</sup>

Zeus appears throughout especially because of the poets’ concern for justice,<sup>39</sup> and because Zeus is a god of reversals, who gives both success and misfortune.<sup>40</sup> He is a god of politics

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33 Cobb-Stevens, Figueira, and Nagy 1985: 1-2.

34 vv. 1-13, 119-122. Legon 2004: 465; Herda 2016: 27-28; But, see also Robu in this volume and 2013-2014: 76, for the importance of Poseidon alongside Apollo.

35 Herda 2016: 27.

36 *Theognidea* vv. 10-11; Paus. 1.43.

37 Herda 2016: 27-29, on Apollo Pythios; Theog. vv. 804-809.

38 vv. 14-17, 249-252, 759-764, 768-771.

39 vv. 282-287, 336-339, 372-381, 730-752, 850-853.

40 vv. 229-231, 585-590 (θεός for Zeus), 890-893.

(800–803) and pederasty (1344–9). He is also, with Apollo, a protector of Megara (756–8), and had a sanctuary in the city.<sup>41</sup>

Next in prominence is Hades and denizens of the underworld. Hades is mentioned by name seven times in the first book of *Theognidea*,<sup>42</sup> and never in the second, which is devoted to love poetry. This frequency is worth noting, as it is consistent with the dire nature of the poetic persona's concerns, and with the existential nature of the threats he perceives. Most of these are simple references to death in the phrase Ἄιδου δῶμα,<sup>43</sup> a motif that also explains the frequent references to other underworld characters and places, including Persephone.<sup>44</sup> The presence of Hades and Persephone may be especially appropriate to Megara because of its connections to the cult of Demeter and to the story of the abduction of Persephone. The first founder of Megara built the megaron to Demeter on the Karia acropolis (Paus. 1.40), on the easterly side of the nascent community, in the direction of Eleusis and Athens. Pausanias tells us that Demeter wandered through Megara while she was searching for Persephone (Paus. 1.43), and the Megarians were persistent in their claim on Eleusis.<sup>45</sup> Demeter herself does not appear in the *Theognidea*. Two references to Helios (996, 1182–3, a chief god of Corinth), single references to Dionysos (975) and Boreas (716), and eleven references to Aphrodite and/or Eros in the book of love poems complete the Theognidean pantheon.

Of the heroes who appear in the poems, some are distinctly Megarian and characteristic of the Megarian discourse environment, and some are Panhellenic. Alkathous, a Megarian founder-hero who built the city's walls with the assistance of Apollo and founded the second acropolis, is part of Megara's engagement with the Peloponnesos (but not with Corinth) and the Pelopids (house of Atreus), since he is a son of Pelops.<sup>46</sup> The poem is a

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41 Paus. 1.40 for the sanctuary of Zeus. The sanctuary of Apollo Pythios, the Pythion, was located on the acropolis of Alkathous (Paus. 1.42), and the temple to Apollo Agraios and Artemis Agrotera founded by Alkathous is located on the way out of town towards Tripodiskos and the Peloponnesos, whence Alkathous came to Megara.

42 vv. 243, 702, 725, 905, 917, 1013, 1123.

43 With the accusative sometimes elided and with four options for the genitive, responding, in part, to metrical considerations: Ἄιδου (Attic, e.g. 1013), Ἄιδεω (epic form, e.g. 1123), Ἄιδαο (epic form, e.g. 243), Ἄιδος (Doric, e.g. 917).

44 vv. 703, 973, and 1295 (book 2).

45 Figueira 1985: 120.

46 vv. 772–782; Paus. 1.42; Robu 2013–2014: 72.

Theognidean plea to Apollo to protect Megara from the Persians, just as he had helped Alkathous.

Myths of Thebes are central and prominent in Megarian narrative traditions,<sup>47</sup> and it is fitting that Kadmos appears early in the *Theognidea* (14). One of Megara's early kings, Megareus, son of Poseidon, came to Megara from Onchestos in Boiotia (Paus. 1.39). The Megarians laid claim to Ino, daughter of Kadmos, and her apotheosis into Leukothea. They say she threw herself and her son Melikertes into the sea on the coastal road from Megara to Corinth and emerged from the sea as a goddess first at Megara (Paus. 1.42-3). The importance of Leukothea at Megara, where there was a *herōon* for Ino in the agora and an annual festival, lies behind the enigmatic reference to a corpse calling the poet home (1229-30).<sup>48</sup> Another daughter of Kadmos died in Megarian territory; Autoñoë had her tomb in the village of Ereneia (Paus. 1.43). In the agora is also a tomb for Adrastus, who died in Megara after defeating Thebes (Paus. 1.43). The local traditions of Megara insinuate the city into the foundation story and greatest epic adventures of the Thebans.

Athens, too, is an important concern of Megarian narrative traditions, and there was contestation over the myth of Theseus, as there was over ownership of Salamis and the cult of Demeter at Eleusis.<sup>49</sup> Theseus appears in the love poems (1231-33), among Ilium and Oilean Ajax (not the Megarian), as one who was destroyed by love. Theseus is also present in the local traditions of Megara through the tomb of Hippolyta (Paus. 1.41) and stories of Skiros.<sup>50</sup> When Megareus, son of Poseidon, was king of Megara, Theseus, son of Poseidon, was king of Athens, and Megara had a relationship of dependence on Athens (Paus. 1.42). Athens more generally is present in the Megarian discourse environment through the shrine of Pandion of Athens, and through the stories of Kings Pylas and Nisos (Paus. 1.39).

The Panhellenic features of the *Theognidea* have a distinctly Megarian aspect insofar as they relate to the house of Atreus. While a reference to Agamemnon (10-13) is not out of place in the local traditions of any Greek city, this family provided to Megara the King Alkathous, brother of Atreus, in the generation before the Trojan War, and the King

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47 Herda 2016: 89-92; Nagy 1985: 78.

48 Nagy 1985: 78-81.

49 Figueira 1985: 116, §7 n.1 (Theseus), 120 (Salamis and Eleusis).

50 Apollod. *Epitome* 1.2-3.

Hyperion, son of Agamemnon, in the generation after it. Stories of Hyperion, last king of Megara before the oligarchic constitution (Paus. 1.43), are a local reflex of the Panhellenic narrative tradition devoted to nostoi and epigones. Theognis' reference to Agamemnon is in connection with Artemis, and Megarian tradition had it that Agamemnon dedicated a sanctuary when he stopped at Megara on the way to Troy (Paus. 1.43). This reference is parallel to his reference to Alkathous in connection with Apollo (772-82), since both heroes are invoked as evidence of previous divine beneficence in a plea for renewed aid. A reference to Nestor (713-16) might recall the Megarian tradition that their exiled King Pylas founded Pylos.<sup>51</sup> Other Panhellenic characters invoked by Theognidean poets, such as the Centaurs (542), Odysseus (1122-7, 1209-16), Oilean Ajax (1231-2), the Dioskouroi (1086-9), and Rhadamanthys (698-717), lack the local significance of Atreids. The extended reference to Sisyphus in the same poem (698-717) stands out as one of the few references to Corinth in the narrative traditions of Megara.

Here we have seen how the *Theognidea* engages both with the local discourse environment of Megara and with Panhellenic tradition. Megarian particularism is found also in the god Apollo Karinos, who appears only in Megara, and whose great antiquity and specificity to Megara is suggested by his association with the first founder Kar, and confirmed by his aniconic pyramidal cult statue (Paus. 1.44), located in the old *gymnasion* on the way out of town by the Gate of the [Sithnid] Nymphs,<sup>52</sup> towards Nisaia.

The tomb of Kar, on the less traveled, coastal, Skironian Way towards the Peloponnesos, is decorated with a fossiliferous stone (lacustrine limestone) found only in Megara,<sup>53</sup> a part of the maritime environment incorporated into the local material culture. As a final note on what is unique to Megara, the presence of good land for pasturing caprids combined with the agricultural poverty of the Megaris led to an agriculture and cuisine characterized by the cultivation of cabbage, onions, and garlic,<sup>54</sup> but with high-quality wool and unique textile products as cash crops.

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51 Apollod. *Lib.* 3.15.5; Herda 2016: 84.

52 Paus. 1.44; Larson 2001: 146; Herda 2016: 85.

53 Paus. 1.44; Herda 2016: 79. All limestone, which is very common in the Greek landscape, coastal and inland, is a geological consequence of shellfish.

54 Zenob. 5.8.

## Megarian Myths

I have attempted to incorporate my observations on localism, Megarian duality, vicissitude, and Megarian particularism into the following reconstruction of the narrative traditions of Megara from the beginning of time into the historical period of the eighth and seventh centuries.

The first man of Megara, Kar, was son of the autochthonous first man of Argos, Phoroneus. Phoroneus was son of the River Inachus and the Oceanid Melia.<sup>55</sup> Inachus himself was son of the Titans Oceanus and Tethys, as part of the sexual generation of the earth's geography.<sup>56</sup> A human grandchild of Titans, he should be associated with primordial humans Deukalion and Pyrrha, and, while it may be incorrect to associate these stories with the metallic ages of man, he may be associated with the Bronze Age, after Zeus had become king of the universe. A Megarian man, the eponymous Megaros, survived Deukalion's flood by fleeing to Mt. Geraneia. He was a son of Zeus and a nymph of the Sithnid springs of Megara, the city's source of fresh water.

Kar founded the eastern acropolis of Megara and the cult and temple (megaron) of Demeter there. He became the forefather of the people of the land, the Karians, who, as the Pelasgians and the Lelegians, were Prehellenic inhabitants.<sup>57</sup> The Isthmus of Corinth and the Megaris, but not Corinth or Athens, for which he also competed,<sup>58</sup> were possessions of Poseidon, and two scions of Poseidon, Lelex and Megareus, would serve as kings of Megara.<sup>59</sup> Two further sons of Poseidon, Sinis and Kerkyon, were malefactors in the neighbourhood of Megara, in the time of Megareus and Theseus. If we take seriously Apollodoros' claim (*Lib.* 3.14.1) that there was a particular period in mytho-historical time that the gods bid for patronage over cities, Poseidon's possession of the Megaris is contemporary with his bid for Athens in the time of its first king, Kekrops.

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55 The story of Phoroneus was told in the lost archaic epic called the *Phoronis*, and this early history is found in the sixth century Attidographer Akousilaos.

56 Apollod. *Lib.* 2.1; Inachus is left off the list of Rivers in Hes. *Th.* 337-345.

57 Herda 2016: 78-82.

58 Paus. 2.1.6; Apollod. *Lib.* 3.14.1.

59 Robu 2013-2014: 72.

Inachus was father also to Io, princess and priestess of Hera at Argos. Events related to Io, Zeus' lust for her, and the resulting progeny will occupy the eleven generations of local Megarian mythistorical time after Kar. In this time also Tereus, son of the Athenian King Pandion, died in Megara after committing suicide for his crimes against Prokne and Philomela (Paus. 1.41). Zeus' initial pursuit of Io leads to her wandering the earth as a cow being punished by Hera. Zeus reunites with her in Egypt, and fathers Epaphos. Epaphos fathers Libya, who mates with Poseidon, and gives birth to Lelex, Belos, and Agenor. Lelex comes to Megara from Egypt, very likely founds the port at Nisaia by disembarking there, and almost certainly founds the cult of Poseidon and the Poseidonion at Nisaia,<sup>60</sup> making Demeter and Poseidon the divine couple that oversaw Megara in the primordial age. Lelex becomes the forefather of the people of Megara, henceforth called Leleges. His son, Kleson, succeeds him to the throne, in the generation of Kadmos and Europa. In the generation after Kleson, the Danaids will return to Argos from Egypt, establishing the first Hellenic population, the Danaans.

It is in association with the generation after Kleson, and after Kadmos, that the mythology of Thebes appears in Megara. Kleso and Tauropolis, daughters of Kleson, are the discoverers of Ino, whose corpse washed ashore at Megara after she threw herself into the sea along the Skironian Way.<sup>61</sup> The Megarians witnessed her apotheosis as the White Goddess and were the first to worship her, in the same generation as Dionysos reached manhood and spread his cult in Greece. The Megarians had a sanctuary to him (Paus. 1.43.5) and to Ino/Leukothea (Paus. 1.42.7) in the agora, and another daughter of Kadmos, Autonoë, had her tomb in Ereneia (Paus. 1.43). The saga of Dionysos in Thebes and its aftermath thereby gains currency in the local discourse environment of Megara.

The next three kings following Kleson link Megara to Athens. Pylas, son of Kleson, succeeded him to the throne of Megara, and received Pandion, King of Athens, as a refugee when he was forced off the throne by the sons of Metion. Pylas gave his daughter Pylia to Pandion in marriage, and, when Pylas was forced into exile for killing his uncle Bias, Pandion succeeded him to the throne. Pylas went to the Peloponnesos and founded

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<sup>60</sup> Thuc. 4.118.4; Robu 2013-2014: 71.

<sup>61</sup> Paus. 1.42-43; Zenob. 4.38.

Pylos in Messenia.<sup>62</sup> The tomb of Pandion is located West of the Alkathoa acropolis of Megara.

Pandion fathered four sons, three of which, Aigeus, Pallas, and Lykos, returned to Athens to reclaim the throne, while Nisos remained in Megara and ruled. Pausanias is aware of a significant rupture between the local narrative traditions of Megara and Athens at this point in mythistorical time. Skiron, a criminal in the Athenian stories of Theseus, was a son of Pylas who, marrying a daughter of Pandion, contested the throne of Nisos, while Aiakos decided the dispute in favour of Nisos and gave the role of military commander to Skiron. Little else of note occurred in the reign of Nisos according to the Megarians, but the Athenians record a war with Minos in the reign of Nisos, and a major loss to him. We can observe that the story of a great Cretan victory over Attica, and the subsequent myths of Theseus and the Minotaur, are Athenian, and not part of the local traditions of Megara.

Following the generation in which the brothers Nisos and Aigeus reigned in Megara and Athens respectively, Megareus, the son of Poseidon, arrived in Megara from Onchestos in Boiotia, and married the daughter of Nisos, Iphinoë. This generation in the Megarian traditions shows renewed concern with Thebes, and contestation over the stories of Megareus and the Kithaironian lion. In the Megarian stories, the arrival of Megareus is completely unconnected with any attack of Minos, but the Boiotians say Megareus came to assist Nisos in repelling Minos, and we may detect in the Boiotian story an attempt to appropriate Megara, successful insofar as the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* records Nisa (Nisaia) as a Boiotian territory (*Il.* 2.508). This son of Poseidon Megareus inherited the throne of Megara in the same generation as Theseus, son of Poseidon, inherited the throne of Athens. Some stories of Theseus were contested by the Megarians; Skiron was no criminal according to them; Hippolyta fled the Amazonian defeat at the hands of Theseus to Megara; and Megareus' son Timalkos was killed by Theseus in a conflict between Theseus and the Dioskouroi. His tomb was made into the *bouleutērion* of Megara (Paus. 1.42), and the tomb of Megareus' other son Euippos became the *Aisymnion* (town hall), which would come to contain also the shrine of Aisymnos, the eponymous founder of the oligarchic government.<sup>63</sup>

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62 Herda 2016: 84.

63 Paus. 1.43; Herda 2016: 55–56.



The Kithaironian lion killed Euippos, son of Megareus, and the king offered the kingship to whomever could slay the beast. Alkathous, son of Pelops, did the deed in the generation before the Trojan War, when Telamon came to Salamis, and his brother Peleus sailed on the Argo, and Alkathous' brother Atreus ruled at Mycenae. Alkathous brought the cults of Apollo and Artemis to Megara (Paus. 1.41.3-4), establishing Apollo as the main god of the city. Apollo would assist Alkathous in building the wall of Megara, and Alkathous fortified the second, western acropolis. This acropolis, the Alkathoa, is on the western side of Megara, physically tying it to the Peloponnesos, whence Alkathous came to Megara. This positionality is emphasized by the location of the temple of Apollo Agraios and Artemis Agrotera founded by Alkathous, located on the way out of town towards Tripodiskos and the Peloponnesos. The tomb of Kallipolis, son of Alkathous, who was killed by his father for perceived impiety towards Apollo, is located on the Alkathoa. Alkathous' other son Ischepolis is honoured as a hero in the *Aisymnion* (Paus. 1.43). Beside the *Aisymnion*, on the Alkathoa side of the agora, was the records office, which had originally been the *herōon* of Alkathous. Tombs of Alkathous' wife Pyrgo and his daughter Iphinoë stood between the *Aisymnion* and the records office. The brides-to-be of Megara sacrifice a lock of their hair to Iphinoë, since she died unmarried (Paus. 1.43).

The local traditions of Megara were engaged with the traditions of Thebes in the generation before the Trojan War, a generation that saw both the greatest saga of that city, the war between the sons of Oedipus, and the first Panhellenic sagas. Telamon went with Herakles to make war on Troy in this generation, fathered his son Teukros with a daughter of Laomedon, and went with Jason and his brother Peleus on the Argo. After Polyneices and his Argive army defeated Eteocles at Thebes, Adrastos of Argos, whose horse Arion was child of Poseidon and Demeter, comes to Megara and lives out his days there.<sup>64</sup>

Telamon, who had migrated from Aigina to Salamis, married a daughter of Alkathous and fathered Ajax, who succeeded Alkathous to the throne of Megara. A Megarian had every reason to be satisfied with the representation of their city in the Homeric poems, in a way that an Athenian could not be, and the Athenians consistently attempted to annex the character of Ajax as their own. The community went under the name Nisa in the

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64 Paus. 1.43; Deinias, *FGrH* 485 F3.

*Catalogue of Ships* (2.508),<sup>65</sup> and the character Ajax linked Megara with Salamis (2.558), however specious the Homeric line.<sup>66</sup> Kalchas, the prophet of the Achaian army and prophet of Apollo, was Megarian, and was retrieved by Agamemnon before the Trojan War (Paus. 1.43.1), when the King of Mycenae dedicated a sanctuary to Artemis in Megara. The Megarians claimed that Iphigenia died in Megara, not elsewhere. Ajax, King of Megara, cousin of the protagonist Achilles, was in the first tier of warriors with him and Diomedes. Ajax features prominently in the *Iliad*, as the largest of the Achaian warriors. Specifically, he plays important roles in the Teichoscopia (*Il.* 3), the Duel of Hector and Ajax (*Il.* 7), the Embassy to Achilles (*Il.* 9), the Battle at the Wall (*Il.* 12), the Battle at the Ships (*Il.* 13), and the Aristeia of Menelaus (*Il.* 17), which includes the battle over Patroclus' corpse. That he has an ignominious death by suicide, after contesting unsuccessfully for the divine armour of Achilles, hardly fails to recommend him as a source of pride for the Megarians; only Diomedes, Nestor, and Menelaus can be said to be able to enjoy their Trojan War victory. Teukros, Ajax's brother, returns to Salamis without him and is banished by Telamon, eventually founding Salamis on Cyprus, and being forefather to the Teukrians. In this generation, the sons of Herakles make their first doomed attempt on the Peloponnesos, and local Megarian tradition engages with this story by saying that Alkmene died at Megara on her way from Argos to Thebes, and that Hyllos died on the border of Megara and Corinth in a duel with Arkadian Echemus, and had a hero cult at Megara (Paus. 1.41).

In the generation after the Trojan War, Hyperion was King at Megara, a son of Agamemnon hardly mentioned in non-Megarian narrative traditions. In this generation the sons of Herakles made another unsuccessful attempt on the Peloponnesos, Orestes avenged his father's murder, and Neoptolemus took up his father's mantle as conquering warrior and adventurer. Hyperion was the last king of Megara, and after his death, the eponymous hero Aisymnos sought an oracle from Delphi about the government of Megara, and it evolved into an oligarchy under the powerful rule of magistrates called

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65 As a territory of Boiotia, see Herda 2016: 83.

66 A deliberate Solonian interpolation in Plut. *Solon* 10. Strabo (9.1.10) reports that the Megarians interpolated a line to explicitly link Salamis to Nisaia and other Megarian villages in order to counter the Athenian claim.

*aisumnatai* (Paus. 1.43.3). The *aisumnion*, or council chamber, housed the tombs of the heroes Euippos and Aisymnos.<sup>67</sup>

The narrative traditions of Megara enter the historical period at this point. Orsippos was a Megarian warrior and Olympic victor (720 BCE), who inaugurated the practice of competing in the nude, and was honoured by a tomb in Megara (Paus. 1.43). Concerns about the aggressions of Corinth, Athens, and Sparta are dominant in this period, and the Megarians honour an ample pantheon of gods led by Apollo, and including Demeter, Poseidon, Artemis, Zeus, Athena, Aphrodite, Dionysos, Leukothea, Night, the Muses, and the Eileithyiai. Theagenes was tyrant in the second half of the seventh century, and he founded a fountain in the agora and an altar to the water god Acheloos near the River Tripodiskos, in honour of his redirecting a stream for the use of Megarians.

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<sup>67</sup> Herda 2016: 55, 60.

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