

THE RETURN OF THESEUS TO ATHENS: A CASE STUDY IN LAYERED TRADITION AND RECEPTION*

Abstract: The Athenian recovery of Theseus' bones from Scyros is known through a number of literary accounts spanning several centuries. The tradition dates the recovery to the early fifth century and connects it to the Athenian statesman Cimon. Modern reconstructions tend to rely on the combination of different (and possibly conflicting) sources. An analysis of the evidence, however, shows that the story was built up over several centuries, as the various layers of the tradition date to different historical and cultural contexts: its core probably dates to the fourth century. Evidence for any fifth-century element is so scant that most of the story may be safely detached from its alleged historical context.

Keywords: Theseus, hero cult, Cimon, Attidography, Plutarch, ancient reception

The story of the recovery of the remains of Theseus from the island of Scyros raises issues involving history and historiography, hero cult and civic religion, domestic and foreign politics, and eventually archaeology and art. Its alleged setting is the early fifth century BC. Its main elements are the Athenian conquest of Scyros, an oracle, the bones of Theseus, his major Athenian sanctuary (*Theseion*), and the role of Cimon, son of Miltiades. These elements are scattered among a number of literary accounts. Modern attempts to reconstruct the historical events generally select and combine details from sources far removed in time from one another, mainly Thucydides and Plutarch, while others, such as Diodorus and Pausanias, provide additional elements.¹ Such an approach relies on a supplementary, 'cumulative' arrangement of different traditions.

I propose to approach the return of Theseus' bones to Athens as a case study concerning literary layering and interaction among a number of sources. This paper argues that most of the stories on the repatriation of Theseus' relics cannot be safely dated to the fifth century, and that its main elements actually date from rather distant contexts: through an accordingly revised historiographical approach, I will propose a different compositional tradition.

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¹ A few representative examples: Podlecki (1971); Luppino Manes (1976); Burkert (1992) 260; Garland (1992) 82–5; McCauley (1999); Giuliani (2001) 80–3; *OCD*³, s.v. 'Cimon', 331; Giuffrida (2004) 260–1; Kallet (2013) esp. 51–2.

1. The Story in its Components

Thucydides (1.98.2) deals with the Athenian conquest of Scyros ‘after’ (ἔπειτα) that of Eion, which follows the retreat of Xerxes’ army from Greece. His brief account provides no information other than the violent enslavement of the Dolopian inhabitants and the settlement of Scyros by the Athenians (ἡνδραπόδισαν καὶ ὄκισαν αὐτοί). While Cimon’s command is recorded for Eion (1.98.1), there is no mention of any *strategos* or of further activity on the island. We learn that Athens conquered and settled Scyros after the early 470s BC:² the event is simply presented by Thucydides among the first steps of the growing Athenian *arche* (cf. 1.97.2).

A possibly Aristotelian passage, coming from Heraclides Lembus’ second-century BC work and attributed to the *Athenaion Politeia*,³ apparently represents the earliest extant source mentioning the Athenian recovery of Theseus’ bones. After explaining his death on Scyros in a remote time, the text reads: ‘Later the Athenians, around the Persian wars, carried his bones back [i.e. to Athens]’ (Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ ὕστερον περὶ τὰ Μηδικὰ μετεκόμισαν αὐτοῦ τὰ ὀστά). Kaibel and Wilamowitz emended the text into ‘after the Persian wars’ (μετὰ τὰ Μηδικά), as this expression is found in Plutarch (*Thes.* 36.1)—hardly a necessary emendation, given the relative chronology of involved sources.⁴ Heraclides’ passage lacks any mention of Cimon, as well as of the Athenian conquest of the island. The text is also found in a scholion to Euripides, *Hippolytus* 11,⁵ with minor textual variations and major additional details: an ambiguous explanation of Theseus’ presence on Scyros (ἐπὶ κατασκοπήν εἰκότως διὰ τὴν Αἰγέως συγγένειαν)⁶ and the recovery of his bones following an oracle (κατὰ μαντείαν). It is all but impossible to assess to what degree each form of this fragment preserved, abridged, or contaminated the original Aristotelian words: certainly, neither allows us safely to assume that the *Athenaion Politeia* mentioned Cimon in connection with Scyros.⁷ On the contrary, we may

² The conquest of Eion is generally dated ca. 476/5, following *schol. ad Aeschin.* 2.31 67a Dilts (2.34 Dindorf) and *Plut. Thes.* 36.1 (see below): Delorme (1986); cf. Loomis (1990); Badian (1993) 86, 90.

³ Arist. fr. 611.1 R. = *Ath. Pol.* fr. 6 Oppermann *ap.* Heraclid. Lemb. *Exc. Pol.* 1 Dilts.

⁴ See Oppermann (1928) *ad loc.*, who preserves the text of the mss.; additional remarks in Polito (2001) 21. Also cf. below on Plutarch.

⁵ *Schol. Vat. ad E. Hipp.* 11 Schwartz = Arist. *Ath. Pol.* fr. 4 Kenyon. Polito (2001) 20–1 believes the scholiast preserves a more faithful version of Aristotle’s text.

⁶ ‘On the purpose of inspection, due to the kinship with Aegeus’, apparently implying legitimate family claims on the island (probably the same version known to Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.5; *Plut. Thes.* 35.5); *κατασκοπή* usually refers to military-related espionage: its occurrence in the Aristotelian *corpus* is scant (*κατάσκοπος*: *Pol.* 5.1313b; *Rh.* 3.1416b).

⁷ *Pace* Rhodes (1981) 76–7.

note, with Herbert Bloch, that Heraclides' only extant mention (*Exc. Pol.* 5 Dilts) of a famous story on Cimon derived from the *Athenaion Politeia* (27.5) is badly mistaken, as Heraclides (or his *excerptor*) blatantly confuses Cimon with Ephialtes.⁸ However, the fragment about Theseus is probably enough to allow the inference that, in the fourth century, the story of the Athenian recovery of the bones was settled.

More detailed accounts about the story are chronologically distant from its alleged context. Diodorus Siculus presents the earliest known mention of *both* the conquest of Scyros *and* the recovery of Theseus' bones. It is even more notable that he does so in two separate sections of the *Bibliotheca*. His version of the conquest of Scyros in Book 11 adds various details to Thucydides' account (Diod. 11.60.2): for example, dating it to 470/69 (11.60.1) or slightly earlier;⁹ attributing it, for the first known time, to Cimon, albeit providing no explanation for his motives in doing so; and claiming that Scyros, inhabited by Dolopians and Pelasgians, became a cleruchy and received a founder nominated by Cimon himself.¹⁰ The additional elements in Diodorus' version suggest that he did not just over-interpret previous sources; he followed a different, enriched tradition imbued with mythological details.¹¹ Some of these elements may actually be rather ancient, but it is impossible to discern them. Book 11 never mentions the discovery of the bones which, however, is found in Book 4: after Theseus' death on the island, 'the Athenians, regretting [i.e. of having expelled him], recovered the bones, honoured him with godlike honours, and built a safe *temenos* in Athens' (οἱ δ' Ἀθηναῖοι μεταμεληθέντες τὰ τε ὄστᾶ μετήνεγκαν καὶ τιμαῖς ἰσοθέοις ἐτίμησαν αὐτόν, καὶ τέμενος ἄσυλον ἐποίησαν ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις κτλ., 4.62.4).¹² Diodorus has no place at all for Cimon, for an oracle, nor for any 'historical' element which could point the reader to the fifth century: this whole part of the story may well take place and end in a remote antiquity, close to the death of the hero. Nothing links 4.62.4 to 11.60.2, and nothing proves that Diodorus intentionally broke the story into two separate parts. We may rather suspect that, as far as he knew, there was no particular connection between Cimon, the fifth-

⁸ See Bloch (1940) esp. 36–7, on Heraclides' selection method and tendency to introduce inaccuracies; also cf. Polito (2001) 7–9 (on the nature of the *excerpta* from Heraclides' work) and 38–9 (on the lack of context of ch. 5).

⁹ Literally, the archonship (11.60.1) dates Cimon's attack on Asia, while that on Scyros occurs before it (cf. 60.2–4). On various issues about Diodorus' chronology and this archon date see Smart (1967); further discussion in Green (2006) 124–5 n. 223.

¹⁰ Diodorus is possibly confused about the cleruchy: Bearzot (1995) 75–80; *contra* Moreno (2009) 216.

¹¹ The mention of a Pelasgian Scyros, which may reflect Athenian claims based on Attica's Pelasgian past, is already in Scymn. 583–5.

¹² Cf. *schol. ad Ar. Plut.* 627 ll. 25–8 Dübner; *Sud.* Θ 368 Adler.

century conquest, and the recovery of the bones. Apparently, his source did not follow the (possibly) Aristotelian dating of the recovery: unfortunately, the nature of such a source is obscure. Although Diodorus states that Ephorus, Callisthenes, Theopompus, and Apollodorus of Athens treated no events earlier than the return of the Heraclids (Diod. 1.5.1; cf. 4.1.3), just about any author may have included a digression concerning Theseus. Hence, Diodorus' source for the passage in Book 4 is impossible to identify,¹³ and its motives remain even more obscure. The same issue affects Book 11: although it is tempting to speculate about Ephorus' work, we definitely cannot assume that Diodorus' Book 11 regularly reproduces it.¹⁴ In these regard, authoritative studies have claimed that Ephorus stands behind the literary papyrus *P.Oxy.* XIII, 1610,¹⁵ of which two brief, disjointed fragments do in fact mention Cimon, Scyros (fr. 6), and king Lycomedes (fr. 7), the murderer of Theseus on the island. In spite of the obvious thematic and textual similarities with Diodorus 11.59–61, however, this papyrus also presents significant divergences from the *Bibliotheca*: both works certainly belong to the same tradition, but their relative position within it is hard to determine, and it is even harder to argue that the papyrus preserves Ephorus' account.¹⁶

Plutarch presents the most detailed accounts of the story, one in his *Life of Cimon*, the other in his *Life of Theseus*. The *Cimon* recalls the Athenian settlement of Scyros (ἄγκισσαν, 8.3) and provides a so far unheard of αἰτία for the attack. The complaint of Thessalian merchants, robbed by Dolopian pirates from Scyros, led Delphi to sanction the whole island (8.3); the matter escalated into an international affair when the islanders appealed to Cimon (8.4), who expelled the Dolopians and 'freed the Aegean' (τὸν Αἰγαῖον ἠλευθέρωσε, 8.5). Although Aegean piracy was definitely an issue in the early fifth century,¹⁷ Plutarch's enthusiastic and colourful narration is probably influenced by the typically Hellenistic practice of *asyllia*¹⁸ and should not be taken at face

¹³ Cf. Vattuone (1998) 1946. On the composition and sources of the *Bibliotheca*, including its 'mythical' section, see Sacks (1982) 434–5; Ambaglio (2008) 19–20 and 23–4.

¹⁴ See now Parmeggiani (2011) esp. 350–94, with the notes (also treating *P.Oxy.* 1610) of Zaccarini (2014b). On Diod. 11.60.2 and Ephorus cf. Canfora (1977) 212–13; Vattuone (2008) 373–82.

¹⁵ See e.g. *P.Oxy.* XIII.105–13; *ATL* III.159; cf. *FGrHist* 70 F 191.

¹⁶ See Rubincam (1976) 357–66; Green (2006) 26–7; Parmeggiani (2011) 379–80; cf. notes in Zaccarini (2014a) 167.

¹⁷ See Rawlings (2000) 235–6. War against piracy was a trademark of thalassocracies: cf. the similar records on Minos (Hdt. 3.122.2; Thuc. 1.4), Themistocles (Nep. *Them.* 2.3), Pericles (Plut. *Per.* 17, 19); cf. Dem. 8.25.

¹⁸ On which see Rigsby (1996) 44–9.

value.¹⁹ In narrative terms, the following part of the story in the *Cimon* has little or nothing to do with the former: learning that Theseus had died on Scyros and recalling that ‘there was an oracle’ (ἦν χρησμὸς, 8.7) ordering the Athenians to recover his bones, Cimon discovered them, ‘about 400 years’ after Theseus’ death (8.6).²⁰ According to Plutarch, the feat was previously denied by the locals (8.7): through a form of circular narrative, Plutarch brings back the story to Dolopian hostility, which is the cause for both the Athenian attack and the original inability to recover the bones.

Plutarch goes back to the final part of the story in the closing chapter of the *Theseus* (36.1), focusing on the recovery and its religious implications. Despite cross-referencing to the *Cimon* for the mundane details, the *Theseus* is not entirely consistent with the earlier account: rather, it seems to expand and rearrange events. Plutarch opens the narration with a redundant dating formula recording both the (perhaps) Aristotelian μετὰ δὲ τὰ Μηδικὰ²¹ and the archonship of Phaidon, 476/5.²² This double dating actually refers to the issue of the oracle: while in the *Cimon* the Athenians recalled a pre-existing, generic χρησμὸς after the conquest, in the *Theseus* they first interrogated (μαντευομένοις) the Pythia, then Cimon took Scyros following her order. He was led by an eagle to a mound (τινα τόπον βουνοειδῆ, *Thes.* 36.1)²³ which held bronze weapons and oversized bones. Bronze Age *tholos* tombs were probably identified as heroic burials:²⁴ actually, at least one Bronze Age burial of a ‘giant’ is known,²⁵ and several *tholos* tombs are present in Attica.²⁶ However, none has been found on Scyros, although the island holds a good number of other Mycenaean burials.²⁷

Each of Plutarch’s accounts provides a different view. Primary political interests are connected to a religious, unplanned achievement in the *Cimon*.

¹⁹ Cf. Dawe (2008), also considering (73) the possible parallel created by Plutarch between Cimon and Lucullus in fighting islanders’ piracy.

²⁰ A dating which is as precise as it is utterly inconsistent with the traditional chronology; the same 400 years are known, not much later, to Favorinus who, however, does not mention Cimon (fr. 96.9 Barigazzi, ll. 15–16).

²¹ See above. The *Theseus* seems to employ the *Ath. Pol.* rather superficially: Ampolo (1988) 238–9 ll. 2, 2–4, 11.

²² On the confusion between the archons Φαίδων (*PA* 13967; *PAA* 912805) and Φαίων (Diod. 11.63.1; cf. *PA* 2805; above on Diodorus) see Smart (1967). Although I do not agree with Smart’s arrangement, the precise year does not significantly affect the present study.

²³ On the animal-guide *topos* cf. Paus. 9.38.3–4 (cf. the eagle as a manifestation of the *daimon* in 4.18.5).

²⁴ McCauley (1999) 91; Boardman (2002) 79–84.

²⁵ See the case of the ‘Giant of Castelnau’: de Lapouge (1890).

²⁶ Whitley (1994) 221–2.

²⁷ Hansen (1951) 57–63; cf. Garland (1992) 83–4.

The *Theseus* is built on an opposite perspective, for it is the oracle which stands behind the military conquest. Even if the theme of the divine command might have a fifth-century origin (see § 2.1), Plutarch's story in the *Theseus* definitely seems reworked in order to produce a deeper involvement of Delphi itself: accordingly, the two accounts have been thought to mirror two conflicting fifth-century versions which, however, are unattested elsewhere.²⁸

To sum up, I posit the existence of two main, originally separate themes which were progressively enriched, and eventually entwined by the time of Plutarch. The first is the tradition, dating back at least to Thucydides, of the Athenian conquest of Scyros after Xerxes' retreat, attributed to Cimon at least by the time of Diodorus or his sources, and dated after Phaidon's archonship as early as Plutarch's sources—on which see § 3. The second major theme is the recovery of Theseus' bones from the island. This story is first attested in the fourth century BC, possibly placed by Aristotle *περὶ τὰ Μηδικά*, connected to a divine response, and eventually attributed to Cimon no earlier than Plutarch. The earliest extant 'evidence' for Cimon's involvement with Scyros and the bones respectively dates over four centuries (Diodorus) and over five centuries (Plutarch) after his own time: these probably represent the latest additions to the whole story. Although Diodorus knows both themes, it is Plutarch who marks their meeting point through the junction provided by Delphi. The sanctuary is actively involved both in the political and in the religious side of the story as the body—respectively—sanctioning Scyros and issuing the oracle to Athens.

The scant fifth-century evidence provides no record of what actually happened shortly after 479 BC on Scyros. The motives behind the Athenian attack may well have been purely political and strategic, possibly related to the control of the Aegean and retaliation against medizing Greeks: as early as Herodotus' time, it was known that at least one Dolopian from Scyros, Pammon, had aided Xerxes' fleet (Hdt. 7.183.3).²⁹

Thucydides obviously omitted many details in his *Pentecontaetia*: we cannot simply rely on his silence in order to determine what took place on Scyros, and how the Athenians perceived it, in the fifth century. Yet, we face a methodological dilemma: to assume that what Thucydides does not state did not happen leads to an *argumentum e silentio*; to argue that what later sources report necessarily stems from lost, unknown fifth-century records means to

²⁸ Luppino Manes (1976) believes that Cimon and the Alcmaeonidae were behind each story; cf. Bowden (2005a) 125.

²⁹ The mainland Dolopians, who medised en masse (Hdt. 7.132, 185; cf. Diod. 11.3.2) were *perioikoi* of the Thessalians. We have no information about the bonds between mainland and islander Dolopians, but their common kinship, as well as the former's seat in the amphictyony, may represent the basis of Plutarch's refined involvement of Delphi and the Thessalians.

supplement the tradition on completely conjectural grounds. The aforementioned scenario compels us to focus on the individual perspective provided by each source.

2. The Fifth-Century Context

The conquest of Scyros involves a series of different themes: setting them against their contemporary cultural context might help us understand the tradition on the recovery of Theseus' bones. It is convenient to begin with the details recorded by the earliest sources, namely the conquest of the island and the recovery of the bones, possibly in connection with an oracular instruction. Above all, the assessment must take into account the shifting cultural context from the fifth to the fourth century.

2.1 The Oracle

However we read it—from the possibly Aristotelian generic *μαντεία* (*schol. ad Eur. Hipp.* 11), to Plutarch's unnamed *χρησμός* (*Cimon*) or Delphic *μαντεία* (*Theseus*)—the oracle about the recovery of the bones (§ 1)³⁰ is grounded in a solid, ancient tradition.

The sources do not always imply that the order came from Delphi. Actually, 'classical' *poleis* often resorted to local responses before seeking the advice of a major sanctuary.³¹ Herodotus (5.90) claims that Athens collected such generic *χρησμοί* at least as early as the late sixth century, and various stories connect eminent characters, including Cimon,³² to the (ab)use of the sacred.³³ However, Delphi is by far the favourite issuing body for many a story on heroic bones. Herodotus' famous narrative on the Spartan discovery and recovery of Orestes,³⁴ which does feature two Delphic interrogations (1.67), seems the main model for a rich literary sub-genre. Heroic recoveries enjoy a significant surge during the fifth century: both close and distant traditions record claims of discoveries of heroic relics around the time of the Persian wars.³⁵ That of Orestes is but one of many non-Athenian tales recorded

³⁰ On the oracular terminology see Bowden (2003) esp. 258–9.

³¹ Dillery (2005) esp. 188.

³² See Ion of Chios on the 'lame hegemony' (*FGrHist* 392 F 14 *ap.* Plut. *Cim.* 16.10); Flower (2000) esp. 77–80. Also cf. Plutarch on the *μαντικὸς ἀνὴρ* Astyphilos (*Cim.* 18.3) and the oracle of Ammon (18.7).

³³ On various personalities see Tuci (2006); Ornaghi (2009) 225–7, on the Philaids.

³⁴ Boedeker (1993); Welwei (2004); Camassa (2011).

³⁵ A catalogue in Mayor (2000) app. 2; Boardman (2002) 210–32. Cf. cases in Dunbabin (1948) 413–14; Viviers (1996) 212–18.

by Herodotus; interestingly, the only prominent Athenian attempt to recover heroic bones he does relate is actually a failed one. The task to recover Aea-cus' relics and to establish his *temenos* was issued in the late sixth century by a Delphic *μαντήλιον* (5.89) which the Athenians only partially fulfilled.³⁶ Whether the story was devised to explain why the *Aiakeion* was a cenotaph³⁷ or to show how the Athenians evaded Delphi's attempt to interfere with their attack on Aegina, it is impossible to say.³⁸ Actually, the empty *Aiakeion* is anything but an exception: the Athenians never seem to have recovered the bones of many other heroes they worshipped in sanctuaries, including various Attic kings besides Theseus—although they did repatriate those of men, such as Themistocles.³⁹ The literary 'need' to locate Theseus' bones—or perhaps to fill his cenotaph—probably reflects his prominence as a symbol of Attica: it is convenient to review Theseus' status and cult in Athens, for which evidence at the time of the conquest of Scyros is elusive.

2.2 The Theseion and the Anakeion. Polygnotus and Bacchylides

Major issues concern the Athenian urban sanctuary of Theseus, the *Theseion*, which featured a famously large *temenos*: although still unidentified,⁴⁰ its existence in the late fifth century is beyond question, as it is mentioned by both Thucydides (6.61.2) and Aristophanes (*Knights* 1311–12).⁴¹ However, literary tradition presents recurring contradictions. First of all, it is at least venture-some to follow Pausanias and other sources in their attribution of the *Theseion* wall paintings⁴² to artists such as Micon⁴³ and Polygnotus,⁴⁴ both of whom

³⁶ Building the *Aiakeion* was probably meant to strip Aegina of Aeacus' protection in advance of the attack: on such a practice cf. Kearns (1989) 327–9; on stealing bones from other *poleis* also cf. the case of Oedipus (Paus. 1.28.7).

³⁷ On the *Aiakeion* see Stroud (1998) 85–104.

³⁸ On the few 'historical' details of the story see Bowden (2005a) 115.

³⁹ A famous case already reported by Thuc. 1.138.6.

⁴⁰ Archaeology only confirms that the *Theseion* and the archaic agora (on which see Di Cesare (2009) 808–9) stood on the east side of the acropolis: Robertson (1998); Greco et al. (2010) 159. On the *temenos* see Christensen (1984) 23–32.

⁴¹ The (mostly late) sources are collected in Wycherley (1957) 113–19.

⁴² On which see Barron (1972); Woodford (1974).

⁴³ Pausanias dates the *Theseion σηκός* to 'after the Medes held Marathon, when Cimon took Scyros' (*ὑστερον ἢ Μῆδοι Μαραθῶνι ἔσχον, Κίμωνος τοῦ Μιλτιάδου Σκυρίου ποιήσαντος ἀναστάτους*, 1.17.6, a double form of dating which imprecisely echoes Plut. *Thes.* 36.1), and attributes to Micon the painting of Theseus' dive into the sea (17.2–3): while the theme matches that of Bacchylides' dithyramb 18 (on which see below), Pausanias' unverifiable ascription does not prove that Micon was inspired by Bacchylides—even less the opposite.

might have worked later than the 470s. Moreover, from the fifth century onward, the *Theseion* itself features a significant literary connection with the *Anakeion*, the somewhat nearby⁴⁵ and possibly ancient⁴⁶ sanctuary of the Dioscuri: the latter also featured a spacious *temenos*, which was confused with that of the *Theseion*.⁴⁷ Scholars often are divided into those who think that the *Theseion* already existed, as a cenotaph, before the fifth century,⁴⁸ and those who believe it was built only after Cimon repatriated the bones.⁴⁹ However, as those parts of the story about the bones and Cimon seem to date to rather late periods (§ 1), assessments on the *Theseion* should proceed on different grounds.

Once more we go back to the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, according to which the Athenians, gathered in arms ἐν τῷ Θησείῳ, had been disarmed deceitfully by Pisistratus (15.4). Polyaeus (1.21.2) records the very same story with a number of differences, among which is the meeting εἰς τὸ Ἀνάκειον.⁵⁰ His version, drawing from an independent tradition, is in no way less believable than that of the *Athenaion Politeia*.⁵¹ Overall, this double story, which further confirms the recurrent confusion between the two sanctuaries, is clearly based on a literary *topos*: Thucydides (6.58) presents a very similar tale, except

⁴⁴ For whom there is even weaker evidence: his contribution depends on the convenient emendation of Harpocration's ἐν τῷ †θησαυρῷ καὶ τῷ Ἀνακείῳ into Θησειῷ or Θησεῶς ἱερῷ (Harpocrat. s.v. Πολύγνωτος; cf. *Sud.* Π 1948 Adler); the reading, besides, conflicts with Lycurgus fr. 6.17 Conomis. The generic praise of Polygnotus by Cimon's contemporary Melanthius (fr. 1 W. ap. Plut. *Cim.* 4.7) is hardly a clue.

⁴⁵ Almost certainly located just under the east acropolis wall (Luc. *Pisc.* 42); tentative archaeological identifications are not grounded: Di Cesare (2009) esp. 813–22. Although his description of the *Anakeion* closely follows that of the *Theseion*, Paus. 1.17.6–18.1 does *not* explicitly put the two buildings in close topographic relation, as noted already by Leake (1841) L262.

⁴⁶ Shapiro (1999) 100–1. The Athenian cult of the *Anakes* shared elements with that of Heracles: Ieranò (2000) 183–5; also cf. Pl. *Ly.* 205c–d; Arist. 33 D. 425 J. = 11.65 Lenz-Behr; Diod. 4.39.1. A significant connection with Theseus himself was introduced at some point: Plut. *Thes.* 33.1.

⁴⁷ After the mutilation of the Herms, Andocides (1.45) has the cavalry rally in the *Anakeion* and the infantry in the *Theseion*. Thucydides (6.61.2), apparently providing a simplified version, mentions a general rally at the *Theseion* only.

⁴⁸ In favour of an 'archaic' *Theseion*: Bérard (1983) 47–8; Walker (1995b) 21–2; Greco (2008) 4.

⁴⁹ Barron (1972) 20–3; Shear (1994) 247. Koumanoudis (1976) proposes a unique version with two different *Theseia*, but relies on the rather problematic *schol. ad Aeschin.* 3.13.41 Dilts.

⁵⁰ Incidentally, Polyaeus' text and the poor conditions of the papyrus initially led to read ἐν τῷ Ἀνακείῳ in *Ath. Pol.* 15.4: Kenyon (1891) 270; cf. Kenyon (1892), *ad loc.*

⁵¹ Cf. *FGrHist* IIIb *Suppl.* I.208; Rhodes (1981) 211.

that it is set ‘in a certain place’ (τι χωρίον, 58.1) and its protagonist is Hippias.⁵² Besides, stripping the demos of its weapons is an archetypical tyrannical measure which variously recurs in Aristotle’s *Politics*.⁵³ The version in the *Athenaion Politeia* probably suffers from an anachronistic re-setting whose aim was to link Theseus’ sanctuary to an episode opposing the demos to tyranny: as Sarah Morris points out, the passage ‘demonstrates that by the fourth century the image of Theseus as king was powerful enough for deliberate retrojection to the reign of the tyrant’.⁵⁴ The story the *Athenaion Politeia* may date to any time as late as the fourth century itself, and is hardly useful towards dating attempts of the *Theseion* itself.

Once we discard the literary evidence for an archaic *Theseion*, the chronology of the very religious recognition of Theseus in Athens—definitely a requisite for the existence of his major cult—may be questioned. Archaic artistic depictions on pottery,⁵⁵ dubious literary evidence of a *Theseid* poem,⁵⁶ or hints on ‘political’, cultural features of his myths,⁵⁷ have been taken as evidence of the widespread worship of Theseus well before the Persian wars. This has led some to speculate on the use of the hero as an element of personal propaganda by Cimon or others;⁵⁸ however, the aforementioned elements only prove that Theseus’ figure was part of Athenian culture—which is an entirely different matter from an established, major cult in the polis.⁵⁹ We should also consider Cleisthenes’ tribal eponyms: while the presence of Theseus’ father and son definitely implies their acknowledged bonds with Attica, Theseus’ own absence is a much more ambivalent fact which, in any case, does not imply his religious stature, cult, nor sanctuary.⁶⁰ Essentially,

⁵² Cf. Larsen (1968) 112. Also consider Thuc. 8.93.1 on the *Anakeion* destined to store weapons on a different occasion.

⁵³ See Santoni (1999) 173 n. 31. Also cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.20, 3.41 on the Thirty Tyrants. On the social and political implications of the armed demos see de Ste. Croix (2004) esp. 30–2.

⁵⁴ Morris (1992) 336. Also cf. § 3.

⁵⁵ For Theseus on pottery see Brommer (1982); Servadei (2005) esp. 191–3. For a full catalogue see *LMC*, s.v. Theseus.

⁵⁶ For doubts on its very existence see Neils (1987) 11–12; Cingano (2007) 93–4 wonders if the *Theseid* may have been superseded and obliterated by Simonides’ work.

⁵⁷ Walker (1995a) esp. 28–33; Luce (1998).

⁵⁸ See Podlecki (1971); Calame (1990) chs. 2.8.3 and 3.1 (but also ch. 6, with persuasively sceptical arguments); Francis (1990) 51–3; Parker (1996) 85–6; Giuffrida (2004) 260–1; Dolicetti (2007) esp. 67–8; Shapiro (2012) 160–82. Cf. § 4.

⁵⁹ Cf. the persuasive scepticism of Bowden (1993) 50–2; Mills (1997) 35–7; Bettalli (2006) esp. 99–103.

⁶⁰ Garland (1992) 89 argues that Theseus’ far too ‘pan-Athenian’ status at the time of Cleisthenes might have prevented his choice as an eponym (cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (2011) 60–1), but also acknowledges that this would not imply any specific religious value.

Cleisthenes' selection followed unknown criteria; in addition, the classical canon of the eponyms might have evolved in the course of the fifth century.⁶¹

Assuming Theseus' early religious status in Athens on the basis of later sources leads to a circular argument. Rather, in the first decades of the fifth century, Theseus might have enjoyed a different form of recognition. Bacchylides' dithyrambs 17 and 18, hypothetically dated to the 470s–460s,⁶² must be taken into account in this connection. Dithyramb 17 briefly narrates Theseus' plunge into the sea to retrieve Minos' ring, a theme which was partially depicted on one of the *Theseion* paintings (above). The Ceans of the dithyramb perform as Athenians youths, and thus some form of relation between the two communities is implied: yet, the dithyramb makes only marginal references to Athens. It rather points to the Ionians, with whom Theseus sets sail from Athens (κούρους Ἰαόνων, v. 3), and to Ceos itself⁶³ through the final invocation of the chorus (χοροῖσι Κηίων, v. 130), whose voice is significantly entwined with that of the Ionian youths. Bacchylides 17 was not part of any Athenian thalassocratic celebration,⁶⁴ a modern interpretation which seems rather indebted to Thucydides' later *Archaiologia*.⁶⁵ The poem was destined to be performed by the Ceans on Delos—the very image of Theseus' dive might even allude to the proverbial 'Delian diver' (e.g. Diog. Laert. 22.2, 9.12): its aim was to praise the Ionians as a whole, in the early years of the so-called Delian league. It represents a symbolic connection among Athens, Ceos, Delos, and the Ionian kin in general. Similar arguments may be put forward for dithyramb 18, whose alleged allusions to Cimon's sons have often suggested its Cimonian origin:⁶⁶ however, while these references are rather subtle,⁶⁷ others are definitely more explicit. The poem opens by addressing Theseus as 'king of sacred Athens, lord of the sweet-living Ionians' (βασιλεῦ τᾶν ἱερᾶν Ἀθα|νᾶν, τῶν ἀβροβίων ἄναξ Ἰώνων, vv. 1–2), apparently a strong and explicit *trait d'union* between Athenians and Ionians, that is, a symbol of the Athenian-led Hellenic alliance.

Essentially, through the shared figure of Theseus as a 'cultural hero', both of Bacchylides' dithyrambs promote Ionian fellowship at the time of the

⁶¹ On the selection consider Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 21.6. The earliest phase of the monument of the eponymous heroes only dates around 430 BC: Shear (1970) 203–22.

⁶² On the problematic evidence for Bacchylides' chronology see Cairns (2010) 1–7.

⁶³ On Bacchylides and Ceos see Cairns (2010) 1–2, 23–4, 48 (polyphony in dithyramb 17); Fearn (2007) 242–8. Also cf. Giesekam (1977), on the relation between the figure of Minos and Ceos.

⁶⁴ On this thesis see Kowalzig (2007) e.g. 91.

⁶⁵ On Minos in Thucydides see Constantakopoulou (2007) ch. 4.1, esp. 96–7.

⁶⁶ See Barron (1980); Vox (1984) 117–20; Fearn (2007) 242–56. Also cf. § 2.3.

⁶⁷ Persuasive scepticism in Barrett (2007) 285–8. The allusions to the sons might make the dithyramb 'Cimonian', but not necessarily Cimon's: Neri (2011) 320–5.

Athenian hegemony and the aftermath of the Persian Wars.⁶⁸ It is likely that, in parallel with such a context, Theseus' own religious importance in Athens dramatically rose, eventually developing into a major city cult and *Theseion*, well before the end of the century but not necessarily as early as the 470s.⁶⁹ In turn, Theseus' growing importance in Athenian literature and art within the rising democracy might be tied to the acquisition of religious authority by the *demos* in the following decades.⁷⁰ However, given the scant evidence for Theseus' Athenian cult in the early fifth century, the contemporary quest for his bones becomes even more doubtful. Moreover, setting the detail of his death on Scyros against the fifth-century context raises further issues.

2.3 Scyros and Achilles (and Theseus?)

If we could trace back the origins of the story of the death of Theseus on Scyros, that would represent an obvious *terminus post* for dating the recovery of his bones, for the latter cannot but be based on the assumption that the remains were to be found on the island. Parke and Wormell, elaborating Carl Robert's cautious assessment,⁷¹ state that the death on the island 'may have even been invented at this time [*scil.* that of the recovery, ca. 476/5], but at least it is not likely to be earlier than the mid-sixth century'.⁷² However, as a matter of fact, not even a fifth-century source records Theseus' death on Scyros. At best, the earliest extant connection between Theseus and Scyros dates to the fourth century, if we believe that Heraclides' *Epitome* preserves Aristotelian material only (cf. § 1). Additional sources recording such a connection are limited to Plutarch and later authorities.⁷³

It is worth trying to investigate the context of the 470s in regard to Theseus' possible links to the island. As early as the sixth century, stories on Theseus feature a number of (limited) lexical affinities with Scyros. However, these terms are solely personal names:⁷⁴ most notably, the 'wicked' Megarian

⁶⁸ Cf. Theseus as a 'Ionian hero' in Tausend (1989) 225–35. The notion of Athenian-Ionian *συγγένεια* appears to be earlier than 479 BC: Constantakopoulou (2007) 62–75; cf. also Antonetti (1996) 11, on Bacchylides' use of *panhellenes*.

⁶⁹ Cf. Morris (1992) 337–54.

⁷⁰ On which see Garland (1990) esp. 85–91.

⁷¹ Robert (1921) 755–6.

⁷² Parke and Wormell (1956) I.200 n. 4 (cf. 181); cf. Mills (1997) 12.

⁷³ [Apollod.] 3.13.8 (*Ep.* 1.24); Paus. 1.17.6; 10.26.4; Tz. *ad Lyc.* 1324. Cf. *RE* 13.2, s.v. Lykomedes (2).

⁷⁴ See list in Jeanmaire (1939) 325, noting that mutual influence might have multiplied the occurrences; cf. already Roberts (1912) 106.

Sciron (Σκίρων)⁷⁵ killed by Theseus, mentioned by Bacchylides 18 (ἀτάσθαλόν τε Σκίρωνα, vv. 24–5)⁷⁶ and depicted in the Athenian *thesauros* at Delphi and in the Royal Stoa (Paus. 1.3.1);⁷⁷ the Salaminian Sciros (Σκίρος)⁷⁸ who helped Theseus on his journey to Crete (Philoch. F 111 ap. Plut. *Thes.* 17.6); a namesake *mantis* from the time of Erechtheus, who stood at the origin of a place called Σκίρος in Attica (Paus. 1.36.4).⁷⁹ However, there is still no explicit connection between Theseus and the island of Scyros.

On the other hand, a tradition which dates back to early epics (e.g. *Il.* 9.666) connected Scyros and Lycomedes with young Achilles:⁸⁰ the two are commonly depicted together in Greek art.⁸¹ This story was well-known in fifth-century Athens: apparently, in the early decades it was painted in the *Anakeion* by Polygnotus, who took some liberties from the Homeric version (Paus. 1.22.6); toward the end of the century, it was alluded to by Sophocles (*Ph.* 239–41, 343). Furthermore, both Sophocles (*TrGF* FF 553–61 Radt) and Euripides (*TrGF* FF 681a–686 Kannicht) wrote a tragedy titled *Scyrians* (Σκύριοι); the few remains are enough to prove that these plays centred respectively on Neoptolemus' and Achilles' adventures on the island.⁸² Admittedly, most of this is negative evidence: yet, it is rather puzzling that, if Theseus' bones really had been found a few decades before, all of these sources preferred Achilles' story on Scyros to Theseus'. They certainly show that fifth-century Athens safely and commonly connected Achilles with Lycomedes and Scyros, while the same cannot be proved for Theseus. What if none of these authors actually knew anything about Theseus' death on Scyros?

In fact, fifth-century theatre has a rather different perspective on the end of Theseus' reign.⁸³ It is convenient to recall it in comparison with fourth-

⁷⁵ *RE* 3A.1, s.v. Skiron (1).

⁷⁶ But note the very different Megarian version: Plut. *Thes.* 10.2–3; see Roberts (1912); Ampolo (1988) 208–9 l. 5; cf. § 2.2 on Bacchylides 18.

⁷⁷ On the *thesauros* see Morris (1992) 342–3; for further depictions see Brommer (1982) 14–18.

⁷⁸ *RE* 3A.1, s.v. Skiros (2).

⁷⁹ Cf. *RE* 3A.1, s.v. Skiros (1) and Skiron (3); Roberts (1912) 107; also cf. the cult of Athena Sciras at Phaleron, to which Theseus himself was at some point associated: Calame (1990) esp. 339–44.

⁸⁰ On the story, found in Homeric poems, the *Cypria*, and the *Ilias Parva*, see Huxley (1975); Collard and Cropp (2008) 159–61.

⁸¹ Cf. *LIMC*, s.v. Lykomedes (I). The *Achilleion* landing that is located on Scyros by late sources (e.g. Eust. 4.339 ll. 9–10) certainly depends on this tradition.

⁸² On Euripides' *Scyrians* see Aricò (1981); on Sophocles' see Pfeiffer (1933) and cf. e.g. *Ph.* 454–60.

⁸³ In general, see Mills (1997) on Theseus in Attic tragedy.

century sources since, as we have seen, the most ancient testimony on his ties with Scyros ('Aristotle' through Heraclides) dates—at best—to this period.

3. The Return of the King: A Fourth-Century Theme

The Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia* reflects a significant literary interest in Theseus and his relation to Athens. It represents the earliest witness of the story of the recovery of his bones from Scyros (§ 1) and, possibly, of his death there (cf. § 2.3). This suggests that we further explore the fourth-century context, when Theseus was certainly commonly regarded as 'the' Athenian hero.

There is abundant evidence that Theseus became a favourite subject of the so-called Attidographic genre.⁸⁴ The *Athenaion Politeia* substantially relied on these works,⁸⁵ and its account on Pisistratus' muster in the *Theseion* (§ 2.2) might derive from the same literary repository. Many of the Attidographers were also known to Plutarch, who provides a convenient list of fourth- and early third-century authorities on many topics related to Theseus (*Thes.* 26.1): Pherecydes, Hellanicus, Herodorus, Philochorus and *τινες ἄλλοι*.⁸⁶ Diodorus the Periegete certainly treated Theseus as well (cf. Diod. Ath. *FGrHist* 372 F 38 *ap. Plut. Thes.* 36.1), possibly in his work *On tombs*,⁸⁷ so did Cleidemus (*FGrHist* 323 FF 17–18 *ap. Plut. Thes.* 19.8–10, 27.2–7)⁸⁸ and Istros (*FGrHist* 334 F 7 *ap. Plut. Thes.* 34).⁸⁹ The numerous divergences that Plutarch detects among the Attidographers further suggest that they did not work on a settled corpus: more likely, they were freely expanding and rearranging available stories, with little regard for mutual inconsistencies. Notably, the death of Theseus itself was known in some variants (*Plut. Thes.* 35.4: note the use of *ἔνιοι δέ φασι* twice), all of which take place on Scyros. All seem to assume that Theseus left Athens as a result of a rather conventional political defeat (35.2–3),⁹⁰ which caused his forced resignation from monarchy: after Menes-

⁸⁴ A selection of additional 'Attidographic' passages on Theseus in Harding (2008) ch. 3. On Jacoby's questionable definition of Attidography as a 'genre' see Ottone (2010).

⁸⁵ See Camassa (1993); Meister (1994) esp. 121–6.

⁸⁶ On *Plut. Thes.* 26.1 see Bettalli (2006) 114–15; on Plutarch's access to Attidographic sources see Tuci (2010) 138–41; also cf. Zaccarini (2014a) esp. 175–8 on Plutarch and fourth-century sources.

⁸⁷ Cf. J. P. Sickinger's 'Commentary' on *BNJ* 372 F 38; on Diodorus' literary sources cf. FF 35, 39.

⁸⁸ On Clei(to)demus see Tuci (2010) esp. 143–57 on these fragments.

⁸⁹ And cf. F 10; on Istros' work see Berti (2009).

⁹⁰ The vocabulary reported by Plutarch faithfully presents Theseus' overthrow in the terms of 'classical' democratic struggle: cf. e.g. his *philoï* involved in a *stasis* (35.2), as well as keywords such as *μισοῦντας* (35.2) *κατεδημαγωγεῖτο καὶ κατεστασιάζετο* (35.3).

theus turned the demos against him, Theseus angrily fled, casting curses (35.3 ἀραῖ) upon the Athenians. This was the *aition* for a place in Athens which was known as *Araterion* (35.3).

These stories are definitely inconsistent with a well-known fifth-century version. To Euripides, Theseus neither lost his kingdom through a violent coup nor left Athens resentfully: on the contrary, he willingly yielded the throne to his beloved demos—as he proudly boasts in the *Suppliants* (403–8)—and, afterwards, he kept living in Attica.⁹¹ At the same time, there is no fifth-century attestation of Menestheus being Theseus' opponent.⁹² Thus, it is even harder to assume the contemporary, early existence of the story of Theseus' flight and death on Scyros. On the other hand, we know that Philochorus himself connected Theseus' curses to the Athenian place called *Aretesion* (*FGrHist* 328 F 19 *ap. EM*, s.v. Ἀρητήσιον)⁹³—probably, the source for Plutarch's *Araterion* which, one may note, is immediately followed by the story of the bones (36.1). By bringing the Attidographic stories on Theseus down into the third century, Philochorus greatly contributed to the development—if not the creation—of an authoritative tradition on the death and return of Theseus to Athens, as his preserved fragment on the *Theseion* (F 177) further suggests.⁹⁴

In addition to literary reworking, religious syncretism may have played a role: Attica featured many ancient, anonymous hero shrines often connected with iatric powers, and the stories on Theseus' death do gain medical elements at some point.⁹⁵ In this regard, it is worth at least recalling that unclear fourth-century literary evidence possibly locates the tomb of a ἥρως ἰατρός next to the *Theseion*.⁹⁶ It is not unlikely that, as Theseus gained higher status

⁹¹ See Harding (2008) 72; cf. Mills (1997) ch. 3, esp. 97–105.

⁹² Shapiro (2012) 173; cf. Harding (2008) 74, convincingly arguing that the Homeric Menestheus evolved into an 'evil' character as a result of the development of Theseus' myth. Note that one of the versions reported by Plutarch has Lycomedes murder Theseus (also) to please Menestheus (*Thes.* 35.4).

⁹³ Cf. *Et. Gen.*, s.v.; see Costa (2007) 188–9; Harding (2008) 72.

⁹⁴ Also consider F 18a on Theseus having converted all but four of his *Theseia* into *Hera-kleia* (already in Eur. *HF* 1329–30), probably trying to explain why the latter were so more numerous in Attica. Cf. above, §§ 2.2 and 2.3 on F 111.

⁹⁵ A tradition (re?)emerging within the School of Gaza (Aen. Gaz. *Teophr.* p. 60 Colonna; Choric. 17.2.84) connects Theseus' expulsion and death with a pestilence (λοιμός) in Athens which, by Apollo's instructions, could only be stopped by retrieving his bones; this story complies with the widespread custom of retrieving heroic bones in order to stop plagues (cf. Paus. 9.38.3), and possibly provides a further hint on the origins of the involvement of Delphi.

⁹⁶ Dem. 19.249 and 18.129; doubts in Wycherley (1957) 114–15. On the often unnamed medical heroes (a common feature: cf. e.g. Paus. 6.11.7–9; 9.38.3) in Attica see Gorrini (2001) esp. 305; Vikela (2006) esp. 45; cf. also Whitley (1994) 222, on unnamed archaic he-

and importance, he progressively assimilated features belonging to weaker, earlier cults located close to his sanctuary.

This interest in Theseus was not invented from scratch: as seen (§ 2), his role in Athenian culture had already developed through the fifth century. In the following decades, however, various authors actively reworked and enriched earlier traditions on many an aspect of the Attic past. As the hero-symbol of Athens, Theseus enjoyed a favourite place in this process, which greatly contributed in detailing and constructing his tales, including that of his post-mortem return to Athens.

4. Conclusions

Various parts of the story of the recovery of Theseus' bones are scattered through a number of sources ranging, at least, from the fifth century BC to the second century AD. These elements cannot be safely combined: to assume that the story of the bones was essentially settled as early as the conquest of Scyros in the 470s is to overlook a series of significant historiographical issues. It is impossible to juxtapose sources in order to build a cumulative story: a different methodological approach allows us to reconstruct the different layers of a diachronic tradition.

I propose the following sequence: (1) after 479 BC Athens conquered Scyros, possibly on the grounds of political, economic, military interests. At that time, although several of his myths were well known in Athens, Theseus did not enjoy a prominent religious status and major cult. (2) In connection with the Athenian hegemony over the Hellenic alliance, the increased cultural importance of Theseus as a collective Ionian hero eventually led to his prominence and religious definition in Athens: certainly well before 415, his civic cult was fully established as the urban *Theseion* was built. The story of the recovery of the bones from Scyros, along with its implications, was not introduced before the fourth century (3) when the long-lived literary template of bone transferal was applied to Theseus. The addition of Cimon to the conquest of Scyros, as an element unrelated to the bones (Diodorus), (4) might date from around the same period, but there is no evidence of his connection to the recovery or to the *Theseion* before (5) the Imperial period (Plutarch).

The largest core of the stories on the recovery of Theseus' bones probably coincides with the wider process of (re)arrangement of the mythical past of Attica, carried out by many authors from the fourth century especially. The so-called Attidography significantly helped bestow on the theme addi-

ro cults in Attica. Having a minor heroic tomb close to the sanctuary of Theseus opens new scenarios: one could go as far as to ask whether 'his' bones were really ever moved, or if they were recognised *a posteriori* as those of an earlier, unnamed hero.

tional details, antiquity, dramatic force, and conformity to settled beliefs, variously intensifying the bonds between Theseus and Athens. Essentially, the story of the return of Theseus' relics from Scyros may be regarded as an aspect of the literary, intentional construction of Athenian identity and history.⁹⁷ Cimon's involvement probably depends on the fact that his name was the only one surviving from the council of the ten *strategoï* for a large part of the 470s and 460s—which, however, does not authorise the attribution of pretty much any contemporary Athenian military enterprise to him. Plutarch freely rearranges narrative elements both in regard to earlier sources and between *his own* pair of versions. This is definitely consistent with Plutarch's strong tendency to adjust each biography in order to suit and 'hyper-characterise' the relevant protagonist, with little regard of any inconsistency that this might create among his own works.⁹⁸ This implies that it is hardly possible—and necessary—to reconcile Plutarch's stories mutually, let alone with the rest of the tradition. Not only Cimon can be safely removed from the story: it is impossible to determine Theseus' own connection with Scyros for the whole of the fifth century. Sources rather show that, traditionally, the island was strongly associated with Achilles, as much as they suggest that in the fifth century Theseus was not believed to have left Athens after a political overthrow. It is well known that the development of Theseus' myths is heavily indebted to those of Heracles:⁹⁹ perhaps Achilles had his share of influence as well in regard to Scyros. Actually, a convergence between these traditions is found as early as Stesichorus, who entwines Achilles' story with Theseus and with Scyros;¹⁰⁰ and by the time of Philostratus, Achilles' attack against Scyros was motivated by the desire to avenge Theseus' death (*Her.* 46.2).

As for the reasons which led to the connection between Scyros and Theseus, they lie out of our reach. However, besides the inspiration possibly provided by other myths of Achilles and Theseus (§ 2.3), we may recall relevant, contemporary events. Scyros was heavily contested during the fourth century: by Persians and Spartans (*Xen. Hell.* 4.8.15), until the Peace of Antalcidas

⁹⁷ On this notion in relation to oracles see Giangiulio (2010); on 'intentional history' see various contributions from the same volume, esp. H.-J. Gehrke, 'Greek Representations of the Past', 15–33, as well as Gehrke (2014).

⁹⁸ On such a tendency see relevant remarks in Marincola (2010); Muccioli (2012) 15–16, 133–44 and Zaccarini (2014a) 181, with additional bibliography. Specifically on Aristides, see Luppino Manes (2011) 84–5; Marincola (2012); on a different form of literary construction of Plutarch's 'mirage of Cimon' see Zaccarini (2011).

⁹⁹ Cf. Mills (1992) 336–7; Bowden (2005b), esp. on Herakles' prominence as a hero in Attica as late as the Persian wars. The imitation of Heracles' feats by Theseus is a literary *topos* (cf. *Plut. Thes.* 6.9; 11.1; 29.3); Francis (1990) ch. 3; Gianotti (2005) 29–38.

¹⁰⁰ Fr. 191 Page: Iphigenia, daughter of Helen and Theseus and spouse of Achilles, gave birth to Neoptolemus on Scyros itself (cf. *Sud.* A 4101; Huxley (1975) 247 on the tradition).

confirmed the Athenian rights of possession (5.1.31); and later by Philip II (Aeschin. 2.72; cf. [Dem.] 59.3). The *Athenaion Politeia* itself lists the island among the ‘legal’ Athenian cleruchies (62.2; cf. Andoc. 3.12–14). Perhaps the strategic, recurring importance of Scyros heightened the need to reinforce its Athenian possession through mythological claims.

The evidence analysed shows that we cannot reconstruct early fifth-century Athenian history by taking into consideration an anachronistic ‘propaganda’ centred on Theseus (cf. §§ 2.2–3). Accordingly, there is even less need to harmonise it with additional putative pieces of ‘Cimonian’ (or likewise contemporary) ideology, allegedly focused on other characters who do not emerge as Theseus’ opponents before the fourth century, such as Menestheus¹⁰¹ and Lycomedes.¹⁰² The recovery of Theseus’ bones was indeed ‘a carefully orchestrated drama’, as Robert Garland effectively calls it:¹⁰³ but it neither dates to the fifth century nor derives from a single personality. On the contrary, most of its details date to later times and should be largely credited to fourth- and third-century authorities, as well as to later developments up to Plutarch’s time.

Historical reconstruction should abide to the *termini* imposed by extant tradition. Even in the case of an ostensible lack of inconsistencies, subtle literary reworking, reception, and enrichment often implies that different traditions are disjointed: as such, they are mutually incompatible and should not be employed as supplementary evidence. As it deals with centrepieces of Athenian history, society, and culture, such as Theseus, Cimon, domestic politics, and post-Persian events, the literary story of the recovery of Theseus’ bones represents a relevant case study to show what we may—and, in my opinion, what we may *not*—learn from a composite and layered tradition.

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¹⁰¹ On which see Dolcetti (2007) esp. 67–8; on the stoa of the Herms and Menestheus see Zaccarini (forthcoming).

¹⁰² Cf. Piccirilli (1981) on Themistocles’ *genos*.

¹⁰³ Garland (1992) 85.

Summary: The Traditions on the Recovery of Theseus' Bones

Source period	Main events or components of the story	Related events or relevant details
Fifth century BC	<p>First half</p> <p>(Athenian conquest of Scyros after the Persian wars)</p>	<p>Ancient tradition on Achilles and Scyros</p> <p>Theseus well known in Athens</p> <p>Theseus Ionian cultural hero (Bacchylides 17–18)</p> <p>Literary <i>topos</i> of hero bones transferal</p>
	<p>Second half</p> <p>Athenian conquest of Scyros as part of the growing <i>arche</i> (Thuc. 1.98.2)</p>	<p><i>Theseion</i> certainly existed</p> <p>Theseus' resignation from monarchy: the peaceful version (Eur. <i>Suppl.</i>)</p>
Fourth century BC	<p>Death on Scyros? Recovery of the bones <i>περὶ τὰ Μηδικά?</i> (<i>Ath.Pol.</i>, <i>ap.</i> Heraclid.Lemb. <i>Exc.Pol.</i> 1)</p>	<p>Theseus hero-symbol of Athens</p> <p>Theseus' resignation from monarchy: the violent version</p>
	<p><i>Manteia</i> on the bone transfer? (<i>Ath.Pol.</i>, <i>ap. schol. ad Eur. Hipp.</i> 11)</p>	<p><i>Ath. Pol.</i> drawing upon Attidography</p> <p>Attidographers writing extensively on Theseus</p>
First century BC	<p>Recovery of the bones from Scyros (in a remote time?) (Diod. 4.62.4)</p>	<p>Earliest source mentioning both episodes</p> <p>Lack of any connection between the two passages</p>
	<p>Cimon conquered Scyros in the late 470s (Diod. 11.60.2)</p>	<p>11.60.2: possibly based on a fourth-c. tradition (Ephorus?); <i>P.Oxy.</i> 1610</p>
First–second century AD	<p>Cimon conquered Scyros 400 years after Theseus' death / ca. 476/5 (cf. Plut. <i>Cim.</i> 8 and <i>Thes.</i> 36.1)</p> <p><i>Chresmos</i> (pre-existing) / Delphic <i>manteuma</i> (concurrent?) (cf. Plut. <i>Cim.</i> 8.7 and <i>Thes.</i> 36.1)</p> <p>Cimon discovered the bones (Plut. <i>Cim.</i> 8.6–7)</p>	<p>Several inconsistencies between the two accounts</p> <p>Main source of additional elements: Thessalians, Delphi, etc.</p>

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