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# Antike Mythen

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## Gentrifying Genealogy: On the Genesis of the Athenian Autochthony Myth

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By the ancient myth of autochthony, we mean the belief current among numerous Greek and non-Greek peoples that they were *autochthones*: that they were the first humans to inhabit their part of the earth and that they had lived there ever since. As a statement about the past, this belief served first and foremost to substantiate social or political interests in the present. At Athens, the meaning of being *autochthón* changed over time; in this process, voices of different groups who had a stake in the myth can be discerned. New light is shed on the development of the myth of Athenian autochthony by the connection between mythical identity and public cults. It is a great pleasure to present this essay with warm congratulations to Fritz Graf, whose work on Greek myth and religion has been a source of inspiration for so many years.

### What does *autochthón* mean?

The first extant instances of the lexeme *αὐτόχθων* applied to peoples occur in Herodotus' historical-ethnographical writings<sup>1</sup>. Seven peoples inhabit the Peloponnese, he informs us, two of whom, the Arcadians and the Cynourii, are *autochthones*, still living where they lived as of old. The Cynourii are the only ones to consider themselves Ionians (Hdt. 8.73). Of the peoples in Libya two are *autochthones*, the Libyans and the Aethiopians, whereas the Phoenicians and Greeks are immigrants (Hdt. 4.197.7). Libya itself is named after Libya, who was an *autochthón* woman according to many Greeks, whereas Asia is named after Prometheus' wife (Hdt. 4.45.12). In Ionia, the

1 In what follows, I will transliterate *autochthón* without translating it, also in quotes of translations by others who render it as "born from the earth"; spelling of Greek names observes familiarity rather than consistency. Stephen Lambert kindly read the draft of this article critically.

Carians are *autochthones*, as they have never migrated (Hdt. 1.171), and the same holds for the Caunians in Crete (Hdt. 1.171) and the Boudini in Scythia (Hdt. 4.109). Thucydides tells the same about the Sicani, *autochthones* in Sicily (Hdt. 6.2.3)<sup>2</sup>. By labelling a group or an individual *autochthones*, both authors clearly mean that they were the first human beings to inhabit that spot of the earth, had never migrated and had always lived there<sup>3</sup>. The opposite of αὐτόχθονες are ἐπήλυδες, immigrants, who have come from elsewhere to settle. Indicating the background of the inhabitants of a place, *autochthon* versus migrant are descriptive labels used frequently by a range of ancient authors of the classical era for a variety of peoples<sup>4</sup>. When a people declared themselves to be *autochthones*, this implied that a core of the population had remained the same over time and was now represented by its living members, who could assert their *autochthôn* identity and uphold any interests based on this view of the past.

The compound *autochthôn* consists of the noun χθών (earth), which has a poetic ring, with the prefix αὐτο- ('same, self'), a combination with a range of potential meanings. In his analysis of this combination, Vincent Rosivach prefers αὐτο- in the sense of "having the same ... as another", and hence *autochthôn* to mean "always having the same land", implying common territorial origins fostering equality as a democratic value<sup>5</sup>. No traces of such equality are found in texts about other *autochthôn* peoples, however; the Thebans, for instance, had a longstanding tradition of oligarchies. Professing origins harking back to the earliest times and exclusion of later arrivals from the original core group, autochthony is rather a quality of the happy few<sup>6</sup>. When the *autochthones*, be they a small or a larger group, claim to be *ipso facto*

2 Similarly, Diod. 5.6.1 (after Timaeus); I could not consult Morales (2004).

3 Cf. Harpocr., *Suda* s.v. αὐτόχθονες.

4 Hellenicus of Lesbos *FGrH* 4 F 161 = Harpocr. *Suda* s.v. αὐτόχθονες = Hellenicus *FGrH* 323a F 27: *autochthôn* peoples are the Athenians, Arcadians, Aeginetai, and Thebans. Scylax (ed. *GGM*, Müller) 47: "some peoples on Crete came from other parts of Hellas, but some were *autochthones*"; 103: on Cyprus a. o. the Amathes are *autochthones*. Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 18c: Arcadians; F 31b: Parnasians on the Parnassos; F 145: Crete was named after Cretes, who being *autochthôn* was the king. Andron of Halicarnassus *FGrH* 10 F 16a = Strab. 10.4.6: On Crete the Eteocretai and the Cydones are *autochthones*, the others migrants (ἐπήλυδες) from Thessalia. Cf. Hall (1997) 19–33, on ethnic identity created in opposition to other ethnic identities.

5 On 'born from the earth', a 4th-century expansion of the meaning of *autochthôn*, see below; cf. Rosivach (1987) 298–301; Hall (1997) 54. On Athenian autochthony as foundation of democratic equality supported by the Cleisthenic *phylai*, Montanari (1981); but on inequality in the *phylai*, see below. Loraux (1986; 1993; 2000) notices the "aristocratic" values of autochthony but supposes that democracy hides these values; Thomas (1989) 213–221, rightly points out (n. 67) that this aristocratic vocabulary is applied to democracy.

6 Thomas (1989) 213–221.

equals, this imagined equality can hide internal differences, as Nicole Loraux has eloquently argued<sup>7</sup>.

If the epithet evokes a sense of equal sharing in its 4th-century uses<sup>8</sup>, the first extant occurrence of αὐτόχθων in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* of 458 suggests a different meaning. When the prefix αὐτο- refers to a thing that is a natural extension of something else or to the closeness of two elements<sup>9</sup>, the epithet evokes an idea of immutability, of being rooted in the earth. In this sense Aeschylus used it in what may be its original coinage, considering the playwright's well-known propensity for new, expressive adjectives. In the opening scene of the play, the herald describes the ruin brought by Paris upon his own city: πανώλεθρον αὐτόχθονον πατρῶον ἔθρισεν δόμον; "Cast in a suit for rapine and for theft as well, he has lost the plunder and has razed in utter destruction his father's house and the very place thereof", as H. W. Smyth translates the passage<sup>10</sup>. The adjective *patrōios* does not merely refer to one's father, however, but rather to one's fathers, that is the ancestral tradition and heritage passed down over many generations. *Autochthōn* here evokes the foundations of Troy, built by the gods on the very spot that Paris should have respected and protected. In sum, the prevalent meaning of αὐτόχθων captures existence on this location from the very beginning. Once the word had been created, it could be applied in other contexts, such as to peoples' origins, as Herodotus and Thucydides were soon to do.

Being the first is not only descriptive, but can also convey particular values. In ancient Greece, the first person to do something or to be somewhere (*archēgetēs*) was considered to have infused his presence into the place or action, making it his own and thus a thing to be transmitted to his descendants. When conceived as such a first event, the past was not merely what had happened (long) before, but first and foremost a prefiguration of the present. Claims in the present would carry more weight if one could prove to be the legitimate descendant and heir of the first person to have this privilege. Stories about autochthony and other myths about origins thus

7 See above, n. 5.

8 Noticed e.g. in *Lexici Seguiriani Synagoge (Lexica Graeca Minora, ed. K. Latte/H. Erbse, Hildesheim 1965)* s.v. αὐτόχθων: τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως.

9 Rosivach (1987) 299: section C: Hes. *op.* 433: ἄροτρον αὐτόγυον 'with a natural γῆς branching from the stock'; Aesch. *Cboeph.* 163: βέλη αὐτόκωπα 'weapons with their own handles'; D: family relations, αὐτοκασίγνητος 'one's very own brother/sister'.

10 Aesch. *Ag.* 536 (transl. H. W. Smyth, Loeb). This case would meet Rosivach's expectation (1987) 299: "it seems probable that the source of the word was Attic, and one might hazard a guess that it was Attic drama which was responsible for its popularization." Hesiod calling Pelasgos αὐτόχθων (Hes. fr. 110 Most = 160 MW) is not a quote but a paraphrase in Apollod. 2.1.1 and 3.8.1, hence not an earlier occurrence.

can be understood as belonging to the wider category of myths of descent and mythical genealogy, featuring peoples, families and individuals as representatives of social and cultural identities that mattered to the narrator's time and place. Jonathan Hall has convincingly argued that the main interest of these stories was the creation of an ethnic identity that suited the needs of the present, particularly claims to territory and citizenship<sup>11</sup>. In such a context, the label *autochthôn* was not so much a historical-ethnographical description, but rather a political value-term, evoking the (mythical) past as a justified cause of contemporary ambitions. Autochthony therefore was a suitable theme in political and epideictic oratory, as Aristotle observed in the *Rhetoric*: "Noble birth (*eugeneia*), in the case of a nation or a state, means that its members or inhabitants are *autochthones* or of long standing; that its first members were famous as leaders."<sup>12</sup>

The first case of such a political use is to be found again in Herodotus. Before the battle of Salamis, he tells us, the Greeks quarrelled about who among them were most entitled to leadership of the navy. The Athenians claimed pride of place, saying (Hdt. 7.161): "we are the oldest people, as we are the only ones of the Greeks who never migrated."<sup>13</sup> Herodotus does not use the word *autochthones* here but clearly does mean it. The argument of the Athenians would be especially effective against their chief competitors, the Syracusans, descendants of colonists and hence migrants into the region they now inhabited. The direct speech of the Athenians in this passage points to the author of the *Histories* as the origin of these words<sup>14</sup>, suggesting that the idea of the Athenians' identity as *autochthones* was current in the 430s. This date is confirmed by two passages in Thucydides. Describing the early history of Greece, Thucydides states that Attica had known few migrations due to the poverty of the soil (Thuc. 1.2.5 f.)<sup>15</sup>. As a result – in the words Thucydides attributes to Pericles in the Funeral Oration (Thuc. 2.36.1) – the Athenians lived in Attica from the earliest times and consequently grew

11 Hall (1997); also Kühn (2006) 15–52; on the sown men, 109–113.

12 Aristot. *rhet.* 1.5.5; 1360b30–3 (trans. J. H. Freese, Loeb).

13 Hdt. 7.161: ἀρχαιότατον μὲν ἔθνος παρεχόμενοι, μόνου δὲ ἔόντες οὐ μετανάσται Ἑλλήνων.

14 De Bakker (2007).

15 Thuc. 1.2.5 f: "Attica [...] was free from internal quarrels from the earliest times by reason of the thinness of its soil, and therefore was inhabited by the same people always (ἄνθρωποι ὄκουν οἱ αὐτοὶ αἰεὶ). [...] it was owing to these migrations (elsewhere) that the other parts of Hellas did not increase in the same way as Attica; for the most influential men of the other parts of Hellas, when they were driven out of their own countries by war or sedition, resorted to Athens as being a firmly settled community, and, becoming citizens, from the earliest times made the city still greater." (transl. C. F. Smith, Loeb).

strong<sup>16</sup>. It is remarkable that both historians apply the word *autochthôn* to other peoples but not to the Athenians<sup>17</sup>, yet conveying the very message the word carries. A possible reason for this avoidance will be discussed later on.

Beside the implicit reference in Pericles' *epitaphios*, the 5th century offers no extant instances of epideictic oratory drawing on the theme of autochthony<sup>18</sup>. Pericles too, in Thucydides' account, did not build his evocation of Athens' value on its mythical origins, but on its civic virtue. In the second half of the 5th century, however, orators presumably drew on the theme frequently, giving the artificial word *autochthôn* a wider currency. This can be inferred from its frequent use by Herodotus – emphatically not applied to Athenians – and especially from the way in which Aristophanes holds up a distorting mirror of the Athenians' being *autochthones*, for instance in *Wasps* of 422:

(Chorus leader:) Spectators, if any of you has noticed our appearance and sees our wasp waists, and wonders what's the point of our stingers, I can easily edify him, 'be he ever so unversed before'. We who sport this kind of rump are the only truly indigenous native Athenians, a most virile breed (Ἀπτικοὶ μόνοι δικαίως ἔγγενεῖς αὐτόχθονες, ἀνδρικότατον γένος) and one that very substantially aided this city in battle (= Salamis)<sup>19</sup>.

The passage seems to reflect appeals to courage due to autochthony in a comic mode, as does a comparable scene in *Lysistrata* (411)<sup>20</sup>. The evocation of 'aristocratic' qualities inherent in autochthony was now applied to all citizens, obliging them to *aretê* and *andreia*<sup>21</sup>.

In the 4th century, Athenian orators frequently drew on Athens' autochthony as a source of civic virtue to live up to. Xenophon, however, did not think it inappropriate to have the Arcadians, equally famous for being *autochthones*, voice exactly the same feelings as were common in Athenian rhetoric, lifting the spirits among them in a situation of distress in 363:

16 Thuc. 2.36.1: "For this land of ours, in which the same people never ceased to dwell (αἰεὶ οἰκοῦντες) in an unbroken line of successive generations, they (the ancestors) by their valour transmitted to our times a free state." (transl. C. F. Smith, Loeb).

17 Except Hdt. 9.73.11 on an individual: Titacus, an *autochthon* inhabitant of Aphidna, who informed the Dioskouri where Theseus and Peirithous had hidden Helena; compare Photius s.v. ἀμψίτοπος: "Aphidnos, son of Earth who has no mother", rendering the *autochthôn* as earthborn.

18 Pace Loraux (1986) and Detienne (2001/2002), who unfoundedly assume that all *epitaphioi* of the 5th century treated the same themes as some of the 4th century did, and in the same way, taking *autochthôn* always to mean 'earthborn' (see also below).

19 Aristoph. *Vesp.* 1071–1078 (transl. J. Henderson, Loeb).

20 Aristoph. *Lys.* 1082–1084 (transl. J. Henderson, Loeb) where the Athenians can no longer conceal their sexual desire: "Look, now I see these native sons (τούσδε τοὺς αὐτόχθονας) holding their cloaks away from their bellies too, like men wrestling!"

21 See also Loraux, above n. 5 and 7.

Now, however, there appeared a certain Lycomedes of Mantinea, a man inferior to none in birth, foremost in wealth, and ambitious besides, and filled the Arcadians with self-confidence, saying that it was to them alone that Peloponnesus was a fatherland, since they were the only autochthonous stock that dwelt therein, and that the Arcadian people was the most numerous of all the Greek peoples<sup>22</sup>.

Clearly, Xenophon did not expect his readers to see anything incongruent in several Greek peoples claiming that they alone of all the neighbouring Greeks were *autochthones*. The evidence so far suggests that autochthony myths were invoked in oratory to sustain an identity which was politically meaningful to one's own community first of all, but also suitable to impress the outside world.

### Autochthony and descent

The grammarian Apollodorus of Athens (2nd century BC) thought the Athenians were called *autochthones* because they were the first to work the land (χθών), that is the earth (γῆ), when it was empty<sup>23</sup>. Usually, however, the fact of autochthony is not explained: it just exists to explain something else<sup>24</sup>. Archaic and classical sources reflect an abundance of stories of descent as components of social identity. The focus of such stories is firmly on heroes, heroines and royal families, with a people joining them somehow at some point, and the order in which the protagonists appear in mythical chronology clearly suits the aspirations of the present<sup>25</sup>. In genealogical myths, all connections are represented as kinship relations: descent from parents means inheriting their material property (land) and immaterial qualities (being, character, skills, knowledge). Siblings share this inheritance equally, each acquiring the part (*keléros*) he or she is destined to have<sup>26</sup>. This idea of inheritance is essential: physical descent from the parents/predecessor is the prevalent mode in mythical stories, but not indispensable. Vocabulary of descent also captured relationships maintained over time in cases in which the 'heirs' had a common stake in privileges or property devolved upon them from an archetypal predecessor who was not considered a literal (physical) ancestor.

22 Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.23 (transl. C. L. Brownson, Loeb); cf. Demosth. *or.* 19.261 (343): "[the Arcadians] who ought to pride themselves as highly as you upon their independence – for you and they are the only *autochthón* peoples in Greece".

23 Apollodorus (*FGrH* 244 F 106) *Peri Theôn*; Harpocr. s. v. αὐτόχθονες.

24 Harpocr. s. v. αὐτόχθονες continues: "but others say that they were not immigrants"; this is a tautology.

25 On descent stories of Greek peoples, Hall (1997); of aristocratic families in Athens, Thomas (1989).

26 On Greek inheritance patterns, Patterson (1998), Cox (1998); reflected in myth Berman (2007) 128–133; in genealogical myths Thomas (1989) 173–195; claims to land in genealogical myths, Malkin (1994).

*Genos* and its cognates included a wide range of meanings, expressing one's belonging to a group and claims to inheritance as part of one's identity, in which the implication of physical descent is essentially ambiguous<sup>27</sup>. A good example of this vocabulary of descent, that I label 'metaphorical', are the Homeridai who perpetuated Homer's poetic legacy without claiming to be his physical descendants. In the narrative process of identity formation, genealogical myths show the role of *autochthones* – whether called so or not – as the founders of the present stakeholders in an inheritance representing claims to territory and excellence.

*Autochthón* was not the same as born from the earth (γηγενής or χθόνιος)<sup>28</sup>. To have one's origins in the earth was not an unambiguous asset, as exemplified by numerous unattractive creatures that emerged in this way: the Gigantes who were justly destroyed by Olympian Zeus<sup>29</sup>, or the warriors springing from the earth after Kadmos had sown dragon's teeth, who had to be killed before Thebes could be founded in earnest<sup>30</sup>. Some earthborn creatures fulfil a more positive role, however. Many myths of origins of Greek *ethné* begin with a figure who made the earth or river from which she had sprung inhabitable for humans; if this figure is male, females arrive on the scene to guarantee offspring<sup>31</sup>. After this earthborn or river-born beginning, a change in characters is needed to prepare the settlement of a coherent human population with a socio-cultural identity and/or the foundation of a city. This stage can take the shape of a rupture, for instance the arrival of a culture-hero from elsewhere to found a city<sup>32</sup>. A more gradual transformation takes place when the earthborn creates offspring with a human who just happens to be there. Many stories simply take the existence of humans at some early point in time for granted, humans who could well come to be called *autochthón*, as they were indeed the very first

27 See clearly and concisely Patterson (1998) 48–50, 87.

28 See also Rosivach (1987) 296.

29 Hes. *theog.* 697: Τιτῆνας χθόνιους; metaphorical use: Aristoph. *Ran.* 825: γηγενεῖ φουθήματι ("with his gigantic blast"); comic reversal: Aristoph. *Av.* 824: "It is the Plain of Phlegra, where the Gods outshot the Earthborn (τοὺς γηγενεῖς) at bragging!"

30 Eur. *Bacch.* 538–541 χθόνιος; 264 γηγενής; cf. Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 22a–b. Invective use: Aristoph. *Nub.* 853 (423): "Is this the kind of ingenuity you've learned in your recent sojourn παρὰ τοὺς γηγενεῖς = with that scum of the earth?" (transl. J. Henderson, Loeb).

31 Paus. 3.1.1: Lelex, earthborn first king of Laconia; Paus. 7.2.5: Anax, earthborn king of Miletus; Paus. 8.1.4 quoting archaic poet Asios: Pelasgos, earthborn first inhabitant of Arcadia; on the distinction created between Arcadians and other Greeks in archaic and classical myths, Nielsen (2002) 6–72. Rivers, like earth, source of life: Parker (2005) 430.

32 On such stories, Blok (1996) 86–90 with bibl.; Hall (1997) 55; Malkin (1994) 98–111.



to inhabit the area. A crucial role falls to the women (daughters of kings) who become the mothers of children of (semi-)divine fathers<sup>33</sup> or fulfil the role of the uxori-local princess around whose hearth the newly-created kingdom can develop<sup>34</sup>. Embodying the human family representing human society, these women form an indispensable link between (semi-)divine and human existence.

In Attica, for instance, according to some accounts, the first earthborn was Ogygos, after him came a deluge, then an *autochthôn* Actaios, whose daughter Agraulos married the (second) earthborn Cecrops, who was succeeded by their son, the *autochthôn* Cranaos – here, another deluge is occasionally inserted – and finally Erichthonios, another earthborn, appeared; after him, the inhabitants are all humans and so are their kings<sup>35</sup>. The repeating sequence is obviously the result of fitting various accounts into one, comprehensive genealogy<sup>36</sup>. Likewise, the ‘first’ and ‘very first’ human kings of Athens could swap places and even multiply<sup>37</sup>. The Argive genealogies show a similar expansion in later generations and fewer earthborn figures at the beginning: Phoroneus, the first human, was the son of Inachos, a river who was the son of Oceanos and Thetys, and (a princess?) Melia<sup>38</sup>. All genealogies next feature Phoroneus’ daughter Niobe, who had a son, Argos, with Zeus; some add *autochthôn* Pelasgos as a second son<sup>39</sup>. Aeschylus added another *gēgenēs*, Palaichthôn (= ‘ancient land’), as a forebear of Pelasgos into Argive genealogy<sup>40</sup>. In sum, genealogical myths often postulate earthborn beginnings and *autochthôn* humans side by side or the one following the other, with or without (kin)relations between them, until at some point the lines may – but do not necessarily – merge.

In Athenian genealogical myths, the heros Erechtheus played a prominent role, but neither his earthborn beginnings nor his relations with human

33 See e.g. the 6th-century *Catalogue of women* (Ps.-Hesiod) and the overviews in prose made by Hecataeus of Miletus (*FGrH* 1 F 13–35); compare Creousa, below. Similar roles of local nymphs/princesses in founding stories of *apoikiai*, hiding the violence of settlement, Dougherty (1993).

34 Hall (1997) 89 for cases of uxori-locality in Argive myths; compare Praxithea, below.

35 Hellanicus of Lesbos *FGrH* 323a F 10; Philochoros *FGrH* 328 F 92 (Ogygos an *autochthôn*); Apollod. 3.14.

36 Duplication is often the result of turning oral accounts into written overviews; cf. Henige (1974).

37 Cf. Parker (1987).

38 See Acusilaos of Argos *FGrH* 2 F 23a–b; 25a–b; on the Argive genealogies, Hall (1997) 67–107, showing five different genealogies with varying positions of Phoroneus in the stemma; the stemmata (81–85) quadruple in size.

39 Hes. fr. 110 Most (= 160 MW).

40 Aesch. *Suppl.* 250f. (ca. 463): Pelasgos: “I am Pelasgos, offspring of Palaichthon whom the earth brought forth (τοῦ γηγενεῶς), the *archégetés* of this land.”

society are clear or consistent<sup>41</sup>. The Catalogue in the *Iliad* 2.546–548 mentions “the men who held Athens, the strong-founded citadel, the demos of great-hearted Erechtheus, whom once Athena tended after the grain-giving fields had born him, and established him to be in Athens in her own rich temple”<sup>42</sup>. The passage testifies to the strong bond between Erechtheus, here as an earth-born creature, Athena and the people of Athens. Herodotus, too, knew Erechtheus to be *gégénēs* (Hdt. 8.55), perhaps echoing the *Iliad*, where also his cult on the Akropolis with an annual sacrifice is mentioned<sup>43</sup>. The *Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.* 7.81) portrays Athena going to Athens and entering the house of Erechtheus, a scene evoking Erechtheus in his role of king-hero, who became popular in Athenian drama and visual arts of the 5th century. Several figures of this mythological complex were depicted in Athenian art since the early 6th century, such as a black-figure fragment of the 580s showing Cecrops with his daughters and vase scenes with Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos, his daughters to whom Athena had entrusted the care of baby Erichthonios, on their own<sup>44</sup>. Erechtheus is represented perhaps for the first time ca. 510–500 in black-figure scenes, as the founder of the chariot-races in the Panathenaia<sup>45</sup>. Founding the festival itself was later attributed to Erichthonios, who at some point emerged as Erechtheus’ earthborn *alter ego*<sup>46</sup>. In visual art, birth from the earth is typical of the child Erichthonios, whereas Erechtheus figures as an adult king, once present at Erichthonios’ birth, elsewhere among the hero-kings of Athens or as a father witnessing the abduction of his daughters<sup>47</sup>. Scenes with the birth of Erichthonios are certainly identified from around 500–480 in black-figure and 470–460 in red-figure

- 41 Kron (1976) 32–39; Miller (1983); Parker (1987); Rosivach (1987); Kearns (1989) 110–133, 160.
- 42 Transl. R. Lattimore, slightly modified; 6th-century interpolation of the lines into the Homeric text possible but not plausible considering the antiquity of his cult on the Akropolis, Kron (1976) 32–37, Kearns (1989) 110–115.
- 43 Hom. *Il.* 2.550 f.: of bulls and rams; *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 1357 = *Sacrificial Calendar of Athens*, face A, l. 3 (Lambert (2002): a lamb; cf. Kron (1976) 40–55.
- 44 Kron (1981) no. 1; 4. Shapiro (1998), fig. 1 Athens, Nat. Museum, Akropolis 585a.
- 45 Evidence Kron (1976) 74–77; in art Kron (1988) no. 49 f.
- 46 Founding of Panathenaia: Kearns (1989) 161; earliest attested stories about Erichthonios as son of Hephaistos and Earth in Pindar and an epic *Danais*: *Hellenicus FGtH* 323a F 27 = Harpocr. s. v. αὐτόχθονες. Hephaistos’ pursuit of Athena is attested ca. 460 on a red-figure amphora: Shapiro (1998) 138, fig. 7, n. 53.
- 47 Kron (1988) no. 1 (abf); 3, 4 (arf); no. 7 (ca. 440–430) Erechtheus witnessing Erichthonios’ birth, inscription a. o. ΕΡΙΧΘΟΝΙΟΣ; ΕΡΕΧΘΕΥΣ; no. 9a (third quarter 5th century) ΕΡΥΧΘ[ΟΝΙΟΣ]. Erechtheus among hero-kings and phyle-heroes: no. 78–80; Erechtheus as father of daughters: no. 55 f., 58–62, e. g. of Oreithyia, abducted by Boreas; by the time of Phanodemos *FGtH* 325 F 4 (Phot., *Suda* s. v. Παρθένοι) his daughters are six in number. Shapiro (1998) 133 on the representation of Erichthonios as a child; on his cult, Baudy (1992).

vase paintings, showing Athena, Hephaistos, Cecrops (often with a snake-shaped body) and Gê in various combinations. His name is also attested in the late 5th century as Erychthonios, with the stem ἐρύομαι meaning “the one who protects the land” reminiscent of his kinsman Erysichthôn<sup>48</sup>.

Such visual representations cannot be read unambiguously as allusions to the autochthony of all Athenians<sup>49</sup>, but they show how strongly ‘historical’ myths were connected to the cultic traditions of Athens. The myths about the early Athenian kings, notably Erechtheus and Cecrops who, as phyle-heroes, had conferred their heritage to the Athenian people, came under permanent (re)construction in the 5th century. Pindar in *Isth.* 2 (ca. 470) refers to the Athenians as Erechtheidai, without implying physical descent<sup>50</sup>, and the latter is even less likely in *Pyth.* 7.10 (486 BC) where Ἐρεχθέος ἄστροί refers to the Alkmaeonidai. ‘Erechtheidai’ thus seems to indicate the Athenians as ‘the people of Erechtheus’, the metaphorical heirs of the heros taking care of his cult or following his rule as a king, reminiscent of the Homeric passages, rather than as ‘real’ descendants<sup>51</sup>. The ambiguity of descent vocabulary prevails in most cases where the Athenians are addressed or described as Erechtheidai, whether in a serious way or mockingly<sup>52</sup>. The παῖδες Ἥφαιστου who built the road for Apollo leading to Delphi, mentioned in the Pythia’s opening speech in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* (458), could be the Athenians when interpreted as referring to Erichthonios, son of Hephaistos and Gê. Yet this reading, too, is neither unequivocally clear nor compelling: ‘child’ (παῖς) comprises a similar ambiguity as the suffix *-idai* concerning (physical) descent and (metaphorical) dependence<sup>53</sup>.

48 Parker (1987) 210; Skempis (2008); for Erychthonios, *LIMC* 9a (see n. 47).

49 Shapiro (1998) 139.

50 Pind. *I.* 2.19 f.: καὶ τόθι κλειναῖς κτ’ Ἐρεχθειδᾶν χαριτεσσιν ἀραρώς / ταῖς λιπαραῖς ἐν Ἀθήναις “and when he (Xenokrates of Akragas) gained the glorious favor of the Erechtheidai in shining Athens, he had no cause to blame the chariot-preserving hand” (transl. W. H. Race, Loeb); Pindar rather seems to refer to Erechtheus as *archégetês* of the Panathenaic chariot-races.

51 Also in Soph. *Ai.* 201 f.: ναὸς ἀρωγοὶ τῆς Αἴαντος, γενεᾶς χθονίων ἀπ’ Ἐρεχθειδᾶν, “Crew of the ship of Ajax, descendants of the underworld Erechtheidai”. The play, like the *Iliad*, portrays Ajax and his men as Salaminians (cf. Kearns 1989, 141); if thus not originally Athenians, the (metaphorical) descent of Ajax’ men from Erechtheus seals the 6th-century incorporation of Salamis in Attica by projecting this connection, institutionally confirmed in the Athenian phyle Aiantis and encapsulated in the genealogical myths of the Philaidai (Thomas 1989, 161–165) into the past. On the date, Garvie (1998) 8: “nothing contradicts a date in the 440s, but certainty is impossible.”

52 Serious: Eur. *Med.* 824; *Hipp.* 151; *Suppl.* 387, 681, 702; *Herc.* 1166; *Ion* 24, 1056, 1060; *Phoen.* 852; mockingly: Aristoph. *Equ.* 1015, 1030 (424).

53 Aesch. *Eum.* 13; cf. Amelesagoras *FGH* 330 F 1. Schol. ad loc.: “the Athenians”, hence also in comm. ad loc. Sommerstein (1990); Collard (2002); Parker (2005) 86 in

So far, we have seen two narratives of mythical origins in Athens. One, going back beyond the 6th century, claims a close connection between the Athenians and the hero Erechtheus, who had earthborn origins in some traditions but became increasingly prominent as a human king of Attica. And one which claims the Athenians to be *autochthones*, that is the first human inhabitants of Attica who never migrated; this idea cannot be dated with certainty before the 430s but may have been around then for some time. Both narratives seem to have been separate strands, as was usual in such myths of ethnic and kingship genealogy. In the 4th century, however, epideictic and political oratory shows, beside instances of the traditional idea of autochthony, a new version which combines both strands into *autochthones-because-born-from-the-earth*<sup>54</sup>. Although *autochthón* is, as we just saw, distinct from *gēgenés*, the meaning of the prefix *auto-* is ambiguous and allows a subtle change from 'belonging to the earth' into 'rooted in the earth' and hence 'springing from it'. The value of Athens' connections with Erechtheus may have stimulated this change, as Vincent Rosivach has argued.

The first datable signs of this merging appear in the last decades of the 5th century, in Euripides' *Erechtheus* of the late 420s or slightly later, and *Ion* of ca. 410. In *Erechtheus* the protagonist is king of Athens and married to Praxithea, daughter of rivergod Cephisos<sup>55</sup>. When an invading army of Thracians led by Eumolpos, a son of Poseidon, threatens to take Athens, one of the daughters of Erechtheus and Praxithea voluntarily fulfils an oracle to sacrifice herself to save the city and her sisters follow her example. Praxithea professes her willingness to sacrifice her daughter because of the high value she accords the city, stating "we are an autochthonous people, not introduced from elsewhere"<sup>56</sup>. In the ensuing battle, Erechtheus slays Eumolpos, Poseidon kills Erechtheus and strikes him deep into the earth<sup>57</sup>,

context of Pythais. Doubt about "Athenians": Verrall (1908): the servants (not sons or children) of Hephaistos, "Athenians" as in schol. "artificial and unnecessary". Podlecki (1989) ad loc.: "craftsmen". Perhaps the Cabiri, children of Cabiro, daughter of Proteus, and Hephaistos (Strab. 10.3.21; Pherecydes *FGH* 3 F 48).

54 A passage in Lys. 2.17: "[the ancestors] had not been collected, like most peoples, from every quarter, and had not settled in a foreign land after driving out its people, but being *autochthones* they had gained the same land as mother and fatherland." (αὐτόχθονες ὄντες τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκέκτηντο μητέρα καὶ πατρίδα) is ambiguous, referring to the earth either as a 'literal' mother or as an equivalent of πατρίς, μητρὶς being very rare. Unambiguous: Demosth. *or.* 60.4; Hyp. *or. fun.* 7; Isocr. 12.124–126 (*Panath.*); 4.24 f. (*Paneg.*); unambiguous but ironical, autochthony as 'noble lie': Plat. *rep.* 414 f.; *Men.* 237a–238b, with Saxonhouse (1986) 258.

55 On the play, its themes and date, Collard/Cropp/Lee (1995) 148–155.

56 Eur. fr. 360.7 f. (ed. Collard/Cropp/Lee = Lycurg. *Leocr.* 100): ἡ πρῶτα μὲν λεῶς οὐκ ἑπακτὸς ἄλλοθεν, αὐτόχθονες δ' ἔφμεν.

57 Eur. fr. 370.59 f. (ed. Collard/Cropp/Lee): κατὰ χθονὸς κρύψας Ἐρεχθεῖα.

but Athens is saved. The play ends with Athena founding cults and priest-hoods: the girls will be worshipped as the Hyakinthides<sup>58</sup>, Erechtheus will receive a sanctuary and cult as Poseidon Erechtheus, Praxithea is to be the first priestess of Athena Polias – both cults the province of the *genos* Eteoboutadai – and Eumolpos will be the ancestor of the *genos* Eumolpidai, who provided important priests for the Mysteries at Eleusis, notably the hierophant. The reign of the Erechtheidai is continued by an adopted son. Although the fragmented state of the text prevents certainty on the play's depiction of Erechtheus' origins, he acts as a human king who is heroised after his death and now resides in the earth. Praxithea represents river-born beginnings. The plot transforms the protagonists into the *archégetai* of the most prominent *gené* serving the most prominent Athenian public cults, creating a connection between the semi-divine early kings and present-day human society. In this process, Praxithea plays a pivotal role, merging her 'chthonic' origins with the Athenian community of *autochthón* humans ("we are an autochthonous people") and safekeeping continuity of the royal household.

A similar role falls in *Ion* to Creousa, the human daughter of king Erechtheus, descendant of earthborn (γηγενής) Erichthonios, who was raped by Apollo and hid the child Ion in a cave. Her husband, the Dorian Xouthos, and she have no children and the couple turns to the sanctuary in Delphi for help. Intervention by the oracle first makes Xouthos accept Ion as his own, next reveals the true relations between mother and son, unknown to Xouthos. As a result of Apollo's schemes, Ion is accepted as a citizen of Athens because his mother is Athenian. In the finale, Athena creates citizen identities by descent: Ion, as a descendant of Erechtheus, will be the legitimate king of Athens and will have four sons, who will give their names to the four (pre-Cleisthenic) tribes Geleontes, Hopletes, Argades, and Aigikores who inhabit Athena's land<sup>59</sup>. Their descendants will go to Ionia, whereas Creousa and Xouthos will have two sons, Doros and Achaios. In *Ion*, the transformation of earthborn origin into human society revolves around Creousa as a mother, the physical and ideological core of the human (Athenian) household. The Athenians and Ionians are descendants of Apollo, the patron deity of the Ionian phratries, and Creousa<sup>60</sup>, and share her earthborn beginnings with the Dorians and Achaians.

58 On their cult, Kearns (1989) 201 f.; Parker (2005) 399, 446.

59 ἐπώνυμοι γῆς κάπιφυλίων χθονὸς λαῶν ἔσονται; cf. Hdt. 5.66. On Athens' changing attitudes towards an Ionian identity in the 6th–5th century, Hall (1997) 51–56. Ἐρεχθεῖδαι refers to the Athenians in Eur. *Ion* 20–26, but in 1057–1060 only to the kings.

60 The Ionians shared the phratries-festival Apatouria, but Ion had no cultic role in the festival; Kearns (1989) 109; Lambert (1998) ch. 4; Parker (2005) 458–461.

In both plays but most markedly in *Ion*, Euripides treats the Athenian claim of autochthony with deep irony and calls the exclusion of others from the *autochthôn* population into question. In both plays the phrase “an immigrant is a citizen in name, but not in his actions” captures a policy which is detrimental to the city<sup>61</sup>. In *Erechtheus*, Praxithea loses all that is her own and the royal house is continued through an adopted son; *Ion* shows that the myth of autochthony is no more than a noble lie<sup>62</sup>.

### Cult and identity

Although the presentist purposes of genealogical myths make a search for historical data as the origin of such stories quite pointless, it is nevertheless worthwhile to confront the Athenian autochthony myth with historical reality for a moment. It was widely known in classical Athens that in the 6th century many craftsmen and mercenaries had come to Attica from elsewhere, that Solon's laws had encouraged granting citizenship to these immigrants and that after the *diapsephismos* following on the fall of the Peisistratidai again people of non-Athenian descent had been made citizens and included in Cleisthenes' political organisation<sup>63</sup>. In the aristocratic elite, it was not unusual to marry non-Athenians and these families maintained strong family memories closely interwoven with Athenian public life; no matter how they manipulated their genealogies, they did not hide the non-Athenian origins of their families or of individual members<sup>64</sup>. Until Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451/450, children of such unions were considered Athenian citizens<sup>65</sup>. On a mythical level, stories abounded about refugees who received a safe home at Athens after a troublesome life elsewhere, the memory of which was kept alive by enactment in Athenian drama. In sum, historical memory could hardly envisage that the Athenian people did not include immigrants; this may have been the reason for the remarkable reluctance of Herodotus and Thucydides to call the Athenians *autochthones*<sup>66</sup>. There was little ground,

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- 61 Eur. fr. 360.12 f.; *Ion* 668–675. Ion to be excluded from Athenian society due to alleged non-Athenian birth, Eur. *Ion* 589–675.
- 62 Saxonhouse (1986) convincingly shows Euripides' ironic treatment of the autochthony theme as a noble lie (see above, n. 54) and his portrayal of women's crucial role as mothers in *Ion*.
- 63 Comp. Thuc. 1.2.5 f. (n. 15); on citizenship procedures involved in this process, Lambert (1998) 261–267.
- 64 Thomas (1989) ch. 2, 3 and 5.
- 65 Inter-marriage with non-Athenians was possible, but perhaps not very frequent, Blok (2009b).
- 66 Compare Herodotus' irony (1.144–147) about the mixed composition of the Ionians who prided themselves on their purity of descent.

then, for an Athenian claim to be *autochthones*, unless one were to imagine that a core group of the population had indeed always lived in Attica, embodying continuity over time; it has to be a core group in the sense that the persons involved could represent the identity of Athens in a meaningful way.

This Athenian identity was expressed and maintained in the polis' cults<sup>67</sup>: being a citizen was in fact defined as membership of the community realised by participation in its *hiera kai bosia*<sup>68</sup>. Besides cults of polis-subgroups composed along lines of age, sex, affiliation or local habitat, some cults and festivals included all Athenians as active participants or as involved audience<sup>69</sup>. Considering that Athens as a human community could only prosper owing to its exchange of benefits with the gods, that in fact the community owed its very existence to the covenant their ancestors had once made with the gods, those who perpetuated this covenant over time by acting as representatives of the community in cult could be regarded as embodying and sustaining its life and identity<sup>70</sup>. Until the mid-5th century, the priesthoods in all public cults were filled by members of the *genē*, groups of families who enjoyed the privilege of their cultic office as the heritage of their *genos'* *archēgetēs*<sup>71</sup>. Nearly fifty of such *genē* are known, and several more of which the identity is uncertain, all supplying priests and priestesses to public cults of varying size and prominence<sup>72</sup>.

Since much of the extant evidence dates to the classical era and later, it is often impossible to assess the antiquity of the genealogical myths of the *genē* and of the *aitia* of the cultic functions they explain. The historical veracity of such stories is immaterial; what mattered was a successful claim to being heirs of an *archēgetēs*. Bearing this in mind, we can discern a coherent pattern of evidence showing that, notwithstanding differences in social status, all *genē* traced their antecedents to the very beginnings of Athens. A few examples will illustrate the pattern, in which 'descent' must

67 Comprehensive discussion of Athenian cults in Parker (2005).

68 On this vast subject Connor (1988), Sourvinou-Inwood (1990), Georgoudi (1998), Blok (2007); Blok (2010).

69 Polis sub-groups defined by cult: Sourvinou-Inwood (1990), Georgoudi (1998), Parker (2005), Blok (2009a); all Athenians Brulé (1996); differently Maurizio (1998); involved audience: Jameson (1999).

70 Serving public cults was one of many forms of Greek priesthood; for the variety, Henrichs (2008); Chaniotis (2008); priestesses of public cults, Connelly (2007).

71 Hesych. s. v. γεννηται: οἱ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γένους μετέχοντες καὶ αὐθωεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς σχόντες κοινὰ ἱερά. οἱ δὲ ὁμογάλακτας καὶ φράτορας συγγενεῖς τοὺς γεννήτας. "Gennētai: those who are members of the same *genos* and have from the very beginning held cults in common. Others call the *gennētai* *homogalaktes* and related *phrateres*." Cf. *Suda*, s. v. γεννηται. On the composition of the *genē*: Bourriot (1976) vol. 1, 1216–1234; Parker (1996) 60–62; Lambert (1999); Smith (2006) 114 ff.

72 Parker (1996) 56–66 and appendix 2.

be understood primarily as 'being heirs of'<sup>73</sup>. The Erysichthonidai claimed descent from Erysichthon, a son of Cecrops whose tomb was in Prasiai<sup>74</sup>, and provided the priest of Apollo on Delos. The Euenoridai had a cultic function in relation to Aglauros and perhaps Athena's vestments. Their own descent myth is unknown, but in Plato's Atlantis-story mirroring Athens a certain Euenor figures as *autochthón* of Atlantis whose daughter had descendants with Poseidon; clearly Plato expected his audience to associate the name of the *genos* with autochthony<sup>75</sup>. The Lykomidai were descendants of Lykos, a son of king Pandion and reputed founder of the Lykeion; the *genos* served the Mysteries at Phlya<sup>76</sup>. The Phytalidai (whose name recalls growth) supplied a priestess of Demeter<sup>77</sup>. They descended from Phytalos, who, having entertained Demeter, received a fig-plant from her. Moreover, the Phytalidai purified Theseus after he killed Sinis; as a reward, they were to offer Theseus a sacrifice, paid by the (descendants of) the families who had sent children to Minos<sup>78</sup>. When Cimon of Lakiadai brought Theseus' bones back from Skyros in the 470s, he inaugurated a sacrifice to Theseus at public costs to be performed by the Phytalidai; the tomb of his deme's eponymous hero Lakios was close to Phytalos' tomb and the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore<sup>79</sup>. The Bouzygai performed the sacred ploughing each year below the Akropolis; their name (oxen-yokers) clearly referred to their function, but was taken to indicate descent of Bouzyges who had been the first to yoke the oxen to use for agriculture<sup>80</sup>. The same process is testified in the case of the Kerykes, a prominent *genos* supplying the herald (*keryx*) and *dadouchos* at the Eleusinian Mysteries, and whose name referred to their function but was later taken to show descent from Keryx, a son of Hermes and a daughter of Cecrops or a son of Eumolpos, the acclaimed forebear of the Eumolpidai<sup>81</sup>.

The cases of the Bouzygai and Kerykes illustrate that metaphorical descent and physical descent as conceptions of entitlement to inheritance were

73 On the mythical founders of *gené*, Parker (1996) appendix 2 and Lambert (2010).

74 Paus. 1.31.2; 3.14.2; see also above.

75 For the Euenoridai, Malachou (2008), with Lambert (2008); Euenor: Plat. *Crit.* 113c-d.

76 For the complicated dossier of Lykos, Kearns (1989) 182; on the Lykomidai, Parker (1996) 305.

77 Parker (1996) 169, 318.

78 Plut. *Thes.* 12, 23.5.

79 Paus. 1.37.2; Kearns (1989) 180.

80 No worship of Bouzyges is known, but his plough was dedicated on the Akropolis (Schol. Aeschin. 2.78); for more details Kearns (1989) 152.

81 Keryx: son of Pandrosos, daughter of Cecrops, and Hermes (Androtion *FGrH* 324 F 1); or Aglauros and Hermes (according to the Kerykes) or descendant of Eumolpos (Andron *FGrH* 10 F 13; Paus. 1.38.3).



not essentially different, but also that inheritance due to physical descent was preferred over metaphorical inheritance and that in due course stories were adapted to fit this preference. The structure of *gené* is compatible with this pattern: each family of a *genos* claimed to be the heir of the *archégetés*, but the *genos* families were not really related to each other<sup>82</sup>, nor did they – as far as the evidence allows us to see – marry preferably only other *gennétai* (of any *genos*) in the classical era<sup>83</sup>. The members of a *genos* family were, of course, relatives and of a special quality, as we shall shortly see.

The most illustrious *genos* were arguably the Eteoboutadai, consisting of two branches, one providing the priestess of Athena Polias, the other among others the priest of Poseidon Erechtheus. The relationship between the two branches in the classical era is rather opaque, but together they were in charge of the central cults of the most central sacred area of Athens, the Akropolis. Priestess and priest acted together in the festival of the Skira, but the main cultic role of the Eteoboutadai was that of the priestess of Athenia Polias in the Panathenaia, the festival of all Athenians in which Erechtheus was marginally involved<sup>84</sup>. They claimed descent from Boutês, who, according to an early source (Hes. fr. 169 Most), was a son of Poseidon, but according to the Eteoboutadai in the late 4th century a descendant of Erechtheus, son of Gê and Hephaistos ([Plut.] *mor.* 843e). By the time the so-called *Library* of Apollodoros had been composed, the (dis)entangled stories – compare the duplication model discussed above – made Boutês the brother of Erechtheus, with Boutês getting the priesthoods of Poseidon and Athena, and Erechtheus the kingship when they divided the heritage of their father king Pandion, the son of Erichthonios, son of Gê and Hephaistos, and Praxithea<sup>85</sup>. Boutês had an altar of his own in the Erechtheion, next to Poseidon and Hephaistos, with one of the Eteoboutadai probably serving

82 As captured in the *Suda*, s.v. γεννηταί: οὐχ οἱ ἐκ γένους καὶ ἀφ' αἵματος προσήκοντες, ἀλλὰ οἱ ἐκ τῶν γενῶν τῶν συννευημένων εἰς τὰς φρατρίας: οὗτοι δὲ εἰσι καθάπερ οἱ δημόται καὶ φράτορες, νόμῳ τινὶ ἔχοντες κοινωσίαν. "*Gennétai*: those who are of one *genos* do not also belong by blood relationship, but they are from the *gené* partitioned over the *phratries*. These people are just like the demesmen and *phrateres*, in that they form a group in the context of some traditional law." Photius s.v. γεννηταί adds that Isaeus (7.13) nevertheless called the *gennétai* ἁπλῶς ἐξ αἵματος συγγενεῖς "simply related by blood"; this refers to kinship within a *genos* family, for the context see below.

83 E.g. among the Kerykes: Hipponikos, the son of Kallias 'Lakkoploutos' was the former husband of Perikles' first wife; she was not a Kerykes herself, being of Alkmaionid descent (Plut. *Per.* 24.5); cf. Bicknell (1972) 77–83. Kallias had been married to Elpinike, daughter of Miltiades and sister of Cimon (Plut. *Cim.* 4).

84 Role of Erechtheus in Panathenaia: Brulé (1996).

85 Apollod. 3.14.6–15.1; compare above, Praxithea not as mother but as wife of Erechtheus.

as priest<sup>86</sup>. Disregarding diverging details, all Eteoboutad descent stories emphasise descent from Gê (Earth) at some point and locate the *genos* at the heart of Athenian *polis* religion from the earliest days of Athenian existence. Presumably their name was Boutadai, but had changed into Eteo- ('real, true') Boutadai to distinguish the *gennêtai* with a superior move from the Cleisthenic deme Boutadai<sup>87</sup>.

With regard to the autochthony theme, some aspects of *genos* traditions deserve special attention: the endogamy of the *gennêtai* and their claims to antiquity and continuity. I will start with endogamy. *Genos* priesthoods were held for life and eligibility for office depended on birth in a *genos* family, eligibility being a part of the family inheritance (*klêros*). Because the *genos* inheritance could devolve to female heirs who would bring their *klêros* into the *oikos* into which they married, or the *klêros* would go to maternal collaterals in absence of any paternal kin<sup>88</sup>, a case can be made that, also before Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451/450, *genos* members were obliged to marry only born Athenians, who were also legal descendants (heirs) of the same ancestors who had entered the covenant of the polis with the gods<sup>89</sup>. The importance attached to inheritance rights of female *gennêtai* was presumably particularly influential in *genê* with female priesthoods, but in fact the necessity of having offspring of the right gender for the priesthood and of Athenian descent on both sides must have made all *genê* deeply conscious of their genealogy<sup>90</sup>. The hypothesis that descent from two Athenian parents was a requirement for eligibility for priesthood and the reason for the endogamy of the *genê*, is corroborated by other evidence. A certain Euxitheos, defending his citizen birth in the late 340s in an appeal to the court, pointed to his *eugeneia* as a *gennêtês*, which had made him eligible for a priesthood and secured his pure

86 Paus. 1.26.5; IG II<sup>2</sup> 5166; Lambert (2009).

87 As explained by lexicographers: Harpocr. s.v. Βούτης: οὗτος ἔσχε τὴν ἱερωσύνην· καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τούτου Βουτάδαι· καὶ Ἐτεοβουτάδαι οἱ ἀπόγονοι τοῦ Βούτου· τὸ γὰρ ἔτεον ἀληθές. Ὅμηρος "εἰ ἔτεον σὸς εἰμί." *Lex. Patm. (Lexica Graeca Minora*, ed. K. Latte/H. Erbse) s.v. Ἐτεοβουτάδαι: γένος Ἀθήνησιν ἱερὸν, καὶ ὄντως Ἀττικὸν καὶ γνήσιον, ἐξ οὗ ἐγίνοντο τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς αἱ ἰέρειαι. Emphasis added. From the mid-5th century onward, the branch of the Athena Polias priestess was represented in a family from Bate, not Boutadai like the Poseidon branch, the causes of which we can only speculate about.

88 For the system of inheritance at Athens, Patterson (1998) 83–100.

89 For the full argument of this case, Blok (2009b).

90 Eligibility for office of priestess of Athena Polias of Penteteris, daughter of Hierokles of Phlya, and Theodote, daughter of Polyoktos of Amphitrope (both late 3rd century) was based on descent from a common ancestor, Drakontides of Bate (mid 5th century), who was five to seven generations away from these women. The genealogical lists of the other Eteoboutad branch, as represented in [Plut.] *Lyc.* 843a–c, covered at least four centuries. On the composition of these families, Blok/Lambert (2009).

Athenian descent from two Athenian parents<sup>91</sup>. Apollodoros made this requirement the cornerstone of his attack on the metic Neaira targeting her alleged daughter Phano for having broken the rules when acting as *basilinna* in the Anthesteria<sup>92</sup>. Reminding his audience of the ancient *nomoi* inscribed on a stele in the sanctuary of Dionysos in Limnais, he cast the requirement of *eugeneia* for those who were to perform the most sacred rites of the polis in terms of autochthony. To underline his argument, he referred to a decree of 427 granting citizenship to the Plataians, which explicitly debarred the naturalised Plataian-Athenians from priestly offices belonging to the *gené*, to the archonship, and perhaps to priesthood in general, but allowed these offices to their descendants<sup>93</sup>.

The continuous line of pure Athenian descent the *gené* could boast owing to their endogamy long before Pericles' Law and which allegedly secured the transfer of the heritage from the *archégetés* to the present *gennētai*, presumably accounts for the epithet *ιθαγενής* that the *gené* acquired at some point. Hesychius added this epithet to many *gené* in his lexicon, apparently not consistently, yet systematically enough to see that it was considered a specific quality of the Athenian *gené*<sup>94</sup>. The epithet was known throughout antiquity since Homer (*Od.* 14.203) but it was not very common; the interest of lexicographers in explaining its usage suggests it had an antiquarian ring. *Ithagenés* meant 'of true, straight descent', indicating legitimate birth in the case of individuals and autochthony when used for peoples as congruent meanings<sup>95</sup>. While in Athens before Pericles' Law, membership of the

91 Demosth. *or.* 57; other cases showing that being a *gennētēs* ensured acceptance in a phratry and was regarded as proof of legitimate descent in Athenian trials: Is. 7.15–17; Ps.-Demosth. *or.* 59.59–61; And. 1.125–127; see also Lambert (1998) ch. 2.

92 Apollod. *Neaira* 74–76 (= Ps.-Demosth. *or.* 59.74–76). Moreover, her marriage to the Archon Basileus had to be her first marriage, a requirement also to be met by the women responsible for the cult of Athena Pallenis (Athen. 6.235a, with Schlaifer [1943]).

93 Apollod. *Neaira* 104 (= Ps.-Demosth. *or.* 59.104): μετεῖναι αὐτοῖς ὧνπερ Ἀθηναῖος μέτεστι πάντων, καὶ ἱερῶν καὶ ὀσίων, πλὴν εἰ τις ἱερωσύνη ἢ τελετὴ ἐστὶν ἐκ γένους, μηδὲ ἐξεῖναι μηδενὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ἐννεέα ἀρχόντων λαχεῖν [μηδὲ ἱερωσύνης μηδεμιᾶς], τοῖς δ' ἐκ τούτων, [ἄν ὧσιν ἐξ ἀσπῆς γυναικὸς καὶ ἐγγνητῆς κατὰ τὸν νόμον.] with Osborne (1982–1983) vol. 2, 11 f.; vol. 4, 176–181; Kapparis (1995); Blok/Lambert (2009); Blok (2009b), on text composition, authenticity and social context. These conditions had to be explicated in the decree since all Athenians were descendants of two Athenian parents and eligible for priestly office in principle a generation after Pericles' Citizenship Law; see below.

94 Parker (1996) 284 f.

95 Legitimate birth: *ιθαγενής* versus born from a concubine: Hom. *Od.* 14.203; Hesych., Phot. *ιθαγενής* αὐτόχθων. γνήσιος; *ιθαγενέσσι* γνησίοις τέκνοις καὶ καθαροῖς, οὐκ ἐκ παλλακίδος. *ιθαγενής* versus ἐπήλυδες: Hdt. 6.54; Hellenicus *FGrH* 4 F 79a; Strab. 7.7.8; Diog. Laert. 1.22; Hesych. αὐθηγενής αὐτόχθων γνήσιος. αὐθηγενές ἐγγενές,

citizen body could be transferred in the male line only to legitimate children, legitimacy required a 'pledged' union between the families of husband and wife. 'True descent', however, required and emphasised legitimate descent through mothers of the same citizen group<sup>96</sup>. This condition fits the endogamy rules of the Athenian *gené* proposed here. When the epithet was attached to the *gené* precisely we cannot say, but, comparing it with the name of the Eteoboutadaí, conceivably *ithagenés* highlighted the claims to uninterrupted, purely Athenian descent of the *gené* vis-à-vis the other Athenians who could pretend to be 'pure' after Pericles' Law but could never vouchsafe that they really were of Athenian descent right from the beginning.

The other aspect of *genos* traditions relevant here is their antiquity and continuity. Among the cults served by the *gené*, quite a number were devoted to divinities specifically benefitting the growth of crops, cattle or children, and to the ancient heroes and heroines of Attika<sup>97</sup>. Since the *gené* could also point to ancient tombs and sanctuaries of their *archégetai* and performed sacred duties that were ancestral (*patrōia*) by definition and publicly recognised as family privileges, they could sustain such claims more compellingly than other Athenians. While many Eupatrid families could boast an ancient, high-quality founder but usually left the connection between this ancestor and recent generations in the dark<sup>98</sup>, the *gené* were perhaps vague about their founder but could substantiate continuity within their families because of the presumed uninterrupted transfer of inherited office over generations.

ἐπίγονον. ἐπήλυδας· νεωστὶ ἐλθόντας ἐξ ἑτέρας γῆς. ἐπιλεκτοὺς. ἢ οὐκ ἰθαγενεῖς. Springing straight from: Hdt. 2.17.24; Aristot. *meteor.* 364a16; Plut. *mor.* 991E; also in medical lit. Relevance to *gené*: *Lex. Patm.* s.v. Ἐτεοβουτάδαι: γένος Ἀθήνησιν ἱερόν, καὶ ὄντως Ἀττικόν καὶ γνήσιον. (cf. n. 87).

96 Poll. 3.21: καὶ γνήσιος μὲν ὁ ἐκ γυναικὸς ἀστῆς καὶ γαμετῆς — ὁ δ' αὐτὸς καὶ ἰθαγενής — νόθος δ' ὁ ἐκ ξένης ἢ παλλακίδος ὑπ' ἐνίων δὲ καλεῖται μητρόξενος. Cf. Aristoph. *Gramm.*, *Nomina aetatum* (fragmenta) 277.14–17 Ὀμηρος τοὺς γνησίους υἱοὺς καὶ ἰθαγενεῖς (l. ἰθαγενεῖς) ὀνομάζει· τοὺς νόθους Ῥόδιοι, μακροξένους (l. ματροξένους) ὀνόμαζον· σκότιοι δέ, οἱ λάθρα γεγονότες. At Athens, legitimacy and citizenship were probably made mutually dependent by Solon (Lape 2002/2003) and were confirmed in phratries (Lambert 1998); until Pericles' Citizenship Law, legitimate descent from one Athenian parent sufficed. Compare above, descent from divine father with human mother as condition of membership of human community in myth.

97 Beside examples in the main text: Arynandridai: priest of Cecrops (Parker 1996, 285 f.); Bouzygai: sacred ploughing; Charidai: supplied priest of Cranaos (Paus. 1.31.3); Euenoridai: cultic role for Aglauros; Eumolpidai: descent from Eumolpos, ancient king (Hom. *b.* 2.154, 476) or son of Poseidon (see above); Coneidai: descent from Coneides, paidagogos of Theseus (Plut. *Thes.* 4); Pyrrakidai: descent from Pyrrhakos, descendant of Erysichthon (Hesych.); Salaminioi: priestesses of Athena Skiras, Aglauros, Pandrosos and Kourotrophos; etc. etc.

98 Thomas (1989) 155–161.

The antiquity and purity of their Athenian descent thus distinguished the *gené* not only from the *démos* but also from many Eupatrid families<sup>99</sup>. In this sense, the *gené* constituted an elite, as Stephen Lambert argues, conceived in terms of birth only, regardless of wealth or political power<sup>100</sup>.

If this reconstruction of the privileged status of *gené* is valid, it would explain several developments in Athenian priesthood. The *Athenaion Politeia* (21.6) tells us that Cleisthenes created the new political structures including all citizens, old and new, but left the *gené*, phratries and priesthoods the traditional way (*kata ta patria*). Yet occasionally, new priesthoods had to be created. We just saw that when the cult for Theseus was instituted in the 470s, its priesthood was granted to the Phytalidai. Of the Cleisthenic tribes instituted in 508/507, some of the eponymous heroes already had cults but others apparently didn't; moreover, all cults of the *eponymoi* obtained a new public function. Although the evidence is thin, it seems that those *gené* who already served one of these hero cults continued to provide the priest, even if they did not belong to this tribe themselves<sup>101</sup>. Against the background of the evidence so far, it seems that when new cults were inaugurated the priesthoods were allotted among Athenians who were of unquestionably pure (double) Athenian descent – *in casu* the *gennétai* among the relevant group. In this respect, an inequality persisted among the Athenians based on birth alone. This inequality was only removed with the introduction of Pericles' Citizenship Law, which raised the *démos* to the same *eugeneia* as the *gené* and effectively opened the priesthood to all Athenians now that they were of Athenian descent on both sides<sup>102</sup>. After Pericles' Law, new priesthoods could be allotted among all Athenians, beginning with the priestess of Athena Nike, who was selected from all Athenian women<sup>103</sup>.

99 Beside their marriages with non-Athenians in historical times, e.g. the Alkmaionidai (Paus. 2.18.8 f.) and the Peisistratidai (Hdt. 5.65.3) traced their origins to Pylos, as did Melanthes, one of the early Athenian kings (Rhodes 1981, 79, 186 f.); on the Salaminian origins of the Philaidai, see n. 51.

100 Lambert (2010); the Gephyraioi, who with allegedly non-Attic origins (Hdt. 5.57–61) were the exception proving the rule, were probably excluded from certain priesthoods and had a position of their own in the network of Attic cults, Lambert (1998) 53, n. 120, cf. Parker (1996) 288 f.

101 The priesthoods of Erechtheis, Hippothontis and Cecropis were held by men of other than the relevant tribes and apparently were traditional *genos* priesthoods; see Schlaifer (1940) 251–257; Kearns (1989) 173; Aleshire (1994) 331 f.; Parker (1996) 285 f., 293.

102 Blok (2009b).

103 The date is contested: mid-420s, Mattingly (2000); early 440s, Lougovaya-Ast (2006).

## The autochthony myth: a new view

Autochthony myths served the creation of an identity that first and foremost was culturally and politically meaningful to the people itself. Until the middle of the 5th century, there is no clear evidence that the Athenians consistently thought of themselves as *autochthones*, meaning the first to have lived in Attica and have done so continuously and exclusively, nor that there was much reason for them to think so. The idea of Athenian autochthony circulates visibly in the 430s, but may have begun somewhat earlier than our first written evidence. In few respects, the Athenian claim seems different from that of other (Greek) peoples who asserted to be autochthonous, and we can speculate whether the Athenian variety would stand out in any way if the Aiginetai, Thebans, Arcadians *et alii* had created and left as many written records of their oratory as the Athenians. Now that we do have this Athenocentric record, however, the Athenians appear to have brought the message of their autochthony, once they had conceived the idea, across with a confidence and insistence that seem more than average.

Before the myth of autochthony emerged, the Athenians considered themselves the 'descendants' of the heros Erechtheus; this was an important part of their identity as a people owing to Erechtheus' exclusive ties with Athena on the one hand, and with Athens and Attica on the other, unlike Herakles and even Theseus. Yet there is no conclusive evidence that they regarded themselves as 'real' descendants of Erechtheus in any way, let alone as born from the earth themselves, rather than as the heirs of his cult on the Akropolis until the late 5th century. The genealogy of Athenian kings ended more or less in mid-air, as such genealogies usually did. The single dotted line from Erechtheus to the present terminated most conspicuously in his cult inaugurated by Boutes and now served by Boutes' 'true' descendants, the Eteoboutadaï. They and all other *gené* embodied persuasive claims to autochthony among the Athenians due to their alleged ancient, unbroken and pure descent, connected with their privilege of holding public priesthods.

The prestige of the *gené* seems to have been a major motive for Pericles to issue his Citizenship Law, raising the *dêmos* to the same level of *eugeneia* as the *gené*. After Pericles' Citizenship Law, the Athenians could imagine in due course that they all were of just as pure descent as the *gené* and were all now similarly entitled to serve as priests and priestesses. Around a decade after Pericles' Citizenship Law, the first certain indications emerge that the Athenians as a people claimed to be *autochthones*. Euripides' tragedies *Erechtheus* and *Ion*, although acknowledging its problematic aspects, not only reflect increasing interest in the autochthony myth but presumably contributed to its impact. *Erechtheus* (420s) portrays the simultaneous origins of the Eteoboutadaï and Eumolpidaï and of the kingship of Athens; *Ion* (410) represents the ancient Athenian tribes as real descendants through Creousa of earth-born

Erichthonios. In the 4th century, the theme of autochthony – now meaning either ‘original inhabitants’ or ‘earth-born’ or both – was elaborated in political and epideictic oratory, notably in the *epitaphioi* and the political treatises of Isocrates. By the later 4th century, the Athenians believed that in days of yore all Athenians were *gennētai*, as the *Athenaion Politeia* shows<sup>104</sup>:

Aristotle says [in book one of the *Athenaion Politeia*] that the whole Athenian population was divided into farmers and craftsmen, and that they consisted of four *phylai*; each of the *phylai* was divided into three parts, which they called trittyes and phratries, and each of those had thirty *genē*, and each *genos* was composed of thirty men. Those who thus belonged to the *genē* they called *gennētai*. [...] from among whom the priesthoods for each were drawn by lot, like Eumolpidai and Kerykes and Eteoboutadai ...

A century after Pericles' Law, the genealogical myths of the *genē* had been successfully transferred to and appropriated by the Athenian *dēmos* in its entirety; being an exclusive elite had become a quality of all citizens. Among the Athenians, however, the *genē* remained more equal than others: they were *itbageneis* since the beginning of the city.

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104 Aristot. *Ath. pol.* F2 (Chambers; F3 Kenyon); slight variations on the same theme in F2 a, b and c.

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