

Genealogy

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Bachofen's famous work provides a good starting point for discussing the historiographic treatment of Greek genealogies. For him, the Greek heroic genealogies were reliable descriptions, or descriptions slightly derivative of actual social situations, and he used them to produce his theory of matrilineality and matriarchy as features of that institution that had characterized all societies at an early stage of development.

In the following decades, at the height of the positivist school's ascendancy, Jacoby's work was extremely useful for the study of the Greek genealogists writing in prose. The first five authors whose accounts and fragments were included in the first volume of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* – HECATAEUS OF MILETOS, AKOUSILAOS, PHEREKYDES OF ATHENS, HELLANICUS OF MYTILENE, and DAMASTES – were all genealogists. Both Jacoby's original work and his commentary, published in 1957 in an expanded edition, are still a reference for scholars wanting to further their knowledge of the authors who started to draw up genealogical lists at the end of the sixth and during the fifth century BCE – that is, at a time when Greek culture was undergoing a transition from orality to the more widespread use of written techniques as a means of transmitting knowledge. In 1949 Jacoby himself had already devoted a monograph to the local traditions concerning the history of ATHENS (a topic already investigated by Pearson) and the genealogy of the Philaids. His method of work is well known: it was based on an extensive prior study of the sources, to which he applied rigorous textual criticism and detailed commentary, in which he examined both philological and purely historical matters.

During the decades following World War II, a school of thinkers related to structuralism and the Indo-European studies of Dumézil developed in France. Its leading representatives

were Detienne, Vernant, and Vidal-Naquet. Their main goal was the study of mythology, poetry, and the culture of Archaic Greece in general. In the analysis they made of mythical genealogies, they stressed the connection of these genealogies with Greek social reality. Their conclusion was that a single type of marriage was reflected at the different levels of Hellenic culture (divine, heroic, human) and that all three had the same structure as Greek MYTH, from the time it was formed. This French school has had a clear influence on other European researchers.

In the 1980s a large number of studies of Greek genealogies were carried out using an interdisciplinary approach, as befits a period in which postmodernity had taken hold in western culture. Recourse was had to disciplines that complemented philology and history, such as sociology and comparative anthropology. In 1985, West, a great specialist in Archaic Greek literature, dedicated a monographic study to the *Catalogue of women* (see WOMEN, GREECE), which, together with HESIOD'S *Theogony*, are the main works to do with legendary genealogy that have come down to us. In West's opinion, the popularity attained by genealogy in Greece can be principally explained by the fact that it served as a source of pleasure for social elites, especially those at Athens, whose members were hungry for such knowledge. West also suggested the sixth-century BCE tradition of collecting genealogies that had been drawn up in the eighth century BCE may not have been entirely oral, although he did not provide a more developed argument in support of his hypothesis.

At the end of this decade the study by Thomas, a specialist in oral traditions and in the beginnings of writing in Preclassical Greece, stands out. She explained the strong link between the human, divine, and legendary Greek genealogies on the one hand and the oral tradition on the other, and she focused on examining the work of the genealogists writing in prose who, in her view, were not mere antiquaries, but extremely popular specialists in

their time. She also pointed up the problem faced by genealogists in trying to synchronize and fit together different oral traditions, in a task that was not just one of synthesis, but was also creative, as it involved inventing new generations and figures in order to harmonize diverse traditions. In her research Thomas employed various modern anthropological studies, such as those by Finnegan, Vansina, and Henige, which confirmed the decisive role of writing in the formation of the genealogies and of other types of lists. In conclusion, Thomas highlighted how the Greek tradition had recorded both the legendary and the more recent ancestors, while leaving a large gap between them that neither was nor needed to be filled in. At all events, she pointed out that the main thing for a Greek family was to bestow importance on its legendary forebears for reasons of personal and social status.

In the final decade of the twentieth century, following the disappearance of the Soviet bloc and the emergence of new regional conflicts for nationalist and religious reasons, Hall devoted a book to explaining the Greeks' feeling of ethnicity, for which he investigated ethnic genealogies and cultural instruments employed by a social group to locate itself in time and space and to reaffirm its identity by appealing to its eponymous forebears. Fowler, on the other hand, a specialist who had published an edition of Archaic Greek mythography, considered that the creation of genealogies in Archaic poetry was politically motivated. In the *Catalogue of women* there is a patent political competition, encouraged by the different *poleis*. In this connection, Fowler made a link between the genealogical literature of the *Catalogue*, the region of THESSALY, and the Delphic Amphictyony at the time of the First Holy War.

SEE ALSO: Amphictyony, Delphic; Ethnography and ancient history; Historiography, Greek and Roman; Orality, oral culture, and historiography.

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