



Περίληψη :

According to Homer, the royal couple of Troy. They had 19 sons. During the Trojan War Priam, a very old man, watches the fighting from the walls of the city, while the role of Hecuba is secondary. On the night of Troy's pillaging Neoptolemus violently kills Priam, whereas there are many variations of Hecuba's death, with her transformation into a bitch being their basic element.

Άλλα Ονόματα

Τόπος και Χρόνος Γέννησης

Troy (Priam)-Phrygia/Thrace (?) (Hecuba)

Τόπος και Χρόνος Θανάτου

Troy (Priam)-Chersonesos (?) (Hecuba)

Κύρια Ιδιότητα

King and Queen of Troy

1. Birth-Family

Priam is one of the sons of Laomedon. His first name is Podarkes. Two different traditions have been preserved about Hecuba; the first considers her the daughter of Dymas, king of [Phrygia](#), and the other daughter of Cisseus, king of Thrace. Her mother is Glaucippe, daughter of Xanthos. However, the authors who consider her daughter of the Thracian Cisseus, deem Telecleia to be her mother.

Priam succeeds Laomedon to the throne of [Troy](#) and rebuilds the destroyed city. Still at a young age, he campaigns to Sangarius, to help the Phrygians in their war against the [Amazons](#).¹ He marries Hecuba, who bears him 19 sons. Among them were Hector and Paris. Priam had 31 more sons from other women, wives or concubines, as well as 12 daughters.² All his sons with their wives and all his daughters with their husbands lived in their father's palace, each couple in a separate chamber.³

2. Activity

During the tenth year of the war narrated in the *Iliad*, Priam is very old and not only does not actively participate in battles, but neither is anyone trying to use his war and life experience. [Hector](#), leader of the army, takes advice war-planning from many people, but never from his father. The only thing left for Priam is to watch the fighting from above, from the walls of Troy along with the other men of his age.⁴

In [Homer](#), Hecuba plays a secondary role. She tries to moderate Hector's impetuosity, then she weeps on his dead body and finally she begs [Athena](#) to take the doom away from the city. But starting from the cyclical epics, the figure of Hecuba is elevated into such a degree that she becomes a symbol of grandeur but also of misfortune.⁵

When the Greeks and the Trojans agree to stop fighting and to allow Menelaus and [Paris](#) to settle their differences, the official oaths of the truce are made by Agamemnon and Priam himself, since the Greeks did not trust his sons. When, however, later Menelaus wins and Pandarus breaks the truce by trying to kill him and Paris refuses to give Helen back to her husband, Priam does not dare to react, nor anyone asks him whether he agrees to become a perjurer.⁶

Priam becomes more active towards the end of the *Iliad*. He orders the guards to keep the city gates open so that the Trojan soldiers, hunted by Achilles, will be able to find shelter inside the city walls.⁷ Furthermore, he is the one, along with Hecuba, who



begs Hector in vain not to fight against Achilles.⁸ And when the goddess Iris, sent by [Zeus](#), urges him to enter the camp of the Achaeans at night, in order to ransom the body of Hector by Achilles, he defies the fears of Hecuba and undertakes the risk of such an endeavour.⁹ Although [Hermes](#), disguised as a mortal, escorts him to the tent of Achilles, in his daring night trip to the enemy camp, the old king of Troy becomes a hero in a different way, since he is no longer able to fight. Even Achilles is bedazzled when he sees him in fort of him.

Hecuba appears to take charge after the fall of Troy. When Troy is conquered, Hecuba has lost most of her sons already. However, one of her sons, Polydorus, was entrusted by Priam to the king of [Chersonesus](#) Polymestor in order to protect him. He had also asked him to guard substantial treasures for his son. After the fall of Troy and Priam's death, Polymestor wanted to keep the treasures he was guarding for himself. He kills Polydorus and throws his body into the sea. His corpse is washed ashore in Troas on the moment that Hecuba –who was allotted along with other Trojan women to Odysseus- is preparing to embark on Odysseus' ship. Hecuba recognizes the body of her son and immediately decides to avenge his death. She sends one of her servants to deceive Polymestor and his two sons into visiting her. Pretending she does not know anything, she intends to tell him where the treasure is hidden - which until then had to be protected from the conquerors. Urged by his lust for profit, Polymestor hurries. When he comes near Hecuba, she pokes his eyes out, while the Trojan women had already killed his sons in front of him.¹⁰

3. Death

The night the Greeks are plundering Troy, Priam manages to find shelter on the altar dedicated to Zeus Erkeios. His daughter Laodice tries to bring him his armour so he can resist, but in vain. There is no hope for salvation. Neoptolemus takes him violently away from the altar, drags him out and slaughters him in front of the palace gates. His body remained unburied.¹¹ A variant of the myth narrates that Neoptolemus drags Priam to the tomb of Achilles outside the city and there he kills him.

Many variants are preserved concerning Hecuba's death. The basic element in all of them is that she is transformed into a bitch. Her tomb was located on the Thracian Peninsula, opposite Troas, and was called "Kynos sema" (tomb of the Bitch). It is reported that she was taken to Chersonesus by her only surviving son, Helenus, who buried her there after her death. According to another version, the Greeks, in order to punish her for the crime against Polymestor, decided to stone her to death, but underneath the stones, instead her body, they found a bitch with fiery eyes. Another variation reports that Hecuba was transformed into a bitch onboard the ship which was taking her to Greece and threw herself into the water.¹²

1. *Il.* 3.184 passim.

2. *Il.* 24.495 passim.

3. *Il.* 6.243 passim.

4. *Il.* 3.146 passim.

5. Eur., *Hecuba and Trojan Women*.

6. *Il.* 3.245 passim., 4.104 passim., 7.357 passim.

7. *Il.* 21.526 passim.

8. *Il.* 22.25 passim.



9. *Il.* 24.169 passim.

10. *Il.* 24.518 passim.

11. Procl., *Chrestomathia*, 257, where fragm. from *Iliu Persis*. Also, Virg., *Aen.*, 2. 50ff.

12. About the versions of Hecubas end, see Κακριδής, Ι., *Τρωϊκός πόλεμος*, σελ. 160-2, Athens 1987 (Ελληνική Μυθολογία, Τ. 5)

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Euripides, *Hecuba*, 109, 218, 518.

Euripides, *The Trojan Women*, 28, 247, 659.