

Succession Myth and Cosmic Legitimacy: The Crown Prince Paradigm in Egyptian And Greek Mythology

I.Jurayev

Senior Teacher, PhD, Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

Received: 18 April 2026; **Accepted:** 04 May 2026; **Published:** 31 May 2026

Abstract: Succession myths occupy a central place in the mythological imagination of ancient civilizations because they encode collective understandings of legitimacy, cosmic continuity, and political authority. This article investigates the crown prince paradigm in Egyptian and Greek mythology through a comparative mythopoetic framework. Drawing upon the theoretical approaches of Mircea Eliade, Carl Jung, and comparative mythology, the study argues that succession narratives transform political inheritance into cosmological drama. The article examines two foundational succession models: the Egyptian Horus myth and the Greek Uranus –Kronos – Zeus sequence. While Egyptian mythology constructs legitimacy through sacred continuity and restoration of maat, Greek mythology conceptualizes succession through generational conflict, rebellion, and cosmic reorganization. Through comparative analysis, the study demonstrates that the crown prince archetype functions as a symbolic mediator between chaos and order, mortality and divine authority, historical instability and sacred continuity. The article further argues that succession myths reveal ancient civilizations' philosophical anxieties regarding power transfer, legitimacy, and the preservation of cosmic harmony. Ultimately, the research establishes succession mythology as one of the foundational mythopoetic structures through which human societies conceptualized lawful sovereignty and political transformation.

Keywords: Succession myth, cosmic legitimacy, crown prince archetype, Egyptian mythology, Greek mythology, sacred kingship, mythopoetics, comparative mythology.

Introduction: The problem of succession has occupied a fundamental position in mythological consciousness since the earliest stages of civilization. Across ancient cultures, the transfer of power was rarely perceived as a purely political or hereditary process. Instead, succession represented a cosmological event capable of determining the stability of both society and the universe itself [1, p. 52]. Consequently, mythological traditions transformed the crown prince into a sacred figure whose legitimacy extended beyond dynastic inheritance toward metaphysical continuity and divine order.

Succession myths emerged as symbolic narratives explaining how lawful authority could survive political transition, generational conflict, and historical instability. In many traditions, the heir apparent

embodied collective anxiety concerning the future of cosmic harmony. The legitimacy of the successor therefore depended not merely upon bloodline but upon symbolic, moral, or divine validation [4, p. 109]. Among ancient civilizations, Egyptian and Greek mythologies produced two of the most influential succession paradigms in world cultural history. Egyptian mythology developed a model centered upon sacred continuity, divine restoration, and preservation of cosmic order through the Horus myth [7, p. 133]. Greek mythology, by contrast, conceptualized succession through violent generational struggle, cosmic rebellion, and transformation of authority in the Uranus–Kronos–Zeus cycle [5, p. 242]. These two mythological systems reflect profoundly different philosophical understandings of legitimacy. Egyptian cosmology prioritizes continuity and cyclical

restoration, whereas Greek mythology emphasizes conflict, rupture, and historical transformation. Yet both traditions share a central mythopoetic concern: the preservation of cosmic order through lawful succession.

This article investigates how Egyptian and Greek succession myths construct the crown prince archetype as a mediator between divine authority and historical continuity. The study examines:

- 1). how succession myths legitimize political authority through cosmological symbolism;
- 2). how crown prince narratives encode anxieties regarding generational transition;
- 3). and how mythological succession reflects broader civilizational philosophies concerning order, law, and sacred kingship.

Through comparative mythopoetic analysis, the article argues that succession myths function not only as religious narratives but also as symbolic frameworks through which ancient societies conceptualized the continuity of civilization itself.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of succession mythology intersects with comparative mythology, religious studies, anthropology, archetypal criticism, and political theology. Although numerous scholars have examined kingship myths and divine authority, succession itself has often been treated as a secondary aspect of broader mythological structures [10, p. 294].

One of the most influential contributions to mythological theory appears in the works of Mircea Eliade. Eliade argues that myths preserve sacred archetypes and legitimize worldly institutions through repetition of primordial divine models [1, p. 17]. In *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, he emphasizes that kingship derives authority through symbolic participation in cosmic order rather than through historical contingency alone [2, p. 36]. This theoretical perspective is essential for understanding succession myths as cosmological narratives rather than merely political legends.

Archetypal criticism developed by Carl Jung further contributes to the analysis of succession mythology. Jung interprets mythological figures as manifestations of universal symbolic structures emerging from the

collective unconscious [3, p. 69]. Within this framework, the crown prince archetype occupies a liminal position between the Hero and King archetypes, representing unrealized sovereignty undergoing transformation [3, p. 81].

Studies of Egyptian mythology frequently emphasize the Horus myth as the foundational model of divine kingship. Egyptologists such as Jan Assmann interpret Horus not merely as a mythological figure but as the symbolic foundation of pharaonic legitimacy [7, p. 146]. The succession from Osiris to Horus establishes a sacred model through which Egyptian civilization conceptualized political continuity and cosmic order. Scholars of Greek mythology, particularly Jean-Pierre Vernant, have examined succession myths as reflections of Greek philosophical concerns regarding power, justice, and generational conflict [5, p. 267]. The Uranus–Kronos–Zeus sequence has been interpreted as a symbolic representation of cosmic evolution from chaos toward structured order [5, p. 281].

Anthropological theories of ritual and liminality also contribute significantly to succession studies. Victor Turner argues that transitional figures occupy unstable symbolic positions requiring ritual transformation before legitimate reintegration into social order [4, p. 96]. This concept is highly relevant to mythological heirs whose legitimacy depends upon symbolic trial and transformation.

Despite these scholarly contributions, comparative analysis of Egyptian and Greek succession paradigms remains theoretically fragmented. Most studies examine these traditions independently rather than investigating their contrasting models of legitimacy and cosmic continuity. This article seeks to address that gap through comparative mythopoetic analysis of the crown prince archetype in both civilizations.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework integrating mythopoetic criticism, archetypal theory, comparative mythology, and political theology. The research primarily draws upon the myth theory of Mircea Eliade, who argues that myths preserve sacred models structuring collective perceptions of reality [1, p. 21]. According to Eliade, political authority in traditional societies derives legitimacy through participation in divine archetypes

[2, p. 42]. Succession myths therefore function as ritualized narratives ensuring continuity between sacred order and historical governance.

Archetypal criticism developed by Carl Jung provides the psychological dimension of the analysis. Jung's theory of collective unconscious explains the recurrence of succession narratives across civilizations as manifestations of universal symbolic anxieties regarding authority, continuity, and generational transformation [3, p. 88].

The concept of liminality proposed by Victor Turner is equally central to this study. Turner defines liminality as an intermediate symbolic state characterized by instability and transformation [4, p. 102]. Mythological heirs occupy precisely such positions because they exist between ordinary identity and sacred sovereignty.

The article also adopts comparative mythology as a methodological approach. Comparative mythology investigates recurring symbolic structures across civilizations while recognizing cultural specificity [6, p. 173]. Through this approach, Egyptian and Greek succession myths are analyzed not as isolated traditions but as distinct philosophical models addressing universal questions concerning legitimacy and cosmic order.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs qualitative comparative analysis grounded in mythopoetic interpretation and symbolic hermeneutics.

The primary mythological materials examined include: Egyptian myths concerning Osiris, Horus, and Set; Greek cosmogonic narratives involving Uranus, Kronos, and Zeus; classical mythological texts and secondary scholarly interpretations.

The methodology consists of four interconnected stages:

1. Mythopoetic Analysis

The study investigates symbolic representations of succession, legitimacy, and cosmic continuity within mythological narratives [1, p. 39].

2. Archetypal Interpretation

The crown prince figure is interpreted through Jungian archetypal theory as a liminal symbolic structure connecting heroic transformation with sacred authority [3, p. 92].

3. Comparative Structural Analysis

Egyptian and Greek succession paradigms are compared to identify both universal patterns and cultural differences regarding lawful sovereignty [5, p. 293].

4. Philosophical Hermeneutics

The final stage interprets succession myths as reflections of broader philosophical concerns regarding power, order, historical continuity, and political legitimacy [11, p. 317]. This interdisciplinary methodology allows succession myths to be examined simultaneously as literary narratives, religious symbols, and political-philosophical structures.

The Horus Myth and Divine Continuity

In Egyptian mythology, the Horus narrative represents one of the earliest and most fully developed succession myths in world civilization. The myth constructs the crown prince not merely as biological heir but as sacred guarantor of cosmic continuity [7, p. 161].

Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, emerges after the violent disruption of cosmic order caused by Set's murder of Osiris. The crisis is therefore not exclusively dynastic; it threatens the stability of maat itself – the Egyptian principle of truth, justice, harmony, and universal order. The succession from Osiris to Horus symbolizes eternal renewal of divine kingship. Horus restores legitimacy by defeating Set and reestablishing sacred balance. Egyptian mythology therefore conceptualizes succession primarily through continuity rather than revolution.

The Pharaoh's political authority derives directly from this mythological structure. Every living Pharaoh was regarded as the earthly manifestation of Horus, while the deceased king became identified with Osiris [7, p. 174]. Succession consequently guaranteed continuity between life, death, divine order, and political governance. This sacred continuity distinguishes Egyptian succession mythology from many later traditions. The heir does not seek to overthrow cosmic order but to preserve and restore it [1, p. 63].

The Horus myth also reveals the liminal nature of the crown prince archetype. Before becoming legitimate ruler, Horus experiences concealment, vulnerability, and symbolic incompleteness. His authority requires ritual validation through struggle against chaos [4, p.

118]. Thus, Egyptian mythology transforms succession into a cosmological process through which divine harmony becomes historically renewed.

Greek Succession Myth and Generational Conflict

Greek mythology presents a radically different succession paradigm. Unlike Egyptian continuity, Greek cosmology constructs legitimacy through generational conflict and transformation of power structures [5, p. 301]. The Uranus – Kronos – Zeus sequence constitutes one of the foundational succession myths in Western civilization. Each generation overthrows the previous ruler:

Kronos rebels against Uranus, Zeus rebels against Kronos.

This repetitive cycle reflects Greek awareness of power's instability and the inevitability of generational transformation [8, p. 44]. Uranus symbolizes primordial authoritarian order resisting historical change. By imprisoning his children within Gaia, he attempts to prevent succession itself [8, p. 51]. Mythopoetically, this represents cosmic stagnation and repression. Kronos initially appears as liberating heir because he destroys Uranus's oppressive domination. However, Kronos eventually reproduces the same tyrannical structure by devouring his own children in fear of replacement [5, p. 318]. The Greek succession myth therefore reveals a profound philosophical paradox: the liberator may become the next tyrant. Zeus ultimately resolves this crisis by establishing lawful cosmic hierarchy rather than merely seizing power. Unlike Uranus and Kronos, Zeus institutionalizes governance through: distributive authority, legal structure, divine hierarchy, cosmic justice [5, p. 337]. His legitimacy depends not solely upon victory but upon his capacity to create stable order.

Greek mythology thus conceptualizes succession as historical transformation rather than cyclical restoration. Legitimate sovereignty emerges only after destructive generational conflict produces a more balanced cosmic system [11, p. 329].

Comparative Models of Cosmic Legitimacy

The comparative analysis of Egyptian and Greek succession myths reveals two fundamentally different mythopoetic philosophies of legitimacy.

Egyptian mythology emphasizes: continuity, sacred restoration, cyclical renewal, divine permanence. Greek mythology emphasizes: rupture, rebellion, transformation, generational evolution. Yet despite these differences, both traditions share several universal symbolic structures: the heir as mediator between chaos and order, succession as cosmological crisis, legitimacy as sacred rather than merely political, and transformation as prerequisite for lawful authority.

In both traditions, the crown prince functions as symbolic guarantor of collective stability [6, p. 209]. The comparative perspective also demonstrates that succession myths reflect broader civilizational worldviews:

Egyptian cosmology prioritizes permanence and harmony,

Greek cosmology prioritizes dynamic transformation and philosophical evolution.

These myths therefore reveal not only political imagination but also differing metaphysical understandings of history, time, and authority.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined succession mythology as a foundational mythopoetic structure through which Egyptian and Greek civilizations conceptualized cosmic legitimacy and lawful sovereignty. The analysis demonstrated that Egyptian mythology constructs succession through sacred continuity and restoration of cosmic harmony, while Greek mythology conceptualizes succession through generational conflict and transformation of authority. Despite their philosophical differences, both traditions position the crown prince archetype at the center of cosmic order. The heir apparent functions not merely as dynastic successor but as symbolic mediator between divine authority, political continuity, and historical stability. The study further established that succession myths encode collective anxieties concerning: legitimacy, transfer of power, preservation of order, and continuity of civilization itself.

Through comparative mythopoetic analysis, the article contributes to literary studies, mythology, and political theology by demonstrating that succession narratives transform political inheritance into cosmological drama. Ultimately, the crown prince archetype emerges as one of humanity's most enduring symbolic

responses to the problem of continuity in a world threatened by chaos, mortality, and historical instability.

REFERENCES

1. Mircea Eliade. *Myth and Reality*. Harper & Row, 1963.
2. Mircea Eliade. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. Princeton University Press, 1954.
3. Carl Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton University Press, 1981.
4. Victor Turner. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine Publishing, 1969.
5. Vernant, Jean-Pierre. *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*. Zone Books, 2006.
6. Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press, 2004.
7. Assmann, Jan. *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*. Harvard University Press, 2003.
8. Hesiod. *Theogony*. Oxford University Press, 1988.
9. Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
10. Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton University Press, 1957.
11. Lincoln, Bruce. *Myth, Cosmos, and Society*. Harvard University Press, 1986.