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# Ithaca, Odysseus and the Euboeans in the eighth century

Irada Malkin

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- 1 The enthusiasm surrounding the Euboeans, internalised and disseminated by scholars in the seventies is still with us, but with a major difference. The Euboeans today have acquired, beyond the evidence for their impressive geographical horizons, more temporal depth. They are no longer viewed, somewhat synchronically within a perspective of the eighth-century renaissance; their story, both as a society in Euboea's major cities, and overseas, now spans more significantly than ever before, at least two centuries. Concurrently with our changing vision of what the Dark Ages were all about, the place of the Euboeans in them as well as their shaping of them, is in need of a new synthesis.
- 2 In this paper I would like to offer a picture centred on the shores of the Ionian and Adriatic seas, with the island of Ithaca as the point of departure and closure. I shall attempt to present an Euboean *periplus*, reconstructing Euboean contacts and colonisation en route: from Ithaca with its Odysseus-associations, to Corcyra, Orikos, Otranto, back to Ithaca and to the cult of Odysseus. I would moreover like to suggest that the interrelation between Ithaca's maritime position as an island en route to the Adriatic, its maritime offshore position in relation to the mainland, the protocolonial activity of various Greeks-Euboeans, Corinthians, and that of the people of Ithaca themselves, and the dedications - probably to Odysseus-of the tripods at Polis, all point to a meaningful convergence with implications pointing to cult, the presence of Homeric myths in the minds of Greeks, and the nature of Greek exploratory and colonial contacts.
- 3 Now and then I shall be using the term "protocolonisation" to cover the period of the ninth to the mid-eighth century. The term, although not quite the same as pre-colonisation, may seem improperly teleological, as if Greeks who sailed to the west, say, in the last quarter of the ninth century, knew that eventually they would also colonise.
- 4 Hindsight, of course, may help us assess certain geo-maritime aspects of Greek exploratory contacts before the mid-eighth century. But proto-colonisation goes

beyond hindsight: first, exploratory contacts could make Euboeans realise the potential of colonisation; second, the typology of Greek settlements at least since the eleventh century was consistently the same both in the regions of the “Ionian migrations” and in those of the “colonisation movement”: the perspective was maritime (sea-to-shore) and the sites chosen were mostly offshore islands, capes, and promontories, defensible from the sea and facing an open-ended hinterland. Thus, setting aside for the moment the famous *polis* criterion which supposedly distinguishes eighth-century colonisation from previous settlements, it would be wrong to dissociate the option of settlement from the minds of Greeks - especially the Euboeans - of the ninth and the first half of the eighth centuries, since settlement in that type of coastal and island sites had been taking place in a world familiar to Greeks at least since the end of the eleventh century.

- 5 It just so happens that in this period, the ninth and especially the eighth centuries, Greeks such as Euboeans and Corinthians were sailing up to the areas of the Otranto Straits, and their sailing route would take them via Ithaca. It also happens that it is during those centuries, the ninth and the eighth, that magnificent bronze tripods were placed in a cave at Polis Bay, at the shrine of Odysseus and the Nymphs.

## 1. Ithaca

- 6 It is important to observe the position of the island of Ithaca, both in poetic and in topographical terms. First, in the *Odyssey* Ithaca is in a liminal position, which seems to constitute the inclusive limits of the familiar Achaian world. Beyond are mythical Phaiakia and the terrible lands of Cyclopes, sorceresses, and monsters. It is only by means of the dreamlike voyage of the Phaiakian boat that Odysseus succeeds in returning directly to Ithaca. Second, Ithaca should be viewed from a historical, maritime, and topographical angle. It lies in an off shore position in relation to the mainland across and it is en route for all Greeks sailing to the north-west during the ninth and eighth centuries. In a forthcoming book<sup>1</sup> I suggest that the two angles, the poetic and the “lived-experience” coalesced to focus on Odysseus as a protocolonial hero and expressed in the cult accorded to him at Polis. Dedications to Odysseus expressed a superimposition of Homer’s geographical threshold onto real maritime itineraries. This localised Odysseus at Ithaca was particularly significant for Greeks observing themselves, sailing beyond Ithaca and returning to their homes (notably Euboea and Corinth) via the island.
- 7 What was Ithaca’s position in the eighth century *vis-à-vis* the Euboeans? It is in a context of coming and going to-and via-Ithaca that one of the earliest inscriptions in Greek apparently belongs. It is a guest-friendship (*xenia*) inscription, on a wine-jug discovered in Ithaca’s main sanctuary of Aetos<sup>2</sup>. It is noteworthy that the alphabet of this particular inscription, as well as the early alphabet of Ithaca in general shows clear signs of Euboean influence.
- 8 Ithaca’s independent position in relation to the trade with Epirus has been brought to the foreground by Catherine Morgan, who emphasises both its position en route north and south as well as in relation to Epirus<sup>3</sup>. To judge by the quantities of (eighth-century) Corinthian material on the island, it came under some Corinthian influence, although its history should not be regarded in Corinthian terms. It was not, as some claim, a Corinthian colony<sup>4</sup>. Ancient sources, although relatively plentiful regarding the essential facts (founders, mother city, foundation dates) of Corinthian colonisation in

north-west Greece, are totally silent about such colonisation in Ithaca. This small island's alphabet shows Chalkidian influences<sup>5</sup>. It is definitely not Corinthian, as one could have expected if there had been a Corinthian settlement on it as early as the first half of the eighth century. Another case of Euboean influence is pointed out by Coldstream on an Ithacan kantharos with a peculiar design, which, «must have been copied from an Euboean original»<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, it is probable that the identification as “Corinthian” of much of the pottery in Ithaca may be wrong and was locally produced as local, “Corinthianizing” imitations of Corinthian pottery. Nevertheless, Ithaca's pottery does not lose its individuality<sup>7</sup>. Nancy Symeonoglou claims that the fabric is consistent with “local” pottery and certain shapes such as Ithaca-style kantharoi are common to Ithaca but are rare in Corinth<sup>8</sup>. Finds in the Bay of Naples and in Corinthian Isthmia strengthen this impression of a mediating role between Corinth and Italy. Lo Porto talks about imports from Ithaca<sup>9</sup>, and Morgan notes that pottery from Isthmia shows close connections with Ithaca's main sanctuary at Aetos, adopting Ithacan forms (kantharos) and plates (rare in Corinthia)<sup>10</sup>. Nancy Symeonoglou currently identifies Ithacan potters' marks in Perachora: a juglet and a fragment of a cup with crosses in orange paint, comparable to a juglet found in Vitsa<sup>11</sup> and some forty vases in Ithaca itself<sup>12</sup>. Finally, Otranto and Messapia, to which we will turn later, reveal a network of material culture (pottery and bronzes), linking Ithaca, Corinth, and Euboea<sup>13</sup>.

- 9 In sum, an independent Ithaca was positioned so as to enjoy a quasi colonial, “off-shore” role in relation to Epirus and the inland road leading through Arta into Epirus, and to Albania via Vitsa and southern Zagora to northern Greece. It also stood at a peculiar maritime juncture, leading up to the Albanian coast and to Italy (the Otranto straits). During the proto-colonial period and with the beginning of actual colonisation her position was probably strengthened, although with the strengthening of Corinthian involvement in the seventh century her role probably became somewhat less significant. However, earlier - the Euboeans since the 750's, the Corinthians since the 730's, and the Achaeans since ca. 700 - all must have passed through Ithaca. Some probably stopped at the island and made expensive dedications to Odysseus at Polis bay.

## 2. Corcyra

- 10 North of Ithaca lies Corcyra, identified at the earliest in the fifth century with Scheria when Thucydides speaks as a matter of fact (i. e., not a new foundation) of a sanctuary to Alkinoos there<sup>14</sup>. The story in Plutarch's *Greek Questions*, according to which Eretrian colonists were expelled from Corcyra by Corinthian ones, is quite familiar<sup>15</sup>.
- 11 The story, which could be suspected as an *aition*, not only contains explicit data which transcends what we usually find in colonial *aitia*, but can be contextualized within the general question of the colonists' “right of return” to the mother city, concerning the establishment of the colonial landfall, which I have discussed in detail in the AION volume dedicated to Giorgio Buchner<sup>16</sup>. Strabo mentions that Liburnians too were expelled by the Corinthians<sup>17</sup>; if this was concomitant to what they did to the Euboeans, the point may indirectly support Plutarch's story.
- 12 Euboean colonisation in Corcyra, therefore, was very short-lived, which indicates that chances for finding evidence for an established Eretrian settlement on Corcyra are very slim. There are those, especially among archaeologists, who may doubt the Eretrian

colonisation. My own approach, before abandoning detailed and contextualized evidence in an ancient source, is first to assess whether or not there might be good reason for not having found corroborating material evidence for it. There is. First, pre-colonial contacts apparently concerned the mainland, not Corcyra itself; in fact, the site of ancient Corcyra, at Palaiopolis, is located with reference to Butrint on the mainland. Second, work on Corcyra has been marked by rescue operations in several building plots in Palaiopolis (graves and settlement deposits are reported), and in work in the area of the Roman bath (over the second harbour channel) which reaches down below the modern water table. It is true that not a single Middle Geometric Euboean sherd has been found in these operations, which one could expect to find even if no Euboean had ever settled on the island (pottery does not necessarily equal settlement)<sup>18</sup>. Even the better sites, such as the cemeteries of Garitsa or Kanoni reveal evidence not before the seventh century (somewhat late also for Corinthians)<sup>19</sup>. Without systematic excavations and surface surveys we cannot seriously apply arguments from silence to the possibility that the Euboeans may have settled elsewhere in Corcyra. Even if they liked the area of Palaiopolis, if they had settled at a site half a kilometre off the rescue excavations that would explain the total lack of evidence. Finally, again, the settlement itself must have been rather short-lived for its members to have left much behind.

- 13 Thus Euboean colonisation in Corcyra must be assessed as a short-term affair, similar perhaps to the Theran settlement of Aziris in Libya. The difference is that whereas the Therans abandoned Aziris after seven years and proceeded to found Cyrene, the Eretrians left for another land altogether. Aziris too did not yield significant settlement material, if its identification is correct<sup>20</sup>. The Euboean situation on Corcyra was perhaps analogous to what Thucydides describes as the Phoenician presence in sites around Sicily before the Greek colonisation; no material evidence corroborates this presence and one is left with assessment of probabilities which, in turn, depend sometimes on the general attitude of scholarship at a given time. In sum, short-lived, dramatic or traumatic episodes may not be reflected in pottery evidence. On the other hand, the recollection of such episodes should be expected to be etched in collective memory for centuries. The absence of evidence is not evidence for absence.
- 14 One may refute Plutarch's story by postulating a late Euboean concoction of it<sup>21</sup>. However, one would also need to come up with a very good reason for an Euboean to be proud of its humiliating message; moreover, since both Chalkidian and Eretrian colonisation practically ceased after the eighth century (the effects of the Lelantine war?) one would need to show a good temporal context, probably between the seventh and the early fifth centuries (when Eretria was first wiped out by the Persians), when this might have been seen as serving some purpose. Also, parallels need to be shown among both authentic and fictive *ktiseis*, but these are lacking. If anything, parallels of 'previous foundations' indicate the reverse. The *ktisis* of Abdera, for example, tells of honours paid by the Teian colonists to Timesias of Klazomenai, honouring the previous (failed) founder<sup>22</sup>. Finally, one would need to examine, specifically and comparatively, all *ktiseis* mentioned by Plutarch himself (e. g., that of Lampsakos)<sup>23</sup> in order to trace some pattern supporting the notion of concoction.
- 15 Positivist support for Plutarch's story is lacking, unless Blakeway is right in identifying some Euboean traces. He claims that the cow suckling a calf on Corcyrean coins is a legacy of Euboean presence on Corcyra. There are also two onomastic

indications: the peninsula of Palaiopolis (the site of Corcyra-city) was called Makridies, an Euboean name; there was also a place called Euboea on the island<sup>24</sup>.

- 16 There are two dates reported for the Corinthian colonisation of Corcyra: Eusebius places it in 708; a fuller narrative version places it earlier, in 733<sup>25</sup>. The earlier date of 734/3 may provide us with a *terminus* as to when the Euboeans had come. 734/3 is the preferred date, in my view, even if it is based on an *a priori* suspicious synchronisation of the Corinthian colonies of Corcyra and Syracuse (the story tells of Chersikrates, together with Archias, first founding Corcyra, with Archias then proceeding to Sicily). Several considerations may support it. First, to succeed in a double enterprise of expelling both Euboean Greeks and Liburnians, the Corinthian contingent must have been considerable, and the story of a major Corinthian expedition, which first took Corcyra and then proceeded to Syracuse seems more credible.
- 17 Second, we note two maritime considerations. Corcyra was en route north to the crossing to Otranto, where significant Greek material has been discovered (discussed below). It did not need to wait for its discovery by Greeks; it was on the way. Perhaps more significant in historical terms is the following point. The maritime route between Corcyra and Syracuse is a natural one. It was not only the route of the Athenian navy in the fifth century, but today too boats ride before the north-easterly winds from Corcyra to the first natural land fall in Sicily: Naxos, founded by the Chalkidians of Euboea in 734. In my view one may see in Corinth's colonisation of both Corcyra and Syracuse a reaction to what could have been perceived by Corinthians as a new pattern of Euboean expansion. Instead of proto-colonial trading, now Euboeans actually colonised two major sites, Corcyra and Sicilian Naxos. Although one was an Eretrian colony (Corcyra) and the other (Naxos) Chalkidian, this may have mattered little for a Corinthian: both Chalkis and Eretria are said to have collaborated on the (earlier) foundation of Pithekoussai. Thus the Euboean "Corcyra-Naxos" route between the two new Euboean colonies was quickly replaced with the Corinthian "Corcyra-Syracuse" one, just one year after Naxos' foundation (734).
- 18 It may have been around this time that the Euboeans settled Orikos to the north of Corcyra. Orikos (Pasha Liman) is situated on an island in the Bay of Valona, just opposite Otranto in Italy. Orikos is mentioned by Hekataios as part of his description of Epirus<sup>26</sup>, and the name seems to signify the whole gulf, indicating that the settlement was of some importance<sup>27</sup>. As Beaumont observes, it had easy access to the small harbour Panormus across the peninsula over the Logara Pass, thus providing it with good communications with Corcyra and the Euboean position on the mainland opposite Corcyra. There are traditions that connect the region with the *Nostoi*, which I will not discuss now. It is perhaps significant that there is a dedicatory inscription of Apollonia at Olympia, dating to the early fifth century, calling the area Abantis, an Euboean name. It is cited by Pausanias who tells of the destruction of Thronios (also in the bay) by Apollonia<sup>28</sup>.
- 19 If we accept the historicity of Orikos, it is highly unlikely that it was founded later than the Corinthian thrust to Epidamnus and Apollonia (seventh and sixth centuries), in other words, a *terminus ante* of 627. As for Eretria and Chalkis, their role as international colonising states seems to have ended already at the close of the eighth century and the Euboean presence, therefore, must be pushed back at least to that time. Since Eretrian presence at Corcyra seems to be acceptable, Orikos was either founded by the Euboeans (probably the Eretrians) also in the mid-eighth century.

Therefore Orikos, across from Italian Otranto, may have already been in existence by 733.

- 20 There may be some general Euboean implications that derive from this picture. First, the title, *The First western Greeks*<sup>29</sup>, has been applied to the Euboeans in reference to their colony at Pithekoussai in western Italy, in the Bay of Naples. Although nothing comparable, archaeologically, exists in Corcyra, it should be emphasised that Euboean colonisation of Corcyra and Orikos is not far removed in time, and may be regarded as contemporary. Second, Pithekoussai's priority has created the impression of a "great leap" in the history of Greek colonisation, since it appeared that the earliest colony in the west was also the most distant. All colonies established until ca 600, were founded closer to "Greece". In contrast to Pithekoussai, Corcyra projects a more conventional and, in terms of distance-crossing, a somewhat less adventurous story: it was just around the corner, so to speak, north of Ithaca, on a natural maritime route to the north (Otranto straits) and to eastern Sicily, and facing Epirus. Thus "the first western Greeks", the Euboeans of Pithekoussai, should be considered "first" in a more nuanced picture. Together with the colonists of Pithekoussai, Euboeans seem to have been "first" on both sides of Italy: both in the Bay of Naples and in the Ionian Sea.
- 21 Chalkidians or Eretrians? Who were the Euboeans active in these regions? It appears that the Chalkidians were active more in western Italy (the bay of Naples) and later in Sicily, whereas the Eretrians concentrated more on the Ionian and Adriatic seas. However, during the first half of the eighth century when both seem to have cooperated in Pithekoussai, their maritime ventures perhaps should not be distinguished too rigidly according to regions. Beginning with the last third of the eighth century, there was one marked difference in favour of the Chalkidian colonies in the west: Corinth, the new colonising power, directed its attention to north-western Greece and to Sicily. Corcyra, as we have seen, was colonised with a view to Syracuse in Sicily, and the Eretrians disappeared in the face of the Corinthians. By contrast, the Chalkidian colonies in the west did not have to confront the Corinthians, and Syracuse would get involved with Kyme not before the fifth century, when it came to its help against the Etruscans. This relatively favourable, subsequent history of the Chalkidian colonies seems to have obscured for us the early history of Eretria in the Ionian and Adriatic seas, which in modern eyes too have caused the first western Greeks to be regarded more in Chalkidian terms.

### 3. Otranto and Messapia

- 22 The Bay of Valona and Orikos face the Straits of Otranto. This is not the place to retell the exciting finds of Francesco d'Andria and others. I should perhaps contextualize them in line of this paper: seas and rivers often function in history either as obstructing the passage between the shores or pulling them together as river banks and the sea between Italy and Albania was no exception<sup>30</sup>. It is particularly noteworthy that both the Corinthian pottery, as well as the Euboean, is similar in range, shapes, and dates to that discovered at Ithaca<sup>31</sup>. This brings Ithaca yet again, either directly or as a point of passage, into the region of significant Greek contacts with Epirus (especially Ambrakia, Vitsa, and Illyria in the valleys of Devoll, Berat, and at Elbasan, and Tren) and Italy<sup>32</sup>. These developments are particularly relevant for the end of the

ninth and the first half of the eighth century, namely, the period contemporary with the tripod-dedications in Ithaca to which I shall soon turn at the end of this paper.

- 23 The implications of the new finds at Otranto signify, in my view, nothing less than a revolutionary approach to the early history of Greek exploration and colonisation in the “West”. Moreover, the implied contacts, which, from a hindsight perspective appear as proto-colonial, further counter-balance the view that sees Greek colonisation in Italy mainly as dominated by Pithekoussai.
- 24 It is not quite clear who were the Greeks involved in the contacts between the straits of Otranto. They were probably traders, Corinthians, Euboeans, and perhaps northwestern Greeks, notably from Ithaca. D’Andria also suggests that tiny enclaves of Greek traders and artisans settled in Messapia by the mid-eighth century<sup>33</sup>. With regard to the traders, we cannot be sure about the identity of the carriers of goods. The relatively significant quantities of Corinthian material seem to point to active participation of Corinthians, in addition to the presumed presence of Euboeans. However, it must be borne in mind that once the network of contacts is observable as more or less constant, the active participants and the origins of the goods carried are factors which can fluctuate<sup>34</sup>.
- 25 To sum up: a colonising Euboean presence at both Corcyra and Orikos may seem acceptable at least for the mid-eighth century, replaced at Corcyra by Corinth probably ca 733 (or possibly some twenty-five years later). The archaeological evidence from Otranto seems to suggest that this Greek presence was preceded by proto-colonial traffic and was directed not only with a view to commerce in the Epirote lands and the Ionian sea, sailing up the coasts, but also across the Otranto Straits, to Italy and possibly also to the Adriatic (the sea north of the Straits). The evidence points to contacts already ca 800 and the first half of the eighth century and may be thus termed proto-colonial.

#### 4. Aristocrats, traders, princes and captains

- 26 It seems probable that prominent among the entrepreneurs were Euboean and Corinthian aristocrats, “princes”, or “captains”. The term “princes”, admittedly impressionistic and vague, avoids some irrelevant anthropological associations of “big men” while keeping enough of a “Viking flavor” to account for the sailing context (trading, gift-exchanging, raiding, etc.) in which we see the evidence for the activity of some of these “captains”. Perhaps they were “captains of sailors-traders”, as Odysseus is called: ἀρχὸς ναυτῶων οἳ τε πρηκτῆρες ἔασιν<sup>35</sup>, leading expeditions with subordinate adventurers/traders who could expect a share in profits. We are reminded of the “Cretan Odysseus”, in the story told to Eumaios, or Mentès, prince of the Taphians whose visit may indicate that such a stop-over at Ithaca by a prince-entrepreneur belonged to a familiar and acceptable frame of associations. It is also implied in the voyage of the “Cretan Odysseus” who is convinced by the Phoenician to go to Libya on the Phoenician’s ship, where both might profit<sup>36</sup>. Finally, Mentès is asked whether he had been in Ithaca before and was he a friend to Odysseus’ house «for many were the men who came to our house as strangers, since he, too, had gone to and for among men». Ithaca, therefore, is perceived as a place frequented by traders,(both ship captains and associates).

- 27 The conclusions of a recent study by Jan Crielaard of Euboean aristocracy in the Dark Age seems to be compatible with this image of the captains<sup>37</sup>. During the tenth and ninth centuries the Euboean elite had privileged access to the import and exchange of foreign goods, especially from the east. Such fruitful long-distance connections were important for status enhancement. By the beginning of the eighth century it can be said that prestige had been accruing to objects also in direct relation to the distance of their provenance and the effort involved in getting them. Special emphasis is thus placed more on the adventure-prestige activity than on the “profit” or “economic activity” as such<sup>38</sup>. «Sailing and travelling in themselves, says Crielaard, probably became prestige-providing activities»<sup>39</sup>.

## 5. Ithaca and the cult to Odysseus

- 28 Trading and sailing in the ninth century via Ithaca towards Corcyra, the straits of Otranto, and southern Italy, were probably perceived as conducted in the opposite direction of Odysseus’s final voyage in the *Odyssey*. The poetical metaphor of transition from the mythical geography into the real world, from Phaiakia/Corcyra to Ithaca, was reversed and made concrete when Greeks were navigating from Ithaca to Corcyra. This is also the context of the cult to Odysseus in Ithaca, discernible since the ninth century. Among the Greeks confronting the metaphor were the Ithacans themselves, Euboeans, and Corinthians.
- 29 So let us turn to Odysseus. The Odysseus of the *Odyssey* does nothing which resembles the foundation of a colony, although he does comment on the availability of a site, the island facing the land of the Cyclopes in the famous scene in the ninth book. All his travels are the exact opposite of a *ktisis* (Homer knew the difference, as we see in the *ktisis* of Phaiakia). This is the first reason why I prefer to see the Odysseus of the *Odyssey* as having functioned as a hero of the proto-colonists, namely, those Greeks who, already in the ninth and early eighth centuries, sailed, explored, traded, and exchanged gifts with the peoples of the north west, in the Ionian and Adriatic seas. The resourceful, persevering, self-made man, famous for his ability to collect gifts and riches in Epirus, was the appropriate hero for those who sailed out not to colonise but expecting to return, and probably hoping for divine guidance and protection, such as Athena gave Odysseus. Actual sailing experiences, the individual image of the proto-colonial hero, and the particular site of Ithaca, the home of Odysseus, converged to create a powerful focus for articulating the proto-colonial experience. The dedications of the tripods at Polis Bay seem to express this experience<sup>40</sup>.
- 30 As any historian of Greek religion should readily admit, the dedications are highly exceptional. It is one thing to find expensive tripod-dedications at the great pan-Hellenic centres, such as Olympia and (later) Delphi or Delos, or even in the great city-sanctuaries, such as the temples of Hera at Samos or Argos. It is something completely different, in fact, unique, when such dedications are found in a cave-shrine on a tiny island in northwest Greece.
- 31 The story is familiar: Sylvia Benton discovered the remains of twelve tripods and investigated the ambiguous reports about a thirteenth tripod discovered by Loizos in the 1870’s. The site of the cave seems to have been primarily sacred to the Nymphs, as such caves often are. The explicit references to Odysseus are few and late. An inscription from Magnesia records the Ithacans’ response to participate in the games of

Artemis Leukophryne at Magnesia, instituted in 206 BC. The Ithacans, in return, invite the Magnesians to the “Odysseia” and order the inscription to be set up in the Odysseion<sup>41</sup>. A series of masks, which date to after 300, were dedicated in the cave. One of them, reads: εὐχὴν Ὀδύσσει (a “prayer”, or “votive offerings” to Odysseus).

- 32 We recall how in *Odyssey* XIII the Phaiakians bring Odysseus to Ithaca, lay him down on the beach, asleep, with the treasure he was given by Alkinoos and the elders of the Phaiakians. He wakes up, converses with Athena, and hastens to hide the treasure, including the rich tripods he was given, inside the cave of the Nymphs, by the seashore. Scholars have calculated that the number of tripods, which were given to Odysseus, was thirteen: one from Alkinoos, twelve from the elders. And lo and behold-thirteen tripods were in fact discovered inside the cave of the Nymphs at Ithaca... How does one explain this?
- 33 There was a good reason why Greeks would stop at Polis Bay. When assessing early colonisation in general and Euboean colonisation in particular, maritime determinants should be taken into consideration. Sailing factors are particularly important in order to establish a context where evidence is otherwise scarce. Maritime considerations may be significant in order to understand Ithaca’s role and the position of Odysseus. It is not enough to state that the island was “en route”, but to ask where, in Ithaca, would people stop. Vathi, a superior harbour on the eastern side of Ithaca, was probably the main port; for people whose destination is Ithaca itself, as well as for the people of the island, Vathi was obviously the preferable choice. However, for those sailing north, say, towards Corfu, Polis Bay in the Ithaca-Cephalonia channel (where the dedications to Odysseus were found) was then as now the single place to anchor. Today, too, Heikell’s Pilot book recommends Polis bay for those coming “down” from Corfu<sup>42</sup>.
- 34 But Polis is on the side of the Ithaca-Kephallonia channel, the opposite side of Vathi and various other anchorage places which exist on the eastern side of Ithaca. Why would people go through the Ithaca-Kephallonia channel where Polis is the only relatively good anchorage place (much inferior to Vathi)? The reason, I think, is that before the Corinthians cut the Leukas channel, navigation towards Corfu would go through the Ithaca-Kephallonia channel. The information about the Corinthian Leukas channel (implying that up until then Leukas was not an island) comes from Strabo<sup>43</sup> and some postulate that some sort of a natural channel had existed before the Corinthian work. But even if there was such a channel, and even assuming it was navigable, it must be admitted that before Corinth controlled it, it is very unlikely that some one would try. A boat sailing the slow, very shallow Leukas channel would have been very unsafe and open to attack from the mainland. Once Corinth took control over the Leukas passage, maritime traffic by Ithaca’s western coasts probably declined-which may also explain why the expensive dedications at Polis bay in Ithaca cease in the seventh century.
- 35 Some have dismissed the identification of the cave as sacred to Odysseus, claiming that the association with the hero was a late, Hellenistic phenomenon<sup>44</sup>.
- 36 However, some major considerations seem to have been overlooked. Just by way of headlines: first, on general grounds, continuity of cult often implies (between the Archaic and Classical periods) continuity in the identity of the cult recipient<sup>45</sup>. Second, it is wrong to claim that the earliest attestation of Ithacan identification with Odysseus is Hellenistic, and based on the mask alone. Ithaca began minting its coins in the early fourth century and Odysseus, sometimes with Athena on the obverse, is clearly Ithaca’s

national symbol right from the first<sup>46</sup>. There is no reason to assume that this was a novelty of the classical period. Third, Aristotle, in his *Constitution of the Ithakesians* implies a ritual of annual gifts were given by the people of Ithaca to Odysseus<sup>47</sup>. Fourth, we have the Nymphs. The magnificent tripod-dedications discovered inside the cave could not have been placed there merely for Nymphs; their kind of cult hardly ever involves that kind of expensive dedication<sup>48</sup>. However, the cult to Odysseus may have started at the cave because of the association with the Nymphs, since in *Odyssey* XIII Odysseus prays to them, mentions gifts he used to give them, promises some more, and hides the gifts of the Phaiakians inside their cave. Also, in one of the sequels to the *Odyssey*, the *Telegony* whose first book was probably plagiarised from a seventh-century poem<sup>49</sup>, the first act of Odysseus upon leaving Ithaca yet again, is to sacrifice to the Nymphs, probably at the same place. Fifth, it is implausible that the tripod-dedications were offered to Olympian deities, for these are usually not worshipped in caves<sup>50</sup>.

- 37 In sum, both positive and exclusionary considerations, as well as the continuity of cult activity, indicate that the remarkable and exceptional dedications were accorded to Odysseus as the cult-recipient. It was never a hero's cult in the strict sense of the word, with a sacrificial pit to absorb the blood. Rather, it was a focus of dedications to the hero who himself placed tripods in the cave, perhaps fulfilling the promise of Odysseus to give gifts to the Nymphs, a promise which remains unfulfilled in the *Odyssey*. The cave, suggests François de Polignac, was the point of social convergence and mediation, emphasising the prestige attached to the objects as rising in direct proportion to their distance from the home of the dedicator<sup>51</sup>.
- 38 In Greek religion, as in many others, dedications are a kind of ritual investment. One "lets go", the verb is *aphienai*, gives up his/her riches, and yet eternalises them for all to see. Dedications, especially by aristocrats and merchants, express also reconnaissance of gratitude (e. g., the famous Mantiklos inscription), and hopeful expectation that the deity will grant favours again. Their dedications to Odysseus must have expressed something personal, (we rarely glimpse the personal emotion in ancient religion) the "captain of sailors-traders", in his personal, direct relation to the hero.
- 39 There is also an explanation diametrically opposed to what I have outlined just now<sup>52</sup>. Homer either saw himself, or heard that there were thirteen tripods in Ithaca and because of that concocted the whole story (although I am not clear which part). In other words, the tripods were an *aition*; they were not placed in the cave because of the *Odyssey*, rather, the relevant sections of the *Odyssey* was composed because there were tripods in the cave. This approach used to come so naturally to scholars, that some are still surprised anyone can think differently. However, the weakness of the argument is inherent already in the text of Homer. He does not single out the tripods from the other elements of the Phaiakian treasure and, most importantly, he does not say there were thirteen tripods. The number is the result of erudite calculation. Anyone who knows the *Ihad* and the *Odyssey* is familiar with the attention to detail, especially when it comes to significant objects, such as the staff of Agamemnon or the cup of Nestor. What is the point of claiming the tripods as an *aition* if the *aition* itself gets to be so obscured?
- 40 The correct approach to the problem, in my view, is to see it in terms of ritual emulating myth in the most probable historical context when the evocation of Odysseus at this particular sea-side shrine would have been most meaningful to the widest circles of those who frequented it: the Ithacans, the Euboeans and the Corinthians of the ninth and eighth centuries. They did frequent it, if we rely on the

maritime determinants outlined above regarding sailing through the Ithaca-Kephallonia channel and stopping at Polis bay. What is important is whether it could have been believed, sometimes in the ninth century, that this was where the Phaiakians landed Odysseus and that it was at that cave, sacred to the Nymphs, that he placed his tripods. Disembarkation and landing-rituals such as libation, setting up a new altar, and so on, have always been significant in Greek religion<sup>53</sup>. Once tripod-dedications entered the milieu of “captains” as one of the most significant (and socially rewarding) ritual actions and “investments”, it seems probable that the cave of Polis provided a point of convergence. What converged were mythic associations, Odysseus’ heroic precedent (both that of his presence in Ithaca and Polis and his precise action of placing tripods in a cave). What also converged were the aristocrats themselves and what they were doing: showing off to each other, sailing to the Beyond and back, exiting and entering, like Odysseus at Ithaca.

- 41 This perception joined with the cult at Polis. The cave at Polis seems to imply a local, Ithaca-cult, but also what we may call a “protopan-Hellenic” shrine, since the hero was shared by other Greeks and could connect with the personal experience of particular individuals sailing to-or by-Ithaca. The “cult community”, therefore, included a wider spectrum of participants: both Ithacans and Greek visitors, Euboeans and Corinthians. The cult activity was closely identified with an epic hero, perhaps not precisely the Odysseus of the textual Homer, but all the same, that hero with that story of return to Ithaca, the landing at the bay and the placement of the gifts in the cave. The tripod dedications are the most revealing aspect of a very early Hellenic cult which transcends both the locality (Ithaca) and ethnic boundaries, such as those differentiating between Euboeans and Corinthians. It provides perhaps the earliest illustration of activity, visible activity, of pan-Hellenic convergence, combining actual sailing and what was in the heads of those sailing, the most wonderful sailor of them all.

## Conclusions

- 42 This is the Euboean and Odyssean *periplus* I have tried to outline in this paper. It emphasises the independent role of the island of Ithaca and its maritime context vis-à-vis Epirus and the routes towards Corcyra and Otranto. It contextualizes the Euboeans proto-colonial sailings along those routes; it offers a historical reconstruction of Euboean colonisation in the Ionian and Adriatic seas, while juxtaposing it with Corinthian efforts. Finally, it places the cult of Odysseus at the heart of this *periplus*, Odysseus who must have been on the minds of Greeks setting out past the homeward destination of that most prominent of *Nostoi*.

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## APPENDIXES

## Additional abbreviations

Antonaccio 1995 = C. M. Antonaccio, *An archaeology of ancestors*, Lanham 1995.

Crielaard 1996 = J. -P. Crielaard, *The Euboeans overseas: long-distance contacts and colonisation as status activities in early Iron Age Greece*, Thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1996.

Coldstream 1977 = J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, London 1977.

Melissano 1990 = V. Melissano, s. v. 'Otranto', in F. d'Andria (a cura di), *Archeologia dei Messapi*, catalogo della mostra Lecce, Museo Provinciale "Sigismondo Castro-mediano" 7 ottobre 1990 - 7 gennaio 1991', Bari 1990.

Morgan 1988 = C. A. Morgan, 'Corinth, the Corinthian Gulf, and western Greece during the eighth century BC', in *BSA* 83, 1988, pp. 313-338.

Morgan 1995 = C. A. Morgan, 'Problems and prospects in the study of Corinthian pottery production', in *Corinto e l'Occidente. Atti del XXXIV Convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia. Taranto 7-11 ottobre 1994*, Napoli 1995, pp. 313-344.

Robertson 1948 = M. Robertson, 'Excavations at Ithaca V', in *BSA* 43, 1948.

## NOTES

1. *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonisation and ethnicity* (University of California Press). Some of the point discussed here are further developed in the book. The aim of this paper is to contextualize my ideas within a Euboian problematic.

2. K. Robb, *Literacy and paideia in ancient Greece*, New York-Oxford 1994, pp. 49-52.

3. Morgan 1988, pp. 313-338.

4. Robertson 1948, pp. 123-4; cf. N. G. L. Hammond, *Epirus*, Oxford 1967, p. 414. A Corinthian "staging station": Cold stream 1977, p. 187; cf. A. M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece: an Archaeological survey of the eleventh to the eighth centuries*, Edinburgh 1971, pp. 339; 416.

5. L. H. Jeffery, *The local scripts of Archaic Greece: a study of the Greek alphabet and its development from the eighth to the fifth centuries BC.*, Oxford 1990 (revised edition with a supplement by A. W. Johnston), p. 230.

6. Coldstream 1977, p. 188.

7. W. D. E. Coulson, 'The "Protogeometric" from Polis reconsidered', in *BSA* 86, 1991, pp. 43-64; cf. J. N. Coldstream, *Greek Geometric pottery*, London 1968, pp. 221-3; Coldstream 1977, pp. 183-4.

8. Nancy Symeonoglou, work in progress (personal correspondence).

9. Lo Porto, in *NSc* 1964, pp. 228f., fig. 48. Cf. S. Benton, 'Further excavations at Aetos', in *BSA* 48, 1953, p. 292 n. 773, fig. 11. See, however, H. Chr. Dehl, *Die Korinthische Keramik des 8 und frühen 7 Jhrs v. Chr. in Italien*, Berlin 1984, p. 258 (Corinthian or Corinthianizing).

10. Morgan 1995.

11. I. Vokotopoulou, *Vitsa. The cemeteries of a Molossian settlement, I-III*, Athens 1986 (in Greek), pp. 205-6, fig. 67. b and plate 323.

12. With *Prakt* 1989, pp. 293-4. Cf. Robertson 1948 who was the first to insist on the local aspects of Ithacan pottery.

13. Cf. Melissano 1990, pp. 41-2.

14. Thuc. III 70. 4. Cf. Ps. Scylax 22. At some uncertain time one of Corcyra's ports was named "the port of Alkinoos". Eustath. ad Dion. Per. GGM II 310.

15. Plutarch, *Greek Questions* XI.
16. I. Malkin, 'Inside and Outside: colonisation and the formation of the mother city', in *Apoikia. Studi in onore di G. Buchner. AION ArchStAnt* 1 (N. S.), 1994, pp. 1-9.
17. Strabo VI 270.
18. V. G. Kallipolitis, 'Κεράμεικα Εύρηματα από την Κέρκυρα', in *ASAA* 44, 1982 [1984], pp. 74-5, figs. 8-9, tentatively identifies sherds from three Eretrian vessels in a deposit at Palaiopolis. Morgan 1995 claims these are likely to belong to the early seventh century and may even be local.
19. See the relevant volumes of the *ArchDelt*. The sites of Fi-garetto and Almyras Peritheias are equally unhelpful for the question I am raising.
20. For the identification of the settlement of Aziris see J. Boardman, 'Evidence for dating of Greek settlements in Cyrenaica', in *BSA* 61, 1966, pp. 150-51; cf. A. Laronde, *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique: Libikai historiai de l'époque républicaine au principat d'Auguste*, Paris 1987, p. 223; P. W. Haider, *Griechen- Griechben-land-Nordafrika*, Darmstadt 1988, p. 132; F. Chamoux, 'La Cyrénaïque, des origines a 321 a. C., d'après les fouilles et les travaux récents', in *LibStud* 20, 1989, p. 66.
21. As suggested in this conference by Catherine Morgan.
22. I. Malkin, *Religion and colonisation in ancient Greece*, Leiden 1987, pp. 54-6, 221-3.
23. Plut. *Mor.* 255a-e with Polyæn. VIII 37; Steph. Byz. s. v. 'Λάμψακος'.
24. Strabo X 449; cf. A. Blakeway, 'Prolegomena to the study of Greek commerce with Italy, Sicily and France in the eighth and seventh centuries BC', in *BSA* 33, 1933, p. 205.
25. Strabo VI 269 with A. J. Graham, 'The colonial expansion of Greece: the western Greeks', in *CAH<sup>2</sup>* 3(3) 1982, p. 131.
26. *FGrHist* 1 F 104 with N. G. L. Hammond, 'Illyris, Epirus and Macedonia', in *CAH<sup>2</sup>* III. 3, 1982, p. 268
27. R. L. Beaumont, 'Greek influence in the Adriatic before the fourth century BC', in *JHS* 56, 1936, p. 165.
28. Paus. V 22. 3-4; cf. Plin. *NH* II 204.
29. D. Ridgway, *The first western Greeks*, Cambridge 1992.
30. Cf. J. -J. Lamboley, 'Le Canal d'Otrante et les relations entre les deux rives de l'Adriatique', in P. Cabanes, (ed.) *L'Illyrie méridionale et l'Épire dans l'antiquité*, Clermont-Ferrand 1987, pp. 195-202. Specifically Lamboley suggests the extension of the overland route to the east, connecting even Asia Minor with Italy through the Pindus range and the Straits of Otranto. See now his *Recherches sur les Messapiens: IV<sup>e</sup>-II<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J. -C.* (Ecole française de Rome), Rome 1996.
31. Melissano 1990, pp. 41-2.
32. F. D'Andria, 'Greci ed indigeni in Iapygia', in *Modes de contacts et processus de transformation dans les sociétés anciennes*. Actes du colloque de Crotona (24-30 mai 1981). Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa (Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome 67), Pisa-Rome 1983, pp. 289-90.
33. For nuclei of settlements, F. D'Andria, 'Insediamenti e territorio: l'età storica', in *I Messapi. Atti del trentesimo convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia. Taranto-Lecce, 4-9 Ottobre 1990*, Taranto 1991, pp. 433-6, and his comments in that volume pp. 312-15.
34. An observation emphasised by C. A. Morgan, whose help in criticising various versions of this research I acknowledge warmly and gratefully.
35. *Odyssey* VIII 162.
36. *Odyssey* XIV 295-6.
37. Crielaard 1996 with his, 'How the West was won: Euboeans vs. Phoenicians', in *HBA* 18-19, 1991-1992, pp. 235-249; 'Ναυσικλειτή Εύβοια: Socio-economic aspects of Euboeian trade and colonisation', in *Αρχαίον Ευβοικιών Μελετών* 30, 1992-1993, Athens 1994, pp. 45-53.
38. Cf. H. Van Wees, *Status warriors: war violence and society in Homer and history*, Amsterdam 1992, pp. 249-258.

39. Crielaard 1996 convincingly adduces anthropological evidence from Oceania, which suggests that «adventure, curiosity, wandering, and exploring cannot be strictly separated from trading ventures, assertion of traditional authority, or raiding». Moreover “knowledge” gained in long-distance travels attaches awe and potency to its bearers, important traits in the implied rivalry among “chiefs”.
40. See S. Benton, ‘Excavations in Ithaca III’, in *BSA* 35, 1934-5, pp. 45-73; ‘The evolution of the tripod-lebes’, *ibidem*, pp. 74-130; ‘Excavations in Ithaca III; the cave at Polis II’, in *BSA* 39, 1938-9, pp. 1-51.
41. O. Kern, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Meander*, Berlin 1900, n. 36, esp. lines 15-16, 28-29.
42. R. Heikell, *Greek waters pilot*, Cambridge 1987.
43. Strabo 451-2.
44. Most recently Antonaccio 1995, pp. 152-155, with references to earlier work.
45. This is a familiar point. See, e. g., J. N. Coldstream, ‘Greek temples why and where?’, in J. V. Muir-P. E. Easterling (eds.), *Greek religion and society*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 67-9; cf. G. Roux, ‘Trésors, temples, tholos’, in G. Roux (éd.), *Temples et sanctuaires* (Travaux de la maison de l’Orient 7), Lyon 1984, pp. 153-171.
46. B. V. Head, *Historia numorum*, Oxford 1911<sup>2</sup>, p. 428.
47. Fr. 507 Rose.
48. Cf. I Malkin, ‘Nymphs’, in *OCD*<sup>3</sup> 1996.
49. Clem. Al., *Strom.* VI 2. 25. 1.
50. The issue of having tripods dedicated to female deities, in major sanctuaries (not caves!), is not quite applicable here as Antonaccio 1995 thinks (p. 154), relying on M. Maass, *Die Geome-Geome-trischen Dreifüsse von Olympia* (*OlForsch* 10), Berlin 1978, p. 4 n. 24) who lists such dedications, e. g., to Athena Lindia in Rhodes, Athena Polias in Athens, Hera at the Samian Heraion, and so on.
51. F. de Polignac, ‘Offrandes, mémoire et compétition ritualisée dans les sanctuaires grecs à l’époque géométrique’, in *Power and religion in ancient Greece*, ‘Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1993’, *Boreas* 24, 1996, pp. 59-66.
52. E. g., A. Heubeck-A. Hoekstra, *A commentary on Homer’s Odyssey*, Vol. II, books IX-XVI, Oxford 1989, p. 177 on *Odyssey* XIII 217-18.
53. I. Malkin, ‘Apollo Archegetes and Sicily’, in *AnnPisa* 16 (ser. 3), 1986, pp. 61-74.