



## **THE MYTH OF THE METROPOLIS—COLONISATION, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

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### Introduction

The consequences of Western Mediterranean colonisation in the Archaic period for the development of the Greek polis, in the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century is a topic relevant for students both of ancient history and cultural developments in colonial situations. The consequences of colonisation for the colonised should not be overlooked, but this paper will focus on changes among the colonisers themselves, as a result of the establishment of new settlements abroad. The study of the early polis is bedevilled by uncertainties, not least because most sources are comparatively late, such as Herodotos, Thukydides and Aristotle. The impression gleaned from these indirect sources is inevitably influenced by the poleis contemporary with these writers. With few exceptions, like Homer and Archilochos, there are no early references to Greek colonisation. The earliest Greek settlements abroad are attested exclusively from archaeology. However, the available written evidence for colonial foundations will be used to investigate the dynamics of early Greek colonisation in the West, and to test some current theories on how Greek settlements abroad were established.

### The early polis and Greek settlements abroad

The Greeks established apoikiai, lit. “away from home”, and emporia, or trading posts, from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE all around the Mediterranean. How were they established? Were they state-led expeditions, private enterprises or both? A.J. Graham warned against simplifying colonial scenarios, pointing out that the foundation stories of founders banished from their mother-cities often contrast with the historically good relations between the colony and its mother-city (Graham 1964, 7). There seems to have been a fleeting distinction between different forms of colonial settlements. John Wilson argues that the difference between emporion and polis was blurred in the Archaic period (Wilson 1997, 206). Emporia sometimes evolved into poleis. Thus, the differences between emporion and apoikia, or between mother-city and colony, are not easy to establish for the early period of the polis, the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards. These settlements will be discussed as settlements of a polis type, i.e. citizen-states and city-states.

Most Greek colonies claimed to have been founded at one moment in time as the result of an expedition from a mother-city, a metropolis, under the leadership of a named individual, the archegetes, expedition leader, also called the oikist, founder. The archegetes acted as a rule on instructions from Apollo through his oracle at Delphi. These stories are called ktisis traditions, or foundation legends. Are the foundation legends true? Was the colony established in a single, rationally planned act? Several scholars believe so. Irad Malkin claims that the oikist was responsible for organising the political and religious space of the territory. This was in part done through the establishment of cults (Malkin 1987, 183-186). Similarly, A.M. Snodgrass maintains that agricultural land in the earliest colonies was provided for the colonists in a single act (Snodgrass 2004, 9). This does not mean, however, that the colony consisted of colonists from only one mother-city, or only of Greeks. Snodgrass accepts that the Western colonies were a cosmopolitan environment, from the archaeological prominence of Phoenician artefacts and settlements at Sardinia and southern Spain (Snodgrass 2004, 2).

The colony was supposed to share the same cults to the gods as the mother-city, the metropolis. François de Polignac draws attention to the fact that the establishment of cults was part of the Greeks taking possession of foreign territory. These cults were established quite

rapidly, within the space of a single generation (Polignac 1995, 98-100). The origins of a colony were important for diplomatic relations and sympathies in conflicts between poleis. Colonies also had cults dedicated to founding heroes, and these heroes were remembered in foundation legends. The descendants of the oikist were of course interested in the maintenance of such foundation legends to strengthen their own claims of local pre-eminence.

The ktisis-traditions have recently been put into doubt by some scholars. Robin Osborne argues that the foundation legends do not fit the archaeological sources: The earliest colonies were established in stages, not all at once, as can be seen from the existence not of one overall grid plan for a colony like Megara Hyblaia, but several separate grids. This makes it doubtful that there was a single rational act behind the establishment of a colony (Osborne 1998, 252-256). The literary evidence for colonisation from the 8th century, the Homeric epics, indicates that settlements were improvised affairs by roving seafarers as well as more organised colonisation (Osborne 1998, 256-260). Instead of state-led expeditions, “settlement in the West was a product of a world in which many were constantly moving across the seas” (Osborne 1998, 268). The impression gained from the Homeric epics is corroborated by a citation from Archilochos regarding the colonisation of Thasos where he states that “the misery of All-Greeks has rushed to Thasos” (Archil. 102 [tr. Gerber]). The pull of a new place to settle precedes the push of an existing community.

Recent colonial studies focus on terms like hybridisation to describe the culture of new settlements. Peter van Dommelen argues that the archaeology of the Western Mediterranean reveals “a complex situation of mutual influencing, and creative subversion” of culture in the relationship between colonisers and natives (van Dommelen 1997, 319). Criticism has been raised at theories of acculturation that divides settler culture and indigenous culture “into separate, impermeable spheres, and positions technologically advanced societies over primitive ones” (Lyons & Papadopoulos 2002, 7). This contrasts sharply with the tradition from T.J. Dunbabin and his book *The Western Greeks* (1948), with his emphasis on the close cultural and political ties between mother-city and colony, after a model reminiscent of British colonialism (De Angelis 1998, 545-546).

The study of the Western colonies is important for any discussion about the origins of the polis and urbanism in Greece. The earliest colonies in the West were founded before several of the poleis in

Greece were urbanised. Early colonies should be discussed as part of the history of the development of the polis; they may have played a role in shaping the Greek polis as a kind of community where the citizens equal the constitution, living in an urban environment with central political and religious institutions; the polis as citizen-state and city-state.

The literature on Greek colonies is vast, and as the above short synopsis of recent scholarship shows, there are several vexed questions. How were the first colonists organised? Was there a gradual establishment of settlements, or were the colonies established as poleis at once? Did the colonists maintain contact with the society they had left? The use of the very term colony is difficult. The connection between metropolis and colony was much weaker in Archaic Greece than that between early modern colonies and their home countries. Colonies were not established mainly to exploit foreign resources in the name of a national state the colonists wished ultimately to return to. The Greek colonies were supposed to become the new permanent homes of the colonists. Moses Finley argues that the Greek colonies should be labelled settlements, not colonies, since they were poleis in their own right (Finley 1976, 174). But, as has been argued above, this distinction is not very relevant for the early polis

Greeks were not alone in their settlement of the Mediterranean. The Phoenicians also established settlements abroad. The Greeks and Phoenicians have been regarded as enemies and competitors in the Mediterranean, but this view is now discarded by most scholars. John Boardman states that “the symbiosis of the two peoples is more remarkable than their competition” (Boardman 2001, 37-38). Trade resulted in Greek contact with other peoples in the colonial environment, and led to cultural borrowings and innovation in Greece (Burkert 1995, 14-25). Whereas Greeks of the Dark Age lived on rather isolated farmsteads and in small hamlets, the Phoenician city states of the Levant thrived throughout the Early Iron Age, into the Greek Archaic period and beyond. It is during the intensification of Greek and Phoenician relations in the Mediterranean that the Greek polis emerges as a distinct form of political organisation, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

#### The polis, politics and urbanism

The development of the Greek polis in the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries coincides with an active period of colonial establishments. How did the

Greeks come to prefer to settle in centralized poleis rather than continuing to live in hamlets? Population pressure alone cannot explain the development of city-states in Greece: centralization and urbanization would not solve the problem of land hunger. What are the origins of the polis?

There are difficulties defining the polis. From an archaeological point of view, monumental buildings give a clue to the development of urban features. Urban features, however, are not necessarily the hallmark of a polis. The classic example is Sparta, which, according to Thucydides, would not have been recognized as a mighty polis from its material remains (Thuc. 1. 10). Not all poleis had impressive buildings or elaborate fortifications, but they were still poleis in the sense of political communities. Alkaios claims that “warlike men are a city’s tower” (Alc. 112. 10 [tr. Campbell]). The community of citizens could be seen as the defining feature of the polis. On the other hand, the simile of the warriors and the tower would not be possible without the actual existence of fortifications.

The earliest written sources to the Greek polis, the epics, describe cities with towers and walls. They also refer to colonies, something which demonstrates that the earliest poleis and colonies were contemporary. In the *Odyssey*, Homer describes the society of the Phaiakians. They were forced to migrate by the oppression of their neighbours, the Cyclopes. Their king, Nausithoos, let his people move to faraway Scheria, where he erected walls, let houses be built, established temples to the gods and divided the land into lots (cf. Hom. *Od.* 6. 4-10). The foundation of their society resembles that of a colony. When Odysseus arrived, the Phaiakians were ruled by the king, or basileus Alkinoos, who ruled in concert with twelve other basileis (Hom. *Od.* 8. 390-391). There is an agora on the harbour, where foreigners are received by the community leaders, who are seated on seats of stone. The rest of the community also participates at their meetings (Hom. *Od.* 8.4-8). Public games are held there (Hom. *Od.* 8. 109-110). There is mention both of council and assembly among the Phaiakians. In several respects, the society of the Phaiakians resembles a polis. They are an antithesis to the uncivilised Cyclopes, who know neither law nor political institutions (Hom. *Od.* 9. 112). The polis is defined both through its buildings and through its political institutions.

The polis as a kind of political community precedes the polis as a monumental city. Settlements grew into cities in part for political reasons, because of the need for administration and centralized

institutions that were housed in central structures in the polis. Greek poleis soon constructed planned agoras and communal temples. James Whitley points out that “towns, after all, were the centres of poleis, and the polis was a centre of power” (Whitley 2001, 179).

The organisation and monumentalisation of the agora is an indication of the urbanised polis. The earliest known planned agora is that of Megara Hyblaia on Sicily, from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The agora was both a place for assembly and a marketplace. The dual function of the market place is also found in most Near Eastern cities, where the city gates served as market place and place for civic business, such as meetings of assemblies and councils. This is a common feature of city-states, and not restricted to Greece.

The polis is the physical extension of the political unity of the inhabitants of city and countryside. It is also a kind of political ideology, where the citizens equal the constitution. The polis in its fully developed form has the combination of an urban centre with a central sanctuary, written laws, and civic institutions involving the participation of all or some of the citizens. It usually had a restricted rural hinterland. These traits are common for several city-states in antiquity, such as the Phoenician city-states of the Levant. A common feature between Archaic Greece and the Near East of the 8<sup>th</sup> century is a concern for justice for the common man., against judges who tread on the weak and destitute at the agora or in the city-gates, i.e. in the institutions for adjudication in the city-state. The kings or basileis in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* are judges, and are criticised for taking bribes and passing verdicts that benefit the mighty. Zeus is the protector of justice, Dike, and he will punish the unjust (Hes. *Op.* 201-280). This reveals a concern for justice and the proper working of central institutions in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and is an indication of the problems of the nascent polis. The same concerns are found in the *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* 17. 384-389). They are paralleled by the Biblical prophet Amos (Am. 5. 7 and 12-15). In all three instances, warning is given about divine punishment against such transgressions.

There have been several discussions of the typological relationship between city-state cultures, the most recent being the investigations of the Copenhagen Polis Centre under the leadership of Mogens Herman Hansen (Hansen 2000). No agreement has been reached on the question whether there are any real similarities between Greek and Phoenician city-states. James Whitley rejects any parallelism between Greece and the Levant, because the Phoenician city-states were monarchies, whereas the Greek poleis were citizen-states (Whitley 2001,

166). But there are indications that the rulers of Phoenician city-states shared power with the council and the assembly (Sommer 2000, 246-249). Their trading settlements abroad can hardly be described as monarchies, because of their small size. Conversely, Greek colonies, such as Kyrene, were ruled by basileis. The sharp divide between the Greek and Phoenician city-states seems overstated, and their structural and historical proximity should be kept in mind in discussing the early polis and Greek colonisation.

#### Trade and migration

The world of the 8<sup>th</sup> century Mediterranean may be glimpsed through the mythological elaborations of the Homeric epics. Odysseus does not only encounter Sirens and Cyclopes, he also meets Phoenician traders and Phaiakian colonists. Odysseus lived in a world where people traversed the seas in search of new land and new resources, people to barter with and slaves for agriculture and production. The Greek polis was formed in a time of busy activity between the established political centres of the Aegean and beyond. In this period, also, several new settlements were established. The Mediterranean Iron Age was a time when peripheral areas, such as the Levant, Greece, and Italy grew in power and importance compared to the Bronze Age, when Mesopotamia was the main centre of developments. It may seem like the pendulum had swung from the Orient to the Occident. The beginning of this rise in importance for the West was the colonisation period in Greece, which is also characterised by Orientalising art and the spread of the alphabet throughout Greece and Italy. The Greeks were not alone on their journeys. Phoenicians, Syrians, and Etruscans were also active; Phoenician traders especially have left their testimony in Greek literature as well as archaeology.

The Greeks were present quite early in the Levant, at Al Mina and further inland in Syria. There has been much debate on the nature of these settlements. They are dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE, nearly two centuries before the end of the Dark Age in Greece. However, they prove only that the connection between Greece and the Near East was never severed completely. Few would now argue that Greeks in the Near East at this early stage were any more than mercenaries or traders, and certainly not that they were colonists in autonomous polities. Jane C. Waldbaum points out that the Greeks made no lasting impression on the

culture of their neighbours at this point (Waldbaum 1997, 12). However, these international Greeks may have served an important function as bringers of foreign impulses to Greece. They were probably both elite people and more humble persons, seeking profit and adventures abroad.

The Greeks were also present in Anatolia from before the end of the Dark Age. There have been Greeks resident in Ionia since the Late Bronze Age. Mycenaean finds at Miletos point to their settlement there, as does the mention of Ahhijawa, or Achaians, in Hittite sources (Mountjoy 1998, 47-51). The Ancient Greeks themselves were convinced that the Dorian, Ionian and Aeolic cities along the coast of Western Anatolia were the result of waves of invasions in the Early Iron Age, the so-called “migrations of the Greek tribes”. What have been called waves of migration are now considered to have been more prolonged and piecemeal processes involving migration of smaller groups rather than entire populations. The historicity of the migrations has been cast into doubt. Recently Jonathan Hall has pointed out that the tradition of the Dorian migration is more of a charter for alliances in 5th century Greece than a useful key to understand linguistic and material changes in Dark Age Greece (Hall 2007, 43-49). It may seem like the Greek migration myths are more of an attempt to explain the distribution of Greek dialects than real memories of ancient migrations. Not least, the ancestry of the Greek cities in Anatolia became important during the Persian Wars, when these cities were under attack from the Lydians and Persians, and appealed for help from their own kin. The myths of the tribes and their political functions should be kept in mind when considering the truthfulness of the ktisis-traditions of colonial foundations and the development of the Greek polis.

### Colonisation in North Africa

Colonisation, the establishment of new, permanent Greek settlements beyond the Aegean, started in the West. The first Greek colony was Pithekoussai on the island Ischia in the Bay of Naples. It was established by Euboians in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. After some time, Pithekoussai lost importance to the coastal settlements. These colonies traded with Etruscans, Phoenicians and Carthaginians. Unfortunately, there are no details about how these early colonies in the West were founded. After



Homer, Herodotos is our oldest Greek source to the establishment of settlements abroad. The most detailed account of a colony is that of Kyrene, in Libya, which is told by Herodotos. This colony was later than the 8<sup>th</sup> century colonies of Italy and Sicily, ca. 630 BCE, but the background for its establishment probably resembles the earlier colonies. The foundation stories from Sicily will be discussed below. Herodotos is a very interesting source, because he relates several stories according to different sources, some of which are in conflict with each other. The stories also include obvious folk tale motives.

The story of Kyrene began in Sparta. Theras, warden to the adolescent kings of Sparta, planned to leave Lakedaimon to establish a colony. He was of Kadmeian descent, and decided to depart for Thera, where his Phoenician kin lived already. Theras gathered colonists who faced execution in Lakedaimon and founded settlements in friendship and cooperation with the inhabitants of Thera. According to Herodotos, the island got its name Thera from Theras (Hdt. 4. 147-148).

The narrative of Herodotos continues with a new story, where a descendant of Thera goes to Delphi and is unexpectedly given instructions to form a colony in Libya. Since he did not know the whereabouts of Libya, and was of old age, the oracle was forgotten (Hdt. 4. 150). Thera suffered severe drought for seven years, and someone remembered the oracle. With the help of a Phoenician resident at Crete, the Therans learned of Libya and the offshore island of Platea. They found the island and left their guide behind. While waiting for the Therans to return, the marooned Phoenician received help from Samians who had been driven off their course. They told of their adventures in Tartessos, near the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula, where they had traded for silver at a vast profit. Meanwhile, on Thera, the citizens drew lots between brothers to fill the roster of colonists, and they departed for Libya led by Battos (Hdt.4.151-153).

The stories of the Therans and Kyreneans agreed up to this point, according to Herodotos, but the Kyreneans had a completely different story about Battos, saying that he descended from a Cretan woman who had narrowly escaped death at the hands of her wicked father. She gave birth to Battos on Thera. Battos stuttered, and went to Delphi to get advice for his speech impediment. At Delphi, he was unexpectedly given instructions to found a colony in Libya. He refused, calamity followed, and the Therans demanded that he fulfilled the oracle. After an abortive attempt, the colonists wanted to return to Thera, but the Therans greeted them with arrows. They therefore departed again and established

themselves at Platea, off Libya (Hdt. 4. 154-156). The settlement on the island was not to the Apollo's liking, and the colonists established a new colony on the mainland, with assistance from the local Libyans. The initial good relations soured when more colonists arrived, and they waged war on the Libyans. Inner strife also threatened the colony, and a new settlement was established at Barke (Hdt. 4. 157-161).

The conflicting stories of the origins of the colony are quite telling. They are similar in their outline, but diverge in their details. Battos is an important person in all versions, but the account of his background varies, as well as whether it was he who received the oracle of Apollo or not. What do these stories tell about the origin of Greek colonies? The oracle of Delphi plays an important role. Emphasis is put on the negative effects of non-compliance with the oracle. Some elements, such as the drought on Thera and the division of brothers are telling of the problems with land hunger and inheritance in Greece, which may have motivated colonisation. However, the colonists do not leave home because of such problems; Apollo had already told the Therans to found a colony. The role of the oikist is emphasised, he is the main character behind the colonial venture. It should be pointed out that the descendants of Battos ruled Kyrene as kings. Irad Malkin argues that Battos was a historical figure that was honoured with a hero cult at Kyrene, something which is corroborated by several inscriptions (Malkin 1987, 204-212). However, the Kyrenean tradition of Battos contains obvious folk-tale motives, such as his wicked grandfather, or his mysterious speech impediment, and indicates that whatever historical memory was preserved about the colonial foundations was soon transformed into myth.

The stories in Herodotos emphasise the links between Lakedaimon, Crete, Thera and Kyrene, to establish the Dorian background for the colonists. This shows the need for a metropolis, a place of origin for Greeks abroad. The initial settlement of Thera by Theras and the Lakedaimonian refugees demonstrates the often amicable relations between colonists and locals, as does the assistance of the Libyans at Kyrene. Of note are the Samians who had been to Tartessos and the role of the Phoenician from Crete. It shows how information was passed by word of mouth among seafarers. It also reveals a different side to the establishment of Greek colonies, not as settlements founded by an archegetes on the order of Apollo, but as heterogeneous settlements of emigrants, traders and local people. The stories served as a charter for a predominantly Dorian polis founded from Thera. At Kyrene the purported Theran decree for the founding of the colony was inscribed in

stone in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (*SEG* 9. 3, 20. 714). This further corroborates the tradition of a state-led expedition, but it should again be pointed out that the emphasis on Battos from Thera as the founder was a tradition that strengthened the claim to power of the local dynasty.

### Colonisation on Sicily

The oldest Greek colonies are found on Sicily and in Italy, the *Magna Graeca*. Thukydides gives much information on the founding of the colonies on Sicily as a description of the political and demographic situation on the island. His account is rather terse, and is probably a condensed version of various myths. Where Herodotos relates different and conflicting versions, Thukydides attempts to give a concise account, with relative dates for the founding of the different settlements. Thukydides' dates may be based on the counting of generations, but the sources to his account of the earliest colonies are unknown. He is unlikely to possess accurate knowledge about the foundation of the Sicilian colonies he discusses. They were founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, about three hundred years before his time, and his sources must have been largely stories, similar to those Herodotos used in his account of Kyrene discussed above.

Thukydides gives information on who established the Greek colonies on Sicily, and whence the colonists came. The colonists encountered indigenous island inhabitants, as well as Phoenicians and Etruscans. The Greeks were looking for land for agriculture, which is abundant on Sicily. There is, however, no direct correlation between demographic growth in the mother city of the colonists and the establishment of colonies abroad. There was no explosion in population growth in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, at least not in Attica, which is one of the best-documented areas for the Archaic period (Osborne 1996, 80). Therefore, land hunger cannot be the only explanation for colonisation. Trade, adventure and political struggles at home were also factors prompting ventures abroad.

According to the account of Thukydides, the early colonies on Sicily have a founder and a mother-city, such as Naxos, founded by the Chalkidians of Euboia led by Thukles, or Syracuse, founded by Archias of Corinth. There was also secondary colonisation, when the colonists moved on to a new place from their original colony, such as Leontinoi. A colony might choose to have a new founder as replacement of the original one, such as Katane, founded by Thukles, but regarding

Euarchos as their founder. There were colonies seeking to establish an additional colony which sent for an oikist from their mother-city, like Selinus, founded by Megara Hyblaia, led by Pamillos of Megara. A colony might have several oikists, organised as a joint venture, such as Gela. Some colonies were more disorganised, such as Zankle, founded by pirates from the Chalkidian city of Kyme. Later, when Zankle prospered, it was decided that its founders should be Perieres and Krataimenes, one from Kyme and one from Chalkis (Thuc. 6. 4).

Colonies often had inhabitants from several cities, such as Himera. Refugees from one colony might join another. Some colonies changed their founder in face of political changes. Kamarina changed its founders from the original Laskon and Menekolos, to Hippokrates of Gela, as part of a ransom for prisoners of war. When the city was later sacked, it was founded again by the Gelans (Thuc. 6. 5). The Egestans exhorted the Athenians to come to their aid against Syracuse, lest they rather join their fellow Dorian Peloponnesians against the Ionian Athenians (Thuc. 6. 6).

As can be seen, Thukydides is at pains to include the various foundation stories into a coherent history of the Greek settlement of Sicily. The variety of foundations on Sicily shows that not all colonies were established like a ready polis from a metropolis, however. In the following, it will be argued that the foundation of colonies was part of the development of the polis, and not a diffusion of the polis type of settlement abroad. The purpose of the foundation stories will be investigated, with a view to the diplomatic aspects of tribal affiliations in the Greek world of the 5th century BCE.

### The myth of the Metropolis

It is not exactly known how the earliest colonies were established. The dynamics of colonial foundations remain conjecture. However, the impression gained from Thukydides is that colonial ventures were organised by poleis in Greece, which sent out expeditions led by appointed leaders. These leaders were later commemorated, even venerated, as heroes. Robin Osborne argues that the establishments of colonies in the 8<sup>th</sup> century were not state-led expeditions, since none of the establishments seem to have been planned to a higher degree than

feasible by the community of colonists themselves, on the spot (Osborne 1998, 260-261). This view implies that the colonies were not planned very much in advance, but was the result of travels for trade and booty, and expeditions of landless farmers looking for a place to start again. Thus, there was no metropolis, and no archegetes or oikist. The stories about the foundation of colonies were myths. Why were these myths created and maintained? As will be seen, there may have been several reasons for the tenacity of ktisis-traditions.

The claim that foundation stories are myths may seem refuted by the fact that Archilochos mentions a follower of Archias, founder of Syracuse, who set out from Corinth (cf. Thuc. 6. 3). The mention of Archias by Archilochos as leader of the expedition to Syracuse is preserved in Athenaeus, as an example of intemperance: one of the colonists who went with Archias supposedly bartered his allotment of land for a honey cake (Ath. 4. 167d-e).

The colony Syracuse was founded ca. 734 BCE, and Archilochos wrote approximately a hundred years later. Thus, the use of this text as evidence for the historicity of Archias is dubious. Rather, foundation stories may be understood as being deliberately created and preserved to legitimate the power of local leading families in the colonies. The descendants of the founder would emphasise the role of the archegetes over other factors contributing to the establishment of colonies, such as migration, trade and interaction with local inhabitants. As Carol Dougherty demonstrates, stories about Greek colonisation follow a narrative scheme, focusing on typical characters such as the murderer in need of absolution, with specific roles in the plot that are repeated from the story of one colony to another (Dougherty 1993, 38). This should make us wary of their purported truthfulness.

Herodotos and Thukydides present Greek colonisation as planned operations led by an appointed archegetes, the leader of the colonial expedition. He was later honoured as oikist, as the hero of the colony. The citizens who joined the colonial venture were appointed, elected or joined as volunteers, and the mother-city sent them out to establish a new city. The new city was supposed to have the same laws and cults as the mother-city, and honour its precedence. There are foundation myths and dates for several Greek colonies, some may be found in Thukydides or Herodotos, others are known in later compilations, like in the *Chronikon* of Eusebios. At closer inspection, the foundation myths seem to fill a political function rather than being a true account of the foundation of the city. Not only did the stories of the founding fathers serve their

descendants; the cult of the hero provided a civic focus and was utilised in the establishment of space in the new territory. But the very connection to a metropolis also had consequences for foreign affairs and diplomacy. During the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE), it became crucial whether a city was Ionian or Dorian, and to whom the colonies belonged. The Athenians, who were Ionians, fought against the Peloponnesians, who were Dorians, for supremacy in Greece. Alliances were forged with reference to ancient ancestral ties and tribal affiliations.

Marshall Sahlins points out that 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens and Sparta used the myths of the Ionians and Dorians to emphasise the differences between themselves: the Athenians were autochthonous, sprung from the soil of Attica, whereas the Dorians were immigrants from the north. The hero of the Athenians was Theseus; the Dorians venerated Herakles. Both poleis used myths to construct their own history (Sahlins 2004, 82-95). The active use of myths is also evident in Greek colonies. Evidence in Thukydides shows the importance of the tribal affiliation of a colony. The fiction was not always politically interesting, and colonies might replace their oikist and found the city again. Amphipolis decided to replace their former Ionian oikist Hagnon with the Dorian Brasidas (Thuc. 5.11).

During the Peloponnesian War, the ideal relationship between the metropolis and its colony was formulated. This is found in Thukydides' account of the fight between Corinth and Kerkyra for Epidamnos in the 5th century BCE. Epidamnos was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and its origins became politically and strategically important during the tensions leading up to the Peloponnesian war. Epidamnos lies on the way to Italy and Sicily, whence both the Peloponnesians and the Athenians might get support. According to Thukydides, it was founded as a colony by the Kerkyreans, led by Falios. Kerkyra, in its turn, had been founded by the Corinthians, and the oikist of Epidamnos, Falios, was sent for from Corinth (Thuc. 1.24). The Kerkyreans argued that a colony honoured its mother-city as long as it was treated well. Colonists were not sent out to be slaves, but to have the same rights as those they left behind in the mother city (Thuc. 1.34). The Corinthians argued that they had not established colonies to be spurned by them, but to be their leaders and to be treated with the proper respect. They claimed that their other colonists honoured them, and that they were particularly loved by their colonists (Thuc. 1. 38).

Here, it is obvious that the bond between colony and metropolis was rather loose. The colonial status of Kerkyra was used as an argument for

the annexation of Epidamnus, and it was no bad thing that this city was strategically placed on the sea route to the West. There is no clear definition of the legal status of the colonies, and Thucydides states that the factions preferred war to litigation or jurisdiction by the oracle at Delphi (Thuc. 1. 28). The distant past was used as an argument to subdue disobedience or allay hostile feelings. This shows that the traditions of colonies and founding heroes were not so much memories of ancient history as political tools to evoke sympathy from allies.

### The Mothers of Political Invention

The establishment of colonies was probably not as straight forward as Thucydides wants us to believe. The image of state-led expeditions in the Archaic period is probably modeled on settlements from later periods, when the polis was well established in Greece. The early colonies were not Greek communities transplanted abroad, but represent a new form of cosmopolitan society. From excavations, it has been demonstrated that some colonies were also inhabited by local peoples, as well as other foreigners, like the Phoenicians in addition to the Greeks (Boardman 1999, 165-168; Ridgway 1992, 116-118). The polis was still in an early phase of its development in mainland Greece in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. If there were no proper poleis in Greece, how could they send out colonists to establish new poleis?

The polis as a community of citizens living in a centralised settlement with common political and religious institutions emerges in the same time period as the early colonisation of the West. It may be argued that the typical Greek polis was formed in the colonial period. This is maintained by Irad Malkin, who points out that the societies on the mainland had the chance to redefine and reorganise themselves when they sent away parts of the population. Also, the establishment of new settlements abroad encouraged rethinking political organisation (Malkin 1994, 2). This may in part explain the development of the polis phenomenon. The Greeks may also have learned from their experiences among the older city-state cultures of the Mediterranean such as the Phoenician city-states in the Levant and their western colonies.

It is beyond doubt that the establishment of city-states in the Archaic period in Greece did not take place in a vacuum. The Greeks were not alone, and this is reflected in their material and intellectual culture. They may also have had political role models in the colonisation period. It may

be objected that a city-state is the logical solution to the challenge of political organisation, and is in no need of any specific foreign influences. However, several traits of Greek political culture, like written laws and writing in general, assembly courts and popular assemblies, and monumental temples as political and ideological centre for the city, are traits of poleis held in common with the more ancient city-state culture of the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians colonised the Mediterranean in the same period as the Greeks, but belonged to a city-state culture from their mother-cities in the Levant. Their political structure was highly developed, and was most likely preserved in their colonies.

The political institutions of the Phoenicians are known indirectly, from the Egyptian 10<sup>th</sup> century story of the trader Wen-Amun and his journey to Phoenicia, the Biblical prophet Ezekiel and Aristotle. They had rulers, but also councils of elders and popular assemblies. It has been argued that the Phoenicians were traders only, and did not establish settlements for agriculture or long-term residency. Carthage is the exception that confirms the rule. Remains of agricultural activities and buildings have been excavated at Phoenician sites in Spain, although it must be admitted that Phoenicians were less interested in conquering the hinterland than were the Greeks (Moscati 2001, 50). The status of the Phoenician colonies is undecided: Hans Georg Niemeyer points out that “they were not cities in the same sense as the colonies of the Greeks in the West. They appear rather to constitute a different “model”, one which is reminiscent of Karl Polanyi’s “port of trade” (Niemeyer 1990, 485). As with the difference between the early polis and different types of Greek colonies, however, the distinction between port-of-trade and other forms of settlement seems overstated for the Western Mediterranean in the Archaic period.

The Phoenicians lived as neighbours to the Greeks on Sicily. Thukydides states that the Phoenicians established themselves round about Sicily on promontories and islets in order to trade with the Sikels, an indigenous people of Sicily. With the arrival of the Greeks, the Phoenicians left most of these sites and established themselves in the vicinity of the Elymians, another Sicilian people, and lived in Motya, Soloeis and Panormos (Thuc. 6. 2). Not all Phoenicians avoided the Greeks, however. During the Athenian preparations for the attack on Sicily in 414 BCE, the Egestans fooled the Athenians into believing they were rich in gold and silver, by borrowing silver and golden tableware from neighbouring towns, Greek and Phoenician, for display (Thuc. 6. 46). This indicates friendly relations, rather than hostile competition.



Rather than using a model of competitive nations to describe the dynamics of ancient colonial environments, Peter van Dommelen's (1997) concept of hybridisation, the mutual changes that occur in encounters between cultures, may be a more fruitful approach.

### Conclusion

The Greek colonies in the West were cultural mingling spots and political laboratories. The political culture of the Greeks was formed during their colonial experiences. It did not emerge out of nothing, but as the result of a cosmopolitan dialogue with other cultures of the Mediterranean. The Greek myths of the metropolis as they are expressed in Herodotos and Thukydides functioned as forms of political legitimation for local ruling families, for making alliances, and as anchoring points for Greeks abroad back in something they perceived as their cities of origin. These myths overshadow the heterogeneous origins of the Greek poleis. Colonisation as a consequence of trade, adventure, land hunger, or political instability sent the Greeks out into the world, and it was there the Greeks learned to become what we know today as the Greeks of history. The Greek polis culture is a result of a cosmopolitan culture of the Iron Age, and has no one mother, but several mothers.

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