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(Re)negotiating colonial identity: Corinth, Corcyra and the Phaeacians

This article examines the relationship between Corcyra and its mother city Corinth – from the settlement of the former in the second half of the eighth century BC up until the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War – from three different yet interlocking angles: politics, religion, mythology. Consequently, the text is divided into three parts, whereby each part represents one of the abovementioned aspects: The first part provides a brief account of the political history of Corcyra and its relations with Corinth. Part two analyses the religious dimension of the connection between Corinth and Corcyra, especially in regard to the shared rituals and festivals mentioned by Thucydides. The third part deals with the association of Corcyra with the Homeric Phaeacians and their mythical homeland Scheria, and the Corcyraeans adoption of said myth as a new identity, which was independent from the previous 'colonial identity' tying them to Corinth as their metropolis.

Keywords: Corinth, Corcyra, Phaeacians, Thucydides, Homer, Greek Historiography, Greek Colonization, Greek Religion, Greek Mythology, identity, hero cult, metropolis, apoikia

> The tiny ship throbbed away from the heel of Italy out into the twilit sea, and as we slept in our stuffy cabins, somewhere in that tract of moon-polished water we passed the invisible dividing line and entered the bright, looking-glass world of Greece. Slowly this sense of change seeped down to us, and so, at dawn, we awoke restless and went on deck. The sea lifted smooth blue muscles of wave as it stirred in the dawn light, and the foam of our wake spread gently behind us like a white peacock's tail, glinting with bubbles. The sky was pale and stained with yellow on the eastern horizon. Ahead lay a chocolate-brown smudge of land, huddled in mist, with a frill of foam at its base. This was Corfu, and we strained our eyes to make out the exact shapes of the mountains, to discover valleys, peaks, ravines, and beaches, but it remained a silhouette.
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> – Gerald Durrell, *My Family and Other Animals*

In his account of the run-up to the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides describes the confrontation between Corcyra (modern day Corfu) and its mother city Corinth, giving reasons for the mutual rivalry and dislike between the two *poleis*. In this context, the Greek historian remarks that the Corcyraeans, in contrast to other Corinthian colonists, fail to grant the Corinthians their customary privileges at communally celebrated festivals. Furthermore, he adds that the Corcyraeans associate themselves with the mythical Phaeacians, which were said to have settled on Corcyra in the remote past (Thuc. 1,25,3–4). The underlying concepts, which tie these two points of contention together and lie at their respective core, are those of kinship and group identity, which primarily became manifest in – and were commemorated through – shared religious practices. This article will therefore take a closer look at the religious dimension of the relationship between Corcyra and Corinth. The second point of inquiry will be the connection between Corcyra and the Phaeacians, which seemed to play a major role in the collective identity of the Corcyraeans at least in the fifth century BC and seems to have exacerbated their already troubled relations with their metropolis. The aim is to discern if, and if so, in what way the numerous political crises between apoikia and metropolis were a catalyst for changes in the religious sphere, especially in regard to cultic bonds between the two cities and the way in which the Corcyraeans (re)constructed their own identity around the Phaeacian myth.

The structure of this paper will be as follows: The first part will consist of a brief historical account of the Greek settlement of Corcyra and its relations with Corinth. Building on this basis, the second and third parts will deal with the religious dimension of the relationship between Corcyra and its metropolis, as well as the mythical associations of the island and its role in the self-perception and -definition of the Corcyraeans respectively.

I. Corinth and Corcyra – A Tale of Two Cities

The earliest archaeological material of Greek colonization on Corcyra stems from the second half of the eighth century BC.[1] This is also the period in which Corcyra became a Corinthian colony, although the exact date of the event is uncertain[2] and there is the possibility of an older, Euboian settlement on the island.[3]

The Corinthian founder of Corcyra was Chersikrates, a member of the Bacchiad family who ruled Corinth at the time.[4] The city, which held the same name as the island itself, was built on the peninsula which extends to the south of present day Palaiopolis.[5]

The motives behind the Corinthian settlement,[6] as well as the course of events of the foundation[7] and the demographical composition of the colonists,[8] remain largely in the dark.

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[1] Malkin (1998: 76–77); Tsetskhladze (2006: lxviii).

[2] Eusebius (*Chron.* 91b Helm) dates it to the fourth year of the eleventh Olympiad (= 733 BC). Strabo (6,2,4 = C 269) states that both Syracuse and Corcyra were founded during the same colonial expedition. The literature on the subject is extensive: Graham (1964: 219) and (1982: 103–113); Kalligas (1984: 67–68); Leschhorn (1984: 73–74); Murray (1995: 102); Malkin (1998: 78–79); Bernstein (2004: 50); Tsetskhladze (2006: lxiv–lxix).

[3] Plut. *Mor.* 293a–b (= *Quaest. Graec.* 11); Ap. Rhod. 4,1210–1214. Blakeway (1933: 205); Graham (1964: 110); Dougherty (1993: 52); Miller (1997: 42–43); Parker (1997: 55–57); Malkin (1998: 74–77); Bernstein (2004: 50, 54–55); Dominguez (2006: 261–262); Tsetskhladze (2006: lxiv–lxv); Cabanes (2008: 164); Tiverios (2008: 5–6).

[4] Chersikrates being a Bacchiad: Timaios FGrH 566 F 80 (= Schol. Ap. Rhod. 4,1216); Schol. Ap. Rhod. 4,1212–1214a; Strabo (6,2,4 = C 269) calls him a Heracleid. Graham (1964: 220); Leschhorn (1984: 85); Bernstein (2004: 72–75); Malkin (2011: 30). The Bacchiad rule of Corinth: Diod. Sic. 7 F 9,6; Strab. 8,6,20 (= C 378); Paus. 2,4,4. Bernstein (2004: 49, 53, 75–76); Dominguez (2006: 271–272).

[5] Malkin (1998: 76–77); Cabanes (2008: 165).

[6] Possible reasons would be: (1) a bid for dominance in the maritime trade with Euboian city-states. Kagan (1969: 213–214); Murray (1995: 132–136); Parker (1997: 55–57); Malkin (1998: 78–79); Dominguez (2006: 261–262). (2) Sought access to Illyrian silver mines. Tsetskhladze (2006: lxiv–lxv). Or, albeit unlikely, (3) a lengthy drought. Plut. *Am. narr.* 2. Cf. Hdt. 5,150–151; Descœudres (2008: 361).

[7] It is uncertain whether we should view aristocratic families or clans acting on their own behalf as the driving force behind the foundation of early colonies in the west, or if we should rather presuppose sufficiently established polis-communities who had sent out 'official' colonists. Williams (1982); Malkin (1998: 90–91); Cawkwell (1992: 291–295).

[8] Cawkwell (1992: 291, 295) and Murray (1995: 147) argue that the numbers of colo-

In any case, Corcyra – largely owing to its advantageous location[9] – seems to have grown into a powerful and wholly independent polis very quickly.[10] Contrary to the good relations Corinth enjoyed with its other major western colony founded in the eighth century BC, Syracuse, tensions flared up early on with Corcyra. Herodotus tells us that the Corinthians and Corcyraeans were at odds with each other ever since the colonization of the island, despite their common kinship.[11] While this might be an overstatement, Thucydides remarks that the first naval battle in Greek memory was fought between the two *poleis*, which he states to have taken place 260 years before the end of the Peloponnesian War.[12] This would make it the year 664 BC, roughly two generations after the foundation of the colony. Even though we do not know the motives and circumstances behind this conflict, it seems fairly clear that both parties were sovereign states at the time of the event, and that it was not a Corcyraean war of independence.[13]

The enmity between the two *poleis* likely further intensified when members of the Bacchiad family, driven into exile by Cypselus, who managed

nists during the early stages of Greek colonization must have been quite small, whereas Leschhorn (1984: 83–84) stresses the need for a considerable amount of settlers in order to be able to overcome pre-existing inhabitants, successfully colonize a region and secure it long-term. Another thing to consider is that what ancient sources call 'Corinthian' settlers was likely a much less homogenous group than the name would suggest. Malkin (1998: 78–79) and (2011: 56–57). For the female population of early western colonies see Shepherd (1999: 294–198), Descœudres (2008: 362) and Brodersen (2012: 226–229).

[9] The island sits alongside the natural maritime route from Greece to southern Italy, and since Antiquity, seafarers have sailed from Corcyra across the Strait of Otranto and beyond. According to Thucydides (6,30,1), this is the exact sea-route the Athenians took when embarking on their Sicilian expedition during the Peloponnesian War. Mackie (1996: 103); Hornblower (1991: 68); Malkin (1998: 7, 78); Bernstein (2004: 55).

[10] Malkin (2011: 22, 39).

[11] Hdt. 3,49,1: νῦν δὲ αἰεὶ ἐπείτε ἔκτισαν τὴν νῆσον εἰσὶ ἀλλήλοισι διάφοροι, ἐόντες ἑωυτοῖσι.

[12] Thuc. 1,13,4: ναυμαχία τε παλαιτάτη ὧν ἴσμεν γίγνεται Κορινθίων πρὸς Κερκυραίους: ἔτη δὲ μάλιστα καὶ ταύτη ἑξήκοντα καὶ διακόσιά ἐστι μέχρι τοῦ αὐτοῦ χρόνου. Will (2015: 80) remarks that Thucydides could also be counting back from the end of the Archidamian War (421 BC), rather than the end of the Peloponnesian War as such (404 BC). This would put the date of the *naumachia* to 681 instead of 664 BC.

[13] Will (1954: 414); Graham (1964: 146–147); Kagan (1969: 214); Cabanes (2008: 165–166). For the view of it being a war of independence, see Dunbabin (1948: 56). For other interpretations, see Vallet (1964: 219–221), Snodgrass (1980: 144) and (2004) and Miller (1997: 272–274).

to overthrow them and establish a tyranny in Corinth (c. 657/56 or 630 BC), sought asylum in Corcyra and were readily welcomed.[14] The Cypselid dynasty launched a major colonial policy and undertook the establishment of what Graham (1964: 118) described as a 'colonial empire'. This policy consisted of tightening up the control over those colonies, which were situated alongside the coastal shipping routes towards the north and west, as well as the foundation of new colonies along said routes.[15] Naturally, the Corinthians bid for hegemony in the Greek northwest collided with Corcyra's own interests in much of the same territory.[16]

On the other hand, there were also interspersed periods during the seventh century BC, where both cities were on relatively friendly terms and collaborated in founding several colonies, namely Anaktorion (c. 655–625 BC), Epidamnus/Dyrrhachium (c. 627 BC) and (Illyrian) Apollonia (c. 600 BC).[17] This phase of comparative peace and common undertakings ended abruptly, when Periander conquered the island and installed his nephew as its ruler.[18] According to Herodotus (3,48; 52–53) and Nicolaus Damascenus (FGrH 90 F 59), this was an act of revenge, since Periander's son had been killed by the Corcyraeans.[19]

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[14] Nic. Dam. FGrH 90 F 57,7. Graham (1964: 111).

[15] Colonies such as Leukas, Ambrakia and Anaktorion were founded under the Cypselids. There seems to have been a greater degree of political and commercial ties between Corinth and these later colonies, contrary to earlier ones like Syracuse and Corcyra. Payne (1962: 25); Shepherd (2015: 582–583). Neither Syracuse nor Corcyra adopted the famous Corinthian coin-type displaying the Pegasus, whereas the younger colonies and even other western *poleis* who had not been founded by Corinth did. Graham (1964: 121–122, 125); Hornblower (1991: 81–82).

[16] Will (1955: 521–539); Kagan (1969: 214–215).

[17] Tsetskhladze (2006: lxvii–lxix); Cabanes (2008: 165). Anaktorion: Thuc. 1,55,1 Plut. *De sera* 7. Epidamnus: Thuc. 1,24–26; Diod. Sic. 12,30,2–4; Ps.-Scymn. 435–439; Strab. 8,3,32; Euseb. *Chron*. 2,88–89. Apollonia: Plut. *De sera* 7; Ps.-Scymn. 439–440; Strab. 7,5,8; 8,3,32; Paus. 5,22,4; Thuc. 1,26,2 (he calls it a Corinthian colony); Cass. Dio 41,45; Stephanus Byzantius (s.v. Ἀπολλωνία) is the only source to provide information about a Corinthian contingent taking part in the foundation. Graham (1964: 31, 130–131); Salmon (1984: 211); Malkin (1987: 228–232); Parker (1994: 339); Kagan (2005: 206).

[18] Busolt (1926: 1270–1271); Graham (1964: 31, 118, 142–144); Miller (1997: 296).

[19] Both accounts differ in regard to the name of said son. Osborne (2009: 184) sees the story related by Herodotus as a myth rather than historical fact, but acknowledges its informative value when it comes to the problematic relationship between Corinth and Corcyra. In

Part of the Cypselid tyrants' colonial policy seems to have been to have close relatives – ideally their sons – serve as oikists (founders) of newly founded settlements, or to appoint them as rulers in already existing ones, thereby establishing ties with the metropolis.[20] The abovementioned story surrounding Periander and his son could be a reflection of this Cypselid strategy.

Relations between Corinth and Corcyra – which must have regained its independence at some point prior – escalated again at the beginning of the fifth century BC. The argument apparently was over who should be considered the rightful metropolis of Leukas.[21] Around the same time (c. 492 BC), both Corinth and Corcyra mediated on behalf of Syracuse when it was defeated by Hippocrates of Gela in a battle at the river Helorus.[22] However, we must not automatically deduce friendly relations between the two cities from this incident: Corinth and Corcyra could just as well have intervened because both were on good terms with Syracuse and had wished to protect it from Hippocrates, while simultaneously continuing their own feud.[23]

After this, we do not hear much about Corcyra until the events on the eve of the Peloponnesian War.[24] As far as we can tell, the sixty or so years between the conflict over Leukas and the 430s BC seem to have been a time of

general, the tale can be viewed as an example for Herodotus' tendency to attribute political decisions, developments and events to single individuals – in this case Periander.

[20] Graham (1964: 30). The founders of Ambracia, Leukas and Anaktorion seem to have all been sons of Cypselus (Ps.-Scymn. 435–436.; Strab. 10,452; Nic. Dam. FGrH 90 F 57,7), whereas the founder of Potidaia, Euagoras, was a son of Periander (Nic. Dam. FGrH 90 F 59).

[21] Even though ancient writers call Leukas a Corinthian colony (e.g. Thuc. 1,30,2), it is quite possible that it was originally a joint foundation of Corcyra and Corinth. Cf. Plut. *Them*. 24,1; Thuc. 1,136,1. Graham (1964: 128–130, 147–148); Kagan (1969: 216). If this was indeed the case, the Corcyraeans had a factual basis on which to stake their claim.

[22] Hdt. 7,154; Diod. Sic. 10 F 28. Miller (1997: 273). Modern scholars suggest different dates for the battle: 492 BC (Graham [1964: 143–144]), 491 BC (Cabanes [2008: 165–166]) and 493/92 BC (Malkin [2011: 35]).

[23] Graham (1964: 143–144).

[24] There is only one passage in Herodotus (7,168–169), according to which the Corcyraeans had promised to send sixty ships to join the Greek coalition in their attempt to fend off the Persian invaders. Instead of joining their naval contingent with the one who would eventually fight in the decisive Battle of Salamis (480 BC), however, they chose a more careful and passive approach and anchored their fleet at Pylos and Cape Tainaron, opting to observe from a distance who would come out on top. Murray (1995: 360); Cabanes (2008:166).

relative peace and seclusion for the island.[25] However, the Corcyraeans seem to have gradually but surely lost ground to the Corinthians in the Greek northwest during the fifth century BC. Corinth further pursued its policy of hegemony in the region after 479 BC, and by the time the Peloponnesian War broke out, important colonies like Leukas, Ambrakia and Apollonia all seem to have been firmly under Corinthian control.[26]

In the mid 430s BC, Corinth and Corcyra entered into yet another armed conflict, this time over Epidamnus. This 'Epidamnian affair', as well as the ensuing civil war on Corcyra, which ultimately led to the downfall of the island, are well-known events and do not need to be retold here.[27] To sum up, Corinth and Corcyra were engaged in a continuous politico-economic power struggle, which had already lasted for more than two centuries by the time the Peloponnesian War broke out. It is therefore unsurprising that the long-standing rivalry between the two poleis seems to have encroached on the mutual religious connection, as well as the identity construction of the Corcyraeans, as will be seen.

II. Religious ties between Corinth and Corcyra?

There is scattered evidence, especially from the Classical and Hellenistic periods, that elsewhere in the Greek world some colonies were required to

[25] Cabanes (2008: 166). Cf. Kagan (2005: 209), who calls it a period of 'splendid isolation'.

[26] See Thucydides (1,25,1–26,2), who mentions Corinth, Leukas and Ambrakia communally sending garrison troops to Epidamnus. Additionally, Corcyra lost its influence over yet another colony to Corinth during the 430s BC: Anaktorion was a joint possession of Corcyra and Corinth (Thuc. 1,55,1: ἦν δὲ κοινὸν Κερκυραίων καὶ ἐκείνων [the Corinthians]), until the Corinthians took it by applying a stratagem on their way back after the Battle of Sybota (433 BC). While writing about events taking place eight years later, Thucydides calls Anaktorion a 'Corinthian city' (Thuc. 4,49: Ἀνακτόριον Κορινθίων πόλιν), so it would seem like the Corinthians managed to expulse the Corcyraeans and assert their own, exclusive control over the colony. Graham (1964: 129–131); Salmon (1984: 270–292); Figueira (2008: 478–479). It is therefore no wonder that Thucydides' Corcyraeans apologetically and regretfully call their policy before the war with Corinth in the 430s BC ἀπραγμοσύνη (Thuc. 1,32,5) – peace and quiet that is the result of inaction and the avoidance of conflict, which is why Hornblower (1991: 77) aptly translates it as 'lazy neutrality'.

[27] Cabanes (2008: 166). For a good analysis of the aims and motives of the parties involved see Crane (1992). For extensive treatments see Wilson (1987) or the commentaries on Thucydides by Gomme (1971: 157–199) and Hornblower (1991: 66–97) with references.

keep up a relationship with their mother cities, especially by way of religious practices – like for example dedications or participation in festivals.[28] However, it is questionable whether such a relationship would also apply to the case of Corinth and Corcyra.[29]

It has already been mentioned that Corinth seems to have emphasized the upholding of close bonds with – and a position of political supremacy over – its colonies, even though the degree of control cannot be specified given the sporadic nature of the extant sources. Especially the colonies founded during the Cypselid era – such as Leukas, Ambrakia and Anaktorion – seem to have had close ties to their mother city, as indicated by the fact that the oikists were sons of Cypselus or Periander. In general, relations between Corinth and its colonies seem to have been regulated mostly by personal connections and the concepts of (unwritten) custom and tradition, rather than by official decrees or laws.[30] Additionally, the ties between colony and mother city were usually closest when both were not located (too) far apart from each other, and when the metropolis was sufficiently ambitious and powerful to bridge the geographical gap.[31]

The situation with Corcyra was rather different for two reasons: Firstly, it had been founded before the Cypselids came to power and put their colonial policy into works, and had been politically independent from very early on – if not right from its foundation. Secondly, Corcyra quickly developed into a powerful and wealthy city-state, which the Corinthians could not simply push around.[32]

There can be no doubt that Corinth had a major cultural influence on Corcyra, at least in the Archaic period.[33] However, this is not necessarily indicative of existing ties, be they political or otherwise, since cultural exchange, for

[28] Cf. below n. 43.
[29] Shepherd (2015: 582–583).
[30] Asheri (1970: 621); Leschhorn (1984: 97–98).
[31] Graham (1964: 66, 140–141, 149–150, 153, 215) provides a number of examples.
[32] Graham (1964: 142–143, 147–148).
[33] The material evidence shows a strong similarity in the architectural style and the sculpture. Dunbabin (1948: 284). This led Graham (1964: 143, here 13) to the assumption that 'there must have been continuous interchange of men and ideas'.

example via travelling artists and artisans, during the Archaic and Classical periods seems to have been largely independent from Greek state-politics.[34]

Much has also been made of the fact that the Corinthian cult calendar was widely distributed throughout the Greek west. The calendars of many Corinthian colonies, including Corcyra, were based on the model of an old Corinthian calendar.[35] Hadzis (1995), who undertook a comparative analysis of the calendars of Corinth and its colonies, argues that the fact of common calendars gives a measure of the power of Archaic Corinth and its persistent influence in the west. She holds that in spite of the geographical distance, Corinth was able to establish and maintain political and economic control over its colonies – she speaks of an 'impérialisme thalassocratique et économique'.[36]

But again, the same cannot be said of Corcyra (or Syracuse), which was evidently independent from Corinth for much of its history before the Peloponnesian War. I also do not see how the evidence of a shared calendar bears out the view of ongoing relations – of a political, economic or even religious nature – since our knowledge is essentially limited to the fact that Corinth and some of its colonies used the same names for certain months of the year, and that most of these names refer to festivals for gods and goddesses.[37] What these common names do not tell us is whether Corinth and some of its colonies celebrated religious festivals together on a fairly regular basis, or not. All we can confidently say is that they are another example for the overall cultural influence of Corinth, especially during the Archaic period, and that they in most cases point towards the origin of the dominant group among the first colonists.

As it stands, the only explicit piece of evidence for persisting religious ties and collectively celebrated festivals between Corinth and Corcyra is provided by Thucydides, to whom I now turn.

[34] Linder (2017).

[35] This calendar, which Hadzis (1995: 448) dates to the seventh century BC, was not only adopted by Corinthian colonies (Corcyra, Ambrakia) and *poleis* in whose foundation Corinth had played a part (Apollonia, Epidamnus), but also other cities along the Illyrian coast (Buthrotum). Even the sanctuary of Dodona used it.

[36] Hadzis (1995: 452).

[37] Apart from Hadzis (1995), see also Pfister (1974: 46); Trümpy (1997) and Cabanes (2003).

The way he (Thuc. 1,25,4) tells it, Corcyra's independence and potency seems to have provoked the Corinthians. The arguments and remarks both by the Corinthians and Corcyraeans during the dispute over Epidamnus, as provided by Thucydides, seem to indicate generally accepted beliefs and rules of behaviour between mother and daughter city:[38]

While the Corcyraeans argue that colonists were not sent out as subordinates, but rather as equals to those who stayed behind in the motherland,[39] the Corinthians maintain that they did not establish colonies in order to be insulted by them. On the contrary, they consider themselves their superiors and leaders by matter of course, as well as deserving of reasonable respect.[40]

The only more concrete complaint brought forth by the Corinthians is the failure of the Corcyraeans to fulfil certain religious obligations towards their metropolis:[41]

> For they neither gave them the customary gifts of honour at the common festivals, nor did they leave the first portion of the sacrifice to a Corinthian like the other colonies did.[42]

[38] Hornblower (1991: 73); Crane (1992). As a side note, it must be added that the question of the credibility of the speeches in Thucydides and, as a consequence, what source-value to attribute to them, has been a topic of contention among scholars for the longest time. The viewpoints range from seeing them as accurate accounts of what really transpired (e.g. Orwin (1994: 212), who goes as far as to call them 'an improvement on truth that serves truth'), to regarding them as largely – if not wholly – fictitious. The speeches of the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians relevant for this paper are equally divisive: Hammond (1973: 41–42, 49–51) argues that they reflect the general sense of what was actually said, whereas Macleod (1974: 388) holds that they merely represent larger ideas and themes, which Thucydides wants to emphasize, such as 'justice' or 'expediency'. On these broader themes in Thucydides' speeches in general see also Rood (1998: 40, 51), on justice in particular see Heath (1990: 389–390), who argues against Macleod. Hornblower (1991: 75–76).

[39] On this point see Hornblower (1991: 71–72) with references.

[40] Thuc. 1,34,1; 38,2.

[41] Graham (1964: 153).

[42] Thuc. 1,25,4 (transl. by the author): οὔτε γὰρ ἐν πανηγύρεσι ταῖς κοιναῖς διδόντες γέρα τὰ νομιζόμενα οὔτε Κορινθίῳ ἀνδρὶ προκαταρχόμενοι τῶν ἱερῶν ὥσπερ αἱ ἄλλαι ἀποικίαι. Since the decisive verb προκατάρχομαι can also mean 'to begin', the passage allows for alternative translations, such as the one provided by Burkert (1983: 37): 'they did not perform the rites of "beginning" for a man of Corinth', referring to ritual practices prior to the killing of the animal, rather than the distribution of meat after the sacrifice had already been conducted.

It is unclear whether the 'common festivals' (παν̣ηγύ̣ρεσι ταῖς κοιναῖς) Thucydides mentions are a reference to festivals conducted at Corinth, or rather at Corcyra. The second part of the sentence is quite clearly about sacrificial rites in Corcyra, so one would assume that the same goes for the festivals mentioned a few words prior. However, there is no certainty to be had, since it could also be a reference to gifts and offerings brought to festivals of the metropolis by colonists, which are attested for other cities.[43]

Sacrificial rituals were reflective of, emphasized and thereby reaffirmed the social status of the individuals involved.[44] Therefore, withholding the honorary gifts (γέρα) and not allowing a Corinthian to play the distinguished part he was accustomed to and expected during a sacrificial ritual would indeed have been a serious matter.[45] Nevertheless, this passage from Thucydides is the only indication that it might have been customary practice for the colonies to give the first portion of the meat of a sacrificial animal to a citizen of the mother city and thereby honour him specifically.[46]

[43] The Athenian colonies, as well as the members of the Delian League, had to contribute panoplies (full sets of armor), oxen and/or grain to the Panathenaea, as well as send a delegation to take part in the festival. Furthermore, they had to supply phalli for the Dionysia. Isoc. 8,82 (On the Peace); IG I3 46,15–117; II/III2 673. Hornblower (1992: 183); Burkert (2011: 386); Schmidt-Hofner (2016: 100–101); Unfricht (2021: 145). For further examples see Graham (1964: 160–165).

[44] Burkert (1997: 47–48, 98, 248); Hornblower (1991: 70); Crane (1992: 5); Unfricht (2021: 157–158).

[45] Indeed, one gets the impression from Thucydides that Corinth's animosity towards Corcyra was predominantly a question of status and prestige. Crane (1992). See also Hornblower (1991: 69), who deems Thucydides' account 'perfectly satisfactory without invoking commercial motives […] on Corinth's part'.

[46] Graham (1964: 160) opines, that this lack of evidence does not necessarily speak against the traditional nature and general acceptance of this practice. Quite to the contrary: If it was indeed as widespread a practice as Thucydides makes it out to be, he says, evidence can be expected to be scarce, since ancient authors likely felt no need to specifically mention or elaborate on it. What Graham seems to overlook in his argumentation is the epigraphical evidence: There are several extant decrees between mother and daughter cities, which regulate the mutual rights and limitations in regard to partaking in festivals and sacrifices: In an early fifth-century BC foundation statute from a colony at Naupactus (IG IX 1 (2) 3:718), founded by the Hypocnemidian Locrians, it is clarified that citizens of the newly established city, if they happen to be present in the metropolis, may sacrifice (θύειν) and receive a share of the sacrificial animal (λανχάνειν) as *xenoi*. In other words, colonists who visit the motherland are not on eye level with the locals when it comes to participation in religious practices, and they are only given limited opportunities to attend festivals and rituals and

Furthermore, the brevity and casual nature of Thucydides' account begs more questions than it answers: How long had these formalities between Corcyra and Corinth been in place? Do they date back to the time of the foundation of Corcyra, or were they a product of Corinthian rule over the island during the reign of Periander, where relations between mother and daughter city might have been assimilated to those between Corinth and the colonies founded under the Cypselids? How long had the Corcyraeans withheld the abovementioned honors from the Corinthians at the time Thucydides wrote about it? It seems unlikely that the Corcyraeans persisted in granting their Corinthian rivals their honorary privileges after having regained their independence at the beginning of the fifth century BC at the latest, so it might have been more than sixty years of the Corcyraeans not acting according to 'customary procedures'.[47]

Another crucial question to be asked is not if, but how much of our view of the relationship between mother and daughter city has been distorted by the written source material. Thucydides, alongside other ancient authors,[48] regards colonies and their mother cities as predestined, natural allies. This view is largely based on the idea of kinship.[49] Consequently, war between 'related' cities is seen as something disdainful and wicked, similar to a civil war.[50] The following passage from Thucydides makes this abundantly clear:

> The Corcyraeans, not just Dorians, but Corinthians, were serving against the Corinthians and Syracusans knowingly, even though they were colo-

thus worship the gods and heroes of their metropolis. For a detailed analysis of this text, see Peels 2017. Conversely, in a fourth-century BC decree between Miletus and her daughter city Olbia (Syll.3 286), we read that Milesians are permitted to sacrifice on the same altars and frequent the same public temples as the citizens of Olbia themselves. Hornblower (1991: 74); Peels (2017: 114 n. 34). In short, there is evidence to suggest that citizens of the metropolis were treated equally (but not in a distinguished or special manner) to the locals in religious matters when visiting a colony, whereas colonists were perceived as foreigners in regard to cult participation in the mother city.

[47] Payne (1962: 25); Shepherd (2015: 582–583).

[48] E.g. Herodotus (8,22,1) or Plato (*Leg.* 754b).

[49] Cf. Thuc. 1,26,3 (The Epidamnian oligarchs, when coming to Corcyra to appeal for help, point out the tombs of the common ancestors and refer to kinship). Hornblower (1991: 74).

[50] Graham (1964: 10–12, 86); Vallet (1964: 219–221); Miller (1997: 272–274).

> nists of the former and of the same kin as the latter, out of necessity under a comely pretext, but in reality of their own choosing because of their hatred of Corinth.[51]

It is evident that Thucydides is looking at the origin and the ethnic belonging of a colony when making evaluations in regard to whom he sees in the right and whom in the wrong. Thus, the Corcyraeans are depicted as the culprits in this scenario, based on Thucydides' view that they ought to side with their mother city because of their common origin and customary obligations toward their metropolis, regardless of Corcyra being an old and independent state in its own right.[52]

The point therefore is whether Thucydides' account should be considered a reliable representation of the religious ties between Corcyra and Corinth. Following this train of thought, it is possible to add another, more radical question to the previous ones: Had there been conjointly celebrated festivals and sacrificial rites (with special privileges being accorded to Corinthian participants), or rather, ought there have been as far as Thucydides is concerned?

The fact is that ties between metropolis and *apoikia* varied greatly throughout the Greek world, and even in Thucydides, one can find examples where factors like colonial relationship and kinship are of no obvious significance in terms of the mutual conduct.[53]

Because of this persisting uncertainty, it would seem prudent to try to find other clues for a possible religious link between Corinth and Corcyra. When trying to discern religious ties between metropolis and apoikia, the

[51] Thuc. 7,57,7 (transl. by the author): Κερκυραῖοι δὲ οὐ μόνον Δωριῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ Κορίνθιοι σαφῶς ἐπὶ Κορινθίους τε καὶ Συρακοσίους, τῶν μὲν ἄποικοι ὄντες, τῶν δὲ ξυγγενεῖς, ἀνάγκῃ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ εὐπρεποῦς, βουλήσει δὲ κατὰ ἔχθος τὸ Κορινθίων οὐχ ἧσσον εἵποντο.

[52] Graham (1964: 105). See also Hornblower (1991: 74), who argues that Thucydides' ideas about the obligations of kin are inherited from Herodotus (e.g. 1,174,1). On the importance of ethnic criteria and feelings in the fifth century BC, and especially in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides, see Alty (1982), whose arguments – specifically directed at the opposing view of Will (1956) – I find very convincing.

[53] Thuc. 4,88,2. Hornblower (1991: 78).

figure of the *oikist* of a colony is usually a good starting point. The origin of the *oikist*, while not being the sole determining factor, was certainly an integral part in the question of which city should be considered the metropolis of a new settlement. In the broadest terms, we can say that the act of foundation was strongly religiously connotated, and the figure of the founder as the main protagonist of said act thus acquired a sacred quality,[54] which he would retain until his death and beyond. The *oikist* was also the person to implement the νόμιμα, which can be described as a number of markers that constituted the collective identity of a newly founded colony – such as the names and number of tribes, cult calendar and rituals, institutions and offices (both political and religious), dialects, script et cetera. These *nomima*, which a colony often shared with its mother city, formed the social, political and religious structure of a settlement.[55] They also served as a unifying instrument for heterogenous groups of settlers, turning them into cultural 'Corinthians', 'Phocaeans', 'Chalkidians' or whichever the mother city was whence the *nomima* were derived from. Because of his role as the main representative of his mother city and its *nomima*, an *oikist* served as a constant reminder of the origin of a colony and the shared ancestry of at least some of its settlers with the inhabitants of the metropolis, especially if the founder in question received a cult after his death – which seems to have been generally the case.[56] Through the figure of the *oikist* and his provenance, there was thus a religious bond between *apoikia* and metropolis.[57] But again, deducing

[54] If, indeed, a certain holiness was not a prerequisite for the job in the first place. There is a long-standing debate whether the accounts of *oikists* appointed by Delphi – especially the ones dealing with the early centuries of Greek colonization – are to be believed, and if *oikists* should thus be seen as chosen by Apollo and acting on the god's behalf, or not. For a discussion of the key arguments on both sides see Malkin (1987: 17–31). Regardless, there are examples of *oikists* who were seemingly chosen because of their fame and expertise in religious matters. The Athenian Lampon, for instance, was already a renowned seer when he got appointed as one of the founders of Thurioi in 443 BC. It seems logical to assume that he was most likely the one who oversaw the religious portion of the foundation. Leschhorn (1984: 131–132) with references.

[55] Graham (1982: 143–144); Leschhorn (1984: 95); Malkin (1998: 18).

[56] The commonly cited source here is Herodotus (6,38,1), who declares posthumous honours for an *oikist* to be the norm. On the widespread practice of founder cults see Malkin (1987: 190–195).

[57] Cf. Parker (1985: 310), who interprets the Epidamnian change of allegiance from Corcyra

regularly and conjointly observed rituals – or even continued or active relations – from this fact would be stretching the evidence too far.[58]

There is not much to go by when trying to discern an *oikist* cult on Corcyra. The literary sources only tell us the name of the founder (Chersikrates), his origin (Corinth) and the circumstances of the foundation. Although we know about several sanctuaries, temples and cults on Corcyra, there is no evidence for a possible grave or cenotaph of an *oikist*, let alone a cult.[59]

However, Thucydides relates a curious detail in his account of the conflict between Corinth and Corcyra. Namely, that the Corcyraeans allude to the Phaeacians as the former settlers of their island (Thuc. 1,25,4).[60] Furthermore, he mentions a sanctuary for Alcinous (Thuc. 3,70,4), who in the Odyssey is the king of the Phaeacians. As will be seen, these remarks by the Greek historian can be viewed as a hint towards a cult surrounding the Phaeacians on Corcyra, as well as an attempt by the Corcyraeans to separate themselves from their ties with Corinth – which were based on shared customs, kinship and the metropolis/*apoikia*-relation – through the adoption of a different, heroic heritage and ideology. Therefore, it is the mythical aspect of Corcyra, and especially the association between the island and the homeland of the Homeric Phaeacians, which I will now turn to.

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to Corinth (in 435 BC after having consulted Delphi on the matter) as an indication of existing 'ritual ties arising from colonization' between Epidamnus and Corinth. Parker does not specify, but one can assume that he must be referring to the act of foundation and the figure of the *oikist* – who was a Corinthian, even though the mother city was Corcyra. Thuc. 1,24,2. Leschhorn (1984: 72–74); Unfricht (2021: 25–26).

[58] Graham (1964: 14–15); Malkin (2011: 55).

[59] Thucydides mentions a sanctuary for the Dios kouroi at Corcyra, as well as one for Hera (Thuc. 3,75) and Dionysus (Thuc. 3,81,5). Furthermore, we know of the existence of two Artemis temples, as well as cults for Apollon Nomios, the Nymphs and the Nereids (Ap. Rhod. 4,1217–1219 with Timaios' Scholion). Pfister (1974: 46); Tsetskhladze (2006: lxiv–lxv); Cabanes (2008: 165). The sole hint concerning a potential hero cult on the island, apart from the Phaeacian reference, which will be discussed later on, are two small metal plates of questionable dating from the oracle of Zeus at Dodona. Both plates bear the identical inscription, and the content of the text seems to be an inquiry about which hero or god to worship in order to ensure peace on Corcyra. Pfister (1974: 228).

[60] On the 'Homeric' opening of the Corcyra episode in Thucydides see Hornblower (1991: 67–68 with references). On Homeric language and allusions in Thucydides – in his account of the events surrounding the Corcyra/Corinth-divide as well as in general – see Mackie (1996).

III. Corcyra in the Myths

Corcyra/Corfu is an island with a long and illustrious tradition of serving as setting for various myths.

For one, there are several examples of episodes and variants of the Argonaut myth being localized at Corcyra.[61] Furthermore, several nostoi myths – stories about the return of the heroes who fought in the Trojan War – establish a connection between Corcyra and Diomedes.[62] Some versions even correlate the story of Diomedes to that of the Argonauts.[63]

By far the most prominent and impactful of these mythical associations, however, was the one with Odysseus and the Phaeacians: According to Homer, Odysseus' last unplanned stop before successfully returning to Ithaca occurs when he gets washed up on the shore of Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians. There, he meets Nausicaa, the daughter of the ruler of Scheria, Alcinous. After having been heartily welcomed by Alcinous and regaled for some time at his court, Odysseus is brought back to Ithaca on a Phaeacian ship.

The Greeks seemingly unequivocally identified the mythical Scheria with the island of Corcyra, an equation which might already date to the Archaic period for several reasons: The inscription on the 'Cup of Nestor', found in a grave in Pithekoussai (dated to c. 720 BC), demonstrates the familiarity of western colonists with some of the tales which would later be integrated into the Homeric epics already for the eighth century BC,[64] and the fairly recent

[61] Paus. 2,3,9; Ap. Rhod. 4, 768–769; 821–822; 982–1013; 1206–1207. The 'heroic bridebed' (ἡρωϊκὸς γάμος) of Jason and Medeia was localized in Corcyra and seems to have been a cult site. Timaios FGrH 1,194; Ap. Rhod. 4,982–984; 1128–1130 (with Schol.); Apollod. 1,9,25; Hyg. *Fab*. 23; Orph. *Arg*. 1297–1299. Most sources speak of a cave as the location, whereas Philetas (Schol. Ap. Rhod. 4,1141) mentions the house of Alcinous. A cult for Medeia seems to have existed on Corcyra since Archaic times. Pfister (1974: 150, 157, 365–367); Malkin (1998: 79); Cabanes (2008: 158–159).

[62] These myths are not in accordance to the Homeric version of Diomedes' fate, where the hero returns safely to Argos after the capture of Troy. Hom. *Od*. 3,180–181.

[63] Timaeus FGrH 566 F 53; Lycus FGrH 570 F 3 (= Schol. Lyc. Alex. 615); Heraclid. Pont. FHG 2 p. 220. Pearson (1987: 74); Malkin (1998: 55, 239–240).

[64] Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1916: 501) attributes the localization of settings from the Odyssey with places in Italy and northwestern Greece to Ionian settlers of the early stages of the so-called 'Great Colonisation'. This view is largely shared by Malkin (1998: 102,

discovery of around 13,000 pottery sherds on the archipelago of Palagruža in the Adriatic Sea proved the existence of a shrine for Diomedes (who was, as mentioned above, also connected to Corcyra in some stories), dating back to the late sixth century BC. At the same time, the graffiti found on some of the sherds also point toward the literacy of many of the seamen who brought offerings to the hero.[65] Malkin (1998: 28) mentions the depiction of the blinding of Polyphemus in Etruscan vase-paintings from the seventh century BC – a motive likely resulting from contact with Euboian traders and settlers, who brought the Odyssean tales with them.[66] Taken on the whole, these separate clues create the picture of a high degree of familiarity with the Trojan Cycle – and possibly with the Phaeacians – among the Greek seamen who sailed the Ionian and Adriatic Seas during the Pre-Classical period.

Many scholars have remarked on the seeming lack of common sense and accuracy of the Greeks when it came to the notion of equating Scheria with Corcyra.[67] The *Odyssey* gives the impression that the Phaeacians are a people, which do not live among fellow humans, but rather in vicinity to the Elysium.[68] The mythical story elements describing the remoteness of the Phaeacians from the real world and their closeness to the realm of the dead are precisely what make the story of Odysseus' return on a Phaeacian ship so miraculous and mystical.[69] The hero is brought back at night-time, while in a state of sweet, death-like slumber.[70] Additionally, Poseidon punishes

156–160, 175). For the 'Cup of Nestor' see Murray (1994). See also Hellanicus FGrH 4 F 77; Kerényi (1973: 122–123); Howie (1989: 25–27) and Ridgway (1992: 57).

[65] Kirigin et al. (2009).

[66] One could also add here the find of numerous bronze tripods from the 9th and 8th centuries BC in the so-called Polis Bay on Ithaca, which in Malkin's (1998: 2, 94) opinion represent offerings to Odysseus dedicated by contemporary Greeks at the supposed landing place of the hero on his return to his native land. Although, as Malkin himself admits, there is reasonable doubt for this attribution, since the earliest explicit epigraphical evidence pointing toward Odysseus as the recipient of a cult is no earlier than the second century BC.

[67] The first one to do so was Welcker (1832: 219). See also Kerényi (1973: 123).

[68] Cf. Hom. *Od*. 6,8; 204–205. For Homer's description of the Elysium see *Od*. 4,562–568.

[69] Φαίακες means 'dark men'. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1916: 501) interpreted this as an affirmation of their mythical status, whereas Kerényi (1973: 134–135) argued rather broadly that 'dark' is what seamen in antiquity seem to have been in terms of their clothing in general.

[70] Hom. *Od*. 13,70–92. Kerényi (1973: 124).

the Phaeacians for having brought back Odysseus to his homeland. He turns their returning ship into stone,[71] as Alcinous and his people watch helplessly from ashore. The god also shrouds Scheria in impenetrable mist, so that Greek seafarers can no longer be expected to be saved by them.[72] To add to this, Homer does not even explicitly call Scheria an island – even though one passage[73] seems to suggest as much.

Why then were these mythical elements not ruinous to the potential localizability of Scheria and its subsequent identification with Corcyra?

There are several explanations for this: We may attribute it to possible alternative versions of the Odyssean tales connected to the Phaeacians, which may have placed them in the accessible and concrete world rather than the 'land of the beyond', which Homer makes Scheria out to be.[74]

Furthermore, the identification of Scheria with Corcyra is only one example of a general Greek phenomenon of translating 'mythical geography into concrete topography'.[75] While they cannot be wholly explained without taking into account a certain amount of wishful thinking and simplification on the part of those who equated the 'landmark x' they encountered with the 'location y' described in the myths, these associations served a definite purpose: For early Greek explorers, colonists and merchants they offered a possibility for 'historical' and geographical contextualization and understanding of the unfamiliar regions they encountered. As such, they provided

[71] In later times, a rocky reef at Corcyra was considered and presented as the location of the Phaeacian ship which had been petrified by the sea god. Plin. *HN* 4,19. See Pfister (1974: 335 with references).
[72] Hom. *Od*. 13,159–187. Segal (1994: 12–64); Malkin (1998: 4, 116); Osborne (2009: 135).
[73] Hom. *Od*. 6,204.
[74] Cf. Malkin (1998: 33–34, 126, 129–132, 152, 180, 189–190), who calls the *nostoi* myths – to which the myths revolving around Odysseus belong – a 'generative mythology', since they were shared within the Greek world from Archaic through Roman times and gave rise to further stories (alternative versions, sequels etc.), images (for example vase-paintings or coins), rituals, historical interpretation and ethnic articulation. For the freedom ancient poets enjoyed when dealing with a certain subject matter, see Johnston (2018: 16–17): They could elaborate on already known basics, confound expectations by alteration or invent wholly new episodes.
[75] Malkin (1998: 7). Ibid.: 'Greek myths were often brought down to earth to function as historical ones. Their main figures were heroes living long ago in never-never land, but […] they came to be superimposed onto ethnic identities and territories'.

a sense of familiarity and a means for 'mediating perceptions and contacts with both the land and its inhabitants'.[76]

The plausibility of an identification of Corcyra with Scheria can also partially be accounted for by what we might call the 'Phaeacian spirit' – the essential characteristics of this mythical group of people as described by Homer. One passage from the *Odyssey*, where Nausicaa is briefing Odysseus on the nature of her people, may serve as our 'ethnological account' of the Phaeacians:

> For the men here endure not stranger-folk, nor do they give kindly welcome to him who comes from another land. They, indeed, trusting in the speed of their swift ships, cross over the great gulf of the sea, for this the Earth-shaker has granted them; and their ships are swift as a bird on the wing or as a thought.[77]

The Phaeacians are described as 'close to the gods' (ἀγχίθεοι),[78] as well as unfriendly towards strangers – both of which emphasizes their status as set apart from the rest of the human world. But they are also the ones who can bridge the gap between the realms of the unknown and the known, inhabited world with their superb naval skills. They are, as Alcinous repeatedly states, 'the ones who escort one home safely' (πομποὶ ἀπήμονες ἁπάντων).[79] Through their unsurpassable ships, they are able to connect the seemingly unreachable to the reachable. Their ships know neither distances nor obstacles and through them, the Phaeacians are able to conquer the dangers and

[76] Malkin (1998: 27). Another example, where Homer served as a frame of reference for an encounter with 'strange people in a strange land', is the expedition (1540–1542 AD) of the Spanish Conquistador Francisco de Orellana, who famously named the river he was exploring 'Río de las Amazonas' after a skirmish with belligerent indigenous women. Bueno Medina (2007).

[77] Hom. *Od*. 7,32–36 (transl. A. T. Murray): οὐ γὰρ ξείνους οἵδε μάλ᾽ ἀνθρώπους ἀνέχονται, / οὐδ᾽ ἀγαπαζόμενοι φιλέουσ᾽ ὅς κ᾽ ἄλλοθεν ἔλθῃ. / νηυσὶ θοῇσιν τοί γε πεποιθότες ὠκείῃσι / λαῖτμα μέγ᾽ ἐκπερόωσιν, ἐπεί σφισι δῶκ᾽ ἐνοσίχθων; / τῶν νέες ὠκεῖαι ὡς εἰ πτερὸν ἠὲ νόημα.

[78] Hom. *Od*. 5,35; 7, 205. Vidal-Naquet (1989: 48).

[79] Hom. *Od*. 8,566; 13,174.

vastness of the sea. In this sense, Scheria can be seen as a gateway between the mythical realm and the real world. This, in a way, reflects the role the island of Corcyra must have played during the time the western trade routes were being established and the colonization movement began to take its course – with colonies and trade posts being few and far apart. The equation Scheria=Corcyra can thus be described as a side-effect of the successful exploration and penetration of the northwest by Greek sailors, traders and settlers, in the sense that what was once considered the unreachable and mysterious beyond became more and more known and accessible the more the trade routes developed and the colonization of the region commenced.[80]

The Corcyraeans themselves, however, seemingly went further than merely accepting the notion that their island was the famed Scheria: In the *Odyssey*, the seafaring skills of the Phaeacians are emphasized repeatedly.[81] This is a striking parallel to the state of Corcyra, which had generated remarkable wealth and power through its maritime trade and had one of the largest Greek fleets in the fifth century BC.[82] Thucydides explicitly states that the Corcyraeans prided themselves on their naval power and nautical prowess, and in doing so, referred to the Phaeacians, which were said to have formerly settled on their homeland.[83] The way he tells it, the Corcyraeans saw themselves as the ideological successors of the Phaeacians, which

[80] Kerényi (1973: 135–136); Miller (1997: 42–43); Malkin (1998: 116, 152).
[81] Hom. *Od*. 5,386; 6,270–272; 7,34–36; 108–109.
[82] Note the words of the Corcyraean ambassador sent to Athens in order to pursue an Alliance: 'We [the Corcyraeans] possess a fleet – the biggest one after your own [the Athenians].' (Thuc. 1,33,1: ναυτικόν τε κεκτήμεθα πλὴν τοῦ παρ᾽ ὑμῖν πλεῖστον); 'There are three noteworthy fleets in Hellas: Yours [the Athenians], ours [the Corcyraeans] and the Corinthians.' (Thuc. 1,36,3: τρία μὲν ὄντα λόγου ἄξια τοῖς Ἕλλησι ναυτικά, τὸ παρ᾽ ὑμῖν καὶ τὸ ἡμέτερον καὶ τὸ Κορινθίων). Transl. by the author. Kagan (2009: 53–54).
[83] Thuc. 1,25,4: ναυτικῷ δὲ καὶ πολὺ προύχειν ἔστιν ὅτε ἐπαιρόμενοι καὶ κατὰ τὴν Φαιάκων προενοίκησιν τῆς Κερκύρας κλέος ἐχόντων τὰ περὶ τὰς ναῦς ('they would boast of substantial naval superiority, even basing their claim on the nautical fame [κλέος] of the island's original inhabitants, the Phaeacians' – transl. M. Hammond). Miller (1997: 42–43). Note especially the usage of the poetic κλέος, which 'reinforces the Homeric connection', as Mackie (1996: 103 n. 3) points out. Cf. Hom. *Od*. 7,39 (Φαίηκες ναυσικλυτοὶ). I concur with Mackie's (1996: 104) argument, that the way in which Thucydides poses the allusion 'encourages us, consciously or unconsciously, to make comparisons between Homer's Phaeacians and Thucydides' Corcyreans'.

fueled their pride and confidence, but also instilled in them a sense of duty to continue and uphold the Phaeacian seafaring tradition and assert their own naval superiority.[84]

Additionally, Homer describes Scheria as a remote and isolated safe haven, a type of earthly paradise, which is not part of the contentions and struggles of the outside world. The inhabitants are minding their own business, not meddling with foreign affairs.[85] This Phaeacian policy of staying aloof correlates with what we can gather from Corcyra's own foreign policy during most of the fifth century BC, up until the war with Corinth in the 430s.[86]

Even though the abovementioned commonalities with the Phaeacians seem largely coincidental given the historical and geographical circumstances, they must have benefited the process of appropriation of this myth and its acceptance as a part of their own history and identity by the Corcyraeans. In this sense, the Phaeacian civilization served as a convenient role model, an ideal past, whose replication or emulation was to be strived for by living a life according to the Phaeacian virtues – namely a foreign policy dictated by caution and dissociation, as well as a strong emphasis on naval power.[87]

Cultic worship of the Phaeacians is never explicitly mentioned in the ancient sources, but Thucydides' account of the identification of the Corcyraeans with the Phaeacians, as well as his mention of a sanctuary of Zeus and Alcinous, have been interpreted along those lines.[88] I would agree with the assessment that the existence of a cult can be taken as a given, but it nevertheless remains uncertain when it might have been instituted.[89]

[84] Kerényi (1973: 122).

[85] Vidal-Naquet (1989: 47); Rohde (1991: 104–105); Mackie (1996: 104). Although Homer 'lets slip' on one occasion that the Phaeacians were pillaging and raiding just like all the other heroes in his epics: Hom. *Od*. 7,7–10 (transl. A. T. Murray): 'There a fire was kindled for her by her waiting-woman, Eurymedusa, an aged dame from Apeire. Long ago the curved ships had brought her from Apeire, and men had chosen her from the spoil as a gift of honor for Alcinous'.

[86] Cf. above n. 24 (Corcyra's 'wait-and-see' approach in the war against Xerxes) and n. 26.

[87] Mackie (1996: 103–104).

[88] Thuc. 1,25,4; 3,70,4; Cf. Ps.-Scyl. 22.

[89] Malkin (1998: 102 n. 47) sees the 'matter of fact' way in which Thucydides reports the existence of a sanctuary for Alcinous as an indication that the cult was not a recent creation. I would argue that this in itself does not go a long way, considering Thucydides' famous

A question to ask here is if Alcinous, who seems to have shared a sanctuary with Zeus,[90] may also have served the role of a founder, since it is hard to imagine the Corcyraeans embracing the Phaeacians as their supposed predecessors without having a corresponding founding figure to symbolize the original settlement of the island.[91] One of the central functions of founding heroes was their 'holding' and protection of the land they had once claimed and occupied.[92] It is nowhere mentioned that the Corcyraeans perceived or presented themselves as direct descendants of the Phaeacians – a claim which would have probably not been taken seriously had they actually made it, given that the Homeric Phaeacians were clearly disconnected in time from the later Corinthian colonization of the island.[93] In my opinion, this lack of descent would not have reduced the importance of a founder cult, but in fact heightened the need for one, since through cultic worship for Alcinous or another Phaeacian,[94] the Corcyraeans could have displayed their respect and veneration for precedent and asked for a favorable attitude of the previous holders of the land.

One of Corcyra's ports was also called the 'Port of Alcinous' at some undefinable point in time.[95] This could be interpreted as a similar case to that of the 'Port of Menelaos' in Libya, which Malkin (1994: 48–52) sees as a

'matter-of-factness' and laconicity about religious matters. On Thucydides' treatment of religion, see Unfricht (2021: 11–15) with references. However, in light of the abovementioned finds by Kirigin et al. (2011) on Palagruža and Malkin's (1998: 94–119) own strong case for an Archaic cult for Odysseus on Ithaka, I would also hold that it seems likely that the cult was not just established in the Classical period.

[90] Thuc. 3,70,4 (Διὸς τοῦ τεμένους καὶ τοῦ Ἀλκίνου). Cases like this one, where heroes and gods shared a sanctuary, are not uncommon. See Burkert (2011: 309, 314) with references.

[91] See also Morrison–Williams (1968: 186), according to whom the Corcyraeans saw a sail-store located in the port of Homeric Phaeacia as the 'forerunner of their city'.

[92] Malkin (1994: 127 with references).

[93] For a similar case, where direct genealogical linkage to Homeric heroes was probably not a feasible option, so that other ways of connecting the past to the present had to be sought, see Malkin (1994: 46–48) on Menelaos and the later Spartans.

[94] It would seem like the first king of the Phaeacians, Nausithoos, would be much more suited for the role of a founder, since he – according to a much-quoted passage from the *Odyssey* (6,7–10) – led them to Scheria, founded a city there, surrounded it with a wall, built houses and temples and divided the land among the settlers. In short, he is doing precisely what historical *oikists* did when founding a colony. However, no sanctuary for Nausithoos is attested. Bernstein (2004: 29).

[95] Eust. Prooem. ad Pind. GGM 2,309–310. Malkin (1998: 102).

localization likely dating back to the first generations of settlers, expressing 'a general idea of opening up the territory by creating a "familiar" landmark in an alien, unknown world'. Considering, however, that in the *Odyssey* it is not Alcinous who leads the Phaeacians to Scheria and thus 'opens up' the territory, but his father Nausithoos,[96] I think it more plausible to regard the name as another indication of the later adoption of the Phaeacian myth by the Corcyraeans, especially in regard to the emphasis on seafaring.

In his description of the palace of Alcinous, Homer also mentions an orchard. Alcinous' house itself lies within the city, and right outside of its courtyard is a garden, in which pears, apples, figs, olives and grapes grow.[97] The latter are important, since Thucydides (3,70) remarks that when civil strife was on the verge of breaking out on Corcyra in 327 BC, some rich citizens were being accused of having cut vines in the sanctuary of Zeus and Alcinous. The question is if this detail should be dismissed as a curious coincidence, or if there might be more to it? I would be hesitant to rule out the latter, given the popularity of the practice of finding topographical counterparts for mythical locations among the Greeks in general, and the keenness with which the Corcyraeans specifically seem to have taken the Phaeacian story to heart. It could therefore be argued, that the Corcyraeans of the fifth century BC thought that there was a link between the Homeric orchard/vineyard (ἀλωή) of Alcinous and the sanctuary of Zeus and Alcinous mentioned by Thucydides, and that they had cultivated a vineyard there just as the Phaeacian king had done according to Homer.

The likelihood of a Phaeacian cult at Corcyra is further increased by our knowledge of other cases where historical *oikists* were later supplemented by mythical founders.[98] Malkin (1998: 8, 30) convincingly argues that this practice was part of a larger tendency towards a new self-definition among

[96] Cf. above n. 94.
[97] Hom. *Od*. 7,40–47; 112–132. Murray (1995: 59, 62). On the magical properties of Alcinous' orchard, which emphasizes the paradisiacal nature of the island, see Vidal-Naquet (1989: 47).
[98] E.g. Kroton, where Herakles was venerated as ktistes alongside the human founder, Myscellus; or Taras, where an eponymous hero Taras was worshipped in addition to the oikist Phalanthus. Malkin (1998: 8) and (1994: 127–139). See also Murray (1989: 1–6).

colonies especially of the Greek west, starting from the sixth and fifth centuries BC. Through the addition of mythical heroes as founding figures, colonies were able to claim greater antiquity and status, rivalling the age and nobility of the cities in the motherland.

For Corcyra, the political situation with Corinth certainly seems to have played into this trend:

While it might be an overstatement to say that the century old feud with Corinth and the hatred of the Corcyraeans towards their mother city might have led to the wish and search for an alternative 'national identity' to begin with, I would certainly argue that these factors fueled the Corcyraean's enthusiasm towards the Phaeacian myth and benefited its adoption. The turn toward the Phaeacians can thus be viewed partly as a response against the challenge of empirical ambition and territorial expansion by Corinth – which exhibited this aggressive foreign policy at least from the time of the Cypselids onwards, as was shown above.

Not only did the connection to Scheria and the Phaeacians provide the Corcyraeans with a sense of heroic heritage, of the continuation of ancient traditions and values and consequently of a rootedness to the place which they inhabited, but it also gave them an opportunity to create an identity which was not based on their Corinthian origin and thereby cut the umbilical cord which connected them to their metropolis.

It is worth noting here that Thucydides (1,25,4) mentions the Corcyraean self-association with the Phaeacians in the context of giving reasons for the Corinthian dislike of their colony.[99] This, I would argue, indicates that this 'new' identity must have been a cause of serious vexation for Corinth, which would only make sense if it had affected the relation between mother and daughter city. It therefore seems reasonable to assume, that the Corcyraeans must have used their Phaeacian-based identity as legitimization for their lack of respect and disobedience towards their metropolis, as well as a justification for why they were different from other Corinthian colonies and had a right to follow their own political and economic interests.

[99] Kerényi (1973: 123); Malkin (1998: 133).

Despite the abovementioned consequences on Corcyra's interstate relations, it must be stressed that the orientation of Corcyraean identity towards the Phaeacians was first and foremost of internal importance. It was the inhabitants of Corcyra themselves, who had to believe in the Phaeacian myth and who had to participate in the according cult as a community in order for it to be functioning as an effective instrument of group solidarity and identity.[100]

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[100] Parker (2011: 120–121).

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