

The Argo's Long Shadow over Lake Tritonis and Lemnos: Two Dormant Oracles in Herodotus

A Longa Sombra da Argo sobre o Lago Tritonis e Lemnos: Dois Oráculos Dormentes em Heródoto

CARMEN SÁNCHEZ-MAÑAS¹ (*University of Murcia — Spain*)

Abstract: Two dormant oracles in Herodotus' *Histories*, 4.179 and 6.139-140, allow us to establish an interrelation between the Greek colonisation of Libya and the Athenian conquest of Lemnos based on the Argonautic myth. This paper conducts an in-depth examination of both passages from a comparative perspective, considering these aspects: mythical setting, conditioned oracular structure, use of tricks by characters, flashback as a narrative technique and the wind's role in the tales. Results show that the myth presents a Panhellenic vocation in the first oracle and a local vocation in the second.

Keywords: Argonauts; dormant oracles; Herodotus; Lemnos; Libya; Miltiades.

Introduction

In the Herodotean account, the Greek colonisation of Libya has four geographical axes —Lemnos, Sparta, Thera and Cyrene—, while Athens plays a tangential role. The Minyans, who pride themselves on being the progeny of the Argonauts, are expelled from Lemnos by the Pelasgians, who abducted the Athenian women from Brauron (4.145.2). Among the crew-members of the Argo were Helen's twin brothers, the Tyndaridae. This Spartan connection grants the Minyans a good reception. When they arrive in Laconia as refugees, they are welcomed by the locals as fellow citizens, and the two groups intermarry. When tensions arise, former Spartan regent Theras includes a small contingent of Minyans into his squad, which colonises the island of Calliste, later known as Thera after him (4.145-149). Following Delphic instructions, Thera eventually becomes the metropole of Cyrene (4.150-159). This city spearheads Greek expansion in Libya, whose mythical precedents lay on Menelaus' short stop at a place subsequently

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called Port Menelaus (4.169.1), and the Argonauts' halt at Lake Tritonis (4.179). Much later, Lemnos falls into the hands of the Athenians, who in turn expel the Pelasgians from Lemnian soil (6.137-140)².

This paper aims at exploring the interrelation between the Greek colonisation of Libya and the Athenian conquest of Lemnos through the Argonautic myth. To this end, we shall focus on two oracles that share a common background and a similar internal structure: 4.179 and 6.139-140.

As for the background, in 4.179, the oracle is addressed to Argonauts' descendants. The oracle recipients in 6.139-140 are guilty of parricide, like the Lemnian women before meeting the Argonauts. Concerning the internal structure, both oracles are dormant and subject to conditions that may deactivate or reactivate them, which leaves room for tricks³ and affects the oracular outcomes. Furthermore, both oracles are narrated in flashback and partly set in mythical times. Last but not least, as a driving force for navigation, the wind contributes to moulding both oracles⁴. For this reason, we shall take it as the guiding thread of our analysis, structured in two sections (one per oracle), and the conclusions.

Blown off course to Libya by a headwind (4.179)

Sailing round Cape Malea, in the extreme of the most oriental finger of the Peloponnese, was a challenging task for ancient sailors, because the north wind could easily blow ships off their course. This navigation obstacle soon made the leap into Greek literature, becoming a topos, the core of which lies undeniably in the *Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.*, 3.286-302; 4.514-518; 9.80-84; 19.184-186)⁵.

For his part, Herodotus records a myth (4.179.1)⁶, in which the cape features prominently. Before setting sail towards Colchis on the newly built

² BARAGWANATH (2020) 158–159; MORRISON (2020) 135.

³ DEWALD (2012) 81, n. 48 describes tricks as “the staple of oral folktale” and emphasises their importance in Greek culture. Although Herodotus does not create either of the two oracles, he is ultimately responsible for shaping them into literature; cf. LURAGHI (2013) 97. In this sense, we consider him to be their author.

⁴ HARRISON (2000) 100, n. 100.

⁵ CORCELLA (1993) 367.

⁶ As DE BAKKER (2007) 169–170, n. 16 remarks, Herodotus remains “non-committal” towards this type of oral traditions that stem from the distant past and lack an identified

Argo, Jason plans to consult Delphi and takes on board, among other things, a bronze tripod and a hecatomb for Delphic Apollo. Nevertheless, the consultation is frustrated by a north wind off Malea, which swerves the ship to Libya. The Argo arrives at the vast Lake Tritonis in the Libyan coastal region. This territory is inhabited by the Machlyes, neighbours of the Lotophagi and occasional lotus-eaters themselves (4.177-178). The eating habits and the vicinity of the Machlyes, which resonate with Odysseus' adventures (Hom. *Od.*, 9.79-86), indicate that Lake Tritonis constitutes a mythical geographical space⁷. At the same time, it marks the border between the nomadic Libyans to the east, and and their farming countrymen to the west (4.186-187)⁸.

The Argo is trapped in the lake shallows. Fortunately, Triton, the eponymous god of the water body⁹, comes to the rescue. Like Menelaus in Hom. *Od.*, 4.351-586, the Argonauts are marooned mythical travellers whom an epiphanic deity gets out of their predicament. Triton spontaneously appears to Jason and reveals him the way out in exchange for the tripod (4.179.2-3)¹⁰. Herodotus mentions only in passing the Argonauts' travails on Lake Tritonis. He does not even report them resuming their journey. Instead, the Halicarnassian concentrates on the oracular significance of the tripod. Triton has been compared to Menelaus' saviour, the Odyssean Old Man of the Sea Proteus¹¹, but the three-legged item is a typical Delphic dedication. The Pythia is

source. Nonetheless, the reiterative *λόγος ἐστὶ* (4.179.2) might subtly convey the "awe and respect" owed to a story that has been transmitted for generations and is still meaningful; cf. PELLING (2019) 148.

⁷ ZALI (2018) 130.

⁸ As MALKIN (1994) 198 points out, Herodotus locates Lake Tritonis "far to the west of Cyrenaica". Cf. BICHLER (2015) 9; MORRISON (2020) 137. See also SIERRA MARTÍN (2014) 29.

⁹ Apparently, Triton shares his dominion with a female personification of the lake. In a local tradition, she mothers Athena by Poseidon (4.180.5). This parentage evokes the epic epithet Tritogeneia "Trito-born" (e.g. Hom. *Od.*, 3.378; Hes. *Th.*, 895; 924; Hdt. 7.141.3). Cf. BEARZOT (1982) 53-54, n. 31.

¹⁰ KINDT (2018) 39-58 has recently demonstrated the structural affinities between oracular and epiphanic stories. Given the concomitance of epiphany and oracle, which is unique in Herodotus' *Histories*, this episode perfectly illustrates the commonalities between both phenomena. Cf. PETRIDOU (2015) 207-210.

¹¹ ZALI (2018) 131.

said to predict while sitting on it (e.g. X. Ap., 12; Plu. Mor., 387c), and the lake god acts very much like her (4.179.3)¹²:

καὶ τὸν τρίποδα θεῖναι ἐν τῷ ἑωυτοῦ ἱρῷ, ἐπιθεσπίσαντά τε τῷ τρίποδι καὶ τοῖσι σὺν Ἰήσωνι σημῆναντα τὸν πάντα λόγον, ὥς ἐπεὰν τὸν τρίποδα κομίσῃται τῶν ἐκγόνων τις τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἀργοῖ συμπλεόντων, τότε ἑκατὸν πόλιας οἰκῆσαι περὶ τὴν Τριτωνίδα λίμνην Ἑλληνίδας πᾶσαν εἶναι ἀνάγκην.

He put the tripod in his own shrine, but he first prophesied over it, explaining the whole matter to Jason's companions, namely that, should any descendant of the Argo's crew take the tripod away, it was inevitable that a hundred Greek cities would be founded around Lake Tritonis.

The inescapability of the foundation, explicit in πᾶσα ἀνάγκη, is not absolute, but subject to a condition *sine qua non*¹³: the removal of the tripod from Triton's sanctuary. Tripods being removed from the temple are rooted in Delphic tradition. Angry at the Pythia's reluctance to cleanse him of murder pollution, Heracles attempts to steal the prophetic tripod to institute his own oracle (Apollod. 2.6.2)¹⁴. Sometimes, the extraction of tripods is lawful, as in Paus. 1.43.7-8. The Pythia orders an Argive murder eager for purification to take up a tripod, carry it out of the sacred precinct and live wherever it falls from his hands. This is how he ends up founding a settlement on Megarian soil¹⁵.

In 4.179, getting a tripod equally guarantees the right of land possession. Albeit not endorsed by the Delphic god, whose sanctuary ultimately does not house the cult object, the colonisation enterprise is no less fittingly championed by a local deity¹⁶. Readers of Herodotus' Book 4 may expect the prospective oecist to be either one of the Minyan colonists that left Laconia with Theras, their Theran or Cyrenean offspring, or a Peloponnesian man whose Minyan forefathers did not accompany Theras (4.148.3-4).

¹² All translations are mine.

¹³ MUNSON (2001) 32.

¹⁴ Remember that Heracles serves for some time as an Argonaut (Hdt. 7.193.2; A.R. 1.122-132; 1.1273-1362; Apollod. 1.9.19).

¹⁵ For the relationship between murder and colonisation, cf. DOUGHERTY (1993) 185.

¹⁶ Together with Athena and Poseidon, Triton forms a divine triad worshipped by the Libyan inhabitants of the lake region (4.188).

Nevertheless, non-Minyans are given a possibility to settle on Lake Tritonis too. A brief anecdote immediately precedes Triton's intervention. In 4.178, Herodotus recalls an oracle of unknown origin (λόγιον) stating that the Spartans would plant a colony on Phla, an island in the lake. This settlement on Phla has been assumed to be one of the hundred foundations envisioned on the lake¹⁷, but a closer reading of the text does not support this interpretation. In 4.179.1, the Halicarnassian brands the story of Triton's episode as a different tale from the previous oracle addressed to the Spartans: ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὁδε λόγος λεγόμενος ("The following story is also told"). In a strict sense, the Spartan one and the other cities are to be located in different zones of the same area (*inside* vs *around* the lake).

Besides, the miscarried integration of the Minyans in Laconia means that they and the Spartans stay and are perceived as distinct groups. Therefore, the Argonautic tradition and the Spartan one attest to competing, albeit intertwined, territorial ambitions over Libya. In the Argonautic tradition, a single Minyan stands out from the rest. It is the future oecist of Cyrene, Battus, a descendant of the Argonaut Euphemus (4.150.2)¹⁸. Battus disembarks in continental Africa at Aziris. This spot is in turn next to the site that Helen's husband reached during his wanderings: Port Menelaus (2.119.3; 4.157.3; 4.169; cf. Hom. *Od.* 4.84-90). The geographical coincidence connects the Minyans with Menelaus, who in turn functions as a new contact point between Minyans and Spartans. In the Spartan tradition, Prince Dorieus plays a major role. Long after Battus' arrival, Dorieus skips enquiry at Delphi and promptly founds a colony at Cinyps, the finest place in Libya, only to be driven out after a couple of years by a coalition between the Libyan tribe of the Macae and the Carthaginians (5.42.2-3). Herodotus attributes the oracular

¹⁷ MALKIN (1994) 95; 162.

¹⁸ In *Pi. P.*, 4.50-63, Euphemus is also identified as an ancestor of Battus. Moreover, it is Euphemus who, as soon as he goes ashore on Lake Tritonis, receives a clod of earth from Poseidon (*Pi. P.*, 4.20-37). In *A.R.* 4.1538-1618, the Argonauts present Triton with a tripod and the god gives them a clod of earth in exchange, which Euphemus takes. Cf. CALAME (1989) 290; THOMAS (2018) 273-274.

neglect to vexation, but Dorieus might also have in mind the prophecy about Phla. If so, he might deem any further oracular consultation futile¹⁹.

Insofar as it is not fulfilled within the *Histories*, we can call this prophecy dormant, especially because nothing or nobody —let alone Dorieus' fiasco— restrains the Spartans from complying with it in the extra-narrative future²⁰. Considering that the one hundred cities are not established either, we can also tag Triton's utterance as dormant. In fact, the Libyan natives somehow hear about it. Taking advantage of the window of opportunity opened by Triton, they interfere with a trick. They hide the tripod (4.179.2), so that no scion of the Argonauts gain access to it. Since neither counteraction nor punishment is noted, we can deduce that they succeed.

In ancient colonisation tales, shrewd settlers usually manipulate locals into giving up all or part of their ancestral lands, sometimes relying on the authority of gods, diviners or oracles (Verg. *Aen.*, 1.367-368; Ath. 7.297e-298a; D.H. 19.3.3; Plu. *Mor.*, 293f-294c; 296d-e)²¹. For their part, the Machlyes break this narrative pattern. Their behaviour is not unparalleled in the *Histories*, though. Their fellow Libyans from Cyrenaica try to do the same. Had he followed the chronological order, Herodotus would have recounted the actions of the Cyrenaic Libyans after those of the Machlyes. Instead, he narrates first the foundation of Cyrene and then returns to the remoter past in a flashback²². So, at this point, readers already know that the Cyrenaic Libyans mislead Battus and his companions into the site of Cyrene, deliberately concealing from them the best part of the area, Irasa (4.158). And yet, whereas the Cyrenaic Libyans eventually face armed confrontation and defeat due to an enormous loss of territory to the Greeks (4.159.4-5), the Machlyes manage to avoid such a disaster.

The main difference between the two native peoples lies in agency. Although reluctantly and with a delay of several years, the settlers appointed by Delphi execute the colonising mandate, while the Cyrenaic Libyans merely adapt themselves to their changing relations with the Greeks as best

¹⁹ MALKIN (1994) 198; and 200–201, for Cinyps and Lake Tritonis as the limits of the Libyan zone colonisable by the Spartans. Cf. ZALI (2018) 129–130.

²⁰ HARRISON (2000) 140.

²¹ DOUGHERTY (1992) 40.

²² ZALI (2018) 135.

as they can²³. In contrast, neither the Argonauts nor their Minyan progeny react to the oracle, despite being the benefited party. It is the injured party, the Machlyes, who feel compelled to act as soon as they become aware of the prediction. By preserving the tripod from the eyes of potential seizers, they prevent the condition of fulfilment from being met. In other words, they rule out the possibility of oracular realisation²⁴.

Thus, they deactivate the vaticination without exposing Triton as a false prophet or twisting the oracular content. Their deactivation enables them to show regard for their local deity and simultaneously to stave off the Argonautic threat peacefully. In short, their handling of the condition of fulfilment empowers the Machlyes to retain possession of their land in the long run.

To Lemnos with a downwind (6.139-140)

Every summer, ancient sailors in the Aegean Sea must take into account the dry north winds blowing from mid-May or June to September or mid-October that reached their peak of speed between 24 July and 31 August. The Greeks called them Etesians because of their annual periodicity²⁵. Their literature reflects this reality from Hesiod (*Hes. Op.*, 664-672) onwards. In the *Histories*, the Etesian winds provide the Corcyreans with a reasonable pretext to justify their absence from the Battle of Salamis, allegedly keeping them from doubling Cape Malea (7.168.4). Sometimes, the obstacle is more than an excuse. The Etesian winds make it impossible to navigate the Bosphorus into the Black Sea, detaining the Argonauts at Phineus' house for forty days (A.R. 2.498-530)²⁶. This involuntary sojourn brings to mind Jason's plight after being

²³ For relations between Greek colonists and indigenous peoples, cf. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE (1994) 12; 32.

²⁴ Based on Timaeus (*FGrHist* 566 F 85) *apud* D.S. 4.56.6, MALKIN (1994) 199 surmises that the Cyrenaeans "discovered" the tripod as a means of validating their foundation of Euhesperides (modern Benghazi), where it was exhibited. Notwithstanding, the ancient sources cited only mention the exchange of information and help in return for the tripod, without express reference to a prognostication or the founding of many cities. Therefore, Triton's oracle remains unfulfilled, as MALKIN himself (1994) 198 acknowledges.

²⁵ AGGELIS (2017) 1239.

²⁶ This episode frames the abduction of Cyrene's eponymous nymph by Apollo (cf. *Hes. F* 215 M.-W.; *Pi. P.*, 9.5-70). It is hence related to the founding myths of the city. Cf. JACKSON (2003) 101, n. 2.

diverted from his course off Malea in Hdt. 4.179. However, the Etesian winds can also favour navigation. They help Cimon's son Miltiades, the Athenian commander at Marathon, to take control of the island of Lemnos (6.137-140).

To narrate the conquest, Herodotus goes back to very ancient times. He links Miltiades' achievement to the Argonautic cycle by retailing a myth of expulsion and rape²⁷ set on Lemnos, a real geographical space with deep-seated mythical resonances (cf. Hom. *Il.*, 1.590-594; 7.467-469; A.R. 1.607-608). In mythical times, the Athenians banished the Pelasgians, to whom they had previously granted for building the wall around the Acropolis (6.137.2)²⁸. This relationship of quiet coexistence transmuted into hostility and exile is analogous to that forged later between the Spartans and the Minyans, displaced from Lemnos by the Pelasgians (4.145-149). Women figure in both stories. While the Minyans receive assistance from their Spartan wives (4.146), the resentful Pelasgians attack young unmarried female Athenians at Brauron. The motif of abducted women, which traces back to the proem and includes Medea (1.2.2), takes on another dimension. The Athenian girls become not only concubines of the Pelasgians, but also teaching mothers²⁹. They educate their many bastard children as Athenians, which jeopardises the Pelasgian society. The Pelasgians neutralise the threat by exterminating their concubines and bastards (6.138). Under the label of "Lemnian deeds", Herodotus equates this killing with an older and more notorious one: the murder perpetrated by the Lemnian women against their menfolk (6.138.4). After the slaughter, the women repopulate the island with the Argonauts (cf. A.R. 1.849-852). The equivalence between the two mythical atrocities symbolically contaminates Lemnos³⁰.

²⁷ SOURVINOU-INWOOD (2004) 151.

²⁸ For the ethnicity of the Athenians and the Pelasgians, cf. SOURVINOU-INWOOD (2003) 140; FIGUEIRA (2020) 47.

²⁹ Cf. DEWALD (1981) 99; SÁNCHEZ-MAÑAS (2018) 173.

³⁰ DORATI (2005) 43. DORATI (2005) 42-43 also stresses that the two parricides are opposite, one being feminine and evoking an upside-down world, and the other masculine and resulting from a simple act of piracy gone wrong. From the perspective of Herodotus' Athenian readers, though, the masculine parricide may also belong to an upside-down world, for *Athenian* men usually have *non-Athenian* concubines; cf. SOURVINOU-INWOOD (2004) 156.

Since the crime (*ἀδίκημα*), the Lemnian soil does not bear fruit and women and livestock are not as fertile as before. The Pelasgians perceive these issues as a sign of divine anger and resort to Delphi for a solution. The Pythia instructs them to give the Athenians whatever compensation they ask for (6.139.2). Consequently, the Athenians do not need to engage in a chain of grievances and vendettas like those unleashed by women abductions in the proem, because Delphi promotes them from injured party to arbitrators, something that happens again only in 9.93-94³¹.

Albeit not explicitly stated, it seems that the Pelasgians inform the Athenians about the oracle. Both the reaction of the Athenians and the subsequent development of events suggest this. After the Pelasgians declare themselves ready to give satisfaction for their wrongdoing, the Athenians make the most of the *carte blanche* offered by the Pythia (6.139.3):

Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ ἐν τῷ πρυτανίῳ κλίνην στρώσαντες ὡς εἶχον κάλλιστα καὶ
τράπεζαν ἐπιπλέην ἀγαθῶν πάντων παραθέντες, ἐκέλευον τοὺς
Πελασγούς τὴν χώραν σφίσι παραδιδόναι οὕτω ἔχουσαν.

The Athenians, after adorning a couch in the town-hall as nicely as they could and setting a table full of all sorts of delicacies next to it, ordered the Pelasgians to hand their land over to them in the same state.

The Athenians prepare a lavish communal meal to illustrate the good state that Lemnos must attain before being delivered to them. Undoubtedly, they are displaying “land hunger”³². Even so, their petition is in line with 9.93-94, where land acquisition is part of the compensation authorised by Dodona and Delphi.

For many years, the land does not change hands, and the Pelasgians continue to live there (6.140.1). This puzzling circumstance invites us to infer

³¹ The noun *ἀδίκημα* has strong impious connotations; cf. WESSELMANN (2011) 348, n. 395. The Pelasgians’ insolence is at odds with the common sense of the Athenians. They refrain from responding violently to the affront. Their moderation is in keeping with the Persians, who despise both women abductors and retaliators of abductions (1.4.2). For the almost identical wording of the oracular responses in 6.139 and 9.93, cf. LATEINER (1980) 30.

³² BARAGWANATH (2008) 141; 195. When Cyrus feasts on the Persians to convince them to rebel against the Medes (1.126.2-5), he also displays land hunger, in his case for the Median Empire.

that the Pelasgians escape the crisis despite contravening the Delphic order³³. Notwithstanding, we should not overlook two relevant aspects.

First, the transfer cannot be immediate because the farming emergency on Lemnos does not match the Athenians' request. Presumably, the island needs some time to recover its good state. Second but more important is that the Pelasgians do not formally disobey the oracle, but subject the request to a condition *sine qua non* (6.139.4):

οἱ δὲ Πελασγοὶ ὑπολαβόντες εἶπαν 'ἐπεὰν βορέη ἀνέμῳ αὐτημερὸν ἔξανύσῃ νηὺς ἐκ τῆς ὑμετέρης ἐς τὴν ἡμετέρην, τότε παραδώσομεν,' ἐπιστάμενοι τοῦτο εἶναι ἀδύνατον γενέσθαι. ἡ γὰρ Ἀττικὴ πρὸς νότον κεῖται πολλὸν τῆς Λήμνου.

For their part, the Pelasgians said in reply: "when a ship arrives with north wind in a single day from your land to ours, then we shall hand it over", thinking that this was impossible to happen, because Attica is far to the south of Lemnos.

Certainly, the distance of about 140 or 150 nautical miles would be insuperable with a headwind, even under oar, in such a short period³⁴. By imposing an unattainable feat of seafaring, the Pelasgians prevent the condition of delivery from being met in the short and medium run. For a long time, they rule out the possibility of leaving the island. That is, they turn the Delphic pronouncement into a dormant one with a trick.

Contrary to 4.179, agency belongs here to both parties, for the condition of delivery proves to be double-edged. By setting it, the offending party defer apparently *sine die* the pending eviction. Very much like the Machlyes, the Pelasgians deactivate the utterance without defying the oracular deity or twisting the oracular content. Paradoxically, their words also entail a particular form of oracular irony, an accidental prediction (κληδών) that is fulfilled unexpectedly (cf. 8.114.2; 9.64.2)³⁵. Thus, the offending party inadver-

³³ KIRCHBERG (1965) 82–83; FONTENROSE (1978) 312; SOURVINOU-INWOOD (2004) 168.

³⁴ For the distance between Attica and Lemnos, cf. NENCI (1998) 319. At first, the Greeks used time units for measuring distance, cf. ARNAUD (2014) 42. In the *Histories*, a day measures both terrestrial and maritime distance (e.g. 1.211.1; 8.98.1; 4.86.1), cf. GEUS (2014) 149. For the difficulty sailing into opposing winds, cf. MEDAS (2004) 58.

³⁵ RUTHERFORD (2018) 6; 38. Alert readers may have been expecting the supposed impossibility to become a reality (*adynaton*), as in 1.55.2 or 3.151.2; cf. ALY (1921) 161.

tently opens a window of opportunity through which the injured party-arbitrator slips many years later, in historical times.

With Athenian support, Miltiades exercises tyranny in the Thracian Chersonese after the deaths of the former incumbents, his uncle and namesake, and his brother Stesagoras (6.34-41). Miltiades then devices a counter-trick: he sails from Elaeus — on the southern tip of the peninsula — to Lemnos in one day, driven by the Etesian winds³⁶. Once there, he urges the Pelasgians to abandon the island. He bases his demand on the Delphic mandate (6.140.1), which shows that the Athenians must have been aware of it, probably through the Pelasgians, as seen above:

*ἀναμνήσκων σφέας τὸ χρηστήριον, τὸ οὐδαμὰ ἤλπισαν σφίσι οἱ
Πελασγοὶ ἐπιτελέεσθαι.*

He reminded them of the oracle, which the Pelasgians never expected to be fulfilled.

Strictly speaking, the only thing that can be fulfilled is the condition of delivery³⁷. The inhabitants of the only two cities are divided. The Hephaestians accept and obey without discussion³⁸, but the Myrinaeans deny that the Thracian Chersonese is Attica and surrender only after being besieged (6.140.2).

The Myrinaeans' attitude highlights the flaws in Miltiades' move. He reactivates the dormant oracle to take over Lemnos peacefully, but he does not persuade the whole population of the legitimacy of his claim³⁹. Unlike

³⁶ The Pisistratids send Miltiades in a trireme to take control of the peninsula (6.39); cf. PAPALAS (1997) 263. Although Herodotus does not specify in what type of ship Miltiades travels in 6.140.1 (*νηϊ*), he may arrive at Lemnos aboard a trireme. At any rate, a fast ship manned by a well-trained crew and propelled by a favourable wind could bridge the distance between Elaeus and the island, approximately 50 nautical miles, in about 10 hours, assuming it reached 5 knots. For the speed estimation, cf. MEDAS (2004) 41; 43; ARNAUD (2005) 106.

³⁷ HORNBLOWER — PELLING (2017) 301 propose three solutions to this incongruity: to presume, given its dactylic rhythm, that the condition was originally integrated into the Delphic oracle; to interpret *χρηστήριον* here as synonymous with *κληδών*; and to understand the noun in a broad sense, as encompassing both the oracle itself and the reactions to it. In view of the complex structure of the Herodotean oracular passages, the third one is the most convincing. Cf. MAURIZIO (1997) 311.

³⁸ This may reflect the atticisation of the area around Hephaestea, cf. MCINERNEY (2019) 249.

³⁹ It is commonly agreed that Delphi legitimises the conquest of Lemnos in 6.139-140, cf. RAUSCH (1999) 12; SOURVINOU-INWOOD (2004) 167; BOWIE (2012) 279; MCINERNEY (2014)

Machlyes and Pelasgians, who respect the letter of the oracles, he twists the terms of the condition of delivery. In spite of that, as his fellow Athenians did of the oracle before, Miltiades now makes the most of the condition. He reduces the number of enemies enough to defeat them and achieve his goal.

Herodotus is generous with Miltiades⁴⁰. Had he followed the chronological order, the Halicarnassian should have ended Book 6 with the failed campaign against Paros, which left Miltiades mortally wounded and accused of deceiving the Athenian people (6.132-136). Adducing the victory at Marathon and the conquest of Lemnos, his friends commute the death sentence to a heavy fine, which his son pays after Miltiades' demise. During the trial, he lies on a coach (*ἐν κλίνῃ*), unable (*ἀδύνατος*) to defend himself (6.136.2). The Halicarnassian reverts this image of loss, making both the coach and the *adynaton* essential to the oracle, with which he closes his account of Miltiades in a flashback.

Judging by his last recorded exploit, Miltiades surpasses the shrewd settlers mentioned in the previous section. He obtains new lands by a combination of guile and violence. As a consequence, the Pelasgians do not succeed like Machlyes. Rather as the Cyrenaic Libyans, they take steps to avert the Greek threat, but eventually face armed confrontation and expulsion. In addition, Miltiades avenges the affront committed by the Pelasgians and re-nounces the possession of Lemnos, which becomes a communal property of the Athenians (6.136.2)⁴¹, in accordance with their old request inspired by Delphi.

Conclusions

So far, we have seen how the wind features as a force of nature with which sailors have to deal. In 4.179, the first great Greek mythical travellers are powerless in the face of the strong north wind that blows them away from

40. However, Herodotus casts doubts on both sides' reactions to the oracle, and primarily on the injured party (i.e., Miltiades), for his handling of the condition of delivery. Cf. BARAGWANATH (2008) 141–143.

⁴⁰ PELLING (2019) 206.

⁴¹ Miltiades conquers Lemnos around 500 B.C and yields it up “shortly before the Persian Wars”; cf. MCINERNEY (2019) 247. The island, on the Black Sea trade route, has strategic value for Athens both as a grain producer and as a defence against Persia, cf. BRAUND (2007) 41–42; KALLET (2013) 55; MCINERNEY (2019) 248.

their route off Malea and causes them to get lost and marooned. Of course, their troubles are far from rare. To the already mentioned parallel of the Odyssean Menelaus, we may add that of the Achaean fleet stranded at Aulis by opposing winds (A. A., 184-191; E. IA, 350-353). Even so, the Argonauts' helplessness may also anticipate the lack of agency that they and their descendants exhibit in the oracle, to which we shall return below.

In 6.139-140, the sailors are not well-known heroes of divine ancestry, and yet they command the north wind in the Aegean Sea. In mythical times, the Pelasgians use it to make a raid from Lemnos into Brauron to the south. Shortly afterwards, they draw on their nautical expertise and the north wind dynamics to curb the land hunger of the Athenians. In historical times, Miltiades avails himself of the incipient Athenian seamanship and, again, the north (Etesian) wind to claim Lemnos for his compatriots.

In these instances, the north wind either precipitates or is interwoven with the interactions between gods and men. In 4.179, the wind plunges the Argonauts into a desperate situation that is resolved by an epiphany. Triton's unsolicited appearance before Jason pertains to a very remote heroic past when deities might directly mingle with humans. Nonetheless, this interaction coexists with an indirect, more modern, one: through an oracle, Triton communicates to the Argonauts information relevant not to them, but their descendants. In the oracle, the lake god establishes a course of action but, unlike the epiphany, he leaves the outcome in human hands.

At first glance, Triton obviously benefits the benefited party. Indeed, he encourages the Minyans —be they Peloponnesians, Theras' companions or, more probably, Therans or Cyreneans descended from the latter— to colonise the territory bordering Lake Tritonis. It is more complicated than that, for Triton fosters tricks. Not in vain, he prophesies over a tripod that can be labelled as stolen, given that it is not initially intended for him. Above all, he lets the Machlyes block the condition of fulfilment with the trick of hiding the tripod. Therefore, he does not desert his worshippers, the injured party. Simply put, the water deity stimulates colonisation, but at the same time allows it to be paralysed.

As previously noted, the north wind is interwoven with the interaction between the Pelasgians and Delphic Apollo in 6.139-140. Contrary to 4.179,

there are not two interactions, but only an indirect one. However, as in the passage in Book 4, the god sets a course of action in his oracle and leaves its outcome to mortals. The north wind hence becomes an instrument in human hands, which at the beginning hinders but in the end facilitates the implementation of the oracular order. In this regard, the wind is comparable to the tripod, which, so to speak, serves as a key that opens and closes Triton's prediction.

Triton and Delphic Apollo share an ambivalence towards the mortals involved in their oracles. At first glance, the god of Delphi benefits the injured party-arbitrator, by bestowing on them *carte blanche* over the offending party. His position is not really that clear, since he tolerates tricks too. He permits the Pelasgians to delay their expulsion with the trick of the condition of delivery. Not content with that, Delphic Apollo also consents to the counter-trick whereby Miltiades ultimately fulfils that condition in a questionable way, to say the least.

The cunning of Miltiades, the Pelasgians and, particularly, the Machlyes contrasts with the lack of agency of both the Argonauts and the Minyans. They do not react to Triton's utterance and consequently do not bring tricks into play. This absence of trickery is consistent with the only Herodotean episode where Minyans intervene in the context of a ruse (4.146.3). The Minyans escape from the Spartan prison dressed as women, but the ploy does not seem to be their idea, but that of their Spartan wives (δόλον...ἔξ ἀντέων), who swap their clothes with them. Unresourcefulness also fits Jason's character. According to Pindar, Jason kills the fleece guardian serpent with stratagems (τέχναις). Earlier, though, the poet recalls that Jason seduces Medea by means of the spells taught to him by Aphrodite, as well as that Medea teaches Jason how to overcome the tests posed by Aeëthes, and supplies him with a healing ointment. (Pi. P., 4.249; 4.213-221). Thus, the Minyans, Jason and, by extension, the Argonauts may be performers of tricks, but not creators, a role that falls to females in the Argonautic myth⁴².

⁴² The paramount female trickster is Medea. For example, she deceives Pelias' daughters into killing their father, as implied in Pindar (Pi. P., 4.250) and reflected in the iconography of the Archaic Period; cf. SPENCE (2010) 116. Jason's characterisation as an unresourceful figure persists in the *Argonautica* (A.R. 1.460; 1.1286, 2.410; 2.623; 2.885;

The two analysed passages demonstrate the validity of the Argonautic myth in the Herodotean work. In Libya, the myth operates in both the manifest and the latent state. In the manifest state, it concerns real geography, underpinning the actual foundation of Cyrene, credited to Battus the Minyan. In its latent state, the Argonautic myth applies to mythical geography, specifically to a vast unexplored or little-known area identified as Lake Tritonis and its surroundings. Against this backdrop, the dormant prophecy by Triton represents an uncertain intergenerational promise of land possession. The Minyans may see the promise fulfilled in the extra-narrative future, should they surmount the Machlyes' obstruction. As if it were not enough, in this hypothetical future, the Minyans would perhaps have to come to terms with their Spartan neighbours, finally established on Phla, the island promised to them within the lake.

The myth also operates on Lemnos in both the manifest and the latent state. Like Libya, Lemnos blends real and mythical geography, but not because it is partially unexplored. As we know, it is a real island that also belongs to the mythical landscape. In the manifest state, the myth magnifies the Pelasgians' parricide and pollution. Against this backdrop, the Athenian request and the Pelasgian answer transform the Delphic mandate into either a long-forgotten authorisation for land possession or a deceptively improbable notice of exile, depending on the perspective. As opposed to Triton's vaticination, Delphic Apollo's oracle ceases to be dormant within the *Histories*. Lemnos actually enters the orbit of Athenian influence. In its latent state, the Argonautic myth adds an underlying insult to the blatant affront that the Pelasgian kidnappers inflict on the Athenians. The expulsion of the Minyans by the Pelasgians remains unpunished until Miltiades expels them from Lemnos. In doing so, he avenges not only his fellow Athenians, but also the Minyans thrown out of their ancestral island.

This, in turn, testifies to the versatility of the Argonautic myth. On the one hand, its natural inheritors, the Minyans, keep their legacy intact. Were they to find the hidden tripod, it would trigger a massive occupation of the lands around Lake Tritonis. This discovery, although hypothetical, endows

3.336; 3.423; 3.432; 4.1318), with some exceptions (e.g. A.R. 4.404–409); cf. MORRISON (2020) 52, n. 46; 121.

the myth with a Panhellenic vocation. The Minyans are patently the benefited party of Triton's prophecy. Notwithstanding, since the lake deity speaks of Greek cities, other Greeks would eventually participate in the colonisation process, as in Cyrene (4.159.2-3). On the other hand, by becoming the avenger of the Lemnian Minyans, Miltiades connects with the Argonautic myth, which in his case acquires a local vocation. It mitigates the problem of legitimacy raised by Miltiades' dubious appropriation of Lemnos, thereby serving Athenian interests.

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Resumo: Dois oráculos dormentes nas *Histórias* de Heródoto, 4.179 e 6.139-140, permitem estabelecer uma interrelação entre a colonização grega da Líbia e a conquista ateniense de Lemnos com base no mito argonáutico. Este artigo conduz uma aprofundada análise comparativa de ambas as passagens, considerando os seguintes aspetos: cenário mítico, estrutura oracular condicionada, utilização de truques por personagens, *flashback* como técnica narrativa e o papel do vento. Os resultados mostram que o mito apresenta uma vocação pan-helénica no primeiro oráculo e uma vocação local no segundo.

Palavras-chave: Argonautas; oráculos dormentes; Heródoto; Lemnos; Líbia; Milcíades.

Resumen: Dos oráculos durmientes en las *Historias* de Heródoto, 4.179 y 6.139-140, permiten establecer una interrelación entre la colonización griega de Libia y la conquista ateniense de Lemnos, basada en el mito argonáutico. Este trabajo realiza un análisis comparativo de ambos pasajes, considerando: el escenario mítico, la estructura oracular condicionada, el uso de estratagemas por parte de los personajes, el *flashback* como técnica narrativa y el papel del viento. Los resultados muestran que el mito presenta una vocación panhelénica en el primer oráculo y una vocación local en el segundo.

Palabras clave: Argonautas; oráculos durmientes; Heródoto; Lemnos; Libia; Milcíades.

Résumé : Deux oracles dormants dans les *Histoires* d'Hérodote, 4.179 et 6.139-140, permettent d'établir une interrelation entre la colonisation grecque de la Libye et la conquête athénienne de Lemnos, fondée sur le mythe argonautique. Cet article propose une analyse comparative des deux passages, considérant : le cadre mythique, la structure oraculaire conditionnée, l'utilisation d'astuces par les personnages, le *flashback* comme technique narrative et le rôle du vent. Les résultats démontrent que le mythe présente une vocation panhellénique dans le premier oracle et une vocation locale dans le second.

Mots-clés : Argonautes ; oracles dormants ; Hérodote ; Lemnos ; Libye ; Miltiade.