Some Reflections on Eschatological Currents, Diasporic Experience, and Group Identity in the Northwestern Black Sea Region

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Discussions on Greek colonization tend to focus on material matters: Who were involved? Which were the resources that attracted settling abroad? What was the character and status of the newly founded installations? This approach tends to see the settlers as pawns in a game. But they were not just that: they were also humans of flesh and blood. How did they perceive themselves in the new situation? How did this perception change over the generations? And did the experience contribute to creating a new collective identity?

As we can gather from the recent summaries by G. Tsetskhladze (1994) and E. Petropoulos (2005) we possess very few data concerning the reasons for settling in the Black Sea region. However, in particular Tsetskhladze underlines that many settlements were founded in response to political and ecological crises in the settlers' homeland.

According to C. Dougherty, who has analyzed ancient "colonial" literature in general, settling abroad was almost always conceived of and remembered as a fearful experience (1993). Though this type of literature according to Dougherty is to be acknowledged as historical representation, not as description of ancient facts, it nevertheless provides us with a glimpse into the psychology of settling abroad. The ancient settler's experience is most fully demonstrated by the writing of Seneca to his grieving mother left behind following his exile in Corsica (41-48 AD). And since it also touches upon the experience of the Pontic Greeks, the paragraph is worth quoting (almost) in full:

> Why do we find Greek cities in the very heart of barbarian countries? …Scythia and all that great stretch which is peopled with fierce and unconquered tribes show Achaean towns planted on the shores of the Pontic Sea; not by the fierceness of eternal winter, not by the temper of the inhabitants, as savage as their climate, were men deterred from seeking there new homes. …Some have not settled upon a place from choice, but, tossed about in long wandering, from very weariness have seized upon the nearest;

> others have established their right in a foreign land by the sword;
> some tribes, seeking unknown regions, were swallowed up by
> the sea; some settled in the spot in which a lack of supplies had
> stranded them. And not all have had the same reason for leaving
> their country and seeking a new one. Some, having escaped the
> destruction of their cities by the forces of the enemy, have been
> thrust into strange lands when stripped of their own; some have
> been cast out by civil discord; some have gone forth in order to
> relieve the pressure from over-crowding caused by an excess of
> population; some have been driven out by pestilence or repeated
> earthquakes or certain unbearable defects of an unproductive soil;
> some… have been beguiled by the fame of a fertile shore that was
> too highly praised. Different peoples have been impelled by dif-
> ferent reasons to leave their homes (*ad Helviam* 7.1, 3-5).[1]

In addition to the mainly traumatic reasons for migration listed by Seneca,
the host country's response to the arrival of foreign settlers may also have
posed new threats that could have influenced the settlers' perception of secu-
rity or lack of same. Turning to the Black Sea region, the general impression
is that power relations between the Greek settlers and their "host society",
the indigenous tribes, was and remained labile. This implied that the Greeks
recurrently were obliged to negotiate their way (see also J.M. Højte's contri-
bution to this volume). And as mentioned by Seneca, landscape and climate
also represented challenges as did the local inhabitants.

    With this paper I shall attempt to probe into the settlers' response to their
new living conditions. My point of departure will be to question why we in
the Black Sea region, as well as in another colonial area of the Greek world,
Magna Graecia, witness the same early and contemporary development of
the similar type of religiosity, namely the parallel development of local Dio-
nysos religion (with Orphism and Pythagoraism as partly overlapping sub-
categories), which was centred on other worldly, transcendent and utopian
hopes. I propose to employ the notion of *diaspora* as a heuristic tool, which
can help us contextualise this particular type of utopian thinking within a
broader framework. First we shall cast a brief look at the evidence for eschato-
logical thinking in the Black Sea region; then we shall discuss various current
diaspora models. Finally, we shall briefly consider the possibility of cultural
Greek-barbarian osmosis between at least members of the elites.

Eschatological thinking in the Black Sea region and beyond

Our knowledge of the early development of the advanced religious thinking
surrounding the worship of Dionysos Bakchaios derives from finds made in
Olbia in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. These finds have provided us with an un-
derstanding of his cult in the city in the late 6th and 5th century BC, and they

are, thus, precious evidence for the early popularity of a cult, which according to Herodotos even attracted the Scythian elite.[2] The mirror from a grave dating to c. 500 BC with the inscription *Demonassa, daughter of Lenaios euai, and Lenaios, son of Demokles eiai* points to the early existence of the cult in the city and its importance in a funerary context.[3] In addition to the mirror, five ingraved bone plaques[4] from the second or third quarter of the 5th century BC,[5] which were found in the Central Temenos, have settled beyond doubt that in the city religious ideas flourished that (a) coupled Dionysos with eschatological thinking; (b) were dualistic (*soma-psyke*); (c) entertained the idea of death as a new beginning, perhaps even one of reincarnation (*bios-thanatos-bios*). They have also proven the existence of Orphics as a group of people devoted to the worship of Dionysos (Rusjaeva 1978; Zhmud' 1992, 160). A related bone plaque mentioning Apollon was found in Berezan'. This plaque has also been connected with Orphic (or Pythagoraean) cult due to the number mysticism expressed on it.[6] As it does not mention Dionysos, however, it is left out here, though it is an eloquent evidence of contemporary parallel speculative thinking.

As mentioned, the five Dionysian bone plaques were found in the cultural layers in Olbia's Central Temenos. We do not know what their purpose was, but they may have been tokens of an initiatory cult, perhaps *symbola* proper. The plaques have been dealt with at length in the scholarly literature, so I see no reason to repeat this here. There is, however, one minor detail I want to mention, namely a zigzag symbol, which is incised on all five plaques. This symbol is variously interpreted: as the letter Z,[7] by Rusjaeva, proposed to be the first letter of Zagreus (Rusjaeva 1978, 90), or the letter N (Rusjaeva 1978, 88), or as a snake or a thunder bolt (West 1982, 19). But with its long-stretched shape this is not a letter and its sharp zigzags show that it is not a snake either. I should like to propose that what is represented is a key. We find identical representations on a number of terracotta discs, found in tombs in Magna Graecia dating to the late Classical and Hellenistic period.[8] These discs contain a number of symbols, which we also find on the contemporary South Italian funerary vases, such as torches, thunderbolts, ladder-shaped musical instruments,[9] wheels, *caducei* etc. Their function is contested; however they can be contextualized in a religious sphere, which is concerned with the underworld and the afterlife. One of these discs, a large disc from Brundisium, features the *apotheosis* of Ariadne and accordingly can be securely understood as Dionysian. To my mind, the mentioned parallels show beyond doubt, that the Olbia symbol is neither a snake, nor a thunderbolt, but a key. The question is how Dionysos can be associated with a key and what that key could lock/unlock.

The only Greek deity who had a key as his known attribute was Hades, and the concept of Hades' key was well known in antiquity. Outside Magna Graecia and the Pontic region, Hades himself was rarely depicted, but we know from Pausanias' description of the decoration of a chryselephantine

table in the temple of Hera in Olympia that he could be portrayed with the key in his hand:

> …on the other [side] are Pluto, Dionysus, Persephone and nymphs, one of them carrying a ball. As to the key (Pluto holds a key) they say that what is called Hades has been locked up by Pluto, and that nobody will return back again therefrom (5.20.3).

To possess the key of Hades is to master life after death. The same thought was formulated by Christ as quoted in the Revelation of John: "I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I hold the key of Hades and of death" (1.18; cf. Matt 7.13-14, 16, 18). The plaques may thus have expressed the invisible by means of visible representation.

J. Vinogradov was of the opinion that only the three plaques found together were Orphic. However, I think that the key symbol connects at least four, perhaps all five plaques.

The Olbia finds are foremost interesting because here we see, if not the genesis then at least the evidence for, how early and widespread this particular type of Dionysianism was. The mirror gives the earliest attested instance of the Bacchic exclamation *euai* (Dubois 1996, 145), and the bone plaques constitute the first attestation of the name of the *thiasos* of Orphic initiates, *orfikoi* (Zhmud' 1992, 160). So it is beyond doubt that Dionysianism and Orphism was in vogue during the early years of Olbia's existence. L. Dubois has even suggested (1996, 152) that the city name of Olbia itself, the "happy and bountiful", may have been inspired by the local Orphic milieu, and he mentions in support of this thesis the unique parallel phrasing we find, on the one hand, on a bone plaque from Berezan' reading *eirene Olbiei polí makarizo ekei* (*SEG* 36.694; Rusjaeva 1986) and, on the other hand, on one of the so-called Orphic gold plaques from Thurioi with the almost identical sentence: *olbie kai makariste – theos d'esei antì brotoio*.[10]

The role of Dionysos in eschatological thinking in the Black Sea region is recurrently found, especially in the northwestern part of the region, and not just in the early period. One may wonder about the significance of the lead tokens dating from the 4th to 2nd century BC found in tombs in Olbia, in Olbia's *chora* as well as in Apollonia, which have been suggested to be connected with the cult of Dionysos Zagreus.[11] But we are on firmer ground, I believe, with a large body of terracotta altars dating to the 3rd and 2nd century BC found in the region that convey the image of Dionysos as champion over death on behalf of his adherents (Guldager Bilde 2005a and b; Guldager Bilde 2006). In the same region we also find the cult of Achilleus diffused (e.g. Hupe 2006). It is generally believed that this cult with its connection to the White Island (Leuke) of the Blessed was also coloured by eschatological thinking. But too little is known of what it could offer its devotees, and it is therefore left out here.

Above I have mentioned parallels in Magna Graecia several times. Material culture reveals the interrelatedness of the two regions, and the ancients themselves perceived the two regions as connected with myths of soul migration (Hinge 2004; Hinge in this volume). Although the Dionysian eschatological doctrines had followers all over the Greek world, it seems to have flourished in Magna Graecia in particular. In fact, until the above quoted finds from Olbia became known, these doctrines were considered *characteristic* for the culture of Magna Graecia (e.g. Bottini 1992).

Eschatological thinking as expression of diasporic consciousness?

Why did so many Greeks from the two regions resort to other worldly or utopian hopes? And why was the development in the two regions contemporary and parallel? The answer lies, I believe, in the fact that the two regions were both Greek satellites planted in non-Greek territories which were situated in the peripheries of the Greek world, and in both regions the indigenous population not only presented challenges but also sources of inspiration for the Greek settlers.

In his influential article on Hellenistic religion in the *Encyclopedia Britanica* (Macropedia; 1980), Jonathan Z. Smith suggested that "utopian" religious practices were something characteristic of "diasporic centres":

> Diasporic religion, in contrast to native, locative religion, was utopian in the strictest sense of the word, a religion of "nowhere", of transcendence. …Rather than a god who dwelt in his temple, the diasporic traditions evolved complicated techniques for achieving visions, epiphanies (manifestations of a god), or heavenly journeys to a transcendent god. This led to a change from concern for a religion of national prosperity to one for individual salvation…[12]

Smith considered this type of religious practice as particularly characteristic of the Hellenistic period, and his use of the term "diasporic" was parallel to that of "immigrant". Taking into account that the article was written in 1980, this is perhaps not surprising. His use of the word diaspora is coloured by the Jewish experience. Thus, the word has negative connotations such as exile, oppression and loss, as well as settling as a minority group in a hostile host country. The background for this association is a long tradition in scholarship on Hellenistic religion and mystery cults that view these as (negative or pessimistic) responses to the new "global" world of the Hellenistic period. Today, this view has been modified, and need not worry us here. What is important in the present context is his association of non-locative, utopian religion and the notion of diaspora. In the following I will argue that the notion of diaspora may, in fact, be of some use as a heuristic model[13] also concerning the pre-

Hellenistic period. Let us therefore consider the hypothesis that it was the diasporic situation in the Greek colonies in Magna Graecia and the Black Sea region that furthered eschatological religiosity. In order to do so, we will need to look a little bit closer at the term diaspora itself as well as the sociological models inspired by it.

Diaspora models

The term diaspora derives from ancient Greek διασπορά, "a scattering or sowing of seeds". Originally, the term diaspora was used to refer specifically to the populations of Jews exiled from Judea in 586 BC by the Babylonians, and from Jerusalem in 135 AD by the Roman Empire (the Diaspora, capitalised). In modern times it is used interchangeably to refer to the *process of dispersal*, the *dispersed community and its culture*, as well as the *geographical space of the dispersal*. Despite some authors stating the contrary, it was never used by the Greeks themselves as a way of describing their own migrations.[14]

Since the mid-1960s, the term has been used metaphorically as a sociological model in African studies (e.g. A. Cohen 1969/1971), but it is not until the early 1990s that a true diaspora model has been developed. In 1991, the first volume of an international, multidisciplinary periodical by the name of *Diaspora. A Journal of Transnational Studies* was issued, edited by K. Tölöyan. In the foreword he furnished the term with the following broad definition:

> We use 'diaspora' provisionally to indicate our belief that the term
> that once described Jewish, [modern, *PGB*] Greek, and Armenian
> dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain
> that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-
> worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community
> (Tölölian 1991, 4-5).

One article printed in this journal in particular has come to provide the repeatedly quoted point of departure in sociological and anthropological literature for the understanding of the term, namely W. Safran's article, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" (Safran 1991). Safran's definition is also based on the Jewish diaspora as the paradigmatic example, and this evidently colours it.

In the late 20th century, still wider groups of people define *themselves* as diasporas in their struggle for recognition.[15] At the same time, and perhaps spurred by this, particularly in the social sciences, the diaspora model has been developed further and expanded, refined and redefined into a forceful analytic tool. And, inevitably, at the same time the term has also become more loose in its theoretical construct mainly as a result of its attempt to free itself of its origin based on the particular Jewish experience.[16] A major step forward was taken by the sociologist R. Cohen. In his seminal book *Global*

Diasporas (1997, repr. in 1999 and 2001) he proposed a diaspora "typology" by distinguishing between groups of persons scattered, on the one hand, for aggressive reasons and, on the other hand, for voluntarist reasons (p. 24). He ends up defining five types of diasporas (Cohen 1997, xi):

1) The classical *victim diaspora* (key examples: the Jews, Armenians and Palestinians);
2) The *labour diaspora* (key example: migrants from the Indian sub continent);
3) The *imperial diaspora* (a result of colonization, for example, the British) and adding p. 67: the *quasi-imperial diaspora* (cases where localization or creolization occurred with the new settlers marrying into the local community or turning against their homeland);
4) The *trade diaspora* (key example: the Lebanese, but he also refers to the ancient Greeks [already Curtin 1984]);
5) The *cultural diaspora* (key example: the black African and Caribbeans).

It is recognised that there can be overlap between the different "types", and that one "type" can develop from one to another. Today Cohen's book provides the starting point for the analysis of the diaspora as a phenomenon, and it is his model I propose to use (Cohen 1997, 26, pl. 1.1). He then defines the following features as common of a diaspora:

1) Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2) Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3) A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
4) An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintainance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5) A development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7) A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8) A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement;
9) The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

To Cohen the difference between an immigrant society and a diaspora is that, in his opinion, the diaspora "…"creolize" or indiginize not at all or only in a very limited way and continue to retain their link, sometimes their dependence, on the "Motherland"", whereas immigrants and immigrant communities assimilate or blend in after few generations (traditionally considered to be three to four) so that the original ethnic identity can no longer be distinguished.[17] Therefore "a strong tie to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained" (Cohen 1997, 24). This discrimination between diaspora and immigration can also be found in J. Shuval's definition of a diaspora as

> …a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements, all of which play a role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing (2000, 43).

In the early 21st century there has still been a further semantic gliding of the term diaspora. Whereas it was understood primarily as a *social form* concerned with the extent and nature of social, political and economic relationships, it now, in addition, also designates a particular type of *consciousness* involving aspects of collective memory and an awareness of identities spanning "here-and-there" (hence the shift of focus from "diaspora" to "diasporic"), and it is also understood as a *mode of cultural reproduction* especially in the format of a bottom-up process (Vertovec 2004, 279; see also Baumann 2000, 326). According to the mentioned theoreticians, this consciousness was shaped by what has been termed the "triadic" or "tripolar" relationship between (a) the immigrant group, (b) the host society, and (c) the country of origin (Safran 1991; Baumann 2000, 327), and it also discloses "lateral relationship" between various diasporic centres at the same level as the relationship to the "homeland".[18]

Diaspora and pagan Antiquity?

Returning to the Greeks, I think we can let us be inspired by the above-mentioned diaspora models and the general patterns behind the creation of a particular diasporic consciousness. However, I am well aware that this may be viewed as provocative by some scholars. In their belief that the experience of migrants throughout time and space can be applied to Greek settlers too, sociologists have had no problems applying the diaspora model to ancient Greek migration or "colonization".[19] R. Cohen, already quoted, for example, places the ancient Greeks in his category *trade diaspora*.[20] Nevertheless, scholars hesitate to study the Greeks as we would study modern migrant groups. This is probably due to the fact that the study of Classics has neither rid itself com-

pletely of its Hellenocentric point of departure nor has it been completely de-colonized. Thus, since migrants (as well as diaspora populations) traditionally are viewed as being in a minority position, and because the semantic baggage of the term in its original association with experiences now classified as *victim diasporas* has not been found to cover the Greek "experience", even today most classicists and archaeologists refrain from employing the term diaspora. A look-up in the rich indices of I. Hodder's *Archaeological Theory Today* (2001) and in C. Renfrew and P. Bahn's *Archaeology. The Key Concepts* (2005) provide not a single reference to the term. It is only in L. Meskell and R. Preucel's *A Companion to Social Archaeology* (2004) we find it employed in the context of world archaeology (Lilley 2004). When used in literature on antiquity, the term is almost exclusively applied to the ancient Jewish diaspora.

As far as I am aware, the first time that the notion of diaspora has been used on pagan antiquity as a leading idea is in the proceedings from an international congress which was held in Montreal in 1988, dedicated to *The Hellenic diaspora from antiquity to modern times* and published in 1991 edited by J. Fossey. This initiative was inspired by Fossey's own interest in the modern Greek diaspora. In the first volume of the conference publication, which is concerned with Greco-Roman antiquity, the term diaspora was mainly used associatively (if at all) and it is not based on any common model. The book was simply too early out. However, it is interesting to note that it was part of the same trend that also created the journal *Diaspora* already mentioned (initiated also in 1991), namely the result of a contemporary diaspora community of Greeks reflecting upon their own past. Since then, among classicists, diaspora has been used to describe religious communities other than the Jews living outside their core area, such as the Pythagoraeans (Cordiano 1999) and the adherents of Isis (Ensoli 2005).

Surely, models are heuristic devices and should not be used as rigid checklists. To my mind, however, the importance of the diaspora model is that it can open a window to a large comparative body of cross-temporal, cross-spatial and cross-cultural material that provides us with an understanding of the patterns in behaviour among settlers in their quest for maintaining and/or developing group identity in relation to, on the one hand, the local community and, on the other hand, to their country of origin. This we can use in order to address our own inadequate body of material and to discover some of the mechanisms or processes at stake in situations of culture meetings or colonial encounters – also in the Pontic region.

Diaspora and religious responses

Leaving home may provide new opportunities but it can also be a traumatic experience, as we saw in Seneca. The diaspora model insists that the reason for the migration/dispersal is of paramount importance for the direction in which a diasporic consciousness may develop (Baumann 2003, 47; Vertovec

2004, 282). If I am justified in my supposition that the Greek settlers for many reasons felt insecure and under stress in the Black Sea region, it is very likely that it resulted in a religious response.[21] Such a supposition is supported by an investigation recently published by R. Inglehart and P. Norris. In their book *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge, 2004) they analyse a huge body of cross-cultural evidence deriving from the four times repeated World Values Survey executed from 1981 to 2001 in 80 different societies, rich and poor, covering all of the world's major faiths. They conclude that "exposure to physical, societal and personal risks drives religiosity. Conversely, a systematic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs has occurred among the more prosperous strata in rich nations".

Since the mid-1990s a number of scholarly works has appeared that address precisely the issue of religion and religiosity as a response to a diasporic situation. First to be mentioned are the publications by M. Baumann (2000; 2003) and S. Vertovec (2004). They conclude that religion in the diaspora can take many forms: religious conservatism and orthodoxy is one possibility, utopian or eschatological thinking is another. In the Black Sea region we find a good example of religious conservatism in the wide-spread cult of Apollon Iatros. The last conclusion is compatible with J. Smith's proposition, which we started with, and it corresponds equally well with what we know about the Jewish diaspora.[22]

Though eschatological thinking may have its origin in negative experiences, we miss the point completely if we relegate it to the esoteric corner as gloomy escapism. Claiming a new identity and a new "life" as an initiate in the Dionysos Bakchaios cult is not, as imagined by R. Edmonds in his analysis of the so-called Orphic gold plaques, "a sign of "counterculture" enacted by socially "marginal" groups or individuals",[23] on the contrary. Utopian religions offer new opportunities in relation to old cults left behind, and privileged status as initiated can form a new power base not just in the afterlife but also in this life. Precisely the archaeological material can help us in nuancing our understanding of these processes with its time/space dimension as well as its potential as indicator of gender/age/status.

Returning to the already mentioned finds from Olbia, at least the mirror provides us with a secure indication of the high social status of the initiated as we can glean from the inscribed aristocratic names: Demonassa and Demokles. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the Dionysos Bakchaios cult could even attract a member of the Scythian elite, King Skyles, to become initiated (Herodotos 4.78-80). The contextualization of the terracotta altars mentioned above provides the same picture. Thus, one altar, for example, was found in the rich Chersonesean house, the so-called House of Apollonios,[24] and also in the home *chora* of the same city, altars were found in the house sanctuaries of a number of farmhouses (plot 39, 106, 151).

It has been repeatedly underlined that the elite also in Magna Graecia was the driving force behind the development of this cult.[25] So if the eschatological

doctrines, celebrating the future rather than the present, which flourished in the Greek peripheries were "subversive", this was perhaps rather in relation to the Greek "centre", where these trends in Dionysianism were viewed as basically foreign.[26]

Culture change through hybridization? [27]

Today, we witness an increased awareness of the contribution from the indigenous milieus in the colonial encounter. Indeed, the very locus of this encounter, be that perceived of as "periphery", "frontier", "beach" or "diaspora", is in much sociological literature being celebrated as zones of particular creativity.[28] In the Black Sea region, though, because we only possess little or contested evidence on the matter, eschatological currents among the indigenous population should be considered briefly as possible sources of inspiration too.

In Greece there was a persistent tradition for linking the Thracians with strong eschatological currents (see also the contribution by G. Hinge in this volume). The best example is of course Orpheus, who, according to one coherent set of myths, was son of the epichoric priest-king, the river Oiagros personified[29] and the grandson of Charops to whom Dionysos had given instruction in the rites and ceremonies connected with the Mysteries (the second "biographical myth" making him the son of Apollon and the Muse of epic poetry, Kalliope, is probably an *interpretatio graeca*). The figure of Orpheus finds a close parallel in Rhesos, similarly a king of Thrace, the son of the Muse Euterpe and another Thracian river, namely Strymon. Rhesos died on the Trojan side by the hands of Odysseus and Diomedes (Hom. *Il.* 10.432-502). In Euripides' play, Rhesos (authorship contested), the Muse, his mother, evokes his afterlife after being set free by Persephone as an "*anthropodaimon* hiding in an underground grotto yet seeing the light" (970-971).

Herodotos unfolds a third myth in relation to the Thracians concerning belief in immortality. According to him

> Their [the Getai's] belief in their immortality [*athanatizousi*] is as follows: they believe that they do not die, but that one who perishes goes to the deity [*daimon*] Salmoxis, or Gebeleïzis, as some of them call him.[30] …I understand from the Greeks who live beside the Hellespont and Pontus, that this Salmoxis was a man who was once a slave in Samos, his master being Pythagoras son of Mnesarchus; then, after being freed and gaining great wealth, he returned to his own country. … therefore he made a hall [*andreion*], where he entertained and fed the leaders among his countrymen, and taught them that neither he nor his guests nor any of their descendants would ever die, but that they would go to a place where they would live forever and have all good things (4.94-95).

Then follows a story of a "religious fraud", how he built an underground chamber, vanished hither, stayed there for three years and eventually "reappeared to the Thracians, and thus they came to believe what Salmoxis had told them. Such is the Greek story about him" (4.95). But Herodotos continues:

> Now I neither disbelieve nor entirely believe the tale about Salmoxis and his underground chamber; but I think that he lived many years before Pythagoras; and as to whether there was a man called Salmoxis or this is some deity native to the Getae, let the question be dismissed (4.96).

Herodotos' distanced view of the local Pontic Greeks' interpretation is noticeable, not least his rejection of the evident *interpretatio Graeca* subordinating Salmoxis as a pupil or slave of Pythagoras. The contemporary Hellanikos was of the same opinion (*FGrH* 4 F 73). Unfortunately, we have very few sources to Salmoxis, but his Getic affiliation can hardly be contested.

Evidently it is difficult to reach behind these myths. Nevertheless, the Greeks themselves believed that the type of Dionysianism connected with the name of Orpheus was to be located in Thrace – and in some "biographical myths", Dionysos was even viewed as coming from that periphery to the Greek world. In fact, he was not. His name is found among the Linear B texts as *di-wo-nu-so*. But Dionysos was a god of many faces, and one of his identities was seemingly shaped in the Thracian environment. Thus, eschatological doctrines also flourished among the Thracian tribes – and also as part of an elite culture. The Thracian religious figures were viewed as "kings" (Rhesos, Orpheus, Salmoxis), and their doctrines similarly circulated among the elite, cf. Herodotos' description of Salmoxis entertaining the "leaders among his countrymen in the *andreion*" already mentioned.

Conclusion

The eschatological currents in the Pontic region as well as in Magna Graecia may have originated as a response to insecure living conditions, and, accordingly, be seen as an element of a diasporic consciousness. Seemingly, these currents were driven by the elite and they, in turn, became "a new beginning" and a new power base which, in a way, may have connected the diasporic centres independently from – and perhaps even in opposition to – the Greek "homeland". It cannot be excluded that at least the Pontic Greeks in their development of eschatological thinking were under influence from indigenous religion on the level of the elite. That the indigenous religious thinking in turn was part of a much wider cultural complex reaching Sibiria, India and Iran, need not worry us here. It must suffice to say that the example of Black Sea eschatology demonstrates the creative potential of the meeting – and mixing – of cultures.

Notes

1 Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Moral Essays*. Translated by J.W. Basore. The Loeb Classical Library. London, 1928-1935 (http://www.stoics.com/seneca_essays_book_2.html#'HELVIAM1).

2 Cf. the story of the Scythian King Skyles, who was killed by his peers as a result of his initiation into the cult of Olbian Dionysos Bakchaios: 4.78-80.

3 Rosanova 1968; Rusjaeva 1978, 96-98; Vinogradov 1991, 83; Bottini 1992, 156; Dubois 1996, 143-146.

4 Rusjaeva 1978; Burkert 1980; Tinnefeld 1980; West 1982; Vinogradov 1991; Bottini 1992, 151-156; Zhmud' 1992; Bernabé 1995, 24-25; Dubois 1996, 154-155.

5 Date proposed by J. Vinogradov based on palaeography (1991, 78).

6 Rusjaeva 1986; *SEG* 36.694; Burkert 1990; Dubois 1996, 93-114. Dated by Rusjaeva to the third quarter of the 6th century BC, by Dubois taken to be contemporary with the plaques from the Central Temenos, which Vinogradov dates up to 100 years later.

7 Rusjaeva 1978, 88; Vinogradov 1991, 78, Bottini 1992, 155.

8 Wuilleumier 1932; disc in the Ashmolean Museum: McDaniel 1924, 28; disc from Brundisium: Kerényi 1963; Sciarra 1976, cat. 383; disc from Tarentum in the Louvre, D3921: Besques 1986, 105, pl. 104.a.

9 On the backside of the plaque with the incised words *eirene polemos aletheia pseudos* is a rectangular object divided into seven "boxes" with a round object inside. This has been interpreted as a flute or a board with eggs by Bottini (1992, 154). There can hardly be any doubt that it is the same object, which we find on the Apulian vases, where frequently a white dot is painted on the string/cross bar, as well as on the already mentioned South Italian terracotta discs. The interpretation of the object as a musical instrument is sure, even though it is uncertain which type of instrument it is and also precisely how it was played.

10 Zuntz 1971, 300-301, A1; Pugliese Carratelli 2001, 102-111.

11 E.g. Wasowicz & Zdrojewska 1998; Zajceva 1971; 2004.

12 Same in Smith 1978, xiv.

13 Model is here used as a "hypothetical description of a complex entity or process" being a "representation or simulation of something that cannot be directly observed" and a "simplified description of reality" that may "help us to improve our understanding of the … characteristics of reality studied in a more effective way than if it had been observed directly" (selected from the list generated by http://www.google.dk/search?hl=da&lr=&oi=defmore&defl=en&q=define:model).

14 Irmscher 1991, 13; Bauman 2000, 315-316.

15 Clifford 1994, 310; also Baumann 2000, 323; Shuval 2000, 41; Vertovec 2004, 277. A useful list of notable diasporas is provided and kept updated in the net-based Wikipedia dictionary (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaspora).

16 It has also been met with critizism e.g. of an in-built ethno-nationalism (Anthias 1998).

17 Cf. also Vertovec 2004, 282: "Diasporas arise from some form of migration, but not all migration involves diasporic consciousness".

18 In particular Clifford views the "decentered, lateral connections … as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return" (1994, 306); cf. also Shuval 2000, 45 with further examples.

19 E.g. Shuval 2000, 42; Bauman 2000, 330; 2003, 92-109; Reis 2004, 45 and many others.

20 Cohen 1997, 83-84.
21 Cf. also *Millenium: Fear and Religion*, IV Conference of the Sociedad Española de Ciencias de las Religiones, Universidad de La Laguna (Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain), 3-6 February 2000. Papers available at http://www.ull.es/congresos/con-mirel/english.htm; Segal 2004, 180-182.
22 Smith 1978; 1980; Safran 1991; Clifford 1994, 305; Cohen 1997, 79; Vertovec 2004, 294 and many studies on the Jewish diaspora, e.g. Neusner 2004.
23 Edmonds 2004, 43, 70, 82. This view is rightly critizised by Stephen Halliwell (Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews: http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=2441).
24 Belov 1962, 170-171, fig. 34.a-b (altar).
25 Redfield 1991; Vinogradov 1991, 84; Bottini 1992.
26 They represented a creative development of the old *polis* religion in a henotheistic direction, and it could be manipulated as a new and strong power base offering opportunities not as also acknowledged by the Peisistratids, when they tried to control it through creating their own canon of Orphic or rather Musaic writings. Cf. also Clifford's interesting considerations on the diaspora's potentially subversive character (1994, 307).
27 E.g. Gosden 2001; Shanks 2001. By using the term hybrid metaphorically to convey a notion of a mix of elements or properties, whereby new properties (good or bad) emerge, we can avoid any judgmental connotations, and in contrast to the terms acculturation or creolization, which pass as synonyms, it does not connote asymmetrical power relations. The term has lately been criticized by Cohen, who wants to place it in inverted commas (1997, 130-131). He bases his criticism on the plant world, where hybridity confer sterility, and thus to him is an improper metaphor for phenomena relating to human cultures. His use is, though, too narrow. The term hybrid today covers a much wider semantic domain than just the natural world including materials (e.g. reinforced concrete), communication technologies (e.g. hybrid net mixing glass fibre and cobber transmitters), and transportation (hybrid car mixing gas and electricity as propellant). But even in the natural world, hybridity is cultivated in modern production as a means of achieving genetic variation and hybrid vigour (*heterosis*), such as increased growth or increased resistance to deceases. Hybridity, finally, can come into being not just as part of deliberate design, but also as spontaneous process.
28 Hannertz 1989; Hartog 2001; King 2004; Cohen 1997; Hannertz 1997; Safran 2005, but also already Turner 1920.
29 Pind. *Third Threnos* fr. 128c; Terpandros fr. 15; Bacchyl. fr. 5b8 (Irigoin); Timoth. fr. 791 (Page); Apollod. 1.3.2; Paus. 9.30.1; Ap. Rhod. 1.24; Hyg. *Fab*. 14; Nonnus, *Dion*. 13.430.
30 Different manuscripts of Herodotos' Historia render the name of the figure as Zalmoxis, Salmoxis, Zamolxis, Samolxis, with a majority of manuscripts favouring Salmoxis (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zalmoxis, retrieved 1 December 2005).

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