

Reciprocal Strategies: Imperialism, Barbarism and Trade in Archaic and Classical Olbia

Robin Osborne

How did the meetings of cultures in the Black Sea region take place concretely in time and space?¹ How were cultures and collective and individual identities shaped, maintained and/or transformed as a result of these meetings? In this paper I raise these questions with reference to Classical Olbia. Olbia has the advantage that we both have significant data from ancient observers, from outsiders who told stories about Olbia which precisely turned on just what sort of a Greek city it was, and from those at Olbia themselves, who speak to us not only through their material culture but also, and this is my focus here, through what, privately and publicly, they inscribed on non-perishable material. Given the privileged position which this comparative wealth of material puts us in, this case study of Olbia is also a study in method. How, faced with an array of evidence some of which looks, on the face of it, quite unlike the material from other Greek cities, and some of which looks, on the face of it, indistinguishable from that from other Greek cities, do we decide what can and cannot be attributed to the “meeting of cultures” in the Black Sea area? I argue in the course of this paper for the importance of close attention to details and for a careful contextualising that considers not just what a particular text says but what it does.

Answering questions about changing cultural identities is extremely problematic, and the literary evidence on Olbia plunges us immediately into the problems. Herodotos 4.18, in his only mention of “Olbiopolitai” has the Greek inhabitants of the area by the sea after you cross the Borysthenes identify the non-Greek inhabitants as “Borysthenites” and themselves as Olbiopolitai. At 4.78 he then describes how the Scythian king Skyles, whose mother was Greek and who had been taught Greek letters, led an army against the “city of the Borysthenites”, noting that the Borysthenites identified themselves as Milesians. Skyles, Herodotos goes on, used to leave his army in the suburb of the town, enter the town without it, put on Greek clothes, and ἡγόραζε on his own, without bodyguards, and with the gates guarded to prevent entry by Scythians. As well as wearing Greek clothes he engaged in rituals to the gods “according to the *nomoi* of the Greeks”. After a month of this he put his Scythian clothes on again and left. But he did all this often and married a

woman in Borysthenes. Herodotos remarks that this was bound to turn out badly, and the crunch came when Skyles desired to be initiated into Bacchic rites, and persisted even when “the god” destroyed Skyles’ house in the town with a thunderbolt. Scythians, Herodotos says, disapprove of the worship of a god that drives men mad, and when one of the Borysthenites informs on Skyles they check the information by entering the city and spying, and then depose Skyles.

What are we to make of this famous story? This is very explicitly a story about the meeting of cultures at Olbia and the concrete consequences. But *whose* story is it? Does it tell us something about the Scythians and their view of the people of Olbia? Herodotos certainly tells the story of Skyles, and that of Anacharsis, with which he precedes it, to reveal something about Scythian hostility to customs that are not their own. This is clear both from the first sentence of 4.76 and from the last sentence of 4.80. But his source for the stories is not clear. In the case of Anacharsis, (4.76-7), shot dead by the Scythian king for conducting Greek religious rituals in Hylaia, Herodotos goes as far as to say that the Scythians deny knowledge of him. If we take this statement seriously we cannot interpret these stories as straightforwardly cautionary tales told by Scythians to warn against adopting foreign (religious) practices. Herodotos quotes, on Anacharsis’ genealogy, Tymnes, the *epitropos* of Ariapeithes, the Scythian king who is the father of Skyles. Tymnes ought to be a Karian name (the other Tymnes in Herodotos is the father of Histiaios), and scholars have seen in him a go-between between the Scythian and non-Scythian worlds, proposing that Herodotos met him at Olbia.

Does the story of Skyles then tell us something about the people of Olbia and the Olbian view of the Scythians? It is notable that both the Anacharsis and the Skyles stories are set in Olbia or Hylaia, the region around Olbia. These are not stories about the problem of importing Greek cult practices into the heart of Scythia; they are stories about the problem of Scythians taking the initiative in Greek cult practice: Anacharsis sets up the rituals to the Mother of the Gods; Skyles decides to be initiated. If the Scythians do not tell the story of Anacharsis, is it the Olbians who do so? Are these stories by which the Olbians explain Scythian wariness of Olbian religious practices? Although Anacharsis is supposed to have picked up the cult of Kybele from Kyzikos, there is evidence for her cult being strong already in Archaic Olbia.² Are these stories by which the Olbians “other” the Scythians, or are these stories which reproduce the way that the Scythians “other” the Olbians?

Or do these stories primarily, or only, tell us about Herodotos? What the story may tell us about Herodotos has been the focus of such scholars as T.E. Harrison, interested in what the incident tells us about Herodotos and religion – Herodotos seems both to assume here that gods are the same world over, just worshipped differently, and to assume that Scythians do not have gods that drive men mad, but that Greeks do.³ He also seems to take it that it is the same god into whose cult Skyles wants to be initiated who destroys

Skyles' house with a thunderbolt. What the story tells us about Herodotos is also a concern of F. Hartog, who stresses the structural parallelism between the Skyles and Anacharsis stories and also the way in which the Scythian attitude towards the cult activity of Anacharsis and Skyles mirrors more widespread Greek ambivalence towards ecstatic cult practices for Dionysos and for the Great Mother.⁴ On this view Herodotos here significantly complicates his view of the "other" Scythians, in that they turn out to be not so very unlike the Greeks – or alternatively Herodotos here uses the Scythians to draw attention to the barbarity of hostile attitudes to ecstatic cults.

What Herodotos' story of Skyles nicely exemplifies are the problems inherent in using literary texts generated by outsiders to look at cultural interaction. The author of the literary text, and his source(s), are themselves part of any cultural interaction they describe between other parties. Establishing firm foundations for understanding what is happening on the ground in any particular place depends on being able to control more variables than can be grasped for such literary texts. I turn therefore to epigraphic texts.

Religious texts and the role of Dionysos in Olbia

I start with religious material. Calendrical material from Olbia demonstrates that this settlement which traced its origin to Miletos employed the Milesian calendar.⁵ Most of the standard dedicatory formulae in material from Archaic and Classical Olbia can be paralleled generally in the Greek world and indeed in the Ionian world. The gods and heroes who receive those dedications include such widely worshipped figures as Apollon Delphinios as well as other Olympians (Zeus, Athena, Demeter, Aphrodite, Hermes) who appear without epithet. The cult of Apollon Iatros is a little more unusual, and among heroes the cult of Achilles on Leuke has attracted particular attention, though the epigraphic material has nothing particularly unusual about it. The Olbian material offers something not obviously immediately paralleled in other parts of the Greek world in two areas: first in relation to the cult of Dionysos and second in producing inscribed bone plaques.

A bronze mirror of c. 500 BC carries, inscribed around its border an inscription "Demonassa (daughter) of Lenaios, euai, and Lenaios (son of) Demokles, eiai".⁶ The Bacchic cry "euai" and the name Lenaios are what are most interesting here. That the Bacchic cry, whether as "euai" or "euoi", first appears in literature in Athenian tragedy and comedy is hardly surprising or to be afforded great significance. Rather more interesting is the use of the name Lenaios. Lenaios appears, on the current evidence of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, outside the Black Sea only in the Hellenistic period. From the 2nd century BC on it becomes quite popular in Athens with some attestation in the Aegean islands (but not elsewhere). Within the Black Sea it appears in the Kimmerian Bosphoros in the 4th century and at Pantikapaion in the 4th to 3rd century, but at Olbia itself there are three attestations in the 5th as well

as two more in the 3rd/2nd century BC.⁷ The Lenaïos of Dubois no. 2 is the son of Dionysodoros, which further encourages association of the name with Dionysos rather than with, e.g. Apollon (though we will see below how close Dionysos and Apollon seem to be at Olbia). That the name and the Bacchic cry should occur together might suggest that the name is not just vaguely Dionysiac but associated in particular with the more ecstatic of Dionysiac rites. Given the evidence I now turn to discuss, I draw attention in particular to the presence of “Lenaiai” in Herakleitos frg. 14a (Diels-Kranz): peoples of the night – *magoi, bakkhoi, lenaiai*, initiates into the mysteries.

Of similar date to the mirror, or a little later, are a number of bone plaques, which explicitly mention Dionysos.⁸ These read “Life, Death, Life; Truth; Dio(nysos), Orphics”, “Peace, War; Truth, Lie; Dion(ysos); A”, and “Dion(ysos); Truth; Body, soul; A”. Debate has chiefly raged over whether to read “Orphics” or “to orphic Dionysos”, but either way we have an early explicit identification of ecstatic Dionysiac cult as having something to do with Orpheus or beliefs derived from Orpheus. My own concern here, however, is with what sort of context we should understand this plaque in.

As small plaques, on a durable material, with inscriptions which mean something only in the context of a particular belief system, we might take these objects to have much in common with the Dionysiac gold leaves found in Magna Graecia, Crete, Thessaly and a few other places.⁹ But those gold leaves have been found in tombs, make reference to a *hieros logos*, allude to rituals of initiation, and offer what appear to be passwords and directions to the soul in the afterlife. The Olbian bone plaques were not found in tombs, and although the curt phrases might be passwords they are not obviously so understood and make no allusion to past initiation. The concern of these plaques with truth and the lie and with war and peace has no parallels in the gold tablets. Only the recurrence of “Life” after, as well as before, “Death” connects these Olbian inscriptions with beliefs about life after death.

What the plaques are much more obviously linked to are tables of opposites – life and death, truth and the lie, body and soul. As such, the context for which we reach is that of pre-Socratic philosophy, the Pythagorean table of opposites and Herakleitos’ interest in contrasting life and death. Except for the term “orphics”, there does not seem anything here that would not be at home in Pythagoras’ Samos or Herakleitos’ Ephesos. The date and explicitly cultic links provided by the name Dionysos and the find-spot of the plaques suggest that we should situate Pythagoras and Herakleitos much more explicitly in the context of cult practice and belief than is sometimes done, and that Herakleitos’ relation to Dionysiac cult is more complicated than his apparent hostility to Dionysiac devotees initially suggests. Herodotos 2.81 talks of “rites known as Orphic and Bacchic, but which in fact are Egyptian and Pythagorean”, but that implication that Pythagoras came first and cult followed seems hard to support. It is only by asserting a common cult basis to Herakleitos and Pythagoras and to the Olbian worshippers of Dionysos,

rather than by seeing the Olbian worshippers as practising something peculiarly Olbian, that we can make sense of these plaques.¹⁰

Exactly the same background seems presupposed by two objects associated with the cult of Apollon – one further Archaic bone plaque, this time from Berezan', and one rather later inscription on a vase fragment.¹¹ The bone plaque bears two inscriptions on one side, one one way up and the other the opposite way up, and one inscription on the reverse side. The shorter inscription dedicates the plaque to Milesian Apollon of Didyma. The longer associates numbers (7, 70, 700) with animals etc. (7, weak wolf; 70, terrible lion, etc.). The inscription on the reverse seems to do both with a number and an apparent mention of Didyma. The vase inscription (alleged by Dubois to date from c. 300 BC, although the vase itself is thought to date to the 5th century BC), has two lines of inscription forming a circular border. The outer inscription names "Boreic thiasotai", the inner reads "Life, life; Apollon, Apollon; Sun, sun; World, world; Light light". The importance lies in the clear association with Apollon and with Apollon explicitly linked to Miletos. Published since West wrote in 1982, the bone plaque comes close to confirming exactly the point which he made then. Dionysos and Apollon were evidently as close to each other at Olbia as they were elsewhere in the Classical world.¹²

The degree and consequences of cultural encounter between Greek incomers and existing local population suggested by the religious material are very limited. The cult practices of the Greeks at Olbia seem not to have been significantly divergent from the practices of Greeks in the Aegean, and the beliefs underlying those practices can all be paralleled elsewhere. Where, if at all, they differ is in being explicitly articulated in material form. The cultural consequences of cultural encounter come precisely in material form. The knowledge of difference leads to its more explicit articulation, ideas under pressure get themselves down in writing.

In the case of religious practices, there is no significant evidence of the introduction into Archaic and Classical Olbia of innovations significantly different from the practices of the Ionian cities from which most Archaic Olbians probably originated. When we turn to political actions, we see more clearly how Olbians reacted to newly minted Classical practices.

Decrees: ateleia and proxeny

A number of decrees survive from Olbia which grant privileges to non-Olbians. From the second quarter of the 5th century there is a fragment of a decree granting *ateleia* to Iatrokles son of Hekataios of Sinope and his descendants, and from the third quarter the opening of a grant of citizenship, *ateleia* and *ges enktesis* to two Sinopeans, one of them the one-time tyrant of Sinope, Timesileos.¹³ From the 4th century there are a series of proxeny decrees for men of a variety of origins, some of which also offer *ateleia*, citizenship, and *proedria*. Two formal features of these decrees are noteworthy. The first is the

concern, which is found already in the 5th century, to include descendants in the grant; in the 4th century this manifests itself in the inclusion not simply of descendants but of brothers and slaves. The second feature is the use of the abbreviated formula “The Olbiopolitai gave proxeny...” in 4th-century proxeny decrees.¹⁴ The use of abbreviated formulae in honorific inscriptions has been remarked upon by Rhodes.¹⁵ The inclusion of relatives and slaves in proxeny decrees, and similar, has been noted by A. Wilhelm and further discussed by C. Marek.¹⁶

From the point of view of the questions which are of interest here, the first important observation is that neither of these features can be traced to Miletos or other cities of Ionia (although Ephesos does have a noted tendency to tag on “and to his descendants” to grants in its Classical decrees¹⁷). Nor, to anticipate the discussion to follow, does Athens provide a parallel for either practice (proxeny grants at Athens are sometimes extended beyond the recipient, but not with the standard formulae on display at Olbia). The sovereign body most inclined to abbreviate proxeny decrees in the way they are abbreviated at Olbia is Delphi, but the same formula is found in various cities of Thessaly, including Pherai and Thetionion.¹⁸ A parallel formula appears in the famous early decree of Kyzikos, granting *ateleia* to Manes son of Medikes and the sons of Aisepos, and perhaps in a later Kyzikene decree of uncertain date; Ilion in the 4th century also uses a slight variation.¹⁹ I note these examples because the closest parallels for the inclusion of relatives and slaves in proxeny decrees come from Thessaly (Pherai from the 5th century on, and 5th century Thetionion; cf. also Lamia and Phalanna) and from a late 5th or early 4th century decree from Delos, which also uses an abbreviated formula, though not quite the same formula.²⁰

Although we are not, I think, in a position to provide these Olbian proxeny decrees with a full pedigree, the combined parallel for the form and the content raises interesting issues. Wilhelm thought that the formula involving extending grants of *ateleia* to slaves was coined for the benefit of large-scale merchants operating with a slave workforce.²¹ Marek objected to this that it hardly explained the use of the formula at Pherae, which was not a place likely to have been at the centre of large-scale trade, and emphasised that in Thessaly, though not in Olbia, all privileges, and not *ateleia* alone were extended to the relatives and slaves.²² But the point is rather that the concrete privileges offered by the proxeny decree can be enjoyed by the individual not simply in his personal capacity but in any capacity. The Olbian examples are particularly clear on this, when they extend the privileges to sons and brothers who share the patrimony (ἡ παῖδες, ἡ ἀδελφοὶ οἷς κοινὰ τὰ πατρῶια, ἡ θεράποντες). But the Olbian examples do, precisely, limit the extension to brothers and slaves, though not to descendants, to the matter of *ateleia*, and that, in itself, suggests that at Olbia it is the case of large-scale merchants that is central.

It is obviously perfectly possible that the Olbians acquired the habit of abbreviating proxeny decrees from one place, and the practice of extending

privileges to slaves from another. But it is economical to think that they drew both practices from the same fount. If so, Thessaly, where both practices are attested already in the 5th century, does look the most promising source. But in that case, did the Olbians directly adapt the Thessalian precedent, or did they acquire the practice re-minted by some intermediary elsewhere? No intermediary currently suggests itself, and we must contemplate the possibility that, by whatever means, the Olbians learnt about Thessalian practice, realised its potential attractions, and adapted it to their own needs.²³

Coin issues

If the context in which Olbians became aware of Thessalian practice with regard to proxenies remains obscure to us, the context in which the Olbians became aware of the possibilities of imposing uniformity of standard in coinage is absolutely clear. Although scholars attempted all sorts of manoeuvres in order to avoid believing it, there can be no doubt that the fragment of a copy of the Athenian Standards Decree once in Odessa Museum was found at Olbia and was inscribed there.²⁴ The similarity in epigraphic style to the decree for Timesileos is overwhelming.²⁵ Now that scholars have generally accepted that the Athenian Standards Decree was moved in the 420s BC rather than the 440s, the problems of believing that a copy was put up in Olbia in any case recede. Despite the silence of Thucydides, the expedition of Perikles to the Black Sea, recorded by Plutarchos, turns out to have been far from insignificant.²⁶ Whether or not they ever actually paid tribute, at least some Black Sea cities were treated subsequently by the Athenians as part of the Athenian empire and were assessed in the 425 tribute reassessment.²⁷ What other Athenian documentation Olbia may have become familiar with as a result of incorporation within the Athenian empire we cannot be certain, but the Standards Decree is certain beyond all doubt.

Greek cities had a variety of concerns with coinage which they regulated by law. The prime concern was with the purity of coinage, and this manifested itself in two sorts of laws, laws about forgery and laws about the production of electrum, where the proportions of gold and silver were not immediately discernible, but were important. Mytilene and Phokaia entered a monetary pact over the production of electrum coinage in the early 4th century.²⁸ Athens moved Nikophon's law over forged coinage in 375/4 BC.²⁹ But when Olbia passed a law relating to coinage in the second, or, on Vinogradov's dating, the third, quarter of the 4th century, it was concerned with neither of these issues.³⁰ Rather it was concerned to allow entry to Borysthenes only to those who agreed that if they wished to buy or sell gold and silver coin they would change it at a specific location in the city, "the stone in the *ekklesiasterion*", for the silver and bronze coinage of the city of Olbia. Olbia hereby effectively establishes a monopoly for its own coinage within the city.

Is there a connection between the Athenian Standards Decree put up at

Olbia in the 420s BC and the Olbian law moved half a century or more later? That the beginning of the Athenian Standards Decree has not survived, and that we learn its content primarily from the changes that are made to the Bouleutic Oath (part of which is what survives on the Olbia fragment of the decree), does not help us to answer this question. In terms of the language employed, the Olbian decree does not echo the 5th-century Athenian decree. Where the Athenian decree talks of not “using or loaning foreign coinage” (clause 8), the Olbian decree talks of “buying and selling stamped gold and stamped silver”. The contrasting terms “foreign” and “native” that feature in the Athenian decree do not feature in the Olbian decree. The use of “import” and “export” of coinage in the Olbian decree has no parallel in the Athenian decree.

If we ask, however, about the purpose of each decree, then a striking similarity emerges. The debate about the purpose of the Athenian Standards Decree has been long and involved, complicated by the inclusion of coinage among the “standards” which the decree insists must be Athenian. As soon as the focus is turned instead to “weights and measures” it becomes more immediately obvious that the direct economic gain for Athenians from the Standards Decree was minimal. While the Athenians perhaps made a small profit from re-minting fees, there was no parallel gain for them in the case of weights and measures. And whatever the economic advantages of a single currency were, and in a real-value coinage they were perhaps not enormous, the economic advantages of uniform weights and measures are still less tangible. So too, when we look at the Olbian decree, fiscal advantage to the state is actually ruled out when the city denies itself the possibility of exacting taxes on the buying and selling of coined gold and silver (lines 29-31).

These negatives are of interest only for the positives which they imply. If the advantages of insisting on a single currency, whether in an empire or in a single city, are not economic, then the focus must be on the political gain. It is true that the political gain from forcing others to use Attic rather than Aiginetan *medimnoi*, or Attic rather than Doric feet, would seem to be as intangible as the economic gain. The work of T. Martin on coinage and sovereignty has shown that there was no necessary connection between the two.³¹ But it is nevertheless hard to think that being obliged to use coins which declare themselves to belong to another city, that is to a particular other city, did not have political force. Likewise, being forced to change one’s coinage on entering another city could not but symbolise, and rather powerfully, that one had entered a place under the political control of others – particularly when that was not the normal experience: as hoard evidence shows, in most cities a mix of coinage was in circulation and use. The insistence that the exchange of coinage happens in the *ekklesiasterion* makes the politics involved absolutely explicit – more so indeed than in the Athenian decree with its emphasis on the place of minting (although allied cities do also have to display the decree in their *agorai*).

Conclusion

I suggest that we should see exactly the same thing going on with this decree establishing a monopoly on coinage as is going on with the Olbian proxy decree. That is, the Olbians observe practice in another Greek city, see its relevance to their own particular interests and concerns, and adapt it for their own use. In the case of coinage, the Olbian decree turns the Athenian decree inside out, regulating not what other cities do in their own city space but what those who come from other cities can do in the Olbian city space. The interest of these Olbian adaptations of practices initially forged by other cities lies in part in the variety of Greek cities from which they borrow. However traditional the ties which led to their Apolline and Dionysiac cult practices, the links that brought their particular political practices can be explained neither by tradition nor, in the case of the Thessalian link, by external relations forced upon them by the other party – we must allow for active *bricolage*. But the interest lies still more in what the adaptations tell us about Olbia's particular concerns.

Negatively, what the proxy decrees and the coinage monopoly decree show is no special concern with the non-Greeks on their borders. There is no sign here of adaptation directed at existence in a world which is culturally resistant to Greek practice. There is no transformation of Olbian culture in the face of the culture of its neighbours on display here beyond perhaps an unusual enthusiasm for wearing their religious enthusiasms in their names. We can see “barbarism” neither through hyper-resistance nor through compromise or hybridisation. Positively, what both the proxy decrees and the coinage law show is a city in a peculiar economic position. We see Olbian culture meeting the culture of other Greek cities and reacting to it, by imitation and by transformation, in ways that are shaped by the particular economic position of the city. Olbian concern with extending privileged tax-exemption to “brothers who have the same patrimony” and to slaves takes up practice elsewhere which treats whole households as recipients of privileges, and adapts it to a situation where what is at issue is not household relocation but the encouragement of a medium-term economic relationship. The Olbian coinage law takes up from the Athenians the idea of requiring use of a single coinage, but, in a situation where Olbia has no power to control coin use outside its own city, it applies this idea to coin use within Olbia itself. The Athenian precedent had depended upon Athenian political (and military) power; the Olbian imitation requires no political power, but it does require confidence that this assertion of Olbian control over the means of exchange can be sustained by the absence of other suitable alternative means of engaging in the same range of exchanges. The dominance of Olbian coinage in Black Sea hoards suggests that the Olbians got their calculation right.³²

In a volume on the meeting of cultures, this paper might be seen to have little to offer. The epigraphic record shows, on my reading, very little evidence

for Greek and non-Greek cultural interference at Olbia. But the examination of the epigraphy does, I would claim, yield one very significant finding. The peculiar provisions of the proxeny decrees and the unique imposition of a single currency within the city stand in a complementary relationship. The proxeny decrees create peculiarly favourable conditions for those who showed an inclination to establish economic relationships with Olbia over the medium to long term. They constitute, indeed, evidence for the city interesting itself in regularising relationships with those who would employ relatives and slaves as agents, and so going some way to deal with at least some of the sorts of difficulties which might arise for such people. And we do not need to imagine what those difficulties were since they are on display from the area of Olbia itself in the 6th-century Berezan' lead letter or Artikon's 4th-century letter.³³ The coinage decree takes advantage of the sorts of economic attractions which drew people to form those medium-term relations. As a "gateway" community Olbia both needed to attract, and could afford to assert itself over, Greeks from other cities who came to establish economic contacts and effect economic exchanges. Both proxeny decrees and coinage decree show a city not merely willing to take political advantage of its economic position, but taking action to make the politics and the economics work in a mutually beneficial relationship.

It is thus not a trivial misjudgement but a fundamental error when C.M. Reed recently wrote that "Certain men honored in Olbian proxeny decrees of the 4th-century constitute a second group of implausible candidates" [for the status of *emporoi* or *naukleroi*].³⁴ His argument was that *ateleia* is so common a privilege in proxeny decrees that its presence does not show that the recipients had economic interests which would be served by their being given the privilege of tax exemption. Not only does the particular way in which the *ateleia* grant is extended in the Olbian decrees to brothers who share the same patrimony itself refute that argument, but the Olbian use of proxeny decrees and the Olbian coinage decree show a clear case of the interaction of politics and economics denied by Reed, who reasserts very much the Hasebroekian view of the separation of trade and politics. Just as with the religious evidence from Olbia what is peculiar is not the ways of thought so much as the survival of evidence, so in this area too, it is not that the Olbians are being unlike a Greek city in their action here, merely that their particular situation enables and encourages them to carry through in practice ideas which elsewhere in the Greek world do not show up so clearly in our evidence.

David Braund concluded his paper at the conference with the observation that communication between Greek and non-Greek in the Black Sea depended not so much on ethnicity but on status, wealth, and power. The proxeny decrees show one way in which status, power, and wealth were indeed made to talk. But the Olbian example also nicely illustrates the way in which the *sorts* of wealth and power available to or in a community themselves contributed to a city's distinctive identity. Olbia drew on techniques of power that were

characteristic of a Greek polis – proxeny grants, regulation of life by formal laws – but the particular content of those techniques of power she adapted to her unique economic position. In as far as the meeting of culture had a distinctive impact at Olbia, it was because of the economic advantages that access to another culture, including another agriculture, gave.

Braund also suggested that it is unlikely that Greeks and non-Greeks in the Black Sea had problems communicating with one another. In most spheres I think he is correct, but the sphere of religion does seem to me to be different. Language is fundamental to the representation that is religion. What the particular Olbian evidence suggests is that without Greek language Greek religious practices remained extremely foreign for non-Greeks, and that Greeks responded to this difficulty in communication in exactly the way in which members of different language communities frequently respond when they experience difficulties communicating: they spoke louder, both writing down on non-perishable materials what normally did not get written down, and carrying their religious affiliations in their names.

Was Olbia special? No Greek would have found it at all a strikingly foreign place. Nothing that happened there was out of the range of what happened in other Greek cities. But the particular selection of Greek cultural practices found there, and the brashness with which they are publicised, can indeed be linked to Olbia's peculiar geographical, economic and cultural position.

Notes

- 1 I am very grateful to Pia Guldager Bilde and the Danish Research Foundation's Centre for Black Sea Studies for their kind invitation to the conference from which this volume derives and for their kind hospitality. I am indebted to Pia Guldager Bilde for generous post-conference discussion.
- 2 Vinogradov & Kryžickij 1995, 115; cf. pp. 116-117 for Dionysos.
- 3 Harrison 2000, 213, 218.
- 4 Hartog 1980, 82-102, 126-127.
- 5 Dubois 1996, nos. 99-100.
- 6 Dubois 1996, no. 92 (500 BC). Δημόνασσα Ληναίο εὐαὶ καὶ Λήναιος Δημόκλο εἰαί
- 7 For the other two fifth century examples, see Dubois no. 2 and *SEG* XXX,958 (on a vase).
- 8 Dubois 1996. nos. 94a: βίος θάνατος βίος | ἀλήθεια | Διό(νυσος) Ὀρφικοί, 94b εἰρήνη πόλεμος | ἀλήθεια ψεῦδος | Διό(νυσος) | A, and 94c Διό(νυσος) | ἀλήθεια | σῶμα ψυχὴ | A.
- 9 For the "orphyic" gold leaves, see Riedweg 1998; Cole 2003. Pia Guldager Bilde's paper in this volume explores further the possible links between these tablets and the Olbian material.
- 10 I essentially reiterate here the position argued by West 1982.
- 11 Dubois 1996, nos. 93 and 95.

12 Compare Detienne 1998, 202: “D’un bout à l’autre du monde grec, Apollon et Dionysos se plaisent à échanger épithètes et instruments, rôles et masques, qualités et fonctions sans se confondre pour autant”.

13 Dubois 1996, nos. 1 and 5.

14 It will be convenient to quote at this point in illustration of these features an inscription, Dubois 1996, no. 21, from 340-330 BC which will be discussed further later in this paper:

ἀγαθῆ τύχει.
 Ὀλβιοπολίται ἔδωκαν
 Ξανθίππῳ Ἀριστο-
 φῶντος Ἐρχιῆ,
 5 Φιλοπόλιδι Φιλοπόλιδος
 Δειραδιώτει Ἀθηναίος
 αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις
 προξενίαν, πολιτείαν,
 ἀτέλειαν πάντων
 10 χρημάτων ὧν ἂν αὐτοῖ
 εἰσάγωσιν ἢ ἐξάγωσιν,
 ἢ παῖδες, ἢ ἀδελφοὶ
 οἷς κοινὰ τὰ πατρῶια,
 ἢ θεράποντες, καὶ
 15 εἰσπλουν καὶ ἔκπλουν
 καὶ ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ἐμ πο-
 λέμῳ ἀσυλεῖ καὶ
 ἀσπονδεῖ

With good fortune. The citizens of Olbia granted to Xanthippos son of Aristophon of Erchia and Philopolis son of Philopolis of Deiradiotai, Athenians, themselves and their descendants, proxeny, citizenship, freedom from taxation on all the *chremata* whichsoever they import or export themselves or their sons or brothers with whom they share their paternal possessions, or slaves, and right to sail in and sail out in peace and in war without reprisals and without a truce.

15 Rhodes with Lewis 1997, 5-6, with 207 for Olbia.

16 Wilhelm 1913; Marek 1984.

17 Rhodes with Lewis 1997, 364.

18 Rhodes with Lewis 1997, 126-127 for Delphi, 176-177 for Pherae and Thetionion; cf. Lamia, 172-173, and Phalanna, 175.

19 *SIG*³, 4 for Kyzikos; *JHS* 24, 1904, 3; Rhodes with Lewis 1997, 410 for Ilion.

20 For examples see, from Thetionion (5th century), *IG* IX.2, 257; *SIG*³, 55; Buck 35: Θετόνιοι ἔδωκαν Σοταῖροι τοῖ Κ-|ορινθιοὶ καὶ τοῖ καὶ γένει καὶ F-|οικιάταις καὶ χρέμασιν ἀσυλία-|ν κατέλειαν κευΦεργέταν ἐ-|ποίησαν κέν ταγᾶ κέν ἀταγ-|λῆαι. αἱ τις ταῦτα παρβαῖνοι, τὸ-|ν ταγὸν τὸν ἐπεστάκοντα ἐ-|ξανακάδεν. τὰ χρυσία καὶ τὰ | ἀργύρια τὲς Βελφαῖο ἀπολ-|όμενα ἔσοσε. Ὀρέσταο Φερεκράτ-|τες ὑλορέοντος Φιλονίκο ἠῆος; from Pherai (450-425 BC) *SEG* XXIII, 415 Φεραῖοι [ἐ]δό[κ]αι-|εν προξενίαν | κάσυλιαν | Ἐπικρατίδα[ι] | αὐτ[ο]ῖ καὶ παι-| [δ]εσσι | Προελνίσι[ς] and *SEG* XXIII, 422 (4th century) Θεός | ---ωι Θηβαῖοι, Ἀχαιῶι ἵππο... | ---- Φεραῖοι [ἐ]δώκαιεν προξ[εν]-|ίαν καὶ] ἀτέλειαν καὶ ἀσυλί[αν] | [καὶ ἐπιν]ομίαν καὶ πολέμοιο [καὶ] | [ἱράνης κ]αὶ αὐτο[ῖς κα]ι οἰκιά[ταις] | ---- ασαν ----- and from Delos (c.400) *IDelos* 71 ἔδοξεν τῇ βολῆι | καὶ Δηλ[ί]οισιν Ἀρ-|ιστοφ[ίλω]ι καὶ το-|ῖς ἀδλ[φε]οῖς ἀτε-|λείην [ἐν]αι καὶ ἐκ-|γόνοις[ς] το[ῖς] τούτ-|ων καὶ [οἰκέ]τησι.

- 21 Wilhelm 1913, 31-45.
- 22 Marek 1984, 282.
- 23 Pairisades at Pantikapaion also extends *ateleia* to slaves, but in a formula which might be held also to extend to them the proxeny *IOSPE* II.1.
- 24 Dubois 1996, no. 6.
- 25 Dubois 1996, no. 5.
- 26 On this, see Braund 2005.
- 27 Meiggs and Lewis 1969, no. 69 with Thukydides 4.75.1-2 and Hornblower 1996 *ad loc.*
- 28 Tod 1948, no. 112.
- 29 Rhodes & Osborne 2003, no. 25.
- 30 Dubois 1996, no. 15.
- 31 Martin 1985.
- 32 This was pointed out to me by Josiah Ober, who comments on it in a forthcoming book.
- 33 Dubois 1996, nos. 23 and 25.
- 34 Reed 2003, 95.

Bibliography

- Braund, D.C. 2005. Pericles, Cleon and the Pontus: the Black Sea in Athens c. 440-421, in: D.C. Braund (ed.), *Scythians and Greeks: Cultural interatctions in Scythia, Athens and the early Roman Empire (sixth century BC – first century AD)*. Exeter, 80-99.
- Cole, S.G. 2003. Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields, in: M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries: the Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*. London, 193-217.
- Detienne, M. 1998. *Apollon le couteau à la main. Une approche expérimentale du polythéisme grec*. Paris.
- Dubois, L. 1996. *Inscriptions Grecques Dialectales d'Olbia du Pont*. Geneva.
- Harrison, T.E. 2000. *Divinity and History: the Religion of Herodotus*. Oxford.
- Hartog, F. 1980. *Le miroir d'Hérodote: essai sur la représentation de l'autre*. Paris.
- Hornblower, S. 1996. *A Commentary on Thucydides 2. Books IV – V.24*. Oxford.
- Marek C. 1984. *Die Proxenie*. Frankfurt.
- Martin, T.R. 1985. *Sovereignty and Coinage in Classical Greece*. Princeton.
- Meiggs, R. & D.M. Lewis (eds.) 1969. *Greek Historical Inscriptions to the end of the Peloponnesian War*. Oxford.
- Reed, C.M. 2003. *Maritime Traders in the Ancient Greek World*. Cambridge.
- Rhodes, P.J. with D.M. Lewis 1997. *Decrees of the Greek States*. Oxford.
- Rhodes, P.J. & R.G. Osborne (eds.) 2003. *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404-323 B.C*. Oxford.
- Riedweg, C. 1998. Initiation – Tod – Unterwelt: Beobachtungen zur Kommunikationssituation und narrativen Technik der orphisch-bakchischen Goldblättchen, in: F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert*. Stuttgart, 359-398.

- Tod, M.N. 1948. *Greek Historical Inscriptions*. Vol. 2. *From 403 to 323 B.C.* Oxford.
- Vinogradov, J.G. & S.D. Kryžickij 1995. *Olbia: eine altgriechische Stadt im nord-westlichen Schwarzmeerraum* (Mnemosyne Suppl., 149). Leiden.
- West, M.L. 1982. The Orphics of Olbia, *ZPE* 45, 17-29.
- Wilhelm, A. 1913. *Neue Beiträge zur griechischen Inschriftenkunde* 3. Vienna.

Abbreviations

<i>IDelos</i>	<i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> . Paris.
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> . Berlin.
<i>IOSPE</i>	Latyshev, V. 1885-1901. <i>Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Pontis Euxini Graecae et Latinae</i> . Leningrad.
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> . Leiden.