

# Dionysos and Herakles in Scythia – The Eschatological String of Herodotos’ Book 4

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The mysteries of Dionysos and of Meter and the teachings of the Pythagoreans play a crucial role in Herodotos’ *Histories* in general and in the Scythian *logos* in particular. The mysteries are, however, not referred to overtly, but concealed in disparate details in the narrative. It will be the ambition of the present article to combine these details into a complete and coherent picture.<sup>1</sup> I shall argue that Herodotos’ Book 4 is pervaded by an “eschatological ideology” which serves to illustrate the fundamental difference between Scythian nomadism and Greek civilisation.

## *The Scythian king in ecstasy*

An often-quoted testimony to Dionysiac cult in the Greek colony of Olbia is Herodotos’ tragic story of the Scythian King Skyles (4.78-80). He had a Greek mother, was fond of Greek customs and stayed for a month or more a year in Olbia. He kept a house and a wife in the city. Eventually, he chose to be initiated into the mysteries of Dionysos Bakcheios. The story is presented as an illustration of the reservations of the Scythians towards Greek culture.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, when the Scythians learn what their king is doing behind the walls of Olbia, Skyles is forced to escape to Thrace, only to be rendered back and executed. Herodotos is not particularly precise as to the nature of the initiation, but I shall try to substantiate that Skyles was initiated into Dionysiac mysteries of the so-called Orphic type, popular in many parts of the Greek world in the Classical age.

A couple of inscriptions have been discovered that document the existence of these mysteries in Olbia. The most interesting – and most often referred to – are three bone tablets carrying the following inscriptions:

SEG XXVIII, 659 βίος. θάνατος. βίος. ἀλήθεια. Ζα(γρεύς).  
Διό(νυσος) Ὀρφικοί “Life. Death. Life. Truth. Za(greus?).  
Dio(nysos). Orphics”

SEG XXVIII, 660 εἰρήνη. πόλεμος. ἀλήθεια. ψεῦδος. Διόν(υσος)  
 “Peace. War. Truth. Lie. Dion(ysos)”

SEG XXVIII, 661 Διόν(υσος). ἀλήθεια. σῶμα. ψυχή “Dion(ysos).  
 Truth. Body. Soul.”

Even though it is anything but evident what the actual function of these tablets was, they send a clear message: Life ends with death, but after that a new life begins. Furthermore, this belief in an afterlife is associated explicitly with Dionysos and the Orphics. The popularity of Orphic beliefs in the northern Black Sea area is supported by other inscriptions from Olbia.<sup>3</sup> A bronze mirror dated to ca. 500 BC carrying a Dionysiac inscription reflects without doubt the Orphic myth of Dionysos’ death, according to which the god looked at himself in a mirror when he was attacked by the Titans (cf. Orph. fr. 209 Kern).<sup>4</sup> A fragment of a black-glazed *kylix* found in Olbia carries the very beginning of Odysseus’ own tale in the *Odyssey* (9.39): Ἰλιώ[θεν] με φ[έρον] ἄνεμ[ος] Κικ[ι]όνεσσι [πέλ]ασσεν “a wind brought me from Troy to the Kikonians” (= SEG XXX, 933); given that the concept of the wind carrying the soul to and fro was ascribed to Orpheus (Arist. *De an.* 410<sup>b</sup> = Orph. fr. 27 Kern), and the Thracian Kikonians and their king Ismaros were connected not only with wine (*Od.* 9.196-7, Archil. fr. 2.2 West), but also with Dionysos (cf. Ps.-Hes. fr. 238 Merkelbach-West), the inscription may be yet another testimony to the character of the Olbian cult of Dionysos.<sup>5</sup> I would like to see Orphic beliefs in later inscriptions from Pantikapaion as well: e.g. *CIRB* 117 (3rd century BC): the deceased breaths Lénaios;<sup>6</sup> *CIRB* 119 (2nd-1st centuries BC): killed in battle, the deceased will go, not to Hades, but to the land of heroes; *CIRB* 121 (1st century BC): the deceased has escaped the wheel of calamities.<sup>7</sup>

We are in a rather controversial area of Classical studies. The label of Orphism was ambiguous in Antiquity, and one cannot point out a single Orphic doctrine or school like, say, the Pythagorean, Platonic or Aristotelian schools (which are not, of course, uniform either). The mythical name of “Orpheus” was rather a seal of approval given to writings belonging to diverse intellectual movements. These obligatory reservations being stated, it must be admitted that both in Classical and Hellenistic times there were in fact religious societies which have to be called and were called “Orphic”.<sup>8</sup> The Olbian bone tablets are an important testimony to that. Furthermore, the existence of an Orphic-Dionysiac cult is confirmed by gold leaves found in graves from South Italy, Crete, and Thessaly dating to the Classical and Hellenistic periods. They give instructions to the deceased of what he or she is going to do when he or she enters Hades, and we learn of two different ends: the ordinary souls live in the forgetful darkness of Hades, whereas the souls of the initiates drink of the Lake of Memory and come to another, more joyful place.<sup>9</sup> In a gold leaf found in Hipponion in Calabria (= Graf & Johnston 2007, no 1, ca. 400 BC), the initiates are called *mystai kai bakchoi*, which demonstrates beyond doubt that

Dionysos played a main role in the ritual. Two gold leaves found in Pelinna in Thessaly (no 26a-b, late 4th century BC) start with these verses:

νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι τῶιδε.  
εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ' ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε

“Now you have died, and now you are born, three times blessed,  
on this very day. Say to Persephone that it is Bakchios himself  
that has redeemed you.”

They express the same line of thought as the Olbian bone plates, only more explicitly.<sup>10</sup> However, even if there can be no doubt that Orphic-Dionysiac cults and beliefs did exist in the 5th century in various places in the Greek world including Olbia, it does not follow that Herodotos has such beliefs in mind in the Skyles story. After all, Herodotos does not mention the Orphics explicitly, nor does he describe the Dionysiac mysteries Skyles is initiated into as some kind of preparation for a more blessed afterlife. His description of the ritual is, if anything, pictured as a wild bacchanal. The keyword is “madness” expressed in the Greek verb *mainesthai* occurring twice in chapter 79: in the description of the Scythians’ general prejudice towards Bacchic cult (οὐ γὰρ φασι οἶκός εἶναι ἐξευρίσκειν τοῦτον, ὅστις μαίνεσθαι ἐνάγει ἀνθρώπους) and in the Greeks’ gossip about Skyles’ initiation (νῦν οὗτος ὁ δαίμων καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον βασιλέα λελάβηκε, καὶ βακχεύει τε καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μαίνεται).<sup>11</sup> In general Dionysos Bakcheios is associated with ecstatic rituals.<sup>12</sup> Since Olbia was a colony of Miletos (as it is stated in the Skyles story: 4.78.3), it is natural to compare Skyles’ mysteries with the Milesian sacred law for the cult of Dionysos Bakcheios (LSAM 48, 276/5 BC): It speaks about a ritual called *ōmophagion*, i.e. “eating of raw meat”. Euripides’ tragedy *Bakchai* also mentions the ritual of eating raw meat (v. 139). It is furthermore reflected in Dionysos’ epicleses *Ōmostēs* (Alc. fr. 129.9 Voigt) and *Ōmadios* (*Hymn.Orph.* 30.5). The ritual is about leaving civilisation, killing with one’s bare hands and eating raw meat, a total regression to the animalistic stage. This regression is not an arrangement which serves only to give the participants a breath of wild air in the daily round.<sup>13</sup> It is a rite of transgression in which the temporary bestiality is supposed to lead to a more sober and civilised life-style. In this analysis, the Bacchanals and the Orphic Dionysos mysteries are two sides of the same coin. Thus, Skyles’ ritual madness does not exclude that his initiation is about redemption in the afterlife.<sup>14</sup> The link between Bacchantic fury and salvation is also suggested by the description in Euripides’ *Kretes* (fr. 79 Austin), even if there seems to be some kind of syncretism of Dionysiac and Kouretan rituals:<sup>15</sup>

ἄγνὸν δὲ βίον τείνων ἐξ οὗ  
Διὸς Ἰδαίου μύστης γενόμεν,

καὶ νυκτιπόλου Ζαγρέως βροντὰς  
 τοὺς ὠμοφάγους δαίτας τελέσας  
 μητρὶ τ' ὀρείῳ δᾶδας ἀνασχὼν  
 καὶ κουρήτων  
 βᾶκχος ἐκλήθη ὅσωθεὶς.

“It is a pure life I have since I have become initiate of the Idaian Zeus and herdsman of nocturnal Zagreus [Dionysos]; after I have celebrated the dinners of raw meat and raised the torches for the Mother in the mountains with the Kouretes, I have been sanctified and have acquired the name Bacchant”

*Orphic mythology and Herodotos' vow of silence*

These ideas rest on a special Orphic mythology and cosmogony different from the classic one presented by Hesiodos in the *Theogony*.<sup>16</sup> For a long time, our comprehension of the Orphic mythology relied mainly on late authors like Athenagoras and Damaskios – supplied with scattered allusions in Classical and Hellenistic authors. That this mythology existed in Classical times already is testified by the Derveni papyrus (carbonised ca. 330 BC), even if the extant parts do not mention Dionysos. So, we have to rely on references in the later sources anyway.

The Latin author Firmicus Maternus gives this account of the Orphic Dionysos myth (*Err.prof.rel.* 6 = Orph. fr. 214 Kern; my paraphrase):

The Cretan tyrant Jupiter [Zeus] had an illegitimate son, Liber [Dionysos]. He put him on his throne, though he was still a boy. His jealous wife Juno [Hera] had her servants, the Titans, attack him. They fooled him with rattles and a mirror, killed him, cut him and cooked the pieces. His sister Minerva [Athena] rescued the heart and brought it to their father, who got furious and killed the Titans. He made a gypsum statuette, in which he inserted Liber's heart, and put it in a temple, where the boy's pedagogue Silenus served as a priest. To mitigate their tyrant, the Cretans celebrate each year a festival and every second year mysteries, during which they revive Liber's passions. They tear a living ox with their teeth and run about screaming and acting as if they were mad (*fingunt animi furentis insaniam*) in the woods, and they carry with them the basket in which Minerva hid Liber's heart.

Firmicus Maternus is a Christian author of the 4th century AD. The general outline of the myth is, however, much older.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Euphorion (fr. 13 Powell) and Kallimachos (fr. 643 Pfeiffer) refer to the cooking of Dionysos. What makes Firmicus' testimony interesting in this context is the fact that

he associates the Dionysiac *mania* and *ōmophagia* with the specifically Orphic mythology about Dionysos' death and resurrection. He calls the séances during which the passions of Dionysos are re-performed *trietērica consecratio*. A *trietēris* festival is commemorated in Classical sources too (e.g. *Hymn.Hom. Dion.* 1.11; Eur. *Bacch.* 133),<sup>18</sup> and it is associated with the cult of Dionysos Bakcheios in the above-mentioned Milesian sacred law.<sup>19</sup> Herodotos informs that the Gelonoi, living north of the Scythians, "celebrate a *trietēris* festival for Dionysos and are Bacchantes" (4.108). Since he wants to emphasise that the Gelonoi are not nomadic Scythians, he may very well be thinking of the same sort of mysteries into which Skyles was initiated a few pages earlier; as we shall see, it is crucial that these Bacchanals are seen as a *condicio sine qua non* of agricultural civilisation. In Euripides' *Bakchai*, Pentheus, who refuses to believe in Dionysos, is torn by wild Bacchantes. It is a mythical staging of the *trietēris* ritual, with a real man as the victim instead of a bull or some other animal. The *sparagmos*, or "tearing" (*Bacch.* 735, 1127), was considered a reminiscence of the god's own end.<sup>20</sup> The participants are called *Bakchoi* or *Bakchai*; by submitting themselves to a (ritual) death and resurrection, they have become identical to the god himself. This conception is implied by the text of the gold leaves, some of which say (Graf & Johnston 2007, no 7; similarly nos 5 and 6; cf. also no 27):

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν<v> γένο<ς> εὖχομαι ὀλβιο<v> εἶναι.  
 πο<ι>νὰ<v> δ' ἀνταπέ<ι>τε<ι>σ' ἔργω<v> ἔνεκα οὐτι  
 δικα<ί>ων,  
 εἴτε με Μο<ι>ρα ἐδαμάσ<σ>ατο εἴτε Ἀστεροπῆτα  
 κ<ε>ραυνῶν.  
 νῦν δ' ἰκέτι<ς> <ῆ>κω πα<ρα>ὶ ἀγνῆ<v> Φε<ρ>σεφόνει<ι>αν  
 ὥς με<ι> πρόσ<ρ>ων πέ<μ>ψη<ι> ἔδρας ἐς εὐαγέ<ι>ω<v>

"For I can also boast that I belong to your blessed stock. I have paid the penalty for the unjust deeds, whether Fate or the Lightener have suppressed me. Now, I come as a suppliant to Persephone, in order that she sends me to the seats of the pure".

The myth of the murder of Dionysos was known to Herodotos. Even if he does not mention it explicitly, it is evident from his treatment of the Egyptian religion. As many others, he identified Dionysos with Osiris, who was killed by Seth and cut to pieces, but his mother Isis, identified with the Greek Demeter, brought the pieces together and embalmed him. Herodotos does not tell that myth either, but he alludes to it when he tells that Apollon / Horos, son of Dionysos / Osiris was the last divine king of the Egyptians, the successor of Typhon / Seth (2.144, 2.156). Moreover, he touches it on several occasions, but says that it would not be right (οὐκ ὀσιον) to go into details:

2.48.3 (about phallagogy) "Why the private member is so huge and the only part of the body that moves is told in a sacred tale."

2.61.1 (about grievances at the festival for Isis in Saïs) "It is not right for me to say over whom they are grieving."

2.86.2 (about different mummification packages offered by the undertakers) "... and the most expensive one carries the name of him whose name it would not be right for me to mention in this context..."

2.170-171 "There are also graves over him whose name it is not right to mention in this context, in Saïs in the sanctuary of Athena, behind the temple ... At this lake, they make representations of his sufferings at night, what the Egyptians call mysteries. Even though I know more about it and know all the details, I shall keep my mouth."

Cf. also 2.47.2; 2.132.2.

It is evident that it is Osiris that is killed, cut to pieces and revived except for the penis. Herodotos is not restrained by some Egyptian pledge of secrecy. The details about the death of Osiris were well-known in Egypt and often described in details in Egyptian literature. His reservations are due to the fact that he identifies the Egyptian rituals with the Greek mystery cults.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it would have been an offence against Greek religious law to say straight out that the mysteries were about the death of Osiris alias Dionysos. The obligatory secrecy is characteristic of Greek mystery cults in general and of the Orphic movement in particular. The verse αἰδῶ ξυνετοῖσι· θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι "I sing to those who know; the uninitiated must close the doors" (Orph. fr. 334 Kern; similarly fr. 245 and 247) is not only alluded to in Platon (*Symp.* 218<sup>b</sup>), but also quoted, it seems, in the Derveni papyrus (col. IV). In an Orphic context, Pindar says that he has many arrows in his quiver that will speak to those who understand, or they will need interpretation (*Ol.* 2.84-86).<sup>22</sup> If we accept that Skyles' initiation was in fact an initiation into Orphic-Dionysiac mysteries, we have a good reason why Herodotos does not spell this point out either. He, too, writes for those who understand.

My hypothesis that Herodotos has an Orphic-Dionysiac ritual in mind is supported by an important detail in his narrative. When Skyles was ready for the initiation, a most powerful omen (φάσμα μέγιστον) occurred: "the god darted the thunderbolt upon his Olbian palace, and it burnt down; nevertheless, Skyles fulfilled his initiation" (4.79.1-2). Yet, to be struck by lightening is at the same time considered a divine way of passing away, a shortcut to immortality, so to speak.<sup>23</sup> The deifying death of Dionysos' mother Semele was due to the thunderbolt of Zeus (Pind. *Ol.* 2.25-26; Diod. 5.52.2). According to one tradition, Orpheus was killed by lightening as well (*Anth.Pal.* 7.617, Alkidamas, *Odysseus* 24). Herakles' pyre was also hit by Zeus' thunderbolt (Diod. 4.38.5). The Orphic gold leaves speak about the deceased being suppressed by the "Lightener" (Graf & Johnston 2007, nos 6 and 7 Ἀστεροπιῆτα / Ἀστεροβλήτα κεραυνῶν).<sup>24</sup> I presume that the lightening omen is meant



as a hint to the interpretation of the Skyles story – with the tragic contrast that Skyles is not deified but killed by his own after an unsuccessful escape to the Thracians on the other side of the Danube. A little later in the Scythian *logos*, we are told that the Thracian tribe of the Getai – who live in the very same region – believes the soul to be immortal. It is, I think, no coincidence that Herodotos tells us that in their disrespect for other gods than Salmoxis, the Getai shoot with their arrows against thunder and lightening (4.94.4).

Admittedly, the Orphic character of the initiation of Skyles is not mentioned directly and unequivocally, but it is supported by accumulative circumstantial evidence. As I shall demonstrate in the following sections of the paper, it is also supported by references to other kinds of eschatological beliefs and practices.

*Mother mysteries in disguise: Herakles and the demanding cave woman*

At the beginning of Book 4, Herodotos presents three different explanations of the origin of the Scythian people: a Scythian myth, a Pontic Greek myth and a rationalist version. In the Greek myth, Herakles plays a central role. Returning from Erytheia, Geryon's "Red Island", following a path around the disc of the earth, he finally comes to Hylaia in Scythia. A female monster steals his horses from him, and she refuses to give them back unless he goes in bed with her. She succeeds in holding him back in her cave long enough to bear three sons with him, the eponym forefathers of the Scythians, Agathyrsoi and Gelonoi.

The journey to Erytheia is a kind of *katabasis*, a journey to the Underworld: Geryon may be seen as a variant of Hades. He is three-headed like Kerberos (cf. Hes. *Theog.* 287), and just like Herakles must fetch the dog of Hades on a later occasion, so he kills Geryon's dog Orthos. Of the canonical twelve labours of Herakles, the Geryonic cattle count as number ten, the apples of the Hesperids as number eleven, and Kerberos as number twelve,<sup>25</sup> and they are in a sense variants of the same story. The classic presentation of the Geryon story was the *Geryoneid* of Stesichoros, to which Herodotos possibly alludes in 4.8.1;<sup>26</sup> Stesichoros locates Erytheia opposite the river of Tartessos in Spain (fr. 184 Davies) and relates that Herakles travelled in the cup of Helios (fr. S17 Davies).<sup>27</sup> It is understandable that the West where the sun sets and "dies" is at the same time the corner of the earth where one would locate the entrance to the land of the dead.

The Pontic Greek myth about Herakles and the monstrous cave woman is only one among many stories about the hindrances confronting the hero on his return with the kine of Geryon. Other versions have other female monsters with whom Herakles has to sleep to get home with the cattle: e.g. Skylla (Sch. Lykophron *Alex.* 46) and Kelto / Keltine / Galate (Parth. *Myth.* 30; Diod. 5.24).<sup>28</sup> In most versions, Herakles travels through Italy (the name of which was said to derive from this very story<sup>29</sup>). What is more, Ephoros says that the

entrance to Hades goes through the Lake Avernus near Cumae (cf. also Verg. *Aen.* Book 6), and the Kimmerians have an oracle there (FGrH 70 F 134).

In the eleventh song of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and his men come to the borders of the Okeanos. Here is, we are told, the people and city of the Kimmerians (*Od.* 11.14).<sup>30</sup> Without doubt, Herodotos and all contemporary readers were familiar with these verses. When immediately after the Herakles story, in the third myth of origin, Herodotos tells that the Kimmerians were the aboriginal population in Scythia before the Scythians, the reader will get his point. According to the mythical geography – which Herodotos does not accept but may use for his purpose – if you go west to the Okeanos and follow the stream with the sun, you will eventually come to Scythia and Hylaia. The last hero with whom Odysseus speaks in the *Nekyia* is precisely Herakles (vv. 601-626) – or rather “his image – he was himself among the immortal gods” (εἶδωλον· αὐτὸς δὲ μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι). Since the idea that the person was his soul conflicts with the opening of the *Iliad* (1.3-4), the passage was considered an interpolation already in Antiquity.<sup>31</sup> The verses may have been used by Orphic itinerant preachers in Classical times already. At any rate, the mention of Herakles, the Kimmerians and the Far West cannot but evoke associations with contemporary eschatological beliefs.

Herakles has in fact a prominent position in the Orphic cosmogonies. According to the summaries given in Athenagoras and Damaskios, in the beginning, there was water and mud, but after that a winged three-headed snake was born; he was called Time (Χρόνος) or Herakles (= Orph. fr. 54 and 57 Kern). M.L. West argues that Herakles’ place in the cosmogonic tradition is influenced by a stoic allegoric interpretation of the Herakles myth, according to which Herakles’ cremation on mount Oita was identified with the *ekpyrōsis* (cf. Seneca *Ben.* 4.8.1).<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, it may still have some foundation in older cosmogonic beliefs. In Hesiodos’s *Theogony* (vv. 270-336), Geryon is the great-nephew of a lady called Echidna, who is half woman and half snake just like the monster of the myth told in Herodotos. Herodotos even calls her an *echidna*; since the border between appellatives and proper names is fluent, the reader (and writer) would naturally identify the two. Hesiod’s Echidna lives together with Typhon – the Titan that murdered Dionysos according to Orphic mythology. Hesiod informs that they had three children together: Orthos, the dog of Geryon, Kerberos, the dog of Hades, and the Hydra, all monsters with whom Herakles had to fight. In the Italic version of the cattle myth, Herakles does not encounter a goddess, but a male monster called Cacus, who lives on the Aventine (Verg. *Aen.* 8.185-275); Cacus and Typhon are probably doublets of Geryon.<sup>33</sup> Ophion – like Pherekydes’ Ophioneus an alter ego of Typhon – started a war against Zeus at Tartessos, i.e. at the same scene as Herakles’ battle against Geryon (Sch. Hom. *Il.* 8.479 Dindorf).

The Geryon myth has an unmistakable parallel in the Vedic story about the hero Trita Āptya who killed the three-headed Viśvarūpa and stole his cattle (RV 10.8, 10.48), and in the Avestic story about Thraētaona who killed



the three-headed Aži Dahāka and obtained his two wives (Yt. 5.34), and it probably goes back to a common Indo-European myth.<sup>34</sup> The Typhon myth, on the other hand, has a striking parallel in the Hittite *illuyankas* myth. Since Typhon is in the Greek tradition located in a cave in Kilikia (Hom. *Il.* 2.783; Hes. *Theog.* 304; Pind., fr. 93 Snell-Maehler), the myth is probably borrowed from Anatolia.<sup>35</sup> Both myths are cosmological dramas about the death and rebirth of the world and the change of seasons. It may have implied some eschatology too, the life of man and the life of the world being equated. Even though the core of the Geryon myth is most likely derived from a Proto-Indo-European model, there can be no doubt that the Greek variant was heavily influenced by Near Eastern mythology as well. We have already seen that Typhon was identified with the Egyptian Seth. Similarly Herakles was recognised as the Phoenician god Melqart, who had an important temple at Gibraltar; the Greek name "Pillars of Herakles" is probably due to Phoenician influence. Thus, the Geryon myth, which takes place just outside of Gibraltar, is possibly the result of a combination of Greek and Phoenician myths. Herakles' apotheosis by the way of the pyre has parallels both in Tyros and Kilikia.<sup>36</sup> Herodotos is aware of these attempts of syncretism, even if he considers it wiser to distinguish the god Herakles from the hero Herakles (2.43-45). It is highly probable that Herakles' labours were, or could be, interpreted cosmologically in Classical times already, even if we do not know if he was exploited by Orphic cosmogonies at that time, and it is highly probable that the Geryon myth would evoke cosmological associations in the readers of Herodotos' text, especially when it is combined with a travel along the Okeanos and an encounter with a chthonic *echidna*.

When the Pontic Greeks derive the Scythian tribes from a snake-legged chthonic goddess, it is of course a way of expressing their autochthonous character (compare the snake-legged Erichthonios ruling autochthonous Athens). However, I shall argue that the Hylaian goddess is a variant of the Great Mother, and so their encounter may be analysed as a cosmological event. At the same time, it may be the mythical model of an initiation: Herakles follows the route of the Sun to the entrance of the Underworld where he kills the monster Geryon and obtains his cattle. In Hylaia he meets another obstacle, a chthonic goddess and begets with her the people of the Scythians. In the myth, we are told that the land was empty, but Herodotos soon informs that it was in fact inhabited by the Kimmerians. It is interesting that the late lexicographer Hesychios quotes *Kimmeris thea*, "the Kimmerian goddess", as a name for the Mother of Gods, possibly a quotation from a classical tragedy.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the readers of Herodotos would have known that after his return to Greece with the cattle of Geryon, Herakles was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries,<sup>38</sup> before, as his last labour, he went down to Hades via the Acherusian Promontory<sup>39</sup> on the south shore of the Black Sea to fetch Kerberos, and he was finally deified by the way of the pyre on Mount Oita. Thus, the life story of Herakles follows the pattern of the initiate. Just like the struggle

with Geryon corresponds to the collection of Kerberos, Herakles' delay in the cave of the Kimmerian goddess is an obvious doublet or rather anticipation of his initiation into Demeter's mysteries in Eleusis. However, these general expectations of the audience are not confirmed until chapter 76, where the cult of Meter is introduced into Hylaia and the observant reader is granted a key to a deeper understanding of the *echidna* myth.

*Anacharsis' devotion to Meter: chthonic mysteries in Scythian Hylaia*

The Skyles story is preceded by a story about the Scythian prince Anacharsis (4.76). He is in Greek literature the prototype of the wise savage travelling in Greece and observing the alien culture. Under his name, a number of so-called apophthegms are transmitted which emphasise the absurdities of Greek civilisation. Herodotos informs that on his return from Greece, Anacharsis landed on the peninsula of Kyzikos and saw a procession for the Mother of Gods, or *Mētēr tōn Theōn*. He promises the goddess that he will sacrifice to her in the way of the Kyzikenes if he returns safe and sound. Thus, when he lands on the north shore, he arranges a festival of Meter in Hylaia. Unfortunately, a Scythian sees it and reports it to the Scythian King Saulios, who goes to the location and immediately shoots Anacharsis with his bow. So far, the story follows the same pattern as the Skyles story.

The cult of the Mother of Gods seems to be referred to in a Greek letter written on a small potsherd found in Olbia. It was originally part of a Samian vessel produced ca. 550-530 BC. The inscription (= SEG XLII, 710) consists of 12 lines of which the left and right margins are not legible anymore, and the text is therefore difficult to read. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the lines 6-8 is quite certain:<sup>40</sup>

... ]ληι ἐνθεῦθεν ἐς τὴν Ὑλαίην ...  
 ... ] αὐτίς οἱ βωμοὶ βεβλαμμένοι ...  
 ... Μ]ητρὸς θεῶν καὶ Βορυσθέ(νεω) καὶ Ἡρακλ[ῆος ...

"from there to Hylaia ... once more the altars were destroyed ...  
 of the Mother of the Gods, Borysthenes and Herakles".

The letters have a quite archaic appearance, pointing to a date in the 6th century BC.<sup>41</sup> The cult is attested in another inscription from Olbia as well (= Dubois 1996, no 81, 5th century BC): [Μητρὶ Θε]ῶν μεδεόσ[η] Ὑλαί[ης]. These two inscriptions attest the presence of Meter in the same spot and at the same date as Anacharsis' ritual in Herodotos' narrative. It is interesting that Hylaia, which is dedicated to the cult of Meter, is also the place where Herakles meets the female monster. The fact that the inscription mentions altars for Meter and Herakles in the same breath supports the identification of the Hylaian Meter and Herakles' chthonic mistress.

The goddess introduced by Anacharsis from Kyzikos is the Phrygian Kybele (Kyzikos is close to Archaic Phrygia). She was introduced into Greece in the 6th century BC, and mysteries were performed in her name. The mysteries of Dionysos, Demeter and Kybele are of course not identical. Both the mythologies and rites differ. There are, however, important analogies and a tendency to syncretism, especially, it seems, in 5th-century Orphism.<sup>42</sup> This approach is apparent in other Classical authors: Pindar's *Second Dithyramb* puts Kybele in connection with Dionysos (fr. 70b.6-11 Snell-Maehler). In the quoted fragment of the tragedy *Kretes* (fr. 79 Austin), Euripides unites mysteries of Meter and Dionysos (cf. also Eur. *Bacch.* 72-82; Aesch. fr. 57 Radt). In the Cretan mysteries, the Mother of Gods plays a central role, and G. Pugliese Carratelli speaks about a more primitive version of the Dionysiac mysteries than the Orphic-Pythagorean ones represented by the South Italian gold leaves (cf. also *IC* 1(xxiii).3, Phaistos, 2nd century BC). On one of the gold leaves from Thurioi (Graf & Johnston 2007, no 4), we read names like Pammater, Kybeleia and Demeter. Pseudo-Apollodoros (*Bibl.* 3.5.1) relates that after having being afflicted with madness by jealous Hera, Dionysos wandered about in Egypt and Syria, but eventually came to Phrygia and was purified by Rheia and initiated into the rituals (τὰς τελετὰς ἐκμαθών).<sup>43</sup> A similar version is ascribed to the epic poet Eumelos of the 6th century BC (fr. 11 Bernabé).<sup>44</sup> The story is a close parallel to the purification and initiation of Herakles in Eleusis. Dionysos goes to Hades, too, to fetch his mortal mother Semele and make her an Olympian goddess (Hes. *Theog.* 940-2; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.3; Diod. 4.25.4).<sup>45</sup> In the Eleusinian mysteries, the initiands met Persephone in a dark room, and they were thereby prepared for death (even though there were apparently no ideas about *metempsychosis* in Eleusis).<sup>46</sup> Thus, mythical and ritual *katabasis* seem to have played an important role in the different mother cults, and Herodotos' audience would readily have understood the Hylaian cult in the framework of Eleusinian and related rituals.

Herodotos offers a clue to the eschatological interpretation of Hylaia in chapter 56, in the catalogue of rivers, where he remarks that it lies near the "Achilleian Race-Course", and this observation is repeated in the Anacharsis story, in case the reader should have missed the point. He does not go into explaining why a locality was named after Achilleus on the north shore of the Black Sea. It was, however, well-known to any contemporary reader that Achilleus was worshipped as some sort of death god in Scythia.<sup>47</sup> The small island of Leuke east of the mouth of the Danube was considered the place to which Thetis took his mortal remains (as related in the epos *Aithiopis*, 7th century BC<sup>48</sup>). Pindar presupposes that his audience knows the island, when he says "Achilleus (rules) the bright island in the Euxine Sea" (*Nem.* 4.49-50 ἐν δ' Εὐξείνῳ πελάγει φαεινὰν Ἀχιλεὺς νᾶσον). In the "Orphic" victory ode, Pindar says that Achilleus was brought to "the Isle of the Blest" (*Ol.* 2.71-80 μακάρων νᾶσον). In other words, the Isle of the Blest and the White Island could be considered one and the same locality.<sup>49</sup> If Alkaios fr. 354 Voigt is au-

thentic, Achilles was known as “the god of Scythia” already ca. 600 BC.<sup>50</sup> So, when Herodotos makes this close association of Hylaia and the posthumous Achilles, his audience might have read a reference to the specific character of the location. Together with the juxtaposition of the stories of Anacharsis and Skyles, it suggests that the Hylaian goddess was the patroness of chthonic mysteries not unlike those of Meter and Demeter.

*Pythagorean sages in Scythia and beyond: Aristetas, Abaris, and Salmoxis*

Meter played an important role among the Pythagoreans too. According to Timaios, Pythagoras’ house was built into a temple for Demeter (*FGrH* 566 F 131). Hermippos (fr. 20 Wehrli) informs that Pythagoras built himself a subterranean chamber and hid for a time in it; he told his mother to write down what was going on on the surface, so when he returned and was able to know all that, people thought he was some kind of psychic (θεϊόν τινα). W. Burkert is without doubt right when he proposes that “mother” stands for the goddess Meter in a more orthodox tradition and the story refers to a ritual *katabasis* (cf. also Hieronymos fr. 42 Wehrli).<sup>51</sup> L. Zhmud, who aims at a more rationalist and less religious Pythagoras, of course rejects this evidence.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, Herodotos puts Pythagoreanism on the same footing as Orphism (2.81). Even though the doctrines and especially the myths must have differed, they were part of the same intellectual milieu, sharing concepts of the soul and the *bios* of the initiate.<sup>53</sup> We have already mentioned the bone tablets from Olbia which associate Dionysos and Orphism. Another bone tablet mentions Apollon and Meter in the midst of mythical elaborations on the number seven (*SEG* XXXVI, 694 = Dubois 1996, no 93, 550-525 BC).<sup>54</sup> The bone tablet, which may be as old as the founding of Pythagoras’ school in Italy or even older, illustrates the character of the archaic intellectual milieu out of which Pythagoreanism eventually arose. The opposition between an Apollinian Pythagoreanism and a Dionysian Orphism is, at any rate, anachronistic. The cults of Apollon and Dionysos do not exclude one another. In the Orphic hymns, Dionysos is called Paian (52.10) and Apollon Bakchios (34.7 *v.l.*). Dionysos’ grave was shown to the tourists in Delphi, and it was said that the famous tripod of Apollon contained his remains (e.g. Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 365<sup>a</sup>).<sup>55</sup>

We have already seen that what I call the eschatological string of Book 4 is anticipated in the Egyptian *logos*. It contains several references to the Osiris myth, which is in Herodotos’ mind identical to the Orphic Dionysos myth, and, as we shall see, the Ethiopian excursus illustrates the perfect Orphic *bios*. Furthermore, Herodotos claims that Greek ideas about *metempsychosis* are derived from an Egyptian model (2.123). He refuses to tell the names of the persons sharing them, but there can be no doubt that a contemporary reader would have thought of Pythagoras and Empedokles at first.

Between the Egyptian and Scythian *logoi*, Herodotos treats the internal politics of the Persian Empire. A considerable part is taken up by the story about

the Samian tyrant Polykrates (3.39-60, 120-128, 139-149). One wonders if Herodotos expects his readers to know that Pythagoras lived on Samos during the reign of Polykrates and went on his study tour in Egypt with a letter of recommendation from the tyrant himself.<sup>56</sup> Herodotos does not, however, stress the point, but it is not at all impossible in the general framework. At any rate, it is supported by the fact that shortly after the death of Polykrates – and explicitly in connexion with the Polykrates affair – the Krotonian Demokedes enters the scene (3.131-137). Kroton is the city where Pythagoreanism prevailed, and we know from other sources that the early Pythagoreans assembled in the house of Demokedes' father-in-law Milon.<sup>57</sup> In Herodotos we are told that Demokedes becomes Dareios' court physician, but escapes back to Southern Italy and marries Milon's daughter. In accordance with his general reticence in these matters, Herodotos says nothing about Milon's philosophical interests; he is only described as the *palaistēs* "wrestler" (3.137.5).<sup>58</sup> However, Herodotos must have been well-informed in these matters since his own biography was connected closely with both Samos and Southern Italy: Being expelled by Lygdamis, he lived for some time as an exile on Samos,<sup>59</sup> and later on he participated in the colony of Thurioi, which was founded in 444 BC on the location of the former Sybaris destroyed in the war with Kroton in 511 BC (cf. Hdt. 5.44-45).

In Book 4, after the myth of Herakles, Herodotos gives a third rationalist version of where the Scythian people originated, namely out of a series of migrations starting in Central Asia (4.13-15). His main source is the epic *Arimaspeia* by Aristetas of Prokonnesos (7th century BC). He claimed to have travelled to the tribe of the Issedonians possessed by Apollon (φοιβόλαμπτος γένόμενος), i.e. probably in some sort of soul journey;<sup>60</sup> he lay dead, disappeared and returned after six years (ἑβδόμῳ ἔτει). Herodotos adds that Aristetas showed up in Metapontion 240 years later and told the locals that he had followed Apollon in the shape of a raven. He disappeared once more, and the Metapontines erected a statue of him next to the altar of Apollon (4.15). Since Metapontion is the city to which Pythagoras withdraws after a crisis in Kroton, this story must belong to the Pythagorean tradition.

Herodotos continues his account with an outline of the geography of the Scythian territory, from the Black Sea to the Issedonians (4.16-31). He is probably following the scheme laid out by Aristetas' epic.<sup>61</sup> Herodotos stresses at the outset (with reference to Aristetas) and at the end of this outline that nobody can say anything about what is lying further north. Then, he starts to argue against the idea of the so-called Hyperboreans (4.32-36.1). He speaks about the mythical Hyperborean delegations to Delos and ends with the words: "I will not tell the story told about Abaris, and say how he carried his arrow all around the world without eating anything" (4.36).<sup>62</sup> Later sources relate how Abaris flew to Greece on an arrow given to him by Apollon (Herakleides Pontikos, fr. 51c Wehrli), and how he meets Pythagoras in Southern Italy and recognises him as the Hyperborean Apollon (Iambl. *VP* 19.90-91; Porph. *VP* 28). I find it quite obvious that Herodotos alludes to the same story,<sup>63</sup> but



deliberately chooses not to tell it explicitly. The loud aposiopesis suffices to bring the point to the mind of his readers. After having laid out the Scythian origin and geography with reference to two persons who were most likely central in Pythagorean mythology because they demonstrated Apollon's acknowledgement of the master's authority, Herodotos continues with an excursus in which he criticises the traditional representation of the map of the world and especially the concept of the Okeanos, the World-Stream (4.36.2-45, cf. also 3.115). It is ironical, but hardly a coincidence, that he undermines the Geryon myth when he expresses his doubts of the possibility of sailing north of Europe. The two tales are tied together in the negation.

The first time Pythagoras' name is mentioned explicitly is in chapter 95. In an excursus on Dareios' journey through Thrace, Herodotos speaks about the Getai and their belief in an immortal soul; after death one comes to the god Salmoxis, and therefore the Getai show an extreme carelessness with their lives.<sup>64</sup> Herodotos ascribes to the local Greeks a down-to-earth explanation of the Getan religion: Salmoxis was earlier the slave of Pythagoras on Samos, but he was freed and returned to Thrace. He taught his compatriots that they would not die, but come to another place and live there happy forever after. He convinced them about the truth of this doctrine by building a subterranean chamber to himself and hiding in it for three years. It is pretty much the same story as the one told about Pythagoras. As W. Burkert points out, Hermippos has not simply duplicated Herodotos' version, for the detail about the "mother" does not occur there.<sup>65</sup> Even though Herodotos is sceptic about this version (he prefers a much higher date for Salmoxis), by telling it, he gives a useful hint to the interpretation of the Scythian *logos*. The suppressed allusions are solved.

The stories of Skyles and Salmoxis are obviously connected in the narrative of Herodotos. The ritual death practised by Salmoxis corresponds to the physical death suffered by Skyles. The red thread is the border between the civilised world and the steppes and between new and old religion. Herodotos informs that the bridge of Dareios over the Hellespont leads directly to the Dionysos temple in Byzantion (4.87), and Thrace is in a sense a Dionysiac territory. The crossing of streams is a familiar motif in eschatological myths,<sup>66</sup> and the bridge itself is an obvious symbol of transition and initiation (though it would be an over-interpretation to suggest that the Samian nationality of its architect is meant as an indication of its Pythagorean character). Thus, a bridge over the river of Kephisos plays a central role in the Eleusianian ritual.<sup>67</sup> Transgressing the Danube by another bridge, Dareios comes into a world that is again completely different; it resembles a *katabasis* into some kind of Underworld where the enemy is just as intangible as the shadows of Hades and the army has but a narrow escape. Dareios' expedition follows an axis which is anticipated by Anacharsis returning from Kyzikos to Hylaia and Aristeas journeying from Kyzikos to beyond the Scythian territory. Immediately after the stories of Anacharsis and Skyles, Herodotos speaks about two monumen-



tal cauldrons put up by the Scythian Ariantas and the Spartan Pausanias in Exampaios and at the Bosporos respectively (4.81).

*The meaning of life according to Herodotos*

I do not assert that Herodotos followed a single specific doctrine and his text should be regarded as some kind of sacred text of a religious society. He alludes indiscriminately to the polymorph mass of eschatological “schools” prevailing in the 5th century BC in order to stress a more general point in his narrative. Herodotos states at the beginning of the Egyptian *logos* that he is generally reluctant towards speaking about “divine matters” (τὰ θεῖα τῶν ἀπηγημάτων) because “all people have the same knowledge about them” (2.3.3, similarly 2.65.2). However, this does not mean that he is an atheist.<sup>68</sup> He often refers to divine causes, e.g. when the Demeter sanctuary in Plataiai is free from corpses of Persian soldiers because the goddess will not have them on her soil after they have burnt her temple in Eleusis (9.65.2). He says he was initiated into the Samothrakian mysteries (2.51.4), and he was probably initiated into the Orphic-Dionysiac mysteries as well since he repeatedly refers to some vow of silence. He was certainly sympathetic towards the Pythagorean doctrine, calling Pythagoras “not the worst sage among the Greeks” (4.94.2 Ἑλλήνων οὐ τῷ ἀσθενεστάτῳ σοφιστῇ). It would, on the other hand, be wrong to see the *Histories* as a Holy Scripture of an Orphic-Pythagorean sect. Herodotos does quote the story about Salmoxis’ hide in the subterranean chamber, which was certainly meant as a criticism not only of the local Getan religion, but also of Pythagoras’ ritual *katabasis*, even if he rejects this version.<sup>69</sup> He seems to accept the fantastic story of Aristetas’ second appearance in Metapontion, but he refuses to relate the Abaris story. Herodotos’ rationalism means that he cannot rely on hearsay that has not been substantiated by other evidence; but he does not reject the existence of divine causes or a higher justice.

In the Geryon myth, Herakles is the prototype of the nomadic herdsman. Sitting in his chariot, he drives the cattle on the outskirts of the world, just like the nomadic Scythians are driving their cattle on the northern steppes with their horses and carriages. In the case of Herakles, however, the status as a lawless cattle thief is only a phase, a rite of liminality, which will eventually lead to civilisation (by the way of his initiation into the mysteries) and apotheosis. His Scythian offspring sticks in this phase,<sup>70</sup> and when Skyles is going through the initiation, which is supposed to introduce him into civilisation, he is consequently killed by his compatriots. The way Herodotos presents the Scythian religion, it is characterised by the absence of the civilising agricultural gods Demeter and Dionysos, whereas dreadful Ares is the most important god (4.59-62). The opposition to the agricultural religion peaks in the stories about Anacharsis and Skyles, who practise the rituals of Meter and Dionysos respectively and are killed for this very reason. On the other hand, the only cults that Herodotos mentions in the case of the Greek colonists in Olbia are

the cults of Demeter (4.53.6) and Dionysos (4.79). This choice is not arbitrary: The two cults teach in their mysteries the meaning of civilisation, why it makes sense to cultivate earth and not to wander about like wild beasts eating the fruits of trees or each other. According to Euripides (*Bacch.* 274-285), Demeter and Dionysos were the two first gods of man, the goddess of the dry food and the god of the anaesthetic liquor respectively. It was probably part of the Athenian propaganda of the 5th century BC that agriculture arose in Attica as a result of Demeter's mysteries in Eleusis (cf. Xen. *Hell.* 6.3.6, Isoc. *Paneg.* 28-29). In the eyes of the Athenians, the mysteries meant the "Beendigung des Urkannibalismus".<sup>71</sup> Thus, by hindering the introduction of the cults of Meter and Dionysos, the Scythians resist to give up their primitive economy based on meat and milk.

In the third book, Herodotos speaks about the magic table of the Sun, which provides the people of the Ethiopians with meat without the unpleasant sacrifice of blood (3.18). J.-P. Vernant compares it to the story about the cattle of the Sun in the *Odyssey* (12.260-402):<sup>72</sup> On the return from Hades and the island of Kirke, Odysseus lands on the island of the Sun. In spite of several warnings, his men decide to sacrifice the cattle and eat the meat. It is the ultimate sacrilege. Even after it has been roasted, the meat is still raw, the hides are wandering about and the slaughtered animals are still mooing. It is the perfect example of *ōmophagia*.<sup>73</sup> It is likely that Herodotos presupposes that his readers are familiar with this story of the *Odyssey*. The army that Kambyzes sends against the Ethiopians ends up starving and resorts to cannibalism, a sacrilege comparable to that of Odysseus' men (3.25.6). In other words, the Ethiopian excursus, which is a natural prolongation of the Egyptian *logos*, offers an example of the Orphic *bios*, according to which people eat without having to slay other creatures.<sup>74</sup>

Whereas the mythical Hyperboreans occupied an idealistic place comparable to that of the Ethiopians,<sup>75</sup> the Scythians were not at all sacred: They sacrifice by strangulation (4.60-61), i.e. they eat the meat with the blood.<sup>76</sup> The Ethiopians lived long, and when they died, their corpses did not putrefy (3.24). On the other hand, murder was the daily order among the Scythians and the neighbouring tribes. In the northern Scythian territory, we hear about the Neuroi, who were werewolves (4.105.2), and the Androphagoi, who were cannibals (4.106). The Issedonians east of the Scythians slaughter and cook their fathers when they die (4.26). Similar rites are ascribed to the Indian Kallatians (3.38.4) and Padaians (3.99) who are described as nomads. Thus, the nomadic cuisine was quite the opposite of the Orphic-Pythagorean diet.<sup>77</sup> Already in the first book, immediately before the excursus on Egypt, we hear about the Central Asiatic Massagetai, who were ascribed to the Scythians by some (but not by Herodotos): They considered it the most blessed lot (ὀλβιώτατα) to be cooked when one died, whereas those who died by illness were buried, which was considered a misfortune (1.216). The division of the deceased into blessed and unfortunate ones sounds like a perversion of the teachings of the

Orphics. The parallelism may be even more outspoken if one conjectures that the Orphic initiate was the victim of a ritual cannibalistic act after the model of Dionysos himself.

The Scythians are notorious milk drinkers. Since Herodotos dedicates the first chapters of the Scythian *logos* to the fabrication of mare milk, this peculiar diet must be, in his eyes, an important sign of their economy (the same diet is attributed to the Scythians in Hes. fr. 150.15 Merkelbach-West, and Hipp. *Aer.* 18).<sup>78</sup> The Massagetai are called *galaktopotai*, "milk-drinkers" (1.216.3). The nomadic Libyans live on meat and drink milk (4.186.1). The Kyklops is since the *Odyssey* the emblem of the nomad: He does not cultivate the earth, but eats meat, milk and cheese and is a dreaded cannibal. At first sight, we are told that the Kyklops "did not look like a man eating bread".<sup>79</sup> Drinking milk is of course not the same as being a brutal murderer. The mare-milking and milk-consuming Abioi of the *Iliad* are the most just of men (*Il.* 13.5). Herodotos informs that the Ethiopians eat boiled meat and drink milk (3.24.2), and they despise the consumption of grain (3.22.4). It just means that you do not belong to the agricultural urbanised civilisation. To quote Aristotles, a person living outside of a *polis* is either worse or better than man (*Pol.* 1253<sup>a</sup>). The Ethiopians are certainly better (since their consumption of meat does not imply the death of another being) and the Kyklops certainly worse.

In Euripides' satyr play *Kyklops*, the one-eyed giants are called "nomads" (v. 120);<sup>80</sup> they do not sow "Demeter's ear of corn" or drink "Bromios' drink, the juice of the grape" (vv. 121, 123); the Kyklops' shelter is empty of Bacchantes (*Cyc.* 63-75), but he is finally "defeated by Bakchos" (*Cyc.* 446, 454, 521, 575), and the choir ends in a laudation of Dionysos (*Cyc.* 709). We have no indications that Herodotos knew this satyr play, and it is probably too late.<sup>81</sup> Yet, they share the same concept of civilisation. The space of the Kyklops is called an *erēmia* (*Cyc.* 22, 116, 447, 622). The phrase *Skythōn erēmia*, which is the name of the Scythian steppes in Hippokrates (*Aer.* 18), becomes proverbial as a designation of the conditions of primitive man (since Ar. *Ach.* 704; it is popular with Imperial and Byzantine authors). In Herodotos, the inner space of the Scythians is not described as deserted, but the adjective *erēmos* usually characterises the frontier regions of Scythia (4.17.2, 4.18.2, 4.18.3, 4.20.2, 4.22.1, 4.53.4, 4.123.2, 4.124.1, 4.125.5, 4.127.2).<sup>82</sup> Thus, Herodotos transposes the traditional scheme of a *polis* and an uninhabited periphery centre to the Black Sea area. It has itself a centre inhabited and cultivated by Greeks or semi-Greeks and a desolate periphery into which the Scythians can choose to recede, and where the graves of their ancestors are located (4.53.4, 4.127.2-3).<sup>83</sup> In the Dionysiac cult, as we have seen, unrestrained rituals were performed on mountain tops and in other desolate places, where victims were torn and eaten raw. When Euripides speaks about "the raw-eating mountain-walking Kyklops" (*Tro.* 436), the Kyklops becomes some kind of uninitiated, self-appointed Bacchant, who cannot escape the lunacy. Similarly, the *Skythōn erēmia* is represented as a liminal space inhabited by uncivilised non-initiates.

*Greek shamanism and Scythian criticism of religion*

According to Herodotos, the Scythians criticise the Dionysiac cult of the Greeks because they think it is wrong to invent a god that drives people mad. This sobriety of Scythian religion is in sharp conflict with the ecstatic shamanism which modern scholarship ascribes to the Scythians and considers an important source of inspiration for Greek Pythagoreanism and Orphism. This line of thought is represented by K. Meuli, E.R. Dodds, W. Burkert and M.L. West.<sup>84</sup> In spite of these awe-inspiring names, some opposition has been uttered, especially by J.N. Bremmer and L. Zhmud.<sup>85</sup> The hypothesis of a Scythian shamanism rests on two pieces of information found in Herodotos:

- A) The Scythians had a certain type of transgendered soothsayers called Enarees (1.105.4; 4.67.2).
- B) Scythian funerals involved a purification ceremony, during which cannabis seeds were burnt in tents and caused great satisfaction in the participants (4.73-75).

On the basis of Central Asiatic and American parallels, Meuli concluded that the Scythians had cross-dressing shamans, who used hallucinating drugs to be able to leave their bodies and lead the souls of the dead safely to the Underworld. However, Herodotos does not describe the Enarees as shamans; they are soothsayers who read the future in lime bark, but we are told of no soul journeys at all (similarly in Hipp. *Aer.* 18). It is true that shamans in some cultures dress and live like the opposite sex, but it does not necessarily mean that any transgendered magician is also a shaman. Moreover, the association of the Enarees with the marijuana tents is without any basis in the text of Herodotos. He says they were used for purification instead of baths, and it is evident that he intends a contrast between Greek water and Scythian fire as a means of purification. Tents with remains of cannabis have been excavated in a kurgan in Pazyryk in Central Asia, but there is nothing that links them to shamanism.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, there is nothing that *excludes* a shamanistic interpretation either. Even though the hallucinating effect of hemp seeds is rather limited, it *may* have served some purpose that had to do with the soul of the deceased being led safely to the hereafter.

The phenomena of soul journey and bilocation are in Greek literature frequently associated with the distant north.<sup>87</sup> As we have seen, Aristeas travels to a people living east of the Scythians, and Abaris comes from a country beyond the north wind. Similarly, according to Bakchylides (3.57-60), Kroisos was rescued from the pyre and moved to the Hyperboreans. It is told that Stesichoros got the impetus for his *Palinody*, which put Helena in Egypt and her *eidōlon* in Troy, from Leonymos of Kroton(!), who had visited the island of Leuke and talked with Helen's ghost (Konon *FGrH* 26 F 1, XVIII; Paus. 3.19.11-13). This preference for the north may, however, reflect a fundamental

geographical scheme in Greek thought which is independent of the ethnographical realities.

M. Eliade maintains that that classic shamanism originated in Central Asia under the influence of Buddhism.<sup>88</sup> In that case it is rather difficult to imagine that the Greeks were influenced by Scythian shamanism in the 7th or 8th centuries BC already. K. Dowden argues that the Greek practice of soul journey was borrowed directly from some previous stage of the ecstatic practices which eventually led to Buddhism.<sup>89</sup> The evidence for contacts between India and Greece in this early period is, however, virtually non-existent.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, the Scythians may in fact have shared the same beliefs about the immortality of the soul and its capability of leaving the body. Scythians and Indians belonged to the same branch of the Indo-European family, and they were in the first centuries of the 1st millennium BC not so different linguistically and culturally as to exclude an exchange of ideas. Thus, before we make Aristeas go all the way to India to be apprenticed to a former incarnation of Buddha, we should perhaps trace the inspiration to the Scythians, who ca. 700 BC crossed the Caucasus and advanced along the northern coast of Asia Minor (the so-called "Kimmerians").<sup>91</sup> Early ecstatic practices may have been borrowed from India to the neighbouring Sakas (the eastern branch of the Scythians) in Bactria and then introduced to the Greeks by the Pontic Scythians; after all, the steppe nomads were extremely mobile. Another possibility is that the Scythians inherited a more primitive stage of ecstatic practices which was borrowed to the Greeks and later developed into shamanism *stricto sensu* under the influence of Buddhism. It is, however, mere conjecture.

Yet, Eliade's approach is extremely Asiocentric. Even though "classical" Central Asiatic shamanism may have developed under the influence of Buddhism, shamanistic practices are recorded in various Native American cultures as well independently (it seems) of the Eurasian shamanism. From a methodological point of view, it is problematic to reconstruct the beliefs of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, and one cannot say how much of this goes back to the Neolithic period. It seems safe to assume that they believed in a soul and in some kind of afterlife and even the possibility of escaping death.<sup>92</sup> Yet, the idea about the soul journeying outside the body momentarily may have developed independently in India and the Balkans.

Herodotos does not give any reason at all for assuming that the Scythians themselves practised any proto-shamanistic ecstatic rituals. As we have seen, he may have had his own motives for suppressing such beliefs and offering instead a non-spiritualistic, phenomenological description of the Scythian cult. Ideas about an afterlife are attested by the Scythian burial customs. According to Herodotos, when a Scythian king died, he was buried in a large tumulus together with one of his wives, fifty servants and fifty horses (4.72). The described rituals agree tremendously well with the archaeological record; the so-called kurgan graves are scattered all over the area dominated by the Scythians.<sup>93</sup> We have seen that the Getai, the neighbours of the Scythians,

had ideas about an immortal soul and aspired to death, and similar beliefs and practices are ascribed to the Celts (Diod. 5.28.6; Caes. *BGall.* 6.14.5). The Scythians may very well have thought of the royal funerals in the same way. Herodotos informs that the Scythians had the deceased transported around in forty days before he was buried (4.73.1). This custom becomes a macabre contrast to the Orphic-Pythagorean doctrine, which must have been in the minds of the contemporary reader after he has read (or heard) the Egyptian *logos* and the first part of the Scythian *logos*. Instead of a soul journey, we have a bizarre body journey. The rich grave gifts and the tour of the dead body emphasise the material continuity, but nothing is said about the soul of the dead.

In Herodotos' narrative, the harsh criticism of ecstatic religion and the plain perversion of Orphic beliefs characterise the Scythians as an uncivilised people beyond good and evil. They have gods, it is true; Herodotos offers a catalogue of theonyms in chapter 59. However, we are told that they do not celebrate (οὐ νομίζουσι) those gods with statues, altars and temples – except for Ares. So, Scythian religion is irreligion.<sup>94</sup> Later on, in chapters 108-109, we are presented with the allegedly half-Greek<sup>95</sup> Gelonoi who, on the other hand, are not only agriculturalists (γῆς τε ἐργάται καὶ σιτοφάγοι) and city-dwellers, but they also worship Greek gods with statues, altars and wooden temples, and they even celebrate a *trietēris* festival for Dionysos and are Bacchants (τῷ Διονύσῳ τριετηρίδας ἀνάγουσι καὶ βακχεύουσι). The lines are full-drawn here.

### Conclusion

The so-called eschatological string rests primarily on five episodes in Book 4 of Herodotos' *Histories*:

- i. Herakles' journey to Erytheia and his encounter with the chthonic monster in Hylaia (4.8-10).
- ii. Aristeas' last journey to Metapontion and the transient mention of Abaris (4.11-15, 4.36.1).
- iii. Anacharsis' adoption of the Meter cult and his subsequent execution (4.76).
- iv. Skyles' initiation into the Dionysiac mysteries and his subsequent execution (4.78-80).
- v. Salmoxis' adoption of Pythagoreanism (4.93-96).

My hypothesis is that these are not isolated episodes, but bricks in a more fundamental structure of Herodotos' narrative. The author prepares his read-



ers for this analysis in the earlier books of his *Histories*. In Book 2 he repeatedly refers to the Dionysos/Osiris myth (though implicitly, bound as he is by some Orphic pledge of secrecy); he speaks about an Orphic-Pythagorean taboo against burying the dead in wool cloths (2.81) and the concept of metempsychosis being derived from Egypt (2.123). In Book 3 the Ethiopian table of the Sun suggests the Orphic-Pythagorean *bios* (3.17-25), and the Polykrates and Demokedes episodes bring Pythagoras' birthplace Samos and his later home Kroton into the scene (3.39-60, 120-149). The prominence of the Kroisos story in Book 1 with its emphasis on true happiness and the king's enlightenment on the pyre (1.29-33, 86-87) must have contributed to the expectations as well. The individual episodes and references do not suffice *per se*, but the accumulation of them makes it highly probable that they serve a purpose in the narrative.

The five episodes of Book 4 involve some sort of initiation into the mysteries of Meter or Dionysos. The core of the initiation is a rite of liminality that takes place either in Hades (a subterranean chamber) or in the wilderness. In the Orphic-Dionysiac initiation, the initiand probably went through some sort of ritual death by virtue of which he was identified with the murdered god himself; he was torn to pieces and cooked (symbolically). After that, the initiate observed a *bios* different from others and ate differently, and after death he would expect a special treatment, some kind of apotheosis or redemption from the "wheel of calamities". The catechumens Anacharsis and Skyles, on the other hand, never succeeded in their initiations, but traded the ritual death of the blessed for a less coveted physical one.

The *bios* of the Scythian nomad is comparable to that of the liminal phase, but it does not lead to a sacred *bios*. The eschatological allusions, which would be perfectly comprehensible to "those who know", underline the Scythians' fundamental lack of agricultural civilisation. Thus, when crossing the Danube into the land of the Scythians, Dareios enters a nightmare landscape of inverted values. His campaign is disastrous, and he returns uninitiated, immediately before he begins his great, but tragic war with Greece, the heart of civilisation. In other words, the many subtle eschatological references contribute in making Book 4 the pivotal scene of Herodotos' *Histories*, which are basically about the tragic Clash of Civilisations between the Orient and Occident.

## Notes

- 1 The present article is an enlarged version of a paper presented and published in Danish (= Hinge 2004b). I am grateful to the editors for accepting it for publication in this volume and especially to Pia Guldager Bilde for her sound scepticism, which helped me improve many, if not all, weak points of my presentation.
- 2 4.76.1 ξεινικοῖσι δὲ νομαίοισι καὶ οὗτοι φεύγουσι αἰνῶς χρᾶσθαι, μήτε γέων ἄλλων, Ἑλληνικοῖσι δὲ καὶ μάλιστα.

- 3 Dubois 1996, 152, suggests that the very name of the city is due to the influence of the Orphic cult ("the blessed city", cf. *SEG XXXVI*, 694 = Dubois 1996, no 93). Vinogradov 1997 emphasises the political significance of the Orphic-Dionysiac cult.
- 4 Dubois 1996, no 92 Δημόνασσα Ληναίο εὐαί καὶ Λήναιος Δημόκλο εἰαί. The exclamation εὐαί (like εὐάν and εὐοῖ) is associated with Dionysiac cult.
- 5 Dettori 1996.
- 6 It is normally assumed that the deceased died of excessive drinking or simply liked to drink (cf. Struve 1965, 115). However, the juncture [Λ]ηναίου [π]νεύοντα resembles Nonnos, *Dion.* 19.133 Ληνὸν ἔτι πνεύοντα, and it may have been part of an Orphic hymnic tradition. Sim. *Anth.Pal.* 7.25 = 67 Page, which shows several affinities with our epigram, may reflect the same tradition.
- 7 εὐδὼν οὖν Ἐκαταίε, μεσόχρονος, ἴσθ' ὅτι θάσσον κύκλον ἀνηρώων ἐχέφυγες καμάτων: cf. Graf & Johnston 2007, no 5, l. 5 κύκλο δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο, Orph. fr. 229 Kern κύκλου τ' ἂν λήξαι καὶ ἀναπνεύσαι κακότητος, 224b.1-2 οὐνεκ' ἀμειβομένη ψυχὴ κατὰ κύκλα χρόνοιο ἀνθρώπων ζώοισι μετέρχεται ἄλλοθεν ἄλλοις (cf. also Antiphilos *Anth.Pal.* 6.95.6 Πάρμις, ἀνηρώων πανσάμενος καμάτων).
- 8 Cf., e.g., Graf 1993; Burkert 2003, 79-106; Graf & Johnston 2007, 62-65.
- 9 These texts have been collected in Pugliese Carratelli 2001 and most recently in Graf & Johnston 2007. This type of instructions may be due to the model of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, cf. Merkelbach 1999.
- 10 Cf. Graf 1993.
- 11 Cf. Henrichs 1994, 47-51.
- 12 Graf 1985, 285-291.
- 13 It is exactly what the festivals are to the Athenians according to Perikles (in Thuc. 2.38): τῶν πόνων πλείστας ἀναπαύλας. The Athenian festivals celebrated in the honour of Dionysos had nothing to do with eschatological mysteries; apparently, this need was fulfilled by the Eleusinian mysteries instead.
- 14 For the link between Bacchic frenzy and Orphic initiation, see Graf & Johnston 2007, 142-143, where it is assumed that the Orphic redemption was reserved for a minority among the worshippers of Dionysos quoting Pl. *Phd.* 69<sup>c</sup> πολλοὶ μὲν ναρθηκοφόροι, παῦροι δέ τε βάκχοι (a Christian cannot help recalling *Ev.Matt* 22.14 πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰσὶν κλητοὶ ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί).
- 15 Burkert 1972a, 50-51.
- 16 For the importance of cosmology in the mystery cult, see Obbink 1997.
- 17 West 1983, 172-173, derives the account from "some Euhemeristic source of the later Hellenistic period".
- 18 Cf. also Diod. 3.65.8; Eus. *Praep.ev.* 2.2.5; *Hymn.Orph.* 44.7, 45 (title), 52.8, 53.4, 54.3. Cf. Jeanmaire 1951, 172, 218-219; Merkelbach 1988, 86-87.
- 19 *LSAM* 48.18-20 καὶ ἂν τις γυνὴ βούληται τελεῖν τῷ Διονύσῳ | τῷ Βακχίῳ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ ἐν τῇ χώρῃ ἢ ἐν ταῖς νήσοις, [ἀπο] | διδόντω τῇ ἱερείᾳ στατήρα κατ' ἐκάστην τριημερίδα.
- 20 As suggested by the testimony of Firmicus Maternus; cf. also Sch. Clem.Al. *Protr.*, p. 318 Stählin δύσαγνον κρεανομίαν· ὥμᾳ γὰρ ἥσθιον κρέα οἱ μινούμενοι Διονύσῳ, δῆγμα τοῦτο τελούμενοι τοῦ σπαραγμοῦ, ὃν ὑπέστη Διόνυσος ὑπὸ τῶν Μαινάδων. According to Pind. fr. 133 Snell-Maehler, those who are reborn have atoned an old suffering (οἷσι Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος δέξεται).

- 21 Lloyd 1976, vol. 2, 279; Burkert 2002. For a general discussion of Herodotos' pious reticence, see Harrison 2000, 182-207.
- 22 Lloyd-Jones 1985, 257.
- 23 Burkert 1961.
- 24 The thunder stroke is a punishment (for the original crime committed by the Titans), but if deification is granted, it is at the same time a blessing, cf. Graf & Johnston 2007, 125-127.
- 25 For the twelve labours, cf. Brommer 1953. West 1997, 470-472, proposes an Egyptian model.
- 26 Hinge 2004a. Other potential sources are Peisandros and Herodotos' own uncle, Panyassis.
- 27 Pherekydes of Athens seems to have identified Erytheia with Gadeira like Herodotos (fr. 18b Fowler), whereas Hekataios locates the scene in Epeiros (fr. 26 Fowler). Pherekydes also has the story about the golden cup (fr. 18 Fowler).
- 28 Fontenrose 1959, 94-120.
- 29 Latin *vitulus*: Hellanikos, fr. 111 Fowler; the same etymology, but without the mythical reason in Varro, *Rust.* 2.1.9; Gell. *NA* 9.1.2.
- 30 The Odyssean Kimmerians are a mythical people "hidden in mist and clouds" (*Od.* 11.15 ἡέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμένοι). This detail may point to the origin of the historical Kimmerians who came from beyond the "dark ocean", see Hinge 2005, 107.
- 31 Albinus 2000, 79-81. Cf. Sch. Hom. *Od.* 11.385. Diod. 1.96.6-9, sees Orphic-Egyptian influence in the second *Nekyia* (Book 24).
- 32 West 1983, 190-194; Brisson 1985; idem 1995. Brisson stresses that the Derveni papyrus does not represent an earlier phase of the Orphic "Rhapsodies". At any rate, Pindar has a Χρόνος ὁ πάντων πατήρ in the highly Orphic *Olympian* 2 (vv. 16-17).
- 33 According to some sources, Herakles is called Recaranus or Garanus in this myth; it is probably a corruption of \**Tricaranus* "three-horned", cf. Puccioni 1970. The three-headedness of the opponent seems to have been replaced by a three-hornedness of the hero. Cf. also Lincoln 1981, 112 + note 81.
- 34 Burkert 1979, 78-98; Watkins 1995, 464-468; Janda 2005, 287-298; West 2007, 259-262. On a possible Indo-European origin of Orpheus, cf. Estell 1999.
- 35 Watkins 1995, 448-459 (he observes that the verb ἰμάσσω occurring repeatedly in the Greek versions (*Il.* 2.457; Hes. *Theog.* 857; *Hymn.Hom.Apoll.* 340) reflects *ishimanta* in the Hittite version).
- 36 West 1997, 465. There seem to have been myths about the death and resurrection of Melqart, cf. Mettinger 2001, 83-111.
- 37 Hsch. s.v. Κιμμερις θεά = *Trag.Adesp.* fr. 221 Nauck.
- 38 Pindar (?) fr. 346 Snell-Maehler; Eur. *HF* 611-613; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.12; allusions in Ar. *Ran.* They probably all go back to a lost epic, cf. Lloyd-Jones 1967; Graf 1974, 139-150. According to Lada-Richards 1999, Herakles in Aristophanes' *Frogs* represents an "alterity" in contrast to the initiate Dionysos.
- 39 Xen. *An.* 6.2.2. Other sources locate his entrance at Tainaron in Lakonia (Eur. *HF* 23, Paus. 3.25.5, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.12).
- 40 Rusjaeva & Vinogradov 1991.
- 41 Dubois 1996, 56-57, has questioned the date of the editors because of the occasional spelling *ou* for the secondary (close) *ō*, which is unusual in the Olbian inscriptions before 400 BC. However, the style of the letters is clearly Archaic. Furthermore,

- even if *ou* is not attested in contemporary Olbian inscriptions, it occurs occasionally in other areas of the Greek world in the Archaic period already.
- 42 West 1983, 140-175; Pugliese Carratelli 2001, 86-93; Graf & Johnston 2007, 73-80.
- 43 Steph.Byz. s.v. *Μάσταυρα* claims that Dionysos was raised by Rheia. As the *mystēs* of Kybele/Rheia Dionysos becomes a *gallos* like the Attis. Dionysos was probably not castrated literally in any tradition. However, his extreme effeminacy in Classical tradition made him a sort of eunuch. Furthermore, Herodotos alludes to the Egyptian myth of the disappearance of the penis of Osiris/Dionysos (2.48.3).
- 44 For the date of Eumelos, see West 2002.
- 45 She seems to be another Thracian-Phrygian doublet of Demeter / Kore (*zemel* "earthly", cf. Phrygian *ζεμελως* "men" < PIE *\*d<sup>h</sup>ǵ<sup>hem</sup>-* = Greek *χθών*).
- 46 Burkert 1972a, 308-9: "Ein Weg in die Unterwelt, an den einige literarische Zeugnisse denken lassen, ließ sich im wörtlichen Sinn in Eleusis nicht bewerkstelligen; doch mochte man die Finsternis in dem geschlossenen Raum wohl als Hadesnähe erleben"; Graf 1974, 79-94.
- 47 Hommel 1980, 63-64; Hedreen 1991; Rusjaeva 1992, 70-83.
- 48 For the date of the *Aithiopsis*, see Hinge 2005, 105.
- 49 Hommel 1980, 18. Cf. also Plin. *NH* 4.93 *eadem Leuce et Macaron appellata* and Sch. Pind. *Ol.* 2.109-149.
- 50 *Ἀχιλλεύς ὁ τὰς Σκυθικάς μέδεις*. It is interesting that Alkaios uses a word which is attested in dedications from Leuke: *SEG* XXX, 869 *Ἀχιλλῆι Λευκῇ μεδέοντι* (5th century BC); *IOSPE* I<sup>2</sup>, 326.2 *Ἀχιλλεῖ [Λευκ]ῆς μεδέοντι* (4th century BC). Dubois 1996, 99-100, conjectures that the common source was the *Aithiopsis*. However, the participle *μεδέων* + gen. is common in epicleses to other gods in inscriptions found in the Northern Black Sea area: *CIRB* 31.5; 35.2; 75.12; 971.2; 1111.4 (Aphrodite); Dubois 1996, no 81 (Meter); no 58 (Apollon); *CIRB* 22 (Hekate); 1315.3 (Artemis). It is less frequent in inscriptions from other areas: *IG* I<sup>3</sup>, 1492; 37; 1493; 1494; 1495; 1491; 1454; *SEG* XXII, 274 (Athena); *Tit.Calymnii* 108; 109; 110 (Apollon). It was possibly a formula of the archaic hymn language that remained popular in the periphery.
- 51 Burkert 1972b, 155-159.
- 52 Zhmud 1997, 115.
- 53 Burkert 1972b, 132; idem 2003, 105-106; Bremmer 2002, 11-24.
- 54 Lévêque 2000.
- 55 Burkert 1972a, 140-142.
- 56 Cf. Aristox. fr. 16 Wehrli; Apollod. *FGrH* 244 F 339.
- 57 Aristox. fr. 18 Wehrli; Iambl. *VP* 248-252.
- 58 It must be emphasised that wrestling was in Antiquity an aristocratic sport and by no means incompatible with a philosophical mind; allegedly, Platon was a wrestler as well (Diog. Laert. 3.4).
- 59 Suda s.v. *Ἡρόδοτος*.
- 60 Dowden 1980. Bolton 1962 and Alemany i Vilamajó 1999, 45-55, insist on a physical journey.
- 61 It is supported by Herodotos' preference for the phrase *κατύπερθε πρὸς βορέην* (4.7.3, 20.2, 22.1, 25.1), which recurs in a fragment of the *Arimaspeia* (fr. 5 Bernabé). Ivantchik 1993 asserts that Aristeeas has borrowed it from Ionic prose and dates him accordingly to ca. 500 BC. However, cf. Hinge 2005, 91-92.

- 62 τὸν γὰρ περὶ Ἀβάριος λόγον τοῦ λεγομένου εἶναι οὐ λέγω (λέγων, ὡς τὸν οἰσπὸν περιέφερε κατὰ πᾶσαν γῆν οὐδὲν σιτεόμενος). To avoid the repetition of the verb λέγειν, Rosén 1987 deletes the parenthesis, while Corcella & Medaglia 1993 defend the transmitted text. Such pleonasms are not unusual for Herodotos' Greek, e.g. 1.94.2 ἅμα δὲ ταύτας τε ἐξευρεθῆναι παρὰ σφίσι λέγουσι καὶ Τυρσηνὴν ἀποικίσαι, ὧδε περὶ αὐτῶν λέγοντες.
- 63 Cf. Meuli 1935, 159-160; Dodds 1951, 161 note 33; Burkert 1972b, 150 (criticism in Bolton 1962, 158; Bremmer 2002, 33).
- 64 Linforth 1918; Eliade 1970, 39-42.
- 65 Burkert 1972b, 159.
- 66 E.g. *Od.* 10.504-516, *Ar. Ran.* 136-270. S. West, 2007, 389-391, lists Indo-European parallels.
- 67 The initiands were abused verbally with so-called *gephyrisms* (γέφυρα "bridge") when crossing the bridge, i.e. so-called *gephyrismoι* (Strabon 9.1.24, Hsch. s.vv. γεφυρίς and γεφυρισταί).
- 68 The most thorough treatment of Herodotos' religiosity is Harrison 2000. He speaks about the "evangelizing purpose" of Herodotos' *Histories*, i.e. the propagation of the general idea that man is subjected to some kind of divine justice.
- 69 Burkert 1972b, 161.
- 70 The Scythian myth of origin (4.5-7) is probably associated with a rite of passage not unlike the Doric rituals concerning the inclusion to the three *phylai*; the young men are going through a phase of liminality including a ritual death, cf. Hinge 2003a. In Herodotos' discourse the signs of liminality are often extended to Scythia as such.
- 71 Graf 1974.
- 72 Vernant 1979.
- 73 Burkert 1990, 9-10.
- 74 Orphic vegetarianism is attested in *Eur. Hipp.* 952-954; *Ar. Ran.* 1032; *Plat. Leg.* 782<sup>c</sup>.
- 75 Cf. *Hell. fr.* 187b Fowler αὐτοὺς δικαιοσύνην μὴ κρεοφαγοῦντας, ἀλλ' ἀκροδρῦοις χρωμένους; the diet of Abaris is even more ascetic in *Hdt.* 4.36.1 (οὐ σιτεόμενος).
- 76 Hartog 1979.
- 77 For the archaeological background of the rituals described by Herodotos, see Murphy & Mallory 2000.
- 78 Shaw 1982-1983.
- 79 *Od.* 9.190-191 οὐδὲ ἐφ'κει ἀνδρὶ γε σιτοφάγῳ. According to Hesiodos, the warlike and hybriatic Bronze Race "did not eat bread, but had a fearless heart of steel" (*Op.* 146-147 οὐδέ τι σίτον ἥσθιον, ἀλλ' ἀδάμαντος ἔχον κρατερόφρονα θυμόν). Isokrates says that grain is "the reason why we do not live like wild animals" (*Paneg.* 28 τοὺς καρπούς οἱ τοῦ μὴ θηριωδῶς ζῆν ἡμᾶς αἵτιοι γεγόνασιν).
- 80 Schmidt 1975, 291, reads μονάδες instead of νομάδες, but the transmitted form is more special than the conjecture and therefore more probable.
- 81 Seaford 1982; idem 1984, 48-51.
- 82 According to Caesar (*BGall.* 6.23), the Germanic tribes showed their power by having as much empty borderland around their territories as possible. It may have been an ideal common to non-urbanised tribes in Central and Eastern Europe, cf. Hinge 2003b, 26-30.

- 83 Thus, from the point of view of the Scythians themselves, periphery becomes centre, cf. Hartog 1991, 153-157; Hinge 2003b, 28-30.
- 84 Meuli 1935; Dodds 1951, 134-178; Burkert 1972b, 120-165; West 1983, 143-150; Margreth 1993.
- 85 Bremmer 1983, 24-53; idem 2002, 27-40; Zhmud 1997, 107-116. Cf. also Dowden 1980.
- 86 Rudenko 1970, 284-285; Wolf & Andraschko 1991.
- 87 Dodds 1951, 161 note 32.
- 88 Eliade 1951; similarly Hermanns 1970, vol. 2, 343-346, argues that shamanism arose in an area between Persia, Tibet and India in the first centuries AD under the influence of Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. The Turkic word which is the source of the English *shaman* comes from Pali *śamaṇa*, Sanskrit *śramaṇa* "Buddhist monk".
- 89 Dowden 1979.
- 90 Karttunen 1989, 108-119; Halbfass 1991-1992.
- 91 Hinge 2005, 100-107.
- 92 In the pagan religion of the historical Indo-European peoples, it is a widespread conviction that the souls of the dead went to some kind of underworld, sometimes guarded by one or more dogs (West 387-396). The Greek word νέκταρ is probably derived from the PIE compound *\*nek'-trh2* "overcoming death" (cf. Watkins 1995, 491-397). Janda 2000 finds Indo-European (especially Indo-Iranian) parallels for the Eleusinian myths and rituals, but many of his etymologies are controversial.
- 93 Sulimirski 1985, 169-171; Thordarson 1988.
- 94 Compare the Kyklops of Homer (*Od.* 9.275-276 οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγίοχου ἀλέγουσιν οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἡ πολὺ φέρτεροί εἰμεν) and the Silver Race of Hesiod (*Op.* 135-136 οὐδ' ἀθανάτους θεράπευειν ἤθελον οὐδ' ἔρδειν μακάρων ἱεροῖς ἐπὶ βωμοῖς).
- 95 On the language of the Gelonoi, see Hinge 2005, 110-111.

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## Abbreviations

CIRB	Struve, V.V. 1965. <i>Korpus bosporskich nadpisej. Corpus inscriptionum regni Bosporani</i> . Moskva.
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> . Berlin.
IOSPE	Latyšev, V. 1885-1901. <i>Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae</i> . Leningrad.
LSAM	Sokolowski, F. 1955. <i>Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure</i> . Paris.
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> . Leiden.
Tit.Calymnii	Segre, M. 1944-1945. <i>Tituli Calymnii</i> , <i>ASAtene</i> 22-23, 1-248.

