Fear, Pity and Envy: Human Feelings in the Framework of Greek Colonisation*

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Introduction

When studying ancient Greek stories of colonisation, we have to agree, from the very beginning, that what we know largely depends on authors who lived much later than the events they describe. Thus, one of the best and most complete stories of colonisation may be found in Herodotus, who explains the origins of Cyrene almost two centuries after its foundation. These late stories are developed in a particular context in response to certain needs of respective moment, often with the aim of providing a community with an explanation about its remote past and identity. However, in this look to the past, some narrative patterns are recalled as useful means of explaining and understanding issues. I shall focus herein on some stories of colonisation that involved three human emotions or feelings, namely fear, pity and envy. I shall argue that these are part of a narrative structure repeated in different texts, with remarkable parallels in the myth of Odysseus, the most important travelling hero in Antiquity, whose adventures and misfortunes might have been a source of inspiration for tales of colonisation through the years.[1]

I. Fear

In an insightful article on writing and re-inventing colonial origins, David Braund states:

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[1] This idea is clearly expressed by MALKIN (1998: 3–5), who refers to Odysseus as a 'proto-colonial hero'.

> "There can be little doubt that much Greek settlement in new worlds far from home was conducted in a climate of fear and anxiety, not only in a spirit of desperation, profit-seeking or adventure. New terrains, new climates and new peoples with new customs had to be negotiated by Greek traders and settlers who were the products of traditional and rooted societies."[2]

Indeed, the set up of a colonial expedition involved ignorance and uncertainty about many aspects of the enterprise, in which fear might originate. On the foundation of Cyrene, Herodotus reports that when Grinnus, the king of Thera, receives the first oracle asking him to establish a colony in Libya, the Theraeans decide to ignore it because "they did not know where Libya was, and did not dare to send a colony out to an uncertain destination (ἐς ἀφανὲς χρῆμα)."[3] In other words, the Theraeans were afraid of engaging themselves in a dangerous journey to an unknown place. And they were probably right since at that time, navigation involved many difficulties and risks.[4]

Archilochus of Paros, who is supposed to have been personally involved in the colonisation of Thasos,[5] sheds some light in understanding this experience. In one of his fragmentary poems,[6] he mentions the sudden fear that overwhelms him (κιχάνει δ᾽ ἐξ ἀελπτίης φόβος) at the sight of a large cloud rising on the horizon before a storm (σῆμα χειμῶνος), a sign of imminent threat mostly for sailors.[7] Certainly, Archilochus was aware of the fatal consequences of shipwreck: in another elegiac poem, he consoles a friend called Pericles and their relatives following the death of a group of fellow citizens at sea.[8]

Conversely, if the expedition was successful and colonists settled the new land, another problem arose: how would they deal with the local inhabitants? Indeed, relations between the Greek colonists and the natives are fundamental to the development of many colonies. We may assume that establishment of good understanding with the local population was

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[2] Braund 1998: 290.
[3] Hdt. 4.150.4: […] οὔτε Λιβύην εἰδότες ὅκου γῆς εἴη οὔτε τολμῶντες ἐς ἀφανὲς χρῆμα ἀποστέλλειν ἀποικίην.
[4] Heavy weather conditions, like strong winds and storms, were the primary danger when travelling by sea, however the texts also mention pirates and enemy fleets as sources of risk.
[5] On the date, see Pouilloux 1963: 10: "il est clair, en tout cas que le poète vint vers une cité déjà établie, sinon forte encore, dans les années 660-650 sans doute."
[6] Archil. Fr. 105 W.
[7] Heraclit. All. 5.2 gives a metaphorical reading of these verses, according to which the cloud heralds imminent war or political unrest, see Lasserre – Bonnard 1958: 33; Tandy 2004: 184f.
[8] Stob. 4.56.30 = Archil. Fr. 13 W.

particularly important at the founding time, when the Greek settlers were in a more fragile situation.[9] However, these are mere assumptions, as although our knowledge of the early stages of colonisation has improved substantially through archaeology, Graham's following statement still holds true:

> "[…] the initial relations between colonists and natives can only be grasped, at best, in a vague and general manner. Yet we do know that these relations tan the gamut from most hostile, when colonization was achieved by the forcible expulsion of the native inhabitants, to most friendly, when the colony was established at the invitation of the local people."[10]

Therefore, awareness of the extent of hospitality to be expected on behalf of the local populations might have proven very useful when setting up a colonial expedition. We may imagine that in the archaic period, stories about far-away peoples were already verbally conveyed in order to supply traders and sailors with useful navigation data. In fact, even in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is reported as a valuable information source to learn about foreigners, thanks to his travel experience. Thus, as he is welcomed on the island of the Phaeacians, king Alcinous asks him to explain where he had sailed to and what cities he had seen; moreover, he asks him to differentiate cruel, wild and unjust populations (χαλεποί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι) from those hospitable (φιλόξεινοι) and pious (νόος … θεουδής).[11] In the context of an epic poem, such question may be considered a mere narrative resource to facilitate progression of the story.[12] However, taking into account the importance of Homer's poems in archaic Greek society, the differentiation that Alcinous establishes among hospitable and inhospitable populations provides a first and basic classification attempt of foreign peoples.

Relations between Greek settlers and indigenous populations most likely developed within a general context of fear and mistrust, as both communities took risks in approaching each other. Nevertheless, the Greek presence might have also incurred benefits to the indigenous people. As suggested by some accounts, some natives willingly welcomed the Greeks and even helped them settle their land. The case of Cyrene, as narrated by Herodotus, offers a good example of this indigenous 'collaboration': the Theraeans, after many failed attempts to found the city in the

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[9] On the relations among Greeks and natives, see Tréziny 2010 (with further bibliography).
[10] Graham 2001: 149.
[11] Hom. *Od*. 8.573-576. Odysseus asks the same question in three different moments during his travel: upon waking on the island of the Phaeacians (*Od*. 6.120f.); on setting out to see the Cyclops (9.176f.), and upon waking on Ithaca (13.200-202), Heubeck [et al.] 1988: 301.
[12] In fact, after this question, Odysseus is going to explain his adventures to Alcinous and the other Phaeacians, de Jong 2001: 217–219.

right place, managed to settle in Cyrene thanks to the guidance of the local inhabitants,[13] who, however, did deceive the Greek settlers and gave them inferior land.[14] Furthermore, we know about some Greek colonies established at the invitation of the native people, usually through the mediation of their king. Below are some of these:

1) Megara Hyblaea provides the earliest case. According to Thucydides, Hyblon, king of the Siculi, led a group of Greeks from Thapsos and gave them land to settle (προδόντος τὴν χώραν), founding the colony.[15] Ephorus' explanation of the same episode gives interesting details concerning the beginning of the colony, whose foundation occurred "in the tenth generation after the Trojan War"[16] because "before that, the Greeks were afraid of the bands of Etruscan pirates (δεδιέναι τὰ ληιστήρια τῶν Τυρρηνῶν) and the savagery of the native people there (ὠμότητα τῶν ταύτηι βαρβάρων), so that they did not even navigate there for trade."[17] Although the record of the Etruscan piracy has often been considered anachronistic,[18] this text allows us to understand how the indigenous reality was believed an element at stake in the Greeks' choice of a destination. Thus, perception of the indigenous reality as dangerous or risky might have discouraged the sending of colonists, while the benevolent attitude of the Sicel king might have helped to promote or reinforce the Greek presence in Sicily.

2) According to Herodotus, Argantonius, king of Tartessos, befriended a group of Phocaeans (προσφιλέες), who arrived on the Iberian Peninsula, inviting them to settle the *chora* of his kingdom, wherever they desired (τῆς ἑωυτοῦ χώρης οἰκῆσαι ὅκου βούλονται). Yet, despite his generous offer, he failed to persuade the Greeks to stay and they sailed back to Phocaea.[19]

3) A very similar situation is recorded about Lampsacos. According to Plutarch,[20] following Charon of Lampsacos,[21] the king of the Bebryces,[22] Mandron, gave to his friend and guest (φίλος καὶ ξένος) Phobos of

[13] See Calame 1996: 128–135, who states (135) that: "Les indigènes prennent donc le relais du dieu de Delphes et finissent par conduire les colons de Théra […] C'est alors au *Destinateur* indigène qu'il appartient de prononcer la *sanction* de l'action finalement parvenue à son achèvement." The date of foundation of Cyrene is conventionally set at 631 BC, see Asheri [et al.] 2007: 671.
[14] Hdt. 4.158.2.
[15] Thuc. 6.4.1.
[16] Megara Hyblaea was founded around 728 BC (Tréziny 2016).
[17] Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 137a (transl. by Graham 2001: 151). Other authors who refer to the foundation are Ps.Scymn. 270-279; Str. 6.267; Polyaen. 5.5.
[18] Graham 2001: 154.
[19] Hdt. 1.163.
[20] Plu. *Mul. Vir*. 255a-c.
[21] Charon of Lampsacos was allegedly a contemporary of Herodotus, Boulogne 2002: 305, n. 206; Fowler 2013: 641–643.
[22] On this people, see Moret 2006: 59–64.

Phocaea "part of his territory and his city" (μέρος τῆς τε χώρας καὶ τῆς πόλεως), in reward for his aid in defeating their neighbours.

4) For the foundation of Massalia, a group of Phocaeans, under the command of two men, Simos and Protis, arrived at Massalia.[23] The Greeks sought out the king of the Segobriges,[24] Nannus, with the goal of establishing friendly relations. Nannus welcomed them as guests (*hospites*) and invited them to attend the wedding ceremony of his daughter Gyptis. Unexpectedly, Protis was chosen by Gyptis as husband and thus he became a member of the royal family, which in fact represented the settlement of the Greeks in that place.[25]

5) In another passage by Plutarch on the foundation of new Cryassa in Caria,[26] it is said that the Melians, due to lack of land, decided to send out colonists. When they reached Cryassa in Caria, a terrible storm destroyed their ships and left them completely helpless. Then, the locals, moved by compassion and fear, invited them to stay and even gave them part of their territory (τῆς χώρας μετέδωκαν).

All these episodes share a similar pattern of favourable reception and integration of the Greeks. The reasons why indigenous peoples welcome the new settlers are not always explicit, although the interest of the local authorities (mostly kings) for favouring their integration is noteworthy. This is also a common pattern in epic stories; we can mention, by way of example, the case of Odysseus at the court of the Phaeacians.

II. Pity

A most interesting case can be found in the history of the foundation of the new Cryassa in Caria, where the generous offer of the locals is presented as a result of two human feelings: on one hand, the inhabitants of Cryassa felt sorry for the misfortune of the Greeks, but on the other, they were afraid, because the first had the courage to leave their homeland in search for new settlements. In a way, the locals' outlook seems contradictory, however it may probably be interpreted as strategy to avoid any possible threats; in other words, it was better to accept and integrate these newcomers into their community than risk violent confrontations.

As far as I know, this is the only case in which fear and compassion are mentioned jointly. However, compassion underlies many supplication scenes in Greek myth. In fact, the figure of the suppliant is recurrent in

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[23] Just. 43.3.8-13. On this passage, see Hermary [et al.] 1999: 36–67.
[24] For this ethnic group, see Urso 2016: 175, n. 14.
[25] Marriage was a mean to establish solidarity bonds between Greeks and local aristocracies, Nenci – Cataldi 1983: 591–594; Braund 2019: 81f.
[26] Plu. *Mul. Vir*. 7 [246D-E].

Greek literature since the Homeric poems and Odysseus is an excellent example of this. For instance, when Odysseus returns to Ithaca, Eumaeus, his swineherd, welcomes him because he fears Zeus Xenios[27] and takes pity on Odysseus, whom he believes an unhappy suppliant (ἱκέτης).[28]

Attic tragedies also developed many plots around suppliants. Usually, suppliants arrive in a foreign city in total despair, fleeing their home-town pursued by unfair men or creatures and asking the locals for help. Somehow, the Melians from Cryassa may be assimilated to a group of suppliants, deprived of resources and in the greatest misfortune; yet, the Carians' fearful behaviour lets us think that the Greeks did not look completely harmless.

III. Envy

Indeed, we know that the development of some colonies damaged over time the interests of the locals, to the point that the native inhabitants began to feel envy upon the Greeks and even violently react against their presence.[29] For some examples, let's return to a few of aforementioned cases:

1) In Cyrene, Herodotus[30] accounts that 56 years after foundation, when Battus the Blessed (ca. 583-570 BC)[31] inherited the throne, an oracle invited all Greeks to settle in Cyrene: a new land distribution was prepared (ἐπὶ γῆς ἀναδασμῷ). As a result of this call, many Greeks arrived and settled in Cyrene,[32] putting an end to the peaceful relations with Libyans which led to a war. The Libyans' discomfort is clearly explained by Herodotus: they were "deprived of their land and treated with violence by the Cyrenaeans".[33] Since they were unable to stop the expansion of Cyrene, they asked their Egyptian neighbours for help, but the alliance was unsuccessful and they were severely defeated. Therefore, the victory of Cyrene came to consolidate Greek sovereignty over the land, expanding its territory at the expense of the neighbouring indigenous population.[34]

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[27] Zeus Xenios was protector of *xenia* or hospitality since Homer (see Lacore 1991; Santiago Álvarez 2004: 30f., 33, 37; 2007: 739f.; 2013). On Greek inscriptions documenting the cult of Zeus Xenios, see Oller Guzmán forthcoming.

[28] Hom. *Od*. 14.386-389; on this passage, see Dougherty 2001: 57f.

[29] On this kind of 'broken' relationship, see Oller Guzmán 2021.

[30] Hdt. 4.159.

[31] Zurbach 2017: 656.

[32] Those were ἔποικοι. For a study on the ἔποικοι in the Black Sea colonies, see Avram 2012.

[33] Hdt. 4.159.4: […] τῆς τε χώρης στερισκόμενοι καὶ περιβριζόμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν Κυρηναίων.

[34] Piñol 2015: 52; Zurbach 2017: 656f.

2) In Lampsacos, the abuses committed by the Greek settlers are also recorded, together with the violent response of the locals.[35] The Greek colonists, who arrived in the city invited by the king of the Bebryces, started to raid the territory of the neighbouring indigenous peoples sometime after their arrival. These plundering expeditions disquieted the Bebryces, who at first were envious of the gains made by the Greeks, but later began to fear the Phocaeans (Φωκαεῖς … ἐπίφθονοι τὸ πρῶτον εἶτα καὶ φοβεροὶ τοῖς Βέβρυξιν). Therefore, they decided to eradicate the Greeks. However, their plan was unsuccessful, thanks to the treason of an indigenous woman called Lampsace. As a result, the Greeks stayed and even re-founded the city changing its name to the one of Lampsacos.

3) In Massalia, the remarkable and rapid development of the city ended up provoking the discontent of the local population. Justin mentions the 'envy' of the Ligurians (*Ligures incrementis urbis invidentes*), whose discomfort led them to constantly attack the Phocaean city. Finally, Comanus, the son of Nannus, decided to put an end to the expansion of Massalia, as he feared that the Greeks, rather than remaining tenants, might become masters of the land (*Non aliter Massilienses, qui nunc inquilini videantur, dominos quandoque regionum futuros*).[36] So, he devised a plot to take the city, but an anonymous indigenous woman, who was in love with a Greek, comes to ruin his stratagem and aids the Massaliots consolidate their power in the region.

4) If we now turn to new Cryassa of Caria, according to Plutarch, the Melian settlement grew so rapidly (πολλὴν ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ λαμβάνοντας αὔξησιν ὁρῶντες), that the Carians devised a plan to destroy it. They again failed thanks to the interference of an indigenous woman, called Caphene, in love with a Greek named Nymphaios. Later, the indigenous city was completely destroyed and replaced by new Cryassa.[37]

Similarities between these colonisation stories seem to fit a pattern of foundation myths widely known in Antiquity. Nevertheless, some historical texts point to a real background with respect to the desire for wealth or gain of some Greek settlers. Thus, in another fragmentary poem, Archilochus mentions 'private gain' (οἰκείωι δὲ κέρδει), that is personal profit, as the origin of many problems (κακά) in Thasos, the colony of Paros.[38] When commenting this verse, J. Pouilloux states:

> "En 650, Thasos est une cité en pleine croissance, déchirée peut-être par les passions individuelles, par le goût de lucre qui possède des conquérants

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[35] Plu. *Mul. Vir*. 255a-c.
[36] Just. 43.4.3-8.
[37] Plu. *Mul. Vir*. 7 (246D-E).
[38] Archil. Fr. 93a W; Tandy 2004: 184–187.

trop avides, mais riche déjà […] les chiens de Thrace ne devenaient bien souvent enragés qu'en raison de la cupidité des nouveaux arrivés."[39]

However, the expansion of a colony through looting and appropriation of land from neighbouring populations was not always successful. See, for instance, the failed expansion of the Phocaeans in Alalia, where the new Greek settlers were defeated by a coalition of Etruscans and Carthaginians ca. 540 BC.[40]

IV. Back to Fear

A failed foundation left the group of settlers without land and the path they had to undertake was not easy: some tried to find other land to found a new colony – this is the case of the surviving Phocaeans from Alalia –, while others tried the way back home. In both cases, what we see is a return to fear. Even for those who wanted to return to their former city, it was impossible to know how they would be received by their former fellow citizens. Indeed, in the well-known inscription of the foundation of Cyrene there is a specific mention of a hypothetical return of colonists, in the event that colonisation failed. The inscription dates to the 4th century, but contains in lines 23–40 what is allegedly the original decree of the late 7th century BC. Lines 33–37 read as follows:

> Αἰ δέ κα μὴ κατ[έχ]|ωντι τὰν οἰκισίαν μη [δὲ τὰν πό]λιν δύνανται ἐπικτί[ζε]|³⁵ν, ἀλλὰ ἀνάγκαι ἀχθῶντι, ἔτη ἐπὶ πέντε ἐκ τᾶς γᾶς ἀπίμ[εν]| ἀδιέως Θήρανδε ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτῶγ χρήματα καὶ ἦμεμ πολιά[τ]|ας.[41]

> "that if on the contrary they do not hold on the settlement and are not able to settle on the city but are compelled by overwhelming necessity, they should within five years fearless leave the country (and sail back) to Thera and their belongings and be full-right citizens" (trans. by C. Dobias-Lalou).

The text clearly establishes a five-year period during which they could return home without fear, namely without danger. In other words, as Malkin clearly states, Theran colonists "are granted the right to return home".[42] However, past this period, it is understood that if someone returns, he risks not being welcomed any more. The inscription reveals the difficulty inherent to any colonisation project, whether successful or not.

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[39] Pouilloux 1963: 17, 26.
[40] Hdt. 1.165f.; Zurbach 2017: 647–650.
[41] IGCyr 011000, DOI: http://doi.org/10.6092/UNIBO/IGCYRGVCYR.
[42] Malkin 2016: 40f.

Conclusions

To sum up, some stories of colonisation identify fear at the beginning of any colonial enterprise, firstly due to the risks of journey by sea, and, secondly, to the contact with indigenous populations with different customs and rules. Regardless, some stories record the willing outlook of the local inhabitants before the Greeks: they aided the colonists find a good location for the new city or even gave them part of their own land. In only one case, compassion underlies such generosity of the locals, but it comes together with fear. Certainly, indigenous populations might be not only afraid but also envious of the rapid development of any Greek colony, interpreted as a threat to local interests. And they might be probably right, since in many cases Greek colonists abused of local resources and tried to expand their control over land.

In most of the cases compiled here, the Greeks managed to impose themselves and consolidate their presence, however, in at least one case they were defeated and had to leave the site. Then, the colonists were back to square one, facing again the fear of a journey to an unknown destination with totally unknown local populations. In a way, this situation is similar to the experience of Odysseus, who at first is unable to recognise Ithaca when he finally finds himself on its shores, and he fears that he might be in another foreign land with other natives, whose nature, whether cruel or hospitable, was once more completely unknown to him. One may possibly see here the desire of writing the history of the Greek colonisation as replication of heroic adventures and misfortunes, "discovering a function of mythology which the Greeks never finished exploiting".[43]

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[43] Pouilloux 1963: 18.

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Abstract: This article aims to discuss the role of three human feelings (fear, pity and envy) in some stories of colonisation, where they define three key moments in the development of any colonial expedition: the departure to unknown land, the encounter with its inhabitants, and confrontation over resources. These stories reproduce a similar narrative pattern of clear epic resonances, in which the echo of Odysseus's experience, sung by Homer, can be glimpsed.

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag zielt darauf ab, die Rolle dreier menschlicher Gefühle (Angst, Mitleid und Neid) in einigen Geschichten der Kolonisation zu analysieren, wobei drei entscheidende Momente für die Entwicklung einer Kolonialexpedition definiert werden: der Aufbruch in ein unbekanntes Land, die Begegnung mit dessen Bewohnern und die Konfrontation um Ressourcen. Diese Geschichten reproduzieren ein ähnliches Erzählschema mit deutlichen epischen Resonanzen, in dem das Echo der von Homer besungenen Erfahrung des Odysseus zu erahnen ist.