

Colonization of Cyrene: A Historiographic Perspective

By Robert Richards

HST 499 Senior Thesis

Professor Kimberly Jensen

April 30, 2011

The colonization of Cyrene during the seventh century BC is among the extensively documented instances of colonization by ancient Greeks. Both Herodotus of Halicarnassus and Pindar of Thebes wrote of the personalities and events surrounding Cyrene's foundation. The inscription *SEG ix 3* located on the marble 'Stele di Fonditori' found at Cyrene describes various aspects of the colonization as well.¹ Each of the three sources varies in the amount of detail it provides and the details included in each account, while similar in many respects, differ significantly. This paper seeks to examine and compare these sources with a view to determining their accuracy as far as possible within the parameters of this study. Necessarily, this exercise probes Delphi's role as the conveyer of Apollo's directive that Cyrene be colonized as it seems crucial for examining the city's post-foundation legacy. The information concerning Cyrene's legacy, Delphi's central role, and the colonization stories will be integrated to explain how the differences encountered in the three texts mentioned above signal a manipulation of Cyrene's colonization narrative over time.

Pindar, an ancient Greek poet of great renown, refers to prophetic origins of Cyrene's colonization several times in the victory Odes, Pythian 4 and Pythian 5.² The Odes provide little more information about the colonization than that a man named Battus traveled from the island of Thera to Apollo's oracle at Delphi seeking a cure for his speech impediment and was told by the priestess to colonize Cyrene in Libya. Pindar writes "the priestess prophesied that Battos should come to colonize the corn-lands of

¹ A. J. Graham, "The Authenticity of the the horkion ton oikisteron of Cyrene," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 80 (1960): 95.

² Pindar's Pythian 9 includes the tale of Apollo's conquest of the nymph Cyrene after spying her fight with a lion. The Spring of Apollo issues from the spot where the coupling took place. Cyrene was later founded along the flanks of the stream it produces and a temple to Apollo was built in the cave from which the stream flows. Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar*. (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1955).

Libya,”³ then later “at last colonized the Lovely Island, Thera; whence Apollo, Lato’s son, has granted Libya’s plain to be yours, to make great in God’s right, and the city divine of golden-throne Kyrene to be administered”.⁴ Near the end he notes “...the winged priestess, who, with threefold salutation, revealed you destined to be king of Kyrene (in eastern Libya), as you came to ask what release the gods might grant of your stammering voice.”⁵ Pindar’s narrative concerning the oracle is only partially borne out in the inscription on the Stele. “...Since Apollo spontaneously told Battos and the Therans to colonize Cyrene.”⁶

The oracular reference in Pythian 5 is embedded in the tale of how Battus came to be cured of his speech impediment. While hunting in the wilds the monarch had both surprised and been surprised by a pride of lions whereupon the lions “fled before Battus in terror when he unloosed on them his strange tongue, and Apollo, the founder of the State, doomed the wild beasts...so his oracles might not be unfulfilled for the ruler of Cyrene.”⁷ No references to Battus’s stammering and subsequent cure appear in the SEG ix 3 inscription text.

The SEG ix 3 inscription provides a substantial amount of detail concerning the selection of colonists from among the island’s population.⁸ The information is absent in Pindar’s Odes and is only partially corroborated by Herodotus. It indicates that a quota was established and a selection of males took place from among the families of Thera

³ Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar*, 57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶ Charles W Fornara. *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War*. (1983; 2nd ed. Rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23.

⁷ Pindar. *The Odes of Pindar*. eds., E. H. Warmington, T. E. Page, E. Capps, W.H.D. Rouse, and L. A. Post. Trans. Sir John Sandys. (1919. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 239 note 1.

⁸ Fornara, *Archaic Times*, 23.

with a maximum of one son per household eligible for conscription. It was understood that any male could volunteer. An obligation of five years participation at the colony was imposed on the chosen, after which, if the colony foundered, the men were free to return to Thera or pursue their fortunes elsewhere. Anyone who refused the honor of participation was to be executed and their goods confiscated. Kinsmen of the settlers were entitled to rights in the colony if they chose to immigrate there in the future.

Herodotus, in *Book IV*, confirms the inscription's claim of a conscription of males to populate the colony and the assertion (made in both the inscription and by Pindar) that Thera received an oracle at Delphi to colonize Cyrene.⁹ Moreover, he adds a substantial amount of detailed information by relating a Lacedaemonian (Spartan) history of Battus's tribe¹⁰; a traditional Theran version which contradicts Pindar's reference to stammering as the reason Battus went to Delphi, and an expanded Cyrenaen account which includes the stammering.¹¹ According to the Theran version Battus went to Delphi merely as a member of King Grinnus' entourage, not to cure his speech impediment, and that it was Grinnus who received the oracle. The passages "Grinnus...king of the island of Thera, went to Delphi...accompanied by a large number...among the rest by Battus,"¹² and "Grinnus consulting the oracle about sundry matters, the Pythoness gave him for answer,

⁹ Herodotus. *Herodotus in Four Volumes: II, Books III-IV*. Ed., by E. H. Warmington, T. E. Page, E. Capps, W.H.D. Rouse, and L. A. Post. Trans. A D Godley. (1921. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), 335.

¹⁰ In many accounts Battus was a member of the Minyae tribe from Lemnos, descendents of Lemnosians and Jason's Argonauts who settled on the island after returning from their epic adventures. The Cyrenaic version presented by Herodotus includes a Cretan princess as Battus' mother.

¹¹ According to Herodotus the traditional Theran narrative also claims that Battus and the colonists failed in their initial attempt to find Libya. They retreated to Delphi where the Priestesses reconfirmed the oracle that they should colonize Libya. The second attempt at colonizing Libya proved successful after several years.

¹² Robert M. Hutchins et.al., eds., , *The History of Herodotus*. Trans.George Rawlinson. (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), 150.

‘that he should found a city in Libya’¹³ exemplify the Theran narrative. It should also be noted that Grinnus, once delivered of the oracle scoffed, saying that he was too advanced in his years to participate and sarcastically redirected the duty to Battus.¹⁴

The Cyrenaen tradition as told by Herodotus agrees largely with Pindar; in that it claims Battus journeyed to Delphi upon reaching manhood and asked to be cured of his speech impediment. But, instead of a cure he was given an oracle appointing him to the prestigious position of ‘oikist’ and king of a new colony in Libya¹⁵, “Battus, thou camest to ask of thy voice; but Phoebus Apollo bids thee establish a city in Libya, abounding in fleeces”.¹⁶ Herodotus’ Cyrenaen version, which was possibly derived from a local source or tradition, includes the unique claim that Battus was born of a princess from the island of Crete.

Pindar of Thebes (c.518-c.446 BCE) was a lyrical poet by profession and is the earliest source of the three mentioned above. Although he was not a historian he is credited with being the “first poet to marshal and explain a chain of historical events.”¹⁷ Pindar’s life began in a small Boetian town near Thebes where he received his early education. From Thebes he relocated to Athens and took up the study of lyrical composition. Upon completion of his studies Pindar returned to Thebes and began his career as a poet. After establishing himself as a local professional he traveled the Greek

¹³ Ibid., 150.

¹⁴ Herodotus, *Herodotus in Four Volumes*, 353.

¹⁵ ‘Oikist’ is the title or moniker of the founding leader of a colony. Nicholson indicates that “The founder of a Greek city held special status, above that of its other rulers; he was felt to have a talismanic power, on which the city could draw, and without which it would cease to flourish.” Nicholson, “Polysemy and Ideology”, 197. For a comprehensive discussion of the cultic role of the ‘oikist’ see Irad Malkin’s *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987).

¹⁶ Hutchins, *History of Herodotus*, 151.

¹⁷ Chester G. Starr, "Pindar and the Greek Historical Spirit," *Hermes* 95, no. 4 (1967): 403.

world marketing his services while regularly attending the four major festivals of games; the Olympian at Olympus, the Pythian at Delphi, the Isthmian at Corinth, and the Nemean at Nemea. Renowned for his exceptional victory odes, he was quickly accepted into aristocratic social circles. Politically he was known as a supporter of oligarchy while fearing the poorest classes and showing some appreciation for the middle classes.¹⁸

During the fifth century BC athletic contests played an important and complex role in Greek society. According to Catherine Morgan the contests were “high consequence events with emphasis placed on personal victory and prestige, and they played a major role in articulating relations between states of differing political complexions.”¹⁹ So, through victory, an individual competitor could not only bring fame and prestige to himself he could provide his mother city with a considerable infusion of political capital. The prestige gained through victory extended across class lines and throughout the city.²⁰ In essence, everyone shared in the blessings of victory.

For ancient Greeks victory was interpreted as being a product of the divine. Kevin Crotty describes the connection, “Excellence is a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of success. Victory may be described as the fortunate conjunction of one’s projects and divine benevolence;”²¹ Smith, however, identifies a causal context with the connection by stating that “In Pindar, victors have inborn ability, something given by the gods...Inborn qualities carry weight” whereas “learned or acquired ability, is shadowy and

¹⁸ Ibid., 403.

¹⁹ Simon Hornblower and Catherine Morgan, eds. *Pindar's Poetry, Patron's, and Festivals: From Archaic Greece to the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 214.

²⁰ Ibid., 166.

²¹ Kevin Crotty, *Song and Action: The Victory Odes of Pindar* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 6.

ineffectual.”²² Both authors agree that the outcome of the contest, positive or negative, was the conclusion of a conscious attempt to achieve a unique metaphysical goal.

Pindar viewed the composition of his odes in a way similar to the way that Greek athletes viewed participation in the games. He believed that producing an ode served as a companion effort to the athlete’s divine exertions. The ode, once completed, enhanced not only the athlete’s achievement but signaled the reaching of the poet’s personal metaphysical goal as well. “The completed ode is the ‘victorious’ conclusion of the poet’s action,”²³ and through it the poet demonstrates a personal connection to the divine.

To establish and reinforce the connection between victor and the divine Pindar composed a layered narrative in which divine imagery and symbols were superimposed onto historical and contemporary figures and events.²⁴ The layering of imagery and symbols was achieved through exploitation of polysemy, the multiple meanings of a single word. Nicholson, in *Polysemy and Ideology in Pindar: Pythian 4.229-230*, provides a wonderful example of Pindar’s method in which he examines the poet’s use of the word ‘bedclothes’ and its symbolic importance to ancient Greeks.²⁵ He explains that the word was associated with a ‘fleece’ and in terms of imagery was connected to the Golden Fleece obtained by Jason. In addition, it bore the connotations of “foundation”, “growth”, and “marriage”. Nicholson explains how Pindar’s method of layering symbolic and narrative operated:

²² Hornblower and Morgan, *Pindar's Poetry*, 109-110.

²³ Crotty, *Song and Action*, 7.

²⁴ Nigel Nicholson, "Polysemy and Ideology in Pindar Pythian 4.229-230," *Phoenix* 54, no. 3/4 (Winter 2000): 191.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

The complex framing of Jason's victory with narratives of foundation and marriage in turn undergirds Pindar's praise of Arcesilas. Like Jason, Arcesilas is victorious...and, through assimilation of Jason to Arcesilas, Arcesilas' equestrian victory becomes a symbol not only of prosperity and progress, but also of foundation.²⁶

Claude Calame also discusses Pindar's layering of narrative and symbolism in Pythian 4 but he focuses on imagery revolving around the god Apollo and legendary Trojan heroes.²⁷ The theme involves the heroization of Battus, oikist of Cyrene, and through him the overt subject of the ode, Arcesilas IV, distant heir to Battus and King of Cyrene. The resulting literary effect is to frame the victory of Arcesilas in terms of fulfilling the Destiny of the colony and completing Apollo's divine plan.²⁸ The Ode's message is clear – Battus received the foundation oracle from Apollo's priestesses at Delphi therefore the Battiad heirs derived royal authority directly from their connection to Apollo. To challenge the validity of the Battiad claim would be a challenge to a god from Olympus.

Both Pindar's Pythian 4 and the closely related Pythian 5 were composed in honor of a single Cyrenaen victory in 462 BC while Pythian 9 celebrated the victory of Telesicrates in the armored sprint race at Delphi in 44BC.²⁹ Pythian 5 was commissioned by King Arcesilas IV while Pythian 4 was likely composed at the behest of one Damophilus, an exile attempting to curry favor with the King of Cyrene over some past

²⁶ Ibid., 197.

²⁷ Claude Calame, *Myth and History in Ancient Greece*. trans. Daniel W Berman (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 86. It should be noted that much of the imagery concerning Apollo, Trojan heroes, Battus, Cyrene's foundation, and Arcesilas present in Pythian 4 occurs in both Pythian 5 and Pythian 9.

²⁸ Ibid., 43-44.

²⁹ Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar*, 232, 270.

transgression; possibly he spoke against the king.³⁰ Pythian 4 and 5 commemorate the victory of Arcesilas IV's chariot team during the Pythian Games at Delphi. The charioteer, Karrhotus, was Arcesilas IV's brother-in-law and Euphamos acted as "manager".³¹

The significance of victory in ancient Greece is well established and its pursuit would have been a desirable activity for a variety of reasons but for Arcesilas IV the victory of his team at Delphi played an important role in a very specific dynastic agenda.³² His succession had been disputed and while he enjoyed the political backing of Persia his contempt and cruelty toward his subjects had turned many of them, including the aristocrats, against him.³³ The new king's position on the throne was tenuous. The victory in the games at Delphi had increased his political capital and Pythian 4 and 5 could only serve to amplify his triumph. He hoped to use the victory as leverage against his domestic political foes while stalling for time and recruiting foreign mercenaries to preserve his position on the throne. But his victory in 462BC and another at Olympia two years later were not enough to retain his crown. He was forced to abdicate and fled to Euehesperides (modern day Benghazi) where he was murdered as late as 440BC.³⁴

³⁰ Nicholson, "Polysemy and Ideology", 191. There is an argument to be made for Karrhotos the charioteer acting as the patron of Pythian 4 (see B. M. Mitchell, "Cyrene and Persia," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 86 (1966):109.

³¹ Mitchell, "Cyrene and Persia", 108.

³² Ibid. see also Nicholson, "Polysemy and Ideology," 191.

³³ Mitchell, "Cyrene and Persia", 108.

³⁴ Ibid., 110; the specific dates of Arcesilas IV's regnum and death are not entirely clear. Mitchell does not assign specific years to the coronation, abdication, and murder. Claude Calame places the coronation in 462BC and his death in 440BC (*Myth and History*, 36).

Herodotus, c.484BC-c.425 BC, is the second and most comprehensive of the three primary sources under examination.³⁵ Like Pindar he spent much of his life traveling Greece and the Mediterranean world. Early in life he was exiled from his home in Halicarnassus and ended up in Samos with his mother. It is possible, due to ease of travel during the years of the Delian League, that from Samos he visited other places but it is not certain. According to Myres he probably made four journeys of inquiry; the first to the Black Sea as far east as Pontus, then to the eastern Balkans and south into Macedonia; the second to Ionia, into Phrygia, south to Cyprus, east to Syria and Assyria (possibly as far as Babylon) then west to Gaza and Palestine; the third to North Africa including Cyrene; the fourth specifically to Egypt.³⁶ At some point during his adulthood he came to reside in Athens. In the later years of his life, after 443BC, he moved residence from Athens to the colony of Thurii in Magna Graecia but may have returned east prior to his death; the colony's sentiment had drifted away from support of Athens.³⁷

Exactly what Herodotus believed his profession to be remains unclear as he makes no specific declaration on the subject. Initially his professional motivation seems to have been travel and the study of various ethnologies but it shifted at some point to the writing of history.³⁸ However, Myres provides an apt insight when he writes:

³⁵ Hutchins, *History of Herodotus*, ix.

³⁶ John L. Myers, *Herodotus: Father of History*. (1953. Rpt., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 5-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13, 16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

A companion so full of good stories would not want for a meal or a bed; and the colloquial style and vivid narrative of the *Histories* support ancient belief that Herodotus lectured publicly and was paid for this.³⁹

Although his career as a traveler, ethnologist, and lecturer extended across many decades Herodotus does not appear to have ever stated his historiographic method outright;⁴⁰ or at least no such statement has yet been uncovered. There are, however, some useful clues contained within his various writings from which some aspects or characteristics of his historiographic method might be discerned.

When considering Herodotus' possible method it is important to note that for the Ancient Greeks there existed no word for 'source' as historians know it today.⁴¹ In fact, as Myres points out, Herodotus rarely names his sources more specifically than referring to a single given name or profession;⁴² for instance he would claim the account came from the man "Archias" or from the "Egyptian clerk". Indeed, Herodotus was averse to naming specific sources to the point that, in his *Histories*, he mentions only one writer of prose among them, Hecataeus, and even then he was included equally in the context of an active political participant.⁴³

Although Herodotus lacked a word for 'source' he did contextualize and place his information into a rubric. The sources were divided between the categories 'eyewitness' and 'hearsay' and to them he applied what he referred to as 'inquiry'.⁴⁴ Today a historian

³⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁰ Egbert J Bakker, Irene J F De Jong, and Hans Van Wees, eds., *Brill's Companion To Herodotus* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 375.

⁴¹ Ibid., 374.

⁴² Myres, *Herodotus*, 10.

⁴³ Bakker, *Brill's Companion*, 510.

might be hesitant to include ‘hearsay’ in a written history, however, Herodotus addressed the criticism indirectly by indicating in his texts that he would reserve judgment on hearsay but felt a duty to report it.⁴⁵ It is possible that because so few written sources existed, to omit an entire category of material (even a category entitled ‘hearsay’) might leave an un-necessary and eternal hole in his narrative; which would, in essence, defeat his purpose.

Moreover, oral tradition falls squarely within the category of hearsay. Oral tradition played a central role in the Ancient Greek understanding of their world⁴⁶ and “It is generally agreed that Herodotus gathered most of his information from oral tradition.”⁴⁷ And, quite relevant to the present discussion, there is evidence that Herodotus may have had access to an oral tradition about Cyrene prior to his visit.⁴⁸ So to disqualify hearsay would leave not a hole in the human narrative, the narrative would be left in tatters.

Herodotus’ heavy reliance on oral sources must also be viewed in the context of the way that ancient Greek society as a whole conceptualized the oral transmission of information. Oration was a prized skill in both politics and entertainment and there was an emphasis placed on the aesthetics of the oration. Public oration was perceived not only as a transmission of words but as a combined product of words, manner, gesture, emotion, tone, and other criteria.⁴⁹ Oratory for entertainment was expected to be witty

⁴⁴ Myres, *Herodotus*, 4, 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁶ Bakker, *Brill's Companion*, 522-523.

⁴⁷ Nino Luraghi, *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 122, 124. Pindar may also have accessed this oral account as well.

⁴⁹ Ian Worthington and John Miles Foley, eds., *Epea and Grammata: Oral and Written Communication in Ancient Greece*, vol. 4 of *Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 135.

and free-flowing; it had to have the flavor of being extemporized or spontaneous to be considered genuine.⁵⁰ It was not until the mid-5th century BC that orators and politicians began to write down their speeches to practice them in the Sophist tradition.⁵¹ So, for Herodotus to be using the written word to transmit and preserve information at that particular time places him on the cutting edge of a new era in communication.

An additional dynamic to be considered is that in Athens and other democratic cities in ancient Greece the Sophist method of using written preparations was viewed with suspicion. All types of intellectual specialization and expertise associated with books and writing were mistrusted for being “undemocratic.”⁵² The democratic ideal at the time put personal trustworthiness, charisma, and ability above perfection of ideas and a clear delivery of factual information⁵³ so, as Johan Schloemann succinctly explains “there was no alternative to the oral mode of delivery.”⁵⁴

Unlike most historians today Herodotus felt perfectly comfortable using analogy and injecting his personal views into his coverage of a person, subject, or phenomena.⁵⁵ He was an open admirer of Pericles, possessed a substantial understanding of Athenian ideals, and spoke in praise of Athens unabashedly.⁵⁶ In fact, Plutarch claims that in 445 BC, Herodotus was paid ten talents of gold by Athens for the shining praise he heaped on the city; whether the amount was ten talents of gold or 1,000 golden drachma is unclear due to translation issues but Myres’ conclusion that an award of ten talents of gold

⁵⁰ Ibid., 141.

⁵¹ Ibid., 135.

⁵² Ibid., 144.

⁵³ Ibid., 145.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 137.

⁵⁵ Bakker, et.al., *Brill's Companion*, 374; Lughari, *Historian's Craft*, 133.

⁵⁶ Myres, *Herodotus*, 12.

“would seem excessive”⁵⁷ rings true. Plutarch also intimates that Herodotus requested some type of payment from the Egyptian city of Thebes and they refused. From that point forward he wrote unfavorably of the city and its inhabitants.⁵⁸

Claude Calame notes another distinct aspect of Herodotus’ method. It is his establishment of as rigorous a chronology as he could muster.⁵⁹ In order to contextualize his chronology within the Greek understanding of reality and the cosmos Herodotus explicitly distinguished between the “time of the gods” and the “time of men”;⁶⁰ bridging the two constructs is the “time of heroes”. He confined his historical inquiry to the “time of men” and established his chronology by counting generations and years while conducting a survey of genealogies; then he reconciled the two schemas. The initial findings were later cross-referenced with other chronologies like the list of Archons of Athens. When competing chronologies of the same events proved irreconcilable for scholarly or other, sometimes political reasons, he placed them side by side in his text.

Herodotus also exhibits a definite aversion to including claims of direct divine intervention in his narrative.⁶¹ Be that as it may, one should not suffer from a false notion. He did acknowledge a plethora of supernatural and divine forces in his work. However, in his version of reality the gods promulgated their agendas primarily through indirect means.

One additional insight into Herodotus’ method can be found in his concept of “history”. According to Sara Forsdyke, “Herodotus defines the subject of his history as

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

⁵⁹ Calame, *Myth and History*, 95.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁶¹ Bakker, *Brill's Companion*. 384.

‘the affairs of Men’, ‘great and wondrous deeds’, and ‘the cause of war’.”⁶² This definition is thematically congruent with Robin Osborne’s conclusion that Herodotus’ ultimate purpose in writing the *Histories* was to explain ‘how’ the war between Greece and Persia happened and ‘why’ the outcome occurred the way it did. It also explains why Cyrene’s history would be granted over thirty chapters in his text. Cyrene played a specific role in Persian history separate from that of mainland European Greece and relating its history was fundamental to establishing the setting for Persian intervention in Libya.⁶³

The latest of the three primary sources chronologically, a marking stone known as the Stele of Fonditori, dates from 322-321 BC during the reign of Egypt’s Ptolemy I Sotor over Cyrene.⁶⁴ According to Cary the inscription contains a Constitution which was intended solely for Cyrene and represents a give and take between Cyrene’s absentee Egyptian overlord and his subjects.⁶⁵ The inscription pertaining to Cyrene’s colonization has been designated as *SEG ix 3* and is believed to be based in part on the same unidentified local source accessed by Herodotus.⁶⁶ It was erected to announce the new political accord achieved between Cyrene’s citizens, the city’s foreign overlord Ptolemy I Sotor, and a group of Theran citizens seeking admittance to the city in the fourth century BC. The Therans were represented in the matter by a Cyrenaen, Demis son of Bathylces, who sponsored the inscription and the decree it contains. The decree confers newly arrived Theran settlers with equal citizenship in Cyrene and was purportedly based on an

⁶² Ibid., 521.

⁶³ Ibid., 518, 516, 505-506.

⁶⁴ M. Cary, "A Constitutional Inscription From Cyrene," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 48, part 2 (1928): 222-223.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ L. H. Jeffery, "Pact of the First Settlers at Cyrene," *Historia: Zeitschrift for Alte Geschichte* 10, no. 2 (1961): 139, 141.

arrangement made prior to Thera's sending out of Cyrene's colonizers three hundred years before.⁶⁷

In the mid-1920s, shortly after the Stele was discovered, work was begun on translating the inscriptions etched into its surface but it is damaged in places and there are resulting gaps in the text. The difficulties in translation and certain discrepancies in wording led to questions of the inscription's authenticity. Both Ferri and Ferrabino made attempts to authenticate or debunk the content but their efforts proved inconclusive and the issue quickly became a matter of contention across the wider academic community.⁶⁸ On further examination of the subject, which included analysis of the two previous efforts mentioned above, Graham concludes that the evidence leans more toward authenticity than forgery but there is still doubt.⁶⁹

Having examined the origins of the three sources it is possible to identify some elements that could affect the content of each version. First, the differences might be due to when they were produced. The versions are not contemporary with each other but were produced decades, and in the case of the SEG ix 3 inscription centuries, apart. Pindar preceded Herodotus while Herodotus preceded the inscription. Herodotus accessed and was influenced by Pindar and in turn Herodotus influenced the content of the inscription. All three contain indications of access to some earlier and as yet unidentified local oral or written source.

Then, the dissimilarities might result from historiography. Pindar was a poet and not a historian. His intention was not to chronicle Cyrene's colonization but to glorify the Battiad dynasty while connecting the fragile reign of Arcesilas IV to its divine foundation

⁶⁷ Graham, "The Authenticity of the horkion ", 96.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 95.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 111.

legacy. Herodotus, acting in the capacity of an ethnographer and later as historian, was attempting to reconcile a variety of sources to chronicle the colonization decades after Pindar. His version represents the most comprehensive collection of accounts but without substantial external corroboration a definite course of events cannot be determined. Herodotus' main objective in writing about Cyrene was to add context to the conflict between Greece and Persia. Both Pindar and Herodotus present unabashedly biased accounts and therefore the claims of each could be considered suspect. The inscription text is suspect in that it mirrors Pindar and includes textual discrepancies. In addition, whether the inscription originates mainly from the earlier text of Pindar, Herodotus, or some third source, it was a conspicuous public feature and likely intended for use as a political tool to resolve a specific internal conflict that occurred approximately three centuries after the city's foundation.

Utilizing only the texts of Herodotus, Pindar's *Odes*, and the SEG ix 3 inscription one is able to conclude that a group of settlers led by Battus colonized Libya from the isle of Thera after an oracle from Apollo was issued to Battus or Grinnus at Delphi. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding of Cyrene's colonization it appears the subject must be approached from another direction. Since Delphi has been universally credited with directing the colonization it seems only logical to explore its involvement. What exact power did Delphi possess to compel Therans to send out a colony? And why would Delphi instruct them to colonize Libya specifically?

According to W. G. Forrest, after the mid-eighth century BCE, Delphi slowly gained power in the Peloponnese by adopting the role of mediator or arbiter in the affairs

of larger city-states, most notably its neighbors, wealthy Corinth and mighty Sparta.⁷⁰ After the Messenian Wars the Partheniai were dislocated and neither Sparta nor Corinth wanted to accommodate them. The Partheniai requested that the priestesses at Delphi sanction their settlement between Corinth and Sicyon. Corinth was unamenable to the deal and negotiations reached an impasse. To resolve the situation the priestesses at Delphi instructed the Partheniai to colonize Magna Graecia and build a new life at Tarentum. In effect, Delphi removed a population that presented a problem to its primary patron Corinth and neighbor Sparta by sending the group to colonize elsewhere.

The Partheniai were not the only colony sent to settle the hinterlands with the blessing of Apollo's oracle at Delphi. Over time wealthy Corinth sent out several more colonies, all sanctioned by Apollo through Delphi. As the colonies became successful it was seen as proof that Apollo had favored the ventures. Forrest writes "But at the beginning it is surely true that colonization was far more responsible for the success of Delphi than Delphi for the success of colonization."⁷¹ Delphi's success became a self-fulfilling prophecy at some point and other city-states began to consult with the priestesses at Delphi about their prospective colonies. Eventually Delphi became a kind of intelligence database and regulatory agency for colonization activities throughout the Greek world. Its power grew beyond directing the placement of colonies to matters of succession and more. Directing Thera to colonize Cyrene, therefore, seems to be well within the authority of the Pythoness of Apollo at Delphi.

But why would Delphi instruct Therans to colonize Libya? Was there a troublesome population similar to the Partheniai on Thera or some type of internal

⁷⁰ W. G. Forrest, "Colonization and the Rise of Delphi", *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 2nd ser., 6 (1957), 174.

⁷¹ Ibid.

conflict requiring an external resolution? Are there additional factors to be considered? Fornara's *scholion* discussing Battus cites Meneclēs' assertion that some type of "civil strife" occurred on Thera and that Battus was involved, possibly as a leader.⁷² So there is at least some indication of division and strife at Thera. But, who were the groups involved in the conflict? And what could have caused the trouble?

A possible clue is found in the Theran version of Herodotus which points to the origins of Battus as an immigrant of the Minyae tribe. It appears that Battus and his fellow Minyae had been driven from the isle of Lemnos by the Pelasgi and moved to Lacedaemon (Sparta) to ask readmittance into society there. They were allowed to settle but after a short period of time a dispute occurred over the sharing of decision-making power and the Lacedaemonians decided to exterminate the Minyae. The Minyae, through deception, escaped prison and only by the intervention of King Theras of Calliste on their behalf escaped death. When the escape occurred King Theras was departing to his home island with some settlers and persuaded the Lacedaemonians to stop pursuing the escapees and allow the Minyae to accompany him to Calliste with the settlers. On Calliste, he explained, the Minyae could settle into a series of small towns along the seashore and become fishermen. Lacedaemonia's leadership agreed and let them go.⁷³

Pindar seems to confirm the Theran version in Pythian 4.⁷⁴ He describes the origins of Battus and his people as having been from the race of the Argonauts and the women of Lemnos. These offspring of the Lemnosians "having mingled with the homes of the Lacedaemonians"⁷⁵ eventually came to rest on an island called Calliste, which is

⁷² Fornara, *Archaic Times*, 22.

⁷³ Hutchins, *History of Herodotus* 151.

⁷⁴ Lattimore, *Odes of Pindar*, 227.

identified by Herodotus as being an earlier name for Thera.⁷⁶ Today Thera is known by its Roman name, Santorini.

Although influenced by Pindar, Herodotus' *Histories* contains detail far beyond that found in the other's work. This surfeit of information is one factor supporting the view that Herodotus' version of Battus' origins stems from at least one other source. Although he does not reveal the source it points toward an acceptance in the Greek world that Battus was a Minyae immigrant and that a group of Minyae had at some point settled on the isle of Thera.

The picture of a diverse, transplanted population on Thera begins to take shape but does diversity alone explain what might have caused the internal strife? The settlers who arrived from Lacedaemonia had been dispersed to rural fishing villages and not the central city Thera so encroachment on traditional power structures or wealth by the settlers should not have been the cause of major strife. The dispersion would also indicate that no one town received an overwhelming number of new settlers. There must have been another cause.

Herodotus may have unwittingly recorded the answer in his passage "Seven years passed from the oracle and not a drop of rain fell in Thera: all the trees in the island, except one were killed with the drought."⁷⁷ George L. Cawkell, in his refutation of overpopulation as the driving force behind Greek colonial expansion, validates this view.⁷⁸ He indicates that colonists sent to establish the colony of Cyrene were selected only from among the males of Thera and the surrounding villages because there was a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Hutchins, *History of Herodotus*, 149.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁷⁸ Cawkell, "Early Colonization," *Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 2nd ser., 42 (1992): 291.

static population, not a growing one. Herodotus supports this idea of an all male colony when he writes “They of Thera, upon this, resolved that men should be sent to join the colony...and that brothers in every family should draw lots to determine who were to go.”⁷⁹ The inscription supports the all male composition of the colony as well, “with one son to be conscripted adults...shall sail.”⁸⁰

Cawkell reasoned this static population had reached what amounts to the *carrying capacity* of the island.⁸¹ In other words the agricultural technology and the limited supply of water on the island could provide enough sustenance to support a fixed amount of people and no more. If the immigrants’ arrival pushed the island’s population to the verge of its carrying capacity while the region was experiencing the onset of a major drought conflict due to increased demand and diminishing resources could result.

There are indications of an additional dynamic affecting the population on Thera: religion.⁸² Cawkell relates that Greeks believed natural disasters were induced either directly or indirectly by the gods. If Battus and the Minyae arrived at Thera with drought following close on their heels some pious Therans may have claimed a causal relationship; effectively *scapegoating* the newcomers for the drought and ensuing hardship. A serious appeal to Apollo for help in averting such a calamity would likely have been transmitted to the god through his principal temple at Delphi.

It seems reasonable to conclude that if Apollo’s priestesses were to dispatch a population to colonize a location during an era of prolonged drought they would assign a fertile, well-watered region for settlement. According to both Herodotus and Pindar,

⁷⁹ Hutchins, *History of Herodotus*, 151.

⁸⁰ Fornara, *Archaic Times*, 23.

⁸¹ Cawkell, "Early Colonization", 291.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 292.

Libya would appear to have fit this criterion. Herodotus, in his Cyrenaen version, refers to Libya as “abounding in fleeces”.⁸³ And Pindar refers to “the corn-lands of Libya”⁸⁴ and “those plains which are mantled by the dark cloud”⁸⁵ which indicates it is an area that receives rainfall adequate for farming.

The later history of the region confirms the fertility at Cyrene as well. Between 335-325 a devastating drought plagued the Mediterranean region from Egypt to Magna Graecia. During the drought Cyrene is credited with supplying enormous amount of grain, amounting to a total eight hundred five thousand medimnoi (measure of grain equal to a one year supply for one family), to no fewer than 41 cities.⁸⁶ In another example of Cyrene’s agricultural ability John Camp II cites Plutarch when pointing out that after Alexander’s siege at Gaza, Athens received one-hundred thousand medimnoi of grain from Cyrene; a full thirteen percent of the total grain confiscated.⁸⁷ In addition to the grain provided to Athens the city of Corinth received fifty thousand medimnoi and Argos, Kythera, Troizone, and Ermione all received grain.⁸⁸

In addition to grain the fertile lands near Cyrene were home to the now extinct *silphium* plant.⁸⁹ Through examination of coins stamped with the likeness of the plant and written descriptions that have come down to us botanists have concluded that silphium was a ceratoid and member of the family Umbelliferae.⁹⁰ The plant, a “mercantile

⁸³ Hutchins, *History of Herodotus*, 151.

⁸⁴ Lattimore, trans., *Odes of Pindar*, 57.

⁸⁵ Pindar, *Odes of Pindar*, 205.

⁸⁶ John McK Camp II, "Drought and Famine in the 4th Century B. C." *Hesperia Supplements* 20 (Studies in Athenian Architecture, Sculpture and Topography. Presented to Homer A. Thompson, 1982): 15.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, note 20.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁹ Alfred C Andrews, "The Silphium of the Ancients: A Lesson in Crop Control," *Isis* 33, no. 2 (June 1941): 235.

blockbuster”⁹¹ grew in a limited area and was mainly harvested by Libyan tribesmen who grazed their livestock on its stubble.⁹² Every part of the plant had commercial value and was in high demand across Greece and Italy for culinary and numerous medicinal uses.⁹³

Although time has obscured the details surrounding colonization of the Greek world the information available about Cyrene allows some conclusions to be drawn about its origins. Ancient literary accounts and the inscribed Stele di Fonditori indicate that one Battus, a Minyae immigrant, led a group of people out from Thera to colonize Cyrene, in Libya. The priestesses of Apollo at Delphi directed the colonization while acting in their dual role of spiritual and temporal mediator. Contemporary scholarship reinforces the ancient information only to a point, though, and indicates that drought was likely a factor driving the colonization. When observed as a whole the contemporary scholarship, contradictory literary versions concerning who received the oracle, and particular details in the inscription one can construct a plausible series of events.

The Minyae, perhaps proud descendents of Jason’s legendary Argonauts, were a conquered people. Their home island of Lemnos had been occupied by Pelasgi invaders from the East and the Minyae became a disgraced and displaced population. From Lemnos they relocated to Lacedaemonia but after a short time a dispute occurred with the local population and again the Minyae were abused then driven out.

The island of Thera accepted them as settlers but their arrival coincided with the onset of a prolonged drought and as a result some type of civil strife developed. Since ancient Greeks often associated natural phenomena with divine agency the drought was

⁹⁰ Seth Richardson, "Libya Domestica: Libyan Trade and Society on the Eve of the Invasions of Egypt," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 36 (1999): 154.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 153.

⁹³ Andrews, "The Silphium of the Ancients", 253.

likely seen as a message or punishment from the gods. Pious Therans might have blamed the Minyae for the drought. Grinnus, King of Thera, went to Delphi to seek an effective solution. He could well have assumed that Delphi would send the Minyae to colonize Magna Graecia as they had with the Partheniai. Battus was likely a leader among the Minyae and was with the group who went to Delphi. As Grinnus had expected the Pythoness sent the Minyae and some other male Therans of local origin to colonize far-off agricultural lands; in this case, Cyrene.

Cyrene, the humble colony established by Thera and rich in agricultural resources, established itself as a powerful city-state able to supply its own people as well as the peoples throughout the Greek world with desperately needed food and large quantities of a versatile and effective medicine. This growth into a powerful agricultural and commercial city, I believe, explains the conflicting texts and inscription discussed earlier.

As a power in its own right, Cyrene's civic pride grew as did the pride of its founding Battiad dynasty. Grinnus' off-hand rejection of leadership of the colony, and therefore indirectly the crown of Cyrene, likely chafed the royal egos of Battus' descendents. Eventually a grand mythology of its founding dynasty equal to its claimed origin with Jason and its later greatness was required; so Cyrene appears to have established one. Grinnus' participation was co-opted and Battus' role became paramount. In fact, neither Pindar nor the *SEG ix 3* inscription so much as mentions Grinnus. Whether or not Pindar had heard of Grinnus in his wide and prolonged travels one cannot say; the same holds true for the inscribers of the *Stele di Fonditori*. The idea that Battus went to Delphi to seek a cure for stammering is not especially flattering, but, it may not

have initially been part of the mythology's evolution. Regardless, the Cyrenaen version's allusion to a subsequent and miraculous cure made the issue moot. As noted by Fornara the word Battus meant "stutterer" in Greek⁹⁴ but Herodotus claims "in the Libyan tongue, the word 'Battus' means 'a King'."⁹⁵ Transposition of the meanings of the word may have occurred at a later time due to its use in the vernacular. Considering that Pindar, at one point in Pythian 5, names the founder of Cyrene as "Aristoteles"⁹⁶ (a moniker completely unmentioned by Herodotus) it appears that the ambiguity surrounding Battus' name only served the purposes of furthering a Cyrenaen revision of events. The discrepancies noted above indicate that, over time, Cyrene shaped its history as energetically as it shaped its place in the world.

⁹⁴Fornara, *Archaic Times*, 22.

⁹⁵Hutchins, *History of Herodotus*, 151.

⁹⁶Pindar, *Odes of Pindar*, 243.

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