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Dossier :

Place aux objets !

Présentification et vie des artefacts en Grèce ancienne

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Natasha BERSHADSKY
Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University

Impossible Memories of the Lelantine War

Résumés

This study offers a solution for a long-standing question concerning the nature and date of the Lelantine War. I propose that in the Archaic period a part of the Lelantine plain was contested in recurrent ritual battles between young aristocrats of Eretria and Chalcis, who reenacted the devastating primordial strife of the bronze-clad Curetes. The contested territory changed hands, providing grazing for the horses of the victorious side; it constituted a sacred space, uniting Eretria and Chalcis in a common cult. The system of the ritual confrontations came to an end with the Athenian conquest of Chalcis in 506 BC. A new historical reading is offered for Theognis' lines depicting a destruction of the Lelantine plain: they mourn the Athenian takeover and the disintegration of the aristocratic system of mutual support, cursing the Corinthians who failed to deliver military help to the Chalcidian elites.

Key words: Eretria, Chalcis, Abantes, Curetes, myth of the Age of Bronze, ritual fighting, initiation, *hippobotai*, Theognis

L'impossible souvenir de la guerre Lélantine

Cette étude interroge la nature et la date de la guerre Lélantine. L'auteur suggère qu'à l'époque archaïque une partie de la plaine Lélantine faisait l'objet de contestations rituelles entre Éréttrie et Chalcis. Les joutes armées auraient rejoué les luttes mythiques et dévastatrices des Courètes aux armes de bronze. Le territoire contesté aurait ainsi changé de mains pour fournir du pâturage aux chevaux des vainqueurs. Il aurait constitué un espace sacré réunissant Éréttrie et Chalcis dans un culte partagé. Le système des confrontations rituelles aurait pris fin avec la prise de contrôle de Chalcis par les Athéniens en 506 av. J.-C. Dans cette perspective, cet article propose une nouvelle interprétation des vers de Théognis décrivant la destruction de la plaine Lélantine : le poète se désole de la désintégration du système aristocratique de soutien mutuel qui a fait suite à la conquête athénienne et maudit les Corinthiens pour n'avoir pas fourni l'aide militaire promise aux élites chalcidiennes.

Mots-clés : Éréttrie, Chalcis, Abantes, Courètes, mythe de l'âge du bronze, combat rituel, initiation, *hippobotai*, Théognis

... *El tango crea un turbio
 pasado irreal que de algún modo es cierto,
 un recuerdo imposible de haber muerto
 peleando, en una esquina del suburbio.*
*The tango creates a cloudy,
 unreal past that is in some way certain,
 the impossible memory of having
 diedfighting, on a corner on the outskirts.*
 J. L. Borges, *El Tango*.

The War Without Qualities

Little is undisputed about the Lelantine War, an ancient conflict between Chalcis and Eretria, two neighboring cities on the island of Euboea, over the Lelantine plain, situated between them.¹ The proposed dates of the war cover all of the Archaic period.² Some forty years ago a scholar concluded his examination of the ancient sources on the war in the following way: “Nothing can be deduced from them about the beginning of the war, the main issue, its immediate cause, its course, its chronology, its duration, its end, or the consequences of the conflict.”³ A more recent analysis of the textual and archaeological data associated with the war has resulted in a similar verdict: “In short, we do not know when – or even whether – the Lelantine War occurred.”⁴

A look at the textual sources makes clear why the war elicits the confusion and the doubts. There are three brief references to hostilities between Eretria and Chalcis in Herodotus, Thucydides and Aristotle – none of whom names the Lelantine plain as the object of contention. There are four mentions of fighting on Euboea in poems of Hesiod, Archilochus and Theognis, and in an anonymous elegiac fragment. These poetic sources display different degrees of opacity – for example, the interpretation of Hesiod’s lines as a reference to the Lelantine War is based on a much later commentary. Finally, there are more extensive descriptions by Strabo and Plutarch, drawing on a variety of older sources. They report that the legendary warriors Curetes incessantly fought for the Lelantine plain, or that the Chalcidians

1. I had the pleasure of presenting an earlier version of this paper at the joint seminar of Florence Gherchanoc, Jean-Pierre Guilhembet and Stéphanie Wýler at ANHIMA; I would like to thank the members of the audience for their stimulating questions and comments. I am deeply grateful to Pierre Ellinger for inspiring discussions and encouragement.

2. See TAUSEND 1987, p. 501-508 and PARKER 1997 for a critical review of the previous literature on the subject, including proposed dates and duration of the war, allies, and causes.

3. BAKHUIZEN 1976, p. 36. Similarly, LAMBERT 1982; TAUSEND 1987, p. 510.

4. HALL 2007, p. 8.

resolved to embrace the custom of pederasty after witnessing a particularly glorious death of an infatuated lover in a battle with the Eretrians.⁵

Faced with this sum total of textual evidence, a sober-minded historian is impelled to distrust any historical reconstruction of the war. What has chronology to do with the Curetes? And yet the war between Eretria and Chalcis appeared to Thucydides the most notable confrontation between the Greeks before the extraordinary present of the Peloponnesian War. That particular border conflict somehow stood out among other border conflicts of the past (Thuc. 1.15.3):

μάλιστα δὲ ἐς τὸν πάλαι ποτὲ γενόμενον πόλεμον Χαλκιδέων καὶ Ἐρετριῶν καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικὸν ἐς ξυμμαχίαν ἑκατέρων διέστη.

At the most, in the once-upon-a-time war between the Chalcidians and Eretrians, the rest of the Greeks also separated into alliances with one or the other party.

While both the Lelantine and Peloponnesian Wars involve “the rest of the Greeks” (τὸ ἄλλο Ἑλληνικόν, Thuc. 1.1.1, 1.15.3), Thucydides appears to expect his audience to appreciate instantly the difference between the old and the new alliances.⁶ We will return to the difference later on. For now, Thucydides’ reference to the “rest of the Greeks” in the Lelantine War allows us to conclude that the war was a Panhellenic tradition.

Perceiving the story of the Lelantine War as a tradition that at a certain point enjoyed the Panhellenic prominence allows us to appreciate its prestige and significance. An important corollary is that we can expect the Lelantine War to be pertinent to any mention of fighting on Euboea in the Panhellenic poetry of Hesiod, Archilochus and Theognis. The Lelantine War may not necessarily be the subject in every case, but it is very likely to be a part of the poetry’s subtext, given the high profile of the tradition about the war. The story of the war exerts a gravitational pull on the poetic traditions.

When we shift the subject of the research from the Lelantine War as it “really” happened to the Lelantine War as it was imagined, the difficulties of reconstruction vanish. The poetic references and legendary episodes can be fully used to reconstruct myths of the Lelantine War. Indeed, as I am going to show below, when we explore the most fabulous detail associated with the Lelantine War – the Curetes fighting for the Lelantine plain (Strab. 10.3.6) – we uncover a remarkably coherent mythical system. Moreover, this mythical structure will emerge as intrinsically connected to a ritual

5. Hdt. 5.99.1, Thuc. 1.15.3, Arist. *Pol.* 1289b; Hes. *Op.* 654-657 with Plut. *Mor.* 153f, Archil. fr. 3 West, Theog. 891-894, *Adespota elegiaca* 62 West = *P. Oxy.* 2508, Strab. 10.3.6, Plut. *Mor.* 760e-761b.

6. On Thucydides’ passage, see LAMBERT 1982.

counterpart.⁷ After reconstructing the myth-ritual complex of the tradition of the Lelantine War, we finally will be able to embed it in history and to trace its changes through time.

The Bronze Generation

Strabo refers to the Curetes being “continually at war for the Lelantine plain” (συνεχῶς δὲ περὶ τοῦ Ληλάντου πεδίου πολεμοῦντας, Strab. 10.3.6). This tradition turns out to be a part of a complex of myths that bring us to the Age of Bronze on Euboea, to the beginnings of human existence and the origins of war.

Among multiple traditions about the Curetes’ origins, some sources describe them as indigenous to Euboea (Strab. 10.3.1). Indeed, a Euboean myth portrays the Curetes as natives of Chalcis. Their mother is the nymph Chalcis, also called Combe, who emerges as a key figure in the local worldview (Zen. 6.50):

ἐπειδὴ Χαλκίδα τῆς Εὐβοίας πόλιν φασὶ ποτὲ ἀνθῆσαι δόρασι τε καὶ πλήθει τετρώρων ἀρμάτων. Οἱ δὲ φασὶν οὐ τὴν πόλιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἡρωίδα Χαλκίδα εἰρήσθαι. Κόμβην γὰρ φασί, τὴν ἐπικληθεῖσαν Χαλκίδα, ἐπειδὴ ὅπλα χαλκὰ ἐποίησατο, πρώτην συνοικήσασαν ἀνδρὶ ἑκατὸν παίδων γενέσθαι μητέρα, ὡς ἰστοροῦσιν οἱ τὰ Εὐβοϊκὰ συγγράψαντες καὶ Ἄριστος ὁ Σαλαμίνιος.

For they say that the Euboean city Chalcis once blossomed with spears and a multitude of four-horse chariots. But others say that it is not the city but the heroine Chalcis who is talked about. For they say that Combe, who was called Chalcis because she created bronze arms and armor, became the mother of a hundred children, after having been the first woman to live with a man, as record those who write about the Euboean affairs, and Aristus the Salaminian.

The eponymous Chalcis-Combe is a heroine of an origin myth: the generatrix of bronze arms and armor, the first woman to cohabit with a man, and the first mother, giving birth to a hundred children. While the passage does not explicitly label Chalcis’ children as the Curetes, such an

7. Multiple ritual-cultic associations of the conflict between Eretria and Chalcis were collected by BRELICH 1961, p. 9-21, in his groundbreaking study of agonistic warfare in Greece, to which my research is profoundly indebted. The Lelantine War has been long in the center of discussion of the phenomenon of rule-bound and ritualized border confrontations in ancient Greece. DAYTON 2006, p. 7-29 is an overview of the literature on agonistic warfare in Greece, with references to the Lelantine War *passim*; recently, see DAVERIO ROCCHI 2015, p. 76. I hope that my case study of the Lelantine War would help to resolve some of the persistent questions associated with the concept of Greek agonism, for example, the elusive dating of the “ritualized” conflicts, or their surprising transformations into wars of total destruction (ELLINGER 1993, 223).

identification appears secure: other sources name her as the mother of the Curetes,⁸ and report that the Curetes were the first wearers of bronze armor on Euboea.⁹ A variant tradition portrays the Curetes themselves as the inventors of the bronze.¹⁰

The Curetes can be also described as “earth-born” in the Euboean context.¹¹ Similarly, Zenobius’ passage above includes a version that seems to envisage the earth of Chalcis generating spears and four-horse chariots.¹² Thus, the Curetes can be imagined to have the divine Chalcis for mother, or to spring from the mother earth.¹³ In any case, their birth is a primordial event, starting an era of human presence on Euboea.

After the Curetes are born, they don bronze armor – the first ever occasion when the bronze is used – and they fight unremittingly for the Lelantine plain. Whom do they fight against? The tradition does not specify it. However, the earth-born Curetes resemble other troops of earth-born warriors, such as the Theban *spartoi*, or the Colchian warriors sprung from dragon’s teeth. These groups, as well as the warriors of the Bronze Generations, self-destroy in internecine warfare.¹⁴ I suggest that the Curetes’ unceasing struggles over the Lelantine plain belong to the same paradigm: they fight between themselves to death over the Plain.¹⁵

The Curetes, fighting incessantly at the dawn of civilization in their bronze armor, belong to the stage of the imaginary past describable as

8. Hsch. s.v. Κόμβη.

9. Epaphroditus *ap. Hdn. De prosodia catholica* 3.1.88; Strab. 10.3.19; Steph. Byz. s.v. Αἰθῆψος.

10. P. Oxy. 1241 col. 4.26-29. On the Euboean Curetes see MELE 1975, p. 24-26; 1981, p. 12-13; WALKER 2004, p. 27-31; BREGLIA 2013, p. 31-37.

11. Nonnus, *Dion.* 13.154-5; compare Strab. 10.3.19 (not explicitly set in Euboea). BLAKELY 2006, p. 18.

12. Compare *Ap. Rhod. Argon.* 3.1354-7.

13. Compare NAGY 2011, p. 46-47, on Aegina the nymph and Aegina the mother earth in Hesiod fr. 205, Merkelbach, West.

14. Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.1, *Ap. Rhod.* 3.1373-1376, Hes. *Op.* 143-155.

15. We may have an Archaic representation of the Curetes’ fighting and its devastating aftermath. A fragment of a relief pithos (Museum of Eretria, inv. ME 16620-21), found in Eretria and dating to the early seventh century BC, is decorated with two friezes. The upper frieze portrays a battle between two parties, both wearing Dipylon shields. The lower frieze shows naked dead bodies of fallen warriors, covered in deep gashes, being devoured by birds of prey. The dead warriors’ hairstyle, long in the back and short in the front, matches the haircut of the Curetes, who let their hair grow long in the back, but cut it short in the front to avoid being dragged down by it in battle (Strab. 10.3.6). The excavator has suggested that the pithos was produced in Eretria (THEMELIS 2006, p. 99). He has also proposed that the scenes belong to “an archaizing world perceived by contemporaries as lying sometime in the past” and has conjectured that the pithos originally served as a funerary vessel “of a nobleman, who might have taken part or even [have been] killed in the Lelantine War” (*ibid.*, p. 104).

the Age of Bronze, characterized by an ubiquity of bronze, an invention of copper metallurgy, and a savage warfare.¹⁶ There is an abundance of myths pertaining to the Age of Bronze on Euboea: for example, we hear of the bronze-working Cyclopes, of the Titan Briareus, or of a marvelous copper-iron mine in the Lelantine plain.¹⁷ Curiously, copper is apparently geologically impossible in the vicinity of Chalcis (including the Lelantine plain): thus, the traditions that connect Euboea, and Chalcis in particular, with the generation of bronze, cannot be explained as an elaboration of the real-world mining.¹⁸

The Lost Euboea

Another group of myths associates the strife between Eretria and Chalcis with workings of elemental forces of nature. Strabo's account of the joint colonization of Pithecusae by Eretria and Chalcis (Strab. 5.4.9) follows a mythical pattern in which the conflict between Eretria and Chalcis leads to a disastrous transition from an era of prosperity and abundance to times of natural cataclysms.

Πιθηκούσσας δ' Ἐρετριεῖς ᾤκισαν καὶ Χαλκιδεῖς, εὐτυχῆσαντες [δὲ] δι' εὐκαρτίαν καὶ διὰ τὰ χρυσεῖα ἐξέλιπον τὴν νῆσον κατὰ στάσιν, ὕστερον δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ σεισμῶν ἐξελαθέντες καὶ ἀναφουσημάτων πυρὸς καὶ θαλάττης καὶ θερμῶν ὑδάτων·

Eretrians and Chalcidians colonized Pithecusae, but after having prospered there on account of the land's fruitfulness and the gold mines, they abandoned the island as the result of a stasis; later on they were also driven out by earthquakes, and by eruptions of fire, sea, and hot waters; ...

The impression that Strabo first portrays a fabulous prosperity, and not just an everyday affluence, is supported by another instance of co-occurrence of *chrus-* and *eukarp-* in Strabo (7, fr. 33, Jones): he describes the city of Datum, a byword for prosperity (Δάτον ἀγαθῶν, "a Datum of good things"), as having a most productive (εὐκαρπον) soil and gold mines (χρυσοῦ μέταλλα).

Understanding Strabo's account as rooted in the concept of the Golden Age helps to explain an otherwise perplexing unrealism of the Pithecusan abundance of gold. Gold mines are geologically impossible on Ischia;

16. MELE 1975, p. 26. On the motif of the Bronze Generation, see VERNANT 1966, p. 31-36, VIAN 1968, p. 59-64; NAGY [1979] 1999, p. 156-159.

17. P. Oxy. 1241 col. 4.12-17, Istr. ap. Sch. and Eust. *ad Iliad X*, 439 = FGrH 334 fr. 71, Hsch. s.v. χαλκιδικός λειμῶν, Strab. 10.1.9. MELE 1981, BAKHUIZEN 1981, p. 167-169, BREGLIA 2013, p. 21-30.

18. BAKHUIZEN 1976, p. 49, 58-59; 1981, p. 163-164.

interpreting χρυσεία as “gold workshops,” or adopting the variant reading χρύσια “gold ornaments”¹⁹ does not solve the puzzle, since very few gold objects were found at Pithecusae, so it is unlikely that the gold-working was a prominent activity.²⁰

The prosperity gives way to the *stasis* and the earthquakes. On the surface, the account seems to be confused, with Strabo giving two versions of the expulsion of the settlers from Pithecusae.²¹ However, conceptually, the two explanations are perfectly complementary: the *stasis* between people is linked to a natural disaster.

According to Strabo, there once was an earthquake also on Euboea, which swallowed up a city called Euboea (Strab. 10.1.9). Strabo apparently located that city in the Lelantine plain (which he describes in the same passage and in Strab. 1.3.16 as extremely seismically active).²² I would like to suggest on the analogy with the Pithecusan cataclysms that the destruction of Euboea the city belongs to the myth of the Lelantine War: the earthquake can be understood as a cosmic response to the war. Hecataeus’ statement that the city of Chalcis was once called Euboea²³ helps us to reconstruct how the lost Euboea and the Lelantine War are related. I propose that Chalcis-Euboea – the city of the Curetes, the place where the bronze armor was invented – was imagined to have been situated in the Lelantine plain.²⁴ It is for that primordial city that the Curetes fought continually between themselves. This Bronze city of perpetual strife is eventually erased by an earthquake, which provides the ending point of the myth.²⁵

19. RIDGWAY 1992, p. 34, COLDSTREAM [1977] 2003, p. 226, 243 n. 11.

20. WALKER 2004, p. 146-47.

21. BAKHUIZEN 1976, p. 22, n. 93; PARKER 1997, p. 52-53.

22. Strabo mentions the destruction of Euboea in the passage in which he describes the Lelantine plain (and then refers to Chalcis and Eretria). However, to corroborate the story of the city’s destruction he quotes an excerpt from Aeschylus’ Γλαῦκος Πόντιος, which does not mention the city’s annihilation and refers to Cape Cenaemum in the north of the island. I follow BAKHUIZEN 1976, p. 12 in assuming that Strabo inserted an erroneous citation at that point.

23. Hdn. *De prosodia catholica* 3.1.88; Steph. Byz. 683.9-10, s.v. Χαλκίς.

24. It is enticing to suppose that the destroyed mythical Euboea was anciently believed to be located at the site of Xeropolis/Lefkandi, and I hope to examine this possibility in a separate project. BAKHUIZEN 1976, p. 10, 13, has suggested that Euboea was the ancient name of Xeropolis. For a review of opinions on the historical identification of Lefkandi as the Old Chalcis or Old Eretria, see KNOEPFLER 1981, p. 309-312.

25. The destruction of Chalcis-Euboea finds a parallel in the fate of the hybridic warriors Phlegyae, who were brought down by the divine thunderbolts and earthquakes (Paus. 9.36.3). A tradition derived from Euphorion of Chalcis describes the Phlegyae as sacrilegious island people, sunk when Neptune struck their part of the island with his trident (Euphorion fr. 105 Lightfoot = Serv. on Verg. *Aen.* 6.618). The self-annihilation/divine annihilation of the Euboean Curetes links this myth to accounts of wars of total

The historical Chalcis was a tame successor of the savage Chalcis of the myth; however, it was not the only one. The alternative name of the ancient Chalcis, Euboea, suggests that the story of the destroyed Chalcis was a pan-Euboean myth.²⁶ We will now investigate how the historical Chalcis and Eretria dealt with that mythical exemplum.

Imitating the Curetes

In his description of Euboea, Strabo states that Eretria and Chalcis were generally in accord with one another, so that when there came a disagreement between them about the Lelantine plain, they established conditions under which to engage in the *agôn*. Strabo reports that a stele in the temple of Artemis *Amarynthia* recorded their pact not to use projectile weapons (Strab. 10.1.12). The historical significance of that information remains elusive, since we cannot date the prohibition or grasp its precise character.²⁷ However, we can make a step toward better understanding by analyzing how that information is treated in Strabo's text.

Strabo continues (10.1.13) by explaining that the Euboeans were excellent at close combat. He cites as evidence the Iliadic description of the Abantes (*Iliad* II, 543-544):

αἰχμηταὶ μεμαώτεσ ὀρεκτῆσι μελίησι
θώρηκασ ῥήσσειν

spearmen, striving with their outstretched ash spears
to break through corselets...

The trajectory of Strabo's thought is remarkable: he casts his mind all the way back from the less distant past of the inscription concerning the ban on projectiles to the very distant mythical past of the *Iliad*,²⁸ and that mythical past exemplifies for him the Euboeans' proclivity for close combat. As we will see, such a fluid mental movement in time, in which the most distant past becomes a template for later occasions, is a pattern recurring in the portrayals of the Lelantine War.

destruction, studied by ELLINGER 1993, although unlike those non-normative conflicts, the Curetes' fighting is a conventional close combat.

26. Pliny reports that the island of Euboea used to be called Chalcis, because copper was discovered there (Plin. *HN* 4.64, citing Callidemus). Thus the metonymy between the city and the island works in both directions.

27. See discussion in WHEELER 1987 with a critique of earlier arguments.

28. The notions of the "less distant past" of the inscription and "more distant past of the *Iliad*" are supposed to reflect the emic ancient Greek point of view; my argument keeps myth and history in different dimensions.

Plutarch narrates in his *Life of Theseus* that Theseus went to Delphi to make a hair-offering to Apollo, as a coming of age ritual. There he cut his hair only in the front, just like the Abantes in Homer. The Abantes, Plutarch continues, were the first to adopt that hairstyle, since they were consummate fighters in close combat. To support that claim, Plutarch cites the following poem of Archilochus (fr. 3 West):

οὔτοι πόλλ' ἐπὶ τόξα τανύσσεται, οὐδὲ θαμειαὶ
σφενδόναί, εὐτ' ἄν δὴ μῶλον Ἄρης συνάγηι
ἐν πεδίω· ξιφέων δὲ πολύστονον ἔσσειται ἔργον·
ταύτης γὰρ κείνοι δάμονές²⁹ εἰσι μάχης
δεσπότηι Εὐβοίης δουρικλυτοί.

Not many bows will be stretched, neither slings
plentiful, when Ares joins the throng
in the plain. It will be the grievous work of the swords.
For of this mode of fighting those ones are masters,
the lords of Euboea famed for their spears.

Therefore the Abantes cut their hair in the front to avoid being seized by it, Plutarch concludes (Plut. *Thes.* 5.1-4).

Plutarch and Strabo refer to the same passage of the *Iliad*, which describes the spear-wielding Abantes as ὄπιθεν κομόωντες “wearing their hair long in the back” (*Iliad* II, 542). Plutarch moves in the opposite direction from Strabo in time, from the remote Iliadic past of the Abantes to the less distant past of Archilochus’ poem. That poem, according to the logic of Plutarch’s text, is supposed to demonstrate the Abantes’ predilection for hand-to-hand fighting. The Abantes are not mentioned explicitly, but are evidently understood to be “the lords of Euboea famed for their spears.” The epithet δουρικλυτοί corresponds to the Homeric description of the Abantes as spearmen with ash spears (*Iliad* II, 543).³⁰ The identification of the lords of Euboea as the Abantes³¹ elucidates the variant δάμονες (instead of δάμονες) in the manuscripts. The characterization of the Abantes as δάμονες portrays them as local cult heroes, a role that is fitting for the mythical ancestors of the Euboeans.³²

29. δάμονες is Fick’s correction; manuscripts have δαήμονες and δαίμονες.

30. RENEHAN 1983, p. 2. For parallels between the language of the poem and Homeric diction see CAMPBELL 1982, p. 143-144.

31. In modern scholarship “the lords of the Euboea” are commonly assumed to be the historical Euboean aristocrats of the Archaic period; thus FORREST 1957, p. 164, DONLAN 1970, p. 134, RENEHAN 1983, p. 2, WALKER 2004, p. 158. However, CAMPBELL 1982, p. 144 identifies them as the Abantes.

32. On δαίμων as referring to a hero in his cultic afterlife, see NAGY [1979] 1999, p. 191. Δεσπότης/δέσποινα are commonly used of the gods.

The poem also speaks about a future battle. But what is that future battle? Given the Panhellenic prominence of the tradition of the Lelantine War, we can expect Archilochus' reference to the fighting on Euboea to be connected with it. Thus, Archilochus seems to declare that there will be a battle over the Lelantine plain in the future. Few projectile weapons will be used. Rather, it will be a close combat, since the Abantes are experts in this way of fighting. The connection between the future battle and the mythical past of the Abantes is expressed precisely and forcefully by the interplay of the pronouns ταύτης and κείνοι in Archilochus' poem, ταύτης γὰρ κείνοι δάμονές εἰσι μάχης, "for of this mode of fighting those ones are masters." A frequent cognitive effect of (ἐ)κείνος is to present to the mind a distant or absent subject. "The (ἐ)κείνος-subject is initially far away or absent or unseen, and through the utterance (ἐ)κείνος that subject becomes – all of a sudden – close or present to the speaking "I" 's vision."³³ The statement that "those ones" are masters of *this* kind of battle goes beyond the observation of similarity of the fighting style.³⁴ It transports the dead Abantes from the remote antiquity of the myth into the here-and-now. We can note how ταύτης ... μάχης frames κείνοι δάμονες: the present-day battle iconically contains the past heroes; however, it is the martial mastery of the ancient heroes that defines the mode of the upcoming fighting.

Both Archilochus' poem and Strabo's passage present the Abantes' fighting as a prototype for the fighting over the Lelantine plain. The Curetes, too, fight incessantly over the Plain, and, like the Abantes, they cut their hair in the front to avoid being dragged down in battle (Strab. 10.3.6). The Curetes and the Abantes appear to be parallel variants in the Euboean context,³⁵ the Curetes being the "home-consumption" version, more explicitly connected to ritual (on which see below), and the Abantes, the Panhellenic "export" equivalent.³⁶

33. BONIFAZI 2012, p. 56, who also discusses (ἐ)κείνος in epiphanies and in references to lamented dead and venerated heroes (BONIFAZI 2012, p. 54-55, 58); see also NAGY 2013, p. 442.

34. On the juxtaposition of οὗτος and ἐκείνος and its connection with reenactments of myths see NAGY 1990a, p. 44; 2013, p. 553-554.

35. MELE 1975, p. 26; cf. FOURGOS 1987, p. 13. SPRAWSKI 2008, p. 112-113, considers the equasion the Euboean Curetes and the Abantes an invention of the Hellenistic historian Archemachus.

36. Some features of the Abantes in the *Iliad* evoke the Bronze Generation. The Abantes are the only Iliadic group carrying ash spears (*Iliad* II, 543): one can compare the genesis of the Bronze Generation out of ash-trees (Hes. *Op.* 145). The connection with bronze is present in the figure of Chalcodon (*Iliad* II, 541), the father of the Abantes' leader, Elephenor. On the motif of ash-trees in the Bronze Generation myth and the associated traditions, see VERNANT 1966, p. 32, 34; NAGY [1979] 1999, p. 156. On Chalcodon, see MELE 1981, p. 25-32, especially p. 31-32 on Chalcodon's link with the working of bronze. On the

I propose that Archilochus' future battle portrays a ritual reenactment of the Curetes'/Abantes' fighting over the Lelantine plain. I believe that Strabo's reference to the regulated *agônes* between Eretria and Chalcis is a different representation of the same practice.³⁷ That is to say, I suggest that the Chalcidians and the Eretrians periodically fought in close combat over the Lelantine plain, and that the participants in these battles were replaying the devastating strife of the Curetes.³⁸ Notionally, for the duration of the battle they were becoming the Curetes.

The Curetes' association with initiation, together with the references to the special haircut, suggest that the reenactment (accompanied by cutting the participants' hair in the style of the Curetes) constituted a rite of passage into adulthood.³⁹ Further, if the fighting for the Lelantine plain operated as a coming of age ritual, the hostilities probably were normally non-lethal.

Strabo's remarks concerning the peaceful relations between Eretria and Chalcis and the regulated mode of fighting over the Lelantine plain contrast with the impression of a ruthless violence, produced by Archilochus' poem, even though the absence or rarity of the projectile weapons is a feature shared by the two sources. Perhaps we encounter here an effect similar to that of lenticular printing, in which a slight change of a viewing angle produces a different image. The non-lethal ritual reenactment of the deadly mythical fighting is a construction built on internal oppositions, joining war and peace, civilization and savagery, death and safety in one experience. These essential oxymorons bring about a remarkable suppleness of descriptive modes. By emphasizing more the connection with the catastrophic past, or conversely stressing the ritual counterpart, one could arrive at diametrically opposite representations of these practices, portraying them as ferocious hostilities or as a peaceful coexistence between the two cities.

Abantes' pan-Euboean character, see MELE 1975, p. 16; on their initiatory connotations, see FOURGOUS 1987, p. 11.

37. There is a gamut of scholarly opinions on the relation between Archil. fr. 3 West and Strab. 10.1.12. Prominent discussions are BURN 1929, p. 33; BRADEEN 1947, p. 227, FORREST 1957, DONLAN 1970, WHEELER 1987, PARKER 1997, p. 59-60, WALKER 2004, p. 157-159.

38. VERNANT 1966, p. 32-33 has visualized a remarkably similar scenario in connection to myths of human origins in Thebes and Argos: "Ces récits d'autochtonie s'intègrent, dans la plupart des cas, à un ensemble mythique qui intéresse la fonction militaire et qui apparaît comme la transposition de scènes rituelles mimées par une troupe de jeunes guerriers en armes." See also TEDESCHI 1975, p. 162-163, WALKER 2004, p. 156-157, BREGLIA 2013, p. 62.

39. On the Curetes and initiation see JEANMAIRE 1939, p. 427-450; BREGLIA 2013, p. 31-37; on the connection of the haircut of the Curetes/Abantes with a coming of age see BRELICH 1961, p. 18, 80-81, MASTROCINQUE 1980, p. 461-462. On identification with a god in initiation rituals see NAGY 1996, p. 87-92; 2013, p. 128. The Curetes are often called δαίμονες (for example, Strabo 10.3.7).

The participants in the ritual battle probably belonged to the social class of the knights.⁴⁰ In the Archaic period Chalcis was ruled by the elite called *hippobotai*, and Eretria by the *hippeis* (Hdt. 5.77.2-3, Strabo 10.1.8, Arist. *Pol.* 1306a, *Ath. Pol.* 15.2); Aristotle reports that these horse-breeding groups were at war with each other (Arist. *Pol.* 1289b). It has been suggested that the Lelantine plain was valued as a grazing land for the horses of the *hippeis* and *hippobotai*: the well-watered plain constituted an only area of “superb horse pasture” on Euboea.⁴¹ I propose that the territory for which the *hippeis* and the *hippobotai* fought in ritual battles would change hands according to the outcome, providing pasture for the horses of the victorious side. That perpetually contested territory would be considered a sacred space, a sanctuary jointly patronized by both the Eretrian and the Chalcidian aristocrats.⁴² This reconstruction finds support in a passage of Aelian, which reports that when the Athenians vanquished the Chalcidians, they settled two thousands of their cleruchs on the land called Hippoboton, and established sacred precincts to Athena in the locale called Lelanton (Ael. *VH* 6.1). The dating of that episode is disputed, and the passage may be a pastiche of several historical events.⁴³ However, regardless of its precise dating, the Athenian action of installing their own goddess in Lelanton suggests that the site was considered sacred, and that it was particularly connected with the Chalcidian *hippobotai*, who were the focus of the Athenian attacks on several historical occasions.⁴⁴

In the Archaic period the area that we now call the Lelantine plain would comprise the sacred precinct of Lelanton,⁴⁵ as well as the grazing lands of the *hippobotai* (Hdt. 5.77.2), and of the *hippeis*. A part of the plain was also used for vine-growing (Theog. 892). One can imagine the uncultivated fertile grounds of the Lelanton with its grazing horses and adjacent vineyards as a sacred place of tranquil beauty. As a parallel, a poem of Sappho (fr. 2 Lobel, Page), describing a blissful sacred precinct,

40. HOWE 2008, p. 81 has proposed that the participants in ancient border conflicts were elites.

41. HOWE 2008, p. 83.

42. Interestingly, both Eretria and Chalcis had a month *Hippiôn* (corresponding to June/July), an extremely rare month name, according KNOEPFLER 1989, p. 44-46, 57. Perhaps *Hippiôn* was the month when the ritual fighting took place.

43. MATTINGLY 1996, p. 65; PAPAZARKADAS 2011, p. 20, n. 17 gives a compressed bibliography of the dating controversy.

44. For example, see Plut. *Per.* 23.2.

45. In addition, an existence of Apollo’s sanctuary in the Lelantine plain is implied by *Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 220, Callim. *Hymn* 4, 288-89. BRELICH 1961, p. 17-18, BRUNEAU 1976. The conflict between Eretria and Chalcis also had ties to Artemis’ temple at Amarynthus, as Strabo 10.1.10,12 indicates. On that sanctuary and the festival of Artemisia, see BRELICH 1961, p. 18-21, 81-82, BREGLIA 1975, KNOEPFLER 1988. See ELLINGER 1993, p. 335-338 on Artemis’ persistent association with wars of total destruction.

includes λειμῶν ἰππόβοτος, a meadow where horses graze, in its string of exquisite details. But a slight change of optics – the “lenticular effect” again – could cast the Lelanton’s unfarmed terrain as a wasteland evoking the desolation of the Age of Bronze with its absence of bread (Hes. *Op.* 146) and total destruction. The eternally disputed Lelanton was probably believed to occupy the place of the obliterated city of the Curetes, the mythical Chalcis/Euboea.

In addition to the young aristocrats of Eretria and Chalcis, for whom the ritual combats served as a coming of age, (older) noblemen from other city-states could also join the fighting, as Plutarch’s story about a Thessalian horseman that assisted Chalcis in battle indicates (Plut. *Mor.* 760e-761b).⁴⁶ A pattern of wide-ranging but intermittent and individual aristocratic participation would explain Thucydides’ condescension toward the old war between Eretria and Chalcis despite the involvement of “all of the Greek world.” The foreigners’ help in ritual battles created ties of reciprocal obligations.⁴⁷ Perhaps connections were also forged between the opposing parties: the Eretrian and Chalcidian aristocrats, sharing the sanctuary of Lelanton, could be paradoxically united through their ritual antagonism.

There is a fascinating archaeological feature in the Lelantine plain that is perhaps linked to the practice of the ritual battle. A straight row of twenty identical rooms, opening toward the Plain, is situated on a narrow enclosed terrace on the top of a hill called Vrachos, near the village of Phylla. The building, dating from the late Archaic period, resembles a civic stoa; however, it is startlingly long (112 m) for its enclosure, taking up nearly two thirds of its length. The excavators have suggested that the building was a barrack, and that the site was a military fort; however, no barracks of the same plan are known from the Greek world. The site is also waterless. The site is nearly equidistant from Eretria and Chalcis (10 and 8 km); it has a good view of Chalcis, but the approach from Eretria is obscured.⁴⁸ The Vrachos hill does provide a brilliant view of the Lelantine plain with its sites of Xeropolis⁴⁹ and the Heroon of Toumba. I would like to propose for further consideration that the structure on the top of Vrachos was used for watching the ritual fighting and for aristocratic banqueting that followed

46. TAUSEND 1987, p. 510-11 has emphasized the private character of that assistance.

47. Hdt. 5.99.1 appears to refer to such a pattern of military ties, when he notes that the Eretrians assisted the Milesians during the Ionian Revolt in 498 BC since they were repaying the Milesians for their help against Chalcis on an earlier occasion when the Chalcidians were supported by the Samians. However, the actual politics behind that episode needs to be explored further.

48. SAPOUNA SAKELLARAKI *et al.* 2002, p. 41, 95, 113.

49. POPHAM *et al.* 1980, p. 425-426, have suggested that the ancient name of Xeropolis was Lelanton.

the battles.⁵⁰ This hypothesis would account for an extraordinary high ratio of drinking vessels discovered by the excavators (more than half of all the pottery).⁵¹

Multiplying Myths

I have mentioned the changeable quality of the ritual reenactment, alternating between past and present, war and peace, the impossible memory of dying in battle and the experience of growing up. When ancient Chalcidians or Eretrians looked back at the chain of ritual reenactments of the Curetes' battles, it would be easy for them to see the older links of the chain as belonging to the territory of myth. In this manner, the identities of Eretria and Chalcis as the eternally warring neighbors could enter the myth, resulting in the "once upon a time" (πάλαι ποτέ) war that Thucydides refers to.

The myth-ritual complex of the Lelantine war was a fertile environment for generating new myths. We have several stories about warriors' remarkable deaths in battles between Eretria and Chalcis. Perhaps the eminence of these deaths had been amplified by the "backlighting" of the Curetes' combats: a death in a battle for the Lelantine Plain made a warrior resemble the figures of the heroic past. The mythical core of the war gradually expanded, incorporating new characters.

My first example of such a character is Amphidamas of Chalcis, at whose funeral games Hesiod won a poetic contest (Hes. *Op.* 654-657). Later sources report that Amphidamas fell in a battle for the Lelantine plain (Plut. *Mor.* 153f, Sch. Hes. *Op.* 650 Pertusi). Is that point integral to the Hesiodic tradition, or is it an ancient scholarly elaboration extrinsic to the poetry?⁵² As I have already suggested, the Panhellenic quality of the tradition of the Lelantine War ensures its prominence as a poetic referent. Therefore, we can expect the association of Chalcis with the Lelantine War to be built into Hesiod's Panhellenic poem.⁵³ Indeed, the examination of the text shows that the brief reference to Amphidamas evokes the same themes as the myth of the Curetes' fighting over the Lelantine plain. Amphidamas' warrior identity is suggested by his epithet δαίφρων 'warlike,'⁵⁴ while

50. Theog. 825-830 appears remarkably fitting for performance at such a banquet.

51. SAPOUNA SAKELLARAKI *et al.* 2002, p. 92.

52. Plutarch athetized the passage about Hesiod's travel to Chalcis, according to Sch. Hes. *Op.* 650 Pertusi = Plutarch fr. 84 Sandbach; see discussion in HUNTER 2014, p. 186-187.

53. On Hesiodic poetry as a product of a long tradition of oral composition and Panhellenic propagation, see NAGY 1990b, p. 38-47; 2009, p. 273-274.

54. WEST 1978, p. 320.

μεγαλήτωρ 'great-hearted' implies his quality of *biē*, in its negative aspect of savage brutality.⁵⁵ Further, Ἀμφιδάμαντος (Hes. *Op.* 654) resonates with the description of the Bronze Generation, who had a heart of adamant (ἀδάμαντος, Hes. *Op.* 147) and died overcome (δαμέντες, Hes. *Op.* 152) by their own hands. The Hesiodic tradition portrays Amphidamas in the same "Bronze" hues that the Euboean Curetes present.

The second case in point is Plutarch's tale about Cleomachus of Pharsalus (*Mor.* 760e-761a), who was summoned by the Chalcidians to lead a cavalry attack in a battle against the Eretrians.⁵⁶ Cleomachus came and, filled with ardor by an embrace of his beloved, routed the Eretrian cavalry, bringing victory to Chalcis. However, he himself fell in battle. The Chalcidians buried Cleomachus in their agora, and marked his tomb with a great pillar. Their former condemnation of pederasty transformed into its eager acceptance.

Cleomachus' heroic burial and the link to the Chalcidian adoption of pederasty mark the narrative as an aetiological myth.⁵⁷ What is more, Plutarch's narrative dramatizes the myth's emergence. Cleomachus asks his *erōmenos* whether he will watch the contest (θεᾶσθαι τὸν ἀγώνα, *Plut. Mor.* 76of), and when the young man affectionately confirms that he will, Cleomachus is fired up to make a brilliant attack on the Eretrians, which brings about his death. We are watching Cleomachus being watched by his beloved, whose gaze propels Cleomachus to fight dazzlingly and ultimately to die. The theatricality of the action, reminiscent of rituals such as athletic competitions,⁵⁸ makes Cleomachus' performance overflow into myth.

Plutarch appends a number of variants at the end of his account. Two derive from Aristotle: a different story of Cleomachus' death in battle with the Eretrians, and a different (Thracian) lover embraced by his beloved before the battle. Aristotle also cited a Chalcidian song, connecting pederasty, aristocratic descent, and manliness. Plutarch adds that the story of the lover and the beloved (named Anton and Philistus) was also narrated in Dionysius' poem *Origins* (*Plut. Mor.* 761a-b). The existence of different versions, treated by different authors and belonging to different genres, shows that the foreign help in the Lelantine War was a well-established

55. On μεγαλήτωρ see NAGY [1979] 1999, p. 321; 2013, p. 310-311.

56. Plutarch visualizes a battle combining cavalry and hoplites (*Mor.* 760f-761a). Aristotle also mentions the use of horses in wars between Eretria and Chalcis (*Arist. Pol.* 1289b). I reconstruct the hoplite fighting as the core of the ritual battles; the use of horses in such combats requires further investigation.

57. BRELICH 1961, p. 18; LAMBERT 1982, p. 219.

58. Plutarch's choice of words evokes both myth and ritual: the fighting is called τὸν ἀγώνα (*Plut. Mor.* 76of), and it is said that Cleomachus ἐτελεύτησεν ἀγωνιζόμενος (*Plut. Mor.* 760e). On the use of ἀγών and τέλος/τελευτάω in ritual and myth see NAGY 1990a, p. 136-137, 245-246; 2013, p. 370-375, 572-598.

subject of stories, and that these stories were traditionally associated with the motif of pederasty. The pederasty is thematically connected to the coming of age,⁵⁹ linking these myths to the initiatory function of the ritual battles. However, these stories also feature an important innovation, in comparison with the myth about the Curetes: they mythologize the aristocratic foreign military help, and connect it with the Chalcidian social customs. The interconnected topics of the Lelantine War, bravery, foreign military assistance and pederastic love are strikingly suitable for aristocratic sympotic poetry; the song, cited by Aristotle, appears to be a part of such a tradition.⁶⁰ It is tempting to imagine such songs being performed after a battle at the hilltop of Vrachos by the symposiasts contemplating the Lelantine plain below.

The End of the Lelantine War

I have presented my reconstruction of the system of archaic myths and rituals comprising the phenomenon that we call the Lelantine War. I submit that we also have historical information allowing us to date the disintegration of that system. The information comes from a poem of Theognis, referring to fighting in the Lelantine plain (Theog. 891-894). A new historical interpretation will emerge after we consider the poem's rhetorics and the textual variants.

Theognis 891-894 appears to be a part of a larger poetic unit, a five-couplet stanza (Theog. 885-894), unified by common motifs and themes:⁶¹

Εἰρήνη καὶ πλοῦτος ἔχοι πόλιν, ὄφρα μετ' ἄλλων
 κωμάζοιμι· κακοῦ δ' οὐκ ἔραμαι πολέμου.
 Μηδὲ λίην κήρυκος ἀν' οὐδ' ἔχε μακρὰ βοῶντος·
 οὐ γὰρ πατρώιας γῆς πέρι μαρνάμεθα.
 ἀλλ' αἰσχρὸν παρεόντα καὶ ὠκυπόδων ἐπιβάντα
 ἵππων μὴ πόλεμον δακρυόεντ' ἔσιδεῖν.
 Οἱ μοι ἀναλκίης· ἀπὸ μὲν Κήρινθος ὄλωλεν,
 Ληλάντου δ' ἀγαθὸν κείρεται οἰνόπεδον·
 οἱ δ' ἀγαθοὶ φεύγουσι, πόλιν δὲ κακοὶ διέπουσιν.
 ὡς δὴ Κυψελιδῶν Ζεὺς ὀλέσειε γένος.

May Peace and Wealth attend the city, so that with others
 I may enjoy a revel. I do not lust after evil war.
 And don't exceedingly give ear to the loud cry of the herald,
 for we are not fighting for the land of our fathers.

59. On pederasty in ancient Greek rites of passage see FERRARI 2002, p. 127-161.

60. BREGLIA 2013, p. 59.

61. VETTA 2000, p. 133-134; WALKER 2004, p. 213; also, already HARRISON 1902, p. 289. FARAONE 2008, p. 16 and *passim* observes a recurrence of five-couplet stanzas in elegy.

But it would be shameful, being present, not to mount swift-footed
horses and look the dolorous war in the face.
Ah the impotence. Cerinthus is laid waste,
The good Lelantine vine plain is being shorn.
The good ones flee, the bad ones manage the city.
May Zeus destroy the race of the Cypselids!

The poem voices a gamut of attitudes to war.⁶² The wish for peace and prosperity in the first couplet (Theog. 885-886) is linked to Hesiod's depiction of the Golden Generation and the city of *dikê*, prosperous and untroubled by the war (Hes. *Op.* 228-229). The desire for a *kômos* recalls the lifestyle of the Golden Generations, who "took pleasure in banquets" (τέρποντ' ἐν θαλίῃσι, Hes. *Op.* 115).⁶³

The second couplet (Theog. 887-888) transforms the wish for the Golden-Age-like peace into a less exalted reluctance to fight. The third couplet (Theog. 889-890) confronts that reluctance, declaring that it would be shameful not to participate in the war. Both couplets refer to a situation of fighting at a locale other than one's native land: line 888 states it explicitly, while *παρεόντα* 'being present at' in line 889 also suggests that the speaker is not usually present at the site of the fighting.⁶⁴

In lines 891-894 the mood becomes desperate. A flourishing land and a community of good people are both being ruined. What happens resembles a destruction of the city of *dikê*. This impression is created, first, by the repetition of *ἀγαθόν* (the good Lelantine vineyard) in line 892 and *ἀγαθοί* (the fleeing nobles) in line 893. Once the upright and aristocratic "good ones"⁶⁵ flee, the good plain turns into a wasteland: the poem thus activates a traditional link between moral goodness and agricultural prosperity.

The destruction is portrayed through warping the themes associated with the city of *dikê*. That city is blessed by exceptionally woolly sheep (Hes. *Op.* 234); in the poem, perversely, it is the vineyard, not the sheep, that is being shorn (Theog. 892). The name of Cerinthus, a town that is being destroyed, harks back to the theme of the abundant honey in the just city (Hes. *Op.* 233): *κήρινθος* means 'bee-bread,' a food of bees that is sweet like a fig (Arist. *Hist. an.* 623b). The rampant destruction (*ἀπὸ ... ὄλωλεν* 'is laid waste,' Theog. 891) recalls the devastation wrought by Zeus (*ἀπώλεσεν* 'destroys,' Hes. *Op.* 246) upon a city as a retribution for *hubris*.

62. BOWIE 1990, p. 228-229.

63. LEVINE 1985, p. 190, 192.

64. WALKER 2004, p. 213.

65. On the interplay of the socio-economic and ethical meanings in Theognis' use of *kakos* and *agathos* see CERRI 1968.

The suggestion of the Golden-Age/city of *dikê*-like existence in lines 885-886 is answered by the images evoking the destruction of the city of *dikê* in lines 891-894. The cohesion is enhanced by the repetition of *κακοῦ* and *κακοί* in lines 886 and 893, and *πόλιν* in 885 and 893. But what is the historical occasion of the heartbreaking loss described in the poem?

Before I attempt to answer this question, we should remark upon its strangeness in the context of Theognis' Panhellenic poetry, that tends to avoid geographic and temporal specificity.⁶⁶ The sack of Cerinthus in our poem is a rare exception.⁶⁷ The irruption of the particular is especially remarkable since nothing else is known about that event. Perhaps Cerinthus' association with honey made it thematically apposite for portraying the destruction of the bountiful land of the good people. But how to explain another glaring specificity, namely, the Cypselids?⁶⁸

In fact, *Κυψελιδῶν* is an emendation, suggested by Hermann. The manuscripts give *κυψελίζων* (A) and *κυψελίζον* (ο), "unmetrical and meaningless."⁶⁹ These variants are indeed unmetrical, but their meaning is central to a new interpretation of the poem I will now offer.

A common meaning of *κυψέλη* is 'chest,' from which comes Cypselus' name. However, it can also mean 'hollow of the ear,' which gives rise to yet another meaning, 'ear-wax' (LSJ). *Κυψελίς* means just 'ear-wax' (Luc. *Lex.* 1). An unattested **κυψελίζω*, derived from *κυψελίς*, can account for a singular neutral participle *κυψελίζον*. **κυψελίζω* should mean 'to fill ears with ear-wax,' that is, 'to turn a deaf ear.'⁷⁰

The metrical difficulty of the long -ιζ- of *κυψελίζον* in a short metrical slot can be resolved by a minor emendation: **κυψελιδόω* should mean the same thing as **κυψελίζω*, producing the metrically suitable participle *κυψελιδούν*. The development *κυψελίς*: *κυψελιδόω* is completely regular, and is paralleled by *κηλίς* 'stain': *κηλιδόω* 'to defile,' and many other pairs.

Thus, *ὡς δὴ κυψελιδούν Ζεὺς ὀλέσειε γένος* should mean, 'May Zeus destroy the turning-a-deaf-ear breed!'⁷¹ A striking ring composition surfaces: the blithe advice not to give ear to the cry of the herald in line 887

66. NAGY 1985, p. 42; FIGUEIRA 1985a, p. 123; OKIN 1985.

67. FIGUEIRA 1985a, p. 123, citing Theognis' mention of the Persian invasion as another exception.

68. For conjectures about the unattested involvement of Corinth in the Lelantine War see BRADEEN 1947, p. 229 (who eventually rejects the relevance of Theog. 891-894 to the war); FIGUEIRA 1985b, p. 288-291; WALKER 2004, p. 216-219. Theognis' line resembles *ἐξώλης εἶη Κυψελιδῶν γενεά*, "May the race of the Cypselids be utterly destroyed!" (Phot. *Lex.* and *Suda*, s.v. *Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ*; Page, *FGE* 1474-1475).

69. FIGUEIRA 1985b, p. 288, n. 13.

70. Thus already DONDORFF 1855, p. 16-17.

71. Compare a prayer in Theog. 851-52.

– the only mention of ears in Theognis’ corpus! – is answered by cursing the people who turn a deaf ear.⁷²

When was there a change of political regime on Euboea, accompanied by the destruction of the Lelantine plain, in which a pivotal point was somebody turning a deaf ear? A sequence of events presented by Herodotus fits these criteria with delightful accuracy.

In 506 BC, the Athenians, who just brought Cleisthenes back from exile, faced an invasion of the Boeotians and the Chalcidians, while an assembled army of the Peloponnesian cities threatened Athens from Eleusis. Spartan King Cleomenes, who wanted to establish Isagoras as a tyrant in Athens, instigated the Peloponnesian assault. Athenians decided to face the Peloponnesians first, and marched to Eleusis. Just before the battle the Corinthians changed their minds, arguing that the coalition was fighting a wrong cause, and departed. After that Demaratus, the second Spartan king, led his army away, and so did the rest of the Peloponnesian allies (Hdt. 5.74-75).

After the Peloponnesian expedition was “ingloriously scattered” (διαλυθέντος ... ἀκλεῶς, Hdt. 5.77.1), the Athenians turned their attention to the rest of their enemies. They demolished the Boeotians in battle, and crossed to Euboea on the same day to crush the Chalcidians. They confiscated the land that belonged to the Chalcidian *hippobotai* and distributed it to four thousands of Athenian cleruchs.⁷³

Here is, then, the situation described in lines 891-894: the joint attack on Athens has crumbled because the Corinthians turned a deaf ear to the plea of assistance and “filled with ear-wax” the ears of the rest of the Peloponnesians. The Chalcidian nobility is facing the consequences of the defeat: some are going into exile; a pro-Athenian rule has been established in Chalcis. The Lelantine plain, with its vineyards, its grazing horses and its sanctuary, is ravaged and cut into cleruchs’ plots.⁷⁴ We can now appreciate the bitter pun of the poem: *κυψελιδῶν* invokes both the action of turning a deaf ear and the Cypselids,⁷⁵ a combination singularly appropriate for referring to the faithless Corinthians.

72. On thematic ring compositions as a unifying device in elegiac stanzas, see FARONE 2008, p. 23-31, with examples from Theognis.

73. HIGHBARGER 1937, p. 98 n. 38 has suggested that Theog. 891-94 refers to the Athenians attack of 506 BC; HARRISON (1902, p. 294) also has considered that possibility; similarly, VETTA 2000, p. 136.

74. The destruction of Cerinthus fits the same occasion: KNOEPFLER 1997, p. 353 notes that Cerinthus probably belonged to the territory of Chalcis in the Archaic period. The Athenian conquest then would deprive Chalcis of Cerinthus. The mention of *Κήρινθος* may also phonetically prime the audience for the hidden *Κόρινθος*, creating a mental ring composition *Κήρινθος ἔλωλεν* – [*Κόρινθος*] *ἔλεσε*.

75. The pun *κυψελίς*–*Κύψελος* is in Luc. *Lex.* 1.22-23.

The destruction of the Lelantine plain enters the Theognidean tradition as a foundational myth of the new world order, the new cold and dark state of affairs in which the aristocratic code of mutual assistance is replaced by mutual wishes of destruction. ‘You have seen (δῆ, Theog. 894) what has happened to the Lelantine plain.⁷⁶ Let it now happen to the Corinthians.’ We are not any more in the times when the ritual brought one face to face with the primordial savagery of the Curetes. The savagery left the distant past and is happening now. And, seen from this new vantage point, the past, when the violence was still ritually contained, when the ethic of reciprocal support was still in place, when the symposiastic lightheartedness was still possible, when they could still banquet on top of the hill, looking at the Lelantine plain below, becomes retrospectively assimilated to the Golden Age.

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76. See BAKKER 1997, p. 75-76 on δῆ conveying an effect of ‘shared seeing.’

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