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## The Actors of Cultural Contact in Ancient Epirus: Colonists, Traders and Pilgrims

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# The Actors of Cultural Contact in Ancient Epirus: Colonists, Traders and Pilgrims<sup>1</sup>

by *Adolfo J. Domínguez Monedero*

## 1 Colonists

Of all the areas affected by the so-called Greek Colonisation, Epirus is of particular interest. In fact, in contrast to other areas of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the inhabitants of ancient Epirus spoke the Greek language, just as the colonists did. Another topic of interest is whether or not Epirus' inhabitants considered themselves to be Greek or were considered Greek by the colonists that settled in and around their territory. In any case, it is hard to believe that in the first stages of colonisation the features that usually characterise Greek identity had already been formed in detail.

The first Greek colony related to Epirus was, without doubt, Corcyra (fig. 1). It was founded in the last third of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. by Corinth, perhaps by ousting a previous Euboean settlement (Plut. mor. 293 B)<sup>2</sup>. It is likely that the name of the territory of Epirus itself, which literally means »mainland opposite islands« (Strab. 10, 2, 8) actually came from the Corinthian colonists of Corcyra. In central Epirus, another Corinthian colony, that of Ambracia, rose in the third quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Strab. 7, 7, 6; 10, 2, 8)<sup>3</sup>. Other colonies are located nearby, although they were not founded, strictly speaking, on Epirote land. These include Anactorion, a colony of Corinth and Corcyra (third quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century) located on the southern coast of the Ambracian Gulf (Strab. 10, 2, 8). Further to the south

lies the important Corinthian colony of Leukas (mid 7<sup>th</sup> century) (Strab. 10, 2, 8)<sup>4</sup> and, to the north, very close to Epirote land but in Illyria, Apollonia, a colony of Corinth and Corcyra (end of 7<sup>th</sup> century) (Ps-Skymn. 439–440; Strab. 7, 5, 8)<sup>5</sup>. Even further to the north is Epidamnos which was also a colony of Corinth and Corcyra founded in the final quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Thuk. 1, 24–27)<sup>6</sup>. These are the main colonies found in the Epirote region or nearby. Not included in this list, however, are the supposed Elean colonies mentioned in a speech by Demosthenes because, despite their mention in literature, we believe that they did not actually exist<sup>7</sup>. It is difficult to analyse in full detail the activities of the various Greek colonies that existed in the area around Epirus. There are, however, some elements that we can look into. With regard to Corcyra, it seems that from an early date this great city was interested in gaining areas of control on the opposite continental land. With this in mind, and given that there is no direct information in the literary sources for the Archaic period, we can turn to archaeology for more details.

The rushed excavations carried out in connection with the construction of the new Egnatia Odos unearthed several Archaic findings of interest. These findings can be linked with others that have been known for some time. Alongside some Corinthian pottery, the remains of terra-

1 This article has been written as part of the Research Project PID2019-105281GB-I00 funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

2 K. Preka-Alexandri, *Oi archaiotêtes tēs Kerkyras* (Athens 2010); G. Metallinou, *Kerkyra through the Excavations of the Last Years: Myths and Realities*, in: C. Antonetti (ed.), *Lo spazio ionico e le comunità della Grecia nord-occidentale. Territorio, società, istituzioni* (Pisa 2010) 11–34.

3 C. Tzouvara-Souli, *Amvrakia* (Arta 1992).

4 K. L. Zachos – A. S. Douzougli, *Leukada. Istorikē-Archaiologikē Episkopēsē mesa apo ta ekthemata tou Archaiologikou Museiou* (Athens 2003).

5 V. Dimo – P. Lenhardt – F. Quantin (eds.), *Apollonia d'Illyrie I. Atlas archéologique et historique* (Athens 2007).

6 S. A. Coccioli, *Epidamno tra Corinto e Corcira*: Th., I, 24–27, in: M. Lombardo – F. Frisone (eds.), *Colonie di colonie: Le fondazioni sub-coloniale greche tra colonizzazione e colonialismo* (Galatina 2009) 145–160.

7 A. J. Domínguez Monedero, »Phantom Eleans« in Southern Epirus, *AncWestEast* 14, 2015, 111–143.



1 Map of Epirus showing the sites mentioned in the text

cotta figurines of a religious nature have been discovered in Neochori-Gkrikas (Paramythia), Mastilitza and Pyrgos Ragiou, all dating back to some point in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. At present it is thought that the latter location was a Corcyraean establishment built in the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in order to control the mouth of the River Thyamis<sup>8</sup>, perhaps as part of the defensive works carried out by Corcyra to protect this

strategic area. The same is suggested for the site located on the Lygia peninsula in the southern part of the River Thyamis' former estuary. Thucydides informs us of the existence of these points of control on the mainland opposite Corcyra when he talks about the civil war in the city in 427 B.C.: »Later, however, the Corcyraean fugitives, of whom about five hundred had got safely across to the mainland, seized some forts there,

<sup>8</sup> A. Tzortzatou – L. Fatsiou, *Nea stoicheia gia tē Thesprōtia tōn Geōmetrikōn kai Archaikōn Chronōn*, *Ēpeirōtika Chronika* 40, 2006, 67–70; A. Tzortzatou – L. Fatsiou, *New Early Iron Age and*

*Archaic Sites in Thesprotia*, in: B. Forsén (ed.), *Thesprotia Expedition I. Towards a Regional History* (Helsinki 2009) 43–49.

and thus dominating the territory belonging to Corcyra on the opposite coast made it a base from which they plundered the people of the island and did them much harm« (Thuk. 3, 85, 2).

Lygia consists of three fortified sections, called Castles A, B and C, surrounded, for the most part, by isodomic walls from the 5<sup>th</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., which were partly reconstructed in later periods. Unfortunately, there is not much information at our disposal regarding the building remains that are partly visible in the site; it is quite possible that the site had been occupied before the fortifications were built. It has been suggested that its ancient name could have been Torone or Toryne, a toponym from this region mentioned by Claudius Ptolemy (Ptol. 3, 14, 5)<sup>9</sup>.

Both Pyrgos Ragiou and Lygia can be used to demonstrate Corcyra's interest in controlling the coastal regions of Epirus, especially the region around the former estuary of the Thyamis river; however, as we have already mentioned, the archaeological finds do not seem to date back to earlier than the last part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Consequently, we must look elsewhere to find earlier evidence.

In this respect, the findings unearthed at Mastilitza, to the north of the current mouth of the River Thyamis, are of particular interest. Here, a cultic structure was discovered which can be dated back to between the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. On the same hill, there is a fortified area of the late Classical/Hellenistic period, as well as a necropolis in which imported materials were also found (end of the 6<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). The cultic area seems to have been in use until the beginning of the Hellenistic period and comprises a rectangular building (13.80 × 9.50 m) facing from east to west, the remains of a possible altar as well as evidence that sacrifices were carried out there. It has not yet been possible to determine the deity to which it was dedicated. Amongst the variety of finds (pottery,

bronze, etc.) there were also weapons (spears, swords and arrows). It is difficult to ascertain whether this sanctuary and other structures detected in Mastilitza ought to be associated with the Epirote peoples or if, on the contrary, and perhaps more probably, they can be taken as an example of Corcyra's control over this strategic area at the mouth of the river Thyamis<sup>10</sup>. In any case, it shows the introduction, even if it was at the hands of the Corcyraeans, of new forms of cult in Epirus that are more like the ones usually found in the Greek world. On the other hand, the discovery of religious terracotta figurines both in Mesopotamos and Neochori<sup>11</sup> suggests that these objects also began to circulate in the Thesprotian region which in turn would have influenced the way in which the Epirotes perceived this religious phenomenon.

It is possible that the Corinthians or – and perhaps with more justification – the Corcyraeans established another area of coastal control in Epirus, namely in the area of the future city of Bouthrotos/Butrint, as is suggested by the findings of Proto-Corinthian, Corinthian and Attic ceramics. These fragments date back to between the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. and the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and seem to prove the existence of a colonial presence, albeit perhaps in the shape of a sanctuary<sup>12</sup>. Hecataeus (*FGrH* 1 F 106) calls it *polis*, which must mean that it was indeed a colony, although there are not many archaeological remains known as we have already seen. It is indeed possible, however, that the first walls were built between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. (instead of city walls as such they seem to have been part of a powerful wall that ran around an important religious *temenos* to the north). Some votive offerings found at the top of the acropolis and on its far west side suggest that cult areas of Corinthian or Corcyraean origin may have existed here. A sculpture of a lion, reused in a late antique door, seems to date back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. although its original place is unknown<sup>13</sup>.

9 A. Vlachopoulou-Oikonomou, *Episkopēsē tēs topographias tēs Archaia Epeirou: Nomoi Iōanninōn – Thesprōtias kai Notia Albania* (Ioannina 2003) 160–162.

10 Tzortzatzou – Fatsiou 2006 loc. cit. (n. 8) 70–77; E. Kanta-Kitsou, *Diktyo Archaialogikōn Chōrōn Thesprōtias* (Igoumenitsa 2009) 22–25; G. Metallinou – E. Kanta-Kitsou – G. Riginos, 32 *Ephoreia Proistorikōn kai Klasikōn Archaiotētōn*, in: M. Andreadaki-Vlazaki (ed.), 2000–2010 apo to Anaskaphiko Ergo tōn Eforeiōn Archaiotētōn (Athens 2012) 352.

11 The terracotta figurine found at Pyrgos Ragiou could belong to the (possible) Corcyraean fortified settlement that may have existed in this spot.

12 R. Hodges, *A New Topographic History of Butrint, Ancient Buthrotum*, in: S. de Maria (ed.), *Le ricerche delle Missioni Archeologiche in Albania nella ricorrenza dei dieci anni di scavi dell'Università de Bologna a Phoinike* (2000–2010) (Bologna 2012) 62 f. A more recent and different interpretation in D. R. Hernández, *Bouthrotos (Butrint) in the Archaic and Classical Periods. The Acropolis and Temple of Athena Polias*, *Hesperia* 86, 2017, 205–271.

13 S. Greenslade – S. Leppard – M. Logue, *The acropolis of Butrint reassessed*, in: I. L. Hansen – R. Hodges – S. Leppard (eds.), *Butrint 4. The Archaeology and Histories of an Ionian Town* (Oxford 2013) 50 f.

The actions of Corcyra, which was interested in controlling part of the mainland, seem to have involved the establishment of links with the coast of Epirus. Some scholars are understandably careful in their observations given that »the archaeology is too limited to determine definitively that Butrint was a ›Corcyraean‹ territory«<sup>14</sup>, and particularly in view of the fact that ancient opinions referring to the »colonial« nature of Butrint do so with even less corroboration<sup>15</sup>. The archaeological remains in locations such as Bouthrotos or Mastilita, however, as well as the Greek imports mentioned earlier lead us to deduce that the city of Corcyra became interested early on in the continental areas opposite the island. At first the island may have just been interested in knowing (and exploring?) these lands but it then went on to install cult areas there. It is not easy to ascertain, however, how they interacted with the local peoples, and if the latter, who were Greek-speaking, found it easy to reconcile these spaces with their own religious ideas, thus making the establishment of cult areas, a frequent practice in Greek colonies, all the more significant. Unfortunately, we do not have much information at our disposal for so far back in Antiquity.

From another point of view, it is not easy to single out who was involved with the local peoples but we can at least look into the collective behaviour of the Corcyraean colonists, who would have built, initially, cult areas that were quite different to those usually found in Epirus. Secondly, the fact that walled-off areas were constructed would serve to help with the defense of the Greek city and may even have increased control over the Epirote land. Beyond the eventual military control, these areas meant that other agents had a way into Epirus, in particular traders and pilgrims.

In northern Epirus we also see the activities of another Greek colony: Apollonia of Illyria. Pausanias informs us that there was a war between this city and the Amantes when he tells us of a sacred monument dedicated by the victors in Olympia:

»These are the work of Lycius, the son of Myron, and were dedicated by the people of Apollonia on the Ionian sea. There are also elegiac verses written in ancient characters under the feet of Zeus: ›As memorials of Apollonia have we been

dedicated, which on the Ionian sea Phoebus founded, he of the unshorn locks. The Apollonians, after taking the land of Abantis, set up here these images with heaven's help, tithe from Thronium«. The land called Abantis and the town of Thronium in it were a part of the Thesprotian mainland over against the Ceraunian mountains [...] Afterwards, however, they were conquered in war and expelled by the people of Apollonia, their neighbours. Apollonia was a colony of Corcyra, they say, and Corcyra of Corinth, and the Corinthians had their share of the spoils« (Paus. 5, 22, 3–4).

This war would have taken place in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and may have led to important changes in this part of Epirus since the destroyed city of Thronium may have been substituted by the city of Amantia, the name of which most likely derives from a political manifestation of the Amantes' *ethnos*. The conquest of Thronium may have been the result of the increasing Greek cities' reinforcement over the nearby Epirote land as we can see occurring years later by the fact that an important internal route ended there that linked the Ambracian Gulf with the Gulf of Vlorë, crossing all of the Epirote land (Thuk. 1, 26, 2)<sup>16</sup>.

The other large Corinthian colony in the area, Ambracia, was located on Epirote territory. We can witness its activities throughout various points in history. Firstly, Thucydides tells us of the great relationship between this city and Argos of Amphilochia; this territory was located in the eastern part of the Ambracian Gulf between Epirus and Acarnania, depending on the point in history; for Strabo (Strab. 7, 7, 1; 7, 7, 8) the Amphilochians were an Epirote *ethnos*. In Epidaurus' list of *thearodochs* (ca. 365–311 B.C.) it appears as part of Epirus. In Argos' list (ca. 330 B.C.), however, we are not told where it is ascribed to, or whether it is situated beyond Acarnania and before Ambracia. Thucydides asserts that in old times »the Amphilochians, under the stress of misfortunes, invited in the Ambraciots, who bordered on Amphilochia, to share the place with them, and these first became Hellenes and adopted their present dialect in consequence of their union with the Ambraciots« (Thuk. 2, 68, 5). This situation changed in 440 B.C. when the Ambraciots »expelled the Argives and themselves seized the city«.

<sup>14</sup> Greenslade – Leppard – Logue loc. cit. (n. 13) 51.

<sup>15</sup> L. M. Ugolini, Butrinto. Il mito d'Enea. Gli Scavi (Rome 1937) 86 f.

<sup>16</sup> R. L. Beaumont, Greek Influence in the Adriatic Sea Before the Fourth Century B.C., JHS 56, 1936, 170.

The Amphilocheians placed themselves under the protection of the Acarnanians and asked for help from Athens. Phormio was sent to Argos and, after reducing the Ambraciots to slavery, settled the Amphilocheians and Acarnanians there<sup>17</sup>. As a result of this enmity, Ambracia waged war against Argos at the end of the summer of 430 B.C. with the help of the Chaonians and perhaps other Epirote allies and, although they dominated the country, they were not able to take the city by assault (Thuk. 2, 68, 7–9). The following year (429 B.C.) the Ambraciots and the Chaonians persuaded the Spartans to send a sea and land expedition against Acarnania. The Spartan admiral, Cnemus, had under his command »of Hellenic troops, some Ambraciots, Anactorians and Leucadians, and the thousand Peloponnesians whom he himself brought; of barbarians, a thousand Chaonians, who, having no king, were led by Photius and Nicanor of the ruling clan who had the annual presidency. With the Chaonian contingent were also some Thesprotians, who likewise had no king. A force of Molossians and Atintanians were led by Sabylinthus, the guardian of king Tharyps, who was still a boy, and of Paravaeans by their king, Oroedus. With the Paravaeans were a thousand Orestians whose king, Antiochus, had entrusted them to Oroedus. And Perdiccas also sent, without the knowledge of the Athenians, a thousand Macedonians, who arrived too late« (Thuk. 2, 80, 5–8).

The Epirote troops in this army suffered a severe defeat before Stratus, which forced Cnemus and his allies to retreat (Thuk. 2, 81–82)<sup>18</sup>. The last attempt made by Ambracia to conquer Argos in 426/5 B.C. ends with an immense disaster (Thuk. 3, 105–114).

The above examples demonstrate the significant involvement that the colonists of Ambracia had at least in this part of the Epirote territory<sup>19</sup>. This must have included alliances with the Chaonians who were also those who found themselves the furthest away from their own land. These relationships, that we know were in place at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., must have been the result of significant interaction for many years and that may have followed other events in history, though not of a political nature, as we will see later on.

Finally, regarding Ambracia, we can mention an inscription dating back to the beginning of Roman occupation (from 160–150 B.C.) which tells us how the Greek city shared a border with the ancient Molossian city of Orraon, one of the four cities that resisted Propaetor Lucius Anicius in 168 B.C. (Liv. 45, 26, 4–10). Located in present-day Ammotopos, this city controlled the route between Ambracia and Dodona from, at least, the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. onwards. In the same way, the inscription also tells us of the common borders that existed between Ambracia and Charadra, which was surely shut off from the Epirote *koinon* when the Romans took over. In any case, the inscription tells us that Ambracia aimed to guarantee the control over its land, without ruling out an increase in its size, even when Roman presence was irreversible<sup>20</sup>.

The various Corinthian colonies have therefore been involved directly with the Epirote land ever since they were first established, often exercising different types of control over the land itself. On occasion, they were supported by military alliances that they formed but they did not discount a more aggressive approach.

17 U. Fantasia, Formione in Acarnania (Thuc. II 68, 7–8) e le origini della guerra del Peloponneso, *Incidenza dell'Antico* 4, 2006, 59–98.

18 Details of all these operations in U. Fantasia, Ambracia, l'Epiro e Atene prima e dopo il 431 A. C., in: G. de Sensi Sestito – M. Intriari (eds.), *Sula rotta per la Sicilia: l'Epiro, Corcira e l'Occidente* (Pisa 2011) 258–262.

19 K. Freitag, Ethnogenese in Nordwestgriechenland: Der Fall Argos Amphilocheikon, in: M. Offenmüller (ed.), *Identitätsbildung und Identitätsstiftung in griechischen Gesellschaften* (Graz 2012)

201–217; J. Pascual, Confederación y poleis en Acarnania en el siglo V a. C., *REA* 118, 2016, 53–77.

20 P. Cabanes – I. Andréou, Le règlement frontalier entre les cités d'Ambracie et de Charadros, *BCH* 109, 1985, 499–544; P. Cabanes, Le règlement frontalier entre les cités d'Ambracie et de Charadros: compléments, *BCH* 109, 1985, 753–757; C. Habicht, Zum Vertrag zwischen Ambrakia und Charadros, *ZPE* 62, 1986, 190–192; P. Charneux – J. Tréheux, Sur le règlement frontalier entre Ambracie et Charadra, *BCH* 112, 1988, 359–373.

## 2 Traders

Let us now move on to another group of agents that was present in Epirus: that of traders. It is, of course, difficult to analyse their role directly and we must do so indirectly, using the non-native objects that have been found in Epirus and which arrived there, at least partly, through trade. I will refer to some elements that may be of interest here starting with those found in Thesprotia and then moving on to those discovered in Molossia.

We can begin with an interesting accumulation of pottery with no clear archaeological context from Mavromandilia. It was found close to the course of the Cocytus river. In addition to different kinds of handmade pottery, the presence of pottery imported from other areas of Greece is of interest here, since these are, to date, the first known imported materials to appear in the region since the end of the Bronze Age. The pottery comes mainly from the area of Corinth but there are also some Western Greek style vases, for which Ithaca has been suggested as an origin. It has been proposed that other vases come from Boeotia, Argos, Thessaly and Attica. The whole collection could date back to between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., although there is also older pottery present<sup>21</sup>. These findings of imported pottery, in the mid-course of the Cocytus River, show clear relations between the inhabitants of this region and those living near the mouth of the River Acheron, as we mentioned earlier. In the same way, the similarities between this pottery and ceramic types found at other locations in Epirus suggest the existence of common traditions between the different peoples living in these areas and even possible interconnections between them. It must be said that this kind of ceramics have appeared also in Geometric period levels in Ambracia, even before the Corinthian colony was founded.

A comparable assemblage is found at the Skala Aetou site, in Philiates, in the middle valley of Kalamas, which has been excavated in recent years (2005–2007). At least two apsidal buildings were

found there. The better preserved one (number 3) measured 14.50 x 3.50 m.; inside, an area with the remains of a pavement and of pithoi was found. The material dates back to between the Iron Age and the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. From the brief reports that have been published to date, it seems that the oldest imports – fragments of Attic black-glazed pottery – correspond to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>22</sup>. The same kind of structure has been identified at other Epirote centres, at Vitsa Zagoriou and Liatovouni in particular, both in the neighbouring Molossian territory. This suggests, again, that there were very similar ways of life at work in most parts of the Epirote land and in the surrounding areas<sup>23</sup>. The absence of imports until a relatively advanced period at Skala Aetou, however, suggests that this settlement was not part of the trade networks that had reached Mavromandilia.

From the information collected at these sites, to which we can add some other areas where possible remains of this period have been identified<sup>24</sup>, it seems that the settlements of Thesprotia, as in the rest of Epirus, were organized along the lines of average-sized groups that maintained a strong link with certain areas. It may well be that they took up residence in some of these areas for part of the year. There were also necropoleis which, from the examples found at sites such as Vitsa and Liatovouni, were used for many generations<sup>25</sup>. Findings such as those unearthed at Mavromandilia indicate that at least part of the territory had begun to receive products made by other Greeks, such as the Euboeans and the Corinthians. This, in turn, demonstrates that the latter also began to receive information about the Epirote people, which would explain the early presence of the Thesprotians in the Homeric Poems.

With regard to Vitsa, the complete publication of the findings from the necropolis gives us a good understanding of the articles imported there and their approximate chronologies (fig. 2). As in other parts of Greece, there is a notably

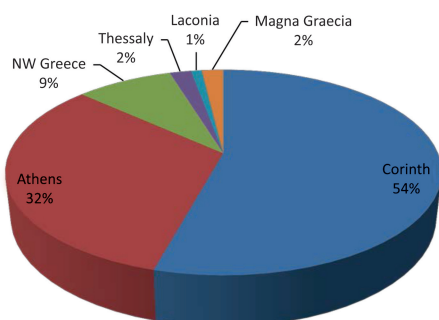
21 Tzortzatou – Fatsiou 2006 loc. cit. (n. 8) 63–67; Tzortzatou – Fatsiou 2009 loc. cit. (n. 8) 40–43; Metallinou – Kanta-Kitsou – Riginos loc. cit. (n. 10) 353.

22 G. Riginos, *Dēmos Phyliatōn*. D. D. Aetou. *Thesē Skala (oikopedo Apostolou ē Micha)*, *ADeltB* 60, 2005, 573–575; Metallinou – Kanta-Kitsou – Riginos loc. cit. (n. 10) 349–354; A. Lamprou – E. Saltagianni, *Archaiologikos chōros Dolianēs*, in: *Ergasies ana-deixēs kai nea archaiologika dedomena*. *Archaiologikos chōros Dolianēs (Igoumenitsa 2007)* 5–11.

23 N. G. L. Hammond, *The affinity of the epirote tribes with their neighbours in the central balkan area*, in: M. B. Sakellariou (ed.), *Epirus. 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization*, (Athens 1997) 57 f.

24 Tzortzatou – Fatsiou 2006 loc. cit. (n. 8) 67, n. 27.

25 J. Vokotopoulou, *Vitsa: ta nekrotapheia mias molossikēs kōmēs* (Athens 1986); A. Douzougli – J. K. Papadopoulos, *Liatovouni: A Molossian Cemetery and Settlement in Epirus*, *JdI* 125, 2010, 1–88.



2 Areas of origin of the pottery imported to the necropolis of Vitsa (850–300 B.C.)

higher presence of Corinthian style ceramics from the Geometric and early Archaic periods. Their presence decreases from the late Archaic and Classical period onwards, in favour of Attic ceramics. There are some other kinds of ceramics, too, though considerably smaller in number (Thessalian, northwestern Greek, etc.)<sup>26</sup>.

Some bronze objects, like a pair of oinochoes from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century which came to light in the same tomb (no. 66), seem to have come from Corinthian workshops, even though they include elements from the Peloponnesian tradition, such as the sculpted busts and palmette handles. The remains of a third oinochoe of this kind are perhaps even older and were also found in the necropolis<sup>27</sup>. Other oinochoes, dating back to the third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., although showing Corinthian influence, may in fact have been made in Ambracia; other bronze vessels show possible influences from the Argolis, central Greece and even the south of Italy.

The necropolis of Liatovouni, which has yet to be published in full, offers a similar panorama to that of Vitsa. Ceramics imports start to appear from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century with ceramics from northwest Greece, perhaps produced in Achaia or in the Ionian islands, as well as Corinthian products, and in particular Thapsos cups whose origins it has been recently suggested may be found in Ambracia<sup>28</sup>. There are also large numbers of Corinthian ceramics of the 7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries and Attic ceramics from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In Liatovouni there is also an im-

portant series of bronze recipients, including an oinochoe very similar to those found in Vitsa and dating back to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>29</sup>.

An important collection of bronze vessels was discovered in 1939 in Votonosi, close to Metsovo. They had been hidden intentionally with the smaller vessels having been placed inside the larger ones. An oinochoe similar to those discovered in Vitsa and Liatovouni is thought to be a mediocre imitation, made in one of Epirus' Corinthian colonies and dating back to around 500–480 B.C. Also found were lekanides, other oinochoes with a round mouth similar to those discovered in Vitsa, hydriai, phialai, different kinds of cups and four large bronze lebetes with iron handles that contained the rest of the vessels. A significant number of the bronze artifacts seem to have come from Corinthian workshops while others may have been made in Euboea, Boeotia and the south of Italy. The large lebetes may even have been made in Epirus itself. The collection was probably put together over a long period of time since it includes objects dating from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the end of the 4<sup>th</sup>. One of the hydriai bears an inscription that links it with the games held in honour of Heracles in Thespieae, Boeotia<sup>30</sup>.

We cannot be sure of the reasons behind this collection, although there is a tendency to view it as the spoils from the raid of a nearby sanctuary or even as a store for the sacred objects owned by the sanctuary itself. Although both of these suggestions are indeed plausible, it may also be the case that the collection represents a set of dinnerware for the banquets of a particular community and was hidden due to conflict. Indeed, it seems surprising that certain bronze objects usually found in sanctuaries (like Dodona, also in Epirus) are missing. In any case, the collection discovered in Votonosi shows us how products from different areas, in particular Corinthian artefacts, circulated in the interior of Epirus. It also informs us of how foreign trade worked in these lands, speaking of trade in its most general sense, since the hydria from the festivals dedicated to Heracles in Thespieae may in fact have reached Epirus as a result of more complex exchange net-

26 Vokotopoulou loc. cit. (n. 25).

27 Vokotopoulou loc. cit. (n. 25) 24–27.

28 Douzougli – Papadopoulos loc. cit. (n. 25) 49.

29 Douzougli – Papadopoulos loc. cit. (n. 25) 50–52.

30 N. M. Verdélis, Vases en bronze de Metsovo, BCH 73, 1949, 19–28; J. Vokotopoulou, Le trésor de vases de bronze de Votonosi, BCH 99, 1975, 729–788.



works. It may also be the case that these were »diplomatic gifts«.

Of course, objects of this nature do not give us any information about how they were distributed; we may assume that the local people were involved in some way, since through various means of interaction they may have encouraged the distribution of such objects. Both war and plunder, as well as other kinds of relationship (marriage, for example), may have led to the circulation of articles, especially those of value. In this way, for example, the similarities shared by the prochoes (or oinochoes) found in Vitsa and Liatovouni suggest that there were links in place

between the two sites, especially between their elites, although it is not clear whether this also applies to the example from Votonosi. We cannot, of course, rule out that the Greek cities on the coast intervened, nor their traders, distributing products from different areas of the Greek world. Traders from cities such as Corcyra and Apollonia and their respective areas of influence may have played an important role, along with other kinds of interaction, in the importing of ceramics and bronze objects to Epirus. Some may have also travelled to the region as »diplomatic gifts«.

### 3 Pilgrims

The final group of individuals that I would like to discuss are pilgrims, whose objective it was to visit the sanctuaries in order to worship the gods and ultimately obtain something from them in return: in the case of Epirus, prophecies in particular. In the area of Epirus we know of two oracular sanctuaries: the Necromanteion and the Dodona sanctuary. The *Odyssey* (Hom. Od. 10, 504–540) tells us of the former and the list of historical visitors includes the delegates of Perianther, the tyrant of Corinth, who visited the Oracle on behalf of the tyrant to invoke the spirit of his wife Melissa (Hdt. 5, 92). Despite the fact that the location of this sanctuary is, supposedly, known (the hill of Saint John in Mesopotamos, near the mouth of the Acheron river)<sup>31</sup>, doubts have arisen about its association with the true Necromanteion<sup>32</sup>, so we will not consider this site here.

The other great sanctuary in Epirus was Dodona, the existence and oracular nature of which are already reported in Homer's poems (Hom. Il. 16, 233–235; Hom. Od. 19, 296–299) and in Hesiod (Hes. fr. 240). The offerings found in this sanctuary make it similar to other well-

known Greek cult places. However, its particular Epirote character becomes apparent in the absence of any religious building before the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Concerning the various bronze objects that are known to have come from this sanctuary, workshops from Corinth, Argos, Laconia and Magna Graecia have been identified<sup>33</sup>. Some authors have even suggested that specifically Epirote workshops existed in the Corinthian colony of Ambracia. As is often the case with commercial products, however, we cannot know for sure who brought the products to the sanctuary. In Dodona, on the other hand, we have another kind of evidence at our disposal that may give us a more exact idea of their identity. This is due to the recent publication of more than 4,200 oracular responses<sup>34</sup> that may be added to the 300 already known<sup>35</sup>. Although they do not contain much information about where those consulting the Oracle of Zeus had travelled from, the alphabets in which they are written do indeed give us valuable information on the sanctuary's visitors. Of the 158 inscriptions from between the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the first

31 S. I. Dakaris, *The Antiquity of Epirus. The Acheron Necromanteion. Ephyra-Pandosia-Cassope* (Athens 1973); S. I. Dakaris, *The Oracle of the Dead on the Acheron*, in: E. Melas (ed.), *Temples and Sanctuaries of Ancient Greece* (London 1973) 139–149.

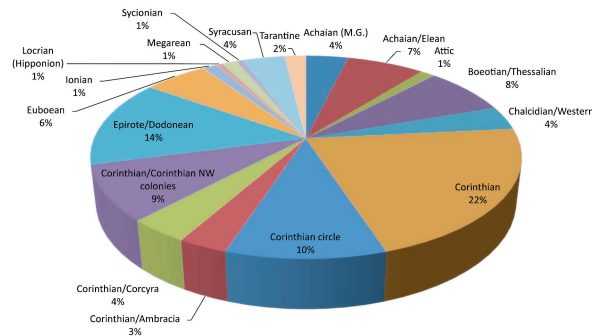
32 D. Baatz, *Hellenistische Katapulte aus Ephyra (Epirus)*, *AM* 97, 1982, 211–233; D. Baatz, *Wehrhaftes Wohnen. Ein befestigter hellenistischer Adelssitz bei Ephyra (Nordgriechenland)*, *AW* 30, 1999, 151–155.

33 S. I. Dakaris, *Archaeological Guide to Dodona* (Ioannina 1971); S. I. Dakaris, *The Sanctuary of Dodona*, in: E. Melas (ed.), *Temples and Sanctuaries of Ancient Greece* (London 1973) 151–163.

34 S. I. Dakaris – J. Vokotopoulou – A. P. Christidis, *Ta chrēstēria elasmata tēs Dōdōnēs* (Athens 2013).

35 E. Lhôte, *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone* (Génève 2006).

half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, for which the origins of their alphabets are known, 48 % are from the Corinthian world in its various forms. It is not always possible to distinguish whether they come from Corinth itself or its colonies, however, given the variability of these alphabets. The rest of the alphabets present are split between the Epirotes and/or Dodonians (14 %) and a variety of origins close by (Thessalians, Achaeans) or from different areas of the central Mediterranean, in particular Magna Graecia and Sicily, which make up the remaining 38 % (fig. 3). This panorama shows us how the sanctuary of Dodona, situated in inland Epirus but well-connected with the different overland routes, was visited by pilgrims from different parts of the Greek world but, above all, from the Corinthian colonies, including without a doubt Corcyra and Ambracia. There are also references to offerings in the sanctuary coming from Corcyra, for instance, the »brazen vessel of Dodona« (Strab. 7, frag. 3). We cannot rule out visitors from other areas such as Apollonia who,



3 Alphabets attested in the lead tablets of Dodona

as we have seen, appear in Epirus or exercise some influence over the region. Interestingly enough, however, the local alphabet used in Dodona is not Corinthian in origin but seems to display influences from the Euboean alphabet in particular<sup>36</sup>. From this we can deduce that these Greeks had an impact on Epirus before Corinth's influence took hold.

## 4 Conclusions

Now that we have taken a look at the different groups discussed for our analysis of the contact between the Greeks and the local peoples in Epirus, we can attempt to respond to some of the questions that this conference aims to address.

- Who are the protagonists of mobility and migration, cultural contact and exchange? In ancient Epirus there are various protagonists as we have seen. On the one hand, it is an area affected by the colonial activities of Corinth and its colonies, which occupy various regions in the Epirote territory or on its borders and use this to their own advantage. Ambracia interacts with its neighbours and sets its borders from the very beginnings of its establishment, although epigraphy shows us that this process is a continual one, even in the initial stages of Roman expansion. In the same way, it intervenes in regional conflicts by sending colonists to nearby regions such as Amphiloichian Argos and in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. we already see it leading a coalition against Acarnania and

Athens with the support of the local people. It is also likely that some of the imported products that we see in the various Epirote settings arrived there thanks to Ambracia, whether they are objects of trade or the fruits of other kinds of relationship (in this group we can include »diplomatic gifts«). We cannot be sure whether or not craftsmen from Ambracia carried out their activities in Epirus but it does seem likely that Ambracians were indeed present amongst the visitors to the sanctuary of Dodona. The overland route travelling from Ambracia to the Gulf of Vlōre is well documented at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. which can be taken as another indication of the Corinthian colony's involvement in Epirote affairs.

On the other hand, other colonies like Corcyra may have established control points on the mainland that became fortified positions by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Before then, however, as we can see from the site of Masti-

36 Lhôte loc. cit. (n. 35) 332.

- litsa, we witness the implementation of a Greek style sanctuary in a setting in which these structures would not have existed previously. Besides the meaning given to it by the Corcyraean colonists themselves, this sanctuary was without a doubt a factor in the cultural change that took place amongst the Epirote peoples who would begin to understand and eventually use ritually Greek elements. This process may have been encouraged further by the similar linguistic identities of the colonists and the local peoples. Other colonies, such as Apollonia, which was established in an area close to Epirus, also intervened with their armies in this territory, protecting their own interests. Both Corcyra and Apollonia may have sent pilgrims and consultants to the Dodona sanctuary and along the coast and on the overland route they may have contributed towards the distribution of imports in Epirus.
- What are the reasons for the mobility of individuals and groups? There are multiple reasons, depending on the interests of those moving around. It is possible that there are individuals who stand out because of their cities of origin working in positions of control on the continent. The fortification of places such as Pyrgos Ragiou or Lygia, for example, shows that Corcyra is interested in consolidating its power over the mouth of the River Thyamis. Before then, the presence of sanctuaries such as Mastilita suggests the existence of a community of colonial origins that was organised around this cult area, perhaps with the aim of exploiting farming resources. In addition, the strategic nature of the site must have been of importance even before a walled area appeared in the last part of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The existence of both economic and strategic interests is also suggested by the tradition of an Ambracian origin amongst the Amphilo-chians which would have triggered a process of cultural change, as Thucydides tells us indirectly. In the case of pilgrims, the reasons behind their mobility are obvious: to consult the oracle of the god. This would enable individuals to then carry out private activities and allow states to resolve any problems they were facing. The presence of traders, although more than probable, is more difficult to demonstrate because we do not know the distribution mechanisms of the objects imported into Epirus. However, the presence of pilgrims in Dodona and the existence of the already men-
- tioned overland route linking Ambracia with Apollonia are elements that allow us to deduce that traders would have been present. Despite this, articles of prestige may well have been taken to different geographical locations as part of aristocratic exchanges between the Epirote elites.
- How and by what sources can individuality and/or group membership be defined and attested to archaeologically? The presence of specific individuals in Epirus can be observed in an extraordinary fashion through the oracular tablets from Dodona. We have more than 1000 personal names, in full or fragmented, belonging to individuals consulting the oracle, in the most part from outside Epirus. In many of these consultations, the gods of Dodona are asked about topics relating to business, especially oversea but also overland, sometimes in the same consultation. Bearing in mind the presence of these individuals in Dodona, it is quite probable that many of the traders using the overland routes across Epirus would make a stop at the sanctuary to consult the oracle about various matters, including commercial ones.
- On the other hand, the presence of external elements in Epirus can be seen in the sanctuary at Mastilita, for example, in terms of its architecture and objects that do not appear in other Epirote centres at that time. In addition, when they do appear, they are clearly imported objects. Greek style sanctuaries, especially in the Archaic period, are a feature that we may deem specific to the Greeks and that the Epirotes did not seem to use at the time. The Dodona sanctuary itself also seems to remain open air and without buildings of any kind until the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
- How do groups with different origins, new arrivals and old-established commingle? Does the new socio-political organization of the community follow the traditions of the new arrivals or of the receiving community or does it amalgamate the two? From an archaeological point of view, we can see how objects of Greek origin become part of the vessel assemblages in local funerary contexts. These objects are above all dedicated to serving and drinking wine and they possibly also have a symbolic value. The ceramics of local origin found in the tombs fulfil the same function, however, and so the imported ceramics do not seem to have introduced new

meanings but should be considered rather a mark of wealth and, ultimately, of status. In some examples, as in tomb 66 in the Vitsa necropolis, where we find two bronze Corinthian style oinochoes, the reduplication may be ostentatious in nature, a suggestion supported by the fact that in the same tomb we find a large 66 cm long spearhead, the largest found in the necropolis. The imported objects in this necropolis and in that of Liatovouni do not seem to have made substantial changes to the local rituals, instead it seems that they had the same function. In bronze deposits, such as the one found in Votonosi, though this may not be a sanctuary as some authors suggest, we encounter a similar phenomenon. The bronze objects were most likely collected and retained because of their exotic nature but also because of the intrinsic value of the metal itself. This practice of collecting and enriching oneself, however, made no apparent impact on the ways of life. This absence of change is also seen in the towns and villages where no important changes are observed from the early Bronze Age to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In addition to this, literary traditions indicate that the peoples of Epirus, Molossians, Thesprotians and Chaones begin to receive and accept traditions from Greece that link their leading circles with different heroes from the Trojan circle, such as Odysseus, Neoptolemus, or Hellenus. This topic has been studied in depth and we will not look into it here but this phenomenon contributes to connecting these peoples or, at least, their leading circles, to the Greek world. The process seems to have been completed in the first third of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. when a Molossian named Alcon is admitted as another Greek to the competition to marry Agariste, the daughter of the tyrant Cleisthenes of Sicyon.

- In the same way, the tradition of cohabiting between Ambracians and Amphilocheians presupposes, perhaps from a hellenocentric point of view, a decisive cultural influence by the Greeks over the local peoples, the main consequence of which would be the hellenisation of some Amphilocheians, whilst those not living in Argos would have continued to be known as barbarians. We cannot enter into more detail here on this most problematic tradition with

its strong ethnocentric connotations, although we should say that the tradition presupposes not a charitable act by the Greeks towards the locals, but rather differences amongst the members of the same people, the Amphilocheians, some of which would have ended up becoming Greeks whilst the others remained barbarians.

- How do living together and the distance from the place of origin affect the pace of acculturation? From the case study we are working on it seems that the important presence of Greek colonies in the Epirote area had great significance, in particular in terms of linking the Greek world with the local population. On the other hand, the distance between the Corinthian colonies and their metropolis was not especially great and Corinth maintained a deep interest in the region, though not necessarily through Corcyra whose relationship with the metropolis was not optimum from an early date, but rather through other colonies such as Ambracia or Apollonia. The numerous visitors to the oracle of Dodona who used the Corinthian alphabet from as early as the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. indicate the great influence that the city on the Isthmus and its colonies had, combined or independently, on Epirote territory. These activities included undoubtedly the different protagonists that we have mentioned already: colonists, traders and pilgrims. The result of the significant Greek presence in Epirus, which – and we must insist on this point – was inhabited at the time by people who also used the Greek language, can be seen from as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., through the gradual process of acceptance of the Greek identity by the Epirotes.
- It is, without a doubt, a combination of the protagonists mentioned, of both Corinthian and Corinthian colonial origins, that led to the Epirote world being known as part of the Greek world. In addition to the brief but interesting information that we are given in Homer and Hesiod, the presence of Thesprotia and Molossia in literature from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards (*Thesprotis*, *Nostoi*) can be taken as further evidence of how literature has gathered together data that must have been collected and passed on by the protagonists of cultural contact dealt with in this study.

### Summary

The actors of cultural contact between ancient Epirus and the Greek world are analysed through three different types of individuals: colonists, traders and pilgrims. Objects and architectural remains of Greek origin in Epirus are studied in order to inquire about the persons responsible for their arrival and to reflect on the processes of economic and cultural exchange. In addition, the use of epigraphic data from the oracular tablets found in the sanctuary of Dodona allows observations on the places of origin of the Greeks who visited the sanctuary. In the conclusions the main data about the cultural contacts that emerge from the analysed information are collected.

### Zusammenfassung

Die Akteure des kulturellen Kontakts zwischen dem antiken Epirus und der griechischen Welt werden am Beispiel dreier Personengruppen analysiert: Kolonisten, Händler und Pilger. Objekte und Architekturreste griechischen Ursprungs in Epirus werden untersucht, um Aussagen über die Personen zu treffen, die zu ihrer Verbreitung beitrugen, und die wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen

Austauschprozesse zu beleuchten. Des Weiteren liefern die im Heiligtum von Dodona gefundenen Orakeltäfelchen epigraphische Daten, die Rückschlüsse auf die Herkunft der aus Griechenland kommenden Heiligtumsbesucher erlauben. In der Zusammenfassung werden die Hauptfakten zum Kulturkontakt, die aus der Analyse der verschiedenen Materialgruppen hervorgegangen sind, zusammengetragen.

*Übersetzung: Jenny Wilde*

### ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

**Fig. 1** Map: A. J. Domínguez Monedero

**Fig. 2** Chart: A. J. Domínguez Monedero

**Fig. 3** Chart: A. J. Domínguez Monedero

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