CENTRAL GREECE ON THE EVE OF THE COLONISATION MOVEMENT*

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Introduction

…the only thing to do is to return to the primary evidence and help it to speak for itself… (Boardman 2001, 34).

It is surely not necessary, here, to stress the importance of the Greek colonisation movement1 whose long-term consequences are today more evident than ever, in a world in which Western concepts and material culture are spreading rapidly and, as it seems, unstoppably, around the globe. Yet, the process itself, its characteristics and above all its causes are still far from clear and continue to be the matter of a vivid debate.

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1 In keeping with the definition given by G.R. Tsetskhadze in the Introduction to the present work (Tsetskhadze 2006, xxiii), the term is applied here to the proto-historical phenomenon datable between the first half of the 8th century and the end of the Archaic period. Ancient writers, and the first modern historians dealing with Greek colonisation such as Désirée Raoul-Rochette and Ernst Curtius, did not distinguish it from the expansion that took place in the 11th and 10th centuries and led to the settlement of the Aegean islands and the west coast of Asia Minor by Ionian, Dorian and Aeolian Greeks from the mainland. For this earlier movement, we use the term ‘migration’—which would in fact be more appropriate for the second expansion also, as has recently been remarked (Tsetskhadze 2003, 130; Bernstein 2004, 31; see also Hansen 2004, 150 n. 2).
Ancient Sources and Modern Terminology

The main difficulty lies of course in the fact that this colonial expansion started well before Greek historiography developed, which means that we possess virtually no contemporary written information about it. True, ‘Homer’ (if we accept the dating of the society described in his epics around 800 B.C.) mentions the foundation of Rhodes in the Iliad (2. 661–670) and that of Scheria in the Odyssey (6. 7–11), but both stories are set in a mythical past, and can hardly be taken as reflecting a historical reality. That neither Hesiod nor Archilochos tell us much about colonisation is particularly disappointing, since both knew from personal experience what emigration meant: Hesiod’s father had come to Askra from Cyme/Cumae on the Acolian coast (probably around the middle of the 8th century) (Opera et Dies 633–640), and Archilochos, of Parian origin, participated himself in the founding of Thasos (around the middle of the 7th century). Both allude in passing to aspects pertaining to emigration and repeatedly mention hunger and poverty as the main reason for which people decide to leave their homes, but neither provides explicit or general information about the colonisation movement.

Such information does not become available until much later: the very word which we translate as ‘colonisation’, ἀποικία, is attested for the first time in the early 5th century, as is the term that designates the founder of a ‘colony’, the oἰκιστήρ or oἰκιστής, and it is not until the second half of the same century that Herodotus and Thucydides include in their works more extensive discussions concerning the colonisation movement. However, since neither of them deals systematically with the phenomenon, one has to reconstruct the picture from numerous dispersed fragments which, without exception, concern individual

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2 See below with n. 381.
3 Crielaard (1995, 236) believes that the story about Scheria reflects late 8th–early 7th-century colonial foundations—without specifying what example he has in mind. To my knowledge, there is not a single apoikia featuring a town-wall at that time. On early Greek town-walls in general, see Snodgrass 1986 (with reference to the earlier literature); and for the colonies in the West, see most recently Mertens 2006, 88.
4 Tsetskhladze 2006, lxxii; Preisendanz 1979.
5 See, for example, Hesiod Opera et Dies 635; Archilochos 53D, 54D.
6 Meaning literally ‘away from house and household’, not, as is so often repeated, ‘a home away from home’, and even less ‘a community created by another community in its own image but on foreign soil’, as Wilson (1997, 205) proposes.