

## Diachronic Homer and a Cretan *Odyssey*

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### Introduction

I explore here the kaleidoscopic world of Homer and Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, combining it with a synchronic perspective. The terms *synchronic* and *diachronic*, as I use them here, come from linguistics.<sup>1</sup> When linguists use the word *synchronic*, they are thinking of a given structure as it exists in a given time and space; when they use *diachronic*, they are thinking of that structure as it evolves through time.<sup>2</sup> From a diachronic perspective, the structure that we know as Homeric poetry can be viewed, I argue, as *an evolving medium*.

But there is more to it. When you look at Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, you will see not only an evolving medium of oral poetry. You will see also a medium that actually views itself diachronically. In other words, Homeric poetry demonstrates aspects of its own evolution.

A case in point is “the Cretan *Odyssey*”—or, better, “a Cretan *Odyssey*”—as reflected in the “lying tales” of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. These tales, as we will see, give the medium an opportunity to open windows into an *Odyssey* that is otherwise unknown. In the alternative universe of this “Cretan *Odyssey*,” the adventures of Odysseus take place in the exotic context of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization.

### Part 1: Minoan-Mycenaean Civilization and Memories of a Sea-Empire<sup>3</sup>

#### *Introduction*

From the start, I say “Minoan-Mycenaean civilization,” not “Minoan” and “Mycenaean” separately. This is because elements of Minoan civilization become eventually infused with elements we find in Mycenaean civilization. And such an infusion has to do with the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> See Nagy (2003:1), with reference to Saussure (1916:117).

<sup>2</sup> On *diachronic* as distinct from *historical* perspectives, see Nagy (2011a).

<sup>3</sup> An earlier version of what follows in Part 1 appeared online in Nagy (2015c).

Minoan civilization, which had evolved in the context of a “Minoan Empire,” as archaeologists know it, was eventually taken over by a “Mycenaean Empire.” This takeover, I argue, is reflected not only in the evidence of material culture but also in the evidence of mythological traditions as reflected in visual and verbal narratives. To be more specific, I argue that the takeover from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization resulted in the modification of myths about the Minoan Empire by way of myths about the Mycenaean Empire. And one of these myths, as we will see, is based on an idea that I paraphrase by way of the popular expression “finders keepers.” This same expression, as we will also see, applies also to a ritual that evolved in a historically unrelated context, the sea-empire of Venice in its heyday. In terms of my argument, the mentality of *finders keepers* that comes to life in a myth about the Minoan sea-empire also comes to life in a ritual that evolved in the historical context of the Venetian sea-empire. Proceeding now to the essay, I start by reviewing some essentials first about the Minoan Empire and then about the Mycenaean Empire.

### *Minoan Empire*

The Minoan Empire makes its appearance in the early second millennium BCE in Crete, which is an island situated in the middle of the Aegean Sea, and the power of this empire was sustained by its dominion over the sea (Fig.1.).



Fig. 1. As we will see, this image of sea-bound Crete will help visualize the importance of the sea for conceptualizing the Minoan Empire.

The blue sea surrounding the island seems serene at the moment—no troubled waters. As we will see later, the distinction I am making here between the “serene” and the “troubled” waters of the sea will help visualize the metaphors applied to the good and the bad fortunes experienced by the sea-empire of Venice.

The concept of a Minoan Empire is linked to the name of a mythical figure who was once upon a time the king of Crete. He was *Minōs* or Minos. Even if Minos existed only in myth, archaeological research has shown that there really did exist a sea-empire that evolved in the context of “Minoan” civilization. This Minoan sea-empire flourished in the second millennium BCE, from roughly 1700 till 1450, and it left behind a multitude of after effects in the first millennium BCE, long after it ceased to exist. A good example is a place-name like “Minoa” (*Minōia*), which was the old name of Paros, an island in the Aegean Sea. In this and in other such cases, the name “Minoa” means something like “outpost of Minos.” Archaeologists

have discovered traces of Minoan outposts throughout the Cyclades islands of the Aegean Sea and beyond. The Minoan maritime network extended to places even as far away as Sicily.

A decisive witness to both the myth and the reality of a Minoan sea-empire is Thucydides (1.4.1):

Μίνως γὰρ παλαιάτατος ὧν ἀκοῆ ἴσμεν ναυτικὸν ἐκτίησατο καὶ τῆς νῦν Ἑλληνικῆς θαλάσσης ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐκράτησε καὶ τῶν Κυκλάδων νήσων ἤρξέ τε καὶ οἰκιστὴς πρῶτος τῶν πλείστων ἐγένετο. Minos was the earliest of all men we know about from oral traditions who possessed a fleet and seized power over most of the sea that we now know as the Greek sea [= the Aegean] and over the Cyclades Islands [of the Aegean Sea]. He was also the first to establish colonial outposts at most of these islands.

In fact, Thucydides is the primary source for a most apt term for this sea-empire, which is *thalassocracy*, derived from the Greek compound formation *thalasso-krat-* / θαλασσο-κρατ- as used by the historian in the sense of “control over the sea” (as in 7.48.2, 8.30.2, 8.41.1, 8.63.1), and the earlier historian Herodotus uses the same compound formation *thalasso-krat-* / θαλασσο-κρατ- in referring specifically to the sea-empire of Minos (3.122.2).<sup>4</sup> For both Herodotus and Thucydides, the thalassocracy of Minos was viewed as a prehistoric precedent for the historical thalassocracy of the Athenian Empire in the fifth century BCE.<sup>5</sup> This “Athenian connection” will figure prominently in my argumentation ahead.

I finish this part of my analysis by noting in general that the concept of a Minoan thalassocracy is well attested in many other classical sources besides Herodotus and Thucydides: going backward in time, I list the following examples: Plutarch, Strabo, Virgil, Catullus, Plato (especially in the *Phaedo*), and, most prominently, the “Homer” of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as we know those epics.

### *Mycenaean Empire*

The Mycenaean Empire makes its appearance in the middle of the second millennium BCE on the mainland of continental Europe, in the region that we now know as Greece. This empire dominated only a part of that region—especially the part that is still known today as the Peloponnesos. It can be said that the Mycenaean Empire was the first empire that ever existed in continental Europe.

The term *Mycenaean* stems from the place-name *Mukēnai* or Mycenae, an ancient fortified site located in the northeast region of the Peloponnesos. This site, dominated by a walled citadel, was the administrative center of that region, as we see from the evidence of clay tablets that were used for the records of the center. Modern archaeological excavations have recovered some of these tablets, which had been accidentally preserved because they were baked in fires that burned down the center or at least parts of the center. Jan Driessen’s formulation is

<sup>4</sup>Nagy (2009 II§242 = p. 222).

<sup>5</sup>Nagy (2009 II §244 = p. 223, E§§161-64 = pp. 364-66).

most apt: “tablets need a fire catastrophe to be preserved.”<sup>6</sup> These fires did not necessarily happen all at once, but in any case the final destruction of the administrative center of Mycenae by fire can be dated around the twelfth or eleventh century BCE.<sup>7</sup> The script that was used for writing on these tablets is known today as Linear B, and the decipherment of this script by Michael Ventris in 1952 showed that the language in which the Linear B texts were written was a form of ancient Greek. This form of Greek resembles most closely the oldest aspects of Homeric language, which is the language of a special kind of oral poetry that shaped the ancient Greek epics that we know as the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.<sup>8</sup>

Linguists generally describe as *Mycenaean* the Greek language of the Linear B tablets, even though Mycenae is not the only ancient site in mainland Greece where archaeologists have found such tablets. Excavations at other sites on the mainland have yielded further examples. Most notably, there were tablets found at Pylos and at Thebes; at these sites, the dating of the fires that baked most of the tablets has been estimated at around the early twelfth century BCE in the case of Pylos and at around the second half of the thirteenth century BCE in the case of Thebes.<sup>9</sup> The Greek Ministry of Culture announced on the 25th of August 2015 that a Mycenaean “palace” near Sparta has been discovered (*The Guardian* 2015).

The language of the Linear B tablets found at these and other sites is remarkably consistent: what we see at work is a kind of *lingua franca* reflecting the bureaucratic agenda of the administrative centers. Given that Mycenae was not the only administrative center that used the *lingua franca* represented by Linear B texts, can we even say that the Mycenaean Empire was controlled from one unified administrative center, which was Mycenae itself? The most likely answer is no. It would be more realistic to view the Mycenaean Empire as a loose federation of multiple administrative centers, small as well as large. Still, from the standpoint of all archaeological findings put together, Mycenae was clearly the most prosperous, powerful, and prestigious of all such centers. For me these three “P”s— *prosperity*, *power*, and *prestige*—sum up the essence of empires in general.

What I just formulated can be backed up by the indirect evidence of archaeological findings at Boğazköy, a small town located in the north central region of the modern state of Turkey. It was here that the great ancient city of Hattusa, capital of the Hittite Empire, was found. And it was here that archaeologists uncovered the archives of this empire. The tablets found in the archives, written in cuneiform script, documented written correspondences between Hittite kings and counterparts who were kings of other empires, including even the pharaohs of Egypt.<sup>10</sup> I focus here on the place-name referring to one of these other empires. That place-name is *Ahhiyawa*, attested in Hittite correspondences dating from an era stretching from the fifteenth

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<sup>6</sup>Driessen (2008:71).

<sup>7</sup>Driessen (2008:74).

<sup>8</sup>Nagy (2008a I§§6, 16-18; II§§116-88).

<sup>9</sup>Driessen (2008:73, 74).

<sup>10</sup> On the correspondences of Hittite kings with pharaohs of Egypt, see (Edel 1994).

to the thirteenth centuries BCE.<sup>11</sup> During that period the Hittite Empire controlled most of the land-mass of Asia Minor from east to west—all the way west to the coast of the Aegean Sea. And it was along the coastline of the Aegean where conflicts occasionally flared up between the Hittite Empire and a rival empire called Ahhiyawa by the Hittites, as we see from correspondences, recorded in the Hittite language, between the successive kings of the two empires.<sup>12</sup>

From the Ahhiyawa texts of the Hittite archives, we can see that the kings of the Hittite Empire in the land-mass of Asia Minor—an empire that was and always had been land-based—speak about the empire of Ahhiyawa as a seafaring power that is somehow ruled by a king whose own land base is in the west, on the other side of the Aegean Sea, situated somewhere on the land-mass of Europe.<sup>13</sup> In the ongoing research on the Ahhiyawa texts, the current consensus is that the land base called Ahhiyawa by the Hittites is the Peloponnesos, and that the center point of that land base is Mycenae.<sup>14</sup> So, the evidence of the Hittite archives points to the existence of a Mycenaean empire, whether or not we consider the administrative center at Mycenae to be powerful enough to control all the regions that archaeologists would describe as belonging to the civilization of the Mycenaeans.

And how did the populations of Ahhiyawa refer to themselves in their native Greek language? The form used in the Hittite texts, *Ahhiyawa* (older variant *Ahhiya*), gives the answer. In the Hittite language, this form approximates what the Mycenaeans themselves would have called their empire: “land of the *Akhaiói*.”<sup>15</sup>

In terms of the Mycenaean Greek language as spoken in the second millennium BCE and as later reflected in Homeric poetry, *Akhaiói* can be translated as “Achaeans,” which in Homeric Greek was a collective heroic name for the Greek-speaking warriors who fought in the Trojan War.<sup>16</sup>

So, the Hittite evidence indicates that the Mycenaean Empire, whether or not it is to be viewed merely as a loose confederation of states, was a formidable sea-based as well as a land-based power, rivaling the land-based power of the Hittite Empire in Asia Minor.

But how did the Mycenaean Empire become a sea-based power in the first place? To explain I return to a term I used earlier when I referred to “the Minoan-Mycenaean civilization.” This compound term Minoan-Mycenaean is meant to reflect the fact that Minoan civilization was ultimately absorbed by Mycenaean civilization. And this fact is correlated with another fact: that the Minoan Empire was eventually taken over by the Mycenaean Empire. Even the original power base of the Minoan Empire, the island of Crete, was eventually occupied by Mycenaeans,

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<sup>11</sup> The original Hittite correspondences known today as the Ahhiyawa Texts have been published, in transliterated form and with translation and commentary, by Beckman, Bryce, and Cline (2011).

<sup>12</sup> See Nagy (2015b).

<sup>13</sup> In the same source as indicated in the previous note, I analyze the references in the Ahhiyawa Texts to sea-based activities linked with successive kings of Ahhiyawa.

<sup>14</sup> See again the introduction of Beckman, Bryce, and Cline (2011:3-4).

<sup>15</sup> Again, Nagy (2015b).

<sup>16</sup> Again, Nagy (2015b).

and that is why the administrative centers of the island adopted the same administrative system that we see operating on the Greek mainland. The most distinctive feature of this system was the Linear B script, used for writing Mycenaean Greek, as opposed to the Linear A script, which had been used for writing the pre-Greek language or languages of Minoan civilization on the island of Crete.<sup>17</sup> The clearest attestations of a distinctly Mycenaean administrative system as superimposed on an earlier Minoan administrative system in Crete are the Linear B tablets found at the ancient site of Knossos in the north central region of the island and at Chanià, the ancient name for which was Kydonia, in the northwestern region. The dating of the Linear B tablets found at such Cretan sites even matches for the most part the datings of Linear B tablets found at the mainland Mycenaean sites. At Chanià, for example, the Linear B tablets that have recently been found can be dated around 1250 BCE. At Knossos there are different sets of tablets that had been baked by fire at different phases of destruction during the lengthy existence of that administrative center, and the dates of destruction range from 1400 BCE in the case of the so-called room of the chariot tablets all the way to as late as 1200 in the case of another administrative zone.<sup>18</sup>

The datings of Linear B texts attested on the island of Crete are remarkably close to the earliest datings of Linear B texts attested on the Mycenaean mainland, and this fact leaves open the possibility that the writing system of Linear B, which was evidently derived from the writing system of Linear A, had actually been invented on the island of Crete, not on the Mycenaean mainland. And such an invention could have been contemporaneous with the replacement of Minoan rule by Mycenaean rule on the island.

I must add here a general observation about both Linear A and Linear B as media of writing in Minoan and Mycenaean administrative contexts respectively. I think it is possible that the attested practice of writing Linear A and Linear B on clay tablets with a stylus was only a transitional phase of recording information, followed up by a final phase that involved writing on parchment with brush or possibly with pen. The parchment would then be sealed, for instance with a signet ring.

I base this observation on the relevant archaeological evidence found at Minoan administrative centers. I quote here a formulation from an earlier work of mine (Nagy 2008a II§132):

Relevant here is the existing archaeological evidence for the use of parchment by the Linear A scribes in the administrative center at Zakro in Crete.<sup>19</sup> Evidently, the procedure of these scribes was to use parchment for their permanent archival records, as opposed to their use of clay tablets for making temporary records. I infer that the Linear B scribes of the Mycenaean era followed an analogous procedure: they would write their temporary records on clay tablets, and these records would then be transferred at the end of a given fiscal year from clay to parchment (the notion of a

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<sup>17</sup> My formulation here does not rule out the possibility that Linear A, in the heyday of the Minoan Empire, could also be used to write Greek, even if Greek was not the standard language of Linear A.

<sup>18</sup> Palaima (2003:164); yet another administrative zone at Knossos can be dated around 1375-1350 BCE. See also Driessen (2008 and 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Weingarten (1983b).

fiscal year is indicated by references in the Linear B tablets to the current year as opposed to the immediately preceding and following years). There is an irony to be noted here: when the administrative centers of the Mycenaean era were destroyed by fires, the temporary records of the Linear B scribes were made permanent for archaeologists because they were baked and thus preserved by the same fires that must have destroyed the permanent records recorded on parchment.

At present I stand by my earlier formulation as I just quoted it here, though I acknowledge that my terminology concerning “scribes” and “archives” may need to be refined.<sup>20</sup> Also, I note with interest a relevant observation by Jan Driessen with specific reference to the room of the chariot tablets at Knossos: the clay sealings in this room, found together with the tablets, “are of a type that may have sealed parchment, a practice quite common in earlier Minoan times.”<sup>21</sup> These clay sealings, I should add, could be sealed by way of a signet ring.

I have a most simple reason to give for having taken up all this space in arguing that the Mycenaean administrations on the island of Crete and on the mainland had retained a Minoan practice of writing documents with brush or pen on parchment—and then sealing the parchment document, as with a signet ring. The reason is this: I find it intuitively appealing to posit such an advanced system of writing for the advanced system of administration that we see it at work in the room of the chariot tablets at Knossos.

Keeping my focus for the moment on the room of the chariot tablets, I note with special interest the Mycenaean cultural agenda reflected in the written records of the Linear B tablets that are linked to that administrative zone at Knossos. I quote from an apt description by Thomas Palaima (2003:164), who notes that the administrative unit responsible for keeping written records there was using these records “mainly for the monitoring and distribution of military equipment (chariots, body armour, horses) to a Greek-dominated military élite.”<sup>22</sup> I wager that the Mycenaean Greek name for such a military élite would have been *Akhaioi* “Achaeans.”

I bring this section to a close by coming back full circle to the point I was making at the start about the term Minoan-Mycenaean. As we have just seen in the case of the scripts known as Linear A and Linear B, the transition from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization needs to be viewed in the context of a takeover where an older empire is replaced by a newer one. Accordingly, the surviving traces of the Minoan Empire, including its myths about a Cretan thalassocracy, need to be viewed in the context of the newer Mycenaean Empire, which not only replaced the reality of the older Minoan Empire but also appropriated as its own the myths about the Cretan thalassocracy.

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<sup>20</sup> For a refining of the terms “scribe” and “archive” as applied by archaeologists to the procedures of writing Linear A and Linear B, see Palaima (2003, especially pp. 169-70). Palaima considers the possible relevance of the Minoan archaeological evidence for the administrative practice of writing on parchment, citing Weingarten (1983a) and Hallager (1997:i, 135-58). I cite also Weingarten (1983b and 1986). But Palaima’s analysis also considers arguments opposed to the idea that Mycenaean administrative centers maintained permanent records written in Linear B on parchment. So the debate is ongoing.

<sup>21</sup> Driessen (2010:72).

<sup>22</sup> Driessen (2008:71) makes a relevant observation with reference to the Linear B tablets found at Chanià in West Crete and dated around 1300 BCE: one of these tablets (Sq 1) concerns chariot wheels.

*Intermezzo: a Word about Myth and Ritual*

As my argument proceeds, I will eventually reach a point where I have a chance to focus on a myth about the Cretan thalassocracy. Before I can get there, however, I will have to focus on a ritual that displays, I think, the essence of this thalassocracy. This ritual is represented in an elaborate painting known to archaeologists as the “flotilla scene,” which is part of a miniature fresco discovered at the ancient site of Akrotiri on the island of Santorini, the ancient name for which is Thera. The dating of this Theran fresco can be placed at around 1600 BCE or even earlier, and the painting gives a most vivid glimpse of the civilization that evolved in the Aegean Sea already during the earliest phases of the Minoan thalassocracy.

As I will argue later, this “flotilla scene” can be viewed as an illustration of a “ritual moment” reflecting all at once the prosperity, power, and prestige of the Cretan thalassocracy. Already now, however, I need to articulate a principle that I will apply to my reading of the evidence provided by the ancient painting we will consider. The principle is simply this: *myth* cannot be understood without an understanding of the *ritual* that goes with it.

In preparation for analyzing this ritual moment, I will now compare a parallel that is illustrated in the visual arts of another thalassocracy.

*A Ritual Moment for the Sea-Empire of Venice*

I concentrate here on a ritual that takes place at the *Festa della Sensa*, a spring festival in Venice that is celebrated every year on the feast day known in Venetian dialect as *la Sensa*, meaning “the Ascension.” The ritual is old, attested for a span of time that exceeds a millennium.<sup>23</sup> And, since it evidently kept changing over the many centuries of its existence, this yearly ritual is impossible to describe in any single definitive version. Given the vast variety of versions attested over time, I find it easiest to begin by sketching a synthesis that features some of the most spectacular attestations of this annual event celebrating the prosperity, power, and prestige of the Venetian sea empire in its heyday. I start with a picture.

We are about to see a painting by Francesco Guardi, to be dated somewhere between 1780 and 1790. This picture captures in a timeless sort of way the spectacular moment when the Venetian Ship of State, a magnificently built and decorated galley named *il Bucintoro*, sets off from its station at the San Marco Basin and sails toward the church of San Nicolò at the Lido. The galley is headed for the open sea of the Adriatic, where an all-defining ritual will take place.



Fig. 2. *Il Bucintoro on Ascension Day*, c. 1780–1790, Francesco Guardi [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

<sup>23</sup> The earliest attestations of aetiologies concerning this ritual can be dated at around 1000 CE: see Muir (1981:119-20).

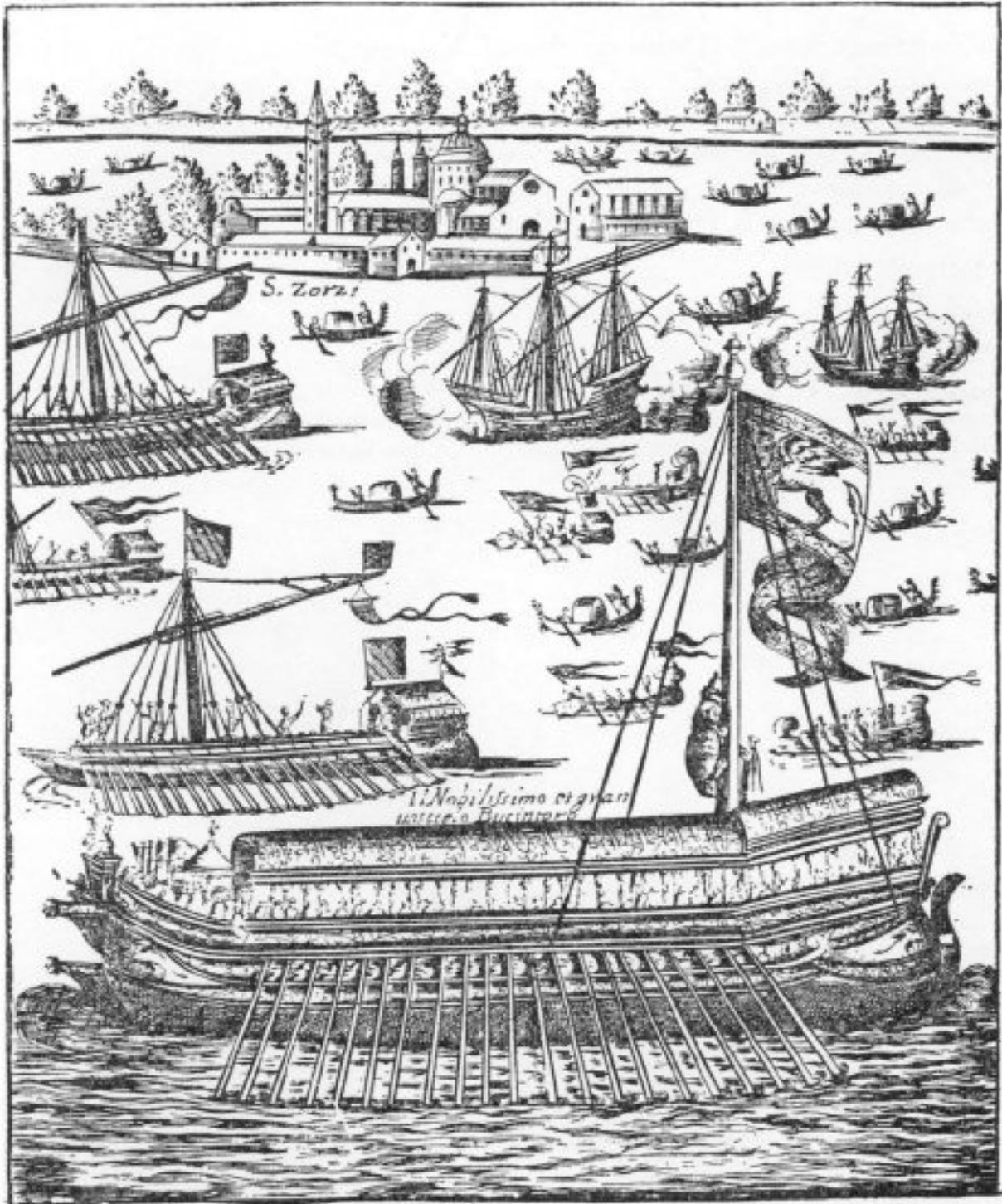
What is the ritual? Its name is *lo Sposalizio del Mare*, meaning “the Wedding of the Sea” in the Venetian dialect, and the two main participants are the *doge* of Venice, representing the bridegroom, and the feminized Adriatic Sea itself, representing the bride. On the day of the yearly feast of *la Sensa*, the *doge* commences the ritual by boarding *il Bucintoro* as his flagship—the painting above shows the most celebrated rebuilt version of this magnificent galley—and sailing off toward San Nicolò, escorted by a flotilla of other boats. As I already noted, the ritual destination of this floating procession is the open sea of the Adriatic, to be reached at a gap in that enormous world-renowned sandbar known as the Lido, separating the Venetian Lagoon from the Adriatic Sea. Situated at that gap is the church of San Nicolò, and our painting shows the ship of state *il Bucintoro* together with its flotilla as it sails toward that church. Once the flotilla reaches the break in the Lido at San Nicolò and heads out into the open sea, the moment arrives for the *doge* to throw into the waves a golden ring, thus notionally “marrying” the Adriatic Sea.

Here is another picture of the same ritual occasion, though at a different moment of the ritual. It is a painting by Canaletto, dated around 1732, showing the flagship *il Bucintoro* in the background, off to the side, and the rest of the flotilla in the foreground (Fig. 3.).



Fig. 3. *Il Bucintoro at the Molo on Ascension Day*, c. 1732. Canaletto [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

Here is a still earlier picture, dated around 1609, produced by the engraver Giacomo Franco. Once again we see the flagship of the Venetian *doge*, *il Bucintoro*, accompanied by a flotilla (Fig. 4.).



*Il Doge di Venetia con tutta la sig.<sup>a</sup> il giorno dell'Ascensione à spararsi il Mare con questa solennità la quale  
 et per dignità et per concerto è la più bella pompa che si ueggia in Venetia*

Fig. 4. Il Bucintoro, the Doge's ship of state, accompanied by a flotilla., c. 1609, Giacomo Franco. [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

What I find most remarkable about this particular picture is the high degree of detail lavished on the appearance of the boats. For me two details stand out. The first is the position of the cabins that we see more clearly at the sterns of some of the smaller boats. The word for such a cabin in Venetian dialect is *tièmo*, which means literally “covering.” And the second is the position, with relation to each *tièmo*, of the oarsman who pilots the boat.

These two details are strikingly comparable to what we find in a miniature fresco I already mentioned, which was discovered at the ancient site of Akrotiri on the island of Thera. The dating of this Theran fresco, as I already noted, can be situated around 1600 BCE or even earlier. The part of the fresco that I show here pictures a flotilla of boats that are being rowed in the mode of a floating procession (Fig. 5.).



Fig. 5. Theran fresco at Akrotiri showing flotilla; c. 1600 BCE, panorama by smial; modified by Luxo, via Wikimedia Commons.

In this picture from Thera, dated as it is around 1600 BCE, I isolate for the moment two details that I propose to compare with the two details I highlighted in the picture from Venice, dated around 1609 CE, over three millennia later. First, I note the positioning of the cabins that we see at the sterns of some of the smaller boats. And, second, I note the positioning, with relation to the cabins, of the main oarsmen who pilot the boats. Here is a closeup, showing the stern of one of the boats (Fig. 6.).

Having just compared two sets of details taken from the picturing of floating processions in two historically distinct sea-empires that are chronologically separated from each other by over three millennia, I must emphasize that the comparisons I am making are merely typological, not genealogical. That said, however, I must also emphasize that both of the empires I am comparing with each other had evolved in the overall context of the Mediterranean world writ large, of which the civilizations of the Adriatic Sea and the Aegean Sea are an integral part.

Returning to the topic of floating processions as attested in the heyday of the Venetian Empire, I will now show an anonymous painting, dated to the sixteenth



Fig. 6. Detail from Theran fresco at Akrotiri, c. 1600 BCE, original image via Wikimedia Commons.

century, which depicts a mythologized moment in history when the *doge* Francesco Ziani disembarks from *il Bucintoro*, having docked at the Convento della Carità, in order to pay his

respects to Pope Alexander III, who was then in exile and had taken refuge at the Convento. This meeting between the *doge* and the pope, if we view the event by hindsight, inaugurates a story about a great Venetian victory: in 1177 CE, the Venetian fleet led by Ziani decisively defeated the enemy fleet of the Holy Roman Empire, led by Otho, son of Frederick Barbarossa. In the painting, the imperial galley of the *doge* is represented in a simultaneously idealized and miniaturized way (Fig. 7.). Flanking the flagship *il Bucintoro* here, as we can see, are two smaller ships, one in the foreground and one further behind in the background. The *doge* has already disembarked, and he proceeds to give his respects to the pope.<sup>24</sup>



Fig. 7. The Doge Sebastiano Ziani disembarking from il Bucintoro at the Convent of Charity. Miniature, 16th Century, [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

In celebration of the victory of the Venetian fleet led by the *doge* Ziani over the fleet of the Holy Roman Empire led by Otho, Pope Alexander subsequently gives to the *doge* the original ring to be used in the yearly wedding of Venice with the Adriatic Sea, and the gift is accompanied by these words addressed by Alexander to Ziani, according to one account:<sup>25</sup>

*Ricevi questo ò Ziani, col quale tu, & tuoi suoi successori, userete ogni anno di sposare il mare. Accioche i posteri intendino, che la Signoria d'esso màre, acquistata da voi per antico possesso, & per ragon di guerra è vostra. Et che il mare è sottoposto al vostro Dominio, come la moglie al marito.*

*Ricevi questo ò Ziani, col quale tu, & tuoi suoi successori, userete ogni anno di sposare il mare. Accioche i posteri intendino, che la Signoria d'esso màre, acquistata da voi per antico possesso, & per ragon di guerra è vostra. Et che il mare è sottoposto al vostro Dominio, come la moglie al marito.*

Receive this [ring], O Ziani, with which you and your successors will make it a custom every year to marry the sea, so that posterity may know that the dominion of this sea, acquired by you through ancient possession and through conquest in war, belongs to you, and that the sea is subjected to your domination just as a woman is subject to her husband.

Moving forward in time to the near-present, I refer here to a video recording of a modern re-enactment of the “wedding.” We see here the mayor of Venice in the act of throwing a ring into the sea, thus re-enacting the role of the *doge* as representative of the Venetian Empire (Fig. 8.).

And what happens to the ring after it is thrown into the waves? In modern times, as we read in touristic descriptions, “Hopeful divers are welcome to attempt to retrieve the ring (finders keepers), and the



Fig. 8. A Venezia lo “sposalizio del mare,” video posted June 1, 2014, via la Repubblica: <http://video.repubblica.it/cronaca/a-venezia-lo-sposalizio-del-mare/167766>

<sup>24</sup> I thank my friends Albert and Rebecca Ammerman for helping me analyze the details shown in this painting.

<sup>25</sup> The words of the pope are quoted this way by Francesco Sansovino (1521-1586), *Venetia Descritta* (printed 1663) p. 501. See also Muir (1981:124).

ring is free of taxes for a year.”<sup>26</sup> As I will now argue, the incidental expression that we have just read here, “finders keepers,” captures the original essence of the whole ritual as it evolved through the centuries.

There are other attestations of such a ritual of marrying the community with the sea, such as at Cervia, a small Adriatic coastal town near Ravenna.<sup>27</sup> Here too, as in Venice, we find a yearly “Wedding of the Sea,” *lo Sposalizio del Mare*, celebrated at the spring festival of Ascension Day, on which occasion the bishop of Ravenna throws a ring into the Adriatic Sea (Fig. 9).

In this picture we see swimmers in the water surrounding the boat. They are eagerly waiting, ready to compete with each other by diving after the ring once it is thrown into the waves. In the same picture I note a detail: we can just barely see a ribbon attached to the ring that the bishop is about to throw. The small attachment evidently facilitates the finding of the ring by the lucky diver who succeeds in retrieving it. If the ring is not found in any given year, according to touristic accounts, such a failure is considered to be a sign of bad luck, negatively affecting the fortunes of local fishermen and farmers. What is at stake, then, in this version of a wedding between community and sea, is not the good fortune of an empire, as in the Venetian version of the ritual, but simply the prosperity of the locale.



Fig. 9. Bishop of Ravenna throws a ring into the Adriatic Sea as part of *lo Sposalizio del Mare*, via <http://www.romagnaforyou.it>. (Note: at the time of publication this website was compromised by malware. The hyperlink has been disabled.)

The aetiology of this localized version of *lo Sposalizio del Mare* goes back to 1445 CE. At that time Cervia had its own bishop: today the bishop of Ravenna performs the ritual. Back in 1445 the local bishop of Cervia was a man named Pietro Barbo and he was credited with originating the ritual. In the year 1445, according to the aetiological narrative, the bishop was sailing from Venice to Cervia when a violent storm arose, threatening the safety of the ship and its passengers. The bishop reacted by throwing his ring into the turbulent sea, thus miraculously making it serene again. And that is why, according to the aetiology, the ring is thrown into the sea every year at the spring festival of the Ascension.

As we compare this aetiology dating to 1445 in Cervia with the earlier Venetian aetiology dating back to 1177, where we saw the giving of a golden ring by Pope Alexander III to the *doge* Francesco Ziani, we can now see from a different perspective the significance of the ritual act itself, the throwing of the ring into the Adriatic Sea. On the surface, it appears that a transfer of ownership is taking place: the pope owns a ring that he gives to the *doge*, and this gift makes it possible for Venice to dominate the Adriatic Sea just as a bridegroom will have dominion, in the quoted words of the pope, over a bride. But the logic of the aetiology goes deeper. Ultimately, the ring is not for the pope to give away. It does not really belong to him. He merely transmits

<sup>26</sup> <http://venicexplorer.com/explore-venice/annual-events/la-sensa.html>

<sup>27</sup> Muir (1981:129).

the ring. And this ring does not even belong exclusively to the *doge*. After all, a new *doge* may be in power a year from now, who knows? But the sea will always be the sea, and it will always receive the ring that is its due, year after year. You have to give to the sea a new ring every year. In terms of the aetiology, *this eternally renewed ring belongs to the sea*. Every year, from one year to the next, the sea reclaims the renewable ring from the *doge*. Whoever the *doge* of Venice happens to be in any given year, he has dominion over the Venetian Empire precisely because the sea gives to Venice that empire for yet another year. The prosperity, power, and prestige of the Venetian Empire can be seen as the yearly gift of the Adriatic Sea.

Similarly, on a far smaller scale, the prosperity of the town of Cervia is a yearly gift from the sea. If the sea is serene, both physically and metaphorically, then good fortune prevails. We see a parallel pattern of thinking in the case of Venice: the title of the *doge* is *il Serenissimo*, “the most serene one,” because the serenity of the Adriatic is transferable to the leader or *doge* (*dux* in Latin) of Venice and, by extension, to the Venetian Empire. Without serenity, the troubled waters of the Adriatic would spell trouble for the Venetian Empire.

And just as the feminized sea that gets married to the *doge* gives good fortune to Venice and to its worldwide imperial community, so also a bride who gets married to a bridegroom will give good fortune to the family by bearing progeny. In terms of this sexualized comparison, the generative power of the bride is so fertile that she can pass it on from one generation to the next, making it possible for the family to last forever. So also, again in terms of such a comparison, both the imperial city of Venice and a small town like Cervia may thrive forever, eternally renewed year after year, by way of re-enacting a prototypical marriage that unites the community with the fertile sea.

Here I return once again to the practice, still current in Cervia and in modern post-imperial Venice, of diving after the ring after it is thrown into the sea. I think that the act of diving into the depths of the Adriatic and retrieving the ring is seen as a personal re-enactment of a collective yearly retrieval of the prosperity desired by the whole community. That is why, I also think, the modern practice of diving for the ring is still sanctioned by a mentality of “finders keepers.” This mentality, in terms of my analysis, is also at work in the ancient ritual of throwing the ring away in the first place. If the community at large prospers as a result of this gift to the sea, then the counter-gift of prosperity from the sea will be happily received and kept by the community that finds it. So, the mentality of *finders keepers* is expressed not only in the individual act of a diver who seeks his personal good fortune: it is expressed also in a collective re-enactment by the community that sanctions its own yearly re-marriage to the sea.

#### *A Mythological Moment for the Sea-Empire of Athens*

The ritual moment when the *doge* of Venice marries the Adriatic sea on behalf of the Venetian Empire is comparable to a mythological moment when the future king of Athens, the hero Theseus, marries the Aegean Sea on behalf of the Athenian Empire, which claimed to be the successor of the Minoan Empire. As I have argued in the book *Homer the Preclassic*, the symbol of this empire was the Ring of Minos, which the prototypical king of the Minoan thalassocracy throws into the sea—to be recovered by Theseus, the prototypical king of Athens and the

notional founder of the Athenian thalassocracy.<sup>28</sup> Here I return to the idea of the Athenian connection, as signaled at the beginning.

In commenting on the representation of this myth as it appears in a painting that covered one full wall of the sanctuary of Theseus in Athens, Pausanias offers a retelling of the myth, which he says is only partially retold through the medium of the painting (1.17.3):

Μίνως ἦνίκα Θησεά και τὸν ἄλλον στόλον τῶν παιδων ἤγεν ἐς Κρήτην, ἐρασθεὶς Περιβοίας, ὡς οἱ Θησεὺς μάλιστα ἠναντιοῦτο, καὶ ἄλλα ὑπὸ ὀργῆς ἀπέρριπεν ἐς αὐτὸν καὶ παῖδα οὐκ ἔφη Ποσειδῶνος εἶναι, ἐπεὶ <οὐ> δύνασθαι τὴν σφραγίδα, ἦν αὐτὸς φέρων ἔτυχεν, ἀφέντι ἐς θάλασσαν ἀνασῶσαι οἱ. Μίνως μὲν λέγεται ταῦτα εἰπὼν ἀφεῖναι τὴν σφραγίδα· Θησεά δὲ σφραγιδά τε ἐκείνην ἔχοντα καὶ στέφανον χρυσοῦν, Ἀμφιτρίτης δῶρον, ἀνελθεῖν λέγουσιν ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης.

When Minos was taking Theseus and the rest of the delegation of young men and women to Crete he fell in love with Periboia, and when Theseus opposed him by objecting, he [= Minos] insulted him and said that he [= Theseus] was not the son of Poseidon, since he [= Theseus] could not recover [*ana-sōzein*] for him [= Minos] the signet ring [*sphragis*] which he [= Minos] happened to be wearing, if he threw it into the sea. With these words Minos is said to have thrown the signet ring [*sphragis*], but they say that Theseus emerged from the sea holding that ring and also a golden garland [*stephanos*] that Amphitrite gave him.

As a symbol, then, the Ring of Minos links the Minoan Empire to the imperial ideology of Athens as represented by Theseus. The mentality of *finders keepers* applies: Theseus finds the Ring of Minos at the bottom of the sea, where Amphitrite, pictured here as the goddess of the Aegean, freely gives it to him. Here I must add that the Ring of Minos can be seen as a signet ring that seals documents of state written in parchment. As I argued earlier, documents written on parchment and then sealed with a signet ring are a distinctive feature of administrative practices perfected in the era of the Minoan Empire. Accordingly, the signet ring is a visible sign or symbol of empire.

And a visible sign or symbol of the idea that Theseus actually marries the sea is the golden garland that the sea-goddess gives to him when he dives into the depths of the Aegean to retrieve the Ring of Minos. In what follows, I will analyze the relevant symbolism of the garlands pictured on the Theran fresco.

## Part 2: Looking through rose-colored glasses while sailing on a sacred journey<sup>29</sup>

### *Introduction*

At the end of Part 1, I started to argue that the golden garland given to the hero Theseus by the sea-goddess Amphitrite in the myth narrated by Pausanias 1.17.3 was a symbol for the

<sup>28</sup> Nagy (2009: E§§162-63 = pp. 364-65).

<sup>29</sup> An earlier version of Part 2 appeared online in Nagy (2015d).

ritual of a stylized wedding that links this hero, as future king of Athens, with the Aegean Sea. In another version of the myth as narrated in Song 17 of Bacchylides, we read further details that are in some ways the same and in some ways different: after Theseus dives into the depths of the sea, the sea-goddess Amphitrite welcomes him, enveloping the hero in a purple robe (line 112) and crowning his head of hair with a garland made of roses (line 116: ῥόδοις)—a garland that she herself as a bride of Poseidon the sea-god had received as a wedding present from Aphrodite (lines 113-116). When Theseus finally comes up for air, emerging from the depths of the sea, he is wearing the purple robe and the garland of roses, ready to confront Minos. From here on, it will be Theseus and not Minos who will have dominion over the Aegean Sea, and this dominion is expressed by the symbolism of both the purple robe and the garland of roses. I will now argue further that this kind of symbolism can be traced back genealogically to rituals that existed already in the era of the Minoan Empire. One such ritual, as we will see, is depicted in the “flotilla scene” of the Thera fresco that I had mentioned in Part 1.

When I speak of a genealogy of rituals, I am making a distinction between genealogical and typological approaches. I already used both terms “genealogy” and “typology” in Part 1, but I have waited until now to offer a working definition of these terms. Basically, a *genealogical comparison* involves a study of parallels between structures that can be traced back to a proto-structure. By contrast, a *typological comparison* involves a study of parallels between structures that are not necessarily related to each other. Typological comparison can be applied to parallelisms between structures as structures pure and simple, without any presuppositions about a common origin.<sup>30</sup>

In what follows, then, I will apply a *genealogical* approach in comparing details we see in the myth concerning the garland that adorns the head of Theseus with details we are about to see in a ritual concerning a sacred voyage of a ship adorned with garlands. And I will also apply a *genealogical* approach in comparing details we see in this ritual with details we are about to see in a ritual depicted in the “flotilla scene” of the Thera fresco that I mentioned in Part 1. In that context I also applied a *typological* approach when I briefly compared the “flotilla scene” with the yearly ritual of a “floating procession” that symbolized the prosperity, power, and prestige—the three “P”s—of the Venetian Empire in dominating the Adriatic Sea. Comparably, as I argued, the “flotilla scene” of the Thera fresco represents a ritual of a *floating procession*. And, in this case, such a ritual likewise symbolizes the prosperity, power, and prestige of the Minoan Empire in dominating the Aegean Sea.

### *The Sacred Sea-Voyage of Theseus*

Returning to the role of the hero Theseus in the myth about his receiving a garland from the sea-goddess of the Aegean, I will now make a genealogical comparison of this role with the role of the same hero in an Athenian ritual noted by Plato with reference to the death of Socrates in 399 BCE. Each and every year, as we see from the description of this ritual in Plato’s *Phaedo* (58a and 58c), the priest of the god Apollo attaches garlands to the stern of the Athenian Ship of

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<sup>30</sup> Nagy (2006 §4). Typological comparisons are especially useful in fields like linguistics: comparing parallel structures in languages—even if the given languages are unrelated to each other—is a proven way of enhancing one’s overall understanding of the linguistic structures being compared.

State, which is understood to be a replication of the hero's original ship, and this act of garlanding officially launches the ship on an annual *theōria* or "sacred voyage" by sea, crossing over from Athens to Delos, which is the sacred island of Apollo in the Aegean, and then back from Delos to Athens. This *theōria*, as we read in Plato's *Phaedo*, stays the execution of Socrates. For the Athenian State to execute this man while the sacred sea-voyage is in progress would be to pollute the ritual—and to pollute the State. But that is another story, and there is no time here to delve into the deep symbolism of the annual Athenian *theōria* or "sacred voyage" as it applies to Socrates. In the book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, I have analyzed that kind of symbolism, which helps explain the philosophical meaning of *theōria* as "theory" or "contemplation" in Plato's works.<sup>31</sup> But here I will stick to the basic meaning of *theōria* as "sacred voyage."

As we learn from the text of Plato's *Phaedo* (58a-c), the two coordinated yearly Athenian rituals: (1) garlanding the stern of the Athenian Ship of State and then (2) sending the ship on a sacred voyage or *theōria* are both linked to an Athenian myth about Theseus: once upon a time, the text of Plato says, this hero saved Athens—and himself—from domination imposed by the sea-empire of Minos. So we see here that the salvation of Athens from the dominion of Minos, *in myth*, is correlated, *in ritual*, with the garlanding of the Athenian Ship of State as it commences its *theōria* or "sacred voyage" to Delos.<sup>32</sup>

In the Athenian myth, as we see it retold briefly by Plutarch in his *Life of Theseus* (15.1-2), the dominion of Minoan thalassocracy over Athens took the form of a seasonally recurring human sacrifice of fourteen young Athenians, seven boys and seven girls, offered to the monster son of Minos, called the Minotaur, who was half man and half bull and who dwelled in the Cretan city Knossos inside a maze known as the *laburinthos* or "Labyrinth" (15.2). Joining a prototypical ensemble of seven boys and seven girls destined for human sacrifice, Theseus sails with them to Knossos in Crete. Once he arrives at Knossos, the Athenian hero penetrates the Labyrinth, where he finds the Minotaur and kills him. Then, Theseus escapes from the Labyrinth and thus "saves" both himself and the other young Athenians. This act of "saving" the Athenians is expressed by the verb *sōzein* in the passage I already cited from Plato's *Phaedo* (58a-b), where we learn also that Theseus commemorated his salvation and the salvation of the other young Athenians by sailing together with them every year to Delos, sacred island of Apollo, on a prototypical *theōria* or "sacred journey"; and this yearly ritual, as we are informed in Plato's text, was still being observed in the time of Socrates.<sup>33</sup> Even in that post-mythical time, adds Plutarch in his *Life of Theseus* (23.1), the *triākontoros* or thirty-oar ship that sailed every year on this ritualized journey to Delos and back was believed to be the same ship on which Theseus had sailed to Delos together with the rest of the young Athenians who had been saved from being sacrificed to the Minotaur. Plutarch in the *Life of Theseus* (again, 23.1) says that the ancient traditions about this ship could be traced forward in time from the mythical era of Theseus all the

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<sup>31</sup> Nagy (2013a:23§§13-14).

<sup>32</sup> Nagy (2013a:23§§10-11).

<sup>33</sup> Nagy (2013a:23§11).

way to the historical era of Demetrius of Phaleron, a philosopher who dominated Athens both politically and culturally in the late fourth century BCE.

In Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* (21.1-3), we can read further details about that prototypical sacred sea-voyage to and from Delos. Every year when Theseus and the other young Athenians arrived in Delos, they performed as a choral ensemble a ritual re-enactment in song and dance of the hero's victory over the Minotaur inside the Labyrinth of Crete, and the Labyrinth itself was ritually re-enacted by way of the singing and dancing, which is traditionally called the *geranos* or "crane." This song and dance of the crane, as traditionally re-performed in post-mythical times at the festival of Apollo at Delos, literally re-enacts the Cretan Labyrinth, since the dance-steps danced by cranes in the course of these birds' courtship rituals during mating season seem to be re-tracing the patterns of a maze or Labyrinth, as Plutarch says explicitly in his *Life of Theseus* (21.2), following the report of the antiquarian Dicaearchus (F 85 ed. Wehrli).<sup>34</sup>

Up to now, I have compared an action of garlanding *in a myth*, where Theseus is garlanded by the goddess of the sea, and an action of garlanding *in a ritual*, where a replica of the supposedly original ship of Theseus is being garlanded. In the first case of garlanding, the myth refers to a ritual of crowning Theseus with a garland, but the garlanding is not explicitly represented as a ritual of and by itself. In the second case, on the other hand, we do see the ritual of garlanding the Athenian Ship of State as a ritual, but we do not see the myth that explains the reason for the ritual, which is, that Theseus once upon a time rescued Athens from the thalassocracy of Minos. It seems that there is no explicit reference made by the ritual itself to the myth about the rescue. Only Plato's text, in describing the ritual, refers explicitly to the myth. By contrast, the ritual of the crane dance does refer explicitly to the myth about the rescue, since that myth is re-enacted symbolically by singing and dancing the entrance and the exit of Theseus into and out of the Labyrinth.

### *Some Thoughts about the Terms Myth and Ritual*

I am highlighting here a distinction between what happens in *myth* and what happens in *ritual* because this kind of distinction is not always obvious when we study any interaction between myth and ritual. I can state in general that rituals very seldom refer explicitly to the myths that interact with them, and so the case of the ritual known as the crane dance is quite exceptional in its explicitness with reference to a corresponding myth centering on the salvation of Theseus from the Labyrinth. By contrast, myths often do refer to rituals with which they interact, as we see in the case of the myth about the garlanding of Theseus by the goddess of the sea.

To elaborate on this statement, I move backward one step and offer here a working definition of *myth* and *ritual* as two interacting processes. This definition applies to my use of these terms *myth* and *ritual* not only in Part 2 but also in Part 1. Here, then, is the definition, which I had developed on the basis of analyzing a variety of myths and rituals in the book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*:

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<sup>34</sup> Calame (1990:239-42).

Ritual is doing things and saying things in a way that is considered *sacred*.

Myth is saying things in a way that is also considered *sacred*.

To say it another way:

Myth is an aspect of ritual, since the act of saying things in myth is understood to be one of many ways of doing things in ritual.

But the act of doing things in ritual does not require the act of saying things in myth.

So, myth is an optional aspect of ritual. And myth operates within the larger framework of ritual.<sup>35</sup> Further, as a framework for myth, a ritual can imply a myth even if that myth is not explicitly retold each and every time the ritual is re-performed.

I also offer here a working definition for a related term, *aetiology*, by which I mean a special kind of myth that motivates or explains an institutional reality, especially a ritual.<sup>36</sup> Even in the case of an aetiology, the aetiology itself can be an aspect of the ritual it explains, but the aetiology is not necessarily made explicit in each and every re-performance of the ritual. Finally, we need to allow for situations where characters in myth perform a ritual that prefigures the re-performance of that ritual in its own here-and-now.<sup>37</sup> A case in point is the performance of the crane dance by Theseus together with his choral ensemble: this performance of the ritual is seen as a prototype for the yearly re-performances of this ritual, extending into the historical era.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Transition: a Ritual Moment as Represented in a Painting*

I am now ready to reconsider in some detail a ritual moment I initially mentioned already in Part 1. This ritual moment, as I noted all too briefly in the context of that initial mention, is represented in an elaborate painting described as a “flotilla scene,” which is part of a miniature fresco discovered at Akrotiri on the island of Santorini, the ancient name for which island was Thera. The dating of this Theran fresco, as I noted already in my initial mention, can be placed at around 1600 BCE or even earlier, and the painting captures, as I argue, a ritual moment as celebrated in the context of an Aegean thalassocracy that evolved into the Minoan Empire. As I also noted in my initial mention, the ritual that is depicted in this Theran fresco painting is remarkably similar to the ritual called “the Wedding of the Sea” as celebrated annually in the context of an Adriatic thalassocracy that evolved into the Venetian Empire. In what follows, I build on my typological comparison of the similarities between the Aegean and the Adriatic rituals. And I use the term “typological” here in the same way as I used it in Part 1.

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<sup>35</sup> This formulation derives from Nagy (2013a:00§13, repeated at 3§18, 5§28, 8e§2).

<sup>36</sup> Nagy (2013a:7a§15, repeated at 8§14, 8b§3, 20§36).

<sup>37</sup> See for example Nagy (2013a:8§§53-62) on the mythical event of the chariot-race at the Funeral Games of Patroklos, which is a prefiguration of chariot-racing as a seasonally-recurring ritual event in the post-heroic age.

<sup>38</sup> See also Nagy (2013a:8e§4) on *mimēsis* as a “re-enactment” of myth in ritual: what you re-enact is myth, and how you re-enact it is ritual.

As I proceed to analyze the details we find in the Aegean “flotilla scene,” it will become evident that some of these details are not only typologically comparable with details we see in the Adriatic ritual known as the “Wedding of the Sea.” We will also find other details that are genealogically comparable with details of the Aegean ritual involving the ship that sails yearly on a sacred voyage or *theōria* from Athens to Delos and back. One detail stands out: as we will see, the garlanding of the theoric ship is genealogically parallel to the garlanding of the ships sailing in the “flotilla scene.”

### *The “Flotilla Scene”*

As we now proceed to take a closer look at the “flotilla scene,” I offer some further background on the wall painting that pictures the scene. The date for this painting and for all the other wall paintings found at the site of Akrotiri on the island of Thera can be correlated with a prehistoric time when a volcano that once occupied most of this island exploded, sometime around the middle of the second millennium BCE, leaving behind a gigantic caldera that now occupies the space where the mountain once stood. The paintings were preserved by the volcanic ash that buried the site of Akrotiri in the wake of this explosion. Till now, I have referred to the wall painting of the “flotilla scene” as a *fresco*, since it is part of a set of pictures painted on the plastered surface of the inner walls found at the site of Akrotiri, but from here on I will use a term more favored by archaeologists, *miniature frieze*. The term *frieze* is based on the fact that the paintings in this case form a band that lines all four inner walls of “Room 5” in a building known to archaeologists as the West House (there is currently no agreement about what exactly is meant by the term “house” in this instance).<sup>39</sup> This miniature frieze has been described as “one of the most important monuments in Aegean art.”<sup>40</sup>

In my book *The Ancient Greek Hero*, I offer this further description (Nagy 2013a:23§18):

The Miniature Frieze occupies the upper third of the inner walls of Room 5, where the doors and the windows would not interrupt the flow of the narrative that was painted on all four of the inner walls. The narrative of the Frieze moves clockwise, beginning and ending at the same point. The point of beginning, situated at the southernmost end of the west wall, shows part of a harbor city or “Town I,” while the point of ending, situated at the westernmost end of the south wall, shows the other part of the same harbor city, “Town I.” So, the narrative comes full circle back to “Town I.”<sup>41</sup> The north wall shows, again, a coastal city, which is “Town II”; as for “Town III,” which overlaps the north and the east walls, this site is yet another coastal city, and, in this case, it is situated at the mouth of a river; the same can be said for “Town IV,” at the eastern side of the south wall, which is once again a coastal city situated at the mouth of a river; actually, “Town IV”

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<sup>39</sup> Doulas (1999:44-97).

<sup>40</sup> Doulas (1999:47). For a valuable analysis of the themes that are represented in the Miniature Frieze, I cite the article of Morris (1989). My reference to this article was accidentally omitted in the List of References in the original printed version of Nagy (2013a), but it appears in the online version.

<sup>41</sup> Doulas (1999:47-49).

may be another way of looking at one and the same city, “Town III.”<sup>42</sup> Then there is the south wall, showing a fleet of ships sailing from the harbor of “Town IV” toward the “home port,” that is, toward the same place that had also served as a point of departure, which was “Town V.”<sup>43</sup> The fleet consists of seven large ships, only one of which is under sail;<sup>44</sup> the other six ships are being rowed by multitudes of oarsmen; further back to our left, in front of “Town IV,” there is also a small boat, equipped with no mast, which is rowed by only five oarsmen.<sup>45</sup> All seven of the large ships are heading from left to right in the direction of the harbor of “Town V.” Located at the stern of each one of these seven large ships is a structure that looks like a cabin, and there is a male figure seated inside each one of these “cabins.”

In Part 1 I already showed the part of the Miniature Frieze where we can see the fleet of ships that are sailing from left to right, back toward the “home port”—which was also the point of departure. For ease of reference, I show again here the relevant part of the miniature frieze.



Fig. 10. Theran fresco at Akrotiri showing flotilla, via Wikimedia Commons.

We see here what I described in the paragraph I quoted just a moment ago. We see the flotilla of seven ships, only one of which is under sail while the rest are being rowed by “multitudes of oarsmen.” And I repeat my remark that this flotilla is sailing in the mode of a floating procession.

I highlight once again in this picture one particular detail: at the stern of each one of the seven large ships is a structure that looks like a cabin, and there is a male figure seated inside each one of these cabins. Now I show once again the closeup that I had showed in Part 1. In this closeup we can see clearly both a cabin, which as I had previously observed looks like a Venetian *tièmo*, and a passenger sitting inside the cabin (Fig. 11.).



Fig. 11. Detail from Theran fresco at Akrotiri, c. 1600 BCE, original image via Wikimedia Commons.

<sup>42</sup> Dumas (1999:48).

<sup>43</sup> Dumas (1999:47-48).

<sup>44</sup> Morris (1989:517).

<sup>45</sup> Dumas (1999:47).

*A Ritual Moment for the Aegean Sea-Empire*

With this background in place, I am ready to consider in more detail the ritual moment that I think is represented in the “flotilla scene.” As I described the scene already, the flotilla is returning to the home base, and so the floating procession has come full circle. As I argued in *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours*, such a coming full circle for such a floating procession in



Fig. 12. Detail from a fresco painting in Room 4 of the West House.

the era of Plato would be called a *theōria*. And we have already seen from the account in Plato’s *Phaedo* that such a *theōria* was inaugurated by way of garlanding the stern of the Athenian Ship of State. My point of comparison, then, is the garlanding of the cabin at the stern of the ship that we see in the closeup I just showed from the “flotilla scene.”

And now I show a picture of such a cabin as viewed from a different perspective (Fig. 12.). For

an interpretation of this picture, I repeat, with adjustments to the present argument, what I say in my book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Nagy 2013a:23§§19-20):

The middle zone of wall paintings in Room 4, situated to the south of Room 5 in the same “West House,” shows a variety of close-up pictures featuring enlarged views of the same kinds of decorations that we see attached to the “cabins” at the sterns of the seven large ships in the “flotilla scene” as painted in Room 5. Of particular interest are two semi-circular garlands of flowers that decorate the cabin at the stern of the ship, as we just saw in the closeup of one of the ships in the “flotilla scene”: this detail matches most closely the two semi-circular garlands of flowers that decorate the wall of the adjacent Room 4.<sup>46</sup>

What we see painted on the wall of Room 4 shows the same garlanded frame of vision that we see painted in the “flotilla scene” decorating the south wall of Room 5. But there is a big difference. Whereas the man who is seated in the “cabin” positioned at the stern of the ship in the picture painted on the plaster wall of Room 5 can look through the garlanded frame of vision and see the sights to be seen as he sails ahead on his sea voyage, a viewer who looks at the plaster wall of Room 4 and sees a picture of the same garlanded frame of vision could merely imagine the sights to be seen in the course of such a sea voyage. Having noted this difference, however, I must return to what the two painted details have in common: whether the sights to be seen are really seen or only imagined, these sights could be interpreted as a *theōria* or the “seeing of a vision,” and here my translation reflects the oldest reconstructable meaning of this word. What is being represented in both paintings, I argue, is a prototype of a *theōria* in the sense of a “sacred journey” that leads

<sup>46</sup> Doulas (1999:95).

to the achievement of a mystical vision. And that view of that vision is framed by the two semi-circular garlands through which the viewer views what is seen. To borrow from a modern idiom, the vision is viewed through rose-colored glasses.

When I speak about rose-colored glasses in the formulation as I just repeated it from the book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* there is something missing. I come back here full circle to a detail in Song 17 of Bacchylides. There I now find that missing something. It is the garland of roses (line 116: ῥόδοις) given to Theseus by the sea-goddess Amphitrite when that Athenian hero dove to the bottom of the sea. That same garland had inaugurated, as we saw, the wedding of Amphitrite the sea-goddess to Poseidon the sea-god. And of course Poseidon was the divine father of Theseus. But that is another story, and I have no space here to delve into it. What I need to keep in the forefront of my argumentation as it comes to a close here is the basic meaning of the ritual act of garlanding the stern of a ship. As I see it, such garlanding is a ritual moment of marrying the sea.

Here I recall the wording of Plato's *Phaedo* (58a and 58c) with reference to the ritual moment when the priest of Apollo attaches garlands to the stern of the Athenian Ship of State as the formal act of launching this ship on its sacred voyage or *theōria* to Delos and back. I now focus on the word used in the text of Plato here, *stephein*, which means "to garland, to make garlands for" (again, 58a and 58c). But what does it really mean, to "garland" a theoric ship? In ancient Greek, the noun that derives from this verb *stephein* is *stephanos*, meaning "garland." Both the noun and the verb refer to blossoms or leaves that are strung together and then ritually attached to an object or to a person. In Modern Greek, the noun corresponding to ancient *stephanos* is *stephánē* (*stepháni*), likewise meaning "garland." There is also a neuter plural form of the noun in Modern Greek, *stéphana*, which can mean "wedding garlands": I note with special interest the metonymy embedded in the phrase used to offer best wishes to newlywed couples: *kalá stéphana*, meaning literally "[may you have] good garlands!." This expression can be translated "may you have a quick and happy wedding."<sup>47</sup>

In Greek Christian Orthodox weddings even today, a high point of the ritual is the exchange of garlands between bride and bridegroom (Fig. 13.).



Fig. 13, sent to me by my friend Costas Tzagarakis, shows an assortment of garlands on sale in a marketplace. The flowers that make up the garland in this case are *sempreviva* (in Venetian Italian, it means "eternally alive"; the local Greeks think it is a local Greek word). The locale is Cythera. For more on this flower and on its symbolism, see Tzagarakis (2011).

<sup>47</sup> This paragraph repeats what I say in Nagy (2013a:23§15).

And here are illustrations of wedding garlands as pictured on votive objects called *tamata* (Figs. 14. and 15.).



Fig. 14. A votive offering or *tama*, showing *stephana* or “wedding garlands.”



Fig. 15. Another votive offering or *tama*, showing *stephana* or “wedding garlands.”

The mindset that corresponds to such a usage in Modern Greek throws light on the fact that the garlanding of objects or of persons is a way of delineating a ritual framework. The attaching of a garland marks the beginning of engagement in a ritual—and a ritual must always have a notionally perfect beginning (By “notionally” I mean that the idea of perfection is in the minds of those who participate in the given ritual). So the attaching of a garland to the stern of the theoric ship is meant to be a perfect *send-off* for the sacred voyage ahead, which must also be notionally perfect and therefore unpolluted. For the Athenian State to execute Socrates while the sacred voyage is in progress, as I noted already, would be to pollute the ritual—and to pollute the State. I should add that the ritual practice of garlanding a ship before a sea voyage survives to this day in the Greek-speaking world, and such rituals of garlanding are linked with important festive occasions—including Easter.<sup>48</sup>

### Part 3: From Athens to Crete and Back<sup>49</sup>

#### *Introduction*

I now return to the Introduction, where I first mentioned the concept of “the Cretan *Odyssey*”—or, better, “a Cretan *Odyssey*”—as reflected in the “lying tales” of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. These tales, as I already said there, give the medium of Homeric poetry an opportunity to open windows into an *Odyssey* we do not know. In the alternative universe of a “Cretan *Odyssey*,” the adventures of Odysseus take place in the exotic context of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization as centered on the island of Crete. That is my thesis for Part 3.

<sup>48</sup> Nagy (2013a:23§16).

<sup>49</sup> An earlier version of Part 3 appeared online in Nagy (2015e).

From the start, I have argued that the civilization I have described as “Minoan-Mycenaean” needs to be viewed from a diachronic as well as a synchronic perspective. That is because, as I already noted in Part 1, elements of Minoan civilization become eventually infused with elements we find in Mycenaean civilization. And such an infusion has to do with the fact that Minoan civilization, which had evolved in the context of a “Minoan Empire,” was eventually taken over by a “Mycenaean Empire.” This takeover, as I argued, is reflected not only in the evidence of material culture but also in the evidence of mythological traditions as reflected in visual and verbal narratives. More specifically, I argued that the takeover from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization resulted in modifications of myths about the Minoan Empire by way of myths about the Mycenaean Empire.

I will explore here from an evolutionary or diachronic perspective not only the relevant Minoan-Mycenaean myths but also, more specifically, the kaleidoscopic world of Homeric myth-making as a medium that actually conveyed some of these myths.

From a diachronic perspective, the system of myth-making that we know as Homeric poetry can be viewed, I argue, as an *evolving medium*. But there is more to it. When you look at Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, you will see not only an evolving medium of oral poetry. You will see also a medium that actually views itself diachronically. In other words, Homeric poetry demonstrates aspects of its own evolution. So, references to Minoan-Mycenaean myths in Homeric poetry can reveal also the evolution of these myths as they existed independently of Homeric poetry.

#### *A Missing Link: the Athenian Connection*

In speaking about a Mycenaean “infusion” into Minoan myth-making, I have concentrated in Parts 2 and 3 on Athenian myths and rituals concerning the hero Theseus. But I have not yet made it clear why these myths and rituals concerning Theseus, which are of course Athenian myths, are also Mycenaean myths. Here I return to the concept of an “Athenian connection.”

I introduced this concept in Part 1. As I already argued there, the myth about the ring of Minos, recovered by Theseus from the depths of the Aegean Sea, must have aetiologized the idea of a transition from a Minoan thalassocracy to an Athenian thalassocracy. But such an idea did not start with the likes of Herodotus and Thucydides in the classical period of the late fifth century BCE. The mythical construct of a connection between the Athenian and the Minoan thalassocracies did not originate in the classical period. No, in terms of my argument, *this myth existed already in the Mycenaean period of Crete*. This was the time when the Minoan civilization of that island, which had evolved in the context of a Minoan Empire, was being taken over by Greek-speaking élites of the Mycenaean Empire. These élites came from the mainland of what we call Greece today, yes, but I would be suffering from a “blind spot” if I thought of these Greek-speakers simply as “Mycenaean”—as if they all came from the Mycenaean acropolis of Mycenae. As we will now see, some of these “Mycenaean” came from other places in Greece, and one of those places was the Mycenaean-era acropolis in Athens. That is what I mean when I speak of an *Athenian connection*.

Evidence comes from the Linear B tablets found in the so-called room of the chariot tablets at Knossos in Crete. In Part 1, I have already spoken about the administrative unit that was in charge of the record-keeping as reflected in the contents of the tablets stored in this room, which can be dated at around 1400 BCE. In Part 1, I noted with special interest the “Mycenaean” cultural agenda reflected in the written records of the Linear B tablets that are linked to the administrative zone represented by this particular room in the context of the overall administration in the “palace” at Knossos. I quoted the apt formulation of Thomas Palaima, who notes that the administrative unit responsible for keeping written records at the room of the chariot tablets in Knossos was using these records “mainly for the monitoring and distribution of military equipment (chariots, body armour, horses) to a Greek-dominated military élite.”<sup>50</sup> I said there that the Mycenaean Greek name for such a military élite would have been *Akhaiói* “Achaeans.” But now I will also say that some of these “Achaeans” were Athenians. To say it another way, at least some of the “Mycenaean” who were running the administration of the labyrinthine “palace” at Knossos around 1400 BCE must have been Athenians.

For me the “smoking gun” that proves the Athenian provenience of at least some of the “Mycenaean” who ran the administration of Knossos around 1400 BCE is the name of one of the divinities listed in one of the Linear B texts found in the so-called room of the chariot tablets. The text is written in the Knossos tablet V 52, and the name of the divinity in line one of that text is *a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja*. An article published in 2001 by Joann Gulizio, Kevin Pluta, and Thomas Palaima argues persuasively that the name of this divinity is to be read as *Athānās potnia* and needs to be interpreted as “[our] Lady of Athens,” not as “our Lady [the goddess] Athena.”<sup>51</sup>

If it is true that the goddess who is featured so prominently in the pantheon of divinities recorded in Knossos tablet V 52 is “our Lady of Athens,” then we see here a direct reference to the goddess of the acropolis of Athens in mainland Greece, specifically in Attica.

In Homeric poetry, the name in question here is *Athēnē*. This name applies both to the goddess known in English as “Athena,” as at *Odyssey* 7.78, and to the place that is seen as the possession of the goddess—which is the territory of the place known in English as “Athens,” as at *Odyssey* 7.80.<sup>52</sup> The suffix *-ēnē* is visible also in the name of the nymph *Mukēnē*, who presides over the acropolis of Mycenae.<sup>53</sup>

The same suffix *-ēnē* is visible also in the place-name *Messēnē*, which means something like “Midland.”<sup>54</sup> Here I compare the place-name *me-za-na* written on a Linear B tablet from Pylos, Cn 3.1. On the basis of this comparison, I have observed elsewhere: “I suspect that the suffix *-ēnē* is endowed with an elliptic function.”<sup>55</sup> What I meant there when I made that

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<sup>50</sup> Palaima (2003:164). Dreissen (2008:71) makes a relevant observation with reference to the Linear B tablets found at Chanià in West Crete and dated around 1300 BCE: one of these tablets (Sq 1) concerns chariot wheels.

<sup>51</sup> Gulizio, Pluta, and Palaima (2001, especially pp. 457-58).

<sup>52</sup> Commentary in Nagy (2004:159-64).

<sup>53</sup> See Nagy (2004:163); also Palaiologou (2013:250 n.5).

<sup>54</sup> Nagy (2004:163 n.17).

<sup>55</sup> Again, Nagy (2004:163 n.17).

observation is this: a form that is *elliptic* refers not only to X but also to everything that belongs to X, such as X2, X3, X4 (and so on). An elliptic form of X implies X2, X3, X4 (and so on) without naming X2, X3, X4 (and so on) explicitly. In terms of this definition, the name *Athēnē* refers not only to the goddess “Athena” but also to everything that belongs to the goddess. The primary example of that “everything” here is the acropolis of Athens. And we see another level of ellipsis in the plural form *Athēnai*: this elliptic plural refers not only to the acropolis of Athens but also to everything that belongs to the acropolis of Athens, which is the city of Athens, and, by extension, to everything that belongs to the city, which is ultimately the region of Attica.<sup>56</sup>

I see a parallel situation in the use of the form *Aswia* (*/Aswiās*) in the Linear B texts, where *Aswia* is evidently a goddess, as we see from the collocation *po-ti-ni-ja a-si-wi-ja = potnia Aswia* “[Our] Lady *Aswia*” as written on a tablet from Pylos, fr. 1208. In the case of *Aswia*, the name survives into the classical period of recorded texts in the fifth century BCE and later: now the name is pronounced *Asiā*, meaning “Asia,” and the referent here is what we call “Asia Minor” in English. So, from a diachronic perspective, this name applies both to the goddess and to the realm of the goddess. She is “Our Lady of Asia” or “Asia” personified.

I emphasize here that the form *Athēnē* at line 80 of *Odyssey 7* is the only instance, in all surviving texts ever written in the ancient Greek language, where the name of the place “Athens” is found in the singular, not in the plural. Everywhere else in attested Greek, we read the elliptic plural *Athēnai*, which I now interpret to mean “everything that belongs to the acropolis of *Athēnē*.” And there is also a deeper level of ellipsis here: the suffix *-ēnē* of *Athēnē* indicates that the goddess Athena is also a personification of the place of Athena, which is the acropolis of Athens and, by extension, the city of Athens, and by further extension, everything that belongs to the city of Athens.

### *What is Missing so far in the Big Picture?*

At this point in my analysis of an “Athenian connection” between the Minoan and the Mycenaean empires, I have concentrated on the goddess Athena as she was pictured in the second millennium BCE. But there is more to it. Later, I will concentrate on a female character in myth who is another essential element that is needed for reconstructing the “Athenian connection.” As we will see, this character seems to be mortal, not immortal. At this point, I would rather not give away her name. But I show here an image that previews her identity. This image, produced by the brilliant researcher Mark Cameron, shows this female figure as she was represented in Minoan fresco paintings. The image is a reconstruction from fragments, but this reconstruction will give us the big picture that I will need for tracing further my thread of argumentation (Fig. 16.).

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<sup>56</sup> See also Muellner (1976:70), who notes that the singular form of *Athēnē* vs. the plural form *Athēnai* can in fact refer to the place that we know as “Athens.” Muellner also analyzes the elliptic function of the plural form here. On the elliptic plural in general, see Nagy (2004:157-75).



Fig. 16. From a fresco found at Hagia Triadha in Crete. Reconstruction by Mark Cameron, p. 96 of the catalogue *Fresco: A Passport into the Past*, 1999 (for an expanded citation, see the Bibliography below). Reproduced with the permission of the British School at Athens. BSA Archive: Mark Cameron Personal Papers: CAM 1.

#### Part 4: A Cretan *Odyssey*, Phase I<sup>57</sup>

##### *Introduction*

I now return to the Introduction in Part 1, where I first mentioned the concept of “the Cretan *Odyssey*”—or, better, “a Cretan *Odyssey*”—as reflected in the “lying tales” of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. These tales, as I already said there, give the medium of Homeric poetry an opportunity to open windows into an *Odyssey* we do not know. In the alternative universe of a “Cretan *Odyssey*,” the adventures of Odysseus take place in the exotic context of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization as centered on the island of Crete. That is my thesis for Part 4.

And I must stress here again, as I did from the start, that the civilization I have just described as “Minoan-Mycenaean” needs to be viewed from a diachronic as well as a synchronic perspective.<sup>58</sup> That is because, as I already noted in Parts 1, 2, and 3, elements of Minoan civilization become eventually infused with elements we find in Mycenaean civilization. And such an infusion has to do with the fact that Minoan civilization, which had evolved in the context of a “Minoan Empire,” was eventually taken over by a “Mycenaean Empire.” This takeover, as I argued, is reflected not only in the evidence of material culture but also in the evidence of mythological traditions as reflected in visual and verbal narratives. More specifically, I argued that the takeover from Minoan to Mycenaean civilization resulted in modifications of myths about the Minoan Empire by way of myths about the Mycenaean Empire.

I will consider here primarily from a diachronic or evolutionary perspective not only the relevant Minoan-Mycenaean myths but also, more specifically, the kaleidoscopic world of Homeric myth-making as a medium that actually conveyed some of these myths.

From a diachronic or evolutionary perspective, the system of myth-making that we know as Homeric poetry can be viewed, I argue, as *an evolving medium*. But there is more to it. When you look at Homeric poetry from a diachronic perspective, you will see not only an evolving medium of oral poetry. You will see also a medium that actually views itself diachronically. In other words, Homeric poetry demonstrates aspects of its own evolution. And I should add that

<sup>57</sup> An earlier version of Part 4 appeared online in Nagy (2015f).

<sup>58</sup> I elaborated on these terms *synchronic* and *diachronic* in Part 1, with reference to Saussure (1972 [1916]: 117). See also Nagy (2003:1).

references to Minoan-Mycenaean myths in Homeric poetry can reveal also the evolution of these myths as they existed independently of Homeric poetry.

*Minoan-Mycenaean Crete as Viewed in the Odyssey*

In the Third Cretan Tale of Odysseus, the hero assumes the “false” identity of a Cretan prince who is a grandson of the king Minos himself. Here is how the Tale gets started (*Odyssey* 19.172-84):

|<sub>172</sub> Κρήτη τις γαῖ' ἔστι μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ, |<sub>173</sub> καλὴ καὶ πείρα, περίρρυτος· ἐν δ' ἄνθρωποι |  
|<sub>174</sub> πολλοὶ ἀπειρέσιοι, καὶ ἐνήκοντα πόλεις· |<sub>175</sub> ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα μεμιγμένη· ἐν μὲν  
Ἀχαιοί, |<sub>176</sub> ἐν δ' Ἐτεόκρητες μεγαλήτορες, ἐν δὲ Κύδωνες |<sub>177</sub> Δωριέες τε τριχάϊκες διοὶ τε  
Πελασγοί· |<sub>178</sub> τῆσι δ' ἐνὶ Κνωσός, μεγάλη πόλις, ἔνθα τε Μίνως |<sub>179</sub> ἐννέωρος βασίλευε Διὸς  
μεγάλου ὀαριστῆς, |<sub>180</sub> πατρὸς ἐμοῖο πατῆρ, μεγαθύμου Δευκαλίωνος. |<sub>181</sub> Δευκαλίων δ' ἐμὲ τίκτε  
καὶ Ἰδομενῆα ἄνακτα· |<sub>182</sub> ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήεσσι κορωνίσιν Ἴλιον εἴσω |<sub>183</sub> ὄχεθ' ἅμ' Ἀτρεΐδῃσιν·  
ἐμοὶ δ' ὄνομα κλυτὸν Αἰθῶν, |<sub>184</sub> ὀπλότερος γενεῆ· ὁ δ' ἅμα πρότερος καὶ ἀρείων.

|<sub>172</sub> There's a land called Crete, in the middle of the sea that looks like wine. |<sub>173</sub> It's beautiful and fertile, surrounded by the waves, and the people who live there |<sub>174</sub> are so many that you can't count them. They have 90 cities. |<sub>175</sub> Different people speak different languages, all mixed together. |<sub>176</sub> There are Eteo-Cretans, those great-hearted ones. And Cydonians. |<sub>177</sub> There are Dorians, with their three divisions, and luminous Pelasgians. |<sub>178</sub> In this land [plural]<sup>59</sup> is Knossos, a great city. There it was that Minos, |<sub>179</sub> who was renewed every nine years [*enneōros*], ruled as king. He was the companion [*oaristēs*] of Zeus the mighty. |<sub>180</sub> And he was the father of my father, Deukalion, the one with the big heart. |<sub>181</sub> Deukalion was my father, and the father also of Idomeneus the king. |<sub>182</sub> That man [= Idomeneus], in curved ships, went off to Ilion [= Troy], |<sub>183</sub> yes, he went there together with the sons of Atreus [= Agamemnon and Menelaos]. As for my name, which is famous, it is Aithōn. |<sub>184</sub> I'm the younger one by birth. As for the other one [= Idomeneus], he was born before me and is superior to me.

There are many details in this remarkable passage that I cannot analyze right now, and I will return to them in other projects. Here I concentrate simply on the synthesizing of Minoan and Mycenaean “signatures.” A clearly Minoan signature is the detail about Minos as the grandfather of the Cretan speaker Aithōn. And a clearly Mycenaean signature is the detail about Idomeneus as the older brother of the same speaker: this king Idomeneus is of course one of the most prominent Achaean warriors in the Homeric *Iliad* as we know it.

And here, at this confluence of Minoan-Mycenaean signatures, is where the hero of the *Odyssey* enters the stream of myth-making (*Odyssey* 19.185-93):

|<sub>185</sub> ἔνθ' Ὀδυσῆα ἐγὼν ιδόμην καὶ ξείνια δῶκα. |<sub>186</sub> καὶ γὰρ τὸν Κρήτηνδε κατήγαγεν ἰς ἀνέμοιο |<sub>187</sub>  
|<sub>188</sub> ἰέμενον Τροίηνδε, παραπλάγξασα Μαλειῶν· |<sub>188</sub> στήσε δ' ἐν Ἀμνισῶ, ὅθι τε σπέος Εἰλειθυίης, |<sub>189</sub>

<sup>59</sup> The pronoun τῆσι that refers to the land of Crete here in *Odyssey* 19.178 is in the plural, not in the singular, as we might have expected. I will offer an explanation in Part 5.

ἐν λιμέσιν χαλεποῖσι, μόγις δ' ὑπάλυξεν ἀέλλας. |<sub>190</sub> αὐτίκα δ' Ἰδομενῆα μέταλλα ἄστυδ' ἀνελθών·  
|<sub>191</sub> ξεῖνον γάρ οἱ ἔφρασκε φίλον τ' ἔμεν αἰδοῖόν τε. |<sub>192</sub> τῷ δ' ἤδη δεκάτη ἢ ἑνδεκάτη πέλεν ἠώς |<sub>193</sub>  
οἰχομένῳ σὺν νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν Ἴλιον εἶσω.

|<sub>185</sub> There [in Crete] is where I [= Aithōn] saw Odysseus and gave him gifts of guest-host friendship [*xenia*]. |<sub>186</sub> You see, he had been forced to land at Crete by the violent power of a wind. |<sub>187</sub> He was trying to get to Troy, but the wind detoured him as he was sailing past the headlands of Maleiai, |<sub>188</sub> and he was dropped off [by the violent wind] at Amnisos, exactly where the cave of Eileithuia is situated. |<sub>189</sub> It was a harsh landing, and he just barely avoided being destroyed by the blasts of the sea-gales. |<sub>190</sub> Right away he asked to see Idomeneus as soon as he came to the city [= Knossos]. |<sub>191</sub> You see, he was saying that he was a guest-friend [*xenos*] [of Idomeneus] and that they had a relationship of mutual respect. |<sub>192</sub> But it was by now already the tenth or eleventh day since he [= Idomeneus] |<sub>193</sub> had departed, sailing off with a fleet of curved ships on his way to Iliion [Troy].

I highlight here line 188, where we learn about the place in Crete where Odysseus landed. That place is Amnisos, and we also learn that the cave of Eileithuia is located there. As we know from the reportage of Strabo, who flourished in the first century BCE, Amnisos was reputed to be the sea harbor of Minos the king (Strabo 10.4.8 C476):

Μίνω δέ φασιν ἐπιναίῳ χρήσασθαι τῷ Ἀμνισῷ, ὅπου τὸ τῆς Εἰλειθυίας ἱερόν.

They say that Minos used Amnisos as his seaport, and the sacred space of Eileithuia is there.

According to Pausanias 4.20.2, the priestess of Eileithuia at Olympia makes a regular offering to this goddess as also to her cult-hero protégé Sosipolis, and this offering is described as *mazas memagmenas meliti* “barley-cakes [*mazai*] kneaded in honey [*meli*].” In Laconia and Messenia, *Eileithuia* was known as *Eleuthia*, and this form of the name for the goddess is actually attested in a Linear B tablet found at Knossos.<sup>60</sup> Here is my transcription of the relevant wording in that tablet (Knossos tablet Gg 705 line 1):

a-mi-ni-so / e-re-u-ti-ja ME+RI AMPHORA 1

*Amnisos: Eleuthiāi meli* [followed by the ideogram for “amphora”] 1

“Amnisos: for Eleuthia, honey, one amphora”

### *Cherchez la femme*

And how should we imagine such a goddess in the era of the Minoan sea-empire, in the middle of the second millennium BCE? One aspect of the answer is this: we should look not only for goddesses but also for human votaries of goddesses. An ideal case in point is Ariadne, who figures in myth as the daughter of Minos the king of Crete.

<sup>60</sup> I first made this argument, with further documentation, in Nagy (1969). For a brilliant analysis of *Odyssey* 19.185-193, along with a wealth of further documentation, see Levaniouk (2011:93-96).

Here is an essential piece of evidence, to be found in the Alexandrian dictionary attributed to Hesychius, where we read: ἄδνόν· ἄγνόν Κρηῆτες “the Cretans use the word *hadno-* for *hagno-*.” So, since *hagno-* means “holy,” *Ariadnē* means “very holy.”

Elsewhere in the dictionary of Hesychius, we read: Καλλίχορον· ἐν Κνωσσῷ ἐπὶ τῷ τῆς Ἀριάδνης τόπῳ “*Kalli-khoron* was the name of the place of Ariadne in Knossos.” And the meaning of this “place of Ariadne,” *Kalli-khoron*, is “the place that is beautiful.” The word *khoros* here can designate either the “place” where singing and dancing takes place or the group of singers and dancers who perform at that place. Such a beautiful place is made visible by the divine smith Hephaistos when he creates the ultimate masterpiece of visual art, the Shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.590-592):

|590 Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυῆεις, |591 τῷ ἴκελον οἶόν ποτ’ ἐνὶ Κνωσσῷ εὐρείῃ |592 Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.

|590 The renowned one [= the god Hephaistos], the one with the two strong arms, pattern-wove [*poikillein*] in it [= the Shield of Achilles] a *khoros*. |591 It [= the *khoros*] was just like the one that, once upon a time in far-ruling Knossos, |592 Daedalus made for Ariadne, the one with the beautiful tresses [*plokamoi*].

Then at lines 593-606 of *Iliad* 18 we see in action the singing and dancing that happens in the picturing of the divine place. So the ultimate place for the singing and dancing becomes the ultimate event of singing and dancing, the word for which would also be *khoros*—this time, in the sense of a “chorus,” that is, a grouping of singers and dancers. And the prima donna for such singing and dancing can be visualized as the girl Ariadne, for whom Daedalus had made the ultimate place for song and dance.

The Minoan painting that I previewed in Part 3 captures a moment when a girl like Ariadne engages in such song and dance (Fig. 17.).



Fig. 17. Detail from a fresco found at Hagia Triadha in Crete. Reconstruction by Mark Cameron, p. 96 of the catalogue *Fresco: A Passport into the Past*, 1999. Reproduced with the permission of the British School at Athens. BSA Archive: Mark Cameron Personal Papers: CAM 1.

### Part 5: A Cretan *Odyssey*, Phase II<sup>61</sup>

In what precedes I showed what can be reconstructed as a Minoan-Mycenaean version of Ariadne. In what follows I turn to later versions, as reflected especially in the visual arts of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. In these later versions, we can see more clearly the connectedness of Ariadne with the idea of thalassocracy—an idea inherited from Minoan-Mycenaean civilization.

#### *Ariadne and Her Garland*

I highlight here the myths about Ariadne and her garland.<sup>62</sup> The mythological foundations of storytelling about the garland of Ariadne and how it was turned into a constellation are most ancient, going all the way back to the Minoan-Mycenaean era.<sup>63</sup> From later eras we get a wealth of relevant evidence from the visual as well as the verbal arts.<sup>64</sup> In the case of the visual evidence, I cite for example the report of Pausanias 5.19.1, describing a scene depicted on the Chest of Kypselos, which is of Corinthian workmanship and dates to the early sixth century BCE: in this scene Ariadne is featured together with Theseus and she is holding a garland while Theseus holds a lyre.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in a picture painted on an Attic vase dated to the middle of the sixth century (Munich 2243; ABV 163, 2), we see Theseus fighting the Minotaur while Ariadne stands by, holding a garland in her left hand and a ball of woolen thread in her right hand; the goddess Athena is also standing by, holding in her right hand the lyre of Theseus.<sup>66</sup> The ball of woolen thread is familiar to us from the existing literary evidence for the myth. It is signaled, for example, in Catullus 64.113 and in Virgil *Aeneid* 6.30. But what about the garland of Ariadne?

According to an epitomized narrative derived from Epimenides of Crete (*FGH* 457 F 19 = *DK* 3 B 25), the garland of Ariadne had been given to her as a gift by the god Dionysus, who intended to destroy (*phtheirai*) her, and she was in fact deceived (*ēpatēthē*) by the gift; but Theseus was saved (*sōthēnai*) by the same gift, since the garland of Ariadne radiated for him a mystical light that helped him escape from the labyrinth; after Theseus and Ariadne eloped to the island of Naxos, the mystical garland was turned into a constellation. By implication, the deception of Ariadne by way of the garland given to her by Dionysus is correlated with the salvation of Theseus by way of that same garland. By further implication, Ariadne must die at Naxos, and it is this death that is compensated by the catasterism of her garland.

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<sup>61</sup> An earlier version of Part 5 appeared online in Nagy (2015g).

<sup>62</sup> Further background in Nagy (2013a:157-58); also Nagy (2015a).

<sup>63</sup> Blech (1982:259-62).

<sup>64</sup> This evidence is surveyed by Blech (1982:262-67).

<sup>65</sup> Blech (1982:263).

<sup>66</sup> Blech (1982:264).

*More on Ariadne and Theseus*

According to another version that we find in the Homeric *Odyssey* (11.321-25), Theseus and Ariadne elope not to Naxos but to an island even closer to Crete, Dia, where Ariadne is killed by the goddess Artemis; the god Dionysus is somehow involved, by way of “witnessing” the things that happened (*marturiēisi* 11.325).<sup>67</sup>

According to yet another version, as recorded in the scholia MV for *Odyssey* 11.322 and attributed to Pherecydes (*FGH* 3 F 148), Ariadne and Theseus elope to the island of Dia and fall asleep on the shore after having made love there. While they sleep, Athena appears in the middle of the night and wakes up Theseus, telling him to proceed to Athens. When Ariadne wakes up in the morning and finds herself all alone on the shore, she laments piteously. Aphrodite comforts her, telling her that Dionysus will make her his woman. Then Dionysus appears in an epiphany and makes love to Ariadne, giving her a golden garland. Then Artemis kills Ariadne. And the garland is turned into a constellation—an event described as gratifying to Dionysus.

This myth about Ariadne and Theseus is distinctly Athenian, going back to the glory days of the Athenian Empire.<sup>68</sup> The myth is attested in a painting that dates from the early fifth century BCE (Fig. 18.).

This picture captures the moment when Athena appears to Theseus after he has made love with Ariadne. The couple has fallen asleep after the lovemaking, but Athena awakens Theseus, gently gesturing for him to be quiet and not to awaken Ariadne, who is held fast in her sleep by a little figure of Hypnos perched on top of her head. The details have been described this way (Oakley and Sinos 1993:37):



Fig. 18. Painting on a lekythos attributed to the Pan Painter, dated around 470 BCE (Taranto *IG* 4545). The line drawing, presented in rollout mode, is by Tina Ross.

Here we see the couple at the moment of separation. Athena has just wakened Theseus, and as she bends over him he begins to rise, bending one leg and sitting up from the pillow on which he has lain next to Ariadne. Athena tries to quiet him as he stretches out his arm, a gesture of remonstrance or inquiry. In the upper left hand corner is a small female figure flying into the night.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> The Homeric passage leaves it open whether Dionysus instigates the killing of Ariadne, so I cannot follow in its entirety the interpretation of Barrett (1964:223).

<sup>68</sup> What follows is a recapitulation of what I argued in Nagy (2013b:160-61).

<sup>69</sup> Their interpretation of this painting differs from mine in some other respects.

I note that the small female figure who is “flying into the night” is disheveled, with her hair flying in the wind and with her clothing in disarray. I interpret this figure as a prefiguring of Ariadne herself at a later moment, the morning after, when she wakes up to find that she has been abandoned by Theseus. I recall here the verse in Catullus 64.63 where the headdress that had held the hair of Ariadne together has now come undone, and she looks like a bacchant, a frenzied devotee of Bacchus, that is, of the god Dionysus. And it is this same Bacchic frenzy, signaled by her disheveled hair, that will now attract Dionysus to her.<sup>70</sup>

In contrast to the morning after, when Ariadne in her Bacchic frenzy will come undone, the picture of Ariadne in the present is eerily peaceful (Oakley and Sinos 1993:37):

Ariadne faces us directly, an unusual pose that points to her oblivion to what is happening behind her as well as allowing us a clear view of the peaceful contentment registered on her face. Her eyes are closed tight, and she will not awaken as Theseus departs, for the figure of Hypnos, Sleep, sits on her head with legs drawn up as he sleeps.

Returning to the picture painted on the lekythos, I draw attention to another figure. Besides the sleeping Ariadne and the little sleeping Hypnos perched on top of her head, we see also the figure of a wakeful boy reclining on the farther side of the bed, to our left, whose head is positioned directly below the miniature figure of the hovering girl with the disheveled hair. In my interpretation, this boy is Eros, who had instigated a night of intense lovemaking between Ariadne and Theseus.<sup>71</sup>

### *Recalling the Blond Hair of Ariadne*

In a posting for *Classical Inquiry* 2015.07.15 (Nagy 2015a), I had drawn attention to a detail that now becomes relevant to the interpretation of the painting we have just seen. The detail comes from Poem 64 of Catullus, which mediates earlier Greek sources. Here we will see that Ariadne the Minoan princess has a *vertex*, “head of hair,” that is *flavus*, “blond.” And I highlight in advance the fact that this description is synchronized with the moment when Ariadne discovers that she has been abandoned by her lover Theseus. The poem pictures her standing helplessly on the island shore, looking out toward the sea, when, all of a sudden, her hair comes undone as she sees the ship of her lover sailing away. At this moment, her beautiful head of hair or *vertex* is pointedly described as blond or *flavus* (Catullus 64.60-67):

|<sub>60</sub> quem procul ex alga maestis Minois ocellis, |<sub>61</sub> saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu, |<sub>62</sub> prospicit et magnis curarum fluctuat undis, |<sub>63</sub> non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram, |<sub>64</sub> non contacta levi velatum pectus amictu, |<sub>65</sub> non tereti strophio lactentis vincta papillas, |<sub>66</sub> omnia quae toto delapsa e corpore passim |<sub>67</sub> ipsius ante pedes fluctus salis alludebant.

|<sub>60</sub> She [= Ariadne] sees him [= Theseus] out there at sea from far away, far beyond the shore’s seaweed. The daughter of Minos, with her sad little eyes, |<sub>61</sub> is like a stone statue of a Maenad as

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<sup>70</sup> I have much more to say about the poetics of Dionysiac dishevelment and eroticism in Nagy (2007).

<sup>71</sup> Nagy (2013b:161-62).

she stares, oh how sad! |<sub>62</sub> Staring she sees him out there, and she is tossed around in huge waves of anxieties. |<sub>63</sub> She loses control of the fine-woven headdress on her blond [*flavus*] head of hair [*vertex*]. |<sub>64</sub> Her chest is no longer covered by her light shawl. |<sub>65</sub> Her milk-white breasts are no longer held back within her smooth bodice. |<sub>66</sub> One by one, all her coverings slipped off altogether from her body, some here and some there, |<sub>67</sub> while the waves of the salt sea were frolicking in front of her feet.

At the very moment when Ariadne comes emotionally undone here, her hairdo likewise comes undone, and so too all her clothing comes undone. Now she looks like a perfect Maenad, that is, like a woman possessed by the Bacchic frenzy of the god Dionysus. It is the maenadic looks of Ariadne that attract Dionysus to her from afar, and, as we read in Catullus 64.253, the god is inflamed with passion for the princess as he now hastens toward her.

This detail about Ariadne's blond head of hair will help me address two basic questions: why is Theseus prompted by Athena to wake up and secretly leave Ariadne, making his way back to Athens, and why must Ariadne be left behind, pathetically abandoned on the shore of the idyllic place where she has just made love to Theseus? The answer is simple: it is because duty calls Theseus back to Athens.

The blond hair of the Minoan princess Ariadne, viewed in the context of her disheveled Bacchic frenzy, matches the blond hair of the Carthaginian queen Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid* (4.590: *flaventesque abscissa comas*), which is being shorn off at the very moment when she too, like Ariadne, comes emotionally undone. Just as Ariadne was abandoned by Theseus, Dido was abandoned by Aeneas.

At a later point in the *Aeneid*, during his sojourn in Hades, Aeneas encounters the shade of his former lover, the queen Dido, who has committed suicide after he abandoned her in Carthage. Aeneas says to Dido (*Aeneid* 6.456-63):

|<sub>456</sub> infelix Dido, verus mihi nuntius ergo |<sub>457</sub> venerat extinctam ferroque extrema secutam? |<sub>458</sub> funeris heu tibi causa fui? per sidera iuro, |<sub>459</sub> per superos et si qua fides tellure sub ima est, |<sub>460</sub> invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi. |<sub>461</sub> sed me iussa deum, quae nunc has ire per umbras, |<sub>462</sub> per loca senta situ cogunt noctemque profundam, |<sub>463</sub> imperiis egere suis; . . .  
|<sub>456</sub> Unfortunate Dido! So it was true, then, the news that I got. |<sub>457</sub> It [= the news] came to me and said that you had perished, that you had followed through on your final moments with a sword. |<sub>458</sub> So your death, ah, was caused by me? But I swear by the stars, |<sub>459</sub> and by the powers above—and by anything here that I could swear by, under the earth in its deepest parts: |<sub>460</sub> Unwillingly, O queen, did I depart from your shore [*litus*]. |<sub>461</sub> But I was driven by the orders of the gods, which force me even now to pass through the shades, |<sub>462</sub> passing through places stained with decay, and through the deepest night. |<sub>463</sub> Yes, I was driven by their projects of empire.

In verse 460 of this passage, the poet is making a reference to a verse in Poem 66 of Catullus, where a lock of hair originating from another queen, Berenice, is speaking (Catullus 66.39):

*invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi*

Unwillingly, O queen, did I depart from the top of your head [*vertex*].

In my posting for *Classical Inquiry* 2015.07.15 (Nagy 2015a), I argued that the lock of hair that gets severed from the head of Queen Berenice of Egypt and becomes a constellation in the sky is parallel to the Garland of Ariadne. But I argued further that the verse “*invitus regina ...*” in *Aeneid* 6.460, referring to the doomed love affair of Dido and Aeneas, refers also to a poetic tradition about the doomed love affair of Ariadne and Theseus; and this additional reference is achieved through the intermediacy of the verse “*invita, o regina ...*” in Catullus 66.39.<sup>72</sup>

Just as Theseus rejected Ariadne in the Athenian version of the myth, so also Aeneas rejected Dido in the story of their doomed love affair. After all, as Leonard Muellner has noted, the moralistic as well as ritualistic temperament of Aeneas as the future founder of the Roman empire is ultimately incompatible with the *furor* or “frenzy” of Dido. In the narrative about the death of Dido in *Aeneid* 4, as Muellner has also noted, we see a clear sign of this incompatibility (Muellner 2012):

When the self-destructive fire of passionate love within her emerges as the fire of her funeral pyre, she [= Dido] cannot actually die. As a person invested with *furor* by Venus, she is by definition hostile to *fatum*, to Aeneas’ destiny to be sure, but even to her own wished-for death, which should not have happened at this point in her life. So a *dea ex machina*, Iris the rainbow goddess, is sent from heaven by Juno to effectuate the impossible.

Here Muellner cites the actual verses of *Aeneid* 4.696-705, where Iris finally shears off a lock of blond hair from the head of Dido, ending it all for the doomed lover of Aeneas. I quote here only the beginning of the scene (*Aeneid* 696-699):

|<sup>696</sup> nam quia nec fato merita nec morte peribat |<sup>697</sup> sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore |  
<sup>698</sup> nondum illi flavum Proserpina vertice crinem |<sup>699</sup> abstulerat, . . .  
<sup>696</sup> For, since she was about to die neither by fate nor by a deserved death, |<sup>697</sup> but before her day,  
the poor wretch, inflamed as she was by her sudden frenzy [*furor*], |<sup>698</sup> it had not yet happened to  
her that the blond [*flavus*] hair on the top of her head [*vertex*], at the hands of the goddess of death,  
|<sup>699</sup> was to be taken away from her.

Just as Dido experiences a Bacchic *furor* or “frenzy” in reaction to her abandonment by Aeneas, thus showing her incompatibility with the future founder of the Roman Empire, so also Ariadne in Catullus 64 is *furens* “frenzied” in verse 124, experiencing *furores* “moments of frenzy” in verses 54 and 94. In this reaction, Ariadne shows her own incompatibility with Theseus, that future founder of the Athenian Empire. But this same incompatibility translates into a

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<sup>72</sup> The argument was first presented in Nagy (2013b).

compatibility with Bacchus. More than that, it translates into an attraction, even a fatal attraction, since Ariadne, in her Bacchic frenzy, attracted the attention of Dionysus.<sup>73</sup>

Just as Aeneas in *Aeneid* 6 is driven by “the orders of the gods” (461), by “their projects of empire” (463), as I have translated it, so also Theseus is driven by the orders of the goddess Athena, whose intervention in the myth of Theseus is an expression of older “projects of empire.” In this case, I mean the Athenian Empire of the fifth century BCE. According to Athenian mythology as it was taking shape in that era, Athens had become a successor to the Minoan Empire that Theseus himself had overcome once upon a time.<sup>74</sup>

### *The Athenian Connection Revisited*

In non-Athenian versions of the myth, as we have already seen, Theseus was saved from the labyrinth primarily by the Minoan princess Ariadne, with the help of her radiant garland and her ball of woolen thread. In the Athenian version, by contrast, Theseus did not really seem to need the help of Ariadne all that much.<sup>75</sup> And the garland of Ariadne can even be replaced by a garland given to Theseus by the sea nymph Amphitrite, as we see in Song 17 of Bacchylides (109-116): in that version, the garland is made of roses. In other variants of the myth, the garland is made of gold, as we see from the testimony of Pausanias, who describes a painting that covered one full wall of the sanctuary of Theseus in Athens. In the context of his description, Pausanias offers a retelling of the myth, which he says is only partially retold through the medium of the painting (Pausanias 1.17.3):

When Minos was taking Theseus and the rest of the delegation of young men and women to Crete he fell in love with Periboia, and when Theseus opposed him by objecting, he [= Minos] insulted him and said that he [= Theseus] was not the son of Poseidon, since he [= Theseus] could not recover for him [= Minos] the signet ring [*sphragis*] which he [= Minos] happened to be wearing, if he threw it into the sea. With these words Minos is said to have thrown the signet ring [*sphragis*], but they say that Theseus emerged from the sea holding that ring and also a gold garland [*stephanos*] that Amphitrite gave him.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> This paragraph repeats my argumentation in Nagy (2013b).

<sup>74</sup> On Theseus as the notional founder of the Athenian Empire, understood to be the notional successor of the Minoan Empire, see Nagy (2009:E§§161-63, 168-69 = pp. 364-65, 368). Such an ideology about an Athenian Empire had a start even before the era of the Athenian Democracy. Already in the era of the Peisistratidai, who dominated Athens in the second half of the sixth century BCE, we see clear signs of what I am calling here “the projects of empire”: see especially Nagy (2009:E§169 = pp. 368). In the same work, I offer a general summary of the imperial ambitions of Athens in the era of the Peisistratidai (2009:I§§7-12 = pp. 6-7). In that era, as we see from the incisive analysis of Frame 2009:323, myths about the love affairs of Theseus with a variety of heroines, including Ariadne, were extensively rethought.

<sup>75</sup> I first made this argument in Nagy (2013b:162-63).

<sup>76</sup> For further attestations of the garland of Amphitrite, see Blech (1982:265-66).

*The Occlusion of Ariadne*

From what we have seen so far, the thalassocratic agenda of Athens are understated in myths about Ariadne and Theseus. Not only does Theseus abandon Ariadne once he is freed from the Labyrinth of Minos, but even more than that, the myth of Theseus no longer really needs Ariadne. Once the thalassocracy of Minos is taken over by Theseus, the role of Ariadne in the achievement of this takeover is occluded. The connection between thalassocracy and Minoan civilization as represented by the Minoan princess Ariadne is now broken.

*The Occlusion of Minoan Thalassocracy*

But the understating of thalassocracy in Minoan civilization seems to have been already an aspect of Minoan civilization itself. The power of the thalassocracy must have been so great that Minoan rhetoric could afford to downplay it. I see a vestige of this rhetoric in the ancient Greek proverb about Cretans who pretend not even to know what the sea is, thus flaunting all the more their knowledge and expertise in seafaring. Here is the proverb (Proverb I 131 ed. Leutsch-Schneidewin):

ὁ Κρής δὴ τὸν πόντον.

The Cretan, aha ! . . . with reference to the sea.<sup>77</sup>

In the scholia for Aelius Aristides *Oration* 46 (page 138 line 4) we find an explanation for the meaning of this proverb: *παροιμία ἐπὶ τῶν εἰδόντων μὲν, προσποιουμένων δ' ἄγνοεῖν*, “This is a proverb applying to those who know but pretend not to know.”<sup>78</sup> To say it another way, the subtext is flaunting its status as a text.

*The Occlusion of Minoan Thalassocracy in the Odyssey*

This kind of rhetoric, where the speaker is flaunting by way of understating, is typical of the “Cretan lies” as told by Odysseus in his rôle as a Minoan prince. There is a salient example in the Second Cretan Tale, told by the disguised Odysseus to Eumaeus the swineherd. The story begins with this detail told by the would-be Cretan about his origins (*Odyssey* 14.199):

ἐκ μὲν Κρητῶν γένος εὖχομαι εὐρειῶν

I say solemnly that I was born and raised in Crete, the place that reaches far and wide

In the singular, *Krētē* refers to the island of Crete. But here we see the plural *Krētai*, which cannot mean a multiplicity of islands named Crete. There is no such thing. Rather, we see

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<sup>77</sup> I translate the particle δὴ here as indicating surprise at learning something new. In general, the particle δὴ has an “evidentiary” force, indicating that the speaker has just *seen* something, in other words, that the speaker has achieved an insight just a moment ago (“aha, now I see that . . .”). See Bakker (1997:74-80; 2005:146).

<sup>78</sup> Aelius Aristides II ed. S. Jebb (1730 [1722]:138, printed in the footnote to line 4).

here an elliptic plural, meaning “Crete and everything that belongs to it.” And of course whatever belongs to Crete are all the Aegean islands and lands controlled by the thalassocracy of Crete.<sup>79</sup> In *Odyssey* 19.178, we see a pronoun that refers to Crete, and, like the noun *Krêtai* in *Odyssey* 14.199, this pronoun too is not in the singular but in the plural. Here again we see an elliptic plural. I have already noted this pronoun in Part 4. So, even the pronoun signals the imperial power of Crete.

Earlier, in Part 3, we saw a parallel example: it was the elliptic plural *Athēnai* in the sense of “*Athēnē* and everything that belongs to it,” whereas the singular *Athēnē* refers not only to the goddess Athena but also to the place that she personifies. As we saw in *Odyssey* 7 at line 80, analyzed in Part 3, the noun *Athēnē* in the singular can refer not only to the goddess Athena but also to the place that she controls, which was primarily the acropolis of Athens. So, to put that singular form into the plural, which is an elliptic plural, is a way of referring to all the places controlled by the acropolis of Athens. Other such elliptic plurals include *Mukēnai*, “Mycenae,” and *Thēbai*, “Thebes.”<sup>80</sup>

#### *A Spartan Variation on a Minoan-Mycenaean Theme*

In our *Odyssey* the Minoan-Mycenaean world is linked more directly to Sparta than to Crete. To make this argument, I start with the beginning of *Odyssey* 15, where the goddess Athena appears in an epiphany to Telemachus at Sparta. As Athena tells Telemachus at lines 1-9, it is time for the young hero to conclude his visit at Sparta and to go back home to Ithaca. I highlight the fact that Sparta here is described at line 1 of *Odyssey* 15 as *euru-khoros* (εἰς εὐρύχορον Λακεδαίμονα), meaning “having a wide dancing-place.”

I see here a Minoan-Mycenaean signature. Relevant is the word *Kalli-khoron*, as I analyzed it in Part 4. As we saw there, *Kalli-khoron* is explained this way in the dictionary of Hesychius: Καλλίχορον· ἐν Κνωσσῶ ἐπὶ τῷ τῆς Ἀριάδνης τόπῳ “*Kalli-khoron* was the name of the place of Ariadne in Knossos.” And the meaning of this “place of Ariadne,” *Kalli-khoron*, is “the dancing-place that is beautiful.” The word *khoros* here can designate either the “place” where singing and dancing takes place or the group of singers and dancers who perform at that place. Such a beautiful place, as we already saw in Part 4, is made visible by the divine smith Hephaistos when he creates the ultimate masterpiece of visual art, the Shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.590-592):

|<sup>590</sup> Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις, |<sup>591</sup> τῷ ἴκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσσῶ εὐρείῃ |<sup>592</sup>  
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.

|<sup>590</sup> The renowned one [= the god Hephaistos], the one with the two strong arms, pattern-wove [*poikillein*] in it [= the Shield of Achilles] a *khoros*. |<sup>591</sup> It [= the *khoros*] was just like the one that, once upon a time in far-ruling Knossos, |<sup>592</sup> Daedalus made for Ariadne, the one with the beautiful tresses [*plokamoi*].

<sup>79</sup> Nagy (2004:163-64), following Muellner (1976:70).

<sup>80</sup> Again Nagy (2004:163-64), following Muellner (1976:70).

Then, at lines 593-606 of *Iliad* 18, we see in action the singing and dancing that happens in the picturing of the divine place. I repeat here what I said in Part 4, where I argued that the ultimate place for the singing and dancing becomes the ultimate event of singing and dancing, the word for which would also be *choros*—this time, in the sense of a “chorus,” that is, a grouping of singers and dancers. And the prima donna for such singing and dancing can be visualized as the girl Ariadne, for whom Daedalus had made the ultimate place for song and dance.

*How the Telling of Cretan Tales Begins only after the Sojourn with the Phaeacians*

So far, I have concentrated on a moment at the beginning of *Odyssey* 15 when Telemachus is visiting Sparta. Now I switch to Odysseus at that same moment. He is already in Ithaca, sleeping in the humble dwelling of Eumaeus the swineherd, after having finished telling his most elaborate “lie” in *Odyssey* 14, where he had narrated the Second Cretan Tale. So, when did Odysseus arrive in Ithaca, where he is telling his Cretan Tales? He had arrived already in *Odyssey* 13, which is where he narrated the First Cretan Tale to the goddess Athena herself. And this arrival in Ithaca marks a major transition in the Homeric narrative.

Here I have reached a critical point in my argumentation, which is essentially this: the adventures of Odysseus in the land of the Phaeacians, starting at *Odyssey* 6 and ending at *Odyssey* 13.187, are a substitution for the adventures of Odysseus in Crete. Once he is in Ithaca, Odysseus wakes up from his adventures, as if from a dream.

The Homeric narrative about the Phaeacians breaks off at *Odyssey* 13.187, at the very moment when they are offering sacrifice and praying to Poseidon to forgive them for having offended the god by conveying Odysseus from their island to the hero’s homeland in Ithaca. The narrative break takes place most abruptly, dramatically, and even exceptionally—at mid-verse. In the first part of the verse at *Odyssey* 13.187, the Phaeacians are last seen standing around a sacrificial altar, praying to Poseidon; in the second part of the verse, Odysseus has just woken up in Ithaca. A new phase of the hero’s experiences has just begun in the “real” world of Ithaca. Once Odysseus wakes up in his native land of Ithaca in *Odyssey* 13, he is ready to tell his First Cretan Tale, and he tells it to none other than the goddess Athena, who appears to him in disguise.

In all the tales that Odysseus tells in the second half of the *Odyssey*, there is a strong preoccupation with the island of Crete. And, as we will see, the *Odyssey* makes contact with Crete also by way of his son Telemachus. As we know, Telemachus goes to Pylos and then to Sparta in our version of the *Odyssey*, thus making contact with a center-point of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization. But there is also an alternative version where Telemachus makes contact with the earlier phase of this civilization, which is localized on the island of Crete.

Further, there is still another tradition, where Telemachus travels not to Sparta or to Crete but instead to the land of the Phaeacians. There are traces of this tradition, as reported by Eustathius in his commentary on *Odyssey* 16.118 and as channeled, as it were, by Dictys of Crete 6.6. According to Eustathius, the sources are Hellanicus (*FGH* 4 F 156) and the Aristotelian *Constitution of Ithaca* (F 506 ed. Rose). According to this variant myth, Telemachus has an

encounter with Nausicaa, princess of the Phaeacians, who is of course also encountered by Odysseus in our *Odyssey*. Telemachus and Nausicaa produce a child named Perseptolis.

*A Cretan Adventure as an Alternative to a Spartan Adventure*

For the moment, however, I will concentrate not on the Phaeacian adventure of Telemachus but on his potential Cretan adventure, to be contrasted with the Spartan adventure that is narrated in our *Odyssey*.

Backtracking from *Odyssey* 15 to *Odyssey* 1, we will now look at verses stemming from two different versions of the *Odyssey*. In both versions, Telemachus first goes to Pylos. That happens in *Odyssey* 3 as we have it. Also, in our version of the Homeric text, Telemachus then goes to Sparta in *Odyssey* 4.

After the adventures of Telemachus in Pylos as narrated in *Odyssey* 3, however, there are two alternative versions for the continuation of his adventures. In one version, as attested in *Odyssey* 4, Telemachus follows up his visit to the palace of Nestor in Pylos with a visit to the palace of Menelaos in Sparta—and he goes there by way of a chariot. That is the version that we read in “our” text of *Odyssey* 4. In another version, however, Telemachus goes not to Sparta but to Crete, and of course he goes there by way of a ship.

Both of these travels of Telemachus are mystical. In one scenario, he travels on a “thought-chariot,” while in another scenario, he travels on a “thought-ship.” In this regard, I await the forthcoming book of Madeleine Goh, who refers to the comparative evidence of Indo-European poetics concerning such shamanistic ideas as “thought-chariots” and “thought-ships.”

But what happens if Telemachus goes to Crete instead of Sparta after Pylos? Then he makes contact not with Menelaos of Sparta, who figures in the Troy Tale of *Odyssey* 4 as we have it, but with Idomeneus of Crete in an earlier Troy Tale of a Cretan *Odyssey* that focuses on a still earlier strand of narrative traditions centering on the *nostoi* or “homecomings” of the Achaeans.

These traditions draw on the world of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization in Crete. Let us consider for a moment the textual evidence. I start with some verses from “our” version of the Homeric *Odyssey*, as transmitted by ancient editors like Aristarchus, head of the Library of Alexandria in the second century BCE (*Odyssey* 1.93, 1.284-286):

πέμψω δ' ἐς Σπάρτην τε καὶ ἐς Πύλον ἡμαθόεντα

I [= Athena] will convey him [= Telemachus] on his way to Sparta and to sandy Pylos

πρῶτα μὲν ἐς Πύλον ἐλθὲ καὶ εἴρεο Νέστορα δῖον,

κεῖθεν δὲ Σπάρτηνδε παρὰ ξανθὸν Μενέλαον·

ὃς γὰρ δεύτατος ἦλθεν Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων.

First you [= Telemachus] go to Pylos and ask radiant Nestor

and then from there to Sparta and to golden-haired Menelaos,

the one who was the last of the Achaeans, wearers of bronze tunics, to come back home.

Next I turn to the corresponding verses as they appeared in a different version of the Homeric *Odyssey*, as we learn from the reportage of Zenodotus, head of the Library of Alexandria in the third century BCE (Scholia for *Odyssey* 3.313):

πέμψω δ' ἐς Κρήτην τε καὶ ἐς Πύλον ἡμαθόεντα  
I [= Athena] will convey him [= Telemachus] on his way to Crete and to sandy Pylos

πρῶτα μὲν ἐς Πύλον ἐλθέ, . . .  
κεῖθεν δ' ἐς Κρήτην τε παρ' Ἰδομενῆα ἄνακτα,  
ὃς γὰρ δεύτατος ἦλθεν Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων.  
First go to Pylos . . .  
and then from there to Crete and to king Idomeneus  
who was the last of the Achaeans, wearers of bronze tunics, to come back home.

### *Cretan Adventures of Odysseus*

What we just saw here is a trace of a “Cretan *Odyssey*,” as represented in our *Odyssey* by the “Cretan lies,” micro-narratives embedded in the epic macro-narrative of the Homeric *Odyssey*.

In “our” *Odyssey*, as Nestor reports at 3.191-192, Idomeneus after the Trojan War returns to Crete with all his men safe and sound. In the “Cretan” *Odyssey*, by contrast, Idomeneus seems to have traveled with Odysseus, even experiencing with him the horrors of the Cave of the Cyclops. I refer here to the brilliant analysis of Olga Levaniouk, who highlights a red-figure stamnos, 480 BCE, featuring ἸΔΑΜΕΝΕΥΣ “Ida-meneus” [*sic*] and ΟΔΥΣΣΥΣ “Odusus” [*sic*], each hanging under a ram’s belly.<sup>81</sup>

As we have already seen in Part 4, the Third Cretan Tale portrays Idomeneus as the *philos xenos* “near-and-dear guest-friend” of Odysseus (*Odyssey* 19.172-84):

|172 Κρήτη τις γαῖ' ἔστι μέσφ' ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ, |173 καλὴ καὶ πείρα, περίρρυτος· ἐν δ' ἄνθρωποι |  
|174 πολλοὶ ἀπειρέσιοι, καὶ ἐνήκοντα πόλεις· |175 ἄλλη δ' ἄλλων γλῶσσα μεμιγμένη· ἐν μὲν  
|176 Ἀχαιοί, |176 ἐν δ' Ἐτεόκρητες μεγαλήτορες, ἐν δὲ Κύδωνες |177 Δωριέες τε τριχάϊκες διοί τε  
|178 Πελασγοί· |178 τῆσι δ' ἐνὶ Κνωσός, μεγάλη πόλις, ἔνθα τε Μίνως |179 ἐννέωρος βασίλευε Διὸς  
|180 μεγάλου ὀαριστής, |180 πατὴρ δὲ ἐμοῖο πατήρ, μεγαθύμου Δευκαλίωνος. |181 Δευκαλίων δ' ἐμὲ τίκτε  
|182 καὶ Ἰδομενῆα ἄνακτα· |182 ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήεσσι κορωνίσιν Ἴλιον εἶσω |183 ὄχεθ' ἄμ' Ἀτρεΐδῃσιν·  
|184 ἐμοὶ δ' ὄνομα κλυτὸν Αἴθων, |184 ὀπλότερος γενεῆ· ὁ δ' ἄμα πρότερος καὶ ἀρείων.

|172 There’s a land called Crete, in the middle of the sea that looks like wine. |173 It’s beautiful and fertile, surrounded by the waves, and the people who live there |174 are so many that you can’t count them. They have 90 cities. |175 Different people speak different languages, all mixed together. |176 There are Eteo-Cretans, those great-hearted ones. And Cydonians. |177 There are

<sup>81</sup> Levaniouk (2011:105).



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