

Aristeas and the Cyzicene

George Huxley

IN DESCRIBING migrations of Scythians, Cimmerians, and other Asiatic peoples, Herodotus mentions that one of his sources is the poet Aristeas, son of Caystrobios of Proconnesus (4.13.1). The wondrous career of the poet caught the fancy of Herodotus, who reported what he heard in Proconnesus and Cyzicus (4.14.1) and at Metapontum (4.15.1). Here we are concerned with a small problem in the Proconnesian part of the well-known tale.

Aristeas, says Herodotus, was a citizen of high birth in Proconnesus. He entered a fuller's shop there and gave up the ghost. The fuller closed his shop and went to fetch the kinsfolk. Word spread about the city that Aristeas was dead, but the story was denied by a man of Cyzicus who had lately sailed over to Proconnesus from Artace; he protested that he had met Aristeas, who was on his way to Cyzicus; moreover the two travellers had conversed together. When the shop was opened, there was no Aristeas, dead or alive. Later, in the seventh year, Aristeas reappeared in Proconnesus, where he composed his poem, the *Arimaspea*, relating the marvellous things he had seen and heard during his wanderings beyond the Euxine. Thereafter he disappeared for a second time; but some two hundred and forty years later, according to the estimate of Herodotus, Aristeas manifested himself to the Metapontines, first as a raven in the company of Apollo and then as himself; in his own guise he ordered the Metapontines to build an altar to Apollo and to set up a statue of Aristeas the Proconnesian (4.14.1–15.4).

In a classic article on Asiatic shamanism Meuli argued that among the legendary powers of Aristeas was a capacity for marvellously rapid travel. Concerning the Cyzicene's protest at Proconnesus that Aristeas was not dead, Meuli wrote, "und als man in der Stadt schon vom Tod des Aristeas geredet hätte, wäre ein Mann aus Kyzikos eben von Artake hergekommen und hätte steif und fest behauptet, er sei dem Aristeas auf der Strasse von Artake nach Kyzikos begegnet und habe mit ihm gesprochen."¹ Consistently with this interpretation of Herodotus, Meuli referred to the miraculously swift

¹ K. Meuli, "Scythica," *Hermes* 70 (1935) 121–176, esp. 157f.

journey of Aristeas from Proconnesus to Artace, that is, to “die wunderbare Schnelligkeit” of his travel before the meeting with the Cyzicene on the road between Artace and Cyzicus.

A slightly different interpretation of Herodotus was given by J. D. P. Bolton.² He argued as follows. “Herodotus states that he heard the story of Aristeas’ first disappearance and reappearance from the Proconnesians and *Cyzicenes*. It is a reasonable conjecture that the Cyzicene contribution was the man of Cyzicus who met the ‘dead’ Aristeas on the mainland, and that Herodotus himself has combined this with a Proconnesian account—of the corpse which vanished from the fuller’s shop—in a manner dramatically effective though chronologically absurd, for logic demands that the Cyzicene had left the mainland before the death, if he was to arrive in Proconnesus, a good four hours’ voyage from Artace, just after it had been announced.” Bolton also remarked that “it is not so much the speed of Aristeas’ journey from Proconnesus to the mainland as the speed of the Cyzicene’s in the reverse direction which is really anomalous.”³

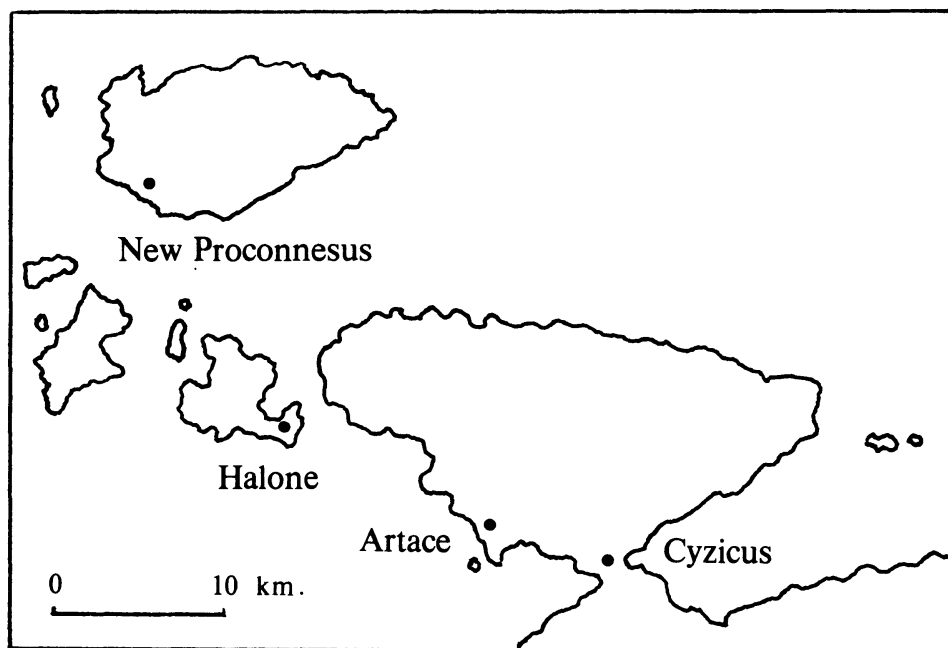
Before Herodotus is agreed to have dramatized a tale which in itself is sufficiently remarkable, it is necessary to look again at what he states. The meeting of the Cyzicene with Aristeas happened before the journey of the latter as far as the Issedonians; so it would be surprising if he had already, prior to his instructive journey, acquired a shamanistic power of bilocation or rapid travel. Not only shamans can be mistakenly supposed to be dead. What Herodotus says is that according to the tale told in Proconnesus and in Cyzicus, Aristeas died in the fuller’s shop but later met the Cyzicene coming from Artace; Aristeas told the Cyzicene that he was on the way to Cyzicus (or the Cyzicene inferred in the course of their conversation that Cyzicus was the destination of Aristeas): *ἐς ἀμφιβασίας τοῖσι λέγουσι ἀπικνέεσθαι ἄνδρα Κυζικηνὸν ἤκουτα ἐξ Ἀρτάκης πόλιος, φάντα συντυχεῖν τέ οἱ ἰόντι ἐπὶ Κυζίκου καὶ ἐς λόγους ἀπικέσθαι* (4.14.2).⁴

There is nothing in the text of Herodotus about the two travellers having met on the road from Artace to Cyzicus. The Cyzicene was coming from Artace, and the two men could have met in the streets of Proconnesus or in the harbour of that city; they could even have exchanged a few words near the harbour of Proconnesus as they passed afloat. The interval between the apparent death of Aristeas and the protests of the Cyzicene in Proconnesus was not so much as

² *Aristeas of Proconnesus* (Oxford 1962) 133.

³ *Supra* n.2: 200 n.13.

⁴ For *ἐπὶ* with genitive meaning motion *towards* in Herodotus see J. E. Powell, *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Oxford 1938) 130 s.v. *ἐπὶ* I.i.



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four hours; it may be have been much less. Thus there was nothing miraculous about the meeting, and there is no need to follow Bolton in distinguishing a Cyzicene component of the legend from a Proconnesian; Herodotus treats the two sources as one, since they were in agreement.

A consequential problem now arises. Where was the Proconnesus whither the Cyzicene came from Artace? Bolton's reference to "a good four hours' voyage" from Artace shows that he had in mind the island called Proconnesus, whose marble quarries gave its name to the Sea of Marmara. The sailing distance from Artace through the channel between Halone and the Cyzicene peninsula to Proconnesus town in the southwest of the island is about thirty kilometers. With regard to the island and the quarries Pliny (*H.N.* 5.32.44) remarks: *insulae in Propontide ante Cyzicum Elaphonnesus, unde Cyzicenum mar-*

mor, eadem Neuris et Proconnesus dicta. secuntur Ophiusa, Acanthus, Phoebe, Scopelos, Porphyrione, Halone cum oppido, Delphacie, Polydora, Artacaeon cum oppido (1.427.11–15 Mayhoff). However, Strabo distinguishes ‘Old Proconnesus’ from the Proconnesus of his own time with its city and quarry celebrated for its white stone: ἐν δὲ τῷ παράπλῳ τῷ ἀπὸ Παρίου εἰς Πρίαπον ἢ τε παλαιὰ Προκόνησός ἐστι καὶ ἡ νῦν Προκόνησος (13.1.16 [588]). Of possible candidates for Old Proconnesus by far the strongest is Halone (Paşaliman). Scylax (94 [GGM I 68]) after mentioning (new) Proconnesus states that there is another island, Elaphonnesus, with a good harbour; he adds that the Proconnesians work the land in it. The Elaphonnesus of Scylax best fits Halone, which has a fine harbour with good shelter from the winds.⁵

If ‘Old Proconnesus’ is placed in Halone, the stages of Greek settlement in the Marmara islands become clearer: as Leaf pointed out,⁶ the supposition that Halone is ‘Old Proconnesus’ implies that the island was a stepping-stone in settlement outward from Cyzicus. Settlers went first from Cyzicus to ‘Old Proconnesus’ and thence carried the name to new Proconnesus. After new Proconnesus itself, Halone is the most fertile of the islands off Cyzicus; and there are ancient remains to match the *Halone cum oppido* of Pliny.⁷ Accordingly we infer that ‘Old Proconnesus’ lay in Halone.

Aristeas reappeared at Metapontum two hundred and forty years after his final departure from Proconnesus, according to Herodotus’ estimate. On this reckoning, if Herodotus was in Metapontum about 440 B.C., Aristeas flourished about 680 B.C. or even earlier. An early seventh-century Aristeas is not a historical impossibility, since late Geometric pottery of that epoch has been reported from Cyzicus,⁸ and it is now clear that Milesians were beginning to come to the Propontis by 700 at the latest. Aristeas himself is best connected with Old Proconnesus: he is likely to have been among the earliest settlers, because his father’s name, Caystrobius, indicates that he was born, or at least conceived, in Ionia—possibly at the festival of the Ephesia held beside the Cayster.⁹ Thus the Cyzicene who insisted

⁵ W. Leaf, *Strabo on the Troad* (Cambridge 1923) 90.

⁶ *Supra* n.5.

⁷ See n.12 *infra*.

⁸ Concerning early Greek settlement in the Propontis see J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas*² (London 1980) 240f; for a report of early seventh century pottery from Cyzicus, E. Akurgal, *Ancient Ruins and Civilizations of Turkey* (Istanbul 1978) 47.

⁹ The suffix *-βιος* is a reflex of the Hittite and Luwian *-piya* and *Piya-*, frequent in Anatolian compound names, and meaning ‘given by’ or ‘-given’. See the discussion by E. Laroche, *Les noms des Hittites* (Paris 1966) 317–19.

that Aristeas was alive did not have to travel all the way from Artace to new Proconnesus. He came across from Artace to Old Proconnesus in the isle of Halone.

Results can now be gathered. (1) The miraculous element in the Proconnesian and Cyzicene story about Aristeas was his recovery from death. (2) There is nothing shamanistic in the meeting between Aristeas and the Cyzicene visitor who came over from Artace. (The tale implies neither praeternatural rapidity of travel nor a capacity for bilocation. If Aristeas learned about shamans—from the Issedonians, for instance, who were the most remote of his informants [4.13.1]—or was initiated as a shaman, his knowledge was acquired after his first departure from home.)¹⁰ (3) The hypothesis that Halone is Old Proconnesus well suits the textual and geographical evidence.¹¹ (4) Aristeas can be dated early in the seventh century, and despite the lack of archaeological evidence for the date of the earliest Greek settlements in Old and new Proconnesus he is fittingly placed in the earlier of the two—that is, in Halone.¹²

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¹⁰ What Pindar said about Aristeas is not clear (fr.271 S.-M.), but the Proconnesian belongs with other early Greek shaman-like persons, such as Hermetimus of Clazomenae (M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* [Oxford 1983] 149). The word *shaman* originated in Siberia among the Evenki people, who were known to their western neighbours, the Samoyeds, as Tungus. Today the Nenets still use a form of the word Tungus to denote the Evenki: see J. Janhunen, "The Tungus Peoples and the Conquest of Siberia," in *Altaistic Studies*, G. Jarring and S. Rosén, edd. (Stockholm 1985) 73–77. The name Tungus passed into Russian, and so the Evenki word *samân* is conventionally called Tungusian (as in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Shaman").

¹¹ There is a typically acute discussion of ancient literary evidence about islands off Cyzicus by A. Andrewes in *JHS* 102 (1982) 23–25. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.vv. Ἀλώνη and Προκόνησος, gives no help with the problem of Old Proconnesus. The entry s.v. Βέσβικος (pp.165.10–166.6M.) includes a fragment of Diogenes the Cyzicene (*FGrHist* 474 F2); the text is corrupt, but a Proconnesus and Halone are distinguished.

¹² F. W. Hasluck's account of the Marmara islands in *JHS* 29 (1909) 6–18 is still valuable; a description of Halone, which can be supposed to have kept its name since antiquity, is included (15–17). In the southeast of the island of Halone a Hellenic *enceinte* runs down to the sea on either side of the hamlet of Khoukklia. The polygonal walls are almost certainly those of Old Proconnesus. Ancient walls and other remains at Khoukklia in southeastern Halone are also described by M. I. Gedeon, *Προκόνησος* (Constantinople 1895) 28f; the archaic funerary inscription of Mandron found there shows that the settlement at Khoukklia already existed in pre-classical times.