

Papers presented within the framework of the Project
SHLABO. SHAPING BOUNDARIES. ETHNICITY AND GEOGRAPHY
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AREA (FIRST MILLENNIUM BC)

To the memory of Federicomaria Muccioli

SHLABO. Shaping boundaries. Ethnicity and geography in the Eastern Mediterranean area (First Millennium BC) is a two-year Project, funded by the University of Verona. Luisa Prandi and Simonetta Ponchia are scientific directors, and supervisors of the post-doctoral fellows Fabrizio Gaetano and Silvia Gabrieli.

The Project aims to analyse the formation of Greek identity, the first western one, at the time of the contacts with the Near East during the First millennium BC. Specific object is the analysis of the interactions between the Siro-Mesopotamian, Levantine and Aegean worlds that took place along the coastal region extending from Bosphorus to the Levant.

The project focuses on this East/West interface area and on the political, economic, cultural or artistic aspects of the interactions that there took place; it aims at identifying times, spaces, and reasons for the construction and definition of boundaries and separation lines – natural or ethnic - and at evaluating the actual functionality of these boundaries as dividing and/or communication spaces, with the purpose to verify the validity of the interpretative models in the specific historical context of political and intercultural relationships.

These areas provide a rich and composite mass of data, including those emerging from the most recent discoveries; they stimulate a reconsideration of the historical dynamics of interactions in the framework of a renewed methodological approach, which imposes to abandon one-sided perspectives, strictly Greek or Oriental, to undertake a truly comprehensive analysis and comparison of the documentation.

A special focus on Anatolian area is the first outcome of the joint research. Four papers exploring the frame of the modern studies concerning the relationships between different people, the actual significance of one of the most cited boundaries and two cases study connected by the relevance of the local traditions and the mixing of Greek and non-Greek elements.

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THE THRACIAN BOSPORUS BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA
IN FACT AND FICTION (II/I MILLENNIUM BC)

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1. Introduction

The Bosphorus channel, together with the Hellespont, occupies a special place as a case study within the *SbaBo* project.¹ This project has been devoted to exploring the significance of some conventional border areas in the geographical space, between Europe and Asia, where Near Eastern kingdoms and Greek cities were getting closer and closer. There are innumerable reference to the Bosphorus' role as a boundary between Europe and Asia, in ancient authors, and therefore so are the reference in this sense by modern scholars, often almost of formulaic type. As a result, the Bosphorus appears to have played a fundamental role in the definition of the boundaries between the Ancient Near Eastern and Greek worlds.

However, its mention by writers of various ages reveals the existence of mental maps which are neither always the same nor simple. For example, Europe and Asia are perceived as two different continents nowadays, but the European and Asiatic banks of the Bosphorus belong not only to the same country, Turkey, but also to the same city, Istanbul. The territory of this town encompasses a couple of Greek *poleis* located at the mouth of the channel, Byzantium and Chalcedon.

In antiquity the channel of Bosphorus had two meanings, as far as the morphology, culture and ethnicity are concerned: one longitudinal and the other transversal. The channel allowed the Propontis and the Pontus Euxinus to communicate. The Greek pilot-books (*periploi*) separately describe the coasts of Bosphorus, at the beginning and at the end of a journey through the Pontus Euxinus² making very clear that the Bosphorus was also the area of greatest proximity between the

1. This paper also builds on my conclusions in Prandi 2019.

2. Cf. Lebreton 2016, 70-71, about the periplus of Pontus Euxinus: the Asian side of the Bosphorus lies at the beginning of the itinerary and the European one at the end.

two continents,³ together with and even more than the Hellespont.⁴ This area was well known and employed over the centuries as a ferrying point.⁵ I devote Par. 2 to these topics, hoping to offer some original suggestions.

Instead, Par. 3 concerns a topic which in my opinion has been often neglected, perhaps because most scholars have so far focused their attention on the commercial and economic importance of the Bosphorus. I will examine the name, or better the names, employed to define the channel in ancient times. These names require some explanation because they conceal something about the *forma mentis* of those who invented them.

2. The Bosphorus as a separator: some clarifications

A full overview of the passages where ancient writers say that the Bosphorus separates Europe from Asia could only be tedious, redundant and not very useful. Likewise, the Greek-Persian wars had a role in defining the Straits as a frontier between two opposite worlds and ways of life which is universally acknowledged.⁶ So, all the texts which refer to these wars and are characterized by interpretation made *a posteriori* are not profitable. Suffice it to remember that the Hellespont was not a boundary when Xerxes crossed it together with his army, but the Greeks considered it as a limit that the Persian king dared to cross.⁷ The beginning of the fifth Century is a *terminus ante quem* which we must go back in time.

First of all, I shall take into account the erection of the stelae by Darius at the time of his expedition against the Scythians in 514 BC. This act may appear the most concrete memory of the crossing of the Bosphorus from one side to another and at a same time it could represent a boundary marker.

Then I will provide an overview of the Greek settlements in the Straits area by following the history of Byzantium like a *fil rouge*. Some well-known passages of Herodotus will also be useful, as they sometimes show a *forma mentis* still independent from the reading of the Persian wars as a clash between freedom and slavery.

3. Cf. Podossinov 2013, 3 and Zyromsky – Hatlas 2013, 173, Bosphorus is the narrowest point between the continents and is useful for a passage, therefore it joins rather than separating.

4. An overview of the measurements of the channels:

Measurements	Hellespont	Bosphorus
Length	62 km. ca.	32 km. ca.
Width	1250 m. max	700-3000 m.
Depth	60 m. med / 100 m. max	30-120 m.

5. Cf., among others, Her. 7. 33 and 174; Xen. *Anab.* VII 1.1 and 7; Plin. *NH*, VI 1 and *infra*, fn. 32.

6. Cf. in any case Lebreton 2016, 75-76, because he investigates this subject in relation to the representation of the Straits; his research is a continuation of mine, to some extent, from a chronological perspective.

7. Cf. Dan 2015, 226-227 and *infra* §2b.

2a. *The stelae of king Darius*

Herodotus says that Darius had two inscribed stelae of white marble erected on the Bosphorus, one engraved in Assyrian and the other in Greek, where he reported the names of all the nations that were in his army, and pauses to remember their fate (IV 87. 1-2). The Byzantians later carried them into their city and used them to build the altar of Artemis *Orthosia*. A stele inscribed with Assyrian characters was left near the temple of Dionysus.⁸

The Persian initiative can be examined from different points of view. Bilingual lists of people subject to the Great king and the reuse by the inhabitants of Byzantium indicate that the stelae were put up on the European side of the channel.⁹ However, Herodotus himself says that many Greek cities of that area were already ruled by pro Persian tyrants.¹⁰ So, we can suppose that the stelae were a monumental vision, so to speak, of the starting point of the expedition,¹¹ being placed in the same place where the king reviewed his army. The stelae were less likely the marker of a point of arrival, following Darius' passing of a border. Crossing the Bosphorus may correspond to the overcoming of a natural limit on the way to the Scythia¹² rather than a momentous step outside of the territory of the empire. We cannot indeed overlook Darius' expectations for the success of the expedition, namely the possibility of increasing the extension of the Persian empire by including the Scythian territory. The failure of the expedition is mirrored in the destiny of the stelae, originally intended for the immortality but actually soon removed.¹³

Moreover, the erection of a stele by the king did not necessarily coincide with the identification of a place full of spatial meanings. This can be demonstrated by another initiative of Darius, reported in more detail by Herodotus and belonging to the same chronological and geographical context, i.e. the stopping of the troops at the sources of river Tearus in Thrace (IV 91). The king had a stele erected there too, with an inscription extolling the goodness of those waters and specifying that he was leading the army against the Scythians as the king of Persia and of all the *epeiros*.¹⁴ Since nothing allows us to consider the Tearus as a significant border element for the Persians, this inscription expresses Darius' point of view, especially through the final title: the king was committed to expanding his domains and the word *epeiros* indicated their progressive growth.¹⁵

8. Cf. Prandi 2020, 32-34, for other details and the chronological frame.

9. Cf. Corcella 1993, 303; West 2013, 122; Lerner 2017, 8. Loukopoulou 1989, 106 prefers the Asiatic side.

10. Cf. Her. 4. 138. 1-2.

11. Cf. Rung – Gabelko 2019, who hypothesize a large-scale memorial. The scholars offer a very good presentation, with plates, of the old Persian inscription found at Phanagoreia and an exhaustive overview of the issues raised (91-99), favouring the idea that the inscription may be a fragment of the stelae erected by Darius.

12. Cf. West 2013, 122.

13. Cf. Grethlein 2009, 208-209. However, her suggestion that a relationship existed between the bilingual stelae and the European and Asiatic sides of the Bosphorus, although attractive, appears to me as depending on a conventional view of the channel. Greek speakers also lived on the Asiatic side.

14. Cf. again Grethlein 2009, 208 fn. 43.

15. Cf. Gaetano 2020, 78-83, who suggests to rule out the meaning of continent.

2b. *The Straits, separators between Asia and Europe?*

A map of the Greek settlements in the Hellespont area from the coasts of the Propontis up to the mouth of the Bosphorus and then to the coasts of the Pontus Euxinus, returns a picture of lively initiative. An evident common feature of this expansion is that, despite the various colonial matrices and the tendency to constitute peculiar areas of influence (Megarian, Milesian *etc.*), the settlements were indifferently located on shores that could be defined European and Asian in a geographical way. Consequently, it does not seem to me an adequate methodology to apply the modern WSA to the Straits area considering it a ‘contested periphery’.¹⁶ In fact, it was the whole of those settlements to be perceived as a periphery rather than the Bosphorus or Hellespont in particular. It is also far from easy to demonstrate that for the Greeks they were disputed areas or to identify the contenders from time to time. It is instead interesting to note that, to varying degrees, all the Greeks of those *poleis* were united by the need to find a *modus vivendi* with the non-Hellenic people close to them.¹⁷ This is a situation in which the Bosphorus, and Hellespont, are crossing points rather than elements of separation.¹⁸

We cannot, however, neglect the evident awareness, for instance in some passages of Herodotus, of the existence of an European and an Asian shore in the area of the Straits, which act as geographical markers to narrate crossings, especially of armies and mostly in the Hellespont area.¹⁹ One of these passages deserves specific attention, also because it still concerns the age of Darius’ Scythian expedition and seems to reflect a Persian perspective. Herodotus says that the king, on his way back from Thrace, arrives to Sestus and then crosses to Asia, leaving Megabazus as his general in Europe (IV 143.1). The terms Asia and Europe in this passage are essentially a choice of Herodotus and nothing proves that they reflect the lexicon of Darius. However, the task assigned to Megabazus, and later to Otanes, to keep under Persian control the areas of the north-western bank of the Straits shows without doubt that they did not represent a border of the empire but were included in it.

So, these two moments – the erection of the stelae on the Bosphorus with the review of the troops on occasion of the departure of the Scythian expedition, and the creation of a command on ‘European’ territories following the return – are mutually connected and signify a rejection, or an overcoming, of the idea that the waterway between the Aegean Sea and the Pontus Euxinus may represent a political or ethnic border.

To this Herodotean passage we can add a detail from Strabo, who is notorious for relying on Homer, thus representing a precious source of information particularly sensitive to preclassical

16. Cf. Heuck Allen 2007 who applies the *world-system analysis* to the Straits area. Her paper, which also covers the modern age, and is not an in-depth investigation, lingers more on the Hellespont than on the Bosphorus and does not include many Greek cases, focusing more on the well-known rather than on the meaningful ones (Heuck Allen 2007, 160-161).

17. Thracian toponyms like Byzantium, Selymbria or Mesambria can suggest it. Cf. Dana 2016, esp. 60-67. Cf. also *infra*, fn. 38.

18. A tendency to curb the number of cities on the banks of the channels can be ascribed to the morphology of the territory and the politics of the main *poleis* (Sestus and Abidus on the Hellespont; Byzantium and Chalcedon on the Bosphorus).

19. Cf. for ex. 4.143; 6.33; 7.20, 33, 174.

ways of thinking. Strabo says that the work of Homer does not reflect a division of the earth into continents, since at his time such a division did not exist yet (12 3.27).²⁰ A specific case of this absence, and pertinent to the area of the Straits, is the difference between geomorphological and political readings of a same territory: the domain of the Trojan leader Asius, which included the two banks of the Hellespont, near Sestus and Abidus (Hom. Il. 2.838; Strab. 13 1.22).²¹

Moreover, the history of the relations between the Greek settlements on the Straits in the decades following the Persian wars offers several *a posteriori* confirmations that the Straits did not represent political or ethnic elements of separation. When a border between the Athenian and Persian spheres of influence was established, around the middle of the fifth Century BC,²² their exclusion is very evident. Although the Athenian interpretation of the Persian invasion had emphasized the Hellespont as frontier between Asia and Europe, the aim of the so-called Peace of Callia was to annex the Greeks settled on the coasts of Asia Minor, as well as those from the coasts of the northern Aegean and from the islands. Considering the Hellespont and the Bosphorus as parts of a border line suitable for Athenian hegemony would have been counterproductive. The orientation of the new border, a fully land one, was therefore north/south, from the Cyanean islands in Pontus to the Chelidonian islands and Phaselis in Lycia.²³

Further elements may come from the events of the Greek city of Byzantium and especially from its network of relationships with some other Greek cities.²⁴ These are Perinthus, Selymbria, Chalcedon and Cyzicus on the Propontis, and Heraclea, Callatis and Histria in the Pontus.²⁵ Their positions on either European or Asian shores do not appear to be important element for establishing borders. Of more interest is the construction and preservation of a *pereia* by the Byzantians: during the third Century BC, they acquired the *Hieron* on the Asian bank of the Bosphorus, gaining also control on overseas territories overlooking the southern shore of the Propontis, such as the peninsula of Yalova, the district of Trygleia, and the area of Lake Dascylitis.²⁶ Byzantium clearly looked far beyond the channel.

These guidelines in the foreign policy of Byzantium are well evident during the Classic and then Hellenistic ages, the periods following the long-lasting propaganda connected to the Persian wars. This propaganda included the theme of king Xerxes crossing the Hellespont, which was represented as the border between Asia and Europe. As a result, before the fifth Century the Straits might not represent a real frontier between peoples.

20. Strabo aims at justifying the poet, blamed for geographical ignorance or carelessness by Apollodorus of Athens and Demetrius of Scepsis. Despite this and although he deals with the Tanais river, it seems to me that the lack of a division between the continents may also affect my comments here. Confirmation of what Strabo writes can be found in the *TLG*, because boundaries or geographical separator between East and West are not mentioned within the Homeric poems. On this topic cf. Gaetano 2021.

21. Cf. again Gaetano 2021 with more details.

22. Cf. Prandi 2019, 74.

23. Cf. Isocr. *Paneg.* 118.7; *Areop.* 80.12; *Panath.* 59; Demosth. *De falsa leg.* 273; Lyc. *Leocr.* 72-3; Diod. 12.4.5; Plut. *Cim.* 13.4-5; Sud. K 1620.

24. Prandi 2020 is the first result of my interests for the relationships between Europe and Asia and the formation of boundaries, exp. 165-169.

25. Cf. again Prandi 2020, 85-89 and 137-140 about the related events.

26. Cf. Polyb. 4.50.2 and 4, and Prandi 2020, 142-145 with all details.

3. The name of the channel

The Greek term *Bosporos* was extensively used to denote the waterway between the Propontis and the Pontus Euxinus. We do not know any evidence of the existence of a name in Anatolic languages or in Phrygian, that is in a context which is ethnically different and chronologically earlier.²⁷ *Bosporos* is a Greek compound,²⁸ which our sources unanimously explained as the crossing of a bovine animal,²⁹ In this regard, ancient writers offer two interpretations.³⁰ On one side, there is the myth of Io, the woman whom Zeus loved and turned into a heifer; Hera sent a gadfly to sting her continuously, driving her to wander the world and ultimately to cross the channel towards Asia.³¹ On the other side, we find references to real and anonymous bovinds which for various reasons cross it.³² In any case, the name Bosphorus suggests the idea that the mouth of the channel

27. I thank Federico Giusfredi for feedback on this topic. The only toponym found in this area is Maša, to define a land perhaps later occupied by Mysians, Cf. Del Monte – Tischler 1978, 264-265 and Wittke 2004, 185-190. On Mysians and the Bosphorus cf. also *infra*.
28. Cf. fn. 38 *infra* about the ties with the Thracian dialect.
29. As the Βόσπορος entry, Liddell-Scott at has “wrongly expld. by the Greeks as Ox-ford”, without reporting a different translation. Within the compound the spelling of the first element raises some problems. However, the second element, which is the most interesting one, does not. (Cf. *infra*, fn. 32, for a different etymology provided by Phylarchus). Even the toponym Βούπορθμος, in Paus. 2.34.8-9 who mentions a peninsula near Corinth, deserves attention. Cf. Kretschmer 1938, 29 and Chantraine 1968, 187, who take it as a synonym of Bosphorus. Cf. *infra* about the use of the word *porthmōs* referring to Bosphorus.
30. I do not take into consideration the passages where the word Bosphorus is reported without any attention to etymology. I cannot, however, pass over the fact that the toponym appears in Aeschylus, to our knowledge the first writer to mention it. Cf. Oberhammer 1899, 741. In two passages of the *Persae*, there is a very strong identification between the Hellespont, the place where Xerxes crossed, and the Bosphorus, which was crossed by Darius when he campaigned against the Scythians (though this war is not mentioned in the tragedy). Atossa - μηχαναῖς ἐξέυξεν Ἑλλης πορθμόν, ὥστ' ἔχειν πόρον. / Δαρεῖος - καὶ τόδ' ἐξέπραξεν, ὥστε Βόσπορον κλῆσαι μέγαν; (722-723, “By a clever device he yoked the Hellespont so as to gain a passage. Darius - What! Did he succeed in closing the mighty Bosphorus?”). Darius - ὅστις Ἑλλήσποντον ἱρὸν δοῦλον ὡς δεσμώμασιν / ἤλπισε σχῆσειν ῥέοντα, Βόσπορον ῥόν θεοῦ (745-746, “for he conceived the hope that he could by shackles, as if it were a slave, restrain the current of the sacred Hellespont, the Bosphorus, a stream divine”). Cf. at least Garvie 2009, 287 and 296 for some comments. Still useful in my perspective is Cahen 1925 on Aeschylus' purposes. Cf. also Dan 2015, 195-199, who stresses that the Bosphorus and the Hellespont were perceived as a single waterway.
31. Cf. Apoll. II 1.3; Dion. Byz. 7; Arrian. 156F20. I do not take into consideration passages without any link between the toponym and Io. Cf. nevertheless *infra*, fn. 37, again for Aeschylus. The link between Io and Egypt, final destination of her wanderings, actually appears the most interesting detail about this figure. Cf. for ex. Dowden – Livingstone 2011, exp. 462-463 and 509-510. A toponym *Bous* on the Asiatic side has already been variously explained in antiquity and I do not find it useful for my purposes. In fact, Polyb. 4.43, describing the strong and changeable stream of the Bosphorus, says that a point where its direction changes is called *Bous*, being the place where Io landed. May be Polybius is falling for a *lectio facillior*: he himself says that from there the stream points towards the European side, so that (in my opinion) a heifer would have some difficulty to reach the Asian bank. Instead, Dion Byz. 110 tells of a column, surmounted by a heifer statue and bearing an epigram. The writer says that the Athenian *strategos* Chares (fourth Century BC) built up this funerary monument for his lover and denies that the statue depicts Io. Likewise, Hesych. Ill. 390F7.29-30. Cf. the elements gathered by Cordano 2009 and Kaldellis 2016, in the commentary to Hesychius, about other evidence.
32. Ephor. 70F156 reports an intricate rationalizing of the Io's myth (at least according to *Schol. ad Apoll. Rhod.* II 168): a real cow takes her place and finally names the channel. Cf. Jacoby 1926, 82, who provides

could be crossed from a side to the other (although we still need to prove that an animal can easily ford it),³³ and that it was a point of passage.

Dionysius of Byzantium, a later writer (second Century AD) who wrote mostly about the Bosphorus and its traditions well illustrates it.³⁴ Imagining a travel along the shores of the channel, in his work *Anaplous* he provides aetiologies of the toponyms he encounters. Dionysius mentions the *Bosporion* promontory, where Byzantium lies, examining the toponym (7): he points out that some writers trace back this name to a bovine animal harassed by a gadfly which crossed the *poros* just there, also observing that others connect it to the myth of Hera hunting Io who from there passed into Asia. Dionysius believes that only a *theioteros* story may deserve credit,³⁵ and that an *epichorion pathos* could not have named two different places called Bosphorus, the Cimmerian and Thracian one; something more important than a *topike historia* had therefore to exist. This understatement of a local tradition tied to the promontory of Byzantium in favour of a Panhellenic myth could appear questionable.³⁶ Moreover, traces of a connection between Io and the Cimmerian Bosphorus are confined to Aeschylus.³⁷

However, Dionysius highlights some useful elements. Not even in the myth the Bosphorus is perceived as a separator, because Io gives a name to the channel by crossing it, not by traveling along it. The use of the term *poros* to refer to a channel crossed by bovine animals (a real animal or someone being transformed into an animal) is a very common word but at the same time it is a recurring toponym, without links to particular episodes. All the names used for the channel are Greek, as they felt it was their right to give it a name.³⁸

a critical opinion about Ephorus, and Parker 2016, within the commentary of 70F156, who is less critical but, in my opinion, not persuasive. Phylarch 81F68 (quoted by *Ethym. Magnum s.v. Bosphoros*) links the name to the verb *speirein* and to the agricultural skills of the more cultivated people who lived outside the Pontus Euxinus. Cf. Landucci 2017 for some comments.

33. Cf. Chantraine 1968, 187, who borrows this idea from Kretschmer 1938, 29 but without further developments.
34. His *Anaplous Bosporou* is an etiologic itinerary along the banks of the channel and mentions many places connected to mostly mythical and only partly historical lore. Two thirds of this work have been preserved through a manuscript tradition, whereas the remaining third through a Latin paraphrasis by Pierre Gilles dating to the sixteenth Century AD. Cf. Dan 2008; Belfiore 2009, 67-97; Russell 2016, 21-24.
35. Dionysius defines *mythodesteron*, more mythical, the connection between the *Bosporion* cape and the Io's myth.
36. The Argonauts saga, where the heroes travel along the channel and open a route to the Pontus Euxinus, seems to provide a different meaning – proceeding along and not crossing – rather than some idea of separator or border. Cf. Russell 2016, 38-44, who places great emphasis on this myth but, in my opinion, he does not find elements to prove that the toponym Bosphorus was linked to the Argonauts by the Greeks.
37. Cf. Aeschyl. *Prom. Vincit.*, 732-735, where Prometheus predicts a way towards the Cimmerian Bosphorus to Io, saying that she will move from Europe to Asia in the future. Cf. Ruffell 2012, 38-40 and 96-98. Nothing in Eitrem 1917. However, Kaldellis 2016, while commenting on 390F7.8, emphasizes the evidence of Steph. Byz. s.v. *Bosphoros*, who says that Bosphorus is a city on the Cimmerian gulf and that this name, like the name of the *porthmôs*, comes from Io. Cf. Prandi forthcoming about these topics.
38. Cf. Kaldellis 2016 for comments on 390F7.8, and Russell 2016, 37, who borrow from Oberhammer 1899, 741-742, about Thracian linguistic roots then re-enacted by Greek speakers. Instead Wendel 1937, 348 hypothesizes a linguistic transformation of a Thracian name. (Cf. *supra*, fn. 32). Many toponyms of the Straits area show a Thracian origin, for ex. Byzantium, Selymbria, Mesambria (cf. *supra*, fn. 17) but this origin appears not so evident in the case of the Bosphorus. From the perspective of my research, it is

The mere connection between the channel and a bovid provides little satisfaction on the historical level, as well as dubious credibility on the practical one. However, unlike the Hellespont,³⁹ other Greek names with different features and more reliable are attested with reference to the Bosphorus. These names have in common references to historical events rather than to mythical stories.⁴⁰

The first evidence comes from Dionysius of Chalcis, a writer of uncertain date (he can be dated from the fourth to the second centuries BC),⁴¹ who wrote a work entitled *Ktiseis* (Foundations); Strabo quotes him in a passage on the Mysians and their settlement in Asia Minor (XII 4. 8).⁴² To Dionysius he attributes the statement τὰ κατὰ Χαλκηδόνα καὶ Βυζάντιον στενά, ἃ νῦν Θράκιος Βόσπορος καλεῖται, πρότερόν φησι Μύσιον Βόσπορον προσαγορεύεσθαι (“the strait at Chalcedon and Byzantium, now called the Thracian Bosphorus, was in earlier times called the Mysian Bosphorus”). The strait (*stena*) between Chalcedon and Byzantium is called by two ethnonyms, both non-Greek and mentioned in a clear chronological sequence: Mysian and, later, Thracian. Both names appear, so to speak, as an excess because Bosphorus still means “passage of a bovine animal”.

An echo of the name Mysian Bosphorus can be found in a fragment of the *Bithyniaka* of Arrian (156F20b),⁴³ where the sequence of ethnonyms is different from Dionysius of Chalcis: διὸ καὶ Βόσπορος λέγεται, οἶον βόδος πόρος τῆς ἐκείνης οἰστροπλήγος, περὶ ἧς Ἀρριανὸς οὕτω φησὶ: “πορθμὸς ὁ κατὰ Χαλκηδόνα καὶ Βυζάντιον, ὃ ποτε Μύσιος, διότι Μυσοὶ ἀντιπέραν ὤικουν ποτὲ τῆς Θράκιος, ὕστερον δὲ Βόσπορος ἐπὶ τῇ συμφορᾷ τῆς Ἰοῦς, ἦν κατὰ μῆνιν Ἥρας οἰσθηθεῖσαν εἰς τοὺς χώρους τούτους ἀφικέσθαι καὶ ταύτην διαπεραιώσασθαι οἱ μῦθοι

crucial to note that the toponym Bosphorus would be linked, even in the case of a Thracian language, to i. e. verbs such as *phero* or *peiro*, meaning “to carry” or “to cross”. Accordingly, Bosphorus would have a sense very near to “carrying” or “crossing”, typical of the Greek language. I thank Paola Cotticelli for useful information about this topic.

39. The “sea of Helle” also belongs to a mythical story but the sea is the place where the heroine falls down and die, without any geographical connotation. A previous name to refer to the Hellespont does not exist in our sources. Only a passage of Lucanus seems to refer to it: *qua pelago nomen Nepheleias abstulit Helle* (9.956). The Latin poet does not actually provide a different name and the verb *aufero* raises some doubts, cf. Stok 1999.
40. I am not suggesting the existence of an opposition between the categories of “historical” and “mythical”, because Greek sources record all the events belonging to the second millennium in a same way, that is, by quoting either the stories of the women beloved by Zeus or the migrations of non-Hellenic people. The first kind appears to us less historical than the second one, although not devoid of truth. Cf. the remarks of Griffiths 2011.
41. Cf. Engels 2015 for an exhaustive presentation of this writer and of the fragments we can attribute to him.
42. Cf. *infra*, fn. 47, about Strabo’s remarks, and fn. 49, about the migrations of the Mysians.
43. Preserved by Eustath. *ad Dion. Per.* 140. Jacoby put together in fragment 20 of Arrian a part *a*, borrowed from *Schol. ad Dion. Byz.* 7, and a part *b*, borrowed precisely from Eustathius. The scholion, at the end, also ascribes to Arrian, through the sentence τούτο καὶ Ἀρριανὸς λέγει ἐν τοῖς Βιθυνιακοῖς αὐτοῦ (Arrian states this in his *Bithyniaka*), what we can read in the passage of Dionysius of Byzantium which we have already taken into account (7). Dionysius however does not mention the crossing of non-Hellenic people and links the toponym Bosphorus to a real cow or to Io turned into a heifer. Part *b* of the fragment also quotes a number of different stories, which are discussed below. Arrian possibly provided a general overview of the stories related to the channel. Cf. Roller *forthcoming*, whom I thank for having let me know his commentary. For my part, I would observe that Eustathius seems to preserve a text which is closer to the original written by Arrian.

ἐποίησαν (“It is also said that the Bosphorus is named because it is the passage-way of a bull stung by a gadfly, concerning which Arrian says: “The strait between Chalcedon and Byzantium (which was once Mysian, since Mysians had lived on the other side from Thrace”), later became the Bosphorus because of the misfortunes of Io, who was driven mad by Hera’s wrath and having arrived at these lands was carried across it, as the myths record”). Arrian, who uses the word *porthmòs* to refer to the channel, has the sequence Mysian and then Bosphorus. Both writers agree in believing that the Mysians were the first to cross and name the channel.

A third non-Greek ethnonym appears in a puzzling fragment of Nymphis of Heraclea (432F11),⁴⁴ who says that ἰστορεῖν Ἀκαρίωνα, ὡς ἄρα Φρύγες διαπλευσαι βουλόμενοι τὸν πορθμὸν κατεσκεύασαν ναῦν ἔχουσαν ἐγκεχαραγμένην προτομήν ταύρου (“Acarion wrote that the Phrygians, wishing to sail across the strait, constructed a ship which had as a figurehead a bull”). There is no need for me to discuss the source, the unknown Acarion,⁴⁵ so I will focus on the twofold content. On one side, an attempt to rationalize the idea of the crossing animal, through a zoomorphic prow (a taurine protome) of the Phrygian ship that recalls an animal and can explain the name Bosphorus. On the other, there is a reference to a historical event, the passage of Phrygian people from one bank of the channel to the other.

Phrygians are also mentioned in F20b of Arrian, quoted above, but without any toponymic significance. According to a tradition, the Phrygians menaced by some enemy did follow a bovine crossing fearless and were safe.⁴⁶ Both Nymphis and Arrian use the word *porthmòs* to indicate the channel before the arrival of the Phrygians. Common words recurring in our accounts to define the Bosphorus – *stenà* in Dionysius of Chalcis, *porthmòs* in Nymphis and in Arrian, *poros* in Dionysius of Byzantium – show, in my opinion, that these writers needed clarity.

Various ethnic names, Mysians, Phrygians, Thracians, used in ancient sources are not without significance. Only to the adjective Thracian we could attribute a value which is mainly geographical, as the country is close to the channel. Instead, the adjectives Mysian and Phrygian seem to derive from distant memories. We can notice that the authors who refer the aforementioned information, without providing any commentary,⁴⁷ were certainly aware of the myth of Io. Unfortunately, we know them only indirectly.⁴⁸

The definition of Mysian Bosphorus inevitably recalls the catalogue of the great expeditions before the campaign of Xerxes recounted by Herodotus. It was precisely the Mysians and the Teucrians who led an expedition from Asia to Europe, before the war against Troy (VII 20. 2).⁴⁹

44. This quotation is in *Schol. Apoll. Rhod.* II 168, with the passage of Ephorus already discussed, cf. fn. 32. For a full treatment of Nymphis, cf. Billows 2016.

45. Jacoby 1943, 23 assumes that Acarion was a mistake for Charon (of Lampsacus). While commenting on Nymphis, Billows 2016 (to whom I refer for a *status quaestionis*) takes into account that possibility. Ceccarelli 2016 argues to the contrary while commenting on the F16 of Charon.

46. Cf. *supra*, fn. 43.

47. Strabo is the only exception because he relies on the passage of Dionysius of Chalcis, which he beefs up with a passage of Scylax of Caryanda in order to prove the existence of a relationship among Thracians, Mysians and Phrygians. Cf. also *infra*, fn. 49.

48. Cf. *Appendix*, with an overview of the quoted writers, the quoting writers and their ages.

49. Dionysius of Byzantium knows and relates the story of an invasion of Mysians and Teucrians before the Trojan war. He says that the crossing point was the locality of the Bosphorus called *Hestiai* (54) and alludes

The issue concerning their destination and the reason behind their displacement according to Herodotus is, from my perspective, marginal. More important is the information regarding a passage *kata Bosporon*. However, scholars argue on solid evidence that their direction was quite possibly the opposite, from Europe to Asia.⁵⁰

Another passage concerning the name of the channel which has not been taken into consideration until now is particularly worth mentioning. Apollodorus, a later writer (second Century AD) but who possibly attests to very ancient information, calls the channel (II 1. 3) *πόρον Θράκιον*, *νῦν δὲ ἀπ' ἐκείνης (scil. Io) Βόσπορον* (Thracian ford, now Bosporon after her). Apollodorus, not unlike Arrian, suggests a sequence of words – an ethnonym, Thracian, then “of the heifer” (*Bosporon*) – but he does not agree with him about the first one.

A sequence made of ethnonyms only, Mysian Bosporus and Thracian Bosporus, appears in Dionysius of Chalcis. Both Arrian and Apollodorus have instead a historic-mythical sequence and put, before the name derived from Io, a toponym matching with one of the ethnics terms in Dionysius, Mysian in Arrian and Thracian in Apollodorus. In the latter, like in Dionysius of Byzantium, the occurrence of *poros* (not *Bosporos*) to stress the passage of the channel is very noticeable. If compared to *stenà* and *porthmòs*, also proper words, the word *poros* is peculiar, as it is part of the compound *Bosporos*.⁵¹ To put it better, we may be facing a memory of the ground zero name, that is merely *poros* “passage, crossing”, from time to time declined as passage of Mysians, or Phrygians, or Thracians, or finally of the bovine/of the heifer.

In this framework, I would omit to discuss the problems related to the chronology of their displacements, to their settlements or to their possible kinship.⁵² I rather like to stress two facts. First, the link between the names of these people and the channel depends on the memory, preserved by the Greeks, of their displacements. Second, ancient writers usually refer to the inescapable turning point of the Trojan war to date their crossings.

These reflections suggest that the Thracian Bosporus seems to have mostly regarded, both in name and in fact, as a passageway rather than as a boundary. Our sources are late writers who retain ways of thinking typical of previous centuries. They also report elements which I already examined at the beginning of this paper. The Greek colonization of the Straits at the beginning of the first millennium BC included settlements without territorial limits. Later, the Greek cities from this area did not consider the channel as a limit to their areas of influence.

All the evidence examined leads to the conclusion that the creation of dividing lines between Europe and Asia did not pass through the Bosporus. The channel has always had a geographical

to their great conquests until Thessaly but he does not use this information to tie their names to the channel.

50. The very comprehensive and detailed commentary of Macan 1908, 30-32 is still useful. How – Wells 1912, 133-134 and now Vannicelli 2017, 328-329 follow him.

51. See also Oppian. *Hal.* I 617-619 (even though he is another late writer from second-third centuries AD), who names the Thracian Bosporus *Βοῶς Πόρον*, dividing the compound and stressing the second word.

52. Cf. Debord 2001, for an overview on the mobility of Mysians, and Wittke 2004, 229-231, on the complex migrations of the Phrygians. Cf. also the remarks of Özlem-Aytaçlar 2010, 507-508 about the Straits area and Dana 2016, 47-48 and 60-63, about the mingling with the Thracians, on the basis of onomastic elements belonging to the later periods.

significance, as Herodotus himself points out, and took on other meanings, both in political and propagandistic terms, only on the occasion and mainly as a result of the Persian invasion in 481-479 BC.

Appendix

The chronological table includes the names of the writers whose important passages concerning the Bosphorus have been analysed. The same mark (* ° ^) links the quoting author to the quoted one.

Age	Names					
IV BC	Dionysius of Chalcis*					
III BC		Nymphis [°]				
II BC						
I BC						
I AD			Strabo*	Schol.		
II AD			-Dionysius of Byzantium -Apollodorus -Arrian [^]	Apoll. Rhod. [°]		
III AD						
				Schol.		
				Dion. Byz. [^]		
XI AD						Eustathius [^]

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