

SEASIDE ALTARS OF APOLLO DELPHINIOS, EMBEDDED HYMNS, AND THE TRIPARTITE STRUCTURE OF THE HOMERIC *HYMN TO APOLLO**

Although recent and ongoing excavations of the sanctuary of Apollo Delphinios in Miletus have prompted archaeologists to discuss anew the aetiological references to the same god and his altar at the end of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*,¹ these discussions have yet to make any impact on literary scholars working on the poem itself.² Indeed, we now know that in archaic Miletus an altar of Apollo Delphinios was erected, as in the hymn, directly upon a sandy beach beside a harbour and was probably the focus, as in the hymn, of some kind of sacrificial ritual, before the annual procession to another famous Panhellenic oracle of Apollo at Didyma. These new revelations provide an incentive for returning to the somewhat puzzling details in the scene on the beach at Crisa in the Homeric *Hymn*, with its agrarian offering and meal (both of roasted barley) followed by a paeanic procession of musician and singers. I will argue that the Milesian parallels allow us to see more clearly that, like the Delian episode at the start of the Homeric *Hymn*, the events at Crisa seem to reflect a shorter hexametrical hymn originally composed for a seaside sanctuary at Crisa and then later adapted, again like the Delian section, by a poet intent on praising Apollo as a Panhellenic deity, whose most important place of worship was Delphi. Such an argument leads, finally, to a positive assessment

* Translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

¹ See e.g. A. Herda, 'Apollon Delphinios, das Prytaneion und die Agora von Milet', *AA* 1 (2005), 286–90; A. Herda, 'Apollon Delphinios – Apollon Didymeus: Zwei Gesichter eines milesischen Gottes und ihr Bezug zur Kolonisation Milets in archaischer Zeit', in R. Bol, U. Höckmann, and P. Schollmeyer (eds.), *Kult(ur)kontakte. Apollon in Milet/Didyma, Histria, Myus, Naukratis und auf Zypern* (Rahden, Germany, 2008), 51–60; and A. Herda, 'How to Run a State Cult: The Organization of the Cult of Apollo Delphinios in Miletos', in M. Haysom and J. Wallensten (eds.), *Current Approaches to Religion in Ancient Greece* (Stockholm, 2011), 75–7.

² Unremarked, for example, by N. Richardson, *Three Homeric Hymns. To Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite* (Cambridge, 2010), or in any of the essays collected in A. Faulkner (ed.), *The Homeric Hymns. Interpretative Essays* (Oxford, 2011).

of the recent suggestion that the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* does not have a bipartite structure (Delian–Delphic), as is usually assumed or argued, but rather a tripartite one (Delian–Delphic–Crisean) that organizes the poem into three hymnic movements: birth, oracle, priesthood.³

The new finds at Miletos

We have known for a long time that the sanctuary of Apollo Delphinios at Miletos, rebuilt in classical times after Persian devastation, was an open space in the *agora* bookended to the north and south by porticos and used as a place of assembly for the city's *ephebes* (youths about to enter full citizenship, often by undergoing military training), as well as a stepping-off point for an annual procession that traversed 18 kilometres from the centre of the city to Apollo's oracle at Didyma.⁴ One of the important features of this procession was, moreover, the performance along the way of paeans by the Molpoi ('dancers and singers') for at least seven different honorees: first for Hekate Propylaia at the gate of Miletos, and then in succession for Dynamis ('Power'), the Nymphs, Hermes Enkelados, Phylios, Keraiites ('Horned One?'), and Chares.⁵ The archaeologists have also long suggested that this paeanic procession from Miletos to the oracular shrine of Didyma generally follows the events near the end of the Homeric *Hymn*, where the Cretan sailors start out from the newly built altar of Apollo Delphinios, singing paeans as they march up to the equally famous oracle at Delphi.⁶ They have pointed, in addition, to an old Cretan connection to Miletos: the board of Milesian cult officials, who oversaw the oracle at Didyma and who were partially in charge of the procession of the Molpoi, were in fact called 'Kosmoi', a word that commonly designates

³ As recently argued by Richardson (n. 2), 9–13.

⁴ The detailed account of the procession takes up most of the so-called Molpoi Inscription, for which see J. E. Fontenrose, *Didyma. Apollo's Oracle, Cult, and Companions* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), 74–5; and V. B. Gorman, *Miletos, the Ornament of Ionia. A History of the City to 400 B.C.* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2001), 176–86, the latter for full text, English translation, and discussion. A. Herda, *Der Apollon-Delphinios-Kult in Milet und die Neujahrsprozession nach Didyma. Ein neuer Kommentar der sogenannten Molpoi-Satzung* (Mainz, 2006), provides the most recent and detailed archaeological commentary. His interpretation of the procession has generally been praised, although his idea that the procession took place during a new year festival has not persuaded many: see, e.g., R. Parker, 'Review: The Molpoi', *CR* 58 (2008), 178–80; and A. Chaniotis, 'The Molpoi Inscription: Ritual Prescription or Riddle?', *Kernos* 23 (2010), 375–9.

⁵ Herda (n. 4).

⁶ *Ibid.*

the board of magistrates who governed the city-states of Crete.⁷ But until very recently there was no evidence for any altar or sacrifice in the rectangular sanctuary of Apollo Delphinios at Miletos, which was, in turn, thought to be part of the urban centre of the city and mainly concerned with Milesian *ephebes* and their political life in the city. This political focus of the cult was, finally, connected closely with the epithet ‘Delphinios’, which historians now stress is not cognate with the Greek word for ‘dolphin’ but rather was the name of a pre-Greek male deity on Crete, who oversaw citizenship and politics, and originally had no connection with seafaring or dolphins.⁸

The recent excavations at Miletus, however, allow us to see for the first time that the parallels between the Milesian rites and the Crisaean narrative in the *Hymn to Apollo* are much closer than had previously been understood. Most importantly, archaeologists discovered that in earliest archaic phase of the city the Milesians did indeed erect a small altar⁹ in the centre of the Delphinion and (more importantly) that the foundations for this altar were placed directly on a sandy beach at the very edge of one of the city’s harbours. In short, the Milesian procession to Didyma began precisely like the procession of the Cretan sailors in the Homeric *Hymn*, at a small altar of Apollo Delphinios that originally rested on a sandy beach.¹⁰

In this light we should, moreover, underscore two additional and pertinent facts about the Milesians: first, in the late classical period they supplied the male priests to Apollo’s sanctuary at Didyma; and second, they claimed themselves to be descendants of Cretan settlers, a boast that has now been confirmed by the numerous Minoan artefacts that continue to be discovered at various places in and around Miletos.¹¹ This new evidence suggests that some truth may lie behind the tale, preserved in a late antique scholion, that a Cretan named

⁷ Fontenrose (n. 4), 60–1.

⁸ For the older scholarly view, see e.g. L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States, Volume 4* (Oxford, 1907), 145–8; and for the new, F. Graf, ‘Apollon Delphinios’, *MH* 36 (1979), 2–22, and Gorman (n. 4), 169–71. The folk etymology for ‘Delphinios’ presented by the Homeric poet is, in short, as erroneous as the one given for ‘Pythian’ earlier in the poem (372–74), for which see T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday, and E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (London, 1936), 251–2, for discussion.

⁹ The base of this altar is only 2 square metres in area.

¹⁰ Herda (n. 1 [2005]).

¹¹ See e.g. B. Niemeier and W. D. Niemeier, ‘The Minoans at Miletus’, in P. Betancourt, V. Karageorghis, R. Laffineur, and W. D. Niemeier (eds.), *Meletemata. Studies in Aegean Archaeology Presented to M.H. Wiener* (Liège, 1999); and A. M. Greaves, *Miletos. A History* (London, 2002), 65–9.

Miletus, exiled by King Minos, came to a small island off the coast of Anatolia named Oikous and that when he died his son buried him on another nearby island, which he named Miletus after his father.¹² Indeed, archaeologists can now show that the Milesian peninsula originally comprised at least two islands and that between the years 2000 and 1180 BCE these islands were colonized, first by the Minoans and then by the Mycenaeans.¹³ Finally, it is pertinent that, when the Milesians doubled the size of the Delphinion in early Hellenistic times, they did so in order to induct into their polity a thousand new Cretan immigrants, who were apparently chosen because Crete had allegedly supplied the original settlers of the area.¹⁴

We can lay out in tabular form the important parallels between the topography and annual rituals at Miletus and the events narrated in the hymn:

	Miletus	Hymn to Apollo
God	Apollo Delphinios	Apollo Delphinios
Rite	sacrifice on small altar built on a sandy beach (but no temple)	sacrifice on small altar built on a sandy beach (but no temple)
Procession	from altar to large oracular temple	from altar to large oracular temple
Priests at oracle	Milesians, whose ancestors were originally Cretan	Cretan sailors diverted by Apollo
Dancers	Molpoi ('dancers and singers'), who sing paeans	foot-stomping Cretans, who are inspired by a Muse to sing paeans
Cretans	city is founded by them; an influx of them in the Hellenistic period	altar is set up by them and they become the first priests at Delphi

These parallels suggest that the pattern of paeanic processions from a seaside altar of Apollo Delphinios to an important oracular shrine is a very old one. A fragment of a poem of Callimachus alludes, in fact,

¹² Scholion to Dionysus Periegetes 825.

¹³ M. Müllenhoff, A. Herda, and H. Brückner, 'Geoarchaeology in the City of Thales: Deciphering Palaeogeographic Changes in the Agora Area of Miletus', in T. Mattern and A. Vött (eds.), *Mensch und Umwelt im Spiegel der Zeit. Aspekte geoarcheologischer Forschungen im östlichen Mittelmeergebiet* (Wiesbaden, 2009); and H. Brückner, A. Herda, M. Müllenhoff, W. Rabbel, and H. Stümpel, 'On the Lion Harbour and Other Harbours in Miletos: Recent Historical, Archaeological, Sedimentological, and Geophysical Research', in R. Frederiksen and S. Handberg (eds.), *Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens 4* (Athens, 2014), 57–63.

¹⁴ Gorman (n. 4), 169–71.

to another local Milesian myth of this sort, which claimed that Apollo, after his birth on Delos, arrived at Miletus (also as a dolphin) and founded his own cult there as Delphinios, before moving on to create his famous oracle in Didyma.¹⁵ The paeanic processions also seem quite similar, especially because both are performed by adult professionals: at Crisa the Muse-inspired Cretan sailors (and soon to be cult officials) and at Miletus the guild of the Molpoi.¹⁶ This kind of performance is contrary to the more familiar practice in the pre-Hellenistic world, at least, where paeans were usually sung by amateur choruses of young men, usually of *ephebic* rank, who sang directly to Apollo (or later to Asclepius) and asked him to keep themselves and their city safe.¹⁷

One may think, perhaps, that the parallels tabulated above are not sufficiently close, because in the classical period Crisa was not a large and important city like Miletos, but this was not the case in the archaic period, when the hymn was composed. In fact, before Crisa was defeated and largely destroyed by the Amphictyonic League in the First Sacred War at the start of the sixth century BCE, it seems to have been a major port-city, which in the Iliadic catalogue of ships is mentioned among the Phocian *poleis* as ‘sacred Crisa’.¹⁸ To understand the historical context of the composition and performance of the Homeric *Hymn*, then, we must understand that archaic Crisa was a powerful *polis*, with important cults of its own, especially of Apollo Delphinios, and that it probably controlled access to the Delphic shrine and its priesthood in a manner quite similar to Milesian control of Didyma.¹⁹ Or, to put it another way: in order to understand both the Milesian rites and the Homeric narrative, we must take into account the dramatic caesura in the continuity of these cities, both of which were essentially destroyed in the late archaic period and then rebuilt in the classical: Miletus in grand scale and Crisa in small.²⁰

¹⁵ Callim. *Branchos* fr. 229, lines 12–13.

¹⁶ There is a textual problem at this point in the *Hymn*, where the Cretan singers are described; for full discussion, see below in the final section of this article.

¹⁷ C. A. Faraone, ‘An Athenian Tradition of Dactylic Paeans to Apollo and Asclepius: Choral Degeneration or a Flexible System of Non-Strophic Dactyls?’, *Mnemosyne* 64 (2011), 206–31.

¹⁸ Hom. *Il.* 2.520.

¹⁹ J. S. Clay, *The Politics of Olympus. Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns* (Princeton, NJ, 1989), 87, disagrees, but can only cite N. Robertson, ‘The Myth of the Second Sacred War’, *CQ* 72 (1978), 49, for support. Here, once again, the newly underscored parallels with Miletos are instructive.

²⁰ The remnants of Crisa eventually merged with or became the small city of Cirrha. Pausanias (10.37.6), for example, explains that in his day Crisa and Cirrha were essentially the older and newer names for the same small city.

The two embedded hymns in a tripartite Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*

The new discoveries at Miletus encourage us to look more closely at the details of the seaside sacrifice at Crisa and to suggest that the description of the sacrifice and song at the end of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* originated in a local composition performed at Crisa, probably a hexametrical hymn sung near or around the altar on the beach.²¹ Such an argument is bolstered by the recent and independent suggestion by Richardson that the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* can be divided into three nearly equal parts,²² challenging a long-standing discussion of the poem as a two-part hymn, the first third focused on Delos, and the rest on Delphi.²³ A triple division – the birth of Apollo (1–178), the founding of the Pythian oracle (179–287), and the creation of the altar and paeanic procession at Crisa (288–544) – makes more sense, especially once we realize that, prior to the Sacred War, the cult of Delphinios at Crisa may have been far more important to its archaic audience, than it was after the destruction of the city. This tripartite structure, moreover, better explains some other triplets that we find in the poem: the foundations of three different cults – the Delian, the Pythian, and the Delphinian – and the three long catalogues of places in close range of each of these sanctuaries: the Aegean littoral and islands around Delos, the Greek mainland near Delphi, and the southern and western shores of the Peloponnese, which, along with the Ionian islands, were in close nautical contact with Crisa.²⁴

²¹ Stationary paeans sung around altars and processional ones are both attested in the Greek world. See I. Rutherford, 'Paeanic Ambiguity: A Study of the Representation of the Paian in Greek Literature', *QUCC* 44 (1993), 77–92.

²² Richardson (n. 2), 9–13. Along similar lines see H. T. Wade-Gery, 'Kynaithos', in *Studies in Greek Poetry and Life. Essays Presented to Gilbert Murray* (Oxford, 1936), 68–9, who likewise isolated nearly the same lines as an originally independent composition which he called the 'Dolphin Song'.

²³ See e.g. Allen *et al.* (n. 8), 186–93; M. L. West, 'Cynaethus' *Hymn to Apollo*', *CQ* 25 (1975), 161–70; W. Burkert, 'Kynaithos, Polycrates and the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*', in G. W. Bowerstock, W. Burkert, and M. C. J. Putnam (eds.), *Arktouros. Hellenic Studies Presented to B. M. W. Knox* (Berlin, 1979), 53–62; A. M. Miller, *From Delos to Delphi. A Literary Study of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (Leiden, 1986), 111–17; Clay (n. 19), 18–19; Richardson (n. 2), 13–15; M. Chappell, 'The Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*: The Question of Unity', in Faulkner (n. 2), 59–81.

²⁴ Richardson (n. 2), 9–13, stresses the importance of the triple catalogues. The poem includes a fourth cult foundation at Telephousa, but this has seemed to many readers to be a doublet of the Pythian foundation; in both Apollo must kill a local serpent before he can build a cultic site. There is, moreover, no catalogue of places connected with this cult.

The existence of this tripartite structure does not, of course, vitiate the modern consensus that the extant hymn was a polished Panhellenic composition that aimed to celebrate Apollo as a pre-eminent deity revered all over the archaic Greek world, whose most important sanctuary was Delphi.²⁵ Because a number of scholars have already made an excellent case for the original independence of Delian section, we need not press the point, except to say that full consensus is still lacking.²⁶ Scholars have claimed before, of course, that Panhellenic poets embedded local hymns into their longer poems: for example, the Boeotian ‘Hymn to the Muses’ at the start of the Hesiodic *Theogony*, as well as the Chryses narrative in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, which likewise seems to have evolved from an epichoric hymn to Sminthian Apollo.²⁷ No-one has argued, however, that the last third of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* – the Crisaeian section – was also originally composed as a separate, local hymn, whose former history is signalled by a number of inconsistencies and tensions within the poem.

After Apollo slays the dragon at Pytho and punishes Telephousa, the poet moves on to the third part of the hymn, by describing how the god, while he is fretting over the need for mortal cult officials (389: *orgêonas*), notices ‘a swift ship on the wine-faced sea’ full of Cretans, who will do two things: perform sacrifices for the god and announce ‘the rulings of Phoebus Apollo of the golden sword, whatever he says when he gives his oracles from the bay tree in the glens of Parnassus’ (392–6). The god then quickly turns himself into a dolphin and commandeers the ship, eventually forcing it to land at Crisa, a port-city on the

²⁵ Regardless of how they view the origins of the poem and its internal structure, most scholars would nowadays agree that a Panhellenic Delphic agenda has shaped the extant poem that has come down to us. See e.g. G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore, MD, 1979), 6–8; Clay (n. 19), 47–9 and 92–4; E. Stehle, *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, NJ, 1997), 177–96; I. Malkin, ‘La fondation d’une colonie apollinienne: Delphes et l’hymne homérique à Apollon’, in A. Jacquemin (ed.), *Delphes cent ans après la Grande Fouille. Essai de bilan* (Paris, 2000), 73; and Chappell (n. 23), 64–7.

²⁶ For a thoughtful review of the controversy, see Chappell (n. 23).

²⁷ C. A. Faraone, ‘On the Eve of Epic: Did the Chryses Episode in *Iliad* 1 Begin Its Life as a Separate Homeric Hymn?’, in I. Klinger and B. Maslov (eds.), *Persistent Forms. Explorations in Historical Poetics* (New York, 2015), 397–428. For the ‘hymnic long-alpha’ and other clues to the origins of the opening scenes of the *Iliad*, see also J. T. Katz, ‘The Hymnic Long Alpha: Μούσας ἀείδω and Related Incipits in Archaic Greek Poetry’, in S. W. Jamison, H. C. Melchert, and B. Vine (eds.), *Proceedings of the 24th Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference* (Bremen, 2013), 87–101; and J. T. Katz, ‘Μῆνιν ᾄειδε, θεά and the Form of the Homeric Word for “Goddess”’, in Dieter Gunkel and Olav Hackstein (eds.), *Language and Meter* (Leiden, 2018).

Corinthian Gulf (399–439). The arrival of the ship at Crisa and the detailed description of the rituals there all make sense as elements of an epichoric hymn for Apollo Delphinios, because the story explains the origins of his altar and epithet. It is not at all clear, however, that these details are necessary to Apollo's stated goal: the acquisition of priests. One might protest, of course, that the narrative section of a local Crisaeian hymn would not begin with a detailed description of a long boat ride (397) but the foundation myth mentioned earlier of the dolphin's role in the foundation of Miletus and Didyma suggests that the mythic sections of hymns could indeed begin at sea. And the shorter Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus* (7) does, in fact, begin in similar fashion with a disguised god walking on a beach (lines 2–6), when 'suddenly men on a well-benched ship came swiftly upon the wine-faced sea...and seized him' (6–10).²⁸ Here the dramatic roles are reversed because the sailors try to kidnap the god, but this compact narrative in the *Hymn to Dionysus* suggests how an independent hymn to Apollo Delphinios might have started up very quickly. Both poems, moreover, identify the sailors as foreigners: 'Cretans from Knossos, the city of Minos' and 'Tyrrhenian pirates'.

The Dionysian hymn, however, is almost entirely stripped of any epichoric or cultic detail and closes with the decisive punishment of the sailors – a simple tale of divine vengeance, it would seem. It does, however, end with a somewhat puzzling scene of divine disclosure (*Hymn. Hom.* 7.53–7): Dionysus takes pity on the sole survivor (the pious helmsman), considers him to be 'all blessed' (*panolbios*), and then says: 'Be not afraid, Diekatôr, beloved to my heart. I am Dionysus the mighty roarer born to Cadmus' daughter in union of love with Zeus.' Here he reveals his divine name and genealogy in language quite similar to other epiphanies described in the Homeric *Hymns*, but one thing is missing. Despite his praise and affection for the helmsman, he does not mention the foundation of any cult, whereas Apollo after giving up his disguise tells the Cretan sailors 'I am the son of Zeus and I declare myself to be Apollo. I brought you here...to occupy my rich temple' (*Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 480–4) and Demeter in similar fashion says to Metaneira and her household (*Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 268–74):

²⁸ On the important parallels between the two hymns, see e.g. Miller (n. 23), 94, n. 243; and Richardson (n. 2), 134–5.

I am Demeter the honoured one, who is the greatest boon and joy to mortals and immortals. But come, build me a great temple and altar. . . as for rites, I myself will instruct you how you can propitiate me with sacrifice.

But there is, in fact, a hint that the *Hymn to Dionysus*, too, ended originally with a similar scene, which was removed or lost when the poem was detached from a specific cult site. A local origin would explain, for instance, why Dionysus proclaims the pious helmsman as ‘all blessed’, a loaded religious term that has parallels with *makarismos*-formulae used in Dionysiac and mystery cults.²⁹ It would also explain why he apparently addresses the helmsman by name as ‘Diekatôr’, a word that editors have tried their best to emend away,³⁰ but which may indeed have been the name of an actual person, who was alleged to have founded a cult of Dionysus on the spot where the epiphany occurred, much as Celeus and Eumolpus, both named in the *Hymn to Demeter*, become the ancestors of priestly clans at Eleusis.³¹ In the scenes at Crisa, the poet refers to Apollo’s interlocutor as ‘the leader (*agos*) of the Cretans’, a term often used in the *Iliad*, but always as an epithet with the person’s actual name or closely following the introduction of that name. The suppression of the name of this Cretan leader at Crisa may also have been part of the Panhellenic adaptation of the local hymn, in order to downplay Cretan agency in the founding of the cult of Delphinios and perhaps even to sever any connection with an aristocratic priestly family at Crisa, like the Eumolpids at Eleusis.

The altar of Apollo Delphinios at Crisa

In fact, the events at Crisa that follow the arrival of the Cretans reveal a similar clash between a local Delphinion story and the Panhellenic Pythian one. Apollo first sheds his form as a dolphin and leaps up

²⁹ For *olbios* as a term for an initiate in mystery religions, see N. Richardson (ed.), *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974), ad *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 480–2 and ‘Orphic Gold Tablets’. For the similar use of *makar* to describe an ecstatic Dionysiac worshipper, see Eur. *Bacch.* 72 ff., with the comments of E. R. Dodds, *Euripides. Bacchae* (Oxford, 1944), ad loc.

³⁰ *Hymn. Hom.* 7, a poem of some fifty lines, has (according to modern editors) only two cruces, both places where the manuscripts suggest that the name of a person once stood there: that of the impious captain at the start of line 44 (the text gives us *Mêdêdên*) and that of the pious helmsman at the start of 55, where we find *Diekatôr*. For various emendations, see Allen *et al.* (n. 8), ad locc.; and most recently D. Giordani, ‘Διόνυσος αἰολόμορφος: osservazioni a proposito dell’Inno Omerico VII’, in R. Di Donato (ed.), *Comincio a cantare. Contribuiti allo studio degli Inni Omerici* (Pisa, 2016), 42–3, who accepts an emendation at line 44 but would dagger the name at 55.

³¹ Paus. 1.38.3 and 2.14.2–3.

from the ship like a shooting star and disappears into the inner sanctum of his Pythian temple, which he then fills with such radiance that ‘the wives and beautifully belted daughters of the Crisaeans gave a shout under the impulse of Apollo, because the god had thrown great fear into each of them’ (440–7). This moment is, however, completely unmotivated by the narrative. Then, beginning in the very next line: ‘From there (i.e. the Pythian temple) again he flew back to the ship, fast as a thought, in the likeness of a youth...and addressed them with winged words’ (448–52). It seems, in fact, that we have alternative versions of the narrative here, because both of the transformation scenes begin with verses that are very similar and, in fact, entirely interchangeable:

440–1: ἔνθ’ ἐκ νηὸς ὄρουσεν ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
ἀστέρι εἰδόμενος μέσῳ ἡματι·

*And then from the ship he rushed, far-shooting Lord Apollo,
in the likeness of a star at mid-day*

448–9: ἔνθεν δ’ αὐτ’ ἐπὶ νῆα νόημι’ ὡς ἄλτο πέτεσθαι,
ἀνέρι εἰδόμενος αἰζηῶι τε κρατερῶι τε·

*And then he, in turn, upon the ship as swift as a thought leapt up,
in the likeness of a man, vigorous and strong...*

Lines 441–8 could, in fact, be easily left out of our extant text, in which case Apollo at the end of the boat ride simply transforms himself from dolphin to youth and addresses the sailors:

440: ἔνθ’ ἐκ νηὸς ὄρουσεν ἄναξ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων
449: ἀνέρι εἰδόμενος αἰζηῶι τε κρατερῶι τε...

*And then from the ship he rushed, far-shooting Lord Apollo,
in the likeness of a man, vigorous and strong...*

The first scene, then, in which Apollo is transformed into a star, presumably came from another version of the narrative, according to which the Cretans take Apollo’s dramatic exit as a sign of theophany and, without any divine commands at all, do what pious Greeks normally do after such theophanic moments. When Athena, for example, makes a sudden exit from the scene at Pylos ‘in the likeness of a sea-eagle (φήνη εἰδομένη)’ and amazement seizes everyone, Nestor responds by identifying the divinity as Athena and offering her a special

sacrifice (Hom. *Od.* 3.371-94). Athena, on the other hand, leaves the scene entirely and presumably returns to Olympus.

Closer still is the scene where the Argonauts, as their boat lands at dawn on the island of Thynis, catch sight of Apollo with his bow and amazement seizes them; after the god moves away, the sailors at Orpheus' suggestion dedicate the island to 'Apollo of the Dawn (*Eôos*)', because he appeared to them at dawn, erect a seaside altar in order to 'offer whatever is at hand', and then sing a paean that narrates how Apollo killed the serpent at Pytho.³² In neither this scene nor the one at Pylos does the god give instructions to the mortals standing on the seashore and one might imagine a different version of the scene in the Homeric *Hymn*, in which, after Apollo disappears like a shooting star, the leader of the Cretans, like Orpheus at Thynis and Nestor at Pylos, gives his men instructions to build the altar and make the sacrifice. Indeed, Orpheus' command to the Argonauts to 'offer what they had on hand' may explain the origins of the strange barley-only sacrifice that the Cretans make at Crisa, presumably all that they had on their ship at the time. In this hypothetical version, then, the Cretans have complete agency and react like pious Greeks after a theophany. Apollonius, moreover, may be imitating this alternate version of the Crisaean scene in the Homeric *Hymn*. The fourth-century historian Herodorus, a native of Heraclea Pontus and the probable source for much of Apollonius' knowledge of the Pontus, reports that there was an altar of Apollo of the Dawn on the island of Thynis, but that it got its name because the Argonauts reached landfall there in the early morning.³³ Herodorus makes no mention of the theophany of Apollo and he was probably interested in the island's history because it was a colony of his hometown.³⁴ We can therefore use Apollonius' narrative of the events at Thynis in one of two ways to help us reconstruct the local Crisaean version of the Homeric *Hymn*: either Apollonius learned about the local Crisaean poem from his researches or he is reporting another version of the events at Thynis that reveals a similar pattern to the foundation of seaside cults of Apollo. In either case, the parallels are instructive.

³² Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.669-713, quoted and discussed by Allen *et al.* (n. 8), 262-3, and Richardson (n. 2), 135.

³³ Schol. ad Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.684-7 = *FHG* 19 F48.

³⁴ *FHG* 19 F7 with the comments of G. Lachenaud, *Scholies à Apollonios de Rhodes* (Paris, 2010), 288, n. 177.

In the extant version of the Homeric *Hymn*, then, the awkward transitions from dolphin, to shooting star, and then to handsome *kouros*, all in the compass of twelve lines (440–51),³⁵ reveal the Panhellenic poet's need to assert both that Apollo's oracle preceded the cult at Crisa and that that the god himself gave precise instructions for its founding after coming from the oracular site.³⁶ I suggest that the poet did so to suppress a version (presumably asserted by the Crisaeans in archaic times) that the cult of Delphinios was historically prior to the Delphic and therefore more important. Since cultic instructions in hexameters were the most common type of Delphic pronouncement in the historical period,³⁷ the poet was able to present Apollo's commands, pronounced directly after he came from the inner sanctum at Pytho, as the very first Delphic oracle.³⁸

After Apollo returns, the Cretan sailors, understandably shaken, continue to sit in their boat and what happens next repays close attention, because some of the details are clearly aetiological in nature. First the god berates them for their uncivilized behaviour (456–61):

τίφθ' οὔτως ἦσθον τετιηότες, οὐδ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν
 ἔκβητ', οὐδὲ καθ' ὄπλα μελαίνης νηὸς ἔθεσθε;
 αὕτη μὲν γε δίκη πέλει ἀνδρῶν ἀλφηστάων,
 ὅππότε' ἄν ἐκ πόντοιο ποτὶ χθονὶ νηῖ μελαίνῃ
 ἔλθωσιν καμάται ἀδηκότες, αὐτίκα δέ σφεας
 σίτοιο γλυκεροῖο περὶ φρένας ἕμερος αἰρεῖ.

*Why do you sit so downcast and do not upon the land
 disembark nor take down the tackle of your black ship?
 For this, at least, is the custom for barley-eating men,
 whenever they from the high sea to land in a black ship
 come exhausted from their labour and straightaway
 desire for sweet grain seizes their hearts.*

The god's language here is peculiar, because he identifies those who sail the high seas closely with agriculture, even though the narrator earlier

³⁵ Scholars generally ignore this awkward point in the poem. For example, all that Clay (n. 19), 82, has to say is: 'Returning to the ship "quick as thought" Apollo puts aside his wondrous disguises and appears anthropomorphically as a *kouros*.' Allen *et al.* (n. 8), *ad loc.*, and Richardson (n. 2), *ad loc.*, simply cite a handful of parallels from other theophanic scenes, but do not explain why there are more than one in the *Hymn to Apollo*.

³⁶ Clay (n. 19), 85–6; Richardson (n. 2), 144.

³⁷ S. I. Johnston, 'Delphi and the Dead', in S. I. Johnston and P. Struck (eds.), *Mantikē* (Leiden, 2005), 283–306.

³⁸ Clay (n. 19), 84–5.

described the Cretans as merchants, ‘who in a black ship were sailing for business and goods on their way to sandy Pylos’ (397–9). The Homeric poets do use both expressions (‘barley-eating men’ and ‘desire for sweet grain’) to refer to mortal men in general and to a natural human diet,³⁹ but the type of sacrifice that Apollo bids the sailors to perform at the end of the scene suggests that this initial focus on grain is important (490–501):

καὶ βωμὸν ποιήσατ' ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνι θαλάσσης·
 πῦρ <δ'> ἐπικαίοντες ἐπὶ τ' ἄλφιστα λευκὰ θύοντες
 εὐχεσθαι δῆπειτα παριστάμενοι περὶ βωμῶν.
 ὡς μὲν ἐγὼ τὸ πρῶτον ἐν ἡεροειδέϊ πόντῳ
 εἰδόμενος δελφῖνι θοῆς ἐπὶ νηὸς ὄρουσα, 495
 ὡς ἐμοὶ εὐχεσθαι Δελφινίῳ· αὐτὰρ ὁ βωμὸς
 αὐτὸς Δέλφειος καὶ ἐπόπιος ἔσσειται αἰεὶ.
 δευνησαί τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα θοῆι παρὰ νηῖ μελαίνῃ,
 καὶ σπεῖσαι μακάρεσσι θεοῖς οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν σίτοιο μελίφρονος ἐξ ἔρον ἦσθε, 500
 ἔρχεσθαι θ' ἅμ' ἐμοὶ καὶ ἱπαιήον' ἀείδειν,
 εἰς ὃ κε χῶρον ἵκησθον, ἴν' ἔξετε πίονα νηόν.

Build an altar by the breakers of the sea
 and lighting a fire burn white barley upon it
 and then, standing around the altar, pray.
 And just as I indeed first in the misty sea
 in the form of a dolphin leapt upon your swift ship,
 so, too, pray to me as ‘Delphinios’. And the altar
 itself will be ‘Delphinios’⁴⁰ and will always be notable.
 Then take your dinner by the side of your swift, black ship
 and pour libations to the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus.
 And, whenever you have set aside your desire for heart-pleasing grain,
 Come at the same time with me and sing ‘Ie Paieon’,
 until you arrive at the place where you will take control of a rich temple.

Here the god demands that they offer a burnt sacrifice of white barley to himself as Delphinios, followed by a vegetarian meal and libations, presumably of wine, to all of the Olympian gods. Since the description of the meal ends with ‘whenever you have set aside your desire for

³⁹ See the comments by S. West, J. B. Hainsworth, and A. Heubeck (eds.), *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey. Introduction and Books I–III* (Oxford, 1988), on *Od.* 1.349.

⁴⁰ Following Richardson (n. 2), *loc. cit.*, against the traditional support of Allen *et al.* (n. 8), *loc. cit.*, and others for the manuscript reading ‘Delpheios’.

heart-pleasing grain’ – a rare variant of an old Homeric formula⁴¹ – we must imagine that the sailors ate the same barley that they had roasted on the altar, before they marched up the hill to the Pythian shrine. This focus on a sacrifice and meal limited solely to grain is puzzling and either reflects the need, as mentioned above, in times of theophany to sacrifice whatever is at hand or echoes some lost Cretan way of sacrificing to their native god Delphinios. But regardless of its source, because it is entirely unmotivated by the wider Panhellenic narrative, we must see it as a vestigial part of the original hymn sung at Crisa.

Cretan colonization and cult foundation at Crisa

Plutarch briefly sketches an alternative version of this foundation myth while discussing the clever behaviour of dolphins (*Mor.* 984a–b):⁴²

καὶ μὴν Ἀρτεμίδος γε Δικτύνης Δελφινίου τ’ Ἀπόλλωνος ἱερὰ καὶ βωμοὶ παρὰ πολλοῖς εἰσὶν Ἑλλήνων· ὃν δ’ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ τόπον ἐξαίρετον ὁ θεὸς πεποιήται, Κρητῶν ἀπογόνους οἰκοῦντας ἡγεμόνι δελφίνι χρησαμένους· οὐ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς προενήχετο τοῦ στόλου μεταβαλὼν τὸ εἶδος, ὡς οἱ μυθογράφοι λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ δελφίνα πέμψας τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἰθύνοντα τὸν πλοῦν κατήγαγεν εἰς Κίρραν.

Furthermore, many of the Greeks have temples and altars to Artemis Dictynna [‘of the Net’] and Apollo Delphinios; and that place, which the god had chosen for himself, was settled by descendants of the Cretans thanks to the guidance of a dolphin.⁴³ For it was not the god who changed his shape and swam in front of the expedition, as the mythographers relate; instead, he sent a dolphin to guide the men and bring them to Cirrha.⁴⁴

Plutarch, then, clearly knows a different version of the Crisaean foundation story, according to which the descendants of Cretans, but not Cretans themselves, while on a colonial expedition (*oikountas*) to mainland Greece, made use of a dolphin as a guide (*hêgemôn*). As Malkin stresses, this alternative version gives full agency to the mortal

⁴¹ Richardson (n. 2), ad 500. This formula is used at least once to refer to food more generally: see e.g. Hom. *Od.* 24.489.

⁴² Quoted and discussed *ad loc.* by Allen *et al.* (n. 8), 262–3, and Richardson (n. 2), who also note Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.659, where the Argonauts erect a seaside altar, after an epiphany of Apollo.

⁴³ This is a difficult passage which is missing a main verb: either ‘Apollo ordered’ the Cretans to do this or (less likely) ‘the poet [i.e. Homer] says’; none of the several emendations are satisfactory. Furthermore, we expect that the Cretans, rather than their descendants were the ones who settled Crisa at the direction of Apollo, presumably from an oracle on Crete itself.

⁴⁴ Translation slightly adapted from H. Cherniss and W.C. Helmbold, *Plutarch’s Moralia. Vol. 12. 920A–999B* (London, 1957).

sailors and seems to follow the lines of a typical colonization narrative:⁴⁵ they eventually find their way to the precise spot for their colony by noticing the movement of animals, just as, for example, Aeneas used a white sow as his guide or Cadmus a cow with a crescent mark on its side.⁴⁶ Moreover, when Plutarch refers to Delphi as ‘that place, which the god had chosen for himself’ he suggests that, in this version at least, the Cretan descendants consulted Apollo Delphinios on Crete or somewhere else, before they left on their journey for Crisa. This is speculation, of course, but the fact remains that Plutarch, who served as a Pythian priest and had intimate knowledge of Delphic traditions, knew of a version of the story different from the Homeric *Hymn*, one that downplayed the Apollo-as-dolphin story and stressed the agency of the Cretan descendants in the founding of Crisa, for, without the presence of the god-disguised-as-dolphin, the Cretans must have built their altar spontaneously in response to a miraculous event. We saw other signs of such an alternative version in the passage from Apollonius (discussed above), where the Argonauts, in response to a different kind of Apollonian theophany, take charge themselves of the foundation of a seaside altar and new cult of the god.

Regardless of the origins of this vegetarian sacrifice and meal at Crisa, Apollo’s double emphasis on ‘Delphinios’ as his own epithet and the name for the newly inaugurated altar suggests that, in times to come (and indeed at the time when the original Crisaean hymn was composed), this simple sacrifice was probably offered annually at the same seaside altar on the beach at Crisa, presumably to celebrate the arrival of the Cretans and their inaugural sacrifice and procession. Because Apollo Delphinios is described in later Greek sources as a god who helps found colonies, Malkin has suggested plausibly that this scene of the first fire on a rudimentary altar near the grounded ship may have been part of an old narrative describing how the Cretans founded the city of Crisa.⁴⁷ If this is so, then the poet who embedded the Crisaean hymn in the Homeric one went out of his way to undercut this colonization narrative by asserting that Crisa was, in fact, already fully inhabited, because he tells us (445–7) that during Apollo’s meteoric theophany the gleam from his temple ‘took hold of all of

⁴⁵ Malkin (n. 25), 76–7.

⁴⁶ Aeneas: Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.55.4; Cadmus: H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford, 1956), ii, no. 374.4–15.

⁴⁷ Malkin (n. 25), 77.

Crisa' and that the wives and daughters of the Crisaeans give a loud shout because of their terror. As was discussed above, this scene is part of an awkward sequence in the narrative that reveals dissidence between two rival versions, as does the fact that we never hear of these native Crisaeans again. In all of these details, the Panhellenic poet seems to have altered the local foundation narrative by stripping the colonizers of any agency: in his version the Cretans were not setting out to found a colony at Crisa under the direction of Apollo. Rather, Apollo diverts them from a business trip to Pylos, so that they can land at the already inhabited port of Crisa in order to serve him in his already prepared Pythian sanctuary.

In the scene that follows, the poet describes the foundation of the altar and the meal in language that closely follows Apollo's original commands, but scholars have noticed an important difference: the divine commands contain a number of archaisms, whereas the ensuing narrative of the poet does not. When the narrator describes, for example, how the sailors follow the god's instructions, he reverts to the traditional formula (513): 'they put away their desire for meat and wine', instead of the focus on grain in Apollo's instructions, which also include the archaic address οὐδέ at the start of 466 and the surprising appearance of duals at lines 456, 487, and 501,⁴⁸ which, like the duals in the embassy scene in *Iliad* 9, may hint at a different version of the poem, in which Apollo addressed two Cretans rather than a boatload. The narrator's version, in contrast, is entirely conventional and predictable.⁴⁹

The poet then expands greatly on the description of the paeanic parade and adds some important details that Apollo had left out (514–19):

βάν ῥ' ἴμεν· ἦρχε δ' ἄρά σφιν ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς Ἀπόλλων
 φόρμιγγ' ἐν χεῖρεσσιν ἔχων, ἐρατὸν κιθαρίζων,
 καλὰ καὶ ὕψι βιβάς· οἱ δὲ ῥήσσοντες ἔποντο
 Κρηῆτες πρὸς Πυθῶ καὶ ἰηπαιήον' ἄειδον,
 οἰοί τε Κρητῶν παιήονες, οἴσι τε Μοῦσα
 ἐν στήθεσσιν ἔθηκε θεὰ μελίγηρυν ἀοιδίην.

And then they set off and lord Apollo, son of Zeus, led them,
 holding his lyre in his hand and playing a lovely tune,
 stepping finely and high. And they followed stamping their feet,

⁴⁸ Richardson (n. 2), *loc. cit.*

⁴⁹ See e.g. the remarks of Miller (n. 23), 98: 'lines 502–512 are a thoroughly conventional patchwork of formulaic lines and phrases from the storehouse of epic diction'.

the Cretans, towards Pytho and they were singing 'Ie Paieon',
 just like the paeans of the Cretans, in whose breasts
 the divine Muse sets a honey-sweet song.

There is a vexing textual problem in line 518, where some have suggested plausibly that the Cretan sailors be identified with or as *paiaiwones*, a group of professional paean-singers on Crete,⁵⁰ a reading that would, of course, provide the closest parallel with the Milesian Molpoi. But even if we retain the traditional interpretation that the word *paiaiwones* refers to songs not persons, the text still provokes two insights. First, Apollo did not have to teach the sailors how to sing and march to this paean, but rather it was a song that they brought from their native land and that they could have sung without divine instruction. Second, unlike the pre-Hellenistic practice, the paean is here performed by grown men, not *ephebes*, just as we saw in Miletos, where Molpoi as singers and dancers accompany the *ephebes*. The description of this procession, then, also seems to refer to an earlier story of colonization in which Cretan sailors, after the theophanic appearance of Apollo as dolphin, honoured the god in a traditional Cretan manner by inaugurating a seaside altar at Crisa and then a ritual procession from there to Delphi, just as a local Milesian hymn presumably explained why the Molpoi, when they processed to Didyma, also departed from an altar of Apollo Delphinios placed directly on the sandy beach.

After the Cretans arrive at the foot of Parnassus and after Apollo shows them the temple and sanctuary over which they will preside, the Cretan captain asks a good question (528–30): 'How, even now, will we feed ourselves? . . . This place is not a desirable place for farming or herding, so that we can survive and serve the public.' Apollo then smiles and assures them that, as long as they have a knife in their right hand, they will slaughter sheep in abundance, brought by the people who visit his oracle (531–7).⁵¹ The contrast between the apparently vegetarian worshipers of Delphinios down at the seashore and the bloody sacrificers up at Pytho could not be more stark and suggests another fault line between the Crisaeian narrative about the altar and paean and the Pythian story about the origin of its priesthood.

⁵⁰ G. Huxley, 'Cretan *Paiaiwones*', *GRBS* 16 (1975), 119–24.

⁵¹ The final lines of the narrative (538–44) are a bit corrupt, but in them Apollo seems to warn the Cretans not to speak or act insolently in times to come, lest they be subjugated to others, a warning that some commentators take to refer to the First Sacred War (c.590 BCE), in which the Amphictyonic League conquered the people of Crisa and began to administer the sanctuary (see n. 54 below).

Some conclusions

I have suggested that a Panhellenic poet framed his complex and wonderful *Hymn to Apollo* by starting with a traditional and local Pythian hymn and then adding a new beginning and ending, which co-opted and thereby reduced the relative importance of the god's Delian and Crisaeian sanctuaries.⁵² He did so, in the first instance, by having the god leave his birthplace at Delos to come to mainland Greece and eventually to Delphi in order to display his superhuman powers by subduing a dragon and an insolent spring and by founding his famous oracle at the foot of Mount Parnassus. I have argued that a local hymn to Apollo at Crisa was adapted in a similar fashion to make it, too, subservient to the Delphic narrative, by insisting – by means of some fantastic quick-changes from dolphin to shooting star to young man – that the Crisaeian cult was founded after the construction of the Pythian oracle, from which Apollo had, in fact, commanded the building of the altar at Crisa and the burning of grain upon it. The parallels revealed by the recent excavations at Miletus suggest, moreover, that the Milesians performed a similar sacrifice on their own archaic altar by the sea, before processing to Didyma with paeans, and that there may have been a very old Greek tradition that Cretan colonists, perhaps guided by their own oracular god Delphinios, founded the seaside cults of this god as thanksgiving for their safe arrival. These traditions were to different degrees lost to modern scholarship, thanks in large part to the destruction in the archaic period of both Miletus and Crisa. In the former case, the archaic altar to Delphinios dedicated on a sandy beach was only recently rediscovered in the heart of the rebuilt classical agora; in the latter, the author of the Homeric *Hymn* adapted an original hymn to the Crisaeian Apollo in such a way as to downplay the importance of the once great seaside city and to give greater glory to the oracular shrine at Delphi.

It is tempting to press this argument even further and to argue that this last point can be used to date the composition of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* to the start of the sixth century, after the fall of Crisa, or to suggest that the last lines of the poem, which predict the downfall

⁵² This suggestion, I should stress again, does not rule out a Unitarian interpretation of the poem; see, for instance, Miller (n. 23), 116: 'such unity... does not preclude the possibility that two or more different poets *created the original materials*, out of which the extant whole was composed' (my emphasis).

of the Cretan priests, were added at a time after the Sacred War.⁵³ Indeed, a number of scholars make similar suggestions about the first part of the poem, when they argue that the combination of the originally independent Delian and Pythian parts can be dated to the festival hosted at Delos in 524–523 by the Samian tyrant Polycrates.⁵⁴ But there could be other explanations. An enterprising poet could have composed this monumental tripartite hymn much earlier, with some details of the Crisaeian section being recomposed or extended in subsequent sixth-century performances to adapt the narrative to the new political reality. But these ongoing and surely unresolvable debates about the precise date of the extant version of the poem as a whole or the individual Delian and Crisaeian parts simply provide more evidence that the hymn was orally composed, re-composed, and re-performed over a long period of time.

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⁵³ Burkert (n. 23); R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns. Diachronic Development in Epic Diction* (Cambridge, 1982), 120–1 and 126–32; and Richardson (n. 2), 14–15 and 151–2, generally support an early sixth-century BCE date, after the First Sacred War, but see Clay (n. 19), 87–92 (the Sacred War is a ‘red herring’). Most recently M. Chappell, ‘Delphi and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*’, *CQ* 56 (2006), 331–4, reviews the voluminous scholarship and argues against an early sixth-century date for the poem, but allows that some parts of the end of the poem might be later additions that do date to this period.

⁵⁴ Wade-Gery (n. 22), West (n. 23), Burkert (n. 23), and Janko (n. 53), 112–15. See Chappell (n. 23), 72–3, for recent discussion.