

EUROPE: EARLY GEOGRAPHIC AND MYTHIC IDENTIFY

To Hesiod Europe was one of the many daughters born of the union of Okeanos and Tethys. First came the great rivers of the world (Th. 334-45) and then a host of lovely water nymphs, some bearing names associated with geographic areas: Doris (350), Europe (357), Asie (359). When Homer speaks of the "Asian meadow" (Il. 2.461) he is aware of a land called Asie. To him Doris is a Nereid, but Europe receives no mention in his epics either as marine divinity or as land. The absence of any reference to Asie, Doris, and Europe in the Odyssey is remarkable. As noted above, Europe occurs for the first time in Hesiod as a river nymph. However, this is no secure indication that Hesiod did not know Europe as a geographic area. Thessaly, the Peloponnese and Aitolia appear in his fragments, but Epeiros is simply landmass as opposed to sea or island.¹

Europe as continental land, clearly distinguished from the peninsular Peloponnese and from the islands, is first named in the Homeric Hymn to Apollon 250-52:

*Ἡμὲν ὄσοι Πελοπόννησον πείραν ἔχουσιν | ἥδ' ὄσοι Εὐρώπην τε
καὶ ἀμφιρῦτους κατὰ νήσους | χρησόμενοι.*

These are precious lines. Πελοπόννησος as a single word is recorded here for the first time. The islands must be those of the Aegean. Europe is quite clearly the trunk of Greece, the continental part of it,

1. Relevant fragments in Merkelbach / West (1967) nos. 28, 176 (Thessaly); 114, 176, 237 (Peloponnese); 29 (Aitolia). It is clear from Th. 189, 582, 964 and WD 624 that to Hesiod *ἡπειρος* is not a specific geographic area. It is worth pointing out that none of the Ionian islands, not even Ithaca, home of Odysseus, appears in Hesiod. On the other hand, Hesiod devotes only a mere five lines to the entire Trojan war (WD 164-68).



although a vagueness shall always linger as to what lands Europe included in the eighth century B.C. and earlier¹. Some ancient scholiasts felt that Homer did not know all of the Peloponnese².

Even though the Greeks expanded their world very early by becoming daring navigators, their concept of the larger world remained quite static until many centuries after the composition of the Homeric epics. In many ways the Mediterranea became their lake. They sailed every part of it, including the upper Adriatic and the shores of Italy. They founded many colonies on the coast of Asia Minor, and from some of them they launched ships that took them as traders and settlers to the unfriendly regions of the north Black Sea. They settled in parts of Palestine and north Africa. Early on the Phoceans reached the straits of Gibraltar, and Greek colonies dotted parts of southern France and southern Spain. Through both land and sea routes tin from the Tin Islands to the south of England and amber from the Baltic Sea were transported to Hellenic lands many centuries before Homer crafted his great epics³. And yet, the world at large remained unfamiliar, and the Hellenes' mental map of it and of themselves in it was mythic construct. Two models of the Kosmos, the "universe", persisted throughout pre-Homeric and early post-Homeric or archaic Greece. The older of the two models can be easily reconstructed from the *Odyssey* whose earth is flat and traversed by the great river Ὠκεανός. Out of this more primitive concept — not through any influence by the specific epic, of course! — evolved the Iliadic one, that of a flat and round earth surrounded by the mighty stream of Okeanos. Of the two early concepts this is the better known one because the shield of Achilles in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad* is such a poetically and conceptually unforgettable model of it. Elsewhere I have tried to adduce whatever evidence I could to show that Ὠκεανός is the mythic extension of the great river Ἀχελώϊος and that both words are derivatives of the fundamental and widespread IE root *akw-* 'water'. Let us not fail to include in our thoughts the Hesiodic genealogy of Europe who is the daughter of Okeanos (Th. 357) and, hence, of Acheloius, if I am

1. Lines 250-52 reappear in the Hymn as lines 290-92. The Homeric Hymn to Apollon is a venerable source dating perhaps as far back as the middle of the eighth century BC.

2. See Schol. Ven. A Hom. I 246 (Hesiodic fr. 213 in Rzach's edition).

3. See Bass (1987: 679); also West (1997: 3-5).



right in linking the two rivers conceptually and etymologically. I shall return to this important detail later, but there is little reason to obscure the fact that in “real world” geography this greatest of Greek rivers still traverses what was once the heart of Europe. Inherent to the genealogy of Europe is the mythic idea that rivers are masculine gods, inseminators, who sire and nurture multitudes of lands anthropomorphically configured as lovely feminine divinities. Europe is one of them, Asia another, Doris yet another.

There is no doubt that from the earliest times and in the earliest records *ἡπειρος*, *Εὐρώπη*, and *ἑλλάς* are connected in both obvious and less obvious ways. In the Homeric epics *ἡπειρος* means mainland or simply land as opposed to sea. The word is also found in the meaning island as distinguished from mainland or continent. As early as the time of the composition of the Iliad *ἡπειρος* refers very specifically to the mainland across from Ithaca, Zakynthos, and the other Ionian islands that contributed men and ships to the fleet led by Odysseus to Troy (Il. 2.631-37). This signification is equally clear in the three passages of the Odyssey in which *ἡπειρόνδε* means “to the mainland”, that is, to the mainland across from Ithaca, and most likely that part of it that is dominated by the mouth of the river Acheloos¹. It is also worth noting that the islands of Odyssey 13.234-35 must be the Ionian Islands, while the islands distinguished from *ἡπειρος* in the Homeric Hymn to Apollon 138 are definitely the islands of the Aegean².

1. See Od. 18. 84-86, 115-16, and 21. 306-10. In these lines first the beggar Iros and then Odysseus himself are threatened with being put on a black ship and sent to the mainland “to king Echetos, destroyer of all men”. This dreaded king may be none other than the fierce Acheloos river personified, the liquid deadly force that claims the lives of men and their flocks, as well as such crops as may stand on the way of his swelling and flooding stream. For this interpretation of the above passages as well as for the semantic and etymological connection between *Ἐχετος* / *ὄχετός* see Athanassakis (1998: 167- 70).

2. In the Homeric Hymn to Apollon *Κρήτη* is not treated as an island, or at least as one of the islands that make up most of the list of places over which Apollo is lord (see lines 19-50). Crete which appears in line 30 is contextualized in such a way as to have its insular character skilfully deemphasized: *ὄσους Κρήτη τ' ἐντός ἔχει καὶ δῆμος Ἀθηῶν / νῆσος τ' Αἰγίνη ναυσικλειτή τ' Εὐβοία . . .* In this connection it is interesting to recall Od. 19, 172-73 *Κρήτη τις γαῖ' ἔστι, μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ / καλή καὶ πλεῖρα, περίρροντος . . .* In these lines Crete, though not called a *νῆσος* is clearly an island which is more than an island!



In the current discourse there is a pressing need to try to locate Hellas on a map whose components keep on shifting and, due to population movements, frequently seem to vanish in one place only to reappear elsewhere. It is very clear in the Iliad that, like Phthia, Hellas was a district or a region of Thessaly. Achilles' Myrmidons and Hellenes most likely came from Hellas, while his own Achaean warriors came from Phthia. Both regions seem to have been situated in southern Thessaly¹.

According to Aristotle, ancient Hellas, ἡ Ἑλλάς ἡ ἀρχαία, was the land that extended from Dodona to the upper Acheloos river². It is as good as certain that the Hellenes of whom Achilles is leader had settled in south Thessaly a generation or two before the Trojan war. The short genealogical tree of Achilles (Zeus / Aiakos / Peleus) may be taken as evidence of a rather recent arrival in Thessaly from more hallowed ancestral haunts in Epirus³. Hellas, then for Homer is a part of Thessaly most likely occupied by Epirotan Hellenes who held sway over a much larger and wilder area of northwestern Greece, of that part of the trunk of Greece that eventually came to be known as Epirus.

Let us now return to Europe. It seems that as landmass Europe was never precisely defined even in the many centuries that followed the Homeric era. Thus, for example, Herodotos states that he knows next to nothing about lands to the west of Europe, and he sees no evidence for the existence of a sea to the north of it *ἐπέκεινα τῆς Εὐρώπης*. Essentially, northern Europe was unknown to Herodotos who had somehow heard of rich deposits of gold in lands to the north of Europe (3. 115-16). For the great historian even the Hyperboreans lived somewhere to the north of the Scythians, therefore, in Asia and not in Europe (4. 33-35)⁴. Despite the uncertainties and the haunting va-

1. See Od. 11.496 and 15.80; also Od. 1.344, 4.726, 4.816. It is very likely that μέσον Ἄργος is the same as the Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος of Il. 2. 681. For Hellas and Phthia in the Iliad see 2. 683, 9.395, 9.447, 9.477-78, 16.595.

2. Meteor. 352 a 33 ff.

3. See Hammond (1967:371). Very relevant to the idea presented here is Achilles' famous prayer to Zeus of Dodona in Il. 16.233-35. The presence of the mysterious Σελλοί (16.230) the priests who dwell about Dodona, and the possible etymological connection between their name and that of the Ἑλληες should not be easily dismissed.

4. Most early references place the Hyperboreans in the most distant western expanses of Europe. Pindar Pythian 10.30 ff; cf. Hesiod fr. 150.21 in Merkelbach-



gueness about the northern, and western frontiers of Europe, the land known by this name had a fixed position in the northern, more precisely, the northwestern part of the Hellenic world. However, the mythic Europe, a Europe with a dramatic story attached to her, was born in the very southern part of the Hellenic world, and was even presented as an exotic outlander.

Hence, it can be said that the mythic legends that surround Europe defy the geographic origins that present her as a daughter of Okeanos and, in general, as a northern entity. There is no need here to dwell on all variants and details of the myth of Europe, the beautiful princess who was abducted and seduced by Zeus¹. For our purposes a brief account of the salient features of the legend will suffice. Europe, daughter of Phoinix (later of Agenor), commonly thought to be a Phoenician king, attracts the amorous attention of Zeus. The king of the gods takes on the shape of a bull whose advances the innocent maiden cannot resist. Zeus chooses to make Crete the place of the consummation of his passion for the princess, and in due time Europe bears him two sons, Minos and Radamanthys. Later legend adds Sarpedon to the list of their children. Zeus could not stay with his beloved, and so he legitimized the peculiar situation by marrying Europe off to the Cretan king Asterion.

Later myths tell us that Europe's family was Phoenician and that Kadmos, her brother, was sent in search of her. He never went to Crete! Instead, in a roundabout way he went to Thrace and then to Delphi where the oracle advised him to make the aim of his journey the foundation of the city of Thebes. The most important detail of this foundation story is not that Kadmos had to fight a dragon for control of the water supply, but rather that he was led to the foundation ground by a cow he met in Phocis.

As I have said, earlier, everyone knows that Europe belongs to the northern Hellenic world. How does she then, in her personified form, find herself in Phoenicia where Zeus is scarce, and how does she end

West 1967. See also Hesiod Sc 142, Homeric Hymn to Dionysus (7) 29; Alcaeus fr. 307 (Lobel / Page), Bacchylides 3.59.

1. For a lucid account of details as well as for the relevant sources see Gantz (1993:202-11, vol. 2). A useful conspectus of the myth of Europe in late antiquity and in the early middle Ages is given by Fischer (1957:7 ff); see also Rosen (1998: 11-25).



up in Crete, an island her brother, Kadmos, missed while in search of her? Can it be that several myths representing several ideologies produce a quilt of mythic and geographic projections? Clearly little or nothing was known of Europe in Crete before the arrival of the first Achaeans sometime in the course of the fourteenth century B.C. These Achaeans and, a few centuries later, their Dorian cousins brought to Crete their Indo-European god, Zeus, and the anthropomorphic counterpart of the land he and his people originally came from, namely, Europe.¹ Thus, Zeus and Europe united in Crete. A sky god united with the native land of the indigenous people to beget Minos, fair-haired Radamanthys, and Sarpedon. But why should this Europe, the one whose story is so central to the Cretan genealogical myth, hail from Phoenicia? She is the daughter of Phoinix, but who is he? Brothers do look for lost sisters, and in myth as, sometimes, in ordinary reality they fail to search in places as conspicuous as Crete.

In a very learned article published in 1941 G. Bonfante argued that the Phoenicians never called themselves Phoinikes, or something equivalent to this Greek form in Phoenician, and that the Hebrews referred to them as the Sidonim. *Φολυξ* observed Bonfante, quite correctly, was a king of the Dolopes (Il. 9.484), and a town named *Φουλίχη* and situated in the territory of the Illyrian Chaonians in Epirus corresponded to the Syrian Phoinike.² Bonfante's article is indeed dense with erudition and categorical assertiveness. The Chaonians and the Graikoi, much like the Phoinikes, were Illyrians. Cities named *Φουλίχη* were Illyrian colonies. The Phoenicians of Sicily "were nothing else than another branch of the Epirot tribe of *Φολυξες*....." Illyrian Phoinikes, Bonfante states, sailed to the coast of Palestine where they settled among the Semitic Phoenicians whom they ruled for some time as a dominant aristocracy. He admits the existence of the Syrian and, perhaps even of the Aegean Phoenicians, but he gives them no place in Greek history. In fact, he drives them out of Hellenic space. He also makes no distinction between Epirots and Illyrians³. Can it be that

1. Hesiod's account of the transportation of the infant Zeus to Crete is the case in point (*Theogony* 463-91).

2. Bonfante (1941: 1-5).

3. *Ibid* pp. 9-17. Quoted text on p. 17. For contact between Greeks and Phoenicians and the residence of Phoenician craftsmen in Greece see West (1997: 9, 606-21).



his article, published in January of 1941, was influenced not only by anti-Semitic fervor, but also by the fascist ambitions of those Italians who espoused Mussolini's ideology and wanted to annex Albania, and northern Epirus which the Greek army invaded and reclaimed in the winter of 1940-1941?

Some time during the thirteenth century the Greeks colonized Cyprus. Between 1230 and 1050 B.C. Aeolian Greeks colonized Lesbos and Syme (1050). Ionians moved to most islands of the Aegean very early and they settled in Chios, Samos and Paros as well as on the coast of Asia Minor. Thus, Ephesus, Miletus, and Halicarnassus immediately spring to mind as early Ionian colonies. During the thirteenth century Mycenaean Greeks settled in Pamphylia, Asia Minor, and even headed west to Apulia (1190). The Dorians who are hardly distinguishable from NW Greeks settled in Sparta and virtually in all of Lakadaimonia about 1120 B.C. Landlubbers though they were, they soon proceeded to invade Melos, Thera, and Crete. This astonishing restlessness and mobility afforded even to small tribes the possibility to seek new opportunities for better land, trade, and even piracy.¹

Bonfante most likely went too far in pressing his claims for the Illyrian identity of so many tribes of the Greek north and in expelling the Semitic Phoenicians from every corner of the Mediterranean. Yet, he may have aroused fresh interest in the name of the Phoenicians and in the possibility that the original settlers of Syrian Phoinike were of Epirotan — hence to him of Illyrian — origin. It should be made clear once again that in Bonfante's frame of reference northern Greek meant automatically Illyrian. However, this obsession of his, born also of scholarly enthusiasm for a daring idea, should not blind us to the likelihood that in the age of the great migrations between 1400 and 1100 B.C. a northern Greek tribe led by an adventurer named Phoinix sailed as far as Asia Minor and the Syrian coast to found colonies of which one at least was appropriately named Phoinike.

The Greeks who reached Crete needed not only the mythology requisite to explain and justify their presence in Crete, but also appealing ideological bridges that could help them find some common ground with new enemies and competitors, including the Phoenicians.² They

1. See West (1997: 4-9).

2. Nilsson (1967: 356, table 26.7) thinks that Europe existed in Minoan Crete, but the sole evidence for his opinion is a tiny statuette of a woman seated on a bull. He calls this female figure "Europa auf dem Stier".



may have seized on an originally Greek colony to invent stories which made Europe, daughter of Phoinix, the beloved of Zeus, and the mother of renowned Cretan Kings and Law-makers. It may, upon hasty reflection, seem odd that the Semitic people who controlled so much of the trade of the Mediterranean might come to be known to outsiders by the name of an inconspicuous foreign tribe that settled among them. Yet, numerous parallels to this and to similar ethnolinguistic and ethnonymic phenomena exist, and Bonfante furnishes us with an abundance of examples.¹ Europe, the daughter of Phoinix, is a northern Greek lady (Hesiod Th. 357), and the land she personifies is firmly anchored in northwestern Greece, more precisely in Epirus. The old Epirotan town *Φοινίκη* was not a colony of the Syrian Phoenicians, and *Φοίνιξ*, the tutor of Achilles, does not, according to Homer, have any connection with the Levant.² The word *Φοίνιξ* we know only as a Greek word of whatever origin, and the argument for a parent form, or some sort of Phoenician or Illyrian kindred form, can only be imagined.³ The affinity with *φοίνιος*, *φοινός*, blood-red (perhaps also with *δαφοινός*) cannot be ruled out. The Phoenicians must have received their name from their main product which was also one of their main trade items, the red or purple color which they obtained, through a special process. The name of Kanaan is derived from West Semitic Kinahhu purple.⁴

We shall return to the Phoenicians, even if only briefly, once more. In this study we must not stray too far from Europe. Various etymo-

1. Bonfante (1941: 9-11) points out that the Hungarians took the name they themselves use as a national name, Magyarok, from the invading Magyars. The Hellenes came to be known in the entire west by the name of a single tribe, the Graeci < Γραικοί.

2. The Homeric Phoinix leaves Hellas to come to Phthia: Il. 9.447, 478-79, 484.

3. Bonfante disqualifies *Φοίνιξ* as a Greek word because he considers the suffix *-ix*, esp. in its plural form *-ixες* exclusively proper to the names of pre-Greek Illyrian tribes. The connection between *Φοίνιξ* and *φοίνιος* / *φοινός* is very well-presented by Aly (1914: 74-79).

4. The most convenient reference for this very sensible view is in Der Kleino Pauly s. v. Phoiniker. For an excellent discussion of the connection between Canaan and Kinahhu for "purple", see Arnout (1967:146). He thinks that Kinahhu owed its name to the land where purple was produced, that is to Canaan, for which he knows of no plausible etymology (ibid).



logies have been suggested for the name. Some etymologists, rather defiant of the Greek morphology, the Greek “looks” of the word, have sought its origin in Assyrian *ereb samsi* and in Aramaic / Hebrew *arab*, both meaning “setting of the sun”.¹ Various hypotheses linking *Εὐρώπη* with Indo-European etymologies are not found convincing by leading etymologists.² We would, of course be dealing with a hellenized Semitic word. However, the geographic location of Europe and the morphology of the name make the Semitic connection, in this case, appear forced and entirely irrelevant to the stories the ancients knew about Europe. Practically all the relevant facts about the occurrence of the name *Εὐρώπη* and many early as well as modern etymologies are summed up by Allen and Halliday in their edition of the Homeric Hymns. It is clear from all available evidence that, originally, *Εὐρώπη* was northern Greece more specifically Epirus. Much later the term expanded to include other northern lands such as Illyria and Thrace³.

I cannot resist offering an etymology of my own for the name *Εὐρώπη* but, for some reason, I feel her brother, *Κάδμος*, should receive some attention at this point. Kadmos is not mentioned in the Iliad which, however, clearly refers to the Thebans as *καδμεῖοι* or *καδμείωνες* several times.⁴ In the Odyssey there is only a single mention of

1. See Frisk 1973 s.v; Chantraine 1968 s. v.

2. Aly (1914-73ff) suggests the etymology *Εὐρώπη* < *εὐρός* + *ωψ*. He offers a wealth of information especially on compounds ending in *ωψ*, *-ωπός*, etc.

3. See commentary on Hymn to Apollon line 251 in Allen-Halliday — Sikes 1936 and also in Casola 1975. Related variants of the name *Εὐρώπη* are found in Soph. Fr. 36 and Eurip. Fr. 382. Of interest are the Macedonian town *Εὐρωπος* (Thuc. 2.100) and *Εὐρωπος* as the name of two Thessalian rivers. The Hesychian gloss *Εὐρώπη χώρα τῆς δύσεως ἢ σκοτεινῆ* is cited by Allen and Halliday in support of an etymological connection with Semitic *ereb*: ‘sunset’, ‘west’. Obviously Hesychius thought of *εὐρός* (cf. *εὐρώεις*) ‘dankness’. However, the implied derivative *Εὐρώ-πη* is insupportable. Then, also, no reasonable attempt can be made to show the transformation of *ereb* into *Εὐρώπη*.

4. Iliad 4.388, 391; 5.807, 10.288 (for *Καδμεῖος*). 4.385, 5.804, 23.680 (for *καδμείων*). Homer names neither Kadmos nor Agenor. However, the daughter of Phoenix and mother of Minos and Radamanthys in Il. 14.321-22 is doubtless Europe. This tradition is also recorded in Ehoiai fr. 141.7, 140 MW; Bachylides in dithyramb to Theseus (17.29-33). In Pherekydes Kadmos is the son of Agenor and half-brother of Phoenix (3F-21).



the Kadmeia in 11.276, a line that informs us that "they were the first to lay the foundation of seven-gated Thebes". References to Kadmos in the earliest sources are extremely rare. He appears once in the *Odyssey* as the father of Ino (5.333). He is also mentioned in Hesiod's *Theogony* in the few lines devoted to the names of the daughters Harmonia bore him. The Kadmeians are "his people" either those who came with him, or those who simply rallied to him.¹ It seems that from earliest times there are two foundation myths about Thebes, and Kadmos is the founder only in one of them.² Our earliest reference to Kadmos as son of Phoinix and brother of Europe is in Hellanikos (4F51). There are many interesting details concerning Europe both as beloved of Zeus and as sister of Kadmos. The idea that Zeus becomes a bull in order to attract Europe and eventually mate with her in Crete courts the possibility that Europe herself, perhaps in some older account, became a cow. This is not stated anywhere, but myth lures the mind in ways that make almost everything possible. In the stories in which Kadmos is important as the founder of Thebes, the sister for whom he came to Greece from distant Phoenicia remains no more than a haunting shadow. He never discovers her. Instead, he founds the city of Thebes. According to one principal source, Kadmos, acting on advice given to him by the Delphic oracle, gives up his search for Europe. The oracle told him to follow a cow he would meet on the road and to found a city wherever the cow would sit down³.

1. From the Hesiodic *Ehoiai* we learn that Agenor is the father of Phoinix (fr. 138 MW).

2. The *Ehoiai* Pherekydes, and Pindar favor the version given in the *Nekyia* (*Odyssey* 11.260-65). Just as there are two foundation myths, there are also two principal genealogical lines. Kadmos son of Agenor: Pherek., Apollod., Hyginus, Soph. OT 268, Herod. 4.147, Eurip. *Bacchae* 171. Kadmos son of Phoinix: Homer: Inference drawn from Il. 14. 321-322), The *Ehoiai*, Bacchylides, Scholion to *Iliad* 2- 494, Hellanikos 4F 51 (see above, note).

3. Pherekydes is the first ancient author to present the foundation of Thebes by Kadmos (56). He does not mention a cow. It is a scholion on *Iliad* 2.494 which gives us the first reference to a cow in the story. Its sources are Hellanikos and Apollodoros. See ΣA Il. 2.494-4F51. See also Eurip. *Phoinissai* 638-44, 657-75 as well as ΣPho 638, which is a lengthy metrical version of the story with several colorful, but not necessarily significant details. Very relevant to the account that links Europe with Crete are S Ab Il. 12.292 = Hes. Fr. 140 MW; see Ganz (1993: 472 ff).



Indeed Kadmos met a cow and, obedient to oracular behest, followed her to the obviously special spot where she lay down. The rest of the story of the foundation of Thebes can and should be left outside the limited and rather specific scope of the his inquiry.

In the Cretan story Europe is seduced by a bull who happens to be none other than mighty Zeus¹. In the Theban story a brother who fails to meet his sister anywhere in the wide world does come upon a cow that leads him to the place where he is destined to become the founder of a great city. Is it not possible that this cow is Europe?² But then what is there to connect Europe with a cow? Once again we may seek help from etymology. As a word *Εὐρώπη* may be a compound form similar to such words as *Κερκώπη*, *Ταυρώπη*, *Μετώπη*.³ The second member of such compounds belongs to the very common *οψ / ωψ* reflex of the IE root *oq** which in Greek frequently means 'looking like', 'seeming like', 'with the face of', etc (*Καλνκῶπις*, *πρόσωπον*, *μέτωπον*). In the last two examples given here in parenthesis the element *ωπ* clearly refers to the face. The expected derivative of *εὐρύς + ωψ*, namely *εὐρύωψ* is inadmissible into the hexameter, at least in the nominative case, because of its metrical value (it is a cretic). The existence also of such forms as *εὔρος* next to *εὐρύς* (cf. *τάχος / ταχύς*) shows that the u ending of adjectives such as *ταχύς* is not secure, or absolutely intergral to the root. *Εὐρώπη*: "she of the broad face", the broad-browed one" is a distinct possibility as the name for the continental part of Greece. It is time to draw into the present discussion the Homeric adjective *εὐρυμέτωπος* which occurs only in the formula *βόες εὐρυμέτωποι* (Il. 10.291, 20.495; Od. 3.382, 11.284, 12.262/355, 20.212) semantically, *εὐρυμέτωπος* and **εὔρωψ* are close. The very nature of things mythic allows us the daring thought that, some time in distant prehistory, Europe was a part of Greece, of Epirus most likely, that

1. Jane Harrison (1963:449) thinks that "the Sun-God of Crete in Bull-form wooed the moon-goddess, herself a cow".

2. Jane Harrison clearly adopted the view that the cow was Europe (ibid).

3. Cf. *Κύκλων*, *Κέκρωψ*, *Καλνκῶπις*, *Ἐλικῶπις* etc. Aly (1914: 63-74) derives *Εὐρώπη* from *εὐρωπός* which he connects with *εὐρώς*: 'mould', 'dankeness'. I should point out that my own *εὔρωψ* is hardly a reconstruction since *-ωψ* exists in the Homeric text (*εἰς ὅσα* Il. 3.158, etc.; Od. 1.411 etc) with the meaning 'face', 'looks'. Later on in the same article, in his discourse on *φοίνιξ*, Aly mentions Europe as the feminine form of *Eurōps* (p. 78).



was believed to have been created from a cow, or to have the attributes of one. In Hesiod's *Theogony* Gaia, the earth personified as a giant woman, is broad-breasted (112). The metaphor involved in this adjective should not obscure the earlier, more primitive belief that the earth was also a giant woman.¹ It seems that at Delphi we have evidence both for an *ὀμφαλός* (navel, center) of the earth as well as for a uterus or womb of the earth. The idea that the omphalos venerated at Delphi was a stone sacred to Apollon was proposed by Martin P. Nilsson, but it rests on very tenuous ground.²

The expression *ὀμφαλὸς θαλάσσης*, 'navel of the sea' used of the island of Kalypso (*Od.* 1.50) has nothing to do with stones sacred to gods. As for the place name *Δελφοί*, there ought to be little doubt that it is an old locative form of a word that could not be very different from *δελφύς*, 'womb', 'uterus'.³ We have gone no further here than identifying some very few, but very significant, parts of the female body that seem to be central to a very old and very primitive concept of the earth. Was the earth, in mythic terms, to be sure, a huge woman or a huge cow? We do get some help from the very ancient Hymn to Demeter which teaches us that there was a plain which the goddess visited to reconcile with the other Olympian gods and to save starving humanity from famine. This plain contained barley seeds that, at the behest of the goddess, could grow or remain dormant in the ground. The name for this most unusual and potent field is Rharion. We shall never know where Rharion was placed by those for whom it held such a unique power. Yet, thanks to the composer of the Hymn, we may never forget that it was a *φερέσβιον οὐθαῖ ἀρούρης*: "a life-giving udder of the earth" (450). Twice in the *Iliad* Achaean Argos (*Ἀχαικὸν Ἄργος*) is also called *οὐθαῖ ἀρούρης* (*Il.* 9.141, 283). Both in the Hymn to Demeter and in the *Iliad* this very poetic expression is used metaphorically and it is inescapably suggestive of a time when people living on Hellenic soil believed that the arable land (*ἄρουρα*) or simply the land familiar to them was a cow. The point is that *οὐθαῖ*, much like so many of its cognates in other Indo-European languages signifies the udder of a

1. It is interesting that neither Rhea nor Hera, both perhaps earth-goddesses in origin, is granted the attribute 'broad-breasted'.

2. Nilsson (1967: 204, vol. 1).

3. *ἀδελφός*, 'he of the same womb', is a useful word to connect with the more obscure *δελφύς*.



cow.¹ The story of Europe reminds us of the story of Io, the priestess of Hera at Argos. The kernel of the myth about Io is old and, despite later complexities and elaborations, quite simple. Zeus fell in love with the beautiful priestess and when his escapade came to the attention of Hera, he changed Io into a white cow, presumably to mislead Hera's spying agents. In another account (The Suppliant Women / The Hiketides of Aischylos) it is Hera who turned Io into a cow. However this unfriendly act did not discourage Zeus who now became a bull and continued to press his passion on unfortunate Io². She may be another version of Europe. Zeus becomes a bull for her sake, and she is turned into a cow to accommodate him³. Hera sends a horsefly to torment Io who, at some point, leaves Europe to cross over to Asia at the strait of *Βόσπορος* ('cow crossing' or 'Oxford') according to one of the many traditions about Io, she ended up in Egypt where she recovered her human shape and gave birth to Epaphos who became king of Egypt. Both Io and Europe become cows that like the Greeks, from early times, wander into other continents⁴.

Greek mythographers connected Io with Egypt. Very old legends contained genealogies in which Europe was the daughter of Phoinix and the sister of Kadmos. In other words, Europe was linked with the Phoenicians. As we have seen above, those who argue for the Phoenician origin of the word *Φοίνιξ* face some rather serious obstacles.⁵ However,

1. Greek *οἶθαρ* is cognate with English udder, German Euter, and Sanskrit udhar. All these words signify the "breast" of a cow.

2. See West / Merkelbach 1967 fragments 124, 126, 294, 296. Aischylos Hiketides 291-324. For a very accessible and thorough review of the sources see Ganz (1993: 198ff).

3. Io's bovine side made her part of very early folk-etymological efforts. In one such effort Euboea (*Εὐβοία*) was named after her (Hes. Fr. 296 MW).

4. Astour (1967:82-92) finds many parallels to the myth of Io in Akkadian, Babylonian, and Hebrew sources. He connects the ancient Greek etymology *ἰὼ* <*lévai* to the West Semitic, specifically, Ugaritic word arb 'wild cow' / 'heifer' and to Hebrew Hagar and arah: 'to wander', 'to travel'. See especially pp. 83-86. Astour also considers *Εὐρώπη* and her Cretan cult title *Ἐλλωτίς* / *Ἐλλωτία* pure Semitic words. He derives *Εὐρώπη*, for example, from the root 'rb which in the Semitic languages has produced words that signify 'evening darkness', 'darkness of the setting sun', 'west' (pp. 132-39).

5. See above, p. 286, notes 4, 5... West (1997: 448) does not seem to address the etymology of *Φοίνιξ*, but he thinks that "his oriental provenance is confirmed by the fact that in the Catalogue of Women he was married to the daughter of Arabos



the same is not true of Kadmos. I am inclined to think that the idea that the Phoenicians founded a "peaceful trading colony" at Thebes is not unlikely.¹ In the name of the founder of Thebes, certain scholars have seen the hellenized version of the Semitic root qdm which has also produced nouns that mean 'the old one', 'the ancient one', 'the easterner' (Ugaritic qadmu, 'the east'; Hebrew qedem, 'east'; Arabic qadim, 'ancient', 'old'). There are conjectures as to how the Semitic word was used at Thebes, as well as to how Kadmos may have received his name.² Phoenicians may have come to Thebes first as traders several generations before the Trojan war. Hundreds of years later, perhaps as late as the middle or even the end of the ninth century B.C., the Phoenician alphabet came to Greece. Clearly, the Phoenicians did not offer correspondence courses to the Greeks. Personal contact was essential and necessary. Phoenician teachers, masters of the art of writing, must have come to Greece. It is a very safe assumption that the Phoenician alphabet was taught at Thebes by such men. Tradition subsequent to Homer ascribed to him so many epic poems that were

and became, by another wife, the father of Adonis" (ibid). See Hes. Fr. 138, 139, 140 (MW). Astour (1967: 139-47) strongly advocates a Semitic origin for *Φολιξ*. He considers the word a derivative of the Semitic word that has given Hebrew *puwva* (Rubia tinctorum, a common source of red dye in antiquity). For details see pp. 146-47.

1. West (1997: 449).

2. West (1997: 449-50). On more details of the argument see Astour (1967: 220-24). Both West and Astour mention *qadmyn* meaning 'easterners' as the form that produced *kadmeioi*. West also lists a possible *Quadmiyyim*. We know from Herodotus that certain Phoenicians, the *Gephyraioi*, who had come with Kadmos and who had first settled in Boeotia, later were received as citizens by the Athenians under special conditions or restrictions. They too were among those Phoenicians who brought to Greece the Phoenician or Kadmean letters. The obscure Athenian hero *Akademos* was highly honored in Athens. At the very beginning of the celebration of the Panathenaean festivals fire was transported from the *temenos* of *Akademos* to the altar of Athena on the acropolis. The hero was especially honored in Athenian gymnasia. His name was variously written *'Ακάδημος* / *'Εκάδημος* (cf. *ἑκαδημία*). Could the introduction of Phoenician letters into Athens have been attributed to a venerated easterner who had come to the city at least six centuries before the introduction of the Phoenician alphabet to Greece? *Akademos* was buried outside the city beyond the *Kerameikos*. His tomb was surrounded by a sacred grove. His genealogy and history were unknown. There was no myth attached to his name. Yet it was within the grove sacred to him that Plato founded his Academy. Might we have an old *qadim*, an easterner, hiding behind all these puzzling details? See Herod. 5.57-58. cf. Plato Rep. 414C.



not his. Thus, perhaps, generations that followed the arrival of easterners who taught the Phoenician letters eventually credited this great event to the greatest ‘kadm’; ‘easterner’, of their own history, Kadmos.¹ The founder and great hero of Thebes was naturalized in many ways. One of them was to make him a brother of Europe, of the one mythic woman who had the closest associations with mainland Hellas².

There is no end to the meandering pathways of Greek Mythology. As everyone knows, king Minos, the most famous king of Crete, was born of the Union of Zeus and Europe. He married Pasiphae, sister of Aietes, king of distant Kolchis, as well as of Kirke (Circe), the irresistible witch familiar to all readers of the *Odyssey*. Many of the details of Pasiphae’s story are the stuff of mythographic elaboration. However, her sexual union with a bull is central and relevant to our efforts to shed light on some of the more unusual and significant aspects of Europe’s adventures. King Minos was offering a sacrifice to Poseidon. He wanted this sacrifice to be an exceptional proof of the god’s favor. He asked Poseidon to send him a bull. He may have asked for too much. Poseidon did send a beautiful bull out of the sea but, for some reason, the animal was never sacrificed. Worse yet, for all concerned, Pasiphae was afflicted with a deadly lust to copulate with the bull. She did fulfil her unnatural desire and thus she became the mother of the Minotaur.³ Pasiphae never became a cow. In accounts that are part of later elaborations Daidalos the famous craftsman in the service of king Minos, constructed a life-like heifer, a hollow one. Obviously the queen made such clever use of it as to lure the bull and have her pleasure with him. No attempt will be made here to interpret the myth of the Minotaur, but some very brief remarks are in order. There are astral facets of the story which lie barely hidden behind the names. Pasiphae, like her sister Kirke, is the daughter of Helios. Her name, ‘she that shines to all’, does hint of a lunar pedigree. The bull is so prominent in Cretan religion,

1. All this, of course, is a conjecture. However, it is not an unlikely one. For an excellent account of whatever evidence we have, see Jeffery (1960: 2ff).

2. Astour (1967: 147-52) shows how men of great learning including Ed. Meyer and Martin P. Nilsson, went out of their way, as it were, to prove that neither the name Kadmos nor the main elements of the myth to which he is central are Semitic.

3. Hes. Fr. 145 (MW), and Bacchylides, Od 17 and 26 are the earliest references to some cardinal elements of the myth. For a thorough review of later sources see Ganz (1993: 260-61).



indeed in Cretan culture, that not much may be gained by thinking of him as a foreign intruder. However, we cannot ignore the fact that in Ugarit, and hence in the West Semitic religion, the supreme god El was also the divine bull and the father of all gods and goddesses.¹ The part of the myth about Minos that tells of how Theseus came to Crete and slew the Minotaur has, as one of its components, an Athenian political script. The prince of Athens hacks a barbarous monstrosity to pieces, and thereby restores law and order to Crete. Now king Minos is the son of Zeus and Europe. Through no act or wish of his own he comes to take the place of a father to the Minotaur. Unlike Zeus metamorphosed into bull, the bull that came from the sea was a sinister animal, loaded with Poseidon's punitive designs. It was an invasive, alien force. To make matters worse, Pasiphae herself was born to a dangerously exotic family, one rooted into the uncanny and even savage fringes of the civilized world. It may be that inherent to the myth of Pasiphae is a taboo not against bestiality, but against matrimonial alliances and religious influences that came from the sea, that is, from the coastlands controlled by the Phoenicians and other eastern peoples.

Hekataios of Miletos composed a book on Europe and a book on Asia. It seems fairly certain that at the end of the sixth century, this act summed up a prevailing concept that the world consisted of two major continental landmasses, with Libya being an appendix to Asia.² Herodotos was familiar with this view (4.36) as well as with a tripartite model consisting of Europe, Asia and Lybia (2.16; 4.42). So for Herodotos Europe is a continent, with continental Hellas being by far the greater part of it. The historian tells us that the kidnapping of women played a great role in causing conflict, especially between Europe and Asia. The Phoenicians kidnapped Io, daughter of the king of Argos, and the Greeks took revenge by kidnapping Europe, daughter of the Phoenician king. Then there was the celebrated stealing

1. The details are complex and lie beyond my ken. See Astour (1967: 136-39). For a very lucid and succinct account of the Semitic parallels see also West (1997: 452).

2. See Sordi - Urso - Dognini (1999 3-5). Cf. also *FgrHist* 1, 329-357. The authors point out that the oldest unambiguous reference to the division of the earth into three continents is in Pindar *Pythian* 9,8. Cf. also *FgrHist* 1, 329-357.



of Helen by Paris with its horrendous aftermath.¹ Herodotos ignores the mythic Europe and dwells on a figure he considers historical. I think he does this in the same spirit as when he dismisses the old beliefs about Okeanos, beliefs he calls figments of poetic imagination (2.23).

The present study of the origins of Europe is not comparative. The idea of Europe both as land and cow should not come as a surprise to anyone. Cows were important and, quite frequently, sacred. In many Indo-European cultures cows — including oxen, of course — were the basic unit of valuation for both life and property. This is clearly evident in the Homeric epics in which price and compensation were measured in heads of oxen.² These big and precious animals, especially when sacrificed in large numbers, signified high honor to the gods.³ We must think here of the cows sacred to Helios, and of the harsh punishment visited upon the comrades of Odysseus for slaughtering them.⁴ More than cattle theft is clearly involved in the main theme of the Homeric Hymn of Hermes (7). Indeed Hermes stole Apollon's herd of "broad-browed" cows, thereby committing an offence similar to the one perpetrated by the comrades of Odysseus on the island of Helios (Od. 12.261).⁵ The theft of divine cattle seems to carry with it a venerable Indo-European motif.⁶ The idea of sanctity in these stories is greater than the idea of property. The stories themselves are very old. From the Norse myth that recounts the creation of the earth from the hacked body of the giant Ymir we learn that Ymir was nurtured by the hugely lactiferous cow Audumla.⁷ In very old times, pre-Hellenic or proto-Hellenic times, the people or peoples who inhabited the north-western part of continental Greece held a belief that their land was created

1. See Herod. 1. 1-5. Herodotos attributes to the learned men of Persia the idea that the kidnapping of Io by Phoenicians was the beginning of the chain of events that led to the wars between Greeks and Persians. See Kakridis (1986: 61-71, vol. 1).

2. See Athanassakis (1971: 13-21) as well as (1992: 178-82). Fundamental work on the subject can be found in Benveniste (1969: 37-61).

3. The word *εκατόμβη* is a good example of religious sentiment and practice.

4. Odyssey 1.8; 12.260-419.

5. The theft of the cattle of Geryon by Herakles may not be irrelevant, even though Geryon is a mortal monster and not a god.

6. In an excellent Vedic parallel Ahi steals the cattle of Indra.

7. For the mythology of creation in the Norse world, and, in particular, the account involving Ymir and Audumla see Branston (1955:57-58), Davidson (1964: 27), Srurluson (1966:34).



from a cow, or that, in ways meaningful to them, it was like a cow. This belief must have also existed in the south and southeastern part of continental Greece. If it did not, it was transported there by the Greeks as they eventually expanded in that direction. Incursion of mythic and religious elements from the Near East cannot be excluded, but in this case such elements may not be as old and as primary. The land we have come to know as *Εὐρώπη* through the earliest Greek texts bears a name that makes very good sense as a Greek word. I have argued in this paper that, given Homeric *Εὐρυμέτωπος*, 'broad-browed', which is used only of cows, it is not unreasonable to suggest that *Εὐρώπη* is derived from *εὐρωψ*, and is a word that does not look odd in the company of such words as *εὐρωπος*, *εὐρωπεύς*, *Ἐπωπύς*, *μετώπη* etc. The concept implicit in the word and the specific poetic and religiously significant name took a long time to come into existence. Roughly the same landmass, more precisely, its coastland was called *ἡπειρος*, when viewed from the sea — the sea that came to be called Adriatic, and Ionian to the south.¹ Hellas was only a part of Europe but, at some very early point in history it may have been roughly coextensive with it. We have seen how Aristotle placed what he called old or ancient Hellas between Dodona and the upper Acheloos river. The Hellenes who inhabited this area moved into Thessaly before the Trojan war. The names Hellas and perhaps even Europe were taken by them to Thessaly where they came to designate smaller areas, towns or river valleys. In Thessaly there were two rivers called *Εὐρωπος*; not quite the same as *Εὐρώπη*, but very close! Both *Ἑλλάς* and *Λαδώνη* are as old as fathomable time for the Hellenes, but a fresh look at their linguistic and religious interrelationship must, for the author of the present study, await another occasion. The cow that was Europe is not an idea that etymology alone can support, although I think that the semantic ripples of the very possible connection *Εὐρώπη* — *εὐρυμέτωπος* cannot be easily dismissed. However, they do become more credible, if the presumed animal has a head, and then also a navel (*ὀμφαλός*), a uterus (*δελφύς*) and, more cogently here, an udder (*οὐθαρά*). Europe was primarily a land. Thus, the word 'European' when it first occurs in Herodotos 7.73, means simply "inhabitant of Europe".²

1. This view is in keeping with the prevailing etymology *ἡπειρος* < *ἀπείριος*. Cognate words: German *Ufer*, AS *ŕfer*: 'coast', 'shore'.

2. It refers to the Phrygians before they crossed over to Asia (this according to Herodotos). To avoid confusion I repeat here that *Εὐρωπεύς* mentioned in Hero-



In antiquity Europe remained a geographical term. So did Asia. Both were daughters of Okeanos. Europe was also a cow. In what I believe was the much older myth, the transformation of Zeus into a bull is a necessity. To rule Europe he must have sexual union with the cow out of which the land was created. Somehow this cow is destined to live on and to continue to sustain and nurture the people of the land. The story of Europe, daughter of Phoinix, and mother of Cretan kings was born in the age of the great migrations and encoded some new imperatives dictated by the drive for autochthony and for trade accommodations with competitors. To the cow crossed over to Asia. In one of the stories about her she even went to Egypt where her son Epaphos ('contact'/'touch') became king. Europe the land could not move, but Europe the cow, who could also become a beautiful woman, could go to Phoenicia, to Crete, to Boeotia. Europe the cow represented that element of the Hellenic continent that could go with the people when they left, and could be transplanted to other countries as an agent of the more benevolent ambitions of the Europeans. Among these ambitions were contact for trade and culture. It was by such means that the Greeks mapped out the world and filled it with the inventions of their restless mind.

dotos 8. 133-35, refers to an inhabitant of the town of *Εὐρωπος* in Caria (Steph. Byz. s.v.). Towns named *Εὐρωπος* existed in Emathia (Thuc. 2. 100) and in Syria as well. See How-Wells 1928 on Herod. 8. 133-35 in vol. 2 pp. 279-80.

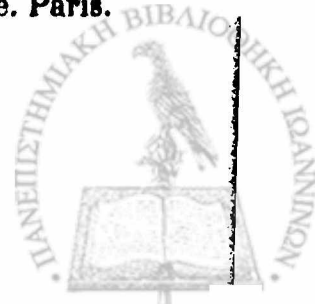


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