THE VOTUM OF 477/6 B.C. AND THE
FOUNDATION LEGEND OF LOCRI
EPIZEPHYRII[1]

THE story of the *votum* made by the inhabitants of Locri Epizephyrii in 477/6 is well known: they vowed to prostitute their virgin daughters at the festival of Aphrodite, if they were granted victory over the tyrant Leophron of Rhegion who was directing an attack against their city. The threat, which was very serious, was overcome thanks to Hieron of Syracuse, but the Locrians did not fulfil the *votum*; they were reminded of it more than a century later, but that is another story.[2]

Naturally, the most interesting feature of this event, which is reported by Justin,[3] is the unique nature of the *votum*. Why should the Locrians have believed that the prostitution of their girls was an appropriate offering to the divinity in return for a victory, or rather, under the circumstances, salvation?

This problem is usually considered and interpreted in terms of 'sacred prostitution', a practice which Klearchos[4] believed to take place regularly at Locri. But the hypothesis of 'sacred prostitution' is of little help, on more than one count. In the first place, it has been pointed out[5] that this opinion of Klearchos is inconsistent with Justin's narrative, where the prostitution of the girls is presented as an extraordinary practice, a special happening considered likely to produce results precisely because of its exceptional character. Pembroke[6] justly casts doubt on Klearchos' trustworthiness in this matter, as well as on the legitimacy of the use of the term 'sacred prostitution', with its underlying ideology, with reference to Greek religious practices. At the same time he refutes the prevailing theory that sacred prostitution was practised at Locri Epizephyrii, a theory which has recently been expressed in new terms by de Franciscis, who thinks that this religious custom was practised at Locri, not regularly, but periodically, in connection with special circumstances and events, and associated with different divinities. De Franciscis bases his suggestion on the expression ἱαρᾶν μίστωμα which occurs in one of the tablets from

[2] Dionysius II prompted the Locrians, who had not fulfilled the 477/6 *votum*, to put it into practice under his direction, in view of the bad luck they were having in fighting the Lucanians. The Locrians followed his instructions, but no prostitution took place, because the whole idea had simply been devised by Dionysius as an elaborate plan to seize forcibly the women's rich jewellery. He was perhaps exploiting a superstitious guilt deriving from the knowledge that a promise to the gods had not been fulfilled by the city. [3] Justin 21. 3.

[4] Apud Athen. 12. 516A; Wehrli fr. 43a. On sacred prostitution cf. H. Herter, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* iii (1960), 70–111; C. Turano, *Arch. Cl.* iv (1952), 248–52; A. de Franciscis, *Klearchos*, xxxv–vi, 172 ff.; A. Reinach, *Rev. Hist. Rel.* lxix (1914), 12–53 *passim*; Ciaceri, *Storia della Magna Grecia* (1927–32), i. 210–1; G. Giannelli, *Culti e miti della Magna Grecia* (Florence, 1963²), 197–204.

[5] S. Pembroke, 'Locres et Tarente: le rôle des femmes dans la fondation de deux colonies grecques', *Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* v (1970), 1269. Herter (op. cit. 73) believes that Klearchos' opinion is derived simply from the 477/6 *votum* and Dionysius' false attempt at having it fulfilled.

[6] Op. cit. 1269–70.

the 'archive of the temple of Zeus',[1] and which he translates 'mercede delle sacerdotesse'. However, it has been convincingly argued that de Franciscis' interpretation is anything but compelling.[2] Secondly, even those scholars who would be prepared both to take Klearchos at his face value and to accept the interpretation of *hiaran mistoma* suggested by de Franciscis, and who would postulate the practice of sacred prostitution at Locri on the basis of these two sources, even they cannot legitimately take this hypothetical institution back into the first half of the fifth century. The only evidence for prostitution of virgins in the fifth century is that referred to in the *votum* which by its nature defines the practice as an exceptional occurrence and not a regular custom.[3] Therefore, even those scholars who believe in a regular Locrian sacred prostitution for the late fourth and the third centuries would have to account for the nature of the 477/6 *votum* in terms other than reference to a pre-existing religious practice; they have to account for the reason why in 477/6 the prostitution of virgins was devised as an exceptional offering to the divinity in return for the salvation of the city.[4]

Other explanations must therefore be considered. De Franciscis touches very casually[5] on the possibility of some kind of connection between this, for him, 'irregular custom' of Locri Epizephyrii, and the expiatory practice of the Mainland Locrians who regularly had to send two girls to the temple of Athena at Troy to atone for the sacrilege committed by the Locrian Ajax, son of Oileus, who raped Kassandra, having torn her away from the statue of Athena where she had taken refuge during the sack of Troy.[6] Such a connection was also

---

[1] *Klearchos*, xxxv-vi, 172–6; A. de Franciscis, *Stato e società in Locri Epizefiri* (Naples, 1972), nos. 23, 30, 31, and pp. 152–5.

[2] Pembroke, op. cit. 1269–70. Mr. Pembroke has kindly informed me that there is a quite close parallel to the expression ἱαρᾶν μίστωμα with reference to territory in *I.G.* ii.[2] 334 (F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* [Paris, 1969], 33). I have Mr. D. M. Lewis's kind permission to mention that he agrees with Pembroke's interpretation of the expression.

[3] Justin's account of Dionysius' ruse suggests that at least until the tyrant's rule—and certainly in the course of it—no 'sacred prostitution' had taken place.

[4] Perhaps a mention should be made here of Pind. *Pyth.* 2. 18–20:

σὲ δ᾽, ὦ Δεινομένειε παῖ, Ζεφυρία πρὸ δόμων
Λοκρὶς παρθένος ἀπύει, πολεμίων καμάτων
    ἐξ ἀμαχάνων
διὰ τεὰν δύναμιν δρακεῖσ᾽ ἀσφαλές.

I do not consider this passage to be a reference to the *votum*, despite the fact that, as is generally believed, it describes the relief of the Locrian virgins in 477/6, when Hieron managed to avert the danger from their city. For according to the terms of the *votum*, since the city was saved, the virgins ought to have been prostituted. They only avoided this fate because the Locrians

decided not to fulfil the vow, but that had nothing to do with Hieron. If anything, if the Locrians had behaved properly, Hieron's intervention, which brought salvation to the city, should have been the direct cause, as it were, of the virgins' prostitution, not of their liberation from the obligation. I think that the Pindaric verses refer to the relief of the Locrians at having been saved from the Rhegian danger, and their gratitude to Hieron for this salvation, exemplified in the persons of the virgins of the city in a kind of *pars pro toto*. Nor is there any reason to believe that Pindar had heard of the *votum*, which may only have been known locally. His knowledge of Locri Epizephyrii (cf. *Ol.* 10 and 11) is very general and rather vague; in fact he seems only to have known what any educated Greek would know about that rather obscure S. Italian city whose only claim to fame was her *eunomia*.

[5] *Klearchos*, loc. cit. 174.

[6] On the practice of the Locrian Maidens cf. F. Hauser, *O.Jh.* xv (1912), 168–73; Reinach, op. cit. (p. 186 n. 4); A. Momigliano, *C.Q.* xxxix (1945), 49–53 (= *Secondo Contributo alla Storia degli Studi Classici* [Rome, 1960], 446–53); G. L. Huxley, *Ancient Society and Institutions, Studies presented to V. Ehrenberg* (Oxford, 1966), 147–64; L. Lerat, *Les Locriens de l'ouest* (Paris, 1952), ii. 19–22; T. S. Brown, *Timaeus of Tauromenion*

postulated by Reinach,[1] who based it on the totally implausible hypothesis that the expiatory rite of Mainland Locris had originally been a fertility rite, a *hierogamia*! The fate of the Locrian Maidens sent to Troy was grim: if caught by the local inhabitants before reaching the temple they could be—and apparently were—killed; if they managed to reach the temple safely they had to spend their lives—at least at one stage their lives (cf. p. 187 n. 6, bibliography)—as humble servants of the sanctuary under very hard circumstances. In my opinion, it is very plausible that the practice of the Locrian Maidens should have played a role in the conception of the *votum*, particularly in view of the fact that the inhabitants of Locri Epizephyrii claimed that among the women who participated in the foundation of their city (see below) there were some members of the 'Hundred Houses', a nobility among the Mainland Locrians which provided the victims for Athena at Troy. However, I do not think that this custom of Mainland Locris explains the whole of the *votum* with which we are concerned, and which, as far as we can judge, appears to be a religious construction first conceived in 477/6. But it may explain one element of it, namely that the people involved were girls, virgins, and not male citizens, children, or slaves. With regard to the prostitution element, that is, the reason for which in this case the Locrian girls were called upon to prostitute themselves rather than, for example, remain virgins and serve as such all, or part of, their lives in a sanctuary, I would like to suggest a different line of approach, which involves consideration of the foundation legend of Locri Epizephyrii.

Aristotle had given a version of the story of the foundation of Locri with which the historian Timaeus disagreed; Polybius, who agreed with Aristotle, attacked Timaeus violently and invoked in favour of Aristotle's version the local traditions of the Epizephyrian Locrians which, he tells us, confirm Aristotle's views.[2] Briefly and compositely, the story runs as follows: during the (almost certainly First) Messenian War, while the Locrian men were fighting away from home as allies of the Spartans, their women took to having amorous relations with their slaves; on, or just before, the return of the men, the slaves and Locrian women fled to Italy where they founded the colony of Locri Epizephyrii. Because all the men were slaves, the new city was named after the nationality of the women, since these latter were free, and the status of nobility among subsequent generations depended on descent from the women of the first, the founders', generation, some of whom had been members of the Hundred Houses.

For our purposes it is irrelevant whether the story is true or false; what is relevant is whether it was known and believed at Locri. This appears to have been the case in Polybius' time, but the problem is the date at which the story first made its appearance, and became accepted, in that city. All that we can be certain of from our sources is that it was extant in the fourth century for Aristotle to have picked it up.

Some historians with an over-sceptical and rationalizing approach have

(Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1958), 45; P. Mingazzini, *Rend. Pont. Acc. Arch.* xxxviii (1965-6), 69-77.

[1] Op. cit. (cf. p. 186 n. 4).

[2] Polyb. 12. 5-12, cf. Walbank, *Commentary*, ii. 330 ff.; cf. Schol. Dion. Per. 366. On the foundation and foundation legend of Locri cf. J. Bérard, *La colonisation de l'Italie*

méridionale et de la Sicile dans l'antiquité, l'histoire et la légende (Paris, 1957), 199-209; T. J. Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks* (Oxford, 1948), 36-7; F. W. Walbank, *J.R.S.* lii (1962), 6-7; Lerat, *Locriens*, ii. 22-4; 138-9; Brown, *Timaeus*, 44-9; M. Napoli, *Civiltà della Magna Grecia* (Rome, 1969), 207 ff.; Pembroke, op. cit. 1252-5.

considered the foundation legend of Locri a fabrication concocted by a propa-
gandistic movement hostile to the Locrians. Two different groups of people
belonging to different periods have been put forward as candidates for its
authorship, but there are good *a priori* grounds for considering both hypotheses
rather implausible (cf. Appendix), while on the positive side, a good case can
be made, I think, for the legend—which is parallel to, and modelled on, the
canonical foundation legend of Taras[1]—having been created at Locri itself in
the course of the sixth century B.C.

The reason why some modern historians have attempted to explain the
Locrian foundation myth in terms of hostile propaganda is that it appears
unacceptable to the rational mind that a people should not resent disreputable
stories concerning their origins—an approach parallel to euhemerism in
mythological studies. There can be an explanation for this lack of resentment,
and we shall discuss it subsequently; but that various cities *did* have disreput-
able foundation legends and accepted them without apparent resentment
cannot be denied. Perhaps the most notorious example is Rome, which, the
legend says, having been declared an asylum by Romulus, received an influx
of all kinds of outlaws who become its first inhabitants.

In my opinion, the fact that the Locrian foundation legend was modelled
on the Tarentine one implies some kind of identification of Locri with Taras,
an identification also reflected in the tradition that Tarentines participated
in the foundation of Locri,[2] another version of which probably underlies
Pausanias' statement that Locri was a Spartan colony.[3] This identification may
have been as old as Locri itself, if it was based on an actual, historical, partici-
pation of Tarentines in the foundation of Locri—a possibility which Bérard[4] is
prepared to accept; or, much more plausibly, it may have been an idea which
sprang from the association and close ties between the two cities. Consequently,
we should now consider the problem of the date of the formation of these ties.
Ciaceri[5] believed that the traditions associating Locri with Taras and Sparta
were not earlier than the second half of the fifth century. However, this view is
unnecessarily sceptical, and an early fifth-century historical association be-
tween the three cities is now readily accepted,[6] while the possibility of an even
earlier connection cannot by any means be easily dismissed. We shall consider
briefly the stories which would tend to place the association between Locri and
Sparta at least as early as the middle of the sixth century.

The main story of this kind concerns the events surrounding the battle of
Sagra, when the Locrians, in extreme danger from powerful Kroton, asked
Sparta for help. She could not give it in terms of soldiers, but sent to the
Locrians the twin gods Dioscuri who travelled to Locri in the ship of the Locrian
delegation and fought gallantly with the Locrians, thus greatly contributing to
the unexpected victory; a Dioscuri cult was instituted at Locri as a result.[7]

---

[1] On the Tarentine foundation legend cf.
Pembroke, op. cit. 1241–9; P. Vidal-Naquet,
'Esclavage et gynécocratie dans la tradition,
le mythe, l'utopie', *Recherches sur les structures
sociales dans l'antiquité classique* (Paris, 1970),
63–80, esp. 72–4; cf. also P. Wuilleumier,
Tarente des origines à la conquête romaine (Paris,
1930), 39–47; Bérard, op. cit. 162–9.

[2] Bérard, op. cit. 205; Napoli, *Civiltà*,
206–7.   [3] Paus. 3. 3. 1.

[4] Op. cit. 205.   [5] *Storia*, i. 193.
[6] Cf. A. de Franciscis, *Archaeology* xi
(1958), 207. The Locrian pinakes, produced
in the first half of the fifth century, show
distinct stylistic affinities with the Tarentine
terracottas (cf. B. Ashmole, *Proceedings of the
British Academy*, xx [1934], 16).

[7] Cf. Bérard, 205; Ciaceri, ii. 248; G.
Vallet, *Rhégion et Zancle* (Paris, 1958), 75
n. 1.

Some other stories and scraps of information also appear to suggest an early involvement of Locri with Sparta: the Locrian poet Xenokritos was reputed to have been one of the founders of the Gymnopaidiai at Sparta[1] (traditional date 665 B.C.); Stesichorus' Spartan-orientated *Palinode*, although not written to celebrate the battle of Sagra as was believed in the past,[2] is nevertheless to be associated with Locri,[3] and Stesichorus himself was undoubtedly connected with Locri.[4]

Champions of Ciaceri's approach would, of course, object that the legends surrounding the battle of Sagra and the Xenokritos story cannot themselves be proved earlier than the later fifth-century involvement of Locri with Sparta. However, the Dioscuri, the institution of whose cult at Locri is connected with the battle of Sagra and the mid sixth-century Sparta–Locri association can be of some help here. According to Ciaceri's hypothesis, their cult should have been introduced at Locri not earlier than the last quarter of the fifth century, the time of the Sparta–Locri–Taras–Syracuse alliance against the Athenians. But this is not so; the Dioscuri appear among the divinities of Locri much earlier: they are represented on the Locrian pinakes which were modelled in the first half of the fifth century with a peak in their production in the 460s.[5] The marble statues of the Dioscuri sliding off the back of their horses which are supported by Tritons—a clear allusion to the legendary journey of the twin divinities from Sparta to Locri before the battle of Sagra—belong to the third quarter of the fifth century, and there is also a terracotta akroterion from the Marafioti temple of approximately the same date representing one of the Dioscuri on a horse supported by a sphinx.[6] The combination of the existence of a cult of the Dioscuri at Locri at the beginning of the fifth century and the representation of the journey legend in the third quarter of the same century makes it, in my opinion, implausible that the traditions involving Sparta and the Dioscuri and referring to the battle of Sagra were inventions of the last quarter of the century, reflecting events and alliances of the Peloponnesian War. Moreover, we should keep in mind the fact that Locri, like Taras, was only indirectly involved in the hostilities of that war, and that the situation and events of the last quarter of the fifth century were not at all analogous with those reflected in the stories about the battle of Sagra.

For these reasons, I think that we should approach the problem of the formation of the close ties between Locri on the one hand and Sparta and Taras on the other with an open mind, and attempt to detect the period and historical circumstances in which such ties were most likely to have been formed. One solution is, of course, the one hinted at above, that the legend of Tarentine participation in the foundation of Locri should itself be taken seriously, as it is by Bérard, and that the involvement between the three cities and the

[1] Pseudo-Plut. *De mus.* 9.
[2] Cf. Vallet, *Rhégion*, 309–10.
[3] Op. cit. 310–1.
[4] Dunbabin, op. cit. 168–9.
[5] Cf. P. Zancani Montuoro, *Atti Società Magna Grecia* i (1954), 87–8.
[6] Cf. A. de Franciscis, *Agalmata. Sculture antiche nel museo nazionale di Reggio Calabria* (Naples, 1960), 28–9 pls. xvi, xvii; E. Langlotz and M. Hirmer, *The Art of the Magna Graecia* (London, 1965), nos. 122–4; A. de Franciscis, *Röm. Mit.* lxvii (1960),

1–28; G. Foti, *Atti iv Convegno Magna Grecia* (1964), 148–51.
    The Marafioti temple, to which the terracotta group belongs, was first built towards the middle of the sixth century, possibly, as Dunbabin believed, not long after the battle of Sagra and (possibly) in honour of the Dioscuri. It was previously thought that it was dedicated to Zeus, but it now appears that it was the Marasa temple which belonged to Zeus (Foti, 148–9).

emergence of a Locrian foundation legend moulded on that of Taras are to be explained in this way, but there are no means of testing this hypothesis. If it is not correct, the ties must have been formed, and the foundation legend adopted and adapted,[1] at a time when circumstances called for such an identification of interests projected into identification of origins.

I believe that there is one period in Locrian and Tarentine history which is more likely than any other to have offered circumstances favourable to this process of identification; a historical moment in which such an identification might have emerged, not so much as a result of an alliance and friendship, as more naturally out of a desire, felt by Locrians and Tarentines, to identify with each other, to define themselves as part of one entity different from others, especially different with reference to another, hostile, group. Such a moment is the period of expansion of the Metapontum, Sybaris, and Kroton alliance. When towards the middle of the sixth century the South Italian Greek cities formed a monetary and commercial league, Locri did not participate in it, while Taras joined at first but soon withdrew. Metapontum, Sybaris, and Kroton rapidly, it appears, transformed the League into an alliance of colonies of Achaean descent against the other Greeks.[2] One of the results of their aggressive policy was the destruction of Siris[3] motivated by the rivalry of Metapontum and Sybaris with that city.[4] It is very likely[5] that the Achaean League helped Metapontum in its 'conflits de voisinage' against Taras. Kroton also pursued an aggressive policy of expansion, particularly directed against Locri, which came to a disastrous halt at the battle of Sagra. In Napoli's opinion,[6] Kroton attacked Locri not only because she desired to expand along the Ionian coast, but also, and mainly, because she aimed at securing control of the route through the Messina Straits to the Tyrrhenian Sea and of the southernmost Tyrrhenian coast, and this very real threat to herself was the reason for which Rhegion sent some help to the Locrians against Kroton at the battle of Sagra.

Taras and Locri then—as well as Siris which was soon got out of the way—were the target of hostilities on the part of the Achaean League, which had an aggressively pronounced ethnic character, no doubt as a means of consolidating the alliance under a common ideology: a state of affairs which did not last very long since Kroton attacked and destroyed Sybaris in 510. Now the Epizephyrian Locrians were certainly not Achaeans, but, like the Mainland Locrians, they were not considered Dorians either. They no doubt felt related to the Doric ethnos, but they themselves did not belong to an important ethnic group and they had no clear ethnic identity to oppose to the aggressive ethnic identity of the Achaean cities. But Taras did: Taras belonged to that important ethnic group to which the Locrians must have felt related, and was, moreover, the colony not only of the most important Doric city, but also of the most important Greek city of the period. And since the interests of Locri and Taras coincided, in a defensive policy against the Achaean League,[7] the Locrians may

---

[1] With reference to the story-telling imagination of the Greeks, Fenik remarks in a different context (B. Fenik, *Typical battle-scenes in the Iliad* [Wiesbaden, 1968], 238): 'the Greeks were not at all loath to repeat similar stories with different names or to give different persons similar careers and adventures'; that this is a general trend of Greek story-telling is apparent if, for ex-

ample, the careers of Theseus and Heracles are considered.

[2] Justin, 20. 2. 3; 4. 18; cf. Napoli, 308–13.
[3] Bérard, 191.   [4] Napoli, 307–11.
[5] Wuilleumier, *Tarente*, 52.
[6] *Civiltà*, 313.
[7] The fact that Taras is not reported to have sent help to the Locrians before the battle of Sagra need not mean that the two

have found themselves *de facto* attached to the Doric ethnos, their near relative. They may therefore have attempted, since common ethnic identity was the ideological slogan of the enemy, to legitimate and make permanent this attachment by projecting the connection with Taras back to the time of the foundation of Locri, and may thus have given birth to the tradition of Tarentine participation in that foundation, a different version of which is the story that Locri was a Spartan colony. Against this background, Locri's application to Sparta for help before the battle of Sagra appears natural, as does Sparta's care not simply to refuse its help to a city which looked upon her as its natural protector. The foundation legend, moulded on that of Taras, would then be an expression of Locri's partial identification with that city; at the same time it projected into the past the alliance of Locrians and Spartans, since it claimed that the Locrians of the Greek Mainland fought in the Messenian War as allies of the Spartans.

It may be objected to this hypothesis that, according to the foundation legends, the Partheniai who founded Taras were at odds with the Spartan social system, and the women and slaves who founded Locri on equally hostile terms with the men who were allies of the Spartans. However, it is obvious, from the close ties maintained between Sparta and Taras throughout Tarentine history, that the anti-establishment character of the Partheniai, whether historical fact or not,[1] did not weaken the relationship between colony and mother city, or cast any aspersion on the character of the citizens of Taras. Therefore, there is no reason to suppose that the Locrians, who simply modelled their foundation legend on the Tarentine one, would have felt that the anti-establishment character which this legendary creation attributed to their founders could cast a shadow on the backward projected relations between their city and Sparta–Taras, the authentication of the early date of which was the whole object of the new legend. Now, it may well be asked why, even in a process of identification and mythopoeic solidification of ties, the Epizephyrian Locrians should chose to copy the pattern of a 'disreputable origin', even if it is true that this origin did not cast a bad light on the coveted relationship with Sparta. This objection may be answered when it is realized that the 'disreputable origin' foundation legends had a special, non-derogatory, significance when referred, not to historical events, but to the mythopoeic imagination of the Greek mind and its themes. For the foundation legend genre, although understood and expressed in historical terms, incorporates in fact mythological elements and themes.[2]

The special significance of the Locrian and Tarentine foundation legends, which also explains why 'disreputable origin' stories do not appear to have been resented by the peoples involved, has recently become clear through the efforts of S. Pembroke and P. Vidal-Naquet,[3] who have shown that the most significant element in the foundation legends of Locri and Taras is the fact that the founders of the two cities are alleged by these legends to belong to the *margin* of the Greek polis, the margin of society. Depending on the different

cities were not allies; if Taras had sent armed forces to Locri, she might have left herself exposed to a surprise attack from the other two members of the League, Metapontum and Sybaris.

[1] Cf. W. G. Forrest, *A History of Sparta*

(London, 1968), 61.

[2] Cf. Vidal-Naquet, op. cit. 64.

[3] S. Pembroke, op. cit. (p. 186 n. 5); id. *J.W.C.I.* xxx (1967), 1–35; P. Vidal-Naquet, op. cit. (p. 189 n. 1).

versions of the tradition, the Partheniai who founded Taras are said to be the sons of different classes of men, but the alleged fathers do have one trait in common in all the versions: they are placed, for one reason or another, outside, on the margin of, the Spartan polis.[1] As regards Locri Epizephyrii, the city was founded, according to the legend discussed here, exclusively by women and slaves, two classes of people outside the civic and political sphere of the Greek polis, since, to quote Vidal-Naquet,[2] 'la cité grecque dans son modèle classique se définissait par un double refus: refus de la femme, la cité grecque est un ''club d'hommes'', refus de l'esclave, c'est un "club de citoyens".' These two groups, who could never become a politically active part of the Greek polis, equal to the male citizens, let alone the leading group in it, can only exercise power, and become a leading group, in myth (e.g. the Amazons), tradition (e.g. Doulopolis or the situation in Argos after the battle of Sepeia), or utopia (e.g. Aristophanes' *Ekklesiazousai*). Pembroke has shown[3] that ancient Greek mentions of matriarchy present, not a memory or picture of a historical state of affairs, of historical customs and institutions—in fact such a state of affairs did not exist—but the *reversed* image of a Greek polis and its ethos; the Greek polis, that is, defined itself with regard to alien groups by projecting on to those groups the reversed image of itself,[4] describing them in terms and attributing to them values opposed to those of the Greek city. Such groups normally belong outside the Greek world proper. But, as Vidal-Naquet has shown,[5] there are three traditions[6] in which a 'reversed world' is situated in the context of the Greek city itself, a world reversed in that the leading role (active citizens/founders of colonies) is held by those two groups which normally existed only on the margin of the civic and political life of the polis, women and slaves associated with each other. These three traditions are the story concerning the situation at Argos after the battle of Sepeia, the foundation legend of Taras, and the foundation legend of Locri. Because these three reversed world situations were placed *inside* the Greek world, integrated in tradition in a rational way into the context of a historical Greek city, they inevitably have an anti-establishment character at the historical and political level. But at the same time, another value of the three stories emerges, a positive quality. In the case of Taras and Locri, a new city was created as a result of the reversed world situation, a new 'order' out of the chaos and nothingness preceding the foundation; seen in historical terms, out of the disorder of the trouble over the Partheniai and out of the tension arising from the return of the Locrian husbands, order, as represented by the Greek polis, was created. In the case of the events following the battle of Sepeia,[7] the reversed world situation came after, and as a result of, a great disaster, in which Argos ... ἀνδρῶν ἐχηρώθη,[8] and lasted until the sons of the dead citizens grew up, expelled and defeated the slaves. With this action things resumed their normal course, and Argos became again a normal Greek polis. In this case then the 'servile interregnum' bridges the time between catastrophe and resumption of normality.[9]

---

[1] Vidal-Naquet, op. cit. 74.
[2] Op. cit. 64.
[3] In *J.W.C.I.* (p. 192 n. 3); id., *Journal of the Economic and social History of the Orient*, viii (1965), 217–47.
[4] Vidal-Naquet, 67.   [5] Op. cit.
[6] On the legend of Caulonia cf. Pembroke, *Locres*, 1268–9.

[7] Cf. Vidal-Naquet, 68–70; R. F. Willetts, *Hermes* lxxxvii (1959), 495–506.
[8] Hdt. 6. 83.
[9] It should be noted that, while the 'slaves' rule' aspect of the story may conceivably have been the result of hostile propaganda, the 'gynaecocracy' aspect, which occurs both in the stories about the events following the

Seen in these terms, the foundation legends of Taras and Locri appear to be repeating the pattern of cosmogonical myths which relate the story of how the world was created, how, from the primordial chaos and confusion, order emerged.[1] From this it would follow that the reversed world[2] and the primordial chaos for which it may be seen in some cases as standing, need not necessarily be considered as positively 'bad things', since they precede the desirable creation, the emergence of order. Seen in this light, the 'disreputable origin' foundation myths cease to imply the casting of some aspersion on the citizens of the city involved[3]—in the same way that the primordial chaos is not held against the things and people of this world!

The fact that the reversed world, and the chaos and disorder for which it stands, was not considered in an exclusively negative light is also reflected in the periodical deliberate re-enactment of the reversed world conditions—with a greater or lesser degree of reversal—in the course of several festivals. The best known example of such a festival comes from the Roman world: it is, of course, the festival of the Saturnalia, which, reorganized in 217 B.C., commemorated and re-enacted the *alternative* world represented by Saturnus' reign.[4] In the Greek world, the festival Hybristika at Argos, which included sex reversal—a practice not uncommon in Greek festivals and rituals[5]—commemorated the reversed world of the period after the battle of Sepeia when women and slaves had, tradition said, a leading role in the city. Other festivals include a reversal of social roles. According to Karystios,[6] in Crete, during the festival Hermaia the slaves feasted, while their masters undertook the menial jobs; this is a symmetrical reversal. Another instance of reversal of social roles in the course of a Greek festival is offered by the Thessalian festival Peloria.[7] This festival was set up in commemoration of the following legendary occasion. Once upon a time, while the Pelasgians were holding a public sacrifice, a man called Peloros came up to Pelasgos and informed him that in the course of great earthquakes the Tempe mountains had become separated and that through the gap the water of the lake had rushed, pouring into the river Peneios, with the result that the previously marshy areas had become uncovered and turned into beautiful plains.[8] On hearing this good news, Pelasgos and other

battle (cf. Plut. *Mul. virt.* 245C–F) and in the oracle quoted by Herodotus (6. 77), cannot be explained in the same way, but without doubt belongs strictly to the reversed world ideology discussed here.

[1] Cf. J.-P. Vernant, *Les origines de la pensée grecque* (Paris, 1962), 96–114; cf. also Vidal-Naquet, op. cit. 78.

[2] On another aspect of reversed world situations preceding, and leading to, order, cf. W. Burkert, *Homo necans. Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen* (Berlin–N. York, 1972), 206–7. On the theme of the reversed world in general cf. H. Kenner, *Das Phänomen der verkehrten Welt in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Klagenfurt, 1970).

[3] One of Timaeus' arguments against Aristotle's story about the servile descent of the Locrians was (Polyb. 12. 11. 5) that the constitution and practices of Locri Epizephyrii were similar to those of Mainland Locris, and that the laws laid down such penalties against adulterers and runaway slaves as one could hardly expect to find in a community derived from such people (Polyb. 12. 9. 5). However, if the 'disreputable origin' motif is considered in terms of a reversal, it would be an automatic result of the creation of order, the foundation of the city, that the normal values and practices of a Greek polis should come in force. In fact, tradition ascribes to Locri Epizephyrii the first law-giver, the austere Zaleukos.

[4] Cf. Athen. 14. 639B; Kenner, 88 ff.; Darenberg and Saglio s.v. Saturnalia; R. M. Ogilvie, *The Romans and their gods in the age of Augustus* (London, 1969), 98–9.

[5] Kenner, 102–63.

[6] Athen. 14. 639B.

[7] Athen. 14. 639F–640A.

[8] Cf. also Hdt. 7. 129.

high-ranking people among the Pelasgians offered Peloros a lavish banquet and waited upon him themselves. Subsequently, when they took possession of the new lands, they instituted a festival in imitation of the first, impromptu, banquet, and celebrated it in honour of Zeus Pelorios. In the course of this festival, foreigners were admitted to the banquet, prisoners were set free, and slaves were waited upon by their masters. Here again then, we have reversal of social roles and suspension of the normal rules of behaviour for the duration of a festival. The foundation story of the Peloria is, of course, aetiological; but nevertheless, it contains an interesting element which fits the pattern of the reversal situations mentioned above: in it, the reversed world is associated closely with a creation, the emergence of new fertile land out of the confusion and negativity of the earthquakes, the laying down of order and positive things where previously negative marshes existed.

Another type of reversal of social roles occurring in the course of a festival is the non-symmetrical reversal in which one group reverses its social role without the diametrically opposed group doing the same; normally this takes the form of slaves behaving as free men without the symmetrical phenomenon of masters waiting upon them or taking up menial jobs. A reversal of this type appears to have occurred in the course of an unnamed Troezenian festival celebrated in the month of Geraistios.[1]

Now, if we go back and consider the peculiar Locrian *votum* with which we started, it is possible, in my opinion, to interpret it in terms of a reversal. Because what is the main theme of the *votum*, if not that virgins should become prostitutes in the course of a festival, which is in fact a reversal of the virgins' social and ethical role, a non-symmetrical reversal, since we are not told that prostitutes would be treated as matrons or virgins. Seen in this light, the *votum* may be considered as a re-enactment of the reversed world situation which resulted in the foundation of the city according to the foundation legend;— a legend which, I argued in the first part of this paper, had already been adopted and adapted by the Epizephyrian Locrians in the course of the sixth century.[2] This re-enactment had the object of saving the city from conquest and perhaps destruction; therefore, in a sense, recreating it.

It may be objected to this interpretation that it envisages the fifth-century Epizephyrian Locrians as expert historians of religion with structuralist trends: in other words, that it implies that in 477/6, when faced with an emergency, and desperate to think up an offering to the divinity likely to produce the desired effect, salvation from the enemy, these people had access to the religious-mythological significance of the reversal situation in their foundation legend, and consciously set out to produce a new reversal pattern, aware of the fact that, according to that mentality, reversal precedes, and leads to, creation and order.

However, such no doubt implausible awareness of the mentality behind the legend, this structural analysis of the foundation legend by the Locrians in 477/6, is by no means necessary to the hypothesis which I am putting forward

[1] Athen. 14. 639c; cf. also Kenner, 87–8.

[2] Another example of a reversed world situation associated with the foundation of Locri may perhaps be found—in residual form—in the story of the ruse by which the Locrians deceived the indigenous Sikels and drove them away from the land they pre- viously occupied (Polyb. 12. 6. 2–5; Polyaen. 6. 22). What is described in the story as the apparently impossible conditions under which the pact could legitimately be broken, and which were artificially created through a trick, can, in fact, be considered as re- versed world conditions.

here. Because when a person or unit of devotees think up a *votum*, they will model it upon existing religious behaviour-patterns or patterns of myth and legend, without necessarily being aware of the mentality behind them or having abstracted the 'structure' of these legends and religious behaviour-patterns. For example, when a contemporary Christian peasant thinks up a 'personal' vow, promising to do something disagreeable to himself, like going up to a church on a hill on his knees, in order to obtain from the divinity something he particularly desires, he is not necessarily aware that the pattern upon which his vow is modelled is determined by the fact that Christian religion ascribes a high place to suffering, and believes that salvation can be obtained through suffering. So in the case of the Epizephyrian Locrians. When faced with an emergency, and anxious to think up an appropriate *votum*, they turned to, and modelled themselves upon, existing religious behaviour-patterns and patterns of myth and legend. That they should have chosen to model themselves upon the foundation legend of the city is not surprising, since the object of the *votum* was the salvation of the city; and it should be kept in mind that a *votum*, any *votum*, is a 'religious construction', the product of a 'decision', not a spontaneously arising religious phenomenon. Now when (or if?) they turned their attention to the foundation legend, they could easily see that it was hardly possible to re-enact the behaviour pattern described in that legend, the women running away with the slaves, without bringing about the disintegration of the city; besides, that particular situation had resulted in creation and order, not for the city which the women had left, but for a *new* city, a colony which was thus founded, while the Epizephyrian Locrians were concerned with saving their own existing city. Given all this, it seems to me that they did not need to have had a structuralist training in order to detect that, although they could not re-enact the foundation legend as it stood, they could re-enact or reproduce its theme, and second, that this theme was the disturbance, the upsetting of the normal social and ethical rules of the Greek polis in the form of disreputable social and ethical conduct on the part of the women citizens.

That they chose to reproduce this theme in the particular form in which it was reproduced in the *votum*, the fact that it was the virgin daughters of citizens through whom the reversal would operate,[1] may have been determined by the importance of the sacrifice of virginity, as well as by the factor mentioned above, the practice of the Locrian Maidens of Mainland Locris, in which the burden of the expiation of the ancient sacrilege was borne by the virgins of Locris.[2]

St. Hugh's College, Oxford   CHRISTIANE SOURVINOU-INWOOD

[1] Professor B. Ashmole has kindly suggested to me an alternative way in which the role reversal may have operated in the creation of the 477/6 *votum*; it is based on the hypothesis that a 'sacred prostitution' may have existed before the *votum*, but was restricted to slavegirls who acted as temple prostitutes; the new element introduced by the *votum* would be that free girls, virgin daughters of citizens, were now obliged to become sacred prostitutes, thus reversing their social and ethical role.

[2] If the above remarks and interpretations are correct, they may provide the 'ideological' background for the well-known 'contrasted figures' represented on the two side-panels of the Ludovisi throne, which Ashmole has most convincingly associated with Locri Epizephyrii (*J.H.S.* xlii [1922], 248–53): one of the panels shows a naked girl playing the flute, the other a heavily draped young woman burning incense in a thymiaterion. This contrast between the two female figures, identified as hetaira and bride or young wife, adorning the side-panels of a relief whose main part represents—almost certainly—the birth of Aphrodite, is usually interpreted in terms of a double connection

APPENDIX

THEORIES ASCRIBING THE INVENTION OF THE LOCRIAN FOUNDATION
LEGEND TO HOSTILE PROPAGANDA

The first hypothesis ascribing the Locrian foundation legend to hostile propaganda maintains (Oldfather, *R.E. s.v.* Lokroi, col. 1315; Brown, *Timaeus* (cf. p. 187 n. 6), 49; Walbank (p. 188 n. 2), 331) that the legend was a fabrication concocted by the democrats against the nobility in the course of the strife during the rule of Dionysius II, or following the revolt. The democrats on this theory would have tried to discredit the nobility by ascribing to it servile origins. In my opinion, the argument is fallacious for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the foundation legend involves a servile descent for *all* Locrians, not for the nobility alone; according to it, noblemen were descended from a slave and a noble woman, common men from a slave and a non-noble woman. Therefore, if the democrats considered slave ancestors a discredit to the noblemen, they must also have considered them a discredit to themselves, and there is no reason why they should have invented a story which cast aspersion not only on their opponents, but also on themselves. Secondly, there is no evidence that the alleged servile descent *was* considered shameful and was resented; Timaeus who attempted to refute the story was not a Locrian, and we certainly know that a parallel 'disreputable origin' story was the canonical and generally accepted foundation legend of Taras, which had never been discredited or denounced as false (cf. Pembroke, *Locres*, 1249; the reasons for this lack of resentment were considered in the main body of the text). Thirdly, if a foundation legend modelled very closely on that of Taras was conceived and used as means of giving deliberate offence, we might expect the perpetrators of this offence to have been hostile towards Taras at the particular period involved, and especially after the revolt; but there is no evidence for such hostility. On the contrary, we know that the Tarentines pleaded—unsuccessfully—with the rebellious Locrians for mercy for Dionysius' family. This intervention, even though unsuccessful, surely presupposes non-hostile, and even friendly, relations. Even if none of these arguments is considered decisive on its own and sufficient to discredit the theory against which it is directed, surely this is a case where cumulative evidence is significant, in so far as it makes this hypothesis *a priori* less plausible.

   Wuilleumier (*Tarente*, 63) has put forward a different hypothesis on the same lines. He thinks that both the legend of the Tarentine—and Syracusan—participation in the foundation of Locri and that of the servile origin of the Epizephyrian Locrians originated during the Peloponnesian War, slanderously invented by the Athenians and inspired by the alliance of Taras, Locri, and Syracuse against Athens. As he considers the Partheniai to be Amyclaeans of a status equal (in Spartan society) to that of the Spartans (*Tarente*, 39–45) whose

of Aphrodite with matrimony and prostitution, either through reference to the two aspects of Aphrodite, Ourania, and Pandemos, or by attributing this double association to Aphrodite Ourania (cf. E. Simon, *Die Geburt der Aphrodite* [Berlin, 1959], 20–9). However, there is no evidence for such a double aspect of Aphrodite at Locri. Ash-

mole has suggested (*Ant. K.* xiv [1971], 160) that the 'tradition of ritual prostitution . . . might well have some bearing on the interpretation of the side-panels of the Ludovisi throne'. In my opinion, it is rather tempting to interpret these two contrasting figures in terms of the role reversal envisaged in the *votum* of 477/6 but never in fact enacted.

name would reflect that of a goddess Parthenos and stories of whose 'disreputable origin' were slanderous inventions of their enemies, it is not clear to me whether he also means to attribute the Tarentine foundation legend to Athenian hostility in the course of the Peloponnesian War. With regard to the Amyclaean origin and goddess Parthenos theory, Bérard's discussion (*Colonisation*, 162–9) is conclusive; as for the hypothesis of a slanderous invention, it collapses over the objection that there was no 'respectable' foundation legend for Taras and there is no evidence that the Tarentines ever attempted to refute the legend which attributed them a 'disreputable' origin. Surely, if a 'respectable' Tarentine version existed, Antiochus of Syracuse at least could be expected to have reported it, and not to have repeated the alleged slander of the Athenian enemy. Consequently, it appears highly unlikely that the Tarentine foundation legend was invented by the Athenians. We might also consider whether Athenian propaganda was likely to have invented the Locrian foundation legend by copying and adapting that of Taras. Several arguments can be brought against this hypothesis. Firstly, if the 'disreputable descent' element was a basic part of the canonical Tarentine legend, and this was accepted and not resented by the Tarentines, why should those Athenians of slanderous intent have thought that the Locrians would consider it offensive? And if it was offensive, and considered such by the Locrians, why should the latter have adopted it, as they had done at least in Polybius' time? If it was not considered offensive it is difficult to see why the Athenians should have bothered to invent it; indeed, it is difficult to see why they should have bothered to invent such mythopoeic propaganda at all against unimportant Locri who may have been hostile to them, but with whom they were not fighting. Lastly, since Athenian propaganda would on this hypothesis be responsible both for the story of the servile descent of the Locrians and for that of the participation of Tarentines in the foundation of Locri, we might have expected the Athenians to have made a better job of it and presented a more tidy picture; as it is, the Locrian and the Tarentine foundation stories taken in conjunction with the tradition of Tarentine participation, contain contradictions which are very natural if we consider the first and the third as having sprung spontaneously at Locri for the reasons, and in the way, suggested in this paper, but which would be difficult to explain in a planned propagandistic invention: while the Partheniai of Taras belong to the generation conceived and born during the First Messenian War, the Locrian women and their slaves were adults in the course of the same war, at the end of which they sailed to Italy and founded Locri. That is, if seen in historical terms, the combination of the foundation legends suggests the chronological priority of Locri over Taras, rather than the opposite order of events implied in the tradition of Tarentine participation in the foundation of Locri—the latter is, of course, also the correct one. The discrepancy between the two stories indicates, in my opinion, that they did not originate in one coherent propagandistic plan.

In any case, the main argument against all these rationalizing theories which see in the Locrian foundation legend the product of hostile propaganda, lies in the particular significance of this type of foundation legend involving reversed world conditions, which has been discussed in the main part of this paper.