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Dear Readers,

In this our third issue of *Kerberos*, we are excited to present you with six new and intriguing papers by undergraduate classicists. In our commitment to the wide scope of “Classics” we have carefully chosen essays that explore those somewhat more niche areas of the discipline for our summer issue.

This issue takes us away from the more traditional topoi of Classics, exploring Bronze age Making, Byzantine culture, Roman orientalism, and more contemporary discussions on Classical receptions and Museum debates. We hope to help guide our readers through an exploration of the multiple facets of the classical discipline and perhaps aide in broadening the scope of your conception of “Classics”.

On a more personal note, this will be our final issue as Editors. We are overjoyed with the reception of our little journal and have been deeply moved by the support of our peers and our mentors as we have navigated *Kerberos*' inception and establishment within the King's College London Classics Department! We want to thank everyone who has pushed us to keep working, despite a few speed-bumps along the way. Thank you to our wonderful team of editors, we could not and frankly would not have done this without you. Thank you to our readers, for continuing to interact with us online and keeping us on schedule with your comments and suggestions.

Thank you once again to *Eris* for being our muse.

A final thank you, and a warm welcome to Becky Brown and Emma Bentley! They will be taking over from us as editors in the upcoming 2019-2020 academic year and we could not be more excited to see what they bring to our “child” *Kerberos*!

It's been a labour of love.

Sincerely,

Bryony Callaghan & Giulia Vidoni

Editors in Chief

In Search of the Pillars of Heracles¹

Oliver D. Smith

¹ Online version: <https://kclkerberos.wordpress.com/2019/08/29/in-search-of-the-pillars-of-heracles/>

In Search of the Pillars of Heracles

Oliver D. Smith, Open University

Abstract

The Pillars of Heracles were columns ancient Greeks regarded as marking the boundaries of the furthest west. In Greek mythology, Heracles laid down the columns when sailing to the island Erytheia at the edge of the world. It is argued the original columns were located during the time of Homer (late 8th century BCE) and Hesiod (c. 700 BCE) at Epirus (northwestern Greece) but were relocated to the south Iberian Peninsula in the 630s BCE, when Greeks expanded their geographical horizon and began trading with Tartesso-Iberians.

Introduction

The Pillars of Heracles were two columns or statues² located at the western edge of the world to mark “furthermost limits of seafaring” reached by Heracles (Pind. *Nem.* 3. 23). In Greek mythology, one of Heracles’ labours involved him travelling to the extreme west and sailing Okeanos (the encircling ocean) to the island Erytheia, home of Geryon’s cattle (Hes, *Th.* 288-293; Ps-Apollod. 2. 5. 10). Heracles either put down the columns on Erytheia (Schol. Pind. *Ol.* 3. 44) or the westernmost promontory of land before sailing Okeanos (Dio. Sic. 4. 18. 4). While Heracles’ wanderings were likely imaginary – geography of his twelve labours involved real locations³ similar to the itinerary of Odysseus’ wanderings and voyage of the Argonauts; the columns were considered to delimit the utmost west by ancient Greek sailors (Strab. 3. 5. 5-6).

² At least one source describes them as statues (Eustat. ad Dion. Perieg. 64) but they were more commonly thought to be columns or pillars (*stêlai*). Strabo (3. 5. 6) notes they originally were man-made objects, but overtime they crumbled and were replaced by an appellation with natural rock formations (such as mountains) that were nearby.

³ Dueck (2012: 25-27) discussing geography of the labours notes that: “Myths often gained a touch of authenticity by including real geographical data”. Six (or seven) labours took place in the Peloponnese: Nemean lion (Argolis), Lernaean Hydra (Argolis), Ceryneian golden-horned deer (Arcadia), Erymanthian boar (Arcadia), Augean stables (Elis), Stymphalian birds (Arcadia) and Heracles entered the underworld Hades at Tarnarum (Laconia) to capture Cerberus; one in Crete: Cretan bull (Knossos); one in Thrace: Diomedes’ Mares (Abdera); the three remaining labours took place in faraway places at edges of the world (Geryon’s cattle, Amazons and apples of Hesperides).

Columns in Iberian Peninsula

The earliest classical source to mention the columns, Hecataeus' *Periodos ges* (frg. 6 Müller) written in the late 6th century BCE places them at Mastia, traditionally identified as Cartagena, Spain. Hecataeus seems to have been alone in locating the columns at Mastia; the geographer Pseudo-Scymnus (142-146) placed them near Mainake, that archaeologists now identify with the city Málaga (about 320 km west of Cartagena). In contrast, the 5th century BCE astronomer Euctemon thought the Pillars of Heracles were on the opposite sides of the Strait of Gibraltar; one column on Kalpe, meaning Gibraltar's promontory; another at Mount Abilyx⁴ (Euct. ap. Av. Ora. 333-340). The renowned historian Herodotus in *The Histories* (c. 440 BCE) positions a column on the Libyan coast (4. 43. 3-4, 181. 1, 185. 1; 8. 132. 1) and claims Tartessos⁵ lay near the Pillars of Heracles (4. 152. 2) which vaguely puts the columns opposite the same strait.

There was disagreement about the precise location of the Libyan column at the Strait; the 1st century BCE geographer Strabo (3. 5. 5) notes while it was sometimes identified with Mount Abilyx (Erat. frg. 106 Roller) a different theory placed it on an islet (perhaps the island Perejil). Ignoring the ancient dispute about the Libyan column, Strabo (3. 5. 5) informs us most Greeks generally accepted Heracles' columns were in the vicinity of the Strait of Gibraltar, citing for example Dicearchus, Eratosthenes and Polybius; to this list can be added: Pseudo-Skylax (1), Plato⁶ (Ti. 24e), Pseudo-Apollodorus (2. 5. 10) and Dionysius Penegetes (64-73). Posidonius (frg. 246 Kidd) however rejected this more popular view and argued for a separate tradition: the Pillars of Heracles sat inside a Punic temple dedicated to Melqart at Gádeira (Cádiz), Spain.

⁴ Monte Hacho (Ceuta) or Jebela Musa (Morocco) both opposite of Gibraltar.

⁵ Tartessos was a region usually identified by ancient Greeks with the Guadalquivir valley in the southern Iberian Peninsula, but Eratosthenes (frg. 153 Roller) argued "Tartessis" covered a broader territory reaching to the strait.

⁶ Plato's description of a "mouth" near the Atlantic Ocean (and columns) can only mean the Strait of Gibraltar.



Figure 1. Four locations of the Pillars of Heracles in the south Iberian Peninsula.

Based on archaeological discoveries, it is known Greeks established commercial contact with Tartesso-Iberian tribes on the southern and southeast Iberian Peninsula during the last third of 7th century BCE⁷ (Domínguez, 2006: 436). This date is corroborated by Herodotus (4. 152. 2) who records a tradition of a merchant from Samos, named Kolaios, who discovered Tartessos in the 630s BCE. A simple solution to the four locations of the columns (i.e. Mastia, Mainake, Strait of Gibraltar and Cádiz, see Figure 1.) is they moved when Greeks increased geographical knowledge of the Iberian Peninsula from the southeast coast; westward, beyond the Strait: “the Pillars later had to be moved to accord with the fact the Straits had become penetrable” (Romm, 1992: 17). In Greek myth, Erytheia that sat just beyond the columns, was placed near Tartessos (Stes. ap. Strab. 3. 2. 11), Gádeira (Hdt. 4. 8. 2), the Strait (Erat. frg. 153 Roller) or an isle off Libya; Ptolemy’s Geography (c. 150 CE) identifies Erytheia with the Moroccan Mogador Isle. The reluctance of some Greeks to re-locate the columns from the Strait to Gádeira might have stemmed from hostile Carthaginian activity, or lack of accurate topographical information. In regard to the former, Strabo (17. 1. 19) and Pseudo-Aristotle’s *On Marvellous Things Heard* (84) mention Carthaginians tried to prevent Greeks sailing beyond the columns, while its likely

⁷ A small number of Greek pottery sherds have been discovered in the south of the Iberian Peninsula that predate the 7th century BCE by one or more centuries, however, as Domínguez (2006: 432-433) cautions, they show signs of having been transported by Phoenicians and can’t be used as evidence for Greek contact with Tartesso-Iberians.

Carthaginians spread fictitious stories to Greeks about waters beyond the Strait as being poorly navigable – to dissuade their rival trading competitors from going there.⁸ Herodotus (4. 196. 1) had heard tales about Carthaginian exploration beyond the columns but was always hesitant to relocate the Pillars of Heracles from the Strait, to Gádeira (Cádiz); he was apparently unable to find a first-hand eyewitness who had seen the Atlantic Ocean (3. 115. 2) beyond the columns.

Columns in Central Mediterranean?

It is tempting to argue that before ancient Greeks located the Pillars of Heracles in the Iberian Peninsula, that they did so outside of Spain, when their geographical horizon was more limited. The poet Hesiod who flourished c. 700 BCE had heard of the island Erytheia, writing Heracles sailed Okeanos to reach it (*Th.* 289-294). Noticeably, Hesiod doesn't localise Erytheia in the south Iberian Peninsula, unlike Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*, written a century later (Curtis, 2011: 15). While Hesiod doesn't provide any geographical clues (only that Erytheia lay in Okeanos, somewhere in the far west⁹), the fact he predated discovery of the Iberian Peninsula by more than half a century means he couldn't have thought Erytheia sat there, nor Heracles' columns.

A non-Iberian location for the Pillars of Heracles has elicited the interest of modern Atlantis enthusiasts, who seek to find the island of Atlantis described by Plato beyond the columns (*Ti.* 24e). Evidence clearly points to Atlantis being an imaginary island (Smith, 2016) and very few classical scholars take seriously the notion Atlantis existed, despite this view remains popular among laypeople and amateur archaeologists. Although Plato rather unambiguously locates the island of Atlantis in the Atlantic Ocean – Atlantis enthusiasts who recognise the impossibility of an Atlantic site for Atlantis (given the fact there is no geological or archaeological evidence for an ancient island civilisation) argue he must have been mistaken. The island and columns,

⁸ Water beyond the columns was chaotic (Schol. ad Pind. *Ol.* 3. 44) and too shallow with mud (Arist. *Met.* 2. 1).

⁹ Erytheia (from *erythrós* = red) translates as “red island” a reference to the western sunset.

they maintain were somewhere else, for example central Mediterranean.¹⁰ An obvious problem with this theory is there are no classical sources that place the Pillars of Heracles in this region.

In 2002, Italian journalist Sergio Frau published a book locating Heracles' columns at the Strait of Sicily citing a fragment attributed to Timaeus (c. 300 BCE) by Karl Müller: "The island of Sardinia, near the Pillars of Heracles" (frg. 28). Despite Frau (2002: 285) arguing Timaeus had written these words, if he read Müller's *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* he would realise the source is *On Lycophron* (796) written in the 12th century by Byzantine poet John Tzetzes. The mistake was made by Müller to list this as a fragment of Timaeus (when Tzetzes doesn't quote or reference Timaeus); it was subsequently removed in the *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*. Anello (2014) discusses the context of Tzetzes placing the columns near Sardinia and notes what he had in mind was "projection of Sardinia towards limit between civilization and barbarism". In other words, Tzetzes' comment shouldn't be taken literal, but as a metaphor.

Another Atlantis enthusiast who has erroneously said there are classical sources that position the columns at the Strait of Sicily (stretching to the Lesser Syrtis) is Anton Mifsud, author of the book *The Pillars of Heracles: Myth or Reality?* (2017). None of the sources Mifsud cites such as Apollonius Rhodes (4. 1230 f.) actually place the columns in this region; the classicist Vidal-Naquet (2007: 126) has noted recent attempts to re-locate the Pillars of Heracles to the Sicilian Strait are poorly justified since no "single ancient text" supports such an identification.

Columns in Epirus

As it happens there do exist some classical sources that put Erytheia outside of the south Iberian Peninsula, but not in the central Mediterranean. A fragment of Hecataeus' *Genealogies* (late 6th century BCE) preserved by the 2nd century CE historian Arrian (An. 2. 16. 5) says the home

¹⁰ This argument is traceable to an article "Atlantis – A New Theory" (Weir, 1959) that claims the columns were originally located at the Strait of Messina, however, the Strait of Sicily remains by far the more popular hypothesis.

of Geryon, where Heracles' stole his cattle, was in the area between Ambracia and Amphiloichi, on the southern boundary of Epirus (Greece). A separate Epirotic tradition recorded by Pseudo-Skylax (26) locates Erytheia nearby, but to the north, at Kestria. According to Fowler (2013: 299) Hecataeus possibly extended Geryon's kingdom northward into Thesprotia. Furthermore, ancient Greeks thought cattle in Epirus and surrounding territories descended from Geryon's.

Although some classicists have argued Hecataeus' localisation of Geryon or Erytheia in Epirus was a rationalisation of the story, others consider the Epirotic tradition to be the earliest when the geographical horizon of the Greeks was more limited when the utmost west was Epirus and the Ionian Sea (northwestern Greece). This is supported by reconstructing Homer's (late 8th century BCE) and Hesiod's (c. 700 BCE) geographical knowledge, that establishes the Ionian Sea as Okeanos, in the remote west. Odgen (2014: 2012) points out "there was a time when the Thesprotian coast, the westernmost edge of the mainland occupied by the Greeks, was regarded as a sort of 'ultimate west'." Arguably, Homer (by a few decades) predated the earliest Greek colonies in Italy and Sicily, which is why he was unfamiliar¹¹ with the central Mediterranean.

¹¹ Homer vaguely knew of Sicels across the Ionian Sea (*Od.* 24. 211) but he seems to have had no topographical information about Sicily: "To the west he has heard vaguely of the tribes of southern Italy and Sicily, the Sikeloi and Sikaniói, but they are mere names to him" (De Camp, 1970: 217). Eratosthenes (frg. 6 Roller) claimed Homer had no geographical knowledge of the central Mediterranean region. Hesiod had heard of places such as Mount Etna because he was contemporary to the earliest Greek colonies in Italy and Sicily, but his knowledge was hazy, rather than accurate; the latter is for example demonstrated by his error Etruria was a group of islands (*Th.* 1015).

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