

Introduction: Aims, Contexts and Connectivity

The Bosphoran kingdom was an extraordinary phenomenon, located at the north-eastern periphery of Greek culture. It emerged from the extended process of Greek settlement in the Black Sea region, which was evidently in train from the seventh and even eighth century BC, the beginnings of archaic Greek history. While a later chronology has been normative and fills the handbooks, archaeological progress at Panticapaeum in particular demonstrates the weakness of the inferences from archaeological chance upon which the much-repeated chronology has been built. The recent discoveries of V. P. Tolstikov and his team from the Pushkin Museum, on the upper portion of its acropolis, have shifted the foundation date of Panticapaeum back about a century, to c. 650 BC or a couple of decades later, with substantial construction and defensive walling. Imported pottery places the redating beyond reasonable doubt. We can only wonder how much earlier further work may take us. Meanwhile, philological efforts to deny written evidence of these early years in the story of Greek settlement around the Black Sea have served a useful purpose, but have themselves depended upon a series of unwarranted assumptions, not least about the archaeology.¹ Happily, chronology in itself has never been a key part of the present enquiry. However, it is worth highlighting this major new development from the first, because it illustrates so much about the nature of the study of the ancient Black Sea more generally. For modern scholarship on the region features recurrent encounters between accumulated scholarly

¹ See Tolstikov (2015) on earliest Panticapaeum; cf. Samar and Astashova (2015) and Tugusheva (2015) on early ceramics (with abstracts in English). On the literary tradition and the problems of the scholar's quest for beginnings, see Braund (2005c); Ivantchik (2017). The wonderful catalogue of a major Bosphorus exhibition in Moscow (Kuznetsov and Tolstikov 2017) appeared as this book went to press: it contains a host of material touching on the themes of this book (often well illustrated for the first time), and offers further lines of enquiry, e.g. Pharnaces' dedication (probably) to Artemis (not identified as Ephesia: CIRB 28), as well as bibliography on a range of hypotheses that have not been pursued in detail here.

traditions (entailing assumptions of all kinds) and the present readiness to raise and follow questions. In a sense, of course, that is characteristic of all research. However, in the Black Sea world the creative process has all but caught fire, so that over the last few years the Bosporan kingdom has come to look very different – even in its physical geography – from the place we imagined only a decade or two ago. In particular, geophysical examination (coring, especially) of the Taman peninsula, across the water from Panticapaeum, has given a strong picture of the watery environment there, possibly entailing even opportunities for passage by water between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov that were distinct from the major thoroughfare past Panticapaeum.²

The Greeks who came into the region were commonly from cities which had their own colonial pasts. Miletus played a leading role: this was an achievement in which the city later took a particular pride, which could entail notions of military conquest, divine mission and a major contribution to the expansion of Greek culture, and even more besides.³ However, settlers came from other places in the eastern Aegean too – for example, from the island of Lesbos, and from Teos, which itself claimed origins in far-off Thessaly, from which the Argo had come to open up the Black Sea.⁴ Meanwhile, settlers also came direct from mainland Greece, as the Megarians in particular are said to have come, either alone or in company with others, such as Boeotians.⁵ Already in the archaic period, therefore, the picture of settlement around the Black Sea is crowded with Greeks of different origins, each with their own particular local traditions – in religion as in much else. Indeed, when we bring into that picture also the many settlers about whom we know nothing and also the many traders and other itinerants who came and went, together with the secondary settlements that were established from earlier Greek foundations, then the crowd of different Greeks threatens to become a disordered mob, until we realise too that their ventures were dwarfed by the local populations already to be found around the Black Sea, as well as other non-Greeks who were drawn there besides. For the establishment and development of these various settlements was by no means only a matter of Greek action

² Schlotzhauer and Zhuravlev (2014); cf. Zhuravlev and Schlotzhauer (2016). The present study does not require any close assessment of these important findings, but the maps shown here are broadly conservative. Cf. Buynevich (2017).

³ Milesian epigraphy indicates also the importance of all this for interstate relations centuries later: e.g. I.Milet. 1. 3. 155 (especially on the Hellespont and Propontis) and in general, Jones (1999).

⁴ With consequential notions of Thessalian links e.g. with Phanagoria: Braund (2014a).

⁵ On Megarian overseas settlements, see Robu (2014) and, still more broadly, Malkin (2011).

and agency. These inchoate settlements lived or died primarily according to their (in)ability to build relationships with non-Greeks around them, whether agriculturalists or nomads or some mix of the two. The contribution of these neighbours is most obvious through the fact that the various Greek settlers were overwhelmingly male, as far as we can judge. These men took their women from among others in the region, through agreement, purchase or violence. The outlook of the women involved is unknown to us, but we need not assume their unwillingness, or that they may not have on occasion played proactive roles in the process.

In consequence, while these Black Sea cities (like the cities from which they sprang) developed their own histories as grand tales of Greek innovation, the reality was clearly much less epic and rather less Greek. Greek arrivals to the challenging new environment of the Black Sea, as elsewhere in colonial history, needed at least acquiescence and probably some active support from the natives of the place. Accordingly, despite the self-consciously Greek identities of these colonial communities, we may in principle suspect that there were significant non-Greek contributions to their various histories and societies. Certainly, Greeks of the Mediterranean were quick enough to believe that there was something not entirely Greek about these Pontics. As we shall see, that sense of alienation between Greeks of different regions meant that there was sometimes a dark side to the connections that were made between the Black Sea region and cults of the Mediterranean world, which are most striking in the case of Parthenos – a constructively martial deity for Greeks in the Crimea, but imagined among Greeks elsewhere as a source of ghastly rites, surrounding especially the human sacrifice of Greeks themselves to a barbarian monstrosity. We shall see how colonisation, and indeed colonialist ideology, offered a means by which such awkward contradictions might be resolved, if not completely – for different places had different needs, while transregional inconsistency was usual enough across Greek culture, not least in Greek religion and cults. Throughout this book we shall have cause to return regularly to ancient and modern obsessions with ethnicity, including the familiar (and often misguided) assumption of hostility between Greek and non-Greek, as well as (also sometimes misguided) assumptions of friendship and cooperation between the various Greeks of the Black Sea region, who could and did go to war with each other.

It was from these complex and rather hazy beginnings (for it is the nature of beginnings to recede as we approach) that the Bosporean kingdom took shape around a ruler based at Panticapaeum (modern Kerch) in the eastern Crimea. In all likelihood the most important moment in the formation

of the kingdom was the establishment of the Spartocid dynasty, which would rule in the Bosphorus from the 430s BC until its replacement by Mithridates VI Eupator at the end of the second century BC. However, we cannot pretend to have much knowledge of their predecessors, the so-called Archaeanactids, whose collective name might suggest earlier coalescence of the Bosphoran communities, whether they each had realms at the same time or were a dynasty represented by a single monarch. Certainly, Diodorus seems to consider them kings, in whichever sense.⁶ Already in the fifth century BC the Bosphoran ruler's authority extended not only along the eastern Crimea, but also across the straits on the Taman peninsula. For the geography of the kingdom was remarkable, as we have begun to see. It will be a recurrent issue in this book. For the Straits of Kerch (known in antiquity as the Cimmerian Bosphorus) constituted a swathe of sea water that ran broadly north–south through the centre of the kingdom. On the Crimean side of these waters, the Greek settlements occupied the best sites at the coast itself. Their orientation on the straits should not be obscured by their use of the near hinterland, nor by the kingdom's ambitions to control the whole of the Crimea, including the city of Chersonesus at its south-west tip and the local peoples of the more southerly parts of the Crimean peninsula, whom the Greeks often called Taurians. Meanwhile, to the east of the straits lay another environment, dominated by the Greek settlements of this further shore and by the great and shifting delta of the River Kuban, called Hypanis in antiquity. We have already noted the fruits of recent geographical study in this complex and watery region, the Taman peninsula. Accordingly, with this great bipartite division in mind, modern scholars usually write of the European Bosphorus of the Crimea and the Asiatic Bosphorus of the Kuban delta region, the Taman peninsula. On that usual conception, the Bosphoran kingdom consisted of two parts, divided by the straits, as well as the minor settlements of the Sea of Azov (the ancient Maeotis) to the north, which was dominated by the city of Tanais at the delta of another great river, the Don (the ancient Tanais). In the course of this book we will return frequently to this division, for the two main parts of the kingdom are different in many ways. The Crimean side is drier, quite rocky and rugged, while the Taman peninsula has few elevations (although it is more volcanic): it tended to wetland and had no

⁶ Diod. 12. 31. 1 has them rule as kings, but this is almost all we have on them and can hardly be pressed. The name ('Ancient Lords' Dynasty?') might well be a creation of the Spartocid centuries, though other explanations are conceivable, including possible claims by these 'kings' to descent from the founders perhaps simply an Archaeanax; cf. Shelov-Kovedyayev (2013). See further Zavoykin (2013) and Molev (2017).

significant stone of its own, even for crude buildings. As we shall see, that paucity of stone is most unhelpful for our use of the inscribed and other stones which have survived there from antiquity.

Meanwhile, these physical divisions were accompanied too by divisions in the local populations among whom Greeks had established their communities. Most ancient authors were satisfied with catch-all terms for such peoples: here they were often called Scythians by far-off Greeks, rooted in the Mediterranean and impatient of local circumstances and niceties. Herodotus is a rare example of a Mediterranean author who was concerned to probe beneath vague terminology of this kind – a concern which he demonstrates repeatedly in book 4 of his *Histories*. Together with the geographers (notably Strabo, who died c. AD 25 or so)⁷ and the considerable local Bosphoran voices that have survived largely through inscriptions and coins, Herodotus reveals that the north Black Sea was a place of many peoples who were in his view not only non-Greek (albeit sometimes partially Greek), but also often non-Scythian in whole or part. For the present study, it is a pity that he had so little to say about the Bosphoran kingdom, and almost nothing about those who lived there, Greek or non-Greek. His focus and the evident source of much of his knowledge about the region as a whole was well to the west of the Crimea, at Olbia. There is no reason to suppose that the much-travelled historian ever journeyed as far as the kingdom itself, and he makes no claim to have done so. Since his overwhelming concern was Scythia and Scythian culture, we may find in his neglect of the kingdom reason to suppose that he took it to be distinct from those parts that could be considered Scythian in some sense. For, as we have begun to see, the Bosphoran kingdom evidently regarded itself as Greek, and was evidently regarded even by the more doubtful Greeks of the Mediterranean as Greek, even if it occasionally suited Athenian orators to throw Scythian ethnicity at its elite, in much the same way as Athenian comic poets might throw Scythianness also at other Athenians.⁸ Again and again, whether in formal inscriptions or in such speeches as Isocrates' *Trapeziticus*, the kingdom appears as nothing other than Greek, however idiosyncratic it may have seemed to the Athenian democracy – itself hardly typical of Greek culture. This was a form of Greek culture that came to

⁷ After the death of his associate Juba II in AD 23 or 24: Strabo 17. 3. 7, with admirable remarks by Roller (2014) 15–16, also on the various modern hypotheses as to how and when Strabo wrote his great work, mostly best forgotten.

⁸ Demosthenes' descent from a lady of the region caused him to be characterised as a Scythian: e.g. Aeschin. 2. 173 and pp. 196 and 260 below on Bol'shaya Bliznitsa. We cannot use such rhetoric to mine hard data, as Müller (2010) desires.

resemble the Greek kingdoms that developed elsewhere in the north, in Thrace and in Macedon, while comparisons might also be made – rather earlier – between the Bosporan rulers and the various ‘tyrants’ who ruled on the south Pontic coast or the eastern Aegean, largely under the aegis of Persia. While the Bosporan elite had a certain taste for images of Scythians, that was true of other Greeks too: there is no reason to suppose that any wished to be Scythians or to ape them, any more than to suppose that the wealthy who owned such artefacts desired to have the lives of the ordinary Scythians who were depicted on them. In sum, our evidence is clear (though we can always desire more of it) that the many peoples of the kingdom formed a kingdom which sought to be Greek, using Greek language, calendar, cults and so on. The fact that non-Greek peoples are usually listed in Bosporan inscriptions separately from the core realm, speaks also of abiding distinction and a measure of alienation too: we may observe the general absence from such lists of ‘Scythians’. The steppe-dwellers of the northern Crimea and further afield across the North Caucasian plain were not part of the realm.

The Bosporan kingdom, therefore, encompassed unusual diversity in human and physical geography, so that there was a great potential for fragmentation. That was in addition to the more usual fragility of monarchical systems that arises from the ever-present issue of succession to the throne. Under the Spartocids, Mithridates and the kings who ruled thereafter as friends of the Roman empire, there was a sustained threat of local uprisings among Greeks and non-Greeks alike, which sometimes led to actual conflict, with or without the larger context of a struggle for succession. Diodorus gives a fairly detailed account of the fighting between brothers that brought King Eumelus to power for a short reign towards the end of the fourth century BC.⁹ There would be other such warfare, notably the conflict between the brothers Cotys and Mithridates for rule under Claudius, and there were doubtless lesser conflicts at the time of other successions, about which we hear little or nothing.¹⁰ The important point, however, is that the kingdom persisted. The fourth and third centuries BC were an era of wealth and prosperity in the Bosporus, or so archaeology seems consistently to suggest. The kingdom had its difficulties, including threats from the interior, even if the significance of these is sometimes overstated. Mithridates Eupator saved the kingdom from invaders, it seems, as he did elsewhere for Greek communities across the northern

⁹ Diod. 20. 22–4.

¹⁰ On Cotys I, see Chapter 4.

Black Sea – or so his supporters said. And much of that role was taken over by Rome after Eupator committed suicide in Panticapaeum itself in 63 BC. With Roman support, which came to involve even the regular provision of subsidies, the kingdom persisted strongly into the third century AD, when Roman help was no longer available, sufficient and reliable.¹¹ The kingdom had persisted for centuries, despite its apparently disjointed nature. The kings who ruled there from Augustan times onwards (Asander, Aspurgus and the rest) were, by and large, at least as successful as their Spartocid predecessors. They were extraordinarily and consistently, as we shall see, assiduous in cultivating and demonstrating a special bond with Rome, its emperors and its imperial family, not least through religion and cult.¹² However, without imperial support, the kingdom was unable to resist the Goths and Huns who seem finally to have brought it to an end in the later fourth century AD. In the course of the many centuries before its demise, however, the potential for fragmentation had somehow been controlled and the kingdom had remained coherent and successful, albeit with some help in its harder times. A central contention of this book is that the religion and cults of the kingdom played vital roles in that survival and success, with Aphrodite Ourania very much to the fore.

It is easy to perceive the very straits themselves as a major factor in the kingdom's vulnerability to disintegration. Certainly, the straits did constitute a real physical barrier to movement by land between the two principal parts of the realm. However, as often with waterways, the straits brought also substantial opportunities. For, as we have seen, the main cities of the kingdom sat around the waters like Plato's 'frogs and ants around a puddle' (*Phaedo* 109b, of the Black Sea Greeks, as well as their Mediterranean cousins). In that sense, we must understand the straits not only as a barrier through the kingdom, but as its central focus from west and east alike. It no doubt helped that for much of their length the straits were no great barrier to intervisibility, while particular crossing points were favoured, as we shall see. One settlement, Porthmium, to the north of Panticapaeum, bears a name (roughly 'Ferry-crossing') that expresses its command of such a crossing, which was key to its very existence: it is no accident that the modern ferry still departs from very close by the remains of the ancient town. We hear enough in our ancient sources to make it clear that these waters were thronged with shipping of all kinds, moving up and down the coasts, cutting to and fro across the straits and making

¹¹ Such is broadly Zosimus' analysis, at least: Zos. 1. 31.

¹² On imperial cult in the Bosporus, see below pp. 251–55.

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the longer transit north and south between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the ancient Maeotis. In antiquity, as sometimes now, this was a packed seascape, akin to the busy waterway of the better known (Thracian) Bosphorus by Byzantium, where too we see settlement clustered on each shore and the benefits of the waterway for all. Meanwhile, we shall also see that pastoralists could and did find their way across this barrier between the Crimea and the Taman peninsula, even on a regular basis. For to the frequent consternation of others, nomads require strategies and equipment to enable the crossing of waterways. While Greek writers at a distance from the reality might contemplate stories of mud-deposits and, especially, ice, nomads and their neighbours (Greeks or not) were well aware of this ingenuity.¹³

In this book these broad historical, socio-political and economic contexts will figure at every turn, in whole or in part. For we shall be concerned especially with forms of Artemis (Parthenos and Ephesia) and Aphrodite (Ourania and Isis) in these colonial and other historical processes in the Bosporan kingdom. In each case we shall trace the roles of those deities not only in traditions of settlement in the Bosphorus, but also in the development of the kingdom internally and externally. We shall see that in their different ways these goddesses contributed substantially to the internal cohesion of the kingdom, not least by forming and strengthening bonds across the central straits. While Parthenos dominated to the west, in the Crimea, and Aphrodite Ourania boasted a great sanctuary at Apatouron to the east, both goddesses also reached across the intervening waters, whether alone or in the company of Heracles or Achilles. At the same time, we shall see too how these goddesses helped to build a place for the kingdom in the larger world of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean in general, connecting with Greeks and non-Greeks as far afield as Egypt and Syria to the east and Massalia and Magna Graecia to the west. The goddesses' major contributions to the cohesion and very identity of the Bosporan kingdom will be a recurrent theme in the pages to come.

Very often studies of Greek religion take one of two directions: either they offer an over-arching view of a single deity across an extended chronological and/or geographical portion of antiquity, or they offer a full account

¹³ See esp. Vakhtina, Vinogradov and Rogov (1980) and Chapter 1. In a neglected section of his history (1. 104), Zosimus reports a story that the Huns were able to cross the straits because mud from the Tanais had enabled their passage. He knew enough to be suspicious of the tale, though sedimentation and coastal change have certainly been important in the history of the Taman peninsula, as was already understood by the fourth century BC: see Aristotle, *Met.* 353a on accruing silt and reduced navigability in the Sea of Azov: on Aristotle and Olympiodorus in this regard, see Wilson (2013) 173.

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of the religion of a particular community or region. The present study has a scope which resembles, at once, both and neither of those alternatives. Here we are concerned with four goddesses, who cluster around the pairing of Artemis and Aphrodite, who tend to be opposites and yet also have so much in common, as we shall see in the Bosporus. While there will be recurrent engagement with other deities (and, especially, with these deities in other places), this book does not seek to offer an all-embracing study of any of the goddesses in Greek culture as a whole, although it is to be hoped that each chapter may contribute significantly to our larger understanding of them, individually and collectively. At the same time, neither does this book attempt to provide a complete account of the religion of the Bosporan kingdom *tout court*, which is an impossible task that has already been attempted often enough, as we shall see in the course of this study. Let us be clear from the first, therefore, that this is a book about four connected goddesses, which engages only when necessary and relevant with other Bosporan deities and cults, and with cults elsewhere in the ancient world. The larger aim is to explore how these goddesses mattered in the Bosporus and, in particular, the contributions they made at a state level through the long life of the kingdom across a millennium or so. Here the city of Chersonesus requires a special word, because it may be considered both inside and outside the Bosporan kingdom at different times in its history. However, its distinct identity from the Bosporus during most of its history means that, although we shall pay considerable attention to this city and its Parthenos, there will be no attempt here to offer a full study of all aspects of the goddess there. In any case, there already exists such a study, to which reference will often be made.¹⁴

Such fundamentals are best clarified in any introduction, but clarification is all the more required in this book, for reasons which are again best made explicit. An unusual feature of this book is its attempt to bridge the large gap between two scholarly traditions. In 1913, when Ellis Minns produced his extraordinary study of the northern Black Sea and beyond, *Scythians and Greeks*, there were well-established contacts between what we may call the western and eastern traditions in scholarship on the ancient world. In the course of the present book, for example, we shall touch briefly on Arthur Evans' casual allusion to his visit to Kerch, as if it had been a trip to Athens or Cairo. Such contacts have always persisted, but they have been swallowed up for the most part in the ideological, linguistic

¹⁴ Namely, Rusyayeva and Rusyayeva (1999) with extensive bibliography on the large scholarly tradition; cf. Popova (2011).

and geo-political chasm that opened up between these two worlds after the revolution in Russia. Alliance in the Second World War did little or nothing to restore pre-revolutionary norms (reasons need not detain us), but with the break-up of the Soviet Union there came real progress in contact and better mutual understanding among scholars in both traditions. A particular landmark was the energetic activity of the Danish National Research Fund's Black Sea Centre at Aarhus, under the much-missed Pia Guldager Bilde. The volumes it created are fundamental, and freely available online. However, all readers of this book should be aware that the two traditions retain a strong independence, not least in method and bibliography. Language-barriers also subsist, notably in Britain, where the generation that learned Russian in the course of national service has retired or passed on. The most obvious outcome of these abiding problems is that few scholars in the western tradition – especially Anglophones – engage seriously with the Bosporan kingdom, unless it is to include a particular artefact in the study of something else. The various translated Russian works, for example, that have tended to appear in recent years are certainly welcome, but they constitute a tiny fraction of the whole and inevitably rest on a massive tradition to which non-Russianists have access only with great difficulty. Meanwhile, in Russia and Ukraine, where almost all work on the Bosporus has been conducted, there is an understandable tendency to look inwards to home-grown work, centred on studies which have established the norms of that internal tradition. As a result of all this (and more) Minns' great book has had a fate which is at once comic and tragic. Among Bosporan scholars, it is generally regarded with real respect, but it seldom appears in scholarly footnotes and its fundamental contributions hardly figure. In western traditions, where the Black Sea in general is avoided by most specialists in antiquity, Minns' book is hardly known at all, despite the fact that (extraordinary to say) it is undoubtedly one of the greatest scholarly achievements in the study of antiquity. My own straw poll of ten senior UK scholars (specialists in antiquity, but not the Black Sea) revealed that about half had heard of it, but none claimed ever to have opened it. The fate of Minns' book serves to illustrate the persistence of scholarly barriers and even alienation, as well as the strange habit of many Anglophone scholars, above all, of ignoring this large part of the ancient world.

With all that in mind, in writing a book of much more modest ambition than Minns' classic, I am well aware that there will be surprises and complaints alike from each side of this abiding scholarly divide. I have tried to address issues that have been considered important by scholars

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in both traditions, some of which may be either alien or baffling to one side or the other. By and large I have followed my own 'western' scholarly tradition (at least among Anglophones) by deliberately not producing epideictic footnotes overflowing with the names of all the scholars who have ever written on any given topic. Instead, while I hope to have read all or most of this huge bibliography, I have confined my references to the studies that contribute specifically to the arguments that I am advancing (whether for or against them), albeit with some favour for the most recent and accessible, on the assumption that those interested in following the scholarly chain to its full extent will avail themselves of the bibliography given by the studies which I have selected for mention. Meanwhile, I should also explain that I have omitted all mention of publications which are associated, in my opinion, with plagiaristic activity, preferring to cite original work and to have regard for a UK academic environment where even undergraduates are severely punished for plagiarism. Throughout, on a more positive note, I have been fortunate indeed in the friends and institutions that have made publications and information of all kinds available to me, and have welcomed me (usually the only Anglophone and sometimes the only foreigner) at their regular conferences. In the Preface I have acknowledged much of this help, but I am aware that I am unlikely to have expressed adequately either the extent or the depth of my gratitude.

I make no apology at all for engaging closely and critically in this book with the ancient texts in the original ancient languages (I supply my own translations, unless otherwise stated). Unlike Minns, many scholars of the Bosporan kingdom today have little or no Greek and less Latin, so that (for example) arguments about the precise meaning of Strabo or Pausanias are attempted on the basis of translations which may or may not be broadly accurate, but which can never convey the original text, as all translators know full well. As I once observed with regard to Roman Britain, it is quite extraordinary that archaeologists (and some historians) who spend so much time and effort on the best methodology in excavation and the like, seem willing to proceed without any serious attention to methodology in the reading and interpretation of texts, for which the basis is a knowledge of the ancient languages and the barest minimum requirement is an understanding of the various kinds of ancient literature and its tendencies. No doubt, the Bosphorus is a victim, like the rest of antiquity, of the increasing separation between historical-archaeological and linguistic-literary studies, whereby the former seem now to have nurtured an empiricist renaissance that has scant concern with the careful appreciation of texts, while the latter has passed from obsession with the subversiveness of texts,

through ahistorical deconstruction, and now on to a new obsession with the alleged anxiety of those once-subversive writings. This refashioning of the author and his work, with its shift from brave optimism to confused neurosis tells us a great deal about the modern world in the west (especially from the 1960s to the present), but probably nothing worthwhile about the ancient world. Again one may take a measure of solace in the subtle empiricism of Minns and his best contemporaries.

Archaeology will figure prominently throughout this book, particularly (though not only) that of the Bosporean kingdom. Thanks to some two centuries of intensive excavation by Russian and Ukrainian scholars, a wealth of material has been unearthed, without which this book could never have been attempted. However, let us be clear, too, that this is not a book about archaeology or about its many discoveries. Throughout, I have tried to indicate the larger archaeological picture, and we shall dwell upon the overall contribution of archaeology in the conclusion of this book. However, it has never been my aim or intention to include for its own sake every instance in the region of particular artefacts (earrings, for example) which may feature a particular goddess. These come to light from time to time and can be important,¹⁵ so that on occasion an isolated artefact may demand attention, but it is the wood that concerns me far more than occasional glimpses of a sapling among the principal trees. Even the discovery at Panticapaeum of a glass cup that bears the name of Iphigenia can contribute little to our enquiry, although it may well cause us to reflect on the meaning of its decoration for the Bosporeans of the later Roman period who came to own it, and whether they saw it in ways substantially different from the assumptions and attitudes of those who made it, probably in Alexandria. While such isolated artefacts can contribute to a sense of the mythological, dramatic and religious world of the Bosporus, it remains unsurprising to find major mythological figures, goddesses and the like in the paraphernalia of what was (as we shall see) overwhelmingly a Greek culture in the Bosporean kingdom.¹⁶

The purpose of this book is to show how our four goddesses, individually and in concert with others, were important in the Bosporus, so that where a particular piece of jewellery (for example) does no more than show the image of the goddess (frequently, only a female who may be a goddess)

¹⁵ E.g. the semi-naked Aphrodite on an intaglio from Artyushenko-2 (southern Taman), c. 400 BC: Kashayev (2016). Or the isolated graffito, notably SEG 37. 666 (11) with 48. 1006 (giving the date), showing a form of Aphrodite at Myrmecium by c. 450 BC, unsurprisingly. Koshelenko (2010) offers colour illustrations of various artefacts showing deities.

¹⁶ On the remains of this vessel, see Sorokina (1976).

without an important context or consequence, I have sometimes not considered discussion necessary, and have left interested readers to chase up my footnotes. In the same spirit, I have not thought it necessary to litter my text or notes with references to the standard lexica and encyclopedias, for it is obvious that LIMC (for example) will be relevant at every turn. Such works are cited explicitly only where there is special reason to do so. The aim here is analysis, not the gathering of stuff in the hope of brute completeness. However, more happily, those readers who may seek such completeness for whatever reason, should find in this book a route to its attainment through my references to the work of others.

Accordingly, this book will focus sharply on the various ways in which forms of Artemis and Aphrodite were key to the Bosphoran kingdom. We shall range between myth and cult, across the complex Bosphoran landscape and through the history of many centuries in the Bosphorus and in the ancient world at large. We shall attempt to achieve a better sense of what these goddesses expressed and contributed within and for the kingdom, its rulers and its wider population, while at the same time retaining a strong sense of their polyvalent force and meanings in the Bosphorus and beyond. After all, and as we shall see, these goddesses are not so much opposites (as often imagined), but forms of the divine which can also share concerns, outcomes and much else. Since they will always attract attention, it is to be hoped that, by examining these goddesses together from a Bosphoran perspective and within a single framework, this book may even cause a few more scholars to venture from their Mediterranean ‘homes’ to settle even briefly in the scholarly world of the Black Sea. As one reflects on the vigorous recent work in the region itself, and the energetic involvement of the splendid new generation of scholars – especially from France and Germany, but also elsewhere across continental Europe – it is possible even to imagine that more Anglophones might appreciate how much they could learn and achieve in the Bosphoran kingdom and elsewhere around the Black Sea. There are already a few recent examples to follow.¹⁷

In sum, therefore, this is a book about connections and connectivity, principally in three senses. First, the contributions of Greek religion and cults to the cohesion of the Bosphoran kingdom, with its particular tendencies to fragmentation. Second, the roles of these religious phenomena in the development of important connections between the Bosphoran kingdom, the rest of the Black Sea region and the world beyond, from

¹⁷ See e.g. Meyer (2013), or the papers collected in Braund, Hall and Wyles (forthcoming). In the USA, note also Kozlovskaya (2017).

Massalia and Rome to Syria and Egypt, via Athens, Sparta, Argos and other cardinal locations around the ancient world. Third, the interplay of these phenomena as a significant contribution to our understanding of the deities themselves, with all that each entails, so that we may enrich our understanding of Aphrodite Ourania, Isis and the rest by incorporating their Bosporan histories into their broader Mediterranean histories, and also, crucially, vice versa. For the Bosporan case(s) and the wider stories of these deities and their cults, will prove to be mutually enlightening. And that, it need hardly be said, is another reason why neglect of the Black Sea world is unconscionable.

As with Greek cults and religion elsewhere around the ancient world, we shall find the interplay of the more local and the more general, wherein local or regional ‘versions’ of a deity (and all that the deity entails) may or may not readily accord with or map onto the shared Mediterranean and Pontic pool(s) of ideology, while they are most unlikely to escape conflict and contradiction with regard to some other local ‘versions’. From the first we shall see, for example, the enormous gulf between the Parthenos of the Crimea and the different ‘versions’ of her – not least as Tauropolos – that proliferate elsewhere. More difficult to trace, however, is change over time. In broad terms we can see how Aphrodite Ourania, for example, might have significantly different roles across time. In whatever ways we imagine her part in the early development of colonial settlement on the north coast of the Black Sea, we may agree without much difficulty that she had rather different role(s) in the Bosporus when it came under the *de facto* control of Roman rulers who traced their own origins to a form of Aphrodite. The details, however, remain elusive, largely because of the fragmented nature of our information. Fortunately, our lack of detail about change(s) can be accommodated within this book, whose thrust is towards the continuities that evidently predominated in Bosporan religion (as usual in all aspects of antiquity) and which, as will be argued, held this diverse realm together.