

ONE

PLACES OF DARKNESS: COLONIAL
SETTLEMENTS AND THE HISTORY
OF CLASSICAL GREECE

Oh you, who have founded so illustrious a city in the air,
you know not in what esteem men hold you
and how many there are who burn with desire to dwell in it.
(Aristophanes, *Birds* 1278–9, transl. E. O'Neill, 1938)

It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery – a white
patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness.
(Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*)

This book aims to paint a different picture of Classical Greece by looking at the experience of the nonelite population in colonial settlements and their hinterland. From a traditional point of view, such an agenda may not seem particularly significant. When we think of Classical Greece, we are used to thinking of Athens, Sparta, the sanctuaries of Olympia and Delphi, Sophocles, or Plato. We are maybe less used to thinking of colonial settlements, let alone nonelite groups living in these settlements and their rural hinterland. Yet I believe that the experience and perception of these groups is crucial to our understanding of Classical Greek culture.

The history of the colonized and the marginalized is never absent; it always emerges in one way or another. It may be nothing more than the history of the “Other,” the margins that define the center, as Edward W. Said has argued in *Orientalism* (1978). This is more or less what happened in the history of Greece

in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. In Classical scholarship, colonization has never been a central issue, let alone the experience of nonelite groups in the colonies. There are, of course, exceptions that will be discussed later in this book, but on a general level, subaltern and colonized groups have not played a major role in the creation of what could be referred to as the “master narrative” of Classical Greece during the fifth and fourth centuries BC.¹ They were more akin to an obscure backdrop – invisible, though necessary for the performance of the play.

Nowadays, this situation appears more problematic and anachronistic than ever. Authors working in the fields of postcolonial studies and literary criticism have contributed to a radical change in our perception of colonial histories and spaces – not only because they have changed the way in which the histories of certain regions and groups are represented in scholarship, literature, and art but also because they have undermined the hierarchies of center and periphery, colonizer and colonized, civilizer and civilized. The works of Edward W. Said (1978), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988; 1999), Homi Bhabha (1994), and Jean and John Comaroff (2009) do not, or at least not exclusively, concern a specific region and period, although they all have a very sound historical footing. Beginning from a local, and apparently “marginal,” perspective, they address much larger fields, such as the notion of culture, the role of the sciences and art, gender, economy, and religion. In this book, I would like to apply a similar approach to the history and archaeology of Classical Greece. The following chapters address a series of questions regarding the experience of nonelite groups in colonial settlements: To what extent can we speak of colonized, marginalized, and/or subaltern groups in Greek colonies of the Classical period? What role did they play in colonial economies, politics, and ideologies? Can we reconstruct their experience of the Classical world, albeit only in a very fragmentary way? And finally: How does the general picture of Classical Greece change if we focus not on urban elites in Athens and elsewhere in mainland Greece, but on the experience of subaltern groups in the colonies and their hinterland?

While these questions have received little attention in Classical Greek and South Italian archaeology, some groundbreaking research has been carried out by scholars working in other fields. In *The Archaeology of the Colonized*, Michael Given (2004) looks at sites such as “farmsteads, illicit whiskey stands and labour camps,” which he finds “far more interesting and instructive than palaces, villas and temples.” Robert Witcher (2006) has emphasized the potential of landscape archaeology and field surveys to go beyond text-driven and “processual” research interests and to understand issues such as “identity, power and social

¹ As in Given 2004, “colonized” is meant here in the broader sense of exploited or subaltern groups.

organization.” New approaches to the production, distribution, and consumption of pottery and metal objects in Southern France have questioned traditional assumptions on the relations between indigenous, Greek, and Etruscan groups from the Iron Age to the Roman period.² Peter van Dommelen and Carlos Gómez Bellard (2008) have analyzed material remains from rural sites on Ibiza and in other regions of the Western Mediterranean in order to reassess the role of agriculture in Punic colonization. These are just a few, though significant, examples of innovative archaeological research that adopts the ideas of postcolonial criticism with the aim of developing new perspectives on the Ancient Mediterranean, though it has had little impact on the history and archaeology of Classical Greece and Classical Greek colonies so far.

The cited studies abandon text-driven and top-down perspectives and start from close readings of local contexts. These might consist in pottery assemblages from rural sites on Ibiza or in cooking wares from Massalia – in both cases the reassessment of colonial histories is based on the analysis of types of evidence that long have been considered ‘marginal’ or ‘less important’ (e.g., cooking wares as compared to fine wares).

Similar approaches may be applied to the Classical Greek world. The archaeology of Classical settlements is notoriously based on top-down and text-driven approaches. Hippodamus, Herodotus, and Plato have shaped the image of these settlements to an infinitely higher degree than cooking wares or pottery assemblages from rural sites. This is particularly obvious in one of the most influential contributions to this field, Wolfram Hoepfner and Ernst-Ludwig Schwandner’s *Stadt und Haus im Klassischen Griechenland* (1986, 2nd edition 1994). The authors attempt to reconstruct the Classical polis (as an idea) by looking at Classical settlements (as physical structures) at the moment of their foundation.³ Case studies on newly founded or enlarged cities such as Piraeus, Olynthus, and Rhodos culminate in admittedly beautiful reconstructions that are in large part hypothetical, as critics have stressed. On these grounds, the authors argue that egalitarian and democratic models were successfully implemented in Classical city-foundations and that this involved the construction of standardized or type houses (*Typenhäuser*).⁴ Subaltern groups do not feature much in the book.⁵ A discussion of rural settlements and the role of peasantry is lacking.⁶ Hence, the question of how the owners of the ‘type houses’ subsisted and how far this involved the labor of subaltern groups remains an

² Dietler 2005; 2010; Verger, Pernet 2013; Roure 2015.

³ Cf. Hoepfner Schwandner 1994: xi.

⁴ As hypothesized already by David Asheri (1966: 14) for the Classical period (“uniformità delle case”).

⁵ Two and a half pages refer to “*oikos*, kitchen and women’s rooms” as well as “metics, slaves, economy and artisanry”: Hoepfner, Schwandner 1994: 328–330.

⁶ One reason might be that landscape archaeology had scarcely developed at the time of the first edition; cf. Lauter 1980; Osborne 1985 (both on Attica).

open one. Instead, the authors paint a positive, indeed encomiastic, picture of the Classical polis. They consider Classical city-foundations to be the work of architects commissioned by the people's assembly⁷ with the objective of creating "equal living conditions for all" and a notion of "common destiny" within the polis.⁸ They also argue that democratic city planning entailed "progress for almost everybody" and a "high level of civilization."⁹ "Almost everybody" is one of the euphemisms that reveals a major problem with this approach: What about women, slaves, peasants, artisans, mercenaries, etc.?

To my eyes, this is a very clear example of how the way in which we look at the archaeological evidence shapes our perception of an entire period. Approaches based on abstract topographical and urbanistic visions of colonial spaces – arguably a product of colonialism themselves – produce a colonialist and sexist image of Classical Greece. On the other hand, we may be able to provide a very different picture of these settlements if we adopt a "bottom-up" approach, by starting from the places of daily life and work on the ground. This is what I shall attempt to do here. The chapters in this book are organized around specific places, such as houses, tombs, fields, farms, and so on – places that are often obscured by abstract and ideal views of colonial space. By looking closely at these places, I aim to find out more about the living conditions of a large group of people who lived in the "Classical world": the nonelite population.

The starting point for my study is a research project of the University of Basilicata on Heraclea Lucana, founded in 433/2 BC on the Ionian Coast of southern Italy.¹⁰ Other Classical settlements of the fifth and fourth centuries BC are analyzed on the basis of published data. I am aware that many more sites and regions could have been included in this study. However, I shall focus here on settlements that were newly established in the Classical period, as the characteristics of Classical colonization are likely to emerge more clearly there than elsewhere.

WAS THERE SUCH A THING AS "CLASSICAL COLONIZATION"?

Was the Classical period characterized by colonization in the first place? There are scholars who probably would question this, and they would do so for

⁷ Hoepfner, Schwandner 1994: 314. The city as a work of art based on an idea or master plan has closer parallels in fourth-century political philosophy than in ancient political practice, as Hannah Arendt (1958: 281–283) has pointed out. The foundation decree of Brea, cited by the authors in support of the role of architects in urban planning, does not mention any architects though (see pp. 16–17 below).

⁸ Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994: xi (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*). On the term *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, see Schmitz-Berning 1988: 654; Neubauer 2011: 408–410.

⁹ Hoepfner, Schwandner 1994: xiii.

¹⁰ See Osanna, Zuchtriegel 2012; Zuchtriegel 2012b; Meo, Zuchtriegel 2015.

two reasons. The first is chronological. Greek colonization is often seen as a phenomenon typical of, or even restricted to, the Archaic period (eighth to sixth centuries BC, the period of the so-called *Grande Colonizzazione*). We shall see that the evidence does not support such a view. However, the way in which Greek colonization is represented in modern scholarship and popular science tends to associate colonization with early periods and archaism, whereas Classical Greece is not regularly associated with colonization. It is as though European colonialism were considered primarily a matter of the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the same time, a period that many scholars consider virtually overstudied – the fifth and fourth centuries BC – is actually full of blank spaces: the colonies and their hinterland. This is all the more surprising if we consider that the relevant written sources on Greek colonization date almost exclusively from the Classical period onward.¹¹ Therefore, the archaeology of Classical colonization is fundamental for the understanding of ancient texts and the way in which they have shaped our impression of Greek colonization in general. For example, the word *apoikia*, usually translated as “colony,” appears in many Classical sources, whereas it is scarcely attested in the Archaic period. In order to assess whether or not an *apoikia* is comparable to our idea of a colony, we need to engage with the archaeology of Classical settlements.

However, the problem with “Classical colonization” not only concerns the concept of what is meant by the term “Classical” but also, and arguably to an even higher degree, by the concept of “colonization.” For if we reflect on colonization, not only are we used to focusing on Archaic rather than on Classical settlements, but we may also feel uneasy about the term “colonization.” Is it appropriate to use this term at all? Nowadays, many scholars reject it. They argue that ancient Greek colonization was radically different from the modern colonialism, and that any analogy should be avoided.¹²

This is understandable as a reaction to traditional approaches to Greek colonization, which tended to equate (and legitimize) modern colonialism and ancient Greek colonization. The ancient Greeks were seen as the “masters of colonization” (Curtius 1883) and the modern European colonizers as their successors. Attempts since the 1960s to “decolonize” the past have led to radically different views.¹³ Analogies between modern and ancient colonization began to appear out of place.¹⁴ While this has undoubtedly led to a better understanding of Greek migration and interaction with local groups (not least

¹¹ Cf. Graham 1964; Dougherty 1993; Miller, T. 1997.

¹² Hurst, Owen 2005; Malkin 2008; Greco, Lombardo 2010.

¹³ Cf. van Dommelen 1996/97; 1998; 2002; 2005; 2006; Malkin 2004; van Dommelen, Terrenato 2007; Pappa 2013.

¹⁴ Hurst, Owen 2005; Bradley, Wilson 2006; Pappa 2013. A different viewpoint is held by E. Greco and M. Lombardo (2010: 38) who reject the usefulness of postcolonial approaches in Classical Archaeology (“In quella sede [that is ten years ago] abbiamo ribadito, una volta

because it permitted leaving simplifying and binary approaches behind), it also entailed certain shortcomings. Scholarship has focused mainly on questioning Greek hegemony and on emphasizing the role of indigenous agency. Some scholars have even hypothesized peaceful and equal relations between Greek and non-Greek groups in so-called mixed settlements on the basis of material evidence.¹⁵ The possibility of peaceful and equal relations should not, of course, be ruled out. However, what I find questionable about this approach is that it is often accompanied by a forgetfulness of phenomena that do have parallels in modern colonialism, such as the subjugation and exploitation of individuals and groups in the colonies and their hinterland. In the nineteenth century, these phenomena were misrepresented in order to prove the superiority of “the Greeks”; today they risk being screened out because they do not fit into the picture of a decolonized past. The question of whether ancient Greek colonization and migration involved inequality, violence, and oppression is rarely asked today.¹⁶ Just as the Greeks as colonizers were once seen as a model for European colonialism, the “decolonized” version of Greek history risks reiterating our own forgetfulness of the colonized in a neocolonial world, for example textile workers in Third World countries from whose workforce Western economies profit but whose living conditions are hardly known in the West.

Exponents of postcolonial criticism have stressed that postcolonialism does not mean that colonialism and imperialism are obsolete and “placed securely in the past.”¹⁷ The term “postcolonial” is actually misleading insofar as it implies the beginning of a new era that leaves colonialism and imperialism behind.¹⁸ But this is illusory given that the economic exploitation of former colonies continues in many cases. Thus, it may be open to doubt whether archaeology has reached a “postcolonial” phase yet and whether archaeological research is completely independent from modern forms of colonialism and

per tutte penso, la nostra posizione nella quale auspichiamo ci si possa riconoscere, almeno noi che non abbiamo avuto imperi coloniali vasti e duraturi e tali da rappresentare un passato ingombrante con cui misurarsi: non c'è niente di nuovo, nessuno confonde le colonie degli antichi con quelle dei moderni! Quindi, quando parliamo della colonizzazione greca non pensiamo ad imperi centrali.”)

¹⁵ Cf. for example Burgers, Crielaard 2011: 157. See also J. Massenet de La Gerniere, in *Atti del 37° Convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia*, 518. Taranto: Istituto per la Storia e l'Archeologia della Magna Grecia. On the basis of terracotta finds, the author concludes: “Indéfendable en bordure de mer, le sanctuaire de Cirò, de lecture difficile parce qu'à la fois grec et non grec, illustre par sa seule existence le climat pacifique qui régnait entre Neto et Nica, au pied des petits cités de Philoctète, aux VIIe et VIe siècles av. J.-C.” In the case of Policoro, peaceful coexistence of Greek and non-Greek groups has been hypothesized by Adamesteanu 1972 on the basis of the evidence from the necropolis.

¹⁶ Osanna 1992: 92; Kindberg Jacobsen, Handberg 2010: 711 (with regard to habitation nuclei at Francavilla Marittima, the authors refer to “a rare case of identifiable social differentiation between Greek and indigenous communities within the same settlement”). See also Attema 2008; Esposito, Pollini 2013.

¹⁷ Spivak 1999: 1. Cf. Stockhammer 2012; 2013; Pappa 2013.

¹⁸ McClintock 1992.

imperialism.¹⁹ I also doubt that we should pretend this by banning terms like “colonization.” As Michael Dietler (2005: 53) has argued, “the idea of linguistic reform – of inventing and imposing upon the reader a new analytic vocabulary to deal with ancient cases that avoids all Greco-Roman terms already incorporated into modern discourse – seems a cumbersome and quixotic endeavor at best: the intellectual equivalent of spitting into the wind.”

If seen like this, “postcolonial” archaeology should not simply consist in abandoning the notion of colonization, exploitation, and subjugation, nor should “decolonizing the past” mean overlooking the colonized and painting a picture of the colonies as equal and irenic communities that have nothing to do with more recent forms of colonization. We should not be too quick in drawing a distinct line between ancient and modern colonizations. For archaeology and history always operate in a contemporary context that shapes our way of asking questions and doing research, which is why we ought to try to make this process explicit and the subject of serious debate. On the other hand, modern colonization is in itself strongly biased by the tradition of Greco-Roman colonial ideology and terminology.²⁰ This does not, of course, mean that we should simply equate modern colonialism with ancient colonization, nor should we reduce the comparison to a simple yes/no question. However, comparison may help shed light on what colonization really meant in Greek antiquity. To my mind, comparative approaches pose a challenge to look for continuities and differences between ancient and modern colonizations and represent an opportunity to shed new light on the question of why we are interested nowadays in Ancient Greek colonization in the first place.²¹

THE 'VOICELESSNESS' OF THE COLONIZED

The subject of this study – the experience of the nonelite population in Classical colonies – lays hidden beneath three layers of silence: the voicelessness of the colonized, the silence of ancient authors, and the silence of modern scholars. By voicelessness I mean the lack of visibility of subaltern groups in the archaeological record and in the literary sources.²² Colonized and marginalized groups have left virtually no texts or images of themselves. Consequently, studies on colonial identities (whether Greek, indigenous, female, male, or the like) based on texts and iconographic evidence tend to exclude those who

¹⁹ Nicholas, Hollowell 2007: 60; Hamilakis 2012.

²⁰ Dietler 2005.

²¹ Cf. Ferro 1997; Osborne 2009; Lane 2014: 3–11.

²² On attempts to use archaeological evidence for the reconstruction of subaltern histories, see McGuire, Paynter 1991; Lomas 1996; Given 2004; Liebmann, Rizvi 2008; Ferris, Harrison, Wilcox 2014.

could or would not express themselves, who “have no voice.”²³ In fact, most studies dealing with Classical settlements have looked mainly or exclusively at the living conditions and cultural expressions of the elite.

The lack of visibility of subaltern groups in the evidence – their voicelessness – is of course no coincidence. As the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci argued, the lack of visibility of subaltern groups may be explained by their systematic exclusion from certain forms of communication. In his famous “Prison Notebooks,” written during the years 1926–1935, Gramsci argues that the southern Italian peasantry represented a subaltern class insofar as they were excluded from the “hegemonic culture” and idiom. In Gramsci’s analysis, the cultural hegemony of southern Italy was dominated by wealthy landowners who exploited the peasants, and mediated by a middle class of doctors, school-teachers, and public employees.²⁴ The various social groups formed a “bloc” bound together by elite culture. Thus, subalternity inevitably implies voicelessness: the subaltern reside within the bloc, but they have no access to the idiom that structures it.

Elaborating on Gramsci’s concept of subalternity, a group of South Asian historians and literary critics (the so-called Subaltern Studies Group) started research in the 1980s on the living conditions and access to social mobility of rural dwellers in India and other countries of the region. They asked if and how subaltern groups could express themselves within or outside the hegemonic discourse and, consequently, from what material or literary traces historians and archaeologists might recognize them. In her seminal paper *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak disputed any possibility of the subaltern being able to express their perception of the world: even the most drastic forms of expression – Spivak discusses the case of a woman who commits suicide to prove her innocence – are misunderstood and reshaped according to the hegemonic discourse.²⁵

What, then, of the subaltern and the colonized in ancient Greece? Can we hope to find any authentic evidence of their history? If one looks only at literary and iconographic sources, the answer is probably no.²⁶ It has been shown, for example, that Athenian vase painting was heavily influenced by the cultural choices of a narrow elite even under democracy, whereas the living conditions

²³ Cf. Ste Croix 1981: 285–289; Morris 1998; Calò 2012: 204. See also Morris, Papadopoulos (2005), where rural towers in mainland Greece are interpreted as *ergastula* for slaves. In a recent paper, A. Esposito and A. Pollini (2013) try to use funeral evidence to trace subaltern groups in southern Italy during the Archaic period. Garland 2014 presents written sources, scarce as they are, concerning the daily experience of “wandering Greeks,” including colonists.

²⁴ Gramsci [2007].

²⁵ Spivak 1988; 1999: 198–311. Cf. Medovoi Raman, Robinson 1990 on certain political implications of that notion.

²⁶ Morris 1998; Osborne 2000.

of the artisans who produced the vases, though occasionally alluded to, remain hidden behind stereotypes and ironic representations.²⁷ Likewise, representations of slave girls on Athenian grave stelae are far more revealing about certain ideas among the Athenian elite who commissioned the stelae than about the living conditions of real slaves.²⁸

When looking for evidence of subaltern histories in ancient written sources and art, what emerges is layers of speech and silence that overlie and obscure the voicelessness of the colonized: the hegemonic discourse of Greek authors who talk about colonial space from a different perspective. Many Classical authors regarded the colonies as a manifestation of Greek civilization and as an ideal space for the development of the (free, male, adult) individual. For example, Xenophon (*Anabasis* V 6, 15) speaks of the foundation of a new settlement as a means of “enlarging the outward power/influence (*dynamis*) and the territory (*chora*) of Hellas.” Plato (*Laws* 708d) states that “legislation and the foundation of cities are the best for the virtue of men” (νομοθεσία καὶ πόλεων οἰκισμοὶ πάντων τελεώτατον πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀνδρῶν).

On various occasions, Classical authors refer to matters of political philosophy by putting themselves in the position of someone establishing a colony (e.g., Plato's *Laws* or Aristotle's best state in the *Politics*). These texts draw up ideal settlements from a top-down perspective; their focus lies on the group of free citizens, whereas other groups are defined only with regard to the male citizen, whose autonomy, subsistence, and reproduction has to be ensured. The texts tend to abstain from a number of aspects that are seen as less relevant, among others the living conditions and economic role of artisans, women, merchants, slaves, and peasants. Thus, the voicelessness of the colonized becomes the backdrop on which Classical writers paint their picture of colonial space and history.

Interestingly, there were also critical voices. Some kind of criticism of glorifying and abstract visions of colonial space can be found in *The Birds* by Aristophanes, staged in 414 BC. The play can be read as a satire on fifth-century theories about the ideal polis or colony as cherished by people like Hippodamus of Miletus, Phaleas of Chalcedon, Socrates, and Athenian colonizers and city-founders of the period. Although they sought to escape from depths, lawsuits, sycophants, and the de facto aristocratic government by establishing a “city in the air,” the two protagonists end up erecting a regime that is as despotic and unjust as the one they fled from.²⁹ Aristophanes contrasts the ideal of the Classical polis with the negative, destructive, and exploitative character of colonial ventures. In pointing out this ambiguity of colonial discourse,

²⁷ Filser, W. forthcoming. *Die athenische Elite im Spiegel der attischen Luxuseramik*, Berlin.

²⁸ Himmelmann 1971; Räuchle 2014.

²⁹ On the *Birds* see Katz 1976; Amati 2010.

he anticipates modern criticism of colonialism. If the play enjoyed some success (it won the second prize in the Dionysia that year), it probably did so because many Athenians in the audience sensed the conflict between utopia and colonial reality.

The Birds shows us that the abstract nature and illusiveness of colonial ideologies was perceived as early as the fifth century BC, and that it was possible to express criticism. However, given that the quoted passage is an isolated case as far as is known, it ultimately confirms the predominance of abstract top-down perspectives in Classical Greece.

The same top-down perspective that has shaped ancient texts can easily be recognized in modern scholarship on ancient colonization. Once again, the relationship between ancient and modern colonization turns out to be extremely intricate. I have already mentioned the study by Hoepfner and Schwandner (1994). Willingly or unwillingly, they belong to a longstanding tradition of viewing colonial space from a particular perspective. The colony is portrayed as a better place, as an opportunity, as a place for development and growth, as an outpost of civilization, and as a new beginning. Of course, this works only if the focus lies on privileged groups within a new settlement. The New World was not new to the Native Americans, whose livelihood and traditions were destroyed by the arrival of Europeans. With regard to glorifying and abstract visions of colonial space, the perspective of the colonized is an element of disturbance; as a result, they receive little attention or are completely ignored. What we have here is another layer of voices that join in the chorus of the Classical tradition and drown out the voicelessness of the colonized.

METHODOLOGY

Is it therefore possible to write the history of the nonelite population, of those who have no voice? As outlined above, what I would like to suggest here is a shift away from abstract spaces toward concrete places and their archaeological analysis. By describing the places of daily life and work, we may be able to restore the fragments of the history of those who inhabited them. In the history of colonial criticism, such a strategy has repeatedly been reenacted. Shifting the focus from ideal representations toward physical spaces is a discursive strategy that goes back at least to the time of Joseph Conrad. In his novel *Heart of Darkness*, glorifying and idealizing visions of colonial space fall apart when the narrator, during his trip up the river to the “inner station,” discovers the barbarism of European civilization. “Blank spaces of delightful mystery” turn into “places of darkness;” the idea of colonization as a civilizing mission melts away in the face of the social realities that are encountered. The places that the narrator visits are places of darkness because they are overshadowed by an abstract image, but also because they conceal an unheard reality. In my