Foundations, refoundations, basileis in North-West Greece (Western Greece, Epirus, South Illyria, Ionian Islands): political history, institutions, historiography

Keywords
Western Greece, Kerkyra, Illyria, basileis, origins

ABSTRACT

The members of the Research Unit, on the base of shared methodological premises and of a common bibliographical starting point (bibliography which is not completely satisfactory by now), have the aim to focus the main aspects of the peculiar foundation and hegemonic dynamics of their areas of study, holding fast to precise thematic and chronological steps. The following aspects are worth a thorough investigation:

1. The original foundation moment: the traditional foundation paradigms and the *logoi* related to the origins of Epidamnus and Apollonia, in their relation to Corinth, Kerkyra, Ambracia and- that is a crucial knot – the Panhellenic sanctuaries. The research programme consists of a preliminary methodological consideration on the identity and the origin of the colonial *poleis*, and comes thereafter to a detailed analysis of the pages of Herodotus (on Apollonia) and of Appian (on Epidamnous), which both are paradigmatic texts for understanding the elaboration of the identity of the city and of its élites.

2. The foundation moment at the time of the hegemonic conflict: political and institutional aspects of the Vth and IVth cent. B.C. analyzed on the basis of specific experiences. The programme of research consists of the accurate investigation of some significant themes: the political and cultural dynamics put into action in Naupactos by the settlement of the Messenioi; the experiences of *basileia* and the political and institutional changes in Epirus, also with reference to the later political theorizing; the Corinthian roots in Timoleon's action in the West, from the perspective of the daughter-*poleis* of Corinth in Western Greece and in the Ionian Islands. These themes require a thorough historiographical investigation (Thucydides, Diodorus, Pausanias, Plutarch) toghether with an accurate analysis of the epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological documents.

3. The islands and power: founders, *basileis*, gifts and the ideology of the Hellenistic period. The aim is to investigate the history of Kerkyra at the time of Agathocles in the light of the relations between the *basileus* of Siracusa and other kings of the Mediterranean Hellenism, with special reference to the geographical and strategic elements analyzed in the long term and to the ideological and symbolic features that can be found both in the historiography (Diodorus) and in the poetic tradition (Apollonius Rhodius, Callimacus).

The project will be supported by the Laboratory of Epigraphy (Greek Section directed by Prof. C. Antonetti) of the Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità e del Vicino Oriente of the University of Venice, whose leading scope of research in the last few years has been the epigraphy of North-West Greece (Aetolia, Acarnania, Ionian Islands). The rich archive of the Laboratory (copies of inscriptions, photographs, secondary bibliography on the region) are a fundamental base for the research. The computer technology of the laboratory, moreover, will make it possible to carry out specific lexical researches, whose results will flow into thematic databases (the figures and the places of the myths on the origins; the lexicon and the way of defining the forms of power; the interconnections between the mythical “founders” and the historical figures).
All the results, the material and the study prospects of the Venetian Research Unit would flow in a dedicated area in the web-site of the Epigraphic Laboratory (http://www.unive.it/nqcontent.cfm?an_id=27506) and in the Forum open to all the members of the national project supervised by the coordinating Unit. The Venetian Research Unit will connect the research project to didactic activities: university seminars (of various levels), thematic seminars, study journeys, meetings open to students and post-graduated students of the other Research Units.

**Status Quaestionis**

The region which is under consideration (Western Greece, Southern Illyria, Ionian Islands and Epirus) in the last twenty years has been the object of a renewed interest, especially as regards the so-called peripheral Greekness. The attention concentrated on the role of Corinth, the main reference point for the poleic foundation processes, and on the results of the frequent Athenian pressures, paying little attention to those elements (political forms, institutions) that are the original and peculiar features of the region.

The programme has the aim to investigate some of these aspects, with the purpose of overcoming a mechanical vision of the foundation processes and of highlighting those local features that are already evident in some religious and ritual experiences. The elements acquired by the recent studies will be therefore more thoroughly investigated. Fundamental are the results of the topographic researches in Aetolia and Acarnania (in particular the Aetolian Strouza Project and the projects directed by prof. Funke, the *Stratikè Research Project* and the *Palairos Research Project*). They explain the settlement dynamics of the region and put into evidence a lively archaeological archaic *facies*, by now unknown, which is even more interesting if we consider the lack of information on the region in the geographic tradition (apart from Strabo). The excavation campaigns made by Albanian archaeologists and by the French, German, English and Italian archaeological expeditions in Southern Illyria together with the Greek archaeological researches in the ancient Tesprotia, in Ambracia and in the Aetolia *epiktetos*, brought to a significant improvement in our knowledge. Moreover, the international collaborations for the investigation of the Homeric *poleis* in the Aetolian region have restarted with satisfactory results. The epigraphic research is systematic and up to date, thanks to the continuous scientific interest of Italian, German and Greek scholars. The *corpora* on Aetolia, Acarnania, Southern Illyria and on the Ionian Islands have recently been updated, whereas studies are being carried out on the region of Tesprotia and on the oracular tablets of Dodona, in Epirus. The archaic epigraphy in particular shows both signals of a strong local characterization and intense mobility, with unexpected alphabetic and linguistic results. As regards this aspect, of great importance is the Laboratory of Epigraphy (Greek Section directed by Prof. C. Antonetti) of the Dipartimento di Scienze dell’Antichità e del Vicino Oriente of the University of Venice. It preserves a wide archive of autograph epigraphic notes, copies of inscriptions, drawings and photographs – now digitalized – of the Aetolian and Acarnanian inscriptions. There is a good cooperation both with the Seminar für Alte Geschichte of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster for a joint edition of the Aetolian and Acarnanian epigraphy and for the digitalization of the inscriptions of the museums of Agrinion and Thyrrheion, and with the équipe of the *Inscrptiones Graecae* of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften for the update of the *corpora* edited by Klaffenbach on Central and Northern Greece and on the Ionian Islands (IG IX, 1, 4-6).

Starting from this epigraphic and archaeological documentary base and considering the experience gained on these subjects by the researchers of this Unit, the programme has the aim to investigate mainly historical and institutional aspects in the context of some more general themes such as federalism and kingship. Only rarely, in fact, the studies on federalism have been able to take into consideration the new archaeological and epigraphic finds and the renewed
historiographical approach on the region. If the interest on the Epirotic kingship and on the dynasts of the Molossi and of the Aeacids is well-established, the local non-dynastic basileiai are often studied only as regards the origin of the territorial States into which they flow (such as Thracians, Macedonians, Illyrians, Epirotes). Some good articles on the subject are in any case a good methodological base to start with for further investigation both on the interconnections between institutional and dynastic forms and on their positioning in a more general theoretical consideration. The theme of basileia brings to the analysis of the results of the first Hellenistic period and of the significant role gained in the region by Agathocles in the last period of his life. This period, also for documentary reasons, has been object of little interest if compared with the attitude of the Dionisii for the Adriatic and for the Ionian Sea. This programme concentrates therefore on the literary and historiographical tradition. The more general thematic and methodological aspects have rarely been analysed in detail in connection with this social and cultural area, nonetheless the few specific studies on Hellanicus, Thucydides, Ephorus, Ps. Scimmus and Strabo show significant elements as regards the representation and creation of historical and identitary dynamics.

Bibliography


**Program’s Description and Search Unity’s Dues**

The members of the Research Unit, on the base of shared methodological premises and of a common bibliographical starting point, have the aim to contribute to the research by investigating the main aspects of the various foundation and hegemonic dynamics, according to their areas of study. The project has therefore the following historical objects: the characterization of the sacral and religious centres; the dynamic relations between polis, ethne and koinon; the traditions and the elaboration of syggeneiai; the social practices, the lifestyles and the institutional results of a peripheral Hellenism; the mobile role, diachronically analyzed, of the marginal social groups in their relation to the élites; the Hellenizing processes in the long term. Starting from the most significant chronological steps of a long term historical development, the following more specific thematic and methodological aspects are going to be thoroughly investigated.

1) **The original foundation moment.** The research will focus on the traditional foundation paradigms and on the logoi related to the origins of Epidamnus and Apollonia, in their connection to Corinth, Kerkyra (and kerkyra's interventions on the tradition), Ambracia and to the Panhellenic sanctuaries. The colonial extensions of the phenomenon and Kerkyra's interventions on the tradition will be considered. Special attention will be given to historiography, in particular to Herodotus and Appian, where for the most part the elaboration of traditions and memories takes place.

2) **The foundation moment at the time of the hegemonic conflict: political and institutional aspects of the Vth and IVth cent. B.C.** In the classical period the region under consideration continues to be a testing ground for politics and institutions. Some specific experiences related to political and institutional processes of foundation will be analyzed, with particular reference to the significant case of Naupactos and to the peculiar dynamics put into action in the locrian polis and in the surrounding area by the settlement of the Messenioi. With regards to the institutions, the research will
concentrate on the significant political and institutional changes in the leading of the Epirotic ethne and therefore on the nature of the basileia in this historical and cultural context. Another significant moment is Timoleon's action: its metropolitan roots will be pointed out, from the perspective of the daughter-poleis of Corinth in Western Greece and in the Ionian Islands. This part of the research will be supported by the investigation of the historiographical tradition (Thucydides, Diodorus, Pausanias, Plutarch) with reference to the epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological documents.

3) The islands and power: founders, basileis, gifts. The ideology of the Hellenistic period. The aim is to investigate the history of Kerkyra in the age of Agathocles, with particular reference to the relations between the basileus of Siracusa and other kings and strategoi of the Mediterranean Hellenism. The role of the island emerges in the inter-crossing of geographical and strategic elements with ideological features of old tradition: particularly meaningful is the symbolism of the island donated as dowry, marriage gift between basileis, with its echoes in the poetic tradition. As to this aspect the investigation of the historography (Diodorus) needs to go along with an accurate comparison with the literary tradition (Apollonius Rhodius, Callimacus).

The Research Unit will carry out the programme according to the following plan:

1) The original foundation moment. A preliminary methodological analysis will focus on the theme of origins and identity, so significant especially as regards the elaboration of the memories and of the image of the colonial poleis. Starting form the historical analysis of the interconnections between the traditions on the foundation of Epidamnus and Apollonia (Antonetti 2007), a detailed investigation of the whole ancient historiographical tradition on both the poleis will be carried out. The logoi on foundation have to be considered as paradigmatic “speeches” of the civic identity and of its élites. As regards Apollonia, privileged attention will be given to Herodotus; as regards Epidamnus, to Appian, who preserves, despite re-elaboration, wide excerpts of an older and more significant heritage. The investigation of the contexts will lead to the comparison with the original traditions of the metropoleis and of the most important Corinthian colonies in the region. The crucial knot of the connection with the Panhellenic sanctuaries will emerge. (C. Antonetti).

2) The foundation moment at the time of the hegemonic conflict. The case of Naupactos is particularly evident on the background of the intricate dynamics between the Vth cent. Poleis, which are fighting for an hegemonic role in the area. Naupactos is also meaningful in the relation to the Messenioi, whose history highlights a strong identitary feeling, particularly evident in the diaspora and in the experiences of foundation. Starting from the thorough studies carried out on the Messenian identity messenica (D. Baldassarra, Dai Messenioi andres alla polis ton Messenion. Il percorso storico dei Messeni tra continuità ed innovazione, PhD Thesis, 2006) the reasearch will focus on the effects of the Messenian settlement on the intricate dynamics of the region which is under consideration (D. Baldassarra). The investigation of the processes of political structurizing and territorial changes in Epirus starts from the already fruitful research on kingship. These processes must be analyzed together with the other similar processes which take place in the nearby regions of Northern Greece and make the attention concentrate into two directions: 1. the analysis (documentary and historiographical) of the interconnection of these forms of power, starting from a detailed analysis of the lexicon and of the contexts where these forms of power come particularly into evidence; 2. the analysis of the results of these experiences as probable model for some Western-Greek experiences (if not practically, at least in the interpretations of the theoreics of politics and of the historians) (S. De Vido).
research on Timoleon's experience and its tradition is based on wider studies on the history of the dynamics and of the leaders in Sicily in the IVth cent. B.C. (De Vido c.d.s). The ancient historical and biographical tradition gives a positive and univocal image of Timoleon, especially when the action of liberation in Sicily is concerned. It is of great interest instead the investigation of the Corinthian roots of the action, with particular attention to the stopppig places in his journey towards the West. Timoleon is a great interpreter of the hinge-area between Corinith and its colonies. The analysis will concentrate on the key words, the slogans and on the images recurring both in the literary tradition and in the numismatic, epigraphic and archaeological documents, marking the hedge between Greece and West in the region under consideration (S. De Vido e C. Antonetti).

3) The islands and power: founders, basileis, gifts. The ideology of the hellenistic period. The other figure that connects this area to Sicily is certainly Agathocles. The aspects of the last ages of his life, less considered by the research until now, will be taken into account and analysed. The literary tradition flowed into Diodorus is particularly important. To that must be added the pure literary and poetic traditions which give a symbolic significance to choices and actions that are, in the facts, merely political. The reading of the complex of the literary traditions on Kerkyra at the beginning of the IIIrd cent. will be useful (lexical analysis, key notions and words, recurring themes) to put into evidence the ways in which the island, at every level, becomes the central element of a net of political and ideological relations. (C. Antonetti e S. De Vido)

The project will be supported by the Laboratory of Epigraphy (Greek Section directed by Prof. C. Antonetti) of the Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità e del Vicino Oriente. The leading scope of the research of the Laboratory has been in the last few years the epigraphy of North-West Greece (Aetolia, Acarnania, Ionian Islands). The very rich archive of copies of inscriptions, the digital archive of photographs and the systematic collection of the secondary bibliography on the region are a fundamental base for the described research, especially as regards point 2. The computer technology of the laboratory, moreover, will make it possible to carry out easily lexical researches on the historiographical and literary texts, whose results will flow into specific databases. Such databases will help in the systematic reading of the most significant elements of the programme: the figures and the places of the myths on the origins; the lexicon referring to the founders and the foundations; the lexicon and the way of defining the forms of power; the interconnections between the “founders” of the mythical narration and the historical figures (strategoi, prostatai, basileis).

All the results, the material and the study prospects of the Venetian Research Unit would flow in a dedicated area in the web-site of the Epigraphic Laboratory (http://www.unive.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=27506) and in the forum open to all the members of the national project supervised by the coordinating Unit. The Venetian Research Unit has already planned to anchor the research project to the university seminars (Greek History, Greek Epigraphy) in the following years. More specific seminars and conferences will give professors and students the opportunity to debate on the theme of the projects. The students of the First and of the Second Course and especially (more actively) post-graduated students will be able to take part to the debate and to the activities. If possible joint study journeys to the archaeological sites that are significant for the project (Locri Epizefiri, Kerkyra, Western Greece) will be organized, so that selected students and postgraduated students of the various Research Units will be able to meet and debate. Study journeys and stages will be valued in CFU.