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## The Phocian Desperation and the ‘Third’ Sacred War<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Phokike aponoia: *The famous desperation of the Phocians*

It is widely acknowledged that the proverb ‘Phocian desperation’ (Φωκική ἀπόνοια) commonly refers to the desperate decision by the Phocians to gather all their women, children and property in one place and consign them all to the funeral pyre if they lost the battle against the Thessalians. According to Herodotus (VIII 27 ff.), the *locus classicus* for this conflict between Thessalians and Phocians, this battle took place in the years leading up to the Persian War<sup>2</sup>. But the details of the desperate decision made by the Phocians only appear in Pausanias (X 1, 3-11) and Plutarch (*Mul. Virt.* II). By the time of Polybius (XVI 32, 2), who mentions "the famous desperation of the Phocians" (τὴν λεγομένην Φωκικὴν ἀπόνοιαν) when describing a similar decision by the besieged citizens of Abydus, the Phocian desperation was already well known. It is widely accepted that the source which provides an account of the Phocian desperation originated between the fifth and the fourth centuries B.C., because the battle took place in the fifth (Hdt: VIII 27, 2: οὐ πολλοῖσι ἔτεσι πρότερον ταύτης τῆς βασιλέως στρατηλασίης) and the account of the Phocian desperation is already known to Aeschines (II 140). This paper argues that the source is unlikely to be dated earlier than the fourth century. Further, it maintains that during the years of the ‘third’ sacred war, pro-Phocian circles promoted a paradigmatic interpretation of Phocian history as a history of *aponoia*,

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<sup>2</sup> Anytime between the sixth and the fifth century: BUSOLT 1893, 699 f. with n. 1; DAUX 1936, 138 n. 1; SORDI 1953, 235-258, 236, 253 f.; LARSEN 1960, 231-237; BURN 1960, 204; LARSEN 1968, 44, 110 ff., 113 ff.; WILLIAMS 1972, 5; LEHMANN, 1983, 35-43, 38 f.; PRITCHETT 1996, 96 f.; IOAKIMIDOU 1997, 40; MCINERNEY 1999, 175-178; MORGAN 2003, 26.



in contrast to the dominant paradigm of the Phocian *hybris* of the fourth century BC. The evidence for this paradigm shift can be found both in the aforementioned passage of Aeschines, and, even more clearly, in some passages by Demosthenes.

To support this argument, the main sources (par. 2) and their interpretation by scholars (par. 3) will be summarized, and some passages by Diodorus, Aeschines and Demosthenes (par. 4) will be analysed.

## 2. *The famous desperation of the Phocians in the ancient sources*

Herodotus (VIII 27-28) records two battles between the Phocians and the Thessalians. The Phocians won the first through a ruse: the divine seer of Elis, Tellias, advised six hundred of their best men to whiten their bodies and weapons with chalk, and sent them on a night attack against the Thessalians in which they were able to recognise, and kill, their unpainted enemies. The Thessalians were terrified by the sight of the whitened, ghostly men and the Phocians inflicted heavy losses on them.

The victory was commemorated by offerings at Delphi and Abai. The other victory, at the pass near Hyampolis, where the Phocians defeated the Thessalian cavalry, was won through the ruse of the concealed amphoras: the Phocians set traps in the pass at Hyampolis by burying hollow jars, into which the horses of the Thessalians fell and broke their legs.

There is no mention of the Phocian desperation<sup>3</sup>.

Polyainos (VI 18) recounts the two Phocian stratagems in the same order as Herodotus, and without adding any details, whereas Pausanias (X 1, 3-11) first records the battle at Hyampolis and the defeat of the Thessalian cavalry due to the concealed amphoras, and presents the “chalk battle” as happening subsequently. Furthermore, he adds two other episodes unmentioned by Herodotus: in the first the Phocians sent *Gelon* with three hundred men to attack the enemy, who butchered them; in the second all the Phocians’ hopes for safety were pinned on

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<sup>3</sup> One may argue that the two battles described by Herodotus are both instances of the Phocians outwitting the Thessalians by ruses and stratagems, told to explain why the Thessalians were so enraged that they used the opportunity of Thermopylae to try to subjugate the Phocians once again; and that therefore the discussion of the Phocians’ desperation does not fit here since, although it takes place in the context of a Phocian victory over the Thessalians, the story of the Phocian *aponoia* was primarily concerned with the Phocians, not the humiliation of the Thessalians. On the other hand, it has to be acknowledged that the story of the *aponoia* itself would have strongly emphasized the humiliation of the Thessalians. Why, then, would Herodotus have left it out? This is all the more relevant if David Konstan is right in arguing that the conflict between Phocians and Thessalians in Herodotus functions as a metaphor for the struggle between Athens and Persia (KONSTAN 1987, 59–74, 71).



their Generals, Rhoetus of Ambrossus and Daiphantus of Hyampolis, and on the mantis Tellias of Elis. On this occasion, too, the Phocians decided that they would put their wives and children on a pyre and set fire to it if they were to lose the battle; this is, according to Pausanias, the Φωκικὴ ἀπόνοια (X 1, 7).

In the second chapter of his *Mulierum virtutes*, Plutarch gives an account of the origin of the conflict, which is not found in either Herodotus or Pausanias. According to this account, the Phocians slew all the Thessalian archons and tyrants in Phocis on a single day, an episode that was followed by the retaliatory killing of two hundred and fifty Phocian hostages and by the invasion of Phocis through Locris, resulting in the execution of all the males and the enslavement of all the women and children. One of the three Phocian archons, Daiphantus, proposed the desperate course of action described by Pausanias. However, Plutarch adds that the women in another assembly approved Daiphantus' proposal and voted him a crown, applauding Daiphantus as the man who had best managed the affairs of Phocis (ὡς τὰ ἄριστα τῆ Φωκίδι βεβουλευμένον: 244D). Even the children agreed with the men's decision. The Phocians defeated the Thessalians at Cleonae near Hyampolis, and this courageous resolution was called Φωκέων Ἀπόνοια. Plutarch adds that the Phocian victory was still celebrated at that time with the festival of the Elaphebolia at Hyampolis.

### 3. *The famous desperation of the Phocians in modern scholarship*

In the entry *Daiphantos* of the Pauly-Wissowa, Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen expressed the view that Pausanias and Plutarch were using the same source, although Plutarch the "Geschichte von der Phokike aponoia mit novellistischen Zügen, aber auch mit eigenen Beobachtungen der Festgebräuche von Hyampolis ausstattete"<sup>4</sup>. It is highly probable that Plutarch also used that source, now lost, for his *Life of Daiphantus*. This source is older than Polybius, who in XVI 33, 2 mentions the Phocian desperation. According to Hiller von Gaertringen, the use of the proverb indicates that the source may be Ephorus, who derives his account of the war between the Thessalians and the Phocians from Herodotus (1), a story with the proverb (2) and a local tradition about Daiphantus (3): "Herodot 8. 27 ff. hat in seiner Erzählung von den phokisch-thessalischen Kriegen, die an die Weihgeschenke in Delphi und Abai anknüpft, noch nichts von D., aber seine Erzählung wird von dem Anonymos (Ephoros?) benutzt sein, der den D [aiphantos] in der lokalen Tradition entdeckte und damit das Sprichwort kontaminierte" (ib.). Hiller von Gaertringen does not specify the exact nature of the "Geschichte von der

<sup>4</sup> HILLER V. GAERTRINGEN 1901, cc. 2012-13, c. 2012.



Phokike aponoia” and just notes that Plutarch had distorted this story by adding folk and romantic elements<sup>5</sup>.

Marta Sordi shares Hiller von Gaertringen's view about Ephorus<sup>6</sup>, but misinterprets his statement on the nature of the source of the “Geschichte von der Phokike aponoia” and concludes that according to Hiller von Gaertringen the story is part of the local oral tradition on Daiphantus. She maintains instead that the source was a written one which narrated the story of Daiphantus and of the *aponoia*. Sordi's argument is based on the account's high level of detail: the names of the Phocian commanders and their geographic origin, the exact number of hostages killed by the Thessalians, the exact name of the place of the battle and so on: “la tradizione, dunque, alla quale la fonte di Pausania attingeva, doveva essere una tradizione scritta, certamente posteriore a quella di Erodoto che la ignorava; con ogni probabilità fondata su documenti, certamente di carattere non popolare”<sup>7</sup>. She is not able to identify this source, because “non ci è giunto il ricordo di nessuno storico focese, e le più antiche storie della Focide che ci sono note sono la Phokaieon politeia di Aristotele, e le Ktiseis ton en phokidi poleon ktl. di Polemone d'Ilio, il periegeta, vissuto nel II d.C, l'uno contemporaneo di Eforo, l'altro ad esso posteriore”<sup>8</sup>.

According to Philip Stadter, the story of Pausanias and that of Plutarch are similar, but the fact that the second is an excerpt from the larger story which Plutarch had told in detail in the *Life of Daiphantus* and that both authors refer to Phocian desperation “demonstrates that Plutarch and Pausanias used a common source”<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, the fact that Pausanias did not mention the women's decree proves that he is not quoting Plutarch. The decree of the Phocians, i.e. the Phocian desperation, is perhaps earlier than Polybius, and belongs at latest to the fourth century, if Stadter is right in arguing that Aeschines - reminding the Athenians of their enmity towards the Phocians, which the Thessalians had borne since ancient times, when the Phocians took their hostages and flogged them to death - uses the words *ὁμήρους* and *κατηλόησαν*, which are “echoed by Plutarch's *ὁμήρους κατηλόησαν*<sup>10</sup>: *κατηλόησαν* is a very rare word (which Aeschines and Plutarch

<sup>5</sup> For the central role played by the proverb in the formation of that story see BUSOLT 1893, 700. See also DAVERIO ROCCHI 2011, 46 (=DAVERIO ROCCHI 1994, 181-193, 187)

<sup>6</sup> HILLER V. GAERTRINGEN 1901.

<sup>7</sup> SORDI 1953, 250 ff. Quotation from page 251.

<sup>8</sup> See also DAVERIO ROCCHI 2011, 22 (=DAVERIO ROCCHI 1999, 15-30, 16).

<sup>9</sup> STADTER 1965, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Aeschin. II 140-141: Τοιγάρτοι Θηβαίων μὲν παρακαθημένων καὶ δεομένων, τῆς δ' ἡμετέρας πόλεως διὰ σὲ τεθορυβημένης καὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὀπλιτῶν οὐ παρόντων, Θετταλῶν δὲ Θηβαίοις προσθεμένων διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀβουλίαν καὶ τὴν πρὸς Φωκέας ἔχθραν, ἣ προὔπηρχε Θετταλοῖς ἐκ παλαιῶν χρόνων, ὅτε αὐτῶν τοὺς ὁμήρους λαβόντες Φωκεῖς κατηλόησαν, Φαλαίκου δὲ πρὶν ἐμὲ ἐλθεῖν καὶ Στέφανον καὶ Δερκύλον ἐπὶ τὴν τρίτην



only use in these passages) and its use to describe the treatment of the hostages in the Thessalian-Phocian conflict must be derived from a single source"<sup>11</sup>. Stadter agrees with Hiller von Gaertringen in identifying this source with Ephorus and in recognizing a Phocian source for the additional material, "presumably a Phocian local history"<sup>12</sup>, unknown to Aeschines, who derived the story from Ephorus, and he agrees with Sordi in rejecting the idea that the Phocian desperation is a romanticized story based on that proverb. He does not add more details about this source; instead, he notes that Plutarch makes use of additional sources in his account, that he could have heard "from his Phocian friends, one of whom even claimed to be a descendent of Daiphantus", and cites *De sera numinis vindicta* 558 A<sup>13</sup>.

Ellinger analyses the use of the noun ἀπόνοια and of the verb ἀπονοέομαι and studies the ancient parallels with the desperate decision of the Phocians, to demonstrate that the story of the *aponoia* is related to the narratives of the "guerre d'anéantissement" and the role played by Artemis as "déesse des situations extrêmes", and is part of the foundation myth of the Phocian koinon<sup>14</sup>. Discussing Polybius XVI 32, 1 he notes that "il est clair qu'il s'agit d'une expression traditionnelle et donc de la résurgence d'un sens plus ancien, étranger à la langue de Polybe"<sup>15</sup>. He deals with the question of the chronological context of the invention of the *Phokike aponoia* too, adding an important dimension to the argument. In X 1, 10 Pausanias describes the offerings the Phocians sent to Delphi subsequent to the engagement: statues of Apollo, of Tellias the seer, and "of all their other generals in the battle, together with images of their local heroes"<sup>16</sup>. The ὄσοι μαχομένοις ἄλλοι σφίσιν ἐστρατήγησαν are Daiphantus of Hyampolis, the

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πρεσβείαν ἀπεληλυθότος ὑποσπόνδου, Ὀρχομενίων δὲ περιφόβων ὄντων καὶ σπονδὰς τοῖς σώμασιν αἰτησάντων, ὥστε ἀπελθεῖν ἐκ τῆς Βοιωτίας, παρεστηκότων μὲν τῶν Θηβαίων πρέσβων, ὑπολειπομένης δ' ἔχθρας φανεραῆς Φιλίππῳ πρὸς Θηβαίους καὶ Θετταλούς, τότε ἀπώλοντο αἱ πράξεις οὐ δι' ἐμέ, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν σὴν προδοσίαν καὶ τὴν πρὸς Θηβαίους προξενίαν.

<sup>11</sup> One can argue that Aeschines made a mistake when he attributed the killing of the Phocians to the Phocians themselves, instead of to the Thessalians (as Plutarch does) and that therefore Aeschines is, perhaps, aware of only a part of the tradition. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility that the Phocians, having killed the Thessalian archons and tyrants, also had Thessalian hostages (maybe their supporters) and therefore Plutarch, not Aeschines, is wrong. And the use of ὁμήρους κατηλόησαν remains suspicious.

<sup>12</sup> STADTER 1965, 38.

<sup>13</sup> STADTER 1965, 38 and n. 29.

<sup>14</sup> ELLINGER 1993, 269 ff.

<sup>15</sup> ELLINGER 1993, 38 and n. 29.

<sup>16</sup> transl. by JONES-ORMEROD 1918, ad l. Cfr. BOURGUET 1912, 12-23, 14 n. 1; POMTOW 1912, 59-61; DAUX-SALAČ 1932, 124; DAUX 1936, 139; SORDI 1953, 245 f.; IOAKIMIDOU 1997, 43; MORGAN 2003, 133; RABE 2008, 139 ff.; SCOTT 2010, 139, 344 n. 288; BAITINGER 2011, 25 nr. 3; BERGMANN forthcoming, cat. nr. 47 MC 1; nr. 48 MC 1.



commander of their cavalry, and Rhoeus of Ambrossus, the commander of their infantry, both mentioned in X 1, 8. Pausanias does not refer to the person who proposed the *aponoia* (just saying *προσετέτακτο δὲ τοῖς ἀνδράσιν*), and only describes the episode of “Phocian despair” after which the Greeks name all forlorn hopes. However, in his description of the battle Pausanias specifies that the office of commander-in-chief was held by TELLIAS, while the commander of the infantry was Rhoeus of Ambrossus and the commander of the cavalry was Daiphantus of Hyampolis<sup>17</sup>. This is the very Daiphantus who, according to Plutarch, proposed the desperate action, then approved by the assembly of the Phocian men and also by those of the Phocian women and children. Ellinger rightly draws attention to the fact that the monuments described by Pausanias can be identified with some remains including the base with the marks of the statues’ feet (inv. 4553α–ζ) and a fragmentary dedication (*Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 202B). Another dedication (*FD* III n. 150), also fragmentary, is supposed by many scholars to concern a conflict with the Thessalians. All date back to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the third century BC. This argument warrants further investigation and will be expanded on later.

McInerney devotes an entire chapter to Phocian desperation but is not interested in exploring the origin of the proverb<sup>18</sup>. He analyses the “colourful stories” reported by the ancient sources from a topographical point of view and summarizes the previous chronological studies, concluding that “the domination of Phocian territory by Thessaly in the course of the sixth century cemented the loose ties that had existed previously between the communities of the region”, as Lehmann had already observed<sup>19</sup>.

#### 4. *The desperation of the Phocians in context*

Unlike Hiller von Gaertringen, Sordi and Stadter, I am not interested in exploring the nature of the supposed local tradition, which contains the proverb *phokike aponoia*. In fact, I am not sure that it is possible to determine the nature of the source in these terms.

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<sup>17</sup> στρατηγοὶ δὲ ἦσαν σφισι Ροῖός τε Ἀμβροσσεύς καὶ Υαμπολίτης Δαιφάντης, οὗτος μὲν δὴ ἐπὶ τῇ ἵππῳ, δυνάμεως δὲ τῆς πεζῆς ὁ Ἀμβροσσεύς. ὁ δὲ χώραν <ἐν> τοῖς ἀρχουσιν ἔχων τὴν μεγίστην μάντις ἦν <Τελλίας> ὁ Ἡλείος, καὶ ἐς τὸν Τελλίαν τοῖς Φωκεῦσι τῆς σωτηρίας ἀπέκειντο αἱ ἐλπίδες.

<sup>18</sup> MCINERNEY 1999, ch. 6.

<sup>19</sup> MCINERNEY 1999, 177. See also LEHMANN 1983, 35-43, 198; BECK 1997, 104, 111; HALL 2002, 144; DAVERIO ROCCHI, 29 (=DAVERIO ROCCHI 1999, 23).





Instead, my purpose is to establish a chronological context for the adoption of this paradigm and the related expression: the *aponoia* of the Phocians.

I agree with Hiller von Gaertringen, Sordi and Stadter in seeking a fourth-century source for the Polybius passage. But I think that even if there was an earlier tradition, it was heavily shaped by the fourth century, in which it became more relevant. There is some evidence about the desperation of the Phocians in the narratives of the 'third' sacred war: their fate is described with reference to the previous paradigm of desperation. None of the aforementioned scholars cites a particular passage which seems important to me: Diodorus XVI 78, 3, which deals with Sicilian history and reports the struggle between the Carthaginians and Timoleon. Diodorus mentions one of Timoleon's mercenaries, Thrasius, "who had been with the Phocians when they plundered the shrine at Delphi and was remarkable for his mad recklessness" (τῶν γὰρ μισθοφόρων τις ὄνομα Θρασίος, σεσυληκῶς τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς ἱερόν μετὰ τῶν Φωκέων, ἀπονοία δὲ καὶ θράσει διαφέρων FISCHER). According to Volquardsen, Hammond, Westlake and Sordi,<sup>20</sup> this passage, like those about Timoleon (72-90), depends on Timaeus, the Sicilian Historian who lived between the second half of the fourth century and the first half of the third century BC and studied in Athens. In Pack's opinion, however, the phrase "ὥσπερ πρότερον ἀνεγράψαμεν (sic)" proves that the source must be Demophilus, Diodorus' source on the Phocian wars<sup>21</sup>. I am not able to take sides in the debate, but for my purpose it is important that both sources originated in the fourth century. We have here further proof of the importance of the fourth century, at least for the development of the notion of the Phocian *aponoia*, if not yet in the sense of "desperation", as will become clearer later on.

Demosthenes' representation of the Phocians is, in any case, more decisive. Misery, suffering and tribulation are key-words with reference to the Phocians in Demosthenes' speeches.

The "unhappy" Phocians were "deluded" and all their cities were destroyed<sup>22</sup>; the "unhappy Phocians" "perished", moved to terror and piety<sup>23</sup>; they

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<sup>20</sup> VOLQUARSDEN 1868, 113; HAMMOND 1938, 137-151, 137 ff.; WESTLAKE 1938, 65-74 and SORDI 1969, XLI (nevertheless she is more cautious).

<sup>21</sup> 1876, 199. Pack wrote ὥσπερ πρότερον ἀνεγράψαμεν, but both Dindorf and Vogel have καθάπερ μικρῶ πρότερον ἀνεγράψαμεν without citing variants.

<sup>22</sup> XVIII 42 DILTS: ἐξηπάτηντο δ' οἱ ταλαίπωροι Φωκεῖς καὶ ἀνήρηθη αἱ πόλεις αὐτῶν; cfr. 142 DILTS: ὅτε τοὺς ταλαιπῶρους Φωκέας ἐποίησεν ἀπολέσθαι τὰ ψευδῆ δεῦρ' ἀπαγγείλας; cfr. XV 38.

<sup>23</sup> XVIII 33; XIX 30; 56; 64 DILTS: ὃν μὲν τοίνυν τρόπον οἱ ταλαίπωροι Φωκεῖς ἀπολώλασιν, οὐ μόνον ἐκ τῶν δογμάτων τούτων ἔστιν ἰδεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἃ πέπρακται, θέαμα δεινόν, ᾧ ἄνδρες Αθηναῖοι, καὶ ἔλεινόν.



are to be saved<sup>24</sup> though *asebeis*<sup>25</sup>; they trusted in false promises and then perished<sup>26</sup>; they are victims of *apate*<sup>27</sup>; they suffered many pains<sup>28</sup>; the commonality of the Phocians are in an evil and pitiable plight<sup>29</sup>; they are reduced to such straits that they can neither help their friends nor repel their enemies<sup>30</sup>; they were completely overthrown<sup>31</sup>; they were abandoned<sup>32</sup>. It is little wonder that Demosthenes explicitly says that the Phocians were *desperate*:

ἀλλ' ἵνα, ἃ ἐβούλεσθ' οἰόμενοι πράξειν αὐτόν, μηδὲν ἐναντίον ψηφίσησθαισθε αὐτῷ, μηδ' ἀμύναιτο μηδ' ἀντέχοιεν οἱ Φωκεῖς ἐπὶ ταῖς παρ' ὑμῶν ἐπανέχοντες ἐλπίσιν, ἀλλ' ἀπογνόντες ἅπανθ' αὐτοὺς ἐγχειρίσαιεν. (XIX 51 DILTS)

According to Demosthenes, Philip's objective was that the Athenians, in the belief that he would do all that they wanted, were to make no decree prejudicial to him, and "the Phocians might not stand their ground and hold out in reliance upon hopes afforded by you, but might make unconditional surrender to him in sheer desperation"<sup>33</sup>.

ἀπογνόντες comes from ἀπογιγνώσκω, "despair", "give up as hopeless", and is composed of ἀπό and γιγνώσκω, "come to know", "perceive". The meaning is similar to that of the verb νοέω, "perceive", "observe", "consider", which is part of the verb ἀπονοέομαι, "to be desperate", and has the same stem as ἀπόνοια. According to the TGL, ἀπογιγνώσκομαι means "desperor": it is used in the perfect participle and means "desperate", and is found with the same meaning in other passages<sup>34</sup>. We should not be surprised that Demosthenes does not use the term *aponoia*, which is used in other sources relating to the desperation of the Phocians: the term *aponoia* does not always denote "desperation", instead often denoting "ignorance of the right way to behave", "lack of sense", in contrast to πρόνοια

<sup>24</sup> V 19; XIX 30; 44; 63; 74; 220.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> XIX 56 DILTS: αἴσπερ οἱ Φωκεῖς πιστεύσαντες ἀπώλοντο; cfr. XIX 58; 63; 179. Compare also XVIII 33; XIX 61; 76; 125; 317.

<sup>27</sup> XIX 77 DILTS: ὅπερ καὶ γέγονεν. μὴ οὖν ὅτι καὶ Λακεδαιμονίους καὶ Φωκέας ἐξηπάτησε Φίλιππος, διὰ ταῦθ' ὧν ὑμᾶς οὗτος ἐξηπάτησε μὴ δότω δίκην· οὐ γὰρ δίκαιον; cfr. XIX 43; V 10; XIX 78.

<sup>28</sup> XIX 128 DILTS: τοὺς ταλαιπώρους πάσχειν Φωκέας.

<sup>29</sup> XIX 81 DILTS: ἀλλὰ μὴν ὃ γε δῆμος ὁ τῶν Φωκέων οὕτω κακῶς καὶ ἐλεινῶς διάκειται.

<sup>30</sup> XIX 82.

<sup>31</sup> XIX 43; 78; 141 DILTS: τῶν ἐχθρῶν Φωκέων ἄρδην ὄλεθρος; cfr. XIX 204; VI 15; VIII 66; IX 19; IX 26 DILTS: καὶ τὸ Φωκέων ἔθνος τοσοῦτον ἀνηρημένον; X 67.

<sup>32</sup> V 10; XIX 47.

<sup>33</sup> Transl. by VINCE- VINCE 1926.

<sup>34</sup> Polyb. XXX 8, 3; Dionys.A.R.V 15; Philo vol II, p. 426; Plut. *Galba* II.





("foresight", "forethought")<sup>35</sup>: the negative connotation is related to insolence (*hybris*) and impiety (*asebeia*), a detail which must be given due importance. This argument will be explored in depth later in the article.

First and foremost, however, it is important to take into account two other arguments that seem to underline the probability that the fourth century was the chronological context for the development of the notion of *phokike aponoia*.

### 5. Monuments, inscriptions, and memory

Indeed, the temptation to interpret the archaeological remains and the two inscriptions quoted by Ellinger as fourth-century allusions to the Phocian victories of Archaic Times is very strong.

In fact, the offerings recorded by Pausanias (X 1, 8-10), i.e. the statues of Apollo and the heroes and of Tellias the seer, and of the other generals in the battle, i.e. Rhoeus of Ambrossus and Daiphantus of Hyampolis (whom Plutarch believed to have instigated the *aponoia*), were identified by G. Daux with certain remains, including the base with the marks of the statues' feet (inv. 4553α-ζ= Jacquemin 1999, N. 397)<sup>36</sup> and a fragmentary dedication (*Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 202B)<sup>37</sup>:

Φωκε[ῖς Ἀ]πόλλωνι [ἀνέθ]ηκαν δεκάταν ἀπὸ Θεσσαλῶν

The base is today on the southwest side of the terrace of the temple in the so-called Halos. Although its original position is unfortunately unknown, the fact that fragments have been found inside or immediately outside the Halos seems to be relevant<sup>38</sup>. The slabs are of marble and rabbeted and 12.61 inches high. According to Anne Jacquemin, the base can be dated to between the second half of the fourth century and the first half of the third century BC. The statues themselves have not survived.

The inscription was perhaps once again engraved and, based on the writing, is traditionally dated to the middle of the fourth century, most probably in the second half<sup>39</sup>. Daux admits "que l'ordre de mots, sauf pour le premier, reste incertain et que la dédicace ne se présentait pas nécessairement de la manière

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<sup>35</sup> See 25.32 ff.; and, in other sources : Isocr.*Pac.* XCIII ; Theophr.*Char.* VI; Polyb. I 70, 5; 82, 1; IV 3, 1; XVIII 54, 8-11; cfr. DOVER 1974, 149; MACDOWELL 2009, 302 ; ELLINGER 1993, 275 ff.; FRANCHI 2016a, ch. 6

<sup>36</sup> The monument was not included in *FD*.

<sup>37</sup> DAUX 1936, 146 ff.

<sup>38</sup> See also KERAMOPOULLOS 1907, 91-104; BOURGUET 1912, 12-23; BOURGUET 1914, 153; BERGMANN forthcoming, l.c.; FRANCHI 2016a, chap. 6; FRANCHI 2016b.

<sup>39</sup> KERAMOPOULLOS 1907, 93 ff. I express my gratitude to Prof. Denis Rousset for his precious remarks.



suiivante”<sup>40</sup>, but has no doubts about the identification of the marks of the statues’ feet with the group of Apollo, Tellias, the generals and the heroes of the battle<sup>41</sup>. His certainty rests on the position of the anchor bolts, which does not suggest an animated and violent scene like the struggle for the tripod, represented in the first Phocian dedication recorded by Pausanias (XIII 7), and on the length of the base.

As Jacquemin and Ellinger acknowledge<sup>42</sup>, Daux’ arguments are not entirely solid; in fact Keramopoulos, Bourguet and, initially, even Daux, identified the same remains with the representation of the struggle for the tripod, which according to Herodotus was dedicated by the Phocians after the victory over the Thessalians<sup>43</sup>. Keramopoulos went further and guessed that the statues over the preserved blocks were substitutes for previous – even larger - archaic statues: although Herodotus mentions *megaloi andriantes*, the preserved marks are small. This hypothesis, however, cannot be proved<sup>44</sup>. Last but not least, one cannot ignore the possibility that the monument was erected after another Phocian-Thessalian battle, which took place in the fourth century BC, in the first years of the so-called ‘third’ Sacred War. This was the battle of Argolas (modern Mendenitsa<sup>45</sup>?), referred to by Diodorus (XVI 30) and won by the Phocians in 355, as Pomtow has already noted<sup>46</sup>.

As a result, it is not possible to use this argument to predate the crystallization of the proverb *phokike aponoia* to the fourth century.

Many scholars believe the second inscription (FD III 3, n. 150), also fragmentary, to be a Phocian dedication, probably concerning a conflict with the Thessalians. According to this interpretation, the dedication would refer to the stratagem of the concealed amphoras recorded by Pausanias XIII 4, and was completed by Bourguet as follows:

[Φ]ωκ[εἰς ἀνέθηκαν δεκάτ]αν τῶι [Ἀπόλλωνι ἀπὸ Θεσσα]λῶν

According to Bourguet, “la restitution suivante [see above] est sure”<sup>47</sup>, because of the disposition of the letters in the stoichedon pattern, and because the Inv. 37, i.e. our inscription, belongs to the same limestone block as the Inv. 1091, an

<sup>40</sup> DAUX 1936, 144 n. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Cfr. KRUMEICH 1997, 192; RABE 2008, 139 ff.; BAITINGER 2011, 25 nr. 4; BERGMANN forthcoming, cat. nr. 47 and nr. 48.

<sup>42</sup> JACQUEMIN 1999, 52, 248; ELLINGER 1993, 235.

<sup>43</sup> KERAMOPOULLOS 1907; KERAMOPOULLOS 1912, 91 ff.; BOURGUET 1912, 14 and BOURGUET 1914, 153; DAUX, FD III 3, Athènes 1943, 124.

<sup>44</sup> See also BOURGUET 1912, 14 n. 1; POMTOW 1912, 59-61; DAUX – SALAČ 1932, 124; DAUX 1936, 139; SORDI 1953, 245 ff.; IOAKIMIDOU 1997, 43, 46; MORGAN 2003, 133, 133; SCOTT 2010, 139, 344 n. 288; BAITINGER 2011, 25 nr. 3; nr. 5; BERGMANN forthcoming, cat. nr. 47 MC 1; nr. 48 MC 1.

<sup>45</sup> BUCKLER 1989, 34.

<sup>46</sup> POMTOW 1901, 1189-1432, esp. 1401-2.

<sup>47</sup> BOURGUET 1912, 14.



inscription honouring some Phocians published by Pomtow<sup>48</sup>, where there is a proxeny decree for a Phocian in the right hand corner of the block. G. Daux and A. Salač express the same opinion in the third volume of the *Fouilles de Delphes*<sup>49</sup>, but Daux later admits in his volume on *Pausanias a Delphes* that “il faut bien reconnaître que, dans le cas des offrandes phocidiennes, ces documents sont trop mutilés et trop incertains pour permettre un contrôle efficace”<sup>50</sup>. More interestingly, also this inscription was perhaps once again engraved and, based on the writing, is traditionally dated to sometime in the second half of the fourth century or the first half of the third century<sup>51</sup>. This means that this inscription, like the first one, does not offer enough evidence to support the argument that the proverb *phokike aponoia* was crystallized before the fourth century. Nevertheless, both are very important in allowing us to detect a tendency to memorialize and monumentalize victories and deeds which seems to be typical of the Phocians of the fourth and/or third century BC. This attitude is also likely to have affected the Phocians’ shaping of their past: even if the first monument had been dedicated after the battle of Argolas, it would have reminded fourth-century Phocians of a more famous archaic battle, the one referred to by Herodotus and later reshaped by Phocian local traditions collected by Pausanias and Plutarch. In the fourth century the Phocians placed statues and once again engraved inscriptions to remember those archaic events that seemed to have become more important for their identity<sup>52</sup>.

## 6. Hybris and aponoia in fourth-century Phocis

One wonders if all that shaping activity relates to the first successful years of the so-called ‘third’ Sacred War, or to the readmission of the Phocians to the Amphictyony after the disasters of the ‘third’ Sacred War<sup>53</sup>. As far as the first hypothesis is concerned, I assume that the Phocians - especially the Phocian leaders - exploited their power over Delphi to campaign for their war against the Amphictyony, or were celebrating victories over one of its members (the Thessalians): such a victory could be the one in Argolas.

The second hypothesis needs more detailed investigation. In 346, at the end of the ‘third’ Sacred War, the Amphictyony imposed a set of heavy penalties: the votes of the Phocians were transferred to Philip, and they were forbidden to replace

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<sup>48</sup> POMTOW 1889, 114.

<sup>49</sup> DAUX – SALAČ 1932, 125.

<sup>50</sup> DAUX 1936, 139.

<sup>51</sup> JACQUEMIN 1999, 52, 347.

<sup>52</sup> FRANCHI 2016a, chap. 6.

<sup>53</sup> ELLINGER 1993, 235; JACQUEMIN 1999, 52.



them until they had paid an indemnity equal to the sum stolen from Delphi, and their poleis were razed<sup>54</sup>. The koinon was formally disbanded<sup>55</sup>, but collecting the indemnity owed to the Amphictyony necessitated the operation of a federal apparatus, a “koinon in flux”, since no agreement had yet been reached on the structure of the federal administration. Because of the continuing threat of invasion, the federal organization quickly reasserted its authority, and the Phocians fought on the Greek side at Cheronea. By the early third century the koinon was formally functioning, as proven by a decree (*IG II<sup>2</sup> 367*). The last decades of the fourth century, a time when the new koinon was incubating, seem to be a highly probable context for the formation of the narratives about the Phocian past<sup>56</sup>. The topic of their desperation, built up in the period following the ‘third’ Sacred War, was applied to former events, like the battles against the Thessalians recorded by Herodotus.

I suppose that the first hypothesis does not exclude the second, and that we can argue many stages of shaping. One of these stages, not necessarily the first, was the golden age of the Phocian control of Delphi, i.e. the first years of the ‘third’ Sacred War. At this time the Phocians are likely to have promoted their actions against the Amphictyony, celebrating contemporary (Argolas) and/or archaic victories (Parnassos and Hyampolis)<sup>57</sup>.

Another of these stages, not necessarily the second, was the years after the ‘third’ Sacred War, when the defeated Phocians started constructing the desperation pattern<sup>58</sup>.

If so, these re-engraved inscriptions and replaced monuments must also be interpreted in conjunction with the picture of the desperate Phocians painted by Demosthenes, and perhaps by the Phocians themselves.

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<sup>54</sup> 1999, 233.

<sup>55</sup> Dem. XIX 81. See GLOTZ 1909, 526-46, 526 ff.; SWOBODA 1913, 319; GEHRKE 1985, 132; DAVERIO 1994, 185; MCINERNEY 1997, 193-207; 1999, 235. See also DAVERIO ROCCHI 2011, 32-36 (= 1994, 177-194), who describes the discontinuous importance of the koinon and the extent to which it was strengthened by the existence of a common cause. Other scholars think that the *koinon* wasn't disbanded, as Dem. XIX 81 only mentions a *dioikismos*, which does not necessarily imply a dissolution: BUSOLT- SWOBODA 1920, 1448 and n. 5; SCHOBBER 1924, 72; GIOVANNINI 1971, 52; BECK 1997, 114.

<sup>56</sup> On the koinon in the second half of the fourth century, and on the role of the Phokikon and of the assembly, see BECK 1997, 111; DAVERIO ROCCHI 2011, 49 ss (=DAVERIO ROCCHI 1994, 190ss.); on the koinon in the second and second centuries, see DAVERIO ROCCHI 2011, 32-36 (=DAVERIO ROCCHI 1994, 177-181).

<sup>57</sup> FRANCHI 2016b.

<sup>58</sup> FRANCHI 2016a, chap. 4 and 6.



## 7. The Phocian desperation and the 'third' Sacred War

This evidence allows us to argue that even if it did exist before the fourth century the paradigm of desperation was most heavily shaped and applied to the Phocians from the second half of the fourth century, and not earlier. To the best of my knowledge, there was no great need before this to describe the Phocians as desperate: but during the 'third' Sacred War there were as many as four reasons for constructing the *aponoia* of the Phocians. The first reason (1) deals with the fact that they were strongly accused of being guilty of *asebeia*, *hybris*, *paranomia* and *hierosylia*, and therefore it was necessary to plead their desperation in order to justify their faults, which was obviously the aim of Demosthenes and, most probably, of the Phocians themselves. Demosthenes admits that whatever one may say about the Phocians— e.g. that they are irreligious— “surely all that was finished and done with before the return of the envoys to Athens, and therefore could not have stood in the way of the deliverance of the Phocians”:

ὄσα γὰρ νῦν ἐρεῖ περὶ τῶν Φωκέων ἢ τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων ἢ τοῦ Ἥγησίππου, ὡς Πρόξενον οὐχ ὑπέδεξαντο, ὡς ἀσεβεῖς εἰσὶν, ὡς—ὅ τι ἂν δή ποτ' αὐτῶν κατηγορῆ, πάντα δήπου ταῦτα πρὸ τοῦ τοὺς πρέσβεις τούτους δευρ' ἦκειν ἐπέπρακτο, καὶ οὐκ ἦν ἐμποδὼν τῷ τοὺς Φωκέας σῶζεσθαι, ὡς τίς φησιν; (XIX 73 DILTS)

It is not by chance that the negative notion of *aponoia* (see above) is linked to the notions of *hybris* and *asebeia*: one wonders if that negative notion, applied to the Phocians together with those of *hybris* and *asebeia*, was turned into a positive one by the Phocians themselves and/or by the Athenian circles sustaining them. This seems to be demonstrated in Polybius, where only the Phocians' *aponoia* does not have a negative connotation, as well as in the fourth-century source of Diodorus, in his description of Thrasius. The fourth-century pattern of the *hybris*, *asebeia* and *aponoia* ("ignorance of the right way to behave") of the Phocians generated an opposing fourth-century pattern of *aponoia* ("desperation")<sup>59</sup>.

Although accusations of *asebeia*, *hybris*, *paranomia* and *hierosylia* ("lawlessness") were flung at the Phocians on the occasion of the First Sacred War too, it is widely acknowledged that the sources about this mostly unknown War which mention these accusations date from the fourth century<sup>60</sup>, whereas earlier sources containing possible allusions to that war ([Hom] *Hymn.Apoll.* 540-4<sup>61</sup> and

<sup>59</sup> FRANCHI 2016a, chap. 6.

<sup>60</sup> e.g. Aeschin. III 107-13, esp. 107. 108 and 109; [Thessal.] *Presb.* (27), 7; Plut. *Sol.* 11; Paus. X 27, 4-8, esp. 5; *Hypoth.* Pind. *Ol.*, p. 7 Drachmann; see DAVIES 1994, 193-212, and SÁNCHEZ 2001, 68, 72.

<sup>61</sup> Forrest 1956, 33-52, 34 with previous bibliography.



Hes. *Scut.* 478-80<sup>62</sup>) either do not mention these accusations (*Scut.*), or do not mention the Phocians ([Hom.]). One wonders if the narratives of this possibly historical war were shaped around the faults of the Phocians - *asebeia*, *hybris*, *hierosylia* and so on - only after the 'third' Sacred War. Perhaps it is not by chance that the offence of *hybris* becomes subject to law in the fourth century<sup>63</sup>. But this is another matter.

The second reason (2) lies in Demosthenes' attitude towards using the plight of the Phocians to "add pathos to his prosecution of Aischines"<sup>64</sup>, accused of having persuaded the Athenians to abandon them<sup>65</sup>. In Demosthenes' view, the mistakes of the Athenians were allowing Phocis to be excluded from the Peace of Philocrates and thus not preventing Philip from moving against Phocis<sup>66</sup>; Demosthenes thought these blunders were committed because Aeschines and Philocrates, bribed by Philip, told the Athenians that Philip was not going to seize control of Phocis, and would bring benefits to Athens<sup>67</sup>. By discrediting Aeschines, Demosthenes distances himself from the Peace of Philocrates.

The third reason (3) is linked with the Athenians' need to justify, after the end of the war, their previous support for the guilty Phocians<sup>68</sup>.

The fourth (4), and perhaps the main reason, is that it was important, both to Demosthenes and to other Greeks (the Spartans and the Athenians led by Hegesandros<sup>69</sup> and Hegesippos<sup>70</sup>, who had both persuaded the Athenians that the safety of the Phocians would benefit Athens<sup>71</sup>), to oppose the swift rise of Philip<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> PARKE- BOARDMAN 1957, 276-282. Before the fourth century the sources about the *hybris* of the Phlegyans - who were guilty of the burning of the temple of Delphi and therefore perhaps related to the narratives about the First Sacred War (PRANDI 1981, 51-63; ELLINGER 1993, 315 ff.), do not mention the Phocians either: cfr. [Hom.] *Hymn.Apoll.* 16; Pherekydes *FGrHist* 3 F 41 d ap. *Schol.* T Hom. II. N 302.

<sup>63</sup> See 21.47; 54.8-9; cfr. MACDOWELL 1976, 14-31; FISHER 1976, 177-93; FISHER 1979, 32-47.; MACDOWELL 1990, 18-23; FISHER 1992, 50-51; CAIRNS 1996, 1-32; MACDOWELL 2009, 245.

<sup>64</sup> MCINERNEY 1999, 233; see also BUCKLER 1989, 132 esp. n. 34 and 133 ff.

<sup>65</sup> Cfr. XIX 20-1; 59; 30 DILTS: εἶτα καὶ Φωκέας ἀπολώλεκεν μὲν, οἶμαι, Φίλιππος, συνηγωνίσαντο δ' οὗτοι· τοῦτο δὴ δεῖ σκοπεῖν καὶ ὄρα̃ν, εἰ ὅσα τῆς Φωκέων σωτηρίας ἐπὶ τὴν πρεσβείαν ἤκεν, ταῦθ' ἅπαντ' ἀπώλεσαν οὗτοι καὶ διέφθειραν ἐκόντες, οὐχ ὡς ὅδε Φωκέας ἀπώλεσεν καθ' ἑαυτόν. πόθεν; cfr. also XIX 15, 17, 18, 20, 43, 44, 47, 49, 53, 96, 97, 101, 144, 159, 278, 322 and BUCKLER 1989., l.c.

<sup>66</sup> BUCKLER 1989, 134.

<sup>67</sup> MACDOWELL 2009, 327.

<sup>68</sup> cfr. Dem. V 14-15; Diod. XVI 57; see BUCKLER 1989, 33.

<sup>69</sup> cfr. Aeschin. I 64-70 with *schol.*

<sup>70</sup> Aeschin. I 64; III 118 with *schol.*; Dem. XIX 72-75; XVII 4; Plut. Mor. 187E; Diog. Laert. III 24.

<sup>71</sup> BUCKLER 1989, 28 ff.

<sup>72</sup> cfr. Dem. I 12-13 DILTS: εἰ δὲ προησόμεθα, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ τούτους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, εἴτ' Ὀλυνθον ἐκεῖνος καταστρέψεται, φρασάτω τις ἐμοὶ τί τὸ κωλύον ἔτ' αὐτόν





The creation of a picture of a cruel, pitiless king, using the image of the desperate Phocians, was part of this strategy<sup>73</sup>. Not all the Athenians were aware of the threat represented by the Macedonian King, and Demosthenes' task was to alert them to it<sup>74</sup>. These strong denunciations of Philip grew even more intense after the First Olynthiac, when it was said that his success had led to *hybris* and he had misled people and made false promises<sup>75</sup>.

These constructions should be viewed together with the fabrication of the betrayal of the Phocians, emphasized by Buckler, with the latter functioning as "a transparent device to turn Athenian sympathy for them to Philip's own ends"<sup>76</sup>. Indeed, the 'third' Sacred War functioned as a catalyst for the formation of many, sometimes contrasting, narratives about the Phocians that finally shaped accounts of other events in the Phocians' archaic and classical past. The stories of the battles between Thessalians and Phocians that can be found in Herodotus lend themselves to a re-shaping based on *aponoia*: the desperate decision highlights the subsequent victory and is perfect material for the foundation myth of the Phocian *koinon*, as Ellinger put it. This narrative about the Phocian *aponoia* merged with the stories in Hdt. VIII 27 ff. and the expression "Phokike *aponoia*" became a proverb, as the Polybius passage demonstrates. Pausanias loves stories about the *aponoia* of a victimised *ethnos* – this is the case for the Messenians too in IV 20 ff. – and, sympathizing with the Phocians, he recounts the story of their *aponoia*; Plutarch is

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ἔσται βαδίζειν ὅποι βούλεται. ἄρα λογίζεται τις ὑμῶν, ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν τρόπον δι' ὃν μέγας γέγονεν ἀσθενῆς ὢν τὸ κατ' ἀρχὰς Φίλιππος; τὸ πρῶτον Ἀμφίπολιν λαβὼν, μετὰ ταῦτα Πύδναν, πάλιν Ποτειδαίαν, Μεθώνην αὐθις, εἶτα Θετταλίας ἐπέβη; (13) μετὰ ταῦτα Φεράς, Παγασάς, Μαγνησίαν, πάνθ' ὃν ἐβούλετ' εὐτρεπίσας τρόπον ὥχετ' εἰς Θράκην· εἶτ' ἐκεῖ τοὺς μὲν ἐκβαλὼν τοὺς δὲ καταστήσας τῶν βασιλέων ἠσθένησεν· πάλιν ῥάσας οὐκ ἐπὶ τὸ ῥαθυμεῖν ἀπέκλινεν, ἀλλ' εὐθύς Ὀλυνθίοις ἐπεχείρησεν. τὰς δ' ἐπ' Ἰλλυριοὺς καὶ Παίονας αὐτοῦ καὶ πρὸς Ἀρύββαν καὶ ὅποι τις ἂν εἴποι παραλείπω στρατείας; see GRIFFITH-HAMMOND 1979, 208 ff. and MACDOWELL 2009, 210.

<sup>73</sup> see e.g. Dem. XIX 62-63 DILTS: Ἀκούετ', ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι. ὁμολογία Φιλίππου καὶ Φωκῶν, φησὶν, οὐχὶ Θετταίων καὶ Φωκῶν, οὐδὲ Θετταλῶν καὶ Φωκῶν, οὐδὲ Λοκρῶν, οὐδ' ἄλλου τῶν παρόντων οὐδενός· καὶ πάλιν 'παραδοῦναι δὲ τὰς πόλεις Φωκίας, φησὶ, 'Φιλίππου, οὐχὶ Θετταίοις οὐδὲ Θετταλοῖς οὐδ' ἄλλω οὐδενί. (63) διὰ τί; ὅτι Φίλιππος ἀπηγγέλλετο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὑπὸ τούτου ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν Φωκῶν σωτηρίᾳ παρεληλυθέναι. τούτῳ δὴ πάντ' ἐπίστευον, καὶ πρὸς τοῦτον πάντ' ἐσκόπουσαν, πρὸς τοῦτον ἐποιοῦντο τὴν εἰρήνην.

<sup>74</sup> MACDOWELL 2009, 211 and 236 and 314: despite a commonplace in recent scholarship that Athens did not have parties, Demosthenes described parties in the *ekklesia*.

<sup>75</sup> Cfr. II 9-10. See MACDOWELL 2009, 231.

<sup>76</sup> BUCKLER 1989, 134; HARRIS 1995, 71; MCINERNEY, 1999, 219 ff. and 231; SÁNCHEZ 2001, 203. McInerney and Sánchez are convinced of the good faith of the Athenians. Anyway, even if the desperation and betrayal are constructions, this does not seem to me inconsistent with the existence of real desperation and betrayal: constructions often derive from kernels of truth.



interested in the story because of his fascination with the life of Daiphantus, with the deeds of the women and his autoptic knowledge of Phocis and the Phocians.

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## Abstract

The proverb Phocian desperation (Φωκικὴ ἀπόνοια) commonly refers to the desperate decision by the Phocians to gather all their women, children and property in one place and consign them all to the funeral pyre if they lost the battle against the Thessalians. According to Herodotus (VIII 27 ff.) this battle took place in the years leading up to the Persian War. But the detail of the desperate decision is only found in Pausanias (X 1.3-11) and in Plutarch (*Mul. virt.* 2). It is widely accepted that the source which provides an account of the Phocian desperation originated between the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., because the battle took place in the fifth and the account of the Phocian desperation is already known to Aeschines (II 140). This paper argues that even if it did exist before the fourth century (and this has by no means yet been proven, and perhaps never will be), it was then that it was most heavily shaped, as an analysis of some passages of Demosthenes seems to show.

Keywords: Phocis, Phocian Desperation, Thessaly, Herodotus, Demosthenes

L'espressione proverbiale "disperazione focidese" (Φωκικὴ ἀπόνοια) si riferisce alla decisione disperata che i Focidesi presero poco prima di affrontare i Tessali in uno scontro avvenuto in età arcaica che in seguito assunse una forte valenza identitaria. In tale occasione i Focidesi decisero di radunare le donne, i bambini e i loro beni e di incaricare 30 guardie di accendere un rogo in caso di disfatta. Stando a Erodoto (VIII 27 ff.) questa battaglia avrebbe avuto luogo poco prima delle Guerre persiane; il dettaglio della disperazione focidese è però riferito solo da Pausania (X 1, 3-11) e Plutarco (*Mul. virt.* II). Secondo gran parte degli studiosi la loro fonte risalirebbe almeno al IV secolo, se non al V, perché la battaglia ebbe luogo tra fine VI e V e, soprattutto, perché l'episodio è noto a Eschine (II 140). In quest'articolo si sostiene che pur ammettendo che tale fonte possa risalire a un periodo precedente al IV secolo (fatto tutt'altro che dimostrato e forse indimostrabile), è nel IV secolo che essa fu plasmata e significativamente orientata, come sembrano indicare alcuni passi di Demostene.

Parole chiave: Focide, Disperazione Focidese, Tessaglia, Erodoto, Demostene