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Arimaspians and Cyclopes: The Mythos of the One-Eyed Man in Greek and Inner Asian Thought

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Arimaspian and Cyclopes:
The Mythos of the One-Eyed Man in Greek and Inner Asian Thought

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Preface

The following material originally formed part of the research for my master's thesis, which investigates the exchange of myths and symbols between the cultures of the Classical world and Inner Asia. However, given the constraints imposed by time, the prescribed length of the thesis, and my personal choice to focus closely on the affinities inherent in Greco-Roman and Turkic-Mongolian imperial symbolism, that project did not fully address the topic. It is only now that, having spent two years thinking over the interconnectivity and continuity that are important aspects of this story, I am able to present this research in its entirety.

Abstract

The enduring presence and intercultural value of the motif of the monocular or one-eyed man in both Greek and Inner Asian mythic traditions are very significant and often ignored aspects of the interface between these two cultural spheres. In this discussion I will trace the history of this phenomenon, and by taking a holistic view of all the available material, will attempt to reassemble this symbol's function within multiple cultural frameworks.

I begin with Greek records of the Inner Asian Arimaspians, analyzing them with reference to the recurrent one-eyed beings in the Inner Asian tradition found in the works of Chinese and Indian geographers writing about the nomadic peoples of the steppe regions. I also examine materials from within the bounds of records made by the nomads themselves — for instance, the thirteenth-century CE *Secret History of the Mongols* (§3–6) and the living Kyrgyz epic *Manas*. Lastly, I ask the all-

important question whether the most famous mythic monocular beings in Classical tradition, the Cyclopes, were also formed under similar intercultural influences.

Scholarly Background

At the beginning of this study we should note that questions regarding the idea that the Greeks drew upon the traditions of neighboring and preceding cultures such as the Hittites, Egyptians and Phoenicians in the formation of their own mythological, religious and historical traditions, is in no way a new idea. Several attempts were made in this area by scholars during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often received with unnecessarily negative criticism from peers who held preconceived opinions regarding the uniqueness and separateness of the foundations of Western culture.¹ However, in the past thirty years, the attempt to retrace the origins and intercultural value of Greek myth has made a spirited return through the efforts to examine them in a comparative framework — viewed by some as iconoclastic² — of Bernal (1991, 2001, 2011), Burkert (2004), Lane Fox (2008), Morris (1992, 2001) and others.

In spite of this new activity, little has been furthered, seemingly, in relation to comparative studies of Greek interactions with the nomadic cultures of Inner Asia. Some notable exceptions, however are Kingsley in his work (2011) on the Hyperborean (Avar?) sage Abaris and investigation of possibilities regarding Inner Asian influence on the formation of Pythagorean philosophy, and Kim (2009, 2013) in his recent holistic re-analyses of Classical and Chinese concepts of the "barbarian," and the Huns/Xiong-nu and their role in the development of early Medieval Europe. Mention must also be made of the "Sarmatian Hypothesis" of Littleton and Malcor (1994) on the similarities between Ossetian and Arthurian myth through Alanic and Sarmatian presence in Britain and southern France during the Late Roman Empire, and Anderson's (2003) return to this topic with added emphasis on Scythic mythic parallels.

¹ For examples of some good early studies of affinities between Greek and Near Eastern myth, see Brown (1898: 203ff) and Hooke (1933, 1963). See Mondy (1990: 144), Bernal (1991: 4–10) and Burkert (2004: 3) for the history of criticism of such methods, their defense and renewal.

² Cf. comments by Yurco (1996: 98), Morris (1996: 171) and (Baines 1996: 27–28) in *Black Athena Revisited*.

The greatest comparative work on the Greeks and the myths of the nomadic peoples who roamed the regions between the borders of Mongolia and the Black Sea Region during the Archaic and Classical periods of Greek history remains Bolton's eponymously titled 1962 opus on the ancient Greek poet, traveler among the nomads, and devotee of the god Apollo, Aristeas of Proconnesus. This is a very scholarly tome that gives much emphasis to collating and connecting Greek records of Inner Asian myth with Chinese and Medieval European records. Bolton himself drew upon the works of many earlier scholars, such as Alföldi (1933), Dodds (1951: 140ff), Phillips (1955) and Meuli ([1935] 1975 II. 817ff), who had posited highly original ideas in relation to perceived Inner Asian "shamanic" elements in Greek ritual and religion, particularly in relation to the Greek folkloric figures Aristeas, Abaris and Zalmoxis (see Meuli [1935] 1975: II. 817–79; Eliade [1970] 1995: 31–83; Burkert 1963: 235–40, 1972: 162ff), who were strongly tied to the Scythic cultures of the Black Sea region that had emerged from the Inner Asian steppes into the West Asian and Greek cultural spheres during the late eighth and early seventh centuries BCE. Bolton (1962: 125–35), comparatively, eschewed all connections between Aristeas and "shamanic" traditions, in order to give preference to the idea that Aristeas was a traveler and as such a recipient of tales from Inner Asian peoples.

Indeed, one of the main reasons that the overlapping of Inner Asian and Classical myth has not been sufficiently studied during the recent renewals in comparative myth seems to be that previous comparative efforts often sought their answers to the question of the nature of Inner Asian myth outside of the Inner Asian context and with little regard to historicity.³ In order to remedy that,

³ Bremmer (1987: 34–50; 2002b: 33–39) who is followed and quoted by Von Struckrad (2003: 106–16) and S. West (2004: 57–59) in many ways is the leader of the common contemporary view on Greco-Scythic "shamanic" influence. These scholars have strongly criticized the ideas of Rohde (1925), Meuli ([1935] 1975: II. 817–79) and Dodds (1951: 140ff) for generalizing Greek wonder workers as "shamans" and for comparing them to figures in Native American, Finnish, Inuit and other traditions. They also contend that elements such as the migration of souls from bodies and other "shamanic" elements are only attested late in relation to figures such as Aristeas and Abaris and never in relation to the Scythians directly. On the other hand, Kingsley (1994: 187–98; 2011) appears to represent the other side of the dispute at present, building up highly sophisticated, yet often anachronistic and stretched arguments, far more ambitious than even the works of Meuli ([1935] 1975: II. 817–79) and Dodds (1951: 140ff). Regarding the tangled and fragmentary traditions on Aristeas and Abaris, both Bremmer (1987: 34–50; 2002b: 33–39) and Kingsley (2011) seem to deem certain branches valid and invalid historically on mere whim, and it is extremely difficult to deduce if there is much reasoning in their choices other than to push pre-

in this paper I emphasize both the continuity *and* the evolution of Inner Asian mythic traditions. I look at the transmission of ideas between cultural spheres through preconceptions and even mutual misunderstandings in order to offer a broader overview of the issues in question.

Part 1: The Arimaspians

1. Introducing the Arimaspians

My investigations into the symbol of the monocular man begin fittingly with one of the earliest and most important meetings between Greek and Inner Asian myth. This is in regard to the Arimaspians, a people mentioned in the Greek historian Herodotus's c. 450 BCE *Histories* (III. 115, IV.13), which drew upon the now lost work, τὰ Ἀριμασπεία ("Arimaspians Matters")⁴ of the previously mentioned poet Aristeas of Proconnesus. Under the influence of the god Apollo, Aristeas is said to have ventured out into the lands the Greeks considered the "North" — beyond the Scythian nomads as far as the country of a people called the Issedones (IV. 13,16), another most likely nomadic people,⁵ who informed him of

conceived agendas on this topic. It is also curious to note that Bremmer (2006: 9–38) is quite willing to consider the influence of very disparate Near Eastern "scapegoat rituals" in the formation of the Greek golden fleece legend, but adamantly attempts to refute any question of Inner Asian cultural influence. However, we must admit that Meuli ([1935] 1975: II. 817–79, Dodds (1951: 140ff) and Kingsley (2011) have gone perhaps a little too far by going outside Inner Asia to other supposedly allied cultures in their approaches, and they could learn much from the famed "universalist" Eliade ([1951] 1989: 4–5) who clearly recognized that some limit (largely Northeast Asia) must be placed on "shamanism" as a term, lest it become a catch-all for all primitive religious experience. Bremmer (1987: 34–50; 2002b: 33–39) and his followers, on the other hand, would simply appear to be refusing to answer questions of intercultural influence because of the now unpopular stain of "universalism" inherent in the older approaches to these matters. In light of these issues, my propositions remain wholly focused on connections with the steppe cultures of Inner Asia and the Caucasus, with Aristeas as a traveller into Inner Asia, not limited to the immediate Greco-Scythian cultural region.

⁴ It has been suggested that although the work bears the name of *Arimaspeia*, it may not have been solely centered on the Arimaspians (Bolton 1962: 25). Similar titles of other Greek works, titles often not bestowed by the author, but by later generations in relation to a certain memorable topic in the work, would support this, as in the case of Book Ten of the *Iliad* coming to be known as the *Dolonea*, due to the death of the character Dolon in it. As nearly all the fragments of the *Αριμασπεία* available concern the Arimaspians, conclusions could easily go either way.

⁵ Bolton (1962: 79) claims we shouldn't assume the Issedones were nomads. If not, who were they? A better argument

the many mythic races that lay just beyond their borders. The Arimaspians are characterized in the fragments of Aristeas we possess as a real people, rich in livestock, of very noble character, highly war-like and covered with shaggy hair (Hdt. III.115, IV.13; Tzetz. *Chil.* VII. 686–92) — their only truly remarkable characteristic being the presence of a single eye in the middle of their foreheads.

It is in the third book of the *Histories* (116) that Herodotus makes his first mention, albeit a passing one, of the Arimaspians — a race of beings deeply connected to tales of the abundance of gold in the “northern” parts of “Europe,” although he appears utterly unconvinced of the existence of these mythical one-eyed men:

It seems to be that the northern parts of Europe have the most gold, but how it is acquired, I do not know and cannot clearly say, and though it is said that the one-eyed Arimaspians steal it from gryphons, I am not convinced that men who are in all other facets the same as normal people, excepting their monocularly, exist at all. (Hdt. III.116)⁶

In relation to terms such as “Europe” and “the North” used by Herodotus (III. 116), we should note, just as Bolton (1962: 116–17) points out, that words such as “καθύπερθε,” often taken literally as “northwards” in Herodotus’s description of the regions beyond the Scythians (I. 103, III. 116; IV.13, 25.2, 147), seem to mean “inland” rather than a specific compass point.⁷ When the term “Northern” or “European” is used, we must be aware that to the Greeks the borders of the world were highly generalized and included the lands of the Scythians around the Black Sea, as well as peoples farther into what we would now call the Inner Asian steppe, including those around the Caspian Sea, which

could be made, ironically, that the Cimmerians weren’t nomads, as they are granted several cities, beginning with Homer (*Od.* XI.16; Strabo VII.3.6) in Classical sources (see Toxтаceв 1993: 30ff for more on other Cimmerian toponyms). As will be shown, the most reasonable identification for the Issedones is the Wu-sun people.

⁶ Hdt. III.116: “... δὲ ἄρκτου τῆς Εὐρώπης πολλῶ τι πλείστος χρυσὸς φαίνεται, ὅκως μὲν γινόμενος, οὐκ ἔχω οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀτρεχέως εἶπαι, λέγεται δὲ ὑπὲκ τῶν γρυπῶν ἀρπάζειν Ἀριμασποὺς ἀνδρας μονοφθάλμους. [2] πείθομαι δὲ οὐδὲ τοῦτο ὅκως μονοφθάλμοι ἄνδρες φύονται, φύσιν ἔχοντες τὴν ἄλλην ὁμοίην τοῖσι ἀνθρώποισι....” All translations Ratcliffe (2013) unless specified.

⁷ Cf. the de Sélincourt trans. (1973) for the Penguin Classics and the Godley trans. (2012) for the Loeb Classical Library, in which “north” is simply assumed.

Herodotus (I.203; IV.45) took, like "Europe" in general, as indeterminably landlocked (Ruck 1992: 227; Romm 1994: 34; S. West 2002: 439).⁸

Journeys to and beyond the early Greek trading centers on the Black Sea, which were first founded during the late seventh century BCE — the same period as the arrival of the Inner Asian Scythians into this region (Boardman 1964: 248; Natho 2010: 44) — appear to have been very rare. In fact Aristeas remains a unique figure in Greek myth and historiography. No one is attested to have ventured as far as he did into Inner Asia — beyond the Black Sea Scythians — either before or after his time, with perhaps the exception of Maes Titianus, Ptolemy's source for his *Geography* on these regions during the second century CE, conveyed through the work of Marinus of Tyre (Ptol. *Geog.* I.11.7, VI.14–16; VIII. 24.3–5); this singularity could merely be due, however, to the biases of the literary and conservative nature of much Classical geography and literature.⁹ Thus Herodotus (IV.13) writes, making reference to Aristeas, the only known source on the subject of the little information known on the most distant regions:

Aristeas, the son of Caüstrobius, from Proconnesus (Marmora) tells us in his poem that seized by Apollo (φοιβόλαμπτος)¹⁰ he journeyed to the country of the Issedones,

⁸ Such approaches to geography as Herodotus's appear to have been thoroughly qualitative and Hellenocentric, with Anatolia and mainland Greece and Ionia sitting in the center of the world and blessed not only with civilization, but also an abundant climate (Romm 1994: 46–66). Thus, radiating outwards from this center, the world not only becomes less known to the Greeks, but also generalized as brutish and climatically harsh, until at the very edges of the world, perfect peoples such as the Hyperboreans (Pind. *Pyth.* X. 63ff) and Ethiopians (*Il.* I. 424–425, XXIII. 205, *Od.* I. 22–24) are found — free from the corruption of sophisticated civilization and blessed with simple material abundance.

⁹ This rarity could merely be the conservative bias of the Classical literary tradition, which appears to have preferred to treat geography as a literary genre through recounting past ventures rather than emphasising ongoing exploration (Romm 1994: 3–6). Aristeas, through his gryphons and Arimaspians and later links to Neo-Platonism, as we will see, is very much a stock literary figure, and very little is added to our knowledge of him by Hellenistic writers, who regularly chose to cite him and his "Northern" wonders (eg. Hellanicus, frag. 178b; Plin. *H.N.* VI.34, VII.174; Strabo VI.3.5–6). Alexander in 329 BCE fought with and defeated the Saccae or Sythians at the Jaxartes (Syr Darya) and was offered the daughter of the ruler of the European Scythians in marriage (Arr. *Anab.* IV.1–6, 15). Very little is said, however, about Greek knowledge of Inner Asian steppe cultures at this point, and thereafter the emphasis in the "East" is on India and Bactria.

¹⁰ This is a very curious term on which much has been said. Bolton's (1962: 132–40) study concludes that it would seem to

and that beyond the Issedones live the one-eyed Arimaspians, and beyond them the gryphons which guard the gold, and beyond the gryphons the Hyperboreans whose [land] goes as far as the sea. All of these nations except the Hyperboreans, beginning with the Arimaspians, are forever at war with their neighbours; the Issedones were driven out of their land by the Arimaspians, the Scythians by the Issedones, and the Cimmerians dwelling by the "southern sea," being pressed upon by the Scythians, left behind their own land. In this way this [account] does not agree with that of the Scythians regarding their county. (Hdt. IV.13)¹¹

Following this, we should also note that Herodotus (IV.16–25) gives a complex list of mythic and semi-mythic peoples and the number of days' journey "ἡῶ" (eastwards) between each one, before finally the Issedones are reached. In fact Herodotus (IV.24.2, 25.1–2) tells us that the Olbian Greeks regularly traveled as far as the people just before the Issedones — a race of congenitally bald people,

mean divinely inspired wandering and not divine possession wherein the god Phoebus Apollo operated through Aristeas's body. Dowden's (1980: 491) comments on the entranced poet that "Aristeas wouldn't have got far in such a condition" are indeed, as Kingsley (2011: 111 n. 15) maintains, quite "staggering" in their reductive approach to the subject matter and appear to spring from Judeo-Christian biases in which sobriety and trance are strictly divided. Bolton (1962: 132–34) also notes that Dodds (1951: 162 n. 37), Phillips (1955) and others seem to have difficulty with the term and even whether Aristeas performed his journey on foot or by "flying" — and thus without going anywhere physically. In conclusion, the most fitting answer would seem to be Bolton's divinely inspired wandering mediated through Kingsley's comments that such experiences should not be treated as a dualistic either/or of physical versus spiritual travel. As S. West (2004: 53) says, perhaps we should treat Aristeas like a pilgrim in search of Apollo, or even his people, the blessed Hyperboreans beyond the North Wind, as Bolton (1962: esp. 179f) also suggested. See also comments below on the use of "flying" as a stylistic aspect of Aristeas's work.

¹¹ Hdt. IV. 13: ἔφη δὲ Ἀριστέης ὁ Καῦστροβίου ἀνὴρ Προκοκνήσιος ποιέων ἔπεα, ἀπικέσθαι ἐς Ἴσσηδόνας φοιβόλαμπτος γενόμενος, Ἴσσηδόνων δὲ ὑπεροικέειν Ἀριμασπῶν ἀνδρᾶς μονοφθάλμους ὑπὲρ δὲ τούτων τοὺς χρυσοφύλακας γρύπας, τούτων δὲ τοὺς Ὑπερβορέους κατήκοντας ἐπὶ θάλασσαν. [2] τούτους ὦν πάντας πλὴν Ὑπερβορέων, ἀρξάντων Ἀριμασπῶν, αἰεὶ τοῖσι πλησιοχώροισι ἐπιτίθεσθαι, καὶ ὑπὸ μὲν Ἀριμασπῶν ἐξωθέεσθαι ἐκ τῆς χώρας Ἴσσηδόνας, ὑπὸ δὲ Ἴσσηδόνων Σκύθας, Κιμμερίου δὲ οἰκέοντας ἐπὶ τῇ νοτίῃ θαλάσῃ ὑπὸ Σκυθῶν πιεζομένους ἐκλείπειν τὴν χώραν. οὕτω οὐδὲ οὐτος συμφέρεται περὶ τῆς χώρας ταύτης Σκύθησι. This account does not agree with the Scythians' account that is found at the start of Herodotus's fourth book (I-VI), in which the Scythians claim to be the youngest nation in the world, having obviously adopted a new etiological and founding myth.

but not as far as the Issedones themselves, who are, however, said to "ἀτρεκέως" ("for certain") (ibid. 25.2) known to live there. This suggests that by Herodotus's time in the mid-fifth century, areas as far east as the regions between the Pontic and Caspian steppe were well known by at least some Greek traders (Olbrycht 1998: 79), but that Aristeas's descriptions — because they describe the farthest peoples — retained a poignant and preferenced position due to their uniqueness.

2. Dating Aristeas

Dating the period of Aristeas and his journey is a difficult matter, but one of utmost importance in attempting to reassemble a context for the entrance of the Arimaspians into Greek myth, and, as will be shown, for the ongoing presence of similar monocular beings in Inner Asian culture. In order to fix the inception of Aristeas's influence on the Greek mindset, Bolton (1962: 6, 89–91) attempted to square hypothetical notions of the already widespread influence from Aristeas's *Ἀριμασπεία* with one of the earliest records of Greco-Scythian art, the c. 575 CE Kelermes Mirror from Ukraine, a panel of which appears to feature the image of two hirsute men fighting a gryphon (see Fig. 1).¹² These figures have been largely identified as Greek imaginings of Arimaspians (Bolton 1962: 89ff; Boardman 1964: 260–1; Jacobson 1995: 183–5; Baumer 2012: 174).¹³ As will be shown below, Aristeas was not necessarily responsible for such imagery and may have lived and flourished either prior to or following the creation of this artifact.

¹² However, we must be aware that debates on the mirror's dating offer extremely diverse periods — placing it anywhere from earlier than 620 BCE to 520 BCE, with little solid evidence either way (cf. Napier 1986: 100; Negāhban et al. 1996: 63; Treister 2001: 70, 244; Tillisch 2008: 87).

¹³ The Kelermes Mirror appears to bear marks of both Ionian and West Asian artistic stylings, as well as archaic period Scythic motifs such as panthers, bears and other creatures illustrated in a typically Sibero-Scythic manner (Bolton 1962: 36ff; Napier 1986: 100; Negāhban et al. 1996: 63; Treister 2001: 70, 244; Tillisch 2008: 87). "Gryphomachies" (battles between men and gryphons) appeared widely hereafter on Black Sea vases in the fourth century BCE for the Scythic market (Boardman 1964: 260–61; Gorbounova 1997: 529–34; Jacobson 1995: 183–85; Baumer 2012: 174).



Fig.1. Keleermes Mirror, Ukraine. Topmost panel featuring "gryphomachy" between gryphon and Arimaspians, c. 575 BCE (image: Bolton 1962: 259).

By comparison, the *Suda* (s.v. Ἀριστεύας), drawing possibly on Apollodorus (FGrH 35 T1; S. West 2004: 45), gives Aristeas's life as taking place in the same period as that of the Lydian and Persian rulers Croesus and Cyrus, but equates this with the fiftieth Olympiad (580–577 BCE), which is a time far too early for the figures in question and is most likely a scribal error (Rohde 1925: 328f; Bolton 1962: 126; S. West 2004: 45). The fifty-eighth Olympiad (548–545 BCE) has been proposed as a more reasonable dating, accepted by Meuli ([1935]1977: II. 857) and S. West (2004: 45ff).

Herodotus's (IV.14–15) own belief, by contrast, was that Aristeas had lived some 240 (340?)¹⁴ years before the time of his own writing in the mid-fifth century BCE, which would suggest the early seventh century BCE. In reference to the available chronology, we should also note that according to Herodotus, Aristeas's journey was regarded as beginning with his entering a fuller's shop in Cyzicus and falling dead, before being seen alive simultaneously on the road to the nearby town of Artaca, and his body's subsequent and strange disappearance from the shop (IV.15). Following this disappearance Aristeas is said to have traveled for seven years before writing the *Ἀριμασπεία* (IV.15). It is also worth mentioning that Aristeas is said to have later reappeared in the form of a crow, under instruction by Apollo, in Metamponium in Italy, and a statue was erected to him to there (IV. 15). The proximity of

¹⁴ One text reads 340 years, which appears incorrect. This number can be cross-referenced with other ancient sources that drew on Herodotus to show that 240 years was indeed the author's belief (Orig. *Cels.* III.26; Tz. *T.* 13). Forrest (1964) suggests that a generational count was used by Herodotus, and that 180 years is the actual period of time. S. West (2004: 46) finds this "ingenious" but not convincing.

these last events to Herodotus's own time remains quite unclear, though it would appear they were regarded as recent (S. West 2004: 44–6).¹⁵

These possibilities having been stated, the early seventh century BCE date for Aristeas suggested by Herodotus must perhaps be refuted, as this is too early even for the foundation of Proconnesus (first quarter of the seventh century BCE) and Greek settlement around the North Pontic area in general, which appears to have begun only during the last quarter of the seventh century BCE (Bolton 1962: 127; Ehrhardt 1983: 38–40; S. West 2004: 47). Herodotus's dates are often quite extreme, including his belief that the poets Hesiod and Homer existed some four hundred years before his own time, and it would seem likely that Herodotus was relying upon tales from Cyzicus and Proconnesus that had little concept of how much earlier these supposed events had taken place (S. West 2004: 45–8).

The only circumstance supporting a date prior to the middle of the sixth century BCE, as is evinced by the *Suda*, is that, in Herodotus's description (IV.13 cf. 11–12), it appears that Aristeas believed, and for that matter probably was quite correct, that the nomadic Cimmerians dwelled in the steppes near the Caspian Sea prior to their migration into and invasion of Anatolia, which took place during the early seventh century BCE (Olbrycht 1998: 75–6, 83, 94).¹⁶ The Cimmerians are first

¹⁵ Rohde (1925: 329) places this at the date c. 434 BCE in one work, and c. 450 (*idem*. 1900: 186 n.1) in another. However, his approach is very literal and relies on an exact 240-year difference between this event and the date at which Aristeas first lived and the Cimmerian invasion. As literal as Bolton also tends to be, it is worth agreeing with him (1962: 199 n. 6) that c. 450 less 240 years is indeed far too early for Proconnesus to even exist! Note also the later belief of Aristeas's visit to Croton and Sicily in Italy (Apollon. *Mirab.* II *ap.* Bolton 1962: 211; Cic. *Verr.* II. 4.128; Plut. *Vit. Rom.* XXVIII). The appearance of Aristeas in Italy has been linked to Pythagorean reappropriation of him there possibly as early as the fifth century BCE, the strongest link with Pythagoreanism being his ability to appear in two places at once — also accredited to Pythagoras (Porph. *Vit. Pyth.* §29; Iamb. *Vit. Pyth.* §135ff). See Bolton (1962: 142ff) and Kingsley (2011) on Aristeas and Abaris in Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean thought.

¹⁶ The Cimmerians are first attested by Near Eastern sources as dwelling in what is now a place near Colchis (Toxracev 1993: 49; Ivančik 1993; 1996: 30) — never in the northern regions of the Black Sea coast, as Greek sources appear to have believed. Herodotus (I.103) appears to have conflated Aristeas's account of their migration through the Caucasus with Greek folkloric views that read certain tombs and landmarks in the North Pontic area as connected with the Cimmerians (cf. Hdt. IV.11–12). By the time of Greek settlement in the North Pontic region (the end of the seventh century BCE onwards), the

mentioned in Assyrian annals c. 714 BCE as dwelling to the north of the Urartic Empire in Georgia and Armenia and defeating its ruler Rusā. Next they conquered Phrygia and attacked Cilicia, and their leader Teushpa was killed by the Assyrians under Esarhaddon c. 679–678 BCE. They then defeated the Lydian king Gyges and took Sardis c. 644 CBE before finally being defeated by Gyges's descendant Alyattes c. 636–625 BCE, and thereafter appear to have been absorbed into the local Anatolian population.¹⁷

In order to rationalize this, perhaps Aristeas simply made use of older knowledge of these events, and there is even the possibility that his "domino effect" catalog of Inner Asian nomadic tribes displacing one another from the Arimaspians to the Scythians and Cimmerians was deliberately assembled to give an overall picture of the etiological history of Inner Asian movements for his audience.¹⁸ Such a catalog may also have been represented in his work from an aerial perspective, as is

Cimmerians had already disappeared from history (Olbrycht 1998: 80–82). However, Olbrycht's (*ibid.*) view that this moving of the Cimmerians to the North Pontic region was due to an attempt to locate the Cimmerians of Homer "somewhere" would seem to sit in need of proper explanation. Although M. L. West (2005: 54–56) and others (Gladstone 1858: 343; Von Baer 1873: 33–7; Heubeck 1989: 70) have put forward some compelling arguments that the Homeric Cimmerians' dark homeland in the far north and close proximity to the underworld in the *Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.* XI. 13–17) suggests their presence in the Sea of Azov with its gloomy tarpits, perhaps it should be considered that the Greeks simply knew of Cimmerian presence in Georgia and collapsed it with that of nomadic peoples further north. See Sworder (2008: 16ff) on the cosmological significance of Homer's placement of the Cimmerians.

¹⁷ See Hdt. (I.16; IV.11–2); Polyaeus (VII.2.1); Diakonoff (1985: 95–96, 116–19); Olbrycht (1998: 90–93) on these events and chronology.

¹⁸ Note the "domino" catalog in *Suda* s.v. "Ἀβάρης" (including the Herodotean gryphons!) which appears to be an attempt to conflate the "Hyperborean Scythian" figure Abaris with the name of the sixth century CE Avars. Kingsley's (2011) reliance on not noticing that this is a scribal error and belief that there is no cross-reference between these two pieces of information in order to suggest the existence of Avars in the archaic period is patently absurd. The final comment in this entry that Abaris and Avars possess the same word structure is apparently a very rare example of lexical *apocope* (the loss of final sounds resulting in the nominative singular and accusative plural sharing the same form), and the term is never found for Avar outside this section and the *Suda* entry on the Bulgars. Even if the catalog of "domino" migrations recorded here is a possible fragment of Priscus (frag. 30), suggesting that fifth-century Greeks were aware of the Avars (prior to any Avar migration, see Theoph. Sim. *Hist.* I. 6), this section appears to have been severely cut down (München-Helfen 1973: 436), both in the *Suda* and in Constantine Porphyrogenitus's *de Legationibus* (p. 74) where it occurs *in situ*. It is most likely an anachronistic product of a later period, perhaps even of Porphyrogenitus himself and his scribes, whose connection

suggested by Maximus of Tyre's (X.2f, cf. XXXVIII.3c-f) description of Aristeas flying out of his body to view the entire world below:

The body of the man from Proconnesus lay there breathing, but weakly and close to death. However, his spirit, having left his body, travelled up into the upper air like a bird, and having seen everything below: the earth and the sea and the rivers and cities and the nations of men, and sufferings and the nature of all things, it again entered his body and woke him, as if it were treating it like an instrument, and he spoke of each of the things that he had seen and heard in turn. (Max. Tyr. X.2f)¹⁹

As suggested by S. West (2004: 55–7), this aerial aspect may have been used by the poet stylistically, through an appeal to his patron Apollo in order to represent these events to his audience from an omniscient perspective.²⁰ Thus, the *Αριμασπεία* could well have been a synthesis of both older

with both Priscus and the *Suda* is troubled by his medial involvement (Cameron 1985: 222–23). See Pohl (1998: 18) and Szádeczky-Kardoss (1990: 206) for examples of soberly noticing this long unrefuted and irrational idea of Abaris = Avar, which appears to begin in modern scholarship with Latham (1856: 349–50) and his siting of the Avars in Antiquity inexplicably in Tobol. Note also that a similar link between Abaris and Avars was made independent of the *Suda* in Bonfini's (*Decades*, p. 11) fifteenth-century attempt to legitimize M. Corvinus, the king of Hungary, by connecting his ancestry with just about everything in Book IV of Herodotus's *Histories*. Kingsley (2011: 92 n. 3) mentions the *Suda*, Bonfini and Latham as his references, but how they are supposed to support his argument in any discernable manner remains mystifying.

¹⁹ Max. Tyr. X.2f: "Προκονησίῳ ἀνδρὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμα ἔκειτο ἔμπνουν μὲν, ἀλλ' ἀμυδρῶς καὶ ἐγγύτατα θανάτου· ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἐκδύσα τοῦ σώματος, ἐπλανᾶτο ἐν τῷ αἰθέρι, ὄρνιθος δίκην, πάντα ὑποπτα θεωμένη, γῆν, καὶ θάλατταν, καὶ ποταμούς, καὶ πόλεις, καὶ ἔθνη ἀνδρῶν, καὶ παθήματα, καὶ φύσεις παντοίας· καὶ αὐθις εἰσδυομένη τὸ σῶμα καὶ ἀναστήσασα, ὥσπερ ὀργάνῳ χρωμένη, διηγείτο ἅττα εἶδεν τε καὶ ἤκουσεν, παρ' ἄλλοις ἄλλα."

²⁰ S. West (2004: 55) deftly notes important precursors of this literary omniscience in reference to Apollo and the Muses, such as the appeal by the Homeric poet in the *Iliad* (II.484f) to give a proper account during the catalog of ships; Odysseus's suggestion that Demodocus could only have known of Odysseus's adventures thanks to Apollo (*Od.* VIII.488) and Hesiod's (*Erg.* 662) appeals to the Muses to aid him in describing seafaring, when he knows little of it. None of this should be taken to indicate that Aristeas just did not make the journey, and rather simply invented it. The matter in question is that of style, and it does not have anything to say regarding questions of Aristeas's mystical flight or traveling. See n. 9 above.

and contemporary information on Inner Asia, much the same as the account from Herodotus that used Aristeas as well as such works as the Hecataeus of Miletus's fifth-century BCE account of the Scythians (Olbrycht 1998: 74ff). In light of all this, the mid-sixth century BCE would seem thoroughly appropriate for Aristeas, and, as will be shown, both the mix of Inner Asian and Greek heritage available to him as a traveler and Greek poet appears to have been synthesized in his work on the Arimaspians. As will also be considered later in this article, the aerial perspective and traveling out of the body in Maximus also seems to possess some strong links with Inner Asian religious traditions; this has already been dealt with by several scholars.

3. Issedones and Scythians on the Arimaspians

In spite of the fact that Aristeas did not reach the mythic gryphons or Arimaspians themselves, Herodotus (IV.13,16,26) remains adamant that Aristeas did in fact visit the people called the Issedones or Issedoi, who spoke of both of these as just beyond their own country. For this reason it is vital to ask what function the myth of the monocular Arimaspians possessed within the Issedone culture, and whether such an influence was spread among other contemporary nomad groups in Inner Asia as well. The descriptions we have of the cannibalistic Issedonian funerary customs, their gilding of the skulls of the dead,²¹ and the equality of their men and women²² in Herodotus (IV.26–27) suggest that they were very much a real people, and one actually visited by Aristeas, in a journey clearly described as out "beyond" the Scythians of the Black Sea region, into the center of the Inner Asian steppe heartland.

²¹ This practice should perhaps not be confused with the more widely attested ancient Inner Asian custom of making cups from the skulls of enemies, found among the Scythians (Plat. *Euthyd.* 299) and Xiong-nu (Sima Qian *Shi Ji* §123).

²² We should note that Herodotus (IV.110–16) links a myth of cross-breeding between Scythians and Amazons as an etiological explanation of the war-like nature of the nomadic Sauromatae women. Westberg (1904: 183–88) uses this to suggest that the Issedones were actually Sauromatae. However, warrior women in Inner Asia, both as reality and myth, may have been far more widely spread than merely the Sauromatae (Bolton 1962: 79). For the presence of such beings in Indian myths of Inner Asia, see *Br̥hat Saṃhitā* XIV. 21–27; cf. Plin. *H.N.* VI.19). We should also note that Herodotus early in his text says that the Issedones (I.202–3) and Messagatae share many customs in common, but this is not enlarged upon by the writer.

The Issedones may have in fact been the nomadic Wu-sun people of Chinese records who dwelt most likely along the Ili River between what is now Dzungaria and Kazakhstan (Tomaschek 1889: cxvi-cxvii; Sitwell 1984: 180),²³ though such peoples are only mentioned from the second century BCE in connection with the exploration of the "western regions" undertaken by Zhang Qian for the Han emperor Wu-di (Sima Qian *Shi Ji* §1972.3168; Jila 2006: 162).²⁴ However, in support of such a notion as equating the Issedones and the Wu-sun, the name of the Wu-sun may have been pronounced as something akin to *asman* by the Chinese in antiquity (Zuev 2002: 23), which may explain the transcription of the name of the Issedones variously as Ἀσσεδόνες, Ἀσεδόνες, Ἐσσεδόες (Steph. Byz. s. Ἴσσηδόνες; cf. Bolton 1962: 184 n. 1) in Greek records. It is also vital to mention here that the name Wu-sun literally indicates the totemic-sounding "grandsons of the crow" in Chinese (Pulleyblank 1970: 156; Hulsewé 1979: 215 n. 805), and a myth of their founder Kun-mo's benefaction by a wolf and crow was recorded in relation to the Wu-sun by Sima Qian (*Shi Ji* 1972.3168) during Zhang

²³ We should note the existence of Issedone *Serica* and *Scythica* in Ptolemy's *Geographia* (VI.14–6; VIII.24.3–5). However, whether this naming merely reflected attempts to square information with already existing Greek geographical conventions going back to Aristeas, or further interactions with the Issedones, remains opaque. Modern views such as Mayor and Heaney's (1993: 45), in which the Issedones are regarded as the "outermost" of the Scythians would seem equally general. Herodotus and Aristeas clearly differentiate the two peoples from one another. Suggestions that the Issedones were Tibetans, simply due to similarities inherent in the eating of one's deceased parents (Minns 1913: 104ff), would seem questionable. The idea that they were a Sarmatian tribe is a possibility (Olbrycht 1998: 74), but that says nothing regarding their location during the seventh or early sixth century BCE.

²⁴ In support of the idea of a Greek having traveled so far, we should note the fact that the Cimmerians in Aristeas's "domino effect" catalog were said to have lived by a "southern sea" (Hdt. IV. 13) (often mistranslated as the Black Sea, which is never called that; cf. the de Sélincourt trans. in the Penguin Classics; How and Wells [1912] 1989 *ad* Hdt. IV.13.2), which would most likely be the Caspian than any other possibility (Olbrycht 1998: 76). If Bolton's (1962: 42–44) suggestions are to be trusted, that Aristeas was responsible for the Scythian origin legend of Colaxis in Herodotus (IV.5–7), as is attested by a Scythian ruler's name found in Alcman (fr. 1.59) in relation to a horse, then he may have known the Scythian language well enough to travel with relative ease. Momigliano's (1975: 8) comments that no Greek would have bothered to learn such languages assumes rather a lot. As Kingsley (2011: 150 n.26) has pointed out, using the comments of Miller (2004: 132), Proconnesus is on the Black Sea and was synonymous with its reputation as a multilingual and multi-cultural region famous for generating interpreters. S. West's (2004: 54–60) comments about the harsh weather of Inner Asia as an argument against Aristeas's journey would seem a bit weak at best.

Qian’s travels among them. Aristeas’s curious manifestation in the form of a crow, to travel with Apollo (Hdt. IV.15 cf. Plin. *H.N.* VII.174), as mentioned above, and the ongoing patronage of crows and wolves as the sacred servants of the modern Western Mongol deity Han Hormazd Tenger (Jila 2006: 163–8), may link both myths back to cultural connections with the Wu-sun people.

Just as important is the fact that the other details we possess concerning the Arimaspians and the influence of Aristeas’s *Ἀριμασπεία* appear to paint these monocular beings as fearsome and mighty — most likely because these descriptions had come from the Issedones or other nomads themselves, who we are told migrated because of Arimaspians encroachment on their own territory (Hdt. IV.13). The earliest extant reference to Arimaspians, besides Herodotus, is in Aeschylus’s contemporary mid-fifth-century BCE *Promethius Bound*, which appears to have made use of the *Ἀριμασπεία* in order to construct the geography of the “North” for its audience. In it images of Arimaspians, their close connection with the gryphons, and other fearsome wonders of the far north of the world (including its plentiful gold) are conjured up for poetic effect:

The sharp-toothed,²⁵ unbarking hounds of Zeus,
The gryphons — beware them, and also the one-eyed cavalry horde
Of the Arimaspians, who dwell by the font
Of Plouton’s stream, which flows with gold.
Do not approach them. (Aesch. *PV.* 803–6)²⁶

In relation to this fearsomeness of the Arimaspians, in a passage recorded by the eleventh-century CE Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes, we also hear the following, in which the Arimaspians are

²⁵ Liddel and Scott ([1898] 2008: 561 “*ὄξυστόμος*”) give the term here as “sharp-toothed, sharp-fanged” and note that, in relation to a sword, it is also found to mean “sharp edged.” None of this language suggests that the gryphons of Aristeas possessed beaks. This will be elaborated below.

²⁶ Aesch. *PV.* 803–7: “ὄξυστόμους γὰρ Ζηνὸς ἀκραγεῖς κύννας
γρύπας φύλαξαι, τὸν τε μουνῶπα στρατὸν
Ἀριμασπὸν ἵπποβάμον’, οἷ χρυσόρρυτον
οἰκοῦσιν ἀμφὶ νᾶμα Πλούτωνος πόρου.
τούτοις σὺ μὴ πέλαζε.”

described as a herding people, rich in animals, rather like Homer's Pylian lords in the *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* IX. 154, 296),²⁷ and quite warlike. Tzetzes's fragment, appears to be the only new information from the *Ἀριμασπεία* that is not merely epitomized from Herodotus or Aeschylus concerning the Arimaspians following the text's destruction (Bowra 1956: 1–10; Bolton 1962: 8–9; Skinner 2012: 128), which from ancient anecdotal evidence appears to have been around the third century BCE (Gell. *NA.* IX. 4. 1–4; Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 23). This fragment reads:

Aristeas says in his *Ἀριμασπεία*:

The Issedones, glorying in their long hair,

Also [say]²⁸ that there are men who neighbour them,

Up above Boreas (the north wind),

Warriors many in number and powerful,

Rich in horses and possessing many herds of cattle.

They have a single eye in the middle of their fair forehead(s),

They are shaggy with hair, and the toughest of all men. (Tzetz. *Chil.* VII. 686–92)²⁹

In relation to the overall positive description of the Arimaspians in this fragment, we should particularly note that their foreheads are described as "fair" (Tz. *Chil.* VII. 691), which would appear to be an extremely curious choice of words, given the beings' hairiness and monocularity. As Romm

²⁷ Premonetary animal wealth was held in high regard among the Greeks from early times and as trade progressed was most likely associated with an antiquated, yet heroic measurement of good fortune and abundance (Austin and Vidal-Narquet 1981: 196).

²⁸ This is reading the syntactically incomprehensible *σφᾶς* (them [acc.]) as *φασ'* (they say), as suggested by Bowra (1956: 1–10) and accepted by Bolton (1962: 8–9) and Skinner (2012: 128 n. 17).

²⁹ Tz. *Chil.* VII. 686–92: καὶ Ἀριστεάας δὲ φησιν ἐν τοῖς Ἀριμασπέοις·

Ἴσσηδοὶ χαίτησιν ἀγαλλόμενοι ταναῆσι·

καὶ τσφᾶς/φᾶσ'† ἀνθρώπους εἶναι καθύπερθεν ὁμούρους

πρὸς βορέω, πολλοὺς τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς κάρτα μαχητάς,

ἀφνειοὺς ἵπποισι, πολύρρηνας πολυβούτας.

ὀφθαλμὸν δ' ἐν ἑκάστος ἔχει χαρίεντι μετώπωπῳ,

χαίτησι<ν> λάσιοι, πάντων στιβαρώτατοι ἀνδρῶν.

(1994: 69–70; 1996: 127–8) has suggested on multiple occasions, this may be an ironic or proto-Cynic use of distant peoples by Aristeas as “noble” in order to undermine Greek conceptions of conventional civilization and beauty. This may certainly have been the case to some extent in estimating how these ideas were received by a Greek audience, but as to the intention of the Issedones themselves, we must discuss one key suggestion that has been made regarding the battles between Arimaspians and gryphons and Aristeas’s and Herodotus’s (IV.13) citations of these Arimaspians as the etiological catalyst for the migration of the Issedones, Scythians and Cimmerians. This is that the tales told to Aristeas represented a nomadic mythologizing on the part of the Issedones of distant rumors of the fall of the Western wealthy Zhou dynasty (827–771 BCE) (gold-guarding gryphons) in the early eighth century BCE to *Xianyun* (Hsien-yün) and *Xi Rong* (Hsi-Jung) invaders (mighty Arimaspians) from “the Northern Regions” (Vilamàjo 1999: 53–4).³⁰

It should, however, be emphasized here that the Xianyun do not appear to have been pastoral nomads, but rather are an ethnically indeterminable series of agro-pastoral cultures that fought in chariots, rather like the late Bronze Age Zhou dynasty itself (Li 2006: 142–5; Di Cosmo 1999: 92off, 2002: 102ff). However, as Di Cosmo (1999: 992) says: “their military pressure on the Zhou borders might be attributed to unrecorded events taking place in the north that set a large number of people in motion and that may be related to the appearance of pastoral nomads.” Thus it may not be that the *Xianyun* and the Zhou were directly being mythologized as Arimaspians and gryphons, but rather that general state formation in the eastern steppes and surrounding China, seen from the distance and with the lack of complex detail available to the Issedones, led to their rationalizing the cause as pre-existing monstrosities from Inner Asian folklore and myths of mythic heroes pillaging riches from monsters. From this we might therefore suggest that the rise of the first nomadic armies in the Inner Asian steppe, which led to the migrations Aristeas and subsequently Herodotus recorded, are steeped in the nomadic etiological mythologizing of these events. It is very difficult in this case to separate historical

³⁰ See Di Cosmo (1999: 92off) for the best available study on the Xianyun, which links their emergence with that of the rise of nomadism in Inner Asia pushing them eastward. Minns (1913: 113–14) curiously notes that Aristeas’s journey, like the later travels of Zearchus and Maniakhs among the Göktürks, and Marco Polo and Carpini to the Mongol court were undertaken during periods of dominance by nomad confederations, allowing ease of travel through Inner Asia. Aristeas is merely the first, making his journey during the trade networks of the “Scythic” confederations of nomads.

fact from cultural belief. In a similar way Bolton's (1962: 100f) theory that Aristeas may have mistaken tales of the settled, peaceful and agrarian later Zhou dynasty for a distant perfect people at the borders of the world in Greek thought, the Hyperboreans,³¹ also highlights the importance of the preconceived values and beliefs at work when two cultures communicate and attempt to extrapolate historical and geographical constructs from the other's worldview.

At this point we should also consider Heaney's (1993: 54ff) theory that the Arimaspians are the *Almas/Almasty*, the hairy, yeti-type wild men widespread throughout living Inner Asian folklore. Indeed Heaney's (1993: 59) Mongolian etymological backtracking would seem sound: *Arimasp* becomes *Almas* through the loss of the final "p," a letter present in the Turkic and some Mongolic languages lost before Ancient Mongolian (c. 1000 CE), and transformed into the dental "-t," in the Kazakh term for the creature; the "r" becomes an "l"; and the medial "i" is lost. We should also note that Herodotus himself gives quite an interesting, albeit most likely untrustworthy etymology for the Arimaspians,³² though its context may have some useful repercussions. Following a description of the Issedone culture (Hdt. IV.26.2), we hear, regarding what lies beyond their territory:

But as to is what is north of them, it is the Issedones who tell the tales of one-eyed men and the gryphons that guard the gold. The Scythians have passed them on to the

³¹ The Hyperboreans indeed already existed before Aristeas, as is evinced by their being mentioned in a seventh-century Hesiodic fragment (*Cata. frag. 40a*), and connections with Apollo as their lawgiver in the sixth (*Alcaeus fr. 307*), but the development of the Hyperboreans as a blessed and perfect people only seems to come to fruition with Pindar's tenth Pythian Ode (c. 498 BCE), the majority of the material of which seems far too highly original not to warrant precursors. Curiously, Origen (*Cels. III. 26*) puts both Herodotus and Pindar on equal footing regarding information on Aristeas, which would seem to suggest strongly the possibility that there existed during his time solid evidence of Aristeas's influence on Pindar's works, such as in reference to the Hyperboreans. From Herodotus's time we should note that the idea of the Hyperboreans being vegetarians seems to have already existed (*Hellanicus fr. 187b*), but that the Scythians seemed to have known nothing of the Hyperboreans (IV.32) — suggesting that they were very much a Greek geographical invention, possibly mediated through Aristeas and Issedonic stories of Chinese agricultural abundance.

³² Other suggestions are the supposedly Mongolian *äräm däk* (Laufer 1908: 452), which is not Mongolian at all, and appears, in fact, to be Orkhon Turkic, and affinities with the Afghan tribal name Arimaspi (Tomaschek 1889: 755), which means "wild horses." Bailey (1979: 8) and Marquart (1905: 90–92) claim that their name means "lone-horse." See Pirart (1998: 239–60) and Vilamàjo (1999: 49 n. 12) for full listings of etymological arguments.

rest of us, and thus we call the one-eyed men by the Scythian name Arimaspians — *arima* being the Scythian word for “one” and *spu* the word for “eye.” (Hdt. IV.27)³³

The question of Scythian knowledge of such beings and the application of the Arimaspians name to them, is very intriguing, because, although, as Bolton (1962: 7) suggests, by the fifth century BCE, the Greeks may well have introduced the Arimaspians to the Scythians through artistic works such as the previously mentioned Greco-Scythian Kelermes Mirror, there is a profound discrepancy between the artistic and literary versions of the Arimaspians and the gryphon. The most important fact is that the Arimaspians are never represented as monocular in Greek or Greco-Scythian art — not even in a single instance³⁴ — and this facet is of course the matter in question regarding Herodotus’s claim that the Scythians spoke about the Arimaspians and their single eye and passed this on — emphatically removing Aristean’s encounter with the Issedones as the single source for this information. In defense of the reliability of the information available to Herodotus regarding Scythian beliefs, we should note that other legendary peoples mentioned by Aristean and then cited by Herodotus (IV.32), such as the Hyperboreans, also found in the Aristean catalog of distant peoples, are stated to have been utterly unknown to the Scythians. Thus there is a possibility that the Arimaspians may have been more widely known than as the result of a single meeting between Aristean and the distant Issedones.

To return to Heaney, like the Arimaspians, the modern *Almas/Almasty* are indeed often characterized as hairy (Heaney 1993: 56ff). Despite this, Heaney utterly ignores questions of monocularity in relation to these beings, and it does not seem to be featured as part of the *Almas*

³³ Hdt. IV. 27: “...γινώσκονται μὲν δὴ καὶ οὗτοι, τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ τούτων τὸ κατύπερθε Ἴσσηδόνες εἰσὶ οἱ λέγοντες μονοφθάλμους ἀνθρώπους καὶ χρυσοφύλακας γρύπας εἶναι: παρὰ δὲ τούτων Σκύθαι παραλαβόντες λέγουσι, παρὰ δὲ Σκυθέων ἡμεῖς οἱ ἄλλοι νενομίκαμεν καὶ ὀνομάζομεν αὐτοὺς σκυθιστὶ Ἄριμασπούς: ἄριμα γὰρ ἔν καλέουσι Σκύθαι, σπού δὲ ὀφθαλμόν.”

³⁴ I have checked all known images of “Arimaspians” in Greek art available. As Bolton (1962: 5) claims, they are never monocular, but tend to be represented as generic Scythian warriors engaged in combat with the gryphons. See note below on the Cyclopes sharing in this same absence of monocularity in art. The absence of such an important bodily peculiarity as this may be connected with the same phenomenon as the fact that the Amazons are never illustrated in art with only a single breast, the Greek etymology being *a-mazon* (without a breast), due to a “hyperdeveloped” Greek sense of form in the visual arts (Paglia 1990: 77).

myth. This would seem particularly crucial for the matter in hand. Making such direct links as these between the Arimaspians and *Almas* also ignores the fact that the Arimaspians appear to have been regarded by the Issedones with much respect (Tzetz. *Chil.* VII. 686–92). Comparatively the *Almas* is regarded as a monster — still a name synonymous in modern myth with one who steals and murders children (Heaney 1993: 54ff). While we cannot deny the possibility that elements of the Arimaspians, including their name, may have become the basis for the *Almas*, as will be shown in Section 5, the ongoing presence of monocular beings in Inner Asian folklore seems to indicate that other aspects could also survive, and that the evolution of symbols is a complex and multi-faceted one.³⁵

4. The Gryphon and Its Complexity

First, however, in order to deepen our understanding of the role of the Arimaspians among the Issedones, Scythians, and Greeks, we must also discuss the intercultural value of their nemesis, the gryphon, and the difficulties implicit in unraveling, from multiple perspectives, its nature and development.

The gryphon is perhaps one of the most curious folkloric images of antiquity. We may indeed note the existence of “gryphon-type” eagle-headed quadrupeds with small wings in Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Phoenician and Mycenaean art from the fourth millennium BCE onwards — sometimes lying in repose, sometimes being hunted, and sometimes illustrated in single combat with a heroic human figure (Goldman 1960: 319–28; Bolton 1962: 87ff). Some of these eagle-gryphon figures even

³⁵ We should also mention some other fairly weak rationalizations, such as that the Arimaspians were one-eyed because they were squinting archers, which goes back to classical scholiasts (Eustath. *ad. Aesch. PV. Aesch. Comment. ad Dionysii Pereges* V.31). However, the Arimaspians are never explicitly or implicitly connected with use of the bow. Another is the rather amusing notion that they were miners with lamps on their helmets (Phillips 1955: 173–74; Bolton 1962: 83–85). Lastly there are the utterly unconvincing attempts to connect the tiny rodent, the jerboa, with the gryphon because of its tendencies to excavate gold-rich dust (Minns 1913: 6, 113). Most recently Heaney has been quoted in an article in 2010 (Vergano *USA Today*, 16/08/2010), following the discovery of evidence of a new hominid species from Inner Asia that was contemporary with both *Homo Sapiens* and Neanderthals, as positing the view that the *Almas* could be the remainder of folk memories of such creatures. This would seem an incredibly long time for such folk memories to survive, compared with human tendencies to animate nature with humanoid monsters. Either way the symbol of monocularità is still being ignored.

appear in early Scythic art, most likely due to trade with Persia and Western Asia (Phillips 1955: Mayor 1993: 45f, 2001: 23). However, the gryphon that was to develop among the Greeks in connection with the Black Sea region and Scythic nomads dwelling there from the late seventh century BCE onwards, is a thoroughly different entity, which, while drawing upon aspects of the Near Eastern gryphon figure, remain unique in that they possessed pointed ears and a curved eagle's beak (Phillips 1955: 172; Bolton 1962: 87ff; Mayor 1991: 16ff; 1993: 45f, 2001: 23f).³⁶

This imagining of the Greek eagle-gryphon appears to have been a creation of Ionian artists trading along the Black Sea region. In attempting to appeal to a Scythic audience, the artists employed the image of the gryphon, presumed to be Scythic, perhaps through the stories (similar to those told to Aristeeas by the Issedones) passed on by Scythic peoples from around the Black Sea. Thus the images were envisioned as Scythic, but through a Greek cultural lens. Following this the gryphon enjoyed a long history of reappropriation across the steppe, not as a beast shown in combat with men, as the Greeks tended to employ it, but as a beast pictured attacking such other animals as elk. This imagery can be found even as far away as Mongolia among the Xiong-nu by the first century CE (Phillips 1955: 172; Bolton 1962: 94; Ishjamts 1999: 160–1). Interactions with the Greeks and the manufacture of luxury Greco-Scythian art most likely instituted the symbol of the Greek gryphon as a mark of elites in Inner Asia, since they were buried with that image. Such intercultural developments as these are what Burkert (2004: 4) describes aptly in his studies of Greek and Near Eastern myth as "progress through misunderstanding" — the process by which cultures interacted and borrowed from one another through the lens of their own preconceptions.

To examine the nature of the original gold-guarding creatures labeled gryphons by Aristeeas, however, we must return to the description of this beast in our early literary sources on the *Ἀριμασπεία*, in which they are described merely as sharp-mouthed dog-like quadrupeds without any discernible

³⁶ Even the term "gryphon" or Greek *γρύψ* is open to debate. It could be a term cognate with English "grab" and similar Old Persian "*grab-*" or it could have already been an existing Near Eastern term for gryphon-type creatures with their origins in the Hebrew *cherub* (Bolton 1962: 89ff). We cannot know whether the Issedones called their monster this, whether they possessed a name similar to pre-existing Near Eastern monsters already termed gryphons, or even whether the term was of Near Eastern origin and the monsters of the Issedones were merely labeled under this term by the Greeks without regard to the original Issedone term.

birdlike features (Aesch. *PV.* 803–6). Liddell and Scott ([1898] 2008: 561) give the term used for their maws as “sharp-toothed, sharp-fanged,” and there is no reference to the possession of beaks, as translators often imagine (Smyth 1926; Vellacott [1961] 2003).³⁷ For that matter, while wings are common in artistic representations of all forms of gryphons, due to a basis in Near Eastern artistic influence, the monster described to Aristeas, and known to such writers as Herodotus and Aeschylus through the *Ἀριμασπεία*, was perhaps a slightly different entity.

Mayor (1993: 45ff) has deftly noted the strange images of unknown quadrupeds on the tattooed nomad ruler buried at Pazyryk in the Altai region (fifth c. BCE), and she has suggested that such creatures are the best available option for the mythic creatures described to Aristeas from within the framework of contemporary Inner Asian myth. At this point we should also seriously consider the main thesis put forward by Mayor (1991, 1993, 1994, 2001: 16–32), that the gryphon in Inner Asian lore has its basis in dinosaur skeletons, especially those of the beaked protoceratopians, common throughout the gold-rich Altai regions of Mongolia and Siberia. However, while the protoceratopians are indeed perhaps the closest one might come to finding any kind of beaked quadruped in nature, the obvious assumption is that the original Issedone animal was beaked, which our sources do not attest. Beaks, wings, pointed ears, and descriptions of weaving nests of gold on the ground in which the animal protected its eggs, are found in literary records only much later, after centuries of exposure to the birdlike artistic imaginings of the gryphon in art (Paus. *I.24.6*; Plin. *H.N.* VI.34, VII.174; Ael. *Hist. An.* IV.27), long after the destruction of the work of Aristeas, around the third century BCE, mentioned above.

These later gryphons are epitomized in Aelian’s (IV.27) telling description of the beast, in his own words, “exactly as the artists describe it,” when he writes of a witness who saw the creature in Bactria; Pliny (Plin. *H.N.* VI.34, VII.174) and Strabo (XV.1.57) appear also to draw upon Hellenistic geographers who had moved the creature towards India in their own descriptions of the gryphon. This appears to have been the period at which more avine facets came to be added to the animal in literature. We should note the Indian gryphons of Philostratus (*Vit. Apoll.* III.48), which do not have

³⁷ Cf. the same term used for the gadfly that bothers Io on her wanderings at line 674 in *Promethius Bound*. In Aristophanes’s *Birds* (244) the term is also used to describe a biting fly. In Euripides (*Suppl.* 1206) it is used to describe the edge of a sword.

wings, but instead skin flaps which allow these predatory quadrupeds to jump long distances. This suggests that there was a dissonance in the ancient world when it came to conflating the literary and artistic images of this creature. The finding of protoceratopian skeletons in the Altai region near preserved nests of fossilized eggs and gold deposits, and similarities to some extent between protoceratopians' frills and the gryphon's wings in art have given Mayor's (1991: 16–41; 1993: 40–66; 1994: 53–58, 2001: 16–32) theories much credence in both palaeontological circles and popular culture.³⁸ However, this still assumes that the avine qualities ascribed to the beast by artists and writers at a later date were possessed originally by Aristeas's and the Issedones' animal. In short, Mayor is fundamentally dependent upon the gryphon as depicted by Near Eastern-based artistic tradition, without due attention to textual history. We should also recall that the evidence we possess, from the Classical geographers, poets, historians and collectors of folklore, was very much centered on the already existing and available information within the Greek cultural sphere, and has almost nothing to say in relation to the myths of the Scythians or Inner Asian nomadic peoples following Herodotus's time.³⁹ Thus it would seem most reasonable to conclude that it was the "gryphon" in art

³⁸ For example see: Dodson (1996: 230–34); Eberhart (2002: 216–17); American Museum of Natural History: <http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/mythic-creatures/land-creatures-of-the-earth/griffin-bones>.

³⁹ Some exceptions include Plutarch's myth of Scilurus and his sons (*Mor.* 174f, 511c), and Pompeius Trogus's origin myth of the royal Scythians (*Just. Epit.* II.4), though these may have only been retellings from earlier works we no longer possess. Lucian, however, gives us a curious instance in his dialogue *Toxaris* (1–7, 42–50), in which a Scythian informs the Athenian Mnesippus of a number of Scythian tales very much like Greek ones. Although these could be taken to be an invention on Lucian's part, scholars have remarked that one of the stories, concerning a cheated lover helped out by two friends and the recovering of a stolen princess, appears very similar to an episode in the Georgian *Knight in Panther's Skin* (Anderson 2003: 21–23, App. IV). To the contrary, even when Ovid was exiled to Tomis and supposedly learned the Getic language (*Ex Pont.* IV. 13, 17–22), his descriptions of Getic and Scythic culture are somewhat generic and hearken back to standard classical motifs such as comparing the Getae to Laestrygonians and anachronistic over-usage of the term "Scythian" (*Ex Pont.* I.1.79, IV. 10. 21–23; Gaertner 2005: 18), and have even provoked conspiratorial suggestions that he never was exiled to Scythia at all due to the somewhat "unrealistic" nature of his description of these cultures (Sorley 1956: 37). Rather we should realize that Ovid merely kept himself to the pre-existing literary idiom on "Northern" peoples. The term Scythian remained anachronistically in use until Byzantine times (cf. Theo. Simo. *Hist.* VII.8.4 = Avars; Maur. *Strat.* p. 116 = Avars, Bulgars; C. Porph. *De Admin.* XIII.25, XLIII.2; LIII.126, 129 = Bulgars, Khazars, Türks), further cementing the backward-looking attitudes of the Classical tradition to their nomad neighbours.

and its conflation with the wonder-tales of India that informed the later literary gryphons more than the works of Aristeas through Aeschylus or Herodotus. If we possessed more fragments of Aristeas's work or knowledge of ancient Inner Asian monsters, then reassembling the original "gryphon" and its context would be a far easier task. For now, however, we are not able to say much more on this, other than it appears to have acted as a foil for the Arimaspians, and perhaps even a metaphor for the difficulty involved in pillaging and procuring gold, such as in the etiological aspects of the *Xian-yun* theory discussed above, rather than necessarily through the direct act of having to mine it.⁴⁰

5. Monocular Beings in Inner Asian Myth

In order to make sense of the legacy of the gryphons and Arimaspians in myth, I would like, following the intimations begun by Alföldi (1933), Phillips (1955), Bolton (1962) and others, to look to the presence of similar beings in the myths of Inner Asia, their symbolic function and narrative context. To undertake such an exploration as this, it is vital to describe the history of the peoples dwelling in the Inner Asian steppe from antiquity to modern times and their interrelations.

It is generally accepted by scholars that the majority of the peoples who, at the dawn of the iron age in the steppe regions stretching between the borders of Mongolia and the Black Sea (c. 800 BCE), took up nomadic lifeways based around stock raising and cavalry warfare — such as those known as Scythic peoples in the Greek cultural sphere and similar networks of interconnected nomads further east under the names *Sai*, *Sakya* and *Sakā* — were ethnically Indo-Iranian (Abetekov and Yusupov 1994: 28; Nicols 2011: 178; Stark 2012: 106–26). Many clear parallels may be seen between these Indo-Iranian peoples and subsequent Inner Asian nomads regarding ways of life, cosmology and myth, following their penetration into Mongolia c. 500 BCE and the emergence and expansion of clearly Turkic-Mongolian-speaking peoples thereafter in the first millennium BCE, into the present Turkic-Mongolian peoples of Mongolia, Siberia and Central Asia.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Cf. Bartsch 1987 for the history of the gryphon and the Arimaspians battle as a metaphor for gold mining.

⁴¹ On similarities in the cosmology and ritual of the Scythians described at Hdt. IV.73f with later peoples: Meuli ([1935] 1975: II. 866ff, Eliade ([1951] 1989: 266, 272–74). On the recurring presence of deer goddesses and the retention of archaic traditions: Jacobson (1993). On Southwest Asian influence on the cosmology of Siberian and Mongol peoples: Skrynnikova (2002, 2004). On shamans and arrows: Kingsley (2011 *passim* esp. "Notes"). On the enduring authoritarian symbolism of the

This said, we should begin with the theories of Alföldi (1933) that Aristeas's Arimaspians and gryphons represented the thunder-producing dragon guardians of the golden mountain at the center of the world, and the Arimaspians' infernal one-eyed beings guarding the underworld in Siberian, Türkic and Mongolian cosmology. Alföldi's (1933) views, based largely on nineteenth-century anthropological records, were taken up by Meuli ([1935] 1975: II. 853–9), Dodds (1951: 140ff) and Phillips (1955: 161–177), who saw the Arimaspians as mythic beings retained in Inner Asian folklore who were primarily of cosmological and symbolic value in the sacred geography of the shaman's journeys to different worlds. These scholars applied such views to Aristeas, particularly through Maximus of Tyre's previously mentioned description of the poet leaving his body and traveling by flying — implying that Aristeas was deeply indebted to Inner Asian religious practices of flying to other worlds, which he received via his meetings with Inner Asian peoples, reflected in the writing of his Arimaspians poem.

In order to bridge this gap between antiquity and the records with which Alföldi (1933) and others worked, the figure of the monocular Duwa Soqur (Blind Duwa), found in the thirteenth-century CE medieval Mongolian *Monqol-un Niuča Tobča'an* (Secret History of the Mongols) must be mentioned; it has already been linked to other myths of monocular beings by several scholars (Finch 1994: 1–2; Kingsley 2011: 92 n. 2). Duwa Soqur is a curious case, as, prior to the diffusion of *The Secret History* in the West it had already been suggested by Alföldi (1933: 556–7) that monocular ancestral beings were most likely "once great figures in mythology among Turks, Mongols and Tibetans" (Phillips 1955: 174) — a conclusion in some ways now long vindicated. The *Secret History of the Mongols* is a unique repository of medieval Türkic-Mongolian myth with few of the biases of transcription by an outside audience (Rossabi 2012: 3; Onon 2001: 17) — especially its first chapter, which appears to draw on diverse mythic sources in order to legitimize the later descent and more historical episodes in relation to Chingis Khan (de Rachewiltz 2004: xxxiv-v). Regarding the earliest ancestors of the Mongols, Börte Cinō (Blue Wolf) and Qo'ai Maral (Beautiful Doe), we read:

- (3) ... Toroqoljin Bayan had two sons: Duwa Soqur (The Blind) and Dobun Mergen (The Expert). (4) Duwa Soqur had a single eye in the middle of his forehead and could

wolf and bundled rods: Ratcliffe (2013a: ch. 2, 4, 5).

see places three day's journey away. (5) One day Duwa Soqur went up Burqan Qaldun Mountain with his brother Dobun Mergen. When Duwa Soqur looked out from the top of Burqan Qaldun Mountain he saw a group of people coming towards the Tüנגgelik Stream. (6) Duwa Soqur said: "Among those travellers there is a beautiful young woman travelling seated at the front of the cart. If she is not yet any man's wife, I will ask for her for you, my brother Dobun Mergen, and make her your wife." And having said this he sent his younger brother Dobun Mergen to see her.⁴²

Duwa Soqur, like the Arimaspians, is uniquely described as bearing a single eye in the middle of his forehead. This allows him to look down off Mount Burqan Qaldun to see distances three days journey away to find his brother a wife, and by this act he gives rise to the Mongol people (§7ff). It is possible to suggest here that Burqan Qaldun may be as fulfilling the role of a cosmic "world mountain" representing the universe at this point in the text. Much of the action in the *Secret History* seems to be based around it (§1–145), and it echoes similar central mountains, such as the sacred *Ötüken yiş* of the Göktürk civilisation in Mongolia (sixth-eighth c. CE), the repeated "Ice Mountain" (*Muz Tag*) in the heavily pagan fifteenth-century Kitai-Uyghur Turfanian *Oguz Kagan* manuscript (§15, 21; Ratcliffe 2013b: 14–5), and world mountains in later living Mongolian epics and shamanic journeys (Eliade [1951] 1989: 266–67; Roux 1993: 327–28).⁴³ Thus Alföldi's ideas concerning the shamanic centering of the gryphomachy (battle with gryphons) around the divine mountain and the placement of monocular

⁴² SHM. §3–6: "[3.2b] ... Toroqoljin-nu kö'ün Duwa-soqor Dobun-mergen qoyar büle'e [4.3a] Duwa-soqor manglai dumda qaqça nidütü qurban ne'ürit qajar-a qaraqü büle'e [5.3b] niken üdür Duwa-soqor Dobun-mergen de'ü-lü'e-be'en Burqan-qaldun de'ere qarba Duwa-soqor Burqan-qaldun de'ereçe qaraju Tüנגgelik-qoroqan huru'u niken bölök irgen newüjü oroju ayisuqu-yi qaraju üjeju [6.4a] ügülerün tede newüjü ayisuqun irgen-nü ditora niken qara'utai tergen-ü öljige-de niken ökin sayin büyyü gü'ün-ne ese ökteksen bö'esü Dobun-mergen de'ü-de'en čimada quyuya ke'eju [4b] Dobun-mergen de'ü-yü'en üjere ilebe." Text: Ligeti (1971). Translation: Ratcliffe (2013).

⁴³ Holmberg (1927: 342) and Bolton (1962: 97–98) both believe that the source of the cosmic "world mountain" is India; indeed, names such as Sumer/Sumber among the modern Turkic-Mongolian peoples would suggest the Hindu Mount Meru. However, this could merely be an upper layer to much older and more widely-spread traditions, such as are described by Eliade ([1951] 1989: 266–69) in relation to Indo-European peoples and their influence on the peoples of Siberia and Mongolia.

beings as a ritual geographical trope there may be echoed in the Duwqa Soqur episode.⁴⁴ Perhaps Duwa Soqur even played the role of a guardian ancestral spirit in Mongol Era beliefs, though we are lacking further information to confirm this beyond the role he plays in the text we possess. However, like the Arimaspians and the infernal guardians of the underworld, and now seen in relation to Duwa Soqur, the function of such monocular beings is primarily a spatial one, in which their nature as positive or negative entities is defined through their positioning in relation to primordial and distant geography.

To this Mongol period context and the geographical importance attached to monocular beings we should add Ukrainian tales of the *edinoogie*, "a whole race of one-eyed people" from "across the sea," to whom the Tatars (Mongols) sold their slaves and who "fattened them up, killed them and ate them" (Железнов 1858: I. 87–89; trans. Reynolds in Bolton 1962: 83). Here we may note that the emphasis is placed, as with the Arimaspians, on the remoteness of such beings, which are never met with but exist on the fringes of the world as "others" and come to be known through the tales of Inner Asian story-tellers.⁴⁵

Similarly, we should also note the presence of another group of proverbially distant one-eyed beings in the form of the negative and monstrous inhabitants of a castle belonging to the enemies of the eponymous hero in the living *Manas* epic of Kyrgyzstan. In this context, once again the dwelling of one-eyed beings just beyond the conventional borders of the world is emphasized, suggesting it as an

⁴⁴ We should also note, as Onon (2001: 21) suggests, that *soqur* in this context does not mean blind (as clearly the character is the opposite!) but rather simply emphatically one-eyed. It would seem wrong here to bring up questions of solar symbolism in relation to the far-seeing Duwa Soqur on the top of the world mountain, which while inviting, have long plagued interpretation of the Polyphemus blinding episode.

⁴⁵ Another thing we should note is the misnomer of there being an "ogre-blinding tale" found among the "Mongols" (Bolton 1962: 194 n. 12). This idea goes back as far as Frazer (1921: App. XIII 452ff), who is actually referring to the blinding of the one-eyed monster *Tepegöz* in the sixteenth-century CE Azerbaijani Oguz Türkic *Qitab-i Dede Qorqut* (§8 pp.140–50), though we have some knowledge that such a story was found among the Azerbaijani Oguz as far back as the fourteenth century CE in Egyptian records (Lewis 1974: 21). The pattern of "ogre" blinding tales is found only in Western Eurasia and is not found at all among the Mongols or peoples of Western Turkistan. See discussion on Frazer (1921) and the Cyclopes below. Strootman (2013: 244–46) has recently pointed out that the story of *Tepegöz* and that of the giant met with by Sinbad in *A Thousand and One Nights* most likely represent an inheritance from Greek literature.

important trope in Inner Asian concepts of remoteness, "otherness" and monstrosity, where they are grouped together with similar mythic entities:

these Kyrgyz reside [with] the Tyrgaut and the castle of the Iron Arrow, of the house of Chingiz, with his metal-armed soldiers. Also, dragon-headed and dog-headed and one-eyed people and wizards and magicians live there. Dragons serve as guards and wolves as messengers.⁴⁶

To carry out our broad-based approach, we must also discuss the presence of one-eyed beings in the records of both Chinese and Indian geographers in relation to the Inner Asian steppe world beyond their borders. These most likely reflect the views that the peoples of the steppe would themselves have given, upon being asked by geographers and traders about the most distant regions. This is the way the Issedonian and Scythian tales of the distant wonders of the "North" came to appear in the works of Aristeeas and Herodotus and it would appear that a similar situation has taken place in other locations around the rim of Inner Asia.

For example, in the first century BCE, in *Shan Hai Jing* and later Chinese geographies, we find monocular men ascribed to the far northern regions — both within (XII. p. 145) and beyond (VIII. p. 121) the northern borders. In these locations they are positioned beside dog-men (XII p. 121; cf. XVII p. 187) and one-legged men (XII p. 121), which would seem to echo many of the wonders described by Classical geographers of the "East" listed in Strabo (VII.3.5–6). Within the literature of India, in the *Mahābharāta* (II. 38, 51), we find one-eyed men (and also three-eyed and one-legged men) as well as gold excavated by ants, *pipilika* (II.52);⁴⁷ in the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* (XIV. 21–27), we find one-eyed men,

⁴⁶ This source comes from the altracist website beutel.narod.ru/write/manas.htm. Other available collections of Manas legends such as Orozbekov's (1999) edition and Köçümkülkizi's doctoral project at <http://www.silk-road.com/folklore/manas/manasintro.html> do not contain this episode. However, we should be aware that as *Manas* is a living oral epic tradition, versions often differ greatly from one another in content, and given the present lack of scholarship on the epic in the west, further comment remains difficult.

⁴⁷ Bremmer's (1987: 36–37) idea that the gryphons' excavation of gold in Herodotus is simply the author reusing the story of stealing gold from giant ants in India (Hdt. III.103–5), seems irrational, as gold excavation by gryphons is not attested until Pliny (*H.N.* X.70.136; VII.2.10) and Aelian (*Hist. An.* IV.27), which may have indeed taken this from the ant-gold story.

Amazons and dog-headed men ascribed to the regions north of India. These would also appear to echo both Chinese and Greek accounts of similar wonders of the Amazons, dog-headed men and similar gold-ants (Hdt. IV. 105–119; Strabo II.1.9, XV.1.55–58; Bolton 1962: 79–83; White 1991: 91–3, 118–20; Mair 1998).⁴⁸ The uncanny convergences on the part of Indic, Classical and Chinese geographers in relation to the wondrous entities of Inner Asia would seem to suggest that many of these entities most likely sprung from the cosmological beliefs of nomadic peoples of Inner Asia themselves, who roamed between the edges of the settled cultures that recorded them. We should also recall from the *Manas* fragment given above the coordination of dog-headed men with monocular beings as associated geographical tropes from within the living traditions of Inner Asia, suggesting a strong continuity of such ideas.

We must now consider how the motif of monocularity came to be so regularly reappropriated in Inner Asian myth, from the Arimaspians onwards, and the overall consequences of such beings' distant geographical associations. One key suggestion that can be made is that shamanic "signposts" indicating geographical concepts of travel, monstrous forces and the ends of the world came together and regularly reinforced one another as a trope of "otherness." Thus in some cases monocular entities are represented as positive or mighty like the Arimaspians or Duwa Soqur, in others as thoroughly negative: their usage comes to be defined by their link with the "quality" of the geographical point to

Moreover, while ant-gold stories are found within the *Māhabharāta* (II.52), giant ants are attested in the far north of the world in the Chinese geographers during the third century BCE (*Ch'u Tz'u* 9/4b *ap.* Hawkes 1959: 104) and the term "ant-gold" is found in Darius's Susa inscription in conjunction with India (Woodthorpe-Tarn [1951] 2010: 297) and is also connected by Megasthenes (*ap.* Strabo XV.1.57; *Arr. Ind.* XV. 5) with Dardistan. The notion that such ant-gold stories arose from confusion with the "Mongol" tribal name *Shiraigol* (Mong. ant [??]) tribe (Laufer 1908: 429; Bolton 1962: 85), who appears to be a eighteenth to nineteenth-century CE (!) confederation of the Sira-Yugars in Gansu and Tibet (and not Mongols!) (Roerich 1943: 297), is perhaps more than a little weak. Nevertheless the tale may have its origins in Inner Asian myth as is attested by Mongolian and Tibetan stories, which Bremmer (1987: 36–37, 2002b: 33) strangely admits as reasonable, compared with his usual cynicism on the Greeks and Inner Asia. However, these stories could also be the result of Indic influence. India remains the hub for ant-gold stories.

⁴⁸ It is curious to note that Megasthenes (*ap.* Strabo XV.1.57) describes a race of monocular dog-men dwelling in the far north of India, which would seem to combine these two key Inner Asian mythemes.

which such numinous beings are added. As Eliade ([1951] 1989: 509–10) says, on the process by which the shaman constructs geography for his or her community:

The lands that the shaman sees and the personages that he meets during his ecstatic journey in the beyond are minutely described by the shaman himself, during or after his trance. The unknown and terrifying world of death assumes form; is organized in accordance with particular patterns; finally it displays a structure and, in the course of time, becomes familiar and acceptable. In turn the supernatural inhabitants of the world of death become *visible*; they show a form, display a personality, even a biography ... the accounts of the shamans' ecstatic journeys contribute to "spiritualizing" the world of the dead, at the same time they enrich it with wonderful forms and figures.

In relation to this we should also note Benavides' (1998: 189ff) comments to the effect that in pre-modern cultures concepts of symbolic, sacred and "actual" nature and geography are completely integrated. It would seem almost impossible to split the differences between concepts of space in epic, shamanic journeys and habitually believed cosmology among the Inner Asian peoples of antiquity, the Middle Ages and even ongoing beliefs still extant at present among the peoples of Siberia, Mongolia and Central Asia. One overlaps onto the other and forms what might be called a "continuum" of spatial myth. Thus, although symbols such as the monocular man and their functions may change in time and between different groups with succeeding reappropriations, as we can see from Aristeas's description of the "North" received from the Issedones, to the other examples given, what we appear to have is in no way anything definable through the dichotomy of "sacred" and "profane" space that litters the interpretations of western religious and geographical traditions.

In light of this, we can see that Aristeas, in the writing of his epic poem, most likely combined elements of Inner Asian religious practice such as a flight out of the body and sacred geographical "signposts," with elements already available in Greek epic, discussed above, such as aerial omniscience, for the audience's benefit via an appeal to his deity, Apollo. Most likely he was a traveler and Apollonian devotee in search of divine learning, who partook in the religious traditions of several cultures and then only later created a work suited to the knowledge and traditions of a Greek

audience, such as in the unexplained attribution of the gryphons to Zeus (Aesch. *PV*. 803) and the similarity in description of Arimaspians and Homeric animal wealth (Tzetz. *Chil.* VII. 686–92; Hom. *Il.* IX. 154, 296). However, while in the Classical tradition Aristeas's one-eyed Arimaspians have remained a peculiarity, as we have seen, within the cultures of Inner Asia this motif has been retained and reshaped for different uses over the centuries and is still living today to inhabit the edges of the world with its "otherness."

Part 2: The Cyclopes

1. Cyclopes and Arimaspians

The Arimaspians having been scrutinized, I would now like to turn to the Cyclopes and questions of their interrelations with the Arimaspians and other Inner Asian monocular beings. The story of the Greek hero Odysseus's tricking and blinding the one-eyed giant Polyphemus in Homer's *Odyssey* is perhaps one of the best known myths in the entire Classical canon. Polyphemus, a Cyclops, however, is but one of an entire race of beings described by Homer — a cannibal people (Hom. *Od.* IX.289ff), who though caring and diligent herdsman (IX.218–222, 308–310), are denigrated for their lack of laws, technological backwardness and ignorance of farming, in spite of the abundant climatic conditions in which they live (IX.107–132). What culture or cultures they may have had their basis in is a matter open to debate — perhaps a nomadic herding people from Inner Asia dwelling around the Black Sea coast — and has not been the target of much academic research, which has tended to center merely on endless symbolic readings of the monster Polyphemus's blinding.

Further, questions regarding the multiple branches of Cyclopes in Greek tradition — the trio of smithing beings in Hesiod's *Theogony* (139–146) and the well-spread cult of Thracian Cyclopean builders (Bacchyl. frag 11; Strabo VII.25.5, VIII. 6.2, 11; Paus. I.42.2, II.2.1; Schol. *ad Eurip. Orest.* 966) must also be investigated, as little work has been furthered in relation to the links between these beings.⁴⁹ Since the Hellenistic period these other forms of Cyclopes have been conflated with Homer's

⁴⁹ Mondt (1983), Heubeck (1989), Bremmer (2002a) are perhaps the only exceptions to this I am aware of. Their ideas will be discussed extensively in this article.

Cyclopes (Call. *Hymn to Artemis* III. 46; Virg. *Georg.* I. 471–72; Verg. *Aen.* VIII. 418–20), when in fact the only true similarity between them would seem to be that they all possess the same name. This in itself may simply have been an easy way for the Greeks to rationalize the presence of multiple occurrences of one-eyed beings in the myths of their neighbors. As will be shown, the closest available cultural connection in relation to these other branches of Cyclopes is the world “North” of Greece — the complex of Thracian and Inner Asian cultures that had come together during the seventh century BCE — just as the Greeks were beginning to interact with such peoples through trade and exploration.

First, in defense of the idea of a possible interrelationship between the Arimaspians and Cyclopes, it appears that during antiquity this was certainly the case perceived by the Classical historians and poets. Strabo for instance suggests:

Perhaps Homer also borrowed his idea of the one-eyed Cyclopes from the history of Scythia; for it is reported that the Arimaspians are a one-eyed people — a people whom Aristeas of Proconessus has made known in his Arimaspians Epic. (Strabo I. 2.10)⁵⁰

In connection with this, he further offers: “Some say that he (Creophylus) was the teacher of Homer, but others that it was Aristeas of Proconessus” (Strabo. XIV.1.18).⁵¹

Gellius less explicitly states: “Moreover, the poets say that there are men under this region of the sky who possess a single eye in the middle of their face, who are called Arimaspi, which means that they are Cyclopes” (Gell. *N.A.* IX. 4.6).⁵²

It has also been suggested that the language of the Cyclops Polyphemus’s lament to Galatea in the Alexandrian tradition, which focuses on the ugliness of his single eye and *λάσιος* (woolly, shaggy) nature (Theoc. *Id.* XI.50; Ov. *Met.* XIII. 846; Philostr. *Imag.* II.18.3) draw upon the *λάσιος* (woolly, shaggy)

⁵⁰ Strabo I.2.10: “τάχα δὲ καὶ τοὺς μονομάτους Κύκλωπας ἐκ τῆς Σκυθικῆς ἱστορίας μετενήνοχε: τοιοῦτους γὰρ τινὰς τοὺς Ἀριμασποὺς φασιν, οὓς ἐν τοῖς Ἀριμασπειοῖς ἔπεσιν ἐνδέδωκεν Ἀριστεάου ὁ Προκοννήσιος.”

⁵¹ Strabo XIV.1.18: “τινὲς δὲ διδάσκαλον Ὀμήρου τοῦτον φασιν, οἱ δ’ οὐ τοῦτον ἀλλ’ Ἀριστεάν τὸν Προκοννήσιον.”

⁵² Gell. *N.A.* IX. 4.6: “... item esse homines sub eadem regione caeli unum oculum in frontis medio habentes, qui appellantur Arimaspi, qua fuisse facie Cyclopas poetae ferunt.”

nature of the Arimaspians as its source (Bolton 1962: 195). This is not a feature ascribed by Homer or even Euripides to the Cyclopes. The heavily bearded illustration of Polyphemus at the late fourth century BCE Etruscan Tomb of Orcus in Italy, which was originally mistaken for the demon Orcus (Spivey and Squire 2011: 127), may also belong to this tradition of transferring the characteristic of hairiness from the Arimaspians to the Cyclopes.

Such information as this, while suggesting that recognitions and interplay between these races of monocular beings certainly occurred within the bounds of the Classical tradition, has largely been discarded without second thought by Classicists (S. West 2004: 45; Skinner 2013: 162 n. 1; Mandzuka 2013: 276), owing to the perceived impossibility of squaring the early date and prioritized sanctity of the Homeric tradition with the historically dislocated and fragmentary figure of Aristeas.

However, we must be aware that just as the name of "Homer" represents a term not attested before the sixth century BCE (Graziosi 2002: 91f), one which was applied to a long oral tradition with perhaps some bases in the Mycenaean period (Tomlinson 2002: 32), equally due to its long history "the Homeric society cannot be assigned to any single period" (Coldstream 1977: 18). We should also be aware that the two Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, were not codified until the end of the seventh century BCE and may refer to seventh-century events such as the fall of Babylon (688 BCE) and Egyptian Thebes (663 BCE) (Burkert 1976; M. L. West 1995), and most likely did not come to mainland Greece from Ionia in "fixed form" before the mid-sixth century BCE (Nagy 1992: esp. 52).

In light of this, we must recall that it is in the period of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE that Aristeas most likely made his journeys to the Issedones — a period in which the frontiers of Ionian Greek exploration were the northern and eastern edges of the Black Sea (Tsetskhladze 1998; Solovyov 2001), where nomadic peoples of Inner Asian origin, such as the Scythians, were dwelling. As will be shown, the episodes of the wandering of the hero Odysseus in the *Odyssey* of Homer and the quest of the Argonauts for the Golden Fleece have many strong themes in common with this period and with the new Greek geographical and commercial frontier. This will allow us to propose some new theories regarding the introduction of the Arimaspians and Cyclopes into Greek myth during a key period.

2. The Society of the Cyclopes

It is imperative to note as we begin this examination, that Homer's Cyclopes, not even Polyphemus, are ever referred to as one-eyed. This would seem quite a curious thing, as since Euripides's fifth-century BCE satyr-play *The Cyclops*, this has been assumed to be the case,⁵³ though we should be aware that at least one Greek commentator, the satirist Accius, called to attention Homer's apparent exclusion of what was later taken as common fact.⁵⁴ As will be shown, the monocular of the Cyclopes most likely stems from the influence of other beings in Greek mythic tradition — also called Cyclopes — that are emphatically one-eyed and bear strong connections to the Black Sea region, and the nomadic peoples of Inner Asia. Rather, with Homer, we appear to have a description of a primitive culture, which has been adjoined to the story of blinding the monster Polyphemus, which is much older than the cultural description which accompanies it. We should then begin with the earliest material — with the details given by Homer regarding the Cyclopean society, and then discuss the Polyphemus, the blinded ogre, in relation to this cultural context. Odysseus says:

And next we came to the land of the Cyclopes, a fierce lawless people who never use their hands to tend plants or to plough, but just leave it all to the immortal gods. The crops they need spring up unsown and untilled, wheat and barley and vines with full clusters that swell with the rain from heaven to make wine. The Cyclopes possess no congregations for making laws, nor any established customs, but live in hollow caves

⁵³ Euripides's fifth-century BCE satyr play *Cyclops* mentions clearly at line 20 the fact that Polyphemus has a single eye. Also from the fifth century, a satyr cup is found that is most likely the earliest example of a monocular Cyclops in art. The satyr-play tradition may in fact have been the earliest clear example of a monocular Polyphemus at all (Mondi 1983: 33 n. 59).

⁵⁴ Aul. Gell. *N.A.* III.XI.5: "*Accius autem in primo Didascalico levibus admodum argumentis utitur ... De Cyclope itidem, inquit, vel maxime quod unoculus fuit, rem tam insignem non praeterisset, nisi aequae prioris Hesiodi carminibus invulgatum esset.*" = "And Accius, in his first lesson makes use of comedic logic ... on the Cyclops he says that if the fact that it was one-eyed had not been so commonly known due to Hesiod existing before Homer, he would not have left out such an important thing as this." The ideas that Hesiod was older than Homer, and that Hesiod and Homer were contemporaries were often argued about among the Greeks and is of no concern here, but see Graziosi (2002) for the best available discussion on this tradition.

in the high mountains, and each metes out laws to his own children and women, but not to others. (IX. 105–115)⁵⁵

We also have a further description of the land of the Cyclopes following this as:

Perpetually unsown and untilled, free from men, supporting only bleating goats. The Cyclopes have no crimson-prowed ships; they have no shipwrights to build oared vessels that could allow them to sail across the sea to visit foreign towns and cultures. Such builders would have made the island into a fine place for them. It is in no way a meagre country, but capable of yielding all crops at the right time of year. (IX. 123–131)⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Hom. *Od.* IX. 105–115:

“ἔνθεν δὲ προτέρω πλέομεν ἀκαχήμενοι ἦτορ:
Κυκλώπων δ’ ἐς γαίαν ὑπερφιάλων ἀθεμίστων
ἰκόμεθ’, οἳ ῥα θεοῖσι πεποιθότες ἀθανάτοισιν
οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ’ ἀρώσιν,
ἀλλὰ τὰ γ’ ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα πάντα φύονται,
πυροὶ καὶ κριθαὶ ἠδ’ ἄμπελοι, αἳ τε φέρουσιν
οἴνον ἐριστάφυλον, καὶ σφιν Διὸς ὄμβρος ἀέξει.
τοῖσιν δ’ οὔτ’ ἀγοραὶ βουληφόροι οὔτε θέμιστες,
ἀλλ’ οἳ γ’ ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ναίουσι κάρηνα
ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος
παίδων ἠδ’ ἀλόχων, οὐδ’ ἀλλήλων ἀλέγουσιν.”

⁵⁶ Hom. *Od.* IX. 123–131:

“... ἀλλ’ ἦ γ’ ἄσπαρτος καὶ ἀνήροτος ἦματα πάντα
ἀνδρῶν χηρεύει, βόσκει δὲ τε μηκάδας αἴγας.
οὐ γὰρ Κυκλώπεσσι νέες πάρα μιλοπάργηοι,
οὐδ’ ἄνδρες νηῶν ἐνὶ τέκτονες, οἳ κε κάμοιεν
νήας εὐσσέλμους, αἳ κεν τελείοιεν ἕκαστα
ἄστε’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων ἰκνεύμεναι, οἳά τε πολλὰ
ἄνδρες ἐπ’ ἀλλήλους νηυσὶν περόωσι θάλασσαν:
οἳ κέ σφιν καὶ νῆσον εὐκτιμένην ἐκάμοντο.

In light of this we may see what appears to be perhaps the earliest anthropological study, albeit a very negative one, in western literature. The Cyclopes are pitied for their cultural backwardness and inattentiveness to what the Greeks regarded as the very markers of culture: farming, sailing and political organisation. However, this impious attitude of the Cyclopes juxtaposed with the natural abundance of their lands⁵⁷ has strangely not led to very much discussion beyond suggestions of them simply as generic "noble savages" conflated together with an archetypal "Ogre Tale" (Kirk 1962: 236) in the form of Polyphemus's blinding.

Before we come to questions of the "Ogre tale," in order to make sense of the civilization of the Cyclopes, we should note what appear to be some very keen parallels within the bounds of not only Homer but also the *Argonautica* cycle in relation to their description. Although the earliest full version of the Argonautic legend we possess is that of the Hellenistic poet Apollonius Rhodius, in the Classics there is a long history of debate on the existence of an *Ur-Argonautica* — contemporary to the period of the *Odyssey's* composition and sharing with it several key narrative structures based around seventh-century BCE Greek explorations in the Black Sea region (Heubek 1989; Danek 1998; M. L. West 2005).⁵⁸

For example, besides the Cyclopes, the other famous gigantic, flesh-eating herding race in the *Odyssey* is that of the Laestrygonians who attack and eat Odysseus's men when these land in their kingdom (Hom. *Od.* X. 81–133). As M. L. West (2005: 48) suggests, this in itself may include "motifs

οὐ μὲν γάρ τι κακὴ γε, φέροι δέ κεν ὄρια πάντα".

⁵⁷ This uncanny mixture of the Cyclopes' barbarism and climatic abundance would seem to have much in common with Greek geographical notions concerning primitive beings' continued dwelling in the same conditions of early man in general, wherein nature was far richer and agriculture was not needed. See Romm (1994: 46–66) for detailed discussion on this matter. Thus, it is not surprising that the oldest mention in text with regard to either Polyphemus or the Homeric Cyclopes, besides the *Odyssey* itself, is made by an Athenian in reference to primordial nature of human society in a passage of Plato's *Laws* (690b) written during the fifth century BCE. In it, lines 112–5 of Book IX of the *Odyssey* are quoted verbatim.

⁵⁸ See M. L. West (2005 n. 1) for a full list of discussions of this matter going back to the mid-nineteenth century. The Argonautic cycle is first mentioned in the *Odyssey* (XII.69–70) as "νηὸς Ἀργῶ πάσι μέλουσα" ("the ship Argo, of interest to everyone") in reference to the *planctae* or "clashing/wandering rocks" episodes in both traditions (*Od.* XII.61 cf. Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* II.600ff).

repeated from the Polyphemus episode." In clarifying the location and culture of the Laestrygonians, some have noted the similarity of their episode in the *Odyssey* to Jason and his crew's Argonautic experience at Propontic Cyzicus against the cannibal Aborigines (Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* I.936–1011; Danek 1998, 197–99; M. L. West 2005: 48–53). If it is possible to assume an overlap between the Argonautic and Homeric cycles, then perhaps too the rock hurling, giantism and cannibalism of both the herding Laestrygonians (Hom. *Od.* X.114–115, 120–22) and Cyclopes when they later attempt to pelt Odysseus's ships with rocks (IX. 289f, 321–22, 537–38) represent typical tropes for experiences with "primitive" peoples. For instance, in Apollonius's *Argonautica*, the local "earth born" Aborigines also attack the crew of the Argo with rocks (I.995) and are exterminated. Like the Cyclops Polyphemus (Hom. *Od.* IX. 529), they are also the sons of Poseidon (Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* I. 952).⁵⁹

The Laestrygonians have since antiquity commonly have been associated with northern climes. Geminus in his *Elements of Astronomy* in the first century BCE, basing his understanding on Crates the Grammarian, located the Laestrygonians in the far north (Gem. *Elem. Ast.* VI. *ap.* Heath 1991: 132–33), due to the long days the herdsmen there possess according to Homer's description (*Od.* X. 81–86). As it is suggestible in many ways that the Laestrygonians were a race of settled nomads in the far north of the world with whom the Greeks interacted during early encroachments upon the Pontic region, this could also perhaps be equally applied to the society of the giant, cannibal Cyclopes.⁶⁰

All of this suggests that both of these portions of the *πλανή* (wandering of Odysseus) mirror one another due to similar experiences or standard literary formulas for representing herding peoples in this region during the seventh-century BCE expansions in the Pontic region — notably that of

⁵⁹ The similarity between the Artakian font giving water to Telepylos in Laestrygonia in Homer (*Od.* X. 109), and a similar Artakia in Apollonius of Rhodes (*Arg.* I.1955–60) has also been one of the key ingredients in this theory. However, the Laestrygonians were never associated with any location as far south and relatively well known as the Propontus, and thus most likely a conflation of two stories from the Black Sea occurred, and both came to be called by the same shared name (M. L. West 2005: 53).

⁶⁰ Sworder (2008: 16) has gone further than this by suggesting that the magnitude of these peoples has a basis in a particular Mediterranean conception used by Porphyry (*Antr. Nymph.* 13. 33) of the north of the world's hard climate producing both gigantic men and pasture animals, namely in the lands of the Celts, Scythians and Thracians.

cannibalism.⁶¹ Other negative elements we find in this intercultural encounter, aside from the cannibalism, such as Polyphemus's breaking the Greek taboo of drinking of unmixed wine (Hom. *Od.* IX. 358–71) — a common cliché in relation to Black Sea peoples,⁶² and ignorance of the Greek rituals of guest friendship (IX.271), would also suggest this. We should also note that Herodotus mentions the habit of the Crimean Taurii of killing and sacrificing all Greeks and sailors who came into their lands (Hdt. IV.104), which suggests an experience that the Greeks had been encountered more than a few times in their travels in this region. These elements would seem to have far more in common with standard notions in connection with Black Sea cultures than they would with the "Ogre Tale," explored below.

3. Blinding the Ogre

We now come to the meeting and confrontation between Odysseus and the individual Cyclops, Polyphemus, in Book IX of the *Odyssey*, long renowned for its "ability to entertain and baffle its commentators" (Mondi 1983: 17), and arguably one of the most famous and repeatedly analyzed episodes in the entire canon of Classical mythology. One thing that has largely kept discussions of the Cyclopes away from those on the *Argonautic* cycle in classical studies is the identification of the first-ever depiction of this myth on the Eleusis amphora of the Polyphemus painter c. 680–650 BCE (M. L. West 2005: 59), which shows Odysseus and his men represented wielding a forked stick to blind a

⁶¹ Man-eaters in the far north are mentioned by the geographers and others from Herodotus onwards (Hdt. IV. 65, 104; Plat. *Euthyd.* 299e–300a; Ephorus *ap.* Strab. VII. 3.9; Plin. *H.N.* VI. 20. 53). Pliny even makes a comparison between the Cyclopes and the existence of northern Scythian cannibals, though he of course by his time assumes the Cyclopes to have existed in the area around Italy (Plin. *N.A.* VII. 9).

⁶² The drunkenness of Polyphemus (Hom. *Od.* IX. 360ff) also echoes the many verbs of ethnic pejoration which were coined regarding the Scythians' purported immoderate drinking (Gruen 2005: 42, 219). Wine in great quantity was one of the main imports into the early Scythian colonies such as Berezan (Solovyov 2001: 49–53), and we should note that the Greek story of Cleomenes's going mad from drinking it unmixed with the Scythians (Hdt. VI. 84–85), would have been characterized for the Greeks by its distinct barbarism.

most likely two-eyed giant (Fig. 2), though we must be aware that, like the Arimaspians, the Cyclopes are hardly ever represented as monocular in art.⁶³

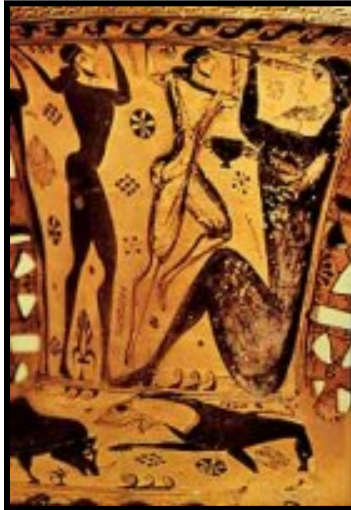


Fig. 2. The Eleusis Amphora, c. 680–650 BCE, the Polyphemus Painter. Note forked stick used to blind Polyphemus in his pair of eyes (Spivey and Squire 2011: 124).

In light of this, I would like to propose a thesis, in the following paragraphs, that at this early stage in Homer, Polyphemus was not necessarily a one-eyed entity, and that the Cyclopes only came to be one-eyed (all of them) through confusion of the ogre-blinding story and the monocular Inner Asian and Caucasian myths received by the Greeks around the Black Sea coast.⁶⁴ In support of this, upon investigation, Homer's Greek is ambiguous at best with regard to the monocularly of Polyphemus. Little is made even of the Cyclops's size except by allusions to the moving of the colossal

⁶³ The Hesiodic Cyclopes were only ever represented very dimly or with lines across their faces (Mondi 1983: 33 n. 59). Due to the differences in ancient and modern literacy, which include the fact that the many people during antiquity could often only comprehend "lapidary" written passages and items of a familiar context (Thomas 1992: 9), it may be that the more conventional motif of the single eye located in the middle of the forehead of the Cyclopes was simply not well known among craftsmen and their clients before the fifth century (Mondi 1983: 33 n. 59). This is certainly possible, though it should also be noted that the Arimaspians and Cyclopes, like many other beings in Greek art, are represented in profile and thus only a single eye is often visible anyway (Mondi 1983: 36 n. 66).

⁶⁴ Even in Euripides's fifth-century BCE satyr-play on Polyphemus, *Cyclops*, he sometimes seems to have two eyes (Seaford 1984: 100; Bremmer 2002a: 142).

rock and his huge staff (Hom. *Od.* IX. 241–243, 320–325).⁶⁵ Polyphemus's eye is only mentioned when it comes explicitly to blinding him, and curiously, he is described as possessing both brows and lids — integrally — in the *plural*. As Mandzuka (2013: 276ff) has recently remarked, nearly all translators of Homer fail to notice this, automatically assuming the presence of a single eye, which is not attested in the text at all. One would think that such a characteristic, which has become a most important element in Greek myth, would have been stated outright. Instead we read: "I then ordered the others to cast lots, for whoever was to dare lift the stave along with my self and stick it in (his) eye" (IX. 332–333).⁶⁶ The actual blinding is described thus:

I then took it from the fire as my companions stood around: and then the god breathed great courage into them. They took up the olive wood staff, sharp at the tip, and plunged it into his eye. As we drove the fiery pointed stave into his eye, we spun it ... and the heat singed all around his eyelids and eyebrows as the eyeball was burnt up and the roots crackled with the flame ... his eye hissed like hot metal around the olive stake. (IX. 380–90)⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Bremmer (2002a: 141) has coyly referred to the idea that the story was sufficiently well known that bluntly stating the monocular nature was unnecessary to Homer's "art." This would seem to be quite an assumption.

⁶⁶ Hom. *Od.* IX. 332–33: "αὐτὰρ τοὺς ἄλλους κλήρω πεπαλάσθαι ἄνωγον ὄς τις τολμήσειεν ἐμοὶ σὺν μοχλὸν αἰείρας τρῖψαι ἐν ὀφθαλμῶ..."

⁶⁷ Hom. *Od.* IX. 380–94: "καὶ τότε ἔγὼν ἄσπον φέρον ἐκ πυρός, ἀμφὶ δ' ἑταῖροι ἴσταντ': αὐτὰρ θάρσος ἐνέπνευσεν μέγα δαίμων. οἱ μὲν μοχλὸν ἐλόντες ἐλάινον, ὄξυν ἐπ' ἄκρω, ὀφθαλμῶ ἐνέρεισαν: ... ὡς τοῦ ἐν ὀφθαλμῶ πυριήκεα μοχλὸν ἐλόντες δινέομεν ... πάντα δέ οἱ βλέφαρ' ἀμφὶ καὶ ὀφρύας εὔσεν ἀυτμή γλήνης καιομένης, σφαραγεύντο δέ οἱ πυρὶ ῥίζαι ... ὡς τοῦ σίζ' ὀφθαλμὸς ἐλαϊνέω περι μοχλῶ."

As well as various symbolic exegeses,⁶⁸ the blinding of Polyphemus has also been commonly held to belong to a structural class of ancient "Ogre" Ur-myths in which this section of the *Odyssey* partook, but was not the source thereof, spread widely across Eurasia (Frazer 1921: 404–54, Mundy 1956: 279–82; Mondì 1983: 25). James Frazer (1921: 404–54) collated thirty-six examples of such tales in his thirteenth appendix to the Loeb translation of Apollodorus's *Bibliothēke*.⁶⁹ However, as was long ago suggested by Meuli ([1921] 1976: I. 639–40) and more recently by Bremmer (2002a: 138–42), it is far more likely that the *Odyssey* was the source of nearly all of these other versions as the majority of them come from the Black Sea region where Greek sailors still tell versions of the Polyphemus story, and moreover all of the versions cited have only been recorded from the Late Middle Ages onwards (cf. Frazer 1921: 404–54). Some betray the influence of Classical learning on what would appear at face value to be simply the oral tales of peasants (Bremmer 2002a: 136–8), and others are merely stories sharing in one or two qualities with the Polyphemus story and do not represent a mythic pattern by any standard. Monocularity is certainly not a common quality except in those stories that seem to have been arguably the direct result of influence from the Polyphemus tale.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Symbolic exegeses have taken this act of blinding to signify a number of natural phenomena: the eruption of a volcano (Berard 1929: 179–85), the eclipsing of the sun (Meyer [1857] 2010: 70–71; Hackman 1904: 3–5), the waning of the moon (Nitzsch 1840: xviii), the eye of a storm (Laistner 1879: 272), and, with the introduction of Freudian analysis, a multitude of sexual symbols indicating the dynamic between Odysseus and Polyphemus as father and son (Roheim 1952: 361–67; Menninger 1938: 321; Glenn 1978: 152–55). Burkert (1979: 30–34) and Bakker (2013: 59ff) have also connected the Polyphemus episode with the former's "lord of the animals" hypothesis, suggesting that elements of the story were Palaeolithic representations of a struggle with a god who controlled all the "game." However, such views as this would seem to have more in common with twentieth-century anthropological mythology than they would with anything provable regarding Homer and his roots.

⁶⁹ Hackman (1904: 3ff) lists 120 recordings of such "Ogre Tales," though Glenn (1971: 155) has remarked that only seventy-four even contain any traces of monocularity. In Frazer's (1921: App. XIII) collection it is necessary to note that of these thirty-six archetypal "Polyphemus" or "Ogre Tales" listed, only thirteen explicitly refer to beings with a single eye. These are the tales numbered §5, 7, 14, 17, 18, 21, 23, 26, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36. Of the selected monocular versions those numbered: §23, 26, 32, 33, 34, 35 — seven in total — are from the region around Greece, strongly suggesting impetus from the *Odyssey*. There are also two Modern Greek versions that do not mention the single eye: one from Athens (§24) and one from Chios (§25).

⁷⁰ Evidence for the *Odyssey* as the origin for the entire pattern of "ogre" tales includes the Old Irish *Merugud Uilix Maicc*

Thus, despite the unlikely notion of a universal ogre "Ur-myth," it is worth detailing here that there is however one particular myth in antiquity that appears to mirror that of the encounter between Polyphemus and Odysseus and has strong parallels with other portions of Odysseus's journey.⁷¹ This is that of the battle between Gilgamesh and the demon of the Cedar Mountain⁷² Huwawa (Humbaba) in Sumerian and Akkadian mythology (*Gilgamesh* V. SBV I-VI). Suggestions have often been made that there exists an affinity between the two stories via Greek contact with cultures in Western Asia (Dalley 1989: 47; Burkert 2004: 26, 44; Lowden 2011: 181–85). This episode contains several themes which may have worked their way into the Greek myth of Polyphemus. One of these is the blinding of Huwawa with winds by Gilgamesh's patron Shamash (*Gilgamesh* V. LV. II). However, Huwawa does not seem to have been a one-eyed entity. He is described and represented in Akkadian mythology as "intestine-faced" and as "lord of the fortress of Intestines" (Dalley 1989: 43) and was often pictured in this manner, with his face drawn in a single unending line (Napier 1986:111).⁷³ Thus, if the

Leirtis (Wandering of Ulysses son of Laertes), which includes a one-eyed Cyclops episode (trans. Meyer 1999: 2), and dates from the eighth century CE (Harris 1998: 14). Even the Renaissance Latin *editio princeps* of the Greek is in comparison much later at 1488 CE (Sarton 1952: 153). This suggests that the *Odyssey* may have remained alive as an oral or lost textual tradition in the West during the Middle Ages. Other versions, such as the usage of the usually benevolent and tutelary Basque Basa-Juan "Lord of the forest...the cultural initiator who instructs mankind" (Lurker 1987: 56) as a "Polyphemus" figure further suggests that the *Odyssey* may have influenced local stories at a later date. See Bremmer (2002a) for the refutation of several other key "ogre myths" from Central Europe that clearly display great evidence of influence from the Classical Tradition. Lithuanian version §16, which Frazer (1921) calls "suspiciously" close to the *Odyssey* contains implicit monocularity. Oghuz Turkish version §36 in connection with the figure *Tepegöz* has already been discussed as most likely stemming from the influence of the *Odyssey*. Further, §23 is a Cappadocian version which does not refer explicitly to the one eye, but makes use of the term *tepekozēs*, which is most likely a Greek rendering of the Turkish *tepegöz* of §36. Thus, due to both the lack of any other of these "Ogre Myths" in antiquity, as well as the likelihood of the *Odyssey*'s survival in some form in both East and West, it is unlikely that a widespread tradition existed that the *Odyssey* merely took part in or was inserted at a late date into the rest of the hero's *πλανή* (wandering), as was suggested long ago (Grimm 1857: 1–30).

⁶⁹ M. L. West (2005: 62–64) deftly notes strong parallels between the Calypso and Circe episodes in the *Odyssey* and that of the alewife Shiduri in *Gilgamesh*, as well as possible connections with Medea in the *Argonautica*.

⁷² Dalley's (1989) translation has "Pine Mountain" and "pine" used on multiple occasions instead of cedar (*Gilgamesh* V. SBV I).

⁷³ Some have also suggested that Huwawa's monstrous face may have been the impetus behind the creation of the Greek gorgon masks and the story of Perseus (Napier 1986: 111; Kovacs 1989: XXX).

Gilgamesh epic was influential in the creation of the Polyphemus through the act of blinding the monster who in neither account appears to be one-eyed, we must look elsewhere for the monocular connections that have been assumed regarding the Cyclopes — owing to its more explicit attestation in relation to other beings possessing the same name.

4. In Search of the Origin of the Monocular Cyclopes

The question then is from whence the Greek literature drew the motif of the one-eyed man, which came to be joined with the Cyclopes through the act of Polyphemus's blinding and the emphasis on his eye (but not a single one) in Homer. One key piece of evidence to support this is the fact that before he is blinded, the monster is merely the "Cyclops" (Hom. *Od.* IX. 296, 319, 345, 347).⁷⁴ It is only following this that he is for the first time twice referred to as Polyphemus (Hom. *Od.* IX. 404, 466). However, he is still called the Cyclops after the blinding as well (IX. 362, 415, 428), suggesting that the two names had not been properly integrated in the Homeric tradition.⁷⁵ As noted, the "fixing" of the Homeric epics most likely took place during the mid-sixth century BCE or slightly beforehand. The emphasis on blinding Polyphemus in one eye appears to have been uneasily squared with the name of Cyclopes, the most obvious answer for this being that the ambiguity of blinding one of the ogre's eyes brought to attention actual monocular beings already possessed in Greek myth that were, however, vastly different. Thus, in order to solve this we must look to the second branch of the Cyclopes —

⁷⁴ One suggestion that has been developed to allow for the difficulties inherent in the Polyphemus episode is that the story existed in different tellings: one in which Polyphemus had one eye and the other in which he possessed two (Mondi 1983: 21–22). Another is that the single eye might represent a version of the tale in which the already deformed Cyclops deliberately exists to be completely blinded by the loss of the second (*ibid.*). In spite of the attractive creativity of these suggestions, they would seem very much clutching at straws in order to solve a much simpler problem, easily solved by bringing the Hesiodic Cyclopes into the equation as the originators of the monocular aspect.

⁷⁵ The name Polyphemus itself seems merely to mean literally "great spoken about" or, according to Liddell and Scott ([1898] 2008: 659) "abounding in many songs or legends." In the *Argonautica* (I.140ff) one of the lesser characters is the Lapith Polyphemus, who in the *Iliad* (I.260f) Nestor calls "godlike" and numbers among the mighty heroes already perished long before the Trojan War. The name in general seems to have no connection with any facet of the Cyclops's physical character.

those of Hesiod, who are clearly described as monocular, and most importantly with words very similar to those of Aristeas's Arimaspians.

The Homeric Cyclopes from at least the time of Thucydides (VI.2)⁷⁶ were seen to possess a very strong geographical connection to Italia in the western Mediterranean — in particular volcanic Lipara and Mount Aetna near Sicily⁷⁷ (Call. *Hymn to Artemis* III. 46; Verg. *Georg.* I. 471–472, *Aen.* VIII. 418–420). One of the principle reasons for this identification of them with Mt. Aetna was that it was seen as the forge of the god Hephaestus/Vulcan and the prison of the Titans, with both of whom the Cyclopes came to be associated (Pindar. *Pyth.* I. 15; Verg. *Aen.* III. 579–82). In relation to this conflation, Mondì (1983: 88) makes a simple and useful observation: "the significant fact is that though they reside on the slopes of Etna, Polyphemus and his fellows are always shepherds, never smiths." This

⁷⁶ By the third century BCE the wandering rocks, the sirens and Scylla and Charybdis were also relocated to Sicily (Lycophron *Alex.* 648; Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* IV. 826), seemingly to group together all the elements of Odysseus' wanderings. Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, describes the Cyclopes vaguely as his relatives due to both peoples' having been fathered by the sea-god Poseidon (VII. 54–63, 207), and that they lived within a very similar vicinity (VI. 4–6). This is an interesting connection as the location of the Phaeacians and their land Scheria, according to Thucydides (I.25.4), was the island of Corcyra, quite near to Ithaca, though the *Odyssey* (IX. 17) emphasizes the long distance between the two locations. Strabo (I.2.18) thought that Scheria was in the Atlantic "sea" or Ocean. Thus we are left unable to answer questions of location, but a shared legacy through the same ancestral deity most likely caused them to be collapsed together in the wake of Homeric myth. One popular conception as to why the Cyclopes were sited in Sicily has been the long discovery of prehistoric elephants in caves on the island, which as far back as the time of Boccaccio were regarded as the skeletons of giants such as Polyphemus and Eryx (Mayor 2000: 6–7, 284–85). Othenio Abel (1914) is the main person responsible for noting and popularizing the similarity between the single eye-like trunk socket in the skulls of such animals and the monocular Cyclopes, and he has been keenly followed by other scholars (cf. Mayor 2000: 6ff; Eberhart 2002: 117; Agnesi et al. 2007: 263–70). However, as Mayor (2000: 284–85) points out, he also appears to have been responsible for the error that the ancient philosopher Empedocles of Acragas spoke of such skeletons and regarded them as elephants, as supposedly did Boccaccio — both ideas that are utterly false. However, we cannot entirely deny the possibility that such skeletons may have informed some of the impetus for locating the Cyclopes here, though the other arguments based on the position of Circe and other characters from the *Odyssey* and the collapsing of these Cyclopes with those of Hesiod would seem stronger.

⁷⁷ However, Homer seems very much aware of the existence of Sicily (*Od.* XX. 383; XXIV. 211, 307), and it would have been odd for him or the tradition to fail to give it as a landmark if all these portions of the *πλανή* were originally intended for this region after Odysseus and his crew were swept off course (IX. 80–81).

connection between a smithing god, divine servitude and the Cyclopes stems from the Cyclopes of Hesiod, writing during the seventh century BCE.⁷⁸ Hesiod's smithing Cyclopes and their origins as titans born from the earth are described as follows:

Again she [the earth] bore the Cyclopes, whose hearts were insolent, Brontes [Thunder] and Steropes [Lightning Bolt] and proud-souled Arges [Shining],⁷⁹ those who found and gave the thunder and lightning-bolt to Zeus. They were like other gods in all respects, but that a single eye lay in the brow of each, and from this they received the name, Cyclopes, from the one round eye that lay in the middle of each forehead. Strength and energy and craft were in their works. (Hes. *Theog.* 139–46)⁸⁰

⁷⁸ From Hesiod's time onward, Circe and Odysseus are named as the progenitors of Latinus and Agrius, who came to rule the Tyrrhenians in Italia (Hes. *Theog.* 1012–16). However, the *Odyssey* itself states that Circe lived very close to the house of Dawn, which would be in the far east (Hom. *Od.* XII. 3–4), and not the far west (M. L. West 2005: 43). As the sister of "baleful Aetes" (= Medea) (Hom. *Od.* X. 137–39), Circe too may have belonged originally at Phasis in the Black Sea in the completely opposite direction, where a plain of Circe is attested (Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* II. 400; Timaeus *FGRH* 566 F 84), as with many other seemingly shared portions of the *Argonautica* and *Odyssey*.

⁷⁹ Whereas the names of these three Hesiodic "Elder Cyclopes" all have names connected with forging and thunderbolts, under later tradition they were to multiply from three to seven (Strab. VIII. 6.11; Nonn. *Dion.* XXVIII. 172), some of whom possessed names connected with the ocean such as Halimedes (sea ruler) and Euryalos (sea roaming) (Nonn. *Dion.* XIV. 52). This not only brings to mind Polyphemus wading through the ocean in the *Aeneid* (III. 665–66), but also the Homeric Cyclopes' association with Poseidon (Hom. *Od.* IX. 529). This crossing over highlights well the conflation of the two very different groups of Homeric and Hesiodic Cyclopes.

⁸⁰ Hes. *Theog.* 139–46: "γείνατο δ' αὖ Κύκλωπας ὑπέρβιον ἦτορ ἔχοντας,

Βρόντην τε Στερόπην τε καὶ Ἄργην ὀβριμόθυμον,

οἱ Ζηνὶ βροντὴν τε δόσαν τεύξάν τε κεραυνόν.

οἱ δὲ τοὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα θεοῖς ἐναλίγκιοι ἦσαν,

μόνος δ' ὀφθαλμὸς μέσσω ἐνέκειτο μετώπῳ.

Κύκλωπες δ' ὄνομ' ἦσαν ἐπάνυμον, οὐνεκ' ἄρα σφέων

κυκλοτερῆς ὀφθαλμὸς ἔεις ἐνέκειτο μετώπῳ:

ἰσχὺς δ' ἠδὲ βίη καὶ μηχαναὶ ἦσαν ἐπ' ἔργοις.

As we may see from the quotes below, these smithing Cyclopes are clearly described not only as monocular, but possessing a single eye in the middle of their foreheads like the Arimaspians, and even the Mongol Duwa Soqur. In the Greek we may certainly see the similarities between Aristeas and Hesiod's monocular beings:

Aristeas frag. 3:

“ὀφθαλμὸν δ' ἓν ἕκαστος ἔχει χαρίεντι μετώπῳ”

(And each of them has a single eye in the middle of his fair forehead)

Hes. *Theog.* 143–5:

“μῶνος δ' ὀφθαλμὸς μέσσω ἐνέκειτο μετώπῳ. Κύκλωπες δ' ὄνομ' ἦσαν ἐπώνυμον,
οὔνεκ' ἄρα σφέων κυκλοτερῆς ὀφθαλμὸς ἕεις ἐνέκειτο μετώπῳ”

(And a single eye was borne in the middle of [their] foreheads, and they were called Cyclopes by name, because a single round eye was borne in the middle of their forehead[s])

It is imperative to note on this matter that Bolton (1962: 8–18) appears to regard the fragments of Aristeas as almost artificial and very repetitive — perhaps composed of pieces of Homer and Hesiod, and, moreover, written by someone who appears to have been a rather “tasteless” and “inept” poet — though this in itself could also signal an “unconventional” and even colloquial originality, rather than corruption or later invention of fragments under Aristeas's name (cf. Bolton 1962: 18–19; Bowra 1956: 8). Even if Bolton (1962: 8–18) is correct in assuming that Aristeas may have borrowed from Hesiod's famous *Theogony* in order to write his *Ἀριμασπεία*, this at most is yet another early recognition of the similarity of the Arimaspians and Cyclopes. Further, Mondì's (1983: 34) theory that the fourth line of the Hesiodic passage (line 142) may in fact be a later addition and can be substituted with a line explaining the Cyclopes' “insolence” with a line implicitly explaining another myth: how they were slain by Apollo for making the lightning bolts used to kill his son Asclepius (cf. Schol. *ad* Hes. *Theog.*; Hes. *Catal.* frag. 43) would still leave the other lines describing the Cyclopes' monocular as valid. This would not, as he believes, prove that the Hesiodic Cyclopes were absurdly “rewritten” as monocular due to the “success” of Polyphemus's blinding in folklore (Mondì 1983: 34. n.

59).⁸¹ Thus the fact remain that both Hesiod and Aristeas are reflecting on monocular entities, which appear far too close to be merely coincidental.

Moreover, the Hesiodic Cyclopes, in their role as smiths to the gods, appear to have had a very close affinity with a third branch of Cyclopes worshipped as the divine builders of many of the still-standing remnants of the prior Mycenaean culture including the walls of Tiryns, Argolis and Mycenae (Bacchyl. frag. 11; Strabo VII.25.5, VIII. 6.2.11). These Cyclopes also possessed one altar at Corinth and possibly one at Megara as well (Paus. I.42.2, II.2.1). According to Strabo and others (Strabo. VIII. 6.11; Schol. *ad Eurip. Orest.* 966), these Cyclopes originally came from Thrace to Lycia and Crete under a Cyclops king who gave them their name. There is also mention, in a minor work by Aristotle, of a race of Thracian Cyclopes who possessed a poisonous fountain (Arist. *De Mir. Ausc.* 121. 842a 11–14).⁸² This Thracian connection will be vital for what follows.

In dating the introduction and spread of this association of the Cyclopes with construction, Bacchylides's fifth-century BCE fragment would appear to be the earliest following Hesiod, which is also supported by their employment of the early euphemism of "bellyhands" in relation to their laborious profession a century earlier (Nicophon frag. 6.121; Bremmer 2002a: 140). However, this brings into question the source of Hesiod's depiction of them as divine smiths much earlier than this, and would suggest some form of precedent in popular religion such as the altar at Corinth and the construction cult, despite the late literary recordings of these beliefs. Both Graves ([1955] 2000: 40) and more recently Burkert (1985: 140) have suggested that the Cyclopes may have been an actual cult similar to other groups with Thracian and Anatolian smithing connections, such as the Corybantes,

⁸¹ The alternate line 142 of Crates the Grammarian reads: "οἱ δ' ἐξ ἀθανάτων θνητοὶ τράφεν ἀυδῆεντες" = "and [the earth] nursed those of the immortals who are called mortal." The grammar of the line is itself quite hard and expects an accusative (direct object), where instead only nominatives are present. Moreover, it appears more of a gloss due to later attempts to rationalize the killing of the Cyclopes and amending their being "like the gods in all respects" except for the fact that the Crates, if they had been killed by Apollo, then logically could not have been immortal.

⁸² Graves's ([1955] 2000: I. 40) suggestion, however, that Thracian smiths tattooed themselves with single rings representing Cyclopean eyes in the middle of their forehead appears to have almost no basis. Although the Thracians were one of the few peoples known by the Greeks who practiced tattooing (Van Dinter 2005: 8), there are no specific links between this and the Cyclopes except that the Thracians most likely drew the custom of tattooing from the Scythians (*ibid.* 10).

Curetes and Telchines, who appear to have possessed a similar social function with regard to their members, as well as having connections to fertility and the myths of nursing Zeus on Crete (Strabo X.3.7, 17, 19; Eliade [1951] 1989: 473; Blakely 2006: 124).

We should thus consider the possibility that the Thracian craftsmen Cyclopes came into Greek myth through the mixed Cimmeric-Thracian and Scytho-Thracian cultures on the west coast of the Black Sea joining mainland Greece to Anatolia; these were produced by Inner Asian migrations westwards during the eighth and seventh centuries BCE⁸³ — just as these legends of the builder Cyclopes themselves suggest. One strong possibility to consider in relation to a cult of smithing Cyclopes is the fact that since antiquity among the nomads of Northern and Inner Asia, the smith has fulfilled a position in society that is deeply connected with magic-working, shamanic practice and power over heat (Peck 1963: 2004; Eliade [1956] 1962: 53). Part of the numinous controlling of heat is that the smith-shaman is often associated with lightning, or a smithing deity who manufactures the thunderbolt on his anvil (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005: 35).

As Kristiansen (1998: 186–98) points out in great detail in his study on the Thraco-Cimmerian cultural complex, intercultural meetings between the emerging nomads of the Inner Asian steppe from the ninth century BCE and settled agriculturalists in the Pontic and Caucasus regions led to a great diffusion and diversification of material goods, which seem to have much in common with Scytho-Siberian art and funerary customs (Wells 2001: 50, 77; 2006: 19–21).⁸⁴ The result of such

⁸³ Strabo (I.3.21) refers to an alliance between the Thracian Teres tribe and the Cimmerians, and later, due to confusion on his own part, calls the Cimmerians Thracians and Teres Cimmerians (I. 3.21, XIV.1.40), which has led to widespread belief among some scholars that the Cimmerians were of Thracian origin (cf. Olbrycht 1998: 92–93). Some, to the contrary, have even suggested that the Cimmerian and Thracian invasions of Anatolia were utterly unconnected, but were conflated by Strabo due to confusion and lack of knowledge on his part (Diakonoff 1985: 94–95; Olbrycht 1998: 92–93).

⁸⁴ The term Thraco-Cimmerian is often used in archaeology to describe the complex burial cultures and uncanny similarities that were to develop in the regions between the Caucasus, the Black Sea and Eastern Europe during the ninth and eighth centuries prior to the Scythian era (seventh-to-third c. BCE). As Kristiansen (2000: 193) says, Thraco-Cimmerian represents archaeological and cultural affinities and signs of sharing motifs, rather than a single “historical people, accidentally referred to at various times in history, and in several places, none of which was their original homeland.” However, it is very difficult to deduce specific different cultures and their “ranges” from within this mass of varied yet highly similar material finds (Wells 2006: 19). Perhaps the most interesting notions have been offered by Ginzburg (1992:

interactions between the steppe and their ongoing refreshment under the Scythians and Sarmatians have been suggested to have deeply influenced the Lusatian, Szentes-Vekerzug, Hallstatt and later the proto-Celtic La Tène cultures in Central Europe (Chadwick 1971: 13–14; Wells 2001: 50, 77; 2006: 19–21) and even the Huns (Kim 2013: 145), pointing towards important and ongoing cultural interplay among these cultural regions.

In relation to this intercultural overlapping and exchange between Inner Asian and European cultural spheres, we should note several key Scytho-Thracian figures such as the culture hero Zalmoxis (Hdt. IV.93–6; Strabo. VII. 3. 5),⁸⁵ who has been well studied in relation to his similarities with Inner Asian journeys to the underworld and the formation of Pythagoreanism (Rohde 1900: II.27ff; Dodds 1951: 147; Meuli 1953: esp. 163; Burkert 1962: 36–55; Eliade [1970] 1995: 31–83; Ustinova 2009: 246–98). As well as Zalmoxis there is also the famous Greek musician, magician and traveler to the underworld, Orpheus. Like the Cyclopes and their arts, Orpheus was said to have brought the healing arts from Thrace by way of the smith magician Idaean Dactyls from Phrygia (Diod. Sic. V. 64.3–5; Strabo. X.16.3–18; Graf and Johnston 2007: 170).⁸⁶ The Dactyls themselves may have had their roots in various smithing rites performed by Inner Asian nomadic peoples who migrated into Thrace after dwelling in and passing through Anatolia, as the Scythians are attested to have done during the seventh century BCE (Meuli [1935] 1975: II. 697, 872; Ginzburg 1992: 254).

The very similar mythic iron smithing tribe, the Chalybes, certainly seem to have possessed keen connections with the Scythians, and were usually cited as dwelling in Armenia (Hdt. I.28;

212, 289) in the form of a theoretical Eurasian “continuum” of mythic and artistic motifs stretching from China to Central Europe, due to intercultural exchange through the overlapping of the steppe and Central European worlds during this period.

⁸⁵ Homer’s (*Il.* XIII. 3–7) description of Zeus turning his attention away from Troy to the Thracians and other northern peoples, who are the most just of men and live on milk, appears to have evolved at least before the time of Strabo (VII.3.2–7; Aesch. *ap.* Strabo. VII. 3.7; Antiphanes *ap.* Athen. *Deip.* 226d) into a perception of such northern peoples as being naturally Pythagorean and not eating meat.

⁸⁶ As Dodds (1951: 147) has remarked on this matter that Orpheus in many ways appears to have been: “A Thracian figure of much the same kind as Zalmoxis — a mystical shaman or proto-type of shamans,” and indeed in support of this, his earliest connections in Greek myth seem to be in the use of song to defeat the Sirens in the Black Sea region in the proto-*Argonautica* (M. L. West 2005: 45–48).

Apollod. Rhod. *Arg.* II.1001). We may note their presence in the catalog of Io's "Northern" wanderings in *Promethius Bound* (714–5) as well as Scythia, described as "the mother of iron" (301), the Chalybes' description as a "Scythic race" (Schol. *ad.* Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* I.1321–23, II.375–8), iron as a Scythic "emigrant" (Aesch. *Sept.* 818) and the Scythian king Saneunus as responsible for iron's (or possibly bronze's) discovery (Hellan. frag. 189). This suggests that iron working was explicitly tied to the Scythians and mixed Scythian peoples by the Greeks, and what is more, it is necessary to remark that it was for metallic riches that the Greeks first founded colonies in Thrace during the seventh century BCE (Kristiansen 2000: 186ff; Arapopoulou and Chrite 2007: 739).

5. A Comparative Theory

It is important to note as we consider these links between the Cyclopes and the Black Sea region that no scholar has yet suggested a Near Eastern or any other intercultural borrowing responsible for the three Cyclopean smiths in the works of Hesiod, as there are no known parallels in the cultures of Asia Minor, the Levant or Mesopotamia. In light of this we should note an alternative possibility: Ananakian's [1925] 1964 XI.85–6 and Bedrosian's (1993: 12 n. 49, 31) theories that the little known Ancient Armenian god T'ork,⁸⁷ who was both one-eyed and a smith, may have influenced the smithing Cyclopes.⁸⁸ In elaborating what has been begun on this, it is curious to note that there are several

⁸⁷ Adontz (1927: 183–94) connects the name of the god T'ork/Tarkhou with Greek *τόργος* and Avar "*itarkou*," meaning "vulture," and his title "Angł" (Mod. Arm. "cruel, terrifying") with the Scythic word for swan (*ǰγλυ*), in order to suggest that the being was worshipped in connection with birds of prey. However, Bedrosian's view (1993: 12 n. 49) that T'ork's name is cognate with the mythical smithing Germanic Duregar and Greek Telchines seems much more reliable. See Toumanoff (1963: 299–303) for questions on the royal Armenian "house" of Angł and its connections with T'ork.

⁸⁸ Ananikian ([1925] 1964 XI.85–6, App. IV. 98–100 "The Cyclops") seems to adhere to Frazer's idea of the "ogre Ur-myth." Indeed Frazer (1921: 446ff §30) does include an Armenian tale told in various places throughout the mountains of the country of a one-eyed giant, which seems very close to the *Odyssey*, as Frazer (*ibid.* 446) himself admits. However, the name of T'ork is not mentioned at all in the story, and connections with the "ogre Ur-myth" seem to be from Ananikian's own assumptions, in which the Homeric Cyclopes are regarded as the same as the smithing beings of Hesiod, with which T'ork actually appears to share common features. Within the Caucasian Nart Sagas we also find a tale that clearly matches the "Ogre tale" pattern in the form of Sosruquo's tricking of the cyclopean being Yinizh (Colarusso 2002: §56 pp. 219–21), and thus should be taken in conjunction with what has previously been said and reiterated on this mythic pattern in

important modern parallels to the myths of the Arimaspians and Cyclopes from the Caucasus and Circassian regions of Armenia, Georgia and Southern Russia that would seem to suggest that in former times monocular beings were closely tied to dominion over smithing and fire-making in these regions. Each of these in turn is strongly connected with the influence of Inner Asian steppe nomads.

For instance, in the Nart Sagas of the Ossetian peoples of Circassia, who are in many ways the descendants of the Indo-Iranian nomads such as the Scythians and Sarmatians of antiquity, the foil to the heroic Narts is a race of mountain dwelling monocular beings called the Ayniwz, who have to be constantly outwitted through episodes such as the stealing of millet and fire from them by the hero Sosruquo (Colarusso 2002: §53 p. 202, §55 p. 216, §57 p. 222). In one regularly recurring narrative pattern from these regions, a giant, much like the Greek Prometheus, is bound to the top of a mountain as punishment for stealing fire and is freed by a Heracles-type hero, Sosruquo or Pataraz (Colarusso 1989: 644–51, 2002: §34–39 pp. 158–72). In at least one such story the giant who is freed by the hero is clearly monocular (§37 p.170), inverting the previously mentioned tale of fire being stolen from monocular beings by Sosruquo (§57 p. 222). Along with similar Georgian fire-stealing tales concerning the hero Amirani, these affinities with Greek myth have led to much interest in suggestions that this mythic pattern too may have been borrowed by the Greeks through contact with Western Asia; the mountain on which Prometheus was imprisoned was, after all — though not directly named by Hesiod or Aeschylus — commonly referred to in antiquity as Mount Caucasus (Aesch. *PS* frag. 107 *ap. Cic. Tusc. X.* 23–5; Apoll. Rhod. *Arg. II.* 1239; Apollod. *Bib. I.*145, *II.* 120; Ov. *Met. II.*224f).⁸⁹ Such Cyclopean connections with fire and smithing would indeed seem to lead back to

connection with monocular beings. Hunt's (2012) recent collection of Caucasian myths does not seem to include any that fit with myths of monocular giants, except perhaps that of the Chechen myth of the blind giant raised from a pelvic bone by Soska Solsa (Sosruquo) (*ibid.* 423ff), which is largely irrelevant to this study.

⁸⁹ Much focus has been put on the Georgian hero Amirani, which has precipitated a long interest in the interplay of Greek and Caucasian myth (Furtwangler 1910: I.V.37; Dumézil 1930: 31–38, 85–89; Colarusso 1989: 644–51; 2002: XXIX). Other similarities in the Nart Sagas have been taken to have exerted influence on the formation of the Arthurian legends, precipitated by Scythian and Sarmatian presence and cultural activity in Central Europe (Scott Littleton and Malcor 1994; Colarusso 2002: XXIX, 552; Anderson 2003: 13–26; Emerson 2004: 1–4).

notions of a monocular deity or group of such beings who presided over such knowledge and were attached strongly to distant abodes in the mountains.

We should also note modern Armenian tales of one-eyed demons who lurk on rooftops to murder people and who dwell in mountain caves. Such myths may have shared similar Indo-Iranian cultural roots with those of the Scythic peoples in antiquity; there is as well the long history of nomadic peoples from the Cimmerians and Scythians and onwards passing through the regions of Armenia and Georgia in order to enter Anatolia (Bedrosian 1993: 12 n. 49, 31). Like the Arimaspians, these Caucasian beings may too have simply devolved and become monsters like the Mongolian *Almas*. Ananikian ([1925] 1964 XI.85, App. IV. 98–100 "The Cyclops") writes on these Armenian beings:

The modern descendants of the Cyclops in Armenia are one-eyed beings, who are either gigantic devils or a monstrous race living in caves. Each individual weighs a hundred times more than a human being. In the day-time they sit on their roofs in wait for travellers, animals, birds, jinn, monsters, whom they may devour. When nothing comes they procure a whole village for their dinner.

If such links between the Classical World and Caucasia regarding the smithing Cyclopes are to be considered seriously, then as Adontz (1927: 192–4) long ago suggested, due to the close connections between the monocular T'ork, the Cimmerians and Scythians,⁹⁰ the probability would then most fittingly sit with the iron age nomadic peoples of Inner Asia, who, as mentioned, regularly dwelt in and passed through Armenia and Georgia and the Urartic Empire (900–600 BCE), from the Cimmerians onwards. As we have seen in relation to the long history of monocular beings in Inner

⁹⁰ Adontz (1927: 192–4) considers the descent list for the sons of Noah (and therefore etiologies of the peoples known to the Jews) at *Gen.* 10:3, in which the sons of Gomer, Ashkenaz and Tōgarmah are listed. His suggestions that they represent the Cimmerians (Gimmeri), Scythians (*iškuzāia*) and the people of T'ork (Armenians) would seem to have much going for it. In *Ezekiel* (27: 14, 38: 6) we should also note that Beth-Tōgarmah is located in the "far north" and is connected with supplying soldiers and horses to both the armies of the Tyrians and Gog. Armenian connections with Tōgarmah (without mention of T'ork) are supported by a number of scholars (Diakonoff 1985: 125; Emerton 1990: 39). Later Christian writers certainly also saw the connection between what they called *θεοργαμά* and Armenia (Flav. Jos. *Ant. Jud.* 126; Euseb. *Chron.* II.12).

Asian lore, further authenticated by the written records of Chinese and Indic geographers, and even the possibility that the Arimaspians were known by not only the Issedones and the Greeks, but also the Scythians themselves, such links would not seem unreasonable. The "domino effect" of migrations of nomadic peoples between the eighth and sixth centuries BCE most likely brought the motif of the monocular man westwards, where, as is the case within the bounds of Inner Asian myth, it was put to a myriad uses in relation to distant people who in antiquity were concerned primarily with metals and smithing: the gold-pillaging Arimaspians, the lightning manufacturing Hesiodic Cyclopes and Cyclopean builders and the fire stealing/possessing beings of Caucasian and Circassian folklore. This final incarnation may have in turn informed both the Prometheus and Cyclops myths — either directly, through contact with the peoples of Armenia and Georgia, or like the Cyclopean builders, through the migration of ideas and peoples into Thrace at this time.

Conclusions

In summing up what has been discussed in this paper, the most important matters would appear to be the following:

1. The original monster of the Issedonic tales told to Aristeas and labeled "gryphon" was not like the Near Eastern artistic representation with which it came to be confounded: it did not possess discernible avine qualities and was more likely some form of mythological dog-like quadruped. In spite of the temptation to square it with skeletons of protoceratopians, such a theory is largely reliant on a failure to note this confusion between "gryphons" in art and much later literary sources dependant nearly wholly on such art and India rather than Inner Asia. Reconstructing the original monster and its connections with gold would be very much easier if we possessed more of Aristeas's work.
2. Aristeas of Proconnesus appears to have been the recipient of a highly mythologised account of the formation of the first nomadic states in Inner Asia, and perhaps even some on the fall of the Western Zhou dynasty, due to peoples who were set in motion by the migrations that ensued. If this is so it may position him as an integral recorder, not necessarily of purely historical events, but of how such events were viewed through the lens of Inner Asian peoples who had previously participated in them through the "domino effect" of migrations. He may

also have received some distant descriptions of the Later Zhou which he construed as the Hyperboreans, further highlighting the multi-valent cultural preconceptions and the uniqueness inherent in this meeting between the Greek and Inner Asian cultural spheres.

3. The Arimaspians represent but a part of a much larger tradition of one-eyed beings in Inner Asian myth, in which such entities fulfilled ongoing roles in shamanic and epic geographical concepts of distant and significant regions and those who dwelt in them. These influences may also be felt in the mountain-dwelling beings from whom fire is stolen in Caucasian and Circassian myth, the Hesiodic Cyclopes and monsters found in modern Armenian folklore.
4. Similarities inherent in the Cyclopes and Arimaspians were recognized by the Classical writers of antiquity, permitting elements of one group to be shared with the other at different periods, e.g., the influence of Hesiod on Aristeas; the transferral of the hairiness of the Arimaspians to the Cyclopes; the perceived influence of Aristeas on Homer.
5. The Hesiodic Cyclopes most likely had their basis in Inner Asian myth, as did the Arimaspians. The Cyclopes of Homer are not one-eyed and represent a completely unrelated primitive race conjoined to a monster-blinding myth, most likely stemming from the Gilgamesh epic. These Cyclopes were simply granted the title "Cyclopes" sometime before the mid-sixth century BCE because of the emphasis in Homer on only one of Polyphemus' eyes during the act of blinding. However, within the text, Polyphemus, the Cyclopean society and the name Cyclops are not yet well integrated, which suggests that this conflation was not much older than this period. The connection between these elements is most likely that the ambiguity of the giant's blinding in one eye was reminiscent of the emphatically monocular smithing beings found in Hesiod and among the Thracians and Caucasians who had been influenced by peoples from Inner Asia.

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