1

ARISTEAS OF PROKONNESOS

(ARCHAIC PERIOD)

David C. Braund

INTRODUCTION

The remarkable Aristeas came from Prokonnesos, an island colony near the southern shore of the Propontis (now the Sea of Marmara), the gateway to the Pontos, the Black Sea.[1] He belonged to a prominent family of his community, which claimed to have been founded from Miletos: we may suppose his inherited wealth and sense of aristocracy. He lived in the archaic period (*c.*750–490 BC), but his more precise dates are very uncertain: our information is inadequate, and scholarly struggles have not improved upon our ignorance.[2] His rather idiosyncratic importance among Greek geographers demands explanation. It centres upon his account of the far north, beyond the north coast of the Black Sea, presented in a work called the *Arimaspeia*.

This *Arimaspeia* was a poem in epic hexameters. The *Suda* (**5** below) tells us that it consisted of three books, which would suggest a length between perhaps 2,000 and 3,000 verses. A link with Homer was suggested in antiquity: the *Iliad* had included a little about the north, while comparisons with Homer's *Odyssey* were easily made.[3] For the *Arimaspeia* centred upon Aristeas' journeying in strange parts and the remarkable phenomena he found there, including even the Arimaspians, whose single eye evoked the Cyclopes.[4] The range of the poem (and so the extent of these travels) remains unclear, but Aristeas had travelled for many years (as Odysseus, albeit rather fewer), and three books of poetry were filled with his account, and perhaps a sense of epic grandeur. The poem seems, therefore, to have entailed much more than the Arimaspians and their neighbours. The poem's title (which need not be Aristeas') probably indicates its prime interest for most ancient readers. The one-eyed Arimaspians lay at the very limit of Aristeas' reported travels: he knew them only from their neighbours, the Issedones, and chose not to venture into their lands, a world of conflict and terror. For the Issedones told him (the poem said) that the Arimaspians were engaged in an on-going struggle with griffins over gold there. However, to reach the Issedones was an extraordinary feat in itself. To seek to go further, even with the divine support of

[1] For discussion on points of language and detail beyond the scope of our present concerns, see especially Bolton 1962; Dowden 2016; and Dan 2008. There is ample room for disagreement.
[2] See below on *Suda*. [3] Further, S. R. West 2004. [4] e.g. Strabo 1. 2. 10, C21 (T 7 Bolton).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009194211.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Apollo, such as Aristeas claimed, was to test the very limits of what mortal humans might achieve, or be allowed to achieve. While the Arimaspian lands were horrendously dangerous, the world of the Hyperboreans beyond them was closed to all but the gods and the most outstanding of heroes, such as Herakles and Perseus.[5] Theirs was a land remarkable for its utopian lifestyle and balmy climate, the far side (Greek *hyper-*) of Boreas, the north wind, himself a superhuman force rich in mythology among Greeks as far afield as Athens.[6] The sacred nature of the Hyperboreans and their special world was confirmed in Greek culture not only by location (outside the weather system of the *oikoumenē* and far from the travails of mortals), but also by its impenetrability. Exceptional contacts were the source of cult aetiologies, as on Delos and at Olympia. Accordingly, Aristeas' failure to reach the Hyperboreans was almost inevitable from the first, and served to confirm their important isolation from Greeks and their geographical experience. If Apollo himself had ever sought to bring the poet into this most special of worlds, he was dissuaded, at least in Aristeas' lifetime. Meanwhile, we should reflect upon the wealth of key Greek traditions in which Hyperboreans played a major role, for their existence warns against any notion that tales of the far north and beyond all somehow sprouted from Aristeas' poetry.[7]

Aristeas was a geographer in the sense that extensive travels were central to his biography and writing, with reports of the peoples, places, customs, and events that might be found in distant parts, or were at least discussed there. Most of what we hear of him and his work concerns the far north, from the approaches to the Black Sea to the mysterious realms of one-eyed warriors (Arimaspians), gold-guarding griffins, and the Hyperborean utopia. However, Aristeas had a much broader significance around the Greek world, as is indicated by his special importance in southern Italy, where the Greeks of Metapontion even erected a statue of him at the centre of their city, next to that of Apollo, his particular patron deity. In that sense, he was part of a Greek colonial culture which stretched around the vast periphery, where pioneering Hellenism encountered other peoples, with their own particular beliefs and local traditions. We shall see how Aristeas' mysticism has a special connection with such colonial processes to the north and west, as also elsewhere in the Greek world.

While Aristeas' contribution to geography was important for Greeks, his mystical aspects were still more astonishing. Strange far-off regions certainly fascinated, but Aristeas' apparent ability to touch the divine entailed a series of fundamental human questions about life and death, the body and the soul, and the relationship between

[5] Herodotos 4. 36 shows impatience (minimized by Romm 1989) with tales of Hyperboreans, which were numerous, and included the fantastical Abaris (see Zhmud 2016). On occasion the Arimaspians might be included among them: so Kallimachos, according to Steph. Byz. υ 47 Hyperboreoi (*BNJ*[2] 35 F 9).

[6] Further, Calame 2011.

[7] Further, Romm 1989. Hdt. 4. 33–5 shows the complex contexts of the Hyperboreans of Delos, which demanded his respect, if not belief.

mankind and the gods. Accordingly, we may readily understand why both ancient and modern writers have tended to focus more on his mysticism than on his geography. At the same time, these two parts of his endeavours have never sat easily together. For both his fantastical geography and his mysticism raise large questions of truth and fiction, and these become still more problematic when geography and mysticism are taken together, as tends to happen with Aristeas. For Aristeas' mysticism was embedded in his geography, and *vice versa*. As the late 5th-century historian Herodotos (**1** below, §§13, 15) makes very clear, Aristeas was said to have travelled in the company of Apollo, at least sometimes as a bird. His soul was said to be able to leave his body and return to it once more.[8] And yet—as mysticism demands—the details seem not to have been very clear even in antiquity. For example, despite suggestions that he visited the far north in the form of a disembodied soul, or a bird (attested only in Italy) or other creature, his miraculous departure for the north, as told in his native Prokonnesos, suggests that he started the lengthy journey of many years in human form. Moreover, Herodotos' evident respect for his account (revealed not least in the sheer space he gives to Aristeas) encourages the inference that Aristeas had presented his journeying in at least a sober manner. Where Herodotos expresses disbelief in tales of Arimaspians sending griffins' gold southwards,[9] he does not attribute the notion to Aristeas, whether through respect or because the poet never said as much. As often with Aristeas, a large part of our difficulty in these key details results from the fact that we have only a few lines that may have been written by Aristeas himself (**2** and **6**). The rest is a noisy assemblage of stories, hypotheses, and imagination, whose foundations are at least unclear for the most part, and which of course entail considerable inconsistencies.

While various claims have been made by modern scholars about the amount in Herodotos' account of the north that comes from Aristeas, these are highly speculative. It is certainly true that Aristeas' *Arimaspeia* became a key work for Greeks who considered these northern regions, but we may be sure that there were other sources of information besides. Herodotos says as much, when he tells of Skythians bringing down to the Black Sea stories they have had from the Issedones, whom Aristeas also claimed as principal informants (Herodotos 4. 27). The fact that Alkman could include the Issedones in public poetry in Sparta around 600 BC also suggests a broader awareness of the region, aside from the writings of Aristeas, especially in view of his different spelling of their name and the other details of the region to which he alludes.[10] For all his undoubted importance, Aristeas cannot plausibly be considered the only, or even the principal, source of fact and fiction for this enormous northern

[8] Further, Seaford 2009. For recent reflections on Hdt.'s use of Aristeas, see Gagné 2020.

[9] Hdt. 3. 116, where the existence of especially large amounts of gold in the far north is accepted. Cf. Hdt. 4. 32 for probable rejection of A.'s version of what Issedonians say, where the poet is also not named.

[10] See Zaikov 2004; cf. Ferrari 2008.

world, where Greeks had begun to explore and settle from early archaic times. Of course, we are in no position to speculate about how much of this kind of material was written down or when.[11] However, this pool of knowledge would account for Aristeas' ability to create a work on the north which seemed worthwhile to Herodotos. However far the author of the *Arimaspeia* had actually travelled from Prokonnesos, there was sufficient knowledge and storytelling in the Black Sea world to provide content for his poem.

Later Greek writers took a range of views about Aristeas and his work. The geographer Strabo is especially interesting, giving a view from the beginning of the 1st century AD. He does not say a great deal about Aristeas, but shows him a measure of respect.[12] Especially so, when he even chooses to report (without comment) that some authorities regarded Aristeas as the teacher of Homer himself.[13] For Strabo, Homer was the first geographer, and a great one. Strabo is at pains to defend Homer's geographical observations against his critics at every turn. The fact that Strabo even mentions Aristeas as Homer's teacher demonstrates a respect for the mystical Prokonnesian. By contrast, in the following century, the sophist Maximus of Tyre takes a harsher view (**3–4**). He brackets Aristeas with poets who write in riddles and couch their great claims in incoherent verbiage. In his critical perspective Aristeas was a charlatan in large part, because he invented mystical tales to obscure the fact that he had no philosophical training. Aristeas' appeal to the divine and the wondrous, as Maximus sees it, was a clumsy stratagem by which he could gain some authority for his nonsense. We simply cannot know how much of Aristeas' work either of these later authors had read. However, Strabo offers a little detail at least, while Maximus' criticisms did not require direct knowledge of Aristeas' text. It may be that the more sympathetic of the two had read a little more. At any rate, a picturesque vignette by Aulus Gellius (Maximus' younger contemporary) should not be pressed as evidence for Aristeas' rarity among bibliophiles of the early Roman empire, not least because (even if we take his account literally) his is a tale about the cheap price of books as much as their obscurity. A few decades earlier the elder Pliny seems to have had a copy of Aristeas' work, while later still the *Suda* clearly knew much more than we do about his works and traditions of his life, including an alternative identification of his father that is otherwise unknown to us.[14]

Closer to home, in Prokonnesos and the other Milesian settlements on the mainland nearby, Aristeas was a local hero. His birthplace had other claims to fame,

[11] Among important hints at other traditions, see notably the scholion on Pindar, *Olympian* 3. 38c. On Alkman and Hekataios of Miletos, see Strabo 7. 3. 6, C299, with Steph. Byz. s.v. Issedones.

[12] For example, Strabo 7. 3. 6, C299, omits him from the list of ignorant purveyors of tall tales about the north, which includes Hesiod (cf. fr. 150 M.–W.) and the Aeschylean Prometheus trilogy.

[13] On A. and Homer, Strabo 14. 1. 18, C639 (T 26 Bolton), with Jane L. Lightfoot 2017; cf. 1. 2. 10 (T 7 Bolton), Arimaspians; Strabo saw Homer as the first geographer proper, Strabo 1. 1. 11, C7.

[14] Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 9. 4 (*BNJ*[3] 35 T 7a/F 3a; T 9 Bolton); Pliny 7. ii. 9–12 (*BNJ*[2] 35 F 3b).

including the provision of high-quality marble for the Black Sea Greeks and others.[15] That marble supply was one among many vectors northwards from Aristeas' homeland. At a supernatural level, among other deities,[16] Apollo was of prime significance there, which was consonant with Aristeas' claim to a special connection with the god. While Apollo was regularly central to traditions of Greek colonial settlement, the occasional coinage of Prokonnesos boasted Apollo's portrait. An inscription from Miletos shows us how Greeks of the Propontis might revel in the notion that the god had joined with them in conquering any barbarians who tried to resist the establishment of Greek communities there, for Apollo was a warrior as well as a singer of poetry.[17] The god was also a source of prophecy and a purveyor of special knowledge about unknown regions, especially through his oracles, notably at Didyma, near Miletos, in a temple decorated with griffins.[18] There is important context here for Aristeas' poem and the geography it presents, all rooted in the patronage and intervention of Apollo himself, it was said. When Aristeas seemed to have appeared in southern Italy, with claims about Apollo and instructions for the Metapontines, the whole matter was taken to Apollo at Delphi, whose oracle was at least as renowned as its counterpart at Didyma, and far more so for the Greeks of the mainland and the western colonies. Meanwhile, on the north coast of the Black Sea itself, Herodotos perceived the Milesian colony of Olbia as a cardinal location, the gateway to Skythia and points further north.[19] Apollo Boreas was clearly significant there, while the city's cult of Kybele was said to have been brought from Kyzikos by a Skythian, Anacharsis, who had returned from the Greek world. The important cult of Aphrodite in Olbia may well have been brought from Artake near Kyzikos,[20] which also features in Herodotos' report of traditions about Aristeas. As indicated above, there is inevitable uncertainty about the extent of Aristeas' impact on the details and substance of Herodotos' account of Skythia and beyond. However, we may observe the larger point that there was in reality a conceptual mapping of the region, which led from the Propontis to Olbia, and it is hard to avoid the suspicion that Aristeas' account had shared in that geographical outlook and orientation. It is a pity that Herodotos does not happen to tell us what was said about Aristeas in Olbia. We may be sure enough, even so, that his poem was very familiar to Greeks of the northern Black Sea in particular, who shared in the general Greek interest in Hyperboreans, griffins, and the rest, and who certainly had a special regional interest in them, including notions about the sources of gold that reached them, as it seemed (Hdt. 3. 116),[21] from the strange environment of the distant north, familiar to Apollo. We may note the origins of key works about that world, including the Hyperborean accounts by Hekataios of Thracian Abdera and Herakleides Pontikos of Herakleia Pontike.

[15] In general, Hasluck 1909.
[16] Especially Kybele, see Paus. 8. 46. 2 with Hdt. 4. 76.
[17] Further, Giovannini 1993, 278, on *Delphinion* 155.
[18] In general, Fontenrose 1988.
[19] See Braund and Kryzhitskiy 2007.
[20] Braund 2020.
[19] *BNJ*[2] 35 F 6a.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009194211.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A concomitant geographical consideration is the popularity of forms of Pythagoreanism and Orphism in this Thraceward region, as also among the western colonies of Sicily and southern Italy.[22] We see elements of this among the Getai above the Danube delta, and in Olbia itself. Herodotos (4. 95) reports a colonialist version of these traditions, whereby Greeks of the region mocked their Getan neighbours as unsophisticated, claiming that their local deity, Zalmoxis, was in fact a crafty slave of the 6th-century philosopher Pythagoras of Samos (later of Kroton in southern Italy), who had tricked them into believing in his ability to overcome death.[23] We may well suspect that these notions in fact arose from cultural contacts in which the similarities between Greek Pythagoreanism and local belief in Zalmoxis were observed. Herodotos refrains from decisive comment, but shows a measure of respect for local practice, as usual. For him Pythagoreanism itself had a complex cultural history, while he must also have been aware that many Greeks responded to its tenets and associated stories with mockery in any case.[24]

Over the centuries Aristeas and his work have been approached and understood in quite different ways. The importance of the *Arimaspeia* for Greek conceptions of the distant north, especially as mediated by Herodotos, has even encouraged sober scholars to claim significant links between Aristeas and the practices of shamans and the like, usually located to the distant east in Siberia. The roots of these modern notions lie in diffusionism and a willingness to replace geographical study of the extent of Russia with vague notions of migrating nomads.[25] The fact that Herodotos says almost nothing of shamanic practices and makes no attempt to connect Aristeas with such medicine-men should at least constitute a warning against this kind of scholarly fantasy. More obviously conclusive, however, is Aristeas' place among the many wonder-workers associated with Pythagoras and often enough, like Pythagoras himself, with Apollo and extensive travelling. Accordingly, while there is no sign of disembodied souls in Herodotos' long account of Skythians, for example, we find such ideas close to the Danube among the Getai, on the western periphery in Italy and Sicily, and elsewhere in and around the Greek world.[26] It is neither a surprise nor a mistake that southern Italy was brought directly into the tale of the fuller's shop told by Herodotos, with Kroton replacing Kyzikos.[27] And it was much easier for Greeks to find what may be called 'shamanism' in their own cultures, without recourse to distant peoples far beyond their experience.

[22] Further, Zhmud 2016, observing that Pythagoras' extensive travels did not include the Black Sea world and the north beyond (where Orpheus travelled, as others: Dio Chrys. 36. 1). On material similarities, Petersen 2011. On Pythagoreanism (or Orphism) in Thrace and elsewhere, see Bernabé 2016.

[23] Hdt. 4. 95; cf. Zhmud 2016.

[24] Egyptian connections: Hdt. 2. 124; cf. 49; 81. Comedy: Ogden 2006.

[25] Meuli 1935 bears much of the responsibility for this. Bolton 1962 sees the weakness of such arguments, but for other vain reasons argues that Hdt.'s north is somehow the east.

[26] For bibliography and judicious brevity on all this, see Ogden 2001, 116–17.

[27] Plutarch, *Romulus*, 28. 4 (T 16 Bolton); cf. Dan 2008 on Aristeios.

We do better to locate Aristeas' mystical tendencies with Pythagoreans than with imagined shamans, unknown even to Herodotos. His ideas and his geography, insofar as we can know them, belong firmly to the Greek world and especially its colonial periphery, perhaps most importantly among the Milesian colonists towards Thrace. On that view he was very much a man of Prokonnesos and we may appreciate how and why his mysticism could have been accepted and valued there, as Herodotos indicates. There is nothing in the *Arimaspeia* that has come from the far north or from Siberia: the griffins sometimes shown in Siberian art are now thought to have come from Greek culture, or perhaps from the Achaemenid melting-pot of cultures.[28] Meanwhile, we have seen that Aristeas fits well enough among the poets and poetical philosophers of the archaic Greek world, including the elusive Homer himself. Herodotos' respect for Aristeas and Strabo's tolerance of him, at least, make much more sense when we understand him and his work as quite different from the bizarre nonsense of others—for example, tales of Hyperborean Abaris (whom Herodotos dismisses, 4. 36). This was an aristocrat of a Greek state, valued and authenticated by his own community and its neighbours, whose devotion to Apollo was to be reckoned with. Insofar as his geography accorded with other information about the north, it was to be taken seriously, and emended or doubted where it did not. With regard to the north, this special Prokonnesian was well placed to have knowledge without even leaving his island, while his broadly Pythagorean biography, his claimed bond with Apollo, and more generally perhaps his *bona fides* as an esteemed author of the colonial periphery brought him special importance across Greek culture and particularly among the Greeks of the west, with their own lines to Pythagoras and Apollo.

For clarity's sake, passages which do not contribute directly to our understanding of Aristeas and his work have not been translated below, though they are cited above where appropriate.

SELECTED FURTHER READING

*Bolton, J. D. P. (1962), *Aristeas of Proconnesus*. Oxford.

*Dowden, K. (2016), 'Aristeas (35)', in *BNJ*^{2}.

Hadas, M. (1935), 'Utopian sources in Herodotos', *Classical Philology*, 30: 113–21.

Szpakowska, K. (ed. 2006), *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt*. Swansea.

West, S. R. (2004), 'Herodotus on Aristeas', in C. J. Tuplin (ed.), *Pontus and the Outside World: Studies in Black Sea History, Historiography, and Archaeology* (Leiden–Boston), 43–67.

[28] On Siberian and Milesian griffins, see Braund 2019b with bibliography. On griffins in Greek culture, see also Arnott 2007, 90. In general, Bremmer 2002.

TEXTS

1 Herodotos 4. 13–16[29]

13. (1) Aristeas, son of Kaÿstrobios,[30] a man of Prokonnesos,[31] said, composing his epic, that he reached the Issedones,[32] possessed by Phoibos Apollo,[33] and that above the Issedones dwell the Arimaspoi, one-eyed men, and that above them dwell the gold-guarding griffins, and above them the Hyperboreans, dwelling on the coast of the sea.[34] (2) And that all these, except the Hyperboreans, beginning with the Arimaspoi, always attack their neighbours, and the Issedones are pushed out of their land by the Arimaspoi, and the Skythians by the Issedones,[35] and that the Kimmerioi dwelling on the southern sea abandoned their land,[36] under pressure from the Skythians. So Aristeas does not agree at all with the Skythians about this land.[37]

14. (1) Whence was Aristeas, who said these things, I have stated. The story I heard about him in Prokonnesos and Kyzikos, I shall tell. For they say that Aristeas, being of a family inferior to none of the townsmen, went into a fuller's shop[38] in Prokonnesos and died, and that the fuller locked his workshop and went to inform the relations of the deceased. (2) However, as the story of Aristeas' death spread about the city, a man of Kyzikos who had come from the town of Artake[39] argued with those who told the story, saying that he had encountered Aristeas heading for Kyzikos and

[29] Herodotos the historian completed his work around 425 BC. He provides our longest and best-informed account of Aristeas' reputation, with a general idea of the content of the *Arimaspeia*, which he incorporates into his own account of the north (not uncritically: see introduction to chapter).

[30] See *Suda* s.v. Aristeas (T 11 Bolton).

[31] On the places named, see introduction to chapter.

[32] The Issedones were the limit of A.'s claimed travels, but he was by no means the only source on them and their stories, as Hdt. 4. 27 and 32 makes clear, tracing the passage of knowledge from them via Skythians to Greeks. Hdt.'s concomitant Skythian etymology of 'Arimaspians' is probably no better than most ancient etymologies, though we may ask why he found it plausible.

[33] On his seizure by Apollo, see introduction to chapter. The Greek word *phoibolamptos* does not scan, but we need not suppose that Hdt. has changed the substance of Aristeas' verse, whose contents are clearly summarized in this paragraph in large part. The idea could be expressed without the compound term itself, as we see at Hdt. 4. 76. 4 on Dionysiac possession. A.'s form remains obscure, whether he was a man, a bird (below), a disembodied soul, or something else.

[34] On this geography, see introduction to chapter.

[35] Herodotos (below) takes this to support his own analysis of Skythian origins.

[36] Hdt. 4. 11–12 has related their expulsion from the N coast of the Black Sea, the monuments and toponyms that they left there, and their subsequent activities in Asia Minor below. The importance of the Kimmerians in traditions of origins there is clear, but the historicity of this Kimmerian invasion from the north remains very obscure (cf. already Hdt. 1. 103–6). Ivantchik 1993 is more optimistic.

[37] Hdt. 4. 5–7 says how the Skythians claimed to be autochthonous on the northern Black Sea. At 4. 8–10 he relates local Greek claims that Skythians were descended from Herakles and a local deity of the place, without supporting them. These autochthonous traditions undermine much of the argument of Hartog 1988: see Braund 2004.

[38] The location of this miracle suggests cleansing, such as a soul might achieve by leaving its body (cf. Bremmer 1983; Seaford 2009), but (as Hdt. reports the story) A.'s body also left the locked shop as well as his soul.

[39] The identity of this key individual is left obscure. On the locations named, see introduction to chapter.

had even spoken with him. And while this man insistently disputed the matter, the relations of the deceased went to the fuller's shop with the things needed for those who pass away. (3) But when they opened the building Aristeas was not to be seen, dead or alive. And they say that in the seventh year he appeared in Prokonnesos and composed the verses that are now called by the Greeks the *Arimaspeia*, and then disappeared a second time.[40]

15. (1) That is what those cities say. I know the following, which befell the Metapontinoi in Italy 240 years after the second disappearance of Aristeas,[41] as I found by making a comparison in Prokonnesos and Metapontion. (2) The Metapontinoi say that Aristeas himself appeared in their land and instructed them to establish an altar of Apollo and to set up beside it a statue bearing the name of Aristeas of Prokonnesos: for Apollo, he said, had come to the land of the Metapontinoi, alone of the Italians, and he himself had followed him, now being Aristeas, but at that time, when he followed the god, he was a raven.[42] (3) And the Metapontinoi say that after saying that, he disappeared, and that they sent to Delphi and asked the god what this apparition of a person might be. And that the Pythia instructed them to obey the apparition, and said that obedience would be to their benefit. And that, after receiving that reply, they carried out the instructions. (4) And now the statue stands with the name of Aristeas by the image of Apollo himself, and laurel trees[43] stand around it. The image is located in the marketplace. Let that suffice about Aristeas.

16. (1) As for the part of the Earth about which the present account has begun to tell, no one knows for sure what is beyond it. For I can discover no one who claims to know it as an eye-witness. For not even Aristeas, whom I have just mentioned, said in those verses of his that he had gone further than the Issedones. Rather, he said that he wrote of things beyond from hearsay, and that it was the Issedones who spoke of them. (2) However, as far as we can proceed for sure by hearsay, all will be told.

[40] The length of his absence might suggest the extent of the travels which informed the poem he wrote upon his return. His second absence was spent with Apollo in Italy, at least in part, as we soon learn. We are not told that he ever returned to Prokonnesos, though that may have been imagined.

[41] Hdt. therefore places A. as early as C8l, though we need not agree with him. Textual emendation is not required: see Dowden ad loc., who proceeds to quote Tatian, *To the Greeks*, 41 (C2 AD; *BNJ*^{3} 35 T 3; T 27 Bolton), who makes Aristeas at least that early; cf. also Dion. Hal. *On Thucydides* 23. 4–6 (*BNJ*^{3} 35 T 5; T 10 Bolton); Strabo 14. 1. 18, C639, Aristeas as teacher of Homer (*BNJ*^{2} 35 T 4; T 26 Bolton).

[42] *Korax*, as all corvids: they were associated with Apollo and tales of metamorphosis, for they can mimic human speech (cf. Pliny 10. lx. 121–3) and were known for their longevity, with prophetic abilities: see Arnott 2007, 163–6. As Apollo's envoy, see already Hesiod fr. 60 in Merkelbach and West 1967, with Dettori 2006.

[43] The tree of Apollo, apparently here made of bronze and capable of giving oracles: Athenaios 13. 605c (T 18 Bolton), specifying a single laurel, as we have on the civic coinage of C5 (Head 1911, 76).

2 Pseudo-Longinos, *On the Sublime*, 10. 4[44]

For the poet of the *Arimaspeia* thinks the following fear-filled:

> A wonder for us[45] is also this, great in our minds.
> men inhabit water, away from land in open seas (*pelagē*)
> wretched persons are they, for theirs are sorry tasks:
> they have their eyes among the stars[46] and their souls on the main (*pontos*).
> often raising their dear hands to the gods
> they pray, their entrails tossing evilly.

I think it clear to all how these words hold more flourish than fear.

3 Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertation* 10. 2

A Prokonnesian man's body lay alive but feeble and very close to death. The soul had left the body, and was wandering in the upper air like a bird, gazing on all below—earth and sea and rivers and cities and tribes of men and sufferings and natures of every kind. And when it re-entered the body and restored it, as if using a tool, it held forth on what it had seen and heard, various things in various contexts.[47]

4 Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertation* 38. 3

A man named Aristeas was born in Prokonnesos, a philosopher.[48] However, his wisdom was not acknowledged at first, because he had no teacher of wisdom to show. Accordingly, he devised a story to counter people's disbelief. He used to say that his soul left his body and flew up straight into the upper air, roving the Earth, both Greece and *barbaricum*, and all the islands, and rivers, and mountains, and that the end of this roving was the land of the Hyperboreans. And that his soul had surveyed all the social customs and practices and the natures of places and the changes of the airs and the effusions of the sea and the estuaries of the rivers. And that his soul gained a much clearer vision of the heavens than that from below. By saying these things, Aristeas became more plausible than Anaxagoras or than Xenophanes, or anyone else who

[44] The author is unknown, but his work is dated to C1 AD. It is a treatise on style, good and bad, which presents its arguments through examples. Here a fragment of the *Arimaspeia* has not had an appropriate impact, in the critic's view, especially when set beside a Homeric passage on a similar subject.

[45] We seem to have the voice of someone amazed at human willingness to sail the open sea: further, Bowra 1956. Distaste for seafaring is a key trope in Greek culture: further Beaulieu 2016; on Hesiod's outlook, see Griffith 1983, esp. 61.

[46] Navigating by the stars, yet with an experience that is far from heavenly.

[47] In this extract and 4 below, the sophist Maximus groups A. with authors, such as Pythagoras and Epimenides, who told wondrous tales and claimed special links to the divine. He presents him as a charlatan who sought belief by claiming to have journeyed in the form of a disembodied soul, flying above the earth and gaining knowledge by observing everything above and below. However, it is not clear that M. has troubled to read the *Arimaspeia*, so that he may rely on a general notion of A. and his poem which may well not be reliable. He gives no detail about its contents, while the respectful Hdt. (1 above) reports a version that the body too had left (see introduction to chapter).

[48] Maximus calls him a 'philosopher' with reservations and irony. He draws a sharp distinction between the enigmatic mythologizing of poets like A. and the clear, comprehensible argumentation of true philosophers (cf. 3 above).

interprets how existence is. For mankind did not yet know clearly the roving of the soul, nor with what eyes it sees things, but simply thought that the soul must journey about if it is to pronounce the greatest truths for each thing.[49]

5 ***Suda*** α 3900[50]

Aristeas: (*son*) of Democharis[51] or Kaÿstrobios,[52] Prokonnesian epic poet: wrote the poem called the *Arimaspeia*. It is an account of the Hyperborean[53] Arimaspoi, three books. They say that his soul came and went as he wished. He was born in the time of Kroisos (*Croesus*) and Kyros (*Cyrus*) in the 58th (?) Olympiad.[54] He also wrote a prose *Theogony* of 1,000 lines.

6 Tzetzes (Ioannes), *Chiliades*, 7. 678–84[55]

And Aristeas says in the *Arimaspeia*:
'Issedoi glorying in (*their*) flowing locks',
and that there are humans beyond, neighbours,
towards the north wind, many and very fine warriors,
rich in horses, flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle.
each has a single eye in a comely forehead,
shaggy-haired,[56] the sturdiest of all men.

[49] See n. on **3** above.

[50] The *Suda*, sometimes called Suidas, is an encyclopaedic lexicon compiled in Byzantion around C10 AD. Its masses of information, variable in quality, are arranged alphabetically by subject.

[51] Unknown elsewhere, indicating how much of the tradition on Aristeas may have been lost.

[52] The name (also at Hdt. 4. 13. 1) evokes a Lydian river, though its use in A.'s family tells us little.

[53] On occasional coalescence of Arimaspians and Hyperboreans, see introduction. It is hard to see how they could be brought together, for—usually—Hyperboreans lived a utopian lifestyle, while Arimaspians fought endlessly with griffins. Possibly it was enough that the latter also might be placed 'beyond the north wind', the literal meaning of the Greek name 'Hyperborean'.

[54] The 58th Olympiad (548–545) follows emendation of the text from '8th' (748–745) to coincide with Croesus and Cyrus, but the date need not be seen as at all precise, while *Suda* may mean either birth or *floruit*. We have no grounds for confidence in any precise date, despite much scholarly effort.

[55] John (Ioannes) Tzetzes, a Byzantine writer of C12 AD, claims to have read some verses of Aristeas. He knew also of other relevant texts, not only Hdt. but Zenothemis and Pherenikos, obscure Hl authors. The second line, where the metre changes from T.'s decapentesyllables to hexameters, seems to be a quotation from the *Arimaspeia*, while the rest (680–4, where the Greek text is problematic: see Dowden 2016 ad loc.) could well be a summary, again in hexameters, of what Aristeas wrote, here compressed in T.'s verse abridgment.

[56] The long hair of the Issedones is distinguished from the more woolly hair of the Arimaspians.