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The Judgement of Alcinous, *Homonoia*, and International Arbitration in Apollonius' *Argonautica* 4

In Book 4 of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians, acts as a mediator between the Argonauts and the Colchian army, which was sent by Aeetes to recover his daughter Medea (4.993-1009). Alcinous rules that Medea may remain with Jason as a result of their marriage (4.1098-1108, 1170-1205). Apollonius' portrait of Alcinous as a just and prudent king (4.1008, 1098-1109, 1175-91, 1201-11) has clear affinities with his characterization in Homer (*Od.* 6.12; 7.11, 309-10, etc.). In contrast to Homer, however, Apollonius emphasizes Alcinous' skill as a judge. Neither the Argonauts nor the Colchians are native to Phaeacia, so that Alcinous acts as a third-party arbiter in a dispute between two groups of foreigners. The influence of the Hellenistic cult of the political abstraction *Homonoia* is apparent in the depiction of Alcinous, whose equitable decision encourages the Colchians to settle in Phaeacia rather than return to Colchis (4.1206-11). Alcinous thus resolves the conflict between the two groups and prevents bloodshed in his country.

This paper suggests a parallel between the judgment of Alcinous and the interstate arbitration of Hellenistic rulers. The depiction of Alcinous reflects the practice of international arbitration and the contemporary ideal of political *homonoia*. During the Hellenistic period international intervention in legal disputes was widely practiced and generally recognized as socially beneficial. Hellenistic cities regularly invited foreign judges or teams of dicasts to resolve disputes impartially. Hellenistic kings themselves were known to intervene in both the public and private disputes of other countries. The evidence of honorific decrees shows that successful arbitrations were subsequently praised as having restored *homonoia* in the host city (e.g., *IG* 11.4.1052 l. 29 *homonoia*; *IG* 12.2 add. 658 l. 11 *eunoia*). Apollonius' depiction of Alcinous illustrates how a model Hellenistic ruler averts war and promotes civil harmony.

[My c.v.](#)