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**TRADE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN
 BETWEEN THE 8TH AND 6TH CENTURY BCE,
 WITH EMPHASIS ON THE DODECANESE**

ABSTRACT Assyria's growing power in the 1st millennium BCE led to an increase in its tribute demands addressed at Levantine cities; as a result, a need arose to intensify and expand further west the search for precious metals. Assyrian military and economic pressure mobilized the Phoenicians to expand their trade zone beyond the regional scale and to become the suppliers of basic resources to a vast empire. This can be seen in the Dodecanese. Rhodes but also Cos played an important part in that network of contacts and connections between the Aegean and the Near East, as is emphatically indicated by the artefacts found, especially those dating to late 8th and 7th centuries BCE. Due to its special geographic location, the island became a go-between and stopping point for the trade travelling from the eastern Mediterranean to Cyprus and mainland Greece. Objects dedicated in the sanctuaries at Ialysos, Kameiros, and Lindos attest to far-away Near-Eastern contacts. In this context, a large number of silver hoards have been attested in the southern Levant between the 10th-6th centuries BCE. The hoards contained, in varying proportions, silver ingots, nuggets, scrap metal, and small jewellery items, however, the silver itself originated from the territories of Greece (mostly Laurion), southern Anatolia and from Iberian sources.

Key words: Archaic period, Greece, Rhodes, Phoenicians, trade, metal trade, Iron Age silver hoards from Levant

ABSTRAKT Wzrost potęgi Asyrii w pierwszym tysiącleciu p.n.e. spowodował nasilenie roszczeń trybutowych względem miast lewantyńskich, jednocześnie wzbudzając potrzebę intensyfikacji i rozszerzenia poszukiwań cennych metali. Asyryjska presja militarna i ekonomiczna zmobilizowała Fenicjan do rozszerzenia swojej strefy handlowej na skalę ponadregionalną, a sami Fenicjanie stali się dostawcami podstawowych surowców dla rozległego imperium. Jest to widoczne także w Dodekanezie. W ramach zaistniałej sieci kontaktów i powiązań między Egeą a Bliskim Wschodem, Rodos i Kos odgrywało znaczącą rolę, o czym dobitnie świadczą znajduwane artefakty szczególnie w późnym VIII i VII wieku p.n.e. Z uwagi na szczególne położenie geograficzne, wyspa zyskała rolę pośrednika i przystanku w handlu biegnącym ze wschodniej części basenu Morza Śródziemnego na Cypr i do Grecji kontynentalnej. Przedmioty dedykowane w słynnych sanktuariach w Ialysos, Kameiros i Lindos poświadczają dalekie głównie bliskowschodnie kontakty. W tym kontekście pojawiają się skarby gromadzone na terenie południowego Lewantu, między X a VI wiekiem p.n.e. Zawierały one w różnych proporcjach sztabki srebra, bryłki srebra i drobną biżuterię srebrną, srebro zaś pochodziło przede wszystkim z obszarów Grecji (głównie Laurion), południowej Anatolii i źródeł iberyjskich.

Słowa Kluczowe: okres archaiczny, Grecja, Rodos, Fenicjanie, handel, handel metalem, skarby srebra z epoki żelaza w Lewancie

The Early Iron Age is one of the most interesting periods in the history of the Aegean, due to the significant social, political and economic transformations observed. As the Iron Age began, the fall of important centres of political power and the disappearance of socio-economic mechanisms which took place towards the end of the Bronze Age forced those transformations by creating a new network of

exchange, values and their perceptions.¹ In particular from the 10th century on, the initiative in the Aegean Basin lay mostly with the Cypriots and the Phoenicians, whose trading efforts included Greece in a wide, trans-regional network. The reciprocal

¹ This work constitutes part of the project "Greek Kymissala. Ancient polis on the Island of Rhodes", which has been founded by the National Centre of Science, granted on the basis of decision number DEC-2013/11/B/HS3/02061.

connections then formed within the Mediterranean clearly confirm that not only the area of southern Levant, but also Cyprus played a vital role in those processes.²

Assyria's growing power in the 1st millennium BCE led to an increase in its tribute demands addressed to the Levantine cities; as a result, a need arose to intensify and expand further west the search for precious metals. The rise of the new political centres that were *poleis* also meant the appearance of new production centres and markets for high-prestige objects originating in the East. The area of interest to the merchants covered all of the Aegean, and colonies started to be established in the central part of the Mediterranean Basin.³ Assyrian influence led to the rise of vassal states on the fringes of the empire and the growth in power of centres such as Urartu or the Aramaic kingdoms of northern Syria. As the Sherratts concluded, royal tombs appeared in Gordion in Phrygia and Salamis on Cyprus,⁴ indicating new political organisms, whose rulers surrounded themselves with items belonging to the elites of Assyrian and Levantine culture, such as chariots, thrones or symposium vessels. In the tombs and sanctuaries of the eastern Mediterranean, objects began to appear coming from the Caucasus, western Persia and Babylon.⁵ Traffic heading west ran along the South-Anatolian coast via Cyprus to Rhodes⁶; it may have then continued counter-clockwise around the Aegean and further west in two streams: either the southern one, through Crete to the western coast of Greece and then southern Italy and Sicily, or via the Cyclades to Euboea⁷ and Attica with its rich silver deposits. The Cretan route was dominated by the Phoenicians, while the route through the Cyclades required some activity from the local Greek communities.⁸

² Bourogiannis 2009.

³ Golani, Gitin 2001: 40-43. The authors believe the hoards from Tel Miqne-Ekron are an example of that phenomenon. As other hoards found in the Cisjordan and in the further parts of the Near East (Thompson 2003; Balmuth 1967; 1975; 2001).

⁴ Rupp 1987: 147-161.

⁵ Sherratt, Sherratt 1993: 366.

⁶ Triantafyllidis: 2008, p. 89-98. The dwindling influence of Euboean trade at the time paved the way for newly established maritime powers such as Rhodes. It is thought the route from the Syro-Palestinian coast to the southern part of Asia Minor ran through the Dodecanese. On that subject see e.g. Boardman 1980: 73; Stampolidis, Karetsov, Kanta 1998: 108-109.

⁷ On the importance of Euboea in metal trade and special position of Lefkandi: Sherratt 2019: 135-138.

⁸ Sherratt, Sherratt, 1993: 366-367.

The islands of the Dodecanese, scattered in the south-western part of the Aegean Sea, were crucial in the process of forming and maintaining a stable and lasting network of contacts with the eastern Mediterranean Basin. Rhodes, especially, was an important crossing point of sea routes and a necessary stop-over for ships sailing from the east. The more northerly Kos was also an important stop due to its regular coastline and the closeness of Anatolia. Both islands provide important evidence concerning the presence and gradually increasing role of objects of eastern origin. Meanwhile, the absence of East Greek pottery in Cyprus and the Levant before the 7th century BCE clearly points to the commercial inactivity of the islands, which left them open, in terms of eastern contacts, to outside movements, Phoenician or Levantine.⁹

The influx of pottery implies three major chronological stages of Phoenician expansion in the area. The first stage covers the 9th century BCE, and is characterized by relatively small amounts of Phoenician pottery, pottery whose style draws on Phoenician models, and faience objects found mostly in burial grounds on Kos and in Ialysos on Rhodes. The second falls in the first half of the 8th century, displaying gradual change, with contacts with the east intensifying. During this time, the inflow of Cypriot material is very clear, but Phoenician objects are present as well.¹⁰ The third stage covers the whole Late Geometric period and displays the strongest influx and presence of Phoenician material in the area, illustrated for example by the production of small Phoenician flasks with mushroom-shaped rim and carinated shoulder either in the red-slipped technique or just burnished. The vessel, found in burials and shrines on the island, is much more common there than elsewhere in the Aegean, clearly pointing to interactions and trade between the Phoenicians and Rhodes having been of especial importance.¹¹ Other significant aspects of Levantine influence include the presence of small jugs from northern Syria¹² and a way of carving ivory also observed on Kos; more importantly, all those phenomena create a special perspective on the process of orientalization in the area. Increased Phoenician

⁹ Bourogiannis 2012: 141.

¹⁰ Bourogiannis 2012: 170.

¹¹ Bourogiannis 2009: 171.

¹² Another example is provided by 7th-century Syrian scarabs seen on Rhodes and in the Levant, which suggest that some routes, at least, included northern Syria. It is a pattern different from the contexts of (also 7th-century) scarabs and amulets present in Aphrodite's shrine in Miletus. Villing 2017: 566.

mobility in the Late Geometric period was originally caused by the settlement of Kition, but it was Assyrian expansion in the eastern Mediterranean during the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II that brought about economic growth of Phoenician cities, particularly Tyre, and resulted in an intensification of trade. Assyrian military and economic pressure mobilized the Phoenicians to expand their trade zone beyond the regional scale and to become the suppliers of basic resources to a vast empire. Archaeological data seem to confirm that paradox, where the period of Assyria's most aggressive policies towards the Levantine cities was also a good time for Phoenician colonization and trade. It is exactly that situation that can be seen in the Dodecanese.¹³ The notion that there were Phoenician residents on Kos and Rhodes, who set up workshops there, is not new. It was put forward for both Kos and Rhodes by J. N. Coldstream, although he distinguished between the tendency to Hellenize oriental pottery (attested to on Kos for Middle and Late Geometric Periods) and copying eastern models without any signs of them penetrating local traditions (supposedly observable on Rhodes in the early 7th century BCE).¹⁴ The Phoenician *metoikoi* who lived on Rhodes in the early 7th century were members of a small Levantine community, integrated in the cities on the island in *enoikoismoi* rather than in separate settlements.¹⁵ The memory of those settlers preserved in literary sources of later periods could refer to those times.¹⁶ The significance of Phoenician enterprises producing ointments in the 7th century BCE on Rhodes is reflected

in the considerable faïence corpus.¹⁷ The Phoenician skill at stimulating and then using lucrative markets certainly contributed to the economic transformation of the Mediterranean Basin, or at least accelerated it. However, it was not only the Phoenicians that initiated trans-regional contacts, and several trade zones were activated. As a nexus in those trade networks, Rhodes was an important point of contact. The movement of people and with them, of ideas, brought changes to the Mediterranean.

The presence of Egyptian objects in Greece contrasts with the absence of Greek ones in Egypt before the second half of the 7th century BCE, when Greek merchants and mercenaries began to be active in Egypt.¹⁸ Not all of those actually come from Egypt, but included also Levantine and Greek items attributed to the Phoenician workshops on Rhodes, with an important role played by Phoenicians, Euboeans, and Cypriots.¹⁹ Their trade and influence in Greece may have included redistributing goods from places which traded with Crete as one of the main exchange points between the Greek world and the eastern Mediterranean, and it would seem routes may have existed which included Euboea and Attica

¹³ The Assyrian expansion may have worked somewhat differently in the case of Cyprus, limiting Cypriot trade. The onset of the empire's dominance on the island is dated to 707 BCE and may be why Cypriot imports diminished in Rhodes in the late 8th century.

¹⁴ J. N. Coldstream saw the Hellenizing juglets (neck-ridge) made on Kos as the work of Greek potters, attributing the locally made copies of eastern products found on Rhodes to Phoenician and Cypriot craftsmen employed in Phoenician workshops on the island. Coldstream 1982.

¹⁵ Bourogiannis 2009: 172.

¹⁶ Considering the island's specific location and the interest it aroused, coming into contact with distinguishing between Phoenician script is quite likely. The memory of a Phoenician Dodecanese survived in Diodorus Siculus: apparently Cadmus, the mythical character the ancients saw as the one who introduced writing to Greece, lay votive offerings in the shrine to Athena in Lindos, which included a bronze cauldron bearing a Phoenician inscription (Diod. 5.58.3); Bourogiannis, Ioannou 2012:14.

¹⁷ The production of faïence on Rhodes could be a Phoenician initiative and another aspect of the Phoenicians penetrating the economy of the island. Importantly, two Phoenician inscriptions found on Rhodes date to the same period. Webb 1978:5-10; Kourou 2003.

¹⁸ Villing 2017: 574.

¹⁹ The search for divisions among trade routes along ethnic lines may prove futile, not simply due to considerable difficulty telling the place of origin of an object, Egyptian from non-Egyptian products, and such phenomena as workshops established by migrant craftsmen, but also because sea trade can be a joint venture (Bourogiannis 2009:123; 2015). It is also evident from observing the circulation of other items, including the Euboean pendant semi-circle skyphoi, from northern Ionia through Cyprus, the Levant, southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain. The part played by Ionian Greeks in Euboean trade could be suggested, from the end of the 8th century BCE, by north Syrian and Euboean finds in Ionia and by the presence of Ionian pottery in Pitthekeousai, Al-Mina, northern Syria, and Cilicia (Villing 2017: 565-566). Finds of Ionian pottery and Ionian production of the pendant semi-circle skyphoi have also been confirmed for the northern Aegean, a region rich in silver (Haider 1996; Kerschner 2014), while eastern Greek, Corinthian, and (somewhat later) Laconian pottery has been observed in the levels of Archaic Carthage, implying also Greek involvement in Phoenician trade in northern Africa in the 7th-6th centuries BCE (Villing 2017:566). It also gives some idea regarding the degree of complexity of the relationships, dependence networks and interests in question.

as places exporting local products (including metal) and Crete and the Dodecanese (Rhodes and Kos) as circulation channels for eastern goods.²⁰

The networks thus created, in which the metal trade made up an important part, covered not only the flow of goods, but also of the knowledge on their use and manufacture by migrant craftsmen. Throughout the Archaic Period, Rhodes remained a transit station for Phoenician trade connections and a starting point for expeditions to places in the Mediterranean Basin. Many finds of eastern, including Levantine, origin confirm that the island was an important nexus of trade networks. Strong interactions between cultures were a direct result of those contacts exerting stable and continued influence. The appearance in the Archaic Period on Rhodes of metal workshops was caused by Phoenician activity and the trade in silver and other metals. Craftsmen processed precious metals manufactured according to new techniques and new styles. One extremely interesting example of the integration of local and Phoenician communities on Kos and Rhodes was placing Greek letters on eastern vessels and the other way round. “Bilingual inscriptions”, noted on both those islands, point to the lasting character of the contacts and interactions in the Archaic Period.²¹ While imported items with Greek inscriptions do occasionally appear in other parts of the Greek world, usually in the context of gift exchange, Greek vessels with “foreign” inscriptions are unusual. Such finds are not unknown and include a skyphos fragment from the Middle Geometric Period from the shrine to Apollo Daphnephoros in Eretria and sherds from Ialysos on Rhodes, with lettering in a Semitic alphabet.²² The vessel was discovered in a burial, which points to a permanent resident, and supports the claim that there was active Phoenician presence on Rhodes. And anyway, the Syro-Palestinian, Greek-lettered alabastron from Kameiros is also a bilingual object in a sense, being an eastern vessel bearing a Semitic name written with Greek letters.²³ That lends extra credence to the opinion that in the 7th century BCE, small Phoenician communities²⁴ of merchants or *metoikoi* functioned on the island. The meaning of those *graffiti* points to social groups whose potential lay in trade and the networks and channels of exchange created.

²⁰ Coldstream 1982: 264, Hodos 2006: 5, 63; Stampolidis 2003.

²¹ Kourou 2015: 255.

²² Kourou 2015:256.

²³ Kourou 2015:254, 256, 263.

²⁴ On finds and inscription from Cos: Bourogiannis, Ioannou 2012: 7-15.

The Phoenician centres in the western Mediterranean centred on southern Sardinia, western Sicily, and Carthage were joined by the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula, reaching, via the Balearic Islands, northern Sardinia and the Tyrrhenian Sea. The tin, copper, gold and silver obtained from around the springs of the Rio Tinto were an important factor in the expansion unfolding in that direction. The Phoenicians established new trading posts on the Andalusian coast – in Toscanos, Chorreras, and Morro de Mezquitilla, starting iron working in the region. Another important element was introducing silver cupellation there.²⁵ The Iberian Peninsula was intensively explored by the Phoenicians in search of precious metals, particularly silver.²⁶

In recent years, a discussion has developed contrasting the originality of the Lydian-and-Greek invention that was the coin with forms of exchange and money used in the Near East, renewed by the evaluation of source texts in the context of new hoard finds²⁷ – complexes about which it can be said in general terms that they contained, in varying proportions, silver ingots, nuggets, and miniature jewellery. It seems particularly interesting to analyze the thirty-five hoards discovered on thirteen sites in present-day Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Region, in the West Bank, dated to

²⁵ Sherratt, Sherratt 1993: 367-368; Fletcher 2012: 211-220.

²⁶ C. M. Hernandez 2013: 17-23. Rafel, Montero, Castanyer, Aquilue, Armada, Belarte, Fairen, Gasull, Gener, Graells, Hunt, Martín, Mata, Morell, Pérez, Pons, Renzi, Rovira, Rovira, Santos, Tremoleda, Villalba 2010: 175-202. The re-examination of Iron Age silver hoards from southern Levant confirms that both recycling of silver was very common and also that mixed silver originated from the Aegean, Anatolia and western Mediterranean: Wood, Montero-Ruiz, Martín-Torres 2019.

²⁷ Such hoards are extremely important for several reasons. First of all, they are the largest known cluster of silver hoards from the Near East and they comprise almost exclusively silver objects. Of course, silver hoards are also known from other regions from earlier periods, but layers dated to the Bronze Age in the region in question have only yielded two comparable finds. Not only do such hoards become more frequent in the Iron Age, but also two of the largest hacksilver hoards known from the Near East were deposited during the Iron Age in the West Bank. The hoards from Dor and Eshtemoa contained 26 and 8.5 kilograms of silver respectively. Moreover, the hoards appeared in a region devoid of its own natural silver deposits. Thompson 2003: 69; Stern 2001: 1-26; Kletter, Brand 1998: 139-154.

the 10th-6th centuries BCE,²⁸ because the sources, which come chiefly from Mesopotamian archives, indicate the use of stamped pouches (or purses), the stamp attesting to the quality and value of the precious metal. Analyzing Assyrian and Egyptian texts also seems to confirm the existence of stamped precious metal ingots.²⁹ Now if the situation had been similar in the Lydian state, the Lydians would not have made their breakthrough, merely “systematizing” solutions already in use in the Near East. That claim creates new options for evaluating how the phenomenon of money in the form of a precious metal can be understood. Certainly in the Late Iron Age an increase can be observed in transactions carried out with weighed silver.³⁰ Metal did not become a universal standard of value and payment, but temples would more and more often resort to that form of money. Silver had the same value in all its forms, regardless of whether it was jewellery, nuggets or ingots: cast on the scales, it all counted for the same.³¹ As already demonstrated by research carried out a long time ago, hacksilver served purposes which can only be termed “monetary”. When need arose, bits of silver could be weighed, placed in a pouch or wrapped in fabric,³² and stamped; in that way, a “unit” was obtained of specific weight, quality, and value, guaranteed by the seal which said who vouched for it.

Taking a close look at the trade network in place in the Mediterranean Basin between the 9th and 6th centuries BCE makes it possible to try and understand why, even outside the ideological realm, so highlighted in the Archaic *poleis* in the form of coins, silver became so important in Greece at that time, as well as providing perspective for the observation of the sudden clustering of the West Bank hoards discussed above in the context of pressure from Assyria. It facilitates seeing the Near-Eastern practice of weighing and marking (stamping) silver as possible inspiration for the Lydians and then Greeks and may offer partial explanation for the virtually exclusive adoption of silver as the standard in large trade centres. In summary, it can be said that in the 10th and 9th centuries, routes took clear shape which Cyprus, Crete, and Rhodes held a particularly important place. Those connections expanded towards the

Near East, linking Phoenicia, via Cyprus and Crete, to the western part of the Mediterranean Basin; contacts also intensified between northern Syria and the Aegean through Rhodes. During the 8th century, eastern goods appear regularly; in the 7th, Egypt and north Africa joined the stable network entwining the Mediterranean.³³ An important role was played in the process by merchants from Levantine cities, particularly in northern Syria, which allowed Greece to join the zone of silver circulation. It ought to be noted the Greeks had considerable silver deposits. The mines on Siphnos, exhausted before the end of the Archaic Period, were worked quite intensely in the period in question, and to a limited extent, silver came from Laurion, northern Greece and Thrace, and the Troad.³⁴ It is presumably under those circumstances that certain aspects of oriental culture—such as myth and its accompanying imagery or the use of alphabetic writing—were transferred onto the soil of the rising political entities and adapted there.³⁵ Cities such as Chalcis, Eretria, Athens, Corinth, and Argos were important East-facing centres. At the same time, growth can be observed of trans-regional sanctuaries located at crucial points on sea routes, such as Lindos, Samos, Delos, Delphi, Perachora, and Olympia. Ties between religion and trade, already observable in the case of the Phoenician presence in Kition on Cyprus and Kommos on Crete, rose to a higher level as part of the acculturation process, through which the Greeks first took in and then transformed elements of oriental culture, making them an aspect of Panhellenic awareness.³⁶

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²⁸ Thompson 2003: 70-71; Bresson 2006: 3.

²⁹ Balmuth 1975: 294-296; Bresson 2006: 3; Jursa 2010: 474-490.

³⁰ Bresson 2006: 4.

³¹ Kroll 2001: 199-206.

³² Golani, Sass 1998: 57; Stern 1998: 48; Schaps 2004: 51, 223; Thompson 2003: 78-82.

³³ Hodos 2006: 5.

³⁴ Bresson 2015: 265; Howgego 1995: 24-26.

³⁵ Murray 1993: 111-113; on the same subject, Morris 1992.

³⁶ Sherratt, Sherratt 1993: 367.

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