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Manufacturers and Markets

The Contributions of Hellenistic Pottery to
Economies Large and Small

Edited by Laura Rembart and Alice Waldner

Wien 2022

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Volume 4

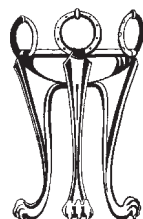
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Proceedings of the 4th Conference of IARPotHP,
Athens, November 2019, 11th–14th

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Offprint



PHOIBOS VERLAG, WIEN 2022

A Fresh Approach to Seaborne Trade and Maritime Connectivity Between the Levant and the Aegean in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods

George Koutsouflakis – Max Luaces – José Angel Zamora López –
Antonio Manuel Sáez Romero

Abstract

Previous studies have highlighted the existence of intense trading activities between the Levant and the Aegean throughout the Classical and Hellenistic periods. However, the available material evidence concerning these commercial connections is still quite limited and most of the academic literature is based on written sources and epigraphic finds. Our contribution aims to provide a new set of archaeological data and, on that basis, to review the current hypotheses on the post-Archaic Levant-Aegean interactions. In fact, several documents allow sketching an innovative picture regarding the economic and trading networks that developed linking the Levantine coast, some Aegean islands and mainland Greece. Epigraphic data illustrate the presence of “Phoenician” communities who lived (and died) in various Greek cities. Additionally, several unpublished finds from key underwater contexts and an exceptional Levantine and Punic amphorae assemblage found in the southeastern Aegean (off the coast of **Levitha Island**) provide fresh data on the consumption of Phoenician wine in the Classical and Hellenistic Aegean. By confronting these historical sources, a connection between these commercial relations with specific historical circumstances is proposed, and also the most likely design of the main maritime routes is explored. The paper examines the continuity of the connectivity and mobility of people and goods from the 5th to the 3rd centuries B. C. In any case, the evidence studied in this paper can be considered just as the tip of the iceberg of a quite larger amount of similar unpublished finds that still need to be studied and integrated within the conventional historical narrative.

1. Introduction

Ancient sources report regularly the existence of intense economic relations between the Levant and the cities of ancient Greece. Indeed, many texts give a prominent place to the Levantine merchants in the development of the economic activities of archaic Greece, particularly concerning the metal trade, be it the Iliad or other classical textual references¹. A significant set of archaeological and literary data also attests the development of these trade links from the Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age². The Uluburun shipwreck, dated in the 1300s B. C., can be considered a paradigmatic case that confirms the early occurrence of maritime routes frequented by the Phoenician ships heading to the Aegean, loaded with a variety of commodities, amphorae and ingots most of all³. After a time of less intensity of these connections, again during the Geometric and the Archaic periods grave goods, sanctuaries and other contexts provide evidence that suggest the reactivation of the commercial contacts between the Levant and the Aegean since the 9th–8th centuries B. C., even if most of the information is still coming from the Levantine coast⁴.

These exchange networks continued in operation during the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods. Peter Van Alfen’s seminal work based on literary evidence demonstrated that between 600–300 B. C. many different commodities, manufactured items, foodstuff and raw materials,

1 SAUVAGE 2012, 110–124; WATHELET 1974.

2 LEONARD 2003.

3 BASS 1991; PULAK 2010; SAUVAGE 2012, 86–87

4 HUBER 2017; MAZAR – KOUROU 2019.

were imported from the Ancient Near East and in particular from the Levantine port cities⁵. At the same time, the maritime, economic and cultural connections have been emphasized due to the significant consumption of Greek pottery in Cyprus and the Levant, and particularly in the sanctuaries and necropoleis of Kition, Byblos and Sidon⁶. Nevertheless, despite the contribution of these literary and archaeological records, the remains of this Levantine-Greek connection found in the Aegean for the Classical and Hellenistic periods are still quite scarce, especially those related to the distribution of transformed products packaged in amphorae, such as wine. On the other hand, the data from the Levantine coast allow us to draw up a picture in which extensive trade networks connected with the exchange of manufactured commodities linked up mainland Greece to the Levant, most of all in the case of fine ware items⁷. The apparent lack of correspondence between literary and epigraphic testimonies and the scarcity of tangible remains has led most scholars to doubt the consistency and importance of these relations within the framework of the main economic circuits of the Eastern Mediterranean⁸. The economic weight of trade relations with the Syro-Palestinian coast has been reexamined, but in most of the academic literature a compartmentalized vision of the ancient Mediterranean is still in place, a perspective based on an alleged antagonism between the Greeks and the Phoenicians⁹.

This perspective had some lasting influence on our understanding of the economic and geopolitical dynamics during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. However, new material data describe a more diverse scenario, **verifying the intensity of these commercial relations between the Levant, and more broadly the Phoenician world and the Greek sphere**. Our present contribution aims to bring together different sources, integrating old and new data into a single narrative, and thus to provide an updated perspective regarding the Phoenician and Greek trade relationship. In order to achieve that goal, we will first examine the most significant data coming from a group of Phoenician inscriptions that attests the social and economic role played by some Phoenician communities in certain Greek cities. Also, several archaeological finds and contexts will be discussed, focusing on amphorae and wrecks of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The combined study of the literary and epigraphic evidence, and of the amphorae and shipwrecks, will allow us to draw some preliminary conclusions, but most of all to open new avenues of research on this topic¹⁰.

2. The Phoenician inscriptions and the connection between the Levant and the Greek area

Phoenician inscriptions found in mainland Greece and in the Aegean islands are a key tool for the analysis of the relationships established between the Levant and the Aegean during the 1st millennium B. C. Even leaving aside some controversial documents, more than 30 Phoenician inscriptions have been identified in continental Greece and the Aegean insular milieu¹¹. Not surprisingly, they come from important trade hubs: in very early times, from Crete and Euboea; during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, from other important islands in the maritime routes linking the Levant and continental Greece (such as Rhodes, Delos, Naxos, Kos) or from port cities in continental Greece as Demetrias or, especially, Athens. This epigraphic corpus can be dated throughout the late 10th to the 2nd century B. C., although the available evidence is more comprehensive and numerous for later periods, suggesting a more intense and stable Phoenician presence in Greece during the late Classical and Hellenistic times (from the 4th to the 2nd century B. C.). For that period, Phoenician inscriptions on stone monuments (not only votive texts, but also funerary or official documents) suggest that Phoenician communities were settled and

⁵ VAN ALFEN 2002; VAN ALFEN 2016.

⁶ CHIRPANLIEVA 2013, 169–199; CHIRPANLIEVA 2019.

⁷ CHIRPANLIEVA 2014.

⁸ BASLEZ – BRIQUEL-CHATONNET 2003; ELAYI – SAPIN 1991, 12–32.

⁹ AUBET 2007, 447; BRAUDEL 2001, 250–282.

¹⁰ This subject will be addressed in the next few years within the scope of the GREPURE Project, of the University of Seville and the BBVA Foundation, which is focused on the compilation and study of any evidence of Phoenician-Punic trade in the Aegean throughout the 1st millennium B. C.

¹¹ BOUROGIANNIS 2021.

somehow integrated in some Greek cities. Significantly, an important portion of these Phoenician texts is indeed part of Greek-Phoenician bilingual inscriptions.

Beside the interesting epigraphic finds from the islands and from the city of Demetrias, the most famous Phoenician inscriptions found in Greece come from Attica. Several examples from the Hellenistic era attest to the significant role played by the Levantine – or rather Phoenician – communities in the civic life of Athens and the Piraeus port. Together with other inscriptions belonging to the corpus of Athenian legislative sources¹², the Phoenician inscriptions confirm the presence of these Levantine merchants in Athens, as well as the importance of their commercial activities.

A good example is a late 4th century B. C. “decree” from the Piraeus (KAI 60), a Phoenician text followed by a short summary in Greek. The inscription is dated in an official manner, but according to the Sidonian calendar (“The fourth day of the marzeah, in the fourteenth year of the People of Sidon”). It registered, following Greek models and expressions, the decision of “the members of the Sidonian assembly” to concede an honorific gift to an individual, “Shembaal, son of Magon”, head of a group contributing to the maintenance of a Phoenician temple, and the appointment of the group responsible for the temple, taking money “from the treasury of the god Baal of Sidon” to sustain its duties by means of Sidonian funding. A Greek text follows, providing just an essential translation: “The association (τὸ κοινὸν) of the Sidonians to Diopeithes, Sidonian” (with the name of the honored man “translated” in Greek). That short and secondary Greek text seems to show that the whole inscription was directed first and above all to Phoenician speakers in the area, but wanted to communicate with local Greeks too.

Thus, it can be noted the presence in the Piraeus of a well-organized and quite integrated group of Sidonians, a real community living (and dying) in Athens and its port (and also active in other Greek places: see for example the bilingual inscription from Kos, KAI 292). They had their own institutions, associations and temples; and they maintained strong links with their mother city, but were also used to the customs and legal procedures of the place where they were living in.

This kind of epigraphic information complements the evidence provided by Greek sources, which inform about the well-integrated and appreciated presence of Phoenicians in Greek social and economic spheres of the Hellenistic period¹³. Besides the Sidonians, an important group was coming from Kition (Cyprus), as shown by their recurrent presence in Phoenician (see below) and Greek inscriptions. Another important group came from Tyre: inscriptions from Rhodes show indeed that Tyrians played a relevant role in the development of artisanal activities, and that they could have obtained local citizenship¹⁴.

Phoenician funerary inscriptions provide further support for this kind of stable presence of Phoenicians among the Greek communities. One of the most important datasets comes again from the Piraeus and the city of Athens. Most of the texts are quite plain or preserve apparently limited information. For example, a damaged stele with the name of the deceased in Greek and Phoenician¹⁵, mentions a man with a Phoenician name (presented in a sort of transliteration in Greek) whose origin was Kition. Thus, even if he was identified as a foreigner, he was locally buried by people able to prepare for him a proper burial (including a funerary stele readable both by local Greeks and Phoenicians present there). In the same way, another stele from Piraeus preserves in good condition a Phoenician and a Greek funerary text (KAI 57). The first part is the Phoenician version “I [am] Mehodesh, son of Pansemelt, man of Kition” followed by a shorter Greek version, where the name of the deceased is in this case “translated”: “Noumenios, Kitian”. The position and length of the Phoenician text, together with the identification of the deceased

¹² ALLEN 2003.

¹³ LE DINAHET-COUILLOUD 1997; YON 2011.

¹⁴ BADOUD 2011.

¹⁵ MASSON 1969.

as Kitian, underlines the foreign origin of those involved in the burial; but it also shows the will to communicate with the local Greeks in their language. It is possible too, that the Greek version of the name was used by the Phoenician when alive, again an eventual sign of his integration in the local lifestyle. Another two Phoenician stelae from the Piraeus, not so well preserved, confirm both this kind of integration and the importance of the Kitian community in the place (a community that some other Phoenician inscriptions show was also active in other Greek ports, see the bilingual funerary inscription from Rhodes¹⁶, CIS I 117).

Phoenician funerary inscriptions also confirm the important presence of Sidonians in the Piraeus. One of the documents consists of a Phoenician text (CIS I 119, KAI 59: “I [am] Asept, daughter of Eshymshelem, Sidonian; this is what erected for me Yatonbal, son of Eshmunsheleh, chief of the priests of god Nergal”) followed by a shorter Greek version, this time transliterating the names: “Asepte, daughter of Eshmunselim, Sidonian”. The deceased was thus a woman, identified by her patronymic and foreign origin, honored by an important Phoenician man that was aware of Greek funerary customs. Another “bilingual” stele from Piraeus (CIS I 120, KAI 56) also corresponds to a deceased female: it includes a Greek text first (“Erene, Byzantine”) followed by the Phoenician version (“Herene, citizen of Byzantium”). This time, the woman has a Greek name and a Greek origin, but was clearly buried by someone (probably her Phoenician husband, a man with clear links and some degree of integration with Greek people) interested in addressing the text of the stele also to the Phoenicians settled in the area.

The city of Athens provides other Phoenician-Greek funerary inscriptions showing the same kind of presence and integration of Phoenicians (especially from Sidon and Kition). One document (CIS I, 116; KAI 53) mentions in Greek the identity of the deceased, including its patronymic and origin (“Artemidoros, son of Heliodoros, of Sidon”) whereas the Phoenician text follows the formulae and language of the Phoenician inscriptions of the period: “Stele of the memory among the living of Abdtinnit, son of Abdshemesh, the Sidonian”. A second stele (CIS I, 117; KAI 55) repeats the same pattern: a good Phoenician funerary text (in this case appearing first: “Of Benhodesh¹⁷, son of Abdmilqart, son of Abdshemesh, son of Tiganesh, from Kition”) and a short Greek version (this time in a sort of translation of the name of the deceased, as seen before: “Noumenios, Kitian”) showing again the “precedence” of the Phoenician version, but also the will to communicate (and to be identified) with the local Greeks in their language.

Last, but not least, a third funerary stele found in Athens, the well-known “Antipatros’ stele”, offers an explicit example of the integration of certain individuals of Phoenician origin among the local Greek population¹⁸. It includes original iconography and a Greek epigram (not well written, possibly by a non-native speaker) both picturing and telling that the deceased was killed by a lion, his corpse rescued by friends and buried in Athens. A short funerary Greek text informs that the deceased was “Antipatros, son of Aphrodisios, from Askalon” (thus adding another link with the Phoenician motherland) and that the dedication was made by “Domsalos, son of Domano, from Sidon” (confirming Sidonians’ predominant role in Attica at this time). A Phoenician text (CIS I, 115; KAI 54), not following the most common Phoenician formulae, seems to be a translation of the Greek one (where the names of the Phoenicians mentioned are both “translated” and “transliterated”): “I (am) Shemay, son of Abdashtart, the Ascalonite. This is the stele which I, Domshaleh, the son of Domhano, the Sidonian, erected”.

Other isolated items or sets of finds have received less attention so far, such as some graffiti on pottery sherds and other non-monumental items. In the coming years, the GREPURE Project

¹⁶ Note that also two Phoenician dedicatory inscriptions (3rd–2nd cent. B. C.) come from a sanctuary in the island (KAI 44–45).

¹⁷ The same name appears in a Phoenician-only votive inscription found at Piraeus (CIS I, 118; KAI 58): a man

called Benhodesh, the son and grandson of high ranked officials, dedicated an altar. He was unfortunately not identified by his origin.

¹⁸ STAGER 2005.

intends to systematize this type of information, mostly unpublished, which will probably contribute important nuances to the picture offered so far by official and funerary epigraphy. In any case, there is no doubt that these written testimonies certify the presence of Phoenicians linked to maritime trade in some of the most important port cities, and that their number and role grew in importance since the 4th century B. C.

To conclude regarding the epigraphic evidence, Phoenician inscriptions found in Greece – in particular the group of Greek-Phoenician bilingual inscriptions coming from some of the most cosmopolitan Greek cities and especially the documents found in Attica (in the city of Athens and in its port Piraeus) – show the well-established and integrated presence of Phoenicians in the timespan between the 4th and 2nd centuries B. C. One important group, considering their recurrent presence in the inscriptions, was of Kitian origin (a group also active in other Greek ports). However, the most relevant, well organized and quite integrated group was the one of the Sidonians, a community living and dying in Athens, and especially in its port. They had their own institutions, associations and officers, their own temples; they maintained strong links with their mother city but were also used to the customs and legal procedures of the place where they were living. It is quite possible that this community was connected with the intense commercial activity carried out by Sidonians in the Athenian port, an activity eventually supported by a growing and more established community.

This information is consistent with the evidence provided by Greek sources, which informs about the well-integrated, appreciated presence of Kitians and Sidonians in Athenian social, intellectual and political life of the period, and also evidently in the economic sphere¹⁹.

3. The maritime trade: first results of some unpublished underwater contexts

The epigraphic and literary evidence suggest that the Phoenician communities established in the Greek mainland and insular port hubs played a significant role during the Hellenistic period. Their presence was linked in particular to the economic activities based in some of those ports (Piraeus-Athens and Delos). However, the archaeological evidence available concerning such activities was rare until now. Recent archaeological surveys undertaken by the Hellenic Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities (HEUA) around several areas of the Aegean Sea have revealed some new documents in relation to the regional distribution of Phoenician commodities, dating to the late Classical and Hellenistic periods. Several underwater discoveries are currently being studied, but we present in this preliminary approach only a brief preview of results from two of them. The first dataset is connected with the commercial activities of the Levantine cities and can be linked with the epigraphic information discussed above. The second assemblage that we will briefly consider in this paper is the cargo of an unpublished shipwreck found near the island of Levitha. The surveys conducted to date allowed a preliminary sampling of the cargo that the ship was carrying and to achieve a first comprehensive picture of the volume and arrangement of the ship's cargo. Levantine (Phoenician) and Punic containers were a substantial part of the goods carried in the ship, together with at least one Rhodian amphora and one Greco-Italic vessel. All together provide some key information about the maritime routes and commercial relations established among the Ptolemaic Kingdom, the Phoenician port cities, Carthage and the Aegean during the 3rd century B. C.

¹⁹ It is worth noting the philosophical schools of Zeno of Kition and Zeno of Sidon. Several decrees – in favour of the Sidonians (367 B. C.) and the Tyrians (ca. 330 B. C.) (IG II², 337; IG II², 342–343) – prove their officially recognised presence and activity. Greek sources also confirm that the close links existed at the top of the political relationships: the case of Straton I of Sidon (ruling during

the middle of the 4th century B. C.), a philhellenic king who established an alliance with Athens (IG II², 141) can be considered paradigmatic in relation to these high-level interactions. In the economic field, we know of the existence of trade delegations and lending groups. There were also workshops and even Phoenicians working in agricultural activities (LIPIŃSKI 2004, 169–170).

3.1. An isolated amphora from the Aegean Sea

A significant finding, which unfortunately cannot be associated with a specific context, is an isolated amphora raised from the Aegean waters and handed afterwards to the HEUA. Although its precise place of discovery is still unknown, it is at the very least unpublished evidence of the maritime trade of Phoenician products through the Aegean Sea. Indeed, it offers some suggestive supplementary evidence to the literary and epigraphic accounts, given that it could possibly be coming from the waters around Attica, by documenting a type of sea-borne import that until now has been rarely identified in the archaeological record²⁰. In any case, it is a complete object that allows us to learn some typological information and raise some hypotheses on its provenance area (fig. 1). The amphora has the typical carinated profile and is 44 cm long, 23.5 cm wide (maximum diameter, in the central section of the body) and has a narrow triangular rim (10 cm), small handles and a conical lower part of the body

(without toe). The morphological features suggest a close relation with the Phoenician productions of the late Classical era and the beginning of the Hellenistic period, such as a Bettles's type A1²¹, Sagona's type 6.3²² or Lehmann's types 7 and 12²³. It should be dated between the 5th and 4th century B. C., whereas the examination of the fabric suggests that it could be coming from the area of Sidon²⁴. Even if there are still some uncertainties regarding the contents linked to this type, most of the available data indicate that it probably was wine²⁵. It is worth noting that at least one example of the type has been found at Ialysos in Rhodes²⁶, and also that a significant number of these Levantine containers have been unearthed within tombs of the Classical and Late Classical period at Marion, Vouni and particularly Kition²⁷. Even though it is an isolated amphora, its singularity and importance lie in the fact that it was retrieved from the Aegean sea, with a chronology that could even be older than the earliest stelae and decrees known to date (which date back to the 4th–3rd centuries B. C.). Also, the amphora is indirect evidence of maritime trade that connected the Levantine cities and some Aegean ports, from at least the 5th century B. C. Finally, this item offers us a typological and chronological link with other more recent discoveries from the Hellenistic period, being a limited evidence of the continuity of these maritime connections during the late Classical period.

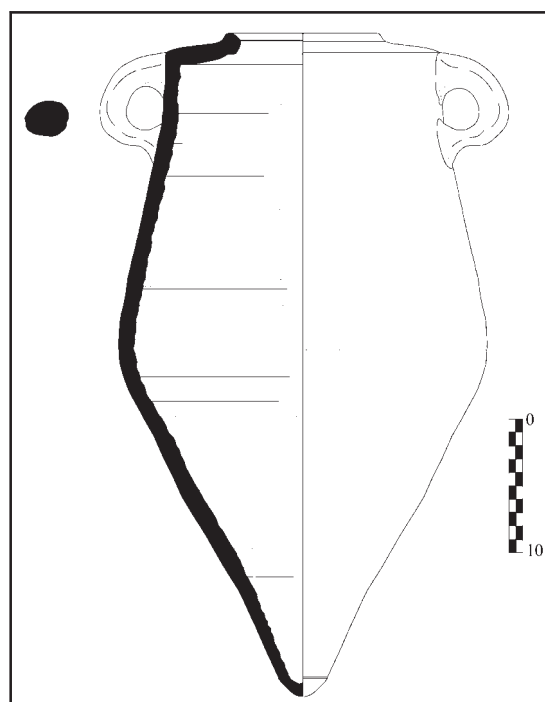


Fig. 1: A late classic Levantine amphora found in the Aegean Sea (copyright on behalf of G. Koutsouflakis and M. Luaces).

3.2. The Levitha shipwreck: new data from the southeastern Aegean area

Although the find discussed in the previous section is lacking context and therefore provides suggestive but incomplete data, in the case of the shipwreck located off the island of Levitha the situation is completely the opposite. In this case, the surveys conducted in recent years by Dr.

²⁰ LAWALL 2006.

²¹ BETTLES 2003, 104–108.

²² SAGONA 1982, 80–82.

²³ LEHMANN 1998, 23–25 pl. 10,1; see also REGEV 2004, 341–345.

²⁴ For a detailed discussion regarding fabrics 1A and 2A, see BETTLES 2003, 139–196.

²⁵ BETTLES 2003, 262–270.

²⁶ Tomb 174, see SAGONA 1982, 82.

²⁷ For the later, see HADJISAVVAS 2012.

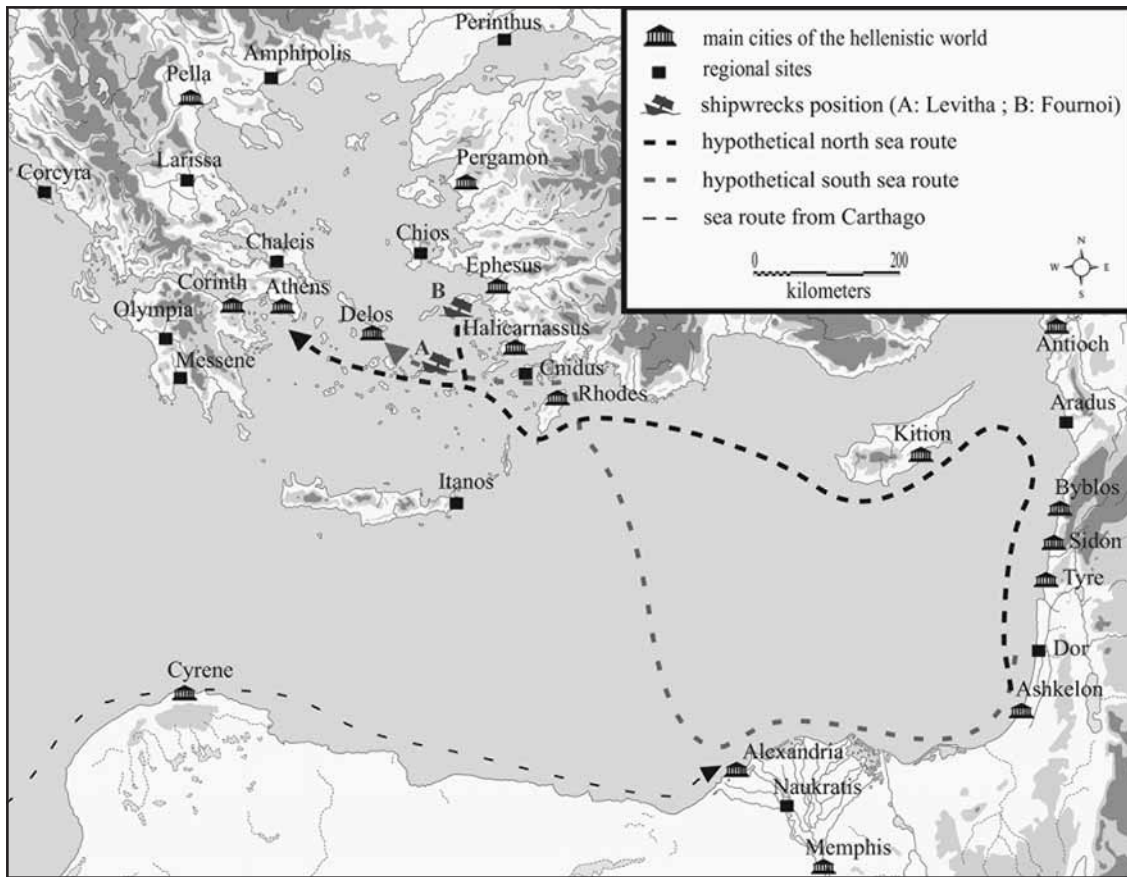


Fig. 2: General overview of the possible sea routes connected with the Levantine and Punic assemblage dated of the Hellenistic period, which have been discovered recently in the Aegean Sea (copyright on behalf of M. Luaces).

George Koutsouflakis and the HEUA team have allowed to gather limited but very precise information, an exceptional snapshot of a very specific moment in the maritime contacts established between the Levant, the Ptolemaic kingdom and Attica. The work completed up to date has revealed that the island was a key place to stop over along the maritime routes linking Rhodes, Kos, the central Aegean (probably Delos) and Attica (fig. 2). One of the shipwrecks identified and explored, whose study is currently underway, offered a very peculiar cargo, which included hundreds of Levantine amphorae (main cargo), some Punic (Carthaginian) vessels and also a few Greek amphorae (Rhodian and Greco-italic, the last coming presumably from Sicily).

The fabric of the two Levantine vessels raised to the surface in the first phase of the survey suggest that the amphorae might have been fired in the southern Levantine coast, or in particular in the Tyre region (fig. 3). Macroscopic and microscopic examination of the fabric from both amphorae indeed suggests a connection with the FC 1C fabric group, which seems to be linked to workshops located in the southern coast of modern Lebanon²⁸. Their morphological features match with the evolution of the Levantine production of transport vessels after the siege of Tyre (332 B. C.) and during the early Hellenistic period, as suggested by Bettles²⁹ in the case of a “carinated-shoulder amphora with a sack shape and a knob at the base” found in Stratum 2a at Tell Keisan. This first sample of the main cargo of the ship revealed the presence of two typological clusters: the first, quite similar to the one from Tell Keisan (see Lehmann’s Assemblage 8, dated ca. 360–300 B. C.³⁰; but also to Ramon’s types T-13113 and T-13121, produced in the 4th–

28 BETTLES 2003, 159–165.

29 BETTLES 2003, 270–271.

30 LEHMANN 1998, 25–28 fig. 12, 5; and also REGEV 2004, fig. 4, 11.

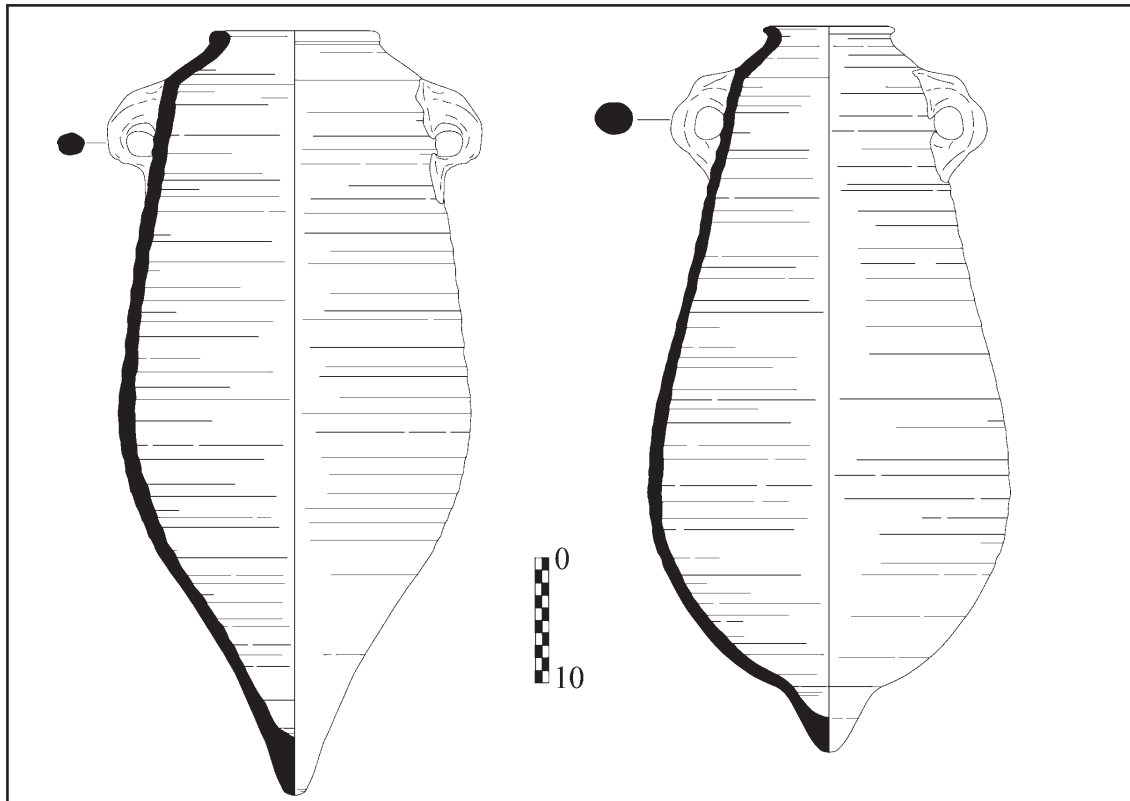


Fig. 3: Two examples of the set of Levantine amphorae retrieved from the *Levitha* shipwreck (copyright on behalf of G. Koutsouflakis and M. Luaces).

3rd centuries B. C. at Carthage³¹); in turn, the second example belongs to a group closely linked to Bettles' type A6³², perhaps to Sagona's type 10³³ and to some vessels from Sidon and Tell Keisan included by Lehmann in his Assemblage 8 dated ca. 360–300 B. C.³⁴. The link between these amphorae and earlier prototypes suggest that they would have been probably related to the Phoenician wine trade. The wreck is as well very interesting as it was carrying some amphorae from the Punic central Mediterranean area (Ramon T-6112/3 and T-4210), a Rhodian vessel and also a Greco-Italic amphora (fig. 4), so the shipment could have been gathered or at least completed in Rhodes itself before sinking off *Levitha*. Regarding the Punic amphorae, the most complete vessel can be linked with the T-6112/3 types, a group produced both in Carthage and western Sicily³⁵, and has an incised mark (cross) below the handle, probably a potter's mark. The Sicilian contexts related to this type point to its production during the first half of the 3rd century, a date that matches with the data from the *Levitha* shipwreck. We should note that the T-6112/3 group was a variant of other more widespread series among the Carthaginian repertoire of the time. The T-4210 amphora is only partially preserved, but its characteristic morphology leaves no doubt about its typology. This tubular like container was connected with a long Carthaginian tradition and was widely disseminated among the western Mediterranean contexts, but its contents have not been clearly identified for now³⁶. **The preliminary examination of the amphorae from the *Levitha* wreck suggests that the sinking of the ship can roughly be dated between the 270s and the 260s B. C.,** in particular taking into account the Rhodian amphorae,

31 RAMÓN TORRES 1995, 241–242 pl. 213–214.

32 BETTLES 2003, 113.

33 SAGONA 1982, 85 pl. 2, 11.

34 LEHMANN 1998, 25–28 pl. 12, 2–3.

35 BECHTOLD 2015, 17.

36 RAMÓN TORRES 1995, 187–190. The only evidence pointing to the transport of food preparations is based on meat products (RAMÓN TORRES 1995, 264).

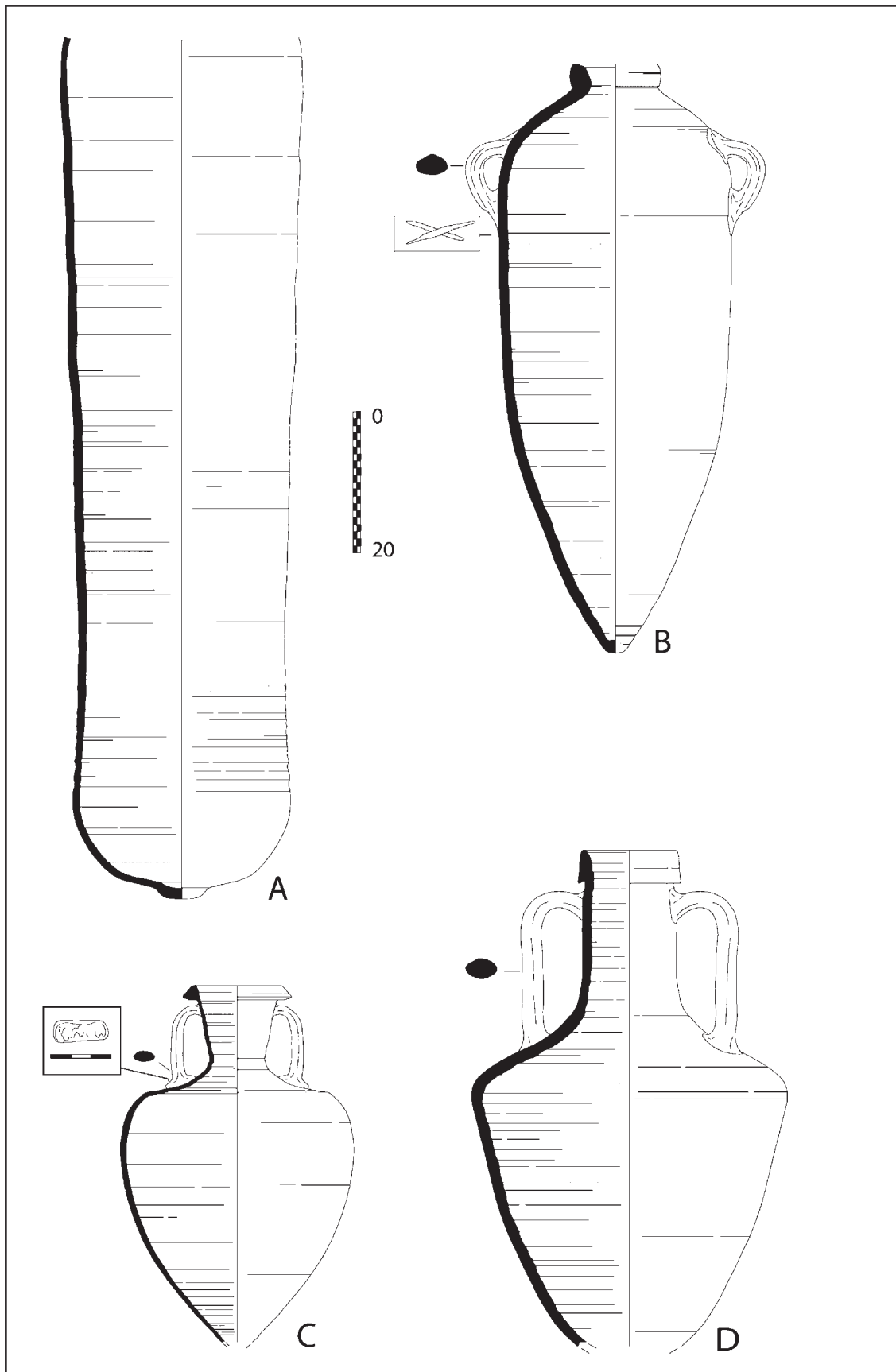


Fig. 4: Other types of amphorae discovered among the assemblage of the *Levitha* shipwreck (A: Punic amphora, type T-4210; B: Punic amphora, type 6112/3; C: Greco-Italic amphora; D: Rhodian amphora, type I-B Koroni variant) (copyright on behalf of G. Koutsouflakis, A. Sáez Romero and M. Luaces).

that belong to Grace's Early Rhodian group³⁷, Monachov's Type I-B Koroni variant³⁸ or Rh I.3-II series³⁹, and also the Greco-Italic vessel, which can be identified as a Gr.-Ita. Va variant⁴⁰, also known as the MGS V type⁴¹.

Consequently, this shipwreck provides suggestive evidence (for the 3rd century B. C.) about the maritime trade route that connected the Levant and the Aegean, which included some main stopovers in Cyprus (Kition), Rhodes and Delos, before arriving to Attica and the mainland. From Ashkelon, Tyre or Sidon, ships were loaded with wine amphorae, sailed off Cyprus⁴², before heading to Rhodes⁴³ and towards Attica and other main cities of the central and northern Aegean. However, an alternative route for the peculiar cargo discovered at Levitha cannot be dismissed, as the amphorae might also have been initially assembled in Alexandria and subsequently held during a stopover in Rhodes before setting sail for the Cyclades and Attica⁴⁴. In this second scenario Alexandria and other Ptolemaic ports would have played a key role in Mediterranean-range connectivity as hubs during the 3rd century B. C.⁴⁵, linking this regional eastern circuit to the long-distance Punic trade (developed by the Carthaginians towards the eastern Mediterranean since at least the late 5th and early 4th century B. C., as certified by findings at Corinth⁴⁶).

3.3. The Fournoi island deposit

The environs of the Fournoi Island were surveyed in the last years and have also revealed significant data concerning the maritime distribution of Levantine commodities in the eastern Aegean. Located between the islands of Samos and Icaria, it should be considered a stop-over to Athens. The study of the material is still in progress and, as a consequence, it is not possible to provide detailed information about this assemblage. As well, the surveys conducted to date have not clarified yet if the amphorae raised to the surface were part of a wreck or if they are just isolated testimonies of overboard disposed cargo from a passing ship that frequented Fournoi as an eventual anchoring spot. Despite the lack of information, the first examination of the amphorae suggests typological similarities with some of the vessels found at Levitha (fig. 5, A). Several Levantine amphorae (three were collected during recent fieldwork) can be connected with Bettles' type A6⁴⁷, dated around the 4th century B. C. In addition to these Levantine amphorae, at least two other examples of Aegean containers have been found in the same deposits. The first one could be connected with the "conical" type from Akanthos or the Kassandra peninsula, dated around the second quarter of the 4th century B. C. (fig. 5, B). The second one, not presented here, was dated around the second half of the 5th century B. C. The connection between these amphorae and the Levantine cluster cannot be assured, even for the most recent one. However, in the current state of the research, we should at least mention their existence. However, the similarities of this dataset and the cargo of the Levitha wreck is quite encouraging, and the typological features of the items points to a date between the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods. A more in-depth study of these amphorae is underway and will allow a more precise dating, and also clarifying if they were indeed parts of the same assemblage. In any case, these finds provide additional evidence of the existence of regular maritime traffic between the Levant and the Aegean Sea.

4. Conclusions

A substantial set of literary, epigraphic and archaeological data attests to the importance of the Levantine trade towards the ancient Aegean and the continuity of these trade contacts and networks throughout the early Iron Age until the Hellenistic period⁴⁸. The available data suggest

37 GRACE 1963.

38 MONACHOV 2005, 74–75.

39 PALAMIDA ET AL. 2016, 140–141.

40 CIBECCHINI – CAPELLI 2013, 434–436.

41 VAN DER MERSCH 1994, 78.

42 DEMESTICHA 2012.

43 DOBOSZ 2013.

44 For the Delta-Rhodes connection see GABRIELSEN 2013.

45 STROOTMAN 2019.

46 FANTUZZI ET AL. 2020.

47 BETTLES 2003, 113.

48 BOUROGIANNIS 2012; BOUROGIANNIS 2018.

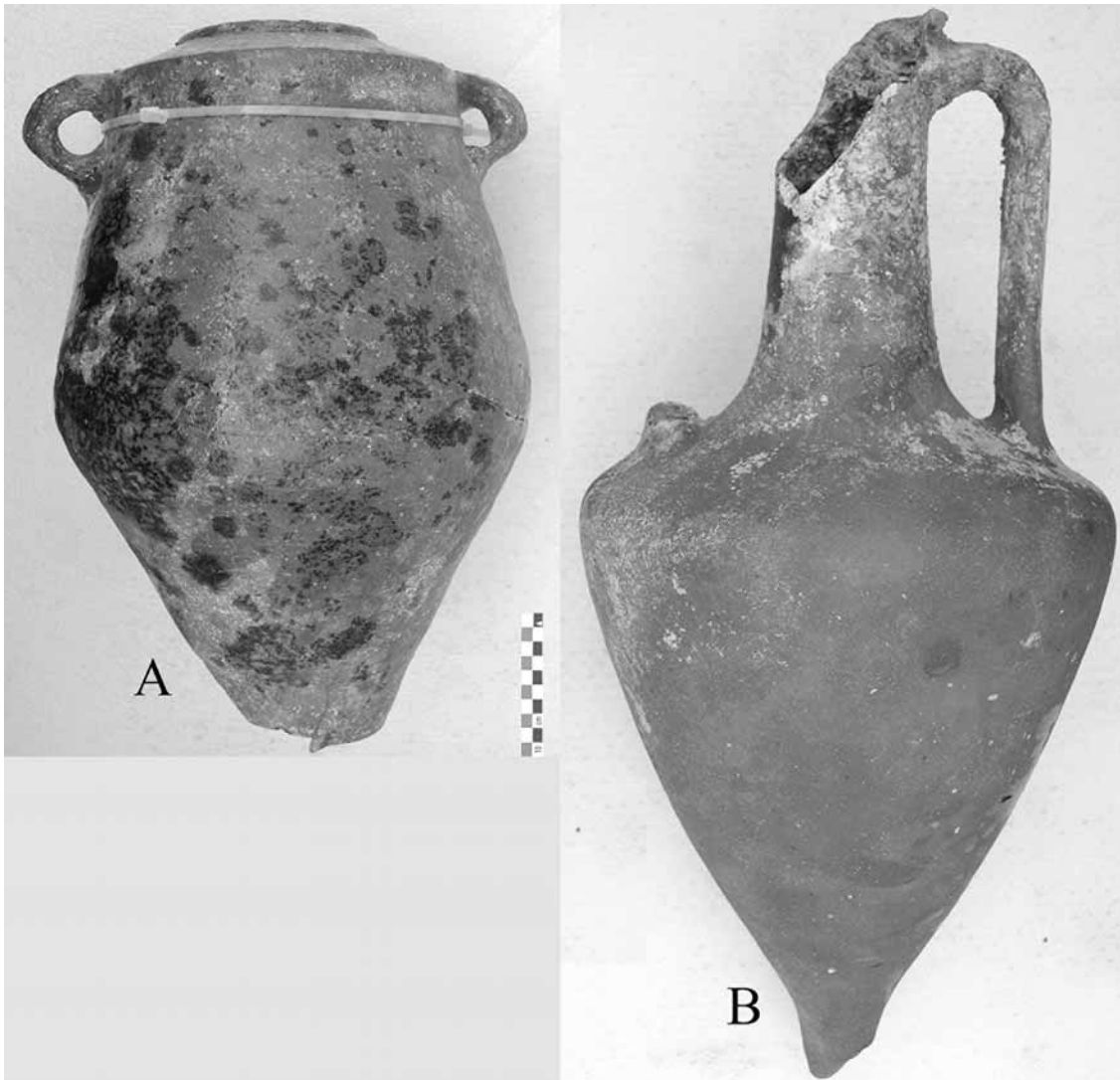


Fig. 5: Pictures of a Levantine amphora (A) and Aegean amphora (B) discovered near the Fournoi Island, in the Aegean Sea. As mentioned, they show formal similarities with some of the containers of the assemblage of the Levitha shipwreck (copyright on behalf of the Hellenic Ephorate of Underwater Archaeology).

that Delos, Athens and Piraeus were home to significant Levantine communities (in particular after Alexander), mostly merchants who mastered Greek and the Greek way of life, but at the same time maintained the link with their homeland in the Levant or Cyprus. According to the literary data and inscriptions, most of those Phoenicians would have come from Sidon and Kition, and in minor quantities from other southern Levant port cities, like Tyre⁴⁹.

The literary and epigraphic data suggest that these merchants were engaged in the trade of various raw materials (metals, resins, etc.), fine handicraft items, textiles and timber⁵⁰. The commerce of wine, transported in amphorae, although more visible in the archaeological record, must have been an important activity but less lucrative. Even so, the findings discussed in the previous sections are quite significant as they confirm the existence of such connections evidenced by the texts. In particular, the wreck found near Levitha Island provides an unexpected and fresh novel approach to this puzzle, providing an accurately dated pillar for the study of these maritime connections during the 3rd century B. C. The final report on the shipwreck and its cargo,

⁴⁹ BASLEZ 1987; RAPTOU 2000; BASLEZ – BRIQUEL-CHATONNET 2003.

⁵⁰ APICELLA 2004, 230–234; VAN ALFEN 2002; VAN ALFEN 2016; KRON 2015.

which is currently in progress, is expected to provide insights on specific episodes of the Aegean-Levantine relations after the Persian period, on the Ptolemaic intervention in the maritime trade of the time and, above all, on a hitherto almost unexplored aspect such as the role of Carthage in the Egyptian-Levantine Phoenician trade of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods.

Although this is a very interesting and stimulating scenario, the available archaeological and epigraphic data is already scattered in a great number of works of no less diverse academic traditions. There are some key issues that must be addressed in the near future to improve our understanding of the regional maritime and economic connections discussed in this presentation. On the one hand, the finds from Aegean Sea emphasize the need for further study of the Levantine amphorae, as some variants and fabrics are still difficult to accurately classify from a typological and archaeometric point of view. On the other hand, the information gathered to date also opens up new avenues for the study of the Levantine trade in ancient Greece, particularly with regard to its true importance from an economic perspective, but also concerning their connection with ancient Punic packaging, their chronological span and the connection of the finds with historical events. Levitha also opens a very stimulating discussion on the consumption and distribution of Phoenician wine in the eastern Mediterranean during the 3rd century B. C., and to what extent Carthage and the Punic cities of the central Mediterranean were involved in these regional economic circuits.

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Editors in chief: Laura Rembart, Alice Waldner

Language editing: Sarah James (English), Guy Ackermann (French), Alice Waldner (Italian), Laura Rembart (German)

Layout: Roman Jacobek, Phoibos Verlag

Cover photo: Mould fragment of a relief bowl with potter's signature "MENEMACHOU", Ephesos (© ÖAW-ÖAI/Niki Gail)

Manuscript preparation, citations and abbreviations follow the Style Sheet of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI, 2015). Contents and illustration permissions (drawings, photos, reproductions and graphs) are the responsibility of the individual authors.

The printing of this publication was made possible by a generous grant received from the CERAMICA-Stiftung Basel.

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Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de>.

www.phoibos.at; office@phoibos.at

Printed in the EU: Prime Rate Kft., Megyeri út 53, H-1044 Budapest

ISBN 978-3-85161-276-9 (printed edition)

ISBN 978-3-85161-277-6 (E-book, PDF)

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