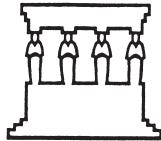


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Greeks and the East in the Iron Age: Interpreting interaction in the Eastern Mediterranean

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Ancient Greeks and the East, their interaction with local peoples and the impact of cultural contacts have been studied extensively in recent years. For the most part, evidence comes from archaeological finds. This means that the situations of interaction have to be reconstructed from sources that give very little information about how such interaction took place. In this article, interpretations of the sites of Lefkandi, Al Mina, and Naukratis will be discussed, including a review of the widely diverging views held on how to explain the findings. The article draws attention to problems regarding the interpretation of sites with artefacts from several different cultures and discusses several models current in archaeology today that produce mutually exclusive narratives of interaction in the past.¹

Introduction

Interaction has been a popular topic in studies of the ancient world in the last decades, in part reflecting the present state of globalisation and world-wide interconnectivity.² As will be discussed in this chapter, the modes and scope of contacts between East and West are disputed. It is important to review the

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1. Some of the arguments in this article were presented at the *American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Meeting* 2007 in San Diego, CA, in the paper “Outside of society? Greeks in the East and Phoenicians in the West” held at the session *Eastern Mediterranean Diasporas*. They have been considerably revised for the paper held at the conference *Global and Local – Perspectives on mobility in the Eastern Mediterranean* in Athens 2011. Further revisions have been undertaken for the present article. I am grateful to the *ASOR Annual Meeting* and *Global and Local* organisers and participants for their reactions and comments, as well as for the comments of two anonymous reviewers for the present publication.
 2. Largely due to the ground-breaking work of Martin West, Walter Burkert, and Sarah Morris, the prevalent paradigm in archaeology and ancient history sets Greek culture in a close connection with a wider Mediterranean environment (S. Morris 1992; Burkert 1995; *ibid.* 2004; West 1999 [1997]). This approach to studies of the ancient world is not without precedent. E.g. Cyrus Gordon was convinced that much of Greek culture had its origins in the East (Gordon 1955).

current debates, because reconstructions of Iron Age history in the Mediterranean are coloured by how we assess processes of interaction. The picture of intense exchange and interaction in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Iron Age and wide-ranging influences on Greek culture has been questioned.³ It is argued that Eastern influences on Greek culture were superficial and transient.⁴ In the following, some of the key sites and archaeological evidence for interaction between Greece and the Near East in the Iron Age will be discussed, with a review of interpretations of the history of these sites. I will discuss three sites in the Eastern Mediterranean that are frequently adduced as evidence for Eastern influence on the Greeks or Greek interaction with the East in the Iron Age: Lefkandi, Al Mina, and Naukratis, before I undertake a review of different models that have been used to describe modes of interaction between Greeks and the East.⁵

Lefkandi

At Lefkandi on the island of Euboea, in the Toumba cemetery, archaeologists have found a 10th century building and several examples of Orientalia. Scholars agree on the unexpectedness of the contents of the graves at Toumba: imported grave goods speaking of contacts between Greece and the Near East from the 10th century BC onwards. The site is not yet fully published. As will be seen, interpretations vary widely. Excavations at Lefkandi on Euboea by Mervyn Popham and Irene S. Lemos in the 1980's and 1990's have revealed graves in the Toumba cemetery with rich Oriental imports. The entirety of the site, its graves and finds cannot be reviewed here. I will discuss the interpretations of a few graves that contain Oriental objects, as well as a large building that was used for a burial, starting with the building.

A huge apsidal building at Lefkandi containing a male and female burial has caused quite a stir among archaeologists. The two burials have been interpreted as belonging to a ruling couple, and the building, 45 meters long, to have been

3. This is largely because of inconclusive evidence for Greek settlements in the East in the Archaic period (cf. Waldbaum 1994; *ibid.* 1997; Haider 1996; *ibid.* 2004).

4. The Greeks supposedly had a culture unique in the ancient world, characterised by citizen communities that ruled their own polities (Raaflaub 1998: 31; Fantalkin 2006: 204). This view conforms to a Classicist view of fundamental cultural differences between East and West, as exemplified by Moses Finley, who emphasised the egregious character of Greek culture, in particular concerning politics (Finley 1983: 53).

5. All dates in the following presentation and discussion follow the periodization of the publications cited. Unfortunately, they tend to be rather imprecise, making chronological correlations with historical events difficult. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to establish precise dates for the different sites under discussion.

their residence.⁶ The apsidal building is frequently referred to as the Heroon, and its male inhabitant has been dubbed the Hero of Lefkandi. Further finds of imported exotica from the Near East at Lefkandi have been used to corroborate the picture of a wealthy community with international contacts. According to Robin Osborne, the wealth contained in the paired burial at Lefkandi, and the sheer size of the building itself, implies a hierarchical organisation of the community. He claims that a small group or family must have been able to extract a surplus from the rest of the community to afford a display like this.⁷

Aside from the size of the building and burial and the presumed need to organise their construction, there is no compelling evidence at Lefkandi for a complex hierarchic society. There is no evidence of writing or other indications for social stratification in the form of a central organisation for the extraction of an agricultural surplus. The possibility that an extended family or lineage could have constructed the large building and subsequent burials as well as imported the various foreign objects should be considered. As will be seen in the following, the significance of the exotic grave goods is difficult to assess.

The foreign imports from Lefkandi have caused much speculation among archaeologists as to their provenance and how they found their way to Euboea. Among the finds is a bronze bowl, from Tomb 55, embossed and engraved with an upper frieze of helmeted and winged sphinxes in between oriental “trees of life”. The bowl is further decorated with a row of animals with palm trees around a central rosette. It is Near Eastern in origin, and North Syria has been suggested as a likely source. The burial is dated by a large Attic Early Geometric I *oenochoe*, with a date *c.* 900 BC.⁸ An engraved Near Eastern bronze bowl was found in a woman’s burial, Tomb 70.⁹ According to the excavators, it is comparable to bowls found on Cyprus, and dates to Late Proto-Geometric, *c.* 900 BC.¹⁰ The excavators consider the bowl to be of Phoenician origin.¹¹ In the same cemetery was a grave, Tomb 79, with contents that include iron weaponry, what is interpreted as weights and scales, a Syrian cylinder seal from 1800 BC, and golden earrings. The cremated ashes of the buried man were collected in a nearly hemispheric bronze cauldron with lid. A *krater*, Phoenician and Cypriote jugs and bronze earrings were also found.¹²

6. Coldstream 1998, 355; Morris 2000, 218-238.

7. Osborne 1996, 43.

8. Popham *et al.* 1988-89, 118.

9. Popham 1995, 103.

10. Popham 1995, 106.

11. Popham 1995, 107, n. 5.

12. Popham and Lemos 1995, 151-157.

These finds have been taken to indicate that the community at Lefkandi, or a part thereof, was in contact with the Near East. However, it should be kept in mind that the majority of graves did not contain foreign imports. The exotic objects come from graves that are dated to different periods, making them even less representative of the graves as a whole. Also, the foreign origins of artefacts do not tell us how they arrived at Lefkandi or why they were deposited in graves. What was the nature of contacts between the community at Lefkandi and the Near East? The preliminary conclusion of the excavators is that Tomb 79 contains the burial of a warrior trader. They suggest that this would explain the connection between Euboea, the Near East and Cyprus. This grave is dated to Sub-Protogeometric II (*c.* 800 BC).¹³ The finds at Lefkandi belong to what is considered a Dark Age in mainland Greece, with little contact between Greek communities and the wider Mediterranean world. The international Late Bronze Age world, where Greek communities were very much a part of the Eastern Mediterranean world, collapsed around 1200 BC, and was followed by a more parochial Iron Age. A warrior trader with contacts to the Near East thus does not fit the general view of Greek interaction with the Near East in the Dark Age.

Ian Morris, assessing the finds from Lefkandi, argues that the Lefkandians were one generation before the rest of central Greece in re-establishing contacts with the East after the collapse at the end of the Bronze Age.¹⁴ He attributes the Oriental objects found in the Toumba graves to Phoenician penetration of the Aegean.¹⁵ In his interpretation, finds of Orientalia in 10th century Greek graves are evidence for Heroic aspirations in the local élite.¹⁶ Thus, Morris interprets the Oriental objects at Lefkandi as the result of trade initiated by Phoenicians, eagerly welcomed by local élites. However, to interpret society at Lefkandi as an emulation of the Homeric heroes is rather speculative. The luxury of the households of the Homeric kings cannot be said to be matched at Lefkandi. Not all scholars accept foreign traders as the source of imported goods at Lefkandi. Irene S. Lemos emphasises the initiative of Greeks over Phoenicians in bringing exotic goods to Lefkandi. In her interpretation, Euboeans went to the Phoenician city of Tyre to trade there. Lemos argues that Proto-Geometric pottery is known from Tyre from the 10th century, as well as other Eastern sites, such as Tell Dor, and that they are found in settlements, not graves, indicating trade in goods rather than in prestige items. In her view, the Tyrians were probably not very interested

13. Popham and Lemos 1995, 156.

14. Morris 2000, 239.

15. Morris 2000, 251.

16. Morris 2000, 228-238.

in the Central Aegean in the 10th century. Thus, in her interpretation, the Greek pottery in Tyre and Tell Dor was brought by enterprising Greeks.¹⁷

Lemos emphasises that the Euboeans at Lefkandi constructed “the earliest monumental building we have so far in the Aegean after the end of the palatial period”. In her interpretation, “the building at Toumba above the burials and its destruction is associated with an important political change that took place at Lefkandi around 950, when the whole community decided to undertake the task of filling in and covering the building”. An élite group, which was buried at the Toumba cemetery around the building “was well established and was eager to acquire imported goods to reinforce its status” by the second half of the 10th century.¹⁸ Although Lemos places the initiative with Euboeans rather than Phoenicians, her interpretation does not really conflict with that of Morris referred to above. Both Lemos and Morris emphasise that an Euboean élite used foreign goods to show their status in a local context. However, Lemos emphasises the Euboean initiative and downplays any active role of the Phoenicians. Both Morris and Lemos argue that there was a local élite and set the Toumba building and the import of foreign goods in relation to efforts by this élite to distinguish itself. This élite had contacts with Phoenicians through trade. Nicolas Coldstream emphasises regular commercial exchange behind the finds from Lefkandi.¹⁹ Like Lemos, he sets the finds of exotica at Lefkandi in connection with the finds of Greek pottery in Tyre dating to the 10th century.²⁰ He argues that these Proto-Geometric sherds resemble the earliest finds of Greek pottery at Amathus on Cyprus. Especially frequent in the Levant are Euboean plates decorated with pendent concentric semi-circles, contrasting to only four found at Lefkandi. Therefore, Coldstream assumes an Euboean export-initiative aimed at the Phoenician market.²¹ Concerning the finds from the Heroon at Lefkandi, he suggests that the grave goods, including an Old Babylonian seal found with the woman buried in the Heroon, may point to her Near Eastern origin. He suggests that she may have been a queen.²² Egyptianising bronze vessels found in the Toumba cemetery and objects of faience point to trade with Egypt. According to Coldstream, this trade probably went through Tyre, and he suggests that this may indicate some intermarriage between an élite family in Tyre and the Hero

17. Lemos 2005, 54. The Greek Proto-Geometric pottery from Tyre is published in Bikai 1978, pls. 22 a1, 30.3.

18. Lemos 2005, 56.

19. Coldstream 1982, 265.

20. Coldstream 1998, 353.

21. Coldstream 1998, 354.

22. Coldstream 1998, 355.

of Lefkandi.²³ Coldstream's interpretation credits the Lefkandi community with an international élite that married the daughters of foreign élite families. This, however, cannot be said to be more than speculation.

In Coldstream's view, contact between Euboeans and the Near East was frequent and regular. Rather than seeing Greece as semi-isolated on the periphery of the Near East, he interprets the evidence at Lefkandi as indicative of a high degree of integration between élites East and West, with an emphasis on the early initiative and success of the Euboeans.²⁴ It should be kept in mind that the site of Lefkandi has offered little in terms of evidence for a complex society with an established élite. Exotica in graves and monumental burials notwithstanding, there is no decisive evidence for the type of internationally oriented ruling élite that Morris, Lemos, or Coldstream assert as the driving force behind the acquisition of foreign objects found in graves. A further problem with the interpretation of Lefkandi as a base for an élite in command of a fleet of daring sea-farers is that it leaves little place for interaction between Greeks and Near Easterners.²⁵ Models

23. Coldstream 1998, 356.

24. The view of Greek initiative in relations between the East and West has been criticised by John Papadopoulos, who attacks archaeologists for dealing in "Phantom Euboeans". He argues that ideology is the main reason behind the focus on Euboeans as the main agents in contacts between East and West. More precisely, he accuses Classicist archaeologists of anti-Semitism, because of their exclusion of Phoenician or Syrian agents in their narratives of interaction in the Eastern Mediterranean (Papadopoulos 1997, 203-207).

25. Finds from the Cretan site of Kommos can be adduced here: a tri-pillar shrine was discovered in the so-called Greek sanctuary or Temple B, used 800-600 BC (Shaw and Shaw 2000, 14). The tri-pillar shrine is considered Phoenician in form and origin. Wedged between the pillars were a bronze horse and faience figurines interpreted to represent the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet and the god Nefertum (Shaw and Shaw 2000, 21-23). The excavators were unable to determine which divinity or divinities were worshipped at the site, but suggest that Nefertum and Sekhmet indicate some kind of protection offered to the worshippers (Shaw and Shaw 2000, 167-169). At Kommos, a small number of sherds from heavy storage jars of Phoenician origin have been found (Shaw and Shaw 2000, 302). The Phoenician origin of the form of the tri-pillar shrine is established from the distinctly Eastern aniconic form of the central idol. Also, the sanctuary was of an open *naiskos* type, from an "Eastern tradition" (Shaw and Shaw 2000, 693-693; *ibid.* 711-713). What does it mean that a Phoenician shrine is erected in a Greek sanctuary? The excavators suggest that cultic activities were undertaken at the sanctuary by visiting sea-farers on stop-overs. It was not a permanent Phoenician or Punic settlement at the site. The sanctuary was also used by Greeks (Shaw and Shaw 2000, 712). I find the suggestions of the excavators reasonable and do not see Kommos as evidence of any form of Phoenician settlement on Crete. It is of interest that seafarers appear to have shared sanctuaries and that an Eastern cultic image and architectural plan was established in a local context. Perhaps this is an indication of the fluidity of identities in the 9th century among seafaring people, making a Phoenician sanctuary acceptable at a Cretan site.

for interpreting interaction between Greeks and people of the Near East will be discussed further below. It should also be taken into consideration that although Greek communities evidently had less contact with the East in the Dark Age than in the Late Bronze Age, there is a high degree of continuity in the urban history of the Levant from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age. Sites like Sarepta appears to have been practically undisturbed by the general destruction that took place around 1200 BC.²⁶ Thus, the Dark Age was not equally dark everywhere. A continuity of contacts in Greece from the Late Bronze Age through the Dark Age should not be ruled out. I turn now to the other side of the coin, viz. an early example of Greek visits to the East in the Iron Age.

Al Mina

Al Mina, at the mouth of the river Orontes in North Syria was excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley in the 1930's. Because of finds of large amounts of Greek Geometric pottery at the site, Woolley regarded it as a Greek colony. More precisely, it was thought to be an Euboean *emporion* or trading settlement in the Levant, and the source of the Orientalising revolution in Greece.²⁷ It has also been suggested that Al Mina played a key role in the adaption of the alphabet for writing Greek.²⁸ Al Mina plays an important role in narratives of early Greek travels abroad in the Iron Age, focussing on Greek initiative. According to John Boardman, the proportion of Greek to local pottery at Al Mina must be said to be exceptional for the Levant in the 9th to 7th century.²⁹ He has calculated the Greek part of the pottery as making out 47% of the total.³⁰ Other sites showing Geometric Greek pottery in the Levant include Tarsus, Tell Tainat, Ras el Bassit and Tell Sukas, the proportion of Greek pottery never reaching over 5 % of the total pottery.³¹ There have also been found some Cypriot wares as well as Levantine or Phoenician ones (Bichrome and Red Slip ware). Other objects are of North Syrian origin.³² Boardman suggests Euboean initiative in establishing exchange relations with the East, and emphasises the Syrian connection to Greece rather than Phoenician carriers to the Aegean.³³ In his interpretation, Al Mina was

26. Cf. Pritchard 1978.

27. Cf. Boardman 1990, 169-170.

28. Cf. Jeffery 1990, 11-12.

29. Boardman 1990, 175.

30. Boardman 2006, 515.

31. Boardman 1990, 171-75, table 1.

32. Boardman 1990, 175-176.

33. Boardman 2006, 516.

a trading settlement, and the Greek presence was “decidedly a limited concession by the local power”.³⁴ Greeks are also attested at Tell Sukas, 72 km south of Al Mina. From the period *c.* 850-675 BC, the Greek sherds are similar to those at Al Mina, i.e. Euboean and Cycladic.³⁵ An Ionian female name is inscribed on a spindle whorl dated *c.* 600 BC, found at Tell Sukas.³⁶ The pottery found at Al Mina has recently been re-classified regarding its provenience. On the basis of this, Gunnar Lehman argues that there was a Phoenician presence at the site *c.* 850 BC.³⁷ In this same period, the Greeks had started to arrive. There was also found Syrian inland pottery at Al Mina, from the ‘Amuq plain.³⁸

The interpretations of Boardman and Lehman presuppose that the origins of the pottery tell us who carried it to Al Mina. To equal pots with people is, of course, highly problematic. The presence of Greek pottery does not necessarily indicate the presence of Greeks, and that also applies to the Phoenician pottery at the site. Several hypotheses about the process behind the presence of foreign pottery at Al Mina are possible, with neither the Greeks nor the Phoenicians necessarily playing the role of colonists or itinerant traders. However, what other ways are there to identify agents in the past than to follow the objects? In lieu of texts or inscriptions, pottery is a vital source of information. Without other finds, such as architecture, residency or trade become moot questions. Boardman argues for Al Mina as the source of the flow of goods that “resulted in the main Orientalising revolution in Greek culture in the 8th century”.³⁹ This might well have been the case. At least, Greek trade with the Levant and Syria clearly inspired new developments in Greek art. However, there is no way of telling what kind of interaction the Greek and local people were party to. Was the Orientalising revolution predominantly inspired by objects, or by the observation of the practice of arts and crafts, i.e. people? This is not easy to determine. There are no written sources to why objects manufactured in Greece were fashioned in an Orientalist idiom. Glenn Markoe emphasises the adaptive, rather than imitative nature of the Orientalising of Greek art, from “imported oriental goods on foreign soil”.⁴⁰ However, there is also the possibility of the acquisition of techniques and motives directly, abroad.

34. Boardman 1999, 155.

35. Braun 1982, 11.

36. Sørensen 1997, 288.

37. Lehman 2005, 83.

38. Lehman 2005, 86.

39. Boardman 2006, 516.

40. Markoe 1996, 50.

The Greeks were clearly a minority at Al Mina. Who else used this port? Gunnar Lehman points out that the Phoenician pottery at Al Mina is similar to that of Tyre, and argues that the port probably had ties to that Phoenician city and its trade connections. He proposes that the population at Al Mina was a mixed community of Greeks and Phoenicians, in addition to local Syrians.⁴¹ The importance of a Greek presence at the site has been questioned, however. Jane C. Waldbaum states that “given the lack of firm evidence for distinctly Greek architecture and burial types, the sporadic inscriptions, and the limited range of imported pottery shapes used primarily as wine-drinking apparatus and as perfume containers, we do not have evidence for a fully Greek cultural context at any site in either Syria or Palestine”. Waldbaum therefore questions whether the Greeks made their presence felt in any significant way in the East, or were ignored by the sophisticated Easterners as Western barbarians.⁴² David W. J. Gill points out that although Boardman interprets the appearance of Euboean wares as firm evidence of Euboeans being active at Al Mina, “there is an equally strong possibility that non-Euboeans (or even non-Greeks) carried it there”.⁴³ Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier points out that “in the absence of other criteria, the occurrence of Greek decorated pottery, even in larger quantities, is a rather poor indicator of the presence of Greeks in the East”.⁴⁴ In Niemeier’s opinion, the Greeks in Syria in the 8th century BC were mercenaries from Greek élites, not settlers.⁴⁵ The model of Al Mina as an encampment of mercenaries is also suggested by R. A. Kearsley, who does not accept trade as the initial purpose for Greek settlement at the site.⁴⁶ Thus, a number of hypotheses have been offered to explain the evidence for Greek contacts with Al Mina, from regular trade and settlement to brief visits, agents counting traders as well as mercenaries. It should also be pointed out that there is no mutual exclusion between mercenary ventures and trade. Further, it must be kept in mind that élite mercenaries, if they indeed were the source of Greek pottery at Al Mina, also had retainers. The ships had crews. Although seldom discussed, these people have a role to play in the encounters between Greeks and the East.

As has been seen, the evidence from Al Mina can be used to argue a number of scenarios. One interpretation is focussed on acquisitive and inquisitive Greeks learning new things in the East and transforming them to their own needs. Another interpretation argues for the integration of Greeks into a diverse mercantile

41. Lehman 2005, 86.

42. Waldbaum 1997, 12.

43. Gill 1995, 106.

44. Niemeier 2001, 13.

45. Niemeier 2001, 24.

46. Kearsley 1999, 117-119.

community. A third possibility presents itself: the Greeks were completely peripheral to the local community or the trading community at Al Mina. The material from Al Mina is unlikely to ever be published in full. Thus, questions concerning Greeks in the East cannot be answered from this site alone. Before discussing further models for interpreting interaction between Greeks and the East in the Iron Age, I will briefly present Naukratis, a site from which there is textual evidence for how the Greeks established themselves and why.

Naukratis

Naukratis was a famous Greek trading station on the Canopic branch of the Nile in the Egyptian Delta. As will be seen in the following, scholars do not agree whether Naukratis was a trading post, a proper Greek *polis* on Egyptian soil, or an enclave controlled by Pharaoh. Fortunately, there are texts that mention Naukratis, making it possible to determine the role of the Greeks at the site with a greater degree of certainty than at Al Mina. Naukratis is discussed by Herodotos, who claims that it was founded at the initiative of Pharaoh Amasis by giving Greeks the opportunity to settle. Amasis allowed those who preferred to visit with their ships without settling at Naukratis to raise altars and establish sanctuaries.⁴⁷ Herodotos further relates that Naukratis was formerly the only open port in the Nile Delta and all foreign traders had to put to port there.⁴⁸ Greek trade with Naukratis is also known from later testimonies to a lost poem of Sappho: her brother Kharaxos plied a trade with Egypt and used of its profits to buy the freedom of the famous *hetaera* Doricha, also known as Rhodopis, who lived at Naukratis.⁴⁹ Kharaxos, Rhodopis of Naukratis and the poem of Sappho is also mentioned by Herodotos.⁵⁰

The site of Naukratis was excavated in the 19th and early 20th century and the finds are scattered throughout several museums and collections. Scholars have established that pottery from a wide range of Greek *poleis* ended up at Naukratis, bespeaking a vigorous trade. The East Greek *poleis* probably provided the most active traders. At the site, remains from several sanctuaries were found, including

47. Hdt. 2.178. Scholars agree that Herodotos' date for the establishment of Naukratis is too late (Whitley 2001, 67). Amasis ruled Egypt from 570 to 526 BC. Astrid Möller argues that there has been found Greek pottery fragments at Naukratis that date to the last quarter of the 7th century, making it more likely that the settlement was in existence in the reign of Psammetichos I, thus, before the reign of Amasis (Möller 2000, 188).

48. Hdt. 2.179.

49. Sappho testt. 1, 15, and 16.

50. Cf. Hdt. 2.135.

a temple to Aphrodite and votive gifts. However, no cemetery has been found.⁵¹ 6th century Naukratis should not be called a *polis*, since it did not control its own territory at the onset, being a port set up at the initiative of Pharaoh. However, it appears to have become recognised as a *polis* at a later stage. Astrid Möller argues that Naukratis was no *polis* until the 4th century⁵². In her interpretation, Naukratis was predominantly a port-of-trade under Egyptian control.⁵³ John Boardman also points out that Naukratis had a different status from Greek colonies elsewhere, e.g. on Sicily: it was a settlement nominally under the authority of Pharaoh. In his interpretation, it had a working population of Egyptians, whereas the Greeks were a mixed lot: “Naukratis attracted the get-rich-quick merchants of East Greece, and their Aiginetan colleagues who ran the business with central Greece. It attracted poets, artists, statesmen, and historians [...]”.⁵⁴ Thus, in Boardman’s interpretation, Naukratis was a cosmopolitan Greek port-of-trade with a native resident element that performed manual labour, with trade or amusements as the most important activities of the Greeks resident or visiting. The interpretations of Möller and Boardman both emphasise the role of Naukratis as host to a merchant community hailing from several parts of Greece. Boardman suggests a similarity between Naukratis and modern colonies like Shanghai.⁵⁵ Underlying this interpretation is a comparable advantage for the Greeks in establishing themselves in Egypt, being somehow more enterprising or clever than the locals with regards to trade and commerce. Möller’s interpretation is more focused on power and initiative lying with Pharaoh. Both interpretations emphasise the role of the Greeks, however, as visiting entrepreneurs. The Egyptian host is either reduced to a resident labourer or a bureaucratic overlord.

Not all scholars agree that trade was the main reason for the presence of Greeks in Egypt in the Archaic period. Peter W. Haider emphasises the role of the Greeks as mercenaries in Egypt and argues that their presence was regulated by the local authorities.⁵⁶ In his interpretation, Greek mercenaries who did settle in Egypt had to become assimilated in order to make a career.⁵⁷ Thus, Greeks in Egypt are interpreted not as a cosmopolitan jet set of merchants and poets, but as élite mercenaries who established themselves abroad. They became Egyptianised and presumably spread this Egyptianised culture in their home communities at

51. Boardman 1980, 118-129.

52. Möller 2000, 191.

53. Möller 2000, 203-207.

54. Boardman 1980, 130-131.

55. Cf. Boardman 1980, 132.

56. Haider 1996, 114.

57. Haider 2004, 449.

their eventual return. Indeed, this is conspicuous in the spread of the naked male *kouros* in Greek communities, with its typically Egyptian stance.

As has been seen, scholars interpret Naukratis and the role of Greeks in Egypt quite differently. It can be argued that Naukratis was a trading settlement established by enterprising Greeks, eventually becoming a Greek *polis* on Egyptian soil. This is a clearly a colonialist scenario, where permanent settlement follows a period of prospective trading with the locals. Against this interpretation, it can be argued that the Greek presence in Egypt was controlled by Pharaoh, making Naukratis a regulated enclave rather than a colony. It has not been claimed that Naukratis had its own agricultural hinterland. The lack of an independent agricultural hinterland is relevant, since a *polis* that could not support itself, would be at the mercy of the regional authorities. This is a port-of-trade scenario, where trade is the main reason for the existence of a Greek presence in Egypt. A third possibility is to analyse the Greek presence in Egypt as predominantly one of élite mercenaries that made careers in the Egyptian military. This would make Naukratis a bridgehead for Greeks coming to Egypt, without implying any colonial status to the settlement.

In my opinion, Naukratis should be seen as a nexus for interaction between Greeks abroad as well as between Egyptians and Greeks. However, its position as a regulated enclave should not be ignored. Its status as a free port reveals that the Greeks were in Egypt at the mercy of Pharaoh. The importance of learning the Egyptian language in order to get ahead in Egypt should also not be ignored. It is likely that the Greeks in Egypt were more influenced by Egyptian culture than vice versa. Naukratis is a telling example of how difficult it is to establish relations between Greeks and the East, even when there are texts available that discuss the site in question. It seems evident that a Greek bias is underlying several of the models used in the interpretation of the archaeological material, resulting in unlikely scenarios for settlement that largely ignores the East. In the following, different models of interpretation will be presented and discussed, in order to demonstrate the differences of opinion concerning approaches to Greek interaction with the East.

Interpreting interaction

It has been demonstrated above that Greco-centric or colonialist perspectives are wide-spread in modern scholarship on interaction between Greeks and the East. The East is regarded as a source of motifs in the arts that were transformed by the Greeks. The Greeks are presented as traders going to the East for trade. Then, they returned to their home *poleis* with exotic goods. Their relations with locals in Syria or Egypt are of little interest, as the Greeks made deals with the local rulers

and established themselves in their own enclaves. Also, Greeks are interpreted as taking the initiative in establishing trade relations with the East. When Near Eastern people were personally involved with the Greeks, it was in the form of wedding arrangements at the very top of the social hierarchy. With the advent of post-colonial studies and the tremendous impact of the book *Orientalism* by Edward Said, this perspective was challenged.⁵⁸ The East cannot be regarded as passive in interactions with the West without revealing an Orientalist bias. However, from the above review of interpretations of the role of Greeks in the East, it is obvious that this paradigm shift has not made much impact on Classical archaeologists. In the following, I will discuss approaches to interaction in the ancient world from outside the field of Classical archaeology that might contribute to a better understanding of Greeks and the East.

A post-colonial perspective can be said to be included in the application of the concept of a world system to the ancient world. Immanuel Wallerstein's world system theory concerning the development of international capitalism is reworked in Andre Frank and Barry Gills' thesis of a five thousand year old world system.⁵⁹ In this perspective, interaction between people and its results are more important than the isolated agents and their culture. The world system theory is akin to the concept of globalisation and can be seen as underlying the works of Martin West, Walter Burkert, and Sarah Morris: the Greeks are presented as being under the influence of a constant flux of cultural influences from the East.⁶⁰ Globalisation is an ambiguous concept, implying simultaneously multiculturalism, i.e. the co-existence of several cultures side by side, and a melting pot where cultures in contact with each other are transformed. Thus, it is a term that is used to describe very different things. Further, the world system becomes an imprecise term when applied to the ancient world, because it cannot be said to have existed lines of communication or interdependent global economies in any way comparable to the modern world. Thus, both concepts are in danger of obfuscating rather than elucidating the object of study, i.e. interaction in the ancient world. Attention should rather be paid to local exchange systems and processes of interaction. This may be seen in the work of Andrew and Susan Sherratt, who propose a model for the Mediterranean of steadily increasing frequency and intensity of contacts between the Near East, Greece, and the Western Mediterranean.⁶¹ In their framework, trade played a predominant role in tying regions together in a system

58. Said 2003 [1978].

59. Wallerstein 1974; Frank and Gills 1993.

60. S. Morris 1992; Burkert 1995; *ibid.* 2004; West 1999 [1997].

61. Sherratt and Sherratt 1991; *ibid.* 1993.

of exchange between the developed centres in the Eastern Mediterranean and an initially underdeveloped periphery in the West, complete with complementary zones of different types of production and regional competition.⁶² Ian Morris has followed up this approach to Greek history in a Mediterranean world system by coining the term “Mediterraneanization”, as a pun on globalisation.⁶³ These approaches are commendable because they take into consideration the several local variations in interaction.

Archaeological evidence from a number of sites implies that people were moving and bringing goods with them to foreign places. Theories about exchange systems suggest how these objects were moved and why. However, the different modes of interaction between agents tend to be let out in these models. Trade is treated as a given factor, motivated by gain. However, this does not explain how agents in exchange systems influence each other socially. Colin Renfrew and John F. Cherry suggest that cultural developments can be explained as the result of peer-polity interaction, the mutual competition and emulation between separate and equal communities.⁶⁴ In the framework of peer-polity interaction, the local networks between polities were the most important in the shaping of Greek identities.⁶⁵ This is no doubt a sensible approach to the developments in Greece in the Archaic period. However, it does place the Greeks in splendid isolation from the rest of the Mediterranean. Renfrew’s thesis of peer-polities presupposes that only polities that have a great deal in common will be liable to pull together and influence each other to mutual benefit. This means that Greek culture developed through emulation and competition between Greek polities. Any influences from Greek experiences abroad are ignored.⁶⁶ A quite different approach is that of Peter van Dommelen and his theory of hybridisation.⁶⁷ Rather than focussing on relations between structurally similar polities within the same culture, van Dommelen emphasises the transforming effects of meetings between different cultures. E.g. colonists and colonised are equally changed by encounters.⁶⁸ This

62. Sherrat and Sherratt 1993, 363.

63. Morris 2003.

64. Renfrew and Cherry 1986.

65. Renfrew 1996, 121-126; *ibid.* 130-136.

66. An approach similar to that of Renfrew is proposed by Marc van de Mieroop to Late Bronze Age palace societies in Syria (van de Mieroop 2005, 126-131). However, different from Renfrew, van de Mieroop’s investigation is not restricted to the Greeks, but defined by a region, *viz.* the Eastern Mediterranean. In my view, this is quite telling of the differences in perspective between scholars of Western and Eastern antiquity.

67. van Dommelen 1997; *ibid.* 2005.

68. van Dommelen 1997, 309.

approach can explain more than a peer-polity model, since it includes more encounters as being of significance than those with people of the same language and culture. A similar perspective to that of van Dommelen is Chris Gosden's middle ground theory.⁶⁹ In this interpretation, the mutual effects of meetings between cultures is emphasised.⁷⁰ Encounters are studied in terms of bringing about the mutual transformation of the cultures coming into contact, depending on the intensity of contacts. A similar approach is advocated by Jonathan Hall, who argues that although scholars are forced to work with a certain reification of cultures, this does not mean that this was the experience of the people that belonged to the cultures in question. Rather, he suggests, cultures are created actively, through eclectic processes of learning, assimilation or rejection.⁷¹

The different models offered for interaction between East and West in antiquity can be summarised thus:

- Colonialism (Boardman 1999; 2006)
- Globalisation (S. Morris 1992; Burkert 1995; 2004; West 1999 [1997])
- World system (Frank and Gills 1993; Sherrat and Sherrat 1991; 1993)
- Multiculturalism (Waldbaum 1994; 1997; Kearlsey 1999; Niemeier 2001)
- "Mediterraneanisation" (Morris 2003)
- Peer-polity interaction (Renfrew 1996; van de Mierop 2005)
- Hybridisation or middle ground theory (van Dommelen 1997; 2005; Gosden 2006 [2004]; Hall 2004)

These different models should be evaluated according to how well they explain the available data. In my view, any perspective that attributes a passive role to either part, West or East, is bound to fail in explaining interaction: the discussion will deteriorate into who took the initiative, Greeks or Phoenicians, a rather fruitless exercise, since either category represent an unwarranted generalised reification of quite varied groups of agents.

A global history of the ancient world

Near Eastern archaeologists have a quite different interpretation of relations between Greeks and their Eastern hosts than scholars of the Classical world. Rather than emphasising that the Greeks lived in enclaves in Syria, Peter M.

69. Gosden 2006 [2004].

70. Gosden 2006 [2004], 24-28.

71. Hall 2004, 42-46.

M. G. Akkermans and Glenn M. Schwartz propose that the Greeks were part of a “world system” of the Eastern Mediterranean, “where economic, cultural, and ideological contacts [...] were frequent and intense”.⁷² They look at the same material from the Syrian coast that is available to Classical archaeologists, but conclude that “the combination of cultural elements of the coast, as well as Aramaic, Phoenician, and Greek graffiti found at coastal sites argue [...] for a multi-ethnic population rather than discrete Greek or Phoenician communities”.⁷³ Rather than looking at separate cultures side by side⁷⁴ or a mix of all Mediterranean cultures,⁷⁵ the perspective of Akkermans and Schwartz tries to accommodate the totality of actors and see how they contribute to a whole.

In order to analyse agency and interaction, agents must be identified. This identification is always a question of interpretation, often of fairly ambiguous evidence, as seen from the above reviews of Lefkandi and Al Mina. A further problem is to determine the aims and goals of agents. The modes of interaction between foreign arrivals and local people have to be reconstructed. The nature of the evidence, mostly pottery, makes reconstructions of forms of interaction difficult: pottery can be transported by different people than the ones who made the pots. Therefore, as Jane Waldbaum points out, it is necessary to establish a more complete archaeological context, including housing, in order to prove a permanent presence of Greeks at Al Mina.⁷⁶ However, is it likely that e.g. Greek traders or mercenaries built their own houses? Further, providing evidence for permanence of residence is not as much an issue as determining the relations between Greeks and locals. How these relations are interpreted is tied to the complex of the Orientalising revolution in Greece. Classicists tend to emphasise the adaption of the Greeks of motifs and technology from the East. However, in this discussion, the totality of the situations of interaction tends to become ignored.

A striking feature of scholarship regarding relations between East and West is the concept of cultural transfer, i.e. knowledge and motifs moving from the Orient to the Occident. Marc van de Mieroop points out a danger with this approach, viz. that scholars regard the Orient as a prelude to Western culture: “the predilection to see the Ancient Near East primarily as a precursor of the Judeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman legacy, tacitly presents the European cultural development as the superior one in the world and measures the relevance of other traditions only

72. Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 393.

73. Akkermans and Schwartz 2003, 392.

74. Cf. Niemeier 2001.

75. Cf. S. Morris 1992.

76. Waldbaum 1997, 12.

in relationship to it".⁷⁷ Indeed, there is a tendency to study e.g. the transfer of the alphabet to the Greeks with regard to a specific moment or place of transfer rather than as a process of interaction. The Near East forms a background or substrate from where knowledge and technology is culled for later refinement by Europeans. Rather than regarding Greece and the Near East as parts of the same story, the East becomes a prelude to the story of the West. This line of thinking can be found as early as Herodotos: he regarded Egypt as one of the most ancient cultures in the world.⁷⁸ In his narrative, Egypt is the source of much of Greek culture, including the pantheon of twelve gods and their cults.⁷⁹ The idea of the East as the source of the West was developed by Hegel into a story of the East as the cradle of the West: Hegel claims that "die Weltgeschichte geht von Osten nach Westen, den Europa ist schlechthin das Ende der Weltgeschichte, Asien der Anfang". In Hegel's interpretation, like the physical sun rises in the East, so does history begin there and as the sun sets in the West, so does history have its end point there: "dafür steigt aber hier die innere Sonne des Selbstbewußtseins auf, die eine höhere Glanz verbreitet".⁸⁰

In Hegel's scheme, the East is the land of morning and mankind's childhood, whereas the West is where freedom for all is realised, through an inner sunrise of the awareness of the self. Of course, the analogy of history and the sun only works from the perspective of Western Europe. Seen from e.g. America, the sun rises in Europe and sets over the Pacific. However, this kind of schematic thinking on the history of the world's cultures as a prelude to the West has proved tenacious. It invites comparison between East and West, but only from a Western perspective, as a comparison between undeveloped and developed, or immature and mature cultures. Western culture has no real relation to the East. Technical skills may well have been transferred and adapted by Westerners, but the East is merely the source of this knowledge. Europeans take what they need from the abundance of the ancient Near Eastern cultures and transform it in their own culture. The narrative has no place for a continuous interaction between East and West. Rather, Europe is like a Phoenician princess abducted by Greek seafarers.⁸¹ Cultural traits are envisaged as being taken aboard Greek ships like so many abducted women.

77. van de Mierop 1997, 288.

78. Hdt. 2.2.

79. Hdt. 2. 4; *ibid.* 2.50-82.

80. Hegel 1970 [1832-45], 134.

81. Cf. Hdt. 1.2.

Conclusions

Odysseus and Kharaxos are the two archetypes of Greeks in the East, being adventurers and traders on brief visits. The lack of written sources for alternative scenarios contributes to the tendency for all sites with Greek artefacts to be interpreted from Greek perspectives, as places where the Greeks went for war or business. Interpretations of the role of Greeks abroad in the Eastern Mediterranean can be inspired by the Homeric epics, with the warrior-pirate Odysseus as the prototype Greek visitor, or Alkaios, with his brother the mercenary Greek in Babylonia,⁸² or Solon, as the learned traveller eager to experience foreign ways,⁸³ or Sappho, with her brother the trader going to Naukratis to buy the freedom of a famous *hetaera*.⁸⁴ The problem with these approaches is that they exclusively explain Greek artefacts from the confrontational perspective of a passive East and an aggressive, inquisitive or acquisitive West.

Finds from burials at Lefkandi on Euboea dated to around 900 BC suggest that there was contact between Greeks and people from Syria and the Levant. This contact has been interpreted as evidence for trade, diplomatic missions, and even migration, but the significance of the site for Greek culture in the Archaic period is hotly disputed. Finds of Greek pottery at Al Mina were for a long time taken as evidence for an early Greek colony in Syria. Trade was seen as the main activity at the site and through this trading station or colony, new motifs in the arts as well as new technology supposedly reached Greece from the Near East. Thus, Al Mina has been regarded as the source of the Orientalising revolution in Greek art. Recent analyses challenge this interpretation, however. Naukratis has played an important role in theories of cultural exchange between Greece and Egypt, held to have had the status of a free port where artists, intellectuals and adventurous merchants rubbed shoulders. However, recent research suggests that Naukratis was not a Greek *polis* on foreign soil, but an enclave for foreign traders established and controlled by Egypt. The sites Al Mina, Lefkandi, and Naukratis have all been interpreted in a range of different ways over the last decades. Scholars do not agree on the forms of interaction at these sites, the identity of the agents involved, or the significance of the sites for cultural developments in Greece or the East. The shifting paradigms in the interpretation of Greeks abroad in the early Archaic period, from colonial scenarios to multiculturalism, invites a comparison between the ancient Greeks and Western academics in post-colonial discourse: the Greeks at Al Mina have gone from colonial explorers in an exotic

82. Alc. 48; Alc. 350.

83. Hdt. 1.29-30.

84. Sappho 202.

East to barbarian mercenaries at the outskirts of the cradle of civilisation, quite analogous to the paradigm shift from a Eurocentric to a global perspective on history. However, as has been seen from the brief review of the interpretations of Lefkandi, Al Mina, and Naukratis, this change in perspective has brought no new consensus on how to interpret the nature of interaction in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Iron Age. More research is needed that takes the East and the West into consideration together.

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