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The Mycenaean Presence in the Black Sea Region

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MA in Black Sea Cultural Studies at the International Hellenic University. Its objective is to present the Mycenaean presence in the whole Black Sea region through the combination of the study of the Mycenaean findings, of local objects impregnated with Mycenaean characteristics, of the information that are hinting in the myths and of the written sources of the period. As regards the latter category, the texts of the Hittites provide valuable information.

Keywords: Argonautic Expedition, Iolkos, Caucasus, Mycenaeans, Black Sea region, Troy, Cyprus, Hittites, Thracians.

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Preface

The information about the rich cultural past of the Black Sea region, which forged through the contacts of the local populations with the Greek civilization, was often till recently if not unknown, incomplete. This situation begun to change the past decades, since the publications of the archaeological surveys became more accessible to the researchers, due to the fact that many of them are written in the international language. This welcome development concerns both, the periods of the prosperity of the Greek cities in the region and afterwards and also the prehistoric periods. Regarding the period of the Bronze Age, several efforts towards this direction are made mainly within the frame of the study of great civilizations like the Hittites in the southern Black Sea region, while the latest archaeological evidences from the cemetery of the Chalcolithic period in Varna also led to publications in English.

Thus, gradually, through the access to the study of the civilizations of the Black Sea region, is unfolded information which adds considerable knowledge about the trade network that was developed during the Bronze Age in the whole Mediterranean. A significant role had the Mycenaeans because of their intense interest in acquiring precious minerals. This search led them also to the Black Sea region, where civilizations mainly in the southern and the western zone engaged in the exploitation of the mines. Thus, this paper dissertation examines the Mycenaean presence in the Black Sea area and the cultural influences it exerted in the whole region. To manage this it appears necessary the interpretation of various findings, many of which travelled there from the Mycenaean world, while others were local, which however present features that declare intense Mycenaean influence.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Manoledakis Manolis for his valuable support from the beginning until the completion of this effort. Initially because during the courses he always raised questions and concerns, some of which led me to search the prehistoric past of the Black Sea region. Secondly, because throughout this effort Professor was always available to offer his help and give his advice.

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Introduction

The 'Axeinos' Pontos always provoked the curiosity of the Greeks, who gave this negative characterization to the Black Sea mainly before the second colonization process¹ and their familiarization with its difficult environment. Initially, not at random they bestowed it with the above characterization, since this Iranian word was synonymous with the term 'inhospitable'.² This negative attitude towards this land may have been partly caused by the narrations of the merchants, who had to deal with the gale force winds, which made the access of their ships from the Bosphorus Straits to the Black Sea a dangerous task. But even when this attempt was successfully attained, the sufferings of the seafarers were far from their end, since seasonally strong winds and fogs affected the Black Sea, causing difficulties during the navigation. Not few ships, during the whole periods of antiquity, were unable to cope with the weather's challenges, and windswept as they were finally ended to the bottom of the lake. During the last decades the underwater archaeological surveys demonstrated significant progress by identifying ancient shipwrecks and bringing to light many of their sunken findings.³ Finally, even when there was mild weather the sailing in the Black Sea was never easy because of the low levels of the salt that it contains. Initially the Black Sea was a close humid environment, which only as a lake could be characterized. Only when the influx in it of the Mediterranean waters began, the lake became a sea. Many theories about this process have been expressed. A recent research supports that the influx did not become as early as it is considered.

¹ The debate of whether the colonization process was taking place on the 8th or on the 7th century BC lasts many years. In favor of the first possibility argue the scholars, who are almost absolutely basing their research on ancient texts, indicatively see Labaree 1957, pp. 29-33; Graham 1971, pp. 35-47. On the other side there are those, who espousing a later colonization process in the 7th century either by combining information which is provided by the ancient texts and the findings, indicatively see Carpenter 1948, pp. 1-10, or by relying entirely on the findings, see Boardman 1991, pp. 18-31.

² Allen 1947, p. 86-8. Allen supports that the word 'Axeinos' is more possibly to have an etymological affinity with the Scythian Iranian word 'axšaina' which means 'dark' than with the Greek word 'Axenos' which means 'inhospitable'. However, according to him phonetically the two terms show a similarity. Thus, the Greeks adopted it. After the beginning of the colonization process, the Black Sea did not seem so inhospitable for the Greeks who settled there. Hence, gradually they changed the name into 'Euxeinos', which means hospitable.

³ Tymoshenko 2013, p. 199. Two shipwrecks of the later periods of antiquity were discovered Near Chersonesos Tauriki. The results of the surveys have shown that the strong winds and the storms were the reasons for their disaster; King 2004, pp. 18-9. The investigations of two more shipwrecks are mentioned by King. The one is near Sinope, in the southern Black Sea and the other is in the western Black Sea area, in the Bulgarian coast.

Through the analyses of the mollusk shells it is supported that the geomorphology of the Black Sea changed at around 7500-5500 BC, in the Middle Neolithic period.⁴

Continuing into the realm of myth, the above difficulties with which the traders had to deal with in the remote region should have kindled the imagination of those back home who were the recipients of the narrations. As a consequence, this was reflected in many Greek myths, since many heroes had to perform some of their trials and adventures also in the Pontic region. Thus the heroes from the Greek mainland had to confront and fight people of warlike and inhospitable tribes that were fitting in with the wild and inaccessible environment in which they were living. Therefore, Heracles among other adventures in the Black Sea fought with the Amazons, the tribe of the southern or according to another version of the northern Pontic region.⁵ Phrixos and Elli had also their adventures during their effort to pass Hellespont. Among these indicative myths it could not be omitted the myth of the Argonautic Expedition, the biggest part of which unfolds in the Black Sea region.⁶

The study of the myth in combination with historical evidences and archaeological researches disclose that the region, in which the king Aeetes was ruling, is located in the western state of Georgia. Likewise, the last decades' archaeological excavations in the Greek Thessaly, in the region near the gulf of Volos identified the city of Iolkos.⁷ The habitation strata of the Bronze Age city are lying on the Neolithic settlement of Dimini. Thus the starting point of the journey, which the myth describes, was indeed a genuine coastal, port town. Nowadays it is not so close to the sea but this was not the case in antiquity.⁸ In addition, as regards to Colchis and the wider region of Caucasus, many findings either imitate Mycenaean prototypes or they are Mycenaean that travelled there through the trade activities that were established among the two regions.⁹ These not only indicate the Mycenaean presence in the area but also reveal that through the myth are displayed contacts of commercial interest between the two regions. Moreover, by examining the texts of the ancient authors about the presence of tribes dealing with the mining

⁴ King 2004, p. 14.

⁵ Anastasiou 1986, pp. 52-5.

⁶ Drakonaki-Kazantzaki 1986, pp. 142-85.

⁷ Adrimi-Sismani 2007, p. 161.

⁸ Andreou-Fotiadis-Kotsakis 1996, p. 543.

⁹ Bouzek 1985, p. 30, 35.

of minerals that were in large quantities in the southeastern Black Sea region are perceived the reasons of such activities.¹⁰

However, this was not the case only in the area of Caucasus since in the southern Black Sea region and Anatolia there were also mines. The Mycenaean findings in the region are many, a reality that indicates the establishment of trade links. With particular interest are the vessels and the pottery fragments in the site of Maşat Höyük, a settlement that used to be part of the Hittite Empire.¹¹ These findings triggered the interest of the scholars since they constitute the unique indisputable Mycenaean pottery vessels that have been found until nowadays in the Black Sea region. Pottery fragments have been also revealed in other areas mainly of the southern Pontic zone. Nonetheless their integration into the chronological framework of the Mycenaean period is under discussion since there are disagreements among the scholars regarding their attribution as Mycenaean.¹² Except for the pottery findings, other objects indicate intense Mycenaean presence in the southern Black Sea area. A particular finding, which raises many questions and intense debates among the scholars, is the Mycenaean sword that was revealed near the great entrance of Hattusa, the capital of the Hittite Empire. Its structure elements indicate that either it is a sword that travelled there from the Mycenaean world or it is a local one manufactured under the Mycenaean cultural influences.¹³ Apart from the findings, the Hittite's texts are also referred to the Mycenaeans, certifying their presence in both the western Anatolia in the boundaries of the Hittite territory and also in the central Anatolia, in the heart of this great Empire. These references do not provide much information regarding the trade but mainly about military conflicts, in which the Mycenaeans were chosen to be in the opposite camp, the one that was fighting against the Hittites.¹⁴ The Mycenaean presence in the western Anatolia evidenced also by the numerous findings in the whole region, especially in Troy. The habitation layers of the Bronze Age present a large amount of Mycenaean pottery declaring their strong presence in the area. It is apparent that the location of Troy was of geopolitical importance for the Mycenaeans as it was very close to the Straits

¹⁰ Drews 1976, pp. 26-8.

¹¹ Özgüç 1980, p. 309.

¹² Cline 1991a, p. 3.

¹³ Mellink 1993, pp. 112-3.

¹⁴ Bryce 1986, pp. 1-12.

of Hellespont, which their ships had to cross during their commercial trips to the Black Sea.¹⁵

Travelling further away to the western Black Sea region, the admiration of the scholars is provoked by the cemetery of Varna, which is dated to the Chalcolithic period. The burials of the cemetery are hundreds and the majority of them are accompanied by precious funeral gifts. Some of them are made of metals that come from the region, while minerals, gemstones and other material constructions travelled also from many different regions of the then known world, including the Aegean.¹⁶ Actually, the presence of these objects describes the existence of trade over long distances from such early period. Regarding the period of the Bronze Age, various hoards display similarities with precious metals from the Greek mainland. The most typical example is the kantharos of the hoard known as '*Vulchetrun*', which could imitate in its construction a type of kantharos that was found in the Grave Circle A of the Mycenae.¹⁷ Many debates regarding the integration of the hundreds of stone anchors of the western Black Sea region in a specific chronological period are also continued nowadays. Although initially the researches made the balance to tilt towards an early dating of them at the Bronze Age¹⁸, gradually some of them were withdrawn from this certainty expressing doubts about their dating in such early periods of antiquity.¹⁹ Generally, as it is specified below, most of the findings in the western Pontic zone as those that set out above and also others like the ox-hide ingots²⁰ have been discovered in noteworthy amounts. Subsequently, they offer many indications for one to advocate in favor of the development of trade activities among the region and the Mycenaean world. What prevents however the scholars to draw clear conclusions, is the lack of the excavation methods during their disclosure. According to the author of the present paper dissertation, this fact is the most important inhibitor. Once a finding is removed from the location in which it is revealed without the appropriate survey of the surrounding space and of the potential additional findings that accompanied it, in retrospect it is difficult for the scholars to include the object into a narrow chronological frame. Furthermore, as a deterring

¹⁵ Jablonka-Rose 2004, p. 625.

¹⁶ Bailey 2000, pp. 222-3.

¹⁷ Sherratt-Taylor 1989, p. 112.

¹⁸ Frost 1982, pp. 280-2.

¹⁹ Frost 1997, p. 112.

²⁰ Toncheva 1982, p. 176.

factor in the dating issue may be considered the absence of Mycenaean pottery in the region. The lack of this medium, which indicates the carrying out of the daily activities, such as the transportation and the storage of potable and dry food, is a matter of concern. Probably future methodical excavation activities provide the scholars either with the desired Mycenaean pottery or with clarifications regarding their intense absence. Finally, the Mycenaean influence, as it is also supported below, goes further to the northern hinterland, reaching to the Ukrainian steppe zone, where cheek pieces²¹ of Mycenaean influence have been revealed, while in the coast of the northern Black Sea region have been discovered of Mycenaean type double-axes.²²

²¹ Hiller 1991, p. 211.

²² Buchholz 1960.

The Mycenaean Presence through the Myth

Thanks to Apollonius of Rhodes, the poet of the 3rd century BC is thoroughly survived the myth of the Argonautic Expedition, the greater part of which was held in the Black Sea, the region that is under consideration in the present paper dissertation. Apollonius based his four-volume book epic poem on older sources that go back to Homer²³ (Od., 10.137, 11.254, 259, Iliad 2.816-877²⁴). It seems however that the earliest extended story of Argo is attributed to Pindar (Pythian Ode 4).²⁵ Nevertheless, in the works of many more ancient authors like Eumelus (Corinthiaka. EGF, frg.2), Hesiod (Eoiae, Theogony 992-999) and Herodotus there are references to the Argonautica.²⁶

As a consequence, it is perceived that the time in which the Argonautica is placed, is an era before the 8th century. This view is also supported by the fact that the predecessors of the heroes that took place in the Trojan War are present in the list of the heroes that participated in the Expedition.²⁷ Hence, the Expedition is placed in the Mycenaean Era, since many rulers of the period are mentioned as crew members.

Continuing, the core of the myth was the target of Jason and the Argonauts to sail up from the port of the northern Mycenaean city, Iolkos in Thessaly, which was also the motherland of Jason, to the region named Colchis or Aea. In that distant land they had to seize the Golden Fleece, which was in the possession of the king Aetes.²⁸ The latter had a huge snake to guard this precious acquirement, which

²³ Some scholars support that the Trojan Catalogue and the Iliad are dated to the 8th century BC, see Drews 1976, pp. 20-2. However nowadays modern scholars have avoided to lay the groundwork of their research on the assurances of the scholars of the last century. Thus, through the fresh look on the issue there are not few among them who argue in favor of a dating of the Iliad in the 7th century, see Kullmann 2011, p. 114; Manoledakis 2013, p. 29.

²⁴ In the Second Book of the Iliad, in the verses 816-877 are mentioned in detail the military forces of the Trojans. Part of the allies consisted also of tribes from the southern Black Sea region. For a detailed examination of the tribes see Manoledakis 2013, pp. 19-37.

²⁵ Braswell 1988. Braswell in his book gives an interpretation of the 4th Ode of Pindar.

²⁶ Manoledakis 2009, pp. 779-86.

²⁷ Drakonaki-Kazantzaki 1986, pp. 140-1. In the 4th book of the "Greek Mythology" there is a full list of the heroes that participated in the Argonautic Expedition as well as their ancestors and their affinity with other known heroes.

²⁸ Nilsson 1972, pp. 136-7.

Phrixos, who was also from Thessaly, gave it to him in a mythological period before the Expedition.²⁹

Many efforts have been made and many theories have been developed even since the ancient times in order to identify if there is a kernel of truth in the myth of the Argonauts generally and in the presence of the Golden Fleece itself in particular. One of the most popular of those that posed in the ancient times was the one expressed by Strabo (11.2.19) and Appian (Mithr. 103). According to them, through the Golden Fleece is reflected the abundant gold of the Phasis River in Colchis, which was collected by the inhabitants in fleeces. Although in their view seems to lurk an exaggeration, the archaeological excavations that are held the last decades in the area surrounding the Phasis River, have brought to light objects that are dated in the Bronze Age. These are made with precious metals and have detailed elaboration, which reveal both, the existence of minerals in the area and the skills of the manufacturers.³⁰ The latter in its turn shows the familiarization in the mining activity.

This activity was the reason that made Colchis famous even from the Bronze Age. References to Colchis are present in Assyrian inscriptions of the end of the 12th century BC with the name *‘Κίλχη’* and in the Urartu with the name *‘Κόλχα’*.³¹ Also, further away in space and time, in Pylos of the 13th century BC have been engraved Linear B tablets mentioning the land of Aea and its king Aetes as well as the name of the leader of the Argonautica, Jason along with the names of some members of the crew.³² Moreover, the names of *‘ko-ki-da’* and *‘ko-ki-de-jo’* are by some scholars interpreted as *‘Κολχιδας’* and *‘Κολχιδειος’* respectively, an interpretation which however is not accepted by the entire scientific community that addressed with the issue.³³ Even if one considers that the interpretation of the latter as Colchis does not apply (although the issue is still under discussion), the above references to the myth and to the region, are sufficient enough to show that the Mycenaeans had knowledge of the existence of Colchis. In addition, the first efforts of commercial transactions with the region are disclosed through the myth. Relying on this

²⁹ Drakonaki-Kazantzaki 1986, p. 128.

³⁰ Bouzek 1990, p. 184.

³¹ Koromila 2001, pp. 19-20.

³² Hiller 1991, p. 214.

³³ Landau 1958, p. 72.

approach, Braund proposed that the myth constitutes a promotion of the relationships of the Greeks with the non-Greeks, within the framework of a first process of colonization even from the Mycenaean period.³⁴

Even if the above opinion is too risky to be expressed for the period that is surveyed in this paper, it is wise to pay attention to the references of Homer about the land of 'Alybe' in which the tribe Halizones lived (Hom. Il. 2.857). He is referred to it as the land from where the steel came from. If one takes under consideration the correlation of the word 'Alybe' with the known tribe of the South Black Sea 'Chalybes', easily becomes comprehensible the etymological affinity of the two. Manoledakis has recently expressed his belief about a high possibility of an identification of the two names. Among others, he also mentions the opinion of Strabo, who in the 1st century BC was also in favor of the matching of the two names. Generally, according to him, the cases could be two. Either it was a misunderstanding during the transfer of Homer's text through the ages, or the Chalybes in the period in which the Iliad was written, called Alybes.³⁵ In addition, as the name of the former reveals, the Chalybes were also connected with lands with mines. Thus, it could have been the same tribe that according to the later Hecateus lived in the land that was among Amnisos and Colchis.³⁶ Hence, the region which was full in silver mines was known into Homer.³⁷ Maybe that was the reason why in most of the narration the Argonauts sailed to Colchis lengthwise the southern coast of the Black Sea region. The version may reflect the commercial activities that were developed among the people of the Greek mainland and those of the southern Black Sea region even centuries before the time of Apollonius. However it is not absent also from the ancient bibliography the opposite route, which was embraced by Diodorus of Sicily. According to his narration, after the Argonauts after left the Straits of Bosphorus, they headed north reaching the Tauric Peninsula and from there they travelled to Colchis (4.44.7, 4.45.1, 4.46.3).³⁸

At this point, it is wise not to omit the connection of Sinope, on the one hand with the Argonautica itself and on the other hand with myths related to it in a

³⁴ Braund 2005, pp. 99-112.

³⁵ Manoledakis 2013, p. 26.

³⁶ Drews 1976, pp. 26-7.

³⁷ Manoledakis 2013, p. 26.

³⁸ Manoledakis 2009, p. 788.

mythological period before the Expedition.³⁹ First of all, Sinope was founded either by the Argonaut Autolykus alone (Plutarch, Lucullus 23.5, Appian Mithr.83) or by him accompanied with his two brothers Phlogius and Deileon (Apollonius from Rhodes Arg. 2.955-961, Pseudo-Scymnus, Periplus 990-1.). In any case, there was a tradition in Sinope as for the foundation of the city that has to do with Thessaly. Moreover, according to the ancient written sources, the Sinopeans had a cult about their hero-founder Autolykos, which lies until the Roman period.⁴⁰ Finally, a colony of Sinope named Cytorus took its name by Cytoros, which was the son of Phrixus from Thessaly (Strabo 12, 3, 10).⁴¹ Therefore, taking into account all the above aspects, it becomes clear that the presence of Thessaly in the south Black Sea has a mythological tradition that goes back to the Mycenaean period.⁴²

Recapitulating, the presence of the names of the fathers of the heroes of Troy constitutes a significant element to place the myth in the Mycenaean period. Moreover, the region of Colchis was known in many civilizations of the Bronze Age including the Mycenaeans. Hence, in the above information one can add the fact that from the time of Homer the existence of the tribe of Chalybes, as the Greeks called the people that used to live and exploit the several mines in the lands around Sinope, a place that is also related with the myths of Thessaly including the Argonautica. Thus, all the above in conjunction with the archaeological finds in the south (a short mention is made above, a more extensive follows) and in the entire Black Sea too, shows that there was a Mycenaean presence in the whole area. This presence was in the context of commercial transactions with the local civilizations.

³⁹ Drakonaki-Kazantzaki 1986, pp. 156-7.

⁴⁰ Manoledakis 2010, p. 565.

⁴¹ Drakonaki-Kazantzaki 1986, p. 156.

⁴² Manoledakis 2010, pp. 563-76. Manoledakis in his work 'on the Cults of Sinope and the Founders of the City' cites evidence from both the mythology of Sinope and the ancient authors. He demonstrates that, according to the myth, before the Milesians, the Thessalians were those who founded Sinope in the early 8th century. Moreover, he does not omit to mention findings and inscriptions that correlate the city with the cult of Autolykus.

Dimini/Iolkos

Before citing the archaeological finds that indicate the Mycenaean presence in Colchis, the region into which the myth of the Argonauts led us, it is considered as a necessity by the author of this paper to line up some information about the Mycenaean center of Iolkos. The Thessalian city like the other more known and better investigated centers of the southern Greece, constituted the starting point of trips with commercial interest. However, the emphasis given here to ancient Iolkos has to do with two interrelated issues. On the one hand is the connection of Iolkos with the Black Sea region as it is evidenced through the myth. On the other hand is the archaeological findings which seal the above contact that the myth implies.

Even until the last decade of the 20th century the interest of the archaeologists, dealing with the Mycenaean world, monopolized the important findings on the southern Greece, in Boeotia and Peloponnese. The existence of the Cyclopean fortifications, the palatial centers and other nonpalatial settlements, were the reasons why Boeotia was considered by many scholars the northern geographical limit of the Mycenaean world.⁴³ However, the archaeological excavations were bringing continuously to light many Mycenaean sites in Thessaly with sufficient quantities of Mycenaean pottery. Nonetheless, the region of Thessaly was always considered to be in the margins of the Mycenaean world.⁴⁴ Partly, a significant role in this perception played the emphasis to the earlier architectural structures and pottery finds of settlements like Dimini, which along with the Sesklo are maybe the two best spatial surveyed Neolithic settlements.

Nevertheless, the excavations that carried out the last decades have revealed many small settlements with both architectural and movable findings which in their turn show the intense Mycenaean presence in Thessaly. Among the many identified are the settlements of Kastro/Palia⁴⁵, Dimini⁴⁶ and Pefkakia⁴⁷ to be the best researched. In addition, the existence of many tholos and chamber tombs leave no

⁴³ Rutter 1993, p. 759.

⁴⁴ Feuer 1999, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Pantou 2010, pp. 114-5.

⁴⁶ Adrimi-Sismani 2006, pp. 465-81.

⁴⁷ Dickinson 1977, pp. 99-100; Pantou 2010, pp. 391-2.

doubt that they served as the final resting place of the Mycenaean inhabitants of the region, since these types of burials constitute the registered trademarks of the civilization.⁴⁸

More specifically, the most intensive excavated settlement is well known with its two names, each one of which is referred to the two most important phases of its occupation. The reason is for the known for its important Neolithic strata settlement of Dimini,⁴⁹ in which additionally the last decades came to light significant layers of habitation of the Mycenaean period. The settlement was identified with the Mycenaean city of Iolkos, widely known from the myth of the Argonautica, to which reference was made above. The settlement was founded in the end of the 15th century BC and flourished in the 14th and 13th centuries.⁵⁰ It consists of many rectangular houses and two megaroid buildings, the Megaron A and the Megaron B. These two are parallel and maybe they shared the same courtyard.⁵¹ The end of the prosperous period of the two Megara became simultaneously and it is placed among the 1292 and the 1132.⁵²

Moreover, in the whole settlement has been found Mycenaean pottery of the LH IIIB2-IIIC. Some quantities are of great quality, reminding those that have been found in the settlements of the Peloponnese, while it is not absent from the strata of the whole Mycenaean period the local, hand-made pottery.⁵³

Continuing, two unique findings were present in the south wing of the Megaron A. As the total number of the findings indicates, this wing was probably the

⁴⁸ Nilsson 1972, pp. 137-8. Nilsson provides information about the Kapaklis tomb near Iolkos, in which have been revealed golden objects and Mycenaean pottery. Adrimi-Sismani 2009, pp. 133-41. More recently, Adrimi-Sismani has also excavated a tholos tomb, during a road construction on the site Kazanaki, near the thessalian city of Volos. The tomb has all the features that characterize the tholoi, representative examples of the Mycenaean civilization. In addition, were held excavations in other sites around Volos in which have been revealed chamber tombs too. The burials in all of these tombs were accompanied by rich grave goods.

⁴⁹ Hourmouziadis 1993. Hourmouziadis reexamined the site of Dimini in the years 1974-1976. Dimini is one of the best excavated Neolithic settlements in the Greek area, offering a wealth of information for both the organization of the space and the way of the everyday life of the Neolithic people. Nowadays it is almost 4km. away from the coastal zone, but during the Neolithic period it was a coastal settlement. Hourmouziadis in his book not only introduces us in the general organization of the space of Dimini but also records his studies concerning both the intra- and the inter-communal arrangement of the settlement.

⁵⁰ Adrimi-Sismani 2007, p. 161.

⁵¹ Adrimi-Sismani 2007, pp. 161-3.

⁵² Adrimi-Sismani 2006, p. 474. The dating of the destruction layer based on a radiocarbon analysis.

⁵³ Adrimi-Sismani 2006, pp. 470-1.

one where the preparation of the food and the storage of the products occurred. Among other findings, the archaeologists discovered a stone weight⁵⁴ and a rim of a kylix⁵⁵ both with Linear B inscriptions. In the above examples, have been recently added two fragmentary tablets with also Linear B inscriptions from the settlement of Kastro/Palia. Unfortunately only one of the two is preserved in good condition. The second one is burnt and only a dividing, horizontal line is preserved on it. Hence, through the proposing restoration of the first tablet it becomes apparent that some of the words are repeated in the Linear B tablets of the Mycenaean centers in the southern mainland and in Knossos.⁵⁶ Therefore, these findings demonstrate that the region of Thessaly should not be treated as a marginalized area of the Mycenaean period.

The latter view is reinforced by the numerous golden objects that have been found in the region. More specifically, of particular interest is a series of analyzes that occurred in some of the golden objects that were found in the shaft graves inside the tholos tomb of Kazanaki. Some of them are either golden jewelry or part of them, while others used to be parts of clothes, which did not preserve due to the perishable material of their construction. With significance was the amount of the golden necklace beads that have been found scattered inside the whole tomb.⁵⁷ This remarkable amount of gold led the excavator Adrimi-Sismani to carry out an examination of the objects in order to determine the origin of this valuable material. According to the first analysis of a small number of the aforementioned objects, the gold that was used for their construction came from a river, which initially was not identified.⁵⁸ Thus, the results of the first analysis unsurprisingly raised more questions than resolved. Therefore, it was followed a second one by the same team of the Louvre Museum. In that second phase it was compared a small amount of the golden materials of the tomb with golden objects from the ancient Colchis. The results revealed that the origin of the objects appears to be largely the same.⁵⁹ Such a development added fuels to the researches' expectations, that the ancient Iolkos was the starting point of trips with commercial interest to the Black Sea region, even

⁵⁴ Adrimi-Sismani 2007, p. 164 fig. 15.4.

⁵⁵ Pantou 2010, p. 387, Adrimi-Sismani and Godart 2005, fig.8.

⁵⁶ Skafida-Karnava-Olivier 2012, pp. 60-3, fig. 8-14.

⁵⁷ Adrimi-Sismani 2009, p. 137.

⁵⁸ Guerra-Röhrs-Salmon-Walter-Adrimi-Sismani 2008.

⁵⁹ Kotti 2010, URL: <http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22733&subid=2&pubid=40814967>.

from the Mycenaean period. Further, the meaning that lies under the myth of the Argonautic Expedition, concerning the search of gold in the region of Colchis is gaining more importance.

On contrast, there are arguments from other counterparts, who have adopted the opinion that it is not for sure that there were sources of gold in the ancient Georgia. More specifically, Tsetskhladze argues that a reason which let him to adopt this thought is that nowadays there are no gold resources in Georgia.⁶⁰ But one cannot rely on the modern reality that applies on the geography of the landscapes. The rivers in Colchis may not have nowadays gold but this does not exclude its presence in antiquity. The history has shown that this could be the case. It is sufficient to be transferred in space and time in Macedonia. Likewise, the numerous golden objects, some of them astonishing, of the classical and Hellenistic period were manufactured from local gold from the rivers and the mountains of the region. Instead, nowadays these lands are far from fruitful regarding the generation of gold. Hence, in the case of the beads from Iolkos, there is no reason for the results to be applied without closer scrutiny, even in this case that the amount of the surveyed objects is small. However, a future additional analysis in a bigger amount of golden products of the two ancient regions could confirm with a greater certainty these first results and allow the controversy of the researches to be laid to rest.

⁶⁰ Tsetskhladze 1995, p. 325.

The Mycenaean Presence in the Southern Black Sea region

The research throughout the Black Sea area begins from the region of Colchis, which is in the modern state of Georgia. This choice was not made at random; the myth of the Argonautica and also the specific results of the analyzed golden items of Iolkos led the research to begin from there. Hence, the connection of the two regions, which was subject until recently only in the realm of the myth, is testified through the archaeological finds too. In spite of the fact that the amount of the analyzed items does not allow the researchers to draw firm conclusions about the source of the gold, other objects that have been found in Colchis reinforce the argument of the Mycenaean presence in the area of Caucasus.

More particularly, in Georgia have been recorded in their entirety nine rapiers and spear heads, which have similarities with specific Mycenaean parallels. According to Bouzek's recordings, the Caucasus' findings have many similarities with the Mycenaean types Karo A and Karo B. The Karo A type of swords was long and appeared in the Aegean in the MM III. The duration of its use reaches at around the LH IIA.⁶¹ On contrast, it does not seem that it was in the tradition of the cultures of Caucasus to manufacture long swords.⁶² This is the case also with the Karo B type of swords, which is dated in the same period with the Karo A.⁶³ This type is characterized by the triangular butt. Its production was not big even in the Aegean. It seems that this group was more widespread in the Balkan area. The Albania and Bulgaria have to show some examples of these, which are either original or local imitations of the Aegean patterns.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, both of the types were found in the Trialeti tombs⁶⁵, in the region of Georgia. Five of them belong to the type A and

⁶¹ Bouzek 1985, p. 30.

⁶² Hiller 1991, p. 212.

⁶³ Bouzek 1985, p. 30.

⁶⁴ Harding 1984, p. 166, pp. 239-41.

⁶⁵ Kuftin-Field 1946, p. 343, p. 346. The Trialeti culture was developed in the northern part of the plateau of the Lesser Caucasus. The place was preferred due to its large amounts of quarrying of obsidian and metals. This rendered feasible the trade contacts with the Near East and even more remote destinations such as the cultures of the Aegean. The Trialeti culture is highly recognizable by its tombs, especially those from the Middle and the Late Bronze Age. The larger amount of them was discovered mainly in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

were found in Hovil, Vari, Khodja-Daoud⁶⁶, Samtavro and Lib, while four were found in the settlements of Miston, Chir-Dir 3, Samtavro and Andriukovskaja.⁶⁷

Moreover, during the attempt to dating some of the above findings that were inside the Trialeti tombs, Gimbutas noted some similarities with findings from the Greek area. More specifically, inside the tomb No. XV, one of the richest tombs, it was present a “socketed spearhead of bronze covered with a silver spearhead.”⁶⁸ This spearhead, according to the same scholar, has similarities with another one from the Tomb X of the cemetery of the Prosymna in Greece.⁶⁹ However Hiller relying on the published drafts of the two objects supports that it is more possible to consider them as imports from the Aegean than as products manufactured under a Mycenaean stylistic influence.⁷⁰ However, according the De Boer’s allegations, the similarities in the aforementioned objects do not prove that there was a direct contact of the two civilizations.⁷¹ Even if the latter is the case, they demonstrate the fact that indeed there was a Mycenaean presence in the area of Caucasus. This presence was a result of the transaction either of products or of ideas and knowledge.

Another finding, on which however the information is inadequate, came to light in the neighboring Armenia. According to the excavator Leveque, one silver cup from the Kirovakan presents similarities with the known group of cups from the Vapheio tomb in the Peloponnese.⁷² The cup is dated in the 16th -15th centuries.⁷³ According to the available description, it is bigger than the Vapheio cups and it has two handles, while those from the Vapheio tomb have one. Unfortunately the information is so restricted and no secure conclusions can be made yet.

Before continuing the journey to the southern Black Sea region it is worth to move a little further to the east in the Baltic region in order to be determined the way with which this distant area associated with Mycenaean world. Early enough in the

⁶⁶ Schaeffer 1948, fig. 222 for Khodja-Daoud, fig. 226: 2 for Hovil, 227: 4-5 for Vari.

⁶⁷ Bouzek 1985, p. 35.

⁶⁸ Gimbutas 1965, p. 92.

⁶⁹ Gimbutas 1965, p. 92, p. 93 fig. 51:1,2. Gimbutas illustrates the two drafts of the two spearheads of the Prosymna tomb in Greece and of the Trialeti tomb in Georgia. These drafts made by Blegen and Kuffin. However, there’s no further publication of any research since then. Thus, the information remains meager.

⁷⁰ Hiller 1991, p. 213.

⁷¹ De Boer 2008, p. 285.

⁷² Davis 1977, p. 104.

⁷³ Mellink 1988, pp. 115-6.

previous century the scholars paid attention to the origin of the amber from which some beads from the burials of the Grave Circles in Mycenae constructed. The results of the chemical analyzes demonstrate that the amber, which was used for the construction of the beads, originated from the Baltic region. This led many scholars to restore an amber route from the Baltic region to the Mediterranean and the central Europe, even from the period of the early Bronze Age.⁷⁴ It seems that the same route was maintained also in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, which shows the consolidation of trade activities with the Baltic over many centuries.⁷⁵ Many of them have been identified in the Adriatic, Alumiere and Tiryns. Indeed, their construction material is the Baltic amber but the conception and the execution of the draft indicate the local origin of the Adriatic and the neighboring Greek beads respectively.⁷⁶ Thus, even though it is difficult for the scholars to argue that the Mycenaeans during their travels reached to the Baltic area; nevertheless they managed to influence the area through their trade activities in the Black Sea.

Entries and information regarding the existence of the above amber route are also identified directly and indirectly in the ancient texts and the mythology. More specifically, Herodotus described the route that the offerings of the Hyperborean followed from tribe to tribe stored in wooden reeds until their final destinations, the sanctuaries in the Aegean and the bay of the Adriatic (Herod. IV 32-35). The tradition regarding the procedure that used to be followed for the distribution of the offerings seems to belong to much earlier periods than Herodotus' (485-421/15 B.C.), since in the beginning of the description of the procedure he is referred to the age of the information that goes back to Hesiod and Homer. In addition, the route that the Hyperborean decided for the gods' offerings to follow, reminds the road which the Argonauts followed during their return to Iolkos after the seizure of the Golden Fleece.⁷⁷

Returning to the southern Black Sea region, of impressive quality Mycenaean findings provides the Hittite Empire and especially the settlement of Maşat Höyük which is almost 100 km east of the capital Hattusa. The site of Maşat Höyük is in the

⁷⁴ Bouzek 2011, p. 248.

⁷⁵ Harding 2005, p. 299.

⁷⁶ Bouzek 2011, p. 248.

⁷⁷ Bouzek 2010, pp. 95-101.

borders of the Hittite Empire. Although the latter was large and strong it did not manage to expand its territory towards the southern coast of the Black Sea region, where used to live the semi-nomadic tribe of Kashka.⁷⁸ Their territory was the provinces of the Sinop, Samsun and Ordu. The Maşat Höyük was at the line and it was possible used as a buffer zone between the two territories.⁷⁹ In this site the archaeological excavations have revealed fragmentary Mycenaean vessels.(fig.1) According to Hiller five of the vessels are flasks and one is a stirrup jar.⁸⁰ However, Cline mentions that the vessels which were created from the join of the sherds are seven.⁸¹ In any case all the vessels and the pottery fragments are Mycenaean and are dated to the LH IIIA2/B. According to the excavator they “are made of buff clay with cream or greenish cream slip, decorated with alternating wide and narrow stripes in lustrous black paint.”⁸² They were found along with Hittite sherds and seal impressions⁸³ and a Cypriot white-slip II bowl.

The presence of the 13th century Cypriot bowl⁸⁴ in the same strata with the Mycenaean vessels raises automatically the question of whether the latter travelled via Cyprus or via the Black Sea region. Some scholars, including the excavator, exclude the possibility that the vessels arrived there via the Black Sea, by setting each one of them different arguments.⁸⁵

Özgüç supports that they probably arrived in Maşat Höyük via Cyprus⁸⁶, due to the presence in the same layer of the aforementioned Cypriot vessel. The probability to had been followed a route through Cyprus is not impossible as it is evidenced that there were trade contacts of the island with both, the Mycenaean

⁷⁸ Muscarella 1995, pp. 91-2. In the end of the Bronze Age the Hittite Empire and the other empires around it received the final blow, which drove them to their complete collapse. Their dissolution is dated at around 1200-1180 BC. Many opinions have been expressed about the reasons of the destruction. One of the most popular candidates for raids against the Hittites is the tribe of Kashka with whom the Hittites were bordering. However, this issue needs to be researched more thoroughly because; first of all the destruction was spatially broad. The Mycenaean centers, which are far away from the Hittites, were also destroyed almost the same period. Secondly, in the Egyptian texts is recorded that the destruction was a result of simultaneous raids of many different tribes, among which the Kashka where present.

⁷⁹ Özgüç 1980, p. 308.

⁸⁰ Hiller 1991, p. 208.

⁸¹ Cline 1991a, p. 3.

⁸² Özgüç 1980, p. 309.

⁸³ Özgüç 1980, p. 309.

⁸⁴ Mee 1978, p. 133.

⁸⁵ De Boer 2008, pp. 284-5.

⁸⁶ Özgüç 1980, p.309.

world and the Anatolian provinces. More specifically, during the LH IIIA2/B the contacts between the Mycenaean world and the Cyprus were increased. According to the pottery distribution, Mycenaean wares have been found in almost 80 sites of the island. The same pottery fragments are also present in more than a hundred sites in the Levant in the same strata with Cypriot pottery. Roughly the same applies in the archaeological strata of the same period in Egypt.⁸⁷ This indicates that the trade relationships between the Mycenaean and the Cypriot centers were close, since Cyprus was an important node in the transit trade of the Mycenaean centers with the Anatolian provinces.⁸⁸

Within the same framework, De Boer also argues that there is not much possibility for the pottery to have been travel via the Black Sea. Among one of the reasons that he refers is the presence of the hostile people of Kashka, who controlled the coastal line and made the trade for the Hittites difficult.⁸⁹ Indeed, the Kashka was a hostile tribe which did not let others to settle in their lands. However this does not prove that they always managed to obstruct the Hittites from developing commercial transactions via the Black Sea. It is not unambiguous that the relationships between Kashka and Hittites were always strained. It is also not unequivocal that the former had no need to develop a kind of cooperation with the empire of the Hittites. Especially when in the fertile plains around the border areas like Maşat Höyük were held almost all the agricultural activities⁹⁰, necessary for the survival in the inhospitable mountainous landscape of Caucasus.

In favor of the possibility of the transportation of the vessels through the Troy and the Bosphorus advocate French, due to the fact that the Maşat Höyük is only 130 km away from the southern coast. He argues that this route is more feasible. After the passing of the products from the Bosphorus they ended up via the Black Sea to Samsun, which was the starting point for their distribution in the Hittite Empire.⁹¹ The possibility of an overland route for the transportation of the vessels is also examined. However, it seems that the sea route is easier than the land's due to the fact of the

⁸⁷ Vanschoonwinkel 2006, pp. 58-63.

⁸⁸ Van Wijngaarden 2002, pp. 275-80.

⁸⁹ De Boer 2008, p. 285.

⁹⁰ Özgüç 1980, p. 306.

⁹¹ French 1982, pp. 21-2. Also Bittel 1976, p. 528, Mellink 1985, p. 558 and Hiller 1991, p. 208 support the possibility of the products to have been transferred via the Bosphorus and Black Sea.

unfriendly and almost inaccessible mountainous region. Furthermore, one cannot omit the reality that until recently the pottery finds are limited in central Anatolia. This absence is in favor of the possibility, according to which the Maşat vessels have transferred via the Black Sea.⁹²

Furthermore, except for the pottery in the Maşat Höyük, additional Mycenaean objects have been recorded in other places of the Hittite Empire. Some of them are in limited quantity while the interpretation of others as Mycenaean is debatable. In Fraktin a stirrup jar of the LH IIIC has been found and a knife also is thought to be an Aegean product. In Godelesin Höyük is present a LH IIIC pottery fragment, while the single sherd from Uc Höyük that was assigned as Mycenaean is under discussion.⁹³

Remaining in the periphery of the Hittite empire, during the excavation activities in the Kusakli area, the archaeologists found fragments of a Mycenaean pyxis of the LH IIIA2. More specifically, these fragments were revealed in a room of the south tower of the northwestern gate of the city of Sarissa. The tower is dated in the 1530 B.C. due to the dendrochronology that was applied on the retained wooden residues of the posts that were used for its construction.⁹⁴

There is also no lack in Mycenaean findings at Hattusa, the capital of the Hittite Empire. In the so called nowadays Bogazköy, the excavations brought to light a possible Aegean belt. It was revealed in a room of the building that used to be the Archive Complex. The belt was made of metal and initially was found in pieces scattered in the room. During the recovery process was joined only a part of it, which could cover the front of the haunches of a man. The missing part could have been made either of leather or of metal. In the outer parts it has bronze foils while gold was also used for the details of the braid.⁹⁵ The draft reminds a similar one, which adorns a Mycenaean headstone. Generally this pattern is present in the earlier phases of the civilization of the islands of the Aegean, earlier than the civilization of Bogazköy. This ascertainment, accompanied with the fact that the braid and the coil patterns were both not unknown in the civilization of the Hittites, made Boehmer to put forward that the researchers should be careful, when they pose the opinion that

⁹² Hiller 1991, p. 208.

⁹³ Cline 1991a, p. 3.

⁹⁴ Yildirim-Gates 2007, p. 299.

⁹⁵ Boehmer 1972, pp. 70-1 fig. 31.

the belt is either a Mycenaean product or a local imitation. According to him, the possibility to be a local belt bearing a widespread pattern in the Hittite culture is a more potential perspective.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, one cannot omit the similarity in the motif between the Mycenaean headstone and the belt found in Bogazköy. Secondly, it is a fact that in the Aegean islands this pattern was frequently present in earlier phases of habitation than the phases in which the belt in Bogazköy was revealed. However, this does not exclude the possibility of the transportation of the object from the Aegean to the Black Sea region. The object could be an heirloom and as a consequence may have been in use for many ages or even its transportation could have occurred in later ages; especially if one takes into account how valuable this belt was, since it contains in its decoration bronze sheets and gold. In addition, the pattern of the braid was timeless and its presence in the artworks may have been repeated through the ages.

Perhaps the most striking Mycenaean object that was found in Hattusa and provoked a series of debates, is the bronze sword “which has a profiled blade with three ridges flaring and branching out at the shoulders below two rivet-holes.”⁹⁷ On the blade there is an engraved, single line inscription in the cuneiform Akkadian language. (figs.2,3) According to the interpretation, it is delineated on the sword part of the Hittite history. More particularly, it is mentioned that this sword is one of the many that were dedicated to the Storm-God. He with the accompaniments of other Gods helped the Great King of Hattusa named Tuthaliya to defeat the people of Assuwa at around 1430 B.C.⁹⁸ According to Hansen the sword is an Aegean Type B sword and it is dated on the second half of the 15th century.⁹⁹ The Aegean origin of it is also supported by Mellink who places it in the LH IIIA1 and in the hands of the King Tuthaliya II.¹⁰⁰ This type of sword used to be constructed in the Mycenaean centers of the Southern Greece, especially in Argolid where most of them have been revealed. Almost all of them are dated in the 16th century; however they were also in use in the 15th century B.C.¹⁰¹ The only two Aegean Type B swords outside the

⁹⁶ Boehmer 1972, pp. 70-1, 73, Taf. X (no. 179).

⁹⁷ Mellink 1993, p. 112.

⁹⁸ Wartke 1992, pp. 256-7 fig. 1-3.

⁹⁹ Hansen 1994, pp. 213-5.

¹⁰⁰ Mellink 1993, pp. 212-3.

¹⁰¹ Sandars 1963, p. 117.

Aegean was thought to be those that were found in Izmir and Bogazköy,¹⁰² while recently has developed a discussion about the newly acquired fragments of a sword from the museum of Varna in Bulgaria. It was found in a nearby city of Varna, in Suma under unclear circumstances. According to the preliminary studies it is considered that it bears many similarities with the sword of Bogazköy.¹⁰³

To remain in the Hattusa's sword, Cline in two of his articles expressed his skepticism about the origin of it from the core of the Mycenaean world, the Peloponnese, without excluding however this possibility. Alternatively, according to the same scholar, it could be a local production of the regions of the western coast of the Asia Minor, imitating almost perfectly the Type B sword.¹⁰⁴ This possibility could be corresponded to reality since there were connections among the Mycenaeans and the regions of the western Asia Minor littoral and hinterland. Indeed, it had been registered in the Hittite texts that in the late 15th century were developed connections among the Achaeans and the Assuwas, the people who inhabited in the western Anatolia, although their exact placement was a difficult challenge for the researchers to show. In any case it is assumed that their region bordered or even included Troy.¹⁰⁵ Of great interest is the information that is provided again from one of these texts, which places a king of the Ahhiyawa¹⁰⁶ alongside the people of Assuwa in their rebellion against the Hittites. Another text also mentions that at around 1400 BC were conducted military operations by the Achaeans in the western provinces of the Hittite Empire.¹⁰⁷ But they were not limited only to this information. According to the texts of the same period, Miletos which they mention it as *Millawanda* was a Mycenaean port. Likewise the archaeological operations in the area confirm this

¹⁰² Cline 1996, p. 138.

¹⁰³ Athanassov-Krauß-Slavče 2012, URL: http://www.aegeobalkanprehistory.net/article.php?id_art=20

¹⁰⁴ Cline 1996, p. 139; Cline 2008, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ Cline 1996, p. 141-2.

¹⁰⁶ Güterbock 1984, pp. 114-22. Along with the interpretation of the relevant texts developed a discussion regarding the Ahhiyawa. Was soon made evident the etymological affinity of this term with the term 'Achaea' that was mentioned by Homer referring to the people of the Greek mainland. Thus, while in the beginning of the previous century the majority of the scholars were denying any link between the two words, nowadays the situation is reversed since most of the scholars believe in the affinity of the two terms and consider the Ahhiyawa as the first Greeks, the Mycenaeans. By accepting this case is then raised the question of whether the texts with the word Ahhiyawa mentioned the Mycenaeans of the Greek mainland or there were other Mycenaeans that created a state in the western Anatolia. The present paper dissertation deliberately does not deepen in this much debated issue; nevertheless accepts the interpretation of the Ahhiyawa as the Mycenaeans.

¹⁰⁷ Bryce 1986, pp. 1-12.

declaration. The layer of habitation named *Miletos V* was full with Mycenaean pottery of the late 15th and early 14th centuries BC.¹⁰⁸

Considering that all the above information reflects the reality, it discloses the Mycenaean presence in the western Anatolia and further deeper to Anatolia reaching near the Black Sea area. However, regarding the origin of the sword, things are not clear. Taking into account the texts of the Hittites, is raised the question of whether the sword was manufactured in Mycenaean Peloponnese or as formulated by Cline it constitutes an excellent product imitation, which was constructed in the areas of the western Asia Minor littoral and hinterland. The latter possibility is reinforced by the historical events of the participation of the Ahhiyawa alongside the Assuwa during their rebellion and the fact that Miletos was a place where Ahhiyawa settled. Moreover, because of its small differences in comparison to the typical Type B swords, should not be excluded the likelihood to had been constructed from specialized, even perhaps Mycenaean craftsmen of the area. After all, another one Aegean Type B sword was discovered nearby, in Izmir. In addition, as the perennial excavations at Troy have shown, the city was a “multinational” place, where inhabited people from different civilizations, among which the Mycenaean and the Assuwas. This constitutes Troy an also possible region for the sword to have been manufactured.¹⁰⁹ In each case, the combination of the texts and the finding itself places the Mycenaean in the western Asia Minor. Their presence is also indicated in Hattusa, where the sword was discovered as well as in the whole Empire as the aforementioned findings suggest. However, regarding the sword, there are no evidences to point out its transferring through the Black Sea. At first glance, the possibility of it to have been locally manufactured and subsequently to have followed a route through the hinterland during its use in the rebellion of Assuwa seems to be a potential view on the issue. However, the existence of other Mycenaean findings in many areas of the Empire, including those nearer to the Black Sea, causes controversial thoughts regarding the road which the sword followed, since its transportation via the Black Sea still remains a candidate to the author’s mind.

To remain in Bogazköy, another impressive, Mycenaean finding is a fragmentary Hittite ceramic bowl, that was revealed in a late 15th - early 14th century

¹⁰⁸ Niemeier 2003, pp. 103-5.

¹⁰⁹ Cline 2008, pp. 12-3.

strata. (fig.4) Two of the joined sherds depict a warrior, which has a great possibility to be an Aegean one.¹¹⁰ This conclusion is created first of all through the observation of the 'plumed and horned helmet'¹¹¹ that reminds some parallels in depictions of helmets in the Aegean islands. More particularly, at the Akrotiri on the Thera Island are well survived ten miniature frescos that depict helmets. One drawing among them depicts the so-called boar's-tusk helmet, which is similar to the type of the helmet of the Bogazkoy's warrior.¹¹² Moreover, during the excavations in the island of Keos, it was discovered a white marble plaque, which was treated. Indeed, there was a depiction of the head of a warrior turning on his right and 'wearing a helmet with curving pointed cheekpiece and waving plume.'¹¹³ (fig.5) This draft also reminds the helmet of the depicted warrior that was found in the capital of the Hittite Empire. Of particular importance is the fact that the presence of the Hittite bowl is in a late 15th century layer. This coincides with the military events that were mentioned in the above Hittite texts. The participation of the Mycenaean warriors in the conflicts that were taking place in the Hittite Empire of the late 15th century, was probably inspired the local pottery workshops, as the depiction of the Mycenaean soldier on the local vase evidenced.

Continuing, in accordance to Firmen, some pottery fragments that were found in Akalan and are exhibited in the Museum of Constantinople are of Mycenaean origin.¹¹⁴ French, who reexamined the fragments, developed a different opinion, according to which the pottery does not even belong to the prehistoric period. The latter view is accorded by other scholars too.¹¹⁵

Travelling outside the boundaries of the Hittite Empire, in Samsun (ancient Amisos) it was found a clay statuette with an inscription. Initially, it was suggested that the inscription was in the Linear A script. Nevertheless, many scholars disagree with this perspective. Much information neither about the statuette nor about the inscription is available; notwithstanding the subject is still under discussion.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Güterbock 1984, p. 115 fig. 6.

¹¹¹ Cline 1996, p. 147.

¹¹² Morgan 1988, pp. 109-15 fig. 64.

¹¹³ Caskey, 1965, p. 375.

¹¹⁴ Firmen 1924, p. 96.

¹¹⁵ Mee 1978, p. 124.

¹¹⁶ Hiller 1991, p. 208.

In the area of Sarkoy, which is near the Marmara Sea, a hoard was revealed. Among the finds that were consisted it, there was a fragment from ox-hide ingot, sickles, spearheads, torcs and swords with European and Anatolian characteristics. There was a Mycenaean sword along with Mycenaean double-axes. These Mycenaean objects are dated in the LH III periods. Their location on the Northwestern shore of the Marmara Sea is connected to the sea trade. Furthermore, since the Mycenaean merchants could arrive with their ships to the Marmara Sea, there was practically nothing to block their course to the exploration beyond the Bosphorus waterway, where the Black Sea lies, and subsequently to develop trade ties with the people who were living around the lake.¹¹⁷ After all the distribution of the Mycenaean objects from the 16th to the 11th centuries discloses that the Mycenaean had trade links in the whole Mediterranean.¹¹⁸ As a consequence, there is no reason for one to believe that they did not attempt to build relationships with the Black Sea region too.

To continue, there is a discussion about the existence or not of specially designed ships that could cross the difficult accessible passage of the Bosphorus Straits. Carpenter argues that until the manufacture of the penteconter, the ancient vessel of fifty oars that was first appeared in the archaic period, ship activities in the Straits were not feasible. The reason is that before this specially manufactured ship there was no other that could withstand the bumping, which would be caused by the strong winds of the area.¹¹⁹ Drews however, basing his criticism towards Carpenter's view on ancient texts, unfolds the knowledge, according to which Sinope and Trapezus were founded in the 8th century BC, indicating an even earlier colonization process, before the manufacturing of the penteconter at around 700. In brief, Drews reminds to the supporters of the texts of Eusebius that they should not rely on the latter's dating as regards to the foundation of Sinope and Trapezus due to the fact that he supports an earlier dating for Trapezus at the 756 BC than Sinope. He places the foundation of Sinope, more than one century after the former, in the 631 BC. This

¹¹⁷ Harding 2005, p. 299.

¹¹⁸ Vanschoonwinkel 2006, pp. 40-113. The author presents in detail the sites in the whole Mediterranean, in which Mycenaean objects from the Prepalatial, Palatial and Postpalatial periods have been found. He allocates the sites in catalogues and on maps too. Through the points on the maps it is given the opportunity to be visually observed the distribution of the Mycenaean objects from the Adriatic to the shores of the Anatolia. See figs. 1-5.

¹¹⁹ Carpenter 1948, pp. 1-10.

information reveals the Eusebius' insufficient knowledge on the issue, since it is impossible Sinope, which was the mother-city of Trapezus to have been established later.¹²⁰ But it is more that; from the texts of Pseudo-Scymnus (Periplus 986-997), the geographer of the 2nd century BC, it becomes known that even in his period survived the tradition, according to which an Amazon gave her name to Sinope. Moreover, the city was inhabited by the Syrians before the Cimmerians' invasion, which is chronologically placed at the end of the 8th century. Furthermore, according to the same passage, the first Greek settler was the Thessalian Argonaut Autolykos.¹²¹ Finally Strabo reveals that (12.3.11), Sthenis, a sculptor of the 4th century BC created a sculpture of Autolykos due to the fact that the citizens were attributed him the same honors they used to attribute to the gods.¹²² Unfortunately the excavation activities cannot seal the words of the ancient passages with findings. Nevertheless they provide neither contraindications, since in Sinope was held surveys only to necropolis and not to the ancient city, while in Trapezus none excavation has been carried out.¹²³

Nevertheless, through this very brief reference on the lively disagreements issue of the foundation of Sinope, it becomes apparent that Greek travelers visited Sinope much earlier than it was thought, in the 8th century BC. Simultaneously this presence signifies an earlier navigation in the Black Sea. Thus, if in the 8th century there were ships that managed to travel through the Marmara Sea and the Bosphorus Straits; one should wonder if this is a case for the Mycenaean period too. Although a statement in favor of a colonization process is not valid for this period, in the first place there is no reason to reduce the meaning of the Mycenaean objects of the area. Secondly the growing need of the Mycenaeans for influx of minerals had as a consequence the establishment of trade links with populations that possessed the knowledge of the exploitation of the wealth of their lands. Attractive candidates should had been the tribes around Trapezus, since have been discovered numerous silver and iron mines, many of which have signs of mining activities in ancient periods.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Drews 1976, p. 22.

¹²¹ Manoledakis 2010, p. 564.

¹²² Drews 1976, p. 23.

¹²³ Drews 1976, pp. 18-9.

¹²⁴ Drews 1976, pp. 26-9, fig. 1.

Finally, there are representations on vessels and ivory reliefs of smaller ships of the periods that preceded the manufacture of the penteconter. According to the author of the present paper, these should not be considered as a component that demonstrates the absence of ships capable to accomplish the travel to the Black Sea, as many scholars have expressed.¹²⁵ There might were categories of ships that they had not been represented or that their representations did not came to light through the excavations. Furthermore, when the artists were trying to transfer the draft of an object on the vessels it was impossible for them to be accurate. The reason is that a vessel is much smaller in scale and circular in its size. This had as a result for the painters not to attribute the details. Therefore, one cannot rely entirely on the art in order to repel the arguments of the existence of navigation in the region; especially when there are tangible evidences, such as the findings that suggest otherwise.

¹²⁵ Carpenter 1948, pp. 1-10 fig. 1,2.

Troy

Few words about the key role of Troy as a node which serves the trade among the Mediterranean and the East have already been mentioned above. The centrality of its location in the neighborhood of the entrance of the Sea of Marmara rendered it in many periods of antiquity¹²⁶ as an important intermediate port for the ships' anchoring, supplying and maybe repairing of potential problems during their long distance journey from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea. Even though nowadays the excavated settlement of Troy is not a coastal one, the geological researches have shown that this was not the case in antiquity. Contrariwise the settlement was nearer to the sea but due to the alluvial deposits of the nearby rivers, gradually through the ages was developed a differentiation on the natural environment.¹²⁷

Regarding the period that is discussed in the present dissertation paper, there is ample proof of the existence of trade links among the Aegean cultures and Troy. Findings in the very early habitation strata, in the Troy II-V indicate for the region an even earlier trade role than it is used to be considered. The study of the archaeological material of excavations that go back in time during the first attempts there, provides much consideration about the first interpretations they were received. At first glance, the stone balances were considered to be either pebbles or millstones but early enough the researchers started to consider them as weight balances. These have been revealed in almost all of the Bronze Age strata of Troy and they also have parallels in the cultures of the Aegean and the Near East.¹²⁸ Consequently, it is a proof of the significant role of Troy for the commercial

¹²⁶ Jablonka-Rose 2004, p. 617. The long standing excavations at Troy have shown a relative chronological sequence in the habitation of the city. It seems that generally the settlement was inhabited from the Early Bronze Age to the end of the Roman period and the dawn of the Byzantine Empire with some periods of abandonment. Not only the movable archaeological findings like the pottery, but also the repairing projects of the defensive walls during the ages declare the habitation periods; Mee 1978, p. 147. According to the material from the excavations, the inhabitants must have abandoned the settlement at the end of the LH IIIc which is the reason that explains the absence of the Protogeometric pottery. Thus, as it was hinted above the sequence of the habitation was interrupted, at least in that one case.

¹²⁷ Wright 1998, pp. 357-8, see also fig. 2 for the Paleographic reconstruction of Troy VI and VII at around 1250 BC.

¹²⁸ Bobokhyan 2009, pp. 19-50.

transactions even in the time of commencement of the habitation on the settlement at the second half of the 3rd millennium BC.

Additional information about the balance weights came to light along with the discovery and the exploitation of the shipwrecks of Cape Gelidonya and Ulu Burum; two Late Bronze Age ships, through which is revealed the trade activity among the civilizations of the late Prehistoric world.¹²⁹ There are many similarities among the balance weights from Troy and those from the cargoes of both vessels, demonstrating the distant routes the ships were able to follow. Moreover, precious objects with features that bear witness their origin from many civilizations of the ancient world, especially from the East have also been revealed. In addition, not valuable for that period of time objects, but very precious to the nowadays research were also in significant amount on both cargoes. Thus, the presence of Mycenaean, Cypriot and Canaanite pottery demonstrate the intense commercial activity that was taking place in the eastern Mediterranean. In many cases the city of Troy served as a reference point due to its location on a hub; from which it could serve the trade activities among the Mycenaean world and the civilizations of the East.¹³⁰

Indeed, in the Troy VI to the VIIb that correspond the stratigraphic layers from the 14th century to the 950 BC, more than 30 vessels and 2000 Mycenaean sherds have been revealed. Moreover, the Minoan and the Late Cypriot II were also in abundance, while some fragments were parts of Canaanite amphorae. In addition, not only pottery was present in these Bronze Age strata but also objects that were made of precious and semi-precious stones, like carnelian, faience, as well as jewelry and other artifacts made of gold and silver.¹³¹ Hence, the numerous findings in Troy connect the region not only with the Mycenaeans and the Hittites as one unsurprisingly expects but also with regions as far as the Mesopotamia.¹³² Moreover the strengthening of the role of Troy as a transit state during the Bronze Age is also reinforced by another one fact. It seems that during the later phases of the Bronze Age the settlement expanded occupying a great area outside of the walls.¹³³ Thus,

¹²⁹ Bobokhyan 2009, p. 43.

¹³⁰ Vanschoonwinkel 2006, p. 97, p. 99. See also p. 98 fig. 16, a map with points of the shipwrecks of Ulu Burum and Cape Gelidonya.

¹³¹ Jablonka-Rose 2004, p. 625 with the citations no. 38-51.

¹³² Wright 1998, p. 359.

¹³³ Wright 1998, p. 359.

simultaneously with the development of the trade in the Mediterranean, that culminated in LH IIIA-B, is reinforced the role of Troy, which acquired wealth and power that allowed the expansion of its territory.

Hence, Troy was established as an essential ally in order to be achieved the conduct of commercial transactions. At this point however is raised the question of who Troy assisted most, the Mycenaeans or the civilizations of the East with the most obvious candidate of the latter to be the Hittites. Quite often it is written that Troy was located at the periphery of the Mycenaean world but not all the scholars share this view. Some argue in favor of a Hittites' influence under which mainly Troy was. Wright agree with this perspective due to the fact that the Hittite Empire was developed into a very strong presence in the Central and Eastern Anatolia, which managed not only to control the resources but to be expanded also towards the western Anatolia. Furthermore, according to the same scholar, in favor of the latter view advocates also the fact that the knowledge of the names of the regions, especially those in the eastern Aegean littoral mainly comes from the Hittite texts.¹³⁴ In addition, considering these texts, from which the scholars receive information about the Assuwa, it is mentioned that the latter tried a rebellion against the conquerors Hittites. Thus, even though it is difficult for the scholars to clarify the boundaries of the Assuwa's territory, through some references of their cities from the Hittite texts, it becomes apparent that they inhabited the western coast of Anatolia. Either they were possessing part of the territory of Troy or they bordered the region.¹³⁵ Whatever was the case, the Hittite conquest put the nodal city under their sovereignty, a course of events that was not for the benefit of the Mycenaeans. This was probably a good reason, capable to explain their participation in the Assuwa's rebellion. Perhaps the latter were offering their assistance to the economic interest of the Mycenaeans by developing a smooth conduct of the trade from and towards to the East, including also the crossing of their products from Troy.

On the contrary it seems that the Mycenaeans had not developed intense trade activities with the Hittites, a possibility that is strongly supported by Cline, who quotes a number of reasons that suggest the consolidation of an unfriendly situation

¹³⁴ Wright 1998, pp. 360-1.

¹³⁵ Cline 1996, pp. 141-2.

among the two.¹³⁶ It is a reality that the Hittite objects in the Aegean are much lesser in number than those which have origin from other regions of the East, like the Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Syria.¹³⁷ Likewise, the Mycenaean objects are in smaller account in the territory of the Hittites than in other Anatolian empires. This could be an indication of the development of loose trade links among the two regions. Moreover if one search for information about their trade relationships in the surviving Linear B tablets, it becomes apparent the complete lack of references on the commercial activities with the Hittites. However this is not the case for the other regions with which they had trade relations. As for the Hittite texts, the situation is roughly the same, since have been traced only three references to the trade with the Ahhiyawa.¹³⁸

If the above view was the case, there is a need for interpretation of the presence of the huge quantities of the Mycenaean pottery in Troy. More specifically, Mycenaean pottery fragments and vases were discovered in all six habitation strata of Bronze Age, from the LH IIA to the LH IIIC. It covers a wide chronological period that starts in the last phases of the Early Mycenaean period and reaches to its end simultaneously with the decline of the Palatial period. Moreover, during the LH IIIA-B periods, when the Mycenaean civilization flourished and its ships travelled towards the west and east, the amount of the Mycenaean pottery in Troy was in its highest levels sending the message of the intense presence of the Mycenaean in the region.¹³⁹ Thus, even if the perspective that desires Troy to have been under the control of the Hittite was a reality, it could be neither an intense nor a continuous surveillance as numerous pottery and other precious findings from many known civilizations of the period indicate. Perhaps Troy became part of a wider commercial network of the civilizations of the period. Thus may need to be given more attention to the most recent Cline's formulations that recommend a multicultural nature for Troy, a region which could have been either a permanent shelter for people from

¹³⁶ Cline 1991a, pp. 1-9.

¹³⁷ Cline 1991b, pp. 133-43.

¹³⁸ Cline 1991a, pp. 1-9.

¹³⁹ Mee 1978, p. 147. The period of the LH IIA to the LH IIIC is approximately among the 1600-1060 BC. According to Mee at the LH IIIA2 period, which corresponds chronologically to the period 1380-1330 BC., the Mycenaean pottery reached at the 40% of the total pottery amount of the settlement.

many areas of the then known world or a temporary one for those who needed to rest during their travels.¹⁴⁰

Concluding, Troy was an important hub for the trade activities in the Bronze Age and also in subsequent periods of antiquity. Its geophysical location near the straits of Dardanelle allowed the region to control the ship traffic that was attempted through them. Subsequently, Mycenaeans grabbed the opportunity to take advantage of the location of the harbor, due to the fact that it was a way for their ships to have at their disposal a passage to the Black Sea. This was very intense in the Palatial period during which they established strong trade ties towards each direction of the known world to the west and east. The increasingly growing need, especially by the elite groups, for ores led them to trade activities with the western and the southern Black Sea region, including also the rich in ores Caucasus area. Thus Troy was a transit state for the Mycenaeans, who nevertheless were not exclusively depended on it, since as it was mentioned above Cyprus had also the same role. Furthermore, the port of Miletus was also a transport hub for the Mycenaeans. Indeed the combination of the Hittite texts and the findings indicate that it may was under the complete control of the latter, who inhabited the round area.¹⁴¹ Perhaps there are other routes which the Mycenaeans were also using for their overseas trips. The variety of their options does not diminish the role of Troy for the trade; after all it was an important hub which was serving also the trade of other regions. Nevertheless, makes apparent that the Myceneans were not based solely on Troy for their transaction. Instead they made sure to have other options. On the one hand it is reasonable for them to have many transit states near to the different regions with which they had developed trade. Thus, Cyprus would served the trade to specific regions of the southern Anatolia while Troy to the regions of the Black Sea and the central Anatolia. On the other hand, this diversity of choices could also reflect the riots on the western Anatolia that were discussed above. Furthermore, even if Troy was not under the control of Hittite, the region due to its geophysical position was probably an attracting pole for many other civilizations which desired to promote their products in other regions by crossing them from the Dardanelle straits.

¹⁴⁰ Cline 2008, pp. 12-3.

¹⁴¹ Niemeier 2003, pp. 103-5.

In such case the Mycenaeans could not be sure for a permanent positive cooperation with Troy.

The Mycenaean Presence in the Western and Northern Black Sea region

In the western Black Sea region the mining activities were developed already since the 4th millennium BC. The presence of the stylized but meticulous gold jewelry testifies also the knowledge of the jewelry manufacturing. The Thracian¹⁴² culture is strongly identified in parts of the present Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. More specifically, the oldest golden object in Europe was revealed among plenty of others in a burial of the necropolis of Varna and it is dated at around 4500-3500 BC. Meanwhile, further to the north, in the modern Romania, were also revealed many golden objects. The stylization techniques are different than those of the artifacts in Varna. It seems however that in the region around the mouth of Danube, from where Jason also is supposed to have passed during the adventurous travel regarding his search for the Golden Fleece, the people was engaged in mining activities in the mountains of Transylvania even from such an early period of time.¹⁴³ Thus, gradually was developed a culture with its own characteristics, traces of which are reflected on the archaeological findings. However, in many occasions, the findings bear features borrowed from other cultures. This not unexpected development has always been the result of the contacts among different civilizations. Therefore, as in the case of the southern Black Sea region, is raised the question of whether in the Bronze Age were developed trade links among the western Black Sea areas and the Mycenaean world, since a number of the objects that were found in the Thracian lands reminds of Aegean parallels.¹⁴⁴

However, before lining up the Bronze Age findings, objects of the aforementioned cemetery of Varna indicate even earlier contacts among the Bulgarian civilization of Karanovo VI and the Aegean world. These approaches were the first attempts that brought together the two distant from each other areas. Thus, they constitute a cornerstone for the subsequent links that were developed among

¹⁴² Dragan 1984, p. 21. The term Thracians identifies the people who lived in the vast area that is illustrated in the text. This term is almost generally accepted by the majority of the researchers to be used for the chronological periods of the beginning of the Bronze Age and onwards.

¹⁴³ Dragan 1984, p. 21, p. 23.

¹⁴⁴ Hiller 1991, pp. 208-9.

the western Black Sea area and the Mycenaeans. Remaining in this context, of particular interest is a marble conical rhyton that was found among other possible sacred grave goods, in a burial of the Varna cemetery.¹⁴⁵ This information instantly brings in mind the very popular rhyta that constituted a significant feature of the Aegean Bronze Age civilizations.¹⁴⁶ However, the use of this kind of vessels was detected in the Aegean cultures since the later phases of the Neolithic period.¹⁴⁷ Thus, the fact that the Varna's rhyto is dated in the same period as plenty of others of the Aegean islands¹⁴⁸ advocate in favor of the existence of cultural influences between the two areas even since the end of the Neolithic period.

Continuing, in the end of the Neolithic period and at the dawn of the Bronze Age it seems that except for the cultural influences there were also developed trade links between the Thracian lands and the Aegean world. Thousands of ornaments, parts of jewelries, were made of the shells of the genera of *Spondylus* and *Dentalium*.¹⁴⁹ The presence and also the use of both of them have been detected in the Aegean even from the Paleolithic period. However, their use increased significantly in the Neolithic era and onwards, mainly for the jewelry manufacturing.¹⁵⁰ Thus, there is no doubt that the shells, which were used for the jewelry beads of the Varna's burial, travelled from the Aegean. Initially, of the same origin was considered to be the marble that was used for the manufacturing of the great aforementioned rhyton. Nevertheless, Gimbutas even from the first conducting excavations expressed her doubt about this possibility. According to her, this assumption cannot be taken into account until there are research results that certify

¹⁴⁵ Gimbutas 1977, p. 44.

¹⁴⁶ Younger-Rehak 2008, p. 158; Konsolaki 2001, pp. 213-20. The use of the rhyta in the cult activities and the burial ceremonies was one of the essential features of the Minoan civilization after the dissolution of which was adopted from the Mycenaean world. More particularly, the rhyta and notably those that were manufactured with gemstones were not only part of the daily household activities but, according to the general belief of the researches, they were also sacred vessels. This probability is highlighted by the fact that in most of the cases they were discovered either in burials or in rooms and building complexes that bear some architectural settings and movable finds rendering them as locations where conducted rituals.

¹⁴⁷ Biehl-Marciniak 2000, pp. 182-4. The Late Neolithic period is a term widely used in the present paper mainly owing to the familiarity of the author with the Greek archaeology, in which the term is also widely used. On the contrary, the term of Early Copper Age it is used in the Bulgarian Archaeology to describe almost the same period of time. In order to avoid confusions it is used for both regions the term of the Late Neolithic period.

¹⁴⁸ Takaoglou 2006, p. 309.

¹⁴⁹ Bailey 2000, pp. 222-3.

¹⁵⁰ Tsuneki 1989, pp. 1-21.

the origin, because the marble could have been of local sources from the south Bulgaria.¹⁵¹

However, even if it is considered as a certainty that the marble was not of Aegean origin, one cannot argue in favor of the same view regarding the beads of the Spondylous shells of the Varna's cemetery. The presence of large quantities of them in accordance with the marble rhyto, which is in the tradition of the Aegean cultures, discloses the influences from the Aegean world. Their presence in the Thracian lands may not prove that they travelled there through the Black Sea; nonetheless, such a hypothesis is not exaggerated. Gimbutas expressed her view about a possible existence of a harbor that could serve for the income and the outcome of the products in such early period of time.¹⁵² In spite of the fact that this has not yet been proven by analogous findings, the coastal location of Varna could have promoted the development of a settlement with a market role serving the trade activities of the whole area around it. After all, it cannot be unnoticed the fact that the excavations have revealed a cemetery with nearly 300 burials that contained thousands of offerings. Most of them were made by precious ores such as gold and copper and rare and semi-rare stones like obsidian and cornelian, which in a high percentage were imported from distant areas of the then known world. This points to defend the hypothesis that in the western Black Sea littoral, near Varna may have developed a transshipment center even from the Late Neolithic period.¹⁵³

Leaving behind the Neolithic background but remaining in the western Pontic zone, one could easily perceive that the inheritance of the knowledge of the metalworking from the Late Neolithic can be detected in the Bronze Age objects. The evolution was rapid and it is reflected in a specific group of objects, which are often referred as 'Vulchetrin hoard'. The treasure was revealed in the homonymous village in the northern Bulgaria. It is composed of 14 golden objects, which however are not dated in the same period of time. Their chronological range spans from the 13th to the 8th century BC.¹⁵⁴ As a consequent, the researchers separated them into

¹⁵¹ Gimbutas 1977, p. 44; Chapman 2012, pp. 342-3. The author of this paper is not aware of research results related to the origin of the marble. However, Chapman in his recently published article mentions with a certainty that the marble was of Bulgarian origin.

¹⁵² Gimbutas 1977, p. 44.

¹⁵³ Higham-Chapman-Slavchev-Gaydarska-Honch-Yordanov- Dimitrova 2007, p. 640.

¹⁵⁴ Sherratt-Taylor 1989, 112, pp. 115-6.

two groups determined by their dating and the type of gold from which they were constructed. Roughly two main groups emerged; the Vulchetrun A and the Vulchetrun B. The first of the two consists of five vessels in their entirety; two bigger and three smaller.(*fig.6*) The latter would be described as smaller versions of the bigger ones. According to the analysis, all five of them were made of the same gold. These belong to the earlier phases and triggered the interest of the researchers due to the fact that their shape and the decoration techniques resemble with Mycenaean golden objects.¹⁵⁵ More specifically Sherratt and Taylor indicate that there are similarities especially between the kantharos of the Vulchetrun A group and pieces of kantharoi that were present especially in the Shaft Grave IV of the Grave Circle A of the Mycenae but also in other regions mostly of the southern Greek area.¹⁵⁶(*fig.7*)

Nevertheless, the Vulchetrun hoard is not the only one in the western Black Sea region which presents evidences of influences from the Mycenaean civilization. Of similar type vessel has been found in even greater distance from the Mycenaean world, in the Baltan region, north of Odessa. The Kryzhovlin bowl, as it is called, is also golden and it is in the type of Vulchetrun. Moreover, there is information for eight golden vessels also similar to the Vulchetrun that were found in Rademi of Romanian Moldova.(*fig.8*) All three groups of Balkan vessels were revealed accidentally and without the appropriate archaeological operations. This non-scientific condition of their discovery has as an impact especially for the kantharos of Kryzhovlin not to be surely dating. This fact in accordance with the differences on the shape and the weight among the Kryzhovlin and the Vulchetrun kantharoi, led some researchers to doubt whether they could be considered as parallels, much less as parts of the same group of vessels.¹⁵⁷ Contrariwise, it cannot get through unnoticed that all of them were made of sheet-gold, let alone the fact that they present similar manufacturing techniques.¹⁵⁸ However, even if the issue of the dating of the Kryzhovlin kantharos remains unresolved, the Vulchetrun hoard is there to represent the adoption of the way of living of the elite groups of the Mycenaean society by a percentage of the local population of the western Black Sea region.

¹⁵⁵ Sherratt-Taylor 1989, pp. 115-22 fig. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Sherratt-Taylor 1989, p. 112; Wright 2004, p. 140 fig. 2; Hartmann 1982, see no. 4367 Tab. 31;Taf. 104.

¹⁵⁷ Matthäus 1989, pp. 102-3.

¹⁵⁸ Sherratt-Taylor 1989, pp. 121-5 fig. 4.

More specifically, it is observed that in the Mycenaean world since the late Middle Bronze Age, the pottery vessels that accompanied the occupants of the burials were gradually replaced from vessels made with precious materials. The most typical examples are presented in the offerings of the burials in the Grave Circle A. In addition, this custom had a spatiotemporal spread due to the fact that it lasted until the Late Bronze Age period and it was established in many areas of the Mycenaean world. It seems that this change in the preference of the offerings is associated with the elite groups that emerged during the period of the Grave Circles, which is among the 1600 and the 1400 BC. They competed with each other and they were trying to highlight themselves through the acquisition of precious vessels, which they used in feastings in order to notify their power through the wealth.¹⁵⁹ From this point of view the aforementioned Balkan hoards could have the same use as in the Mycenaean world. This perspective is not unlikely, especially if it is taken under consideration that the Balkan kantharoi imitate in their design the Mycenaean ones. Hence, it is a possible thought that in the western Pontic region some local groups were trying to highlight themselves through the hosting of events, during which they used to make a demonstration through the use of their precious vessels.¹⁶⁰ Besides, as it was mentioned above, the mineral wealth of the region was taken advantage by the local groups already at the end of the Neolithic period and it was used for the manufacturing of any kind of objects. Nevertheless, the fact that all the above hoards were incidental findings makes it difficult to prove the feasting theory. However, it is not unlikely to reflect the reality of the time, since the introduction of this kind of feastings were gradually established by many civilizations of the then known world.¹⁶¹ Perhaps the findings that will be resulting from future systematic excavations will shed more light on how deep was the cultural influences that were developed by the contacts of the local population of the western Black Sea region with the Mycenaean world.

Thus, it becomes conceivable that the researches have to deal with plenty difficulties in order to include the above vessels into a narrow chronological frame. Nevertheless, the adversities they front in order to determine the route that the

¹⁵⁹ Wright 2004.

¹⁶⁰ Sherratt-Taylor 1989, pp. 126-7.

¹⁶¹ Moorey 1980, pp. 181-92.

Mycenaean traditions followed until they were absorbed by the so distant area of the western Black Sea region are more intense. It seems that the Mycenaeans detected many routes to approach the regions with abundant mineral wealth with which they desired to develop trade ties. The plurality of the Mycenaean findings in many settlements of Macedonia and Thrace indicates their strong presence in these areas. But this was not the only route they had followed. As the findings of the southern Black Sea region indicate, the Mycenaeans did not hesitate to pass the Bosphorus Straits in order to navigate in the Black Sea.¹⁶²

Although the type of the findings in the southern Black Sea region, such as the pottery, clearly indicates the existence of trade relationships between the Mycenaeans and the local populations, the situation in the western Black Sea area is different. On the one hand, the lack of pottery is a matter of concern for the researchers. On the other hand the rest of the findings, which resemble with others from the Mycenaean world, add fuels to the controversy of the scholars due to the fact that they can be interpreted either as Mycenaean or as local imitations. This is the case with some bronze rapiers, swords and double axes from Bulgaria. According to Bouzek's records, many of the swords that were found in the whole Balkan Peninsula present features that indicate influences from the Mycenaean world.¹⁶³ In the geographic area which is under consideration in the present paper, has been paid attention to the study of two striking cases; nonetheless in the present paper also follows a reference of another one sword, for which the data are limited.

Of particular interest is the sword that was found in the Bulgarian hinterland, in the Galatin area. (*fig.9*) According to Bouzek it is an Aegean C sword which is dated in the LH IIB-III A.¹⁶⁴ Further to the northern hinterland, in Transylvania, has been discovered a group of swords that shows strong relation with the Karo A type of the Mycenaean swords. They are dated in the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁶⁵ On the one hand, even if the swords of the above two cases were imported from the Mycenaean world it is difficult to connect them with a route via the Black Sea, due to the fact that they were discovered in the hinterland, far away from the sea.¹⁶⁶ If this is the case, it is

¹⁶² Desborough 1964, pp. 127-38.

¹⁶³ Bouzek 1985, p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ Bouzek 1985, pp. 31-2 fig. 6:6.

¹⁶⁵ Cowen 1966, p. 310.

¹⁶⁶ Hiller 1991, pp. 209-10.

more likely that they followed another road, maybe through the Macedonia and Thrace. On the other hand, they could have been local products influenced by the Mycenaean world. After all, the construction techniques of the Mycenaean swords and spears had been examples to follow in many of the corresponding weapons found in almost all the regions with which the Mycenaeans developed trade links.¹⁶⁷

Within the same framework is classified the fragmentary sword of the museum of Varna, for which there is a brief mention above. (*fig.10*) It was found accidentally in the city Sumen, near Varna. Also in this case the lack of the archaeological methods undermines the efforts of the scholars to dating it. However, during a study about its typology, they developed the belief that it carries multiple structural similarities with the Hattusa's sword with the Akkadian inscription. Thus, although initially emerged the question of whether it was an import from the Aegean or a local production, its similarities with the sword from Hattusa could indicate commercial relations between the Hittite Empire and the western Black Sea region.¹⁶⁸ It is difficult to be obtained clarifications that would preclude or ratify some of the above assumptions about the origin of this sword; especially because the exact site of the discovery of the object in order to be contacted further surveys it cannot be traced. The typology of the sword as well as the further studies on its material may in the future pay additional information. Nevertheless, the fact that it bears Mycenaean characteristics indicates the cultural presence of the Mycenaean world. Even if one assumes that the presence of the object did not result from the development of trade among the two regions, it cannot be rejected that it was the outcome of the transaction of ideas. However, this transaction may have occurred indirectly within the frame of the influences that brought the possible contacts with the Hittite Empire and not directly through the relationships with the Aegean. Even if this was the case, it is disclosed once again the size of the spread of the Mycenaean culture, which strongly influenced others, through the diffusion of its artifacts.

The question about a Mycenaean origin or a local production under the Aegean influences is afflicting the scholars also in the study of many other Bronze Age objects of the region. The research focuses on some groups of double-axes. In the whole Balkan area were revealed some representative examples of this kind of

¹⁶⁷ Vanschoonwinkel 2006, pp. 44-53 fig. 1-5.

¹⁶⁸ Athanassov-Krauß-Slavčev 2012, URL: http://www.aegeobalkanprehistory.net/article.php?id_art=20

groups with intense Mycenaean construction characteristics.¹⁶⁹ More particularly, in many settlements of Bulgaria have been revealed many double-axes that bear intense Mycenaean features. Most of them are from the 14th to 12th century BC.¹⁷⁰ However it is difficult to connect them with a route via the Black Sea because they were discovered deep in the hinterland.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, a double-axe that was revealed in the western Black Sea coast, in Bulgarovo near the Burgas constitutes an exception.¹⁷² This unique finding is not able to lift the burden of a theory that supports the trade connections of the western Black Sea littoral with the Mycenaean world via the Black Sea; nonetheless one could argue that it constitutes a stepping stone towards this direction. In any case, the double-axes with the strong Mycenaean features that were discovered in many areas of the Bulgaria indicate a Mycenaean presence at least through the cultural influences that were exerted by the Mycenaean world in the western littoral and deeper in the hinterland.

In the above ambiguous cases are also added other findings, the study of which produces many dilemmas. Initially the debates about the hundreds of anchors that were found on the western Black Sea region were concentrated of whether they are of Mycenaean origin or imitations of Mycenaean parallels. (*fig.11*) These 150 stone anchors have been revealed in Cape Kaliakra, Nessebar, Sozopol and Pomorie; however the largest quantity of them, which constituted of almost 100 anchors, was revealed in Nessebar.¹⁷³ The most characteristic feature of the majority of the Bulgarian anchors is their relatively large size and weight. According to the preliminary publications carried out by Frost, predominate in quantity the three-holed anchors, while there are also in lesser number two-holed and one-holed anchors.¹⁷⁴ Initially, Frost expressed his belief that the primarily studies would indicate their dating in the Bronze Age; especially relying on the fact that the use of stone as a construction material of anchors is predominately a characteristic of this period of antiquity.¹⁷⁵ However the Bulgarian findings have been not revealed through archaeological excavations, a circumstance that hinders the efforts for their dating. In

¹⁶⁹ Harding 1984, p. 127.

¹⁷⁰ De Boer 2008, p. 288.

¹⁷¹ Panayotov 1980, p. 179.

¹⁷² Harding 1984, p. 238, p. 241 fig. 54.

¹⁷³ De Boer 2008, p. 286.

¹⁷⁴ Frost 1982, p. 280; Bouzek 2013b, p. 92 fig. 11:5.

¹⁷⁵ Frost 1982, pp. 280-2.

addition, according to De Boer they do not present remarkable similarities in their typology with the Bronze Age anchors of the Mediterranean,¹⁷⁶ a doubt that before him was also expressed by Frost. The more detailed studies that followed the subsequent years after the latter's first publication, made apparent that, although many of the anchors of the Bulgarian coast were large in their size, not a single one among them approached the much bigger anchors of the Mediterranean.¹⁷⁷ Thereby, Frost abandoned his belief that their dating goes back to the Bronze Age, expressing instead the view that they are probably connected with the medieval period.¹⁷⁸ Doubts about the initial dating of the anchors were relatively recent expressed also by Bouzek. Nevertheless, few lines below in the same publication, Bouzek places the Bulgarian anchors on the Bronze Age,¹⁷⁹ while in another publication of the same year he explains the difficulties in scholars' efforts to date them because almost all of them are loose findings. Nevertheless, he places them anew before the early Greek Iron Age.¹⁸⁰ Thus, it becomes perceived that, decades after their discovery, the scholars are still experiencing difficulties associated to the dating of the anchors, a situation that was probably a result of the lack of methodical excavation activities that would have made the process of the dating more compatible.

Finally, even the stone anchor of Sozopol, which bears the Greek name NHAZKOY, should not be treated uncritically as a later finding. (*fig. 12*) Despite De Boer's thoughts that it could be part of the ships of the colonists, the author of the present paper is skeptical regarding this possibility, due to the fact that it is another one finding in this region with insufficient discovery data.¹⁸¹ Moreover, the anchor resembles of the Aegean ones that had flooded the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age. As a consequence, the inscription on it should not be regarded as a safe criterion which alone militates against the dating of the anchor on the final prehistoric periods, since the inscription could have been engraved on later periods. Furthermore, no other anchors with inscriptions mentioning names have been revealed in the area. Therefore, the particular one is not considered as part of a practice that used to be followed during a certain period of the historical times. In

¹⁷⁶ De Boer 2008, p. 286.

¹⁷⁷ Frost 1986, p. 280.

¹⁷⁸ Frost 1997, p. 112.

¹⁷⁹ Bouzek 2013a, pp. 19-21.

¹⁸⁰ Bouzek 2013b, pp. 91-2.

¹⁸¹ De Boer 2008, pp. 287-8.

addition, even if a later dating of the specific anchor is the case, this does not necessarily prove a later dating of all the anchors that have been discovered in the western Pontic region. Generally, according to the author's opinion, until there is unambiguous research results the issue of their dating remains open.

The questions on the issue of the origin of many findings are intensified further if on the above is added yet another category of objects, the ingots with the ox-hide shape. Many of them have been found in the western Black Sea littoral and hinterland bearing also Aegean characteristics. After the two ingots that were discovered in the Cape Kaliakra¹⁸² and the Cerkovo near Burgas,¹⁸³ the scholars recognized two more as those. The latter were kept in the museum of Varna. In the south of Sozopol even more numerous examples have been discovered at the bottom of the sea and now are available on research.¹⁸⁴ In the European side of the Marmara Sea fragment of one more ingot with ox-hide shape was revealed.¹⁸⁵ All of them were discovered either accidentally or in a corrupted archaeological environment. Therefore, the possibility of collecting additional archaeological material which would be fruitful in the dating was difficult, not to mention impossible. However, analysis of some of the aforementioned ingots has shown that all of them originated from the same mining source in Cyprus.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, De Boer expressed intense doubts about the part of the ingot that was revealed in Cape Kaliakra. According to his opposition it was incorrectly considered as such one and should be reexamined the possibility to be treated as a simple metal mass, which consists, pursuant to the laboratory research, of metal alloys. More specifically, it is composed in its higher percentage of copper and gold and in its lower percentage of silver.¹⁸⁷

Moreover, the interest of the scholars was particularly attracted by the second ingot that was discovered in Cerkovo. (*fig. 13*) It is another one finding for which there is lack of knowledge about the archaeological environment in which it was revealed; a fact that allowed the development of many debates regarding its dating. However,

¹⁸² Buchholz 1983, p. 104 fig. 11.

¹⁸³ Tonceva 1982, p. 176; De Boer 2008, p. 291 fig. 3.

¹⁸⁴ De Boer 2008, p. 289.

¹⁸⁵ Bouzek 2013b, p. 91.

¹⁸⁶ Bouzek 2013b, p. 91

¹⁸⁷ De Boer 2008, p. 289.

owing to the presence of the engraved symbol + on it, which undoubtedly is connected with the Aegean Bronze Age dialects of the Linear A and Linear B, the discussions are shifted to another matter of issue, the origin of the object. An isotopic analysis on the ox-hide ingot has shown that the latter presents a large percentage of identification with the copper mines of Cyprus.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, as it was mentioned above, a further analysis by the same team of the researchers has shown that most of the ingots of the Burgas area present a high possibility to have been imported also from Cyprus, due to the fact that their type of copper matches with the ingot of Cerkovo.¹⁸⁹

The above observation allows the transportation to Cyprus in order to become comprehensible the key role of the island, which in the Bronze Age it was a place to be reckoned with. It has been verified by the findings and it was briefly mentioned above that Cyprus developed strong trade ties with the Mycenaean world since it was an important transit state for the trade that was developed among the Mycenaeans and the civilizations of the East. Nevertheless, its participation in the intense exchange activity in the whole Mediterranean was not confined only to the role of the island as intermediary. Cyprus was the main source of copper for the Mycenaeans. They used to import a large proportion of raw materials from many regions with which as a consequence they developed their most intense trade relationships.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the fact that the copper that was used for the manufacture of the ox-hide ingots came from Cyprus, does not necessarily indicate the origin of the final product from the same region. On the contrary, a Mycenaean origin of the ingots is more likely due to the reason that the Mycenaeans had developed a strong trade network throughout the Mediterranean. As a consequence, there was a constantly inflow of mineral wealth, which led them first of all to develop an industry and secondly to create within their society a class of specialized craftsmen. The latter were engaged in the manufacturing of objects from these precious metals.¹⁹¹ A considerable amount of the finest examples are the offerings that were revealed in the burials of the Grave Circle A. Some of them are mentioned

¹⁸⁸ Stos-Gale, –Maliotis–Gale-Annetts 1997, p. 110 Tab. 6, p. 114 fig. 11.

¹⁸⁹ Stos-Gale, –Maliotis–Gale-Annetts 1998, pp. 217-26.

¹⁹⁰ Treul-Darcque-Poursat-Touchais 1996, pp. 527-8.

¹⁹¹ Harding 1984, p. 48. The Jn Linear B tablets from Pylos provide much information about the smiths of many areas that were under the control of the Palace. Their names along with the amount of the copper that the Palace provided to each one of them have been recorded on this series of tablets.

above in response to the influence they exerted to the Vulchetrun and other hoards that were discovered in the western Black Sea littoral and hinterland, reaching deep into the Transylvania region.

To continue, adding on the above data the ox-hide ingot from Cerkovo with the Mycenaean symbol + engraved on it, is increased the possibility for many of them to had travelled there in order to become trade products in the commercial operations that were taking place among the two regions. Nonetheless, almost all of the ox-hide ingots in the whole Bulgaria were loose findings. This makes it more difficult for the researchers to determine with a relative certainty their accurate origin. Moreover, they can be sure neither for a route via the Black Sea region. However, this perspective is possible enough to reflect the reality of the period. To this direction are pleading both, the indications of other findings with Mycenaean features of the west Black Sea coast or in close proximity to it, like the double-axe that is discussed above, and also the position of the ingot with the Mycenaean symbol itself, which was discovered only 80 km from the west littoral.¹⁹²

Continuing, of particular interest is an amount of findings, which are encountered throughout the Black Sea region but with their most frequent presence in the northwestern Pontic area. Nonetheless they are not absent from the Caucasus area too. The reason is for the fibulae of the Belozërka culture, which was developed in the end of the Bronze Age, just before the appearance of the Cimmerians at the area.*(figs. 14, 15)* The majority of the fibulae have been found in Moldova and in the western Ukraine, while some of them present similarities with the sub-Mycenaean fibulae of the Greek and of other areas of the Balkan Peninsula.¹⁹³ According to Bouzek's records they were all recovered from female burials. They were most likely used as parts of the dresses from which, as a consequence of the passage of the time and the perishable material of their construction, nothing left. The fibulae that the researchers encountered most are those with the shape of the violin-bow with the double loops and the simple bow. In lesser quantity were revealed the knee-shaped and the snake-shaped fibulae. Violin-bow fibulae are also present further to the hinterland in Romania, Slovakia, Moravia and Poland.¹⁹⁴ In particular, the violin-

¹⁹² De Boer 2008, p. 291.

¹⁹³ Bouzek 2001, p. 33.

¹⁹⁴ Bouzek 2011, pp. 247-8, fig. 1-2.

bow and the simple bow types of fibulae had many parallels in Greece and Italy, a fact that spurred Bouzek to make a thorough research on them. Thus, he stated that it is more possible of the northwestern Black Sea fibulae to be local ones, which stylistically endeavored to approach the familiar to them fibulae from Italy and Greece. The reason that led him to this conclusion is the fact that almost all of them were more roughly than the latter ones manufactured.¹⁹⁵ In any case, the imitation of an everyday, pennyworth product shows how deep the Mycenaean civilization influenced the regions with which it established strong relationships through the commercial transactions of greater economic importance that had developed among them.

The most incomplete part of the scholars' efforts, in order to identify the extent of the Mycenaean presence in the western and northern Pontic area, is the pottery, which until nowadays is not adequately represented. Only one sherd has been revealed in the site of "Old Vasiliko", which is near the area of Tsarevo. The fragment belongs to the body of a vessel, which according to Fossey should have been a curved bowl. The clay is reddish yellow and the vase is decorated externally with two parallel bands painted in red color. The same scholar argues that it is probably dated in the LH IIIA-B, wherein the slip and the paint militate.¹⁹⁶ According to the same scholar, the presence of the fragment constitutes an indication of the existence of trade ties among the Aegean and the western Black Sea littoral. However, Bouzek in one of his latest publications stated that the dating of the pottery fragment in the 14th-13th centuries BC is questionable.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, no further suggestions about an integration of the finding in another chronological frame are available. Generally, the existence of sufficient pottery fragments in combination with scientific excavation methods play a significant role in conducting conclusions, since the pottery was a medium which participated in a range of daily activities. Nonetheless, the presence of a single pottery fragment hardly leads to irrefutable conclusions. One could claim that this one pottery fragment is intrusive, if there were no other findings in the

¹⁹⁵ Bouzek 2012, p. 538-9 the fig. 1:1 it seems that imitates the sub-Mycenaean Greek fibulae, fig. 1: 3,4,9 they are the Caucasian fibulae that according to Bouzek were influenced from the Greek ones.; Sapouna-Sakelarakis 1978, pp. 34-52. The author provides information about the violin-bow and the simple-bow fibulae of the Greek area, which constitute the Greek parallels to the Black Sea fibulae. There is also among them one knee-shaped fibula (no. 43) that was revealed in Vrokastro.

¹⁹⁶ Fossey 1997, pp. 29-31 fig. 3:1, see also Plate 2.

¹⁹⁷ Bouzek 2013a, p. 19.

broader area that indicate a Mycenaean presence. However, this is not the case in the western Pontic zone. The particular fragment, in companion with the findings that are analyzed above and are either of Mycenaean origin or of Mycenaean influence, can only be over welcomed.

Generally, regarding the possibility of the western Black Sea region to had established trade relationships with the Mycenaeans, as outlined in detail above; has already become undisputable that they created commercial relationships with both the West and the East. In addition, according to the last decades' researches, the different kinds of findings place them as far as to the southern Black Sea region and to the Caucasus area. Thus, there was no reason not to develop simultaneous links with the areas of the western Pontic littoral and hinterland especially if it is taken under consideration that the Mycenaeans, like the Thracians, had their own import requirements regarding the raw materials. Like the burials in the Varna's cemetery, also in those of the whole Mycenaean world have been found numerous of precious offerings. Hence, it becomes comprehensible that the Mycenaeans or more likely the elite groups, through the development of trade ties were trying to taking care some of their basic needs. The trimmed burials with the precious offerings that showed the prestige and the power of the dead were of high priority on the lists of the needs of the elite groups. And to achieve the continuous influx of rich ores they developed ties with different sources of wealth of the then known world. As it was mentioned above, it is already certified that the Mycenaean *loikos* had trade links with Colchis, since some golden beads of the tholos tombs of Kazanaki are of Colchian origin. On contrast, in the same research it was revealed that the major suppliers of gold for the Mycenaean Centers of the southern Greece were the Egypt and Mesopotamia.¹⁹⁸ Thus, according to the author of the present paper, the Mycenaean world did not depend on one wealth resource. Instead, they made sure to have many alternative choices in cases of diplomatic crisis with some of their suppliers. In addition, an author's thought is that maybe there was another one reason for this plurality of sources. According to this, the Mycenaean world should not be regarded as a united administrative world. Culturally maybe it was existed a unity up to a point but every Mycenaean Center could have acted independently in the development of its trade

¹⁹⁸ Kotti 2010, URL: <http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22733&subid=2&pubid=40814967>

activities. Thus, it is not surprising that the origin of the gold of Iolkos is different from the one of Mycenae.

Continuing the journey to the northern Black Sea region, the excavations revealed three different types of Aegean Bronze Age double-axes. Unfortunately once again the information about the archaeological context in which the findings were belonged during their disclosure is meager; hence the references in this paper are limited to the records and the drafts of previous decades. More specifically, in one occasion, has been traced the presence of the Kilindir type of double-axe at Kozorezovo in Ukraine.¹⁹⁹ This type of double-axe took its name from the region of Kilindir in northern Macedonia, where the first of this kind of double-axes was revealed.²⁰⁰ According to Harding's description "is slender and has tube-like extensions of the oval shaft-hole on both sides".²⁰¹ Gradually many others were discovered in the northern Greece, in Macedonia and Epirus.²⁰² Another double-axe was first revealed in the Greek area Hermones in Corfu and it constitutes another one case of an area borrowing its name to a type of an artifact. The Hermones type of double-axe it was also present in the northern Black Sea region in two occasions. One of them was discovered in the lower Danube area and the other further away to the Kerch of the Crimea peninsula.²⁰³ This type "has slightly 'drooping' blades and a collar on the top side of the shaft-hole which is also oval"²⁰⁴ and generally it has more or less the same dispersion as the Kilindir type with the exception of a finding that was discovered in Levant.²⁰⁵ Moreover, double-axes with oval shaft-hole of the Mycenaean Type B have been also revealed.²⁰⁶ According to Harding's records they belong to the type III,²⁰⁷ being concave-sided.²⁰⁸ Six of these have been discovered in Cerkovo, two in Kozorezovo, one in Berezan and another one in Jekaterinoslav.²⁰⁹

¹⁹⁹ Buchholz 1960, p. 42 fig. 6e.

²⁰⁰ Heurtley 1939, p. 231 fig. 104 bb.

²⁰¹ Harding 1985, p.190.

²⁰² Bouzek 1985, pp. 43-4.

²⁰³ Buchholz 1960, p. 41 no. 16, p. 51 fig. 6b, 6c.

²⁰⁴ Harding 1985, p. 190-1.

²⁰⁵ Harding 1985, p. 190.

²⁰⁶ Bouzek 1985, p. 46 fig. 15: 1-3, 5.

²⁰⁷ Harding 1975, p. 190.

²⁰⁸ Bouzek 1985, p. 46.

²⁰⁹ Hiller 1991, p. 210.

In addition, many other examples come from the hinterland, reaching further to the northern Ukraine and Russia.²¹⁰

Most of the double-axes of the northern Black Sea region present many more similarities with Mycenaean analogous objects from Troy than with parallels from the Mycenaean production centers.²¹¹ This observation leads to the question of whether these artifacts were manufactured in Troy or in the Mycenaean Centers of the Greek area. Even if the question never meets its solution and if it is considered that there were no direct trade relationships among the Mycenaeans and the northern Pontic littoral, the existence of these artifacts indicates at least contacts of the remote northern Black Sea region with the periphery of the Mycenaean world. The strong presence of the Mycenaean findings in Troy, especially the pottery²¹², suggests that the region was an intermediary state to the commercial activities that occurred among the Mycenaeans and the East, including the Black Sea region too. Therefore, Troy called upon to have the same role with Cyprus, to connect the Mycenaean core with the East. Thus, the abundance of the Aegean findings in these two regions sheds more light to the Mycenaean trade routes that used to be followed during their commercial transactions. As these two regions are lying closer to the East and the Black Sea areas, they were designated as transit states in order to facilitate the control of the trade activities.

Finally, once again occupies the interest of the scientific community the rich Shaft Grave IV of the Grave Circle A at Mycenae, since four discs made of bone or antler were buried there. After the wording of many different interpretations regarding these strange objects, even from the period of Schliemann's excavations, it seems ultimately that the majority of the scholars agree with their interpretation as cheek pieces.²¹³ Travelling further to the northern Black Sea region, Leskov found many horse cheeks in Russia and Ukraine. His interest was particularly attracted by those that were revealed far in the hinterland in the region of Trachtemirov, near Kiev. These cheek pieces made him to correlate them with the ones from the Shaft Grave

²¹⁰ Bouzek 1985, p. 46.

²¹¹ Hawkes 1936, p. 158.

²¹² Mee 1975, pp. 146-7. The scholar mentions the amount of the Mycenaean pottery in the six chronological strata of habitation of the LH period until the LH IIIC where its percentage decreases rapidly. In the next phase, the Protogeometric period the settlement seems to be abandoned due to the complete lack of the pottery of the period.; Korfmann 1995, p. 175.

²¹³ Harding 2005, p. 297.

IV due to the fact that he noticed many morphologically similarities.²¹⁴ Likewise others were also revealed in Romania and Moldova. Many expressed their disagreement with this theory while among the supporters are also those that went a step further by arguing that groups of horsemen from the Russian steppe travelled southern to the Aegean. Hence, the local population had the chance to come to contact with the chariots and learn about the harnessing of the horse and how to use them in chariot groups.²¹⁵ This theory was considered to be exaggerated. It is more likely the similarities among the cheek pieces of the Mycenae and those from the northern Black Sea littoral and hinterland to be the result of the transportation of manufacturing knowledge by the Mycenaeans. The latter travelled to the Black Sea and although it seems excessive to have approach so deep in the hinterland, where Trachtemirov is, it is not unlikely that their wares and their constructive ideas to had reached so far. After all, the import of amber from the Baltic indicates their participation on commercial transactions with remote regions.

²¹⁴ Hiller 1991, p. 211.

²¹⁵ Harding 2005, pp. 297-9.

Conclusion

To sum up, the closed, inaccessible area of the Black Sea with its ambient environment was attracted to the ancient Greek writers. References and detailed descriptions of both the geophysical environment and the different tribes who inhabited the region are encountered in lyric poetry, in historiography, in geography, in mythology as well as in other forms of writing. From Pindar and Homer to Apollonius of Rhodes and Strabo elapsed many centuries, during which many events were logged and many formerly oral myths were recorded, frequently with the necessary changes in order to comply with the trends and the spirit of each period. Therefore, may the Argonautic Expedition is known to us thanks to its recording by Apollonius of Rhodes, but the myth predated and was maintained over the centuries both through the oral tradition and the written sources, reaching to the 3rd century BC. Then it was recorded by Apollonius who also added touches of his era.

However, one of the targets of the present paper dissertation was to provide not only a mere reference of the myth but to emphasize through this and also through the findings in the connection of the city of Iolkos with the distant Colchis. Indeed the excavations of last decades have revealed that the Thessalian city of Iolkos was not a marginal region as previously was considered. Quite the opposite; the Mycenaean city thrived, a situation which is evidenced by the precious grave goods that accompanied those who were lying inside the tholos tombs of the region. Whether the mere existence of the tholos tombs ultimately indicates or not that their inhabitants once belonged to ruling elites, is a subject under discussion which however is not covered by the present paper. Nevertheless, the findings of the tholos tombs of the region of Thessaly, make clear that the society of Iolkos, such as the Mycenaean societies of the southern Greek area, was interested in the influx of precious metals for the manufacturing of jewelry and other items that lend prestige. The first steps towards proving this theory, which are discussed detailed in the beginning of the dissertation, made with the results of the analyses of the golden objects from Iolkos and Colchis. Their quantity may was small but it highlights a great rate of matching as regards to their origin. Therefore, the trips which used to have the city of Iolkos as starting point may were not only in the realm of myth. The

indications that offered the items of Iolkos are converted into evidences in favor of the Mycenaean presence in the Black Sea especially when review in conjunction with the findings of the whole latter region.

Thus, appears the main issue of this paper dissertation, which is represented by its title, the Mycenaean presence in the Black Sea region. An amount of objects in the whole region declare this presence. Due to the fact that these objects were closely analyzed in the main body of the paper, heading towards the end it is considered wise by the author to explain the exact meaning of the term 'Mycenaean Presence'. Nonetheless before that, it is essential to be reported the difficulties, which the research confronted during the study effort of some of the findings that bear Mycenaean features. The hundred findings that have been revealed in the Black Sea region and are mentioned in detail above are either of Mycenaean origin or some of them were manufactured under the Mycenaean influence. This is a difficulty itself, as the controversies among the scholars for the interpretation of many of these objects have been intense and although decades of researches have been spent, there is no point in which the views are converged. This first adversity in many occasions is fed with the insufficient archaeological evidences either due to the natural erosion of the surrounding environment or because the findings were collected randomly. This was the case in many of the aforementioned objects, especially of the western Pontic zone. Finally, another problem during the present research has to do with findings whose descriptions from the preliminary surveys identify on them clear Mycenaean features. However neither further researches regarding them are available nor have drawings or photographs of the object been published.

Despite the above problems, the majority of the findings has clear Mycenaean characteristics and has been discovered after the appropriate archaeological proceedings. These findings are able to declare a Mycenaean presence in the Pontic area. This does not mean that the author suggests a presence similar to the very later colonization process, which had as a result the establishment of cities and settlements in the whole area. In the present text it is ascertained that the Mycenaean objects which have been discovered in the whole Black Sea region should not be regarded as intrusive findings; contrariwise most of them suggest the establishment of commercial activities among the peoples of the region and the

Mycenaeans. It has been already mentioned in the main body of the paper that first of all the Mycenaeans developed strong trade ties with many areas to the West and East. Hence their interest for the Black Sea area should unsurprisingly be accepted by the researchers. The presence of ore deposits in the southern and the western parts of the region, which the local populations did not leave unexploited, had their own important role to these connections, since the influx of mineral was one of the primary reasons that actuated the Mycenaean trade activities. Additionally, the manufacture techniques of many objects of the Black Sea region suggest their local construction. However, the same objects present also Mycenaean characteristics. In such case, it becomes apparent the intense Mycenaean, cultural influence. Hence, concluding, the Mycenaean presence in the Black Sea region is perceived by both, the establishment of the trade and also the cultural influences which the Mycenaean exerted through their advanced artifacts.

Abbreviations

AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
ASOR	Bulletin of American Schools of Orient Research
BSA	The Annual of the British School of Athens
IrAnt	Iranica Antiqua
JHS	The Journal of Hellenic Studies
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
PBF	Prähistorische Bronzefunde
PPS	Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society
PZ	Prähistorische Zeitschrift
SAM	Studien zu den Anfängen der Metallurgie
SWJA	Southwestern Journal of Anthropology

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TABLES



Fig.1. Mycenaean Flask from Maşat Höyük. (after Özgüç, 1980)



Fig.2. Part of the Hattusa's bronze sword with the Akkadian inscription.
(URL: <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/HPM/hpm-en.php?p=hetgesch-en>)

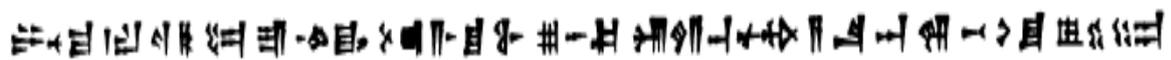


Fig.3. The Akkadian inscription on the Hattusa's sword. (after Wartke, 1992)

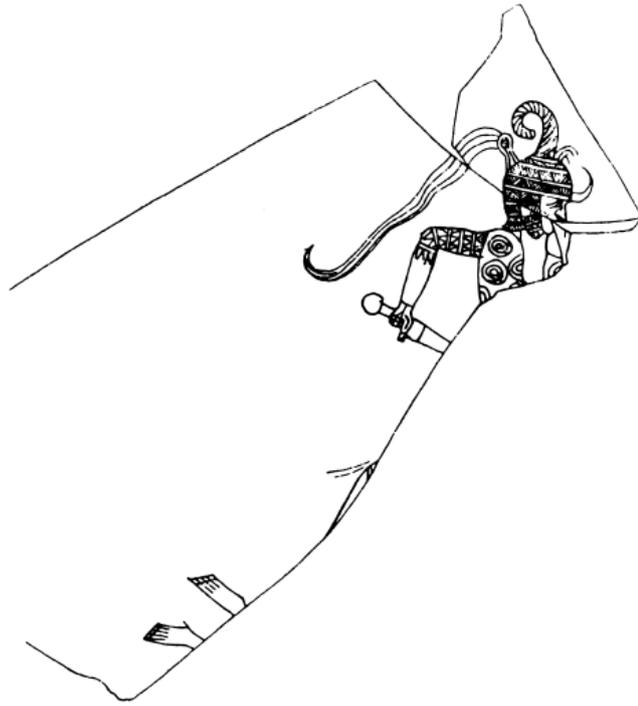


Fig.4. Drawing of the ceramic bowl of Hattusa. (after Güterbock, 1984)



Fig.5. Fragment of the white marble slab from Keos. (after Caskey, 1965)

TABLE 4



Fig.6. Golden kantharos from the 'Vulchetrun A' hoard. (after Hartmann, 1982)



Fig.7. Golden kantharos from Mycenae, Shaft Grave IV. (after Wright, 2004)

TABLE 5

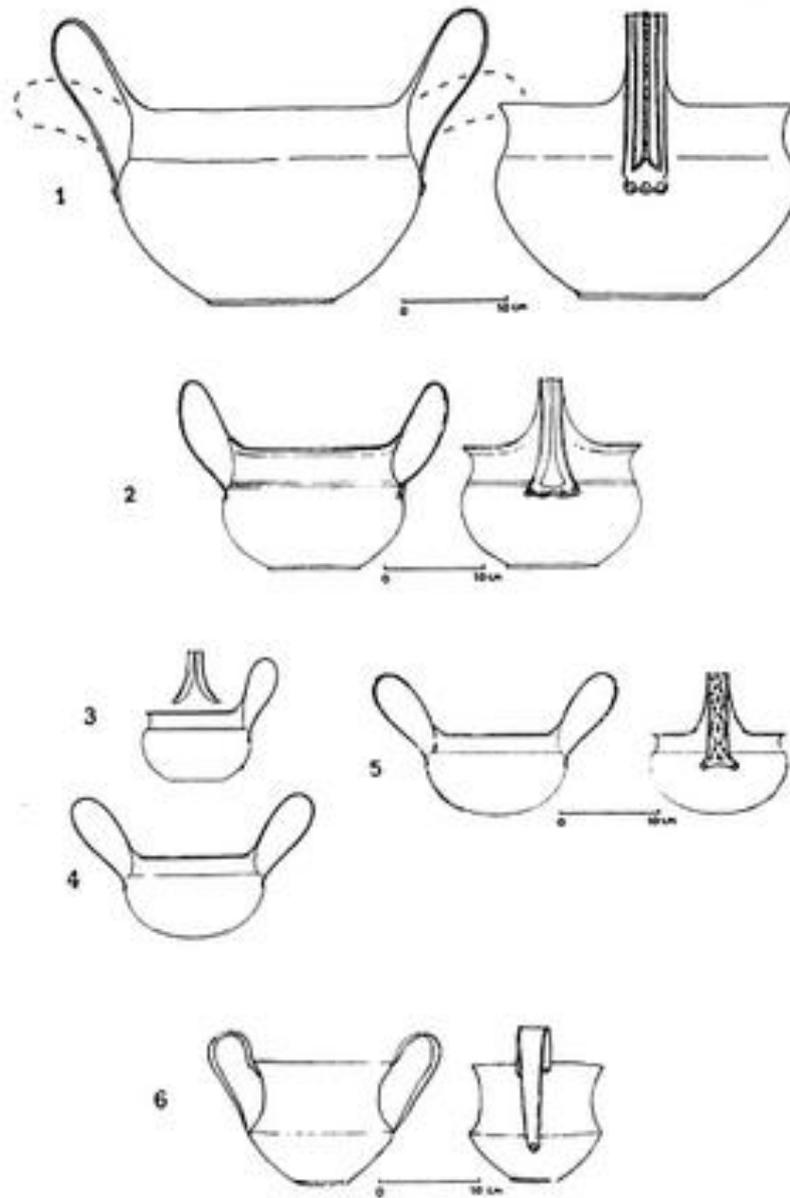


Fig.8. Drawings of golden kantharoi, 7:1 Vulchetrun; 7:2 Kryzhovlin; 7:3-7:5 Rademi; 7:6 Mycenae, Shaft Grave IV. (after Sherratt-Taylor, 1989)

TABLE 6

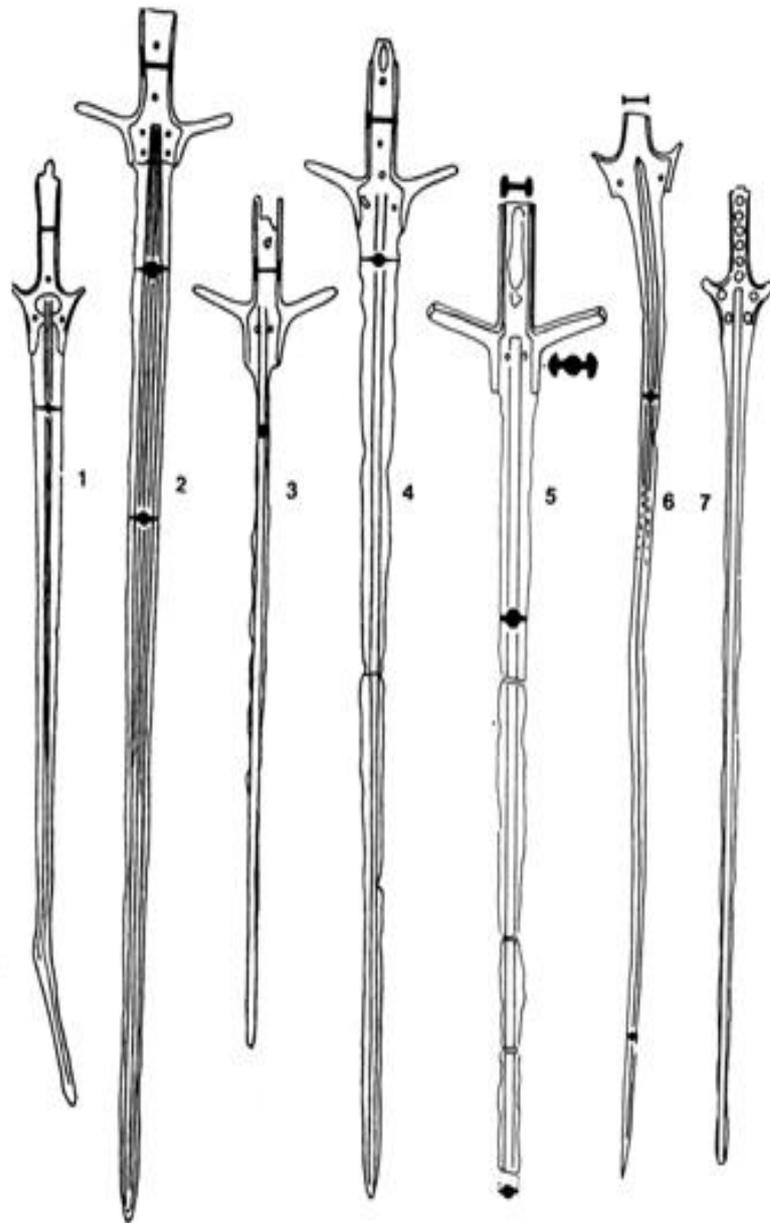


Fig.9. Balkan swords with Mycenaean features. 9:1 Mycenae, 9:2 Dono Levski, 9:3 Doktor Josifovo, 9:4 Peruštica, 9:5 Medgidia (Romania), 9:7 Tetovo near Skopje. (after Bouzek, 2013b)

TABLE 7

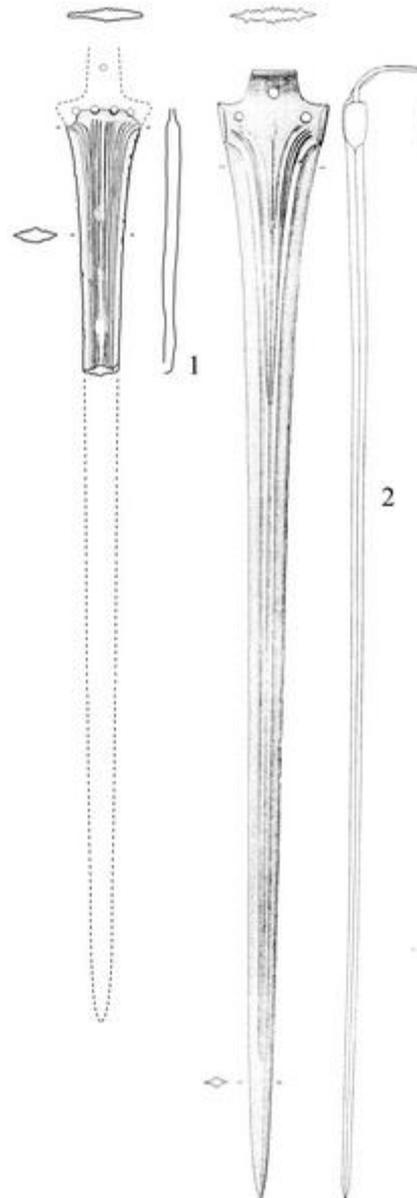


Fig.10. Of Mycenaean type swords. 10:1 Varna, 10:2 Hattusa.
(URL: http://www.aegeobalkanprehistory.net/article.php?id_art=20)

TABLE 8

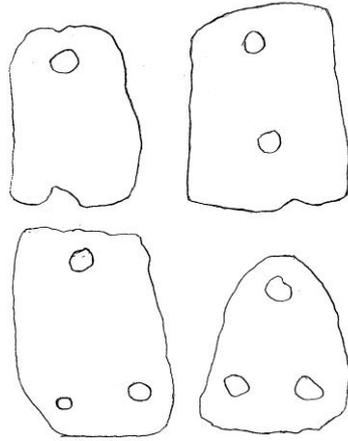


Fig. 11. Drawings of stone anchors from Sozopol. (after Bouzek, 2013b)



Fig.12. Stone anchor from Sozopol with the inscription 'NHAZKOY'. (after De Boer, 2008)



Fig.13. Ox-hide ingot from Cercovo with the sign '+'. (after De Boer, 2008)

TABLE 10

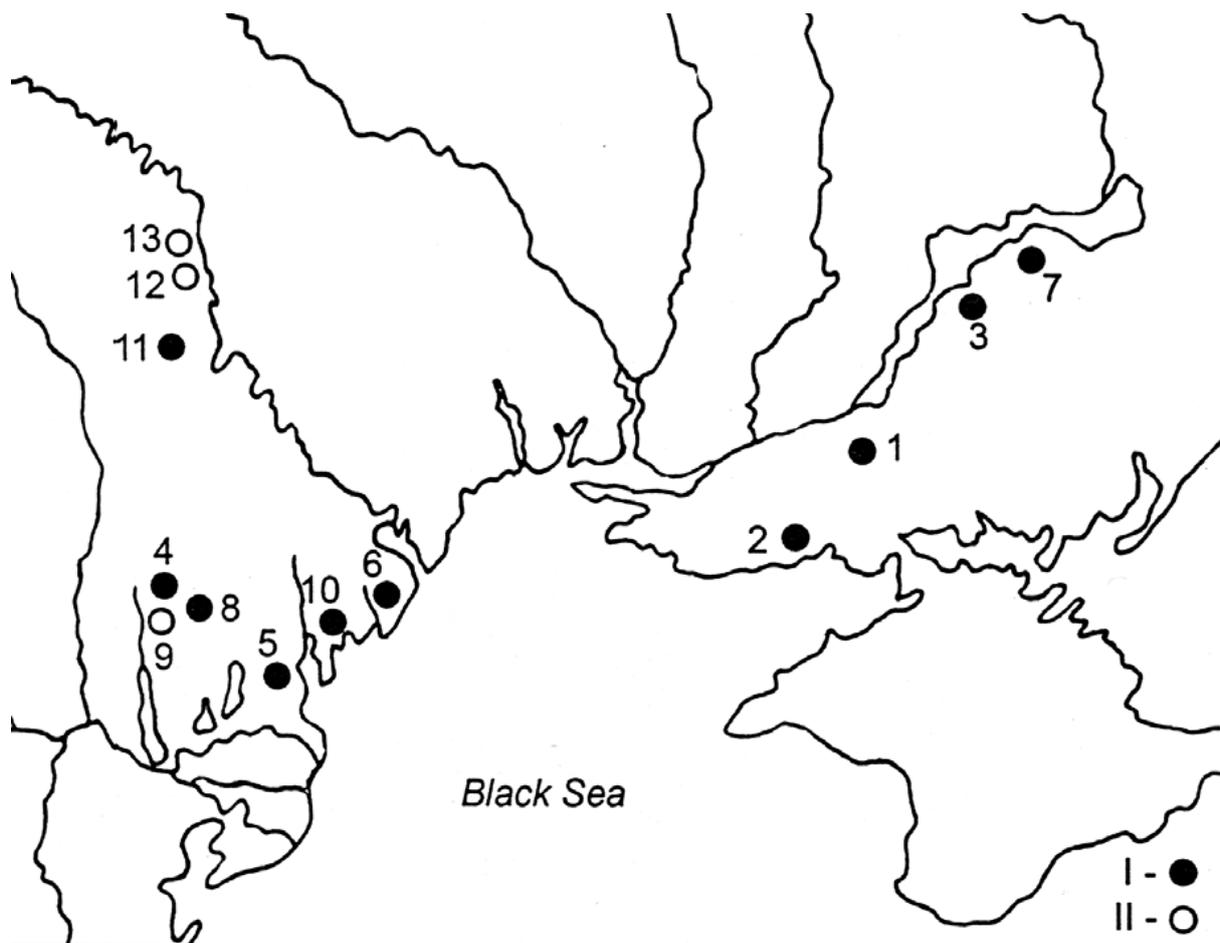


Fig.14. Distribution of the fibulae on the western and northern Black Sea region.
(after Bouzek, 2011)

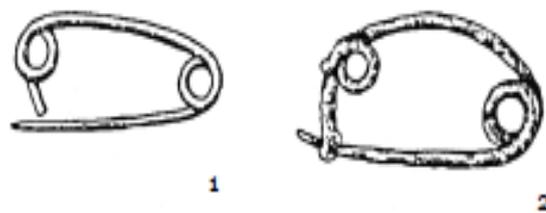


Fig.15. Two types of fibulae from the western and northern Black Sea region. 15:1
Lukjanovsk tumulus, 15:2 Širokoje tumulus. (after Bouzek, 2011)

