ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

Authoring : *Dimitriadou Daphne*
Translation : *Καλογεροπούλου Γεωργία*
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Summary :

The colonisation of the Black Sea took place from the second half of the 7th century BC until the early Classical period. The metropolis of most of the colonies in the Black Sea was Miletus, which founded important cities like Sinope, Amisos, Histria and Olbia. Other cities participated in the colonisation of the region to a lesser extent, such as Megara, which founded Heraclea Pontica and Mesembria, Teos, Mytilene et. al. The colonies' economy was based on fishing, agriculture and the rich resources in timber and metals. They developed into important trading centers, whereas they maintained good relationships with the indigenous population.

Date

2nd half of the 7th c. BC- late 5th c. BC

Geographical Location

Black Sea

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1. Introduction

The Greek mythological tradition connects the first contacts of the Greeks with the peoples of the Black Sea with the Argonauts and their journey to Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece. Some scholars believe that this particular myth reflects history and Jason's journey actually took place before the Trojan War, since Homer referred to that myth.[1] However, others disagree with this view and claim that the myth of the Argonautic expedition cannot refer to a journey in the Black Sea in the 13th c. BC.[2]

Archaeological evidence from Georgia and references on the Black Sea in Greek literary sources testify that the Greeks knew those areas since the 8th c. BC.[3] Nevertheless, the colonisation began in the second half of the 7th c. BC, during the second phase of the Greek colonisation in the Archaic period, after the establishment of colonies in southern Italy, Sicily, the Western Mediterranean, the Adriatic and the northern coast of the Aegean.

The penetration of the Greeks into the region of the Black Sea is mainly linked to the efforts of Miletus, which claimed to have founded 75 or even 90 colonies. Strabo the Geographer stresses the fact that the city was famous for the large number of colonies in the regions of the Black Sea and Propontis.[4] Not only Miletus but also Megara, Teos and other cities were involved in the colonisation of the region. The widespread colonisation of the Black Sea is dated to the 6th c. BC and was completed towards the end of the Archaic period. In the 5th c. BC only the city of Athens appointed *klerouchoi* (allottees) on the western shores of the Black Sea.

The transitional period of the colonies lasted until the middle or the 3rd quarter of the 6th c. BC, when there was a change in the architecture of the cities. A systematic town-planning and the first temples appeared, as well as the first stone buildings. In addition, certain colonies had taken control over the surrounding rural areas ('chorai') as early as the beginning of the 6th c. BC, although in most cases that did not happen until the mid-6th c. BC. For instance, the 'chorai' of both Olbia and Chersonesus Taurica (colony of Heraclea Pontica) gradually expanded to 1,500,000 acres each in the 4th c. BC.[5]

2. Models of colonisation

Two 'models' of colonisation have been studied in the Black Sea; the Ionian (Miletus, Teos et.al.) and the Doric (Magara, Heraclea Pontica). The first was peaceful and adaptable to the indigenous economic or political conditions, while the latter exploited directly the local population. Initially, the natives formed part of the early Greek colonies and their relations were peaceful until the end of the Archaic period. However, that situation changed at the beginning of the 5th c. BC, when local kingdoms under Persian control rose in Thrace, Scythia, Colchis and Paphlagonia.

In the 5th century BC the Kingdom of Bosporus was formed by the Greek cities in the peninsulas of Kerch and Taman to prevent the Scythian expansion. On the Thracian coast of the Black Sea the Greek cities lost their independence when the Kingdom of Odryssians was established in the region. Nevertheless, the 4th century BC was a period of prosperity for the cities and the kingdoms, which enabled the

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penetration of the Greek element into the Pontic areas.[6]

The Oracle of Apollo at Didyma was a cult place common for all the colonies of Miletus. The Pontic cities worshipped Apollo Ietros as their patron deity.[7] Apollo Hegemon was worshipped at Phasis in Colchis, while the Greek communities of the greater region worshipped Demeter as well.[8]

3. The Colonisation of Propontis

Prior to establishing colonies in the Black Sea, the Greeks had explored the potential of the area of Propontis, the entrance to the Black Sea. During the first half of the 7th century BC settlers from Miletus, Erythrai and Paros founded Parion, on the southern shores of Propontis, at the eastern inner edge of the Hellespont. The Milesians established the agricultural community of Cyzicus to the east of Parion and to the southwest, in Mysia, Abydos. The Phocaeans founded Lampsacus to the northeast of the same area. The Megareans founded Chalcedon and Astacus in the region of Bithynia on the Asian shores of Propontis in 685 BC and Selymvria on the northern coast. According to Herodotus, seventeen years later they established the city of Byzantium, at an extremely advantageous place opposite Chalcedon.[9]

4. The Colonisation of the Black Sea[10]

4.1. The first phase (2nd half of the 7th c. BC)

In the 7th c. BC – during the last third in particular – a small number of colonies were established on the northern, western and southern shores of the Black Sea. The foundation date of Sinope, a colony of Miletus almost at the middle of the northern coast of Asia Minor, is debatable. Literary sources mention two different versions. The historian Eusebius cites the year 631/630 BC, but simultaneously he claims that Trapezous, a colony of Sinope on the northeastern coast of Asia Minor in Colchis, was founded in 756 BC, which presupposes the existence of Sinope. Pseudo- Scymnus mentions that an earlier settlement was destroyed by the Cimmerians and the city was later re-established by two exiles from Miletus.[11] Some scholars believe that Sinope was founded by Corinth in the first half of the 8th c. BC, while some others date it to the second half, or even at the end of the 7th c. BC. The archaeological excavations in the city have not clarified the problem, as the modern city expands over a large part of the ancient one. However, the establishment/re-establishment by Miletus is dated to the last third of the 7th c. BC by most historians.[12]

Similar problems occur in the case of Trapezous, since there is no archaeological evidence. It was probably founded as an emporion and later, after 630 BC, it was re-established by the citizens of Sinope as a colony. Kotyora (modern Ordu) and Cerasous were colonies on the northern coast of Asia Minor, however there is no certainty whether their metropolis was Miletus or Sinope. Tios (modern Filyos) and Sesamos were certainly Milesian colonies.[13]

At the end of the 7th c. BC the Milesians founded Histria on the western coastline of the Black Sea, in present-day Romania, and Orgame on the Danube Delta; on the northern coastline, an emporion was established on Berezan island in Ukraine, which evolved into a colony in the next century. However, recent pottery finds from Berezan and Histria indicate the participation of settlers from other cities, such as Samos, Chios, Ephesus and probably Smyrna. In 610 BC Miletus founded Apollonia (modern Sozopol) in Thrace, in present-day Bulgaria.[14]

4.2. The second phase (circa 1st half of the 6th c. BC)

By 560 BC new colonies had already been founded by the Milesians: Tomis on the western coastline of the Black Sea (modern Romania), Olbia/ancient Borysthenes to the North near Berezan, Panticapaeum, Nymphaeum, Theodosia, Myrmekion, Tyritake in the Cimmerian Bosporus to the North-East of the Black Sea and Hermonassa, Kepoi and Patraeus on the Asian coastline of the Black Sea. Colonisers from Mytilene participated in the founding of Hermonassa.[15]

4.3. The third phase (circa 560-530 BC)

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Not only Miletus but other cities as well were involved in the colonisation of the Black Sea during this period. The Megareans and the Boeotians founded Heraclea (modern Ereğli) on the southern coast of Black Sea, to the west of Sinope, circa 560-550 BC. According to both ancient written sources and contemporary scholars, the colonisers either extinguished or enslaved the indigenous Mariandyn tribe. The city developed into an important centre of viniculture and trade. Towards the end of the 5th c. BC they expanded their territory over the western part of the northern coast of Asia Minor and proceeded to issue their own currency.[16]

The Milesians founded Odessos on the western coastline of the Black Sea in circa 560 BC, whereas in 550 BC the cities of Tyras and Nikonion were established in the wider area of Olbia.[17] It is likely that Amisos (modern Samsun) was founded on the eastern coast of Sinope in the mid-6th BC.

In 542 BC Teos founded Phanagoria (or Phanagoreia) in the Cimmerian Bosporus. In the south, Sindoikos Limen was founded on the site of the later city of Gorgippia, while in the European Bosporus, Akra, Porthmeus and Illourato were established. During this period, Milesian settlers founded Phasis, Gyenos and Dioskourias.[18]

5. Colonies in the Black Sea during the Classical period

During the Classical period only a few colonies were founded, which developed into important centres of the region. In 493 BC, according to Herodotus, the Megareans settled on the Thracian coastline and founded Mesembria (modern Nessebar).[19] In the early 5th c. BC the inhabitants of Heraclea Pontica founded Callatis on the southern coast of present-day Romania and at the end of the 5th or early 4th c. BC Chersonesus Taurica in Crimea.[20]

6. Rationale for colonisation

The reasons for the colonisation of the Black Sea were not only to support agriculture (new farmland) or trade (wheat, slaves). Moreover, colonisation was not the result of the necessity for raw materials (especially metal and wood) or the increase of the population in urban areas and the subsequent lack of land. In several cases, the reasons were political. For example, Miletus, 'The Pearl of Ionia' as Herodotus described, and the metropolis for most colonies in the Black Sea, established an advantageous geographical position and owned vast fertile land. In the late 8th c. BC, like other Ionian cities, Miletus extended its boundary nearly fifty kilometers inland. The outcome of the wars with the Lydians was not positive for the Ionian cities, including Miletus, as the Lydian Kingdom expanded at the expense of the Ionian territories. The Milesian farmland was dramatically reduced and the economy suffered a severe blow. This led to proposals for the re-allocation of the existing land, which would inevitably be unfair to a part of the population. A radical solution to deal with the situation and prevent social turmoil within the city was migration and the establishment of new cities.[21]

7. Economy of the colonies

The economy of the Greek colonies was mainly based on fishing, agriculture, industry and trade. The main products imported from local communities were metals, domestic animals, skins, as well as slaves. Athenian commodities were extremely popular among colonists.[22] The production of local commodities began in the mid-6th century BC. Pottery kilns found in Histria, Nymphaeum, Panticapaeum, Phanagoria, Gorgippia, Sinope and Chersonisus Taurica testify a notable pottery production from the 6th until the 2nd c. BC. This included terracotta figurines, lamps, loom weights, cookware and amphorae. Sinope, for instance, had a thriving pottery industry, particularly of amphorae in the 4th c. BC. Those amphorae were quite popular up until the third quarter of the 6th century AD as it is testified by sherds, stamped amphora handles and kilns in a wide area extending over the Black Sea and the Aegean. In addition, the pottery production of the colonies in Colchis from the second half of the 4th century BC has been correlated with the migration of pottery makers from Sinope to the region.[23]

Metalwork was practiced in Panticapaeum, Nymphaeum, Phanagoria, Berezan and elsewhere. Silversmithing and goldsmithing developed after the 4th century BC, when there was a great demand for jewellery utensils and weapons made of precious metals.[24]

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3. Eumel., *Fragmenta* 2.8; Hesiod, *Theogony* 337-340.

4. Strabo 14.1.6.

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10. See photolibrary, map with the colonies on the Black Sea.

11. Eusebius, 2.81; Pseudo-Scymnus, 941-952.

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The Poetics of Colonization

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Glossary :

amphora, the

from the greek words "αμφί"(on both sides) and "φέρω" (carry): vessel with long ovoid body and a considerably narrower neck made in various sizes from the smaller perfume oil container to the large storage receivers of liquids and solids. It stands on a small foot and it bears two invariable vertical handles on either side. Some of the distinguished types of the amphorae are these whose lower part is tapering to the point (narrow bottomed), the neck type, the Nicosthenian, the Nola, the Panathenaic, the Tyrrhenian, the SOS type.