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Sinope as a Trade and Cultural Agent in Thrace in Classical and Early Hellenistic Times

Through evidence of different natures and dates, an attempt is made to reveal Sinope – the most developed Greek *apoikia* on the south Black Sea shore from Archaic to Early Hellenistic times, – as a contributor to the economic and cultural development of Thrace, and especially its northeastern region.

1. Some newly published artefacts from NE Bulgaria, which, added to others already known from modern SE Romania and Moldova, are instructive about the early stages of the adoption and development of the iron industry in Thrace as well as of the relations with Anatolia, Caucasus and the Near East – an area supposed to be the primary hearth of iron technology in the Ancient World. These artefacts are tools known as lugged or trunnion axes and adzes. They are valuable sources of information because of the lack of bronze-made predecessors in Thrace, despite their well-known existence in Asia Minor and its adjacent eastern regions. Another group of iron axes with direct parallels in Central Anatolia are those of the Emir-Dag type. Since the locations are in the hinterland of the littoral, near the ports of Classical times – Odessos, Dionysopolis, Byzance and Tirizis, there are grounds to suppose the axes are a result of direct contact by sea with northern Anatolia. This idea is supported by another group of recently published metal artefacts - fibulae in the vicinity of Odessos, which parallel finds in central and SE Anatolia and regions to the east of the Transcaucasus and Levant as well.

Mapping the discovery locations of the axes and the fibulae, which have replicas in Thrace, outlines in general the route connecting (since the Early Bronze Age) the Black Sea coast in the region of Sinope-Amisos through Central Anatolia, and the Taurus Mountains with the Cilician littoral to the south, toward Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine. The possibility that the direct route across the Black Sea from Sinope along the Crimean peninsula to the NW coast of the Pont was familiar to the local sea-farers as early as before Greek colonisation, has been long established in the literature. The Late Bronze Age harbor settlement of Sinope, known as "SINUWA" in Hittite sources, is confirmed by the recent excavations. The new data which we are presenting also support this idea.

2. Sinope developed as a prosperous port of a caravan route between the Euphrates and the Black Sea from the 6th to the 4th c. BC. This was in addition to the leading role of the *polis* as producer and exporter of olive oil to the markets of the north and northwestern Pontic area, established on the base of the Sinopean amphorae (and stamps) recorded in great amounts in Histria, Callatis etc. The past 25 years of excavations of a huge Thracian settlement near the town of Ispirih (NE Bulgaria) has revealed a regular importation of goods (oil) in Sinopean amphorae (steadily ca. 18-20 % of the whole amphora import), as well as roofing tiles. The most probable identification of the town is Helis, the Early Hellenistic capital of the Getic kingdom. Judging by the archaeological evidence it was a significant economic and trade center of the area. There are recorded Sinopean products at other Thracian settlements and cemeteries of 4th-3rd c. BC, which confirm a well-established presence of Sinopean products in the hinterlands of Histria, Callatis and Odessos. It is matter of debate whether the marketing in the country was performed by Sinopean merchants or by the mediation of West Pontic dealers.

3. In addition to the export of olive oil and architectural terracotta, Sinope realized the rich mineral resources of its area and was probably an artistic center, especially after the expedition of Pericles and settlement of several hundred Athenians. On the basis of the

evidence, E. Akurgal supposes that much of the Achaemenid metalwork on the black market seems to have come from this area.

4. The economic penetration of Sinope in the deep hinterland of northern Thrace gives reasonable grounds for the search of the origin of some toreutics artifacts discovered in the last three decades, such as the bull-rhyton of the silver treasure from Borovo. In the same context, iconographic and stylistic novelties with a pure Thracian appearance, such as vases (jug No. 158 of the Rogozen treasure) and pieces of ceremonial armor (Agigiol, Peretu, Zlatinitsa etc.) could be explained through the association with East Anatolia and adjacent areas.