

# ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF GREEK IRON AGE POTTERY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

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EARLY GREEK POTTERY EXCHANGE AND CONSUMPTION OVERSEAS ARE reflections of social and cultural relations in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea that can be variably understood depending in each case on their individual historical and archaeological context. In the past, these relations were primarily associated with Greek, partly also Phoenician, migration and related social processes in the Mediterranean during the Iron Age. Due to the paucity of textual and other archaeological evidence about the early phases of Greek migration, Greek pottery was perceived as the archaeological fingerprint of Greek colonisation<sup>1</sup> or migration in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and was used as the main tool for its historical reconstruction. In this way, the historical treatment of early Greek pottery exchange and consumption overseas underwent the same processes of simplification and generalisation as that of Greek colonisation.<sup>2</sup>

### THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS IN EARLY GREEK POTTERY STUDIES

Methods and approaches to the study of Greek pottery were affected by the discipline's social context and its strong links to contemporary political agendas in the same manner as Greek colonial narratives were shaped by the conflicting

<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'colonisation', which stands for the Greek *apoikismos*, without quotation marks despite its colonialist implications.

<sup>2</sup> Dietler 2017.

interests of European colonialism; the underlying aim of earlier British, French, German and American historiographies that presented variable and sometimes conflicting models of negotiation between ancient Greek migration and modern colonialism was the legitimization of modern imperialist claims.<sup>3</sup>

The cultural-historical approach to Greek migration followed a well-established tradition in European archaeology that used to view the spatial and temporal patterns of artefact distribution as evidence for the reconstruction of cultural 'groups' and human mobility.<sup>4</sup> This was a period when cultural change was explained in Europe through migration or diffusion of ideas, usually from advanced centres to recipient peripheries. Moreover, a certain confusion in the association of ethnic identity with cultural and biological affiliation dominated archaeological thought.<sup>5</sup> It was in such an intellectual context that the finding of MG pottery in Italy was taken by Alan Blakeway in the early 1930s to imply Greek 'pre-colonisation contact with the West'.<sup>6</sup> By the same reasoning, Thomas Dunbabin declared in the following decade in his most influential book on Greek colonisation in Italy and Sicily that 'it is in the early eighth century that Greek vases and, by implication, Greek traders begin to find their way again to these areas'.<sup>7</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, Greek pottery consumption was further understood as a residue of Greek commercial or colonial exchange, exogamies and other forms of small- or large-scale migration also in regions that were not associated by ancient literature with Greek *apoikismos*.

Classical archaeology was center unaffected by the processual shift of certain European archaeologies that had already removed migration from their explanatory kit in the 1960s and disassociated cultural and ethnic affiliations. Current qualitative and quantitative criteria deriving from conventional material studies were systematically applied instead for the definition of Greek colonial settlement forms (colonies versus emporia), colonial impact on the 'barbarian' hinterland, the degree of the – usually one-way – assimilation of the Indigenous populations and the types of cultural and economic relations between metropolises and colonies. Classical archaeology also barely profited from the contemporary scientific and theoretical advances in the study of past migration that appeared on the intellectual agenda.

The synthetic work of David Ridgway on the dawn of Greek colonisation in Italy, which was inspired by the discovery of the extraordinary finds at the necropolis of Pithekoussai, echoes the *Zeitgeist*: Greek pottery consumption was quantified to explain the extent of colonial encounters, from ordinary

<sup>3</sup> Ceserani 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Trigger 2006, 217–23, 232–35.

<sup>5</sup> Härke 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Blakeway 1932–33, 172.

<sup>7</sup> Dunbabin 1948.

‘trade’ to the establishment of emporia and colonies.<sup>8</sup> A major archaeological concern has always been the search for origins and primacies in colonial expansion. The latter was unquestionably ascribed to the Euboeans, whose pottery seemed to have dominated in both the eastern and western Mediterranean, and their homeland necropolises and sanctuaries already demonstrated variable cultural contacts with the Levant. Al Mina was also included in this discussion about ‘precolonial’ expansion after ‘Boardman first hoisted, courageously at the time, the Euboean flag’.<sup>9</sup> That site at the mouth of the Orontes River, where unusually large quantities of MG and LG pottery were recovered, was understood exclusively with ceramic criteria in most archaeological and historical handbooks as the eastern Mediterranean counterpart of Pithekoussai.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, the Euboean flag was hoisted in the northern Aegean, where Anthony Snodgrass suggested the colonisation of Chalkidike by Euboeans as early as the Protogeometric period, drawing evidence mainly from the Submycenaean and Protogeometric pottery from Torone and Mende, which was allegedly similar to that of Lefkandi.<sup>11</sup> These faulty ceramic arguments were disputed by John Papadopoulos, who argued against the equation of pottery and people but could not avoid the pitfall of the search for ethnic origins that obsessed Mediterranean archaeology.<sup>12</sup> The persisting trend on origins was followed by a reduced interest in the economic and other social factors that shaped the modes of exchange and consumption. The common interpretation of Greek pottery overseas, either through a gift-exchange perspective or as space fillers on cargo ships, adequately treated neither the complexity of their materiality nor their popularity in non-Greek contexts. Previous interpretations of Greek pottery consumption overseas downplayed the variability of its context of use, which reflects diverse modes of exchange, as a recent study on the occasion of the examination of a new large and well-stratified assemblage of Aegean and Aegeanising Geometric pottery at Kinet Höyük has demonstrated.<sup>13</sup>

Previous studies further failed to consider certain economic aspects of its production – such as the labour invested and all the social processes that transformed the perception of its value – through its exchange to its use. Pottery consumption and partly also exchange were namely treated independently after having been removed from the *chaîne opératoire* that also includes

<sup>8</sup> Ridgway 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Popham 1994, 26–27.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Ridgway 1984; Coldstream 2003, 71–72; Murray 2013, 109–14; for a more balanced treatment of Al Mina’s material culture and its historical implications, see Osborne 2009, 74–75.

<sup>11</sup> Snodgrass 1994.

<sup>12</sup> See Papadopoulos 2011, with previous literature.

<sup>13</sup> Gimatzidis et al. 2023.

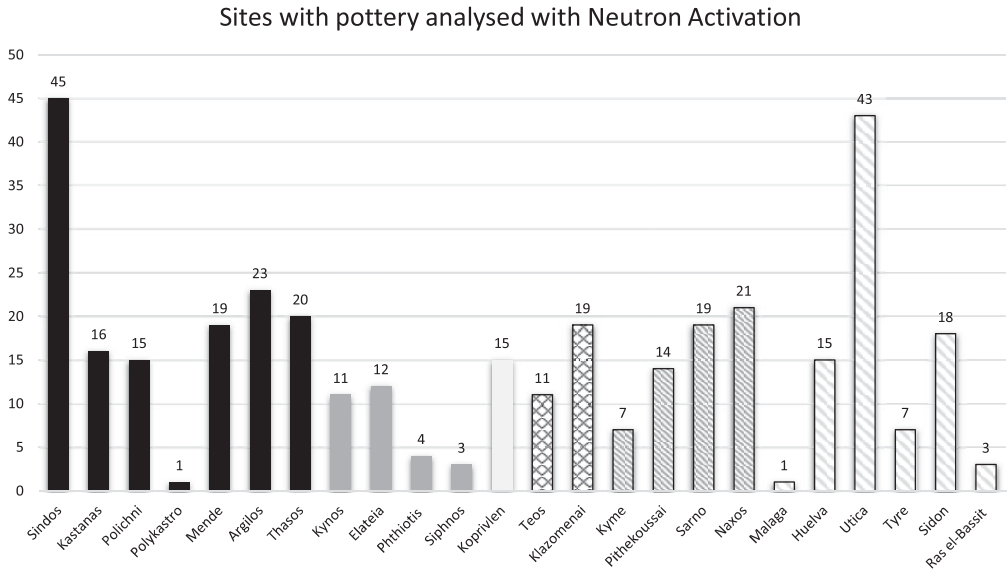
modes of production. This approach was in full alignment with the previous focus of anthropology on issues of consumption and the post-colonial critique that failed to treat social and economic relations through a holistic perspective.<sup>14</sup> The perception of Greek pots as luxury gifts in the Levant, going hand in hand with the understanding of Aramaean, Phoenician and Egyptian wares in Greece as exotic wares or ‘orientalia’, reflects a persisting orientalism in Classical archaeology that perpetuates the social and cultural divide between the Aegean and the Levant and distorts the economic relations that emerged through these exchanges.

#### AIM, PLANNING AND STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

The aim of this project is to amend previous material studies by means of new scientific and archaeological evidence about early Greek pottery consumption in colonial and other Mediterranean contexts. This is a requirement for any re-examination of the social and cultural relations between the Aegean and the Mediterranean during the Iron Age from a modern disciplinary and theoretical perspective. Our endeavour emerged within a project with the broader objective to examine in a comparative manner the earliest phases of Greek *apoikismos* in Italy and Macedonia by means of variable archaeometric and archaeological studies (see Preface). The first sites that provided ceramic material for NAA were thus some of the earliest Greek colonies in the northern Aegean and Italy (Figure 1.1). Pottery of early Greek or local colonial origin was analysed at colonial sites such as Pithekoussai and Kyme in Campania, Naxos on Sicily and Mende, Thasos and Argilos in the northern Aegean. Ceramic material of Greek type and origin was also sampled at Indigenous sites at both ends of the early Greek migratory stream in order to comparatively examine the pottery used at both colonial and Indigenous sites within the same colonial landscapes: in Italy, we analysed pottery at certain necropolises in the valley of Sarno that present new case studies for comparison with the major colonial sites, whose pottery we also analysed in Campania. The concrete criteria for the choice of Indigenous sites in the northern Aegean (Sindos, Polichni, Kastanas, Polykastro) for the purposes of comparative NAA are analytically illustrated in Chapter 4.

It soon became clear that early Greek pottery consumption at Greek colonial and related Indigenous sites was marked by certain common variables as pottery at sites in culturally differentiating landscapes in the western and eastern Mediterranean. It was for this reason that the project was expanded to include also the analysis of pottery of Greek type and origin at Phoenician metropolises such as Sidon and Tyre, as well as at Phoenician colonies such as Utica, Huelva

<sup>14</sup> Chibber 2013.



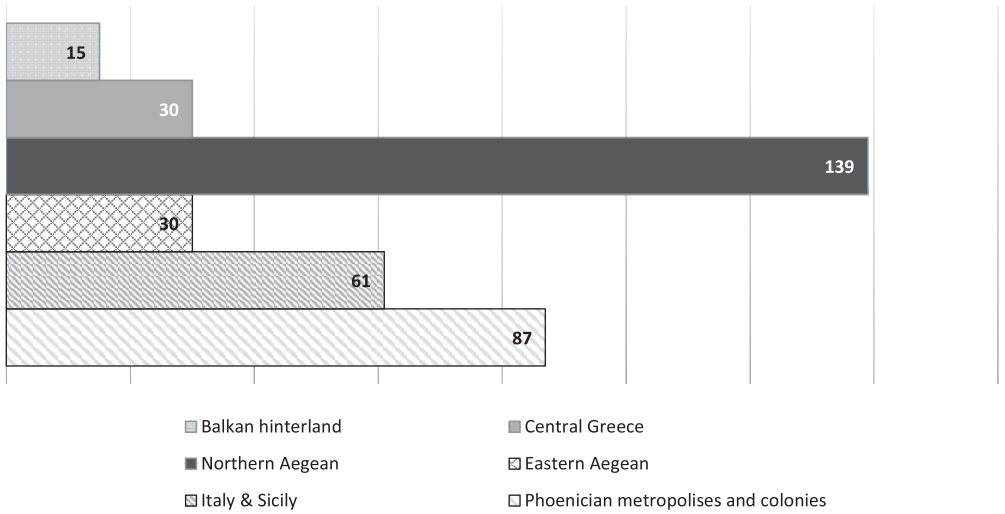
1.1 Sites with pottery analysed by Neutron Activation

and Málaga, thus broadening the project's focus. Interestingly, the earliest assemblages of Greek Early Iron Age pottery in the Mediterranean were recovered at some of these and a few other metropolitan Phoenician sites rather than at the first Greek colonies in Italy. This diversity is reflected in the sampling of our project, which centres on the analysis of the earliest Greek pottery overseas and includes eighty-seven samples from Phoenician sites in the eastern, central and western Mediterranean and sixty-one samples from Pithekoussai, Kyme, Sarno and Naxos on Sicily (Figure 1.2).

While the earliest Greek pottery types exchanged in the Mediterranean and examined in this book date to the Protogeometric period, Greek pottery use became common only during the MG and LG periods, as the finding of numerous PSC, meander hook, chevron and other Geometric bowls from the Iberian peninsula to the Near East indicates. Such pottery types circulated not only at Greek and Phoenician metropolitan and colonial sites but also in other cultural contexts through various exchange mechanisms. Their understanding requires an approach that overcomes previous more or less Hellenocentric perspectives of classical scholarship that used to focus on Greek 'colonial' agency.

In other words, Greek pottery exchange and use overseas cannot be adequately understood through a binary of Greek metropolises and colonies that fails to consider the agency of other cultures in the production, exchange and consumption of pottery of Greek type. As in the case of pottery of Mycenaean type that was appropriated, produced, exchanged and used in cultural contexts that do not seem to have been shaped through any structured

Regional distribution of the samples analysed with NAA



1.2 Regional distribution of the samples analysed with NAA

migration process from the Aegean to Italy or the Levant, Greek Geometric pottery cannot be taken as a marker of Greek migration. The variability of its fabrics and exchange patterns instead speaks against the perception of the transfer of Greek pottery technology and types as a reflection of interaction between Greek metropolises and colonies. One of this project’s aims is thus to highlight flaws in such understandings of Greek pottery exchange in the Mediterranean and elucidate alternative patterns in the diffusion of Greek ceramic technology and types in non-Greek cultural contexts.

The pottery sampled at the aforementioned sites comprised mainly tableware forms. Interestingly, the earliest Greek pottery that was exchanged overseas did not comprise transport amphoras that were exchanged for their content (wine, oil, etc.) but tableware exchanged per se. These were fine vessels for storing, pouring, mixing and mainly drinking, which are commonly perceived as luxury artefacts that were allegedly used by Indigenous elites to enhance their social status through demonstration of their access to international exchange networks. In addition to these, we also analysed by way of exception a few Greek transport jars that belonged to conspicuous types and contexts, such as the earliest specimens known so far of Milesian and ‘Samian’ transport jars from Sindos or the much-discussed monochrome amphora from Cerro del Villar in the region of Málaga.

The circulation of the earliest standardised Greek amphoras dates to the beginning of the LG period, that is, to a much later date than the jars of similar function in the Levant, which continued a Bronze Age practice of pottery making and ware exchange. Transport containers from Attica, Corinth, Chios,

Klazomenai, Samos and Miletos (as the Sindos examples suggest), which were exchanged during the Archaic and later periods all over the Mediterranean, were produced in a standardised form and technology for the first time during LG I (see Table 1.1). It was, nevertheless, a surprise for classical scholarship to have realised during the past two decades that the earliest standardised Aegean transport jars of the post-palatial period did not originate in any of these well-known regions of Greece, but instead in its northern ‘periphery’. These amphoras, which appeared in the Early Protogeometric and were further exchanged through the Geometric to the Early Archaic period, were examined for the first time at Troy and studied in detail by means of large, stratified ceramic assemblages at Sindos. Their broad, intense, compact and complex exchange network indicates the emergence of transformations barely known so far in the economic and social organisation of the northern Aegean that dramatically affected the history of early Greece and its Balkan hinterland. This ceramic ware reflects advances in production and exchange in the northern Aegean that were thought to be a pull factor for Greek migration.<sup>15</sup> This intriguing category of pottery thus inevitably became one of our NAA project’s focuses, with sixty-two samples analysed at both Indigenous (Sindos, Polichni, Polykastro, Kastanas) and colonial sites (Sindos, Thasos, Argilos) in the northern Aegean. It was for the same purpose that we included in our analytical studies material from Elateia and Kynos in central Greece and Klazomenai in the eastern Aegean, where such amphoras were recovered (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Finally, the authors of this volume agreed upon the term ‘Protogeometric and Geometric transport amphoras’ (P/GTAs) for this ceramic category, which was decorated with Geometric motifs and exchanged mainly in the northern Aegean, but also far beyond that.

Another consistent ceramic category that was commonly consumed in several different microregions in the northern Aegean and its Balkan hinterland, and which became another focus of our NAA project, was K-22 Ware. We sampled and analysed forty-three samples of this ceramic ware, which was manufactured from the end of MG II and particularly from LG Ia onwards with a hybrid – both wheel-fashioned and coiling – technique and was decorated with common Geometric motifs. K-22 Ware constituted the only common cultural feature in remote micro-regions of central, eastern and Pirin Macedonia that otherwise differed significantly, in both social as well as cultural terms.

The analytical results of all 362 samples of pottery and clays (Phthiotis, Siphnos, Naxos) that were obtained at twenty-four sites and regions in eight countries all over the Mediterranean are presented in the first two chapters of this book. The following chapters are discussions of the analytical results in

<sup>15</sup> Gimatzidis 2020.

TABLE 1.1 *Cultural phases in the eastern, central and western Mediterranean and their synchronisation with the Aegean periodisation system, conventional and revised absolute chronology*

Cultural periodisation	Aegean		Campania (Pacciarelli 2000)	Iberian peninsula (Mederos Martín 2021)	Northern Levant (Mazzoni 2000)	Southern Levant (Lehmann 2021)
	Conventional chronology hist BCE (Coldstream 2008)	Revised chronological BCE (Gimatzidis and Weninger 2020)				
EPG	1050–1000	~12th c.	Proto-Villanovan	Late Bronze Age IIC	Iron Age IA–IB	Iron Age I
LPG	950–900	1100–1050	Pontecagnano IA		Iron Age IC	Iron Age IIA Early
EG	900–850	1050–990	Pontecagnano IB early	Late Bronze Age IIIA	Iron Age IIA	Iron Age IIA Late
MG I	850–800	990–930	Pontecagnano IB developed			
MG II	800 – 760	930–870	Pontecagnano IIA	Late Bronze Age IIIB/Iron Age IA	Iron Age IIB	Iron Age IIB
LG Ia	760–750	870–790	Pontecagnano IIB			
LG Ib	750–735	790–735		Iron Age IB–IC		
LG IIa	735–720	735–720				
LG IIb	720–700	720–early 7th c.				
Early Archaic period	7th century	7th century			Iron Age IIIA	Iron Age IIC



their archaeological context by scholars who made available pottery from their sites for NAA. Chapters 4 to 15 are followed by catalogues with information about the ceramic finds and their contexts. The entries of the sampled pottery in the individual catalogues share the same names with the samples in Hans Mommsen's databank, which in some cases deviate from the names of the sites they come from (e.g. Sindosg: Sindos; Kasg: Kastanas; Polyk: Polykastro; Kopr: Koprivlen; Klazog: Klazomenai; Teosg: Teos; Bassit: Ras el-Bassit; Sidong: Sidon; Naxosg: Naxos; Pith: Pithekoussai). Most of the sampled pottery is presented in illustrations, with the exception of a few very small fragments and some finds that were already depicted in detail in earlier publications. Only a few of the 362 samples whose analytical results are presented in this book have been reserved for a detailed discussion of their types and contexts in forthcoming studies. These include three analysed skyphos fragments of the AzG ('Al Mina') Ware from Ras el-Bassit, four fragments of the so-called Siphnian Ware from Argilos, and eleven vases and sherds from Teos.

#### THE CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Pottery studies of such a scale as those undertaken within this project are faced with methodological challenges that arise, on the one hand, through the use of different periodisation systems in the eastern, central and western Mediterranean and complications in their synchronisation. On the other hand, recent combined archaeometric and archaeological studies at sites such as Sindos and Assiros in the Aegean as well as Sidon and Utica in the eastern and central Mediterranean have challenged the conventional Greek Early Iron Age chronological system that was constructed almost a century ago through cultural-historical methods. It has been argued that a major error in the conventional Greek chronology was the definition of Late Geometric I and Middle Geometric II by means of flawed stylistic and historical arguments.<sup>16</sup> The new data indicate that the beginning of Late Geometric I should be raised from 760 hist BCE to around 870 cal BCE, while the beginning of the preceding MG II phase should be accordingly raised from 800 hist BCE to around 930 cal BCE (see Table I.1). Such a chronological revision has major implications for the study of the Greek Early Iron Age, particularly when the focus is on the examination of Greek pottery production, exchange and use during the MG and LG periods, as is the case in this book.

Given that there is no such thing as an 'Iron Age Mediterranean chronology' – despite previous invocations of that term – and in order to avoid complications resulting from differing understandings of absolute chronology, the use of relative Greek chronology – especially for the periods

<sup>16</sup> See Gimatzidis and Weninger 2020; Gimatzidis 2021; 2021–22; Doumet-Serhal et al. 2023.

pre-dating LG II – is favoured in this book. Since the authors that have individually contributed to this book come from various disciplinary and scholarly backgrounds representing different views about chronology, any use of absolute dates – according to the conventional or revised Greek chronology – is accordingly explained and illustrated by chronological tables.

#### THE PROJECT'S APPROACH AND CONTRIBUTION TO GREEK CERAMIC STUDIES

The following three points outline our ceramic project's methods and output: in the first place, it provides new empirical evidence about the origin of a large sample of Iron Age Greek pottery that was exchanged at several different sites all over the Mediterranean. The analytical results were obtained through NAA, one of the most reliable scientific methods for ceramic provenance studies. Their statistical examination within a well-populated database, including thousands of analysed ceramic samples and plenty of reference material, which was created by Hans Mommsen at the University of Bonn, Germany, allowed the localisation of the origin of a number of ceramic groups and individual pottery types with certain precision.

Secondly, the analytical results are discussed in their cultural and social context by scholars specialising in the archaeology of the place of this pottery's use rather than origin. For a long time, Greek pottery consumption overseas was a matter of historical reconstruction primarily among classical archaeologists specialising in Aegean archaeology, although most of these pottery finds were recovered in Indigenous Phoenician, Cilician, Italian, Iberian or Balkan contexts. In these cases, the Aegean perspective may have been useful for the examination of issues of typology, but it has also distorted, on certain occasions, the understanding of that pottery's modes of exchange and consumption, which requires firm knowledge of its variable Indigenous social and cultural contexts. This book thus keeps the focus on the social context of pottery exchange and consumption, while issues of production are treated only in those contexts where local manufacture of Greek-type pottery has been analytically attested, for example in the northern Aegean. The new data obtained from the analysis of Greek ceramics within this project present nevertheless a necessary requirement for any future endeavour to reconstruct the modes of production in the Greek mainland.

Thirdly, apart from the new analytical data of old pottery finds from well-known excavated sites, where archaeological discourse had usually been exhausted, this project also presents some new Greek ceramic assemblages from recently investigated sites in the Mediterranean. Alongside the analysis of Geometric wares from old excavations such as those of Paolo Orsi at Kyme and Giorgio Buchner at Pithekoussai, or the rescue excavations at Huelva in

Spain, this book presents new Greek pottery finds together with their analytical data from recent excavations at Sidon in Lebanon and Utica in Tunisia. The new finds from these and a few other sites in the eastern Mediterranean, such as Kinet and Misis Höyük,<sup>17</sup> radically challenge previous views about Greek ceramic exchange and consumption overseas by demonstrating the complexity of this ware's cultural and social implications, depending on its variable contexts.

The ambition of this project is to provide a holistic and regionally informed insight into the use of early Greek pottery overseas. On the one hand, it shows that Greek pottery consumption was not occasioned by the same social and cultural demands and cannot be understood as a manifestation of any common colonial or other economic strategies at variable sites in the Mediterranean. Even sites in the same colonial landscape – for example, Pithekoussai and Kyme – may have perceived Greek pottery use in a different manner. Although remote sites in the Mediterranean enjoyed the consumption of the same ceramic types usually originating from the same supplier in the Aegean, this practice was in every case subject to different modes of exchange responding to variable cultural requirements. On the other hand, this book shows that despite the cultural and social variability of the sites using Greek pottery in the eastern, central and western Mediterranean, they still belonged to a world that reached – especially in the period of Phoenician and Greek migration – an impressive degree of globalisation.<sup>18</sup> Early Greek pottery consumption was nothing less than a material expression of this, otherwise known as the ‘Mediterraneanisation process’<sup>19</sup> that was further manifested by the exchange of other wares such as metal ores, textiles, ivories and various types of artefacts such as seals and Phoenician, Sardinian and other ceramics within the very same network of social and economic relations.

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<sup>17</sup> For the well-stratified Greek Geometric pottery assemblage from Kinet Höyük that has also been analysed by Neutron Activation in a previous project, see Gimatzidis et al. 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Hodos 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Morris 2005.

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