

# GREEK THRACE AND THE ARCHAIC PERIOD THASSIAN PERAIA:

## interaction, dialogue, contact and network in Northern Aegean\*

Trácia grega e a *peraia* de Tasos de período arcaico: interação, diálogo, contatos e redes no Norte do Egeu

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### ABSTRACT

It is our objective, in this article, to present geographical and historical aspects of South Western Thrace and the island of Thassos, as well as to bring up and highlight the interaction between continent and island. Thassos has a marked proximity to the continent and, according to archaeological sources<sup>1</sup>, a close relationship between the island and the region of Thrace since the Neolithic period can be established. With the arrival of the Greeks, in the Archaic Period, the fluidity of the contact between continent and island solidified with the foundation of Thassian settlements within Thracian territory. This relationship was marked by intense commercial and social exchanges and local and regional interactions in the Northern Aegean in the Archaic Period.

**Keywords:** Thrace; Thassos; colonialism.

### RESUMO

É nosso objetivo, neste artigo, apresentar aspectos geográficos e históricos acerca da Trácia Sul-Occidental e da ilha de Tasos, assim como trazer à tona e destacar a interação existente entre continente e ilha. Tasos possui uma marcante proximidade com o continente e, de acordo com as fontes arqueológicas<sup>2</sup>, se fez presente uma relação estreita entre a ilha e a região da Trácia desde o período Neolítico. Com a chegada dos gregos, no período arcaico, a fluidez do contato entre continente e ilha solidificou-se a partir dos assentamentos tasienses no interior do território trácio. Esta relação foi marcada por intensos intercâmbios comerciais e sociais e interações locais e regionais no Norte do Egeu em período arcaico.

**Palavras-chave:** Trácia; Tasos; colonialismo.

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## General characteristics of Thrace: History, topography and its relationship with the Greeks

The term “Western Thrace,” common today in historical bibliographies, is a recent geographical notion: it is a term applied to an area strongly disputed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century during the first Balkan War (1912), when Bulgaria and Greece disputed that territory. In 1913, with the signing of the Treaty of Constantinople, part of the region remained with Turkey. The borders have changed many times since then, and today Thrace remains divided between the three countries that disputed it at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece.

Today, “Thrace of the Aegean” is entirely within the confines of the administrative district of Western Thrace, Northern Greece (BARALIS, 2008, p. 102). Until Hellenistic times, it had its terrestrial borders in the border of the Nestos River, which empties next to the island of Thassos and the banks of the Danube River.

As for the populations that were part of the ethnic base of the region, three peoples distinguished themselves, according to Herodotus: Sapaei, Bistones and Cicones (*Histories*, 7.110<sup>3</sup>). The peoples quoted, according to Herodotus, had been in contact with the Greeks from backward periods; however, these historical sources do not provide enough background information on settlement patterns in this area.

From the point of view of material culture, the archaeological evidence from the region of Thrace is still rather scarce. Thrace has a history of excavations under French coordination and, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was a region systematically visited by travelers. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, travelers were very interested in the topography of the region. In 1783, a volume on the region of Thrace and Macedonia called *Picturesque Voyage of Greece*<sup>4</sup> was published. It contained various descriptions of the ruins, which are considered historic, and its ancient topography (MARC, 1997, p. 480).

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, travelers were interested in describing the economy and the political organization of the region. With the creation of the École Française d’Athènes (EFA) in 1846, scientific work in Thrace was multiplied. There was no methodological systematization of archaeological work at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, between 1821 and 1832, due to the Greek War of Independence and, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 1912 and 1913, due to the Balkan wars in that region. During World War I, France sent an archaeological expeditionary group to Macedonia. Between 1916 and 1923, French “protection” missions methodically systematized the excavation missions and occupied the territories of Macedonia (MARC, 1997).

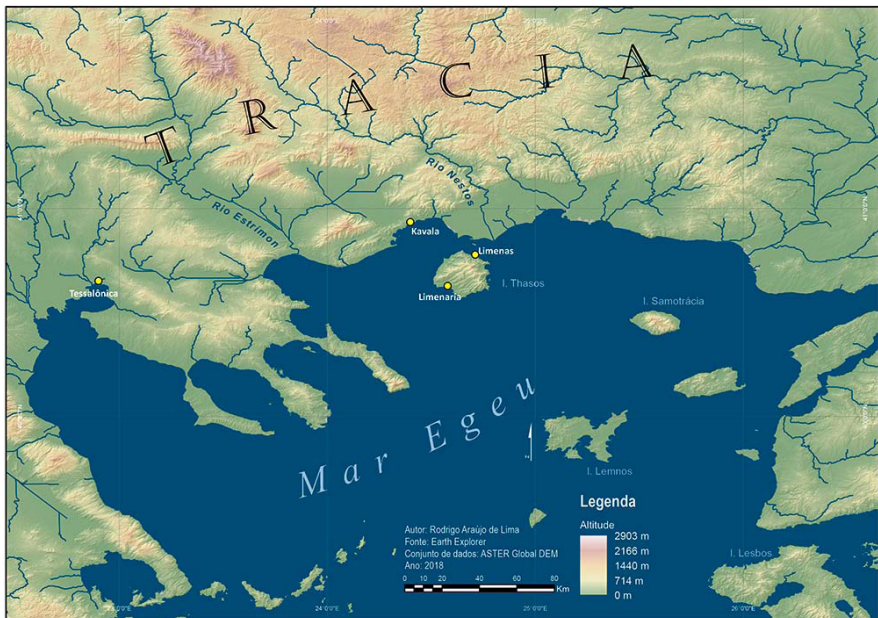
In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between the 50s and 70s, excavations in the hinterland occurred more intensively, but still in an incipient way. Until the late 1980s, the material remains of the Thracians were often described as “prehistoric,” and the excavations were mainly concentrated in the Greek foundations along the coast (BARALIS, 2008, p. 102).

The lack of any political unity in Antiquity - underlined by Herodotus (*Histories*, 5.3) - was a direct consequence of the diversity of cultural profiles, often masked by the generic terms applied to Thrace and its various populations. In this sense, ritual customs known from archaeological evidence are important evidence for the minimum

knowledge of social functioning, which enables us to understand that reality. Funerary customs can also be very enlightening in regard to local cultural differences, since the evidence found in cities near the Northern Aegean are profoundly different from the evidence found in the interior of Thrace, reinforcing the diverse character of the region (BARALIS, 2008, p.103).

According to Thucydides (*History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.971-2<sup>5</sup>), there was a fairly intense movement on the Aegean coast in backward periods. Thucydides calculated the distance between the cities by the rivers of Thrace. The mobility of Greek materials, such as wine amphorae, or the diffusion of classical architectural forms in the construction and decoration of tombs, or the generalized adoption of Greek as the administrative and political language in various periods demonstrate that the Greeks entered hard to access terrain, in different periods, challenging the almost insurmountable dictates of local geography (ARCHIBALD, 2010, p. 203). One of the reasons for this apparent contradiction is the permeability of the region's border areas, especially the coastal lines between the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea, particularly when it comes to its rivers, which provide natural access to the interior of the region (ARCHIBALD, 2006, p. 115-122).

Figure 1 shows the region of Thrace and the spatial configuration of the islands close to the European and Asian continents. The proximity between islands and mainland has created a very solid commercial, cultural and social link since the Archaic Period.



**Figure 1** – Map of Thrace (North Aegean).  
Image credits: Rodrigo Lima (2018).

## Physical conditions: topography and the symbiotic relation with men

The geography of the Eastern Balkans presents a rugged and difficult to reach topography, as its mountain range, oriented from West to East, prevents inland movement and mobility. In Figure 1 we can better observe the topographical details of the region of Thrace, with the identification of the dense layer of mountains demonstrated by the map.

Past behaviors cannot be logically inferred through landscapes, nor can they be determined by geographic necessity, but they may represent a symbiosis between human populations and their environment. In the Eastern Balkans there is archaeological evidence of changes in land use structure patterns at different times. During the Neolithic and Bronze Age, nucleated settlements, which practiced intensive agriculture, created stratified mounds. In the first millennium BCE, the increase in ecological diversification resulted in a more varied exploitation of uplands as well as lowland resources, a pattern that continued into later times. These dynamic processes have left a variety of physical impressions in the contemporary landscape, which have begun to be recognized only a few decades ago and thus valued as record sources.

Since the Neolithic, the construction of roads and routes through the mountains, as well as in the plains, the creation of stable settlements, with the use of durable materials, the exploitation of minerals, especially for metallurgy but also for building stones and clays for a wide range of ceramic production transformed the environment and shaped the mountainous paths of Thrace (ARCHIBALD, 2010, p. 204).

The historical development of the Greek cities of the Aegean islands is much more complex than had been imagined by previous generations. The image that is slowly emerging from local excavations in the Northern Aegean islands and other prominent Thracian settlements is one gradually approaching the eclectic legacy of populations circulating in the border areas of the continent and islands.

## Thrace and the Greeks: the problem of “colonization”

This complex Western Thrace region is an example of the contact dynamics between Greeks and natives, despite their geography of difficult access, as stated in the previous topic. The region has evidence of *poleis* as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, with configured urban areas, a delimited *chora*<sup>6</sup> and lots of contact materials. It is a region that has been excavated since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as we have already stressed. The phenomenon labeled “contact” may have materialized in several ways: local or long-distance trade, diplomatic relations secured by the so-called “gift exchange” or exchanges of natural products (STOYANOV, 2000, p. 54).

Petia Ilieva, in his studies on the Greeks and Thracians in the Aegean, draws attention to the analysis of artifacts in context, taking into account different possible behaviors of a material. In other words, the definition of a specific variety of contact depends on the role played by the material in the “foreign” cultural context, how it was received, and whether it is possible to observe these distinguishing features in the archaeological record (ILIEVA, 2007, p. 212). For this, the new post-processual

archeological approach is deconstructing the Helenocentric vision, opening the discussion to a contextual vision and to the local relation between object and society, thus, seeking to understand the mechanisms that lead to the established cultural load between both. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the colonial character of the arrival of the Greeks, observing the complex regional and local processes.

According to Archibald (2010), the history of the establishment of Greek settlements had a complex development, through encounters and long-term relationships, in a much more inclusive way than historiography has consider to this day. Historiography focused on the unidirectional discourse of Hellenicity towards the Thracian peoples, without reflecting on previous interactions during the second (not to mention the third) millennium BC (Karamitrou-Mentesidi, 1999 *apud* ARCHIBALD, 2010, p. 205).

The general analogies we find regarding subsistence, exploitation of natural resources and technological development between the Eastern Balkans, the coastal regions of the Aegean Sea and mainland Greece are very significant. The variety of agricultural crops, including varieties of cereals, legumes and weeds, as well as domestic structures, including food storage wells in the form of ceramic *pithoi*, demonstrate that the communities located around the so-called low Macedonia and the Aegean coast were intensely involved in the dynamics of material exchanges during the Archaic Period (REEVE, 1995, p. 181). Some food items that appear for the first time during the Bronze Age entered Greece from the north and northeastern areas of the region (ARCHIBALD, 2010, p. 206).

Historiography considers events of the first half of the first millennium BC as “colonial” or *apoikia*<sup>7</sup>, that is, a process through which, in the present context, numerous settlements were founded by groups of pioneers. There was a similar level of interest in the islands near Thrace in the Aegean Sea. This area was mainly explored by Ionian Greeks from Asia Minor and by inhabitants of the islands closest to that coast (ARCHIBALD, 2010, p. 205).

The colonization model suggested by 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars for the Greek period has been proved inadequate, in part because its dictates were the establishment of a credible and valid chronology for much of the Mediterranean. The term “colonization” carries associations that are potentially confusing, if not erroneous, when anachronistic or inadequate assumptions are made without reflection on the specific context under study. Colonization involves colonialism, that is, the unequal exploitation of another territory by a dominant social (or political or technological) group (PURCELL, 2005, p. 118). The historiography of colonial archaeological studies in the ancient Mediterranean is being rethought from a multilateralist perspective.

Archaeological and historical studies, according to Peter Van Dommelen, focused only on one side of the narrative - that of the founders of colonized regions (VAN DOMMELEN, 2008, p. 51). There is an ongoing deconstruction of the concepts and of the uses of meanings coined by traditional historiography, bringing to the surface, for debate, a reflection on the meaning of words and their imbricated speeches. The discourses present in the interpretation of material culture reproduce a limited view of what the foundations of Greek settlements were in the Archaic Period. For

Shanks (1996), the use of evolutionary hypotheses of Greek and Roman superiority has been a feature of Classical Archeology since its inception (SHANKS, 1996; VAN DOMMELEN, 2011).

Anthropology work, along with studies in the literary<sup>8</sup>, philosophical and historical fields, opened a wide range of possible interpretations in the field of archaeological studies. The research on the identities present in the context of foundations, taking into account the heterogeneity of the arriving Greeks and the cultural diversity of local populations, is defined by Tamar Hodos as a set of features that things or people can be recognized by, considering their materiality in a context of shared social practices among different groups, where it is possible to recognize expression traits of their respective identities within the connectivity networks that facilitate such developments (HODOS, 2017, p. 3).

The link between the notion of identity and its mechanisms of social distinction enables us to examine different types of identities: cultural, personal or social. The cultural aspect of identity encompasses social production and reproduction of meanings (SHANKS, 2001, p. 289). This represents a coherent system of values, norms, and habits that, through repetition, engenders a sense of a unified belonging, individuality, and collectivity over time.

New post-processual currents tend to look at Greek polis from a local perspective, pointing to elements that are geared to local patterns of reasoning. According to Chrystel Müller (2016, p. 28), the so-called “parochial polis” has launched a new trend in the study of Greek cities, that of localism, sometimes called “parochial,” which echoes contemporary interests in local life and participatory democracy. For Hans Beck, after two decades of networks and exchange analysis, one must now look at the “parochial polis,” which “turns to the other side of hyperconnectivity” (BECK, 2015)<sup>9</sup>. According to some historians, most poleis gave a “self-referential and sociocentric” response to changes in their political and cultural environment. They were more interested in their local tastes, habits and events (identity and self-representation) than in everything that happened beyond their borders (MÜLLER, 2016, p. 28)

According to Franco de Angelis (1998), discussions on colonial issues in the context of Greek Archeology and History are restricted to the Archaic Period – between 750 and 500 BC, marked by the Greek foundations. The Greek *poleis* were distributed geographically in several different places, between France, Northeastern Spain, Western Mediterranean, Italy, Adriatic and Libya in the Central Mediterranean, Black Sea and surrounding areas. According to De Angelis (1998), in terms of quantification, more than 100,000 Greeks may have moved to colonies around 700 BC and generally between 30,000 and 60,000 male adults. By 500 BCE the Greeks had indeed departed from Greece in great numbers. The production of the colonies may have represented around 40% of the whole of Greece, making them significant places politically, economically and culturally, as in the case of Syracuse in Sicily and Thasos in the North Aegean (DE ANGELIS, 1998, p. 18 -19).

Since the 1990s, advances in studies on Greek colonization have been important in the transformation of historical practices to counterbalance the rooted pan-Hellenistic

view, with its focus on written texts and historiography. According to De Angelis (2008), classical studies are generally linked to modern colonialism, and analogies to terms and concepts are used anachronistically, without contextualizing the problems involved. The terminology used for words such as “colonization” and “colonialism” gained more attention because of its indiscriminate use, making it necessary to re-evaluate terms and concepts. Scholars such as Robin Osborne<sup>10</sup> began to re-evaluate other areas of recent Greek history aiming at looking more closely and critically at the literary field, at the archaeological evidence, and especially at the documents themselves. Thus, in the field of material culture, especially with regard to pottery and its studies, the need for a more accurate look at social practices in context is very much in vogue.

It is interesting to think about the terms that are used to conceptualize and interpret material culture from an identity perspective. Tamar Hodos and Shalley Halles propose to recognize the projected perception and identities of past cultures through materiality. Hodos bases her thoughts on hybrid cultures and their roles within our perception of culture. The terminology used by Tamar Hodos (2017, p.5) is intended to emphasize hybrid culture as a total concept, unlike researchers who use hybridism in the category of subcultures - which in itself is already a problem, since the term supposes to hide a distinct cultural layer under the broad umbrella of the dominant culture. Heterogeneity itself must be seen as culture (HALES; HODOS, 2010, p. 4).

For Tamar Hodos, following a global point of view does not mean presenting a history of identity studies in the disciplines of Ancient History or Classical Studies, but rather providing an indication of key moments to deal with the relationship between culture and identity. These relationships have often been centered on the construction of ethnic identities<sup>11</sup>. It is necessary to keep in mind a heterogeneous analysis of regional cultures, emphasizing their different traits<sup>12</sup>.

In the case of Classical Archeology<sup>13</sup>, ideas of identity have been defined by romanticism and modernism, not only by latent nationalism and rationalism, but also by other sectors of knowledge such as psychoanalysis. Ideas about identity issues over time are outlining a dubious character in Europe, that of alterity and polarity (HODOS, 2017, p. 21).

Criticism blossomed through social sciences against systemic methodology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the 1980s. The United States and the United Kingdom began to separate disciplines from Classical Archeology and History of Art, each one of them following a different theoretical trajectory. The postmodern viewpoint that had been delineating the theoretical sphere implies the development of ideals and modernist thoughts that focus on meta narratives and world systems. Within the movement, there is an emphasis on decentralization, diversity, and local heritage. Postmodernists disrupt the idea of power and prioritize plurality.

Thus, more in-depth studies on the interaction of the Greeks with the neighboring world, the so-called “non-Greek,” are increasingly more relevant. Most approaches focus on how the Greeks viewed the “other.” The “center-periphery” model, according to Petia Ilieva (2007), is still functional from the point of view of flows and reflections on relations in the Mediterranean. However, this model is questionable, since there is

no way to apply a modern concept of colonization in settlements with such complex and diversified material relations (ILIEVA, 2007, p. 212).

## Thassos and Thrace: continent versus island

### Thassos and the *peraia*<sup>14</sup>

Below we will present the most important rivers that provided access into the interior of Thrace in the Archaic Period: Strymon and Nestos. Thassos entered Thracian territory and founded several cities there as early as in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The Thassian incursion into Thrace was far from quiet, as important struggles were fought and the penetration suffered strong resistance from the Thracians. In the midst of the struggles for territory, they established themselves in the region of the Strymon and of the Nestos, two main inland navigation rivers of Thrace (TIVERIOS, 2008, p. 80). Excavations suggest that the earliest Thassian foundations, dating from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, were Neapolis (present Kavala), Oesyne (Nea Peramos area), Galepsos and Pistiros. Pistiros was founded at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and can be considered the main foundation of the Nestos River region (Figure 2). The region of the two rivers is strategic to provide access to areas which are rich in minerals, according to Herodotus (*History*, 6.46) (Koukouli-Chrysanthaki, 1980, p. 310-311 *apud* Constantakopoulou, 2017, p. 235).



**Figure 2** – Map of Thassos.  
Image credits: Rodrigo Lima (2018).



The Thassian *peraia* provided the island with the planting and cultivation of grains, wine, and sheep and goat grazing. The Thassians used the Strymon River (Image 1), which gave them access to the fertile hinterland of Thrace, as a pathway to negotiate and exchange with the Thracians (TIVERIOS, 2008, p.89). The Nestos River (Image 1), on the other hand, did not have the mineral wealth of the Strymon River, but it had fertile extensions of low lands and rich pastures (LAZARIDIS, 1971).

### **Strymon and Nestos: the importance of penetrating the territory**

The tribes that occupied Thrace in the Neolithic period were: *Bisaltae* (in the inferior valley of the Strymon); *Odomantes* (in the plain north of the Strymon); *Sintos* (in the middle of the Sérmmnon valley); *Pieres* (in the region south of Mount Pangaion); *Edonios* (on the left bank of the lower Strymon, south of the Angites River, and on the Philippi plain); *Satrae* (on the Pangaion); *Dersaioi* (further north); and *Sapaios* (lower course of Nestos) (PAPAZOULO, 1988, p. 351-413). It was most likely the rich mineral resources of the area, gold and silver from Mount Pangaion (Image 1), which attracted Greek enterprises in the region (LOUKOPOULOU, 2004, p.854). To the east of lower Nestos and in its delta, along the Aegean coast, there are large alluvial extensions. In contrast to the lands west of the Nestos, there are no precious mineral resources in the Nestos River region. The narrow gorges of the Nestos and the few passages offered through the Rhodopes mountains made it virtually impossible to communicate regularly with the Thracian interior by this route. In addition, the Thracian tribes created an impenetrable barrier along the northern boundary of the coastal plain and threatened East-West land communications through narrow passages of the Nestos River. The *poleis* that formed in this region were: Abdera, Ainos, Bergopolis, Dikaia, Drys, Kypsela, Maroneia, Mesambrie, Orthagoria, Sale (LOUKOPOULOU, 2004).

### **Thasos: an extension of Thrace?**

The question of the extent of Thasos (as an arm) of the Thrace continent is a discussion raised by Constantakopoulou (2007). The founding of colonies in the Thracian *peraia* may have been an attempt at political, economic, geographic and social unification on the part of the island of Thasos, even if just for a short period of time.

The Thassian *peraia* covered practically the entire area of the Strymon and Nestos Rivers. During the control period, there was a considerable social, political and economic relationship with the territory of Thrace, as we saw in the previous topic. The possession of the islands by the mainland was taken by Athens in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC as a reprisal for the revolts against Athenian control in 465 BC, seeking the renunciation of Thasos' colonies participation in the Delian League. Thucydides (I, 101.3) tells us that the conflicts between Athens and Thasos were due to a dispute over control of silver deposits in Thrace. The reestablishment of control over the *peraia* occurred in 410 BC (CONSTANTAKOPOULOU, 2007, p. 245).

For Debord (1999), the study of the *peraia* allows us to make some general observations about island relationships with continental territories. It should be

emphasized, however, that *peraia* was a territory controlled by the islands (DEBORD, 1999, p. 265). The Thassian *peraia* is considered, by some authors like Velkov; Domaradzka (1994, p. 1-4), as an *emporion*<sup>15</sup> in the terrestrial heart of Thrace. Ties were established through marriages between Thracian and Thassian residents, evidencing a possible attempt at unification. This continental region meant a great deal to the islands. In the case of Thassos, the acquisition and possession of a *peraia* required interaction between island and continent. For some poleis – such as Chios, which also founded cities in Asia Minor<sup>16</sup> - there was no establishment of similar relationship; the Chiot's foundations had a certain level of political and economic autonomy. In the case of Thasos, in particular, the *peraia* can be considered part of the political territory of the island (BOUZEK, 1996, p. 221-222). The political and daily interaction between island founders and mainland was common. In Rhodes, for example, surveys of funerary inscriptions on the Rhodian *peraia* (Karia, Lydia and Cnidus) in Asia Minor<sup>17</sup> show that many people of the *peraia* lived in the city of Rhodes and maintained a marriage relationship between inhabitants of the continent and inhabitants of the island. For Constantakopoulou, this dynamics (continent and island) can be considered, in turn, as a form of fusion and unification, an extension of the island to Thrace and Macedonia (DEMARADZKA, 1994 *apud* CONSTANTAKOPOULOU, 2007, p. 249).

### Thassos: History

The island of Thasos has been inhabited since the Paleolithic period, according to archaeological research conducted in Tsinès, a region close to Limenaria, chora of Thassos. The approximate dating of these sites is about 10,000 BP<sup>18</sup>, when, according to geological studies, the island was still part of the continent. In the chora of Thassos, Neolithic huts were found, more specifically to the south of the island, in Limenaria, La Scala Maries and Kastri (GRANDJEAN; SALVIAT, 2000, p. 23).

Important vestiges of the Bronze Age were found in the area of Potos and especially in La Scala Sotir, where fortifications and anthropomorphic stelae of the second millennium were evidenced. The dating is 1,300 BC in Kastri, Potos and Theologos, continuing uninterruptedly up to 700 BC (Figure 2).

In the Palaiokastro region, a few kilometers from La Scala Maries, traces of a housing nucleus from the 11<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BC were found. The recovered materials were: tools, pottery models from Macedonia, from the East and the Balkans, with incised decoration and grooves (PORTO; HORA, 2016, p. 2).

The Northern Aegean region was a setting for legends circulating in southern mainland Greece and the Southern Aegean islands. The wealth of the region led to the departure of the founding expeditions of the Cyclades Islands in search of new settlements, on the one hand to enrich themselves and, on the other hand, to solve their demographic and urban problems. The foundation of the Thasos polis by Paros is one of these typical cases. The leader of the foundation was Telesikles, father of the lyrical poet Archilochus, who a generation later, about 650 BC, came to Thassos accompanied by his friend, army general Glaucus, and some new settlers, who set off

to conquer the Thracian coast. During these wars of conquest, Glaucus was killed and his cenotaph was excavated in 1914 in the agora of Thasos (LAZARIDIS, 2003, p. 14).

Sara Owen (2003), in the article “Of dogs and men: Archilochus, Archeology and the Greek settlement of Thasos” brings us literary reports made by Archilochus. The son of the *oikist*<sup>19</sup> Telesikles settled on the island of Thassos during the Greek foundation. According to the accounts, Archilochus had an aversion to the Thracian settlers; he called them “miserable,” scum of Greece. He disdained the island saying that it looked like the “ass of an ass,” was not pretty like Sybaris in Italy, and described the Thracians as “dogs” (OWEN, 2003, p.1).

The island opened up to trade both in the Northeast Aegean and the nearby continent. Herodotus, in Book VI, describing the Persian Wars in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, says there were gold mines located between Coenyra and a locality named Aenyra and recalls that the first to explore these Thassian mines were the Phoenicians (HERODOTUS VI, 47).

I myself have seen these mines; by far the most marvelous were those that were found by the Phoenicians who with Thasos colonized this island, which is now called after that Phoenician Thasos. These Phoenician mines are between the place called Aenyra and Coenyra in Thasos, opposite Samothrace; they are in a great hill that has been dug up in the searching. (History, VI, 47, 1 and 2).

Thasos continued to thrive, shrines were filled with monuments and offerings (GRANDJEAN; SALVIAT, 2000, p. 8). The new polis had commercial and cultural ties with other poleis and other peoples. Archaeological remains show a great external influence on pottery, bronze and ivory, illustrating the relationship with the Cyclades and with the Rhodians, Ionians, Corinthians and Athenians in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. We could ascribe this growth to the political history of Thassos, which, from the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to 540 BC lived under a tyrannical regime, undergoing a moderate oligarchic period from 540 to 465 BC until becoming dependent on Athens. It is considered that, in this interim - beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, more precisely in 492 BCE - the Thassians submit to the Persian King Darius, now having the control of Ionia (Herodotus, VI, 44). In 491 BC, when Darius and his general Mardonius invaded Thrace, they forced Thasos to dismantle its walls and pay taxes. In 477 BC, Thassos joins the Delian League, when Athens was dominant in the Aegean Sea and Attic imports were at full throttle (GRANDJEAN; SALVIAT, 2000, p. 28).

From that century onwards, one perceives a dispersion of silver coins, which shows the breadth of trade relations. At the end of the Archaic Period, the city was rich, with a fairly structured urban apparatus. At the necropolis, the excavations provided fragmented ceramic material. The fragments, in residential areas near the temple of Dionysus, are dated from the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC and early 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The types of decoration vary, being of Macedonian type, without decoration, and pottery similar to those of Samothrace, Lesbos and Lemnos.

From the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC on, one can see the import of Corinthian vessels through Athens and East Greece. Cycladic pottery and fragments of votive terracotta are found mainly in the Artemision where there is a large amount of contact pottery, such as pottery of daily use and Thassian pieces (Grandjean, Salviat, 2000, p. 155). There is also Parian-Thassian pottery from the Orientalizing period, as well as Cycladic, and the so-called “Melian”<sup>20</sup> pots, rich in ornaments and human and animal representations.

## Final considerations

The Thassian settlers entered the Thracian territory through coastal navigation and the main navigable rivers of the region: Strymon and Nestos. Thassos was thus characterized as an extended “arm” of continental Thrace, acquiring particularities that differed from Greek islands far from the continent. It is therefore imperative to introduce Thrace into the discussion of Thassos and its formation as a major polis in the Mediterranean during the Archaic Period.

The particular characteristics visible in the urban fabric of Thassos, the rituals there developed, the dwellings and the material culture established on this island in the Archaic Period reinforce and reiterate the reception of Greek culture, transforming it and resignifying it through regional influences. To better understand these transformations, we have presented a general description of the region of Thrace, highlighting its regional and local history, its physical characteristics and the knowledge of its topographical boundaries. This knowledge was of great importance for us in order to have clarity on the cultural and social peculiarities that involved the formation process of the Thassian polis and on the political, economic and cultural relations that this island had with the neighboring peoples, especially the ones coming from Thrace. In this sense, in our view, and in this we agree with Chris Gosden (2004), it is not possible to develop an archaeological reflection on local objects without taking into account the regional inter-relations, that is, ignoring / disregarding the dialogue with the macro space environment (GOSDEN, 2004, p. 82). We emphasize the approach to the active and continuous development of identities that are invented and reinvented in new practices - between reception and resignification - that engender new cultural and social systems.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout its history, the island of Thassos has offered fertile lands to its own. According to Herodotus (VI, 46, 2-3), the riches from the island provided their inhabitants with an annual income of at least 80 talents<sup>22</sup> in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The earliest Parian settlers<sup>23</sup> settled in Limenas, northeast of the island (Figure 2), a very propitious place, since it had a safe natural port, which was fundamental for an exit through the north - turned to the Thracian continent. Due to its proximity to the coast of Thrace, trade between the Thracians and local peoples of the island became quite intense (TIVERIOS, 2008, p. 73). Figure 1 gives an overview of the distance between the Thracian continent and the island of Thasos.

Excavation reports<sup>24</sup> and publications relating to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC bring the geographical positions of sanctuaries, harbors and dwellings that would have been areas of worship of foundations existing prior to the arrival of the Greeks (OWEN,

2009, p. 94). These signs of synoecism<sup>25</sup> coincide with a significant increase in trade surpluses, since the presence of Macedonian amphorae with geometric decoration is observed in many places in the North Aegean, including Thassos and Thrace, in backward periods (BERNARD, 1964; BOZHKOVA 2005 *apud* OWEN, 2009, p. 95).

Thasos, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC was, according to Sara Owen (2009), in connection with populous nucleated settlements in the region of Thrace. For Robin Osborne (2005), the result of increased levels of trade would only make sense if there were a port of call for the regular trade and exit of ships. The author presents the successful example of Pythecusae, a rocky, dense and dynamic island in the commercial sphere, as opposed to an unsuccessful example of the port of Koukounaries in Paros. According to the author, this one only failed because it was abandoned and was not used commercially (OSBORNE, 2015, p. 11-12).

Thus, to understand Thassos at the continental level one must build a regional knowledge based on understanding the legacy of a local historical past that goes beyond the Greek foundations of the Archaic Period. The indications of reuse of Thracian ritual sites, according to Sara Owen (2009), leads to the understanding that these places were appropriated by Greeks since Paros founded what would become the polis of Thassos.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Researchers from the Greek Archaeological Service (Ephoria) and the French School of Athens (EFA), started systematic excavations in both Thrace and Thassos from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> Pesquisadores do serviço grego de Arqueologia (Ephoria) e Escola Francesa de Atenas (EFA), empreenderam, a partir da segunda metade do século XIX, escavações sistemáticas tanto na Trácia quanto na ilha de Tasos.

<sup>3</sup> HERÓDOTO. *História*. Primeiro relato clássico da guerra entre gregos e persas. Trad. J. Brito Broca. 2. Ed. São Paulo: Ediouro, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> de Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, Vol. III, Paris, Ph. de Pierres, 1783.

<sup>5</sup> TUCÍDIDES. *História da Guerra do Peloponeso*. Trad. Mário da Gama Kury. 2. ed. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1986.

<sup>6</sup> It is understood by *chora* the territory close to the urban nuclei of the several Greek *poleis* (asty); the rural hinterland controlled by a polis or, at least, subject to the expectation of control by a *polis*.

<sup>7</sup> *Apoikia*: a city founded by a group of Greek immigrants, especially from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. *Apoikiai* had a religious and moral relationship with the cities that had founded them, but were politically and economically independent. The term *Cleruquia*: the establishment of a Greek colony on external settlements. *Cleruquia* was politically and economically dependent on the cities that had founded them. Unlike the *apoikiai* that formed autonomous cities independent from their founding cities. These terms were translated from the Labeca glossary (see [www.labeca.mae.usp.br/glossario](http://www.labeca.mae.usp.br/glossario)), which aims to standardize Greek terms in Brazil.

<sup>8</sup> Discussions about the concepts of subaltern, hybridism, simulacrum and deconstruction began in the Anglophone academy due to the Eurocentric discriminatory context that reinforced “backward” cultural prejudices from the 1970s onwards with the decolonization of Africa (north and south). From then on, some new studies became known as Orientalism. In 1978, the book entitled “Orientalism: the Orient as Invention of the West” (1978) by the Palestinian scholar E. Said; “The Place of Culture” (2010), by Hommi Bhabha, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” (1985), by Gayatri Spivak and “From the Diaspora: Identities and Cultural Mediations” (2003), by Stuart Hall deconstructed the colonization process in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and nowadays with postcolonialism, through cultural studies within the institutions that formed the culture of the United States and Europe due to the minority movements of the 1980s.

<sup>9</sup> Beck, H. 2015. “The Parochial Polis: Localism and the Ancient Greek City-State, Project 2015”. Site: <http://www.hansbeck.org/local>

<sup>10</sup> A decade ago, Robin Osborne wrote relevant critiques towards traditional terminology, calling for the complete elimination of the existing works on Ancient Greek History and for their replacement for a more flexible model of migratory waves. OSBORNE, R. *Early Greek Colonization? The Nature of Greek Settlement in the West*. In: N. FISHER, H.VAN WEES (eds.). *Archaic Greece: Problems and Evidence*. London, 1998, 251-269. OSBORNE, R. *Greek Archeology: A Survey of Recent Work*, *AJA*, 2004, 108, 87-102.

<sup>11</sup> We will use the definition of S. Jones (1997, p. Xiii) “...all social and psychological phenomena associated with a culturally constructed group identity. The concept of ethnicity focuses on the ways in which social and cultural processes interact in the identification of, and interaction among, ethnic groups to emphasize the character of the construction of ethnicity as a concept embedded in the multiple identities formed (see subclause 1.2).”

<sup>12</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a strong inclination for deterministic discourses. In 1860 the belief in the biological inequality between human groups became popular. With the rise of nationalism and the yearning for a nation, more specifically with the unifications of Italy (1850-70) and Germany (1871), the nationalist discourse in vogue gave voice to social Darwinists. The differences between the inhabitants of the same nation weakened, at the same time that the discourse on the differences between western and non-western peoples grew. As a result of natural selection, human groups had become culturally intertwined and acquired the ability to use culture. Popularized by Lubbock's words in *The Origins of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man* (1870) the idea quickly finds security in the adaptive discourses: "the more and less culturally capable." This perspective justified the European economic policy for colonial rule. Amidst Darwinian atmosphere of racial differences and the emergence of nationalist ideas, there were two disparate perspectives within the areas of European Prehistory and Classical Archeology, which emerged as different disciplines.

<sup>13</sup> The influence of evolutionism on Classical Archeology in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be observed through the attempt to evaluate artifacts as stages of cultural development, illustrated through serialization and typological development. The work of Gordon Childe, published in 1925 (*The Dawn of European Civilization*), which produced a synthesis of prehistoric Europe, emphasizes the types of artifacts defined by a cultural group, proposing for the first time the survey of cultural hypotheses. This new emphasis on how groups of people lived and interacted with each other enables us to see the past as a mosaic outlined by social groups. (TRIGGER, 1989, p. 167-74)

<sup>14</sup> *Peraia*, *Peraea* or *Peræa* (from the Ancient Greek: ἡ περαιαία) was the continental possession by an island state. See, for Thasos: Bažani and Venclová, 2013 (on the emporium of Pistiros); and Tiverios, 2008, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> Emporion: Greek term meaning "maritime trade place; deriving thus a city located in the coast, with great port and great commercial activity" (Labeca: [www.labeca.mae.usp/pt-br/glossary](http://www.labeca.mae.usp/pt-br/glossary). Consulted on: Feb 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> On Chios and its *peraiá*, see (CONSTANTAKOPOULOU, 2007, p.242).

<sup>17</sup> On Rhodes and its *peraiá*, see (CONSTANTAKOPOULOU, 2007, p.259).

<sup>18</sup> BP: acronym for "before the present". It is based on the year of 1950 as a time marker for rather ancient dates. This dating is mainly used in prehistoric archeology. This date was the reference to establish the calibration curves in radiocarbon dating.

<sup>19</sup> *Oikist*: "In Greece, the founder of an *apoikia* (a new city); the Archegetes, like Apollo". The *oikist* was buried with the honors of a hero in the agora and received, annually, a heroic cult" (Labeca: <http://labeca.mae.usp.br/pt-br/glossary/>. Consulted on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> "Melian" pottery: these are vessels produced in the Archaic Period in the Cyclades. For some time, the term "Melian" had its origin discussed and modified (PEREIRA FILHO, 2011, p. 20-21). The term "Melian" is enclosed in quotation marks, as it is a misnomer, but still widely used in the bibliography. The nomenclature arose after Alexander Conze found the three vase fragments at Melos in 1862, and named them as Melian. Researchers like Ingeborg Sheibler attributed the fragments to Paros, others to Naxos. For a long time, Dimitrios Papastamos and J. Boardman have used this term "Melian." In this article we will use the term in quotes.

<sup>21</sup> Reception and resignification are current concepts that immerse themselves very strongly in the materiality. In this sense Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall in a text published in 2010, entitled *The Cultural Biography of Objects World Archeology*, bring us the idea that Archeology is crucial to understanding the relationship between people and things. Material culture came to assume the most decisive weight in social analysis. People have realized that objects not only

provide a stage of human action, but are an integral part of the process. Certainly, if we consider material culture in its different moments of production, exchange and consumption, little is left out, especially when it is inserted in its contexts and has undergone social transformations. This new focus directs attention to human stories and what objects tell us. The central idea is that objects resignify all the time and these transformations are linked to people.

<sup>22</sup> A Greek Attic talent, would have the value of 26 kg, this way, 80 talents would equal to 2080 kg. (HUMPHREY, J. W.; OLESON, J. P.; SHERWOOD, A. N. *Greek and Roman technology*. Routledge, p. 487, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Inhabitants of Paros - an island in the Cyclades.

<sup>24</sup> *BCH* (*Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique*).

<sup>25</sup> Synoecism: “cohabitation, merging small communities into a larger one that totally replaces them; a process that in ancient Greece led, in many cases, to the formation of the polis “. From the original Greek συνοικισμός, ου (ό). Retrieved from the site <http://labeca.mae.usp.br/glossary/>. Consulted on: Jan 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

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