

**“A GOLDEN BRACELET AND A CITY AS A PRIZE FOR VALOR”:
AEGEAN MERCENARIES AND A NEW THEORETICAL MODEL FOR THE
ARCHAIC EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

**“UN BRAZALETE DE BRONCE Y UNA CIUDAD COMO PREMIO POR SU
VALOR”: MERCENARIOS EGEOS Y UN NUEVO MODELO TEÓRICO
PARA EL MEDITERRÁNEO ORIENTAL ARCAICO**

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ABSTRACT:

Some theoretical adjustments of Wallerstein's core-periphery paradigm, based on Polanyi's pattern of integration developed on reciprocity, are sketched, in order to enable a broader comprehension of premodern world systems, like the Archaic Eastern Mediterranean. Starting from the observation that prestige was the main asset in this type of premodern world systems, I examine in the present article how the larger and more powerful states were able to increase their prestige in the peripheries, through direct and indirect promotion. Indirect promotion is more thoroughly investigated in the particular case of mercenaries coming back from the East to the Aegean.

RESUMEN:

Se presentan aquí unos ajustes teóricos al paradigma centro-periferia de Wallerstein, basado en el modelo de Polanyi del desarrollo de la integración a partir de la reciprocidad. El objetivo es permitir una comprensión más amplia de los sistemas mundiales pre-modernos, como el Mediterráneo Oriental Arcaico. Comenzando con la observación del prestigio como el principal aspecto en éstos, examino en el presente artículo cómo los estados más grandes y poderosos fueron capaces de incrementar su prestigio en las periferias, a través de la promoción directa e indirecta. Esta última ha sido más investigada en el caso concreto de los mercenarios que retornan de Oriente al Egeo.

KEYWORDS: world system, dedication, reciprocity, prestige, promotion, international relations.

PALABRAS CLAVE: sistema mundial, dedicatoria, reciprocidad, prestigio, promoción, relaciones internacionales.

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I. Introduction: the Archaic Eastern Mediterranean – a world system based on reciprocity.

In a previous article², I tried to solve a conceptual problem that emerged in the studies devoted to the Archaic Eastern Mediterranean. Although many authors claimed that Greece was just a periphery of the more developed and wealthy Near Eastern core³, they used the terms coined by Immanuel Wallerstein without any particular attention paid to his lack of confidence in the possibility that his theoretical framework centered around the concept of ‘world economy’ might be adapted also to pre-modern societies. In Wallerstein’s words: “prior to the modern era, world economies were highly unstable structures which tended either to be converted into empires or to disintegrate”⁴.

None of the three types of world systems proposed by Wallerstein – world economies, world empires and non-integrated worlds of subsistence economies – seemed appropriate to describe the relations emerging in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 8th-6th centuries BC, so that the use of terms such as ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ is rendered also inappropriate from a strict logical perspective. Yet the thesis that Greece – and the Aegean, in general – was one of the peripheries of the great Eastern empires⁵, intuitively seemed right, being based on numerous aspects, starting with that of political power and ending with the numerous cultural Eastern influences which might be traced in Greece during the Archaic age⁶. The existence of another type of world system that does not fit Wallerstein’s categories is further advocated by the glimpse on the late Bronze age international relations provided by the Amarna Letters⁷: some hundreds of years before the Archaic age, the Eastern Mediterranean was an interconnected space where royal family members, embassies, priests and merchants were elements of highly dynamic networks, whose center was represented by the Egyptian, Hittite, Babylonian, Mitanni and afterwards Assyrian empires.

What is required in order to transpose the undeniable reality of the late Bronze age and the Archaic age into theory is an addition to Wallerstein’s construction, represented by the introduction of a new conceptual category – “world systems based on reciprocity”⁸. The development that I proposed was triggered by the

² Iancu 2014.

³ I provide a short list of authors, coming from different research areas, who admit the divide between the central Oriental kingdoms and the peripheral Greece (and the Aegean as a whole): Humphreys 1978, 168 – “Archaic Greece was a poor country; less sophisticated in culture and craftsmanship than the civilizations of the East”; Kuhrt 2002, 17 – “the comparative backwardness and poverty of Greece is obvious”, “a marginal, or frontier, zone”; Luraghi 2006, 22-23 – “we ought not to forget that the Greeks of the archaic age were indeed living on the fringes of much larger and better-organized polities, which constantly produced the kind of centralized wealth that makes it possible to hire mercenaries”; Gates 2010, 42 – “we might consider preClassical Greece as a culture lying on the outer edge of the larger circle of Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian civilisations”; Vlassopoulos 2013, esp. 7 – “around 700 the Greek world was emerging as a backward periphery, which was highly stimulated through contact with and influence from the older, richer, more developed and more powerful world of the Near East.” Specific references to Wallerstein’s theory are rare and it seems that many scholars use concepts coined by him without being aware of their origin or of Wallerstein’s in-depth discussions on them.

⁴ Wallerstein 1974, 348.

⁵ Assyria in the 8th and early 7th century, Egypt, Lydia, Babylonia and Media after the fall of Assyria, and Persia, starting with Cyrus’s the Great reign.

⁶ From religion – Burkert 1992, to poetry – West 1997.

⁷ See the edition of Moran 1987.

⁸ Instead of a dismissal of the whole theory. Latter theoretical developments, such as Renfrew’s ‘peer polity interaction’ model (Renfrew 1986) and Malkin’s networks’ paradigm (Malkin 2011) should not be viewed as

observation that the world systems theorized by Wallerstein could have been defined by the main economic patterns of integration, in Karl Polanyi's terms⁹, that fit the pieces of the systems together: the world economies were defined by market trade, the world empires by redistribution, the non-integrated worlds of subsistence economies through the lack of integration. Polanyi's scheme has one more pattern of integration that cannot be found in Wallerstein's classification, although is a very well known anthropological object of study: reciprocity. I assume that world systems of a different kind than those listed by Wallerstein might have existed in history, their constitutive parts being integrated through reciprocity (Table 1).

Patterns of integration Polanyi 2001 [1944], 45-58.	<>	Types of world systems Wallerstein 1974
Non integration	<>	Subsistence economies
Redistribution	<>	World Empires
Market trade	<>	World Economies
Reciprocity	<>	?
		World Systems based on Reciprocity (Iancu 2014)

Table 1. Correlation between Polanyi's patterns of integration and Wallerstein's types of world systems (with the addition made by myself)

The characteristics of such systems should be thoroughly studied, like it happened with those of world economies and world empires. I started this process in my article of 2014, using basic concepts of anthropology. One of them, of course, was reciprocity, defined as "the movement of goods between correlative points of symmetrical groupings within or between societies"¹⁰, with its most obvious concrete means of manifestation, the gift exchange. Besides them and their integrative effects, I established also that the main asset in this type of world was the prestige or the symbolic capital, in Bourdieu's terms¹¹, which could have been converted easily in support for one's designs and in other forms of capital¹².

One specific question that arises is how one might multiply its symbolic capital at the international level and, more particularly, how the Eastern monarchs developed their prestige in the Aegean in the Archaic age.

concurrent, but rather supplementary, to an improved 'core-periphery' theory, the status of core and periphery being given by the number and the quality of ties connected to certain nodes. The core-periphery theory represent a model for understanding the inequalities in given systems, while the peer polity interaction and the network theories are useful in conceptualizing the diversity of means of interaction which produce in time the inequality effects.

⁹ Polanyi 2001 [1944], 45-58. Although these patterns are dubbed as 'economic', we should be well aware of Polanyi's substantive view of economy, mainly expressed through his concept of 'embeddedness' – the fact that economic activity is always constrained by non-economic institutions. Because of this, I even tend to suppress the term 'economic' when referring to the patterns of integration.

¹⁰ Möller 2000, 11.

¹¹ Bourdieu 1989, 17: "the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate".

¹² For concise, yet pervasive and meaningful explanations on reciprocity and prestige exchanges, concepts quite difficultly comprehensible by observers coming from modern societies, where the exchange of goods is massively quantitative, impersonal and rational, see Chic-García 2009, 139-153,

II. Intended and non-intended promotion.

Besides some staples and products like olive oil, wine, wares, and probably ores, where they acted as intermediaries, just like the Phoenicians, Greeks did not use to have too many commodities to provide to the Eastern empires in exchange for the great quantities of *orientalia* that flowed to the Aegean.

Moreover, there is a full record of Eastern monarchs sending gifts to Greek sanctuaries, communities and individuals, throughout the whole Archaic age, in definitely intended actions of boosting their prestige in the Aegean¹³.

The only way we can explain this apparent 'commercial' imbalance between the Aegean and the Eastern empires, in both fields of reciprocity exchanges and of market trade, is that besides other commodities, the Aegean provided to the Oriental monarchies skilled professional labour – craftsmen, engineers, sailors, doctors, eunuchs and even, or maybe especially, mercenaries¹⁴.

The case of mercenaries is probably the most illustrative for the question addressed above. Agut-Labordère has convincingly shown how the Egyptian pharaohs executed a conscious and effective management of prestige in the Aegean, through gifts and dedications, in order to attract mercenaries to join their ranks¹⁵. On the basis of the already cited references to dedications and gifts, we might infer they were not the only ones who acted this way, the Lydian kings being for sure at least as able and as present in the Aegean as their Egyptian counterparts.

What I want to particularly highlight in this article is not, however, this intended promotion, planned and conducted directly by the Eastern monarchs through their agents. Instead, I wish to emphasize the non-intended, indirect promotion of the Oriental empires in the Aegean communities, conducted by returning mercenaries, third parties from the same category with returning engineers, craftsmen, doctors or merchants, both Greek and foreign.

III. Mercenaries as promoters of the Eastern monarchies.

For a long time, the role played by Archaic mercenaries in the cultural interactions between the Aegean and Oriental empires has not been properly acknowledged in modern literature, traders and craftsmen being considered the almost unique carriers of Oriental material items and ideas. Recent studies pleaded for a reappraisal of the vectors of Oriental influence in the Aegean, some authors

¹³ Midas to Delphi – Hdt. 1, 14, 2-3; Gyges to Delphi – Hdt. 1, 14; Alyattes to Asessos – Hdt. 1, 22 and Delphi – Hdt. 1, 25; Kroisos to Delphi and the Delphians – Hdt. 1, 50-52; 1, 54, 1; 1, 92, to Thebes – Hdt. 1, 92, to Ephessos – Hdt. 1, 92 and Hogarth 1908, 1-8; Necho II to Didyma – Hdt. 2, 159, 3 and probably to Ialysos – Kousoulis and Morenz 2007, 184-188; Amasis to Delphi – Hdt. 2, 180, to Sparta – Hdt. 3, 47, to Polykrates – Hdt. 3, 39 and to Kyrene, Samos and Lindos – Hdt. 2, 182 (as well as others). On the matter of dedications to sanctuaries, see Kaplan 2006 and Gazzano 2014.

¹⁴ At least in the case of Egypt, foreign mercenaries were so important that they were perceived as a distinctive feature of the Saite kingdom by other Orientals (Jer. 46, 21). The number of Aegean mercenaries, Ionians and Karians, in the ranks of the Saite army should have been very large for those times, Herodotos mentioning 30.000 men in the army of Apries ca. 568 BC (Hdt. 2, 163, cf. D.S. 1, 68, 2-5), while the Elephantine stela of the first year of Amasis (see with Daressy 1900, 2-3; Lloyd 1988, 178-180; Leahy 1988, 190; Ladynin 2006) gives an account over the total 'infestation' of the Delta by probably the same men attested by Herodotos, in the context of the civil war between the two pharaohs.

¹⁵ Agut-Labordère 2012, 222-226.

positively reconsidering the role of mercenaries¹⁶, even adopting probably exaggerated views on their significance¹⁷.

A quantitative approach towards the measure in which Archaic mercenaries contributed to the increase of the prestige of the Oriental monarchies in the Aegean periphery would be totally inappropriate, even if large series of data were available. On the other hand, a qualitative assessment, oriented to the description of the phenomenon might be useful and realistic at the same time.

The first step in this direction is to see whether there are good grounds in maintaining the fact that the Archaic Aegean mercenaries temporarily or permanently went back to their homelands¹⁸ and were disposed to promote their former masters as employers.

Maybe the best known evidence is represented by a basalt cube statue found near Priene, which bears the following inscription:

“Pediton dedicated me, the son of Amphinneus, having brought me from Egypt; to him the Egyptian king – Psammetichus – gave as a prize of valor a golden bracelet and a city, on account of his virtue”¹⁹.

As pointed out by Masson, Yoyotte and Agut-Labordère, the artifact points to a Greek mercenary who managed to enter the high circles of Egyptian administration at the end of the 7th century BC and who got very well accustomed with Egyptian culture²⁰. Still, he presented his gift to an unknown god in Ionia, so that many of his fellow countrymen were informed on what prospects one could expect from consenting to loyally and effectively fight for the pharaoh.

Pediton was not the only mercenary to return from Egypt or Asia and to boast of his accomplishments in the service of Eastern monarchs through dedications in Greek sanctuaries, although he is the only one that provides us with a glimpse on the messages the returning mercenaries were spreading to the members of their communities. In Rhodes, at the temple of Athena in Kameiros, a certain Smyrthes dedicated two Egyptian statues, most probably at almost the same time as Pediton²¹. There are serious arguments for considering that a horse frontlet of North Syrian origin, found at the Heraion of Samos was also dedicated by a returning mercenary, and the reasoning employed in the case of that artifact might be quite well reproduced for some other objects in Samos, Miletos and Eretria²².

¹⁶ Greaves 2001, 87-89, 167-168; Raaflaub 2004, 209-210.

¹⁷ Hale 2013, esp. 185-187.

¹⁸ There are some opinions against this view, notably Austin 1970, 18-19 who proposed for the Archaic Greek mercenaries in Egypt an one time enrollment at the beginning of the reign of Psammetichos, the Aegean warriors remaining in the country as military colonists. See also Hornblower 1982, 354-357.

¹⁹ *SEG*, 37, 994 with Şahin 1987, no. 1, 1-2, pl. 1-2; Ampolo and Bresciani 1988; Masson and Yoyotte 1988, Vittmann 2003, 203-206; Moyer 2011, 57-58; Agut-Labordère 2012b.

²⁰ Masson and Yoyotte 1988, 177-179; Agut-Labordère 2012b.

²¹ Kousoulis and Morenz 2007, 188; Agut-Labordère 2012b, 298. Another comparable Egyptian object associated with the Aegean mercenary activity in the Saite kingdom, without bearing any inscription, is a figure of Bes discovered in the sanctuary of Artemis at Amyzon – McAnally 2016, 176.

²² Samos Archaeological Museum B2579/A1306 – a horse frontlet manufactured in Northern Syria in the 9th century BC and deposited at the Heraion of Samos in the 7th century BC – with Kyrieleis and Röllig 1988; Luraghi 2006, 38-41; Aruz et al. 2014, cat. no. 165. Other similar artifacts which might be attributed to Greek mercenaries in Luraghi's opinion – Luraghi 2006, 40-41 – are other horse frontlets and blinkers and a series of Assyrian mace-heads, found in Samos, Miletos and Eretria. Crielaard 2002, 253-256 takes into account another explanation for the presence of the Oriental made blinkers in the Aegean – that of repeated gift-exchange.

The memory of returning mercenaries is also preserved in literary sources. Herodotus provides the example of Phanes of Halikarnassos, who fled from Egypt trying to reach his country, but was caught in nearby Lykia just to flee once again, this time to Persia. As he “had an exact knowledge of all Egyptian matters” (*epistamenon te ta peri Aigypton atrekestata*), he convinced Kambyses to attack Egypt, revealing all that he knew about the country he had served before²³.

We might easily imagine what the results were when people like Phanes came back to their own countries not as runaways, but as accomplished veterans, like Antimenidas, brother of the poet Alkaios, who celebrated his deeds performed probably while serving in the army deployed by Babylon against Ashkelon: Alkaios recorded in his verse both the marvelous hilt of Antimenidas’s ivory sword bound with gold, and the epic killing of a gigantic enemy²⁴.

The evidence for mercenaries coming back from the East and spreading the word about the might and wealth of the Oriental monarchs might be scarce, but it is very well paralleled by the case of Greeks who practiced other professions for the same employees. The situation of Phanes is well paralleled by that of Demokedes of Croton, a highly esteemed doctor at the court of Dareios I of Persia, who nevertheless seized an opportunity to flee to southern Italy²⁵, while that of Pedon has many similarities with that of Mandrokles, the Samian who built for the same Dareios the pontoon bridge over the Bosporos and dedicated in the Heraion a painting depicting his deed, bearing the following inscription:

“After bridging the Bosporus that teems with fish,
Mandrokles dedicated a memorial of the floating bridge to Hera,
Having won a crown for himself, and fame for the Samians,
Doing the will of King Dareios.”²⁶

It was undoubtedly a matter of great pride to serve under foreign kings such as Dareios and Psammetichos and afterwards to boast in front of your own fellow countrymen and even better, in front of the whole Hellenic world, dedicating rich gifts to the panhellenic sanctuaries. The fascination for making associations between oneself and the powerful monarchs of the Near Eastern is proved not only by the aforementioned references, but also by some *graffiti* in Abu Simbel, made by Greek and Karian mercenaries taking part to Psammetichos’ II campaign against Nubia in 593 BC: they were also proud to carve in stone for eternity memories of themselves joining the all mighty pharaoh in his actions against his enemies²⁷.

Surely, these are only pieces of the greater puzzle. Just imagine men like Pedon and Mandrokles, who made such conspicuous dedications, bearing so eloquent inscriptions, telling their stories in front of audiences bred with the verses of Homer! How many giants like that killed by Antimenidas figured in the stories of the retired mercenaries? How many treasures and cities like those invoked by Pedon and how many glorious deeds like those recorded in Abu Simbel kindled the imagination

²³ Hdt. 3.4.

²⁴ Alk. fr. 350 Lobel/Page = Heph. *Ench.* 10.3 + Str. 13, 2, 3, with Quinn 1961, who connects it to Alk. fr. 48.

²⁵ The story of Demokedes of Croton is recounted at length in Hdt. 3, 125, 129-137.

²⁶ Hdt. 4, 88.

²⁷ Greek *graffito* ML, 7a, mentioning *basileos Psamaticho*, with Lepsius 1849-1858, Abt. 6, Band XI, Bd. 98 and Bernand and Masson 1957, 3-10; Karian *graffito* E.As 7, mentioning *esak’ōowš . . . pismašk*, with Lepsius 1844-1858, Abt. 6, Band XI, Bd. 99, Vittmann 2003, 164 and Adiego 2007, 118, 293-294..

of Greeks and, in the same time, inspired their respect and admiration for their powerful Eastern neighbours?

But how did it work? What did happen when mercenaries came back from their missions, willingly or unwillingly promoting their former masters through their stories and the riches they brought with themselves? In order to answer these questions, a new theoretical excursus is needed.

I have already mentioned that I give 'prestige' the same meaning Bourdieu gives to 'symbolic capital', even though in anthropology and especially in sociology the meaning of the term is restricted²⁸. This decision was necessary as, in modern historiography, especially in constructions such as 'prestige goods', the term lost its more precise denotation.

What I wish to highlight is the symbolic dimension of prestige – it is a form of capital formed by perceptions and representations, i.e. it is found in people's mind. It is translated into attitudes and actions, determined by the aforementioned perceptions and representations. In this wise, it is highly similar with nowadays commercial notoriety.

Thus, in order to describe the behavioral evolutions commanded by the promotion did by returning mercenaries, I find appropriate a model that figures in some marketing manuals – the so-called DAGMAR approach, in its revised 1995 form – from which I retain the stages attained through communication until the customer buys the product: awareness – comprehension – conviction – action²⁹. The same stages might be considered also in the assessment of the way the Greek warriors were influenced by the prestige of the Eastern monarchies in providing their military services.

The first stage was the raising of awareness. We have a very good example in the *Odyssey* of how the discussions between returning mercenaries and other potential employees, unaware of the Eastern marvels, might have looked like. The eloquent episode is that of the discussion between Odysseus, arrived in Ithaca, and Eumaios, the swineherd. Odysseus assumes the identity of a Kretan warrior who, after coming back from Troy, launches a piratical raid against one of the kingdoms in the Delta. While looting indiscriminately, its greedy companions are surprised and slaughtered by the Egyptian warriors, he himself being saved only through the mercy and "the regard for the wrath of Zeus" of the Egyptian kinglet. The story of Odysseus follows with a short description of his living in Egypt: "There then I stayed for seven years and much wealth did I gather among the Egyptians, for all men gave me gifts."³⁰

Unfortunately we don't know why the Egyptians provided the Kretan stranger with gifts. As he came there as a passionate warrior³¹, is it too exaggerated to surmise that he might have fought for his Egyptian hosts?

Surely, Odysseus's story was a fiction, but one intended to convince, so it probably had many elements that could have been considered real. Surely, he talked to an old swineherd, not to a young man eager to seek his fortune in the military profession, but we can imagine, from this particular example, how would have

²⁸ Kantzara 2009: "In social sciences the notion prestige denotes symbolic value expressed as a quality of honor and esteem that individuals and social groups may attain on the basis of desirable traits and achievement."

²⁹ Dutka and Colley 1995, 45.

³⁰ Hom. *Od.* 14.285-286. The piratical ride of the fake pirate is narrated in Hom. *Od.* 14, 256-284.

³¹ Besides the story of the raid against Egypt, the Kretan stranger admitted earlier that he acquired his fortune in nine raids and that he never preferred toiling the soil instead of fighting in war - Hom. *Od.* 14, 216-234.

worked the promotion in the case of two warriors who met, one of them returning from the East, the other one having not, at that moment, any knowledge of the opportunities which waited for him abroad³². We just have to recall the amazement of Telemachos and Peisistratos when they visited Menelaos' palace, heard his stories about his voyage in the East and saw the gifts he received in Egypt and Phoenicia³³, to obtain a glimpse on the potential reaction of Greek warriors when they were told by other comrades about the chances provided by the service in Oriental armies.

As such initial encounters with pieces of information concerning the Eastern monarchies multiplied, the awareness changed more and more into comprehension and even conviction³⁴. We should note that the perceptions and representations of the Greeks were not constructed solely on exact knowledge. Repeated reports of the marvels of the East, like those sung by Alkaios with reference to his brother, should have created rather quickly strong stereotypes of the power and wealth of the Oriental kings. Good examples of such stereotypes are found in the Classical age, associated to the Persian king's court and might be inferred from the report of an Arkadian embassy that presented the unembellished truth when it came back disappointed from Susa, in 367 BC:

“But Antiochos, because the Arkadian League was less regarded, did not accept the royal gifts, and reported back to the Ten Thousand [n.a. – the Arkadian assembly] that the King had bakers, and cooks, and wine-pourers, and doorkeepers in vast numbers, but as for men who could fight with Greeks, he said that though he sought diligently he could not see any. Besides this, he said that for his part he thought that the King's wealth of money was also mere pretence, for he said that even the golden plane-tree that was forever harped upon, was not large enough to afford shade for a grasshopper”³⁵.

In this particular case, the embassy discarded the common knowledge, built on the reports of many previous favorable Greek embassies which had presumably accepted the royal gifts, that the Great King had many effective soldiers and possessed a huge wealth. It discarded also, ironically, the accounts of the marvelous rich objects, like the false tale of the golden tree, and yet it acknowledged the vast numbers of servants present at the Persian court!

Thus, we observe a significant evolution from the initial surprise produced by the reports of the huge opportunities in the East to the strong convictions about the Oriental power and wealth which the Arkadian ambassador aimed to shake.

I chose the example above for its eloquence and not in order to state that these convictions were constructed over a long period of time. There are in fact some clues that they were already built at the middle of the 7th century BC, when Archilochos or one of his fictional characters proudly says “I want no wealth of Gyges

³² Eumaios was deeply impressed by the sufferings and wanderings of the stranger, though he did not believe the story about the fate of Odysseus, because other strangers had previously lied on the matter – Hom. *Od.* 361-388.

³³ The full episode of the visit is presented in Hom. *Od.* 4, 1-624. Instances that should have frequently occurred during the contacts between returning mercenaries and would-be mercenaries are: 4, 43-47, 71-76, 122-134 (Telemachos and Peisistratos marvel at the rich palace of Menelaos and at the luxurious Oriental items displayed by Helen) – the awe inspired by the fortunes of the veterans, acquired in their journeys abroad; 4, 81-89 (Menelaos lists the countries he visited) – the geographical information provided by the veterans; 4, 611-619 (Menelaos gives Telemachos a silver bowl which he himself had received from “the warrior Phaidimos, the king of the Sydonians”) – the marvelous gifts the returning mercenaries gave to their friends.

³⁴ Given the scarcity of available sources, the limits between the two stages are more difficult to draw in the historical and anthropological reconstruction of the mercenary phenomenon, than in modern marketing.

³⁵ Xen. *HG.* 7.1.38.

rich in gold, Nor have I ever envied him"³⁶ implying that many others wanted in fact even a small part of the Lydian king's wealth and envied him for his fortune. Gyges had such a great prestige among the Greeks at his time that he was still remembered in the 4th century for his wealth³⁷. The same is true for the later Lydian king Kroisos and even for the earlier Phrygian king Midas.

What requires particular attention is that the fragment of Archilochos' also demonstrates the existence of a positive attitude towards taking action in order to gain such wealth as that of Gyges'. The great behavioral trip from unawareness to strong conviction providing the necessary motivation for enrolling in Eastern armies was accomplished even at the middle of the 7th century BC, in the case of some Greek individuals and communities.

It is certain that the step from conviction and positive attitude to action was frequently made in the Archaic age by tens of thousands of Aegean warriors³⁸. But how did it actually happen?

There are not many data on the matter. We know, for example, that Kroisos sent special emissaries having available great amounts of money in order to make announcements of enrollment³⁹ and probably the recruitment, especially at the end of the Archaic age, was quite well organized, similarly to the mechanisms employed in later periods.

Still, there is a more detailed account of another way of recruitment, probably less frequent, but better displaying the role of prestige in the whole mercenary phenomenon. Herodotos is the one who preserves the memory of an event that occurred after the battle of Thermopylai, when "some few deserters, men of Arcadia, lacking a livelihood and desirous to find some service" came to the Persian camp and were brought in the front of him⁴⁰.

We might notice how men convinced by need, but also by the prospect of a good employment, not only waited to hear the call of arms, but even went, by their own desire, to offer their services to the archenemy of Greece.

IV. Conclusion.

Great numbers of Aegean warriors got to serve under Eastern rulers as mercenaries, both in the Classical and Archaic ages, contrary to the common opinion among modern scholars that only in the fourth century BC this type of employment became a mass phenomenon⁴¹. The great disparities in political power and wealth

³⁶ Archil. fr. 19 West = Arist. *Rh.* 1418b 29-30 + Plu. *De Tranq.* 10. For a long time, based on fr. 1, fr. 2 and fr. 216 West, Archilochos was deemed to have fought as mercenary, although the common interpretation of the most eloquent excerpt, fr. 216, was questioned in Lavelle 1997, 236. See Trundle 2004, 13 and Fields 1994, 20-49. For further treatment of the Gyges's theme by Archilochos, see Strauss Clay 1986.

³⁷ The most known Classical accounts are Hdt. 1, 8-13 and Pl. *R.* 359b-360b. A full review of the literary sources concerning Gyges is available in Smith 1902. The hypothesis that Gyges employed significant numbers of mercenaries is maintained in Haider 1988, 164-74; Kammerzell 1993, 111-14; Bettalli 1995, 75-76.

³⁸ See n. 13.

³⁹ D.S. 9, 32, on the treason of Eurybatos of Ephessos. Cf. Hdt. 1, 77; 81-82, 1.

⁴⁰ Hdt. 8, 26, 1.

⁴¹ Bettalli 1995 draws even a perfect antinomy between the characteristics of the phenomenon in the Archaic and Classical periods, based on pairs such as based on pairs such as few – many, elites – masses, aristocratic reciprocity – economic contractualism (e.g. p. 52: "È comunque possibile affermare con sicurezza che il mercenariato era esercitato da gruppi ristretti: si tratta di un mercenariato aristocratico, di elite, e non di un

between the Eastern empires and the Aegean small polities, in circumstances of demographic growth and internal strife in Greece, are probably the most significant factors that drove so many groups of warriors from Ionia, Karia and the whole Greece to the Orient, in quest for fame and richness.

Nevertheless, this particular aspect of the functioning of the Eastern Mediterranean world system should be explained in more detail through the role prestige played in societies where reciprocity was the main means of integration. The full explanation of the mercenary phenomenon in the Archaic and Classical Eastern Mediterranean cannot be reached without taking into consideration the promotion the Oriental rulers received in the Aegean. Promotion was either conducted directly through their own networks, or resulted indirectly through the actions of their former employees, who brought back with them, besides riches, marvelous tales and valuable knowledge for other would-be soldiers of fortune.

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