Journal of Hellenic Studies 138 (2018) 67–79 doi:10.1017/S0075426918000058

IN THE SHADOW OF PHOENICIA: NORTH SYRIA AND 'PALESTINIAN SYRIA' IN HERODOTUS

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Abstract: Scrutiny of Herodotus' ethnographic accounts of northern Syria and the region he calls 'Palestinian Syria' reveals oddities and inconsistencies. Here it is argued that such problems may be resolved if a fundamental fact is recognized: the enormous early literary prestige of the Phoenicians has obscured the historical roles of these other peoples in the *Histories*. The character and extent of this process, specifically as it bears on Syria-Palestine during Iron Age II, is analysed here. It is hoped that a new appreciation of the Syrians as an ethnicity may be gained as a result. It is suggested as well that for important historical problems researchers should ascertain whether Herodotus is not actually talking about Syrians when he discusses Phoenicians.

Keywords: Herodotus, Syrians, Phoenicians, ethnography

I. Introduction[1]

Herodotus' accounts of North Syria and the region he calls 'Palestinian Syria' are part of his larger ethnography of the eastern Mediterranean seaboard in the *Histories*, for which he began collecting materials perhaps in the middle of the fifth century BC. This ethnography has played an important role in research about the interactions between Greeks and Phoenicians, and Greeks and North Syrians, not least of all the question whether the northwestern Semitic script on which the Greek alphabet, and all subsequent alphabets, was modelled was the Phoenician script or the later Aramaic script. Quite apart from Herodotus' geographic accounts of North Syria and Palestinian Syria, which vary in accuracy and consistency, if his ethnographic presentations of those regions are scrutinized, oddities crop up and quickly multiply. The thesis of the following essay is that if the tensions in Herodotus' ethnography are resolved, a pattern emerges. It can be seen that North Syrians and Palestinian Syrians are present not as historical actors, for the most part, but as geographic expressions, empty shells that Herodotus moves around as place-markers in his geography of the Syro-Palestinian seaboard.[2] As historical actors, North Syrians and Palestinian Syrians seem largely to have been replaced by 'Phoenicians'. The results of the present inquiry, then, could be used in future research to determine if Herodotus should always be taken to mean Phoenicians when he talks about Phoenicians in the rest of the *Histories* or if he should not sometimes be taken to mean other ethnic groups, specifically North Syrians and Palestinian Syrians.

Serious study of Herodotus' Near Eastern ethnography has been going on at least since 1617, when J. Selden noted Herodotus' observation that the Greeks of his day called the Assyrians '*Surioi*' but that the 'barbarians' called them '*Assurioi*' (Herodotus 7.63).[3] This oddity has been explained recently with the help of Near Eastern evidence, which makes it clear that *Assurioi*/*Surioi* derive from the same, Near Eastern source; the Greeks of Herodotus' day, whose ancestors had lived among the Assyrians' neighbours, were preserving in *Surioi* an old orthographic variant.[4]

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[1] All ancient dates are BC.

[2] On the use of the terms 'Syria-Palestine' and 'Syro-Palestinian', see below n.14.

[3] Selden (1617) iv–v.

[4] Near Eastern evidence: the Luwian version of a fascinating, recently published bilingual inscription, in Hieroglyphic Luwian with a Phoenician copy, discovered at Çineköy in what was ancient (Ah)hiyawa/Adana,

Along with this *Assurioi*/*Surioi* question, another major problem has been the strange fact that Herodotus associates 'Syrians' (*Surioi*) with Cappadocia in Anatolia, far away, in other words, from the Syrian homeland of the *Surioi* in Syria-Palestine.[5] A key passage is 2.104.3: in one sentence Herodotus describes 'Syrians' in pointedly different ethnographic contexts, which clearly shows that he considered the two groups to be distinct. The manuscripts of Herodotus preserve both *Sur-* and *Suri-*, and some critics have adopted *Suri-* to indicate the Anatolian Syrians and *Sur-* to indicate the Syrians of Syria-Palestine.[6] However, this orthographic variation is probably not meaningful and should not be enlisted for help; *Sur-* is probably a later version of *Suri-* that has intruded into the manuscripts.[7] In fact, *Suri-* is already present in Greek with the singular use of the toponym *Suriē* in the *Odyssey* (15.403; entire passage 15.403–14), which is probably not the Syria of Syria-Palestine, but rather the Anatolian land of the *Surioi* on the Black Sea littoral, part of a 'greater Cappadocia' in Iron Age Anatolia (*cf*. Strabo 12.1.1).[8] As with the *Assurioi*/*Surioi* question, recent findings from the Near Eastern side can explain the problem of the Anatolian *Surioi*. The results of Z. Simon's 2012 study confirm that Herodotus' ethnonym *Suri-* is ultimately based on an early toponym (*Su+ra/i-*) for Tabal, biblical Tubal.[9]

Work on the problems related to the Greek terminology *Assurios*/*Surios*/*Suros* was firmly established with T. Nöldeke's pathbreaking 1881 article. Nöldeke's study is still a model for strenuous, exacting and nearly exhaustive historical-philological analysis of an ancient topic. It set the tone and agenda for subsequent contributions. The main thrust of this work has been to establish a consistent terminology for the ancient ethnography on the Levant; in other words, to determine what we should call the peoples and places in question, rather than necessarily to investigate the historical significance of the peoples involved. This narrow focus was necessary in order to establish the foundation for future study, and anyone working in the field now owes these scholars a great debt. Among successors to Nöldeke, E. Schwartz's 1931 article can be noted for augmenting Nöldeke's collection of Classical sources and particularly for Schwartz's analysis of Xenophon's

preserves *Su+ra/i-* in place of the standard *Asu+ra/i-*: Tekoğlu and Lemaire (2000). This reading and a few other similar examples show that in the second half of the eighth century Luwian '*Su+ra/i-*' and '*Asu+ra/i-*' were being used as orthographic variants of the toponym for the kingdom of Assyria. As R. Rollinger ((2006b) 286–87) suggests, the Greeks who lived or travelled in this region in the late eighth century probably will have found this ambivalent usage *au courant* and thus it will have entered Greek in this form. By the time Herodotus began his researches, however, the version originally represented by '*Asu+ra/i-*' had prevailed in the east, whereas standard Greek usage preserved the older variant spelling. For a lucid introduction to the text of the Çineköy inscription and related historical problems, see now the commentary of Beckman et al. (2011) no. 28; bibliography on the inscription is already large: see especially Hawkins (2009) (for a general audience, but invaluable for setting the inscription's significance within expanding scholarly knowledge about northern Syria, especially finds from the Amuq plain and the new Aleppo Storm God temple inscription); López-Ruiz (2009) (the inscription's wider importance as evidence for Greek and Near Eastern contacts).

[5] Anatolian *Surioi*: Hdt. 1.6.1–2, 1.72.1–2, 1.76.1–2, 2.104.3, 5.49.6, 7.72.1; *cf*. Nöldeke (1881) 445.

[6] See the detailed discussion in Helm (1980) 38 n.25.

[7] No obvious distinction is made between the two forms in the manuscripts of Herodotus, though, as P.R. Helm observes ((1980) 38, n.25), ABC seem to prefer *Sur-*, whereas DRSV apparently prefer *Suri-*. Helm concludes ((1980) 31) that the variants are biforms of the same name, which must be true. As for *Sur-*, it seems most likely that this is a copyist's error, perpetuated because it had become a more familiar form, as Nöldeke (1881) 444, n.4 recognizes (*cf*. Schwartz (1931) 73). This process must have begun early, since *POxy* 3376 *fr*. 17 (= Hdt. 2.104.3), dating to the second century AD, preserves Cυροι twice (lines 1 (Cυροι) and 5 (Çυροι)). I have thus used the text of N.G. Wilson's recent OCT (2015) throughout, which, except for the mentions of (Anatolian) *Suroi* at 7.72, consistently adopts the variant *Suri-*.

[8] As Huxley (1960) (especially 19–20) suggests. Between the composition of the *Odyssey* and Herodotus, Hekataios discussed these 'Syrians' but apparently called them '*Leukosuroi*', or 'White Syrians': *FGrH* 1 F200, 1 F201; cf. *FGrH* 1 F199 and *cf*. Maiandrios (*FGrH* 491–92 F4 ap. Strabo 12.3.25 (Eustathios *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem B* 852)). On the *Leukosuroi*, see Nöldeke (1881) 446–47; Dan (2010).

[9] The primary (Hieroglyphic Luwian) text is KARKAMIŠ A4b §6, which J.D. Hawkins ((2000) 80) dates to slightly earlier than *ca*. 1000 BC. Z. Simon (2012) adds KARKAMIŠ A6 §6 (*ca*. 900 BC). Simon discusses these references to *Su+ra/i-*, shows that they refer to Tabal and links *Su+ra/i-* to the *Surioi*/*Leukosuroi* mentioned by Greek writers.

key testimony about North Syria in the first book of the *Anabasis*, a source Nöldeke leaves largely untouched.[10] The *Surioi* (and '*Leukosuroi*') of Anatolia have recently been the subject of two studies (Dan (2010); Simon (2012)), both of which incorporate Near Eastern evidence to supplement the Graeco-Roman sources. The latest offerings to follow in the mode of Nöldeke are R. Rollinger's two 2006 articles, which also exploit new Near Eastern evidence. None of these essays, it should be noted, focuses on a particular ancient source, even though Herodotus is a mainstay; instead they all aim to provide full coverage of the various terms' evolution over time. Nor is any particular region usually a focus, apart from the recent studies on the Anatolian 'Syrians'. This is certainly true for North Syria and Herodotus' 'Palestinian Syria', the subjects of the present study, which are only subsidiary concerns in earlier work.[11]

Especially after the introduction of the Near Eastern evidence just mentioned, it may now be time to ask broader historical questions of the ancient ethnography, while at the same time concentrating on a single ancient source, in this case Herodotus. The present essay excludes as subjects both the 'Syrians' (*Surioi*) of Anatolia and the *Surioi* who are in fact Assyrians, on the grounds that these problems have been solved decisively by the Near Eastern evidence. Instead its aim is to analyse Herodotus' account of the North Syrians (*Surioi*), that is, the actual, Aramaic-speaking Syrians, and the group Herodotus calls the 'Palestinian Syrians (*Surioi*)', who should be associated with the Philistines and with the subjects of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, during Palestine's Iron Age II (IA II), the period *ca*. 1000–586 BC.

To appreciate what is at stake in Herodotus' ethnography, a brief summary of the modern understanding of the regions in question will be helpful − and, to be clear, what *is* at stake is the basic texture of an indispensable primary source from the Greek side on early relations between Greece and Syria-Palestine. With the benefit of four centuries of intensive research since Selden, we recognize that a relatively clear divide can be made between North Syria and Phoenicia in IA II. This divide is not only geographic; it is linguistic, since the land of Syria spoke in the Aramaic language and eventually wrote in the Aramaic script, for which there is now considerable inscriptional evidence, beginning with the Tell Feḫerije inscription (*KAI* 309) dating to *ca*. 830 BC.[12] Phoenicians, by contrast, spoke in the Phoenician language and wrote in a distinctive linear alphabetic script that may go back to *ca*. 1100 BC; this alphabetic script was the progenitor of the Aramaic script.[13] While such things can never be ascertained with absolute certainty it is possible to mark off with some confidence a zone of Phoenician speakers on the northern seaboard of Syria-Palestine beginning in the south around Carmel (*Barrington Atlas* 69 B4), which cannot go much further north along that seaboard than the city the Phoenicians knew as '*rwd*, Classical Arados, the biblical Arvad (*Barrington Atlas* 68 A4).[14] North of this Phoenician-speaking zone

[10] Schwartz (1931) 378–81; *cf*. Schwartz (1932). E. Schwartz erred, however, in putting stock ((1931) 379–81) in the statistical notes in the manuscripts that follow the end of the *Anabasis* (following *An*. 7.8.24), which are copyists' additions (see Helm (1980) 16). For Xenophon on northern Syria, see below. For stimulating reviews of the various solutions proposed by modern scholars to these questions between Nöldeke (1881) and the introduction of the key Near Eastern evidence, see Rollinger ((2006b) 283–84); Simon ((2012) 174–75).

[11] For example Nöldeke (1881) 450–52, 460–62; Schwartz (1931) 386–87.

[12] H. Gzella dates this inscription to the middle ninth century or slightly later on palaeographic grounds ((2015) 63–67). There are striking peculiarities of letter forms in the Tell Feḫerije inscription that do not appear in contemporary Phoenician lettering, but which closely resemble early Greek letter forms, particularly those in the Eretrian script or scripts of Eretrian derivation. Especially interesting is the Aramaic dotted *'ayin* which corresponds to the dotted *omicron* (Θ) from Eretria (Kenzelmann Pfyffer et al. (2005) no. 26), Pithēkoussai (Bartoněk and Buchner (1995) 178) and now Methōnē in Pieria (Besios et al. (2012) no. 5), on which generally, see now Janko (2015).

[13] The Proto-Canaanite abecedarium from 'Izbet Ṣarṭah in northern Israel dates to *ca*. 1100; the 22-letter Phoenician alphabet was fully formed with the early tenth-century Aḥiram Inscription, from Byblos (*KAI* 1).

[14] The terms 'Syria-Palestine' and 'Syro-Palestinian' have been preferred here as descriptors for that area within the ancient Near East that might otherwise be called 'Greater Canaan' or the 'coastal Levant'. This choice has been made with the understanding that while

on the seaboard was largely Aramaic-speaking country, the region that I have designated 'North Syria', here narrowly defined as the area north of Arados on the coast and up to Karatepe (Azatiwadaya) and Zinçirli (Sam'al), then inland to the Euphrates and back down southward to Ḫamat and its environs.[15]

Palestine, and Judah and Israel, are perhaps both more familiar and easier to define than North Syria. Palestine (Akkad. KUR *pa-la-as-tú*) in the strict sense is the Philistine pentapolis – the five cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath – and its environs on the southern coastal plain of Syria-Palestine. The evidence is limited and controversial, but the most convincing theory about the linguistic and cultural character of this people in IA II is that they were mostly the same basic Canaanite stock that had dwelled there during the Bronze Age.[16] That stock had been infused, we now know, with an Aegean element in the decades following the catastrophic end of the Bronze Age, but it is likely that any cultural distinctiveness among the Aegean newcomers did not last long, and had long since disappeared by, say, 850 BC. The Hebrew-speaking kingdom of Judah (Yəhudà), with its capital at Jerusalem, lay in the land to the west of the Dead Sea. Judah survived the demise in 722 BC of its cultural counterpart, the northern kingdom of Israel (Yiśrà'ẹl), with its capital Samaria.

II. Northern Syria and the *Phoinikē*

In 1962, in her landmark *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, L.H. Jeffery noted a puzzling feature of Herodotus' definition of the *Phoinikē*, offered during his description of the Persian Empire's provincial districts (*nomoi*) (3.91).[17] As Jeffery observes, 'the proper domain of the Phoenicians was from Mt. Carmel northward to Arvad'. However, in this description of the provincial districts Herodotus says (1) that the fifth *nomos* began at the Greek city Posidēion, which was founded, according to Herodotus, by the legendary Amphilochos son of Amphiaraos, a figure we know from another mention in the *Histories* (7.91) should be associated with a Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age context,[18] (2) that Posidēion lay on the border between the Cilicians (*Kilikoi*) and the Syrians (*Surioi*), (3) that this fifth *nomos* ran southward to Egypt, and, moreover, (4) that 'all of *Phoinikē*, Syria (the one called Palestinian, Συρίη ἡ Παλαιστίνη καλεομένη) and Cyprus lie within this *nomos*'.[19] In the past the Greek city Posidēion has been identified with Al Mina, the modern name for an eighth-century multiethnic camp of Greeks and other, local groups on the estuary of the Orontes river (*Barrington Atlas* 67 B4), but most scholars now locate Posidēion further south, at Ra's al Basīt, Syria, on the coast just south of the Cas(s)ius Mons (*Barrington Atlas* 68 A2).[20]

'Syria-Palestine' is an imperfect term for the area involved (see Bryce (2009) *s.v.* 'Syria-Palestine'), nevertheless incaution in this respect is usually preferable to the inexactness or cultural bias of the alternatives.

[15] Often side by side with the culturally and linguistically Aramaic principalities, there also existed states whose language was Luwian, of the Anatolian branch of Indo-European closely related to Hittite, a dialect of which was written by the political classes in what is conventionally called 'Hieroglyphic Luwian'. This multicultural zone stretched as far south as Ḫamat. On the linguistic geography of Syria in IA II, see Lipiński (2000).

[16] Thus Drews (1998).

[17] While presenting the *status quaestionis* on the invention of the Greek alphabet: Jeffery, *LSAG* 1–42 at 11. Her brief remarks on the problem thus supersede the comments of T. Nöldeke ((1881) 460–61), who, writing in anachronistically nationalist terms, concluded that: 'Auch für die im Ganzen wenig in Unterscheidung fremder Nationalitäten geübten Griechen hoben sich die Aramäer scharf ab von den unter und neben ihnen wohnenden, wenn auch stammverwandten, Phöniciern und Arabern.' For a recent, thorough and very sceptical treatment of Herodotus' Persian provincial districts, see Ruffing (2009).

[18] On the historical bases for the Amphilochos figure, see especially now Lane Fox (2008) 78–79, 80, 155, 213–14, 223.

[19] At 7.89.1 (for which see below) Herodotus similarly differentiates between 'Palestinian Syria' and the *Phoinikē*.

[20] Riis (1970) 137–38 argues influentially against Al Mina and for Ra's al Basīt; followed by, for example, Courbin (1986) 187–88, 206–07. The best argument against equating Al Mina with Posidēion may be T.F.R.G. Braun's observation that most Greek places named after Poseidon are capes, a topographic form that characterizes Ra's al Basīt but not Al Mina: Braun (1982) 10.

Herodotus, in other words, thought of Phoenicia as running up the Syro-Palestinian seaboard northward all the way to the border with Cilicia, through territory we should understand to have been largely Aramaic ethnolinguistically and North Syrian geographically in IA II. This confusion is strange, especially since Herodotus tells us that he had visited the *Phoinikē*, specifically Tyre (2.44). Jeffery notes another passage of Herodotus as well, his description of the southern coast of Anatolia (4.38.2), in which he states that this coast ran westward from an eastern terminus at the Muriand(r)ic gulf, which 'lies near Phoenicia' (πρὸς Φοινίκῃ). The Muriandic gulf, or Issicus Sinus (*Barrington Atlas* 67 B3, C3, B4) is the gulf sheltered on the north by Cilicia in Anatolia and on the southwest by Syria's Amanus range. The cities Muriand(r)os and Issos lay on its Syrian shore.[21] Here, then, in this passage about Anatolia, Herodotus extends the northern border of the land he knows as the *Phoinikē* much farther northward even than when he set it at Posidēion in the passage just considered (3.91), all the way to the northernmost reaches of North Syria in south-eastern Anatolia.

The fact that in the fifth century at least some of the seaports of North Syria appear to have become ethnically Phoenician must have exacerbated the difficulty Herodotus had in accounting for North Syria. We know this to be true at least of Muriand(r)os from the detailed account of the region in Xenophon's *Anabasis*, which describes the military adventure into the heart of the Persian Empire of the Ten Thousand Greek mercenaries (in 401 BC), of which Xenophon himself had been a vital member. Xenophon says (1.4.4–6) that Abrokomas was the governor of the area that lay to the south of the coastal pass below Issos, which according to Xenophon separated Cilicia from Syria. This pass was the 'Pillars of Jonah', a narrow defile separating a part of the coast between Issos in the north and Muriandos in the south from the foothills of the Amanus range.[22] Whether the region Abrokomas governed was meant to be understood as Phoenicia (as *An*. 1.4.5 and 1.4.10 imply) or as Syria (as Diod. Sic. 14.20.5 implies in a summary) is unclear. There is no doubt, however, that whatever its political-administrative status Xenophon considered the land south of this pass to be culturally Syrian at the end of the fifth century BC.[23] Yet Xenophon also reports that Muriandos, the first major city along the coast south of the Pillars of Jonah was ethnically Phoenician in his day, an *emporion* filled with merchant ships. South of Muriandos, Xenophon's narrative makes clear, the coast was again Syrian country (*An*. 1.4.9–11). While it is true that Herodotus and Xenophon have different ideas about where Cilicia stopped and Syria began, it is unlikely that much had changed ethnolinguistically in this region in the 50 years or so since Herodotus had begun his great project until Xenophon marched through here with Cyrus. In fact Xenophon's notice about the Phoenician ethnicity of Muriandos at least partly explains why Herodotus' states vaguely that the Muriandic gulf lay 'near Phoenicia' (4.38.2). That Muriandos was heavily Phoenician in 401 BC suggests that, if pressed about it, an educated fifth-century Greek with knowledge of this area might have labelled as Phoenician land that in IA II had been North Syrian geographically and predominantly Aramaic linguistically.

[21] For Muriand(r)os, see below.

[22] Pillars of Jonah: *Barrington Atlas* 67 C3, where they are labelled 'Kilikiai Pylai'. Not to be confused with the Suriai Pulai, or Syrian Gates (*Barrington Atlas* 67 C4), the Belen pass due south of the Pillars of Jonah, which affords a crossing of the Amanus range, in antiquity as today via Turkey's route D817. Both passes play key but obscure roles in Arrian's account of Alexander the Great's Battle of Issos (Arr. *Anab*. 2.6.1–2), for which see Engels (1978) especially 48.

[23] Note especially *An*. 1.4.9, where Xenophon mentions the veneration of the sacred tame fish of the Chalos river, which 'the Syrians regarded as gods' and would not allow anyone to harm. This practice is probably related to the worship of Atargatis/Derketo, later known simply as *Dea Syria*, 'the Syrian Goddess', whose main sanctuary was at North Syrian Hierapolis/Bambukē, to whom fish were sacred (see Lucian *Syr. D* 45, *cf*. Ath. 346d–e). Later sources frequently report Syrian prohibitions on eating fish: see, for example, Porph. *Abst*. 4.15; Artem. 1.8; Diod. Sic. 2.4.3; Hyg. *Fab.* 197; Ov. *Fast.* 2.473–74; Plut. *De superst*. 170D.

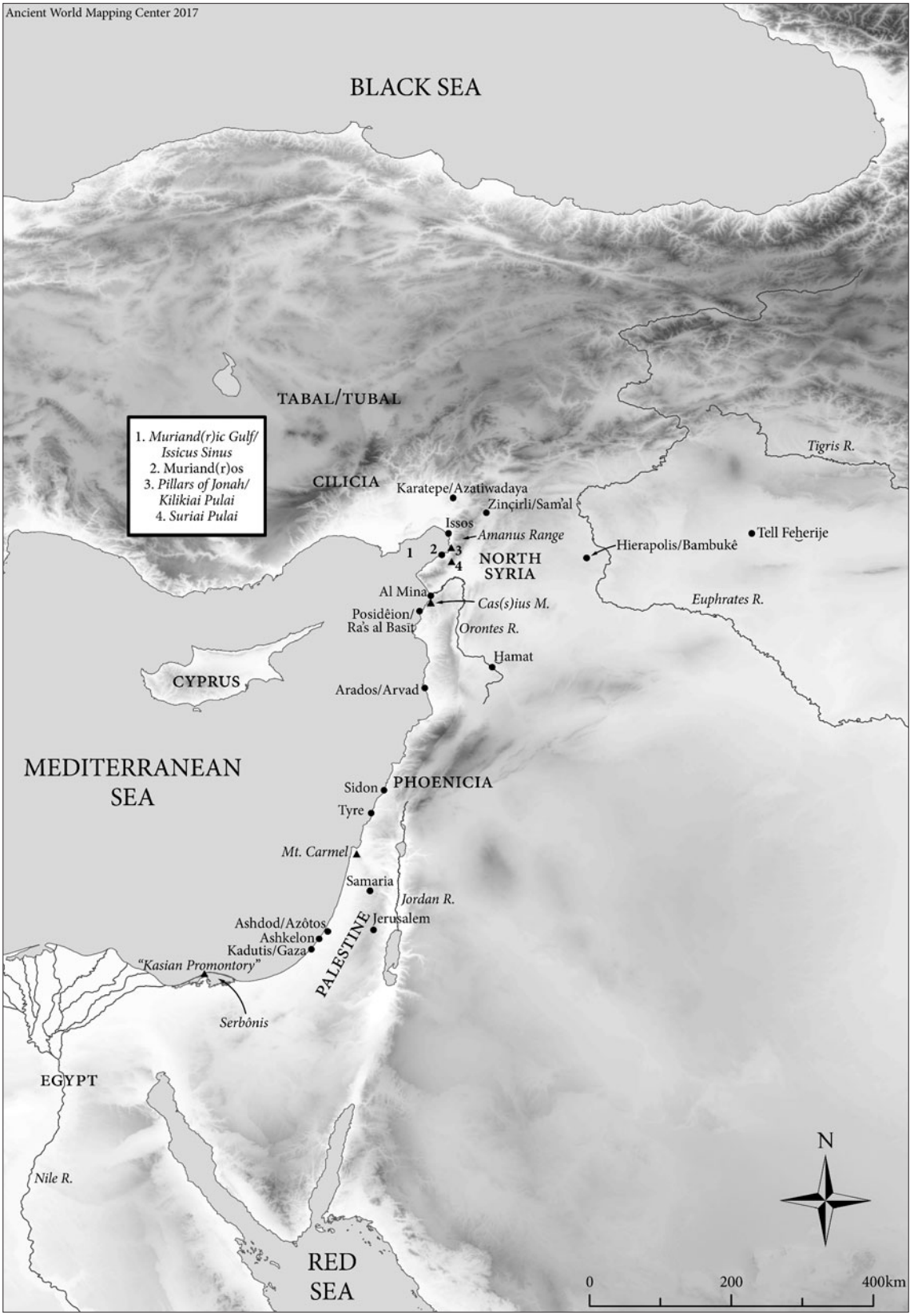

Fig. 1. Herodotus' geography of Syria-Palestine. © Ancient World Mapping Center, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426918000058 Published online by Cambridge University Press

From this it can be seen that the Greeks' ethnographic idea of North Syria had much to do with their conception of the Phoenicians, and it is therefore worth considering how the Phoenicians were mapped on to geographic space before Herodotus, in the Homeric poems.[24] The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the compositions of which most scholars still date to the second half of the eighth century, consistently localize Phoenicians (*Phoinikes*), or *Sidonioi*, in an area discernible in the terms of modern historical geography.[25] In every Homeric passage that mentions *Phoinikes*, and at the same time qualifies that ethnonym with a specific toponym, the toponym used is either the great Phoenician city-state Sidon (Sidōn, Phoenician *ṣdn*) or the *Phoinikē* itself. For example, when Odysseus poses to Athena as a Cretan adventurer, he tells a made-up story in which he had obtained passage with Phoenicians (*Od*. 13.273), who, he says, voyaged back to Sidon after dropping him off at Ithaca (13.285). Likewise, in every Homeric passage that mentions Sidonioi without otherwise qualifying this label the poet has clearly taken *pars pro toto* and is referring to *Phoinikes*.[26] The most striking aspect of the Phoenicians in the Homeric poems is that they are consummate actors; they are clever tricksters, wealthy kings and busy craftspeople, traders and sailors.[27] Because of the outsized role the Phoenicians played in the early Greek poetic tradition, the Phoenicians were consequently more easily admitted into ethnographies and histories, whereas, without any such poetic pedigree, 'Palestinian Syrians' and North Syrians tended to remain mere geographic expressions. The fact that in the Herodotean passages considered above the *Phoinikē* engulfs much of the Mediterranean seaboard testifies to the potency of the Greek poetic traditions about the early Phoenicians as the great actors of the eastern Mediterranean.

III. 'Palestinian Syria' and the *Phoinikē*

Herodotus treats the region that he calls 'Palestinian Syria' not unlike the way he treats North Syria. When he is engaging in purely geographic definition, Herodotus is tolerably clear about the size and extent of Palestinian Syria. Part of the reason he is clear about Palestinian Syria may be that, unlike North Syria, Herodotus claims to have visited the former.[28] On the other hand, much recent research has stressed that Herodotus was no modern ethnographer, and that his ethnographic studies were often shaped less by autopsy and in-person negotiation than by the numerous narrative demands operating in the *Histories*.[29] If these demands predominated here, Herodotus could have fictively created his autopsy of Palestinian Syria. In any case, in a passage that defines the region by moving along the great coastal route from north to south (3.5.1), Herodotus demarcates Palestinian Syria as the land that stretches from the southern borders of the *Phoinikē* as far south as the city of Kadutis (Gaza) (*Barrington Atlas* 70 E2).[30] The next region southward, the country of

[24] There is no need to mention Syrians, because Syrians as such do not appear in the poems; but see above on Homeric *Suriē*.

[25] An influential view of the dates of composition (soon after 750 for the *Iliad* and a generation later for the *Odyssey*), voiced by Janko (1982) 93, had become *communis opinio* by the late 1990s; *cf*. Raaflaub (1997) 625. There is, however, an increasing feeling among scholars that the poems are by different poets and that their composition should be dated later, to around the beginning of the seventh century: see Ulf (2008) especially 89.

[26] *Sidonioi* unqualified by any association with the ethnonym *Phoinikes*: *Il*. 6.290–91; *Od*. 4.618 = 15.118.

[27] At 14.4.3 the manuscripts of Strabo read 'Kallinos', i.e. the Ephesian poet who composed perhaps *ca*. 700 BC, as the source of Strabo's statement about the legendary founder-hero Mopsos, who, Strabo says, quoting this source, led a group of fugitives to Pamphylia, whence some of them were dispersed into Cilicia and Syria, 'even as far as Phoenicia'. If this were a valid citation of such an early source it would be important evidence for the (presumably) post-Homeric development of Greek ideas about Phoenicia. However, as López-Ruiz (2009) 489 n.8 points out, a palimpsest proves that the original reading for Strabo's source was 'Kallisthenēs', i.e. the fourth-century BC historian; for the palimpest, see Aly (1956); (1957). Line 8 of a fragment of the first *Hymn to Dionysus* (*Hymn. Hom.* 1.1–9 = Diod. Sic. 3.66.3) mentions Phoenicia, but this passing reference does not contain any relevant information.

[28] Explicitly stated at 2.106.1, when he testifies about certain Egyptian *stēlai* he saw by autopsy there. Autopsy may be implied by 2.20.3. See further n.33 below.

[29] See, for example, Bichler (2000); (2013); Thomas (2000); Luraghi (2001); Rollinger (2004); Baragwanath (2008).

[30] On Kadutis/Gaza, see below n.35.

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seaboard *emporia* from Gaza to the unidentified city Iēnysos, he says, is Arabian territory, but after this Arabian territory, from Iēnysos to the marsh of Serbōnis, 'beside which the Kasian promontory stretches seawards', it is again the land of the *Surioi* (3.5.2).[31] From the marsh of Serbōnis southward lay Egypt (3.5.3).[32] In this description of the coastal route, then, the *Phoinikē* and Palestinian Syria are distinct regions, as they were in the passage about the fifth Persian *nomos* (3.91).

Things get distorted, however, when Herodotus talks historically rather than simply geographically about the *Phoinikē* and Palestinian Syria. When Herodotus gives the Phoenician entry in his catalogue of the units in Xerxes' invading army in 480 BC (7.89.1), he says that the Phoenicians, along with the Palestinian Syrians, furnished 300 ships. To this point there is no difficulty in distinguishing between the two groups, the fifth-century Palestinian Syrians and the fifth-century Phoenicians. However, Herodotus then pauses to give a brief history of the Phoenicians, specifically their protohistoric movement from the 'Red Sea' to their current home, which he says lies within the part of *Suriē* 'that is called Palestine' (7.89.2). This statement accords with another passage (2.116.6), where, in a discussion of the travels of the Homeric character Alexandros (i.e. Paris), to demonstrate the proximity of Phoenicia to Egypt, Herodotus says that '*Suriē* and Egypt share a border, and the Phoenicians, to whom Sidōn belongs, live in Syria'. Both these statements are at odds with what he says in the passages already discussed (3.5, 3.91), in which he keeps Palestinian Syria and the *Phoinikē* quite distinct, and in the second statement, influenced by the Homeric idea of the Phoenicians, Herodotus extends the *Phoinikē* all the way south to the border with Egypt.

These discrepancies probably have more to do with Herodotus' inability to deal ethnographically with the *Phoinikes*, about whose history he had heard much, than with his lack of knowledge about the geography of Palestinian Syria.[33] In other passages in the *Histories* that refer explicitly to Palestinian Syria or about which it can be inferred with some confidence that the *Suriē* to which Herodotus refers is Palestinian Syria, he gives a relatively consistent portrait of its place in the larger region of the Syro-Palestinian seaboard. In these notices, as in the full description of the coastal route at 3.5, Palestinian Syria is the strip of land that runs southwards along the Mediterranean coast − excepting the short stretch of Arabian land from Gaza to the unidentified city Iēnysos − until its border with Egypt.[34] When there is no historical ethnography to deal with, in other words, when Herodotus is treating the geography of Palestinian Syria in his own day, he keeps Palestinian Syria and the *Phoinikē* distinct (7.89.1). He only falters when he is forced to fit the Phoenicians as historical actors into the geography of the region (7.89.2).

It is true that Herodotus possessed historical information about the Palestinian Syrians qua Palestinian Syrians. This information about the deeds of Palestinian Syrians is limited in quantity and in extent – it always relates to Palestinian Syria's dealings with the Saite pharaohs – and it apparently stems from a particular Greek source, the oracular centre of Branchidai (Didyma) in Milesia.[35] Nevertheless, for our purposes the more interesting way that Herodotus deals with the

[31] The 'Kasian promontory' (*to Kasion oros*; *cf.* 2.6.1) was at least part of the dune barrier island that enclosed Serbōnis (*Barrington Atlas* 70 C3).

[32] Note that Aeschylus (*Supp.* 5) envisions Egypt as the land 'whose pastures border Syria'.

[33] Unless of course Herodotus has manipulated his materials in a way that would falsify his claim to autopsy in Palestinian Syria; for this possibility, see above. It is impossible to be sure, but because his geographic representation of Palestinian Syria is relatively clear and consistent, it seems better to accept that, at least in this case, Herodotus' claims to autopsy (above, n.28) should be accepted.

[34] Explicit mentions of Palestinian Syria: 1.105.1, 1.105.2, 1.105.3, 2.106.1, 3.91, 4.39, 7.89.2. Notices about which it can be inferred that the *Suriē* to which Herodotus refers is Palestinian Syria: 2.11.3, 2.12.2, 2.20.3, 2.30.2, 2.116.6, 2.152, 2.157, 2.158.4, 2.159.2, 3.6.2. It is true that at 2.12.2 Herodotus says that these Palestinian Syrians inhabit the coastal part of Arabia, an opaque statement, particularly given the care with which he delineates the Arabian coastal strip in the full description of the *via maris* at 3.5.

[35] Notices about these Palestinian Syrians: (1) Psamtik establishes frontier outposts (*phulakai*) at Daphnai in Pēlousion against Arabians and Syrians (2.30.2) – Συρίων must be the correct reading here, rather than the Ἀσσυρίων of some of the manuscripts (Lloyd (2007) ad 2.30.2 (260) apparently accepts Συρίων here but thinks the meaning is 'Assyrians'); (2) Psamtik captures 'Azōtos in

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people of Palestinian Syria as historical actors is simply to turn them into Phoenicians. The essential passage (1.105) about these Palestinian Syrians qua Phoenicians is introduced as follows. Herodotus believed that the Levant had suffered from a plague of raiding Scythians, an event that he attaches (1.105.3) to the reign of the Median leader Kyaxarēs (Akkadian Umakištar), which, based on Herodotus' own chronology, is usually dated *ca*. 624–585 BC.[36] Herodotus says that these Scythians were plundering their way down towards Egypt, but that they were met in Palestinian Syria by Psamtik I (Psmṯk), or Psammētichos in Greek, the first pharaoh of the 26th (Saite) Dynasty (1.105.1). This Scythian incursion was not the long-lasting, quasi-imperial reign Herodotus makes it out to be, but its early date is more relevant to the present discussion than its historical character, because Psamtik's reign can be confidently fixed to *ca*. 664 to *ca*. 610, and this episode therefore constitutes a good test case for Herodotus' appreciation of events in IA II Syria-Palestine.[37] Psamtik managed to deflect the Scythian raiders peacefully, but, Herodotus reports (1.105.2), on their way back northwards through Palestinian Syria some of them plundered the Temple of Aphrodite *Ouraniē* at Ashkelon (Ašqəlon: *Barrington Atlas* 70 F2). At this point Herodotus pauses to clarify the fact that the Temple of Aphrodite *Ouraniē* on Kythera, the island off Greece's southern Peloponnesos, was a later offshoot of this, the goddess' original temple: 'the temple on Kythera was founded by Phoenicians from this same Syrian land'.[38] 'This same Syrian land' means the area around Ashkelon Herodotus has just referred to, that is, Philistia between Ashdod (Ašdod/Azōtos) in the north and Gaza in the south.

Herodotus may have been aware that there had been extensive Greek contacts with Ashkelon in IA II. Elsewhere in the *Histories* Herodotus cites the Greek poet Alcaeus (5.95), whose floruit was around the last decade of the seventh century. In one of his poems Alcaeus welcomes back his mercenary brother Antimenidas, 'from the ends of the earth' where he had served as an 'ally of the Babylonians' (*fr*. 350 LP = Str. 13.2.3 (617)). This Alcaeus fragment about Antimenidas may be related to another that mentions Babylon and Ashkelon (*fr*. 48 LP = *POxy* 1233 *fr*. 11.6–20), and it may be that Antimenidas took part in the capture and destruction of Ashkelon by the Babylonians in 604, part of Nebuchadnezzar II's devastating 604/3 campaigns, as a result of which 'all the kings of Ḫattiland came before him and he received their vast tribute' (BM 21946, tr. Lipschits (2005)).[39] The

Syria' (i.e. Ashdod) after a siege of 29 years (2.157); (3) Nechōs II wages a land war against the Syrians, wins a battle at Magdōlos (i.e. Migdol) and captures the important Syrian city Kadutis, i.e. Gaza (for which *cf*. already Hekataios, who in his *Asia* says that Kanutis – a variant spelling for Kadutis – was a large city of the Syrians (*Surioi*): *FGrH* 1 F280 = Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Κάνυτις) (2.159). Lloyd (2007) ad 2.159 (359) takes the *Surioi* mentioned here as a 'term of wide application'; he thus suggests that it refers to Chaldaeans (Neo-Babylonians) and that it signifies Nechōs' clash with Nebuchadnezzar II's forces on Egypt's eastern frontier in 601–600 (*cf*. Schwartz (1931) 387, identifying Nechōs' enemies as Judaeans). However, the mention of Kadutis/Gaza in the same sentence as *Surioi* indicates very clearly that the context is Palestinian 'Syrian'. All these roles are 'one-dimensional' and all occur within a single, narrow context: the reigns of Psamtik I and Psamtik's successor, Nechōs II (*ca*. 610-*ca*. 595), a period when Herodotus says (2.154.4) accurate knowledge about Egypt first became available to the Greeks, specifically following the adventures of the Bronze Men, Greek and Carian hoplite raiders employed by Psamtik as mercenaries. There can be little doubt through what medium this specific historical information about these Syrians moved: at 2.159.3 Herodotus says that Nechōs sent to Branchidai and dedicated to Apollo the outfit he had worn on the campaigns, in a context that indicates that his previous narrative owed its existence to Branchidai as a proximate source. On Branchidai, see Hdt. 1.46, 1.92, 5.36 and especially 1.157–59.

[36] The whole account is Hdt. 1.103–107.1, *cf*. 1.73. Reign: 1.107.1.

[37] For this incursion, see Drews (2004) 108, 109.

[38] Like Herodotus, his contemporary Xanthos the Lydian may have put Ashkelon (or as Xanthos apparently terms it, Askalōnion) in *Suria* (*FGrH* F8, ap. Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Ἀσκάλων). This reference to Ashkelon, however, may be a later confusion with a toponym that was originally Lydian Daskyleion in Xanthos, since Nicolaus of Damascus, who also reportsthis story (*FGrH* 90 F18), and elsewhere uses Xanthos, talks about a Lydian foundation at Daskyleion (Nic. Dam. 90 *fr*. 44.10–11).

[39] Quinn (1961) first suggests a connection between *fr*. 350 and *fr*. 48; Braun (1982) 22 makes the case convincingly. Some caution is warranted, however, as Fantalkin (2011) 103–04 warns, since *fr*. 48 does not actually name Antimenidas. The entry in the *Babylonian Chronicle* that preserves the notice about Ashkelon's

testimony for Greeks like Antimenidas is not only literary; the best evidence for Greek mercenaries at Ashkelon may be a recently published ostracon (Ashkelon 3.3).[40] This is an inscription in Greek scratched on the surface of a thick body sherd from a coarse storage jar. According to the author of the *editio princeps*, the sherd was found in the 604 BC destruction layer.[41] The inscription has not been studied in depth, but it is a remarkable, if brief, document. It reads, in archaic lettering: ATATO EMI, 'I belong to Atatos'. Testimonia for this name are meagre, and while full study may clarify this question, whether or not the name itself is Greek is less important than the fact that the inscriber wrote in Greek.[42] Since he etched his name onto an object meant for practical use to indicate that he owned it, he presumably identified himself as a Greek speaker in a foreign land, for the benefit of other speakers, or at least readers, of Greek. The ostracon strongly suggests that a Greek lived at Ashkelon and, given the historical context, the probability is high that this Greek was a mercenary.

In this notice about Ashkelon, Phoenicians play a role in Herodotus' IA II narrative, but they do not live in the land modern scholars would consider IA II Phoenicia; rather, they inhabit an area well to the south of Phoenicia, the land Herodotus calls Palestinian Syria, which we would call Philistia. The 'Phoenicians' in this story are not in fact Phoenicians, rather they are Philistines. Given the specificity with which Herodotus identifies Ashkelon in this notice, and given the rich history of Greek contacts with Ashkelon, there can be little doubt that Herodotus was tapping into a good historical tradition. However, the Phoenicians loomed so large in Greek poetic tradition that, perhaps in order to make the story about Psamtik and Aphrodite *Ouraniē* meaningful to his audience, Herodotus replaced the Philistines of Ashkelon with 'Phoenicians'.[43]

IV. Conclusion

In his narrative about Syria-Palestine, Herodotus frequently uses the ethnonym *Phoinikes* to describe historical actors. The Phoenicians had made a deep impression in the Homeric poems, and this earlier poetic representation cast long shadows over Herodotus' ethnography of Syria-Palestine. The fact that an anecdote about the antics of *Phoinikes* at Argos in legendary times stands at the very beginning of the *Histories* (1.1.1) suggests that these shadows lay over Herodotus' entire project. However, as Herodotus integrated the geography of the *Phoinikē* into his narrative, significant confusion arose and the *Phoinikē* was sometimes made to engulf much of the Syro-Palestinian seaboard. The geographic ubiquity of the *Phoinikē* in the *Histories* reflects Herodotus' ideas about the historical ubiquity of the Phoenicians in the Levant. At the same time, Herodotus does not adequately handle the ethnographic problems related to the *Surioi* of Palestinian Syria, because, although he claims to have visited Palestinian Syria, the Phoenicians, who were famous from the Homeric poems, tended to overshadow this region's lesser-known peoples, who had not appeared in early Greek poetry. In the resulting confusion, Herodotus replaced Pales-

destruction (the *editio princeps* of BM 21946, lines 18–20 (Wiseman (1956) 85) read ^{uru}[*iš-qi-'i-il-lu-nu*], 'Ashkelon') has sometimes been doubted, but the reading has, it seems, been confirmed by the discovery of a destruction layer at Ashkelon (for which, see Stager (1996); Fantalkin (2011)) and by A. Fantalkin's argument for the original restoration (reading, however, qi_2 rather than *qi* for the second syllable), built on a new collation of the chronicle ((2011) 87, n.1).

[40] *Editio princeps*: Cross (2008) 367, no. 3.3.

[41] There seems, however, to be some uncertainty about the exact archaeological context in which the sherd was found: *cf*. Waldbaum (2011) 136 n.30 with Fantalkin (2011) 99.

[42] Fantalkin (2011) n.31 (99–100) cites the opinion of E. Lytle in a personal communication, who believes the name is Greek, and Fantalkin himself cites *inter alia* the roughly contemporary graffito on a cup from the Athenian Agora with the name Ἀταταίας (*Agora* 21 F 4 (P 22709), *ca*. 650–625). It should be noted, however, that the name cited is the genitive of the otherwise unknown woman's name Ἀταταία (*LGPN* ID no. V2-11580). *Cf*. too the undated graffito Ἀτᾶτος in situ in a tomb wall, from the royal tombs at Egyptian Thebes (*ISyr* 14).

[43] Zechariah 9.3–5, the composition of which is datable to *ca*. 520, loosely associates Phoenician Tyre with Ashkelon (*cf*. Ps.-Scylax *Periplus* 1.78), as well as with Gaza and Ekron, but there is nothing whatever in this passage to suggest that Ashkelon was Phoenician ethnolinguistically at that time.

tinian *Surioi* with Phoenicians (1.105.2) and, generally, he has the Palestinian Syrians serve in his narrative not as a people or peoples but as a geographic expression. Herodotus' account of North Syria is even more prone to distortion; unlike Palestinian Syria he never even claims to have visited North Syria. The North Syrians (*Surioi*) could not be given any independent existence as an ethnicity. They are therefore made to represent the toponym *Suriē*. Nevertheless, the fact that Herodotus recognizes (3.91) North Syria (*Suriē*) as a place where Syrians (*Surioi*) should have been in the Early Iron Age, dwelling south of Posidēion on the Mediterranean seaboard, means that he must have known North Syrians as historical actors during that period, but only as very murky figures. The fact that in Herodotus' day some of the North Syrian coast was inhabited by Phoenicians no doubt compounded this region's obscurity. When Herodotus sifted through the traditions available to him, the actual presence of Phoenicians in North Syria in his own day probably made it easier to assign deeds done by North Syrians during the Early Iron Age to the Levant's supreme early actors, the Phoenicians.

A larger lesson to be drawn from this study, perhaps, is that whenever in the *Histories* Herodotus mentions *Phoinikes*, but does not otherwise explicitly qualify those citations with clearly defined toponyms, we can suspect the presence of Aramaic-speaking Syrians or of Philistines or Hebrew speakers. Put another way, it should be recognized that *Phoinix* is both a specific and a generic ethnonym for Herodotus, an understanding that, as H. Pastor Borgoñon began to appreciate, often held true for Greeks generally.[44] Contact between the 'Phoenicians', who are really North Syrians, and Greeks, and between the 'Phoenicians', who are really 'Palestinian Syrians', and Greeks did not necessarily happen in Greece. To the contrary, critical analysis of the relevant notices in Herodotus may show that much of this contact occurred in Syria-Palestine itself. Mounting evidence shows that in IA II Greeks did travel and live especially among the Aramaic-speaking population of North Syria and that they interacted with North Syrians in a lively and fruitful process of cultural exchange.[45]

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[44] Pastor Borgoñon (1988/1990) 118–33. More radically, van Dongen (2010), especially 477–80, even suggests that, as a historical (as opposed to a linguistic or archaeological) construct, 'Phoenicia' is entirely artificial; after all, the residents of Tyre, Sidon etc. did not consider themselves to be 'Phoenicians' but Tyrians, Sidonians etc. Furthermore, the Old Testament reveals that, unlike the Philistines, the Edomites and others, the Israelites apparently did not possess an indigenous word to designate 'Phoenicia': they only had one shade of meaning of 'Canaan', the etymology and origins of which are still mysterious: van Dongen (2010) 478. Van Dongen (2010) 480 concludes that by any definition of ethnicity there was no 'Phoenician' ethnic identity.

[45] Contact between North Syrians and Greeks need not have taken place only in Syria itself, but in places as far away as Pithēkoussai, the multicultural outpost on the eponymous island (now Ischia) in the gulf of Naples, where there is considerable evidence for exchange between Greeks and Semitic speakers, and specifically for Greek borrowing from the Aramaic script. See generally on cultural exchange between Greeks and Semitic speakers at Pithēkoussai, Demand (2012) 245–46; Lane Fox (2008) 136–51 perhaps goes too far in denying a non-Greek presence. On an Aramaic-Greek letter correspondence from Pithēkoussai, see above n.12. For Semitic influences on the Greek script at Pithēkoussai, see Janko (2015) 13–16 (and *cf.* 8–10 on early Aramaic influence on the Greek alphabet); for a collection of the Semitic texts from Pithēkoussai, see Bartoněk and Buchner (1995) 187–89.

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