

# Exploring Community in the Hinterland of a Black Sea Port

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## Community in the Black Sea

The Pontic coast is not like the rest of Anatolia. For most of the past 5,000 years this narrow strip of lush, fertile land has been connected more to the other coasts of the Black Sea region than to the greater part of the Anatolian landmass. The Greek port of Sinope<sup>1</sup> and its hinterland are a particularly good example of this generalization (Fig. 1). Since at least the Early Bronze Age (mid-3rd millennium BC) ceramic finds from the Sinop region have shown significant affinities to those of the northern and western coastal regions of the Black Sea.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, there is seldom sufficient evidence to build a

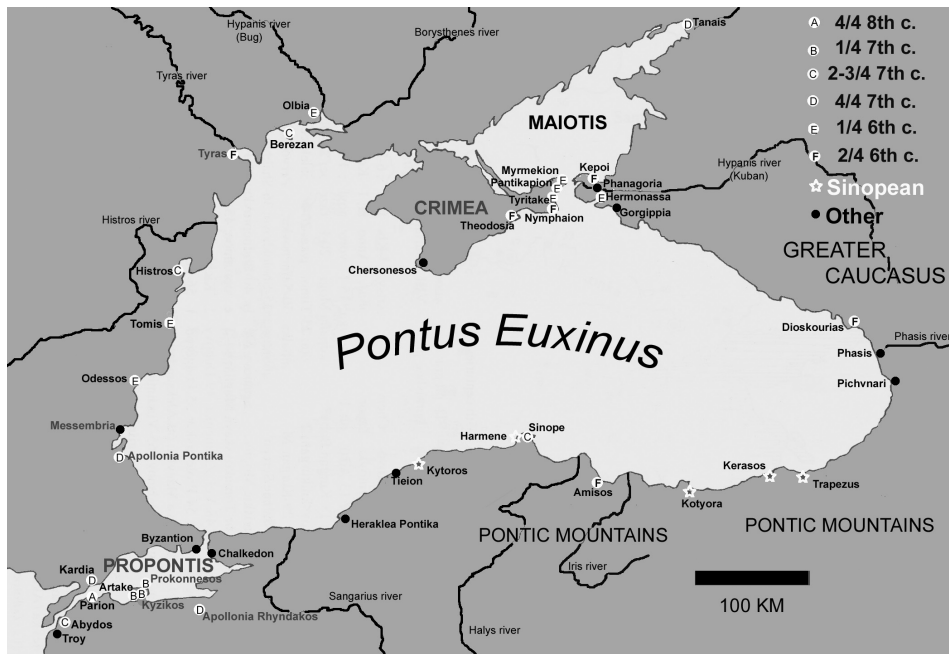


Fig. 1. Map of the Black Sea, featuring the chronological phasing of major Milesian colonial foundations.

strong case for close economic and cultural relationships with the majority of Anatolia before modern times, although we know that the promontory was incorporated into imperial structures that bound it to the rest of Anatolia from Hellenistic times onward.

The concept of community has recently been applied to a variety of cultural and economic groupings as a flexible and dynamic alternative to the more static concepts of archaeological cultures or politically derived units like city-states and kingdoms.<sup>3</sup> Communities are not territorially discrete like politically defined units, and are bounded more by social relationships that cross over the hard edges that political entities attempt to enforce at borders. Communities have a significant diachronic component as well as spatial and demographic ones: the growth and development of a sense of community over generations forms the basis for the economic and social relationships that sustain the community at any given time. Many communities believe that they belong together, based on ethnic, religious or other historical connections. Imagined communities are formed around such concepts and can exist at a distance from one another, such as the trade diasporas<sup>4</sup> – Milesians, Rhum, Genovese, Venetians and Armenians – that flourished at various times around the Black Sea.

Knapp (2003) has successfully applied the concept of community to the multi-scalar economic and social entanglements of the mining installation of Phorades in Bronze Age Cyprus. Knapp situates the special purpose site in a changing network of political and economic structures that at times link this tiny place in the mountains to island-wide political structures, coastal ports and overseas consumers. Knapp's application of the community model emphasizes the importance of exchange in the creation and maintenance of a sense of community. This concept can be usefully adapted to assist us in understanding the dynamic relationships of the Sinop hinterland.

### *Community in Sinop*

The Sinop promontory (Fig. 2) extends approximately 30 km into the Black Sea from the center of the mountainous Anatolian coast. The Pontic mountains isolate the promontory from the majority of Anatolia. The south and central highlands, rich in forest products, are formed by a folded Eocene flysch extension of the Pontic mountains. Plio-Quaternary marine limestone deposits form the rolling hills of the central promontory which support diversified agriculture. The coast alternates between small sandy coastal valleys and the cretaceous volcanic masses of Inceburun and Boztepe.<sup>5</sup> The coastal valleys provide good beach landings for small boats which are used for local fishing and offer the potential for transporting local products to the primary port of Sinope for distribution overseas. Sinope is situated on the isthmus connecting Boztepe to the mainland and consequently has harbor facilities to the north and south of the town. The main port is on the south side of the promontory

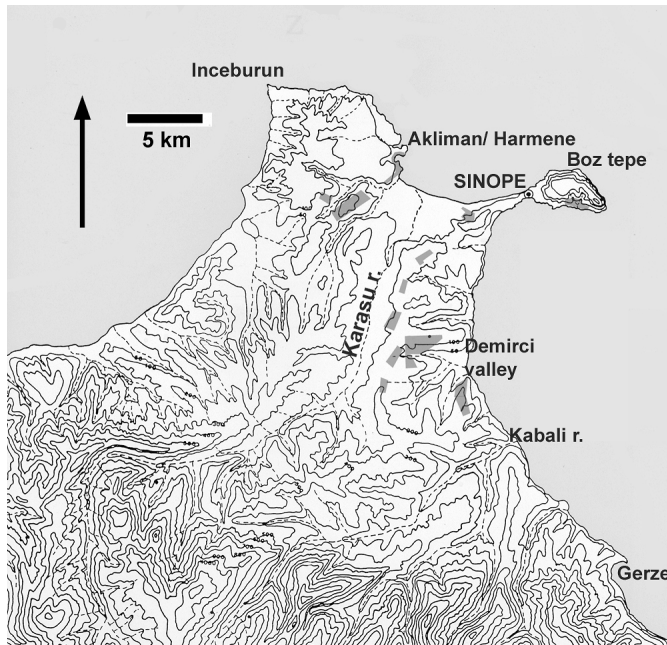


Fig. 2.  
The Sinop promontory.  
Shaded areas are quadrants sampled during the 1996-1999 systematic regional survey.

although when winds blow from the east the northern harbor provides shelter. The ecological diversity of the promontory is proportional to its geological and topographic diversity. The prevailing winds from the west provide abundant rainfall on the western side (up to about 1,200 mm annually), while the sheltered eastern side is drier and sunnier (650-700 mm annually). The town of Boyabat just on the other side of the coastal mountains receives rainfall of about 400 mm annually. The western coast has long been famous for good shipbuilding timber, while the eastern side of the promontory was one of the very few places in the Black Sea that supported olive production.<sup>6</sup>

The Sinop promontory is sufficiently diverse to encourage the emergence of interdependent relationships between local communities. However the setting of the promontory in the Black Sea was equally important in structuring a role for the port and promontory in the Black Sea community. The port offers the safest deep water harbor along the 1,000+ km Anatolian Pontic coast making it an essential stop for east-west traffic. Furthermore, the promontory is the northernmost point in Anatolia and its situation directly opposite the Crimean Peninsula makes it an attractive crossing point over the open sea. The surface currents of the Black Sea flow north-south from the Crimea to Sinop, assisting sailors on this crossing while the currents off cape Karambis to the west flow south-north. It is significant that Sinope founded its own colony of Kytoros just west of Karambis. The Byzantine wrecks discovered by R. Ballard's team in 2000 were laden with "carrot" amphorae from Sinope that are found by the hundreds in sites along the northern Black Sea region.<sup>7</sup> Given that the wrecks were found well to the west of the Sinop promontory they

were probably heading to take advantage of the south-north currents off cape Karambis when they sank. The rich fishing resources of the Black Sea deserve mention here as well. The anchovies, small tuna (palamut) and other fish of the Black Sea follow consistent annual migration patterns around and across the sea. Fishing for migratory species may have been even more important than trade in motivating contact between Black Sea communities before the establishment of the Milesian colonial network in the 7th century BC.

Since the Bronze Age the Sinop hinterland has responded to the ebb and flow of the Black Sea regional and local communities. The strategic importance of Sinope has been the primary characteristic driving the relationships of the port in some historical contexts (for example the Greek Archaic period or late Byzantine/Seljuk times). During such phases the port seems to have been isolated even from its immediate hinterland. Sinope's potential as the gateway of a rich and ecologically distinctive part of the Black Sea coast has emerged as the driving force behind Sinope's extensive relationships from the highlands of the Sinop promontory to the coastal towns and their own hinterlands in other historical contexts (for example Hellenistic and Roman times). Thus the settlements on the promontory have a shifting history of relationships with each other, with the port of Sinop/Sinope, with the greater Pontic world and beyond.

#### *Investigating the processes forming community in the Sinop promontory*

A strategy for applying the community framework to a study of the Sinop community needs to address archaeologically observable processes that form the basis of communities.

- How did manufactured goods circulate around communities at local and regional levels?
- Are evidence of prestige goods and wealth concentrated in the port or distributed extensively reflecting local participation in extensive economic and social networks?
- What is the balance of subsistence-oriented economy to specialized production and exchange?
- To what extent do center(s) provide an effective conduit for goods produced in the hinterland to the greater world?
- How did the community(ies) on the Sinop promontory connect to the imagined community of Milesian colonies?

The SRAP sampling program is designed to characterize the patterns of use and habitation of the various parts of Sinop promontory and to establish local patterns of exchange within the promontory in order to reconstruct a history of community. The heavily overgrown conditions in Sinop province and the size of the promontory (c. 500 km<sup>2</sup>) make it necessary to sample the survey zone rather than conduct a full-coverage survey.<sup>8</sup> A program was designed

to sample major topographic and ecological zones of the promontory to get a sense of how different kinds of places were inhabited through time. Major zones for sampling include the territory immediately surrounding Sinope, the east and west coasts, the Karasu valley, and the highlands. Sample quadrats are 1-5 km<sup>2</sup> units chosen partly based on visibility and partly on the ecological and topographic context. Each quadrant is examined intensively in a number of tracts in which contextual (topographic, environmental), spatial and material data are collected. All tracts are mapped and recorded regardless of whether archaeological *loci* (places where evidence of human use is identified) are found. Interpretations of particular classes of archaeological *loci* are based on geophysics and systematic mapping of material evidence on the surface of well-preserved examples. Geomorphological and paleoecological studies reconstruct human-environmental relationships, archaeological visibility and the landscape taphonomy.<sup>9</sup> Ceramics (including tiles and other construction materials) and lithics from sample transects in each tract are counted, weighed and photographed.<sup>10</sup> Observations on ware types are keyed to the photos and a finely discriminated ware typology is being established and dated under a research program designed by A. Bauer, P. Vandiver and A. Casson.<sup>11</sup> Using this method we are able to gather quantified evidence for the distribution of finely distinguished ceramics and construction materials in all periods that will allow us to trace the distribution not only of well-established imports, but also that of locally-produced wares.

The results available to date suggest an expansion and contraction of a sense of community on the Sinop promontory from the Bronze Age to the present day. The spatial extent of the Sinop communities has fluctuated over time. In times of maximum cohesion (for example, Hellenistic/Roman, late Ottoman/Republican) the economic and social structure of the promontory has centered on the port and several secondary centers. These centers have served a variety of functions as the concentrations of political power and administrative functions, the conduits of locally produced goods to external markets, and industrial centers (for example ship building). A variety of specialized and subsistence activities were scattered through the hinterland: agriculture, fishing, industry, forest products and facilities supporting religious practices, lodging and exchange. At other times (e.g. in Greek Archaic, late Byzantine/Seljuk) Sinope port has stood out as an important strategic place in the Black Sea community at large, but has had little engagement with the hinterland.<sup>12</sup>

A brief summary of the evolution of community in the Sinop promontory can be offered here and explored more fully elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> The Bronze Age (mid 3rd-late 2nd millennium BC) was characterized by extensive subsistence settlement and ceramics suggesting a widely dispersed network of connections. From the Early Bronze Age onward it is apparent that the inhabitants of Sinop promontory were in contact with others from the western half of the Black Sea in spite of the fact that there is to date no evidence suggesting overseas trade



or intensive seafaring. It does not appear that permanent coastal settlements were established at this time. Wide ranging fishing may have promoted the contacts that are evident in the material record. The seasonal migrations of economically significant species could have encouraged fishermen to venture far from home along the coasts and in the central Black Sea, creating opportunities for contact, cooperation and competition that could in turn lead to gift exchange and other alliance-building strategies.

The coastal settlement pattern appears to have changed significantly during the early first millennium BC. A settlement was established just beneath the later city walls that showed significant parallels in ceramics and architecture to the pre-Greek settlements of the North Pontic region.<sup>14</sup> This may have been a colony or a fishing camp, but seems to have been accompanied by an increasing density of coastal settlements around the promontory suggesting a new coastal-oriented settlement pattern.<sup>15</sup> Coastal sites significantly reduce the agricultural catchment of settlements and thus suggest that the sea was providing economic benefits through fishing, trade or some other means.

The earliest evidence for the Milesian colony at Sinope dates to the later 7th century BC.<sup>16</sup> According to the well-established historical tradition Sinope set up a chain of colonies extending to the metal-rich eastern Pontos shortly after its own foundation. These colonies maintained close economic and political ties with the mother city that is clear as late as Xenophon's expedition (*An.* 5.7-10). On the other hand there is very little evidence to support the idea of Greek engagement with the hinterland on the Sinop promontory before the 4th century BC. Following the intensification of Persian activity in the eastern Pontos in the early 4th century Sinope's relationship with its colonies may have been severed. At the same time a series of amphora production installations was established on Boztepe just outside the town.<sup>17</sup> A small percentage of 4th century columnar grave monuments with non-Greek names were recorded in the Kumkapi cemetery on the mainland just outside the town wall.<sup>18</sup> These monuments suggest a degree of mixing between Greeks and non-Greeks in the city. One monument is particularly interesting in this regard, that of *Manes elaiopoles*, an oil seller of Paphlagonian origin.<sup>19</sup> This name, together with evidence of significant expansion of Hellenized settlements in the hinterland during the 3rd century, may reflect the development of the olive industry for which Sinope was known in later Hellenistic and Roman times. Further evidence of this industry may be traced through the extensive production and distribution of Sinop amphorae starting in the 4th-3rd centuries BC.<sup>20</sup> At this time the survey has documented a significant increase in settlement density along the coasts of the promontory, the establishment of contacts between inland, coastal and overseas communities and the establishment of Greek-related sanctuaries in the highlands.<sup>21</sup> This is the first time in which we can speak of an integrated community on the Sinop promontory.

In Roman and early Byzantine periods the integrated economy of the Sinop promontory expanded. Settlement density in the hinterland reached its

highest pre-modern levels during these periods, a variety of special purpose sites are in evidence including industrial, maritime, agricultural and other specialties.<sup>22</sup> A major secondary port and amphora production facility was established at Demirci Plaj, about 15 km south of the main port.<sup>23</sup> This port served the expanding agricultural sector in the Demirci valley which in the density of settlement and distribution of industrial evidence resembles the intensive olive production regions of the Mediterranean like the hinterland of Leptiminos.<sup>24</sup> The characteristic pyroxene tempered amphorae of Sinope are found by the hundreds in the north and west Black Sea and have been documented in a late Roman wreck off the coast of Ayancik west of Sinop.<sup>25</sup> Settlement appears to have expanded even in the highlands where a number of large settlements with ceramics imported from the coast or overseas have been recorded in our initial general surveys. Although it is necessary to conduct further investigations it is clear that an integrated economic community existed on Sinop promontory during Roman and early Byzantine times. This community broke down after Arab and Turkish raids loosened the Byzantine hold on Sinop. By the 13th century Sinop port was an outstanding strategic point in the maritime geography of the Black Sea, but the hinterland appears desolate.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Milesian colonial community*

The Milesian colonial community formed one of the most effective trade networks in the ancient world. Despite decades of field research in many of Miletos' most famous colonies (Olbia, Berezan', Istros) there is still little perspective on the processes that motivated Milesian colonization (Fig. 3). An alternative to the colonization models that emphasize foundation dates and unreliable legends of oikists might emphasize the evolution of a colonial community over time.<sup>27</sup> A brief survey of the early colonies suggests a pattern of diverse strategic and economic interests. The spatial-temporal pattern of Milesian colonization suggests a series of opportunistic foundations starting in the later 7th century BC that later developed into an imagined community centered upon the idea of a shared Milesian heritage.

The early foundations (Eusebian dates in the first quarter of the 7th century BC) of colonies around the Sea of Marmara offered control of access to the Black Sea and control of valuable marble sources on the island of Prokonnesos. Control of Black Sea access may not have been the primary goal. No effort was made to colonize Chalkedon, Byzantion, or any other site which would have afforded control of the Thracian Bosphoros (note the marked contrast with the 6th century pattern in the Kimmerian Bosphoros). Some of the earliest marble sculpture from Miletos may have been carved from the distinctive streaked Prokonnesian marble.<sup>28</sup> High quality marble was particularly important to the elites of cities like Miletos, where ambitious architectural and sculpted monuments were a primary means of competing for prestige.

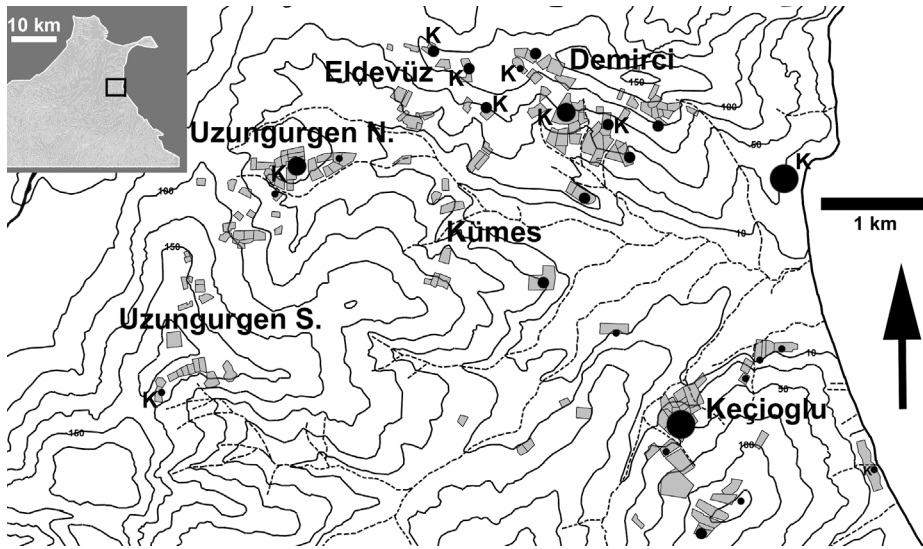


Fig. 3. Demirci valley, Roman settlement pattern. Circle size indicates site size: very large: (5 ha+), large (1-5 ha), medium (0.3-1.0 ha), small (<0.3 ha). K symbols indicate the location of kiln-related debris.

A generation later (Eusebian dates in the third quarter of the 7th century) Milesian colonial foundations reflected different interests. First, colonial towns like Berezan', Olbia and Istros were founded in rich coastal plains, followed by the rapid expansion of agricultural hinterlands. These foundations together with their extensive agricultural territories controlled access to major river systems that connected them to extensive inland trade networks. About 15 years later, the foundation of Sinope was quickly followed by Sinope's own foundation of a string of colonies along the south Black Sea coast. This region was famed in antiquity for a wide array of natural resources, particularly timber for ship building and metals. By the end of the 7th century a diverse network of colonies connected Miletos to a broad array of raw materials, agricultural products and hinterland trading systems. A later major Milesian colonial initiative was the establishment of several major colonies in the Kimmerian Bosphoros in the mid- to late-6th century BC.

Several fundamental problems persist as we attempt to understand the process of these Archaic foundations. First, the population of the Milesia does not appear to have been great enough to have supported the emigration of tens of thousands of colonists. Ceramic finds in the colonial settlements suggest close contacts with north Ionia at least as much as with Miletos. Second, despite the extensive distribution of the Milesian colonial network and the eventual control of strategic positions for controlling overseas trade, there is no evidence that suggests a coordinated colonial strategy. An entrepreneurial model for colony foundation in which individual or groups of aristocrats



gathered colonists (many but not necessarily all Milesian) and in return gained prestige and/or economic profit can be compared to contemporary Mesopotamian and Levantine models for long-distance trade and colonization. Rather than an overarching colonial program, there may well have been a natural tendency towards diversification as aristocratic clans developed particular areas of interest and dominance. Close collaboration between scholars working in colonial settlements and those focused on Miletos can help us to exchange valuable information on the inscriptional, historical and stylistic evidence that can be used to study economic, social and artistic trends in the greater Milesian community.

The community survived and adapted to the destruction of Miletos in 494 BC, the rise and fall of the Athenian Empire in the later 5th century, and the re-emergence of Miletos as an influential city in Hellenistic times. Some cities (Olbia, possibly Kyzikos) entered into *isopoliteia* agreements with Miletos, perhaps in the 4th century BC.<sup>29</sup> These agreements may have assisted in re-building Miletos' position following the varied fortunes of the 5th century BC, and re-affirmed ties with the now flourishing colonies. In the 4th century the colonial community appears to have flourished and matured. Great increases in the volume of trade around the shores of the Pontos show that colonies were taking advantage of the remarkable ecological diversity of the region. Could the traditions of Milesian colonial foundations in the Black Sea have been promoted in these times as a means of enhancing the prestige and economic integration of self-styled Milesian colonies?

#### *Towards testing the Milesian colonial community model*

Thus far we have introduced the possibility that an imagined community of Milesian colonies held remarkable power over the flourishing Black Sea trade networks. This process may have begun as early as the Archaic period but it may have still remained significant as late as Roman times. It is extremely difficult to establish the motives and processes that drove Milesian colonization and the maturation of a well-developed colonial network. Nevertheless, the economic interests and organization of the colonists and indigenous groups may be traced through landscape-oriented research if projects are designed to establish the basic economic, social and religious infrastructure of a number of case studies. A series of coordinated field projects focusing on the hinterlands of several different colonies and the mother city itself would permit strict comparison of the density and distribution of subsistence and special purpose sites, monumental tombs, religious facilities, farms, industrial sites, and a range of other facilities through the landscape. One of the major obstacles we face at present is the establishment of comparable data sets from surveys that have been conducted using different methodologies and with different research goals. This is a broader problem in landscape archaeology in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions, although steps are

being taken to address the problem of comparability.<sup>30</sup> The Collaboratory for GIS and Mediterranean Archaeology (CGMA, available at <http://cgma.depauw.edu/>) is an ambitious initiative to make survey data available from the multitude of diverse surveys that have been conducted in the Mediterranean.<sup>31</sup> Despite these important advances in making survey data available for broad comparison, the problem remains that many projects have gathered data that are fundamentally different. At present this paper must stand as a plea for coordinated problem-oriented, multi-site research programs that will enable us to understand better the complex economic and social picture of ancient colonial systems.

## Notes

- 1 I shall use the name "Sinope" when referring to the Greek port and the name of the modern port and region "Sinop" to refer to the port in non-Greek times and to the promontory.
- 2 Hiebert 2001; Bauer 2001; 2002; Doonan 2004a.
- 3 Knapp 2003.
- 4 Stein 1999.
- 5 Ketin 1961.
- 6 Doonan 2003.
- 7 Ballard et al. 2001.
- 8 Doonan 2004b.
- 9 Degradation of the archaeological record: Wilkinson 2004.
- 10 Doonan 2004b.
- 11 Bauer in preparation.
- 12 Doonan 2004a.
- 13 Doonan 2004a; Doonan in press b.
- 14 Doonan 2004a; Doonan in press a and b.
- 15 Doonan in press b.
- 16 Boysal 1959. *For the most recent discussion, see Ivantchik 2005, 135-161. Eds.*
- 17 Garlan & Tatlican 1997; Garlan & Tatlican 1998.
- 18 French 1990; 1991b.
- 19 French 1990, no. 3.
- 20 Avram 1999; Fedoseev 1999; De Boer 2001.
- 21 Doonan 2004a, ch. 4; Doonan & Bauer 2005.
- 22 Doonan & Smart 2000-2001; Kassab-Tezgör & Tatlican 1998; Doonan 2004a.
- 23 Kassab-Tezgör & Tatlican 1998.
- 24 Stone et al. 1998; Doonan 2004a, 101-108.
- 25 Ballard et al. 2001.
- 26 Doonan 2004a, ch. 6.
- 27 Tsetskhladze 1998.
- 28 von Graeve, personal communication.
- 29 Gorman 2001; Gorman 2002.
- 30 Alcock & Cherry 2004.
- 31 Foss & Schindler 2004.

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