

# New Light on the Crisis Years: Changing Economic Practices of the Second Millennium in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Aegean

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## The 'Crisis Years': changing perspectives

The Aegean and Mediterranean 'crisis' of approximately 1200 BCE has long been an area of interest for archaeologists. During this period of time, a series of destructions at sites across the Mediterranean coincided with the collapse of the Hittite Empire, the disappearance of the Mycenaean palaces, and the destabilisation of Egypt. This crisis has long been considered as a single revolutionary process brought about by outside invaders—originally thought to be the Dorians, 'barbarians' from the north who swept down through Greece, ending the Bronze Age with their iron weapons. Subsequent scholarship has acknowledged that the so-called crisis was in fact far more complicated than originally thought, and the concept of European 'barbarian' invaders has now been thoroughly rejected. Nevertheless, a widespread belief in the invasions of the 'Sea Peoples' remains persistent. This collection of unknown islanders immortalised in the wall reliefs of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, allegedly burned Greek palaces on the way to Egypt and the Near East, eventually settling in the Levant.

More recent models have called into question this view of a single, violent, 'invasion-driven' end to the Bronze Age. Despite common archaeological

assumptions that destructive events throughout the region were closely associated, the destructions themselves were not universal and were spread out over decades. The archaeological evidence indicates a long process of changing settlement patterns and a widespread rejection of the large palace-based redistributive economies of the Late Bronze Age. It has become apparent that larger processes of political and economic transformation were at work, resulting in extensive regional change during the transition to the Iron Age. The model proposed by Andrew and Susan Sherratt during the early 1990s sees the destabilisation during the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age transition in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean as an inevitable result of widespread economic changes.<sup>1</sup> Trade during the Late Bronze Age was initially dominated by elites, who consolidated and maintained their power through their access to and management of prestige goods. As small-scale traders began expanding their operations, elite-oriented trade became destabilised and decentralised. Pirates and independent merchants disrupted the flow of high-level goods, bringing them to a wider consumer base in ever-increasing amounts. The decentralisation of trade would have been an enormous factor in societal change, an economic revolution that challenged and ultimately undermined elite rule and the redistributive economies associated with the palaces.<sup>2</sup>

The key material driving this economic change was metal, specifically bronze. The traditional view of this transitional period, interpreted hoards of scrap bronze across the Aegean and East Mediterranean, as representing a bronze shortage which led to the use of utilitarian iron. More recent models propose that more bronze than ever was flooding the system, especially from Cyprus, transported by independent, low-level merchants.<sup>3</sup> With bronze weapons and artefacts, once controlled by elites,

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1. Andrew Sherratt and Susan Sherratt, 'From Luxuries to Commodities: the Nature of Mediterranean Bronze Age Trading Systems', in *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean*, ed. by N.H. Gale, (SIMA 90, 1991), pp. 351-86 (p. 376).

2. Susan Sherratt, "'Sea Peoples" and the Economic Structure of the Late Second Millennium in the Eastern Mediterranean', in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE*, ed. by S. Gitin et al. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998), pp. 292-313 (p. 294).

3. Susan Sherratt, 'Circulation of metals and the end of the Bronze Age in the eastern Mediterranean', in *Metals Make the World Go Round: The Supply and Circulation of Metals in Bronze Age Europe*, ed. by C.F.E. Pare (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2000), pp. 82-98 (p. 87).

appearing on the market in large quantities, the power structures at the top of the economic hierarchy began to destabilise.

This model provides an opportunity to re-examine the role of Greek interaction with the north, specifically the Balkans and the Alpine region. This investigation will explore Central Europe's role as an active contributor to the economic collapse of the palaces, an examination that will address the agency of Europe in a manner that goes beyond the traditional view of Europe as a 'periphery' to the Mycenaean 'core' or as the realm of violent 'barbarians'. The Sherratts' model will be explored initially through an analysis of two Late Bronze Age shipwrecks, the Ulu Burun and Cape Gelidonya wrecks, which give insight into the complicated trade mechanisms of the fourteenth and thirteenth 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE and provide support for a model of decentralised trade. The role of metal will then be addressed in more detail, focusing on Aegean and Mediterranean relationships with Europe, in order to explore patterns of bronze production and deposition, ultimately addressing the question of how bronze was being introduced to the previously stable exchange system of the Mediterranean world.



Fig. 1: Map of the region, including key sites mentioned in the text

## Ulu Burun: Elite-controlled trade

A late fourteenth century shipwreck found off the southern coast of Turkey near Ulu Burun contains a staggering amount of high-quality goods, including ‘six tons of copper, a substantial amount of tin, dozens of ingots of cobalt-blue glass, logs of Egyptian ebony, perhaps a ton of terebinth resin, more than half a dozen hippopotamus teeth, part of an elephant tusk, tortoise shells, a jar of orpiment (trisulphide of arsenic), ostrich eggshells, murex opercula, and spices and foodstuffs.’<sup>4</sup> This list of goods easily fits the description of elite-level gift exchange found in the fourteenth century Amarna letters, which detail trade interactions between neighbouring kings<sup>5</sup>. The copper and tin ingots on Ulu Burun would have produced eleven tons of bronze once alloyed, an enormous amount requiring both adequate metalworking facilities and the oversight of some degree of palatial authority at the point of receipt. It has been suggested that the ship’s eventual destination was Kommos or Tiryns, based on settlement size and wealth, workshops, imported Orientalia and prime location on trade routes.<sup>6</sup> Bronze was a high value good—it ‘not only fulfilled the needs of conspicuous consumption and display... but also occupied an increasingly strategic role as a material for weapons; and this required the movement of large quantities of metal.’<sup>7</sup> As such, it would have been in the interest of elites to control the distribution and production of this volatile and valuable commodity. The ability to alloy bronze and produce bronze items in such large amounts would have been limited to palace-endorsed smiths. By transporting bulk amounts of metal as copper and tin ingots—rather than as ready-alloyed objects—elites protected their interests on these long and dangerous sea journeys.

Cypriot White Slip milk bowls were also carried on the ship, stacked within pithoi.<sup>8</sup> Pottery is never mentioned in the Amarna letters or other records of elite gift-exchange—this was a material that circulated at lower levels of society. The

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4. George F. Bass, ‘Evidence of Trade from Bronze Age Shipwrecks’, in *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean*, pp. 69-82 (p.74).

5. Sherratt, ‘Circulation of metals’, pp. 83-4.

6. Eric H. Cline and Assaf Yasur-Landau, ‘Musings from a Distant Shore: The Nature and Destination of the Uluburun Ship and its Cargo’, *Tel Aviv*, 34 (2007), pp. 125-141 (pp. 134, 136).

7. Sherratt and Sherratt, ‘From Luxuries to Commodities’, p. 361.

8. Cline and Yasur-Landau, ‘Musings from a Distant Shore’, p. 135.

merchants or royal agents on the Ulu Burun ship were probably trading pottery independently for individual profit, separate from the elite cargo.<sup>9</sup> Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery is found in large quantities throughout the East Mediterranean. Mass production of Cypriot and imitation Aegean wares took place at Cypriot coastal centres during the thirteenth century, and it is likely that Cypriot merchants were responsible for delivering this pottery to consumers in the Levant and elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> The immense quantities of this pottery that was transferred to the Near East indicates that the trade of pottery was of great interest to lower social demographics.<sup>11</sup> That this pottery is found in lesser amounts within the Hittite empire and inside Egypt implies that it was perhaps not as welcome in such highly regulated societies, likely because of the ‘entrepreneurial, decentralised way in which such pottery was marketed, and the perceived implications this had for the continued exercise of politico-economic and social control by those states whose established power rested most strongly on principles of tight centralisation.’ These pots foreshadowed ‘the social and political risks posed by the movement of other, more socially and economically significant goods and materials along the same decentralised channels.’<sup>12</sup> While pottery in itself is not a high-value material and would likely not have been perceived as a threat to the elite monopoly of trade, this independent trade in low-status items likely provided the seeds for future decentralisation.

### Cape Gelidonya: Independent trade

The Cape Gelidonya wreck dates to about a century after Ulu Burun. The bulk of the cargo consisted of the ingredients for making bronze implements, including scrap bronze tools from Cyprus, intended to be recycled and bronze,

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9. Oliver Dickinson, *The Aegean from Bronze Age to Iron Age: Continuity and Change Between the Twelfth and Eighth Centuries BC* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 34; Sherratt, ‘Circulation of metals’, p. 83.

10. Sherratt, “‘Sea Peoples’”, p. 298.

11. Susan Sherratt, ‘E pur si muove: Pots, Markets and Values in the Second Millennium Mediterranean’, in *The Complex Past of Pottery: Production, Circulation and Consumption of Mycenaean and Greek Pottery (sixteenth to early fifth centuries BC)*, Proceedings of the ARCHON International Conference, held in Amsterdam, 8-9 November 1996, ed. by J.P. et al. (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1999), pp. 163-211 (p. 187).

12. Sherratt, ‘E pur si muove’, p. 172.

copper, and tin ingots.<sup>13</sup> An anvil and metalworking tools seem to have been used for onboard production of bronze objects.<sup>14</sup> The scrap metal and evidence for onboard bronze working, as well as the smaller scale of this wreck, imply that the ship could represent an independent merchant operating on a small scale, practicing ‘tramping’, in which he would call at various ports to take on new material and ply his trade.<sup>15</sup> Like Ulu Burun, the Cape Gelidonya wreck carried Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery,<sup>16</sup> but in this case it appears that bronze and pottery were being made available to the same non-elite markets. The Cape Gelidonya wreck likely represents the inevitable decentralisation of trade that occurred as international trade networks expanded in the Late Bronze Age.<sup>17</sup>

While one must be cautious in extrapolating an economic trend from the evidence from just two shipwrecks, these wrecks do provide scholars with two very different views of trade in the Mediterranean and the separation of these wrecks in time fits nicely with both the Sherratts’ theory and the evidence from the Amarna letters. The fourteenth century Ulu Burun wreck represents tightly controlled elite-level trade, with precious items such as metals transmitted in separate ingots to be alloyed later by palace-controlled smiths. The Cape Gelidonya wreck of a century later represents small-scale, independent trade in ready-alloyed metal, the kind of ‘tramping’ that significantly increased amounts of accessible bronze in the Mediterranean and radically undermined the elite monopoly on high-status goods such as metal.

## Origins of the bronze

It appears that independent merchants, likely Cypriot given the amount of Cypriot and Mycenaean–imitation pottery being produced on Cyprus for eastern

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13. George F Bass et al, ‘Cape Gelidonya: a Bronze Age shipwreck,’ *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 57, no. 8 (1967), p. 117; A. Bernard Knapp, ‘Archaeology, science-based Archaeology and the Mediterranean Bronze Age Metals Trade’, *European journal of archaeology* 3, no. 1 (2000), pp. 31-56 (p. 15).

14. Bass, ‘Cape Gelidonya’, p. 73.

15. For a full description of tramping, see A. Bernard Knapp, ‘Thalassocracies in Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean Trade: Making and Breaking a Myth’, *World Archaeology*, 24:3 (1993), pp. 332-347.

16. Bass et al., ‘Cape Gelidonya’, p. 125.

17. Knapp ‘Thalassocracies’, 340; Sherratt and Sherratt, ‘From Luxuries to Commodities’, pp. 366-7.

markets, were transmitting bronze scrap and objects immediately preceding the collapse, but where did this metal come from? Metal is a difficult material to trace in the archaeological record due to its precious nature. Unless metal is deposited deliberately, it is used and reused over centuries, melted down to form new objects, handed down through generations or recycled. Despite this, a changing trend in Mediterranean bronze use can be seen in the increasing deposition of bronzes from temperate Europe and the Balkans. Metallurgy in Europe had reached a high state of complexity during the Late Bronze Age:

During the Late Bronze Age (ca. mid-14<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> c. cal BC) we see an increase in the levels of social complexity, leading to a truly European-scale system for metallurgical production and diffusion, the so-called metallurgical *koine*, which implies not only the circulation of standardised types, but also the exchange of finished products and a high level mobility for metallurgical craftsmen.<sup>18</sup>

While European metalworkers appear to have been involved in complicated production and exchange networks within Europe, Sherratt is content to have Cypriot merchants as the instigators and instruments of economic change in the Mediterranean, adapting their trade in mass-manufactured pottery to encompass metal forms from Europe. Cypriot traders certainly seem to have been involved in the trade of European bronze within the Mediterranean, based on similar depositional patterns in the Mediterranean of Alpine ‘Urnfield’ bronzes and Cypriot metalwork ‘within the same hoards or other depositional contexts.’<sup>19</sup> It remains questionable,

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18. Magnus Artursson and Franco Nicolis, ‘Cultural Relations between the Mediterranean and the Baltic Seas during the Bronze Age? The Evidence from Northern Italy and Southern Scandinavia’, *Between the Aegean and Baltic Seas: Prehistory Across Borders: Proceedings of the International Conference Bronze and Early Iron Age Interconnections and Contemporary Developments between the Aegean and the Regions of the Balkan Peninsula, Central and Northern Europe*, University of Zagreb, 11-14 April 2005, ed. by I. Galanaki et al. (Aegaeum 18, 2007), pp. 331-342 (p. 335).

19. Susan Sherratt, ‘The Mediterranean Economy: “Globalization” at the End of the Second Millennium B.C.E.’, in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina, Proceedings of the Centennial Symposium*, W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and American Schools of

however, who was initially bringing the bronzes into the Mediterranean, and more examination of European sources and mercantile agency is required. As Sherratt maintains, 'What we are seeing is the growth of alternative networks: the erosion of monopolistic control by entrepreneurial activity, uniting European 'barbarians' and eastern Mediterranean 'free traders' in a mobile commodity flow which undermined and swept away the older system.'<sup>20</sup> This economic hypothesis is a plausible model for the demise of the palaces, but too often agency is denied to the so-called 'barbarians.' How exactly was European bronze entering the Mediterranean exchange system, and what role might European traders have played in this process?

### Metallurgy in Europe – the Balkan connection

Trade routes between the Balkans and the Aegean are well attested throughout the Bronze Age, with an intensification of trade in metals occurring during the Late Bronze Age. East Balkan copper ingots more closely resemble Mediterranean types than most Hungarian and Romanian types, indicating the interconnection of the East Balkan area with Greece and the East Mediterranean.<sup>21</sup> Sites along the route from the Balkans and Black Sea down into the Aegean would have played an important role in channelling metals, such as the site of Mikro Vouni, on the island of Samothrace, which has been proposed as a trading 'colony' instrumental in regulating the flow of goods from the north into the Aegean.<sup>22</sup> Locally produced ox-hide copper ingots found at several eastern Bulgarian sites were inscribed with East Mediterranean marks, presumably designating amounts, producers, traders, or eventual destination of the ingots. These ingots were possibly marked on-site by representatives of southern powers:

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*Oriental Research*, Jerusalem, May 29-31, 2000, ed. by W. Dever and S. Gitin (Eisenbrauns, 2003), pp. 37-54 (p. 41).

20. Sherratt, 'Circulation of metals', p. 89.

21. Krassimir Leshtakov, 'The Eastern Balkans in the Aegean Economic System during the LBA. Ox-Hide and Bun Ingots in Bulgarian Lands', *Between the Aegean and Baltic Seas: Prehistory Across Borders*, ed. by I. Galanaki and others (Aegaeum 18, 2007), pp. 447-458 (p. 447, 452).

22. *Ibid.*, p. 455.

Probably, the ingots were made following an order from abroad and cast in standard forms, accepted both by the international traders and by the big centres of consumption. We can propose the presence of foreign representatives of ‘trading companies,’ who were authorised to control the quality of the metal and to mark the ox-hide ingots. If some signs are Cypriot ones and others Cretan, we can hypothesise two types of trade-residents.<sup>23</sup>

Cretan authorities would likely have been linked to the Mycenaean political system. Cypriot traders could conceivably represent a separate form of trade entirely, perhaps circulating ingots from the Balkans as part of their ever-increasing decentralised trade in precious goods.

It is archaeologically apparent that copper was being produced both in the Balkans and on Cyprus and that copper from both sources circulated throughout the Aegean. Balkan copper seems to have been largely regulated by the Mycenaean palaces but Cypriot traders played a crucial role in peddling their own ores around the Mediterranean (to elites and non-elites alike) and possibly included some Balkan copper in this exercise.<sup>24</sup> Despite the possibility of Cypriot use of Balkan metals in independent trade, the fact remains that ‘for centuries, these zones existed within a sphere of economic stability, dependent on active exchange of information and goods.’<sup>25</sup> The revolutionary influx of metal into the LBA Mediterranean could be related to the import of Balkan ingots, but given the long, stable history of state-sanctioned trade between these regions, it would be more profitable to look elsewhere for sudden and significant changes in the metal trade.

## Metallurgy in Europe – the Adriatic connection

While trade centred on the Balkans, Black Sea, and Aegean seems to have been generally controlled by palatial authorities, the case seems very different in terms of western Greece’s relationship with temperate Europe, specifically the metal-producing regions of the Alps and the Adriatic coast. A very busy bronze-production industry existed in temperate Europe and the Adriatic region at this time, and

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23. *Ibid.*, p. 452, 456.

24. Sherratt, ‘Circulation of Metals’, p. 88.

25. Leshtakov, ‘The Eastern Balkans’, p. 457.

connections with the Mycenaean world are attested at sites in the Po Valley, which runs between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea.<sup>26</sup> The ‘Urnfield bronzes’, produced in Alpine Europe, began to appear in large quantities in the Aegean and East Mediterranean during the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. These items largely fall into ‘the status-defining categories of personal ornaments and weapons—fibulae, pins, knives, and weapons, such as flange-hilted cut-and-thrust swords, Peschiera daggers, and a variety of relatively short forms of spearheads with circular-cast sockets.’ These items introduced a significant amount of bronze into the Mediterranean economic system, a development related to ‘the increasing evidence in this period for the circulation of bronze in scrap form.’<sup>27</sup>

The initial point of entry for the Urnfield bronzes into the Aegean and East Mediterranean trade system was likely through the western coast of Greece. Central European metalwork, particularly weapons, is distributed along the coast, particularly concentrated in Epirus, Achaea, and on the Ionian island of Kephallenia. Thirteen sites in Epirus and fifteen in Achaea show Late Bronze Age Central European weapons, particularly in cemeteries, including spearheads, swords, and daggers.<sup>28</sup> The Diakata cemetery on Kephallenia contains a leaf-shaped spearhead with direct parallels from Italy, the North Balkans, south-central Europe, Albania, and the Danube-Sava province, indicating a connection to an extensive European metallurgical *koine*. Naue II swords appear in bulk in Achaea, Elis and the Ionian islands and are the most common sword type during Late Helladic IIIC (c. 1190 BCE), after the collapse of the palaces. Kephallenia demonstrates significant amounts of Central European metalwork and the island likely also played an active role ‘in the transportation and distribution of amber on the Mainland and the rest of the Aegean in the LH IIIB-C period.’<sup>29</sup> Papadopoulou emphasises the importance of these regions of western Greece:

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26. Artursson and Nicolis, ‘Cultural Relations’, p. 335; Sherratt and Sherratt, ‘From Luxuries to Commodities’, p. 375.

27. Sherratt, ‘The Mediterranean Economy’, p. 41.

28. Evangelia Papadopoulou, ‘Western Greece and the North in the Late Bronze Age: The Evidence of Metalwork and Objects of Exotic Material’, in *Between the Aegean and Baltic Seas: Prehistory Across Borders*, ed. by I. Galanaki and others (Aegaeum 18, 2007), pp. 459-470 (p. 464, 465).

29. *Ibid.*, p. 464, 465.

The distribution of all other finds (bronze tools, implements, jewellery and weapons) seems to support the suggestion that during the latter half of LH III B and in LH III C the regions of Western Greece and especially Epirus, Achaea and the Ionian island of Kephallenia played a decisive and important role in mediating links between the North and the Aegean via Italy and the Adriatic region. Situated at crucial nodes of supply routes, they controlled and took advantage of the flow of valuable products and objects, which had to pass through them.<sup>30</sup>

These sites were not located in the direct vicinity of any palatial authority, which likely led to the freedom to engage in opportunistic trade in high-value objects. Metal already circulated in a far less restricted manner in the Alps and the Adriatic. It stands to reason that independent European traders would have interacted with settlements and traders on the western coast of Greece, who provided a route for the bronzes into the more strictly controlled economic system of the Aegean and East Mediterranean. With Cypriot merchants engaging in rapidly spiralling trade throughout the Mediterranean, it would have been easy for independent merchants near the metal-producing areas of the Alps and Adriatic to link up to or emulate the Cypriot system of low-level trade, until the combined efforts of a network of independent traders caused the spiralling consumption of metal that helped undermine the Mediterranean and Aegean palatial systems.

After the collapse, much of Greece declined, with settlements diminishing and palaces either abandoned or destroyed. Messenia, Laconia, and the Argolid were heavily affected, likely because of the presence of large palatial centers.<sup>31</sup> While depopulation in Messenia during LH III C 'seems to have been almost total', certain specific areas of Greece survived the collapse and even flourished, including Attica (along the inland isthmus trade routes), Achaea, Epirus, and Kephallenia, where

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30. Ibid., p. 466.

31. Jeremy Rutter, 'Cultural Novelties in the Post-Palatial Aegean World: Indices of Vitality or Decline?', in *The Crisis Years: The 12th Century B.C. From Beyond the Danube to the Tigris*, ed. by W. Ward and M. Joukowsky (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 61-78 (p. 68, 70).

population increased.<sup>32</sup> Kephallenia was likely already involved in decentralised trade at the time of the collapse. This may explain why it alone of the Ionian Islands survived the crisis and continued to prosper throughout LH IIIC. Later in the first millennium, settlement in the Ionian Islands shifted to Ithaca, probably because its natural harbour made it a better location for maritime trade.<sup>33</sup> The LH IIIC survival of those areas on the Greek mainland already involved in metal trade with Central Europe implies that these areas were only loosely connected to Mycenaean rule and thus did not collapse along with those places closely affiliated with the palaces.



Fig. 2: Regions of Greece mentioned in the text

Considering the possibly semi-independent nature of trade along the west coast of Greece and the tendency for piracy and small-scale mercantilism to create conflict at coastal sites, it should be mentioned that these developments could provide a new perspective from which to view the *o-ka* tablets of Pylos in Messenia. These Linear B tablets describe

32. Philip Betancourt, 'The end of the Greek Bronze Age', *Antiquity*, L (1976), 40-47 (p. 40).

33. Vassilis Petrakis, 'History versus the Homeric "Iliad": A View from the Ionian Islands', *The Classical World* 99, no. 4 (2006), 371-396 (p. 377, 380).

‘contingents watching the Pylian coast,’ overseen by palatial officials (*e-qe-ta*) of unknown type.<sup>34</sup> Tablet Jn 829 ‘records the collection of bronze from the kingdom’s temple coffers... specifically to forge ‘points for spears and javelins’.<sup>35</sup> This tablet has long been thought to indicate an external threat, possibly related to the palatial collapse, but ‘we know from Thucydides and Homer of the problems of piracy and from the archaeological record about fortification techniques and the military ethos of the Late Bronze Age.’<sup>36</sup> This armament is nothing that would not be expected from a militarised palatial state concerned with piracy along its coasts, and Palaima interprets the tablet as representing ‘standard operating procedure’ in a coastal centre.<sup>37</sup> Jn 829 further underlines the palatial approach to management of precious materials. The palace must provide the bronze before weapons can be created, whereas Urnfield bronze weapons appeared on the market already alloyed, emphasizing that their import was likely not controlled by the palace. Given the influx of bronze weapons from Central Europe and the existence of relatively independent mercantile communities around the Adriatic, it may not be coincidence that the perceived threat came from the western coast, likely linked to the piracy associated with busy trade networks.

## Conclusion

It has been generally accepted that Cypriot traders were instrumental in a process of economic decentralisation that led to the sweeping regional changes of the Late Bronze Age, but it seems probable that independent traders in Central Europe and the Adriatic were also involved in introducing new resources into the Greek system. The distribution of bronze weapons and ready-made tools in Achaea, Epirus,

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34. John Bennet, ‘The Aegean Bronze Age’, in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*, ed. by I. Morris, R. Saller & W. Scheidel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 175-210 (pp. 192-3).

35. Cristoph Bachhuber, ‘Aspects of Late Helladic Sea Trade’, (MA dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2003), (pp. 56-7).

36. Thomas G Palaima, ‘The Last Days of the Pylos Polity’, in *Politeia: Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age: Proceedings of the 5th International Aegean Conference/5e Rencontre égéenne internationale*, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10-13 April 1994. Vol.2, ed. by R. Laffineur and W. Niemeier, (Liège: Austin: Université de Liège, Service d'histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique; University of Texas at Austin, Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory, 1995), pp. 623-634 (p. 626).

37. p. 626.

and Kephallenia (all of which survived the LH IIIC collapse) demonstrates that this trade in European bronze was not a palatial enterprise. Rather than a 'Mycenocentric' view of state-sponsored Aegean traders traveling to European ports in order to attain resources, it seems far more likely that outside influences instigated the circulation of metal at non-palatial levels. Settlements along the Adriatic embraced this mercantile spirit and proved instrumental in bringing bronze into the system, while Cypriot traders in the Aegean and throughout the Mediterranean contributed heavily to the large-scale decentralisation of trade. The spirit of mercantilism so evident in the Cypriot evidence is reflected in the Adriatic and along the western coast of Greece, where settlements not under direct palatial control demonstrate economic initiative, interacting with the enterprising traders and producers of Central Europe.