

## Settlement, colonisation and Black Sea networks:

### Early Iron Age to Classical Sinope

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The town of Sinop, on the northern coast of Turkey, is blessed with two natural harbours. It was the most strategic port in the Black Sea region from antiquity until the Crimean War and, although today you are more likely to see yachts and fishing boats, larger tankers still take shelter there when a storm threatens. This connection to the sea was key to the foundation of ancient Sinope as a Greek settlement in ca 630 BC and its involvement in the movement of people, goods and ideas around the Black Sea throughout the first millennium BC.

In the summer of 2015, the University of Sheffield began its collaboration in the Sinop Kale Excavations, an exciting new archaeological project in the heart of the ancient city of Sinope. This project, directed by Owen Doonan (California State University Northridge), builds on more than a decade of survey and environmental research conducted by the Sinop Regional Archaeological Project and its aim is to investigate the nature of pre-Greek settlement as well as the early Greek settlement and its later development. The Sheffield contingent, supported by funding from the British Institute at Ankara and including Jane Rempel and Sue Sherratt from the Department of Archaeology as well as undergraduates Greer Dewdney and Nick Groat, worked alongside an international team including Associate Director Alexander Bauer (Queens University New York), Field Director Andrew Goldman (Gonzaga University) and students from both American and local universities.

Three operations were opened in a three-week season: the first was a 5m × 10m trench perpendicular to the line of the city wall; the second was a 2m × 2m trench against the wall extending from the edge of excavations carried out in 2013–2014 by the Sinop Museum; and the third cut back a section protected under an Ottoman concrete cap inside a Hellenistic tower. The most significant finds of the season include: the first evidence ever documented of Early Bronze Age settlement in the urban area of Sinop; two distinct types of pre-colonial stone-built houses each associated with ceramics from the northern Black Sea and central Pontic Anatolia respectively; documentation of an extensive early colonial settlement with handmade wares used together with Archaic (sixth century BC) and Classical (fifth to fourth century BC) Athenian ceramics; and evidence for the relationship of the city wall to Archaic and Classical horizons.

Of particular interest for Sherratt and Rempel is further understanding the ways in which Sinop was connected to larger Black Sea networks in the first millennium BC. Although the maritime linking up of the Black Sea coasts in general, and traffic along the Turkish Black Sea coast in particular, has traditionally been regarded only as an outcome

of Greek settlement from the later seventh century BC, archaeology in recent decades has demonstrated that maritime connections around and across the Black Sea (in some periods apparently more intense than others) go back well into prehistory, at least as far as the late Chalcolithic period in the fifth millennium BC (Bauer 2006). It also seems probable that, when Greeks finally ventured into the Black Sea in the later seventh century, this coincided with a period when Black Sea maritime networks were already in operation and when there was an increase in use of coastal sites in the area around Sinop (Doonan 2004). Later literary sources tell us that the Milesian settlement of Sinope immediately set up a daughter-settlement at Trapezous (modern Trabzon), on the coast further to the east, which suggests that Sinope's main purpose was as a way-station for Greek sea traffic along this coast. At any rate, survey by the Sinop Regional Archaeological Project, directed by Owen Doonan, has shown little sign of interaction between Sinope and its hinterland before the fourth century. It is possible, perhaps, that the rich iron and silver resources in Gümüşhane province near Trabzon may have been an attraction, not least since the *Iliad* describes the eastern part of the Black Sea coast as the place where 'silver was born'.

Ancient Sinope's seaward focus in these early periods is confirmed by its foundation of the secondary settlements of Kotyora (possibly modern Ordu) and Kerasous (Giresun), as well as Trapezous, to the east of Sinop along the Black Sea coast, probably not long after the foundation of Sinope itself. Epigraphic evidence demonstrates early diplomatic relationships with other Greek settlements on the Black Sea, particularly Histria and Olbia, which were also early Milesian foundations, as well as the presence of Sinopeans living in settlements around the Black Sea and the Aegean (Ruscu 2008). In 437/6 BC an Athenian cleruchy was established at Sinope as part of Pericles's Black Sea expedition, demonstrating the importance of Sinope to trading networks in the Aegean and further abroad.

Beginning in the fourth century BC, however, evidence for Sinope's participation in Black Sea networks increases significantly. The fourth and third centuries BC was a period of prosperity in the Black Sea region with the Greek settlements and local populations engaging in intensive networks of trade and exchange, diplomacy and elite display. Sinope's involvement in Black Sea trade during this period is clear; from the second half of the fourth century to the mid third century BC exports of amphorae and roof tiles from Sinope are found in all regions of the Black Sea. By the beginning of the third century BC, wine and oil amphorae from Sinope are the main imports at Greek settlements on the northern coast of the Black Sea (Krapivina 2010) and, by ca 325 BC, Sinope was the main trading partner for southwestern Georgia, based on the quantity of Sinopean roof tiles, amphorae and other pottery vessels, and coins found at sites in that region (Inaishvili and Khalvashi 2010).

Both the amphorae and roof tiles are identifiable as Sinopean products by their fabrics and shapes, but also because of their workshop stamps. In addition to an image, like the dolphin and eagle that branded Sinopean coins, these stamps often include the name of the potter as well as the *astynomos*, an annually appointed official. These stamps were used from the second quarter of the fourth to the early second century BC and can be placed in a relative sequence based on the names of the potters and *astynomoi* (Garlan 2004). This means that these stamps – and the amphorae and roof tiles that bear them – can be dated quite closely, lending a rich chronological resolution to our understanding of Sinopean exports in the Black Sea during this period.

Work conducted by the Sinop Regional Archaeological Project has indicated that it is only in this period – the fourth century BC – that Sinope’s connection with its hinterland starts to develop. Beginning in the fourth century BC, new coastal sites were established: small settlements with primarily Greek pottery, such as Bostancılı, or a mixture of Greek and local pottery, like İlyan’ın Yeri. In addition, during this period Greek pottery is found for the first time at larger indigenous centres like Tingiroğlu and Maltepe, located at key transport points in the hinterland (Doonan 2004; Doonan et al. 2015). It is possible that this evidence for new interactions with the hinterland is related to increased agriculture production in support of Sinope’s exports of oil and wine during this period.

However Sinope’s new relationship with its hinterland also mirrors a general trend towards more intensive occupation and agricultural exploitation of the rural territory around Greek settlements in the Black Sea region. Beginning in the fourth and continuing into the third and second centuries BC, sites like Histria and Kallatis on the western coast, Olbia, Chersonesos and the Bosporan kingdom on the northern coast and Vani on the eastern coast all experienced increased numbers of rural settlements as well as new road networks and agricultural installations like field systems. This phenomenon is well documented in other regions of the Black Sea but less well understood for the southern coast. The potential for the Sinop Kale Excavations to refine local pottery chronologies for this period and add resolution to survey data will add significantly to our understanding of this phenomenon.

Indeed, the first season of the excavations provided exciting results. Located near the best-surviving section of the Hellenistic fortification wall that stretches across the Sinop peninsula, two smaller-scale evaluation trenches established initial results relating to the building of the city wall and to an uninterrupted superimposed sequence from the mid first millennium BC to the late first millennium AD. One of them also provided hints of an indigenous settlement which may have preceded the Greek settlement and/or co-existed with its earlier centuries. These results are highly significant for our understanding of the early Black Sea and demonstrate the outstanding promise the Sinop Kale Excavations hold for future research.

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Sinop Kale Excavations at the base of the Hellenistic fortification walls and view to the northern coast of the peninsula (J. Rempel)