



The Eastern foundations : Near Eastern influence on the Ionian Presocratics and the transmission of Eastern religious ideas to Ionia
by Steven Camac

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History
Montana State University
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Abstract:

In the Ionian town of Miletus, at the beginning of the sixth century B. C. E., Thales emerged as Greece's first philosopher. After Thales came Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Xenophanes of Colophon, and Heraclitus of Ephesus. As a group, these philosophers are the Ionian Presocratics.

In *Early Greek Thought and the Orient*, M. L. West showed similarities between early Greek philosophy and Near Eastern religious ideas. But West's work is not widely accepted. It also raised more questions than it answered. How were Near Eastern ideas transmitted to Ionia? How do they fit into Near Eastern concepts? How was Ionia different from the rest of the Greek world? Strong Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratic philosophy must have come from consistent contact with the Near East. Similarities in the ideas of different cultures are not evidence of a transmission of ideas: all that this shows are parallels. To go beyond parallels requires pinpointing the routes of transfer.

The Archaic ivory carver is singled out as a medium of transfer for religious ideas. Ivory carvers had a knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek religion. As ivory carvers traveled throughout the religious centers of the Aegean, they spread Near Eastern religious ideas to Greece.

The transfer of the Phoenician alphabet to Greece demonstrates a transfer of ideas. The transfer of the alphabet shows both that there was an intimate level of contact between Greeks and Phoenicians, and that the two peoples communicated complex knowledge effectively. Ionia's cultural and political context exposed it to Near Eastern ideas. The author argues that Ionia adopted Anatolian religion, making it religiously part of the Near East. Ionia's elite families inter-married with the Lydian aristocracy thus closely connecting Ionia to Lydia. Also, political conquest by Lydia and Persia opened Ionia to Anatolian and Iranian culture.

Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratics demonstrates that Greeks and people of the Near East communicated complex ideas. Transmission of Near Eastern ideas to Greece provides compelling proof that the foundations of Ionian Presocratic philosophy are Near Eastern.

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ABSTRACT

In the Ionian town of Miletus, at the beginning of the sixth century B. C. E., Thales emerged as Greece's first philosopher. After Thales came Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Xenophanes of Colophon, and Heraclitus of Ephesus. As a group, these philosophers are the Ionian Presocratics.

In Early Greek Thought and the Orient, M. L. West showed similarities between early Greek philosophy and Near Eastern religious ideas. But West's work is not widely accepted. It also raised more questions than it answered. How were Near Eastern ideas transmitted to Ionia? How do they fit into Near Eastern concepts? How was Ionia different from the rest of the Greek world?

Strong Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratic philosophy must have come from consistent contact with the Near East. Similarities in the ideas of different cultures are not evidence of a transmission of ideas: all that this shows are parallels. To go beyond parallels requires pinpointing the routes of transfer.

The Archaic ivory carver is singled out as a medium of transfer for religious ideas. Ivory carvers had a knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek religion. As ivory carvers traveled throughout the religious centers of the Aegean, they spread Near Eastern religious ideas to Greece.

The transfer of the Phoenician alphabet to Greece demonstrates a transfer of ideas. The transfer of the alphabet shows both that there was an intimate level of contact between Greeks and Phoenicians, and that the two peoples communicated complex knowledge effectively.

Ionia's cultural and political context exposed it to Near Eastern ideas. The author argues that Ionia adopted Anatolian religion, making it religiously part of the Near East. Ionia's elite families inter-married with the Lydian aristocracy thus closely connecting Ionia to Lydia. Also, political conquest by Lydia and Persia opened Ionia to Anatolian and Iranian culture.

Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratics demonstrates that Greeks and people of the Near East communicated complex ideas. Transmission of Near Eastern ideas to Greece provides compelling proof that the foundations of Ionian Presocratic philosophy are Near Eastern.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the sixth century B. C. E.,¹ Thales emerged as the first known Greek philosopher. Thales is important because he symbolizes the beginning of Greek science. He lived in the Ionian town of Miletus, on the Aegean coast of Anatolia. After Thales came Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Xenophanes of Colophon, and Heraclitus of Ephesus. As a group, these philosophers are known as the Ionian Presocratics, and the founders of Greek philosophy. The birth of Greek philosophy was one of Western civilization's most important events. At the core of a Western identity is the philosophical method: questioning and searching for reason in the human and physical world.

In Early Greek Thought and the Orient (1971), M. L. West showed that there are similarities between early Greek philosophy and Near Eastern religious ideas.² But West's work has not been widely accepted. In The Presocratic Philosophers (1983), for example, G. S. Kirk says that while Thales' ideas could have come from the Near East, there are no similarities between the ideas of the other Ionian Presocratics and Eastern

¹Hereafter all dates are B. C. E. (Before the Common Era).

²M. L. West, Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.).

Near Eastern ideas transmitted to Ionia? How do they fit into Near Eastern concepts? How was Ionia different from the rest of the Greek world? This work will attempt to answer these questions.

Presocratic sources, however, are scattered and cryptic. Most of them are fragmentary, coming from passages in later Classical writers. But even with our limited sources, it is possible to identify a common thread running through the ideas of Ionian Presocratic thought -- an attempt to give structure and order to the universe. And when Near Eastern religions contemporary to the philosophers are examined, it becomes apparent that the Ionian Presocratics gave the universe a Near Eastern order and structure. Moreover, Ionian Presocratic philosophy fits into a Near Eastern conception of the universe. Chapter 1 will argue that Near Eastern religious influence best explains the birth of Greek philosophy in Ionia.

The strong Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratic philosophy could only have come from consistent contact with the Near East. However, similarities in the ideas of different cultures are, alone, not evidence of a transmission of ideas. Otherwise, all Chapter 1 would show are parallels. To go beyond "parallelomania,"⁴ what needs to be shown is the transference of ideas. This, in turn, requires pinpointing the routes of transfer.

What were the mediums of transfer of Near Eastern ideas to Ionia? Walter

⁴L. H. Fieldman, "Homer and the Near East: The Rise of the Greek Genius" Biblical Archaeologist 59:1 (March, 1996.), 15.

Burkert has suggested Near Eastern migrant workers as possible agents of transfer.⁵ Assyrian conquest of the Levant in the 8th and 7th century pushed traders and craftsmen to look to the Aegean for new commercial opportunities. The reemergence of Greek civilization was a new untapped market for Near Eastern traders. In Chapter 2, the Archaic ivory carver, a migrant and itinerant worker, is singled out as a medium of transfer for religious ideas. It will be argued that the ivory carvers of the Aegean were Levantine, that they had knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek religion, and that the use of ivory figures in Greek religious worship indicates that religious transfer and translation took place.

Chapter 3 looks at the transfer of the Phoenician alphabet to Greece. The transfer of the alphabet shows both that there was an intimate level of contact between Greeks and Phoenicians, and that the two peoples were able to communicate effectively.

Chapters 2 and 3 show the importance of Levantine traders as transmitters of knowledge. Ionia, however, was as connected to the Near East by land as it was by the Aegean. Chapter 4 shows that Ionia adopted Anatolian religion, making it religiously part of the Near East, that it was closely connected to Lydia through inter-marriage and political conquest, and that because of both the Median Empire's movement west and the Persian conquest of Lydia, Ionia was open to Iranian religion.

Ionia's exposure and interaction with Near Eastern cultures was more intimate than other Greek societies. To describe Ionia as a frontier between Greece and the Near East is correct. What is incorrect is to perceive Ionia as a purely Greek frontier. Archaic

⁵Walter Burkert, The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence in the Early Archaic Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.).

Ionia was a polyglot culture -- a mixture of Near Eastern and Greek culture. The reason Ionia's mixed culture has been overlooked is that it has not generally been viewed in the cultural context of the Aegean and the Near East. Throughout this work Ionia is examined with an eye on its cultural surroundings. When such a perspective is taken, Near Eastern influence becomes more readily apparent. Thus, it is the purpose of this work to demonstrate that Near Eastern religious ideas influenced the Ionian Presocratic philosophers, Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus, and, more importantly, to show how the ideas were transferred and translated into a Greek cultural context.

CHAPTER 2

THE EASTERN ORIGINS

Classical Greece viewed Ionia as luxurious, weak, and a political failure. Ionia's diminished reputation began when it was conquered by Lydia in 614. Then, it failed to resist Cyrus the Great in 547, and could not gain its freedom in 499 (Ionian Revolt).¹ Politically, Ionians became part of the Near East, and, for this, the Greeks could not forgive them. Ionia, however, always had more ties to the Near East than mainland Greece. The Aegean exposed Ionia to trade from the east, and, inland, Ionia neighbored Lydia, which was politically and culturally a Near Eastern civilization. Ionian commercial and political interaction with the Near East gave it access to Eastern religious ideas. Greek philosophy's Ionian birth, at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth century, was stimulated by Near Eastern religion. Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus all had Near Eastern influence in their philosophy. Moreover, their ideas fit into a Near Eastern conception of the universe.

Recent scholarship has brushed aside the similarities between Ionian Presocratic philosophy and Near Eastern ideas. Near Eastern ideas, it is said, did not have the rational order and were too primitive to have any profound effect on the Ionian intellectuals.²

¹Carl Roebuck, *Ionian Trade and Colonization* (Ares: Chicago, 1983), 1.

²See Jonathan Barnes, ed., *Early Greek Thought* (London: Penguin, 1987.); Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1946-1975/1961-1975.); W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge:

However, this attitude by historians of philosophy demonstrates that, generally, the obvious depth to Near Eastern civilization has been overlooked. Also, scholars of ancient Greece have not taken Ionia's cultural context into account. Instead, Western scholarship has taken a Greco-centric view of Ionia. Typically, maps of the Greek world only show the western part of Asia Minor, as if to blot out Ionia's geographical connection to the East. Also, from the Lydian conquest (578) of Ionia until its liberation from Persia in the 460's,³ Ionia was politically part of the Near East. And before the political conquests of Lydia and Persia, Ionia was a frontier between the Greek world and the Near Eastern culture of the Lydians. For example, Ionia had been trading with the Lydians since 700.

Moreover, the Greeks knew that Near Eastern civilizations were ancient. Near Eastern religions were as ancient as the cultures that they came from. They also had tradition and order. This tradition and order of Eastern religions, I will argue, had a profound effect on the Ionian Presocratic philosophers, for Near Eastern religion was the foundation from which Greek and Western philosophy grew.

Thales

At the beginning of the sixth century Thales emerged as Greece's first known philosopher.⁴ He lived in the prosperous Ionian harbor town of Miletus, on the Aegean

Cambridge University Press, 1983.); Terence Irwin, Classical Thought (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.).

³Herodotus 9, 90.

⁴Aristotle Met. A3 983b6.

coast of Anatolia. The dates of Thales' birth and death are not known for certain.⁵ We do know, from Thales' dating of the eclipse on May 28 585 B.C.E., that he was active at the end of the seventh and well into the sixth century.⁶ Thales studied different aspects of the universe; he was an astronomer, a geometer, and a philosopher. He believed that the universe was made up of a single principal stuff, water,⁷ and that soul was intermingled in the universe.⁸

Thales' belief that everything was made from water attempted to give the universe order. In the Near East, water was seen as the vital source of creation and life. Water was the essence of life in the Egyptian "Creation By Atum." In this creation myth life arises out of Nun, the waters of chaos:

I am Atum when I was alone in Nun; I am Re in his first appearance, when he began to rule that which he made.⁹

We are then told that the creator Atum is water, the creator of life:

I am the great god who came into being by himself. Who is he? The great god who came into being by Himself is water; he is Nun, the father of the gods.¹⁰

Atum created himself and life; he was also water (Nun). The Egyptians believed

⁵G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, The Presocratic Philosophies: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.), 76.

⁶Herodotus 1, 74.

⁷Aristotle Met. A3, 983b.

⁸Aristotle De An. A5, 411a.

⁹James B. Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3rd edition, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.), 3.

¹⁰Ibid. 4.

everything was created from water, a concept that parallels Thales' belief that water was the principal substance of the universe.

In the Akkadian creation myth, fresh water and sea water, Apsu and Tiamat, join together in the creation of the gods:

When on high heaven had not been named, Firm ground below had not been called by name, Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter, (And) Mummu-Tiamat, she bore them all, their waters commingling as a single body; No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had Appeared, When no gods, whatever had been brought into being, Uncalled by name, their destinies understood -- Then it was that the gods were formed within them.¹¹

Apsu's and Tiamat's union created the gods who went on to create the world. Again, water was the essence of life. Water also had a primordial nature, "Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter." Water was the origin of all things, including the gods. For Thales, water was also primordial -- the origin of all things.

In Iranian cosmology, water was held to have one source, the sea Vourukasha.¹² The earth was like a round disk floating on the sea: "He came on the water which was arranged below the earth . . ." ¹³ This concept was identical to Thales' idea that the world floats on water:

Others say that the earth rests on water. For which reason this is the most ancient account we have received, which they say was given by Thales the Milesian, that it stays in place through floating like a log or some other such thing (for none of these rests by the nature of air, but water) -- as though the same argument did not apply to water supporting the earth as to

¹¹Ibid. 1-8, 60-1.

¹²Yashts. 13, 65. "Then when the waters flow out from the sea Vourukasha."

¹³Bundadish 6, 14.

the earth itself.¹⁴

The belief that the world floats on water was seen throughout the Near East. In Egypt it was believed the earth rested upon primordial Nun.¹⁵ Babylonians believed the primordial water under the earth was the god Apsu.¹⁶ The Hebrews believed that the earth was put above water, "Yahweh stretched out the earth above the water."¹⁷ The belief that the earth floated on water spanned the Near East, from Iran to Egypt.¹⁸

The heavens, we are told, also interested Thales. Herodotus gives us an account of how Thales predicted an eclipse during the sixth year of battle between the Medes and Lydians on May 28, 585 B.C.E.¹⁹ Diogenes Laertius, Dercyllides, and Callimachus also tell of Thales' knowledge of solstices and eclipses.²⁰ As Neugebauer argues, Thales'

¹⁴Aristotle *de caelo*. B13, 294a28; *Met.* A3, 993b6. "Thales, the founder of this type of philosophy [one principal substance], says that it is water (and therefore declared that the earth is on water)"

¹⁵Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3-5.

¹⁶Ibid. 61.

¹⁷Psalms 136, 6; 24, 2. "Founded it upon the seas, and establish it upon the floods."; Gen xlix. 25 "the deep that lieth under"; Deut xxxiii. 13 "the deep that coucheth beneath."

¹⁸The idea is seen also in Greece. Greeks believed that the river Okeanos flowed around the earth. It was also known as the broad outer sea, and was the source of all gods and all things. The river Okeanos shows that early Greece was culturally part of an Aegean culture. It shows that there was Near Eastern influence on the Greek world before Homer and the eighth century.

¹⁹Herodotus I, 74.

²⁰Diogenes Laertius I, 23. "Some think he [Thales] was the first to study the heavenly bodies and to foretell eclipses of the sun and solstices, as Eudemus says in his history of astronomy; for which reason both Heraclitus and Democritus bear witness for him."; Dercyllides *ap.* Theon. *Smryn.* "Eudemus relates in the astronomy that Oenopides first discovered the obliquity of the zodiac and the cycle of the Great Year, and Thales the eclipse of the sun and the variable period of the solstices."; Callimachus I, 52.

knowledge of eclipses could only have come from Babylonia.²¹ Babylonian priests were studying astronomy for many centuries before Thales' prediction, and had studied eclipses since at least 721 (most probably much earlier). By the sixth century Babylonian priests had a good feel for the cycle of the stars and moon. Although Babylonians could not predict the exact day of an eclipse, they could predict the year of eclipses.²²

There is also a Phoenician influence in Thales' astronomical knowledge.

Callimachus tells us:

...for victory belonged to Thales, who was clever in judgement, not least because he was said to have measured out the little stars of the wain, by which the Phoenicians sail.²³

The little stars of the wain are the Little Bear. The Phoenicians used the Little Bear as a navigational aid for their long sea voyages. From Callimachus' statement it appears that Thales told the Milesian sailors about the Little Bear, allowing them to navigate more accurately on longer voyages. Greek sailors used the Great Bear, a less accurate navigational point.²⁴

In summary, Thales' concept of water as the basic stuff of the universe fits in with a uniform Near Eastern belief that water was the primordial element of the cosmos. His

²¹Otto Neugebauer, Astronomy and History: Selected Essays (Springer-Verlag, 1983.), 232-247.

²²Charles H. Kahn, Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.), 76, n. 2. There is also a theory that Thales gained knowledge of astronomy from Egypt. Egyptian priests also kept astronomical records, but they did not study them for the length of time that the Babylonians priests had.

²³Callimachus I, 52.

²⁴Ora Negbi, "Early Phoenician Presence in the Mediterranean Islands: A Reappraisal" American Journal of Archaeology 96 (1992): 614.

astronomical knowledge shows that Thales presumably had access to Babylonian charts and records. Thales' astrological connection with Phoenicians suggests that he, and Miletus, were exposed to Phoenicians and their maritime knowledge. Sources on Thales are limited, which makes him somewhat of an enigma. But what we do have suggests close ties to Near Eastern thought.

Anaximander

Anaximander was the first recorded Greek philosopher who attempted to give a detailed explanation of man's experience. Theophrastus calls Anaximander the student and successor of Thales.²⁵ He was born in 610/9 B.C.E. and died in 546/5.²⁶

Anaximander continued Thales' search for an order to the universe. He did not, however, believe in Thales' idea that water was the basic stuff of the universe. For Anaximander, the universe's principal element was Apeiron: a boundless, infinite and indeterminate element. Apeiron engendered the finite and determinate primitive substance of earth and water, fire and air, and night and day. Opposites were constantly at war: cosmic equilibrium was achieved through the regeneration that the struggle produced.

For Aristotle, the main properties of Apeiron derived from it being an absolute beginning:

As a beginning, it must also be something that has not become and cannot pass away. For that which has become must necessarily come to an end,

²⁵Simplicius In Phys. 24, 13. "... Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian, the successor and pupil of Thales."; Hippolytus Ref. 1, 6. 1. "Now Anaximander was the disciple of Thales."; Plutarch Strom. 2. "Anaximander, who was the companion of Thales . . ."

²⁶G. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, The Presocratic Philosophers, 101.

and all passing away likewise has no end. Thus, as we have said, it is itself without beginning, but is rather -- so it is thought -- the beginning of everything else. And it encompasses all things and governs all things, as those persons declare who posit no other causes besides the Apeiron, such as mind or love [here he is talking about Anaxagoras and Empedocles]. And this, they say is the Divine. For it is immortal and indestructible as Anaximander and most of the natural philosophers maintain.²⁷

Apeiron's absolute beginning made it divine, because it was the cause of all things.

Anaximander's Apeiron was the one divine entity controlling and guiding all things.

Apeiron could not be seen or felt; it was undefinable, but it was everywhere, in everything.

Simplicius' quotation from Anaximander's only surviving work shows how the clash of opposites produced life:

Anaximander . . . declared the boundless to be the principle element of existing things, having been the first to introduce this very term of 'principle'; he says that it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some different, boundless nature, from which all the heavens arise and the kosmoi within them; 'Into those things from which existing things have their coming into being, their passing away, too, takes place, according to what must be; for they make reparation to one another for their injustice according to the ordinance of time,' as he puts it in rather poetical terms.²⁸

Anaximander saw a daily exchange in the universe: night gives way to day; the change of the seasons; youth eroded by age; and growth by decay. Arguing in a similar fashion,

Hippocrates uses the universe as an example for the body. It is an explanation which sums up the workings of Anaximander's equilibrium of opposites:

All of them are present in the body, but as the seasons revolve they become now greater now less, in turn, according to the nature of each. The year has a share of all things -- the hot, the cold, the dry, and the wet -- for no one of these things which exists in the world order would last for any

²⁷Aristotle *Phys.* iii. 4, 203b6.

²⁸Simplicius *Physics.* 24, 13.

length of time were it not for all the rest. On the contrary, if a single thing were to fail, all would disappear; for all things come into existence from the same necessity and are sustained by one another.²⁹

In addition, Anaximander's Apeiron has strong parallels with the Indo-Iranian principle of rta/aša.³⁰ Mary Boyce states:

This term (rta/aša), it is now generally accepted, represents a concept which cannot be precisely rendered in another tongue. It stands, it seems, for order in the widest sense: cosmic order, by which night gives way to day and the seasons change; the order of sacrifice, by which this natural rhythm is strengthened and maintained; social order, by which men live together in harmony and prosperity; and a moral order of truth.³¹

Aša (aša) was the moral order of divine godness (Ahura Mazda). Night would not give way to day if divine evil (Angra Mainya) ruled the universe. In the first meeting between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainya there was the clash of opposites:

Truly there are two primal Spirits, twins renowned to be in conflict. In thought and word, in act they are two: the better and the bad. And those who act well have chosen rightly between these two, not so the evildoers. And when these spirits came together they created life and not life, and that there should be at last the worst existence for the followers of the Drug (choas), but for the followers of aša, the best dwelling.³²

In Zoroastrianism, there was a battle to maintain order, a battle between good and evil.

Order allows the universe to operate in the same way that Apeiron allows the universe to function, to maintain equilibrium, cosmic order.

Apeiron was also the creator of all things -- the absolute beginning: Apeiron was

²⁹Hippocrates Nat. Hom. 7.

³⁰In Zoroastrianism there is aša/Aša: Aša is a divine being, one of the Bounteous Immortals, and personifies the qualities of aša: order, justice and righteousness.

³¹Mary Boyce, The History of Zoroastrianism: Volume one, The Early Period (Lieden: E. J. Brill, 1975.) 27.

³²Yasna. 30, 3-4.

the one divine entity of the universe. Ahurá Mazda was also the beginning and creator of all things:

Then I recognized you as Bounteous (Spənta/creator), when I saw you as primal at the birth of life. Then I recognize you as the beginning and the end. . . when I comprehended you with my eyes as the real Creator of order (aša), by thy acts lord of existence.³³

There are similarities in their roles and functions, but also in what they were as entities:

Apeiron was the one divine entity of the universe; Ahura Mazda was the one god of the universe.

Anaximander's cosmogony and cosmology were strikingly similar to Near Eastern concepts. In Anaximander's cosmogony, similarities are seen:

He says that that which is productive from the eternal of hot and cold was separated off at the coming-to-be of this world, and that a kind of sphere of flame from this was formed round the air surrounding the earth, like bark round a tree. When this was broken off and shut in certain circles, the sun and the moon and the stars were formed.³⁴

A sphere of flame encased the earth, "like bark round a tree." The Zoroastrian sky is made of stone and encases the earth.³⁵ Moreover, in Genesis and Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God, the sky is described as a dome:

And God said let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky.³⁶

Over the heads of the living creatures (Cherubs) there was something like a

³³Yasna. 31, 8.

³⁴Ps.-Plutarch Strom. 2.

³⁵Greater Bundahis. Ia, 6.

³⁶Genesis 1, 6-8.

dome shining like crystal spread out above their heads.³⁷

Also in Genesis, earth is at the center of the universe. Anaximander's cosmogony also placed earth at the center of the universe, as it was the coldest thing in the universe, while the heavenly bodies were the hottest and at the outer limit.

Anaximander believed the world to be concave: "In form it is concave like a drum of a column."³⁸ Also, Near Eastern mythical schemes, the world was surrounded by a ring of mountains, which gave it a concave appearance. Babylonians had a map which showed seven great mountains arranged around the world, encircled by the Bitter River.³⁹ In the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, during the journey to the Cedar Forest, Gilgamesh crosses the 'seven mountains to track down Humbaba.'⁴⁰ The earth is also surrounded by mountains in Zoroastrian cosmology:

As the first mountain there stood upon earth high Hara, which encircles entirely the eastern and western lands.⁴¹

Before Anaximander, Greeks treated the heavenly bodies as detached self-contained entities.⁴² Aetius relates that Anaximander believed the heavenly bodies were carried by circles and spheres; these circles and spheres were enclosed with air.

Anaximander also put the heavenly bodies into their own spheres:

Anaximander [says that the heavenly bodies] are carried by the circles and

³⁷Ezekiel 1, 21.

³⁸Hippolytus Ref. I. 6, 3.

³⁹Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum, (Publications of the British Museum, 1906.), xxiii, pl. 48.

⁴⁰The Epic of Gilgamesh, trans., N. K. Sanders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960.), 76.

⁴¹Yashts. 19, 1.

⁴²Kahn, Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology, 88-89.

spheres on which each goes.

The heavenly bodies come into being as a circle of fire separated off from the fire in the world and enclosed by air.⁴³

Aetius also tells us that Anaximander believed the sun and moon were like chariot wheels filled with fire, and that the heavenly bodies were wheel shaped:

Anaximander says that the sun is like a chariot wheel . . . the rim of which is hollow and filled with fire. At a certain point on it the fire shows through an opening, as through the nozzles of a bellow.⁴⁴

The moon is a ring eighteen times as large as the earth. It is like a chariot wheel the rim of which is hollow and full of fire, like the ring of the sun, and it is placed obliquely [to the plane of the earth] like the other.⁴⁵

The heavenly bodies are wheel shaped masses of compressed air filled with fire.⁴⁶

Ezekiel saw the throne of God in the sky supported by four Cherubim. Each Cherub was attached to a wheel, and whenever the Cherubs went up from the earth so did the wheels.

Also, in between the wheels there was fire:

In the middle of the living creatures (Cherubs) there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and the lightning issued from the fire. The living creatures darted to and fro like a flash of lightening. As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like a gleaming of beryl; and the four had the same form, their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel. When they moved, they moved in any one direction without veering as they moved. Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. When the

⁴³Aetuis II. 16, 5; II. 20, I.

⁴⁴Aetuis. II. 20, 1.

⁴⁵Aetuis. II. 25, 2.

⁴⁶Aetuis. II. 13, 7.

living creatures moved, the wheels moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose.⁴⁷

Eziekiel's vision of God's throne is constructed of spheres within spheres, an arrangement which was similar to Anaximander's cosmos of circles and spheres. Moreover, both Eziekiel's God and Anaximander's Apeiron are the one divine entity of the universe, and they were the creator and cause of all things.

Anaximander's ordering of the Heavenly bodies was distinctly Zoroastrian. He placed the stars and planets nearest the earth, then the moon, and the sun furthest away: "He (Anaximander) placed the sun highest of all, below the moon, and below these the stars and planets." In the Avestan and Pahlavi texts it was ordered stars, moon, sun, and beginningless light:

When they sever the consciousness of men it goes out to the nearest fire, then out to the stars, then out to the sun.⁴⁸

As it is said in revelation: . . . from the light which is endless it (the divine glory) fled on, on to that of the sun; from that of the sun, it fled on, on to the moon; from that of the moon it fled on, on to those stars, it fled on to the fire. . .⁴⁹

Syrian notions about the origins of life also influenced Anaximander. He believed that life arose out of water and that man came from fish or fish-like creatures.⁵⁰ Plutarch tells us that Syrians believed fish were of a similar race as humans, and that this was a more sensible idea than Anaximander's:

⁴⁷Eziekiel. 1, 13-20.

⁴⁸Damdat Nask in Sayast La-Sayast 12, 5.

⁴⁹Pahlavi. Denkart, 7. 2, 3.

⁵⁰Aetius V. 19, 4.; Ps.-Plutarch Strom. 2.; Cerorinus de die nat. 4,7.; Hippolytus Ref. I, 6, 6.

Therefore they (Syrians) actually revere the fish as being of similar race and nurturing. In this they philosophize more suitably than Anaximander; for he declares, not that fishes and men came into being in the same parents, but that originally men came into being inside fishes, and that having been nurtured there -- like sharks -- and having become adequate to look after themselves, they then came forth and took the land.⁵¹

The Syrian Goddess states that Syrians held fish to be sacred, and that they would not touch them.⁵²

Anaximander's main influences were from Iran and the Levant. Aša's (aša) cosmic battle to maintain order can be seen in the Apeiron's equilibrium of opposites. Apeiron and aša were both concepts of order; an order that allowed the universe to function. Apeiron was also the creator and beginning of all things in the same manner as Ahura Mazda and Yahweh. Anaximander's order of the heavenly bodies was identical to a Zoroastrian one. Ezekiel's vision of God's throne, with its spheres and fire, also has a vivid likeness to Anaximander's heavenly bodies.

Anaximenes of Miletus

Diogenes Laertius quotes Apollodorus in telling us that Anaximenes was active at the time Sardis was captured by the Persians, and that he died in the 63rd Olympiad (528-25).⁵³ Like Anaximander, Anaximenes believed the source of existing things to be

⁵¹Plutarch Symp., VIII. 780E.

⁵²Ps.-Lucian. The Syrian Goddess, (De Dea Syria), translated & edited by Attridge, H. W. & Oden, R.A. (Scholars Press, 1976.), 22.

⁵³Diogenes Laertius II, 3.

infinite, yet for him Air was the originative stuff and basic form of matter.⁵⁴ Air changed by a system of condensation and rarefaction. When Air was at its most diffuse it was invisible. Yet, when it became more tightly packed, it was harder to resist. As Air became visible, it became heavier and more solid. Air could also be rarified; when it was made finer it became fire.⁵⁵ Also, Anaximenes was the first Greek to use detailed observation to support a physical theory. He theorized that anything cold was condensed, and anything loose and relaxed was hot. The Milesian was said to have learned this from the breath blown out of his mouth.⁵⁶ Anaximenes' philosophy of condensation and

⁵⁴Aristotle Met. A3, 984a5. "Anaximenes and Diogenes make air, rather than water, the material principle above the other simpler bodies." Theophrastus ap. Simplicium in Phys. "Anaximenes son of Eurystratus, of Miletus, a companion of Anaximander, also says, like him, that the underlying nature is one and infinite, but not undefined as Anaximander said but definite, for he identifies it as air . . ."; Hippolytus Ref. I, 7, I. "Anaximenes . . . said that infinite air was the principle, from which the things that are becoming, and that are, and that shall be, and gods and things divine, all come into being, and the rest from its products."

⁵⁵Hippolytus Ref. I, 7, ii. "The form of air is of this kind: whenever it is most equable it is invisible to sight, but, it is revealed by cold and hot and the damp and by movement. It is always in motion; for things that change do not change unless there is movement.

Through becoming denser or finer it has different appearances; for when it is dissolved into what is finer it becomes fire, while winds, again, are air that is becoming condensed, and cloud is produced from air by felting. When it is condensed still more, water is produced; with a further degree of condensation earth is produced; and when condensed as far as possible, stones. The result is that most influential components of generation are opposites, hot and cold."; Simplicius Phys. 24, 30. ". . . for he identifies it as air; and it differs in substantial nature by rarity and density. Being made finer it becomes fire, being made thicker it becomes wind, then, cloud, then (when thickened still more) water, then earth, then stones; and the rest come into being from these. He, too, makes motion eternal, and says change, also, comes about through it."

⁵⁶Plutarch de prim. frig. 7, 947f. ". . . or as Anaximenes thought of old, let us see neither the cold nor the hot as belonging to substance, but as common dispositions of matter that supervene on changes; for he says that matter which is compressed and condensed is cold, while that which is fine and 'relaxed' (using this very word) is hot. Therefore, he said, the dictum is not an unreasonable one, that man releases both warmth and cold from his

rarefaction was backed up with observation, physical theory, making him the first Greek to strive to give a material and physical explanation to the universe.

Anaximenes gave quantitative explanation to the universe, but at the core of his philosophy was divine Air. Air was a god.⁵⁷ the cause of change, the essence of life. Soul, the essence of life, was also Air: "Just as our soul (being Air) controls us, so breath and air encompass the whole world order."⁵⁸ Air was the soul of the cosmos and of life: without Air there was not life. Anaximenes' concept of Air, as the essence of life in humans and the universe, has parallels with Indo-Iranian ideas about the wind god Vāyu. Vāyu was the first cosmic life-principle. He was the life breath of the universe and living things.⁵⁹

Anaximenes' Air was not only the cause of life, but also creator of the cosmos:

... and all things are produced by a kind of condensation, and again rarefaction, of this [sc. Air]. Motion, indeed, exists from everlasting; he says that when the air felt there first of all comes into being the earth, quite flat -- therefore it rides on air; and the sun and moon and remaining heavenly bodies have their source of generation from the earth.⁶⁰

Anaximenes . . . said that infinite air was the principle, from which the things that are becoming, and that are, and shall be, and gods and things divine, all come into being, and the rest from its products.⁶¹

Throughout the Near East the idea of one creator was common: in Egypt it was either

mouth: for the breath is chilled by being compressed and condensed with the lips, but when his mouth is loosened the breath escapes and becomes warm through its rarity. This theory Aristotle claims to be due to the man's [sc. Anaximenes'] ignorance. . ."

⁵⁷Cicero *de natura decorum*. 1, 10, 26. "Anaximenes determined that air is a god. . ."; Aetius 1, 7, 13. "Anaximenes [says that] the air [is a god]. . ."

⁵⁸Aetius I, 3, 4.

⁵⁹Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism: Vol.1.*, 80.

⁶⁰Ps.-Plutarch *Strom.* 3.

⁶¹Hippolytus *Ref. IX.* 7, I.

Atum, Amon, or Aton;⁶² in the Levant, it was the Hebrew Yahweh (Lord), or Elohim (God);⁶³ in Iran, Ahura Mazda was “the creator of life,” and the “Creator of all things.”⁶⁴ All these gods were the originative essence of the universe in the same manner as Anaximenes’ Air.

While Anaximenes’ creator was a widely shared Near Eastern concept, his cosmology was a mix of eastern ideas. His heavenly bodies moved around the earth like a “felt hat turns around our head,” and the sun moved around a mountain:

He [Anaximenes] says that the heavenly bodies do not move under the earth, as others have supposed, but round it, just as if a felt cap turns around our head; and that the sun is hidden not by being under the earth, but through being covered by the higher parts of the earth [mountains] and through its increased distance from us.⁶⁵

Similarly, Iranians believed the heavenly bodies moved in a plane parallel to the earth, so they orbited around the Peak of Hara,⁶⁶ just as Anaximenes’ world was surrounded by mountains that hid the sun at the end of the day. Babylonians, Sumerians, and Iranians all believed that the world was surrounded by mountains.⁶⁷ It appears, then, that Anaximenes took the Iranian concept of the heavenly bodies orbiting a central mountain and blended it

⁶²Pritchard, 3-4; 370-1; 368-9.

⁶³Genesis 1, 1-31.

⁶⁴Yasna. 44. 7.

⁶⁵Hippolytus Ref. I, 7, 6.

⁶⁶Yashts. 12, 25.

⁶⁷British Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum. xxiii, Plate 48.; Epic of Gilgamesh, 76.; Yashts 19, 1.

with the broader scheme of Near Eastern earth encircling mountains.

Anaximenes attaches the stars to a crystal sky: "they [the stars] are fixed in the crystalline [vault of the heavens] like ornamental nail heads."⁶⁸ This is a scheme which was both Zoroastrian and Hebrew. Ahura Mazda created the sky first,⁶⁹ it was a perfectly round empty shell made of stone.⁷⁰ Zoroaster describes the sky as being made of rock crystal.⁷¹ In Genesis the sky was a "dome", and in Ezekiel the sky was also a dome "shining like crystal above our heads."⁷²

Basic Near Eastern cosmogonies and cosmologies influenced Anaximenes. The creator god, the crystal like sky, and the orbit of the sun and heavenly bodies were Near Eastern concepts. Hebrew and Iranian influences are again the most prominent.

Xenophanes of Colophon

Xenophanes was twenty-four when he left Colophon. But it is not clear if the Persian invasion of Ionia (546/5 B.C.E.), or an expulsion, caused him to move to Sicily.⁷³

⁶⁸Aetius II. 14, 13.

⁶⁹Greater Bundahis I. 54.

⁷⁰Greater Bundahis I a. 6. Asmān is the god of sky, and was the ancient Iranian word for stone.

⁷¹Yasna. 30. 5.

⁷²Genesis 1, 6-8.; Ezekiel 1, 21.

⁷³Diogenes Laertius IX, 18. "Xenophanes, son of Dexios or, according to Apollodrus, of Orthomenes, of Colophon . . . he, being expelled from his native land, passed his time in Zancle in Sicily and Catana . . . He wrote in epic meter, also elegiacs and iambs, against Hesiod and Homer, reproving them for what they said about the gods. But he himself also recited his own original poems. He is said to have held contrary opinions to Thales and Pythagoras, and to have rebuked Epimenides too. He had an extremely long life as

We can be sure that he was active from the middle to the end of the sixth century. Though he lived the majority of his life in Sicily, his thought has its foundations in the Ionian tradition. Xenophanes concerned himself with the gods: natural phenomena, and the origin of all things. Much of Xenophanes' work was not philosophical. Later thinkers did not know what to make of Xenophanes. He did not seem to be a natural philosopher. Aristotle calls Xenophanes' thought "primitive",⁷⁴ and Theophrastus excluded Xenophanes from his great work because he belonged to a different category of thinker.⁷⁵

Xenophanes' belief in one universal God rebelled against the religious tradition of Archaic Greece. He rejected the gods and religion of Homer and Hesiod: "Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods everything that is a shame and reproach among men, stealing and committing adultery and deceiving each other."⁷⁶ Greek gods portrayed negative human emotional and ethical qualities. He replaced the Greek pantheon with one god: "One god, greatest among gods and men, in no way similar to mortals either in body or in thought."⁷⁷

His thought maybe explained through a comparison with Near Eastern religions. In Iran, there was the one good primeval god, Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom and the

he himself somewhere says: 'Already there are seven and sixty years tossing my thought up and down the land of Greece; and from my birth there were another twenty five to add to these, if I know how to speak truly about these things'. . . And he was at his prime in the 60th Olympiad."

⁷⁴Aristotle Met. A 5, 986b 18.

⁷⁵Simplicus Physics. 22, 22.

⁷⁶Sextus adv. math. IX, 193.

⁷⁷Clement Strom. V. 190, I.

Father of Order (aša).⁷⁸ Ahura Mazda was the only god worthy of worship. And there was the Hebrew Yahweh: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."⁷⁹ In Ezekiel, God was all seeing: "I will judge you according to your ways, I will punish you for your abominations. My eye will not spare you, I will not have pity." Ahura Mazda, too, judged humans, he heard their words and thoughts.⁸⁰ Xenophanes' god was also all knowing and seeing: "All of him sees, all thinks, and all hears."⁸¹ Xenophanes' God also changed the physical world with his will:

Always he remains in one place, moving not at all; nor is it fitting for him to go different places at different times, but without toil he shakes all things by the thought of his mind.⁸²

Ahura Mazda brought about creation with his thoughts: "You, O Mazda created for us in the beginning by your thought material objects and consciences."⁸³

Xenophanes believed people saw gods in the image of themselves (as an ethnic group):

But mortals consider that the gods are born, and that they have clothes and speech and bodies like their own.⁸⁴

The Ethiopians say that their gods are snub nosed and black, the Thracians

⁷⁸Yasna 44.

⁷⁹Exodus 2-4.

⁸⁰Yasna 31, 13.

⁸¹Sextus adv. math. IX, 144.

⁸²Simplicius in Phys. 23, 11 + 23, 20.

⁸³Yasna 31, 11.

⁸⁴Clement Strom. V, 109, 2.

that theirs have light blue eyes and red hair.⁸⁵

These ideas suggest Xenophanes had contact with non-Greek religions, which were, it would be fair to presume, eastern. His conception of one all powerful god that judged the humans actions was non-Greek, and was similar to Iranian and Hebrew notions of an all powerful god that judge humans by their actions.

Heraclitus of Ephesus

Heraclitus lived in the latter part of the sixth century and the early part of the fifth.⁸⁶ He wrote a book, "On Nature," about the universe, politics, and theology.

Heraclitus' work did not fit with the other Ionian Presocratics. He believed the ordered universe was a pre-existing fire that was in constant flux, changing from fire to earth to water, but always keeping the same "proportions as existed before it became earth."⁸⁷ The universe was in a harmony of opposites; if there was not wrong there could not be right.⁸⁸ Heraclitus' Logos was the center piece to his philosophy. The Logos was the unifying formula in the universe.

The Logos unified the universe spiritually and materially. Heraclitus believed the universe was ordered and the same for all: "To those who are awake, there is one ordered

⁸⁵Clement Strom. VII. 22, I.

⁸⁶Diogenes Laertius XI, 1.

⁸⁷Clement Strom. V. 104, 1-3.

⁸⁸Hippolytus Ref. IX. 9, I.

universe common to all.”⁸⁹ Everything came into being in accordance with the universal Logos.⁹⁰ Logos caused the day to turn into night and the seasons to change. Spiritually, Logos had to be comprehended.⁹¹ Comprehension of the Logos meant an understanding that everything, including man, was one with the universe.⁹²

It has already been remarked that in Indo-Iranian belief there was the concept of rta/aša. Rta/aša was a principle of cosmic order that governed the natural world and human society, it caused night to be day, winter to become summer, it allowed society to operate in harmony, and stood for the moral order of society. But men had to submit to its workings, they had to believe and accept rta/aša for it to work in human society. To have rta and aša, to be rtavan and ašavan, was to be a just and upright being.⁹³

Ahura Mazda chose aša at the beginning of creation. Aša was a deity, One of the seven Bounteous Immortals, a personification of aša created by Ahura Mazda.⁹⁴ Aša (aša) was immaterial, it was above humans, but accepting aša meant understanding that humans were part of aša’s cosmic order. Heraclitus’ Logos and the Zoroastrian aša were similar

⁸⁹Plutarch de superst. 3, 166c.

⁹⁰Sextus Empiricus adv. math. VII, 132-133. “Of the Logos it is as I describe it, men always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. For although all things happen according to this Logos men are like people of no experience, even when I distinguish each thing according to its constitution and declare how it is; but the rest of men fail to notice what they do after they wake up just as they do when they sleep.”

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Hippolytus Ref. IX. 9, I. “When you have listened, not to me but to the Logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one.”

⁹³Boyce, 5, 27.

⁹⁴The order of the universe was aša, while Aša was the deity that personified aša.

in concept and function. Zoroastrians took the subjective concept of order and made it a religious entity and belief. Heraclitus adapted aša and turned it into philosophy.

Logos unified the universe, but it was the dualism of Heraclitus' cosmos that gave it harmony. It was the opposing forces of the cosmos that created a balance:

That which is in opposition is in concert, and from things that differ comes the most beautiful harmony.⁹⁵

They do not understand how that which differs with itself is in agreement: harmony consists of opposing tensions, like that of a bow or a lyre.⁹⁶

They would not know the name of the Right [Dike], if these things (i.e. opposites) did not exist.⁹⁷

There could not be good if there was not bad. Zoroastrianism, too, had strong dualism.

The ultimate opposing forces in the universe were Angra Mainya (not life, evil) and Ahura Mazda (life, good). Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainya existed in the beginning; they were primeval unity. "Plurality and diversity" could only come about because there was the hostile spirit, Angra Mainya.⁹⁸ The Gathas tell of their first encounter between the twins:

Now these two spirits, which are twins, revealed themselves at first in vision. Their two ways of thinking, speaking and acting were better and the bad.-- Between these two (ways) the wise choose rightly, fools not so. And then when these two spirits first met, they created both life and not life, and there should be at the last the worst existence for the followers of the Drug, but for the followers of Aša, the best dwelling.⁹⁹

⁹⁵Kathleen Freeman, Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels 'Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,' (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949.) fr. 8, p. 25.

⁹⁶Hippolytus Ref. IX. 9, I.

⁹⁷Clement Strom. IV. 9, 7.

⁹⁸Boyce, 192.

⁹⁹Yasna 30. 3-5.

The individual must decide between living his life the way of aša and druj, good and evil -- Zoroastrians must chose aša.¹⁰⁰ Men and gods worked in harmony to defeat the forces of evil. Similarly, Heraclitus' dualism was ethical; people had to choose Logos, but most could not perceive or grasp the true meaning of the Logos:

Therefore one must follow the Logos that which is common to all. But although the Logos is universal, the majority live as if they had an understanding peculiar to themselves.¹⁰¹

In Heraclitean and Zoroastrian belief systems, the right choice must be made. Heraclitus believed this choice to be common to all:

Those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all, as a city must rely on its law, and with much greater reliance. For all the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over.¹⁰²

Actions and thoughts were judged at death:

For better deaths gain better portions according to Heraclitus.¹⁰³

There await men after they are dead things which they do not expect or imagine.¹⁰⁴

Judgement was made according to Logos, and it was a judgement that no one could escape:

¹⁰⁰Yasna 45.

¹⁰¹Sextus Empiricus. adv. math. VII. 33.

¹⁰²Stobaeus Anth. III. 1, 179.

¹⁰³Clement Strom. IV. 49, 3.

¹⁰⁴Kathleen Freeman, trans. Ancilla to the Presocratic Philosophers, Fr. 27, p 26.

How could anyone escape the notice of that which never sets.¹⁰⁵

The most wise-seeming man knows, (that is), preserves, only what seems; furthermore, retribution will seize the fabricators of lies and the false witnesses.¹⁰⁶

In the same way, Zoroastrians were judged according to aša by the eye of Ahura Mazda:

The deeds, open or stealthy, into which search is made, O Wise One, or if for a trifling wrong a man should exact the greatest atonement. Perceiving all this with thine eye, you see this through your shining righteousness.¹⁰⁷

. . . the Soshyant will rise up all the dead. And all mankind will arise, whether just or wicked. . . Then the assembly of Isadvastr will take place. In that assembly, everyone will behold his own good or bad deeds, and the just will stand out among the wicked like white sheep among black. Fire and the yazad Airyman will melt the metal in the hills and the mountains. . . Then all men will pass through the molten metal. And for those who are just it will seem like they are walking through warm milk; and for the wicked they are walking in the flesh through molten metal.¹⁰⁸

Then when retribution comes for these sinners, then, Mazda, Power shall be present for thee with Good Purpose, to declare himself for those, Lord, who shall deliver the Lie into the hands of the Truth.¹⁰⁹

Heraclitus' fire also judged those who did not choose Logos: "Fire, having come upon them, will judge and seize upon (condemn) all living things."¹¹⁰ Fire was an important part of Heraclitus' universe, it was the "archetypal form of matter."¹¹¹ Fire was pre-existing and ever living:

¹⁰⁵Clement *Paedagogus*. II, 99, 5.

¹⁰⁶Freeman, Fr. 28, p 26.

¹⁰⁷Yasna 31. 13.

¹⁰⁸Bundahish. 34. 6-9, 20-23.

¹⁰⁹Yasna 30. 8.

¹¹⁰Freeman, Fr. 66, p 29.

¹¹¹Kirk, 198.

The universe (cosmos), which is the same for all, was not created by anyone of the gods or mankind, but it was and shall be ever living fire, kindled in measure and quenched in measure.¹¹²

Fire was divine, the foundation and essence of life, and with the power of condemnation.

Fire was also an important part of Zoroastrianism. Fire was the god Ātar, the son of Ahura Mazda.¹¹³ Fire was in all living things -- the essence of life. It was the seventh creation which permeates all other six creations giving them life and growth. There were five different forms of fire: the fire in rocks and other natural sources was Berezišavah; Vahrhān fire was Berezišavah that has been sanctified so it can be used at shrines; Vohufryāna comes from animals and man; Urvāzišta was in earth and plants; and Vāzišta was in clouds.¹¹⁴

Heraclitus saw fire as forming the other world masses, sea and earth, and the changes between the masses:

Fire's turning: first the sea, and of the sea half is earth, the half burner [lightening or fire] . . . earth is dispersed as sea, and is measured so as to form the same proportion as existed before it became earth.¹¹⁵

All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods.¹¹⁶

Fire was in all things through a system of change, but no matter what form it had changed to it always had the proportions of fire. Life occurred because of fire. Like Heraclitus,

¹¹²Clement Strom. V. 104, I.

¹¹³Yasna. 36, 3.

¹¹⁴Bundahis 17, 1-19.

¹¹⁵Clement Strom. V. 104, iii.

¹¹⁶Plutarch de E. 8, 388d.

Zoroastrians believed that fire was the essence of life. For both, it did not matter what form fire was in, it was always fire.

Heraclitus has come down to us as an enigma. He does not fit into early Greek thought. Later Greek philosophers thought of him as stuck up, and not liking common people.¹¹⁷ The strong religious elements in Heraclitus' philosophy made him appear haughty. He believed in one supreme God. But Heraclitus believed that only God could truly understand.¹¹⁸ Humans could never be as wise as God. Heraclitus' god was true wisdom:

That which is wise is one; it is willing and unwilling to be called by the name of Zeus.¹¹⁹

That which is wise is one: to understand the purpose which steers all things through all things.¹²⁰

Ahura Mazda was also constantly invoked as the Lord of Wisdom¹²¹ and knowledge.¹²²

Ahura Mazda could not be deceived, because he saw and knew all things.¹²³

As an Ephesian, Heraclitus was born into a culture that was politically dominated by Iranian culture due to Persian control of Ionia. Thus, Zoroastrian ideas were more accessible than in previous generations. Logos, the harmony of opposites, and fire were

¹¹⁷Diogenes Laertius. XI, 1.

¹¹⁸Freeman, Fr. 78, p 29. "Human nature has no power of understanding, but the divine nature has it."

¹¹⁹Clement Strom. V. 115, 1.

¹²⁰Diogenes Laertius. IX, 1.

¹²¹Yasna 30, 1.

¹²²Yasna 45. 3.

¹²³Yasna 45. 4.

Heraclitus' most important concepts. Similarly, important concepts in Zoroastrianism were aša, a cosmic and ethical dualism, and fire. The similarities between these concepts are striking and offer a better explanation of where Heraclitus got his ideas than to say that he came by them independently.

Conclusion

A Near Eastern concept and structure of the universe substantially influenced Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus. This scheme of the universe came from Near Eastern religion. Religious ideas from all over the Near East were influential, but the prominent influences were from Zoroastrianism and the Hebrews. These two religious influences show that ideas were transmitted to Ionia via land and sea. Zoroastrianism came across the Anatolian plains, while Hebrew concepts were brought to Ionia by Aegean trade. Moreover, whether from the sea or land, contact with the Near East was not sporadic. For over a hundred years, from Thales to Heraclitus, Near Eastern religion was a steady and important influence. Such steady influence came from an abiding intellectual contact with Near Eastern religious ideas, which will be the topic of the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 3

THE IVORY BRIDGE

As Greece emerged out of the Dark Ages, it was closely tied into a broader Aegean economy and culture. An example is the ivory trade of the Archaic period, when Greeks began to give carved ivory figures as gifts to gods and priests. Ivory figures, carved in a northern Levantine (Syrian) style and using Near Eastern religious symbolism, became an intimate part of Greek religious ritual. This is not really surprising: at the turn of the millennium ivory carving was a Levantine speciality. Ivory carving had been a Near Eastern art form and tradition since the 4th millennium B.C.E. In the Near East, ivory was used to depict religious scenes. Carved ivory had a close relationship with religion in the Near East as well as in Greece. The Greeks' intimate use of ivory carvings in ritual indicates that stylistically they felt comfortable with the figures. Most important, Greeks understood the Near Eastern religious symbolism of the figures. Moreover, the religious nature of the Aegean ivory trade meant that ivory carvers had a religious knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek culture, allowing them to transfer religious ideas from east to west. The ivory carvings of the Archaic period are thus material evidence of a transmission of ideas from the Near East to Greece.

Ivory carvers traveled from one of the coastal trading towns of the Levant, where they could get easy access to raw ivory, and the religious centers of the Aegean.

Philostratus' tale about Apollonius of Tyana, a sophist of the early Roman Empire, gives us a vivid image of what the ivory carver's craft must have been like. Apollonius was in Thrace trying to find a ship sailing to Ionia. The captain of a ship bound for Ionia could not take him, because his was only a cargo ship. Apollonius asked what he was carrying, and was told the ship carried statues of gods in stone, gold and ivory. Apollonius lost his temper when the captain would not bargain with him. He told the captain:

Are you so ignorant as to drive away philosophers from your ship, men whom the gods have a special fondness for, and above all at a time when you are making business out of the gods? This is not the way they made statues in the olden times. They did not canvas the cities selling them the gods. They used to carry nothing but their own hands, their mason and ivory working tools; provided the raw materials and fashioned the works of art in the temples themselves.¹

Apollonius' description of the ivory trade in the "olden times" exactly fits the Archaic period.

In the Near East ivory was a luxury good, prized for its decorative qualities. Ivory carving was an art form that used the standard motifs and forms of the Orient. Many of these motifs and forms involved Near Eastern religious symbolism. A female figure staring directly ahead, for example, indicates the figure is of a goddess,² a tree with its branches spreading out represents the tree of life,³ a lion is connected to the sun⁴ and a

¹Philostratus Life of Apollonius. V, 20.

²R. D. Barnett, A catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories. (Publications of the British Museum, 1975.), 78.

³Janice L. Crowley, The Aegean and the East: An Investigation into the Transference of Artistic Motifs Between the Aegean, Egypt, and the Near East in the Bronze Age. (Jonsered, 1982.), 43.

⁴Ibid. 82.

bull to the moon.⁵ In Greek culture ivories were also luxury goods, but their symbolic potency was stronger than in the Near East. Ivory figures were part of the religious ritual - they were given as religious gifts.

To understand ivory figures fully we have to examine why they were given and what purpose they served. Ivory figures were gifts presented and displayed at temples and shrines. So, first, we must look at what role gifts played in Greek religion and society. The majority of ivory figures found throughout Archaic Greece are representations of priests and deities. The Greeks used a system of religious reciprocity that was part of a wider cultural practice.

On a bronze statue of Apollo (700), we have an inscription which states:

Mantiklos [the name of the seer] has dedicated me to the far shooting god with the silver bow, from the tenth of his profit; you Phiobos, give pleasing return.⁶

This inscription shows that the relationship between a god and his worshiper was played out through an exchange of gifts. A deity was presented a gift, which was displayed in the sanctuary/temple, so it could be seen. In return, the worshiper sought the deity's favor. Furthermore, the gift was an important part of Archaic Greek society. In the Odyssey Athena visits Telemachus as a friend from his father's time. The disguised Athena tells Telemachus he should choose a nice gift for her because "it will be worth recompense for you."⁷ Gift giving established and maintained relationships, whether it was between men,

⁵Ibid. 72.

⁶L. H. Jeffery, The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece. (Oxford. Rev. ed., 1990.), 90.

⁷Homer Odyssey. I, 187.

or man and a deity. As gifts became more precious, the expectation and obligation between the two parties increased.

Plato also saw reciprocity between god and man. In Euthypro and Symposium Plato's definition of piety is "sacrifice and prayer."⁸ The religious exchange consisted of prayers and sacrifice from the worshiper to the god, who, in return, was expected to guide and view the worshiper favorably. Reciprocity was at the core of Archaic Greek society and religion. This is what Marcel Mauss calls total prestations:

what they exchange is not exclusively goods and wealth, real and personal property, and things of economic value. They exchange rather courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts; and fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract. Finally, although the prestations and counter-prestations take place under a voluntary guise they are in essence strictly obligatory. . .⁹

When Mauss states that "in essence" the gift and the counter gift are "strictly obligatory" he is telling us that such obligations ran deep into the fabric of society. In the society and religion of Archaic Greece such obligations were strictly adhered to.

Yet ivory carved into human figures held a sacred quality that was more symbolically powerful than other gifts. Greeks used ivory to symbolize human flesh. Such symbolism arose because ivory's origins were mysterious and marginal. Greeks did not know the true origins of ivory until the 5th century.¹⁰ In The Odyssey, Homer warns of

⁸Plato Euthypro. 14ce; Symposium. 202e.

⁹Marcel Mauss, "Gifts and Return Gifts." From Bohannon, P. & Glazer, Mark. Eds. High Points in Anthropology. (Mcgraw-Hill, Inc., 1988), 267.

¹⁰R. D. Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas. Quedem 14. (Jerusalem, 1982.), 43.

ivory's mysterious qualities:

For our feeble dreams have twofold doorways. One is wrought of horn,
and the other ivory. And those dreams which come through the sawn ivory
mislead, bearing a tale which is not fulfilled.¹¹

Homer's warning shows that ivory's marginality gave it a mysterious potency. Ivory's texture and color made it feel similar to human flesh. Without knowing where or what exactly ivory came from it could not be connected to anything profane.

Ivory's human qualities are seen in the myths that grew up around it: Pygmalion, King of Cyprus, made an ivory statue that was so lifelike it actually came to life; and there was a story of the gods giving an ivory shoulder to the Phrygian Pelops as an artificial limb.¹² Both stories involve sacred events: a miracle and a divine gift.

For Greeks, a carved ivory figure was a gift that became divine when presented at a sanctuary. The act of giving ivory carved as a priest/priestess or deity was more religiously potent than other precious gifts. Ivory figures of priests/priestesses presented at sanctuaries immortalized them: being immortal also meant deification.¹³ Deification was caused by ivory's humanizing qualities and the figures' display at the temple or shrine.¹⁴

¹¹Homer *Odyssey* 19, 565.

¹²Ovid *Metamorphoses* X.

¹³Homer *Odyssey*. V. 218; *Iliad*. II. 447. "Immortal and free from old age." Being immortal was god like to the Archaic Greeks. If you could not die you were a god.

¹⁴Charles W. Fornara, translator and editor, *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War*. (Cambridge University Press, 1977.), 37. We have an inscription from Argos which states: "When these men were Demiourgoi, these things were made in (the temple) of Athena. The objects and heirlooms and the [. . . were dedicated] to Athena Polias. The heirlooms for the use of the state shall not be used by a private person outside of A[thena] Polias. But the State shall use them for [sacred rites]. If anyone damages them, he shall repair them. The Deiorgos shall impose the amount. The temple

Gifts were displayed as long as the sanctuary existed. An ivory figure was tied into the existence of the sanctuary and the religion. A priest/priestess was, therefore, deified by an ivory figure presented at a sanctuary.

An ivory representation of a priest/priestess honored a single person, while a precious gift could only be given to the chosen god, or the temple. The gift aided the worshiper in the relationship with the deity of the temple; if a priest/priestess looked upon a lay person favorably, so would a deity. From the many carvings of clergy present at the Temple of Artemis, in Ephesus, it is clear that the Syrian carving style was accepted by the worshipers and the priesthood.

Giving a god an ivory representation of itself brought the deity to the physical world. Again, ivory's symbolic use as flesh humanized the deity. The humanized god was brought closer to the worshiper, and the void between god and worshiper was closed (minimized). Once the figure was presented at the temple, it was likely that instead of praying to the statue, which was in the temple, the ivory figure of the deity was worshiped. The ivory figure, thus, became a personal shrine. An individual shrine made the relationship between the deity and the worshiper more intimate. Most important, the worshiper had to feel comfortable with the carving, and fully believe in what the figure represented -- the symbolism of the carving had to be understood and accepted by the worshiper.

According to Pausanias it was not until the 6th century that the first Greeks,

warden shall see to these matters." This inscription shows that worshipers were within easy access of gifts and 'heirlooms.'

Dipeonus and Scyllis, represented human flesh in ivory.¹⁵ But we have ivory figures from Archaic Greece dating back to the ninth century. Pausanias' statement tells us that Greeks did not have an ivory carving tradition. The majority of ivories depicting humans, found during the Archaic periods, were carved in a Syrian style, which indicates that north Levantine craftsmen dominated the Greek trade in ivory figures.

As we have seen, the Greek market was primarily a religious one. Thus, ivory carvers plied their trade at the religious centers of the Aegean. To be successful, an ivory carver had to know all the religious symbols and motifs of Near Eastern and Greek culture. The motifs and symbolism used in the carvings show that ivory carvers imposed Near Eastern religious symbolism onto Greek religious concepts.

Near Eastern concepts are also seen in other aspects of Greek art in what has been termed the Orientalizing period (750-650 B.C.E.). The most obvious Near Eastern motifs are naturalistic. Greeks began to depict lotus flowers, palms, sphinxes, griffins, lions, panthers, and chimeras.¹⁶ To Greeks, lions and panthers were as fantastic as sphinxes and chimeras. Ivory carving was part of the "Orientalizing period", but it was also different. In the ivory carvings of the Archaic period there are fewer naturalistic motifs. Instead, there are more carvings of deities and humans.

The two peoples who dominated the ivory trade in the Near East and the Aegean were the Phoenicians and the Syrians. Yet the origins of ivory carving are not found in the Levant. Egypt is the earliest known ivory carving state in the Near East and the Aegean.

¹⁵Pausanais VIII, 46.

¹⁶John Boardman, ed., The Oxford History of Classical Art. (Oxford University Press, 1993.), Pre-Classical Greece, by Alan Johnstone, 30-39.

The earliest Egyptian ivory figures go back to 3500 B.C.E. (fig. 1).¹⁷ There is Egyptian influence in both Phoenician and Syrian ivory carving, but it is especially obvious in the

Figure 1. Egyptian ivory of a dwarf girl. Ht. 5.4 cm. c. 3500 B. C. E.



southern Levantine tradition (Phoenician). From Megiddo we have a similar carving of a prostrate girl holding a bowl (fig. 2). And from Egypt we have a carving of a prostrate girl holding a cosmetic box (fig. 3).¹⁸ Also found in Megiddo was a 12th century carving of

¹⁷Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas, PL 5.

¹⁸Ibid. Plate 11.

Bes, an Egyptian god of fertility and dance,¹⁹ similar to a 14th century Egyptian carving of Bes (fig. 4).²⁰ An Egyptian influence is seen in the Syrian carving of a seated figure (fig. 5).²¹ A Syrian style emerges, however, in the ivory plaque of a goddess between two rampant goats (fig. 6),²² and the carving of a female head (fig. 7).²³ Both these carvings have more feeling for form, and are more natural than carvings from the southern Levant and Egypt. Although the origins of ivory carving are Egyptian, it clearly became a speciality of the Levant.

A prerequisite for ivory carving is a ready supply of raw material. The raw materials for the growth of this local speciality were close at hand. In the second millennium large herds of elephants roamed the valleys of the Euphrates and its tributaries.²⁴ In 1464 an Assyrian general described the great elephant drive near Carchemish.²⁵ Six centuries later Ashurnazirpal II (883-59) was able to collect live examples for a zoological park.²⁶ Soon after this the Syrian elephants became extinct.²⁷

¹⁹Lewis Spence, Ancient Egyptian Myths and Legends. (New York: Dover Publishing, 1990.), 281.

²⁰Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas, Plate 11.

²¹Ibid. Plate 23.

²²Ibid. Plate 24.

²³Ibid. Plate 23.

²⁴J. H. Bearstead, Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest, vol. II (The University of Chicago Press, 1906-7.), 227.

²⁵D. D. Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, vol. I (The University of Chicago Press, 1926-7.), 247.

²⁶Ibid. 520.

²⁷R. Miller, "Elephants, Ivory, and Charcoal: an Ecological Perspective." Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 264 (1986), 29-43; L. G. Hayward, "The Origin of Raw Elephant Ivory Used in Greece and Aegean in the Late Bronze Age." Antiquity 64 (1990), 103-9.

Figure 2. Egyptian swimming-girl holding a cosmetic box, 14th century B. C. E.

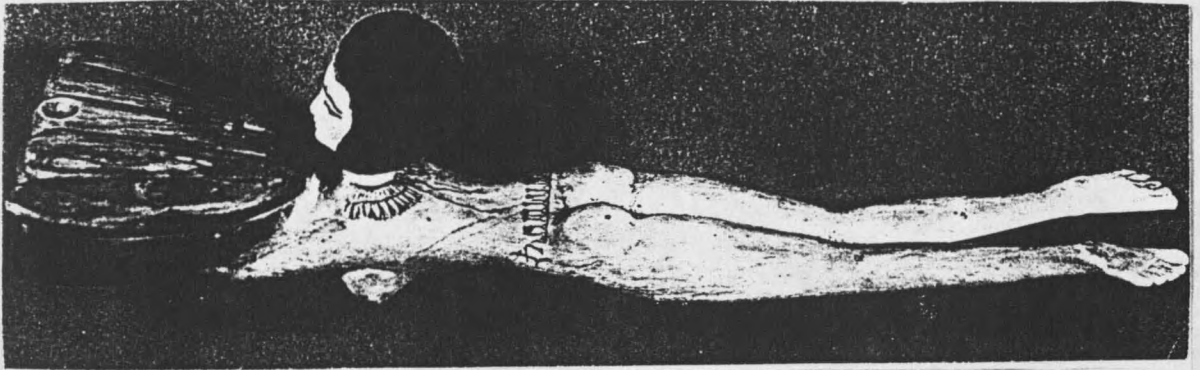


Figure 3. Syrian swimming-girl holding a bowl. L. 17 cm.

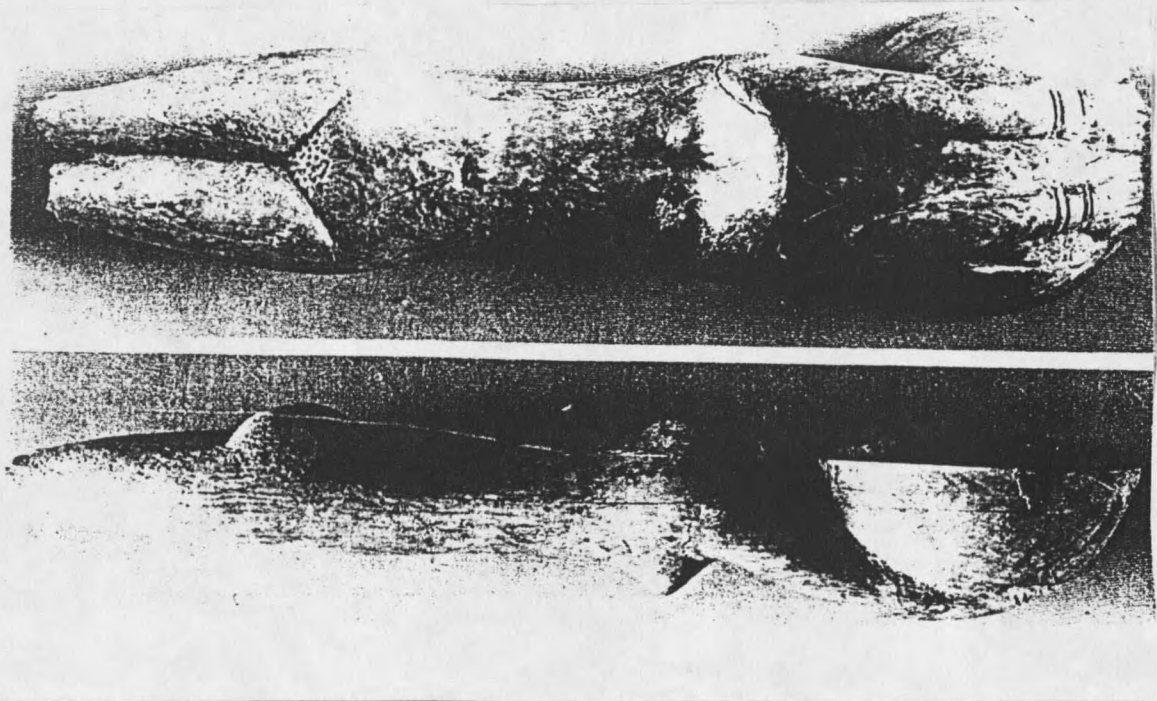


Figure 4. Bes (Egyptian god of dance and fertility) figures from Egypt and Syria.



Syrian Bes running.



Egyptian Bes 14th century.

Figure 5. Seated ivory Syrian figure from Kamid el-Loz. Ht. 7cm.



Figure 6. Goddess between two rampant goats, plaque from Ras Shamra. Ht. 13.7 cm.



Figure 7. Female Head from Ras Shamara. Ht. 15 cm.



Other sources for ivory were Africa and India. African ivory came from Sudan and Somalia through Egypt.²⁸ Our earliest reference to Indian ivory is Hiram of Tyre's expedition to India.²⁹ The trade in raw ivory shows the vast trading networks of the Near East. It was a network in which the Phoenicians and Syrians were an important element.

²⁸Olga Krzyszkowska, *Ivory and Related Materials: an Illustrated Guide*. (Castle Cary Press; Somerset, 1990.), 15-22. Hippopotamus ivory was also used.

²⁹I Kings, 10, 22.

The political chaos of the Near Eastern Dark Ages freed up independent trade, which allowed Phoenicians and Syrians to establish trading empires. To fully understand how this occurred, we have to go back to the 14th century. This was a period which saw the rise of imperial power throughout the Near East. Egypt and the Hittite Empire had borders in the Levant: Egypt controlled southern Levant; the Hittites had taken over Cilicia and northern Levant; and the Assyrians replaced the Mittannians as the dominant power to the east. During this period we see the Palatial system at its most powerful. Palaces controlled all social, economic, political, and military life -- there was an absolute centralization of power. To be able to prosper during this period people had to be tied into the economies of the palace.

One of the reasons for the decline of the Palatial system was international competition over trade, which eventually culminated in military conflict. Hittites tried to stop Ahhiyawan (Cypriot/Greek?) ships from entering Amurru³⁰, and the Hittites and Egyptians clashed in 1284 at Kadesh.³¹ There were clashes between states and merchants over the state monopoly of trade. But the most insidious cause of the Palatial system's decline was the growth of mobile inland and coastal populations. These populations attacked and invaded cities and states, also putting pressure on trade through piracy and raids. The best known groups of these mobile populations were the "Sea Peoples,"³² their

³⁰Hans G. Gütterbock, "The Hittites and the Aegean World: Part 1. The Ahhiyawa Problem Reconsidered," *American Journal of Archaeology* 87 (1983), 136.

³¹Pritchard, "Egyptian and Hittite Treaties," 199-205.

³²Ibid. "Egyptian Historical Texts," 262.

inland parallels were the camel riding "Habiru"³³ and the Armaean tribes.³⁴ By the 12th century, the attacks and the destruction caused by these mobile populations shook the foundations of centralized power and prompted the collapse of the Palatial system, which, in turn, caused the weakening of imperial power in the Near East: Egyptian power in the Levant weakened and the Hittite Empire was fragmented.

The collapse of the palatial system allowed independent Phoenician and Syrian city-states to thrive. Also, Phoenician and Syrian independence ushered in a period of maritime expansion. Colonies were founded in Sicily and North Africa, and there was also a search for new sources of gold and exotic goods (such as ivory from India). The opening of the Mediterranean to the Levant also allowed the rise of entrepreneurial trade, especially in the Aegean. New, smaller, vessels, that were more maneuverable and needed fewer rowers, opened up the Aegean to small scale independent maritime trade.³⁵ Levantine craftsmen could now more easily access the growing Aegean market.

The growth of independent states allowed Phoenician and Syrian trading empires to grow and prosper. With their new found success and identity, Phoenician and Syrian carving styles become distinct. Thanks to the Assyrian kings of the 9th to the 7th centuries we have large collections of both Phoenician and Syrian ivories. The ivories were discovered at Nimrud near Mosul. The Phoenician ivories were found in the North-

³³Ibid. "Akkadian Letters," 483.

³⁴Andrew and Susan Sherrat. "From Luxuries to Commodities: The Nature of Mediterranean Bronze Age Trading Systems," in Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean, ed. N.H. Gale (Jonsered, 1991.), 373.

³⁵Ibid.

West palace in 1847.³⁶ Characteristically, Phoenician art demonstrates great technical skill and symmetry, but no feel for form. Egyptian motifs and concepts are borrowed wholesale to show Semitic ideas (fig. 8).³⁷

Phoenician ivory carvers were specialists at inlaying furniture with ebony and ivory. There are two almost perfectly preserved examples of ivory inlaid Phoenician furniture from Salamis in Cyprus.³⁸ Phoenician ivories have been found on Cyprus, Rhodes, at Corinth, and on Crete. The Phoenician use of Egyptian symbolism made it harder to tap into the Greek market. Greeks preferred a more natural style. Also, there were higher costs in materials and transportation for inlaid furniture. Economically, the Greek market was less viable for the Phoenicians. In the East, on the other hand, Phoenician furniture and inlaid objects dominated the market. Pieces have been found throughout Mesopotamia, Assyria, and the Levant. Four sites in the Near East have produced large collections of Phoenician ivories -- Nimrud (the largest), Khorsabad, Arslan, and Samaria.³⁹

The largest collection of Syrian ivories was found in 1854 in the South-East palace at Nimrud. It consists of unguent boxes, receptacles for makeup, little couchant calf figures, and full length figures of naked women. Syrian ivories have a firm and distinct style. Human figures have a squat build; the faces have long noses, large staring

³⁶Barnett, A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories. (Publications of the British Museum, 1975.), 15-17.

³⁷Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas. Plates 46-48.

³⁸Ibid. Plate 52

³⁹Barnett, "Early Greek and Oriental Ivories." Journal of Hellenistic Studies 68 (1948) 3-4.

Figure 8. Phoenician ivory of a sphinx from 9th century Nimrud. Ht. 19 cm.



eyes, a small chin, and a pinched mouth (fig. 9).⁴⁰ As in the Bronze Age tradition of northern Levant, there is naturalistic feel for form. Greeks preferred the more creative and life-like style of the Syrians.

Figure 9. Females Heads Syrian style from the South-East Palace, Nimrud.



Some important motifs found in Syrian ivories are: animal combat, hero stabbing a griffin or lion, naked women wearing a polos hat, rosettes and the Sacred Tree. These motifs are found throughout the Near East, and show that Syria was more culturally tied into the Near East than Phoenicia. Geographically, Syrians were exposed to the Iranian plains, Mesopotamia, and Egypt through the southern Levant. Phoenicians, on the other hand, were under a constant Egyptian sphere of influence, an influence clearly seen in the motifs and style of their art. The major Near Eastern sites of Syrian ivories are Nimrud (the

⁴⁰Barnett, A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories. S 95-184.

largest), Al Mina, Hasanlu, Tell Halaf, Altintepe, and Gordion.⁴¹ In the Aegean, we have ivories at Lindos and Camirus on Crete, the Idaean cave, Samos, Ephesus, Sparta, Perachora, Athens, and Delphi.⁴²

By the middle of the 9th century Syrian independence was being compromised. Its brief greatness, built on control of the trade-routes down the Euphrates to Mesopotamia, was seen as a threat by the Assyrians. With the Assyrian conquest of Bit-Adini the Syrian frontier retreated to Carchemish. In 849 Carchemish was captured and became an Assyrian colony. For over a century Syrians keep retreating and by 711 Assyrian dominance was complete. With the loss of independence Syrian art petered out. Few Syrian ivories have been found in the Near East after the 7th century.

The Phoenicians gained from the elimination of their business rivals. Their trade reached its heights in the 8th century. But Phoenician greatness was to be short lived. Assyrian aggression also put pay to the Phoenicians. Although Tyre fought off Assyrian sieges and attacks, Esarhadon crushed Sidon in the mid 7th century. The destruction of one of the two leading Phoenician cities was a turning point in Phoenician history from which it never completely recovered. Phoenician ivory carving also suffered. After the 7th century, the quality of craftsmanship is poor, and there are few Phoenician ivories found in the Near East.

The disappearance of Phoenician and Syrian ivory carvers from the Near East suggests they moved to the Aegean market, because it is in this location that we find

⁴¹Barnett, "Early Greek and Oriental Ivories." 4-5

⁴²Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas, 48.

significant numbers of ivory figures. Phoenicians, however, must have adapted to the Greeks' taste for a more natural form of the Syrian style.

The turmoil of Assyrian invasions encouraged many craftsmen to flee west to the growing Aegean markets. As a result the Near Eastern ivory carving tradition diminished. By the 7th century the ivory trade was centered in the Aegean. The absence of a Greek ivory carving tradition, and the development of a Greek taste for oriental art, created a market for ivory carvers. At the end of the 8th century ivory figures become more numerous in the Aegean. This was the same period Assyria became dominant in northern Levant. This strongly suggests that Syrians were working the Aegean market.

Most of the carvings found in Archaic Greece were carved in a Syrian style. An ivory figure of a nude woman wearing a pilos hat, dated approximately 750, was found in the Dipylon cemetery in Athens (fig. 10).⁴³ Her facial features are Syrian: round staring eyes, pinched mouth, and a small pointed chin. The body is long and elegant, which is not exactly a Syrian style, but there is a natural feel for form which is Syrian. We also have a figure of Apollo and a lion from Delphi dating back to 700 (fig. 11).⁴⁴ This figure has a squat body, staring eyes, a pinched mouth and a small pointy chin, which are all Syrian in style. A lion's inclusion by Apollo's side shows a clear Near Eastern influence. The temple of Artemis in Ephesus has given us several ivory representations of priests and priestesses. They are all carved in a Syrian style, but two figures especially stand out.⁴⁵

⁴³Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas, Plate 56.

⁴⁴Ibid. Plate 57.

⁴⁵D. G. Hogarth, Excavations at Ephesus: the Archaic Artemisia of Ephesus, (Publications of the British Museum, 1912.), Plate XXIV.

Figure 10. Naked goddess from the Dipylon cemetery, Athens. c. 750 B. C.E.



Figure 11. Apollo and a lion, from Delphi. Ht. 24 cm. c. 700 B. C. E.



One, from early 7th century Ephesus, is of a priestess with a swan's head attached to her head-gear (fig. 12). The facial features and the shape of the body are of Syrian style. Also, down the priestess' back runs a thick braid of hair, similar to a figure in the Syrian collection from Nimrud (fig. 13).⁴⁶ The second figure is of a priest, again with prominent Syrian features (fig. 14). In the damaged figure of a swimming girl holding a bowl from Athens (fig. 15),⁴⁷ we have clear resemblance to figures from 14th century Egypt.⁴⁸ More important, this figure looks similar to the swimming girl figures from the Syrian collection of Nimrud (fig. 16).⁴⁹ All these ivory figures show an obvious Syrian carving style.

From Samos we have what is probably the most beautifully carved ivory figure from Archaic Greece. It is of a young kneeling athlete, dated approximately to 650 (fig. 17).⁵⁰ His eyes are large and staring, the nose is long and pointed, his mouth is large with full lips, and his chin is strong. The artist has caught the form and tone of the athlete's physique. This piece was a meticulously carved portrait. Also, the posture of the athlete suggests he was a real person. Certainly the attention to form indicates that the artist closely studied the human figure. The craftsmanship shows the artist was experienced and highly skilled. Because there was not an ivory carving tradition in Greece by the seventh century, it is doubtful a Greek had the technical skill to carve this figure. Moreover, the

⁴⁶Barnett, A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories, S 211.

⁴⁷Barnett, "Early Greek and Oriental Ivories," 4, Fig. 3.

⁴⁸Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas, Plate 11.

⁴⁹Barnett, A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories, S 93.

⁵⁰Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas, Plate 62.

feel for form and tone, and the skill of the piece strongly suggest a carver trained in a Syrian tradition.

Figure 12. Priestess and a swan's head. Ht. 22.5 cm. c. 600 B. C. E.



Figure 13. Nude Female, wearing a crown with plaited hair running down her back.



Figure 14. High priest. Ht. 11 cm. c. 600 B. C. E.



Figure 15. Swimming girl holding a bowl, Athens.

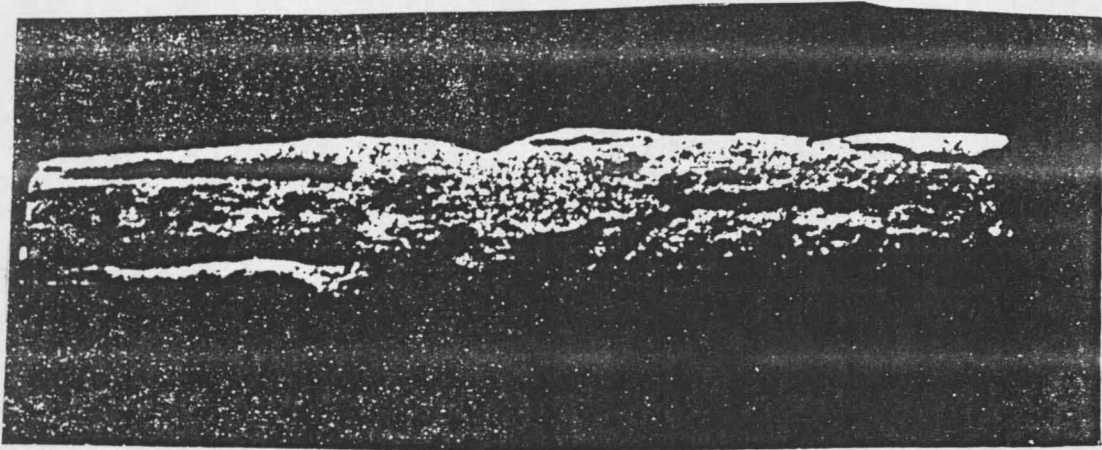


Figure 16. Swimming girls holding a cosmetic spoon, Nimrud.

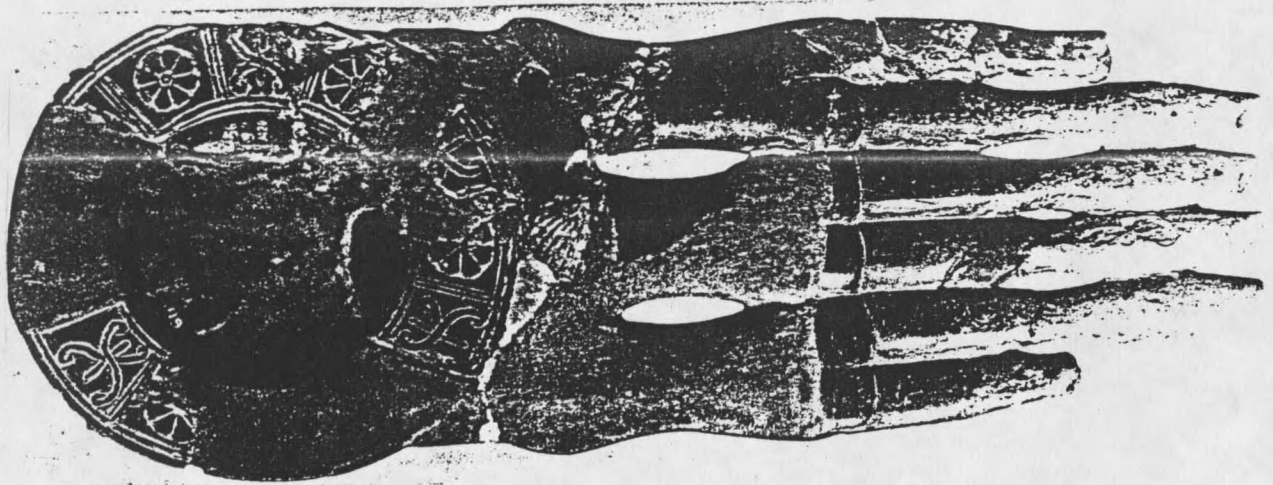
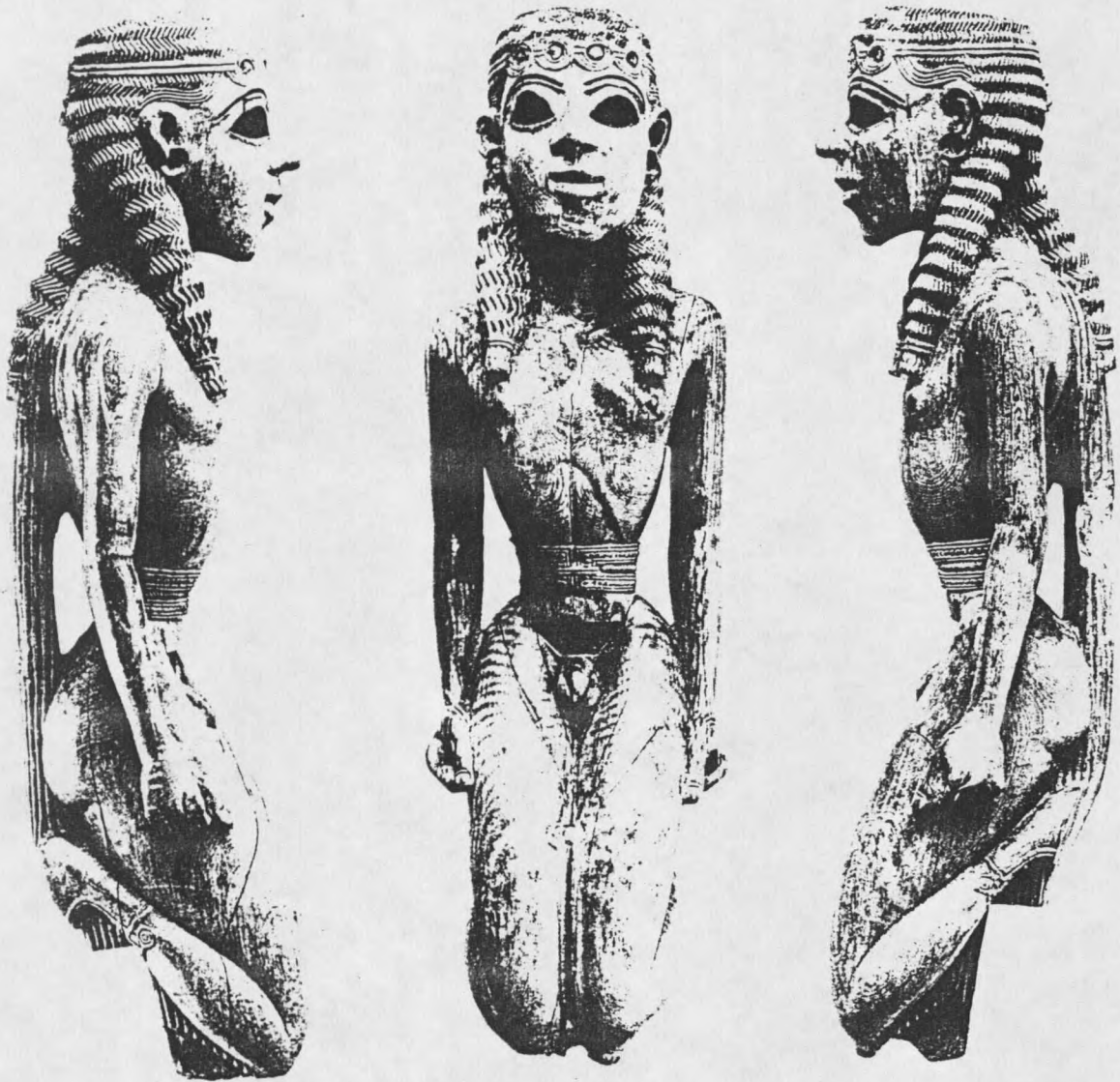


Figure 17. Kneeling boy from Samos. Ht. 14.5 cm. c. 650.



If these ivories are examined more closely, it can be seen that the ivory carvers used and understood the symbolism of Near Eastern religion. The nude female from the

Diplyon cemetery in Athens is a representation of a goddess. From Near Eastern symbolism, we know that a frontal facing female is a deity.⁵¹ The box polos hat is worn by the Syrian goddess Kubaba, a goddess in the same mold as Ishtar.⁵² Ishtar had strong connections with two Greek goddesses, Athena and Aphrodite.⁵³ We have an ivory figure of Aphrodite and Peitho from Ephesus. Here the goddess is also naked. From the nakedness of the figure, it is most probably Aphrodite, a more seductive deity than Athena. Again, from Ephesus, we have a frontal relief of a nude woman holding her breasts (fig. 18).⁵⁴ A female figure holding her breasts was a popular and old Near Eastern sign for a fertility goddess. It is also a motif and symbol that is seen in metal figurines from Bronze Age Levant.⁵⁵ Again, it is similar to the representation of the roles of the Archaic Artemisia of Ephesus was as a goddess of fertility. With the figure of Apollo and a lion we again see Near Eastern symbolism, which depicts lions with solar goddess Nanai, a form of Ishtar.⁵⁶ Figure 18 is a representation of Artemis. One of the

⁵¹Barnett, A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories, 81-2.

⁵²Ibid. 105.

⁵³Charles Penaglase, Greek Myth and Mesopotamia: Parallels and Influence in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod, (Routledge, 1994.) 159-180/230-7.

⁵⁴Hogarth, Excavations at Ephesus, Plate XXIV.

⁵⁵Ora Negbi, Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Syro-Plastin Figurines (Tel Aviv University; Institute of Archaeology, 1976.), 121-136.

Fertility goddesses were especially popular in the Levant, and many figurines have been found at Ras Shamara, Megiddo, and Byblos throughout the Late Bronze Age. See the "Judeideh" Group, Figs. 84-85; Pls. 40, 61; The "Byblos" Group, fig. 88; Pl. 43; The "Byblo-Palestine" Group, Fig. 94.

⁵⁶Barnett, A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories, 102.

Figure 18. Relief of a nude woman holding her breasts, Ephesus. 5.7cm.



deities such as Utu,⁵⁷ Šamaš and Šapaš.⁵⁸ Moreover, one of Apollo's roles was as sun god. The use of Near Eastern symbolism is thus obvious. In this carving Apollo has simply replaced a Near Eastern solar deity.

The keys to the transference of Near Eastern religious knowledge are in the relationship between the carver and the buyer, and the transference of ivory carving as a technical skill to Archaic Greece. There was a growing desire for Near Eastern artifacts during the Archaic period. From Apollonius' description of how the craftsmen 'carried nothing but their skill, a few tools, and ivory',⁵⁹ we know that figures were not carved until the craftsmen got to the temple or sanctuary. In turn, this indicates that much of the work was commissioned, or that a figure was carved at the site and then displayed for

⁵⁷Utu is also a god of wisdom.

⁵⁸Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories*, 71.

⁵⁹Philostratus *Life of Apollonius*, V, 20.

sale. There was a commercial discourse between the craftsmen and the potential buyer: an explanation of the symbolism may have been needed, especially in the higher quality pieces. The ivory carver's knowledge of both Greek and Near Eastern religion allowed him to translate gods and symbols from one culture to the other.

The majority of ivories found at Ephesus are Syrian. We also have some lower quality carvings at Ephesus, which indicate craftsmen still learning their trade. Greeks did not have an ivory carving tradition, but Greeks did learn to carve ivory. Ivory carving was a craft that could not be learned by observation. For a technical skill to be learned there has to be steady contact between teacher and pupil. Moreover, all religious and cultural knowledge relevant to the ivory trade also had to be passed to apprentices, because it was at the heart of the craft. In Archaic Ephesus Greeks were taught to carve ivory by Syrians, or craftsmen trained in a Syrian carving tradition.

The temple of Artemis, at Ephesus, was one of the most important religious sanctuaries in the Aegean so there was a large and constant market. Yet Ephesus was culturally tied into Anatolia and the Aegean as well as to Greece. This cultural fusion is seen in the religion of the Ephesian Artemis. The religion was a blend of the Greek Artemis and the Anatolian mother/fertility goddess Cybele (see Chapter 5). Fertility goddesses were also important in Near Eastern culture. Similarly, it was the role of mother and nourisher that dominated the Ephesian religion. The strong Anatolian presence in the religion and the importance of fertility goddesses in the Near East thus made it an environment favorable for Syrian ivory carvers to settle and prosper.

In conclusion, Ionian Presocratic philosophy and the ivory trade both have their roots in Near Eastern religion. The style and symbolism of ivory figures found in Archaic Greece show a material transference of religious ideas from the Near East to Greek culture. When the Near Eastern influence of the Ionian Presocratics is put in the context of the ivory figures found at Ephesus, we have a source for the transference of Near Eastern ideas in Ionia. Ivory carvings religious foundations allowed carvers to translate Near Eastern religious symbolism and concepts for a Greek customers. Moreover, the Levant's geographical and cultural exposure to Egypt and Mesopotamia gave Syrian and Phoenician ivory carvers the ability to transfer Semitic and non-Semitic Near Eastern religious ideas to an emerging and developing Greek society and culture.

At the foundation of this Chapter's argument is communication of Near Eastern ideas between Levantine ivory carvers and Greeks. Communication between people of the Near East and Greeks is probably the most overlooked subject in ancient history. The next Chapter examines the transference of the West Semitic alphabet to Greece, and its strong implications that West semites and Greeks communicated.

CHAPTER 4

PHOENICIAN LETTERS

Introduction

It was well known to the ancients that the Greek alphabet was borrowed from the Phoenicians. Herodotus is the earliest textual evidence of the transmission:

Phoenicians who came with Cadmus -- amongst whom were the Gerphyreai -- introduced into Greece, after their settlement in the country, a number of accomplishments, of which the most famous was writing, an art until then, unknown to the Greeks.¹

The transfer of the alphabet shows an intimate level of contact with Phoenicians.² For the alphabet to be transferred, there had to have been Phoenicians and Greeks who could communicate.³ What has generally been overlooked by scholars is that the transfer of the

¹Herodotus 5, 58-9.

²Walter Burkett, The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Early Greek Culture in the Archaic Age, translated by Margret E. Pindar and Walter Burkett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.), 28. The implications of Phoenicians teaching Greeks the alphabet have been touched on by Walter Burkett. He makes the point that teaching the alphabet presupposes an intimacy of contact.

³L. H. Jeffery, The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.), 2-3; J. N. Coldstream, Geometric Greece (New York: St. Martins Press, 1977.), 205. Both Jeffery and Coldstream have no problem with the idea of Phoenicians teaching the alphabet to Greeks. However, they and other scholars have not picked up on the implications of such intimate interaction.

alphabet also involved the communication of *knowledge* from Phoenicians to Greeks.

Scholars agree that the Greek alphabet has a West Semitic origin. What makes this obvious is that the names of the Greek letters (alpha, beta, gamma, delta, etc.) do not have a Greek meaning, but are Semitic words (Table 1);⁴

Table 1. Greek and West Semitic Alphabets

Phoenician Letter Names	Greek Letter Names
'Alep "Ox"	Alpha
Bēt "House"	Beta
Gimmel "Throw-stick"	Gamma
Hē' "Lo!"	Epsilon
Wāw "Peg"	Upsilon
Zayn "Weapon"	Zeta
Hēt "h"	Eta
Tēt "t"	Theta
Yōd "Hand"	Iota
Kapp "Palm"	Kappa
Lamed "Goad"	Lambda
Mēm "Water"	Mu
Nūn "Fish"	Nu
Samek "Fish"	Xi
'Ayin "Eye"	Omicron
Pē "mouth"	Pi
Ṣade "Cricket"	San

⁴Joseph Naveh, Early History of the Alphabet: an Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Paleography (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Hebrew University, 1982.), 175.

Qop "Monkey"	Koppa
Resh "Head"	Rho
Šin "Tooth"	Sigma
Tau "Mark"	Tau
Dālet "Door"	Delta

that the letter sequence of the Greek alphabet is identical to the West Semitic alphabet; and that the forms of early Greek characters are similar to West Semitic letters (Table 2).

Table 2.

Late Proto-Canaanite (1200-1050 B. C. E.)	Archaic Greek	Classical Greek	Latin
𐤀 𐤁 𐤂 𐤃	𐤀 𐤁 𐤂 𐤃	A	
𐤄 𐤅 𐤆	𐤄 𐤅 𐤆 𐤇 𐤈	B	
𐤉 𐤊 𐤋	𐤉 𐤊 𐤋 𐤌 𐤍	Γ C	
𐤎 𐤏 𐤐	𐤎 𐤏 𐤐	Δ D	
E	E	E	
𐤑	𐤑 𐤒 𐤓		F
I	I	Z G	
𐤔 𐤕 𐤖	𐤔 H	H	
𐤗	𐤗	Θ	
𐤘 𐤙	𐤘 𐤙 𐤚 𐤛	I J	
𐤜 𐤝	𐤜 𐤝	K	
𐤞 𐤟 𐤠 𐤡	𐤞 𐤟 𐤠 𐤡	Λ L	
𐤢 𐤣	𐤢 𐤣 𐤤 𐤥	M	
𐤦 𐤧 𐤨	𐤦	N	

𐤀	𐤁	𐤂
⊙ ⊙	⊙ ⊙	⊙
𐤃 𐤄	𐤅 𐤆	π ρ
𐤇 𐤈 𐤉	𐤊 𐤋	
𐤌	𐤍 𐤎	ϑ
𐤏 𐤐 𐤑	𐤒 𐤓 𐤔	ϕ ρ
𐤕 𐤖	𐤗 𐤘 𐤙	σ ς
𐤚	𐤛 𐤜	τ
	𐤝 𐤞 𐤟	υ υν υω
	𐤠 𐤡	φ - χ
	𐤢 𐤣 𐤤	χ ψ
	𐤥 𐤦 𐤧	ψ ζ
		ω

Also, because the Phoenician alphabet did not have vowels, Greeks took West Semitic letters, which did not correspond with the Greek language, and made them vowels (Table 3).⁵

Table 3.

West Semitic Letters	Greek Vowels
yôd	ι
'alep	α
hē	ε
hêt	η

⁵Driver, *Semitic Writing*, 155.

waw	U
'ayin	O

Dating the Transfer

Dating the transfer of the alphabet has caused much controversy. At one extreme, Bernal believes the alphabet was transferred before 1400.⁶ At the other, Jeffery believes it was in the mid 8th century, because there is no physical evidence of writing before the middle of the 8th century.⁷ But an 8th century dating of the transmission appears to be too late. That there is no evidence of writing before the 8th century is because Archaic Greeks wrote on leather and animal skins. In fact, in 5th century Ionia papyrus books were still called diphtherai (meaning 'skins').⁸

The main problem with a mid 8th century date is that it does not allow enough time for different dialects and scripts to have developed by 700. The style, formula, patterns of imagery, use of simile and narrative strategies in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* show that the composer was literate. The style of the composer was not that of an oral poet.⁹

⁶Martin Bernal, The Cadamean Letters: Transmission of the Alphabet before 1400 B.C. (Wiona Lake: Eisenbraums, 1990.); L. H. Jeffery, The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.).

⁷Jeffery, The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece, 46.

⁸Herodotus 5, 58. For the same reasons, there is little left of the Phoenician/Canaanite literature which Philo of Byblos discusses. See Albert I. Baumgarten, The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos (Lieden: E.J. Brill, 1981.); Herman S. Schibli, Pherekydes of Syros (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.).

⁹Louis H. Feldman, "Homer and the Near East: The rise of the Greek Genius" Biblical Archaeologist 59:1 (March, 1996.), 16.

How could the complex literary styles of the Iliad and Odyssey have arisen in fifty years? The earliest known Greek lyric poetry is from Archilochus of Paros (680-640). Son of a Parian aristocrat who made his living as a mercenary soldier, he could not have won any patronage for the poetry he wrote; he was an amateur. Archilochus relates: "I am two things: a fighter who follows the master of Battles, and one who understands the gift of the Muses' love."¹⁰ Archilochus was evidently not a pioneer in his literary efforts. It may be assumed that others, at least a generation before him, were writing poetry. Could such widespread literacy have developed within thirty years? A mid 8th century date cannot explain either the similarities between early Greek and proto-Canaanite alphabets, which were used between 1200-1050 (See Table 2).

Phoenician Presence in the Aegean

Archaeological evidence of strong Phoenician presence in the Aegean suggests that the alphabet was transferred before 900. By 1100, the Phoenician alphabet was widely used throughout the coastal towns of northern Palestine.¹¹ Also, by 1100, Phoenicians were expanding into the Aegean. Phoenician expansion began with a close commercial relationship with Cyprus which dates back to the Middle Bronze Age, and intensified through the Late Bronze Age. By the early 11th century, there was a strong and

¹⁰Richmond Lattimore, trans., Greeks Lyrics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.), 1.

¹¹P. Kyle McCarter, "Early Transmission of the Alphabet" Biblical Archaeologist 37 (1974): 59.

influential Phoenician presence in Cyprus, which was used as a staging area for the rest of the Aegean.

Crete has yielded two important discoveries that show Phoenicians were present on the island: first, 10th century Phoenician temples in southern Crete; second, a Phoenician inscription, the oldest found in the Aegean, from the 9th century Tekke Tomb.¹² The dating of the inscription and the bowl it was inscribed on has caused much debate. Coldstream has shown that the bowl could date back to the mid 10th century (i.e., the bowl could be 150 years older than the burial).¹³ Of course the inscription could have been written on the bowl at any time before the burial. Naveh, however, dates the inscription to the 11th century, because of its similarity to inscriptions found on arrow heads from Syria.¹⁴

For Aegean traders Crete made an excellent base: it had access to the Anatolian coast, the other Aegean islands and the Greek mainland. Clearly, Phoenicians took advantage of Crete's location. From the second half of the 10th century, Levantine gold, faience, and glass jewelry, as well as Egyptianized faience objects, have been found in Lefkandi, indicating trade with the Levant and Phoenicians. Euboeans were receiving Levantine luxury goods before the 9th century.¹⁵

¹²Ora Negbi, "Early Phoenician Presence in the Mediterranean Islands," 607-609.

¹³J. N. Coldstream, "Greeks and Phoenicians in the Aegean" in Phönizier im Westen, ed., H.G. Niemeyer (Mainz, 1982.), 265.

¹⁴Naveh, Early History of the Alphabet, 39-41.

¹⁵Negbi, "Early Phoenician Presence in the Mediterranean islands," 606-607.

Transmission of the Alphabet

The transmission of the alphabet probably occurred between 1100 and 900. Naveh believes the alphabet was transmitted in the 11th century.¹⁶ His argument is based on epigraphical similarities between 11th century Northwest Semitic scripts and early Greek scripts (see Table 2). Similarities between the alphabets are strong. McCarter believes the alphabet started its transmission in the 11th century and was gradually diffused into Greek society until the 8th century, an idea which allows the Greek language-system time to develop and vary. The adaptation of Semitic letters into Greek vowels also shows the gradual process of assimilation. Greeks went back to the Phoenician alphabet, their source, to find suitable letters. It was also a process that indicates a close study of the Phoenician language and an understanding of the needs of the Greek language. Only a person with the ability to use both languages could have achieved this. In the Odyssey, there is a suggestion that there were Greeks in the Archaic period who were multilingual: "Crete is multilingual; in it are Achaians, proud Pure-Cretans, and Kydonians, three tribed Dorians and godlike Pelasgians."¹⁷ Furthermore, such adaptation could only occur because of consistent and continuing contact with Phoenicians. Adaptation of the West Semitic alphabet was the transmission of knowledge from the Near East to Greece on a large scale.

Alphabetic writing began in the Levant in the 18th or 17th century.¹⁸ So

¹⁶Naveh, 175-186.

¹⁷Odyssey, 19, 175-7.

¹⁸Naveh, 13.

Phoenicians had centuries to perfect their techniques for teaching the alphabet and writing. Josephus states: "of all those who dealt with the Greeks, the Phoenicians used writing the most, for private business as well as for their public affairs."¹⁹ This says as much about the ability to teach the alphabet as it does about Phoenician literacy. A school tablet found in Marsiliana (Etruria) shows an early Greek alphabet that had been written out by the student.²⁰ The technique of learning the alphabet by rote was Phoenician,²¹ and it was assimilated by the Greeks. Moreover, assimilation of Phoenician teaching techniques had to occur for the alphabet to be borrowed. Greeks did not possess an alphabet nor the ability to teach the alphabet. Teaching techniques could not have been borrowed from another group; it came from the same group that gave the Greeks the alphabet, the Phoenicians. This is shown by the identical sequence of the Greek and Phoenician alphabets, and by the use of Semitic words for the Greek letters. The alphabet was a system of writing that could be taught to a wide portion of the population in a short period of time due to the teaching techniques employed to convey it. Greeks used the Phoenician alphabet because the Phoenicians had an effective method of teaching.

Conclusion

The transmission of the alphabet shows an intimacy of contact between Greeks and Phoenicians that went far beyond trade. Greeks and Phoenicians could communicate

¹⁹Josephus Ios. c. Ap. I, 28.

²⁰Naveh, 181.

²¹Burket, The Orientalizing Revolution, 28-29.

complex ideas. Lines of communication between the cultures were open.

The transfer of the alphabet also has important implications for the birth of Greek philosophy. Greek assimilation of the alphabet indicates that Near Eastern ideas could be communicated to Greeks. Phoenicians had exposure to all Near Eastern cultures. Their strongest cultural contact was with Egypt, which gave them the ability to explain Egyptian religious ideas. Phoenicians could also transfer other Levantine ideas and knowledge.

That the Phoenician alphabet was borrowed by the Greeks has been known for a long time. What has not been sufficiently emphasized is that the transmission of the alphabet was a transfer of complex knowledge, which shows that early Greece belonged to a broader Aegean world.

CHAPTER 5

THROUGH THE LYDIAN LAND

Introduction

Turkish culture is not easy to define: it is Islamic, but it is not part of the Arab world; it is part of Europe but it is not truly European. Like Turkey, Archaic Ionia, situated between a developing Greek world and the ancient civilizations of the Near East, was a place where East met West.

Today, Archaic Ionia is perceived as part of a Greek and, to a lesser extent, Aegean culture.¹ Politically, however, Ionia was ruled by two Near Eastern empires during the Archaic period, the Lydians and the Persians. Under Lydian and Persian rule Ionia was a Near Eastern region. Inter-marriage with Anatolians and Lydians made Ionia ethnically and culturally different from mainland Greece. Adoption and translation of Anatolian religion created a culture that was open to Near Eastern religious ideas. Ionian Presocratic philosophy also shows that Ionia was a mixture of Near Eastern and Greek culture.

¹See Carl Roebuck, Ionian Trade and Colonization (Chicago: Ares Publishers Inc, 1983.).

Conquest of Ionia

During the Archaic period the political events of the Near East, not Greece, had important consequences for Ionia. The two empires that ruled Ionia, the Lydian and the Achaemenid (Persian), made it politically part of the Near East.

Lydia

The collapse of the Hittite Empire in 1200 freed many of the indigenous clans of Anatolia. Invasions also weakened Lydia at the end of the 13th century, which allowed the Heraklids (Tylonid), an indigenous Anatolian clan, to take control of Lydia.² Politically, the Heraklids' rule of Lydia was "amorphous." They ruled in this vague manner until the 7th century. There was, however, mounting pressure from the east and the west. Both the East Greeks, who had begun to colonize the Aegean coast of Anatolia in 1000, and the Phrygians were encroaching on Lydian agricultural lands. This mounting pressure stimulated growing discontent with Heraklid rule. Civil war ensued between the Heraklids and Mermnad clans. The Mermnads, led by Gyges, were successful and took control of the kingdom. Gyges restructured Lydia by centralizing power in Sardis, pursuing an aggressive military policy against the East Greeks and Phrygians, starting diplomatic ties with Assyria, Babylonia, Cilicia, and Egypt, and adopting an aggressive mercantile policy.³

²Herodotus I, 7.

³Jack Balcer, Sparda by the Bitter Sea: Imperial Interaction in Western Anatolia (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1986.), 34.

Gyges' centralizing of power turned Sardis into the metropolis of Lydia and Anatolia. Between the reigns of Gyges and Croesus,⁴ Sardis grew into one of the great cities of the Near East. Sardis was located on and below a steep hill overlooking the plain of Hermus. The city was on ancient trade routes between the interior of Anatolia and the Aegean. Hittite carvings along the routes attest to their antiquity. These trade routes connected Sardis to the major Ionian cities. Sardis was three days' travel from Ephesus, Colophon, and Smyrna, and five days' travel from Miletus.⁵

Lydian contact with Ionians began around 700,⁶ and contact became more intimate until the Persian conquest of Lydia. However, Lydia put constant military pressure on the Ionian cities, especially Miletus.⁷ Ephesus and Colophon, on the other hand, were agricultural economies. As the two cities became more populous, they began to encroach on agricultural land used by the Lydians. As a result, Ephesians and Colophonians were forced into a closer relationship with Lydia than other Ionian cities. Both cities soon came under Lydian control, becoming satellite states (see below).⁸

Contact with the other Ionian cities grew until the region was subjugated by Croesus. Yet Croesus' conquest exposed Ionia to the same Near Eastern cultures that were in contact with Lydia. Thus, the Lydian control of Ionia turned it into a Near Eastern

⁴The Mermaid had five kings: Gyges (680-648), Ardys (648-624), Sadyattes (624-612), Alyattes (612-561), and Croesus (561-547).

⁵George M. A. Hanfman and Jane C. Waldbaum, A Survey of Sardis and the Major Monuments Outside the City Walls (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.), 18.

⁶Herodotus I, 16.

⁷Herodotus I, 16-17.

⁸Balcer, Sparda by the Bitter Sea, 80.

region. Before the Lydian conquest, Ionia was a frontier region separating the Greek world from the Near East.

Croesus' acquisition of Miletus exposed Lydia to Aegean trade through the Ionian ports, especially Miletus. It was vital that Croesus allow the Ionian cities commercial autonomy by pursuing a hands-off policy. A strong and independent Ionian economy gave Lydian traders more opportunities in the Aegean.

Media

Iranian culture began to move west with the growth of the Median Empire. Media won its independence from Assyria in 672.⁹ During the 7th century Median economic and military power grew. In 605, the Medes and the Babylonians overthrew the Assyrian Empire and divided it up, substantially increasing the wealth and power of Media.¹⁰ However, the collapse of the Assyrian Empire changed the balance of power in the region. The Medes found themselves at war with the Mannaens and the Urtu, taking them westward towards Asia Minor and Lydia.¹¹ After Media had subjugated these kingdoms, war broke out between the Medes, led by Cyaxares, and the Lydians, under Alyattes. On May 28th, 586, there was a solar eclipse in the middle of battle. Both sides took this as an omen and decided to make peace. The marriage of Cyaxares' son, Astyages, and the

⁹Muhammad A. Dandamaev and Vladimir G Lukonin., The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.), 49-50.

¹⁰Herodotus I, 96. For full discussion see Dandamaev and Lukonin, The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran, 49-55.

¹¹Dandamaev and Lukonin, 60-61.

daughter of Alyattes, Aryenis, secured the peace treaty.¹²

The result of the war was that the Medes had pushed back the Lydian frontier to the Halys river, well inside Anatolia.¹³ The peace treaty between the Medes and the Lydians brought Iranian culture to Sardis. So by early in the 6th century, the same period in which Thales emerged as the first Greek philosopher, there was a source for Ionian exposure to Iranian culture.

Sardis

The political alliance between Lydia and Media opened communications between the two empires. Important Median figures are likely to have been invited to Sardis. It is also fair to presume that Magi, Iranian priests, accompanied either caravanserais or political envoys from Media. Moreover, after Ionia came under Lydia's control, Ionians would have been present at the court of Croesus. Herodotus relates that during Croesus' rule all the great Greek teachers of that period paid visits to Sardis.¹⁴ It is impossible to know if Herodotus is exaggerating this, but it is safe to assume that Ionian intellectuals visited Sardis.

Even before Lydia's conquest, inter-marriage between the Ionian aristocracy and the Mermnads meant that Ionians were present at the Lydian court (See below). It was there that Ionians were exposed to Iranian culture for the first time.

¹²Herodotus I, 72.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Herodotus I, 30.

Persian Empire

When Cyrus conquered the Lydian Empire, Ionia also came under Persian control. Ionia became part of what was to be the largest empire yet known to man. The Persian Empire spread from Bactria in the East to the Aegean coast of Anatolia. The communications system in the empire was effective. Persians expanded on the network of Assyrian roads, which allowed them to have relay-style mail service:

There is nothing in the world which travels faster than these Persian couriers. The whole idea is a Persian invention, and it works like this: riders are stationed along the road, equal in number to the number of days the journey takes -- a man and a horse for each day. . . . The first passes the dispatch to the second, the second to the third, and so on along the line . . .¹⁵

They were also the first to use camel caravans on a large scale: information could travel throughout the empire quickly.¹⁶

The Persian empire contained a large number of cultures and ethnic groups. Cyrus' policy of aiding the building of temples throughout the empire encouraged individual cultures to maintain their identity. Allowing the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple is an example of this policy.¹⁷

With the communication systems and the acceptance of different cultures, ideas could move easily within the Persian empire. People could also travel freely throughout the empire. Herodotus is an example of someone who traveled and gathered ideas under the

¹⁵Herodotus. VIII, 98.

¹⁶Lionel Casson, Travel in the Ancient World (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994.), 50-55.

¹⁷Ezra. 6, 3-5.

umbrella of the Persian empire. Thus, Near Eastern ideas, such as Babylonian, could find their way to Ionia via the Persian empire.

Social Acculturation

J. Balcer has pointed out that Ionians did not despise Persian rule.¹⁸ After the Persian war, did the Ionian cities not revolt from Athens and go back to Persian control? Ionians did not see Persians as the *barbaroi* others Greeks did. In fact, by the outbreak of the Persian war (480), Ionia was a diverse society, a blend of Greek, Anatolian, Lydian, and a broader Aegean culture.

The polyglot society of Ionia produced a different, less ethnocentric (Greek), perspective of foreign cultures. Athenian society, on the other hand, showed disdain towards Ionians, calling them effeminate and luxurious, like Lydians.¹⁹ The rest of the Greek world viewed Ionia as “other”, because Ionians had a different culture.

Inter-marriage

When Greeks migrated to the Anatolian coast they inter-married with native populations. Herodotus relates that when the Ionians first arrived on the Anatolian coast they married local women. He also mentions that some of the Ionians deferred to Anatolian Kings.²⁰ But it was the inter-marriage between the Ionian and Lydian

¹⁸Balcer, 2-3.

¹⁹Herodotus I, 143; Hippocrates Airs, Waters, Places 12; Thucydides I, 124.

²⁰Herodotus I, 147.

aristocracy that had the most profound effect. Lydian kings and aristocrats used marriage to bond treaties and aid commercial activity with other states. The most famous Lydian marriage of this sort was between Astyages and Alyattes' daughter in the peace treaty with the Medes.²¹

G. S. Kirk states "that Thales was as Greek as most Ionians."²² Thales, it appears, had a mixture heritage of Phoenician, Greek, and Anatolian:

Now Thales, as Herodotus and Douris and Democritus say, was the son of Examyces as father and Cleobuline as mother, from the descendants of Theleus, who were Phoenicians, nobles from the line of Cadmos and Agenor.²³

Thales, a man of Miletus . . . being a Phoenician by ultimate descent.²⁴

Kirk, not a proponent of Near Eastern influence, believes Thales' father, Examyces, had a Carian (ethnic Anatolian) name. This would not be surprising considering Herodotus' comments on inter-marriage between Ionians and Anatolians (see n. 20). It is likely that Thales' mixed heritage was not an exception. Furthermore, it can be no coincidence that Ionia's golden age, an age that Thales epitomizes, occurred at the same time that the Lydian Empire was at its height.

Lydia used marriage as a political tool. It appears that marriage cemented trade and land agreements between aristocratic Ionians and Lydia's ruling Mermnad clan. In fact, there were marriages directly into the Lydian king's immediate family: Melas I, the

²¹Herodotus I, 74.

²²Kirk, 77.

²³Diogenes Laertius I, 22.

²⁴Herodotus I, 170.

tyrant of Ephesus was married to one of Gyges' daughters; Melas II was a son-in-law of Alyattes;²⁵ Croesus' half brother Pantaleon, who almost took the throne from Croesus, had an Ionian mother;²⁶ Pindaros, another tyrant of Ephesus, was Alyattes' grandson.²⁷ Because it was the ruling class that was inter-marrying, it had control over the levels of contact between the two cultures. The purpose of these marriages was to make relations between the city and Empire more friendly and to create alliances, which brought the two cultures together.

Ionian inter-marriage with the ruling Mermnad clan connected Ionia to Lydian and Near Eastern culture. Kinship ties broke cultural boundaries between Ionia and Lydia: Ionia was opened up to Near Eastern cultures. Inter-marriage must have changed Ionian aristocratic perspectives of Lydian and Near Eastern culture. Because of the marriage between Astygates' son, Cyaxares, and Alyattes' daughter, any marriage into Alyattes' immediate family connected that person to the Median royal family. Furthermore, Astygates was Cyrus the Great's maternal grandfather. Lydia had kinship ties deep into the heart of Iranian society. To a lesser extent, the Ionian aristocracy in other city states probably had kinship ties to the Lydian aristocracy. Ionian aristocrats could not view Lydians and people from the Near East as *barbaroi* in the same egocentric way that other Greeks did.

²⁵Balcer, 87.

²⁶Herodotus I, 92.

²⁷Herodotus I, 26.

Colophon and Ephesus

The most profound Lydian influence was in Colophon and Ephesus. Both were agricultural economies; they did not have to colonize to support their populations, and their perspective was inland. Also, well-developed roads and a rich agricultural plain connected the Ionian cities to Sardis. Colophon, Ephesus, and Lydia worked the same agricultural plain: land agreements between the two cities and Lydia had to be reached. Lydia was a powerful empire, so it was in the best interest of Colophon and Ephesus not to clash with it.

Xenophanes, a Colophonian by origin, noted Colophon's high degree of acculturation:

The men of Colophon, having learnt useless forms of luxury from the Lydians, as long as they were free from hateful tyranny, used to go to the place of assembly wearing all-purple robes, not less than a thousand of them in all: haughty, adorned with well-dressed hair, steeped in the scent of skillfully prepared unguents.²⁸

The purple robes and the unguents were the "useless forms of luxury" that came from Lydia.²⁹ Xenophanes' statement also suggests that Colophon's aristocracy had easy access to Lydian goods. Trade and communication between Colophon and Lydia must have been free-flowing.

The strong bond between the Lydian and Colophonian aristocracy, which

²⁸Freeman, 20, fr. 3.

²⁹Sappho relates: "But as for these brodered headbands, it is only just recently that they have brought them from Sardis to the towns of Ionia." Sappho lived from about 620-550, which suggests that Lydian fashions had a Greek market at the end of the 7th century. Also, Sappho's remarks correspond with the acculturation noted by Xenophanes.

presumably occurred through inter-marriage, became apparent when Cyrus attacked Sardis. When the Persians invaded, the Mermnad aristocracy moved to Colophon. The ties between the Mermnads and the Colophonian aristocracy evidently ran deep.

Colophon's acculturation is known because of Xenophanes' poem. For Ephesus there is no such description. What our sources do indicate is that Lydian kings married their daughters to the rulers of Ephesus (above), suggesting that Ephesus had as close a bond to the Lydian aristocracy as Colophon did. The Mermnads presumably also married into the aristocracies of the other Ionian cities in an attempt to build political alliances.

Clearly, there was a strong Lydian connection with Colophon and Ephesus. Inter-marriage, and the use of Colophon as a safe haven for the Lydian aristocracy, indicates that the Lydian presence and influence in Ionia was profound. Ionia had an inland connection to the Near East, which, in turn, gave it access to Iranian culture before the Persian invasions of Greece.

Communication

Acculturation between Ionia and Lydia was reciprocal. The most obvious Ionian influence on Lydia was the borrowing of the Greek alphabet during the Archaic period, which, as was said in chapter 3, presupposes the ability to communicate complex information. This adoption of the alphabet is called the Hellenization of Lydia. It is interesting that the Greek adoption of the Phoenician alphabet is not called the Semitization of Greece. Also, the fact that inter-marriage occurred between the Lydian

and Ionian aristocracies strongly suggests that Greeks and Lydians communicated. Many children of Lydian/Ionian unions must have been bilingual, or at least had a knowledge of Lydian and Ionic Greek. Again, the implications of borrowing the Greek alphabet have been overlooked. Ionians' and Lydians' ability to communicate connected Ionia to Anatolian and Near Eastern culture more closely than is realized at present.

Religious Acculturation

Many centuries after the Archaic period, Ionia was a society that was open to Near Eastern religions. In Hellenistic Priene, there is a Temenos of the Egyptian Gods, which was sacred to Isis, Serapis, and Anubis.³⁰ Pausanias relates that from the middle of the second century C.E. there was an Egyptian cult statue at Erythrai.³¹ In Ephesus there was another Egyptian cult area, The Temple of Serapis, also dated to the mid 2nd century C.E.³² These Egyptian temples show that second century C.E. Ionian culture accepted Near Eastern religion. The process began during the early Archaic period when Ionians adopted important aspects of Anatolian religion.

³⁰Ekrem Akurgal, Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey: From Prehistoric Times Until the End of the Roman Empire (Istanbul, 1973.), 196.

³¹Pausanias VII 5, 4.

³²Akurgal, Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey, 163. Inscriptions have been recovered of an Egyptian cult. It is believed there were Egyptian colonists living in Ephesus at this period.

The Mother Goddess

Near Eastern religion had many uniform concepts, but one of the most striking was the importance of the mother/fertility goddess. The great mother/fertility goddesses of the Near East were Egyptian Isis, Mesopotamian Ishtar, Phoenician Ashtarte, and Anatolian Cybele. It was with the mother goddess that the most important religious blending and translation occurred between Anatolian and Ionian culture.

When the Greeks first settled on the west coast of Anatolia, around 1000, their inter-marriage with the local tribes suggests acculturation began in the first generation of settlers.³³ We see acculturation in the adoption of Anatolian religion, especially Cybele -- an important Anatolian deity. Instead of imposing Greek religion in Ionia, the Ionians translated Cybele to the closest female Greek deity, Artemis. In Greek religion Artemis was not a mother/fertility goddess, but a nature and huntress deity who was unmarried and a virgin goddess. The Ionian Artemis took Cybele's functions and roles: she became a mother/fertility goddess.

Ionians rebuilt Anatolian shrines that were dedicated to local deities. The temples had attributes of the older Anatolian shrines; they were all open and faced west.³⁴ The most famous temple to Artemis was in Ephesus. However, there were also Greek temples to Artemis built on old Cybele-shrines at Klaros,³⁵ and Magnes-on-the-Meander.³⁶ There

³³Herodotus I, 147.

³⁴Akurgal, 178-179.

³⁵Akurgal, 178.

³⁶Akurgal, 137.

were other mother-goddess shrines at Sardis and Pessinus.³⁷

In the Meander valley, there was a Greek shrine built on an old shrine to the Carian goddess Ninoe, who was similar to the Akkadian Ishtar Nina -- a nature/fertility goddess. Local Greeks called the Goddess Aphrodias.³⁸ Why the temple was dedicated to Aphrodias and not to Artemis, like the other Ionian temples, is not clear. But a religious translation, similar to that from Cybele to Artemis, took place.³⁹

Another temple built on an old cult area was the Temple of Didyma, near Miletus, which was dedicated to Apollo. A representation of Apollo at Didyma that is Hittite in iconography -- Apollo is seizing a deer in each hand -- suggests that the Ionian Apollo was a blend of an Anatolian god and the Greek Apollo.⁴⁰ Although it is not clear what deity the shrine was dedicated to before the Greeks came, it was presumably a god that had similar functions to Apollo.

Ionian adoption and translation of Anatolian religion shows that Anatolian culture had a strong influence on Ionia. Translation of Anatolian religion presupposes knowledge of the religion; such knowledge is a sign of a high degree of acculturation.

Anatolian religious acculturation created an Ionian religion that was Near Eastern and Greek. That people of the Near East identified with Ionian religion is shown by Croesus' presentation of gifts to Ionian temples, especially the Temple of Artemis at

³⁷Akurgal, 178-179.

³⁸Akurgal, 171-175.

³⁹Another important Anatolian god, the wine-god Bakillis, was blended with a Greek deity, Dionysus. It is also believed that the Bacchic rites originally came from Anatolia.

⁴⁰Akurgal, 222-223.

Ephesus.⁴¹ Also, Necho, the Egyptian king, and Croesus, presented gifts at the Temple of Apollo at Didyma.⁴²

Iranian Religion

Iranian religion has a strong presence in Ionian Presocratic philosophy (chapter 1). However, it is a presence that can be overlooked if routes of transfer cannot be shown. To identify the routes of transfer, we must look at pagan (pre-Zoroastrian) Iranian religious ideas that were present in Media, and the spread of Zoroastrianism from Eastern Iran into Media (western Iran). Iranian ideas found in the philosophy of the Ionian Presocratics show that Ionia was connected to the Near East by Anatolia as well as the by Aegean.

Zoroastrianism began with the prophet Zoroaster (Zarat.uštra in old Persian) and his teachings. It is known from the geography and linguistic evidence in the Gathas that Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism originated in eastern Iran and Afghanistan. This is the region the ancients called Bactria.⁴³ No exact date can be given for Zoroaster, but the Gathas suggest that he lived in a period of unrest: Zoroaster talks of much raiding and bloodshed. This description fits the known history of the area for the Late Bronze Age.⁴⁴

⁴¹Herodotus I, 92.

⁴²Herodotus II, 159.

⁴³Mary Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism: Volume I, The Early Period (Lieden: E. J. Brill, 1975.), 3-4.

⁴⁴Mary Boyce, Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism (New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1984.), 11.

Zoroastrianism built on Indo-Iranian pagan religion. Indo-Iranians used to be a single group that lived on the Asian steppes. During the 3rd millennium, they divided and went their separate ways. Much of the cosmology and cosmogony in Zoroastrianism comes from the Indo-Iranian tradition, and can be seen in the Rigveda. The language and the form of the hymns in the Rigveda are close to that of the Gathas. All the evidence indicates that Zoroaster lived between 1400-1000.⁴⁵

Zoroastrianism spread into western Iranian culture from the frontier trading town of Raga. It was the eastern trading center in Media.⁴⁶ Its importance came from the trade in what Esharaddon (680-669) called the choicest product of the Medes, lapis lazuli.⁴⁷ The only source of lapis lazuli in the Near East was the mountains of Bactria.⁴⁸ Not only was Raga an important trading town, but it became a holy town for Zoroastrians. In fact, Zoroastrians believed that Zoroaster was born there. Raga's religious importance also strengthens the idea that Zoroastrianism spread west from the city. As in other Near Eastern trading towns, merchants from Media and Zoroastrian traders from Bactria set up caravanserais in Raga. Thus, it was probably in Raga that western Iranians came into contact with Zoroastrianism.

That Zoroastrianism spread to west Iranian culture is known because it became the religion of the Achaemenid clan (Persians), as shown by the Behistun inscription on which

⁴⁵Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism: Volume II, Under the Achaemenians, 3.

⁴⁶Boyce, A History of Zoroastrianism: Volume II, 5-9.

⁴⁷D. D. Luckenbill, Ancient Records of The Assyrians and Babylonians: Volume II, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926-7.), 540.

⁴⁸Georgina Herman, "Lapis Lazuli: The Early Phases of its Trade," American Journal of Archaeology, 21.

Darius I constantly invokes Ahura Mazda. It is believed that inter-marriage, as well as trade, helped Zoroastrianism become assimilated into western Iran.⁴⁹ Zoroastrianism and west Iranian religion were both founded in the same pagan ideas, and especially in cosmologies and cosmogonies.

In the pagan Medo-Persian religion there were three Ahuras -- Ahura Mazda, Mithra, and Varuna. The Ahuras' main purpose was to uphold aša, in Medo-Persian 'arta.' Arta appears as the first element of two honorific Median names found in 9th century Assyrian cuneiform texts: Artasirar(u) and Irtizat(I). These two names show that the principle of aša was important and present in 9th century Media.⁵⁰

According to Herodotus, Magi, Iranian/Zoroastrian priests, were present at the court of Astyages. However, Zoroastrianism may never have been fully accepted by the Median Magi. Even so, the Iranian ideas that influenced the Ionian Presocratics, concepts such as aša, cosmogonies, and cosmologies, were present in Media in the 7th century. Thus, it is most probable that pre-Zoroastrian and, to a lesser extent, Zoroastrian ideas spread to Ionia before the Persian invasion.

Conclusion

Anatolian, especially Lydian, acculturation connected Ionia to the Near East. It also explains Ionian Presocratic philosophy's Iranian influence. Lydia's political alliance with the Median empire exposed Ionia to Iranian culture. We now have viable routes of

⁴⁹Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism: Vol. I, 6.

⁵⁰Boyce, History of Zoroastrianism: Vol. II, 15-16.

transmission for the major Near Eastern ideas in Ionian Presocratic thought: from the Aegean and across the Anatolian plains.

