

■ The Imagined Phoenicians in Homer's *Odyssey*

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Abstract

About 700 BCE, thanks to the frequent contact with the Eastern world an important breakthrough took place in Greek arts and cultures, thereby introducing the Greek Renaissance or the orientalizing revolution. Numerous instances of Phoenician ships and craftsmanship can be readily found in Homer's epics and often come to serve as substantial exemplars for Orientalism. However, the *Odyssey* belongs to an epic tradition of large-scale heroic poetry and aims to relate a fictive world of the heroic past, although the present of the epics is precisely the period about 750-550 BCE, the time when the new cultural and social trends were in the process of formation. The stories in the *Odyssey*, at most, provide a virtual reality and a real fiction, which can open a unique window to understand the profound impact brought about through the interaction with Phoenicians. Integral to the question of the imagined Phoenicians is the construction of a symbolic connection with the Other, which is of considerable significance in the configuration of Greek identity. Furthermore, apart from Phoenician alphabets, diverse examples such as purple colors, date palms, and silver bowls indeed exemplify how part of Phoenician culture may well turn out to be instilled into Greek daily life.

Keywords: Phoenicians, *Odyssey*, Orientalism, other, Greekness

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(Received 27 August 2015; Accepted 1 November 2016)

Introduction

The Greek Renaissance took place around the eighth century BCE and was marked by a general social leap based on the emerging technical and structural innovations, including the adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet and the expansion of the inter-city and Mediterranean trade. Whereas the ancient name of this people eludes us, the modern name “Phoenician” is actually a Greek invention, from the word *Phoinix*, which recurs in the *Odyssey*. Etymologically, Phoenicia means the purple land and this namesake has much to do with the purple dye extracted from the poisonous sea snail *Murex*.¹ Adequate archaeological findings and excavations point to the fact that the Phoenicians had established colonies by the mid-ninth century BCE in many Mediterranean cities such as Kition and Byblos. Byblos, the only major Phoenician coastal city, was once the primary eastern Mediterranean emporium, with direct trade ties with Egypt, the Aegean, and Mesopotamia and continued to prosper in the late Middle Bronze Age to the first millennium BCE.

Though since 1,200 BCE the Phoenicians might have entered a new phase of colonization, little archaeological evidence has yet been found to date the presence of the Phoenicians in these areas before 800 BC. But afterwards, there was evidently frequent contact between Phoenicians and Greeks in Cyprus. It is likely that Euboeans were the first to establish contact with Phoenicia and the Phoenician residents once settled at Lefkandi; this encounter made it possible to introduce the Phoenician alphabet to ancient Greece. While the Phoenician commercial impact upon Greece, from Cyprus or the mainland, and other pertinent Mediterranean areas such as Crete and Italy is not easy to verify, Homer’s version of the preeminence of Phoenician craftsmanship and their great entrepreneurial temperament is decidedly substantial.

According to Glenn E. Markoe, “the Phoenicians were a confederation of traders rather than a patchwork of widely scattered merchant communities” or, to be brief, “maritime trade, not territory, defined their sphere” (11). Interestingly, two of the primary sources about ancient Phoenicians—the Bible and the Assyrian annals—cast light on their military and commercial affairs, but have few accounts about their political, social, cultural or economic development.² The *Old Testament*, although rather informative, is somehow limited and prejudiced in its perspective. Robin Osborne explains ancient Greece in the making since 800 BCE, summarizing

¹ The term Phoenicia is from the Greek *phoinix*, which is generally considered to be related to a luxurious purple dye, a Phoenician specialty.

² It means the lack of data from the metropolis, Phoenicia itself.

that mainland Greece, although not under any political threat from the east, comes to be an object of interest to the Phoenicians and other Levantines (40).

The Phoenicians, geographically as the Iron Age successors of the Bronze Age Canaanites, were prevailing in the cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos and thereabouts, a territory which was under the Assyrian domination in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. However, Charles Gates points out that the division between “Bronze Age Canaanites and Iron Age Phoenicians, separated at 1200 BCE, is artificial” (189). William F. Albright argues that “the early emergence of Greek colonies in Ionian as great centers of trade is best illustrated by the fact that Ionian became the name by which the Greeks were known in Hebrew, Assyria-Babylonian, Old Persian, and Sanskrit” (228). Despite the dearth of precise accounts concerning the Phoenicians, some scholars such as Walter Burkert call attention to the very concept of the orientalizing revolution in the archaic Greece. Burkert, underscoring the indebtedness of Greek civilization to eastern stimuli and stressing the comparable eastern background for Homeric epics (1-5), gives a balanced perspective and avoids a framework based on the oriental-occidental polarity. Maria Eugenia Aubet, whose main concern is with the Phoenician colonialism of the ninth to seventh centuries BCE, argues that, because goods are obtained via looting and piracy and thus mercantile activities are regarded as dishonorable, traders such as the Phoenicians, accordingly neither trustworthy nor respected, are usually regarded as representing the antithesis to the Homeric heroic ideals (128). Ann C. Gunter elaborates on the nascent Orientalism, which is discerned “in an earlier period of Greek history, in Homer’s depiction of Trojans, Phoenicians, and other non-Greek peoples in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*” (1).

Scholarship on the ancient Phoenicians and the Homeric world is productive and inspiring; yet the ways in which Homer’s epics characterize the Phoenicians have not yet attracted similar interest on the part of specialists. In this regard, Homer presents us with a typical discourse of the Other or alterity, in which Greece’s awareness of its indebtedness to the non-Greeks abounds. But the Phoenicians in the *Odyssey* as an imagined Other cannot be reduced to any definite category in terms of geography, history, or economy, and they thereby deserve further discussion. This paper thus argues that Homer’s depiction of the Phoenicians in the *Odyssey*, though not historically or ethnographically accurate, serves to help us see how oriental traditions such as Phoenician artifacts, seafaring, and trade interacted with the Greek society, and even how the Phoenician crafts and arts could eventually permeate that society. In fact, the representation of the Phoenicians in the *Odyssey* never becomes merely an ethnic stereotype. Numerous instances in Homer’s epics—particularly those from Books 13, 14, and 15 of the *Odyssey*—reflect both the reality of inter-regional conflicts and the “imaginary

space” of the Greek ideal. The epic framework of the *Odyssey* gives us not only a fictionalized world but also an elastic picture of the Phoenicians. Here we see Greek society in contact with the Eastern navigators and ancient Mediterranean geopolitical conditions in a state of constant flux. Echoes of long-forgotten voyages, although remote and faint, are fused with elements of folk-tales. Odysseus, after all, a special kind of oceanographer, innovates the “mythic stream” by spinning a yarn about himself, the Cretans and the Phoenicians.

The second section of the paper looks more closely at how Homer’s mosaic fragments that picture an outlandish Phoenicia appear to make sense in the *Odyssey*. Materials like Phoenician bowls may well point to a larger network of Greek-Phoenician cultures, even if Phoenicia itself is never reached. The third section looks at how the conflicting images of the Phoenicians in the *Odyssey* may well reveal that the formation of “Greekness” is related to the affirmation, negation, and integration of Otherness. The paper ends with a re-consideration of numerous available examples such as the alphabet, the use of purple and the date palms in order to show how some Phoenician attributes had already, in Homer’s time, become embedded in daily Greek life. Integral to the question of the “imagined Phoenicians” is the construction of a symbolic connection with the Other, where the Greek-Phoenician difference is closely tied to the possibility of a Greek-Phoenician identity.

A False Account

Known for his wits, Odysseus has a good command of many turns [πολύτροπος] of language (*Od.* 10.330-31). In Book 13 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus, parading himself as a young Cretan prince and presenting himself to the disguised Athena, cooks up a story as an explanation for his appearance in Ithaca; in this forged account, Odysseus begs a passing Phoenician ship to take him on board with the spoils he has won at Troy:

νῦξ δὲ μάλα δνοφερὴ κάτεχ’ οὐρανόν, οὐδέ τις ἡμέας
 ἀνθρώπων ἐνόησε, λάθον δὲ ἐ θυμὸν ἀπούρας.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τὸν γε κατέκτανον ὄξει χαλκῶ,
 αὐτίκ’ ἐγὼν ἐπὶ νῆα κιῶν Φοίνικας ἀγαυοὺς
 ἔλλισάμην, καὶ σφιν μενοεικέα ληΐδα δῶκα:
 τοὺς μ’ ἐκέλευσα Πύλονδε καταστήσαι καὶ ἐφέσσαι
 ἢ εἰς Ἥλιδα διαν, ὅθι κρατέουσιν Ἐπειοί. (*Od.*13. 269-75)

Now when I had slain him with the sharp bronze, I went at once to a ship, and made prayer to the lordly Phoenicians, giving them booty to satisfy their hearts. I bade them take me aboard and land me at Pylos, or at splendid Elis, where the Epeians

hold sway. But the truth of it was that the force of the wind thrust them away from there much against their will, nor did they mean to play me false; but beaten back from there we came here by night. (*Od.* 13. 269-75)

In spite of constructing a faked identity and a deceiving tale, the narrator illustrates a very realistic westward passage from Crete to Ithaca, that is, a commercial route for the Phoenician trading vessels. Step by step, the virtual reality about Phoenicians is taking shape in Odysseus' tricky account.

There exists an extraordinary symmetry: the fictive Phaeacians in the previous books of the *Odyssey* are becoming real, whereas the historical Phoenicians are becoming fictional. Geographically, it is rather difficult to define the hometown of the Phoenicians, even though it is said that they occupy the entire Levantine coast between the Suez and the Gulf of Alexander. Phoenician culture has frequently been labeled as a lost civilization, whose histories and mythologies have vanished—no Phoenician manuscript is still extant, although the current alphabetic systems in most Western countries are believed to trace back to ancient Phoenician innovation. For this reason, pieces of information concerning Phoenicians in the *Odyssey* matter a lot. A famous ancient ebony trading route is roughly like this: Phoenician ships convey the products across the Arabian Sea and up the Red Sea or across the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf to the market at Tyre and then the goods was transported overland by camel caravan. Correspondingly, Odysseus articulates the geographic information about the ancient Mediterranean world such as the nautical route connecting Crete, Elis, Cyprus, Egypt, and Lybia. However, never does Odysseus focus on an accurate account. Likened to a Cretan, Odysseus places himself to be among the proverbial Cretan liars: his story generates a web which traps his listeners not only into the mendacity of a false account but also into a logical conundrum. Despite the series of Odysseus' actual travels, the calculated ways of reclaiming the truth of the fictive worlds can achieve the aesthetics of the outlandish territories rather than a realistic journal of the travels.

It must be carefully noted that the Phoenicians do not break any ideal; instead, they act simply without any normative confines. The Phoenician expansion in the ninth century BCE, a movement against the pressure by the powerful Assyrians under Ashurnasirpal II, can be one of the momentous factors to facilitate the communication between the Greeks and the Phoenicians. For instance, the presence of relatively large numbers of Phoenician goods found in the Greek colony of Pithekoussai along with non-Greek type burials exhibits such a cultural interaction.³ Odysseus seems to criticize the behavior of breaking the honorable

³ Take the similarities between Anat and Athena for example. The fact that both Anat and Athena are the goddesses worshipped in a joint temple in Cyprus implies the close contact between the Greeks

social code set by sea-loving peoples such as Phoenicians. In this aspect, the Phoenicians are usually demonized as cheaters, pirates and abductors. However, Odysseus relates that he, the outcast Cretan prince, is begging the noble Phoenicians for help to take him aboard and land him at Pylos or Elis; unfortunately, the precarious wind carries them away from the desired course. Initially, these Phoenicians may be as accommodating as those Phaeacians; but eventually they forsake Odysseus in order to survive the hardship. Though the Phoenicians in this story are not featured by the positive character traits of the Phaeacians, the tale here implies that the Phoenicians can prevail over the elements of the marine conditions such as landfalls and windward circuits in the Mediterranean. It transpires that these Phoenicians have to desert Odysseus, but they do not take any goods from him. These details of Odysseus' storyline picture that the Phoenicians, like ancient nomads, are always migrating without settlements and without nations. Just due to their being constantly mobile, no categorized norm can predict their conduct.

The detailed descriptions in the *Odyssey* point to the fact that the Phoenicians are pretty active in these waters at least from the heroic times on. Odysseus gives a lively representation that a Phoenician ship is moored off the coast of Crete and an outcast escapes the island by means of buying his passage with a portion of the booty from Troy. These Phoenicians are never taken simply as a race, but as the mercantile people and/or seafaring Western Semitic speakers. In other words, the collective Phoenician group can be regarded as a confederation of traders, not a country defined by territorial boundaries. It is the maritime trade that defines the sphere of the Phoenicians. Odysseus' evocative accounts are based on the reality of Phoenicians as the merchant-seamen, who are always across the geographic and ethnic bounds.

Rather than discrediting the seafaring and commercial activities, the epic narratives document an emerging trend of maritime exploration to the new zones. In the *Odyssey*, Phoenicians, who are considered to be those who are ready to break codes of honor, serve as the antithesis of the heroic values of the Greeks. However, the colonial and commercial exploitation of the newly formed Greek states corresponds to that of the Phoenicians. Odysseus envisions his unexpected and sudden encounter with the Phoenicians, which may well broaden his vision and initiate a series of voyages of discovery.⁴ As great seafarers, Phoenicians are

and Phoenicians, a long-range symbiosis, and an extensive cultural interchange.

⁴ Another episode reveals that seagoing Phoenicians kept to their bargain and did not rob Odysseus of his personal goods (*Od.* 8. 387ff). It is agreed that ancient Phoenicians earn much interest from the trade of certain rare objects such as ivory in Sparta and westward in the meanwhile. According to the record in chapter 27 and chapter 31 of *Ezekiel*, we can infer that the continuing trade with Greeks through the Phoenicians port of Tyre in the early sixth century and the accompanying results of the commerce:

able to utilize bronze and iron to construct superior ships, which in turn make safe and long-distance travel possible. The use of iron nails, for example, makes possible considerable improvements of the ship design.⁵ Since a single vessel has the carrying capacity of approximately 200 donkeys and makes delivery significantly faster, sea transportation is immeasurably more profitable; as a consequence, both the steady growth of commercial importance and increasing indispensability of cities will ensue. However, the Homeric picture of these seafaring deeds is somehow reductive, since there is an insufficient depiction of what the cargo of those Phoenicians that are anchored off Crete or how the imaginary Phoenician traders will set off for Libya. Odysseus' narrative trick, no matter plausible or implausible, has the power to form and to transform the image of the Phoenicians. Furthermore, Odysseus never declares the exact ethnic identity of these seafarers, less owing to the profound fear of the presence of Phoenician traders on the fringes of the Aegean sea than to his limited knowledge of this people and the consequent anticipation of to the precarious contact with the uncertain and uncharted territory.

What underlies Odysseus' story is the inheritance of a storytelling tradition which must run across linguistic and cultural lines; at least, the speaker must be bilingual or even multilingual. Apparently, these Phoenicians, not the same as their neighbors who used the complicated hieroglyphs or cuneiform, availed themselves of an alphabetic system of writing. And it is fairly odd that the Phoenicians are not mentioned when Homer is listing the peoples whose languages are intermingled in ninety cities in Crete (*Od.* 14. 175ff). In all probability, ancient Greeks learned to write for the reason of keeping commercial records as Phoenicians did; however, there are no Phoenician or Greek mercantile inscriptions of around 700 BCE. It is estimated that ancient Greeks learned the use of leather as a writing material when they first learned their letters from the Phoenicians, because papyrus was a foreign import,⁶ and was expensive even in the fifth century BCE, but leather was a native product and relatively cheap. In addition, the scribe who tried to record the Greek epic is supposed to be literate in West Semitic writing, or in Powell's

slaves. For example, there is a detailed account of the trade of Tyre that lists multi-colored textiles and garments as Tyre's own merchandise traded abroad (*Ezekiel* 27: 23). Later in the first half of the sixth century, Greek trading on the Syrian and Phoenician coast south of Al Mina must have been sponsored by the Babylonians. And then a new power from the east, the Persian King Cyrus, took the stage and entered Babylon in 539 and therefore succeeded to the dominion over places such as Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. While, under Persian rule, Greek trade seems to have prospered in the Near East, the heroic value obviously gave way to new enterprising spirit.

⁵ For instance, Phoenicians know how to piece together all parts more effectively and to replace the flat hull of older vessels by proper keels of the backbone of the ship. The smelting of iron was supposedly invented in eastern Anatolia around 1500 BC; but it was the Phoenicians who, via travelling and trade, learned that skill and then exported it to other places.

⁶ Papyrus is a very common material for diverse usages such as making cables for the ship (*Od.* 21. 388-95).

terms, “familiar with the ancient West Semitic tradition of creating poetic texts through dictation” (69). The gap between the illiteracy of the Greeks as a result of the extinction of the Mycenaean script and the introduction of Phoenician alphabet does exist, but the epic narration ingeniously moves without any linguistic restraint, oral or written.

As a big liar, Odysseus peppers his stories with any available materials, which may reveal the unrelieved harshness of the underlying reality. Moreover, the fibs abounding in Odysseus’s tales are, instead of being framed in the heroic adventures, set in a rather un-heroic realistic world and suffused with everyday acts of treachery, murder, piracy, and trade. A probable geographic model, on which the story-teller Odysseus drafts his interregional viewpoint, may be just similar to the Herodotean map—a circular earth fringed by the Ocean, the River Oceanus, and divided in two halves, Europe and Asia and is composed of three parts: the orderly and familiar center, the intermediate region, and the fringes. But, the global layout of the Homeric epic still slightly differs from the Herodotean map. For instance, the Eastern Ethiopians mentioned in Herodotus (3.94) are said to live somewhere in Makran or Baluchistan, whereas the Eastern Ethiopians of Homer (*Od.* 1.22 ff) have not yet moved so far into Asia.⁷ Odysseus does not mention that any Phoenician cities rise as a significant maritime power; but his tales simply substantiate that a number of Phoenician sailors circumnavigated Crete and nearby.⁸ Thanks to the compelling figment of epic imagination, the panorama of the vigorous interaction between the Greeks and the Phoenicians can be better realized. However, Odysseus’ false account fans the imagination of readers from antiquity to the present but, concurrently, fakeness evokes doubts. These stories, though never exact, epitomize what is generally the accepted or imagined image of the mobile Phoenicians.

His True Story

The second Cretan tale (*Od.* 14. 191ff) starts from a pretty beguiling and ironic tone: “Then I will tell you all this quite frankly” [τοιγὰρ ἐγὼ τοι ταῦτα μάλ’ ἀτρεκέως ἀγορεύσω] (*Od.* 14. 192). Odysseus here spins a more elaborate

⁷ According to Herodotean map, Ethiopians are living in the typical fringes areas. There is a famous account in the *Iliad* that all gods go to partake of a feast in Ethiopia (*Il.* 3.3ff.) and the similar occasion is termed as the Table of the Sun by Herodotus (*Htd.* 3.18).

⁸ It is believed that by the late eighth century BCE, the Phoenicians, alongside the Greeks, founded trading posts all over the Mediterranean. Sea traders from Phoenicia at that time ventured beyond the Strait of Gibraltar as far as Britain in search of tin.

story, narrating his leadership of a contingent sent to Troy, his brief return to his assumed Cretan homeland and his decision to command a raid on Egypt, which winds up a destruction of his expedition and entails years of exile to Egypt, Thesprotia, and Ithaca. The narrative framework consists of consecutive transmissions, in which the sender, the signal, and the receiver are concurrently affecting the validity of the message. Here, what is truly crucial for the addressor Odysseus is to articulate how an unfortunate but decent beggar like him can overcome all the challenges in life and adventures. A true story is out of a false identity with multifarious subtexts. Odysseus is good at such a persuasive technique: claiming to state truly while telling a lie. It is understandable that Odysseus simply desires to elicit sympathy from Eumaeus, who, once a king's son, is enslaved after being kidnapped by Phoenician pirates. It is pretty paradoxical that the genuine liar Odysseus notes Phoenicians as malicious tricksters and the potential sources of pain or suffering for fellow humans due to their depraved behavior (*Od.* 14. 289). Besides, Odysseus just avoids designating an exact locality; for this reason, only a rough sketch of places can be grasped. Perhaps it is because Phoenicians, traveling near Kommos on the south coast of Crete, according to Odysseus' tale, are not confined to any city such as Kition, Cyprus, Salamis, or Sidon. The self-alleged honesty, albeit not utter falsehood, just attenuates the reliance on the historical accuracy but adds the aesthetics of ambiguity to the narrative scope.

The equivocation of such a story indeed provides a wider perspective into the unproven scenario of the exotic areas. We can see Homer as an organizer of imaginary landscapes, out of which a mosaic of the outlandish Phoenicia will emerge. Despite the fictiveness of these adventures, his tale revolves around the Mediterranean geography. About the end of the Iron Age, the Phoenicians were ethnic and cultural antagonists to the Greeks, since both groups were competitively exploiting the mineral and other wealth of Africa, Sicily, Sardinia, Italy, Spain, and France. There can be some kind of direct contact between Greeks and Phoenicians, perhaps a type of diachronic contact extending over large periods of time. Due to this reason, the image of the Phoenician seamen is habitually much distorted:

ἔνθα μὲν ἐπτάετες μένον αὐτόθι, πολλὰ δ' ἄγχιρα
 χρήματ' ἀν' Αἰγυπτίους ἄνδρας: δίδοσαν γὰρ ἅπαντες.
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ὄγδοόν μοι ἐπιπλόμενον ἔτος ἦλθεν,
 δὴ τότε Φοῖνιξ ἦλθεν ἀνὴρ ἀπατήλια εἰδώς,
 τρώκτης, ὃς δὴ πολλὰ κάκ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐώργει:
 ὅς μ' ἄγε παρπεπιθῶν ἦσι φρεσίν, ὄφρ' ἰκόμεσθα
 Φοινίκην, ὅθι τοῦ γε δόμοι καὶ κτήματ' ἔκειτο.
 ἔνθα παρ' αὐτῷ μείνα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτόν. (*Od.* 14. 285-92)

There then I stayed seven years, and much wealth did I gather among the Egyptians, for all men gave me gifts. But when the eighth circling years come, then there came a man of Phoenicia, well versed in guile, a greedy knave, who had already wrought much evil among men. He prevailed upon me by his cunning, and took me with him, until we reached Phoenicia, where lay his house and his possessions. There I remained with him for a full year. (*Od.* 14. 285-92)

While the first Cretan narrative renders a decent image of the Phoenician merchant sailor (*Od.* 13. 349), the second tale⁹ adds a substantively sinister feature for a man from Phoenicia. To label a Phoenician as a greedy man or τρώκτης is to highlight a proverbial bias harbored by ancient Greeks: Phoenicians are stereotyped as inveterate liars and deceivers. Phoenicians are pejoratively denigrated as unreliable cheaters, experienced hucksters, insatiable mongers, and unscrupulous profiteers. Considering ancient Mediterranean contexts, in which there were few large-scale transactions and enterprises, but inter-city and inter-regional encounters indeed took place and conflicts and misunderstandings in-between were not uncommon, we might ascribe this case to a failure of investment and discern an animated web consisting at least of four parts: a clever Greek, speculative Phoenicians, a nouveau-riche Cretan, and wealthy Egyptians. The story can be put in a different way: an envious Greek intends to distort a case of international trade, in which a relatively prosperous Cretan makes a big fortune in Egypt and then joins a rather opportunist group of Phoenician venture—but only in vain.

More instances in the *Odyssey* can show the interchange of gifts, arts, and technology between Greeks and Phoenicians. Menelaus recounts his previous adventures to Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, North Africa, and the western Mediterranean (*Od.* 4. 76-85).¹⁰ On the second day of his sojourn in Sparta, Telemachus repeats his request for information about his father and Menelaus replies in a long story concerning his homecoming and a series of adventures, which, unlike those expeditions into mythical realms in Odysseus' journey, are said to be travels to real places such as Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, the lands of Ethiopians, Sidonians, Erembians and Libyans. Among the precious gifts Menelaus gets during Telemachus' visits in these places is a splendid Phoenician bowl,¹¹ which tellingly

⁹ These primary ingredients of the story such as Egypt, the Mediterranean trade, and Phoenicians altogether fashion a fairy-tale style, in which the narrator, placed himself at the analogous position as Joseph in *Genesis* 41-50, is a foreigner thriving under an Egyptian king. Obviously, Egypt is the land of opportunity for the ancient eastern Mediterranean basin.

¹⁰ These places are usually associated with imported goods found in the ancient Greek marketplace: from Egypt, rigging for sails and papyrus; from Syria, frankincense; from glorious Crete, cypress for the gods . . . from Phoenicia, the fruit of the palm and fine flour.

¹¹ In Book 15 of the *Odyssey*, Menelaus regards the bowl as the symbol of hospitality:

illustrates the emerging Greek ceramic tradition of the Orientalizing period and hence suggests the transition from the Bronze to the Early Iron Age accompanied by a radical change in population make-up or political organization along the Phoenician coast. Slightly differing from the idealized model of gift exchange, the Phoenician trade in effect constitutes an agency for cultural exchange, although sometimes the Phoenicians are easily associated with pirates. Whereas the unilateral theft or piracy is in contrast with the reciprocal generosity of gift exchange, the commercial trade is somehow between these two forms and is not always against the poetic values of hospitality.¹²

This richly decorated and intricately figured Phoenician bowl, as one of the most illustrious motives in Homer's epics, features prominently in the recent archaeological and historical researches. With the latest findings, there is growing knowledge about ancient Phoenician bowls as a unique and unprecedented combination of Egyptian, Assyrian, North Syrian, and Aegean styles; in this light, the Phoenicians indeed play the role of intermediaries in commerce and in arts as well. And it can be substantiated that one of the primary grounds for Phoenician maritime activity is the acquisition of silver. Jeffrey M. Hurwit believes that the early Greek art is influenced by the oriental style, citing the very case of an imported Phoenician bronze bowl (66-67). The Phoenician bowl from Kerameikos grave 42, around 850 BCE exactly pictures the imaginary world created by the epics. The case of the silver bowl set by Achilles as a prize in the funeral

‘Τηλέμαχ’, ἧ̄ τοι νόστον, ὅπως φρεσὶ σῆσι μενοιῶς,
 ὣς τοι Ζεὺς τελέσειεν, ἐρίγδουπος πόσις Ἥρης.
 δώρων δ’ ὅσσ’ ἐν ἐμῷ οἴκῳ κειμήλια κέϊται,
 δώσω ὃ κάλλιστον καὶ τιμηέστατόν ἐστι.
 δώσω τοι κρητῆρα τετυγμένον: ἀργύρεος δὲ
 ἐστὶν ἅπας, χρυσῷ δ’ ἐπὶ χεῖλεα κεκράνται,
 ἔργον δ’ Ἡφαίστοιο: πόρην δὲ ἐ Φαίδιμος ἦρωσ,
 Σιδονίων βασιλεύς, ὄθ’ ἐδὸς δόμος ἀμφεκάλυψε
 κεῖσέ με νοστήσαντα: τεῖν δ’ ἐθέλω τόδ’ ὀπάσσαι. (*Od.* 15. 111-19)

Telemachus, may Zeus, the loud-thundering husband of Hera, in truth bring to pass for you your return just as your heart desires. Of all the gifts that lie stored as treasures I will give you that one which is the most beautiful and most precious. I will give you a well-wrought mixing bowl. It is all of silver, and its rims are finished with gold, the work of Hephaestus; the hero Phaedimus, king of the Sidonians, gave me it, when his house sheltered me as I came there; and now I wish to give it to you. (*Od.* 15. 111-19)

The mention of Sidonians, those usually associated with craftsmanship, is highly suggestive of the Bronze Age.

¹² The instances such as Sidon as a developed port city where Paris sailed en route to Troy (*Iliad* 6. 290-91) and en route home after the war (*Od.* 15. 118-19) showcase a sophisticated polity and complex sociopolitical organization with the elite gifting network and the practice of hospitality.

games of Patrocles (*Il.* 23. 740 ff) shows both the superb craftsmanship of the Phoenicians and a complex history of elite ownership. Another example of the handiwork of Sidonian women is the embroidered garments, which are brought back from Sidon by Paris (*Il.* 6. 288 ff.) and are similarly characterized by the pronounced intermixture of cultural elements. The luxury goods of the Phoenicians are obviously linked with the wealth of Asia, but the very riches are ultimately corrupting. A confrontation with eastern artifacts is of paramount importance for the cultural renaissance after the Dark Age in ancient Greece. The *Odyssey* does not mention that ancient Easterners such as Phoenicians and Levantines are politically unimportant; but it is iterated that the Phoenicians do bring or introduce their stylistic artifacts and sophisticated metalwork to the Greek world.

The obvious fascination with Phoenicians and their crafts is a result of ancient Greeks' curiosity and passion for approaching the oriental world and the related arts and cultures. Odysseus indeed divulges something relevant to the real contact between the Greeks and the Phoenicians, albeit under a highly virtual context, which creates a legendary space for the representation of their interaction. According to the *Old Testament*, most independent rival cities such as Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, and Arwad, never work in concert with one another; yet there is no single allusion to a Phoenician confederacy or state. The totality of the Phoenicians in the Cretan stories silhouetted by Odysseus adds a more enigmatic shade to the borderlines between the imaginary maps and the real Mediterranean. However, Phoenicians may have been active, though somehow limited within the Eastern Mediterranean for the time before moving westward Spain, Italy, and Carthage; by contrast, the locations in the *Odyssey* such as Calypso, the Land of the Lotus Eaters, Scylla and Charybdis, are already far more than the charted territory.¹³ In short, the core truth of the story is simply an approximation of the ancient Mediterranean geography. From these two stories fabricated by Odysseus, a tentative conclusion is likely to be: the Phoenician world is virtually real and really virtual.

The Imagined Phoenicians

The focus of the third Cretan narrative (*Od.* 15. 403-84) is on a skilled Phoenician, a Phoenician nursemaid of the young Eumaeus. The homeland of

¹³ The correlation between Odyssean geography and real geography is rather confusing, even though Thucydides already identifies Scheria, as the Phaeacians call their island, with Corcyra, north of Ithaca off the coast of northwest Greece.

this nursemaid is Sidon, rich in bronze (*Od.* 15. 425). Eumaeus, who was once the princely young son of a father who ruled two cities on the island of Syria and whose maidservant at that time was a Phoenician slave kidnapped from home and sold, plays a major role in the action through enlarging upon his origins and revealing the ironical effect of slavery. In order to have the opportunity to return to her homeland, this Phoenician slave steals treasure and the son of the king (Eumaeus) so as to get the help from Phoenician sailors. Unfortunately, she dies en route. And then the Phoenicians bring the boy Eumaeus to Ithaca and sell him to Laertes. This Phoenician nursemaid, who is a betrayer of her master, constitutes a counterexample to Eumaeus, who unfortunately enters servitude in Ithaca but is a royal servant even during the absence of his master. From the swineherd Eumaeus' viewpoint, which reflects a typical stereotype at that time, Phoenicians are usually the evil seamen prevailing in the Mediterranean:

ἐνθα δὲ Φοίνικες ναυσίκλυτοι ἤλυθον ἄνδρες,
 τρῶκται, μυρὶ ἄγοντες ἀθύρματα νηϊ μελαίνῃ.
 ἔσκε δὲ πατρὸς ἑμοῖο γυνὴ Φοίνισσ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,
 καλὴ τε μεγάλη τε καὶ ἀγλαὰ ἔργα ἰδυῖα:
 τὴν δ' ἄρα Φοίνικες πολυπαῖπαλοι ἠπερόπευον. (*Od.* 15. 415-19)

Thither came Phoenicians, men famed for their ships, greedy knaves, bringing countless trinkets in their black ship. Now there was in my father's house a Phoenician woman, comely and tall, and skilled in glorious handiwork. Her the wily Phoenicians beguiled. (*Od.* 15. 415-19)

The *Odyssey* gives an artfully balanced conspectus of the Phoenicians, to be more precise, the imagined Phoenicians. The term Phoenicians may conjure up both positive and negative images: on the one hand, Phoenicians are lauded as learned scribes, brave seafarers and sophisticated explorers, skilled engineers, and superb artisans; on the other hand, they are depreciated as unreliable huskers, depraved cheaters, treacherous traders, insatiable mongers, and crooked racketeers. Both Odysseus and Eumaeus foster the complicated ambivalence towards the Phoenicians. Odysseus demonizes Phoenician traders as those coming to the Greek lands and even kidnapping children (*Od.* 15. 459). Eumaeus' Phoenician nurse is struck by a sudden and gentle death from one of Artemis arrows and then she, like a sea bird (κῆξ), plunges vertically into the ship's bilge (*Od.* 15. 479). Very similar to Odysseus' false account, Eumaeus' narrative features the Phoenicians as greedy and duplicitous seamen who, carrying goods of minor consequence to be exchanged through barter for replacement goods, are not above trafficking and abducting children (*Od.* 14. 452-53). Eumaeus does not mention metals or other raw materials carried by the Phoenician ship, perhaps because the luxury goods seems to be unimportant in his viewpoint.

The rivalry against the seemingly capricious Phoenicians is precisely a matching note to the theme of identity in the *Odyssey*. The hostility towards the Phoenicians can be perceived in the diction such as greedy and evil; additionally, an emphasis on the products shipped by Phoenicians as nothing but trinkets (*Od.* 15. 416) is clearly to underline their worthlessness and thus to slight the existence of the Phoenician business. Despite the evident rivalry, the intimacy between Greeks and Phoenicians such as Eumaeus' nurse as a Phoenician woman occurs.¹⁴ It is never hard to find close parallels between Odysseus and the much-degraded Phoenicians. The Phoenicians are cunning or *πολυπαίπαλοι* (*Od.* 15. 419), a word registering a witty wordplay by synthesizing the meanings of being outstandingly crafty and terribly wily. By comparison, a conventional epithet for Odysseus is *πολυμήχανος*; that is, Odysseus is mainly characterized by his artifice and various stratagems, which are equivalent to the dishonorable deceits and amazing skills, the supposedly inherent attributes of Phoenicians. While the *Iliad*, which adopts the term *πολυδαιδαλος* or of many skills specifically to describe the Phoenician craftsmen (*Il.* 23. 740-49), tends to cast light on the praiseworthy expertise of the Phoenicians, the *Odyssey* not only pictures the Phoenician splendid silver bowls but also highlights the unreliability of the Phoenician traders.

A rather large proportion of the *Odyssey* is taken up with detailed description of the foreign or exotic areas and thus suggests that Greeks have assimilated the other cultural materials, motifs, and ideas into their own arts. The description that a week after kidnapping the little Eumaeus his treacherous nurse died on the Phoenician traders' ship and her body was thrown overboard to be a prey for seals and fishes (*Od.* 15. 477-80) echoes the thematic figures on certain Phoenicians bowls which have recently been unearthed. Numerous ancient literary and inscriptional records of Israel, Egypt, Assyria and Greece documents bear out that Phoenician craftsmen not only produced excellent weaving and dyeing fine fabric but also showed advanced skill with the ivory, metal, stone and wood artworks—despite their borrowing of certain striking motifs and foreign sources. The *Odyssey*, which was composed against the background of the Orientalizing period of Greek art, seems to reveal the Greek sense of the Orient as cultural antagonist. The passage in Homer (*Od.* 17. 383-85) mentions craftsmen, including carpenters, seers, and singers—apparently excluding the Phoenician businessmen and those cloth-makers. The varying views corroborate that the Greeks look to the Phoenicians for artistic and intellectual inspiration but then attempt to distinguish themselves from other cultures. To put together, the confrontation with the Other and the interaction

¹⁴ Archaeological evidence that Phoenicians and Greeks lived together on the island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples in the eighth century BCE considerably proves this.

with the Phoenicians turns out to be a potential to facilitate the formation of the Greek identity. At the first level, the tales, although framed in a deceptive trap, may constitute a larger bank of ethnic stereotypes such as duped Cretans and fraudulent Phoenicians. Secondly, the story-teller Odysseus pretends to tell the true story via a counterfeited identity and ironically takes a position of the defrauded victim; by contrast, the faithful swineherd Eumaeus recounts his involuntary descent into a lesser position but undoubtedly expresses his ingrained ambivalence towards the Phoenicians. For a long time, these ensnaring words, which are under the control of a smarter readership, come to map out another emblematic level: an imagined Phoenicia innovates itself by attaching more significance to itself.

What really matters is the problem of changing identities, a motif to have a lot to do with the very formative period which occasions the emerging awareness of Greek community. Eumaeus' abduction and Odysseus' account of himself as a Cretan prince can be read as a paired exchange of personal identity. Similarly, the Greekness is somehow defined through asserting and negating the Other. It is understandable that the Phoenicians, like other foreigners, are by no means wholeheartedly received due to untrustworthiness and the deep-rooted ideology of unreliable merchants. However, the presumed Phoenicians, good or bad, form an indispensable part in the narrative framework of Odysseus' identity. Odysseus repeatedly assembles stories to dissimulate his identity. These beguiling stories may imply the international vision which the much-traveled Odysseus has. Despite the frequently faking tentative identities, Odysseus is becoming aware of his own identity through encountering other cultures. The foreign and unknown can be the core to sparkle imagination, which then facilitates the construction of the identity. In the same vein, the Greekness is never formed in a completely isolated manner. Therefore, instead of accepting the ideology of origins and organic development as elaborated in romantic nationalism, reciprocal cultural percussions are the better key to the deeper and more programmatic rationale of the *Odyssey*.

Odysseus' stories are not identical with a pack of lies, because the composition of these tales inspires an alternative to explore the impact of the Oriental civilizations on the Geometric and Archaic Greek culture. The stories in the *Odyssey*, true or false, confirm that Crete, as a kind of natural crossroads, is a transit for the relocation of craft workers and the dissemination of ideas, information, and technology. Actually, the Phoenicians' westward expansion, not purely to establish more new settlements, was to capitalize on the available mobile workforce of highly skilled workers. Utterly differing from the Greco-barbarian opposition or the center-periphery relationship, the interaction between Greeks and Phoenicians in the *Odyssey* is based on a mutuality rather than on the straight orientalism. Many scholars stress the process of Orientalizing; for example, it is frequently cited that the birth of

Greek philosophy has a lot to do with the tradition of Thales, who was actually of Phoenician decent. However, that Odysseus subtly designs various stories with varying characterizations of Phoenicians is a practice to challenge the concept of the absolute oriental influence and the notion of identical Greekness as well. In general, we use the term ancient Greece not in a geographical sense, but somehow as a shorthand expression meaning the collection of places inhabited by Greek-speaking people. Simply put, ancient Greece is never defined by territories. Similarly, Phoenicia is a highly vague concept. Phoenicians are arguably defined in opposition to the Greeks; and the polarity and similarity between them may be just part of the consequences of a Greek-centered representation of the world. Aristotle gives an alternative depiction of the wind, in which the southern south East corresponds with *Phoenicias*; that is, the very locality of the Phoenician native land is supposed to be in the direction of South Southeast. In this sense, the Greeks and the Phoenicians are related to each other with their varying perspectives and directions. The profound outcomes of the long-term interconnection between Greeks and Phoenicians will infiltrate the linguistic and everyday spheres, along with the immediate effects on trade, artifacts, and technology.

Symbols and Words

It is not overemphasized that the Phoenicians, as the intermediaries between the oriental culture and the Greek world, introduce something lastingly consolidated into Greek society as well as being as a catalyst for sparking the coming Greek renaissance. Maria Eugenia Aubet has a general remark concerning the ancient Phoenicians: “Phoinix, the eponymous hero of the country, is none other than the king of Tyre . . . the alphabet, and the date palm, another emblem of Tyre’s coinage, called Phoinix in Greek” (7). Whereas Phoenician craftsmen and artists perpetuate the ideals of their Canaanite ancestors into the first millennium and disseminate them throughout the Mediterranean zone, they introduce not only their delicate metalworking, ivory carving, jewel manufacturing and glass-making but also the alphabetic writing system invented by the Canaanites to the Greeks. The fact that Phoenician inscriptions dating from the ninth century BCE have been found in Cyprus and Sardinia and that there was a Greek settlement in Phoenicia at the same period indicates that the two peoples lived side by side during the so-called Dark Age. Moreover, the word, βύβλιος (papyrus), which appears in Homer’s *Odyssey* (21. 391), is derived from the name of the Phoenician city Byblus and was borrowed at a time when Byblus was the most important city and port on the Canaanite coast, namely from the early third millennium to the

early eleventh century BCE. After that date, Byblus lost its preeminence to Sidon and Tyre. If the alphabet was borrowed from the Phoenicians as early as the eleventh century BCE, Homer or his syndicate or his scribes might have used it. The poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, a master of the oral techniques and repertory, exploits the new resource of the alphabet adapted from a Phoenician script. The poems are performed by professional bards from memory and improvisation; yet the medium of the alphabet made possible the survival of these two epics to our own day. It is estimated that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reached their current form approximately 750-550 BCE, i.e., the period of the development of the polis, Greek colonization, and the rise of Panhellenic or Greek sentiment. Over time, the introduction of the Phoenician writing system facilitates increased literacy in the Greek cities, which in turn becomes essential in the sense of community.

The mention of a well-wrought Phoenician silver bowl is not uncommon in Homeric epics. Take *Iliad* 23. 740-48 for example: Achilles brings out a silver mixing bowl as the prize for the winners of the running contest. The history of the bowl is its own warrant: handmade by the Sidonians, the most skilled in refined handiwork, this article is initially the gift which Phoenicians prepared for Thaos, then the ransom which Euneos paid for Lycaon, son of Priam, and currently the prize which Achilles deems the greatest honor. This bowl, among the products of the finest craftsmanship, is accompanied by a story, which exactly attests to the owner's standing and social connection. The circulation of this bowl manifests its extraordinary heritage, its worthiness, and its multiple functions as a gift, a ransom and a prize. Simply put, Phoenician products, like this silver bowl, already have been widely circulated, collected, and distributed and in Greek society and, in all likelihood, are dearly valued and appreciated.

Furthermore, the linguistic osmosis takes place. The name Phoenicia is said to derive from the Greek, *Phoinikes*, referring to the purple colored dye which the Phoenicians extracted from the murex shell, and with which they produced highly prized textiles. Yet the very purple cloak appears to be a symbol of high standing:

ὥς ἔφατ', ὄρτο δ' ἔπειτα Θάας, Ἀνδραίμονος υἱός,
καρπαλίμως, ἀπὸ δὲ χλαῖναν θέτο **φοινικέσσαν**.
βῆ δὲ θέειν ἐπὶ νῆας: ἐγὼ δ' ἐνὶ εἵματι κείνου
κείμεν ἄσπασίως, φάε δὲ χρυσόθρονος Ἥως. (*Od.* 14. 499-502; emphasis mine)

So he spoke, and Thaos, son of Andraemon, sprang up quickly, and from him flung **his purple cloak**, and set out to run to the ships. Then in his garment I gladly lay, and the golden-throned Dawn appeared. (*Od.* 14. 499-502; emphasis mine)

The purple cloak signifies the social status of Thaos and, particularly in this passage, embodies the universal compassion of helping the needy. Similar in-

stances are: first, the Phoenician silver bowl, as an example of the circuit of royal gifting well known in the Levant during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, is owned and transmitted in the society of fellowship; second, the Sidonian garments as a luxurious commodity imply a specific gift-exchange relationship.¹⁵ For the ancient Greeks, the Phoenician cities may well supply an external model to shape their internal developments, which eventually lead to the formation of Greek *polis*. The process runs parallel with the Orientalizing in the Geometric period. The composition of the *Odyssey* delicately integrates oriental elements, which afterwards come to shape the upcoming Greek culture.

Phoenicia, although mentioned in diverse stories in the *Odyssey*, is literally associated with the date palm trees and therefore symbolically induces more cultural contexts above and beyond the boundaries of epic tradition. The name *Phoenix*, as implied in Homer's epics, indicates a tree from Phoenicia. For instance, upon meeting Nausicaa for the first time, Odysseus compares her beauty to the new shoot of that date palm beside the altar of Apollo in Delos:

Δήλω δὴ ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ βωμῶ
φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα:
 ἦλθον γὰρ καὶ κείσε, πολὺς δέ μοι ἔσπετο λαός,
 τὴν ὁδὸν ἧ δὴ μέλλεν ἔμοι κακὰ κήδε' ἔσεσθαι. (*Od.* 6. 162-65; emphasis mine)

Now in Delos once I saw such a thing, a young shoot of **a palm** springing up beside the Altar of Apollo—for there too, I went, and many men followed with me, on that journey on which evil woes were to be my portion. (*Od.* 6. 162-65; emphasis mine)

The poet of the *Iliad* makes no mention of date palms. In the *Odyssey*, our hero, while shipwrecked, compares Nausicaa to the magnificent palm tree which he had seen at Delos and, immediately, Nausicaa is propitiated. One of the prizes for the regular athletic events at Delos with the choral performance is the sacred date palm, which indeed carries the symbolic meaning of youth, life, and beauty. As the name “Phoenix” manifests, the date palm was carried westward by the ancient Phoenicians. It is likely that, on the Syrian coast, the Cornice of the Levant, the Greek sailors first saw such a sacred tree and then took it to the island of Delos to adorn the temple of Apollo.

The date palm could be distinctly the Cretan date palm. Hellmut Baumann insightfully summarizes that, except the Cretan date palm (*Phoenix theophrasti*), all the palms in Greece are introduced from other lands; for example, the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) was brought in Antiquity to Greece from Arabia (213).

¹⁵ Winter puts a stress on the parallels between Homer's references to the well-wrought silver bowls of high quality and value and the biblical accounts of the cunningness and skills of the Phoenician craftsmen, who are said to be sent to build Solomon's palace and temple (604).

Indeed, the palms were known to many earliest cultures and the wild Cretan date palm, which was first mentioned by Theophrastus, has its scientific name *Phoenix theophrasti* and can be spotted in a wild state at five localities on Crete but might be descendants of plants brought back by the Minoans from Africa. The species of the date palm *dactylifera*, a term combined of *dactylos* (date) and *fero* (to bear), expresses itself a kind of date-bearing palm. Moreover, the Greek *dactylus* means finger. Nawal Nasrallah formulates his theory: *Phoenix dactylifera* is “an ancient Greek nomenclature, derived from Phoenicia, the ancient narrow coastal region between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan Valley that makes up modern-day Lebanon and parts of Syria, Israel and Palestine” (12). In ancient Greek and Latin, the term *palma* refers to the edible date palm and the ornamental dwarf palm as well, whereas it is arguably stated that *palma* can be a corruption of *tamar*. In the analysis of art in the ancient Near East, Irene Winter concludes that the form of the sacred trees consists of “a fan-shaped cluster of leaves that resembles the palmetto plants of Phoenician ivories” (193). Interestingly, aside from the Semitic origins, the sacredness of the palm fronds is related to the myth of Heracles, who first sees the date palm on his return from the Hades and immediately crowns himself with its leaves. In any case, the system of naming the plant date palm reflects a process of conceptual orientation in which the likely Phoenician cultures may well merge into the linguistic sphere of Greek life.

Alternatively, some Greek myths associate date palms with the fascinating story of the fiery bird that never dies. Yet the issue is about the process of how the date palm was introduced to the ancient Greek world and how its image is presented since the heroic times on. Harold N. Moldenke speculates that, according to Herodotus, Strabo,¹⁶ and Pliny, the so-called strong drink mentioned in *Leviticus* 10:9¹⁷ may be the juice of date palm rather than wine (170). Later, the coins of gold tenth shekel of Carthage from 350-320 BCE with a date palm on it can demonstrate that later ancient Greeks and Romans adopted the palm leaves as symbols for victory, worn by victors of games and battles as wreaths or carried by hand. Yet the images of date palms struck on Greek and Roman coins explain the importance of the tree as an economic resource. After all, aside from the introduction of alphabetic writing system via the Phoenician seafarers, certain commonplace instances such as purple color and date palms suggest the fact that many aspects of the imagined Phoenicians come to be embedded in Greek daily

¹⁶ Strabo mentions that in Babylon the date palm furnished its people with bread, wine, vinegar and meal and many kinds of woven articles are made from date palm.

¹⁷ The quote is: “You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come” (*Leviticus* 10:9).

life. It is inferred that the adoption and transformation of artistic and technological advances of non-Greek peoples can initiate a persisting and voluminous percussion on varying dimensions of Greek society.

Conclusion

The stories about the imagined Phoenicians in the *Odyssey* altogether suggest the reality in the disguise of counterfeited accounts and the actual conditions under the camouflage of the virtual map and thus reveal a well-established pattern, in which the exotica are distorted, transformed and adapted at the same time. Whereas many sources do refer to a climate of competition existing between Phoenicians and Greeks in the Mediterranean basin, the *Odyssey* offers a specific perspective in which imaginary, symbolic and cultural dimensions are synthesized into an underlying formative potentiality of Greek culture, history, and identity. On the one hand, the fuzzy combination of truth and fiction provides adequate space, which in turn transcends the absolute polarity of Greeks and non-Greeks and embraces the relative reciprocity in-between. On the other hand, the contradictory descriptions revolving around the Phoenicians—positively, they are celebrated as learned scribes, unbeaten seafarers, intrepid explorers, excellent craftsmen, and skilled engineers; negatively, they were discredited as cunning knaves, evil businessmen, and unsympathetic intruders—can unfold a rich spectrum of ethnographic data and articulate the continuous encounters of different peoples. Granted that the ready acceptance of non-Greek ingredients paves the way for entering the Pan-Hellenic period, the Phoenicians can be one of the best catalysts of the coming Greek renaissance and may well facilitate the enduring impacts on various spheres of Greek life.

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荷馬史詩《奧德賽》中想像的腓尼基人

摘要

西元前八世紀末，西元前七世紀開始，希臘人接觸東方藝術作品，加以吸收模仿，進而開創與建立自己的風格，開啓重要的文藝復興，或稱東方化時期。荷馬史詩《奧德賽》多處提及腓尼基人和他們的精緻手工藝，也成為史家與學者佐證此時期的「東方革命」的典型例子。但是，我們必須思考幾個重要的面向與其隱藏的意義：《奧德賽》並非單純的史實呈現、史詩的社會融合不同時期的文化背景、史詩想像的腓尼基人與腓尼基文化並非限定在一地方。此外，史詩呈現想像的腓尼基文化，看似與希臘文明對立，但卻是希臘人學習與模仿的重要對象之一，看似想像中的他者，卻是希臘主體形成重要的一環。從地理空間觀看，游動的腓尼基人，成為古希臘接觸東方文化的關鍵。從時間縱軸觀察，除了腓尼基字母，還有不少例子都可以看出，部分腓尼基文化漸漸成為希臘日常生活、日用語言和社會結構的一部分。

關鍵詞：腓尼基人、《奧德賽》、古希臘東方化時期、他者、希臘特質