



## Relief *Stelae* From Athens: The External Evidences Regarding Heracleia Pontica (The 5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C.)

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### ABSTRACT

Heracleia Pontica despite having such an important place in the ancient world, the settlement constitutes one of the areas in the southwestern Black Sea where the need for archaeological studies is felt intensely. Therefore the subject of the research constitutes the examination of our knowledge of the development of the Heracleia Pontica between the Archaic and Hellenistic periods (5th and 4th centuries BC). The evidences which are uncovered from an abroad *polis* is evaluated in the context of regional archaeology, and a group of finds consisting of funerary relief *stelae* and proxeny decrees revealed by Aegean archaeology - associated with Paphlagonian city - are discussed. These artifacts, dated between the 5th and 4th centuries BC were unearthed in Athens since the 19th century. The funerary relief *stelae* and proxeny decrees are unique in that they belong to the people from Heracleia as indicated in their inscriptions. Moreover, they form various arguments in examining the social turmoil, exiles, and commercial activities of the associated city or the relations between Athenai and Heracleia Pontica. The finds discussed in this study constituting four funerary relief *stelae* and two proxeny decrees are considered to be related to Heracleians based on the inscriptions. Although they belong to the Heracleians, the fact that they were unearthed in Athenai makes them particularly remarkable.

**Keywords:** Heracleia Pontica, Athens, Black Sea, Funerary *Stelae*, Archaeology



## Introduction

As it's known the chronological discrepancy between the archaeological and historical evidences of the Archaic and Classical periods on the coasts of southwestern Euxinos (Bithynia and Paphlagonia), has long been debated (Tsetskhladze, 2022, pp. 523-528; Manoledakis, 2017, pp. 181-182, 188-189; Marek, 1993, pp. 16-24; Petropoulos, 2005, pp. 15-16). Such an interesting aspect of the subject, researchers emphasize that most of the archaeological evidences specific to this period and area which the coasts of Bithynia and Paphlagonia form an important part, comes mostly from other sides of the Black Sea and even from the Aegean (Avram *et al.*, 2004, p. 927; Hoepfner, 2022, pp. 1-2; Erciyas, 2007, pp. 1195, 1201). Perhaps the best arguments for this statement constitute the excavation inventories of Heracleian *amphorae* from other shores of the Black Sea, instead of the Heracles' own city in Paphlagonia (Saprykin, 1997, pp. 3-18, 47-48, 60-61; Monakhov, 2019, pp. 60-64; Opait, 2010, pp. 389-393). It is also often stated that the lack of archaeological data observed especially on the southern Black Sea coast between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC was due to intense modern urbanization, the scant archaeological works and the geographical difficulties in the region compared to other parts of Anatolia and Black Sea (Atasoy, 2018, pp. 109-113; Burstein, 1976, pp. 1, 14). But, we can see that the recent number of archaeological research carried out on western Paphlagonia has increased gradually (Hoffmann, 1989; Marek, 1989; 2003; Hill & Crow, 1993; Şerifoğlu, 2015; Atasoy & Erpehlivan, 2015; Bağdatlı Çam *et al.*, 2019<sup>a</sup>; 2019<sup>b</sup>; 2022; Yıldırım, 2017; 2021; 2023). Although the inventories of classical archaeology become limited as we move towards to inland when compared to coastal part (Matthews, 2009, pp. 149-154, 156-161; Laflı *et al.*, 2013, p. 67; Keleş & Çelikbaş, 2019, p. 197; Yıldırım, 2022, pp. 414-415; Gökoğlu, 1952, p. 65; Dökü *et al.*, 2006, p. 67-75; Karasalihoğlu, 2020, pp. 282-286; Karauğuz, 2008, p. 47). On the other hand, the deep-rooted and experienced Athenian archaeology continues to provide immense data and put forward arguments for the ancient southwestern Black Sea Region.

The subject of this research is to examination of the development of Heracleia Pontica between the Archaic and Hellenistic periods (5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC). The evidences comes from another region where we have a group of finds consisting of funerary relief *stelae* and proxeny decrees, uncovered on the Aegean side, however, associated with the Paphlagonian city. These arguments are fundamental as they reveal that archaeology is a multi-special and inter-regional science. Because they provide specimens on that the questions that cannot be answered in the relevant place can be clarified through data coming from other sites. Therefore this research will appeal primarily to data coming from Athenian archaeology but will help to enlighten Heracleian remote past.

## Historical Background and Archaeological Context

Heracleia Pontica was founded as a Greek colony by Megarians and Boeotians in the mid-6th century BC, and attributed to Heracles or the *oikistes* Gnesiochos of Megara (Ruge, 1912, pp. 433-434; Avram *et al.*, 2004, p. 956). Whether the city was founded by a hero or a mortal, it represents one of the most powerful *poleis* in the southwestern Black Sea (Dörner, 1967, p. 1035; Öztürk, 2013, p. 507; Rempel & Doonan, 2020, p. 132). The foundation myth was shaped by a Delphic oracle that predicted the establishment of a city in honor of Heracles (Just., 16.3.; Malkin, 1987, p. 74; Belke, 1996, p. 208; Dana, 2011, pp. 55-56), and the hero carried out his last struggle with Cerberus in a cave at Pontic Heracleia (Xen., Anab., 6.2.2). Although Heracleia Pontica was founded in such an early period, it is equally interesting that the archaeological gap between the Archaic and Hellenistic periods can still be observed in its own territory. On the other hand, Tios the city just northeast of Heracleia was founded by *oikistes* Tios of Miletos or Pataros of Thrace has more archaeological data dating back to the third quarter of the 7th century BC (Yıldırım, 2023; Öztürk, 2014; 2023; Atasoy, 2015; Atasoy & Erpehlivan, 2015; Tsetskhladze, 2022; Tsetskhladze & Yıldırım, 2023). Towards the northeast, possibly Milesian initiatives Sesamos (Pre-Amastris), Kromna, and Kytoros whose founders are unknown, constitute other settlements adjacent to Heracleia Pontica (Burstein, 1976; 2006; Ehrhardt, 1996; Hind, 1999, pp. 27-28; Marek, 2003, p. 30; Avram *et al.*, 2004, pp. 955-960; De Boer, 2005, p. 171; Robu, 2012, p. 182).

The importance of Heracleia stems from its wealth, its success in urbanization, and its strategic point as a transit port-city controlling the grain trade coming from the Northern Black Sea (Strab., 12.3.6; Arr., Periplus, 13.3; Bittner, 1998, pp. 120-130; Burstein, 2006, p. 144; Erciyas, 2003, p. 1406; Braund, 2007, p. 53; Saprykin, 2014, 357). Although the archaeological potential of the region was tried to be shown by researchers in the 20th century (Leonhard, 1915, pp. 288-308; Kalinka, 1933, p. 46; Jacopi, 1937, pp. 6-10; Burney, 1956, pp. 180-183; von Gall, 1966, pp. 50-57), and even an important archaic statue which is a head fragment thought to belong to a tyrant or to a Persian satrap was found within the city (Akurgal, 1986; Summerer, 2005), the ancient settlement constitutes a point that more archaeological research is needed in this part of Black Sea today.

However, archaeological value of Heracleia Pontica in its own location was first emphasized by the studies of Dörner and Hoepfner (Dörner & Hoepfner, 1962, pp. 565-594; Dörner & Hoepfner, 1989, pp. 103-105; Dörner, 1990, pp. 34-36; Hoepfner, 1966; Hoepfner, 1972, pp. 37-46). During his research in Heracleia, Hoepfner identified a funerary stele fragment, a small section of the city wall, the remains of a building, and various architectural elements dating between the Early and Late Hellenistic periods (Hoepfner, 2022, pp. 59, 73-74, 91-95). Although they have not been implemented by archaeological excavations we have some stray finds of sculptures dating to later periods of the ancient city (Erichsen, 1972;

Pfuhl & Möbius, 1977; Cremer, 1992; Sezer, 2021; Özgan, 2022). The epigraphic past of the Heracleia, about which we are more fortunate, has been shaped by the data obtained from the city and the region itself (Robert, 1937; Jonnes & Ameling, 1994; Öztürk 2013; 2017; 2023). Current studies conducted underwater and on land have exciting potential (Davis *et al.*, 2018, pp. 74-75; Okan *et al.*, 2017, pp. 53-56; Bilir & Bilir, 2022, p. 49) but apart from these, there are inadequate and rather personal impressions we get through the short-term stops of the travelers (Akkaya, 1994, pp. 27-35; Erciyas, 2003, p. 1416).

In the ancient long-distance interaction of Heracleia two chief *poleis* of Attica, the Megara and the Athenai form the main centers. Although the first played a dominant role as the founder, the second seems to have been more effective since the end of the 5th century BC (Ehrhardt, 1996, p. 103; De Boer, 2006, p. 279). As far as we know, Hellas' interest in Paphlagonian coasts started with Megara in the 6th century BC. After Perikles' regional expedition to the Hospitable Sea, Athens seems to have strong impact on the cultural and political life of the ancient world and established ties via the tyrant dynasties, the rich families, and merchants of the city for a long time (Arist., *Pol.*, 7.5.7; Desideri, 1991; De Boer, 2005, pp. 167-172; Braund, 2007; Hall, 2019; Coşkun, 2019; Marek, 2017, p. 211).

It is known that Clearchus who can be considered as the second founder after Gnesiochos (Memn., 1.1; Berve, 1967, pp. 316-318; Arslan, 2018, pp. 95-96), similarly his son Timotheos and Chion from the same city had close relations with Plato and Isocrates in Athens (Isok., *Epist.*, 7.12-13; Christy, 2016, p. 259). The ties of the Heracleian philosopher Heracleides and the mathematician Amyclas with Plato, Speusippus, Aristotle (Diog. Laert., 5.86; Bosworth, 1994, pp. 15-17; Mikalson, 1998, p. 259; Arslan, 2018, pp. 100-101), and the relations between two cities in reign of tyrant Dionysios can be cited as other examples in this regard (Arslan, 2016; Lester-Pearson, 2021, p. 149; Gallotta, 2022, pp. 241-242). However, within the archaeological context that generate remarkable evidences of these relations between the two *poleis*, the funerary relief *stelae* or proxeny decrees of Heracleot *metoikoi* (*metic-resident alien*) (Adak, 2003, pp. 20-39; Watson, 2010, p. 259; Üreten, 2017, pp. 29-36), who settled in Athens between the late 5th and 4th centuries BC, are of particular importance. Because these constitute arguments that shed light on the early Heracleia Pontica.

These finds are remarkable in several aspects. As will be mentioned below, unlike the finds which are only inscripted, the citizens of Heracleia clearly wanted to show themselves in these relief *stela* or proxeny decrees. Although the reliefs are presented within the standard imagery of Classical art specific to the period, a tendency can be detected to show themselves as undifferentiated individuals, as a part of the new place they belong to, even though they come from a distant place (Boardman, 1995; Lawton, 1995; Childs, 2018). The fact that the *stelae* in question were found in Athens, a city quite far from Heracleia, can be another striking aspect in itself. Moreover, the imagery we encounter, especially in proxeny decrees is quite

strong. It is significant that the holy family members accompanying the citizens of Heracleia were consciously chosen as Athena and Heracles. This allegory or context established between Athenai and Heracleia through the individuals in question who were deemed worthy of honor is clear enough. Because they are the Heracleian citizens (Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004, pp. 257-262; Garland, 1982; Mikalson, 1998; Breder, 2013<sup>a</sup>; Closterman, 2007).

With all this, it should be emphasized that the number of cities named Heracleia in the ancient world was numerous (Asheri, 1975, pp. 33-38; Heineman, 2021: p. 262). It is known that this situation makes it difficult to determine the real *polis* of which related Heracleians were its citizens. However, considering the arguments to be expressed below, it can be said that Heracleia Pontica, is one of the cities that comes to mind the most.

### Description of the Finds

I) Proxeny of Sotimos: One of the earliest pieces of evidences is an inscribed relief proxeny decree found in Athens (Fig. 1), (Lawton, 1993, pp. 3-4 fig. 5). The stele was reported to have been discovered near Erechtheion, southwest of Parthenon in 1835. When it was found the top and bottom parts were missing (Ritter, 2001, p. 130 abb. 9; Jonnes & Ameling, 1994, p. 162). It is made of white marble and according to preserved condition, its dimentions were 41.5 cm wide, and 51.4 cm high (Lawton, 1995, p. 118 no. 72 pl. 38; Meyer, 1989, pp. 88, 274 taf. 12.2). The relief section, with three human figures on it, rises on a 7.1 cm high *ovolo* and *taenia* molding (Walbank, 1970, p. 329 no 29 pl. 8 fig. 1). Although the entire inscription was not preserved well, it can be clearly read that “*Sotimos of Heracleia*” and his family were honored with the titles of *proxenos* and *euergetes* by the people of Athens (Ritter, 2001, pp. 151-153; EM. 6609; IG I<sup>3</sup> 74).

The upper part of the relief is missing and it has been determined that the leading role in the stele is reserved for the goddess Athena, sitting on a quadrangular platform. The goddess who was depicted larger than the other figures, leaning on her shield with her back and upper right arm, is turned to the right in profile. On the opposite, a male figure, who is probably Sotimos, was depicted wearing sandals, a *himation*, and facing Athena (West, 1935; Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004, p. 261). On the far right of the scene, there is a third figure whose upper part was missing only knees were preserved, just like the Sotimos in the middle (Fig. 1). He was described as Heracles whose upper body seems to be shifted to his right. There, a small piece of the club that the hero leans on the ground, therefore the figure has been identified as Heracles (Lawton, 1995, p. 118; Walbank, 1970, pp. 107, 329; Ritter, 2001, p. 139). The proxeny stele in question, whose connections with Heracleia Pontica will be discussed below, is dated to the late 5th century BC (Ritter, 1997, p. 28 abb. 6; Mattingly, 1996, p. 151).

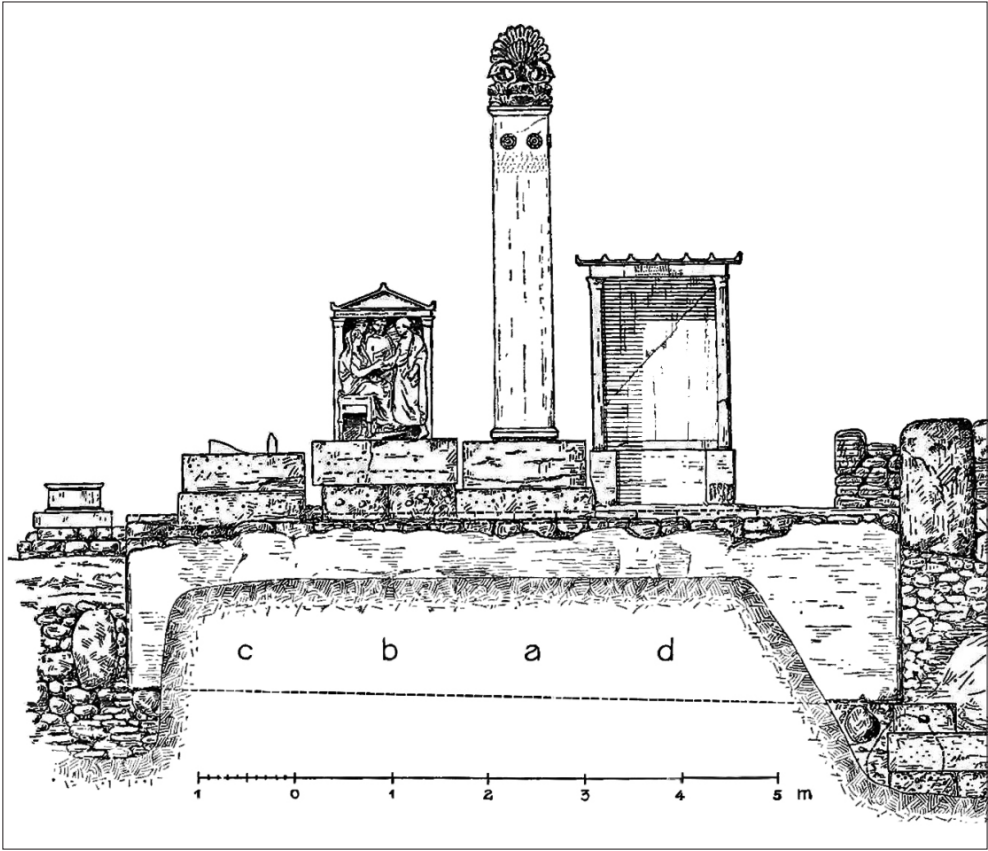
Perhaps one of the most crucial series of evidences in the context of our study was identified in a monumental *peribolos* tomb from the necropolis of Kerameikos in Athens,

which we learned through Aegean archaeology and epigraphy (Ohly, 1965, p. 342 abb. 38; Garland, 1982, p. 136; Breder, 2013<sup>a</sup>, p. 172-174; Hoepfner, 2022; Wijma, 2024, p. 219). Of the total seventeen *periboloi* in the area defined as the terrace on the slope in the southwest of Kerameikos, one example is important for our topic which was a monumental burial plot proposed to have belonged to a family from Heracleia (Fig. 2), (Brueckner, 1909, pp. 64-74; Conze, 1893, p. 95 no. 411 pl. 98; Stroszeck, 2021; Karagöl, 2022, p. xv). The funerary group was discovered in 1863 and was dated to the mid-4th century BC or the third quarter of the same century (Banou & Bournias, 2014, pp. 21-25, 233 fig.). The *peribolos* was built with limestone blocks as a funerary plot with a wall of approximately 50 cm thick running on three sides. It is in the form of a podium, 800 cm wide in the front, and has 535-600 cm depth on both short sides and approximately 280 cm height in the front (Fig. 3), (Brueckner, 1910, p. 109; Richter, 1967, p. 45; Stroszeck, 2002/2003, p. 172).



**Figure 1:** Proxeny decree of Sotimos of Heracleia. Athens. (National Museum of Athens 3850).  
(After; Lawton 1993: fig. 5).

It was determined that the plastered front wall has a narrow eave line on the top. The sarcophagi of this family members were made in limestone, and said to be buried under the ground, just behind the *stelae* (Brueckner, 1910, pp. 123-129 abb. 12-24; Himmelmann, 1999, p. 33). For the *peribolos*, a reconstruction of six or seven *stelae* in total, three of those were attributed by inscriptions has been proposed (Bergemann, 1997, p. 138) (Figs. 2-3). The



**Figure 2:** *Peribolos* of Heracleot family from Kerameikos. Athens. (After; Brueckner 1909: abb. 37-38. reproduced drawing).

plot, where the graves of the Heracleian family members Agathon, his wife Korallion and his brother Sosikrates are buried, is located at the eastern beginning of a street, between the tomb monuments of Dionysios and Dexileos, respectively dated to the 5th and the 4th century BC (Hildebrandt, 2006, p. 129; Banou & Bournias, 2014, p. 205; Avram, 2013, p. 180 no. 1551; Wijma, 2024, pp. 221-224).

II) *Stele of Korallion*: In point of our study, the important find of Heracleot *peribolos* is a gable-roofed, *naiskos*-type funerary relief stele made of Pentelic marble. The stele - approximately 165 cm high and 100 cm wide - was standing on a limestone base (Fig. 4), (Conze, 1893, p. 95 taf. 98 no. 411; Diepolder, 1931, p. 50; Breder, 2013<sup>b</sup>, p. 32; (KM. 688). It is framed horizontally with an inscribed epistyle, starting from the bottom of the pediment. This frame continues with vertical plasters on both sides, and natural ground is depicted at the base (Breder, 2013<sup>a</sup>, p. 173; Stroszeck, 2021, p. 60; Bergemann, 1997, p. 184, taf. 39/1-2, taf. 81/1-2, taf. 69/2).



**Figure 3:** *Peribolos* of Heracleot family from Kerameikos. Athens. Stelae of Agathon, his brother Sosikrates and his wife Korallion. (After; Stroszcek 2003: abb. 13).

The main scene on the stele is reserved to four human figures in relief. Korallion, the owner of the *naiskos*, is sitting on a *diphros* wearing a *khiton* that reaches down her feet. With her right hand extended forward, Korallion poses *dexiosis* with her husband Agathon who is standing towards her (Himmelmann, 1999, pp. 33, 35 abb. 12, 98; Avram, 2013, p. 145 no. 1005).

In the middle of the two main figures, there is another standing and bearded male like the one on his right, and it was proposed that it probably personifies Agathon's brother Sosikrates in the background (Banou & Bournias, 2014, pp. 200, 223; Clairmont, 1993, no. 4415). In the left background the bas-relief head of a young male, likely depicting the family's servant, and his left hand resting on his chin is standing behind Korallion (Fig. 4). In the bottom of the scene, there is a dog figure looking towards its owner Korallion. One of the most striking features of this stele that presents a dramatic funerary scene is the perception of depth that is tried to be given by the placement of the figures. The relief was gradually deepened and sized from the background to the front, and the entire scene was enlivened by extending the two main front figures over the frame (Karo, 1943, p. 32 pl. 32; Humphreys, 2018, pp. 366-372). It has been shown that "*Korallion, wife of Agathon*" was read on the epistyle of the *naiskos* stele, dated to the second half of the 4th century BC (Diepolder, 1931, p. 49 taf. 45.2; Schmaltz, 1983, pp. 108-109 abb. 7; IG II<sup>2</sup> 11891).





**Figure 4:** Relief stele of Korallion, wife of Agathon of Heracleia from *peribolos*. Athens-Kerameikos (After; Conze 1893 taf. 98 abb 411, drawing).



**Figure 5:** Marble *lekythos* from *peribolos* of Heracleot family. Athens-Kerameikos (After; Brueckner 1909 abb. 41).

Based on the reconstruction of other family plots in the immediate vicinity, scholars have revealed that the marble *lekythoi* was placed at both ends of this *peribolos*, and served as grave marks (Stroszeck, 2013, p. 8; NM. no. 1127). Thus, a marble *lekythos* in relief dating back to the second half of the 4th century BC was unearthed at the eastern end of this *Heracleot* monument (Fig. 5), (Conze, 1900, p. 160 no. 748 taf. 130). There is a scene with a total of three figures on the panel placed between the shoulder and the base of the *lekythos*. But unfortunately, the *lekythos* made of Pentelic marble is missing on its neck and handle. On the main scene, a bearded and *khiton* dressed old male is depicted sitting on the *klismos* facing left with a young male behind him. On the opposite, there is another but relatively younger and standing male in similar clothing. Two men facing each other are portrayed in *dexiosis* pose which we are familiar with ancient *stelae* (Brueckner, 1909, p. 69 abb. 41; Garland, 1982, p. 137).

From the *Heracleot peribolos* another monumental find, the stele of Agathon should be mentioned. This constitutes a *naiskos* stele which is 180 cm high, and 146 cm wide. It was

made of *hymattion* marble and placed at the western end of the *peribolos*. The stele rises on a limestone base has no figurative scene but an epigram inscribed as “*Agathon, son of Agathokles of Heracleia*” on its epistyle (Figs. 2d-3), (Breder, 2013<sup>a</sup>, p. 173; IG II 2090). It is estimated that the flat roofed and antefix decorated stele on its top was once painted and had a theme referring to Agathon (Conze, 1906, p. 309 taf. 297 no. 1443; Walter-Karydi, 2015, pp. 200 abb. 109, 252-253). We also know that the stele which belongs to Tibeios of Ticeion, the northeastern neighbor of Heracleia Pontica, unearthed in Athens was also painted in a similar technique and dated to 5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Bäbler, 1998, p. 97 no. 37; Öztürk, 2014, p. 158).

The other find at the eastern end of Heracleot *peribolos* consists of another marble *naiskos* that was probably once painted but only a limestone base and small fragments are known to remain (Figs. 2c-3), (Garland, 1982, p. 137).

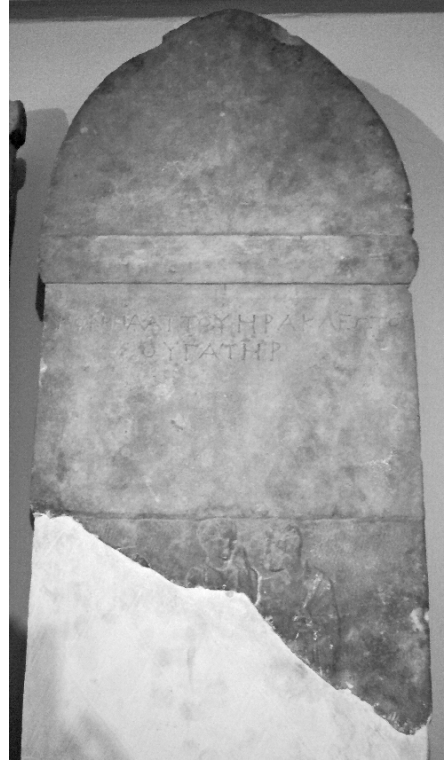
One of the tombs belonging to the Heracleot family and the most monumentalized in size - 390 cm high, 60-57 cm wide (bottom and top) - constitutes an *anthemion* stele made of Pentelic marble (Figs. 2a-3), (Kurtz & Boardman, 1971, p. 125 fig. 24 (a); Bergemann, 1995, p. 29; Knigge, 1988, p. 122; Hildebrandt, 2006, pp. 305-306, no. 170). There are no human figures depicted at this stele just as mentioned above. But on the upper part of the stele, under two flower rosettes, the names of two brothers “*Agathon and Sosikrates, the sons of Agatholes of Heracleia*” are mentioned (Stroszeck, 2002/2003, p. 172; Conze, 1906, p. 327 pl. 319 no. 1535; IG II<sup>2</sup> 8551).

III) Stele of Dromon: As Conze and Ginesti-Rosell pointed out, in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century another funerary relief stele of a Heracleian man was unearthed in Piraeus, port of Athens (Conze, 1900, p. 141 no. 662 taf. 126; Avram, 2013, p. 158 no. 1205). The find made of Pentelic marble, partly missing, is 27 cm wide, 42 cm high, and 5 cm thick (Clairmont, 1993, no. 2433; Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, p. 318 no. 423 fig. 237). The upper part of the find is depicted in the form of an *akroteria* with a bas-relief palmetted decoration (Fig. 6). Here an inscription, “*Dromon of Heracleia*” written in two lines under the palmetted section, was placed on a base with *ovolo* and *taenia* molding. Just below there are two human figures in bas-relief dated to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Conze, 1900, p. 141; Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, p. 318; G II<sup>2</sup> 8636). The scene on the stele about half is missing, is quite figurative. An old and bearded male figure, wearing an *eksomis* like mantle that leaves his right shoulder and arm exposed, is sitting on a *klismos*. He extends his right hand to a young woman standing in front of him, thus it represents a *dexiosis* scene indicating a farewell (Scholl, 1996, p. 269, no. 171).

IV) Stele of Konna: In her study published in 2012, Ginesti-Rosell identified another relief stele from the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC



**Figure 6:** Relief stele of Dromon of Heracleia. Athens-Piraeus (National Museum of Athens 1127) (After, Ginesti-Rosell 2012 fig. 237).



**Figure 7:** Relief stele of Konna, the daughter of Attos the Heracleian. Probably found in Athens (National Museum of Athens 2760) (After, Ginesti-Rosell 2012 fig. 240).

(Fig. 7), (Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, p. 321 no. 430 fig. 240; Avram, 2013, p. 167 no. 1345). The find is made of Pentelic marble and has a pointed profile on the top. It is 33 cm wide, 63 cm high. The inscription “*Konna, daughter of Attos of Heracleia*” written in two lines, was just below an *ovolo-taenia* molding (Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, p. 320 no. 430 fig. 240; G II<sup>2</sup> 8699; NM. no. 2760). The stele was probably found in Athens or its immediate surroundings. But the depiction of the figures is very difficult to specify because it was broken from the section where it was found, as Ginesti-Rosell stated. However, there is a man and a woman depicted facing each other and a third hardly distinguishable figure can only be discerned (Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, p. 321).

V) Stele of Lykinos: Apart from the examples stated above, Ginesti-Rosell also refers to another funerary relief stele made of Pentelic marble. Accordingly, its decoration consists of a bearded man holding the hand of a woman dressed in *khiton* and *himation*. We do not have visual or any descriptive information about this broken artifact that was unearthed in Piraeus.



**Figure 8:** *Proxeny* decree of Sostratos of Heracleia. Athens-Acropolis (Epigraphical Museum of Athens 7221) (After; Culasso-Gastaldi 2004).

But its dimensions were quite small in size, measuring 24 cm in width and 26 cm in height. It was revealed that “*Lykinos of Heracleia*” was written on the inscription (Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, p. 320 no. 428; IG II<sup>2</sup> 8717; Avram, 2013, p. 169 no. 1381).

VI) *Proxeny* of Sostratos: Another find with relief that can be considered in the context of our study is a *proxeny* decree belonging to “*Sostratos of Heracleia*” (Fig. 8), (Boardman *et al.*, 1988, p. 747 no. 329; Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004, p. 256; EM. 7221). Due to its preserved state, it is understood that the stele unearthed in the Acropolis of Athens originally was standing on a quadrangular base. The find is a broken and very poorly preserved fragment that is 39 cm high and 32 cm wide. It is framed along the left edge with a 3 cm wide border vertically, and at the bottom, a *taenia* molding in 4.5 cm high was inscribed horizontally (Meyer, 1989, p. 297; Palagia, 1990, p. 57; Walbank, 2008, p. 27 fig. 25; IG II<sup>2</sup> 419).

In the scene with relief, the first figure on the left is recognized as Heracles. The hero depicted standing frontally is the only identifiable figure by his attribute club, leaning on the ground (Palagia, 1990, p. 56-57; Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004, p. 258). On the other side, Heracles

is putting his left hand on a platform and holding a lion's skin. The other figure in the scene is quite obscure due to its weathered conditions. The female figure facing Heracles, whose her right leg, shield, and part of her spear have been preserved, is considered as Athena. It is claimed that Sostratos was originally depicted as standing by Athena once and might be placed in the weathered section (Lawton, 1995, p. 150 no. 158). In the single-lined inscription found on the *taenia*, a man named "*Sostratos of Heracleia*" is honored as *proxenos*. The decree is dated to the end of the 4th century BC (Lawton, 1995, pl. 83; Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004, p. 257; SEG 39.324, 43.1294, 45.231).

### Evaluation of Finds

As result through Athenian archaeology and epigraphy, we can reveal four grave *stelae* (II-Fig. 4, III-Fig. 6, IV-Fig. 7, V) and two proxeny decrees (I-Fig. 1, VI-Fig. 8), all containing relief scenes belonging to individuals whose originated from Heracleia were identified. Another work with relief was recognized, which represents a different example, is a marble *lekythos* probably used as a grave mark and having no inscription (Fig. 5). But it should also be noted that the *lekythos* in question is extremely important because it was unearthed from the *peribolos* of Heracleot family in Kerameikos and has a figurative scene similar to other funerary *stelae*.

Among the finds identified and listed chronologically, the earliest is the proxeny decree of Sotimos dated between 424-410 BC (Ritter, 2001, p. 139). West and Lawton interpreted the granting of such honor to Sotimos, due to the close relations between Athens and Heracleia Pontica (West, 1935, p. 74; Lawton, 1995, p. 118; Ritter, 2001, p. 130). Indeed after the Perikles' expedition, the *polis* seems to have begun to come under influence of Athens from the second half of the 5th century BC (Meritt *et al.*, 1950, p. 116; Burstein, 2006, p. 143; Coşkun, 2019, p. 18; Lewis, 2024, p. 173). Athens' demand for significant amount of grain, which was supplied from the Northern Black Sea, must have made Heracleia a key port-station in terms of marine trade. Therefore these commercial activities apparently resulted in the establishment of close relations between the Black Sea and the Aegean (Saprykin, 1997, p. 53; Whitby, 1998, pp. 119-120; Braund, 2007, pp. 53-55).

At this point, it should be noted that attention is drawn to the historical record regarding the arrival of Lamachos near Heracleia, who started his duty to tax the cities of Euxinos in 424 BC (Diod., 12.72.4; Thuk., 4.75). But he had to return to Athens by land because his fleet anchored in Kales River was destroyed in a heavy flood (Walbank, 1970, p. 332; Gallo, 2013, p. 159). In the same year, the proxeny issued to Sotimos of Heracleia in Athens thus gained meaning. As result the decree was associated with the possible assistance of this Heracleot family in escaping the difficult situation that Lamachos encountered on the Paphlagonian coast, and then the Hareakleia of which Sotimos was a citizen was located on the Southern

Black Sea (Fig. 1), (Lawton, 1995, p. 118). On the other hand, it is almost clear that the proxeny referred to a period when tyranny had not been established in Heracleia Pontica yet. Therefore both the proxeny and the historical record may refer to a communication between Heracleia and Athenai when there was a democratic environment before the tyranny in related Pontic city (Saprykin, 1997, p. 51; Desideri, 1991, p. 10; Arslan, 2018, pp. 100-102).

Following this argument, that introduces the close relations between Athenai and Heracleia in the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, we must appeal to the archaeological evidence from Kerameikos. The monumental *peribolos* and the *stelae* it contains which is dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC are also valuable in themselves since they were used by the Heracleian family for very long period (Bergemann, 1997, p. 12; Closterman, 2007, p. 644). Because related arguments had enabled the scholars to establish some correlations between the social developments in the Paphlagonian port and the burial plot of the Herakelaian family in Kerameikos. Accordingly, these artifacts coming from Athens can be considered as indirect evidences which contributes to the archaeology and the history of the Heracleia in the Black Sea (Ohly, 1965; Hoepfner, 2022)<sup>1</sup>.

It can be thought that the *peribolos* in question seems to be an extension of the tomb monuments that started to appear in Athens in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Figs. 2-3), (Leader, 1997, p. 684). Moreover, as Closterman and other scholars pointed out, it is clear that these kind of monuments emphasize marriage, the commemoration of family members, and family unity as the context of this tradition (Closterman, 2007, p. 650-651; Kurtz & Boardman, 1971, pp. 106-108; Garland, 1988, p. 131). On the other hand, the meaning of this *peribolos* associated with a Black Sea settlement might have represented some kind of social and political developments in Heracleia, such as forced migrations or exiles of families (Garland, 1982, pp. 137-138). Accordingly, some of the individuals exiled by tyrants probably might have migrated to Athens where they already knew this city due to their commercial and/or political activities (Hoepfner, 2022: pp. xviii-xix). Thus the *peribolos* belonging to the Heracleian family presumably appeared as a symbol of their new life as foreign residents or metics there (Ohly, 1965, p. 343; Brueckner, 1909, p. 64-65; Breder, 2013<sup>a</sup>, p. 173). Considering the chronological sequence of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC that determined the Heracleot funerary *stelae* (Hildebrandt, 2006, pp. 305-306, 129-131; Breder, 2013<sup>a</sup>, p. 172, pl. 292 abb. 27) - the sequence also constitutes the period when tyrant domination was still continuing in Heracleia - it is possible to say that lives of the metic families in question could have been oscillated between slavery or new opportunities offered by *poleis* such as Athenai and Sinope (Figs. 2-3, 4-7), (Loddo, 2022, pp. 156-161; Manoledakis, 2022, p. 272; Lewis, 2024, p. 171-175).

1 In his book translated into Turkish in 2022, Hoepfner's mention of related Heracleian *peribolos* in Kerameikos of Athens is very important in terms of archaeology and history of the Paphlagonia or the Southwestern Black Sea. *see.*, (Hoepfner, 2022).

On the other hand, especially when it comes to the Southern Black Sea region researchers often specified that such metic families may be elites and wealthy merchants who dominate maritime trade (Woolmer, 2013, p. 228; Braund, 2007, p. 55; Xen. Anab., 1.8.5-6). Besides, the individuals we know from historical records or proxeny decrees, are involved in commercial activities between Athens and Heracleia Pontica. One of the earliest examples is a Heracleian shipman identified in an Athenian inscription from the 4th century BC (Ginesti-Rosell, 2013<sup>a</sup>, pp. 304-305).

Another remarkable name is mentioned in the speeches of Demosthenes, whose name is Lykon (Demost., Against Callip., 52.3-9). He was a merchant from Heracleia and he died during his journey to Libya heading off from the Athenian port in the 4th century BC. After his death, a lawsuit was filed for a large amount of cash that Lykon left before his departure (Mack, 2015, p. 77).

Another argument illustrates a crisis experienced by Heracleides of Salamis in the port Heracleia Pontica which appears in a proxeny decree from Athens dating around 330-325 BC (Lambert, 2018, p. 55; Woolmer, 2013, pp. 228-229). Heracleides probably stopped at the port of Heracleia Pontica during his marine trade from the Black Sea to Athens where his ship's sails were confiscated by Dionysios. As determined by the epigraphic sources, the problem was resolved by a decree issued in Athens, and an official was sent to Dionysios. This is vital as it reveals the position of Heracleia Pontica in Black Sea maritime trade and represents another argument coming from outside its borders (Casson, 1967, pp. 122-124; Reed, 2003, p. 117). A grain donation to Athens, attributed to a person named Dionysios, is also documented (Meritt, 1941, p. 49). Therefore it is considered that the name mentioned in the inscription dating around 324 BC may refer to the Heracleian tyrant (Casson, 1986, p. 183; Lambert, 2018, p. 302; IG II<sup>2</sup> 360, 363).

Apart from the funerary relief stele of Korallion (Fig. 4) and marble *lekythos* (Fig. 5) from the same burial site, the most significant finds are those of Dromon (320 BC) (Fig. 6) and of Lykinos (4th century BC) (V) who were from Piraeus and another find was of Konna possibly from Athens (4th century BC), (Fig. 7), (Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, pp. 318-321 no. 423, 428, 430). The proxeny stele of Sostratos from the Acropolis of Athens (Fig. 8) dated between 330-325 BC should also be underlined (Palagia, 1990, p. 57; Lambert, 2012, p. 134).

When taking into account the existence of these names in such a remote place from their homeland, whose identities are far more defined on the funerary *stelae* and proxeny decrees, it comes to mind that they constitute metic family members who lived in Athens somehow. Because the chronology coincides with the tyranny in Heracleia Pontica and possible forced migrations, in other words, exiles caused by the anti-democratic policies, successfully practiced by Clearchus, Satyros, Timotheos, and his brother Dionysios (Mandel, 1988, pp. 59-63; Van Oppen de Ruiter, 2020, pp. 18-19; Gallotta, 2022, pp. 239-244).

## Discussion and Conclusion

In fact, the earliest abroad evidence regarding the close relations of Heracleia Pontica with Hellas is a votive group sent to Olympia, but cannot be verified by archaeology. There is only a historical record (Paus., 5.26.7) of this important but relatively obscure group of statues relating to the city's long-distance interaction (Farnell, 1921, p. 132; Burstein, 1976, pp. 35, 119; Tsetskhladze, 2022, p. 528). These statues, dated to the late archaic period, are a votive group by Heracleots. The works were dedicated to the father of the founder hero of the Pontic city, to the Olympia, as an appreciation of a victory against the Mariandynians in Paphlagonia (Boardman, 1990, p. 7 no. 1704; Erciyas, 2003, p. 1408; Manoledakis, 2022, p. 97).

Among the external archaeological arguments we have evaluated (I-VI), there are those known other than Sotimos and Sostratos of Heracleia (Figs. 1, 8), who were awarded honors such as proxeny by Athens. Stele of Mnemon and Kallias of Heracleia found in Athens dated to 337-326 BC were excluded from our study because they do not belong to the works in relief, but should also be considered (Lambert, 2007, pp. 114-115; Reed, 2003, p. 127). It has also been determined that in another decree given approximately the same date (337-320 BC), the name Pandios of Heracleia was mentioned. And there were records of two different Heracleians of the same century but could not be read (Woodhead, 1997, p. 123 no. 82, 157-159, no. 104; Lambert, 2007, p. 105 no. 83, 122 no. 126, 125 no. 143; Ginesti-Rosell, 2013<sup>b</sup>, pp. 299-300; Avram, 2013, pp. 145-188).

Also, the grain supplies provided by the Heracleot merchants to Athens mentioned in inscriptions, are interpreted by scholars as their political or commercial expectations (Csapo & Wilson, 2022, p. 22; Lambert, 2007, p. 105 no. 81, 114; Lambert, 2012, p. 144, 156-158; Adak, 2003, p. 85, 154; IG II<sup>2</sup> 408). However, we see that which of the homonymous cities belonged to these people has been a point of discussion among scholars for a while. Because it has been determined that there are at least more than twenty cities founded by the son of Zeus, bearing his name across the Mediterranean, Aegean, and the Black Sea (Ruge, 1912, pp. 423-440; Heineman, 2021, p. 262). But, depending on the historical conjunctures in Athenai and in Heracleia Pontica, the grain demand of the former and the critical position of the latter in the Black Sea maritime trade seem to make it possible to correlate the two settlements in interpretation of the archaeological material (Karo, 1943, p. 32; Boardman, 1995, pp. 114, 119 fig. 112-2; Stroszeck, 2002/2003, p. 172; Hildebrandt, 2006, pp. 129-130; Childs, 2018, p. 39).

In addition, the individuals and/or the family members referred as Heracleian are not limited to those mentioned above. Many names presumably related to this city have been introduced in finds such as proxeny decrees, *stelae*, and *kioniskoi* found in Athens or around.



A considerable inventory has been put forward that illustrates the extent of the relationship between the two cities. Accordingly, more than six hundred Heracleians had been shown in the Attica region and most of them were - although uncertain - probably of Pontic origin. Additionally, by considering this inventory, it has been claimed that the Heracleots constitute the second most populous metic group in Athens<sup>2</sup>. If the group of finds, unearthed in Athenai and Piraeus consisting of Classical period grave *stelae* belonging to the Paphlagonians is attached to this inventory, we can understand that Heracleia's interaction with Athenai could have been much more consolidated (Bäbler, 1998, pp. 93-100, 228-233 no. 33-40; Ginesti-Rosell, 2016, pp. 189-190).

All these statements seem to have enabled the background of a consensus in associating the archaeological evidences we discussed in this study, with the city of Heracleia in the Black Sea. Indeed, most scholars agree that the people who were buried in the monumental Heracleot *peribolos* of Kerameikos are of Pontic origin (Hoepfner, 2022, p. xviii; Knigge, 1988, p. 121; Burstein, 1976, pp. 72-79, 237; Childs, 2018, p. 39; Loddo, 2022, p. 158). Although for proxy of Sostratos, the southern Italy was considered, recent researches point it to the Black Sea (Lambrechts, 1958, pp. 151-157; Mikalson, 1998; Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004, pp. 258-259; Lambert, 2012, p. 124).

We can say that the situation is similar for funerary *stelae* other than the related *peribolos*. Based on epigraphic evidences, obtained from funerary *stelae* dated between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, Ginesti-Rosell revealed the presence of thirty people in Athens, most likely from the city of Heracleia Pontica (Ginesti-Rosell, 2012, pp. 92-93, 308-322). Scholars state that Pontic candidates - Sotimos and Sostratos - are prevailing for the references to Heracleians as well in the proxy decrees. Since the Black Sea maritime trade and wheat demands were vital for Athens from this period onwards, one may think that the Southern Black Sea representative as Heracleia appears to be the strongest candidate, among all homonymous cities (Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004, pp. 258-259; Fraser, 2009, pp. 181-188). We do not much about the Sostratos of Heracleia. But it seems he should have had a similar past in relations with Athens just as the Sotimos. By considering his decree, this man must have been respected by Athenians somehow.

2 “The turbulent politics of Heracleia on the Pontus in the fourth and early third centuries B.C.,... created a large group of exiles, and many of these found their way to Athens. In fact, within the foreign population... the Heracleotai stand out, initially by sheer numbers, second only to immigrants from Miletos. From tombstones alone we can identify in Athens, from the mid-fourth century B.C. to the second century A.D., over 600 Heracleotai...”, *see.*, (Mikalson, 1998, p. 254; Avram, 2013, pp. 145-188; Öztürk, 2014, p. 160); For the Athenian inscriptions referring Heracleians and their relations with Pontic Heracleia, *see.*, (Brueckner, 1909, pp. 64-65; Robert, 1973, pp. 437-442; Osborne & Byrne, 1996, pp. 72-98; Pitt, 2022, p. 148 fig. 66.1; Vestergaard, 2001, pp. 84-87; Erciyas, 2003, p. 1415 with her references to Saprykin, 1997, pp. 288, 290). On the records from Rostovtzeff dated between 2nd-1st century B.C. *see.*, (Rostovtzeff, 1941, pp. 1455; Ferguson, 1911, p. 316); On records between 3rd to 1st centuries B.C. *see.*, (Pope, 1947, pp. 53-56); For the records in Aegean and Hellas between 4th to 1st centuries B.C. *see.*, (Asheri, 1972, pp. 26-27; Ferrario, 2014, p. 270; Nemeth, 2001, pp. 333, 340; Fraser, 2009, p. 186; Jonnes & Ameling, 1994, pp. 115-120, 162 no. 120).

In this respect, Heracleia's possible membership in the Delian League is not surprising. Because, we can claim this due to its name being almost identified in the tribute lists of 424 BC (Avram *et al.*, 2004, p. 956; Demir, 2001, p. 539). Therefore one may think that it is also possible to discover external or abroad evidences of Pontic Heracleians, who escaped from the pressure of the tyrants, thanks to the Aegean studies (West, 1935; Stroszeck, 2002/2003; Culasso-Gastaldi, 2004; Ginesti-Rosell, 2012).

It can be considered that, as external evidences, the *stelae* and proxeny decrees in question, which were discovered in Athens are very valuable finds contributing to the archeology and history of Heracleia Pontica. They are also unique in revealing the role of the city in its long-distance interaction. Another dimension is that, as Hoepfner - who made valuable contributions to the archaeology of Heracleia - pointed out for Heracleot *peribolos*, they constitute the arguments we have in understanding the social developments, separations and evolution of the settlement (Hoepfner, 2022; Ohly 1965; Karagöl, 2022). These footprints of the Heracleians, who oscillated between oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny, unearthed in such a remote place, have an interdisciplinary nature (Arist., Pol., 5.5.6). Archaeology, epigraphy, and history played an active role in introducing this knowledge to the regional archaeology, and they will stimulate the motivation of continuous archaeological excavations which are crucially needed in Heracleia Pontica.

As mentioned above, the descriptions and dating of the works have been constructed by scholars, in parallel with the social developments in Athenai and/or in Heracleia Pontica (I-VI), (Richter, 1967, p. 45). Based on the finds, we can suggest that the Athenian influence in Heracleia began institutionalized after the expedition of Perikles and the city's membership of the Delian League. Then, by the establishment of the tyranny, we can see that this effect was felt even more, especially in elite families. Soon, when the grain trade was intensified in the Black Sea, it made the Heracleian port one of the favorite points for Athenai. It must have also triggered the migration of rich Heracleian merchants to Athenai as *metoikoi* (Bergemann, 1995, 33; Saprykin, 2017, p. 352; Marek, 1984, 46 no. p. 36). As a result, Heracleia became a crucial maritime trade hub on the way to the Aegean, thus gained an important role in the Athenian trade network (Saprykin, 1997, p. 59; Keen, 2000, p. 66; Reed, 2003, p. 30). Preserving this relationship was extremely vital both for the elites of Heracleia and for Athenai, in terms of ensuring the continuity of grain supply from the Northern Black Sea. Therefore, the opinion that the Heracleians reflected on the *stelae* presumably belonged to merchants, who somehow benefited from this commercial relationship, is getting stronger (Casson, 1967, p. 120-124; Himmelmann, 1999, p. 33). On the other hand, it can be assumed that the inscribed *stelae* pointing to their origins as Heracleians, appears as a symbol of their loyalty to the city, where they were born or their parents belonged to.

There are two key chronological thresholds considered to decipher the works, especially

the Heracleot *peribolos* of Kerameikos. These thresholds are determined as 364 BC and 338 BC (Knigge, 1988, pp. 122-123). The first one appears as the date when Clearchus overthrew the regime in Heracleia and then the exile of the democrats (Berve, 1967, pp. 316-320). However, another important threshold about Heracleia is an earthquake (Arist., *Met.*, 2.8. 367a), possibly occurred around 360 BC, and thought to have caused great destruction<sup>3</sup> (Ramsay, 2009, p. 88). It can be thought that this event not only facilitated the tyrant's job, who was trying to take over the administration but also stimulated the migration of citizens. If so, it should be noted that Heracleia may have experienced two different but devastating events in the second quarter of the 4th century BC. One of these must have been constituted from the political crisis led by Clearchus, and the other probably a natural disaster caused by the North Anatolian Fault.

The last chronological threshold is a decree that allowed the use of stones of Kerameikos to strengthen the Athenian city walls due to the likely threat by Philip II (Kurtz & Boardman, 1971, p. 107; Bergemann, 1997, p. 138). Of course, a little while the renewal of the necropolis and the law prohibiting excessive spending on grave monuments also affected this process in various ways (Garland, 1982, pp. 127-128, 135). Accordingly, the tombs in question, are estimated as individuals buried in the *peribolos* built between 364 and 338 BC whom, probably Clearchus exiled (Childs, 2018, p. 39).

The problem with democratic exiles in Heracleia started in the second quarter of the 4th century BC in the reign of Clearchus and continued increasingly during the administrations of Satyros, Timotheos and Dionysios. It was not solved during the reign of Alexander the Great, Perdikkas, Antigonos, and Lysimachus but was partially ceased by Nymphis, immediately after the Battle of Kurupedion (Asheri, 1972, pp. 27-28; D'Agostini, 2020, pp. 71-72). With the evidences discussed, we can better understand that the problem in question, which has been experienced in the city for approximately 80 years is long-term and serious.

In this study, the archaeological and historical potential of ancient Heracleia Pontica is tried to be evaluated in the light of finds from outside its borders (I-VII, Figs. 1-8), (Atasoy, 2018, pp. 111-112). Consequently, through Aegean and Athenian archaeology the urban development of the settlement being able to based much stronger structures, and it is possible to find more detailed answers to the question of what is known on early Heracleia.

In addition, with the help of achieved responses from outside the Paphlagonian region, it is clear that we can deepen the dimensions of regional archaeology, the interaction between the Black Sea and the Aegean in between the Archaic and Hellenistic periods. Along with these, it should be emphasized that Heracleia Pontica which constitutes one of the most important sites in Northwest Anatolia, deserves continuous archaeological excavations.

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3 See., also forthcoming ....., "Securing An Earthquake Record".

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