

NAUKRATIS AS PORT-OF-TRADE REVISITED

The colloquium at Lyon ¹ provided a valuable occasion to reconsider some of the crucial questions about the status of Naukratis in Egypt and to re-evaluate the concept of the port-of-trade. In the following, I shall concentrate on the points and arguments made by Alain Bresson and Christophe Pébarthe in their contributions.

In his paper, Alain Bresson returns to the question of the status of Naukratis, a topic he treated in 1980 in his fundamental article which set the framework for all later studies of this matter ². He now puts forward more arguments for a late transition of Naukratis' status from emporion to polis. At the same time, he sheds new light on the supposed Milesian origin of Naukratis.

First, he considers arguments about Naukratis' legal status. The status of Naukratis had to be acknowledged (a) by the Egyptian authorities, (b) the Greeks living at Naukratis and (c) those at home to which the place belonged. Apart from Herodotus, two Rhodian decrees which Bresson treated the first time in 1980 are decisive to show that Naukratis had no civic status up to the time those decrees were inscribed. *Lindos* 16 (411-408 BC) shows, according to Bresson, the existence of an Egyptian population at Naukratis : the beneficiary of the pan-Rhodian decree is an « Egyptian from Naukratis », surely a member of the caste of interpreters created by Psammetichos I two centuries earlier. There is still another possible reconstruction of the missing letters on the stone as to make the beneficiary an Aiginetan from Naukratis which was once suggested by Austin,

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1. I am most grateful to Laetitia Graslin, Jérôme Maucourant and Annette Peignard-Giros who invited us all to this table ronde at Lyon. I feel very much honoured that my book on Naukratis gave way to the idea to discuss the Polanyian concept and Naukratis in such a friendly and hospitable atmosphere. The dear memories of this occasion are not meant to be shadowed by me now defending my position with critical remarks.
 2. BRESSON 1980, p. 291-349, reprinted in BRESSON 2000, p. 13-64.

but dismissed by Bresson³. In any case, the existence of proxenoi at Naukratis does not presuppose that it had been a polis by that time. It seems as if Naukratis had the same status as any other Egyptian village, only that it was settled by Greeks. Lindian decree found at Naukratis⁴ (440-420 BC) made a Greek « resident in Egypt » proxenos of the Lindians. In his former article Bresson has already shown that this formulation corresponds to a well-defined legal status, that of a permanent resident in Egypt, a status established by Amasis and that this status comprised the settlers at Naukratis, those who wanted to live there permanently according to Herodotus. After the Persian conquest, the Greeks could re-install themselves again at Naukratis and those residing in Egypt would use a local ethnic such as Memphites and without doubt Naukratites.

Second, Bresson seeks to understand why Naukratis could develop a civic status during the 4th century before Alexander the Great. To pursue this argument, he sets Naukratis and its administrative powers, i.e. the nine poleis from Asia Minor, into the historical context of the 5th and 4th centuries. It is within the framework of Persian power that Bresson explains the transition of Naukratis' status from emporion to polis. He starts from Herodotus' report that the administration was in the hands of nine poleis from Asia Minor who provided the *prostatai tou emporiou*. These were in charge of supervising the commercial operations, but were they magistrates of the city, too? Bresson draws a parallel to the emporion near Vetren in Thrace: an inscription shows that the status of the emporion was not negotiated between the Thracian king and the residents of the emporion, but between the king and a global framework of three cities: Maroneia, Thasos, and Apollonia. Although there have been cases in which the fate of a city has been regulated by superior powers, such as for Minor Asian cities between Athens or Sparta and the Persian king, this fits the legal definition of an emporion which has not the right to negotiate in its own capacity. The community of residents was not the legal subject, but only the object.

At Naukratis, the port-of-trade was administered by a group of poleis. Within a polis proper, an emporion is the place of external exchange, while the agora is the place of internal exchange. While all poleis had an agora, not all had an emporion, only those with a harbour. According to Bresson, Naukratis very well had an emporion, but not one administered by the community at Naukratis, but one managed by the nine cities of Asia Minor. At Naukratis, there were no citizens, but residents in Egypt, comparable to the *emporitai* in the treaty between Maroneia, Thasos, and Apollonia and the Thracian king. I sympathize with this line of reasoning, but I would emphasize that Naukratis was an emporion, not that it had one. In this, I follow Hansen's distinction that there were communities which were an emporion and communities which had an

3. AUSTIN 1970, p. 29 n. 3 ; BRESSON 2000, p. 31.

4. *Lindos* II 212-4, appendix to 16.

emporion⁵. I disagree, however, with Hansen in that he categorized Naukratis as the only archaic example of an emporion which was separated from the polis. I believe that the entire place that we call Naukratis was an emporion during the Archaic period⁶.

Bresson provides a short survey of the history of Naukratis to display the importance of its administration and to explain why there was a new legal organisation which permitted the constitution of a polis. During the first half of the 6th century, the Egyptian pharaoh and the Minor Asian poleis had a good rapport, but then, those cities on the Minor Asian mainland had fallen under Persian domination. After 525 BC, both Asia Minor and Egypt were under Persian rule and the negotiations about the Hellenion should have been easier again. The difference was probably that Naukratis was not any longer the only port open to Greek trade. This system should have worked till the Ionian revolt. Between 499 and 479 BC, there was most likely an entire break of relationships. Till the peace of Callias in 449, exchange might have proved difficult, and only then the old Amasian system could be reinstalled. Bresson maintains that it almost certainly was this restoration that was reported by Herodotus who visited Egypt in the 440s or 430s.

About Herodotus' travels, in fact little is known. He could equally have visited Egypt during the 460s, before in 454, he helped to expel the Halikarnassian tyrant Lygdamis. Some time later after 444 BC, he left his hometown Halikarnassos for good to settle in the newly founded colony Thourioi. During the 440's, he seems to have already given public lectures from his histories. If indeed Herodotus visited Egypt in the 460's, he might not have seen the Amasian system working at Naukratis, but people could have told him how it worked. This might explain some of the difficulties we have to understand his text.

Anyhow, Bresson is justified to stress the remarkably long life of that system which seems to have been reinstalled each time after a disruption. He asks for the time when the system was abandoned. The Lindian inscription of 440-420 BC and Herodotus' work which can be dated into the 420's prove that it was still in existence by then. Did it exist till Naukratis was reorganised as a polis?

Such a system needs peace to work. Bresson considers the different periods of war and peace. Between 404 and 400, Egypt won back its independence which might have influenced the Hellenion structure. The end of the Peloponnesian War, when the Spartan alliance acted together with Persia and against Athens (a number of Minor Asian poleis revolted against Athens after 412-411), might equally have disturbed the Hellenion system. The disruptions during the Corinthian War and the changing alliances of the Egyptian pharaohs

5. HANSEN 1997, p. 85.

6. MÖLLER 2000, p. 202-3 ; 2001, p. 2.

could be considered for possible consequences for Naukratis. An arbitration of the Ionian koinon of 391-388 between Miletus and Myous shows that Persia controlled Ionia during that period. The king's peace of 387/6 BC, however, could have been the decisive moment, because it had the Ionian poleis re-entering Persian rule while the Persian king tried yet again to get Egypt into his hands. Bresson concludes that after 387/6, the old administrative system of Naukratis was abandoned.

The pharaohs had to find another way to administer the Greek community at Naukratis. For the first time, Egypt could enter trade on a larger scale with mainland Greece. The easiest way probably was to have the people from Naukratis control their emporion themselves, consequently leading to a civic status. Without doubt, Naukratis was still in the hands of the Egyptian rulers, financially in any case as is shown by the stele of Nektanebis I (380 BC). But for the first time, the inhabitants of Naukratis could negotiate directly with the Egyptian pharaoh.

Bresson asks in a footnote whether the Hellenion remained a sanctuary after it lost its administrative rôle. The archaeological evidence tells us that the building complex which is considered to have been the Hellenion was reconstructed during the Ptolemaic time, during the 3rd century at the latest. Even if most of the votive inscriptions to the « Gods of the Hellenes » which led to the identification with the Hellenion can only be dated to the 5th and 4th centuries, it seems likely that the Hellenion remained an important place for religious and civic activities during Hellenistic times. It might even have served as the prytaneion that was mentioned by Hermeias for the Hellenistic time, but not excavated ⁷.

Third, in order to reconsider the alleged Milesian foundation of Naukratis, Bresson takes up the new reconstruction of an inscription of the 3rd century BC by R. Scholl which is likely to represent a list of bouleutai from Naukratis of one given year. This list is grouped by phylai, probably four, possibly more, but only two of the names are preserved: Herais and Neilias. Scholl maintains that the document demonstrates that Naukratis was from its beginning a Greek polis founded by Milesians. Bresson, on the contrary, believes that this document confirms the hypothesis that Naukratis gained city status only during the 4th century.

The two names of phylai known to us at Naukratis do not correspond to the names known from other Milesian colonies in the Black Sea area, moreover, there are usually six instead of the apparently four at Naukratis. To set up names for phylai by modelling them on the names of divinities is typical for the 4th century. This strengthens Bresson's argument of the development to civic status only during the 4th century. One does not have to believe in a renaming of older phylai, as Bresson points out, as normally tradition counts and other Milesian

7. Hermeias *ap.* Athenaios 4.149D-150A; cf. MÖLLER 2001, p. 5.

poleis kept their old names for the six phylai. Even if there is no possibility to ascertain the exact number of phylai at Naukratis for the moment, there is no necessity to believe in an archaic creation of the phylai. Bresson maintains that the phyle Neilias got its name less likely as reminiscence to the mythical founder of Miletus Neileus than from the river Neilos (Nile). The tradition of Neileus founding Naukratis is found in two scholia to Theocritus (Idyl. 17.98): the Milesians are said that after they had founded Naukratis to have named the river Nile after the founder of Miletus. Bresson gives evidence that the name Nile is not Greek. The divinisation of the Nile at Naukratis may not surprise, as the cult of the Nile was specific to the Greeks in Egypt. In Ptolemaic times, the river Nile was worshipped together with Serapis and Isis and was represented with a cornucopia. Possibly, the Greeks at Naukratis choose the name for one of their phylai in honouring the divine river. One does not have to fall back on the Milesian founding hero Neileus to explain the name Neilias for one of the Naukratitan phylai.

The modelling of a legendary bond between the river Neilos and the Milesian hero Neileus, however, has to be considered. Probably only in the 4th century, the apparent homonymy between the river and the Milesian hero became a convincing and integrating argument, at a time, when every polis needed a founder and Neileus was adopted to be founder of Naukratis. According to Bresson, it was speculations about the homonymy that gave a supplementary justification for the Milesian origin of Naukratis. Thus, the story about the foundation by Neileus seems to have been modelled on the pun Neileus – Neilos.

Fourth, Bresson briefly takes up Strabo's version of the foundation of Naukratis which is built around the Milesian fort ⁸ and seeks to understand what happened during the period between c. 625 and 560 BC that Herodotus does not mention in his report. At the end of the 7th century, Miletus evidently played a leading role in founding colonies. A number of Aigyptiaka have been found at Archaic Miletus, although the majority seems to be imitations, once attributed to Rhodes, some of the scarabs, however, are now attributed to a workshop at Naukratis. Around 600 BC, Necho dedicated a linen corselet to Apollo at Didyma (Hdt. 2.159). The links of the 6th century seem to be weaker. According to Herodotus, Amasis did not give Miletus which already had its own sanctuary at Naukratis a place in the organisation of the Hellenion, and he did not give presents to Miletus as to other Greek cities either (Hdt. 2.180: Delphi; Hdt. 2.182: Kyrene, Samos, Lindos, Hdt. 3.47: Sparta). If the presents were given after 545, the absence of Miletus is evident, since the polis was then dominated by the Persians. The 20 years before 545, however, Miletus was already Persian-friendly (Hdt. 1.141, 169). Miletus' relations with the Egyptian powers seem to have changed. Necho's dedication implies that the Egyptian

8. I deal with Strabo's foundation story in MÖLLER 1997/2000 and 2001, p. 13-21.

pharaohs before Amasis had friendly relations with Miletus, while Amasis after his nationalistic revolution against Apries seems to have changed contacts to the Greeks around Chios and the Dorian cities. If this hypothesis is true, Bresson takes it that Herodotus' silence on the Milesian period reveals rivalries and tension between the Minor Asian cities, in particular the Ionian cities. After the dissolution of the Hellenion at the beginning of the 4th century BC, the Milesian element stroke back and Milesian characteristics and institutions were adopted. Even in the 4th c. the memory of the Milesian elements at Naukratis had not disappeared. Herodotus' allusion about the poleis who wanted to participate in the Hellenion might thus find its solution.

I would like to review the « memory of Milesian elements » from a slightly different angle. As we do not have any earlier written evidence than Herodotus and he passes a possible foundation of Naukratis by Miletus with silence, it is not at all certain which position Miletus had before it was excluded from the Hellenion. I think it possible that only in the 4th century, when Naukratis needed as much as other poleis a foundation story, links to Miletus which could easily tie in with its fame as the metropolis of many a colony were constructed and a foundation story modelled on the pun Neileus – Neilos or on an obvious etymology of the name Naukratis as ruler of many ships, a possible allusion we might find in Strabo's story where the Milesians, rulers of the sea, went up the Nile with 30 ships to found Naukratis after a sea battle with Inaros⁹.

Bresson has excellently underlined his older arguments with new ones for a 4th-century development of the polis-status of Naukratis.

Christophe Pébarthe takes up the occasion to ask which privileges Amasis really gave to the Greeks ; which purpose the Hellenion had ; which responsibilities the prostatai had and finally : what was the emporion of Naukratis ?

As the answers are not to be found only in Herodotus, he first considers the Lindian decree¹⁰ for the working of this institution. Pébarthe suggests a date in the 2nd half of 5th century for this inscription, while Bresson has dated it more precisely to 440-420 BC and I was fairly convinced that the lower margin could be brought down to 411 when Kamiros, Lindos and Ialysos changed allies from Athens to Sparta and democracy fell at Lindos. I admit that my statement was purely based on historical reasoning, not on epigraphical reasons as Bresson's¹¹.

Pébarthe distinguishes three steps that led to this inscription : First, the decision had to be taken to honour Damoxenos in declaring him proxenos and euergetes and privileging him with tax exemption. Second, the information was forwarded to the Hellenion at Naukratis resp. to Polykles who was at Naukratis.

9. Cf. MÖLLER 2001, p. 17.

10. *Lindos* II 212-4 appendix to 16.

11. BRESSON 2000, p. 29 ; MÖLLER 2000, p. 190.

Third, the decree was inscribed on stone. All three stages are covered by the verb *anagraphein* : to inscribe or to have inscribed, to transcribe, to grant a privilege and register it, or to put into an archive¹². The proxeny decree was transferred to the Hellenion which according to Pébarthe served as an archive building, because it applied to the emporion.

Second, Pébarthe takes Damoxenos' decree to confirm one possible function of the Hellenion : that of an archive. But why do we not hear of the other poleis using the Hellenion as an archive ? This question takes Pébarthe back to the rôle of Polykles. He identifies him as one of the prostatai at Naukratis, since he was a Lindian and not an inhabitant of Naukratis. Pébarthe admits that it is difficult to prove that he was a prostates, since the modalities of their nomination are unknown. Moreover, Herodotus named Rhodes and not the single poleis Lindos, Kamiros and Ialysos as participating in the Hellenion and in nominating the prostatai. Polykles comes from Lindos. Pébarthe eventually follows Bresson who suggested that the post rotated among the three Rhodian poleis. Pébarthe considers the responsibilities of the prostatai as to deal with the trade and, in following Roebuck, to administer the emporion for the benefit of the poleis that appointed them. He ascribes them the control over those who had the right to export and import and who had the *atelia*, the tax exemption.

Here, I should like to express some doubt. The prostatai at Naukratis could certainly not act as if they were magistrates of a proper Greek city. One of the major interests of the pharaohs in Naukratis was most certainly to ensure proper income from taxes and duties. Naukratis was a device of the administered trade of Egypt. Therefore, it would have been the pharaoh to grant privileges such as tax exemption. I would rather suggest that the privileges bestowed on Damoxenos applied to Lindos and not to Naukratis, since it was the Lindians granting these rights. The Lindians could grant tax exemption for their proxenos from Naukratis when trading with Lindos, but hardly when dealing with Egypt. The registration of Damoxenos' privileges on stone at the Hellenion should then have served his prestige among the community at Naukratis.

Third, Pébarthe seeks to understand why Amasis privileged the nine poleis and not the others, which means analyzing the nature of the emporion. He assumes like Bresson that Amasis turned against those Greeks who had worked for Apries and his predecessors. There is evidence in Egyptian texts that taxes and duties have been levied at Naukratis from early on. Probably, the gifts to the temple of Neith have been interrupted around 570 BC which might be correlated to the civil war between Apries and Amasis. Since the Amasis stele claims that Greek ships cruised in the delta, the revenues seem to have been in the hands of the Greeks and Apries. After having taken over the power, Amasis might have sought to limit trade to the necessary amount, but even he could not abstain from trading with the Greeks. As Pébarthe and Bresson suggest, Amasis gave the

12. Pébarthe announces a forthcoming contribution on this important issue.

emporion at Naukratis to those poleis who had not openly taken side with Apries.

Asking what products were desirable for Egypt, Pébarthe names wine and olive oil besides timber and iron. If there was interest in Greek wine and olive oil – Egyptians normally drinking beer and using castor oil – it was without doubt for elite consumption only. Iron might have come from the south, the desired metal was silver, once more a prestige good, yet again this lacked in Egypt which, however, had gold and some iron. Timber was surely needed and we have evidence that the Egyptians sent expeditions to Phoenicia to get cedar wood desired e.g. for temple doors. Thus, Egypt had an interest in opening itself, albeit with restrictions, to the Greek traders.

As his last point, Pébarthe reconsiders the port-of-trade concept. He names some of its features, but maintains that most of these elements cannot be found in Greek reality: Some ports-of-trade belong to small states, some to large ones. They facilitate the handling of the long-distance exchange of pre-modern economies. Governmental administration prevailed over economic competition. They were a neutral space, a derivative of silent trade. The prices were fixed and indigenous population administered the port-of-trade. I have discussed these features at length¹³ and I should only like to emphasize here that dismissing the concept for Greece wholesale does not help us to understand any Greek « reality », no matter how we define this reality. Some of its features can well be observed e.g. in the Athenian emporion in the Peiraeus where at least the grain trade and its prices were administered.

In the case of Naukratis, however, we are not within the Greek culture, but we are dealing with an intercultural phenomenon. It is therefore necessary to understand the Egyptian side of it. It does not matter whether the Greeks fixed prices, the Egyptians surely did and if not, they controlled their external trade in such a way that we can hardly speak of offer and demand which regulated the price. The prostatai were assigned by the nine poleis, but they had hardly the right to grant tax exemption to certain Greeks at Naukratis. The pharaoh or his officials such as Nekhthorheb did surely interfere with their responsibilities in cases that concerned the exchange with Egyptians.

Of all the features he mentions, Pébarthe accepts Naukratis' position as an interface between two differently organized economies. In working as an interface, however, Naukratis was never a neutral space, since it belonged to the Egyptian pharaoh who gave it to the Greeks. This place may not be considered as derived from silent trade, but it worked as a device of the administered trade of Egypt. It exercised firm control and granted the Greeks the privilege to trade there, not out of generosity, but for good reason to acquire goods desired by its elite. This lack of neutrality of Naukratis made me leaving out this feature in my

13. MÖLLER 2000, p. 19-25.

list of nine elements characterizing the port-of-trade¹⁴. Graslin and Maucourant, however, put, like Polanyi, some emphasis on this point in outlining the port-of-trade concept in their contribution.

Pébarthe is quite right in pointing out that there was more exchange between Greeks and Egyptians in Egypt than just at Naukratis. Archaeological evidence demonstrates, however, that during the 6th century, there was little exchange in the western delta apart from Naukratis that was pretty much isolated indeed¹⁵. The old question of whether the Greek emporion of Naukratis lay beside an older Egyptian village has been taken up by Yoyotte in the 1990's. I have responded to his arguments elsewhere¹⁶ and I would only like to say that I am not convinced that there was an Egyptian village while Egyptian officials were present without doubt to control the dealings of the Greeks and to provide them with their desired good: grain. Grain was centrally collected by the pharaoh and the temples and was not available on a market, making the contact between the Greeks and Egyptian officials essential.

I believe that Pébarthe's rejection of the usefulness of the concept of the port-of-trade for Naukratis is mainly based on his interpretation of the Lindian decree. According to him, the inscription proves that the prostatai tou emporiou controlled the emporion and administered the trade for their profit. I should like to oppose and to point out that, as Naukratis was not an ordinary Greek polis with its autonomy and sovereignty to pass decrees before the 4th century BC, a fact equally acknowledged by Pébarthe, not even the poleis in charge of the Hellenion could pass decrees affecting Egyptian sovereign rights such as levying taxes and duties.

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14. MÖLLER 2000, p. 20-5.

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