

TRAVEL AND THE GREEK σοφία: A STUDY OF THE PHOENICIAN MERCHANT IN PHILOSTRATUS' *HEROICUS*¹

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This article is concerned with the characterisation of the Phoenician Merchant, one of the two interlocutors in Flavius Philostratus' *Heroicus*. Drawing on the “change” thesis, which many scholars espouse as to the portrayal of the character, this paper focuses on two important elements that, despite their thematic significance, have never been associated with the “change” of the figure: travel and σοφία. After exploring Philostratus' presentation of the character as a “traveller”, the essay examines in detail the passages in which σοφία appears, and the words related to σοφία. The paper then concludes that the Phoenician Merchant—the “traveller”—is described as a person who acquires “Greekness” through his deep engagement with “Greek” σοφία, and that this is his most significant “change”.

Introduction

Travel is one of the most important activities among Greek elite intellectuals living in the first to third centuries CE, an era commonly known as the “Second Sophistic”.² For example, sophists in this age, with

¹ This article is an expanded version of the paper read at the conference “Sapiens Ubique Civis: International PhD Student Conference on Classics” held at Szeged, Hungary on 28 to 30 August 2013. I would like to express my gratitude to the conference organisers for their hospitality and friendliness, and to all the participants in the meeting for their thoughtful comments and suggestions. Special thanks are due to Prof. William Furley at University of Heidelberg, who read my original paper and improved it to the greatest degree possible.

² PRETZLER (2007a: 32–56) and PRETZLER (2007b) deal with their travel and travel writings. For travel in the ancient world in general, see ANDRÉ–BASLEZ (1993); CASSON (1994); ELSNER–RUBIÉS (1999: 8–15); ROMM (1992); and HARTOG (2001). The term “Second Sophistic” was coined by the author whose work this paper is concerned with, i.e. Flavius Philostratus (c. 170–249 CE). Relevant passages are found at *Vitae Sophistarum* (henceforth *VS*) 481 and 507.

a view to giving their epideictic orations, hardly stayed at one place but instead, visited various areas in the Roman Empire.³ We should not fail to mention Pausanias, whose *Periegesis* makes us sure that the author is an indefatigable traveller in Greece.⁴ When we turn our eyes to literature, we can find, amongst others, Greek novels, whose authors make their young protagonists experience wide-scale travel around the Mediterranean Sea.⁵

Philostratus lived in such a world of enthusiastic travellers, both real and unreal. This, I believe, makes it reasonable to suppose that travellers in their own literary works play an important role, and should be investigated carefully. With this idea in mind, I discuss one of the two interlocutors in the *Heroicus*, the Phoenician Merchant.⁶ He is arguably represented as a “traveller” who, due to the lack of favourable wind for his ship, accidentally visits the city of Elaeus, where another interlocutor, the Vinegrower, leads a peaceful life with the ghost of Protesilaus.⁷

The character has already drawn the attention of several modern critics, and their basic argument is a starting point for my discussion. The Phoenician Merchant is, on the whole, presented as a listener of the Vinegrower’s narratives, before undergoing a conspicuous “change”⁸ during the course of the dialogue: namely that at the beginning he is extremely skeptical about the Vinegrower’s tales, but as the conversation

WHITMARSH (2005) is the most recent general study on this fascinating period. For the (notoriously complicated) questions of lives and works of our Philostratus and the other “Philostrati”, see DE LANNOY (1997); SOLMSEN (1940); ANDERSON (1986: 1–22); BILLAUT (2000: 5–31); FLINTERMAN (1995: 5–51); and BOWIE (2009).

³ Philostratus in his *VS* tells us about travelling sophists (e.g. Alexander [571] and Hippodromus [618]). He also mentions sophists who have rarely or never travelled (Aristides [582] and Aelianus [625]), which, however, seems to suggest that travel was a very common activity among sophists in his period. On this topic, see ANDERSON (1993: 28–30).

⁴ Recent scholarship on Pausanias’ work has tried to assess it in quite a new perspective, not (derogatively) labelling it as a mere *Baedeker* in the ancient world. See, e.g. ALCOCK–CHERRY–ELSNER (2001); HUTTON (2005); and PRETZLER (2007a).

⁵ For the motif of travel in the ancient novel, see MORGAN (2007); ROMM (2008); and MONTIGLIO (2005: 221–261).

⁶ The text of the *Heroicus* is taken from DE LANNOY (1977). Translations are modified versions of MACLEAN–AITKEN (2001).

⁷ JONES (2001: 144–146) discusses the geographical setting of the work from a historical perspective. FOLLET (2004) shares the same concern.

⁸ GROSSARDT (2006: 47) “Bekehrung”; AITKEN–MACLEAN (2004: xxx) “movement”; MACLEAN (2004: 253) “change”; WHITMARSH (2013: 103) “transition”. Cf. GROSSARDT (2004: 234).

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proceeds, he is gradually allured by them, and by the end of the dialogue, he has become an enthusiastic listener. The idea is too evident to be denied and nor do I have any problems with it. Drawing on the “change” thesis however, I place an emphasis on two factors previous studies of the Phoenician Merchant have failed to notice. One is, as is suggested in the preceding paragraphs, his position as a “traveller”.⁹ I believe it is easy to link the merchant’s “change” with his act of travelling because travelling, or more specifically, leaving one’s own home, entering unknown worlds and facing what is unfamiliar, causes the traveller to “change.” The traveller cannot be the same before and after the experience of travel.¹⁰ Remember Homer’s Telemachus, who can do nothing against the arrogant suitors at the first stage of the poem but, through his experience of travel to Achaean veterans, becomes a true hero who takes revenge against his family’s uninvited guests.¹¹ The other element this paper will focus on is the concept of σοφία. Philostratus uses the word and its cognates so frequently that it is not an exaggeration to state that σοφία plays a central role in the dialogue.¹² Especially important is the fact that σοφία is a typically “Greek” idea,¹³ and Philostratus is clearly aware of that when he uses it in his work. σοφία, so our author seems to believe, has a special ethnic force that can exert its influence on “non-Greeks” who encounter it. My primary concern is thus to investigate how the Phoenician Merchant’s “non-Greekness” is influenced by the “Greekness” of σοφία.¹⁴

In what follows, I will first show that the Phoenician Merchant is a “traveller”, a character who, like Telemachus, has potential to “change” in

⁹ Apollonius in the *Vita Apollonii* (henceforth *VA*) too is a traveller, which indicates Philostratus’ interest in travelling people. ELSNER (1997) discusses the motif of travel in the work.

¹⁰ Cf. MOSSMAN (2006: 281): “... travel can also become a powerful metaphor for the development of the narrative’s subject”.

¹¹ Cf. CLARKE (1963).

¹² GROSSARDT (2006: 53). It should not be overlooked that the concept constantly haunted our author during his lifetime, as he struggled to authorise those who were called σοφισταί in the *VS* and who, at the same time, made the sage of σοφία metaphorically conquer the whole of the known world in the *VA*. Cf. ELSNER (2009: 15–17), who says, at 15, that “for all its variation, one might argue that the Philostratean corpus as a whole has a systematic and repeated set of themes whose focus is the study of *sophia* in its various forms and widest sense as understood in the Second Sophistic”.

¹³ HALL (1989: 121).

¹⁴ The concept of “Greekness” is a hot topic in the recent scholarship of the “Second Sophistic” literature. See, e.g. SWAIN (1996); GOLDHILL (2001); WHITMARSH (2001); and KONSTAN–SAÏD (2006).

the foreign land he visits. I will then explore how the merchant actually “changes” the Vinegrower through his involvement with the Greek σοφία, and how his teacher, Protesilaus, possess σοφία, by highlighting passages in which σοφία, and words related to σοφία—such as σοφός, σοφῶς, φιλοσοφῶς, φιλοσοφῆω—appear, before analysing these passages one by one. At the end of the paper, I will conclude that the Phoenician Merchant, the “traveller,” is described as a person who acquires “Greekness” through his deep engagement with “Greek” σοφία, and that this is his most significant “change.”

The Phoenician Merchant as a “Traveller”

Before exploring the relationship between the Phoenician Merchant and σοφία, it is necessary to make clear my idea that the merchant can be seen as a “traveller”.¹⁵ Brief observations on Homer’s representation of the “Phoenicians” and the Philostratean characterisation of the merchant, which is greatly influenced by the epic poet’s imagination, will show that the most important point about the character is his status of being a “traveller.”

Let us then first discuss the question of the “Phoenicians.”¹⁶ As to the Philostratean characterisation of the Phoenician Merchant, the most fundamental point to be made is that the merchant is of Phoenician origin. If one explores his literary function in the dialogue, this aspect should be considered first. The readers know that Philostratus does not give him a personal name, which often tells the reader much about the character, but just presents him as a “Phoenician” (Φοῖνιξ).¹⁷ This characterisation suggests that Philostratus directs our attention specifically to his ethnicity: we are told to pay attention to the fact that the merchant is “Phoenician.”

It is not unreasonable, therefore, to argue that the merchant’s ethnicity tells us something essential about the character. Here, we should examine how Greek authors represent the “Phoenicians” in their literary products in order to make sense of the importance of the merchant’s ethnicity. I, however, do not wish to scrutinise a wide range of texts in which the “Phoenicians” are featured. Rather, I concentrate on the texts of just one

¹⁵ MARTIN (2002: 156) and BOWIE (1994: 184) call him a “travel(l)er”, though with no explanation.

¹⁶ For the ancient Phoenicians in general, see HARDEN (1962). This text, however, is not so useful for our present purposes. MILLAR (1993: 264–295) examines Phoenicia in the Roman times.

¹⁷ It is vital to note that Φοῖνιξ is the first word attributed to the character (1,1). Cf. HODKINSON (2011: 24) for his anonymity.

author: the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. The reason for the selection is that Homer's works are, without doubt, the most important hypotexts upon which the *Heroicus* is written. Readers can easily find in the text a number of influences and parodies of, or allusions to, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.¹⁸ Indeed, several sections (24,1–25,17 and 43,1–44, 4) deal specifically with Homer and his poems! We can say undeniably that Homer's epic poems give us a host of clues by which the reader is able to fully understand the enigmatic descriptions Philostratus offers in his text.

In the Homeric poems, we can find a couple of descriptions about the Phoenicians.¹⁹ Here, I want to take *Od.* 15,415sqq. as an example, as Eumaeus tells his disguised guest a series of autobiographical stories. The Phoenicians appear in his tales when he reports their landing to his native country Syria. The stories are about the visiting Phoenicians and a woman who served the ruling king. The Phoenicians are introduced by the swineherd as “famed for the ship” (15,415: ναυσίκλυτοι). One day, a wily Phoenician, hearing that the woman came from Sidon (a city in Phoenicia), planned to help her return to her homeland. To his kind invitation she answered that she would follow the Phoenicians if they, “sailors” (15,435: ναῦται), promised to bring her home safely. In the end, she fled from the kingdom with Eumaeus. The Phoenicians and the two runaways embarked on the Phoenicians’ “ship swift in the sea” (15,473: ὠκύαλος νηῦς) and sailed away (15,474: ἐπέπλεον; 15,476: πλέομεν), but as a result, the woman was killed by Artemis on the way, while Eumaeus and the Phoenicians arrived in Ithaca.

In this scene then, the Phoenicians are portrayed as “travelling” sailors.²⁰ When we look at other Homeric passages, we soon notice that the poet uses this characterisation in these places as well. At *Od.* 14,287sqq., Odysseus tells Eumaeus about his encounter with a

¹⁸ MESTRE (2004) examines Philostratus’ recreation of the accounts on Trojan events against Homeric narratives. Cf. ANDERSON (1986: 243–244). On Homeric revisionism in the Roman Imperial period in general, see, e.g. KINDSTRAND (1973); ZEITLIN (2001); KIM (2010) (the *Heroicus* is discussed at pp. 175–215); and GROSSARDT (2006: 58–74).

¹⁹ A comprehensive study on the Phoenicians in the Homeric epics can be found in WINTER (1995). AITKEN (2004: 271–272), picking up Homer’s works as crucial texts for the *Heroicus*, pays special attention to the Phoenicians’ “deceit and trickery” (271), which I do not discuss below.

²⁰ Greediness is another interesting feature attributed to the Phoenicians. Homer calls them τρωκται (15,416), an expression imitated by Philostratus (1,3: τρωκται), which indicates Homer’s strong influence on Philostratus in description of the Phoenicians.

Phoenician.²¹ According to the Ithacan hero, the Phoenician, intending to obtain a large amount of money by selling Odysseus, left Phoenicia for Libya on a “seafaring ship” (14,295: νηὸς ... ποντοπόροιο). At *Od.* 13,271sqq., we find another story about the Phoenicians told by Odysseus, this time to the goddess Athena. Here the Phoenicians are described as the hero’s helper with a “ship” (13,272: νῆα). They, trying to bring Odysseus to Pylus or Elis, are compelled to “drift about” (13,278: πλαγχθέντες) on their way due to unfavourable wind, only to leave him heading for Sidon with his goods. When describing the bowl Achilles chose as a prize for the winner of the running race (*Il.* 23,740sqq), the poet tells us that the Phoenicians brought it over the “murky sea” (23,744 ἡεροειδέα πόντον) and presented it to Thoas. As these examples clearly show, Homer presents the Phoenicians as sailors, “travellers” on the sea.

We are now in a position to look at the Philostratean text itself, and to discuss how the Phoenician Merchant is described. What interests us most is the verbal exchanges at the beginning and the end of the dialogue, because both of the scenes concern spatial “movement” of the Phoenician Merchant. At the beginning of the text, the Vinegrower asks the stranger “from where” (1,1: πόθεν) he has come to the city. Having heard that he is a Phoenician, the local farmer asks him where he is going to “go” (1,2: βαδίσεις). To this question, the Phoenician answers as follows:

{Ph(oenician Merchant).} I need a sign and an omen for good sailing (εὐπλοίας), vinegrower. For they say that we shall go into the Aegean itself, and I think the sea is horrible and not easy to sail (πλεῦσαι). I am going against the wind. Phoenicians, facing this mark, watch things for good sailing (εὐπλοίας). (1,2)

The language of sailing is used repeatedly to characterise the Phoenician.²² This characterisation is, of course, influenced by the Homeric presentation of the Phoenician people we saw above. For the first detailed description of the Phoenician, the author emphasises his “movement” or, more specifically, his “travelling.” He is a man who has come from, and is going to, a foreign place, far from where he is now, Chersonesean Elaeus.

What about his description at the end of the dialogue? There, too, he is portrayed as a man of “travelling”:²³ the Vinegrower tells him to “sail” (58,5: πλεῖ) again if the wind is favourable, and the Phoenician responses

²¹ He is τρώκτης (14,289), too.

²² Note also 6,3, where the Phoenician says, “I have been sailing (πλέω) from Egypt and Phoenicia and this is already about the thirty-fifth day”.

²³ A full citation for this scene is found below p. 59.

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to his host's word that he does not want to "sail" (58,6: πλεύσαιμι) unless he hears more heroic tales from his companion. In this way, Philostratus implies that the Phoenician will continue his "travel" beyond the point where our text ends.

In the discussion above, I have demonstrated that the author, heavily drawing upon the Homeric "Phoenicians," invites the reader to see his Phoenician Merchant first and foremost as a "traveller". This understanding is quite important, especially as it is interrelated to the problem of the merchant's "change," the most noticeable characteristic that many Philostratan scholars have spotted. "Travellers change," so the Phoenician Merchant will "change." But how? Our next task is to answer this question.

σοφία as an Important Topic in the Conversation

Now that we have seen the Phoenician Merchant represented as a "traveller," let us investigate what this "non-Greek" foreigner experiences in the place he travels to. Bluntly put, he has come to Elaeus to listen to the long, detailed accounts about the Trojan War and surrounding events recounted by the local host, the Vinegrower. What we must focus on, therefore, is the contents of the Vinegrower's narratives and a series of the merchant's reactions to them. It is obvious that the farmer deals with a number of topics in his talk, but a rough overview of the entire dialogue reveals that one motif is evident throughout: σοφία. This symbolically "Greek" concept is the most important overseas experience of the Phoenician Merchant.

To begin with, I need to spotlight the Vinegrower, because the σοφία which the Phoenician Merchant will acquire originates from this character. In the introductory scenes where the two interlocutors talk about themselves, the Phoenician Merchant asks the Vinegrower about his σοφία. The dialogue is as follows:

{Ph.} But, vinegrower, are you engaged in wisdom (φιλοσοφείς)?
{V(inegrower).} Yes, indeed, and with beautiful Protesilaus. (2,6)

The meaning of the word φιλοσοφείς is ambiguous and difficult to grasp, but to associate it blindly with "philosophy" in its ordinary sense²⁴ cannot

²⁴ The translations of GROSSARDT (2006: 184) ("Führst ... etwa philosophische Gespräche"), MACLEAN-AITKEN (2001: 9) ("live a reflective way of life") and HODKINSON (2011: 31) ("lives a life of contemplation") all seem to preserve the word's semantic connection to "philosophy". My interpretation places much

be accepted, as that interpretation does not fit the context. Moreover, such an interpretation overlooks other important passages which should be taken into consideration with this exchange. A little earlier in the work, the Vinegrower says to his companion that the Phoenicians are σοφοί with nautical affairs (1,3). This is the first appearance of σοφία-related words in our text, and so we should be attentive. It is because the σοφία among the Phoenicians is mentioned by the Vinegrower that the Phoenician Merchant, too, is interested in the σοφία of his partner, and the merchant picks up the subject his companion set out earlier in the conversation. Consequently, the expression φιλοσοφεῖς is never associated with “philosophy”, but employed simply for the merchant to check whether the Vinegrower himself is engaged in some kind of σοφία.

A crucial aspect of φιλοσοφῶ must be discussed here. Our text indicates that a person who is engaged in σοφία, i.e. a man of φιλοσοφῶ, can be “Greek”. At 4,5–6, the Phoenician Merchant points out that with respect to language, the Vinegrower is “educated” (ἐπαιδευθῆς) and does not seem to be among the “uneducated” (ἀπαιδευτῶν).²⁵ To this observation, the farmer tells his companion that in the past, he was “engaged in σοφία” (φιλοσοφοῦντες) with Protesilaus in a city. What should not be overlooked in this exchange is the concept of παιδεία. Scholars now agree that in the Imperial Greek world, those capable of commanding “educated” Greek can be regarded as “Greek”, irrespective of their origins.²⁶ When we return to the exchange with this idea in mind, we soon find an interesting fact: it is suggested that the Vinegrower, because of his past “engagement in σοφία”, could become “educated” in language and, as a result, was initiated into a privileged society of true “Greeks”. In short, his act of φιλοσοφῶ made him “Greek”. We readers should not forget that the person faced by the “non-Greek” merchant is “Greek”.

Let us return to the conversation at 2,6. To the question asked by the merchant, the Vinegrower answers “Yes”, as the citation shows. He is engaged in σοφία. What kind of σοφία is it, then? Here, we turn to Protesilaus, the Vinegrower’s advisor and co-worker, because he is a key figure in relation to the question of σοφία of the Vinegrower. A little later

emphasis on the original formation of the word (φιλο- + σοφία), as is discussed below.

²⁵ WHITMARSH (2013: 113) detects a close parallel of this exchange at *VS* 553, where Herodes Atticus talks about Agathion’s “educatedness” (ἐπαιδευθῆς) in language and his non-membership in the “uneducated” (ἀπαιδευτῶν).

²⁶ WHITMARSH (2004: 144–146).

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in the conversation, the relationship between the Vinegrower and Protesilaus is highlighted as cited below:

{V.} ... I consult Protesilaus as a doctor, and by the company with him and the devotion to the land I am becoming wiser (σοφώτερος) than myself, because he excels also in his wisdom (σοφίας). (4,10)

As we saw just above, the Vinegrower is engaged in σοφία with Protesilaus. The account presented makes clearer his claim that he and Protesilaus are fellow cultivators of σοφία or, in a word, reveals their own specific form of the engagement in σοφία. The merchant is informed that Protesilaus is distinguished in his σοφία and his instruction leads to the sophistication of the σοφία of the Vinegrower. We can recognise that the Phoenician is impressed by their engagement with σοφία because just after this, he praises his companion for his “divine and pure wisdom” (4,11: σοφίαν ... θεϊάν τε καὶ ἀκήρατον).²⁷ Philostratus, it seems, prepares the merchant to obtain the σοφία of the grower and Protesilaus.

After the two interlocutors move to the vineyard, the owner of the yard recounts what Protesilaus has told him about the events he saw. The point to be made here is that the Greek warrior is labelled as φιλόσοφος by his friend (7,8). Like the aforementioned word φιλοσοφῶ, it is hard to grasp the exact meaning of this appellation, because the word is used only here in the entire work. Yet, it can be safely stated that it does not denote “philosopher”, because in the text we cannot find any descriptions of Protesilaus’ possession of “philosophical” interest in the things around him. I suggest that we understand the meaning of the word φιλόσοφος by connecting it with preceding exchanges between the two interlocutors we saw above. We have observed that Protesilaus is engaged in σοφία as a teacher of the Vinegrower. From this, it is proper to understand φιλόσοφος not as a “philosopher” but as a “man who is engaged in wisdom”, or a “wisdom-loving man,” given its juxtaposition with the label φιλαλήθης.

In this manner, the Vinegrower and Protesilaus are inextricably interwoven with the concept of σοφία in the opening scenes of the work and the Phoenician Merchant, a would-be heir of their σοφία, is well aware of the strong link. We are now ready to look at the ways in which the σοφία of the two exerts a gradual influence on the Phoenician Merchant. First of all, let us examine the words given by the Vinegrower

²⁷ GROSSARDT (2006: 366, ad loc.) sees the response as a mere irony.

just after the Phoenician Merchant sits down, getting ready for further conversation:²⁸

{V.} Ask whatever you wish, stranger, and you will not say you have come in vain. For when Odusseus was wandering far from his ship, Hermes or one of the god's wise (σοφῶν) followers encountered him and shared a serious story ... and Protesilaus by means of me will fill (ἐμπλήσει)²⁹ you with information and make you sweeter and wiser (σοφώτερον). For knowing many things is very valuable. (6,1)

The Vinegrower compares the Phoenician Merchant to Odysseus³⁰ and himself to Hermes or one of the god's "wise" (σοφῶν) followers, a comparison which declares his intention to help his guest become "wiser" (σοφώτερον). We saw above that Protesilaus, a man outstanding in his σοφία, makes the Vinegrower "wiser" (σοφώτερος). It is not difficult, therefore, to discern educational hierarchy constructed among the three people concerned: Protesilaus is responsible for the Vinegrower's σοφία and the Vinegrower for the Phoenician Merchant's. This relationship, it seems, makes the reader expect that the Phoenician Merchant, a temporary pupil of the Vinegrower, will acquire σοφία from the lectures given by his teacher. The farmer's self-presentation as a follower of Protesilaus and, at the same time, as a possessor of σοφία, thus signals the importance of σοφία in his subsequent accounts, and the transmissibility of the central topic to his hearer.

After this, the Phoenician Merchant talks a little about the dream which caused him to visit the very city where the two characters meet and are conversing. The Vinegrower is impressed by the story, and then proposes launching into the main discourse. The passages below are the Phoenician Merchant's response to him:

²⁸ AS GROSSARDT (2006: 371, ad loc.) indicates, relaxation for a character implies that what follows includes something serious ("ernsthaften" to borrow the commentator's word), for instance, philosophical discussion, as described at Plato's *Phaedrus* (228e (καθιζόμενοι), 229a (καθιζησόμεθα), 229b (καθίξεσθαι)), which Philostratus must have had in mind when he made the merchant relax himself (ἰζήσωμεν [4,1] and ἰζήσαι [5,5]), perhaps in order to inform the reader that the two interlocutors intend to start discussing φιλοσοφία, just like Socrates and Phaedrus.

²⁹ The verb will be discussed later (below pp. 58–59).

³⁰ This would be another sign for the reader to regard the Phoenician as a "traveller". Cf. GROSSARDT (2006: 49–50); ANDERSON (1986: 249–250); MACLEAN (2004: 259–260); and KIM (2010: 182) for the comparison.

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{Ph.} What I long to learn at least you know. The meeting itself which you have with Protesilaus, what he is like, and if he knows things about the Trojan events similar to those of the poets, or those unknown to them, these I need to listen to. By “Trojan events” I mean the following: the assembling of the army at Aulis and the heroes, one by one, whether they were beautiful, as they are celebrated, brave, and wise (σοφοί). (7,1–2)

The most important point to note is that the merchant is interested in whether the heroes were “wise” (σοφοί) or not. We have seen that the interest of the two interlocutors has been basically in the concept of σοφία. Given this context, it is easy to understand this utterance of the Phoenician Merchant. Indeed, the hero the Vinegrower recounts in greater detail in the following conversation is distinguished in his σοφία. I now begin to discuss him.

Palamedes’ σοφία

Chapters 26 through 36 are devoted to Protesilaus’ autopsy-based report, mediated by the Vinegrower, concerning the Greek heroes who fought in the Trojan War. In this segment, famous heroes are mentioned one after another, but I do not aim to investigate them all. Instead, I would like to focus on just one warrior, Palamedes.³¹ He is given by far the most prominent role among the heroes whose activities the Vinegrower recounts. Two simple but strong reasons support this claim: namely, the length of his story and its place within the Vinegrower’s narrative about the Greek heroes. His story, found at Chapter 33, is situated at the very middle and is much longer than the stories of the other Greek warriors.³² Thus it is no exaggeration that Palamedes, who suffers from neglect or extremely brief treatments in traditional narratives,³³ plays quite an important part in the *Heroicus*. As I hope to demonstrate, the Vinegrower’s presentation of Palamedes as a protagonist-like figure with

³¹ On the hero as presented in the *Heroicus*, see BESCHORNER (1999: 222–224); GROSSARDT (2006: 571–573); SOLMSEN (1940: 563–564); and ANDERSON (1986: 246).

³² BESCHORNER (1999: 223); DEMOEN (2012: 225).

³³ HODKINSON (2011: 80–87) gives a useful summary of how Palamedes is treated in ancient literature before the *Heroicus*.

distinguished σοφία³⁴ indicates that the account of the hero affects the Phoenician Merchant to an enormous degree.³⁵

Before discussing the detailed description of Palamedes in that part, I would like to look at another chapter where Palamedes is briefly featured, because his introduction there seems to anticipate the description in the main part. In Chapter 21, the Vinegrower tells his companion about an event which happened to a farmer in Ilion. One day, when the farmer visited the grave of Palamedes to make offerings, the hero himself appeared in front of the admirer and spoke to him. After commenting briefly on what had happened between himself and his rival Odysseus in the past,³⁶ Palamedes changed the subject and asked the farmer what he was especially worried about concerning his grapevines. When the farmer answered that it was hailstones spoiling his plants, the hero suggested defending them with leather straps. Below is the opinion expressed by the Phoenician Merchant, who has just heard Palamedes' suggestion:

{Ph.} The hero is wise (σοφός), vinegrower, and always invents something good for human beings. (21,9)

The point is that the merchant describes Palamedes as “wise” (σοφός). The hero is here presented as a man who helps human beings with his σοφία. We will see this connection between Palamedes and σοφία in the main section as well.

Let us then scrutinise how Palamedes is described in the central part dealing with heroes. The very first passage of the Vinegrower's account of the hero deserves special attention:

{V.} He [sc. Protesilaus] reports the affairs of Palamedes as follows: he arrived self-taught and already trained in wisdom (σοφία), knowing more than Chiron. Before Palamedes, seasons as such did not exist, nor did the cycle of the months, and “year” was not a name for time; nor were there coins, nor weights and measures, nor numbering, and the desire (ἔρωσις) for wisdom (σοφία) did not exist, because there were no letters. (33,1)

³⁴ GROSSARDT (2006: 571) stresses that the leitmotif in the chapter is the notion of σοφός.

³⁵ If we talk about the *Heroicus* as a whole, we should say that the protagonist is undoubtedly Achilles, whose accounts, much longer than those of Palamedes, are grandiosely presented at the last part of the dialogue (44,5–57,17).

³⁶ These comments too seem to anticipate the strife of the two recounted later in the main part.

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As we saw just now in the words of the Phoenician Merchant, here too the connection between Palamedes and σοφία is emphasized. Especially interesting is the phrase “the desire (ἔρωσ) for wisdom (σοφίας)”, because it reminds us of the label φιλόσοφος, “wisdom-loving man”, which was given to Protesilaus.³⁷ The Vinegrower seems to say that Palamedes is the same as Protesilaus, in that the hero is an enthusiastic pursuer of σοφία.

As is expected from this opening account, the rest of the description of Palamedes centres on his engagement with σοφία at the time of the Trojan War, with a particular focus on the ways in which his σοφία is at work in his rivalry with Odysseus.³⁸ For example, let us consider the quarrel between the two heroes concerning the interpretation of the eclipse seen in Troy. When the soldiers recognised the phenomenon and lost courage, regarding it as a sign sent by Zeus, Palamedes relieved them of their anxiety by his rational explanation of the sun and the moon. Odysseus, however, was not persuaded by his rival’s remark and rails at Palamedes as follows:

{V.} ... But you, Palamedes, will say less foolish things by paying attention to the earth rather than by using wisdom (σοφιζόμενος) about what is in heaven. (33,7)

While the words related to σοφία that have been discussed so far have, in general, a positive meaning, in this Ithacan hero’s attack, on the contrary, the word σοφιζόμενος takes on a pejorative connotation, which conjures up the Platonic sense of the term σοφιστής. Palamedes’ reply to this abuse accelerates the hostility between the two heroes. Indeed, he responds:

{V.} ... If you were wise (σοφός), Odysseus ... you would have understood that no one is able to say anything wise (σοφόν) about the heavens unless he knows more about the earth. (33,8)

Palamedes thus does not fail to capture Odysseus’ derogative expression σοφιζόμενος and counterattacks by denying his enemy possession of σοφία, which angers Odysseus. From this exchange, we notice that Palamedes and Odysseus are contending with each other about the uses of their σοφία, implying that the σοφία of their opponent is to be disparaged.

Another example of Palamedes’ use of σοφία arises when the Vinegrower discusses the wolves from Mount Ida that harmed the animals of the Greek army. Here, too, the rivalry between Palamedes and Odysseus

³⁷ Above p. 51. Cf. HODKINSON (2011: 89) for the similar observation.

³⁸ HODKINSON (2011: 79–101) offers an excellent discussion on these scenes, to which I owe a great deal.

is highlighted. When the Greeks faced the problem, Odysseus first proposed killing the wolves with their own hands. In response, however, Palamedes asserted that the wolves were sent by Apollo as a prelude to—and in preparation for—a plague. He then told his fellow soldiers to pray to the god in turn. Following this suggestion, Palamedes stated that:

{V.} ... Those who guard themselves against the plague need a light diet and vigorous exercise. I did not take up medicine, but all things can be managed with wisdom (σοφία). (33,14)

For Palamedes, σοφία is to be relied upon in the face of the disaster. The hero seems to try to take initiative against Odysseus by stressing the power of σοφία.

Subsequently, the Vinegrower reports that the Greek army overcame the disease thanks to Palamedes' σοφία (33,17: ἐσοφίσαστο), adding that:

{V.} ... In addition to these, rewards for his [sc. Palamedes'] wisdom (σοφίας) were crowned by the Greeks, but Odysseus considered acting dishonourably and he turned against Palamedes whatever villainies he had. (33,19)

The Greek soldiers acknowledged the σοφία of Palamedes, which, it seems, must have saved them from numerous troubles in the past. Odysseus, his perpetual rival, nevertheless felt antipathy towards his activity by means of “sophistic” σοφία. I now briefly look at Odysseus' emulative use of σοφία to kill his opponent with a view to grasping more fully the significance of Palamedes' σοφία.

According to Protesilaus' account, in order to do away with Palamedes, Odysseus made Agamemnon believe that Achilles aimed to gain supremacy over the whole Greek army with the help of Palamedes. Below is a part of Odysseus' words to the Greek leader:

{V.} ... Thus, it is necessary to keep away from Achilles and to be on guard against those who know him, and to kill this abuser of wisdom (σοφιστήν). I have devised a plan against him by which he will be hated by the Greeks and destroyed by them. (33,25)

Here, we should not neglect the word σοφιστής. Though Odysseus admitted that Palamedes had wisdom, he presented it as a bad thing, bringing about destruction to the Greeks.³⁹ Additionally, it should be

³⁹ The word σοφιστής occurs only here in the *Heroicus* and therefore it may be not so easy to grasp its meaning. DEMOEN (2012: 227, note 84) discusses the

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stressed that the word σοφῶς is used twice (33,27 and 33,31) to describe Odysseus' carefulness about his scheme. In the scene depicting Palamedes' downfall, Odysseus employs σοφία just as his rival has done on various occasions. And thanks to the cunning exploitation of σοφία, he succeeded in removing Palamedes, who was stoned to death by his fellow soldiers. However, Odysseus did not manipulate all of the Greeks into executing the miserable hero. Consider the citation below, describing the deep sympathy for the dead fighter expressed by his supporters:

{V.} ... Not only to Achilles, but also to all who possessed desire (ἔρως) for strength and wisdom (σοφία), this hero [sc. Palamedes] seems to have shown himself worthy of emulation and song, and Protesilaus, whenever we turn to the remembrance of him [sc. Palamedes], sheds floods of tears, praising the hero's courage, especially in death. (33,37)

Once again we find the expression “desire (ἔρως) for wisdom (σοφία)”.⁴⁰ Palamedes, a man of σοφία, from whom “desire for wisdom” ultimately stemmed, was thus pitied by those who had the same feeling towards σοφία. It bears emphasis here that, when the Vinegrower talks about Palamedes, he starts and ends with this same phrase—“desire for wisdom”—which may suggest that the speaker intends to arouse the Phoenician Merchant's “desire for wisdom”. In this vein, it is telling that, following the Vinegrower's accounts cited above, the merchant, who rarely interrupts the host's lecture, suddenly asks his companion whether Palamedes can be seen or not (33,38).⁴¹ This unexpected action, I would argue, vividly shows the listener's special interest in the hero; he, influenced by Palamedes, exhibits his “desire for wisdom”.

Before closing the discussion of Palamedes, I would like to examine an interesting conversation between the phantom of Odysseus and Homer described in Chapter 43, which is germane to the topic of Palamedes' σοφία. This digressive chapter focuses on the question of how Homer composed his epic poems. The Vinegrower tells his guest about Homer's travel to Ithaca and his interview with the local hero. The grower recounts what happened between the two as follows:

{V.} ... When Odysseus came up, he [sc. Homer] asked him about the events in Iliion. He [sc. Odysseus] said that he knew and remembered them all, but that he would tell him nothing of the things he knew unless there

possibility of regarding it as a dramatic irony, which is caused by its hidden positive meaning. Cf. HODKINSON (2011: 90).

⁴⁰ See the discussion above pp. 54–55.

⁴¹ Cf. note 46 below.

would be a reward for him from Homer, good repute in the poetry and a hymn for wisdom (σοφία) and manliness. (43,13)

Odysseus is greedy enough for σοφία to negotiate cunningly with the poet, who has no equal in narrative persuasiveness. He knows well that people believe what Homer says to be the most probable; he thinks that if Homer portrays him as “wise”, he will be recognised as such. Later, he even entreats the poet to refrain from describing Palamedes as “wise” (43,15: σοφός). In reality, however, these exchanges serve to highlight Odysseus’ viciousness⁴² and, at the same time, to make explicit Palamedes’ perfect victory in the competition with Odysseus for σοφία. Palamedes, the Vinegrower emphasises, is “wiser” (34,6: σοφώτερόν) than Odysseus and, revealingly enough, is the “wisest” (34,7: πάνσοφον).⁴³ The hero with true σοφία is not Odysseus, but Palamedes.⁴⁴

So much for analysis of the description of Palamedes. We have observed, in summary, that σοφία is one of the most conspicuous features of the Greek hero. In the *Heroicus*, there is no other fighter more famous for σοφία than this soldier. Though the Phoenician Merchant does not comment on the σοφία of Palamedes at all, it can hardly be doubted that the story of Palamedes’ engagement with σοφία has deeply impressed him. As we saw above,⁴⁵ he is eager to hear whether the heroes in the Vinegrower’s narratives are “wise” (σοφοί) or not; Palamedes’ σοφία cannot escape from the enthusiastic listener’s attention.⁴⁶

Successful Transmission of σοφία

What is the final reaction of the Phoenician Merchant after the Vinegrower has finished relating the stories he learned from Protesilaus? Consider the following passage, which appears towards the end of the dialogue:

⁴² The Vinegrower enumerates his shameful features at 34,1–2.

⁴³ Palamedes is described as “wisest” (σοφώτατος) also at *VA* 4,16.

⁴⁴ Odysseus has a disadvantage also at 25,14. According to Protesilaus, Nausicaa did not love his “wisdom” (σοφίας) because he had never said nor done “wise thing” (σοφόν) for her.

⁴⁵ Pp. 52–53.

⁴⁶ Also noticeable is the fact that Palamedes is, within Chapters 26–36, the only Greek hero on whom the Phoenician Merchant comments (33,38). For the other warriors, the merchant says nothing, just listening to their tales, as if they were much less impressive to him compared to Palamedes. Cf. KIM (2010: 204) for the merchant’s silence.

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{Ph.} ... But after you have filled (ἐμπέπληκας) us with the heroic stories, I would no longer ask how he [sc. Protesilaus] returned to life, since you say he treats that story as inviolable and secret. (58,1–2)

The point worthy of attention is the use of the verb ἐμπίπλημι. Indeed, the Vinegrower uses this verb earlier in the dialogue.⁴⁷ There the Vinegrower states that Protesilaus will “fill” (ἐμπλήσει) the Phoenician Merchant with his firsthand knowledge of the Trojan War and other significant events and, importantly, in so doing will make the listener “wiser” (σοφώτερον). As if the Phoenician Merchant recaptured that remark, here he says that the Vinegrower, as he foretold, has “filled”, ἐμπέπληκας, him with the stories of heroes. This moment, I argue, indicates that the merchant eventually obtained the σοφία of the true events of the Trojan War from its original possessors—the Vinegrower and his friend Protesilaus.⁴⁸

Another important utterance of the Phoenician Merchant supports this argument. It is true, as seen just above, that in the closing scene of the work we cannot find any expressions directly related to the notion of σοφία. Rather, the very last words uttered by the Phoenician Merchant, which put an end to the entire dialogue, seem to reveal how the σοφία on the Trojan events has successfully been passed to the merchant. Look at the following exchange of the two interlocutors:

{V.} ... Now, go to the ship rejoicing with all that the garden bears, and, stranger, if the wind is yours, set sail after pouring a libation to Protesilaus from the ship ... But if the wind should be against you, come here at sunrise and you will obtain what you wish.

{Ph.} I obey you (Πείθομαί σοι), vinegrower, and so shall it be. May I not sail, by Poseidon, before listening to this story as well. (58,5–6)

For our purposes, the phrase Πείθομαί σοι, found in the Phoenician Merchant’s comments, is worthy of detailed discussion. The meaning of the expression is twofold: In context, it means simply, “I obey you”. We can see the three imperatives in the words of the Vinegrower, “go” (ἴθι), “set sail” (πλεῖ) and “come” (χώρει). The expression indicates the merchant’s obedience to his host. Let me repeat, however, that this is

⁴⁷ In the passage already cited above p. 52. For the verbal agreement, see GROSSARDT (2006: 770, *ad loc*).

⁴⁸ The verb appears also at 43,1, uttered by the merchant (“... I would not even go away from here willingly, but would be carried off to the ship with difficulty ... lamenting at not being filled (ἐμπίπλησθαι) with the story”), which, just like its occurrence here discussed, shows his remembrance of the Vinegrower’s promise to him, and, probably, his expectation to gain σοφία from his companion.

simply a context-oriented reading. We should not overlook the other, and more significant, meaning that is imbedded in the phrase. *πειθομαι*, the middle form of the verb *πειθω*, can also mean “I believe”. Here, remember that “belief” is an important motif in the *Heroicus*. When, at the beginning of the dialogue, the Vinegrower tells his guest about the revival, or reappearance, of the heroes who fought in Troy, the merchant responds, “I don’t believe” (*Ἀπιστῶ* (3,1)). In a way, the conversation that follows represents the Vinegrower’s efforts to make the merchant “believe” him. Accordingly, *Πείθομαί σοι* in the citation can be read as an indication of the merchant’s full belief of his companion; the merchant, at the very final phase of the dialogue, says that he “believes” what has been recounted about the heroes fighting in the Trojan War. In this way, the text suggests that the *σοφία* of the Protesilaus and the Vinegrower has finally been conveyed to their listener, the Phoenician Merchant.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, in the ancient world, the acts of travelling and of obtaining *σοφία* are closely linked. Legendary stories about the Greek lawgiver, Solon, vividly attest to the strength of this connection.⁴⁹ I propose that the same holds true for the Phoenician Merchant. He is a “traveller”. He, like other ancient travellers, acquires *σοφία*, which he could have gained had he not travelled to the town where the Vinegrower works with the ghost of Protesilaus and, once there, conversed with him. When the dialogue begins, he is highly sceptical of his companion’s stories. However, as the conversation advances, he is little by little attracted to them. What is vital is the Vinegrower’s and Protesilaus’ daily engagement with *σοφία*, and, further, the treatment of *σοφία* in the Vinegrower’s tales about heroes—in particular the tale of Palamedes, the second greatest hero next to Achilles. All these elements work to influence the merchant, who, by the end of the conversation, becomes a willing listener to his partner’s tales, as is shown by the expressions *ἐμπέληκας* and *Πείθομαί σοι*.

We should connect his attainment of *σοφία* to the problems of his “change” and “Greekness”. The Phoenician Merchant is a “Phoenician”, an “Other” against a “Greek” world, who came from the “non-Greek” world. Does he, then, remain an “Other” throughout the dialogue? The

⁴⁹ At Hdt. 1,30, where the king of Lydia Croesus talks to the sage, *πλάνη* (“wandering”) and *σοφίη* are tellingly put together. Cf. HARTOG (2001: 5); PRETZLER (2007a: 37).

answer is certainly no. He “changes” in the dialogue with the Vinegrower, who, capable of speaking like an “educated” Greek, has a true “Greek” identity.⁵⁰ From this person, the Phoenician Merchant won the “Greek” σοφία and, as a result, acquires “Greekness”. As to the problem of his “change”, what should be highlighted is his “change” of cultural identity—he “changes” from a “non-Greek” to “Greek” through his obtainment of the “Greek” σοφία.

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⁵⁰ See the discussion above p. 50.

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