

Trade, Technology, and Politics

How political competition fueled
economic expansion and
technological innovation

The Basic Mechanism

“What stimulated increased economic interdependence and political integration in early civilizations seems to have been the trade and craft specialization encouraged by the politically motivated demands of the upper classes for prestige goods, and by expanding markets for better-quality mass-produced commodities as population densities increased” (Trigger, “Understanding Ancient Civilizations”)

Trade

- Local vs. long distance
- How was exchange brokered, w/o currency?
- How much does the state control trade?
- Where does trade take place? (Are there markets?)

Traders

- Trusted or despised?
- Full-time specialists or itinerant?
- Making a profit, or working for the state?
- Who trades with whom?

Trade Goods

- What was traded internally vs. internationally?
- Relationship between value, volume, and transport
- Raw vs. processed
- What does 'currency' mean?

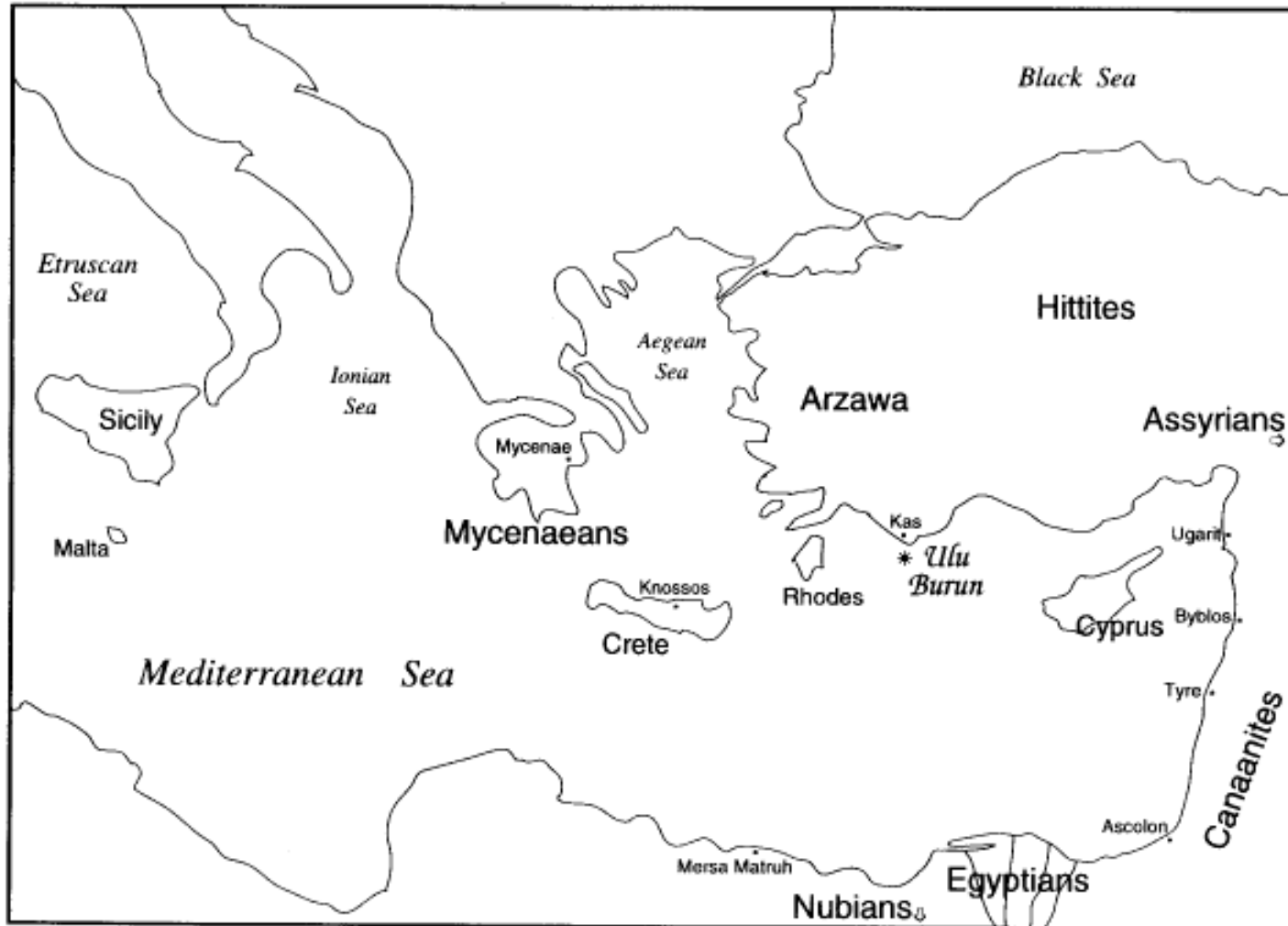
Trade Routes

- Routes vs. nodes of exchange
- How much location, and how much “marketing”?
- Transport technologies remain low-tech, labor-intensive
- Storage as important as travel
- Role of seals, weights, and standards

Point-to-Point Trade: The Uluburun Shipwreck Data

- 3300 BP (mid New Kingdom Egypt) shipwreck in the eastern Mediterranean
- Cargo included:
 - 10 tons copper from Cyprus
 - 1 ton tin ingots (source outside Mediterranean)
 - Pomegranates, olive oil, wine
 - 150 Canaanite jars of incense resin
 - Earliest known glass, sourced to Syro-Palestinian Coast
 - Egyptian ebony wood
 - Ostrich eggs, elephant and hippo ivory from Nubia
 - Mycenaean pottery
 - Gold jewelry, glass beads, ivory cosmetic containers,
 - Bronze tools

Sourcing the Cargo



Standardizing Exchange Units

- Uluburun ingots in the shape of ox hides

Marking cargo for different owners, destinations

Kassite (Babylonian) cylinder seal

Balancing cargo choices for volume, value

- Beads from the Baltic
Sea
- Bronze double head
axe (prov. Unknown)
- Egyptian gold
jewelry