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**SELECTED WRITTEN ACCOUNTS OF THE WOOD TRADE  
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*This article presents a perspective on several selected sources that clarify the significance of the wood trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. Wood features in ancient literary sources from the advent of the written word. The selected sources in this article reflect the individual attributes of the trade in this commodity; they also indicate the extent to which this trade formed international relations.*

**Key words:** *trade in the ancient world; Eastern Mediterranean; wood trade; international politics.*

*У даній статті представлено погляд на кілька окремих джерел, які пояснюють значення торгівлі деревиною в Східному Середземномор'ї. Дерево постійно фігурує в стародавніх літературних джерелах з появою писемного слова. Розглянуті в даній статті джерела відображають певні ознаки торгівлі цим товаром, а також засвідчують рівень розвитку торгівлі у формуванні міжнародних відносин.*

**Ключові слова:** *торгівля у стародавньому світі; Східне Середземномор'я; торгівля деревиною; міжнародна політика.*

**Problem formulation.** It is intellectually demanding to chart trade routes in the ancient world, as well as to ascertain the terms under which trade was carried out and the main players behind a given exchange. Archeology has uncovered much information in this regard, but most accounts are to be found in written sources. However, even these do not contain clues to the exchange of all products; rather, they reference only the most expensive merchandise, as well as what could be considered the most strategic. Wood, in particular, belongs to the latter category; in many areas of the Near East, the resource was lacking, even in places where advanced civilizations arose. Because wood was scarce, and because it was necessary in the construction of buildings, temples, graves, and ships, as well as in the production of tools and furniture, populations were forced to seek it out and engage in trade in order to secure it. Because wood was an expensive and strategic material, references to its trade can be found in many hieroglyphic, cuneiform, antique, and biblical sources. In this way, the wood trade allows us to understand how trade ties and networks functioned in the ancient world; it also illustrates the extent of exchange, the mutual involvement of states, and the influence of trade on politics and diplomacy.

**Purpose of the article.** For all these reasons, I have become interested in the wood trade – specifically that in the Eastern Mediterranean; there, the sources that mention the wood trade are the oldest available, and they can be found in the largest quantity, because the Egyptian and Mesopotamian rulers, as well as Greek and Israelite traders, were interested in the resource.

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**Analysis of recent researches and publications.** At the same time, the present study is not intended to be a systematic summary of all the available sources, insofar as this theme was exhausted and thoroughly detailed by Russell Meiggs in his monograph "Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World"<sup>1</sup>. Instead, I shall merely attempt to summarize a few written sources that document this trade. That is, I shall be selective, choosing documents on the basis of the evidence they provide with regard to some of the important features of the trade. Chronologically, I will focus on the oldest reports, which come from the third century BCE, up to the time of Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic period. The study should, using the example of the wood trade, show the extent of international trade at the dawn of civilization. It should also indicate the forms this trade took, as well as the terms under which it was conducted. I shall also attempt, on the same basis, to show the importance of trade in the formation of power structures, diplomatic networks, and politico-military history.

**Main material.**

**The oldest reports.** The first civilizations that arose in the Near East – Mesopotamia and Egypt – required wood; however, the resource was not available to them. In fact, one of the oldest stories in Mesopotamian history – the epic of the mythical king of Uruk: Gilgamesh, and the fabled giant: Humbaba – describes the troubles that the Sumerian kings had to overcome in order to transport wood from the mountains of Lebanon or the Amanus. To reach the wood, Gilgamesh had to overcome the giant; in this way, the story seems not to describe trade but rather violent seizure of wood as if it were prey. Reports of the Akkadian kings Sargon and Naramsin are written in a similar spirit<sup>2</sup>. The founder of the Akkadian empire, as well as his grandson, boast that they were able to expand their empire to the mountain range that is decorated by a cedar forest; that is, as far as the Mediterranean sea. They considered the forest their own property; therefore, we cannot speak of trade when the expeditions involving wood have such a proprietous, predatory nature. The scroll of Gudea from Lagash recounts the situation in the same spirit:

*"Gudea, the en-priest of Ningursu, made a path in(to) the Cedar Mountain, which nobody had entered (before); he cut its cedars with great axes. With axes he fashioned (them) for the SÁR.ÚR, the "Right Arm of Lagash", the "Floodstorm-Weapon" of his king. (Like) giant snakes, cedar rafts were floating down the water (of the river) from the Cedar Mountain, pine rafts from the Pine Mountain, zabalum – wood rafts from the zabalum – wood Mountain..."*<sup>3</sup>

Does the scroll speak of trade or of predatory expeditions? It seems that, similarly to the reports of the Akkadian rulers, the text describes a predatory expedition. Now let us look at Egypt. The Nile valley, as well as the surrounding desert regions, did not provide the Egyptians with wood that could be used in construction. Therefore, they had to import logs, from which they could fashion mighty beams that could support roofs or be used to manufacture spars in the construction of large ships. The Proto-Phoenician port of Byblus became a key figure in the import of wood; indeed, the residents of the town were

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<sup>1</sup> Meiggs R. Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World. – Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> For text see: Pritchard J. Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. – Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1969. – P. 267–268.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. – P. 268.

known as none other than “fenchu” – lumberjacks – by the Egyptians<sup>4</sup>. The transport of wood from Byblus to Egypt remains recorded to this day in the famous Palermo Stone. The text, which takes of the form of annals recording the events of the first to the fifth dynasties, reports the arrival of 40 ships carrying cedar or pine wood during the reign of Snofru (ca. 2600 BCE)<sup>5</sup>. Soon afterwards, the Egyptians constructed their own ship using this imported wood, and they enclosed the royal palace with cedar gates. Unfortunately, the text does not give us a broader picture regarding the transport of wood to Egypt. It is possible that the Byblians received some kind of return for the delivery of wood, whereby we could sensibly talk about trade; however, we cannot exclude the possibility that the wood came from Canaan as a part of their tribute.

Granted, the oldest texts from Mesopotamia and Egypt do not describe trade or its terms. However, they do show that wood was, from the beginning, an important cog in international exchange. States invested considerable resources into the import and export of the commodity. Furthermore, this activity required specialized technology and ships, as well as organized crews and extensive storage facilities. Thus, we can rightfully consider the wood trade one of the most important triggers of international trade and transport.

**Wenamun’s account: the price and terms of international trade.** In the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE, none of the civilizations in the Near East had the military power to take complete control of the resources of the Eastern Mediterranean. After the death of Ramses XI., Egypt had been divided into two autonomous political centers. Upper Egypt was ruled by the omnipotent high priest of the god Amun of Thebes, while Lower Egypt was governed by a dynasty that ruled from Tanis. In the fifth year of the rule of Smendes – the founder of the dynasty that ruled from Tanis – reports arise of the famous Egyptian, Wenamun, and his journey from Thebes to Byblos<sup>6</sup>. To this day, we do not know for sure how much the historical background of this story was mythologized<sup>7</sup>. The journey may indeed have taken place, and the accounts of the wanderings of the Egyptian delegations may have been reworked in accordance with literary standards; on the other hand, the background of the work may not contain any historical “grains of truth”, but it is not

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<sup>4</sup> See: *Elayi J.* *Historie de la Phœnicie.* – P. : Perrin, 2013. – P. 44–53; *Thiollet J.-P.* *Je m'appelle Byblos.* – P. : H & D, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> For text see: *Strudwick N.* *Writings from the Ancient World. Text from the Pyramide Age.* – Atlanta : Society for Biblical Literature, 2005. – P. 66–67.

<sup>6</sup> *Egberts A.* *Hard Times: The Chronology of ‘The Report of Wenamun’ Revised* // *Zeitschrift für Ägyptischen Schprache.* – 1998. – 125. – P. 93–108.

<sup>7</sup> At first, researchers assumed the text to be a true account (*Erman A.* *Die Literatur der Aegypter: Gedichter, Erzählungen und Lehrbücher aus dem 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* – Leipzig, 1923. – S. 225) that may have been dressed up in literary clothing (*Lichtheim M.* *Ancient Egyptian Literature II. The New Kingdom.* – Berkeley, 1976. – P. 224); to this day, this moderate position is the most popular approach to the text, although certain more radical opinions do exist. Despite these, contemporary scholarship mainly looks upon the text as a literary construct that nonetheless remains faithful to the period in which it arose. For an overview of how opinions regarding the text developed, see: *Winand J.* *The Report of Wenamun: A Journey in Ancient Egyptian Literature* // *Collier M.* *Ramesside Studies in Honour of K. A. Kitchen* / ed. Steven Snape. – Bolton : Rutheford Press Limited, 2011. – P. 542–543.

possible to reflect as untrue the facts that are preserved within the story. In the story, the Theban priest, Wenamun, receives an order from Amun's high priest to import Byblian wood for Amun's barge. After various obstacles and adventures, Wenamun reaches Byblos. Despite the considerable helping of narrative stereotypes and fables, the text of the report does agree with some historical facts of the period. The Egyptians in the town need to import wood, by they cannot demand it as a tribute or a tax. The splintered and weakened Egypt does not, at that time, have enough power in the Levant, and Wenamun, as the leader of the Egyptian expedition, is forced to negotiate trade terms with the Byblians. Wood is a valuable trade item, and Wenamun has to show off in order to obtain it. In this way, the report unfolds the course of the trade negotiations. The account informs us as to the trade terms of both partners, about the stages of trade and the prices of merchandise. After the initial "pleasantries", the Byblian king asks Wenamun a question:

*"On what sort of business have you come?" "And I answered him, "It is in quest of lumber for the great and noble barge of Amon-Re, King of the Gods, that I have come. What your father did and / what your father's father did, you will also do," so I said to him. And he said to me, "They did in fact supply it. You have but to pay me for supplying it, and I will supply it. Indeed my (forebears) carried out this commission, but only after Pharaoh had sent six freighters loaded with Egyptian products, and they were emptied into their warehouses. You, what have you brought me in my turn?" He had a journal roll of his forefathers brought and had it read out in my presence. A thousand Deben of silver and miscellaneous items were found (entered) in his (journal) roll. / And he said to me, "As for the Ruler of Egypt, is he lord of what is mine, and I his servant as well?" (If so), would he have been needing to send silver and gold in order to say, "Carry out the commission from Amon!?" Or was it rather a gift that used to be presented to my father? As for me in my turn, am I your servant? Or am I a servant of the one who sent you? I have but to let out a shout to the Lebanon so that as soon as the heavens open up, the logs will be deposited here on the seashore" <sup>8</sup>.*

This text reveals a number of things. Firstly, that this does in fact recount a trade negotiation. Clearly, the Byblian king controls the wood trade. The text also implies that his scribes keep detailed trade records in an archive set apart for that purpose. It was from this archive that the king brought the trade journal of his ancestors for Wenamun to hear. The report goes on to reveal that the men were negotiating an equal trade agreement. Both sides had to fulfil certain conditions before the exchange could take place. However, in this part of the negotiation, Wenamun is in a difficult position, because the precious metals that he was to use in the exchange had been stolen in Dor. That is, he did not at that moment have the means to make a sufficient payment to the Byblian king. Nonetheless, he had to find a way to conduct the trade negotiations. He came up with the following solution, which in the end he carried out:

*"Have your scribe brought to me / that I may send him to Smendes and Tanetamon, the planners Amon has installed in the north of his land, and they will cause*

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<sup>8</sup> The Literature of Ancient Egypt / ed. Willam Simpson. – New Haven; L. : Yale University Press, 2003. – P. 120.

*whatever is (necessary) to be brought. I will send him to them with the words, "Have it brought until I go (back) south, and (then) I shall remit to you whatever deficit is still due you", so I said to him. He put my letter in his messenger's hand; and he loaded aboard the keel, the bow piece, the stern piece, along with four other hewn timbers, totaling seven, and sent them to Egypt. His Messenger, who had gone to Egypt, returned to me in Syria in the first month of the second season, Smendes and Tanetamon having sent along / four bowls and one kakmenvessel of gold, five bowls of silver, ten articles of clothing of byssus, ten coverlets of fine thin linen, five hundred mats of smooth linen, five hundred ox-hides, five hundred ropes, twenty sacks of lentils, and thirty baskets of fish. So the prince rejoiced, and he detailed three hundred men and three hundred oxen and assigned supervisors in charge of them to have them fell the timbers. They felled them, and they lay there throughout winter. In the third month of the third season they were hauled to the seashore, and the prince went out and attended to them" <sup>9</sup>.*

The above text reveals further interesting information. In it, we discover how Wenamun managed to resolve the situation with limited means. He sent a messenger to Lower Egypt to request the appropriate means of payment. The Byblian king expressed trust in the authenticity of the request by sending a part of the requested merchandise to Egypt as a sign of good will. The Pharaoh reacted positively and sent the required payment to Byblus. It was not until then that the Byblian king ordered his people to procure the wood. It is clear that, not only did the king monitor trade, he also supervised the extraction of the raw materials themselves. It was his people and his animals that went into the mountains, and his leaders supervise the process. When the timber had been felled, it was left to mature and dry out so that it would be ready in the summertime: the sailing season on the Mediterranean. The report even gives us an insight into the price that the Egyptians paid; in this way, it constitutes a concise and unique picture of the entire trade transaction with wood in the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

**The formation of new states and the demand for wood: an example from Old Testament history.** The formation of new states, as well as the expansion of old ones, brought with it growth of both trading centers and further construction. Concomitantly, this meant an increase in the number of tradesmen who dealt in materials, including wood. Because demand for wood was high, as was interest in the commodity as a trade item, we have ample evidence as to the period immediately after Wenamun's report was written. This evidence is to be found in the Old Testament; specifically, the book of Kings, which carries us through to the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. During the first half of that century, the Israelite kingdom lived through the brightest period in its history. At the nation's helm, power was passed from one capable ruler to another, and they rendered Israel into the strongest player in the Levant at the time. The book of Kings describes a period when David – the ingenious military tactician – bequeathed the throne to his son: Solomon. The new king set aside his politics to focus on strengthening the country from the inside. Granted, during Solomon's reign, the kingdom lost some of the dependencies that had

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. – P. 121.

been won during the reign of his father, but the nation gained in the fields of effective administration and the possibilities for centralized management. This stabilization required a strong ideological basis. In his life, Solomon implemented an idea that his father David had considered, but had not had time to realize. Namely, the younger king led the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, which was to become a center of religious life: the main cultic center of the country. In order to fulfil such a plan, Solomon required new sources of wood; he also had to employ more craftsmen. He did not have to look far for either purpose. Phoenician cities that bordered the Israelite kingdom were already cultivating the forested hills of Lebanon, and many experienced carpenters already lived there. It was in this booming atmosphere of construction, demand, and supply that the well-known agreement emerged between Solomon and the Tyrian king: Hiram. The entire trade agreement has been preserved in the Book of Kings as follows:

*“And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David. And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the Lord his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent. And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name. Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians. And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the Lord this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over his great people. And Hiram sent to Solomon saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household. So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year”* (1 Kings 5. 1–11).

The Old Testament book recounts many details. As in Wenamun's report, the Phoenician king himself makes the final decisions regarding the sale of wood. Clearly, representatives of local power had control over the reserves of cedar trees that scattered across the hills above the Phoenician cities. Furthermore, this control did not consist in simply determining the terms of trade. According to the text the King oversaw exactly who entered the forest and extracted the wood, as well as where the wood would be exported to, and the kinds of ships that would transport the material to the site of delivery. In the text, the Phoenicians appear to be experts in woodwork; in fact, this single com-

modity was able to provide a living for the entire city, as is clear from the text of the agreement where we read that Hiram obtained, as payment for the wood, as much cereal and oil as was necessary for the entire city of Tyre.

In the following decades and centuries the demand for wood was fueled by the claims of the great powers that were gradually rising in the Near East – Assyria, the Neo-Babylonian empire, and Persia. Their requirements were not met by the wood reserves of the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Phoenicians were forced to seek additional sources in other parts of the Mediterranean. In this case, we can no longer speak of trade: wood flowed into the centers of the great inland empires as a tribute; thus, the trade deteriorated.

**The requirements of the Greek city states.** The sea never divided the Greeks; instead, it united them. Ships played a natural role in transport across the tangled mass of the Greek islands. The sources that I will explore in the forthcoming paragraphs were written at a time when the waters of the Mediterranean were dominated by triremes. To construct these ships, the Greeks required a regular supply of good quality wood. The weight of a ship was roughly 25 tons, and the construction of a trireme necessitated a 50 % greater weight of crude wood; therefore, one ship required 35 tons of wood. Furthermore, oars were a necessary piece of equipment for ships; each of these weighed 7–10 kg, and there were 200 of them on a single ship. Therefore, an entire set of oars necessitated a further 1400–2000 kg of wood per ship. All told, to construct one trireme, the Greek shipwrights needed around 40 tons of wood<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, the lifespan of one trireme rarely reached 20 years<sup>11</sup>, and that is assuming that the ship was not wrecked in a storm, run aground, or sunk in one of the many sea battles. In any case, even when there were no such disasters, the cities had to ensure that new ships were constructed every year so that their navy was continually renewed and maintained. As an example, let us consider the island of Corcyra, which had 120 ships at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war (Thuc., I. 25). The islanders had to construct at least six new ships annually in order to maintain their navy at this size. Had they wanted to expand their fleet, they would have had to construct even more ships per year. It was for this reason that, as Diodorus informs us, Themistocles' suggested building 20 ships per year in Athens; in so doing, the Athenians would increase, rather than simply maintain, the size of their fleet, which at the time comprised 200 ships (Diod., XI. 43.3). Taken together, if we consider that the Corcyrians required six new ships annually simply to maintain the size of their fleet, they we must conclude that their annual demand for wood – simply to allow them to build new ships – was 240 tons. In the case of the Athenians, who were building 20 ships per year, the requirement was 800 tons. Thus, the Greek cities, which sustained dozens of ships, required an enormous amount of wood. For this reason, the Greeks actively sought out sources of this commodity, as well as ways of obtaining it cheaply.

The first source that I shall mention in this section – “Enquiry into Plants” from the works of Theophrastus – tells us how much the Greeks knew about the location of wood that was suitable for shipbuilding. Chronologically, Theophrastus belongs to the Helle-

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<sup>10</sup> Bissa E. Governmental Intervention in Foreign Trade in Archaic and Classical Greece. – Leiden : Brill, 2009. – P. 108.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

nistic period; in this way, he lies beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, the content of his work can be applied to the classical period as well. It is clear from Theophrastus' treatise on plants that the Greeks knew exactly where to find wood that was suitable for shipbuilding:

*“Again it is only a narrow extent of country which produces wood fit for shipbuilding at all, namely in Europe the Macedonian region, and certain parts of Thrace and Italy; in Asia Cilicia Sinope and Amisus, and also the Mysian Olympus, and Mount Ida; but in these it is not abundant. For Syria has Syrian cedar, and they use this for galleys”*<sup>12</sup>.

Theophrastus also mentioned that shipwrights used various types of wood in their shipbuilding. The choice of wood depended on the purpose it was to fulfil:

*“Now silver-fir, fir and Syrian cedar are, generally speaking, useful for shipbuilding; for triremes and long ships are made of silver fir, because of its lightness, and Merchant ships of fir, because it does not decay; while some make triremes from fir also because they are ill provided with silver-fir. The people of Syria and Phoenicia use Syrian cedar, since they cannot obtain much fir either; while the people of Cyprus use Aleppo pine, since their Island provides this and it seems to be superior to their fir. Most parts are made of these woods; but the keel for a trireme is made of oak, that it may stand the hauling; and for merchantmen it is made of fir”*<sup>13</sup>.

As we can see, the Greeks needed an enormous amount of wood for their navy. They knew where it could be found; we must now account for how they obtained it. Evidence regarding trade with wood and wooden components comes first and foremost from Macedonia.

The Macedonian king – Amyntas – had at the start of the fourth century BCE to defend his throne from his enemies. In fact, in the year 393 BCE, the Illyrians even forced him out of his own kingdom; however, with the help of his allies he managed to regain control of his kingdom during the course of the following few years (Diod., XIV. 92.3–4; Aeschines *On the Embassy* 2. 26–28). In particular, the Chalcidian league occupied an important position among his allies, and the Chalcidians gained from this arrangement in the following way:

*“Let there be import of pitch and timber, all types of timber for building, and for building ships except for silver-fir, as the Koinon wants. And for those let there be export to the Koinon, having informed Amyntas before the export, paying the taxes that have been agreed. And for the others let there be export and transport, paying the taxes, both for the Chalcidians from Macedonia and for the Macedonians from the Chalcidians”*<sup>14</sup>.

In return for their services, the Chalcidians were given the right to buy wood from the Macedonians. Indeed, the Macedonian king himself held the trade firmly in his hands. It is clear from the text that he personally granted permission to extract the wood; he also

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<sup>12</sup> Translation by Arthur Hort (*Hort A. Theophrastus. Enquiry into Plants. I–II. – L. : W. Heinemann, 1916*).

<sup>13</sup> Translation by Arthur Hort.

<sup>14</sup> *Rhodes P. J., Osborn R. Greek Historical Inscription 404–323 BC. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003. – 12. 9–18.*



decided which types of trees could be felled. For instance, his notice forbids the felling of silver fir; it also confirms our presumption that the wood trade was an important part of the diplomacy and politics of the period, even though it is often forgotten about. Errietta Bissa illustrated the prominence of the wood trade, and of trade in general, in the formation of the foreign political policies of the Greek city states. In so doing, she used the example of the Athenian politics of the fourth and first centuries BCE<sup>15</sup>. She showed that certain aspects of the wood trade – the search for trade routes and the procurement of trading partners – formed the background for many of the cities' decisions.

**A brief conclusion.** On the basis of several selected sources I have shown that, since the beginning of trade, wood was among the most important portable components of international trade in the ancient world. The transport of wood necessitated considerable human and material investments; for this reason, we can conclude that the wood trade in particular constitutes a template by which trade was implemented in the ancient world. The trade became a basic necessity for marine transport, and it demanded specialized craftsmen and extensive storage facilities. Therefore, transport of the product stimulated the development of the mercantile industry as a whole. In addition, sources indicate that the demand for wood grew constantly in the ancient world. Regardless of political and economic crises, buildings, graves, and aristocratic palaces required an ever-increasing supply of wood – as did growing navies and other activities. Despite this, it is clear that the supply of wood was maintained, and its trade was controlled, by the ruling elite. The Lebanese reserves were controlled by the Phoenician kings – under the occasional supervision of Assyrian bureaucrats. The Macedonian resources were held under the watchful eye of the Macedonian king. In fact, wood was such an important component of a state's wealth, that not only did the state elite make decisions regarding the product, they also ensured and controlled its extraction, assigning their own people to such projects. Occasionally, they defended such activities militarily. For this reason, it was not always straightforward or simple to access wood. The material became an important part of diplomacy and politics. In this way, the wood trade resides in the background of many historical events of the Eastern Mediterranean, even though it is often forgotten about in the first instance.

**Conclusions and further researches directions.** From the beginning of long-distance exchange, the wood trade was one of the most important trade commodities. The present article discusses the demand for wood in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the attempts of advanced civilizations to obtain enough wood for their various purposes. The prominence of wood can be seen reflected in the fact that it was controlled by the states that had access to it. Wood reserves were directly controlled by the courts of rulers; trade and concessions regarding the commodity were detailed and archived in records. In fact, the courtiers of the king himself often supervised the extraction of wood. Moreover, the wood trade quite evidently contributed, to a considerable degree, to the formation of the diplomatic and political strategies of states in the ancient world.

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<sup>15</sup> Bissa E. Governmental Intervention... – P. 117–141.