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Sicily without Mycenae: A Cross-Cultural Consumption Analysis of Connectivity in the Bronze Age Central Mediterranean

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Abstract

During the Middle Bronze Age in Sicily, there is evidence for material contact with several extra-insular societies, not least with the contemporary Mycenaean culture based in the Aegean. This Mycenaean connection typically receives the most attention, and has been used as the basis to posit the broad acculturation of Sicilian society to Aegean norms, despite a rather limited amount of evidence. To complement the empirical data of genuine imports, interpretations of Aegean influence have also been applied to Sicilian material expressions. In this study, I argue that such acculturation frameworks are too limited to analyse properly the material changes that occur in Sicily, as they rely heavily on the uncertain physical presence of ‘Mycenaeans’ on the island, and do not engage with Sicilian agency or motivations. Instead, I propose a framework borrowed from current globalisation studies, whereby what has been accepted, rejected, or heavily adapted from external sources is given equal interpretive weighting. This consumption-focussed perspective also considers the likelihood of disparate systems of value and meaning. The result is an interpretive framework in which prehistoric Sicilians do not fade into the background during the Middle Bronze Age, overshadowed by the primary place given to Aegean influence and activity.

Keywords: Bronze Age, Sicily, Aegean, acculturation, cross-cultural consumption, identity

Introduction

Colin Renfrew's (1968) article 'Wessex without Mycenae' called into question certain cultural links and interpretations of influence between the Aegean and Britain during the Bronze Age. The main thrust of his argument was chronological: Renfrew felt that dates for the Wessex culture should not be dependent on distant Mediterranean ones. His more pertinent central theme, however, was to challenge interpretations, like those of Childe, that sought to posit the 'irradiation of European barbarism by Oriental civilisation' (Renfrew 1968: 277; Childe 1939: 10). While Renfrew's revised chronology, based on newly available radiocarbon and dendrochronological data, was itself challenged almost immediately (Branigan 1970: 105), his critique of the material basis for contact, subjective presumptions of influence, and *ex oriente lux* bias is still valid today.

The case under investigation here is also one that has traditionally been interpreted as an instance of extensive influence upon an indigenous culture (that of Sicily) by a more complex, in this case Mycenaean, culture. Unlike Wessex, however, the connection between the Aegean and Sicily, the Mediterranean's largest island (Figure 1), is based on more secure evidence for the Middle Bronze Age (MBA, ca. 1550–1250 BC) and the Late Bronze Age (LBA, ca. 1250–900 BC). The presence of Late Helladic ('Mycenaean') imports in Sicilian contexts is unambiguous. Furthermore, plausible arguments have been made for Aegean influence on traditional Sicilian materials and practices (Leighton 1999: 168; D'Agata 2000: 73-75; Militello 2004a: 318). And, unlike prehistoric Britain, absolute dating techniques have not radically altered Sicily's traditional second millennium BC chronology (Alberti 2013: 2503) (Table 1).

Nonetheless, this study takes issue with two aspects of current interpretations of the relationship between Sicily and the Mycenaean world: (1) the amount of influence the latter is portrayed as having over the former, a scenario that consistently downplays any local Sicilian agency or creativity; and (2) the kind of contact proposed, which always assumes the direct, physical presence of Aegean agents, despite the circumscribed amount of evidence and the significant drop in Aegean imports when moving from the Italian peninsula to Sicily. Long ago the call was made to avoid placing an Aegean or eastern Mediterranean agent everywhere a Mycenaean object was recovered (Knapp 1990: 124; Gillis 1995: 62), but such proposals have had little impact, and a deep, enduring Mycenaean presence in Sicily is still promoted. This is disappointing, as debates over diffusionist ideas vs local adaptation have occurred for other

periods in Sicily's prehistory, e.g. concerning the adoption of the Neolithic 'package' of farming, animal husbandry and pottery (Tusa 1999a: 202; Leighton 1999: 52), or the processes behind the spread of Bell Beakers in the Early Bronze Age (Tusa 1999a: 274-81; 1999b: 156-58; Leighton 1999: 110-12; Giannitrapani 2009: 237-40). It is only in later prehistory that such debates are lacking; in particular the notion of Aegean influence upon Sicilian societies in the second half of the second millennium BC has gone largely unchallenged (van Dommelen and Rowlands 2012: 21).

>>Insert Figure 1 and Table 1 about here<<

The dominant paradigm for contact between the Aegean and Sicily is typically discussed under the rubric of acculturation or 'Mycenaeanisation' (Tanasi 2009: 51; see also Bietti Sestieri 1988: 42). After a brief deconstruction of this model, and the problems inherent with any acculturation-based framework, I propose an alternative metaphor — drawn from modern globalisation studies — for interpreting interconnections between Sicily and the eastern Mediterranean. In this alternate model, the focus falls upon the local sphere, on the creative consumption of Aegean materials and influences in Sicily, and on their active adaptation — physically and ideologically — into local communities. In essence, it is a reversal of the acculturation perspective: instead of theorising about agents of exchange, the provenance of exotic materials, foreign motivations for contact, and possible sea routes, focus falls on how local communities received, manipulated, and re-contextualised outside influences. What did these Sicilian Bronze Age communities expect to gain from contact with Aegean peoples, objects or practices? Is the existence of a new identity group — so-called 'Mycenaeanised' Sicilians (Tanasi 2009: 51; see also De Miro 1999a: 80) — borne out by the evidence? I argue that Sicilian communities attempted to express their cultural distinction within the context of a more connected Mediterranean world, as they learned and developed what it meant to be Sicilian (Russell 2016: 170).

Problems with Acculturation: Past and Present

Acculturation paradigms, which stress that cultures in contact will inevitably become similar to each other, have a long pedigree in archaeological thought (Cusick 1998). Like much terminology that has been in use for some time, however, acculturation has developed a

somewhat imprecise definition. Cusick (1998: 128) found listed four main definitions for acculturation, not all compatible: the loss of traditional materials and practices by (almost always) the subaltern, indigenous population; the adoption (forced or voluntary) of ‘western’ materials and practices; a value-neutral description of any changes that occur as a result of culture contact; and a voluntary acceptance of outside influences by the indigenous party, while still maintaining the same basic value system and lifestyle. The value-neutral definition would seem to be unassailable, although it merely attempts to describe material or social change without interpreting any motivations for change, or engaging in any analysis of power dynamics (Knapp 2008: 53). The final definition, involving selective appropriations from outside while maintaining a distinct identity, closely resembles the cross-cultural consumption approach adopted here.

In Sicily, such acculturation interpretations also have a long history, with early proposals not only of an Aegean civilising mission to the island (Orsi 1895; Dunbabin 1948: 41-42) but also of diffusionist ideas about the eastern Mediterranean origins of Early Bronze Age Sicilian (EBA) society (Bernabò Brea 1957: 126, 148). In this case, it is clear that the value-neutral definition of acculturation is not being employed, as those who promote a Mycenaeanisation narrative envision a scenario whereby Sicilian communities became more socially complex (e.g. ‘proto-urban’ — Tanasi and Vella 2014: 63) by imitating Aegean norms (Orsi 1895: 149; D’Agata 2000: 64; Militello 2004b: 291).

Beyond terminological precision, there are problems with the way acculturation has been applied to Sicily specifically. The arguments for a deep, penetrative Aegean influence on the island (Tanasi 2009: 52; Castellana 2000: 28-31; Tanasi and Vella 2014: 63-64) are based upon a remarkably small amount of data (see below), much of which comprises subjective interpretations of influence, rather than unequivocal, empirical evidence of contact. Several strategies have been employed to augment both the empirical data and the interpretations of influence. These include: (1) representing the entire Aegean as if it was a unified polity, where all contact reflects some monolithic Mycenaean ‘thalassocracy’ (van Wijngaarden 2002: 23; Galaty 2016: 208); (2) Cypriot imports lumped together with Aegean goods to reflect a ‘Mycenaean connection’ (e.g. D’Agata 2000: 77; Smith 1987: 18); (3) non-Mediterranean goods in Sicily presented as an indication of the activities of Mycenaean middlemen traders (Tusa 1999a: 491), regardless of whether there is any geographic rationale for such an interpretation

(e.g. Baltic amber—Harding 1984: 74); and (d) forcing Mycenaean agency into previously existing connections (e.g. Sicily and Malta—Tanasi 2008: 140), where an Aegean presence is not required.

Thus a discourse of ‘Aegean-ness’ permeates the acculturation paradigm, recasting objects and practices that have nothing to do with the Mycenaean world. Such rhetoric extends beyond the use of Greek pottery terms like ‘amphora’, ‘*pyxis*’ or ‘krater’, which are common enough terms in Mediterranean archaeology, and do not necessarily imply an Aegean source of influence. In Bronze Age Sicily, however, such labelling is ubiquitous, yielding unlikely interpretations such as a pit with bones being described as a ‘kind of hecatomb’ (De Miro 1999b: 449), a stone building labelled the ‘prince’s palace’ of the (*w*)*anax* (Anaktorion at Pantalica) (Bernabò Brea 1957: 162-63), or native Sicilian tombs categorised as *tholoi* (Tomasello 2004: 189). The use of such terms helps to cast Bronze Age Sicily in an Aegean glow, disguising the limited empirical basis for such assignments.

The restricted amount of data (Blake 2008: 9-10) has not prevented those promoting the acculturation model from describing contact with Sicily as direct, primary, systematic and prolonged (Tusa 1999a: 534). In this framework, Aegean sailors, merchants, and artisans are seen to be physically present in Sicily on a seasonal basis; they identify themselves as ‘Mycenaeans’ unequivocally; and the benefits of imitating them are self-evident, requiring no explanation or discussion (Dietler 2005: 56). ‘Mycenaeanisation’ as a process is never deconstructed or even described (cf. Galaty 2016: 212, where this process is broken down and examined against the backdrop of several contact zones). There is little engagement with Sicilian motivations for developing and maintaining an exchange-based relationship, or with what the specific benefits might have been in imitating their trading partners. Locals are reduced to passive recipients of a presumably ‘higher’ culture, and the power relationship is represented as heavily favouring the visitors (Iacono 2015: 261-62). As Stein (2002: 907) correctly reminds us, however, power relationships need to be demonstrated in the evidence, not ‘assumed in advance’. How much power would an Aegean ship’s crew have had hundreds of miles away from their native shores, assuming direct contact? Sicily is not a small, resource-poor island, and even coastal (and near-coastal) communities like Thapsos, Syracuse or Cannatello that engaged in maritime exchange were likely not dependent upon it for survival.

A Mycenaean acculturation framework also assumes that ships arriving from the Aegean should be labelled ‘Mycenaean’ in the first place (Feuer 2011: 507). There is no discussion of the crew’s composition on long and middle distance ships, but does the ‘ethnicity’ or ‘nationality’ of ships or crews have any basis in reality within a Bronze Age context (Harding 1984: 258; Harpster 2013)? Even when directly excavating shipwrecks and their cargoes, the application of broad corporate labels tends to be based more on the principal investigators’ expectations and intuition rather than on any objective assessment of the data. Harpster (2013: 589) cautions that too often these labels are based on historical sources of uncertain validity, with little explicit methodology to justify the practice. Given that the specific agents of maritime exchange in the present study are a question of probabilities in the first place, arbitrarily assigning them a blanket label is a precarious position from which to begin any interpretation of contact or foreign presence.

When the discourse of ‘Aegean-ness’ and subjective interpretations of Mycenaean influences are removed, the empirical data for contact consists of the final deposition of imported objects in Sicilian contexts. There is nothing that allows us to speak of a certain Aegean presence on the island, and the drop-off in the number of imports between the more Aegean-proximate Italian peninsula and that found in Sicily would seem to speak against direct contact; a down-the-line exchange scenario is more plausible (Renfrew 1977: 77-78; Blake 2008: 16). Specifically, we are comparing about 100 sherds of LH pottery islandwide, to individual sites in the south of mainland Italy (e.g. Broglio di Trebisacce, Rocavecchia, Termitito) that can boast thousands of sherds each (Jones *et al.* 2014: 29, 33, 34). Such interpretations of Aegean influences are highly suspect; they could easily have been absorbed by native Sicilians engaging with foreign commodities, independent of foreign peoples (Russell 2011: 262). There is no need, however, to ignore the presence of Aegean or other exports in Sicily completely; the focus must simply be shifted from the occasional and uncertain presence of foreigners to the consumption of exotic materials and responses to external stimuli by local peoples.

Cross-cultural Consumption: Foregrounding the Local to Analyse the Past

Current studies on the consumption of ‘western’ commodities provide a useful analytical tool and appropriate framework for analysing Bronze Age exchange contacts: both in the past and the present we are dealing primarily with the spread of objects or practices rather than the movement

of populations. Furthermore, these studies focus on the direct observation of living societies coming into contact, and of the resulting full spectrum of consequences. When studying archaeological assemblages, we see only final depositional contexts, and ambiguous material culture patterning. The archaeologist needs to rely on subtle material changes to interpret contact and influence. With such stripped-down sources of information, it is perhaps only natural that straightforward, unidirectional acculturation or assimilation models were first proposed to explain the data. When looking at modern cultural encounters, however, it becomes clear that such frameworks are inadequate.

Culture-contact studies have followed a more acculturation-based path in the past, and emphasised the tendency for globalised commodities and ideas to produce material homogenisation, and the disintegration of cultural boundaries (Appadurai 1990: 295), such as the ‘Americanization’ or ‘coca-colonization’ of the world, resulting in a ‘global ecumene’ (Hannerz 1992: 217-18; Nederveen Pieterse 2015: 53-54). A more recent trend, however, has been to examine the articulation of the experience of consuming western goods in so-called ‘developing’ nations (Howes 1996: 3). Ethnographic researchers have found that what superficially looked like homogenisation was actually a more hybrid type of experience, a kind of ‘global localization’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2015: 54, 57; Versluys 2014: 14) or ‘glocal’ experience (Galaty 2016: 215). In other words, while communities in the developing world were certainly using foreign products, or consuming western media, the meanings of such commodities were often altered to conform to local expectations. Thus the people involved in such scenarios were not acculturated; instead, the commodities and practices were (Howes 1996: 4-5). From a cross-cultural consumption perspective, therefore, it is the reception, adaptation, and subsequent integration of foreign objects and ideas into the consuming society that dictates both their meaning in a new social setting, as well as their potential to influence the consuming society at a material, experiential, or identity-based level.

When goods circulate outside of the culture that originally produces them, there is no guarantee that the meanings or practices associated with such products are also transferred or accepted by new consumers. Consumption in this context is neither a passive act of imitation nor an indication of the shallow materiality of society; rather it is a creative act of social identity negotiation (Miller 2006: 347-48). Even when social practices appear superficially similar (a common occurrence in the archaeology of culture contact), cultural interactionist studies caution that the social significance of such forms may be markedly different (Appadurai 1990: 307). Diachronically speaking, imported

materials or practices may become naturalised to the point that they are no longer even perceived as foreign. Two modern examples illustrate the key disjunction between the intentions of producers, and the creativity of consumers.

The Barbie doll, produced by the toy manufacturer Mattel, has been sold in the United States since 1959, becoming one of the most successful toy phenomena of the post-war period (Cox 1977: 303-304). It is not surprising, then, that Barbie was subsequently introduced into international markets, including those in the developing world. The doll is highly adaptable, and Mattel often sells culture-specific Barbies, complete with appropriate local dress, ethnically significant accessories, and at times a change of hair colour or skin tone (Macdougall 2003: 264). These are changes that Mattel felt would make the dolls more accessible and acceptable to consumers in specific foreign markets. Even without the active input of doll buyers and users, the commodity had already been adapted externally to fit with local cultural expectations.

Macdougall (2003) examined the use of Barbie and Barbie-like dolls in the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. Mattel sells an official Mexican Barbie in the country, but for the specific community under investigation (Merida), these 'legitimate' Barbies tend to be prohibitively expensive for the largely working-class population. Instead, young girls are given locally produced knock-offs, which are commonly sold without clothing or accessories — stripped, literally, of any identity implications (Macdougall 2003: 265). While the practice of playing with plastic dolls has successfully been transplanted to the Yucatan, the genuine American commodity itself has made limited inroads.

When the researcher took a closer look at the articulation of the experience of young Mexican girls playing with these dolls, she noted other key ideological differences between the official American Barbie and its local counterpart. Whereas Mattel promotes Barbie as an independent, career-oriented young woman (in her various 'guises' Barbie is shown engaging in several modern occupations), in the Yucatan Mexican girls more commonly had their dolls perform more traditional roles of family member or mother (Macdougall 2003: 265-66). The dolls have also become integrated into Mexican-specific contexts, wholly independent of their American origins. For example, it is common for the dolls to feature in *quince años* parties: rite-of-passage birthday celebrations for 15-year-old girls (Macdougall 2003: 268). This is a Mexican-specific appropriation of Barbie, and has nothing to do with its consumers wishing to appear more American. So, while some foreign ideas have penetrated the Yucatan Peninsula, the

articulation of the experience of playing with Barbie dolls is one that promotes a traditional, local identity. The doll has been assimilated; its users, largely, have not.

Diachronically, even the perceived ‘foreignness’ of external stimuli may disappear. An ethnographer studying the impact of the ubiquitous proliferation of Coca-Cola in northwestern Argentina (Classen 1996) discovered an interesting disconnect between the soft drink and its perceived origins. While older people were more likely to lament the ‘Americanization’ of their communities, younger consumers seemed largely oblivious to the issue. One woman even expressed surprise that Coca-Cola was an American import. It had always been a part of her existence and experience, and had a Spanish-sounding name, so she had always assumed it was an Argentine product (Classen 1996: 43). Far from being Americanised, this younger generation had naturalised the soft drink to be a part of their authentic, local experience. Over time, an ‘exotic’ item had become customary.

The way cross-cultural interactions occurred in the past no doubt followed their own historical trajectories, and we should not assume the success of certain modern societies to corrupt the uses or meanings of international goods necessarily translates directly to past societies. Nevertheless, given the lack of mass media, international advertising campaigns, or fast transport links in the MBA, it makes even more sense to focus on the consumption of foreign stimuli. In such an environment, it is hard to argue against the idea that consuming societies had much greater freedom to corrupt meanings and instil their own value systems upon any imported goods, practices, or ideas.

To return to the present case, before analysing the contact scenario in Sicily during the MBA through the lens of cross-cultural consumption, it is crucial to present a brief overview of the archaeological evidence for extra-insular contact, along with traditional interpretations of acculturation that the data have generated. One further point is that although the Aeolian islands form part of the modern province of Sicily, evidence from there is not included in the following summary: Aeolian society in the MBA and LBA followed a disparate cultural trajectory to ‘mainland’ Sicily, and exhibits different diachronic and contextual patterns of connectivity to the eastern Mediterranean (Bietti Sestieri 1988; Blake 2008: 12).

Evidence for Extra-insular Contact with the Aegean during the MBA

In the latter half of the second millennium BC, material evidence indicates that the island of Sicily was in contact not only with the Aegean but also with peninsular Italy, Malta, Sardinia, the Aeolian islands, Cyprus and the Baltic region. They may also have had links to the western Mediterranean, although the evidence for contact with the Iberian Peninsula or the Balearic Islands is still quite limited (Cultraro 2005). Over the course of the final centuries of the second millennium BC, the stark regionalism that defined the EBA was slowly replaced by a more homogenous island-wide material culture, with only two major cultural-geographical ‘zones’ classified (Leighton 1999: 147). The MBA is characterised by an increase in the number of contacts with extra-insular peoples (Leighton 1999: 147), evidenced by the greater number of imports found. There are fewer sites known than in the EBA, although this may reflect the more constricted timespan for the MBA (approximately 250–300 years, compared to roughly 900 years for the EBA—Leighton 2005: 271) rather than any trend of depopulation. Aegean imports — customarily termed ‘Mycenaean’ whether they can be traced back to the Peloponnese or not — have received the most scholarly attention for the MBA.

Late Helladic (LH) pottery is the most commonly found imported object in MBA contexts, covering a relative chronological span from LH IIIA to LH IIIB (ca. 1450–1150 BC). These pots or potsherds have been found at 16 sites around Sicily, particularly in two clusters: along the east coast of the island (Siracusa province), and in the middle of the south coast (Agrigento province) (see Figure 1, above). Approximately 100 examples are known, although 75% of the evidence comes from just two sites, Thapsos and Cannatello (Table 2). All other sites are represented by only a few examples each (Vianello 2005: 51, 54). Burial contexts are by far the most common for LH pottery, which places Sicilian usage in stark contrast to other parts of the central Mediterranean, where such pottery is most common in domestic contexts (Blake 2008: 12; Leighton 1999: 171). Cannatello, however, which has produced the most LH pottery, is not a mortuary site, and the relatively high amount of LH pottery recovered there has led its principal investigator to label it a ‘Mycenaean emporium’ (De Miro 1999a; 1999b).

>>Insert Table 2 about here<<

Of the 100 or so examples of LH looking pottery found on Sicily, 34 examples from eight sites have been analysed chemically and/or petrographically to determine whether they were genuine imports or locally made copies (Jones *et al.* 2014: 295-96). All but one of these

examples yielded a foreign provenance, the Peloponnese being the most common attribution. The one example that did not confirm a foreign origin — a LH IIIB2 or LH IIIC amphora found in a tomb at Milena — produced uncertain results, and may have been locally made or imported from Calabria (Jones *et al.* 2014: 228, 266). This almost complete lack of locally made Aegean-looking pottery stands in sharp contrast to the situation that has been encountered in peninsular Italy and on Sardinia (Jones *et al.* 2005; Jones and Day 1987; Jones *et al.* 2014: 453).

Beyond actual imported pottery, certain Sicilian MBA pots have been classified as ‘Aegean derivatives’ (D’Agata 2000: 64) (see Figure 4 below). Aegean derivative is a term used to describe locally made, Sicilian-looking pottery (i.e. resembling the MBA Thapsos-Milazzese facies) that has adopted either an overall shape or formal element from Late Helladic prototypes. Despite these novel features, the pottery was still manufactured using traditional handmade techniques, and finished with the brown, burnished surface and incised decorations that characterise Thapsos-Milazzese facies ceramics (D’Agata 2000: 65). Examples of such derivative wares include jugs with tubular spouts, and two handled bowls with raised bases (D’Agata 2000: 71-75). Beyond formal similarities, Aegean influence has been read into figural decorative motifs on local pottery (Leighton 1999: 174; D’Agata 2000: 76-77). Such influence, if valid, only concerns six vessels, all found at Thapsos. These figures include birds and quadruped animals (Voza 1973a: 141-42). Such decorations were not painted on the surface of the pots as they are on Late Helladic vessels, but incised following traditional Sicilian decorative techniques.

In addition to LH pottery, other possible Aegean imports to Sicily include finished metal objects (Taylour 1958: 77; Leighton 1999: 176, 178). Such objects are harder to source to a specific region of manufacture as they represent a much smaller corpus of data than pottery. Provenience analyses of ore sources are rife with *prima facie* assumptions (Budd *et al.* 1995: 17), and inevitably only indicate the beginning of any object’s biography, with little to say about agents of mobility or place of manufacture. At most we can suggest that there is a distribution bias for some forms that may indicate an Aegean origin. Given that LH pottery was consumed by Sicilian communities, it is reasonable to assume that other finished materials were sought as well. Even broadly accepting all proposed interpretations of an Aegean source for these objects does not yield a large corpus of imported material (Table 2). A total of ten objects from three sites have been assigned a Mycenaean label: two bowls from Milena (Caldare) (Bernabò Brea

1957: 132); a cup and three daggers or short swords from Thapsos (Militello 2004a: 308-309); four spearheads from Cannatello (Taylour 1958: 77); and an oxhide ingot fragment (more likely Cypriot than Mycenaean) each from Thapsos and Cannatello (Lo Schiavo 2008: 229-34).

Beyond movable goods, Mycenaean influence has been read into certain architectural expressions in MBA Sicily, including both funerary and domestic structures. Within the acculturation camp, debates over these constructions do not involve whether they are Aegean-inspired or not, but rather which eastern Mediterranean buildings they should be compared to, and whether they were built using Aegean labourers, or simply under the supervision of Aegean architects (Tomasello 2004; Militello 2004a: 315-18).

In terms of funerary architecture in Sicily, the so-called rock-cut *tholos* tomb has been implicated as an Aegean-inspired innovation (Tomasello 1995-96, 2001; Militello 2004b) (Figure 2). These tombs are defined as having circular or sub-circular plans, arched or pointed ceilings, benches along the walls, occasionally corbelled masonry around the entrances, and often *dromos*-type paths leading up to the forecourts (Leighton 1999: 168). There are no standardised plans for these tombs in Sicily, although this is also true of Aegean rock-cut tombs, which vary substantially in form (Tomasello 2004: 189). The use of a regular unit of measure and some geometric refinements are held as further proof of the Aegean influence in such tombs, and some scholars have posited the presence of foreign architects (Tomasello 1995-96: 258; Militello 2004a: 322, 325). While many of these features have EBA Sicilian precedents, their convergence has been argued to represent closer contacts with the Aegean world, where there is not only an economic but also an ideological exchange during the MBA (Leighton 1999: 168).

>>Insert Figure 2 about here<<

Even if we accept the notion of some Aegean influence in these tombs, their distribution indicates that *tholoi* were not the dominant style of tomb in either MBA Sicily or LBA Greece. In fact, the number of examples provided in each area actually favours Sicily, with 68 examples reported (Tomasello 1995-96: Appendix 1; 2001; Rizzone *et al.* 2004), compared to just 29 examples from the Aegean (Tomasello 1995-96: appendix II). This has resulted in an interpretive paradox: the more Sicilian *tholoi* are found, the more it suggests to certain scholars a widespread Mycenaean influence in Bronze Age Sicilian society (e.g. Militello 2004b: 294), instead of a more straightforward interpretation that we are in fact dealing with an indigenous Sicilian

practice (Whitehouse 1972), one that developed over centuries of constructing rock-cut tombs, and eventually led to geometric refinements and more consistent execution.

A more fruitful area for discussing foreign architectural influences can be seen in the non-mortuary structures of the central habitation zone complexes (A and B) at Thapsos (Figure 3). These constructions are more rigidly rectilinear than in the earlier habitation zone at Thapsos, and involve sequences of rooms arranged axially, framing exterior pebble courts. Those scholars proposing an acculturation model have debated which foreign prototype site served as the template for the Thapsos central complexes, including buildings from the Aegean (Gla—Tusa 1999a: 498), Cyprus (Pyla *Kokkinokremmos*—Tomasello 2004: 203), and the Levant (Megiddo—Militello 2004a: 320). Comparisons with these eastern Mediterranean structures are fairly generic in nature, however, and it should be stressed that we are dealing with an evaluation of the foundations of buildings only. Leaving aside any specific eastern Mediterranean prototype, it is certainly accurate to say that: (1) the central habitation complexes are organised very differently from the older northern habitation zone at Thapsos; (2) they do not resemble any contemporary MBA sites on the island; and (3) there are no known EBA settlements that could have provided a template.

>>Insert Figure 3 about here<<

After the MBA, LH pottery imports disappear, with the only known example — a LH IIIC jug from Pantalica — now considered to be a Sicilian imitation (Leighton 2005: 277). Nevertheless, the ‘echo’ of contact (Tanasi 2009: 52) has been read into the continuing influence on Pantalica North facies pottery, and architectural expressions like the so-called ‘Anaktoron’ at Pantalica. Indeed, Pantalica North derivative pots demonstrate much closer shape similarity to Aegean prototypes than their Thapsos-Milazzese counterparts, no doubt due to the adoption of wheel-shaping techniques in LBA Sicily. There are also several finished metal objects of gold, silver and bronze that have been found in the large LBA cemeteries such as Dessucri, Pantalica, Cozzo del Pantano and Caltagirone (Tanasi 2004), most of which are likely to have been imported goods. In the complete absence of LH pottery, however, the specific agents of mobility and networks of commodity exchange or technological transfer should remain open questions, particularly as this period coincides with the collapse of Mycenaean palace centres in the Aegean (Broodbank 2013: 472).

Creative Consumption in the Bronze Age: From Contact to Consciousness

Concentrating on the provenance of imported objects found in Sicily only represents the first stage of any object's biography. The focus on novel features found in MBA Sicilian material expressions has led to subjective interpretations of influence, with no in-depth analysis of the meaning of such changes beyond bland categorisations (i.e. 'Myceneanisation'). A shift in focus to the consumption of foreign materials and practices can provide a broader understanding of Sicilian communities. Consumption, defined as the 'logic by which goods are *received* (acquired, understood and employed)' (Howes 1996: 2, original emphasis), asks different questions about the impact of extra-insular connections, and focuses not only on novel features in the material record, but also on that which has been maintained. It does so because what has been rejected (or heavily adapted) from external sources is just as meaningful as what has been accepted. Instead of blanket assumptions of acculturation, by examining more closely the specific instances of cultural appropriation in Sicilian Bronze Age communities it becomes possible to tease out the 'diversity within perceived homogeneity' (Jiménez 2010: 56) inherent in consuming foreign objects or influences.

This is not to say that Sicilian societies were immune to foreign stimuli, or that they necessarily insisted upon intensive adaptations in every instance. When we look at some specific Late Helladic forms, a certain continuity of practice between Sicily and the Aegean can be read into Sicilian contexts. For example, *alabastera* and piriform jars are the two most common LH shapes represented in Sicilian MBA contexts (van Wijngaarden 2002: 233). There, as in the Aegean, funerary depositions for these vessels are the most frequently encountered, which may speak of an aspect of Aegean burial practice adopted by Sicilian locals. In this instance, however, there may not have been much room for the creative consumption of such forms. These vessels are believed to have been containers for oils and unguents associated with anointing or otherwise preparing bodies for burial (Leighton 1999: 172), and other uses for such substances may have been unknown. Hence, what transpired was simply one aspect of the Sicilian funeral rite being altered to accommodate the availability of this exotic substance, rather than any wholesale acculturation to Mycenaean funerary rituals. Contextually speaking, no Sicilian tombs have been found with exclusively Aegean or other foreign materials; such materials always form only a small part of burial assemblages primarily composed of local materials (Tusa 1999a: 479-80; van Wijngaarden 2002: 233). Nonetheless, there is certainly some room to argue in this instance for a

certain acculturation to Aegean norms by Sicilian consumers. Burials represent socially significant contexts, and the willingness to adapt one's common practices — even in a restricted way — does afford those promoting an acculturation paradigm empirical data upon which to base such arguments.

When looking closer at the deposition of these jars, however, it becomes clear that such 'acculturation' was limited, sporadic, and not prescribed for the entire population. At Thapsos, approximately 45 of 300 rock-cut tombs have yielded evidence for grave goods (i.e. not robbed in antiquity, or washed away by the sea) (Leighton 1999: 162). About half contained local funerary equipment only, and of the 23 examples that included Aegean pottery, such wares were outnumbered by local Thapsos-Milazzese style pottery (van Wijngaarden 2002: 232). As each tomb was used for multiple burials, it is difficult to reconstruct specific equipment associated with individual burials. Typically, older grave goods were pushed to the edges of the burial chambers, with only the most recent burial and its equipment positioned in the centre (Leighton 1999: 164). Many of the tombs were excavated in the nineteenth century (Orsi 1895), and the reports provide only inventory lists of 'significant' finds, with limited spatial or contextual information. Nevertheless, it would seem that while Sicilian consumers were free to use foreign materials in their burial rites, it never developed into a social necessity, and most in fact chose to follow strictly traditional practices, even during the busiest period of extra-insular contact. Similar contexts shared between the Aegean and Sicily, however, do not necessarily indicate an engagement in similar practices, nor do they show that similar meanings were associated with 'anointing' the dead. As Hodos (2006: 82) cautions, 'shared practices are not the same as identically replicated ones'. Whatever may have been the material benefits of using such oils and unguents on the deceased, there is no reason to assume that such practices filled the same cosmological purposes for Sicilian and Mycenaean society. From a cross-cultural consumption viewpoint, the ability of consumers to corrupt meanings must be considered. As we are dealing with the spread of objects and not of populations in the MBA, regardless of who was involved in the initial exchange scenario, it falls upon the consuming party to make of these materials and substances what they will.

It is also possible to read a narrative of resistance to foreign materials and practices when examining Aegean-derivative wares in funerary contexts. As mentioned above, 'Aegean-derivative' wares were locally made Sicilian pots that incorporated overall shapes or certain

formal elements from Late Helladic pottery (D'Agata 2000: 64). This is an unusual description for a type of pottery that was locally conceived, manufactured and consumed in Sicily, and is certainly part of the discourse of 'Aegean-ness' that exists to augment the sparse import data. From the traditional, externally-focused acculturation perspective, the imitation of Late Helladic formal elements in Thapsos-Milazzese facies pottery is regarded as a clear indication of the Mycenaean acculturation of Sicilian society (D'Agata 2000: 63; Tanasi 2005: 563). From the consumption-based approach advocated here, however, what we are dealing with is the active appropriation of foreign materials, and their adaptation to suit local tastes or expectations (van Dommelen and Rowlands 2012: 25). From this perspective, what has been rejected is just as important as what has been adopted. While a certain similarity is evident (and an argument for the influence of foreign shapes therefore valid), for some of the vessel types proposed as Aegean derivatives (Figure 4), what is more striking is that these 'derivative' pots have rejected a painted finish — arguably the most conspicuous feature of Late Helladic pottery — and instead retained the burnished finish and incised decoration of traditional Thapsos-Milazzese facies pottery. From the acculturation point of view, this is explained as the lack of the required skill set to paint these pots: Sicilian potters had 'a precise will to imitate Mycenaean vessels without the support [of] a proper technical skill' (Tanasi 2005: 563). Such an absence of necessary technology transfer is further seen in the fact these derivative pots are handmade and not wheelmade. In other words, local potters had access to finished products, but no accompanying knowledge of how to execute more precise imitations.

>>Insert Figure 4 about here<<

While the lack of technological know-how is certainly a limiting factor, I would argue instead that what is happening is a negotiation between local potters and consumers. The introduction of Late Helladic pottery at a site, and possibly specific practices associated with it, have been translated into Sicilian products, with the intention of making any associated practice seem less foreign. In other words, certain members of Sicilian society desired a specific function associated with the imported shape, or perhaps found the formal elements reproduced in the derivatives aesthetically pleasing, but in practice they wanted a local-looking pot. In the subsequent LBA, when wheel shaping technologies had emerged in Sicily — as seen in the local Pantalica facies pottery (Leighton 1999: 174; Tanasi 2004: 340), this active rejection of a painted finish is maintained. The result is vessels that bear a much closer shape resemblance to Aegean

prototypes, but that still appear to be part of the local vernacular because of the traditional finishing techniques employed. It would seem, therefore, that a lack of technological transfer may not be the main reason why Sicilian potters and consumers decided to maintain a traditional look for their funerary wares. This ‘naturalisation’ of foreign influences becomes more powerful over time. While the original artisans and consumers may have been aware of foreign inspiration in the execution of derivative pottery forms, subsequent generations may have considered these vessels to be purely local and traditional. Just like the change in perception regarding Coca-Cola between older and younger Argentinian consumers, derivative pottery develops into nothing more than the customary way things are done for new generations, who have no sense of being acculturated to foreign practices.

Beyond the east coast, the site producing the largest amount of LH pottery is the settlement of Cannatello, located in the middle of Sicily’s southern coast in Agrigento province (Figure 1: 14). The site is not directly on the coast, like Thapsos, but sits some 1.3 km inland from a beachy shoreline. Cannatello is circular in plan, and only its northeast quadrant has been fully excavated (Figure 5). Precise sherd counts have not been published for the site, although the ‘busiest’ period in terms of LH pottery is said to be the site’s first phase (Figure 5A), where several LH IIIA sherds were found (De Miro 1999b: 448; Castellana 2002: 130) within its original circuit wall, many in Hut 8 (De Miro 1999b: 446). The busiest architectural period for Cannatello is its second phase (Figure 5B), when several structures were constructed within a now larger circuit wall, and the interior space was further partitioned by a trapezoidal wall with a ‘forceps’ shaped entry (De Miro 1999b: 442). A smaller amount of LH IIIB pottery was recovered from this second phase (Vianello 2005: 113). Evidence for metalworking has also been recovered from the site, in the form of four sandstone moulds (Albanese Procelli 2003a: 15), and a (now lost) copper oxhide ingot (Giardino 1995: 293).

>>Insert Figure 5 about here<<

Cannatello’s principal investigator often plays up the Cypriot ‘flavour’ of its finds (De Miro 1996: 999; 1999a: 79; 1999b: 448), although he still refers to the site as a ‘Mycenaean emporium’ (De Miro 1999a; 1999b). This is a vague label, and De Miro is never precise on what actual role he imagines Aegean agents played in the site’s administration, beyond their physical presence. There is also less Aegean pottery recovered at this site than Maltese Borg-in-Nadur facies pottery (Levi 2004: 234, 237) and Nuragic pottery from Sardinia (Lo Schiavo 2003: 17).

In fact, analysis of the latter has found that some of the Sardinian pottery was produced using local clay sources (Levi 2004: 237; Jones *et al.* 2014: 230). Thus we may be more justified in seeing Cannatello as a Maltese or Nuragic emporium, although based on architectural parallels to other contemporary Sicilian sites (e.g. Mokarta—Tusa 2009: 30), and the prevalence of Thapsos facies pottery (Deorsola 1996: 1033-37), Cannatello was almost certainly a local settlement, inhabited and controlled by Sicilian residents.

In terms of architectural practices, the argument for Aegean influence upon Sicilian *tholos* tombs seems overly generic. The rock-cut tomb (of any shape) has been a longer established feature of central Mediterranean funerary customs than any place in the eastern Mediterranean, with the earliest examples coming from southern Italy and Malta (Whitehouse 1972: 275). Domed-roof chambers are known as early as the Neolithic period in Italy, and become standard in the following Copper Age (Whitehouse 1972: 276). In Sicily itself, the EBA Castelluccio rock-cut tombs have been characterised as axial and symmetrical (Maniscalco McConnell 1996: 86), perhaps even incorporating a ‘rudimentary unit of measure’ (McConnell 1992: 35). Rather than seeing such features as an imitation of some eastern form, an alternative suggestion is that these tombs recreate typically Sicilian domestic architecture (Albanese Procelli 2003b: 57). With regard to the *tholos* style tombs specifically, the presence of a central cavity in the roof could be seen as either a representation of an *opaion* opening (i.e. a hole for smoke to escape), which in huts would allow for the ventilation of hearth smoke, or simply a crown-like projection that the huts may have had, if we accept that the representation of such superstructures seen in later miniature hut models was accurate (Albanese Procelli 2003b: 57).

The most convincing argument for external influence upon Sicilian building practices is certainly the central habitation complexes at Thapsos. During the MBA, the site was reoriented around more rectilinear complexes, each with its own open, cobbled courtyard space (Voza 1973a: 135, 138) (Figure 3). While the older northern habitation zone continued to be occupied (Alberti 2007: 368-69), the new focus of the community appears to be the central complexes, of which two building foundations survive: Complexes A and B (Complex C, shown in the plan, is dated to a later LBA phase). Those who posit Mycenaean influence, via either architectural planning or actual Aegean labour, are certainly correct that this organisation of space is a new feature in Sicilian settlement plans, and does not appear to have any prototype within the island (Militello 2004: 315).

From a consumption perspective, however, we must consider not only the novel features, but also elements of continuity. While the general arrangement of structures is new, the actual building materials and construction techniques have local roots, including rubble-filled walls, ‘benches’ encircling the interiors, centrally placed hearths, and stones with central cavities to hold upright beams (Militello 2004a: 318). At the very least, regardless of the source of inspiration for the layout of the central complexes, it seems quite evident that their execution was performed by Sicilian labour. Another element of continuity can be seen in the disposition of Complex A to a previously existing circular ‘hut’ structure. Instead of demolishing the older hut, the plan of Complex A has been somewhat truncated to accommodate it (Voza 1973a: 141; Tusa 1999a: 477). This would seem to indicate some kind of communal significance for this hut, and a reluctance to erase traditional buildings with newer ones. Much like the articulation of play with Barbie dolls was constrained within traditional Mexican gender roles, architectural innovations at Thapsos had to accommodate whatever cultural role the existing hut performed.

While the question of specific foreign influence remains somewhat obscure, foreign input of any type should not be interpreted as ‘a passive process of absorbing outside ideas’ (Doonan 2001: 161). Rather it should be seen as an indication of developing social competition within Thapsos as a result of material or physical contact with outsiders, which led to the formalisation of settlement spaces. Given that local labour arguably was used in building the Thapsos complexes, the question of how necessary the presence of Aegean or Cypriot architects might be should remain an open question. These complexes, although certainly representing an original plan for MBA Sicily, are not technically sophisticated, particularly when placed alongside the plans of the Mycenaean citadels and Cypriot urban centres to which they are commonly compared. The similarities are generic at best (Albanese Procelli 2003b: 38), and even the earlier northern habitation zone had clear organisational principles that could have influenced layout decisions (Leighton 1999: 154). If the local population of Thapsos was exposed to ideas about the organisation of space provided by maritime merchants, not only from the eastern Mediterranean, but also from the more proximate Aeolian Islands, southern Italy (Vianello 2005: 93) or Ustica (Leighton 1999: 153), or were themselves aware of other types of complex urban planning via their own travels, it is possible that the complexes at Thapsos were both built and conceived by Sicilian peoples. It is also worth repeating that we are only analysing the foundations of these structures. Despite the originality in the organisation of these complexes, in

elevation the walling, roofing, furnishings and decorations may have looked traditionally Sicilian.

There is a danger in overly relying on Thapsos as some kind of MBA type-site for Sicily (van Wijngaarden 2002: 206). We know of no other MBA settlement so organised, although in truth there are not many MBA habitation sites known on the island in general. It is possible, therefore, that Thapsos was unique among Sicilian settlements in its organisation of space, perhaps because of its strategic waterfront position, and was therefore more predisposed to outside influences. It may also have had incentive to present a more ‘familiar face’ to passing vessels, to attract the extra-insular trade that it was engaged in, especially if it were in direct competition with other coastal settlements. However, no consideration of local motivations for these innovations is ever offered in acculturation paradigms, in which homogenising to Aegean norms is its own reward.

Acculturation perspectives rarely engage in any discussion of the power dynamic between foreign producers and/or shippers and the consuming societies of Sicily, beyond an implicit assumption of the superiority of foreign commodities and practices, which would ‘naturally’ be regarded as desirable by the receivers. This dynamic is worth exploring further, however, as is a brief discussion of how the structure of MBA Sicilian communities affected their ability to accept, appropriate, and adapt foreign stimuli. Even if we accept that the agents of mobility can be classified — in even the broadest sense — as ‘Mycenaeans’, how would hailing from a more complex Aegean society have benefitted such mariners far from their power base?

Iacono (2015: 261-62, 275) has suggested that superior sailing technologies, resulting in greater freedom of mobility, gave Aegean Bronze Age mariners a distinct advantage over their southern Italian trading partners, granting them greater choice over which communities to trade with, at least early in the relationship. While this may be true, it also should be acknowledged that Sicilian consuming societies also had choices regarding whom they could exchange with (e.g. potentially Aegean, Cypriot, Aeolian, southern Italian or Maltese agents at Thapsos; Aegean, Cypriot, Maltese or Sardinian agents at Cannatello), which must have tempered any pragmatic sailing advantages that Mycenaean navigators had. This of course also assumes that, as a rule, these commodity exchanges took place at Sicilian sites, an assumption that is needlessly restrictive. While we cannot recreate the scenario that took place ‘on the beach’ (Dietler 1998: 297-98) at Cannatello, the natural harbours at Thapsos (especially the deeper

southern harbour) would not only have benefitted visiting ships, but also would have sheltered local ships. If we add Sicilian maritime mobility into the contact equation, keeping in mind that regional trade networks had existed in Sicily since at least the Neolithic (Leighton 1999: 74-78), then the choices open even further for Sicilian consumers regarding what foreign commodities, technologies, or ideas to accept, and who their prospective trading partners could be.

MBA society in Sicily is broadly considered to be more hierarchical than egalitarian (Leighton 1999: 182; Albanese Procelli 2003b: 125), typically described as a ‘chiefdom’, or at times even ‘proto-urban’ (Militello 2004a: 304; Tusa 1999b: 176, 179). In such an environment, it is unlikely there was open or equal access to foreign commodities or dealings with foreign visitors. Such contacts must have conferred status and socio-political power to those who could take advantage of them, although the number of tombs at Thapsos that contained foreign grave goods, as well as the different areas at Cannatello that yielded foreign pottery (even within the quarter of the site that has been excavated), would seem to suggest that such contacts were not restricted to a single individual or family. Of course, we are not simply speaking of contacts with the Aegean or eastern Mediterranean, and Alberti’s (2006: 420) analysis of the prestige value of foreign goods in Thapsos tombs suggests that Aegean goods were no more highly valued than those of other areas like Malta or Cyprus. Having access to extra-insular contacts had the potential to convey social status regardless of the origin of those contacts. Furthermore, van Wijngaarden (2002: 234) observed that there is no correlation between the architectural elaboration of the tombs at Thapsos and the presence of LH pottery. Therefore, if extra-insular contacts were a path to socio-political or economic prestige at Thapsos, they were not the only path. In such a political environment, it is not difficult to envision a consuming society that had ample freedom and ability to appropriate the foreign objects and ideas that suited them, and contextualise them within community-specific systems of value and meaning.

Cultural appropriations and adaptations are not simply for the benefit of the consuming party either. Such changes must be projected outwards for outsiders to experience, and thus validate, the existence of difference (Friedman 1990: 321). Thus, when a Sicilian consumer adapted external products or ideas, this not only had the effect of naturalising external stimuli to make them more palatable to local norms, but also put a ‘local spin’ on outside influences as a potent message to those they interacted with: we are open to you and your ideas, but we still do things our own way. In such a manner, increased contact in the MBA — far from having a

homogenising effect — actually contributes to an increased sense of local identity for Sicilian communities, as they promote more actively what it is that makes them distinct. In the parlance of interactionist studies, they have ‘learned to be local’ (Wilk 1995: 110-11) in response to a more connected Mediterranean world.

Conclusion: Sicily without Mycenae

If the work of L. Bernabò Brea...has stressed the importance of diffusionist processes, ample possibilities remain for different or complementary prehistories of Sicily...in which more prominence is given to local developments and identities, multiple causes of change...and convergences that are not simply due to movements of people. (Leighton 1999: 6)

An apposite prehistory of Sicily is one in which the people of Sicily take the foreground. When it comes to the MBA, however, the focus inevitably shifts to interactionist studies, where locals become increasingly marginalised as passive blank palettes on which to inscribe varying levels of foreign influence. If we are to highlight the impact of extra-insular contact upon Sicilian communities in the MBA — and an increase in such contact is certainly one of the defining features of that period, there is no need to restrict the analysis to a binary dynamic of Mycenaean and Sicilians. The assemblages at sites like Thapsos and Cannatello clearly demonstrate that more actors are in play, and if encounters with the Aegean had an impact upon Sicilian practices, systems of value, or even identities, then surely their interactions with peoples from Malta, Sardinia, the Aeolian islands, Italy or even other communities in Sicily itself should also be considered catalysts for change.

A cross-cultural consumption framework reminds us that when goods cross cultural boundaries, not all of their cultural ‘baggage’ necessarily accompanies them. It recognises that consumption is a creative, active process, not a passive acceptance. Consumers have the ability to construe new meanings and values upon novel objects, and even when contexts appear to be similar, this is not the same thing as an identically replicated practice. Barbie appears in the same cultural ‘context’ in America and Mexico: young girls playing with dolls. It is only in the articulation of said play that it becomes clear that the doll has been adapted to fit its context, not the doll user. In prehistoric archaeology, we are denied direct witness to the consumption of foreign goods. Nevertheless, these modern parables of globalised products like Coca-Cola or Barbie should caution us not to jump to conclusions regarding the acculturation of past societies.

We need to recognise that what has been maintained from the traditional, material past, and what has been adapted from external sources, can be every bit as meaningful as what has been accepted. In this light, material expressions like Aegean derivative ware should be interpreted as creative, local expressions that have been adapted to fit in with local expectations and needs. ‘Aegean derivative’ is an unfortunate and inappropriate label, which not only places the emphasis on the subjectively interpreted ‘Aegean-ness’ of these pots, but also depreciates them as inferior imitations of a genuine Mycenaean article.

A cross-cultural consumption framework of analysis provides a better way forward for investigating current and future evidence for contact in Bronze Age Sicily. It removes the uncertainty of the agents of exchange by placing the emphasis on the creative consumption of external stimuli by the certainly present Sicilian communities. It actively engages with local motivations for material, social or identity changes, beyond a broad assumption of the inherent attractiveness of eastern Mediterranean goods and practices. It stresses the importance of engaging materially with entire assemblages, not just the all too often restricted focus on a few foreign objects, or novel material features interpreted as foreign influences. Instead, it stresses the equal importance of material continuity, and active rejections of foreign stimuli, as important elements of a developing Sicilian island identity, or more likely, multiple Sicilian identities; positing a monolithic Sicilian Bronze Age identity is as misguided as assuming a singular Mycenaean one. In such ways, we can reconstruct the developing consciousness of what it meant to be Sicilian during the Bronze Age, in the face of, and in response to, increasing levels of contact with the extra-insular world.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1: Map of Sicily, showing key sites mentioned in the text and Table 1.

1. Monte San Paolillo; 2. Molinello di Augusta; 3. Thapsos; 4. Floridia; 5. Cozzo del Pantano; 6. Siracusa; 7. Pantalica; 8. Milocca; 9. Buscemi; 10. Milazzo; 11. Dessueri; 12. Madre Chiesa; 13. Monte Grande; 14. Cannatello; 15. Marina di Agrigento; 16. Milena; 17. Scrinda; 18. Erbe Bianche; 19. Caltagirone. Inset: Sicily in its central Mediterranean context.

Figure 2: Sicilian rock-cut ‘*tholos*’ tombs. Left: ‘*dromos*’ forecourt of a rock-cut tomb at Thapsos; right: plan and section of Tomb A from Thapsos. (Author’s image and adapted from Russell 2011: 126, figure 3.41).

Figure 3: The habitation areas of Thapsos, including the earlier (fifteenth-thirteenth centuries BC) northern habitation zone, and the subsequent (fourteenth-thirteenth centuries BC) central complexes. Inset: the entire peninsula highlighting the disposition of the habitation areas in the isthmus (Author’s image).

Figure 4: Common derivative shapes in the MBA.

A: the strainer-spouted jug with handle

B: two-handled bowl on raised base. (adapted from Orsi 1895: plates IV, V; Voza 1973b: plate VIII).

Figure 5: The excavated northeastern quadrant of Cannatello showing Phase 1 (A) and Phase 2 (B) occupation. (adapted from Russell 2011: 130-31).

Table Captions

Table 1: A simplified relative chronology for Sicily, Italy and the Aegean during the second half of the second millennium BC. (after Alberti 2013: 2504; Lo Schiavo 2008: 228; Leighton 2005: 266).

Table 2: A catalogue of MBA imported material from the Aegean and/or eastern Mediterranean. Note: there is much uncertainty concerning the amount of Aegean pottery at Monte Grande, with the principal excavator claiming thousands of Middle Helladic or Late Helladic I sherds

(Castellana 2000: 28-31), while others maintain that these have been misidentified (e.g. Leighton 2005: 277). This table reflects the amount of Late Helladic I-II pottery (sixteenth-fifteenth centuries BC) cited in Mederos Martin 1999.