HESPEROS AND PHOSPHOROS:
HOW RESEARCH ON AEGEAN-EASTERN INTERACTIONS
CAN INFORM STUDIES OF THE WEST*

Introduction and Background

The recursive extent of influence between the Aegean interactions with neighboring regions remains an area of investigation that continues to generate enthusiastic scholarly interest and lively debate. Here, we outline the importance of current theoretical perspectives on Aegean interaction with the East (particularly Philistia and Cyprus), which may be conceptually helpful to the study of similar interactions with central and western Europe. We also draw on a couple of very interesting examples from the conference to illustrate our positions. The archaeological, historical, and anthropological approaches we touch upon include gift exchange, entanglement, transculturalism, transnationalism, and piracy as a model of limited migration.

Secondary State Formation

The emergence of complexity in the Aegean can be regarded as a case of secondary state formation, whereby new levels of complexity emerged through cultural contact with surrounding areas. This initially takes place through interactions with the Near East, and later through processes of “Minoanization” and “Mycenaeanization.”1 Aegean interactions with the Near East as a sphere of influence were well advanced by the late Early Bronze Age (ca. 2200 BCE) with the importation of raw materials from the Near East including copper, tin, gold, and ivory.2 Gold and exotic materials were used in the Aegean to manufacture items of elite regalia such as diadems, mace-heads, and other luxury items.3

Trade and Interaction

Interaction can be driven by trade and particularly by the quest for metals, yet as Cline4 has pointed out, the acquisition of seemingly quotidian items can also have distance value. Artzy5 identified

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2 As detailed in J.L. CROWLEY, The Aegean and the East: An Investigation into the Transference of Artistic Motifs between the Aegean, Egypt, and the Near East In the Bronze Age (1989), but see S. VITALE and T. MARKETOU, ΑΣΚΑΙ. The Southeast Aegean / Southwest Coastal Anatolian Region and Cultural Identity. 1. Early and Middle Bronze Age (in press) for a history of interaction extending back at least as far as the Neolithic; also T. STRASSER and C. BROODBANK, “Migrant Farmers and the Neolithic Colonization of Crete,” Antiquity 65 (1991) 233-245.


Entanglement and Transculturalism

three categories of trade: king’s trade (wealthy royal cargoes), sailor’s trade (small items traded on the side), and entrepreneurial trade (trading activities on the margins of official trade undertaken by part-time specialists). Aegean peoples became key players in Mediterranean trade interactions, which involved gift exchange of luxury items (as noted above), the temporary gifting of skilled workers, trade in ephemeral items such as cloth and spices, in the dissemination of ceramic styles and motifs, and in the transmittal of Aegean style consumption and feasting practices. The outcomes of such activities contributed to cultural entanglements in the liminal or border zones of the coastal and island regions of the Mediterranean.

Transnational Membership in “Club Med”

By the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1700-1200 BCE) small portable objects of exotic materials in the international style and used for display became bearers of elite culture and knowledge. Among such objects, ivories became particularly important. Their portability, enchanting translucence, ability to be recut into different objects, frequent survival as heirlooms, ability to defy rigid artistic and/or functional classification schemes allowed them to be shared across cultural and ethnic boundaries, made them the ultimate transnational artifact. A transnational understanding of artifacts promotes understanding the meaning of objects as complex, fluid, multiple, and contested based on their cultural context, which also may be viewed as transcultural and entangled. At the same time, caution is warranted to not over-privilege the exotic among the masses of local objects and other imported goods or to always privilege long-term entanglements over the possibilities of short term encounters (which may or may not be recoverable).

Entanglement and Transculturalism


Aegean seafarers, traders, and crafters were entangled in transcultural exchanges with the east and west on many scales. Cultural influence among these regions was multi-directional. Entangled approaches emphasize the materiality of the object and its spatial relationship to context, which permits the reconstruction of the relationship between the object and agents (makers, owners, and/or users are primary concerns). Stockhammer distinguishes between “relational entanglement” whereby new meanings become attached to a foreign object, which may be transformed into a personal possession, and “material entanglement” whereby a newly created object combines the familiar with the foreign, and may become appropriated and entangled with foreign and/or local social practices. Horned altars and horns of consecration are examples of entangled objects re-circulating in the Mediterranean in many contexts. They may take the form of horned incense altars in Canaan and Philistia; representations in Aegean art, horns of consecration in Cyprus, the Aegean, and Sicily; and actual altars in Cyprus, Philistia, and Israel with many variations. These stylistic variations include large ashlar altars with flat and pointed tops, two or four horns, plaster creations, and altars carved from a single block of stone. An emphasis on categorization schemes tends to privilege cultural origins rather than considering the new functions and meanings an object may take on in a foreign or mixed cultural context, which requires a detailed analysis of style as well as the processes of use and deposition. For example, in Philistia, horned altars tend to be associated with industrial activity as at Ekron and Gath, whereas in Israel and in the Aegean as in House Xeste 3 at Akrotiri, Thera, they may be associated with blood sacrifice, and in Crete, Greece, and at Kition, they marked important architectural features. Just as people can become assimilated or acculturated into a new culture, objects might become indigenous once they are appropriated into a new culture, and it need not be tied to migration or other types of arrival of peoples from a different region. Thus, the best way to understand the appearance of “Horns of Consecration” in Italy is to analyse their context and undertake a comparative analysis. The beginning of cultural entanglements and transcultural identities is something that can begin with the consumption of foreign goods such as food, exotic international style items, ceramics, and even the imitation of foreign architectural elements. Such consumption practices frequently precede any kind of migratory activity, requiring these activities to be clearly documented and analysed.

Object biography can be a useful way of understanding long term histories of the relationships between people and objects, which considers origin as well as unintended forms of consumption. Object biography considers an object over the different periods of its life history with the goal of understanding the relationship between it and the people who used or experienced it. The stages in an object’s biography include procurement, production and style, consumption (which might involve a multiplicity of functions, an emphasis on categorization schemes tends to privilege cultural origins rather than considering the new functions and meanings an object may take on in a foreign or mixed cultural context, which requires a detailed analysis of style as well as the processes of use and deposition). For example, in Philistia, horned altars tend to be associated with industrial activity as at Ekron and Gath, whereas in Israel and in the Aegean as in House Xeste 3 at Akrotiri, Thera, they may be associated with blood sacrifice, and in Crete, Greece, and at Kition, they marked important architectural features. Just as people can become assimilated or acculturated into a new culture, objects might become indigenous once they are appropriated into a new culture, and it need not be tied to migration or other types of arrival of peoples from a different region. Thus, the best way to understand the appearance of “Horns of Consecration” in Italy is to analyse their context and undertake a comparative analysis. The beginning of cultural entanglements and transcultural identities is something that can begin with the consumption of foreign goods such as food, exotic international style items, ceramics, and even the imitation of foreign architectural elements. Such consumption practices frequently precede any kind of migratory activity, requiring these activities to be clearly documented and analysed.

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17 ROSS (supra n. 10).
18 See HITCHCOCK (supra n. 16), with detailed references.
19 ROSS (supra n. 10) 40-41.
20 ROSS (supra n. 10) 45.
21 MAEIR et al. (supra n. 9) 1-28 [pp. numbers different from supra n. 9 and infra n. 27].
movements, exchanges, recycling, curation, and experiences), deposition, and re-discovery. This approach enables us to go beyond utilitarianism and functionality and engages with the diversity of meanings, functions, and social agency imbued in an object, which may change in different contexts and in different periods.

Jung and Pacciarelli recently presented the stylistic and material parallels for an intriguing Minoan ivory statuette found at Punta di Zambrone (Italy) where they've noted the geographic suitability of the region (bays and promontories) for piracy (Pl. 1). Elaborating on the transnational and transcultural aspects of ivory objects, their use as heirlooms, plunder, and foundation deposits might provide an additional avenue of approach that would enable them to derive a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the statuette. Other avenues of approach would be to engage in a more in-depth study of pirate culture, considering the role of geography, entanglement and cultural mixing, feasting activities as indicated by Aegean pottery in Italy, and consumption practices as the authors have done for the Sea Peoples in general and more specifically for the ivory bowl from Tell es-Safi/Gath, which is identical to bowls in the Megiddo hoard. Similarly, Vitale and Blackwell employed concepts of object biography and concepts of transnational identity to extract more meaning from the funerary evidence presented as discussed below.

Social Fragmentation, Collapse and the Culture of Piracy

Scholarly understanding of the destruction and collapse that took place throughout the Mediterranean (ca. 1177 BCE) is continuously evolving from simplistic models of colonization or migration to mercantilism, to sophisticated models of and case studies dealing with entanglement, transculturalism, limited migration, and piracy following the breakdown of maritime routes. As Aegean peoples became entangled with their neighbors in the formation of piratical cultures forming the Sea Peoples phenomenon (over emphasizing the biblically well-known Philistines) similar implications may exist for understanding cultural entanglements in the West. Evidence of piracy may be summarized as the preference for basing their enclaves in association with particular geographical features, desolation of coastlines using their ships to beach at speed and attack by surprise, the hunter-gatherer like foraging activities of pirates through plundering, the taking on of new followers through rites of initiation and deposal, and new followers through rites of initiation and deposition, and re-discovery.

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23 SILLIMAN (supra n. 12) 63, 68.
25 MAEIR et al. (supra n. 9).
27 MAEIR et al. (supra n. 9) 17.
28 These proceedings.
31 GALVIN (supra n. 26).
integration, the splitting off of pirate groups in search of new areas to forage (plunder), and tribal allegiances that coalesced around Aegean symbols such as Mycenaean IIIC feasting ware. It is no accident that the Homeric word for feast ὀική, (to share), characterizes the egalitarian style of feasting in piratical activities in the Homeric Iron Age rather than the diacritical feasts associated with the Mycenaean palaces.

Similarly, Vitale and Blackwell could employ object biography, gender studies, and concepts of transnational identity in their study of the warrior burial from Tomb 21 at Langada (Kos) in order to take their work further. This is one of a number of burials containing particular formulaic mixtures of foreign accoutrement used as evidence for identifying warriors of the LH IIIB–IIIC period. Tomb 21 at Langada (Kos) included a spearhead next to the skull, a Cetona sword, a Naue II sword, two spearheads with short and casted socket, a razor, two fibulae, and many amber beads. Exact parallels for the spearhead are found only in northern Italy and Achaea. This is one of a number of warrior burials studied by Jung, which may represent the signature of a pirate burial. It is made up of material culture and social practices from the Aegean and Italy, combined to create a new style of masculine identity, and transnational warrior or pirate identity. What does it say about masculinity at the end of the 13th century BCE to be using Mycenaean perfumed oil, Italian razors and weaponry, and beads from the Baltic region?

Architecture by nature provides a much smaller database for comparative analysis and interaction studies than ceramics, so that looking beyond the shores of Greece can substantially increase the amount of available comparanda. The recently excavated building at Mygdalia Hill, near Patras in Achaea exhibited a hall with a linear arrangement of two columns. It has parallels with other LH IIIC buildings in the Argolid including Tiryns Building T and at Midea. Walberg and Maran have discussed the significance of these buildings with regard to the abandonment of the monumental hearth in LH IIIC (ca. 1190–1050/30 BCE) Greece, noting that architectural plans were modified to suit the new social realities of a warrior culture that had abandoned the ἔστησεν ἑαυτῷ θεῖον ἱερόν ideology. In these post-palatial buildings, roof supports assumed the form of a central, linear arrangement dividing the room into aisles minimising the

53 HITCHCOCK and MAEIR (supra n. 30); HITCHCOCK and MAEIR (under submission supra n. 30)
54 HITCHCOCK and MAEIR (in press supra n. 30)
55 These proceedings. We are grateful to Salvatore Vitale for sharing a copy of his paper with us prior to publication.
57 Comment by R. Jung at Hesperos conference, held in Thessaloniki, Greece, 18-20 June 2016 (?).
58 For example, in HITCHCOCK and MAEIR (supra n. 30) and in HITCHCOCK and MAEIR (under submission supra n. 30), we consider the possibility of female participation among the piratical activities of the Sea Peoples based on their participation in 18th century piracy, their participation in the British Royal Navy as shown through archaeological evidence from Nelson’s island in Egypt, and based on the fluidity of gender categories in the Bronze Age. See also P. TREHERNE, “The warrior’s beauty: masculinity and self-identity in Bronze Age Europe,” Journal of European Archaeology 3.1 (1995) 105-144.
59 Presented at these proceedings by L. Papazoglou-manoudaki and C. Paschalidis. We are grateful to Costis Paschalidis for sharing a copy of their paper with us prior to publication.
significance of the hearth, rather than the square arrangement of the previous era, which served to emphasise the hearth.

Maran suggests that monumental hearths were linked to a ceremonial and ritual ideology celebrating the 
wanax, and their absence or minimisation in the Aegean IIIC world says something about a change in the level of political complexity following the demise of the palaces. A similar building is found in Building 350 at Philistine Ekron. It was composed of a rectangular hall with a linear arrangement of columns screening an off-centred hearth, and flanked by a series of side chambers, which contained ritual offerings. A few other similar buildings exist in post-palatial Crete at Sissi, Quartier Nu (Malia), Kavousi-Vronda, and Kephala-Vasiliki; and in Philistia at Tel Qasile and at Tell es-Safi/Gath. Such structures are by no means typical of the post-palatial, early Iron Age, where a great deal of social fragmentation is exhibited in settlement forms. The question of why such buildings were found at certain sites across the Mediterranean and not at others requires further collaborative study by those working in the west and in the east, although what all of the sites seem to have in common are foreign connections and the ability to harness resources.

Go West Young Man!

The comparison with Iron Age east-to-west (Phoenicians and Greeks going west) - and west to east (Greeks going eastward) - activities, also suggest interesting insights for understanding the Bronze Age westward connections of the Aegean cultures. The mixed character of these Iron Age entanglements – mercantile ventures, colonies, limited migration and integration events, mercenaries, and other aspects of cultural mixing and transnationalism – led to complex cultural connections and interactions. While there are substantial socio-cultural differences between the Bronze and Iron Age Aegean (and Mediterranean in general) with the breakdown of palatial societies, many aspects of continuity and the long durée seen throughout Mediterranean history, indicate that similarities, parallels, and new insights can be gleaned from our approaches.

Similarly, while the differences between the Phoenician and the Greek colonial ventures is what is most often stressed, the entangled cultural interactions seen in the eastern Mediterranean during the early Iron Age might reflect on the need for a more nuanced view of the differentiation on the one hand, and the interaction on the other, between the Phoenician and the Greeks, in their endeavours in the western Mediterranean.

Conclusions

Our understanding of both the emergence of complexity in the Early Bronze Age and the collapse that took place in the Aegean ca. 1177 BCE has gone from simplistic models of colonization, migration, conquest, or mercantilism, to more sophisticated approaches. These approaches include entanglement, transculturalism, object biography, transnational identity, gender identity, limited migration, and piratical

43 WALBERG (supra n. 40) 90.
47 HITCHCOCK and MAEIR (in press c supra n. 46).
activity. It is our hope that such considerations offered by Phospheros may provide useful insights to Hesperos.50

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50 It is a sign of things to come that at both the Hesperos conference, which focused on the west and at the preceding SASCAR conference, which focused on the east, it was observed that the study of the Aegean should not be limited by modern national boundaries.
ILLUSTRATION

Pl. 1 Possible pirate map of the eastern and western Mediterranean, showing sites mentioned in the text. It is based on a pirate map of the historical era. Shaded areas indicate places vulnerable to piracy and hexagons indicate possible choke points that might stretch out a group of ships, making them more vulnerable to attack (drawing by Jay Rosenberg, after GALVIN 1999: 9, map 1).
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