Change, Continuity, and Connectivity
North-Eastern Mediterranean at the turn of the Bronze Age and in the early Iron Age

Edited by Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò and Marek Węcowski

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Change, Continuity, and Connectivity

Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò, Marek Węcowski

The present collective volume stems from an interdisciplinary project funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, within the frame of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities (research grant no. 12H 12 0193 81). It incorporates the main results of three international workshops held in Warsaw between 2014 and 2016 with several papers specifically written for this book. The broadly defined aim of this volume – combining the import of archaeological, historical, linguistic, and scientific studies in the field – is to offer a multidisciplinary reassessment of the relationships between the Aegean and the Levant ca. 1300-900 BCE (and slightly beyond), i.e. in the period when a series of decisive historical transformations in the North-Eastern Mediterranean took place reshaping the historical and cultural fates of this region.

Traditionally, this period of cultural contacts has been conceived of teleologically, in which an *ex Oriente lux* interpretive pattern was the key to understanding archaic and classical Greek culture – a mono-directional or at best diffusionist view of intercultural relations. More recently, the pendulum of scholarly interest seems to have swung in the opposite direction, focusing, on the one hand, on modes of adoption and adaptation, and less on sheer transmission, of diverse cultural phenomena. On the other hand, hypothetical Aegean “influences” on Levantine cultures seem to have come to the fore, going far beyond the simple study of the geography, or “ethnography” of migrations, including the most famous case of the so-called Sea Peoples of the Late Bronze Age.

The title of this volume shows its intention to study the North-Eastern Mediterranean at the turn of the Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age as a hub of supra-local connectivity by tracing – on a general historical level and in almost each particular essay – textual and archaeological evidence of both change and continuity. To some extent at least, it may be much easier to observe discontinuities and novelties in the broadly defined field of cultural history. However, for a historical period of unquestionable crisis marked by political, social, and no doubt economic upheavals on an unprecedented scale in the North-Eastern Mediterranean, continuities and connectivities may be no less striking to a contemporary student. To find the balance between the two perspectives may perhaps be seen as the main challenge of the historical studies of this period.

It is not our intention to present an authoritative and fully up-to-date version of the historical phenomena and processes involved, but rather to contribute to a fresh scholarly debate by juxtaposing informed but nonetheless often opposed points of view. As will be clear to every reader of this volume, the authors’ methods and general approaches differ considerably. Most importantly, whereas the historical implications of some of the essays are presented in a refreshingly optimistic manner, striving for a new understanding of some general cultural phenomena or of regional histories, other essays are soberly minimalistic regarding the feasibility of drawing firm conclusions with the current state of research. It is good to keep in mind that both maximalist and minimalist approaches may be equally valid.
The first and central part of the book (“Change, Continuity, and Connectivity – Regional Reassessments”) contains a series of essays arranged in a broadly geographical and chronological order, from Hittite–Mycenaean relations in the north, through Asia Minor, Cyprus, Cilicia, Syria, and the Levant, up to the Jordan Valley. This section has a double nature as it includes both general essays and case-studies. The case-studies are drawn from specific archaeological sites and their implications and focus on several particularly important problems of regional history.

In this section, Piotr Taracha offers an introduction to the study of a fundamental historical problem of Hittite–Mycenaean interconnections in the Late Bronze Age, a starting point of the story to be followed in this book, dealing both with archaeological evidence for cultural links between the Mycenaean world and western Anatolia, and with the “Ahhiyawa problem” in a number of Hittite texts. This is a sensible reassessment of local political interactions in a liminal zone of western Anatolia – one of the crucial peripheral regions within the geographical scope of this book – having recourse to diverse archaeological, historical, and anthropological analyses. Later in the same section, Rostislav Oreshko tackles the crucial but debatable issue of the (conceivable) Aegean ethnic names in the eastern Mediterranean in his study of Ahhiyawa, Danu(na), combining his primarily linguistic approach with archaeological and historical considerations. This essay offers a meticulous study of old and new Hieroglyphic-Luwian evidence on the issue and may be conveniently compared to the general linguistic essays assembled in Part Three of this volume. Next, in his methodologically rich essay, Emanuel Pföhl studies socio-political changes and continuities in the Levant between 1300 and 900 BCE, addressing, first, particular factors in the twelfth century BCE transition relevant to socio-politics, but ultimately advocating for a longue durée view of the historical phenomena involved. Pföhl’s main intention is to challenge the scholarly consensus that “a key change in socio-political structures occurred [in this period], marking a transition from territorial polities to ‘national’ or ethnic polities” (p. 64). Instead, he observes “the fundamental permanence, after the twelfth century crisis, of hierarchical territorial structures based on kinship and patronage in the Levant” (p. 64). In a refreshingly provocative paper that invites further discussion, Jeffrey P. Emanuel tackles the difficulty of differentiating between regular naval warfare and piracy in the Late Bronze and the Early Iron Age Mediterranean. On a more general level, this issue is an example of the larger historical and methodological problem of studying non-state, asymmetrical, or guerrilla warfare typical of the periods of deep transition and change. As such, this paper discusses one of the crucial historical factors influencing the fates of the North-Eastern Mediterranean in the period under scrutiny in this volume. Ann E. Killebrew deals with the interactions and interconnections between Cyprus and the southern Levant during the Early Iron Age. Challenging the traditional view of the the last two centuries of the second millennium BCE as “a period of societal breakdown following the disintegration of the great Late Bronze Age empires”, Killebrew has recourse to the results of recent excavations in the southern Levant and on Cyprus as well as to extensive provenience studies of ceramics and metals. The emerging picture is one of decentralized but regionally-connected polities
on Cyprus and the coastal Levant that survived and even flourished after the collapse of established socio-economic structures. Guy D. Middleton discusses the “Sea Peoples” and Aegean migrations at the end of the Late Bronze Age, arguing against “the ‘migrationist’ characterisation of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age eastern Mediterranean – specifically the idea of a Mycenaean or Aegean migration to the southern Levant which saw the introduction of novel locally-produced Aegean cultural features” (p. 95). In yet another revisionist paper, Francisco J. Núñez offers an overview of the impact of the “Sea Peoples” in the central Levant and the socio-political and cultural repercussions for urban environments and explains the reasons for this particular situation, which are to be found, as he argues, in the fact that the gravitation point of the entire issue of the Sea Peoples in the Levant should be sought in events and circumstances that occurred in its northern part. Namely, “the issue in its entirety seems to have been a north to south phenomenon in which the battle [somewhere north of the Chekka cape, in north Lebanon] between Ramesses III and those foreign peoples changed the course of events and led to a new situation” (p. 128).

In an archaeological case-study, David Ben-Shlomo presents various aspects of change and continuity when studying pottery and terracottas in Philistia during the Early Iron Age. He observes a peculiar duality in the material culture of this region. Southern Levantine pottery and terracottas show clear signs of Aegean and Cypriote imigration as well as continuity of Canaanite traditions. He concludes that:

[...] the traditional view seeing the Philistine phenomenon as representing a group of people arriving from the west [...] to Philistia during the beginning of the 12th century BCE, and bringing various aspects of their material culture with them, can be maintained. Yet, the effect of this phenomenon on the local political scene of the southern Levant may have been more gradual and complex“ (p. 150)

In the same section, Aren M. Maeir presents a reassessment of “Philistine” material culture by reconsidering the extant archaeological evidence from sites thought to be Philistine, and relevant Egyptian iconography, and compares both to Biblical accounts of Philistines. He argues for a strongly ideological import of “early Israelite/Judahite foundation stories”. Teresa Bürge and Peter M. Fischer deal with regional and interregional contacts (trade, migration, hybridization etc.) between the Jordan valley and the eastern Mediterranean in the light of the Early Iron Age strata of the site of Tell Abu al-Kharaz. To round-off Part One of our volume, it may be instructive to quote some of the conclusions of this well-balanced paper (p. 179):

[...] it is clear that the settlers of early Iron Age Tell Abu al-Kharaz were influenced by the transformations in the 12th century BCE. Limited migration of individuals or families, which arrived from the Eastern Mediterranean through the Jezreel Valley, is suggested. These migrants mingled with the local population most likely by intermarriage, which explains the amalgamation of local and foreign traits in the material culture of many Phase IX contexts at Tell Abu al-Kharaz. This migration process might have lasted years, decades or even generations. Therefore, it is problematic to refer to these migrants as ‘Sea Peoples’, as the immigrants to Tell Abu al-Kharaz had already experienced cultural changes on their way to Transjordan due to the time lapse from their arrival at the Mediterranean littoral until they finally settled at Tell Abu al-Kharaz. However, these descendants, who represent one of the outcomes of the ‘Sea Peoples Phenomenon’, contributed to a rich, flourishing, well-organized and multi-cultural society at early Iron Age Tell Abu al-Kharaz.
Moving from the regionally-oriented and chronologically more focused studies of our Part One, the second part (“Cross-Cultural Approaches”) offers some broader cultural perspectives on the historical period studied in this book. Not inappropriately, it is hoped, some of the essays included in this section go well beyond the chronological scope of the volume to study far-reaching historical and cultural consequences of some of the phenomena involved. Some others study notoriously debatable and methodologically demanding historical issues originating from historical comparisons between the two geographical extremes of the North-Eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Levant.

Jan Paul Crielaard studies the role of individuals with multiple identities dependent on cross-cultural contacts in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age central and eastern Mediterranean, comparing them “to other individuals attested in the archaeological and textual records who seem to have possessed comparable positions in intercultural or transcultural situations of increasing interconnectivity” and thus highlighting “the possible role of [such] individuals in culture contacts” (p. 196) and exploring the phenomenon of cultural hybrids. Sarah Murray deals with eastern *exotica* on the Greek mainland in their immediate context with a view to go beyond their traditional, and elite-oriented archaeological interpretations. She argues that the largely ritual contexts and functions of many 13th through 10th century *exotica* may instead be indicative of “a variety of mechanisms, not only [...] of economic or political exchange systems associated with the élite, but also [...] of the movements of humbler individuals, or in conjunction with non-local supernatural beliefs”. Thus, “imported *exotica* in the early Greek world may in some cases have served to provide individuals with an unseen superstitious or supernatural advantage rather than a socio-political one” (p. 228). In the same section, Giorgos Bourogiannis – by offering a lucid overview of the relevant material – deals with the problem of the transmission of the alphabet to the Aegean with a view to answer fundamental questions of “how, when and where the adoption of the alphabet by the Greeks took place” (p. 236). Vicky Vlachou discusses the imagery of funerary rituals and cult practices in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean, arguing that “despite the strong influence of Egyptian and Near Eastern beliefs, Aegean funerary iconography embodies regional traditions and beliefs”. At the same time, the author stresses the workings of “the varying symbolic meanings that these images seem to adopt during each period, and the importance that is placed on the different parts of the rituals in order to better serve the needs and aspirations of the communities that are undergoing significant shifts and transformations of their own” (p. 272). In her essay, S. Rebecca Martin asks what we really know about the Levantine institution of the *marzeah*, a type of feast often associated with, or even studied as a model of, the Greek aristocratic banquet, or *symposion*. As far as the similarities, and hence conceivable historical links, between the Levantine and the Aegean commensal practices go, she argues that “the *symposion* and *marzeah* were only as much alike as any elite occasion that involved wine drinking” and therefore scholars “must seek the *symposion*’s origin stories elsewhere” and not, simplistically, in Levantine social practice (p. 303). This section of the book concludes with Gunnel Ekroth’s essay on holocaustic sacrifices, rituals where an entire animal was put into the fire, in ancient Greek religion and on their conceivable links to Levantine rituals. The author combines here archaeological, zooarchaeological, and written evidence for holocaustic sacrifices in the Greek Early Iron Age and historical periods (ca. 900-100 BC). After an exhaustive overview of the relevant Greek material and a sober discussion of possible contact between the Aegean and the
Levantine practitioners of holocaustic rituals, Ekroth’s concluding remarks, as in the case of the previous Part One, may be quoted to conclude this section of the volume as well (p. 322):

The similarities between the Greek burnt animal sacrifice, holocausts as well as thysiai, and the practices in the Levant are fascinating, but also pose methodological challenges. Are we to focus on the likenesses or the differences? We are clearly facing ritual actions, which in many ways are similar but which also diverge as to the execution and to the purposes and meanings. A holocaust of a bull in the temple at Jerusalem was undoubtedly something different from the holocaust of a piglet to a local Greek hero. And could there be a greater distinction in the perceptions of the divine, between the Greek gods, anthropomorphic in the full sense of the word, the almighty God of the Hebrew Bible? Even so, they were both really fond of sweet-smelling fatty smoke.

Part Three (“Linguistic Approaches”), much more systematic in its presentation of relevant material than the two previous ones, covers the field of interactions between the Levantine, Anatolian, and Aegean languages. The evidence of the interaction of Aegean and Levantine languages recognizable in the linguistic material of historical periods should in principle be one way of assessing the interaction of populations in the northeastern and eastern part of the Mediterranean. Such an approach is naturally not free of methodological pitfalls that must be taken into consideration when the results of linguistic analyses are used by non-specialists to support or disprove historical and archaeological generalisations regarding the Late Bronze and the Early Iron Age history of the North-Eastern Mediterranean.

In this section, Dariusz R. Piwowarczyk discusses the methods of dating the linguistic developments pertaining to the languages involved in the cultural transfers studied in this volume. In general, when studying such linguistic phenomena, one can a priori speak of a “triangle” of mutual linguistic relationships whose “angles” would be formed by Greek, Anatolian, and Semitic languages. Within this framework, Rafal Roslól deals with Semitic influences in Greek, Paola Dardano with Semitic influences in Anatolian languages, Zsolt Simon with Anatolian influences in Greek, and Wilfred G.E. Watson with Anatolian influences in Semitic languages.

Besides presenting a polyphonic, and not smoothed or artificially consistent, version of Aegean-Levantine interconnectivity, the main novelty of this book is a fourth and final set of essays discussing new scientific approaches that transcend traditional multidisciplinary debates concerning the conflicting attitudes and, at times, conflicting methodologies of archaeology, history, and linguistic studies. Scientific studies can be groundbreaking, but their conclusions are sometimes ambiguous or difficult for non-specialists to understand. Scholars lacking the requisite methodological skills and field experience are sometimes prone to misunderstanding and misapplying technical studies.

Therefore, in the final Part Four of the volume (“Scientific Perspectives”), Maciej Chyleński, Marcin Grynberg, and Anna Juras present some prospects for approaching the problem of Late Bronze Age migrations in the Mediterranean, using ancient DNA. In the same section, Argyro Nafplioti tackles the hotly debated issue of using isotope ratio analysis as a tool for reconstructing past life histories.
The Editors of the volume can only hope that this book will find its way not only to the specialists interested in the historical period between ca. 1300 and 900 BCE, but also to the scholars grappling with methodological and theoretical problems involved in studying various aspects of pre-modern archaeology and cultural history.
Imported Objects in the Aegean beyond Élite Interaction: A Contextual Approach to Eastern Exotica on the Greek Mainland

Sarah Murray

Systems of exchange between the Aegean and the Levant during the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition have been the subject of a formidable quantity of scholarship over the last several decades. Nonetheless, many aspects of trade and interaction over this transition remain poorly understood. In this paper I consider the meaning of one of the most direct categories of evidence that we have for such systems: imported exotica, which I define here as finished goods found in regions outside their “cultural unit” of manufacture. The interpretation of so-called “imports” in the archaeological record is a vast topic, so due to limitations of space I focus here only on objects imported from the eastern Mediterranean that are found in the Greek mainland from contexts dated to the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age transition. In particular, I am interested in taking a fresh look at the depositional contexts and potential meaning of these imported objects as a corpus.

1. Early Greek Trade: Current Models

In Aegean Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age archaeology, maritime trade has most frequently been cast as an economic and political institution, through which exotic finished objects and locally unavailable commodities were transferred across space, mostly for consumption by an economic or cultural “élite”. These élites used exotica to create their identities as privileged and special by way of conspicuous consumption within communities.

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1 A sample of recent work includes: Betelli 2011; Bell 2012; van Wijngaarden 2012; Tartaron 2013. For general and relatively up-to-date summaries, see Dickinson 2006; Burns 2010a. The author would like to thank the organizers of the conference The Aegean and the Levant at the Turn of the Bronze and Iron Ages for the invitation to participate in the proceedings and for putting together an excellent event in Warsaw. Portions of this paper closely reproduce the ideas presented in the author’s dissertation (Murray 2013) and monograph (Murray 2017). The author thanks Cambridge University Press for permission to reuse some of this material in the current publication.

2 Not for the lack of effort on the part of scholars but because trade systems are simply difficult to reconstruct for the prehistoric period. As Bennet has pointed out, “the core problem with understanding past exchange patterns is that objects tend to be recovered archaeologically in contexts where they were consumed, not in the process of distribution, or even at their point of arrival.” (Bennet 2007: 201). This means, of course, that we cannot excavate trade systems, and we are left to interpret “indirect traces in bad samples” (Clarke 1973: 16).

3 For definitions see Vianello 2011, vii (there given as “any foreign as opposed to indigenous material and products”); Michaelidou, Voutsa 2005. The term exotica is used interchangeably here with “imports”, partly for stylistic variation, but also because its Greek root, ἐξωτικός, or foreign, from outside, provides a less anachronistic framework within which to categorize exogenous objects in the archaeological record than “import” which is imbued with valences accrued from the modern capitalist economy.

4 As most clearly articulated by Helms 1988; 1993. See also Colburn 2008: 206; Heymans, van Wijngaarden 2011: 125; Vianello 2011: 169; Whittaker 2011. The term exotica has even occasionally been defined in
According to this view, long-distance trade with the Levant was not only an economic institution, but also a socio-political tool used to consolidate power and entrench hierarchical differences within Greek society.\textsuperscript{5}

This model is partly based on work from anthropology, especially the idea of the \textit{kula} ring established by Malinowski and Mauss long ago, but also on a rich accumulation of contemporary documentation from the Aegean.\textsuperscript{6} For the Late Bronze Age, there is plenty of evidence for élite exchange in the form of a combination of epistolary evidence for correspondence among great kings in the Near East\textsuperscript{7} and the archaeological remains of shipwrecks at Kaş (Uluburun) and Cape Gelidonya.\textsuperscript{8} These windows into the prehistoric world provide ample and incontrovertible evidence that élite-driven exchange was a real and prominent feature of Late Bronze Age exchange between the Aegean and the Levant. From the 12th to 9th centuries, we do not possess contemporary textual evidence, but the 8th century Homeric poems may afford us a glimpse backwards into an Early Iron Age system of \textit{xenia}, by which luxury goods were transferred between the Levant and Greek \textit{basileis}. This was a system that differed in its mechanisms from the preceding Late Bronze Age one (perhaps involving more travel on the part of élites themselves), but that essentially served the same function: to bind élites together and provide them with special objects that were inaccessible to the common man.\textsuperscript{9}

Finally, to demonstrate that exchange was really going on along the lines that texts and anthropological models suggest, archaeologists have documented many examples of imported \textit{exotica} in archaeological contexts in the Aegean and the Levant.\textsuperscript{10} Existing arguments assert that these objects support the view that finished imported goods did circulate among élites and accrue “distance value” because of their unusual nature.\textsuperscript{11} I suggest in this paper that we should reassess this view of imported \textit{exotica}, which have too often been assumed to provide an illustration of the models built from texts and/or anthropological case studies, rather than independently interpreted in their archaeological contexts. Do the depositional contexts and seeming meaning (as far as we can extract it) of \textit{exotica} always “match” the role that they have been assigned based on texts and anthropological models of exchange? This is an important question to consider because the great advantage of archaeology (in direct opposition to textual evidence) is that it often allows scholars to access the viewpoint of a non-élite subset of society.

\textsuperscript{5} Burns 2010b; Cline 2005; cf. sources cited in n. 1.
\textsuperscript{7} The best collection of Hittite documents available in English remains Beckman 1995. For the Amarna letters, Moran 1992.
\textsuperscript{9} On élite exchange in Homer, élites, and the EIA, Lemos 2007; Crielard 2006; Mazarakis-Ainian 2006; Crielard 1995.
\textsuperscript{10} For the Late Bronze Age, Cline’s \textit{oeuvre} still represents the most thorough attempt to quantify the evidence for long-distance trade in the LBA Aegean (Cline 1994; 2005; 2010; cf. Parkinson 2010). For the Early Iron Age, some catalogs have recently appeared (\textit{e.g.} Lemos 2002: Appendix B; Braun-Holzinger, Rehm 2015) alongside lists buried in individual site publications, but the history of research is scantier.
\textsuperscript{11} Burns 2010a; 2010b; Knapp 1990; 1998; Sherratt 2001; Voutsaki 1997.
In the service of assessing the archaeological record of Aegean-Levantine exchange, then, I briefly lay out the evidence so that we may consider what the imported \textit{exotica} might tell us about relations between the Aegean and the Levant over the 13\textsuperscript{th} to 10\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Once I have summarized the evidence, I attempt an interpretation of the objects discussed that is independent of ideas drawn from prevailing textual sources and models, then consider how we might explain the apparent discrepancies between what the imported Levantine \textit{exotica} in Greece seem to mean in their contexts and what our current models seem to push them towards.

\section*{2. Eastern \textit{Exotica} in LBA–EIA Greece}

As has been noted before by scholars studying imported objects in Mycenaean contexts, one surprising aspect of identified imported \textit{exotica} is the relatively small number of such objects that archaeologists have managed to recover and identify.\footnote{For discussion of the apparent dissonance between the importance of trade in the LBA Aegean and the small number of recognizable imports recovered see Dickinson 2006: 201; Cherry 2010: 112; Tartaron 2013: 34.} From the roughly 125 years of Late Helladic (LH) IIIB, we know of only 121 securely-dated, imported \textit{exotica} from the east.\footnote{Figure is based on work presented in Murray 2013: 380–397, and in brief in Murray 2017, chapter 2.} The objects have been found primarily in contexts that are in fact closely associated with the élite–palatial complexes and élite tombs. One hundred and two of these objects come from just three sites: Mycenae, Tiryns, and Thebes.\footnote{Other sites with imports dated to the LH IIIB period include Menidi, Dendra, Monodendri, Pyllos, Tsoungiza, Prosymna, Spiliareika Lousikon, and Midea (see Murray 2013: 380–397 for details and bibliographies for these finds).} This accords with what we might expect, that \textit{exotica} are preferentially deposited at palatial sites, where élites, using exotic imports to distinguish themselves from their followers, might be the primary consumers. However, when we look more closely at the archaeological record for each site, the association between élite consumers and imported objects becomes more difficult to sustain.

At Mycenae, imports have been recovered from a number of areas both within and outside of the citadel proper.\footnote{Two imports have been found in recent excavations at Mycenae outside of the citadel (a faience cartouche from a dump, Whitley et al. 2005-2006: 33, and one fragment of a Canaanite jar, Shelton 2010: 197).} While the complex stratigraphy and history of excavation at the site makes many of these imports difficult to interpret with any certainty,\footnote{The concentration of excavated imported objects in the marginal areas of the citadel may or may not be a function of the state of preservation of the site, since deposits from the upper citadel did not survive antiquity in good stead.} a number of patterns are apparent in the nature and intra-site distribution of the imports. First, the majority of identified \textit{exotica} from the site come from contexts associated with religious/cultic activities (around the Citadel House)\footnote{The structures of the Citadel House area include a series of storage facilities as well as a number of spaces that have been interpreted as cult locations (French 1981; Taylour 1981).} or with the manufacture of special craft objects (the Ivory Houses).\footnote{Tournavitou 1995. All of the imports from the House of the Shields consist of faience or alabaster vessels discovered in the West room and the West half of the North room (Tournavitou 1995: 695–712). The vessels consist of shapes that would not be out of place in ritual contexts, including rhyta, alabastra, kylikes (Wace 1956: 111–12; Peltenburg 1991: 164; Cline 1994: nos: 652–61; Tournavitou 1995: 695–712).} The imported objects known from LH IIIB Mycenae primarily comprise small...
faience vessels intended for ritual use and faience figures and plaques. One of the plaques was discovered inside of a lead vessel deposited under the threshold of a cult building in the citadel house area. In Egypt such objects are likewise most frequently located in foundation deposits.  

From the area NE of the lion gate also comes a bronze reshef figurine. 

At Tirynt, the characteristics of known exotica are quite different. The largest concentration of LH IIIB imports is in the area around Building VI in the lower citadel, which contained cult materials and metalworking equipment. A second import-rich deposit was excavated just inside the North gate of the lower citadel. Both of these deposits come from areas in the site that functioned primarily as workshops or sites of ritual activity in the late Mycenaean period. The Tirynthian import assemblage of exotica is notable for the additional presence of several Cypriot open and closed ceramic vessels, as well as a few highly unusual imports, such as an ivory rod inscribed in Ugaritic cuneiform (it has been interpreted by the excavator as a tally stick) and wall brackets (one imported, along with local imitations), a Syro-Palestinian or Cypriot ceramic type that functioned as a wall-mounted incense burner, usually found in ritual contexts. As a corpus, then, Tirynthian imports are characterized by exclusive presence in the lower citadel and lower town, and by consistent association with ritual or workshop areas (and metalworking areas in particular).

The disposition of known imports from Thebes is quite different again. All but one of the IIIB Theban imports were found in a single cache of cylinder seals in the so-called “treasure room”, a late IIIB deposit in what was apparently a workshop for the production of value-added goods in the New Kadmeion. The majority of the seals show evidence of having been recarved or abraded before their final deposition. In addition, the seals were found along with an assemblage of other semi-precious stone objects, both finished and raw, including a set of cylinder seal shaped stones that had not been cut at all. Most scholars believe that this is because the cylinder seals at Thebes had been subsumed into a stone-cutting industry for their value as raw materials, rather than because of their distance value as imported objects.

During the Mycenaean palatial period, then, when the link between élites, exotica, and power has traditionally been taken as a given, the imported objects that archaeologists have recovered from the Greek mainland, although located preferentially at palatial centers, do not come from contexts that suggest imported exotica were especially prized by palatial officials as status symbols. The few finished eastern exotica that we have recovered come from workshops or areas that suggest ritual use. Finally, these objects comprise categories of material culture (plaques, bronze statuettes, faience vessels) that seem remarkably humble
in scale and media compared to the lavish gifts enumerated in kingly missives preserved from the ancient Levant.  

From the following III C period the raw number of imported eastern exotica present in the archaeological record is once again quite small (69). Once again the majority of the exotica come from only a couple of sites: Tiryns & Perati. At Perati, a single-period cemetery site, imported objects were found in 19 different tombs (8% of the non-looted tombs from the cemetery). The tombs containing imports are located only in the western portion of the cemetery (see Figure 1). While a few tombs (30, 13, 147) contained several imported objects, in most cases exotica were found in singles or pairs, in tombs ranging in architectural type and plan. In addition to an unusual number of scarabs, the import assemblage includes several other Egyptian amulets (three crocodiles, several Bes figurines, and one figurine of the goddess Thoeris/Taweret), two faience cartouches of Ramses II, Syro-Palestinian crescent and rosette amulets, and five Cypriot bull-shaped earrings.

If we found them in their Egyptian or Near Eastern contexts, we could class the figural amulets as prophylactic. That is to say that they seem to have been intended to ward of danger, perhaps specifically the many hazards that await the soul on the journey to the underworld. Likewise, the gold Syro-Palestinian rosette and crescent amulets, suspended from small hoops, are regarded by Iakovidis as protective amulets against the “evil eye”, which is consistent with their use in Egypt, the Levant, and Asia Minor.

Along with amulets and seals, exotica from Perati include three imported balance weights (two of the weights adhere to the Egyptian q-det standard, the other to the contemporary Palestinian shekel). These are not as numerous as the amulets, but they are equally conspicuous because they suggest the practice of some kind of mercantile or metallurgical activity by the interred.

The imported objects from the cemetery at Perati in Attica have, like exotica from the palatial period, usually been interpreted as indicating some kind of continued élite contact

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29 For example, EA 14, describing a partial list of gifts in a single instance of exchange between Burnaburiash and Akhenaten includes: gold necklaces, golden oil containers, gold pins, silver goblets, gold figurines, silver figurines, gold goblets, gold pails, gold rings, golden sandals, ivory bracelets, bronze razors, gold bowls, gold necklace plaques, tubes of eye paint, gold knives, gold ladies, a statue of the king and his family, chariots overlaid with gold, seven ships overlaid with gold, gold-embellished furniture, silver braziers, monkey figurines, abundant sweet oil, silver ladies, silver sandals, silver mirrors, hundreds of bronze mirrors, bronze tripods and braziers, horse tack, bronze razors, bronze ladies “for the barber”, hundreds of fine linen garments and bed furnishings, hundreds of jars of perfumed oils, stone vessels and figurines, stone headrests, whetstones, ebony and ivory boxes, and over four hundred ivory containers of various types.

30 Other III C imports are known from Mycenae, Teichos Dymaion, Lefkandi, Aigio, Portes, and Agia Varvara (see Murray 2013: 402–420 for details and bibliography).

31 Tombs containing imports are nos. 13, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 37, 43, 52, 75, 86, 104, 147, 152, 409, 471, and 483. Full details and description of the contexts is available in Iakovidis 1969.

32 Most recently Herrmann 2016; Ben-Tor 1994; Giveon 1974 on Canaanite usage in the Middle Kingdom; Horn 1972 for Palestinian scarabs.

33 Iakovidis 1980: 84–5. The use of amulets in Syro-Palestine, especially as guards against the attacks of the Lammashtu against unborn babies and newborns, is well attested, and endured well into the seventh century amongst the Phoenicians (Ackerman 2004: 460; Stager 1995).

34 Iakovidis 1980: 98.
between Perati’s inhabitants and the wider Mediterranean world. However, although some of the tombs containing imports are among the richest in the cemetery (in terms of finds/burial), there is no clear correlation between tomb wealth and import presence (Figure 2).

The only other mainland site with a meaningful concentration of imported eastern exotica from the LH IIIIC period is Tiryns. Of special interest among IIIC Tirynthian imports is a Syro-Palestinian armor scale that was deposited underneath a hearth in the courtyard of a building in the northeastern section of the lower town. The hearth consisted of a smooth clay surface, below which a pavement made of sherds covered the carefully placed bronze armor scale. The armor scale, and its deposition in a clearly ritual context, has its closest parallels in contexts associated with Cypriot metalworkers at Hala Sultan Tekke. In addition to this armor scale, and several more wall brackets, Stockhammer has recently identified a number of Cypriot simple style stirrup jars and further fragments of imported wares, as well as an assemblage of pottery that ought to be associated with opium-smoking rituals typical of Cypriot practice. Moreover, in the same phase from Tiryns was discovered a small clay ball inscribed with Cypro-Minoan markings, another object that finds its closest parallels in contexts associated with merchants and traders in Cyprus.

As is well known, there are not many finished, imported eastern exotica from the Protogeometric period in Greece (1050 to 900 BCE), and the majority of those that have been found come from mortuary contexts at the site of Lefkandi in Euboea. Once again, scholars have tended to associate these imported objects with élites, be they “local” élites, warrior-traders, or bicultural individuals, but once again the pattern is not so clear-cut when we look carefully at the mortuary contexts yielding exotica.

The correlation of import access to overall wealth of burial in PG tombs at Lefkandi Toumba is greater at Lefkandi than it was at Perati. This is especially true for imported objects other than objects made of faience, suggesting that the bronze and gold imports from Lefkandi probably should be ascribed to some sort of élite display or competition. However when it comes to faience objects–scarabs, rings, seals, necklaces–there is no straightfor-

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36 Figure based on data compiled from Iakovidis 1969; 1970.
40 Vetters 2011. This is the only site on the mainland where significant numbers of Cretan coarseware transport vessels continue to be found during the IIC period (Maran 2005).
41 For summary of finds and full citations see Lemos 2002: 165; Key Lefkandi publications include: Popham et al. 1980; Popham, Touloupa, Sackett 1982a; 1982b; Popham, Calligas, Sackett 1983; 1988; Popham et al. 1993; Popham, Lemos 1996. See also publications of the related settlement which had been ongoing since the 1960s at Popham, Sackett 1968, and sources cited therein.
42 For association of wealth with Lefkandi imports, Crielaard 2006: 286–289; Lemos 2003; for “warrior traders” see Antonaccio 2002; for the bicultural individual see Crielaard in this volume.
43 For plot of wealth and import presence in the Toumba cemetery see Murray 2017, fig. 2.6.
44 A case that is especially strong for the burials in the Toumba heroon itself (Popham, Touloupa, Sackett 1982a: 172; Lemos 2002: 165).
ward relationship between imported objects and élite burials.\textsuperscript{45} Many come instead from children’s or women’s graves that are not particularly well-furnished, and seem to be related to “amuletic”/prophylactic practice rather than to élite identity, in a way that is consistent with the use of such objects—scarabs and figurines—in contemporary Cyprus and Tyre.\textsuperscript{46}

3. Imported \textit{exotica} in Context

It is difficult to read meaning from such a meager body of archaeological evidence as we have in the case of LBA–EIA \textit{exotica}, but the patterns of contextual deposition evident in the above review of eastern \textit{exotica} suggest that we should take seriously the idea that the imported artifacts that we have recovered from the LBA–EIA Aegean archaeological record relate to something other than élite self-fashioning. At Mycenae the association between imported objects and élite individuals is problematic, because the finished imported \textit{exotica} that we have discovered in IIIB levels are found most commonly in ritual and workshop areas. Likewise, the kinds of imported \textit{exotica} recovered from the archaeological record are not necessarily the sort of flashy accouterments that you would expect the élite to acquire for the purpose of “personal aggrandizement”. Cylinder seals at Thebes, on the other hand, are made from one of the LBA world’s most valuable exotic materials (lapis lazuli), and come from a palatial context, but their findspot in a palatial workshop and their state of re-working and wornness shows that these artifacts were not of interest to palatial élites because they were \textit{exotica} in their own right, but as commodities. At Tiryns, the evidence from both LH IIIB and IIIC deposits has been convincingly interpreted by the excavators to indicate the clear and consistent association of imported \textit{exotica} with workshops and/or with demonstrably non-local ritual activities. Maran and Vetters have pointed out in a number of different publications that metalworking at Tiryns is often associated with ritual or cult, and that Tiryns is likely to have been home to resident Cypriot craftsmen whose presence ought to account for the significant number of imports excavated in the lower citadel.\textsuperscript{47}

Turning to IIIC Perati, the imported Levantine objects from this cemetery comprise a motley potpourri of small artifacts ranging from amulets, seals, and other small pieces of gold jewelry to seemingly utilitarian stone weights. There is no clear correlation between tomb wealth and import possession at Perati. In addition, the presence of various classes of unusual small finds—chisels and slag, the bones of whole sheep and goat, cowrie shells, unique pieces of pottery, and beads in the shape of exotic plants such as the lotus flower—that are not commonly encountered in other Mycenaean burials suggest non-local residents or practices may have been common at Perati.\textsuperscript{48} Likewise, at Lefkandi many of the imported \textit{exotica} discovered in the Toumba cemetery come from relatively humble graves and seem to be related to “amuletic” ritual practice rather than to élite self-identity.

\textsuperscript{45} See Arrington 2016 for an argument that Lefkandi’s \textit{exotica} can primarily be explained as talismanic trinkets deposited in accordance with a general system of mortuary ritual, rather than special objects accessible only to a small fraction of society; for talismanic practice on PG and Geometric Crete, Shaw 2000: 168–170.

\textsuperscript{46} Aubet 2004: 59; Gamer-Wallert 2004; Mazar 2004; Ben-Shlomo 2008.

\textsuperscript{47} Maran 2004; Cohen et al. 2010; Vetters 2011.

\textsuperscript{48} Oddities of mortuary ritual in the cemetery include not only unusual offerings, but the lack of any evidence for feasting at the tombs in the dromoi and the nearly complete lack of kylikes from the tomb offerings, not to mention the very early appearance of several cremation burials, most of which co-occur with imported \textit{exotica}. For a full analysis of the Perati cemetery see Murray 2018.
When we look at the evidence this way, it is abundantly clear that a significant portion of identifiable, imported finished objects apparent in the archaeological record from the 13th to 10th century Greek mainland cannot be easily associated with politically-driven exchange among élites (Table 1). What, then, are most finished, imported exotica doing in the archaeological record? Are they simply “trinkets” like the ones peddled by the Phoenicians in Homer’s *Odyssey*? I suggest that these objects instead speak mostly to the presence of non-local individuals, often perhaps craftsmen or merchants, in the Greek mainland, and in a broader sense, to the increasing exchange of ritual practices and syncretism in the environment of great flux and mobility that characterizes the transition from the LBA to the EIA. Of course, the process of reading religious, superstitious or ritual practice from the archaeological record is as fraught as determining ethnicity from material remains. Whether the people responsible for the final deposition of these exotica are Greeks returning from mercantile voyages abroad, non-Greeks living and working in the mainland, or local élites who have picked up new ritual practices from their peers around the Mediterranean is largely impossible to discern from the archaeological record. It is nonetheless interesting to observe a connection between the appearance of these objects in the archaeological record, a time of extraordinary migration and movements of peoples, and an era in which the world seemed especially frightening and risky, where good luck was in short supply and things like prophylactic amulets, that could confer some kind of ritual advantage might have been especially valued.

However we interpret them, the largely ritual contexts and functions of many 13th through 10th century exotica call into question the usual idea that these items serve only to “confer power” onto the élite, a simplistic formula which has been correctly problematized in recent literature. This is not to say that Aegean élites were not actively interested in collecting and displaying unusual commodities and objects—a premise that is clearly supported by ample documentary and archaeological evidence. However, when we consider the archaeological residues of Aegean interaction carefully, it is incontrovertibly clear that a majority of the archaeologically recoverable eastern exotica from the Greek mainland over the LBA–EIA transition do not seem clearly associated with these individuals.

In sum, the association of a sizable portion of known imports with some kind of ritual context, mortuary or otherwise, holds true across the dataset of Aegean imports from the eastern Mediterranean between c. 1300 and 900 BCE. This trend could easily be extended down to the 8th century when we know most eastern exotica found in Greece come from sanctuaries. There are two possible implications for our understanding of Levantine/Aegean relationships during this period. The first is that exotica are likely to have moved around the Aegean through a variety of mechanisms, not only through economic or political exchange systems associated with the élite, but also as a result of the movements of humbler individuals, or in conjunction with non-local supernatural beliefs. A second is that imported exotica in the early Greek world may in some cases have served to provide individuals with an unseen superstitious or supernatural advantage rather than a socio-political one, and that spiritual authorities, in addition to political or economic ones, were often at the center of early Greek cosmopolitanism.

Figure 1. Spatial distribution of imported objects in the cemetery of Perati (base map modified from Iakovidis 1969: 12 σχεδ.1)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Securely dated eastern exotica</th>
<th>exotica perhaps associated with workshops, ritual practice, or talismanic belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LH IIIB (1325–1200 BCE)</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LH IIIC (1200–1050 BCE)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protogeometric (1050–900 BCE)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

**Figure 2.** Distribution of quantity of objects per burial and presence of imported objects in the cemetery at Perati.
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