

## **9. Mobility and transitions: the south-central Mediterranean on the eve of history**

Nicholas C. Vella – Department of Classics and Archaeology,  
University of Malta, Malta  
nicholas.vella@um.edu.mt

Davide Tanasi – Arcadia University,  
The College of Global Studies, MCAS, Italy  
TanasiD@arcadia.edu

Maxine Anastasi – Department of Classics and Archaeology,  
University of Malta, Malta  
maxanastasi@gmail.com

**Abstract.** This paper reviews the evidence for maritime connections between Malta and Sicily in the second millennium BC and considers their social implications. Since much of what has been written by antiquarians and archaeologists about the islands was often the result of more modern maritime connections and knowledge transfer between local and foreign scholars, we begin by arguing for the relevance of a spatially oriented history of archaeological thought and practice.

### **9.1. Introduction**

Mobility is the hallmark of the Bronze and early Iron ages, not only movement of humans across the Mediterranean but with them ideas, beliefs, and ways of doing. The invention of the sail somewhere along the eastern shores of the Middle Sea resulted in what Broodbank has called ‘the shrinkage of the Mediterranean’, a process which brought easterners ever closer to the islands and coastal regions of the centre of that sea from about the mid-second

millennium BC<sup>1</sup>. This is not to say that mobility did not occur in earlier periods in prehistory: the obsidian exchange system tells us much about movement in the Neolithic<sup>2</sup> whereas the phenomenon related to the distribution of Beaker pottery during the Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age is now being explained in part by reference to a structured interaction involving small-scale population movements between regions<sup>3</sup>. Although knowledge about seacraft is sparse for the second millennium BC, in particular for the central Mediterranean, the theme of cultural mobility is back in full force and archaeologists seem to be more inclined to investigate how long-range interactions determined the outcome of regional cultural processes<sup>4</sup>. Of course, since writing had not yet come in use among communities of the central Mediterranean at this time it is archaeological finds that play a key role in research.

This paper is written in the wake of the collaboration between two of us (DT, NCV) which developed out of discussions held in the aftermath of a successful EU-funded INTERREG IIIA project – KASA – that ran between 2004 and 2006, aimed to foster cross-border cooperation between neighbouring regions<sup>5</sup>. On that occasion, travelling between the coastal provinces of south-east Sicily and Malta brought scholars and students in touch not only with the archaeological sites, museums and regional landscapes but was a valuable opportunity to explore and deepen the connections between research agendas. More importantly, first-hand study of archaeological material resulted in new discoveries being made in Malta and in Sicily<sup>6</sup>. In the course of our research we became aware how our knowledge about ancient objects and sites was begotten by actual travel and that in this sense we were heirs to a long tradition

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<sup>1</sup> Broodbank 2010: 259.

<sup>2</sup> Robb and Farr 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Vander Linden 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Cummings and Johnston 2007. In the social sciences, ‘mobility’ is emerging as a new paradigm; see Sheller and Urry 2006.

<sup>5</sup> The project was co-ordinated by Alessandro Musco (Officina di Studi Medievali, Palermo), Pietro Militello (Università degli Studi, Catania) and Anthony Bonanno (University of Malta). An impressive series of scholarly volumes was published as part of the project. These can be downloaded from the following website: <http://kasa.officinastudimedievali.it/content/view/33/53/>

<sup>6</sup> Tanasi 2008; 2009.

in which antiquarians and prehistorians wrote about ancient connections between places (often islands) after conducting studies during a journey or at the end of one (often overseas). For this reason, we feel that we ought to preface our discussion of ancient mobility and circulation patterns in the south-central Mediterranean by arguing for the relevance of a spatially-oriented history of archaeological thought and practice<sup>7</sup>.

## **9.2. Insular knowledgescapes: modern mobility, antiquarianism, archaeology**

The interest in the prehistoric remains of most Mediterranean islands, in particular Sicily and Malta, but also Cyprus, Sardinia, Corsica and the Balearics, stimulated ideas about the remote past and was important in the development of an idea of prehistory<sup>8</sup>. It can be argued that several Mediterranean islands became an integral part of a knowledgescape of European antiquarianism, facilitated by the unprecedented explosion in mobility of travellers that took the Early Modern period by storm. Mediterranean Italy, with its Classical remains and historic Renaissance cities, became the compulsory destination for generations of grand tourists. Besides, there were those northerners who followed their doctors' orders and made the Mediterranean their temporary home base on account of its favourable, warm climate<sup>9</sup>. By the end of the eighteenth century, even Sicily, with its Classical ruins was deemed important enough to lure travellers beyond Campania. Then, off Sicily's south-eastern tip, there was the Maltese archipelago, seat since 1530 of the hospitaller Order of the Knights of St John, and attractive in its own right not only for the cult and devotion towards the apostle St Paul, shipwrecked there in AD 60, but also for its very visible ruins of gigantic proportions<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> We take our cue from recent work on the geography of scientific knowledge (Livingstone 2005), where importance is given to the roles played by space and place in the production, consumption and circulation of knowledge; for the relevance of this line of research for archaeology, see Díaz-Andreu 2007-2008: 4.

<sup>8</sup> Leighton 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Towner 1996: 102.

<sup>10</sup> Freller 1999; 2009.

As can be inferred from Leighton's study<sup>11</sup>, intellectual discoveries and the knowledge transfer process about the Mediterranean's ancient history were facilitated not only by the mobility of travellers who came to see first hand objects displayed in cabinets of curiosities and sites in their landscape setting but also by the exchange of information that ensued between a network of persons often patronised by learned societies and, eventually, institutions. Scientists, scholars and explorers were encouraged to embark on long-distance travel, make contacts, observe and record, and to lecture about the discoveries and publish an account on their return (Fig. 9.1). Freller has shown how Maltese and Sicilian scholars formed an integral part of a network of information gathering and exchange that took local knowledge to the libraries and salons of all major European cities<sup>12</sup>. It was through such exchange that the same local knowledge found its way into a master narrative. Chippendale has argued that much of the understanding and the growth of knowledge amongst European antiquarians rested on a comparative approach, on forms of analogy that were sought between monuments and between objects<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, although intellectual contexts have changed since the end of the seventeenth century, it is not incorrect to say that antiquarians and archaeologists have worked along similar lines using similar strategies: raising questions of origins, considering chronological priorities, and proposing directions of cultural diffusion.

In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, two master narratives developed which impinged directly on the relationship between the roles of connectivity and isolation in island history. The first concerned the colonisation of islands by migrating fauna along land bridges, apparent in the bathymetry reported by hydrographers sounding central Mediterranean waters in the course of the nineteenth century, and which once must have connected Malta to Sicily. The second master narrative related to the Phoenicians as discoverers and colonisers of several islands – from Cyprus to England – and as carriers of the megalithic phenomenon to

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<sup>11</sup> Leighton 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Freller 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Chippendale 1989.



**Figure 9.1.** Dominique Vivant Denon’s travel itinerary through Sicily and Malta (after Denon 1993: pl. 1).

the western Mediterranean. Written at a time of new horizons and re-evaluation of the world by empire builders, historical narratives were naturally characterised by notions of a broad scope, even turning archaeology as an instrument of ideology. It might not come as a surprise, in fact, that disproportionate attention was devoted to the second narrative<sup>14</sup>. For the Maltese Islands in particular, which by 1815 had become to all intents and purposes a strategic naval outpost of the British Empire and essentially a compulsory staging post in any travels to and from the Orient, this meant that the megalithic temples were not more than the earliest manifestations of architecture of the most famous merchant venturers in ancient history<sup>15</sup>. The point is not that supporters of this narrative were wrong, which they clearly were. Rather, it is that at the time this was a fairly reasonable way to proceed. Of course, dissenters

<sup>14</sup> Champion 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Pessina and Vella 2009.

existed, amongst them a sharp thinker, the Scottish antiquarian A. H. Rhind. He had stopped in Malta for a few weeks on the way home from Egypt, studied for himself the megalithic remains, and expressed to his peers gathered in Edinburgh a few years later why an argument from analogy could not be used to sustain the Phoenician origin of the Maltese remains<sup>16</sup>.

It is also interesting to note how points that emerged from the first narrative failed in large part to cause archaeologists to rethink the premises implicit in their second narrative. The effects of submerged land bridges led at least one scientist to think of islands like Malta as distinctive places where speciation and geographical isolation could be seen at work<sup>17</sup> while an ethnologist considered the changes which an insular population on Malta could undergo under a succession of cultural influences and migrations but unchanging geographical conditions<sup>18</sup>. In a fine lecture about islands delivered at the University of Malta, the army medical doctor Archibald Garrod, not only considered the effects of Darwinian thinking on island history but put emphasis on the outcomes of voluntary insular seclusion and geographic isolation on island communities<sup>19</sup>. But for the archaeologists of the early twentieth century, a narrative about the prehistoric remains of Malta had first and foremost to establish their antiquity and that meant, once again, seeking analogies for elements of its material culture beyond its shores, across the length and breadth of the Mediterranean.

There are few designs that have probably conditioned the way prehistorians and archaeologists have modelled cultural connections than the spiral, not least in Malta<sup>20</sup>. It was on the basis of the spiral designs sculpted in relief on the ‘altar slab’ which had been uncovered at the Ħaġar Qim temples in 1839 that Arthur Evans drew a connection for the Maltese temples (which he visited in 1897 in the company of the Oxford ancient historian J. L. Myres)

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<sup>16</sup> Rhind 1856: 399.

<sup>17</sup> De Stefani 1913: 60-63.

<sup>18</sup> Buxton 1922; 1924.

<sup>19</sup> Garrod 1919. Sir Archibald Garrod (1857-1936) was the father of Dorothy (1892-1968), the archaeologist who was to become the first woman professor at Cambridge University; both were personal friends of Sir Themistocles Zammit, the Maltese medic and archaeologist (see F. Vella 1965).

<sup>20</sup> See Bonanno 2007.

with the Bronze Age Aegean, and in particular the spiral-decorated stelae from the shaft graves he had unearthed at Mycenae<sup>21</sup>. The spiral designs on several megaliths uncovered at the Tarxien temples by the Maltese medic-turned archaeologist Themistocles Zammit between 1915 and 1918 seemed to lend further weight to this idea. Indeed the theory of the Aegean derivation for western Mediterranean megalithism in general, and the Maltese megaliths in particular, remained popular and was a strong model that conditioned diffusionist thinking for several decades<sup>22</sup>. Despite the dissenters, foremost amongst them the Fascist archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini who argued methodically for Malta as the source rather than recipient of Mediterranean civilisation<sup>23</sup>, the temples had had to be built by migrants whose architecture and decoration might conceivably be related to that in Malta. Sicily, lying midway between the Aegean and the western Mediterranean, could have been the intermediary in the path of gradual movement of peoples originally hailing from North Africa. For Evans Mycenaean influence could have reached Malta via Sicily for there, at Castelluccio in the south-east, had just been found two closure-slabs belonging to rock-cut graves carrying a spiral ornament in relief<sup>24</sup>.

All this, and more ideas which fitted into a diffusionist paradigm, crumbled under the impact of calibrated radiocarbon dating. Many will recall the chronological fault line on the map that accompanied the monograph which announced the demolition of the diffusionist framework<sup>25</sup>. The impact was felt even on one of the major exponents in Mediterranean prehistory from mid century, John D. Evans. A young Cambridge graduate, Evans had been sent to Malta in 1952 to act as a researcher on a project that was to produce (in 1971) a comprehensive survey of the prehistoric antiquities of the Maltese Islands. A study visit to Sicily to meet Luigi Bernabò Brea allowed Evans to put the long wished-for order to the pottery sherds in the museum of archaeology in Malta, producing a sequence of pottery styles and five Neolithic and three

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<sup>21</sup> Evans 1901; 1902.

<sup>22</sup> For example: Mayr 1908; Patroni 1932; Hawkes 1940: 153-154.

<sup>23</sup> Ugolini 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Evans 1901: 198-199; Orsi 1892.

<sup>25</sup> Renfrew 1973.

Bronze Age cultural phases pegged to typological sequences established for Sicily, the Aeolian Islands (Lipari and Filicudi) and south Italy<sup>26</sup>. In a series of replies and counter replies which appeared in the journal *Antiquity*, Evans came to accept that his explanatory framework for which the Maltese temples had to be contemporary with Late Bronze Age developments in the Aegean – defended in his doctoral thesis<sup>27</sup> and in line with the thinking of the earlier Evans – could not be supported by the evidence<sup>28</sup>. The reaction, expected for its time, was Evans’s adoption of an autonomous explanation for the temple culture of Malta, one that considered the archipelago as an ideal laboratory to examine the trajectories culture processes take in conditions of relative isolation<sup>29</sup>. Evans’s work<sup>30</sup> is rightly hailed as an attempt to apply biogeographical principles to archaeological purposes in the Mediterranean<sup>31</sup>, and it was instrumental in framing a major fieldwork project on Malta’s smaller island, Gozo, and to explore the effects relative isolation would have had on the temple-building community of the archipelago<sup>32</sup>. Such a stand, which conceives of insularity as voluntary seclusion wanted by islanders for their own purposes, would seem to have an embryonic voice in the writings of Malta’s first professor of Archaeology, John Ward-Perkins, appointed on the eve of WWII in a political move to counter mounting Italian cultural propaganda in Malta. Reacting to similarities thought to exist between aspects of material culture of Neolithic Malta and elsewhere, he wrote in *Antiquity*:

‘These fundamental resemblances must not however blind us to the strongly individual character of the finished product, the result, it seems, of generations of specialized development. *The insularity of the Maltese Neolithic civilization does not of course imply a*

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<sup>26</sup> Evans 1953 based on Bernabò Brea 1950.

<sup>27</sup> Evans 1956.

<sup>28</sup> Bernabò Brea 1960; Evans 1960; Trump 1961a.

<sup>29</sup> Evans 1977.

<sup>30</sup> In particular the thought-provoking article, Evans 1973.

<sup>31</sup> Rainbird 2007: 32.

<sup>32</sup> Stoddart *et al.* 1993; Robb 2001; Malone and Stoddart 2004.

*complete isolation*. There were undoubtedly contacts with the outer world [...]'<sup>33</sup>

It is not the intention here to magnify the importance of a little known attempt to contemplate the effects of isolation on insularity just because we now know that this point is an essential component of writing about islands in prehistory<sup>34</sup>. After all, Ward-Perkins wrote in a different intellectual climate with a clear research agenda in mind. We refer to his work more to highlight the fact that the potential of such an idea, and all the other theoretical debates that have characterised the fifty-year interim, have not been fully extended to the post-Temple period of Malta, even if similar issues are at stake<sup>35</sup>. What can be made out of trans-insular distribution of pottery in the south-central Mediterranean in the Bronze Age is a matter to which we shall now turn.

### 9.3. Ancient mobility, modern transitions

Assessing the extent and nature of ancient mobility is not without problems; *exactly* what the social effect of connections was may also be beyond recovery in archaeological terms. The givens are straightforward: leaving or getting to an island involves maritime travel on seacraft that would withstand a combination of currents and winds using a whole gamut of skills from fashioning timber to wayfinding at sea; virtually any seafaring to the western Mediterranean from the east is bound to touch upon the Sicilian landmass by which we mean its three long coastlines facing three seas: the Tyrrhenian, the Ionian, the African. In addition, the distribution of pottery styles, if not pots themselves, point to interaction spheres in which those living on the small islands to the north and south of Sicily, or along its long shores, were engaged.

For the south-central Mediterranean Bronze Age, three broad cycles of mobility have been proposed<sup>36</sup>: (1) mobility restraint followed by divergence in the Early Bronze Age, c. 2200-1450 BC;

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<sup>33</sup> Ward-Perkins 1942: 28; emphasis added.

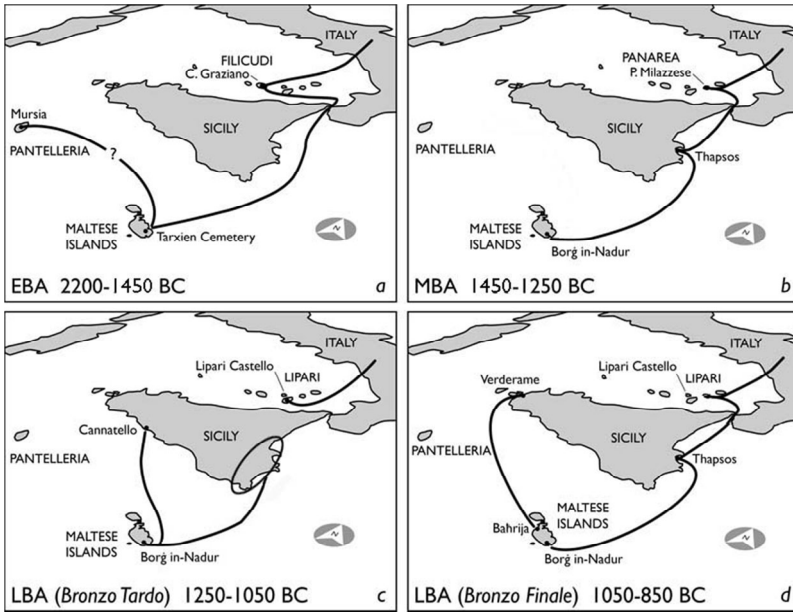
<sup>34</sup> Broodbank 2000: 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Cazzella *et al.* 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Tanasi and Vella forthcoming.

(2) mobility escalation in the Middle Bronze Age, c. 1450-1250 BC; (3) mobility restraint followed by regional interaction in the extended Late Bronze Age, c. 1250-850 BC. In this working model, 'restraint' and 'escalation' are directly related to archaeological signatures, that is, elements of material culture that can be identified and where known contexts of deposition have allowed us a glimpse into the value systems between communities separated by stretches of open sea. We have attempted to portray these connections as thumbnail sketches in figure 9.2 realising, however, that what we show are a series of snap-shots of a network with, in most cases, an uneasily wide temporal scope for which we are assuming that sites were occupied at exactly the same time – and, hence, that members of communities were talking to each other or at least interacting socially. Moreover, our view may be influenced by our wish to make sense of pottery fragments and assemblages most of which were identified for the first time by one of us (DT) amidst collections held in museums in south-east Sicily and Malta over the last few years; these data are being presented in tabular form at the end of this paper (Tables 9.1-9.4).

Notwithstanding what we have just said, the maritime bias of our south-central Mediterranean network is clear. There is a marked preference for sites on defendable coastal bluffs or spurs (Capo Graziano, Punta Milazzese, Castello di Lipari, Magnisi Peninsula, Borġ in-Nadur, Bahrija, Mursia) and on river banks or other locations with favourable coastal configurations (Cannatello, Cozzo del Pantano, Plemmirio, Vendicari, Ortigia). A desire for access from and to the sea is beyond doubt. But it is clear that not every site is intensely connected with others at all times. Take Thapsos, for example (Fig. 9.4). Located on the low-lying Magnisi Peninsula, between Augusta and Siracusa, with settlement clustered across the isthmus and the graves separating it from the seashore in the Middle Bronze Age, it had coves on either side ideal for canoes to be drawn on the foreshore or to accommodate deep-hulled seacraft equipped with the latest eastern novelty, the sail. Thapsos would appear to have been well-placed to be the focus of much activity during this period, in which maritime trade with different interaction spheres –



**Figure 9.2.** Maritime cultural mobility in the south-central Mediterranean between the Early and Late Bronze Age (drawn by Maxine Anastasi).

the Aegean one, including the Cypriot, from across the great expanse of sea to the east (more than 500 km away), the Maltese one beyond a tricky channel of sea to the south (about 160 km), the Tyrrhenian one located beyond the turbulent bottle-neck to the north (about 130 km away). No other site on Sicily’s 200 km-long eastwards-looking *façade maritime* became a centre of seaborne activity in quite the same manner. The other sites of the Siracusano, which we highlight in figures 9.2b and 9.4, because of the presence of pottery with characteristics of shape and decoration that are at home in Malta’s Borg in-Nadur cultural complex, were probably drawn into Thapsos’ interaction sphere for social, and not just geographical, reasons.

The maritime innovation of the sail may have brought changes to the social fabric of the coastal communities in Sicily *directly* (rather than down the line) and fairly *rapidly*. Entrepreneurial individuals in a society which was essentially transegealitarian came

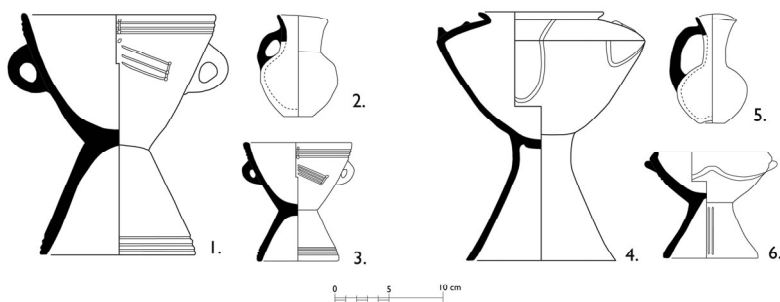
in direct contact with metal-bearing groups from the Aegean, resulting in what can be interpreted as competitive manipulation of values in an island with only minor sources of metal and probably little knowledge of mining and crafting. In the first phase of Thapsos' history, Mycenaean imports in clay and metal dominate; after two generations pots displayed and used in the Aegean for special symposia-type gatherings were copied in local clay, a sign of the wish to emulate and partake in a tournament of value which bears the hallmark of 'foreignness'. Pottery of the Borg in-Nadur type with its characteristic highly polished red fabric found its way here too (Table 9.1) and a set composed of a two-handled bowl, an open-mouthed jug and a pedestalled basin has been recognised, just like an identical set made locally (Fig. 9.3)<sup>37</sup>. Here we probably have a sign of the skeuomorphic imitation of metal vessels, high-status symbols brought into the islands by easterners or by Sicilian individuals who may have seen them in use outside Sicily and were all too keen to adopt them and control their use and their scarcity by their deposition – and hence withdrawal from circulation – in funerary contexts.

The Maltese islands were caught in this net (and one of us has made a compelling case for the presence of Maltese immigrants at Cozzo del Pantano elsewhere in this volume<sup>38</sup>). *Why* is the question that is hard to answer because direct evidence for the social structure of the islanders' at the time is elusive and also because we will have to decide whether it was Maltese seafarers who made it to Sicily on their own boats, on their own terms and for their own purposes or whether Maltese individuals joined Sicilian long-range travelling expeditions on their return journey from Malta. The social implications of each possibility are different because the construction, upkeep and use of seacraft that could be used to cover a distance beyond a day's journey – a multi-paddled longboat rather than a canoe will have to be assumed – makes particular demands on a group: resources (both human and material), skill and power to build them, skill and power to use them. It is difficult to assess whether the Maltese communities scattered on their hilltop settlements in both islands could achieve the minimum thresholds to

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<sup>37</sup> Tanasi 2008: 75-80.

<sup>38</sup> Tanasi, this volume (chapter 10).

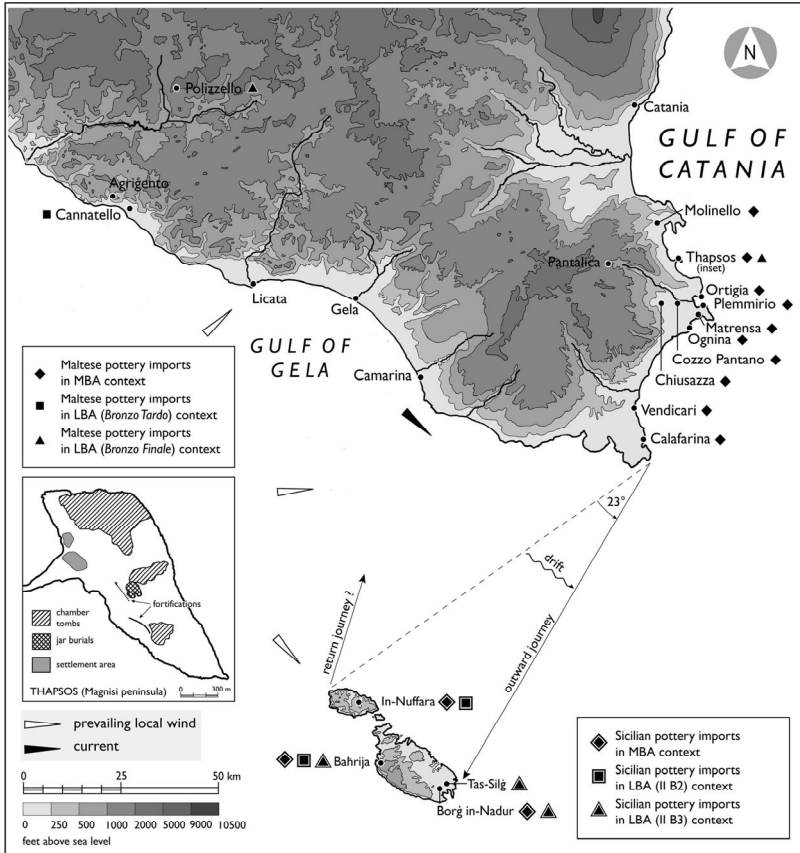


**Figure 9.3.** Maltese and Sicilian Middle Bronze Age pottery set from tomb 23 at Cozzo del Pantano, Sicily. ‘Maltese’ pieces: (1) inv. 11242, (2) inv. 11264, (3) inv. 11246; ‘Sicilian’ pieces: (4) inv. 11283, (5) inv. 11248, (6) inv. 11266 (drawn by Carlo Veca and Maxine Anastasi).

deploy longboats, even communally, and the likelihood is that they probably could not. If they did, it is probably to Sicily that they would have had to turn to obtain the key resource required – timber – to produce the craft in the first place. If we assume for the sake of argument then that Maltese individuals were on return trips to Sicily why would the communities around the Siracusano have allowed them to live in their midst and partake in activities of a status-accurring nature, if not die and be buried there as well? One suggestion that can be put forward revolves around the effect that Aegean long-range seafaring into the western basin of the Mediterranean could have had on coastal communities that need no longer be compulsory staging posts. Knowledge associated with sea travel as a skilled craft, certainly required for any sailing boat wishing to proceed beyond the south-eastern cape of Sicily to the west, where currents and prevailing winds would have made progress tricky at best<sup>39</sup>, may have lent the islanders on Malta a unique, possibly powerful, position which the Thapsians were keen to restrict if not control.

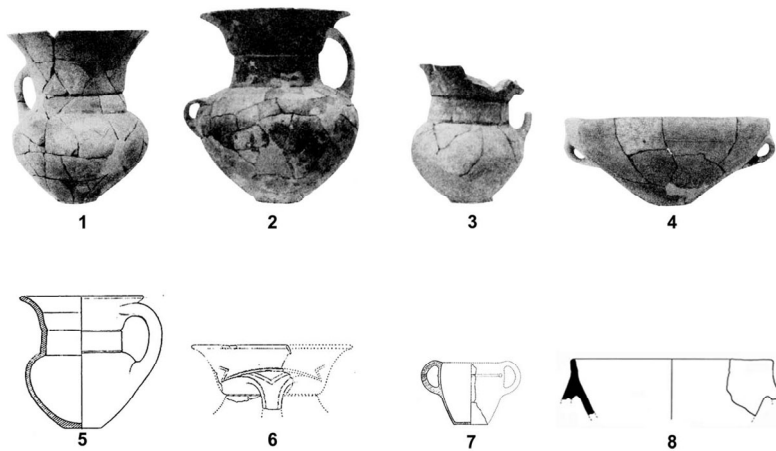
The importance enjoyed by the coastal centre of Thapsos did not always exist, certainly not in the Early Bronze Age and neither does the site show up for a while in the Late Bronze Age (*Bronzo Tardo*).

<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere (Tanasi and Vella forthcoming) we have considered the difficulties involved in maritime travel in the Sicily-Malta channel.



**Figure 9.4.** Distribution of Sicilian and Maltese or Maltese-type Bronze Age pottery in the two islands. A hypothetical return journey beyond Sicily’s south-east coast towards Malta is shown (drawn by Maxine Anastasi).

That another island link in fact existed, involving Filicudi’s Capo Graziano culture in the south Tyrrhenian and Malta’s Tarxien Cemetery culture at the other end of the central Mediterranean world towards the end of the third millennium, is striking (Fig. 9.2a). As far as the pottery (helmet-shaped bowls with incised decoration around the base of the handle) and other elements of material culture (especially bossed-bone plaques) are concerned, the links would appear to have been long-ranging with origins well beyond



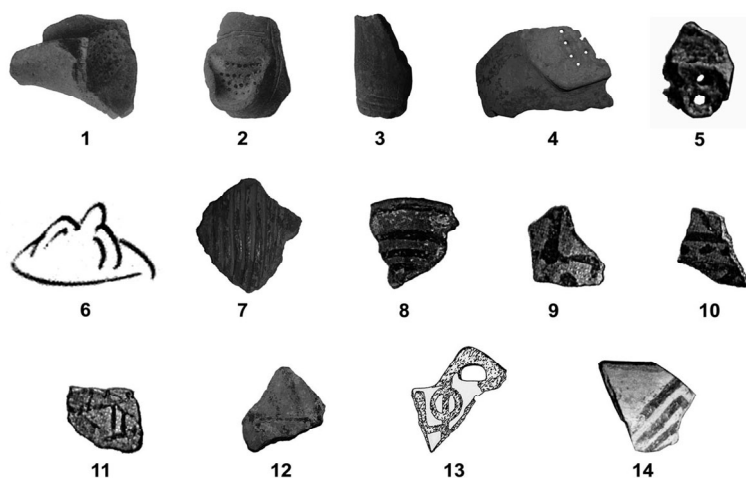
**Figure 9.5.** Maltese-type pottery from Final Bronze Age Sicily: 1-7) Thapsos settlement (Voza 1973; Voza 1980-1981); 8) Polizzello, Hut 1 (scale 1:4, drawn by Denise Cali).

the coast of Dalmatia<sup>40</sup>. It is for this reason that this phenomenon of seafaring activities has been dubbed the ‘Argonauts of the West Balkans’<sup>41</sup>. But the ultimate origins of artefact styles do not say much about the social milieu in which objects functioned and undoubtedly processes of transfer and adaptation by down-the-line passage were at play; the resulting distribution pattern in the south-central Mediterranean has yet to be explained.

In the closing centuries of the second millennium BC the situation seems to have altered again, and the Maltese archipelago is drawn into a wider maritime world for which it is hard to determine the key locations which may have provided some stimulus if not resources to enhance social power (Fig. 9.2c, d). Intense interaction patterns can be surmised but so does regional divergence and differentiation, especially in Sicily. Evidence for south-central maritime connections is again provided by pottery recently recognised for what it is by one of us (DT) (Fig. 9.4): Maltese or Maltese-type pottery in Sicily (at the sites of Cannatello, Polizzello and Thapsos, Fig. 9.5, Tables 9.2, 9.3)

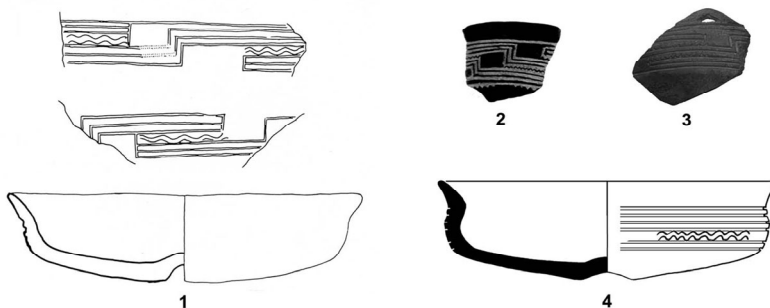
<sup>40</sup> Bonanno 2001; Cazzella *et al.* 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Maran 2007: 14.



**Figure 9.6.** Sicilian pottery imports in Malta: (1-5) Fragments of strainer spouted jugs from Bahrija (Peet 1910; Trump 1961b); (6) Triple handled lid from In-Nuffara (Trump's notebook, archives of the National Museum of Archaeology); (7) Fragment of pedestal basin UNP/P/53 held at the National Museum of Archaeology; (8) Plumed ware sherd from Bahrija (Evans 1953); (9-12) Ausonian II pottery sherds from Bahrija (Trump 1961b); (13) Ausonian II pottery sherd from Bahrija? (Evans 1971); (14) Ausonian II pottery sherd from Tas-Silġ (Blakolmer 2005). Not to scale.

and Sicilian pottery from a number of sites in Malta and Gozo (Fig. 9.6, Table 9.4). Again, who was behind the trips being made is a moot question and whether the Maltese – or at least some who were directly engaged in voyaging – were practising seafaring to a serious degree to manipulate flows to their advantage is really impossible to tell on the basis of the limited contextual evidence (from similarly limited excavations) we have available. Towards the end of the second millennium BC, the importance that had been enjoyed by the site of Borg in-Nadur for several centuries seems to shift to Bahrija (Fig. 1.1), where a settlement on a precipitous cliff on the north-west coast overlooking an anchorage at Fomm ir-Riġ, has produced the pottery with links to different cultural traditions in Sicily, particularly Pantalica North/Montagna di Caltagirone (strainer jugs, geometrically-incised and highly-polished red fabrics)



**Figure 9.7.** Final Bronze Age pottery from Sicily and Malta: (1) Proto-Elymian bowl from Verderame (Tusa 1992); (2) Bowl fragment from Bahrija (Peet 1910); (3) Bowl fragment B/P103 from Bahrija; (4) Bowl B/P30 from Bahrija. Not to scale.

and Cassibile/Ausonian II. Then there is the so-called ‘Proto-Elymian’ pottery with a black polished fabric from Bahrija, decorated with cut-out and impressed geometrical meanders, for which striking parallels have been found in western Sicily, particularly at Verderame near Trapani and Segesta-Monte Barbaro, dated to the first half of the ninth century BC (Fig. 9.7)<sup>42</sup>.

Which brings us to the point when easterners from the other *façade maritime* at the other end of the Mediterranean, would appear to have become impatient to set sail, hemmed as they were between mountains and sea and a daunting realpolitik. Exploration of the Great Sea that beckoned beyond the Phoenicians’ tiny offshore islands and headlands would appear, in fact, to have started already in the early ninth century BC if we go by the recent archaeological discoveries and radiocarbon dates from far-away Huelva along the Atlantic coasts of Iberia<sup>43</sup>. Caught in this long-distance mobility that was to become the backbone of Mediterranean interconnectivity in the first millennium BC<sup>44</sup> were pluri-ethnic communities located along the preferred routes. In the wake of this movement must have come the few pottery pieces from the Aegean, probably Crete, dated to the Early Geometric (820-800

<sup>42</sup> Tusa 1992.

<sup>43</sup> de Canales *et al.* 2006; Nijboer and van der Plicht 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Hodos 2009.

BC) and Middle Geometric (800-770 BC) periods recognised amidst the material from the megalithic temple at Borg in-Nadur<sup>45</sup>.

Beyond the interactions at the global scale that characterise the Phoenician (and Greek) Mediterranean of the first half of the first millennium BC are the local realities which tend to be obscured by the effort to generalise colonising traits and cultural outcomes. The nature of this Bronze Age/Iron Age transition involving foreign and local agency has only recently come to the fore in the wake of post-colonial studies<sup>46</sup>. We believe that a glimpse of the response to local conditions can be had by a brief consideration of the significance of handmade pottery in early Phoenician settlements.

### ***9.3.1. A word about the significance of handmade pottery***

The novelties brought by Greek and Phoenician settlers to the central and western Mediterranean are well known and their effects – in terms of material culture and practices – for Sicily and Malta have been recently discussed by Hodos<sup>47</sup>. Pottery remains the most ubiquitous archaeological indicator of the presence of Phoenicians away from the homeland, even if we all subscribe to the caveat that pots do not necessarily imply the physical presence of the human groups that made them. Ceramic wheel-making technology coupled with the use of red slip has, in fact, often been taken to mark the arrival of Phoenician know-how in a number of areas where the prospectors settled permanently. But for a while now several scholars have pointed out that together with the more obvious pot types which bear the hallmarks of the repertoire known in the Phoenician homeland in so far as shape and decoration go, there are also ceramic vessels which were modelled by hand – from Tunisia to Morocco<sup>48</sup>, from Malta to Sicily to southern Spain<sup>49</sup>. These

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<sup>45</sup> See Tanasi, this volume (chapter 4); also Tanasi 2009.

<sup>46</sup> See van Dommelen 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Hodos forthcoming; also Sagona 2008 for Malta which is, in part, a response to Vella 2005.

<sup>48</sup> For Carthage, see Mansel 1999, Aznar 2005; for Lixus, see Gómez Bellard and Habibi 2001.

<sup>49</sup> For Malta, see Quercia 2002 and Sagona 2008; for Motya in Sicily, see Delgado and Ferrer 2007: 31-34; for southern Spain, see Martín Ruiz 2000, Delgado and Ferrer 2007.

include urns, bowls, trays, cooking pots including one-handled globular vessels sometimes with a knob opposite the handle or tronco-conic flat-based vessels often with four lug handles below the rim or on the body. These widely separated examples are related by their relatively coarse if variable fabrics, thick walls, and irregular manufacturing and are more common than previously had been recognised. In all cases, the intervention of native potters in the production of such vessels has been suggested or surmised, and most scholars claim that the decorative, technical and formal characteristics of the pottery are at home in the native pot-making traditions of the different areas settled by the Phoenicians<sup>50</sup>.

Delgado and Ferrer have gone a step further to investigate what such pottery actually means in social terms, a theme that has been pursued with interesting results in different contexts for some time<sup>51</sup>. They argue that handmade pottery allows archaeologists to identify the presence of people of diverse geographical origins among the residents of Phoenician Cerro del Villar in southern Spain and at Phoenician Motya in Sicily. Since the pottery studied by them consists mostly of vessels used for the preparation and consumption of food (in other words, daily routine activities), Delgado and Ferrer argue that different culinary traditions reflect the pluri-ethnic nature of the settlements they studied: the cooking methods involving liquid foods like soups at Cerro del Villar are native to southern Iberia whereas the domestic ovens and the trays used for baking bread and other solid food reflect an eastern Mediterranean custom<sup>52</sup>.

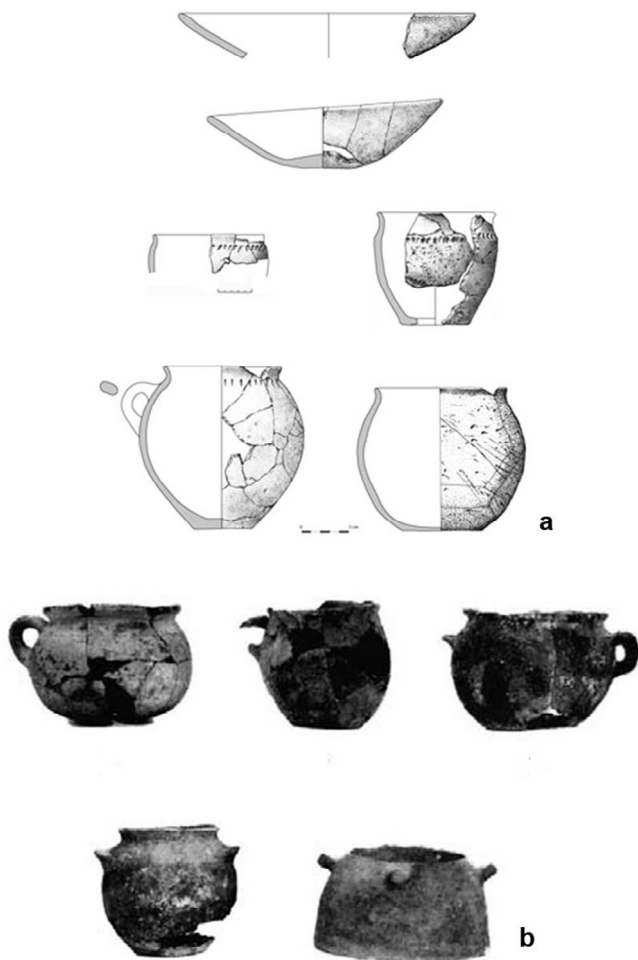
We are happy to endorse this reconstruction since it relates vessel function to behavioural significance in a novel way. Moreover, the scenario does allow for a situation where foreign and local potters co-exist. We can also support this line of reasoning by considering briefly what the technological innovation of handmade ceramics

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<sup>50</sup> In the case of Malta, Sagona's (2008) attempt to reverse the stratigraphic sequence at the Borġ in-Nadur huts – so that phase II B3 follows on from the Tarxien Cemetery phase – allows her to argue for ceramic 'affiliations' between the two phases (pp. 494-496). The problems with the reading of what she terms 'ambiguous elements in the stratigraphic record' (p. 494) have been discussed elsewhere in this volume (chapter 3).

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Rautman 1988.

<sup>52</sup> Delgado and Ferrer 2007: 26.



**Figure 9.8.** Selection of handmade pottery from Phoenician Cerro del Villar (a) and Motya (b) (after Delgado and Ferrer 2007).

implies for those accustomed to specialised production on a fast wheel. For although several excavations have by now been conducted in the Phoenician homeland none have turned up handmade pottery in layers which are of interest to us here, those

dated to the 9th, 8th and 7th centuries BC. The pottery published from Tyre and Sarepta, for example, is all made on a fast wheel and the pottery production process implied by the discovery at these two sites is one related to a workshop industry not household production. One could suggest that early Phoenician prospectors did not have specialist full-time potters in their ventures westwards for such individuals would have had to form part of a larger team each responsible for a task: from raw material (clay, temper) procurement to pot formation using wheel technology and firing in sophisticated kilns<sup>53</sup>. Potters trained in traditional pot-making and firing methods – at the household level, for instance – would have adapted quicker to new ecological niches because they would have possessed more skills than the specialist responsible for one task only<sup>54</sup>. And at the household level, it is likely that the pot-making tradition was one based on fashioning vessels by hand even because ethnographically it is known that it allowed potters to work with lower quality and less thoroughly processed raw materials<sup>55</sup>.

The individuals we seek to identify in that process of mobility which took the early Phoenicians to the west must have been those familiar with clay and sources of clay, had experience of its properties, and were knowledgeable about water and fuel sources. Given the size of the ecological niches which the Phoenicians occupied in their earliest ventures – we think here about the limitations of life on small offshore islands with an average size of a few hectares – it is more than likely that individuals of native origin may have had a role in facilitating access to mineral resources on the mainland. And in the course of such information exchange came knowledge related to the production of the right vessel shapes – even ones unknown back home – and the right fabric for the right task. The popularity of some pieces at regional level – for example, the one-handled ‘cooking pot’ known in Malta, Sicily, Carthage, and Sardinia – is testimony to the fact that once introduced the model was taken up fast, produced on a wheel, and became an integral part of the new lifestyle that sustained it.

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<sup>53</sup> Arnold 1985: 224.

<sup>54</sup> Arnold 1999: 77.

<sup>55</sup> Sinopoli 1991: 122.

SITE	POT. NOS	SHAPES	CONTEXT DATE	REFERENCES
<b><i>Thapsos</i></b>				
Tomb 1	1	Lamp	Thapsos I-III	Orsi 1895: coll. 96-97, fig. 3
Tomb 6	1	Handled cup	Thapsos III	Orsi 1895: col. 101, fig. 7
Tomb 22	3	Bowl, pedestal basin	Thapsos II	Orsi 1895: coll. 109-101, fig. 15
Tomb 26	2	Handled cup	Thapsos I	Orsi 1895: col. 112, fig. 19
Tomb 27	1	Handled cup	Thapsos I	Orsi 1895: col. 112.
Tomb 34	1	Juglet	Thapsos II-III	Unpublished (exhibited at Syracuse Museum, inv. No. 14735)
Tomb 38	1	Juglet	Thapsos II-III	Orsi 1895: col. 123
Tomb 64	1	Juglet	Thapsos I-III	Orsi 1895: col. 135, fig. 52
Tomb E	4	Bowl, juglet, jug	Thapsos (generic)	Gentili 1951: 215-216
Tomb D	2	Juglet	Thapsos I-III	Pelagatti, Voza 1973: 37-38 (nos 88, 92), pls 9.88, 8.92
Complex A, rectangular room	4	Handled cup	Thapsos I-III	Pelagatti, Voza 1973: 44 (nos 139-140), pls 9.139, 140; Voza 1973, p. 148, fig. 8.
Area to the south of Complex B	4	Handled cup	Thapsos (generic)	Pelagatti, Voza 1973: 44-45 (nos 138-141), pl. 9.138-140.
North area, circular hut	2	Bowl, jug	Thapsos III	Pelagatti, Voza 1973: 45 (nos 142, 143).
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>			
<b><i>Cozzo del Pantano</i></b>				
Tomb 13	4	Juglet	Thapsos II	Tanasi, this volume
Tomb 23	21	Juglet, bowl, pedestal basin	Thapsos I-III	Tanasi, this volume
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>			
<b><i>Plemmirio</i></b>				
Tomb 23	1	Juglet	Thapsos (generic)	Orsi 1891: 132, pl. 11.21
<b><i>Matrensa</i></b>				
Tomb 6	7	Juglet, bowl, pedestal basin	Thapsos II	Orsi 1903: 147, pl. 11.6

**Table 9.1.** Maltese-type pottery in Middle Bronze Age Sicily.

SITE	POT. NOS	SHAPES	CONTEXT DATE	REFERENCES
<b><i>Molinello</i></b>				
Tomb 1	2	Juglet	Thapsos II	Orsi 1902: 415, fig. 4
<b><i>Ognina</i></b>				
Sondage B, spit 1	1	Pedestal basin	Thapsos (generic)	Bernabò Brea 1966: 44, 65, pl. 46.2-3
Sondage D, spit 1	1	Bowl	Thapsos (generic)	Bernabò Brea 1966: 45, 65, pl. 46.6.
Sondage E, spit 1	1	Bowl	Thapsos (generic)	Bernabò Brea 1966: 47, 65, pl. 46.1
Sondage F, spit 1	1	Bowl	Thapsos (generic)	Bernabò Brea 1966: 47, 65, pl. 46.4-5
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>			
<b><i>Grotta di Calafarina</i></b>				
Cave	1	?	Thapsos (generic)	Guzzardi 1997-1998: 92, no 37.
<b><i>Vendicari</i></b>				
Pantano Sichilli area	1	Bowl	Thapsos (generic)	Guzzardi 1991-1992: 772
<b><i>Grotta Chiusazza</i></b>				
Trench R, stratum II	1	Bowl	Thapsos (generic)	Tinè 1965: 237 (no. 431), 239, fig. 18.1, pl. 36.1-5
<b><i>Ortigia</i></b>				
Archbishopric courtyard	1	Handled cup	Thapsos (generic)	Orsi 1919: 486, fig. 77
Unknown provenance	1	Bowl	Thapsos (generic)	De Gregorio 1917: 146- 147, pl. 41.8
<b>Total pieces</b>	<b>68</b>			

Table 9.1. (cont.) Maltese-type pottery in Middle Bronze Age Sicily.

SITE	POT. NOS	SHAPES	CONTEXT DATE	REFERENCES
<b><i>Cannatello</i></b>				
Area of re-use of MBA settlement	?	Closed shapes	Phase III (Recent BA II, Final BA I)	Levi 2004: 237; Jones <i>et al.</i> forthcoming.

**Table 9.2.** Maltese-type pottery in Late Bronze Age Sicily.

SITE	POT. NOS	SHAPES	CONTEXT DATE	REFERENCES
<b><i>Thapsos</i></b>				
Complex C, rectangular space (quadrant L/31)	4	Jugs, basin	Cassibile	Voza 1980-1981: 678, pl. 119,4-5, 9, 12.
Quadrangular space SE of Complex B (quadrant XLVIII/33)	1	Jug	Cassibile	Pelagatti, Voza 1973: 49, no. 158, pl. 9:158; Voza 1973: 149, fig. 9a
Rectangular space of Complex A (between quadrants L/30, L/29 and L/30)	3	Jug, jars	Cassibile	Unpublished (on display at Syracuse Museum)
Space in the southern area of habitation quarters	4	Jugs, jar	Cassibile	Voza 1973: 154-156, fig. 13; unpublished.
North-central area, quadrant XLIV/22	1	Juglet	Cassibile	Unpublished (on display at Syracuse Museum).
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>			
<b><i>Polizzello</i></b>				
East side, area of Hut 2	1	Bowl	S. Angelo Muxaro – Polizzello	Tanasi and Vella forthcoming.
<b>Total pieces</b>	<b>14</b>			

**Table 9.3.** Maltese-type pottery in Final Bronze Age Sicily.

SITE	POTTERY	CONTEXT DATE	REFERENCES
Bahrija <i>Peet's excavations</i>	4 frags of strainer jug of Pantalica North type 1 frag. of plumed Cassibile-type pottery 1 frag. of strainer pot of Ausonian II type	Pantalica North – Cassibile/ Ausonian II	Peet 1910: pl. 14, 28, 32; Evans 1953: 75, pl. 14,7; Unpublished.
<i>Trump's excavations</i>	1 frag. of strainer jug of Pantalica North type 34 painted frags. of Ausonian II type	Pantalica North – Cassibile/ Ausonian II	Unpublished; Trump 1961b: pl. 16.
Total	41 sherds		
In-Nuffara <i>Trump's notebook</i>	1 bell-shaped lid with triple handle of Pantalica North type	Pantalica North	Unpublished
Tas-Silg	1 frag. Ausonian II type	Ausonian II	Mallia 1966: 50, pl. 35.20.
Unkown provenance	1 frag. of Pantalica North-type basin	Pantalica North	Unpublished
<b>Total pieces</b>	<b>44 sherds</b>		

**Table 9.4.** Late and Final Bronze Age Sicilian pottery found in sites in the Maltese islands.

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**Nicholas C. Vella** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Classics and Archaeology at the University of Malta. He co-directs several research projects in Malta and has co-edited *Debating Orientalization: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Change in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Equinox, 2006).

**Davide Tanasi** PhD is Adjunct Professor of Archaeology and Ancient History at Arcadia University – The College of Global Studies. He has authored several publications about Mediterranean prehistory including *La necropoli protostorica di Montagna di Caltagirone* (Polimetrica, 2008) and *La Sicilia e l'arcipelago maltese nell'età del Bronzo Medio* (Officina di Studi Medievali, 2008). He is co-director of the Archeomatica Project (IPLab, University of Catania) aimed to develop new digital tools for archaeological research and the preservation of cultural heritage.

**Maxine Anastasi** graduated with a BA (Hons) degree in Archaeology in 2007 and completed a research MA in Roman Archaeology under the supervision of Prof. Anthony Bonanno at the University of Malta. Her research involves the contextual study of Late Punic and Roman period pottery in the Maltese islands. She participates in several research projects, all involving the Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Malta. Her work includes post-excavation analysis related to the publication of the final report of the Department's excavations at Tas-Silġ, and assisting the ceramic specialists on the Għar ix-Xiħ (Gozo) excavation project, the Żejtun Villa excavation project, and the Malta Survey Project.