

*Domesticating landscapes: Sicily and the Maltese Islands in the  
Later Neolithic and Eneolithic Ages (IV-III millennium BC)*

MASSIMO CULTRARO

**Introduction**

The Late Neolithic and the early phases of the Eneolithic period in Sicily and Malta are an ideal theatre for island archaeology in general, and in particular for exploring the relationships between islands and the extra-insular world (Evans 1977), according to the most up-to-date studies on the Mediterranean island communities, specifically the Aegean in the Early Bronze Age (EBA) (Broodbank 2000).

In the last decades an increasing amount of archaeological research has been focused on the long-term interconnections between the Maltese Islands and Sicily during the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC (Cazzella 2000a; 2000b; Cultraro 2000; Procelli 1981; 1991) (Fig. 1.1). Whereas specific studies on the EBA Castelluccio culture have provided significant data in order to establish the main cultural relationships between Sicily and Malta (Bernabò Brea 1966; Procelli 1981; Bonanno 2001), the investigation of the Late Neolithic Period and the early Eneolithic does not seem to have received great emphasis, except for rare cases (Cazzella 1994; 2000a; Giannitrapani 1997).

Malta and Sicily are a special case with regard to their later cultural evolution, especially after about 3500 cal. BC when both islands were involved in independent developments. The result was the emergence of different cultural trajectories, such as the monumental temple architecture in Malta (Renfrew 1973: 147-166; Bonanno *et al.* 1990-91: 192), whereas in the case of Sicily local and external networks flourished in the same period.

How can we explain this divergence in terms of extra-cultural interaction? Could we interpret these changes only in terms of movements? Or migration of small and distinct people from Sicily to the Maltese Islands? (Trump 2002: 38) Or

rather in the direction of a broader system of inter-regional contacts in the central Mediterranean basin?

The spread of the incised pottery in many areas of the Mediterranean, such as Sicily/Aeolian Islands (Spatarella pottery), Malta (Zebbug Ware) Southern Italy (incised ware from Calabria) and north-western Greece (Scratch Crusted Ware), appears to reflect articulated networks of communication that can be explained not only in terms of population movements.

The question is whether the extra-interaction system between Malta and Sicily was the result of direct and regular contacts (Cazzella 2000a), or whether these long-term relationships were a part of a macro-level phenomenon involving the central Mediterranean basin during the later 4th millennium BC.

In view of the above, the aim of the present paper is firstly to investigate the new data found in Sicily and to compare them with the contemporary cultures of the south-western Balkans and north-western Greece during the transitional phase from the Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age. I shall focus on the analysis of the Zebbug pottery and those assemblages that were geographically closest to the Maltese islands. Here I shall not attempt to review, in detail, the meaning of the term “Copper Age”, or *Periodo Eneolitico* according to the Italian scholars, since it is a conventional and, in some case, arbitrary definition which embraces various assemblages and pottery styles in the period between c. 3800 cal. BC and 2400 cal. BC (Leighton 1999: 91-93). This definition will be used for describing a wider chronological framework, but the adoption of Eneolithic Age, in terms of a different phase from the previous Neolithic period, is not reasonable enough to explain the complex socio-economic changes involving the Sicilian communities at the end of the 4th millennium BC.

### **Originality and Diversity of the early Eneolithic Age in Sicily**

Since the pioneering work of L. Bernabò Brea and M. Cavalier upon the sites at Spatarella and at Castello on the island of Lipari (Bernabò Brea & Cavalier 1980: 470-494; Cavalier 1979), it has been widely accepted among scholars that the appearance of the incised pottery (Spatarella phase) is indicative of a transitional stage from the Diana Culture to the early Eneolithic Age. A gradual move away from Late Neolithic red wares to darker burnished and incised wares is clearly discernible in the stratigraphies of several sites on the Aeolian Islands and in Sicily.

A specific feature of the Spatarella assemblage is the incised decoration, consisting of rows of triangles frequently located within the inner part of deep bowls and, more rarely, in the body of jars (Cavalier 1979: fig. 23-24; Cazzella

2000a: fig. 1: 5-7) (Fig. 1.2d-j). Another characteristic motif is the 'ladder-pattern' which occurs on the larger jar forms, many of which are well burnished (Martinelli 2001: fig. 1) (Fig. 1.2a-b).

The evidence from the Aeolian Islands best illustrates the changing ceramic production, by showing the gradual transformation from Late Neolithic Red Wares to darker burnished and incised pottery (Spatarella phase). As I will clarify further, a similar degree of transformation is discernible in other parts of the Mediterranean basin during the middle of 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, providing a solid support for the periodisation of the early Eneolithic in Sicily and in the Maltese islands.

An excellent chronological marker for the Spatarella phase in the Aeolian Islands is the conical bowl, with a spreading rim and decorated with an incised row of triangles on the inner rim (Fig. 1.2d-j). In the Etna region, shallow bowls of this category are documented in some sites along the Simeto valley; for example, they occur in Trefontane, near Paternò (Catanzaro *et al.* 1975-76: 21, fig. 5.69) and in the Cave of Capritti (Adrano), an unpublished deposit with a stratigraphy covering the main phases of the Eneolithic period (Cultraro 1997: 136). In this latter site the stratigraphical sequence assures that shallow bowls with incised triangles in the inner side are documented in the same level which also contains San Cono-Piano Notaro ware.

Further inland, near Bronte (N-W slopes of the Etna volcano) the *Riparo della Serra*, a cave deposit still unpublished (Cultraro 1997: 136), provides a reliable stratigraphic sequence. Stratum 4 was characterised by few burnished, grey, incised decorated pottery and shapes, related to the late Diana culture or Spatarella. The upper level (stratum 3) includes dark burnished ware and a small group of incised pottery decorated with large triangles and broadly scratched lines, comparable with the early Eneolithic Calafarina style of southeastern Sicily (Orsi 1907). Among the considerable variety of pottery from stratum 3 there is a jar with an ovoid-shaped body and bell-shaped neck, which can be compared with similar pear-shaped vessels from the Zebbug phase (Fig. 1.3).

The presence of incised pottery in the Eneolithic cemetery at Piano Vento, near Palma di Montechiaro (Agrigento), confirms the spread of this pottery class in the south-western part of the island (Castellana 1995). The cemetery comprises two spatially separated burial groups that can be related to two different chronological phases. The pottery assemblage from the eastern funerary cluster is mostly characterized by a painted class ware that appears to be different, in shape and decorative pattern, from the Conzo Style (Castellana 1995: 27-38) (Fig. 1.5.B:2). The burnished ware, related to the San Cono-Piano Notaro culture, represents the

most common pottery group, whilst the incised triangles on the external surface of the carinated bowls, as well as the cut-out patterns, are very popular (Fig. 1.5B:1, 3-4).

Conversely, the burials of the western cluster show some remarkable differences in the pottery assemblage and in the decorative system. Among the dark burnished pottery the incised triangle motif occurs on a group of carinated bowls, but this decorative pattern appears infrequently in the inner part of the dish (Castellana 1995: figs. 57-60) (Fig. 1.5C:1,3). The impressed dots and a combination of large broad cut-out motifs and incised dots, sometimes filled with red ochre or white substances, occur frequently in several varieties of open forms, as the pottery assemblages from Tombs 26 and 27 suggest (Castellana 1995: 127-130, pls. 107-114). Moreover, one should stress that among the burials of the western side the painted Dark on Light ware largely occurs in small jars with baggy bodies and in carinated open forms (Castellana 1995: figs. 66, 72; 75, 77). (Fig. 1.5C:2, 4).

The analysis of the pottery leads to conclude that the differences in the pottery assemblage between both funerary areas should be interpreted in terms of chronological sequence. In fact, the eastern burial group can be dated to earlier than the western side burials, where the painted wares mostly occur (Fig. 1.5). A group of carinated and round-bottomed large bowls from the cemetery at Piano Vento (Castellana 1995: 82, figg. 57-60), which are decorated with incised triangles, represents the first occupation of the area (Fig. 1.4: 1-3). The affinities with the Spatarella ware from the Aeolian islands is mostly limited to the incised motifs, but the large presence of carinated profiles, which are absent in the Late Neolithic Spatarella phase, synchronizes the pottery class with incised triangles to the same phase when the San Cono-Piano Notaro ware was in use. It is worth noting that a similar pottery variety is discernible within the cave sites from Mount Etna mentioned above, where the carinated bowls with incised triangles follow the conical open shapes with a similar decorative motif, as the sequence at the Riparo della Serra (Bronte) suggest.

Close parallels with the pottery group from the western burials at Piano Vento, dated to the early Eneolithic period, can be found in some important sites on the south-eastern coast of Sicily. A carinated bowl with offset rim from Casalicchio-Agnone shows a decorative pattern with triangles upon the rim and a couple of lines on the body (McConnell 1985: 106, CLC028) (Fig. 1.4.4). Indeed, two shallow bowls decorated with similar patterns are reported from Piano Notaro at Gela (McConnell 1985: 117, 124, CSR088, CSR106).

Given the evidence from Piano Vento and from the stratigraphic deposits in the Etna region, there is now evidence to argue for a greater degree of the incised pottery in the early Eneolithic in Sicily (Tusa 1992: 239-240). However, a review of the dating and distribution of the deposits suggests that there is relatively little to support the notion of chronological homogeneity of the incised pottery in Sicily. The presence of discernible stratigraphy at some sites makes it possible to consider an internal evolution of the incised pottery on the basis of presumed developmental sequences of form and decoration (Fig. 1.5). Given these considerations, we can conclude that:

1. Triangles incised on the inner rim of shallow bowls (Spatarella type) represent the decorative pattern documented in a transitional stage from the late Diana culture to early Eneolithic Age. This reconstruction is supported by the stratigraphic sequence within sites of the Etna region (Fig. 1.5.A).

2. Triangles incised on the external surface of vessels, such as in Piano Vento (eastern group tombs) and Piano Notaro, suggest a position later than the Spatarella's pottery assemblage (Fig. 1.5.B). In the same phase we include the broad cut-out lines motif and the presence of the early painted pottery examples from Tomb 17 at Piano Vento (Fig. 1.5.B:2).

3. The tombs of the western group at Piano Vento provide the evidence for the late phase of the cemetery. Significant changes on the pottery and on the decorative system suggest a later position for this tomb group (Fig. 1.5.C). The painted black on light ware includes small jars decorated with groups of irregular lines. The decorative system and pattern scarcely developed, thus possibly allowing the dating of this stage to when the painted style of Conzo is attested in the eastern region of Sicily. The broad cut-out line patterns are also documented and incised decoration is extremely common, consisting of broadly scraped lines, zigzag lines and drilled dots carried out before firing.

### **Malta before the Temples**

Given the chronological sequence of the early Eneolithic Period in Sicily as proposed above, we can now examine the contemporary cultural assemblage from the Maltese islands.

The Zebbug pottery assemblage lacks obvious local antecedents, but it shows clear connections with contemporary material from Sicily and the Aegean-Balkans area during the second half of the 4th millennium BC (Trump 1961). Vessels are handmade using a soft fabric, fired at a relatively low temperature. They have well smoothed surfaces and are fairly light in colour (Trump 1996: 31-

32). A detailed analysis of the full range of vessel forms in the Zebbug phase is relatively difficult since shapes are not rigidly standardised. Some characteristic shapes appear foreign to the local ceramic repertoire, showing clear parallels with ceramic traditions documented in the central Mediterranean (Evans 1953: 49-50, 78).

Two fragments of incised pottery decorated with triangles were reported from Santa Verna in Gozo, where they occur in a level containing mixed Grey Skorba and Zebbug wares (Trump 1966: 45, fig. 44a-d) (Fig. 1.6:1-2). We are dealing with a mixed context, where pottery of the Mgarr type apparently seems to be absent. However, J. Evans, in his review on Maltese prehistory, mentions some sherds with Mgarr phase decoration being found in T. Ashby excavations in 1911 (Evans 1953: 46). The conclusion, therefore, is that the deposit of Santa Verna cannot be considered in terms of chronology.

More remarkable evidence was found at Skorba in Malta. According to D. Trump, three sherds with incised triangles are documented in a level containing Grey Skorba pottery (Trump 1966: 45) (Fig. 1.6:3-4). In the case of the evidence recorded from the AF Trench, it is worth noting that the level was beneath the Zebbug phase. The stratigraphic sequence, however, is not clearly discernible and there is suspicion that the sherds may be related to the Zebbug phase rather than the Skorba phase. In fact, the fragments from Santa Verna mentioned above, and those from a disturbed deposit immediately above the Red Skorba shrine at Skorba, could suggest a possible early stage in the development of the Zebbug phase.

The most difficult question is to correlate this category of incised pottery with the cut-out ware known as the Mgarr Phase. Since the work of D. Trump on the Skorba site, it has been suggested that the Mgarr ware may be an intermediate phase between Zebbug and Ggantija phases (Trump 1966: 31-32). However, in a recent synthesis on the prehistory of Malta, the Mgarr pottery group is considered not as a distinct chronological phase, but as a local pottery repertoire (Stoddart 1999).

The *status quaestionis* is really more complex and it needs to be explained. The review of the dating of the early stage of the Eneolithic Age in Sicily suggests that there is relatively little evidence to support the notion that the Mgarr pottery is a chronological phase in itself. As noted above, the analysis of the pottery from the cemetery at Piano Vento confirms that the broad cut-out technique is documented in a stage later than the occurrence of the incised ware of the Spatarella type. Moreover, the stratigraphic evidence from the Grotta Chiusazza includes the occurrence of a pottery group decorated with broadly scratched “hair lines”, known

as the Calafarina style, in the same level associated with San Cono-Piano Notaro pottery (Tinè 1965: 174-175, pl. VI 13-19). A similar association between Scratch ware and incised pottery is attested in stratum 3 at Riparo della Serra, which represents the level following the Spatarella phase (see above).

According to these statements, it seems that the Mgarr pottery assemblage could suggest a pottery class dated to the Zebbug phase rather than being a distinct phase.

Equally, the recent data from the Brochtorff Circle Tomb demonstrates that the Zebbug phase is not homogenous in its sequence and appears to include two different stages according to the analysis of the pottery and decorative system (Malone *et al.* 1995). In terms of a relative chronology, the evidence from the Brochtorff Circle provides significant elements for dating a specific decorated pottery group in a late stage of the Zebbug sequence or in a proto-Ggantjia group. In fact, the Ggantjia dates in the later 4<sup>th</sup> millennium cal. BC fit better with the radiocarbon dates of the early Eneolithic of the Italian peninsula (Skeates 1994, with references) than the early Zebbug period dated to the late 5<sup>th</sup> millennium cal. BC, which also overlaps with the conventional chronology proposed for the Red Skorba phase (Trump 1995-96).

Another series of elements should be mentioned here. Firstly, in the Zebbug phase a certain amount of painted ware, decorated with red or brown patterns on a cream or yellow surface, cannot be considered as an isolated class, but it should be examined in the light of the contemporary evidence from the early Eneolithic in Sicily, as the pottery assemblage from Piano Vento suggests (Trump 1966: 40, fig. 38; Giannitrapani 1997: 211). In this case, we could be dealing with a specific pottery production which may have been imported from Sicily, or locally produced pottery imitating Sicilian models. The second element is the occurrence of the hemispherical 'button' using the *Spondylus* shell, with a V-shaped perforation, in Malta. This is a category of ornaments documented in Tomb 5 at Ta' Trapna (Evans 1971: fig. 58) and in the Brochtorff Circle tomb in Gozo (Malone *et al.* 1995: fig. 24). This latter evidence confirms the Zebbug phase date, but use of this type of ornament may have continued into later phases, as suggested by the five examples from Tomb 5 at Xemxija (Evans 1971: pls. 43-44). A significant parallel for the V-perforated button is the example found in Tomb 2 at Uditore, Palermo, where the pottery assemblage can be related to the late stage of San Cono-Piano Notaro Culture (Cassano-Manfredini 1975: fig. 18).

### **Sicily and Malta: Dialogues in the islands**

The general picture of the early Eneolithic in Sicily, as has been reconstructed above, provides significant evidence to re-assess the Maltese sequence prior to the Temple Period. If we compare the Sicilian early Eneolithic sequence with the pottery style groups from Malta, we can conclude that there are new and intriguing data in order to synchronize the relationships between both areas. The correlation can be summarised as follows (Fig. 1.7):

1. The Spatarella phase can be related to the Grey Skorba phase or to the transitional phase from Grey Skorba to Zebbug period. This phase is marked by the appearance of the shallow bowl type, decorated with triangles incised on the internal rim.

2. The next phase includes the eastern group tombs at Piano Vento. The cut-out decorated pottery can be compared with the same ceramic production from Mgarr. In terms of the relative chronology, this stage can be synchronised with the early Zebbug culture.

3. The next phase encompasses the western group tombs at Piano Vento and it is related to the late Zebbug culture, attested in the Brochtorff Circle.

To sum up, according to the general view widely accepted within Maltese archaeology (Trump 2002: 49-55), the Zebbug phase (c. 4100/3800 cal. BC) provides a period of successful transformations of the local social and economic structure, representing the beginning of the “ritualisation process”, as S. Stoddard has pointed out (1999: 139), leading to the construction of megalithic temples in the next phase. Conversely, the early Eneolithic period in Sicily reflects changes in the economic and social structure, showing a society dominated by competition and greater mobility, perhaps related to growing social tensions and greater insecurity (Tusa 1992: 233-240; Leighton 1999: 87-91). In spite of radical differences in terms of social organisation, considerable contacts were maintained with other areas of the Central Mediterranean, shown by the strong similarity in appearance and decorative elements found in the pottery of Sicily and the Maltese Archipelago (Evans 1953: 78; Trump 2002: 38, 55).

### **The origin of the early Eneolithic incised ware: A look at Western Greece and the Balkans**

I turn now to the previous question, the definition of comparative material for the early Eneolithic of Sicily and Maltese Islands, in order to provide a solid confirmation of the chronological sequence, as I have suggested above. Many of the ceramic types investigated from Sicily and Malta show possible Aegean



parallels which have been pointed out by L. Bernabò Brea (1980: 679) and D. Trump (2002: 55).

A potentially fruitful area of investigation is north-western Greece and the Adriatic coast of Albania and Epirus, where recent excavations have produced new data for the chronology of the transitional phase from Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age. The incised decoration, characterised by light lines, has close parallels with a specific ceramic group documented in some cave deposits in the islands of Ithaka and Leukade. The stratigraphic sequences found in the Polis Cave at Ithaka, in the Cave of Evgiros (Choirospelia) at Leukade, and also in the site of Aphiona at Kephallonia, provide a significant key chronological indicator to establish the occurrence of the incised ware in a late stage of the Final Neolithic Period, dated to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (Souyouzoglou-Haywood 1999: 6-7).

Recent excavations in the Cave of Drakaina (Poros) on the island of Kephallonia, confirms this stratigraphical sequence and also provides new elements for reconstructing the general development of the Late Neolithic cultures in north-western Greece and the Balkans area (Miranda-Chatziotou, Stratouli 1999: 75, fig. 6). The pottery with incised motives, noted as *Scratch Crusted Ware* or “Incised Prosymna Ware” (Blegen 1937: 375), appears to be attested in many deposits on Mainland Greece, such as Lerna and Corinth, in latest Neolithic levels, immediately preceding the Early Helladic I (Phelps 1975: 300).

In the Cave of Lakes, at Kastria of Kalavryta (Achaia), incised pottery was exclusively found in the level III, dated to Late Neolithic II. Within this level a fragment of a shallow bowl decorated with incised triangles is attested in association with linear and cut-out incised ware (Sampson 1997: 245-246, fig. 70). We can also mention the evidence from the Aspis Hill at Argos, where beneath the level dated to EH I, an Eneolithic or Late Neolithic dated stratum has been found. The ceramic assemblage includes burnished pottery and some characteristic incised decorated pottery (Aram Stern 1996: 240-241) (Fig. 1.8). One fragment decorated with dots and lines can be compared with the Mgarr pottery from Malta and with the San Cono-Piano Notaro culture in Sicily (Aram Stern 1996: fig. 15).

The evidence from the cave deposits in the Ionian Islands provides some important elements for defining the chronology and the ceramic production in north-western Greece during the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. This sequence can be compared to the culture and chronological sequence of the Western Macedonia and Adriatic area. The incised pottery, using a mixture of scratch-decorated ware and the cut-out decorated category, is the most significant chronological key for defining the later phase of Neolithic Period.

In this perspective I focus on two important stratigraphic deposits in order to explain the periodisation of the Late Neolithic and early Eneolithic in the Western Balkans. In the settlement at Dërsinik, in Albania, incised pottery decorated with triangles and light lines is documented in a level dated to the latest Neolithic Period (Lera 1988: pls. XVI-XVII). The stratigraphical sequence recorded at Gladnice, in the Kosovo region, includes an early level of occupation characterised by scratch-decorated ware relating to the Late Neolithic Balkan group of Bubanj-Hum Ia - Vinca C2-D, whereas the higher stratum produced channelled burnished pottery which can be compared with the Baden-Kostolac group (Garasanin 1973: 610, fig. II, 4-5).

Moreover, the Proto-Baden culture in Kosovo and Bosnia, traditionally synchronized with the Bubanj-Hum Ib horizon, encompasses a category of pottery decorated by incised lines and rows of dots. This pottery assemblage is later than the scratched ware, suggesting that the date of introduction for the dot-decorated pottery is placed in an advanced phase of the Eneolithic Period in the Balkan region (Cultraro 2001: 220-222). The latter is important in synchronising the western Adriatic sequences with the periodisation of the early Eneolithic culture in Sicily and Malta.

### **A note on the chronology**

Radiocarbon dates from north-western Greece place the date for the latest Neolithic and the transitional phase to EH I, in the mid-4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (Douzougli-Zachos 2002: 126). In the case of Sicily, radiocarbon dates are really scarce (Leighton 1999: 91-93). Two samples from the Grotta Cavallo (Leighton 1999: tab. 4) suggest that the Piano Notaro culture may be dated to the middle of 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, allowing a closer synchronism to be made with the Adriatic Balkans and Western Greece (Cazzella 2000a: 89).

The evidence from Grotta Cavallo can be compared with the dates reported from South Italy and the Aeolian islands. The radiocarbon dated chronology for the Late Neolithic/Early Eneolithic provides two dates, from Spatarella on Lipari (4885± 50 BP) and at Grotta della Madonna, Praia a Mare (Calabria), levels 23-21 (4770± 55 BP, Salerno-Vanzetti 2004: 226-227).

In the case of Malta, recent radiocarbon dates from the Brocchtorff Circle provide corroboration of the dating for the Zebbug and Ggantjia phases. In fact, the Zebbug phase appears to fall between 4200 and 3600 cal. BC (Malone *et al.* 1995: 342: table 10) and it appears to be earlier than might have been expected.

## **Conclusion**

The data examined above lead to the conclusion that contacts between the Maltese Islands and Sicily were continuous during the early Eneolithic Age, and perhaps on a scale that hitherto has gone unappreciated. The linkage between both insular districts has often been stressed in terms of exchange processes such as the case for ochre, as L. Maniscalco has pointed out (1989), greenstone axes and other perishable items (Skeates 1995). The incised pottery, in the scratch-decorated and cut-out ware varieties, is a distinctive style of pottery which appears in the Central Mediterranean during the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. In a broader context, the spread of this ceramic assemblage clearly documents that a complex network of communications connected many different areas of the Mediterranean basin, in particular, Sicily, South Italy, the Maltese Islands and the south-western Balkans, including the Ionian Islands.

The radiocarbon dates from the Balkans suggest a position earlier than the other areas involved in this phenomenon of transmission of the incised pottery. However, I do not believe that this means we should accept the traditional interpretation of ethnicity and people migration, according to some scholars who interpreted the emergence of the incised pottery in early Eneolithic Age in terms of large-scale people movements (Maran 1998). At the same time, the interpretation of S. Tinè, who suggested that the early Eneolithic incised pottery in Sicily was of a local development deriving from the incised wares of the Neolithic period, does not appear to be a highly defensible hypothesis (Tinè 1965: 175). These contacts should be explained using a different perspective that suggests small scale, directional and continuing movements.

The selective adoption of specific decorative patterns and of shapes clearly indicates that the emergence of the incised pottery depended on the different degree of diversity and complexity at an inter-community level. The incised pottery forms only a part of a broader inter-regional communicative system and it cannot be separated from the emergence of significant changes in the funerary ritual. The development and growth of collective burials and the use of the rock-cut tombs in Malta and Sicily represent the best current evidence for inter-community contacts (Giannitrapani 1997: 211; Cazzella 2000B). Rock-cut tombs are documented in the Western Balkans during the late 4th millennium BC, for instance at Vucedol and Gradac (Schmidt 1945: 41-47), and are also reported in north-western Greece which is, as noted above, the area showing the best comparisons with the early Eneolithic in Malta and Sicily.

The different impact and adoption of these stimuli coming from the south-western Balkans and Aegean world were highly selective and dependent upon its

appropriation within specific local strategies. These involved the creation and maintenance of contrasting identities among the local groups and it explains the different trajectories and the different results found in Malta and Sicily, although both were active elements of a wider inter-regional network of communication in the Central Mediterranean basin.

### Bibliography

- ALRAM STERN E. 1996. *Die Ägäische Frühzeit. I. Band. Das Neolithikum in Griechenland*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- BERNABÒ BREA L. 1966. Abitato neolitico e insediamento maltese dell'età del Bronzo nell'isola di Ognina (Siracusa) e rapporti tra la Sicilia e Malta dal XVI al XIII sec. a.C. *Kokalos* 12: 40-69.
- BERNABÒ BREA L. & M. CAVALIER 1980. *Meligunìs Lipara IV*. Palermo: Flaccovio.
- BLEGEN C.W. 1937. *Prosymna. The Helladic Settlement preceding the Argive Heraion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BONANNO A. 2001. Malta tra Africa e Sicilia. Indizi dei contatti marittimi nel II millennio, in C. Giardino ed., *Culture marinare nel Mediterraneo centrale e occidentale tra XVII e XV secolo a.C.* Rome: Begatti Libri: 97-107.
- BONANNO A., T. GOUDER & C. MALONE 1990-91. Monuments in an island society: The Maltese context, *World Archaeology* 22:2: 190-205.
- BROODBANK C. 2000. *An Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CASSANO S.M. & F. MANFREDINI 1975. Recenti ricerche nelle necropoli eneolitiche della Conca d'Oro. *Origini* 9: 153-271.
- CASTELLANA G. 1995. *La necropoli protoeneolitica di Piano Vento nel territorio di Palma di Montechiaro*. Agrigento: Assessorato beni culturali ed ambientali e della pubblica istruzione.
- CATANZARO C. *et al.* 1975-76. La stazione preistorica di Poggio Monaco nel territorio di Paternò. *Cronache di Archeologia* 14-15: 9-49.
- CAVALIER M. 1979. Ricerche preistoriche nell'Arcipelago Eoliano. *Rivista di Scienze Preistoriche* 34: 45-136.
- CAZZELLA A. 1994. Dating the Copper Age in Italy and adjacent islands. *Journal of European Archaeology* 2(1): 1-19.
- 2000a. Sicilia e Malta durante l'età del Rame. *Sicilia Archeologica* 98: 87-96.
- 2000b. Due tradizioni alle origini dell'ipogeismo in Italia e a Malta?, in *L'ipogeismo nel Mediterraneo* (Proceedings of Int. Conference, Sassari May 1994). Sassari: 511-518.

- CULTRARO M. 1997. The Cyclops before the Greeks: the emergence of civilization in the Etna region, in B. De Vivo, M. Contini, C. Albore Livadie (eds). *Volcanism and Archaeology in Mediterranean area*. Trivandrum: 129-148.
2000. Considerazioni sull'architettura funeraria in Sicilia durante l'età del Bronzo Antico, in *L'ipogeismo nel Mediterraneo* (Proceedings of Int. Conference, Sassari May 1994). Sassari: 707-721.
2001. Aspetti dell'Eneolitico dell'Italia centrale nel quadro dei rapporti con la penisola balcanica e l'Egeo, in *Preistoria e Protostoria della Toscana. Atti della XXXIV Riunione Italiana di Preistoria e Protostoria*. Firenze: 215-233.
- DOUZOGI A. & K. ZACHOS 2002. L'archéologie des zones montagneuses: modèles et interconnexion dans le Néolithique de l'Épire et de l'Albanie méridionale, in G. Touchais, J. Renard (eds). *L'Albanie dans l'Europe préhistorique* (BCH Suppl. 42). Paris: 111-145.
- EVANS J.D. 1953. The prehistoric culture sequence of the Maltese archipelago. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*. 19: 41-94.
1971. *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: A Survey*. London: Athlone.
1973. Islands as laboratories for study of cultural process, in C. Renfrew (ed.). *The Explanation of Culture Change: Models in Prehistory*. London: Duckworth: 517-520.
- GARASANIN M. 1973. *Praistorija za tlu S.R. Srbije*. Beograd: Srpska knjizevna zadruga.
- GIANNITRAPANI E. 1997. Sicilia e Malta durante il Neolitico, in S. Tusa (ed.). *Prima Sicilia. Alle origini della società siciliana*. Palermo: Regione siciliana, Assessorato al turismo: 201-211.
- LERA P. 1988. L'habitat du néolithique récent a Dörsnik. *Iliria*: 21-68.
- LEIGHTON R. 1999. *Sicily Before History*. London: Duckworth.
- MALONE C. *et al.* 1995. Mortuary Ritual of 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium BC Malta: the Zebbug Period Chambered Tomb from the Brochtorff Circle at Xaghra (Gozo). *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 61: 303-345.
- MANISCALCO L. 1989. Ochre containers and trade in the Central Mediterranean Copper Age. *American Journal of Archaeology* 93.4: 537-541.
- MARAN J. 1998. *Kulturwandel auf dem Griechischen Festland und den Kykladen im späten 3. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* Bonn: R. Habelt .
- MARTINELLI M.C. 2001. Un'altra capanna nella località Spatarella di Lipari (ME)?, in *Studi di preistoria e protostoria in onore di Luigi Bernabò Brea*. Palermo : Regione Siciliana, Assessorato regionale dei beni culturali e ambientali e della pubblica istruzione : 89-104.
- MCCONNELL B.E. 1985. *San Cono - Piano Notaro - Grotta Zubbia Ceramics in Sicilian Prehistory*. Ph.D. Dissertation: USA: Brown University.
- MIRANDA-CHATZIOTOU E. & G.STRATOULI 1999. To spelaio Drakaina ston Poro

- Kephalonias, in *Praktikà tou St' Diethnes Panionio Synedrio*. Athens: 61-76.
- ORSI P. 1907. La Grotta di Calafarina presso Pachino. *Bullettino di Paletnologia Italiana* 33: 7-22.
- PHELPS W.W. 1975. *The Neolithic Pottery Sequence in Southern Greece*. Ph.D. Dissertation. London: University of London.
- PROCELLI E. 1981. Il complesso tombale di contrada Paolina ed il problema dei rapporti tra Sicilia e Malta nella prima età del Bronzo. *Bollettino d'Arte* 66: 83-110.
1991. Aspetti religiosi e apporti transmarini nella cultura di Castelluccio. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 1(2): 252-266.
- RENFREW C. 1973. *Before Civilisation: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe*. London: Pimlico.
- SALERNO A. & A. VANZETTI 2004. *Preistoria e Protostoria in Calabria*, in *Preistoria e Protostoria in Calabria* (Atti XXXVII Riunione Scientifica Istituto Italiano di Preistoria e Protostoria). Firenze: 207-234.
- SAMPSON A. 1997. *To spelaiou ton Limnon sta Kastria Kalabryton*. Athens.
- SKEATES R. 1994. A radiocarbon date-list for prehistoric Italy (c. 46,400 BP-2450 BP/400 cal. BC), in R. Skeates, R. Whitehouse (eds). *Radiocarbon Dating and Italian Prehistory*. London: Accordia Research Centre, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London 147-288.
1995. Animate objects: a biography of prehistoric "axe amulets" in the central Mediterranean region. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 61: 279-301.
- SOUYOUDZOGLOU-HAYWOOD C. 1999. *The Ionian Island in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age 3000-800 BC*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- STODDART S. 1999. Long-term Dynamics of an Island Community, in R.H. Tykot, J. Morter, J.E. Robb (eds). *Social Dynamics of the Prehistoric Central Mediterranean*. Accordia Studies n. 3. London: Accordia Research Institute, University of London: 137-147.
- SCHMIDT R.R. 1945. *Die Burg Vucedol*. Zagreb.
- TINÈ S. 1965. Gli scavi nella Grotta Chiusazza. *Bullettino di Paletnologia Italiana* 74: 123-248.
- TRUMP D. 1961. Skorba, Malta and the Mediterranean. *Antiquity* 35: 300-303.
1966. *Skorba*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1995-96. Radiocarbon Dates from Malta. *Accordia Research Papers* 6: 173-177.
2002. *Malta: Prehistory and Temples*. Malta: Midsea Books.
- TUSA S. 1992. *La Sicilia nella Preistoria* (2th ed.). Palermo: Sellerio.

*Figures*

**Fig. 1.1** Neolithic and Early Eneolithic exchange networks between Sicily and Malta (adapted from Leighton 1999).

**Fig. 1.2** Pottery assemblage from Spatarella, Lipari (from Cavalier 1979).

**Fig. 1.3** Two-handled jar from Riparo della Serra (Bronte), stratum 3 (early Eneolithic Period); 2. Two-handled jar from Malta, Zebbug Phase (after Evans 1971).

**Fig. 1.4** Carinated bowls with incised triangles (1-3 from Piano Vento); 4 from Casalicchio Agnone (Licata); 5-6 from Piano Notaro (Gela); 1-3 from Castellana 1995; 4-6 from McConnell 1985.

**Fig. 1.5** Proposal of periodisation of the Late Neolithic/early Eneolithic Period in Sicily, according to the ceramic sequence.

**Fig. 1.6** Fragments of conical bowls with incised decoration from Santa Verna in Gozo (1-2) and Skorna in Malta (3-4) (from Trump 1966).

**Fig. 1.7** A comparative synchronism between Sicily and the Maltese islands from Late Neolithic to the early Eneolithic period.

**Fig. 1.8** Incised pottery from the Aspis Hill at Argos, level pre-Early Helladic I (after Alram Stern 1996) <.