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Feasting at Roca: Cross-cultural encounters and society in the southern Adriatic during the late bronze age

This is the submitted version (pre peer-review, preprint) of the following publication:

Published Version:

Feasting at Roca: Cross-cultural encounters and society in the southern Adriatic during the late bronze age / Iacono, Francesco*. - In: EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY. - ISSN 1461-9571. - STAMPA. - 18:2(2015), pp. 259-281. [10.1179/1461957114Y.0000000074]

Availability:

This version is available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/684095> since: 2019-05-20

Published:

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1179/1461957114Y.0000000074>

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(Article begins on next page)

This is the final peer-reviewed accepted manuscript of:

[European Journal of Archaeology](#) , [Volume 18](#) , [Issue 2](#) , 2015 , pp. 259 - 281

The final published version is available online at:
<https://doi.org/10.1179/1461957114Y.0000000074>

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Feasting at Roca: Cross-Cultural Encounters and Society in the Southern Adriatic during the Late Bronze Age

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This study examines some assumptions related to Late Bronze Age interaction between the Aegean world and central Mediterranean societies. It asserts that, contrary to what is often assumed, this relationship was extremely important and had considerable social consequences. It is argued that such an importance can be appreciated only by acknowledging that interaction is constituted by real world social encounters. On the basis of this insight, the contextual evidence from the site of Roca in Apulia is analysed. It is proposed that archaeological remains here represent a series of public events — i.e. large feasts — possibly entailing the participation of people of different cultural backgrounds and in which a subtle strategy of representation of relative distance and closeness was adopted to promote interests within Roca's community. Such interests are interpreted with reference to the increasing connections between the eastern and western portions of the Mediterranean, substantiated in the circulation of metal and pottery models and types.

Keywords: southern Italy; Late Bronze Age; Aegean-type pottery; feasting; interaction; Mycenaeans

The East-West Connection, 1500-1000 BC

During the second half of the second millennium BC, the Mediterranean Sea connected two different worlds. On the one side, the East, with about two millennia of state societies often organized in urban centres, with written historical records, and relatively market-oriented forms of economic life. On the other side, the West, characterized arguably by communities small in size and less complex as far as political and economic organization are concerned. At one end of the same body of water stands ancient history, at the other prehistory.

Although these differences are, from many points of view, a literary cliché in need of deconstruction, they nevertheless capture some real macroscopic diversities that archaeological research through the decades has noted and tried to explore with the aid of diverse interpretative paradigms. The importance of East-West connections in the shaping of social dynamics all over the Mediterranean during prehistory has been highlighted and downplayed as a result of the alternating success of different theoretical perspectives (Sherratt, 1997: 1–7). Despite these shifting views, it is now generally accepted that it is misleading to fragment the study of Late Bronze Age interaction dynamics and that it is necessary to interpret them from a pan-Mediterranean perspective, embracing not only the Aegean area, but also regions to the east and west (Blake & Knapp, 2005; Broodbank, 2011, 2013). However, because of its chronological primacy in developing some of the social forms that characterize modernity (e.g. states), the East is normally more willingly accepted as influential in shaping the sociocultural developments of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean as a whole. This is not equally true for the connections to the western portion of the Middle Sea, which are normally deemed of negligible importance until well into the Iron Age (e.g. Sherratt, 1993).

Not long ago, Blake (2008: 25) wrote in a general re-examination of the evidence of interaction between Italy the Aegean world: ‘The social changes in Italy in the Late Bronze Age are geographically inflected taking distinct regional forms and occurring at different rates that are not easily tied to the Mycenaean presence’. This view is based on the distribution of imported or locally imitated Aegean-type pottery (a material that represents the quintessential evidence for Late Bronze Age connectivity), and most notably on the comparison of the different amounts uncovered west and east of Greece. While this kind of material is plentiful in Egypt and in the Levant, its attestation to the west is much more sparse, indicating the sporadic nature of contact and the limited importance of its consequences (Blake, 2008; a similar view is expressed also by E.S. Sherratt, 1999). However, Blake’s argument does not take into consideration a fundamental aspect for the assessment of the importance of any archaeologically detectable phenomenon — this relates to the units of consumption of any archaeological material. Indeed, Aegean-type material in the eastern Mediterranean has been uncovered in large urban sites, often representing the political centre of states that extended for thousands of square kilometres (as in the case, for instance, of Ugarit; see Garr, 1987: 34; Yon, 2006: 9). In the West, the size of communities was much smaller. For instance, Middle and Late Bronze Age sites in Apulia, one of the areas more exposed to Mycenaean influence, averaged some 3-5 ha (Bettelli, 2002: 39). This means that, having smaller populations, Bronze Age communities of the central Mediterranean were consumed far fewer resources, both locally produced and imported, than large urban centres in the Levant. Yet this does not necessarily imply that the interactions to the west were less significant than those to the east, and actually, in some specific cases, the exact contrary can be argued, i.e. that the impact of contact with the Aegean polities in small central Mediterranean communities was much larger than in Levantine cities (a similar view is held also by Cazzella & Recchia, 2009). This is because there, the impact of contact was ‘diluted’, so to speak, over a much larger number of inhabitants. The same was clearly

not true in smaller villages to the west, where a larger proportion of residents possibly had the chance to get in contact directly with visitors.

The key element is obviously the social context in which inter-societal interaction occurred (on the specificities of south-eastern Italy, see Cazzella, 2010). To this extent, it is necessary to bear in mind that, as in any situation of this kind, what comes into contact are actually not whole societies but groups within them. According to the view adopted here, these groups are likely to have had conflicting interests whose clash resulted in dynamics of social change. External relationships could have played a vital role in reinforcing the status of one group within this internal renegotiation, and this process could have been accompanied by the use of various strategies, often involving the emulation of a partner (e.g. Gell, 1986; Sherratt, 1993; Stein, 2002; Earle, 2002: 371–73). This model is particularly relevant in situations where interaction is not balanced, i.e. when there is a (real or perceived) dominant role of one of the groups taking part in the interactions. In these cases, emulating and adopting cultural traits belonging to partners could have signalled the existence of a special relationship between the parties involved, a common ground that facilitated communication as well as any economic and social transaction entailed by it (what has been named *salient affiliation*; see Schortman, 1989). This process of emulation could have involved both the adoption of material cultural items and, more subtly and more effectively, the introduction of new social practices.

Weighing Partners, Meeting Partners

It has been debated several times (e.g. Bietti Sestieri, 1988) whether or not the interaction between the Aegean world and communities of the central Mediterranean was unbalanced or not. Such an assessment is not easy to make and, indeed, it can be argued that its result will derive primarily

from the notion of ‘weight’ adopted. The risk is in introducing elements that, consciously or unconsciously, embody biases and unjustified assumptions about the nature of the societies and groups involved. A possible solution to this problem might be assessing the greater or lesser weight of the parties only on the basis of their familiarity with the means through which interaction was carried out (boats), and which undoubtedly gave an advantage to those who mastered them, who were able to move rapidly, controlling the transportation of precious exotic goods. This is, of course, a general and imperfect criterion, as the presence of iconographic and textual evidence pointing to the existence and diffusion of maritime *savour-faire* will undoubtedly have a considerable effect on it. In order to assess this issue briefly in the specific context discussed here, suffice to note that the developed mercantile sector of Aegean polities (as attested by the widespread recovery of Minoan/Mycenaean-type pottery, see Van Wijngaarden, 2002: 275–81) seems not to be present in societies inhabiting the central portion of the Middle Sea, at least for the early part of the Bronze Age. This is not to say that traces of maritime activity are completely absent. Certain zones, i.e. the southern Tyrrhenian or Malta, have produced evidence of familiarity with boats in the form of representations (Pace, 2004: 72–74; Martinelli et al., 2010: 310) and possible wrecks (Bernabò Brea, 1985), while a general propensity towards sea-faring activities can be reasonably argued on the basis of the geographic configuration of the settled islandscapes of the Aeolian and Adriatic archipelagos. If not the result of later activity, a complete local Middle Bronze Age ceramic container accidentally recovered in the deep waters off the Cape of Leuca (Auriemma, 2004: 131, no. 414) at the southern tip of Apulia is also likely to be connected to maritime activities. Yet, despite the existence of such hints, it cannot be forgotten how crucial maritime matters were within Aegean polities. It is well known that, since the early part of the second millennium BC, sailing represented the standard sea-faring technology in the Aegean (Broodbank, 2010). This basic difference underlies, at least until well into the Late Bronze Age, a greater acquaintance and a more effective use of the means through which connections were carried out on the part of

Minoan/Mycenaean actors, and hence the fundamentally unbalanced nature of the interaction between the Bronze Age societies of southern Italy and Aegean in favour of the latter.

At a fundamental level, it is necessary to acknowledge an apparently trivial and often overlooked aspect: interaction (in this case as much as in any other) was actually constituted by the unfolding of a series of micro-events that were real-world social encounters in which people came into contact. In such encounters, the social relationship between the parties involved it is likely to have been staged in such a way as to promote the interests of the interacting groups. My use of the term ‘staged’ is intentional, as on these occasions performance, appearance and impression projected probably had a noteworthy importance.

It is rarely possible to grasp this event-level in the archaeological record, but not impossible. I will try to demonstrate, via the analysis of one of these event-like contexts, that among the range of practices that began to be emulated at some central Mediterranean sites during the Late Bronze Age were wine drinking and food sharing. My focus will be on a site located at the immediate interface between the East and the West — Roca in south-eastern Italy. In doing so, I will initially shift attention away from the impersonal routes visible over the *longue durée* to their tangible effects in terms of performed social practices. First, however, it is necessary to introduce what feasting is and how it has been recognized in our specific case-study.

Enacting Interaction: The Feast

Feasting, understood as the sharing of food and (often alcoholic) beverages, has recently been the subject of considerable attention within Mediterranean archaeology (Halstead & Barrett, 2004; Wright, 2004; Hitchcock et al., 2008), even if the interpretative potential of feasting episodes

involving people of different cultural backgrounds has been little explored so far (among the few exceptions are Tyson-Smith, 2003 and Eriksson, 2008). Theoretical discussion on feasting has re-evaluated the role of commensality within the political arena of pre-modern societies. The contribution of ethnoarchaeology has proven to be particularly useful in this regard, highlighting the possibility of reconstructing past behavioural patterns connected to feasting on the basis of material cultural remains (Dietler & Hayden, 2001). Most of these studies have recognized ritual significance to be an element common to most examples of feasting, although obviously ritual as a concept does not necessarily entail reference to a fully-fledged religious ideology (Dietler, 2001: 69–75; Hitchcock et al., 2008).

The motivations for feasting are potentially endless, ranging from *corvée* feasts aimed at the mobilization of labour, to celebration and formalization of alliances, coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, funerals, or even compensation feasts for an aggression (Hayden, 2001: 28). Of course, exploring which of these types of events are represented in a specific feasting occasion goes well beyond what can be achieved through the analysis of the archaeological record alone. More useful, in relation to the kind of evidence that archaeology provides, is the essential list of indicators of feasting events suggested by Hayden (2001: 40, Table 2.1), based on a number of ethnographic examples. These include:

- Rare or labour intensive plant or animal species;
- Quantity of food items;
- Evidence of waste of food items;
- Special ‘recreational’ food;
- Presence or absence and relative abundance of prestige items;
- Destruction of wealth or prestige items (via intentional breakage or burial).

For Dietler (2001), it is possible to recognize some broad categories of feasts related to their strategic aims. Of particular interest to our case-study is the concept of diacritical feasts. In Dietler's (2001: 85) words, a diacritical feast 'involves the use of differentiated cuisine and styles of consumption as a diacritical symbolic device to naturalize and reify concepts of ranked differences in the status of social orders or classes'. In other words, the chief characteristic of these feasts is the intention to distinguish a specific group of people taking part in the event, in order to stress their special status within the feasting arena. As we shall see, all these concepts seem particularly helpful in disentangling the archaeological evidence from Roca.

Feasting at Roca

Roca is a coastal settlement on the southern part of the Adriatic coast of Apulia, at the point where the stretch between eastern and western shore of the sea is the narrowest. The site's overall extent today is about 3 ha, but, because of the local geology, characterised by soft calcareous rocks, it has been estimated that its surface has been heavily eroded over the course of time. The site was probably located on the edge of a small lagoon (similarly to many other sites in the regions, e.g. Coppa Nevigata; see Cazzella et al., 2012) whose exploitation likely played an essential role in favouring the early occupation of the site as well as in enhancing its potential as a landfall in later periods. More than twenty years of research conducted at Roca by the University of Salento have shown that the site has been occupied continuously from the Middle Bronze Age to historical times surviving two main destructions in the Apennine and Protovillanovan period.

The prehistoric phases that have been most extensively investigated are those related to the latest part of the Bronze Age, but the Middle and Recent phases of the Bronze Age have also been

widely explored (Table 1). In the Recent Bronze Age, Area IX, along the inner side of fortifications to the north of the main gate (Figure 1A), seems to have experienced an intense activity and, because of this, the focus of much of the following discussion will be on this zone. I will also pay close attention to the assemblage of wheel-thrown fine painted Aegean-type ceramics (including both imitations and proper imports) that can be easily distinguished from local coarse handmade pottery (*impasto* in Italian), which was the standard ceramic product of southern Italy in this period. There are two main reasons for discussing this specific category of material. The more opportunistic one relates to the large amount (by central Mediterranean standards) of this pottery retrieved at Roca. Indeed, this site has produced about half of the total finds of Aegean-type material uncovered in the whole of the central Mediterranean (about 5000 finds, the exact number for the whole excavation is still uncertain). But also, because of its nature as fine tableware, Aegean-type pottery is the obvious medium to be explored if we are to analyse evidence related to food and drink consumption. Below, all of the counts mentioned are of families of sherds (i.e. vessels, see Orton et al., 1993), with the single exception of the calculation of the proportion between Aegean type and *impasto* material, which is based on a simple sherd count.

During the Middle Bronze Age (Table 1), the coast of Apulia was populated by a number of relatively small, fortified sites and Roca was one of these, although it had the largest fortification walls in the region (some 21 m wide in correspondence of the gate; Scarano, 2011, 2012). In this period, occupation at the settlement seems to have been organized mainly (although not exclusively) in the stripe immediately within the fortifications as well as in semi-underground structures scattered around the site (Scarano, 2012: 38–39), which in some cases probably functioned as habitations. The amount of Aegean material retrieved in the deposits dating to this chronological horizon is extremely small — in line with what was happening at other Apulian sites, and much lower than that of other areas of the central Mediterranean. At this time, indeed, the area

that seems to constitute the main node in this east-west connection is the Tyrrhenian, with sites such as Lipari presenting large quantities of imported material (Van Wijngaarden, 2002: 207–28).

By the end of the Middle Bronze Age, i.e. during the Apennine period, Roca seems to have experienced a rather dramatic fire destruction primarily evidenced by the obliteration of the imposing fortifications. During this event, seven individuals remained entrapped in one of the wall's posterns and died of asphyxiation (see Scarano, 2011). Although still poor in numerical terms, the evidence related to the interaction with the Aegean world at the end of the Middle Bronze Age occupation (LH IIIA in Aegean terms) is interesting, as some of the ceramic shapes found dating to this period appear to have been related to drinking (e.g. Guglielmino in Scarano, 2012: 346, no. 187). Recent chemical analyses by Jones and others (Guglielmino et al., 2010) have indicated, already at this stage, the existence of local production of Aegean-type drinking vessels. This was not limited to low quality copies with generic Aegean affinities, but actually involved the selective adoption of specific elements of various origins and their conscious blending. This is the case, for instance, with a locally produced cup (Figure 2) that, as noted by Guglielmino, has a fairly distinctive Minoan motif, quite rare in mainland Greece; and yet, looking at the shape of the vessel, it can be recognized as a relatively deep bowl — an element relatively rare on Crete and more frequent in the Mycenaen world (see Guglielmino et al., 2010: 274–75, no. 74 with bibliography).

However, it is during the following phases, dating to the Recent Bronze Age, that the network of external relationships of Roca appears to have experienced a sudden blossoming, with the great majority of Aegean-type finds dating to the period between LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC early in Helladic terms. By now, in the wider Mediterranean setting, the Tyrrhenian area and Sicily had experienced a certain decrease in the attestation of Aegean-type material, whilst the Adriatic area up to the mouth of the Po River had started to produce more findspots. At Roca, some of the most

important evidence dating to this period can be found in Area IX. At the base of a long sequence here, it has been possible to recognize two deposits (Phase 1 and 2), one on top of the other, which filled up a large natural depression in the bedrock. These are more spatially limited than the other subsequent phases, which have been investigated over a much larger area, but have yielded the largest concentration of Aegean-type pottery retrieved at the site.

Some chronological differences between these two deposits can actually be noted in the local material (Pagliara et al., 2008: 259), while, within the assemblage of Aegean-type material, the situation is more complex. Although vessels potentially datable to LH IIIB2-C early (e.g. monochrome deep bowls) are present, the overall distribution of shapes and the presence of a few older vessels (e.g. a stemmed bowl dating to LH III B1; see Pagliara et al., 2008: 266, no. I.5) seems to imply that, although this is definitely not a ‘closed’ context, the bulk of the material of Phase 1 is compatible with activities occurring in a horizon corresponding to LH IIIB1-2 (Figure 3). In my opinion, given this relatively long chronological interval, as well as the relative dispersion of fragments belonging to the same vessel, these activities possibly involved not only intentional deposition, as originally argued by the excavators, but also the accumulation of discarded material, as suggested by the detailed analysis of the material. It is also possible to tentatively connect to this last type of activity the heterogeneous fragmentary bronze items recovered (Pagliara et al., 2008: 251). The presence of discarded material seems to be even more consistent in the subsequent Phase 2, where there is also a definite decrease in measurements indicating how much on average vessels can be reconstructed. This is measured by the average Estimated Vessel Equivalent, which measures the proportions of vessels preserved where 1 represents a complete rim or base (see Table 2 and Orton et al., 1993). Phase 2 can be less problematically dated to LH III C early (as perhaps suggested by the carinated bowl in Figure 7.2), even if it is necessary to bear in mind that, since we are not in Greece but in southern Italy, these dates need to be taken with extreme caution.

From a functional point of view, in both Phase 1 and 2, open shapes definitely predominate, implying an interest in ceramics themselves rather than their contents. Despite this predominance, there are also a few significant closed vessels which connect Roca to the wide Aegean trade network of the mature Mycenaean palatial times (LH III A-B), such as coarseware stirrup jars (which, according to provenance analyses by Jones and Levi, appear to have been produced in western Crete; see Guglielmino et al., 2010, no. 364, 430). Interestingly, dippers in unpainted pottery are also found from Phase I; dippers are ubiquitous in domestic contexts of mature Palatial times in Greece (but are very rare in the central Mediterranean), and are recorded almost exclusively in this phase. Lustrous decorated ceramics (the fine painted tableware) makes up almost the totality of the assemblages of both Phase 1 and 2 but for a handful of exceptions. Other classes of Aegean-type material, i.e. kitchenware (attested in the region at the nearby site of Scoglio del Tonno, but not at Roca; see Gorgoglione et al., 2006), or figurines (sporadically found at Roca) are not encountered in these two contexts. During Phase 1, Aegean-type material is well represented in the assemblage (109 vessels), constituting more than the 3 per cent of the total. Such a calculation takes into consideration the whole extent of Area IX (measuring some 1241 m² overall) but if we take into account only the smaller sub-sample investigated in the years 2005-2006 that has revealed the highest concentration of ceramic material, the proportion of Aegean-type vessels reaches a staggering 22 per cent, confirming that much of the material from this period was concentrated in a relatively small area (measuring about 60-70 m² depending on the phase).¹

The subsequent deposit, i.e. Phase 2, marks a further increase (274 vessels, about 4 per cent over the whole area and almost 23 per cent in the smaller 2005-2006 sample) and corresponds to

¹ The quantification strategies adopted here are not detailed in full for reasons of space. Suffice to know that the smaller sample area in 2005-2006 was adopted to calculate more precisely the proportion between local *impasto* and Aegean-type pottery. There are no substantial differences in the presence of shapes of Aegean-type pottery in this specific sub-sector, since the overwhelming majority of the material of Phases 1 and 2 come from this area.

the largest amount of Aegean-type material ever found at Roca (as well as elsewhere in the central Mediterranean). Open shapes seem to predominate again and, among them, is an overwhelming majority of deep bowls and craters, which with more than twenty vessels constitutes altogether about the 52 per cent of the assemblage. These two shapes have a specific significance within the Mycenaean repertoire, for they appear to be quite unambiguously related to the consumption of wine. According to Borgna (2004: 265) and Podzuweit (2007: 57–69), ring-based craters and deep bowls unequivocally represent drinking sets, where the large vessel imitates in shape the individual cup on a larger scale (or vice versa). Other kinds of drinking sets, intended this time as a number (normally two to three) of identical vessels, are also attested in the assemblage (e.g. Figure 4) and, again, mostly (but not exclusively) comprise deep bowls and craters. According to Nordquist (1999) as well as other scholars, this feature is characteristic of feasting assemblages in Greece since the Middle Helladic period, and similar patterns are also attested on Crete (e.g. at LM Kommos, see Rutter, 2006: 458–59, no. 40/8–10). While pottery sets are not unique to the archaeological record of Roca in southern Italy, what is remarkably different and extremely Aegean in character is the presence of a vessel with a specialized function like the crater, a large bowl used to mix wine with water. At the *Casa Centrale* of Broglio di Trebisacce in Calabria, another context for which the presence of communal consumption of food/drink has been postulated, pottery sets included almost exclusively large closed containers and cup/bowls of various sizes (with the occasional addition of jugs), but nothing comparable to a crater, although it cannot be ruled out completely that some *impasto* vessel performed the same function (Castagna in Bettelli, 2002: 247–49, for other examples of drinking practices in Late Bronze Age Italy see Iaia, 2013).

The significance of the features identified in the ceramic record is emphasized if the context of their deposition is taken into consideration. Indeed, the deposit of Phase 2 was constituted by a very thick stratum of reddish-brown soil, which included abundant remains of different species of

wild and domesticated animals, often preserving cut-marks and traces of partial combustion as well as several thin ash layers. This complex deposit was covered by the remains of the contemporary deposition of a number of large portions of animals including cattle, pigs and sheep/goats (Figure 5). Taphonomy and the sediment around the bones indicate that the portions were deposited when their soft tissues were still intact, and that therefore the meat had not been consumed. Similar animal depositions were also identified inside the deposits of Phase 1 although these were far less well preserved (Pagliara et al., 2008: 271–72).

The physical sequence indicates that although the animal parts were not perfectly contemporaneous with the pottery deposits, since the latter were likely to have been formed over a certain amount of time, they can probably be attributed to the same kind of activities, also similar to those which occurred earlier, during Phase 1. Therefore, even if it is not possible to surmise that the animal depositions and the pottery deposits belonged to an individual event, it is possible to safely argue that they both related to a number of similar events reiterated over time in the same area. The deposition of the portions of animals was subsequently sealed by branches, which left leaf-impressions on a thick crushed limestone pavement (measuring up to 80 cm in depth) laid on top of them.

Interpretations

In the preliminary publication of this context, the excavators highlighted its cultic significance (Pagliara et al., 2008: 276; Guglielmino, 2009: 186–88). This interpretation is also based on the subsequent use of the area during the Final Bronze Age, for which again a cult use has been suggested (Maggiulli & Malorgio, 2011). In this light, the animal sacrifices can perhaps be interpreted as a sort of foundation ritual potentially connected to a number of later structures (e.g.

the fortifications re-built in the subsequent Recent Bronze Age phases or a large ‘cult’ building dating to the Final Bronze Age; see Hunt, 2006; Pagliara et al., 2008). Without denying the importance of these aspects, it is also interesting to explore what the social implications of the practices attested may have been, and this is what will be attempted here, acknowledging also the impossibility of separating the ritual sphere from the social in a Bronze Age context.

With this in mind, it is now possible to look back at the criteria for feasting and note that many of them are met by Roca’s evidence. Indeed, there is what seems to be a ritual context, whose event-like nature is hinted at by the lack of consumption and sacrifice of the meat. Also, as previously mentioned, the concealing of the sacrificial deposit by a thick pavement is even more indicative of ritual significance, and can perhaps be paralleled in the widespread practice of foundation deposits (Hunt, 2006). A sacrifice, especially if conducted in the way attested here, undoubtedly constitutes a waste of food (in this specific case on a quite grand scale). Also, it can be noted that the food offered in the feast was particularly labour intensive. This statement is not valid only in relation to the amount of surplus needed to maintain some of the animals sacrificed (e.g. cattle). Taking into consideration earlier disarticulated remains, it can be hypothesized that, although not directly associated with the event in which the animals were sacrificed, they were nevertheless indicative of the range of foods consumed during similar feasts occurring in the area. Among these remains were numerous wild species whose procurement required a skilled and substantial hunting effort (Rugge in Pagliara et al., 2008: 270).

As for prestige items, in this (mature but not final) phase of the Recent Bronze Age, given its overall rarity within the central Mediterranean, Aegean-type pottery probably still had a halo of prestige, although this was definitely declining with the increased local production of Italo-Mycenaean pottery (Bettelli, 2002; Jones et al., 2005). Moreover, the consumption of a ‘recreational

food' such as wine, another of the proposed criteria, seems to be hinted at by the abundant presence of craters and deep bowls (Iacono, 2013a).

Last but not least, quantity is a point that requires a little more elaboration. What is interesting, in addition to what is attested, is what is missing. According to the Minimum Number of Individuals calculated, only on the animal skeletons most likely to be sacrificial these should represent three heads of cattle, two pigs and two sheep/goats (Rugge in Pagliara et al., 2008: 270). On this basis, it is possible to propose a conservative and cautious estimate of the amount of meat involved in the feasting event that was related to the sacrifice of the animals. Subtracting the weight of the portion deposited without consuming the meat, we still have a figure of about 160 kg of meat, enough to abundantly feed 530 people which, however we decide to estimate the population of a 3 ha site, would constitute the large majority of the population (see the Appendix for details of this calculation). Even supposing that this event was protracted over several days, the number of people that could have been fed (say 176, if three days) would still probably include a considerable portion of the inhabitants of the site.¹

Having assessed the scale of the event documented by the faunal assemblage from Roca, it is worth looking again at the ceramic record. As with the disarticulated animal remains, a perfect contemporaneity cannot be assumed between the pottery and the animal sacrifices. However, given the presence of similar depositions within Phase 1, it does not seem too hazardous to hypothesize that the ratio of different vessel classes and shapes recorded in the preceeding deposits of Phase 2 are expressions of similar practices. Fine Aegean-type tableware was not the only kind of pottery attested; alongside it was also copious local *impasto* pottery. The sample of this class of material analysed encompassed a wide range of possible uses — the majority of those normally performed through pottery (Figure 6). The shapes dominant in Phases 1 and 2, namely cup/bowls and *olle* (a

multifunctional vessel of variable size used for both storing and cooking), are extremely versatile and were arguably used for the most disparate functions required of a non-specialized set of domestic pottery (Recchia, 2004, 2010; Cazzella & Recchia, 2008). The presence of Aegean-type material in this period, therefore, does not seem to cover any ‘functional’ gap in the local production if not that related to wine serving/consuming. Interesting is also the almost absolute absence of shapes that in the Aegean world were used to serve food, such as shallow angular bowls, which are represented only by one specimen (Iacono, 2013a: 181). More importantly, comparative quantification has shown clearly that, although abundant throughout all the phases of the sequence, Aegean-type pottery from Area IX constituted a minority of the overall ceramic assemblage, and from these it is also necessary to subtract the vessels not connected to communal drinking (Figure 3). It is obviously possible that local vessels were also used to consume wine, together with the Aegean-type ones, but, if this was the case, there would still be a fundamental difference between those who had access to a proper Mycenaean cup during the feast and those who did not.

Discussion

The specific mode of deposition of the animals sacrificed at Roca Area IX, bears considerable significance in establishing the cultural background of those who were performing the sacrifice and therefore probably hosting the feasts. Indeed, although in recent and not-so-recent studies on Aegean ritual and religion many have stressed the possibility of non-burnt sacrifices in Aegean Bronze Age sacrificial practices (Marinatos, 1986; Bloedow, 1996; Nikoloudis, 2001), as a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of archaeological examples found in the literature report the use of fire at some point in the process (Halstead & Isaakidou, 2004; Whittaker, 2008). Also, the deposition of such large portions of big animals, their subtraction from the human domain with an act that is from many points of view similar to that of burial practice is, to my knowledge, not

attested in the Late Bronze Age Aegean. The deposition of disarticulated animal bones in tombs or cultic contexts as well as the burial of complete animals in tombs (e.g. at Vronda: Day & Snyder, 2004: 69–71; Archanes: Sakellarakis & Sapouna-Sakellarakis, 1997: 262; at various locales in Middle Helladic and Mycenaean Greece: Cavanagh & Mee, 1998: 33, 114–15) cannot be considered valid parallels, since they lack the main feature of ritual attested at Roca, i.e. the sharing of a consistent part of the victims' meat between the living and supernatural entities (whether gods or ancestors). As noted by Guglielmino (2009: 188), similar practices — though by no means identical — are instead described by Tunzi Sisto (1999: 144–47) at the hypogea from Trinitapoli, in northern Apulia, which were originally used for cult practices not directly connected with burials, and which therefore constitute a potential parallel for the ritual witnessed at Roca. Other potential comparisons are with the evidence from the site of Broglio, although here analogous sacrifices were located in a slightly later horizon (i.e. Final Bronze Age; see Masneri, 2006: 740). Overall, this suggests that, despite the large quantities of Aegean-type material retrieved, those in charge of setting up the feast were probably local people from the community of Roca. The extremely high proportion of Aegean-type material (substantially higher than that attested at some of the Levantine sites with the most evident traces of interaction with the Aegean, e.g. a mere 1 per cent is recorded at Ugarit; see Bell, 2006: 37) indicates that either the group that enjoyed a special treatment actually corresponded to selected individuals (i.e. important people within the community coming from different family groups) or that it included an entire age/gender sector (i.e. all men or women of a certain age, or similar), although distinguishing between these two hypotheses is impossible. The enactment of such a display strategy might have communicated two distinct messages at the same time. One might have been aimed at the local community, stressing a critical relationship in reasserting the predominant role of an interest group in the eyes of the other inhabitants. The other might have been directed at external partners (being actual people from the Aegean area or local intermediaries), highlighting the similarities between the groups coming into contact. The very fact

that Aegean-type material was indeed adopted with clear reference to wine consumption and within the context of a large-scale feast, a practice to my knowledge unattested outside of funerary ritual in Bronze Age Italy, suggests that making reference to the Aegean cultural cosmos was a priority for those organizing the feast. This, together with the imported nature of some of the vessels adopted, possibly indicate the direct involvement of people coming from the Aegean world. If this was the case, then the feast in Phase 2 of Area IX could represent an attempt by a local elite group to stress their closeness with their Aegean partners, within a critical social event, highlighting at the same time the distance between them and the rest of the population of the site, who could participate in the feast but could not have access to the consumption of wine and/or to the proper Mycenaean drinking vessel.²

All in all, the archaeological record suggests that something very similar to what has been defined as a diacritical feast was being recursively enacted at Roca in Area IX during Phase 2 (and perhaps also in Phase 1). The main difference with the concept as defined by Dietler (2001) is the fact that the affiliation sought might not have been between commoners and elite from the same societies, but between local elites and foreign visitors (either from the Aegean or intermediaries). And yet the social encounter of the feasts would have created a hybrid context belonging completely neither to one or the other of the societies involved, and in which this difference had become secondary. In the series of feasting events occurring in Area IX, a group of people, probably corresponding to those hosting the banquets, used a subtle strategy of exclusion in order to mark differences between different sets of people taking part in the feast.

The sharing of wine (or merely of wine cups) restricted to the two groups (visitors or the intermediaries of Aegean actors, plus their local partners) reinforced an inter-cultural class-based

² Control of the use of specific forms of fine Aegean-type tableware may also have occurred at Broglio where, as noted by Van Wijngaarden (2002: 243), cups and other dinner vessels were mainly concentrated at the *Casa Centrale* complex, which has been interpreted as the central dwelling of the site.

solidarity that probably had its economic rationale in the exchange of other goods. Among these, along with perishable goods, was probably already copper from Adriatic Northern Italy — an area that, as attested by precise parallels within the local ceramic repertoire, had strict links with the site of Roca, which constituted a fundamental stepping-stone on the route connecting Europe with the eastern Mediterranean (Pagliara et al., 2008: 256–58; Jung et al., 2011). The importance of this long-range link is witnessed in Greece in the popularity in late palatial and early post-palatial times of bronze shapes that clearly relate to European products (or more precisely Adriatic products; see Harding, 1984), such as, for instance, Naue II swords, Peschiera daggers, Matrei knives, and so on (Bietti Sestieri, 1973; Bettelli, 2004; Peroni, 2004). In recent times, some of these items have proven to have been produced with metal coming from north-eastern Italy where production was peaking (e.g. at sites like Acqua Fredda in Trentino; see Pearce, 2007: 76–77; Jung, 2009; Jung & Mehofer, 2013). It has also been surmised by many that the appearance and growth of popularity in the Aegean of the notorious Handmade Burnished Ware, a class of handmade pottery characterized by peculiar Italian-looking (or, better, Sub-Apennine) shapes is perhaps to be connected to this same western connection (Pilides, 1994; Jung, 2006; D’Agata et al., 2012; see also Iacono, 2013b with comprehensive bibliography). A good illustration of how these influences probably worked on a wider Mediterranean scale, from the northern Adriatic to the Aegean, entailing different classes of materials, is offered by the considerable resemblance between four vessels, all carinated bowls (a shape that in the Mycenaean tradition is considered by some to be derivative of Sub-Apennine prototypes; see Rutter, 1990) and all decorated with a wavy line: an *impasto* version from the Villaggio Grande of S. Rosa di Poviglio in the Terramare area in northern Italy (Figure 7, no.1), an example in Aegean-type pottery from Roca (Figure 7, no.2), another from Tiryns (Figure 7, no. 3), and one more from Phaistos (Figure 7, no. 4; see Borgna, 2003: 449, Plate 23.68; Bernabò Brea & Cremaschi, 2004: 107, Figure 5, no. 5; Podzuweit, 2007: Plate 43.12 Iacono, 2013a: 506, Figure 5.3.10).

This northern Italian connection would survive for long, fully manifesting its importance only later in the Final Bronze Age phases at Roca, when one of the two hoards recovered in the large building previously mentioned included a good number of types with parallels in the north Adriatic area (Maggiulli, 2009).

Conclusions

In a world that is ever more connected and, at the same time, divided by invisible and yet powerful social and cultural boundaries, the analysis of second millennium BC connectivity, the very first occasion in which intersocietal contact operated in a truly pan-Mediterranean dimension, represents an important resource. This is because such an analysis allows us to make sense of the most basic functioning of interaction between societies characterized by profound organizational differences such as, for instance, the small-scale, kin ordered villages of the central Mediterranean and early urban states of the Aegean. In this paper, I have critically discussed and addressed some widespread assumptions related to the functioning and the relative importance of Late Bronze Age interaction between the Aegean world and the people inhabiting the central Mediterranean, challenging them through the analysis of a specific context in which this relation was exemplified. I have argued that, despite recent analyses suggesting the contrary, the relationship between the Aegean world and selected areas in the central Mediterranean was extremely important and had considerable social consequences. This relationship was, particularly during its earliest phase, unbalanced in favour of Aegean seafarers. I have also surmised that Late Bronze Age trade, as we know it through its material traces, was constituted by a collection of real world social encounters in which the balance of power and influence between participants was continuously renegotiated through the performance of specific actions and social rituals.

The contextual record from the site of Roca in Apulia has been analysed on the basis of these insights and the evidence from Area IX, Phase 2, has been considered likely to represent the material correlate of a series of large scale feasting events, evoking, but perhaps also involving, two different cultural spheres: Sub-Apennine (Italian) and Aegean. A relevant proportion of the population of the site is likely to have been involved in these events in which Aegean-type material may have been actively employed as a means to manipulate and negotiate internal power equilibria. The exceptional state of preservation of this context has made it possible to conceptualize the interaction between Aegean and southern Italian societies in a way that goes beyond generic notions of interaction as well as modernist trade-oriented interpretations, envisaging a possible example of the actual context of socialization in which this encounter took place.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on my recently concluded PhD research and incorporates much input from my supervisors, in particular Cyprian Broodbank, Todd Whitelaw and Corinna Riva, as well as my external examiners, Evangelia Kiriatzi and Ruth Whitehouse. The study of Aegean-type material from Area IX at Roca has been funded by the Institute of Aegean Prehistory, as well as by the Scuola Normale Superiore and the Italian Ministry of University Research (MIUR). Preliminary versions of this paper were presented at a seminar at the British School at Athens and at the University of Salento. I owe thanks to all those scholars who provided me with valuable feedback, including Anna Maria Bietti Sestieri, Annalucia D'Agata, Walter Gauss, Angelos Hadjikoimis, Yannis Hamilakis, Cosimo Pagliara, Kostas Paschalidis, and Melissa Vettters. I am also grateful to colleagues at the University of Salento: Luigi Coluccia, Vincenzo Spagnolo, and, in particular, Riccardo Guglielmino, without whose help and encouragement my research at Roca would have not been accomplished. A special 'thank you' goes to Emanuela Cervinara, Daria Palmisano, Gennaro

Schiaiano, and Arianna Trecarichi for their precious help with the *impasto* pottery quantification. Finally, I am very grateful to Riccardo Guglielmino and Peter Lieberman who commented on an earlier draft of this paper.

Appendix

The average ration for the last feasting event represented at Roca, Phase 2, is (arbitrarily but not unreasonably) set at about 300 g. The calculation of the overall amount of meat is based on the conservative estimates by Vigne (1991). For each bovine, an overall amount of 100 kg of edible meat has been postulated, while for pigs the figure is 40 kg and for sheep/goat 8 kg. This, multiplied by three cattle, two pigs and two sheeps/goats, totals 396 kg of meat. From these totals, it is necessary to subtract the weight of the buried parts that has been calculated as follows: for each leg one-quarter of the overall weight has been deducted, while for the heads and feet, one-tenth. The small segments of spine that were also found in connection are compatible with standard butchery practices and have therefore not been subtracted. There is one foot and one head of pig, and the same for sheep/goat, while there are nine cattle legs, making a total of 234.6 kg. The remaining meat amounts to 161.4 kg, which is equivalent to about 530 rations.

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Biographical Note

Francesco Iacono is a specialist in Mediterranean prehistory but his broader research interests include social theory, approaches to ceramics, and the history and politics of archaeology and heritage. He has collaborated with institutions in the UK, Italy, Greece, and Albania. His recently concluded PhD at UCL is a study of interaction in the Late Bronze Age of the southern Adriatic, including both the Italian and Balkan sides of the sea. He is assistant director of a research project (funded by Instap) aimed at the study and publication of Aegean-type material from the site of Roca.

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Figure Captions

FIGURE 1 (A) Location of Area IX at Roca; (B) location of Roca and of the other sites mentioned in the text. The shaded strip at the bottom of the plan represents the overall area of the Bronze Age fortifications.

After Pagliara et al., 2007

FIGURE 2 Local Aegean-type cup with Minoan motifs from Roca.

Drawing courtesy of Riccardo Guglielmino

FIGURE 3 Percentage of different Aegean-type vessels in Phases 1 and 2, Area IX, Roca. Total sample size = 78 vessels (only vessels diagnostic at shape level are considered, see Table 2 for overall figures).

FIGURE 4 Drinking set formed by two identical vessels from Roca, Area IX.

FIGURE 5 Parts of animals deposited without consuming the meat, Roca, Area IX

After Pagliara et al., 2008, fig. 24

FIGURE 6 Roca, Area IX. Percentage of different *impasto* vessels during Phase 1 and 2. Total sample size 400 sherds; diagnostics at shape level 346 sherds.

FIGURE 7 *Impasto* and Aegean-type carinated bowls; see text (after Borgna, 2003: 449, Plate 23. 68; Bernabò Brea & Cremaschi, 2004: 107, fig. 5.5; Podzuweit, 2007, plate 43.12).

TABLE 1				
PHASES OF AREA IX AT ROCA IN RELATION TO SOUTHERN ITALIAN AND AEGEAN CHRONOLOGIES				
Culture Italy	Mainland Greece	Crete	Roca Area IX	C14 (1σ)
Protovillanovan (FBA)	LH IIIC Late	LM IIIC	7	1117-977 cal BC
	LH IIIC middle	LM IIIC	6	not available
Subapennine (RBA)	LH IIIC middle	LM IIIC early	5	1258-1112 cal BC
	LH IIIC early		3-4	not available
		Trans. LH IIIB2-LH IIIC	LM IIIB late	
	LH IIIB2	1		
	LH IIIB1		LM IIIB early	
	Apennine (End of MBA)	LH IIIA2	LM IIIA2	
LH IIIA1		LM IIIA1		

SOURCE: Jung, 2006. Radiocarbon determinations (LTL, OxCal v4.01) after Pagliara, Guglielmino, et al. 2007: 356–57.
NOTE: MBA= Middle Bronze Age; RBA= Recent Bronze Age; FBA= Final Bronze Age.

TABLE 2			
SHAPE COMPOSITION OF PHASE 1 AND 2 ASSEMBLAGES			
Phase 1		Phase 2	
Shapes	FoS	Shapes	FoS
non id	10	Unidentified	26
non id closed	47	Unidentified closed	142
non id open	16	Unidentified open	64
Amphora/hydria/large jug	6	Amphora	5
Bowl	1	Carinated cup/ bowl	1
Champagne cup	1	Coarseware stirrup jar	1
Coarseware stirrup jar	2	Collar necked jar	1
Cup	3	Cup	1
Dipper	4	Deep bowl	18
Goblet	1	Dipper	1
Crater	3	Feeding bottle	1
Kylix	1	Crater	4
Lamp/brazier	1	Kylix	1
Lid	1	Lid	2
Mug	1	Piriform jar	1
Stemmed bowl	2	Shallow angular bowl	1
Stirrup Jar	3	Stemmed bowl	1
		Stirrup jar	2
		Straight-sided alabastron	1
Total:	109		274
Average EVE:	0.36		0.29

SOURCE: Iacono, 2013a

NOTE: FoS= Families of Sherds, EVE= Estimated Vessel Equivalent (see Orton et al., 1993)