Something Old, Something New and Something Borrowed -Appropriating Foreign Material Culture in the Late Bronze Age Aegean

Filip Franković

ABSTRACT

Objects of foreign origin found within a certain 'local' archaeological context have often been interpreted as objects of high social value (due to their exotic character and origin). However, such interpretations have often dealt with the unusual character of these objects rather than examined the dynamic process through which they have been received into a new cultural context. This paper aims to examine specific objects and their dynamic biographies, while at the same time analysing the oversimplified concept of foreignness. It deals with two specific objects of foreign origin which have been appropriated into new cultural contexts. Rather than being treated as passively received objects of great value, they are interpreted as active creators of their own biographies within the context of the Late Bronze Age Aegean.

The first example addressed in this paper is a Mycenaean-style krater found in the grave on the Ayasoluk hill near Selçuk (Ephesos). The krater was used as an urn for the deposition of cremated remains. As such a burial practice is not known from the Greek mainland at the time, its appearance in the context of West Anatolia directly questions its 'Mycenaean' character and shows a more dynamic relationship to the object itself. The second example is a well-known Egyptian stone vase found in the Neopalatial context at Kato Zakro. In this paper, its complex biography is presented and used to argue for a more dynamic character of personal biographies, which could have significantly influenced their perception in past societies.

The paper aims to question the concepts of foreignness, ethnicity and hybridity in the Late Bronze Age Aegean using the aforementioned examples. With its concluding remarks the paper aims to challenge some of the grand narratives of the Aegean prehistory, which are often hard to avoid in the newly proposed interpretations.

KEYWORDS

Late Bronze Age; Aegean; Anatolia; Egypt; appropriation; hybridity; entanglement.

INTRODUCTION

During the 2nd millennium BCE, the area of the Eastern Mediterranean witnessed a rise of intercultural contacts which reached its peak during the Late Bronze Age. Intercultural contacts spread through exchange networks, based primarily on maritime routes (e.g. Broodbank 2013; Emanuel 2016; Knapp – Demesticha eds. 2017). Although placed almost on the margin of the network and away from the most important geo-political events of the time, in comparison with the politically more important powers like Egypt or the Hittite Empire, the area of the Aegean served as an important link in the chain of exchange. As witnessed in the archaeological record, the material culture of Aegean provenance has been found all over the Eastern Mediterranean and vice versa.

Contacts of the Aegean with Egypt,¹ perhaps the most important political power of the time, ranged from diplomatic visits² to the exchange of goods³ or even artisans⁴ (e.g. Wachsmann 1987; Panagiotopoulos 2001; 2006; Bietak et al. 2007; Hitchcock 2008; Phillips 2008a; 2008b). These contacts often seem to be related to powerful elites and their taste for exotic objects (Panagiotopoulos 2013, 57).⁵

The interconnections between Anatolia and the Aegean in the Late Bronze Age have been widely discussed. These connections can be noted in a series of different relations ranging from diplomatic correspondence (e.g. Beckman – Bryce – Cline 2011) and movement of people (e.g. Mokrišová 2016) to connections in the religious sphere (e.g. Morris 2001), and are predominantly related to the 'Mycenaean' Greek mainland, although earlier connections with 'Minoan' Crete should not be neglected. However, the key to examining the relationship between Anatolia and the Aegean during the Late Bronze Age lies in the material culture present in the archaeological contexts of both areas. Nevertheless, the archaeological data outline a rather unbalanced picture.

Objects which unambiguously originate from Central Anatolia are rather rare on the Greek mainland, Crete and the islands of the West Aegean (CLINE 1991). The opposite is the case with objects originating from Greece and discovered in Anatolia. Although there are few Aegean-type finds in Central Anatolia (MEE 1998, 141), the circumstances are quite different in West Anatolia and on the islands of the East Aegean, where a large quantity of objects originating both from the Greek mainland and Crete has been found both in the contexts of settlements and cemeteries (MEE 1978). It seems that the 14th and 13th centuries, or the LH IIIA and LH IIIB phases, witnessed a significant increase in the number of objects brought from the Aegean

- For an interpretation of regional (Crete Greek mainland) and chronological differences in the consumption of Egyptian objects in the Aegean Sea a new and significant study by Michael L. Galaty (2018).
- Even though Egyptian objects have been found in different archaeological contexts all over the Aegean, the mentioned diplomatic contacts are more prominent in relation to Crete than they are in relation to other Aegean islands or the Greek mainland. Our knowledge of definite Aegean diplomatic visits to Egypt is mostly related to Crete and possibly some of the Aegean islands (e.g. Vercoutter 1956; Wachsmann 1987; Laboury 1990; Matthäus 1995; Rehak 1996; 1998; Panagiotopoulos 2001; Duhoux 2003; Panagiotopoulos 2006; Matić 2012; 2014; 2015; Matić Franković 2017).
- 3 Although often out of our reach, one should not neglect the possible trade in perishable or hardly traceble goods between the Aegean and the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean. One should mention trade in food such as Spanish vetchling (e.g. Kislev Artzy Marcus 1993), wood (Redford 2003, 78–80) or spices, as possibly shown by the semitic loan words for spices in Linear B sources (Ventris Chadwick 1973, 91). In this context, recent studies (Ben-Schlomo Nodarou Rutter 2011; Day et al. 2011) dealing with transport vessels of mostly Cretan origin, some of which have been found in the Late Bronze Age contexts in the Levant, are especially important.
- The influence of Aegean art on Egypt is most clearly seen in the examples of Minoan style frescoes from Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt (e.g. Bietak 1996; Bietak et al. 2007; Younger 2009; Bietak 2013). The influence can be seen on Crete as well. On Crete, not only were objects of Egyptian provenance imported (e.g. Crete Egypt 2001; Phillips 2008a; 2008b; Galaty 2018), but the iconography was also significantly influenced by the Egyptian sources. This does not refer only to the well-known example of the adoption of the color canon, but also to some other famous examples such as the domestication of the Egyptian goddess Taweret into the Minoan Genius (e.g. Evans 1935, 431–467; Gill 1964; Weingarten 1991; Hallager Weingarten 1993; Panagiotopoulos 2012b, 54; Blakolmer 2015) which probably influenced the religious sphere as well.
- 5 For the topic of the relationship between diplomatic exchange and luxury goods see also Feldman 2006.
- 6 For a general overview see later in the text.

or, to be more precise, of Mycenaean origin. The Aegean influence is also recognized in the appearance of different forms of material culture, such as domestic and funerary architecture, which is sometimes interpreted as a sign of the spreading of Mycenaean culture in general (MEE 1988). Consequently, the East Aegean-West Anatolia stands out as a representative region for examining intercultural contacts in the 2nd millennium BCE Eastern Mediterranean. As the character and the intensity of contacts between both sides of the Aegean differ significantly from those between Egypt and the Aegean, the paper focuses more on explaining the complexity of relations between the West Aegean and the East Aegean-West Anatolia.

EARLIER INTERPRETATIONS AND APPROACHES TO INTERCULTURAL CONTACTS BETWEEN THE WEST AEGEAN AND THE EAST AEGEAN-WEST ANATOLIA

From the earliest research conducted in this area, West Anatolia has been perceived as a buffer zone between the West Aegean and Central Anatolia in the Late Bronze Age. Most of the early studies of the Late Bronze Age material culture in this area tried to distinguish between objects of local origin and those brought from the archaeologically better researched area of the West Aegean. As archaeologists improved their knowledge of the Late Bronze Age both on the Greek mainland and Crete, the influence of the Minoan and Mycenaean cultural spheres in West Anatolia and the islands of the East Aegean became widely recognized.

The material culture was often separated into two big groups: the one of Mycenaean (or Minoan) origin and the other of local origin. A large quantity of Mycenaean-type material culture, mainly pottery, started to appear in the area during the 14th and 13th centuries BCE and has been interpreted as a proof of the Mycenaean cultural influence.8 Several theoretical models explaining the question of Mycenaean involvement in the East Aegean-West Anatolia arose during many years of research in the area.

The existence of high quantities of Mycenaean material culture in the region was often explained as a consequence of the colonization process originating from the Greek mainland. The idea of colonization, supported by a significant number of scholars, such as Christopher Mee, Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier and Mario Benzi (e.g. Mee 1978; 1988; Benzi 1992; Mee 1998; Niemeier 1998a), saw the population of the East Aegean-West Anatolia as comprised of both people of Mycenaean origin and those of local descent. The main goal was to distinguish between the archaeological material of local origin and that brought from or influenced by the Minoan⁹ Crete and the Mycenaean Greek mainland. Such an approach resulted in the creation of terms such as 'Mycenaeanization', which suggests that local people were colonized and that they accepted Mycenaean material culture through the process of acculturation. The most applied model in explaining such processes was developed by Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier.

⁷ The question of Ahhiyawa and the relationship of the term to the geopolitical situation in the Late Bronze Age Greek mainland and the Aegean islands will not be discussed in this paper. However, there is a vast amount of bibliography on the topic. For a general overview see e.g. Mountjoy 1998, 47–51; Kelder 2010; Beckman – Bryce – Cline 2011.

⁸ The appearance of Aegean cultural traits in the earlier phases of the Late Bronze Age has been interpreted as a Minoan influence in the area, while the later material, mostly that of the 14th and 13th centuries BCE, has been interpreted as an influence of the Mycenaean cultural sphere.

⁹ For the interpretation of Minoan influence in the East Aegean-West Anatolia see e.g. Niemeier 1996; 1998a; 1998b; 2005; 2007; 2009; Niemeier – Niemeier 1997; 1999; Guzowska 2002; Girella – Pavúk 2015; 2016.

He expanded the colonization model by trying to determine the degree of Minoanization at the site of Miletus (Niemeier 1998a, 29–36). Niemeier composed a list of typically Minoan cultural characteristics and tried to determine which of them were present on the site. This approach significantly influenced later research and was also used to explain how substantial the process of Mycenaeanization was on certain archaeological sites.

Due to the large quantity of Mycenaean material appearing in Mycenaean-type tombs in the East Aegean-West Anatolia, burial practices have been one of the most important factors in examining the level of Mycenaeanization. Research in this realm can mostly be associated with Christopher Mee. In a series of his studies, he dealt with Mycenaean-type tombs in the East Aegean-West Anatolia and the material originating from the Aegean (MEE 1978; 1988; 1998). Mee abundantly demonstrated the differences and similarities in burial practices between the East Aegean-West Anatolia on one side, and the West Aegean and the Greek mainland on the other. Mee saw the similarities in the material culture and burial practices as a result of migration and acculturation, but stressed that the main problem in interpretation was the lack of insight about the indigenous inhabitants of the area (MEE 1988, 303). While he proposed migration as a possible explanation, he expressed some doubts about it being a large-scale event. He considered trade to be the most probable reason for the appearance of Mycenaean material culture (MEE 1998, 140–141). Conquest and invasion have also been offered as possible reasons, as supported by the existence of LH IIB-LH IIIA1 warrior graves on Rhodes, which are considered to be the graves of Mycenaean conquerors (DRIESSEN – MACDONALD 1984, 58–59).

A different approach to explaining the appearance of Mycenaean decorated pottery in the East Aegean-West Anatolia was developed by Penelope Mountjoy. Mountjoy separated the area into two parts, the Upper and Lower Interfaces, with the border between the two set around Ephesos. The Upper and Lower Interfaces demonstrate different quantities of Mycenaean pottery, with the Upper characterized by a larger quantity of local wares and the Lower by a larger quantity of Mycenaean pottery (Mountjoy 1998, 34–45). Mountjoy sees Mycenaean culture in the Southeast Aegean as a separate entity with a hybrid character. She was the first to introduce the term 'hybrid' into the discussion about the Southeast Aegean, juxtaposing the process of acculturation to the process of colonization (MOUNTJOY 1998, 34-37), which is not always the case with the explanatory models used on the East Aegean-West Anatolian examples. Mountjoy proposes that the differences in the degree of Mycenaeanization in the entire area of the East Aegean-West Anatolia reflect the intensity of contacts (Mountjoy 1998, 33-37). In her view, the acceptance of Mycenaean material culture shows socio-cultural connectivity as opposed to political unity (Mountjoy 1998, 50). Relying on burial practices, Mountjoy claims that the East Aegean became part of the Mycenaean cultural sphere in this way and dismisses the migration hypothesis (Mountjoy 1998, 37).

Although some of the earlier approaches have not been completely abandoned (e.g. Guzowska 2002), several new ones have been proposed and tested in recent years (Mac Sweeney 2008; Eerbeek 2014; Girella – Pavúk 2015; Pavúk 2015; Vitale 2016). For example, Naoise Mac Sweeney casts doubt on the presence of the Mycenaeans in the Southeast Aegean. She proposes that many elements usually considered typical of the Mycenaean culture had already existed outside the Greek mainland. She sees the Mycenaean culture as a composite culture which resulted from communication and influences between different elite groups in the Aegean, rather than spreading from its center on the Greek mainland. Consequently, Mac Sweeney does not see the 'Mycenaeans' in the Southeast Aegean as a group of people originating from the Greek mainland, but as a local elite embracing some Mycenaean cultural elements as part

of their participation in the pan-Aegean elite network (MAC SWEENEY 2008, 108–109). Peter Pavúk (2015) proposes a different perspective on the region. He observes the East Aegean-West Anatolia as a separate entity, rather than as merely a zone of different cultural influences.

APPROACHING INTERCULTURAL CONTACTS

Most of the early approaches dealing with the appearance of Mycenaean material culture in the East Aegean-West Anatolia have been influenced by the old culture-historical premise of an ethnic interpretation of certain traits of material culture. The presence of Mycenaean-type material culture has been interpreted as a sign of the presence of Mycenaean inhabitants, colonists or conquerors (e.g. Mee 1978; Driessen – MacDonald 1984; Mee 1988; Benzi 1992; Mee 1998; NIEMEIER 1998a). Penelope Mountjoy (1998), with her concept of the hybrid interface, represents the first attempt to abandon the earlier views and represent the East Aegean-West Anatolia in a different light. Although quite distanced from the earlier approaches, and thus certainly important, Mountjoy's approach never completely succeeded in abandoning some of the earlier concepts deeply embedded into the discipline. For example, although West Anatolian material culture has been defined as hybrid in character, it was still perceived as an amalgam of local and Mycenaean cultural traits. In other words, some of the older culture-historical concepts still served as the basis for this approach. Although a new category was created, its fundamental parts still wore labels with strong ethnic connotations, such as Anatolian or Mycenaean. This does not mean that technical terms such as Mycenaean pottery should be abandoned, but rather that they should be treated as taxonomic categories from an epistemological point of view instead of serving as an expression of ethnic identity. A similar point of view has been proposed by Philipp Stockhammer recently (Stockhammer 2013, 13). Stockhammer's work can be used to question the concept of hybridity in explaining intercultural connections in the East Aegean-West Anatolia.

The trending of the term 'hybridity' in the studies focusing on cultural interactions in the Eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age has already been discussed by Stockhammer (2013, 11). In the case of the East Aegean-West Anatolian interface, the term has been used to describe objects which cannot be put into one of the predefined taxonomic categories, but rather lie somewhere in between them (Stockhammer 2012, 11–12). Stockhammer (2013, 11) separates this concept of hybridity from the concept of hybridity by Homi Bhabha (2007, 112–114) who sees it as a strategy of the subaltern in the framework of the colonial context. These two concepts are not to be interchanged, as their meanings are quite different.

Although it proposes a different approach from the typical dichotomy between the local and the Mycenaean, when applied to the East Aegean-West Anatolia, the concept of hybridity still focuses on the description of the specific character of the hybrid, rather than examining the dynamic and creative process of its creation (Stockhammer 2013, 14). The category of the hybrid has been artificially created alongside the Mycenaean and Anatolian, without explaining the interaction between the two, and proposed as a new taxonomic category which does not reveal much about the dynamic interactions that preceded it. In other words, it does not define how and why foreign influences were received in the local context or, in the case of the East Aegean-West Anatolia, how and why the 'foreign' Mycenaean-type material culture was used for the construction of local identities.

¹¹ For a more recent view on hybridity and the processes of Minoanization and Mycenaeanization in the East Aegean-West Anatolia in the Late Bronze Age see GIRELLA – PAVÚK 2016. For the discussion on hybridity in archaeology see KNAPP 2008.

Considering the fact that intercultural contacts seem to be a highly dynamic and transformative process, the local community has to be treated as an active, rather than a passive recipient of foreign material culture.¹² In this case, the concept of appropriation, with its recent rise in popularity, might prove important for a better understanding of how and why foreign material culture was used during the 14th and 13th centuries in the East Aegean-West Anatolia. Hans Peter Hahn separates the process of appropriation into four aspects: material appropriation, objectification, incorporation and transformation (HAHN 2004, 220-222). Material appropriation takes place when an object becomes a personal possession of an individual and when a certain personal value is attached to it. As a result, the object can be subjected to changes in form, e.g. additionally decorated (HAHN 2004, 220). The object is then classified into a certain predefined category of the receiving society through the aspect of objectification (HAHN 2004, 220–221). Through incorporation, human subjects learn how to use the object in a proper way, again, of course, from the local perspective. Incorporation seems to be a bodily experience that can influence one's own perception of the body, which is then used as a tool for handling this new type of object (HAHN 2004, 221–222). During transformation, the object is attributed with local meanings and reinvented in the receiving society, where it can be used to create new traditions (HAHN 2004, 222–223; HAHN 2005, 107). Some authors have stressed that the first two aspects are much easier to reach, as they remain on the level of materiality, while the remaining two deal with social practices and as such are much harder to trace (Girella -Pavúk 2015, 393). Nevertheless, other studies (Stockhammer 2012, 17-31) have shown that the incorporation into a new context and transformation can be reached.

The process of appropriation from an archaeological perspective was recently studied by Philipp Stockhammer and successfully applied to Aegean-type pottery appearing in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age contexts in the South Levant (Stockhammer 2012, 14–32). As an addition to the appropriation process, Stockhammer introduces the concepts of relational and material entanglement (Stockhammer 2013, 15–17). The appropriation of a foreign object into a new cultural context, with its materiality unchanged, is seen as a relational entanglement first reached through the process of appropriation. Similarly to appropriation, the process of entanglement is a continuous process, which can cause the emergence of new relational entanglements, but also induce a different type of entanglement, which Stockhammer refers to as material entanglement. This process brings to light the creative power of entanglement, as previously separate categories of objects combine and merge into a new material form, which does not clearly exhibit its origins (Stockhammer 2012, 16–17). Since appropriation is a continuous process that needs to be reaffirmed (Hahn 2004, 224), its creative character comes to light.

Parallel to the concept of material entanglement put forward by Stockhammer, which shows the true creative capacity of the process of appropriation, a slightly different approach, directly connected to the issue of hybridity, has been suggested by Luca Girella and Peter Pavúk (2015; 2016). In their re-examination of Minoan pottery in the Northeast Aegean, Girella and Pavúk proved that the appropriation of foreign objects can, over time, lead to the development of completely new forms of material culture (Girella – Pavúk 2015, 394–395).

The approaches of Stockhammer, Girella and Pavúk have several points in common. Girella and Pavúk's approach is based more on a chronological analysis distinguishing among the different phases of contact which change through time. They define pre-contact, contact and hybrid phases in their analysis of the Minoan influence on Samotrace (Girella – Pavúk 2015, 394–395). Their hybrid phase is closely related to what Philipp Stockhammer calls material entanglement, during which new material forms are created as a result of intercultural con-

tacts and the process of appropriation. However, although a much higher degree of relational entanglement is exhibited in the contact phase, some traces of material entanglement can nevertheless be noted. Stockhammer's approach (2012; 2013) offers an opportunity to distinguish among the stages of entanglement within every phase and even focus on a particular object (or a class of objects), thus providing a more detailed insight into the object's context of consumption. On the other hand, Girella and Pavúk's approach (2015) is more focused on the assemblages within a certain archaeological context. Because of the complex relationship between the object and the cultural context in which it is found, Stockhammer claims that the study should not end with a conclusion about a certain state of entanglement, ¹³ but rather examine the practices associated with the object itself (Stockhammer 2013, 17).

SOMETHING BORROWED

Burial practices, supposedly hybrid themselves, have been used to define the hybrid character of the East Aegean-West Anatolian interface. More precisely, the diversity of tomb types (Mycenaean and Anatolian), different burial rites (inhumation, cremation) and the use of objects of different origins as grave goods have been interpreted as expressions of the hybrid burial practice (Mountjoy 1998, 37). The Ayasoluk hill near Selçuk (Ephesos) is a case in point. According to all the criteria mentioned above, this specific case could be treated as an example of a hybrid burial practice. However, a more dynamic relation between the material culture and its users is proposed for this site.

On the Ayasoluk hill in 1963, a so-called 'Mycenaean' tomb was discovered (Gültekin – BARAN 1964, 125). It is mentioned in the report that the tomb was dug into the soft sandy soil and that it contained some stones (GÜLTEKIN - BARAN 1964, 125). However, although the architecture of the tomb was not presented in detail, the plan available in the original report seems to indicate that the remains of the excavated tomb were circular in shape and that its diameter must have been a little less than 4 m (GÜLTEKIN – BARAN 1964, 128). Taking into consideration all of the available information and the parallels in West Anatolia, it is possible that the tomb may have been either a circular chamber tomb dug into the soil, similar to tombs noted on other sites in West Anatolia, such as Değirmentepe and Müskebi, or a circular stone-built subterranean chamber tomb, sometimes referred to as the tholos tomb. However, the amount of stones discovered inside the tomb is insufficient for the latter to be true. The existence of a dromos and a stomion, which appear as standard architectural segments of both tholoi and Mycenaean-type chamber tombs, such as the ones from Müskebi, was also not reported. Barbara Horejs and Fabian Kanz (2008, 12) believe it to be a grave with stone edging, but from the report (GÜLTEKIN - BARAN 1964, 125), which generally lacks information about the spatial distribution of the finds within the tomb, it is not clear whether only the discovered objects or the entire tomb was surrounded by stones. If stones were found only around the finds and not as the edging of the entire tomb, they might belong to the blocking of the stomion, which might not have been recorded in the process of excavation or the stomion had been severely damaged prior to the excavation.¹⁴

¹³ For the entanglement in the Southeast Aegean see e.g. VITALE 2016.

¹⁴ The discussion about the architecture of the tomb is important in this case as it directly influences the interpetation of this tomb as Mycenaean in type. From the available evidence, it is not possible to convincingly argue that the tomb from Ayasoluk should be considered as of a Mycenaean type, although this might have been the case and such a possibility should not be discarded.

A total of six complete ceramic vessels were found inside of the tomb. The tomb contained a large piriform jar, a conical rhyton, a flask, a flask with a pierced base, an undecorated juglet and a stemmed krater. In addition, some fragments possibly belonging to a second krater were found (GÜLTEKIN – BARAN 1964, 125–127). The pottery was dated to the LH IIIA2 period by multiple authors (GÜLTEKIN – BARAN 1964, 127; MOUNTJOY 1998, 36). Penelope Mountjoy explains the pottery finds through her concept of the hybrid interface, although she sees one of the flasks and the rhyton as typically Mycenaean. In her opinion, other vessels exhibit Minoan or East Aegean traits and should be described as local imitations (MOUNTJOY 1998, 36).

The most important object for this study is the stemmed krater (Fig. 1) decorated with argonauts and triangular motifs (Gültekin – Baran 1964, 129; Özgünel 1983, pls. 14–18). What is even more important is the fact that human remains were found inside of the krater (Gültekin – Baran 1964, 126). It has to be noted that these were the only human bones reported from this tomb. Unfortunately, the excavators did not provide any additional information about the bones, so the number of individuals, their gender and age remain unknown. Even more problematic is the fact that the report did not reveal whether the bones were cremated and put into the krater as an urn or collected as part of the secondary treatment after the original inhumation. However, the size of the vessel might point to cremation, as it would be almost impossible to fit bigger and complete bones inside of it, as also suggested by other authors (Horejs – Kanz 2008, 120).

The argument that the human remains found inside the krater might point to cremation can also be supported by comparison to other sites in West Anatolia. ¹⁶ Although quite a distanced



Fig. 1: Reconstructed drawing of the Mycenaean-style decorated stemmed krater from the Ayasoluk hill in Selçuk (Ephesos). The profile drawing is only approximate, scale ca. 1:4 (redrawn by Věra Doležálková after GULTEKIN – BARAN 1964 and ÖZGÜNEL 1983).

¹⁵ Christopher Mee proposes the LH IIIA1 date for some of the objects (MEE 1978, 127).

¹⁶ This specific case has also been mentioned by Mokrišová (2016, 50). However, this is not the only example of this or similar practices in the East Aegean-West Anatolia, as similar cases have been noted on sites such as Bakla Tepe (Erkanal – Özkan 1998, 403; Erkanal – Özkan 1999, 111; Erkanal 2008, 166; Erkanal – Şahoğlu 2012, 96; Aykurt – Erkanal 2017) and Müskebi (Bass 1963, 355; Boysal 1964, 82; Çiner 1964, 57; Boysal 1967, 79).

from the site of the Ayasoluk hill, the best parallels can be found in the Troad. A significant number of similar practices have been recorded at two cemeteries, namely the Cemetery of Cinerary Urns at Troy (Blegen – Caskey – Rawson 1953, 371–391) and Beşik Tepe (Basedow 2000). At the Cemetery of Cinerary Urns, excavated by Carl Blegen in the 1930s, a total of 19 complete urns were found (Blegen - Caskey - Rawson 1953, 371). However, additional urn pieces collected throughout the area, four burial pithoi (Blegen - Caskey - Rawson 1953, 375) and two additional urns excavated by Dörpfeld (1894, 124) in the late 19th century point to at least 182 burials in this cemetery. Although the total number of burials at this cemetery is not relevant for this discussion, the type of the prevailing vessels used as urns certainly is. Kraters produced in a variety of fabrics (local Gray, Tan and Coarse Ware) make up the majority of the vessels used as urns at these cemeteries (Blegen - Caskey - Rawson 1953, 375-376). Although not as numerous as in the Cemetery of Cinerary Urns, a similar example comes from the cemetery of Beşik Tepe where a krater was also used as an urn for cremated human remains (Basedow 2000, 46; Basedow 2002, 469). Both cemeteries can be dated to the 14th and 13th centuries BCE. If the dates of the Mycenaean pottery found within the burial contexts are considered, the examples from both cemeteries belong to the LH IIIA2 phase (Mounjoy 1999, 284; EERBEEK 2014, 168–170), which corresponds to the date of the Ayasoluk burial.

The use of the Mycenaean-style krater (**Fig. 1**) as an urn for the deposition of cremated (or any other kind of) remains of the deceased is clearly an important example for the study of intercultural connections. As cremation is uncommon for the Greek mainland and the West Aegean in the 14th and 13th centuries BCE, using some Mycenaean-type vessels as urns in the East Aegean-West Anatolia obviously distances the vessels from their original purpose. Therefore, a dynamic character of the process through which such a vessel was appropriated into a new cultural context should be explored. However, due to the complexity of historical relations in the area, a few additional problems arise with the application of the theoretical model.

In an idealized case, the use of the Mycenaean-type vessel as an urn in this burial context could easily be described in the framework of the process of appropriation. The first two aspects of the process of appropriation, namely material appropriation and objectification, can be easily ascertained in this case. Through the aspect of material appropriation, the krater would become a personal possession with personal value attached to it by those who obtained the object. It can be argued that the personal value of the object could be even higher due to the fact that it was used as a final resting place for some of the deceased family members. Through the aspect of objectification, a new krater would be placed into the existing category of local kraters which could also be used as urns, as shown by the local examples from other cemeteries in the area.

One has to keep in mind that other aspects of the appropriation process will sometimes not be clear from the archaeological record. However, if the differences between the use of objects in a new context and in the place of their origin can be traced, as proven in this case, incorporation and transformation might also be possible to reach. Through the aspect of incorporation, the Mycenaean-type krater would have to be used in a proper way, from the local perspective, in order to be included into the local burial practice, or even used during the funeral. The transformation aspect would allow the krater to be completely integrated into the local society, although it could still be considered as foreign from the local point of view (Hahn 2004, 222). At the same time, as local-style kraters are usually not decorated, different features of the Mycenaean-type krater, such as the lively painted marine motifs, could trigger the creation of new traditions connected to the burial practices and the relationship to the deceased.

Although very applicable, the abovementioned approach is a simplified example of how appropriation could work in this particular case. However, the object's own biography and a far more complex cultural context of the East Aegean-West Anatolia call for a more detailed insight.

SOMETHING BORROWED AS SOMETHING NEW

Earlier in the text, the concept of entanglement as defined by Philipp Stockhammer (2013) was presented. This concept can be used to further examine the example of the Mycenaean-type krater (**Fig. 1**) used as an urn on the site of Ayasoluk. A vast quantity of Mycenaean-type pottery appearing in the East Aegean-West Anatolian interface during the 14th and 13th centuries BCE can be seen as an example of relational entanglement, as many of the pottery shapes and decorations appear for the first time in this area and as such must have been appropriated into the local context. Nevertheless, the earlier Minoan influence in the region should not be neglected either (see Girella – Pavúk 2015).

Most of the Mycenaean pottery found in the area has been described by various authors as of 'foreign' origin (e.g. Özgünel 1983, 733; Benzi 1996, 969). This attribution was based mostly on morphological and stylistic criteria, linking most of the imported examples to production centers in the Argolid, ¹⁷ as supported by the optical emission spectroscopy (OES) and chemical analysis (Jones – Mee 1978; Karantzali – Ponting 2000) for some of the examples. However, significant local production should not be overlooked (e.g. Mountjoy 1995; Mountjoy 1998, 39).

Such a strong relational entanglement has triggered a more creative material entanglement, which is reflected in the appearance of new pottery types, such as basket vases and local types of incense burners which are often described as an amalgam of Minoan (Cretan), Anatolian and Mycenaean (Greek mainland) traits, but which are not found in any of these regions in such a form (Eerbeek 2014, 124–125). The mentioned forms appear on LH IIIA2 Rhodes and were probably triggered by the relational entanglement in the previous LH IIB-LH IIIA1 phases.

This brings us back to the abovementioned krater from Ayasoluk (Fig. 1). According to Penelope Mountjoy, the motifs on this krater were made in a Minoan or East Aegean fashion and can be considered a local imitation of Mycenaean pottery. If this were true, the krater could also be taken as an example of material entanglement. However, such a conclusion directly questions the foreignness of the object and its perception within the local context. Although it is quite clear that the final form of the krater was heavily influenced by the pottery which originally came from the other side of the Aegean, its local production and the strong local influence on its final appearance indicate that it might not have been perceived as foreign at all. This fact is further supported by a whole variety of locally produced kraters which appear on different sites in the Southeast Aegean from LH IIIA2 and which were created under a strong influence of Mycenaean pottery (Mountjoy 1998, 39; Raymond et al. 2016, 67–68). However, the appearance of a typically Anatolian iconographic motif, such as the horned tiara of a Hittite god or ruler on a Mycenaean-style painted krater of the LH IIIB-LH IIIC date from Miletus (Weickert 1959, 65; Buchholz 1974, 365; Mee 1978, 136; Vermeule – Karageorghis 1982, 166; Güterbock 1984, 115; Niemeier 1998b, 39; Blakolmer 2012, 60), could not have belonged to the Mycenaean iconographic repertoire. While painted pottery might owe much to the tradition of the West Aegean, its application seems to be completely East Aegean-West Anatolian. As a consequence, the placement of the Ayasoluk krater into a wider context of the 14th and 13th centuries East Aegean-West Anatolia opens up two important discussions.

¹⁷ For a better understanding of the position of the Argolid in international trade, one has to mention a study by Bryan E. Burns (1999) dealing with the consumption of the object of foreign origin found in the Argolid.

The first discussion relates to the question of whether the social value¹⁸ of foreign things lies in their material or their exotic design, as recently argued by Diamantis Panagiotopoulos (2013, 48). His research convincingly showed that, in many cases, the material can be taken as the basis for attributing a foreign or exotic character to a certain object, due to the fact that it is more resistant to domestication than its design (Panagiotopoulos 2013, 69-70). However, what is important to consider is the fact that in some forms of material culture, the difference in the material might not be recognized (Burns 1999, 48), as is the case with pottery, 19 and its design is the only thing in the eyes of the viewer that might make the object seem foreign. Once again, it has to be questioned whether the design really has to be taken as a sign of something foreign or if it could be perceived as a new, rare, precious or different local variety (Panagiotopoulos 2013, 62-63). This directly questions the concept of foreignness. One needs to take into consideration that some of the ceramic vessels might never have been perceived as foreign by the people who used them. Moreover, the relationship between the predefined taxonomic categories created by archaeologists and 'real' entities of the past has to be further questioned (see Stockhammer 2013, 12–14). The difference between the perception of foreignness in ancient societies and the modern scientific community sometimes seems to be easily neglected (PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2013, 48–49). Furthermore, even if we accept that a certain design was perceived as foreign in the communities of the past, how long was it perceived as truly foreign and how long would it take for it to be perceived as local through a gradual process of domestication (PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2013, 62-63)? Therefore, if we accept that the krater in question was a new local product used for a type of burial practice attested in the wider area of West Anatolia, it can be argued that the process of appropriation can in a certain way be used to explain how new forms, not necessarily perceived as foreign, were integrated into the already existing practices.²⁰

The second discussion relates to the possibility of double appropriation, which can best be explained through example. In his study of Philistine feasting vessels, Philipp Stockhammer argues that the Philistines²¹ used their bowls for feasting in a similar way as the local population and that they must have changed their eating and drinking habits after their arrival on the South Levant according to the habits of the local inhabitants (Stockhammer 2013, 21–22). However, it has to be noted that the migration hypotheses cannot be conclusively proven

¹⁸ For a view on how certain 'ordinary' objects might have acquired a certain social value both in elite and non-elite contexts due to their foreignness, see CLINE 1999.

¹⁹ Although one could argue that different fabrics could be evaluated differently in a local context, due to the differences between the materiality of pottery and, for example, stone, it has to be concluded that the choice of different fabrics might be closer to a choice of design than material in this case. In other words, while some potters can produce fabrics of different kinds or introduce changes within the same workshop using local sources, other materials, like stone, are not prone to such changes as they are easier to describe as local or non-local by the consumers.

²⁰ A similar proposal was recently argued by other authors (RAYMOND et al. 2016, 65) for kraters and other pottery shapes from Miletus. The authors suggested the use of the process of appropriation rather than the concept of hybridity. However, they did not question the foreignness of the objects themselves or clarify how these objects relate hybridization to the appropriation process, as the former might be considered a product of the local creation of new forms triggered by the intercultural contact and the latter a process in which a foreign object is received into a new cultural context.

²¹ For the problem of the Philistines and the spread of Aegean influences at the end of the Late Bronze Age see e.g. Yasur-Landau 2010; Hitchcock 2011; Hitchcock - Maeir 2016a; 2016b; Maeir - Hitchcock 2017.

when based only on the outdated cultural-historical premise 'pots-equals-peoples'.²² It is equally possible that only certain groups within the local society decided to appropriate new pottery types and include them into their everyday use, while other groups continued using their own vessels. In other words, it is sometimes hard to distinguish between local people appropriating foreign material culture and newcomers appropriating local practices. In both cases, the end result would be the same.

This argument is highly applicable to the example from West Anatolia presented above, as some of the previous interpretations argued for the colonization of the area by migrants from the West Aegean. In that case, it would not be possible to say whether local inhabitants appropriated the Mycenaean krater as an urn to fit their own burial practices or the newcomers from the 'Mycenaean' world appropriated local customs. As a result, it has to be questioned whether a certain social practice can be appropriated as part of the social strategy. It is unquestionable that the objects themselves were used in a new and different way and were therefore appropriated into a new context. However, when discussing the identity of the people using the objects, it often remains elusive whether new objects were appropriated into the already existing practices, or the old and familiar types of objects were used as part of a new social practice.

This neither indicates a migration of the Mycenaeans nor that the material culture is to be equated with ethnic identities. On the contrary, it should be argued that, in the case of the East Aegean-West Anatolia, a dichotomy between 'Mycenaean' and 'local' cannot be sustained anymore, neither on the level of the material culture nor by ascribing ethnic identities on any ground. Applying the 'pots-equals-peoples' premise in this particular case would not just mean neglecting the dynamic processes within the local community, but also ignoring an obvious heterogeneity of the material culture in the West Aegean (Mokrišová 2016, 45). The entire picture seems rather complex and, as a solution, the East Aegean-West Anatolia should be approached as a separate entity with a wide variety of possible social, cultural or ethnic identities, which might not be related to a certain pottery style or even to the political geography of the time.²³

Even though migrations²⁴ are hard to trace since cultural identities can be quite flexible, Jana Mokrišová (2016, 47) has recently argued that mobility could be traced in the domestic sphere in some cases.²⁵ At the same time, Mokrišová argues that burial practices cannot be taken as a proof of migrations, due to the fact that identities can be easily manipulated in the funerary context (Mokrišová 2016, 47, 50–51). Despite the undoubtedly correct remark about the manipulation of identities within funerary contexts, it can be argued that funerary data can provide a more detailed insight into mobility. The unfortunate absence of proper anthropological and isotope analyses in most Late Bronze Age cemeteries in the East Aegean-West

²² It has to be mentioned that the intention here is not to question Philipp Stockhammer's valuable research, but rather show that sometimes appropriation can be seen from two different angles.

²³ While in some cases the origin of the object can be taken as an expression of group identity, though not necessarily an ethnic one, in others, the use of the object might be more important. For example, a recent study by Mac Sweeney showed that on the Late Bronze Age site of Beycesultan, the local origin of stemmed cups was taken as a basis for the construction of group identity, neglecting the foreign Aegean-style stemmed cups (Mac Sweeney 2009, 109–111). This conclusion is quite important due to the fact that Aegean-style stemmed cups (kylikes) are well-known and widely used in different contexts all over the East Aegean-West Anatolia. Also, for the appropriation of Aegean-type kylikes as incense burners in the context of the Southern Levant, see Stockhammer 2012.

²⁴ For migration models see Anthony 1990; 1997; 2000; Burmeister 2000.

²⁵ See also Gorogianni - Cutler - Fitzsimons 2015.

Anatolia produced a lot of speculations about the origin of the deceased. These speculations were primarily based on the types and origin of the material culture used in funerary contexts. However, proper research in the future could prove extremely fruitful for understanding different identities in the area. Correlating the results of isotope analyses to specific tomb types and assemblages of material culture could show how important the origin of an individual actually was for the construction of cultural identity. While the origin of a certain individual could have been taken as a basis for the expression of cultural or even ethnic identity, it can also be argued that it might have been completely irrelevant. Tomb types have often been used as proof of different cultural and ethnic identities. However, some recent studies of Early Bronze Age burial practices in Anatolia showed that the choice of a certain tomb type indicates a correlation to certain age and gender categories (Massa 2014). Without proper examination one can only speculate about the correlation between material culture and identity in the funerary contexts of the East Aegean-West Anatolia.

SOMETHING OLD

The second example presented in this paper is a highly unusual, but well-known stone bridge-spouted²⁶ jar (**Fig. 2**) from Kato Zakro (e.g. Warren 1996, 211–212; *Crete – Egypt* 2001, 209–210; Bevan 2007, 125; Phillips 2008b, 63; Panagiotopoulos 2013, 65–66).²⁷ The jar was created by reshaping an Egyptian globular vase made of brown porphyritic basalt. A pair of cylindrical handles has been removed from the object and replaced with horizontal ones. Next, an opening for the pouring hole was made and a spout of local gray-brown stone was added. During the production of the spout, the artisan tried to copy the original material, as witnessed by small rectangular holes drilled on the spout in order to inlay white material which would imitate the porphyritic texture of the original vase (Lilyquist 1996, 226; Panagiotopoulos 2013, 66).

AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

The Egyptian stone vessel whose materiality was changed to better suit the local preferences upon its arrival to a new cultural context can be seen as an example easily explicable through the process of appropriation. While the vessel was turned into a personal belonging through the aspect of material appropriation, the object's form could have been modified. These modifications could have been undertaken as a result of the aspect of objectification, in which the Egyptian globular vase was recognized as a Minoan bridge-spouted jar with some of the important parts missing. In order to assimilate the jar completely into the already existing category in the receiving society, some necessary changes in its shape and appearance had to be made. Although incorporation and transformation are not easily reachable in this case, the fact that some of the vessel's parts were added later, and were therefore detachable from the main body, must have positively influenced both of these aspects.

²⁶ For Minoan stone bridge-spouted jars see Warren 1969, 33-34.

²⁷ There are many other examples of the reworked Egyptian vases from all over the Late Bronze Age Aegean (for an overview see Warren 1969, 109–115 and Warren 1996).

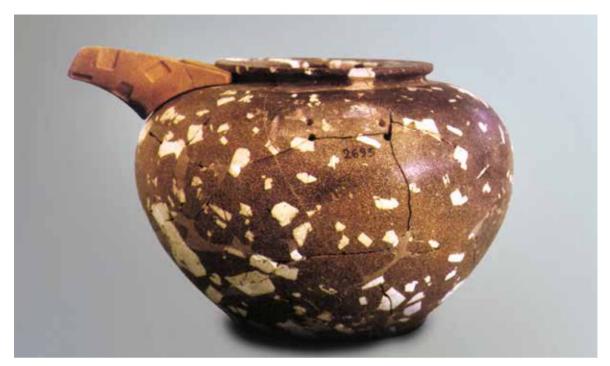


Fig. 2: Stone bridge-spouted jar from Kato Zakro (after PLATŌN 1974, fig. 73. Picture from the Zakros Excavation Archive. Courtesy of Lefteris Platon).

However, Peter Hahn's study offers the possibility of a different approach to the object. It is possible that the Kato Zakro vase (**Fig. 2**) should not be viewed as an appropriated object, but rather as an object changed through acquisition (Hahn 2004, 217). If the object was modified by the artisan, maybe according to the wishes of the consumer, it could be treated as an object changed through acquisition. This would mean that a foreign object was perceived more as a piece of raw material than as an object of high value. The personal biography of the object seems to be of the utmost importance for understanding the process behind the attested change. Although the final result might appear the same, this could have been caused by different perceptions and approaches to the object. The application of a certain theoretical model is therefore highly dependent on the object's personal biography.

The perception of an object as an import has often been based on a taxonomic classification of the archaeologists, further based on the spatial origin of the object (Panagiotopoulos 2013, 49). Complex and obscure biographies of certain objects or conditions in the moment of their entry into a new cultural context might have significantly influenced the perception of their alterity (Panagiotopoulos 2012a, 55). In this particular case, another category connected to the origin has to be added – the category of time. In order to resolve this issue, the focus should be shifted to the personal biography of the object.²⁸

The Kato Zakro stone bridge-spouted jar (**Fig. 2**) can be connected to a variety of Egyptian Predynastic and Old Kingdom stone vessels found within the Middle and Late Bronze Age contexts in the Aegean. This particular example was found in the LM IB context, but originates from the period between the Egyptian first and third dynasties (Warren 1969, 109). In this sense, stone vessels of this kind could be considered antiques or antiquities (Bevan 2007, 124). Although limited, there is evidence of contacts between late Old Kingdom-early Middle

Kingdom in Egypt with the EM IIB–MM I period on Crete. Therefore, some of these vessels might have arrived already towards the end of the third millennium (Bevan 2004; Bevan 2007, 124). This would mean that some of the antiquities that had arrived as early as Prepalatial Crete were preserved until later periods. It has to be noted, however, that these old objects may have been rediscovered as a result of grave robbing (Pomerance 1980; Phillips 1992) and were traded to Crete later in the Neopalatial period (Bevan 2007, 125). In the Neopalatial period, both antique and contemporary Egyptian stone vessels were reshaped to fit local needs (Bevan 2007, 125; also see Warren 1996; Bevan 2003, 69; Phillips 2008a, 80–88).

If these objects, including the Kato Zakro example, were really brought to Crete as early as in the Prepalatial period, it is questionable whether these objects were considered Egyptian antiquities or local ones by their Neopalatial consumers. The memory of the real origin of these objects might not have been preserved in the minds of Neopalatial Cretans. In the case of Egypt, foreign objects were an important part of the diplomatic gift exchange or tribute paying,30 testified both by texts and the iconography of the 18th Dynasty Theban tombs, corresponding to the Neopalatial and Final Palatial periods on Crete (e.g. Wachsmann 1987; Panagiotopoulos 2001; 2006). However, Aegean iconography and written sources remain mute on the topic of official visits by foreign embassies in which objects of foreign origin might have been brought to the Aegean, with the possible and unclear exception of the procession fresco from Pylos (Blakolmer 2002; 2012).31 This lack of evidence makes it impossible to conclude whether these old objects were part of a gift exchange or not, and consequently when they were brought to Crete.

Andrew Bevan proposes a third option, which is a combination of the first two approaches. In his view, some of the vessels may have been acquired in Neopalatial times and then linked to the few heirlooms from the earlier periods to legitimate fictitious ancestral lineages (Bevan 2007, 125).

The indefinable period in which the Kato Zakro vessel actually arrived on Crete opens up different possibilities for its perception within the local context. If the object was brought to Crete as early as the Prepalatial period and was held on Crete as an heirloom until the Neopalatial period, is it possible that its original place of origin had been forgotten and that it was perceived as an old local product? On the other hand, if old Egyptian stone vessels were brought to Crete together with new ones, were the inhabitants of Crete able to understand the difference and was it revealed to them?

Although every object can have multiple meanings and functions, we have to be aware that only the materialized practices are visible to an archaeologist and that a complete insight into the entire multiplicity of meanings and functions is often out of our reach (Stockhammer

²⁹ Possible earlier arrivals of stone vessels from Egypt may be attested in the fragments of the stone vases probably datable to the Predynastic or Early Dynastic periods, found within the context of the Late Neolithic houses in Knossos (Evans 1928, 16–17; Warren 1969, 109–110). However, their Egyptian provenance is highly questionable (Warren 1969, 109–110).

³⁰ It has recently been argued that Aegean objects brought to Egypt by the Aegean emissaries can be understood as gifts rather than tributes (MATIĆ 2012; 2015).

References to international trade are generally not attested in linear B sources (e.g. Killen 2008). However, one has to mention the names of two men (a3-ku-pi-ti-jo, mi-sa-ra-jo) noted on two linear B tablets from Knossos (KN Db 1105.B and KN F[2] 841.4). Although these names can be linked to different names for Egypt (e.g. Ventris – Chadwick 1973, 136; Cline 1994, 128), they seem to be personal names of these two individuals rather than signifying the origin of two anonymous Egyptians. Therefore, it is impossible to use these names to prove the origin of the individuals in question (Bennet 2011, 157–158).

2012, 13). Therefore, only one part of the object's biography can be fully understood. However, in this case, the meanings and functions of the object are dependent on time and space, as we are dealing with an old object that was introduced into a different cultural context. In other words, we act like prisoners of our own knowledge. We are aware that the object was much older than the context in which it was found, as well as that it was brought from Egypt to the Aegean, but we cannot understand how the object was perceived within the cultural context just before it was altered. Consequently, our own knowledge about the object's past has shaped our opinion of the object's perception, which can differ from that of the human actor(s) who changed the form of the object in the past.³²

As stressed by different authors (e.g. Preston 2000, 25–29; Panagiotopoulos 2013, 52), there is no 'proper function' of an object, but only the 'system function' dependent on time, space and cultural context of the user. Therefore, a more dynamic biography of objects through time and even their multiple re-evaluation within the same cultural context can be expected. In this particular case, this would open up the stone vessel in question to multiple interpretations during its usage on Crete before it was finally buried into the ground. For example, if it was imported during the Prepalatial period, it might have been seen as a foreign object of great value. Over the years, its foreignness may have been forgotten and it may have been perceived as a precious object of local origin, but older in date. Finally, the object may have been appropriated into the new Neopalatial context, where its materiality was changed in order to better fit the newly proposed needs. This points to two conclusions. First, appropriation is not only reserved for foreign objects, but it might also be cautiously applied to the objects related to the past in some cases. These old objects might have seemed equally foreign to the consumers as the contemporary ones coming from distanced regions. This does not mean that these objects were attributed with a foreign character, but rather that they might have been equally distanced from contemporary social practices. Second, although the materiality was changed to fit new needs, the material most closely resembling the original one was used. This again stresses the importance of the material, not as superimposed to the design, but rather in a close correlation to it. The design was adapted to the needs of the local cultural context, but the coherency of the material proved important for the process. As shown by Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, the predominance of design over material is a modern concept deeply imbedded into archaeological thought (Panagiotopoulos 2013, 51–52) and it is quite possible that the material played an important role in the eyes of the consumers in the Bronze Age Aegean and was preferred over the object's design (PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2013, 65). The re-contextualization of the object within a new cultural context can be considered as one of the most important points of every object's biography. However, in that process, the design and material could be differently evaluated (Panagiotopoulos 2013, 52). In the case of the stone vessel from Kato Zakro (Fig. 2), although the foreign design of the object was of no importance to local consumers, it can be argued that design did play quite an important role as the object was altered to fit local preferences. Accordingly, it can be argued that the material was preferred over the foreign design, but that it was in a close relationship to the local one.

³² A similar view has recently been expressed by Joseph Maran (2015, 244). He argues that in the previous research a foreign or local character of the material culture has often been too easily attributed to certain objects. Maran states that such an approach essentializes the foreignness and neglects complicated biographies of objects. According to Maran, the knowledge of local consumers about the object's origin or past is often too easily assumed, while the transformation of the object within the local culture is often neglected.

Bevan claims that Cretan consumers were more interested in obtaining original antiquities than raw materials (Bevan 2007, 124), as these old objects might have had important social value for the Cretan elite, different from the one attributed to the contemporary Egyptian stone vessels (Bevan 2007, 125). However, additional reshaping might point to a more complex relationship to this particular object. In the Neopalatial period, both antique and contemporary Egyptian vessels were reshaped to better suit local preferences (Bevan 2007, 125; also see Warren 1996; Bevan 2003, 69; Phillips 2008a, 80–88). This would point to a general trend of adjusting stone vessels despite their complex biographies, foreign³³ and exotic design, or antique character. The idea that they were of important social value to the Cretan elite cannot be sustained, as we do not know if that same elite fully understood the objects' origins.34 What is more important, the treatment of these antique objects and contemporary Egyptian stone vessels does not seem to show any differentiation based on the age of the objects. Brought together to Crete from Egypt or collected from different sources around Crete, many of the stone vessels in question seem to have been treated as raw material for the production of local types of stone vessels.35 This could mean that, at the end of the complex biography of the Kato Zakro example, its material was of the greatest value to those using it, while the antique and foreign character of its design might have been forgotten or neglected. This can be further supported by a recent claim by Michael L. Galaty (2018, 84) who argues that most of the imported stone vessels from Crete were adopted into elite households as part of their utilitarian repertoire, meaning that the original meanings of these Egyptian objects were of no or little importance for the Neopalatial elite.36 A more detailed study of the meaning of these vessels exceeds the scope of this paper.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the two case studies presented in this paper was not to nihilistically deconstruct all of the earlier interpretations or applicable theoretical models, but rather to show how different personal biographies of certain objects could influence the final interpretation. The complex life of objects shaped not only the perspectives of people from the past, but also those of archaeologists dealing with these objects. Although the final result might seem the same, it is a complex relationship between humans and objects which shaped the meanings of these objects in the past. If we are to examine the subtler differences between possible options, we should consider all possible factors that may have influenced the objects' perception within the communities of the past.

³³ It is also possible that some of these objects were produced in Syro-Palestinian or Levantine workshops and not the Egyptian ones (Lilyquist 1996, 225–226). This would suggest that the exact origin of the object was possibly unknown to Cretan consumers.

³⁴ A similar argument has recently been convincingly put forward by Bryan E. Burns (2010, 29–36) for the luxury imports on the Greek mainland. According to Burns, the original symbolic meaning and the exact origin of imported objects might have been completely unknown or unimportant to the local consumers.

³⁵ It has been argued that Minoan artisans could have easily acquired raw materials from Egypt instead of already finished vessels (Phillips 2008a, 85). However, the reasons why this particular strategy was employed have a wide variety of possible interpretations, ranging from saving work hours to the promotion of personal skills through the ability to adjust the already completed vessels. Whatever the interpretations, they do not seem to be related to the origin or age of the vessels themselves.

³⁶ Galaty (2018, 77-85) convincingly argues for different consumption patterns on the Greek mainland.

This paper demonstrates how highly applicable the process of appropriation is to understanding intercultural contacts in the past. However, at the same time it shows that this model should not be applied always and without criticism. This does not suggest that there is something wrong with the model itself, but rather that our own preconceptions can influence our choice of a model and consequently the final interpretation. Our pre- and misconceptions about certain cultural contexts under examination can influence our understanding of the foreign. Even if we use valuable models such as appropriation, we should first examine whether the objects of our study can truly be considered foreign and therefore subjected to this kind of research. If the idea of foreignness is not critically evaluated at the beginning of archaeological research, theoretical models serve as tools to prove, rather than examine the foreign character of the material culture.

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Filip Franković

Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte und Vorderasiatische Archäologie Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Heidelberg Sandgasse 7, D-69117 Heidelberg frankovic.uni@gmail.com