

GREEK MIGRATIONS FROM THE AEGEAN TO THE IONIAN COAST OF SOUTHERN ITALY, IN THE 7TH CENTURY BC: SHARED GOODS, RITUALS, HEROIC MEMORIES, IN AN ARISTOCRATIC PERSPECTIVE

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The site of the Incoronata (in the current Basilicata region) offers a privileged interpretative model to understand the phenomena of integration among other communities in the Mediterranean Iron Age. In the 7th century BC this hegemonic place on the Ionian coast of Southern Italy, occupied by those communities that the sources named Enotrians, welcomed Greek people coming from the Aegean Sea, with whom they shared craft practices, ritual spaces, goods and resources, imagerie and ideologies. The practice, and philosophy, of sharing led to a noticeable advancement in the process constructing local aristocratic identities, who took advantage of the external relations, goods and external cultural elements to consolidate their hegemony, inside and outside their own communities. Instead of using an economics-oriented approach (often anachronistic when applied to this historical period), here I argue for an ideological and historical-cultural interpretation. This is based on the hypothesis of the development of a process of sharing, from both communities, of a memory built on a common mythological and historical ground. Such ground had its roots in the mythopoeic events elaborated around a heroic memorial, but also historically determined, dating back to the Bronze Age and which represented a fundamental tool for the construction of hegemony and aristocratic identities.

The presented study tries to understand the role memories played at the core of migration phenomena of the early Archaic Mediterranean. From this perspective three crucial questions will be asked: a) for what reasons groups of Greeks has left their own countries in the 7th century BC and moved to sites of Central Mediterranean so far away from home? b) What has really attracted them, inside an historic and geographic “non-colonial” context as the one we’re going to investigate? c) For what reasons indigenous communities received them?

This topic has been partially discussed in 2017 Innsbruck Conference *The production of locality and empowerment in the Archaic Western Mediterranean* (Denti in press)¹, focused especially on the concept of *archaika* in this historical process and clearly epitomised in the conference presentation:

“A key device that is often used in the production of locality [in the sense discussed in Appadurai 1996, and drawn on other recent works in material culture studies, An], are so-called *archaika*. These are ruins and antiques, which may be centuries-old at the time of use. *Archaika* could also be objects that were specially designed to look old,

for instance during the performance of foundation rituals. By means of such *archaika*, which are usually seen as derived from, or associated with, the world of ancestors and forefathers, the imagined locality and neighbourhood acquire an ostensibly ‘archaeological’ authenticity and presumed prehistoric depth. Through the materiality of the real or presumed age of *archaika* foundational discourses on empowerment, provoked by foreign cultural or even colonial contacts, can be projected back onto a distant past and be reshaped into *archaioi logoi*, seemingly old language and rites. It is precisely at these moments that locality and neighbourhood are perceived as ancient and thus as a particularly powerful resource to forge a shared identity among locals”.

One of the main contributions to the understanding of this phenomenon comes from the archaeological record of Incoronata². This small hill overlooking the lower Basento valley in the gulf of Taranto can be considered as the ‘political’ centre of a group of villages (not yet archaeologically identified) and associated cemeteries (very well

¹ Some parts of this paper have already been developed in that occasion and are re-proposed here, with new critical insights and most recent archaeological data. The bibliography (for reasons of space) is reduced to essential contributions.

² The archaeological record, brought to light during 20 excavation campaigns carried out by the Rennes 2 University, which forms the core of this work, concerns the north-west sector of the hill and is part of a stratigraphic sequence that stretches from the 9th century to the end of the 7th/beginning of the 6th century BC.

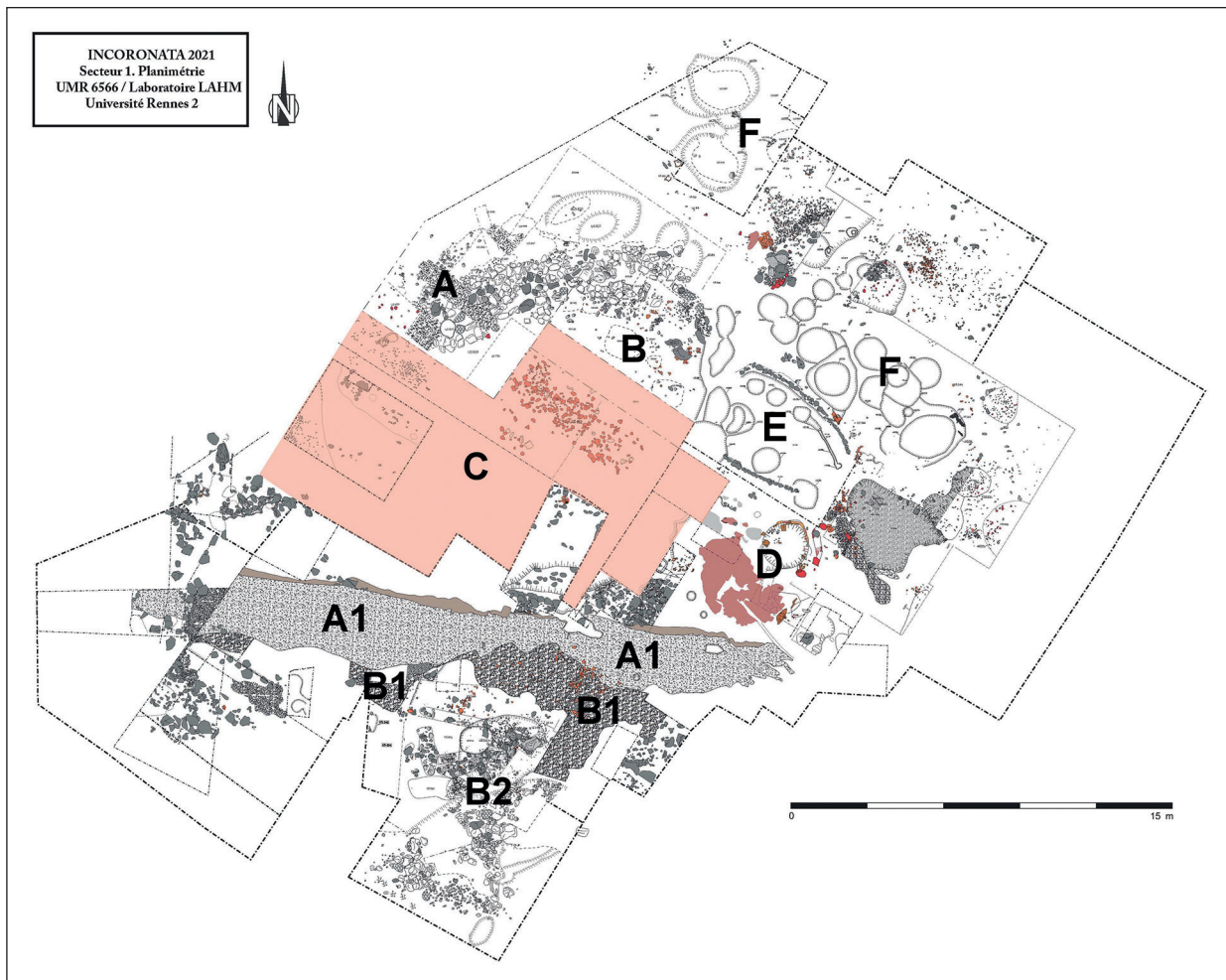


Fig. 1. Incoronata, plan of the excavation 2021 (CAD by Lisa Marchand).

documented) occupied from the 9th century BC and belonging to the indigenous *Oenotri* inhabitants (the *Chones* of the Greeks sources). From the end of the 8th century BC-beginning of the 7th century BC there is a major evidence of Aegean Greeks, who in specific ways, shared resources and craft products, rituals and *imageries*, behaviours and ideologies with them (Denti 2013; 2022a).

The data must be framed within a “para-colonial” context. In fact, exactly when the Metaponto *apoikia* was founded by the Achaeans at the start of the 6th century BC, Incoronata ceased to exist. Moreover, the Greeks who settled on this hill in the 7th century BC were not Achaeans but came mainly from the Aegean islands (Denti 2018). In this sense, the notions of mobility and memory, discussed here, should be considered within an historical background that is not – traditionally understood in the Hellenocentric sense – of the Archaic period. I am referring here to the *polis* and its institutions, the colonial *chora*, all phenomena

situated within a highly complex context marked by mobility of people, objects and ideologies, and by interactions between foreign groups within a space where the indigenous element was the most powerful factor. Rather than employing the term “pre-colonial” context – which evokes a teleological approach to the advent of the colonisation phenomenon – or “non-colonial”, because it is reminiscent of a historical-geographical situation in which the *apoikiai* exist in close geographic proximity, i.e. in the 8th century BC (see Taranto to the north and Sibari to the south), I therefore prefer to use the term of “para-colonial” for this particular horizon in this territory.

The occupation of Incoronata during the 9th and 8th century BC appears to be characterized by a mainly Oenotrian *facies* where the Greek component is essentially absent³. Three main factors

³ The only evidence of a relationship with the Greek world

characterize this occupation phase: a series of monumental interventions, ceremonial contexts, and evidence of pottery production, the main aspects of the political structuring of groups of local elite who controlled these spaces. The southern edge of the hilly plateau is characterized by a huge terrace, a large platform made up of pebbles directly placed on the virgin ground, which continues for about 40 metres by 10 metres wide (Fig. 1, B1); this was probably a large open-air ritual terrace. This platform defines a ritual space to the south, dating to the 8th century BC (Fig. 1, B2), which develops around a big white smooth stone, fixed by wedges into the ground and surrounded by intentional deposition of Oenotrian pottery, numerous animal bones and unusually large river pebbles⁴ (a practice well documented since the Bronze Age in the Aegean world, as the sacred space of the islet of Dhaskalio, near Keros in the Cyclades, for example, teaches: Renfrew, Philaniotou, Brodie, Gavalas 2009: 38-39). This installation, which can be described as an altar or an aniconic cultic stone, rests on a pit filled with numerous mini-layers of ash, containing burnt bones and pottery dated to the 9th century BC, which is configured as a space consecrated to Chthonian rituals. This structure was ritually obliterated through the deposition of fragments of large containers, polished impasto pottery and matt painted jars (*olle*) which were deposited whole and intentionally broken *in situ*. The high quality of this record (amongst which are glass beads, bronze and lapis lazuli) and the construction of a triangular enclosure (evoking similar Aegean structures dedicated to heroic cults, among which the best known is located in the West Gate of Eretria) suggests that this context and its cultic Chthonian function must have been a key space for the site in this period.

During the 7th century BC, the situation radically changes. A Greek community is attested on the hill, until the site was abandoned. This abandonment can be dated between the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 6th century BC. All the structures from the earlier stage were ritually obliterated as a precise signal of a radical political change that took place at the end of the 8th cen-

are some pieces of Mid-Geometric *kotylai*, that attest to the low, but functionally highly significant, level of contact. It is not until the end of the 8th century BC that the number of imports increase as evidenced by the Early Protocorinthian pottery and fine Late-Geometric vessels from eastern Greece, always related to the sphere of wine consumption. Orlandini 1986: 126, n. 55, 56-58, 68; Denti 2010: 311, fig. 99; 316, fig. 104.

⁴ On the meaning of pebble's depositions: Denti 2022c.



Fig. 2. Inoronata, the apsidal building viewed from the West, with the ritual context preserved in the center of the apse; below: the painted crater, the two oenotrian askoi, the SOS amphora foot (photo by M. Denti, elaboration by C. Bellamy).

ture, and then partially reconstructed, preserving a precise topographic and functional continuity. The two principal activities from this phase are the same as those of the previous century: the craft productions (which are mixed, indigenous-Greek) and the ritual spaces (where indigenous and Greek pottery were used).

This Greek community comprised craftsmen and artists, potters who built one of major Greek Orientalising “schools” in the Mediterranean, providing living scenes from the Homeric battles and the glorious deeds of the heroes of Greek mythology, such as Perseus, Bellerophon, Herakles (Fig. 3) (Orlandini 1988; Orlandini 1991; Denti 2000; 2002; 2005). Potters and painters who worked at Inoronata during this century came from the Aegean islands, in particular Paros and Naxos (Denti 2018). Artisans from other Orientalising Greek workshops – such as Corinth, Athens, and East Greece – or who should have frequented those workshops, should also formed part of this community (Denti forth.).

The Greek presence at Inoronata might have been occasional rather than stable⁵, connected

⁵ Cf. the analogous situation in the Apollo sanctuary *Daphnephoros* at Eretria: Verdan 2013.



Fig. 3. Incoronata, relief perirrhanterion, detail of the decoration (from Orlandini 1983: fig. 318).

to the ceremonial needs of cultic events and the religious festivals⁶ that took place on the hill and which constituted the “strong” moments of the hegemonic structuring of the indigenous elite. A seasonal presence, by itinerant potters, seems also to be confirmed by the discovery of pottery by the same hands of those at Incoronata in other sites along the Ionian coast (Amastuola and Crotona) and now also identified in Sicily at Megara Hyblaea (De Barbarin 2021).

In this general framework, other Greeks with different origins probably frequented the hill during the 7th century BC, as evidenced by the pottery imports – extraordinary in quality and quantity – coming from the most disparate regions of the Hellenic world, which could have been transported there by individuals from the Aegean, as is known to happen in other sacred contexts in the Mediterranean. Besides the *cythrai* (Quercia 2015), they include large containers, Corinthian, Attic, Laconic, Greek-Oriental amphorae and valuables connected to wine consumption, produced by Corinthian (Cavagnera 1995) and East Greek workshops (Denti 2008).

In order to understand the type of relationships that these individuals must have had with members of the indigenous community, we need to emphasize that this space remained under

the control of the Oenotrian local elite’s family groups throughout all its pre-colonial history. This is indicated by the study of excavated contexts, the quantification of ceramics (where the percentage of indigenous pottery is clearly greater) and the study of the undecorated pottery, whose shapes are mostly indigenous and remain practically unchanged until the end of the site’s occupation (Meadeb 2016).

In this context, indigenous people and Greeks choose to share spaces, resources and activities in ways that the archaeological record allows us today to begin to decrypt more precisely. This sharing concerns expressions of rank, within an elite social framework. This relates to the common use of resources, spaces and tools used on one side for the artisanal production (Gorgues 2017), and on the other for ritual practices. These two areas appear to be associated with common ideologies and cultural sharing which are archaeologically visible in the areas excavated (i.e. the ritual contexts, the artisanal area) and in the construction of a Mythical-epic *imagerie* of extraordinary visual and conceptual impact, painted on the Greek pottery produced *in situ* (Denti forth.).

At what level does this issue impact the notion of identity? The acceptance of “another” community by the groups of local elite and the elaboration of new instruments of knowledge (that is knowledge of the other, as well as of oneself) and of creation of procedures of reciprocity, constitutes a further and a crucial tool in the development of empowerment within this community. These are processes in which the notion of reciprocity should be likely understood as a starting point – and not of an arrival point – within foreign groups that were attracted to each other because they *already* had several shared elements, as we will see, most likely shared over a long time (Müller 2002: 391; Denti 2009a). Thus, it is in this specific framework that the notions of memory, migration and empowerment need to be considered.

Craft production and ritual provide very considerable archaeological data on the two spheres through which these phenomena manifest themselves.

The archaeological evidence at Incoronata points to a clear change at the beginning of the 7th century BC. The large 8th century BC monumental paved terrace was covered by a massive amount of stone and soil, which preserved it intact and then it was sealed by ritual practices. On top of this, a new paved terrace with the exact same orientation (east-west) was built of stone flakes and tiny pebbles (Denti 2017) (Fig. 1, A1). In terms of

⁶ Cf. the case, significantly similar, from the nearby site of Roca Vecchia: Iacono 2015.

material culture, contact with the Greek world is indicated by a considerable amount of imported pottery, coming from the most diverse regions of the Aegean, that was found together with the appearance of locally made Greek pottery, probably dating from the mid-century. Beside this phenomenon, important structures related to a craft production of ceramics represent the most complete example of a pottery workshop known in Southern Italy at this time (Denti, Villette 2013). The evidence includes large quantities of kiln parts, firing surfaces and pits used as kiln (Fig. 1, D), decking, post holes, pits for decanting clay, settling basins, a probable underground clay quarry, large amounts of kiln waste, an interesting series of potters' instruments (especially stone ones) and, most importantly, the base of a potter's wheel. There is some evidence of metallurgical activity too. These contexts are characterised by the joint occurrence of Greek and indigenous pottery. Both products are found among the kiln waste within the rubbish from the same "firings", or *in situ* next to each other in the area where the artisans worked, not far from widespread concentrations of burnt or blackened clay. Together with the locally produced Greek and indigenous pottery, sherds incised with Greek letters were discovered in the same context. This testifies to the presence and joint activity of local and Greek potters within the same workshop during the 7th century BC. Nevertheless, despite the co-presence of the indigenous and Greek potters who were using the same workspaces and resources, the characteristics of the two craft traditions remain strictly distinct.

Concerning the ritual sphere, where the local Iron Age elite affirmed or negotiated its hegemonic power relations, almost all the structures excavated in this sector area of the hill have a ritual function. One of the most relevant, north of the large terraces, is the area where an apsidal building was erected (Fig. 1, E); oriented in a south-east-northwest direction, the building measures roughly 6 x 4 m. Its function – perhaps residential, and certainly ceremonial – is confirmed by the discovery, right in the centre of the apse, in an area bounded on the ground by tiny pebbles, of a perfectly preserved ritual context, where local and Greek pottery were used together, inside the same ceremonial space (Fig. 2). This is the material found *in situ*, associated with charcoal: a locally produced painted crater, deliberately broken but completely reconstructable (made unusable by carefully cutting away the foot); two Oenotrian *askoi*, one unpainted and the other monochrome; two bobbins; an SOS amphora foot fixed in the

ground with the centre cut out for libations. This "closed" context illustrates the use of Chthonic ritual practices, probably destined to familiar cults reserved for the community's ancestors and/or heroes. This adoption of libatory practices, as we have already seen extensively developed during the 9th and 8th century BC but involving now the use of Greek ceremonial materials, shows us at what level the now cross-cultural encounter was played out between the local community and their external partners.

The surrounding space is characterized by the presence of a series of pebble floors delimiting a number of ritual spaces (Fig. 1, F): repeatedly associated with pits dug into the virgin soil, often one inside the other, connected to Chthonic ceremonial practices (Denti 2017; 2020; 2022b). We are dealing with *bothroi*, through which it was possible to enter into contact with the underworld, filled by indigenous and Greek pottery. All the features of this ritual typology⁷ testify the establishment of specific actions connected with the world of ancestors.

A large monumental structure is currently preserved on about 13 m long and up to 2.80 m wide (Fig. 1, A). It is made of irregularly shaped stones, laid in a soil deposit; a large part of these stones are laid down flat. The state of progress of the excavation does not yet allow us to describe the function of such structure. However, there are a number of elements that we can take into account: the architectural technique; the possible association with the bricks reused *in situ* in the layers of the final obliteration of the building (served as elements of its elevation?); the imposing dimensions of the artefact; the association with ritual deposition of great prestige (i.e. imported Greek ceramics, a bronze Daedalic female small sculpture, see Denti 2019); the fact that the structure appears systematically encircled by a series of ritual pits; finally, the impressive effort devoted (in terms of manpower, means, technique, material) to implement its demolition – and its preservation in memory – thanks to one of the most largest obliterations recorded by Mediterranean archaeology for the Iron Age: Denti 2016). These arguments suggest, with great probability, the attribution of the structure to the foundation of a building of considerable dimensions and particularly remarkable significance (Denti 2021; 2022b).

⁷ As the distribution of parts of a same pot (usually prestigious ones) in different ceremonial contexts: the phenomenon of the "enchainment" studied by John Chapman: Chapman 2000.

This process of obliteration, dating to the end of 7th century BC, was complex and accompanied by ritual practices: the cult spaces were defunctionalized by filling in the pits and by the complete covering of the built structures – previously demolished and perfectly cleaned i.e. purified – through layers of earth, pebbles and stones which could reach impressive heights (Fig. 1, C). It seems very probable that this situation has involved substantial pottery, stone and earth ritual deposits (but also weapons, loom weights, shells) that characterise all the north area of this sector (Denti 2009b). These are large square pits, on average measuring 4 x 3 m. Entire pottery vases, intentionally broken *in situ*, upside down vessels, vessels cut in half, single parts of vessels (following the logic of the *pars pro toto*) were dumped or carefully placed inside these square pits dug into the virgin earth. The depositional logic was the same in every deposit: first the finest and most prestigious pottery (whose shapes are fundamentally connected to libations or banquets purification: *louteria*, *perirrhatheria*, *dinoi*, *stamnoi*, *oinochoai*, bowls, cups), offering (*kalathiskoi*, miniature pottery), transport and conservation of liquids (amphorae, *hydriai* and possibly the *pithoi*); and later, as “protection”, the large containers (*pithoi* and amphorae). The fine pottery found in these deposits, connected to ceremonial practices, consists basically of Greek products. However, some indigenous shapes, normally represented by single examples that stand out for their high level of manufacture, were first laid at the bottom of the deposit⁸. They had also been rendered unusable through the removal of their foot or rim, as in the case of a great biconical jar (*olla*) with an *a tenda* design (which also shows the signs of blows received on the walls at the time of fragmentation). We are thus faced with the same ritual defunctionalization methods as used with the Greek crater deposit in the centre of the ritual building’s apse. The presence of a single example of Oenotrian culture is immediately charged with meaning: its initial deposition and its isolation characterises the primary act of the deposit’s foundation, a sign marking the privileged relationship of dominant family group with the Chthonic world. These depositional mechanisms thus marked, through the easily culturally identifiable object that served as the main link with the world of the ancestors, all the *auctoritas* of the local elite’s hegemony who controlled Incoronata. Secondly, we can see that

identical ritual practices were applied to both the indigenous and Greek material: the fragmentation of the vases made *in situ* through the violent blows to the vases’ surface; the deposition of the reversed vases; the removal of a horizontal section of the vase; the removal of a vertical section of the vase; the removal of the vessel’s rim or foot. As we have seen, in the south area, at the time of the obliteration which took place in the 8th century BC, the pottery was deposited in the same way, after being intentionally broken.

Mobility and memory: Middle ground, archaika and common memories for the elite empowerment

The contextual and functional features of Incoronata’s archaeological data confirm their inclusion in the productive spaces and their connection to ritual practices, both of which depend on an ancestor cult background. Extremely coherent with the latter is the making of objects and the recourse to practices that we call *archaika*, according to procedures implemented by elite groups to build their hegemony during the Iron Age through the figurative, monumental and literary retrospective creation of a culture, testified by archaeology as well as literary sources.

The reference to past elements can be seen on different levels at Incoronata. On one hand they concern the evocation of a series of typically Bronze Age models and motifs, reflected in some pottery shapes and in some iconographical schemes reproduced on the figured pottery; the reference point, in this case, was a past that was distant in time but close in concept: the world of heroes. On the other hand, the uninterrupted re-proposal of identical ritual practices over the two centuries of occupation, evoked a closer past, ensuring genealogical continuity with the world of the ancestors.

I will present a very short selection here⁹. An important quantity of Greek pottery shapes produced *in situ* during the 7th century BC – and significantly adopted in the ceremonial sets – look directly back to pottery prototypes from the Aegean world of the Bronze Age. The clearest case is shown by some painted craters whose profile, handles and the high foot make us think immediately of Bronze Age prototypes. Miniature *kalathiskoi* in grey ware (a class moreover manufactured in this region from the Bronze Age), significantly placed complete in the large ceramic deposits, explicitly

⁸ See the same situation in the deposits of the indigenous sanctuary at Polizzello, in north-west Sicily: Perna 2015: 144.

⁹ An in-depth analysis is in Denti forth.



Fig. 4. Incoronata, miniature *kalathiskos* in grey ware, from a large ritual deposit. Excavations of Rennes 2 University (photo by M. Denti).

refer to Aegean Bronze Age shapes (Fig. 4). Another locally produced class of pottery found at Incoronata, the one handled painted cup (Fig. 5), is a well-known precise replica, in shape and decoration, of the *Achaean Vapheio cups* widely found in the Aegean world from Early Minoan III to Late Helladic Periods (Papadopoulos 2003). In this context, it is perhaps possible to ask ourselves whether the replication of the production – and use – of the local Oenotrian unpainted pottery and impasto pottery (“coarse ware”, typical of the South-Italian Bronze Age) could also refer to the same phenomenon. They invariably continue to be produced, in typically indigenous shapes, throughout the whole history of the site: is it possible to think that such systematic respect for tradition depended on an ideological repetition of a vascular repertoire strongly endowed with meaning?

Archaism can also be observed in the figurative repertoire of the painted Greek ware made at Incoronata. Evocation of motifs of the Geometric repertoire, as the decoration of the *dinoi* with faced horses and giant tripod of Late Geometric shape. On the large *stamnoi* are repeated some of the most common decorative motifs of the Minoan and Mycenaean vascular repertoire. Among these we can recall the “bordering wavy line”, vertically framing the metopal space on each of the two sides of the vase, and the motif of the double axe, reproduced singly in giant format, alongside the representation of a lion (of Cycladic type), or the decorative pattern of the double vertical volute with palmettes (another Cycladic and East Greek pattern) (Fig. 6; for the deepening of those different



Fig. 5. Incoronata, one handled painted cup, from deposit of Saggio T, Excavations of University of Milan (from Orlandini 1992: fig. 194).

aspects, see Denti forth. chapter 3). These figurative motifs are full of precise semantic implications, which are directly related to the conceptual sphere of heroization (Denti 2018; 2022a; forth.). Of great interest is the recurrence of a widespread iconographic motif – due to its meaning related to the idea of the eternal rebirth – found in many elite funerary contexts of the Mycenaean world: the double spiral (Younger 1997). This is often painted on the rim of the locally produced figured



Fig. 6. Incoronata, figured *stamnos* with “bordering wavy line”, double axes, vertical volute with palmettes pattern. Excavations of University of Milan (photo by M. Denti).

dinoi, containing the wine used in the ceremonial occasions. Spirals are also designed, almost obsessively, in relief on different registers that separate the figurative bands of the large *perirrhanteria* (Fig. 3), the most spectacular instruments of heroic ritual found at Incoronata, used for ablutions and the purification of water. The exegetical interpretation of the pattern with double opposing “arch” allows us to tracing its roots – very ancient roots: the best comparison come from the painted decoration of Minoan *larnakes* from Sitià (Crete) and, even further in time, of a Calcolitic jar from Erimi, Cyprus (Karageorghis 1981: 22, 23, n. 7).

The recourse – explicit and repeated – at Iron Age Incoronata, to objects, signs and shapes that recall Bronze Age objects and images, or Late Geometric repertoire, is therefore not an accidental phenomenon, nor to be explained by purely formalistic reasons. The appeal of the past, re-proposing physical and mental elements of an ancient history (the age of heroes) as well as a more recent one (the age of ancestors), contributed to the social and political consolidation of the members of this community: a phenomenon widely known and well-studied in the Iron Age Aegean world.

Alongside this factor, another tools used in the empowerment process can be identified in the recourse to the integration of, and relationship with, the *other*: individuals, culture, ideology and objects coming from *outside* the community. From this point of view, we need to focus on the idea of the origin of such objects: valuable and prestigious objects, very often to be understood as gifts, in the “Homeric” sense. The different origins of prestige goods imported to Incoronata from the Aegean, Corinth, East Greece, can easily respond to the canonical requirements of Mediterranean places of worship where dedications of objects of different origins are commonly found. However, in a context such as this, the different origins can be explained within a concept of *geographic distance* as a space that was not simply physical, but as the seat of a circuit of international relations. Within this circuit, the acquisition of prestige goods entailed, and sealed, the process of the elite’s empowerment that controlled the very same process. It is a concrete “connectivity”, even though not economic in the modern sense, but rather founded on ideological, ritual and cosmological patterns (Helms 1993; D’Ercole 2012: 167-168; Denti forth.).

So, over the 7th century BC, a group of Aegean Greeks were attracted to this space for reasons (not merely economic/mercantile ones) that depended on a system characterized by shared elements connected to the memory and the cult of ancestors

and heroes. This system should also depend on a heritage whose roots sink deeply into the Bronze Age. Furthermore, a direct historical/geographical connection with this world can today be archaeologically demonstrated by the evidence of a *stable* frequentation of groups of Mycenaeans (including potters working *in situ*) coming from the Aegean, at numerous sites in the region, datable to the Recent Bronze Age, including Termitito and San Vito di Pisticci, to mention only those closest to Incoronata (Cipolloni Sampò 1999). To this day, no adequate documentation from the Bronze Age (and thus evidence of a direct, material connection to that world) has *yet* been found in Incoronata¹⁰, inviting us to further explore the question of how this repertoire was transmitted in this specific context. Let us not forget, however, that in order to understand the significance of the 9th- and 8th-century ritual structures mentioned above (notably the big white smooth stone, surrounded by intentional deposition of large pebbles), we had to resort to comparisons that are chronologically placed in the Bronze Age.

Moreover, a close connection between the Aegean and the Ionian West appears sealed in memory by the Homeric traditions¹¹: the territories of the Sibaritide and the Crotoniatide (and further north Daunia) appear profoundly associated with the *nostoi*, the Homeric heroes who, upon returning from the Trojan war, received worship and honours at these places. We should not underestimate the fact that such places are *not* Greek foundations but – invariably – indigenous sites, confirming the deep connections of the latter with the Aegean world, that even the literary tradition continued to stress (Musti 1981). Significantly, the indigenous communities which occupied the Ionian coast of Southern Italy are constantly considered in the Greek sources to have Trojan origins.

This historical and conceptual background has allowed us to understand how this kind of shared cultural instruments, which the exceptional archaeological record from Incoronata has helped to recognise, were drawn up and used to develop the socio-political empowerment of those communities. Those instruments have been structured around at least four pillars, components of a hegemonic “middle ground”, constantly negotiated through means such as: craft activity; practices of ritual and worship; relations built with an *outer* community; sharing of common memories.

¹⁰ I say “yet”, because in the nearby Termitito, for example, the Iron Age occupation lies beyond Bronze Age levels.

¹¹ *Contra*, as fruit of late foundation myths, e.g. Yntema 2011.

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