

Exploring Connectivity

Entanglements



Connectivity & Materiality

- Material evidence for culture contact in the eastern Mediterranean
- What do objects made & exchanged by peoples tell us about social interactions?
- Mediterranean:
 - A means of communication & interaction
 - An experiential space through which people moved
 - Different engagements with the physicality of the sea helped craft distinctive identities



Aerial: Egypt, SW Asia & East Mediterranean

Culture Contact

- “contact between cultures is inherently disruptive, challenging people’s views of themselves & of others” (Cusick 1998a: 3)
- Inevitably changes social & material worlds:
 - New ideas, ways of doing things & novel items of material culture
- Peoples’ perceptions of the new & unusual is culturally constructed:
 - Eagerly adopted, reworked & incorporated in new creations of identity
 - Ambiguity or even mistrust



Egyptian depiction of Asiatic,
Yahudiyeh

Modes of Exchange

- How & why did goods & people move around the Mediterranean?
- Different modes of exchange
 - Gift exchange
 - Commodity trade/mercantile exchange
 - Sailor trade
 - Consuming the exotic
- Colonisation

Archaeological Evidence

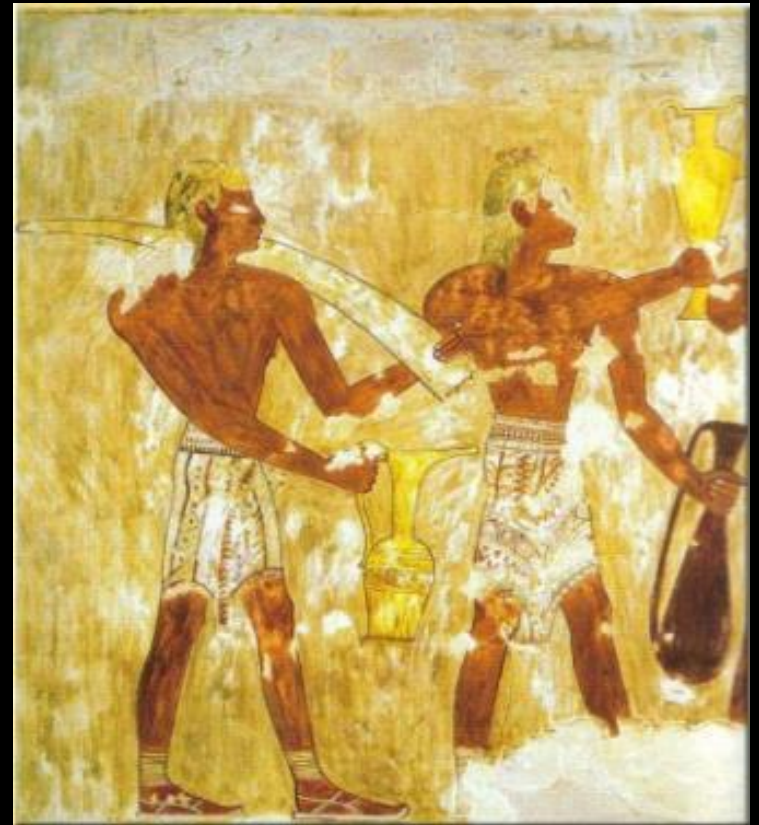
- Items that have physically survived & can be demonstrated to have moved in antiquity
- Many traded commodities will not survive
 - Grain, textiles, liquids transported in perishable containers etc
 - People
- Textual data
- Iconographic evidence



Canaanite Jar, Ulu Burun

Mauss (1925) *The Gift*

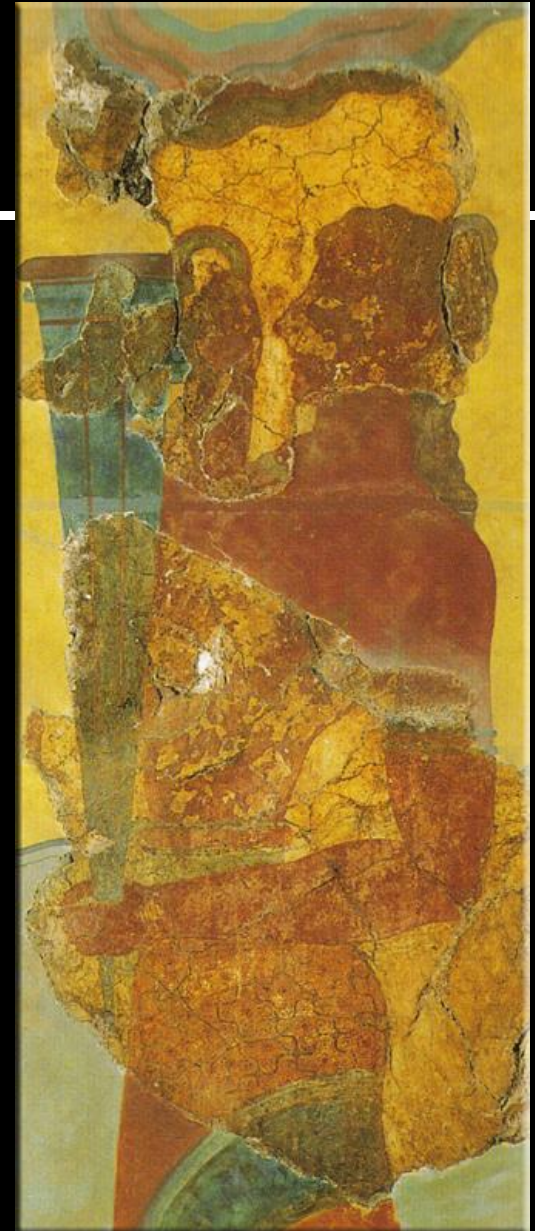
- Exchange within archaic societies
- Gift giving is of particular importance
 - Social as well as economic
- Between whole groups via chiefs
 - Goods, wealth, property
 - Courtesies, entertainment, ritual
 - Women
 - Military assistance



People from Keftiu

Gif exchange

- Based on **obligation & self interest**
 - Obligation to give
 - Obligation to receive
 - Obligation to reciprocate
- Gifts are **inalienable**: a part of the giver is sent with the gift
- Gives them a hold over the recipient
 - If the recipient is unable to repay the gift they lose face



Procession fresco, Knossos

Gift Exchange

- Underpinned by need to create alliances & friendships beyond the immediate kinship group
- Accumulate wealth, prestige & repute within one's own community
- Emphasis on the familial relationship between participants:
 - Used to create & mediate social relations
 - Creates an inexorable bond between two gifting partners
 - To make a gift is to give away part of yourself (inalienability)

Mercantile Trade

- Polanyi & the **substantivists**
 - Relativist approach (differences between cultures)
 - Economic rules are based on the social & natural environment
- Mercantile trade is dependent on coinage & developed in 4th century Athens
- Bronze & Early Iron Age trade = reciprocal gift exchange



4th century stater, Aegina

Mercantile Trade

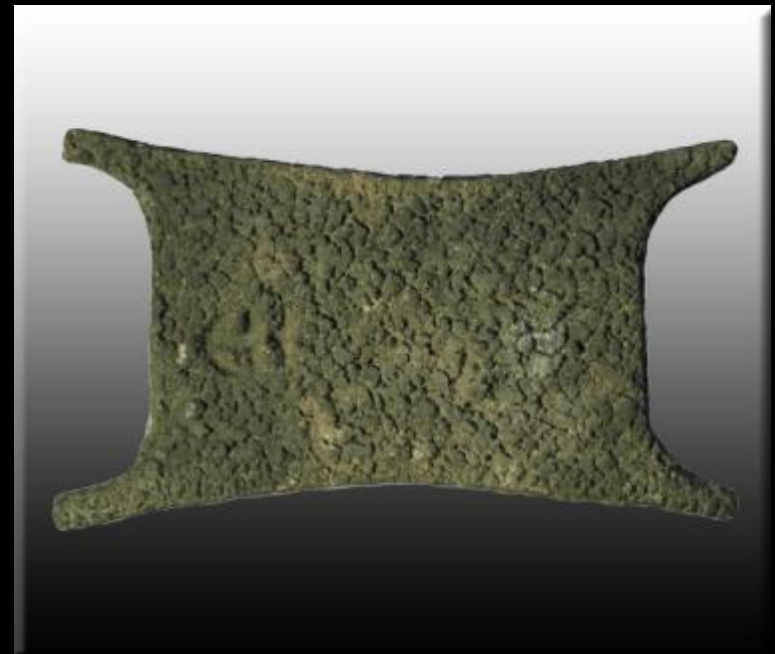
- Emphasises **market value** of exchange items rather than underlying social relations
- It might imply a specific central location (market place) in which transactions take place
- Does mercantile exchange depend upon some form of monetary system to operate?



Canaanite weights

Mercantile Trade

- Can we extrapolate mercantile trade to the Bronze Age?
- Standard systems of weights & measures...
- Metals (especially silver) a pre-monetary system of exchange
- Development of merchant economy in Near East:
 - Contracts
 - Laws
- Commodity trade?



Copper ingot

Commodities

- Objects of economic value intended for exchange
 - “its **exchangeability**... for some other thing is its socially relevant feature” (Appadurai 1986:13)
 - “**alienable** objects which can be exchanged between individuals without obligation” (Steel 2012: 123)
- Marx: produced to be exchanged/consumed:
 - Totally separate from embedded social relations



Mycenaean stirrup jar,
Arediou

Tamkārum

- Private merchants attested from 3rd millennium BC
 - Law codes & letters
- Long distance trade
- Had agents abroad
- Financed commercial enterprises & granted credit
- Taxed & controlled by palace/temple



Donkey caravan, Taurus Mountains

Sailor Trade

- Unregulated trade alongside other types of exchanges
- “Tramping... gave ample opportunity for bargaining, & for making the most of price differences. Every sailor from captain to cabin boy would have his bundle of merchandise on board, & merchants or their representatives would travel with their wares. The round trip, which could last several weeks or months, was a long succession of selling & buying & exchanging, organised within a complicated itinerary. In the course of the voyage the cargo would often have completely altered its nature....[indeed the ships] were more like travelling bazaars. The calls at port were so many opportunities for buying, selling, reselling & exchanging goods, not to mention the other pleasures of going ashore” (Braudel 1972: 107).

Consuming the Exotic

- How are traded goods consumed, viewed, & valued within the recipient society?
- Helms (1988): control over traded goods a strategy for the accumulation of political & ideological power
- Esoteric knowledge of distance places & customs is used in the construction of political ideologies



Ostrich-egg rhyton, Crete

Consuming the Exotic

- “Not only exotic materials but also **intangible knowledge** of distant realms & regions can be politically valuable goods” (Helms 1988: 4)
- “A symbolic relationship develops between the individual who is able to source materials from a mysterious distant realm & the world from which these materials derive; adding to their social capital” (Steel 2013: 127)



Appliqué sphinx, Malia

Colonies

- Settlement established by a people of a different descent/ethnicity, language & social practices to the local population
- Distinguished by distinct domestic & civic architecture, material culture & burial customs
- Appropriation of land
- Possible subjugation of indigenous population



Akrotiri: West House

Coloniser & the Colonised

- Colonial situations are perceived as a confrontation between two distinct cultural entities
- Unequal relationship
 - Cultural superiority of the coloniser
 - Subordination of the native



Hybridisation

- Construction of new social practices exhibiting a mix of cultural influences
- Not simply blending of material culture
- Expression of agency & identity in a contact zone



Rock crystal vase, Mycenae

Colonialism & Material Culture

- “a relationship with material culture” (Gosden 2004: 4)
- Spread of material culture results in a “destabilising of older values, so changing all concerned – incomers and natives” (Gosden 2004: 4)
- A network of people, ideas & objects which are transformed through social action
- Shared cultural milieu:
 - Spread of material culture & social practices but no evidence for military interaction/control
 - Elite interaction

Summary

- Cultural contact can be observed through the movement of objects
- In Near East supplemented by textual evidence & representations
- Gift exchange between elites: inalienable things with their own histories
- Commodities in “mercantile” exchange & sailor trade
- Use of the exotic in construction of identities
- Colonisation: spread of materials, ideas & social practices