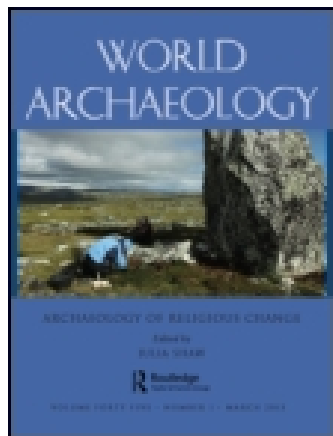




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Migration, mobility and craftspeople in the Aegean Bronze Age: a case study from Ayia Irini on the island of Kea

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Migration, mobility and craftspeople in the Aegean Bronze Age: a case study from Ayia Irini on the island of Kea

Natalie Abell

Abstract

This paper investigates the question of human mobility from a practice-centered perspective, and argues for the value of such approaches in elucidating how new ideas and objects enter a community and become 'local' over time. In particular, I focus on the Middle Bronze Age in the Aegean Sea, and the foundation of a new settlement on the island of Kea, at Ayia Irini, apparently aimed to take advantage of an intensification of interregional trade and rising interest in the substantial metal resources at Lavrion, just opposite Ayia Irini on the coast of Attica. On the basis of the kinds of objects produced by local craftspeople, and the techniques used to do so, it is argued that the settlement of Ayia Irini incorporated people from diverse regions; the movement and integration of non-local people into the community over time resulted in an assemblage of artifacts and a way of life in the Aegean that was distinctively multicultural.

Keywords

Aegean Bronze Age; mobile craftspeople; interaction networks; communities of practice.

Migration-centered approaches, focusing on the long-distance movement of large numbers of people, have fallen out of favor in studies of Aegean prehistory, with a few exceptions (e.g. discussion in Brogan and Hallager 2011; Dickinson 2007); migration to Cyprus, on the other hand, continues to be hotly debated (e.g. Knapp 2008; Webb and Frankel 2007). Several recent studies have argued for the existence of smaller-scale migration, particularly the movement of non-local craftspeople using distinctive potting and/or weaving technologies, into the islands of Kythera in the Early Bronze Age (EBA) (Broodbank and Kiriati 2007), Aegina during the earlier Middle Bronze Age (MBA) (Hiller 1993) and Kea during the later MBA and LBA (Gorogianni, Cutler and Fitzsimons forthcoming) (Fig. 1). Although less regularly considered as a significant force of cultural change in archaeological studies of migration, such smaller-scale and relatively short-distance migrations, when operating between culturally distinctive regions, were probably as important in promoting cultural change in the past as were short-term



Figure 1 Map of the Aegean.

interactions between travelers and traders. This article examines the new foundation of a settlement at Ayia Irini on the island of Kea during the earlier MBA, a period of increased communication and movement in the Aegean, in order to assess the evidence for the origin of migrants to this new island community, and to consider the impact of the movement and interaction of craftspeople there. On the basis of the adoption of new technologies into local production practices, it is argued that some craftspeople, including craftswomen, at MBA Ayia Irini came from further afield than previously thought (i.e. from Crete). The integration of craftspeople from different cultural backgrounds into the community at Ayia Irini most likely had a significant impact on how local residents interacted with non-local people, ideas and objects over time. Finally, it is suggested that technology- and practice-centered approaches like this one provide new perspectives on human mobility and culture change in the past by providing insight into networks of interaction that may have operated outside or parallel to trade networks, and which could be traversed by agents other than elites, merchants and men.

The earlier MBA and the foundation of Ayia Irini on Kea

Following a period of disruption and economic and demographic decline in much of the Aegean at the end of the EBA (recently, see Broodbank 2000; Rutter 2013), significant social changes took place. On the island of Crete, at the southern edge of the Aegean, a complex hierarchical

society (usually conceived of as a state) emerged (Cherry 1984, 1986; Schoep 2002); the development of sailing technology at the transition to the MBA enabled an increase in long-distance trade in metals, luxury goods and other objects between Crete and the established kingdoms of the Near East and Egypt (Broodbank 2000; Cherry 1984, 1986; see also papers in Parkinson and Galaty 2009). During the earlier MBA, exchange within the Cycladic islands and along the coast of mainland Greece also intensified, driven at least partially by the community of Kolonna on the island of Aegina, which was a major center of trade and which may also have had a significant armed presence along maritime routes, judging from vase paintings on Aeginetan pots that depict warriors on boats (Rutter 2001, 129, fig. 14). Several scholars have suggested that Kolonna, by the earlier MBA, had emerged as a complex, stratified society, generally referred to as either a chiefdom or a proto-state, on the basis of the presence of large-scale community architecture, a large building complex containing luxury and imported goods (including a seal), a wealthy grave located just outside the primary gate of a massive fortification wall and evidence for the specialization of craft production, especially in the manufacture of ceramics (Gauss, Lindblom and Smetana 2011; Lindblom 2001; Niemeier 1995; Rutter 2001, 125–30).

Several studies have emphasized that interaction between Crete and the Near East spurred social changes on Crete in the earlier MBA, and that the acquisition and exploitation of precious metals by Cretan elites was an important factor in the development of the state ‘palatial’ economy (e.g. Cherry 1986; Wiener 1991). Lead-isotope analyses have demonstrated that a large proportion of metals in use in the MBA Aegean, including on Crete, are compatible with sources from Lavrion, on the coast of Attica in mainland Greece, as well as, perhaps, the western Cyclades, especially Kythnos and Seriphos (Gale and Stos-Gale 2008; Kayafa 2010; Stos-Gale and Macdonald 1991; Stos and Gale 2006). Access along the western Cyclades to Lavrion, therefore, was likely an important consideration for state agents and elites on Crete and elsewhere in the Aegean; accordingly, it seems probable that an interest in Lavrion was a major factor in drawing people to the broad region of Attica and the nearby island of Kea during the earlier MBA.

A new settlement was founded in the earlier MBA (c. 1900 BCE) at the site of Ayia Irini on Kea, north of the island of Kythnos, and just opposite Lavrion on the Attic coast (Caskey 1972; Overbeck 1984, 1989). Part of the appeal of the site seems to have resulted from its position on a large, sheltered harbor and its proximity to navigation corridors linking culturally distinctive regions of the Aegean, especially the Euboean Gulf, the northern and western Cyclades, Aegina in the Saronic Gulf and Attica (Fig. 1). Lavrion is visible from the hills surrounding the site of Ayia Irini, and evidence for metal processing in the form of slag and crucibles has been found in deposits dating to all MBA and LBA phases of occupation (Cummer and Schofield 1984; Davis 1986; Overbeck 1989; Schofield 2011); accordingly, it seems likely that residents of Ayia Irini, from the foundation of the settlement in the earlier MBA, played an important role in processing and perhaps providing access to metals from Lavrion, as well as between regional exchange networks (Crego 2010; Overbeck 1982; Overbeck and Crego 2008, 306–7).

Ayia Irini, central Greece and Kolonna on Aegina

Ceramic and other imports from diverse, distant parts of the Aegean were found at Ayia Irini in the earliest deposits of the MBA, which suggests that the community played a key role in

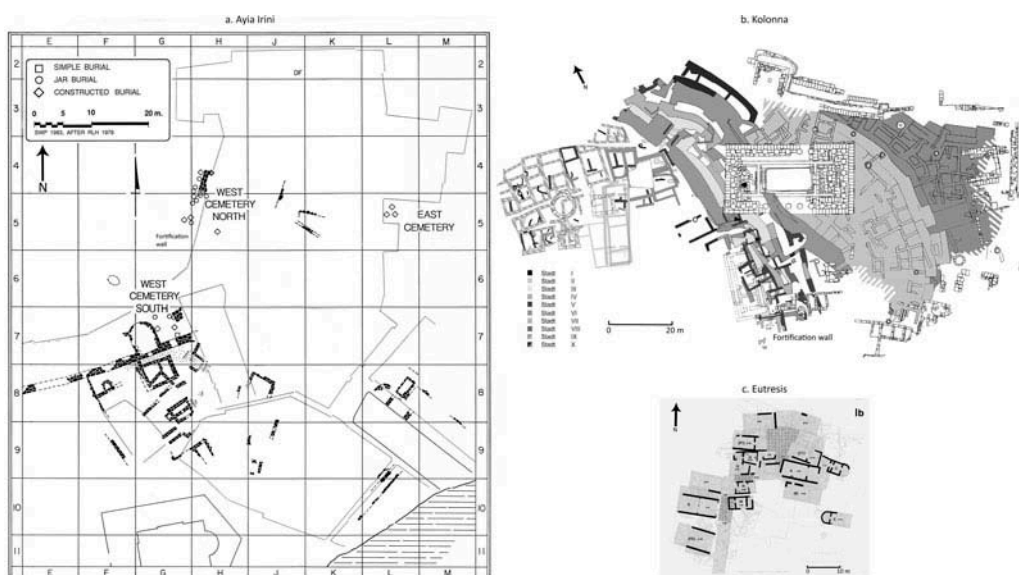


Figure 2 Plans of (a) earlier MBA Ayia Irini (after Overbeck 1989, pl. 3, courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati); (b) Kolonna (after Gauss, Lindblom and Smetana 2011, fig. 1.1, courtesy of Walter Gauss); (c) earlier MBA Eutresis (after Philippa-Touchais 2010, fig. 6, courtesy of Anna Philippa-Touchais).

exchange from its foundation, yet the origin of its initial settlers has remained elusive (Crego 2007, 2010; Overbeck 1982, 1989). Overbeck and Crego (2008) suggested that the first inhabitants of MBA Ayia Irini came from central Greece, especially on the basis of similarities in town plans (Fig. 2) and the presence of large numbers of central Greek imports (Gray Minyan wares) from that region in the earliest MBA deposits (e.g. Fig. 3a, b). It was recently suggested by Crego (2010), on the basis of close similarities in the form of the fortification walls at Kolonna and Ayia Irini, the existence of abundant evidence for trade between the two communities and closely comparable pottery production and consumption patterns, that the settlers of Ayia Irini in the earlier MBA came from Kolonna on the island of Aegina.

It is expected that, in situations of local or short-distance migration, migrants engage in continuing connections with and participation in the economic and social networks within which they had lived previously (Anthony 1997). That is, if some or all of the earlier MBA settlers at Ayia Irini came from Kolonna it is likely that interpersonal and kinship ties would have continued to exist, linking new residents of Ayia Irini with Aeginetan economic and social networks. In addition, migrants to Ayia Irini in the earlier MBA might have been particularly likely to participate in exchange with individuals from their home settlement(s), people with whom they had established social connections, since stable, personal relationships between parties are fundamental to the operation of exchange (Granovetter 1985). Although exchange between Ayia Irini and Kolonna seems to have been common, the prominence of central Greek imports at Ayia Irini, as well as the existence of Keian imports in at least one community on the Euboean Gulf, Mitrou (Hale 2014), is also significant, since it suggests that exchange connections – and perhaps personal relationships – between central Greece and Ayia Irini were at least as developed as those between Ayia Irini and Kolonna.

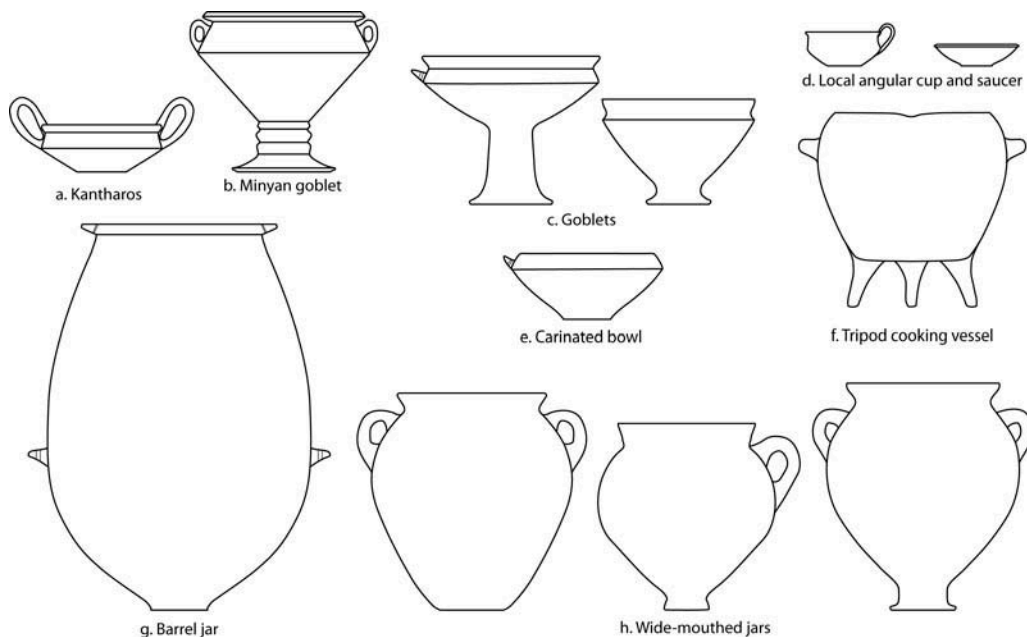


Figure 3 Some ceramic shapes from earlier MBA Ayia Irini (drawings not to scale). (a) Kantharoi, found in Gray Minyan, local and Aeginetan wares (after Caskey 1972, nos. D92, D93); (b) Minyan goblet, found in Gray Minyan and local wares (after Caskey 1972, nos. D1, D3, D101); (c) goblets produced on Kea (after Caskey 1972, nos. D125, D128); versions similar to the one on the left also produced on Aegina; (d) local vessels, sometimes produced with a potter's wheel, for which the closest parallels seem to be Cretan (after Caskey 1972, nos. D70, D74); (e) carinated bowls, common on Kea (after Caskey 1972, no. D121); a similar, uncarinated version was produced at Kolonna; (f) tripod cooking vessel, a locally produced Cretan shape (after Abell 2014, no. 101, of LBA date); (g) barrel jar, common in local and Aeginetan wares (after Caskey 1972, no. D89); (h) wide-mouthed jars, some of which were probably used as cooking vessels, given parallels with Aeginetan and mainland cooking wares (after Caskey 1972, nos. D85, D88, E14, E16). Modification of images from Caskey (1972) courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati.

No contemporary settlements in the central and southern Aegean seem to have established such intense and diverse exchange connections as Ayia Irini and Kolonna, which, in this period, seem more like each other than other Cycladic or mainland communities, in terms of exchange contacts, as well as object production and consumption patterns. These similarities lend support to the suggestion that Kolonna may have been the origin for at least some of the migrants to Ayia Irini in the earlier MBA. Other scenarios, however, could be envisioned, especially since both settlements seem to have been among the most significant hubs of exchange in this period. For example, central Greek pottery wares (e.g. Gray Minyan and Pink-Orange wares), although very common at Ayia Irini, were much rarer at Kolonna (Crego 2007; Gauss and Kiriatzis 2011; Overbeck 1982, 1989); the different distribution of these wares suggests that, from the foundation of the settlement, residents of Ayia Irini cultivated somewhat different exchange relationships than residents of Kolonna. Similarly, although the form of the Keian fortification wall finds parallels in the fortification wall at Kolonna, the plans of the two settlements are otherwise rather different (Fig. 2). The settlement plan of Kolonna is dominated by agglomerations of

buildings with shared party walls, but that of Ayia Irini seems to have been made up of smaller, freestanding buildings, a characteristic that exists in several mainland Greek settlements, such as Korakou in the Corinthia or Eutresis in Boeotia (Blegen 1921, 77, fig. 110; Philippa-Touchais 2010, 800, figs 5–8). That is, the settlement plan of Ayia Irini seems to show closer similarities between Keian and mainland Greek ways of conceptualizing spatial organization than between Keian and Aeginetan ones. On the basis of the architectural and trade connections, therefore, there is evidence that could suggest that new settlers to Ayia Irini came from Kolonna, or from central Greece, or even, perhaps, from both locations. Although, at present, it is difficult to determine which scenario is most likely, a closer analysis of variability in craft technologies and local production suggests that the latter scenario, in which Ayia Irini was initially settled by people from diverse cultural backgrounds, is not outside the realm of possibility.

The *chaîne opératoire*, communities of practice and hypothesizing mobility

Craft production – including pottery making – is deeply socially embedded, conditioned by both unconscious expectations about the proper operation and goals of craft making and conscious choices, innovation and actions at all points along the *chaîne opératoire*, from the acquisition and processing of raw materials, to forming, decorating and finishing techniques (Dobres 2000; Dobres and Hoffman 1994; Schiffer 2004). The ways in which a potter, weaver, basket-maker or stone-knapper makes choices – whether conscious or unconscious – along the *chaîne opératoire* are also shaped by the context in which the process of craft production was learned; craft producers who participate in similar or shared learning environments may be regarded as part of the same ‘community of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).¹ Situations in which craftspeople of multiple communities of practice occupy the same geographical locale may arise in cases where such craftspeople are mobile, migrating into a new community (whether permanently or not) from a geographically distant learning environment. Archaeologically, the presence of craftspeople trained in different communities of practice, but operating within a single settlement, could be inferred, for example, in situations where similar kinds of objects in a community are consistently made using different techniques, or, put another way, when diverse practices are regularly used to achieve the same goal. Although a craftspeople may alter his or her techniques as a result of innovation, experimentation or entering a new social environment of practice, it has been argued that basic motor skills and gestures, in particular, are likely to be conservative, given how deeply ingrained such skills are in the learned production process and the probability that such skills are significantly less susceptible to social pressures deriving from the public performance of craft production (Dobres 2000; Gosselain 1998; Loney 2000, 2007; Nicklin 1971). Over the long term, although new gestures or technologies may be subject to experimentation and innovation, as craftspeople realize the limitations or advantages of those methods, novel features of the *chaîne opératoire* are likely to be either accepted or rejected (e.g. Arnold 2008, 229–79); that is, over the long term, variation in production methods within a single settlement may be viewed as the result of multiple craftspeople making different choices along the *chaîne opératoire*. Archaeologically, investigation of variability and pattern in the *chaîne opératoire*, including in the use of different motor habits or gestures, provides insight into the make-up of a group of craftspeople working within a settlement, and, moreover, may

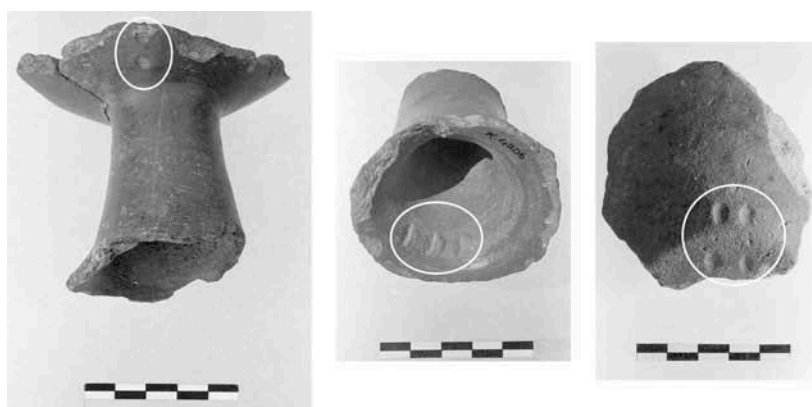
enable the identification of one or more communities of practice, linked by their common approach to production, based on a similar or shared learning environment.

Approaches focused on variation in the *chaîne opératoire* and identification of distinctive communities of practice offer an opportunity to consider the mobility and interaction of craftspeople in a way that traditional analyses based on similarities in artifact use patterns or styles of decoration cannot. Although new technical skills may be learned through ‘vertical’ or generational learning patterns (i.e. from an older craftsman to a younger apprentice), ‘horizontal’ learning, between craftspeople of different communities of practice, is also possible. ‘Horizontal’ learning mechanisms may be hypothesized especially in situations where new technologies or techniques are adopted by craftspeople in contact with an area where such practices had been operating over the long term. In the case of some technologies, like stone knapping, weaving on a vertical loom or making ceramics using a potter’s wheel, ethnographic research suggests that long apprenticeships would be necessary before mastery of the technique could be achieved (Coy 1989; Maynard, Greenfield and Childs 1999; Roux, Bril and Dietrich 1995; Roux and Corbetta 1989; for the application of these ideas in Aegean archaeology, see Choleva 2012; Cutler 2012; Gorogianni, Hilditch and Abell in progress; Hilditch 2008; Jeffra 2013). Therefore, in situations where new technologies were adopted into a community in contact with nearby regions where such technologies had previously been in use, we can hypothesize long-term interaction between craftspeople, probably enabled through the movement of craftspeople using particular technologies into a settlement where those technologies were not previously in use. Moreover, both long-term contacts and the social consequences resulting from them need not be assumed to occur entirely – or even primarily – through the action of men or elites. As such, analyses of change in technologies and the *chaîne opératoire* offer significant potential for considering the roles of women and/or children as agents of social change, in their roles as learners, technicians and producers who create objects in regular (if not daily) use within a community (Dobres 2000; Hendon 1996).

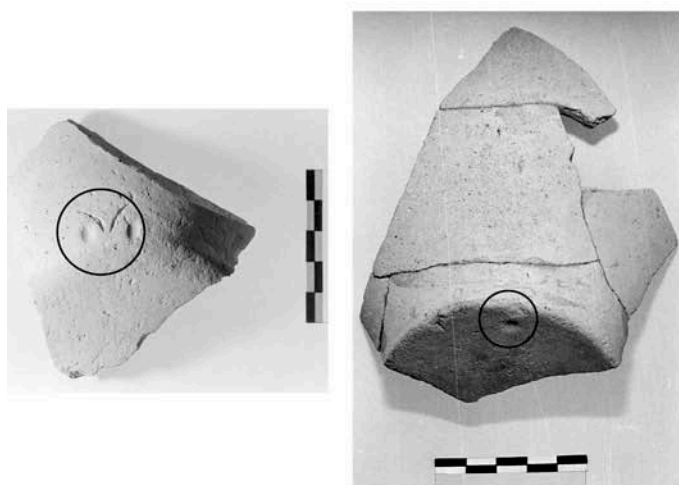
There are, of course, limitations to such an approach, and it is not advisable to approach technological change as a new ‘pots/technologies = people’. However, when considered as part of an overall package of material culture and social practice, such a technological approach offers novel insights for considering interregional and intercultural interaction, as well as mobility or migration.

Diversity in pottery-production strategies: evidence for different communities of practice at Ayia Irini?

A major component of Crego’s (2010) argument, that Ayia Irini was settled by Aeginetans from Kolonna, was her observation of similarities in pottery-production methods between Kolonna and Ayia Irini. In both communities, similar shapes were created by local potters, such as goblets, kantharoi, carinated or incurving rim bowls, wide-mouthed jars and barrel jars (Fig. 3a, c, e, g, h). In addition, potters in both locations typically employed hand-building methods, rather than those that required the use of a potter’s wheel. Moreover, at both Kolonna and at Ayia Irini, potters’ marks – small, simple, unobtrusive, incised or impressed marks – were applied to some ceramic products (Bikaki 1984; Lindblom 2001) (Fig. 4). Ethnographic studies have demonstrated that potters’ marks are employed primarily for tracking a potter’s output in



a. Goblets (l) and closed vessel (r)



b. Closed vessels



c. Spouted bowl

Figure 4 Potter's marks on (a) local, (b) Aeginetan and (c) Melian vessels, found at Ayia Irini (after Bikaki 1984, pl. 16, no. IV-11, pl. 19, no. IV-58, pl. 20, nos. IV-69, IV-78, pl. 21, no. IV-90; courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati).

shared work, firing or market space, in order to distinguish the products of multiple potters and ensure that economic benefits from ceramic exchange are associated with the correct producer (Barley 1994; Donnan 1971; Gill 1981); while potters' marks provide a convenient method for distinguishing the vessels of one potter from another, they are not always necessary (e.g. Frank 2007; Longacre 1999), and, like all parts of the pottery-production process, are embedded in the process of making vessels, linking a potter with the past and with his or her own context of learning. Crego (2010) hypothesized that potters' marks may have been used by Keian potters as a way of tracking tribute obligations to an Aeginetan authority that had organized the settlement at Ayia Irini. However, ethnographic studies of potters' marks suggest that the marks seldom have meaning for people other than potters; moreover, potters' marks were also used in contemporary communities elsewhere in the Cyclades and southern mainland Greece (Bailey 1996, 93–4; Nikolakopoulou et al. 2008, 313; Zerner 1986). There is, therefore, no *a priori* reason to assume that the potters' marks at Ayia Irini provide a closer link to potting traditions and communities of practice at Kolonna than in the Cyclades or even southern mainland Greece, since the use of potters' marks in contexts throughout this broad region might reflect only participation in shared working or firing practices. The same, in fact, is true of hand-building methods of ceramic production, which were in almost exclusive use throughout the Aegean, with the exception of central Greece and Crete, where the potter's wheel was also employed. In the absence of additional data on variation in hand-building methods, or differences in other aspects of the *chaîne opératoire* (particularly fabric, temper and firing characteristics), it is impossible to link the potting community of practice at Ayia Irini with a specific community elsewhere in which Ayia Irini potters might have learned. Indeed, the production by local Keian potters of shapes typical of Aeginetan, mainland Greek and Cycladic repertoires in the earliest phases of the settlement could suggest that potters arrived at Ayia Irini from more than one location; alternatively, variety in the local repertoire might have resulted from choices to produce vessels that were desirable to different groups or for different occasions within the community.

Although it is unclear whether potters using hand-building methods and potters' marks migrated to Ayia Irini from a single Aegean community, most pottery production seems to have been approached in ways most common in Aegina, southern mainland Greece and the Cyclades. It is, however, likely that one or a few potters were trained in a different community of practice – one that was either on or closely linked to Crete. Pottery production on Crete in this period differed from that in the Cyclades, Aegina and most of mainland Greece in the use of distinctive ceramic shapes and decorative habits, but also in the employment of the potter's wheel. The potter's wheel was also used in central Greece, but was employed to produce shapes different from those on Crete; the two wheel-using communities of practice seem to have developed independently and to have had very little interaction with one another (Knappett 1999).

At Ayia Irini, deposits of the earliest phase of the MBA settlement included a very few locally produced vessels most likely made using a potter's wheel (Overbeck 1989, 38, 41); vessels made using a potter's wheel became more common in later phases of the earlier MBA settlement (Overbeck 1989; see also Abell 2014) (Fig. 3d). It seems likely that the potter's wheel was adopted at Ayia Irini through the interaction and mobility of Cretan potters, rather than those from central Greece. Nearly all vessels made using a potter's wheel at Ayia Irini seem to have been modeled on small plain cups, bowls and lamps that were common on Crete, rather

than large, burnished goblets, kantharoi and other shapes made using a wheel in central Greece (Abell 2014; Overbeck 1989). In addition, shapes made on a wheel in central Greece were usually fired in a reduction atmosphere, which was unlike the practices in use on Crete and Kea. Finally, a stone wheel-head from earlier MBA Ayia Irini had terracotta parallels on Crete, but no such objects have been found in central Greece (Evely 1988; Georgiou 1986, 39, no. 153). It seems likely, therefore, that physical differences in the construction of potters' wheels also existed, further differentiating potting communities of practice in central Greece from those of Crete and Kea.

In addition to the use of the potter's wheel in ceramic production, two other techniques in use in the early phases of Ayia Irini seem to have derived from Crete – weaving with vertical, warp-weighted looms and cooking in tripod jars. Neither technique was popular; loom weights and tripod legs were rare in the earliest deposits of the period (Overbeck 1989). Nevertheless, the existence of both kinds of objects suggests a second area of overlap between communities of practice at Ayia Irini and on Crete. Such a distinctive group of techniques in use within the settlement, which were not related to those in use on Aegina, in the Cyclades or in mainland Greece, suggests that at least some of the earliest migrants to Ayia Irini learned how to make pots, to weave cloth and to cook food in distinctively Cretan communities of practice. Moreover, the fact that all three techniques were adopted in the earliest phases of the MBA settlement at Ayia Irini, and that all three – and especially weaving – are regularly associated with women's work in historical and ethnographic contexts (e.g. Burke 2010; Cutler 2012, 150; Hendon 1996; Wright 1991), suggests that they might be linked in terms of labor. That is, the women who wove on vertical looms might also be the people who cooked food in tripod cooking pots and, perhaps, made vessels using a potter's wheel.²

No obvious distributional patterns suggest that potters, weavers or cooks trained in Cretan communities of practice were spatially isolated within the settlement. In addition, with respect to pottery production, macroscopic observations of local ceramic fabrics in use at Ayia Irini in the MBA do not suggest different types of clay acquisition, tempering or firing techniques between potters who used the wheel and those who did not (Abell 2014; Gorogianni, Hilditch and Abell in progress), which suggests that, despite different technical approaches to *forming* vessels, other steps in the ceramic *chaîne opératoire* were followed in similar ways by both wheel- and non-wheel-using potters. Although the physical and mental requirements of learning to use wheel technology strongly suggest the presence at Ayia Irini of craftspeople trained in Cretan communities of practice, such craftspeople seem to have become at least partially incorporated into a local community of practice, which was linked together through non-forming aspects of the *chaîne opératoire*.

While the earliest use of vertical looms, tripod cooking pots and the potter's wheel at Ayia Irini probably resulted from the physical movement to Kea of women trained in Cretan communities of practice, the use of these techniques over time need not necessarily have been the result of continued movement or migration to Ayia Irini. Within the settlement, such techniques could have been passed along from older to younger craftspeople through 'vertical' apprenticeship mechanisms, in effect creating a Keian community of practice that had ties to Crete. As subsequent generations of craftspeople learned these techniques, it seems likely that distinctions between non-Cretan and Cretan would have blurred, as kinship and other social networks intertwined and changed over time and as such techniques became typical of local practices in the eyes of technicians. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the incorporation of

non-local craftspeople into the community at Ayia Irini continued in subsequent periods. This hypothesis is based partially on the adoption of new technologies in later phases, especially with respect to metal-working and aromatic processing, as well as on the presence of imported industrial objects like loom weights, which probably had little intrinsic value to people other than their owners (Abell 2014; Cutler 2012; Georgiou 1986; Gorogianni, Cutler and Fitzsimons forthcoming). Thus, over the long term, the migration of craftspeople (and perhaps others) to Ayia Irini most likely continued, and non-local technologies and practices were integrated into local ways of doing things.

Why Ayia Irini?

Theories about the mechanisms of migration emphasize that ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors encourage people to leave their homes (Anthony 1997; Burmeister 2000). In this case, while the appeal of access to trade networks and metal resources may have ‘pulled’ some group(s?) of people to Ayia Irini, it is probable that factors in their home settlement(s) also ‘pushed’ them to leave. Competition among social groups at Kolonna or within central Greece, for example, could have encouraged some groups of people to move, in order to have better access to resources and opportunities for social distinction. On the other hand, the fact that at least some migrants at Ayia Irini were probably women raises the possibility that alternative mechanisms may also have been at play. It has been argued that, in later periods at Ayia Irini, non-local women may have arrived in the community as brides, whose presence was intended to cement alliances between elites (Gorogianni, Cutler and Fitzsimons forthcoming). While this may be true for at least some women even in this early period, other types of movement may also have occurred. In any case, we have very little sense of the degree to which women in the Bronze Age Aegean were mobile, as a result of their own desires or imposed requirements, as brides, captives, slaves, servants or as part of family units. Nevertheless, the fact that women *and* men most likely migrated to Ayia Irini, and, moreover, probably came from different parts of the Aegean, highlights the singular nature of the settlement in the earlier MBA, as well as later periods of occupation. Even 400 years after the settlement was founded, *c.* 1500 BCE, the locally produced material culture of Ayia Irini remained remarkably multicultural, with both typological and technological connections with diverse parts of the Aegean. It seems probable that the stage for what Broodbank (2004) termed the ‘cultural promiscuity’ of Ayia Irini was set in the earlier MBA, when migrants from different parts of the Aegean arrived at Ayia Irini and created a new community with extensive Aegean connections, but an idiosyncratic way of life all its own.

Conclusions

Ayia Irini was a new settlement in the earlier MBA, and we can be sure that a migration to the location occurred. It is possible that at least some new residents at Ayia Irini came from Kolonna on Aegina and/or central Greece, and may have moved to Ayia Irini to take advantage of the position of the location and, perhaps, to seek new economic or social opportunities. Despite the fact that the foundation of Ayia Irini in this period might be

considered to be a straightforward situation of local, short-distance migration to an uninhabited area, the evidence of trade and architectural connections with different parts of the Aegean suggests that the reality may be more complicated. Evidence from analysis of technical variability in craft production suggests that this new settlement incorporated people who learned their crafts in communities of practice from different, culturally diverse Aegean regions, including Aegina, perhaps other parts of the Cyclades or southern mainland Greece and, very likely, Crete. Residents of this new settlement created new communities of practice – both in craft production, but also eating, drinking and perhaps other social practices – which were particularly Keian. Whether we classify craftspeople who entered the community at Ayia Irini in different periods of its history as migrants, mobile craftspeople or just non-local people, their presence very probably had a significant impact on how local people viewed their community and how they conceived of distinctions between what was ‘local’ and what was not, especially since multiple households (rather than a single workshop) seem to have participated in local craft production.

It has been noted that the material culture of Ayia Irini was particularly cosmopolitan with respect to other Cycladic sites (Abell 2014; Broodbank 2004; Gorogianni and Abell forthcoming). This is clear in the earlier MBA, but was true also in later periods, when residents of the settlement seem to have maintained exchange relationships with mainland Greece to a greater degree than other Cycladic exchange hubs, like Phylakopi on the island of Melos or Akrotiri on the island of Thera. I would argue that this cosmopolitan nature was, at least partially, a consequence of the migrations that impacted on the site, starting from its earliest phases. Unlike Phylakopi or Akrotiri, the foundation of Ayia Irini in the earlier MBA seems to have been a targeted endeavor to take advantage of the position of a location with significant potential to facilitate or manipulate trade between culturally discrete regions, especially with respect to the acquisition of metal resources from Lavrion. The integration of non-local people into the community would have enabled at least some residents of the settlement to form and maintain relationships with traders and perhaps political agents from other parts of the Aegean by appealing not only to local participation in recognizably shared eating, drinking, crafting and even ritual practices, but also to notions of shared descent and kinship. Thus, the migration and movement of non-local people into the community at Ayia Irini would have been a fundamental factor in shaping local values and practices, but also in enabling at least some members of the local community to facilitate growth and economic prosperity.

It is desirable for future studies – on Kea, in the Cyclades and beyond – to focus more attention on questions of craft technologies, production practices and the *chaîne opératoire*, especially in terms of identifying the characteristics of different communities of practice. Only when we understand how communities of practice from different regions might be assessed can we begin more fruitfully to approach issues of human mobility and attempt to unravel them from complex networks of trade and exchange. Investigations of the movement of craftspeople parallel to, or outside, other kinds of interaction networks offer unique insights into different means through which objects, ideas and people moved in the past. Moreover, such studies offer significant potential for considering how non-elite people created and consumed material culture in different periods, and provide insight into processes of interaction and exchange that are not dependent on macro-level approaches focused on vague ‘influence’ between cultures or emulation and competition between elites.

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Notes

- 1 For the use of the idea of ‘communities of practice’ in the context of Aegean Bronze Age, see Abell (2014), Abell and Hilditch (under review), Choleva (Choleva 2012), Crewe and Knappett (2012), Gorogianni, Hilditch and Abell (in progress), Hilditch (2008) and Cutler (2012); see also Webb and Frankel (2007) for the investigation of population movement to Early Bronze Age Cyprus through analysis of communities of practice across an entire suite of cultural activities, from agricultural practice, to domestic industries and childrearing.
- 2 The use of the potter’s wheel has, in the past, been associated with evolutionary models of increasingly specialized, standardized production (Loney 2000), which is often assumed to be in the domain of male rather than female craftspeople. This model for the adoption of the potter’s wheel does not fit the evidence of Ayia Irini, where the wheel was used in a very limited fashion for about 100 years, over the course of the earlier MBA. Accordingly, although it is of course possible that the earliest wheel-using potters at Ayia Irini could have been male rather than female, this need not necessarily have been the case. For an expanded discussion of the organization of ceramic production at Ayia Irini, see Abell (2014).

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