

Evidence For Mycenaean Pottery Trade in the East Mediterranean

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Introduction

- The dominant exports from Mycenae are perfume and pottery.
- It is debatable on how far the Mycenaeans actually traded.
- The high quantities of pottery in LHIII shows that the Mycenaeans were a significant trading power.

The main focus of my dissertation is Mycenaean pottery and its trade in the east Mediterranean, this is why I am focusing on the pottery found in my chosen sites. Ugarit, Enkomi and Tell el Amarna.

From my research so far I have found that:

The dominant exports from Mycenae are Perfume and Pottery, there is a debate over the importance of the pottery in regard to the role it plays as a container for the perfume.

It is debatable how far the Mycenaeans actually traded. This is due to the possibility that the sites exchanged goods with each other, indirectly distributing the products. For example exchange between Egypt and Cyprus and close social bonds with Cyprus and Ugarit.

The high quantities of pottery in LHIII shows that the Mycenaeans were a significant trading power. The large amount of pottery on other contemporary sites in the surrounding areas of the east Mediterranean also supports this for example Kition on Cyprus.

Mycenaean trade

- Mycenae lies on the Argolid plain within Peloponnese in Greece.
- The acropolis of Mycenae contained a pottery production area, which was the main export.
- The Mycenaeans traded by sea. They managed to trade as far as the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt.
- Tartaron is the primary scholar examining the possible locations of the Mycenaean harbours.



East Mediterranean

Mycenae lies on the Argolid plain within Peloponnese in Greece. It lies between two hills on a strategic location as it is possible to see for a great distance onto the plain. The site is most famous for the wealth found at the site, most notably the gold found in Grave circle A excavated by Heinrich Schliemann in 1876, who used ancient references in the Homeric hymns to find the site.

The acropolis of Mycenae contained a pottery production area, which was the main export. The Mycenaeans also traded in perfumes, these can often be found in Mycenaean tombs on other sites with pottery so -there is a debate on whether the pottery was the object of trade or if it was the content being traded. I will explore this later on.

The Mycenaeans traded by sea. They managed to trade as far as the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt. As shown by the map of the East Mediterranean, if a civilisation was to survive and flourish it would make sense to trade by sea. All the cities which had strong trading ties used rivers and the sea to trade. Egypt for example used the Nile. Mycenae, also, close from the sea so could easily have exploit it in their trading. This can be shown by the contemporary export records that have

been collected together by scholars such as Eric Cline.

Tartaron is the main scholar that is examining the possible locations of the Mycenaean harbours. I plan to expand this more in later research for this dissertation.

Mycenaean pottery-generalized

- Mycenaean pottery is the main evidence found across the sites.
- The pottery is also very distinctive and clear phases of development can be seen in the ware.
- Pottery found in Egypt and the Levant civilisation can be used to date the rise and fall of the Mycenaean civilisation.



Mycenaean vase (1300-1200 BCE) in the pictorial style depicting stylized bulls and birds. From a tomb in Enkomi, Cyprus

Mycenaean pottery is the main evidence found across the Ugarit, Enkomi and Tell el Amarna. This is due to pottery being the most traded object from the Mycenaean civilisation this proves that the Mycenaean's were trading across vast distances.

The pottery is also very distinctive and clear phases of development can be seen in the ware. Which can also be used to date the period of exchange between sites. An example of this can be shown in the LH IIIA2-B (a span of 175 years) in the earlier part of this period the most popular pottery from Mycenae which were kylikes, small stirrup jars and small piriform jars which all had two popular motifs (the flower and whorl shell). In LHIIIB the form of the pottery had changed to deep bowls and stemmed bowls and the motifs which were panelled pattered were the most popular.

Pottery found in Egypt and the Levant civilisations which has clear chronological dating systems also can be used to be used to date the rise and fall of the Mycenaean civilisation. The pottery is so distinctive in its different styles that it can be used to tell when trading with certain sites was popular for example the large quantities of the panelled pattern pottery shows that trade with the Mycenaeans was popular in the LHIIIB period.

Ugarit

- Ugarit was a sea port in the northern Levant.
- Its location was significant as it allowed the site to be a major trading place for multiple civilisations of the period.
- Ugarit is significant as the site housed a large collection of Mycenaean pottery as well as a large collection of administrative texts in multiple languages.



Map of the Levant

Ugarit was a sea port in the northern Levant.

Its location was significant as it allowed the site to be a significant trading place for multiple civilisations of the period : Egyptians, Mycenaeans, and cyproit-Minoans.

Ugarit is significant as the site housed a large collection of Mycenaean pottery as well as a large collection of administrative texts in multiple languages. The native script seems to have been cuneiform which is what those texts are written in.

The Mycenaean pottery is a smaller section of the pottery found at the site, it also seems to have not affected the society. This suggests that it was only for a small number of the elite who invested or who had interest in Mycenaean pottery. Bell argues that both Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery only contributed to about 1% of ceramic finds in Ugarit. Regardless, it is also possible to assume that Ugarit was the gateway for Mycenaean pottery into the Levant as it can be found in other sites such as Tell Abu Hawam

Ugarit

- 80% of the Mycenaean pottery found at Ugarit seems to have been small containers with substances such as Mycenaean perfumed oils.
- imitations of Mycenaean pottery can be found within the assemblage.
- The other types of ceramics found are drinking vessels and possibly ritual apparatus.



Mycenaean stirrup vase from Ancient Ugarit displayed in the Louvre

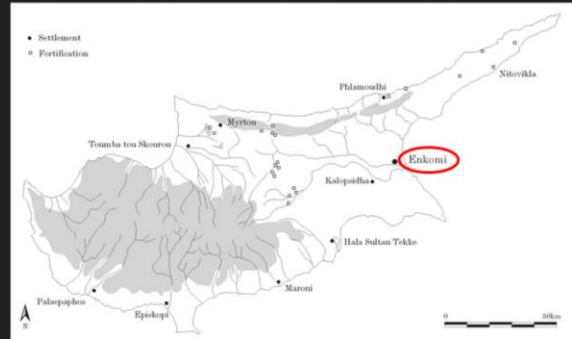
80% of the Mycenaean pottery found at Ugarit seems to have been small containers with substances such as Mycenaean perfumed oils, which was another large part of Mycenaean trade. This suggests the pottery was traded more for its contents than for the vessel itself.

This can be shown by the large of imitations of Mycenaean pottery found within the assemblage.

These imitations are made with local clay but are designed to look Mycenaean, which could suggest there was a large group of people who like the Mycenaean style products but there was high demand which couldn't be met with the imports so some copies were made to lower the demand. The other types of the ceramics found are drinking vessels and possibly ritual apparatus however it can be argued, again, that the ceramic objects did not impact hugely on the society. There is no evidence to suggest that the people of Ugarit adopted the Aegean way of drinking.

Enkomi- (Cyprus)

- In contemporary records of the time the island is referred to as Alashiya
- Enkomi lies on the north east of the island and was an important trading and copper-working centre for the island.
- Enkomi has close ties to Ugarit and the rest of the Levant.
- There is a vast amount of Mycenaean pottery found on the site dating from Late Cypriot I period of occupation



Plan of Cyprus showing Late Cypriot I settlements

In contemporary records of the time the island is referred to as Alashiya.

Enkomi lies on the north east of the island and was an important trading and copper-working centre for the island. This is due to the location of Cyprus being an ideal gateway for multiple powerful civilizations, for their products to be traded or exchanged. The island also contained a large source of copper, this was a desired product for the other civilisations and may have increased motivation to trade with Cyprus. Also, in textual evidence from the sites, there are diplomatic exchanges with Cyprus between Ugarit kings, Hittites and New Kingdom Pharaohs.

Enkomi has close ties to Ugarit and the rest of the Levant. This can be shown through similar burial practises. And the same Mycenaean style pottery found at the site.

There is a vast amount of Mycenaean pottery found on the site dating from Late Cypriot I period of occupation this is primarily found in the tombs of the wealthy.

Enkomi- (Cyprus)

- The first imports of Mycenaean pottery were small scale ceramics during 16th-15th Century B.C.
- Large Imports in 14th-13th BC.
- Imports were popular even though the island had the ability to make its own pottery.
- Cyprus had a close relationship with Amenhotep III and Egypt.
- Egypt - copper and timber.
- Cyprus - silver and a metallurgist expert.



A Cypriot Copper Ingot from the British Museum collection.

Mycenaean pottery has been found in Cyprus from the Greek mainland in LH II, but these number very few pieces.

The first imports of Mycenaean pottery were small scale ceramic during 16th-15th century B.C.

large-scale importation dates to the 14th and early 13th century B.C. (Cadogan 1973, 1991).

Imports were popular even though the island had the ability to make its own pottery, in Enkomi and other sites such as Kition. Suggesting that the pottery had impact on the society.

There is evidence to suggest that Cyprus had a close relationship with Egypt as it is suggested that one of the Cypriot kings (unidentified) was in regular longstanding correspondence with Amenhotep III. This is referenced in a letter that the Cypriot king sent Amenhotep IV (son of Amenhotep III). The letter also provides information on mutual trading. Egypt wanted copper and timber. Cyprus wanted silver and a metallurgist expert.

Tell el Amarna –(Egypt)

- Tell el Amarna (Amarna) has a large collection of Mycenaean pottery within the site suggesting trade ties.
- It is difficult to work out references to the Mycenaean in the Egyptian archives.
- The reign of Amenhotep III is a significant period for trade between the two civilisations.



Location of Amarna in Egypt

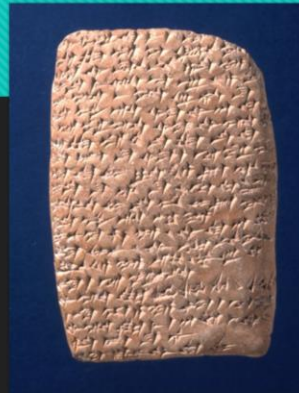
Tell el Amarna (Amarna) has a large collection of Mycenaean pottery within the site. Within the site suggesting trade and ties between the Pharaohs of Egypt and Mycenaean.

It is important to note that the Mycenaean were known as “tanaja” or “timay” in the Egyptian records this means that it is often difficult to work out references to the Mycenaean in the Egyptian archives. This therefore makes the notion that the Mycenaean directly traded with the Egyptians debatable.

The reign of Amenhotep III is a significant period for trade between the two civilisations. Most notably his wife Tiye was interested in the Mycenaean.

Amarna

- Unpublished tablet from Amenhotep III and a scarab with royal cartouches found in Mycenae.
- An Aegean place list at Amenhotep III's mortuary temple.
- The Amarna letters which are written in cuneiform not Egyptian.
- The letters do not reference Mycenaean civilisation but they make reference to Alashiya (Cyprus) and Ugarit.



One of the Amarna letters displayed in the British museum

This can be shown by an unpublished tablet from Amenhotep III and a scarab with royal cartouches found in Mycenae.

There also what appears to be a list of Aegean place names found in his mortuary temple. Scholars believe that the inscribed text is a list of Aegean place names. The Egyptians therefore had knowledge of the Mycenaeans. One theory behind the origins of the list, is that it was a diplomatic and exploratory mission that was sent by Amenhotep III.

The site of Amarna is known for the Amarna letters which interestingly are written in Cuneiform (the language from Ugarit) not Egyptian. It is important to note that the Mycenaean civilisation is not referenced in Amarna letters however there is reference to Alashiya (Cyprus) and Ugarit, which had close trading with the Mycenaeans. This therefore supports the idea that the Egyptians did not directly trade with the Mycenaeans but rather that trade was indirect.

Theoretical perspectives- what they are, explain application

- The theories that I am incorporating into my dissertation are:
 - Materialities.
 - Itinerary of object.
 - Gift exchange or exchange theory.

Materialities

The main focus of my dissertation is Mycenaean pottery and its trade in the east Mediterranean, this is why I am focusing on the pottery on the sites. I am also focusing on text in Linear B and cuneiform, as the inscriptions containing those text forms were often used for administration so therefore they can be used to give an understanding of some of the trading between the sites.

Itinerary of object

This approach will be significant too, as it captures the dynamics of artefacts when they are excavated. This means that the artefacts are therefore always changing beyond their original purpose. The theory also can be applied to the examination of pottery as it allows for the need to understand the technologies needed to create the object and to transport it. This therefore means that the pottery can be linked to the civilisations that created them and those who brought them.

Gift exchange or exchange theory

This theory will be significant as trade can not only be paid transactions, it can be exchange in the form of objects. An example of gift exchange can be shown with the relationship between Cyprus and Egypt. Also it can be applied to the explanation to why the trade networks were able to reach so far.

Conclusions

- The evidence from my research up to this date leads me to conclude that Mycenaean control over trade in pottery and oils in the Eastern Mediterranean whether direct or indirect – was significant. I now need to examine the following:
 - Further detail on the sites.
 - The debate on the reasons why the pottery is so common at the sites.
 - The types of pottery and their chronology.
- I also need to focus on aspects of Mycenaean trade such as methods and routes in order to provide a full discussion on the topic.

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