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A Mediterranean Mosaic: The Archaeological Evidence for Ethnic Diversity at Pithekoussai

Rachel Dewan

The Greek colonies of Magna Graecia are some of the finest examples of the Greek spirit of exploration. These large settlements in the Southern Italian peninsula have long been regarded as indicative of the extent to which Greek culture spread in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE. Where, however, did this colonization first begin? The idea that the Greek polis was directly transported from the Greek mainland to regions overseas seems too ambitious, especially given the fact that the polis was not “ready for export” in the early Archaic period (Ridgway 109). The discovery of the 8th century BCE site of Pithekoussai on the small Italian island of Ischia was therefore of significance to the study of Greek colonization, for it did not appear to be a full colony like those of later dates, yet was clearly a Greek settlement. Although its precise nature is still debated amongst scholars, Pithekoussai has been deemed a key stepping stone in Greek colonization as the earliest Greek foundation in the Western Mediterranean.

Despite the discovery of Pithekoussai in the late 18th century by a local priest who noticed large numbers of pottery sherds and the presence of tombs near the Ischian town of Lacco Ameno, it was not until 1952 that excavations began (Ridgway 39). Giorgio Buchner, conducting work for the Naples Archaeological Superintendency, led these excavations for thirty years, carefully and systematically uncovering various parts of the vast and remarkable site of Pithekoussai. In 1966, David Ridgway joined Dr. Buchner on the project, and together they revealed three distinct areas of the settlement: the expansive cemetery in the Valle di San Montano; a treasure-trove of pottery in the Acropolis Dump on the east slope of the Monte di Vido; and the Mazzola industrial area on the hill opposite the acropolis, where the metalworkers and artisans engaged in their craft (Ridgway 40). Excavations at the site remain incomplete, but the enormous amount of material collected from thirty years of work has left the excavators and other scholars with a great deal to study before further excavations are conducted. These examinations raised a number of questions and theories, leading to ongoing investigations and discoveries.

One central issue of any type of colonization is the interaction between the colonists and the natives in whose homeland the colony is founded. Such social rela-

tions are often difficult to identify in the archaeological record; however, Pithekoussai has yielded a variety of evidence which not only indicates relationships between the Greek colonists and the Italic natives, but with other Mediterranean peoples as well. Far from being a homogeneous Greek city-state, Pithekoussai seems to have been a hub of commercial activity for much of the Mediterranean, creating an East-West crossroads and being home to diverse ethnic groups including Euboean and Corinthian Greeks, indigenous Italic peoples, and Phoenicians or Levantines. By investigating the available ceramic evidence, fibulae types, burial traditions, imported goods, and various written sources, it is possible to shed light on “the international community of merchants and craftsmen resident at Pithekoussai”; and try to understand how cultural identities affected commercial relations in the Archaic Mediterranean (Ridgway 121).

I. Bronze Age Interactions: Mycenaeans in the West

In order to discuss Greek contact with the Western Mediterranean in a comprehensive way, it is important to begin many centuries prior to the foundation of Magna Graecia’s colonies, and even before early Archaic Pithekoussai. The Mycenaean Greeks and perhaps other Bronze Age peoples of the Aegean islands were in fact the first Greeks to make contact and establish trade with their contemporary populations in the Italian peninsula (Smith 5). Although much debate continues to surround the issue of permanent Greek settlement in Italy at this time, the influence of their presence is undeniable, particularly in the ceramic evidence.

While some scholars speculate that contact between Italy and the Aegean may in fact have begun in the 3rd millennium BCE, the period from 1400 to 1200 BCE (LHIIIA and LH IIIB) has been identified as the time when the Aegean saw the greatest expansion in trade. Contemporaneous pottery of the type produced by the Mycenaeans, a Late Bronze Age peoples originating from the Greek Mainland, has been found in Anatolia, the Levant, Egypt, and forty-five sites in Italy and its adjacent islands, providing evidence for a large, pan-Mediterranean trade network in this period (Smith 5-6). It is difficult to tell, however, if Mycenaean traders themselves were sailing throughout the Mediterranean, stopping from port to port to exchange goods; if these traders were in fact living amongst foreign locals for periods of time; or if, rather than conducting trade directly, they collaborated with other Mediterranean peoples in order to establish a complex, multi-ethnic trade network. Gert Jan van Wijngaarden, for instance, has assumed the viewpoint that there was a “conditioned coexistence” in the LH IIIA and LH IIIB Mediterranean, in which thalassocracies did not exist. Instead, trade was likely conducted between many different cultures, as demonstrated by the Uluburun shipwreck and its ‘international’ cargo (van

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Wijngaarden 7). Moreover, Moses Finley notes that references to trade and traders are not present within Linear B tablets, indicating the seemingly insignificant role that long-distance commerce played in the Mycenaean economy (Finley 206; Vianello 87).

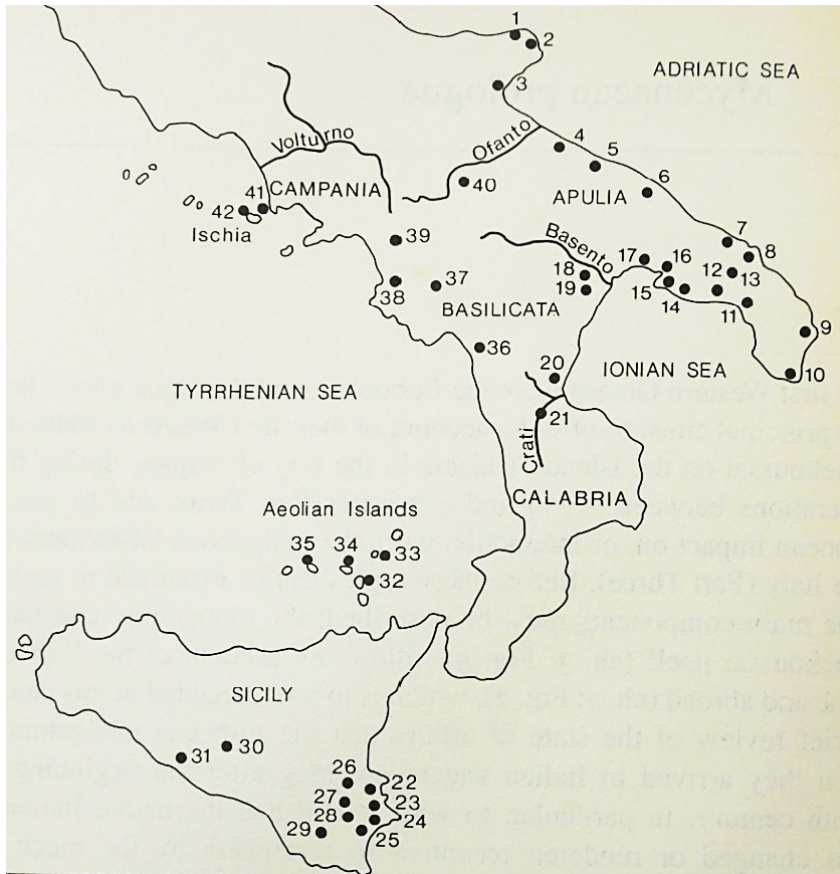


Fig. 1. Distribution map of Mycenaean pottery in Sicily and South Italy (Ridgway 1992, Fig. 1).

Whether or not the Greeks were heavily invested in their overseas partnerships, the archaeological record reveals that the Italic peoples of Italy with whom they traded certainly valued the connection. Mycenaean pottery became a popular trade commodity, with ceramic evidence having been uncovered at all 42 sites represented on the map (see fig. 1). Greek imported pottery first appeared in the Aeolian Islands and Vivara in the Late Helladic I and II and grew in popularity throughout the early LH III period. Specific regions, including south-eastern Sicily, parts of Apulia, and

Vivara, became distribution centres, facilitating the supply and demand of Mycenaean and some Minoan pottery for the Italian peoples (Vagnetti 163). In LH IIIB and IIIC, the majority of the 'Greek' pottery in Italy was actually locally-produced imitation (van Wijngaarden 204). The lack of direct imports at this time has led some scholars to believe that the Mycenaean trade partnership with the Italians either dramatically decreased or ceased altogether in the Late Helladic period. The imitations were therefore a way for the Greek pottery market in Italy to remain active at a time when there was no longer any direct contact with the Greeks.

The production of these imitations began in earlier periods, but exactly how they began is unknown. While some scholars believe that Italics may have simply amalgamated Greek techniques, including the use of the potter's wheel and red burnish, into their own ceramic manufacturing, others feel that the level of craftsmanship and extreme similarities of the Italic imitations to the Greek originals are too great to have simply been adopted (Blake 22). Instead, scholars suggest that Mycenaean artisans lived and worked amongst the natives, perhaps in exchange for Italic commodities such as metal (van Wijngaarden 7; Smith 164). Such a reciprocal trade relationship would continue to be very familiar to the Italic peoples and the Greeks in the years to come, but it would take several centuries for Greek-Italic relations to be re-established after the so-called Greek Dark Age from the 11th to 9th centuries BCE.

II. A History of Pithekoussai

The collapse of the Mycenaean palaces in the Late Bronze Age had a profound effect on the Greek world, marking the beginning of the end of the Bronze Age. Although the Mycenaeans and their island counterparts had played an important role in the extensive trade routes which spread throughout the Eastern and Central Mediterranean in the Bronze Age, the collapse of their economic and administrative system left Greece unable to continue such commercial relationships, and communication between Greece and Italy ceased for several centuries (Coldstream 223). As current scholarship often emphasizes, this Dark Age was not quite as 'dark' as was once thought, and the discovery of sites such as Lefkandi prove that Greek culture was far from completely extinguished at this time (Papadopoulos 192). Generally, however, the peoples of Greece remained self-contained, engaging in few relations with other cultures, for several centuries.

With the dawning of the 7th century BCE, this cultural isolation changed. The earliest evidence for renewed Greco-Italic relations appears at Veii, where the discovery of imported Greek drinking vessels and Middle Geometric II chevron skyphoi in Italic burials indicates the reintroduction of Greek pottery to the Italian peninsula

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(see fig. 2) (Ridgway 129). Over a mere few decades, the creation of Italic imitations of these vessels began just as they had when the Mycenaean trade was at its peak centuries before, positive proof that the Greek presence in Italy was off to a healthy start (Blakeway 129).

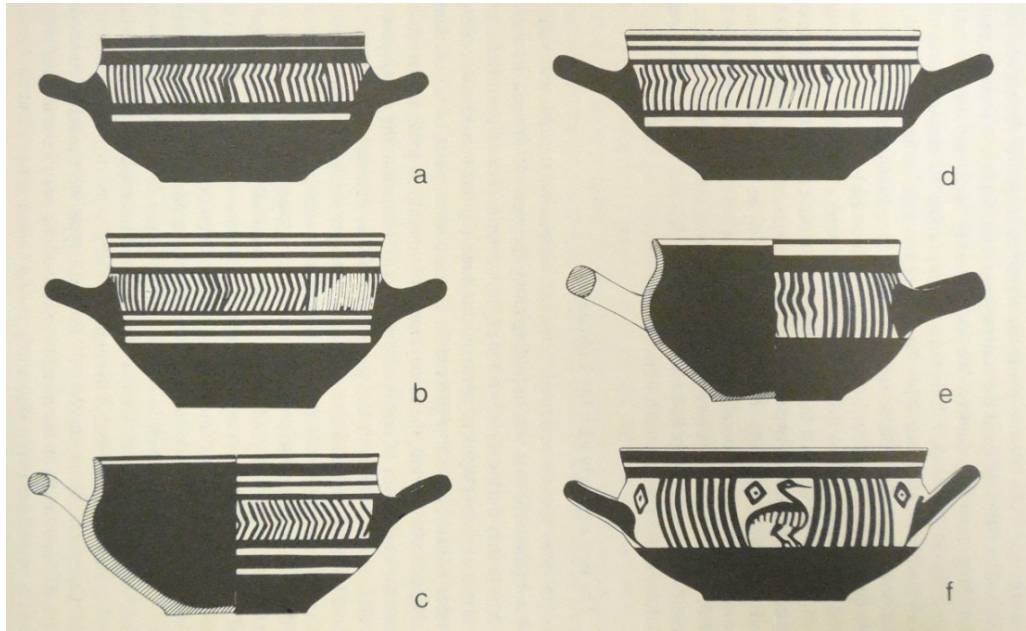


Fig. 2. Chevron skyphoi from the Villanovan cemeteries at Veii (Ridgway 1992, Fig. 34).

Although this first contact took place at Veii in west-central Italy, the first official settlement established by Greeks on Italian soil was on the small, volcanic island of Ischia, 300 km away at the entrance to the Bay of Naples (Coldstream 49). Pithekoussai was located on the north-west corner of the island, and afforded the colonists multiple advantages (see fig. 3). In addition to its easily defensible location, the settlement was able to utilize the two natural harbours for effective trade and commerce (Coldstream 225). The reason for Pithekoussai's founding, however, is not yet fully understood. Although the first century writers Strabo and Livy, Greek and Roman historians respectively, both reference the site in their writings, neither provide much detail, which is in contrast to the lengthy foundation stories of many of the later Greek colonies. It is possible that this is where the trouble lies, for Pithekoussai may not officially have been a Greek colony at all.

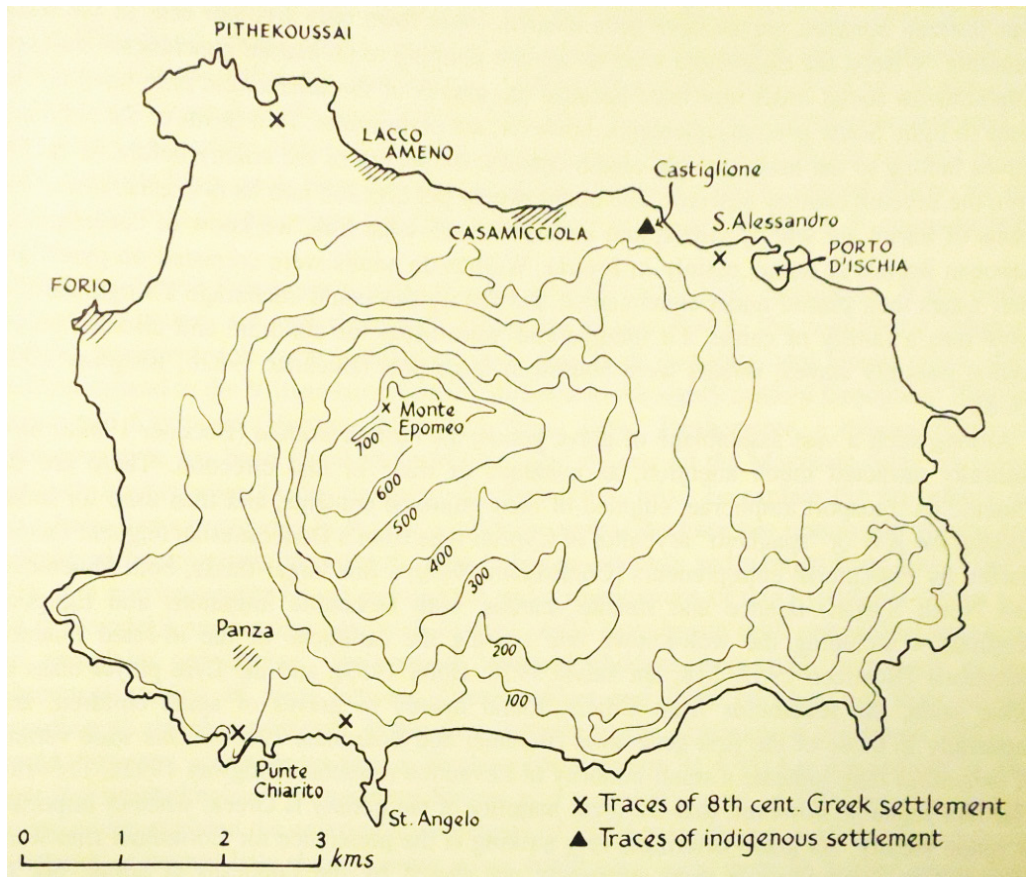


Fig. 3. Island of Ischia with the site of Pithekoussai marked in the NW corner (Coldstream 1994: Fig. 4.1).

During the heyday of later Greek colonization in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, the founding of a Greek colony, or *apoikia*, required a very involved process. Regarding colonization as a sacred act, Greeks who intended to establish a colony, regardless of their mother-city, were required to send a representative to Delphi, where it was necessary to secure oracular consent before a colonizing expedition could be dispatched (Graham 26). Once this permission had been obtained, an *oikist* was chosen to lead the group of colonists to establish the new Greek city. This *oikist* was highly regarded and was often worshipped as a hero after death (Graham 27). For this reason, the names and stories of various *oikists* and their colonies were frequently passed down through history, usually in the writings of ancient historians. In the case

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of Pithekoussai, however, no such name or story seems to have been recorded, and nowhere is the site clearly identified as a colony. It is of course possible that, as the first Greek settlement in the West, the protocol of such colonization had not yet been developed and therefore no one felt the need to record the site's early history. Alternatively, Pithekoussai may have been an *emporion* rather than an *apoikia*, which would have altered the relationship between the settlement and its mother-city (Graham 5). The founding of an *emporion* or trading post would not have involved the rigorous procedure needed for an *apoikia*, thus explaining the lack of historical records about its establishment.

In modern scholarship, Pithekoussai is rarely considered a true Greek colony. It is often identified as an *emporion*, which would indeed provide an explanation for the wide range of cultural material at the site. As a trading post, the settlement would have provided shelter to not just Greeks, but also foreigners involved in the expansive networks of the Mediterranean at the time. Although this is a plausible idea, the archaeological evidence suggests that the foreign residents of Pithekoussai were not temporary lodgers, but were permanent residents of the site. For this reason, David Ridgway argues that Pithekoussai was neither an *apoikia* nor an *emporion*. Instead, he maintains that a skewed view of Pithekoussai and its networks has been passed down to the present day by later Greeks who could not conceive of any type of Greek metropolis other than a *polis*, an *apoikia*, or an *emporion*. He claims that it is not fair to impose such definitions upon a site as early as Pithekoussai, when its people were, in all likelihood, not aware of such terms (Ridgway 186). The world of the early Archaic Period remains a rather mysterious one, but as new evidence continuously comes to light, it reveals a sophisticated world in which different cultures constantly mixed and interacted.

III. Ethnic Diversity at Pithekoussai

i. Western Greeks: Euboeans and Corinthians

At the time of Pithekoussai's foundation, the terms 'Greeks' or 'Hellenes' did not necessarily refer to a homogeneous group of people.¹ Although the peoples of Greece generally shared a common language and culture, individual regions were largely considered their own autonomous entities. This is clear in the later foundation histories of various Greek colonies in which specific Greek city-states decided to send expeditions to found colonies from the mother-city (Graham 5). It is known from ancient sources that Pithekoussai, though an early settlement and not quite deserving of formal Greek 'colony' status, was founded in a similar way by Greeks from the eastern region of Euboea. Fortunately for modern scholars, Livy and Strabo discussed Pithekoussai in their writings, albeit rather briefly. Livy's reference was

1 See Hall 2004 for more on this linguistic history and its effects on ethnicity studies.

fairly indirect, for he mentioned the site only in connection with its own later colony of Cumae:

Cumae was their mother city, and the Cumani derive their origin from Chalcis in Euboea, thanks to the fleet in which they had sailed from their home, they enjoyed much power on the coast of that sea by which they dwell; having landed first on the island of Aenaria and the Pithecusae, they afterwards ventured to transfer their seat to the mainland. (Livy VIII.22.5-6)

Though short, Livy's attribution of the founding of Pithekoussai to the Euboeans, and specifically the Chalcidians, is relatively clear.

Strabo's description, on the other hand, is longer, and gives some clues as to why the site was originally founded:

Pithecussae was once settled by Eretrians and also Chalcidians, who, although they had prospered there on account of the fruitfulness of the soil and on account of the gold mines, forsook the island as the result of a quarrel; later on they were also driven out of the island by earthquakes, and by eruptions of fire, sea, and hot waters... (Strabo 5.4.9)

Mentioning two peoples of Euboea instead of only Livy's Chalcidians, Strabo also hinted at the wealth of the settlement. He referred to this wealth only once more, writing, "[a]nd Timaeus, also, says that many marvellous things are told by the ancients about Pithecussae..." (Strabo 5.4.9). Strangely enough, the "marvellous things" so far uncovered at Pithekoussai have not included much gold, but Strabo's description nevertheless reflects the importance of this settlement (Coldstream 226).

The material remains largely agree with the written sources, attesting to an Euboean foundation at Pithekoussai. Ceramic evidence is often considered to be the strongest support for this given that much of the pottery at Pithekoussai is Euboean in style. Importantly, the majority of these ceramics, an impressive 81%, have been found to have been produced locally, while a smaller yet substantial amount was imported (Ridgway 26). This very high percentage implies the presence of resident Euboeans at the site, rather than mere trade relations with Greeks.

The long history of Euboean pottery in Italy began around 800 BCE. It was at this time, when the revival of Greek-Italic relations was beginning after the Dark Ages, that Euboean pottery became popular amongst the people of Etruria. The Greek chevron skyphoi found in a grave at Veii reflect this Euboean presence (see fig. 2); they are typically Euboean vessels (Ridgway 129). Ceramics such as these soon be-

came increasingly popular and found a wide distribution throughout Italy, showing the influence of Euboean styles by the middle of the 8th century BCE.

Though never mentioned by ancient authors, the archaeological finds indicate that, while the Euboeans controlled the ceramic market in the first half of the 8th century BCE, Corinthian masters began arriving in Italy in the middle of the century and soon rose to supremacy (Blakeway 144). With Corinthian pottery found both at Pithekoussai (see fig. 4) and throughout Italy, it is clear that this ceramic type was the major fashion throughout the late 8th and early 7th centuries. Furthermore, the detail with which the pieces are made suggests that Corinthians themselves immigrated to the Italic peninsula (Coldstream 52). Corinthian pottery was so popular, in Pithekoussai and the colonies which followed it in later decades, that a “hybrid colonial style” soon emerged. This fusion of Corinthian, Oriental, and local styles was unique to Pithekoussai, Cumae, and Magna Graecia, and is proof of the extent to which the Greek colonists living abroad affected the development of pottery (Coldstream 52).

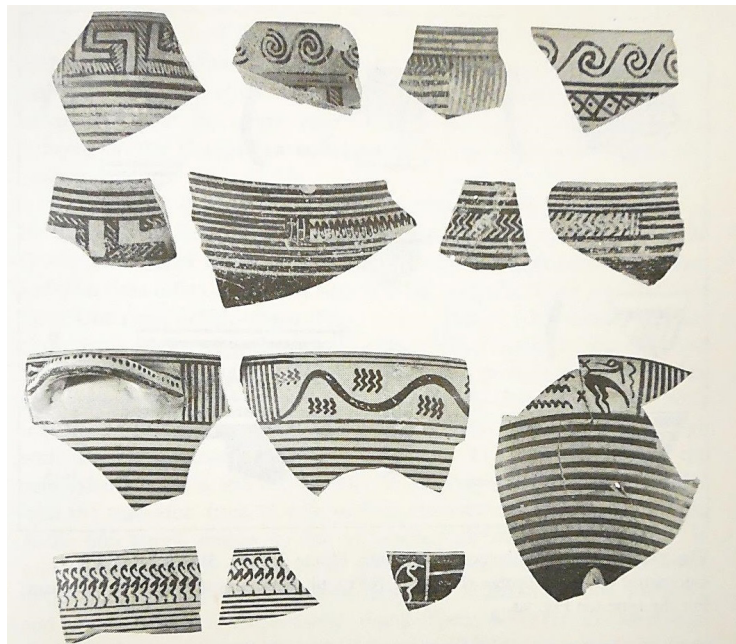


Fig. 4. Sherds of imported Corinthian pottery excavated from the Acropolis Dump at Pithekoussai (Ridgway 1992, Pl. 13).

In addition to the ceramic remains at Pithekoussai, burial traditions have been examined in order to try and determine the ethnicities of the deceased. Pithekous-

sai's large and well-preserved San Montano cemetery has yielded over 1300 graves to date, but it is estimated that this represents only 5% to 10% of the total (Coldstream 52). Given that there is a great deal more to be excavated, it is difficult to draw any decisive conclusions about the nature of the cemetery and the people buried within it. Nevertheless, some helpful theories and inferences can be made. For example, of the graves excavated thus far, the large majority have yielded burial practices contemporary with types found in Greece, specifically those in the region of Eretria (Coldstream 52). These burial types include cremations on pyres prior to the burial of the ashes in a stone cairn or urn, pit inhumations for children and low-status adults, and jar-burials or *enchytrismoι* for infants. Firm parallels for all three types have been found in the Greek homeland (Shepherd 311). In fact, of the oldest graves of the cemetery (about one-fifth of those which have been excavated), no burial practice has been discovered which *cannot* be attributed to Greece, thus suggesting that the first people at Pithekoussai were Euboeans.

The Euboean, and even Eretrian, connection seems to extend to nearby Cumae, the first Greek colony on the Italian mainland. At this location, the discovery of a wealthy warrior burial has raised questions about the deceased's ethnicity. The grave is a cremation in which the ashes were interred in a small cauldron and subsequently placed within a very large vessel of similar form. This was then surrounded by additional cauldrons, as well as jewellery, weapons, equestrian equipment, silver vessels, and foreign imports (Coldstream 54). Such a burial parallels the rich tombs of Eretria in which ashes were buried in bronze cauldrons with jewellery and weapons (Coldstream 55). These practices fit well with Livy's narrative describing the foundation of Cumae, given that he claims that the Euboeans who settled Pithekoussai eventually moved to the mainland.

Although most scholars today accept Pithekoussai's identification as an Euboean foundation, some maintain that the Euboean presence has been exaggerated by both ancient authors and archaeologists. This contention has become a long-running debate amongst scholars, even 50 years after the site's excavations. The leading scholars in this argument are David Ridgway and his supporters, who have been called the "pro-Eubian [*sic*] faction" (Papadopoulos 201), and John Papadopoulos, whose refusal to acknowledge the Euboeans as major players in the founding of Pithekoussai has been deemed "an anti-Euboean campaign" (Ridgway 24).

Ridgway's advocacy for the Euboeans at Pithekoussai stems mainly from the popular reasons discussed above, and he often stresses the ceramic evidence and written sources as major explanations for the Euboean presence. He lays particular emphasis on the fact that the Euboean pottery found at Pithekoussai and throughout Italy does not consist of merely a few sherds, but involves large quantities that follow

a clear chronology, from the end of the Dark Ages to the introduction of Corinthian wares. Ridgway claims that this amount of pottery cannot simply be dismissed (Ridgway 25). In addition, the pottery record matches the information recorded by Livy and Strabo so well that it is difficult to see how the Euboean narrative could be completely false. Although he acknowledges the dangers of blindly believing ancient authors who often had ulterior motives for what they wrote, Ridgway notes that in this case they would have had no reason to skew the truth. Indeed, he holds the fact that Livy and Strabo were both writing centuries after Pithekoussai had been founded, but still associated the site with the Euboeans as meaningful to the history of the site (Ridgway 27).

Unrelated to pottery or ancient writings, Ridgway strengthens his case by highlighting some of the findings within the Mazzola production quarter of Pithekoussai in order to prove Euboean authority in the 8th century BCE. He notes that the Euboean weight standard, a bronze-bound lead disc of 8.79 g known from mainland Greece, was used in the industrial complex at Pithekoussai (Ridgway 185). He argues that if Euboeans had not been the authoritative group within the settlement, it is unlikely that such a specific aspect of their culture would have been used in the economic activities of the site.

Finally, Ridgway highlights the role that the Greek alphabet can play in determining ethnic influence and authority. He points out the fact that the Etruscans adopted the Euboean alphabet for their written language following their interactions with Greeks at Pithekoussai (Ridgway 185). Although the Greek alphabet was common to all Greeks regardless of their mother-city, and thus does not help to pinpoint a precisely Euboean settlement, this linguistic evidence detracts from the theory that Pithekoussai may in fact have been founded by Phoenicians; this idea has sometimes been hinted at by Papadopoulos (Papadopoulos 193).

Papadopoulos' major concern with the theories of Ridgway and others such as Coldstream and Boardman, lies in his disbelief that the presence of Euboeans automatically follows the presence of Euboean pottery. In other words, he rejects the "pots-equal-people" assumption (Papadopoulos 194). Although this is a fair concern and all archaeological study should bear this principle in mind, the quantity of excavated Euboean pottery, as Ridgway points out, is more than adequate to suggest an Euboean presence. Ridgway is not making an unreasonable assumption when he claims that the amount of Euboean pottery found in Italy suggests an Euboean-Italic relationship greater than that of mere trade interactions.

The other significant point raised by Papadopoulos regarding this issue takes more of a theoretical approach. As an advocate for the Mediterranean-wide influences of the Phoenicians and other Eastern cultures, Papadopoulos is wary of Helleno-

centric interpretations, and is “alarmed at the sense of nationalism” in scholarship which sees the Greek world as the height of Mediterranean culture (Ridgway 193-194). He views Ridgway’s theories as an oversimplification of the ethnic diversity apparent at Pithekoussai, and stresses the presence of other cultural groups in addition to the “few Phoenicians and a lot of Euboeans” (Papadopoulos 202). Despite Papadopoulos’ claims, a large portion of the finds suggest that the majority of Pithekoussai’s population was indeed Euboean. While Ridgway acknowledges the presence of additional cultures at Pithekoussai (Papadopoulos 202),² the archaeological evidence unearthed so far simply does not indicate that the “phantom Euboeans” described by Papadopoulos were as invisible as he believes them to have been (Ridgway 24). Euboeans, and Corinthians a few generations after them, appear to have comprised the majority of Pithekoussai’s population. Far from being absorbed in their own Hellenic culture, the archaeological record shows that these people embraced the ethnic groups they came into contact with and founded a settlement of unique diversity.

ii. Italic Peoples

Despite the controversy surrounding the ethnicity of the early Greeks who led Pithekoussai’s trade relations, scholars generally agree that the Greeks established relationships and trade connections with the native Italic peoples. One unanswered question here, however, regards the nature of these relationships; how did they begin and what sustained them?

Although the large amount of early Euboean pottery in Etruria suggests that interactions between the two cultures were positive and strong, there is the possibility that some distrust or even hostility existed. Despite the lack of fortifications in early Greek colonies, a few fortified Italian sites have been discovered inland, and were possibly built as a consequence of the natives’ fear or suspicion of the foreign newcomers (Morel 126). On the other hand, it has also been suggested that Greeks and natives were so eager to make the most of each other’s resources that hostility was never an issue. In fact, Greeks and indigenous Italics appear to have coexisted at a few native sites, including Siris, where Greeks and Italics were buried side-by-side, and Morgantina, where funerary traditions evolved from purely-Italic rock-cut chamber tombs to mixed Greco-Italic burials (Morel 125; Ziskowski 12). While both Siris and Morgantina date to a period later than Pithekoussai, they show that coexistence between these two ethnic groups was indeed possible.

2 One need only refer to sources such as “Phoenicians and Greeks in the West: A View from Pithekoussai,” “Euboeans and Others Along the Tyrrhenian Seaboard in the 8th Century B.C.,” and “Seals, Scarabs, and People in Pithekoussai I,” to see that Ridgway advocates for a multi-ethnic population at Pithekoussai.

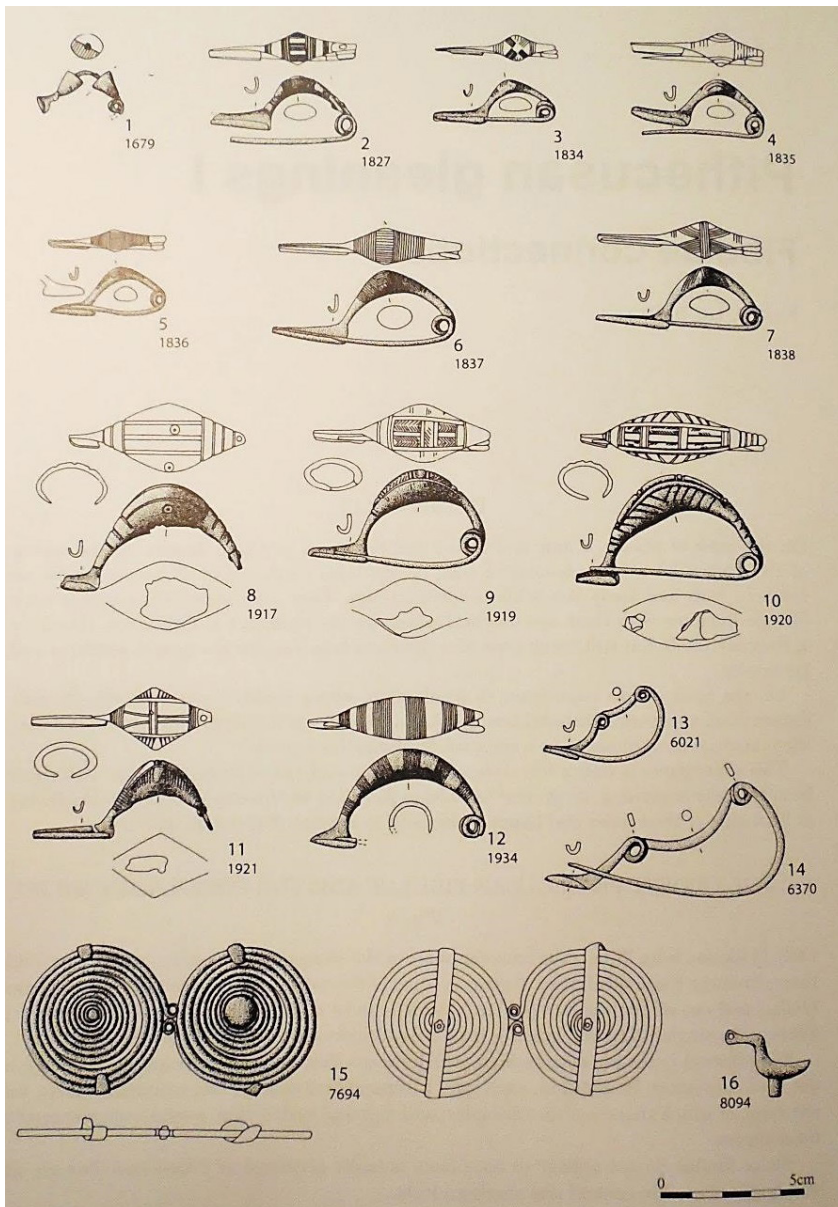


Fig. 5: The oldest fibulae, all Italic types, found at Pithekoussai (Schiavo 2006, Fig. 1).

Following his excavations of Pithekoussai's cemetery, Giorgio Buchner took this idea of coexistence one step further and suggested that the women of Pithekoussai had not been Euboean colonists like their male counterparts, but rather Italic women whom the Greek men had married upon their arrival in Italy (59-86). This concept is known as the 'native wives theory' and has generated much scholarly discussion and debate since its publication in 1975. Largely based on the jewellery and fibulae found in the San Montano cemetery at Pithekoussai, Buchner notes that, while the pottery and grave goods are principally Greek, the bronze fibulae which were buried with many of Pithekoussai's residents are entirely Italic in type (Coldstream 53). Moreover, a recent study by Fulvia Lo Schiavo reveals that the fibulae styles seem to have evolved over time out of an Italic foundation. Schiavo identified the earliest fibulae at the site as those with catch-plates that were very different from those known in Greek types (see fig. 5). Instead, these fibulae are known from wide distributions in central and Southern Italy (Schiavo 252). Thus it seems that these Italic fibulae were produced within Pithekoussai itself, by metal craftsmen in the industrial quarter (Ziskowski 7). Experimental types such as the arch, serpentine, and 'configured' arch fibulae have all been identified in both the craft area and the cemetery, proving that Pithekoussan artisans were integrating Italic metalworking traditions into their own developments (see fig. 6) (Schiavo 252).

Despite this undeniable integration on the part of the Greeks and their taste for Italic styles, it is difficult to uphold the natives wives theory based on fibulae alone. Overall, there seems to have been a general preference for Italic pins at Pithekoussai, rather than a specific connection between women and fibulae. In fact, a more prominent connection exists between children buried in the cemetery and the fibulae; nearly half of the 592 graves originally published in Buchner and Ridgway's *Pithekoussai I* are child graves in which fibulae have been found (Shepherd 295). Such strong comparisons cannot be drawn for the female occupants of the cemetery, and thus it seems too far of a stretch to extrapolate the high concentration of Italic fibulae to intermarriages at Pithekoussai. Instead, the Greeks may simply have been heavily invested in the metalwork of the indigenous Italics. After all, metal resources were likely one of the most sought-after commodities in Etruria (Shepherd 290; Schiavo 252).

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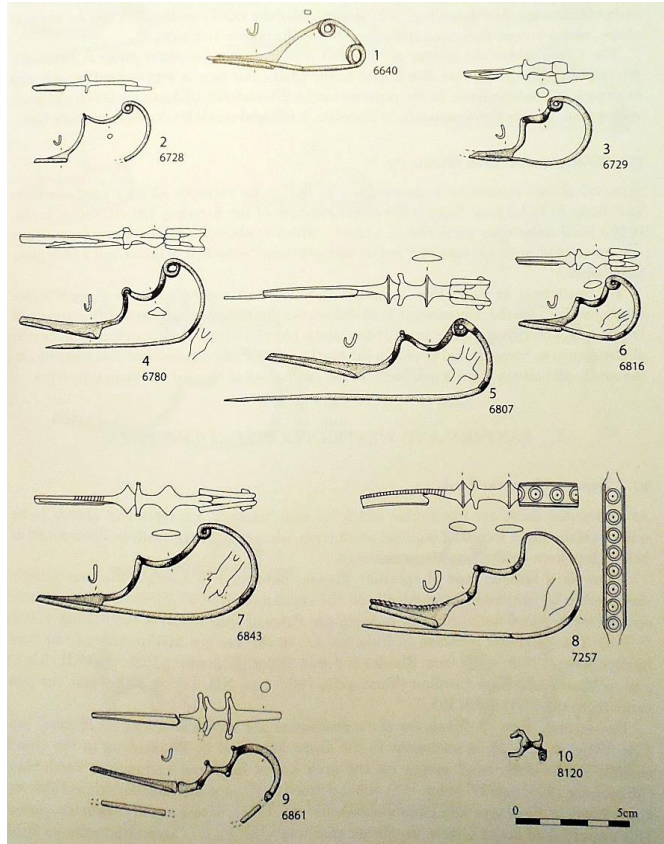


Fig. 6: Locally-produced experimental types of fibulae from Pithekoussai (Schiavo 2006, Fig. 3).

In order to investigate whether or not the native wives theory can be supported through other types of analyses, scholars have turned to literacy, linguistics, and osteological remains. Perhaps one of the most interesting sets of clues has been the appearance of ‘hybrid’ proper names inscribed on pots at Pithekoussai and Cumae. These names often involve two separate titles; one which seems to be Greek and the other Etruscan (Ziskowski 7; Hall 41). For example, the Etruscan-Greek name Larth Telicles was found on a sherd at Pithekoussai and bears elements of both cultures, which perhaps is a sign that the child’s Etruscan and Greek parents wanted to have both of their ethnicities represented in the name of their child. These hybrids, however, disappear after the 7th century BCE, implying the steady integration and assimilation of the cultures (Ziskowski 7). Additionally, incised lettering has been found on a separate piece of pottery at Pithekoussai, and has been identified as an Etruscan

inscription dated to 740 BCE (see fig. 7) (Woudhuizen 101). Although this does not in itself prove that Etruscans were living within Pithekoussai, it does reveal the close connection between the Greeks and Italics since the sherd was found in a Greek site amongst Greek pottery.

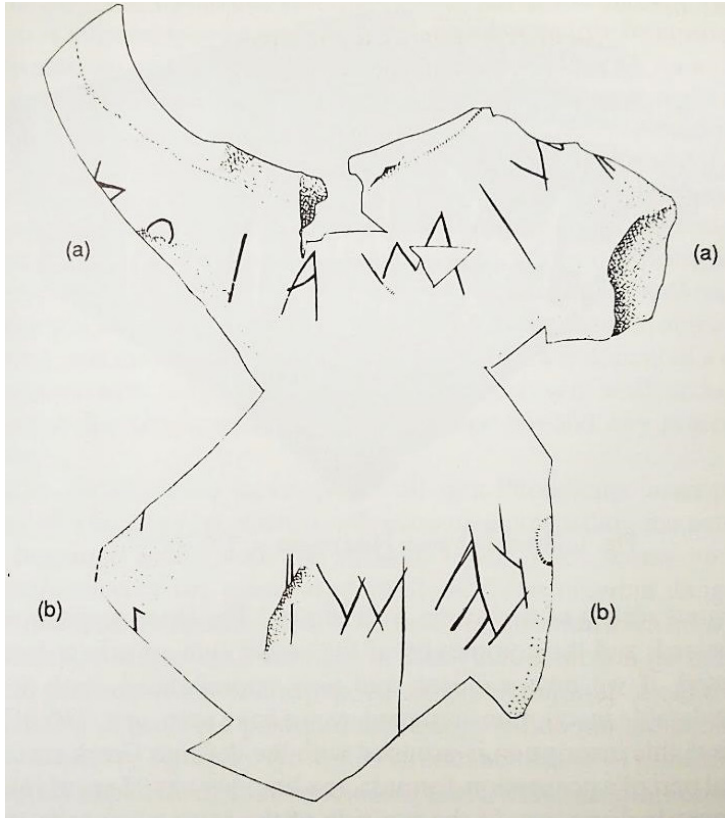


Fig. 7: Pottery sherd with Etruscan inscription from Pithekoussai (Woudhuizen 1988-1989, Fig. 2).

This inscription also helps to emphasize the point of literacy which has been applied to the native wives theory in addition to the debate surrounding the Euboeans. As noted earlier, the Etruscans adopted the Greek alphabet for their written language. This adoption implies alphabetic literacy on the part of the Etruscans; a literacy which, some have suggested, would have been very difficult to assimilate simply through trade connections. Intermarriages, on the other hand, would have provided the presence of “teachers” directly within the families of a settlement, facilitating the spread of the language more effectively than it would have without intermarriage

(Coldstream 90). This theory is, of course, very much based on conjecture, but it is a possible explanation for the rapid diffusion of the Greek alphabet throughout Italy in the 8th century BCE.

The teeth of the Pithekoussan burials have been analyzed in an effort to identify any morphological markers potentially helpful in determining the ethnicities of those buried in the cemetery. Many of the study samples revealed evidence of the bifurcation of the root of the first premolars (Ziskowski 6). It is known that this dental trait is common to the indigenous peoples of central Italy in this period (c. 900-600 BCE), but is not a trait commonly associated with ethnic Greeks (Ziskowski 6). Of significance is the observation that the earliest inhabitants of the cemetery exhibit no evidence of bifurcation, yet many of the later do. This development could be explained by the introduction of the morphological trait to the foreign Greek community through intermarriage. The bifurcation would then have been passed down to the mixed Greek-Italic offspring of these unions, resulting in its later appearance (Ziskowski 6).

Evidence for intermarriages may not be limited to Pithekoussai, but may also be visible at Cumae. Coldstream is a strong proponent of the theory that much of the mixed Greek-Etruscan population of Pithekoussai, the offspring of the original settlers of Pithekoussai, moved to Cumae in order to be involved in mainland commercial activity. This theory helps explain the decline in population at Pithekoussai after 700 BCE, the increased population at Cumae, and the diverse cultural material found in some of the graves at the same site (Coldstream 95). Coldstream applies this theory primarily to the rich warrior grave found at Cumae. Despite being buried in an Euboean fashion, this warrior was also interred with an Etruscan bronze shield, Etruscan Orientalizing fibulae, and a few other Italic high-status goods (Coldstream 54). The identity of this man has therefore been interpreted in various ways, including as an Etruscan warrior, an Euboean colonist, and, as Coldstream believes, the son of Etruscan-Euboean parents who immigrated from Pithekosusai to Cumae (Coldstream 95). Coldstream's theory would explain the unique hybridity of the warrior's grave. It is, however, important to remember that this is only a single burial and it is risky to make widespread assumptions based on a potential anomaly.

Ultimately, the level of uncertainty surrounding the native wives theory necessitates a cautious approach; only 5 to 10% of Pithekoussai's cemetery has been excavated. While the evidence seems to suggest at least some cases of intermarriage, caution should be employed when making generalizations until further excavations are carried out.

Aside from intermarriage, evidence reveals that Etruscan-Greek relations were strong in the 8th century. Mutual trade and interaction facilitated cultural exchange,

for the influence of Italic metalwork can be seen in the fibulae of Pithekoussai, both those of Etruscan import and locally-made imitations, while the Greek alphabet and pottery styles spread north, influencing the Etruscan written language and the ceramic market.

iii. Levantines: Phoenicians and Eastern Peoples

Fifty years ago, Buchner wrote that in the 8th century BCE, “the masters of the trade between the Eastern Mediterranean and central Italy” were the Euboeans (12). At the time, he believed that the Euboeans had commercial bases at both Pithekoussai and Al Mina, and were therefore able to dominate a central East-West trade route. However, it is now known that Buchner’s conclusions here are false because Al Mina was never an Euboean foundation, and “[t]rade empires and commercial monopolies...are fantasies in the archaic [sic] period” (Whittaker 77). Although the Euboeans were heavily involved with the commercial activity of the Mediterranean at this time, the Phoenicians were also a significant power. As active seafarers and merchants, it is not surprising that evidence at Pithekoussai indicates Phoenician influence and perhaps even habitation at the site.

When discussing the Archaic networks of the Mediterranean, it is important to remember that although Greece experienced a Dark Age, other cultures did not. The Levant, for instance, flourished at this time and continued its interactions with various regions of the Mediterranean (Ridgway 182). As Greece emerged from its Dark Age, the Euboeans seem to have been the first Greeks to establish new and solid contacts with the Levant. Interested in the acquisition of precious metals from Etruria, the Levantines had maintained contact with Italy, while the Greeks, in contrast, had yet to establish the extensive networks they would rely upon so heavily only a few decades later. Though mere speculation, it is possible that it was the Levantines who helped to reintroduce the Greeks to the Italians and the trade networks of the Archaic Mediterranean (Ridgway 182-183). It has even been suggested that early Greek trade was conducted through the Phoenicians. In this model, Levantine traders and merchants acted as the “middlemen” within the Mediterranean trade routes, at least until the Euboeans became established enough to begin their own ventures (Ridgway 183).

Whether or not the Phoenicians directly assisted the Euboeans in ‘getting a foothold’ in the Mediterranean trade networks of the late 9th and early 8th centuries BCE, the two cultures undoubtedly began interacting by the mid-8th century, when Pithekoussai became “a free port at which native Greek and Near Eastern concerns freely mingled” (Markoe 61). In addition to the substantial amount of Phoenician Red Slip ware found in the Acropolis Dump at Pithekoussai, there has also been clear

evidence found for Levantine residents within the settlement itself (Ridgway 39). The best support for the presence of this ethnic group has been found in Grave 575 in the San Montano cemetery, where an imported amphora was reused for a child's burial in the Late Geometric period (Ridgway 113). The amphora bears three separate Semitic inscriptions, which in itself indicates contact with other cultures (see fig. 8). In this case, the meanings of the first and third inscriptions are of the most significance.



Fig. 8: Semitic texts and symbol (highlighted in yellow) inscribed on an imported amphora from Pithekoussai's Grave 575 (Ridgway 1992, Fig. 29).

The specific language of the first inscription has been identified as Aramaic, and seems to have been a type of ancient customs declaration (Ridgway 240; Ridgway 113). This inscription would have pertained to the original usage of the amphora as the container for a trade commodity, perhaps olive oil or wine, and is a testament to the active pan-Mediterranean trade of the time. Furthermore, this inscription, as well as the second one below it, was not translated from its original language, which seems

to indicate that the Semitic label would have been understood by the receivers. In this case, the receivers may have been Levantines who were based in the Greek settlement of Pithekoussai, or, though less likely, Greeks who had had enough interaction with Levantines that they could understand the language (Ridgway 113). Either way, this inscription attests to the strong Levantine presence at Pithekoussai.

Following its use as a commercial storage vessel, the foreign amphora was recycled by Levantines at Pithekoussai, and used in the *enchytrismos* of a child buried in the settlement's necropolis. The third inscription appears to match this context, for the incised representation of a triangular symbol is well-known from religious and funerary contexts at Carthage and other Phoenician sites in the Mediterranean (see fig. 8) (Ridgway 114). The use of this foreign religious symbol here suggests that at least one of the parents of the deceased child felt the need to observe Levantine religious practices, presumably because of their own cultural traditions (Ridgway 114). It is an especially interesting observation that this non-Greek child was interred amongst the other inhabitants of Pithekoussai, with no differential treatment in his or her burial apart from the religious symbol. This once again reflects the nature of Pithekoussai as a place of diversity, which had little concern for ethnic or racial divides.

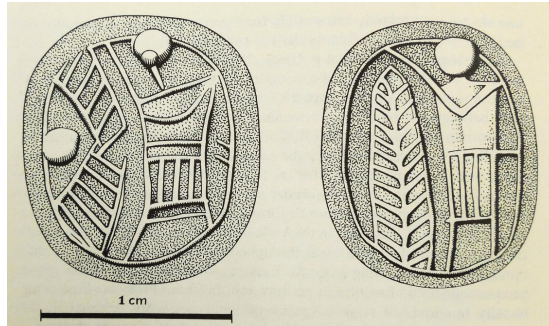


Fig. 9: Imported Lyre-Player Group seals from the Valle di San Montano cemetery, Pithekoussai (Ridgway 1992, Fig. 15).

An examination of the burial goods found within the San Montano cemetery confirms this inclusivity, revealing that ethnic boundaries were loosely drawn. Many Greek burials, for example, contain foreign grave goods, and the necropolis as a whole has yielded a large amount of Eastern exotica or *orientalia*, including seals of the North Syrian Lyre-Player group (see fig. 9), Egyptian scarabs, and Levantine aryballoi (Ridgway 115; Ridgway 235). Although these were not all Phoenician goods, they were most likely brought to Pithekoussai by Phoenician merchants and Levantine residents because of the Greek taste for exotic goods. In fact, the San Montano graves have yielded the largest collection of Egyptian type paste scarabs found at

a Greek cemetery, and 89 seals and scarabs alone have been found in 60 Euboean graves (Ridgway 235; Ridgway 65).

Grave 433 is a good example of a burial which shows the many different cultural influences apparent in the Pithekoussan cemetery. Within this fossa grave was found a locally-made oinochoe, an iron knife, five miniature bronze double axes with parallels in the Peloponnese, a bronze fish-hook, a bead of white glass paste, and a Lyre-Player seal in a silver pendant (Ridgway 240; Macnamara 270). This last object is of particular interest because it shows a unique amalgamation of craftsmanship. As noted, Lyre-Player seals are known to be predominantly from Northern Syria, but Syrian seals are without silver attachments. Silver-mounted seals were instead extremely popular in Etruria, most likely produced there using imported seals brought to Italy by Phoenicians (Markoe 63). This single object (see object 420 in fig. 10) is therefore able to reveal the complex trade routes often taken by goods before reaching Pithekoussai, and the influences that multiple cultures can have on material goods.

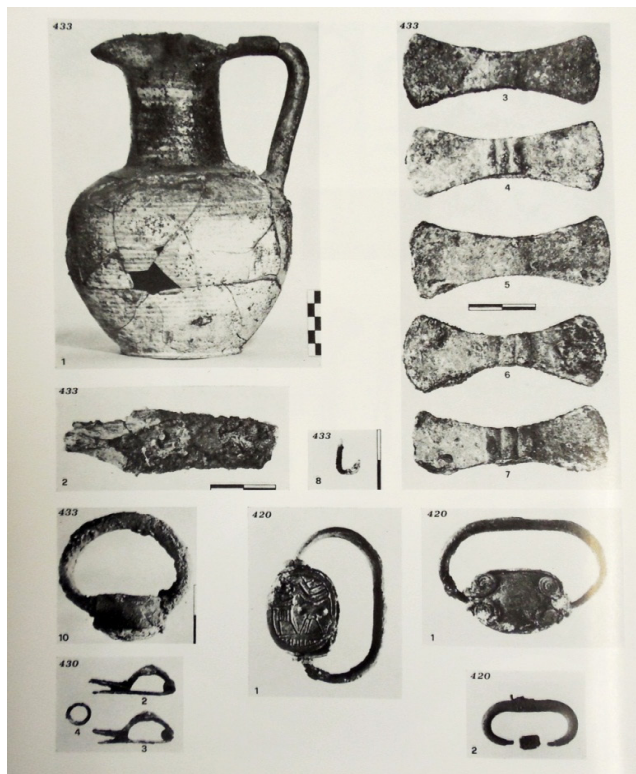


Fig. 10: The burial goods of Pithekoussai's Grave 433 (after Buchner and Ridgway 1993, Tavola CLXII).

While there is little doubt that Phoenicians visited and resided at Pithekoussai, Glenn Markoe contends that their most significant commercial market was more northerly. It was in Etruria, he explains, that Levantine traders continued to obtain the precious metals they had been procuring through the Etruscans for years. Although Phoenicians continued their trade with the Euboeans at Pithekoussai and other sites throughout Italy, Markoe argues that the Eastern influence visible in the silverwork of the North is a clear indicator that the Phoenician presence was in fact stronger in Etruria than in central Italy (61). Particularly interested in the silver resources of northern Italy, Phoenician artisans may have lived and worked amongst the Etruscans, as the large number of 8th and 7th century BCE Cypro-Phoenician silver bowls in the region suggests (Markoe 65).

A Phoenician presence in Etruria would also help to explain the strong Oriental influences visible in Etruscan silverwork of the period. Such robust trade relations and interactions between the two groups would have facilitated the spread of Eastern motifs and contributed to the emergence of the Oriental style in Italy. This theory has found support with the discovery of an Etruscan Orientalising workshop which produced pieces extremely similar to original Cypro-Phoenician metal goods (Markoe 68).

Despite the strong Phoenician-Etruscan connection to the north, Pithekoussai was by no means excluded from the advantages of such trade relations. Rather, Markoe suggests that the Phoenicians and the Greeks held a symbiotic relationship at this time; although both groups traded with the Etruscans, they never competed because each desired separate commodities. The Greeks were interested in iron and copper, while the Phoenicians wanted silver, thus their market interests never infringed on one another (Markoe 80). In this way they were able to maintain shared contact with the Italics, while also trading amongst each other in a tri-cultural exchange within the Italian peninsula.

Inevitably, this exchange led to many mutual influences, particularly between the Phoenicians and the Corinthians, who dominated Pithekoussai's ceramic market by the late 8th century BCE. The Corinthians were impressed by the Oriental goods and Eastern motifs of the Phoenicians. As they began to integrate such styles into their own pottery and art, a new style emerged and eventually made its way back to the Greek homeland, initiating the rise of the Greek Orientalizing Period (Markoe 61). Likewise, the Phoenicians seem to have been quite taken with the ornate Corinthian ware, for they began to imitate it in their silverware (Markoe 61). Interestingly, this same silverware is that which influenced Etruria, revealing just how intertwined these markets and networks could be.

The widespread influence of Phoenician goods and motifs demonstrates the

strong trade activity within the Italian peninsula during the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. Commercial and cultural interactions were not always linear, and it was this intricacy which enabled cultural exchange to take place in such an inhibited and dynamic way; a cultural exchange which is perhaps best exhibited at the multicultural site of Pithekoussai.

IV. "A Small Greek World"³

Despite the debates that continue to surround various aspects of Pithekoussan life, it can be said with confidence that though Pithekoussai was a Greek settlement founded by Euboeans in the early 8th century BCE, it was also home to a diverse variety of ethnic groups. Native Italics seem to have maintained strong connections with the Greeks, not only on a commercial level, but also on a personal one. While the widespread distribution of Euboean and Corinthian pottery and the Etruscan adoption of the Greek alphabet attest to the strong relations between these groups, it is possible that interactions sometimes evolved into intermarriages, with Greek-Italic families residing at Pithekoussai. Although Buchner's native wives theory remains one of the most contested aspects of Pithekoussai's diverse population, the Italic fibulae, Etruscan inscriptions, dental analysis, burial traditions, and culturally-mixed names suggest that intermarriages were not a rarity.

Alongside the Greeks and Etruscans, a minority of Levantines also appear to have called Pithekoussai home, burying their dead beside their Greek neighbours and sharing their Eastern artistic techniques with the willing Greeks. Additional strong Phoenician interactions with the Etruscans to the North created interwoven networks throughout the Italian peninsula in which Greeks, Italics, and Levantines shared in a mutual exchange of culture.

At present, the situation at Pithekoussai appears to have been a rather unique one. Although other sites have yielded evidence of coexistence, and the large trading hub of Al Mina saw these same diverse cultural groups pass through its port, few sites provide evidence for diversity to this extent (Coldstream 224). However, the question should be asked, 'was Pithekoussai truly so unusual in this regard?' If the Mediterranean world was so intertwined, as evidence suggests, then such multi-ethnicity must not have been quite so unusual. One challenge facing archaeologists in answering this question is that such coexistence is not always visible in the archaeological record (Morel 126).

From a theoretical standpoint, it is challenging to define ethnicities, and ethnic coexistence. This is especially true when mobility is involved and new ethnic

³ The title of Malkin's (2011) work is used here to conclude this article because it summarizes how the far-reaching networks connected with Pithekoussai facilitated the feeling of a small, accessible Mediterranean world in the Archaic period.

identities form as populations move and settle amongst different groups of people (Malkin 209). The same is true of culture; when one group integrates aspects of another group's culture, that culture becomes appropriated into its own. This idea can be seen in Greek-Italic relations, when, in the centuries following Pithekoussai's foundation, elites of the Italic natives used elements of Greek culture, including hoplite armour, symposia, and Homeric-style burials, within their own ethnic context as symbols of their authority (Hall 45). Not only would the characteristics of Greek culture and Italic culture change because of this incorporation, but the way in which these cultures are now identified in the archaeological record would also be altered. With this in mind, the networks of the Archaic Mediterranean should be regarded as simply that – Mediterranean. Rather than visualizing the interactions between groups as nationally-driven, where large cultural powers strove to gain resources and wealth, the evidence suggests that these interactions took place within an integrated system of trade between smaller groups, largely free of xenophobic tendencies and ethnic barriers.

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