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Negotiating Social Entanglements through Feasting in Iron Age and Archaic Western Sicily*

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Abstract: Iron Age and Archaic western Sicilians interacted with Greek and Phoenician colonists. The effects of this interaction accumulated over time, introducing new ideas and material culture. Here, western Sicilians transformed their feasting assemblages, reinventing their visual displays of wealth, power, and prestige. This local response created new material culture and expressions of identity.
Keywords: Interaction, Sicily, Feasting, Identity, Post-Colonialism.

Riassunto: Le popolazioni indigene della Sicilia occidentale dell'Età del Ferro e di età arcaica interagirono con i coloni greci e fenici. Gli effetti di tale interazione, stratificatisi nel tempo, determinarono l'introduzione di nuove idee e di elementi di cultura materiale. Le popolazioni della Sicilia occidentale trasformarono i loro set cerimoniali, reinterpretando le manifestazioni visive di ricchezza, potere e prestigio. Questa risposta locale diede vita a nuove forme di cultura materiale e a nuove espressioni di identità.
Parole chiave: Interazione, Sicilia, banchetti, identità. postcolonialismo.

Sicily's geographic position dividing the western from the eastern Mediterranean situated it as a crossroad of cultures for millennia. The arrival of Greek colonists and Phoenician merchants during the eighth century BC resulted in significant transformations to indigenous Iron Age Sicilian polities. In the western Mediterranean, only eastern Spain (ROUILLARD 2009) and western Sicily (KOLB, SPEAKMAN 2005; MONTANA *et alii* 2009; MORRIS, TUSA 2004; and BALCO 2012; 2018) hosted both Greek and Phoenician colonial centers. Consequently, the Elymi of western Sicily, an indigenous population occupying a number of sites across western Sicily (DE VIDO 2009; DE ANGELIS 2016; SPATAFORA 2020) (Fig. 1) engaged in intensive contact and interaction with the Greek colonies at Selinus and Himera as well as the Phoenician *emporia* at Mozia, Panormus, and Solunto. This, in turn, significantly

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affected the social, political, and economic lifeways of the Elymi, in a manner and scale unlike that experienced by the indigenous Sicans and Sikels in central and eastern Sicily. As relations with colonists became sustained interaction, new ideas, behaviors, and material culture were introduced. Indigenous populations likely perceived the function and/or social implications of foreign goods, beliefs, and behaviors in a different manner than the Greek or Phoenician colonists. The Elymi selectively adopted some ideas and materials introduced from afar while retaining their own cultural traditions, consequently forging a new identity on their own terms. Over multiple generations, the effects of entanglement accumulated, transforming both indigenous and colonial cultures via an evolving process. Here, commensal vessels are explored as proxies for social ideation within the complex social situation that developed in ancient western Sicily. The social significance of feasting as political capital is discussed below, prior to a discussion of the transformation of feasting assemblages and broader social behaviors during the Iron Age and Archaic periods in western Sicily.

To understand the rich complexity of cultural encounters within colonial contexts, researchers have largely moved from polarized colonizer/colonized dichotomies into the concept of social entanglement (BOYD *et alii* 2000; DIETLER 1998; HARRISON 2004; HODDER 2012; MARTINDALE 2009; ORSER 1996; SILLIMAN 2001; 2005; 2016; STAHL 2002; THOMAS 1991). Entanglement accounts for the complex social interconnectedness of people, population centers, and cultures. Such entanglement interanimates individuals with diverse cultures, objects, and places (BALTUS, BAIRES 2012; KIRK 2006; JORDAN 2009; 2014), energizing social change and the concomitant transformation of material culture. As active agents, individuals are cognizant of social and material entanglements, purposefully manipulating, negotiating, or transforming objects within their context of use and display (BALTUS 2015), by incorporating or rejecting elements of foreign behaviors and material culture. Consequently, the individual can repurpose beliefs, behaviors, and objects to satisfy their needs, desires, or agenda, shaping their expressed identity. As the effects of social and material transformation can accumulate over time, change becomes a seemingly innocuous and indirect, and therefore opaque, process.

Sustained contact and interaction can transform cultures, leading to the development of a social middle ground (WHITE 1991) or third space (BHABHA 1990) – a cultural manifestation that resembles, yet differs from previous expressions of both local and foreign cultures. Such cultural interdigitation (EMERSON 2013; BALTUS 2015) is expressed both behaviorally and objectively, preserving archaeologically visible evidence of the social middle ground. Thus, since we cannot see social or behavioral transformations, we can look to the material culture, and resulting changes in manufacture and use of certain objects, to infer these ephemeral developments. Here, prestige goods are excellent proxies for studying social transformation as their expression varies concomitant to broader social and behavioral transformations. Certain types of pottery, in particular, acted as prestige goods, serving as "political currency" and affording the user with the appearance of wealth, power, and prestige (BRUMFIEL 1987; BRUMFIEL, EARLE 1987; LECOUNT 1999).

Exploring status displays in Iron Age and Archaic western Sicily (approximately 900-500 BC) is readily accomplished via contextual and morphological examinations of pottery vessels and their contexts of use. Of all the diverse pottery forms imported by indigenous Iron Age western Sicilian populations, commensal vessels, particularly those used to consume wine during feasting, are optimal because they were imported in greater numbers than any other forms (WALSH 2014). Commensal feasting was a socioculturally important ritual practice that has been explored archaeologically via diverse theories and methodologies (DIETLER 1990; DIETLER, HAYDEN 2001; GUMERMAN 1997; JOYCE 2010; HAMILAKIS 1998; 2008; PAUKETAT *et alii* 2002; BRAY 2003; HALSTEAD, BARRETT 2004; SWENSON 2006; MILLS 2007; HAYDEN, VILLENEUVE 2011; ARANDA *et alii* 2011; TWISS 2012; WILLS, CROWN 2004; WRIGHT 2004; FERRER MARTÍN 2013; 2016). Feasts served a number of key social functions: they reinforced pre-existing norms regarding social behavior (RABINOWITZ 2004), they created social contexts extending beyond familial boundaries (WILLS, CROWN 2004), and they strengthened social bonds (WALSH 2014). As ritual behaviors, feasts are «a fundamental instrument and theater of political relations» (DIETLER 1999: 135). Perhaps most importantly, feasts served as events where various cultural practices could be conducted, repeated, and reinvented to fit local tastes, both literally and figuratively. Simply put, feasts were political tools to negotiate power, in this case power situated in the space between local and colonial societies.

During feasts, inanimate objects are imbued with qualities extending beyond their functional abilities through complex interactions humans share with them. Each commensal feast incorporates culturally significant food and drink, reflecting concepts of «proper consumption» (DIETLER 2010: 185) shared by the participants. Colonial interaction – then as now – introduced new foods, beverages, commensal hardware, and behaviors to the feast, broadening the spread while redefining which food and drink were to be consumed. For example, Gauls in Iron Age southern France transformed their feasting behaviors, replacing beer and animal fats with wine and olive oil following contact and intensified interaction with colonial Greek merchants and settlers (DIETLER 2005; 2010). Concomitant to the incorporation of wine and olive oil came the incorporation of imported Attic vessels among local Gallic feasts, reflecting local choices by Gauls to actively incorporate imported commensal hardware alongside their own feasting vessels (DIETLER 2010).

The choice of beverage(s) served and consumed at the feast was not entirely socially motivated. Alcoholic beverages – including wine, beer, and mead – were political tools associated with hospitality and reflective of social status, making them indispensable components of commensal feasts (DIETLER 2006). Consequently, offering food or drink that broke from the expected cultural norm may have served to communicate status, success, and identity.

The hardware that functioned to contain, mix, serve, and consume food and drink also communicated status to members of the culture utilizing it. In Iron Age and Archaic western

Sicily, Greek colonial feasting equipment and behaviors may have been incorporated among indigenous traditions, redefining status hierarchies through their possession and use. Many of these feasting accoutrements manufactured of fired clay or precious metals remain archaeologically visible, facilitating a contextual study of individual vessels or entire assemblages as conveyors of representative status.

The vast majority of feasting vessels that remain archaeologically visible were made of fired clay. Transformations of fired clay feasting assemblages accompanied similar changes in status representations. As pottery, these vessels preserve well and are ubiquitous components of domestic artifact assemblages in Iron Age and Archaic western Sicilian sites. The Elymi manufactured and used a variety of fired clay feasting hardware, including *scodelle*, *ciotole*, *tazze attingitoi*, and *capeduncole* (MÜHLENBOCK 2008; 2015; CAMPISI 2003; SPATAFORA 2003; TROMBI 1999a; 2015; SERRA 2016) (Fig. 2). These commensal vessels were likely derived from earlier Bronze Age forms (MÜHLENBOCK 2008; SPATAFORA 1996) yet constituted the crux of indigenous Iron Age feasting assemblages. Many of these vessels were decorated with painted or incised geometric motifs. Painted decoration appeared prior to the widespread use of incised decorations (SERRA 2016) and typically included red or black bands and bars forming geometric designs added atop a cream-colored paint (TROMBI 1999b; 2015; CAMPISI 2003; SERRA 2016; BLASETTI FANTAUZZI 2017; 2018). Incised decorations were characterized by bands and bars forming repeating triangular patterns (FATTA 1983; DI NOTO 1995; ARRABITO 2019). One incised design frequently identified at Iron Age settlements in western Sicily is known as *denti di lupo*, or "teeth of the wolf" (KOLB, SPEAKMAN 2005; OMA 2006; KOLB *et alii* 2006; BALCO 2018; ARRABITO 2019). Nearly identical assemblages of indigenous commensal vessels with these decorative motifs are universal at indigenous Iron Age and Archaic settlements in western Sicily, suggesting a shared tradition spread among these polities.

As stated, the possession and use of feasting vessels communicated status and identity. At the same time, however, any object manufactured and/or influenced by foreign cultures can also «increase the ideological power and political prestige of those who acquire them» (HELMS 1988: 263). The acquisition and possession of imported goods provide testament to the individual's social, political, and/or economic acumen and affirms the «personal characteristics of the acquirer, who has had to deal […] with a conceptually distinctive foreign realm» (HELMS 1993: 101). The possession and/or use of foreign vessels thereby becomes a means to establish, maintain, or exert one's prestige within the group (WRIGHT 1995; 2004; DIETLER 1990; ARNOLD 1999; VIVES-FERRÁNDIZ 2008). Among indigenous Iron Age western Sicilian populations, the choice to use Aegean feasting vessels, rather than indigenous ones, would have broken from the structured indigenous norm, displaying the status or wealth of the individual. Likewise, possessing such imports would have testified to the network maintained by the individual and the socio-economic power that they had access to. In cases where high-quality imports were displayed or used, their presence would have drawn attention to the individual, increasing their social visibility among those at the feast.

Evidence of commensal feasting has been identified within domestic and ritual contexts among Elymian population centers. These contexts are key to understanding the sociopolitical function of the feast. Then, as now, the reasons to feast were diverse, resulting in a wide array of behaviors, foods, drinks, and hardware associated with scheduled and unscheduled banqueting at different locations around population centers. In these contexts, evidence of feasting is most strongly associated with sanctuaries and structures possibly dedicated to banqueting activities.

Sanctuaries served as a nexus of socio-political and cultic ideologies, creating, negotiating, and legitimizing power among indigenous Sicilian polities (FERRER MARTÍN 2013). Given the central role of feasts as activities negotiating and reinforcing power structures (DIETLER 1999; RABINOWITZ 2004), it comes as no surprise that evidence of feasting is found among sanctuary contexts. Indigenous Iron Age and Archaic Sicilian sanctuaries were communal ritual settings situated at the *acropoleis* of indigenous settlements (D'ONZA 2019; FERRER MARTÍN 2013; 2016). Such ritual spaces among indigenous centers are rare in Sicily; with perhaps the best studied at ancient Palikè, located in southeast Sicily (MCCONNELL, MANISCALCO 1997-1998; MANISCALCO, MCCONNELL 2003; CORDANO 2008). Despite their rarity, several Sicilian *acropoleis* in western and central Sicily preserve evidence of successive feasting events with large quantities of butchered and burnt animal remains recovered from in and around hearths, altars, and votive pits (FERRER MARTÍN 2013; 2016). This pattern has been observed at Monte Polizzo (MORRIS *et alii* 2004), Polizzello (PALERMO *et alii* 2009), Sabucina (GUZZONE 2009), Colle Madore (DI ROSA 1999), and Monte Bubbonia (PANCUCCI 1976-1977; 1980-1981; PANCUCCI, NARO 1992), indicating the importance of these localities as communal and ceremonial feasting centers.

The association between feasting and cultic activities extends beyond the simple presence of burnt food remains among certain contexts. At Monte Iato, for example, a two-story banqueting structure likely constructed in the sixth century BCE, was situated immediately west of the Temple of Aphrodite. The social functions of these two structures were directly associated as evidenced by the presence of a ramp connecting the alter in front of the temple and the upper story of the banqueting structure (ÖHLINGER 2016). Feasting at Monte Iato incorporated the use of indigenous hardware alongside imported Greek vessels. For example, fragments of indigenous painted vessels associated with feasting were deposited in ritual dumps near these structures after being intentionally broken (ÖHLINGER 2016). Additionally, a mixed assemblage of imported and indigenous commensal vessels was identified in the rear of the Temple of Aphrodite. This assemblage consisted of 13 vessels, five of which were local matte painted bowls ritually destroyed prior to discard (ÖHLINGER 2016). Furthermore, an indigenous *attingitoio* recovered next to an Attic *skyphos* at the Late Archaic house, dated to approximately 460 BCE (KISTLER *et alii* 2017), attest to the mixed nature of feasting assemblages composed of both indigenous and imported vessels. Here, the *attingitoio* is interpreted as a necessary component of an indigenous ritual focused on the redistribution of food and drink (KISTLER *et alii* 2017). This evidence suggests ritualized feasting occurred

within the cultic areas atop Monte Iato, relying on an assemblage of both local and imported vessels utilized together. Other evidence of indigenous Sicilian feasting has been identified in banqueting halls not affiliated with sanctuaries. Sites such as Monte Iato (KISTLER, MOHR 2015), Montagnoli di Menfi (CASTELLANA 1990; 1992; 2000; KISTLER 2011), and Monte Maranfusa (SPATAFORA 2009) include multi-functional structures, hosting both feasting and cultic behaviors (ÖHLINGER 2015). Commensal hardware recovered from domestic contexts at Monte Maranfusa, for instance, suggest feasting as a component of domestic cult activities. Here, imported commensal vessels were deposited alongside locally produced indigenous ones, forming a complicated feasting assemblage dating from the end of the sixth to the beginning of the fifth centuries BCE (SPATAFORA 2009; 2015). The evidence from Building or "*Edificio*" 2, where a complex assemblage of locally manufactured and imported commensal vessels was recovered (SPATAFORA 2002), suggests that the structure may have served both domestic and social gathering functions (SPATAFORA 2015). This multi-room structure included spaces for the preparation and cooking of foods, communal feasting, food storage, and personal rest (SPATAFORA 2016). Certainly, such a space would have been the locus of negotiating status and identity among commensal participants.

Indigenous feasts clearly incorporated imported hardware alongside locally produced vessels, forming an assemblage reflecting the socially entangled cultural palimpsest characteristic of western Sicily. Still, some vessels within those socially and politically charged feasting assemblages are not readily identified as local or imported, instead blending indigenous manufacturing techniques and decorations with Aegean forms. Such vessels have been recovered from many indigenous sites across western Sicily. These include such examples as a locally produced *lekanis* recovered at Polizello, decorated with indigenous matte-painted geometric designs (TROMBI 2015: n. 865), a locally produced *hydria* recovered at Entella, decorated with indigenous matte-painted geometric designs (TROMBI 2015: n. 192), a *scodella*/lip-cup produced locally and recovered at Monte Finestrelle (BALCO 2018), and a locally produced *skyphos* also recovered at Entella, decorated with indigenous matte-painted geometric designs (TROMBI 2015: n. 220), among others. Of particular note are locally produced *kraters*, often decorated with matte-painted indigenous designs. Such vessels have been recovered at Monte Maranfusa (CAMPISI 2003), Entella (SERRA 2016), and Salemi (BALCO 2018), amongst other places, and would have been a focal point at feasts, a physical location from which participants would have drawn commensal beverages to imbibe and socialize, further entangling the people and cultures through shared revelry.

The appearance of mixed-style vessels, such as those discussed above, occurred at a time when indigenous western Sicilian populations may have had limited access to high-quality imported commensal hardware. Consumption of imported vessels was likely confined to Greek and Phoenician colonists. Consequently, few imported vessels likely remained to be exchanged with other populations, such as the Elymi, which would have created a scarcity amongst indigenous consumers, potentially driving their role as visible signals of wealth, power, and prestige.

Scarcity, as an argument for the dearth of imported feasting vessels recovered from sixth and fifth century indigenous contexts, is supported by evidence for the repair of broken imported commensal vessels. Mended pottery is seldom published (DOOIJES, NIEUWENHUYSE 2007; 2009; PECHE-QUILICHINI *et alii* 2017), yet repaired feasting vessels are present at several indigenous Sicilian population centers including Salemi (BALCO 2012; 2018) and Morgantina (ANTONACCIO 2004; STILLWELL 1959). At Salemi, a fragment of an Attic cup recovered from indigenous contexts shows evidence of a repair (BALCO 2018). This particular mend did little to preserve the original function as a commensal vessel, yet it preserved the vessel's ability to communicate social status through its display.

Clearly, mended vessels held some significance to the people that used them. Reasons for repairing commensal vessels vary; some have interpreted the presence of mended pottery as evidence of periods of social instability and/or crisis (GULDAGER BILDE, HANDBERG 2012). Still others feel that such vessels could be heirlooms «handed down over generations until "furniture being part" of the place» (MENTESANA *et alii* 2018: 267). Such *archaika* project back to a distant past, contributing to the maintenance of communal identities (KISTLER *et alii* 2017). The presence of mended imported feasting vessels among indigenous Sicilian contexts is here interpreted as evidence of their scarcity and high cost to attain – had they been readily available to indigenous populations, broken examples would likely have been replaced by functional vessels.

The scarcity of imported commensal vessels during the sixth century BC prompted the manufacture of cups that blended Aegean, indigenous, and Phoenician forms, potting techniques, and decoration. Vessels exhibiting such blended culturally stylistic elements are here termed "mixed-style" (BALCO 2018). Potters could readily adapt their techniques to manufacture products that appeared similar to imported vessels, particularly to those who may have known of the imports, but who may not have seen them in person. In this manner, potters expressed their agency through the creation of products that blended indigenous and foreign styles. The scarcity of imports allowed potters to find their own voices, meeting demand while also indexing who they were. This synthesis of styles and techniques resulted in vessels that were not strictly indigenous, Aegean, Phoenician, or colonial. These vessels were material manifestations of the social middle ground that developed in western Sicily at that time, enveloping indigenous and colonial populations within a novel expression of cultural and material admixture.

Classifying material culture ultimately produced by individuals enmeshed in a web of complex social interaction and changing behaviors is difficult, at best. It requires contextualizing the historical, social, and political conditions as experienced by the given group, whether indigenous or colonial, and from their perspectives. The vessels indigenous Sicilians manufactured, and those they used during the Iron Age and Archaic periods, were socially charged – their display and use reflected active identity choices of the individual. To consider these objects as solely indigenous or imported is to uncritically oversimplify them.

Instead, cultural affiliations should be averted in favor of thick, objective description. In this case, classifying the vessels as mixed-style more appropriately describes them while avoiding subjective classificatory bias (BALCO 2018).

Mixed-style vessels did not suddenly appear at the Late Iron Age/Archaic transition in western Sicily. Examples can be found among other, earlier cultural contexts around the Mediterranean and elsewhere. For example, the manufacture and use of local pottery incorporating Mycenaean vessel forms and decoration has been recorded at a variety of sites, including in Turkey (VAESSEN 2016), Crete (MOUNTJOY 1990), and Italy (JUNG, MEHOFER 2013; JONES *et alii* 2014; 2021; JUNG *et alii* 2015). The manufacture of these vessels, distinct from Mycenaean imports, have been interpreted in a variety of manners employing a simultaneous blend of subjective and objective characterizations. Rather than account for these vessels objectively prior to subjectively interpreting their context of manufacture, use, and discard, such pottery is interpreted as "local Mycenaean" (VAESSEN 2016: 51-52), "Italo-Mycenaean" (JUNG, MEHOFER 2013; JONES *et alii* 2014; 2021; JUNG *et alii* 2015), or simply "hybrid" (MOUNTJOY 1990).

Among Elymian contexts in western Sicily, mixed-style vessels became regular components of feasting assemblages at the end of the Iron Age (BALCO 2012; 2018). Elymian mixed-style vessels typically took on the form of a cup or a *krater*, incorporating painted fields and bands similar to black gloss decorations found on imported vessels. These decorative fields and bands were not burnished, but were painted onto the vessel after firing, reflecting the techniques and facilities (i.e., kilns) familiar and available to the potter. This decision attests to potters enacting their agency within their own communities of practice, choosing to continue utilizing existing techniques with which they were already familiar.

Most often, mixed-style vessels were incorporated among feasting assemblages alongside indigenous cups and occasionally an imported *krater*. However, mixed-style vessels were not limited to cup forms. As stated above, several mixed-style *kraters* have been recovered from Monte Maranfusa, Entella, and Salemi. Given that the *krater* would have been the focal point of the feast, drawing everyone together to charge their cups (whether indigenous, imported, or mixed-style), perhaps it was the most impactful display of status and prestige. In these contexts, acquiring large, imported pottery vessels (such as a *krater*) would likely have been difficult during the sixth century BCE given the distance between the colonial centers and the mountaintop sites in western Sicily's interior. This difficulty would have added to the scarcity of such large, imported vessels, increasing the social capital one could display through its possession.

Conceivably, colonists in Sicily and Magna Grecia had an ample supply of imported and colonial vessels. Still, indigenous vessels have been recovered from a variety of habitation, cultic, and mortuary contexts among the Greek colonies in western Sicily (TROMBI 2003). Despite this, no mixed-style vessels have been identified among colonial Greek contexts in western Sicily. With imported and colonial sympotic hardware able to sufficiently meet the

needs of the colonists, there would have been no economic motivation to manufacture mixed-style vessels. Perhaps colonial Greek populations avoided possessing and utilizing mixed-style vessels as these vessels would have communicated an ethnic association, and perhaps even function, uncouth among the colonists. Colonial Greek populations referred to the indigenous western Sicilians as *Elymoi*, a term in ancient Greek referring to millet, a grain the Greeks considered inferior (NENCI 1989; DE ANGELIS 2006). Given colonial Greek perspectives likening indigenous western Sicilians with «under-developed barbarians» (DE ANGELIS 2006: 32), it would come as no surprise if colonial Greek populations were to eschew indigenous products, particularly in socially charged contexts such as feasts. In this case, the colonists may have expressed their own agency in forging a social identity distanced from indigenous culture.

For indigenous populations in Late Iron Age and Archaic western Sicily, the incorporation of mixed-style vessels within feasting assemblages served important social functions. Rather than continue to use exclusively vessels such as *attingitoi*, *capeduncole*, and/or *scodelle*, indigenous populations actively incorporated vessels with foreign forms and stylistic elements into their feasting assemblages and behaviors. This addition may seem insignificant relative to the broader transformation of feasting behaviors, but choosing to incorporate imported and mixed-style vessels among feasting assemblages required adjusting the hierarchy of status displays to account for these new vessels. Following their incorporation within feasting assemblages, mixed-style cups appear to have been used alongside imported vessels, suggesting a similar role exemplifying status and identity to other participants at the feast. Consequently, the possession and use of a mixed-style cup in sixth century indigenous feasts provided the individual with the appearance of social mobility, and its use may have inflated the status of the individual using it.

During the sixth century BC, the growing frequency with which mixed-style vessels appeared at feasts likely diminished the general impact associated with the use and possession of such vessels. As more and more mixed-style vessels were circulated, any status associated with them became diluted. At that point, only real imported vessels from the Aegean would have retained their status as *exotica*. Consequently, mixed-style commensal vessels were a short-lived trend demonstrating the resiliency of indigenous Sicilian culture at the local level.

Once the indigenous Elymi of western Sicily allied themselves with Athens during the second half of the fifth century BC (CHAMBERS *et alii* 1990; DE ANGELIS 2006), there was little need for mixed-style vessels. The alliance facilitated a period of economic growth for the Elymi, one in which costly imported Attic pottery became readily available for indigenous consumption. Feasting assemblages and status associations of commensal vessels transformed yet again following this political and economic alliance. At this time, locally manufactured Elymian pottery was replaced with vessels manufactured in the colonies or the Aegean. Mixed-style vessels, in vogue only a few generations earlier, were deposited in tombs as stand-ins for costly imports or discarded altogether. The transformation of commensal

assemblages attests to the gradual transformation of indigenous society and identity expression (SPATAFORA 2015) during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.

Feasts were social functions where commensal hardware visibly communicated socially, economically, and politically meaningful information. Consequently, particular feasting vessels projected the status and identity of the individual while the entire commensal assemblage, as a whole, could project the identity and status of the group partaking in the feast. The projection of these characteristics is not necessarily mutually exclusive; the two can be interlocked as some identities are afforded special status over others. Parsing status and identity from the remains of past feasts is difficult, at best; however, if a feasting assemblage consisted of both indigenous and imported vessels, then it likely expressed a socially transformed quality. Characterizing that quality or the degree to which the feasting behaviors were transformed is the next challenge. To understand variation among Elymian feasts, we need to contextualize what an Iron Age Elymian feast looked like. Unfortunately, no complete feasting assemblages have been recovered from indigenous Elymian contexts. Isolated feasting vessels removed from contextual association with their counterparts do little to aid reconstructions of feasting hardware in their contexts of use. Furthermore, no figural representations of indigenous western Sicilian feasting behaviors have yet been identified.

We must consider the varying degrees of social visibility or communicability of different functional vessel types within the context of the feast. For instance, vessels from which beverages were poured or ladled, or that were central to the feast, such as *kraters*, would have had wider exposure and visibility, than a single cup used, and likely seen, by one individual. Here, the visibility of the vessel as a centerpiece of the social feast must be considered. If the possession and use of a cup served to communicate status of the individual, then the possession and use of a *krater* may have served to communicate status in a different manner. If individuals brought their own cups to the feast, the symbolism of the cup reflected the identity and status of the individual reveler, yet the symbolism of the *krater* would have reflected the identity and status of the host or of the community.

Commensal feasts were mnemonic behaviors reinforcing status and identities at the individual and group levels. Transformations to commensal hardware attest to the exchange of ideas between diverse cultures and a redefining of the expression of identity and status. The initial appearance of Greek-style vessels, followed by the emulation of such vessels at Elymian and Phoenician centers occurred because of the transformation of symbols of power and displays of that power. Changes to the physical nature and use of commensal hardware accumulated over time. The *attingitoi* of the seventh century BC were replaced by *scodelle* and mixed-style vessels alongside few imported lip-cups in the sixth century and then by readily acquired imports in the fourth century. The transformation of the feasting assemblage required a normalization of new vessel forms leading to a reduction in the use and display of indigenous forms and an intensification of imported ones. What were once

rare, exotic imports became normal complements to the feasting assemblage before becoming standard components of the feasting kit.

Interestingly, commensal forms incorporated into indigenous feasting assemblages were almost always Aegean. Phoenician forms are distinctly absent, suggesting that the indigenous populations actively selected Aegean feasting behaviors over Levantine ones, despite sustained social and mercantile interaction with colonists at the Phoenician centers of Mozia, Panormus, and Solunto. Even at Mozia, Aegean vessel forms were manufactured alongside Levantine ones, suggesting the demand for such forms transcended broad cultural boundaries.

In this case the transformation of the feast was the result of small changes accumulating at different rates over time. This change was driven by the desire of participants to represent their status in a visible manner, at times elevating their own status and at others normalizing the status of others, and shaped by broader social, political, and economic contexts extending well beyond western Sicily. To the commensal participant, the cup represented power and status; it was an object situated in the liminal space between cultures, a space where the participant could use the cup to define their status, actual or projected, through conspicuous consumption.

Following the intensification of social interaction with foreign Greeks and Phoenicians, the adoption of elements of the Greek feast by Sicilians would come as no surprise. As colonists introduced new beverages and commensal hardware, those indigenous Sicilians with the social, political, or economic network to acquire such foreign goods would incorporate them into their own banqueting behaviors. This redefined indigenous feasting behaviors, transforming both the material and social culture of the feast, including the expression of status.

As the indigenous populations incorporated foreign vessels among their own feasting assemblages, they changed the social meanings associated with the use and possession of both indigenous and imported vessels. New status associations and assumptions developed at the local level, transforming the behavioral understanding of using indigenous or imported vessels. Initially, during the Late Iron Age and Archaic periods, the continued manufacture and use of indigenous feasting vessels could be a consequence of the scarcity of imports among indigenous communities in the mountainous interior of western Sicily. Likewise, for those who had access to imports, the choice to use an imported vessel could represent an acceptance of social interaction and acculturation with colonial populations. The possession and use of these vessels, indigenous or imported, became the catalyst for identity expression and symbolized the socio-political perspective of the user. Once the market shifted in the second half of the fifth century BC, imports became more readily accessible, transforming yet again the status value of these vessels among indigenous populations.

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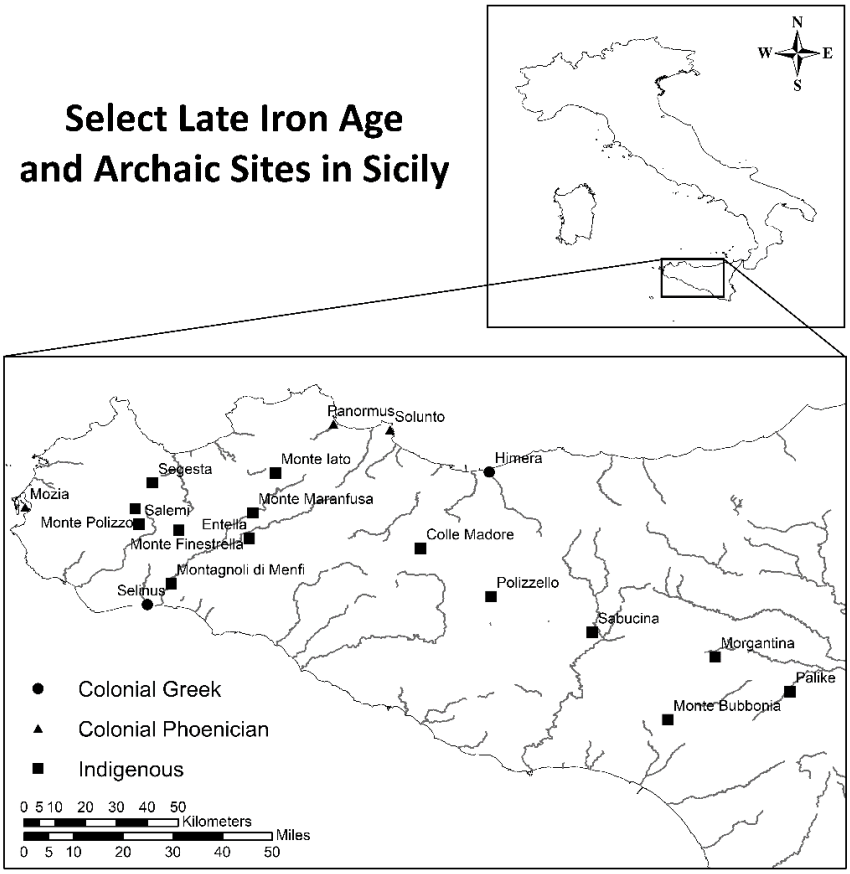

Fig. 1: Map of Sicily showing key indigenous and colonial sites discussed.

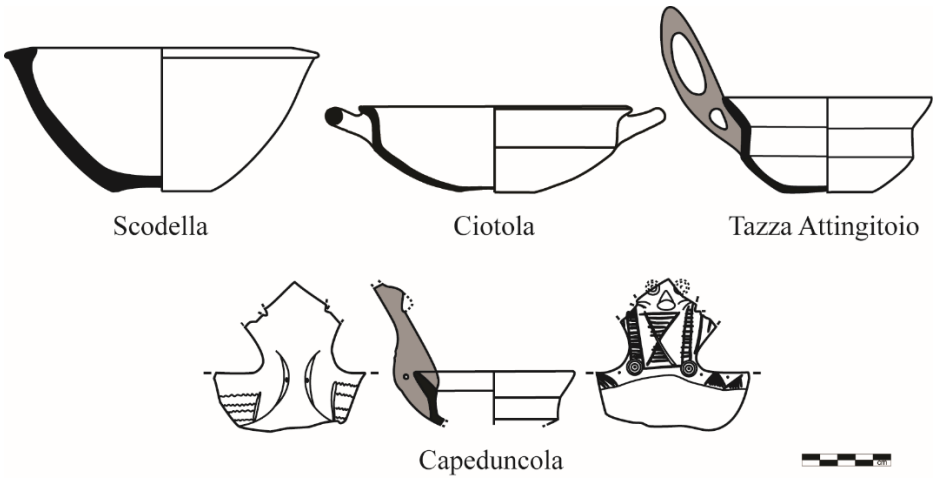

Fig. 2: Indigenous *scodelle*, *attingitoi*, and *capeduncole* vessel forms.