



MIGRATION ON RHODES DURING THE MYCENAEAN PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews issues of migration and ethnicity as far as Rhodes is concerned during the Mycenaean period. Thus a better understanding of these terms is offered by highlighting their meaning and they ways they operate. The next step is to present the migration hypotheses that affect directly Rhodes and their basic points. The analysis used here is one that derives from the burial context due to the amount of evidence that is available in sharp contrast to the limited data coming from settlements. The local characteristics, the similarities and differences with mainland Greece and more particularly with the Argolid are also discussed. The conclusion proposes that on Rhodes there seems to be a strong local character with close interaction with the Argolid. Moreover the available evidence argues against a migration and an ethnic origin of the local polulation from the Argolid during the Mycenaean period.

KEYWORDS: ethnicity, thalassocracy, chamber tomb, *emblemic insignia*

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a term evoked very frequently by archaeologists in order to explain changes in material culture. Thus any new element attested in the period and region under review is easily attributed to the arrival of new people. The degree of change is in quality and quantity analogous to how suddenly the new elements occur. In the research on Rhodes during

the Mycenaean period migration plays a prominent role. It is not only used for explaining the introduction of the Mycenaean culture to Rhodes, but for all the LB III period. Thus we will review the arguments related to the migration hypothesis associated with the Mycenaean culture on Rhodes. The ultimate focus of these questions is the ethnicity of the people on this island, with all the consequences this may have had. The origin of the

people living on Rhodes this period has been proposed to be from the Argolid with a special relationship existing between the two regions. This has haunted research conducted on Rhodes, making it a central issue. An analysis of the available burial evidence will be offered here since the settlement data are rather limited, in order to review the hypotheses proposed. Hence an attempt will be made to understand better the local practices and at the same time to compare and contrast the burial traditions of Rhodes and the Argolid (Voutsaki 1993).

MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY

Migration and ethnicity are the main issues that are directly linked with the Mycenaean culture on Rhodes. Therefore it is highly important to define and understand the meaning of these terms, the ways they operate and how they are visible in the material record.

Studies about human migration are numerous, however no unified field exists and the approaches can be characterized as interdisciplinary, conducted by sociologists, anthropologists, economists and geographers (Lewis 1982: 3-4). All look at different aspects of migration, but their common element is that the researchers review contemporary cases. Thus for a diachronic perspective or research into the past some general points can be used from these analyses, but not their totality.

Defining the term migration is not as easy as one would think, the shift of permanent or semi-permanent residence from one point to another is not enough to describe it, since the movement of a household from one house to another in the same neighborhood cannot be taken as migration (Cohen 1996; xii; Lee 1966; 49). Thus a significant spatial distance between the two points should be considered essential.

Migration studies are concerned with the causality of the human movement that should

be found in the area of origin, as well as the effect of the migrants on their destination. In archaeological explanation there is a tendency to invoke migration only for interpreting the changes in the destination area, while the reason all too often offered for the movement is population pressure. However migration should be seen rather as a social strategy and not as an automatic response to overpopulation (Anthony 1997; 22). Population density is dependent on subsistence strategies, technological capacities, resource management and cultural characteristics and idiosyncrasies of a specific region and period.

The variables that affect the decision to migrate are a result of highly selective conditions and a combination between 'push' and 'pull' factors; the first is the negative situation in the area of origin and the second is the positive condition in the destination region (Anthony 1997; 22; Lee 1966; 56). The decision-making can be individual, kin-based or more collective and can have personal or wider socio-economic causality, while rationality should not always be expected (Lee 1966; 51). Furthermore people do not respond in the same way to a specific problem, but according to various factors such as sex, age, cultural context, social status, economic conditions and belief-systems. When migration does occur it is rather as a stream and perhaps with temporal intervals, long or short, rather than broad waves that cover entire landscapes as single events in the time scale.

Ethnicity is but one of the identities a person has, often overlapping with others or being one of its dimensions. It is a product of dialectics, since at least two individuals or groups are needed to create a difference, that ultimately form ethnic groups (Eriksen 1993; 1; Gosden 1999; 190). Contacts and interactions are central in order to base an identity on what one is not, therefore the idea of 'Us' versus 'Them' is fundamental (Eriksen 1993; 9-10; Jones 1996; 66; 1997; 84).

A good start is to use the broad processual definition of ethnicity, that ethnic groups have ascribed culturally identities, which are expressed with real or assumed common culture and descent based on shared mythologies. Although much criticism has been launched at such a general expression, it is better to use it as a starting point and apply it in each social, cultural and temporal context (Jones 1997; 87).

In order to understand better the role of ethnicity in society Bourdieu and his *habitus* has been used. He believed in the constant transformation of social structure, a structuring structure and a structured structure at the same time (Bourdieu 1977; 72). The agent plays an important active role in this process by participating positively or even by resisting new conditions of whatever character. Thus it becomes clear that ethnicity is not a passive image of society, but an intersubjective belief based on the shared discourse that shapes and is shaped by everyday practices (Jones 1996; 68-9; 1997; 90).

Thus ethnicity underlines the cultural differences between groups. In that process the temporal, spatial and social variables and contexts create a number of different cases, therefore it is unlikely that there will be a one-to-one correlation between ethnicity and the entire range of cultural practices in any society (Jones 1996; 70). The manifestation of ethnicity in the material culture, or the *emblemic insignia* may vary in different social contexts as well as forms and scales of interaction, that can change through time (Barth 1969; 35; Jones 1996; 72). Thus a diachronic analysis is a necessary tool for the archaeologist to view the shifts in the expressions of ethnicity and the dimensions of the material culture that highlight it (Jones 1996; 73; 1997; 126). Nonetheless there is also a fear of treating culture as an epiphenomenal symbolic set whose only purpose is to serve the expression of ethnicity or other social identities (Jones 1997; 119-20). We should rather view material cul-

ture as both structuring and structured by ethnicity (Jones 1997; 120).

It is certain that ethnic groups have never been well formed as territorially bounded cultural units either in the present and definitely not in the past (Jones 1996; 75; 1997; 104). Ethnicity should not be projected into the past or present it as homogeneous, but it should be seen in its own historical context (Jones 1996; 75-6). Thus diversity and local characteristics should be expected in the same ethnic region. The importance of ethnicity derives from the correlation between culture, identity, social organization, the multivocality of symbols, continuity and change, whilst it is expressed by a limited set of cultural characteristics (Barth 1969; 38; Eriksen 1993; 162).

For many researchers ethnicity is cultural differentiation, closely connected to the existence of social, cultural and political resources, as well as contacts that have common characteristics (Eriksen 1993; 147). Perhaps the two fundamental points for identifying identities are the degree of interaction and the power relations between groups of people in each cultural context (Jones 1997; 128). However it is quite difficult to pinpoint in a definite way the item(s) that symbolize ethnic identity, since objects tend to have many ascribed meanings and roles depending on their context.

THE MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY HYPOTHESES FOR RHODES

It is also necessary to demonstrate the historical background in this region and the processes that were under way to the extent that we can recognize them today.

The initial problem of the Mycenaean migration hypothesis is the MBA as well as the earlier parts of the LBA which are inextricably linked to the Minoan thalassocracy. The reason for discussing this hypothesis is that it affects the whole of the region under review in the preceding period, but there is no intention of addressing this issue here.

The Minoan cultural characteristics found in this region were introduced from the MM II period (Benzi 1984; 100; Marketou 1990; 44; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1982; 181-2). The available evidence are rather limited and sporadic without allowing to have a broader view and understanding of the processes under way on Rhodes. The presence of Cretan material culture was increased with a variety of elements during the LM IA and B period (Davis 1992; 748; Furumark 1950: 177-80; Marketou 1988; 30-2; 1998; 63-5; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1982; 149-81). Many scholars tend to see the Minoan cultural influence in this region as an economic, social and political control from Crete (Niemeier and Niemeier 1999; 552-3). The similarities in pottery, architecture and small finds between Rhodes and Crete are evoked, but in a rather superficial way as Marketou (1998; 63-5) has convincingly demonstrated. Nonetheless during the LM II period more mainland pottery was found in the settlements, while in the LH IIB period Mycenaean chamber tombs appeared at Ialysos (fig.1, 1) as well as other sites in this region such as Kos (Mee 1982; 81-2; Papazoglou-Manioudaki 1982; 184). The spread of the Mycenaean culture continued in LH IIIA1 and intensified during LH IIIA2 in the whole of the South-eastern Aegean including Rhodes. Nevertheless in the LH IIIB period there is a decline on Rhodes, something that does not happen with the rest of the South-eastern Aegean. Surprisingly in LH IIIC there is an important increase of tombs used and pottery deposited at Ialysos.

The thalassocracy model has been used to highlight the role of the Minoan or Mycenaean intervention and presence since Furumark wrote (1950; 180-1; Niemeier 1984; 214). Thus the central problem of these approaches is that the analysis of the data for the Minoan cultural elements and the social, political and economic description of the structures during the LB I period are applied automatically with-

out change for LB III. In other words the Mycenaean culture on Rhodes was taken as a simple transfer of control from Crete to the Greek mainland and more specifically to the Argolid. The same applies for the migration of the Minoans to Rhodes that allegedly has taken place with the first appearance of Minoan style pottery, a process repeated in the LH IIB period with the construction of the first chamber tombs on the island.

The backbone of the ethnicity issue is the character and provenance of the pottery found on Rhodes. The initial belief in a strong local pottery character was proven false after clay analysis conducted on a large sample both from the Trianda settlement as well as the Ialysos cemetery (fig.1, 1). The quantities of Argolic pottery found at Ialysos were about 85% for LH IIIA2, almost 60% for LH IIIB and less than 10% for the LH IIIC period (Jones and Mee 1978). The strong Argolic presence made scholars suggest migration of Mycenaean from the Argolid in LH IIB and LH IIIA1 and their gradual spread throughout the rest of the island in LH IIIA2. The imports of pottery from the so-called homeland of the migrants continued in all these periods and also subsequently. Thus the broad image given is that of streams of migrants coming in each period and spreading across the whole island. Some researchers went a step further claiming this as evidence for the whole South-eastern Aegean. The recent excavations conducted at Aspropilia on Rhodes, a site close to Pylona, were supplemented by clay analysis (fig.1, 11). The results were in accordance with those conducted at Ialysos suggesting a similar tendency for importing large quantities of Argolic pottery throughout the island as well as imports from other areas (Karantzali and Ponting 2000; 230, 234). Thus Argolic imports were not confined to one settlement, Trianda, but it was most probably a common practice. However it must be stressed that this

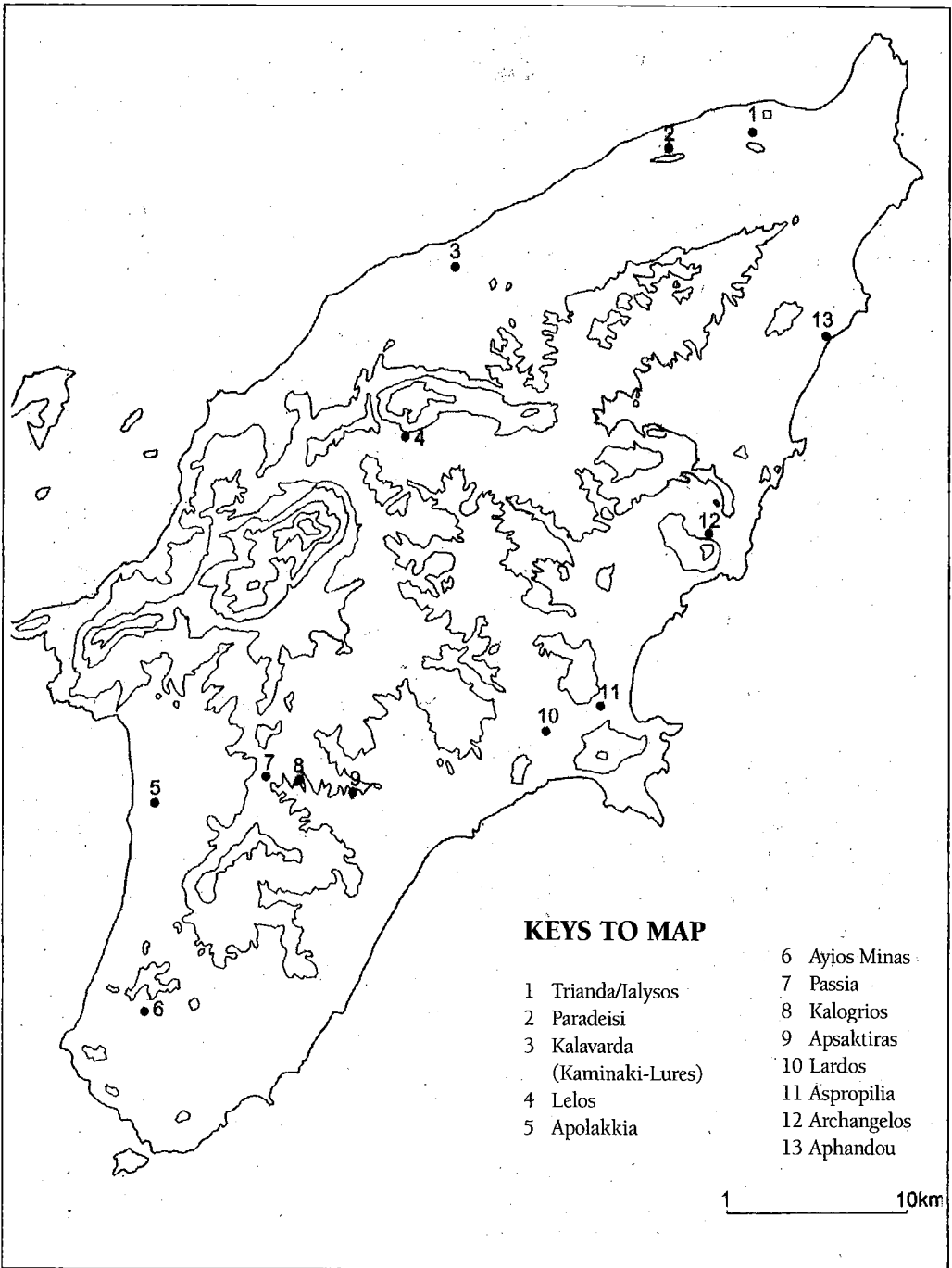


Fig. 1: Map of Rhodes (circles for cemeteries and square for settlement), contours at 200m intervals

picture, as far as the quantities of Argolic imports seen on Rhodes is concerned, has no other parallels in the South-eastern Aegean.

Interestingly enough during the LH IIIC period this process was reversed with more pots being locally produced. The cemetery of Ialysos seemed to expand, while the quantity of pottery deposited in the tombs was unparalleled in any previous period. Some of the tombs on Rhodes were re-used in this period, a phenomenon found in several cemeteries across the island (Benzi 1982; 325-33; 1992; 225, 227; Cavanagh and Mee 1978; 36-8). This picture presents a sharp contrast to the evidence of destruction of palaces, abandonment of settlements and the smaller size of the newly built tombs in mainland Greece. Thus although the pottery was locally produced and in fact with a lot of Cretan elements, it was attributed to fleeing migrants from the mainland either stopping permanently on the island (Mee 1982; 90), or on their way to Cyprus. Other scholars opposed this idea by proposing an internal migration on Rhodes from the rural sites to the central one (Benzi 1992 224-5; Macdonald 1986; 149). This was based on the decline in the number of sites and quantity of pottery recovered from sites outside Trianda/Ialysos. Thus through pottery and its provenance the history of Rhodes is reviewed, but during the LH IIIC period the criteria change. The pottery style and its provenance is unimportant, the quantity of the pottery and the increased use and re-use of tombs. This hypothesis is more importantly connected to the theory of Greek migration to Cyprus (Lakovidis 1995; 217, 222; Leriou 2002; 169-71). Rhodes is strategically placed and all migrants have to pass from this island one way or another due to its geographical position. Thus more migrants from the Greek mainland have to be present on the island during the LH IIIC period and to these people all changes of whatever character are attributed.

THE BURIAL TRADITION ON MYCENAEAN RHODES

In order to assess the relationship between Rhodes and mainland Greece, and particularly the Argolid the burial tradition of this island will be reviewed.

The cemeteries on Rhodes share one characteristic, tombs in a given cemetery tend to have the same orientation. This can be seen at Paradeisi, Kalavarda, Lelos, Apolakkia, Ayios Minas, Passia, Kalogrios, Apsaktiras, Lardos, Aspropilia and Archangelos, in other words in all the cemeteries where more than one tomb has been recovered and preserved (fig.1) (Dietz 1984 21-86; Hope Simpson and Lazenby 1973). The only exception to this pattern is Ialysos. In this cemetery tombs range from a north to south-east orientation, but it should be noted that no tomb is oriented to the west or south, revealing some kind of order.

The tombs and consequently the cemeteries have as a focus one point on the horizon. It seems that the majority of the tombs on Rhodes face to the east (south-east and north-east), as well as north. At Ialysos there is a preference for north and north-east, while in southern Rhodes east and south-east were preferred. The overall picture of Rhodes is unlike the strict preference for a common eastern orientation of tombs as seen on Crete or the trend for a south-west orientation attested in the Greek mainland (Blomberg and Henriksson 2001; 78-84, figs 6.6, 6.7). This common orientation of tombs in the same cemetery is not attested on mainland Greece as a practice, while parallels are found in the South-eastern Aegean and Anatolia since the Early Bronze Age (Wheeler 1974: 418-9). Actually the LB I cemetery at Trianda had a number of pithos, pit and cist graves with a common orientation north to south (Marketou 1988; 615-7; 1998; 61).

In addition it is common to find in the same cemetery more than one burial cluster. This happens mainly in the larger cemeteries

of the island such as Ialysos, Paradeisi, probably Kalavarda, Apolakkia, Ayios Minas and possibly Aphanadou (fig.1). Although such a practice is also common in the Greek mainland, on Rhodes the clusters are placed on different hills or at opposing edges of the settlement, as was probably the case at Paradeisi.

From the limited settlement evidence available it seems that the cemeteries are located to the north or more often to the west of the habitation area. Their distance from the cemeteries seems to range from few metres up to a kilometer. A similar trend, as far as the orientation and the distance is concerned, can be found in the Argolid, except that the variation is far greater (Cavanagh and Mee 1990; 64).

As for the diachronic use of cemeteries, Ialysos was the earliest one founded in LH IIB. In LH IIIA1 six cemeteries were in use, mainly in the northern part of the island with the addition of Apsaktiras (fig.1, 9) in the southern part and perhaps Lardos (fig.1, 10). During LH IIIA2 there is an expansion of cemeteries used to 28, which decreased to 25 in LH IIIB. During LH IIIC 20 cemeteries were in use, slightly less than in the previous period, but we certainly do not see the same degree of settlement and cemetery abandonment as in mainland Greece. In this period it is interesting to note that in the southern part of the island the settlement pattern seems more or less unchanged from LH IIIA2 until LH IIIC, whereas in the north there is more abandonment of settlement, especially during the LH IIIC period. This is even stronger in the area close to Ialysos, perhaps indicating that there might have been some kind of limited internal migration that in this case could be called nucleation.

The tombs are structurally canonical, but they are smaller in size than those found in mainland Greece. Interestingly enough tombs at Ialysos become larger over time reaching their largest size in LH IIIC. This trend is ex-

actly the opposite of the development seen in the mainland, where tombs became smaller in time. Especially when one is considering the LH IIIC cemetery at Perati, the contrast is important (Iakovidis 1970B; 11). Moreover the tombs in the cemeteries outside Ialysos tend to be slightly larger than the ones in the largest cemetery on Rhodes. As a whole the preference for a rectangular shaped chamber is overwhelming. Structural arrangements in the interior of the chambers are not uncommon such as pits or benches, but they are not found as frequently as in the mainland. Interestingly enough stepped dromoi are found at Ialysos and Aspropilia. In southern Rhodes there is one of the largest concentration of tombs with side-chambers. There are four of them at Passia, Apsaktiras and Aspropilia, compared with about 30 in the whole Mycenaean world (fig.1) (Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1987; 147-8). These three cemeteries are also geographically close revealing a local characteristic. Moreover at Ialysos we have the extremely rare occurrence of two tombs having antechambers (Benzi 1992; 228). It should be also noted that in cemeteries pit or cist graves rarely occur, while no tholos tomb has been recovered so far on the island. Nevertheless the diversity that exists and the characteristics that are present highlight canonical Mycenaean cemeteries with some strong local features.

It may be significant that the breaking of pottery in the dromos is uncommon at Ialysos, while it is rarely reported in the rest of the cemeteries. Nonetheless the recently excavated Aspropilia cemetery casts doubts on this point since all six tombs had broken pottery in their dromoi that chronologically corresponded to the deposited pots (Karantzali 2001; 21-2).

As for the burial inside the tomb, at Ialysos the characteristic is for rather few dead to be deposited when compared to the Argolid. There is also a strong tendency to retain the primary burial and for the deceased to be

placed in an extended position with the head close to the stomion. Cremation is sporadically attested and apart from an uncertain case at Kaminaki-Lures dating to LH IIIA2 (fig. 1, 3) (Benzi 1992; 418; Mee 1982; 53), all the rest were found at Ialysos in tombs used during LH IIIC.

In the cemeteries outside Ialysos the popularity of secondary treatment is clear, since it is attested in all of the cemeteries on the island. Secondary treatment entails the disarticulation of the skeleton of the deceased along with all the rituals performed as part of this process. This activity highlights continuity and a very consistent practice for the deceased through a more frequent re-opening of the tomb and re-arrangement inside. In my opinion it reveals a closer and more frequent interaction between the living and the dead, something that highlights the importance of the deceased in the everyday conduct of life in the local context.

Inside the tombs clay vessels and small finds were placed by the deceased. The quantity of pottery at Ialysos is very high in LH IIIA2, but severely decreased during LH IIIB. Nonetheless in LH IIIC there is an extraordinary increase in the amount of pottery deposited in tombs. In the sites outside Ialysos yet again a peak is reached in LH IIIA2 and a decrease is attested for the LH IIIB period. However there is no further decrease in LH IIIC, as some scholars have suggested, but rather a stability in the quantity of the pottery placed in the tombs. Moreover if one takes into account the decrease in the number of cemeteries in use during this period, it seems that the tendency to deposit more pots was followed in the sites outside Ialysos as well. As for the pottery types, at Ialysos, jars and unguent containers were preferred, while in the rest of the sites on Rhodes open vessels were particularly popular. Nonetheless there is the same preference as far as oil containers, jugs and ritual vases were concerned.

As for the small finds it is particularly interesting that Ialysos was rich in goods made out of semi-precious stones, silver, gold and bronze. Moreover there was a tendency for more silver items and bronze tools to be buried during the LH IIIC period. In the sites outside Ialysos there are fewer small finds both in quantity and diversity in the same tomb and even cemetery. Special mention should be made of the rarity of figurines in tombs, which has long been underlined and seems to be true for the whole of the South-eastern Aegean as far as the burial context is concerned. Apart from the fact that a similar situation exists in other regions of mainland Greece, such as Attica and Achaia (Cavanagh 1998; 109-10), the limited evidence from settlement suggest a more frequent presence of figurines with all its symbolic value (Benzi 1999; 278-81; Pilali-Papasteriou 1998; 44-5). Therefore premature conclusions about the local religious beliefs should be treated with caution and limited only to the burial context.

CONCLUSIONS

As discussed in the theoretical part about migration there must be a causality for people moving from one place to another. There seems no adequate reason to suggest waves of migrations from the Argolid to any place. This is further emphasized when considering the distance and organization that such a movement would need to reach Rhodes.

Returning to the identity of the people buried in the tombs, I would like to stress that methodologically as much as theoretically it is misleading to equate ethnicity with pottery style or clay provenance. Thus the whole burial context was analyzed in order to compare the local tradition with mainland paradigms.

What we can say is that there is a tendency on Rhodes to present tombs spatially as equal in cemeteries, having the same orientation. Perhaps they represent an egalitarian and

most probably idealistic image of the local society. The orientation of the cemetery in relation to the settlement is similar to the Argolid, however the preference for a common eastern or northern orientation has no exact parallels in the mainland or Crete. Perhaps they are highlighting the presence of some older beliefs that continued to be active, carrying the same or similar symbolic meaning. Furthermore the fondness for small rectangular chamber tombs, and the development of tomb size from smaller to larger is a local characteristic. This undermines the idea of Mycenaean noblemen coming in LH IIB and IIIA1, when offerings were rather few and no impressive funerary tombs such as tholoi were constructed. The same applies to the relatively few burials deposited and the preference at Ialysos for primary burial in contrast to the secondary treatment found in the rest of the cemeteries on Rhodes. The deposited offerings reveal a strong local character that remains, with small fluctuations through the periods, stable and with many differences to the pattern seen in the Argolid. In fact the closest parallels for the type of pottery deposited are found at Pylos, although of course I do not argue that the people buried in the Rhodian cemeteries were from Messenia. Especially during LH IIIC when destructions are found in the Greek mainland, on Rhodes it is either a period of stability or of

further development, with a continuation of the local burial tradition.

The abundance of Argolic provenance pottery both in the settlements and the tombs underlines its widespread use at Ialysos and elsewhere on Rhodes. This rejects, in my opinion, the hypothesis of a few noble Mycenaean elite who were the elite and exercised political or social control over the locals. Moreover it means that no special symbolic significance is attributed to the Argolic pottery when deposited in tombs. Thus it seems rather unlikely that only the provenance of pottery functioned as emblematic insignia of the people's ethnicity.

Summarizing I would like to add that I do not reject the movement of a limited number of people in any one period, inside the island or outside of it. What I suggest is that it did not have a vital role in the local socio-political development. From the available burial evidence diversity is the picture seen among the cemeteries on Rhodes, but a number of common elements reveal a socio-cultural unity, if not a political one. The relationship between Rhodes and mainland Greece, and particularly the Argolid, might have been close as far as exchanges were concerned. However there is no positive evidence in the burial context to suggest migration or large scale population movement from the mainland to Rhodes.

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