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TAG 2017: Maritime Entanglement in the Aegean islands (Cyclades) in the Bronze Age long-term perspective

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Overview – Space and time



- Cyclades – largest archipelago of the Aegean sea
- From the start of the Early Bronze Age/EBA (3300 BCE) to its end (2200 BCE)
- Well-studied region
- Rich archaeological landscape in EBA



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Seascape perspectives

- The sea as a central space in the culture of maritime communities
- *“blanketed with history and imbued with names, myths and legends”* (Cordell 1989)
- Sea not just an economic space
- Social determination, communities have a choice to pursue a maritime way of life (Vavouranakis 2011)
- A seascape is:
 - The sea and everything inhabiting it
 - Human constructions to interact with the sea (boats, harbours, material culture)
 - Material culture referencing the sea (motifs, scenes etc.)
 - The land with which the seascape is brought onto



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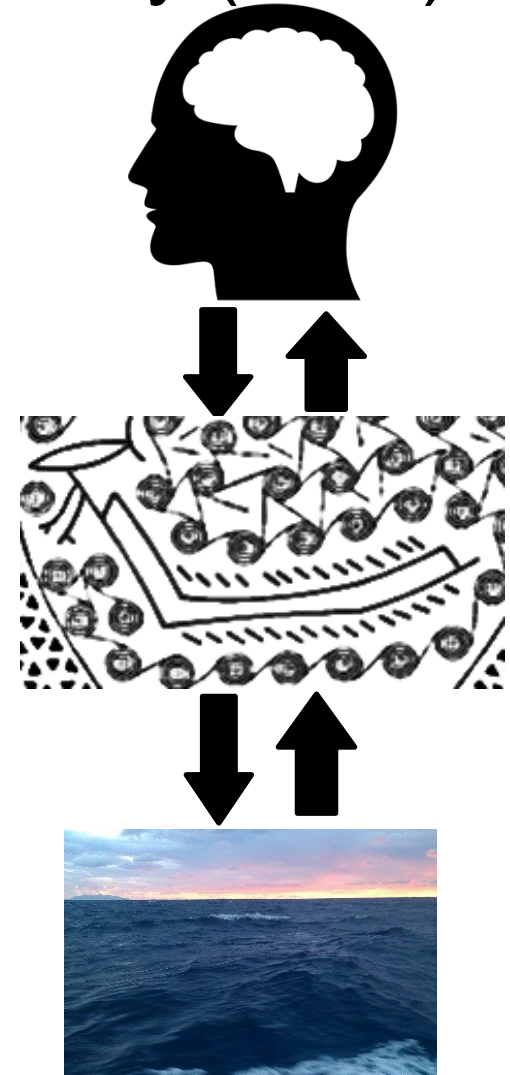
“Seascape dialogues”

- “Seascape dialogues” denotes human-seascape interaction – a two-way process.
- Interaction can come in several forms:
 - Seafaring
 - Habitation of a coastal zone
 - Consumption of seafood
 - Use of sea-related materials in settlement and burial contexts



Representation of Seascapes and Material Engagement Theory (MET)

- Representation can come in several forms; boats, marine life, the sea itself
- MET sees the mind as embodied – thinking happens in the interaction of brain and body with the environment (Malafouris 2013)
- Material culture takes on a greater significance in helping people interact with their world
- Material culture can be indicative of the extended human mind of prehistoric maritime communities





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Metarepresentation and intersubjectivity

- Metarepresentation the rendering of culturally constructed **concepts** through images, which have a deeper meaning than the sum total of the image.
- We cannot know what the meaning is, but we can say when these depictions mean something due to the frequency of their occurrence.
- For concepts to have potency (such as seasapes) they require the participation of a large section of society.
- This intersubjectivity is entangling, though the entanglement breaks down once the conditions surrounding the generation and reproduction of concepts is altered.



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Seascape imagery in practice: Early Bronze Age I (3300 – 3000 BCE) (Pelos-Lakkoudhes culture)



Melian obsidian



Raw marble



Distribution network of marble vessels (after Broodbank 2000)

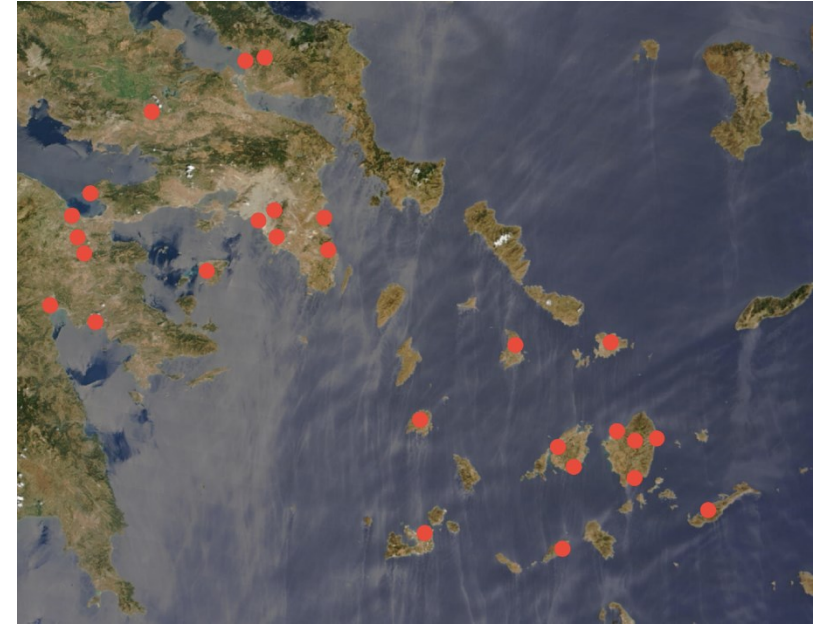
- Long range seafaring and sea interaction not so strong in EB I, though resource procurement of marble and obsidian and networks of marble vessels (mostly inter-Cycladic)
- Mix of inland and coastal sites
- Small-scale settlement
- Mortuary practices the key (*archaeologically detectable*) expression of identity during this period.
- No representation of sea-related themes in material culture.

Seascape imagery in practice:

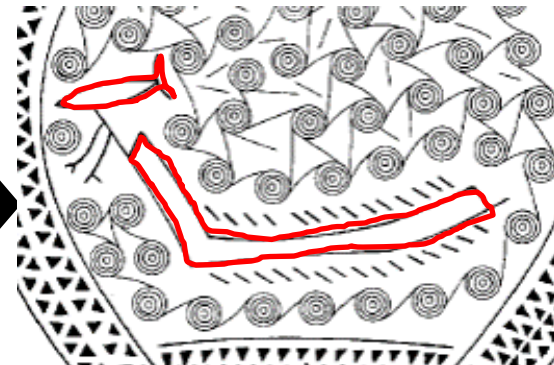
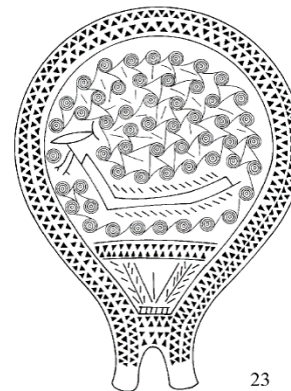
Early Bronze Age I-II (3000 – 2400 BCE)

(Kampos; Keros-Syros and Kastri cultures)

- Period of an 'international spirit', widespread mobility of seafaring of various island and coastal communities
- Advent of some larger communities, some by the coast
- Mortuary practices the key (*archaeologically detectable*) expression of identity during this period.
- Appearance of sea-related matter in material culture, though is the minority
- Emergence of a sea-faring elite based on the deployment of material culture (Broodbank 2000)



Findspots of Cycladic Frying pans (after Broodbank 2000)

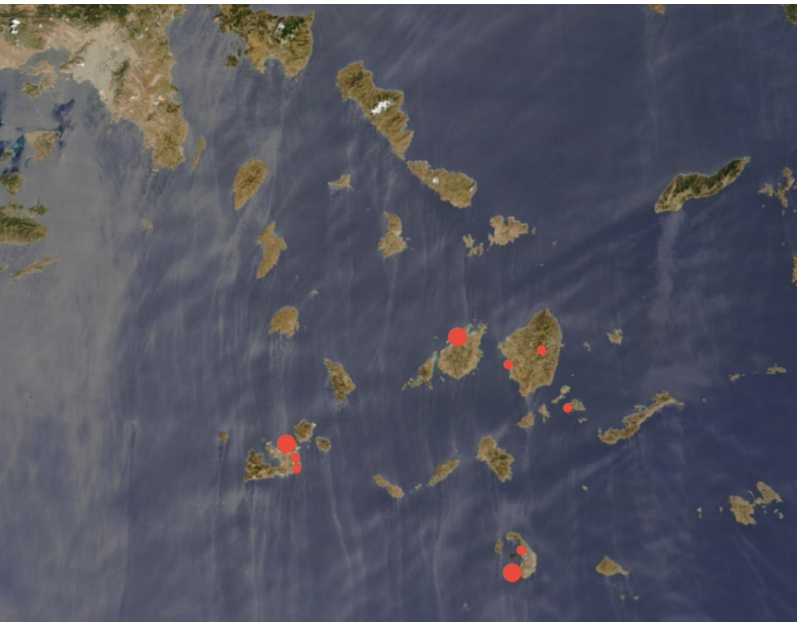


After Hekman 1994



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Seascape imagery in practice: Early Bronze Age III (2400 – 2200 BCE)



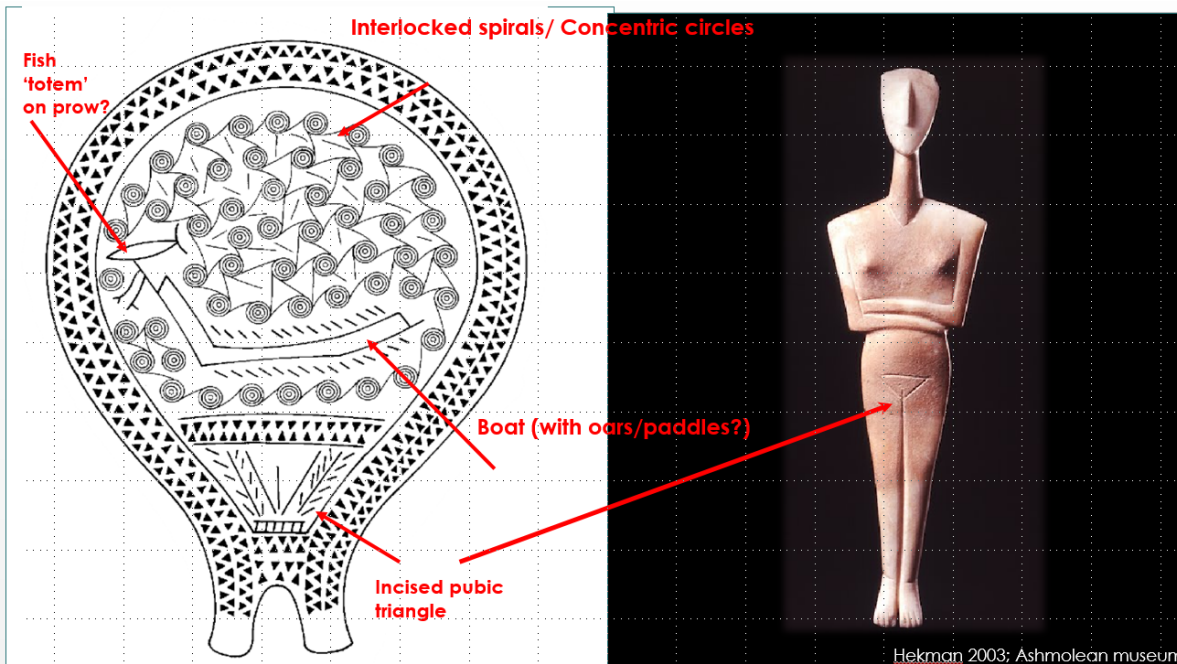
Sites of the EB III period (after Broodbank 2000)



- Instability and depopulation
- Appearance of sailing ships in iconography (Crete)
- Disappearance of cemeteries
- Beginnings of nucleation at one centre on islands (Phylakopi/Melos; Akrotiri/Thera)
- Seascape representation decreases dramatically in the islands

Discussion: Maritime (dis)entanglement? (1)

- Long range seafaring and sea interaction not so strong in EB I.
 - Mortuary practices the key (*archaeologically detectable*) expression of identity during this period
- Sea-related imagery enters the syntax at the end of EBI and grows in EB II.



- During EB II there is an explosion of long-range contacts and the representation of longboats.
- Sea-related imagery enters into mortuary expression, though is found in a minority of tombs – a prestige marker?
- Height of entanglement



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Discussion: Maritime (dis)entanglement? (2)

- In EB III conditions change
 - Appearance of sailing boats from Eastern Mediterranean
 - Climate change
 - Shifting communication networks
 - Depopulation
- Changing conditions brought about the end of the significance of seafaring ideology in the Cyclades
 - Disentanglement of Cycladic communities with the sea
 - Reorientation of the relationship in later times



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Social determinism

- Pattern does not apply for all the Cyclades.
- Communities could reject a maritime way of life and pursue alternative strategies.
- Skarkos on Ios and Markiani on Amorgos EB II focus on agriculture, despite good positions to take advantage of maritime contact.
- Maritime entanglement is a *social choice* rather than an inevitability.



Skarkos on Ios



Markiani on Amorgos

Thanks for your time!

