

A MEDITERRANEAN CONNECTION.
NUOVI DATI SULLE RELAZIONI TRA MALTA E CRETA AGLI INIZI DELL'ETÀ
DEL FERRO

DAVIDE TANASI

ABSTRACT

The topic of the relations between the Maltese Archipelago and the Aegean in the Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age has been neglected due to the scant evidence available. Recent research on unpublished pottery coming from several Middle and Late Bronze Age Maltese sites, held at the National Museum of Archaeology of Valletta, offered new data for the interpretation of a Mediterranean connection that linked Malta and Crete in the Early Iron Age. In this paper three classes of objects, extraneous to the local tradition and probably of Cretan derivation, coming from the excavations of the Borg in-Nadur temple and from the Borg in-Nadur culture layers of the Bahrija village, are discussed.

The first object, a clay model of local fabric resembling a circular plan building, can be related to the well-known Cretan production of the cylindrical models, developed between the Late Minoan and Late Geometric period. The second is a fragment of an imported *kalathos* with simple geometric painted decoration that can be compared with several examples of the Early and Middle Geometric production of the Messara plain. The last case is represented by three knobs related to conical lids, of local fabric, that can be interpreted as local imitation of the conical lid with finial knobs popular in the Cnossian necropoleis in the Early and Middle Geometric period.

This new evidence that shows a chronological and geographical coherency informs us about a hitherto unknown relation between Malta and Crete, by the end of the IXth century and the beginning of the VIIIth century BC, that can be tentatively explained through the agency of Phoenician middlemen, operating in Crete from at least the Xth century BC, and very interested in the Maltese islands, as the subsequent colonization of the mid VIIIth century will testify.