

MYCENAEAN GREECE, MEDITERRANEAN
COMMERCE, AND THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY

The impact of long-distance exchange on the developing cultures of Bronze Age Greece has been a subject of debate since Schliemann's discovery of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. In *Mycenaean Greece, Mediterranean Commerce, and the Formation of Identity*, Bryan E. Burns offers a new understanding of the effects of Mediterranean trade on Mycenaean Greece by considering the possibilities represented by the traded objects themselves in their Mycenaean contexts. A range of imported artifacts was distinguished by their precious material, uncommon style, and foreign writing, signaling their status as tangible evidence of connections beyond the Aegean. The consumption of these exotic symbols spread beyond the highest levels of society, and they functioned as symbols of external power sources. Burns argues that the consumption of exotic items thus enabled the formation of alternate identities and the resistance of palatial power.

Bryan E. Burns is assistant professor of classical studies at Wellesley College. He is the author of numerous articles on Bronze Age Greece and has been awarded fellowships and fieldwork grants from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-11954-2 — Mycenaean Greece, Mediterranean Commerce, and the Formation of Identity

Bryan E. Burns

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)



MYCENAEAN GREECE,
MEDITERRANEAN
COMMERCE, AND THE
FORMATION OF IDENTITY

Bryan E. Burns

Wellesley College



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
 It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521119542

© Bryan E. Burns 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2010

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Burns, Bryan E., 1970–

Mycenaean Greece, Mediterranean commerce, and the formation
 of identity / Bryan E. Burns.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-11954-2

1. Greece – Commerce – History. 2. Mediterranean Region –
 Commerce – History. 3. National characteristics.

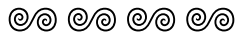
I. Title.

HF375.B87 2010

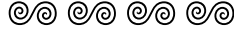
938'.01 – dc22 2009035011

ISBN 978-0-521-11954-2 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in
 this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
 or will remain, accurate or appropriate.



To C.K.P.

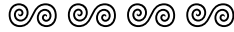


CONTENTS

<i>List of Tables and Illustrations</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
INTRODUCTION: EFFECTS OF TRADE	1
Consumer Cultures	3
1 AEGEAN AGENCY IN MEDITERRANEAN EXCHANGE	8
Exchange in the Bronze Age Mediterranean	9
Assessing Individual Imports	20
Acts of Consumption and the Materialization of Ideology	29
An Overview of Imported Objects in Mycenaean Greece	36
2 BECOMING MYCENAEAN: DEFINITIONS OF CIVILIZATION, STYLE, AND ART	41
Foreign Elements in the Monuments at Mycenae	43
Ethnicity of the Shaft Grave Treasures and People	51
The Institutionalization of Mycenaean Artifacts as Greek Art	57
Internal and External Perspectives	66
3 IMPORTS IN THE EARLY MYCENAEAN PERIOD	73
Social Context of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae	80

CONTENTS

	A Prehistory of Foreign Relations	86
	Exotic Objects in the Shaft Graves	88
	Ivory in the Shaft Graves and in Early Mycenaean Crafting	95
	Early Imports Outside the Shaft Graves	100
4	CRAFTING POWER THROUGH IMPORT CONSUMPTION	105
	Perspectives on Kingly Power	107
	Instability and Independence within Centralized Systems	111
	Limitations of Palace Economies	116
	Local Networks Employing Foreign Goods	119
5	IMPORT CONSUMPTION IN PALATIAL CENTERS	130
	Imports and Textual References at Pylos	132
	The Erasure of Foreign Symbols at Thebes	135
	Religious Associations in the Citadel at Mycenae	139
	An Enigmatic Group Outside the Citadel at Mycenae	147
	Utilitarian and Decorative Imports at Tiryns	156
6	FUNERARY CONSUMPTION AND COMPETITION IN THE ARGOLID	163
	Site Hierarchy and Regional Competition	166
	Individual and Communal Identities	171
	Late Helladic IIIA Tombs as Places of Celebration	179
	Continued and Concentrated Tomb Use in Late Helladic IIIB	186
7	CONCLUSIONS: FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC IN THE MYCENAEAN WORLD	191
	<i>References</i>	197
	<i>Index</i>	241



LIST OF TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Tables

- 1.1 Approximate chronology for the Greek Bronze age, 14
- 5.1 Total count of motifs preserved on ivory objects found in the West House Group, 152

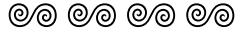
Illustrations

- 1.1 Map of Aegean and Mediterranean regions, 10
- 1.2 Locations of Late Bronze Age Mediterranean shipwrecks and extra-Aegean finds of Mycenaean pottery and “Minoan-style” frescoes, 11
- 1.3 Amenhotep III faience plaque fragment, Myc Exc 68–1000, 21
- 1.4 Ivory relief figures, 27
- 1.5 Distribution of imported items in Late Helladic contexts, 37
- 2.1 Gell’s illustration of the Lion Gate, 47
- 2.2 The Lion Gate, 48
- 2.3 The Prudhoe Lion, 49
- 2.4 Gold mask from Shaft Grave IV, 53
- 2.5 The Warrior Vase, 55

- 2.6 “Exhibition at Athens of the Mycenæ Treasures Discovered by Dr. Schliemann,” 59
- 2.7 Gold mask from Shaft Grave V among the paintings of the *Iliou Melathron*, 61
- 2.8 Faience figurine (NMA 4573) bearing the cartouche of Amenhotep III, 67
- 3.1 Reconstruction of gold ornaments from Shaft Grave III as decoration of an Egyptian sarcophagus, 77
- 3.2 Significant sites of the Late Bronze Age Aegean, with a detail of the Argolid, 80
- 3.3 Plan of the Prehistoric Cemetery area at Mycenae, with Early Mycenaean tombs in black and later constructions shaded in gray, 81
- 3.4 Restoration of Shaft Grave Circle A within the Late Helladic IIIB citadel, 84
- 3.5 Sketch and section drawing of the altar above Shaft Grave IV, 85

TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3.6 Rock crystal pyxis (NMA 8638) from Shaft Grave Omicron, 91 | 5.5 Plan of the citadel at Tiryns; detail of the LH IIIB Unterburg with the location of Building VI, 159 |
| 3.7 Wooden containers from Shaft Grave V, 93 | 5.6 Reconstruction of the alabaster frieze from the Tiryns Megaron, 161 |
| 3.8 Vessels of African origin and Minoan reworking, 95 | 6.1 Reconstructed landscape of the Late Bronze Age Argolid, 167 |
| 3.9 Shaft Grave ivory pyxides (NMA 210), 101 | 6.2 Hierarchical map of the Mycenaean settlements in the Argolid, 169 |
| 3.10 Glass objects from Chamber Tomb 516, 103 | 6.3 Presence and absence of imported objects among settlement and funerary excavations in the northeast Peloponnese, 171 |
| 4.1 Locations of Linear B administrative centers on Crete and mainland Greece, 109 | 6.4 Carved elephant tusk (NMA 2916) from Mycenae Chamber Tomb 55, 174 |
| 4.2 Social hierarchy in the Linear B archives, 113 | 6.5 Drawing of the carved tusk (NMA 2916) from Mycenae Chamber Tomb 55, 175 |
| 4.3 The palatial complex at Pylos, 121 | 6.6 Gold ring (NMA 2854) from Mycenae Chamber Tomb 55, 177 |
| 4.4 Structures in the citadel of Mycenae, 123 | 6.7 Locations of funerary activity at Mycenae, 181 |
| 4.5 Stone mold (NMA 1018) from Mycenae, 127 | |
| 5.1 Plan of the Citadel House Area at Mycenae, 141 | |
| 5.2 Glass and faience ornaments from the Tsountas' House Shrine, 145 | |
| 5.3 The West House Group at Mycenae, 149 | |
| 5.4 Eponymous relief (NMA 7525) from the House of Sphinxes at Mycenae, 155 | |



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has developed from my University of Michigan dissertation (1999) but has grown to encompass an expanded geographical scope and more flexible terms of interpretation. Given its long period of evolution, I have benefited from additional time and stimulus found in museums and libraries, at conferences and lectures, and through class discussions and discoveries in the field. Many colleagues offered feedback and support in these many venues, namely John Bennet, Brendan Burke, Eric Cline, Carol Dougherty, Ernestine Elster, Kate Gilhuly, Tricia Gilson, Eleni Hasaki, Peter Holliday, George Korres, Ken Lapatin, Susan Lupack, Camilla MacKay, Kristina Milnor, Sarah Morris, Dimitris Nakassis, John Papadopoulos, Paul Rehak, Rob Schon, Cynthia Shelmerdine, Kim Shelton, Susan Sherratt, Ray Starr, and Molly Swetnam-Burland. I also thank the staff of the American School of Classical Studies, in particular Jack Davis and Maria Pilali; my work has also been made possible by the assistance of Nicholas Kaltsas, Eleni Morati, and Kostas Paschalidis of the National Museum in Athens.

Throughout the phases of this project, and many others, John Cherry has been a source of learned guidance, practical assistance, and friendly counsel. Financial support for additional research was provided by the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, the University of Southern California, and Wellesley

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

College. The production of this book was made possible by the editorial assistance of Shana Meyer and Keller Kaufman-Fox and by the careful management of Beatrice Rehl and Amanda Smith at Cambridge University Press.

My archaeological studies grew out of an interest in history that I share with my father and a love of travel that is my mother's gift. This book, like all my recent endeavors, has been strengthened by the enthusiasm, support, and companionship of my husband, Cashman Kerr Prince.