

Feeding the Community: Women's Participation in Communal Celebrations, Western Sicily (Eighth–Sixth Centuries BC)

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Abstract In the study of the Sicilian Iron Age, most of the works devoted to their main communal ritual spaces—the so-called “acropolis”—have stuck mainly to describe both their architectures and those artifacts registered in them. However, in the realization of this practice, those objects traditionally considered as imported or *exceptional* have been emphasized. The return of this selective practice is that other artifacts could not be considered as *extraordinary*, but being also present in these spaces and, therefore, with a certain role in these celebrations, they have long been dismissed and undervalued. This is the case of all those objects that are directly related to the domestic sphere and, particularly, with those activities usually associated with the women's world, such as cooking pots or loom weights. The invisibility of these objects relative to the domestic sphere and, above all, to the feminine sphere has led to validate and perpetuate a biased glaze over these ceremonies where only male elite actors could participate. In response to these androcentric and classist discourses, the main aim of this paper is to recover the agency of certain women in the development of these communal celebrations and to show their importance in the construction and representation of a sense of community that was created constantly through these ceremonies through the study of these long-forgotten household objects.

Keywords Sicily · Community · Ritual · Gender · Power · Colonialism

Introduction

Despite the importance that postcolonial and gender approaches have achieved in the study of the Ancient Mediterranean in the last decade (see, among others, van

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Dommelen 1997, 1998, 2006; Antonaccio 2001, 2005; Delgado 2008a, b; Delgado and Ferrer 2007, 2011a, b; Whitehouse 2013), most of the historical and archaeological narratives about Sicily during the first millennium BC still maintain a traditional perspective of analysis founded on colonialist and androcentric discourses. These narratives, and especially those starting at the end of the eighth century BC when the first communities of Phoenicians and Greek migrants settled in the island,¹ have traditionally stressed the agency of the colonists and belittled the ability for action of the local Sicilian people.

+These traditional discourses about Sicily maintain a picture in which the colonists are the only possible actors of any encounter and confrontation, especially of the historical development of the island. On the contrary, local people in these narratives—when not completely absent—have been predestined to turn into, following the term coined by Spivack (1988), mere “historiographical subjects.” In other words, they are imagined as a passive, static, and monolithic entity within this Sicilian colonial entanglement.

This local passivity appears in most of the studies devoted to the Sicilian colonies, both Greek and Phoenician, in which local people who inhabited them are mostly represented as mere tools used under the desire of the colonists in order to achieve a successful development for their new diasporic and/or colonial installations. In these readings, on the one hand, male natives are usually conceived of as manpower, either as slaves or freemen (Dunbabin 1948: 192; Finley 1968: 13; Domínguez Monedero 1989: 11; Serrati 2000: 10; Albanese Procelli 2003: 137). On the other hand, native women are turned into sexual subjects, being relegated only to the sexual satisfaction of the colonizers and the demographic reproduction of the colonies, mostly in their first generations (Finley 1968: 13; Domínguez Monedero 1989: 11; Albanese Procelli 2003: 137).

Besides this interpretation characterized by the passivity of local people in the development of the colonies, it is noteworthy that in the study of Sicilian local contexts, where their agency should be observed more clearly, the ability for action of native people is again relatively hidden behind the cloak of acculturation or, most usual in Sicilian studies, hellenization.² Therefore, most of the narratives that engage with local contexts still explain the development, change, or even action of Sicilian native communities exclusively from the perspective of their *outstanding* nearby colonies and, in particular, from the unidirectional relationship that the latter established with them. In fact, in these discourses, colonies—and, more explicitly, male colonizers—are the only actors that enable local communities to achieve a higher cultural, social, political, economic, technological, and ritual level. That is a similar grade of development, although never the same, as the one held by the colonies that surrounded them.

¹ The first levels of the Phoenician colony of Mozia are dated to the mid eighth century BC (Nigro 2010, 2014: 492–493), while the foundation of the first Aegean foundations in Sicily—for example Naxos (Pelagatti 1977; Lentini 1987: 416–422), Megara Hyblaea (Bérard 1983), or Zancle (Pelagatti 1980–1981: 697–701)—is dated to the end of the eighth century BC.

² It is noteworthy that although in both colonial studies, Greek and Phoenician, native people have been subordinated to the agency of the colonizers, when the focus of interest is moved to Sicilian native contexts, the colonial preeminence is completely submitted to a hellenocentric perspective or *hellenization* or to the detriment of a Phoenician perspective or *orientalization* (Ferrer 2012: 3).

Following from this narrative, it is also assumed that local male elites are the only members of native communities who could have agency, although always dependent on their relationships with the surrounding colonies. The ability for action of these local dominant groups is mostly enabled through the monopolization of the access to some exotic or colonial goods—either produced in Sicilian colonies or just arrived to the island by means of their harbors—and their later distribution among the rest of the community. This model based on a system of prestige good economies had its peak in the periodic celebration of communal ceremonies, in particular in those carried out in the so-called *acropolis*. In these events, these male elites would exhibit and legitimate their power publically, while the rest of the community—all of the women, as well as elders, children, and those men who did not belong to the elite—would display their dependence and submission to them (Albanese Procelli 2003, 2006; Hodos 2006, 2008). In summary, these traditional narratives present a native social and political setting where only a few men have agency—an agency completely dependent on their control over some colonial goods and, consequently, on their relationship with the colonies—while the rest of the community is still imagined as a homogeneous, static, and passive entity (Ferrer 2013: 462–465).

However, the detailed analysis of some local contexts shows us a different scene, where local people have agency of their own and their capacity for action is not only limited to their assumed male elites (Ferrer 2012, 2013). In this regard, the analysis of the acropolis, as well as the communal ritual events carried out on them periodically, represents a suitable locus of study to recover the voice of those who have been traditionally silenced in archaeological and historical narratives devoted to Sicily during the first millennium BC. The suitability of these communal places devoted to the periodical celebration of ritual ceremonies arises, on the one hand, to the considerable amount of available archaeological data³ and, on the other, to the important significance that the acropolis—as well as the periodic celebrations carried out in them—held among the Sicilian local people (Ferrer 2013).

The aim of this paper is threefold. Firstly, I want to reveal how in these communal celebrations local people—understanding them in all their social and gender complexity—built and materialized a sense of community and, simultaneously, constructed, negotiated, and legitimized the power and gender dynamics that existed within that community. Secondly, I aim to recover the voice, as well as the centrality, of some women in the periodic celebrations carried out in the acropolis through the study of objects frequently belittled in traditional archaeological narratives—such as cooking wares and textile implements—for their close association with domesticity and, by extension, the feminine sphere. Thirdly, I aim to stress the continuity that exists between the domesticity and the ritual sphere, bringing to light the strong bonds that in these communal ceremonies were woven between these ritual events and the daily world.

To achieve this triple aim, first, I will briefly analyze the acropolis, the periodic ritual celebrations carried out in them, and the meaning that these communal places had for

³ In this regard, it is worth pointing out that most of the archaeology of local Sicily during the first millennium BC has been focused on the study of those spaces that have been traditionally associated with power representations (for example, city walls or the same acropolis) in detriment of others that have been usually considered as unrelated or secondary to it, such as domestic contexts. In spite of this traditional poor attention to domestic contexts, it should be noted that in the last decades, some Sicilian indigenous houses have been published (see, for example, Albanese Procelli and Procelli 1988; Spatafora 2003; Mühlenbock 2008, 2015).

the local Sicilian people. Secondly, I will stress the centrality of one of the most important practices performed in these communal ceremonies, in particular feasting. Finally, I will explore the role of certain women in these celebrations carried out in the acropolis, highlighting their importance in the construction of the community.

Sicilian Acropolis: Communal Ritual Spaces in Sicily During the First Millennium BC

From the end of the second millennium BC and throughout the first millennium BC, native Sicilian populations mostly settled on hilltops. These settlements were placed at strategic points along routes of travel and transport and with easy access to the Sicilian river network, which favored convenient communication not only between them but also from the end of the eighth century BC, with the colonies scattered along the coast (Fig. 1).

The elevated topography of these centers determined their internal organization, using the slope to distinguish, visually and spatially, the three areas that usually form these settlements: the cemeteries in their lower levels, the residential areas in a second level, and the acropolis or places devoted to the periodic celebration of communal ritual ceremonies at their highest points [e.g., Polizzello (Panvini and Guzzone 2009), Monte Polizzo (Morris et al. 2002, 2003), and Montagnoli (Castellana 1990, 1992)] or in their most visually conspicuous areas [e.g., Sabucina (De Miro 1991; Guzzone 2009) or Segesta (Burford 1961; Mertens 2006)]. This topographic placement of the acropolis endows them with a visual and geographic dominance over the whole settlement, its surrounding areas, and the visual links established between them and the rest of the island.

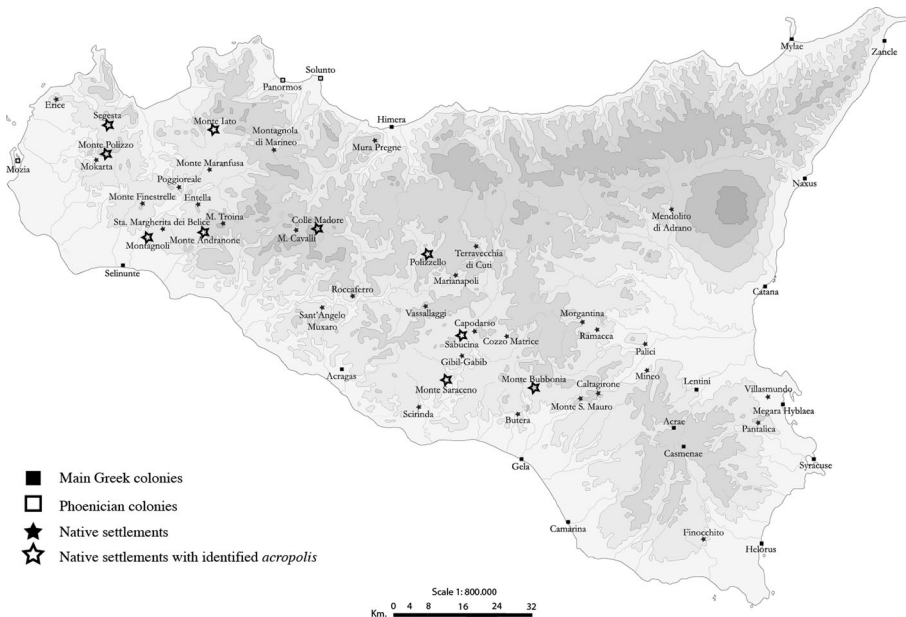


Fig. 1 Map of Sicily showing the main native settlements of the first half of the first millennium BC, the main *acropolis* and Greek and Phoenician colonies

Beyond the natural power of their location within the settlement and the Sicilian landscape, the prominence of the acropolis was reinforced through the use of a differentiated architecture that stressed the monumentalization of these places as well as maximized their difference with respect to the rest of the settlement (Ferrer 2010, 2012). This distinction could be made using either archaic architectural styles, as in the construction of circular buildings—see, for example, Polizzello (Palermo et al. 2009), Montagnoli (Castellana 1990), or Monte Polizzo (Morris et al. 2002, 2003)—or by integrating elements belonging to colonial architectural traditions. Likewise, the high level of complexity and dynamism that characterize all the acropolis differentiates them from residential areas. Most of these ritual areas present several buildings that could be devoted to more restrictive or esoteric practices as well as open spaces where those ritual activities visually accessible to a wider audience could be carried out (Ferrer 2012). Regarding the space, it is also worth highlighting that this spatial complexity was never temporally static; rather, its formulation constantly changed over time, as is illustrated by the successive modifications documented in Monte Polizzo (Morris et al. 2002; Morris and Tusa 2004), Sabucina (De Miro 1991), or Polizzello (Palermo et al. 2009; Panvini and Guzzone 2009) (Fig. 2).

Material evidence recorded at the acropolis suggests that three highly ritualized activities have been repeatedly recorded in all of these settings and throughout their

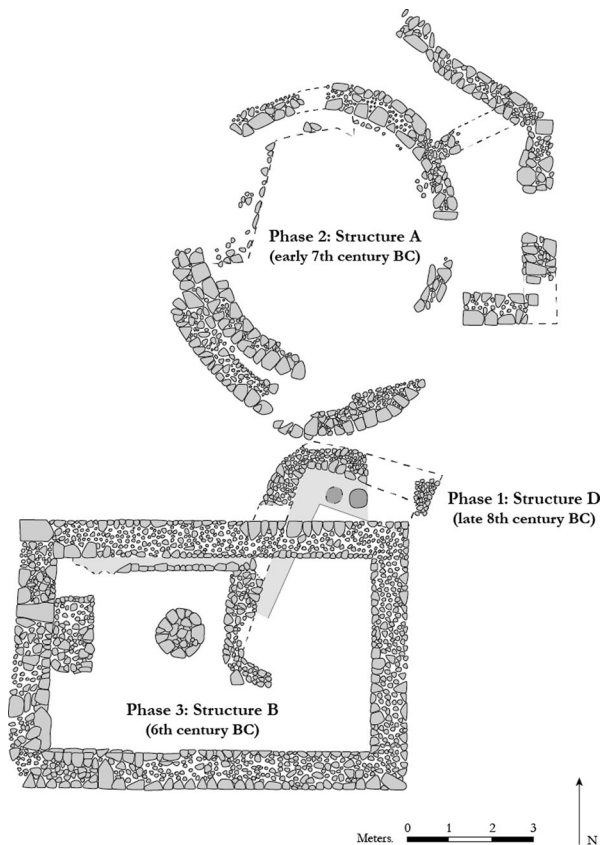


Fig. 2 Successive architectural elaborations of Sabucina's *acropolis*, late eighth to sixth centuries BC (after De Miro 1991; Fig. 8)

occupations⁴: the cleaning of these spaces [probably at the end of a ceremony or before any architectural remodeling (Ferrer 2012: 394–398)], votive depositions, and episodes of feasting. It is noteworthy that these three activities do not represent a novelty within the Sicilian ritual tradition after the installation of the colonies because all of them have been documented in communal ritual places located within settlements dated to the pre-colonial period. These pre-colonial ritual places and associated practices are illustrated by the data from La Muculufa (Holloway et al. 1990) from the beginning of the second millennium BC, Madre Chiesa di Gaffe (Castellana 2000a) during the mid-second millennium BC, or the first levels of Polizzello, dated to between the tenth and ninth centuries BC (Tanasi 2009).

In summary, the very physicality of these places, as well as the successive celebrations carried out in them, makes the acropolis crucial spaces of local interaction inside settlements. They were not only meeting points but also places of constant visual and mnemonic reference for all those who lived in, or even only visited, these centers. The continued execution of communal ritual practices in these settings converted the acropolis into arenas where social solidarity was promoted and group identity was forged among all those who participated in these events, independent of their social, gender, and political identifications. However, the heterogeneity of the participants, with their different experiences and their social and cultural identifications, also turned the acropolis into arenas where the various power relations that existed within these communities were built, negotiated, and reified. Following Bourdieu (1980: 179–193), it could be suggested that for these populations, the acropolis represented one of their more important symbolic or cultural capitals (Ferrer 2012, 2013).

Collective Commensality: from the Extraordinary to the Continuity with the Ordinary

Material evidence recorded in the acropolis points to the predominance of feasting practices in these communal ceremonies. This pattern is recorded in all these ritual spaces and throughout their life cycle, highlighting the preeminence of feasting practices in the development of these communal ceremonies. Indeed, as several studies conducted from different theoretical and methodological perspectives have pointed out in the last years, feasting practices represent one of the most important arenas where both social competition and integration are produced simultaneously (see, among others, Dietler 1990, 2001, 2010; Dietler and Hayden 2001; Gumerman 1997; Hamilakis 1998, 2008; Pauketat et al. 2002; Bray 2003; Halstead and Barrett 2004; Jennings et al. 2005; Swenson 2006; Twiss 2008; Hayden and Villeneuve 2011; Ferrer 2013). These studies assume that feasts are a universal phenomenon, through which social identities are established and altered, social competitions are held, and ideologies are infused. In sum, feasting is conceived of as a key factor in the negotiation and maintenance of social order as well as in processes of social change.

⁴ Among the different ritual practices also documented in the acropolis, the following stand out: an emphasis on deer hunting at Monte Polizzo (Morris et al. 2003; Morris and Tusa 2004), metal production in Colle Madore (Vassallo 1999), and the emphasis on a warrior group in the latest levels of Polizzello (De Miro 1988; Palermo et al. 2009; Panvini and Guzzone 2009).

Likewise, most of these studies argue that the power of feasting derives precisely from its extraordinariness, in particular, the presence of a larger number of banqueters and a differential consumption of food and drink, both in quantity and quality (Dietler 1990; Dietler and Hayden 2001; Gumerman 1997; Pauketat et al. 2002; Bray 2003; Jennings et al. 2005; Hayden and Villeneuve 2011). However, it is noteworthy that this perspective based on exceptionality isolates feasting practices from daily meals, forgetting the social and symbolic dimension of food as well as the close relationship and the continuity that exists between these collective practices and quotidian meals. In fact, as other studies have suggested, food ingested both in *ordinary* and *extraordinary* consumption practices participates actively in the processes of constructing and representing identity, both collective and individual, as well as power (see, among others, Appadurai 1981; Goody 1984; Bourdieu 1988). With regard to this, several studies in diverse disciplines have stressed how food, in both extraordinary feasts and quotidian meals, acts in these processes in a dual way. On the one hand, food is involved in the construction of social and political relations characterized by equality, cohesion, or solidarity. On the other hand, it works in the creation, legitimation, and representation of social and political relations based on difference (Appadurai 1981; Goody 1984; Bourdieu 1988; Caplan 1997; Counighan and Van Esterik 1997; Counighan 1999; Scholliers 2001; from an archaeological perspective: Hamilakis 1998, 2008; Halstead and Barrett 2004; Smith 2006; Delgado 2008b, 2010; Ferrer 2013). Moreover, the different contexts in which both actions are performed—at home or in ritual events—and their different social and political purposes convert them into arenas where different collective temporalities are constructed, as well as disrupted and punctuated, allowing the creation of different social memories and forgettings (Hamilakis 2008: 15–16).

In Sicily, the existence of the continuity between feasts and daily meals finds its archaeological confirmation in the fact that most of the material culture recorded in these ceremonial settings was highly similar to the material documented in the contemporary household contexts. In other words, both arenas, household and acropolis, have yielded the same kinds of vessels—tableware, cooking ware, and storage containers—and ceramics—coarse, plain, and decorated (incised, impressed, or painted)—local wares, as well as some imports, mainly of Greek manufacture. Besides this similarity, the degree of difference that exists between both contexts, combined with the dominant presence of a material culture related to food—its storage, preparation, service, and especially, its consumption—recorded in the acropolis, suggests not only the strong relevance that feasting practices had in the successive celebrations carried out in these communal ritual settings but also that acropolis feasts must be interpreted as an elaboration of a daily practice widely known by all the members of the community, involving an extrapolation to the structural social and power dynamics at work in the daily meals carried out in households (see, for example, Douglas 1975; Weismantel 1989; Bradley 2005; Delgado 2008b, 2010; Delgado and Ferrer 2011a, b). Indeed, this change of perspective in our understanding of feasts—from the extraordinary to the continuity with the ordinary—opens up a window to the past where there is room to explore some objects usually forgotten in traditional archaeological narratives, such as cooking wares. Through their study, we can also recover the agency of some actors that have been frequently belittled, such as certain women.

Beyond Alcohol: Meat Consumption in the Acropolis

Most of the materials from the acropolis refer to consumption practices, in particular to drinking paraphernalia. Among these vases were found a considerable number of closed receptacles dedicated to serving liquids, especially jugs and table amphorae, mostly of local production. But among the ceramics related to drinking, there is an absolute predominance of open shapes devoted to consumption, particularly cups and bowls of local production, to which were added, from the second half of the seventh century BC, a certain number of Greek imports, both of metropolitan and colonial production (Ferrer 2013).

This pattern, documented in all Sicilian acropolis, is perfectly illustrated at Polizzello throughout the life of the settlement. During the early occupation of its acropolis, specifically in the use level of the North Building (first half of the ninth century), open vases—cups and bowls, both simple and carinated—represent 75 % of all the ceramics identified in this space (Palermo et al. 2009: 51). In a later period, 17 pits from the last use level of structure B (c. 600–550 BC) show again a clear predominance of drinking paraphernalia. In almost all these pits, service and, mainly, consumption vessels were documented. Among them, votive deposition nos. 5 and 9 stand out; the former represents 77 vessels and the latter 40 vessels, both displaying a high predominance of drinking vases of local and Greek production (Tanasi 2009: 34–43) (Fig. 3).

Along with this material related to drinking, other elements associated specifically with solid and semisolid food—such as cooking wares, grill hooks, and faunal records—have also been documented in the acropolis although in smaller quantities. Despite their recurring presence, it is worth pointing out that they have had little influence on the traditional scholarly narratives concerning the Sicilian acropolis. In fact, in these accounts, feasting has been inferred only through drinking paraphernalia and alcoholic consumption. This practice of ignoring everything that goes beyond beverage consumption derives not only from the considerable volume of material related to drinking from these spaces, but principally from the importance that usually has been given to alcoholic consumption. In particular, we refer to alcohol's connotation as extraordinary food related to prestige and status, to the establishment and maintenance of a direct

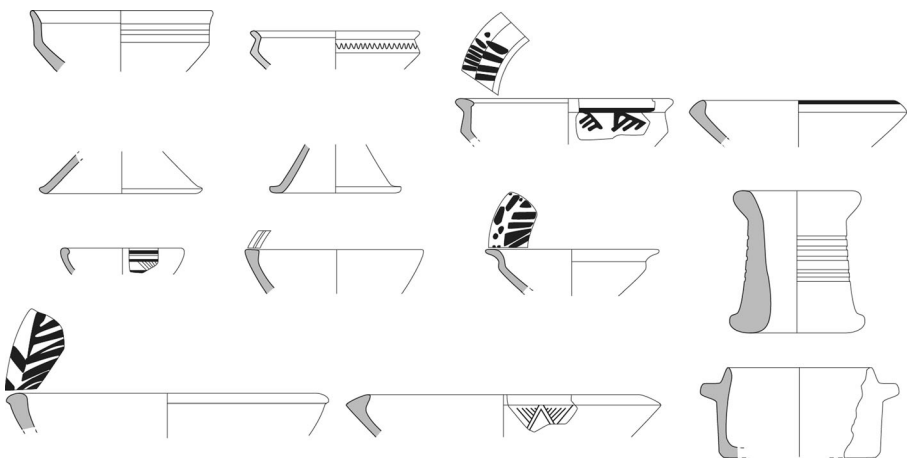


Fig. 3 Some vessels recorded inside the North Building of Polizzello's *acropolis* (after Tanasi 2009; Fig. 80)

association between this beverage and the masculine sphere, and above all, to its traditional association with the importation of products specifically Greek. Regarding this last point, it is interesting that in most of these discussions, the introduction of wine and its paraphernalia has usually been considered one of the principal indicators not only of the existence of certain contacts between local and colonial communities—in particular between local male elite and colonizers—but also specifically of the Hellenization of local peoples (Hodos 2000, 2010; Domínguez Monedero 2010).

Along with these drinking practices, in these ceremonies, the consumption of solid and semisolid food also had a strong importance. Although this consumption has been documented through two kinds of sources that refer to two different types of food—meat and porridges—more attention has been given to the first one. As with the strong importance conferred to alcoholic beverages, the greater degree of attention given to meat consumption at the expense of other kinds of food consumed at the acropolis relates to the positioning of meat as extraordinary, including its traditional association with the male sphere.

The consumption of meat is, to an extent, inferred in these communal ceremonies by grill hooks but is mainly inferred by faunal remains. Despite the lack of detailed published faunal analyses from all Sicilian acropolis, the available data from Monte Polizzo (Hnatiuk 2003) and Colle Madore (Di Rosa 1999) allow us to approach this practice. The comparison of the faunal record from Monte Polizzo's acropolis with that documented in the contemporary domestic contexts of the same settlement, in particular house 1 and house 2 (Müchlenbock 2008), reveals that both contexts contain the same species. However, the proportions of each species differ completely between the two contexts. In these two houses, there was an absolute predominance of domestic animals—mainly bovines and ovicaprids and, in lesser degree, suids—which represent almost the totality of the fauna identified in these spaces (house 1, 96 %; house 2, 97.7 %), while wild animals have a small presence (house 1, 2.6 %; house 2, 2.1 %). On the contrary, in the acropolis, this pattern is completely reversed, with a clear predominance of wild animals, mostly red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), representing 51 % of the acropolis' faunal register (zone A, 39.7 %; zone B, 84.4 %), while domestic animals only represent 15 % of the total. Despite the small presence of domestic animals in the acropolis, the relative proportions among them coincide completely with what is observed in the domestic contexts, ovicaprids being the most attested animals, followed by bovines and, finally, pigs (Table 1).

It is interesting to compare these data with those recorded at Colle Madore's acropolis (Di Rosa 1999). In this ritual context, we find a very similar sequence of percentages of domestic animals to those that were recorded in both contexts at Monte Polizzo. But, in contrast with Monte Polizzo's acropolis, in Colle Madore, cattle remains are overrepresented while deer are present in the same percentage as in Monte Polizzo's domestic contexts (see Table 1). In fact, the huge amount of deer remains documented in Monte Polizzo seems to allude more to a specific particularity of this community than to a general ritual behavior, which yet again points to some continuity between daily and ritual consumption patterns. However, it must be noted that—as in other Mediterranean populations of the first millennium BC (Wilkins et al. 1995; Davidson 1997)—meat was not a usual food and, in most cases, its consumption corresponds to celebrations, both domestic or familial and communal.

Table 1 Percentages of faunal remains from house 1 and house 2 of Monte Polizzo (after Mühlenbock 2008; Table 5), zone A and B from the *acropoleis* of Monte Polizzo (after Morris et al. 2003; Tables 2 and 3), and Colle Madore's *acropoleis* (Di Rosa 1999: 256)

Species	MP-H1 (%)	MP-H2 (%)	MP-zone A (%)	MP-zone B (%)	CM (%)
Cows	24.0	32.9	11.8	6.6	59.8
Sheep/goat	50.0	48.9	42.5	7.9	35.9
Pig	22.0	15.9	6	1.1	1.9
Dog	0.2	–	–	–	–
Horse	0.2	–	–	–	–
Red deer	2.6	2.1	39.7	84.4	2.3

In summary, the act of sharing the same animal for consumption would serve, as is the case with collective drinking, to build a sense of community. But simultaneously, the distribution of their parts among some members of the community (differential in the order in which individuals were served or in the quality of the meat which individuals received) would participate in the creation, display, and legitimation of the social and power dynamics that existed within it. Likewise, the consumption in these ceremonies of the same animals consumed in household contexts, mainly some domestic animals, also stresses the continuities that, in this world, existed between daily and ritual meals (Ferrer 2012, 2013).

Humble Foods in the Acropolis: Cooking and Serving Porridges for the Community

The existence of close bonds among households and acropolis, and also the active participation of some women in these communal ceremonies, is stressed when we analyze the second kind of foods eaten in these communal ceremonies: these are porridges, gruels, or soups cooked in pots. Although in the acropolis cooking ware does not comprise the majority of ceramic sherds recorded in these ritual spaces, it is documented across all acropolis and throughout their occupations.

Most of the cooking ware documented in the acropolis corresponds to the *pignatta*. This is a handmade pot of coarse clay, fired a lower temperature with a troncoconic or cylindrical body, a completely flat bottom, and the addition of two or four clay lumps as handles (Fig. 4). Its wide documentation in Sicilian native domestic contexts⁵ suggests that this was the most common cooking vessel used by local people during all the first millennium BC, continuing to be used until medieval times (Isler 1995: 56–58). The high level of simplicity and diversity in forms displayed by the *pignatte* suggests that these vessels could have been produced within the domestic sphere (Mühlenbock 2008: 86, Mühlenbock 2015: 249;

⁵ The *pignatte* represent 69 % of all the cooking ware recorded in Monte Maranfusa's domestic contexts (Valentino 2003: 255). This kind of pot also represents the most common cooking vessel documented in the four houses published from Monte Polizzo (Mühlenbock 2008). Among other native domestic contexts from western and eastern Sicily, *pignatte* have also been recorded at Monte Iato (Russenberger 2010), Cozzo Mususino (Tamburello 1969), Morgantina (Leighton 1993: 171), and Montagnola di Ramacca (Albanese Procelli and Procelli 1988–1989: 126).

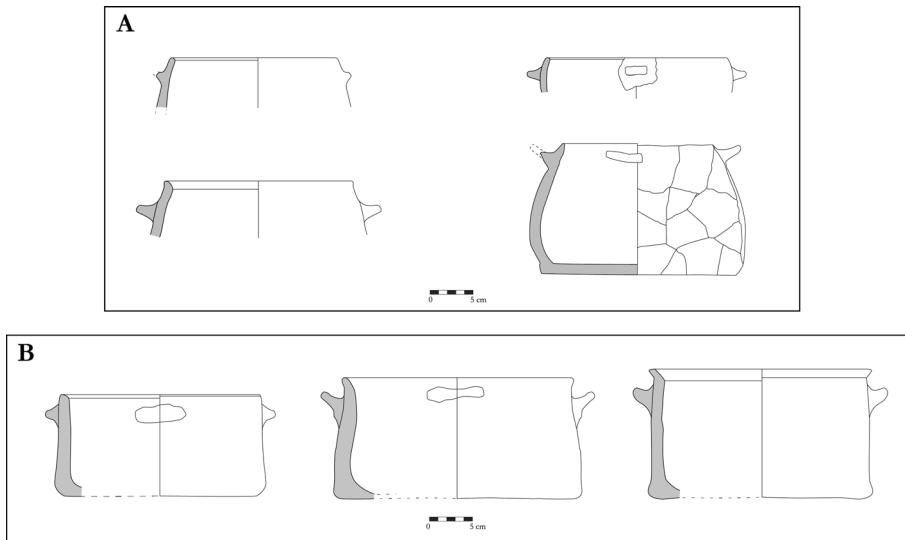


Fig. 4 At the top of the figure (a), some *pignatte* from the acropoleis of Monte Polizzo are shown (after Ferrer 2012; Fig. 8.18). At the bottom (b), some *pignatte* from a domestic context of Monte Maranfusa are shown (after Valentino 2003; Fig. 220)

Ferrer 2012: 212). In this case, it should not be surprising that the *pignatte* from acropolis were probably made by those members of the household group who used them on daily basis, that is, by those persons who took care of the daily cooking.

Despite the scarce availability of paleoenvironmental data from Sicilian native contexts dated to the first millennium BC, the evidence that does survive points to cereals—mainly barley and wheat and, to a lesser extent, spelt and rye—as the main alimentary resource for the Sicilian native communities (Spigo 1980; McConell 1996; Stika 2002; Stika et al. 2008). This predominance of cereals in the native Sicilian diet, together with the high predominance of *pignatte* among Sicilian cooking ware and their morphology perfectly adapted for slow cooking, suggests that these pots were mainly used for the elaboration of cereal porridges. Indeed, all these data point to cereal porridges cooked in *pignatte* as the base of the daily diet of the Sicilian native people during all the first millennium BC.

The continuous presence of *pignatte* in the acropolis, the high diversity of forms that they presented, and the strong possibility that they were produced in the household suggest that some members of the community who participated in the successive communal events performed in these ritual settings could have brought these cooking pots—as well as the humble meals cooked in them—to these ceremonies. This possibility becomes more plausible when we compare the size and volume of the *pignatte* documented in domestic contexts with those recorded in the acropolis, an analysis that currently could only be done at Monte Polizzo.⁶ Most of the *pignatte* documented in its domestic contexts present a diameter that ranges between 13 and 34 cm (Müchlenbock 2008: 85). The same pattern appears in the acropolis of Monte Polizzo, where those *pignatte* fragments whose diameters can be measured present quite similar dimensions, with diameters that generally range between 13 and 40 cm. Specifically, from 67 *pignatte* measured on this acropolis, 57 have a diameter

⁶ Until now, Monte Polizzo is the only site where ceramic assemblages from the acropoleis (Morris et al. 2002, 2003; Morris and Tusa 2004) and some of its domestic contexts (Müchlenbock 2008) have been published.

that fits perfectly within the pattern documented in its domestic contexts (85 %), with only 5 pots of larger dimensions (7.5 %) (Fig. 5). These latter pignatte present diameters that range between 42 and 48 cm, and their production and use could be considered exceptional, as this kind of larger pot has not usually been recorded in household contexts. The very close resemblance between the pignatte found in both contexts—domestic and ritual—suggests that the pignatte used in communal celebrations may have been brought from the homes themselves. Specifically, these objects were probably taken along to the acropolis by the same cooks who used them in their household sphere daily, that is, by those people who regularly cooked for their household groups, a category that probably includes some women.

This idea seems to be reinforced when we consider two possible dump areas related to this acropolis and the successive ceremonies carried out in it.⁷ The first of them is located at zone E, a natural slope situated 50 m northwest from the acropolis. Its stratigraphy presents a continued sequence of depositions dated from the mid-seventh century to the beginning of the fifth century BC, a span that coincides with the main phases of the use of this acropolis. The association of this dump with the acropolis is due to the proximity of both spaces, the temporal coincidence of their periods of use, and the similarity of their materials, both from a typological and proportional perspective (Morris et al. 2002; Cooper 2007). Most of the materials recorded in it are the following: ceramics, mainly fine ware of local and imported production as well as cooking ware, in particular pignatte⁸; metallic objects related to both personal adornment—such as fibulae, pins, or beads—and tools, such as iron knives; and faunal remains (Cooper 2007). The second dump is located at zone B, only 5 m southeast of the highest point of the acropolis. This deposit, with a maximum width of 5.5 and 0.5 m of depth at its central point, is dated in the third quarter of the sixth century BC. Unlike zone E's dump, a very small quantity of fine ceramics (both of local and imported production), cookware, and metallic objects were recorded (Table 2). Instead, the dump in zone B contained a considerable volume of charcoal, ashes, faunal remains, and fragmented large storage containers, especially *pitthoi* of local production (Morris et al. 2003) (Fig. 6).

Although both of these dumps seem to contain most of the debris from the successive ceremonies carried out in this acropolis, the dissimilar kinds of materials recorded in each one indicate that they could have been used for different purposes. In this sense, most of the materials recorded in zone B's dump seem to be related to the possessions of the acropolis—and, by extension, of the community as a whole—while those documented in zone E's dump—mainly drinking vessels and cookware—could be personal or household belongings provided by those who participated in these ceremonies (Ferrer 2012: 405). The possibility that some participants in these communal ceremonies provided vessels typically used in their daily lives highlights the bonds that were established between the domestic and ritual spheres in these celebrations. Furthermore, the use of these vessels stresses the importance of the household in the

⁷ Until now, dump areas related to the acropoleis have only been documented at Monte Polizzo. However, the documentation of general cleaning practices at all the acropoleis carried out after every ceremony or before their continued architectonic and spatial restructuring suggests that these could also exist in other settlements (Ferrer 2012: 397).

⁸ Pignatte have been profusely documented in zone E's dump. They represent between 28 and 42 % of the whole ceramics recorded in this context (Cooper 2007: 42–43).

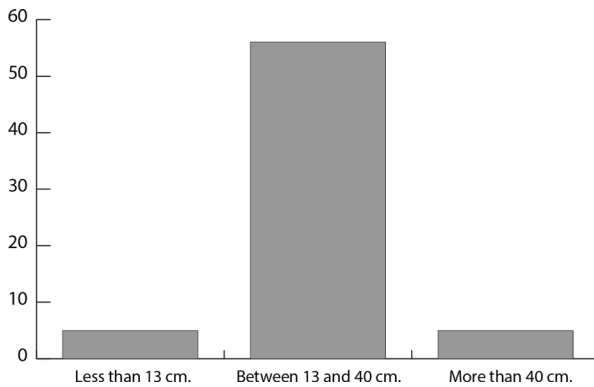


Fig. 5 Diameter measurements from the *pignatte* recorded in the acropoleis of Monte Polizzo. From 106 rims of *pignatte* documented in this context, only 67 rims have been able to be measured. From this group, 5 rims correspond to less than 13 cm, 57 rims present a diameter between 13 and 40 cm, and 5 rims are over 40 cm

development of these communal celebrations and, by extension, in the construction of a sense of community and the power relationships created, contested, and legitimized through them. These vessels also reveal the importance of daily cooks—a group that probably included some women—in these processes, which affected both their homes and their community. In this regard, providing some of the pots used in their daily lives to feed their families during these communal celebrations would have extrapolated the central role of these cooks as nourishers and carers of their households to the wider social structures of the community.

With regard to the distribution of the *pignatte* in the acropolis, it is interesting to note that they show quite a homogenous pattern. Most of them have been recorded in clear association with hearths or in pits related to them, as is well illustrated by Montagnoli's acropolis (Castellana 1990, 1992, 2000b). From this ritual area, structure 7 stands out. This is a large ovoid building (7.85 m by 6.80 m) with a surrounding internal bench that has been dated, stratigraphically and through the materials recovered within it, to

Table 2 Percentages of main ceramic classes recorded in zone E of Monte Polizzo (after Cooper 2007; Table 5) and the domestic contexts (houses 1, 2, 3, and 4) of the same settlement (Müchlenbock 2008; Fig. 28)

	Zone E HM II (%) Late 6th century BC	Zone E HM III (%) Mid-6th century BC	Zone E HM IV (%) Early 6th century BC	MP H1 + H2 + H3 + H4 (%) 6th century BC
Indigenous ^a	62.3	52.2	64.2	46
Coarse ware ^b	2.2	0.5	0.9	14
Cooking ware	19.6	38.1	32.1	9
Amphora	1.8	0.3	—	5
Greek	13.8	8.5	2.4	33
Punic	0.2	0.2	0.2	—
Etruscan	0.1	0.2	0.2	—

^a This category includes indigenous plain and decorated ceramics, both incised/impressed and painted

^b This category is mainly formed by *pithoi* or large domestic storage containers

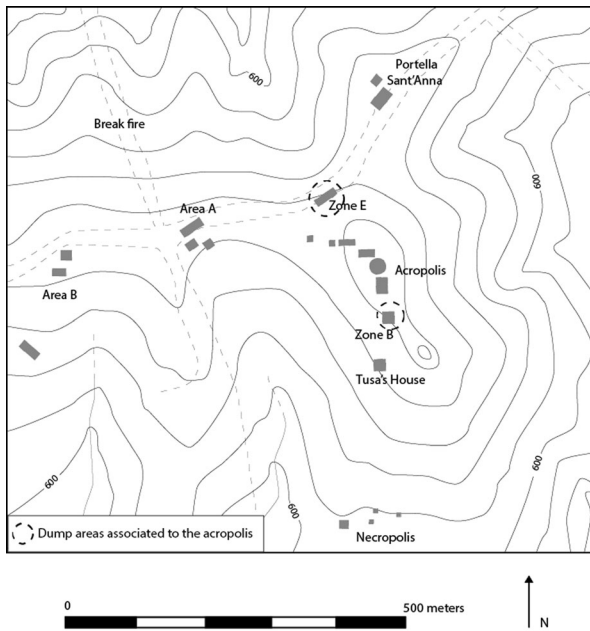


Fig. 6 Map of Monte Polizzo marking the two dump areas in zone E and zone B associated to its *acropolis* (after Morris et al. 2002; Fig. 3)

between the mid-eighth century and the mid-seventh century BC. At the center of its internal pavement was a high, well-elaborated hearth, the perimeter of which is decorated by a series of impressed circles. This was probably used to cook food during some periodic celebrations, as evidenced by the presence of one pignatta and three cylindrical clay andirons on top of it⁹ (Castellana 2000b: 266–267). Likewise, other cooking surfaces have been recorded in other acropolis in close association with cooking ware, both in open areas [see, for example, Polizzello (Panvini and Guzzone 2009: 89; Figs. 69 and 70), Montagnoli (Castellana 2000b: 263), or Monte Polizzo (Morris et al. 2003: 8)] and inside buildings [see, among others, structure A1 from Monte Polizzo (Morris et al. 2002: 17; Fig. 10) and structure B from Polizzello (Panvini and Guzzone 2009: 33; Fig. 33)].

This spatial pattern suggests that, while some of the porridges consumed in these communal ceremonies could be cooked at home and later brought to the acropolis, some of them would be cooked in these ritual spaces during the celebration of these communal events. Cooking these everyday meals in communal ceremonies stressed the bonds that were established between these ritual events and the domestic sphere—that is, the daily life of these settlements. Similar to the ingestion of alcoholic beverages or meat, by consuming these porridges—widely known by everyone for being the base of their daily diet—a sense of community would have been constructed and ordered, and the active participation of various households groups was materialized. The

⁹ Cylindrical clay andirons have been also documented in clear association with hearth in other ritual structures from Montagnoli, in particular structures 1 and 6 (Castellana 2000a, b: 267), as well as some domestic contexts; such is room G of Monte Maranfusa (Spatafora 2003: 51).

consumption of their main daily food in these exceptional events implies transcending the boundaries of the various households that constituted these communities, joining them physically and symbolically. The construction of this web that joined all the households of these settlements would have been perfectly materialized by the larger pignatte recorded at the acropolis. These pots present a capacity that exceeded the need required by a household group in its everyday life but, during these events, could have enabled the feeding of other members of the community who were not members of the same household group. Eating from the same porridge stressed the bonds of solidarity woven during these ceremonies, while simultaneously, the act of serving—for example the order followed or the size of each portion—established and displayed the power relations that existed within the community.

Furthermore, through the consumption of these cereal porridges, the construction of this sense of community and the materialization of its membership are not presented as something ephemeral, exclusively limited to the celebration of this ritual event. Unlike the ingestion of meat, the use in these ceremonies of a daily meal accessible to all those who resided in these settlements, such as the cereal porridges, would have allowed a daily remembering of their membership to the community, as well as the power relationships that existed within it, which had been negotiated and contested during these events celebrated in the acropolis.

The cooking of these porridges during celebrations turned daily cooks—including some women—into central actors in these ritual events and, by extension, in the building of a sense of community and of the power dynamics that were created, negotiated, and materialized in it. Indeed, these women were not simply passive observers of the dynamics of their settlement. They cooked one of the main foods eaten during these celebrations, and they possibly also managed, distributed, and served it to assistants.

As with the household, the act of sharing the same food with the entire community—a food that was widely accessible for all, such as the cereal porridges—meant that these women wove bonds of solidarity among the different actors that participated in these ceremonies. As such, they reinforced the idea of social cohesion and brought everyone together in spite of their differences. However, with the act of serving these same women established and marked the different social identifications that distinguished participants as well as the power relations that existed among them.

More Feminine Participation in the Acropolis: Loom Weights as Votive Objects

Together with cookware, other objects traditionally associated with domesticity, and in particular with women's activities, have been recorded in the acropolis (for other Mediterranean contexts, see Kleibrink 2001, 2005; Gleba 2008; 2009; Sofronew 2011). In this case, I refer to textile implements, specifically loom weights. As with cooking ware, these items have not been found in large amounts in the acropolis, but their recurrent documentation in all acropolis and throughout their life suggests, yet again, the active participation of some weavers—some of whom were probably women—in these communal ceremonies.

Most of the loom weights found in the acropolis have a trapezoidal or pyramidal shape and reproduce the same features of those recorded in Sicilian domestic contexts of the first

half of the first millennium BC (De Simone 2003: 347–356; Mühlenbock 2008: 115–116). Some of them, both in domestic and ritual contexts, present in their surfaces incised or impressed decorations, repeating in these cases the same decorative patterns that appear on the pottery, such as wavy lines, small concentric circles, and a triangular series called “denti di lupo” (Vassallo 1999: 243) (Fig. 7).

Unlike domestic contexts, where loom weights are frequently found in considerable amounts related to the use of a loom, in the acropolis, they are recorded isolated or in small groups of no more than five loom weights. Notably, Polizzello's acropolis (seventh–sixth centuries BC) is an exception. Inside structure C, there were nine loom weights deposited around the hearth (Panvini and Guzzone 2009: 180), and underlying a tile in deposition 1 of structure D were 10 pyramidal loom weights together with a lucerne, an iron knife, and some *astragalus* (De Miro 1988: 33). Despite these exceptional groups of loom weights, the overall pattern of loom weights suggests that in ritual spaces in the acropolis, these objects were not used for textile production, as seems to occur in other Mediterranean contexts (see, among others, Pedley 1990: 140; Kleibrink 2001: 49; Gleba 2008 185–187; 2009: 76–78). It is more probable that they materialized a kind of offering closely related to domesticity and, by extension, probably to the feminine sphere.

The presence of these loom weights in the acropolis suggests that some weavers—a category that probably included some women—brought objects closely associated with their lives and their daily activities to these settings as votive offerings. Indeed, the strong similarity that exists between loom weights documented in these ritual spaces and domestic contexts opens up the possibility that, in many cases, the items that participated in these ceremonies were the same items that certain women had previously used in their own textile production. Thus, as with the cooking ware, this act and this object materialized the strong relationship and even continuity that existed between the households and the idea of community constructed in the acropolis.

The offering of these objects with strong feminine connotations reveals, as with the pignatte, the importance that some women had in these communal ceremonies as well

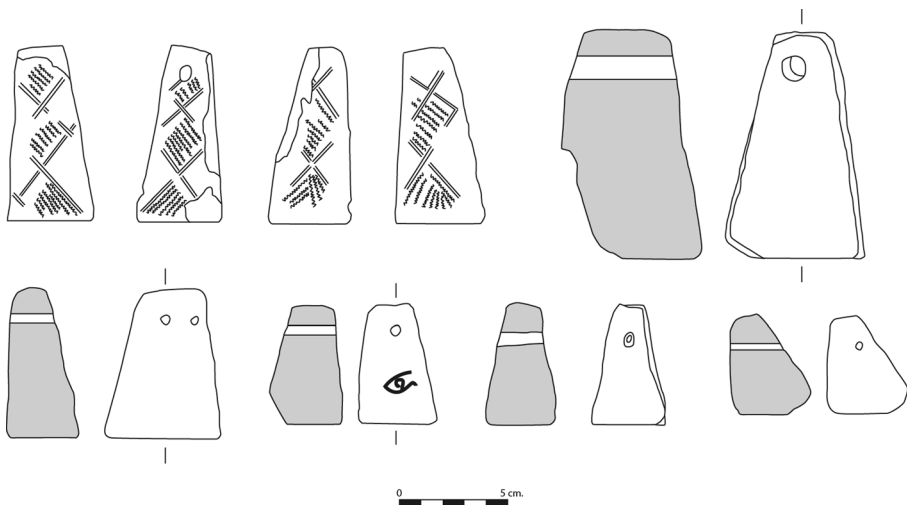


Fig. 7 Some loom weights from the acropolis of Colle Madore (after Vassallo 1999; Fig. 234)

as in their communities. Considering the continual presence of these kinds of implements in contemporaneous Sicilian domestic contexts, this activity undertaken in domestic contexts and managed probably by some women of the household seems to have had a strong economic—and also symbolic—importance for the development and enrichment of local household groups. Through the presence of objects associated with textile production in the acropolis, the importance that weaving practices held for these people was represented and materialized. Moreover, the presence of loom weights in the acropolis provides evidence of the importance of those weavers, who dedicated part of their time to creating these essential textiles for the wider community.

Conclusions

The contextual analysis of objects frequently belittled in traditional archaeological narratives for their close relationship with domesticity and, by extension, with the feminine sphere shows a different picture of the Sicilian setting, where domesticity and ritual, instead of being separate spheres of action, were completely interlinked. This analysis allows us to open a new window to the Sicilian past, where the agency of local people is not exclusively limited to local male elites or submitted to the colonies directly. That is, agency was not simply binary in terms of gender (male vs. female), status (elite vs. commoners), or colonization (colonizer vs. colonized). In fact, focusing on these objects reveals a more complex Sicilian local world where different local voices appear and actively participate in the construction of their sense of community as well as in the gender and power dynamics that exist within it.

The presence in the acropolis of objects strongly associated with the feminine sphere, such as cooking wares and loom weights, not only indicates the presence of certain women in these communal ceremonies, in particular those who undertook their everyday cooking and weaving for the well-being of their household. The same objects also highlight the importance that these specific women had in the construction and representation of an idea of equality, social cohesion and solidarity, as well as in the materialization of the social distinctions that existed within these communities.

Furthermore, we must also consider how the importance of these women came directly from their fundamental role in the development—economic as well as social and affective—of the different household groups that constituted these communities. Through the actions that these women carried out in ceremonies in the acropolis, we can see the continuity that existed between everything considered quotidian, domestic, and ordinary and that which has been interpreted as ritual, sacred, and extraordinary. Likewise, we can also explore the importance that feminine agency had in this world, both in those daily practices that affected only their household and in those practices carried out periodically and that included the whole community.

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