1. Introduction

Monte Polizzo is a hilltop site 6 km northwest of Salemi, in Trapani province, western Sicily (37° 56‘ N, 12° 46‘ E; fig. 1). The highest point on the acropolis is 725.9 m above sea level, and the view from the summit takes in most of western Sicily, including Segesta and Mozia, 9 km and 28 km distant respectively. Since the 1950s Monte Polizzo has been designated a forest preserve, and extensively planted with oak and pine. Artifacts from the site have been known since the nineteenth century. Vincenzo Tusa, then Soprintendente di Archeologia for the Palermo region, carried out the first systematic excavations in 1970. He examined three areas “del centro abitato, alla sommità del monte, distante tra loro almeno trecento metri.” In all three, he found rectilinear buildings containing indigenous Iron Age and imported Greek pottery. Saggio IX uncovered a rectangular structure on the west slope of the acropolis. It had two phases of walls (fig. 2), and the finds included Corinthian, East Greek, and incised local wares, and a hoard of bronzes, now in the Palermo Museum.

In 1996, Sebastiano Tusa, Soprintendente di Prehistoric Archaeology for the Trapani region, and Kristian Kristiansen, of the University of Goteborg, opened a new international study of the Monte Polizzo region, the Scandinavian-Sicilian Archaeological Project. This study subsequently expanded to involve teams and individuals from North America and the United Kingdom and now includes a wide range of interconnected archaeological projects. Our main goal is to explore the development of indigenous society in western Sicily in the sixth through fourth centuries B.C., when Greek and Carthaginian imperialism began seriously affecting the upland interior. We are interested in defining more precisely what is meant by “Hellenization”: the selective local adoption of and resistance to Punic and Greek material culture; the transformation of economic and class structures as the political environment changed; and the constitution of ethnic identities. In addition to these questions focusing on the Mediterranean region, Monte Polizzo is part of a larger comparative project on later...
Fig. 1. Sites in western Sicily mentioned in the text.

Fig. 2. The "Tusa House," excavated in 1970.
European prehistory, involving fieldwork at Tanum in Sweden and Szazhalombatta in Hungary as well as Sicily. ¹

Fieldwork began in February 1998 with a preliminary site survey. ² In June 1998 Christopher Prescott of the University of Oslo began excavation at two points where the Forestry Service’s bulldozing of firebreaks had exposed archaeological remains: House I and the Profile. The first area produced substantial house remains, and the second a stratified pottery sequence. ³ Excavation continued in 1999 and 2000. In 1999 new work began at Portella Sant’ Anna, and four trial trenches were opened between House I and the acropolis (fig. 3). In

¹ Kristiansen 1999.


2000, trial excavations also began in the cemetery of Monte Polizzo, in an area that had been exposed by erosion since 1983. In June 1998 Michael Kolb of Northern Illinois University also began a surface survey in the delia Coltura valley north of Monte Polizzo. In 1999 he extended the survey to the Mokarta area, and in 2000 began trial excavations on Montagna Grande, uncovering a Bronze Age tomb (see fig. 1).5

In June and July 2000, Stanford University undertook a trial excavation on the acropolis of Monte Polizzo. Ian Morris directed the excavations, Trinity Jackman was assistant director, and Emma Blake oversaw analysis of the artifacts. This report is a preliminary account of the 2000 season. The other teams excavating and surveying in the Monte Polizzo region are publishing preliminary results elsewhere in various formats.6

2. Summary of Results

Excavation focused on two zones, A and B (fig. 4). On the summit of the acropolis we uncovered part of a curvilinear structure (A1), diameter 6.4 m, with evidence for use between the late sixth and the late fourth or third century B.C. The precise construction date has not yet been fixed. The thickness of building A1’s walls, in places reaching 2.8 m, suggests that it may have been a tower or a platform. If it was a tower, the entrance was apparently from the east. A wall (a) runs off to the north of A1; the two small areas on either side of this wall (A1/1 and A1/2) contained deposits of burned bone and charcoal in a clay matrix, with a few potsherds and fragments of bronze. In the rubble from the collapse of A1 we found imported Greek pottery, stamped amphora handles, more bronzes, a clay animal figurine, and a Phoenician glass bead. Parallels with assemblages from other west Sicilian sites, particularly Polizzello, suggest that building A1 may have had religious functions.

Thirty meters to the south we exposed part of a rectangular structure (B1), aligned roughly northeast-southwest (surface elevation before excavation ranged from 720.15 m in the southwest to 722.35 m in the northeast). B1 had at least two activity areas. The earliest occupation phase, attested in area B1/2, dates to the Iron Age, and the second, attested in area B1/1, is medieval. Building B1’s internal width was 2.6 m, and the width of the walls 75–80 cm. Wall a has been traced for a distance of 15 m, and the wall probably continues to the southwest. B1 is on the same alignment as the Iron Age building excavated by Vincenzo Tusa in Saggio IX in 1970, some 75 m to the south. Both structures were probably built at roughly the same time in the Iron Age, probably in the sixth century B.C., and the whole of this part of the acropolis may have been laid out on a regular grid. Building B1 was then reoccupied after a break of roughly seventeen hundred years. The medieval reuse produced only scanty occupation deposits, and B1 may have been used as an animal shelter in this period.

Our exploration of the area between zones A and B is still incomplete, but there are indications that this was an open space in antiquity.

ZONE A

Building A1 stands at the highest point on Monte Polizzo and has suffered badly from erosion, tree planting, and above all the twentieth-century construction of a stone shelter above

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6 See http://www.engl.niu.edu:88/-archaeology; Kolb and Tusa 2001; Prescott et al. 2001
Fig. 4. Acropolis zones A and B. Contours at one-meter intervals. The diagonally shaded enclosure in zone A is modern. Only the dotted areas were excavated beneath the topsoil.
Monte Polizzo  
Acropolis 2000  
N-S profile  
Structure A1

Fig. 5. North-south profile through building A1.

it. The interior of the shelter was dug out to a depth of 45 cm, heavily disturbing the ancient deposits.

The stratigraphic sequence is simple (fig. 5):

- Layer 1: construction pit for the stone shelter
- Layer 2: thin deposit of topsoil covering whole area
- Layer 3 (outside building A1): main deposit of rubble from building’s collapse
- Layer 4 (outside building A1, in some areas): more compact deposit from an earlier phase of collapse
- Layer 5 (inside building A1): rubble from building’s collapse
- Layer 6 (inside building A1): yellowish clayey soil
- Layer 7 (inside building A1): smaller area of dark clay soil
- Layer 8: natural matrix of hill

A1 is 6.4 m in diameter (figs. 6, 7). Its walls are built of roughly hewn flat limestone slabs. The hill of Monte Polizzo is made up of alternating layers of sandstone and limestone. In most places sandstone is the top layer, but there is a limestone outcropping just 300 m northeast of the acropolis. At its greatest preserved height, on the south face, five courses of the external curved wall have been excavated, standing 37 cm high. On the south side, Building A1’s wall is 2.8 m thick. At the thinnest point, on the west side, it is 1.4 m thick. The outer face of the wall has been destroyed for a stretch of 1.8 m in the southeast by a large pit, probably dug by the Forestry Service, and in the northwest its upper courses are disturbed by the stone shelter. No foundation cuttings have been identified.

Building A1 is only partially excavated. Three main interpretations seem possible at this point. First, if the structure proves to be a full circle, it may have been a tower with two small, rectangular, internal chambers (A1/1 and A1/2). Second, the circular part of A1 (wall c) may belong to a tower built on top of an earlier rectilinear structure (walls a and b). Third, fuller excavation may reveal that A1 was semicircular, apsidal, or oval. At present, we do not have enough evidence to distinguish between these hypotheses. The profile in figure 5 contains no stratigraphic evidence for multiple phases. But if the curved walls represent a later phase we would not find clear stratigraphic evidence south of A1, since the only excavated deposits belong to the collapse of the curved walls; and the disturbance of the deposits inside A1 when the modern shelter was built may have removed all traces. All the datable finds have come from the rubble collapse of the building(s), and thus provide no decisive evidence.
Fig. 6. Final state top plan of building A1. Line a marks the profile in fig. 5.

Fig. 7. Building A1, final state, 2000 season.
If the first or third interpretation is correct, then A1 may have been built in the second half
of the sixth century B.C., and remained in use into the early third. If the second, then the
rectilinear structure probably dates to the sixth century, and the round to the third. Further
excavation to the north should clarify these questions. There is also a possibility that A1 is
the remains of a small tholos tomb, though this is less likely, since the west Sicilian tradition,
going back into the Bronze Age, was of rock-cut rather than built tombs.

On present evidence, the entrance to building A1 seems to have been on the east side, where
the course of the external wall is interrupted by two large stones. The trench needs to be ex-
tended to the north to confirm this. The putative-entrance opens onto a small chamber (A1/1),
measuring 1.72 m east-west. Its south and west sides are bordered by well-built straight walls a
and b. Seven courses of the south wall have been excavated, to a height of 56 cm. We only exca-
vated part of the floor deposit in area A1/1 (layer 6). It consisted of a yellow clayey soil, including
traces of burned mud or clay. The whole of the excavated part of the floor deposit was wet sieved.
It is rich in organic remains, charcoal, and fragments of animal bone and tooth. Most are small
and poorly preserved, and some are burned. Our initial impression is that the shattering of the
bones was probably post depositional. Many of the bones, a few sherds from one or more large
coarse vessels, and two bronze fragments (one from a pin, the other probably from a fibula) were
found near the south wall, but otherwise there were few artifacts in this deposit.

In the center of structure A1 is area A1/2. Like area A1/1, its northern part lies under
the stone shelter. It measures 1.1 m east-west. The soil in A1/2 was disturbed to a depth of
45 cm below the modern surface, where we found barbed wire and glass, but there were
intact deposits beneath this. These were completely excavated and wet sieved. They con-
stituted chiefly of the same yellow clay as was found in A1/1, but there was also a small area of
darker, more heavily burned soil (layer 7). The deposit was generally 7 cm thick and con-
tained very little pottery, although there were even heavier concentrations of bone, often
burned, than in A1/1. These floor deposits lay directly on top of a sterile, sandy deposit mixed
with rounded stones, which appears to be natural. Wall a was cut at least 15 cm into the
sterile layer 8 in A1/2, suggesting that it was constructed from the east side, and that the
floor of A1/1 will prove to be lower than that of A1/2.

Areas A1/1 and A1/2 have produced no secure dating evidence, signs of occupation earlier
than A1, or foundation cuttings containing datable artifacts. However, layers 3 and 4, the rubble
from the building’s collapse, contain many objects. Most were concentrated within 30 cm of
the exterior face of the wall and may originally have been displayed on top of the wall or in
niches in it. Most of the sherds come from coarse ware storage vessels. The fabric is typical of
the Iron Age deposits elsewhere at the site, with orange-red surfaces and bluish-gray interior.
The noteworthy finds include;

(a) Base of an Attic black glaze Type C cup, ca. 525–500 B.C. (fig. 8a). 8
(b) Phoenician sand-core glass “eye” bead (fig. 8b). This type had a long period
of use, from the eleventh through the third century B.C. 9

8 Cf. Sparkes and Talcott 1970,91-92,263-265, nos. 398-431, and Roberts 1986,3-15, esp. no. 12, from the Athe-
nian Agora; and Kunze-Gott et al. 1999, 15, with pl. 9.1, from Kerameikos gr. C18 at Athens. Similar examples
have been found at Palermo (Palermo punica 147, 180, 283, no. 137) and Mozia (Isserlin et al. 1958, 30, for a
similar but unstratified foot; the complete cup in pl. 5c, from a grave, has a foot more like a Type A cup; Famâ
and Toti 2000,458).
9 This type had a wide distribution and long life: e.g.,
from Kition, Karageorghis and Demas 1985, 237 with
Fig. 8. (a) Type C cup base; (b) Phoenician glass bead; (c) five-pointed star amphora stamp; (d) Λ1 amphora stamp; (e) clay horse figurine.
(c) Stamped amphora handle with five-pointed star in oval stamp (fig. 8c). We know of no exact parallels, although there are numerous Thasian examples of five-pointed stars in rectangular stamps, usually with one- or two-word texts. Four examples have been excavated at kiln sites on Thasos, all belonging to the “récent” phase, and probably dating ca. 335–300 B.C. A six-sided rectangular clay object from Morgantina, probably of the third century B.C., also has a five-pointed star on one side. Punic amphoras sometimes have small oval stamps, but we know of no Punic parallels for the five-pointed star design.

(d) Stamped amphora handle, reading ΛΙ in oval stamp (fig. 8d). Again, we know of no exact parallels for this “timbre à monogramme.” One example from Thasos probably says ΛΙ but as part of a larger text in a rectangular stamp. A Knidian stamp reading ΔΥ in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto is a closer parallel, probably dating to the third century B.C. The clay object from Morgantina mentioned above also has a Λ on one face.

(e) Clay figurine, probably of a horse (fig. 8e). The shape is common throughout the first millennium B.C. on Greek and indigenous sites. The tail, three of the legs, and the head are missing.

(f) Handmade cooking pot with vertical wall, flat base, and lug handle. At Palermo, this shape (Punic pottery category C2) was limited to the second half of the sixth century B.C., although examples from graves at Mozia date around 700, and from the tophet from the seventh century onward.

These finds do not come from a sealed deposit securely dating the construction of A1, but they seem to fall into two chronological clusters, around 525–500 and 350–300 B.C. The rubble also contained significant amounts of tooth and bone, and large dressed stones. The topsoil produced further Attic black glaze sherds, the base of an archaic Greek cup, and indigenous Iron Age grooved grayware pottery, as well as modern potsherds, glass, steel barbed wire, and a 1978 coin.

Leaving aside the possibilities that the round parts of A1 are a later addition to an original rectilinear structure or that A1 will prove not to be round, we should note that both round buildings and small tholos tombs were widespread in Bronze Age Sicily and remained common in the west in the Iron Age.” Acropolis buildings A, B, and D at Polizzello and a round building at Montagnoli parallel several features of Monte Polizzo acropolis building A1. At all three sites, the circular buildings included deposits of ash and burned bones, beads, bronze ornaments, figurines, and decorated local and Greek pottery. However, there are also

1 Bell 2000.
2 The Whitaker collection, includes some three-letter groups of the third century B.C. (Garozzo 2000, 570–572, nos. 28 and 29), but no exact parallels.
3 Bon and Bon 1957, no. 89.
5 Bell 2000.
6 Palermo punica 181, 308, 310 no. 140.
7 Garlan 1986; Debidour 1986, figs. 36e, 37h, 38h, 40b, and pp. 330–334.
some differences. At Polizzello and Montagnoli, (a) the buildings were larger, with diameters of 8–10 m; (b) the finds were concentrated around altars, in pits covered by sherds of large vases, or, in the case of Building B, in a small curved enclosure; (c) each building consisted of one large circular room; (d) the walls of the buildings were no more than 1 m thick; and (e) the finds were richer than those made so far at Monte Polizzo, including at Polizzello silver, amber, and ivory. The Polizzello finds begin at least as early as 650-625, and those at Montagnoli in the first half of the sixth century.18

Nothing found in or around Monte Polizzo A1 need necessarily date before the late sixth century, but future excavations may change factors (b) and (e) listed above. However, the architectural differences between Monte Polizzo and the Polizzello and Montagnoli buildings will stand. The excavated portion of Monte Polizzo A1 has more in common architecturally with the defensive tower built around 350 B.C found at Montagna dei Cavalli19 than with the buildings at the other two sites. The Montagna dei Cavalli tower was 4.85 m in diameter, with walls at least 1.5 m thick. However, the site report mentions no finds like those at Monte Polizzo, Montagnoli, or Polizzello, and the Montagna dei Cavalli tower was part of a larger system of fortifications, including a wall and gate, which (so far) does not seem to be the case at Monte Polizzo. A round tower dating back to the eighth century was found at Monte Finocchito, but the construction of Monte Polizzo acropolis building A1 is very different.20

For the moment, we are assuming that Monte Polizzo building A1, like Polizzello buildings A, B, and D, should be interpreted as a shrine, and that the activities taking place here involved burned sacrifices of small animals, votive offerings, and wine drinking. These all parallel archaic and classical Greek religious practices, but they went on in a very different spatial setting. This parallels the finds at Polizzello and Montagnoli, but the details of Monte Polizzo building A1 suggest that there was no uniformity in how various west Sicilian groups adapted and adopted Greek customs.

ZONE B

Like building A1, building B1 has suffered from erosion and tree planting. The walls have been disturbed in three places (fig. 9). In one case, this was definitely caused by the planting of a tree, and a second disturbance is directly on the line of a row of trees. There is no evidence for what destroyed the junction of walls b and d. At the east end of building B1, erosion has removed all but the lowest course of the walls, while in sounding C at the west end of the building, ten courses have been excavated, and more may survive. The height of the wall at this point suggests that building B1 was an all-stone construction, like that excavated by Vincenzo Tusa in 1970.

Most of one room (B1/1) has been excavated, in the northeast part of building B1. Its internal dimensions are 8.1x 2.6 m. Two short sections of walls a and b that were rebuilt in the second phase of the building's use may originally have been doorways. No further traces of walling on the line of wall b were found in sounding B, which might mean that building B1 was originally a one-room structure, with wall e (excavated length 6.7 m) marking out a courtyard or supporting a lean-to shelter. However, sounding B was disturbed by the same tree that damaged the junction of walls b and d, and further digging may yet reveal a wall.

19 S. Tusa 1992, fig. 56.
20 Vassallo 1993-1994, 1267-1268 and pl. 173.1
Fig. 9. Final state top plan of building B1

Fig. 10. Northeast-southwest profile through area B1/1.
parallel to wall e. At present, there are three plausible forms for building B1: (1) a long multiroom structure just 2.6 m wide, entered from the southwest; (2) a broad multiroom structure just 2.6 m deep, entered from the northwest or southeast; (3) a one-room house, 8.1 x 2.6 m, entered from the southwest, with a partially enclosed courtyard.

As in building A1, the stratigraphic sequence in the excavated parts of building B1 is simple. Figure 10 shows the northeast-southwest profile through the long axis of area B1/1:

Layer 1: topsoil  
Layer 2: rubble from final collapse of B1, mixed round stones and building stones  
Layer 3: deposit of medieval pottery and tile  
Layer 4: rubble containing medieval roof tiles  
Layer 5: loose gray soil  
Layer 6: sandy soil  
Layer 7: natural matrix of hill

Figure 11 shows the roughly north-south profile along the west balk of sounding C, in area B1/2:

Layer 1: topsoil  
Layer 2: rubble from final collapse of wall e, with medieval roof tiles  
Layer 3: loose gray soil  
Layer 4: rubble from earlier collapse of wall e  
Layer 5: gray ashy soil with Iron Age pottery

_Iron Age Phase._ Only a few Iron Age sherds were found in room B1/1. In B1/2, however, sounding C reached an Iron Age floor deposit, but only in a 1 x 1 m area. The finds from layer 1 in sounding C included an Attic black glaze rim and a typical west Sicilian incised sherd similar to
those of the third or fourth phases of indigenous pottery at Monte Iato (sixth century BC). A fine incised loomweight, decorated with the triangle-based motifs common in Iron Age west Sicilian iconography, was found in layer 2 (fig. 12). Layers 4 and 5 included many fragments of storage vessels with orange-red surfaces and blue-gray interior, and a few fine ware sherds, including a red-painted one that may be Phoenician. Layer 5 included large amounts of ash and some animal teeth and bones. Iron Age occupation of area B1/2-like House 1, nearly 150 m to the west—may have ended in a fire, but more of area B1/2 must be excavated to confirm this.

Wall e is the only wall with a stratigraphic terminus ante quem in the Iron Age. It is built of flat roughly hewn limestone slabs very like those in building A1 and is 70–72 cm wide. The small amount of the junction of walls d and e visible in sounding E suggests that they are bonded, and so too the junction of walls b and d visible in sounding D. The construction techniques of the lower courses of walls a, b, and c are exactly the same as those in wall e, and the Iron Age structure excavated by Vincenzo Tusa in 1970 is on the same alignment as building B1, and its construction techniques are very similar. It thus seems likely that the whole of building B1 was originally constructed in the Iron Age.

Medieval Phase. After the end of the Iron Age occupation, deep deposits of rubble (layers 2 and 4, separated by the less stony layer 3, in sounding C [fig. 11]) accumulated in area B1/2. In the upper part of layer 2 we found fragments of pink roof tiles with very coarse inclusions, particularly pieces of straw burned away by firing. The tiles have close parallels at Monte Iato and Palermo, dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries A.D. In area B1/1 we found a more complicated record. Here layer 4, immediately above the sterile layer 6, included large amounts of medieval roof tiles. Particularly at its northwest end, the slabs that made up layer 4 might have been artificially leveled to make a rough floor. The three separate deposits of layer 3 included more roof tiles, an iron nail, two other fragments of iron, and probably seven separate pots, all wheelmade. Several of the vessels were made from a light buff to reddish-brown clay with dark mica inclusions. Two or more open vessels had a pitted creamy slip. Part of the rim of one of the slipped vessels, with a ribbed surface, could be restored (fig. 13). The lip is of a kind common on many late Roman amphorae, but continued much later. Two vessels had a plain greenish-brown lead glaze, with close parallels from a Norman observation post at San Martino delle Scale near Palermo. The earliest Sicilian glazed pottery, found at Syracuse, dates to the ninth century A.D., and plain brown and green glazed sherds were common at Monte Iato, occupied from the early eleventh century until 1246, and in the late twelfth/thirteenth-century mosque at Segesta. Layers 3 and 4 probably date to the Norman/Swabian period. Above these deposits was another layer of rubble, 2, including both flat limestone slabs and round stones from the natural matrix of the hill. We see two possible explanations for this sequence:

22 D’Angelo 1989.
23 E.g., Keay 1984, Type XI, variant A, probably third century A.D.
24 Lo Brano and Lo Cascio 1996, 211-213
25 Isler 1984, 117.
26 Ritter-Lutz 1992, 86-88; Molinari 1997, 139-141
27 We would like to thank professor John Hayes for discussing this pottery with us.
1. The whole of building B1 was constructed in the Iron Age. In medieval times area B1/1 was completely cleared of Iron Age remains, but in area B1/2 only some of the rubble from the collapse of the Iron Age building was removed. Areas B1/1 and B1/2 were then used in ways that produced no obvious archaeological deposits. The roof of building B1 then began to collapse, but B1/1 must have been repaired, since the main deposit of medieval material belongs to a second phase (layer 3), above what might be a partially paved gently sloping floor. Building B1 went through a final stage of collapse.

2. Area B1/1 is a medieval addition to building B1, following the orientation of area B1/2.

Hypothesis 2 seems unlikely, for reasons discussed above. The architectural style of the lower courses of walls a and b is like that of wall e, but the upper course is built in a very different style, using large round stones, much less carefully joined. In wall a, there is a clear sandwich of earth separating the round-stone phase from the flat-slab phase. Stratigraphically, the second building phase of walls a and b predates the formation of layers 1-3 in Area B1/1.
(the medieval pottery deposit, the rubble from the collapse of the building, and the topsoil).
The surface of layer 4, the possible rough stone floor, generally lay about 5 cm below the top
of the slab-built parts of the wall in those areas where the wall had been repaired with round
stones. The most economical interpretation is that the round-stone phase of walls a and b
was contemporary with the medieval reoccupation of building B1.

We suggest that when people returned to the acropolis of Monte Polizzo, perhaps seven-
hundred years or more after the site’s abandonment, they found building B1 in a ruined
state. They cleared some of the rubble out of area B1/2 and rebuilt its walls, either entirely
from round stones or using a mudbrick superstructure. In Area B1/1, where erosion had
done more damage but there was less rubble, they cleaned up the fallen stones and crudely
rebuilt short stretches of walls a and b. As in Area B1/2, they either built a perishable super-
structure on this stone foundation, after repairing it with round stones, or rebuilt it entirely
from round stones, and roofed the room with tiles.

Whatever activities went on in building B1 in its medieval phase left no very obvious
traces. It may have been used as an animal shelter. B1 later began to decay, but B1/1 at least
remained in use. A partial collapse produced layer 4. Its surface may have been leveled off to
produce a new floor, although since it slopes down from east to west at an angle of 5 percent,
this would have been unsatisfactory for human occupation. When B1/1 was finally aban-
donated, seven pots (perhaps already broken, since none can be completely repaired) were left
behind on top of layer 4, and were later crushed by the further collapse of tiles and stones
from the building. It is possible that the pottery in layer 3 was left on shelves or niches in
area B1/l, hence accounting for its position sandwiched between two layers of stones and
tiles; but its position both outside and inside the building makes that less likely.

Open Areas

Four 5 x 5 m trenches were begun in the south part of the area between zones A and B (fig.
4). The two southernmost of these were excavated to bedrock. Both had an extremely simple
stratigraphy. A topsoil layer, varying from 2 to 16 cm thick, covered a homogeneous deposit
of sandy soil and round stones, often large. Layer 2 was 50–80 cm thick. It contained very
few finds, but fragments of modern flowerpots—presumably those used by the Forestry Ser-
vice to bring saplings to Monte Polizzo in the 1950s—were scattered through its upper parts.
Layer 2 seems to be disturbed and decayed bedrock, a sandstone conglomerate containing
the same mix of small and large round stones.

In the two northern trenches, only the topsoil layer was removed. In both trenches the
surface of layer 2 was very similar to the southern trenches, with consistent deposits of round
stones and no signs of walls or concentrations of building stone.

It remains possible that the area extending 15 m north of zone B has been very seriously
disturbed in modern times, and all traces of ancient occupation destroyed. But given the
almost complete absence of pottery in the lower parts of layer 2, it seems more likely that this
was an open space in antiquity, and that layer 2 has accumulated gradually through erosion
over the past twenty-five hundred years.
3. Conclusion

Structure A1 seems to have been occupied in the Late Iron Age, between about 500 and 300 B.C. It may have had religious functions, including burned sacrifices. Building B1 was constructed in the Iron Age, though we cannot yet be more precise about its date, and its functions are as yet unclear. Its architectural style resembles the structure excavated nearby by Vincenzo Tusa, but is very different from the multiroom clusters that Tusa found elsewhere on the site, and that have been excavated since 1998 at House I and Portella Sant’Anna. After standing in ruins for more than fifteen hundred years, Building B1 was reused in the Middle Ages, possibly as an animal pen.

The acropolis excavations have made a start toward answering the questions posed at the excavation’s outset. While the architectural styles at House I and Portella Sant’Anna bear some resemblance to Greek styles of housing, acropolis building B1 does not. Further, the Elymians of Segesta, just 9 km away, famously borrowed Greek religious architectural styles for the magnificent temple they probably began in 426 B.C.; but A1, if it did indeed have sacred functions, owes nothing to Greek religious construction. It may fit into a broader sixth-century B.C. trend toward linking elements of Greek sacrificial ritual with local architectural forms, but, as noted above, A1 appears to draw as much on contemporary Sicilian archaic and classical military tower building as on Bronze Age house and tomb types. Here we may be able to explore local responses to Phoenician and Greek presence in the selective use of foreign material culture and customs. Finally, both House I and the small area excavated in sounding C of acropolis building B1 appear to have been destroyed by fire. Stefano Vassallo has recently pointed out that many indigenous sites in western Sicily were abandoned in the first quarter of the fifth century B.C., and has linked the pattern to the increasing assertiveness of the tyrants of the Greek cities at this point. He notes that Vincenzo Tusa’s finds at Monte Polizzo in 1970 seemed to fit the pattern; our limited finds in 2000 support this. If destruction by fire turns out to be a general pattern at Monte Polizzo, the site’s abandonment may have been linked to growing conflicts for control of the fertile valleys of western Sicily.

Cf. Leighton 1999,261–263
29 Vassallo 2000, 985; on the tyrants, Sartori 1992;
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