KITCHEN-WARE FROM LM IIIC PHAISTOS COOKING TRADITIONS AND RITUAL ACTIVITIES IN LBA CRETAN SOCIETIES

by ELISABETTA BORGNA

Introduction

The overall aim of this article is to outline certain aspects of a research project concerned, in general, with the problem of the population of Phaistos and the Mesara plain in the final phases of Late Bronze Age Crete and, in particular, with the patterns and the nature of the Mycenaean component, especially as regards LM IIIC Cretan societies (Borgna 1997; in press).

My approach to this subject is based on my research into the LM III kitchen-ware from the so-called "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I" at Phaistos[1], which has led me to propose the following three specific arguments:

a) more information about cooking vessels can contribute to our knowledge of a class of production and of a field of research till now not much explored in Aegean studies[2];

b) as ethnological and sociological researches have shown, the description of domestic pottery is a valuable method whereby one may

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[1] The deposit was excavated in 1965 and 1966 by the Italian Archaeological School (see Levi 1965-1966, 381ff.; Laviosa 1977); the research was entrusted to me by Prof. V. La Rosa, Director of the Italian Mission at Phaistos; for the access to the material, I am grateful to Prof. C. Laviosa. This text is a longer version of a paper presented to the 8th International Congress of Cretan Studies, Heraklion, Sept. 1996; for discussions, comments and suggestions I am indebted to F. Carinci, P. Cassola, A. Cazzella, S. de Martino, D. Haggis, C. Knappett, V. La Rosa, E. French, R. Peroni, L. Vagnetti; for critical reading I am especially grateful to P. Warren: I was not always able at taking full advantage of useful observations and notes and I am the only responsible for the results and possible errors. For correcting my English I thank in particular N. Carter. Drawings are by G. Merlatti.

[2] In particular as regards LM kitchen-ware I rely on Betancourt 1980; cf. Betancourt 1985, passim; the detailed research by H. Martlew has not yet been fully published; see Martlew 1988.

SMEA 39/2 (1997) p. 189-217.

explore the visible means of self-identification in the ethnic as well in the purely social domain (Ferguson 1991; Yentsch 1991). As regards the Cretan context such a description could enable us to distinguish the real Mycenaean presence from a more general Mainland influence or from a simpler pattern of stylistical similarity – as well as to explain the interaction among different ethnic and social units;

c) the Phaistian evidence of kitchen-ware so far analyzed seems to place the functional aspect of the archaeological context within an important perspective. In particular, if compared with the results obtained from the study of the nearby assemblage of the "Acropoli Mediana" (Borgna in preparation), it offers an interesting insight into aspects and meanings of consumption and social exchange in a field familiar to anthropological approach, i.e. the consumption of food and drink[3]. With regard to Aegean archaeology and history, this means the discussion of shared rituals, and specific social and political behaviour, such as banquets and communal drinking (see below).

Turning to the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I": the composition of the used and broken pottery, mainly belonging to a period limited to LM IIIC, seems to point to domestic kitchen practices. General domestic or industrial activity is indicated by 24% of the coarse ware (fig. 1:1), as emerges clearly from a comparison with the nearby assemblage of the "Acropoli Mediana", which at present seems to be constituted exclusively of decorated fine ware, in particular open shapes belonging to specialized sets mostly suitable for drinking[4].

A more precise kind of specialization is then suggested by the huge quantity of cooking vessels, which constitutes 40% of the abundant coarse ware (fig. 1:2) and leads one to infer that the site was devoted to domestic or industrial activity, corresponding to that intermediate stage between primary production and consumption, i.e. the transformation and the preparation of food.

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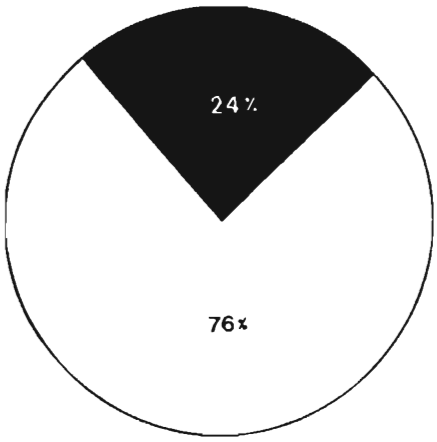
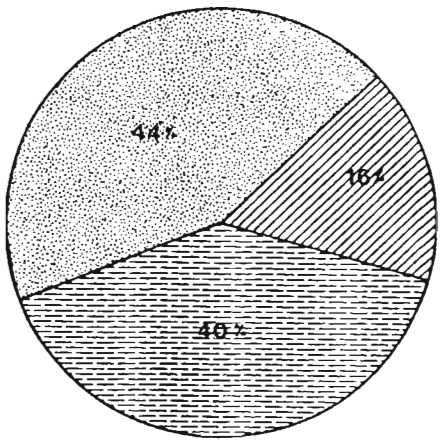
[3] See in particular Douglas 1984; Powers, Powers 1980; Whitehead 1980; Goody 1982; Miller 1985, 150 ff.; Leach 1986, 60; Sinopoli 1991, 122-124; Trankell 1995; Grottanelli, Parise 1988.

[4] The data from the "Acropoli Mediana" are still in preparation. The comparison is, however, not completely reliable because the material from the Acropoli Mediana, retrieved in rescue operations during earlier campaigns at Phaistos, cannot be certainly considered representative of the whole context of primary deposition and possibly were preserved only in part. Furthermore, the percentage furnished here as regards "Casa a ovest" (from a selected sample of 1,442 sherds) is not yet definitive and, in a more advanced stage of research, could be subject to some minor changes.



Pottery from "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I": 1442 fragments
Fine ware: 1101 (76%)
Coarse ware: 341 (24%)



Coarse ware from "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I"
Painted coarse ware: 154 (44%)
Unpainted coarse ware: 57 (16%)
Kitchen ware: 140 (40%)

Fig. 1 - Ratios of pottery composition from the "Casa a ovest del piazzale I", Phaistos.

The cooking vessels from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I"

In accordance with my first argument, it is possible to describe some vessels belonging to classes conventionally named cooking pots, dishes and trays[5]. However, the sample considered reveals a marked morphological variability within each class, in particular that of the cooking pots.

The usual LM III tripod globular jar with restricted mouth and distinct rim or neck (fig. 2:3) is the shape almost exclusively present, apart from a few fragments belonging to the open sub-cylindrical jar (fig. 2:1-2) coinciding with a shape much more widely spread, as is well-known, during the earlier phases of EM, MM and LM I (fig. 14:1)[6]. These two basic shapes, corresponding to types current in the available classifications, could perhaps be subdivided, on the grounds of the present documentation, into smaller

[5] At this preliminary stage of research I follow the terminology and technological considerations of Betancourt (1980); for the general conventional definitions see also Palsson Hallager 1997, X.

[6] These two shapes correspond to types A and B in Betancourt 1980 (see p. 2, fig. 1); cf. Betancourt 1985, 51, fig. 31 (EM II); Martlew 1988, types AII, DI-II; Haggis, Mook 1993, figs. 18, 20, 23; for examples with more convex walls and slightly restricted mouth provided with a short rim see e.g. Chapouthier, Joly 1936, pl. 16 c.d; Popham and others 1984, pl. 162, 9-10.

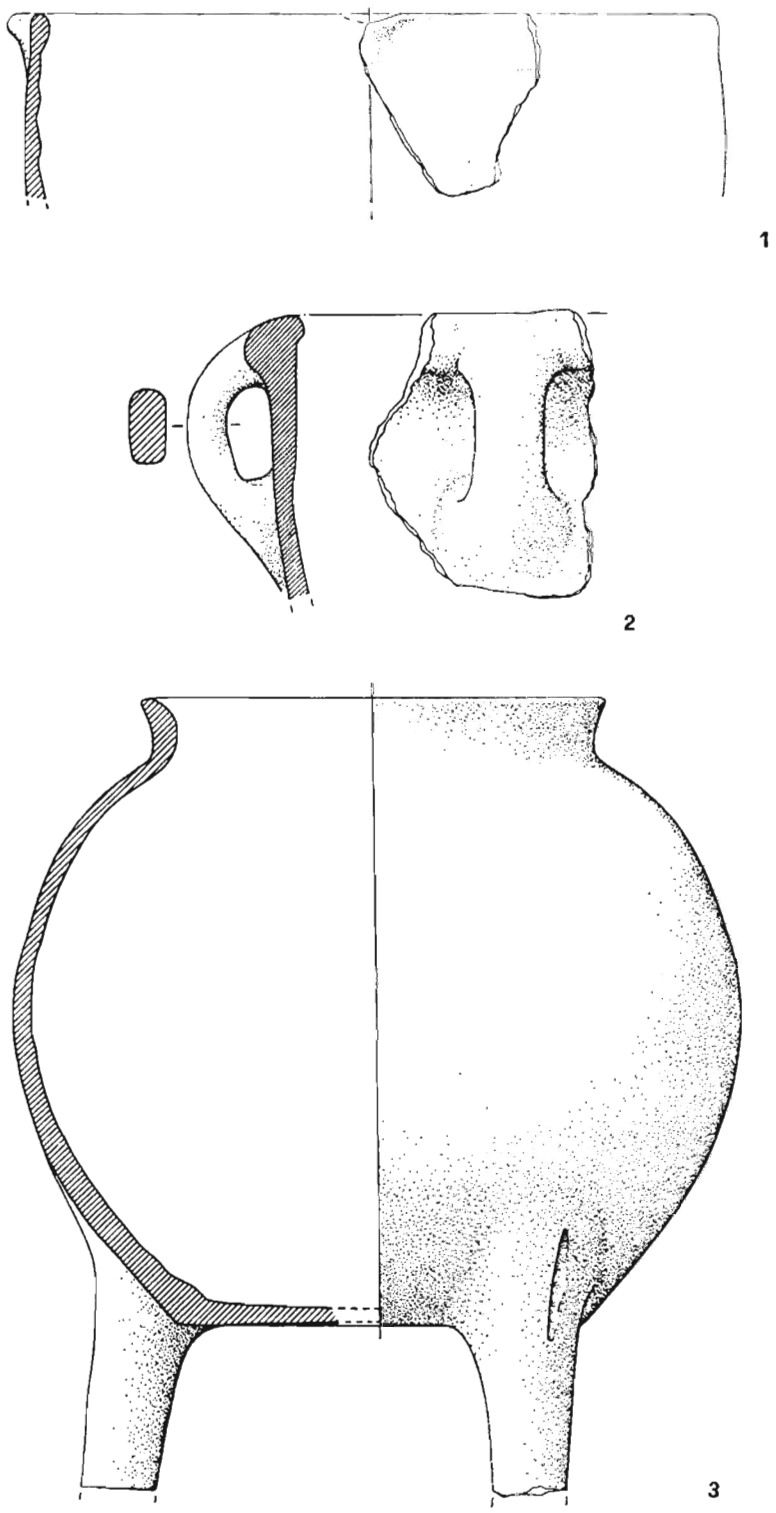


Fig. 2 – Tripod cooking pots from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos (1:3).

typological clusters. In particular, in the larger sample related to the subglobular shape (figs. 2,3; 3) one can distinguish at least: a) a type with rounded shoulder and collar-necked mouth (fig. 3:1); b) a type with a wider, flaring, almost funnel-like neck or rim (fig. 3:2); c) a type provided with a very short everted rim (fig. 3:3).

Besides tripod jars, a similar range of variability could possibly apply to several flat-based pots without legs, generally of a more markedly ovoid profile (fig. 4)[7].

As regards handles, the use of horizontal handles, widespread in the Minoan productions, is contrasted in a few cases by the evidence of vertical ones.

Finally, there is an enormous variation in the size and relative capacity of the pots.

The large trays (fig. 5) generally have short cylindrical walls and flat rims, though sometimes they show more open, conical walls with rounded rims. The rim profile is sometimes irregularly waved thanks to a little projection like a spout or a pouring lip, and is provided with horizontal lugs. Disc-shaped lids (fig. 5:5), flat or with plastic ribs along the edge, could belong to this class of vessels, especially some trays with a slight ridge on the top of the rim. The trays could also stand on legs[8].

The well-known dishes (fig. 6), very large in diameter, have a thin convex base and very short thickened walls, generally marked by a triangular ridge and rounded rims. There is evidence of wavy projections interrupting the rims as well as of holes piercing the walls (Betancourt 1980; 1985; Watrous 1992, passim).

Other, more sporadic items, can be named dippers, exemplified by a middle-sized rounded vessel with a distinct, large mouth and a large, raised handle, or by a smaller one with a low vertical handle, more similar to a cup (fig. 7).

There are, as well, some "pedestalled bowls", i.e. open conical bowls

[7] For comparisons, rather difficult to detect in LM contexts, see in particular Seiradaki 1960, 5 n. 3; Haggis, Mook 1993, fig. 26; Coulson, Tsipopoulou 1994, 76-77, pl. 11,1 (with vertical handles); see however the strong similarity with much more ancient Cretan products, as represented in EM II Myrtos: Warren 1972, 123-124, fig. 61, pl. 45A; cf. also Popham and others 1984, pl. 162 (LM II). According to the close similarity with the Mainland cooking pot FS 74 (Mountjoy 1993, 117-118; cf. Tournavitou 1992, 188 n. 4, Form 13; Furumark 1992, pl. 45) the shape is also implied in the discussion of the Mycenaean influence.

[8] Besides Betancourt 1980 and 1985, see then Watrous 1992, passim; Martlew 1988, type F; Haggis, Mook 1993, figs. 20, 26; for a legged example in LM IIIC see Seiradaki 1960, 7 n. 4, fig. 4,4.

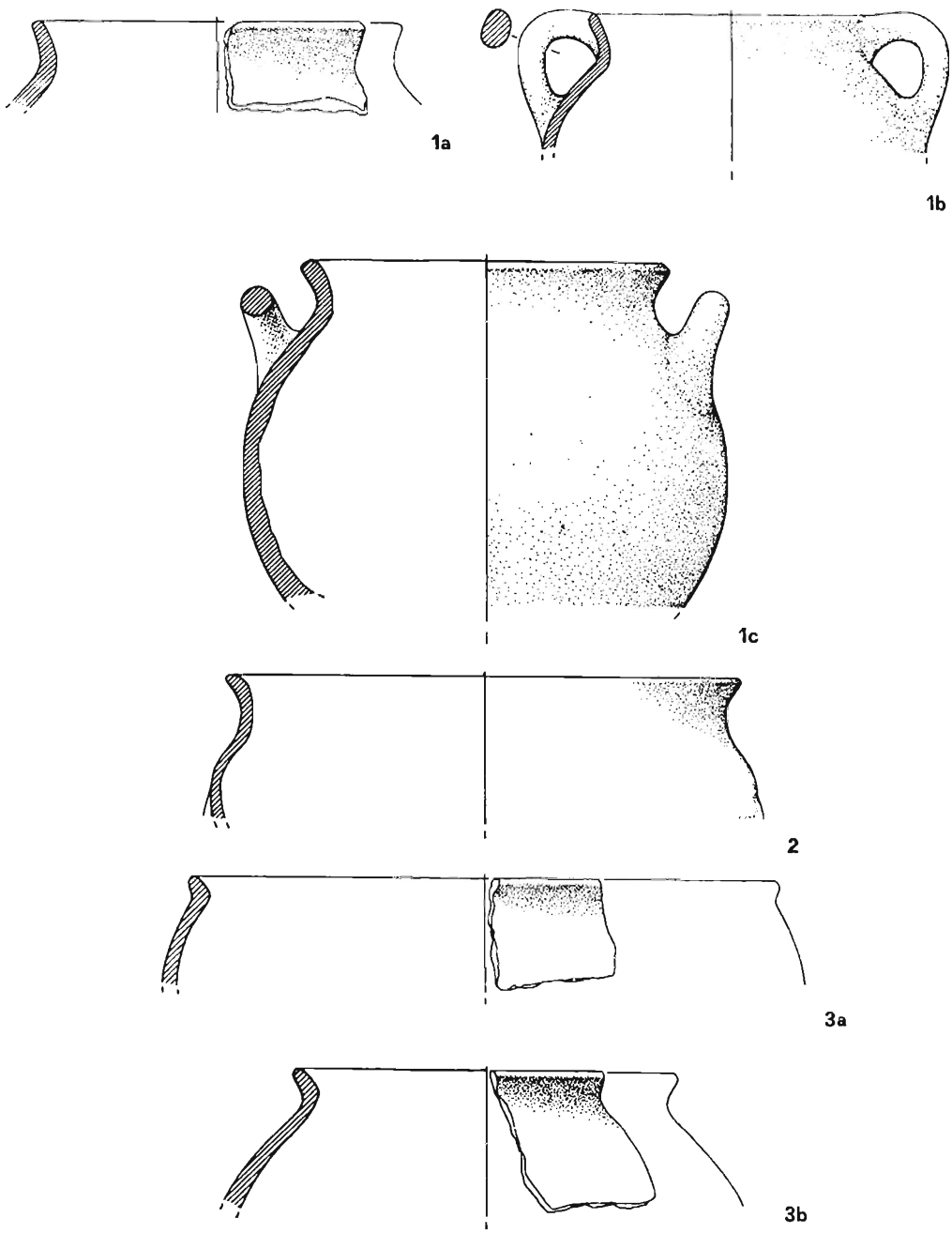


Fig. 3 – Tripod cooking pots from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos (1:3).

with flaring and flattened rims supported by high cylindrical or sub-conical stems (fig. 9). The narrow range of available comparisons points to Late Cycladic contexts[9] and, in Crete, to a few examples dating from LM I to LM IIIA[10].

Isolated fragments suggest the use of a kind of grill or portable oven with the base-plate characterized by "blind" holes on the lower surface of the bottom (fig. 8)[11].

Finally, some sherds belong to a cooking vessel whose shape does not seem to appear in the more usual LM III domestic contexts: a kind of huge,

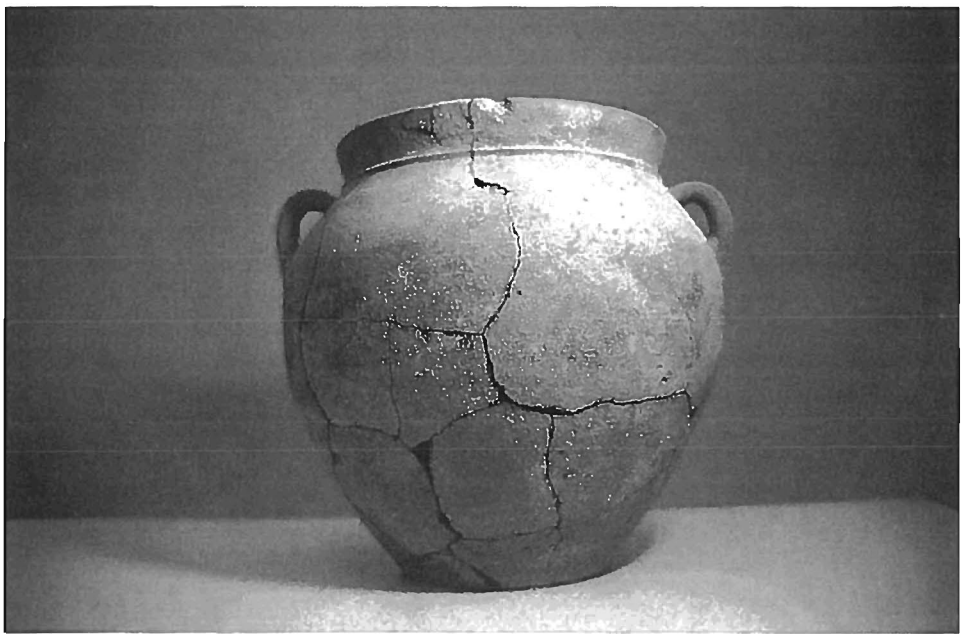


Fig. 4 – Cooking pot from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos.

[9] Kea: Willson, Cummer, Schofield and others 1984, 68 tav. 53; Georgiou 1986, 30 ff., pl. 7: considered as simple containers of food, since they lack traces of soot and fireclouds.

[10] From LM III cf. Knossos-Makritikhos (Hood, De Jong 1958-1959, 188 n. 18, fig. 6); Mavro Spelio (Forsdyke 1926-1927, pl. 23); Episkopi (Platon 1955, 622 fig. 3).

[11] For "portable-ovens" in some way comparable see e.g. MM Phaistos: Levi 1976, pl. 63f; for plates bearing circular impressions on one surface see in particular Mainland examples: Broneer 1939, 400-401, n. 30 fig. 83; Mylonas 1973, pl. 125; Mylonas Shear 1987, 109-112; Iakovidis 1989, fig. 9b.

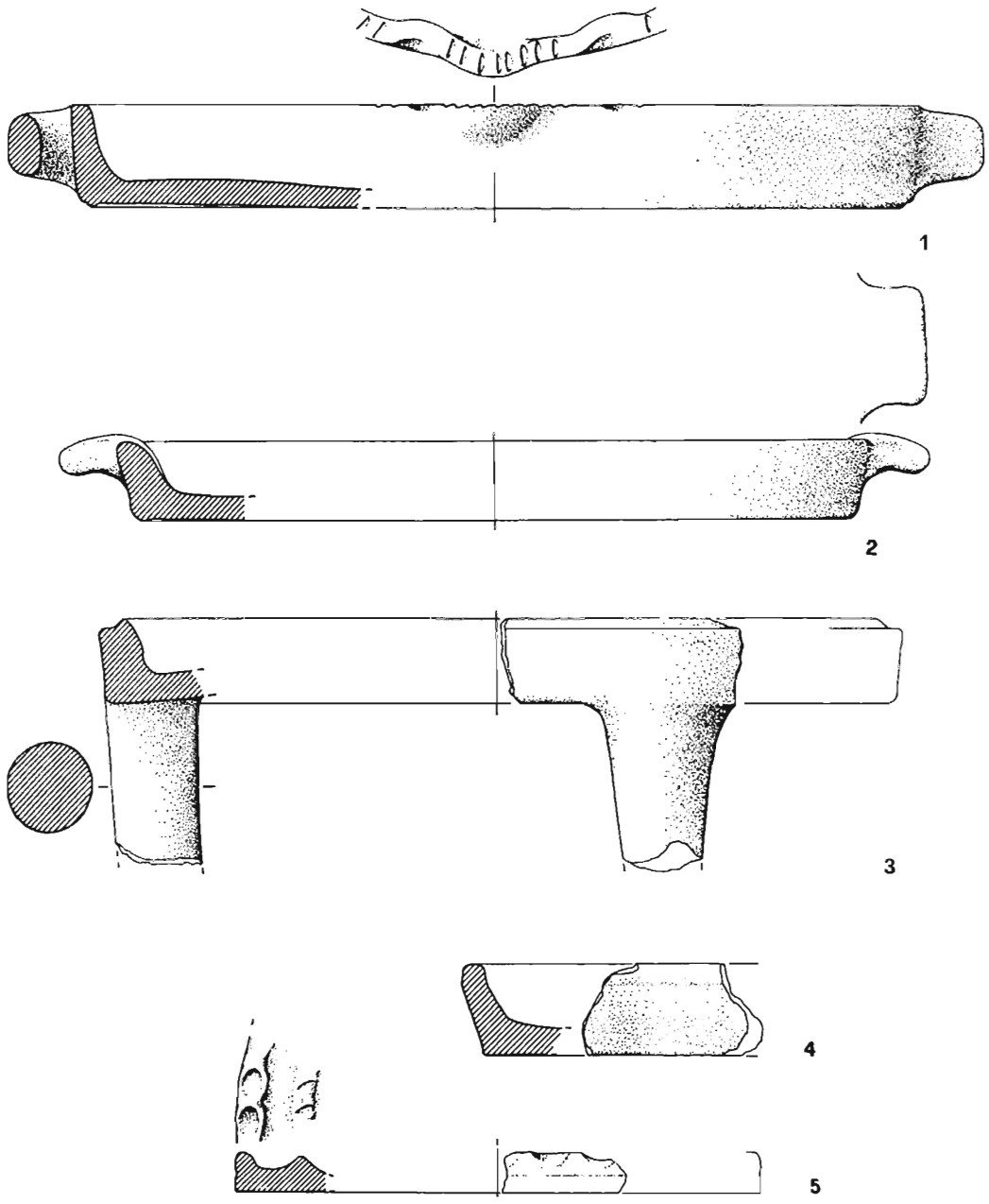


Fig. 5 – Tripod cooking trays and lid from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos (1:3).

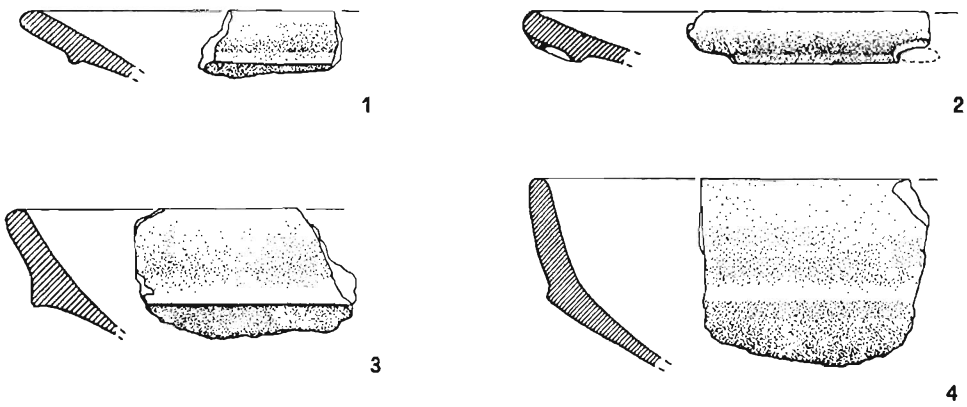


Fig. 6 – Cooking dishes from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos (1:3).

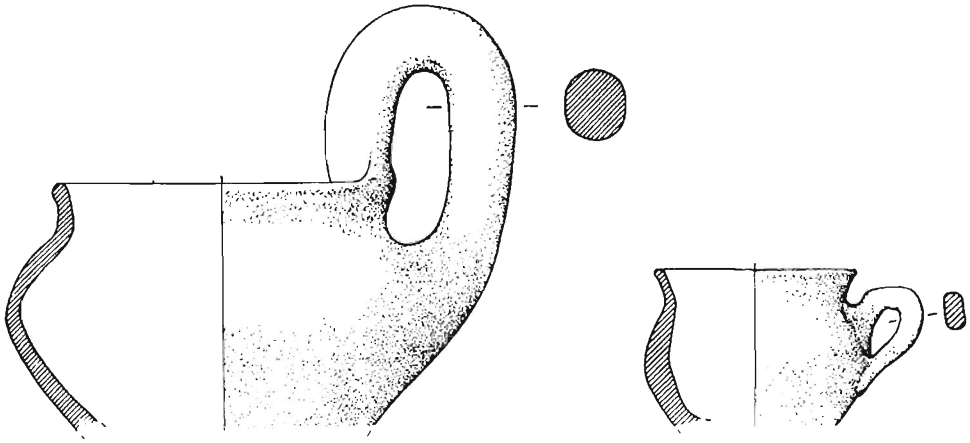


Fig. 7 – Dippers (?) from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos (1:3).

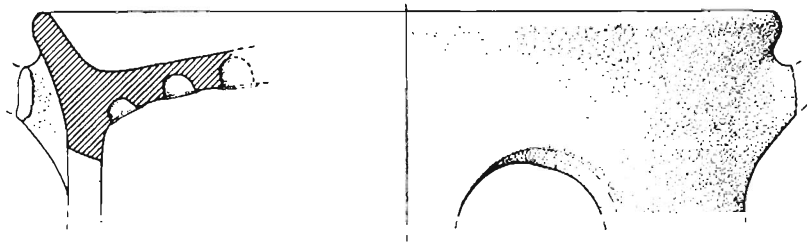


Fig. 8 – Portable oven (?) from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos (1:3).

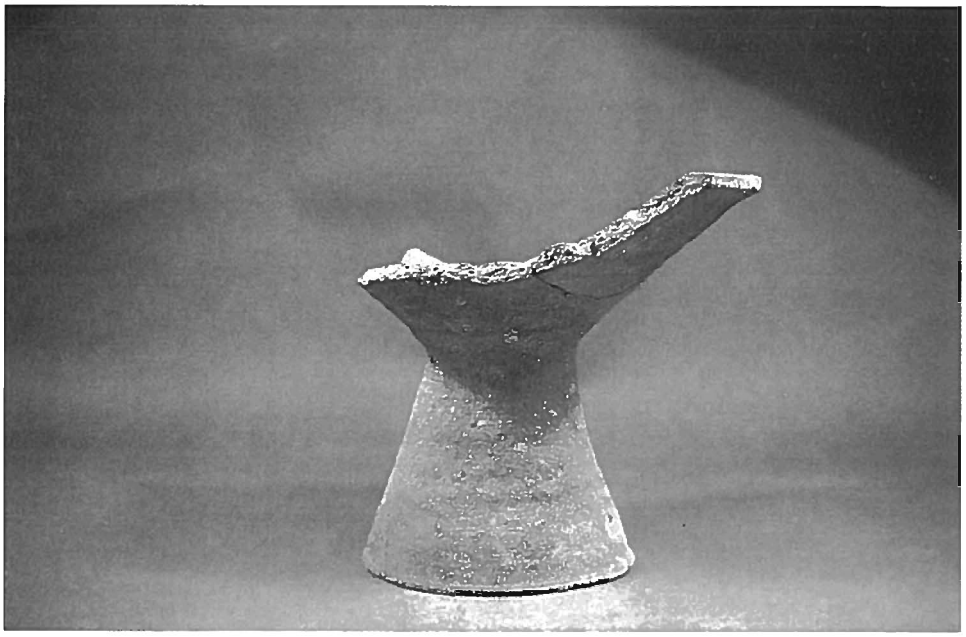


Fig. 9 – Pedestalled bowl from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos.

open hemispherical basin, provided with two vertical handles, a slight pouring lip, and with horizontal grooves under the rim (fig. 10)[12].

As regards the chronological and functional explanation of the material, I would like to make, at present, only a few preliminary observations, to be developed in the final publication.

As regards the cooking pots, a future systematic classification could attribute a chronological value to some morphological differences, most notably in the forms of the rims. Though their presence in the same assemblage seems to point to a long-lasting tradition for all these variants, the short distinctively everted rim seems to represent an earlier stage in the production of globular tripod pots[13], while the high flaring rim could possibly constitute a later step in the development of the collar-necked pots[14].

[12] Cf. possibly Watrous 1992, 144, n. 1616 (LM IIIB Kommos).

[13] Cf. Platon 1962, pl. 69 (Khondros Viannou, LM IIIA-B); "AD" 1989 (1995), 449 ff., pl. 249 (Chania); Hood, De Jong 1958-1959, fig. 6, 12 (Makritikhos IIIA 2); Watrous 1992, figs. 50 n. 1346; 62 n. 1654; 63 nn. 1663, 1664 (Kommos LM IIIB).

[14] See for example the pot in the late IIIC context of the Kephala tholos (Cadogan 1967,

Fig. 10 – Cooking basin from the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I", Phaistos.

As regards major morphological variations a functional explanation seems more useful for the presence of the open-mouthed cylindrical tripod pot in the kitchen set used by the inhabitants of the building. From a functional perspective, the hemispherical basin or cauldron, can be compared to this type fo vessel (fig. 10)[15].

As regards dishes and trays, suffice it here to make some observations related to function; ethnographic comparisons and techno-functional

265 n. 15, fig. 5); cf. Popham 1992, 65 pl. 48c5 (SM Knossos); the evidence is however much more ambiguous if we look at the Mainland situation, where funnel-like necked pots fit the evidence of LH IIIB products: cf. FS 230 in the House of the Sphinx and the West House (Tournavitou 1995, 92-93, Form 95).

[15] The basin shape is possibly comparable with examples of open, slightly rounded pots, sometimes provided with a convex bottom, attested in particular towards the end of the Protopalatial phase (cf. at Phaistos Levi 1976, pl. 187a, c) and probably imitating the early precious bronze tripods, such as the products at Mallia: Vandenabeele 1980, 71 ff., figs. 95-99; cf. Matthäus 1980, 100 n. 5; for the shape with hemispherical open bowl in some Linear A documents cf. ibid., 113, pl. 78, 3-4 (MM-LM I); see the huge cauldrons from LM I Tylissos (Hazzidakis 1921, 54ff.; Matthäus 1980, 82ff.; cf. below,); also for the hemispherical shape as attested at Phaistos it is possible to find a comparison in later metal models: see. below, nt. 20.

analysis agree in attributing to large cooking dishes a specialized role in the transformational chain involving "toasting" and baking processes, carried out by keeping the slightly convex and particularly thin walls in the embers or coals[16]. On this subject, it is worth observing that some details of the Phaistian dishes and trays, such as the pierced holes and the wavy rims with so-called "pouring lips", seem to be more clearly suited to allowing the circulation of air or assisting pouring of additive liquids than to handling in order to pour out water and/or liquids. Considering the evidence of lids fitting cylindrical trays, in particular, it seems possible to identify them as utensils not unlike portable ovens (Betancourt 1980, 7).

Finally, as regards the "pedestalled bowls", on the basis of several observations[17] these items could be considered as lids for cooking jars.

Kitchen-ware and Minoan-Mycenaean traditions in cooking and diet

To turn more specifically to the second argument put forward in the introduction, namely the interaction between Minoans and Mycenaeans in LM III Crete – thereby enlarging the analytical consideration of pots to include a short review of the Aegean kitchen-ware beyond the evidence of the "Casa a ovest" – we may observe that the globular LM III cooking jar (fig. 11:1) has almost exclusively a flat bottom, according to an earlier local tradition. This detail constitutes a distinguishing attribute if compared with the round-bottomed Mycenaean pots (fig. 11:2) and makes it possible to challenge the opinion according to which the Cretan productions depended on Mycenaean prototypes (Betancourt 1980, 5; Betancourt 1985, 155). From this point of view, the sporadic and isolated evidence of round-bottomed pots provided with vertical handles in LM IIIC contexts, such as at Karphi (fig. 11:3) (Seiradaki 1960, 7, fig. 4,3; Haggis, Mook 1993, fig. 26), could be used as a much more remarkable indicator of Mycenaean influence, offering evidence of close techno-stylistic similarities.

From the same point of view, the cooking jar seems to emerge as a special indicator in the discussion of two parallel if interacting oppositions: firstly, open cylindrical jars (fig. 11:4) versus closed subglobular jars (fig. 11:1-3); secondly, flat bases versus round bases. The former in both cases fit better with the Minoan evidence, the latter with the Mycenaean.

[16] Cf. Arnold 1991, 44-48; Henrickson, Macdonald 1983, 630-643; for Cretan cooking vessels cf. Betancourt 1980, 7.

[17] In particular for the shaping of the rim with a sharp angle and a flat surface, the internal surface sometimes roughly finished and the absence of a real foot or distinct base.

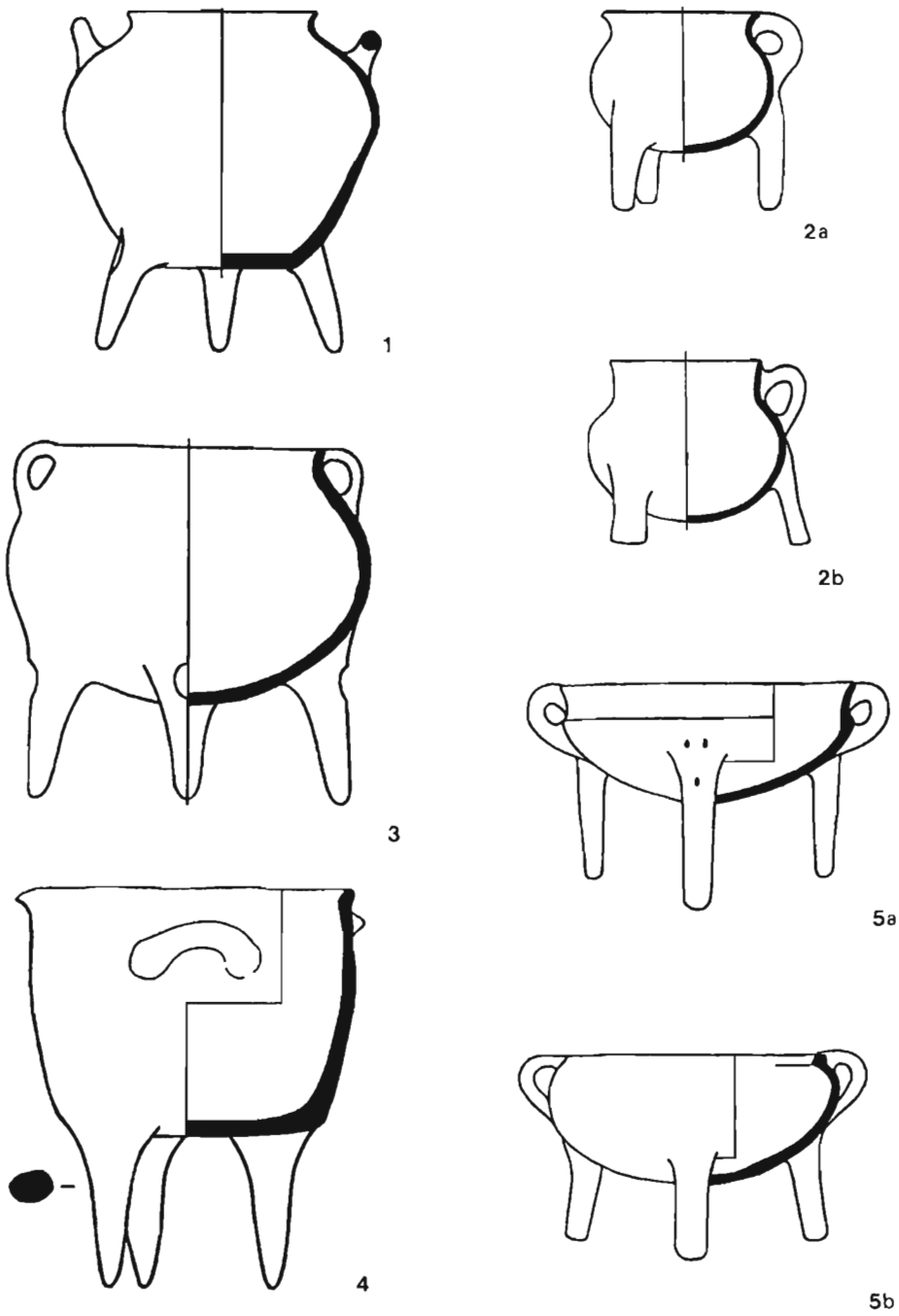


Fig. 11 – 1. Tripod cooking pot from Kommos (Betancourt 1980, fig. 1 C45); 2a,b. Tripod cooking pots from mainland Greece (Lefkandi: Popham, Milburn 1971, fig. 8,3; Mycenae: Wardle 1969, fig. 8,82); 3. Tripod cooking pot from Karphi (Seiradaki 1960, fig. 4,3); 4. Tripod cooking pot from Kommos (Betancourt 1980, fig. 1 C103); 5a, b. Tripod cooking cauldrons from Lefkandi (Popham, Milburn 1971, fig. 2,2-3) (1:6).

To develop this argument, I have started to explore, firstly, the attributes of the technological subsystems of the ancient producers[18], and then, secondly, the possible constraints acting in the links between form and function[19]. This I have done from a general anthropological and ethnological viewpoint, with particular attention to the possible ritualistic and symbolic connections embedded in the ideological domain of the Aegean cultures (Arnold 1985, 151 ff.; Miller 1985, 83, 150).

On the basis of the evidence provided by pottery, by its strict coincidence with metal vessel shapes (Matthäus 1980; Vandenabeele, Olivier 1979, 225-233), by ideograms in the Linear B tablets[20] and by iconographic sources in fresco painting (see below), it seems that in the Minoan world the traditional production of large-mouthed cylindrical pots was markedly affected by ceremonial and ideological constraints still discernible, though without any active roles, in simple domestic contexts, or, at least, was perfectly suited to ceremonial use. The shape possibly owes its long-lasting tradition to a major role enacted in open-air communal happenings and social meetings, where vessels were required to ensure direct access and enable easy manipulation of their contents, as is shown by the miniature fresco of Ayia Irini in Kea (fig. 12)[21]. Also a possible similarity with a kind of ritual "louterion", used for

[18] There is no space here to sum up and comment on the technical attributes affecting the efficiency of the pots: my observations are based especially on Linton 1944; Rye 1981, 84-85; Henrickson, Macdonald 1983, 630-643; Robertson 1983; Smith 1985, 260-261; Arnold 1985, 23, 144; Hally 1986; Rice 1987, 224-242; Arnold 1991, 44-48; Sinopoli 1991, 83; Skibo 1994; Sassaman 1995.

[19] For a theoretical viewpoint see in particular Hally 1983; Smith 1985, 260-261; Miller 1985, 74; Rice 1990; Henrickson 1990; Skibo 1992, 33-34; Aronson, Skibo, Stark 1994.

[20] Bruns 1970, 18 ff.; Vandenabeele, Olivier 1979, 225-233; Matthäus 1980, 113; Valenza Mele 1982, 103 ff.; Mountjoy 1993, 81-82; cf. Ventris, Chadwick 1959, 323. Considering metal vessels and tablets, the exclusiveness of the cylindrical shaped tripod to the Minoan tradition emerges more clearly, though in the bronze production the base appears sometimes slightly convex; particularly suggestive seems to be the link between the ideogram related to this shape and the indication "ke-re-si-jo we-ke" ("of Cretan production": cf. Vandenabeele, Olivier 1979, 231-233), beyond the exclusive distribution of the materials in Minoan contexts. The other tripod, hemispherical with round bottom, though attested in Crete (see above), is familiar to Mainland and Cycladic productions and possibly depends on northern Aegean traditions: see the Early Bronze Age documentation in Podzuweit 1979 (e.g. pl. 20); cf. La Rosa 1997; in particular in the Cycladic contexts it is possible to record together both round and flat-based jars (see e.g. Georgiou 1986); the few Cretan examples of round-bottomed pots seem to derive from the prototype of such bronze tripods (e.g. Levi 1976, pl. 187a; perhaps Martlew 1988, 423, type DI), as will be argued for the latest LH/M IIIC cauldrons (see above, nt. 15, and below, p. 208).

[21] Abramowitz 1980, 62, pl. 6a,b; Morgan 1990, 255 fig. 2; Mantzourani 1995; cf. Morgan 1995, 243.

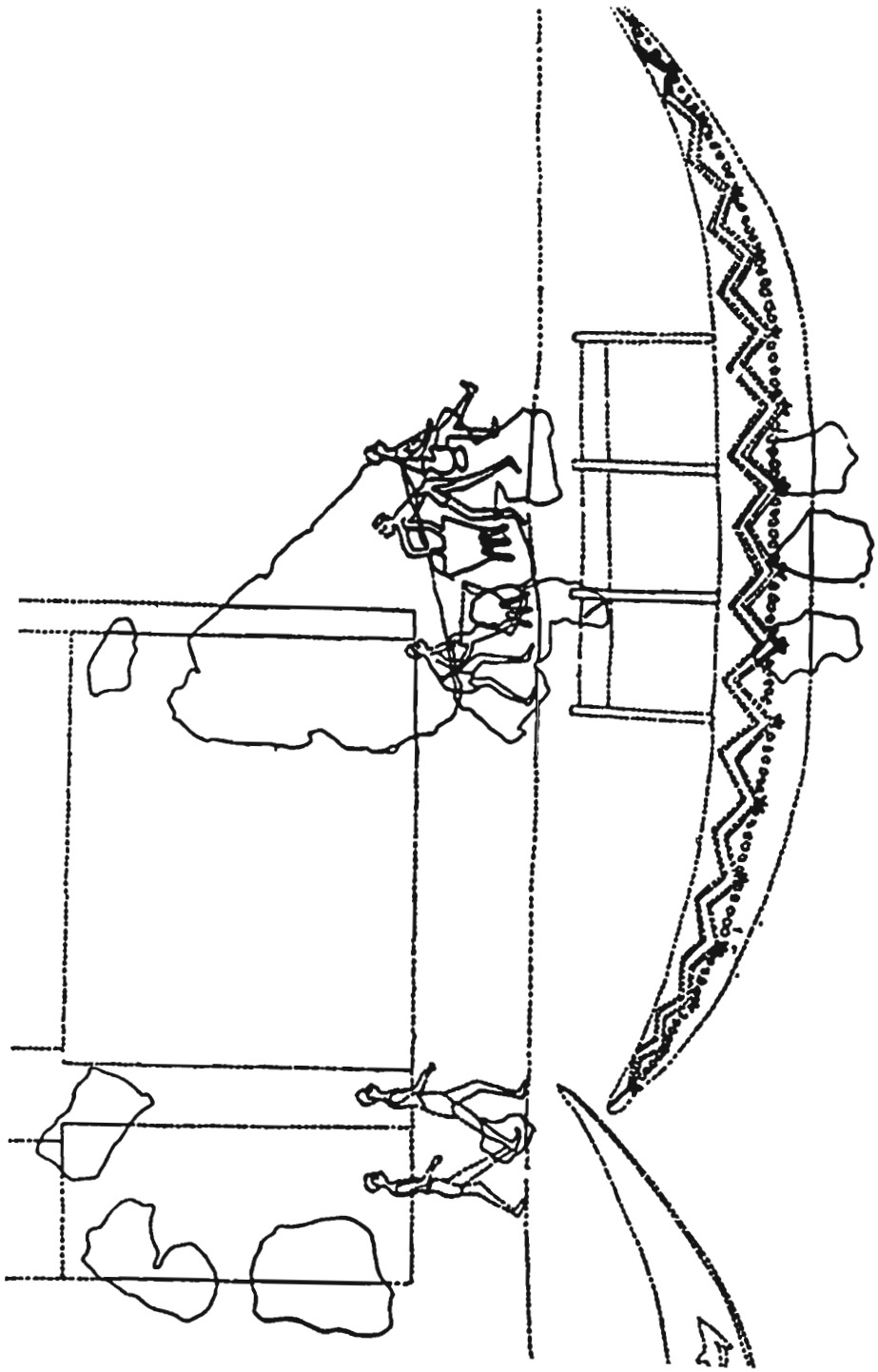


Fig. 12 – Fresco painting from Ayia Irini, Kea (Morgan 1990, fig. 2).

the heating of water in the ritual washing of the dead (Matthäus 1980, 114; Valenza Mele 1982, 114), could reveal a symbolic meaning, as is possibly suggested in the placing of jars in tombs; in this case, the removal from everyday circulation would stimulate public demand (Arnold 1985, 151 ff.).

From a purely technical viewpoint this shape, in most cases provided with a small spout on the rim, seems to be suited to the heating and rapid boiling of liquids, activities for which it was not necessary to control evaporation but only the risk of boiling over, here prevented by the width of the mouth. Conversely, the closed globular jar is well adapted, as is known, to cooking through slow boiling, and seems therefore to be more directly related to the utilitarian purposes of a cooking tradition mostly based on boiling.

In particular this latter pot, if it is provided with a round bottom without angles, would seem to encourage an even distribution of heat when submitted to a direct firing source, especially open fires and embers, a use clearly detected in some Mycenaean contexts with associations of pots and hearths (Mylonas Shear 1987, 111; Tournavitou 1992, 102).

From a more general anthropological point of view, the difference between round- and flat-based vessels is often explained as due to a greater degree of complexity in domestic activity, in the latter case one generally more developed and founded on so-called "indoor-kitchen", equipped with cooking plates and ovens (Robertson 1983, 120-121; Arnold 1985, 144-149; Smith 1985, n. 26; Longacre 1995). The possibility of contrasting with the Mainland hearth tradition a cuisine much more adapted to ovens and to a diet depending mainly upon baking activities seems therefore to be relevant to the Cretan context. Indeed, some scholars have already explored the Cretan evidence relating to cooking plates and portable ovens (Metaxa Muhly 1984). Maria C. Shaw has shed light on the general spreading of built ovens, at least from LM I-II onwards (Shaw 1990). Supporting this point is the almost exclusively Cretan distribution of vessels used for "toasting" and baking processes, such as trays and dishes. In this context one should take note of the built oven discovered, with a dish still inside it, during the early excavations at LM IIIC Karphi (Pendlebury, Money-Coutts 1940, 87; Seiradaki 1960, 9-10). Further important details concerning cooking processes could be added by the recent excavations of Quartier Nu at Mallia, with the possible evidence of the associated use of cooking platforms and ovens in LM IIIB kitchen practices (Driessen, Farnoux 1993; Farnoux 1994, 104-105), and in particular by the similar evidence of a well-preserved context of kitchen and storage activities at LM IIIC Chalasmenos[22].

[22] Coulson, Tsipopoulou 1994, 76ff.; cf. also Preston Day, Glowacki, Klein in press (Kavousi, Vronda).

Summing up, the two different traditions – in Crete that linked to the open cylindrical flat-bottomed tripod jar, on the Mainland the one concerning the globular, narrow-mouthed and round-bottomed exemplar – could be explained by taking various factors into consideration. Among these it is important to stress the more practical utilitarian concerns of Mycenaean producers, in supplying a simple cuisine founded on a tradition of boiling on hearths for domestic consumption (Mylonas Shear 1987, 111; Tournavitou 1992, 202); whereas on the Cretan side, we should stress the more powerful ritual and ideological constraints affecting the Minoan productions in a context of cooking based on structures planned for the control and the distribution of heating and, as regards basic domestic procedures, more adapted to baking processes and possibly to more specialized kitchen practices.

To support this impression, we can simply look back to the kitchen ware of MM palatial Crete, with its rich set of different vessels, including trays, dishes and different kinds of pots, such as low-walled jars or pans (Levi 1976, pls. 63, 64, 65; Martlew 1988). These seem to point to the development of that elaborate cuisine in which the diversification of cooking procedures, involving roasting, boiling, frying and in general transformation practices through the use of oil and animal fat, directly points to the complexity of social relations[23].

Conversely, the possible development of such a kind of "haute cuisine" on the Mainland does not seem to affect the general diet and the more common cooking practices. In the Mycenaean world, such a cuisine, if it ever emerged, remained exclusively linked to the highest levels of society and to the ceremonial display of the palace aristocracies, as attested by the prestige metal vessels. In this context, a type of bronze vessel shaped for ceremonial purposes, and at the same time representing an exact model for cooking pots, seems to be detectable only in the latest Mycenaean centuries, at the end of IIIB and in IIIC. The open round-shaped tripod cauldron with distinct neck, shown by some ceremonial scenes in the Pylos frescoes (fig. 13)[24], constitutes a direct inspiration for a well-known ceramic tripod cauldron, found in some important sites such as Lefkandi and Mycenae (fig. 11:5)[25]. It is thus possible to infer that in this period remarkable

[23] According to the suggestions of Levi-Strauss 1968; Goody 1982; cf. above nt. 3; for Crete cf. already Hazzidakis 1934, 58; for remains of fat or oil cf. Betancourt 1980, 7.

[24] Lang 1969, pl. 122, 21H 48; Vandenabeele, Olivier 1979, fig. 155; Immerwahr 1990, pl. 74; cf. Marinatos 1988, 15.

[25] Popham, Milburn 1971, 336-337, fig. 2; Wace 1921-1923, pl. VIIIb (Granary); cf. at Tiryns-Iria: Döhl 1973, 191, pl. 75; cf. Furumark 1992, pl. 174.

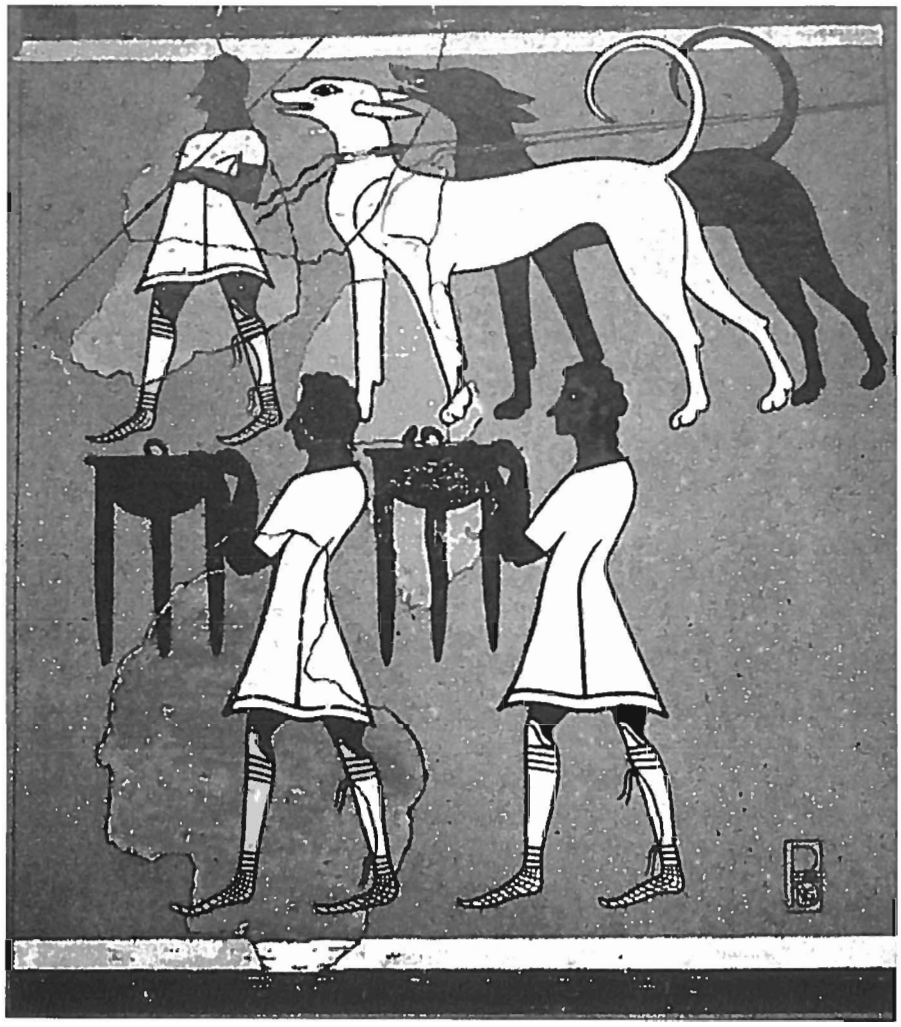


Fig. 13 – Fresco painting from Pylos (Immerwahr 1990, pl. 74).

ideological components and direct ceremonial constraints enter the field of utilitarian activities of the Mainland contexts as well. These ritual purposes depended on the needs of the new LH IIIC élites, engaged in founding and maintaining their power through the social and political behaviour familiar to a new pattern of society, which substituted the centralized palatial one. In

this kind of society, the previous structures of redistributive economy and of political hereditary kingship are quickly substituted by a reciprocity founded on obligations and personal relations. The increasing social competition provokes the search for alliances and support among the factions of warrior communities, in which hospitality and generosity could become, from shared values, instruments of control and even socio-political institutions. Feasting and communal meals are therefore typical devices of social exchange and are especially crucial to the survival of the emerging élites, who adopt earlier palatial practices and move to public social contexts, possibly open to the participation of larger social components[26].

This diffusion and transfer of the ritual banquet from the close spatial and social context of the palace to the surrounding settlement possibly leads to the common use of this new tripod pot, adapted to ceremonial activities. From this point of view, the evidence of the diffusion of meat consumption in the diet of larger social groups, detected by Kilian in LH IIIC Tiryns (Kilian 1991, 79; De Fidio 1989, 198-199; Albers 1994, 106), could be associated with this new pattern of social meals, in which the round-shaped open cauldron could cope with the practice of meat preparation[27]. Within this perspective, the transition between palatial and post-palatial IIIC society could constitute a major transformation also as regards kitchen procedures and even social practices belonging to diet and domestic consumption[28].

From this approach, considering more closely function and social context, one could doubt that a correlation ever existed between the diffusion of globular pots in Crete and a direct influence of Mycenaean immigrants. More relevant is the profound transformation of socio-economic organization in Crete at the transition from Neopalatial to Postpalatial society. In LM II – as has already been observed – the cuisine undergoes a radical change towards "private", everyday procedures (Shaw 1990, 250); as a cuisine of a crisis period, it probably departed for a while from communal performances, especially those linked to the open cylindrical pots, and, consequently, provided more directly for the needs of domestic households. In these contexts, apart from the globular tripod pots, the flat-bottomed pots without legs became much more efficient, matching a

[26] On that argument see e.g. Whitley 1991; Donlan 1994; Wright 1994; Deger-Jalkotzy 1995; cf. Borgna in preparation.

[27] For tradition in Greek historical and colonial contexts cf. Valenza Mele 1982, 119.

[28] The tradition referring to a change in the banqueting practices from roasted to boiled meat becomes, in this context, an argument which deserves careful consideration: Berthiaume 1982, part. 15-16; Valenza Mele 1982, 120 ss.

tradition of use familiar to much earlier Cretan domestic contexts, as examples from Myrtos show (fig. 14:1) (cf. above, nt. 7). Anthropological suggestions make it clear that when in pot-user communities the production units coincide or closely interact with the consumption units, the properties required by the latter, i.e. related to use, are more significant than those related to manufacturing technology or affected by symbolic and ideological constraints (Braun 1983, 112; Miller 1985, 187; Schiffer, Skibo 1987). This inference seems pertinent to at least some settlement contexts in LM III, where we can assume a radical change as regards demand and distribution of manufactured objects from a centralized pattern towards a more dispersed one, though we may not necessarily suppose a generalized household production (Peacock 1981; Rice 1987, 184).

Social context and ritual practices

In time, however, the local communities underwent many radical changes and, in particular during LM IIIB-C, new social relations had to correlate with new patterns of ritualized socio-political behaviour, as we saw for LH IIIC élites (above, p. 205).

Approaching the third argument put forward in the introduction, we come back to the Phaistian IIIC assemblage of the "Casa a ovest"; in particular, it is tempting to explain the evidence of some oversized pots and of the huge hemispherical cooking basin (fig. 10) – a vessel possibly linked to the IIIC patterns of conspicuous consumption[29] – from a socio-ideological point of view. The strict morphological coincidence with a bronze model as offered by the LH IIIC tripods from the House of the Tripods at Mycenae (fig. 14:2) seems to support this explanation (Onasoglou 1995, 22 ff.; fig. 56,2; pl. 11). From a preliminary analysis of the assemblage, I obtained the impression of a ceremonial, at least extra-domestic kitchen activity. As mentioned, the huge amount of kitchen-ware and in particular the size of some of the pots, exceeding the average, point to activities of food preparation and transformation for a consumption involving a social component larger than the simple domestic unit (Henrickson, Macdonald 1983, 631; Smith 1985, 260-261). Further evidence enhances this picture, namely: figurines – in particular the "psi" Mycenaean type; some fragments possibly belonging to a major class of figures; larnakes with elaborate

[29] In particular on the ground of his size the well-known, though much earlier, hemispherical bronze cauldrons from Tylissos seem to be related to a similar social use (see above, nt. 15).

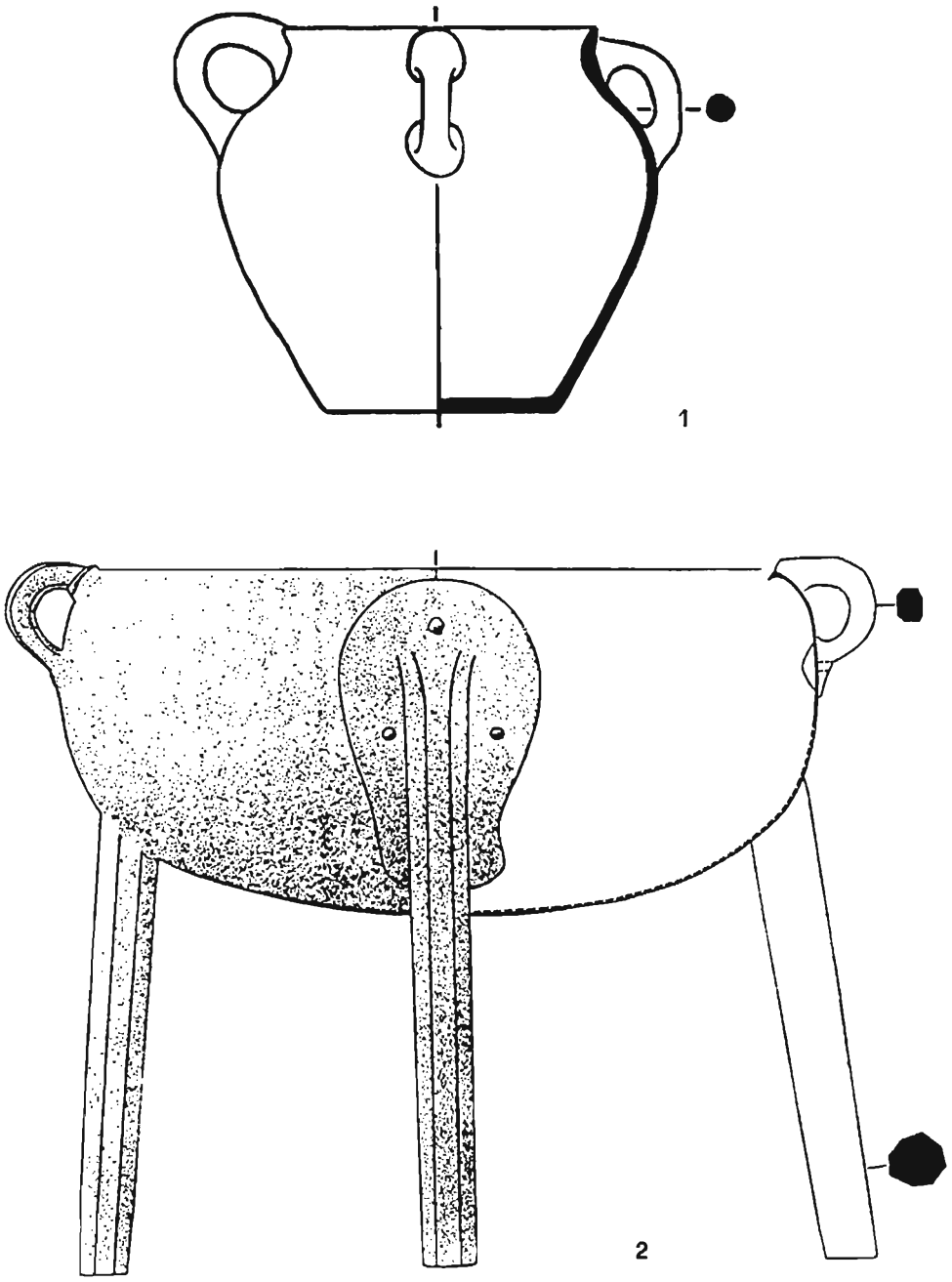


Fig. 14 · 1. Cooking pot from Myrtos (Warren 1972, fig. 61 P333); 2. Tripod bronze cauldron from Mycenae (Onasoglou 1995, fig. 56,2) (1:4).

decoration; bronze objects such as two sickles and a knife, conceptually related to both the main domains of food transformation, vegetable and meat[30]; all these elements seem to constitute relevant indications besides more general ones stressing consumption, in the huge pottery assemblage of richly decorated bowls and cups. Furthermore, two cooking jars discovered in the building still had their contents: according to the excavator's report[31], a jar filled with toasted seeds stood on a floor and another one with bones was intentionally buried under the same floor.

Clear links with cults and rites are suggested by the presence of the bones buried in a cooking pot intentionally discarded, bones which the newest results assign to a child. The behavioural context could point in particular to the field of sacrifice and offers[32]. The transformation of cereals seems to have, from both anthropological considerations and Homeric suggestions, a central role in ritual and ceremonial consumption as well.

Through the framework provided by the association of all these aspects we are bound to confront a subject crucial in the discussion of social and ritual behaviour, which belong to the Aegean Bronze Age civilizations but also extend to the Greek historical communities, that of communal meals and banquets[33].

However, these themes deserve to be explored in detail for the Phaistian kitchen. At present, as regards the possible "Greek" component, the strongest hints of Mycenaean influence in the field of consumption point to the diffusion in LM IIIB-C Crete of a social practice of drinking activity, as

[30] For a contextual comparison see possibly Coulson, Tsipopoulou 1994, 80-83, fig. 15; on the redundant role of the knife in the processing of meat see Marinatos 1986, 38; knife and sickles seem to be associated in the cult context of LH IIIC Mycenae: Albers 1994, 51-52.

[31] Excavation Report of L. Menna (1966) in the archive of the Italian School at Athens; bones and vegetal remains has still to be submitted to detailed analysis.

[32] Initially considered as animal ones, the bones actually belong, according to recent anthropological examinations carried out by Prof. Mallegni of the University of Pisa, to a child, most probably borne dead; burials of children under domestic floors are not uncommn in TE/M IIIC communities. Some similarities between funerary and sacrificial rites are especially relevant to Crete: between the two kinds of practice distinguished by N. Marinatos in the Minoan sacrificial ritual, the most suggestive for actual comparison seems to be that implying the offering of the sacrificed animal through burial, according to behavioural attitudes connected with funerary rituals and in some way opposed to the burning sacrificial practice; Marinatos 1986, cf. Sakellarakis 1970; Long 1974; for the relations between sacrifice and death see in particular Burkert 1972.

[33] See above; cf. Graham 1967; more recently, Burkert 1994; cf. Albers 1994 (131); for the historical times e.g. Bruns 1970; Schmitt Pantel 1992; see below, nt. 35, 36.

possibly shown by the widespread occurrence of the specialized set of deep bowls and kraters, well attested at Phaistos on the Acropoli Mediana, and as possibly predicted by the earlier spreading of goblets and kylikes during the previous phase of Mycenaean contacts, in LM II-IIIA[34].

The two subjects, that of a possible "protosymposion" and that of the ceremonial kitchen, could thus represent two important dialectical components in the ultimate Minoan-Mycenaean process of interaction.

Conclusions

Summing up the results obtained in this short discussion of three arguments arising from my research, each of them to be explored in full detail, I would like to conclude with the following preliminary considerations:

a) the kitchen-ware present in the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I" at Phaistos certainly represents a reliable sample of LM IIIC coarse ware production; in these products we can infer a great variability either as a consequence of complexity and specialization of cooking functions and of social organization of kitchen activities as inherited from the Minoan tradition, or, possibly, as an indication of productions no longer strictly standardized and distributed by centralized workshops or affected by centralized models;

b) the convergence of pot typologies in LH and LM III productions has to be considered more as a consequence of a convergence as regards economic grounds and social needs than as an influence of one tradition upon the other. In general, the globular tripod pot with round bottom is better rooted in the Mycenaean traditional productions, where it is more suited to utilitarian aims and to a diet based on boiled food for a domestic unit of consumption. The open cylindrical tripod pot, exclusive to the Minoan productions, seems to be strongly affected by ideological constraints which favoured its long-lasting transmission. In Crete, the scanty evidence of pots which could cope with the needs of slow-boiling cooking processes is outweighed by the large evidence of ovens and vessels related to baking practices, probably more suited to Minoan ritual as well as domestic consumption.

c) The strong increase of ritual ideologized behaviour and ritualized social practices affected the field of food and drink consumption in post

[34] Borgna in preparation; on the concept of symposium as social behaviour linking the protohistory and the history of the Greek world see especially Murray 1983; 1990; 1994.

palatial societies, in Greece as well as in Crete. To these general aspects it seems possible to link some material correlates, such as the open round-shaped tripod pots, similar to the late bronze cauldrons. In the "Casa a ovest del Piazzale I" at Phaistos the analysis of the context of cooking ware permits one to detect important evidence about communal banquets. As a general conclusion, we can infer that during the age of crisis and transformation the strategies of social control and political competition and dominance attributed a strong new power to practices well-rooted in the Aegean religious and ritual traditions and predicting, at the same time, later historical institutions.

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