

DEFINING A PATTERN OF CONTINUITY DURING THE DARK
AGE IN CENTRAL-WESTERN CRETE: CERAMIC EVIDENCE
FROM THE SETTLEMENT OF THRONOS/KEPHALA
(ANCIENT SYBRITA) *

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The claim for continuity of occupation in Greece from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age¹ was initially founded on the identification of Minoan and Mycenaean elements in the spheres of art and religion of early Greece. To take just one example which is particularly close to me, for Italian archaeologists working on Crete the idea of an uninterrupted development in these fields between the Minoan and the early Greek period represents a traditional belief given early expression in Doro Levi's analysis of clay figurines of the Cretan Dark Age, included in the publication of the cemetery of Arkades in 1929². Much later, in the early 1980s, Antony Snodgrass explicitly stated that the evidence of continuity in Crete, in contrast with a near-vacuum on the Greek mainland, was apparently due to the strength of Minoan survival in both fields³, while the idea of continuity of cult has enjoyed a large popularity thanks to the results of excavations in the sanctuary of Kato Symi where, according to Angeliki Lebessi, clear evidence

* I should like to thank L. Rocchetti and N. Prokopiou for useful suggestions and advice. My warmest thanks are due to Prof. P. Warren for reading this text and giving very helpful comments. Photos are by M. Petrarca, drawings by G. Merlatti. The following abbreviations are used: LH/LM IIIC = Late Helladic/Late Minoan IIIC; SM = Sub Minoan; PG = Protogeometric; EPG = Early Protogeometric; MPG = Middle Protogeometric; LPG = Late Protogeometric; PG B = Protogeometric B; G = Geometric; MG = Middle Geometric; LG = Late Geometric; EO = Early Orientalizing.

¹ Relevant bibliography on Dark Age Greece has recently been summarized in Morris 1996; Morris 1997 a; Morris 1998. See also Morris 1994.

² Levi 1927-1929; Levi 1968.

³ Snodgrass 1971, 401.

of uninterrupted cult activity from the Middle Minoan to the Hellenistic and Roman period has been found⁴.

A new trend in the study of the Greek Dark Age developed in Britain in the post-war period. Even though the focus was initially centred on art history, it soon moved to the social and economic transformations which eventually led to the rise of the city-state system. Three still fundamental volumes on the Dark Age, appearing in the 1970s⁵, were responsible for the shift. Among their basic elements was a moderate evaluation of continuity, which was founded on the recognition of marked regional variations and diachronic changes, and which cannot be detached from a balanced view of Near-Eastern influences on early Greece and from the idea of the 8th century BC as a period of renaissance. Thanks to these three works, debate about continuity has become an inquiry into the emergence of the different forms of the early Greek states⁶. One of the striking characteristics of early Greek societies is the diversity of their social and political institutions, and this diversity could probably account for the marked differences existing in the material evidence of the Dark Age – a hypothesis which applies to mainland Greece as well as Crete.

DARK AGE CRETE⁷ AND PATTERNS OF CONTINUITY

While it cannot be denied that, in contrast to the mainland, Crete constitutes a single cultural entity, fieldwork carried out in the last twenty years has shown beyond doubt that the island cannot be regarded as a unity

⁴ Lebesse 1981; see also Kanta 1991.

⁵ Snodgrass 1971; Desborough 1972; Coldstream 1977; see also Desborough 1964; Snodgrass 1977; Snodgrass 1987, 170-210.

⁶ Relevant bibliography includes De Polignac 1984; Morris 1987; Morgan 1990; Morgan, Whitelaw 1991; Whitley 1991 a; Whitley 1991 b; De Polignac 1995; Morgan 1996; Mazarakis Ainian 1997; Morris 1997 b.

⁷ On Dark Age Crete, the bibliography is enormous. Surveys may be found in Desborough 1964; Snodgrass 1971; Desborough 1972; Coldstream 1977; Snodgrass 1977; Kanta 1980; Warren, Hankey 1989; see also Haggis 1993; Rehak, Younger 1998. In *Central Crete* Knossos is a clear example of uninterrupted occupation during the Dark Age: Brock 1958; Coldstream 1972; Warren 1982-1983; Coldstream 1984; Coldstream 1991; Sackett 1992; Coldstream, Catling 1996. As for Gortyna and Prinias, Rizza, Scrinari 1968; Rizza 1996. In the Mesara, Phaistos, which was resettled in LM IIIC, probably underwent a change in the location of the main settlement during the SM period. The site should have been inhabited continuously throughout all the Dark Age, yet the pattern of occupation is still not clear (Rocchetti 1967-1968; Rocchetti 1969-1970; Rocchetti 1973-1974; Borgna 1997; Cucuzza 1998). During LM IIIC and SM, Ayia Triada functioned as a sanctuary site and was active, even if intermittently, until the 7th century BC (D'Agata 1997; D'Agata 1998; D'Agata forthcoming a). Kommos was deserted during LM IIIC (Watrous 1992) and a re-occupation as a

during the Dark Age, and that a pattern of profound regionalism, if not localism, must be recognised⁸. One of the many elements of differentiation is the form which continuity took within diverse settlements, or in other words the ways in which occupation of any one site between LM IIIC and EO developed. Recently, James Whitley has tried to explain this variability through a twofold model, which has its origin in ethnographic analogies and is founded on the notion of stable as opposed to unstable sites⁹. An obvious example of the former type is the major site of Knossos, which was a large settlement during the Dark Age as well as in the Bronze Age, and a later focus of urban activity. Conversely, Kavousi with its change of location from Vronda to Kastro around 1000 BC, has been ascribed to the unstable site type. Unfortunately this model cannot be universally applied to Dark Age sites, as Whitley himself admits. To take just one example, in central-western Crete, the site of Thronos/Kephala¹⁰ shows elements of both groups: it is not

sanctuary site started in SM (Shaw, Shaw 1993; Shaw 1998). For occupation in the Mesara plain, Watrous *et al.* 1993; Kanta, Karetsou 1998. PG and G tombs have been identified at Kaliviani, D. Valianou in AD 34B, 1979, 384. In *Eastern Crete* Kavousi, Karphi and Vrokastro, which were founded in LM IIIC, were inhabited continuously until the Orientalizing period, while Palaikastro and Zakro were abandoned in LM IIIC when the population moved to the high sites of Kastri and Lenika. Karphi: Pendlebury, Money-Cutts 1937-1938; Nowicki 1987; Kavousi: Gesell, Preston-Day, Coulson 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1995; Coulson 1998; Vrokastro: Hall 1914; Hayden 1983; Hayden *et al.* 1992. Recently identified or extensively investigated Dark Age sites are Khalasmenos and Katalimata (Haggis, Nowicki 1993; Coulson, Tsipopoulou 1994), Phatsi-Droghara (Tsipopoulou 1997); Praisos (Whitley 1998); Vasiliki Kephala (Eliopoulos 1998; Rehak, Younger 1998); see also Nowicki 1990, 1994. In *Western Crete* the few data at our disposal seem to imply, if possible, an even more striking local diversity. The most important town in the area in the Bronze Age, Chania/Kydonia, was deserted in the course of LM IIIC and not inhabited again until the mid - 8th century BC, Andreadaki-Vlasaki *et al.* 1997. LM IIIC occupation has been detected for the sites of Stylos Apokoronas, Khosti, Nopegheia, Vrysses, and Ghribiliana, while PG cemeteries have been found at Pelekapina and Modhi (Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1991). In the area of the classical town of Eleutherna, at the site of Pyrgi the earliest phase of occupation seems to go back to the LM IIIC (Kanta 1994, 72), while the cemetery at Orthe Petra dates back to the 9th century BC (Stambolidis 1994, 1996 a, 1996 b). In the eparchia of Rethimnon the site of Chamalevri was occupied during LM IIIC (Andreadaki-Vlasaki, in *Κρητική Εστία* 4, 1991-1993, 241-44; Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1995, 375), while at Atsipadhes an important LM IIIC, and later, cemetery has been discovered (Petroulaki 1915). In the valley of Amari, apart from Thronos/Kephala, the tomb recently found at Pantanassa shows that this site was an important one in the course of SM/PG period (Tegou 1998), as probably was the settlement on the Veni (Pendlebury 1939, 327). The sanctuary at Patsos should have been used throughout the period (Kourou, Karetsou 1994). Finally, a refuge site has been pointed out at Orne, near Ayios Vasilios (Hallager, Hallager 1997, 398).

⁸ Haggis 1993; Morris 1997 c.

⁹ Whitley 1991 b.

¹⁰ Spratt 1865, 99-110; Halbherr 1896; Hood, Warren, Cadogan 1964, 71-72; Prokopiou

such a large site as Athens or Knossos, and here no Bronze Age occupation earlier than LM IIIC has been detected. However, it was continuously occupied throughout the Dark Age, from LM IIIC to EO, a feature which is characteristic of Whitley's stable settlements and which still remains unparalleled in Western Crete.

Nevertheless, settlement continuity cannot be allowed to obscure local discontinuity in social and political organization. After the end of the PG period, on the southern plateau of the summit of Kephala, a monumental building called A1 was erected, which is remarkable for shape, technique of construction and dimensions, attesting to a profound change in the social organization of the local community¹¹. The construction of A1 started after 840, while its use may be assigned to the LG/EO period. Hence, the appearance of A1 may be interpreted as a hint of the transformation of the local settlement from a community of pre-state type into a well organized political entity, which could be equated to a *polis*. But, if a change in material culture was visible on the site at the beginning of the 8th century BC, what kind of process led to this change? What form did continuity take on the site between the 12th and the 9th century BC? In order to give a specific content to the pattern of continuity also in relation to the problem of the rise of the early state, the first step must be detailed examination of some coherent body of archaeological evidence at a local level, with the aim of identifying significant breaks, if any, in the archaeological record of the Dark Age period.

THE DARK AGE SETTLEMENT AT THRONOS/KEPHALA

The humble, clay figurine **41.29** reproduced in fig. 15 was found in pit 41 on the summit of Kephala, the low hill dominating the village of Thronos where a Greek-Italian team – of CNR/Istituto per gli studi micenei and the Ephoria of Chania – has been working since 1986¹². The contents of the pit included pottery which belongs to the SM period and may be assigned to the 11th century BC. The piece – solid, handmade, and modelled in an extremely rough way – represents a female figure still shaped in accordance with some of the rules established for much more pretentious clay figures in the Late

1991; Rocchetti 1994 bis, 229-35; Prokopiou 1994; Prokopiou 1997; L. Rocchetti, N. Prokopiou, A.L. D'Agata, in *SMEA* 34, 1994, 141-142; *SMEA* 36, 1995, 147-48; *Κρητική Εστία* 5, 1994/1996, 298-302; D'Agata forthcoming b; D'Agata forthcoming c.

¹¹ L. Rocchetti, N. Prokopiou, A.L. D'Agata, in *SMEA* 34, 1994, 141-42; *SMEA* 36, 1995, 147-48; D'Agata forthcoming b. The excavation of A1 has been resumed in 1999.

¹² *Supra*, notes 10-11.

Bronze Age¹³. Its uniqueness lies in having been found in a Dark Age sealed context which can be dated precisely: as everyone knows, a case quite rare even on Crete. Thus our piece may symbolize one of the main features of the settlement of Thronos/Kephala, namely its having been inhabited throughout all the Dark Age. The site is generally identified with Minoan *suki-ri-ta* and the Classical polis of Sybrita. Excavations on the summit of Kephala have confirmed the existence of an important settlement which was probably in command of the valley of Amari. It was founded at the beginning of LM IIIC and occupied continuously throughout the Dark Age period, and later. On the northern plateau (fig. 1) the remains of the LM IIIC settlement and a somewhat more limited one that developed over it in the PG and G periods, have been unearthed. On the southern plateau (fig. 2) the large building A1 was identified in 1995. Given the dimensions and state of conservation of the wall structures, reaching a height of 1 metre, it appears that this may well be one of the few examples Crete has to show of a LG/EO monumental building, and, as we said, it also offers evidence of a fair degree of political organisation on the site in the 8th century BC. In the area between the two plateaux (fig. 3) a series of 40 pits has been unearthed, carefully dug into the kouskouras and filled with soil mixed with animal bones, pottery sherds, ashes and charcoal. On the evidence of pottery found inside the pits they can be assigned to a time range spanning between LM IIIC and PG. In view of the continuity of life here in the Dark Age, together with the excellent state of conservation of the architectural remains, and the notable quality of the ceramic finds, we may say that the settlement on the summit of Kephala represents a complex so far unparalleled in Western Crete. Indeed, it is emerging as a site comparable to the great acropolises of Eastern Crete and one that will be making a fundamental contribution to our knowledge of the Dark Age period.

As material evidence from the dwelling area is still under examination, we shall turn our attention to the pottery evidence collected in the pits of the

¹³ The semicircular upper margin of the head – which may allude to a band or diadem – together with the position of the head, thrown back, and the feet, although somewhat roughly fashioned, standing out from the base suggest that the model 41.29 was inspired by were the large, hollow female figures of LM IIIC (e.g. Gesell 1985, figs. 48, a-c). The disproportion between head and body shown here can be seen in a figurine from Tylissos (Kanta 1980, 11, fig. 2, 5-6), possibly attributable to late LM IIIC. In contrast the style of the head finds fairly close comparison – although the iconographic type is clearly different – in a head again from Tylissos (Kanta 1980, 11, fig. 2, 7-9), and in certain fantastic animals from the shrine on the *Piazzale dei Sacelli* at Ayia Triada – C2.15, C2.16, C2.24: the first two pieces are attributed to the borderline between IIIC and SM, the third to SM (D'Agata forthcoming a) – and from the Spring Chamber at Knossos (Evans 1928, 136, fig. 69k).



Fig. 1 – The dwelling area on the northern plateau of the hilltop of Kephala at Thronos.



Fig. 2 – Building A1 on the southern plateau of the hilltop of Kephala at Thronos.



Fig. 3 – The central area where the pits were excavated on the hilltop of Kephala at Thronos.

central area¹⁴. The pits constitute a peculiar characteristic of the site, their features and general organisation implying, in most cases at least, that most of them were not intended as simple dumps; they should instead correspond to a more complex local behaviour, probably of ritual nature¹⁵. Leaving out their purpose for now, it is important to stress that the pits represent sealed contexts. The material found in each of them can be assigned to a relatively short span of time and has been ordered in a sequence starting as early as LM IIIC. I shall briefly examine the fine ware found in ten pits (**3, 5, 31, 36, 20, 41, 2, 10, 29, 30**) which range in chronology over the period between LM IIIC and an advanced phase of PG.

The chronological sequence for the pits was based primarily on the evolution displayed by the fine pottery collected from them, but for LM IIIC and SM it also appears to find confirmation in close matches observed in the

¹⁴ For a preliminary report on the excavations and a general plan of the area Rocchetti 1994, 242-43; Prokopiou 1994. Preliminary reports on the pottery from the pits are to be found in Prokopiou 1991, 1994, 1997. The archaeological evidence concerning the pits will be published in D'Agata forthcoming c.

¹⁵ D'Agata forthcoming c.

pottery produced on the mainland. Even though not found in stratified levels, the material recovered in the pits, and especially the fineware, affords the opportunity to follow the features of the local ceramic production, offering an excellent study case for identification of local patterns of change and/or continuity in material culture at the transition between the Late Bronze and the Early Iron Age. It also provides evidence to ascribe the local development within LM IIIC, assert the existence of a SM phase within the domestic context, and tie this chronological development up with precise reference points on the Greek mainland. At the same time, it also attests to a SM and PG occupation in central-western Crete whose features may be associated with those of the central area of the island¹⁶.

THE DARK AGE SETTLEMENT AT THRONOS/KEPHALA. THE CERAMIC EVIDENCE FROM THE PITS IN THE CENTRAL AREA

The earliest pits on the top of Kephala date back to an initial phase in LM IIIC, their most evident features being the variety of types of deep bowls, the presence of elements still attributable to LM IIIB and the clear distinction between Mycenaean and Minoan elements¹⁷. In particular, we note the presence of champagne cups, conical cups and small kylikes; adoption of the close style on stirrup-jars and, in a few rare cases, the pictorial style on kraters, and a number of elements of Cypriot origin.

The material in pits **3** and **5** dates to early LM IIIC. **Pit 3** (figs. 4-6) yielded 279 fragments and may be considered representative of the features of this phase on the site. Its main characteristics show that the centre was in touch with the rest of the island. In the fine ware the prevalent vessel is the deep bowl, to be found here in all the types attested on the site. This typological range is matched both by the types found at Kavousi in phase I of LM IIIC and the types singled out in the layer corresponding to the

¹⁶ On LM IIIC and SM, Desborough 1964; Popham 1965; Popham 1967; Warren-Hankey 1989; Warren 1982-1983; Popham 1992; Catling 1996; and the general discussions recorded in Hallager, Hallager 1997. On PG, Desborough 1952; Brock 1957; Snodgrass 1971; Coldstream 1972; Desborough 1972; Coldstream 1977. According to the absolute chronology established for Knossos (Warren-Hankey 1989, 169; Coldstream 1996, 410-11) the following dates may be assumed: LM IIIC = 1200-1100 BC; SM = 1100-1000 BC; SM/EPG (transitional phase) = 1000-970 BC; EPG = 970-920 BC; MPG = 920-870 BC; LPG = 870-840 BC; PG B = 840-810 BC.

¹⁷ It is in fact on the basis of this mixing that the pit evidence lends support to hypotheses on the ethnic and social composition of the groups forming the earliest settled community on Kephala. For fuller treatment of the subject, D'Agata forthcoming c.

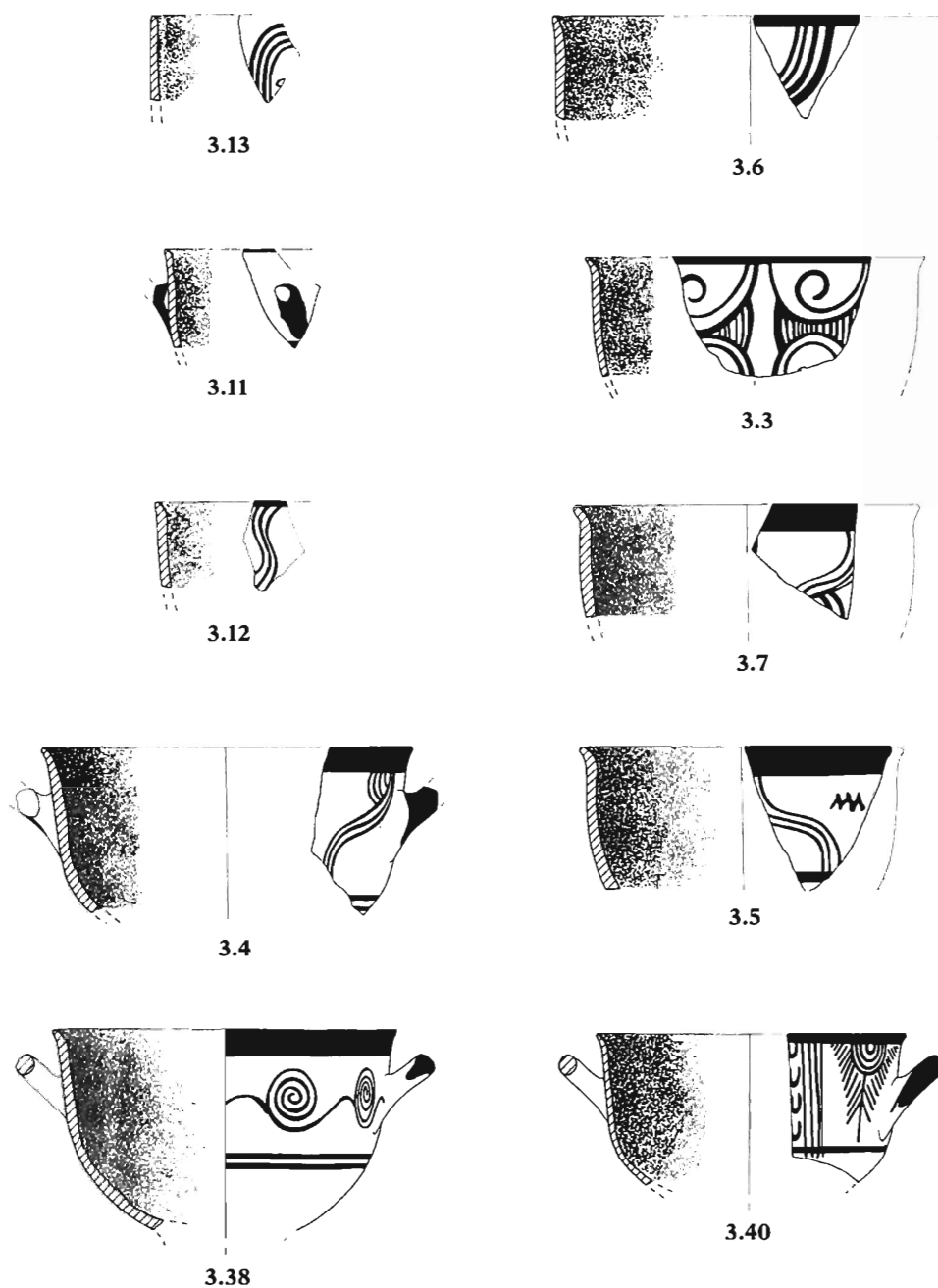
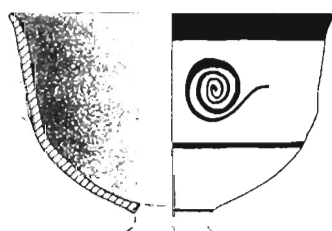


Fig. 4 – Pottery from Pit 3 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.



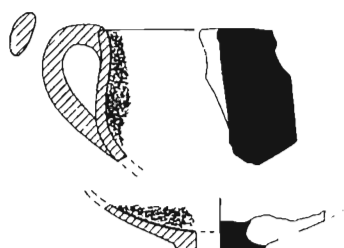
3.1



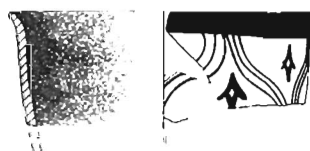
3.37



3.9



3.17



3.2



3.15



3.18



3.14

Fig. 5 – Pottery from Pit 3 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

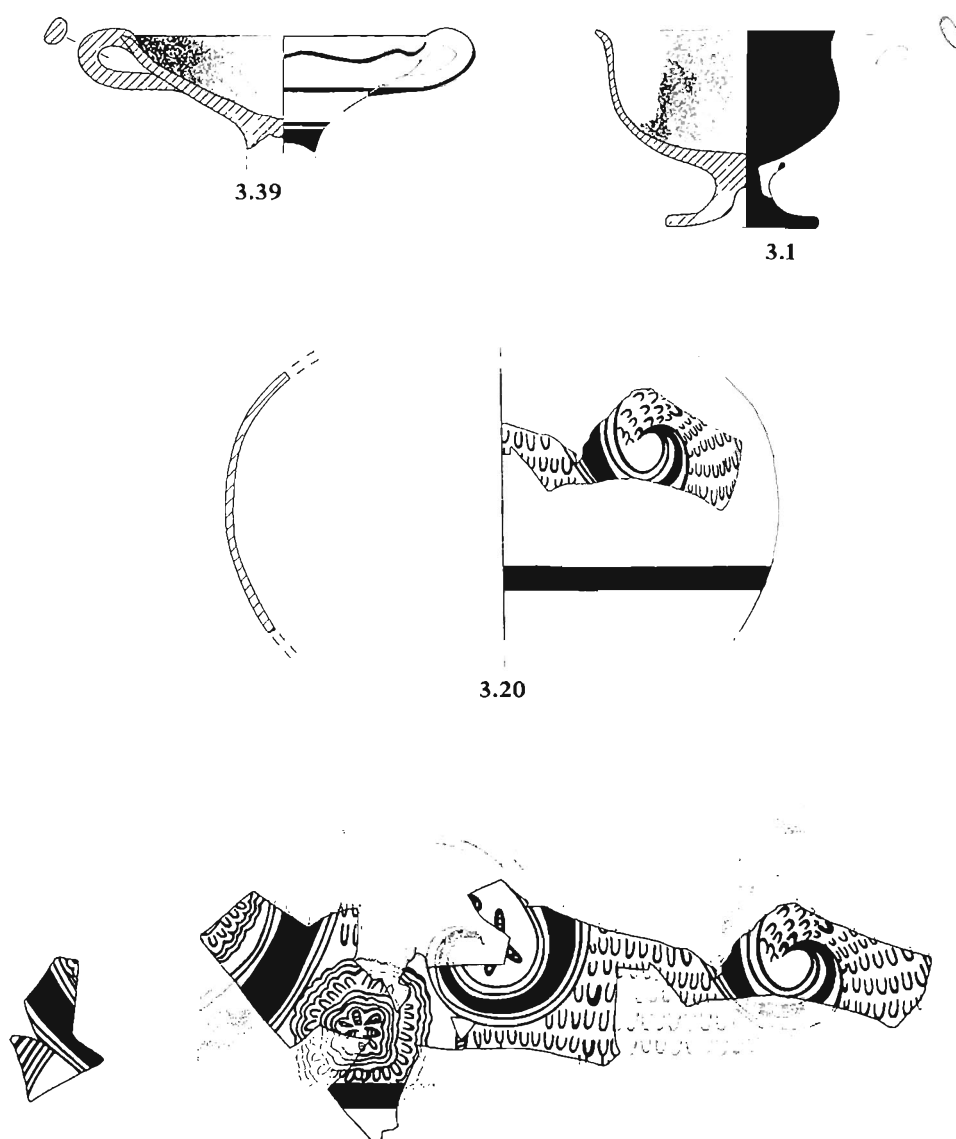


Fig. 6 – Pottery from Pit 3 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

destruction of the palace of Pylos, now ascribed to the transitional phase between LH IIIB and IIIC¹⁸.

¹⁸ Mook, Coulson 1997; Mountjoy 1997.

Type 1 (**3.11, 3.12, 3.13**) has semiglobular profile and straight rim, which may in some cases be oblique within¹⁹. This is the LM IIIC version of the traditional Minoan drinking vessel, i.e. the cup with semiglobular body, also attested on the mainland for this phase²⁰.

Type 2 with bell-shaped profile and everted rim is the most common here (**3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.38**) also constituting the most numerous nucleus on the site. It appears to be modelled on FS 284, characterising early LM IIIC and early LH IIIC²¹. Type 3 with vertical wall and everted rim (**3.1, 3.40**), well attested on the site and known to us from elsewhere in Crete²², also finds matches in material on the mainland²³. Finally, type 4 (**3.2, 3.8, 3.9, 3.37**) with flaring profile and everted rim, might prove specifically Cretan²⁴.

With regard to the bases, both the raised type with conical profile, hollowed underneath (**3.1, 3.14**), and the ring type (**3.15**) are attested, the former in a decidedly larger proportion.

For decoration the most recurrent motif consists of tricurved arches assembled in various way, they appear with arches on **3.4** and **3.7**²⁵, with zig-zag on **3.5**, with iris on **3.2**. The spiral motif is also present, isolated on **3.37**²⁶, running on **3.38**²⁷, antithetic on **3.3**²⁸. The decoration on **3.4** e **3.38** is still of the LM IIIB type.

Worthy of mention for outstanding quality of firing, smoothness of slip and gloss of the paint, as also indeed for the subtlety and precision displayed in the execution of the bands of linear decoration, are **3.1** and **3.40**, two

¹⁹ Tzedakis, Kanta 1978, fig. 2, 2; Borgna 1997, fig. 6, 1; Mook, Coulson 1997, fig. 8, 5, 15, 24.

²⁰ Mountjoy 1997, 111-12, fig. 12, 73-74, type 4.

²¹ Popham 1965, 318-23; Kanta 1980, 259-60. The type is widely known on Crete, at Knossos (Popham 1965, fig. 1 A, B), Phaistos (Borgna 1997, fig. 6, 6-7), Chania (Tzedakis, Kanta 1968, fig. 2, 1, 4, 6), Kavousi (Mook, Coulson 1997, fig. 8, 3 and 23), Kastelli Pediada (Rethemiotakis 1997, fig. 23, c and f), Palaikastro (Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, fig. 14, P2) and corresponds to the type 1-deep bowl which has been isolated among the material of the destruction level of the Palace of Pylos, Mountjoy 1997, 111, fig. 7, 32-44.

²² Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, fig. 8, c; Mook, Coulson 1997, fig. 8, 13-14; Cadogan 1967, 258-59, fig. 2, 4.

²³ Mountjoy 1997, figs. 8-10, 45-64.

²⁴ It is known at Chania (Tzedakis, Kanta 1966, fig. 4, 6), Phaistos (Borgna 1997, fig. 6, 9), Kavousi (Mook, Coulson 1997, fig. 8, 22; fig. 10, 26, 28).

²⁵ Popham 1965, figs. 4, 16; 8, 58; Rethemiotakis 1997, fig. 27, v, z; Warren 1982-1983, fig. 48.

²⁶ Popham 1965, fig. 6, 28-30; Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, 290, fig. 8, e-f, o; Warren 1982-1983, fig. 47.

²⁷ Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, fig. 8, h. See also Kanta 1997, 96.

²⁸ Rethemiotakis 1997, fig. 34, d.

vessels closely resembling one another, both decorated with the panelled pattern. The decorative motif on **3.40** shows combination of a specifically Minoan element, i.e. the 'u' motif, and the panelled pattern of mainland origin²⁹.

Another aspect of the deep bowls from this pit worth noting is the absence of a reserved band at the rim³⁰ and, in terms of linear decoration, the presence of one or two bands below the frieze.

Other open vessels are attested with just a few examples: the blob cup **3.17**, the champagne cup **3.35** and the small kylix **3.39**. The blob cup **3.17**, to judge by the raised base and deep body differing from the traditional Minoan cup, should be included among the types showing combinations of local and mainland features³¹. The type is attested at Kavousi from the earliest phase of IIIC³², although not particularly common in Crete during this period³³. **3.17** differs in form from the examples from Kavousi³⁴, appearing closer to an example from Karphi³⁵ in terms of body form and base profile. Base **3.18** on the other hand, also attributable to a blob cup, appears to belong to the type well represented in the local tradition.

Kylix **3.39** shows a low, carinated body on a solid, thin stem, considered typical of LM IIIC early³⁶. An unusual feature is the wavy line as the only decorative motif³⁷. Champagne cup **3.35**, decorated by immersion, is little attested as a type on the site, but known in Crete in early LM IIIC³⁸. **3.20** is a

²⁹ Popham 1965, 321-24.

³⁰ It has to be stressed that a reserved band has not been detected on the deep bowls found in the pits of LM IIIC early at Thronos/Kephala, and it is considered rare on the coeval material from the nearby site of Chamalevri, see Hallager, Hallager 1997, 108. On the Cretan origin of the reserved band, Tzedakis, Kanta 1978, 15-16; Kanta 1997, 97.

³¹ The deep cup with flaring rim and raised base is an innovation of early LH IIIC contrasting with the shallow cup of LH IIIB2 (Mountjoy 1986, 146-47); the blob decoration is well attested, e.g. at Perati, on various types of cups: cf. Iacovidi 1970, 215-16, pl. 186 a, where it might also be of Cretan derivation.

³² Mook, Coulson 1997, 347.

³³ Kanta 1980, 267.

³⁴ Gesell 1990, 327, pl. 35 (equivalent to Seiradaki 1960, fig. 14, cup 1) although sharing with it the raised base.

³⁵ Seiradaki 1960, fig. 14, cup 2.

³⁶ Hallager 1997, 38-39. This in fact is the recurrent type in phase I of LM IIIC at Kavousi (Mook, Coulson 1997, 348, no. 31).

³⁷ On the motif, Popham 1965, 324, fig. 5, 24. See also the kylix from Ayia Triada in Kanta 1980, fig. 40, 2.

³⁸ For an LM IIIB type, cf. Tzedakis, Kanta 1978, 21, fig. 14, 14; see also Hallager 1997, 37. LM IIIC examples are known to us from Palaikastro (Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, 298, P22, fig. 15) and Kavousi (Gesell 1990, fig. 6, 15); see also the monochrome example from Chania in Hallager 1997, 40, fig. 40. On the type in general, Hallager 1997, 40.

small stirrup-jar with globular body³⁹ corresponding to FS 180, decorated as far as the lower wall in Octopus Style⁴⁰. Of the decoration there remain the ends of two tentacles, possibly adorning the back of the vessel, and 'u' motifs and rosettes showing a typically Cretan combination of motifs known on stirrup-jars from Eastern Crete⁴¹. The vase from Thronos also shows that the style was formed in LM IIIC early⁴².

Pit 5 (figs. 7-8), excavated on the southern part of the summit and cut at the southern edge by a later wall, yielded 253 fragments, kitchenware being the most common ceramic class. Of the fineware, the deep bowl is the prevalent shape here attested mainly in type 2 (**5.17a**, **5.29**, **5.34**) with curving profile and everted rim, which, as we have seen, is the most common on the site. **5.30**, on the other hand, belongs to type 4.

On the evidence of both form and decoration **5.34** is one of the earliest vessels so far found on the site⁴³. The concentric semicircles on **5.29** can also be seen in very similar form on a bowl from Chania⁴⁴. The panelled pattern with antithetic loops on **5.30** and the wavy line on **5.1** may be seen as typical mainland motifs⁴⁵. On **5.17a** there is the earliest example of V-motif, which looks like a debased version of the tricurved streamer⁴⁶ and which will be popular in the site in LM IIIC and SM. The motif is attested at Phaistos⁴⁷,

³⁹ Seiradaki 1960, 16, fig. 11, 2; Kanta 1980, 247, fig. 24, 5-6.

⁴⁰ On the origin of the style, Desborough 1964, 7; Popham 1965, 332; Betancourt 1985, 181-84. See also Kanta 1980, 255-56.

⁴¹ Cf. the stirrup-jar from Kritsa in Kanta 1980, 255-56, fig. 136, 1, and the one from Vasiliki in Popham 1967, pl. 89, f. For the composite rosette with wavy outline and petals painted with horizontal strokes, Kanta 1980, fig. 137, 2 (Myrsini); for the floral elements with petals painted with horizontal strokes see the vase from Kritsa cited above, Kanta 1980, fig. 136, 1.

⁴² On the mainland the stirrup-jars in Octopus Style do not appear prior to middle and late LH IIIC, and have been taken to be of Cretan derivation (Rutter 1977, 3; Mountjoy 1986, 156, 169). On Cretan exports and the local production of Rhodes and the Dodecanese in LH IIIC, Macdonald 1986, 135-38; Benzi 1992, 86-91. The original inspiration of the style must go back to Chania and the local Kydonian Workshop of LM IIIB, as indicated by the examples of stirrup-jars attributable to that period and already showing decoration with octopus and rosette with wavy outline: cf. in particular two vessels from Gournes and Kalokoraphitis, in Kanta 1980, 48, fig. 22, 3; 107, fig. 43, 4.

⁴³ For a very similar vase from early LM IIIC levels of Knossos, Warren 1982-1983, fig. 48. See also *supra*, note 25.

⁴⁴ Tzedakis, Kanta 1968, fig. 8, 5. On the motif, Popham 1965, 324.

⁴⁵ Panelled pattern: Popham 1965, 321-22. For wavy vertical lines at the centre of a panel, Rethemiotakis 1997, 316, fig. 30. For wavy line, Popham 1965, fig. 5, 20.

⁴⁶ Cf. e.g. Popham 1965, 336, fig. 4, 12-15; Andreadaki-Vlasaki 1991, 406, no.1.

⁴⁷ Borgna 1997, fig. 6, 2.

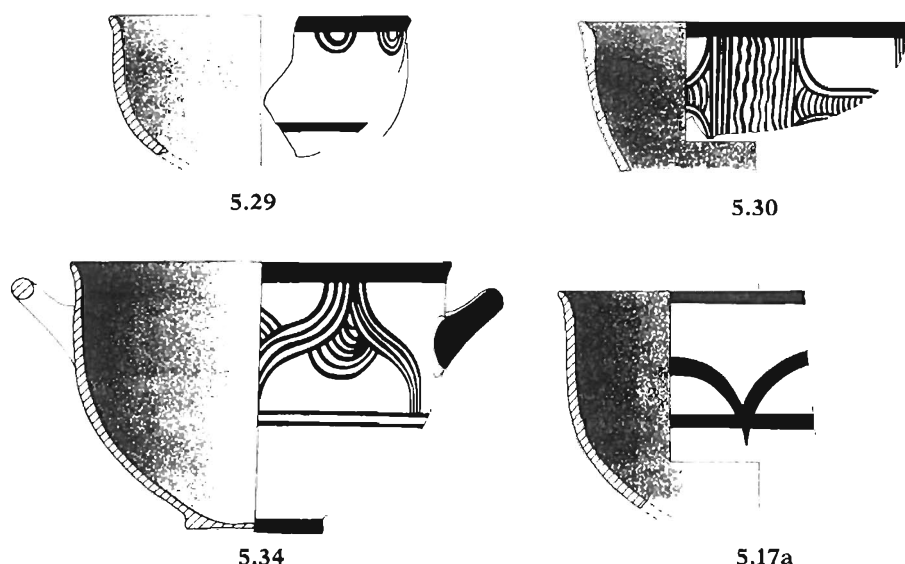


Fig. 7 – Pottery from Pit 5 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

but seems unknown at Knossos⁴⁸ and might therefore be seen as a feature developing in southern-central Crete at the very beginning of LM IIIC⁴⁹. Krater **5.32**, a deep biconical shape, is fashioned on the model of deep bowl FS 284, amply attested in the Cypriot world and also documented in Crete⁵⁰. The decorative motif⁵¹ is also typical of this shape in Cyprus. Finally, **5.28** is an early example of stirrup-jar, of ovoid shape, decorated in Close Style⁵².

Although only a few fragments have been found there, **pit 31** (fig. 9) is of great chronological importance having yielded material finding close matches on the mainland and constituting a distinct watershed between the pits attributed to early and late LM IIIC. Altogether, the material seems to amount to a few table vessels (at least one cup and a deep bowl), a cooking pot and a miniature cooking vessel. Jug **31.4**, ovoid in form and decorated on the shoulder with the FM 72 'necklace', corresponds to FS 106

⁴⁸ Missing from the early LM IIIC levels of the Stratigraphical Museum excavation (P.M. Warren, pers. comm.), but cfr. Warren 1982-83, 79, fig. 42 left.

⁴⁹ See D'Agata forthcoming c.

⁵⁰ Kling 1989, 108-125, fig. 3, c; see also Hall 1914, fig. 49, B; Borgna 1997, fig. 20, 18.

⁵¹ Hall 1914, fig. 49, B; Popham 1965, fig. 3.

⁵² Kanta 1980, 254-56. For a similar decoration of antithetic spirals with fringed arcs in between, Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, fig. 9, kj.

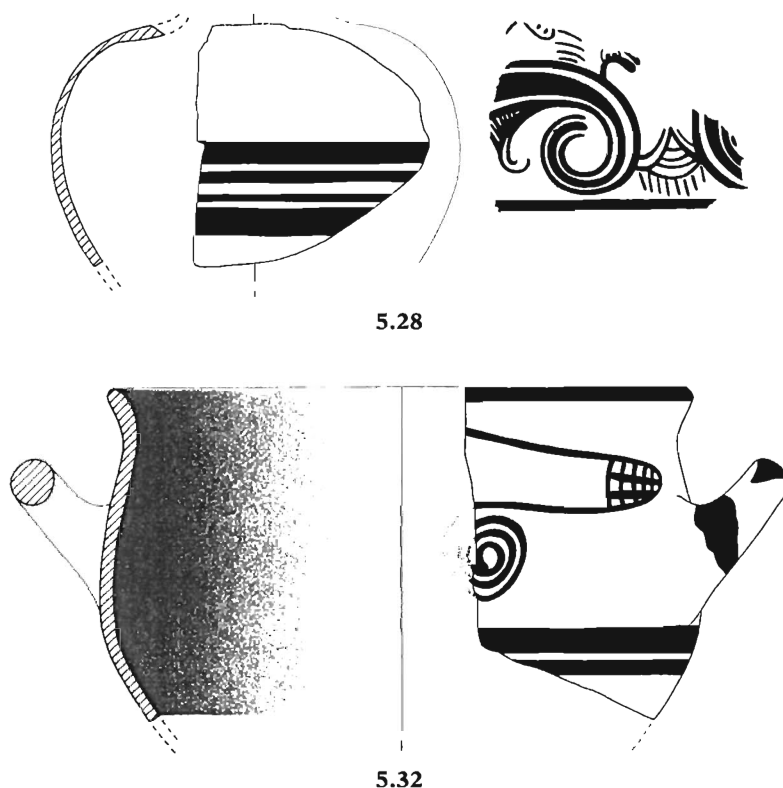


Fig. 8 – Pottery from Pit 5 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

attributed to middle LH IIIC, apparently constituting a variant⁵³. Again, cup **31.5** shows an unusual form for Crete; the tall, flared rim, vertical walls and deep body suggest affinities with FS 215-216⁵⁴. The absence of decoration, with the exception of one broad band at the inner rim, finds no precise counterpart among the mainland examples, which are characterised by a band at the outer rim and monochrome paint or linear decoration within. Here we seem to have a local elaboration of a non-Minoan form. In terms of mainland production, the two vessels may be attributed to a mid phase of IIIC⁵⁵.

⁵³ Mountjoy 1986, 165, fig. 209.

⁵⁴ Mountjoy 1986, figs. 183, 219.

⁵⁵ According to the excavator, two phases, roughly corresponding to LH IIIC early and middle, have been isolated at Kastelli Pediada, Rethemiotakis 1997.

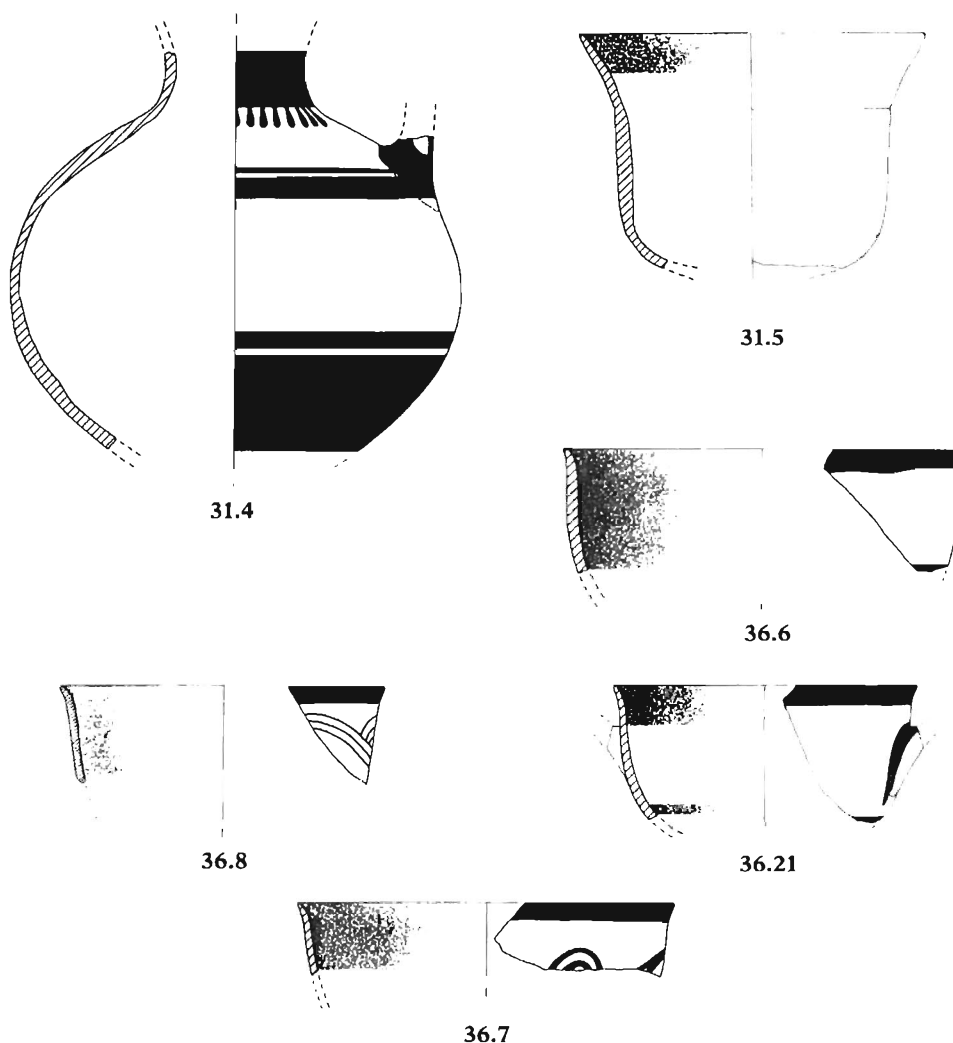


Fig. 9 – Pottery from Pit 31 and Pit 36 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

Attribution to late LM IIIC has been made for a number of pits showing in general a certain limitation in ceramic repertory. Moreover, we find: a distinct reduction in decorative motifs and the appearance of monochrome among the deep bowls together with the almost total disappearance of flat bases; irregularities in the manufacture of open vessels (spattering, turning of the bases); the introduction of some new forms, although produced sporadically; a repertory nevertheless still recognisable as IIIC. A feature

common to certain late IIIC pits and most of the SM pits is the presence of a very hard, compact and overfired fabric unknown to the pottery of the earlier pits.

The large **pit 36** (figs. 9-10), assigned to this phase, is located in the central area, just to the north of the Byzantine wall which crosses the summit of Kephala from east to west. Pit 36 yielded 629 pottery sherds, among which kitchen ware is prevalent. The deep bowl is again the prevalent shape, documented in types 2 (**36.6, 36.21**), 3 (**36.1, 36.8, 36.20**) and 4 (**36.7**). The bases (**36.1, 36.2, 36.3, 36.20**) tend to the tall and conical. Still present are raised, flat examples (**36.5, 36.27**). Among the few motifs occurring, there are zig-zag (**36.1**) and the V-shaped motif (**36.20**) recognized in pit 5. **36.21** is a rare example of a deep bowl decorated inside with bands. Kraters **36.30** and **36.19** belong to two slightly different types. **36.19** has a semi-globular bowl and protruding triangular rim⁵⁶, which appears close to FS 282 of the middle LH IIIC⁵⁷. As for decoration, the elaborate composition consisting mainly of triangular spaces infilled with concentric arches, inside rectangular panels, finds a parallel in the stirrup-jars of burial VI A at Gypsadhes, attributable to the beginning of the SM period⁵⁸. **36.30**, with its vertical wall, protruding triangular rim and a moulding below the rim might well represent a slightly more evolved version of the previous form. To be noted is the treatment with spattering on the inside, which was to become typical of SM and EPG.

Attributed to the same phase is the material found in **pit 20** (figs. 11-12), which yielded 327 fragments. Features evidencing later production are the presence of the deep monochrome bowl and irregularities in the turning of the bases, together with the appearance of such an unusual type as the wide-mouthed jar **20.1**, again made with the overfired fabric which we consider typical of this phase.

Deep bowl **20.2** corresponds to type 3, with almost vertical walls, while **20.8** and **20.18**, both fragmentary, could belong to type 3 or type 1, if a semiglobular profile has to be reconstructed for them. The bases are mainly conical in profile and slightly hollowed underneath (**20.2, 20.4, 20.5, 20.14**),

⁵⁶ Cf. Rethemiotakis 1997, fig. 15, e.

⁵⁷ Mountjoy 1986, fig. 223, 2. Popham (1965, 318, note 14 and fig. 9) defines a krater with triangular rim and vertical walls as the local equivalent to FS 281, belonging to LH IIIB2, although it shows an oblique rim.

⁵⁸ Hood, Huxley, Sandars 1958-1959, 247, fig. 28, VI A, 2-3. Burial VI A should be taken to be SM, cf. Catling 1996, 309.

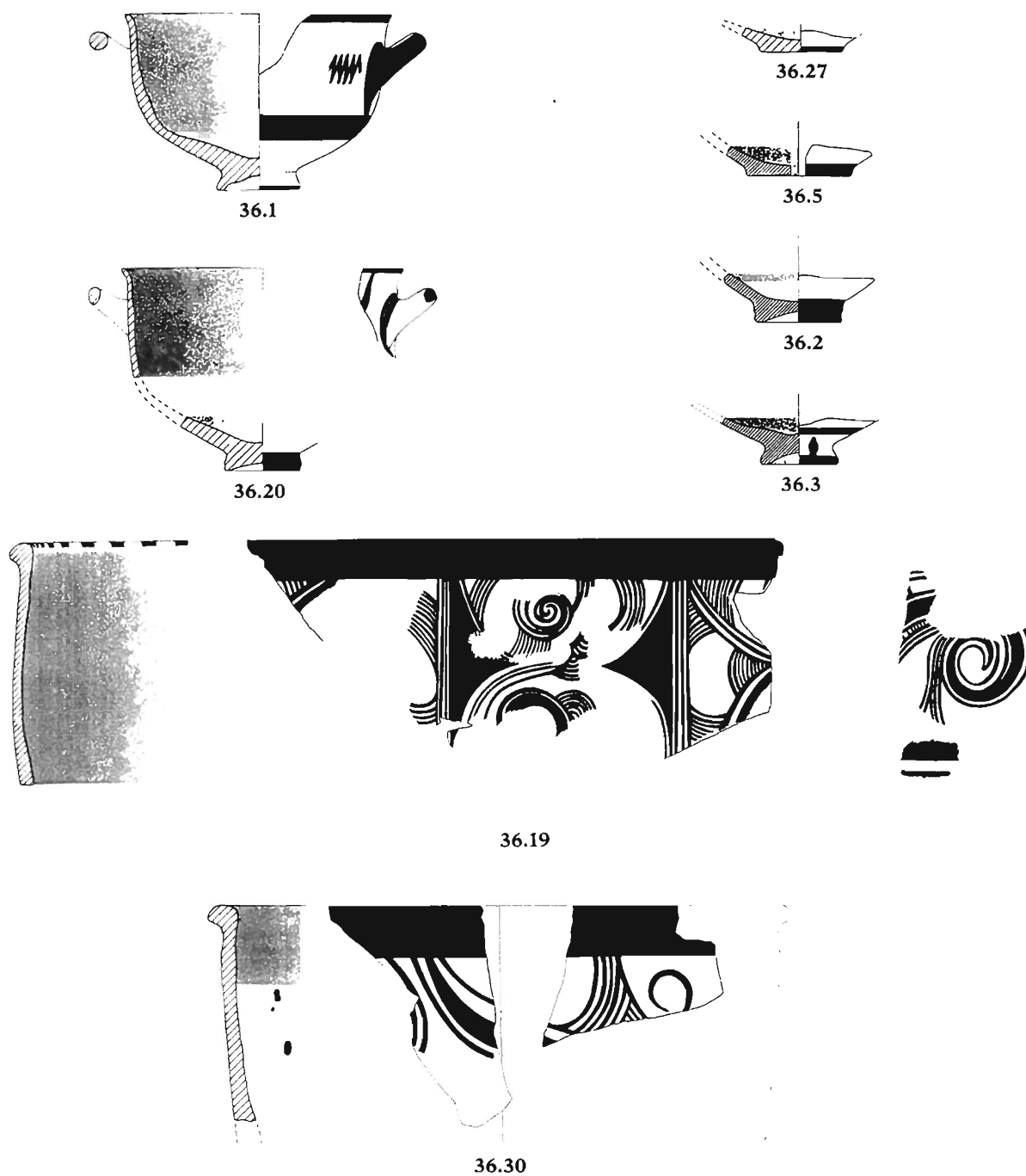


Fig. 10 – Pottery from Pit 36 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3, except **36.19** at 1:4.

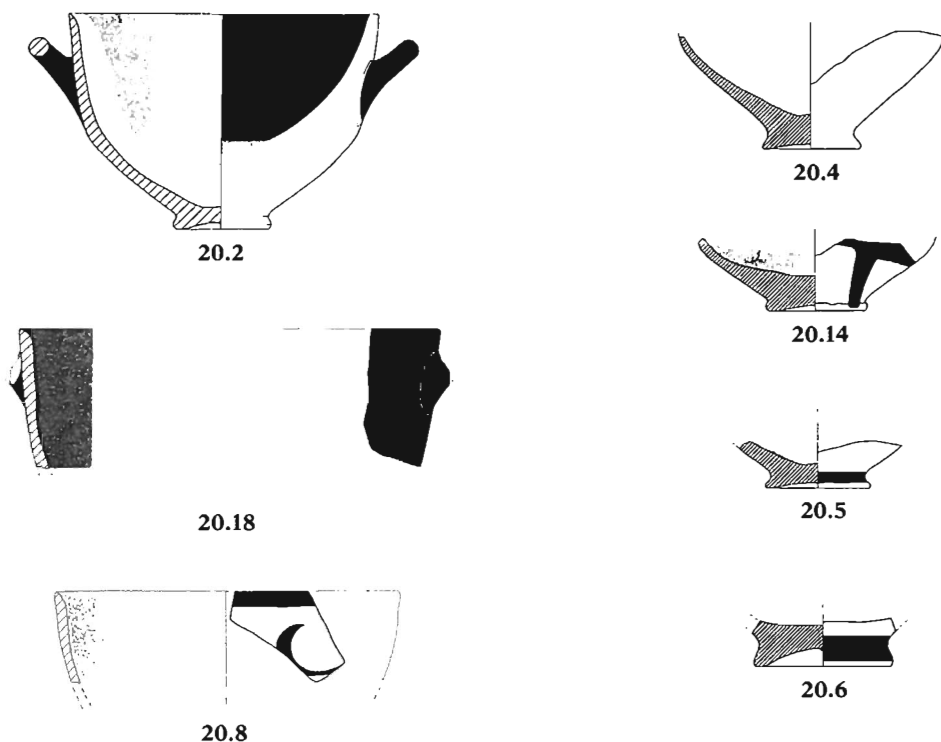


Fig. 11 – Pottery from Pit 20 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

with the one exception of **20.6**, which is high, conical and hollow. Some show protuberances on the bottom of the base, which become common in SM. As for the decoration, **20.18** is monochrome, **20.2** being decorated by immersion⁵⁹. Wall fragment **20.7** is from a krater decorated with the Horns of Consecration, a double axe in the centre⁶⁰. **20.11** is part of a stirrup-jar with an ovoid shape, decorated on the belly with the stylised tentacle of an octopus. The vase is well-documented in Eastern Crete⁶¹ and should be typical of all the island in LM IIIC.

⁵⁹ Cf. Popham 1992, pl. 43, 7; Coulson, Tsipopoulou 1994, fig. 10, 3.

⁶⁰ A similar motif appears on coeval kraters from Karphi (Seiradaki 1960, fig. 23, H), Vrokastro (Hall 1914, fig. 49, bottom row, on the right) and Knossos, Stratigraphical Museum Excavations (P.M. Warren, pers. comm.).

⁶¹ Cf. the examples from Praisos (Kanta 1980, 181, fig. 69, 3-4), Palaikastro (Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, fig. 15, P24) and Chalasmenos (Coulson, Tsipopoulou 1994, 86, fig. 18, 2, pl. XIII, 3).

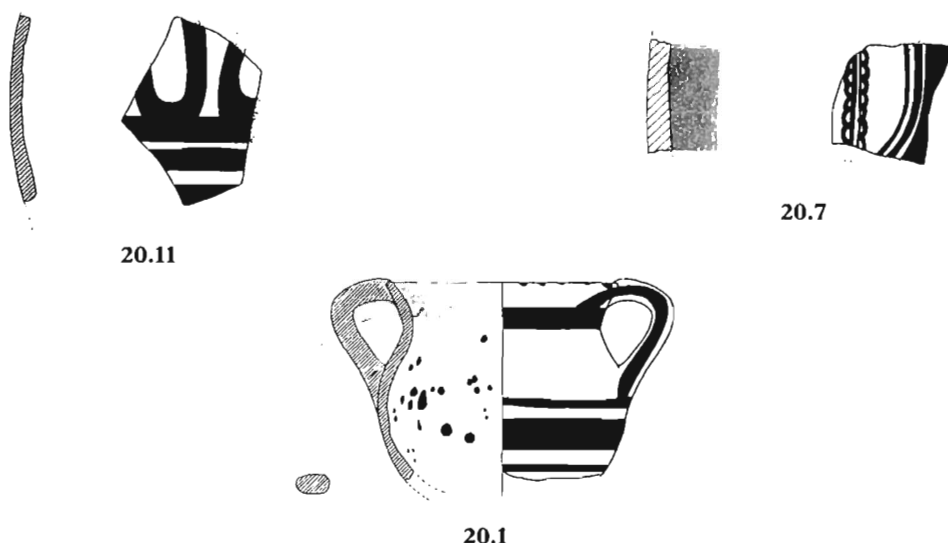


Fig. 12 – Pottery from Pit 20 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

The wide-mouthed jar **20.1** is a quite rare shape⁶². The example from Thronos can be associated with the one documented at Karpfi⁶³. For internal spattering decoration comparison can be made with an LM IIIC amphoriskos from Palaikastro⁶⁴.

Pits 2 and 41, attributed to SM, document a further reduction in the deep bowl repertory, decoration being now limited to monochrome and the V-shaped motif, which is one of the distinctive features of the fineware of the site in the 12th and 11th century BC. The bases of deep bowls are mainly conical in profile and hollowed underneath, and the carinated kylix is still in use. **Pit 41** (figs. 13-14), in the northern part of the summit of Kephala, where the clay female figurine **41.29** was found, is located just at the edge of the settlement area. The pit yielded a large quantity of material (more than 1000 sherds) in a very fragmentary state, fineware being the prevalent class. The prevalent shape is still the deep bowl, examples of which are very different

⁶² An LM IIIB example of unknown provenance is in Kanta 1980, 272, fig. 97, 10. The origin of the shape is uncertain, cf. Kanta 1980, 272.

⁶³ Seiradaki 1960, fig. 14, 7, although it has a slightly more angular profile and taller rim.

⁶⁴ Sackett, Popham, Warren 1965, fig. 15, P 23.

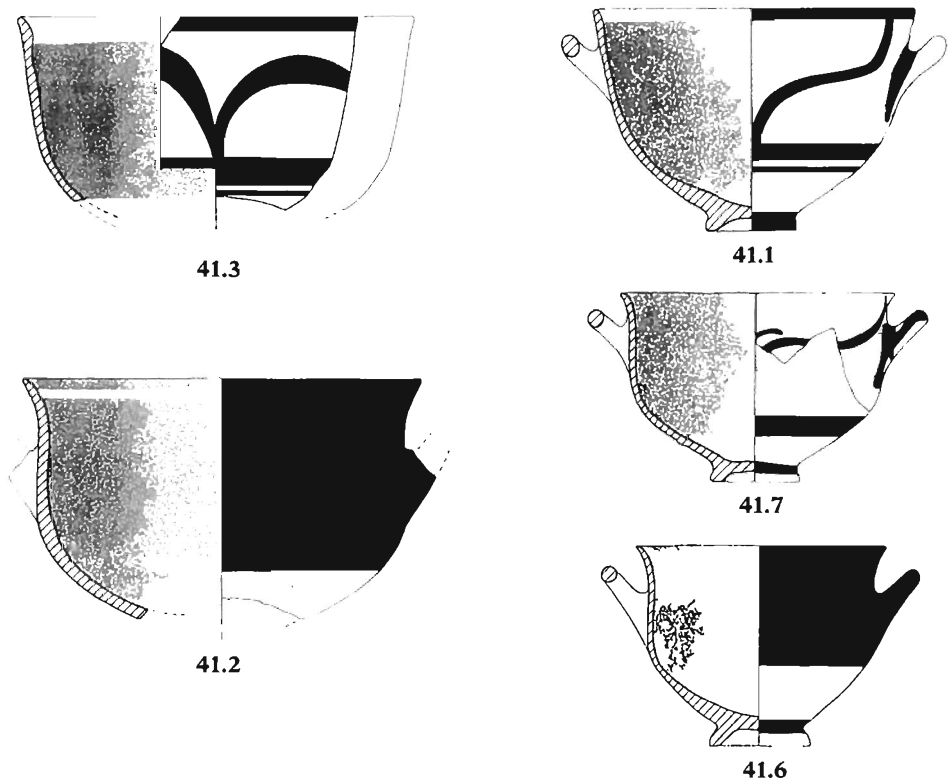


Fig. 13 – Pottery from Pit 41 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

not only in shape but also in the rendering of single parts, which means that their production was not at all standardised. The main type is bell-shaped or S-shaped, with everted lip (**41.2**, **41.6**, **41.7**), usually on ring – or conical base. This is the SM variety of deep bowl, deriving from the type with vertical wall and everted rim, well attested at Knossos in corresponding levels of the Stratigraphical Museum excavations⁶⁵ and showing close connection with FS 285 both in form and in the type of decoration⁶⁶. The most common base is the hollow conical type (**41.2a**, **41.18**, **41.21**, **41.22**, **41.27**), although we also find some ring bases (**41.6**, **41.7**, **41.13**, **41.14**) and

⁶⁵ Warren 1982-1983, 80-81, fig. 62.

⁶⁶ Mountjoy 1986, fig. 254, 1-6.

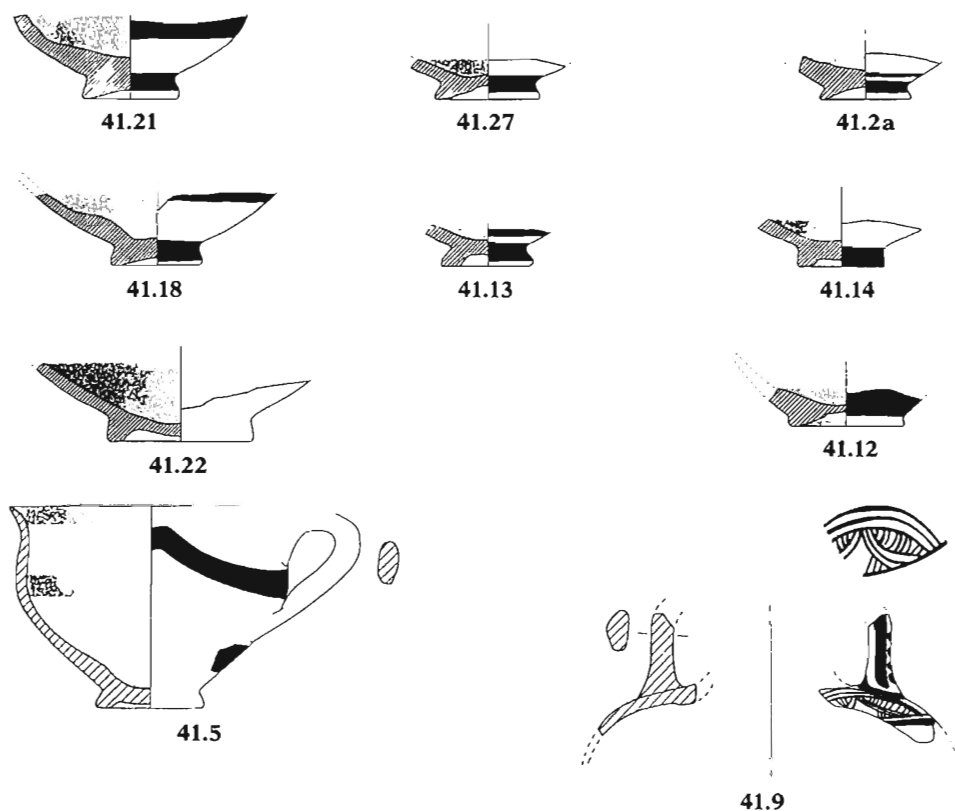


Fig. 14 – Pottery from Pit 41 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

cylindrical bases hollowed underneath (**41.1**, **41.12**). The bases often evidence irregularities in turning and variations in form, with spiral marking on the outside and protuberances on the bottom of the vessel. The vases may have a reserved band at the lip, which seems to be a rather common feature of this phase on the site, or a reserved circle on the centre base, or the reserved inner body. As for decoration, only two types are documented: monochrome with reserved lower part, or painted with the V-shaped, or similar, motif. **41.5** is a rare example of cup with bell shape and everted lip⁶⁷, affording a parallel with FS 216 attributed to late LH IIIC⁶⁸. It may well also

⁶⁷ For a very similar vessel from the North Cemetery at Knossos, Catling 1996, 305, 40.19, fig. 83.

⁶⁸ Mountjoy 1986, 190, fig. 249.

constitute a prototype of the cup on pedestalled base, usually decorated with a wavy line, well-known on Crete in SM and PG⁶⁹, and indicated as the most common open shape in the advanced SM levels at the Unexplored Mansion at Knossos. Stirrup-jar **41.9**, with its decorative motif of triangular areas filled with arches, finds comparison in three Knossian vessels from Gypsadhes⁷⁰. On this evidence, assuming late LH IIIC to be coeval with the first part of SM⁷¹, it is probable that pit 41 corresponds to an early phase of SM (SM I).

Again, the material from **pit 2** (figs. 15-17), on the southern plateau of the hilltop, can be attributed to SM. The presence of fragments possibly deriving from skyphoi alongside the deep bowls, which however remain the most common open form, and the total absence of decorative motifs on the latter vessels, identify this as later material belonging to the SM group.

As in the other SM pits, we again find an overfired fabric, of red colour, frequently used for deep bowls.

As for the types, the deep bowls may have vertical walls (**2.20**, **2.23**) or with the S profile (**2.21**). Worth noting is the peculiar form of the handles on **2.20**, possibly derived from metal ware, comparison being with a vessel from Kastelli Pediada⁷² and one from Knossos⁷³. Bases are conical or cylindrical in profile (**2.10**, **2.11**). In terms of decoration, the deep bowls are dipped from the foot or have a reserved window between the handles (**2.23**).

2.13 and **2.14**, with flaring profile and rim diameter superior to the height, may represent early versions of skyphoi. They are fully coated. **2.13** shows unusual strokes on the rim⁷⁴.

2.15 constitutes a new type of krater with S-profile, or bell-krater, also documented in various sizes for the same phase at Knossos⁷⁵. The interior of the vessel is fully painted.

A new type is represented by the kalathos, documented by **2.18** and **2.19**, with flat, protruding rim. The two vessels display similarities in decoration but differ slightly in profile. **2.18** has a short rim, and conical profile, finding

⁶⁹ SM: Popham 1992, 60-61, pl. 43, 1-6; Warren 1982-1983, fig. 60, a-b; EPG: Boardman 1960, 140-42, Tomb VIII, 14, pl. 36; Coldstream 1972, 67, pls. 15, 25; 17, 32-38; Coldstream 1996, 385, 25.2, fig. 77; see also **10.23**, *infra*.

⁷⁰ Hood, Huxley, Sandars 1958-1959, 247, fig. 28, VI A, 1-3. *Supra*, note 58.

⁷¹ Mountjoy 1986, 8, table 1.

⁷² Rethemiotakis 1997, fig. 22 (LM IIIC).

⁷³ Catling 1996, 131, 98.9, fig. 101 (SM/EPG).

⁷⁴ It seems a feature whose start goes back to late LM IIIC: cf. e.g. **20.1**.

⁷⁵ Popham 1992, pl. 44, 1-2.

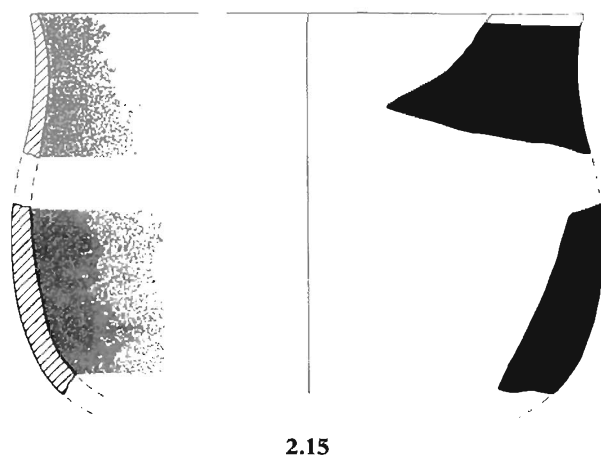
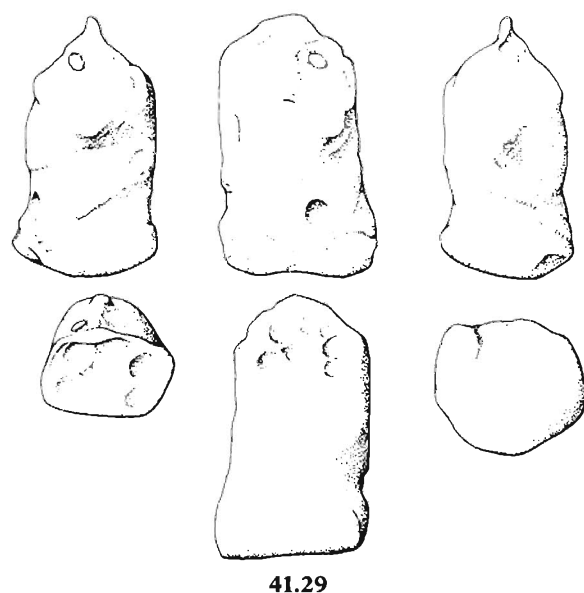


Fig. 15 – Material from Pit 41 and Pit 2 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

comparison in an example from Phatsi-Droggara⁷⁶. **2.19**, smaller in size, has a thin but wider rim and a convex profile coming closer to that of examples from Fortetsa⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ Tsipopoulou 1997, 456, fig. 1, 5048.

⁷⁷ Brock 1957, 12, no. 48, pl. 6.

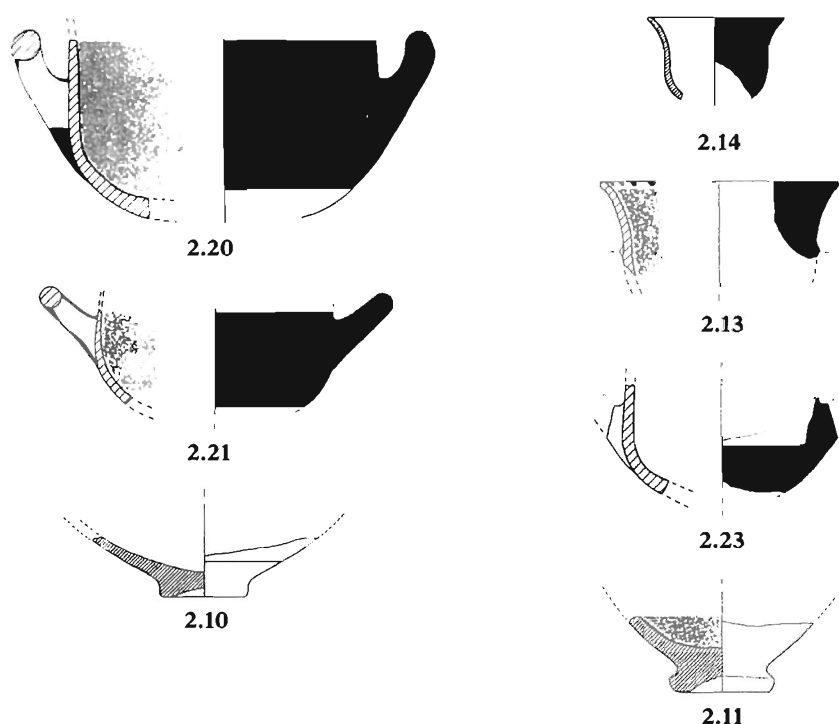


Fig. 16 – Pottery from Pit 2 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

A clear change in the ceramic repertoire is documented by **pit 10** (figs. 17-18), on the eastern side of the esplanade. Now the deep bowl has almost disappeared and the skyphos has become the main shape used for drinking or eating. **10.17**, with the rim diameter largely less than the height, is a good example of the shape and may be assigned to the EPG⁷⁸. The vase – produced in different sizes, the miniature one included – is usually of the bell-type dipped in paint for two thirds⁷⁹, the foot being hollow and conical. It may be unpainted inside, or fully coated but for reservation on the bottom (**10.7**, **10.8**, **10.15**), or with spattering (**10.16**). The characteristics of its manufacture may be identified in a strong irregularity in the turning of the foot and in a sign in form of a spiral on the ground on the exterior of the foot. They all imply that this is the starting of a new and experimental

⁷⁸ Boardman 1960, 130, no. 15, fig. 4; Coldstream 1963, 37, nos. 7-15, fig. 8; Coldstream 1972, 72, B24, fig. 2; Coldstream 1996, 379, 48.2, fig. 85 (small); 379, 207.23, fig. 125 (large).

⁷⁹ On the type, Coldstream 1972, 67; Coldstream 1996, 379-80.

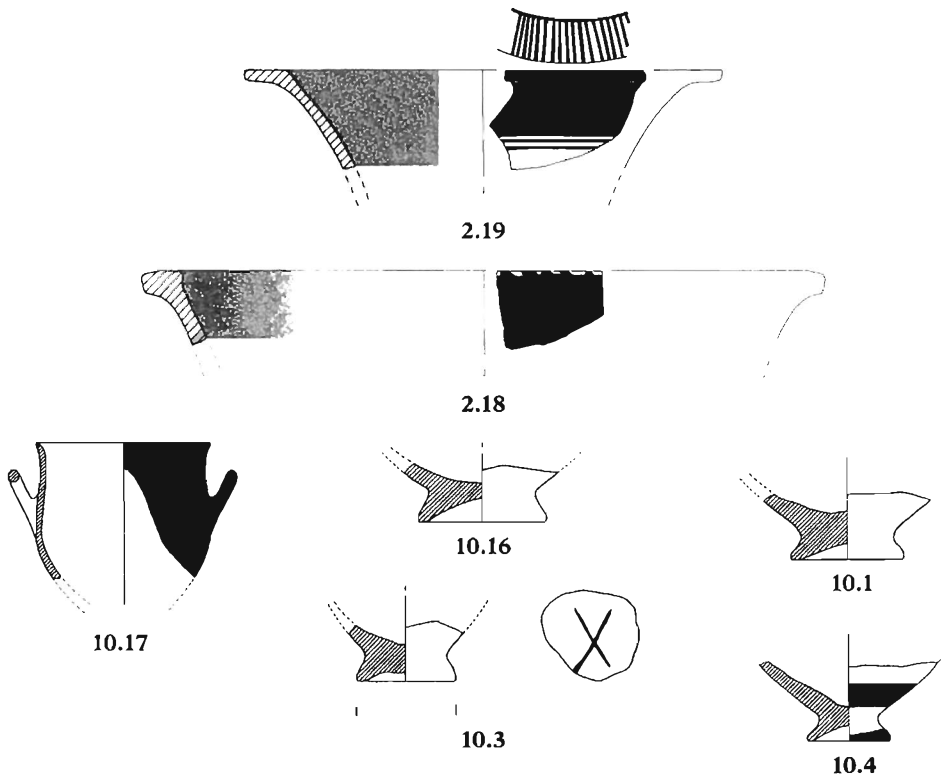


Fig. 17 – Pottery from Pit 2 and Pit 10 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

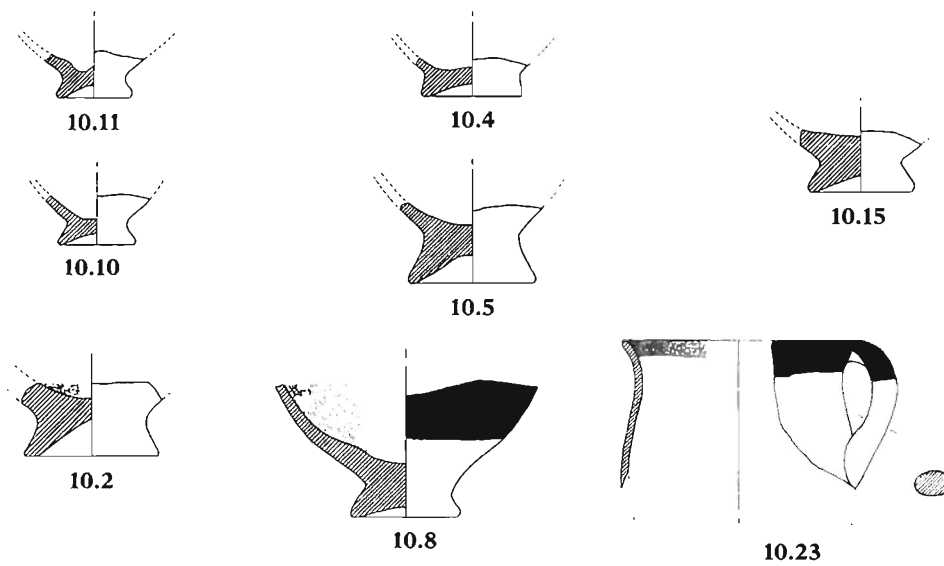


Fig. 18 – Pottery from Pit 10 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

production which finds a parallel at Knossos on material from EPG deposits⁸⁰. On the foot of **10.3** a 'x' has been incised before firing, which should correspond to a potter's mark⁸¹. **10.23** showing the S-profile and a band on the rim, offers a further example of the bell-cup, usually with a light background and a wavy line under the rim⁸². To judge by the somewhat slender profile, this piece should already belong to PG. Broadly speaking, we can say that now the quality of pottery is inferior to the standard of the previous phases; however this is a period of experimentation and there is no decline in material culture, a fact which is also well testified by the accurate way in which the pits continued to be excavated.

Later phases within the PG are represented by **pit 29** and **pit 30**. The large and deep **pit 29** (fig. 19) yielded 452 fragments. Fine ware is prevalent, followed by coarse and kitchen ware. While kitchen ware continues to represent a rather distinct class, the border between fine and coarse ware becomes increasingly blurred. Emphasis is now on single shapes rather than on ceramic classes, and this may perhaps indicate a new organization of the ceramic production. Pit 29 is one of the few PG pits to have yielded a fair quantity of material, and it is also one of the later ones, closed during LPG. **29.8** is a traditional skyphos with S profile, or bell-skyphos⁸³, while **29.1** is something between a skyphos and a cup, and is characterized by globular body, short, everted lip, and conical foot. The shape recalls a type of LPG Attic cup, on high conical foot, imported to Knossos during the local MPG phase⁸⁴, but the final result has a strongly local flavour, stressed by the technique of coating the vase reserving the lower part. The skyphos **29.4** finds a parallel in a Knossian MPG skyphos of mainland derivation⁸⁵, for the shape of the short and everted lip, and for decoration (reserved panel with solid triangles between the handles), which is common in Knossos in LPG times⁸⁶. The cup **29.2**, with its bell-like profile, is not far from Knossian MPG and LPG examples⁸⁷. However, the belly shape with a base smaller than usual, and the lower reserved part are to be regarded as local features, and

⁸⁰ Cf. Coldstream 1972, 65-70.

⁸¹ On potter's marks of the Early Iron Age, Papadopoulos 1994.

⁸² *Supra*, note 69.

⁸³ E.g. Coldstream 1996, 379, D 7, fig. 56.

⁸⁴ Coldstream 1996, 401, J 54, fig. 66.

⁸⁵ Coldstream 1996, 381, J 11, fig. 65.

⁸⁶ Brock 1957, 28, no. 246, pl. 18; Coldstream 1996, 360, 219.28, fig. 132; 373, L 15, fig. 69.

⁸⁷ Boardman 1960, 134, no. 17, fig. 5, pl. 36 (MPG-LPG); Coldstream 1996, 28, J 28, fig. 65 (LPG, Attic).

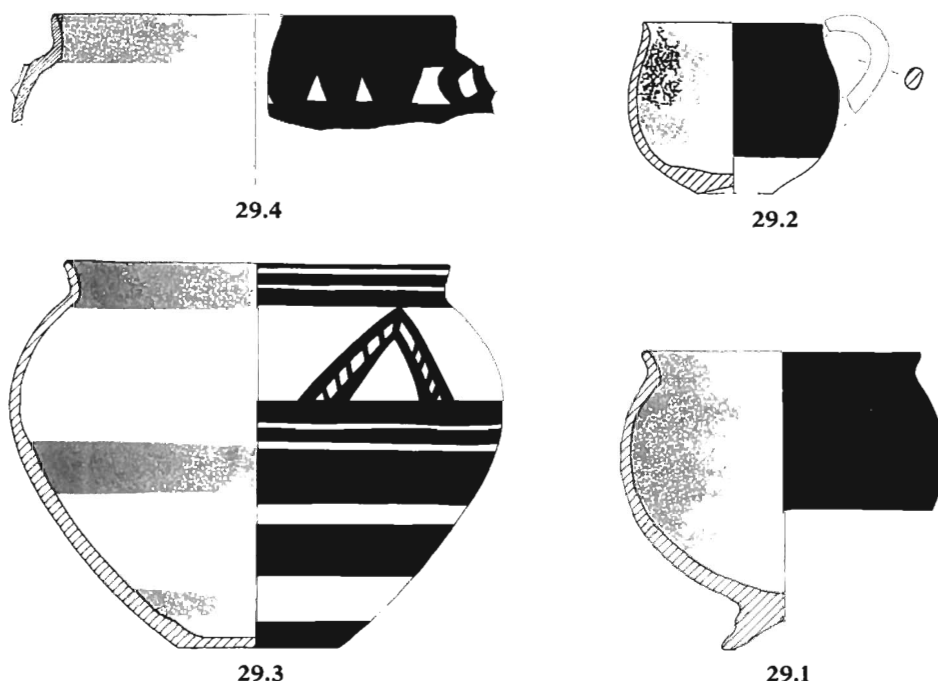


Fig. 19 – Pottery from Pit 29 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

may probably also be taken as a sign of local conservatism⁸⁸. Pyxis **29.3** seems to be a local version of a mainland prototype. The pear-shaped body, absence of handles and flat base find something of a parallel in a type of pyxis produced at Knossos between MPG and LPG, under the influence of Attic LPG⁸⁹. The isolated hatched triangles on the shoulder should represent a local, earlier, version of the gridded triangle which will become popular at Knossos in LPG and PG B⁹⁰.

In the large and conical **pit 30** (fig. 20), 179 fragments were collected with fine ware slightly prevalent over coarse and kitchen ware. The traditional bell-skyphos is present with **30.4** and **30.5**, but cups seem now to be the prevalent form, although by a small margin. Among them, **30.2** may represent a local type with a bell-like profile, everted lip and banded decoration⁹¹. Wall sherds **30.7** and **30.6** are from large, closed vessels. **30.7**

⁸⁸ Cf. e.g. the pedestalled cups from Tomb P at Fortetsa, Brock 1957, pl. 3, 19.

⁸⁹ Coldstream 1996, 359, Type B (especially, fig. 58, D 25).

⁹⁰ Coldstream 1996, 50, Q 98, fig. 72 (PG B).

⁹¹ Unpainted within, decorated with bands, this piece still seems to follow the tradition

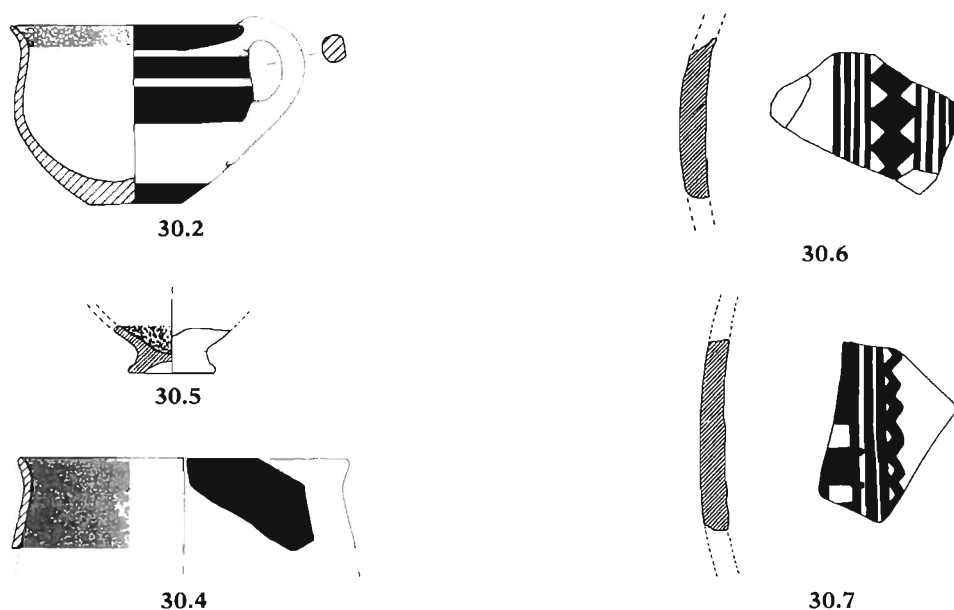


Fig. 20 – Pottery from Pit 30 at Thronos/Kephala. Scale 1:3.

is decorated with a chequer motif often attested at Knossos on kraters and amphorae in the course of PG, especially in the advanced period⁹². **30.6** displays a vertical chain of solid lozenges⁹³. On this evidence the closing of the pit should be ascribed to a very advanced date within the PG, which in Knossian terms means LPG or the beginning of PG B.

THE DARK AGE SETTLEMENT AT THRONOS/KEPHALA AND THE EVIDENCE FOR THE RISE OF AN EARLY STATE

This brief excursus on some Dark Age pottery from the pits of Thronos/Kephala may account for a stylistic development which gives support to the

launched on the site with the cup of Minoan derivation **41.5**, *supra*. See also a LPG example from Knossos, decorated with stripes and scribble, Coldstream 1996, 385, 287.29, fig. 144.

⁹² EPG: Boardman 1960, 133, no. 1, fig. 6; Coldstream 1963, 37, Tomb II no. 3, fig. 7; Coldstream 1972, 75, nos. 20 and 23, pl. 18; MPG: Coldstream 1996, 369-72, F 1, fig. 59; 92, 48.7, fig. 86; LPG-MG: Brock 1957, 169, pattern 1v.

⁹³ Cf. Brock 1957, 172, pattern 5b (LPG-PG B); Coldstream 1996, 398, 207.7, fig. 124 (LPG, Attic krater).

idea of continuity of occupation of the settlement during the Dark Age – in contrast to what is known for western Crete where site abandonments in the course of the 12th cent. BC seem to be a recurrent pattern;⁹⁴ moreover, the ceramic evolution which we have been able to detect shows that in this area of the island phenomena of cultural stagnation or staticity, reported for some sites in Eastern Crete⁹⁵, are absent. At Thronos we can distinguish two phases:

- the earliest one includes LM IIIC and SM, which show different features and have to be considered as different stages in terms of pottery evolution. Nevertheless, from a cultural point of view, this is a single phase: no real change is detectable within it, and the tendency to develop local stylistic traits exists. The site is seen to be in touch with the rest of the island;

- the second phase corresponds to PG, which marks a break in the ceramic sequence. There is a clear change in main shapes and manufacture, and probably in the organization of production, although links with the past are obviously present. Stylistically, local features are detectable, and a stable connexion with centres of production in Central Crete must be presumed.

The question to address now is how we are to relate the ceramic evidence from Thronos with the problem of the rise of the state. The rise of the early-state polities in Greece is still a matter of debate. Anthony Snodgrass argued cogently that revolutionary changes put an end to the Dark Age in the course of the 8th century and described them as a structural revolution⁹⁶. Other scholars have denied the reality of these transformations, asserting that Greek *poleis* evolved slowly and continuously since the Late Bronze Age, thus opposing a gradualist view to Snodgrass' revolutionary theory⁹⁷. An important point was made by Ian

⁹⁴ Probably it was mainly the coastal sites, like Chania and Chamalevri, that were abandoned in the 12th century BC.

⁹⁵ Desborough 1972, 118. However, the stylistic development in this area of the island is still a subject of discussion: W. Coulson (1990, 14; 1998) does not distinguish any SM phase at Kavousi and believes that, out of Central Crete, SM should be considered as a Knossian ceramic style; recently the analysis of ceramic material from some burials in the area of Siteia has led M. Tsipopoulou (1997, especially 482-484) to state that a short SM ceramic phase, to be dated within the 10th cent. BC, and a long PG phase may be recognized in Eastern Crete.

⁹⁶ Snodgrass 1971; Snodgrass 1987.

⁹⁷ This debate has pitted classical archaeologists, namely John Papadopoulos and Sarah Morris, and social archaeologists trained in Cambridge (among others, Ian Morris and James Whitley), one against the other, the latter being accused of undervaluing the pat-

Morris few years ago, when he was able to show that the Greek Dark Age were not very dark indeed: the society was very hierarchical and the process of state formation was in no sense a sudden leap into complexity⁹⁸. This is true especially on Crete where continuity is much more substantial than in any other part of the Greek world. But the recent statement, again by Ian Morris, that given the strong signs of material continuity the archaic Cretan political organizations could be seen as "a legacy from the Bronze Age"⁹⁹ does not help to clarify the question. Continuity does not mean absence of change, and the existence of marked local differences in material culture implies that in Crete, too, the rise of the state was not a uniform process. The mechanisms which led to the formation of different political structures at the very beginning of the Iron Age still remain largely unclear and simple assertions of continuity are useless. As far as Thronos/Kephala is concerned, first of all it has to be stressed that during the Dark Age the site did not suffer any decline. Real cultural continuity can be seen between the 12th and the 11th century BC, whereas a substantial change in material culture developed during the 10th century followed by a trend toward the formation of local stylistic features. There is no conclusion to draw at this point, since any conclusion would have to be verified against evidence from other categories of data. Nevertheless, local changes in pottery style may be interpreted as a through-time indicator of social changes inside a community¹⁰⁰. At Thronos/Kephala, there is no slow evolution as from the end of the Bronze Age, and no sudden revolution in the 8th century BC. The pottery evidence seems to point to a chronological differentiation which could offer still another perspective on the mechanisms by which the Cretan Dark Age came to an end.

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terns of continuity and importance of Near Eastern influences from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age, and exaggerating the social and cultural differences existing between the early Greeks and the contemporary Eastern Mediterranean groups, Papadopoulos 1993; Morris 1993; Whitley 1993; Papadopoulos 1996; Morris 1997 a; Papadopoulos 1997; see also Morris 1992 a; 1992 b.

⁹⁸ Morris 1991. Also Snodgrass has stressed the strenght of Minoan tradition on Crete (cf. *supra* note 3).

⁹⁹ Morris 1998, 66: here Morris appears to be less 'revolutionary' than Snodgrass.

¹⁰⁰ See the relevant bibliography in D'Agata 1999, 47, note 3.

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