

ASPECTS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE CYCLADES AND THE MAINLAND IN THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Middle Bronze Age period is characterized by a marked divergence in cultural traits, as attested in areas of the southern Aegean and the Greek mainland. Especially for the Cyclades, Crete and the mainland, the differences are particularly evident in fields such as the level of sociopolitical organization, material culture production and consumption and burial customs. Moreover, there is great variety in both the nature and degree of interaction between these areas. This paper focuses on aspects of interaction between the Cyclades and the Mainland in the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) based on pottery evidence. The role of Aegina is also examined. After a brief review of the nature and distribution of Cycladic wares at mainland sites and on Aegina, the main discussion will focus on mainland ceramic evidence found at Akrotiri, Ayia Irini, Phylakopi and Paroikia.

Even from the Early Bronze Age (EBA) period, Cycladic pottery, mainly of incised ware, appears to have been widely distributed in mainland sites.¹ Equally wide is the distribution of Middle Cycladic (MC) pottery on the Mainland,² the most prominent imports being the matt-painted paneled cups and the bird jugs. Both types are considered as imported from Melos or Thera, while in some cases it has been possible to attribute the exact provenance of vases to one or the other of the two islands based on stylistic

and ware observations.³ Evidence from stratified deposits at Akrotiri suggests that the bichrome and polychrome bird jugs and the matt-painted paneled cups were produced in the advanced MC period, but it seems that only the variety of bird jugs with swallows continued to be produced in the early Late Cycladic (LC) I period. Another popular ware, slipped and burnished, which appears mostly in types of bowls, is common in both the Thera/Melos and Aeginetan production; the imported specimens at mainland sites can usually be attributed to their place of origin as the fabrics are distinct in macroscopic and analytical terms.⁴ Most of the matt-painted imported specimens at mainland sites appear to originate on Aegina, with a few exceptions identified as Cycladic. Imports from Kea are rarely mentioned⁵ and no reference has yet been made to Naxos or Paros.

At the site of Kolonna, Aegina, Cycladic imports start already in the Early Cycladic (EC) period.⁶ MC imports include vessels of different wares, such as bichrome (a closed vessel, possibly a jug, from Stadt X context);⁷ matt-painted dark-on-light (jugs, wide shallow bowl, spouted vessel); slipped and burnished, mainly red (bowls, goblets) and with white decoration (bowls, a closed vessel, possibly a jug); light-on-dark (mainly closed coarse vessels); and white-and-black on red ground.⁸ Suggested provenances include the islands of Kea and Melos.⁹

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¹ Cycladic imports and imitations in the local production have been identified at sites in Attica, south Euboea, Boeotia, Corinth, the Argolid and Messenia (Asea, Asine, Attica, Eleusis, Manika, Eutresis, Kirrha, Korakou, Lerna, Voidokoilia).

² Cited in PAPAĞIANNPOULOU 1991, 297–303, with references:

Aspis, Athens, Brauron, Eleusis, Euboea, Eutresis, Kirrha, Korakou, Marathon, Mycenae (Grave Circle B), Pefkakia, Thorikos, Tiryns, Lerna. For bird jugs in bichrome ware on Crete see MACGILLIVRAY 1984.

³ Cf. MARTHARI 1993b, 250–3, pl. 32a, b, on the Thera jugs from Mycenae, Grave Circle B, and Lerna.

⁴ Cf. KILIKOĞLU *et al.* 1990; KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, 123.

⁵ E.g., for Lerna see ZERNER 1993, 40–2, 50 and n. 69; for Aegina see KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, 134–5.

⁶ WELTER 1938, 10.

⁷ With parallels at Phylakopi (ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, pl. XX.5), Mycenae, Grave Circle B (MYLONAS 1972/3, pl. 127, no. 2), Ayia Irini V (DAVIS 1986, pl. 64, AF-5).

⁸ KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, 123–36, pls. 4–13.

⁹ *Ibid.* 123–36.



Fig. 1 a) Carinated bowls b) Carinated bowl c) Carinated cups

Recent advances in research promote the classification of fabrics/wares in close relation to the results of petrographic and chemical analyses.¹⁰ Scientific provenance attributions and technological observations are of particular relevance to the discussion of a number of issues concerning the Helladic-Cycladic relations in all Bronze Age periods. Aspects of particular interest involve the character of the Cycladic influence on the material culture of coastal mainland and Cretan sites in the EB II period, especially the study of imitated Cycladic ceramic types and actual imports,¹¹ the production, distribution and imitations of Grey Minyan ware,¹² as well as the origins and distribution of matt-painted and polychrome wares.¹³ Along these lines, the provenance attribution of MC matt-painted and bichrome pottery to Melos or Thera is of great importance for the understanding of trade routes and exchange patterns in the MBA Aegean.¹⁴

II. MAINLAND CERAMIC EVIDENCE AT CYCLADIC SITES

Akrotiri, Thera

Excavations conducted as part of the roof replacement program at Akrotiri from 1999 to 2001 have revealed an extensive ceramic sequence covering phases of the settlement from the Neolithic period to the volcanic destruction in LC I/Late Minoan (LM) IA.¹⁵ Mainland imports retrieved during earlier excavations and material from the recent excavations of the stratigraphical trenches are presented below in order to examine the chronological correlations between the two areas.

Pottery imported from the Mainland is present in most phases at Akrotiri from the EC to the LC I period. In the local sequence, the EC Kastri group phase is followed by four ceramic phases, which broadly correspond to the MBA horizon.¹⁶ In the phase that marks the beginning of MBA at Akrotiri (phase A) matt-painted vases with geometric designs in a zonal

system are found, local and imported, in types such as the carinated bowls (Fig. 1a, b), carinated cups (Fig. 1c), barrel jars (Fig. 2) and a few closed vessels. In stylistic terms, the zonal geometric decorative system is common at mainland sites and Aegina, but at Akrotiri it was soon replaced by the matt-painted naturalistic/pictorial style, which marks the MC ceramic production of Akrotiri and Phylakopi. The vase types cited above are found also at Aegina and other sites in the Cyclades in the same phase;¹⁷ however, their production in the course of the MBA follows different routes and adds to the marked divergence attested in MBA pottery assemblages. Not much can be said at the present stage about the nature and quantities of matt-painted and plain wares imported to Akrotiri from mainland sites and Aegina in the course of the MBA; it is hoped that petrographic analysis will allow some progress.

Very few sherds of imported Grey Minyan ware have been identified in MC levels at Akrotiri. The rarity of the ware has been noticed in earlier publications; only four Grey Minyan sherds have been published from unstratified contexts.¹⁸ From the recent excavations only a few more sherds have been added to the previously known material. These are seven rim/body sherds from bowls/goblets (two carinated), four body sherds from open vessels, two fragments from kylix ring stems, one kylix foot sherd and two base/body sherds, possibly from bowls (Fig. 3). With the exception of four sherds that come either from LC I or mixed contexts, the rest come from stratified deposits of the MC period.

With reference to the chronological context, it is interesting to note that Grey Minyan vases begin to be imported at Akrotiri in a ceramic phase which in the local sequence follows the EC Kastri group material and marks the beginning of the MBA. The local pottery types and wares have parallels with the Phylakopi Iii-iii material. The deposits also include Middle Minoan (MM) I imports. Grey Minyan ware con-

¹⁰ E.g., for Lerna see ZERNER 1986; 1993; for Eleusis see COSMOPOULOS *et al.* 1999; on Aspis see KILIKOGLU *et al.* 2003.

¹¹ Cf. DAY *et al.* 1998 on the assemblage of Ayia Photia, Siteia.

¹² Cf. RUTTER 1993 on the Early Helladic (EH) III predecessor and Zerner 1993 on central Greece, True Minyan ware, Aegina.

¹³ Cf. BUCK 1964, on the origins of Middle Helladic (MH) matt-painted from the Cyclades; ZERNER 1993, on the production of mainland polychrome ware in central Greece.

¹⁴ KILIKOGLU *et al.* 1990.

¹⁵ DOUMAS 1999 (2002), 155–202; PETRAKOS 2000; 2001; 2002.

¹⁶ NIKOLAKOPOULOU *et al.*, forthcoming.

¹⁷ Selected examples cited here (N.B. the variations in shape, ware and decoration at different sites). Bowls and one-handled carinated cups: Aegina: SIEDENTOPF 1991, pl. 80; Phylakopi: ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, pls. XI.7–10, XXXIII.3–5. Barrel jars: Aegina: SIEDENTOPF 1991, cat. nos. 2, 3; Phylakopi: BARBER 1974, cat. nos. 65, 168; ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, pl. VIII.4; Paroikia: OVERBECK 1989b, cat. no. 82; Kea: OVERBECK 1989a, AQ-17a–g.

¹⁸ Grey Minyan sherds from Akrotiri have been published in PAPAĞIANNOPOULOU 1987, 59, 352, pl. 24, cat. nos. 269–72.

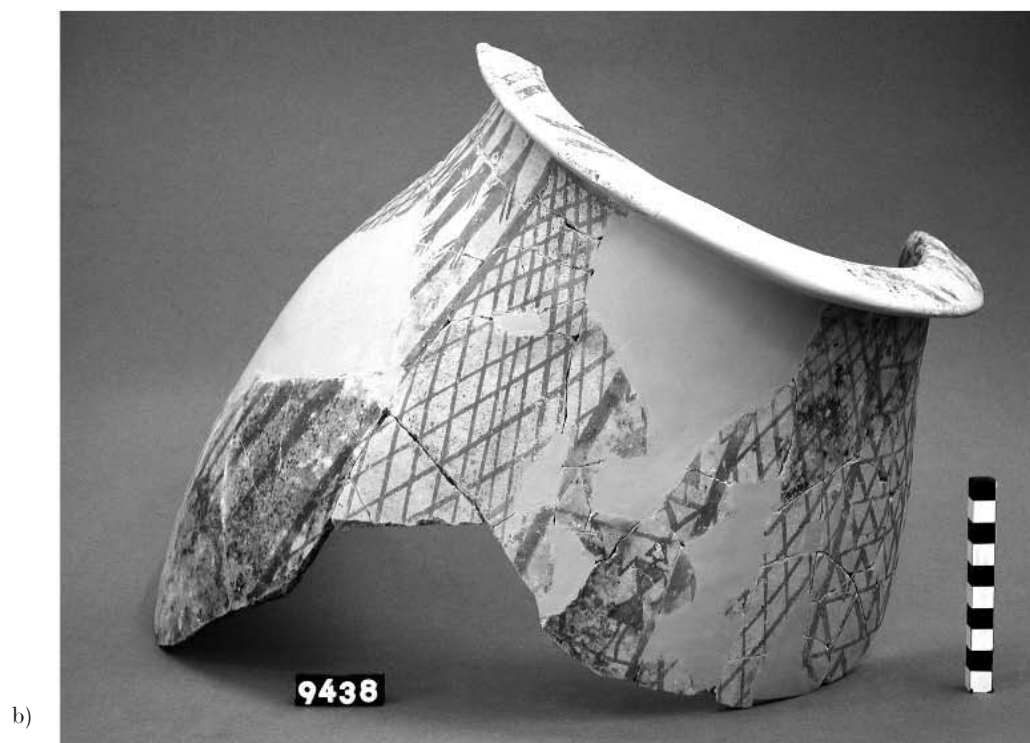
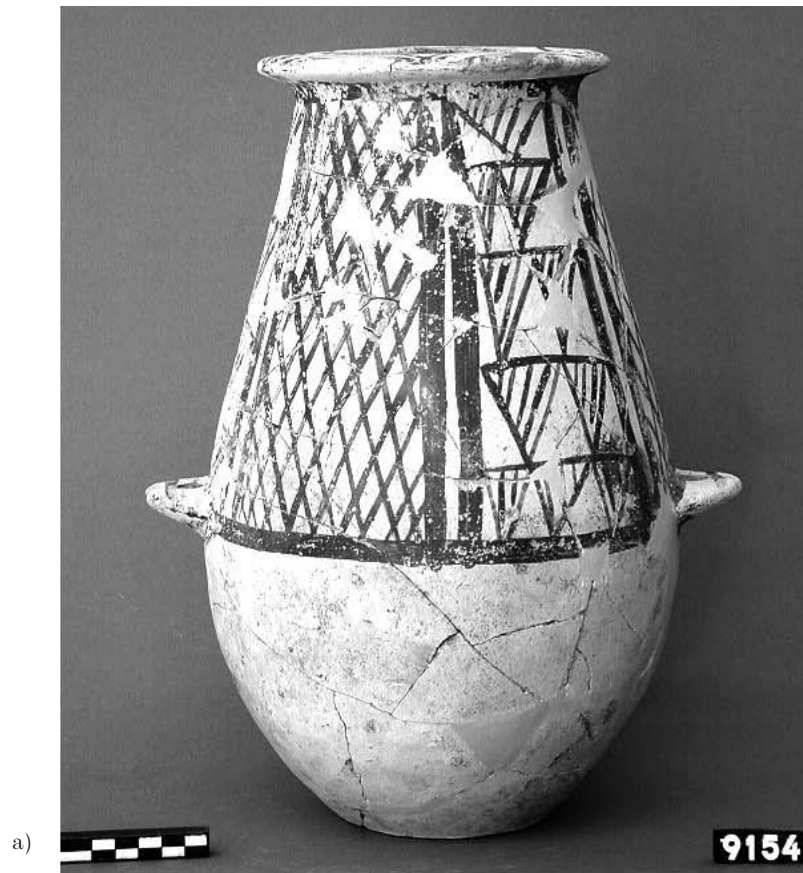


Fig. 2 Barrel jars

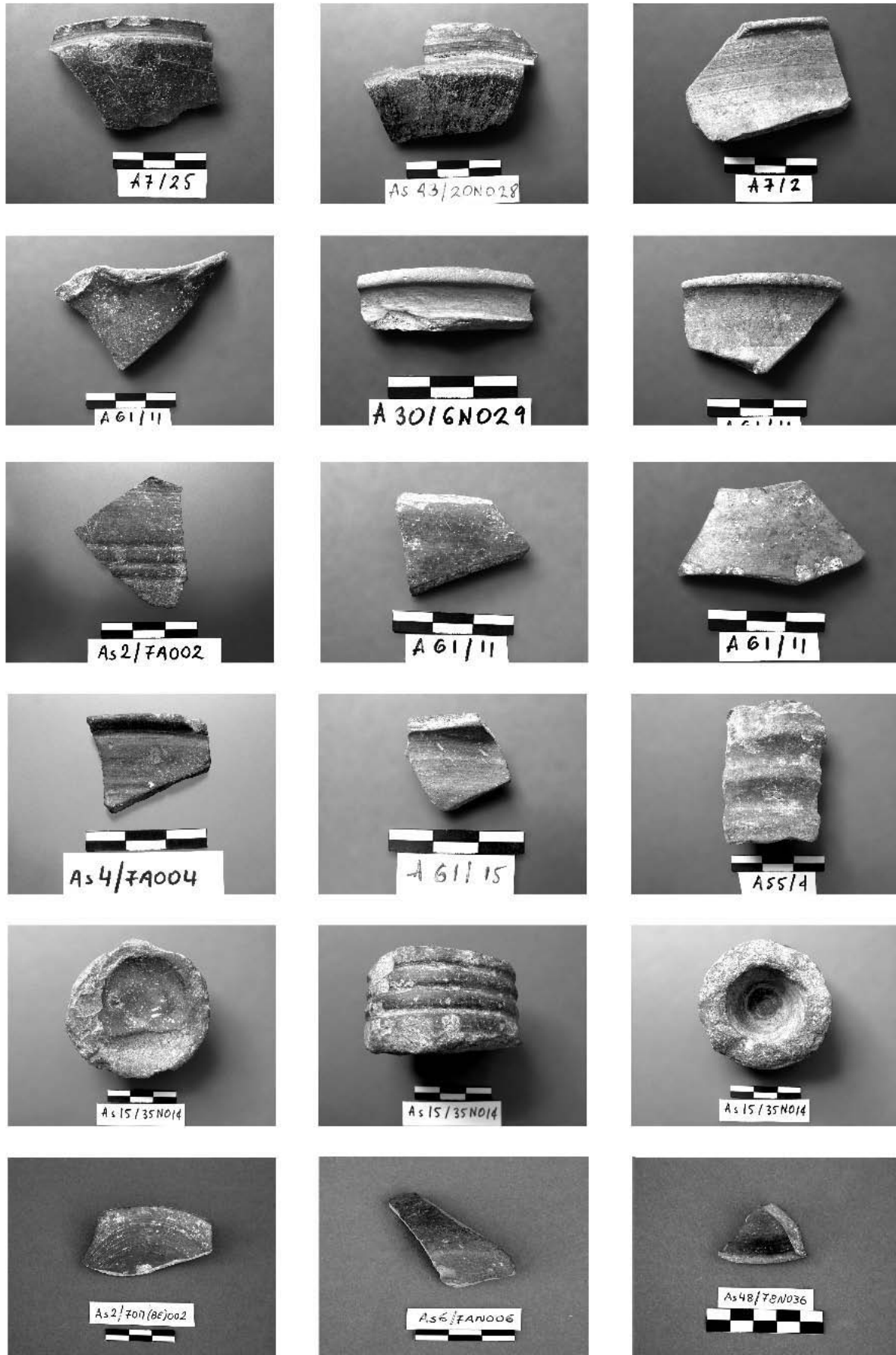


Fig. 3 Minyan sherds

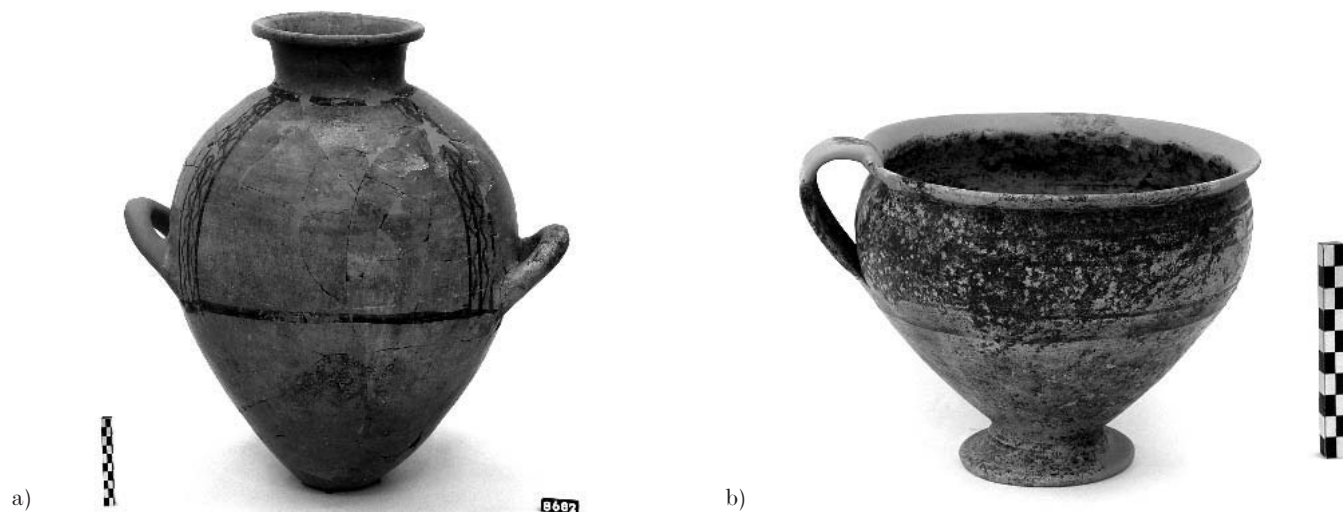


Fig. 4 a) Pithoid Jar b) One-handled cup

tinues to be imported throughout the MC period at Akrotiri; sherds are found in deposits characterized by local matt-painted and plain wares and deposits of an advanced stage which include the local bichrome and slipped and burnished wares, as well as MM IIIA imports. Only a few sherds have been found in early LC I contexts and no Grey Minyan vases have been found in LC I houses. It is possible that by the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (LBA), preference shifted to the wares of “MH tradition”¹⁹ described below. In quantitative terms, the mere handful of Grey Minyan sherds identified among thousands of local and imported MBA sherds is indeed striking.

Mainland ceramic imports found in LC I contexts at Akrotiri have been published by M. MARTHARI (pottery of “MH tradition”)²⁰ and Y. Lolos (Late Helladic [LH] I pottery).²¹

Vases of “MH tradition” belong to the following wares: matt-painted on matt surface (three hydrias and a pithoid jar), bichrome matt-painted on matt surface or “Aegina type Polychrome” (two amphoras, a pithoid jar, two bridge-spouted kraters and a bridge-spouted jar), bichrome matt-painted on burnished surface or “Mainland type Polychrome” (three beaked jugs and three paneled cups) and plain ware with matt surface (two pithoid jars).

New finds from the recent excavations include:

A two-handled ovoid pithoid jar with cylindrical neck (inv. no. 8682), matt-painted on burnished surface (H. 0.52 m) (Fig. 4a). Parallels for the shape are found at Mycenae, Shaft Grave B.²²

A hemispherical cup of the S-profile type (inv. no. 10018), bichrome matt-painted on burnished surface (H. 0.145 m) (Fig. 4b). Parallels for the shape can be found in different wares, e.g., at Ayia Irini, period VI²³ (LC I date) and at Eleusis, West Cemetery²⁴ (late MH date); however, it seems that an exact parallel in ware and decoration is hard to locate.

An oval-mouthed jar, bichrome matt-painted on matt surface. The vase has not been restored yet; the decoration consists of a series of schematic birds, a variation of the motif depicted mainly on jugs.²⁵

A beaked jug (inv. no. 8825), burnished (H. 0.20 m) (Fig. 5a).

Two beaked jugs (inv. nos. 8823, 8824), bichrome matt-painted on burnished surface (H. 0.15 m and 0.154 m) (Fig. 5b, c). The beaked jugs are similar in shape to the one published by M. Marthari;²⁶ the ware and decoration of the bichrome jugs do not find exact parallels. Of particular interest is a red-burnished jug with tall neck and funnel mouth, which could be a mainland import to Akrotiri. However, no exact parallels for the neck and mouth formation can be found in the published material of mainland sites.

¹⁹ See ZERNER 1993, n. 41, on the terms “LH I wares” and “wares in the MH tradition”.

²⁰ MARTHARI 1980; 1993.

²¹ LOLOS 1990.

²² MYLONAS 1972/3, pl. 77a, b.

²³ CUMMER and SCHOFIELD 1984, pl. 64, cat. nos. 838, 839.

²⁴ MYLONAS 1975, pl. 101, no. 619.

²⁵ Cf., from Akrotiri, MARTHARI 1980; 1993; from Mycenae, MYLONAS 1972/3.

²⁶ MARTHARI 1980, 194, no. 3726, pl. 71b.

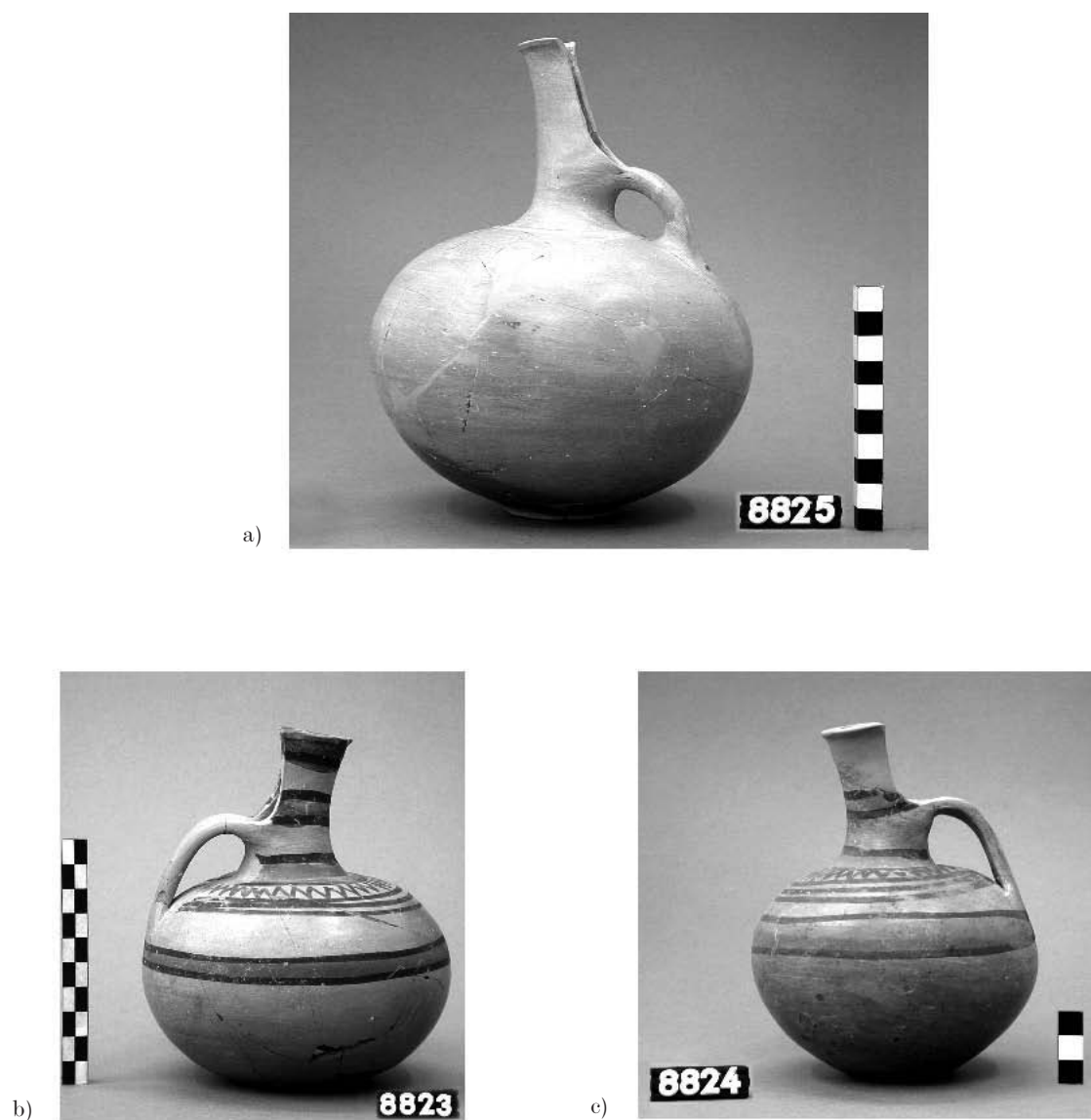


Fig. 5 Beaked jugs

All the above cited vases were found in LC I contexts; the majority of them come from rooms of LC I buildings. Some were found in groups (e.g., in room 6 of the West House and in a room of building Theta) and the context suggests that they were probably temporarily stored in clusters together with other goods for protection during reorganization after earthquake destruction that hit the settlement soon before the volcanic eruption. It is worth noting that no similar vases of the wares described as “of MH tradition” have been identified in MC

contexts at Akrotiri, not even in rooms of houses from which numerous local and imported vases have been restored. However, there still remains the possibility that the vases were kept as “heirlooms” from the previous phase, as they are few in number and might have been considered as valuable items. The ongoing study of the abundant MC sherd material may shed light on this issue in the future. It has been suggested that the polychrome wares were produced in LH I alongside the LH I style,²⁷ whereas hydrias and stamnoi decorated with double circles and plain-

²⁷ Cf. discussion in DAVIS 1979, 256–8, on the LH I date of mainland polychrome ware. It seems that mainland poly-

chrome appears at most mainland sites in LH I, e.g., at Lerna in period VI (ZERNER 1993, 48).

ware types were produced continuously from the end of MH to LH IIIA1.²⁸ The lack of exact parallels for some specimens found at Akrotiri, especially in the polychrome wares, may also be attributed to the limited information that exists from stratified domestic LH I contexts.

Mainland imports at Akrotiri of classic LH I styles consist mainly of Keftiu cups of the low broad variety and hemispherical cups.²⁹ The imports in general constitute no more than 10–15% of all Akrotiri pottery and Helladic vases constitute in turn approximately 13% of the imported pottery, being third in order of preference after imports from Crete and other Cycladic islands.³⁰ More cups of both types have been found in LC I contexts during the recent excavations. The majority of the LH I imports at Akrotiri are attributed to the mature or classic phase of LH I. Characteristic elements of the latest Peloponnesian LH I are absent (e.g., funnel Keftiu cups with ripple), a circumstance that may be taken to indicate that the destruction of the settlement occurred before the closing stage of Peloponnesian LH I.³¹

Ayia Irini, Kea

At Ayia Irini, imports from the Mainland appear in EBA levels. In period II contexts (EB II late) the imported wares include Urfirnis and yellow mottled.³² Pottery with an “Urfirnis” finish an ubiquitous feature of the Mainland in EH II, it was also found in EC wares, such as those imported at Ayia Irini, most of which appear to be of western Cycladic origin.³³ Mainly sauceboats occur in yellow mottled ware at Ayia Irini, while a variety of shapes is attested in the Mainland. The scarcity of this ware in the Cyclades does not rule out an island origin for at least some of the Ayia Irini examples, although a mainland origin would seem more probable.³⁴ In period III contexts (EB II end) the numbers of Urfirnis sauceboats drop by at least half, while the occurrence of yellow mottled sauceboats also falls.³⁵ A pinkish buff

ware, which was attested in a variety of shapes, could possibly originate in Euboea.³⁶

In the earlier part of the MBA, in period IV contexts, Grey Minyan ware occurs in great quantity in the following shapes (cited in order of abundance): goblets (rim/body fragments, ring stems), kantharoi (some with hollow lip), bowls (rounded, with horizontal lip, with spreading lip and grooved shoulder), a flat lid, a cylindrical pyxis, a miniature jar and a straight-sided vessel.³⁷ In period IVb the rounded bowl with horizontal grooves is introduced. In the course of the period, goblet ring stems are gradually replaced by smooth ones. A couple of pieces made of micaceous clay probably are local products. Grey Minyan ware loses its popularity at the end of period IV, but does not disappear completely. Goblet types in local burnished ware exhibit “a pronounced ‘Minyanization’”³⁸ in shape characteristics.

All matt-painted wares at Ayia Irini are imported.³⁹ Those from the Mainland appear to be much less common than Cycladic specimens. The barrel jar is the favorite shape in period IVa, but during period IVb it is replaced by the globular jar. During this period, a local version of polychrome ware is produced.⁴⁰

In the later part of the MBA, in period V contexts, Grey Minyan ware appears in lesser quantities than in period IV, in shapes such as goblets, bowls, fragments of goblets/bowls, a few kantharoi, small closed vessels and an open vessel.⁴¹ There are sherds from goblets with grooved shoulders, most of which probably had strap handles. One sherd has a loop handle of a type more common in period IV. Goblets and bowls with this type of loop handle usually have a shorter lip and shoulder than those with strap handles.⁴² Only a few ring stems have been found. Kantharoi appear with high-swung handle and grooves on the shoulder. The mainland imports of period V are typical of later MBA deposits found on mainland sites. The shapes have their closest parallels in phases 6 and 7 of Lerna V.⁴³ The characteristic carinated

²⁸ DAVIS 1979; MARTHARI 1993.

²⁹ LOLOS 1990; MARTHARI 1990, 63–4; 1993.

³⁰ MARTHARI 1980, 208; 1993.

³¹ LOLOS 1990, 55–6; see however MARTHARI’s remarks (1990, 64) on a possible Helladic import, a bridge-spouted jug with double axes.

³² WILSON 1999, 72, 76–7, and general discussion 231–9.

³³ *Ibid.* 72.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 76–7.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 134, and general discussion 231–9.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 141.

³⁷ OVERBECK 1989a, 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 10–1. The matt-painted ware category in the Kea period IV publication (OVERBECK 1989a) includes Helladic, Cycladic and imports of unknown provenance. See OVERBECK, this volume, for Aeginetan imports, which apparently constitute a considerable percentage of the matt-painted specimens of unknown provenance.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 10.

⁴¹ DAVIS 1986, 6, 84–5.

⁴² Found also at Phylakopi (DAWKINS and DROOP 1910/11, pl. XIV, nos. 49, 50) and Paroikia (OVERBECK 1989b, 000).

⁴³ DAVIS 1986, 85.

shapes of Mature Minyan begin to lose popularity in period V, yet the most common features of LH I, such as the abundance of Yellow Minyan and shapes with more rounded profiles, are not yet present.⁴⁴ In the local pottery production, burnished stemmed goblets of period IV type go out of fashion; goblets have grooved shoulders, while ring stems are rare. The widespread imitation of Minoan styles is the most characteristic feature of the local pottery of period V.⁴⁵

Matt-painted pottery imported from the Mainland is not as common in period V as in period IV.⁴⁶ Also a ware of uncertain provenance (similar to the pink-orange ware of period IV) may have originated from the Mainland,⁴⁷ while “Mainland Polychrome” ware appears only in period VI (LC I).⁴⁸

Phylakopi, Melos

Dawkins and Droop named pottery with a coating of reddish brown slightly lustrous paint “Urfirnis” Ware.⁴⁹ They considered it an early link with similar wares on the Mainland but they suggested that the Melian pieces may well be of Cycladic origin. The sherds were found on the bedrock; the excavators were unwilling to assign a date very early in the First City. Similar sherds had been uncovered in the first excavation season at Phylakopi in EBA levels.⁵⁰

Grey Minyan ware was first published in the 1904 report.⁵¹ Dawkins and Droop discuss the Minyan ware in more detail (again using the name for the first time).⁵² The majority of the pieces are fragments of goblets with ring stem on a spreading foot, conical body, and sharp angle at the shoulder, from which a broad flat upright handle rises to about the level of the widely splayed lip. One or two raised bands often run round the body of the vase. They were copied at Phylakopi in the local burnished ware, both red and

black, one with decoration in white paint.⁵³ In some rooms it was noted that Grey Minyan ware was more abundant than either painted or burnished ware. Of the entire quantity, about 73% was found in deposits in which the native geometric and Cretan Kamares ware predominated (early and middle stages of City II), while of the remaining 27% about half was found with pre-Mycenaean Melian (City II) and the rest with LM I and native “Red and Black” imitations of LM I (early City III).⁵⁴ The long duration of Grey Minyan ware production was noticed at Phylakopi, at a time when it had not yet been observed at mainland sites.⁵⁵ A few sherds of black Argive Minyan were also identified.⁵⁶

Matt-painted ware was also published in the first report of the Phylakopi excavations,⁵⁷ with some specimens resembling the Akrotiri carinated shapes with geometric designs.⁵⁸ The use of matt black paint was considered of mainland/Aeginetan derivation, as it was absent from Crete.⁵⁹

Paroikia, Paros

The main phase of the site is dated by Overbeck to early MC, a stage contemporary to Phylakopi I-iii and the beginning of Ayia Irini period IV.⁶⁰ Pottery groups and vases dating to a later stage have also been identified.

Vases and fragments in Grey Minyan ware include: a bowl with ridged shoulders, a small bowl with spreading (hollow) lip and two grooves on the shoulder, a carinated bowl with flattened lip, two large rim fragments, probably from goblets, two ring stems from goblets, and seven rim fragments from kantharoi.⁶¹ Imitations of Grey Minyan shapes include one complete dark red goblet, fragments of stemmed goblets in slipped and burnished ware or plain ware. Some of these specimens are imported to Paroikia,

⁴⁴ Ibid. 85.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 85.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 6.

⁴⁸ CUMMER and SCHOFIELD 1984, 46–7.

⁴⁹ DAWKINS and DROOP 1910/11, 16.

⁵⁰ It is possible that some of the sherds described in ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, section 3, “Some other Early wares”, belong to Urfirnis ware, but the provenance is uncertain.

⁵¹ First mentioned in ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, 153–4, section 18, “Odds and ends” (fragments of wheel-made goblets).

⁵² DAWKINS and DROOP 1910/11, 16–8, pl. VII, no. 27 and fragments.

⁵³ Ibid. pl. VII, nos. 4, 201.

⁵⁴ DAWKINS and DROOP 1910/11, 17–8.

⁵⁵ DAWKINS and DROOP 1910/11, 18.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 18.

⁵⁷ Cf. fragments of some vases in ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, section 9, “Pottery of the Early Mycenaean style with designs in matt black”.

⁵⁸ According to EDGAR (in ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, 118, on nos. 17, 22–5, pl. XVIII) these fragments stand apart as a group because of the distinct character of the ornamentation (“sparse and petty patterns”) and the sharpness of the curves of the vessels. It is possible that the differences reflect a chronological or provenance deviation from the main group discussed in that section.

⁵⁹ ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, 253.

⁶⁰ OVERBECK 1989b, 1–4, 20–5.

⁶¹ Ibid. 14–5, 21–2, cat. nos. 113–24.

probably from other island sites.⁶² The bulk of Grey Minyan ware is of classic Minyan type, and thus dates after the beginning of MH on the Greek mainland. The complete goblet in local burnished ware “lacks both the distinctively Minyan profiles of some pieces from Phylakopi and the elegant shape of the best examples from Ayia Irini”.⁶³

MH matt-painted imports include: a cup or bowl, in greenish buff fabric, decorated in brown on the edge and the interior of the lip, a body fragment from an open shape, and a carinated bowl in pink/orange fabric.⁶⁴

The pottery dated later than the main group (late MC or early LC I?) includes a local paneled cup in mainland style⁶⁵ and imitations of polychrome matt-painted ware (two deep bowls and two fragments of other types).⁶⁶

III. CORRELATIONS AND ASPECTS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE MAINLAND AND THE CYCLADES IN THE MBA

Putting the pieces of evidence together might prove to be a difficult task at the present stage, mainly because of the limited amount of published mainland imports from stratified contexts at Cycladic sites (with the exception of Kea) and the distinct character of trends and choices in the local ceramic production at MBA sites. The discussion has to focus on the material from Akrotiri and Ayia Irini; it is hoped that the forthcoming publication of the stratigraphical excavations at Phylakopi will further the study of correlations. The following remarks concern the most distinctive, but apparently also most commonly identified wares, Grey Minyan and MH matt-painted.

From the evidence presented above it appears that Grey Minyan and MH matt-painted wares appear together in the earliest MBA phases at Akrotiri and Ayia Irini. At Akrotiri, the ceramic assemblages attributed to the earliest MBA phase are the next identifiable distinct ceramic phase after EC Kastri group assemblages. In ceramic terms, the closest parallels are with Phylakopi I-ii and I-iii material. It is possible that this early MBA phase partially overlaps with Ayia Irini period IV; at Ayia Irini no such ceramic material has been identified as a distinct assemblage between period III (Kastri

group material) and period IV (well into the MC period). It is in this phase that local wares and fabrics at Akrotiri display the technological attributes that we associate with MC ceramic production, while imports from Minoan Crete include characteristic specimens of MM I date. If MH matt-painted wares appear in most mainland assemblages at a later stage than Grey Minyan ware, the coexistence of Grey Minyan and MH matt-painted material in Akrotiri early MC levels leads us to correlations with a stage well into the MH period. The simultaneous appearance of Grey Minyan and MH wares is also attested at Paroikia in the main phase, dated to the early MBA, but unfortunately there is no clear stratigraphical information on the preceding and subsequent phases. It is not clear whether Grey Minyan material published from Phylakopi belongs to City II-ii or II-iii levels; however, it is noted that “it was during the earlier part of this (*i.e.* MC) period that the (*Mainland*) importations into Melos were especially frequent”.⁶⁷

The most comprehensive picture of the next phase of interaction is presented in the material published from Ayia Irini period V. It is noted that Grey Minyan ware appears in lesser quantities than in period IV. The mainland pottery of period V is typical of later MBA deposits on the Mainland, but again it is not as common as in period IV. This could be the case also for Akrotiri in the advanced MC period, but the limited amount of Grey Minyan does not allow for further precise remarks. However, it is worth noting that in floor deposits of advanced MC date, from which numerous whole local and Minoan vases have been reconstructed, no Grey Minyan or MH matt-painted vases have been identified. On the other hand, future petrographic and chemical analysis may help us to distinguish matt-painted and plain wares from the Mainland and Aegina among the numerous quantities of sherd material.

It is only in contexts of the early stages of the LBA at Akrotiri and Ayia Irini (period VI) that mainland polychrome ware is found. Further study of the sherd material at Akrotiri is expected to confirm whether this is exclusively the case in chronological terms.

In only a limited number of cases has an exact provenance been identified for mainland imports at

⁶² Ibid. 10, cat. nos. 63–5.

⁶³ Ibid. 22 and n. 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 19, cat. nos. 185–7.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 6, cat. no. 18.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 6, cat. nos. 20, 21.

⁶⁷ DAWKINS and DROOP 1910/11, 18.

Cycladic sites. In the Ayia Irini publication, the matt-painted ware apparently includes imports from various areas including Aegina; in only some cases are the specimens identified as of exclusively mainland origin.⁶⁸ A ware characterized by a pink/orange fabric is suggested to be imported from Euboea.⁶⁹ Grey Minyan ware was apparently produced in different areas of the Mainland, while, according to C. Zerner, a variety labeled True Grey Minyan, which exhibits a high technological level in its manufacture and is wheel-made, may have been produced in central Greece, in the Orchomenos area.⁷⁰ Some of the Grey Minyan sherds found at Akrotiri could belong to this True Grey Minyan ware variety. For the matt-painted and polychrome vases imported at Akrotiri, Marthari suggests a provenance from the northeastern Peloponnese, while west Attica and Aegina are proposed as possible candidates.⁷¹ The northeastern Peloponnese and the area of Messenia have been suggested as possible sources for the hemispherical and Vapheio cups of LH I style on stylistic grounds and on the basis of macroscopic examination of the fabric.⁷²

The strong Aeginetan presence at sites in Attica and the Argolid definitely outweighs imports from the Cycladic islands. It is not yet possible to assess statistically imports from Thera, Melos and Kea, but the broad distribution of Cycladic bichrome and matt-painted in the Argolid, Boeotia and Attica may show that Melian and Theran buff clays and naturalistic styles were particularly appreciated.

Apart from imports, we can comment on aspects of interaction between the two areas, and especially the degree of influence, if any, on the local production of each site and the development of related pottery wares. A first impression from the evidence presented suggests a largely varied picture in the number of actual imports in the three best-known MC sites (Akrotiri, Phylakopi and Ayia Irini), with Ayia Irini receiving the greatest number of mainland imports. Phylakopi has fewer, while at Akrotiri the handful of Grey Minyan sherds identified among thousands of sherds is indeed striking in its paucity. Grey Minyan vase shapes are commonly copied in the local production at Ayia Irini in both periods IV and V and the same, though to a lesser degree, appears to apply at Phylakopi and Paroikia. The

imitations are made in local wares, most prominent being the burnished and slipped and burnished varieties, but apparently not using the same technology, particularly in terms of wheel use and possibly also firing practices. At Akrotiri there does not appear to be any impact on local production; no rim sherds or goblet stems have been identified in local fabrics, unless they are represented in nondiagnostic body sherds of goblets and kantharoi in the local slipped and burnished ware. This is in contrast to the other two sites, which exhibit whole vases in local imitations as well as interisland exchange of locally produced imitations of Grey Minyan types. By the beginning of the LBA, however, the interaction networks operate along different lines, as the Minoan impact has reached its maximum effect on the local production of all island sites.

The wider context of interaction between the Mainland and the Cyclades, with particular reference to the early MBA, involves sociopolitical changes attested at island sites. It appears that the time of the “international spirit” of the EB II period ended in the Cyclades with the Kastri group phase; in some places, e.g., Ayia Irini, a disruption followed. Leaving aside matters of terminology for the phase that follows, Akrotiri and Phylakopi, and slightly later Ayia Irini, all enter the MBA period as nucleated settlements, being the largest aggregated centers on the respective islands, as opposed to the more dispersed settlement patterns attested on the islands in the EB II period. This change in intra-island sociopolitical structure may have had some effects on the nature of the external relations of each Cycladic centre. It is in this context that the marked differences in the quantities of mainland imports at each site could be considered.

It seems from the evidence presented above that some shared traits, especially in vase types and decorative styles, occur widely at the island sites, and also on Aegina, at the beginning of the MBA (e.g., red-burnished bowls, ouzo cups, matt-painted barrel jars, carinated cups, cooking pots). Aegina could indeed have played an important role in the Helladic-Cycladic pottery exchange at this stage. The presence of mainland pottery and its influence on the local production differs from island to island, but as a general rule it appears to be stronger in the earlier phas-

⁶⁸ See supra n. 39.

⁶⁹ See supra n. 36.

⁷⁰ ZERNER 1993, 47 and ns. 44–8.

⁷¹ MARTHARI 1980; 1993.

⁷² LOLOS 1990, 54.

es of the MBA rather than the later. At Ayia Irini both fineware and coarseware imports are attested in Grey Minyan and matt-painted wares, while the picture of the function of the imported vases is not so clear yet at Phylakopi and Akrotiri. In the later stages of the MBA the mainland factor is less conspicuous, judging mainly by the site with the closest of such ties, Ayia Irini, while Cycladic imports at mainland sites have been found in limited quantities up to now and have been identified as items with assigned value, imported *per se*, e.g., the bird jugs.

From the above, the following tentative conclusions can be put forward: first, it appears that Aegina must have had a significant role as a regulator of the quantity and possibly the quality of imports to mainland sites from the Cyclades and from its own local production. Second, the nature of contacts of

the Cycladic sites with areas of the Mainland and the influence attested on the local production in the MBA is different in each case, but altogether seems more conspicuous in the earlier stages. Proximity models do not necessarily offer a comprehensive explanation for the differences attested, as is also the case with the nature and degree of the Minoan influence at each island centre during the later stages of the MBA.

This paper has focused on pottery as an important aspect of trade and interaction between the two areas. Future work may involve a more extended approach of other aspects of interaction, such as burial habits and secular architecture, to provide a more comprehensive picture of the relations between island and mainland sites in the early stages of interaction.

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