

# THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE SEQUENCES OF KEA AND AEGINA

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The fourth period of occupation at Ayia Irini on Kea represents the first resettlement of the site after a considerable gap that embraces both the end of the Early Bronze Age (EBA) elsewhere and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA). The pottery repertory of Ayia Irini IV parallels that of cities VIII and IX at the Kolonna site on Aegina.<sup>2</sup> Kolonna VII, which follows immediately on the Early Helladic (EH) III phase represented by Kolonna VI, also is of Middle Helladic (MH) date, but the overall character of the pottery appears earlier than that of Ayia Irini IV. Pottery groups (*Fundgruppen*) XXIX and XXX are firmly dated to Kolonna VIII, and groups XXXI through XXXVII are assigned to Kolonna IX, although not all the latter groups are stratigraphically fixed and there is no distinction of phases within Kolonna IX. Groups XXXVIII through XL place Kolonna X in the time of Ayia Irini V, the final period of Middle Cycladic (MC). Walter and Felten allow a conventional century for Kolonna VIII and one and a half centuries for the ninth settlement.<sup>3</sup> If this is correct it may be too long for Ayia Irini IV, and perhaps Kolonna VIII begins a little earlier than Ayia Irini IV, as suggested by a few vessels from group XXX, while Kolonna IX could overlap a bit with Ayia Irini V.

Group XXIX from Kolonna VIII consists of four MH matt-painted (MHMP) kantharoi (409–12) that appear to be a matched set. Although none of the decorative schemes is attested among Ayia Irini's rather slim repertory of MHMP fine ware these pieces would look right at home there. In group XXX the MHMP pieces again correspond in a general way to pottery found in Ayia Irini IV. The shape of 413 is similar to that of many examples from Ayia Irini, in

both local wares and Cycladic White (e.g., Fig. 1: S-30, AQ-11, AQ-29, AT-34, CB-5, CN-4).

But it is Kolonna IX, with its ample collection of pottery, that most emphatically corresponds to Ayia Irini IV, as documented by groups XXXI through XXXVII. The first group consists of a single fine MHMP cup (423), which is not paralleled at Ayia Irini but which – again – would not look at all out of place in period IV. Of the three MHMP pieces that comprise group XXXII the decoration on 425 has approximate parallels in Ayia Irini IV (Fig. 1: CE-55, White-on-red; CE-90, Pink-orange). The barrel jar 426 has general parallels at Ayia Irini, but the vertical linking of the circles is not matched in the preserved material.

In Walter and Felten's group XXXIII, 429 is the handle of a great bulbous jar, one of many *Bogenrippenamphoren* occurring at Kolonna. This is a very distinctive shape that is found at several sites (for which see the individual catalog items 124–55 in SIEDENTOPF 1991). The best-known example is the magnificent vessel from Eutresis.<sup>4</sup> Ayia Irini has produced substantial fragments of one bulbous jar and single sherds from three others – all in the local yellow-slipped ware. One handle attachment (Fig. 2: DG-11) is unstratified, but all the others (Fig. 2: AO-11, CM-7, and one unpublished, not illustrated) date fairly early within period IV. Siedentopf observes<sup>5</sup> that at Kolonna this shape begins early and does not continue late, and indeed nearly all of his pieces are assigned to Kolonna VII or VIII, but the dating of Walter and Felten's 429 to Kolonna IX is also entirely satisfactory in relation to Ayia Irini IV.

In group XXXV the red Burnished goblet 435 (which should be restored with a taller stem) is

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<sup>2</sup> The sequence of settlements at Kolonna and their respective find groups are detailed in WALTER and FELTEN 1981.

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Aegina inventory numbers of vases cited in the following text refer to their catalog; when SIEDENTOPF 1991 is cited *his* numbers are used. Catalog numbers cited for Ayia Irini refer to OVERBECK 1989 for period IV and to DAVIS 1986 for period V.

<sup>3</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 10.

<sup>4</sup> GOLDMAN 1931, 146, pl. 13.

<sup>5</sup> SIEDENTOPF 1991, 21.

described as having “feiner ziegelroter Ton”<sup>6</sup> and, therefore, according to Walter and Felten, the vessel cannot be genuine Cycladic but is undoubtedly of local manufacture.<sup>7</sup> However, even though the clay used at Ayia Irini is not normally refined, it can be and sometimes is, and even though *any* uniform color of the biscuit is not usual it does occur. My examination of the goblet on two different occasions has convinced me that it is an example of Keian Middle Cycladic Burnished ware, for which compare, among many others, CE-47 (Fig. 2).

The Gray Minyan kantharos 436 from group XXXV is not especially similar to any of the more than 91 examples at Ayia Irini, but all five of the ring-stemmed goblets, of Mature Minyan style, are matched exactly on Kea, where ring-stemmed goblets belong mostly to the first half of the period – as do red Burnished goblets. Thus group XXXV should date well before the end of Kolonna IX. The goblets 437–9 display the familiar “Trojan” handles, perched on the rim. Although in Ayia Irini IV no full profile of *any* of the more than 295 Gray Minyan goblets is preserved, there are several of these distinctive handles (Fig. 2: BD-41, BD-47). Kolonna 441, from group XXXVI, is the classic Lianokladhi goblet, paralleled by abundant examples at Ayia Irini (e.g., Fig. 2: J-20, K-14, S-51, X-40; Fig. 3: BD-38, CE-104, CE-108).

Groups XXXVIII, XXXIX and XL have parallels with Ayia Irini V, which equates with Middle Minoan (MM) III and Phylakopi II,3 and marks the end of Middle Cycladic. Compare Kolonna 451, 452 with P-5 in Ayia Irini V (Fig. 3). Most strikingly, group XL consists of one Melian jug of the Black-and-red style, for which see similar pieces from Ayia Irini V (Fig. 3: C-18, AF-5). A similar sherd has recently been found at Kolonna.<sup>8</sup>

In Siedentopf’s presentation of the matt-painted ware from the Kolonna site<sup>9</sup> it is his Ripe Style, which he equates with Kolonna IX, that best corresponds with both the MHMP found at Ayia Irini and the locally made Yellow-slipped ware that derives from it. In both wares the commonest shape at Ayia Irini is the barrel jar, which disappears from all wares about the end of period IV; in MHMP it already begins in IVb to

be replaced by the globular jar. Siedentopf’s 15 most closely resembles Ayia Irini’s barrel jars; his Early Style jars (equated with Kolonna VII and VIII),<sup>10</sup> such as his 3 and 4, are rather different in shape, and the decoration, in horizontal bands, has little in common with any jars from Ayia Irini. The mature form of decorative syntax, with vertical zones, seen on Siedentopf’s Ripe Style 15, is typical of barrel jars at Ayia Irini; but the form of that vessel’s circles – with flanked spokes – occurs only on the local Keian Yellow-slipped ware. The MHMP pieces at Ayia Irini have the double circles with no spokes, like those on the more advanced Siedentopf 81 at Kolonna (but occurring also in find groups of Kolonna IX). Compare BS-2 (Fig. 4), which dates to the second half of Ayia Irini IV. The checkerboard pattern on Siedentopf 46–63 is found on one Keian Yellow-slipped barrel jar, AQ-22 (Fig. 4). The extra handle suspended from the lip of Siedentopf 81 is a relatively late feature at Kolonna not found at all on Kea. The late barrel jar Siedentopf 96, extraordinarily careless in its painted decoration, has a rim profile and a handle that do not occur at Ayia Irini.

Siedentopf’s figure 1 illustrates the progression of rim profiles on barrel jars: the first one to match the profile of any barrel jar at Ayia Irini is, again, 15 of the Ripe Style. Note the contrast with 96, again, which has a swelling at the edge of the lip – apparently a common feature in Siedentopf’s Late Style, but not found at Ayia Irini.

Kilian-Dirlmeier<sup>11</sup> illustrates fragments of Keian red Burnished (small) barrel jars at Kolonna, from the old excavations and therefore without recorded context, which can be compared with examples from Ayia Irini IVb (especially grave 3-1; Fig. 4). There are also at Kolonna more fragments of Keian red Burnished goblets<sup>12</sup> and of Keian Light-on-dark patterned ware.<sup>13</sup> Thus Keian imports at Kolonna are significant, as at no other known site, and new finds from ongoing excavation continue to add material. In the opposite direction, Lindblom attributes to Aegina Ayia Irini’s best-preserved MHMP barrel jar (Fig. 4: BS-2), as well as several other pieces,<sup>14</sup> and he believes that substantially more Aeginetan pottery remains to be identified in Ayia Irini IV.<sup>15</sup> Thus it

<sup>6</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 175.

<sup>7</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 133.

<sup>8</sup> W. Gauss (pers. comm.).

<sup>9</sup> SIEDENTOPF 1991, 45–6.

<sup>10</sup> SIEDENTOPF 1991, 44.

<sup>11</sup> KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, pls. 7, 11.

<sup>12</sup> KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, pls. 4, 5 (along with other shapes).

<sup>13</sup> KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, pls. 8–11.

<sup>14</sup> LINDBLOM 2001, 43.

<sup>15</sup> M. Lindblom (pers. comm.).

seems more and more likely that a good deal of Aeginetan pottery did reach Ayia Irini at this time.

In 1989, describing the MHMP imports to Ayia Irini IV, I wrote that “the barrel jars and most other MH pieces from earlier groups have a chalky surface, a chartreuse cast and dead black paint”.<sup>16</sup> In examining matt-painted sherds in the Kolonna workroom, as late as April of 2004, I did not see any pieces that fit that description, although I noted that the fabric of the Aeginetan MHMP *did* resemble that of imports in *later* Ayia Irini IV: unlike the earlier MHMP at Ayia Irini, both of these groups display a fairly hard and smooth, buff surface, with brownish paint.<sup>17</sup> The popularity of Polychrome style in Ayia Irini’s Yellow-slipped ware led me to speculate in 1982 that the inspiration for this local style had come from central Greece and thus, perhaps, along with it the actual imports of MHMP vases.<sup>18</sup> The increasingly evident prominence of Aegina in the MBA and the growing evidence of its exchange relationship with Kea now make this seem unlikely, although I still consider the origin of Ayia Irini’s earliest MHMP an open question.

Turning to the architectural sequence: Kolonna V, of EH III date, is a new layout that displays no similarity to, or continuity with, its predecessors.<sup>19</sup> It is the only one of all the successive Bronze Age settlements that displays a Cycladic tendency in its layout of blocks of houses sharing party walls – in this respect resembling Phylakopi<sup>20</sup> more than Ayia Irini.<sup>21</sup> Kolonna V also is the first settlement on its site to exhibit a fortification wall, which with its rounded towers bears considerable resemblance not only to the EBA systems of Kastri on Syros<sup>22</sup> and Lerna III<sup>23</sup> but also to the Middle Cycladic fortification of Ayia Irini IV, which was equipped with at least one rounded tower.<sup>24</sup> Certainly the last-named site is too late to have any direct connection with Kolonna V, but on Aegina the use of at least one rounded tower continues into Kolonna VI and VII,<sup>25</sup> where it now belongs to a *Vormauer* (a preliminary

wall intended to impede a direct assault on the main wall) that parallels the exterior face of a much more substantial principal wall. Even Kolonna VII, though already MH in date, cannot be as late as Ayia Irini IV, but this same distinctive *Vormauer* – although without the rounded tower – continues into Kolonna VIII,<sup>26</sup> which must equate mostly, if not entirely, with Ayia Irini IV.

Thus continuity with the earlier fortifications is still strong and, notwithstanding the substantial reworking of the defensive systems of Kolonna VI, VII, VIII and IX, there is no general destruction of the settlement after that which ended Kolonna V.<sup>27</sup> Because of this continuity it seems to me credible that the far more modest defensive system erected immediately on the refounding of Ayia Irini at the beginning of period IV was inspired by the long-standing tradition of Aegina. It has previously been argued<sup>28</sup> that Ayia Irini IV was founded from the Greek mainland out of commercial motives; but Bronze Age Aegina is virtually an extension of the Helladic mainland, and Kolonna – in light of its apparent interest in the outside world and its proximity to Kea – could just as easily have played some part in this enterprise. In any case Kolonna might have contributed engineers who set about designing and building the defenses of Ayia Irini immediately upon arrival of the new settlers.

Whereas the defenses of Kolonna X, the final stage of MH, represent no more than yet another modification of the existing system,<sup>29</sup> the onset of the contemporary Ayia Irini V is emphatically marked – following an interval (phase IVc) during which the site was unfortified<sup>30</sup> – by the erection of the “Great Fortifications”,<sup>31</sup> an entirely new, widely extended and far stronger defensive system. But even this defensive work pales beside Kolonna’s massive bulwark, which has no parallel in Middle Helladic or Middle Cycladic Greece and which must have compellingly projected the might and prestige of Aegina.

<sup>16</sup> OVERBECK 1989, 11.

<sup>17</sup> OVERBECK 1989, 11; SIEDENTOPF 1991, 11–2.

<sup>18</sup> OVERBECK 1982, 43; see also OVERBECK and CREGO, forthcoming.

<sup>19</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 28–42.

<sup>20</sup> ATKINSON *et al.* 1904, pl. I.

<sup>21</sup> OVERBECK 1989, pl. 2.

<sup>22</sup> TSOUNTAS 1899, 117–8; BOSSERT 1967, 56.

<sup>23</sup> WIENCKE 2000, plans 5–7.

<sup>24</sup> OVERBECK 1989, pls. 3, 5.

<sup>25</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, figs. 34, 35, 40, 41.

<sup>26</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, figs. 46, 47.

<sup>27</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 28, 42.

<sup>28</sup> OVERBECK and CREGO, forthcoming.

<sup>29</sup> WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 83.

<sup>30</sup> OVERBECK 1989, 1.

<sup>31</sup> DAVIS 1986, chap. 2.

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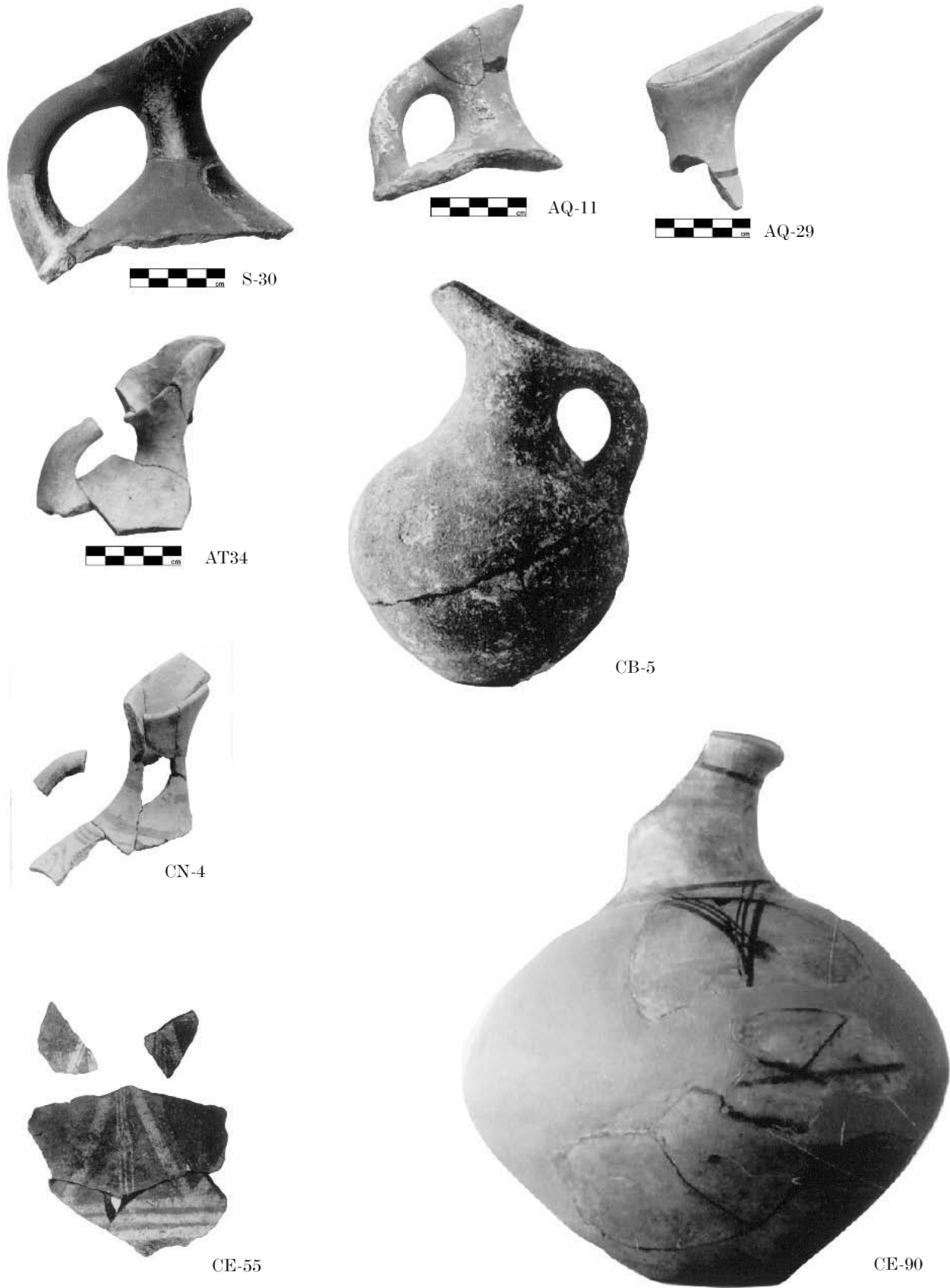


Fig. 1 Beaked jugs in various wares, from Ayia Irini IV  
(CE-55 is from a White-on-Red jar; CE-90 is a Pink-orange jug with cutaway spout)



Fig. 2 Yellow-slipped ware (AO-11, CM-7, DG-11); red Burnished ware (CE-47); and Gray Minyan ware, all from Ayia Irini IV

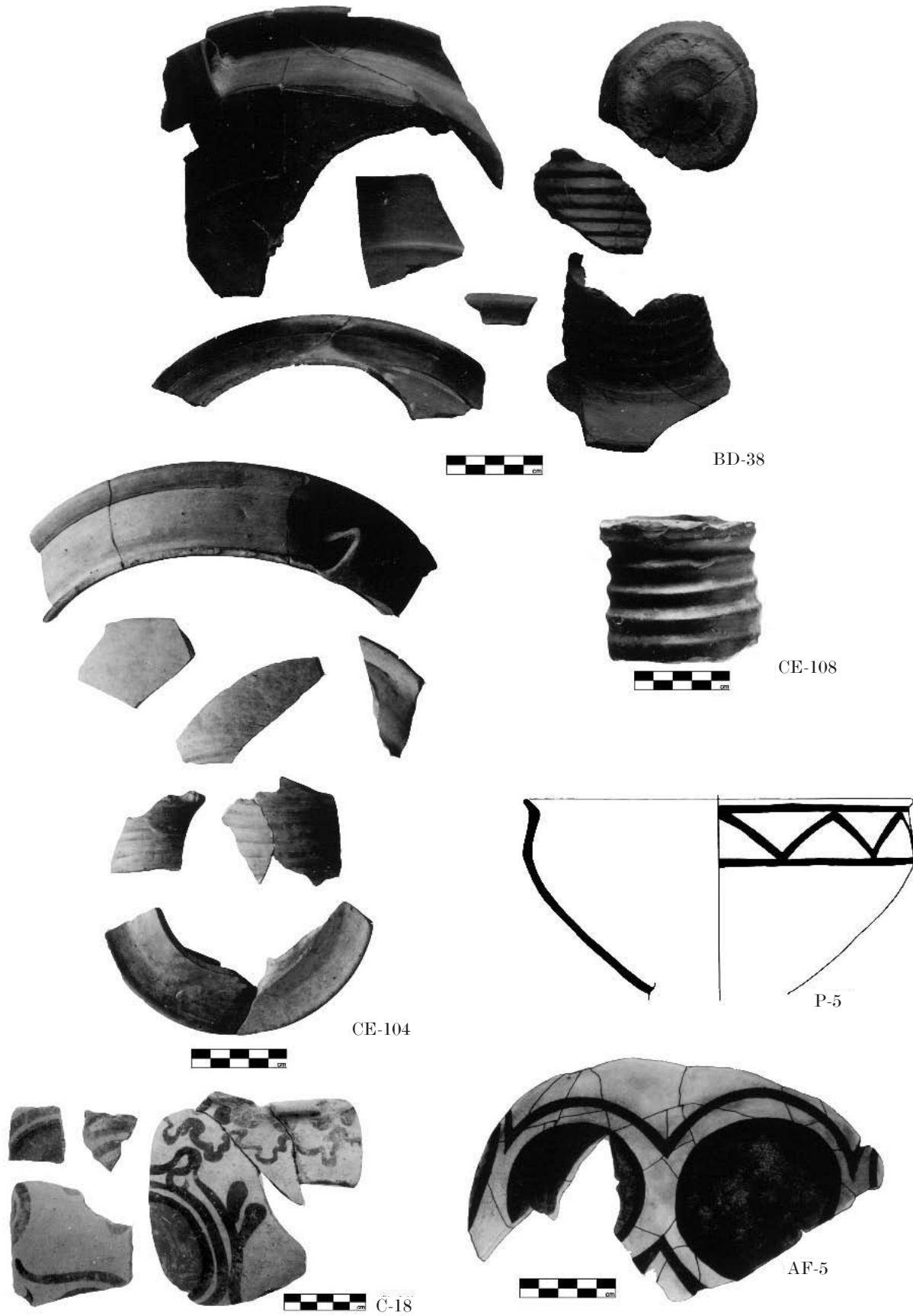


Fig. 3 Gray Minyan ware from Ayia Irini IV (BD-35, CE-104, CE-108); MH Matt-painted ware (P-5) and Cycladic White ware (Black-and-Red style)(C-18, AF-5), all from Ayia Irini V



Fig. 4 Yellow-slipped Polychrome ware (AQ-22); red Burnished ware (Grave 3-1);  
MH Matt-painted ware (BS-2), all from Ayia Irini IV