

Regional variation in Mycenaean pottery

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Observations on regional variation of LH IIIB2 (late) pottery from Thebes

Eleni Andrikou

An assemblage of pottery excavated in the Municipal Conference Centre of Thebes (MCCTh) plot is going to be presented and discussed in the frame of defining regionality for the palatial centre of Thebes.

The MCCTh plot lies at the NW lower slope of the Kadmeia hill, just opposite the Archaeological Museum of Thebes, at a distance of 250m from the “House of Kadmos” on top of the hill. In Trenches 17, 17/18 and 18 at the central east part of the plot a fill was excavated containing discarded pottery, 23 Mycenaean figurines and a restricted number of various other artifacts. The pottery has been dated to LH IIIB2 late. Based on the analysis of shapes included in the assemblage the conclusion was drawn that the pottery discarded in this area comprises the remnants of a collective feasting occasion involving mainly if not exclusively, drinking.

Presentation and discussion of the material deal with four topics:

1. The results of the Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) of 46 samples which point to a mainly Theban or Boeotian production for most of the material.
2. Examination of technological traits of the building of vases.
3. Particularities and / or preferences on vase shapes.
4. Comments on vase decoration.

The last three topics, discussed in comparison to the pottery of the Mycenaean centers in the Peloponnese, help to define the degree of regionality in the palatial centre of Thebes just before the demise of the Mycenaean palatial system.

Ceramic consumption patterns at Ayia Irini, Kea in the Mycenaean period

Anna Belza

This paper presents the results of the preliminary study of ceramics from the harbor town of Ayia Irini, Kea from the Mycenaean period (LH IIB–LH IIIC, ca. 1550–1100 BCE). The main features of the pottery (classes, shapes, styles) are presented from four contexts: House AB, the Spring Chamber, House J, and a bothros. The character of local and nonlocal pottery is examined to determine the degree of variation and/or uniformity between Ayia Irini and other regions in the Late Bronze Age Aegean. The pottery from House AB reveals significant information about pottery consumption patterns at Ayia Irini in LH IIB–IIIA1 and the local production and consumption of wares that were unaffected by broader regional trends. Pottery dating to LH IIIA2 from the Spring Chamber, House J, and the bothros indicate that regional trade partners remained unchanged from LH IIB–IIIA1 while local potters experimented with technologies (clay processing, forming, surface treatment) and shapes. The Mycenaean koine ceramically attested at Ayia Irini is understood to be the result of participation in a Mainland oriented exchange network which experienced change or reorganization by LH IIIB, leading to the diminished use of Ayia Irini through LH IIIC.

Some observations on Mycenaean pottery in Southern Phocis

Lucille Garnery and Julien Zurbach

The site of Kirrha in southern Phocis, on the shores of the Corinthian gulf, has been occupied from the Early Bronze age until LH IIIB or perhaps somewhat later. Excavations have been conducted here by Henri van Effenterre and others in 1937-38, by the Ephoreia of Antiquities of Delphi from the 1960s onwards and as a collaboration between the French School of archaeology and the Ephoreia from 2009 onwards.

These explorations carried out since the first half of the 20th century have shown that in LH III the site was smaller than in earlier periods, since remains from that period came to light only on the eastern half of the magoula, around the church of the modern village. We have been able to find LH III remains in Area 4, on the summit of the hill, just east of the trenches dug by van Effenterre where similar phases also came to light.

The material excavated is typical for a settlement, usually highly fragmented. No contexts were excavated which could be characterized as destruction deposits; it seems that the buildings, which are in all probability domestic structures, were normally abandoned, if not emptied by their inhabitants, and not destroyed by fire. Nevertheless, the careful excavation has led to the establishment of a fine stratigraphy comprising at least four main phases from LH II to IIIB, with the earlier phases more clearly attested. A striking feature of this site, particularly in Area 4, is the change from settlement (until LH IIA) to necropolis (LH IIB) and back to settlement at the beginning of LH III.

This paper will present some aspects of the pottery from the LH IIB graves, which mark the beginning of Mycenaean pottery in Kirrha; then turn to some questions about the fine decorated, Mycenaean-style pottery from LH III A-B, and then to the coexistence of, and relationship between, handmade and wheelmade cooking and storage vessels.

Considerations on Late Bronze Age Aeginetan pottery - Mycenaean vs Aeginetan

Walter Gauß, Daniel Frank and Eva Kreuz

Our presentation is divided into three parts and focuses on differentiating early Late Bronze Age pottery of Mycenaean and Aeginetan style and origin. The settlement of Kolonna on the island of Aegina forms the basis for our considerations, whereas the site of Katsingri in the Argolid is a very important reference site for our observations.

In the first part, Walter Gauss discusses the ceramic sequence from the so called ‘Südhügel’ at Kolonna. In particular, the chronological and stylistic development of the Aeginetan pottery is discussed as well as the share of imported pottery.

In the second part, Eva Kreuz deals with the highly interesting excavation area K10 situated in the northwestern part of the ‘Äußere Vorstadt’ (outer extension) of Kolonna. Here a sequence of MH III to late LH IIA or early LH IIB deposits was recently uncovered. First preliminary results of the pottery study indicate that the entire range of Aeginetan pottery of the Early Late Bronze Age is represented. Furthermore, the finds from K10 provide important new insights into how imported Mycenaean style pottery, presumably from the Argolid, may have influenced Aeginetan pottery.

In the final part of our presentation, Daniel Frank draws a comparison of “Mycenaean vs. Aeginetan” pottery based on his study of the MH III to LH IIB/LH IIIA1 settlement of Katsingri in the Argolid. Due to the site’s advantageous location in close distance to the overland route from the Argolid to the Saronic Gulf it received a fair amount of pottery from both production areas. First insights into the ceramic classes, shapes, and imports in the tableware sets will be discussed.

Incoming and outgoing. Ceramic traditions in Late Mycenaean western Achaea. The case of Teichos Dymaion

Michalis Gazis

The ample data from excavations of numerous cemeteries throughout the region is the backbone of our knowledge of Mycenaean Achaean pottery. Based on that evidence it is generally accepted that western and eastern Achaea, although related, followed autonomous cultural trajectories.

Within this framework, Teichos Dymaion stands out as the most prominent settlement site of western Achaea, with a clear defensive role. The vast quantity of pottery from the excavations, old and more recent ones, presents many challenges but also opportunities to anyone trying to assess its role and significance. Based on the available data, this paper will put forward a few general remarks concerning the nature of the Mycenaean ceramic assemblage and offer new insights into the various ceramic traditions present at the site and their implications. In terms of chronology, there is hardly any pottery predating the LH III period. Only a limited amount can be dated to the LH IIIA period, while a considerably larger portion dates to the LH IIIB period, with the majority of the assemblage spanning the entire LH IIIC period. The pottery from Teichos Dymaion is characterized by a good deal of variability, both in terms of stylistic and typological attributes, as well as in matters of production techniques and methods. As would be expected at a settlement site, the assemblage is made up predominantly of vessels associated with the consumption of food and drink, such as deep bowls, cups, kylikes, kraters etc. In terms of decoration, local production is typical of the Achaean fashion, mainly of LH IIIC date, including multiple bands on stirrup jars and solidly painted bodies of kraters, amphoras and kylikes. Imported pottery is well represented, e.g. vessels of Argive origin with LH IIIB features, including stirrup jars, Group A and B as well as Rosette deep bowls.

Variability is also manifest in the occurrence at Teichos Dymaion of two ceramic traditions, apparently of southern Italian origin, which are alien to the predominant Mycenaean one, but are taken into account in this paper as significant indicators of mobility of people and ideas throughout most of the 13th cent. BCE: Handmade Burnished Ware has been found in quantities well above the ones documented in other sites of the Aegean. Wheel made Grey Ware, while rather rare, is considered in the context of hybridity with Mycenaean pottery, especially in connection to the occurrence of the carinated cup FS 240. Moving in the opposite direction, one could arguably claim that Teichos Dymaion had a role to play if not in the production, then at least in the circulation of Achaean pottery in Italy, given its strategic location at the starting point of the sea route between NW Peloponnese and the Italian peninsula.

Similarities and dissimilarities of ceramic assemblages between subregions of Laconia and what they may mean

Vasco Hachtmann

The British excavations at Ayios Stephanos and at the Menelaion in the 1960s and 1970s significantly increased the knowledge about the Late Bronze Age in Laconia. Extensive publication of the finds from these two settlements has betrayed a certain difference in material culture that apparently owes much to the varying intensity of contact with the Minoan world. Plentiful new evidence from different sites within Laconia invites a reassessment of the question of regionalism during the Late Bronze Age in this part of Greece. For example, the results of an intensive archaeological survey in Central Laconia have been published; in South East Laconia a new corpus of grave pottery from Epidavros Limera has been presented, while at Pavlopetri a large coastal site is being investigated. Quantified pottery data is now available from the recently discovered Mycenaean palace at Ayios Vasileios near Sparta and an attempt is made in this paper to integrate the latter in our current view of different trajectories of ceramic style, consumption and pottery-related practices in different Laconian sub-region in a diachronic perspective. Inevitably, however, the question arises whether the different types of archaeological record are sufficient to provide a well-founded picture.

Regional variability in Mycenaean pottery: Some thoughts on local Mycenaean pottery in the Spercheios valley

Efi Karantzali

The Spercheios valley is a privileged area providing all the necessities for a relatively safe and comfortable existence. Fertile soil, abundant water resources, ore and clay deposits, defensible passes and a location in the hub of easy communication routes over land and sea are the main features of this region. The valley began to be systematically explored in the last 20 years. Parts of the settlements at Frantzi and Lygaria were excavated, providing important stratigraphic data for the Mycenaean production and life in the Spercheios valley. Additionally, our knowledge of burial pottery was enriched after the discovery, in 2009, of the diachronic cemetery at Kompotades on the south side of the valley.

The Middle Helladic was a prosperous period for the life of the inhabitants in the valley. The local production of certain MH pottery classes, such as the so-called matt-painted/ $\Delta 1\beta$ and the grey “Minyan” class, is observed in high percentages at almost all MH sites. However, the most frequent class was the local dark handmade household pottery, comprising storage/transport and cooking utensils. The MH tradition of household pottery is very strong during the early phases of the Late Helladic period.

The local ceramic production of the valley was changed from the MH III/LHI transition period. The apsidal house at Frantzi has provided a useful data for the identification of the main features (regarding clay, classes, wares and typology) of the local ceramic production during the transitional MH III/LHI and the early stages of the LH I. The local ceramic assemblage in the Spercheios valley is characterized by the absence of the lustrous early Mycenaean pottery, while some of the MH ceramic and their derivatives belong chronologically to the initial phase of the LH I in Central Greece.

Pottery classes identified for the first time during these periods continue to be produced in a similar way, or in variants through the LH III period. Frantzi is up to now a unique site providing stratified Mycenaean pottery from the LH II-III A2-early until LH III B2-III C early periods. The early Mycenaean period is represented by architectural remains and corresponding local pottery, suggesting a long use of the first Mycenaean buildings from LH II to LH III A2-early. The majority of the ceramic production during the palatial period was locally manufactured, while imports were rare and sometimes of uncertain origin. However, the material culture demonstrates that people in the Spercheios valley settlements were aware of the technical innovations of the Mycenaean palatial centers.

Argive style pottery as a benchmark? Distribution and consumption of painted styles deriving from the Argive workshops

Eleftheria Kardamaki

The present paper focuses on painted pottery with patterned decoration that was characteristic for the region of the Argolid during the palatial period (LH IIIA – LH IIIB). Argive workshops are considered to have had a leading role – or one assumed as “central” versus “regional, peripheral” – in pottery production reflecting a longstanding tradition in successfully producing masses of painted vases with abstract or pictorial motifs and good quality of clay. Pottery of these styles had a large distribution within the Aegean and the East, as beautiful containers for traded goods or as highly appreciated vases for consumption. Due to these qualities, Argive painted pottery forms the basis of the relative chronological system, but it has been long recognized that its use outside the Argolid for the purpose of chronological comparison should be treated with caution.

The paper addresses question of how extensive – or limited – was in fact the circulation of Argive or Argive-style pottery in mainland Greece, and whether it is possible to trace any differences over time. Study of the distribution and the nature of deposits within the Argolid and NE/Peloponnese aims to investigate patterns of production and consumption and how these relate with the palaces and palatial centers.

Mycenaean pottery from the eastern slopes of Macedonian Olympus revisited: the search for regional variations at the “Trimpina/Platamon stop” and “Rema Xydias” cemeteries

Sophia Koulidou

Rescue excavations at the southeast border of the region of Macedonian Olympus, at the adjacent sites of *Trimpina/Platamon Stop* and *Rema Xydias*, have revealed new significant evidence concerning the spread of the Mycenaean sphere of influence in this northernmost area of the Mycenaean world. Although funerary pottery assemblages are well acknowledged as reflections of just a lone, yet essential, community activity, that of the funerary practices, however they can also be deployed in the identification of different production traditions in a single region.

As such, the typological examination of the funerary Mycenaean ware pottery from the aforementioned cemeteries, dating from LH III A1 to LH III B/LHIIIC Early, provided observations regarding both inter-cemetery variations and interregional connections. As to the former, it has been recognised that Trimpina (the earlier cemetery) is carrying more traditional features both in its material culture and its burial practices, whereas Rema Xydias more innovative features, indicating a broader permeation of Mycenaean cultural traits in the area. As to the latter, two main cultural circles can be identified as the source of the Mycenaean pottery influence, and in a few cases of actual imports, in the area. These are the Thessalian cultural circle, in combination with areas of Central Greece, such as Phthiotis and Phocis, and the West Peloponnesian cultural circle (West Mainland Koine), particularly Achaia.

The skeleton in the closet. Late Minoan II-III B ceramic regionalism before and after the final destruction of Knossos

Charlotte Langohr

This paper puts forward a Cretan perspective on the topic of regional variation in Mycenaean pottery. In order to do so, I propose to proceed in two steps. The first part of the paper draws a general picture of our current understanding of ceramic regionalism in Late Minoan (LM) II-III B Crete (most recently Rutter forthcoming). Based on this general framework, the second part of this contribution specifically focuses on the LM IIIA2 phase, the time of the final collapse of the palace of Knossos, and with it, the end of its centralized administration and tight political control of a large part of Crete (most recently D'Agata et al. 2022). Despite being taken as a major turning point in the history of Minoan ceramic regionalism, the LM IIIA2 phase remains a period difficult to define at a certain number of sites, both stratigraphically and ceramically. Much effort is still needed to better explain, on the basis of a bottom-up approach to our assemblages, the *transition* between two phenomena on which there is some consensus: from the impressive stylistic uniformity of the LM IIIA1 repertoire, to the widespread regionalism of LM III B pottery. By proposing an assessment of the changing patterns of ceramic uniformity *versus* localism or regionalism in another Aegean region, Crete, this paper aims to offer a useful counterpoint to the discussion on the manifold aspects of regional variability in Mycenaean pottery.

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MH IV or LH I? Why Mycenaean starts in LH IIA

Michael Lindblom

The identification on the southern and central Greek mainland of Late Helladic (LH) I pottery that could justifiably be labelled “Mycenaean” as opposed to “Minoan” or “Minoanizing” is problematic. Its definition contains contested or even unknown aspects relating to production locales, changes in ceramic technology and exchange networks in overlapping orbits of cultural engagement. Our current understanding maintains that “Mycenaean” pottery was first produced in a relatively small area in coastal Laconia best exemplified at Ayios Stephanos. The potters were trained in a ceramic technology mirrored at Middle Minoan III-Late Minoan (LM) IA Kastri on the island of Kythera. The same situation applies at Lerna in the latter half of LH I. Neutron Activation Analysis suggests that not only decorated, but also monochrome and unpainted small vessels of ultimately Minoan derivation and indistinguishable from contemporary Kytheran examples were regionally or even locally produced.

The observations upset the canonical divide between Middle and Late Helladic and Minoan and Helladic in ways that better reflects past realities, but also introduce challenges for ceramic specialists. Scholarly response to this question has typically been to push the beginning of “Mycenaean” pottery back in time and extend the LH I period to encompass roughly one century in calendar years. For simple pedagogical reasons, however, it may be equally valid to suggest that what we label as Mycenaean pottery should only begin with multiple attested production locales outside the Minoan(ized) Kythera and Laconia towards the end of LH I or, perhaps even better, the beginning of LH IIA. If the proposal is accepted, the LH I Lustrous Decorated “Mycenaean” pottery should be considered as just one of several instances of “Minoanizing” pottery in the prehistoric Aegean, as originally proposed by Jeremy and Sarah Rutter in 1976. Although generalizing and imperfect, this label should probably also extend to include identical ceramic classes used by presumably multi-ethnic communities at contemporary Kythera.

The earliest imported and locally produced Mycenaean pottery in coastal Thessaly

Bartłomiej Lis and Anthi Batziou

In this paper, we would like to offer a first glimpse into the Early Mycenaean decorated pottery deriving from the site of Kastro/Palaia Volos. We will present both imported and locally produced pottery. This material significantly changes our knowledge regarding the earliest Mycenaean pottery in coastal Thessaly. According to the current conventional knowledge, based almost exclusively on funerary evidence, there is no LH I pottery in Thessaly, while LH IIA pieces are extremely rare and larger quantities of both imported and locally produced Mycenaean pottery are associated with LH IIB and IIIA1 phases.

The material under current study by the authors, deriving from two rescue excavations conducted at the settlement site of Kastro/Palaia, clearly shows that this perception needs to be revised. Our aim is not only to show such pottery, but also to put it under discussion. With regard to imported pottery, while its chronological position is relatively straightforward, there are interesting observations regarding its manufacture, highlighting the need of a more thorough study of the earliest Mycenaean pottery produced in southern Aegean. For the locally produced pieces, its dating provides a considerable challenge given the absence of fine stratigraphic divisions. This challenge is due to the strong regional character of such pottery and within this workshop we would like to encourage a discussion on how such pottery can be approached.

Petsas House pottery: production, products, and percentages in the Late Helladic IIIA workshop at Mycenae

Kim Shelton

Late Helladic pottery from the Argolid is considered a trend-setter and a benchmark for assessing regional style – both its own regional style, and in comparison to it, other regional styles. This is due in part to scholarly bias based on early excavations and the pottery typologies developed from those. Yet, pottery from the Argolid, especially during the palatial period, does appear to have spread far and wide, where it is recognized by scholars macroscopically, stylistically, and chemically. It was imported into other regions, it was curated and kept as heirlooms, it inspired local and regional imitation. Was it a part of the *koine* or was it the model around which the *koine* formed?

Petsas House, a building complex in the settlement of Mycenae, provides an opportunity to study and understand pottery production and the Argive regional style during the late 14thc. BCE. The house also served as a ceramic workshop during the LH IIIA period, was totally destroyed by earthquake late in that period, and is one of the few examples, so far excavated, of multi-use space in a palatial settlement during a period of expansion and centralization. The massive pottery corpus recovered through excavation provides important insights into large-scale ceramic production, the organization of a major workshop, and the features of consumer demand. In particular, this paper examines in some detail the pottery produced and in storage in the house in order to characterize its typological make-up, various manufacturing technologies, and production strategies, which were focused locally, regionally, and towards the greater Mycenaean and Mediterranean world. The pottery at Petsas House exhibits standardization, innovation, and variation in LH IIIA2 ceramics and provides a unique opportunity to define the regional style in context, through fabrics, treatments, and trends.

A view from the Terrace: Late Helladic pottery at Iklaina, Messenia

Patrick Thomas

Iklaina is the site of an important Mycenaean polity in Messenia about 10 km. from the Bronze Age palace at Pylos. It appears to have been conquered and subjected to direct control by the kingdom of Pylos in LH IIIB; its relationship with Pylos and other Messenian sites before then is still under investigation. Excavations conducted by Dr. Michael Cosmopoulos of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society, have produced a wealth of new evidence about the site. This report aims, in keeping with the theme of the conference, to emphasize some aspects of finds at Iklaina that relate to regional differences in Mycenaean pottery.

Not surprisingly, ceramics at Iklaina bear a considerable resemblance to those found at Nichoria. Since the excavation and initial study of the Nichoria pottery, however, knowledge of fabrics has expanded considerably, with improved ability to recognize imports. One of the most striking features of Iklaina is the low amount of imported material. More than a decade's worth of excavation and examination of several hundred thousand sherds has not turned up a single piece of Aeginetan pottery, either cookware or matte-painted. There is no more than a literal handful of suspect decorated Minoan pieces. Examples of exotic micaceous fabrics are more common, but still very rare: many probably come from Kythera and others from Lakonia. Even lustrous-decorated imports from the Argolid are comparatively rare.

The local potters who supplied Iklaina appear to have been relatively conservative and selective in their implementation of the Mycenaean ceramic "agenda." The uptake of lustrous-decorated fine ware seems to have been slow. Carefully made and decorated Vapheio cups are relatively common in LH II at Iklaina, usually with ripple or some kind of spiraliform motif, but larger lustrous-decorated fineware goblets and cups are rarely encountered. In LH I-II, goblets and cups almost always are found in a few medium-coarse "plain" fabrics with no painted decoration. It is worth pointing out that the notoriously poor preservation of paint in Messenian pottery appears to have a chronological aspect to it: the LH I-II lustrous-decorated at Iklaina is usually on a fine white or pale brown fabric with a carefully prepared surface that preserves the paint. By LH IIIA, there was considerably more painted fine ware, but the soft and porous surfaces of the increasing amount of pale finewares do not preserve paint well. As was the case at Nichoria, open shapes like kylikes and stemmed bowls were often solidly painted, although often only traces of the paint remain. The liking for solid paint continued into LH IIIB, when it appears on deep bowls as well. When linear decoration or motifs do appear, either on closed or open vessels, they almost always conform to the normal syntax seen elsewhere.

Although Iklaina's potters seem to have been sparing in their selection of painted decoration, by contrast, they appear to have been careful observers and participants in the evolution of shape from LH I onwards, whether in fineware or the much more abundant "plain" wares used for goblets and stemmed cups before the advent of the kylix in LH IIIA. The rim profiles of open shapes like goblets, kylikes, stemmed bowls, and deep bowls appear to "track" closely what was happening elsewhere, although of course how precisely synchronized those changes were is an open question. The same attention appears to have been given to non-coarse closed vessels as well.

In the consideration of regional differences, it is also important to note that some sites may have sponsored certain kinds of activities that are more reflective of the particular site than location. Iklaina, for example, has yielded a very large number of spit stands that probably relate to specialized cooking at the site. Conical cups and basins in a wide variety of sizes are also very common, seemingly considerably more so than other published Mycenaean sites.

Late Helladic IIIC Pottery in Athens and Attica: Archaisms, Innovations, and Cycladic Connections

Trevor Van Damme

Sarah Immerwahr, in her major publication of the finds from the excavations of the Athenian Agora, had already noted that the palatial *koine* seen in other parts of the Aegean world never took hold in Athens and, instead, we can observe a strong continuity in the stylistic trends set in Late Helladic II–Late Helladic IIIA1 including the widespread popularity of burnished and monochrome vessels. Further discoveries since Immerwahr's synthesis, have confirmed the idiosyncratic nature of the Attic style when compared to the Argive sequence and raised new questions about the placement of key deposits.

A major development in our understanding of the Mycenaean sequence in Attica is the archaeological identification of two major Late Bronze Age pottery production centers at Kontopigado in West Attica and, most recently, the islet of Praso in the bay of Porto Rafti in East Attica. Petrographic and chemical studies help to securely identify their respective outputs and offer the potential to identify Attic exports in other regions that may refine the local pottery sequence. This is especially important as the dominance of local production centers from an early date has contributed to the small number of imports and to the trend towards increased regionalism.

In this paper, I will begin with an overview of what we know and do not know about the local Attic sequence highlighting key closed deposits and discussing some of the challenges that arise when attempts are made to place them relative to the Argive sequence. I will then turn my attention to the problem of the relative dating of the earliest Late Helladic IIIC deposits in Attica. Central to my discussion will be the complete presentation of a closed deposit of material, interpreted as a large dump of domestic debris from the Athenian Acropolis that was discarded in the so-called Mycenaean Fountain. An issue that immediately arises from this analysis is the abundance of linear decorated deep bowls coupled with an almost total lack of monochrome bowls—an observation that stands in sharp contrast to the earliest Late Helladic IIIC material from Kontopigado. An attempt to resolve this discrepancy proposes that either the fill in the Mycenaean Fountain must be Late Helladic IIIB2 in date or the final occupation of Kontopigado is later than currently believed. Certain features of the same deposit also mirror developments in the Cyclades suggesting an intensification in contacts between the two regions during the postpalatial period.

***Koine* and Regional Variation in Mycenaean Tableware Pottery: From Theory to Case Study**

Salvatore Vitale

The Palatial phases of Mycenaean civilization are known for the considerable uniformity in material culture across the Aegean, with tableware ceramics being a prominent example. A. Furumark used the term *koine* to describe the remarkable increase of homogeneity in Late Helladic (LH) IIIA2 and, to a lesser extent, LH IIIB pottery styles (Furumark 1941, 521, 540). Since Furumark's work, however, the utilization of the term Mycenaean *koine* dramatically increased and important semantic shifts from the original definition occurred. During this process, stylistic standardization gradually turned into socio-cultural uniformity and Mycenaean *koine* became "... a historically remarkable phenomenon which is anything but self-evident..." (Eder and Jung 2015, 113). As such, Mycenaean *koine* is considered by some to confirm the existence of political unity across a large portion of the Aegean from approximately the late 15th to the early 12th centuries B.C. Nevertheless, no thorough theoretical discussion or contextual analysis of the material evidence for the existence of a broader Mycenaean cultural *koine* has been attempted to date.

The loose use of such terms as cultural *koinai* was recently the subject of critical review. In an important essay published in 2017, for example, M. Dietler stated that "... such semantic and theoretical laxity... leads easily to a kind of 'cargo cult' approach to theory, where a vaguely apprehended rubric is appropriated in the hope that it will magically deliver interpretive meaning" (Dietler 2017, 17). To rescue the epistemological significance of cultural and material *koinai*, Dietler suggested a theoretically coherent contextual approach. According to this methodology, the analysis of the objects reflecting such *koinai* must consider three aspects: spatial and quantitative distribution; formal and functional characterization; and consumption patterns.

Following Dietler's approach, this paper proposes a diachronic discussion of diagnostic drinking vessels from Pylos, Mitrou, and the "Serraglio" on Kos. Located in different areas of the Mycenaean world, these sites represent a diverse set of case studies, including a Palatial center from the southwest Peloponnese, a secondary center from the central Greek mainland, and an important regional center from the southeast Aegean. Emphasis is placed on the critical comparison between these three sites and other important sites in the northeast Peloponnese during the late formative, mature, and final phases of the Mycenaean palaces.

While not denying an increased uniformity in tableware drinking vessels during the Mycenaean Palatial phase, the results of this research demonstrate the existence of major differences in the distribution, perceived function, and consumption patterns of diagnostic types across the Aegean. Additional contextual analysis is needed to evaluate the character of the so-called Mycenaean *koine* and special attention must be placed on complex variables, such as the critical role played by the significant spatial and quantitative spread of Argive imports. In the meanwhile, it is wise to contain interpretative efforts and refrain from major historical reconstructions, especially those concerning wider socio-political trajectories.

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