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On some late Prepalatial pricket lamps in White-on-Dark Ware from beneath the North Wing of the Malia Palace

Ilaria CALOI, Roxane DUBOIS

SUMMARY In 2021, eight pricket lamps were identified during the study of pottery from the sounding undertaken by Olivier Pelon in 1978 and 1985 in Room IX b, located in the North Wing of the Malia Palace. These lamps, contained in an EM III–MM IA assemblage from the northern part of the room, are local productions in semi-fine red fabric that imitate the elaborate patterns of the White-on-Dark Ware, the hallmark of the late Prepalatial productions of East Crete. These elaborate white-on-dark pricket lamps from the late Prepalatial levels of the Malia Palace seem to represent the prototype of the later pricket lamps, well-attested across the Malia site from MM I to MM II. This paper aims to present the eight lamps and their context, to provide parallels both from Malia and Minoan Crete, and to trace the development of this specific shape from late Prepalatial through the Protopalatial period in the whole island.

RÉSUMÉ *Sur quelques lampes à piton de la période prépalatiale tardive en céramique à décor blanc sur fond sombre provenant de l'aile nord du Palais de Malia*

En 2021, huit lampes à piton ont été identifiées lors de l'étude du matériel céramique issu des fouilles menées par Olivier Pelon en 1978 et 1985 dans la salle IX b, située dans l'aile nord du Palais de Malia. Ces lampes, qui font partie d'un ensemble datable des phases EM III-MM IA provenant de la partie nord de la salle, sont des productions locales en pâte semi-fine rouge imitant les motifs élaborés de la céramique décorée en clair sur fond sombre, caractéristique des productions prépalatiales tardives de la Crète orientale. Ces lampes à piton élaborées, décorées en clair sur fond sombre, provenant des niveaux prépalatiaux tardifs du Palais de Malia, semblent représenter le prototype des lampes à piton plus tardives, bien attestées sur tout le site de Malia du MM I au MM II. Cet article vise à présenter les huit lampes et leur contexte, à fournir des parallèles à la fois de Malia et de la Crète minoenne, et à retracer le développement de cette forme spécifique de la fin de la période prépalatiale jusqu'à la période protopalatiale sur toute l'île.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ *Περί μερικών πήλινων λύχνων τύπου «κηροπηγίου» της ύστερης Προανακτορική περιόδου με ανοιχτόχρωμα μοτίβα επί σκοτεινού βάθους από τη βόρεια πτέρυγα του Ανάκτορου των Μαλίων*

Το 2021, κατά τη μελέτη του κεραμικού υλικού που προέκυψε από την έρευνα που πραγματοποίησε ο Olivier Pelon το 1978 και το 1985 στην αίθουσα IX b, που βρίσκεται στη βόρεια πτέρυγα του Ανακτόρου των Μαλίων, αναγνωρίστηκαν οκτώ λύχνοι τύπου «κηροπηγίου». Αυτοί οι λύχνοι που περιέχονται σε ένα σύνολο της ΠΜ III - MM IA από το βορειότερο τμήμα του δωματίου, αποτελούν προϊόντα τοπικής παραγωγής που κατασκευάστηκαν από έναν ημι-λεπτόκοκκο ερυθρό πήλο και μιμούνται τα περίτεχνα διακοσμητικά θέματα της κεραμικής με ανοιχτόχρωμα μοτίβα επί σκοτεινού βάθους, η οποία αποτέλεσε το σήμα κατατεθέν της ύστερης Προανακτορικής παραγωγής στην Ανατολική Κρήτη. Αυτοί οι περίτεχνοι λύχνοι με τα ανοιχτόχρωμα διακοσμητικά θέματα επί σκοτεινούς βάθους που προέρχονται από στρώματα της Ύστερης Προανακτορικής περιόδου του ανακτόρου των Μαλίων φαίνεται να αντιπροσωπεύουν το πρωτότυπο των μεταγενέστερων λύχνων τύπου «κηροπηγίου», που μαρτυρούνται σε όλη την περιοχή των Μαλίων από τη MM I έως την MM II. Η παρούσα εργασία έχει ως στόχο να παρουσιάσει οκτώ λύχνους και το ανασκαφικό τους περιβάλλον, να παραθέσει παράλληλα τόσο από τα Μάλια όσο και από την Μινωική Κρήτη και να ανιχνεύσει την εξέλιξη του συγκεκριμένου σχήματος από την Ύστερη Προανακτορική περίοδο έως την Παλαιονακτορική περίοδο σε ολόκληρο το νησί.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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PRELIMINARY NOTE

This study has been undertaken at Malia for the “Malia Palace Project” (2016-2021) directed by Maud Devolder, under the aegis of the École française d’Athènes (EFA) and with the financial support of EFA, INSTAP (Institute for Aegean Prehistory, Philadelphia) and Ca' Foscari University of Venice. The authors of the papers are Ilaria Caloi (IC) and Roxane Dubois (RD), with the collaboration of Maud Devolder (MD). Each part of the paper is signed according to their initials.

The authors want to thank Maud Devolder for her precious advice, Iro Mathioudaki and Simona Todaro for their kind suggestions, Angelica Garzia for her sketches of decorative motifs, Mattia Zantedeschi for his help with figures, and Don Evely for the English correction of the paper. A special thanks to Bastien Rueff, who shared his unpublished PhD thesis with us. The authors are also thankful to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

The abbreviations used in this paper are the following:

EBSA = École belge d’Athènes

EM = Early Minoan

MM = Middle Minoan

All measurements are in cm.

INTRODUCTION (IC, RD)

The study of the ceramic material retrieved from soundings made by Olivier Pelon under the rooms to the north of the Central Court of the Malia Palace led to the discovery of what appears to be a prototype of the well-known *lampe à piton* of Malia. It is a lamp composed of a footed bowl with a central pricket and two opposed lugs below the rim, made in a local red semi-fine fabric and decorated on a red slip with a creamy-white colour that imitates the patterns of the well-known East Cretan White-on-Dark Ware, also known as “White Style”.¹

Eight specimens were identified. They all come from late Prepalatial (i.e. EM III–MM IA) levels reached by O. Pelon in the northern part of Room IX b, to the east of the *Salle Hypostyle* (Room IX 2) in the North Wing of the Malia Palace (fig. 1).²

In this paper, we first present the context of finding and the catalogue of the eight pricket lamps, then we provide parallels from Malia and the rest of Minoan Crete, and finally we discuss the chronology and development of this shape from the late Prepalatial through the Protopalatial period.

THE CONTEXT AND ITS CHRONOLOGY (MD, IC)

In the framework of an extensive program of stratigraphic soundings made from 1964 to 1992 in the Malia Palace, O. Pelon explored in 1978 and 1985 the early levels in the northern part of Room IX b,³ which in its latest form comprised the second flight of a staircase that led from the North Portico of the Central Court to a series of elaborate spaces above Rooms IX 1 and IX 2 (fig. 1).⁴ Under the remains of a stucco floor associated with walls that belonged to an early stage of the Palace, the excavator reached a layer that contained large quantities of ceramic material which he dated preliminarily to the EM III–MM I phases. Under it a fill was found, which contained numerous fragments of EM IIB vases mixed with small stones and which may belong to a major levelling episode dating to the beginning of the EM III phase.⁵ O. Pelon provides only limited information on the stratigraphy, but the coherence of the EM III–MM I assemblage

1. On the East Cretan White-on-Dark Ware see BETANCOURT 1984; HALL 1904–1905.
2. PELON 1980, pp. 184–191.
3. Fieldwork notebooks C_MAL_167 (year 1978) and C_MAL_174 (year 1985) of Olivier Pelon describing the soundings labelled “A” and “Berme A/B”, respectively.
4. PELON 1980, p. 191; GRAHAM 1987, pp. 125–126, figs. 87–88.
5. See context 5.C.1 in DEVOLDER, CALOI, GOMRÉE 2019, pp. 223–250, and table 12; CALOI 2019, pp. 265–275.

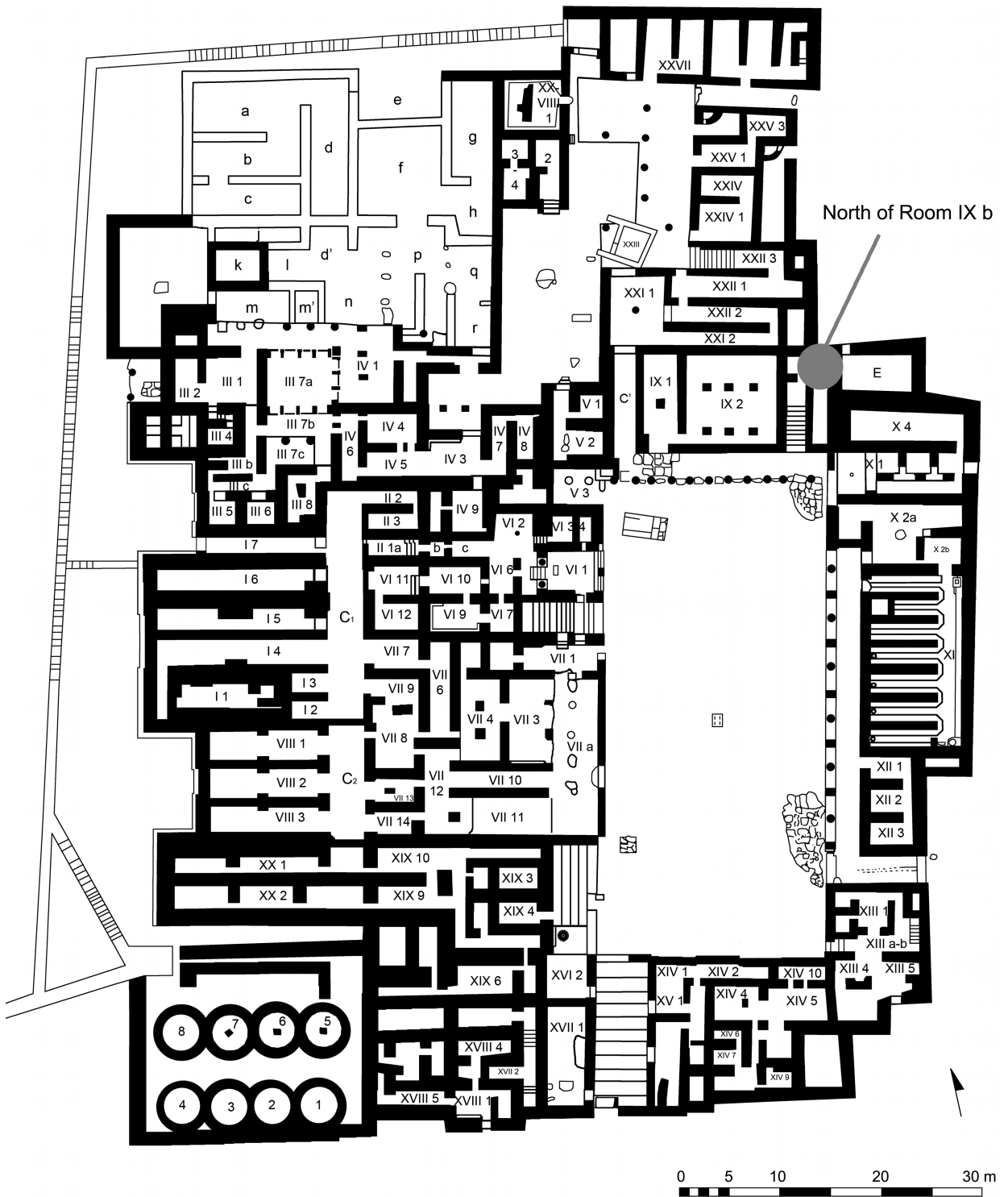


Fig. 1 — General plan of the Malia Palace with indication of Room IX b in the North Wing (After the plans of E. Andersen in PELON 1980, pl. 28, and M. Schmid, N. Rigopoulos in PELON 2002, pl. XXXII).

uncovered in different soundings in the room indicates a late Prepalatial occupation on top of the EM IIB fill. However, the excavator resolutely expresses in his notes that no floor level could be identified.

The revision of the late Prepalatial material uncovered by O. Pelon in 1978 indicates that it is mainly composed of EM III and MM IA pottery, although sherds discovered in 1985 in association with it may date as late as the early Protopalatial period (likely MM IB).⁶ The late Prepalatial assemblage primarily consists in imports from the Mirabello region,⁷ mostly goblets, and deep and shallow bowls produced in East Cretan White-on-Dark Ware, as well as eight fragmentary lamps in local White-on-Dark Ware that imitate the decorative patterns of the above-mentioned imports (**L1–L8**; fig. 2).

THE EIGHT PRICKET LAMPS FROM SOUNDINGS BENEATH THE NORTHERN PART OF ROOM IX B (RD)

The lamps identified in the above-mentioned context of Room IX b are eight (**L1–L8**). They are produced by hand in White-on-Dark Ware using a local semi-fine red fabric, well-attested at Malia from the Early to the Late Bronze Age, and decorated in creamy white on a red slip. The red slip and the white decoration are not always preserved.

Of the eight lamps identified (fig. 2), only two have been reconstructed from several fragments (**L1** and **L2**; fig. 3), thus showing their whole profile, which consists of a footed conical bowl with a central, conical pricket, and two opposed lugs below the rim. Among the others, **L3**, **L4** and **L5** preserve non-joining fragments of foot and rim, while **L6** and **L7** are only rim fragments. Finally, **L8** consists merely of a burnt pricket fragment.

The eight lamps differ one from another in morphological aspects, like profile of bowl, type of rim, kind of foot, position of lugs, as well as in decoration. There are examples showing a deep bowl with straight walls and a bevelled and/or thin rim (**L1**, **L2**, and **L6**), and others with a shallow and open bowl terminating with a flaring rim (**L3**, **L4**, and **L7**).

L3 and **L4** are very similar in profile, with a bowl showing open walls and a thick, flaring rim. Their conical feet however differ both in shape and in wall thickness.

6. A new book devoted to the EM II-LM I occupation levels in the North Wing of the Malia Palace is in preparation for the *Études crétoises* of the École française d'Athènes: M. Devolder, I. Caloi, avec la collaboration de R. Dubois, I. Mathioudaki, E. Nodarou, *Fouilles exécutées à Malia. L'occupation du Minoen Ancien IIA au Minoen Récent IA dans les pièces au nord de la cour centrale du Palais*.

7. On the typical fabrics from the Mirabello region, see NODAROU 2017.

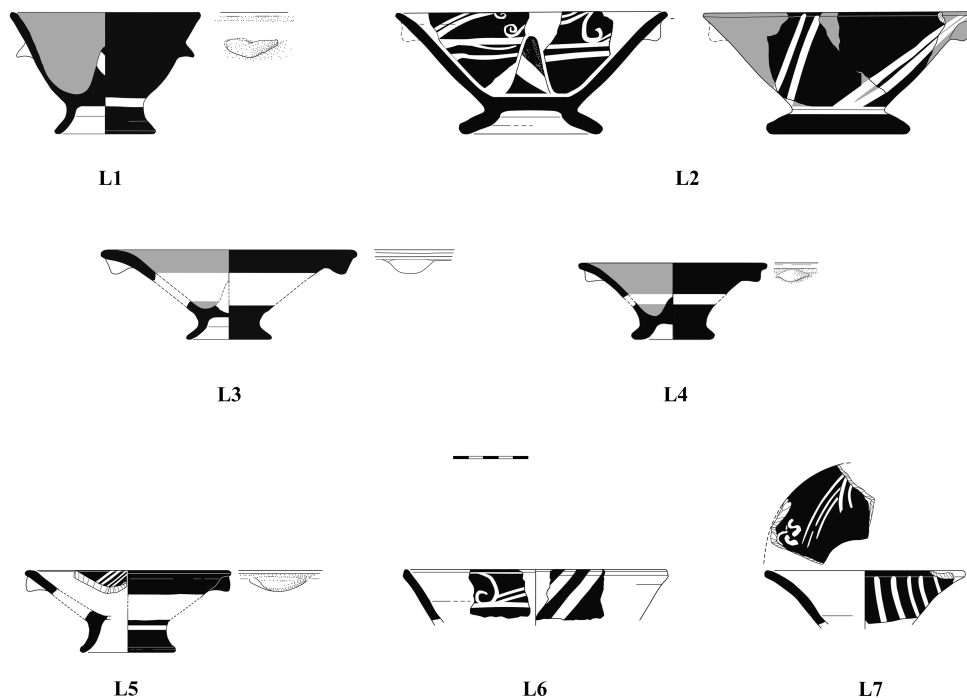


Fig. 2 — The pricket lamps **L1-L7** from the EM III-MM IA deposit from Room IX b, in the North Wing of the Malia Palace (Drawing EFA: B. Konnemann).

It appears that the deep bowl with straight walls is more often associated with a bevelled rim, while the shallow bowl with open walls usually shows a flaring rim. Nevertheless, the association between the type of bowl and the shape of foot shows no consistence.

Where preserved, the lugs point downwards. In almost all the specimens (**L2-L5**) they are rounded and located just below the rim (fig. 2). Only in **L1** (figs. 2-3), are they set in a lower position, at mid-height of the bowl. **L1** is different from the other examples also in its deeper bowl and high foot, which recalls that of **L5**.

The conical pricket, when preserved, varies in height: it is very tall in **L1** and **L2**, short in **L4**. One may notice that the pricket seems taller in lamps with deep bowl, while shorter in those with shallow and flaring bowl.

The white-on-dark decoration is not preserved and visible in all the specimens. Some of them show only traces of white added on the red slip of the vase. Among the eight specimens, only four display a readable decoration in the interior and/or exterior faces of their bowl (**L2**, **L5**, **L6**, **L7**). The decoration of the exterior surface is

commonly characterized by diagonal parallel lines descending from the rim, which can be continuous, as in **L7**, or grouped in twos, as in **L2** and **L6** (figs. 2–3).

The decoration of the inner face of the bowl can be very simple, as in **L5**, which shows parallel lines, or more elaborate, displaying a combination of festoons descending from the rim with other motifs. In **L6** the festoons are combined with single spirals, while in **L7** they are in association with a series of irregular S motifs (figs. 2, 4).

The conical foot—whether high or low—is decorated with a white band at the junction with the bowl. This decoration is well visible in **L1**, **L2**, and **L5** (fig. 2), but not easily readable in **L3** and **L4**. The pricket is usually painted with a white, spiralling band, clearly evident in **L1** and **L2** (figs. 2, 3). In a recent study on the function and use of lamps in Minoan Crete, Bastien Rueff first suggested the use of a textile dipped in fuel and rolled around the pricket of the Malia-style *lampes à piton* on the basis of ethnographical parallels from Tunisia,⁸ thus confuting the long-lasting theory that these lamps were used with candles made of wax or tallow. The white spiralling band painted around the pricket of some lamps (**L1** and **L2** in figs. 2–3) seems to depict exactly this rolling up textile, thus supporting B. Rueff's hypothesis.

While nearly all the Malia samples examined by B. Rueff bear soot and burnt traces localised on the pricket,⁹ the late Prepalatial lamps from beneath Room IX 2 show black stains also on the inside of the bowl (fig. 3), and in some cases outside as well. It is possible that they result from the burnt fuel (likely plant oil) used to impregnate the textile.

CATALOGUE

L1 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (78 P 588, 78 P 627, 78 P 640, 78 P 696, 78 P 820)

Reconstructed from five fragments and restored. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. 8.3; bowl rim d. 14.5; foot h. 2.3; foot base d. 7.4; wall th. 0.3.

Red-slipped with added unreadable creamy-white decoration (White-on-Dark Ware). Conical, deep bowl with straight walls and a thin, bevelled rim; at mid-body two opposed pinched lugs pointing downwards; high foot; tall, conical pricket. Unreadable traces of white decoration in the interior and exterior faces of the bowl. Foot decorated with one horizontal band at the junction with bowl. Pricket decorated with a spiralling band. Burnt pricket; traces of burning on the inner and outer faces of the bowl.

Date: EM III–MM IA. Figs. 2–3.

8. RUEFF 2020, pp. 232–233, 259–261. This study offers the first detailed examination of function and use of a large typology of Minoan lamps, integrating a typological study with a use-wear analysis, supported by experimental work and ethnographic studies.

9. RUEFF 2020, pp. 232–233.



Fig. 3 — The pricket lamps **L1** and **L2** from the EM III–MM IA deposit from Room IX b, in the North Wing of the Malia Palace (Photo EFA: R. Dubois).

L2 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (78 P 449, 78 P 471, 78 P 472, 78 P 639, 78 P 647/2, 78 P 697)
Reconstructed from six fragments and restored. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. 7.6; bowl rim d. 16.5; foot h. 1.3; foot base d. 9.5; wall th. 0.5.

Red-slipped with added creamy-white decoration (White-on-Dark Ware). Conical, deep bowl with straight walls and a thin, bevelled rim; below the rim two opposed rounded lugs pointing downwards; low foot; tall, conical pricket. Interior bowl decorated with two parallel festoons descending from the rim and with parallel lines alternating with single spirals. Exterior bowl decorated with groups of two diagonal parallel lines. Foot decorated with one horizontal band at the junction with bowl. Pricket decorated with a spiralling band. Burnt pricket; traces of burning on the inner and outer faces of the bowl.

Date: EM III–MM IA. Figs. 2–4.

L3 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (78 P 844, 78 P 641)

Two, non-joining, fragments of foot and rim. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. rec. ca. 6.1; bowl rim d. 16.8; foot h. 2.2; foot base d. 6.2; wall th. 0.6.

Red-slipped with added unreadable creamy-white decoration (White-on-Dark Ware). Conical, shallow bowl with open walls and flaring rim; below the rim, two opposed rounded lugs pointing downwards; high foot. Unreadable traces of creamy-white decoration in the interior (base of pricket) and exterior (foot).

Date: EM III–MM IA. Fig. 2.

L4 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (78 P 604, 78 P 626, 78 P 630, 78 P 642, 78 P 647/1, 78 P 698)

Six, joining and non-joining, fragments of foot and rim. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. rec. ca. 5.6; bowl rim d. 13; foot h. 1; foot base d. 6.3; wall th. 0.5.

Red-slipped (slightly burnished?) with added unreadable creamy-white decoration (White-on-Dark Ware). Conical, shallow bowl with open walls and flaring rim; below the rim, two opposed rounded lugs pointing downwards; low foot; short pricket. Unreadable traces of creamy-white decoration in the interior (pricket) and exterior (foot). Burnt pricket; traces of burning on the inner face of the bowl and black/burnt at core.

Date: EM III–MM IA. **Fig. 2.**

L5 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (85 P 1528A, 85 P 1512A)

Two, non-joining, fragments of foot and rim. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. rec. ca 5.5; bowl rim d. 13.2; foot h. 2.8; foot d. 7; wall th. 0.4.

Red-slipped with added creamy-white decoration (White-on-Dark Ware). Conical, deep bowl with straight walls and flaring rim; below the rim two opposed, rounded lugs pointing downwards; high foot. Interior bowl decorated with four parallel diagonal lines descending from the rim. Foot decorated with one horizontal band at the junction with bowl.

Date: EM III (?). **Fig. 2.**

L6 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (78 P 445)

Rim fragment. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. max 3.5; bowl rim d. 17; wall th. 0.4.

Red-slipped with added creamy-white decoration (White-on-Dark Ware). Conical, deep bowl with straight walls and bevelled rim. Interior bowl decorated below the rim with one thin horizontal line, from which descend two parallel diagonal lines and a single spiral; another horizontal line in the interior wall. Exterior bowl decorated with two thick parallel diagonal lines. Possible burnt traces on the inner face of the bowl.

Date: MM IA (?). **Figs. 2, 4.**

L7 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (78 P 451)

Rim fragment. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. max 3.5; bowl rim d. 13; wall th. 0.7.

Red-slipped with added creamy-white decoration (White-on-Dark Ware). Conical, shallow bowl with straight walls, flaring towards the rim. Interior bowl decorated below the rim with a series of S motifs and with two groups of festoons descending from the rim, one with three parallel lines and one with two. Exterior bowl decorated with five slightly diagonal parallel lines descending from the rim. Heavily burnt on the inner face of the bowl.

Date: MM IA (?). **Figs. 2, 4.**

L8 Pricket lamp (*lampe à piton*) (78 P 440)

Fragment of foot and pricket. Semi-fine red fabric.

H. max 2.1; wall th. 0.5. Red-slipped. Burnt pricket.

Date: EM III–MM IA.

DEFINING THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE MALIA PRICKET LAMPS. SYNCHRONISMS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE MALIA (IC, RD)

The pricket lamps or *lampes à piton* are a typical form of Maliote ceramics, characteristic of the so-called “*Première Époque*”, a term used by the excavators of the Malia town to date contexts and deposits ranging from the late Prepalatial to the early Protopalatial phases.¹⁰ Veit Stürmer was the first to briefly discuss the *lampes à piton* in his study of the Chrysolakkos ceramic material published in 1993. He noticed that this type of lamp was quite common at Malia in MM I–II, but then disappeared in MM III. He also underlined the exclusivity of this shape in the Malia necropoleis and its absence in the Palace and the settlement.¹¹ This statement was, however, rapidly challenged by Jean-Claude Poursat, who mentioned examples from Quarter Theta, from the Seal Workshop –under MM II levels– and from the unpublished soundings under the latest floors of Quartier Mu.¹² Later, in 2013, J.-C. Poursat stressed the absence of the *lampe à piton* in the MM IIB destruction levels of Quartier Mu.¹³

Our survey of the published pricket lamps from Malia –both from settlement and necropoleis– shows only a few close parallels in terms of shape and decoration with the eight lamps under discussion. The best *comparanda* come from late Prepalatial contexts, but similar examples have been retrieved also from Protopalatial and mixed contexts (i.e. dating to the *Première Époque*), as illustrated in **Table 1**. The best morphological parallel is represented by a complete lamp retrieved from the necropolis of the *Pierres Meulières*.¹⁴ Its shape is very similar to that of **L2** (**figs. 2-3**) –conical deep bowl, conical foot, two opposed lugs below the rim pointing downwards. It is described as plain, without any kind of surface treatment. Despite coming from a disturbed context, it could fit well with a late Prepalatial date, as it was found in association with MM I ceramic material. A fragmentary lamp found in a sounding undertaken to the north of the Chrysolakkos building by P. Demargne, and first published by B. Rueff,¹⁵ closely matches our lamps. Despite its fragmentary state, it recalls them in fabric, shape, and decoration: it is produced in White-on-Dark Ware and shows a white band at the junction of bowl with foot. The context is dated to MM I–II,¹⁶ but the example could

10. The term encompasses the phases now identified separately as EM III, MM IA, MM IB, MM IIA and MM IIB (DEVOLDER 2019, pp. 16–17).

11. STÜRMER 1993, p. 173.

12. POURSAT 1993, pp. 604–605.

13. POURSAT 2013, p. 125, n. 5.

14. VAN EFFENTERRE H., VAN EFFENTERRE M. 1963, p. 99, pl. XL, no. 8473 (indicated as no. 8476 on the illustration).

15. RUEFF 2020, p. 64, type 5b, fig. 25, pl. 10 (N1533).

16. RUEFF 2020, pp. 64–65, XXIII–XXVI.

Malia town	Buildings/areas	Chronology		
		EM III–MM IA	MM I–MM II	MM IIA
Settlement	Palace	8		
	Maisons Sud		1	
	Quartier Pi			1
	Quartier Gamma Zeta		1	
	Villa Alpha		1	
	Quartier Theta		3	
	Haghia Varvara		1	
Funerary buildings/areas	Chrysolakkos	1	26	
	Pierres Meulières	1	2	
	Second Charnier		1	
Total		10	36	1

Table 1 — Table illustrating the evidence of pricket lamps at Malia from late Prepalatial to the Protopalatial times.

be easily attributed to the late Prepalatial period on the basis of its stylistic affinities with the Palace specimens. Another good comparison, similar in terms of shape, except for the absence of lugs, comes from a MM IIA context of Quartier Pi.¹⁷ It shows a conical deep bowl with straight walls standing on a conical foot and is black-burnished.

Several mixed contexts from Malia have yielded pricket lamps composed of an open and shallow bowl standing on a low conical (or cylindrical) pedestal, which may be seen as a later development of the form in the early Protopalatial period (see *infra*). Most of these low pedestalled pricket lamps, characterised by a square rim and a short pricket, occur at Chrysolakkos. They were first mentioned and dated by Pierre Demargne to MM I,¹⁸ then partially catalogued by V. Stürmer, who dated them to MM IB-II.¹⁹ The most recent and complete documentation of these lamps from Chrysolakkos is,

17. KNAPPETT et al. 2017, p. 522, fig. 51, no. 213; RUEFF 2020, p. 109, fig. 63, pl. 82, no. PI 5.124.09, “type PI 5”.

18. DEMARGNE 1945, pp. 27, 30.

19. STÜRMER 1993, p. 138, fig. 6, no. 49 (N2106); p. 130, fig. 3, no. 17 (N401); p. 132, fig. 4, no. 28 (N216); p. 134, fig. 4, no. 32 (N504).

however, provided by B. Rueff in his PhD dissertation.²⁰ He shows that out of sixty-five lamps found there, twenty-seven are *lampes à piton*. He dates them to MM I–II, proposing a MM IB–IIA for the ones coming from the soundings to the North of the building.²¹ Similar examples come also from non-closed contexts, like the *Maisons Sud* (South Houses),²² the *Second Charnier* (Rock Shelter 2)²³ and the necropolis of the so-called *Pierres Meulières*.²⁴

The town of Malia has revealed other kinds of pricket lamps, quite different in profile from the above-mentioned ones; they are conical, footless bowls or cups.²⁵ It is also relevant to add that in the *Études Crétoises* volumes many pricket lamps are mentioned to come from buildings, whose materials have not been studied and published, like Quartier Theta and Villa Alpha.²⁶ These examples are not properly described and/or illustrated, and thus they cannot be compared with the lamps here discussed.

So far, it is possible to confirm what J.-C. Poursat had already stated in 2013, namely that the *lamp à piton* does not survive at Malia into late MM IIB, as Quartier Mu destruction levels do not yield it. It probably died out at the end of MM IIA, giving way to other types of lamps with a tall pedestal, which in the rest of the island had started to appear exactly in MM IIA (see *infra*). However, only the complete publication of the Protopalatial deposits coming from several Malia buildings (e.g. Chrysolakkos, Villa Alpha, Quartier Theta) may confirm that this shape stopped at the end of MM IIA.

Precise parallels for the *lampes à piton* are quite rare outside Malia. In particular, the *lampe à piton* in White-on-Dark Ware seems attested only at Malia. Necropoleis and settlements from late Prepalatial Crete have so far not provided *comparanda*. The

20. RUEFF 2020, pp. 64–66.

21. RUEFF 2020, pl. 10, p. XXII–XXVI.

22. One specimen dated to the *Première Époque* is published in CHAPOUTIER, DEMARGNE, DESSENNE 1962, p. 50, pl. XXXVII, no. 9144.

23. DEMARGNE 1945, p. 16, pl. XXXIV, 2. The lamp is dated to the *Première Époque*.

24. VAN EFFENTERRE H., VAN EFFENTERRE M. 1963, pp. 73–74, pl. XXX, nos. 8472 and 8474. The two examples, both brown- to black-slipped, were found in the *Tombe à puits* no. 1. They both show lugs below the rim, which are different from those of our examples in their orientation and rectangular shape.

25. One example comes from House Zeta Gamma; the context is dated to MM I (DESHAYES, DESSENNE 1959, p. 40, pl. xxv, A,7). Two pricket lamps also come from Villa Alpha: the first is a black-slipped footed one-handled cup, while the second is a stone bowl, the only stone pricket lamp found so far at Malia (DEMARGNE, GALLET DE SANTERRE 1953, p. 15, pll. IX and XLVIII, no. 8475; p. 18, pl. IX, no. 2210).

26. Three specimens are reported from the “*réduits B1 et B2*” in Quartier Theta (also called *Maison de la Plage*), from a context dated to MM IB (VAN EFFENTERRE H., VAN EFFENTERRE M. 1976, p. 48, nos. 190–192). Fragments of a pricket lamp are reported from the south part of the islet of Haghia Varvara, associated with materials dated to MM I (DEMARGNE, GALLET DE SANTERRE 1953, p. 9).

possibility should, however, be considered that fragmentary shallow bowls may have not been properly recognized as the upper part of pricket lamps.²⁷

Despite the apparent absence of late Prepalatial counterparts outside Malia, we observe that the best parallels for the bowl shape and white-on-dark decoration of our lamps are the EM III–MM IA deep bowls, well represented in East Cretan sites like Gournia, Vasiliki, and Alatzomouri.²⁸ The main difference in shape concerns the two lugs: in the Malia lamps they are positioned below the rim and point downwards (fig. 2), while in the Eastern Crete bowls they are set horizontally on the rim.²⁹

We have already emphasized that the decoration imitates the “White Style”, commonly attested in the EM III–MM IA productions of East Crete. The exterior decoration of our lamps displays patterns very common in the EM III–MM IA pottery of Vasiliki, Gournia and Alatzomouri.³⁰ In particular, the exterior decoration on **L2** and **L6**, and the pattern visible on the outer face of **L7** match those represented in several deep bowls from the EM III deposit of Alatzomouri.³¹ Concerning the interior decoration, for lamps **L2** and **L6**, which display a combination of festoons and single spirals (figs. 2, 4), the best comparisons are to be found in the patterns of cups and spouted jars from the North Trench of Gournia.³² The ceramic material from the Gournia North Trench³³ provides good parallels also for the series of irregular S motifs displayed in **L7** (figs. 2, 4), which were called “quirks” by Edith Hall.³⁴

On the basis of their recent study of the EM III Alatzomouri deposit, the authors suggested that in EM III the White-on-Dark decoration is more linear, while in MM IA it starts to show new curvilinear designs.³⁵ According to this study, S motifs and spirals

27. During the study of ceramic materials from Room IX b of the Malia Palace we realized that what appeared to be fragments of late Prepalatial local shallow bowls imitating the East Crete White-on-Dark Ware perfectly matched the feet of pricket lamps.

28. For Vasiliki, SEAGER 1906–1907, fig. 3; SEAGER 1908; for Gournia, HALL 1904–1905, pl. XXVII–XXVIII; for the Alatzomouri rock shelter, APOSTOLAKOU, BROGAN, BETANCOURT 2017, figs. 23–24; see also ANDREOU 1978.

29. See the examples from Vasiliki in SEAGER 1906–1907, p. 120, fig. 3, and from the EM III Alatzomouri rock shelter in APOSTOLAKOU, BROGAN, BETANCOURT 2017, fig. 23, nos. 23–24, and fig. 24, nos. 29, 32.

30. See SEAGER 1906–1907, p. 120, figs. 3a, c; APOSTOLAKOU, BROGAN, BETANCOURT 2017, fig. 23, nos. 23–24, and fig. 24, nos. 36–37.

31. For the decoration of **L2** and **L6** see APOSTOLAKOU, BROGAN, BETANCOURT 2017, fig. 24, no. 26; for that of **L7** see APOSTOLAKOU, BROGAN, BETANCOURT 2017, fig. 23, no. 24 and fig. 24, nos. 29, 36–37.

32. HALL 1904–1905, pl. XXVII, 17–19. In particular, **L6** finds a very close parallel in the motif represented in pl. XXVII, 19.

33. HALL 1904–1905, pl. XXVIII, 11, 20.

34. HALL 1904–1905, p. 201.

35. APOSTOLAKOU, BROGAN, BETANCOURT 2017, p. 110, figs. 69–71.

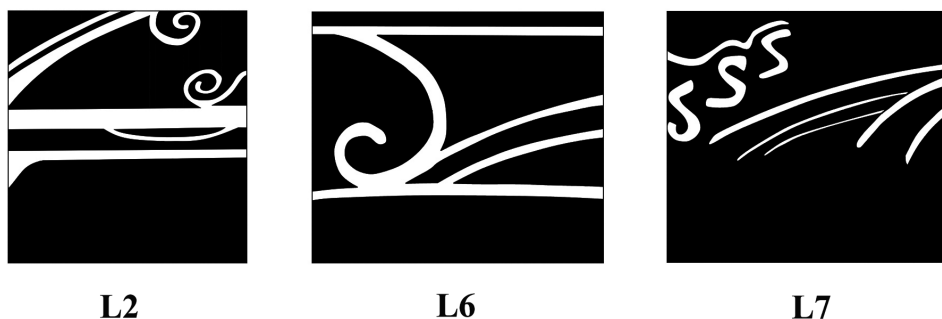


Fig. 4 — Sketches of motifs depicted on pricket lamps **L2**, **L6** and **L7** (Drawing EFA: A. Garzia).

would date to MM IA rather than to EM III, and thus the North-Trench Gournia and the Vasiliki deposits would be MM IA in date.³⁶ Consequently, the decoration of the Malia lamps **L2**, **L6** and **L7** (fig. 4) could be more at home in MM IA, rather than in EM III, better represented by the linear decoration of **L5**.

Looking at stratified EM III and MM IA contexts from other regions of Crete, stylistic parallels are few. We may only observe that the bowls of **L3** and **L4** recall the shallow bowls with flaring rim attested at EM III Knossos.³⁷

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHAPE FROM THE LATE PREPALATIAL THROUGH THE PROTOPALATIAL PERIOD (IC)

Based on the features of the eight lamps from Room IX b and of the *Pierres Meulières* specimen from a possible MM I deposit, it is conceivable that the late Prepalatial *lampe à piton* is characterized by a deep bowl on a conical foot and two lugs. Because of a general absence of closed MM IB deposits at Malia, it remains to understand how the form developed at the site during the early Protopalatial times. Looking at the *lampes à piton* from the Malia contexts dating to MM I–MM II (i.e. Chrysolakkos, *Maisons Sud* and *Pierres Meulières* necropolis), the impression is that the shape acquires a much more open and shallow bowl, which stands on a pedestal foot, rather than on a conical one. Some of these later examples have lugs, while others do not. The decoration is much simpler than in the late Prepalatial samples, presenting a black or red slip, sometimes burnished. This development of the shape seems confirmed by a Protopalatial pedestalled pricket

36. APOSTOLAKOU, BROGAN, BETANCOURT 2017, p. 110, fig. 71 (with MM IA motifs).

37. See MOMIGLIANO 2007, p. 85, fig. 3.3, no. 11 and p. 88, fig. 3.6, no. 9.

lamp (no. 19/09/4622/OB001) retrieved from Zone 9 of the Sissi necropolis (fig. 5). It comes from the upper levels of a huge pottery deposit of Space 9.13, dated between MM IIA and MM IIB.³⁸ The lamp, in Red Slipped Ware, is produced in a semi-fine red fabric – a local fabric well attested from Prepalatial to Neopalatial times both at Sissi and Malia³⁹ and composed of a small and open shallow bowl standing on a conical pedestal. The red slip is badly preserved, but still visible both in the inner and outer faces, and on the short and blackened pricket as well. This specimen is very similar in fabric, surface treatment and shape to the above-mentioned Malia examples found in MM I–MM II contexts at Chrysolakkos⁴⁰, in the *Maisons Sud*, in the *Second Charnier* and in the necropolis of *Pierres Meulières*. Based on these stylistic parallels, it is likely that the latter examples could be contemporary with the Sissi lamp, thus pointing to a MM II date, likely MM IIA. It seems, instead, a little different from the *lampe à piton* retrieved from the MM IIA context of Quartier Pi, which, in terms of shape, still resembles the late Prepalatial specimens. It looks like a direct development of the *lampe à piton* from the late Prepalatial period through the beginning of the Protopalatial period.

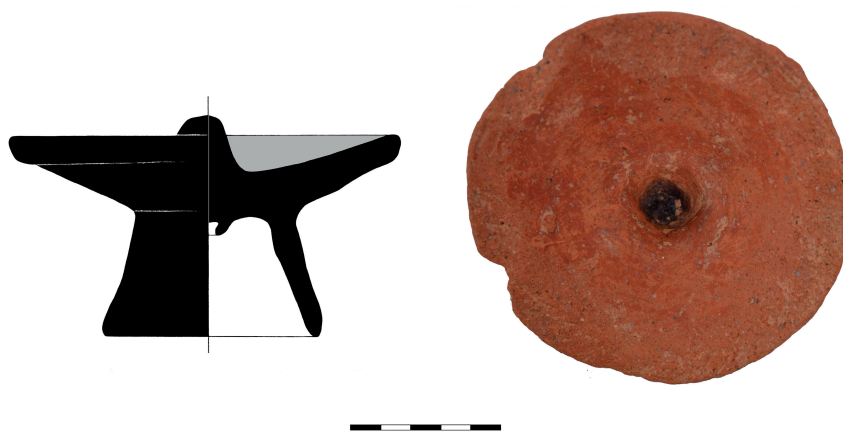


Fig. 5 — The MM II pricket lamp from the Sissi necropolis (Drawing EBSA: A. Sanavia; photo EBSA: I. Caloi).

38. SCHMITT, SPERANDIO 2018, p. 65. The publication of the Sissi cemetery of Zone 9 is in preparation by Aurore Schmitt, field director of the Zone 9 excavation, Ilaria Caloi and Sylviane Déderix. The study of pottery from the Room 9.13 deposit is ongoing by I. Caloi, who preliminarily dated it to MM II.

39. See CALOI 2018.

40. See the examples in RUEFF 2020, figs. 25–28. The parallel is very strong with the lamp illustrated in fig. 28, right.

Thus far the pricket lamps are not attested outside Malia until MM IIA, when they start to appear also in the shape of experimental vases. Phaistos yielded two examples from MM IIA contexts. The first, retrieved from a MM IIA fill of the Acropoli Mediana quarter,⁴¹ is a small, unusual tripod pricket lamp in Plain Semi-coarse Ware. It has a conical bowl with a short, central pricket, on a tripod base, and is equipped with a vertical handle. This odd example, which does not find any comparanda, reflects the high degree of experimentation in the MM IIA ceramic production of Phaistos. The second one comes from a MM IIA deposit, found in the dump of *Bastione II* wall, the MM IIA northern limit of the Lower West Court facing the main palatial building of the First Palace.⁴² It is a plain pedestalled lamp, composed of a convex bowl with short pricket, which stands on a very tall pedestal.⁴³ The tall pedestal becomes very common on different kind of lamps of the Protopalatial period, as testified by samples at Phaistos,⁴⁴ Malia (both in MM IIA Quartier Pi⁴⁵ and MM IIB Quartier Mu),⁴⁶ and Knossos.⁴⁷ Most of these lamps usually lack the pricket and show two opposed spouts notched into the rim. A very particular type is instead represented by a fragmentary pedestalled lamp found in a MM IIB context at Apodoulou,⁴⁸ in the Amari Valley, where the central pricket appears together with the two spouts.

In the last phase of the Protopalatial period, i.e. MM IIB, a new type of pricket lamp appeared in Crete. This is composed by a conical bowl standing on a tall, conical pedestal foot, with an ample, vertical handle going from the bowl to the foot. This is well represented by an example found in the MM IIB deposit of the Ceremonial Area 1 of the Petras necropolis.⁴⁹ Another similar pedestalled pricket lamp comes from the First Palace of Phaistos, but it is made of stone.⁵⁰ It was found by L. Pernier in the repository of Room X, which is one of the MM IIB storerooms located beneath the façade of the Phaistos Second Palace, facing the Middle West Court.

41. BALDACCIO 2017, pp. 153, 240, no. 845, pll. 76, 114.

42. See the MM IIA dump of *Bastione II* wall in CALOI 2021.

43. These MM IIA pedestalled lamps from Phaistos are still unpublished. They will be published in Ilaria Caloi, *Renovating the First Palace of Phaistos in MM IIA. Combining Architectural and Ceramic Phases*, in preparation.

44. MERCANDO 1974–1975, p. 53, fig. 50.

45. KNAPPETT et al. 2017, pp. 521–522.

46. POURSAT 2013, pll. 6.2–6.3.

47. See MM II pedestalled lamps in MACGILLIVRAY 1998, p. 87, fig. 2.24.

48. VENIERI 2016, p. 314, no. 469, pll. 75, 86.

49. TSIPOPOULOU 2017, p. 121, fig. 4f. Here it was interpreted as a *kalathos*.

50. PERNIER 1935, pp. 242–243, fig. 117.

Two similar pricket lamps, defined as pricket candlesticks, were found by R.C. Bosanquet and R.M. Dawkins at Palaikastro, “on the gravel ridge east of the main town, near the early burial”.⁵¹ One of them was illustrated by the same authors, while the second one was published by Richard Hutchinson as a brazier in a separate paper. Here, it is described as produced in “a matt red fabric with traces of a polished red slip” and “may be assigned to the MM III period”.⁵² These two specimens are both composed of a deep bowl with flat rim on a tall pedestal; they both have a broad, vertical handle. It remains to be understood whether they are MM IIB in date, based on the closed comparisons with the specimens of Petras and Phaistos, or if they can be assigned to the beginning of the Neopalatial period.

CONCLUDING REMARKS (IC, RD)

This study has shown that the well-known Malia-style pricket lamps go back to late Prepalatial times. The EM III–MM IA deposit found in Room IX b by O. Pelon has indeed provided what appears to be the prototypes of the *lampes à pignon*, well attested in MM I–MM II deposits of settlement and funerary buildings of the Malia town, but so far not present in the Palace.

It remains difficult to give an exact chronology to the eight specimens from the Prepalatial levels of Room IX b. We have already observed that the deposit where they were found has material ranging from EM III to MM IA. Likewise, the best comparisons found at Malia, i.e. the complete specimen from the *Pierres Meulières* and the fragmentary lamp in White-on-Dark Ware from Chrysolakkos come from non-stratified deposits. The shape of the lamps published here did not much help in defining their chronology either, but we benefited from their decoration. We observed that both **L2** and **L6**, which show a combination of diagonal lines/festoons with a single spiral, and **L7**, displaying irregular S motifs, seem to be dated to MM IA rather than to EM III. In contrast, **L5** could be more at home in EM III. These are, however, small details that cannot be conclusive in giving a precise chronology to the eight lamps from Room IX b.

It appears that the late Prepalatial examples from beneath Room IX b of the Palace are much more decorated than later examples. They show elaborate white-on-dark linear and curvilinear motifs, including spirals. Worthy of mention is the very local decoration of the pricket: the spiralling line that shows the position of the rolled textile. Moreover, these *lampes à pignon* imitate the complex patterns of the East Cretan White-on-Dark

51. BOSANQUET, DAWKINS 1902–1903, p. 326, fig. 26.

52. HUTCHINSON 1939–1940, p. 39 (CM 3287), pl. 14q.

Ware, which in Minoan times probably appeared as a fascinating ware if we consider the high number of its imitations and exports all over Crete. The assemblage from beneath Room IX b indeed revealed not only the eight lamps imitating the “White Style”, but also a rich amount of serving and drinking vessels in East Cretan White-on-Dark Ware imported from the Mirabello region. The ongoing study of the North Wing of the Malia Palace will shed new light on the nature of this rich assemblage, which may have been used for display in some ceremonial events.⁵³

Concerning the development of the *lampe à piton*, we noticed a strong simplification of decoration in the passage from late Prepalatial into Protopalatial times. The MM II specimens do not show decorative motifs, but are plain or simply monochrome, whether slipped or burnished. It appears that the embellishment has moved from the decoration to the shape, which now shows a tall cylindrical pedestal, like the samples of Phaistos and Apodoulou, or a conical pedestal with a broad, vertical handle, as illustrated in the MM IIB specimens of Petras, Phaistos and Palaikastro. The use of tall pedestals for lamps finds a counterpart in the pedestalled bowls with a central hole adopted for ritual actions during the ceremonial activities undertaken in the palatial centres (e.g. Phaistos, Malia, Knossos, Petras) and in the major settlements of the island (e.g. Palaikastro) during the Protopalatial period.⁵⁴ This new trend may be connected to a major need of display and visibility by the new, emerging élites of the Protopalatial period. It remains, however, to demonstrate how the *lamp à piton* developed at Malia from MM I to MM IIB, and we hope that future research and studies will shed new light also on this period.

53. *Supra* n. 6.

54. CALOI 2022.

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