

A Newly Discovered Middle Helladic Settlement in the Trapeza Area near Aigion (Achaia, Greece). The Materials from the Survey

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Abstract

A new Bronze Age site has been discovered near the Trapeza Hill, 7 km inland from Aigion (eastern Achaia, Greece). Ongoing research has thus far revealed a multi-phase settlement covering the Middle Helladic (MH) period and the transitional phase up until the Late Helladic (LH). Investigations since 2013 have included the collection of surface material, as well as the excavation of two trenches. This contribution presents the study conducted on the pottery and small finds recovered from the surface survey in order to outline an initial cultural and chronological framework of the settlement.

Keywords

Achaia, Middle Helladic, settlement, pottery

Zusammenfassung – *Eine neu entdeckte mittelhelladische Siedlung im Bereich des Trapeza-Hügels nahe Aigion (Achaia, Griechenland). Das Fundmaterial der Oberflächenbegehung*

In der Nähe des Trapeza-Hügels, 7 km landeinwärts von Aigion (östliches Achaia, Griechenland), wurde eine neue Stätte aus der Bronzezeit entdeckt. Die laufenden Forschungen haben bisher eine mehrphasige Besiedlung ergeben, die das Mittelhelladikum und die Übergangsphase bis zum Späthelladikum umfassen. Die im Jahr 2013 begonnenen Untersuchungen konzentrierten sich auf das Aufheben von Oberflächenmaterial sowie das Ausheben von zwei Grabungsflächen. Dieser Beitrag stellt Untersuchungen zu der Keramik und den Kleinfunden aus der Oberflächenbegehung vor, um einen ersten Eindruck vom kulturellen und chronologischen Rahmen der Besiedlung zu vermitteln.

Schlüsselbegriffe

Achaia, Mittelhelladikum, Siedlung, Keramik

1. Location and Description of the Site

Since 2010, evidence of prehistoric occupation in and around the Trapeza Hill – a 448 m-high plateau – has been the object of systematic fieldwork carried out by a team headed by Elisabetta Borgna from the University of Udine under the

direction of Andreas Vordos for the Greek Ministry of Culture. Investigations proved the Trapeza area to be an extended archaeological landscape scattered with traces of occupation dating from the Neolithic period up until the Hellenistic age.¹ The MH site was discovered in 2013 on a flat saddle at the base of a high ground (409 m asl) immediately to the south of the Trapeza, located between the Meganitis River to the west and a narrow valley linking the hinterland with the coast to the east (Fig. 1). The area is surrounded by a verdant environment highly favourable to habitation and close to water sources, including a perennial small stream to the east of the site. The location is naturally protected, as it is inaccessible on three sides, whereas on the southwestern side, at mid-height, the slope gently declines, forming a protruding plateau. The very eastern edge of the slope offers a broad view of both the summit and the southwestern slope of the Trapeza, where in later times a Mycenaean chamber tomb necropolis (15th–11th centuries BC) was established.²

At the time of the discovery, an extensive quantity of pottery sherds was noted on the surface of the site – today covered by an olive grove to the north and a vineyard to the south. The area appeared to have been heavily damaged and disturbed by recent land terracing and drainage, as well as other obsolete modern installations including a tile factory.

During the first inspection in 2013, a number of pottery fragments were recovered from random locations allowing for a preliminary chronological evaluation. Investigations resumed in 2015 with a systematic and intensive surface

¹ BORGNA, VORDOS 2016, 447–448.

² BORGNA 2013. – BORGNA, VORDOS 2016. – BORGNA 2017. – BORGNA 2018. – BORGNA et al. 2019. – BORGNA, DE ANGELI 2019. – BORGNA, VORDOS 2019. – BORGNA, DE ANGELI 2020. – BORGNA 2021. – BORGNA, LICCIARDELLO 2021.

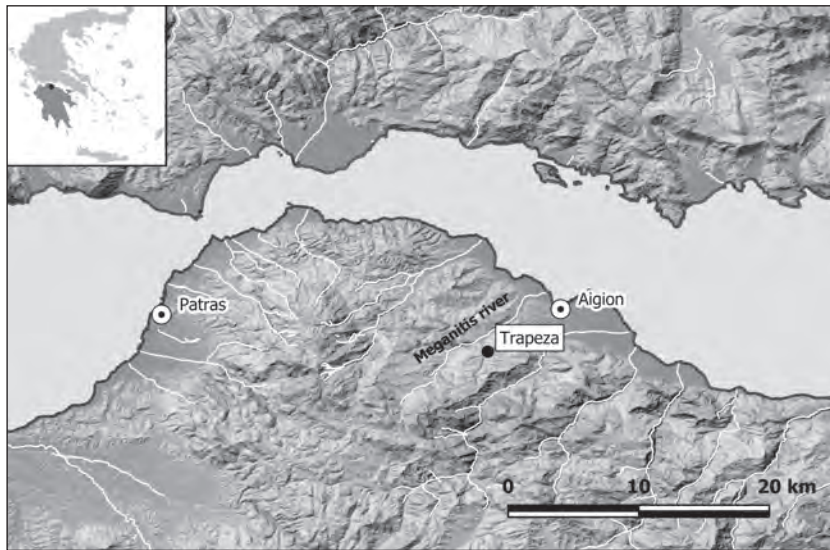


Fig. 1. Location of the Trapeza settlement (Map source: ©ASCSA Corinth excavations, offered under Creative Commons licensing, adapted by A. Mercogliano).

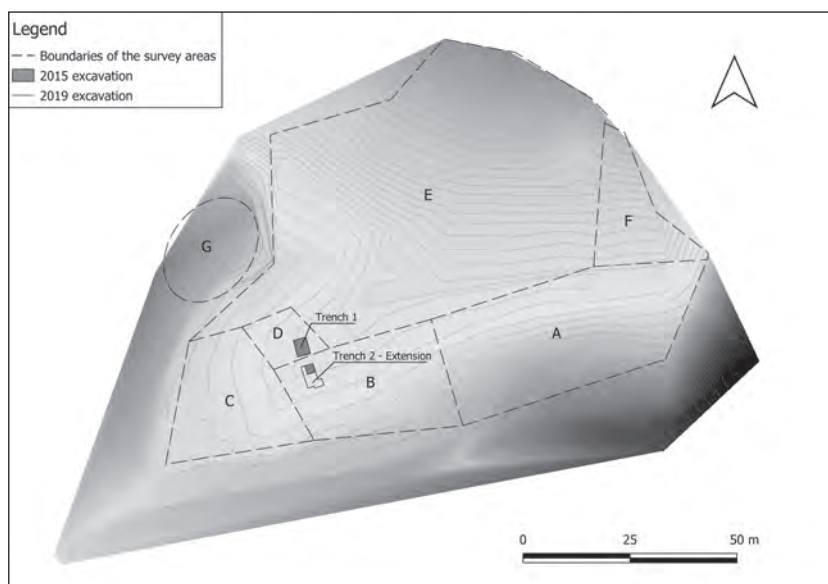


Fig. 2. Topographical plan of the settlement with survey areas and trenches 1 and 2-extension (Graphics: A. Mercogliano; topographical survey: Astrolabe Engineering).

survey. The area was divided into seven zones (from A to G), covering 0.8 ha, according to its geomorphological configuration (Fig. 2).³ Materials were collected by walking within strips that were c. 2 m wide. As dense concentrations were observed, they were circumscribed and mapped as clusters. After the identification of the major cluster, two small test trenches were opened during the same year. In 2019 and 2021, new excavation campaigns were carried out in order to enlarge one of the trenches. The excavations brought to light a complex sequence of anthropic deposits packed with MH

materials that resulted from successive actions of terracing, obliteration, filling, and levelling. On top of the sequence, a new cycle of use with architectural remains was distinguished and preliminarily dated to a transitional MH – LH or very early LH phase.⁴ At least three infant burials belong to this upper cycle.⁵

⁴ BORGNA et al. 2019, 330. – MERCOGLIANO, BORGNA, in press.

⁵ The presence of burials in the area of the settlement is common during all of the phases of the MH period, see MILKA 2010. Starting from the late MH, spaces inside and among houses became exclusive for infant burials, especially when other formal extramural cemeteries were at the disposal of the community, see POMADÈRE 2010. At Mygadlia (western Achaia), infant burials were excavated

³ The immediate surroundings have not been investigated; therefore, it is uncertain whether the site extended beyond the surveyed area.

2. The Surface Materials

The results of the 2013 and 2015 surface collections included 2478 recovered items, of which 2338 are vessel fragments for a total weight of 45.786 kg.⁶ My study encompassed the pottery and ceramic objects.⁷ The general conclusive remarks presented here should be considered preliminary and will be integrated into the publication of the materials from stratified contexts, which are currently under study.

It is worth pointing out that the fragments collected in 2015 did not emerge on the surface as a result of continuous and uniform erosion. The concentration was due to circumscribed episodes which occurred between 2013 and 2015, specifically olive and vine planting. For this reason, the general state of preservation of the fabrics and surfaces is quite fair, while fragmentation has been recorded to an uneven degree, unfortunately in many cases preventing the reconstruction of the original shapes, especially when no exact parallels could be found.

Since we lack any information about the original archaeological context of these materials, the present research was primarily based upon the intrinsic physical aspects of every single sherd. Almost all of the assemblage could be assigned to wares of MH tradition, with only a small percentage belonging to Mycenaean wares, and a few sherds ascribable to minimal later disturbances.

A selection of 125 sherds bearing morphological and decorative diagnostic features was catalogued. Of these, only a representative fraction will be described in this text.

In presenting the materials, the following general criteria were applied: an initial distinction was made between Middle and Late Helladic pottery.⁸ The former is further subdivided

within the settlement area and dated to LH I–IIA, see PAPAZOGLOU-MANIOUDAKI, PASCHALIDIS, JONES 2019.

⁶ The remaining items consist of clay objects (9 items), lithics (66 items) and a representative sample of modern tiles (65 items).

⁷ Master's thesis submitted to the University of Udine in 2018.

⁸ A few considerations on relative chronology are deemed necessary at this point. For the MH period, there is no real consensus on the division into the MH I – MH II – MH III periods, if not according to general pottery criteria, see the critique by DICKINSON 1977, 17–31. R. Howell's phasing of MH pottery at Nichoria is one example of how the I–III division of MH has been solved at a single settlement, see HOWELL 1992. Stratigraphic investigations at several other sites led to the formation of different phasing systems, which fit the traditional partition to a greater or lesser extent, see MARAN 1992a. – GAUSS, SMETANA 2007a. – GAUSS, SMETANA 2007b. – ZERNER 2008. – HALE 2016. Nevertheless, 'MH I', 'MH II' and 'MH III' are standardly used labels which will be adopted in this text as well. When imprecisely dated *comparanda* are given, general indications such as 'early' or 'late' MH are used. Pottery in the MH tradition that possibly outlasts the MH period and is more suited to a transitional MH – LH chronology

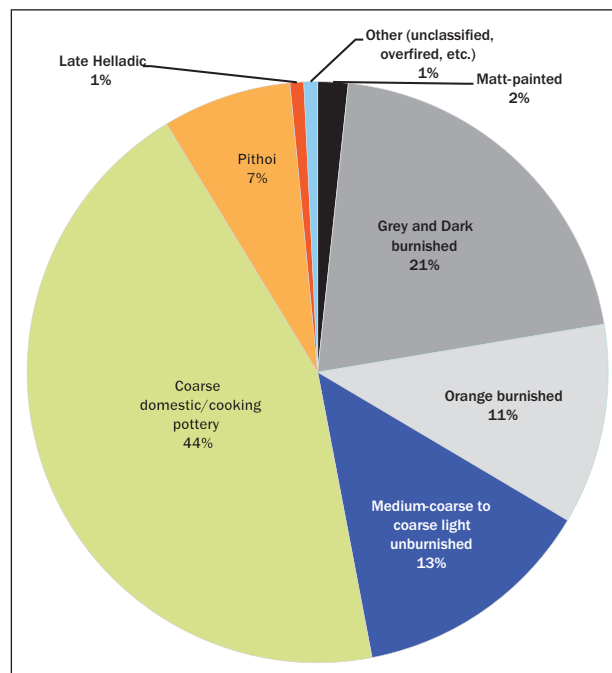


Fig. 3. Graph showing the percentages of each pottery group identified by sherds count (Graphics: A. Mercogliano).

into 'Matt-painted', 'Grey and Dark Burnished', 'Orange Burnished', 'Medium-coarse to Coarse Light Unburnished', 'Coarse Domestic/Cooking Pottery' and 'Pithoi' (Fig. 3).⁹ The definition and description of each pottery group is clarified below. The small finds are treated separately.

2.1. Middle Helladic Pottery

2.1.1. Matt-Painted (Fig. 4)

A group of recovered fragments is indicative of the presence of MH Matt-painted wares at the site.¹⁰ The decoration of these sherds was mostly obtained by applying dark or greyish-brown paint (5 YR 5/2–5/3–6/2–6/3) on smoothed or strongly burnished light-red surfaces (5 YR 7/6–6/6–6/8). The paint has a uniform matt appearance and is firmly bonded with the surface of the vessels so that no irregularities

is also included in the MH pottery section. This choice is in line with recent reconsiderations of the chronological definition of the Middle – early Late Bronze Age periods, see SPENCER 2010, 670. – VOUTSAKI 2010, 100. – RUTTER 2017. – WIERSMA, VOUTSAKI 2017, vii–viii. In terms of absolute dating, the high chronology has been followed, see MANNING 2010. See also VOUTSAKI, NIJBOER, ZERNER 2009 for a proposition regarding the absolute dating of the traditional partition.

⁹ This is a re-elaboration of a personal subdivision that I adopted for my master's thesis. A more refined classification system is currently under construction.

¹⁰ Forty sherds in total, which represent c. 2 % of the total of the pottery collected.

could be spotted by running fingers over the surface. Generally, the fabrics are truly hard and fine, with barely visible sparkling inclusions or sparse limestone elements. Coarse fabrics in association with matt-painted decoration are rather rare. In only a few cases the paint was applied on a white slip coating, whereas in the northeastern Peloponnese this was a well-established technical feature from the early MH period.¹¹

Most of the Matt-painted pottery analysed seems to be close in terms of surface colour and treatment to late MH Matt-painted ‘Argive Light’ wares (in the fine- and medium-tempered burnished varieties)¹² and central Greek ‘Yellow and Red Minyan Matt-painted’, as defined by Kalliope Sarri.¹³ By the end of the MH period, the so-called ‘Yellow Minyan Matt-painted’ ware also reached the southern Peloponnese, according to the pottery sequence of Ayios Stephanos.¹⁴ Similar matt-painted wares are well attested in Achaea during the MH III – LH I periods at Pagona, near Patra,¹⁵ and at Aigion.¹⁶

Fragments from shoulder-handled bowls, nos. 1–4, vaguely recall MH III – LH I goblets or krateriskoi¹⁷ found elsewhere in Achaea which typically bear solidly painted triangles on the shoulder.¹⁸ They might indeed belong to bowls

originally standing on a low foot. Unfortunately, most of the available parallels are only preliminarily published through pictures, preventing any accurate comparison.

Nos. 5 and 6 probably belonged to small globular jugs, but they are not sufficiently preserved for an attribution to specific types. Globular jugs are known from the early MH period¹⁹ onwards and become particularly common during MH III and LH I, especially as grave goods in the northeastern Peloponnese.²⁰ Jugs with horizontal mouths seem to have been less popular than beaked ones until the MH IIIB phase, at least in the Argolid.²¹ A few MH jugs are known in Achaea: a globular one with painted linear decoration from Aigion,²² a beaked jug from Pagona²³ and a small globular jug with a horizontal mouth from an unknown context.²⁴

The neck fragment no. 7, which once would have had a vertical handle attached, could belong to either an amphora or a hydria. While amphorae are only rarely found in MH contexts,²⁵ the hydria, together with various types of stamnoi, are regarded as a ‘type fossil’ shape of MH IIIB in the Argolid.²⁶ By the end of the MH period, the hydria-type jar was popular in Achaea as well, as demonstrated by the imposing matt-painted specimen from Drakotrypa near Kattarraktis, now exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of Patra.²⁷ A thinned rim similar to that found on sherd no. 7 is

11 As can be seen, for example, in the case of Argos, see PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 5, “classe à pâte semi-fine”. This technique is also common at MH III – LH I Tsoungiza, see RUTTER 1990, 420. – RUTTER 2015, 210. – RUTTER 2020, 487, 557–558.

12 DIETZ 1991, 29.

13 SARRI 2007, 163. – SARRI 2010a, 77–79.

14 ZERNER 2008, 193–199.

15 DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, 123.

16 PAPAOGLOU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, 135.

17 To my knowledge, the term “krateriskos” is first used for MH – early LH low-stemmed goblets by L. Papazoglou-Manioudaki, see PAPAOGLOU-MANIOUDAKI 2010. It seems to be specifically indicative of a type of goblet with a carinated or biconical body and low conical base (not to be confused with the Mycenaean krateriskos, i.e., a smaller variant of the ring-base krater typical of western Greece and the Ionian Islands, see MOUNTJOY 1999, 29). Analogous vessels commonly appear in west-central Greece and the northwestern Peloponnese. They are referred to as “gobletartige Kratere” by P. Pavúk and B. Horejs (PAVÚK, HOREJS 2012, 54, 65–68) and as a more neutral “Fußgefäße” by J. Maran (MARAN 1992a, 317 and n. 1016). S. Dietz prefers to use the conventional term “goblet” for large MH III – LH I low-footed vessels in the Argolid, even though he expresses some doubts about the aptness of the term, see DIETZ 1991, 166.

18 Aigion: PAPAOGLOU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, Fig. 11 (LH I). Pagona: DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, Fig. 1/19–20 (MH IIIB – LH IIA horizon). Mygdalia: PAPAOGLOU-MANIOUDAKI, PASCHALIDIS 2021, Fig. 5/b (upper left); 8 (upper specimen) (Mygdalia I, transitional MH III – LH I/LH IIA). Teichos Dymaion (some published as Neolithic or Early Helladic but most likely MH): MASTROKOSTAS 1967, Pl. 149/α, γ (lower left). For the shape, see also jars/kraters from a

LH I–II deposit at Frantzi, in the Spercheios valley, see KARANTZALI 2016, Fig. 20/67–68.

19 Globular jugs with ornate painted decoration are typical of the EH III – MH I transition and MH I periods in the Argolid. Argos: BALITSARI 2019, Fig. 30/98. Asine: FRÖDIN, PERSSON 1938, Fig. 167/2. – NORDQUIST 1987, Fig. 34. Lerna: ZERNER 1978, Pl. 12 BD155/5. See also at Kirrha: DOR et al. 1960, Pl. XLI. For further examples of globular jugs from the early MH Argos, see PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, Fig. 26/88 (late MH I–II); PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS, TOUCHAIS 2011, Fig. 12/6 (late MH I – early MH II).

20 Many examples are presented in DIETZ 1991, Figs. 53–54. Comparisons can also be made with the MH III materials from Tsoungiza, see RUTTER 1990, Figs. 14–15.

21 DIETZ 1991, 177. – PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 34.

22 PAPAOGLOU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, Figs. 3–4. This jug has a characteristic back-turned neck, reminiscent of a shape well attested in central and northern Greece, see PAPAOGLOU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, 133. For this type, see in general MARAN 1992a, 151–156. – MARAN 2007, 167–171. – DAKORONIA 2010.

23 DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, Fig. 1/18 (MH IIIB – LH IIA horizon).

24 PAPADOPOULOS 1979, Fig. 50/d.

25 SIEDENTOPF 1991, Pl. 49/220 (Kolonna, Stadt IX, MH II). – DIETZ 1991, Fig. 59/AI-5 (Mycenae B-Circle, LH I B).

26 DIETZ 1991, 192.

27 PAPADOPOULOS 1979, Fig. 51/a. The excavations at Drakotrypa have not been thoroughly published. A first phase of the settlement is roughly dated to the late MH – early LH period and then the site was

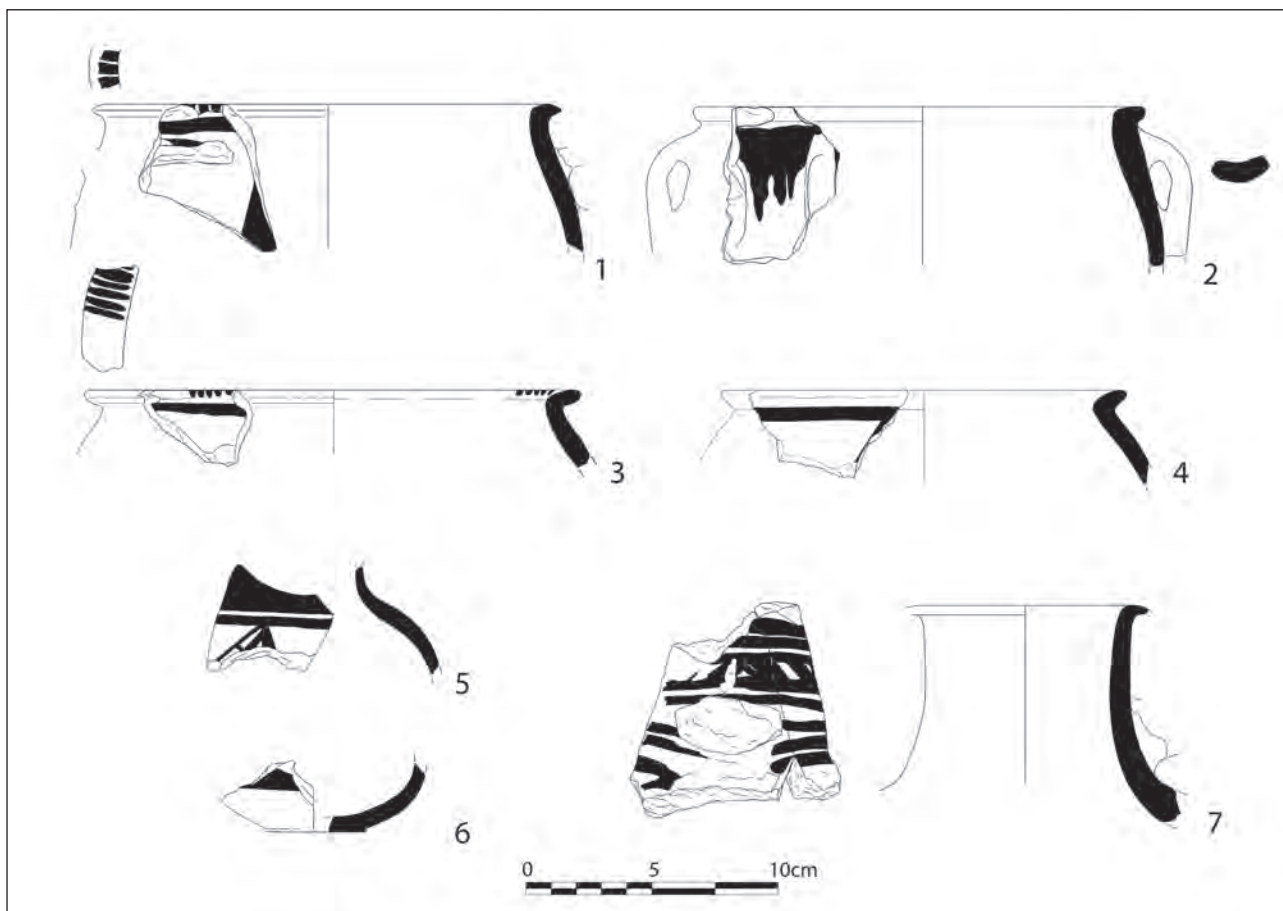


Fig. 4. Matt-painted pottery, scale 1:3 (Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

paralleled on a hydria fragment from Kafkania, although it has a vertical handle attached to the shoulder (like the hydria from Katarraktis) and not from the shoulder to the neck.²⁸

2.1.2. Grey and Dark Burnished (Fig. 5)

The majority of the fragments included here show several similarities with the pottery traditionally called ‘Grey Minyan’: they feature hard-fired fabrics that are almost always fine and semi-fine, with a uniform selection of white limestone inclusions, completely reduced cores and burnished or polished surfaces (Gley 1 5/N, 5/10Y–6/10Y–7/10Y, 5 YR 4/1, 2.5 Y 4/1). Nonetheless, ‘Minyanizing’ would probably be a better definition as none of the fragments bear any obvious traces of wheel throwing.²⁹

In some cases, imperfections in the colour were observed in pieces with not fully reduced cores or mottled surface colour, ranging from dark olive brown to black (10 YR 6/4–5/4–5/3–4/2–3/1). These characteristics, which result from different and less controlled conditions in the firing process, are typical of the pottery classified as ‘Dark Burnished’ at several sites.³⁰ Today the term ‘Dark Burnished’ is commonly preferred to the old-fashioned ‘Argive’ or ‘Black Minyan’, a ceramic ware characterized by a red clay core and black surfaces, as defined by Alan Wace and Carl Blegen in their dated classification of pre-Mycenaean pottery.³¹ Of those presented here, only one fragment (no. 23) should be assigned to the

occupied again in the palatial period, see ZAPHEIROPOULOS 1965. – PAPADOPOULOS 1979, 45–46. – DARQUE 2005, plan 118.

²⁸ RAMBACH 2002, Fig. 5/43.

²⁹ For an overview of the history and definition of ‘True Minyan’ and ‘Minyanizing’ wares, see SARRI 2010b. – PAVÚK, HOREJS 2012,

15–18, 34–36. – HALE 2016, 246–250. – BALITSARI 2019, 481. – BALITSARI 2021.

³⁰ Especially in the Argolid at Lerna (ZERNER 1978, 142–143), Asine (NORDQUIST 1987, 49. – DIETZ 1991, 31) and Argos (PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS, TOUCHAIS, 2011, 209. – BALITSARI 2019), but also elsewhere in Greece at Mitrou (HALE 2016, 247) and Ayios Stephanos (ZERNER 2008, 189–193).

³¹ WACE, BLEGEN 1918, 181.

Dark Burnished group. Diagnostic sherds for this ware appear to be under-represented, but account for a significant quantity among all the other fragments (although still less than the grey varieties).

The wide, offset, almost vertical rims, nos. 8 and 9, resemble the morphology of EH III and early MH I Bass 'Bowls' or cups.³² This shape is also known in eastern Achaëa where many examples were found in the EH III contexts of He-like.³³ Another close parallel comes from Aigeira.³⁴

The bowl, no. 10, has a short, everted rim and a rather squat body that both push it slightly later into the Middle Bronze Age.³⁵ Large bowls or basins (no. 11) reaching 30 cm in diameter are common. They might have stood on large stems or low spreading bases (no. 20).³⁶

Bowls and basins decorated with horizontal grooves (nos. 12–15) are also attested. The straight shoulder of fragments nos. 12–13 make a placement in the late MH I or early MH II more likely.³⁷ Bowls with horizontal grooves decorated with incised festoons (like no. 14) are typical shapes of the Dark Burnished wares (especially of the so-called 'Argive Minyan' variety) and can be dated to the MH II–III period.³⁸ Other specimens have been found in Achaëa, at Aigion,³⁹ Pagona⁴⁰ and Teichos Dymaion.⁴¹

Fragments of goblets, including plain, incised or ringed stems, to the best of my knowledge represent the first known evidence of this shape in Achaëa (nos. 16–19).⁴² Due to the high degree of fragmentation, it is almost impossible to guess how the upper part of these vessels was originally moulded. Indeed, sherds bearing 'complex rims' typical of

the 'Lianokladi' type goblet⁴³ have not been detected. Since the goblet fragments in question lack the technological features generally attributed to 'True Grey Minyan' vessels imported from central Greece, they were probably part of local 'goblet-like' vessels. As for their chronology, a general MH II–III range can be proposed.⁴⁴ Incised stems are documented at Pefkakia-Magoula phase 6 früh (MH II).⁴⁵ In the northeastern Peloponnese, goblets with ribbed stems usually predate those with plain or incised stems.⁴⁶

The kantharos, no. 21, is likely consistent with a MH II–III date.⁴⁷ No. 22 probably belongs to a mature type of angular bowl or goblet, with many parallels in the Argolid from MH IIIA contexts.⁴⁸

The curved profile of fragments nos. 23 and 24 suggests that they were part of semi-globular cups or kantharoi. Globular and semi-globular cups in Argive Light wares appear for the first time during MH IIIB according to Dietz's chronological scheme.⁴⁹ In the MH IIIB – LH IIA level at Pagona, there is evidence of globular and semi-globular cups produced in grey fabric.⁵⁰ According to Peter Pavúk, the incorporation of new shapes within the formerly narrow morphological corpus of Grey Minyan and Dark Burnished wares – as in the case of semi-globular cups – is indicative of a new phase which breaks the MH tradition, better suited to a LH I dating.⁵¹ A very late MH or early LH date might also be assigned to the basin with an out-turned rim with a thickening on the inside, no. 25, given its similarity to the rim of a LH I–IIA bowl from Pagona.⁵²

32 ZERNER 1978, 138–140. – RUTTER 1995, 355–376.

33 KATSAROU-TZEVELEKI 2011, Fig. 2/a.

34 ALRAM-STERN 2006, Pl. 19/230.

35 ZERNER 1978, 139. – ZERNER 2008, 191.

36 Compare with SARRI 2010a, Pl. 44.

37 Horizontal rounded ribs were very common in Lerna Va deposits, while sharp ridges are in general use later, see ZERNER 1978, 139–140. Therefore, an early MH II chronology may fit well in this case. Lerna: ZERNER 1978, Pl. 7/D BS GENERAL/5, 6, 10, 11 (MH I). Berbati-Mastòs: SÄFLUND 1965, Fig. 125/1, 9–10 (EH III – MH I). The deposit dated to EH III by G. Säflund also includes early MH sherds, see LINDBLOM 2011, 89. Ayios Stephanos: ZERNER 2008, Figs. 5.1/1009; 5.7/1099–1101 (MH I late).

38 DIETZ 1991, 54, 69.

39 PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, Fig. 1 (MH II–III), comparable in particular with nos. 59–60.

40 Compare DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, Fig. 1/13 (MH IIIA horizon) with no. 24.

41 MASTROKOSTAS 1967, Pl. 160/β (upper centre and lower left).

42 There are none at Aigion (PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, 132) and no other goblet has been published from other sites in the region until now. However, the material that has been published thus far is too narrow to base overall statements on it.

43 The 'Lianokladi' ring-stemmed goblet has been acknowledged as the 'quintessential' shape of the MH 'True Grey Minyan' ware of central Greece, see HALE 2016, 250, 277. For a description and on the distribution of the shape, see MARAN 1992a, 86–87. – SARRI 2010a, 110–124. – PAVÚK, HOREJS 2012, 35–36. – BALITSARI, PAPADOPOULOS 2018, 234–236. The term "complex rim bowls" was used by C. Zerner to describe open bowls bearing articulated profiles similar to those of the Lianokladi goblets, see ZERNER 1986, 62. Only one sherd from a possibly imported late MH Lianokladi goblet was collected during the excavation, see MERCOGLIANO, BORGNA, in press.

44 MARAN 1992a, 85–86. – HALE 2016. Although rarely, goblets are still found in LH I contexts, see, for instance, at Frantzi: KARANTZALI 2016, 45 and Fig. 16/39.

45 MARAN 1992a, Pl. 70/11.

46 RUTTER 1990, 430. – DIETZ 1991, 170.

47 An almost exact parallel comes from a MH tumulus excavated in the Pyrgaki-Tsouka locality, near Pyrgos in Trifylia, see RAMBACH 2010, Fig. 1/a.

48 Asine: NORDQUIST 1987, Fig. 46/1. – DIETZ 1991, Fig. 14/78.

49 DIETZ 1991, 87–88.

50 Compare no. 21 in particular with DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, Fig. 1/17 (MH IIIB – LH I/IIA).

51 PAVÚK, HOREJS 2012, 36.

52 DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, Fig. 1/22.

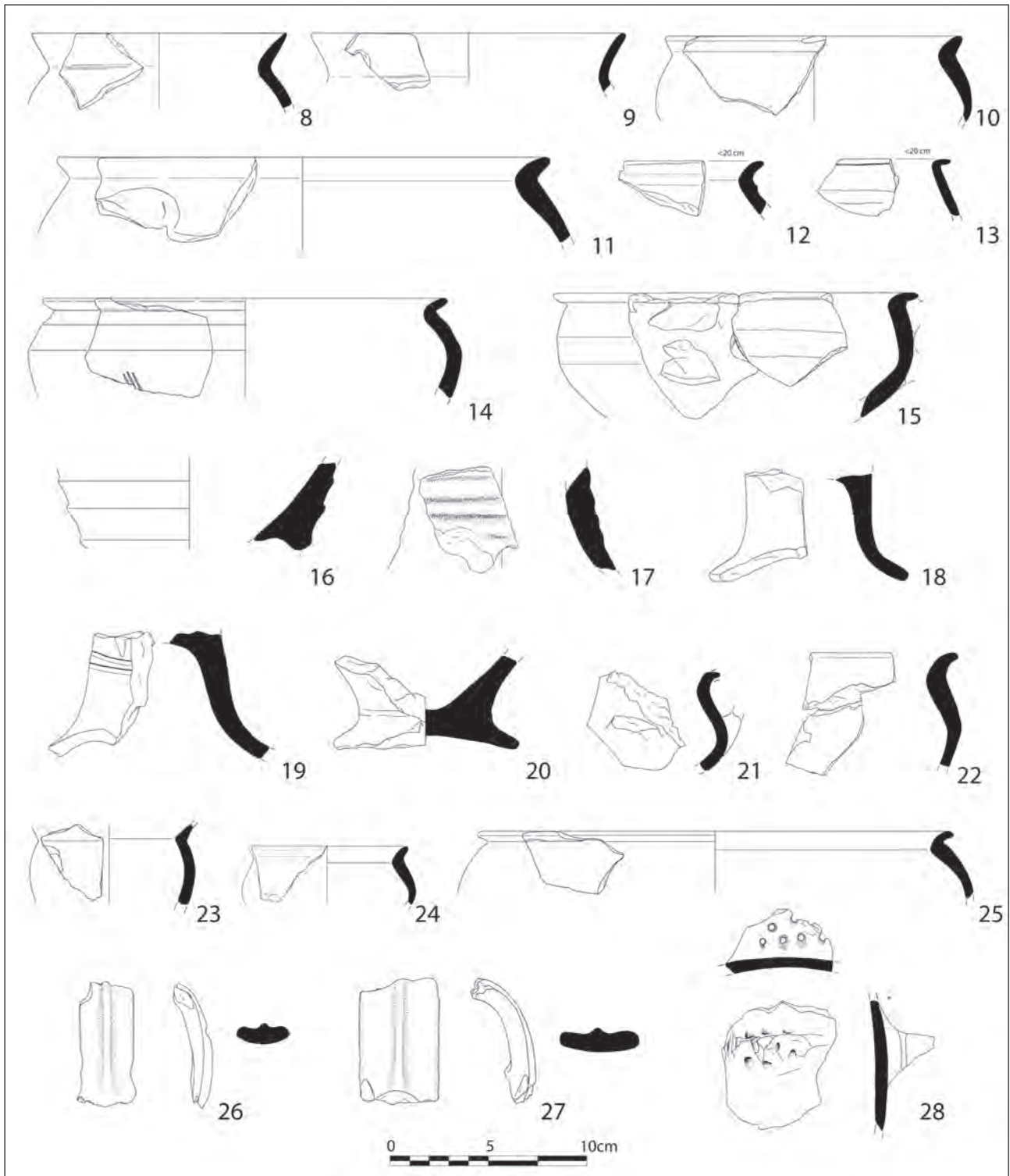


Fig. 5. Grey and Dark Burnished pottery, scale 1:3 (Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

Vertical strap handles with a mid-rib (nos. 26–27) are abundantly attested, but do not seem to be widely paralleled in southern Greece. Given the variability of their

profile and dimension, they were likely features from different shapes, especially kantharoi and shoulder-handled bowls. Multiple-ribbed handles are typical of an early

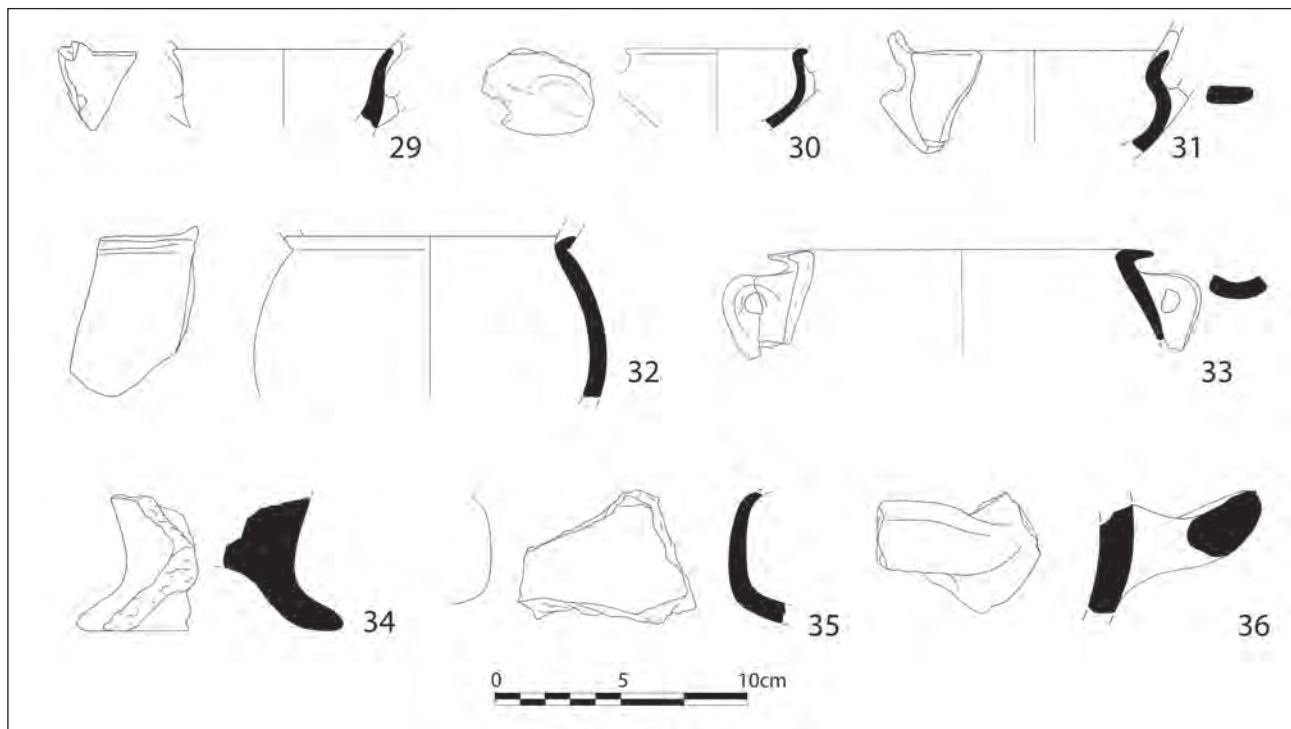


Fig. 6. Orange Burnished (29–34) and Medium-coarse to Coarse Light Unburnished (35–36) pottery, scale 1:3 (Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

MH phase.⁵³ The type with a central rib possibly betrays far-reaching northern connections,⁵⁴ but it has sometimes also been attested on coarse-incised ‘Adriatic’ vessels.⁵⁵ Overall, it seems more reasonable at present to consider it the result of local expression. A pierced lug made of medium-coarse grey fabric (no. 28), might belong to a closed shape. As a general tendency, dark-surfaced closed shapes are extremely rare in Greece, though they have been attested.⁵⁶

⁵³ At Mitrou, they are found during phases 1–4, corresponding to the EH III–MH I transition, MH I and MH I–II transition, see HALE 2016, 267 and Tab. 5.

⁵⁴ Pefkakia-Magoula: MARAN 1992a, Pls. 51/16 (phase 5); 71/11 (phase 6 früh); 115/20 (earlier or contemporary to phase 7); 120/16 (phase 7); 124/6 (earlier or contemporary to phase 7). Magoula Aidiniotiki (Thessaly): MARAN 1992a, Pl. 42/8. Orchomenos: SARRI 2010a, Pl. 58/10. There are sparse occurrences of this feature in the southwestern Peloponnese (Nichoria): HOWELL 1992, fig. 3-33/P2417 (‘Minyan’ ware, MH II). See also Nezir caves (Albania): ANDREA 1990, Pl. 15/1–2 (phase V, Middle Bronze Age). According to Z. Andrea, this morphological feature came to Albania as a result of the penetration of central Adriatic morphological elements in the Varvara cultures, see ANDREA 1990, 32–33.

⁵⁵ Lerna: RUTTER 1995, Pl. 105/1260 (EH III). Kafkania: RAMBACH 2002, Pl. 7/58, 66. Malthi: VALMIN 1938, Pl. XXI/D9.

⁵⁶ Argos: PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS, TOUCHAIS 2011, Fig. 13/35–37 (late MH I). Filla-Kalogerovrysi: SAMPSON 1993, Fig. 48 (late MH).

2.1.3. Orange Burnished (Fig. 6/29-34)

This category gathers all of the sherds from fine or semi-fine vessels with light-coloured surfaces, with shades ranging mainly from orange to red and – more rarely – from beige to yellow (5 YR 7/6–7/8–6/6–6/8, 7.5 YR 7/6–7/8–6/6–6/8, 10 YR 7/6). Fabrics are usually hard-fired and surfaces may be burnished or well smoothed. This category shows several macroscopic characteristics of the pottery traditionally known as ‘Yellow Minyan’,⁵⁷ also detected in the ‘Yellow and Red Minyan’ wares of central Greece⁵⁸ and in the long-lasting ‘Hard Orange’ wares of the southwestern Peloponnese.⁵⁹ The definition of this group also partially overlaps that of the ‘Argive Light’ wares described by Dietz.⁶⁰

Nos. 29 and 30 belong to a category of small kantharoi commonly known as ‘miniature kantharoi’, which became popular in the MH III period in the northeastern

Eretria: MÜLLER CELKA et al. 2011, Fig. 8/36.

⁵⁷ WACE, BLEGEN 1918, 181.

⁵⁸ SARRI 2010b, 607.

⁵⁹ SHELMEKDINE, GULIZIO 2016, 160.

⁶⁰ The burnished varieties, not including the painted examples, see DIETZ 1991, 29–31.

Peloponnese,⁶¹ also attested elsewhere in Achaia.⁶² They both find precise parallels at MH III Tsoungiza.⁶³

Kanthaloi with an S-profile are represented as well (no. 31). S-profile kanthaloi frequently appear in EH III – MH I contexts, although in contrast to no. 31, they usually present a deeper globular body and longer, wider, almost vertical rim.⁶⁴ While kanthaloi tend to be angular or carinated in southern Greece from MH II onwards,⁶⁵ the S-profile kantharos is still found in central and northern Greece, where it gradually becomes smaller and shallower.⁶⁶ Thus, the kantharos represented by no. 31 can be generally dated to an advanced phase of the MH period.

The case of fragment no. 32 is both intriguing and uncertain. Its raised handle suggests that it is a kantharos, and its profile and short, thinned rim are reminiscent of a class of rounded kanthaloi with sharpened vertical handles found in central Greece⁶⁷ and the Ionian Islands.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the preserved fraction of the piece does not allow for a secure identification.

The shoulder-handled bowl fragment no. 33 might have been part of a goblet, as can be seen from the comparison with a similar fragment from Pisa, in Elis, showing traces of the joint of either a stem or a low foot.⁶⁹ Low feet do appear (no. 34), but the upper part of the vessel is missing in all cases. Low-footed goblets (or krateriskoi) are indicative of MH III – LH I phases and abundantly documented in the northeastern Peloponnese.⁷⁰

2.1.4 Medium-coarse to Coarse Light Unburnished (Fig. 6/35–36)

Medium-coarse to Coarse Light-coloured fabrics ranging from reddish to pale orange (5 YR 6/8–7/6, 7.5 YR 7/8–6/6–7.5 YR 8/4) are employed for vessels with miscellaneous domestic functions, which are usually larger and closed, such as jars. Fabrics are not hard like the burnished categories described above and surfaces are almost invariably wiped.

The most frequent shape is the narrow-necked jar, a shape already common from the EH III period⁷¹ and throughout the entire Middle Bronze Age. The short cylindrical neck with flaring rim, no. 35, seems to be more typical of hydriai or stamnoi of the late MH – early LH periods.⁷² The concave-convex handle, no. 36, can be generally assigned to the MH period.⁷³

2.1.5. Coarse Domestic/Cooking Pottery (Fig. 7)

Coarse Domestic/Cooking Pottery is abundantly attested in the recovered fragments. In this category, fabrics are coarse and mixed with small to rather large (up to 7–8 mm) red, grey, and white lithic inclusions. Surfaces are brown to red-coloured, occasionally mottled, and are either roughly or more carefully smoothed, while cores are greyish to black and grainy. The varied colour of the surfaces may have been caused by the use of the vessels for cooking but, given the fragmentary character of the material, it was very difficult to discriminate between the black surfaces created by cooking and those caused by uneven initial firing. As suggested by the evidence from other MH sites, such as Argos or Mitrou, there does not seem to be an exclusive, specialised local fabric type for cooking vessels at most settlements across the mainland during this period.⁷⁴ Similar observations have been made for the LH I cooking pottery from Tsoungiza.⁷⁵

Ovoid jars with wide flaring rim (also known as ‘wide-mouthed jars’, nos. 37–39) are the most commonly recurring shapes. The wide-mouthed jar is commonly found from EH III to LH I all over Greece, without any substantial

61 RUTTER 1990, 436. – DIETZ 1991, 153. – PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 16–17.

62 PAPADOPOULOS 1979, Fig. 48/e (unknown provenance). See also the unpublished miniature kantharos displayed in a showcase of the Archaeological Museum of Aigion.

63 No. 31: RUTTER 1990, Fig. 13/64. No. 32: RUTTER 1990, Fig. 13/149.

64 Lerna: RUTTER 1995, 44 (shape XI). – ZERNER 1978, Pls. 5/D 594/4; 16/BE 435/3–BE 448/1 (MH I).

65 ZERNER 1978, 140–141. – DIETZ 1991, 48. – PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS 2002, 12.

66 Pefkakia-Magoula: MARAN 1992a, Pl. 124/7 (phase 7, MH III). See also from Orchomenos: SARRI 2010a, Pl. 6/8.

67 At Pefkakia, this type of kantharos (type 2CIV) is known during phases 6 Mitte and spät (late MH II), see MARAN 1992a, Pls. 93/9; 108/4.

68 Familiengrab ‘S’ near Skaros Hill, Leukas, see KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 2005, Pl. 47/2 (grave S8).

69 RAMBACH 2002, Fig. 12/P6 (MH II–III).

70 DIETZ 1991, Fig. 51. Tsoungiza: RUTTER 2015, Fig. 3/E 11 (LH I). Korakou: DAVIS 1979, Fig. 9/193, 195 (LH I).

71 RUTTER 1995, 48–49 (shape XVII).

72 DIETZ 1991, Fig. 58/AI-6 (MH IIIB), Fig. 59/AI-8 (LH IB). Korakou: DAVIS 1979, Fig. 10/222–229 (LH I).

73 Aigeira: ALRAM-STERN 2006, Pl. 22/263. Kafkania: RAMBACH 2002, Figs. 5/43; 8/81.

74 The local Coarse ware from Argos included shapes intended for both storage and cooking, see TOUCHAIS 2007, 84; see also BALITSARI 2019. On Mitrou, see LIS 2017b, 197–198. The only exception seems to be Kolonna, where there was a specific fabric recipe used mainly for cooking pots, see GAUSS – KIRIATZI 2011, 131, 199; GAUSS et al. 2017, 51.

75 LIS 2020, 854.

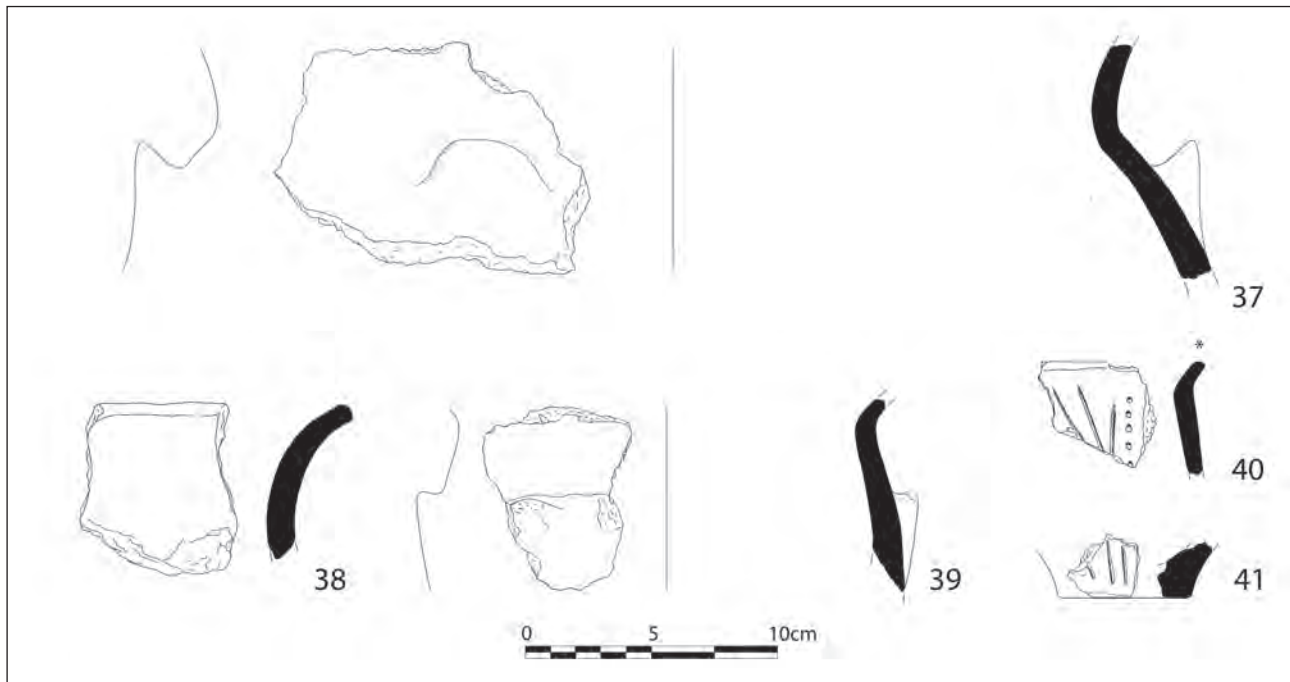


Fig. 7. Coarse Domestic/Cooking Pottery, scale 1:3 (Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

diachronic morphological variation.⁷⁶ Horn-shaped knobs, like the one found on the small jar no. 39, are a long-lasting feature from prehistoric times, also documented in MH contexts.⁷⁷

Coarse incised decoration traditionally called ‘Adriatic’ is also present (nos. 40–41). The Adriatic ware definition identifies a group of coarse and semi-coarse vessels bearing incised decoration according to a rather simple syntax, usually composed of groups of vertical, horizontal and oblique lines in a herringbone pattern or rectangular panels variously arranged on the surface of small or medium-sized wide-mouthed jars or jugs.⁷⁸ As a result of the

study carried out by Jeremy Rutter at Lerna IV, it is now generally acknowledged that this ware first appears in the EH III period, as a local innovation.⁷⁹ The case of fragment no. 40, with incised oblique lines and a row of dots, appears to be rather unusual. Rows of dots are rare but still present on MH coarse incised vessels.⁸⁰

MH ‘Adriatic’ ceramics have been uncovered elsewhere in Achaea at Teichos Dymaion,⁸¹ Pagona,⁸² Aigion,⁸³ Aigeira⁸⁴ and in the Kastria Cave, near Kalavryta.⁸⁵ The coarse incised ware from this last context, which dates to a late phase of the MH, shows an especially high degree of variation in both shape and decoration.

2.1.6. Pithoi (Fig. 8)

Pithoi represent a problematic category in terms of chronology, as they are likely to remain in use for extended periods.⁸⁶ Prehistoric pithoi from mainland Greece lack a systematic

⁷⁶ Lerna: RUTTER 1995, 442–454 (EH III). Argos: TOUCHAIS 2007, 85–87 and Figs. 2–4 (MH). Tsoungiza: RUTTER 1989, 12 and Fig. 7/18–19 (LH I). Mitrou: LIS 2017b, Fig. 3 (LH I–II). See also LIS 2017a, 39–40.

⁷⁷ The type is common in all layers of the Aspis, see TOUCHAIS 2007, 88. Lerna: ZERNER 1978, Pl. 2/D 563/16 (MH I). Argos: PHILIPPA-TOUCHAIS, TOUCHAIS 2011, Fig. 13/40 (late MH I – early MH II). Nichoria: HOWELL 1992, Pl. 3-27/P2369–2371 (MH I). Kastria Caves: SAMPSON 1997, Pl. 82/340 (late MH). Frantzi: KARANTZALI 2016, Fig. 14/31 (mixed MH deposit). Pefkakia-Magoula: MARAN 1992a, Pls. 43/8 (phase 4, MH I); 98/12 (phase 6 Mitte, late MH II).

⁷⁸ The best and most numerous examples of coarse incised MH pottery are to be found in the western and southern Peloponnese, at Malthi (VALMIN 1938) and Nichoria (HOWELL 1992). For a general description and overview of the so-called ‘Adriatic’ ware, see RUTTER 1995, 632. – TOUCHAIS 2007, 88–89. – SARRI 2010a, 183–186.

⁷⁹ RUTTER 1995, 633–634.

⁸⁰ Argos: TOUCHAIS 2007, 88. Nichoria: HOWELL 1992, Fig. 3.4/P2091 (MH I). Dimitra: SYRIOPOULOS 1973, Pl. 48a/28–31.

⁸¹ MASTROKOSTAS 1967, Pl. 160/a (lower left).

⁸² DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, Fig. 1/11–12 (MH IIIA horizon).

⁸³ PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, 131–132.

⁸⁴ ALRAM-STERN 2006, Pl. 21 (EH III – MH I/II).

⁸⁵ SAMPSON 1997, Figs. 81–82.

⁸⁶ RUTTER 2015, 210.

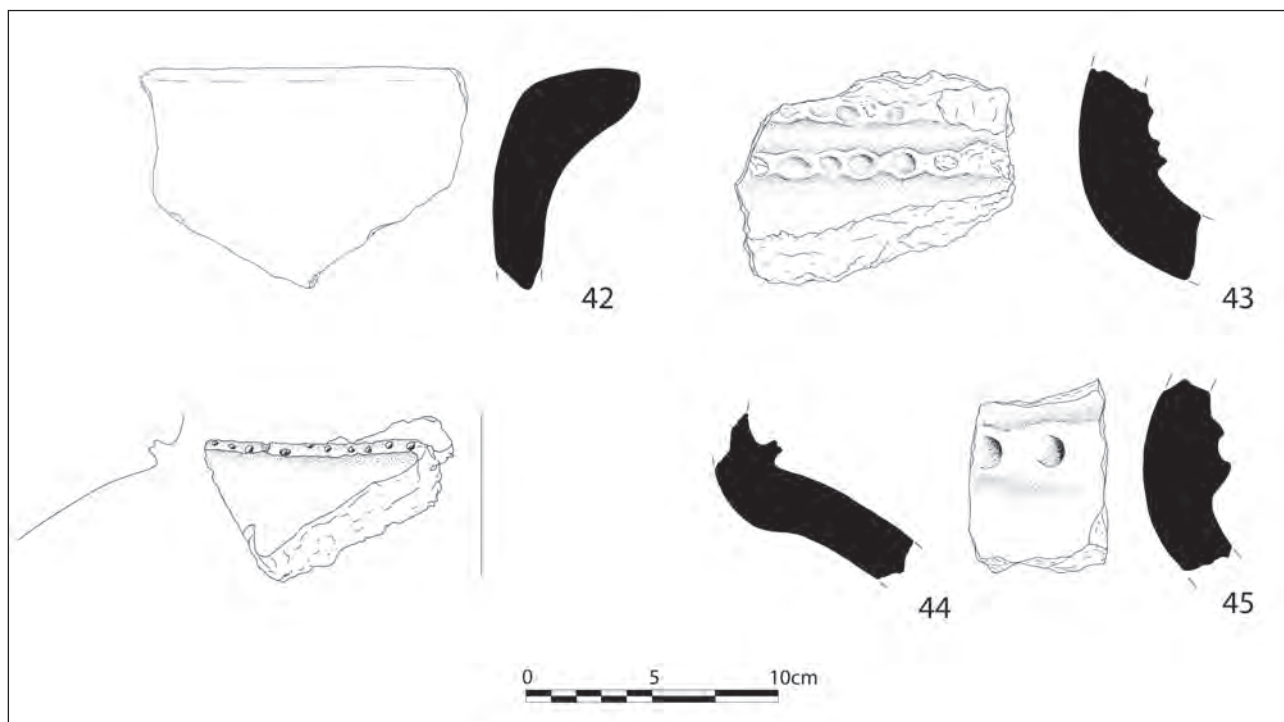


Fig. 8. Pithoi, scale 1:3 (Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

typological study,⁸⁷ and MH ones have been said to be “the most neglected ceramic types of the Aegean Bronze Age”.⁸⁸ Due to these factors, the materials included in this category could only be framed into general long-term spans.

The pithoi fragments recovered at the Trapeza regularly show a rather uniform fabric recipe, which is likely to have been specifically designed for this shape. They are made of a pink to orange clay (5 YR 7/4–7/8, 7.5 YR 8/3–8/4, 7/3–7/6) mixed with selected inclusions of red flint. The pithoi retrieved at the EH III settlement of Helike (eastern Achaia) have similar technical characteristics to the pithoi from Trapeza.⁸⁹

The fragment of a pithos with a horizontally everted and thickened rim (no. 42) has parallels at MH I Nichoria,⁹⁰ as well as MH III Asine,⁹¹ and even in LH I–II contexts.⁹² Narrow-necked pithoi bearing plastic bands with fingerprints or circular impressions at the junction between the neck and the shoulder (as in fragments nos. 43, 44 and 45) are part of a

long-lasting tradition starting in EH III, covering the entire MH period and including the LH I.⁹³

2.2. Late Helladic Pottery (Figs. 9–10)

Fragment no. 46 belongs to a kylix (FS 256) decorated with antithetic wavy stems.⁹⁴ It has close parallels from LH IIIA2 in Phocis.⁹⁵ The decorative scheme, consisting of a second exterior band below the rim and interior bands, is unusual on kylikes and more often found on stemmed bowls. It is noteworthy that this feature occurring on various types of

⁸⁷ LIS, RÜCKL 2011, 154.

⁸⁸ RUTTER 2007, 35.

⁸⁹ KATSONOPOULOU et al. 2016.

⁹⁰ HOWELL 1992, Pl. 3-30.

⁹¹ DIETZ 1980, Fig. 64/55. – DIETZ 1991, Fig. 23/212 (MH IIIB).

⁹² FRANTZI: KARANTZALI 2016, Fig. 22/81 (LH I–II deposit).

⁹³ Tsoungiza: PULLEN 2011, Fig. 6.68/734 (EH III). Helike: KATSONOPOULOU 2011, Fig. 11. – KATSAROU-TZEVELEKI 2011, Figs. 16–17 (EH III). Aigeira: ALRAM-STERN 2006, Pl. 22/260 (EH III – MH I/II). Deriziotis Aloni: STOCKER 2003, Fig. 25/P154 (double row of rope pattern decoration, EH III). Koumoula: TOUCHAIS 1981, Fig. 44/2 (MH). Kafkania: RAMBACH 2002, Fig. 10/110 (MH II–III). Tsoungiza: RUTTER 1990, Fig. 17/113 (MH III). – RUTTER 2020, Fig. 9.18/D123, D125 (MH III – LH I); 9.37/D362 (MH III – LH I, compare in particular with no. 44 for the punctate decoration); 9.44/E31 (LH I). Kiapha Thiti: MARAN 1992b, Pl. 21/679 (LH I).

⁹⁴ BORGNA, VORDOS 2019, Fig. 4. Mistakenly published with three bands below the rim in BORGNA et al. 2019, Fig. 2/f.

⁹⁵ KRISA: MOUNTJOY 1999, Fig. 294/64. Delphi: MOUNTJOY 1999, Fig. 294/66.

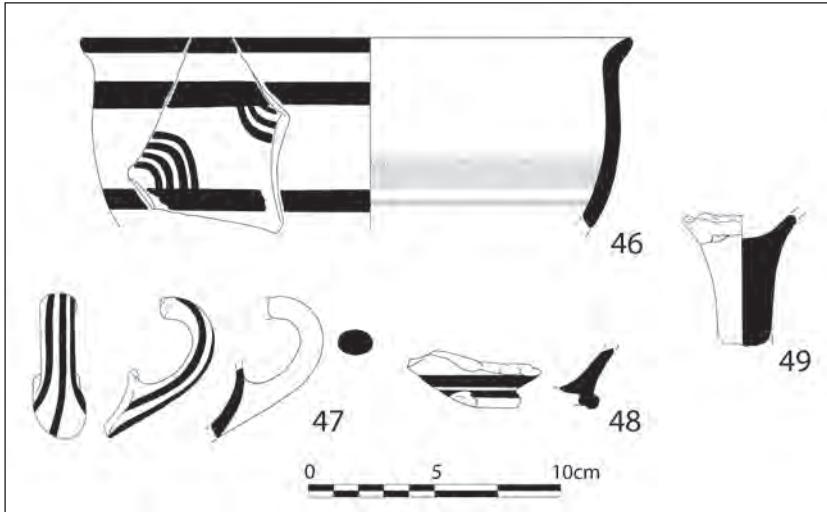


Fig. 9. Mycenaean pottery, scale 1:3
(Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

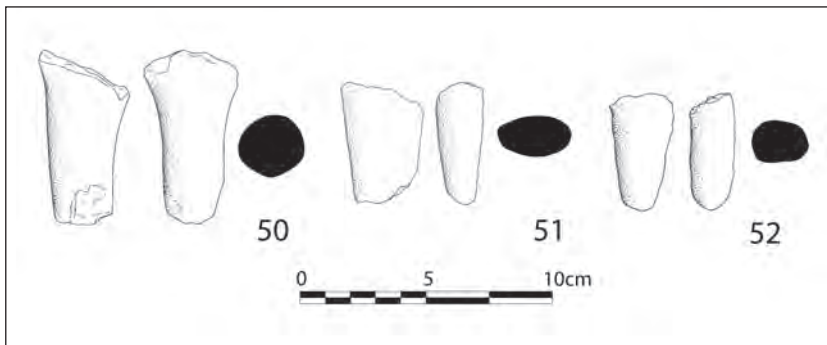


Fig. 10. Coarse tripod legs, scale 1:3
(Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

open shapes other than the stemmed bowl is a regional characteristic of Phocis.⁹⁶

The handle, no. 47, painted with three vertical bands, is consistent with the same type of kylix. The base, no. 48, belongs to a ring-based shape, possibly a small piriform jar. For the kylix stem, no. 49, only a general LH III span can be proposed, most probably LH IIIA–B, when kylikes were widespread.

Three fragments of legs made of coarse clay are ascribable to tripod cooking pots. Their section varies from circular (no. 50) to elliptical (no. 51) and rounded irregular (no. 52). The tripod appears in Mainland Greece during the Early Mycenaean phase and becomes a standard shape only from LH IIB–IIIA1 onwards.⁹⁷ Some of the earliest evidence of

this shape can be found in the LH IIA level at Mitrou, where a few occurrences of tripods have been found.⁹⁸ It is difficult to propose a more specific chronology for the leg fragments from the Trapeza, but, in any case, they almost certainly date to a phase following the Middle Bronze Age.

2.3. Small Finds (Fig. 11)

A few ceramic objects – all classifiable as textile tools – have been discovered at the site.

Nos. 53 and 54 belong to longitudinally pierced terracotta spools with concave ends. This type of spool appears early in the MH at Ayios Stephanos⁹⁹ and Lerna,¹⁰⁰ from

⁹⁶ Especially on kantharoi and krateriskoi, see MOUNTJOY 1999, 744–745.

⁹⁷ Lis 2017b, 196. Tripods are found at Kolonna in MH III and LH I, see GAUSS et al. 2017, Figs. 6.5–6.6. Tripods found in MH III – LH I contexts of the mainland are imports either from Crete or Aegina:

Tsougiza: RUTTER 1990, Fig. 18/171 (MH III). Asine: DIETZ 1991, Fig. 16/108 (MH IIIA). Lerna: LINDBLOM 2007, 127 and Fig. 10 (lower right) (LH I). Korakou: DAVIS 1979, 252 (LH I).

⁹⁸ Lis 2017b, Fig. 7.

⁹⁹ BANKS, JANKO 2008, 427 and Fig. 9-23.

¹⁰⁰ CASKEY 1957, Fig. 3. – BANKS 1967, 561–562 and Pl. 19/c1–c3.

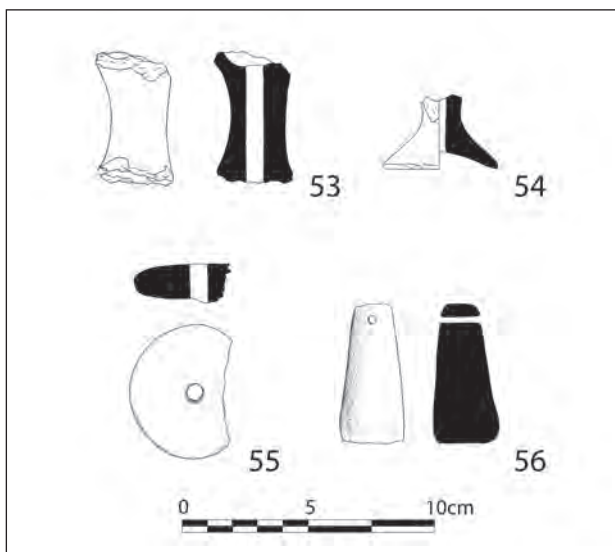


Fig. 11. Small finds, scale 1:3 (Drawings: N. Petropoulos).

phases 6 and 7 (MH II–III/LH I) at Pefkakia-Magoula¹⁰¹ and – generally – is quite common all over Greece and as far as Chalkidiki and western Anatolia, during a span covering the MH II–III and LH I–II periods.¹⁰² According to Jill Carington Smith’s hypothesis, such spools might have been used in connection with horizontal looms.¹⁰³

The flat clay disc with perforation, no. 55, may have been used as a spindle whorl. Flat discoid whorls are quite common in Neolithic times, but they make rare appearances during the Bronze Age.¹⁰⁴ A few parallels from MH contexts can be mentioned: one from MH I Nichoria,¹⁰⁵ the other from MH II–III Kafkania.¹⁰⁶

The truncated-pyramidal loom weight (37 g) with a horizontal hole below the top (no. 56) is particularly interesting. Considering that weights of similar shape are in use until at least the early Roman period¹⁰⁷ and that the discovery of loom weights within MH contexts – especially in southern Greece – seems to be rare,¹⁰⁸ one could interpret the loom weight no. 56 as the result of a later occupation. Nevertheless, weights of pyramidal and truncated pyramidal shapes do occur starting in the Early Bronze Age period

in northern Greece.¹⁰⁹ Two pyramidal loom weights have been found at Ayia Triada–Chalkis in Aitolia: one in a layer with mostly MH III materials,¹¹⁰ the other was found in a LH IB deposit.¹¹¹ There is one example known at Kirrha with no precise indication of its archaeological context,¹¹² but it might well be Middle Helladic.¹¹³ A pyramidal loom weight is also documented in a mixed prehistoric context at Ayios Stephanos.¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Banks suggests that the appearance of this type at the site may have occurred at the end of the MH or the beginning of the LH period.¹¹⁵ Therefore, there is a good chance that no. 56 dates to the late MH – early LH period as well.

3. General Remarks on Pottery

The abundance of pottery clearly proves the presence of a well-established settled site. As shown in the table (Fig. 12), a large part of the material was gathered in area D, the smallest of the surveyed areas, but the one located in close proximity to the largest flat area, where the ancient habitation may have been concentrated. The clustering of the remains may also be the result of exposition from harrowing and cultivation, but, in any case, an extensive anthropic sequence has been verified through excavation.

Almost all of the wares identified can be placed in the MH pottery tradition. Two major diagnostic categories characterize the sample: Matt-painted and fine unpainted (grey, dark or orange) burnished pottery. Matt-painted decoration is found across open and closed shapes, encompassing both tableware and storage functions. Motifs are mainly composed of geometric figures (notably solidly painted triangles) or groups of lines forming net patterns. Although not represented among the surface material, curvilinear patterns do appear, as testified by a few sherds coming from a transitional MH – LH horizon excavated in one of the test trenches.¹¹⁶

¹⁰¹ MARAN 1992a, Pl. 155/3–4, 6–7.

¹⁰² CARINGTON SMITH 1975, 404–407. – PAVÚK 2012, 123–126 with the entries collected on pages 129–130 and in Pl. XXXIV/a.

¹⁰³ CARINGTON SMITH 1975, 218–239.

¹⁰⁴ CARINGTON SMITH 1975, 398–399. – CARINGTON SMITH 1992, 682.

¹⁰⁵ CARINGTON SMITH 1992, Fig. 11-2/2664 (type 12).

¹⁰⁶ RAMBACH 2002, Fig. 11/55 (MH II–III).

¹⁰⁷ CARINGTON SMITH 2000, 236.

¹⁰⁸ CARINGTON SMITH 1975, 400. – CARINGTON SMITH 1992, 689.

¹⁰⁹ Refer to the sites mentioned in CARINGTON SMITH 2000, 236. At Pefkakia-Magoula, they occur in the *Übergangsphase* (EH III), and in phase 3, i.e., at the transition between EH III – MH, see MARAN 1992a, Pl. 155/9–10, 12. They have been found in a securely dated closed context in Archontiko, western Macedonia, see PAPADOPOULOU 2012, Pl. XXII/g–h (phase IV, 2135–2020 BC). A conical loom weight found in EH II Tiryns is unique in the Argolid, see SIENNICKA 2012, Pl. XXV/g.

¹¹⁰ DIETZ, MOSCHOS 2006, 104–105 and Fig. 60, but the context is disturbed by later Archaic activities.

¹¹¹ DIETZ, MOSCHOS 2006, Fig. 40.

¹¹² DOR et al. 1960, 144 and Pl. XII/6489.

¹¹³ An Early or Middle Bronze Age date had already been proposed, see CARINGTON SMITH 1992, 689.

¹¹⁴ BANKS, JANKO 2008, Fig. 9.4/6059.

¹¹⁵ BANKS, JANKO 2008, 427.

¹¹⁶ BORGNA et al. 2019, Fig. 2.

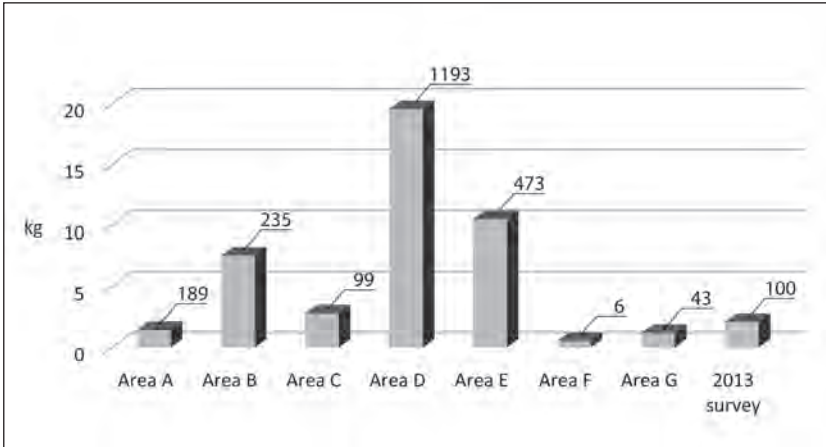


Fig. 12. Graph showing the amount of pottery recovered over different surveyed areas according to weight. The respective number of fragments is indicated above each bar (Graphics: A. Mercogliano).

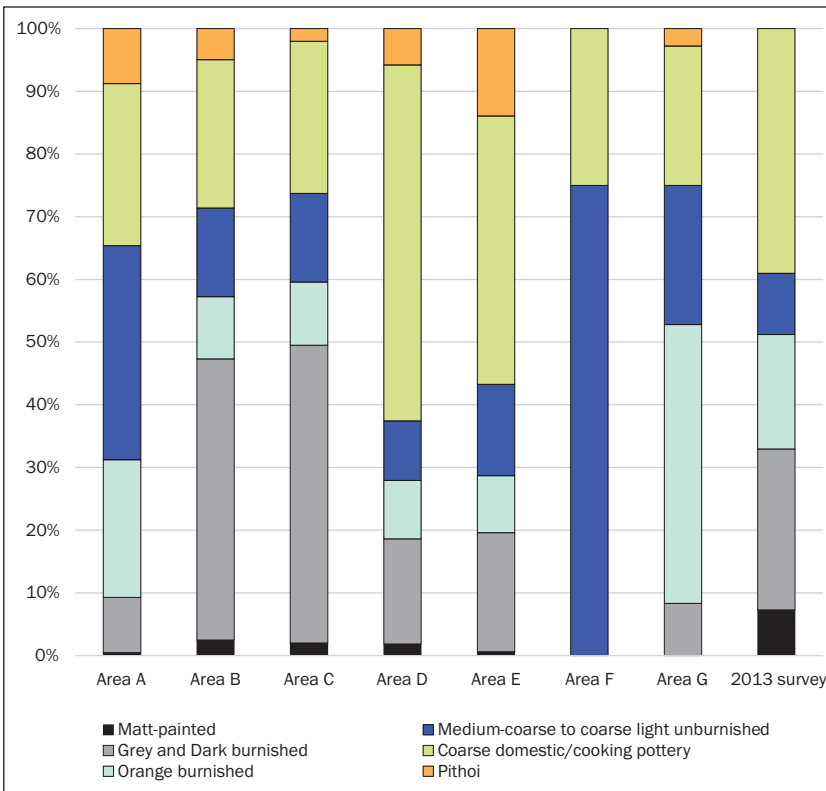


Fig. 13. Graph showing the ratio between different classes of pottery over different surveyed areas by sherds count (Graphics: A. Mercogliano).

As for the plain burnished pottery, a primary distinction was made between the dark-surfaced and light-surfaced classes. Grey and Dark Burnished pottery is almost exclusively associated with open shapes, mainly medium- to large-sized (15–30 cm diameter) bowls (pedestalled or not) and basins. The decoration, horizontal grooves or incised lines, is quite uniform and canonical. Plain light fabrics, on the other hand, are used both for open and closed shapes. The Orange Burnished group mostly includes cups and

kantharoi, which tend to be smaller (with an average diameter of 10–15 cm) than their dark counterparts. The standard plastic and/or incised decoration commonly found in dark unpainted wares is not found.

Some differences can be detected by looking at the ratio between different classes of pottery over different areas (Fig. 13). It is possible that the differences in the spatial distribution of pottery may indicate differences in the use of areas. Grey and Dark Burnished pottery appears to be

underrepresented in areas A, C, G and F, primarily at the edges of the slope. The scarcity or absence of pottery belonging to this category in some areas of the site might also be of chronological significance. A general pattern has been identified in other sites showing that the relationship between Grey/Dark Burnished and burnished wares of light colour gradually reversed during the MH period: while Grey/Dark Burnished wares constituted a preponderant part of the fine pottery assemblage at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, burnished wares of lighter colours gradually became favoured for tableware starting in the late Middle Bronze Age.¹¹⁷ Perhaps not by chance, most of the Mycenaean decorated sherds have been collected in one of the areas (area A) where Grey and Dark Burnished wares are overshadowed by light counterparts. Area A and marginal areas of the site (areas F and G) may have been the focus of later occupation or may simply hide more recent sequences of habitation that are better preserved.

The catalogued sherds can be gathered into four main chronological groups:

1. Late EH III – early MH group: this group is very poorly represented, exclusively by grey-surfaced sherds from bowls/cups with globular bodies (Fig. 5/8–9). The few parallels mainly point to the northeastern Peloponnese. There is no clear indication of Matt-painted pottery dating to the early MH thus far. Matt-painted pottery was absent from Aigeira, which was possibly occupied during the EH III – MH II period.¹¹⁸ This may be indicative that painted wares were extremely rare in pottery contexts of the earliest MH period in Achaea.
2. Middle to late MH group: this is by far the richest group, attested by Matt-painted and fine unpainted wares in a wide variety of shapes, such as kantharoi (Figs. 5/21; 6/29–32), goblets (Figs. 5/15–19; 6/33), grooved and carinated bowls (Fig. 5/12–15, 22), basins (Fig. 5/11), jugs (Fig. 4/5–6) and jars (Figs. 4/7; 5/35). Similar shapes and wares are widely documented in a large geographical area, once again including Corinthia and the Argolid, but also the western Peloponnese and central Greece.
3. Transitional MH – LH: this group, which lacks a clear chronological definition (see below), collects all of the vases in the MH tradition which potentially fall into an early LH date, including globular and semi-globular

cups and bowls (Fig. 5/23–25), low-stemmed goblets (Fig. 6/34) and krateriskoi with matt-painted triangles (Fig. 4/1–4). This pottery retains strong connections with the cultural sphere of the northeastern Peloponnese, but also shows some aspects that are only paralleled in Achaea and the neighbouring regions, emphasizing the presence of new local traditions in this area. An example of this phenomenon is the solidly painted triangles, which seem to be a signature of the decorative repertoire of late MH – early LH Achaean Matt-painted pottery, both eastern and western, with an influence reaching as far as the opposite side of the Corinthian Gulf, in Aitolia and Phocis.¹¹⁹

4. Mycenaean group: after an apparently long absence in remains, a small group of sherds, including a diagnostic LH IIIA2 decorated kylix (Fig. 9/46), provides evidence for Late Bronze Age occupation at the site.

The Medium-coarse to Coarse Light Unburnished, Coarse Domestic/Cooking Pottery and Pithoi should be mentioned separately, as they potentially fall within a wide range of time between the EH III – LH I periods, not allowing for a more precise dating.

The remaining group of ceramic objects (Fig. 11) can be placed in a late MH – early LH time span.

Several varieties of imported pottery, including wheel-made Grey Minyan ware, Aeginetan, Cycladic or Minoan vases, are completely lacking.¹²⁰ Not even one sherd could be conclusively assigned to the earliest Mycenaean ‘Lustrous-decorated’ wares. However, a LH date could be suggested for a few sherds manufactured in a MH tradition. Similar evidence has been observed on the pottery from the surface survey of the Mastos Hill in the Berbati Valley.¹²¹ This absence leads to the issue of the identification of LH I, especially in peripheral contexts (compared to the northeastern and the southern Peloponnese), where the replacement of MH traditional wares was supposed to have been a slow process.¹²² Indeed, there is increasing evidence for the

¹¹⁷ RUTTER 2007, 5. – PAVÚK, HOREJS 2012, 37. G. Nakou interestingly linked this change to the increasing circulation of gold metal vessels in mainland Greece, see NAKOU 2007, 236. See also RUTTER 2012.

¹¹⁸ ALRAM-STERN 2010, 146–147.

¹¹⁹ DOR et al. 1960, Pl. XXX (upper left). – DIETZ 2007, 87 and Fig. 2/4. – DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, 125.

¹²⁰ A few sherds from possibly imported vessels, including a Grey Minyan goblet, have been identified in the materials from the excavations, see above n. 43.

¹²¹ LINDBLOM 2011, 89–90.

¹²² DIETZ 1991, 92–93. – MOUNTJOY 1999, 20. – RUTTER 2012, 417. For recent general considerations on the LH I ceramic phase, see DICKINSON 2014. – LINDBLOM, GAUSS, KIRIATZI 2015. – RUTTER 2015. – DICKINSON 2021. The recently published detailed study on MH III – LH II ceramics from Tsoungiza shows that during the earliest LH I, Lustrous-decorated ceramics at the site are represented by

definition of a LH I “pre-early Mycenaean pottery stage” lacking Lustrous-decorated pottery,¹²³ further confirmed by the pottery sequence excavated at Mitrou, where LH I covers four subphases, the first two of which do not feature Mycenaean pottery.¹²⁴

The earliest Mycenaean Lustrous-decorated pottery from Achaea constitutes a very small corpus and is so far attested at Aigion,¹²⁵ Mygdalia,¹²⁶ Pagona,¹²⁷ and Portes.¹²⁸

4. A Diachronic Overview of the Site in the Framework of Middle Helladic Greece

The available information suggests that the site was founded at a very late stage of the Early Helladic or early in the Middle Helladic. Given the paucity of MH I diagnostic features, occupation may have been more intense late within this phase or early in MH II, possibly about the same time as the reoccupation of Aigion, on the coast.¹²⁹ Late EH III and early MH occupation is quite sparse in Achaea and has been uncovered at Teichos Dymaion,¹³⁰ Aigeira¹³¹ and, recently, also at Lousika,¹³² in the western part of the region.¹³³

More substantial evidence has been recorded for the MH II and MH III periods, when Greece witnessed an increase in the number of settlements all over the mainland, including inland locations, according to a phenomenon that has

been called ‘colonization of the interior’ by Jeremy Rutter.¹³⁴ As testified by the excavated sequence, the late MH might have been concurrent with massive terracing and levelling activities that are indicative of a change in the topography of the settlement. In the rest of Achaea, substantial social and economic growth has been recorded at the MH III – LH I transition, with the establishment of prominent sites, especially in the western part of the region, which started to experience a strong cultural connection with Aitolia, on the other side of the Corinthian Gulf.¹³⁵ There has been much discussion about a partition of Achaea into two cultural districts separated by the Panachaikon range, not only in the prehistoric period, but also during historical times.¹³⁶ Indeed, eastern Achaea seems to have always maintained closer relations with the north-eastern Peloponnese, whereas the western part shared more cultural traits with Elis and Ionian Greece. This has also been claimed for the EH and early MH periods,¹³⁷ and seems to be confirmed by the ‘early MH’ and ‘middle to late MH’ groups at the Trapeza, which strongly resemble northeastern Peloponnese pottery production. According to the present state of knowledge, cultural differences between eastern and western Achaea appear to have been more strongly demarcated at the transition to the LH period, especially in the funerary sphere.¹³⁸ As already mentioned above, the MH – LH transitional pottery at the Trapeza shows many similarities to the northeastern ceramic sphere, although it should be emphasized again that, in some cases, the search for closely related materials revealed parallels only found in Achaea and in a few sites on the other side of the gulf. The evidence suggests that, despite strong influences from the northeastern Peloponnese, the pottery at the site featured certain local characteristics.¹³⁹

At the moment, it is difficult to clearly demonstrate to what extent the Trapeza settlement survived into LH I, given the absence of many of the diagnostic LH I features and

Minoan or Minoanizing imports which account for 3.4 % of the inventoried pottery. Only from a developed subphase of LH I and, for sure, by the LH IIA, does most of the Mycenaean Lustrous-decorated pottery at Tsoungiza come from a ceramic industry inaugurated in the immediate environs of Mycenae, presumably based in the pottery workshop at Berbati, see RUTTER 2015. – RUTTER 2020, 559–562, 648.
123 MATHIOUDAKI 2014, 15.

124 VAN DE MOORTEL et al. 2019, 288 and n. 37.

125 PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI 2010, 136 and Figs. 15–16 (LH I).

126 PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI, PASCHALIDIS 2021, Fig. 9 (LH I/IIA).

127 DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, 124–135 and Fig. 1/21–22 (LH I/IIA).

128 MOSCHOS 2000, 17 and Fig. 9/1–2 (LH I).

129 PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI 2010.

130 Beyond the reports of the old excavations by E. Mastrokostas (MASTROKOSTAS 1966a. – MASTROKOSTAS 1966b. – MASTROKOSTAS 1966c. – MASTROKOSTAS 1967), see also the recent finds and reconsiderations by M. Gazis (GAZIS 2017. – GAZIS 2018).

131 ALRAM-STERN 2006. – ALRAM-STERN 2010. The recent finding of Pattern-painted pottery at the site provides an explicit hint that it was occupied at least from the late EH III (the fragments are illustrated in ÖAI 2013, 93–94).

132 PHILIS 2017.

133 EH III settlements are also known at Helike (KATSAROU-TZEVELEKI 2011. – KATSONOPOULOU 2011. – KATSONOPOULOU, KATSAROU-TZEVELEKI 2017) and Keryneia (KOLIA, SPIROULIAS 2017. – KOLIA, SPIROULIAS 2020), but both were abandoned before the end of the Early Bronze Age.

134 RUTTER 2001, 131.

135 DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010, 125. Remains of megaron buildings dated to the late MH – early LH period have been uncovered in the area of Katarraktis, see above n. 25. A transitional MH III – LH I phase has been identified at Mygdalia, see PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI 2015. – PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI, PASCHALIDIS 2017, 453. – PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI, PASCHALIDIS, JONES 2019, 199–201. – PAPAZOGLU-MANIOUDAKI, PASCHALIDIS 2021. The cemetery excavated at Portes records early LH examples of large built chamber tombs cut inside a tumulus, see MOSCHOS 2000.

136 PETROPOULOS 2012. – PETROPOULOS 2016.

137 ALRAM-STERN 2010, 147.

138 ARENA 2015, 12–13.

139 This issue attracted much more attention in relation to the Early Mycenaean period and to the establishment of a Mycenaean province in the Aigialeia, even though an independence model is now more widely accepted, see ARENA 2015.

wares. One should nonetheless consider the position of the site, far from the coast and from significant long-distance connection routes or trading centres, such as Kolonna or Kastri on Kythera.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, if the surveyed area (about 1 ha) actually corresponds to the settlement size, then it would be considerably smaller than the estimated average area of late MH sites.¹⁴¹ Herding must have been a substantial subsistence strategy at the site and, consequently, weaving and textile production would have been one of the main occupations, as demonstrated by the textile tools recovered. The identification of the site as a small-scale hamlet would further justify the absence of many imported wares and make it a perfect candidate as a ‘type-site’ of local pottery production.¹⁴²

The Early Mycenaean period appears to be under-represented at the Trapeza, while many other sites were flourishing elsewhere in Achaea: in the western part of the region, coastal (or subcoastal) sites and inland locations became prominent, probably along a vertical axis of cultural connection linking Achaea with Ionian Greece.¹⁴³ In eastern Achaea, coastal sites like Aigion are distinctive, probably fostered by maritime trade routes that involved the future palatial poles of the Argolid together with several centres facing the Corinthian Gulf, such as Korakou or Kirrha.¹⁴⁴ Due to its defiladed geographical location, the Trapeza area may have lacked some of the crucial connections for the cultural and socio-economic growth of Early Mycenaean Achaea.

Scant evidence of occupation is recorded again in Palatial times, at least from the LH IIIA2 period, a phase that is, by contrast, well attested at the Mycenaean chamber tomb cemetery nearby.¹⁴⁵ Whether habitation was discontinuous, relocated or just obliterated by modern land use remains an open question to be solved by further systematic excavations.

The discovery of the MH site of the Trapeza therefore opens new interesting perspectives for research into a poorly known period in Achaea, which reveals evidence for widespread phenomena, but – at the same time – is distinguished by local characteristics that have yet to be systematically explored.

¹⁴⁰ It is worth noting that no Aeginetan pottery is reported from the early LH horizon at Pagona, see DIETZ, STAVROPOULOU-GATSI 2010.

¹⁴¹ WIERSMA 2014, 204, 214.

¹⁴² For further explanation on the characteristics of a ‘type site’, see RUTTER 2007.

¹⁴³ TSONOS 2016, 263–264.

¹⁴⁴ ARENA 2015, 28. The finds from the Early Mycenaean megaron at 8 Polychroniadou Street confirm the key role of Aigion within the trade network of the northeastern Peloponnese, see PAPAZO-GLOU-MANIOUDAKI 2015.

¹⁴⁵ A possible connection between the cemetery and the settlement has been suggested in BORGNA et al. 2019.

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