

FINE WARE CERAMICS, CONSUMPTION AND COMMENSALITY: MECHANISMS OF HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION IN EARLY BRONZE AGE CYPRUS

Introduction

A number of recent studies on feasting in prehistoric Cyprus have drawn attention to the importance of this form of commensality, with respect in particular to the Chalcolithic and Late Bronze Age periods.¹ This paper will focus on the Early Bronze Age. Its objectives are straightforward. If food and/or drink consumption beyond day to day domestic needs was an important aspect of social behaviour in Early Bronze Age Cyprus, what forms did this take, what purposes were being served and how did it differ in scale and intent through time and from region to region?

We define feasts, following Dietler,² as “communal food consumption events that differ in some way from everyday practice” or, even more simply, as eating or drinking together for a special purpose or occasion;³ noting that such events have “some bearing on social relations and on the identities of the participants, whether creating them, reinforcing them, or even masking them.”⁴

Only two Early Bronze Age settlements on Cyprus have been substantially excavated (Pl. LVIIa): Sotira *Kaminoudhia*, in the south, where the exposed architecture dates to Early Cypriot III, the last phase of the period;⁵ and Marki *Alonia*, in the centre of the island, which was occupied from the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, during the so-called Philia phase, through Early Cypriot I, II and III.⁶ The Early Bronze Age is otherwise known almost entirely from cemeteries, and primarily from extensively excavated cemeteries at Bellapais *Vounous*, Lapithos *Vrysi tou Barba* and Karmi *Lapatsa* and *Palealona* in the north coast region.⁷

- 1 L. STEEL, “A Goodly Feast a Cup of Mellow Wine: Feasting in Bronze Age Cyprus,” in *The Mycenaean Feast* 161-180; EAD., “Wine Women and Song: Drinking Ritual in Cyprus in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages,” in D. BOLGER and N. SERWINT (eds), *Engendering Aphrodite. Women and Society in Ancient Cyprus* (2002) 105-119; E. PELTENBURG *et al.*, *Lemba Archaeological Project II.2. A Ceremonial Area at Kissonerga* (1991); S.W. MANNING, “Prestige, Distinction, and Competition: The Anatomy of Socioeconomic Complexity in Fourth to Second Millennium B.C.E. Cyprus,” *BASOR* 192 (1993) 44-48.
- 2 M. DIETLER, “Feasts and Commensal Politics in the Political Economy: Food, Power and Status in Prehistoric Europe,” in P. WIESSNER and W. SCHIEFENHÖVEL (eds), *Food and the Status Quest, an Interdisciplinary Perspective* (1996) 89.
- 3 O.A.C. ANIGBO, “Commensality as Cultural Performance: The Struggle for Leadership in an Igbo Village,” in D. PARKIN, L. CAPLAN and H. FISHER (eds), *The Politics of Cultural Performance* (1996) 101.
- 4 E. BLAKE, “The Material Expression of Cult, Ritual, and Feasting,” in E. BLAKE and A.B.K. KNAPP (eds), *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Prehistory* (2005) 107.
- 5 S. SWINY, G. RAPP and E. HERSCHER, *Sotira Kaminoudhia. An Early Bronze Age Site in Cyprus* (2003).
- 6 D. FRANKEL and J.M. WEBB, *Marki Alonia. An Early and Middle Bronze Age Town in Cyprus. Excavations 1990-1994* (1996); *Marki Alonia. An Early and Middle Bronze Age Settlement in Cyprus. Excavations 1995-2000* (2006).
- 7 The *Vounous*, Lapithos and Karmi cemeteries were excavated over 50 years ago but, apart from *Vounous*, remain incompletely published: see P. DIKAIOS, “The Excavations at Vounous-Bellapais in Cyprus, 1931-1932,” *Archaeologia* 88 (1940) 1-174; E. STEWART and J.R. STEWART, *Vounous 1937-38. Field Report of the Excavations Sponsored by the British School at Athens* (1950); A-E. DUNN-VATURI, *Vounous. C.F.A. Schaeffer's Excavations in 1933 Tombs 49-79* (2003); V.R. GRACE, “A Cypriote tomb and Minoan Evidence for its Date,” *AJA* 44 (1940) 10-52; J.L. MYRES, “Excavations in Cyprus, 1913: A Bronze Age Cemetery at Lapithos,” *BSA* 41 (1940-45) 78-85; E. GJERSTAD, J. LINDROS, E. SJÖQVIST and E. WESTHOLM, *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition. Finds and Results of the Excavations in Cyprus 1927-1931*, Vol. I (1934) 33-162; E. HERSCHER, *The Bronze Age Cemetery at Lapithos, Vrysi tou Barba, Cyprus; Results of the University of Pennsylvania Museum Excavation, 1931* (Unpublished dissertation, University of Pennsylvania 1978); J.R. STEWART, “The Tomb of the Seafarer at Karmi,” *OpAth* 4 (1962) 197-204. For a comprehensive study of Cypriot Bronze Age mortuary practice, see P.S. KESWANI, *Mortuary Ritual and Society in Bronze Age Cyprus* (2004).

Bronze Age tombs in Cyprus have produced large quantities of pottery vessels. These have traditionally been viewed as grave offerings or personal possessions of the dead and hence as evidence of belief in an afterlife. This paper will suggest, alternatively, that most grave goods are residues of mortuary feasting by the living and that tombs and cemeteries were often loci for intense social interaction, as well as providing a significant impetus for the production and manipulation of material culture (for similar arguments with regard to Early Bronze Age Crete see Hamilakis).⁸

The Philia phase

The beginning of the Early Bronze Age in Cyprus (around 2400 BCE) is marked by an array of innovations which include the first systematic exploitation of the island's copper resources, the introduction of cattle, donkeys, new breeds of goats and sheep and other agricultural technologies (including the sole-ard plough), rectilinear architecture, extra-mural burial and other aspects of mortuary behaviour and new domestic technologies and practices.⁹ Evidence for these is associated with a distinctive archaeological entity, which has long been defined in terms of pottery and other diagnostic artefacts as the Philia cultural system.¹⁰

There is widespread agreement that southwestern Anatolia or/and Cilicia are the likely source of most, if not all, Philia phase innovations. The process by which they reached Cyprus, however, has long been a source of controversy with debate focusing on models of internal restructuring on one hand¹¹ and population movement or migration on the other.¹² Recently, Peltenburg¹³ and Bolger¹⁴ have argued for a longer-term process, whereby contacts between Cyprus and Anatolia during the Late Chalcolithic were followed by intensive interaction culminating in the arrival of settlers at the beginning of the Philia period.

The Philia settlement pattern, although still relatively poorly known, appears to have been characterised by small widely dispersed communities located in the copper-rich foothills of the Troodos, in agricultural terrain and along transportation routes, with larger regional centres and at least one dominant coastal site at Vasilia in the north.¹⁵ Few of these settlements are likely to have been internally viable as biological populations or large enough to ensure the inter-generational transmission of craft skills and more specialised technologies. Most must have been dependent on the maintenance of close relationships with larger centres.

Philia sites across the island have produced fine ware vessels which are virtually identical in form, fabric and decoration, along with a distinctive range of other artefact types and a common

- 8 Y. HAMILAKIS, "Eating the Dead: Mortuary Feasting and the Politics of Memory in the Aegean Bronze Age Societies," in K. BRANIGAN (ed.), *Cemetery and Society in the Aegean Bronze Age* (1998) 115-132; "Tombs for the Living," *Antiquity* 314 (2007) 1090-1093.
- 9 J.M. WEBB and D. FRANKEL, "Characterizing the Philia Facies: Material Culture, Chronology, and the Origin of the Bronze Age in Cyprus," *AJA* 103 (1999) 3-43.
- 10 P. DIKAIOS, "The Stone Age", in *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition IV:IA* (1962) 152-176; J.R. STEWART, "The Early Cypriote Bronze Age," in *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition IV:IA* (1962) 205-401.
- 11 STEWART (*supra* n. 10) 270; MANNING (*supra* n. 1) 35-58; A.B. KNAPP, "Archaeology and Ethnicity: A Dangerous Liaison," *Archaeologia Cypria* IV (2001) 29-46.
- 12 DIKAIOS (*supra* n. 10) 202-203; E. GJERSTAD, "The Origin and Chronology of the Early Bronze Age in Cyprus," *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1980) 11-13; WEBB and FRANKEL (*supra* n. 9); D. FRANKEL, "Migration and Ethnicity in Prehistoric Cyprus: Technology as Habitus," *European Journal of Archaeology* 3 (2000) 167-87; J.M. WEBB and D. FRANKEL, "Identifying Population Movements by Everyday Practice. The Case of Third Millennium Cyprus," in S. ANTONIADOU and A. PACE (eds), *Mediterranean Crossroads* (2007) 187-214.
- 13 E. PELTENBURG, "East Mediterranean Interaction in the 3rd Millennium BC," in ANTONIADOU and PACE (*supra* n. 12) 139-159.
- 14 D.L. BOLGER, "Cultural Interaction in 3rd Millennium B.C. Cyprus: Evidence of Ceramics," in ANTONIADOU and PACE (*supra* n. 12) 162-186.
- 15 For a discussion of the role of Vasilia in the Philia system see J.M. WEBB, D. FRANKEL, Z.A. STOS and N. GALE, "Early Bronze Age Metal Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. New Compositional and Lead Isotope Evidence from Cyprus," *OJA* 25 (2006) 261-288.

set of low order valuables, such as annular pendants and spiral earrings.¹⁶ This remarkable homogeneity in material culture implies the widespread establishment of a group identity with strong Philia cultural associations, and suggests that mechanisms were in place which ensured non-competitive links within and between widely dispersed incursive Philia communities, and secure access to marriage partners, animal stocks, raw materials, manufactured goods and technical and esoteric knowledge. Was commensality one of these mechanisms?

Common sets of vessel types suggest common forms of food presentation and consumption and common etiquette, cuisine and traditions. In Philia phase tombs the most common forms are cutaway-spouted jugs, bottles, amphorae and small bowls, with the latter in the majority (Pl. LVIIb).¹⁷ Comparison with the only available Philia settlement assemblage is instructive. At Marki large closed vessels are over four times as common as small closed vessels; and the incidence of small to large bowls is approximately 3:1.¹⁸ Thus larger capacity storage, mixing and pouring vessels were considerably more common than small closed vessels in both habitation and mortuary deposits; and the routine use of small bowls for eating and drinking is indicated in both contexts. Medium and large bowls, used for food preparation and presentation, are, however, present in settlement deposits but do not occur in funerary assemblages.

Incised motifs are simple, restricted in number and often limited to specific parts of the vessel.¹⁹ The decorated assemblage is comprised almost exclusively of amphorae, cutaway-spouted jugs, small jars and flasks. Small bowls are rarely incised but sometimes painted or pattern burnished. This suite of fine ware mixing, pouring and serving vessels has long been linked to the introduction of exotic alcoholic drinks and to a group mentality characterised by the use of organised hospitality as a means of social integration and control.²⁰ Additional evidence for alcohol consumption in Cyprus at this time is perhaps indicated at Philia phase Marki, where vat-like vessels with perforated bases, grain storage pits and a large oven may have been associated with beer production.²¹

Alcohol, in this case probably beer, with its "properties of intoxication and the generation of conviviality,"²² is likely to have played a major role in communal consumption events. Decorated fine ware liquid mixing and pouring vessels occur in both settlement and funerary assemblages but are markedly more common in burial assemblages.²³ This suggests that such vessels and their contents played a particularly important role in mortuary ritual. The absence of food processing and presentation bowls and animal bones in Philia tombs further suggests that drinking was the principal and perhaps the only form of commensality practiced in association with burial at this time. The high incidence of incised decoration on amphorae

16 D.L. BOLGER, "Early Red Polished Ware and the Origin of the 'Philia Culture'," in J.A. BARLOW, D.L. BOLGER and B. KLING (eds), *Cypriot Ceramics: Reading the Prehistoric Record* (1991) 29-35; MANNING (*supra* n. 1) 48; WEBB and FRANKEL (*supra* n. 9); WEBB and FRANKEL (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 147.

17 Plate 2 is derived from data from Vasilia Tombs 1 and 103 and *Ayia Paraskevi* Tombs 3/3A, 4, 9, 12 and 14A. J.B. HENNESSY, I. KEHRBERG and K.O. ERIKSSON, *Ayia Paraskevi and Vasilia. Excavations by J.R.B. Stewart* (1998); Khrysiliou *Ammos* Tomb 1 and *Ayia Paraskevi* Tomb 7 (D.L. BOLGER, "Khrysiliou-Ammos, Nicosia-Ayia Paraskevi and the Philia Culture of Cyprus," *RDAC* [1983] 60-73); *Ayia Paraskevi* Tomb 25 (G. GEORGIOU, "The Necropolis of Ayia Paraskevi Revisited," *RDAC* [2002] 49-65); *Kyra Kamini* (DIKAIOS [*supra* n. 10] 156-159); *Deneia Kafkalla* Tomb 166 (I. NICOLAOU and K. NICOLAOU, "Dhenia-Kafkalla and Mali Tombs," *RDAC* [1988] 103-106) and Tombs 6, 10 and 15 at *Sotira Kaminoudhia* (SWINY and HERSCHER in SWINY, RAPP and HERSCHER [*supra* n. 5] 111-114, 117-120, 129-132). All major Philia fabrics are included (Philia Red Polished, Philia White Painted and Black Slip and Combed). Philia Red Polished with band burnishing and Black Slip and Combed vessels were counted as decorated.

18 FRANKEL and WEBB (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 92, Text Figs 4.4-4.5, Table 4.5.

19 FRANKEL and WEBB (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 95, Table 4.12.

20 MANNING (*supra* n. 1) 45; E. PELTENBURG, "From Isolation to State Formation in Cyprus, c. 3500-1500 B.C.," in V. KARAGEORGHIS and D. MICHAELIDES (eds), *The Development of the Cypriot Economy from the Prehistoric Period to the Present Day* (1996) 23.

21 FRANKEL and WEBB (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 22, fig. 2.8, pl. 10a-c (oven), 26, fig. 2.12, pls 14a, 18, 36e (pits), 99-100, fig. 4.9, pl. 40 (vats).

22 A.G. SHERRATT, "Cups that Cheered: The Introduction of Alcohol to Prehistoric Europe," in W.H. WALDREN and R.C. KENNARD (eds), *Bell Beakers of the Western Mediterranean: Definition, Interpretation, Theory and New Site Data. The Oxford International Conference 1986. Part I* (1987) 92.

23 FRANKEL and WEBB (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 95.

implies a specialised use for this vessel type and suggests that the focus of attention was on larger capacity, shared or communal storage and mixing vessels rather than on either pouring vessels or small bowls used for individual consumption.

We can, then, argue for a common set of drinking vessels and related behaviour across the island during the Philia phase of the Early Bronze Age and suggest that commensality, involving, in particular, the shared consumption of alcohol, served as a mechanism of alliance and solidarity among communities of common cultural origin with relatively permeable boundaries and low levels of social competition. Ceramic innovation was clearly not a key currency in competition or display at this time. Instead, the similarity of vessel form and decoration across the island suggests that commensality and the equipment used in commensal events were vehicles of horizontal integration rather than vertical differentiation within and between Philia communities.

Early Cypriot I and II

The success of these Philia settlements and the expansion of their descendant populations resulted in the establishment of more independent settlements and new cultural patterns in the succeeding Early Cypriot I period. The emergence of distinct spatially differentiated ceramic style zones at this time suggests that the earlier pattern of multiple, small-scale interactions was replaced by a reliance on specific regional centres as the focus of alliance and social exchange. This seems to have been accomplished through population growth and processes of acculturation and integration which transformed both Philia and indigenous communities.²⁴

The 'boundaries' of these regional entities are poorly understood, but it is clear that southern and central sites shared strong ceramic links in Early Cypriot I-II, forming a south/central style zone (Pl. LVIa).²⁵ At Marki decorated table ware virtually disappears in Early Cypriot I, to be replaced by hard-fired plain mottled vessels.²⁶ Similarly, assemblages from Early Cypriot I-II tombs in the south-central zone are almost entirely undecorated (Pl. LVIIa).²⁷

In the north coast region, the situation is radically different. Here settlements newly established in Early Cypriot I developed a distinctive ceramic tradition which is much richer in its array of forms and in the extent and complexity of its decoration than either the earlier Philia or the contemporary south-central repertoires.

Specifically, Early Cypriot I-II Red Polished ware from *Vounous* and other north coast cemeteries exhibits an expanded range of shapes, a marked increase in the number of decorated vessels, particularly small bowls, jugs, earlug pots and flasks, and the introduction of specialised ritual vessels with elaborate incised and modelled decoration (Pl. LVIIb).²⁸ There is a significant increase, also, in the size, shape range and capacity of small bowls (Pl. LVIIIa), and a similar increase in the size range and capacity of jugs (Pl. LVIIIb).

24 D. FRANKEL, "Becoming Bronze Age: Acculturation and Enculturation in Third Millennium BC Cyprus," in J. CLARKE (ed.), *Archaeological Perspectives on the Transmission and Transformation of Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean* (2005) 18-24.

25 The defining features of this south/central ceramic style zone are discussed in more detail in FRANKEL and WEBB (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 105-106.

26 FRANKEL and WEBB (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 104-105, 148.

27 The data in Plate 3 are derived from Early Cypriot I-II tombs at Episkopi *Phaneromeni* (D. DURYEA, *The Necropolis of Phaneromeni and its Relation to Other Early Bronze Age Sites in Cyprus*, Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of Missouri, 1965); Tombs 1/82 and 1/99 at Psematismenos *Trelloukkas* (I.A. TODD, "A Middle Bronze Age Tomb at Psematismenos-Trelloukkas," *RDAC* [1985] 55-77; G. GEORGIOU, "An Early Bronze Age Tomb at Psematismenos-Trelloukkas," *RDAC* [2000] 47-63); Tomb 1/2000 at Maroni *Maraes* and Tomb 4 at Pyla (G. GEORGIOU, "Three Early Bronze Age Tombs from the Hills of Larnaka District," *RDAC* [2001] 49-71); Tomb 2 at Pyrgos (M.R. BELGIORNO, "Rescue-excavated Tombs of the Early and Middle Bronze Age from Pyrgos (Limassol)," *RDAC* [2002] 1-32); Tombs 7, 9, 14, 17 and 18 at Sotira *Kaminoudhia* (S. SWINY and E. HERSCHER in SWINY, RAPP and HERSCHER [*supra* n. 5] 114-135), Tomb 14 at Avdimou *Kamares* (G. VAVOURANAKIS and G. MANGINIS, "Μεσοκυπριακοί Τάφοι στη Θέση Αυδήμο-Καμάρες," *RDAC* [1995] 68-77); Tomb 4 at Marki *Davari* (FRANKEL and WEBB [*supra* n. 6, 1996] 230) and Kalavassos Village Tombs 73-75 (I.A. TODD, *Vasilikos Valley Project 11: Kalavassos Village Tombs 52-79* [2007] 181-189).

28 Plate 4 is drawn from the largely intact Early Cypriot I-II tomb assemblages at Bellapais *Vounous* Site A, as reported in STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7).

There is an emphasis on individually distinctive vessels, particularly in the case of the so-called tulip bowls,²⁹ which show deliberate 'additive' variability, involving the accumulation and redundancy of elements in both form and decoration.³⁰ The same is true of the decoration on jugs, earlug pots, spouted bowls and flasks. Incised motifs are more diverse, occur in more intricate configurations and are symbolically more complex than those on Philia vessels (Pl. LIX). Where Philia ceramic form and decoration signalled affiliation to a common tradition, these vessels focus attention on particular consumers, imply restricted access to esoteric knowledge and are highly distinctive at a regional level. This marked use of selected vessels as vehicles of 'symbolic style' is likely to have been closely linked to the dynamics of identity negotiation.³¹

Tulip bowls, many of which have small spouts at the rim, were certainly used for liquids. The same is true, obviously, of jugs and deep bowls with tubular spouts which J.R Stewart has suggested were 'connected with the enjoyable evil of strong drink.'³² He also identified apparatus depicted in the round on a spouted jar from *Vounous* Tomb 164A as a 'fermentation plant' for the production of grain alcohol.³³ Indeed it seems highly likely that the production and consumption of beer continued to play a critical role in funerary ceremonial.

Ritual vessels, used for the shared consumption of special substances, take the form of deep bowls with rayed disks and animal heads and large pedestalled bowls (up to 53cm high) with modelled animals and tulip bowls on the rim.³⁴ Several are incised on the body with horned animals,³⁵ either depictions of carcasses seen from above, or alternatively, representing masked dancers, suggesting that funerary feasts may have been emotionally, theatrically and ritually charged events.

The presence of medium and large bowls at *Vounous* suggests that food as well as drink was consumed during mortuary ceremonies. Tomb chambers also contain significant quantities of animal bones, almost entirely from adult cattle.³⁶ These were placed in the chambers as cuts of meat, in some cases whole sides of oxen. These articulated joints, which are likely to represent waste from funeral feasting, suggest the high cost and size of such events and imply sustained levels of economic surplus. The purposeful disposal of high utility cuts and the destruction of unique items like cult vessels by permanent burial are particularly associated elsewhere with competitive feasting.³⁷ The presence of cult vessels in over a third of tombs and animal remains and prestige serving vessels in almost all chambers³⁸ implies widespread promotional feasting behaviour and creation of social debt at *Vounous* in Early Cypriot I and II.

Notably, also, north coast burials took place in well-cut chamber tombs, while contemporary burials in the south/central region are primarily simple pit graves. At *Vounous*, Lapithos and Karmi there is also evidence for tomb elaboration in the form of carved *dromos* facades, which suggest additional investment in status enhancement and competitive visual display.³⁹

29 J.R. STEWART, *Corpus of Cypriot Artefacts of the Early Cypriot Bronze Age*, Part III:1 (1999) 87-108, Class XIII, Group B.

30 On 'additive', as opposed to 'qualitative', variability in LM IIIC pottery decoration from the Acropoli Mediana, see E. BORGNA, "Social Meanings of Food and Drink Consumption at LM III Phaistos," in *Food, Cuisine and Society*, 178-180.

31 S. PLOG, "Equality and Hierarchy: Holistic Approaches to Understanding Social Dynamics in the Pueblo Southwest," in T.D. PRICE and G.M. FEINMAN (eds), *Foundations of Social Inequality* (1995) 189-206.

32 *Supra* n. 29, 1.

33 STEWART (*supra* n. 9) 1; STEWART (*supra* n. 10) 291; STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7) 232, pls LXXXVII-LXXXVIII. For a different interpretation see V. KARAGEORGHIS, *The Coroplasty Art of Ancient Cyprus I. Chalcolithic - Late Cypriote I* (1991) 157, pl. CXXI.3-4.

34 Eg. STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7) pls LXXIX-LXXXV.

35 STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7) pl. LXXIX.e-d, LXXX.a-b, XCIII.

36 H.G. STUBBINGS in STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7) 374-380.

37 B. HAYDEN, "Fabulous Feasts: A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting," in M. DIETLER and B. HAYDEN (eds), *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power* (2001) 53.

38 See KESWANI (*supra* n. 7) 64, Table 4.7a.

39 J.R. STEWART, "Decorated Tomb Façades, Cyprus," *Antiquity* 13 (1939) 461-463; STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7) 152, figs 111-112; 158, figs 120, 124b; 162-163, fig. 123; HERSCHER (*supra* n. 7) 705; P. ÅSTRÖM, "A Cypriote Cult Scene," *JPR* 2 (1988) figs 3-4; R.S. MERRILLEES, "A Stone Anthropomorphic Bas Relief from Middle Bronze Age Cyprus," in F. VANDENABEELE and R. LAFFINEUR (eds),

These distinctive aspects of mortuary practice in the north coast region suggest that differential status and access to resources were being expressed and negotiated through tomb elaboration and promotional feasting in Early Cypriot I and II. The association of such status enhancing behaviour with death and burial further suggests that sufficient surpluses were available in this region to sustain regular feasting events and that ancestral relationships were of particular importance in the formation and legitimation of individual and sub-group identity. This early development of social hierarchy in the north is likely to have been driven, at least in part, by indirect contact with the Aegean, Anatolia and the Levant. Although evidence of such contact is rare before the Middle Bronze Age, all extant imports have been found at north coast sites and extra-island contacts are likely to have been maintained in some form throughout the Early Bronze Age.⁴⁰

Early Cypriot III–Middle Cypriot I

In the Early Cypriot III period, new forms of iconographic evidence, in particular terracotta models and vessels with modelled decoration, provide important information. They include wine production scenes⁴¹ and model tables with juglets and bowls, perhaps illustrating drinking sets.⁴² A series of large spouted bowls may specifically depict preparations for feasting and drinking. On almost all examples a figure is shown pounding a substance in a mortar beside three or four figures grinding at a bench.⁴³ The presence of a multiple grinding facility of this type together with two elaborate stone mortars in what is believed to be a non-domestic building at Sotira⁴⁴ is the first indication we have for ritual or ceremonial activity associated with a special-purpose structure from any settlement of the prehistoric Bronze Age on the island. The size range of cooking pots from Marki, some of which have a capacity of over 16 litres, also suggests at least occasional preparation of meals beyond normal domestic requirements (Pl. LXa).⁴⁵

Turning again to the burial record, a comparison of assemblages from Early Cypriot I–II and Early Cypriot III–Middle Cypriot I tombs at Bellapais *Vounous* suggests changes in consumption practices and in the use of particular vessel types as agents of social competition (Pl. LXb).⁴⁶ Most significant are an increase in the number of small bowls (from 37.4% to almost 50%) and juglets and a decrease in the number of jugs. This shift from jugs to juglets amounts to a marked reduction in the size of vessels associated with the pouring of liquids. In addition, earlug pots, tulip bowls and earlier types of cult vessels have disappeared, and new complex vessels, comprised of multiple bowls or juglets,⁴⁷ make an impressive appearance.

Cypriote Stone Sculpture. Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Cypriote Studies Brussels-Liège, 17–19 May, 1993 (1994) 37–42; KESWANI (*supra* n. 6) 56–58.

40 Ceramic imports include GRACE (*supra* n. 7); STEWART (*supra* n. 7); STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7) 237, pl. XCIVa; J.F. ROSS, "The Vounous jars revisited," *BASOR* 296 (1994) 15–30.

41 V. KARAGEORGHIS, "Cypriote Antiquities Repatriated," *RDAC* (2002) 69–75, figs 1–5, 7; P. FLOURENTZOS, "Recent Rare Finds Related to the Cult and Everyday Life in Early/Middle Bronze Age Cyprus," in A. KYRIATSOULIS (ed.), *Kreta und Zypern. Religion und Schrift* (2001) 159–166.

42 KARAGEORGHIS (*supra* n. 33) 106, Ha.1–2, pl. LIX.1–2.

43 KARAGEORGHIS (*supra* n. 33) 117–120, SC1, SC3, SC4–SC6, SC8, pls LXV–LXVII, LXIX–LXXVII, LXXVIII–LXXIX.

44 S. SWINY, "Of Cows, Copper, Corners and Cult: the Emergence of the Cypriot Bronze Age," *Near Eastern Archaeology* (2008).

45 On cooking pots from Marki see WEBB and FRANKEL (*supra* n. 6, 2006) 133–137, figs 4.46–4.47, pls 46–47; J.M. WEBB and D. FRANKEL, "Prehistoric Cooking Pots from Cyprus," *Ceramics Technical* 19 (2004) 91–96. On the importance of the relative size and number of cooking pots and serving vessels as archaeological indicators of feasting see M.J. CLARKE, "Akha Feasting. An Ethnoarchaeological Perspective," in DIETLER and HAYDEN (*supra* n. 37) 158–162 and W.R. DEBOER, "The Big Drink: Feast and Forum in the Upper Amazon," in DIETLER and HAYDEN (*supra* n. 37) esp. 223–229.

46 Plate 8 is drawn from Early Cypriot III and Middle Cypriot I tomb assemblages from Bellapais *Vounous* Site B, as reported in STEWART and STEWART (*supra* n. 7) and DUNN-VATURI (*supra* n. 7). DIKAIOS (*supra* n. 7) does not contain full lists of vessels from each tomb.

47 Eg. DUNN-VATURI (*supra* n. 7) pls XX (Tomb 56.27), XXX (Tomb 59.3), XCI (Tomb 72.64), C (Tomb 76.17); DIKAIOS (*supra* n. 7) pls XIVa, XXXI, XXXII.b–d.

This investment in 'promotional technologies',⁴⁸ that is in non-utilitarian vessels which were subsequently 'destroyed' by burial within the tomb rather than recycled or exchanged, suggests a continuing emphasis on costly and elaborate funerary ceremonial in north coast cemeteries in Early Cypriot III.

While small bowls increased in quantity there is, however, a decrease in the number of bowl forms, in the incidence of decorated bowls and in the range and complexity of decorative motifs. The majority of small bowls are now plain and incised designs, when they occur on small bowls and juglets, are more standardised (with a preference for the net pattern and hatched lozenges), suggesting an increasingly formulaic kind of communication and a decrease in the role played by small bowls, in particular, in individualised social confrontation.⁴⁹ Elaborate incised, modelled, relief and pictorial decoration is now reserved primarily for jugs and complex vessels. These more elaborate vessels are broadly distributed,⁵⁰ suggesting that they were part of a widely shared symbolic system and used in drinking/eating events that were practiced across the *Vounous* cemetery.

The increase in the number of small bowls may indicate participation by a larger number of people in funerary ceremonies in Early Cypriot III. The decreased emphasis on individually marked serving vessels and their increasing standardisation also suggest a move from qualitative to quantitative selection criteria. This may reflect a shift in the focus of identity negotiation from individuals to sub-groups or more corporate entities. Such a trajectory toward the assertion of authority by sub-groups on the north coast becomes increasingly visible in displays of metal wealth at Lapithos by EC III and is perhaps reflected in the famous *Vounous* Model, of Early Cypriot III or Middle Cypriot I date, which has been interpreted most recently⁵¹ as depicting an idealised social order which attempts to legitimise a hierarchical construction of authority.

The elaboration of liquid storage vessels (perhaps now used for wine?) suggests, further, that the display of agricultural surpluses played an increasingly important part in burial ritual. The investment, also, in elaborate multiple vessels may reflect more formalised ritual practices, perhaps involving libation or offerings rather than simple shared consumption. Animal bones are present in most tomb chambers, though not in the same quantities as in Early Cypriot I-II.

Conclusion

In many non-stratified societies alcoholic beverages such as wine and beer form an important part of competitive feasting and other power-diffusing mechanisms.⁵² In the case of Early Bronze Age Cyprus the socio-cultural context of food and alcohol consumption may initially, that is during the *Philia* period, have been more important than control over production, storage and exchange, with commensality serving as a mechanism of social stability and a means of diffusing differences through a celebration of common values and heritage rather than providing an opportunity for display and negotiation. The social ritual of communal drinking in the *Philia*, suggested in particular for mortuary contexts by the predominance of cutaway-spouted jugs, fine ware amphorae and small bowls and the absence of food presentation bowls and animal remains, appears to have been a behaviourally and socially static practice designed to promote a shared identity and maintain rather than transform the socio-political order.

48 B. HAYDEN, "Pathways to Power. Principles for Creating Socioeconomic Inequalities," in PRICE and FEINMAN (*supra* n. 31) 67-68; B. HAYDEN, "The Emergence of Prestige Technologies and Pottery," in W. BARNETT and J.W. HOOPES (eds), *Emergence of Pottery* (1995) 257-266; B. HAYDEN, "Practical and Prestige Technologies: The Evolution of Material Systems," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 5 (1998) 1-55.

49 A similar phenomenon is noted for Early Minoan IIB by P. DAY and D. WILSON, "Ceramic Change and the Practice of Eating and Drinking in Early Bronze Age Crete," in *Food, Cuisine and Society*, 53-54.

50 KESWANI (*supra* n. 7) 64, Tables 4.7b-c.

51 E. PELTENBURG, "Constructing Authority: The *Vounous* Enclosure Model," *OpAth* XX (1994) 157-162. See also MANNING (*supra* n. 1) 45-46.

52 A.H. JOFFE, "Alcohol and Social Complexity in Ancient Western Asia," *Current Anthropology* 39 (1998) 297-322; SHERRAT (*supra* n. 22).

Such integrative feasts⁵³ bind people together in various intersecting groups and provide opportunities for the movement of marriage partners and other goods; and are likely to have played a particularly important role in integrating and sustaining small, widely dispersed incursive Philia communities.

This was not, however, the case on the north coast during Early Cypriot I and II where feasting residues, at least in the context of death and burial, reflect the use of more elaborate, more symbolically complex and more individualised drinking equipment and the conspicuous consumption of meat, and in particular of beef. They suggest that in this part of the island mortuary feasting served as a vehicle for competitive intra-group display and for the promotion and negotiation of identity among and between social groups during a period of intense social transformation.

Contemporary communities in the centre and south of the island appear to have been subject to much lower levels of social pressure and competition. There is little here to suggest that funerary consumption was a particular context for ideological exchange. Neither the tombs themselves nor the vessels used in funerary ceremonies appear to have served as vehicles for expressing or claiming prestige and negotiating social status.

The dynamic eating and drinking practices performed in connection with death and burial among north coast communities in Early Cypriot I-II continued, however, at *Vounous* in Early Cypriot III and spread at this time across the rest of the island. The increased focus on juglets suggests the consumption of alcohol in smaller quantities and may reflect an increase in the importance of wine over beer (a suggestion independently supported by the iconographic evidence) or the consumption of alcohol among smaller-scale interaction groups. In any case feasting and feasting equipment now appear to have served as a means of negotiating and defining authority and power relationships across the island. This is likely to have been related to widespread improvements in household economic security, which provided the sustained agricultural surpluses required for conspicuous feasting to become embedded social practice.⁵⁴

Cycles of production, circulation and consumption of elaborate pottery are frequently connected with the development of larger settlements and the struggle to manipulate social and economic power.⁵⁵ The evidence for widespread participation in mortuary feasting at *Vounous* through Early Cypriot I to III and the absence of concentrations of prestige ceramics in particular tombs suggest that the communities involved were still decentralised, with relationships governed by kinship and personal interactions rather than more formally established or ascribed hereditary institutions. Feasting, throughout this period, appears to have been especially performed in contexts designed to promote connections with ancestors and validate competing claims to authority among still weakly stratified social groups.

This changing pattern of consumption behaviour in Early Bronze Age Cyprus is best understood against a background of population growth and expanding settlement size, which provides a framework for understanding the breakdown of the widespread, horizontally integrated Philia system and the development of regional diversity in Early Cypriot I and II. At the same time significant differences between the north coast and south-central regions in Early Cypriot I and II clearly indicate that the trajectory toward more fluid, vertical relationships of alliance and obligation was neither unilinear nor universal but is characterised rather by shifts in geographical focus and cycles of intense internal competition which we are only just beginning to understand.

Jennifer M. WEBB and David FRANKEL

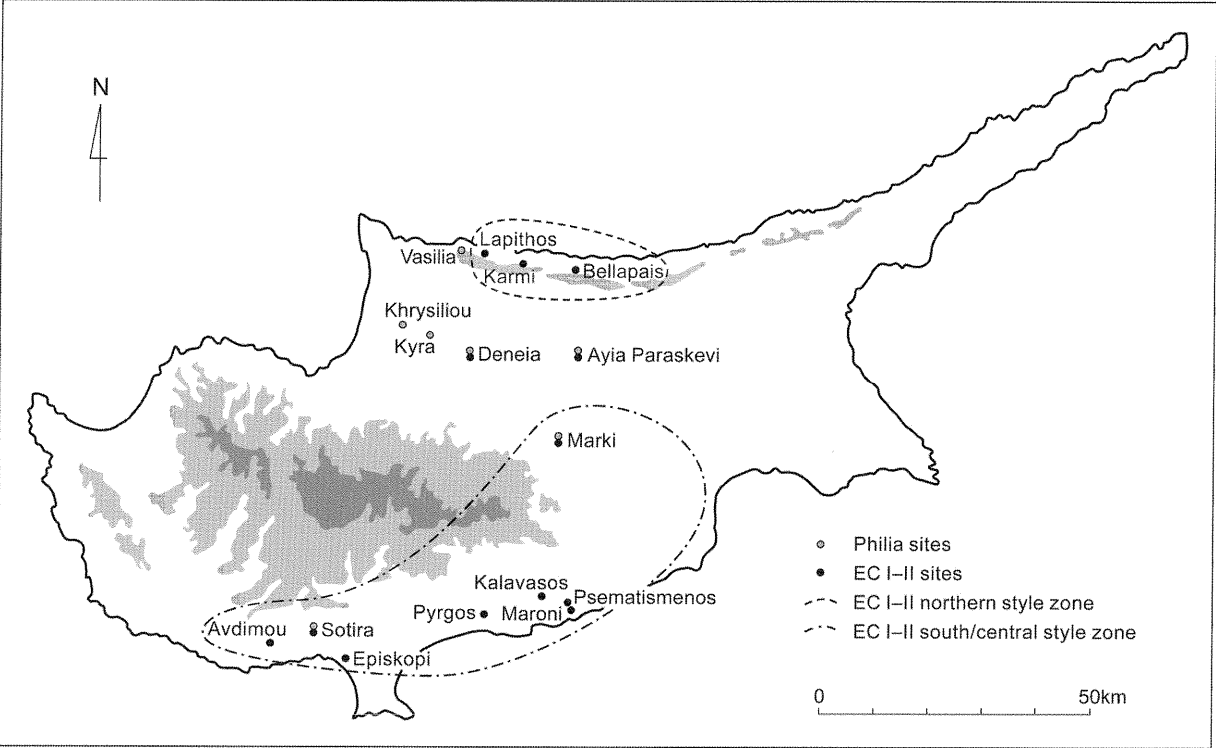
53 On integrative or 'alliance and cooperation' feasts see HAYDEN (*supra* n. 37) 35-39, fig. 2.1; M. DIETLER, "Theorizing the feast. Rituals of Consumption, Commensal Politics, and Power in African Contexts," in DIETLER and HAYDEN (*supra* n. 37) 68-69; J.M. POTTER, "Pots, Parties, and Politics: Commensal Feasting in the American Southwest," *AmerAnt* 65 (2000) 471-492.

54 On the importance of abundance in determining feasting strategies see P. WEISSNER, "Of Feasting and Value: Enga Feasts in a Historical Perspective," in DIETLER and HAYDEN (*supra* n. 37) 117; DIETLER (*supra* n. 53) 80-82; HAYDEN (*supra* n. 37) 26-27.

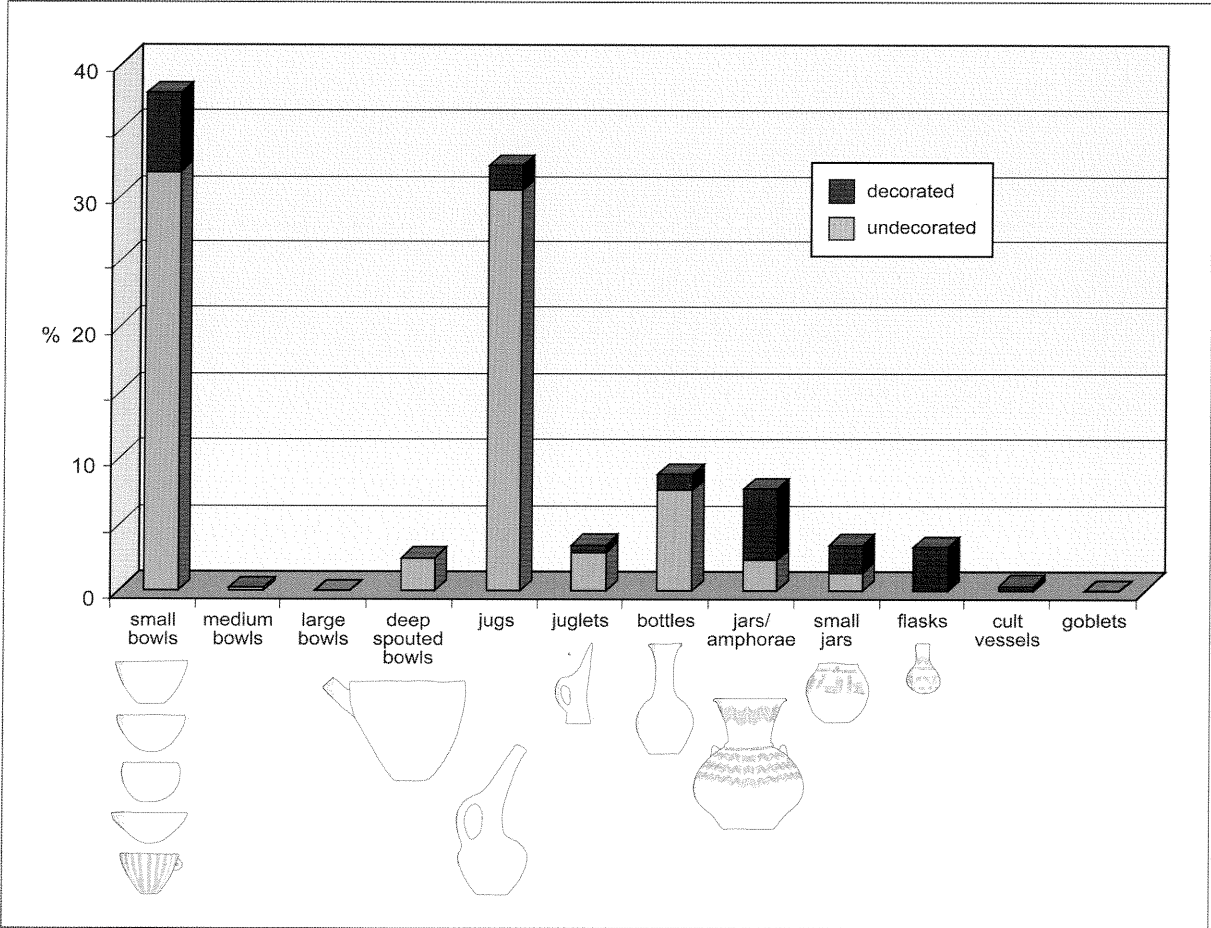
55 BORGNA (*supra* n. 30) 174-195.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

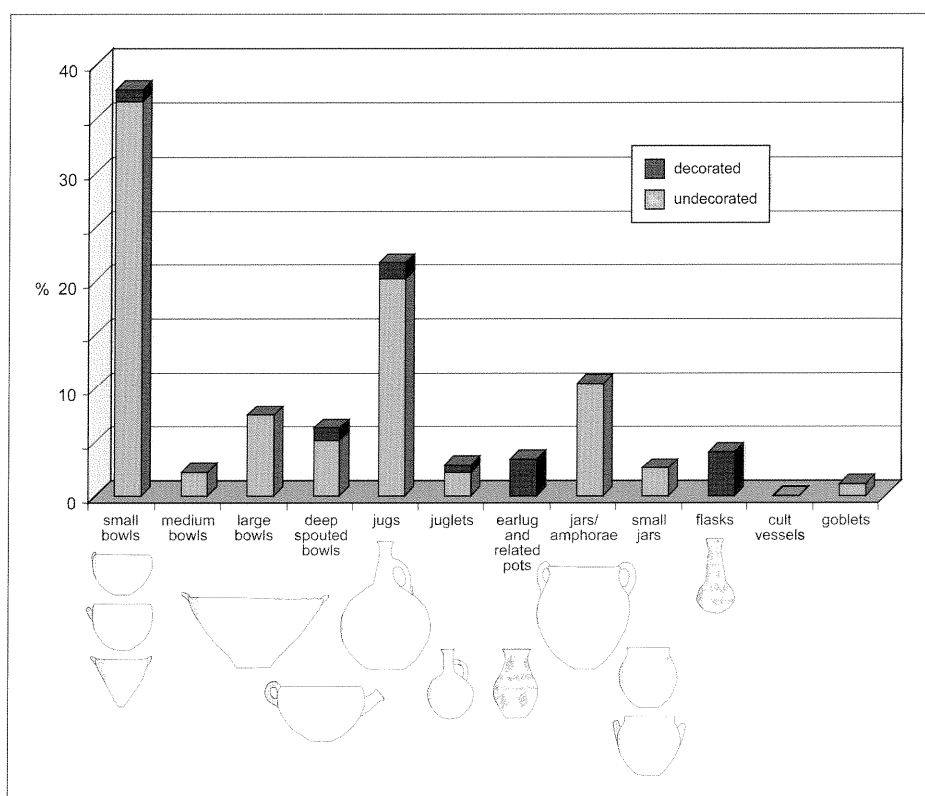
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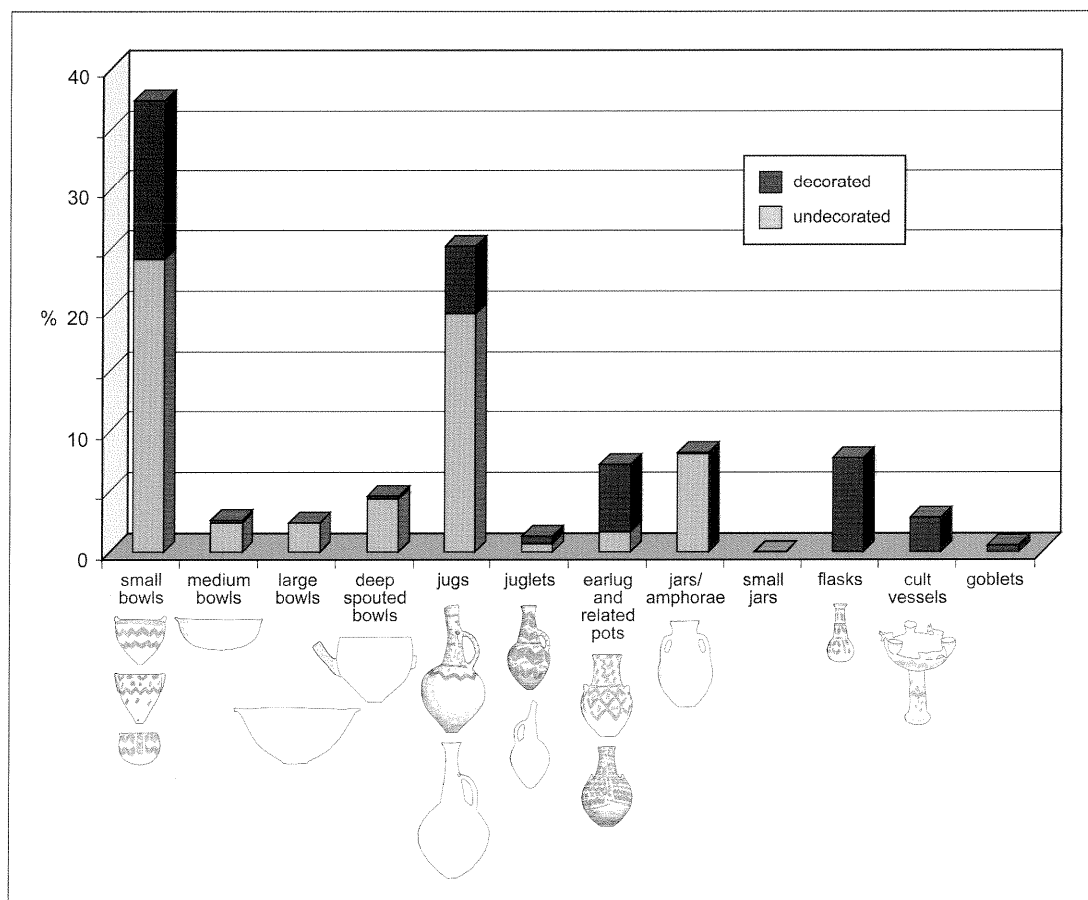
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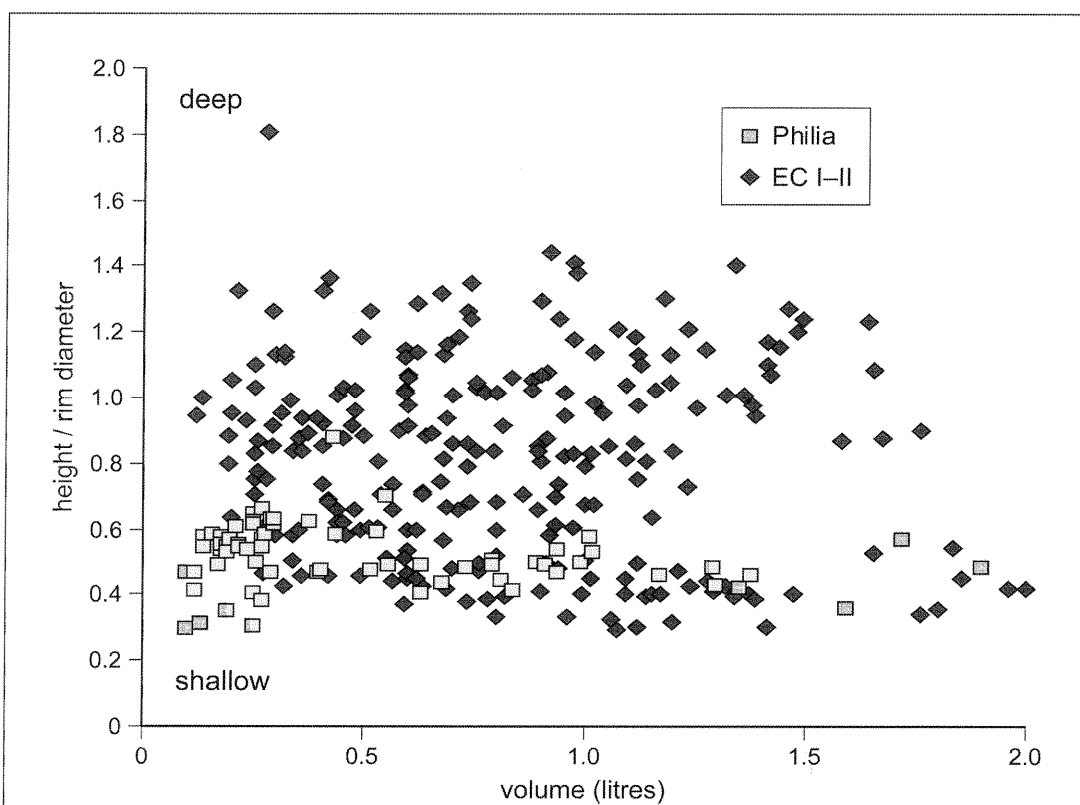
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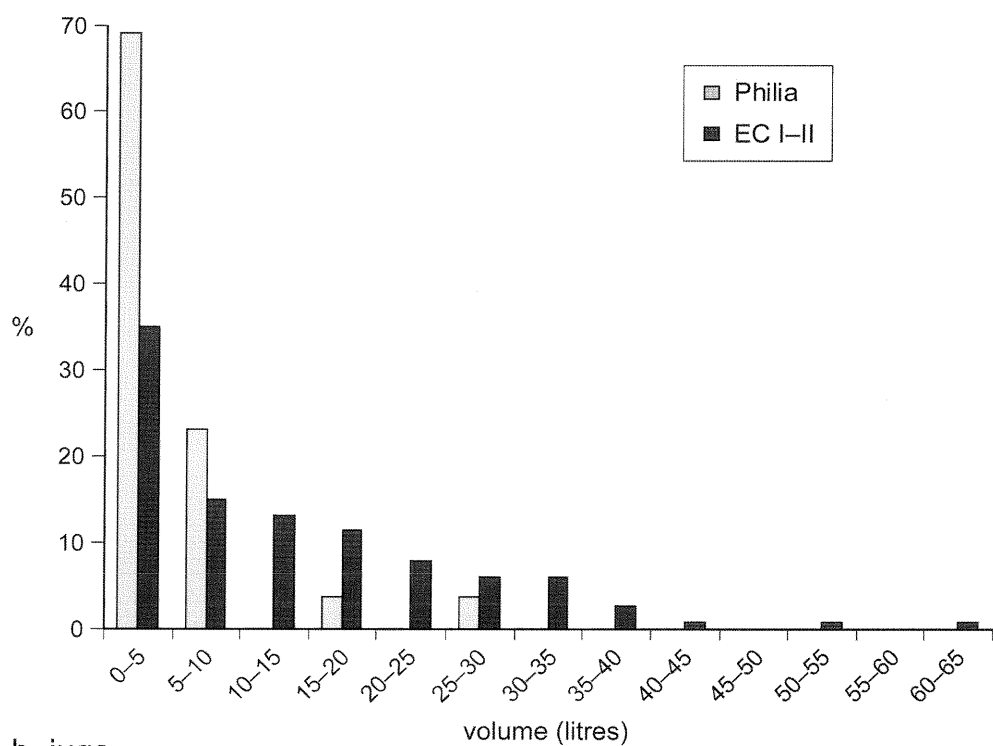
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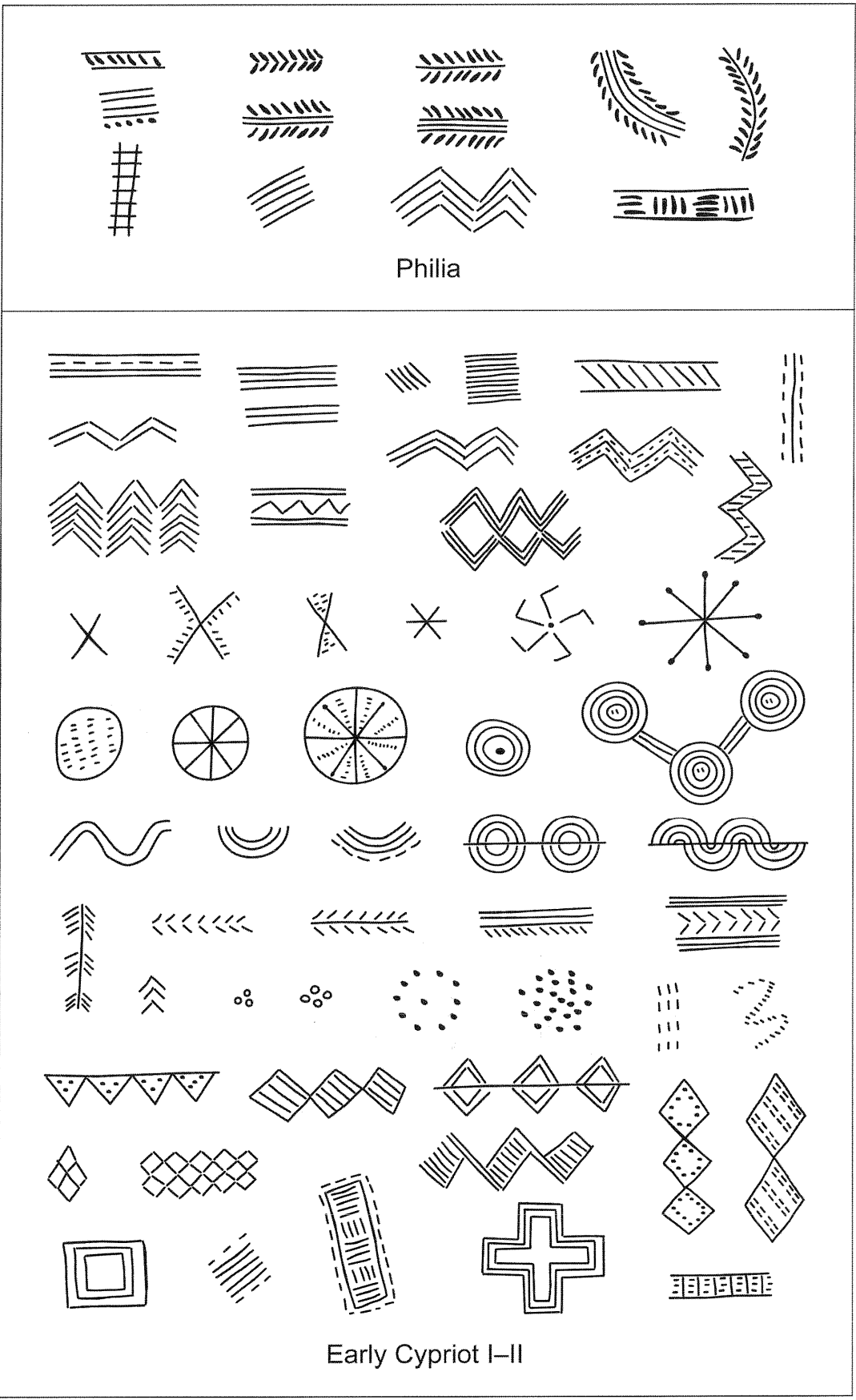
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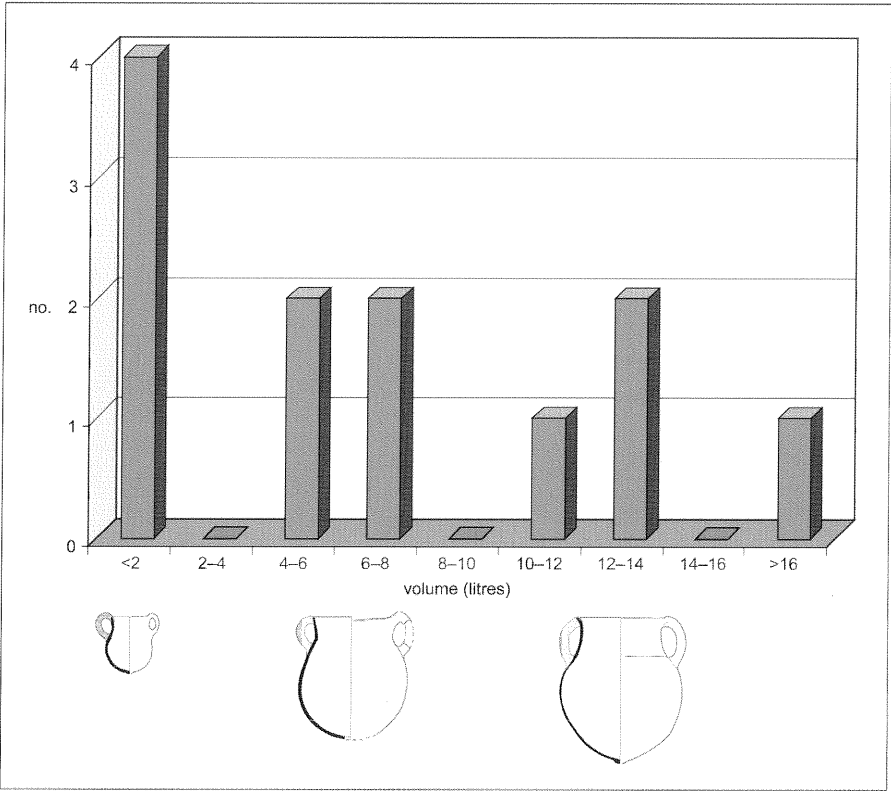


a. small bowls

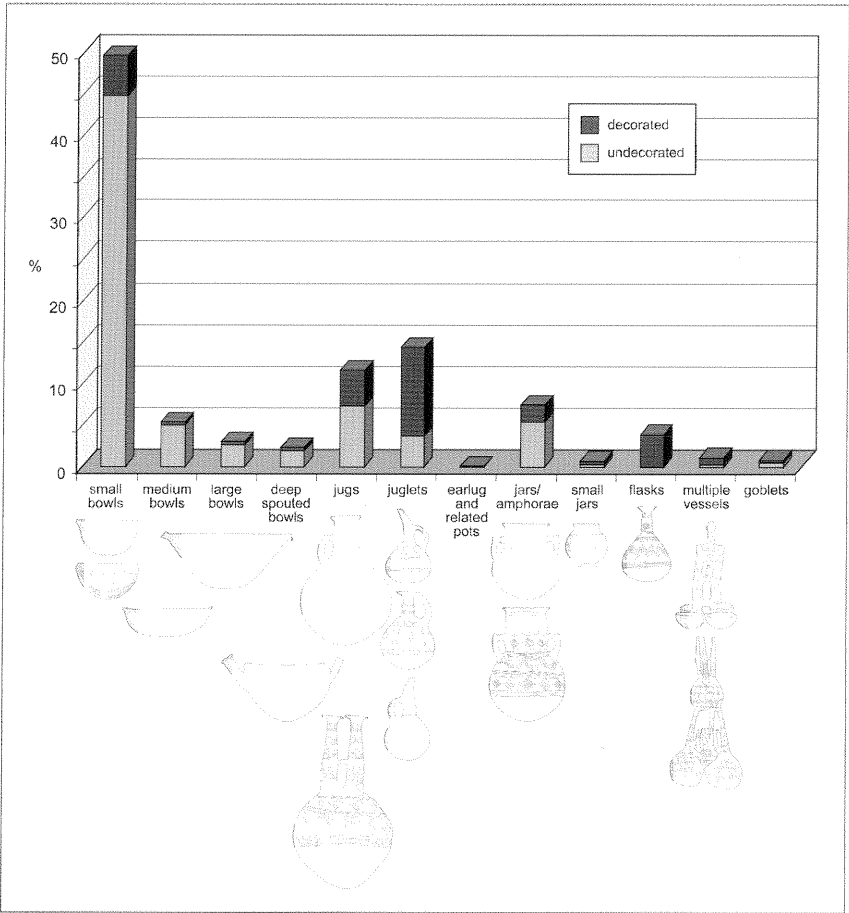


b. jugs





a



b