

THE COMPLEX PAST OF POTTERY

PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION AND CONSUMPTION OF MYCENAEAN AND GREEK POTTERY

(sixteenth to early fifth centuries BC)

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E pur si muove:
**pots, markets and values in the second millennium
Mediterranean¹**

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Thanks to its relentless lack of bio-degradability, pottery is a dominating fact of life in Mediterranean archaeology. Field surveys depend on it, excavation reports owe their bulk to it. It consumes endless resources and work hours in recovery, storage, recording, conservation, classification, analysis and interpretation, and has its own specialist languages and exclusive mystiques. It is the primary building block of chronological frameworks, and it dominates our reading of the archaeological record of inter-regional relationships in general. The movement of pottery is one of the striking features of early Mediterranean activity as reflected in the archaeological record. But was it really an important item of inter-regional exchange -- or are we simply misled by its prominence in the surviving material remains? And

¹ This paper is a much abridged version of a very long, rather over-ambitious paper written five years ago. It was an attempt to work out a sensible role for long-distance trade in pottery within the context of debates about ancient trade in general, which -- in the Aegean at least -- have often taken the form of a somewhat unproductive confrontation between substantivist and formalist views of second millennium economies (*cf.* most recently on this Sjöberg 1995). As will probably be apparent, the paper was stimulated by reaction to some of the more extreme expressions of "primitivism", in which any serious economic role for trade is denied and the only possible explanation for the long-distance movement of pottery is reduced to one of undocumented gift-exchange. It builds on the model of ancient trade set out in Sherratt & Sherratt 1991, and its original elaboration owes much to prolonged exchange with Andrew Sherratt and Bernard Knapp as well as to the work of Michael Vickers and Michal Artzy. I thank both Andrew Sherratt and Michael Vickers for their helpful comments on this final version. I am grateful to Helen Whitehouse for permission to reproduce fig. 5.

I am extremely grateful to the organisers, Jan Paul Crielaard, Vladimir Stissi and Gert Jan van Wijngaarden, for the opportunity to participate in the colloquium and for their hospitality, and to these as well as other participants for much stimulating discussion throughout its duration. I should also thank Joost Crouwel for his unfailing ability to remind me from time to time that I really quite like pottery after all.

if it was not an especially important item, why did it apparently move in such quantities?

E pur si muove: and yet it does (or rather did) move.² To ask why it should have done so is to raise fundamental questions about the nature of ancient trade, and about the concepts of value which we apply to ancient artefacts and the motivations for their transfer between producers and consumers. This paper is an attempt to suggest how pottery can be fitted into wider patterns of exchange, both of materials, finished goods and ideas, by examining the role of pottery in second millennium inter-regional relations.

Pots, trade and colonisation

Pottery has always played a very large part in our attempts to trace relationships between the Aegean and other areas of the Mediterranean. But the interpretation of these relationships, and the role that pottery played in them, have often been quite hotly disputed, reflecting conflicting views of what similarities in pottery wares or styles represent in terms of the movement of pots, peoples, or vaguer 'influences'. Before the 1960's it was not always possible to distinguish for certain between the physical movement of pots and the spread by some other mechanism of ceramic wares and styles, and explanations offered tended to reflect this uncertainty. For Arthur Evans, for instance, the discovery of Aegean pottery outside the Aegean was proof of a Minoan 'thalassocracy' -- an amalgam of colonisation and trading monopoly, which was derived ostensibly from the tradition recorded by Thucydides, but mediated in the first place through Thucydides' barely concealed concern to produce an historical precedent for a fifth century Athenian politico-military thalassocracy, and in the second place through the roll-up of 'flag and trade' provided by British mercantile colonialism.³ In the same way, for A.J.B. Wace and C.W. Blegen the relationship documented by the Late Bronze Age Aegean pottery found in the east and central Mediterranean was one of trade accompanied by colonisation -- though with Mycenaeans rather

² Galileo's attributed response to the pre-Copernican minimalists of the Inquisition.

³ Evans 1921, ch. 1; cf. Caskey 1969; Schofield 1984.

than Minoans playing the leading role.⁴ In 1947 Helene Kantor also saw Aegean pottery as evidence for trading domination combined with the physical settlement of Aegeans, either as full-scale colonials or as "merchant settlers".⁵

Within this broad consensus of view in the pre-war and early post-war period, one can nevertheless detect a certain amount of tension in the interpretation of how transfer of, for instance, Mycenaean pottery to Cyprus or the Levant actually came about. Pottery found outside its usual cultural environment either arrived by means of trade (a concept so familiar to European scholars that it needed no examination), or it arrived as the personal possessions or as part of the cultural baggage of people who had themselves been temporarily or permanently transported from one environment to another, either as 'traders' or as 'migrants'. By and large, those who had least difficulty in accepting pottery as a normal object of trade in the Aegean and east Mediterranean were often schooled in a Classical and art historical tradition in which pots (or rather 'vases') were seen essentially as art objects: expensive luxuries and desirable status symbols to the ancients who acquired them, just as they were to the eighteenth and nineteenth century collectors of Graeco-Roman antiquities, who had more than a little to do with the creation and fostering of this way of looking at them, as Michael Vickers has pointed out.⁶ On the other hand, those who had greater difficulty in seeing pottery in general as an automatically desirable object of trade⁷ were often scholars with a background in European prehistory, who were inclined to see pottery as a primarily ethno-cultural indicator, whose spread was effected either

⁴ Wace & Blegen 1939, 12-3.

⁵ Kantor 1947; cf. Sjöqvist 1940, 92-7; Schaeffer 1936; 1973.

⁶ Vickers 1987; Vickers & Gill 1994, ch. 1.

⁷ Cf. Wace & Blegen (1939, 14): "...Even in the earliest periods there was undoubtedly a certain amount of interchange of pottery among the various (...) centres. How this interchange of pottery was effected is a problem which has been considerably discussed. One suggestion is that this was due to some kind of trade, another that it was the result of plunder. Still when it is realised that the pottery so found is not of the best quality and indeed is often of very poor fabric, one must recognise that such vases neither could be commercial objects of sufficient importance to run the risks of travel in early days in view of their fragility nor would be in the least likely to attract looters. They thus were presumably imported for the sake of their contents or were casual imports, part of the movables of travellers, visitors, or perhaps merchants".

through personal mobility or the transplantation of an inherited folk tradition through the migration of populations. It is no coincidence that both outlooks should have flourished uneasily side by side, sometimes in one and the same scholar, above all in the archaeology of the second millennium Aegean and Cyprus, where the meeting of Classical and prehistoric scholarship engendered a certain ambivalence towards the interpretation of pottery. The model of the mercantile empire or thalassocracy, in which both trade *and* colonials or merchant settlers could be neatly combined, was by way of a very nearly perfect solution to this conceptual tension.

Over the last thirty years or so, this tension has persisted and resurfaced in a variety of new forms. In the 1960's and 1970's the international repudiation of colonial and economic imperialism, particularly in such sensitive areas as the Near East, induced a climate of distaste and suspicion for the mercantile empire model, and paved the way for critical re-examination both of the contemporary assumptions on which ideas of thalassocracy were based, and of those aspects of the archaeological record to which they had become attached. The growing possibility of using scientific techniques to determine provenance,⁸ as well as the excavation of Late Bronze Age cargo-carrying wrecks, such as that at Gelidonya, directed attention to new ways of approaching patterns of trade in the eastern half of the Mediterranean.⁹ This began to expose the inherent tension between interpretations of pottery primarily as evidence *either* of trade *or* of migration (whether in the form of political colonists, refugees, individual expatriate merchants or whatever); and the eastern Mediterranean Late Bronze Age has since seen the kinds of arguments being fought out in prehistory as a whole, between autonomy, migration and diffusion.

While the arguments of processual archaeologists have had some success in exorcising the *Volksgeist* from pottery which clay analysis can now clearly show to have been imported, the effect of this has been to throw an even greater weight of emphasis on inter-regional trade in pottery. There is now little doubt, for instance, that much of the large quantity of Mycenaean pottery from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries found in Cyprus and the Levant was (as Gjerstad originally

⁸ Catling & Millett 1965.

⁹ Cf. e.g. Bass 1967; 1991; Merrillees 1968; 1974; Yannai 1983.

suggested¹⁰) made on the Greek mainland, and particularly in the Argolid;¹¹ and few would now maintain that it was regularly transported as a kind of cultural comfort-blanket to console expatriates who thought of themselves as stranded far from the civilised life of home. All the same, the same kind of uneasiness which has led to rejection of the idea that pottery is of such over-riding cultural importance and specificity that it acts as an index of the linguistic and ethnic identity of its users has also succeeded in undermining any surviving remnants of the old confidence concerning its natural importance in trade.¹² Unable to believe any longer that such humble artefacts, however prettily decorated, travelled long distances as desirable objects in their own right to be exchanged for essential goods like Cypriot copper, for instance, those assailed by such misgivings currently seek refuge in the idea of pots as secondary accompaniments for real cargoes: necessary containers for perfumed oils or wines; or saleable ballast and space-fillers as a source of minor profits for shippers or crews.¹³ From being the key to everything, pottery thus becomes an incidental and largely irrelevant accompaniment to more important transfers of materials.

For the second millennium, therefore, a new configuration of tensions is now apparent. Trade in pottery has on the one hand received greater emphasis; and on the other its importance has begun to be questioned. At the same time (and partly because of this), elements of *Volksgeist* linger: in the movement of non-container shapes which are sometimes still taken as evidence for forms of contact or settlement other than trade, as in occasional suggestions that the presence of Mycenaean kylikes at Troy indicates the relics of a besieging army or the seasonal presence of fishermen exploiting the tunny run through the Dardanelles.¹⁴ It lingers most explicitly, though, in the transfer to local production of 'foreign' wares and types, which is still often treated as archaeological proof of immigration. In the case of the pottery of Aegean type produced in Cyprus and the Levant in the later thirteenth and twelfth centuries, this interpretation arises not only from traditional

¹⁰ Gjerstad 1926, 218-20.

¹¹ Jones & Catling 1986; French 1991; French, Hoffman & Robinson 1993.

¹² Vickers 1985; Gill 1988.

¹³ Gill 1988; 1991.

¹⁴ E.g. Taplin 1986; Mee 1984.

narrative accounts of invasions and destructions, migrations and refugees, but is also based on an identification of the boundaries of material culture with those of language or a generally undefined concept of 'ethnicity' as some sort of constant. In this way, particular pot shapes not demonstrably useful as travelling containers are regarded as exclusively 'Mycenaean', in the sense that only Greek-speaking people with an ancestry in the Mycenaean heartland could possibly have inherited a cultural use for such pots or the incentive and ability to produce them.¹⁵

The alternative to this is a conception of the role of pottery which avoids both forced subservience to an essentially factoidal historical narrative¹⁶ and inbuilt ethnic attributions, but at the same time recognises its potential economic as well as social and cultural¹⁷ significance. The economic importance of pottery can only be understood within the context of the incentives both to production and consumption. Specialisation in the production of certain types of manufactured goods such as pottery for overseas exchange is a specific form of economic development, and consideration of the economic and social needs of the supply side is crucial in understanding why such goods achieved a wide distribution outside their home area. One side of the equation is thus the question of economic rationale. Nevertheless, the cultural context of local consumption --and the cultural values accorded to imported goods such as pottery-- also have to be considered; and perceptions of such goods will differ according to the nature of the society receiving them. Both aspects need to be included in the account. It would be a mistake, in other words, to create an opposition between "trade" and "cultural interaction", for the material exchanges took place within a setting which inevitably also included the

¹⁵ The old *Volksgeist* assumptions may also to some extent have been reinforced in more recent years by unconscious misapplication to industrially produced pottery of the principle of the "whispering potsherd" (Flannery 1976, 251-3): the idea of pottery-making as a skill handed on primarily within a genetic relationship -- in other words, for instance, that only true-bred Mycenaeans (Greek-speakers born or with an ancestry in the Aegean) can make Mycenaean pottery. Cf. Sherratt 1991.

¹⁶ Cf. Maier 1986.

¹⁷ "Cultural" in the sense of material culture and practices instilled (but not co-terminous) with negotiable and potentially fluid systems of social values and beliefs. This is quite different from the sense in which the word is sometimes still used by archaeologists -- as a surrogate for supposed ethnic (and often geographically defined) identity based typically on linguistic and racial considerations.

practices, ideas and aspirations of people. The advantage of an economic analysis is that it can reveal the logic behind such interactive patterns, and suggest why pottery in particular came to play such an important part in these exchanges; but in order to see how it worked this must still be set within a cultural context.

Pots, trade and the Bronze Age economy

So far, I have talked about trade as though it can still be taken for granted as an important component of inter-regional intercourse in the eastern Mediterranean of the second millennium, as it was in the days of Evans. But that, of course, is far from the case. Indeed, certain extreme minimalist views, such as those of Anthony Snodgrass, would not only deny inter-regional trade any integral role in the formation and maintenance of the urbanised palatial societies of the Aegean, but would argue that external trade, in any sense other than that of the direct exchange of gifts between individuals at the highest social level, could hardly be said to exist.¹⁸ There are many problems with this view, but one of the most intractable is that of accommodating the evidence of the inter-regional movement of pottery -- a class of material which figures not at all in documented examples of gift-exchange. Since most minimalists are by virtual definition cultural autonomists, and thus equally hostile to any simple equation between transportation and transplantation of pottery and the migration of human populations, there is something of an impasse. The best one can do in these circumstances is fall back on the notion that Aegean, or for that matter Cypriot, pots were sufficiently prized as craft goods outside their regular areas of manufacture and usage to figure fairly regularly in direct personal and socially directed high-level exchange of an undocumented nature -- the one form of elite gift exchange over which the ancients in general preserve a total and stony silence.

Even a cursory glance at the known corpus of Aegean pottery in the east Mediterranean reveals two things (table 1, presented at the end of the article). First that it was moving in impressively large quantities, particularly in the case of Late Helladic IIIA-B pottery in Cyprus. At Hala Sultan Tekke, for instance, where the excavators have made a

¹⁸ *E.g.* Snodgrass 1991.

sustained effort to distinguish imported Late Helladic (and Late Minoan) IIIA-B pottery from the locally produced White Painted Wheelmade III, there are over 4,300 pieces of imported pottery from the published trenches alone -- that is, from only a part of the excavated area, itself only a very small part of the whole site.¹⁹ And even a glance at the map shown in figure 1, compiled by Marco Pacci almost ten years ago,²⁰ shows the extent to which imported pottery of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries penetrated the countryside of the island as a whole. There is no area of the island, apart from the higher reaches of the Troodos mountains, which is not covered; and scarcely a cluster of tombs or settlement known from surface survey which has not produced imported sherds.

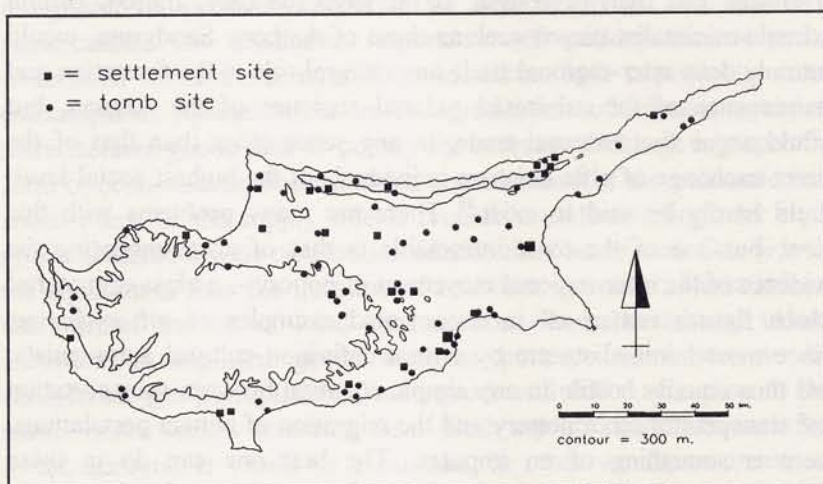


Figure 1. Late Helladic IIIA-B pottery in Cyprus (after Pacci 1986).

The other thing we notice is that it is by no means merely, or even foremost, a question of containers which might be regarded as travelling on account of their contents. As far as Aegean pottery in the east Mediterranean is concerned, non-container vessels such as cups, bowls and wide-mouthed jugs rank high among the earliest Middle Minoan and early Late Helladic/Minoan pots to turn up in Egypt, the Levant and Cyprus (table 1); and much the same picture obtains in the

¹⁹ Figures compiled from P. Åström *et al.* 1976-89; cf. Sherratt 1998, 296 n. 8.

²⁰ Pacci 1986, 342; cf. also Catling 1980, 17.

other main areas (the Troad and the central Mediterranean) which received Aegean pottery imports from early in the Late Bronze Age.²¹ And while in all three of these areas the number of imported Aegean containers seems to increase during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, the proportion of non-container vessels remains considerable: perhaps as much as 30% in Cyprus,²² and around 40% in the Levant.²³ In the case of Cypriot pottery exported to the Levant in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, the emphasis on types other than containers is if anything even greater.²⁴ Interestingly, the main exceptions to this pattern are found in New Kingdom Egypt, particularly in the immediate post-Amarna period, and in Hittite Anatolia, where imported Aegean and Cypriot pottery is generally very much rarer and, when it does occur, consists almost exclusively of container shapes.²⁵ This, I believe,

²¹ Mee 1984; Re 1986; Marazzi & Re 1986; Taylour 1958.

²² See e.g. the figures from certain excavated areas of Hala Sultan Tekke in P. Åström *et al.* 1976-89 vol. 6, 25; vol. 8, 35 (*cf.* above, n. 18).

²³ Figures taken from Leonard 1994. In the Levant, however, the total of imported Late Helladic IIIA-B pottery is probably considerably lower than on Cyprus. Leonard, for instance, lists a total of only 2,000, though unpublished sherd material from Ugarit and Tell Abu Hawam is likely to bump up the total somewhat (*cf.* also Gilmour 1992, 116).

²⁴ See Gittlen 1981. Gittlen's view that such imports came to an end during Late Bronze IIA in Palestine is not shared by others (*cf.* e.g. Artzy 1985 b), though they seem to have diminished somewhat during the thirteenth century. This may have been because Cypriot-made ware of Aegean type began to replace them, particularly during the later part of the thirteenth century; or it may have been due to political factors (*cf.* Weinstein 1981 for the relative economic autonomy allowed to Palestinian centres by the Egyptian authorities especially during Late Bronze IIA). Political factors may also have been responsible for the comparative lack of thirteenth century Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery in the Orontes valley (*cf.* Cline 1994, 73).

²⁵ For Cypriot pottery in Egypt, see Merrillees 1968; 1975; *cf.* Gittlen 1981, fig. 3; and for LH IIIA-B, Hankey 1993, 112; *cf.* Cadogan 1973, 169-70. Aegean non-container types such as kylikes, cups, bowls and kraters do show an uncharacteristic flurry of representation at Amarna and one or two other sites during the reign of Akhenaten, however (Hankey 1973, fig. 1; *cf.* Merrillees 1973). For the distribution of fourteenth to thirteenth century Aegean pottery in the Hittite controlled areas of Anatolia, see Mee 1978; Re 1986; *cf.* Cline 1994, 68; Sherratt & Crouwel 1987, 345. Up to date detailed information about Cypriot pottery in the Hittite heartland is less readily accessible, but see Åström 1972 for a clear indication of the marked scarcity of White Slip and Base Ring bowls. There is a very little White Slip at Masat and Boghazköy (see Cline 1991 2-3 n. 4 with references; *cf.* Knapp & Cherry 1994, 44), while at Tarsus, where only five White Slip bowls were recovered, the

tells us much about the entrepreneurial, decentralised way in which such pottery was marketed, and the perceived implications this had for the continued exercise of politico-economic and social control by those states whose established power rested most strongly on principles of tight centralisation. In other words, I suspect that such pottery was being deliberately excluded from these areas -- less for its own sake than because of what its large-scale marketing represented, and particularly because of the social and political risks posed by the movement of other, more socially and economically significant goods and materials along the same decentralised channels.²⁶ It is a question to which I shall return below in connection with the Mycenaean palaces.

It looks then, at least as far as Cyprus and the Levant are concerned, as though we are dealing with a movement of pottery as a category of object in its own right, rather than simply as containers; and from now on this paper will be concerned essentially with pots which may be regarded in this way rather than with those which may be deemed to have acted primarily as packaging for other commodities.²⁷ That leaves us with the possibility of ballast, which I shall leave aside for the moment -- remarking only in passing that the very notion of exchangeable ballast, with its potential for opportunistic enhancement of the marginal value of a cargo, has already taken us a long way from the idea of straightforward gift-exchange in which the carrier acts as a mere messenger between the principals involved.

Before looking more closely at the nature of pottery, I wish to offer a few remarks on the role of manufactured or craft products generally in the urban and palatial systems of the eastern Mediterranean. The minimalist position -- which sees them as essentially secondary consequences of a primarily agrarian-led development of social and

excavators remarked on what seemed to them the surprisingly small quantity of Cypriot and other foreign pottery in the Hittite period levels (Goldman 1956, 205).

²⁶ Cf. Sherratt 1998; and for some excellent discussion of the real and perceived subversion posed by various forms of 'privatisation' generally in the ancient world, see Hudson 1996.

²⁷ Pots strictly in the form of packaging, particularly as containers for special scented oils (like the "sweet oil" mentioned in the Amarna letters: e.g. EA 25.iv.51-5, EA 34.16-25, 50-3, EA 35.24-5), may indeed have figured in high level exchange, although even these are frequently of stone or metal (cf. e.g. EA 14.40-6).

economic complexity-- is not strong. The tightly controlled organisation of Aegean textile or perfume industries on the kind of scale and complexity documented in the Linear B tablets is symptomatic of something more than just the provision of goods for internal (*i.e.* downwards) redistribution, or for irregular overseas exchange with top-level elites in return for certain raw materials or exotic status-enhancers; and it is not much easier to explain in the language of peer-polity emulation with its almost exclusively regional and social emphasis.²⁸ Moreover, while it may be possible to argue for some association between gift-exchange and centralised production or centralised control of specialised production, an exclusive association of this sort fails to explain --other than by the notion of centralised control itself-- why such large-scale, wide-ranging and full-time productive endeavour as is seen in the developed centres of the second millennium should be directed to what seems from a minimalist point of view a relatively restricted end and to a relatively restricted outlet.

There are particular difficulties in this view when it comes to pottery production, since even fine pottery is most unlikely ever to have figured to any extent --if at all-- in high-level gift exchanges. Not only this, but its more or less total absence in the documentary, literary and iconographical record of both the second and first millennia makes quite clear that its role in the ideal of high elite culture was pretty negligible altogether. Unlike certain other craft-products, moreover, the raw materials of pottery are neither rare nor restrictable (in comparison with such things as metals, ivory or precious stones), and do not require special requisition or the long-term investment and infrastructural organisation of supply -- in contrast, say, with textiles or specialised wines or oils. What is more, the technology and skills involved, though specialised, are relatively uncomplicated and commonplace;²⁹ and most of them have been around since the Neolithic. Nor is it often the case that the pots which travelled most widely and frequently were those which displayed greatest labour input or technical virtuosity, in the form, say, of highly elaborate shapes or

²⁸ Cf. *e.g.* Cherry 1986.

²⁹ Unlike, for instance, the mysterious and exotic technique which made imported Chinese porcelain so attractive to early modern Europe. Nor, unlike Chinese porcelain in the hands of the newly rich of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, is there any indication that Mycenaean pottery was ever supplied with mountings of precious metal or other valuable materials.

complicated techniques of decoration. Although the polychrome, eggshell-fine Middle Minoan Kamares ware which arrives in small quantities in Egypt and the Levant early in the second millennium probably does fall into this category, generally speaking the Mycenaean (probably mainly Argive) pottery which later reached the east Mediterranean in such quantities during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries displays few if any of these qualities. It is undoubtedly mass-produced stuff, even if subject to a fair degree of quality control. Its shapes are relatively simple, and designed for rapid production on the wheel. Its decorations, too, consisting of varieties of horizontal banding and a range of repetitive, and often relatively simple circumcurrent and symmetrical motifs, are generally well-adapted to fairly rapid output. There is very little in the way of complicated or time-consuming techniques such as elaborate plastic decoration or use of bichrome. Even in the case of the pictorial decoration found, for example, on the chariot or bull kraters (which I shall return to below), the overwhelming impression is of relatively standardised mass-production, designed for a fairly rapid throughput. There are hundreds of the wretched things, all looking really very much the same. In other words, this is essentially cheap and cheerful stuff.³⁰

All this only makes sense if the inter-regional transfer of pottery is seen as a fundamental feature of the possibly varying kinds of second millennium economies which are involved in their production and distribution, rather than simply as the opportunistic disposal of surplus income generated by agrarian production on the one hand, or an aspect of purely political and social relations expressed in the mutual exchange of greetings-gifts on the other.³¹ Indeed, in the context of inter-regional exchange generally these two aspects should rather be seen as two comparatively minor features of a much broader phenomenon, and the emphasis often given to one or other as running the risk of missing the three-dimensional economic complexity which lies between. The acquisition of external luxury materials and exotic manufactured goods is a primary feature of the process of elite

³⁰ Distinguished primarily by its painted decoration from the mass of east Mediterranean pottery, which was regarded as so humbly utilitarian that it was often left undecorated. Although its decoration is likely to have been one of the chief attractions of Aegean pottery imported to the east, it is hardly enough to have lifted it altogether out of what was regarded as an essentially mundane class of goods.

³¹ Sherratt & Sherratt 1991.

formation and of the development and maintenance of lifestyles which are both defined by and symbolise participation in an inter-regional system of exchange: in other words, membership of a supra-regional club of powerful and civilised elites, whose civilisation is both entirely self-defined and transcends inter-regional boundaries. The status of such elites critically depends on continuing access to recognised material symbols of such a distinctive position -- access which is sustained by the extraction of a local surplus both to support local conspicuous consumption and to provide exports for inter-regional exchange. At the same time, local manufacturing capacity develops because of the incentive to control and reduce the outward flow of valuable materials, partly by home production and import substitution, whenever possible, of exotic manufactures, and more importantly by injecting an element of diversification and an increasing proportion of added value into the value of manufactured goods designed for external exchange. All this itself requires further agricultural or craft intensification as well as the increased provision of raw materials. Manufacturing centres emerge to cope with a growing volume of production and transfer; and it is in this context that various forms of mass production --including the mass production of pottery for long-distance exchange-- become desirable and possible.

Let me put it another way. The growth of international exchange in the third and early second millennia was motivated in the first instance by elite control above all of the acquisition and circulation of materials which confer power, and on which in a very practical sense the political, social and economic structures typified by the early palace societies of the Near East, and later the Aegean, were based: above all, prime-value materials such as precious metals, copper and tin.³² The growth in volume of exchange and circulation of such materials as peripheral areas are drawn into, and eventually incorporated into, an expanding exchange network has several effects. In the first place, the culturally constructed power of such materials enhances their

³² For a brief outline of the three primary dimensions --prime (or convertible) value, preciousness value, and added value-- into which the notion of value in the exchange systems of the eastern half of the Mediterranean in the second millennium may be broken down, and their relative importance on a social and economic scale, see Sherratt 1994, 62-3. These dimensions may be regarded as in some respects broadly analogous with the "durable", "transient" and "rubbish" categories distinguished by Michael Thompson (1979) in his analysis of the socio-dynamics of value systems.

desirability at other social levels and in areas on the margins of an established exchange system, and, as a result, it is in the interests of elites to continue to exercise tight control over their exchange and circulation in order to prevent uncontrolled seepage downwards (through their own social hierarchies) or laterally (to elites elsewhere). A second effect is increasing diversification and specialisation as more areas are incorporated into a single linked system. On a regional basis, such diversification and specialisation will allow local elites to retain as much as possible of the prime value of their raw materials and still participate in international exchange -- on the simple principle of giving away less of real value for more.³³ This leads to the growth of value-added production (for example, finished metalwork instead of raw metals), leading on to products with a greater element of added value (such as textiles, perfumed oils, etc.), and to the development of goods for exchange whose sole value lies in the added value of manufacture rather than in the raw materials (for example, pottery, glass and faience). By the time this stage is reached, the internal social and economic structures of producing centres have reached a level of organisation where the continuation and expansion of international exchange (often on something approaching a "coals to Newcastle" basis) becomes essential to prevent internal collapse. A further effect of growth both in volume and diversification is a tendency towards decentralisation in the interstices of the system: such things as private enterprise on the part of official palace-based merchants or agents, or the growth of whole groups of professional, and effectively independent, carriers and middlemen, who may well be based at geographically crucial nodes on international routes. This is perhaps particularly true in the case of seaborne trade, where the problems of physical regulation are especially great in view of the need for circular routes and frequent landfalls.

³³ Capitalising on the one resource --human labour-- which was relatively cheap in the ancient world, and remained so down to well after the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. While there may from time to time have been initial difficulties in acquiring certain types of particularly *recherché* skilled labour, once these were obtained there was generally little problem over ensuring the continuity of such a pool. In any case, such considerations do not apply to pottery manufacture, most of whose techniques had already been developed and widely disseminated in the Neolithic at a time when pottery probably still had the capacity to be a genuinely elite product.

The part played by purely added-value products --of which pottery is a supreme example-- in such international exchange systems is particularly interesting. The relative flexibility offered by its wholly manufactured nature means that it offers a degree of versatility well suited to the maintenance and creation of markets within an already interdependent system, for example in the form of niched production or adaptation to specific market demands -- both of which may have operated, for instance, in the case of the Mycenaean palatial centres of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries.³⁴ At the same time, pottery's lack of convertibility (both literally and metaphorically), and its fragility, means that it has the built-in obsolescence of ephemerality which offers additional opportunity for market maintenance and manipulation in various ways. Most important of all, perhaps, purely added-value goods in general --and pottery *par excellence*-- stand in marked contrast to the convertible or prime value resources (particularly metals) which are the real determinants of internal and international power or status, and whose uncontrolled vertical or lateral distribution poses obvious dangers for elites.³⁵ Unlike these, which are subject to careful elite control throughout --at least that is until the whole system begins to break down during the course of the thirteenth century with an increase in the quantity and velocity of circulation of metals at an informal level, often in the form of scrap-- a purely added

³⁴ As far as adaptation to specific market demands is concerned, this is quite clear in the case of Mycenaean pottery exported to the east Mediterranean (see further below; and cf. Sherratt 1982). Although there is no clear proof, there is also a strong supposition --if only to account for the successful co-existence of the various palatial centres-- that the Mycenaean palaces may have chosen to concentrate to some extent on different manufactured specialities for export: e.g. pottery in the Argolid, linen textiles and perfumed oils at Pylos, woollen textiles at Knossos, etc. The presence of a handful of small containers, such as small straight-sided alabastra and stirrup-jars, of Argive manufacture at Pylos (Haskell 1984, 102-3) might even suggest that perfumed oils produced at Pylos sometimes travelled east in Argive packaging, thus indicating a more positive degree of complementary specialisation between palatial centres. The breakdown of such a pattern of complementary 'nicheing' might also, incidentally, help to account for the eventual collapse of the mainland palaces. The contraction of the Argive export trade in non-container pottery to the east in the later thirteenth century (probably as a result of successful Cypriot import substitution), for instance, might well be supposed to have had grave consequences not only for the economic well-being of the Argive palaces themselves, but also for the potentially precarious balance between the various Mycenaean palatial regions.

³⁵ Sherratt 1994, 62-3; 1998, 295.

value commodity like pottery has long-term potential for penetration of a comparatively mass market, since in itself it poses little threat to elites in either producing or recipient centres. Its circulation thus need not be controlled at a high level; and it can move in a largely decentralised, essentially commercial, manner, either as a side-accompaniment to official, high-level exchange, or independently.³⁶ Its complete lack of prime or convertible value, however, means that it requires an element of active marketing. And this is achieved through the boost of cultural value, which can be seen to operate in a number of diverse, and often sophisticated ways, depending on the nature of the consuming market. The other thing, of course, about purely value-added products like pottery, which require nothing special in the way of restricted raw materials, is their susceptibility to import substitution -- that is, their transfer to local manufacture-- particularly once a certain threshold of scale of movement and social diversity of circulation is reached. And there is ample evidence of just such import substitution occurring again and again, particularly among Levantines and Cypriots in the east Mediterranean, from at least the beginning of the Late Bronze Age onwards.³⁷

As long as long-distance exchange was confined to scarce or valuable raw materials or a few low-bulk high-value manufactured objects in return for 'lifestyle' luxuries, it seems likely that it was indeed mainly conducted on a formal, high level gift-exchange basis -- or at least made to appear so. It would have been in the interests of both parties in the early stages of an inter-regional relationship to deal exclusively on a one-to-one basis with participants of perceived elite status, and indeed the rationale behind such exchange actively demanded it. This is not to say, however, that in reality middlemen could not be concealed behind the rhetoric of such exchange as proxies (either commissioned or speculative) for the principals on the initiating side.

As the scale of participation increased, however, and the scale and range of manufacturing production grew in complexity as manufactured products began to play a larger part in overseas exchange, exchange mechanisms themselves almost certainly became more complex. And it is at this point that we can probably envisage the

³⁶ Liverani 1986; *cf.* Artzy 1985 a.

³⁷ *Cf.* Sherratt 1994, 67-8.

growth of differentiation between formal, high-level exchange frequently couched in the language of royal gifts (albeit with its frequent sense of calculated equivalence) and exchange of a more or less genuinely commercial nature aided in the east by the use of a universal silver standard based on a recognised system of weight equivalence.³⁸ Materials and goods of high prime or convertible value (such as precious metals, copper and tin), whose internal and external distribution it was in the interests of elites to control, continued to be traded mainly or exclusively via formal, high-level exchange procedures, as the preoccupation of much of the documentary evidence --both administrative and private-- with such materials suggests. The exchange of goods such as pottery, on the other hand, which was aimed at an increasingly mass market (and which conspicuously does not figure in such documents), was better facilitated by unofficial, undocumented, entrepreneurial 'grass-roots' trade.³⁹ However, although suggestions that pottery may have travelled partly or even mainly as ballast or space-fillers underline the notion of profit at the margin associated with this type of trade,⁴⁰ it is highly improbable that its ballast potential (which is slight in most circumstances⁴¹) was the main reason for its movement; and we have to see it as an important cargo in its own right. Indeed, the Cypriot success in producing highly stackable types like the Base Ring and White Slip bowls suggests that bulk

³⁸ For a recent plea for the recognition of the role of commercial middlemen in Late Bronze Age Aegean trade, even in the case of goods destined for high-level recipients, see Gillis 1995. For a wide-ranging discussion of the potential for complex interplay between a range of different types of exchange and exchange mechanisms in the eastern half of the Mediterranean generally in the second millennium, see Knapp & Cherry 1994, 123-55.

³⁹ Liverani 1986.

⁴⁰ Artzy 1985 a; 1985 b.

⁴¹ Cf. McGrail 1989 (and it should be noted that the idea of pottery as saleable ballast was originally introduced into the argument from analogy with the carriage of porcelain tea-sets from China, in the context of bulk transport of an exceptionally light-weight commodity: tea). Similar objections apply to the notion of pots carried primarily as space-fillers, with its connotations of haphazard adventitiousness. While this may indeed be a useful concept in relation to the relatively small amounts of Cretan pottery which reached the east Mediterranean in the early second millennium, by the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries both Argive and Cypriot pottery, although not in itself an intrinsically valuable cargo, nevertheless seems too economically significant to have relied exclusively on the unsystematic availability of 'space to be filled'.

transportability was a prime consideration built in at the beginning of the production process, and further suggests that at least by the Late Bronze Age we are dealing with something more economically significant than casual 'sailors' trade'.

One more thing before I move on to the question of consumption: and that is that I do not believe for a moment that it is any coincidence that the two areas which were most closely and consistently involved in production of pottery for transfer overseas in the second millennium -- that is, the Aegean and Cyprus-- were both areas which contained resources of raw materials of prime and highly convertible value which were highly sought after by the established powers of the Near East: in the case of Aegean silver since the third millennium, and of Cypriot copper certainly since the early second millennium. What we have here in effect are two opposite extremes of a value spectrum: the resources of silver or copper with their high prime or convertible value, which undoubtedly represent durables in the value systems of the second millennium; and pottery with its complete lack of convertible or preciousness value, which is a pure value-added commodity more akin to ephemeral rubbish.⁴² It is perhaps not too fanciful to see in the pottery, which in some ways is a relatively cheap by-product of an existing socio-economic organisation based on value-added craft specialisation, some additional attempt to mitigate --or at least capitalise on-- the outward flow of the other much more internationally valuable resource from these areas.

We can pursue this further in the Aegean area by considering the specific regions or centres most closely involved in the production of pottery for transfer to the east. In the early second millennium it is protopalatial Crete; in the Late Bronze Age predominantly the Argolid. While neither region itself possesses the metal (particularly silver) resources sought in ever increasing quantities by the powers of the east since the third millennium, both are in a position to act as crucial nodes through which concentrations of such valuables passed, and, indeed, both almost certainly owed their respective pre-eminence at different

⁴² It is ironic that anything so ephemeral as pottery should be so relentlessly indestructible in the archaeological record. Indeed, it is wholly as a result of this that it is often ultimately converted from Thompson's "rubbish" category to the kind of durable which is now housed, under guard, in museums and seen as a form of long-term investment by dealers and collectors (*cf.* Thompson 1979, 6-10).

times to precisely this factor: Crete as the main articulation point between the Aegean and east Mediterranean, once the advent of sailing ships in the late third millennium made direct open-sea voyaging possible; the Argolid not only as a crucial leg on the return stretch of the western 'string' or circuit which linked protopalatial and neopalatial Crete with the metal resources of eastern Attica and the north-west Aegean,⁴³ but as itself an important isthmian node between the maritime corridors of the Corinthian, Saronic, Euboean and Argolic gulfs. Pots were not only pure added value products in themselves, but were also a means by which such major articulation points along long-distance maritime supply networks could capitalise on (and thus add value to at very little cost), the high-level transfers of valuables which flowed through them, by the additional provision of cheap products designed for low-level transfer in the same direction. This pattern was later replicated in south-west Euboea in the early first millennium, when the clay-rich Lelantine district between Chalcis and Eretria, at the entrance to the Euripos, was able to capitalise on its choke-point position on the main west Aegean sea route between the precious metal sources of eastern Attica and those of the Chalcidice and Thasos by providing metallic-looking drinking cups (the so-called Sub-Protogeometric pendent semicircle skyphoi) for sale along the chief maritime routes in the Aegean and east Mediterranean.⁴⁴ To put it crudely, in all these cases pots were piggybacking on metals.⁴⁵

⁴³ Davis 1979.

⁴⁴ For a tracing of the eastern end of these routes through the pottery, see the maps in Coldstream 1989, fig. 1.

A comparable pattern can probably be detected on Late Bronze Age Cyprus, despite its much more limited area, its greater variety of wares, and the difficulties of knowing where precisely on the island its chief export wares were produced. Of the main fourteenth and thirteenth century export wares, White Slip and Base Ring appear to have been produced in a number of centres (Knapp & Cherry 1994, 158-61), which might plausibly reflect the series of separate political units – each with its own administrative centre and coastal outlet – which have been postulated as forming the contact units for the organisation of overseas export of copper during this period (Stech 1982, 113; Hadjisavvas 1996; cf. Sherratt 1998, 297). In the case of White Slip at least, the recently discovered fourteenth century production site at Sanidha in the southern foothills of the Troodos, far removed from any sign of permanent settlement (Todd 1993), suggests the possibility of periodic (possibly seasonal) bouts of specialised production, perhaps organised from some administrative centre such as Aghios Dhimitrios further down the Vasilikos valley.

In such production areas, pottery for overseas trade seems likely to have been produced with the encouragement of local powers, if not under centrally controlled or supervised conditions. This certainly seems to have been the case with the palatial production of Kamares ware in the early second millennium⁴⁶ and may be surmised to some degree for Argive production of pottery for export to the east during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries.⁴⁷ The successful marketing of such low value, non-threatening goods as imported pottery on any kind of scale, however, demands rather special conditions in the recipient area. In particular, since it is not transferred by means of high-level, official exchange and thus redistributed from the top down, it requires a political and economic structure sufficiently relaxed and open to allow decentralised commercial activity within its boundaries; and it is in this light that the general failure of Aegean and Cypriot non-container pottery to penetrate Hittite-controlled Anatolia or Egypt in the reactionary period which followed Amarna should probably be seen. In

Cyprus is complicated by the fact that it not only exported its own pottery, but that its ship operators and traders, based in the growing coastal urban centres, also appear to have been responsible for the carriage and distribution (or marketing) of much of the exported Aegean (especially Argive) pottery which reached the east Mediterranean in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries. The gradual but steady growth of wheelmade mass production of pottery during the course of the thirteenth century (including production of an Aegean type of ware) arguably represents a successful bid by the increasingly powerful inhabitants of coastal urban centres such as Enkomi and Palaepaphos, whose growing power was based on the relatively low level, decentralised forms of seaborne trade which the mass movement of pottery in the later second millennium represents, to take the production of such traded pottery more directly into their control. Before losing out altogether, the manufacturers of Base Ring and White Slip seem to have fought back with attempts to reduce the unit costs of manufacture by such measures as reductions in thickness and quality of slip and simplification of decoration (Artzy 1985 b; *cf.* Sherratt 1998, 299).

⁴⁵ *Cf.* Artzy 1985 a, 137-8 (though not always necessarily, perhaps, in such an intimately linked manner as she suggests).

⁴⁶ *Cf. e.g.* Wiener 1991, 332.

⁴⁷ There is nothing in the Linear B tablets to suggest active administrative control of pottery production (though the extant tablets from Mycenae are very limited in number), and the designation of individual potters on the Pylos tablets as "royal" or associated with specific officials (*cf.* Chadwick 1976, 71, 147; Palmer 1963, 135-6, 191-2) may mean no more than that these were responsible for production of pottery for palatial use. On the other hand, the association of Late Helladic IIIA-B kilns (as at Berbati and Tiryns) close to or in the palace centres themselves suggests a degree of palatial supervision over pottery quite evidently produced for overseas export (*cf.* French 1991; French, Hoffman & Robinson 1993).

this respect, the Aegean (and above all the Mycenaean mainland) presents an especially interesting case. During most of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, when there is every sign of fairly close palatial control over the internal economy, the main body of the Aegean also seems to have proved unaccountably resistant to the reception of Cypriot pottery. Yet, at the same time, there is good reason to believe that Cypriots were the main carriers and marketers of much of the imported Aegean (particularly Argive) pottery which reached the east Mediterranean, which is not infrequently marked, after firing, with Cypriot signs and invariably found in the Levant in association with Cypriot wares.⁴⁸ In effect, it looks as though the Mycenaean palaces (and particularly those of the Argolid) were walking something of a tightrope: using Cypriot carriers to create and foster overseas markets for their state-endorsed pottery through the more commercial structures in place in certain parts of the east Mediterranean, while at the same time maintaining a tight control over the types and distributions of goods received in return in order to preserve the command structure of their own domestic economies.

For much of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, this seems to have been achieved by means of a complex network of linked circuits, with their interfaces at transshipment points on Rhodes and the Cretan port of Kommos, which formed the junction between an Aegean circulation system and an east Mediterranean one -- a junction marked by the main northward and westward limits of distribution of such objects as White Slip bowls, Canaanite jars and stone anchors. Both official and freelance carriers and/or agents may have operated in both systems (no doubt often represented in one and the same person), forming a complex interplay of administered and 'free' trade in which different types of goods were habitually exchanged or traded on different bases, and allowing the Mycenaean palatial rulers to keep the more unofficial, commercial activities of eastern (particularly Cypriot) traders at bay from their own immediate territories. Insofar as this paid off, the old picture of a net exchange of Argive pots for Cypriot copper may thus, in effect, be --at least in part-- a genuine one;⁴⁹ but mediated through a complex structure of interactions with differentiated levels of

⁴⁸ Hankey 1981, 44-5; Hirschfeld 1992.

⁴⁹ Catling 1980.

exchange and different modes of carriage, the picture no longer seems quite so unrealistic or exploitatively one-sided as it once appeared.

During the course of the thirteenth century, however, we begin to glimpse signs of the direct penetration of Cypriot commercial traders into western Aegean coastal waters, marked not only by the Iria wreck, but by Cypriot ceramics at Tiryns, Lefkandi and Chania, and by evidence for Cypriot trade marks incised on Mycenaean pottery within its Argive production area.⁵⁰ At the same time, the breakdown of the earlier system of interfacing circuits is indicated by the decline of Kommos before the end of the century. This is accompanied by increasing signs of direct Cypriot involvement in the central Mediterranean, and, even more significantly, the flooding into the Aegean and east Mediterranean of ready made bronze goods of Italian or Alpine origin, together with an increased velocity of circulation of bronze and precious metals in scrap form -- all of these probably moving through the same informal channels. It is probably no coincidence that it is at this point that the tightrope begins to collapse, eventually taking with it the Mycenaean centralised palatial systems themselves. The paradox is that, despite its medium-term advantages, the promotion of a trade in pottery, ultimately dependent for its success on the growth of decentralised commercial activity, was bound in the long run to foster the conditions for undermining the tight command nature of these centralised systems. As the Hittite and Egyptian authorities appear to have appreciated, long-distance trade in pottery for pottery's sake was a dangerous venture to have embarked on.

Marketing, consumption and cultural value

While the perceived values of materials of high prime or convertible value involved in high-level transfers remain relatively constant in the international elite culture of a linked economic system and its periphery, the value of a wholly added value manufactured product such as pottery, which has little or no recognised elite currency, requires constant re-negotiation. The extent to which something as commonplace as pottery, in the notable absence of any recorded elite

⁵⁰ Lolos, Pennas & Vichos 1995; Cline 1994, nos. 399-400, 446-8, 632, 788-96; Hirschfeld forthcoming; cf. Sherratt 1994, 70 n. 16.

esteem, can play a significant part in an increasing volume of lower level transfers depends not only on suitable transport conditions (which in the ancient world meant primarily maritime and riverine transport), but also on the existence of a demand for it outside its area of manufacture. This, in turn, depends on the existence of contexts in which its use is seen as appropriate, and on the extent to which potential exporters can actively stimulate new types of demand.

There are two concepts which seem to me particularly useful when considering the cultural context of the marketing and consumption of Aegean --or for that matter Cypriot-- pottery outside its production area in the east Mediterranean in particular. One is *sub-elite*, and the other is *substitute-elite*. Both concepts rest on the ability of pottery to fit into an existing system of cultural values. Sub-elite entails the provision of acceptable, and to some extent suitably exotic, but non-convertible (and therefore non-threatening) 'placebos' for social groups whose means or status exclude them from participation in high-level exchanges or otherwise limit their access to the kind of genuinely elite materials and goods which figure in the documentary, literary and iconographical record. Substitute-elite refers more particularly to substitutes for elite goods in what may otherwise be more or less elite contexts -- particularly in such cases as tomb depositions or sanctuary dedications in circumstances where it is neither necessary nor desirable to use these forms of deposition to make extravagant (and competitive) social or political 'statements', or where sumptuary regulations restrict the use of certain forms of conspicuous consumption.⁵¹ It is often difficult to draw any very clear distinction between these two concepts on a contextual basis. Elites in a local context may be distinctly less than elite in a regional context, and still less so on an inter-regional stage; and even a royal palace may both contain sub-elite personnel and have substitute-elite requirements. All the same, in terms of both concepts the marketing of imported pottery depends on a more or less complex package of multiple symbolism, based on reference to widely recognised elite symbols, for its success.

Foremost among this package are the social values of formal ritualised wine-drinking which had already long been absorbed by the

⁵¹ Cf. Vickers 1985-86, 165 on fifth century Athenian pottery traded in Tuscany: "pottery provided the poor with smart tableware, and the rich with the show, but not the expense, of an elaborate funeral".

sophisticated societies of the east Mediterranean by the time the first Aegean pot arrived on the scene. The increasing elaboration of such rituals, designed to maintain and enhance social exclusivity, meant that by the later third millennium, if not before, real elites --whether human or divine-- used increasingly complex sets of precious metal, particularly silver, drinking and pouring equipment. And it is in this light that the Kamares cups, bowls and bridge-spouted pouring jugs which turn up in small concentrations in Middle Kingdom Egypt, in some cases in apparently quite clearly sub-elite contexts,⁵² should probably be seen. It is quite probable that these metal shapes themselves to a large extent transcended inter-regional boundaries,⁵³ but in any case it is more than likely that a large number of them were Aegean finished silver products of a sort which had probably been reaching the east since sometime in the third millennium.⁵⁴ The decoration of these clay Kamares pots may to a large extent reflect embossed decoration of the sort found on silver vessels like those in the Tôd treasure.⁵⁵ However, it is more than likely that we are also seeing deliberate echoes on the decoration of these pots of the kind of fine dyed wool Aegean textiles with rapport patterns of the sort which, as Elizabeth Barber⁵⁶ has shown, the Aegean (and particularly Crete) was certainly exporting to Egypt from at least the twelfth Dynasty onwards -- that is, at much the same time as the Kamares pots themselves. Another possibility, of course, is inlaid metalwork.⁵⁷ Both of these -- fine textiles and inlaid metalwork-- unlike pottery, figure prominently

⁵² Cf. Kemp & Merrillees 1980, 85, 284-5 for the apparently sub-elite nature of the domestic contexts in which even the relatively small quantities of Kamares ware occur in Egypt, particularly at Kahun.

⁵³ Cf. Cherry 1986, 40.

⁵⁴ For drinking cups and weapons from "Kaptara" recorded on early second millennium documents from Mari, see Dalley 1984, 51. The close approximation in weight of a third millennium silver bowl said to be from Amorgos in the Cyclades (now in the Ashmolean: AE 158) to one-sixth of an Eblaite mina seems suggestive, and may indicate that finished silver drinking vessels destined for the east were already being produced in the Aegean at this early period.

⁵⁵ See Warren & Hankey 1989, 131-4, pls. 5-11.

⁵⁶ Barber 1991, 346-7.

⁵⁷ For an excellent example of pottery clearly imitating inlaid metalwork, see the White Painted amphorae or tankards with inlaid faience beads from Middle Cypriot tombs at Aghia Paraskevi (Hadjicosti 1992, 113-7, figs. 4-7, pl. XVIII), which compare closely in shape and decoration with an inlaid gold vessel from a temple deposit in early second millennium Byblos (Culican 1966, fig. 19).

in the documentary and iconographical record of high-level gift exchange during the second millennium.

Despite the fact that they cannot be regarded as elite goods within an east Mediterranean context of values, at least some of the value of the comparatively few Kamares pots which reached Egypt, the Levant and Cyprus in the early second millennium may have lain in their exotic nature, as well as in the allure of particularly fine craftsmanship and complicated decorative technique which they quite clearly represent. However, the later penetration of east Mediterranean mass markets in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries by predominantly Argive Mycenaean (as well as Cypriot) non-container pottery, appears to reflect a mainly downward marketing strategy in which non-convertible, more or less disposable substitutes for precious metal drinking and other ceremonial equipment were welcomed by elites as substitute-elite goods, and their sale actively promoted among a sub-elite stratum of society in Cyprus and the Levant both by producing centres and middlemen carriers for their own separate reasons (and at least not officially discouraged by local elites). As we have seen, much of the actual marketing of this pottery was undoubtedly in the hands of a growing and increasingly powerful body of professional carriers and traders based in the urban coastal centres of Cyprus, who articulated effectively with the main Argive producing centres in a series of complex interfacing maritime circulation patterns which seem to have changed and become more direct in the course of the thirteenth century. At any rate, these Cypriot carriers and marketers seem to have known what would sell and to have got their message through to the producers. This would account, for instance, for the apparently export-oriented nature of the Argive Mycenaean pottery found in Cyprus and the Levant in which a number of distinctive types --the so-called Levanto-Helladic shapes-- have long been recognised as either peculiar to an east Mediterranean market, or at least very much more common there than in the Aegean (table 1).⁵⁸ Of the types which fall into this category, some are directly relatable to well-known Cypriot shapes, such as the Base Ring bowl and White Slip milkbowl,⁵⁹ which

⁵⁸ See, for example, Gjerstad 1926; Stubbings 1951, 42-3; Sherratt 1982; Leonard 1994, 6-7.

⁵⁹ For examples of these in imported Mycenaean ware, see Buchholz & Karageorghis 1973, nos. 1637-9.

themselves are marketed in large quantities and at apparently diverse social levels to the Levant during the same period. At the same time, virtually all of them, including the Cypriot shapes, can be related to metal types current in the east Mediterranean and probably also to some extent in the Aegean.⁶⁰ Moreover, the well-known pictorial kraters, which are still far more heavily represented in Cyprus and the Levant than in their area of production in the Argolid, suggest a particularly complex build-up of elite symbolism -- almost what one might call a kind of 'ship in a bottle' phenomenon. While their shapes are familiar enough in metal,⁶¹ the ubiquitous chariots, which are generally shown in a less than aggressively or actively military setting (fig. 2), also appear to carry a strong and monotonously consistent sub-text: these belong to people who wished to convey an image, or create an appearance, of association with chariot-ownership -- even if, in some cases, one might speculate that the nearest they ever got to a chariot may have been a picture of one painted on a pot.⁶²

⁶⁰ See, for example, the range of bronze shapes in Matthäus 1980 and 1985, and Gershuny 1980, pls. 1-6, which between them include versions of most varieties of cups, jugs, bowls and kraters exported in Aegean or Cypriot clay wares. Further examples are provided, for instance, by the gold chalice from the Ulu Burun wreck (Bass 1987, 714), a metal Base Ring bowl from Egyptian Thebes (Sjöqvist 1940, fig. 9), the collections of metal vessels from tombs at Teratsoudhia on Cyprus and Tel Nami in Israel (Karageorghis 1990, pl. XXIV; Artzy 1994, 128), and by the assemblages of evidently metal drinking and libation equipment actually portrayed on imported Mycenaean kraters from Enkomi (Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, 21-2, III.21-2).

⁶¹ See, for example, the bronze amphoroid krater from Teratsoudhia Tomb 104 (Karageorghis 1990, 63 fig. 7, pl. XXIV:N.66), and the stemmed krater portrayed on Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III.21. For examples of deep bowl kraters and related forms in metal, see Matthäus 1980, pls. 52: 442-4, 44:372, 47:397,399.

⁶² The importance of the symbolism of the chariot scenes on these imported Mycenaean kraters has recently been emphasised by Louise Steel (in papers presented in London and Edinburgh in September and October 1996) who consequently regards the kraters as having a genuinely elite currency within Cyprus. This, however, seems to me improbable. While those in some richer than average tombs may well have a substitute-elite role (or in other words act as acceptable funerary substitutes for precious metal equivalents), the sheer number of such kraters which must have entered Cyprus, let alone the humble clay of which they were made (and their cheap and easy replicability), militates against such absolute exalted status by any normal east Mediterranean standards. Such exclusive status was certainly not accorded to other Mycenaean pottery imports to the island, and it is hard to see why the decoration of such kraters should have served to differentiate them to such a qualitatively absolute extent.

On the subject of chariot kraters (and indeed of the other ubiquitous figured motif, the bull, which commonly appears on imported pots, particularly kraters), there are other aspects of the iconography which suggest yet another element in the package (figs. 2-3). Is it really just fanciful imagination which leads the pot painters to fill the corners of some of the chariot scenes with lots of busy little motifs, such as stylised flowers which look like no flower anyone ever saw in reality, floating dot rosettes or groups of chevrons, or to divide the bodies of their bulls into neat panels filled in most unlikely fashion with rosettes and other little patterns? This kind of unnaturalistic treatment is so consistent on many of these pictorial kraters that we can at least dismiss the idea of pot painters' *individual* imaginations. Many of the patterns themselves are easily recognisable to anyone familiar with a basic repertoire of embroidery motifs or the kinds of things found on old-fashioned samplers. And rather than looking determinedly for any deep symbolic significance in the inclusion or deployment of these motifs, we are probably better to sit back and enjoy the general effect, just as the owners of these pots presumably did. To my mind, they are quite deliberately designed to create an impression of figured textile-work, which may well relate to Mycenaean textiles of the sort produced by the highly specialised (and to some extent international) groups of textile workers recorded on the Pylos and Knossos tablets, and earlier shown being brought to the Theban court by ambassadors in the tomb of Menkheperresaneb.⁶³ Again, it is the multi-valency of the overall impression that succeeds in making these pots socially and culturally attractive: fine textiles, chariots, precious metal vessels associated with elite drinking rituals, bulls as symbols of divine or regal power in Near East and Aegean alike -- all undeniably elite symbols, and all (even the bulls in the form of bulls' head metal vessels) subjects of international exchange at the highest level; but all wrapped up in a run-of-the-mill clay pot suitable for being lost forever in a tomb or for possession and use by someone who may belong to a less than super-elite stratum of society, but nevertheless has his social pretensions and aspirations. It is particularly interesting that when import substitution of these imported Mycenaean pots first begins to get going in the coastal urban centres of Cyprus, probably quite early in the thirteenth century, or perhaps even earlier (and almost certainly as part of an essentially commercial

⁶³ Barber 1991, 334-5 fig. 15.19.



Figure 2. Imported Late Helladic IIIA2 amphoroid krater from Cyprus (Cyprus Museum, Nicosia A1645; courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

strategy on the part of these centres), it is aspects of the drinking equipment which seem to be produced first and are most prominent: kraters, chalices, kylikes, drinking bowls of various types, jugs -- among them, perhaps earliest of all, the so-called Rude or Pastoral

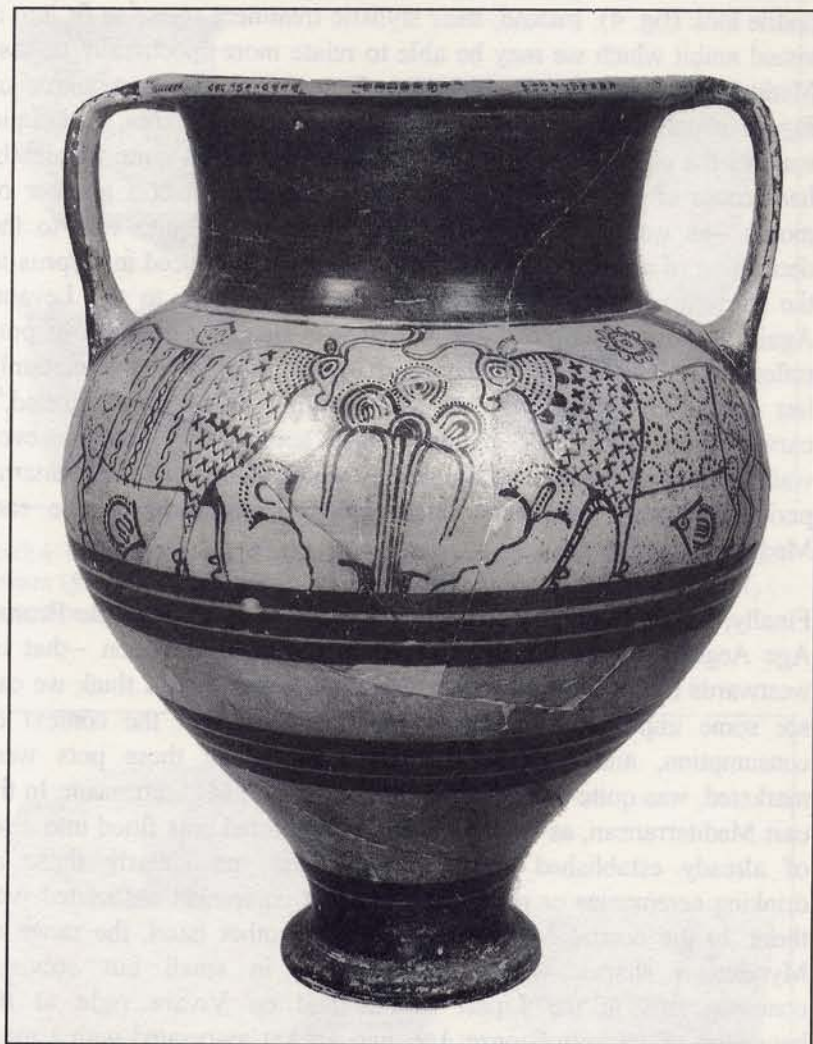


Figure 3. Imported Late Helladic IIIB amphoroid krater from Cyprus (Cyprus Museum A1647; courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

Style kraters.⁶⁴ The themes of these --particularly the bulls and vegetation-- to some extent echo those of the imported Mycenaean

⁶⁴ Karageorghis 1965, 231-59; Anson 1980; Yon 1982; Kling 1989, 122-3; Leonard 1994, 8-9; cf. Sherratt 1991, 192.

kraters, but their style is different; and in particular they lack that textile look (fig. 4). Instead, their stylistic treatment seems to fit into a visual ambit which we may be able to relate more specifically to east Mediterranean art forms and styles. Figure 5 shows an example of Egyptian polychrome or blue-painted ware from Amarna, a ceramic ware of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties which quite frequently has scenes of this sort,⁶⁵ and on which one can detect a number of motifs --as well as a general style-- which relate quite well to the decoration of a range of pottery of Aegean type produced in Cyprus in the thirteenth century and also exported from there to the Levant. Again, however, I do not imagine that it is simply a question of pots reflecting pots -- and some other more exalted medium almost certainly lies behind both: perhaps, as Karageorghis originally suggested,⁶⁶ carved ivory work, or painted linen textiles, or perhaps even wallpaintings of the naturalistic variety which characterise the Amarna period and may well have lingered longer elsewhere in the east Mediterranean littoral.

Finally, I want to end by commenting very briefly on the Late Bronze Age Aegean pottery which travelled in the other direction --that is, westwards to the central Mediterranean-- because there I think we can see some important differences which suggest that the context of consumption, and therefore the basis on which these pots were marketed, was quite distinct from that in the east Mediterranean. In the east Mediterranean, as we have seen, the imported pots fitted into a set of already established and familiar values, particularly those of drinking ceremonies or rituals and the elite equipment associated with these. In the central Mediterranean, on the other hand, the range of Mycenaean shapes which first appears in small but strategic concentrations in the Lipari islands and on Vivara right at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, and not yet associated with a mass market, was almost certainly exploiting a somewhat different set of values (table 1). The Late Helladic I-II cups, in particular, some possibly of Messenian or Laconian origin,⁶⁷ are likely to have been part

⁶⁵ Cf. e.g. Hope 1987, esp. pls. XXXII-XXXIV, XXXVI:B, XXXVII; Bourriau 1981, no. 141.

⁶⁶ Karageorghis 1965, 235-6.

⁶⁷ Jones & Vagnetti 1991, 131.



Figure 4. Rude (or Pastoral) Style kraters from Cyprus (Kouklia Museum, Cyprus museum 1959/II-26/1, Enkomi T. 19 respectively; courtesy of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus).

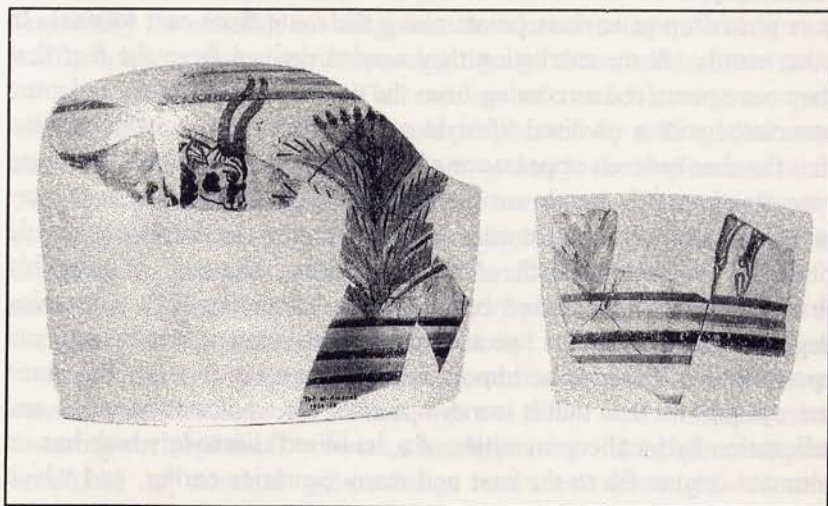


Figure 5. Fragments of a large polychrome jar from Tell el-Amarna (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, no. 1924.165; courtesy of The Visitors of The Ashmolean Museum).

and parcel of the process of the introduction of a 'civilised' wine-drinking ritual to that region -- part, in this case, of a strategy of actively propagating lifestyle ideology in the interests of furthering long-term exchange in that direction, and indeed in this respect probably not unreminiscent of the much later dual motivation explicitly accorded to early European activity in the New World: in the words of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, "to serve god and grow rich".⁶⁸ Even in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, when the volume increases and the distribution expands, the differences between the imported Aegean non-container repertoire in the central Mediterranean and that found in the east suggest a different kind of cultural context of consumption as well as a different kind of market (table 1). The absolute quantities are much smaller, the Aegean origins more diverse, and the types of imported non-container pottery found in Italy, for instance, seem more typical of what might be called 'normal' Aegean repertoires, and above all lack the specialised types found in the East Mediterranean. This suggests that what was still involved at this time was a more generalised continuation of 'lifestyle' dissemination, possibly mainly still at a local or newly emergent urban elite level, in which prestigious Aegean drinking habits in particular were still being 'sold' to the inhabitants of a wider area of the central Mediterranean in the form of pots picked up at various points along the route from east to west. In other words, all the marketing they needed derived from the fact that they were perceived as coming from the source of civilisation and were associated with a civilised lifestyle and practices. It is in this context that the simultaneous appearance of locally produced pottery of Aegean type together with the almost certainly silver-inspired wheelmade gray and gray-on-gray wares at sites such as Broglio di Trebisacce should probably be seen -- both of them including a range of arguably drinking-related vessels and both of them coinciding with a growing degree of urban or proto-urban development and regional specialisation.⁶⁹ It may be import substitution up to a point. But much more important than that it is a symptom of the wholesale adoption and adaptation by local communities of a 'civilised' lifestyle which has its ultimate origins far to the east and many centuries earlier, and which

⁶⁸ "Para servir a Dios y hacernos ricos"; from *The history of the conquest of New Spain*, quoted by Trevor-Roper 1965, 129.

⁶⁹ Jones & Vagnetti 1991, 132, 140-1; Vagnetti 1993, 147-51.

marks their incorporation into an increasingly expanding Mediterranean economic system based ultimately on just such lifestyle considerations.

Conclusion

Pottery --and its long-distance movement-- in the second millennium Mediterranean thus has both less importance and more importance than has often been accorded it. On the one hand, as its absence from the documentary, literary and iconographical records indicates, pottery was not an item of high elite culture and is most unlikely to have played any role in high-level transactions between the rich and powerful sections of Bronze Age society. But while the idea that pots were made at Mycenae to cultivate the friendship of eastern potentates and furnish their palaces with exotic luxuries can probably be dismissed as a form of ceramocentric fantasy, the long-distance movement of pottery nevertheless discloses a stratum of economic activity which is largely unrepresented in the elite texts, yet which nonetheless fulfilled a significant economic role.

It was particularly important in the economies of communities situated at nodal points on long-distance maritime supply routes (especially for metals), enabling them to take advantage of the flow of traffic in high-value materials passing through them, and to divert some of it to their own benefit. The creation of manufacturing capacity allowed them to use their geographical position by adding their own manufactured commodities to the chain, and so to develop and sustain a more complex social and economic infrastructure. As a socially and politically innocuous product, which nevertheless had the ability to encapsulate desirable social and cultural values within a readily accessible and expendable medium, pottery played an important part in the formation and sustenance of sub-elite and substitute-elite markets in recipient areas. It also gave rise to a substantial body of middlemen carriers and commercial traders whose skills lay in feeding and fostering such informal markets, thus bypassing the tightly controlled conditions of nominal gift-exchange and centralised redistribution which characterised the palatial system in its ideal form.

Eventually, indeed, it provided the conditions for undermining the political institutions which depended on these restricted networks of exchange to control the circulation of more socially and economically

valuable materials and goods. Above all, it was the commercial entrepreneurs, based particularly in Cyprus and heavily involved in trading both Cypriot and Aegean pottery, who by the later thirteenth century were in a position to establish power bases of their own in the coastal cities of that island, where they produced and traded an increasing diversity of more 'powerful' goods (including both finished metalwork and metal in scrap form) in the same decentralised and ultimately subversive manner. From this point onwards, the highly centralised palace-based command economies of the Bronze Age, in which economic and political control were closely identified, were doomed; and overseas trade in pottery itself may be said to have played a not insignificant, if indirect, part in their downfall.

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Date	Area	Imported ware	Sites	Site types	Site locations
Early 2nd millennium	Egypt	MM	c. 4+	Tomb and settlement	Mainly Lower Egypt
Early 2nd millennium	Levant	MM	c. 2-5	Tomb and settlement	Coastal and a few inland
Early 2nd millennium	Cyprus	MM	c. 3	Tomb and settlement	Mainly north coast
16th-15th century	Egypt	LM IB, LH II	c. 10-12	Mainly tomb	Mainly Lower and Upper Egypt
16th-15th century	Levant	LM I, LH II	c. 15	Mainly settlement; a few tombs	Coastal; Orontes valley; inland Palestine; Transjordan
16th-15th century	Cyprus	LM I, LH II	c. 8	Tomb and settlement	North and south coasts
16th-15th century	Troy	LH II		Settlement	
16th-15th century	Central Mediterranean	LH I-II	c. 5+	Settlement	Concentrated on Aeolian islands and Vivara

Table 1. Aegean pottery exports in the second millennium.

Quantities	Types	Non-container types	Provenance	Other remarks
Small. Largest concentrations at El-Haraga (c. 22 pieces) and Kahun (c. 18 pieces)	Mainly non-containers	Bridge-spouted jugs, cups, bowls	Crete	Fine, polychrome Kamarens ware. Associated with sub-elite domestic contexts at Kahun. Apparently occasionally imitated (though this may reflect common silver models)
Small. Largest concentration at Byblos (up to c. 10 pieces)	Non-containers	Cups, bowls, bridge-spouted jugs	Crete	Occasional imitations (cf. Egypt)
Small.	Non-containers	Cups, bowls, bridge-spouted jugs	Crete	No imitations
Small. No concentrations	Containers and non-containers	Jugs, cups, bowls	Crete and Mainland (exact provenance uncertain)	Occasional imitations
Small. A few pieces only	Containers and non-containers	Bowls, cups	Crete and Mainland (exact provenance uncertain)	Associated mainly with non-palatial domestic contexts, and some shrine contexts
Small. Main concentration at Tomba tou Skourou (c. 24 pieces)	Containers and non-containers	Cups, jugs	Crete, Mainland (exact provenance uncertain); a few possibly from Cyclades	
c. 57 pieces (pre-Korfmann excavations)	Containers and non-containers	Cups, stemmed cups, jugs	Mainland (exact provenance uncertain)	Troy Vid-e. Habitation and refuse deposits
Small: e.g. c. 25+ pieces from Vivara	Containers and non-containers	Cups (including Vaphio cups), jugs	Peloponnese (including possibly Messenia, Laconia and N.E. Peloponnese)	LH I consists almost entirely of cups and jugs. Containers mainly LH II

Date	Area	Imported ware	Sites	Site types	Site locations
14th-13th century	Egypt	LH IIIA-B	c. 31	Tomb and urban settlement	Delta to Upper Egypt; some in Nubia
14th-13th century	Levant	LH IIIA-B, LM IIIA-B	c. 66	Tomb and urban settlement	Coastal sites; Orontes valley; inland Palestine; Transjordan
14th-13th century	Cyprus	LH IIIA-B, LM IIIA-B	c. 82	Tomb and urban settlement	Island-wide (except for Troodos Mts.)

Table 1 (cont.).

Quantities	Types	Non-container types	Provenance	Other remarks
Comparatively large, particular concentration of LH IIIA2 at Amarna	Containers and non-containers	Cups, bowls, kylikes, kraters, rhyta, jugs	N.E. Peloponnese (Argolid)	Main concentration and widest range of non-container shapes at Amarna (LH IIIA2), associated with sub-elite domestic contexts. Includes types characteristic of imported LH IIIA2 non-container repertoire in Cyprus and Levant. LH IIIB imports less numerous and confined mainly to containers. Occasional imitations, possibly of Cypriot manufacture?
Comparatively large (increases steadily in LH IIIA2-B). Particular concentrations at Ugarit and Minet el Beida (over 400 published pieces) and Tel Abu Hawam. LM IIIA-B relatively rare	Containers and non-containers	Kraters, cups, bowls, rhyta, jugs, kylikes	Mainly Argolid. Also central Crete and occasional other regions. Some of Cypriot origin in 13th century	Imported LH includes types characteristic of imported LH IIIA-B on Cyprus, including specialised LH IIIB shapes (cf. below). Found in variety of domestic, religious and funerary contexts, often accompanied by Cypriot pottery. Possibly occasional local manufacture of containers
Very large. Greatest concentrations at urban coastal centres. More imported LM IIIA-B than in Levant	Containers and non-containers	Kraters, jugs, rhyta, cups, kylikes, bowls	Mainly Argolid. Also Crete and occasional other regions	Imported LH IIIB includes non-container types less common or very rare in Aegean: e.g. chalices, shallow bowls, stemmed shallow bowls, one-handled bowl types, trefoil-mouthed jugs, pictorial kraters. Accompanied by local manufacture during 13th century

Date	Area	Imported ware	Sites	Site types	Site locations
14th-13th century	Troy	LH IIIA-B, LM IIIA		Settlement and tombs	
14th-13th century	Central Mediterranean	LH IIIA-B, LM IIIA-B	c. 60+	Settlement and some tombs	Main concentrations in Calabria/Apulia Sicily and Sardinia (13th century). Predominantly coastal

Table 1 (cont.).

Quantities	Types	Non-container types	Provenance	Other remarks
Large (c. 750 pieces from pre-Korfmann excavations: c. 1.5 % of total amount of pottery). A little LMIIIA	Containers and non-containers	Jugs, cups, kylikes, bowls, mugs, stands	Uncertain: possibly varied, but includes Argolid	Probable imports include bowl and cup shapes found in Grey and Tan wares. Local manufacture (painted Tan ware) begins in Troy VI f-h: shapes include bowls, kylikes, jugs, mugs, stands, stirrup jars
Variable: main concentrations at urbanised or semi-urbanised centres (e.g. c. 100 published pieces from Scoglio del Tonno). Small at most sites	Containers and non-containers	Kraters, jugs, kylikes, bowls, cups	Argolid, Rhodes, central and east Crete; possibly other regions	Imports include a high proportion of LM IIIA-B. Local manufacture by 13th century at centres in Calabria; also probably in Sicily and Sardinia

Sources: Schaeffer 1949; Stubbings 1951; Blegen, Caskey & Rawson 1953; Tylor 1958; Anati 1959; Åström 1961-62; Hankey 1967; 1970; 1973 b; 1993; Cadogan 1973; Mee 1978; Kemp & Merrillees 1980; Portugali & Knapp 1985; Catling in: Jones & Catling 1986, 574-609; Marazzi 1986; Marazzi & Re 1986; Ferrarese Ceruti 1986; Vincentelli & Tiradritti 1986; Pacci 1986; Re 1986; Gregori & Palumbo 1986; Jones & Vagnetti 1991, 1992; Vagnetti 1993; Leonard 1994; van Wijngaarden 1990.