

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF THE MIDDLE MINOAN III CERAMIC SEQUENCE IN SOUTH-CENTRAL CRETE: RETURNING TO THE TRADITIONAL MM IIIA AND IIIB DIVISION?

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INTRODUCTION

This article will discuss *pottery* and *terminology*: its delicate subject and pretext is the Middle Minoan (MM) III period, the period before LM IA on Crete. When dealing with MM III it must be clearly understood that *pottery* and *terminology* are inseparable concepts. Many aspects of the intricate debate about the definition and division of MM III arise from a confusion in applying competing terminologies to pottery. This paper cannot hope to provide a definitive answer to this subject, hence the question mark at the end of the title.

A great deal of attention has been focused over the last few decades on attempts to distinguish MM III ceramics on stratigraphic and stylistic grounds, but difficulties have been encountered in establishing whether any division can be made within the material, and whether there is any chronological distinction between MM III deposits toward the end of the period and deposits from the beginning of LM IA (the so-called MM IIIB/LM IA transitional phase). The background to this question is twofold, as it is concerned with the intersection of a problem of chronological distinction that affects all of Crete and the clarification of a specific ceramic situation within a single region.

The complicated debate about the MM III sequence in Crete can be summed up as follows: most scholars

have rejected any substantial division within MM III, while acknowledging the existence of possible stratigraphical distinctions.¹ Others, since the publication of a few deposits from Knossos, have pointed out the existence of one final stage of the period, which has been called MM IIIB/LM IA transitional (or, more recently, “Early LM IA”).² There has recently been a sense of unease with this transitional phase, and a few scholars have returned to Evans’s traditional division into MM IIIA and MM IIIB.³ All of these chronological uncertainties reflect the fact that the condition, form and status of the palaces and settlements are uncertain in MM III. The debate has, however, focused so far almost exclusively on north-central Crete, largely because of the comparative lack of pertinent published material from the other regions of Crete, in particular the western Mesara. Nevertheless, the western Mesara contains a rich series of MM III deposits, only partly published, and it is one of the few areas of Crete that possesses a complete range of ceramic evidence, since palatial, private and funerary contexts are all represented.

THE VALUE OF SOUTH-CENTRAL CRETE: PRESENT DEBATE AND PROPOSALS

The present status of the MM III chronological sequence of the western Mesara is defined by a series of issues concerning the synchronization of the different ceramic assemblages. The stratigraphical

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to the Italian Archaeological School of Athens for permission to reproduce pottery drawings from Chalara (Phaistos) and Ayia Triada and the unpublished photos from room LXXIII at Phaistos. Pottery from the new excavations at Ayia Triada was drawn by G. Fatuzzo. Inking was made by him and myself. A special debt of gratitude is owed to the Italian School at Athens for having given me continuous support during the last five years. My warm thanks also go to Michael Metcalfe for correcting the English text.

¹ LEVI 1976; WALBERG 1976; CARINCI 1983; CARINCI 1989; BETANCOURT 1985; WALBERG 1992; STÜRMEYER 1992; VAN DE MOORTELT 1997.

² POPHAM *et al.* 1984; WARREN and HANKEY 1989; WARREN 1991; NIEMEIER 1994; WARREN 1999. For the use of the term “Early LM IA” see VAN DE MOORTELT 1997 and SHAW *et al.* 2001, 89–94.

sequence of Phaistos has been a subject of long debate, ever since Doro Levi produced a new historical sequence that was quite different from that proposed by Arthur Evans for Knossos. The result was the willful creation of a new terminology, which was soon challenged by Levi's diligent collaborator and architect Enrica Fiandra.⁴ This complex debate made it very difficult for researchers to compare the material from Phaistos with that from Knossos and the other centres of Crete.⁵ Levi presented his "protopalatial phase III" as a homogeneous building phase both in the palace, where phase III pottery was scarcely attested, and in the settlement. This allowed him to propose a substantial unity in the succession of connected building periods and pottery styles. A complete collection of all the ceramic forms and decorations of his third phase was provided by the extremely rich finds of two tholos tombs not far from the village of Kamilari.⁶ Filippo Carinci's papers on MM III pottery deposits of Knossos and Phaistos have stressed the limits of subdivisions of this period, and they also have put phase III in a more clear chronological framework, as the scholar has interpreted phase III as the first stage of Neopalatial period, equivalent with MM III.⁷ To similar conclusions arrives Aleydis Van de Moortel, who has offered an useful overview of phase III pottery deposits from Phaistos.⁸ Thanks to re-examinations of stratigraphical sequences and results from new excavations Carinci has recently supposed the possible existence of a subdivision within MM III.⁹ So far, the 'protopalatial phase III' has been regarded as a single ceramic period equivalent to MM IIIA, and the Kamilari deposits have been considered as candidates for a possible advanced stage of MM III.

Excavations at Ayia Triada and Kommos have greatly expanded the number of MM III deposits: the new cycle of excavations at Ayia Triada, begun by Vincenze La Rosa in 1977, has brought to light a substantial series of MM III deposits that attest the

existence of a later stage of MM III,¹⁰ and the excavation program at Kommos has resulted in publication of a great mass of MM III pottery by Philip Betancourt.¹¹ This work has been recently augmented by Aleydis Van de Moortel. She has again denied the possibility of a distinction being made within MM III and, as a result of recent excavations, she has distinguished three LM IA chronological subphases ("Early", "Advanced", and "Final") and two LM IB subphases ("Early" and "Late").¹²

Preliminary results from the study of MM III material at Phaistos and Ayia Triada suggest that it is possible to distinguish two phases within this period, as well as to understand the transition between MM III and LM IA in this region. A substantial confirmation of this sequence, to be discussed in this paper, comes from Kommos, based for the most part on the evidence of the original publication of the Kommos MM pottery by Betancourt, supplemented by the important stratigraphical observations of James Wright.¹³ Van de Moortel and Jeremy Rutter have presented further assessments.¹⁴

My previous reexamination of the ceramic deposits from Phaistos showed that there are some grounds for defining separate MM IIIA and IIIB phases, though the latter period is scarcely attested.¹⁵ The deposits from Ayia Triada, on which I have also worked, document a clear presence of MM IIIB at this site.¹⁶ At the risk of anticipating my conclusions, I should state in advance that through the combination of stratigraphical and stylistic evidence alone from Phaistos, Ayia Triada, and Kommos we are in a position to propose a sequence that is valid for the entire south-central area of Crete. An important obstacle to our sequence is the *terminology*: after 100 years of excavations and research, we still are not able to propose a single terminology (Fig. 1). But to what extent is the present debate on the MM III terminology a *real* or *unfounded* prob-

³ BERNINI 1995; HOOD 1996; LA ROSA 2002a; MACDONALD 2002; KNAPPETT and CUNNINGHAM 2003; MACDONALD 2004.

⁴ FIANDRA 1961–62.

⁵ The difficulty of establishing a link between the Levi and Fiandra systems is clearly demonstrated by the recent publication of MacGillivray, where, having accepted that the two systems are not compatible, he opts for the second one as more relevant for the comparative material from Knossos. MACGILLIVRAY 1998, 99–100, fig. 3.2.

⁶ LEVI 1961–62.

⁷ CARINCI 1983; CARINCI 1989.

⁸ VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 305, 349–86, 796–813.

⁹ CARINCI 2001, 222–3. A correlation between phase III and MM IIIA is in LA ROSA 1995a.

¹⁰ LA ROSA 1977.

¹¹ BETANCOURT 1990.

¹² VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 225–74; SHAW *et al.* 2001, 89–94.

¹³ WRIGHT 1996.

¹⁴ VAN DE MOORTELE 1997; SHAW *et al.* 2001, 25–110; Rutter 2006. I am greatly indebted to J. Rutter for useful discussions on stratigraphic and ceramic issues at Kommos.

¹⁵ GIRELLA 2003a.

¹⁶ GIRELLA 2003b ; GIRELLA 2005.

L. GIRELLA	D. LEVI-F. CARINCI (1976, 1988)	PH. BETANCOURT (1990)	A. VAN DE MOORTELT (1997, 2001)
	Phaistos-Ayia Triada	Kommos	Kommos
MM IIIA MM IIIB	III Protopalatial phase III Protopalatial phase	MM III Transitional MM III/LM IA	MM III Early LM IA

Fig. 1 Proposed synchronization of MM III stages in the western Mesara

lem? In recent works on Kommos, for instance, one might note the problems that arise from combining the traditional chronological division with the different terminology used by the Canadian mission. To my mind, comparison with the Kommos data does not risk a danger of misrepresenting the ceramic composition of the deposits. Moreover, the different terminology used by Van de Moortel and Rutter does not at all compromise the sequence here presented, but rather, on my interpretation, in fact corroborates the “traditional” terminology as identified by Evans at Knossos. On the basis of that interpretation, I propose the following synchronisms for the western Mesara in Fig. 1.

Through this synchronization it will be possible to gain a much deeper understanding of the complex and changing ceramic production and ceramic style of the western Mesara in MM III, as well as to provide a key contribution to the current debate about the phasing of MM III on Crete as a whole. The main goal of this reassessment will be not only to clarify the local sequence in south-central Crete, but also to facilitate comparison with the other centers of the island, as well as those of the north and southeast Aegean in which MM III pottery (as imports or local imitations) has been found.

THE EVIDENCE FROM PHAISTOS AND AYIA TRIADA: THE STRATIGRAPHY

The rich series of Levi’s phase III pottery from Phaistos appears to comprise a single horizon of deposits, with the consequence that these have been pulled in earlier or later directions on the basis of different parallels. A brief discussion of the ceramic evidence is necessary to understanding the topographical distribution of the deposits as well as their stratigraphical situation. The following data has been obtained from the preliminary publications of Luigi Pernier and D. Levi. I have also included ceramic and

stratigraphical observations on the deposits on which I have worked (Fig. 2).¹⁷

In the palace, MM III ceramic deposits are scarcely attested. The MM IIIA foundation deposit of room 50 was recovered under the alabaster slabs of the Second Palace. The MM IIIA floor deposit of room 18 was stratified below a previous layer of LM IB; the MM IIIA vases were found on a paved area. From the oldest excavations of the palace two other possible MM IIIA contexts are known: the first is a fill dumped in a lustral basin, below room 70 of the Second Palace. The floor deposit of room XLV-22 was sandwiched stratigraphically between two floors of MM IB–II and LM I. In the northeast area of the palace another complex of buildings was explored by Pernier. Only the central sector (room 103) was modified in LM I, while the eastern and western blocks were in use and abandoned during MM III. The scant stratigraphical information does not allow us to clearly interpret the deposit of room 101 (i.e., floor deposit, collapsed deposit, or fill), while the pottery assemblage from rooms 102 and 104 belongs to a floor deposit. There are no trace of subsequent occupation in these three rooms until LM III.

Two main areas were intensely occupied in the settlement during MM III. The homogeneous deposit from the north room of the *Bastione Ovest* was presumably an original MM IIIA floor that collapsed from an upper level of the building. A little to the south, a MM IIIA floor level was represented in the small room CIV, which is connected with the *Bastione Ovest*. The *Casa a Sud della Rampa* (rooms LXXXVI–XCIII, XCVI), connecting the lower and the upper court, is represented by the basement of a large building, with homogeneous MM IIIA floor deposits covered by stones and slabs that have fallen from upper floors. An almost complete sequence is documented in the southern area. Underneath LM IA or IB floors are the stratified MM IIIB floor deposits

¹⁷ A synthesis of the stratigraphical situation of the main MM III deposits from Phaistos is in VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 340–1.

<i>AREA</i>	<i>MM IIIA</i>	<i>MM IIIB</i>
Palace	Room 18, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, pp. 374–377) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 796–797) Room 50, foundation deposit (LEVI 1976, 405–406) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 796–797) Room XLV–22, floor deposit (PERNIER 1935, 121–124) Below room 70, fill (PERNIER 1935, 327–331)	
NE Quarter	Room 101, collapsed floor (?) Room 102, floor deposit (PERNIER 1935, 353–360) (PERNIER BANTI 1951, 392–294) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 797–798)	Room 104, floor deposit (PERNIER 1935, 367–375) (PERNIER BANTI 1951, 399–404) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 797–798)
Area West of the Court I	<i>Bastione Ovest</i> , collapsed floor (LEVI 1976, 341–342) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 807–809) Room CIV, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 346–347; LA ROSA 2002b, 37, fig. 57)	
Area South of the Court I: <i>Casa a Sud della Rampa</i>	Rooms LXXXVI–LXXXVII, collapsed floors (LEVI 1976, 490–491; LEVI CARINCI 1988, 367; LA ROSA 2002b, 638) Rooms LXXXVIII–XCIII, XCVI, floor deposits (LEVI 1976, fig. 755, 758, 763–767; LEVI CARINCI 1988, 367–369; VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 798–802; CARINCI 2001)	
Area South of the Court I	Kouloura III, fill (LEVI 1976, 354–358)(VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 798)	
Area West of the Court LXX	Rooms LXXV–LXXVI, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 457–468) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 802–804)	Below room CC, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 472–473) North of room CC, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 307–308)
Area South of the Palace	House of the SW slopes, floor deposit (PERNIER 1902, 19–20, fig. 5, 43; PERNIER 1935, 161–166)	Room LXXI, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 428–431) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 804) Room LXXII, fill (LEVI 1976, 441–443) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 804–806) Room LXXIII, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 432–436) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 804–806)
<i>Acropoli Mediana</i>	Trench 1955, fill (MM II–IIIA–IIIB) (LEVI 1976, 595–598)	Trench 1966, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 596–597) Trench 1969, floor deposit (LEVI 1976, 602–604) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 809)
Chalara Nord	Rooms ι , κ , λ , λ' , floor deposits (LEVI 1976, 675–679; VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 806–807; GIRELLA 2003a)	
Chalara South	Below rooms η' , ϵ' , fill (LEVI 1976, 688–693; VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 807; GIRELLA 2003a)	
Seli		Volakakis house, construction and initial use (LA ROSA CUCUZZA 2001, 196–197)
Kouses	Previous occupation of the house (MARINATOS 1924–25)	Previous occupation of the house (MARINATOS 1924–25)
Kamilari tholos tombs	Tholos of Grigori Koriphi (LEVI 1961, 62; LEVI 1976, 703–741) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 810–813)	Tholos of Grigori Koriphi (LEVI 1961, 62; LEVI 1976, 703–741) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 810–813)
Kamilari tholos tombs		Tholos of Milona Lakko (LEVI 1961, 62, 107–109; LEVI 1976, 742–743) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 813)

Fig. 2 MM IIIA and IIIB deposits at Phaistos and neighbouring sites

AREA	MM IIIA	MM IIIB
Sacello	<p><i>Sacello</i>, below LM I floor, fill (MM IIIB–IIIA) (LA ROSA 1977, 312–313)</p> <p>Room α, layer III (LA ROSA 1979–80, 65, fig. 15 c–d) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 748)</p> <p>Room γ, layer IV (LA ROSA 1979–80, 77–78, figg. 31–32) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 748–749)</p>	
Villa	<p>Corridor 74, foundation deposit (LA ROSA 1977, 302, fig. 12) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 749)</p> <p><i>Bastione</i>, room South of the <i>Bastione</i>, fill (LA ROSA 1995b, 526)</p>	<p>Below rooms 62, 65a and 66a, layer VII, fill (LA ROSA 1985, 192, pl. I; LA ROSA 1989, 82, pl. XVI) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 749–750)</p> <p>Below room 14, fill (HALBIERR <i>et al.</i> 1977, 93; LA ROSA 1997, fig. 8)</p>
North Sector		<p><i>Edificio Ciclopico</i>, SW area, layers III–IV, fill (LA ROSA 1979–80, 145–146, fig. 99)</p> <p><i>Edificio Ciclopico</i>, SW area, central part, fill (LA ROSA 1979–80, 142, fig. 96)</p> <p><i>Edificio Ciclopico</i>, NE room, layer III, fill (MM IIIB and LM IA) (LA ROSA 1979–80, 123–125)</p> <p><i>Edificio Ovest</i>, room b, below <i>Casa del Vassoio Tripodato</i> (LA ROSA 1989, 89, pl. XV)</p> <p>Below room Q, <i>Casa della Soglia Alabastrina</i>, layer III, destruction deposit (D'ACATA 1989) (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 750–751)</p>
NE Sector		<p><i>Complesso della Mazza di Breccia</i>, Below room a, layer 7, fill (LA ROSA 1992–93, figg. 68–70)</p> <p><i>Complesso della Mazza di Breccia</i>, trench M/4, layer 30e–d, f, dump (CARINCI 2003, 137; GIRELLA 2003b; GIRELLA 2005)</p>

Fig. 3 MM IIIA and IIIB deposits at Ayia Triada

of rooms LXXI and LXXIII and that below the Geometric room CC. The floor deposit north of this Geometric room was found at the same level, but, in this part, the MM IIIB floor was stratified above a MM IIB level. Likewise, a LM IA fill covered a similar deposit containing MM III vases. Underneath the Geometric level of room AA were two MM IIIA floor deposits (rooms LXXV–LXXVI). The MM IIIB floor deposits of the *Acropoli Mediana*, which were found in 1966 and 1969, were without any stratigraphical indication. The MM IIIA floor deposits of rooms ι, κ, λ–λ', in the northern area of the Chalará quarter, were covered by Geometric and Hellenistic levels. From the southern part, a dump was pushed into a MM IIB–IIIA building for leveling operations during the construction of a

LM I mansion, and included a great deal of fine pottery, primarily MM IIB and IIIA.¹⁸

A re-examination of the stratigraphical sequence of the Levi excavations was carried out during 2000 and 2001 in the *Casa a Sud della Rampa*.¹⁹ The most surprising result was the discovery that the house had already been a large structure in MM IIB, and that during MM IIIA it was simply modified by the addition of more rooms. Observations about the architecture and the stratigraphy now make it possible to distinguish between different architectural phases, all of them *within* MM IIIA. Some of the stratigraphical data are considered useful in understanding the date of the MM IIIA modification of the house.²⁰ The most important gain is the identifi-

¹⁸ LEVI 1967–68; GIRELLA 2003a, 112–209.

¹⁹ CARINCI 2001; LA ROSA 2002b.

²⁰ The evidence comes from room LXXXIX, layer 602 (LA ROSA 2002b, 645, fig. 60, pl. VIIA), room XCI, foundation

deposit (LEVI 1976, fig. 760; LA ROSA 2002b, 649, pl. VIIA), room XCII, layer 401 (LA ROSA 2002b, 652, fig. 105, pl. VIIA), and room XCIII, pit 903, foundation deposit (LA ROSA 2002b, 654, figs. 115–7, tav. VIIA).

cation of the layers of preparation and the foundation deposits of four rooms of the house, just after MM IIB (that is, the initial stage of MM IIIA). The well-known groups of pots found on the floors represent the destruction deposit of the house at the end of MM IIIA. After this event, the entire house appears to have been abandoned.

In marked contrast with Phaistos, MM III was represented at Ayia Triada by a much smaller number of discrete deposits (Fig. 3).²¹ In the area of *Sacello*, MM IIIA deposits were stratified above MM II (room a: layer IV) and below LM IA (room γ : layer III) deposits. Underneath the LM IA plaster floor of the *Sacello* another MM IIIA deposit was isolated by Luisa Banti. The evidence for the main Villa is represented by two fundamental deposits. The first is a foundation deposit of purely MM IIIA date; it provides the evidence for the Villa's initial use in MM IIIA. The MM IIIB fill below rooms 62, 65 and 66 was associated with a partially preserved structure. This dumped fill is covered by a second layer (VI), containing LM IA ceramic debris. A MM IIIB fill under the slabs of room 14 was found in 1913.²² In the north sector of the settlement the destruction deposit of the *Casa della Soglia Alabastrina* was associated with use of the room during MM IIIB.²³ The precise interpretation of the fills below the *Edificio Ciclopico* remains at present uncertain. Until a thorough study is undertaken of the pottery and stratigraphy of the fills, there is no objective evidence for determining the date with precision.

In the northeast sector, the recent cycle of excavations has brought to light a series of MM IIIB fills stratified below LM IA (trench M/4) and LM IB layers (room a).²⁴

We are now in a better position to return to the question of a possible division within MM III. It is clear that, at Phaistos and Ayia Triada, in no case

does there appear to be evidence of a sequence of superimposed floors assignable to MM IIIA and IIIB. This anomaly could be explained as a consequence of the different strategy of reconstruction after the hypothetical earthquake destruction at the end of MM IIIA. None of the MM IIIA floors at Phaistos was modified or repaired after the impressive destruction. Also of significance are the MM IIIB floor deposits and fills followed shortly afterward by a second destruction horizon. More specifically, the series of MM IIIB fills at Ayia Triada show the great magnitude of the event and the new reorganization of the settlement within LM IA.

THE EVIDENCE FROM KOMMOS: THE STRATIGRAPHY

Important evidence for a stratigraphical distinction within MM III comes from Kommos (Fig. 4).²⁵ Excavations since 1976 have brought to light an exceptional number of MM III deposits. The published data allow us to fill the gap at Phaistos and Ayia Triada. The large collection of collapsed or abandoned floor deposits comes from the four main areas so far explored: the Hilltop, the Central Hillside, the area north of House X and the Civic Centre. The evidence suggests that the MM III site suffered a devastating destruction.²⁶ Most of these deposits have been assigned to MM III.²⁷ This date corresponds to MM IIIA as it used for both stratigraphical and ceramic observations in the present article. As argued by both Betancourt and Wright, there is no evidence for the immediate reoccupation of the majority of the buildings after the earthquake. Nevertheless, some of the rooms (rooms 29, 38, 44, and 51) exhibit evidence of architectural modifications (blocked doorways, raised floor levels) and preserve floor deposits.²⁸ Aside from the rooms constructed after the earthquake (rooms 7b, 8, and 9, spaces IA and 33S of the Central Hillside Area, and rooms 23, 24, 28 of Southern Hilltop Area), these secondary

²¹ See also VAN DE MOORTEL 1997, 279–80. CARINCI 2003, 128–9.

²² HALBHERR *et al.* 1977, 92–3; LA ROSA 1997, 88, fig. 8. But the mention of one fragment in dark-on-light “reed style” may indicate the mixed nature of the deposit, with some LM IA inclusions.

²³ To the same chronology we assign the pottery that comes from a layer under the floor of the *Casa del Vassoio Tripodato*, under the *Edificio Ovest*: LA ROSA 1989, 89, pl. XV. The pottery is currently being studied by D. Puglisi.

²⁴ GIRELLA 2005.

²⁵ Most of the considerations included in the text and table

are based largely on the Ph.D. dissertation of A. Van de Moortel and the work of J. Rutter: VAN DE MOORTEL 1997, 24–9, 225–44, and especially 698–730; RUTTER 2006.

²⁶ BETANCOURT 1990, 37.

²⁷ BETANCOURT 1990, 96–123, 220–31; SHAW and SHAW 1993, 134–6; WRIGHT 1996, 140–99; VAN DE MOORTEL 1997, 698–726.

²⁸ BETANCOURT 1990, 46–8. Different opinions are reported in WRIGHT 1996, 142–3, 187–9, 238–9; VAN DE MOORTEL 1997, 27.

<i>AREA</i>	<i>MM IIIA</i>	<i>MM IIIB</i>
Northern Hilltop	Space NHT 14–15* (B. 117–121; VDM. 719–721)	
Southern Hilltop	Trench 6A* (B. 96–101; VDM. 718–719)	Room 23 (B. 127–129; VDM. 728–729) Room 24 (B. 124–126; VDM. 729–730) Room 28 (B. 50; VDM. 730)
Central Hillside, North Building	Space 16* (B. 113–116; VDM. 701–702) Rooms 57–59 (VDM. 717–718) Room 15 (B. 131–132; VDM. 700–701) Space 20* (B. 52; VDM. 702)	Space 14 (VDM. 729)
Central Hillside, East Building	Room 28 (B. 132–133; VDM. 707–708) Room 29 (Lower floor) (B. 121–123; VDM. 708) Room 30 (B. 53; VDM. 709) Room 31 (B. 134–135; VDM. 709) Room 38 (Lower floor) (B. 135; VDM. 709)	Space 338 (B. 135) Room 29 (Upper floor) (B. 133–134; VDM. 709) Room 38 (Upper floor) (B. 135–136; VDM. 710)
Central Hillside, South Building	Room 44 (Lower floor) (B. 136; VDM. 711–712) Room 51 (Lower floor) (B. 140; VDM. 715) Room 45 (B. 137; VDM. 713) Room 46 (B. 138; VDM. 713) Room 47 (B. 138; VDM. 714) Room 48 (B. 139; VDM. 714) Room 49 (B. 139–140; VDM. 715) Space 52* Room 23 (B. 132; VDM. 702–703) Room 25 (B. 101–112; VDM. 703–707)	Room 44 (Upper floor) (B. 136–137; VDM. 712) Room 51 (Upper floor) (B. 140–141; VDM. 716) Room 7b (VDM. 726–727) Room 8 (B. 51; VDM. 727) Room 9 (B. 131; VDM. 727–728)
Central Hillside, Rampa del mare		Space 1A (B. 130–131; VDM. 726)
Southern Area	Room north of X2* (VDM. 698–699)	
Southern Area, Building T	Room E (R. Group 1) Room 23, first floor (R. Group 2a) Room 24a, first floor (R. Group 3a; VDM. 724) Room 24b, first floor (R. Group 4a; VDM. 725)	Room 23, second floor (R. Group 2b; VDM. 724) Room 24a, second floor (R. Group 3b; VDM. 725) Room 24b, second floor (R. Group 4b; VDM. 725) Room 25a, first and second floor (R. Group 5a–b) Room 19 (R. Group 6; VDM. 723) Room 42 (R. Group 7; VDM. 726) Space 16 (R. Group 8; VDM. 722) South of Building T, south façade* (R. Group 12) Space 36, west end (R. Groups 9 a–b) Space 35, west end (R. Group 10) Building AA and bottom of the South Stoa kiln dump (R. Group 14)

Fig. 4 MM IIIA and IIIB deposits at Kommos (deposits with * are fills)
(B: BETANCOURT 1990, VDM: VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, R: RUTTER 2006)

floor deposits represent, in my opinion, a MM IIIB modification of MM IIIA floors, following the earthquake in MM IIIA.²⁹ New preliminary data from the

Civic Centre have been published by Van de Moortel; a complete list of MM III and Early LM IA deposits is now published in details by J. Rutter.³⁰ We are able

²⁹ See also RUTTER 2006, 385–9. Rutter is uncertain whether to consider the deposits contemporary with the “Early LM IA” period or whether they represent an intermediate phase between “MM III” and “Early LM IA”.

³⁰ VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 26, 721–6. RUTTER 2006 (Groups 1–14), 381–8.

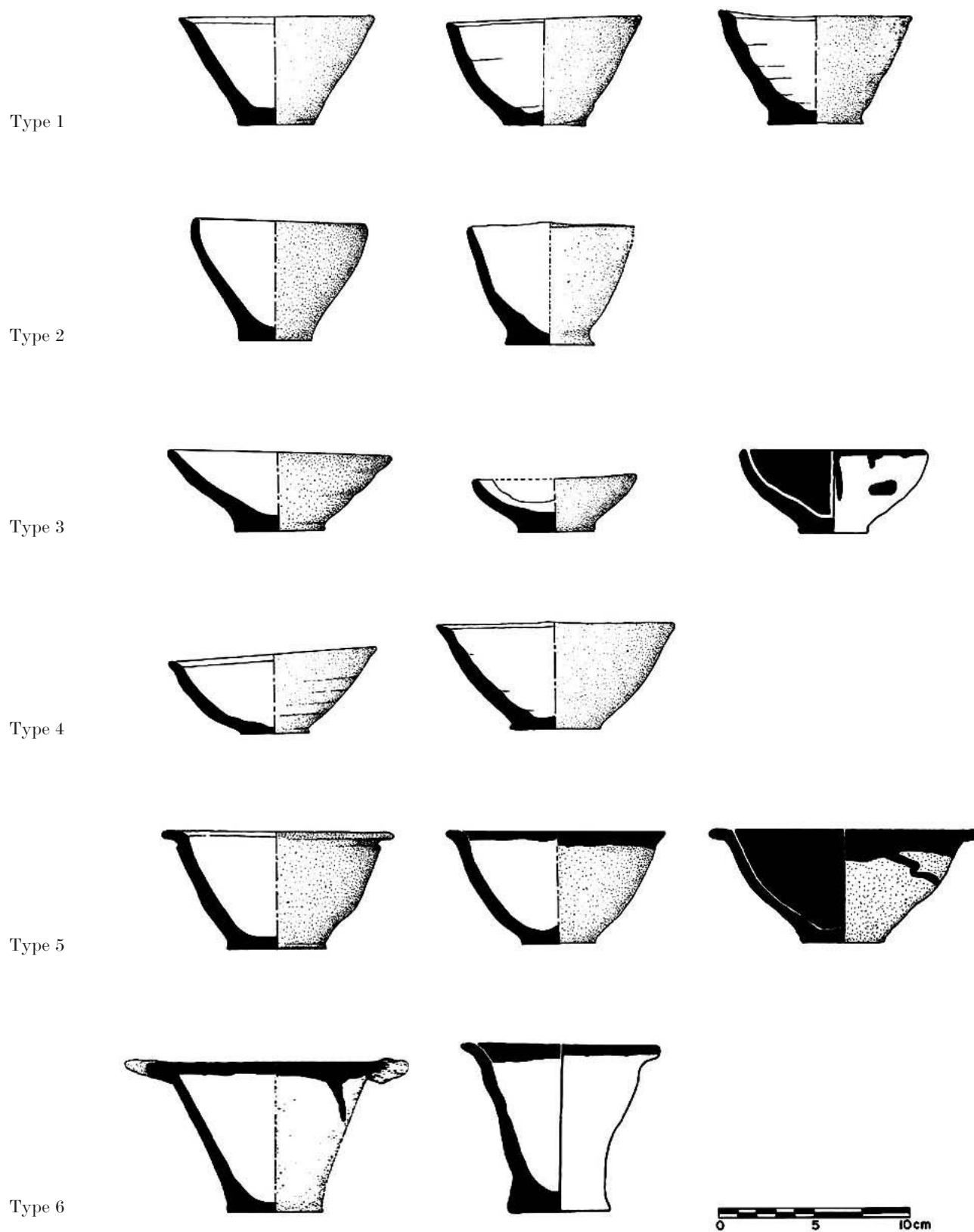


Fig. 5 Typology of MM IIIA handleless cups of South-Central Crete. References: *Type 1*: F 4843b, F 4779c, F 4779a (LEVI & CARINCI, 1988, pl. 101: r, t, x); *Type 2*: F 4974b, F 714b (LEVI & CARINCI, 1988, pl. 101: i, l); *Type 3*: F 4972b, F 716a (LEVI & CARINCI, 1988, pl. 102: n, q); *Type 4*: F 4974c, F 4914a (LEVI & CARINCI, 1988, pl. 102: r, s); *Type 5*: F 5243, F 4979 (LEVI & CARINCI, 1988, pl. 103: g, d); *Type 6*: F 5249c (LEVI & CARINCI, 1988, pl. 103: i); C 4529 (BETANCOURT 1990, fig. 67) (scale 1:3)

to recognize here the same stratigraphical situation as at the Central Hillside Area, that is, a series of MM IIIA floor deposits and fills stratified underneath others of MM IIIB.³¹ These two periodizations are presented in Van de Moortel's publication as MM III and Early LM IA; her entire Early LM IA ceramic assemblage is here considered a MM IIIB phase, well documented at Kommos and with a homogeneous and diagnostic number of stylistic features.

THE EVIDENCE FROM PHAISTOS, AYIA TRIADA AND KOMMOS: THE MM IIIA CERAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Taking up the second goal of this paper, we arrive at *pottery*, aiming to delineate the main stylistic characteristics that distinguish MM IIIA from IIIB. Morphological, decorative and manufacturing aspects of MM III ceramic production have been extensively discussed by various scholars.³² The quality and quantity of the ceramic assemblages of the period allow us to identify strong similarities among the assemblages of all three sites. Some of the changes pointed out here have already been discussed by Betancourt and Van de Moortel.³³

The most notable changes from MM IIB concern the remarkable increase in ordinary vases and the decrease in the variety and quality of high-quality pottery. Whereas morphological changes are less pronounced among the pouring and closed vessels, there is a high variability among the open shapes. The handleless cup production illustrates this variability. Handleless cups are as frequent in MM III as in MM II, but are now badly made, showing an irregu-

lar range of shapes, variable wall thickness, diameter, height, and capacity and a number of faults: deformed and irregular walls, mostly small but sometimes medium and large nonplastic inclusions, frequent fingerprints left on the cups, marks from lifting the cup from the hump, sloped bases from uneven cutting of the cups from the hump. Characterization of the evolution and typology is desirable.³⁴ Six types (1–6) may be distinguished for MM IIIA on the basis of technological criteria and dimensions; another two types (7, 8) represent developments newly introduced in MM IIIB (Fig. 5).³⁵ One important point must be stressed: we must rid ourselves of the impression that designated types occur in only one ceramic phase. Some MM IIIA types are attested during MM IIIB, but they represent different developments, and other types that occur in MM IIIA show some changes in MM IIIB (Fig. 6).³⁶

A second significant criterion for distinguishing MM IIIA and IIIB types is the system of light-on-dark and polychrome decoration, which has so far been considered to be remarkably uniform over a variety of shapes. Among the striking features, in general, is the simplification in the color schemes and motives, as well as the almost total disappearance of impressed decoration on the table ware. The syntactic arrangements are limited to the upper part of the vessels, and include few auxiliary motives. A key pattern of MM IIIA is the thin spirals that usually run on the upper part of straight-sided cups and on the shoulder or belly of the bridge-spouted and open-mouthed jars.³⁷ Two important MM IIIA key types

³¹ RUTTER 2006, 391–5, 402–3. See groups 2a–2b, 3a–3b, 4a–4b, 11–2.

³² See the basic work of WALBERG (1976); also STÜRMER 1992; WALBERG 1992; VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 642–54.

³³ BETANCOURT 1990, 37–41; VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 225–35, 379–86, 508–13.

³⁴ A. Van de Moortel has presented a thorough typology showing various type of cups through MM II, MM III, LM IA, and LM IB phases. VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 32–81, fig. 5–10. Van de Moortel's work has been useful to me as a frame of reference. The present typology is largely based on my own work on the handleless cups from Chalara (Phaistos) and Ayia Triada, and it aims to offer a more simplified typology, as well as to stress the existence of regional variants among the three main sites of the Mesara. As far as the first aspect is concerned, type 1 corresponds to VAN DE MOORTELE type B, type 2 comprehends types D, E, F (as these last two are ovoid and semiglobular variants of D), type 3 corresponds to types C and N (the latter is a variant of C), type 4 is A in Van de Moortel's typology, and type 5 comprehends types J and M (the latter is a variant of J).

Type 6 is here considered a handleless cup, whereas Van de Moortel describes it as tumbler (VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 117–8). Finally, types 7 and 8 of MM IIIB comprehend respectively types P and V at Kommos.

³⁵ I prefer to retain the term "handleless cup", even though it is not as widespread as the term "conical cup". The first describes better than the second the whole shapes of the form (conical, semiglobular, ovoid). The present typology takes into consideration previous works that have involved an establishing of the classification of Minoan handleless cups (FIANDRA 1973; BETANCOURT 1986; GILLIS 1990; VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, figs. 6, 7), but is largely based on my own work on the handleless cups from Chalara (Phaistos) and Ayia Triada.

³⁶ So, for example, type 8 is attested during MM IIIA at Kommos by two examples, but is more frequent during MM IIIB. At the time of this writing, Kommos is the only site that attests the presence and the evolution of this type.

³⁷ For Phaistos: LEVI 1976, pls. 198d–f; 200m; 206b, h; 207a–i, l; 211n. For Ayia Triada: LA ROSA 1977, fig. 19a. For Kommos: BETANCOURT 1990, figs. 25, 30, 31, 34, 37; pls. 29, 42, 46.

Type 1	Unpainted, with slightly convex or straight-flaring walls, and rounded or flattened rim.	Type 5	A convex side cup with outturned rim unpainted or dipped in orange/red/brown paint.
Type 2	Unpainted, with semi ovoid profile, mostly bell shaped.	Type 6	Straight rimmed cup, with or without lug handles. The rims are usually dipped in dark paint and a variant has swashes of paint on interior and drips on exterior.
Type 3	Unpainted: a semi-globular cup with convex walls and straight rim.	Type 7	Ovoid or semiglobular cup with straight and rounded rim, dark coated inside and outside.
Type 4	Unpainted: a large cup with convex walls, thick and gently outturned or inturned rim, characterized by spiraling finger marks on the interior.	Type 8	Ovoid cup with straight rim, dark coated with thick light on dark retorted spirals and white bands on the rim and base.

Fig. 6 Proposed typology of MM III handleless cups

are the straight-sided cups with a series of horizontal grooves cut in the side at regular intervals, and the type with a rounded horizontal bulge in the middle.³⁸ Both types are very rare in south Crete, but common in Knossos deposits of MM IIB–IIIA, such as the so-called West Polychrome deposit.³⁹ The first of these types, coated in black with white dots in the rim zone (the so-called “White-Spotted Style”), is one of the main hallmarks of MM IIIA at Knossos.⁴⁰ The “White-Spotted Style” in southern Crete is characterized by a spraying of the entire surface of the cup with white paint. Examples from Phaistos suggest that this style begins in MM IIB, when the surface is carelessly sprayed; but, as far as I can see, it also occurs during MM III, and no clear distinction is apparent between the IIIA and IIIB phase.⁴¹

The main characteristics that I have summarized occur at Phaistos and Kommos, in differing percentages, but not at Ayia Triada, which does not yet show a clear MM IIIA phase. At Phaistos and Kommos, the varied nature of the deposits (fills, dumps, destruction floor deposits, and foundation deposits) allows us to

identify on stylistic grounds the initial and final stage of MM IIIA. At Phaistos this first subphase can be recognized primarily from the deposits of the eastern rooms LXXXVI–LXXXVII and from the foundation deposits below rooms XCI and XCIII of the *Casa a Sud della Rampa* (Fig. 7). I would assign the assemblage from the collapsed floor of the West Bastion and the deposits of rooms 18 and 50 in the palace to the same subphase.⁴² The key feature of this initial stage is the persistence of the MM IIB light-on-dark pattern tradition, clearly noticeable in the table ware. In north-central Crete the major comparanda for this subphase come from group E at Knossos and from the destruction deposit at Anemospilia/Archanes. In respect to the decorated pottery, the subdivision of the surface into two or three horizontal zones and the use of motives originated during the MM II period are two decisive aspects. The motives are: spiky foliate bands, rows of dots, interlocking S-spirals, crescents, chevrons, solid arcs, quirks, cross-hatchings, rows of arcs, and the heavy open running spirals in which closed spirals resemble crashing waves. This last pat-

³⁸ LEVI 1976, pl. 209p (F 4755); pl. 212s, t (F 3202, 3708).

³⁹ MACGILLIVRAY 1998, 71 (types 11, 12), fig. 2.10, pls. 17, 18, 79, 81, 156. The provenience of the cups from mixed contexts at Knossos (groups E and P) leaves open the chronology between the close of MM IIB and early MM IIIA, but the occurrence of this type from deposit B of the Acropolis Houses indicates that, produced before the end of the MM IIB, it was a key form of MM IIIA (CATLING *et al.* 1979, fig. 18.49, 95–8). There is one example of a straight-sided cup with horizontal bulge from Knossos, which is attested in a possible MM IIIA context; see MACGILLIVRAY 1998, 72 (type 13), pls. 17, 79.

⁴⁰ The type is also attested in large numbers from the Anemospilia/Archanes deposit and, for this reason, is known in the recent literature as the “Archanes Cup”. SAKELLARAKIS and SAKELLARAKI 1997, fig. 383l, m. For a recent discussion of the Anemospilia assemblages, see GIRELLA 2001. Recent considerations of the “Archanes Cup” are in MACDONALD 2004, fig. 18.1a, d.

⁴¹ LEVI 1976, pl. 210e–m.

⁴² For a preliminary definition of this early MM IIIA phase see CARINCI 2001; GIRELLA 2001.

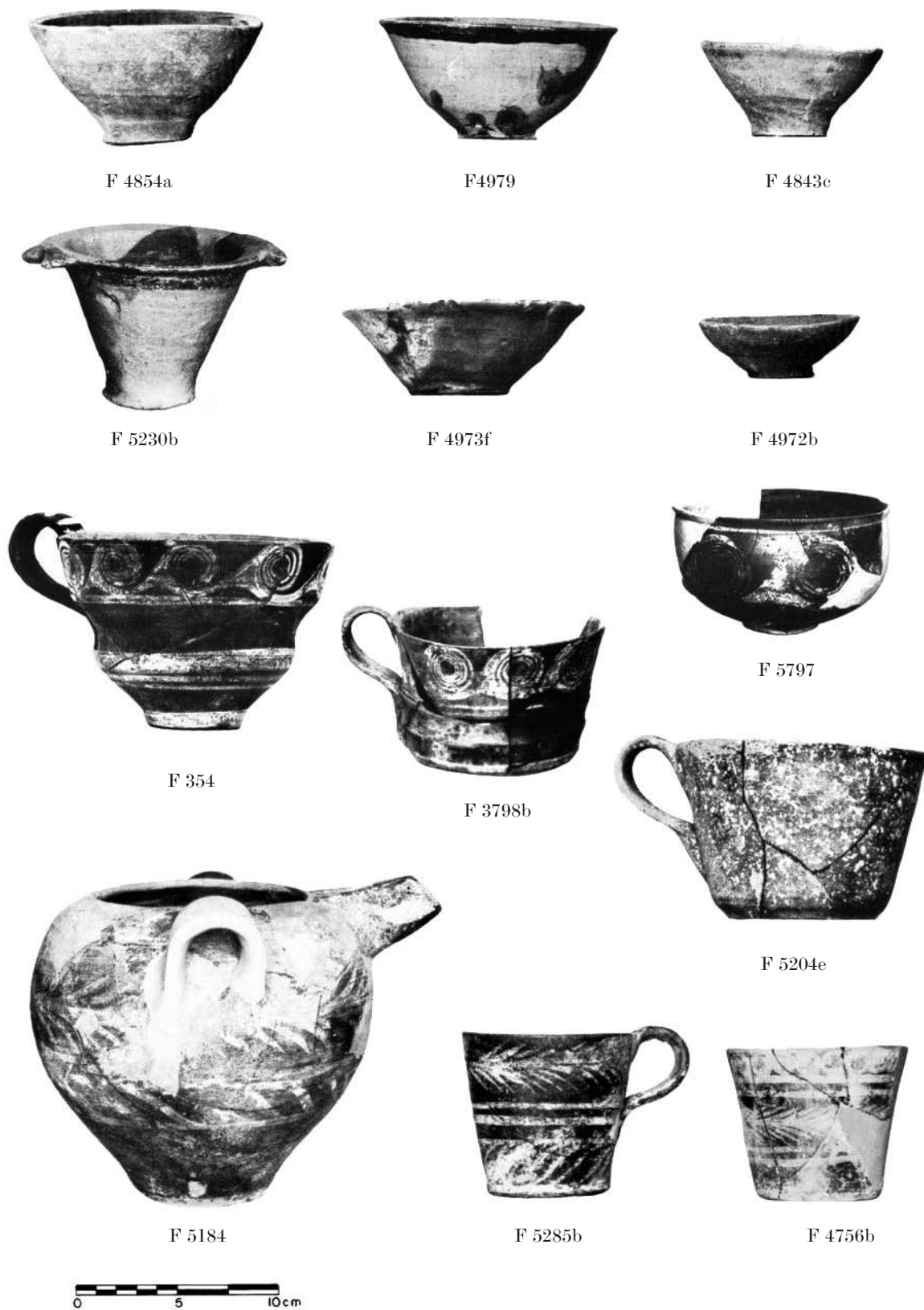


Fig. 7 MM IIIA vessels from *Casa a Sud della Rampa* (Phaistos) (scale 1:3)

tern, which originated in the MM IIB period at Phaistos, appears also in MM IIIA at Phaistos and at Knossos. The assessment of its chronological position is crucial for understanding the date of Minoan and Minoanizing vases outside Crete, such as the small jug from the Troy V cist grave.⁴³

The second subphase of MM IIIA is marked by a general horizon of destruction and is recognizable at both Phaistos and Kommos. Three important new patterns, which seem to exemplify a general stylistic trend of MM IIIB, are (1) the thick retorted spirals, (2) the pictorial style, represented by polychrome vegetal motifs presented in naturalistic manner (lilies, crocuses, palm trees) and (3) the “fancy” style, which occurs on serving vessels, represented by conglomerate patterns, dot rosettes, rows of arcs, lozenges, and triangles. The most important evidence for this second subphase is illustrated by the rich floor deposit of room CH 25 at Kommos (the Pithos Room) and those from the *Casa a Sud della Rampa* at Phaistos (Fig. 8).⁴⁴ The three new patterns, which appear in the mature stage of MM IIIA, continue during MM IIIB (as the common light-on-dark motives of the period), but they seem to drop out in LM IA.

Apart from the strong similarities between the ceramic assemblages at Phaistos and Kommos, I would point out some internal differences that, far from being purely accidental, could reflect different rhythms of ceramic production. First, the rise in the frequency of ordinary vessels is much more pronounced at Kommos than at Phaistos. This trend is observable, for instance, by the occurrence at Kommos of medium-coarse bridge-spouted jars, which are absent at Phaistos.⁴⁵ In addition, I stress the presence of small non-local ceramic fragments decorated with thick tortoise-shell ripple lines, which come from MM IIIA deposits and fills at Kommos.⁴⁶ These are the only examples of lustrous dark-on-light patterned designs found in MM IIIA contexts of the western Mesara. I believe that this speaks in favor of a capacity for Kommos to maintain long-distance relationships. At Phaistos we do not have lustrous dark-on-

light patterned pottery, and the ribbed Vapheio cup F 5219a with tortoise-shell ripple, from room XCIII of the *Casa a Sud della Rampa*, is the only example of a light-on-dark version of this class.

THE EVIDENCE FROM PHAISTOS, AYIA TRIADA AND KOMMOS: THE MM IIIB CERAMIC PERSPECTIVE

If we leave behind MM IIIA in order to concentrate on MM IIIB, the apparent lack of evidence may seem awkward. As was mentioned above, the identification of MM IIIB has been seriously obscured by the use of different terminologies. My present opinion is that deposits with the same composition have been labeled with diverse terminologies on the basis of the absence or presence of characteristics considered to be elements of a lower chronology (that is, LM IA), such as the occurrence of the lustrous dark-on-light patterned vases.⁴⁷ The significance of the diverse and asymmetrical distribution of these characteristics lies in our ability to understand whether the characteristics are contemporary. It is proposed here that the validity of using one single terminology for MM IIIB is supported by the similarities of the three sites, despite some internal differences. The variations in the composition of the deposits are here interpreted as local differences in ceramic production that are much more pronounced in MM IIIB than in MM IIIA. In fact, MM IIIB presents an unstable picture, relative to MM IIIA, in the distribution of ceramic features. The presence or the absence of such characteristics, taken here to reflect crucial changes in ceramic production, also have relevant consequences for distinguishing MM III from LM IA. So, for example, the occurrence of lustrous dark-on-light decorated pottery may not be a reliable criterion for identifying MM IIIB in the western Mesara. This new class is rare and has an unusual fabric that may come from outside the Mesara and may be primarily Knossian.⁴⁸

More useful to our analysis are the changes in production between MM IIIA and IIIB. Here, there are no remarkable differences in manufacturing practices, but noticeable changes in respect to the mor-

⁴³ KORFMANN 1997, 32–8, pls. 31, 32.

⁴⁴ BETANCOURT 1990, 101–12; WRIGHT 1996, 182–4; VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 703–7; CARINCI 2001.

⁴⁵ VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 143, figs. 38, 39.

⁴⁶ BETANCOURT 1990, fig. 27 (C 2578), 38 (C 489), 61 (C 2159, C 4929), 62 (C 1285), 63 (C 644); VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, fig. 81 (C 9033).

⁴⁷ A relevant summary of the problem is in WARREN 1999, 895–6. See also GIRELLA forthcoming b.

⁴⁸ Otherwise, as Driessen and Macdonald clearly pointed out

in a brief, incisive guide to the identification of MM III to LM IB pottery, “It [MM IIIB] is the period *par excellence* of tortoise-shell ripple, and it may be that close study would reveal that certain kinds of tortoise-shell ripple belong here rather than earlier or later” (DRIESSEN and MACDONALD 1997, 19). The role of Knossos in the diffusion of lustrous dark-on-light vessels in south Crete at this stage is very important, but is not yet entirely clear in terms of imports and local production. See also GIRELLA forthcoming b.



Fig. 8 MM IIIA vessels from *Casa a Sud della Rampa* (Phaistos) (scale 1:3)

phological and decorative repertoire. For example, in handleless cup production we observe a reduction in size of types 1 and 5 and thinner walls in type 4, and while no changes are apparent for types 2 and 3, the occurrence of monochrome cups with thick retorted spirals (types 7 and 8) is among the striking features of the production in MM IIIB (Fig. 9). As has been argued elsewhere, the new types 7 and 8 could be a replacement for coated straight-sided cups with handles, whose production seems henceforth less common. However, because the strong similarities between the MM IIIB and the subsequent LM IA production do not always allow us to distinguish

between the two stages, this criterion is most reliable when applied to large assemblages or in combination with other criteria. There are no obvious morphological changes in vessel types, in spite of the occurrence of several regional differences such as the production at Phaistos of pedestal vases, mostly the bridge-spouted jars, which are rare at Kommos. These vessels now have a more elongated profile, coarse coil handles, narrower spouts and pedestal bases. In contrast, among the handleless cups, the type 8, with thick retorted spiral in white paint, represents a typical Kommian feature, as is indicated by the diffusion of this type during the subsequent stage.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 63–5, 73–4; SHAW *et al.* 2001, 43, 66–7.

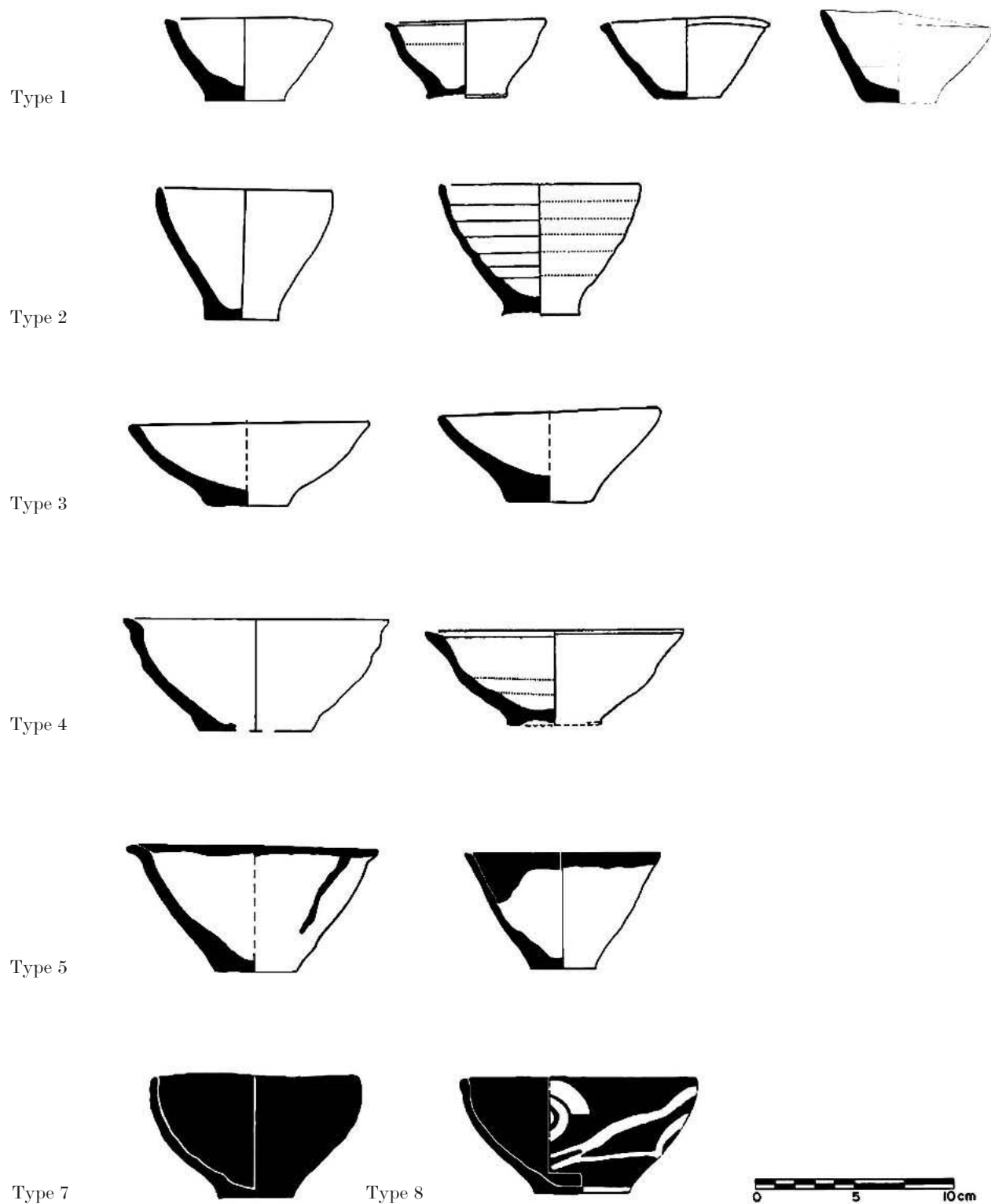


Fig. 9 Typology of MM IIIB handleless cups of South-Central Crete. References: *Type 1*: C 1044 (BETANCOURT 1990, fig. 40); C 7443, C 6651 (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, fig. 7); HTR 2555 (unpublished); *Type 2*: C 232 (BETANCOURT 1990, fig. 59); C 7613 (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, fig. 7); *Type 3*: HTR 2554, HTR 2495 (unpublished); *Type 4*: C 6775, C 7746 (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, fig. 27); *Type 5*: HTR 2566 (unpublished); C 6609 (BETANCOURT 1990, fig. 67); *Type 7*: C 6648 (RUTTER 2005, pl. 3.27); *Type 8*: C 168 (VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, fig. 7) (scale 1:3)

A general trend in the occurrence of dark-ground painted pottery is observable at the three sites. The monochrome coated vessels are more frequent than before, and are associated with a strikingly simple decorative repertoire. Indeed, the polychromy is reduced to marginal and subsidiary motives and the range of light-on-dark patterns is largely restricted to thick retorted spirals, horizontal or wavy lines, and veining. A possible successor to the MM IIIA pictorial group is the so-called “lyrical floral” style, presently reported from Kommos, Ayia Triada, Phaistos, Kamilari (tholos A), and Kouses, but in uncertain or disturbed contexts between MM III and LM IA.⁵⁰ Marked by a high quality of manufacturing, this new style, which is also attested in transport vessels, shows strong links with the vessels in the “finicky” and pictorial style of MM IIIA.

Lustrous dark-on-light patterned vessels are more common in MM IIIB than before. The slight presence of this class at Ayia Triada and Kommos is a notable change of this period; its presence at Phaistos is relatively less than at these two sites.⁵¹ In spite of the asymmetrical composition in the ceramic assemblages at Ayia Triada and Kommos, common motives and techniques can be identified. The decoration consists of tortoise-shell ripple, executed with finer lines and more lustrous dark color than before, but other motives (diagonal and horizontal bands, running spirals, lunettes and solid waves) are represented from this point on. The patterns are restricted to cups, bowls and small pouring vessels. Though we cannot at present identify the centre of production of this new class, Ayia Triada, where the motives show more variety, may be a good candidate. In addition, the non-local fabric of some fragments from Kommos has revealed the existence of imports from north and east Crete.

A number of deposits that illustrate in different combination the characteristics summarized above

can be used to define the MM IIIB ceramic phase in south-central Crete, bearing in mind the problems of the quality and composition of each assemblage. These deposits are currently characterized under different terminologies: MM III or “III protopalatial phase” for Phaistos, MM IIIB/LM IA for Ayia Triada, and MM IIIB/LM IA or Early LM IA for Kommos. Likewise, A. Van de Moortel, using the Kommiian criteria, has considered the two Phaistian deposits, discussed below, having an Early LM IA rather than MM III date.⁵² I propose, nevertheless, that these deposits show the existence of separate MM IIIB and LM IA phases, since their overall character appears to support a MM IIIB date. Most of the vessels that come from the Kamilari tombs could be dated to MM IIIB. The occurrence of monochrome decoration, the limited variety of white patterned vessels (largely limited to thick retorted spirals, veining, vertical reeds and splashes), the frequency of elongated shapes and bridge-spouted jars with pedestal bases are the main indicators for the MM IIIB chronology.⁵³ These criteria for dating can only be confirmed, however, on the basis of further investigation of their stratigraphical position.

Phaistos

Northeast sector of the palace: room 104. The deposit comes from an unstratified context. Nonetheless, it presents a homogeneous composition that is valuable for our analysis.⁵⁴ The deposit comprises mainly table ware, coated in dark brown, red brown and red paint, with one main motive in white paint: the large and thick retorted spirals. The shapes in use include large straight-sided cups, tall and deep hemispherical cups, tall and elongated oval-mouthed amphoras, small jugs with rounded or cutaway neck, and bridge-spouted jars with pedestal bases. Despite the lack of stratigraphical evidence, the deposit may belong to MM IIIB. The main indicators are the

⁵⁰ The most famous example is the amphora F 2723 from the Kamilari tholos tomb: LEVI 1961–62, 119, fig. 169; LEVI 1976, pl. LXXVII, 189 b. On the Lyrical Floral Style see also VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 291–3.

⁵¹ Two neglected lustrous dark-on-light decorated vessels that come from the floor deposit of room LXXIII at Phaistos, cups F 2709 and F 2822, are decorated with horizontal bands on the exterior and tortoise-shell ripple and horizontal bands on the interior (see Fig. 10). At Ayia Triada, in addition to the sherds from the *Casa della Soglia Alabastrina* (D’AGATA 1989, pl. XXIe, g; XXII), we mention the unpublished cup HTR 713 from the dump below rooms 62 and 65a of the Villa and the jug HTR 2559 from trench M/4

in the northeast sector. Lustrous dark-on-light vessels of Kommos, which come from stratigraphical contexts, are the askoi C 1045, C 1066 from room 24 of the Southern Hilltop (BETANCOURT 1990, fig. 40.847, 848), the fragment of closed vessel C 10033 from room 23 of Building T and the stirrup jar C 6654 from room 19 of the same complex (VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 236–7, fig. 81); the latter is considered to be imported from Knossos.

⁵² VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 388–9.

⁵³ LEVI 1961–62, figs. 49–53, 55i, 55m, 67, 73a–c, e, f, 74, 79, 82, 84, 95, 100, 102, 109, 113, 154–7.

⁵⁴ PERNIER 1935, figs. 221–4.

⁵⁵ LEVI 1961–62, fig. 160; LEVI 1976, 432–6.

oversized straight-sided and hemispherical cups; the more elongated form of the closed vessels, in particular that of the oval-mouthed amphoras; the use of the pedestal base with a plastic ring as link; and the markedly high proportion of thick and retorted spiral decoration.

Area south of the palace: room LXXIII. The floor deposit of this room is currently labeled MM III, but it resembles more clearly the composition of the MM IIIB pottery style at Phaistos (Fig. 10).⁵⁵ We can distinguish two new types of handleless cups: the low, ledged-rim cup and the large semiglobular cup dark-slipped in and out. Second, the deposit boasts at least two in-and-out bowls: one decorated with bands outside and tortoise-shell ripple inside (F 2822), the second with bands in and out (F 2709). This decoration is one of the main hallmarks of the MM IIIB deposits at Knossos. Other diagnostic features are the elongated outline of the jugs and bridge-spouted jars; the use of the pedestal base in the small jars; the ovoid body of the ewers, with concave flaring neck, sloping rim and a single handle with circular section encompassing the rim. The type was decorated with dark monochrome paint or with light-on-dark thick retorted spirals. The polychromy is rare, and the range of light-on-dark motives is largely restricted to thick retorted spirals, white splashes on dark ground and veining, the last one of which I believe to be a MM IIIB introduction. At Knossos, this motive is found on MM IIIB/LM IA transitional vessels.⁵⁶

Ayia Triada

The material from the first three deposits discussed below has been labeled as MM IIIB/LM IA for many reasons: the first two, by La Rosa, because of the mixed composition of MM IIIB and LM IA pottery, and the third by A. L. D'Agata, after the publication of the Unexplored Mansion by M. Popham. The publication of a large deposit from the Stratigraphical Museum excavations at Knossos by P. Warren assigned all of these deposits to the "MM IIIB/LM IA transitional" phase.

Villa: foundation deposit from corridor 74. The deposit presents a small set of vessels: two bridge-spouted jars, six handleless cups, one saucer and one brazier.⁵⁷ I have examined the pottery, with the kind

permission of La Rosa, and I am not altogether convinced that it belongs to a later period. On the contrary, it seems clearly assignable to MM IIIA, because of the absence of dark-on-light patterned pottery and, mostly, the close connection with the Phaistian deposits of the same period. The date of the context in any case suggests an important, even if modest, building operation at the site.

Villa: deposit from rooms 62, 65a, 66a. The trench along the northern foundations of the Megaron has revealed several stages in the building of the villa, of which the earliest was a dump containing MM III pottery, mostly handleless cups.⁵⁸ The dump consists of about 200 handleless cups, straight-sided cups, saucers, fruit bowls, milk jugs, juglets, small open jars, bridge-spouted jars and a rare shape of alabastron. The dark-on-light patterned pottery is rare, limited to few examples and restricted to dipped rims and tortoise-shell ripple. In contrast, the most frequent monochrome decoration, in conjunction with isolated cases of light-on-dark decoration, shows that we are justified in identifying the deposit as MM IIIB rather than MM IIIB/LM IA. The MM IIIB date is also supported by the handleless cups of the deposit, which are different in shape as well as in size from those of MM IIIA. Type 1 tends to be strictly conical, with narrower base and thick and flattened rims. We note also examples with faintly everted rims and a variant with gently ogival profile. Type 5 with everted and dipped rim is on the average smaller and narrower than the MM IIIA examples. Type 2, with semiovoid profile, is taller than before and the variant with belled outline does not appear.

North sector: burnt destruction level below room Q, Casa della Soglia Alabastrina. This deposit continues to be the subject of discussion.⁵⁹ In the preliminary publication, A. L. D'Agata concluded that the deposit does not yet belong to the mature LM IA, but she added that it cannot be defined as typical of MM III at Phaistos. The MM IIIB/LM IA date supported the definition of Warren's transitional phase. The core of the problem lies in the nature of the deposit, a secondary deposit of destruction material used as fill at the beginning of LM IA. If LM IA is the date of its deposition, that dating does not apply

⁵⁶ WARREN 1991, figs. 8E, F, 9B, C; POPHAM *et al.* 1984, pls. 142.3, 144.11, 13, 19, 145.3. See also VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 389, note 239.

⁵⁷ LA ROSA 1977, figs. 10–2.

⁵⁸ LA ROSA 1985, 191–2, pl. 1b–f; LA ROSA 1989, 82–3, pl. XVI.

⁵⁹ For a date to the Advanced LM IA see VAN DE MOORTELE 1997, 282–5.

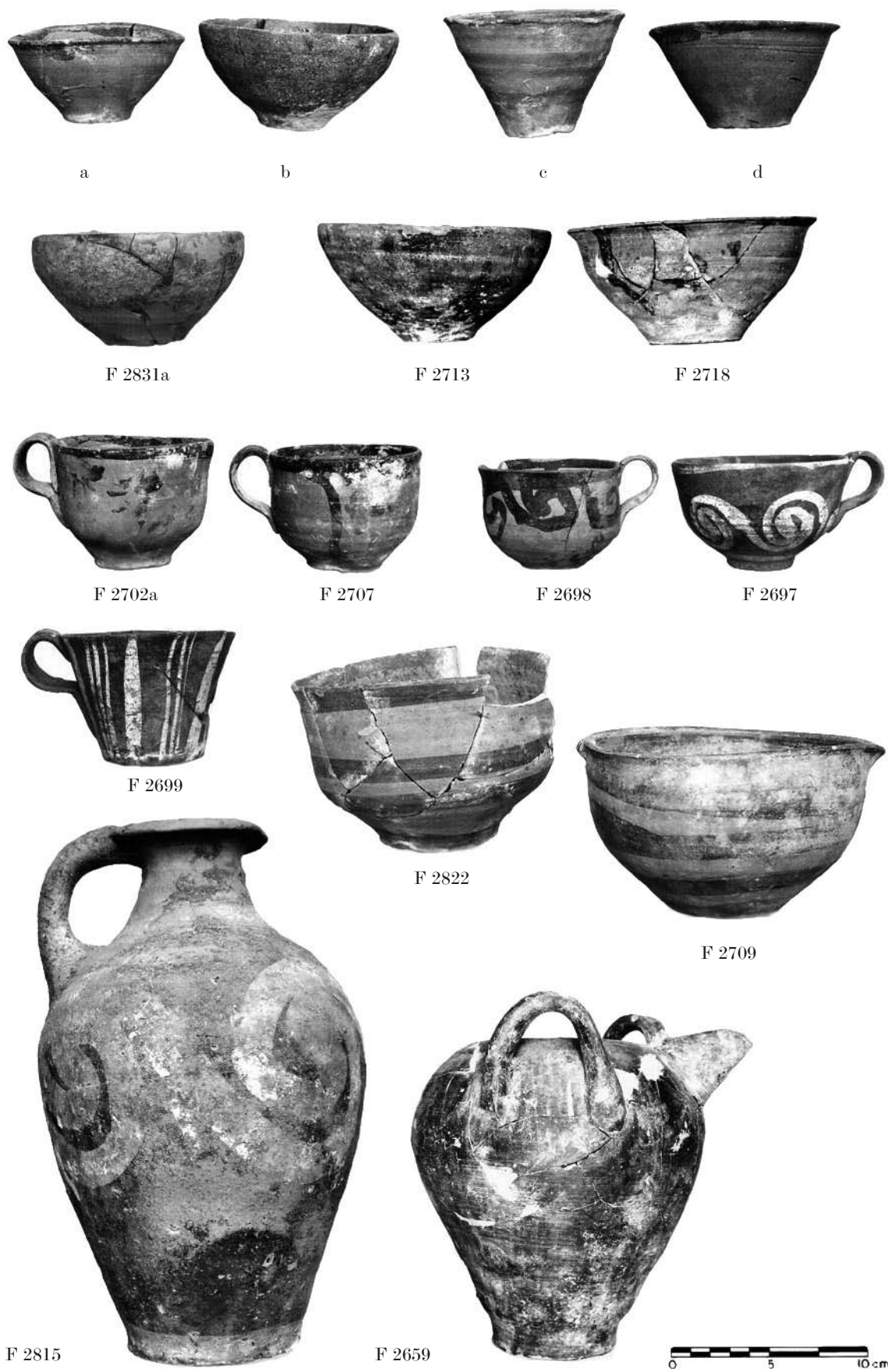


Fig. 10 MM III B vessels from the floor deposit of the room LXXIII (Phaistos), a-d, F 2831a, F 2718, F 2659 are unpublished (scale 1:3)

to the overall character of the deposit, which should be considered MM IIIB, even though it exhibits new characteristics.⁶⁰

Light-on-dark patterning is most frequent decoration, followed by monochrome and polychrome decoration. Light-on-dark is found on handleless cups, straight-sided cups, hemispherical cups, bowls, basins, small miniaturistic jars and bridge-spouted jars. The motives are restricted to bands, dots or curvilinear lines. The polychromy consists of white and red bands or rosettes. Dark-on-light patterned pottery is less common, limited to rounded cups, handled globular cups, handled bowls with ledged rim, one Vapheio cup, and bridge-spouted jars. Motives are largely restricted to running spirals and, more frequently, tortoise-shell ripple, the latter quite common on the rounded cups and bowls with everted rims. The composition of the deposit, with its predominance of light-on-dark and monochrome pottery and the narrow range of dark-on-light motifs, best represents the characteristics of the MM IIIB period. I do not want to understate the presence of hints of LM IA, mostly in dark-on-light patterned pottery, but we cannot forget that these features represent the date of the deposition of the material, after MM IIIB.

Northeast sector: trench M/4. The study of this MM IIIB pottery dump, uncovered in 1993 and in 1995, further expands our understanding of this phase at Ayia Triada.⁶¹ The jumbled condition of material, the packing of the vessels, and the semicomplete preservation of large and small vessels indicate the secondary nature of the deposit, which is likely the result of a cleaning operation. The deposit contains small, medium and large-sized vessels; the material yielded at least 470 handleless cups, of which 105 are catalogued (see, in Fig. 8, HTR 2554, 2555, 2495, 2566). Other common shapes in use are straight-sided and hemispherical cups and bridge-spouted and open-mouthed jars. The domestic character of the deposit is corroborated by the presence of large bowl, jugs of various sizes, oval-mouthed amphoras, cooking pots and pithoi.⁶² There is a great amount of simple plain pottery, and the dark coating has a dilute appearance and is frequently fired red or dark brown. The main characteristic of the deposit is the enormous frequency of monochrome pottery, with an interesting trend

toward simplicity in the dark-ground decorative repertoire, which is restricted to horizontal or diagonal bands and rare thick retorted spirals. Polychromy is largely restricted to auxiliary bands. The range of dark-painted motives is very small, consisting mostly of tortoise-shell ripple, horizontal bands and running spirals, surprisingly on just two vases. My preliminary view is that the deposit could be placed in MM IIIB. The restricted use of dark-on-light patterned pottery, as well as the unusual reduction in light-on-dark decoration, clearly shows that the deposit is antecedent to the LM IA period, but subsequent to MM IIIA production. In addition, I would point out the poor fabric of the vessels; the dilute character of the dark paint; the scarcity of polychromy; the simplicity of light-on-dark motives in comparison to the range of Phaistian deposits; the presence, even though restricted, of dark-on-light patterned pottery; and the presence of few important hallmarks of the phase, such as the low version of the type I handleless cup, the semiglobular type dark-coated in and out (type 7), and the plain semiglobular cup with lower and thicker walls (type 2).

Kommos

Twenty-four MM IIIB deposits have been isolated at Kommos (Fig. 4).⁶³ Given the homogeneous composition of their assemblages, I shall sum up here the overall ceramic features. Kommos presents for this period, in general, small-sized and primarily fragmentary deposits. While the large percentage of handleless cups and plain table vessels allows the identification of diagnostic features, there are no obvious changes among the pouring and storage vessels. Thanks to the initial characterization by Betancourt and the further review by Van de Moortel, we are now in a position to isolate these principal characteristics:

- 1) The occurrence of morphological changes in the production of handleless cups similar to that at Phaistos and Ayia Triada, but with a well-documented appearance of two new types of cups (7 and 8) (Fig. 8).
- 2) A sharp reduction in light-on-dark patterned motives, accompanied by a drastic decrease in polychromy and a reduction in motives to a single motive (thick retorted spirals).

⁶⁰ D'AGATA 1989, pls. XXI, XXII.

⁶¹ Preliminary notices are in *ASAtene* LXXI–LXXIII (1998), 418–9, figs. 16, 18, and GIRELLA 2003b; GIRELLA forthcoming b.

⁶² GIRELLA forthcoming a.

⁶³ BETANCOURT 1990, 41–8; VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, 235–44, 721–30. RUTTER 2006, 387–8, 409–13.

- 3) A large diffusion of monochrome decoration among both the open and the closed shapes.
- 4) A relative abundance of lustrous dark-on-light patterned vessels with a range of motives heralding the LM IA production (tortoise-shell ripple, diagonal and horizontal bands, running spirals, isolated semicircles, lunettes and solid waves), found in fragmentary condition and in a limited range of shapes.
- 5) The existence of a great quantity of imports, mainly from north Crete, but also from east Crete, Gavdos and Cyprus.⁶⁴

This summary touches on one of the main problems of the MM III chronological sequence. If we assume that the MM IIIB deposits from Phaistos, Ayia Triada and Kommos are contemporary to each other, we have to admit variation in the distribution of dark-on-light patterned pottery and in the proportion of light-on-dark and dark-on-light patterned vessels. The explanation of this lack of uniformity lies in the nature of the deposits themselves and also in the regional character of the pottery production. In the Phaistos assemblages, this regional variation seems wider. The isolated occurrence of dark-on-light patterned pottery, in comparison with the markedly high proportion of the white thick retorted spirals style, rather than being a casual occurrence, seems to indicate a more impressive difference in pottery production between Phaistos and the other two centers.

As we have stressed above, in this stage the three sites develop some characteristics that appear to be unique for any site. Phaistos shows the persistence of the old production, with maintenance of the light-on-dark style and polychromy. It seems impervious to the new ceramic trends, represented by the lustrous dark-on-light vessels. Ayia Triada illustrates an asymmetrical picture, represented at the moment by different deposits that do not at all show the abandonment of the MM IIIA tradition, but which probably present the first local production of lustrous dark-on-light pottery. Finally, the Kommian MM IIIB assemblages illustrate the growth of plain production and the lack of lustrous dark-on-light pat-

terned vases in local fabric. Thus there is enough evidence to propose the existence of two or three different but contemporary pottery productions.

As far as we can observe, the MM IIIB phase is distinguished from MM IIIA by several characteristics. These new features are more subtle than the differences between MM IIB and MM IIIA, suggesting that the time lapse was not very long. A preliminary sketch of these features is presented here:

- 1) A new dark paint, fired red or brown in color instead of the black that is common in MM IIIA. The paint seems to be more dilute and its varied texture might be related to changes in firing; for example, the diffusion of a red-fired dark paint could be explained by a more oxidizing atmosphere in the pottery kiln.
- 2) A new range of handleless cups, with the inevitable presence of some MM IIIA vessels and hints of LM IA.
- 3) Variations in straight-sided cups, with molded base and, in several cases, elimination of the bevel at the base of the wall.
- 4) Frequency of monochrome decoration.
- 5) A substantial amount of light-on-dark decoration, continuing the MM IIIA tradition, but with a restricted range of motives: speckles, horizontal bands, thick and retorted spirals, quirks, diagonal bands, wavy lines, semicircles.
- 6) A restricted use of polychrome decoration, mainly floral stylized motives in red and white on dark ground, occurring on cups and bowls. Simple auxiliary red bands on closed vessels.
- 7) The first occurrence of lustrous dark-on-light patterned vases, with a non-homogeneous distribution of new motives (tortoise-shell ripple, diagonal and horizontal bands, running spirals, isolated semicircles, lunettes and solid waves). In-and-out bowls with bands, wavy lines and tortoise-shell ripple. Tortoise-shell ripples on cups and bowls. Spirals, some solid-centre, and crescents rarely occur. The vessels with this technique have well-fired clay and are coated with a pinkish, pinkish/yellow slip and with dark or reddish lustrous paint.

⁶⁴ For the problem of the imported vessels at Kommos see BETANCOURT 1990, 191–2. Other imported vessels come from Building T of the Civic Centre: a stirrup jar and a teacup from Knossos, other teacups decorated with dark-on-light spirals from an unknown Minoan production cen-

tre, a collar-necked jar from east Crete, a large convex-sided cup from Gavdos, and a jug from Cyprus. Apart from the stirrup jar published in VAN DE MOORTELT 1997, fig. 81, the above-mentioned vessels are now published in RUTTER 2006, pl.3.29 (8/3), pl. 3.30 (9b/2), pl. 3.28 (8/6).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The assemblages from these three major sites appear to reveal an unstable state of the MM III sequence, although much work remains to be done in order to properly reassess all the deposits. Indications exist for justifying a MM IIIA and IIIB subdivision, and although these are not as substantial as could be desired, the subdivision is supported by stratigraphical and stylistic observations. On the basis of the evidence, the first stage is marked by a great destruction, perhaps a seismic event; this event could be the same as that affecting Knossos, Galatas and Anemospilia in north Crete. A MM IIIA destruction has recently been identified at Palaikastro, in eastern Crete.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the overall impression given by the deposits assigned to MM IIIB is that this second stage was marked again by a great destruction. I think that it is reasonable to accept the suggestion that the so-called Great Destruction at Knossos and damage elsewhere in the island was caused by a single earthquake datable to MM IIIB and that this event might be considered contemporary with the seismic destruction on Thera (Early LC I).⁶⁶

As I outlined at the beginning, I believe in the value of the traditional division of MM IIIA and MM IIIB. In spite of regional differences on the island, I have come to the conclusion that these two phases are sufficiently recognizable, bearing in mind the previous and subsequent character of the pottery production of each region, since the impression given by deposits assigned from MM IIIA to LM IA is one of uninterrupted development over a short time span

and relative continuity in production showing a narrow range of innovations.

The use of Evans's terminology helps to understand the local sequence of each region and facilitates the establishment of links across the whole island. The synchronisms between the western Mesara and Knossian subdivision needs to be further worked out, but a number of issues can already be raised. The composition of the large deposit from the Stratigraphical Museum at Knossos indicates, to my mind, that the label MM IIIB is preferable to the cumbersome MM IIIB/LM IA transitional stage. Two other deposits outside the palace, as has been recently pointed out by C. Macdonald, could be fitted in the same label: that from the South Corridor of the Unexplored Mansion, and the deposit from the Hellenistic Kilns Area.⁶⁷ These three deposits are secondary in the nature of their contexts and they belong to the same destruction horizon that affected the palace at the end of MM IIIB.⁶⁸ The same isolation of MM IIIB and LM IA deposits has been recently observed at Palaikastro, where the identification of MM IIIB deposits has been possible on the basis of stratigraphical and stylistic grounds.⁶⁹ The MM IIIB deposits from Palaikastro show a correspondence with the MM IIIB at Knossos, and surprisingly even with those from south Crete. They include light-on-dark and dark-on-light patterned pottery. The light-on-dark motives are horizontal bands, retorted and running spirals, and pendant festoons, but also foliate scrolls, which are very rare in central Crete. The polychromy is almost absent and the monochrome decoration is widespread; the dark-

⁶⁵ MACGILLIVRAY *et al.* 1998, 254–5; KNAPPETT and CUNNINGHAM 2003, 111.

⁶⁶ The problem lies in the interpretation of the secondary deposits from Akrotiri, where there appears to be a number of sherds that could date to MM IIIB: MARTHARI 1984, fig. 7 and MARTHARI 1990, 66–7. Aside from the possibility of unifying Warren's transitional phase with MM IIIB, the chronology of the seismic destruction level at Akrotiri is still open and the material from that level does not completely satisfy any direct synchronism with MM IIIB in Crete. From the photographs in Marthari's articles it is clear that the dark-on-light sherds decorated with ripple and spiral patterns, as well as the rare light-on-dark spotted ware, correspond with the composition of MM IIIB Knossian deposits, but, as far as we can observe, there is no clear deposit at Akrotiri that is strictly dated to the MM IIIB in Cretan terms that overlies the deposits that contain MM IIIA pottery: I. Nikolakopoulou (pers. comm.). For this reason, it would be wiser to maintain the Cycladic terminology of

Early LC I until the synchronisms with the final stage of the MM period can be clarified. For the MM III comparisons at Akrotiri see KNAPPETT and NIKOLAKOPOULOU 2005.

⁶⁷ For the Unexplored Mansion see POPHAM *et al.* 1984, 94–7, 158, pls. 141, 142, 144, 145, and MACDONALD 2004, 241–2. For the Area of the Hellenistic Kilns see MACDONALD 1996, pl. 3A; MACDONALD 2002, pl. VIIIe (right), IX; MACDONALD 2004, 242, 248, fig. 18.1e, 18.2a, e, 18.3 ii, and HATZAKI in this volume. For the MM IIIB date of the deposits from the palace see HOOD 1996 and MACDONALD 2002.

⁶⁸ For a different approach to the MM IIIB pottery of Knossos, mainly based on the identification of “pottery groups” rather than the “traditional” nomenclature, see the contribution of E. HATZAKI in this volume.

⁶⁹ The most recent works on Neopalatial pottery are BERNINI 1995 and KNAPPETT and CUNNINGHAM 2003. The latter makes some corrections to Bernini's paper and shows stronger arguments for separating the MM IIIB and LM IA phases at Palaikastro.

on-light patterned motives are not very common, and are restricted to dipped rims, tortoise-shell ripple, wavy lines and spirals.

In light of these observations, here necessarily summarized, our present analysis shows that MM IIIB in south-central Crete (variously labeled as MM IIIB/LM IA or Early LM IA) corresponds in date and in ceramic composition to MM IIIB in northern as well as in eastern Crete. These synchronisms suggest close contacts among the diverse areas, as well as imitation within Mesara pottery production, but suggest also sufficient differences to demonstrate that north, south and east Crete belonged to different ceramic traditions.

Reassessing the MM III sequence of south-central

Crete is probably the first step that we need to take toward the acceptance of a single terminology for the whole island. Such an effort would help us to build a systematic chronological framework valid for all of the Aegean, although, for the time being, the scrupulous employment of Evans's terminology remains one of the most pressing unsolved problems. As long as ceramic *styles* are equated with ceramic *periods*, the frustrating debate on MM III will continue to be misunderstood. Ceramic styles may continue for some time, but ceramic periods are identified by a restricted number of shapes and decorations that constitute the type fossils. Thus we can find MM IIIB as a style in the LM IA period, and vessels stylistically datable to MM IIIB that possibly were produced in LM IA.

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