# An Explosion of Polychromy: Establishing Localised Ceramic Identities at the Dawn of the Mycenaean Era

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**Abstract:** Near or at the end of the MH era, a wave of polychromy swept over the ceramic repertoires of the central and southern Greek mainland. Beginning at the start of the period we term LH I (c. 1675–1600 BC) or just before and persisting for some four to five generations thereafter down to some point within the LH IIA phase (c. 1600–1550/1525 BC), this predilection for bichrome and trichrome approaches to the decoration of tablewares was a feature of several different regions within the first half of the Prepalatial Mycenaean era. What inspired this sudden popularisation of the use of multiple colours for ceramic ornamentation? As striking as its relatively sudden emergence is the seeming contemporaneity of its disappearance from the various regional styles within which it had flourished. Was the virtual extinction of polychromy around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century somehow related to the circumstances of its rapid adoption a century of more earlier? How this decorative fashion was exploited by its numerous producers may provide some answers to the questions surrounding the peculiar history of this characteristically early Mycenaean mode of pottery décor.

Keywords: Middle Helladic, Mycenaean pottery, Bichrome, ceramic regionalism

# Introduction: Ceramic Polychromy from the Neolithic to the Earlier Middle Bronze Age

The production of ceramic containers decorated with two or more differently coloured pigments or clay slips that Aegean prehistorians more commonly refer to as 'paints' has a very long history on the Greek mainland, beginning as early as the sixth millennium BC.<sup>3</sup> But pottery decorated in this way was comparatively rare during most of the third millennium BC – that is, the EH era – with the exception of the light-on-dark pattern-painted class known as Ayia Marina ware, popular in central Greece in the EH III phase, in addition to small quantities of similarly ornamented vessels produced in the preceding EH II Argolid.<sup>4</sup> These light-on-dark pattern-decorated pots exploited the pronounced colour difference between what was probably a kaolin clay slip for the white and an iron-rich clay slip for the moderately lustrous, red to black coating over which the white was added.

No EH pots decorated with two or more colours of dark-firing paint applied over a pale-firing clay ground in a dark-on-light style are known to us. The kinds of dark-on-light polychrome pots occasionally produced during the Late Neolithic era did not reappear on the Greek mainland until manganese-based paints once again became popular during the transition from the EH III to the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> For descriptions and assessments of the various 'paints' utilised by Peloponnesian potters during the lengthy Greek Neolithic era (c. 6500–3100 BC), Vitelli 1993, 8–9, 199–204, tab. 13; Vitelli 1999, 25–27, 31–33; Vitelli 2007, 5–7, 111–114, Groups 2–9. The distinctions made by Vitelli between iron-based and manganese-based 'paints' and their usage in various monochrome as well as polychrome-painted varieties of pottery are all transferrable to the Bronze Age ceramic groups treated here.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For light-on-dark pattern-painted pottery of the EH II period, see Wiencke 2000, 614–618, 743, fig. 2.101, tab. 32c; for equivalently decorated pottery of the EH III period, best known in central Greece as Ayia Marina ware, see Rutter 1995, 596–623, especially 619–623.

MH period,<sup>5</sup> at which point it once again became possible to create bichrome dark-on-light decoration predictably by employing manganese oxide as well as iron oxide pigments in oxidising conditions.<sup>6</sup>

Although some mainland potters exploited the potential colour difference between manganese- and iron-based paints, to achieve the best results they would have needed good control over the firing atmosphere for the pigments they used as well as for the pale clay ground, whether slipped or unslipped, to look as distinct as possible by the end of the firing process. Perhaps for this reason, in addition to the extra work entailed in obtaining both kinds of dark-firing paints, the amount of dark-on-light bichrome or polychrome pottery remained only a minuscule portion of the pattern-painted pottery throughout the first couple of centuries of the MH era, even within those regions where matt-painted pottery was relatively common.<sup>7</sup> There are a few exceptions, but most of the relatively small number of polychrome-decorated vessels from early MH I contexts in the eastern Peloponnese and from somewhat later MH I–II contexts in eastern central Greece take the form of large jars and bowls, containers that may typically have served as display pieces at communal or kin-based social events.<sup>8</sup>

# **Magnesian Polychrome Matt-Painted**

This pattern of very sparing production and usage of dark-on-light bichrome-decorated pottery appears to undergo a significant change with the appearance of the class christened "Magnesian Polychrome Matt-Painted" by Joseph Maran on the basis of its concentration at Pefkakia and neighbouring sites around the Gulf of Volos. This class consists for the most part of belly-handled

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Zerner 1978, 52–53, no. D563/7, pl. 7 (giant narrow-necked jar); 52, no. D563/5, fig. 1 (cup or kantharos); 59, no. D596/3–4, pl. 9 (kantharos or Bass bowl); 67, no. D600/4, fig. 4, pl. 10; 71, no. D594/7, fig. 5, pl. 11 (horizontal-handled bowls with incurving upper bodies and flattened lips); 77, no. D591/6, fig. 6, pl. 12 (biconical cup, kantharos, or bowl). All of these examples may be dated to either the highly experimental transitional IV/V phase at Lerna (Rutter 1986, 32) or to an early stage of Phase VA (Zerner 1978, 151, 153–155), after which this variety of bichrome with red paint described as "thick and grainy with shiny inclusions" disappears.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Vitelli 1999, 32; Vitelli 2007, 111–116. For additional bibliography on manganese oxide pigments, see Hale 2014a, 41 n. 31. The bichrome and polychrome, for the most part light-on-dark painted decorative class known as MH Lustrous Decorated (Zerner 1993, 45–47; Zerner 2008, 201–206; Whitbread – Jones 2008; Kiriatzi 2010), produced in fabrics variously described as 'mudstone and chert' or 'sand-tempered', belongs to a ceramic tradition clearly derived from central and western Crete. Vessels of this class are omitted from consideration in what follows, notwithstanding their incorporation of some mainland Greek characteristics during the course of the MH period, since the class is considered Minoan rather than Helladic. Likewise omitted are all varieties of Minoan polychrome-decorated pottery imported to the mainland.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> These regions would have included the northeast Peloponnese (Argolid and Corinthia) and presumably at least parts of central Greece (Attica, Boiotia, Phokis, and Euboia), the Spercheios Valley, and coastal Thessaly. In Lakonia and perhaps also Messenia, Dull-Painted pottery making use of an iron-based rather than manganese-based pigment was more common than true Matt-Painted in the earlier MH phases (Rutter – Rutter 1976, 13; Zerner 2008, 179–182, 193–195; Hale 2014a, 48–50). Recent careful analysis of the pattern-painted pottery throughout the long, seven-phase MH sequence at Mitrou in east Lokris has shown that Dull-Painted also preceded Matt-Painted in at least some areas of central Greece. As at Ayios Stephanos, Dull-Painted at Mitrou was only displaced by Matt-Painted in the local Phase 7 at the very end of MH II (Hale 2014a, 40–48, tabs. 1–2, fig. 3, pls. 1–3). As Hale points out, the implications of a consistent distinction between Matt-Painted and Dull-Painted (the latter previously often viewed as simply a variant of Matt-Painted) have yet to be worked through in regions such as central Greece (including perhaps the Spercheios Valley and parts of coastal Thessaly) as well as the central and northwestern Peloponnese.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Large jars, jugs, and bowls are the rule at MH I (late)–III Pefkakia (Maran 2007) as well as at contemporary Mitrou (Hale 2014b, Vol. I, 66–67, 143, 161–162, 180, 203, Vol. II, 109 MH-P59, pl. 6 [Phase 4]; 125–126 MH-P112–115, pl. 11 [Phase 5]; 138–139 MH-P156–157, pl. 14 [Phase 6]; 158 MH-P217–219, pl. 20 [Phase 7]; 178–179 MH-P282–284, pl. 27). Much the same appears to have been true at Lerna (above n. 5, but note also a certain number of smaller to mid-sized drinking vessels at that site) and for the much rarer examples of dark-on-light bichrome in use at MH I Ayios Stephanos (Zerner 2008, 194, 220, nos. 1069, 1074, fig. 5.5). The horizontal-handled bowl no. 1069 from Ayios Stephanos looks enough like some of the examples of the same shape from Lerna cited above in n. 5 to be a possible product of the same workshop.

amphoras,<sup>9</sup> large beaked jugs,<sup>10</sup> small barrel-jars,<sup>11</sup> and large horizontal-handled basins.<sup>12</sup> Maran reported finds of this class from several sites further to the south in central Greece (Kirrha, Eutresis, Lefkandi, Orchomenos)<sup>13</sup> and suggested that other pieces he knew only from photographs might come from as far afield as Koukonisi on Lemnos.<sup>14</sup> Since his publication, other probable examples of this class have been identified at Mitrou.<sup>15</sup> Neutron activation analyses of seven samples of this class from Pefkakia showed that the pots represented by five had closely comparable chemical composition patterns and thus were likely produced at a single location, very possibly Pefkakia itself,<sup>16</sup> while the other two samples exhibited singleton compositions and may thus represent two additional production centres.<sup>17</sup> This class features distinctive shapes and a spare decorative syntax that have no local antecedents in coastal Thessaly. Maran has argued that both its shape range and decorative style are modelled after the matt-painted pottery of MH I–II Aigina<sup>18</sup> on which, however, the painted ornament is invariably monochrome rather than bichrome and is applied on an unburnished and hence rather dull, albeit very pale clay ground. He has therefore interpreted the appearance of the 'Aigineticising' Magnesian Polychrome class as a purposeful act of emulation on the part of potters resident in coastal Thessaly. In his view, these potters are likely to have been motivated not only by the prolific ceramic output and first-class distribution network of Aigina, but even more by the interest of local Thessalian elites in patterning their behaviours after those of an Aiginetan elite whose socio-political prominence in MH Greece was recognised throughout the central Aegean as much from the imposing architecture of the site as from the widespread distribution of its pottery (with its associated marking system) and its andesite grinding stones.<sup>19</sup> In support of such a motivation, Maran drew attention to the peculiarly localised distribution of Aiginetan and Minoan ceramic imports to major Thessalian sites around and just inland from the Gulf of Volos, a phenomenon suggesting that inter-site competition among elites in this region may have included showing off the external contacts of a particular kin group by way of the categories of imported ceramic containers it was successful in accumulating.<sup>20</sup>

# Aiginetan and Boiotian ('Mainland Polychrome') Bichrome

Maran's reconstruction of the genesis of the Magnesian Polychrome class may be viewed as mildly ironic in that the most recent analyses of Aiginetan Bichrome Matt-Painted pottery have concluded that the large-scale production of this widely distributed class begins no earlier than

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Maran 1992a, pls. 80.1–2 (= Maran 2007, fig. 3.5), 4; 81.2; 92.20; 105.8; 110.5 (= Maran 2007, fig. 3.3); 111.3.
<sup>10</sup> Maran 1992a, figs. 78.9 (= Maran 2007, fig. 3.4), 79.1–2, 87.10. The jug illustrated as Maran 1992a, fig. 111.6,

is markedly smaller, comparable in size to an atypically small closed bichrome shape from Mitrou (Hale 2014b, Vol. II, pl. 27: MH-P284).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Maran 1992a, pls. 81.1, 102.21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Maran 1992a, pls. 78.1 (= Maran 2007, fig. 3.6), 78.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Maran 2007, 172 n. 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Maran 2007, 172 n. 33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Hale 2014b, Vol. I, 203, Vol. II, 158 MH-P217, pl. 20 (Phase 7); 179 MH-P283, pl. 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Maran 2007, 172–173, tabs. 1, 4, fig. 3.1–5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Maran 2007, 172–173, fig. 3.6–7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Maran 2007, 174 and n. 36. For the Middle Bronze Age chronostratigraphy of Pefkakia relative to that of Kolonna on Aigina and other major MH sites, see Maran 1992a, 370, fig. 25; Hale 2016, 263, tab. 2. The floruit of Magnesian Polychrome extends from Pefkakia Phase 5 through Phase 7 (Maran 1992a, 162–169), roughly equivalent to MH ceramic Phases 4–7 and LH I at Mitrou and to ceramic Phases I, J, and K at Kolonna.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Zerner 1993, 56 n. 63; Rutter 2001, 125–130, fig. 12; Lindblom 2001; Maran 2007, 175 and n. 42; Gauß et al. 2011.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Maran 1992, 246–247; Maran 2007, 176. Note the discovery in Phase 6 early at Pefkakia in House 311B of no fewer than nine Magnesian Polychrome jars, large jugs, and basins in a single room where they had evidently been used to mix and transport liquid contents (presumably wine and water) from storage pithoi kept in this room to nearby household spaces where the liquid was dispensed and consumed: Maran 1992a, 24–26, pls. 78.1–2, 4, 9; 79.1; 80.1–2, 4; 81.2; VIIA; Maran 2007, 172 n. 29, fig. 4.



Fig. 1: Distribution map of Aiginetan Bichrome (map: M. Lindblom)

the LH I period.<sup>21</sup> Aiginetan Bichrome may thus owe its inspiration to the unmistakably earlier Magnesian Polychrome class, itself supposedly inspired by Aiginetan monochrome matt-painted products.

Unlike the most popular class of bichrome matt-painted pottery produced in the Cyclades in later stages of the Middle Bronze Age – the so-called 'Black-and-Red' class of Melos and Thera<sup>22</sup> – both Magnesian Polychrome and Aiginetan Bichrome feature almost exclusively abstract motifs<sup>23</sup> distributed very sparingly in a light-ground style on a comparatively small number of distinct shapes. Intermediate in many ways between the southern Cycladic 'Black-and-Red' class and Magnesian Polychrome but roughly contemporary with both is the 'Yellow-Slipped Polychrome' of Keos<sup>24</sup> which, though less austere than the Thessalian bichrome class and represented on a broader range of shapes, nevertheless lacks any naturalistic motifs in the same way as does Magnesian Bichrome and most Aiginetan Bichrome. Significantly, this Keian variety of Bichrome

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Davis 1979, 241, nos. 29–51; 243, no. 69, pl. 73c–d; Lindblom 2001, 25–27, tab. 3; Lindblom 2007, 124–125, figs. 14–17; Pruckner 2011, 243–244, 246–248; Lindblom et al., forthcoming, figs. 5–6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Marthari 1998; Papagiannopoulou 2008; Lindblom et al., forthcoming, figs. 2–3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> As opposed to the floral motifs, birds, griffins, and even some cattle, goats, agrimia, and human beings are characteristic of Theran and Melian Bichrome. Note, however, the small number of floral motifs (ivy leaves, rosettes, and even one case of Minoanising foliate band) recently added to the repertoire of Aiginetan Bichrome motifs by Pruckner (2011, 246–248, figs. 25, 29–32), as well as a single rare example of birds (Mylonas 1972/1973, 133, no. A-116, pls. 113, 220, 243β; Lindblom 2001; Pruckner 2011, 247 n. 58). A second Aiginetan Matt-Painted jar decorated with birds (Mylonas 1972/1973, 194, no. O-200, pls. 171b, 219, 243β; Dietz 1991, 224–227, Shape KB-2, fig. 71), though considered bichrome-painted by Lindblom (2001, 36 n. 126; also Pruckner 2011, 247 n. 58), appears to bear only a single colour of paint. But a third matt-painted fragment with a bird, from Circle A at Mycenae, may be both bichrome and Aiginetan (Crouwel 1989, pl. 34b; Pruckner 2011, 247 n. 58).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Overbeck 1989, 10; Lindblom et al., forthcoming, fig. 4.



Fig. 2: Distribution map of Boiotian Bichrome (map: M. Lindblom)

Matt-Painted is very narrowly distributed outside the island<sup>25</sup> and seems no longer to have been produced by the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. The 'Black-and-Red' class of Thera and Melos declined in frequency during LC I and was evidently also no longer being produced by the early LC II phase, in all likelihood because of the Santorini eruption and the total abandonment of Thera. In other words, when Aiginetan Bichrome was becoming popular throughout the central Aegean during LH I, its two closest Cycladic analogues had either already disappeared (Keian) or were on the decline (Theran and Melian).

As far as we are presently able to tell, at just about the same time as the long-established Aiginetan ceramic industry began churning out large numbers of bichrome-painted kraters and jars and exporting them to at least 15–20 different sites so far identified in the northeast Peloponnese, central Greece, and the Cycladic islands of Keos and Thera (Fig. 1),<sup>26</sup> a number of different sites in Boiotia began producing an altogether different class of bichrome matt-painted pottery that, since the pioneering work of David French in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has been termed

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Aside from the examples found in some numbers at Ayia Irini, a recent review (Lindblom et al., forthcoming) identifies only a few sherds of this class from MH II–III contexts at Kolonna and Lerna.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Lindblom et al., forthcoming, fig. 6.



Fig. 3: Result of a discriminant analysis of 249 samples, corrected for dilution and assuming seven clusters using all 29 elements measured except As, Ba, Na and Zr. Plotted are the discriminant functions W1 and W2, which cover 95.5% and 2.4% of the between-group variance. The ellipses drawn are the 2σ boundaries of the groups. Ten bichrome samples from the Lerna VI shaft graves are shown as filled symbols (the single Aiginetan bichrome sample was measured twice, hence two filled dots in the AegA ellipse). All are good members of their respective groups. The different chemical groups originating from Aigina (AegA), Boiotia (TheA, TheH, TheP), Euboia (EuA), the NE Peloponnese (Mycenae/Berbati: MYBE), and the unlocated but suspected Argive group Ul20 are well separated (data and caption courtesy of H. Mommsen)

'Mainland Polychrome' (Fig. 2).<sup>27</sup> Michael Lindblom, Hans Mommsen, and Ian Whitbread have argued that French's geographical descriptor 'Mainland' should be replaced by 'Boiotian' (Fig. 3).<sup>28</sup> Iro Mathioudaki, the author of a 2011 dissertation at the University of Athens devoted to this ceramic class,<sup>29</sup> agrees that it is a product of this region. Documented from surface surveys and excavations at some 60 different sites (almost half of them located in Boiotia, Attica, Phokis, and Lokris), the class that we will henceforth refer to as 'Boiotian Bichrome' is even more widely distributed than is Aiginetan Bichrome, although the two are frequently found at the same sites and quite often in the same deposits at those sites.<sup>30</sup> Yet as Table 1 shows, these two extremely popular bichrome-decorated tablewares are very different.

Aiginetan Bichrome pots are invariably handmade and typically have dull, wiped surfaces; light and patchily applied burnishes do occur, but these are rare. The shape and pattern ranges

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> French – French 1971, 27; French 1972, 33; Mathioudaki 2010, 622 and n. 3; Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. I, 8 and n. 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Among other evidence, these authors cite the NAA work done by Hans Mommsen on eight samples of this class from the Lerna shaft graves. These represent four different chemical composition patterns, two of which can be convincingly identified as products of Tanagran and Theban workshops, while the other two may derive on the one hand from eastern Boiotia or even Euboia and on the other, possibly from Orchomenos: Lindblom et al., forthcoming, fig. 11 (reproduced here as Fig. 3).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> For example, Tsoungiza, Korakou, Ayia Irini, Kiapha Thiti, Lefkandi, Asine, and Lerna. For full distributions of Boiotian Bichrome, see Lindblom et al., forthcoming, fig. 8; Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. II, 177–180.

are narrow. Forms other than bridge-spouted, horizontal-handled kraters and narrow-necked jars featuring either two belly handles or two such handles plus two additional shoulder handles are exceedingly unusual.<sup>31</sup> Patterns are almost exclusively abstract and consist largely of horizontal wavy bands, opposed or intersecting diagonal band groups, and combinations of upright and pendent concentric semicircle groups, plus a few pendent triangles and band-framed vertical zig-zags.<sup>32</sup> All chemically analysed samples of this class exhibit a single compositional pattern that is consistent with an Aiginetan origin. Although no kilns for the production of this class have yet been positively identified, there is universal agreement among specialists that this class was produced in the immediate vicinity of the site of Kolonna, if not necessarily within that settlement's fortifications.

By contrast, Boiotian Bichrome pots are usually wheel-finished (and perhaps even wheelthrown, if small), and routinely have highly burnished and lustrous surfaces. The shape range of Boiotian Bichrome is extensive: Søren Dietz lists no fewer than eleven different shapes imported for deposition in graves in the Argolid, and Mathioudaki has identified eleven different shape categories encompassing sixteen distinct shapes.<sup>33</sup> Although by far the most common of these are narrow-necked jars, jugs, and kraters,<sup>34</sup> there are also substantial numbers of cups of three different types (semiglobular, Vapheio, and panel)<sup>35</sup> in addition to some flat-based as well as pedestal-footed goblets,<sup>36</sup> high-handled kantharoi,<sup>37</sup> ring-handled shallow bowls on low pedestal feet,<sup>38</sup> and deep bowls.<sup>39</sup> In other words, Boiotian Bichrome encompasses a complete tableware assemblage rather than the much narrower subset of shapes characterising Aiginetan Bichrome.<sup>40</sup> Boiotian Bichrome's repertoire of patterns is also far larger, consisting of some twenty different motifs,<sup>41</sup> of which at least two are recognisably floral (palm, ivy), two more are faunal (bird, griffin), and one consists of manmade artefacts (ship<sup>42</sup>). Aside from all the other differences between the two classes under review, there is also one very basic contextual difference: Boiotian Bichrome vessels were considered appropriate as grave goods and are often found in tombs. especially in the Argolid,<sup>43</sup> whereas Aiginetan Bichrome is almost never found in tombs, although all other major classes of Aiginetan pottery appear at least occasionally in early Mycenaean tomb assemblages, even cooking pottery.<sup>44</sup> Finally, the variable chemical compositions of a number of

<sup>34</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. I, 56, diagram 10.

- <sup>38</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. II, 183 EYTP31.
- <sup>39</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. II, 182 EYTP23.
- <sup>40</sup> Mathioudaki 2010, 625; Mathioudaki 2015, 49.
- <sup>41</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. I, 23–55, 157–158, pls. 1α–β.
- <sup>42</sup> Immerwahr 1987, 86–87, fig. 1a–b; Maran 1992a, 221 and n. 246; Adrymi-Sismani 2010, 307, fig. 11.
- <sup>43</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. I, 192–194; Mathioudaki 2011b; see also Dietz 1991, 217–223, fig. 69.
- <sup>44</sup> Dietz 1991, 224–227. The Aiginetan classes in question included colour-coated and burnished (goblets), monochrome matt-painted (hydrias and narrow-necked jars), and plain coarse kitchenware (wide-mouthed jugs). As Michael Lindblom has argued (2007), the large quantities of fragmentary Aiginetan Bichrome vessels recovered from the fill of the Lerna shaft graves do not represent grave goods, but rather part of an enormous corpus of ceramic debris from one or more episodes of large-scale feasting behaviour. For two examples of Aiginetan Bichrome vessels from Mycenae, one from Circle B, Tomb Λ, and one probably from a tomb in or near to Circle A, see n. 23 above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Lindblom et al., forthcoming, fig. 5, cite two different cup types (panel and carinated), a beaked jug, a deep bowl, and a handleless bridge-spouted jar, each attested by very few examples. To these Pruckner (2011, 246–248, figs. 27–33), would add a ring-handled shallow carinated bowl, and perhaps differentiate between two different kinds of feet on the panel cups.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Lindblom 2007, figs. 14–17; Pruckner 2011, 246–247, figs. 2–4, 24–34. The pattern ranges of Aiginetan Monochrome and Bichrome Matt-Painted seem to be very similar, if not altogether identical (see, e.g. Pruckner 2011, 247 n. 57; above n. 23).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Dietz 1991, 217–223, fig. 69 (three cup types, two jug types, a juglet, an askos, and four types of narrow-necked jars); Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. I, 56–85, 159–160, pls.  $2\alpha$ – $\beta$  (eight open shapes, six closed, pithoi, and lids).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. I, 69–74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. II, 185 OPX7, 186 OPX23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Goldman 1931, 169, 172, fig. 239 (Eutresis); Schofield 2011, 70, no. 801, pl. 51 (Ayia Irini).

Boiotian Bichrome samples subjected to NAA have demonstrated that this class of pottery was probably produced at a substantial number of different locations within Boiotia (and perhaps beyond, but still within central Greece), in marked contrast to the highly nucleated production zone of Aiginetan Bichrome.<sup>45</sup>

# Additional Polychrome Ceramic Classes from Early Mycenaean Contexts

The astonishing and rather suddenly achieved popularity of both the Aiginetan and Boiotian Bichrome classes of pottery might lead one to conclude that these were the only two classes of such eye-catching tableware to have been produced on the mainland in LH I as well as LH IIA times, but this was clearly not the case. Several other varieties of early Mycenaean Bichrome or even Polychrome-Painted pottery exist (Tab. 1). Reasonably common at sites in the Corinthia such as Korakou and Tsoungiza but also occurring in graves at Eleusis, Argos, and Mycenae as well as in the fill of the shaft graves at Lerna and in settlement debris at numerous other Argive and Corinthian sites as well as further afield on the islands of Aigina and possibly Keos (Fig. 4) are small open and closed pots coated on the exterior with red or black iron-based paint that has been burnished to moderate lustre and then overpainted in matt white with neatly executed running spiral patterns (either tangent-linked or retorted), panelled patterns, concentric semicircle groups, or fringed concentric circle groups ('rosettes').<sup>46</sup> Variously termed 'White on Burnished Dark Ware' or 'Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished', vessels in this class often have subsidiary banding on the interior rim in a matt, dark brown, manganese-based paint, thus creating a trichrome scheme of decoration (Fig. 5). As long ago theorised by Carl Blegen when he first recovered examples of this class at Korakou, its source of inspiration was presumably MM III or earlier Cretan pottery. The Minoan connection is perhaps clearest from the particular emphasis in this class on a lustrous dark-painted ground for its patterned ornament in matt white as well as on spiraliform and other curvilinear motifs. But the pots in this class were exclusively handmade, in contrast to the largely wheelmade manufacture of such small decorated vessels on Crete at this time, and the solidly coated exterior surfaces were always carefully burnished in contrast to the treatment of most MM III pottery. Perhaps a closer source of inspiration for this light-on-dark bichrome or trichrome mainland class were the smaller shapes of the Lustrous Decorated class being produced somewhere in southern Lakonia or on Kythera throughout the Middle Bronze Age. What is perhaps most remarkable about the Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished class is how closely its shape repertoire corresponds to that of the earliest lustrous decorated dark-on-light pottery that we recognise as Mycenaean, the pottery of Arne Furumark's Myc. I style.<sup>47</sup> On the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> See n. 28 above and Fig. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Blegen 1921, 32–33, figs. 47.1–17, 48.1; pls. 2.2, 4, 6, 8; 3.8 (= fig. 47.16); Blegen 1928, 134, fig. 127.11; Kourouniotis 1932, 88, fig. 65; Frödin – Persson 1938, 278, fig. 192, bottom middle and right; Gercke – Hiesel 1971, 8, pl. 10.6, middle; French 1972, 36, q; Mylonas 1972/1973, 25–27, nos. A-6, A-8, pls. 13δ, 15β-γ, 225; Döhl 1975, 139-140, nos. 20-23, pl. 73.4; Protonotariou-Deïlaki 1980, 51-52, 60, 79, pls. F31.5-6, F36.3-6, F52.5; Cummer - Schofield 1984, 85, pl. 64f-g; Dietz 1991, 212-213, fig. 66 (except for shape FC-1, the single examples of which from Circle A, Grave V at Mycenae and the tumulus at Samikon lack an overall dark slip on the exterior: Karo 1930/1933, 149, no. 858, pl. 172); Yalouris 1966, 29, no. 86, pl. 20a; Lolos 1987, 217, 370, fig. 492; Dietz 1991, 213 and n. 478; Alden 2000, 388, no. 9; 546, no. 52.26; 680, no. 6; 694, no. 53.798; Wohlmayr 2000, 135, no. 18, figs. 6.18, 73; Kramer 2004, 174-177; Lindblom 2007, fig. 6.9-14; Walberg 2007, 212, nos. 1181-1189, fig. 109, pl. 17; Schofield 2011, 62, no. 631, pl. 48; Cosmopoulos 2014, 99, no. 713, fig. 30, pl. 54; Rutter 2015, 219, nos. D145-149, fig. 5; Piteros 2015, 248, fig. 8. A previously unpublished ring-handled juglet or cup fragment is illustrated here (Fig. 5a-b) to show the three distinct colours of paint occurring on some Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished vessels. An unpublished juglet from Berbati (Grave 20, no. 6) exemplifies the class at this site (Fig. 4). The shape range of the Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished class includes at least four types of cups (semiglobular, carinated, straight-sided, and ring-handled), a squat jug, a beaked jug, and a small horizontal-handled jar or alabastron. Note the absence of large shapes, whether open or closed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Furumark 1972 [1940/1941], 472–477; Dickinson 1974; Mountjoy 1986, 9–16; Dickinson 2014.



Fig. 4: Distribution map of Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished (map: M. Lindblom)



Fig. 5: Rim and handle fragment of trichrome Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished ring-handled juglet or cup from Excavation Unit Q6/17 at Kolonna on Aigina: a. Exterior; b. Interior (photos: W. Gauß)

basis of its distribution, the home of this class may have been the Corinthia. On present evidence it is more abundantly represented at Korakou than at any other single site, and its shape and decorative repertoire are likewise broader there than anywhere else. Production of this stylistically very homogeneous class appears to have ceased before the end of the LH I phase.

Two classes of bichrome-decorated fine ware from Ayios Stephanos provide a similar picture in most respects (Tab. 1). The earlier, termed 'Fine White-Slipped Matt-Painted', features a highly burnished, hence lustrous, ivory-white slip over a pink to light red fabric. Banding over this slip may be red or dark reddish brown to dark brown, or a combination of both, with very simple patterns such as dots or a horizontal wavy line or two in added white sometimes applied over the dark brown banding. Shapes are invariably small, but may be either open forms (such as round-bodied kantharoi, ring-handled and perhaps other cup types, and goblets) or closed ones (such as juglets or small narrow-necked jars).<sup>48</sup> Though it may not have been made before early LH I, already by LH IIA it may have ceased being produced. White-slipped analogues in Matt-Painted fabrics exist at a number of other sites as far away as central Greece,<sup>49</sup> but no examples of this particular southern Lakonian monochrome, bichrome, and trichrome class have thus far been securely identified to our knowledge anywhere except at Ayios Stephanos.<sup>50</sup> Yet a few samples of the class analysed by way of Optical Emission Spectroscopy long ago suggested that this class may not have been locally produced.<sup>51</sup>

During the LH IIA phase, the preceding white-slipped class appears to have been supplanted at Ayios Stephanos by a quite different series of small round-bodied cups or goblets featuring dense red and dark brown banding along with a very few simple patterns such as horizontal zigzag and wavy lines as well as upright and pendent concentric semicircle groups.<sup>52</sup> Unlike the white-slipped predecessor that may have been wheel-finished,<sup>53</sup> the later Bichrome class of small cups or goblets may have been entirely handmade.<sup>54</sup> Like its predecessor, it has been recognised only at Ayios Stephanos. Since Aiginetan kraters first appear at this site only in LH IIA, and since horizontal wavy bands and concentric semicircle groups are both common patterns on Aiginetan Bichrome kraters, it is possible that the *decorative* repertoire of this later of two bichrome classes at Ayios Stephanos, although certainly *not* its shapes, were inspired by imported Aiginetan models. Like its predecessor, however, this local southern Lakonian class enjoyed only a short life-time: there is no evidence for its continued production after LH IIA.

Fragments from large closed (narrow-necked jars and jugs or amphoras) and also open (basins or kraters) shapes bearing both linear and occasional patterned decoration in matt white painted over broad dark bands on interior and exterior rims as well as exterior shoulders are known from

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Rutter – Rutter 1976, 10; 39, nos. 297–308; 51, nos. 726–729; 61, nos. 989–991, ills. 11, 16, 19, figs. 10, 26, 33; Jones 1986, 424; Zerner 2008, 253, no. 1606, fig. 5.27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Rutter – Rutter 1976, 10 n. 12. Similar in its external appearance, though seemingly produced in a coarser fabric and in different shapes, is the so-called 'Pink and White Fabric' or 'Strawberries and Cream' of late MH Lerna (Zerner 1978, 68; Zerner 1993, 48, 55 n. 51; Kramer 2004, 177–178).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> A medium-sized four-handled narrow-necked jar from Grave V in Circle A at Mycenae (Karo 1930/1933, 149, no. 858, pl. 172; Dietz 1991, 212–213, Shape FC-1, fig. 66) and a closely comparable jar from the tumulus at Samikon (Yalouris 1966, 29 no. 86, pl. 20α; Lolos 1987, 217, 370, fig. 492) resemble in their shape and overall decor a smaller trichrome jar from Ayios Stephanos (Zerner 2008, 196–197, 253, no. 1606, fig. 5.27) but lack the white slip that is probably a feature of the Lakonian piece. Nevertheless, the Circle A and Samikon jars are closer in their decorative schema to the Fine White-slipped Matt-painted class from Ayios Stephanos than to any other known group of Bichrome Matt-Painted vessels so far identified in the Peloponnese. A single white-slipped body sherd found at Malthi from a wheelmade open shape decorated with spaced red and chocolate-brown bands may possibly be an example of the Fine White-Slipped Matt-Painted class imported to nearby Messenia: Valmin 1938, 302–303, pl. 4.21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Jones 1986, 424; Whitbread – Jones 2008, CD-89, CD-115.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Rutter – Rutter 1976, 9; 51, nos. 714, 718, 720; 61, nos. 985–988, ills. 16, 19, figs. 26, 33; Zerner 2008, 196; 243, no. 1428; 252–253, nos. 1594–1604; 288, nos. 2246–2247, figs. 5.22, 5.27, 5.52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Rutter – Rutter 1976, 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Zerner 2008, 196.

Bichrome or Trichrome Class	Production Site or Region (number)	Date Range	Distribution [Chief areas in BOLD]	Shape Range [rare examples within brackets]	Pattern/Motif Range [rare examples within brackets]	Pot- marks	Contexts
AIGINETAN BICHROME	Kolonna (1?)	LH I- II(B?)	c. 20 sites [Argolid; Corinthia; Attica; Euboia; Lokris; Lakonia; Keos; Thera]	narrow-necked jars (2- or 4-handled); krater [panel cup; carinated cup; jug with cutaway neck; handleless spouted jar; deep bowl; ring- handled bowl]	horizontal or vertical wavy bands; opposed or intersecting diagonals; concentric semicircle groups, vertical or horizontal; panels [pendent triangles; running spirals; ivy leaves; foliate band]	Yes – many	Settlement debris (fill of Lerna shaft graves = feasting debris); only rarely in tombs (Mycenae, Circle B)
BICHROME	Boiotia and perhaps Euboia (at least 4 and possibly many more)	LH I– II(A?)	c. 50–60 sites [Boiotia; Euboia; Lokris; Corinthia; Attica; Argolid; Lakonia; Kythera; Messenia; Elis; Thessaly; Keos; Melos; Paros; Thera]	<ol> <li>16 shape categories (6 closed, 8 open, pithoi, lids).</li> <li>A complete tableware assemblage but most common are narrow-necked jars, jugs, kraters, and cups</li> </ol>	c. 20 different patterns (including pictorial motifs: plants; birds; griffin; ships; only birds are common)	°Z	Settlement debris; tombs
LIGHT ON DARK- SLIPPED AND BURNISHED	Corinthia (?)	LHI	c. 20 sites [ <b>Argolid</b> ; <b>Corinthia</b> ; W. Attica; Phokis; Messenia; Keos; Melos]	carinated, straight-sided, semiglobular, and ring- handled cups; rim-handled juglet; squat jug; alabastron [goblet (?)]	running spirals (tangent- linked and retorted); panelled patterns; concentric semicircle groups; fringed concentric circles	Ŷ	Settlement debris; tombs
LAKONIAN WHITE- SLIPPED MATT- PAINTED	southern Lakonia (?)	LHI(- IIA?)	Ayios Stephanos only (as so far known)	<pre>kantharos; ring-handled cup; squat jug or small jar; goblet or semiglobular cup (?); jug (?)</pre>	light-on-dark horizontal wavy line(s); banding only in dark- on-light bichrome	No	Settlement debris only
LAKONIAN BICHROME	southern Lakonia (Ayios Stephanos?)	LHIIA	Ayios Stephanos only (as so far known)	semiglobular cup or small goblet	horizontal zigzag or wavy line; upright and pendent concentric semicircles	No	Settlement debris only
MESSENIAN LIGHT ON DULL-PAINTED	Messenia (?)	LH I- IIA (?)	Malthi; Nichoria; Ayios Stephanos (?)	large closed (narrow-necked jars, jugs/amphoras) and open (basins/kraters) shapes	light-on-dark horizontal wavy line(s); quirk; pendent concentric semicircles; groups of vertical bars (on interior rim)	No	Settlement debris only

Tab. 1: Bichrome and Trichrome Classes of Pottery produced on the LH I-II Greek mainland (including Aigina)



Fig. 6: Fragments of bichrome Light on Dull-Painted rounded cups (a–b), and narrow-necked jars (c–d) from Malthi in Messenia. Three fragments were originally illustrated by Natan Valmin (1938, pl. 23:D1 [c], D7 [b], and D10 [d]) and three were recovered in his Rooms A14 (d), A17 (a), and A18 (c) on the central terrace of the settlement (drawings: T. Ross, photos: M. Lindblom)

early LH contexts at both Malthi and Nichoria in Messenia.<sup>55</sup> The dark paint on these vessels appears to be dull rather than genuinely matt, and is thus presumably iron-based. The patterns in matt white are simple, consisting of a horizontal wavy line or two, horizontal quirk, and pendent concentric semicircle groups, in addition to spaced groups of vertical bars at the interior rim. Distinctive features of this particular light-on-dark decorated class, aside from its dull rather than matt dark paint and its restricted range of large shapes, is the application of the dark paint in broad bands rather than as a solid coating. We suggest terming this class Light on Dull-Painted. On the basis of its limited distribution, we are inclined to identify it as a regional product of Messenia.<sup>56</sup>

Aside from the Aiginetan, Boiotian, Lakonian, and potentially Corinthian and Messenian classes of bichrome or trichrome pottery just surveyed, there also exist examples of other classes of such elaborately decorated pottery from a variety of MH III through LH I contexts in Lako-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Valmin 1938, 303–304, pl. 23D1–D3, D6, D9–D11; Dickinson 1992, 477, 524, nos. P3131–P3132, fig. 9.3, pl. 9.8. A small squat jug from the tumulus at Samikon bears banding in brownish gray and white at the rim, base of the neck, and base, in addition to a dark-painted pattern on the shoulder and may be an additional example of this class from nearby Triphylia: Yalouris 1966, 13–14, no. 10, pl. 9α.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> A narrow-necked jar rim from an early Mycenaean context at Ayios Stephanos may be an example of this class imported to Lakonia: Zerner 2008, 258, no. 1696, fig. 5.31.

nia, the Argolid, and the Corinthia.<sup>57</sup> Most of these feature burnished surfaces and are likely to be local or at least regional products, but none represent workshops or industries that made particularly noteworthy contributions, either quantitatively or qualitatively, to the constellation of classes we have already examined. The overall picture of small-scale local production of occasional bichrome-decorated pots in the Peloponnese is echoed by the finds of small numbers of bichrome-decorated sherds at coastal central Greek or Thessalian sites such as Mitrou and Pefkakia that cannot be attributed to the large-scale producers of Aiginetan and Boiotian Bichrome or the medium-scale output of Magnesian Bichrome or Corinthian Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished. Most of these local products should probably be identified as imitations of better-known imported classes, including imports from the Cyclades.

# Discussion

The preceding review of the major as well as some minor classes of bichrome pattern-decorated pottery produced on the Greek mainland and the nearby offshore island of Aigina in the MH and early LH periods indicates that the production of such ceramics varied considerably through time and space. During the roughly four to five centuries surveyed, only rarely was such polychrome pottery produced in large quantities or in a single style that was widely distributed outside of its single site or wider region of production. Moreover, in virtually all cases, pots decorated with two or more colours of paint represent comparatively simple elaborations of morphologically and decoratively similar classes of pottery that bear painted ornament in just a single colour, what we call Monochrome Matt-Painted.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, only Maran's Magnesian Polychrome along with the class we have here called Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished *cannot* be viewed as mere variants of more simply decorated products of a single site or region.<sup>59</sup>

We have been at pains to point out how these bichrome or polychrome classes differ from each other in terms of their modes of manufacture (whether handmade or wheel-finished, either with or without burnished surfaces), their shape ranges, and their pattern repertoires (Tab. 1). But of course these are also the same characteristics that differentiate their more simply decorated monochrome variants. The addition of one or two additional paint colours certainly makes the polychrome classes more visually distinctive, but do these colours really make the polychrome classes all that much more striking than their more plainly decorated analogues? After all, we can easily enough distinguish between Aiginetan and Boiotian Matt-Painted products without needing to rely on the colour of an added iron-based paint. And surely if the makers of these polychrome classes were seeking to differentiate their product lines more sharply but were reluctant to do so by way of their shapes, they could have done more to vary their patterns? It strikes us as *very odd* that the creation of altogether novel motifs, or even the adoption from other regions of already existing and truly distinctive motifs, is as limited in MH pottery as it is. The potters of Thera at the very beginning of the Late Bronze Age, for example, show how quickly an astonishing range

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> E.g. Rutter – Rutter 1976, 61, nos. 981–984, ill. 19; Davis 1979, 243, nos. 70–71, fig. 6, pl. 74a; Dietz 1991, 78–80, nos. 189–191, 193–195, fig. 22; Philippa-Touchais 2002, 12–14, no. 35, figs. 7–8; Zerner 2008, 258, no. 1695; 279, no. 2059; 288, no. 2267, figs. 5.31, 5.46, 5.53; Rutter 2015, 219, nos. D42–44, D209, fig. 5; Lindblom et al., forthcoming, fig. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Mathioudaki 2015.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Note, however, that the Magnesian Polychrome class does qualify as a bichrome-decorated variant of an altogether plain (i.e. unpainted) local or regional product: Maran 2007, 172. It may be worth noting at this point that the term 'Bichrome Matt-Painted' is a probable misnomer in that only one of the two colours in question is actually manganese-based and hence genuinely 'matt' in its appearance. The pigments that fire red or reddish-brown are presumably iron-based and thus might be better identified as *dull* rather than *matt* paints. The dark paint used for our Light on Dull-Painted class ranges from black to dark grey at Malthi, but can also be red or brown at Nichoria (see n. 55 above).

of new naturalistic motifs could become part of the decorative repertoire of a ceramic industry.<sup>60</sup> But on the Greek mainland, only a few Aiginetan and Boiotian Bichrome artisans made use of such motifs, in the process limiting themselves to floral, faunal, and artefactual patterns that had already been exploited for some time by southern Cycladic artists on Thera and Melos. Even in their choices of abstract motifs, the Bichrome pot-painters of Aigina, Thessaly, and Lakonia were oddly reluctant to spice things up a bit. There must have been a virtual taboo in Helladic culture on creative artisanal expression that only the craftsmen imported into the service of Mycenae's shaft-grave elite at the end of the MH period were ultimately able to break up with their amazingly innovative forays into metallurgy, various inlaying techniques, the small-scale carving of stone and ivory, and the combination of multiple materials.

The differential use and shape preferences of the various classes of bichrome pottery, however, offer clear insights into what was important to the consumers of these exceptionally decorated containers. The frequency of large narrow-necked jars with a fairly narrow range of different handle arrangements and of large horizontal-handled kraters, most of them furnished with bridged spouts, in both Aiginetan and Boiotian Bichrome argue for the desire to transport and mix large quantities of liquids – presumably wine and water – as part of highly visible ceremonies of display. The enormously large storage vessels we call pithoi were not ostentatiously decorated in the same way as the narrow-necked jars were – they, after all, did not have to move. Vladimir Milojčić's excavation of House 311B at Pefkakia, as Joseph Maran has shown, has provided us with the evidence of how bichrome-decorated jars and large jugs of his Magnesian Polychrome class would have been used to bring the contents of pithoi 'to the party'.<sup>61</sup> The producers of Aiginetan Bichrome, either accepting the limitations of their local clays or perhaps more simply deciding to leave the choice of drinking vessels up to local consumers,62 opted not to market for off-island consumption a line of bichrome-decorated drinking cups, although they apparently crafted a fair number of bichrome panel cups for local Aiginetan consumers. Not so the producers of Boiotian Bichrome, who provided large numbers of different drinking shapes with Helladic, Cycladic, and even Minoan ancestries along with plenty of jugs from which the cups could be filled. The smaller-scale producers of bichrome pottery at Ayios Stephanos and in the Corinthia did not produce the large pots - jars or kraters - in their local styles, but only rather narrow ranges of drinking cups and small closed shapes - juglets and alabastra - that probably served as either individual or two-person pouring vessels like our modern karafakia for ouzo and tsipouro. Perhaps these last were designed to hold small quantities of undiluted wine rather than the larger volumes of wine mixed with water in a krater?

The development of the deeper-bodied krater from the earlier and shallower basin at the MH III/LH I transition in the Aiginetan ceramic industry and its rapid popularisation as by far the most common open shape in the Bichrome Matt-Painted class, in addition to its frequency in contemporary colour-coated and burnished as well as monochrome matt-painted forms,<sup>63</sup> parallels a similar popularisation of a related but rather different krater shape in the Boiotian Bichrome class.<sup>64</sup> This phenomenon together with the contemporary spread of Minoanising and Cycladicising one-handled cup shapes (straight-sided or Vapheio, semiglobular, and panel) surely bear

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> E.g. Papagiannopoulou 2008.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> See above n. 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Unless, of course, these local consumers chose to drink out of Aiginetan colour-coated and burnished goblets, significantly more capacious drinking vessels (Pruckner 2011, 245–246 and n. 47, figs. 9–11) than the one-handled cups of various kinds that were common products of the Boiotian Bichrome and Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished industries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Davis 1979, 241, nos. 29–50; 243, no. 69, figs. 5–6, pl. 73c; Lindblom 2007, 123–125, figs. 11, 13–15; Pruckner 2011, 243–244, figs. 2–7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Davis 1979, 243, nos. 52–53, fig. 5, pl. 73d; Mathioudaki 2011a, Vol. I, 66–69. For the shape in plain ware at early LH I Tsoungiza, Rutter 2015, 215–217, nos. D304–D306, E-51, figs. 3–4.

witness to a fundamental change in mainland Greek drinking habits at the close of the MH era.<sup>65</sup> While mainlanders in the Argolid and east-central Greece made extensive use of the krater in either imported Aiginetan or locally produced Boiotian forms, some regions either largely did without kraters (at least until LH IIA) and developed bichrome drinking assemblages that continued to rely upon traditional Helladic forms like the kantharos and goblet (e.g. southern Lakonia) or alternatively adopted a bichrome drinking assemblage that incorporated the new Minoanising and Cycladicising cup types but substituted juglets and alabastra for the kraters, large jars, and large jugs of the Aiginetan and Boiotian industries (e.g. the Corinthia with its Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished class).<sup>66</sup>

Very similar in its shape assemblage to Corinthian Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished is the decoratively altogether different LH I Lustrous Decorated repertoire that we conventionally recognise as the earliest Mycenaean painted pottery.<sup>67</sup> The only large shapes in the latter are small numbers of Minoanising pithoid and bridge-spouted jars, respectively the functional equivalents of the large storage jars (pithoi and narrow-necked transport jars) and spouted pouring vessels (jugs as well as kraters) of Boiotian Bichrome. Contextualising the appearance of LH I Lustrous Decorated pottery in this way allows us to recognise it at its birth as essentially a Minoanising dark-on-light Argive variant of a light-on-dark bichrome or trichrome matt-painted assemblage that was also at home in the northeast Peloponnese, namely the class termed Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished here.

Excavations at the small site of Tsoungiza during the 1980s yielded a series of spatially discrete groups of late and terminal MH, LH I, and LH IIA pottery. Tsoungiza lies just a three-hour's walk north of the far wealthier and better-connected site of Mycenae, at which contemporary tombs in Grave Circles B and A were being furnished with extraordinarily lavish assemblages of grave goods including a good number of examples of the bichrome-decorated ceramic classes discussed above. The Tsoungiza evidence has shown that the major bichrome-decorated classes -Aiginetan, Boiotian, and Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished - as well as several examples of miscellaneous bichrome matt-painted vessels all made a sudden appearance at the site at the very beginning of LH I.68 Contemporary and somewhat later corpora of LH I pottery from the East Alley at Korakou and Shaft Graves 1 and 2 at Lerna, in which similar ranges of bichromedecorated pottery occur, unfortunately cannot provide confirmation as to how swiftly these polychrome classes were being distributed throughout the Argolid and the Corinthia, for the simple reason that substantial deposits of chronologically homogeneous MH III pottery from those sites have yet to be published. Dietz claimed that fragments of Aiginetan Bichrome and Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished vessels appear in deposits of his MH IIIB phase at Asine, but his grounds for dating these deposits earlier than the beginning of LH I are inadequate.<sup>69</sup> Thus the evidence published to date suggests that all of these bichrome-decorated classes made their initial appearance in the Peloponnese no earlier than the beginning of LH I, at the same time as the earliest dark-on-light pottery decorated with lustrous paint in the LH I style began to circulate. Determining why so many distinct categories of bichrome-decorated pottery should have come into being contemporaneously is a continuing problem. But it is a striking fact that they became popular at essentially the same time as the appearance of LH I Lustrous Decorated pottery and the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> This shift in drinking behaviour is well documented in a series of closely dated settlement deposits at Tsoungiza in the differences noted between Groups A–C of MH IIIA–B and Groups D and E of LH I: Rutter 2015.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> The two different strategies appear to overlap at Tsoungiza in the southern Corinthia where Corinthian Trichrome as well as both Aiginetan and Boiotian Bichrome vessels are found in the same settlement deposits. The same kind of overlapping can also be observed at Korakou (Davis 1979) and in the shaft grave fills at Lerna (Lindblom 2007), so perhaps such overlapping is characteristic of much of the northeast Peloponnese in a way that it is not in Boiotia, Lokris, and Thessaly to the north or in Lakonia and Messenia to the south.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Blegen 1921, 32–35; Mountjoy 1986, 9–16; RMDP, 80–85; Lindblom et al. 2015, 232–234. Early piriform jars of FS 27 type presumably played a functional role closely comparable to alabastra of FS 80 type.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Rutter 2015, 213–220, Group D and parts of Group E.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Rutter 1993.

first examples of horizontal-handled kraters in a broad range of decorated as well as plain ceramic classes.<sup>70</sup> Another striking novelty of the LH I period is the initial appearance of vessels in precious metals – silver, gold, and electrum – in the shaft graves at Mycenae.<sup>71</sup> It may well be that the explosion of polychromy in ceramics was conditioned to some degree by the combination of silver with gold, as well as with other materials in such colours as blue, white, and black in metal drinking vessels.<sup>72</sup> The shape range of the earliest Mycenaean vessels in precious metals, both open and closed forms, is quite similar to that of the Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished class, as well as to that of the LH I Lustrous Decorated class. The small sizes of the bichrome- and trichrome-decorated containers in the former would certainly make sense if they had been inspired by precious metal vessels, especially in the early years of the production of gold and silver vessels on the mainland when access to substantial quantities of the metals in question was limited.

Potentially of equal significance are the seeming disappearance of the Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished class before the LH IIA period begins and the failure of both the Aiginetan and the Boiotian Bichrome classes to survive into the LH IIB period. The floruit of most categories of bichrome-painted pottery during the early Mycenaean era was short-lived. Not only do we need to explain why it suddenly became such a fad, but we also need to account for its relatively rapid decline in popularity. This, too, may be connected with developments in metallurgy, in the sense that rivalry for status among early Mycenaean elites appears to have shifted rather abruptly in LH IIB and LH IIIA1 to non-portable forms of material culture (e.g. monumental building projects) other than the metalwork that had played so prominent a role in such competition during the LH I–IIA era.<sup>73</sup>

Acknowledgements: This paper draws heavily on evidence assembled in an unpublished article submitted a decade ago for publication by Michael Lindblom, Hans Mommsen, and Ian Whitbread with the title, 'Bichrome Pottery in the MBA–LBA Central Aegean' (hereafter cited as Lindblom et al., forthcoming). For permission to cite extensively from that article prior to its publication, we are extremely grateful to Hans Mommsen and Ian Whitbread. We are also much beholden to Joseph Maran for responding to questions concerning his important 2007 article on the genesis, distribution, and significance of the Magnesian Polychrome class he has identified as a product of coastal southeastern Thessaly.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> See n. 68 above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Davis 1977, 125–137 (Circle B, Graves N, Γ, I, A, Δ), 137–251 (Circle A, Graves I–VI); Wright 2004, 17–25, figs. 2–3, tabs. 4–5. For the dramatic change in societal concepts of value at this time, see Voutsaki 2012 (especially 179–182 with respect to objects) and also Voutsaki 2016 for a diachronic overview of the shift away from reciprocity that undoubtedly plays a role in the popularisation of polychrome-decorated tablewares in the LH I period.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> E.g. Davis 1977, 204–219, nos. 82–83 (NM 351, NM 390), figs. 169–173; Rutter 2012, 80–82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Rutter 2012, 81.

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# Illustrations

Fig. 1: Distribution map of Aiginetan Bichrome (map: M. Lindblom)

Fig. 2: Distribution map of Boiotian Bichrome (map: M. Lindblom)

Fig. 3: Result of a discriminant analysis of 249 samples, corrected for dilution and assuming seven clusters using all 29 elements measured except As, Ba, Na and Zr. Plotted are the discriminant functions W1 and W2, which cover 95.5% and 2.4% of the between-group variance. The ellipses drawn are the  $2\sigma$  boundaries of the groups. Ten bichrome samples from the Lerna VI shaft graves are shown as filled symbols (the single Aiginetan bichrome sample was measured twice, hence two filled dots in the AegA ellipse). All are good members of their respective groups. The different chemical groups originating from Aigina (AegA), Boiotia (TheA, TheH, TheP), Euboia (EuA), the NE Peloponnese (Mycenae/Berbati: MYBE), and the unlocated but suspected Argive group Ul20 are well separated (data and caption courtesy of H. Mommsen)

Fig. 4: Distribution map of Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished (map: M. Lindblom)

Fig. 5: Rim and handle fragment of trichrome Light on Dark-Slipped and Burnished ring-handled juglet or cup from Excavation Unit Q6/17 at Kolonna on Aigina: a. Exterior; b. Interior (photos: W. Gauß)

Fig. 6: Fragments of bichrome Light on Dull-Painted rounded cups (a–b), and narrow-necked jars (c–d) from Malthi in Messenia. Three fragments were originally illustrated by Natan Valmin (1938, pl. 23:D1 [c], D7 [b], and D10 [d]) and three were recovered in his Rooms A14 (d), A17 (a), and A18 (c) on the central terrace of the settlement (drawings: T. Ross, photos: M. Lindblom)

## Table

Tab. 1: Bichrome and Trichrome Classes of Pottery produced on the LH I–II Greek mainland (including Aigina). Principal sources in alphabetical order: Dickinson 1992; Dietz 1991; Kramer 2004; Lindblom 2001; Lindblom 2007; Lindblom et al., forthcoming; Maran 1992a; Maran 1992b; Maran 2007; Mathioudaki 2011b; Pruckner 2011; Rutter 2015; Rutter – Rutter 1976; Valmin 1938; Zerner 2008