

DIVERSITY IN POTTERY CONSUMPTION IN THE MINOAN FIRST PALACES. DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN REGIONAL AND PANCRETAN CUPS?*

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Abstract

During the First Palace or Protopalatial period (Middle Minoan) IB-IIB: 19th-18th c. BC) on Crete the communal consumption activities undertaken at palatial sites seem to prefer the use of specific cups, which are very different from one palatial site to another. The plain handleless conical cup is the typical shape of Phaistos, well attested in the palatial centre since Prepalatial times. It is also present in the nearby sites sharing the ceramic tradition of Phaistos (e.g. Ayia Triada, Kommos), but absent or rarely attested in the rest of the island at least until MM III. The footed goblet is the drinking cup par excellence of the palatial site of Knossos, from Prepalatial times until MM IIA. The footed goblet is well attested in the Knossian region, but quite rare outside it. At Malia, the one-handled conical cup is the main drinking cup in use at the palatial site, especially in MM II. It is present also in the nearby sites (e.g. Sissi), as well as in eastern Crete, but absent in the rest of the island.

All these cups have in common the following characteristics: production in crude ware, plainness or a very simple decoration, presence in massive quantity only in one palatial site and respective region. On the contrary, there are some shapes that seem uniformly attested across the island in Protopalatial times, like the carinated, the straight-sided and the rounded cups in Polychrome Ware. In this paper I will argue that in Protopalatial Crete there existed some cups that are characteristic of specific palatial sites and their area of influence (ideological and/or political), and likely connected to ceremonial activities that took place under the auspices of the palaces or with the purpose of evoking palatial ceremonies, and others that are instead more uniformly attested across the island because representative of inter-connected elites of Crete.

Introduction

During the First Palace or Protopalatial period (Middle Minoan) IB-IIB: 19th-18th c. BC) on Crete the communal consumption activities undertaken in palatial sites seem to prefer the use of specific unpainted or slightly decorated cups, which are very different from one palatial site to another. The plain handleless conical cup is the typical shape of Phaistos, very common at the palatial centre since Prepalatial times. It occurs in nearby sites sharing the ceramic tradition of Phaistos (e.g. Ayia Triada, Kommos), but is absent or rarely attested in the rest of the island at least until MM III.

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The footed goblet is the drinking cup *par excellence* of Knossos, from Prepalatial times until MM IIA. In Protopalatial times, it is the most common shape at Knossos and neighbouring sites (*e.g.* Archanes), but quite rare outside the north-central region of Crete.

At Malia, the one-handed conical cup is the main drinking cup in use at the palatial site, especially from late Prepalatial times until the end of the Protopalatial period. It occurs in north- and south-eastern Crete but is not recovered in the rest of the island.

All these cups have in common the following characteristics: (1) production in crude ware; (2) plainness or a very simple/limited decoration; (3) presence in massive quantities at one palatial site and its local environs.

During the inferred communal consumption activities undertaken in the First Palaces¹, these specific shapes are sometimes used in combination with a minority of other more elaborate drinking cups, which are, however, uniformly and more extensively attested across the island in Protopalatial times. These include carinated cups, straight-sided cups, and rounded cups with everted rims in Kamares Ware, *i.e.* the well-known Polychrome Ware typical of the Protopalatial period. These types, produced in fine fabric, with elaborate shapes and rich decoration, occur in the consumption deposits not only of the main First Palaces of Crete (Phaistos, Knossos, Malia), but in all the Protopalatial sites of whatever level, *i.e.* second-order palaces, coastal towns, villages, and funerary contexts. The impression conveyed by the numerous Protopalatial sites that have these kinds of elaborate cups is that they are not linked to a specific palace or confined to a particular region of Crete, like the above-mentioned simpler drinking cups, but occur across the whole island.

In this paper I will argue that in Protopalatial Crete there existed some cups that are characteristic of specific palatial centres and sites in their area of influence (stylistic, economic, ideological and/or political), and likely connected to ceremonial activities that took place under the auspices of the local palace or with the purpose of evoking palatial feasting, while others that are broadly and uniformly present at sites across the whole island are so because they are representative of the inter-connected elites on Crete.

Changing approach: plain ware VS decorated ware

For the First Palace period, much work has been done on the ceremonial consumptions that took place in the Minoan palaces². The study of Kamares Ware was central for understanding ceremonial consumption at the palaces. Gisela Walberg³ explained the distribution of Kamares Ware on Crete in terms of a dichotomy, distinguishing between palatial and provincial products, with the former being the production of the palaces of Knossos and Phaistos. More recent studies have instead shown the presence – both production and consumption – of Kamares Ware in several palatial and non-palatial centres of Crete, as well as the existence of local responses to the most common shapes/decorations attested at Knossos and Phaistos⁴. Following the view of John Cherry⁵, that the consumption of Kamares Ware reflects the competition between autonomous and interacting centres, the regional approach has dominated recent studies.

¹ For Protopalatial Phaistos see CALOI 2012; 2013, pp. 269-271; 2017; for Protopalatial Knossos see MACDONALD - KNAPPETT 2007, pp. 161-167.

² See the previous note.

³ WALBERG 1983.

⁴ See for example the elaborate productions of MM

IIB Myrtos Pyrgos (CADOGAN 1978; KNAPPETT 1999), of MM IB Petras (HAGGIS 2007) and of Protopalatial Ayia Triada (CARINCI 2003; BALDACCI 2013; 2014). See also ANDREOU 1978.

⁵ CHERRY 1986, pp. 34-38.

These regional approaches have been adopted by scholars dealing with the Mesara plain, in south-central Crete, as well as with the northern and eastern regions in the Protopalatial period. For example, concerning the Mesara plain and as first pointed out by Vincenzo La Rosa⁶, it seems that during the Protopalatial period the Phaistian hegemony (political, or possibly only ideological) in this area was complete, and the sites of Kommos and Ayia Triada were interpreted as in some way dependent on the palatial site. A similar approach was used by Gerald Cadogan to define a regional state – known as the Malia-Lasithi state – centred on Malia and extending as far as Myrtos Pyrgos on the southern coast and to Gournia on the northern⁷. Carl Knappett then focused on the special relationship between Malia and Myrtos Pyrgos, as well as on the stylistic links identified between Malia and sites of far eastern (*e.g.* Palaikastro) and southern Crete (*e.g.* Phaistos), and interpreted them as the expression of elite preferences in consumption activities⁸.

In his study of the MM IB Lakkos deposit of Petras, defined as “the result of the accumulation debris from diacritical feasting”⁹, Donald Haggis convincingly interpreted the stylistic diversity of wares and decorative systems represented in this deposit as a manifestation of “the expressed purpose of creating distinctly different pots, and indeed sets or groups of table wares, that served to articulate the horizontal and vertical differentiation of their users in specific feasting or drinking ceremonies”¹⁰.

Most of these studies – both region- and site-focused – have been mainly based on the analysis of decorated wares, sometimes associated with other material correlates, such as glyptic, lithics, and metalworking¹¹. Less attention has been devoted to plain wares as a useful means to define cultural regions and to understand phenomena like integration and interaction. Using this approach, Carl Knappett compared the production of domestic pottery of MM II Myrtos Pyrgos with that of fine wares, concluding that the former was more decentralized and less standardized than the latter, which was instead defined as production administered by the Myrtos Pyrgos elite¹². This approach was used by Aleydis Van de Moortel in her 2007 paper on ‘regional diversity in Central Crete’, where she concluded: “...that during the Protopalatial period there was not much movement of pottery between the two regions other than of the highest-quality ‘Kamares’ vases and some transport vessels”¹³. This approach has been used also by Simona Todaro and myself to study the occurrence and spread of the Phaistian-type plain handleless conical cups across Crete in the Prepalatial and Protopalatial periods respectively¹⁴. These studies have shown that not only the shape of the handleless conical cup, but also the forming techniques used to produce it at Phaistos and local environs since EM IIB, are not witnessed outside the Mesara plain, at least until MM IIA, if not even later (see *infra*)¹⁵.

As we will see below, the study of the occurrence and spread of specific plain cups, likely representing the ritual behaviour of a specific palatial site, outside that settlement itself, may help in defining the cultural region of that palace and in understanding its degree of influence in the region. It seems indeed that these site-specific cups could be interpreted as a cultural marker: they were indeed produced by different communities, imitating the ones manufactured by the major production centre of the region. In contrast, the adoption of the elaborate cups in Kamares Ware may help in defining inter-regional rather than intra-regional interactions.

⁶ See LA ROSA 1985, p. 47; see later publications on the western Mesara plain in the Protopalatial period: CARINCI 2003; SHAW 2006; CALOI 2015.

⁷ CADOGAN 1995; see also KNAPPETT 1999, fig. 6.

⁸ KNAPPETT 1999, p. 630.

⁹ HAGGIS 2007, p. 760.

¹⁰ HAGGIS 2012, p. 195.

¹¹ See HAGGIS 2007; CADOGAN 2013.

¹² KNAPPETT 2000.

¹³ VAN DE MOORTELT 2007, p. 202.

¹⁴ TODARO 2013, 2016; CALOI 2019A.

¹⁵ CALOI 2019A; TODARO 2016.

The consumption of plain or slightly decorated cups in the First Palaces of Crete

The handleless conical cups at Phaistos

At Phaistos, in south-central Crete, the most common shape in the Protopalatial period is the handleless conical cup, usually named *skouteli* by the Italian excavators of Phaistos¹⁶.

The first plain handleless cups appear in south-central Crete in the EM IIB period¹⁷, and continue to be used until LM III, varying through time in manufacturing technique, dimension, and profile, and thus being good indications of date¹⁸. Most of them are unpainted, but in Pre- and Protopalatial times (especially from MM IA to MM IIA) a minority of examples occurs also in Dark-on-Light Ware with added decoration in white¹⁹. Recent studies have demonstrated that the main use of the handleless conical cups in Pre- and Protopalatial periods was on ceremonial occasions, connected to building and re-building activities on the site, rather than in everyday use²⁰. In the Protopalatial period, they are mainly attested in construction fills, foundation and/or building deposits, feasting hoards, and dumps, all originating from communal ceremonies which very likely took place in the Middle West Court²¹ or in the Lower West Court of the palace²². They are present also in MM II Phaistian houses located on the slopes of the palace hill (e.g. Chalara and Ayia Photeini²³), but always in small proportions in comparison to the mass quantities found in the palatial contexts. It remains to understand whether they were produced in mass quantities only on demand, namely in occasion of the organisation of mass consumption events sponsored by the palatial elites²⁴. S. Todaro has already suggested mass productions of EM III handleless conical cups to be used as ration bowls in occasion of the major construction activities undertaken on the Phaistos palace hill²⁵.

Already in the first stage of the Phaistos First Palace period (MM IB), the handleless conical cup is much attested in the neighbouring sites of the palatial site, like the settlements of Kommos and Ayia Triada²⁶. It, however, begins to spread further in the Mesara plain only in MM II (likely MM IIA), a phase corresponding to the increase of the palatial power of Phaistos in its region²⁷. The increase in popularity of the *skouteli* in MM II (A and B) is especially visible at Kommos and in the close-by tholos tomb cemetery of Kamilari²⁸, where the plain handleless conical cups were used for communal consumption. Moreover, the contemporary appearance in MM IIA of the handleless conical cup and of the bridge-spouted jar at the Kamilari cemetery has been interpreted as a change in ritual behaviour, now likely imitating the ritual performances drawn

¹⁶ See the first publications on *skoutelia* from Phaistos in FIANDRA 1973 and LEVI - CARINCI 1988. See also BE-TANCOURT 1986 for southern Crete.

¹⁷ TODARO 2013.

¹⁸ See the first study on the development of the type from EM to LM in FIANDRA 1973; for the development in the individual periods at Phaistos see: TODARO 2013 for Prepalatial times; LEVI - CARINCI 1988, pp. 234-247; CALOI 2013, pp. 112-117, 149-150, 159; CALOI 2019A for Protopalatial times; and GIRELLA 2010 and PALIO 2001 for Neopalatial times.

¹⁹ See examples dating to MM IB and MM IIA in CALOI 2009.

²⁰ TODARO 2013, pp. 294-295; TODARO 2019, p. 184;

CALOI 2017 and CALOI 2019A, p. 22.

²¹ CALOI 2013, pp. 269-271.

²² CALOI 2013, 2019A.

²³ CALOI 2005.

²⁴ On the topic see CALOI 2019A, pp. 21-23.

²⁵ See *supra* note 20.

²⁶ See MM IB deposits with plain handleless conical cups at Kommos in VAN DE MOORTEL 2006, pls. 3.1-3.3, at Ayia Triada in BALDACCIO 2014.

²⁷ RELAKI 2012; CALOI 2015, 2021.

²⁸ For Kommôs see the MM II construction fills of Building AA in VAN DE MOORTEL 2006; for Kamilari: CALOI 2019B.

from the communal ceremonies at the Phaistos palace²⁹. Together with Kamilari, other tholos tomb cemeteries of the Mesara plain have revealed plain (and decorated) handleless conical cups in the Protopalatial period, such as Koumasa, Porti and Apesokari, whose deposits are however not entirely published yet³⁰.

It is important to highlight that the plain handleless cup exists also in the settlements of Monastiraki and Apodoulou, in the Amari Valley. Both these sites, which were founded in MM I and collapsed in MM IIB, exactly like the First Palace of Phaistos, are located along one of the main communication routes between the southern and the northern parts of the island³¹. They have been both interpreted as satellite villages of Phaistos and, in particular, Monastiraki was interpreted as a small palatial site enjoying a strong relationship with the First Palace of Phaistos³².

The recent publication of the pottery from Apodoulou³³ has revealed that plain handleless conical cups are attested in every phase of the Protopalatial period, from MM IB to MM IIB, and that they seem to follow the development of the shape at Phaistos.

Beyond the Mesara region, in the Protopalatial period the handleless conical cup is almost absent, except for two dozen of examples found at MM IIA Archanes and Knossos. In the latter³⁴, they were confined to this specific phase, not even continuing until the end of the Protopalatial period, despite the existence of few MM IIB deposits at Knossos. They ceased to be found again until MM III, when this shape started to dominate Minoan ceramic assemblages all over Crete, and remained so until LM IIIA. At Archanes³⁵, the handleless conical cups appeared in the cemetery in MM IIA and then continued to be used until the Neopalatial period. If the brief appearance of *skoutelia* at MM IIA Knossos needs to be explained, the presence of conical cups at Archanes is not so surprising, as the cemetery seems to show architectural and ceramic traditions of both north-central and southern Crete.

It seems quite clear that the plain handleless conical cups are especially attested in those sites that have been already interpreted by several scholars as satellite settlements of Phaistos.

The footed goblet at Knossos

The main drinking cup at the First Palace of Knossos is the footed goblet. It appears first in EM IIA³⁶ and lasts until the MM IB-MM IIA phases of the First palace at Knossos. Then, according to Macdonald and Knappett³⁷, it declined dramatically at the end of MM IIA. In the Protopalatial period, it mainly appears in Plain Ware, but also in Light-on-Dark and Dark-on-Light wares³⁸, where the main decoration is characterized by a simple band on the rim (interior and/or exterior) or on the body. During its acme, namely from EM III to MM IB, it was primarily used at Knossos and in north-central Crete; it was a central, north Cretan shape. It is important

²⁹ CALOI 2019B.

³⁰ For Koumasa: PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2015; for Apesokari: FLOUDA 2011 (for the tholos tomb A complex); VAVOURANAKIS 2012; VAVOURANAKIS ET ALII FORTH. (for the tholos tomb B complex); for Porti: XANTHOUIDES 1924, p. 61, nn. 5069, 5097, 5098, pls. VI, XXXVI; FLOUDA FORTH.

³¹ For Monastiraki: KANTA 2006; 2012; for Apodoulou: CIVITILLO - GRECO 2003.

³² KANTA 1999, 2012.

³³ VENIERI 2016; 2020, pp. 99-104.

³⁴ MACGILLIVRAY 2007; see also MACDONALD - KNAPPETT 2007, pl. 24, nn. 308-327.

³⁵ SAKELLARAKIS - SAKELLARAKI 1997, pp. 412-413, fig. 377.

³⁶ See examples in MOMIGLIANO 1990; 2007.

³⁷ MACDONALD - KNAPPETT 2007.

³⁸ MACGILLIVRAY 2007; see also MACDONALD - KNAPPETT 2007.

to note that in late Prepalatial, *i.e.* EM III-MM IA, it appears in a number of sites of north-central Crete, especially in funerary contexts, such as in cemeteries of Malia, Gournes and Archanes³⁹, and even in far eastern (*e.g.* Palaikastro⁴⁰) and southern Crete (*e.g.* Drakones tholos tomb)⁴¹. But in the succeeding Protopalatial period, the impression is that it was mainly confined to Knossos and possibly to its immediate surroundings. As pointed out by Macdonald, “at Protopalatial Knossos it clearly figured as the main drinking vessel in everyday use as well as in ceremonial feasting”⁴². On the basis of the published materials from sites of north-central Crete, the footed goblet in MM IB-MM IIA exists at Juktas, the peak sanctuary connected to the Knossos palace, and in the cemetery of Archanes, where it follows the same trend observed for Pre- and Protopalatial Knossos. According to Sakellarakis⁴³, it is the most popular shape in MM IA and MM IB, then disappears in MM IIA. For the first phase of the Protopalatial period, the footed goblet is the most common drinking shape identified in the MM IB deposits from funerary buildings of the Archanes cemetery⁴⁴, where it was used for communal consumption. It remains to be understood whether in these early stages of the Protopalatial period it is present also in the settlements of the Pediada region, like Galatas, Kastelli and Smari, for which we wait for the complete publication of their respective Protopalatial deposits⁴⁵.

In the rest of the island, it is almost absent, except for some very rare examples, which are, however, decorated in polychromy. Three of them have been discovered in MM IIA levels of three Protopalatial quarters of Phaistos, namely the Quarter West of the Middle West Court of the Palace⁴⁶, the Acropoli Mediana⁴⁷ and Chalara⁴⁸. These examples, which are locally produced, find their best comparisons in the Knossian Rounded goblet – Type 3, as defined by MacGillivray⁴⁹. Another polychrome specimen has been found at Chrysolakkos and dated to MM II⁵⁰.

³⁹ For Malia and Gournes, see ANDREOU 1978; for Archanes, see SAKELLARAKIS - SAKELLARAKI 1997, pp. 386-405, figs. 339, 342, (EM III), 346-348, 351 (MM IA); PAPADATOS 2005, p. 15, P1-P5, fig. 10. Recent study of Pre- and Protopalatial deposits from Gouves has shown some footed goblets that could date to MM IA or MM IB (MANDALAKI *forth*).

⁴⁰ Only one example was found in the MM IA deposit of Room XI: KNAPPETT - COLLAR 2007, pp. 6-7, fig. 5, 13.

⁴¹ XANTHOUDIDES 1924, n. 5030, pl. XLII.

⁴² MACDONALD 2010.

⁴³ SAKELLARAKIS - SAKELLARAKI 1997, pp. 405-410, fig. 362, 364.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ For preliminary publications of Protopalatial deposits from the Pediada sites see: RETHEMIOTAKIS 1997; RETHEMIOTAKIS - CHRISTAKIS 2004; for Smari, see VALIANOU 2017.

⁴⁶ CALOI 2013, pp. 145-146, n. 723, fig. 41. It was found in a stratified fill, dating from MM IB to MM IIA, interpreted as a dump of pottery used during the communal consumption activities undertaken in the Middle West Court of the palace. It is in Dark-on-Light Ware with white decoration and finds its best parallel in the Early Chamber at Knossos, see MACGILLIVRAY 1998, p. 127, n. 111, pls. 4, 42. It could be an import or an imitation of Knossian footed goblets.

⁴⁷ BALDACCI 2017, n. 207. It comes from a MM IIA fill found in Rooms CV-CVII of the *Acropoli Mediana*. As reported by Giorgia Baldacci, its best parallels are in MACGILLIVRAY 1998, pp. 165, 167, nn. 925, 976, pls. 29, 135.

⁴⁸ LEVI - CARINCI 1988, p. 205, F 4378, tav. 88o. It comes from the MM IIA levels of Room ι' at Chalara.

⁴⁹ MACGILLIVRAY 1998, p. 66, fig. 2.7, 3.

⁵⁰ VAN EFFENTERRE 1980, p. 516, fig. 722.

The one-handled conical cups at Malia

At Malia in the Protopalatial period there exists a type of one-handled conical cup with concave walls on a narrow base, with a round-sectioned handle. This cup goes back to the Late Prepalatial period and is the commonest drinking cup shape encountered during the Protopalatial period not only in the palace, but also in all the Malia town buildings; it is used in both settlement and funerary contexts⁵¹. It is important to underline that this type differs from the straight-sided cups, which have straight walls on a larger base and a strap handle, and are mainly attested in Monochrome and Polychrome wares. The one-handled conical cup of Malia is mainly attested in Plain Ware, but is also commonly represented in Dark-on-Light and Light-on-Dark wares, with the main decoration consisting of double or triple festoons descending from the rim interior⁵².

Unfortunately, the palace of Malia has not revealed closed Protopalatial deposits, but it appears that the shape is well attested in all the levels of the palace dating to the Protopalatial period on stylistical basis⁵³.

The best-known deposits of the Malia Protopalatial period come from Quartier Mu, and especially from its MM IIB destruction levels⁵⁴. As reported by Poursat and Knappett, in Bâtiment A most of the one-handled conical cups were found in two storerooms, namely Magasin I 16 with 60 specimens and Magasin III 17 with 90, and in the niche of Room I 3, which revealed 80 cups⁵⁵. They were probably stored there to be used during communal consumption events.

West of Malia, this shape seems attested in the Smari settlement, located between Knossos and Malia. According to the preliminary publications by Vallianou⁵⁶, they were found in the MM IIB destruction layers of the site. We still do not know the function of these unpublished deposits, but it is interesting that the most common drinking cups are the Maliote one-handled conical cups.

East of Malia, at Sissi, the one-handled conical cup of Malia type occurs in large amounts in the MM II (A and B) deposits of both the settlement⁵⁷ and the cemetery, which are now under study, respectively, by Roxane Dubois and myself.

In south-eastern Crete, at Myrtos Pyrgos, which has been considered part of the Malia-Lasithi state centred at Malia, Gerald Cadogan⁵⁸ reports that the one-handled conical cups typical of Malia – and well represented in MM IIB levels of Quartier Mu – occur both in Plain Fine Ware and in Light-on-Dark fine ware with the typical festoon decoration.

In the Mirabello bay, the site of Pefka, near Gournia, with its MM IIB workshop of organic dyes, has also revealed many one-handled conical cups – both plain and decorated – of the Malia type⁵⁹.

At Petras, in the Siteia bay, the ceremonial area of the Pre- and Protopalatial cemetery has revealed a few one-handled conical cups of the Malia type⁶⁰, together with many other vases finding their best parallels at Malia. The type is, however, not attested in the MM IB Lakkos deposit found on the palace hill⁶¹, making it possible to suggest that this Malia-type cup started to be lo-

⁵¹ Stelios Andreou (ANDREOU 1978) reports this shape in all the ceramic groups he recognized at MM IA-MM IIB Malia.

⁵² See examples in POURSAT – KNAPPETT 2005.

⁵³ VAN EFFENTERRE 1980, p. 511. V. Van Effenterre comments on the uncountable number of one-handled conical cups retrieved both from the palace and the other buildings of Malia.

⁵⁴ POURSAT – KNAPPETT 2005.

⁵⁵ POURSAT – KNAPPETT 2005, pp. 190, 254, 268, pls.

75-76.

⁵⁶ VALLIANOU 2017.

⁵⁷ See the MM II specimens from the settlement in DUBOIS 2021, p. 578, fig. 9.4.3.

⁵⁸ CADOGAN 2013, p. 108.

⁵⁹ APOSTOLAKOU ET ALII 2020, figs. 37-38, pl. 13.

⁶⁰ TSIPOPOULOU 2017.

⁶¹ HAGGIS 2007; 2012.

cally imitated only from MM II onwards.

Finally, it is surprising to find a large amount of the Malia-type one-handled conical cups in far eastern Crete, in the tombs of Pezoules Kephala at Zakros⁶².

Of the three above-mentioned types, it is only the one-handled conical cup, typical of Malia palace and town, which has much spread outside the hinterland of Malia. It is interesting to note that these cups are attested outside the above-mentioned Malia-Lasithi state (see *supra*).

This fact raises a question: can we postulate the ideological influence of Malia spread over the north-eastern and far eastern Crete on the basis of the evidence of the one-handled conical cups? Carl Knappett had already supposed that in MM IIB there is visible not only “a strong interaction and integration across east Crete”, but that “This is arguably the first time in the Protopalatial period that one can really identify a centre for regional interaction – and it seems that it is Malia that is making efforts to bring east Crete under its influence”⁶³.

I think that this observation can be confirmed by the attestation of one of the most characteristic shapes of communal consumption at Malia in the ceremonial area of the Petras cemetery and even in the tombs at Zakros, in the far east.

In the following, I will consider whether the adoption of these cups, specifically for communal consumption at a site, whether a cemetery or a settlement, could represent a symbolic link with one dominant palace. Does this sort of adoption express the ideological influence exerted by one palatial centre on its territory? For Knossos or Phaistos, this involves their immediate surroundings, but for Malia, it could be much of the eastern half of Crete. Can the distribution of these cups then help define the limits of the area of ideological influence of a palace?

Regional cups VS pancretan cups?

We have observed that the three above-discussed types of cups are much used in consumption activities undertaken in the three major palaces of Crete: they seem to represent the etiquette of drinking behaviour used during the communal activities sponsored by the palatial elites.

The spread of these three types of cups in Protopalatial Crete is not that wide, but seems to respect the borders/limits of the natural or cultural region of a palace, as already defined by scholars on the basis of a variety of material correlates (*e.g.* glyptic, metalworking, etc; see *supra*). These plain cups, despite their low value, seem to reflect the need of communities living and/or burying at a site located in a palace’s territory to tie themselves to the etiquette of the drinking behaviour typical of that palace and thus display their membership of a much wider regional community. This is arguably the case for the Phaistian handleless conical cups, mainly attested in sites of the Mesara plain and of the Amari valley, and of the plain or slightly decorated Knossian footed goblets, which exist only in the north-central region sites. The Malia-type one-handled conical cups, however, are instead attested in an area much larger than the natural region of Malia, reaching the far eastern coast of the island. Since the ritual behaviour of a community undoubtedly reflects a community’s sense of identity and its collectively held behavioural patterns, it is possible that communities living in eastern Crete wanted to express their desires to be ideologically - and not necessarily politically - integrated into a system defining a regional entity, focused on the palace of Malia. We cannot avoid the possibility that these communities acquired the most easily accessible cups that were mass produced by the major centre of their local region⁶⁴. But this would not explain both the long distance existing between the major palatial centre and these communities, and the local production of these cups, as most of them are not imports.

⁶² PLATON 2017.

⁶⁴ See WHITELAW FORTH.

⁶³ KNAPPETT - ICHIM 2017, p. 400.

Returning to the elaborate cups in Polychrome Ware well attested in Protopalatial times, the impression given is that their use in communal consumption activities is not specifically confined to a palace and its region, but is much wider. The presence of carinated, straight-sided, and rounded cups with everted rims in Polychrome Ware is not limited to one specific palatial site but is instead attested in almost every site of Protopalatial Crete. For example, if we focus on one of the most common Protopalatial shapes, the carinated cup, it is present in every phase of the period (*i.e.* MM IB, MM IIA and MM IIB) and it occurs in almost every Protopalatial site of Crete, namely first-order and second-order palatial sites, coastal towns, villages, hamlets, as well as in funerary contexts. Several studies have been devoted to the development of this shape throughout the Protopalatial period in each region of Crete, showing that each region has its own development pattern, in terms both of morphology and decoration⁶⁵. Nevertheless, there exists a general trend that can be recognized all over the island: the carinated cup appears in MM IB, with a rounded carination, and then, from MM II, starts to show a taller upper body and a sharper carination. Moreover, from MM IIA the ridge decoration begins to appear frequently on the upper body of carinated cups.

It appears that this trend is not regional, but apparent all over Crete. I would call this trend supra-regional or even pancretan. I do not want to tackle here the occurrence and development of each standard type in Polychrome Ware through the Protopalatial phases, but I highlight that these elaborate cups are not confined to one specific palace and its region but occur all over across the island.

Apropos the above-discussed plain cups, these elaborate cups are different in two aspects: (1) they are high-value cups, with a high investment in manufacture evident, which means elaboration in the shape, surface treatment, and decoration; and (2) they have skeuomorphic features: they all imitate and/or evoke metallic prototypes. Clay imitation of metal vessels is a marked trend in Protopalatial pottery, which was emphasized by Walberg in 1983⁶⁶. This phenomenon starts in MM IB, but much increases in MM IIA and becomes common in MM IIB. This happens not only at Knossos and Phaistos, as posited by Walberg, but also in the other palatial centres (*e.g.* Malia, Petras, Kommos, Gournia), in important funerary complexes (*e.g.* Archanes, Kamilari, Koumasa, Platanos), in villages, such as Myrto Pyrgos, as well as in other small villages all over Crete. The popularity of these skeuomorphic shapes is not confined to palaces but seems widespread, reflecting that the emulation of metallic prototypes (or the emulation of clay imitations of metallic shapes!) occurred not only at the main palaces of Crete, but also at other smaller centres of the island, some of whose residents likely wanted to demonstrate that they were part of a supra-regional system.

I would suggest that in Protopalatial Crete there existed two different kinds of consumption. The first involves the use of plain cups – often exclusive to one palatial site – which expresses the drinking behaviour of the palatial community and thus indisputably reflects a community sense of identity. This is probably the reason why the spread of these unpainted cups seems to respect the limits of those cultural regions that have been already identified in previous studies on the basis of the sharing of specific ceramic traits (fabrics, shapes, and styles), as well as of other material correlates (*e.g.* glyptics). Thus, at Phaistos, as the symbol of the palatial identity is the consumption of the plain conical cup during communal consumption events, the adoption of this

⁶⁵ See the occurrence and development of the Protopalatial shape in the Mesara region in: LEVI - CARINCI 1988; CALOI 2013; BALDACCI 2017; VAN DE MOORTELE 2006; GIRELLA - CALOI 2019; for the north-central region of Crete in: POURSAT-KNAPPETT 2005; MACGILLIV-

RAY 2007; MACDONALD - KNAPPETT 2007; in eastern Crete: HAGGIS 2007 for Petras; KNAPPETT - CUNNINGHAM 2012 for Palaikastro.

⁶⁶ WALBERG 1983, pp. 24-25.

specific cup (which is often locally produced rather than imported) in the nearby centres (*e.g.* Ayia Triada, Kommos, Kamilari), as well as in the satellite villages of Apodoulou and Monastiraki, seems to reflect the need of these centres to be part of a wider community centred at Phaistos.

The second is represented by the consumption of high-value cups, which reflect the ability of the elites (palatial and non-palatial) to be inter-connected in a supra-regional network. Coming back to the explanation given by Cherry about the consumption of Kamares Ware, as the expression of a peer-polity interaction, of emulation between autonomous centres, I think that we should focus on a competitive emulation not only between palatial centres, but also between a variety of elites, living also in smaller and less important sites. The case of Myrtos Pyrgos is relevant here: at the site consumption of the above-mentioned one-handled conical cups is clear, recalling the palatial centre of Malia, indicating that Myrtos Pyrgos fell within a regional system centred on Malia. But Myrtos Pyrgos also consumes elaborate and high-value cups that hint at stylistic interactions not only with Malia, but also with other important centres of different regions of Crete, like Palaikastro and Phaistos⁶⁷.

If the adoption of plain cups by a community is more connected to its need to belong to a regional system, based on the palatial centre of its region, the ostentatious display of the lavishly ornamented cups of Kamares Ware by a community, has instead the purpose of including the community itself in a much wider, supra-regional system, one that I would call pancretan.

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⁶⁷ KNAPPETT 1999.

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